

**SAN FRANCISCO
PRESERVATION BULLETIN NO. 10**

**HISTORIC AND CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
IN SAN FRANCISCO**

HISTORIC DISTRICTS -- INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty-five years, the City and County of San Francisco has designated eleven historic districts and six conservation districts and has recognized approximately 30 districts included in the California Register of Historical Resources, the National Register of Historic Places, or named as National Historic Landmark districts. These districts encompass nationally significant areas such as Civic Center and the Presidio National Park; the City's first commercial center in Jackson Square; warehouse districts such as the Northeast Waterfront and the South End; and residential areas such as Telegraph Hill, Liberty Hill, Alamo Square, Bush Street-Cottage Row and Webster Street.

In general, an historic district is a collection of resources (buildings, structures, sites or objects) that are historically, architecturally and/or culturally significant. As an ensemble, resources in an historic district are worthy of protection because of what they collectively tell us about the past.

Often, a limited number of architectural styles and types are represented because an historic district is typically developed around a central *theme* or *period of significance*. For instance, the theme for a proposed historic district might be "Late 19th century Victorian housing, designed in the Queen Anne style." Period of significance refers to the span of time during which significant events and activities occurred within the historic district. Events and associations with historic properties are finite; most resources within an historic district have a clearly definable period of significance.

A high percentage of buildings located within districts contribute to the understanding of a neighborhood's or area's evolution and development through *integrity*. Integrity is the authenticity of physical characteristics from which resources obtain their significance. Integrity is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. When properties retain integrity, they are able to convey their association with events, people, and designs from the past. When resources lack integrity, they are deemed incompatible or non-contributory. In general, only a small percentage of resources located within an historic district are deemed incompatible or non-contributory. In an historic district representative of 19th century architecture, a newly constructed building would be deemed non-contributory, as would a resource that no longer conveyed a sufficient level of integrity.

ESTABLISHING AN HISTORIC DISTRICT

When considering the creation of an historic district, important local and nationally recognized historic preservation criteria should be considered. Locally, the San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (Landmarks Board), an advisory

board to the Planning Commission,

has developed priorities for the selection of potential San Francisco landmarks and historic districts. They are:

- Does the proposed historic district directly address and engage the cultural and social history of San Francisco?
- Does the proposed historic district characterize a neighborhood or area presently underrepresented in the City's Landmarks and Historic Districts program?
- Would the proposed historic district involve communities of people, such as ethnic communities, communities of interest, or cultural communities?
- Does the proposed historic district include public spaces and common grounds?
- Does the proposed historic district include architecturally significant buildings?

At the national level, the National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. National Register criteria are:

Criterion A: That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

Criterion B: That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

Criterion C: That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

Criterion D: That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Both the local preservation priorities and the National Register criteria are utilized when reviewing requests for local landmark or historic district designation.

HISTORIC DISTRICT CLASSIFICATIONS

All buildings within historic districts are categorized as to whether they contribute to the character of the district. Historically, San Francisco has rated buildings in districts in one of three ways:

Contributory (The term "Compatible" was used in historic district designations made

prior to 1986). A classification applied to a site, structure or object within an historic district signifying that it generally shares, along with most of the other sites, structures or objects in the historic district, the qualities that give the historic district cultural, historic, architectural or archaeological significance as embodied by the criteria for designating the historic district. These resources are of the highest importance in maintaining the character of the historic district. Typically, contributory resources have been modified very little over time and possess a high degree of integrity.

Contributory Altered (The term “Potentially Compatible” was used in historic district designations made prior to 1986). A classification applied to a building, site, structure or object within an historic district signifying that it generally retains the qualities that give the district cultural, historic, architectural or archaeological significance, but its integrity has been compromised by inappropriate alterations. Appropriate restoration of such resources may result in amending its classification from Contributory Altered to Contributory.

Noncontributory (The term “Incompatible” was used in historic district designations made prior to 1986). A classification applied to a site, structure or object within an historic district indicating that it is not representative of the qualities that give the historic district cultural, historic, architectural or archaeological significance as embodied by the criteria for designating the historic district. Buildings constructed after the district’s period of significance, or dating from the district’s period of significance but significantly altered and possessing no integrity, shall qualify for this rating.

A complete listing of San Francisco’s historic districts found in Article 10 of the Planning Code can be found as **Attachment A** of this document.

PROTECTION OF RESOURCES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The designation of buildings within historic districts affords two forms of protection. The first form of protection is that any exterior alteration proposed for a building within an historic district requires Certificate of Appropriateness review and approval by the Landmarks Board and in some cases, by the Planning Commission. Secondly, an application for a demolition permit to a cultural resource located within an historic district can be held for six months by the Planning Commission and three months by the Board of Supervisors in order to explore feasible and prudent alternatives to demolition. *For more information, see Preservation Bulletin #4, Certificate of Appropriateness Procedures.* Demolition of cultural resources located within historic districts also requires local review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). *For more information, see Preservation Bulletin No. 16, CEQA and Historical Resources.*

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

The standards for review of building permits for cultural resources located within historic districts and conservation districts are listed in Articles 10 and 11, respectively of the Planning Code. The Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are locally adopted by the Landmarks Board, and provide a framework to review preservation projects under Article 10. A modified version of the Standards are utilized to review alteration permits pursuant to Section 1111.5 of the Planning Code.

OTHER INFORMATION

For procedures on how to designate local historic districts, refer to *Preservation Bulletin No. 5, Landmark and Historic District Designation Procedures*, adopted by the Landmarks Board on December 16, 1998.

DOWNTOWN CONSERVATION DISTRICTS -- INTRODUCTION

At present, Conservation Districts in San Francisco are located exclusively in the city's downtown core area. Unlike traditional historic districts, which recognize historic and cultural significance, Conservation Districts seek to designate and protect buildings based on architectural quality and contribution to the environment. These downtown districts contain concentrations of buildings that together create geographic areas of unique quality and thus facilitate preservation of the quality and character of the area as a whole. For a listing of San Francisco's six Downtown Conservation Districts, see **Attachment B** of this document.

DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN AND ARTICLE 11 OF THE PLANNING CODE CLASSIFICATIONS OF BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The discussion on the ratings of Downtown Area Plan buildings below provides a framework for understanding how the **Conservation Districts** were developed under Article 11 of the Planning Code. Refer to the Downtown Area Plan of the General Plan and Article 11 of the Planning Code for additional information about the preservation of buildings and districts in the C-3 (Downtown) Districts.

In the mid-1970s, San Francisco Architectural Heritage undertook the completion of a survey of resources found in the City's downtown area. The findings of the downtown survey served as the genesis of the book *Splendid Survivors, San Francisco's Downtown Architectural Heritage*, which resulted in the creation of the City's Downtown Plan and Article 11 of the Planning Code.

One of the key components of the Downtown Plan is the requirement that **Significant Buildings** be preserved and the retention of **Contributory Buildings** is encouraged. The evaluation of the architectural, historical and environmental qualities of downtown buildings was undertaken in order to establish a rating system that classified downtown buildings on the basis of their overall importance. Buildings were evaluated individually and in relationship to other buildings.

Significant Buildings

The Downtown Plan rates cultural resources in three ways. The first classification is for **Significant Buildings**, which includes those buildings of the highest architectural and environmental importance: buildings whose demolition would constitute an irreplaceable loss of the quality and character of downtown. They include all buildings classified as Buildings of Individual Importance and rated as "excellent" in architectural design, or very good in both architectural design and relationship to the environment. These buildings are individually important.

Category I and II Buildings

Buildings -- referred to in the Downtown Area Plan as **Significant Buildings** -- are divided into **Category I and Category II buildings**; the difference being the extent of alterations allowed. **Category I buildings** are judged to be buildings of individual importance and rated excellent in architectural design or are rated very good in both architectural design and relationship to the environment. A one story addition is permitted on **Category I buildings**, but must not cover more than 75 percent of the building's roof area. **Category II buildings** meet the same standards as **Category I buildings**. However, because of their depth and relationship to other structures, additional stories could be added to the rear of the building without compromising the building's overall integrity.

Contributory Buildings

The Downtown Plan contains a second grouping of buildings that are known as **Contributory Buildings**, which seek to encourage, but not require, retention of other buildings contributing to the quality and character of the downtown. These buildings, which are contextually important, consist of two groups:

Category III Buildings

Category III (Contributory) buildings are buildings classified as Buildings of Individual Importance and rated "very good" in architectural quality. Located outside of conservation districts, these resources are rated "excellent" or "very good" in relationship to the environment.

Category IV Buildings

Category IV (Contributory) buildings are located within a designated conservation district. They consist of buildings classified as Buildings of Individual Importance and Buildings of Contextual Importance.

- Buildings of Individual Importance – are rated "very good" in architectural quality or rated "excellent" or "very good" in relationship to the environment.
- Buildings of Contextual Importance – are rated "very good" in architectural design, or "excellent" or "very good" in relationship to the environment.

While individually important buildings could be placed in any category, contextually important buildings qualify only for **Category IV** status.

Category V Buildings

Category V buildings comprise a third grouping of Downtown buildings. This classification includes all other buildings in the (C-3) Downtown District not otherwise designated. They are classified as **Category V-Unrated buildings**. **Category V** buildings were not designated with a preservation rating. The possible combinations of design and relationship to the environment ratings resulted in **Category V** determinations.

CHANGE OF DESIGNATION/DESIGNATION OF ADDITIONAL BUILDINGS

Buildings may be designated or their designation may be changed through a process identified in Section 1106 of Article 11 of the Planning Code. In general, the designation or change of designation of a building may be initiated by motion of the Board of Supervisors; by resolution of the Planning Commission or the Landmarks Board; by the verified application of the owner or authorized agent of the affected property; by the application of any organization or group which has historic preservation stated as one of its goals in its bylaws or articles of incorporation; or by the application of at least 50 registered voters of the City. Except in the case of initiation by governmental bodies, applications shall be filed with the Planning Department. For more information on this process, refer to Section 1106 of Article 11.

OTHER HISTORIC DISTRICTS

CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The California Register of Historical Resources is a comprehensive listing of California's historical resources, including those of local, state and national significance. The "significance" criteria for the California Register are similar to those used by National Register of Historic Places. The California Register includes:

- Resources formally determined eligible for, or listed in, the National Register of Historic Places;
- Individual historic resources and historic districts;
- Resources identified as significant in historic resource surveys that meet certain criteria;
- Resources and districts designated as city or county landmarks when the designation criteria are consistent with California Register criteria; and
- California Historic Landmarks number 770 and higher.

A number of California Register of Historical Resources-designated historic districts can be found in San Francisco. They are listed as **Attachment C** of this document.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES HISTORIC DISTRICTS

San Francisco also contains a number of historic districts that have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. These listings have occurred over time through the nominations by property owners, by the work of the California Office of Historic Preservation and through federal activities and undertakings pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. San Francisco, in its role as a Certified Local Government has reviewed, commented and recommended inclusion of historic districts in the National Register of Historic Places. They are listed as **Attachment D** of this document.

ATTACHMENT A -- ARTICLE 10 HISTORIC DISTRICTS

NAME DATE	LOCATION/APPENDIX	EFFECTIVE
Alamo Square	Area generally bound by Golden Gate Avenue to the north, Divisadero Street to the west, Webster Street to the east and Fell Street to the South. Appendix E	07/06/84
Blackstone Court	Area generally bound by Lombard Street to the north, Franklin Street to the east, Gough Street to the west and Greenwich Street to the south. Appendix H	11/19/87
Bush Street-Cottage Row	Area generally bound by Bush Street to the north, Webster Street to the east, Fillmore Street to the west and Sutter Street to the south. Appendix K	10/03/91
Civic Center	Area generally bound by Van Ness Avenue to the west, Market Street to the south, Golden Gate Avenue to the north, and Seventh Street to the east. Appendix J	01/15/96
Dogpatch	Area generally bound by Mariposa Street to the north, Tubbs Street to the south, 3 rd Street to the east, and Indiana Street to the west. Appendix L	2003
Jackson Square	Area generally bound by Broadway to the north, Sansome Street to the east, Washington Street to the south and Columbus Avenue to the west. Appendix B	08/09/72
Liberty Hill	Area generally bound by Twentieth Street to the north, Mission Street to the east, Dolores Street to the west and Twenty-Second Street to the south. Appendix F	10/25/85
Northeast Waterfront	Area generally bound by Greenwich Street to the north, the Embarcadero to the east, Montgomery Street to the west and Broadway to the south. Appendix D	04/08/83

NAME DATE	LOCATION/APPENDIX	EFFECTIVE
South End	Area generally bound by Stillman Street to the north, First Street to the east, Ritch Street to the west and King Street to the south. Appendix I	03/23/90
Telegraph Hill	Area generally bound by Greenwich Street to the north, Sansome Street to the east, Montgomery Street to the west and Green Street to the south. Appendix G	11/13/86
Webster Street	Area generally bound by Jackson Street to the north, Buchanan Street to the east, Fillmore Street to the west and Clay Street to the south. Appendix C	04/08/81

ATTACHMENT B -- ARTICLE 11, CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Article 11 of the Planning Code, adopted on September 17, 1985, designated six Downtown Conservation Districts. These Conservation Districts include the following areas:

NAME	LOCATION/APPENDIX
Commercial-Leidesdorff Conservation District	Area generally bound by Market Street to the north, Tehama Street to the south, Anthony Street to the east and Annie Street to the west. Appendix G
Front-California Conservation District	Area generally bound by Clay Street to the north, Sacramento Street to the south, Sansome Street to the east and Montgomery Street to the west. Appendix H
Kearny-Belden Conservation District	Area generally bound by Pine Street to the north, Bush Street to the south, Montgomery Street to the east and Kearny Street to the west. Appendix I
Kearny-Market- Mason Conservation District	Area generally bound by Sacramento Street to the north, California Street to the south, Battery Street to the east and Front Street to the west. Appendix E
New Montgomery-Second Street Conservation District	Area generally bound by Market Street to the north, Howard Street to the south, Second Street to the east and Annie Street to the west. Appendix F
Pine-Sansome Conservation District	Area generally bound by California Street to the north, Bush Street to the south, Sansome Street to the east and Montgomery Street to the west. Appendix J

**ATTACHMENT C -- CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL PLACES
HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

DISTRICT NAME	LOCATION	REGISTERED
2nd And Howard Streets Historic District	2nd St. at Howard St.	07/28/99
Alcatraz Historic District	Alcatraz Island	01/01/98
Aquatic Park Historic District	Hyde St./Polk St./Van Ness Ave	01/01/98
Aronson Historic District	3rd St. at Mission St.	01/01/98
Bush St-Cottage Row Historic District	Bush St at Cottage Row	01/01/98
Central Embarcadero Piers Historic District	The Embarcadero	01/01/98
Coast Guard San Francisco Depot Historic District		01/01/98
Conservatory Valley Historic District	Golden Gate Park/John F. Kennedy Drive	06/28/99
Fort Funston Historic District	Skyline Blvd At Pacific Ocean	01/01/98
Francis "Lefty" O'Doul Bridge District	3rd Street	01/01/98
Ft. Miley Military Reservation, Ft. Miley District	Clement St. at 44th Ave.	01/01/98
Hayes Valley Historic District	Fillmore St. at Market St.	01/01/98
Industrial District, Rincon Point/ South Beach District	1st St. at Brannan St.	01/01/98
Jackson Brewing Company District	Folsom St. at 11th St.	01/01/98
Jackson Square/Barbary Coast Historic District	Sansome St. at Columbus Ave.	01/01/98
Laguna Honda Hospital And Rehab Center District	Laguna Honda Blvd.	01/01/98
Liberty Street Historic District	Liberty St. at Guerrero St.	01/01/98

DISTRICT NAME	LOCATION	REGISTERED
Light Station Historic District		03/18/98
Lower Nob Hill Apartment Hotel District	Bush Street	01/01/98
Lyon Street District		01/01/98
Market Street Theatre and Loft District	Market St. at Jones/Taylor Streets	01/01/98
North Point Park/Marina District		01/01/98
Old Ohio Street Houses District	#17/55 Osgood Place	01/01/98
Panhandle/Avenue Heading To Golden Gate Park		01/01/98
Piers 26-28 District	Piers 26-28, Harrison at Bryant Streets	01/01/98
Presidio Of San Francisco	SR 101 at SR 480	01/01/98
Punta Medanos/Batteria Yerba Buena, Fort Mason/Black Point District	Bay St. at Laguna St.	01/01/98
Russian Hill, Russian Hill/Vallejo St. District	Russian Hill Place, Broadway and Florence Streets	01/01/98
Russian Hill/Macondray Lane Historic District	Green St., Jones/Taylor Streets	01/01/98
Russian Hill/Paris Block District	Green St. at Macondray Lane	01/07/88
San Francisco Civic Center District	Golden Gate Ave. at Market St.	01/01/98
San Francisco Cable Cars	Washington St. at Leavenworth St.	01/01/98
San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge	I-80 at San Francisco Bay	08/13/01
So. Pacific Company Hospital, Mercy Family Plaza District	Fell St. at Hayes St.	01/01/98
Southeast Farallon Island Historic District		10/05/98
Yerba Buena Island Lighthouse, Goat Island Lighthouse District		01/01/98

**ATTACHMENT D -- NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

DISTRICT NAME	LOCATION	REGISTERED
Jackson Brewing Company District	Folsom St. at 11th St.	01/01/86
Jackson Square/Barbary Coast Historic District	Sansome St. at Columbus Ave.	01/01/72
Laguna Honda Hospital And Rehab Center District	Laguna Honda Blvd.	11/18/71
Liberty Street Historic District	Liberty St. at Guerrero St.	06/23/76
Light Station Historic District		10/15/66
Lower Nob Hill Apartment Hotel District	Bush Street	01/01/66
Lyon Street District		10/10/78
Market Street Theatre and Loft District	Market St. at Jones/ Taylor Streets	05/31/79
North Point Park/Marina District		01/01/82
Old Ohio Street Houses District	#17/55 Osgood Place	01/01/80
Panhandle/Avenue Heading To Golden Gate Park		01/01/84
Piers 26-28 District	Piers 26-28, Harrison at Bryant Streets	01/01/83
Presidio Of San Francisco	SR 101 at SR 480	08/13/01
Punta Medanos/Batteria Yerba Buena, Fort Mason/Black Point District	Bay St. at Laguna St.	01/01/88
Russian Hill, Russian Hill/ Vallejo St. District	Russian Hill Place, Broadway and Florence Streets	01/07/88
Russian Hill/Macondray Lane Historic District	Green St., Jones/Taylor Streets	01/01/88
Russian Hill/Paris Block District	Green St. at Macondray Lane	05/05/89

DISTRICT NAME	LOCATION	REGISTERED
San Francisco Civic Center District	Golden Gate Ave. at Market St.	07/31/91
San Francisco Cable Cars	Washington St. at Leavenworth St.	09/03/91
San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge	I-80 at San Francisco Bay	04/01/93
So. Pacific Company Hospital, Mercy Family Plaza District	Fell St. at Hayes St.	07/28/99
Southeast Farallon Island Historic District		10/05/98
Yerba Buena Island Lighthouse, Goat Island Lighthouse District		01/01/98

January 2003