

Information for
Community-Initiated Efforts to Prepare
Historic District Nominations
In Mission Hills

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References:

City of San Diego, Historical Resources Board, Historical District Policy on Establishing Historical Districts.

City of San Diego, CPCI Dept., Guidelines for Preparing a Historic District Nomination in Consultation with Staff.

OVERVIEW OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS:

Definition: *“A historical district means a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are united historically, geographically, or aesthetically by plan or physical development and that have a special character, historical interest, culture or aesthetic value, or that represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.”* (San Diego Municipal Code, Section 113.0103)

Criteria for Districts: The following criteria will be utilized in determining the significance of an area proposed for district designation:

- a. Common Heritage (an area associated with groups of residents)
- b. Traditional Activity (e.g. central market)
- c. Rare Past (example of architecture once common, now rare)
- d. Developmental Progression
- e. Consistent Plan (coherent or consistent planning and design)
- f. Public Works (development of public works and other engineering feats)
- g. Features of Daily Living (illustrates the details of daily living in prior times)
- h. Industrial Evolution (evolution of an industrial era)
- i. Craftsmanship (examples of craftsman not feasible today)
- j. Building Groupings (relationship of individual structures to the group)
- k. Landmark Supportive (Landmark structures, with less important bldgs.)

A district will need to exemplify one or more of these criteria.

Objective of Historic Districts: To maintain the scale and basic character of the subject district through:

- Protection and preservation of basic characteristics and salient architectural details of the district.
- Affording continuing vitality through private renewal, within appropriate standards. Not a static museum.
- Encourage development of vacant property and re-development of incompatibly developed properties in accordance with the character of the area.
- Encourage continuing research into San Diego’s past.

The Concept of Contributing vs. Non-contributing Sites:

Contributing sites are those that meet the “significance characteristics” of the district. Generally, a district should have a minimum of 50% contributing sites,

and ideally 65% or more. Contributing sites are eligible for the *benefits* and *responsibilities* of historic designation, including the Mills Act contract, the Historical Building Code and development complying with U.S. Sec. of Interior Standards.

Non-Contributing sites are those that have been substantially modified so that they no longer contribute to the historical integrity of the district, or that were developed subsequently and have no inherent historical significance or features. They are not eligible for the benefits of historical designation, unless restored to the point of being a contributor.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION:

1. District Nomination Proposal Form:

- Proposed District Name.
- Preliminary boundary description.
- Names and contact info for volunteers on applicant team.
- Identity of *qualified historic consultant* who will supervise project.
[Consultant must meet U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards in architectural history or history.]
- A copy of any prior surveys for the area.
- A draft “methodology” to outline the research and survey work that will be undertaken.

2. The District Report. Elements must include:

- *Context Statement* – describes aspects of the historical development of the area, identifies significant patterns that properties represent, and establishes the themes and property types that are important for the proposed district.
- *Detailed Boundary Description and Justification.* Often the boundaries are those of the original underlying subdivision, but not always.
- *Statement of Significance.* This statement evaluates the historic context against the following HRB designation criteria:
 - A. Exemplifies special elements of the City’s or a community’s or a neighborhood’s historical, architectural, social ... or architectural development.
 - B. Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.

C. Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, period or method of construction...

D. Is listed or has been deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historic Places.

- *Period of Significance.* The period of time which reflects the Statement of Significance (Example, if a subdivision is significant for architectural styles, the Period of Significance would span through the build-out of the subdivision.)
- *Intensive Survey of Properties in District.* A detailed analysis of each property, including architectural description, construction history, and known alterations, recorded on DPR forms and a spreadsheet that summarizes the field survey data.

PROJECT RESEARCH AND SURVEY WORK:

1. Archival Research (Note: Not all items are required by the City)
 - Review original subdivision maps (available at County Assessor).
 - Sanborn fire maps (available at S.D. Historical Society).
 - Historic ownership records (County Assessor).
 - Residential building records (County Assessor).
 - Water and sewer permits (San Diego Water Dept).
 - City Directories (S.D. Historical Society, City Library).
 - Building permit and completion notices (newspapers, available at City Library).
2. Field Survey Work
 - Architectural descriptions of each property.
 - Determining modifications to properties.
 - Assessing integrities of properties
 - Documenting other features of district (monuments, etc.)

CITY PROCESSING OF NOMINATION:

These are the approval steps after the nomination has been submitted to the City:

- A City-sponsored community workshop is held for property owners and residents.
- A petition must be signed by a “substantial number or a majority of property of the property owners” in support of the nomination. (The City might use a ballot process instead.)
- A First Hearing is held by the Historical Resources Board (HRB) to determine completeness of the nomination.
- A Second Hearing is held by the HRB to take action to designate the district.
- The designation can be appealed to the City Council within 10 days of final approval by HRB.

STEPS TO GETTING STARTED ...

1. Form a neighborhood committee to spearhead project.
2. Interview and choose a *qualified historic consultant* to supervise project.
3. Consider fundraising vs. volunteer work to complete research and survey work:
 - Do you want to “hire out” research?
 - Are there reliable volunteers in your district?
 - Are there potential donors within the district?
 - Do you want to hold events to raise funds/publicity?
4. Prepare Nomination Proposal (with assistance of consultant).
 - Establish preliminary boundaries
 - Prepare methodology (the plan for research and field survey work.
 - Meet with City (HRB staff) to review proposal.
5. Carry out research and field survey work. (Hint: make sure the required research is completed before any optional research is performed, especially if you are on a budget!)
6. Draft the District Report.

HOW *MISSION HILLS HERITAGE* CAN HELP:

- Guidance and free advice during the entire process.
- Manpower support for publicity and fundraising events.
- Financial support through MHH's matching fund program.
- Attendance at public meetings and approval hearings.