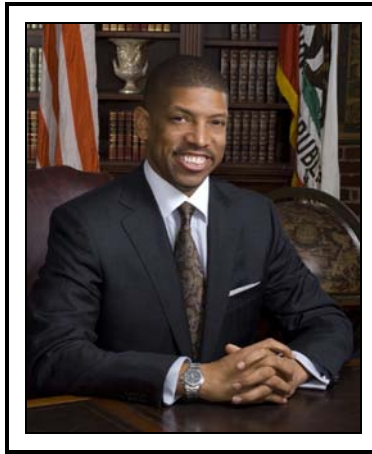


Sacramento Central City Urban Design Guidelines



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Letter from the Mayor

June 17, 2009

Dear Friends,

Sacramento is poised for exciting times. Our city is embracing several opportunities that will transform Sacramento into a world-class destination city. Some of these opportunities include the Railyards project, re-visioning of the River District, Docks project, and revitalization of our downtown.

It is my hope to create a Sacramento that boldly declares its desire to be the most livable city in the nation. To do so, the city will need a clear framework to guide development in both the public and private sectors. Along with the 2030 General Plan, the Central City Urban Design Guidelines are another significant step toward making Sacramento a world-class destination city.

As Mayor I am pleased to support these guidelines and the vision they promote for our great city.

Sincerely,


Kevin Johnson
MAYOR



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Acknowledgements

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Special Thanks to the following City of Sacramento Departments:

Ray Kerridge, City Manager
Office of the City Manager
Office of the City Attorney
Community Development
Economic Development
Fire
Parks & Recreation
Police
Transportation
Utilities
Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency

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Central City Urban Design Guidelines

Contents

Acknowledgements

Section 1 Introduction to Central City Urban Design Guidelines

Section 2 Central City Framework

Section 3 Central Core Design Guidelines

Section 4 Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Section 5 Railyards Design Guidelines

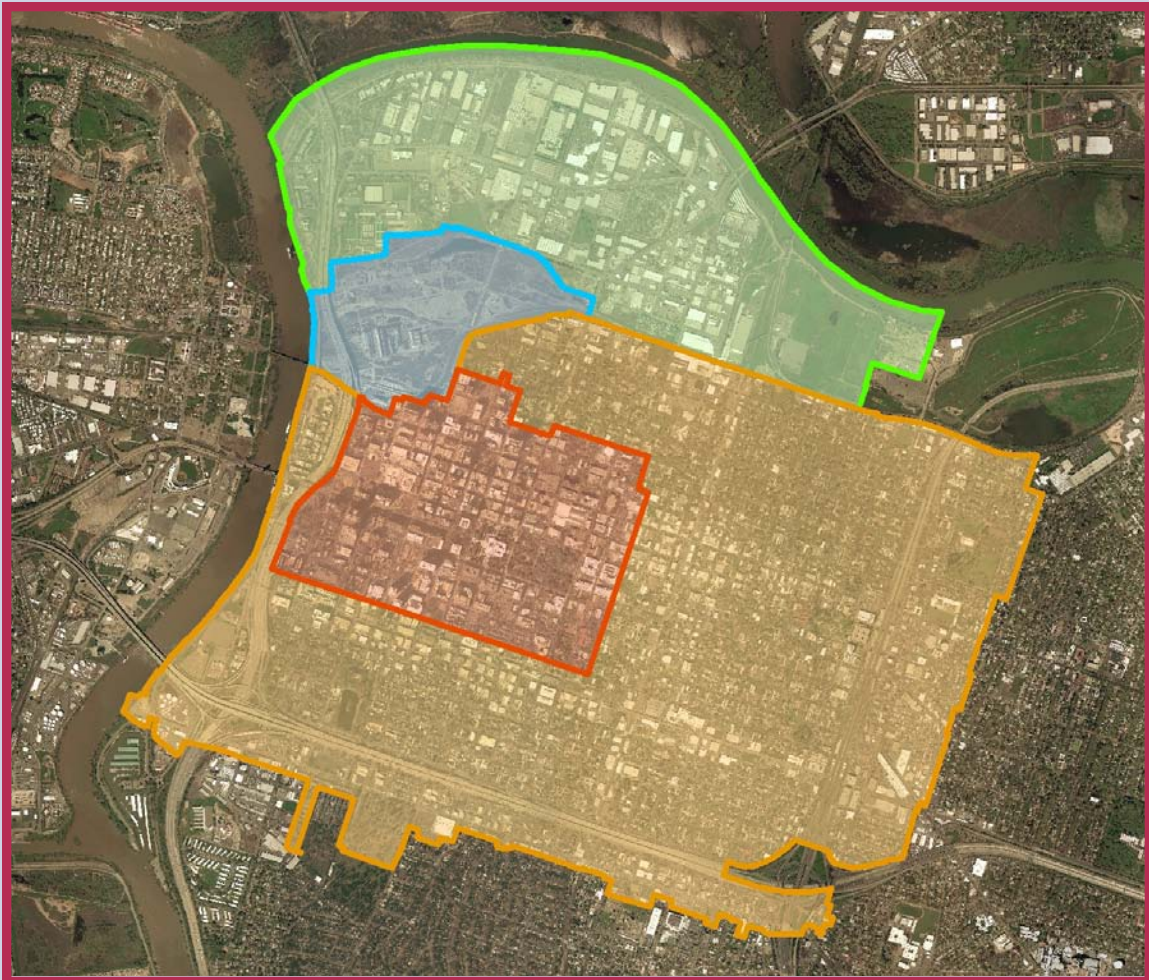
Section 6 River District Design Guidelines

Addenda

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SECTION 1

Central City Urban Design Guidelines Introduction



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Section 1

Introduction to

Central City Urban Design

Guidelines

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1.1-1
A. The Intent	1.1-3
B. Why Urban Design is Important to a Livable Sacramento.....	1.1-3
C. Planning Process	1.1-4
D. Guidelines Document Organization and Use	1.1-5
1. Guidelines Organization and Structure	1.1-5
2. Use of the Guidelines.....	1.1-6
3. Authority for Review	1.1-6
4. Applicability of Historic Preservation Standards and Urban Design	
Guidelines	1.1-6

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Central City Urban Design Guidelines is a compilation of design guidelines for the districts and neighborhoods that comprise the 4,300-acre Central City Community Plan Area. Together, these guidelines convey the City's expectations for design excellence in the Central City—from the traditional urban neighborhoods surrounding the downtown Central Core, to the redevelopment areas of the former Southern Pacific Railyards and the northern River District.

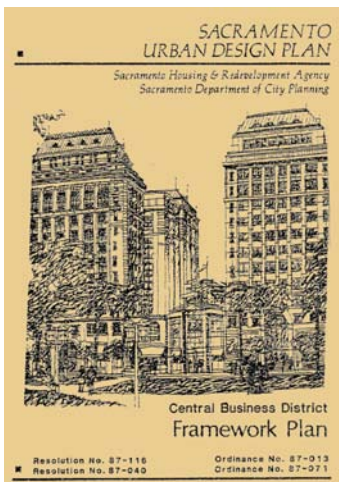
Sacramento continues to be highly rated in indexes that rank cities according to their desirability and livability, and seeks to maintain this distinction. As Sacramento continues to grow and mature as a city, it becomes increasingly clear the benefit that responsive and stimulating design can have on the City's cultural, economic, and environmental health, and the community's quality of life. Great cities provide beautiful buildings, attractive public space, and a variety of cultural and recreational opportunities that make them attractive places to live as well as distinctive destinations. Throughout the world, cities that value design and demand excellence of their design professionals, not only raise the quality of life for those who live, work and visit there, but also are more competitive in attracting businesses and institutions and promoting tourism.

Since the late 1990s, the districts and neighborhoods of the Central City have enjoyed a remarkable renaissance that has significantly enhanced the desirability of the Central City as a place to live and work. Two documents served as

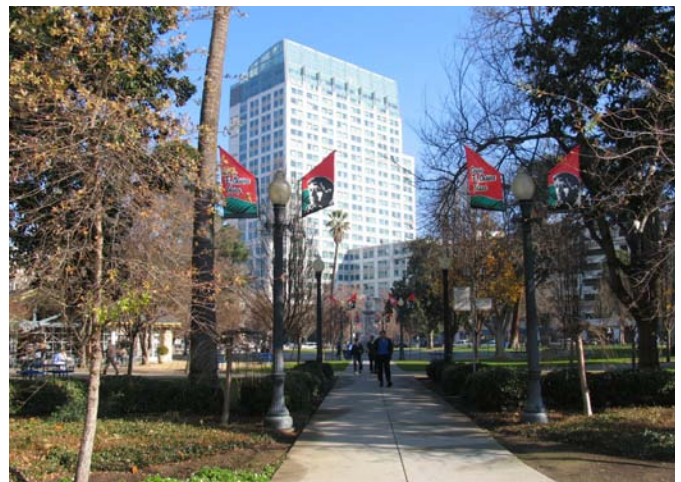
the foundation for this change: The Sacramento Central Business District Urban Design Plan (1987) and the Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines (1999). Together these documents have guided the architectural and urban design in more than two-thirds of the Central City area.

The 1987 Sacramento Central Business District Urban Design Plan (Urban Design Plan) established a number of goals for enhancing the downtown, many of which have been achieved and some which have not. The policies and recommendations in the 1987 Plan served as catalysts for a renaissance that has extended beyond the CBD to areas of Midtown, just east of the Downtown and along commercial corridors. Within the CBD, many of Plan's goals were achieved, including the refurbishment of Cesar Chavez Plaza, the rehabilitation and renewed landscaping of Memorial Auditorium, and the addition of numerous new civic buildings along I Street, which the Plan defined as Sacramento's Civic Street, including the City Hall expansion, the California EPA headquarters, and the Federal Courthouse.

The Urban Design Plan, however, did not anticipate the desire for residential living within the Central Business District that emerged in the first years of the new millennium. This new interest in downtown living created the need to update the City's design guidelines to address the prospect of new high-rise residential buildings in the CBD and the need to provide high quality residential environments in the context Sacramento's historic commercial center.



Previous Sacramento Central Business District Urban Design Plan (1987)



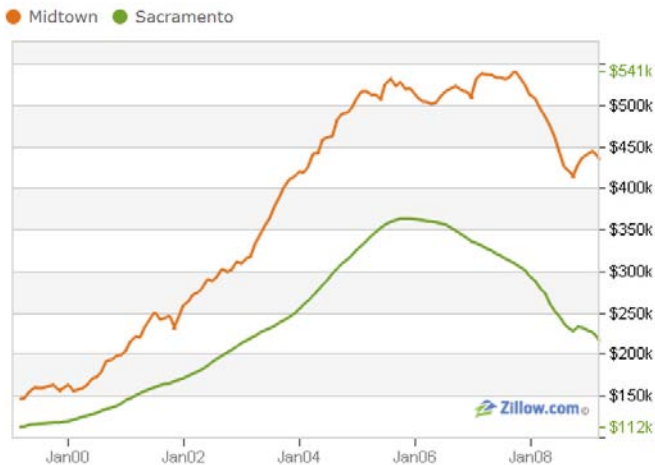
Renovated Cesar Chavez Plaza and the Cal/EPA building.

The Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines, which addresses the historic residential neighborhoods surrounding the CBD, sets forth goals to respect and integrate the variety of architectural styles that occur within these neighborhoods in order to preserve “the aesthetic variety of the Central City”. One of its key principles is to promote walkability and the interaction of people with buildings and preservation of neighborhood streets that respect the scale, massing, pattern and details of the neighborhood context. To this end, Sacramento’s Central City neighborhoods have flourished and remain some of the City’s most desirable neighborhoods. As testament to this, despite the economic downturn and housing crisis that began in 2008, the neighborhoods of the Central City retained the highest real estate values in the city.

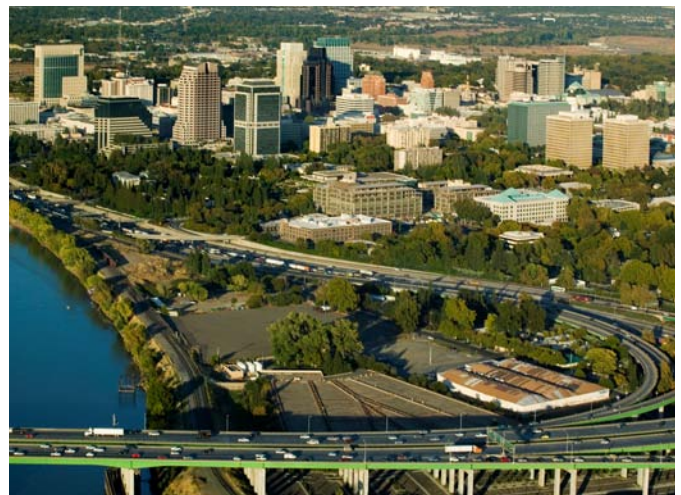
The Central City is now poised to take its success to a new level with several new opportunity areas now available for redevelopment. As of 2009, over 1,400 acres outside of the downtown core are planned for high density urban development, including the Railyards, Township 9 in the River District and the Docks Area along the Sacramento River. Each of these major development areas holds promise to create vibrant new mixed use neighborhoods and significant new public open space. Each will bring access and focus back to Sacramento’s riverfronts, add parkland and public plazas, and provide for future cross-river linkages that will better connect the Central City with the neighboring communities north and west.

The determination and cooperation of Central City residents and business leaders is reflected in the shared aspiration to make the Central City a world-renowned, 21st Century urban center. A vocal and persuasive citizenry representing a range of interests has consistently advocated for quality design that produces attractive human-scale and pedestrian-focused urban spaces; inspiring architecture that reflects Sacramento’s heritage while embracing innovative design that respects its context; and a sustainable built environment that conserves our limited resources.

As Sacramento has grown and matured as an urban center, the community’s awareness of urban design issues and demand for quality buildings and public spaces has continued to grow. This growing civic confidence is founded both in local experience and the influx of a diverse new population who bring their experiences and expectations from other cities and cultures. Recognizing that the confidence and sophistication of the Sacramento community will continue to grow with their city, the Central City Urban Design Guidelines (CCUDG) will continue to evolve to keep abreast of the community’s design expectations. This is particularly true as it relates to the emerging field of sustainable, “green” design and carbon reduction strategies. With the population in the Central City projected to triple by 2030, the 2030 General Plan states that the CCUDG will be reviewed and updated every five years to ensure that the community dialogue for design excellence continues to be at the forefront in the future development of the Central City.



Real Estate Value Comparison of Midtown with Sacramento Region



View of downtown Sacramento from above the Capital City Freeway and I-5 interchange.

A. The Intent

The Central City Urban Design Guidelines brings together all of the design guidelines applicable to development within the Central City Community Plan area¹. The objective of the Guidelines is to direct future growth in a manner that builds upon the existing context, the City's market strengths, cultural and social amenities, and historical assets while acknowledging and enhancing the Central City's potential for dynamic and transformative growth and maturation as a leading urban center.

The intent is to ensure that all development in the Central City contributes to making downtown Sacramento a unique and special place that includes a residential component integrated into the commercial center. To advance the vision set forth in the 2030 General Plan to be "the most livable City in America," the new Central Core Design Guidelines (Section 3) build on its predecessor, the 1987 Sacramento Central Business District Urban Design Plan, to ensure that proposed higher density development also provides the qualities and amenities that will create an attractive, livable downtown with a lively mix of uses, walkable streets, an open and interesting skyline, and a high level of design expression.

¹ Existing guidelines cover all of the Central City Community Plan area except for limited areas that are designated for Planned Unit Development (PUD).

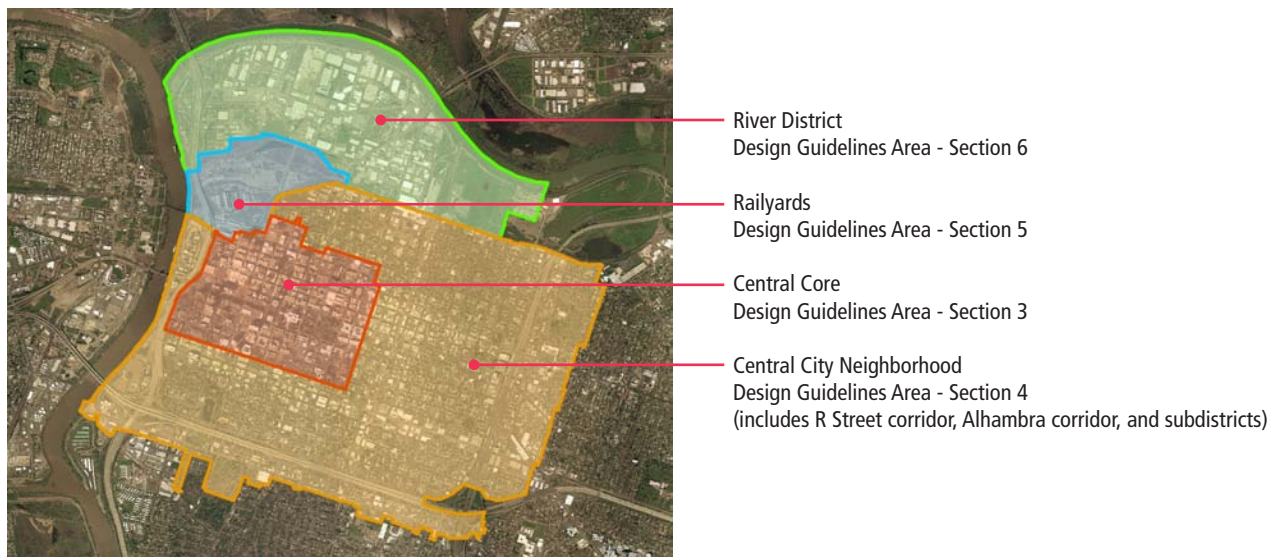
B. Why Urban Design is Important to a Livable Sacramento

"First life, then spaces, then buildings – the other way around never works."

Jan Gehl, Professor of Urban Design School of Architecture, Copenhagen, Denmark

Creating a livable city is not just about great architecture. The discipline of 'urban design' strives to address the human desire for sociability by creating places for social interaction to occur. In this sense, urban design is the art of 'place-making', the creation of three-dimensional environments that invite people to come together: to walk pleasant streets scaled for people, not just vehicles; to gather in parks for their workday lunches or to enjoy a weekend festival; to feel safe and comfortable in their outdoor environment; and to have that chance encounter with a friend or colleague while on a leisurely walk or dining at an outdoor café. Successful urban design encourages people to be both spectators and participants in the life of the city, where people are drawn to watch others and take pleasure in the impromptu 'theater' that occurs in well-designed public spaces.

Typically, buildings are the elements that define our public spaces. Whether the space is a large public plaza or a



common sidewalk, the design of the building influences how the space will be used and experienced. The orientation and transparency of adjoining building facades influences the level and type of activity in adjoining open spaces and the public's engagement with the building—whether they will be repelled by a harsh and relentless façade, or will be drawn to the building for its visual interest and expression of internal function and life within. The quality of building materials is more than just an expression of style and must be carefully and intentionally considered. The materials used to wrap a building communicate the value attributed to qualities such as permanence, stability, and civic pride. Similarly, the height and bulk of a tall building will give unique expression to the skyline, but can also dictate patterns of use for public spaces within the arc of their shadow. Shadows from tall buildings can stretch blocks beyond their own sites. While this can have positive benefits in Sacramento's hot summer months, solar access is a real amenity for public spaces during the balance of the year.

The great cities of the world each have their notable and distinguished buildings that capture the imagination and serve as signatures for their city. However, while the design of individual buildings is important, cities are generally remembered and cherished for the quality and character of their public spaces—the streets, plazas, and parks where people experience the city, rather than a few isolated landmark buildings. People's experience and memories of

a city tend to be shaped by qualities that directly affected their experience: Did they feel safe walking the city streets? Was it clear and convenient how to move about in the city? Were there comfortable and attractive places to sit and take in the surroundings? Was it easy to use transit and explore the city without a private vehicle? Were there a lot of people out and about enjoying themselves? Were there distinctive features such as fountains, public art, or landscape features that were attractive and memorable?

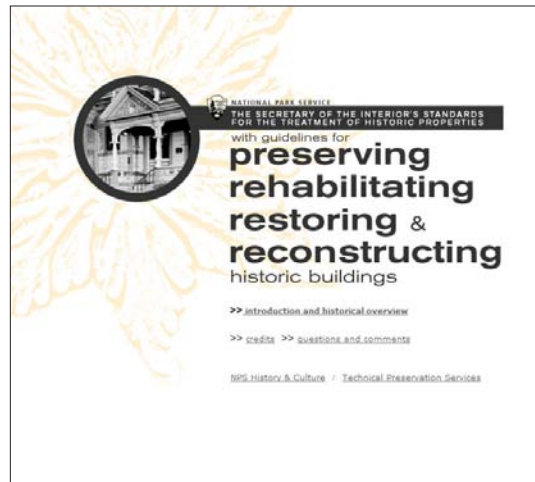
All of these questions go directly to the quality of a city's urban design, and address essential qualities of place that are important to residents, visitors, and businesses alike. The Central City Urban Design Guidelines seek to inform designers, reviewers, and decision makers about the elements of good design and the importance of creating environments for people as well as great architecture in making Sacramento a great livable city.

C. Planning Process

These Central City Urban Design Guidelines evolved from the process to update the 1987 Sacramento CBD Urban Design Plan and Guidelines. Originally intended to address only the Central Business District, the update process made evident the need for a comprehensive urban design framework and design guidance for the entire Central City. Over a 12-month period, the City's Development Services Department worked with a 14-member Citizens Advisory Committee,



Among Sacramento's historic structures is the Railroad Station, completed in 1925 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.



Sacramento's adopted Preservation Standards include the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties".

representatives from other City departments, community representatives, and a consultant design team to refine and update the concepts and guidelines in the 1987 document to address current and projected urban design challenges facing the Central City in light of increasing demand for residential development, higher densities, and the pending redevelopment of major portions of the Central City.

The design concepts, principles, rationales, and guidelines contained herein were created through a three step process. The first step was an analysis of the existing physical and market context, including evaluation of the type and level of development in the planning pipeline, to understand the implications for the Central City's form and character. This analysis also included identification of potential opportunity sites for redevelopment and projections of potential development capacity in the context of the 2030 General Plan to focus significant additional residential development in the Central City. The next step was exploring alternative development scenarios for accommodating such growth. The third, and final, step was the formulation of design guidelines that would accommodate increased densities, taller buildings, and increased residential population while preserving and enhancing the qualities that contribute to a vibrant, economically robust, and pedestrian- and transit-friendly downtown.

Paralleling these steps were a series of citizen advisory committee meetings, a public workshop, an AIA/ULI-sponsored peer review session, and a series of discussions with public and private downtown interest groups, developers, political representatives, and City and Redevelopment agency staff. The resulting Central City Urban Design Guidelines reflect extensive input from City Commissioners, a Citizen Advisory Committee, the City Council, as well as community and focus groups, business, professional and regulatory organizations, and City departments.

D. Guidelines Document Organization and Use

1. Guidelines Organization and Structure

The Central City Urban Design Guidelines is a compilation of design guidelines for the districts and neighborhoods



Public workshop held within the entrance hall of Sacramento's New City Hall

that comprise the 4,300-acre Central City Community Plan Area. The Central City Urban Design Guidelines is intended to guide urban design throughout the entire Central City. It sets forth broad urban design concepts to guide future planning and development throughout the Central City, and then more specific principles and related design guidelines to inform the design review and approval of individual projects.

Section 1 of the Central City Urban Design Guidelines introduces the document's purpose and function. Section 2 describes the Central City's physical and regulatory context and the broad vision and urban design concepts that provide the underlying framework for the design guidelines. Section 2 is followed by individual sections for each of the Central City Design Review districts. Initially, the document includes sections for the following Design Review districts:

- Section 3: Central Core (2009)
- Section 4: Central City Neighborhoods (1999)
- Section 5: Railyards (2007)
- Section 6: River District (2010).

The intent is eventually to have the Central City Design Guidelines be the sole design reference for the Central City with sections for all Central City neighborhoods and sub-districts, with the exception of properties listed in the Sacramento Register of Historic & Cultural Resources (see Section 4 below). Sections for sub-districts such as the Docks Area and Sutter's Landing will be incorporated into the document as guidelines for these areas are adopted.

2. Use of the Guidelines

The Central City Urban Design Guidelines generally provides guidance in three areas: the urban design framework, the public realm, and the private realm. At the vision level, the document establishes a framework of urban design concepts intended to inform all decisions relating to the physical form and character of the entire Central City. This includes private development, but also is intended to inform City decisions related to issues such as transit, street improvements, parking standards, schools, public services, parks, and infrastructure. As such, it is intended that this volume will be referenced by decision-makers to evaluate future initiatives.

At the level of design guidelines, the public realm guidelines provide some guidance for private development, but the primary focus is to provide direction to City departments and decision-makers responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of improvements within City parks and public rights-of-way.

3. Authority For Review

The Central City Urban Design Guidelines provides direction to developers, property owners, City staff, City Commissions, and the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Commission. Used in concert with the City of Sacramento Zoning and Preservation Ordinances and applicable building codes, this document provides City staff, decision-makers, and private interests a common basis for the evaluation of design and development issues during the design review and approval process for individual private development proposals. In addition, all projects requiring building permits for exterior or site work will continue to require Design Review.

The guidelines in this document are intended to provide direction rather than prescriptive requirements. The City Commission or Director responsible for design review shall have the authority to waive individual guidelines for specific projects where it is found that such waiver will better achieve the design policy objectives than strict application of the guidelines. If a certain type of development project within the Central Core Design Review District is not referenced in the Central Core Design Guidelines, in that event the Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines shall apply.

4. Applicability of Historic Preservation Standards and Urban Design Guidelines

For properties listed in the National Register, California Register, or Sacramento Register of Historic Resources, either as individual Landmarks, or as properties within Historic Districts, projects on those parcels will be reviewed in accordance with adopted Historic Preservation Standards, including the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties". The City of Sacramento has also adopted two documents—"Listed Structures Plan (Residential and Non-Residential)" and "Preservation Area Plan"—which are being updated as part of the proposed "Preservation Development Standards" document (Note: as of 2001 "Listed Structures" are now referred to as "Landmarks" and "Preservation Areas" are referred to as "Historic Districts"). Additionally, in the Railyards, design guidelines have been developed specifically for the Central Shops Historic District, to be used in addition to the Secretary of the Interior's Rehabilitation Standards, and for the Transition Area around the Central Shops Historic District.

When a proposed project involving historic properties includes some element where the historic standards may be silent, these Central City Urban Design Guidelines will govern, along with the City Code, as they may relate to that element. When there may be a conflict between the historic standards and the Central City Urban Design Guidelines, the historic standards will govern.

Design review of proposed projects involving historic properties, whether Landmarks or Historic Districts, are conducted by the Preservation Commission, Preservation Director, or Preservation Staff, per Chapter 17.134 of the City Code. In addition, preservation development project review requires certain additional reviews, such as review of proposed window and door repairs/replacements and proposed fencing, even if Building Permits are not required.