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# I. Introduction

## WHY DO WE HAVE RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES?

San Francisco is known for its neighborhoods and the visual quality of its buildings. From the Victorians of the Western Addition to the stucco-clad Mediterranean-style homes in the Sunset neighborhood and contemporary infill homes found throughout the City, the architecture is diverse, yet many neighborhoods are made up of buildings with common rhythms and cohesive elements of architectural expression. These neighborhoods are in large part what make San Francisco an attractive place to live, work, and visit. In order to maintain the visual interest of a neighborhood, it is important that the design of new buildings and renovations to existing buildings be compatible with nearby buildings. A single building out of context with its surroundings can be disruptive to the neighborhood character and, if repeated often enough, to the image of the City as a whole.

The Residential Design Guidelines (Guidelines) articulate expectations regarding the character of the built environment and are intended to promote design that will protect neighborhood character, enhancing the attractiveness and quality of life in the City. The Guidelines address basic principles of urban design that will result in residential development that maintains cohesive neighborhood identity, preserve historic resources, and enhances the unique setting and character of the City and its residential neighborhoods. The Guidelines also suggest opportunities for residential designs to further San Francisco's goal of environmental sustainability.

## LEGAL BASIS

Section 311(c)(1) of the Planning Code provides that Residential Design Guidelines shall be used to review plans for all new construction and alterations. Specifically, it states:

“The construction of new residential buildings and alteration of existing residential buildings in R districts shall be consistent with the design policies and guidelines of the General Plan and with the “Residential Design Guidelines” as adopted and periodically amended for specific areas or conditions by the City Planning Commission. The Director of Planning may require modifications to the exterior of a proposed new residential building or proposed alteration of

an existing residential building in order to bring it in to conformity with the “Residential Design Guidelines” and with the General Plan. These modifications may include, but are not limited to, changes in siting, building envelope, scale, texture and detailing, and landscaping.”

The Planning Commission adopted the first Guidelines on November 2, 1989. This version of the Guidelines was adopted by the Planning Commission on December 4, 2003.

In developing these Residential Design Guidelines, the Department referred to the General Plan, and to the Planning Code.

**The General Plan** is San Francisco’s adopted guide for coordinated and harmonious development in accordance with its present and future needs. The Residence and Urban Design Elements of the General Plan include objectives and policies that guide housing supply and residential development, and encourage a quality living environment. The Residential Design Guidelines support and implement these objectives and policies.

**The Planning Code** establishes standards for the maximum and minimum dimensional requirements for a building. The standards include height, the size of rear and side yards, and front setbacks, as well restrictions on the size and location of certain building components.

**Section 101.1** of the Planning Code establishes priority policies to conserve and protect existing neighborhood character. This section of the Code is the result of a November 1986 voter initiative (known as “Prop. M”) that arose out of a concern for the visual quality of the neighborhoods. The Residential Design Guidelines implement these policies.

## HOW ARE THE GUIDELINES USED?

### Applicability

The Residential Design Guidelines apply to all residential projects in RH (Residential House) and RM (Residential Mixed) zoning districts. They do not apply to NC (Neighborhood Commercial) Districts or to commercial or institutional buildings within residential districts.

Application of the Guidelines is a mandatory step in the permit review process and all residential permit applications must comply with both the Planning Code and the Residential Design Guidelines.

The new Housing Element is being considered for adoption by the Planning Commission. The Housing Element will replace the current Residence Element.

Urban Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial Districts can be found in the Commerce and Industry Element of the General Plan (Pages I.2.34-I.2.36).

## Organization

The Residential Design Guidelines are organized in a hierarchy, from large-scale neighborhood character issues to small-scale building details. Special guidelines that apply only to historic buildings are also included. Each topic begins with a Design Principle, which is a discussion of the ideas and goals regarding a specific subject. It is followed by a “guideline”, which further explains the design principle.

Because some of the guidelines may conflict, and certain guidelines may not apply to a project, it is necessary to identify the particular issues related to a project to use this document effectively.

Thoughtful application of the Guidelines and a sensitive design that is well detailed, using quality materials, will assist in creating a project that is compatible with neighborhood character and reduces the potential for conflict and delay.

The illustrations typically show existing buildings on 25-foot wide lots in low-density neighborhoods. However, the illustrations also apply to alterations and new construction on wider lots and in higher density settings, such as those found in RM (Residential Mixed) Districts.

## Design Principles

The Residential Design Guidelines focus on whether a building’s design contributes to the architectural and visual qualities of the neighborhood. The Design Principles found in this document indicate the aspects of a project that will be evaluated in making a determination of compliance with the Guidelines.

Following is an overview of the Design Principles:

- Ensure that the building’s scale is compatible with surrounding buildings.
- Ensure that the building respects the mid-block open space.
- Maintain light to adjacent properties by providing adequate setbacks.
- Provide architectural features that enhance the neighborhood’s character.
- Choose building materials that provide visual interest and texture to a building.
- Ensure that the character-defining features of an historic building are maintained.

Projects must comply with the design principles as stated in the Guidelines. However the design solutions and schematic drawings included in the document are intended to illustrate the text and are not design examples to be copied or imitated. **There may be other design solutions not shown in the Guidelines that will also result in a successful project.** The Guidelines do not mandate specific architectural styles, nor do they encourage direct imitation of the past.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE**

Applicants are encouraged to discuss projects with Planning Department staff and adjacent neighbors early in the design process to identify specific issues that may affect the design. Applicants may also request a Project Review meeting to discuss a proposed project with Department staff in detail. A fee is charged for this meeting.

Planning Department staff is available to provide information to applicants, neighborhood residents, property owners, and concerned members of the public. For questions about a specific building proposal, contact the staff planner assigned to that project.

For additional information, contact the Planning Information Counter at:

1660 Mission Street, Ground Floor Lobby  
415-558-6377  
[www.sfgov.org/planning](http://www.sfgov.org/planning)

# II. Neighborhood Character

**DESIGN PRINCIPLE:** Design buildings to be responsive to the overall neighborhood context, in order to preserve the existing visual character.

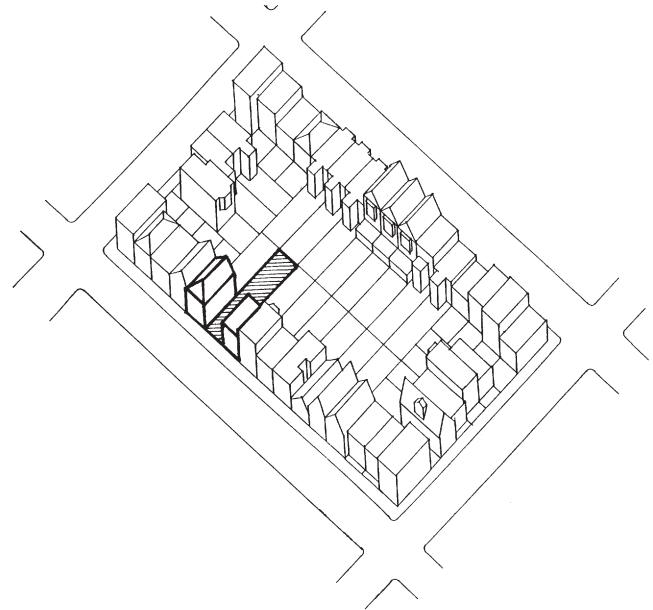
Most residents live in areas that are distinct neighborhoods. Many neighborhoods have defining characteristics such as street trees, buildings with common scales and architectural elements, and residential and commercial uses that make the neighborhood identifiable and an enriching place to be. The neighborhood is generally considered as that area around a home that can easily be traversed by foot. Neighborhoods may also be defined by natural or man-made elements such as parks, streets and hilltops.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

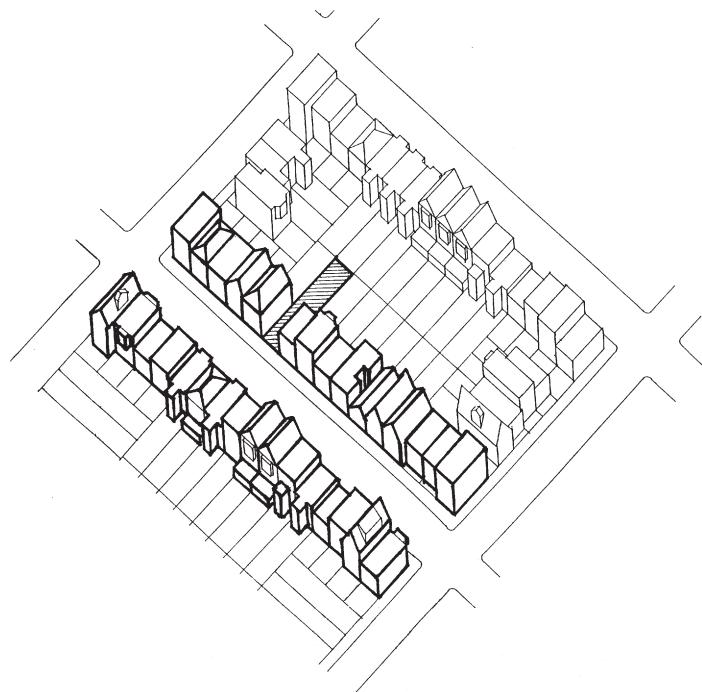
Though each building will have its own unique features, proposed projects must be responsive to the overall neighborhood context. A sudden change in the building pattern can be visually disruptive. Development must build on the common rhythms and elements of architectural expression found in a neighborhood. In evaluating a project's compatibility with neighborhood character, the buildings on the same block face are analyzed. However, depending on the issues relevant to a particular project, it may be appropriate to consider a larger context.

Neighborhood patterns that are important to the character of the neighborhood include:

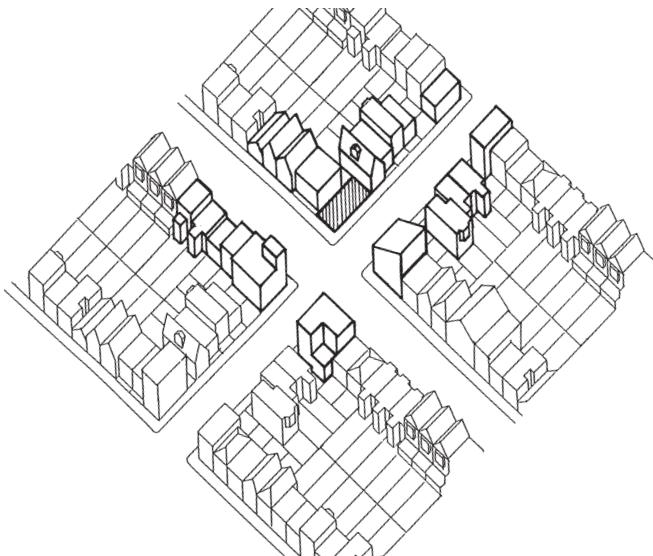
- The **block pattern:** Most buildings are one piece of a larger block where buildings define the main streets, leaving the center of the block open for rear yards and open space. Some blocks are bisected by mid-block alleys where service functions that detract from the public pedestrian environment, such as garage entries, trash collection, and utilities, are located.
- The **lot pattern:** Residential blocks are typically made up of narrow and deep lots (25' x 100'), creating uniform building pattern, with a pedestrian scale.



**Immediate Context:** When considering the immediate context of a project, the concern is how the proposed project relates to the adjacent buildings.



**Broader Neighborhood Context:** When considering the broader context of a project, the concern is how the proposed project relates to the visual character and scale created by other buildings in the general vicinity.



**Corner Lot Context:** When considering the context of a corner lot, the concern is how the proposed project relates to buildings on both streets near the intersection.

## WHAT IS THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

### Defined Visual Character

**GUIDELINE:** In areas with a defined visual character, design buildings to be compatible with the patterns and architectural features of surrounding buildings.

On some block faces, there is a strong visual character defined by buildings with compatible siting, form, proportions, texture and architectural details. On other blocks, building forms and architectural character are more varied, yet the buildings still have a unified character. In these situations, buildings must be designed to be compatible with the scale, patterns and architectural features of surrounding buildings, drawing from elements that are common to the block.



*This block face has a strong visual character because of the uniform width and height of the buildings on the block, compatible building details, and consistent placement of features such as entries and bays.*



*The buildings on this block have a variety of building forms and details, however the overall building scale is uniform, helping to define the block's visual character.*

### **Mixed Visual Character**

**GUIDELINE:** In areas with a mixed visual character, design buildings to help define, unify and contribute positively to the existing visual context.

Some block faces do not have an apparent overriding visual character, or the character may be mixed or changing. When no clear pattern is evident on a block face, a designer has a greater opportunity and responsibility to help define, unify, and contribute positively to the existing visual context. Designs should draw on the best features of surrounding buildings. Existing incompatible or poorly designed buildings on the block face do not free the designer from the obligation to enhance the area through sensitive development.



*With a variety of building scales, forms and details, this block has a mixed visual character.*

# III. Site Design

**DESIGN PRINCIPLE:** Place the building on its site so it responds to the topography of the site, its position on the block, and to the placement of surrounding buildings.

Site design relates to how a building is placed on the site. It establishes how the building addresses the street and surrounding buildings. In designing the building on a site, the topography of the site and its location on the block must be considered. A property on a sloping site will have a different form than one on a flat site, as will a building on a corner rather than in the middle of the block. Other factors in site design include the site's relationship to adjacent properties and the location of front, side and rear yards.

## TOPOGRAPHY

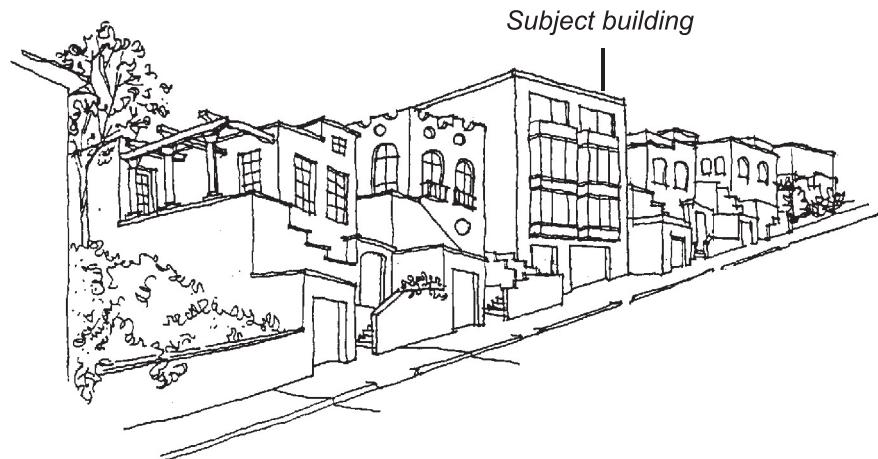
**Guideline:** Respect the topography of the site and the surrounding area.

New buildings and additions to existing buildings cannot disregard or significantly alter the existing topography of a site. The surrounding context guides the manner in which new structures fit into the streetscape, particularly along slopes and hills. This can be achieved by designing the building so it follows the topography in a manner similar to surrounding buildings.



*These buildings respect the topography of the surrounding area by stepping down to the street. This is reinforced by garages at the street edge, elevated building entrances and setbacks to the mass of the buildings.*

*The proposed building does not respond to the topography and front setback patterns because it does not have any of the stepping or articulation found in surrounding buildings.*



## FRONT SETBACK

**GUIDELINE:** Treat the front setback so that it provides a pedestrian scale and enhances the street.

The front setback is the distance between the front of the building and the front property line. The extent of the setback and treatment of the open space in the front setback are the primary way a building relates to the sidewalk. The front setback provides a transition between the public realm of the street and the private realm of the building, and as such, it must be treated so that it provides a pedestrian scale for the building and enhances the open space along the street.

Planning Code Section 142 requires that all off-street parking be screened from view. Front setbacks and driveways are not intended as off-street parking areas.

In neighborhoods where existing buildings are built up to the front property line and there is no front setback, build new buildings up to the sidewalk to the maximum extent permitted by the Planning Code, in order to maintain existing building patterns. However, in some situations, a front setback may be appropriate to accommodate architectural or decorative features or landscaping at the base of the building.

### Varied Front Setbacks

**GUIDELINE:** In areas with varied front setbacks, design building setbacks to act as a transition between adjacent buildings and to unify the overall streetscape.

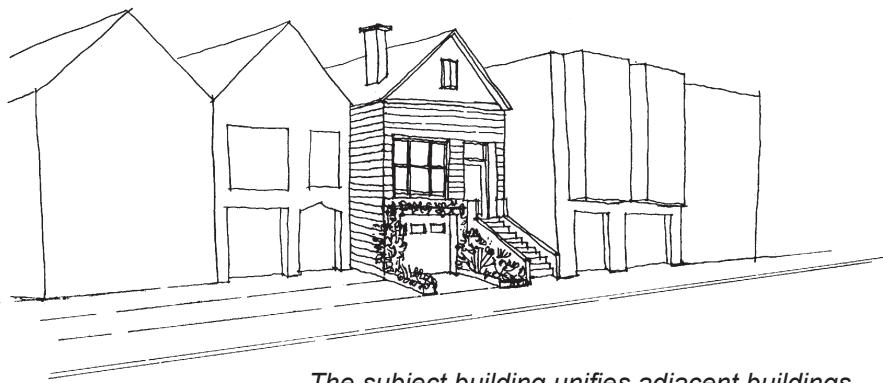
Under Planning Code Section 132, the required front setback is typically the average of the two adjacent buildings, or 15 feet, whichever is less.

In cases where existing buildings on a block face have varied front setbacks, infill projects can play an important role in acting as a transition between front setbacks of varying depths and in unifying

the overall rhythm of the streetscape. In designing the front setback, consider the following measures; other measures may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Articulate the facade with well-defined building entrances and projecting and recessed facade features that will establish a rhythm and add visual interest to the block face.
- Articulate the front facade in “steps” to create a transition between adjacent buildings.
- Avoid creating blank walls at the front setback that detract from the street composition.

Similarly, a proposed project may be located next to a historic or architecturally significant building that is set back from the street or is on a wider lot with front and side gardens. The front setback of the proposed project must respect the historic building’s setbacks and open space. Additionally, the front setback must serve to protect historic features of the adjacent historic building.



*The subject building unifies adjacent buildings with an appropriate front setback, landscaping and finished building materials.*



*The subject building uses an alternative method of averaging the front setback (Planning Code Section 132(b)) to unify the streetscape.*

## Landscaping

### GUIDELINE: Provide landscaping in the front setback.

Landscaping in the front setback creates a visually interesting transitional space between the public realm of the street and the private realm of the building. It also provides an opportunity to screen undesirable building features or otherwise enhance the appearance of a house, and contribute to the overall quality of the streetscape.

Landscaping must be an integral part of the project's design and not an afterthought. In landscaping the front setback, consider the following measures; other measures may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Provide landscaping in excess of the requirements of Planning Code Section 132(g).
- Provide landscape areas that are of a meaningful size for planting.
- Minimize paved areas such as driveways. Design driveways to be no wider than necessary to access garages and to be covered with permeable surfaces, such as interlocking pavers or natural ground cover.

Planning Code Section 143 requires street trees to be planted when constructing new buildings and large additions to buildings. Utility placement must be considered during the early stages of design to avoid conflicts with street trees. Tree species and planting locations are subject to approval by the Department of Public Works, Division of Urban Forestry. Contact them at 554-6700 or [www.sfdpw.org](http://www.sfdpw.org).

See also "Trees for San Francisco: A Guide for Street Tree Planting and Care" by the Friends of the Urban Forest. Contact them at 561-6890 or [www.fuf.net](http://www.fuf.net).



*The landscaping and front porches link the building to the street, creating a pedestrian-scaled environment.*

*With an encroachment permit from the Department of Public Works, planting can be provided in front of a building without a setback*



Planning Code Section 132(g) requires that 20% of the required front setback area be unpaved and devoted to plant material.

On properties where there is no front setback, landscaping is still encouraged. Planting opportunities include the following:

- Provide street trees.
- At the ground level, incorporate planters into porches, stairways and recessed building entrances.
- At the upper levels, incorporate planters on decks and balconies.
- Install trellises on the front facade.

The use of native vegetation or climate appropriate plantings is encouraged. Consider irrigation and maintenance issues in selecting plant materials. When outdoor lighting is incorporated in the front setback, provide lighting that is energy efficient and is shielded to avoid excess glare.

## SIDE SPACING BETWEEN BUILDINGS

Planning Code Section 133 requires setbacks in RH-1(D) Districts only. Planning Code Section 136 limits projections into the side yard to three feet or 1/6 of the required side yard, whichever is less.

**GUIDELINE: Respect the existing pattern of side spacing.**

Side spacing is the distance between adjacent buildings. In many cases, only a portion of the building is set back from the side. Side spacing helps establish the individual character of each building while creating a rhythm to the composition of a proposed project. Projects must respect the existing pattern of side spacing.



*Although features such as bays and chimneys project into the side yards, the overall side yard pattern is consistent, creating a defining characteristic of the block face.*

## REAR YARD

**GUIDELINE:** Articulate the building to minimize impacts on light and privacy to adjacent properties.

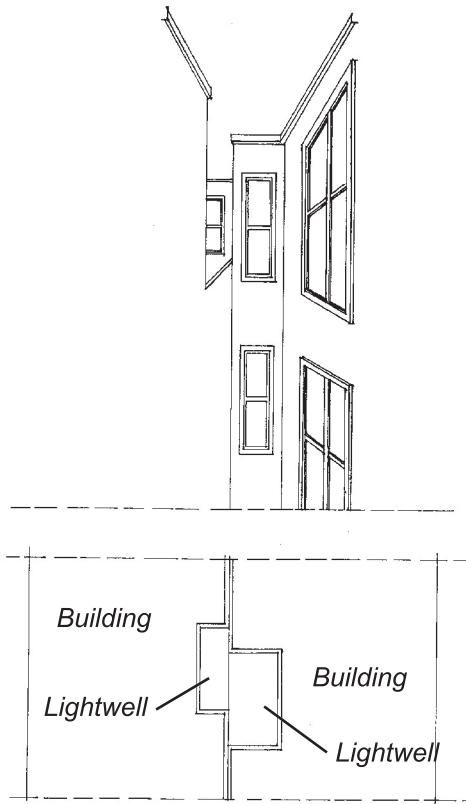
Rear yards are the open areas of land between the back of the building and the rear property line. When expanding a building into the rear yard, the impact of that expansion on light and privacy for abutting structures must be considered. This can be challenging given San Francisco's dense pattern of development, however, modifications to the building's design can help reduce these impacts and make a building compatible with the surrounding context.

### Light

In areas with a dense building pattern, some reduction of light to neighboring buildings can be expected with a building expansion. However, there may be situations where a proposed project will have a greater impact on neighboring buildings. In these situations, the following design modifications can minimize impacts on light; other modifications may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Provide setbacks on the upper floors of the building.
- Include a sloped roof form in the design.
- Provide shared light wells to provide more light to both properties.
- Incorporate open railings on decks and stairs.
- Eliminate the need for parapet walls by using a fire-rated roof.

Planning Code Section 101 states that one of the purposes of the Planning Code is to provide adequate light, air, privacy and convenience of access to property in San Francisco.



*Provide shared light wells to maximize light to both properties.*

## Privacy

As with light, some loss of privacy to existing neighboring buildings can be expected with a building expansion. However, there may be special situations where a proposed project will have an unusual impact on privacy to neighboring interior living spaces. In these situations, the following design modifications can minimize impacts on privacy; other modifications may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project. Some of these measures might conflict with the “light” measures above, so it will be necessary to prioritize relevant issues:

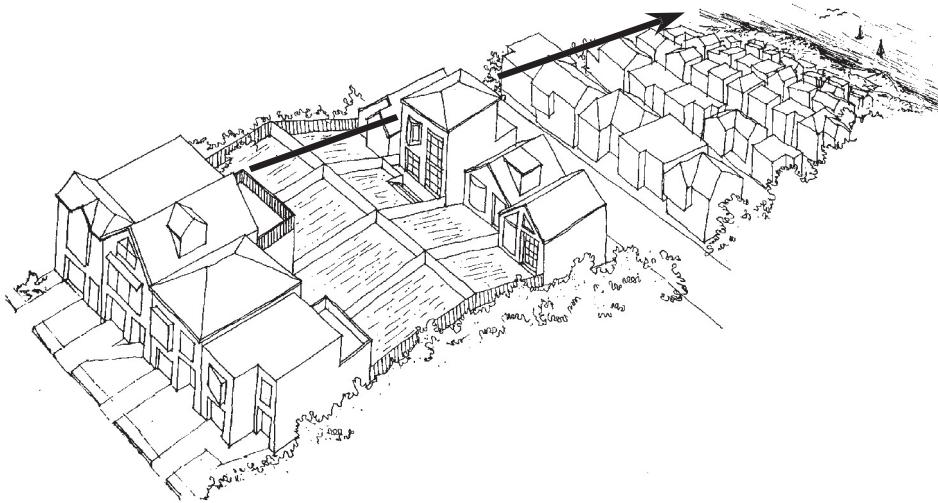
- Incorporate landscaping and privacy screens into the proposal.
- Use solid railings on decks.
- Develop window configurations that break the line of sight between houses.
- Use translucent glazing such as glass block or frosted glass on windows and doors facing openings on abutting structures.

## VIEWS

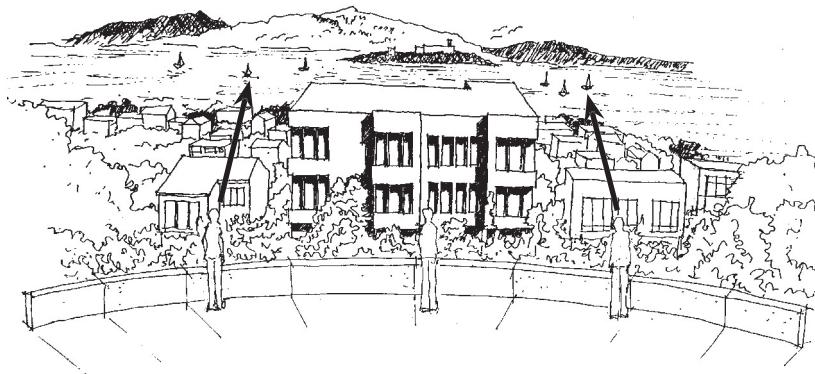
### GUIDELINE: Protect major public views from public spaces.

The Urban Design Element of the General Plan calls for the protection of major public views in the City, with particular attention to those of open space and water. Protect major views of the City as seen from public spaces such as streets and parks by adjusting the massing of proposed development projects to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts on public view sheds. The General Plan, Planning Code and these Guidelines do not provide for protecting views from private property.

The Urban Design Element identifies streets that are important for their quality of views (page I.5.16) and identifies outstanding and unique areas that contribute to San Francisco's visual form and character (page I.5.25).



*Views from this private building and deck are not protected.*



*Views from public areas, such as parks, are protected. The massing of this building impacts the view from the public park.*

## SPECIAL BUILDING LOCATIONS

### Corner Buildings

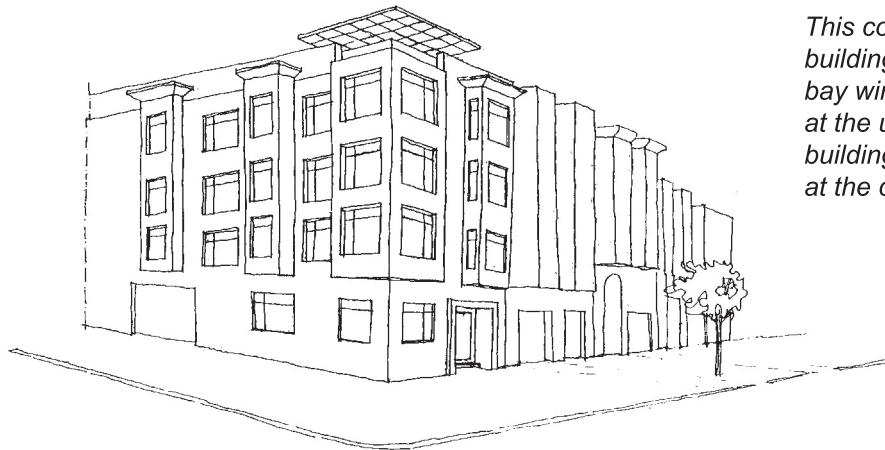
**GUIDELINE:** Provide greater visual emphasis to corner buildings.

Corner buildings play a stronger role in defining the character of the neighborhood than other buildings along the block face. They can act as informal entryways to the street, setting the tone for the streetscape that follows. Corner buildings must recognize their prominent location by embracing the public realm with a greater visual emphasis. In designing corner buildings, consider the following measures; other measures may be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Design both street facades to be fenestrated, articulated and finished as “front” facades.
- Add emphasis with more architectural detailing than found on other buildings on the block face.
- Where appropriate, use a greater building height to add emphasis.
- Design a more complex building form with projecting facade elements and special building features such as towers, cupolas, wrap-around bay windows, balconies, or other architectural embellishments.
- Create a prominent building entrance by notching the corner.



*This corner building is set back from both streets, allowing for a prominent entry stair that faces the corner. The pedimented projection and balcony at the upper floor gives the building greater visual interest.*



*This contemporary corner building has wrap-around square bay windows with an overhang at the upper floor giving the building greater visual emphasis at the corner.*

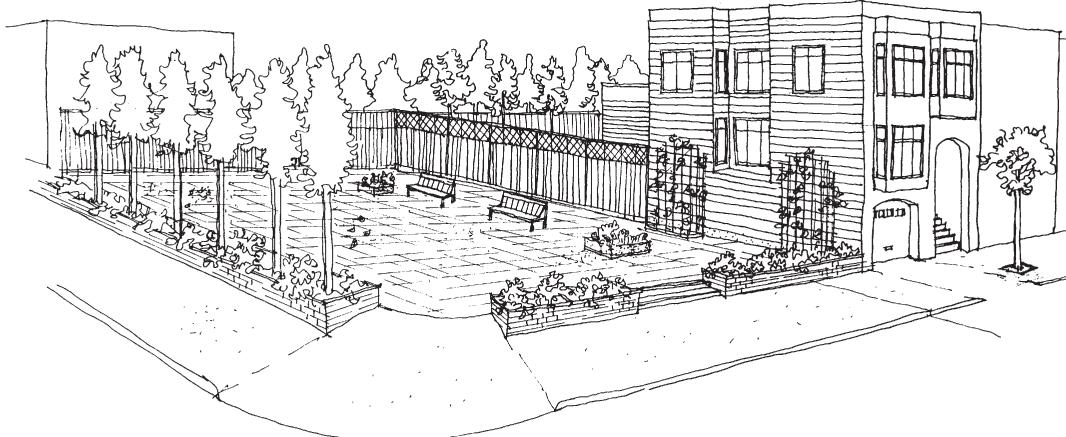
In addition, some corner buildings in residential districts may have rear yards with street frontage, leaving the upper stories of the rear facade visible from the street. In these situations, the building's rear facade must also be finished with appropriate building materials, and have more visual interest than normally seen on a rear facade.

### **Buildings Abutting Public Spaces**

**GUIDELINE:** Design building facades to enhance and complement adjacent public spaces.

Some buildings abut public spaces such as neighborhood parks, pedestrian or bicycle paths, and school playgrounds. As with corner buildings, they have more than one facade facing a public space.

For more information about property line windows, see the Department of Building Inspection's Administrative Bulletin on "Local Equivalency for Approval of New Openings in New and Existing Building Property Line Walls".



*Treatment of a building facade abutting a neighborhood park. Facade articulation and finished materials are used to avoid a dull and unattractive side wall. The fence has also been designed to complement the adjacent space.*

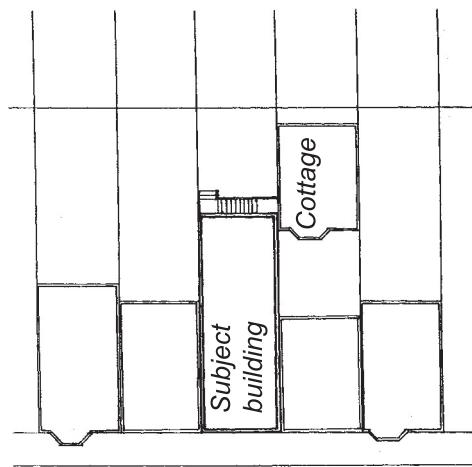
Special attention is necessary to ensure that the building's facades enhance the public realm. Blank walls or fences along public spaces can make these spaces feel isolated. Instead, these building facades must be fenestrated, articulated, ornamented and finished with a level of detail compatible to a front facade. Provide exterior lighting that is energy efficient and is shielded to avoid excess glare.

### Rear Yard Cottages

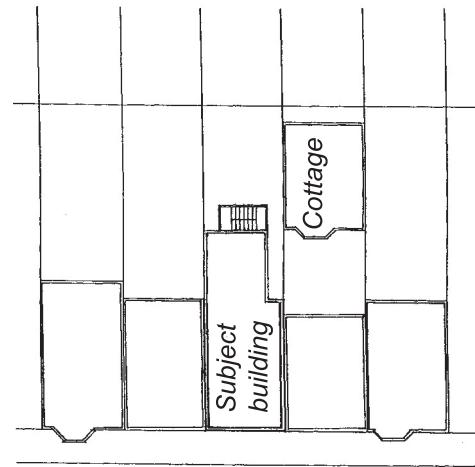
#### GUIDELINE: Articulate the building to minimize impacts on light to adjacent cottages.

Buildings located in rear yards are non-complying structures under the Planning Code and may themselves have an impact on the rear yard open space. However, when a proposed project is adjacent to a lot that has a cottage used as a dwelling unit at the rear of the lot, modifications to the building's design may be necessary to reduce light impacts to that cottage specifically. Consider the following modifications; other measures may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Provide side setbacks at the rear of the building.
- Minimize rear projections such as decks and stairs.



*This illustration shows a new building permitted under the Planning Code. The building's design has not been modified to minimize light impacts to the adjacent cottage, and further restricts the mid-block open space.*



*This illustration shows a new building that provides a side setback to reduce the impact on light to the cottage.*



# IV. Building Scale And Form

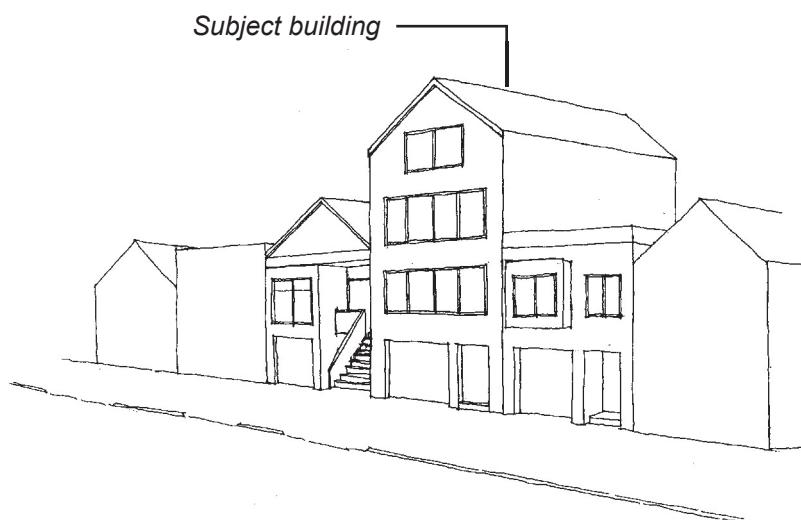
**DESIGN PRINCIPLE:** Design the building's scale and form to be compatible with that of surrounding buildings, in order to preserve neighborhood character.

## BUILDING SCALE

**GUIDELINE:** Design the scale of the building to be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings.

The building scale is established primarily by its height and depth. It is essential for a building's scale to be compatible with that of surrounding buildings, in order to preserve the neighborhood character. Poorly scaled buildings will seem incompatible (too large or small) and inharmonious with their surroundings.

A building that is larger than its neighbors can still be in scale and be compatible with the smaller buildings in the area. It can often be made to look smaller by facade articulations and through setbacks to upper floors. In other cases, it may be necessary to reduce the height or depth of the building.



*This building is out of scale with surrounding buildings because it is not articulated to make it more compatible with the scale of surrounding two-story homes.*

*A fourth story setback and facade articulations make the building more compatible with the scale of surrounding buildings.*



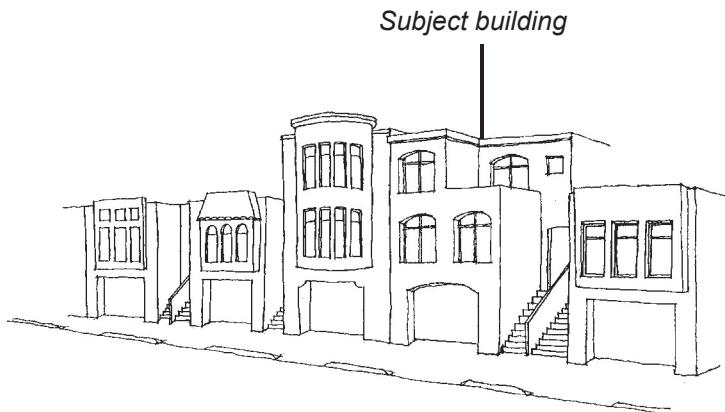
### **Building Scale at the Street**

**GUIDELINE:** Design the height and depth of the building to be compatible with the existing building scale at the street.

If a proposed building is taller than surrounding buildings, or a new floor is being added to an existing building, it may be necessary to modify the building height or depth to maintain the existing scale at the street. By making these modifications, the visibility of the upper floor is limited from the street, and the upper floor appears subordinate to the primary facade. The key is to design a building that complements other buildings on the block and does not stand out, even while displaying an individual design.

Refer to Planning Code Section 130, 136 and 250 for setbacks, permitted obstructions and height limits.

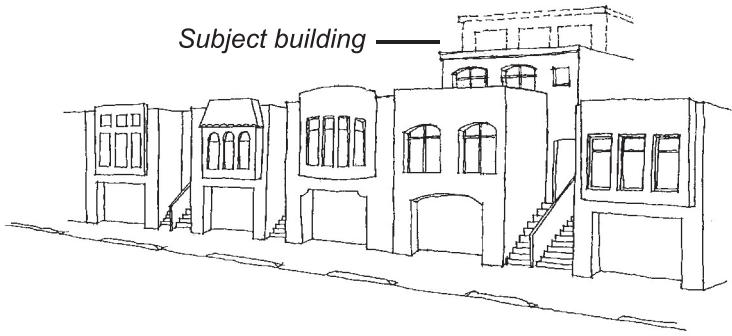
*A partial third-story setback provides a transitional height to the adjacent two-story building and maintains the scale of the buildings at the street level.*



In modifying the height and depth of the building, consider the following measures; other measures may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Set back the upper story. The recommended setback for additions is 15 feet from the front building wall.
- Eliminate the building parapet by using a fire-rated roof with a 6-inch curb.
- Provide a sloping roofline whenever appropriate.
- Eliminate the upper story.

*On this block face of two-story buildings, it is possible to preserve the building scale at the street by setting back the third floor. However, an additional setback for a proposed fourth floor is not sufficient. The fourth floor must be eliminated to respect the neighborhood scale.*



*The three-story scale of the block face is maintained by setting the fourth floor back so it is subordinate to the primary facade.*

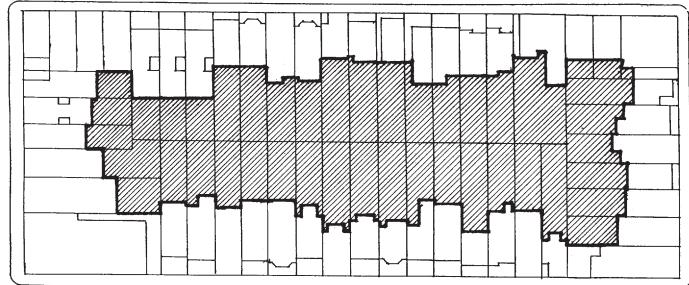


### **Building Scale at the Mid-Block Open Space**

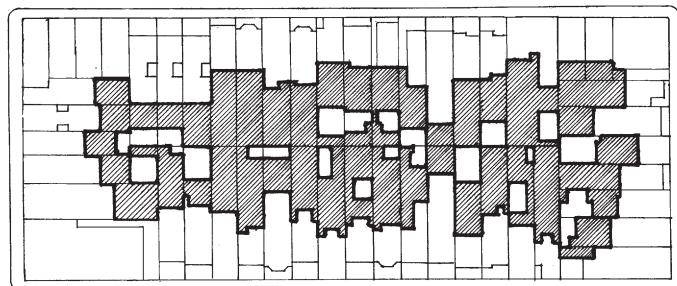
**GUIDELINE:** Design the height and depth of the building to be compatible with the existing building scale at the mid-block open space.

Rear yards provide open space for the residences to which they are attached, and they collectively contribute to the mid-block open space that is visible to most residents of the block. This visual open space can be a significant community amenity.

*Block with a strong mid-block open space pattern.*



*Block with an irregular mid-block open space pattern. The rear yards of many of the parcels are developed with structures.*



The height and depth of a building expansion into the rear yard can impact the mid-block open space. Even when permitted by the Planning Code, building expansions into the rear yard may not be appropriate if they are uncharacteristically deep or tall, depending on the context of the other buildings that define the mid-block open space. An out-of-scale rear yard addition can leave surrounding residents feeling “boxed-in” and cut-off from the mid-block open space.

The following design modifications may reduce the impacts of rear yard expansions; other modifications may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Set back upper floors to provide larger rear yard setbacks.
- Notch the building at the rear or provide setbacks from side property lines.
- Reduce the footprint of the proposed building or addition.

Planning Code Section 134 establishes minimum depths for required rear yards in all residential districts. Planning Code Section 136 summarizes permitted rear yard projections.



*Although the Planning Code allows a three-story addition extending into the rear yard, the addition is substantially out of scale with surrounding buildings and impacts the rear yard open space.*



*A two-story addition with a pitched roof lessens the impacts of the addition and is more in scale with the rear of the adjacent buildings.*



*This addition has been scaled back to two stories and is set in from the side property lines to minimize its impact.*



*This addition extends the full width of the lot but is set back at the second floor so the building steps down to the rear yard.*



*The rear stairs are setback from the side property line and their projection into the rear yard is minimized, in order to maintain the mid-block open space.*

## BUILDING FORM

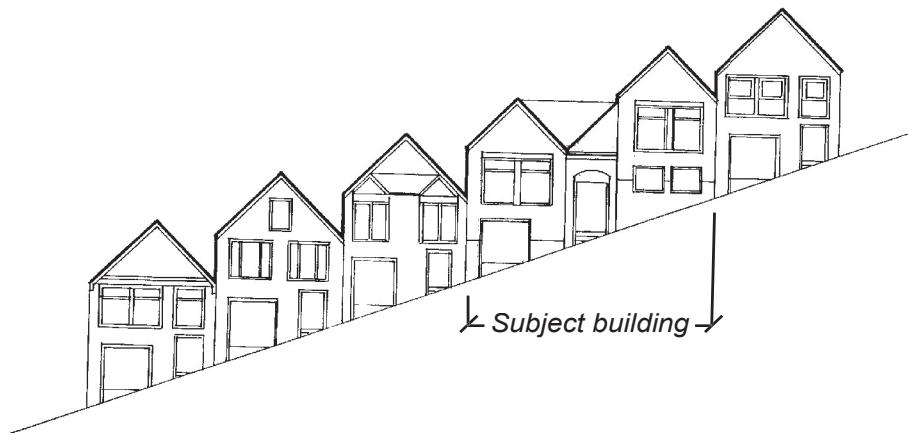
**GUIDELINE:** Design the building's form to be compatible with that of surrounding buildings.

Building form is the three-dimensional shape of the building. The elements of building form include the width and proportions of the facade and the shape of the roofline. Though the Planning Code establishes the maximum building envelope by dictating setbacks and heights, the building must also be compatible with the form of surrounding buildings.

### Facade Width

**GUIDELINE:** Design the building's facade width to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

Most building widths are related to the lot width, typically 25 feet. This uniform building width contributes to the overall character of the neighborhood and the scale of buildings within the area. Therefore, it is very important to respect the facade widths typically found in the neighborhood. If a project is located on a site that is wider than usual, articulate the facade to respect traditional facade widths. For example, a facade may be broken into separate forms that match the widths of surrounding buildings. Design this articulation to be substantive, not merely be a surface treatment.



*Although this building is twice the width of surrounding buildings, it has been designed to have two gabled forms, similar in width to other buildings.*

## Proportions

**GUIDELINE:** Design the building's proportions to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

Proportions are the dimensional relationships among the building's features, and typically involve the relationship between the height and width of building features. A building's proportions are evident in the floor-to-floor heights of a building, the size and placement of windows and doors, and the scale of features such as porches, cornices and bay windows. Building features must be proportional not only to other features on the building, but also to the features found on surrounding buildings.



*The horizontal emphasis of this building's windows and the lack of facade articulation results in a building that disrupts the character of the street and is inconsistent with the proportions of surrounding buildings.*



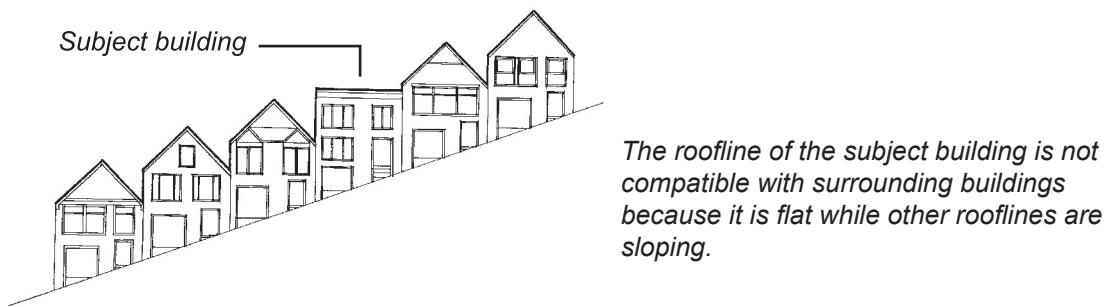
*Through the use of vertical oriented windows, the proposed building has proportions similar to surrounding buildings.*

## Rooflines

**GUIDELINE:** Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

Predominant rooflines found on buildings in San Francisco include front gabled, multi-gabled, hipped, or flat. In some cases, a building may have a parapet at the front that obscures a flat or gabled roof behind it. Within a block, the collection of roofs create a “roofline,” which is the profile of the buildings against the sky. When designing a project, consider the types of rooflines found on surrounding buildings. For example, if most buildings have front gables, adding a building with a flat roof may not be consistent with the neighborhood pattern.

In some situations, there may be groups of buildings that have common rooflines, providing clues to what type of roofline will help tie the composition of the streetscape together. In other situations, it may be more appropriate to consider the entire block face to determine the broad pattern of rooflines.



# V. Architectural Features

**DESIGN PRINCIPLE:** Design the building's architectural features to enhance the visual and architectural character of the neighborhood.

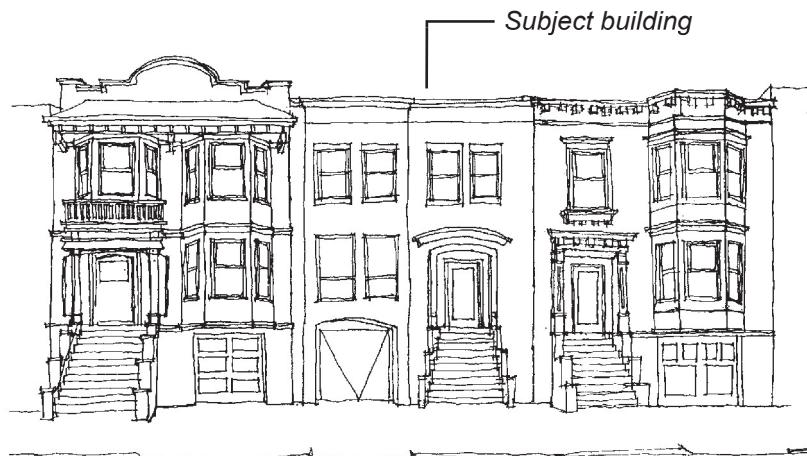
Architectural features add visual interest to a building, and provide relief by breaking up a building's mass. Architectural features include building projections such as bay windows, porches, garage structures, rooftop forms, and building entrances. They are a significant component of the architectural character for both the building and the neighborhood.

In designing architectural features, it is important to consider the type, placement and size of architectural features on surrounding buildings, and to use features that enhance the visual and architectural character of the neighborhood. Architectural features that are not compatible with those commonly found in the neighborhood are discouraged. Many architectural features are permitted as obstructions in the front or rear yard under Planning Code Section 136; however many architectural features may also be located within the buildable area of the lot.

## **BUILDING ENTRANCES**

**GUIDELINE:** Design building entrances to enhance the connection between the public realm of the street and sidewalk and the private realm of the building.

Building entrances are an important building feature, providing the connection between the public realm of the street and sidewalk, and the private realm of the building. A well-designed building entrance will appear welcoming and inviting to the pedestrian, making the neighborhood a pleasant place to live. In addition to the doorway itself, the entry may be comprised of stairways, landings, porches, and other elements.

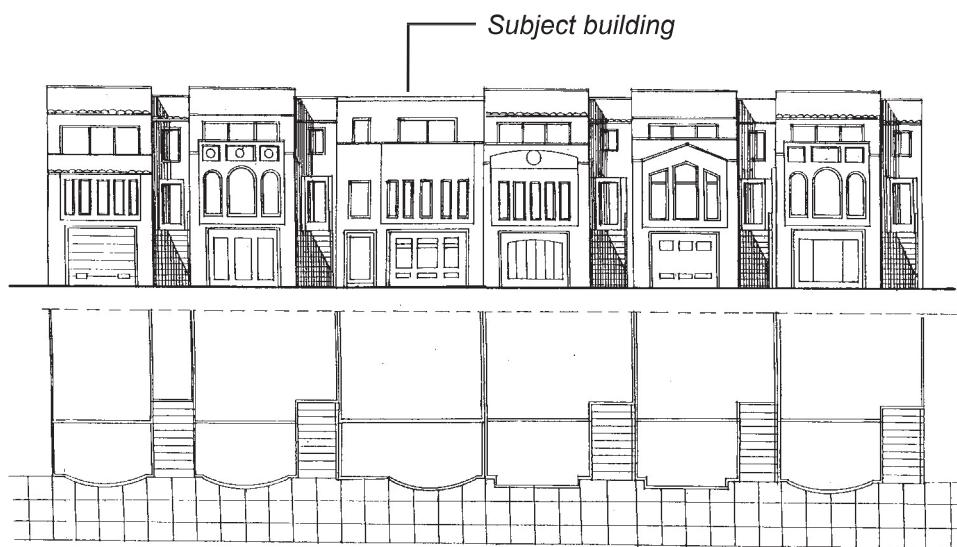


*Building entrances are an important building feature. These building entrances appear welcoming because of the broad stairways and well-designed door surrounds.*

### **Location of Building Entrances**

**GUIDELINE:** Respect the existing pattern of building entrances.

Many neighborhoods have block faces with distinctive patterns of building entrances. Entrances may be consistently located on the left side, right side, or middle of the front facade, or may be recessed. Some entrances may be at the street level while others are elevated above the street. Proposed projects must respect the existing pattern of building entrances.

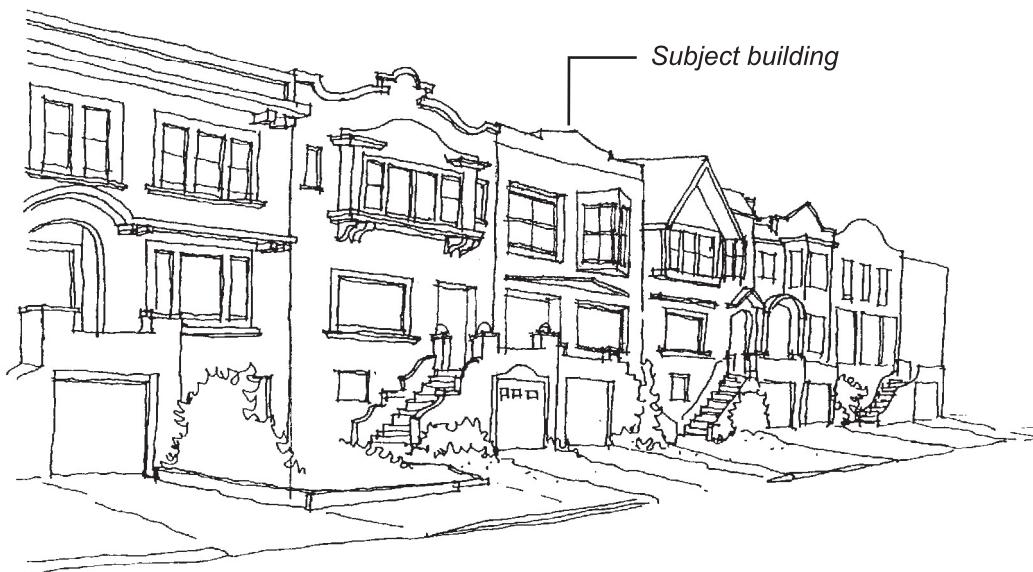


*This building entrance is not compatible with other building entrances because its location on the left side of the building breaks the pattern of right side entrances found on the block face. Additionally, the entrance is not elevated and recessed, as are other entrances on the block face.*

## Front Porches

**GUIDELINE:** Provide front porches that are compatible with existing porches of surrounding buildings.

A porch is a design element that serves as a front entry to the building. In many neighborhoods, it is common for buildings to have front stairs leading up to a porch that is above the ground level. These stairs and front porches, either enclosed or unenclosed, contribute to the visual richness of the streetscape. Provide front porches that are compatible with existing porches of surrounding buildings.



*Design front porches to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.*

## Utility Panels

For utility installation requirements, contact the PG&E New Construction Services Office at 695-3500 or [www.pge.com](http://www.pge.com).

**GUIDELINE:** Locate utility panels so they are not visible on the front building wall or on the sidewalk.

Utility panels and meters can detract from the appearance of the front building facade. Where possible, locate this equipment so it is not on the front of the building, but is instead recessed or otherwise hidden from view. Additionally, locate utility boxes for new buildings on the property instead of on the sidewalk in front of the building, where possible. Coordinate utility line placement to maximize the potential for tree planting.

## BAY WINDOWS

**GUIDELINE:** Design the length, height and type of bay windows to be compatible with those on surrounding buildings.

Bay windows are an important element of a building's design and as such, they must be appropriately detailed and located with respect to other building elements to create a well-proportioned building. The length, height and type of bay window must also be compatible with patterns that are prevalent in the area. For example, buildings in a neighborhood may typically have bay windows at both the second and third floor, or only at the second floor. Buildings may have one bay centered on the facade, or two bay windows side-by-side. The bay windows may be square, angled or curved.

Planning Code Sections 136(c)(2) and (3) establish dimensional limitations for bay windows located in required setbacks and yards. The Code includes requirements for the height, width and amount of glass area of bay windows.



*The width and length of the proposed bay window are not compatible with the bay windows on surrounding buildings.*

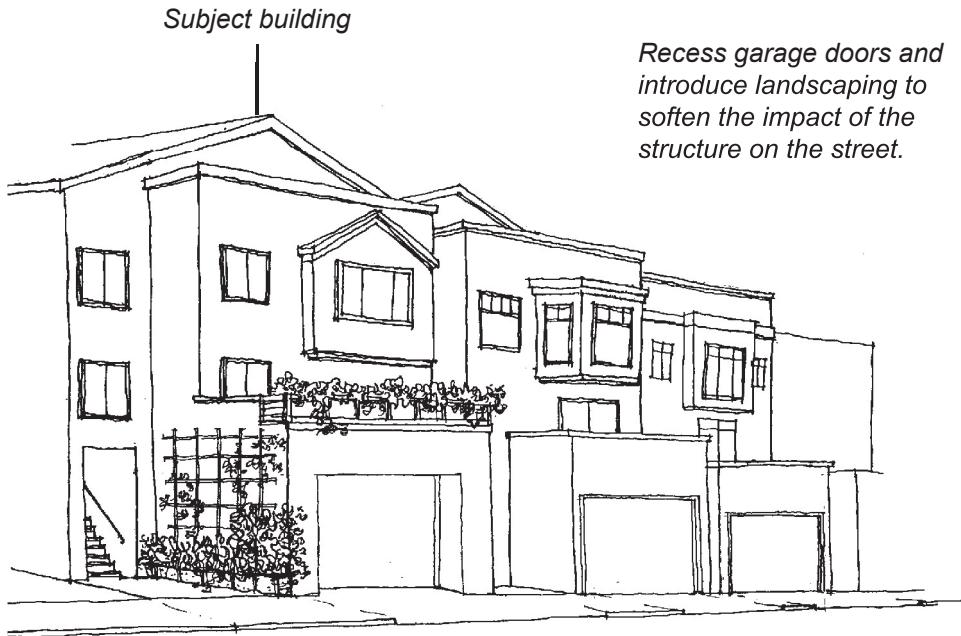
## GARAGES

### Garage Structures

**GUIDELINE:** Detail garage structures to create a visually interesting street frontage.

Construction of a garage structure at the front of the building typically results in the replacement of a landscaped area with a structure that covers nearly the entire frontage of the lot. This can

Planning Code Section 136(c)(26)-(28) permits garages in the front setback area of steeply upsloping lots.

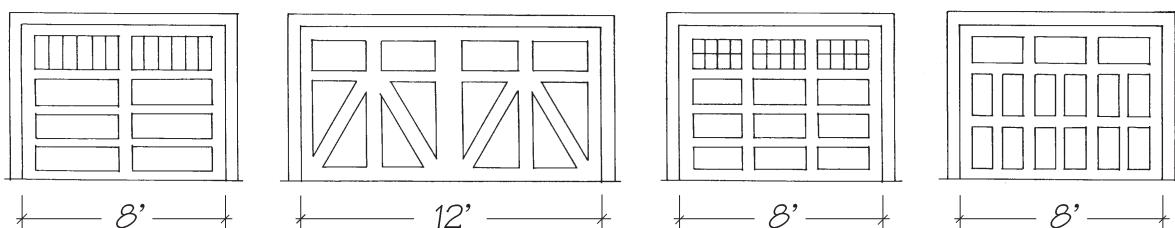


result in a blank, unattractive street frontage for pedestrians. To avoid this, detail the garage structure to create a more visually interesting street frontage. For example, recess garage doors to modulate the building wall, and introduce landscaping to the front yard and on the roof of the garage to soften the impact of the structure at the street.

### **Garage Door Design and Placement**

**GUIDELINE:** Design and place garage entrances and doors to be compatible with the building and the surrounding area.

Garage doors occupy a major portion of the building's ground floor and can therefore have a major impact on the pedestrian's perception of the building. In order to minimize the visual impacts of the garage door, it must be designed to be an integral part of the building's architecture, with trim and detailing that is visually interesting.



*Design garage doors to complement the architecture of a building.*

The following design modifications may achieve this; other modifications may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Recess the garage door so it appears less intrusive. Garage doors that are recessed to provide adequate vertical clearance must not be recessed so far as to result in a shadowy void that appears to undermine the building.
- If adding a garage to an existing building, place the garage entirely below the bottom of the bay so it is not necessary to remove any trim or portion of the bay window.
- While glazing may be used on doors, the doors should be mostly opaque so parked vehicles cannot be viewed from the street. Limit other openings in the door to those required by the Building Code for ventilation. Locate them well below eye level and decoratively screen them in a way that will block the view of the parking area from the street.
- Choose a garage door with a design and materials that complement the architecture of the building.

### **Garage Door Widths**

#### **GUIDELINE: Minimize the width of garage entrances.**

Because the garage door is usually the largest opening in the front of the building, care must be taken to prevent it from becoming the dominant facade feature. In most of the City's residential neighborhoods, the width of the garage doors is between eight and twelve feet. In some cases, nearby buildings may have over-sized garage doors with inappropriate designs that detract from the street character of the neighborhood. Over-sized garage doors must not be emulated; rather the new garage door must improve the visual quality of the area.

The following design modifications can be used to minimize the appearance of the garage door; other modifications may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Where the garage is not deep enough to allow adequate car maneuvering space, two smaller doors of approximately eight feet in width separated by a minimum of one foot is more appropriate than a single sixteen-foot wide garage door.
- Where a smaller garage door is infeasible, recess the door from the front facade to reduce the impact of a larger garage door.

For information about obtaining a minor sidewalk encroachment permit for a new curb cut, contact the Department of Public works at 554-5810 or [www.sfdpw.org](http://www.sfdpw.org).

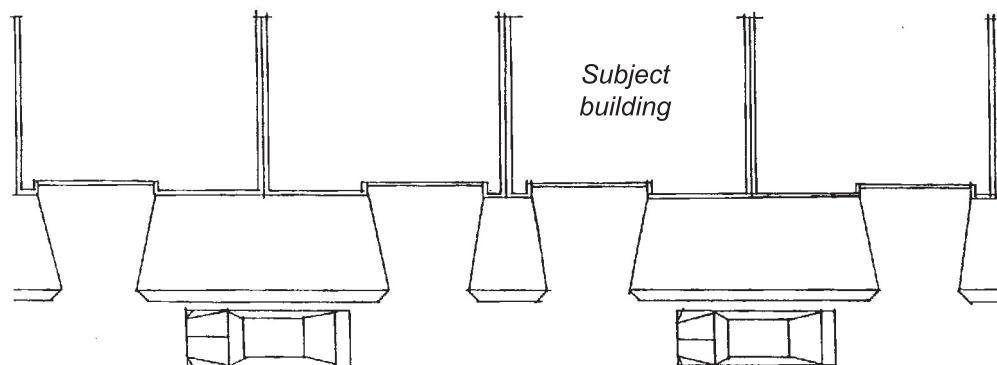
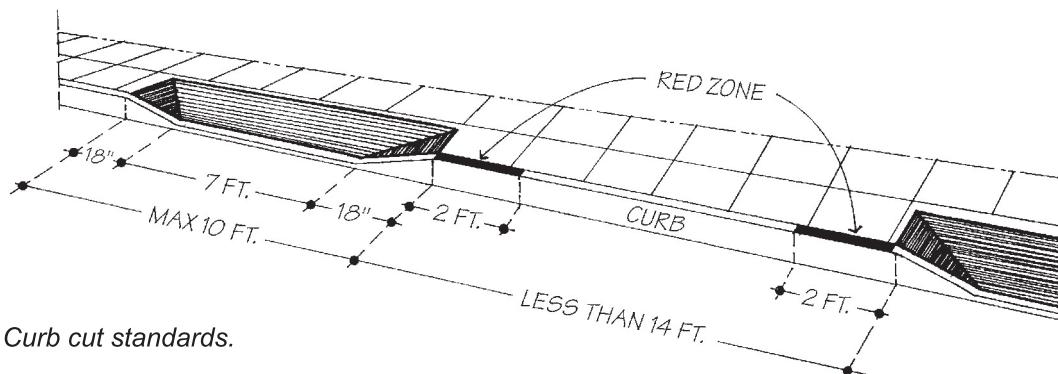
For information about requesting a “red zone” for a curb cut, contact the Department of Parking and Traffic Engineering Division at 554-2300 or [www.sfgov.org](http://www.sfgov.org).

## Curb Cuts

**GUIDELINE:** Coordinate the placement of curb cuts.

Pursuant to Planning Code Section 155(l), curb cuts must be designed to minimize the width and frequency of curb cuts, and to maximize the number and size of on-street parking spaces available to the public. The Zoning Administrator’s “Curb Cut Policy” adopts a standard curb cut width of 10 feet for all new residential development and alterations to existing buildings. Where the curbside length is less than 14 feet, a two-foot “red zone” included on either side of a curb cut may result in a loss of on-street parking because the remaining space is too small to be used for parking.

Pursuant to these regulations, new curb cuts must be placed in locations that will minimize the loss of on-street parking. When developing multi-family projects and contiguous lots, cluster parking areas and coordinate the placement of curb cuts with others on the block. Additionally, locate curb cuts to maximize the potential for tree planting.



*By pairing the new curb cut with the existing curb cut to the left, a full-size on-street parking space is preserved.*

## ROOFTOP ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

**GUIDELINE:** Sensitively locate and screen rooftop features so they do not dominate the appearance of a building.

The appearance of a building is affected by the design and placement of all architectural features, including rooftop features. Rooftop features include stair penthouses, parapets, dormers, windscreens and solar collection devices. They can dominate the appearance of a building and the block face if they are not sensitively located and screened.

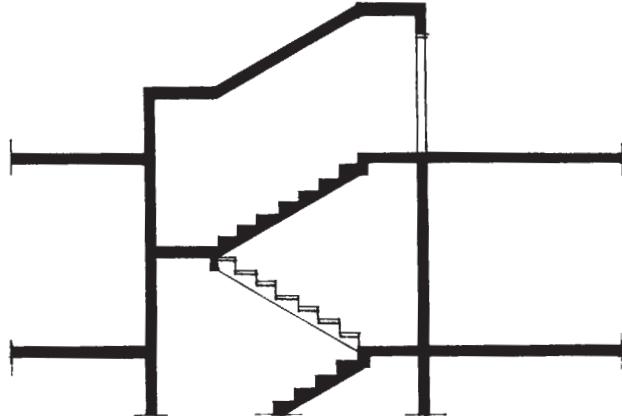
The following design modifications may reduce the impact of rooftop features; other modifications may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Locate rooftop features in a manner that minimizes their visibility from the street and reduces the effect of rooftop clutter.
- Design rooftop features with the smallest possible overall dimensions that meet the requirements of the Building and Planning Codes.
- Limit the number of rooftop features.

### Stair Penthouses

**GUIDELINE:** Design stair penthouses to minimize their visibility from the street.

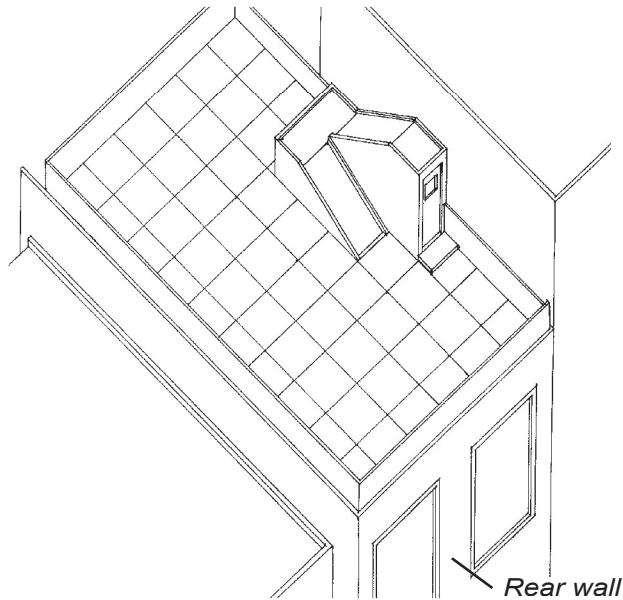
A stair penthouse is typically constructed to provide roof access for the building. Limit the size of the penthouse in order to reduce its visibility from the street and its impact on light to adjacent buildings. Stair penthouses may also be entirely eliminated through the use of roof hatches, courts with stairs, or exterior rear stairs to the roof.



*Section drawing of a stair penthouse with a sloped roof.*

The following design modifications may reduce the impact of stair penthouses; other modifications may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Slope the roof of the penthouse structure to follow the slope of the interior stairway.
- Locate the penthouse against the wall of an adjacent building.



*In order to minimize the visibility of this stair penthouse, the roof follows the slope of the interior stairway and the penthouse is located against the wall of an adjacent building.*



*The parapet provides a distinctive architectural feature to the overall design of the building.*

## Parapets

**GUIDELINE:** Design parapets to be compatible with overall building proportions and other building elements.

Parapets are parts of walls entirely above the surface of the roof. They are sometimes required for fire protection but they may also be decorative and can be used to screen roof features. Design parapets to be compatible with other building elements and overall building proportions. Using a fire-rated roof can eliminate the need for a parapet wall, reducing the height of a building as viewed from the street or mid-block open space.

## Dormers

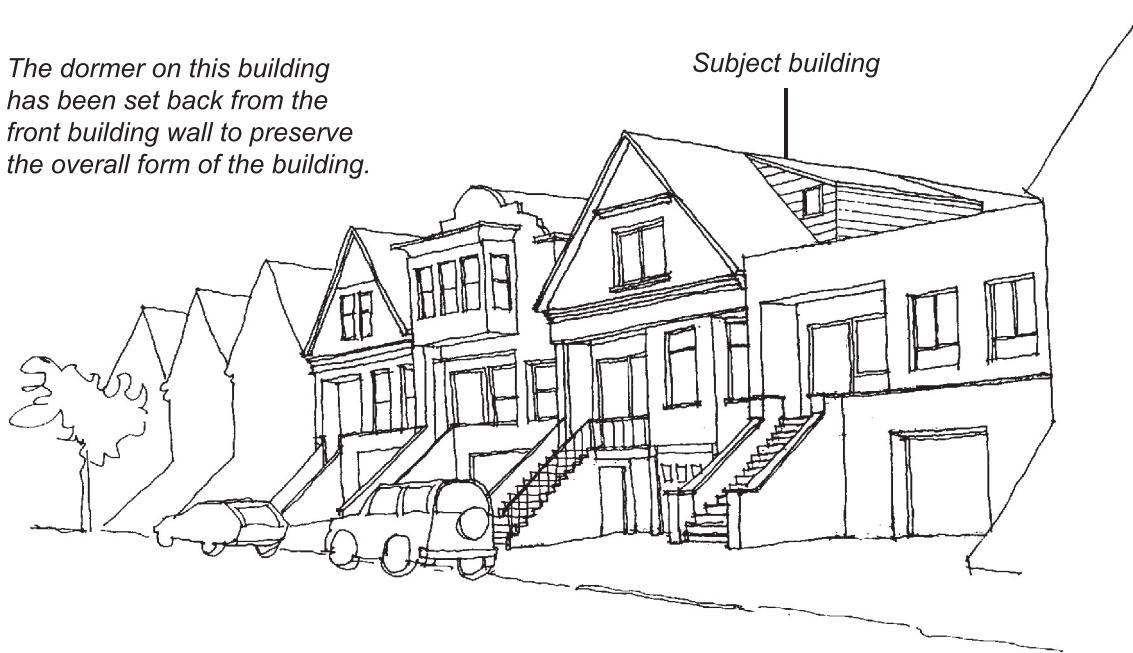
**GUIDELINE:** Design dormers to be compatible with the architectural character of surrounding buildings.

Dormers can be used to allow more light and ventilation into a building, and can provide additional occupiable space. Consider the following when designing dormers; other measures may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Set back dormers that provide increased occupied floor area from the front building wall. The minimum recommended set back is 10 feet.
- The peak of the dormers should not be higher than the peak of the building's roof.
- Dormers must be compatible with the architectural character of surrounding buildings.

For more information, see the Zoning Administrator's Bulletin for dormers.

*The dormer on this building has been set back from the front building wall to preserve the overall form of the building.*



## Windscreens

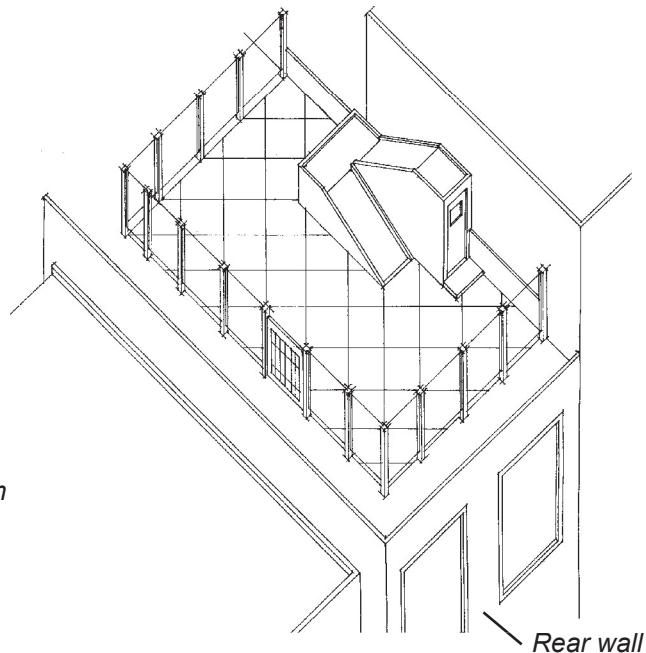
**GUIDELINE:** Design windscreens to minimize impacts on the building's design and on light to adjacent buildings.

Windscreens provide protection for outdoor areas on rooftops. Design windscreens so they are compatible with the building's design and do not increase the building's apparent height. Also minimize the impact windscreens can have on light to adjacent buildings.

Consider the following in designing windscreens; other measures may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances of a particular project:

- Transparent windscreens are encouraged.
- The maximum recommended height of windscreens is eight feet.
- Where possible, locate the windscreens in a manner that minimizes their visibility from the street and surrounding properties.

*To minimize its visibility from the street, this windscreen is transparent and is set in from the front, rear and sides of the property.*





# VI. Building Details

**DESIGN PRINCIPLE:** Use architectural details to establish and define a building's character and to visually unify a neighborhood.

A building's architectural details, windows and materials provide the finishing touches that convey a sense of quality and define a building's character. Architectural details have a great impact on how a building is perceived, and provide visual interest, texture, and richness. Buildings with virtually identical forms can appear dramatically different due to their details. The use of compatible details visually unifies a neighborhood's buildings, providing continuity and establishing the architectural character of the area.

Some neighborhoods exhibit uniformity. Victorian neighborhoods are characterized by ornate turned and jig-saw cut trim and large double-hung windows, while neighborhoods with Spanish and Mediterranean Revival houses have a simpler character, with stucco finishes, red tile roofs, a variety of window styles, and less decoration. Neighborhoods with a mixed visual character may exhibit a broader range of details, but usually have some common theme, such as the alignment and placement of components such as windows and cornices or the location of entries. If the choice of windows, materials, and ornament has no rationale, the building will lack architectural unity and integrity.

## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

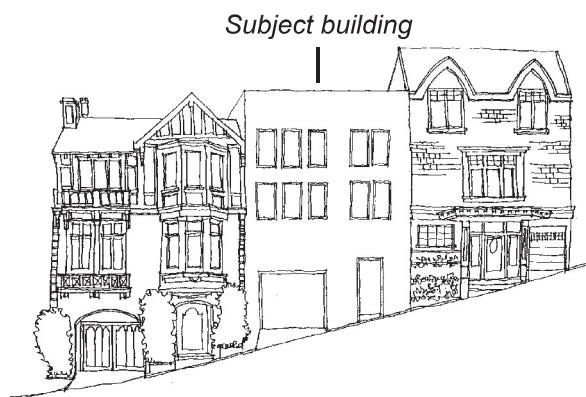
**GUIDELINE:** Design the placement and scale of architectural details to be compatible with the building and the surrounding area.

Architectural details provide visual richness and interest, and contribute to the streetscape. Details create shadows on the building surface and help to articulate the mass and define the building's form. Many details are functional and serve a purpose, such as a cornice, a column, or window trim. Other elements, such as brackets under a cornice may be structural or decorative, while some details are solely ornamentation intended to enhance the building's appearance.

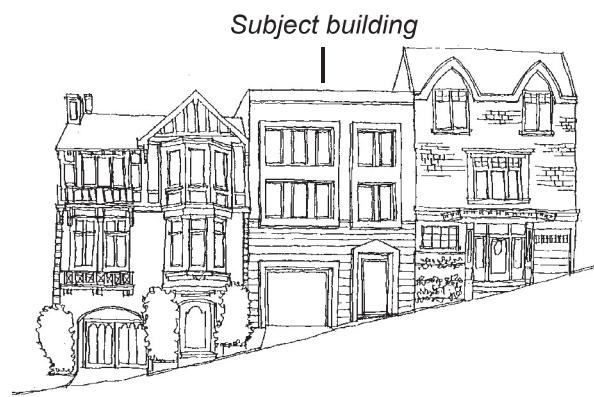
In designing a building's facade, use architectural details with understanding and restraint, and with consideration for the visual

character of the neighborhood. The use of decorative brackets, eaves, dentils, cornices, columns and capitals, for example, should come from an awareness of the evolution of such building elements and of their original structural function: columns hold up buildings, brackets support overhangs, etc. Do not use detail that makes the building stand out as excessively plain or overly decorated, or that results in building facades designed as replicas of historic buildings. Ornament that has been carelessly tacked on to the facade of a building can cause architectural disorder, and will appear superficial and cluttered.

A relatively flat facade with little articulation and detail will be inconsistent in an area that has a high degree of facade ornamentation. Likewise, if the detailing on buildings in the neighborhood is simple and restrained, adding a great deal of ornament is discouraged.



*A building with no detail looks out of place on a block face with rich detailing.*



*This building has added details around the windows and building entries, making it more compatible with other buildings on the block face.*

## WINDOWS

**GUIDELINE:** Use windows that contribute to the architectural character of the building and the neighborhood.

Windows are one of the most important decorative features, establishing the architectural character of the building and the neighborhood. Windows provide human scale and emphasize the proportions of a building. They are also a link between the inside private space and the outdoor public space. The proportions, features and materials of a building's windows articulate the architectural rhythm along the block-face and contribute to the building's sense of mass.

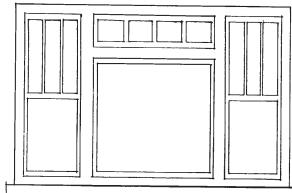
Planning Code Section 136(c)(2) requires that the glass area on a projecting bay window be equal to at least 50 percent of the vertical surfaces on the bay.

## Window Size

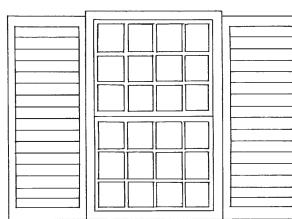
**GUIDELINE:** Relate the proportion and size of windows to that of existing buildings in the neighborhood.

Buildings within a neighborhood usually have windows with compatible proportions of height to width. Most residential buildings have a vertical orientation that is reinforced by the windows. Using windows compatible in proportion, size, and orientation to those found in the surrounding area are essential for a building's compatibility with the neighborhood. In order to establish a sense of mass along the block-face, design the proportion of window (void) to wall (solid) area on a facade to be compatible with buildings in the surrounding area.

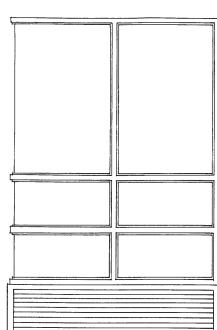
## Window Features



*Craftsman*



*Colonial*

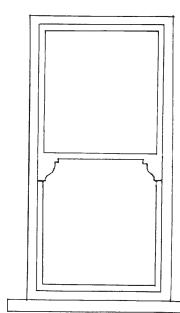


*Contemporary*

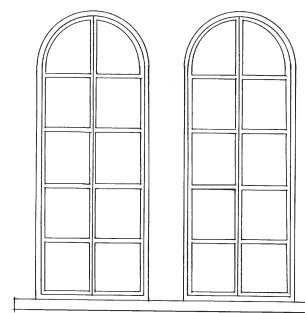
**GUIDELINE:** Design window features to be compatible with the building's architectural character, as well as other buildings in the neighborhood.

The windows on buildings with specific architectural styles such as Victorian, Edwardian, Spanish, Colonial Revival, or Craftsman, may have distinctive characteristics and features that typify each style. These features include size, shape, and trim elements, as well as the window function: double-hung, casement, or fixed. Ensure that the materials and detailing of replacement windows as well as windows on new building are appropriate to each building's architectural character, as well as the windows on other buildings in the neighborhood.

Among the features to consider are the detailing of the individual sash and the trim surrounding the windows. If a window is to have divided lights, it should either be a true divided light or a quality simulated divided light where muntins are applied to both the interior and exterior of the window. A sufficient window depth, or distance



*Victorian*



*Spanish*

from the face of the building to the sash, will create shadow lines, adding richness to the facade. All of these elements help to provide visual interest, creating reveals that give depth to the building facade and maintaining the architectural character of the building.

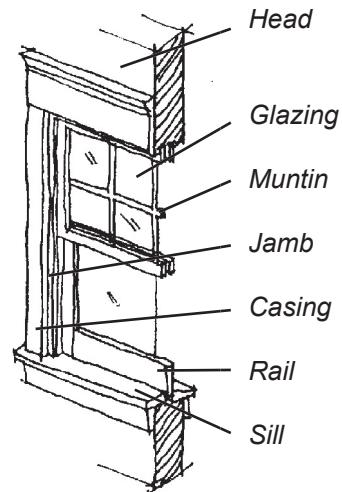
## Window Material

**GUIDELINE:** Use window materials that are compatible with those found on surrounding buildings, especially on facades visible from the street.

In order for a building to be harmonious with surrounding buildings, the choice of window material is very important. In areas where nearby buildings have inappropriate or incompatible windows, choose new or replacement windows that improve the visual quality of the subject building and the neighborhood. Reflective glass may not be appropriate on a residential building; use glass that is clear or only lightly tinted.

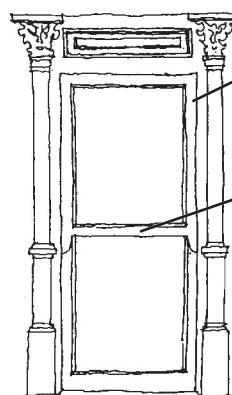
When replacing only select windows on a facade, it is especially important that the replacement windows match the proportions, style, details and materials of the existing windows in order to maintain the architectural character of the building. If a variety of window types are used, the result will be a facade that lacks visual cohesiveness.

For example, replace painted wood windows in-kind, particularly on all portions of facades visible from the public right-of-way. Replace non-original aluminum or vinyl windows with painted wood windows, if wood windows are original to the building. On existing buildings, the use of aluminum or vinyl windows may not be appropriate if the appearance of these materials is not compatible with the original building material. However, these window materials may be appropriate on new construction if they are compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

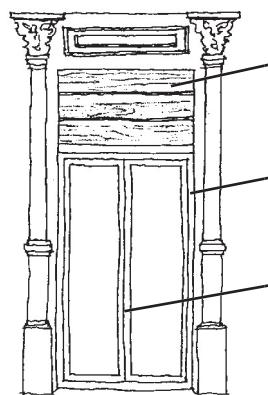


*Window details*

The California "Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings" establishes building energy efficiency standards for new construction and alterations to existing buildings. See [www.energy.ca.gov/title24/](http://www.energy.ca.gov/title24/) standards or call 800-772-3300 for information about energy efficiency standards for windows.



*Original window*



*Replacement window*

*Wood siding*

*Aluminum window*

*Slider*

*The proportions and materials of the replacement window are not compatible with the architectural character of the building.*

## EXTERIOR MATERIALS

**GUIDELINE:** The type, finish, and quality of a building's materials must be compatible with those used in the surrounding area.

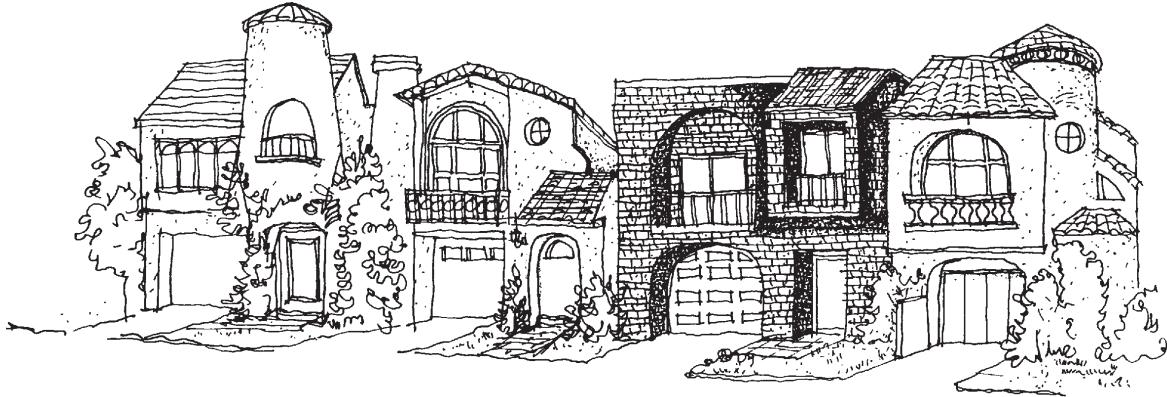
For more information about green building design and construction, see the "Green Building Guidelines" at [www.sfenvironment.org](http://www.sfenvironment.org).

When choosing building materials, look at the types of materials that are used in the neighborhood, and how those materials are applied and detailed. Ensure that the type and finish of these materials complement those used in the surrounding area, and that the quality is comparable to that of surrounding buildings. In neighborhoods with uniform materials, it is best to utilize the same materials. For example, a shingled house would not fit in with a row of stucco houses.

For information on sustainable materials and the reuse of building materials as part of new construction, contact the San Francisco Department of the Environment at 355-3700 or [www.sfenvironment.org](http://www.sfenvironment.org).

Use material finishes that are compatible with those of surrounding buildings. If the materials are predominantly painted wood siding or shingles, a stained finish may not be compatible. Masonry (brick and stone) that is not painted should be left unpainted.

Also consider the visual qualities of a material, such as a smooth or rough texture. For example, in choosing masonry, the color and size of the bricks or stone may be a factor. Wood siding is available in a variety of widths and styles. Stucco may be smooth or rough, or scored to look like stone. Choosing among the varieties of a specific material is as important as choosing among the materials themselves.



*This unpainted shingled building is not compatible with the painted stucco of surrounding buildings.*

## Exposed Building Walls

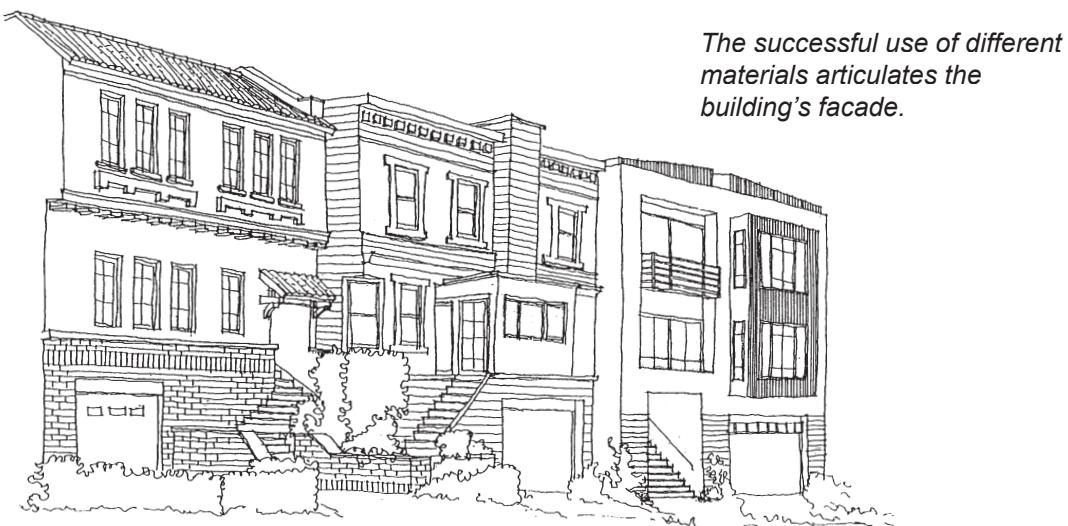
**GUIDELINE:** All exposed walls must be covered and finished with quality materials that are compatible with the front facade and adjacent buildings.

Quality building materials are strongly encouraged on all visible facades as they are more durable. Visible facades include not only the front and rear of buildings, but also the sides and walls within light wells. In areas where buildings were not built with quality materials, make an effort to improve upon the quality of the area. On existing buildings, materials such as vinyl, cellulose-based composition wood products, and synthetic stucco using foam may not be appropriate if these materials are not compatible with the original building materials and the material of adjacent buildings. Plywood is only acceptable on the portions of a facade that are entirely hidden by the adjacent building.

## Material Detailing

**GUIDELINE:** Ensure that materials are properly detailed and appropriately applied.

Materials are an integral part of a building. A mix of materials on a facade can be used successfully to articulate a building's structure and mass, and not just to create more visual interest on a blank, flat facade. Attention must be given to the number of different materials that will be used on a facade, how the materials will be applied and distributed, and what materials are chosen. Roof materials must also be compatible with those found in other buildings in the neighborhood. While in some projects the use of a variety of materials (e.g., stucco, brick, and wood siding) together can result in a successful design, in others the variety will seem cluttered and disjointed.



# **VII. Special Guidelines for Alterations to Buildings of Potential Historic or Architectural Merit**

## **WHY DO WE HAVE THESE SPECIAL GUIDELINES?**

Standards for the preservation of City Landmarks and for properties in City Historic Districts are contained in Article 10 of the Planning Code. There are other structures in the City that are also of historic and architectural merit. These structures should also be preserved because they provide a tangible link to our past and are the foundation of our built environment. These special Residential Design Guidelines are intended to address alterations to residential buildings that are not otherwise regulated by Article 10 of the Planning Code, but which may have historic or architectural merit. These guidelines are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Before beginning a project on any residential building in San Francisco, it is important to determine whether your building may be considered to have historic or architectural merit for the purposes of these special Residential Design Guidelines. The following registers and surveys contain listings of buildings of historic or architectural merit that are not officially designated as City Landmarks or located in City Historic Districts, but which may be subject to these special Residential Design Guidelines. If a property is on any of the surveys, or has any of the ratings listed below, it should appear in the Planning Department's Parcel Information database. The rating systems differ between surveys and registers and are very detailed in nature. Please contact the Planning Information Counter at 558.6377 to determine if a property has any of the following ratings or is on any of the surveys listed below, as well as for an explanation of specific ratings and/or surveys and their applicability to this document and other Department review procedures.

- Buildings with a National Register status code of 1 through 5
- Buildings with a California Historical Resource status code of 1 through 5
- Buildings listed in the book *Here Today* (Survey adopted by the Board of Supervisors)
- Buildings listed in the San Francisco Planning Department's 1976 Architectural Survey
- Buildings with a National Register or California Historical Resource status code of 1 through 5 which are listed on surveys adopted or endorsed by the Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors
- Buildings listed as having historic or architectural merit on informational surveys prepared by other agencies and organizations
- Buildings identified as having historic status in the General Plan

## CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

**DESIGN PRINCIPLE:** Ensure that the character-defining features of an historic building are maintained.

The overall purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that the character-defining features of an historic building are maintained, so that the building continues to convey a sense of time and place. Character-defining features include the following:

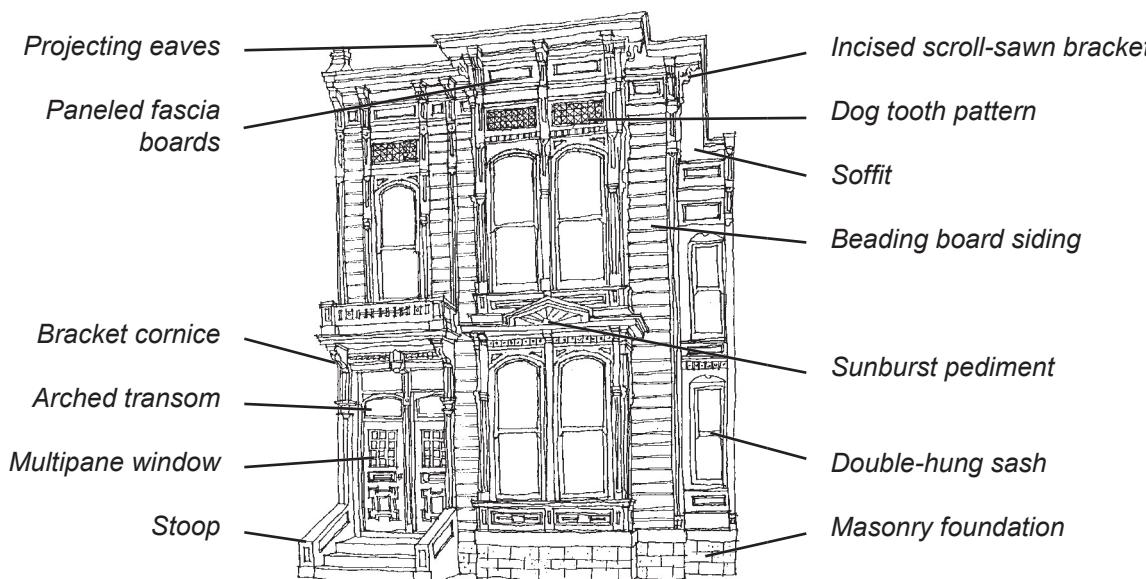
- A building's location and orientation on the site
- Relationship to adjacent buildings or placement in a grouping of buildings
- Overall form of the building
- Materials, craftsmanship, and decorative details.

Avoid removing or altering character-defining features of a building, especially those that are visible from the street or public way. When proposing to alter or add to an historic building, use the following guidelines to ensure that the character-defining features are maintained. The measures described below are based on the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties", the standards used for the review of alterations to landmarks and buildings in historic districts.

Projects that impact historical resources as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be subject to the requirements of CEQA. Nothing in these Residential Design Guidelines is intended to designate properties as historic for the purposes of CEQA, which are not already considered Historical Resources as defined by CEQA.

For information on CEQA review procedures see the "CEQA Review Procedures for Historic Resources" available from the Planning Department.

For information on City Landmarks and Historic Districts, refer to Article 10 of the Planning Code.



*The character-defining features of this Italianate-style house include its height, proportions and form, as well as its many decorative elements and materials.*

## Building Form and Materials

- Preserve the historic building form. If a building has a gabled roof, it should not be changed to a flat roof. Retain the original height and width of the facade. Set additions back from the front facade so that the addition is subordinate to the historic building, limiting visibility of the addition from the street.
- Do not alter a building in such a way that implies an inappropriate historic period. For example, adding Victorian-style gingerbread to a Spanish Revival house would be inappropriate.
- Design the materials, detailing and form of an addition to be compatible with the historic building. However, it should be clearly distinguished from the original building so it can be understood as a more recent change. If possible, construct new additions so that if the addition is removed in the future, the form of the historic building is unimpaired.
- Maintain the historic finishes of exterior materials. If a wood-sided building was originally painted, it should remain painted and not be stained. Masonry that is not painted should remain unpainted.



Existing building

Proposed addition

*The proposed addition is inappropriate because it alters the historic form of the building, infills the distinctive second floor porch, and mimics the historic details of the building.*

## Building Components

- Avoid adding materials or features that were not historically found on the building. For example, if a property never had a bay window, adding one may affect the architectural character of the property.
- Whenever possible, repair damaged and deteriorated building components. A building's original materials are essential to its historic integrity. Replace only those materials or components that cannot be repaired. Use the same kind of materials and match the detailing of the deteriorated feature. If a substitute material must be used, match the appearance of the original material as much as possible.
- If an element is missing, replace it based on physical documentation or photographic evidence, if available. In some cases, it may be acceptable to copy a component from a similar building found in the neighborhood.
- Preserve historic landscape features, such as fences.
- Removal of non-historic building materials and additions is encouraged.



*The house on the right was once a twin of the adjacent Victorian house on the left. It has been stripped of its trim, covered in stucco, and the windows have been changed, resulting in a loss of integrity.*

## Windows

- Keep windows in their original location. Do not change the size and shape of window openings. Avoid adding new windows to the primary facade.

- Maintain the material, style, trim, and functional features of windows. If window replacement is necessary, replace only those windows that are deteriorated and cannot be repaired. Match the replacement windows to the material and design of the historic windows. If the original windows are missing, property owners are encouraged to use new windows that most closely match the size, design, type, and material that would have been used historically.

## Garages

- Design new garage door openings to be as unobtrusive as possible. The size of the door must be no larger than absolutely necessary, and the door design must be compatible with the existing building, but not be finished in a way that imitates the historic building. Detail the doors to minimize the effect on character-defining features. Design new garages so they are not projecting out from the front facade, nor are they recessed so deep as to appear to undermine the base of the building.

*This garage door is appropriately detailed and placed, making it compatible with the building's historical architectural features.*



## FURTHER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

The San Francisco Planning Department has prepared numerous Preservation Bulletins that provide in-depth information on a variety of preservation topics. Lists of surveys and other sources of information on buildings of historic or architectural merit are also available. Please contact the Planning Information Counter, 1660 Mission Street, Ground Floor Lobby, or our website at [www.sfgov.org/planning](http://www.sfgov.org/planning).

The following resources can also provide further information on the architecture and history of San Francisco:

- San Francisco Public Library History Center and Photograph Collection, [www.sfpl.org](http://www.sfpl.org)
- *Here Today*, by the Junior League of San Francisco
- *National Trust Guide to San Francisco*, by Peter Booth Wiley
- *San Francisco Architecture*, by Sally B. Woodbridge, John M. Woodbridge, and Chuck Byrne
- Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, [www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm)

# VIII. Appendices

## APPENDIX A – CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE STARTING YOUR PROJECT

Prior to submitting a building permit application, an evaluation should be made of the following issues to determine if there are any special conditions that apply to a property, and to focus consideration on the design issues that apply to that property:

- **Neighborhood Discussion.** Applicants are encouraged to contact neighbors, neighborhood organizations and other concerned parties about their project early in the design process to identify and resolve possible conflicts. With early consultation, significant delays can often be avoided once the permit is submitted to the Planning Department.
- **Complete Application.** A complete building permit application is necessary for the Planning Department to review a project for compliance with the Planning Code and Residential Design Guidelines. Please review the Building Permit Application Packet for a list of required application materials, available from the Planning Information Counter at 558-6377 or [www.sfgov.org/planning](http://www.sfgov.org/planning).
- **Buildings of Potential Historic or Architectural Merit.** If your property is historic, the Special Guidelines for Alterations to Buildings of Potential Historic or Architectural Merit in Chapter VII of this document will apply.
- **Neighborhood Character Districts.** If the property is in a Neighborhood Character District, these guidelines may not apply. Contact the Planning Information Counter for more information.
- **Building Code Requirements.** Your project will have to meet requirements of the Building Code that could have a significant impact on the building's design. Contact the Department of Building Inspection at 558-6088 for further information.
- **“Green Building” Construction.** By incorporating green building methods and materials in your project, you can conserve natural resources, improve energy efficiency and indoor air quality, in addition to promoting sustainability in San Francisco. For more information about green building guidelines, contact the San Francisco Department of the Environment at 355-3700 or [www.sfenvironment.org](http://www.sfenvironment.org).
- **Property Restrictions.** There may be special restrictions, easements, or other recorded agreements that will affect a property. Contact the County Recorder at 554-5444 for more information. For properties subject to covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs), contact the Homeowners Association to identify and resolve any issues before starting your project.

## APPENDIX B – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Architectural Features:** Prominent or significant parts or elements of a building or structure.

**Articulation:** Minor variation in the massing, setback, or height of a building, such as bay windows, porches, entrances or eaves that defines the structure.

**Bay Window:** A window or set of windows, which projects out from a wall, forming an alcove or small space in a room.

**Block:** Land or a group of lots, surrounded by streets or other rights-of-way.

**Block Face:** The row of front facades, facing the street, for the length of one block.

**Building, Adjacent:** A building on a lot adjoining the subject lot along a common side lot line.

**Building Envelope:** The exterior dimensions and elements of a building.

**Compatibility:** The size and character of a building element relative to other elements around it.

**Context:** The characteristics of the buildings, streetscape, and landscape that support or surround a given building, site, or area.

**Cornice:** The horizontal projecting part crowning the wall of a building.

**Dormer:** A gabled extension of an attic room through a sloping roof to allow for a vertical window opening into the room.

**Facade:** Exterior wall of a building.

**Fenestration:** The arrangement and design of windows and other openings on a building's facade.

**Frontage:** The width of a lot measured at the front property line.

**Roof:** The top covering of a building. Following are some roof types:

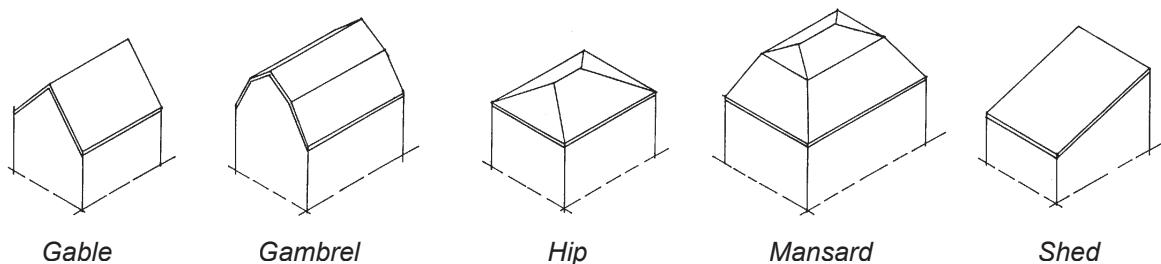
- A **Gable** roof has a pitched roof with ridge and vertical end.
- A **Gambrel** roof is a variation of a gable roof, each side of which has a shallower slope above a steeper one, often referred to as a “barn” roof.
- A **Hip** roof has slope ends instead of vertical ends.
- A **Mansard** roof is a roof with a double slope; the lower slope is steeper and longer than the upper; the upper pitch is typically shallow or flat.
- A **Shed** roof has one slope only and is sometimes built against a higher wall.

**Scale:** The relationship between the height, width and depth of a building.

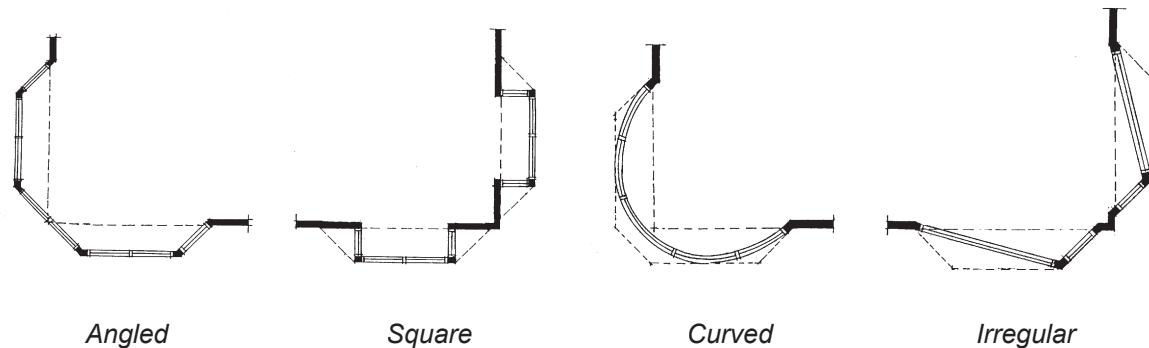
**Streetscape:** The visual character of a street as determined by elements such as structures, access, greenery, open space, view, etc.

## APPENDIX C – ILLUSTRATIONS

### Roof Forms

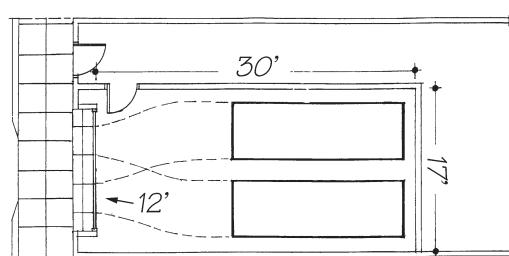


### Bay Windows Configurations

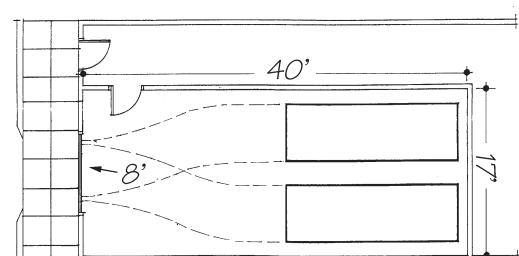


*Plans of a bay window at a building corner.*

### Garage Layouts

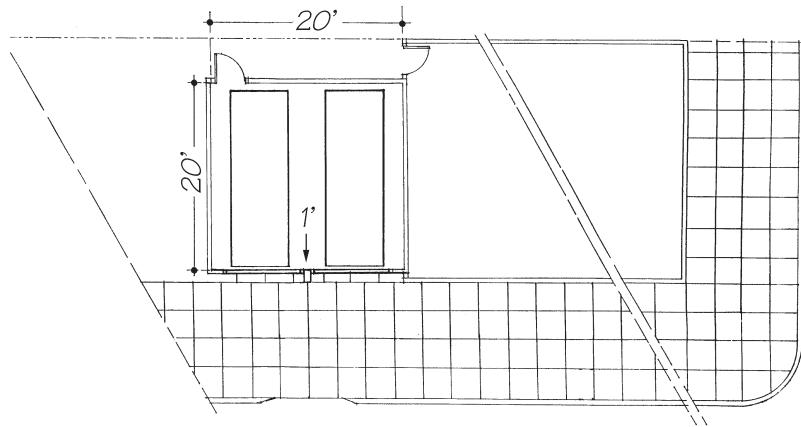


A two-car garage with a 12-foot garage door requires a garage depth of 30 feet.

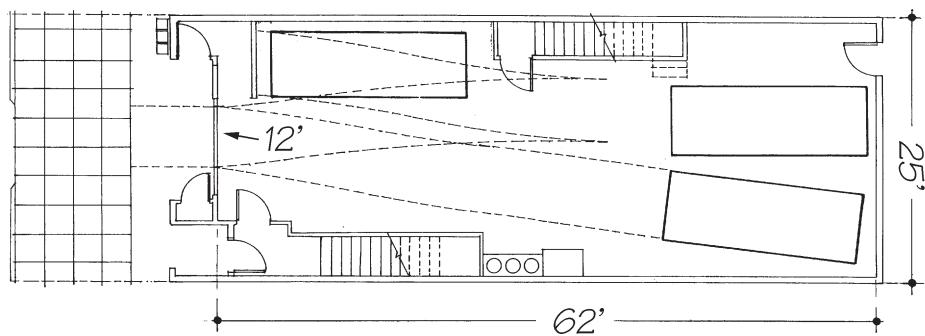


A two-car garage with an 8-foot garage door requires a garage depth of 40 feet.

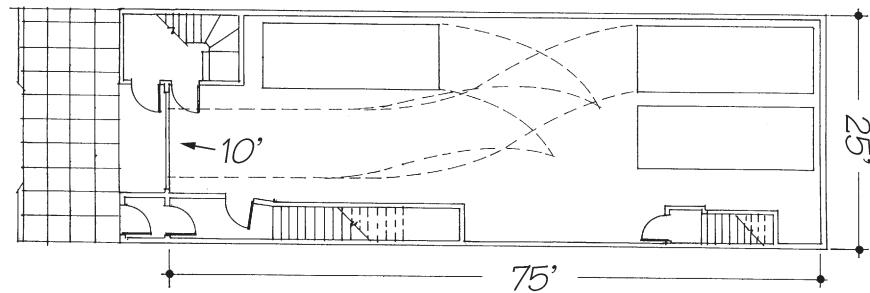
## Garage Layouts (continued)



*Where it is not possible to have a sufficient garage depth to allow a single, small garage door opening, two small garage doors are preferable to one large garage door.*



*A three-car garage with a 12-foot garage door requires a garage depth of 62 feet.*



*A three-car garage with a 10-foot garage door requires a garage depth of 75 feet.*

## APPENDIX D – DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

### NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER (pages 7-10\*)

QUESTION	
The visual character is: (check one)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Defined	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

### SITE DESIGN (pages 11 - 21)

QUESTION	YES	NO	N/A
<b>Topography (page 11)</b> Does the building respect the topography of the site and the surrounding area?			
Is the building placed on its site so it responds to its position on the block and to the placement of surrounding buildings?			
<b>Front Setback (pages 12 - 15)</b> Does the front setback provide a pedestrian scale and enhance the street? In areas with varied front setbacks, is the building designed to act as transition between adjacent buildings and to unify the overall streetscape? Does the building provide landscaping in the front setback?			
<b>Side Spacing (page 15)</b> Does the building respect the existing pattern of side spacing?			
<b>Rear Yard (pages 16 - 17)</b> Is the building articulated to minimize impacts on light to adjacent properties? Is the building articulated to minimize impacts on privacy to adjacent properties?			
<b>Views (page 18)</b> Does the project protect major public views from public spaces?			
<b>Special Building Locations (pages 19 - 21)</b> Is greater visual emphasis provided for corner buildings? Is the building facade designed to enhance and complement adjacent public spaces? Is the building articulated to minimize impacts on light to adjacent cottages?			

Comments:

\* All page numbers refer to the Residential Design Guidelines

## BUILDING SCALE AND FORM (pages 23 - 30)

QUESTION	YES	NO	N/A
<b>Building Scale (pages 23 - 27)</b>			
Is the building's height and depth compatible with the existing building scale at the street?			
Is the building's height and depth compatible with the existing building scale at the mid-block open space?			
<b>Building Form (pages 28 - 30)</b>			
Is the building's form compatible with that of surrounding buildings?			
Is the building's facade width compatible with those found on surrounding buildings?			
Are the building's proportions compatible with those found on surrounding buildings?			
Is the building's roofline compatible with those found on surrounding buildings?			

Comments:

## ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES (pages 31 - 41)

QUESTION	YES	NO	N/A
<b>Building Entrances (pages 31 - 33)</b>			
Does the building entrance enhance the connection between the public realm of the street and sidewalk and the private realm of the building?			
Does the location of the building entrance respect the existing pattern of building entrances?			
Is the building's front porch compatible with existing porches of surrounding buildings?			
Are utility panels located so they are not visible on the front building wall or on the sidewalk?			
<b>Bay Windows (page 34)</b>			
Are the length, height and type of bay windows compatible with those found on surrounding buildings?			
<b>Garages (pages 34 - 37)</b>			
Is the garage structure detailed to create a visually interesting street frontage?			
Are the design and placement of the garage entrance and door compatible with the building and the surrounding area?			
Is the width of the garage entrance minimized?			
Is the placement of the curb cut coordinated to maximize on-street parking?			
<b>Rooftop Architectural Features (pages 38 - 41)</b>			
Is the stair penthouse designed to minimize its visibility from the street?			
Are the parapets compatible with the overall building proportions and other building elements?			
Are the dormers compatible with the architectural character of surrounding buildings?			
Are the windscreens designed to minimize impacts on the building's design and on light to adjacent buildings?			

Comments:

\* All page numbers refer to the Residential Design Guidelines

## BUILDING DETAILS (pages 43 - 48)

QUESTION	YES	NO	N/A
<b>Architectural Details (pages 43 - 44)</b>			
Are the placement and scale of architectural details compatible with the building and the surrounding area?			
<b>Windows (pages 44 - 46)</b>			
Do the windows contribute to the architectural character of the building and the neighborhood?			
Are the proportion and size of the windows related to that of existing buildings in the neighborhood?			
Are the window features designed to be compatible with the building's architectural character, as well as other buildings in the neighborhood?			
Are the window materials compatible with those found on surrounding buildings, especially on facades visible from the street?			
<b>Exterior Materials (pages 47 - 48)</b>			
Are the type, finish and quality of the building's materials compatible with those used in the surrounding area?			
Are the building's exposed walls covered and finished with quality materials that are compatible with the front facade and adjacent buildings?			
Are the building's materials properly detailed and appropriately applied?			

Comments:

## SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS TO BUILDINGS OF POTENTIAL HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL MERIT (pages 49 – 54)

QUESTION	YES	NO	N/A
Is the building subject to these Special Guidelines for Alterations to Buildings of Potential Historic or Architectural Merit?			
Are the character-defining features of the historic building maintained?			
Are the character-defining building form and materials of the historic building maintained?			
Are the character-defining building components of the historic building maintained?			
Are the character-defining windows of the historic building maintained?			
Are the character-defining garages of the historic building maintained?			

Comments:

\* All page numbers refer to the Residential Design Guidelines



## APPENDIX E – ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### PLANNING COMMISSION

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Michael J. Antonini, Vice President  
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### ORGANIZATIONS

American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter  
San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association  
San Francisco Architectural Heritage

Collingwood Hill Neighborhood Association, East and West of Castro Improvement Club, Friends of Noe Valley, Lakeshore Acres Improvement Club, Merced Manor Homeowners, Miraloma Park Improvement Club, Noe Valley Democratic Club, North Beach Neighbors, Pacific Heights Residents Association, Pine Lake Park Homeowners, Planning Area for the Richmond, Russian Hill Neighbors, Telegraph Hill Dwellers Association, Upper Noe Neighbors, West of Twin Peaks Central Council

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Mark Palmer, Department of the Environment

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