



Y O U R O L D H O U S E

GUIDE
FOR
PRESERVING
SAN JOSE
HOMES

August 2003

Approved by the San Jose City Council August 19, 2003

Prepared by:
Winter & Company
775 Poplar Avenue
Boulder, Colorado 80304

CREDITS

A special acknowledgement to the **Mayor and San Jose City Council/ San Jose Redevelopment Agency Board** for their support, and to the San Jose Redevelopment Agency and San Jose City staff members who assisted in the preparation of this Guide.

Thanks to:

San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission (Gloria Sciara, Stephen Polcyn, Avelino Legaspi, Sandra Paim, Michael Youmans, Justine Leong, and Edward Janke)

Hensley Historic District (Lenora Porcella, Eric Schoennauer, Brian Chapman, Diane Gonzales, Manuel Lima, and Richard Desmond)

Community Participants

Joan Bohnett	Lisa Jensen
Michael Borbely	Andre Luthard
Ron & Judy Borcharding	Franklin Maggi
Kate Boruff	Leslie Masunaga
Campus Community Association	Chris McSorley
Sandy Christiansen	Ardith Meyer
George Constantin	Bonnie Montgomery
Patricia Curia	Naglee Park Association
Evelyn Delgado	Palm Haven Restoration Committee
Leslie Dill	Ken Podgorsek
Dave & Naomi Dudek	Preservation Action Council of San Jose
Charlene Duval	Dianne Saichek
Norman Finnance	Carol Savoy
Davis & Linda Gheen	South University Neighborhoods Association
Nick Gonzales	R.L. Squires
Cici Green	Michael Tierney
April Halberstat	Mary Tucker
Judi Henderson	Robb Underwood
Horace Mann Neighborhood	Gregory & Elizabeth Winslow
Gabriel Ibarra	Diana Wirt
Michael & Gwen Jennings	Beth Wyman

San Jose Redevelopment Agency

Renda James- Project Coordination; Paul Asper-Cover Design

San Jose Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement

Courtney Damkroger- Project Coordination

San Jose Department of Housing

Norberto Duenas and Don Ludwig- Project Coordination

Consultants**Winter & Company**

Nore V. Winter

Brian W. Koenigberg, AICP

Betsy Shears

Debbie Yin

Franklin Maggi & Bonnie Montgomery Historical Overviews-Chapter 2 and 7**Photography & Sketch Credits**

Bruce Race, FAIA, AICP (RACESTUDIO)

History San Jose

Hensley Historic District

CONTENTS

Introduction

How Will These Design Guidelines Be Used?	1
Do the Design Guidelines Dictate Taste?	2
Will Following These Design Guidelines Be More Expensive?	2
Organization of the Document	2
Structure of Design Guidelines	3
Which Design Guidelines Apply to Your Project?	4

Chapter 1: Purpose of Design Guidelines

Background of Design Guidelines	5
The Historic Landmarks Commission	6
Design Review in San Jose	6
The San Jose Historic Resources Inventory	7
Basic Principles for Historic Preservation	8
Benefits of Preserving Historic Houses	9
Choosing an Approach	10
Planning a Preservation Project	11
Design of Alterations	11
Basic Principles for Site Design and Infill	11
Religious and Institutional Structures	12

Chapter 2: Architectural Resources

Brief History of San Jose	13
Using Architectural Style Descriptions	16

Chapter 3: Rehabilitation of Historic Houses

Treatment of Character-Defining Features	34
Original Materials	37
Porches	42
Windows and Doors	47
Roofs	50
Building Relocation	53
Adaptive Use	55
Corner Stores	56
Seismic Retrofitting	57

Chapter 4: Additions

Basic Principles for an Addition	59
Preservation of Additions	60
Design of New Additions	61
Roof-top Additions	64
Raising a Building	65

Chapter 5: All Projects

Sidewalks and Walkways	68
Fences and Site Walls	69
Landscaping	71
Lighting	73
Driveways and Parking	74
Accessory Structures	76
Mechanical Equipment and Service Areas	77
Energy Conservation	78
Building Color	79

Chapter 6: Infill and Alterations to Non-Historic Houses

Site Design	82
Building Mass, Scale and Form	84
Building Materials	86
Architectural Character	88
Windows and Doors	89

Chapter 7: Historic Districts and Conservation Areas

91

Chapter 8: The Hensley Historic District

103

Appendices

A. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation	APP-1
B. Interpretation of Terms	APP-2
C. Glossary of Terms	APP-3
D. Other Resources for Preservation in San Jose	APP-7

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**The City of San José Department of Planning,
Building and Code Enforcement, Planning Division**
(408) 277-4576
www.ci.san-jose.ca.us/planning/sjplan



INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidance for improvements to historic houses and neighborhoods in San Jose, California. Anyone planning a project will also be subject to the requirements of the City of San Jose Municipal Code. Title 10 “Zoning Ordinance” and Title 13 “Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places” will be of particular importance given the topics addressed in these design guidelines.

These design guidelines are for property owners planning exterior alterations and additions to existing historic houses. They also apply to the design of new buildings within historic neighborhoods and districts. The guidelines will assist property owners in understanding the context of the built environment of San Jose and help owners when they are faced with decisions about alterations and new construction. The guidelines are not a rigid set of rules. Rather, their purpose is to provide educational information to property owners and tenants about historic buildings, their distinctive characteristics and how to maintain them; they suggest various appropriate ways to address design, repair and rehabilitation issues; and, they suggest good maintenance practices.

How Will These Design Guidelines Be Used?

These design guidelines are provided to property owners as information that may be used in planning an approach to the treatment of historic houses. Owners are encouraged to review the guidelines when planning an improvement project in order to ensure that the work contemplated will help preserve the historic character of a neighborhood.

In some cases, the guidelines are applied in a more formal manner. Many properties within the City are also designated as “Historic Landmarks” or are located within a “Historic District,” and are subject to the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 13.48 of the Municipal Code. Therefore, the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) and Planning staff will use the guidelines for residential projects subject to their review. The Historic Preservation Ordinance requires the submittal of a Historic Preservation Permit for exterior modifications to a Historic Landmark or a building within a Historic District.

The design review process is “reactive,” in that it applies to proposed actions initiated by a property owner. While it guides an approach to certain design problems by offering alternative solutions, the design review process does not dictate a specific outcome nor does it require a property owner to instigate improvements that are not contemplated.

While ordinary repair and maintenance are encouraged, seemingly minor alterations to a historic house, like enclosing a porch or changing windows, can have a dramatic effect on the visual character of a historic house and therefore are of concern. The following is a list of common changes that can have a significant impact on a historic house:

- The construction of a new structure
- The alteration or restoration of exterior features of a historic house
- Addition to a structure
- The removal or demolition, in whole or in part, of a historic house
- Applying a new exterior siding material
- Adding a new window, door or dormer
- Creating a driveway or a parking area
- Building a deck, fence or garage
- Enclosing a porch

This list is not all inclusive but is indicative of the types of changes to which these design guidelines apply. For questions regarding permits and the applicability of these guidelines, please contact the Planning Division.

Do the Design Guidelines Dictate Taste?

No. These guidelines reflect basic approaches to design that will help build strong neighborhoods. They do not dictate style either. However, they do reflect the policies of community representatives and the values of long-term residents, including their goals to invigorate historic neighborhoods while building on their early design traditions.

Will Following These Design Guidelines Be More Expensive?

In most cases, no; following the design guidelines will not cost more. They help direct *where* money is spent improving a property, not *how much* is invested. For example, the guidelines ask that a new building be placed in line with others on the block. This generally should not affect the cost of constructing the building foundation.

In the case of new construction, greater flexibility in the use of materials is appropriate, given the neighborhood context. This means that alternative materials may be considered when the appearance is similar to that of traditional wood siding.

Organization of the Document

The document is organized into an introduction, two chapters of background information, four chapters of design guidelines, two chapters on historic districts and conservation areas in San Jose and an appendix of supplementary information.

- **Chapter 1: Purpose of Design Guidelines.** This chapter presents general information about historic preservation and design guidelines.
- **Chapter 2: Architectural Resources.** This chapter summarizes the basic history of the area and describes different architectural styles.
- **Chapter 3: Rehabilitation of Historic Houses.** This chapter provides the design guidelines that apply to rehabilitation or alteration of historic houses in San Jose.
- **Chapter 4: Additions.** This chapter provides the design guidelines for additions to historic houses.
- **Chapter 5: All Projects.** This chapter provides the design guidelines that apply to any construction project, including rehabilitation, new construction and site work on historic houses, and should be read by all users.
- **Chapter 6: Infill and Alterations to Non-Historic Houses.** This chapter provides the design guidelines for the construction of a new building. These guidelines also apply to the alteration of non-historic structures.
- **Chapter 7: Historic Districts and Conservation Areas.** This section provides an overview of the designated historic districts and conservation areas in San Jose.
- **Chapter 8: The Hensley Historic District.** This chapter contains a brief history of development, a summary of the design characteristics and the neighborhood's design goals. This information draws upon comments from area residents in public meetings and also includes information prepared by community residents, City staff and design consultants.
- **Appendices.** This final section provides other supplementary information that may be helpful when using this document.

Structure of Design Guidelines

Each design guideline in this document includes several components that constitute the material upon which design review decisions will be made.

Design Element

The guidelines are grouped into pertinent design element categories (e.g., site planning, building materials, secondary structures).

Policy Statement

Each design element category has a policy statement that explains the City’s basic approach to the treatment of that topic. In cases where the detailed design guidelines do not appear to address a situation, this general policy statement shall serve as the basis for determining the appropriateness. *Policy statements are presented in a black box.*

Background Information

Following the policy statement is a brief discussion of the issues typically associated with the specific design topic. This may include technical information as well as other relevant preservation theory.

Design Guidelines

Specific design guidelines are numbered in order to reference them during the design review process. The numbering system does not reflect a prioritization of the design guidelines.

Additional Information

The design guideline statement is followed by supplementary information that may include additional requirements, or may provide an expanded explanation. The supplementary information is listed as bulleted (•) statements.

Illustrations

Design guidelines are further explained with photographs and illustrations. The examples given should not be considered the only appropriate options, however.

✓’s and ✗’s

In order to help the reader determine design approaches that are appropriate, many of the illustrations are marked with either a ✓ or an ✗. Those illustrations marked with a ✓ are considered appropriate solutions to the design issue, whereas those illustrations marked with an ✗ are not appropriate.

Sample of the format used in this document for design guidelines.

Treatment of Character-Defining Features

Preserve historic architectural features and details.

Historic features, including original materials, architectural details, window and door openings, contribute to the character of a structure and should be preserved when feasible. Continued maintenance is the best preservation method.

4.1 Protect and maintain significant stylistic features.

- The best preservation procedure is to maintain historic features from the outset so that intervention is not required.
- Preserve character-defining features. Then, repair only those features that are deteriorated. Finally, replace only those features that are beyond repair.



Protect and maintain significant stylistic features, such as these windows, dentils, the flower patterns and the cupola.

Which Design Guidelines Apply to Your Project?

Use the chart below to identify the chapters that apply to the work being considered: the rehabilitation of a historic house, an addition to a historic house and/or the construction of a new structure on the site of a historic house.

USE THESE CHAPTERS

PROPOSED WORK	Introduction	1. Purpose of Design Guidelines	2. Architectural Resources	3. Rehabilitation of Historic Houses	4. Additions	5. All Projects	6. Infill and Alterations to Non-Historic Houses	7. Historic Districts and Conservation Areas	Appendices (Secretary's Standards, Definitions, and Resources)
Preservation of a historic house	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Restoration of a historic house	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Adapt a residence to a commercial use	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Add onto a historic house	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
New construction	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
Site improvements	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
Any work in a designated historic district	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓