



# Old Washington School

Historic District Plan

## Physical Description & Boundaries

The Old Washington School Historic District (formerly Washington Historic District) is a primarily residential area located within Sacramento’s original 1848 street grid and is roughly bounded to the east and west by commercial development along 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> streets, to the north by industrial development along C Street, and to the south by mixed commercial and institutional development along G Street.



Figure 241. The Old Washington School Historic District contains houses built in a variety of Victorian styles.



Figure 242. A row of Queen Anne style houses on 15<sup>th</sup> Street between E and F streets.



Figure 243. Modern infill (background) borders the district to the east.



Figure 244. A group of tall, turn-of-the-century apartment buildings on G and 14<sup>th</sup> streets.

## Brief Historic Context

The Old Washington School Historic District preserves a portion of the Washington neighborhood, one of Sacramento's oldest residential neighborhoods that developed along the city's first streetcar lines in the 1870s. The neighborhood is named after the Washington Elementary School, which moved from its original location at 13<sup>th</sup> and G streets to the intersection of 18<sup>th</sup> and E streets, now a part of the New Washington School Historic District, in 1916.<sup>1</sup>

Sacramento's first streetcar line began service in 1870 under the ownership of the City Street Railway. The line consisted of horse-drawn cars that ran from the Central Pacific Railroad station on Sacramento's waterfront at Front and K streets down H Street to the State Agricultural Society's California State Fairgrounds at 20<sup>th</sup> and G streets. Streetcar service attracted prominent local business owners to settle along H



Figure 245. The Washington School at its original location at the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and G streets (1936). Source: California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

Street, including brewery owner Frank Ruhstaller and longtime Huntington-Hopkins Hardware manager Albert Gallatin. H Street became known as "Merchants' Row" as a result. The concentration of stately homes in the area, meanwhile, gave the surrounding neighborhood another name: Mansion Flats.<sup>2</sup>

The name "Mansion Flats," however, belies the reality that the neighborhood was a predominately middle-class residential area. Employees of the Southern Pacific Railroad and the city's other industries lived in smaller houses on the blocks to the north of G Street that make up the present-day Old Washington School Historic District. Unlike the wealthy elites living along H Street, many of whom owned their own private carriages, the streetcar line provided a vital service to the workers who lived in the neighborhood and used it to travel to their places of work downtown.<sup>3</sup>

As the neighborhood grew in the late nineteenth century, streetcar service continued to expand. The H Street line was discontinued in 1892; the following year, it was replaced by a new line of electric streetcars operated by the Central Electric Railroad Company, which ran along G Street from 7<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> streets. The line was considered "a great convenience to people residing in the northern and northeastern portions of the city, who had been without a railway ever since the H Street line was discontinued," and was believed to "greatly enhance the value of property in that portion of the city."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> William Burg, "Sacramento's Streetcar Suburbs," *Sacramento History* (blog), August 22, 2007, <http://sacramentohistory.blogspot.com/2007/08/sacramentos-streetcar-suburbs.html>.

<sup>4</sup> "Running on G Street," *Sacramento Daily Union*, March 7, 1893.



Figure 246. 1923 map of Sacramento's streetcar lines (dotted lines) and highways (solid lines), showing the variety of transportation options around the Washington neighborhood. The location of the Old Washington School Historic District is outlined in green. Source: Center for Sacramento History, 1979/X-003/00005, edited by Page & Turnbull.

By 1923, the Washington neighborhood—named after the relocation of the Washington Elementary School in 1916—was bordered by several major transportation corridors. Streetcar lines ran down G Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street, which was also part of the state highway system along with the neighborhood's western boundary at 12<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>5</sup> Residents continued to consist primarily of middle-class workers, such as clerks, printers, stenographers, lens grinders,

<sup>5</sup> C.G. Brown, "Map of the City of Sacramento" [map], 1923, Center for Sacramento History.

<sup>1</sup> William Burg, "Mansion Flats Home Tour," *Sacramento Press*, September 13, 2013, <https://sacramentoexpress.com/2013/09/13/mansion-flats-home-tour/>.

electricians, and carpenters.<sup>6</sup>

Residential development slowed during the Great Depression. The economic downswing, combined with the rising popularity of the automobile, led to the decline of streetcar lines across the city. In 1936, streetcar service along G Street ended and was replaced by bus service.<sup>7</sup> After World War II, many residents migrated out of the city's central grid to newer residential suburbs outside the city limits and were replaced by lower-income residents. Multi-unit apartment buildings were constructed in greater numbers over the following decades in response to the demographic shift. More recently, infill projects have brought new residential development to the Washington neighborhood at the start of the twenty-first century. In 2008, loft apartments were constructed on C Street using "green" building technology.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Sacramento City Directory*, Sacramento City Directory, Co., 1921.

<sup>7</sup> William Burg, *Sacramento's Streetcars* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Burg, "Mansion Flats Home Tour."

# Significance

The Old Washington School Historic District was designated for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources by the City Preservation Commission in 1985 in Ordinance #85-076 as the Washington Historic District.

The following table provides a current evaluation of significance under the requirements and considers the factors based on the above historic district context and the 2018 historic district survey. Additionally, this historic district relates to the Railroad Context Statement of the city’s General Plan Technical Background Report.

<b>(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts</b>	
<b>(1) Requirements</b>	
<b>(a)</b>	The Old Washington School Historic District meets requirement (a) for listing on the Sacramento Register, because it is a geographically definable area.
<b>(b)(i)</b>	<p>The Old Washington School Historic District meets requirement (b)(i) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area that possesses “a significant concentration or continuity of buildings unified by: (A) past events or (B) aesthetically by plan or physical development.”</p> <p>The district is significant for its collection of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century houses that were built directly to the east of Sacramento’s older residential neighborhoods to the west as streetcar lines expanded outward from the city center. The Washington neighborhood, alternately known as Mansion Flats, grew alongside Sacramento’s first streetcar line, which began operation in 1870 and initially ran down H Street before shifting to G Street in 1893. Easy access to transportation attracted both wealthy business owners and middle-class employees to build houses close to the streetcar line. While more affluent residents built the mansions along H Street that gave the neighborhood its nickname, the blocks to the north that comprise the Old Washington School Historic District were filled with the smaller houses of employees of the city’s railyards and other industries. The existing buildings in the area reflect the range of architectural styles that were popular for new residential development during this peak period of development in the neighborhoods. The end of streetcar service through the neighborhood in 1936 was an early transition point that signaled a wider shift in the city’s demographics and development, as the affluent residents began to relocate to newer residential suburbs outside of the central city, aided by the increasing availability and popularity of automobiles.</p>

## Period of Significance: 1870-1936

The period of significance for the Old Washington School Historic District begins with the start of streetcar service to the area in 1870, which attracted residential development to the area, and concludes in 1936, when streetcar service ended along G Street.

## Property Types from the Period of Significance

- Residential

## Architectural Styles from the Period of Significance

- Gothic Revival
- Italianate
- Queen Anne
- Stick/Eastlake
- Folk Victorian
- Classical Revival
- Beaux Arts
- Spanish Eclectic
- Mediterranean Revival
- Classic Box
- Prairie
- Craftsman
- Vernacular

<b>(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts</b>	
<b>(1) Requirements</b>	
<b>(b)(ii)</b>	<p>The Old Washington School Historic District meets requirement (b)(ii) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area “associated with an event, person, or period significant or important to city history.”</p> <p>The district is associated with the development of new residential neighborhoods along the city’s streetcar lines from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Much of Old Washington School Historic District’s development is related to the expansion of streetcar lines to the area, first on H Street in the 1870s and later on G Street in the 1890s. Prior residential development in Sacramento had been primarily concentrated in the central business district downtown, where the commercial waterfront, railyards, industries, and state government offices were located. The availability of employment opportunities attracted large numbers of people to the downtown area who not only worked in the businesses downtown but often lived in the immediate area. As these areas became increasingly overcrowded and polluted, neighborhoods to the east, such as the Washington neighborhood, became attractive alternatives. Streetcars enabled workers who were employed by businesses downtown to live further from the city center, resulting in the establishment of Sacramento’s early residential subdivisions and the beginning of an exodus of residents from the downtown area.</p>
<b>(c)</b>	<p>The Old Washington School Historic District meets requirement (c) for listing on the Sacramento Register as it aligns with the goals and purposes of historic preservation in Sacramento, as well as the city’s other goals and policies. Per the Sacramento City Code, the preservation of the district enhances the “city’s economic, cultural and aesthetic standing, its identity and its livability, marketability, and urban character.”</p>
<b>(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts</b>	
<b>(2) Factors to be considered</b>	
<b>(a)</b>	<p>Factor (2)(a) states that “a historic district should have integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association.” The Old Washington School Historic District retains sufficient integrity to meet this factor for consideration as a historic district.</p>
<b>(b)</b>	<p>Factor (2)(b) states that “the collective historic value of the buildings and structures in a historic district taken together may be greater than the historic value of each individual building or structure.” The Old Washington School Historic District meets this factor because its buildings and structures represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose collective historic value is greater when taken as a whole.</p>

## Character-Defining Features

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically single-family houses, some of which have been converted into multi-unit apartments or commercial businesses</li> <li>Parking and auxiliary uses located along alleys</li> </ul>
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominately one- or two-story houses with Delta-style high basements and raised first story</li> <li>Some larger, three-story multi-unit apartment buildings</li> <li>Houses with almost identical design often located on the same block, possibly built by the same person</li> <li>Concentration of large houses in the southern section of the district, particularly on F Street and the immediately surrounding blocks</li> <li>Smaller houses on blocks near industrial development along the district's northern boundary</li> </ul>
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominately wood siding, typically wide and narrow width channel rustic siding, three- or four-lap siding, or shingles of varying shapes, especially on gabled ends</li> </ul>
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front-facing gabled or hipped roofs, often with a low, centrally placed dormer</li> <li>Brick chimneys</li> </ul>
Entries & Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delta-style configuration with staircases leading to primary entrances above a high basement</li> <li>Paneled wood doors with integrated glazing or framed by side or transom windows</li> <li>Wood stairs</li> </ul>
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wood-frame double-hung windows</li> <li>Bay windows, both front- and side-facing</li> </ul>
Porches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prominent full or half-width porches accessed by a staircase</li> </ul>

Element	Character of Historic District
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Italianate, Queen Anne, and Stick/Eastlake details, including incised brackets; spindlework; slender, turned porch posts and balusters; and patterned shingles on gabled ends</li> <li>Classical Revival details, including fluted, square pilasters, Tuscan columns, and decorative garlands</li> </ul>
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gardens, lawns, or patios in front of houses</li> <li>Low fences in front of many houses, mostly wood picket or wrought iron, often with brick piers</li> </ul>
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally uniform setback of approximately 30 feet from the street to building facades on lettered streets, often with wide parking strips and sidewalks, both of approximately eight feet in width</li> <li>Rows of deciduous street trees of varying types and sizes—most often sycamore, elm, and palm trees—planted in a parking strip along the street curb</li> <li>Wide streets with two full-size traffic lanes</li> </ul>

## Boundaries & Location

The following map shows the boundaries and location of the Old Washington School Historic District.

To view the statuses of individual properties as contributing or non-contributing resources to the historic district, refer to the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources.

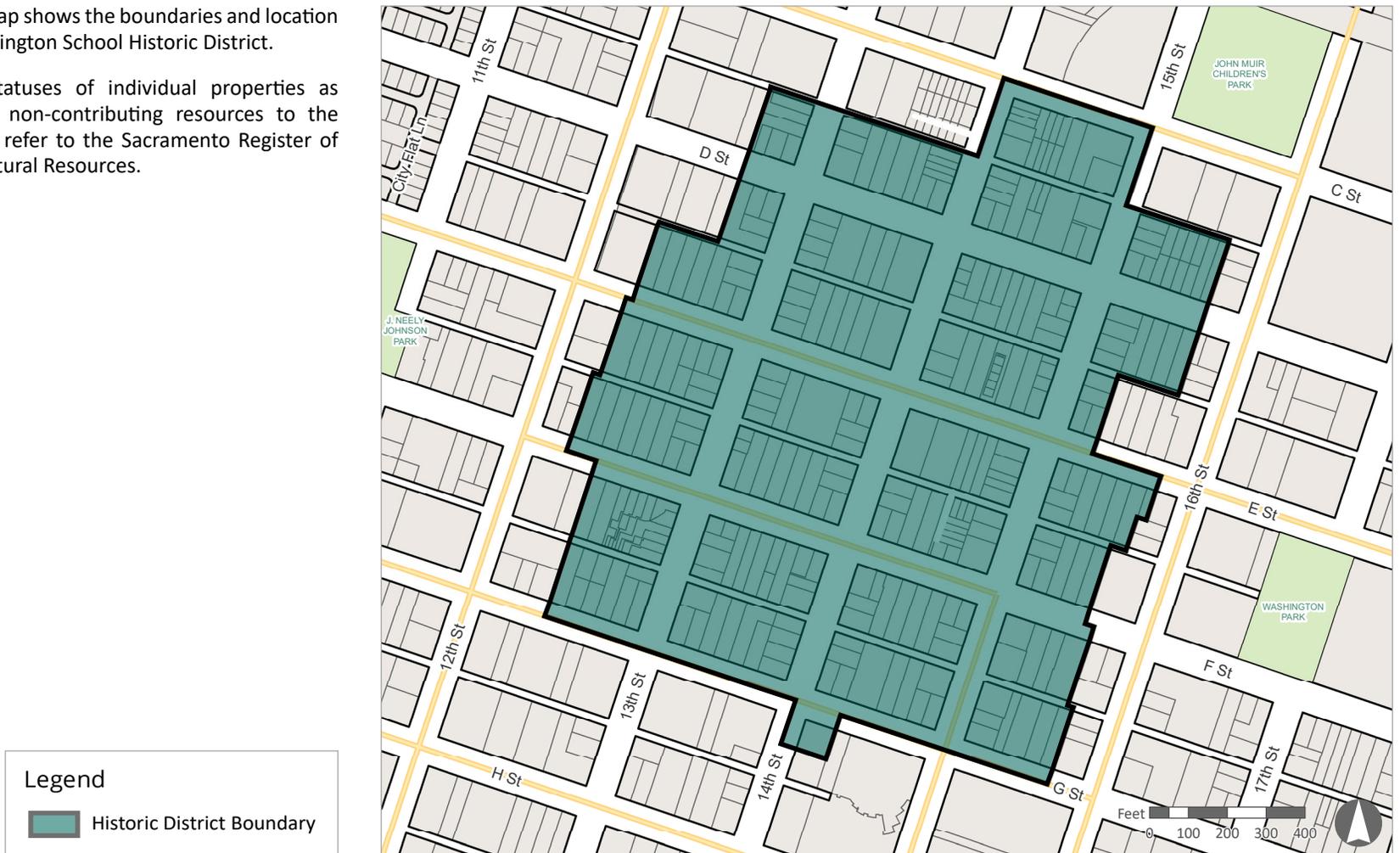


Figure 247. Map of the Old Washington School Historic District. Source: City of Sacramento and Page & Turnbull, 2019.

# District-Specific Standards & Criteria

## Design Principle

*Preserve and maintain the contributing resources and features that define the district while encouraging new development that enhances its historic residential character and livability.*

## Rationale

The Old Washington School Historic District contains a large collection of single- and multi-family residential buildings that are part of a historic neighborhood, dating back to the late nineteenth century. While the contributing buildings exhibit a mix of architectural styles, the similar use of materials, scale, setback, landscaping, and siting unite the grouping as a whole. Recent development on the edges of the district highlights the need to balance the preservation of the character of the district with increasing housing density.

In addition to the Standards & Criteria Common to Sacramento's Historic Districts in Section 1, the following district-specific standards and criteria apply when planning a project in the Old Washington School Historic District.

## 1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

- 1.1 Maintain, preserve, and, where necessary, repair and restore historic elements associated with the predominate Delta style of residential architecture, especially historic staircases, porches, and doors.



Figure 248. Many contributing buildings exhibit decorative exterior woodwork.

## 2. Additions & Accessory Structures for Contributing Resources

- 2.1 Avoid additions that cause a contributing building's height to exceed 150% of its historic height.
  - Use step backs to maintain the existing street façade height.

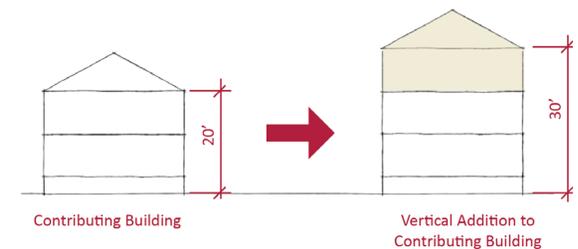


Figure 249. Additions should not cause a building's height to exceed 150% of its historic height.

### 3. New (Infill) Construction & Alterations to Non-Contributing Resources

- 3.1 Design the scale, massing, and proportions of new construction to be compatible with those of contributing buildings on the same block.
- Where additional height is considered, the height of new buildings should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.
  - Consider using step backs for taller buildings to maintain the existing street façade height of adjacent contributing buildings.

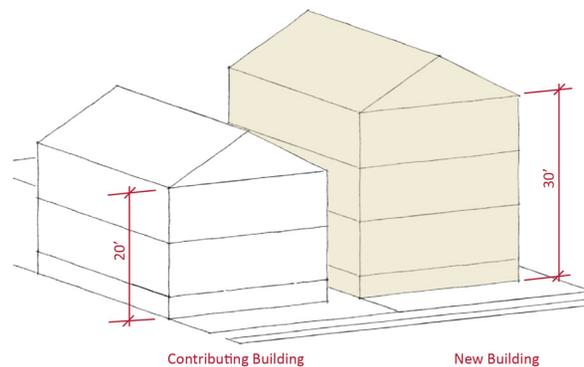


Figure 250. The height of new buildings should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.

- 3.2 Preserve the historic pattern and articulation of long, narrow 40' x 160' parcels wherever possible.

- Consider breaking down the massing of large infill developments into smaller masses that reflect the historic lot pattern.
- Where shared courtyard approach is used for subdivision of properties into multi-family use, minimize width of courtyard entrance.



Figure 251. These new apartment buildings match the setback, scale, and street-facing orientation of adjacent contributing buildings.

### 4. Site Features, Streetscape, & Landscaping

- 4.1 Avoid creating new curb cuts on lettered streets in the historic district.
- Locate parking and service access along alleys, and use landscaping features to screen it from the public right-of-way, wherever possible.
  - Where a shared courtyard approach is used for the subdivision of properties into multi-family use, utilize a single curb cut at the courtyard entrance if parking is included at the courtyard.



Figure 252. The height, materials, massing, and setback of the building on the right are not appropriate next to the contributing house on the left.

## 5. Alley Infill

- 5.1 On a typical unsplit parcel, set back alley infill buildings a minimum of 30 feet from the primary building on the parcel. If a parcel is split, set back alley infill buildings a minimum of 15 feet from the lot split.
- 5.2 The height of alley infill should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.

