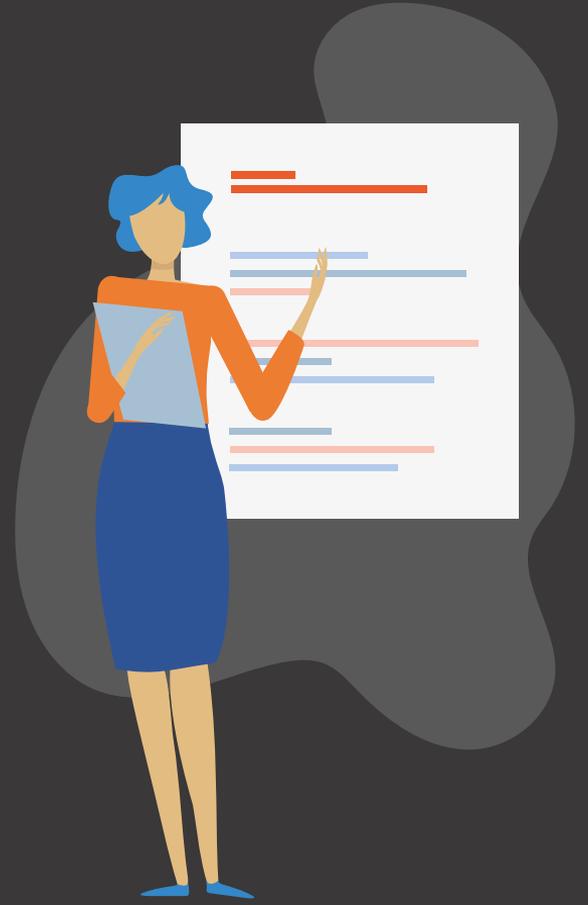


# sacramento historic districts

CPF Conference May 2025  
Kathleen Romano



# key learnings

1

## **districts define every structure**

designating a historical district does not require 100% owner buy-in. and includes ADUs

2

## **districts reduce applicant costs**

Form based guidelines reduce applications coming before HLC lowering applicant costs & providing HLC focus its work plan.

3

## **districts balance preservation**

CA State Permit Streamlining Act and recent ADU laws can be met while managing change of historic resources to meet SoIS.

# california preservation foundation 2020 award winner

“Based on extensive historic research and a comprehensive survey of each district, individual historic contexts, significance evaluations, periods of significance updates, lists of character-defining features, and an **inventory of contributing and non-contributing resources** were prepared. Using this information, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and public input, design standards common to all of Sacramento’s historic districts were developed. Additionally, **customized design standards for each individual district, were developed to ensure that the unique characteristics of each neighborhood will be preserved and enhanced.**

The Historic District Plans were unanimously approved by City Council in December 2019 with support from a broad cross-section of the community.”

- CPF Website<sup>1</sup>

# one plan does not fit all<sup>2</sup>



## unique plans

Each district has a Brief District Historic Context, Significance, Period of Significance



## unique areas

Each district has a Historic District Physical Description and Boundaries



## unique resources

Each district has Contributing and **Non-Contributing** Resources



## unique preservation

Each district has Preservation and Infill Design Standards

# districts define everything



## contexts

Document historic significance using *multiple & simple approaches*



## boundaries

Define districts by significance *not just current inventory*



## ordinances

Remove antiquated terminology, identifying all contributing & *non-contributing resources*



## guidelines

Publish historic preservation guidelines for each City Design Guideline topic & *form based ADU rules.*

### Design Guidelines<sup>3</sup>

3.11 Design new buildings with an understanding of the historic context, character-defining features, and historic significance of the historic district.

- Refer to examples of historic resources that strongly contribute to the historic district, rather than non-contributors or inappropriately altered structures.
- Infill on non-contributing properties, including vacant lots, should take design inspiration from surrounding contributing properties.

3.12 Develop the scale, proportions, and volumes of new buildings to be compatible with those of adjacent contributing properties.

- New buildings that are significantly larger than contributing buildings on the same block are discouraged.

3.13 When designing new buildings, take into consideration the height range of existing contributing resources in the district (including roof plate and roof line).<sup>1</sup>

- Pay special attention to the heights of contributing resources on the block face or where the infill project is located.

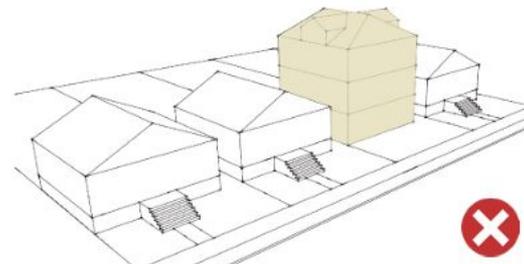


Figure 31. The height and massing of the new building does not respect those of the surrounding contributing buildings.



Figure 32. The height, massing, scale, and form of this new house is compatible with the historic houses on either side.

<sup>1</sup> City code section 17.180.030 defines the height of a building as "the vertical dimension measured from the average elevation of the finished lot grade at the front of the building to the plate line, where the roof meets the wall."

## Character-Defining Features<sup>4</sup>

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically single-family residences, some converted into multi-family units</li> <li>Interspersed churches and apartment buildings dating from the period of significance</li> <li>Parking and auxiliary uses located along alleys</li> </ul>
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varying building heights ranging from one- to four-stories tall with Delta-style high basements and raised first story</li> <li>Horizontal or square massing of homes facing lettered streets, particularly Capitol Avenue</li> <li>Smaller homes located on numbered streets</li> </ul>
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominately wood siding, typically wide and narrow channel rustic, wood lap, and shingles of varying shapes; brick; and stucco</li> <li>Brick or clinker brick foundations, column bases, and chimneys</li> </ul>
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prominent front-facing gabled or hipped roofs, often with a centrally placed dormer</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>Wood, brick, or terrazzo steps</li> <li>Paneled wood doors, often with a transom above, or integrated glazing</li> </ul>
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wood-frame double-hung, casement, paired, ribbon, cottage, and leaded glass windows</li> <li>Single- and multi-story bay windows in semi-hexagonal, squared, and rounded forms</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>Typical ornamentation for the various architectural styles listed in the section above</li> <li>A wide selection of column types, including squared, tapered, turned, Egyptian, and Tuscan</li> <li>Classical Revival details, including fluted pilasters, scrolls, dentils, and garlands</li> </ul>
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wrought iron fences with brick piers or low brick retaining walls around small front lawns or gardens</li> <li>Brick patios with decorative bond patterns</li> </ul>
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniform setback for single-family houses, tending to be widest on Capitol Avenue</li> <li>Narrower setback on numbered streets</li> <li>Rows of mature, evenly spaced, deciduous street trees—most often elms and sycamores interspersed with rows of palms—planted in a parking strip</li> <li>Iron hitching posts with horseheads and evidence of removed hitching posts in the form of L-shaped concrete strips next to street curbs</li> <li>Some concrete upping blocks engraved with family names</li> <li>Varying sidewalk widths to accommodate street trees</li> </ul>

# References

1. CPF Awards: <https://californiapreservation.org/awards/sac-hdp/>
2. Historic District Plans proposal deliverables:  
[https://sacramento.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view\\_id=30&clip\\_id=4213&meta\\_id=527182](https://sacramento.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=30&clip_id=4213&meta_id=527182)
3. Standards and Criteria for All Historic Districts:  
<https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/content/dam/portal/cdd/Planning/Urban-Design/Preservation/Adopted-Historic-District-Plans/Design-Standards-for-All-Districts.pdf>
4. Capitol Mansions Historic District Plan:  
<https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/content/dam/portal/cdd/Planning/Urban-Design/Preservation/Adopted-Historic-District-Plans/Capitol-Mansions-HDP.pdf>