

# Demystifying Historic Districts

- What are historic districts?
- How are historic districts established?
- How does historic designation protect my neighborhood?
- What can I do with my property if it is historically designated?
- What are the benefits of historic designation?

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# HISTORIC DISTRICTS DEFINED

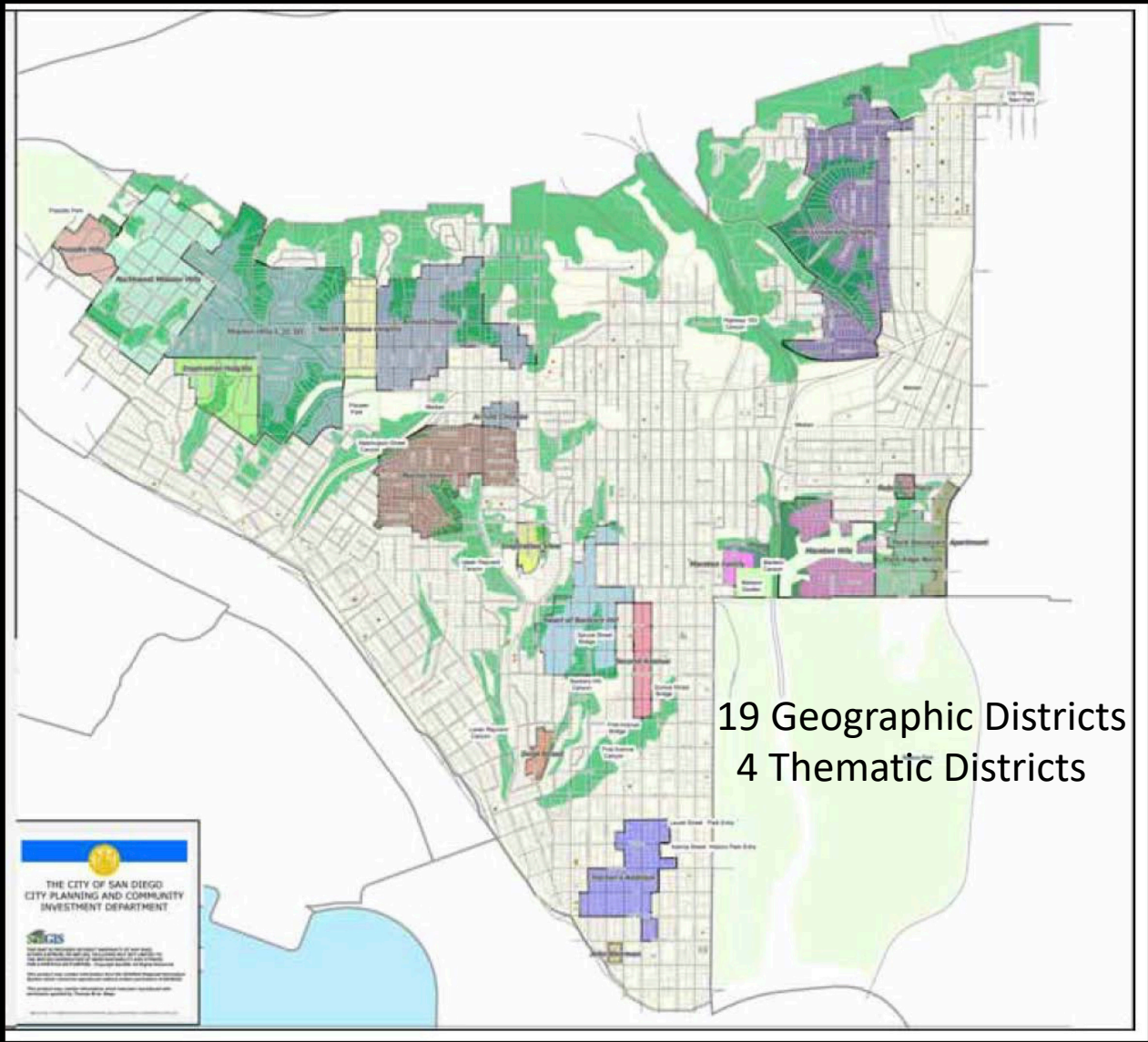
- A **significant concentration, linkage or continuity** of sites, buildings, structures, objects & landscape
- **United historically, geographically or aesthetically** by plan or physical development
- Have a **special character**, historical interest, cultural or aesthetic value
- Represent **one or more architectural periods** in the history and development of the City of San Diego

**Uptown Historic Architectural  
and Cultural Landscape  
Reconnaissance Survey**

**IS Architecture**  
Ione R. Stiegler, AIA  
Historic Preservation Architect

Vonn Marie May  
Cultural Landscape Specialist

**City of San Diego**  
March 2007



19 Geographic Districts  
4 Thematic Districts

Uptown Reconnaissance Survey Results  
IS Architecture (2007)

# District Boundaries

- Use Subdivision boundaries as starting point
- Adjust per context, period of significance
- Contributors & Non-contributors
- Owner support

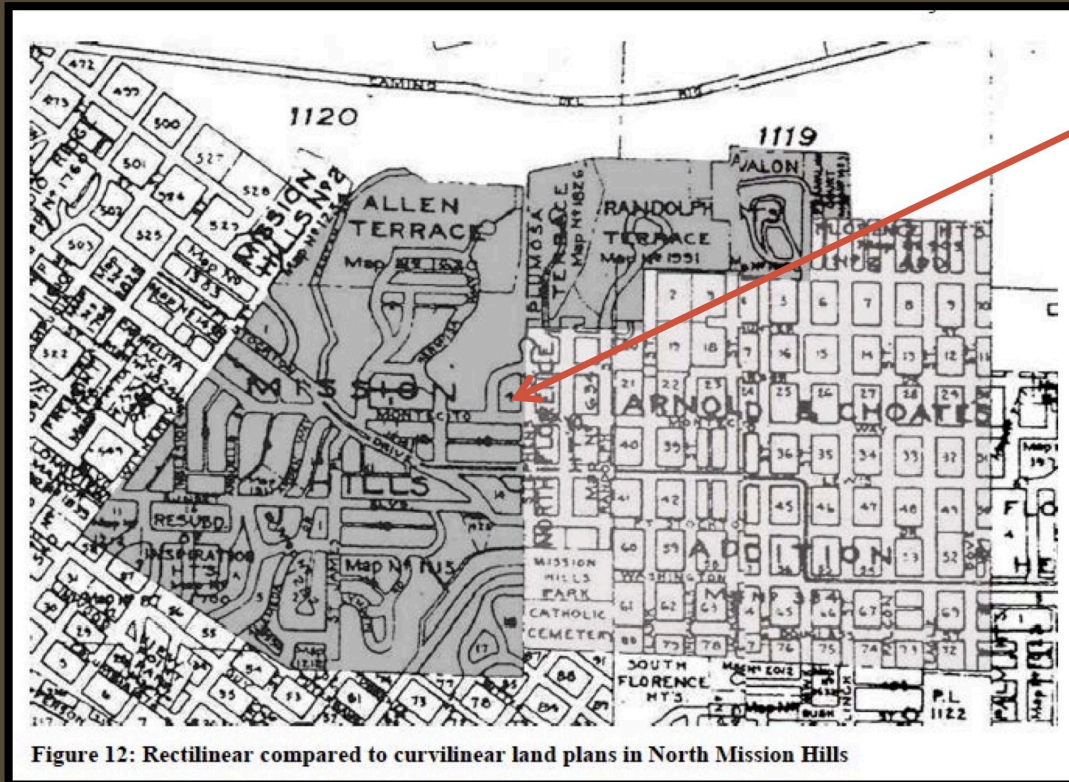
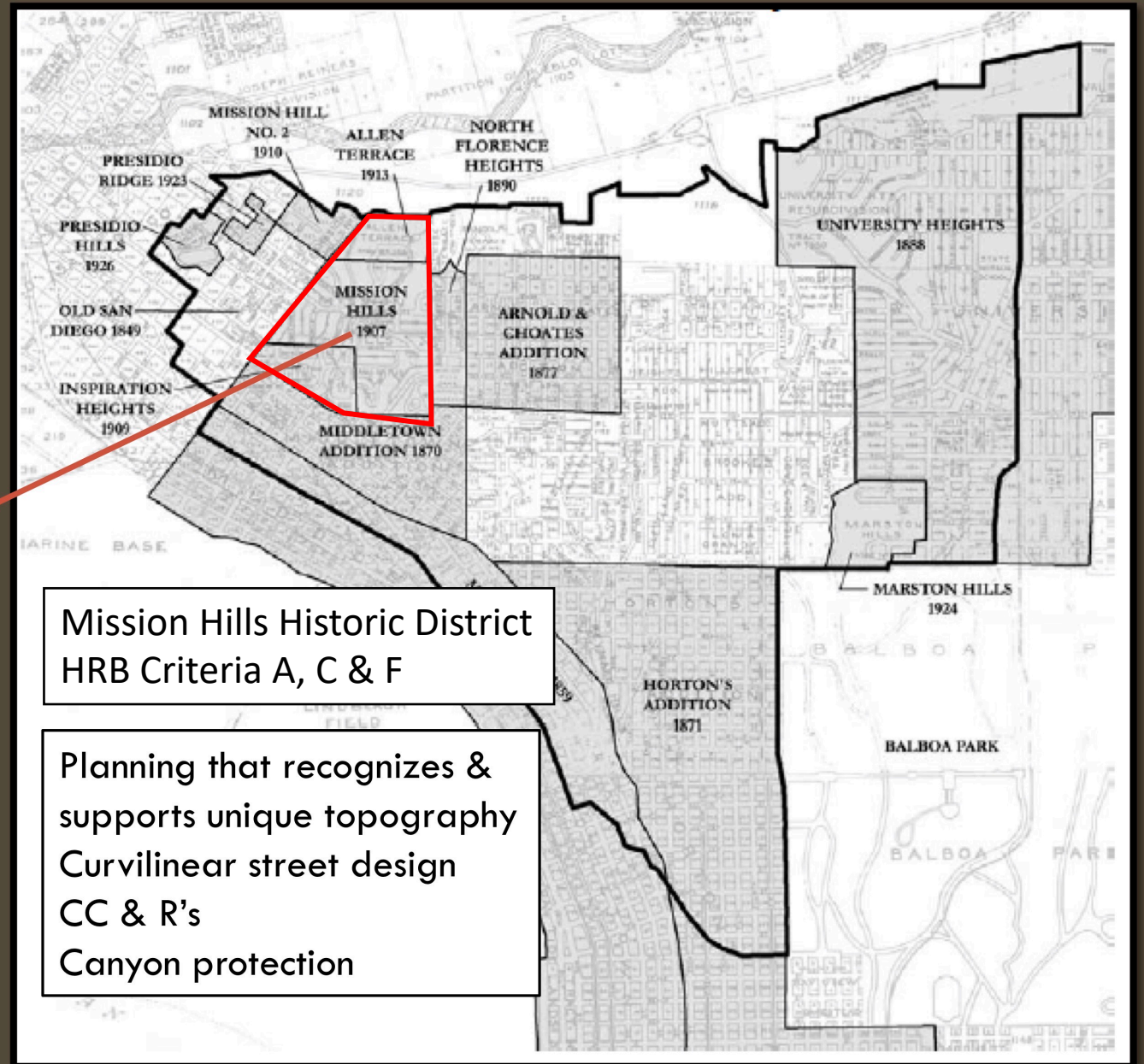


Figure 12: Rectilinear compared to curvilinear land plans in North Mission Hills



Mission Hills Historic District  
HRB Criteria A, C & F

Planning that recognizes &  
supports unique topography  
Curvilinear street design  
CC & R's  
Canyon protection

# Designation Strategy: Large District Broken into 3 Smaller Units w/ Different Contexts

Mission Hills Historic Districts  
Mission Hills. Phases 1 & 2  
Ft. Stockton Line

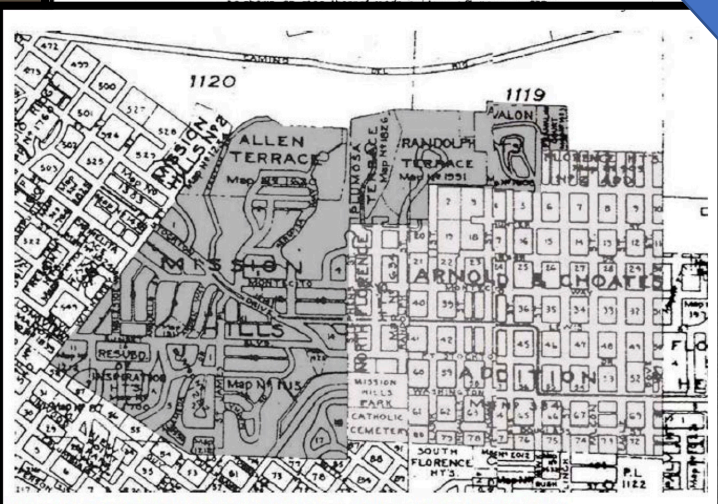
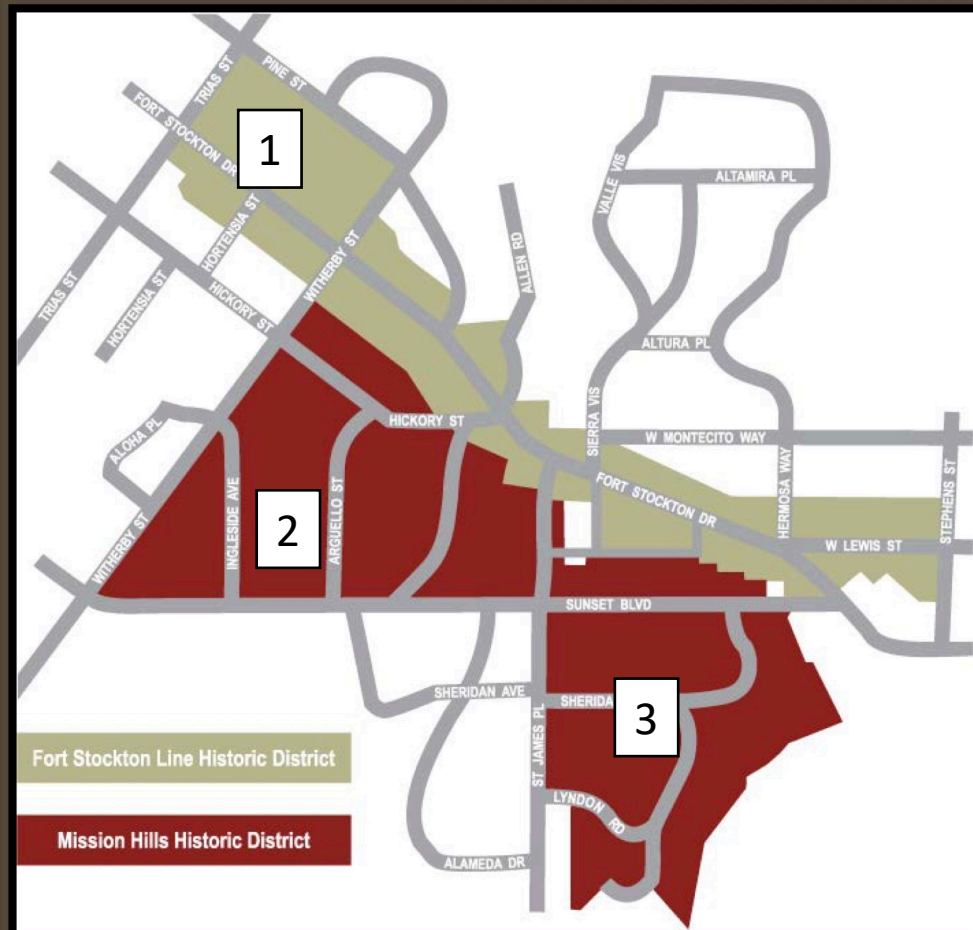
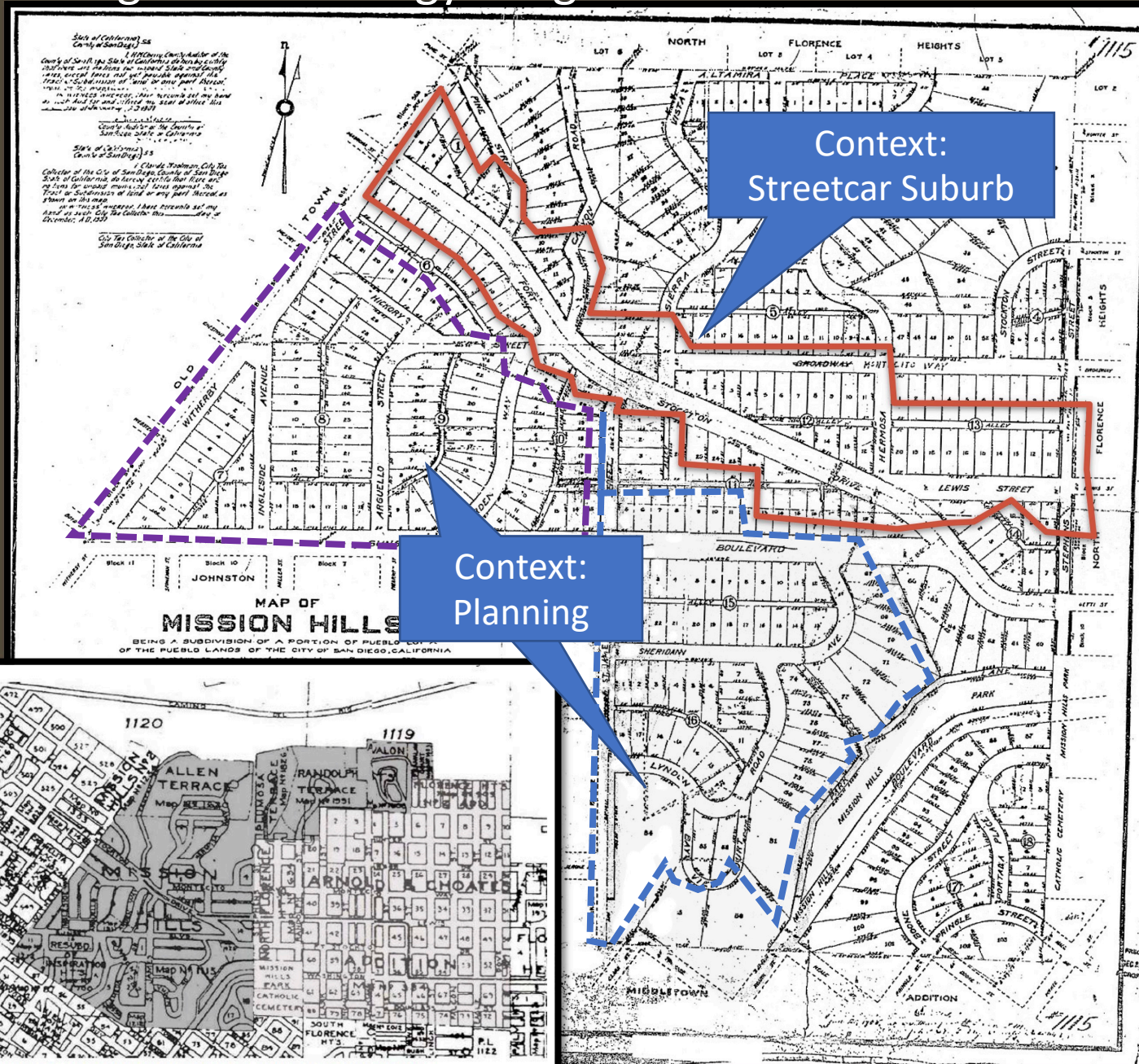


Figure 12: Rectilinear compared to curvilinear land plans in North Mission Hills



# HRB Designation Criteria

**Criterion A:** Special Element of City's, community or neighborhood development

**Criterion B:** identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history

**Criterion C:** distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or craftsmanship

**Criterion D:** Notable work of a master

**Criterion F:** Historic District



# HRB Criterion F: Special Research Considerations

- Common Heritage
- Traditional Activity
- Rare Past
- Development Progression
- Consistent Plan
- Public Works
- Features of Daily Living
- Industrial Evolution
- Craftsmanship
- Building Groupings
- Landmark supportive



# Why establish historic districts?

Create **CERTAINTY** about future of neighborhood

- Secretary of the Interior's Standards or tailored design guidelines assure **INCREMENTAL CHANGE**
- Govern what **can** and **cannot** happen
  - Covers all structures & significant landscape features
  - Non-contributors
  - Assures **COMPATIBLE** Infill Development on Vacant Lots
  - Includes Public Realm (trees, sidewalks, lighting, boundary markers, bridges, street width & paving, curbs)



# CONTRIBUTORS

# NON-CONTRIBUTORS

ADD to significance of district

DO NOT ADD to significance

Support Context

Not part of context

Within boundaries

Outside period of significance

Within period of significance

Not physically in district

Have integrity

Lost Integrity



INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

UNALTERED



## INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Non-historic windows in original openings  
Enclosed porch with glazing; framing intact  
Re-stucco w/ inappropriate texture

MINIMALLY ALTERED



## INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

HEAVILY ALTERED

Window replacements in altered openings;  
Replacing original siding w/ different siding;

Porch enclosure w/ solid walls;  
Significant cumulative changes

Demolishing original walls



INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

ALTERED BEYOND RECOGNITION

# Historic District Nomination Process\*

## Step 1. Initiation by Interested Public

1. Designation Request w/ Petition demonstrating owner support
2. Historical Report (anyone can prepare report)
  1. Document Context & Historical Significance
  2. HRB Criteria met
  3. Boundaries & Period of Significance
  4. Contributors & Non-contributors w/ DPR 523 A & B Forms
  5. Design Guidelines, as applicable

## Step 2. HRB Board & Staff

3. Two Board Hearings
  1. Evaluate completeness & adequacy of information
  2. Public Noticing & HRB Site Visit
  3. Hear testimony & take appropriate action
4. Designation can be appealed to City Council

\* Policy 4.1 HRB Procedure on Establishing Historic Districts, 1977, 200, 2002, 2011

# Benefits of Historic Designation

## CITY OF SAN DIEGO MILLS ACT

- Property tax savings – 50% average (25% to 75%)
- Rolling 10-year legal contract
- Eligibility Requirements
  - Historic Designation
  - Visible from the street
  - Secretary of the Interior’s Standards
- Application Deadline
- Annual Threshold of New Reduction in Property Tax Revenue
- Mills Act Agreement requirements include a 10-year work plan
- Inspection Schedule/Monitoring – Five Years
- Fees
  - \$1,185 for the historic designation process, \$590 for agreement, \$492 for monitoring (and every five years thereafter), \$949 for enforcement in case of violations

### CITY OF SAN DIEGO MILLS ACT AGREEMENT APPLICATION

Applications are accepted between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year; applications must be received by March 31<sup>st</sup> to be processed the same calendar year.

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Designated Property: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Designation (*must be designated by December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous year*): \_\_\_\_\_

Parcel Number: \_\_\_\_\_ HRB Site Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Original Use of Property: \_\_\_\_\_ Current Use: \_\_\_\_\_

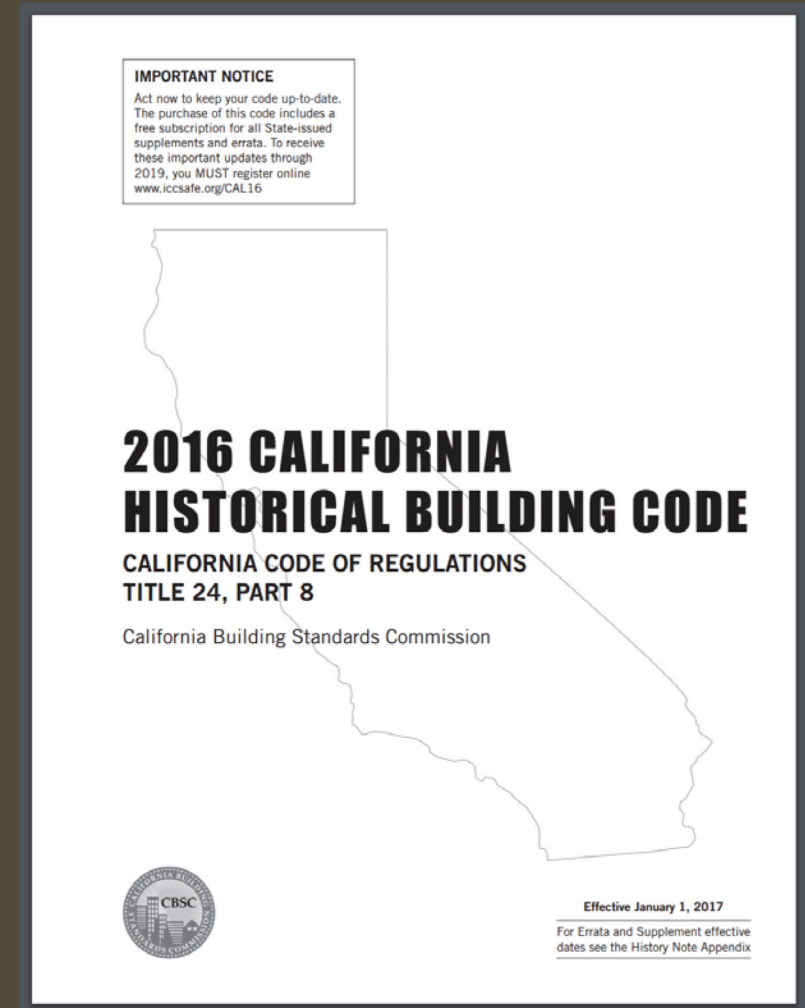
- Attach a check made payable to the City Treasurer for \$471.00 (This fee is a processing fee, and is non-refundable)
- Attach a description of the historical characteristics of the property. Excerpts from the documents supporting listing of the property on the City of San Diego’s Register of Historical Resources may be used for this purpose. Include current 4”x6” color photos of all elevations and character defining features of the structure and any outbuildings.
- Attach a description of any alterations/additions/modifications that have been completed on the structure(s).
- Attach a Grant Deed, including a legal description of the property.
- Attach paperwork that establishes authority of signer(s) if property is held in a Trust, Corporation or Partnership.
- Attach an explanation of the manner in which the proposed contract will promote preservation of the historic property. Include cost estimates from qualified contractors. Include a tentative schedule of restoration and maintenance activities to be undertaken consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s



# Benefits of Historic Designation

## CALIFORNIA HISTORIC BUILDING CODE

- Intended to to save California's architectural heritage by recognizing the unique construction problems inherent in historical buildings and by providing a code to deal with these problems.
- Performance oriented regulations
- Applied by the enforcing authority of every city, county, city and county, or state agency
- Relevant to repairs, alterations and additions necessary for the preservation, rehabilitation, relocation, related construction, change of use or continued use of a qualified historical building.



# What can I do with my property if it is designated?



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- Secretary of the Interior's Standards
- Preservation
- Rehabilitation
- Restoration
- Reconstruction

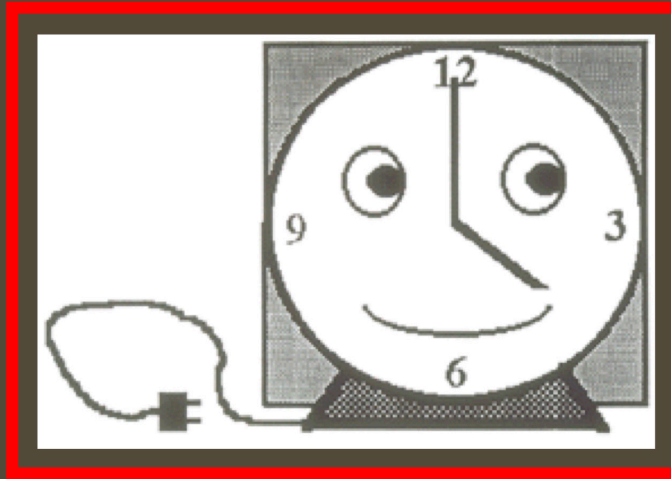
### The Preservation Clock

*Time is asleep for record-keeping purposes*



### The Rehabilitation Clock

*Time is "plugged-in" to current needs*



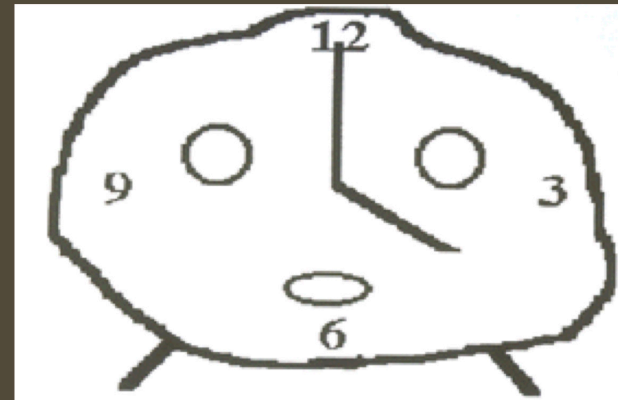
### The Restoration Clock

*Time is looking backward to find significance...*



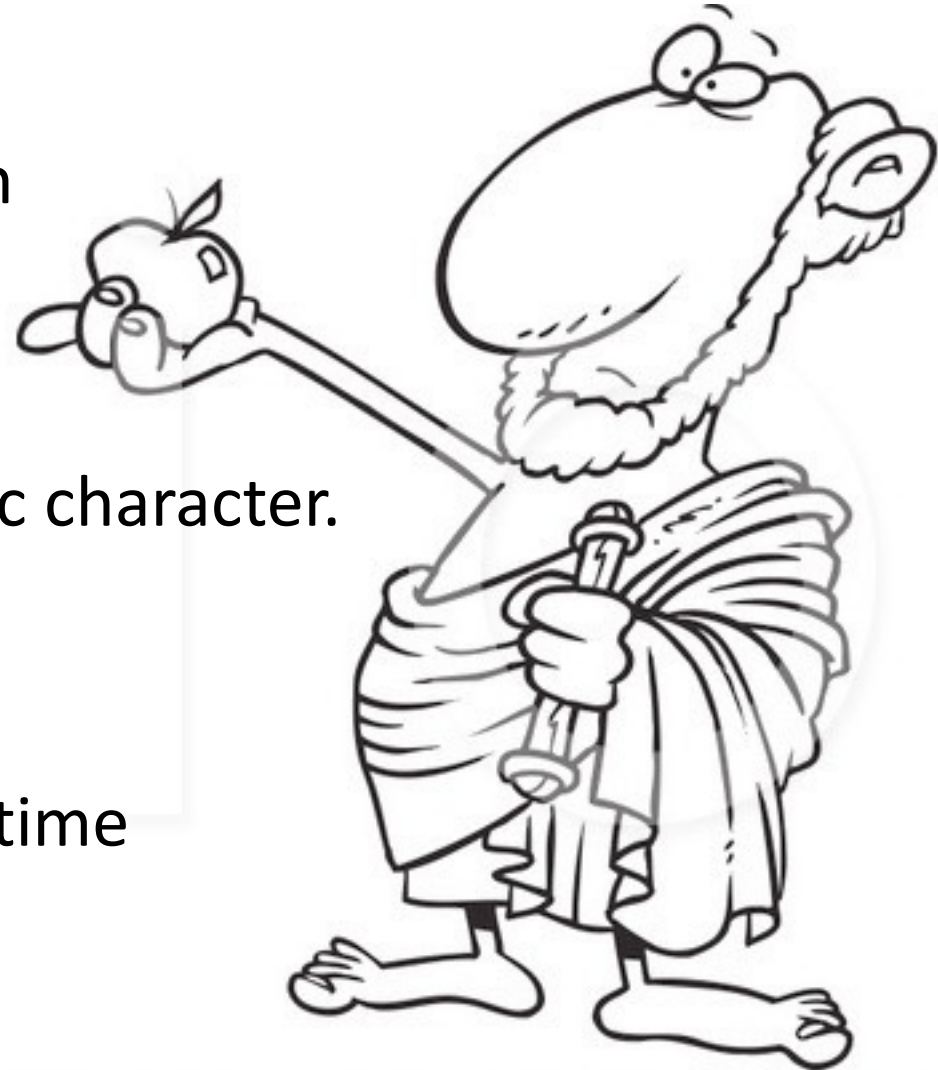
### The Reconstruction Clock

*Time's ghosts re-appear in an all new package.*



# Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

- Property should maintain historic use or compatible new use.
- Retain & preserve historic character.
- Do not add features that were never there.
- Significant changes over time will be respected.



Historic properties provide a sense of time & place;  
Therefore unchanged front facades are important



But, historically designated properties  
are allowed to change over time  
to remain economically viable  
And to accommodate  
new occupants & uses



Put changes on facades  
not visible to the street

Use compatible design & massing;  
Differentiate new construction from original  
To avoid a “false sense of history”

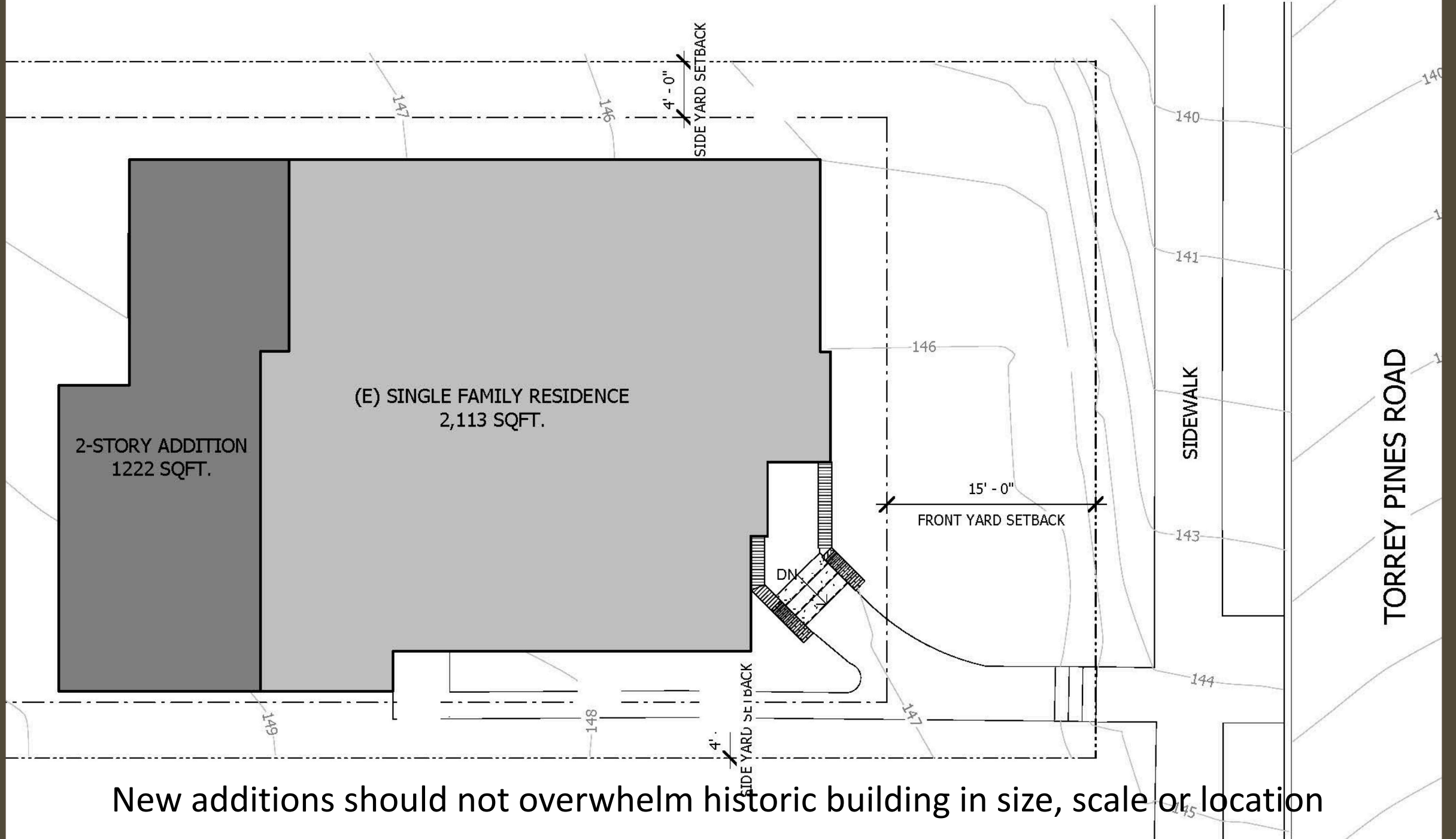
Closed Eaves

Shed Roof

Board Siding

Cable Railings





New additions should not overwhelm historic building in size, scale or location





Rear  
Addition

Place new additions at rear  
On secondary facades

# Differentiate new construction from old

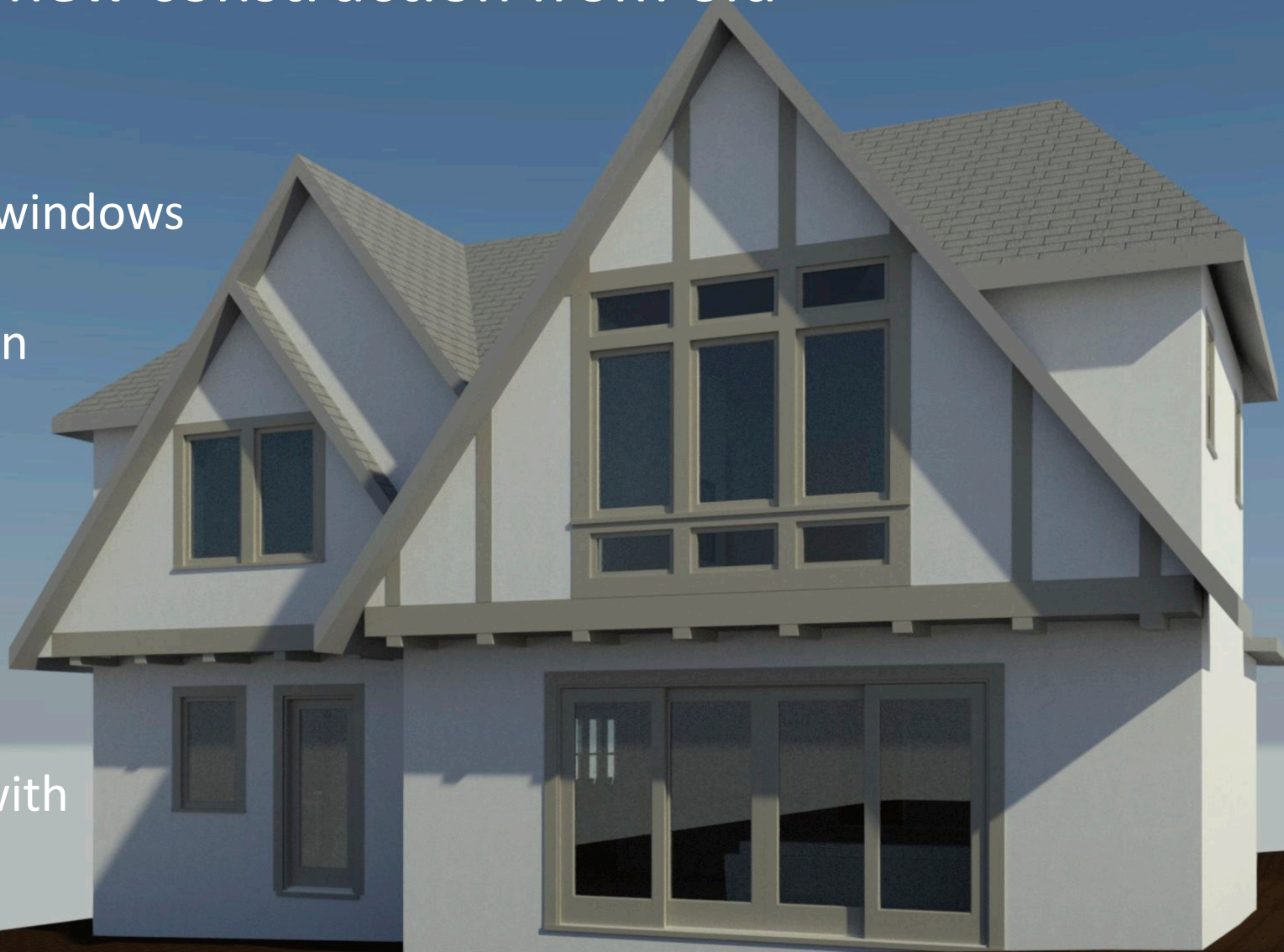
New divided light windows  
too similar to historic windows



# Differentiate new construction from old

New undivided windows  
Clearly express  
new construction

Pitched roof  
Stucco siding &  
Half timbering  
Are consistent with  
Original style



# NEW CONSTRUCTION / INFILL

Differentiated but Compatible

Front Porch

Garage at Rear

One story Mass at front

Two Story at Rear



# City Historic Designation Work Plan North Park & Golden Hill

Year	District Name	Community	Approx Number of Properties	Date Designated
2017	Spalding Place	North Park	14	7/27/2017
2017	Valle Vista Terrace	North Park	90	11/16/2017
2017	South Park	Golden Hill	407	10/26/2017
2018	Melhorn & Son	North Park	30	10/25/2018
2020	Arizona Street Tract (Park Villas)	North Park	48	Found Ineligible
2021	Park Boulevard Residential	Uptown and North Park	119	
2021	Culverwell & Taggart's	Golden Hill	245	
2021	Kalmia Place	North Park	20	
2021	Altadena	North Park	400	
2022	28th Street	North Park	45	
2022	St. Louis Heights	North Park	135	
2023	30th Street Commercial	North Park	128	
2023	Wabash Mesa	North Park	82	

1763  
TOTAL

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511

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78

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784

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180

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210

# Local Designation Alternative: HRB Criterion E

## Listed on the National Register or California Register

### National Register:

Only need 1 significance criterion

- Criterion A (community history)
- Criterion C (architecture, architect/designer, materials, construction)

### Local Level of Significance

- Easier form to complete: requires less information
- Integrity standards more relaxed (“majority” = 51%)
- 12-24 month listing process once report submitted
- FREE
- If owner objection >
- AUTOMATICALLY listed on California Register

# Bibliography

San Diego Historic District Policy:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/programs/historicpreservationplanning/historicdistricts>

San Diego Historic District Fact Sheet:

[https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/historic\\_district\\_designation\\_fact\\_sheet\\_20170519.pdf](https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/historic_district_designation_fact_sheet_20170519.pdf)

HRB Procedures on Establishing Historic Districts:

[https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/historic\\_district\\_policy\\_4.1\\_adopted\\_111027.pdf](https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/historic_district_policy_4.1_adopted_111027.pdf)

HRB Guidelines for Application of Designation Criteria:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/201102criteriaguidelines.pdf>

HRB Guidance for Historical Research Reports:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/planning/programs/historical/pdf/hrbreport.pdf>

Secretary of the Interiors Standards: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>

SOI Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties; <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdfrelief>

San Diego Mills Act Property Tax Reduction Program:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy//planning/programs/historical/pdf/2015/millsacthandout201507.pdf>

Mills Act Agreements: Diego Council Policy 700-46

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy//planning/programs/historical/pdf/millsactdocs/081215councilpolicy70046.pdf>