



South Side

Historic District Plan

Physical Description & Boundaries

The South Side Historic District is located within Sacramento’s 1848 street grid plan but is situated beyond the city’s original *de facto* southern limit, which was formerly delineated by the R Street railroad levee until its removal in 1902.¹ The present-day neighborhood is roughly bounded by Rice Alley to the north, 16th Street to the east, W Street to the south, and 3rd Street to the west. As Sacramento’s largest historic district, South Side features a broad range of building types, styles, and uses, as well as the historic Southside Park, the district’s namesake.



Figure 299. A view of the lake in Southside Park, looking east.



Figure 300. Our Lady of Guadalupe Church faces Southside Park.



Figure 301. Victorian-era houses, such as these on 4th Street between S and T streets, appear throughout the district but are more common west of Southside Park.



Figure 302. A few houses, such as this house on Solons Alley, survive in the alleys to the west of Southside Park.

¹ William Burg, “Southside Park,” (National Register of Historic Places Draft Registration Form, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2017), 10.; William Burg, *Sacramento’s Southside Park* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 21.

Brief Historic Context

The South Side Historic District preserves a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood in the southwestern quadrant of Sacramento's original 1848 street grid. At the time of the city's initial settlement in the mid-nineteenth century, this area was characterized by agricultural fields and low-lying marsh land.² Two major infrastructure developments helped to shape the evolution of the South Side during this early period, the first of which was the construction of the R Street levee on the city's southern edge in 1854.³ Although it was intended to protect the young city from periodic flooding, it had the opposite effect. During particularly devastating flooding in the winter of 1861-1862, the R Street levee trapped floodwaters within the city for several months.⁴ Because of the presence of the levee and the constant threat of flooding, the area to the south of R Street remained sparsely populated until the end of the nineteenth century.⁵

The second major development was the establishment of the Sacramento Valley Railroad, which constructed its route along the top of the R Street levee and began its operations in 1856. The S.V.R.R. was California's first railroad line and spanned 22 miles between

² Fire Department of the City of Sacramento, *A Birds-eye view of Sacramento Capitol of the State of California* [map], 1857, 30 1/4 inches x 35 inches, "California History Section, Picture Catalog," California State Library, http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/NETX6MY4UVD6PJF2TY7CDCRV7LN7F78AGKTFNFKMKR229GYXJ5-37463?func=full-set-set&set_number=001266&set_entry=000001&format=999.

³ Richard J. Orsi, "Railroads and the Urban Environment: Sacramento's Story," in *River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*, ed. Christopher J. Castaneda and Lee M. A. Simpson (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 80-81.

⁴ Orsi, 83.

⁵ Historic Environment Consultants, "Southside Park: Historical Architectural and Landscape Survey," (report, City of Sacramento, 2012), 6.



Figure 303. Small commercial buildings are scattered throughout the district and often located at street corners.



Figure 304. A row of Craftsman style bungalows on 15th Street between T and U streets.



Figure 305. Minimal Traditional style houses are more frequent to the east of Southside Park.



Figure 306. Mid-century apartments add to the variety of residential buildings in the district.



Figure 307. View looking north along the Sacramento River from T Street, showing industrial development next to the river below R Street (1929). Source: Center for Sacramento History, David L. Joslyn Collection, 1970/001/0092.

Sacramento and Folsom.⁶ Following the construction of an improved levee system on Y Street in 1878, the R Street levee was removed and the railroad tracks, by then owned by the Southern Pacific Company, were rebuilt at ground-level in 1903.⁷

A majority of industrial development in the South Side area occurred along the waterfront to take advantage of access to riverboats traveling up and down the river daily and employed large numbers of people.⁸ The remainder of land beyond the levee was occupied by moderately sized homes, small garden plots, and uncultivated marsh land, including a slough between

6 Steven M. Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 53.

7 Page & Turnbull, "R Street Corridor Historic District," (National Register of Historic Places Draft Registration Form, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2013), 3.

8 Burg, "Southside Park," 8.12.

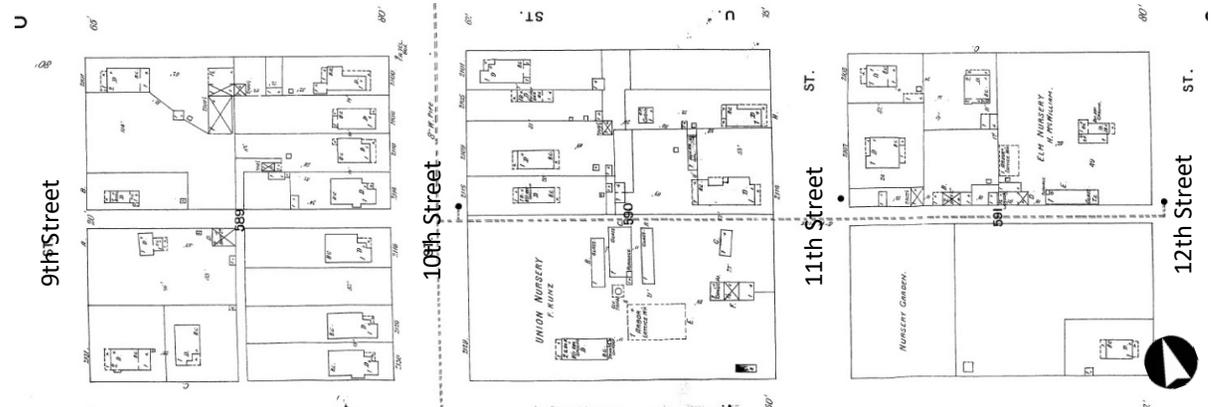


Figure 308. Close-up of blocks east of 8th Street from an 1895 map published by the Sanborn Map Company, showing increased development (1895). Source: Sacramento Public Library, edited by Page & Turnbull.

6th and 8th streets that would later become the site of Southside Park.⁹ In 1871, the Sacramento City Street Railway extended its line south along 10th Street to the City Cemetery on Y Street.¹⁰ By 1900, another streetcar line would be added that ran east along T Street from 3rd Street to 28th Street.¹¹ A map published by the Sanborn Map Company in 1895 illustrates the resulting increase in development, especially to the east of 8th Street.¹²

The gradual influx of residents to South Side led to the establishment of the Southside Improvement Association around 1900.¹³ The focus of the

9 Ibid.

10 William Burg, *Sacramento's Streetcars* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 9.

11 William Burg, "Sacramento's Streetcar Suburbs, Part 4: East Sacramento and Elmhurst," *Sacramento History* (blog), September 5, 2007, <http://sacramentohistory.blogspot.com/2007/09/sacramentos-streetcar-suburbs-part-4.html>.

12 Sanborn Map Company, Sacramento, California [map], sheet 40, 1895.

13 Burg, "Southside Park," 8.10.

organization was to lobby for the removal of the R Street levee and the beautification of the slough land between R and Y streets. After the levee's removal in 1903, the Southside Improvement Association, led by many of the South Side's landowners, shifted its efforts to the creation of a multi-block park that it hoped would attract more residents to the area. The project was an early example of a community-led improvement project that aimed to increase neighborhood density.¹⁴

By 1907, the City's Board of Trustees had approved plans for the creation of Southside Park, which were to be carried out by architect Rudolf Herold, engineer George Randal, and landscape architect John McLaren, designer of San Francisco's Golden Gate

14 Nathan Hallam, "The Evolution of Sacramento's Central City Street Grid," (master's thesis, Sonoma State University, 2003), 68.

Linda Flint McClelland, *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2002, 68.



Figure 309. Southside Park (1927). Source: California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

Park. The design of Southside Park was influenced by the nineteenth-century principles of urban planning and park development exhibited by the works of Frederick Law Olmsted and his contemporaries.¹⁵ The completed park covered eight city blocks, totaling 26 acres in size.

A massive building boom in South Side marked the years that followed. Numerous newspaper articles and advertisements touted the area's charm and the recreational amenities. A listing in the *Sacramento Union* from 1909, in the midst of the park's construction, described Southside Park as "Sacramento's show garden" and declared that adjacent property values would "soar sky high"

¹⁵ Burg, "Southside Park," 8.11.

because of their proximity to the new park¹⁶ While larger homes were built on the land closest to the park, the majority of the newly subdivided parcels were developed for modestly scaled homes in architectural styles characteristic of the period, such as the Craftsman and Classical Revival styles.

South Side was an attractive location for local residents who were vacating Sacramento's overcrowded city center. Additionally, because South Side was one of the few neighborhoods where racial covenants did not restrict homeownership, it was settled by the many immigrant and ethnic groups that arrived in Sacramento during the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁷ By the 1920s, South Side could already be characterized as a multicultural neighborhood. The area's unique cultural milieu brought about the construction of many churches and societal halls that contributed to the neighborhood's architectural character.¹⁸

While many of South Side's earliest inhabitants were Irish immigrants, it was primarily a neighborhood of Portuguese and Italian immigrants prior to the 1950s.¹⁹ The local Portuguese community was centered around 3rd and T streets. Its cultural and spiritual heart were the ODES Hall (*Ordem do Divino Espirito Santo*, or Order of the Divine Holy Spirit) at 514 W Street and St. Elizabeth's Church at the corner of 12th and S Street. Italians settled along S and T streets as far east as 19th Street and attended St.

¹⁶ "Southside Park Frontage 160x160," *Sacramento Union*, November 30, 1909, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SU19091130.2.144.7&srp os=143&e=-----en--20--141--txt-txIN-%22Southside+Park%22+Sacramen to-----1>.

¹⁷ Burg, *Sacramento's Southside Park*, 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Burg, "Southside Park," 8.12.

Mary's Church, which was originally located at 8th and N and relocated to the corner of 7th and T streets in 1915.

A new influx of ethnic groups flowed into the South Side neighborhood in the 1950s as a result of the redevelopment of Sacramento's West End, located immediately to the north. Many displaced Japanese, Chinese, Latino, and African American residents relocated to South Side during this period.²⁰ A Mexican community grew along 4th and 5th streets, southward toward Y Street (now Broadway). The community centered around El Centro Mexicano, dedicated in 1948 and located next to Southside Park at 6th and W streets, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, built in 1958 at 711 T Street.²¹

Highway construction in the middle decades of the twentieth century forever altered the South Side neighborhood. Demolition for U.S. Route 50, planned to run east to west between W and X streets, began in 1965 and resulted in the destruction of a quarter of Southside Park, hundreds of houses, and significant community buildings, including the ODES Hall. The completed highway also effectively cut South Side off from the newer, wealthier neighborhoods of Curtis Park and Land Park that had developed to the south of Y Street (now Broadway) in the early twentieth century. Meanwhile, the construction of Interstate 5, running north to south between Front and 3rd streets, in the 1960s severed the neighborhood's connection to the river waterfront. The highway project devastated the industrial corridor along the Sacramento River and the Portuguese business district

²⁰ Burg, "Southside Park," 8.13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Section 8, 15-16.

located along 3rd Street.²² South Side fell into disrepair, and residents with the means to relocate moved to newer residential suburbs outside of Sacramento.²³

In the twenty-first century, South Side has retained its identity as an inclusive, multicultural neighborhood. Students and young professionals have moved into the neighborhood, attracted by its combination of inexpensive housing, proximity to Southside Park, shady street trees, and historic architecture, and turned many of its single-family homes into shared living spaces. Infill projects, such as the 1990s cohousing project at 5th and T streets, have filled in many vacant lots leftover from redevelopment projects, while historic preservation efforts, led by local homeowners and the City of Sacramento, have resulted in the restoration of historic houses in the neighborhood.²⁴



Figure 310. Parade of Chicano horseback riders in front of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (1964). Source: Center for Sacramento History, Trinidad Sanchez Collection, 1998/098/001.

²² *Ibid.*, Section 8, 17.

²³ Burg, *Sacramento's Southside Park*, 117.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

Significance

The South Side 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.

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) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts	
(1) Requirements	
(a)	The South Side Historic District meets requirement (a) for listing on the Sacramento Register, because it is a geographically definable area.
(b)(i)	<p>The South Side 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>Due to South Side’s rapid development during the first decades of the twentieth century, the district represents a stylistically unified collection of residential and commercial buildings. Buildings within the district boundaries share complimentary architectural styles, scale, and materials. To the west of Southside Park, the district is characterized by a cohesive grouping of simple, high-basement cottages. To the east of the park, the district is comprised of similar high-basement cottages punctuated by larger homes with more elaborate ornamentation.²⁵</p>
(b)(ii)	<p>The South Side 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 South Side Historic District is significant for its association with early twentieth-century community-led movements to increase neighborhood density. Unlike Sacramento’s one-block parks that were incorporated as part of the city’s original grid plan, Southside Park was a community-driven improvement project, led by the Southside Improvement Association, that was intended to enhance the natural appeal of the neighborhood and draw homeowners from the densely-populated city center.²⁶ The ensuing development of South Side attracted residents from diverse backgrounds, many of whom were recent immigrants to Sacramento.</p>
(c)	The South Side 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.”

²⁵ “2.2.29 South Side Historic District,” (Ordinance # 85-076, Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources, July 30, 1985, updated May 2014), 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

Period of Significance: 1871-1965

The period of significance for the South Side Historic District begins with the inauguration of streetcar service down 10th Street to Y Street in 1871 and ends when demolition for the construction of Highway 50 began in 1965. The district has an expansive period of significance to incorporate the area's initial period of physical development as well as the significant physical and demographic changes that took place in the mid-twentieth century, which contribute to the unique architectural character and cultural significance of the district.

(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts	
(2) Factors to be considered	
(a)	Factor (2)(a) states that “a historic district should have integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association.” The South Side Historic District retains sufficient integrity to meet this factor for consideration as a historic district.
(b)	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 South Side 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.

Property Types from the Period of Significance

- Residential
- Institutional/Civic
- Commercial
- Recreational

Architectural Styles from the Period of Significance

- Italianate
- Classical Revival
- Italian Renaissance
- Craftsman
- Mid-Century Modern
- Commercial Styles:
- Queen Anne
- Classic Box
- Mission
- Minimal Traditional
- Googie/Exaggerated Modern
- One-Part Commercial Block
- Stick/Eastlake
- Tudor
- Spanish Eclectic
- Art Deco
- Vernacular
- Two-Part Commercial Block
- Folk Victorian
- Beaux Arts
- Mediterranean Revival
- Streamline Moderne
- Colonial Revival
- French Eclectic
- Prairie
- Late Moderne

Character-Defining Features

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historically single-family residences, some converted into multi-family units • Small commercial businesses, typically located on street corners • Parking and auxiliary uses located along alleys
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic and institutional buildings—such as churches, schools, and community organizations—concentrated around community “gathering place” of Southside Park • Buildings generally one-to-three stories tall • Some houses with Delta-style high basements and raised first story • Predominately cuboid or horizontal massing; although older houses often exhibit vertical massing • Larger houses generally located on lettered streets, with smaller houses more typically located on numbered streets, especially toward the district’s southern boundary near U.S. Route 50 • Many houses in the Classic Box form located along the route of a former street car line on T Street
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominately wood siding, typically three-lap, channel rustic, or shingle siding of varying shapes, especially on upper stories and gabled ends • Occasional use of brick, stucco, or a combination of the two • Stucco cladding as a common alteration, often combined with clay or cement tile roofs
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front-facing gabled, hipped, or jerkinhead roofs, often with centrally-placed hipped or shed dormers • Brick and clinker brick chimneys
Entries & Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta-style configuration with staircases leading to primary entrances above a high basement • Paneled wood doors, often with a transom above, or integrated glazing • Wood or terrazzo stairs
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wood-frame double-hung windows • Front- and side-facing bay windows
Porches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent full, half, or central porches with Classical, square tapered, paired, or turned columns accessed by stairs

Element	Character of Historic District
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen Anne, Eastlake, and Classical Revival details, including incised brackets; spindlework; turned or Tuscan columns, patterned shingles, and rounded bay windows • Craftsman details, including exposed rafter and purlin tails, wood braces, tapered square columns, and low shed dormers
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small lawns or gardens in front of many houses
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally uniform setback from street to property line of approximately 16 feet from sidewalks to primary building facades with an eight-foot-wide sidewalk and eight-foot-wide grass parking strip on lettered streets, and a slightly narrower measurements on numbered streets • Rows of mature, deciduous street trees—most commonly sycamore, elm, walnut, and cork trees and some rows of evenly spaced palms—planted in a parking strip along the street curb • Evidence of hitching posts in the form of L-shaped concrete strips next to street curbs in front of some turn-of-the-century houses • Narrow driveways leading to garages that are built into the first story of a house, attached to the side of a house, or constructed as free-standing structures on the alley.

Boundaries & Location

The following map shows the boundaries and location of the South Side 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.

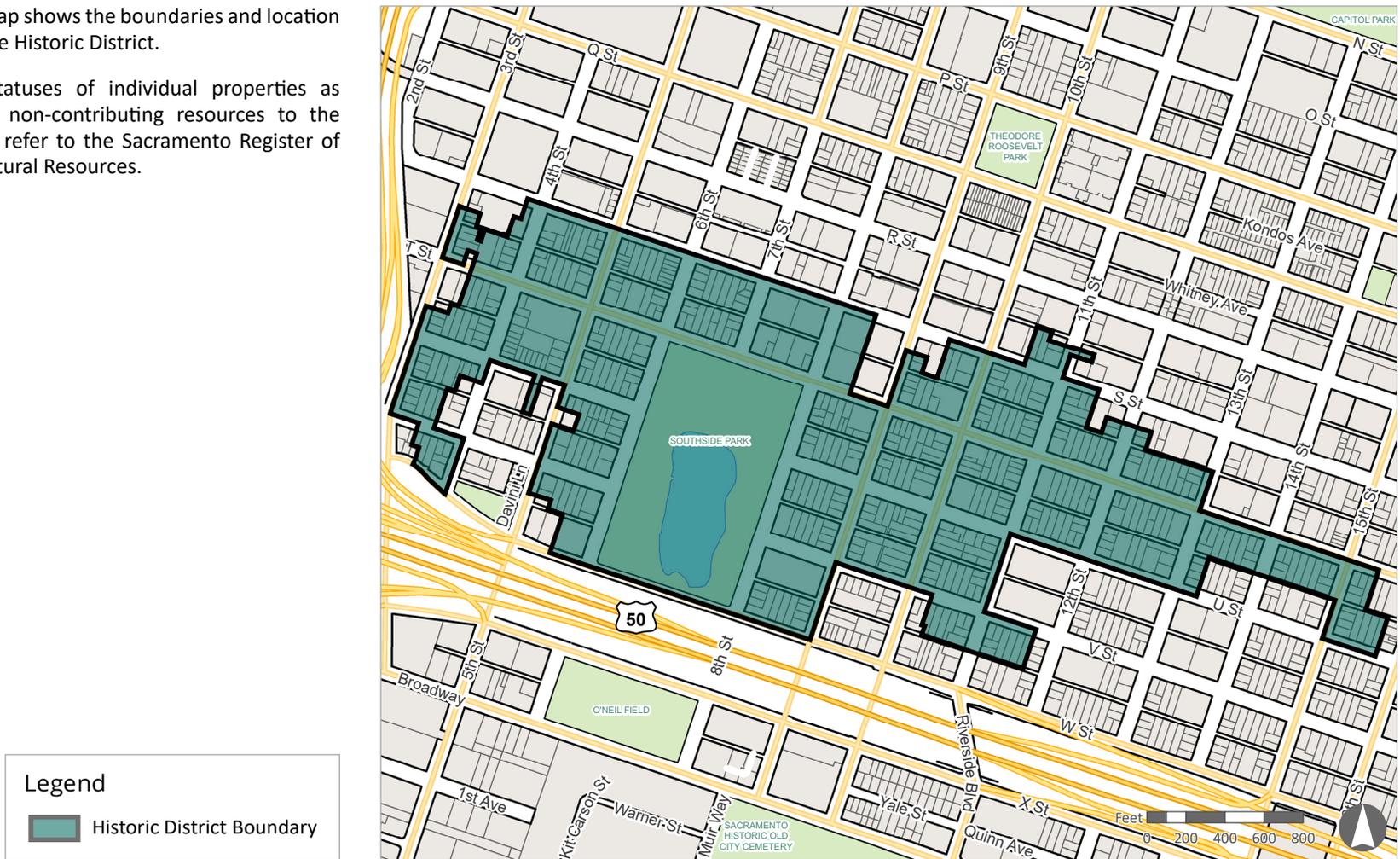


Figure 311. Map of the South Side Historic District. Source: City of Sacramento and Page & Turnbull, 2019.

District-Specific Standards & Criteria

Design Principle

Preserve and maintain the existing historic character of the South Side Historic District as one of Sacramento's most architecturally and ethnically diverse neighborhoods while encouraging compatible new development that enhances this character and improves the historic district's connection to surrounding neighborhoods.

Rationale

The South Side Historic District is one of Sacramento's largest and most ethnically and architecturally diverse historic districts, consisting of a collection of historic residential, commercial, civic, and institutional buildings, dating from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. The neighborhood is somewhat cut off from other parts of the city by Highway 50 to the south and larger scale commercial development and parking lots that spill over from the R Street corridor to the north. South Side retains a broad feeling of visual coherence, in spite of its wide range of architectural styles and building types, due to a similar use of materials and landscaping and the gradual shift in building scale, massing, and architectural styles as the historic district progresses from west to east.

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 South Side Historic District.

1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

- 1.1 Preserve, maintain, and continue to encourage compatible re-use of the contributing historic civic, institutional, and commercial buildings.
- 1.2 Maintain, preserve, and, where necessary, repair and restore historic elements associated with the Delta style of residential architecture, especially historic staircases facing the street, porches, bay windows, and doors.



Figure 312. Wood and brick are common historic materials on contributing buildings throughout South Side.

2. Additions & Accessory Structures for Contributing Resources

- 2.1 Avoid additions that make contributing buildings constructed in horizontally massed or box-like architectural styles, such as Craftsman or Classic Box, more vertical or that make vertically massed Victorian-era buildings more horizontal.
- 2.2 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.

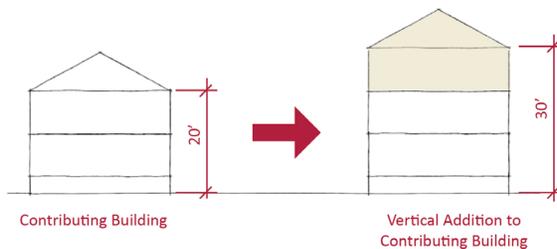


Figure 313. Additions should not cause a building's height to exceed 150% of its historic height.

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
 - Larger buildings with box-like massing are generally appropriate on lettered streets, particularly along T Street, while smaller buildings with horizontal massing are generally appropriate on lettered streets, particularly on the south edge of the historic district.
 - Pay special attention to compatibility of height and massing when locating new construction adjacent to a row of contributing buildings that exhibit the same height and mass.
- 3.2 The height of new buildings should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.

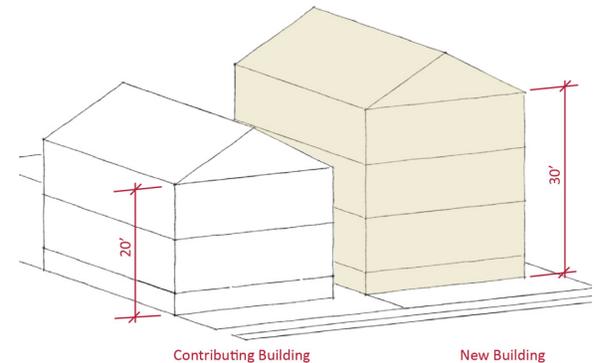


Figure 314. The height of new buildings should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.



Figure 315. Rows of houses of similar height and scale create distinctive, visually cohesive groupings on some blocks.

- 3.3 Maintain the visibility of varying building profiles, shapes and forms in the historic district.
- Avoid designs that result in rows of identical new buildings.
- 3.4 Focus commercial and mixed-use development to street corners and along 10th Street.
- Where commercial properties are sited directly adjacent to residential properties, provide a side setback and articulate side facades to avoid solid party walls facing residential properties.
 - Consider drawing design inspiration from contributing commercial buildings in the historic district.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 Consider providing covered front porches or entries at new infill development to preserve the historic district's visual pattern of porches.



Figure 316. Contributing commercial buildings in the historic district are often located at street corners and may provide a useful context for new commercial infill.



Figure 317. Uniform setbacks add to the visual cohesiveness of the architecturally varied historic district.

4. Site Features, Streetscape, & Landscaping

- 4.1 Preserve, maintain, and, where necessary, repair and restore historic plantings and landscaping features in Southside Park, such as the bandstand and lake.
- 4.2 If it becomes necessary to replace a mature street tree, replace it with the same species of tree or a compatible species that will grow to a similar height, size, and form.
- 4.3 Where street trees consist of a row of trees of the same species, such as palms, replace removed or diseased trees with the same species or a compatible species at regular intervals in order to maintain the historic tree planting pattern.
- 4.4 Remove chain link fences and barbed wire where possible.



Figure 318. The lake in Southside Park is a historic landscaping feature of the park.

- Replace chain link fences with fences that are of a compatible material and height to historic or compatible new fences at contributing properties in the historic district.

5. Alley Infill

- 5.1 The height of alley infill should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.
- 5.1 Draw inspiration for the design of secondary dwelling units on alleys from historic examples of residential buildings located on alleys within the historic district.



Figure 319. Contributing buildings along alleys in the district provide a historic example for development along alleys.