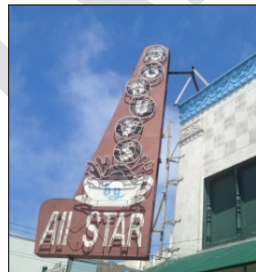


Neighborhood Commercial Buildings

Historic Context Statement

1865-1965



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

February 17, 2016

City & County of San Francisco
Planning Department

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Chapter 1

Project Description

INTRODUCTION

The San Francisco Planning Department (Department) developed the *Neighborhood Commercial Buildings, 1865–1965, Historic Context Statement* (Storefront context statement) to provide the framework for consistent, informed evaluations of neighborhood commercial buildings and storefronts. The Storefront context statement documents the evolution of retailing, shop window display, new materials and technologies, and changes to consumer culture that impacted the distribution, form, and design of neighborhood storefront spaces. It identifies the primary architectural styles and character-defining features of San Francisco’s historic storefronts and commercial buildings, and provides a guide for future building evaluations. It links a specific commercial property type to identified themes, geographic patterns and time periods, and provides an overview of significance, criteria considerations, and integrity thresholds.

The Storefront context statement was developed to assist with Department-produced planning documents and environmental reviews, and to assist property owners and commercial tenants with the identification of important character-defining features to retain during seismic or accessibility upgrades and other rehabilitation projects.

The Storefront context statement is organized around three primary periods of development: Early San Francisco Neighborhood Commercial Development, 1865–1905; Neighborhood Commercial Expansion, 1906–1929; and Modernizing Neighborhood Storefronts, 1930–1965. Key themes, patterns of development, styles, and materials are documented for each period of development. The periods are summarized below.

Early Neighborhood Commercial Development (1865–1905)

This period is characterized by the expansion of residential suburbs and related commercial corridors beyond the downtown commercial core. Commercial strips typically emerged along the flatter sections of what was often hilly terrain. Clusters of commercial blocks expanded perpendicularly from the spine of major transit corridors, and scattered examples of commercial spaces emerged within purely residential blocks. Storefronts from this era reflect the dominant Victorian era styles including Queen Anne, Italianate, Stick/Eastlake, and the Neoclassical forms of the Edwardian era. Storefronts are typically wood-clad and feature recessed vestibules, low-bulkheads, and divided light transom windows. Window display areas featured screened back walls which prevented a clear view into the store’s interior. Due to the widespread destruction of the 1906 earthquake and subsequent modernization efforts, there are very few examples of intact storefronts from this period of development.

Neighborhood Commercial Expansion (1906–1929)

Key themes associated with this period include the Reconstruction era that followed the 1906 earthquake and fire, which resulted in denser residential and commercial districts; the expansion of residence parks and streetcar suburbs and related commercial cores; and the construction boom of the mid-1920s. Clusters of commercial blocks often grew adjacent to, rather than within, the new residence parks developing in the western and southern areas of the City. This period also witnessed a major shift from Victorian and Edwardian era styles to emerging styles such as Mediterranean Revival, Tudor Revival, Storybook, and Exotic/Gothic Revival. Newer cladding materials, including stucco, terra cotta, polychromatic glazed tiles, and Spanish clay tile, largely replaced the wood paneling, cladding, and ornamentation associated with earlier styles. The Stock Market Crash of 1929 and onset of the Great Depression marks the end of this period of development.

Modernizing Neighborhood Storefronts (1930–1965)

This period is characterized by radical shifts in retailing concepts and forms, focused efforts to remodel older storefronts, the influence of New Deal-era programs to stimulate the construction industry, and the introduction of Modern designs and materials. As a result of storefront modernization efforts, this era is more likely to produce buildings with notable differences between the design of the storefront and upper story. New storefront forms and materials included luminous structural glass cladding, curved glass display windows, glass block, stacked elongated Roman brick, extruded aluminum fittings, neon signs, integrated planter boxes, and deeply recessed vestibules. Storefront systems introduced in the postwar era include the fully glazed “Visual Front” system which allowed visual access to the store’s interior and the “Billboard Front” which converted the upper story(s) into a blank canvas for signage and advertising. Storefronts and commercial buildings often referenced emerging Modern styles including Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, Midcentury Modern, Googie, and New Formalism.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

At present, there is very little historical documentation or scholarly research focused on San Francisco’s neighborhood commercial storefronts. The Storefront context statement will provide the necessary historic context to contextually identify, document and evaluate this little-understood property type. It will provide a foundation for understanding a storefront’s character-defining features, which in turn will help guide development of the complementary Neighborhood Commercial Design Guidelines.

Objectives

- Provide property owners and commercial tenants a broader understanding of historic significance and character-defining features
- Inform development of the Department’s Neighborhood Commercial Design Guidelines by identifying essential historic features to protect when rehabilitating storefronts to meet seismic and accessibility requirements
- Provide property owners, commercial tenants, and planners information about historic designs, materials, and finishes to facilitate appropriate rehabilitation
- Provide the necessary contextual information to guide future environmental evaluations
- Foster an appreciation of the relevance and significance of San Francisco’s neighborhood commercial forms, styles, and history
- Provide recommendations for future efforts to aid in the identification, rehabilitation and recognition of significant historic resources

Scope

- Focus on neighborhood commercial buildings—primarily retail and service-oriented businesses—located outside of the downtown commercial core
- Note that commercial or institutional genres significantly different from mainstream commercial storefronts are omitted (e.g., drive-in businesses, gas stations, motels, post offices, mortuaries/funeral homes, large-scale urban renewal projects, and shopping centers)
- Also note that commercial buildings that are covered in existing thematic historic context statements are omitted (e.g., theaters and auto showrooms and garages¹)

¹ Additionally, Mark Kessler’s *The Early Public Garages of San Francisco: An Architectural and Cultural Study* (2013) provides a detailed overview of these early automobile-oriented businesses.

Period Justification

The period 1865 to 1965 was chosen because it covers the primary periods of extant neighborhood commercial development. Residential and related commercial development outside of the downtown commercial core began in the mid-1860s with extension of the rail lines into the Mission District and Hayes Valley. Few neighborhood commercial buildings from the 1860s are known to exist and none are known to retain integrity at the storefront level. The end date of 1965 roughly corresponds to the 50-year threshold that typically triggers California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review for proposed building alterations. The end date also marks the passage of the Federal Highway Beautification Act, which sought to regulate the overt signage and (what was perceived to be overly exuberant) commercial architecture that characterized midcentury design.

BACKGROUND

Survey Program

The foundation of a successful preservation program is an understanding of the location, distribution, and significance of historic, cultural, and archeological resources, which can include buildings, sites, structures, objects, districts, and cultural landscapes. This understanding is achieved through the historic and cultural resource survey process. In addition to identifying significant resources and potential historic districts, a survey can help identify properties that qualify for local or national preservation incentives and/or inform the development of neighborhood-specific design guidelines to protect neighborhood character.

To facilitate these and other preservation efforts, the Department has established the Citywide Cultural and Historical Resource Survey Program (Survey Program) to manage and conduct historic and cultural resource surveys. The Survey Program provides guidance for the development of neighborhood-specific historic context statements and large-scale surveys in support of the Department's Area Plans and other local planning efforts. Survey evaluation informs the public, property owners, government officials, and those who do business in San Francisco, making environmental review more transparent.

Historic Context Statements

A Historic Context Statement creates a framework for interpreting history by grouping information around a common theme, geographical area and time period. Context statements are established evaluative tools for surveying historic and cultural resources in San Francisco, as well as throughout California and the nation. In its instructions for documenting historic and cultural resources, the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) references the National Park Service's context-based methodology: "The significance of a historical resource is best understood and judged in relation to a historic context. A historic context consists of: a theme, pattern, or research topic; geographical area; and chronological period. The theme, pattern or research topic provides a basis for evaluating the significance of a resource when it is defined in relation to established criteria."

On June 7, 2000, the former San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (Landmarks Board), by Resolution No. 527, adopted the OHP's Instructions for Recording Historical Resources (1995) as the methodology for documenting historic and cultural properties in San Francisco. This resolution specified that context statements prepared in accordance with the OHP recordation manual, and reviewed for accuracy and adequacy by the Landmarks Board (now the Historic Preservation Commission), may be recommended for use in associated property

evaluations, and that the Department shall maintain a library of adopted context statements. Towards these ends, several area-based and thematic-based context statements have been developed for use in San Francisco surveys by the Department, the Historic Preservation Commission, and various other public agencies and community organizations.

Recent historic context statements managed or produced by the Department's Survey Program include: *Sunset District Residential Builder Tracts, 1925-1950*; *San Francisco Modern Architectural and Landscape Design, 1935-1970*; *City Within A City, Historic Context Statement for San Francisco's Mission District*; *The Golden Age of Schools*; *Automotive Support Structures*; and neighborhood-based context statements produced for the Market & Octavia, South of Market, Showplace Square, Japantown, Transit Center, Balboa Park, and Central Waterfront planning efforts.

Until recently, context statements commissioned by neighborhood organizations tilt toward area-specific, rather than thematic context statements. In-progress and recently completed community-managed context statements include: Mission Dolores, West Slope of Russian Hill, Oceanview/Merced Heights/Ingleside (OMI), Oceanside, Parkside, West Side Residence Parks, and Bayview-Hunters Point. Several context statements with a cultural and/or ethnic focus are underway, including contexts focused on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer community, Latinos in San Francisco, and the African American experience in San Francisco.

The content and organization of the Storefront context statement is consistent with federal, state, and local guidelines that were adopted for developing historic contexts. Numerous National Park Service publications were consulted to inform the organization and evaluative frameworks for the Storefront context statement, including:

- National Register Bulletin No. 15 "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation"
- Bulletin No. 16B "How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form"
- National Register Bulletin "Historic Residential Suburbs, Guidelines for the Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places"

The OHP developed several guidelines pertaining to the development of historic contexts including "Writing Historic Contexts," "OHP Preferred Format for Historic Context Statements" and "Instructions for Recording Historical Resources." Related San Francisco Planning Department guidelines include "Suggested Outline for a Fully Developed Context Statement" and "Outline for the San Francisco Context Statement." The Secretary of the Interior's "Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation" also includes guidelines for the development of historic contexts.

REGULATORY BASIS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Federal Level

In the United States, the concept of preserving a community's architectural past emerged during the decades preceding the Civil War and focused on colonial buildings and other structures connected with important figures in American history. Public concern over the possible loss of historic sites and buildings of importance to the nation's heritage prompted Congress to adopt the Antiquities Act of 1906, offering protection to prehistoric and historic sites located on federal properties. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 established a national policy of preserving historic resources of national significance and created the National Historic Landmark Program. This legislation empowered

the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the National Park Service, to use the Historic American Buildings Survey to survey, document, evaluate, acquire, and preserve archaeological and historic sites.²

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 established a number of programs that deal with historic preservation at the federal and state levels. The National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the Secretary of the Interior, was created as a federal planning tool and contains a list of national, state, and local districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. In addition, the NHPA created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent federal agency that serves as the primary federal policy advisor to the President and Congress; recommends administrative and legislative improvements for protecting our nation's heritage; advocates full consideration of historic values in federal decision-making; and reviews federal programs and policies to promote effectiveness, coordination, and consistency with national preservation policies. The NHPA also established the review process known as Section 106, in which federal undertakings must be assessed for potential impact on historic resources.³

Both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 require consideration of a project's effects on historical, architectural, and archaeological resources as part of the environmental review process. In 1983, the Secretary of the Interior released Preservation Planning Standards and Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties that are used nationwide and under CEQA to guide appropriate preservation strategies.⁴

State Level

The State of California maintains preservation programs through the OHP within the California Department of Parks and Recreation. This office is administered by the State Historic Preservation Officer and overseen by the State Historical Resources Commission, whose members are appointed by the Governor. The office maintains the California Register of Historical Resources, which lists properties evaluated and/or designated by federal, state and local authorities.⁵

CEQA is the foundation of environmental policy and law in the state of California, and encourages the protection of all aspects of the environment, including historical resources. Under CEQA, state and local governmental agencies must consider the impact of proposed projects on historic resources.⁶

Local Level

At the local level, there are numerous studies, mandates and guidelines pertaining to the identification, evaluation, and preservation of historic and cultural resources in San Francisco. San Francisco's commitment to retaining its historic fabric is codified in Section 101.1 of the Planning Code, which sets forth eight Priority Policies, including Policy 7, which states that "landmarks and historic buildings be preserved."

The Department's 1966 study, "The Preservation of Landmarks in San Francisco," outlined goals for City legislation to protect architectural and historic resources. In 1967, the Board of Supervisors adopted a landmarks ordinance, Article 10 of the Planning Code, which established the Landmarks Board.⁷ In 1985 the Downtown Plan was adopted as part of the General Plan, and Article 11 of the Planning Code created five categories of notable buildings and

²Architectural Resources Group. 2009. Preservation Element (draft). (Commissioned by the San Francisco Planning Department).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The Historic Preservation Commission replaced the Landmarks Board in 2009.

implemented the preservation policies created for that Plan. Finally, the General Plan's introduction incorporated a 1986 voter-approved initiative, known as Proposition M, that added Section 101.1 to the Planning Code.

In 1995, San Francisco became a Certified Local Government (CLG) under the provisions of the NHPA. CLGs must comply with five basic requirements:

- Enforce appropriate state and local laws and regulations for the designation and protection of historic properties
- Establish a historic preservation review commission by local ordinance
- Maintain a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties
- Provide for public participation in the local preservation program
- Satisfactorily perform responsibilities delegated to it by the state

In 2008, voters approved a charter amendment to replace the Landmarks Board with a newly created Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) that has expanded powers over historic resources in San Francisco. The HPC makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on designations of Article 10 landmarks and landmark districts. The HPC may also review and comment on projects affecting historic resources that are subject to environmental review under CEQA, and/or projects subject to review under Section 106 of the NHPA. The HPC also approves Certificates of Appropriateness for alterations of Landmarks and properties located within Article 10 Landmark Districts. The Storefront context statement will be brought to the HPC for adoption at a future date.

Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code provides for official designation of landmarks, landmark districts, and structures of merit that have "a special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value." In addition to properties officially designated under Article 10, the City and County of San Francisco also recognizes those properties identified as eligible resources in adopted informational historic and cultural surveys. Properties lacking official designation at the local, state, or federal levels, and also lacking documentation in an adopted informational survey, may still be considered potential resources pursuant to San Francisco Preservation Bulletin No. 16, "City and County of San Francisco Planning Department CEQA Review Procedures for Historic Resources."

Article 11 of the Planning Code was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1985 and governs approximately 430 downtown buildings. These buildings include designated Category I through IV (Significant and/or Contributory) and Category V (Unrated) buildings located within or outside of a Conservation District.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

The following section provides an overview of the criteria for significance and aspects of integrity used to guide individual buildings and historic districts. It contains general information about the criteria of significance and aspects of integrity adopted by the National Park Service and the California Office of Historic Preservation.

Detailed guidance for evaluating the significance and integrity of neighborhood commercial buildings and storefronts follows each of chapter focused on a specific period of development. The evaluative frameworks document the key themes, property types and criteria for significance, and include discussions of integrity thresholds, registration requirements, and character-defining features.

Significance

Significance establishes why, where, and when a property is important. The criteria for significance, as established by the National Park Service, are identical at the federal, state, and local level. The criteria apply to buildings as well as landscapes, structures, and objects. Properties are evaluated for significance within their relevant historic contexts using the following adopted criteria:

National Register	California Register	Definition
Criterion A	Criterion 1	Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Criterion B	Criterion 2	Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
Criterion C	Criterion 3	Displays distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, work of a master, high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
Criterion D	Criterion 4	Yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Integrity

Integrity is the authenticity of physical characteristics from which resources obtain their significance. When a property retains its integrity, it is able to convey its significance, its association with events, people, and designs from the past. Integrity is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The condition and alteration history of a building's interior spaces are not considered for this historic resource survey. The National Register defines the seven aspects of integrity as follows:⁸

1. Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. Except in rare cases, the relationship between a property and its historic associations is destroyed if the property is moved.
2. Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Design can also apply to districts. For districts significant primarily for architectural value, design concerns more than just the individual buildings or structures located within the boundaries. It also applies to the way in which buildings, sites, or structures are related.
3. Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the *character* of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves *how*, not just *where*, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space.
4. Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. A property must retain the key exterior materials dating from the period of its historic significance.
5. Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
6. Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character.

⁸ National Park Service. National Register Bulletin No. 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2002).

7. Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character.

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Chapter 2

Historic Context Methodology

Development of the *Neighborhood Commercial Buildings, 1865–1965, Historic Context Statement* (Storefront context statement) relied upon a range of primary and secondary sources, field visits, GIS mapping, and synthesis of previously prepared historic context statements. This section briefly describes the archival sources, historic context statements, and other environmental review documents consulted in the preparation of the context statement.

HISTORIC AND ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archives and Repositories	San Francisco Public Library History Center, San Francisco Planning Department archives, San Francisco Assessor and Recorder’s Office, Internet Archive (www.archives.org), Google Books, www.OpenLibrary.org , the University of California’s Calisphere archives, Association for Preservation Technology’s Building Technology Heritage Library
Primary Sources	Original building permit applications and architectural plans, 1976 Department of City Planning Architectural Survey field forms, San Francisco City Directories (various publishers); San Francisco Public Library Digital Photograph Collection, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority (SFMTA) digital photograph collection, Charles Cushman Photograph Collection, Calisphere, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Works Progress Administration Land Use Maps (1948-1960), <i>Architect & Engineer</i> , and Storefront trade catalogs (1880s-1970s)

SURVEYS, EVALUATIONS & CONTEXT STATEMENTS

Several past surveys, context statements, and evaluations relevant to the development of commercial buildings in San Francisco were consulted, including:

Department of City Planning 1976 Architectural Survey

Approximately 10,000 buildings were identified and ranked in the Architectural Survey conducted by the Department of City Planning from 1974 to 1976. This survey focused solely on architecture and did not identify or evaluate a property’s cultural or historic associations. Buildings included in this survey were considered at that time to be among the top 10% of architecturally significant buildings in San Francisco. Field survey forms for each individual property are located in a 61-volume set at the San Francisco Planning Department preservation library. Surveyed buildings were concentrated in the central and northern neighborhoods and included residential, industrial, commercial, religious, and institutional property types.

Context Statements

Existing thematic- and neighborhood-based context statements were consulted during preparation of the Storefront context statement. The *San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design Historic Context Statement, 1935-1970* provided important information regarding changes in materials and storefront design in the 1930s-1960s. Neighborhood-based context statements, including *San Francisco’s Parkside District: 1905-1957, Historic Context Statement*, *San Francisco’s Ocean View, Merced Heights, and Ingleside (OMI) Neighborhoods, 1862-1959, Market and Octavia*

Historic Context Statement, Mission District City Within a City Historic Context Statement, the Japantown Historic Context Statement, and Historic Context Statement of the Oceanside provided documentation regarding early residential and commercial development within certain neighborhoods.

Designated Historic Resources

Article 10 Landmarks

The City and County of San Francisco maintains a list of locally designated City Landmarks and Historic Districts, similar to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) but at the local level. Landmarks can be buildings, sites, or landscape features. The regulations governing landmarks, as well as the list of individual landmarks and descriptions of each landmark district, are found in Article 10 of the Planning Code. Landmark status provides the greatest level of protection for historic resources in San Francisco. As of December 2015, approximately 12 neighborhood commercial buildings are designated Article 10 Landmarks. Additionally, many of the City's landmark districts contain neighborhood commercial properties including Liberty Hill, Dogpatch, Civic Center, South End, Northeast Waterfront, Duboce Park, Market Street Masonry, and Jackson Square.

National Register

The National Register of Historic Places is a list of buildings and sites of local, state, or national importance. This program is administered by the National Park Service through the OHP. Examples of neighborhood commercial buildings listed on the National Register include the Doolan Residence and Storefronts at 1500-1512 Haight Street; the Stanyan Park Hotel at 750 Stanyan Street; and the Old Ohio Houses at 17-55 Osgood Place. Several National Register Historic Districts also include large numbers of neighborhood commercial buildings including the Lower Nob Hill Apartment and Hotel Historic District and the Uptown Tenderloin Historic District.

California Register

The California Register of Historical Places is a list of the State's historical and archeological resources. It also includes all locally designated properties and all properties listed in the National Register.

Research

Essential publications consulted while researching this project included *Contemporary Shops in the United States* (1946) by Emrich Nicholson, *Shops & Stores Today: Their Design, Planning, and Organisation* (1956) by Ellis Somake, *Shops and Stores* (1948, rev 1957) by Morris Ketchum Jr., *Twentieth Century Building Materials* (1995) by Thomas Jester, and *Signs, Streets, & Storefronts; The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (2013) by Martin Treu. The lecture notes from Paul Groth's July 18, 2006 presentation to the Planning Department "Ordinary Storefronts of the Twentieth Century: Articulating the Lines between Shoppers and Retailers" provided an important foundation from which to better understand the evolution of storefront design, materials, and consumer culture.

Key archival sources included a variety of storefront and product catalogs, including marketing and spec sheets produced by Kawneer Company, the Detroit Show Case Co., Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co., and Natcor were accessed from the Internet Archive. Trade catalogs found in the Association for Preservation Technology's digital Building Technology Heritage Library proved essential in documenting storefront materials, technologies, and cladding materials. Retailers' trade publications and materials, such as the booklet, "How to Make Your Window Pay Your Rent" (1899) published by a Philadelphia pharmaceutical chemist, provided useful contextual information from a merchant's perspective. The *Illustrated Business Directory, San Francisco, 1895* served as an important visual record of

primary elevations of commercial buildings located in the downtown core, an area later destroyed by the 1906 earthquake and fire. The San Francisco Planning Department's Land Use Survey Maps (1920 / 1948-1962) were also consulted to determine likely dates for the insertion of commercial uses into residential buildings.

A review of historic photographs available online provided a better understanding of the forms and appearances of neighborhood commercial buildings during particular periods of development. The most effective way to find relevant photographs proved to be keyword searches for specific street names or business types. The University of California's online collections at Calisphere.com proved very useful as did the San Francisco Public Library's digital historic photograph collections. The locations of early businesses were determined by cross-referencing the listed business name in San Francisco's City Directories.

Publications that assisted with the classification of architectural styles include *The Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California* by Gebhard, Winter, and Sandweiss; *California's Architectural Frontiers* by Harold Kirker; *Storybook Style: America's Whimsical Homes of the Twenties* by Arrol Gellner; and historic context statements focused on San Francisco's Modern design and the Sunset District's Period Revival tract houses.

National Park Service Preservation Briefs also provided useful information, including #11 *Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*, #12 *The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)*, #23 *Preserving Historic Ornamental Plaster*, #25 *The Preservation of Historic Signs*, #41 *The Seismic Retrofit of Historic Buildings: Keeping Preservation in the Forefront*, and #44 *The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement and New Design*.

Field Visits

Regular site visits were undertaken to identify property types and photograph representative buildings. Storefronts with high levels of material integrity or unusual design features were noted for research and follow-up by Department staff. During the course of developing this document, Department staff visited numerous commercial corridors throughout San Francisco in order to gain a better understanding of the physical forms, material, and design and to gauge the general levels of physical integrity. Buildings along the following corridors were photographed: Mission Street, Fillmore Street, Chestnut Street, Polk Street, Ocean Avenue, 16th Street, 22nd Street, 24th Street, West Portal Avenue, and San Bruno Avenue. Photograph databases from the Department's previous historic resource surveys were also reviewed for relevant property types.

Chapter 3

Historical Development: San Francisco

San Francisco Overview

The character of San Francisco's built environment has been influenced over time by various factors, including significant historical events, cultural movements, technological advances, notable individuals and groups, and changing trends in urban design and architecture. Underlying all of these factors is the City's dramatic natural topography. The City is confined to roughly 49 square miles at the tip of a peninsula where the San Francisco Bay to the east drains through the northerly Golden Gate into the Pacific Ocean to the west. The terrain is distinguished by the famed hills of San Francisco, which offer myriad views of ocean, bay, and city skyline, as well as by broad valley floors that historically received the earliest and densest settlements and that contain many of the City's oldest neighborhoods.

The cultural landscape that has emerged in San Francisco within the past two centuries has resulted from purposeful alterations of the natural physical landscape by successive waves of settlement and development. Coves and tidal marshes along the Bay were filled; hills and dunes leveled; and inland streams and lakes were diverted, drained, and reclaimed. It is no accident that San Francisco is located at an important natural harbor, as maritime commerce played a vital role in the development of San Francisco. However, the vitality of the port was ultimately offset by the City's relative geographic isolation by land. Until the construction of the iconic sister bridges in the 1930s, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge, the only direct ground approach to the City was from the south, while access to San Francisco from points north and east was possible only by boat.

Phases of Development

Native American, Spanish, and Mexican Periods, ca. 5,000 years ago to 1848⁹

The earliest known inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula were indigenous Native Americans. Archeological remains of the settlements of indigenous peoples in San Francisco date to at least 5,000 years ago. The indigenous groups that most recently inhabited the Peninsula were Ohlone tribes of the Costanoan linguistic family who led riparian-based lifestyles along the shores of the Bay. At the time of European contact in the late 18th century, an Ohlone tribelet called the Yeluma lived in seasonal villages that dotted the eastern portion of the San Francisco Peninsula. Seasonal villages consisted of impermanent, lightly framed structures covered with willows and tule reeds. While none of the structures of indigenous peoples remains extant, numerous archeological sites in San Francisco, including shell mounds and burials, provide insight into the earliest settlements.

Non-native explorers, settlers, and colonists began to arrive on the San Francisco Peninsula in the late 18th century. The government of Spain established a military outpost, or presidio, at the northern tip of the peninsula near the mouth of the Golden Gate in 1776. Concurrently, Catholic missionaries of the Franciscan order established the sixth, and then-northernmost, mission in a chain that would eventually number 21 missions along the California coast. The permanent chapel of the Mission San Francisco de Asis was completed in 1791 near present-day 16th and Dolores Streets. Commonly called Mission Dolores, the chapel is the last of the mission compound buildings to remain standing and is the oldest extant building in San Francisco.

When Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, the territory that included present-day California became a possession of the Mexican government, which secularized the missions and conferred vast rancho tracts across the

⁹ Information related to historical development citywide is excerpted from the Department's draft Preservation Element (2009).

entire San Francisco peninsula and beyond. The Spanish and, later, Mexican settlements utilized primarily adobe construction, reflecting the scarcity of native wood for building. Adobe construction was largely vernacular, with architectural flourishes reserved for edifices such as the Mission Dolores chapel. Another change brought by Mexican governance was international trade, which had not been permitted by Spain. By 1835, a small civilian commercial port settlement, the Pueblo of Yerba Buena, was established in the area of present-day California and Montgomery Streets, initially supported by the export of California hides and tallow and the import of goods from the eastern United States and Europe.

Enduring development patterns were established in Yerba Buena. In 1839, the pueblo's first survey platted the area around Portsmouth Square in what became known as the 50 Vara Survey. The survey established a rectangular grid of blocks aligned to the cardinal directions. In 1847, Market Street was laid out on a diagonal to the earlier street grid, running from the center of the shoreline of Yerba Buena Cove (approximately at the intersection of present-day Battery and Market Streets) toward Mission Dolores and Twin Peaks, with portions of its route following an old path to the mission. Soon thereafter, the 100 Vara Survey platted the area south of Market Street on a street grid aligned diagonally with Market Street, and with quadruple-sized lots, in conflict with the 50 Vara grid to the north. This unconventional mismatch of surveys, platted at the birth of the City, is apparent today in the enduring street-and-block patterns north and south of Market Street.

DRAFT

Period of Development:

Early San Francisco Neighborhood Commercial Development, 1865 – 1905

Background: 1850s-1860s¹⁰

The small settlement of San Francisco changed dramatically with the discovery of gold on the American River in the Sierra Nevada foothills in 1848. San Francisco, already the primary port on the West Coast, was also the closest harbor to the strike, and by 1849 the City was growing exponentially as fortune-seeking men flooded in, primarily by sea, bound for gold country. Many of the newcomers remained in, or returned to, San Francisco, which transformed from a quiet harbor into an instant city teeming with a diverse, international population. By 1852 the population stood at approximately 35,000, and the character of the place had entirely changed from four years before.

As the gold rush gave way to more normal patterns of growth and development, the instant city that had sprung up from tents, shacks, and cabins began a long and fitful transition into a permanent city of repute. With an increasing population (which also became more diversified with respect to ancestry, gender, age, and household type) came new construction to support housing, commerce, and industry. The City boundary line was sequentially expanded southward and westward, ultimately reaching its current location (and merger with the County line) in 1856 through the Van Ness Ordinance. Nonetheless, most of the City's commercial development remained concentrated near the port, the natural location of trade in goods and services. Related industrial activities were located near the port as well, primarily in the South of Market area, with rail spurs providing connections to move materials and goods to and from warehouses and manufacturing plants. Low-scale brick commercial buildings designed in the Italianate style characterized the 1850s-1860s development centered on the Jackson Square.

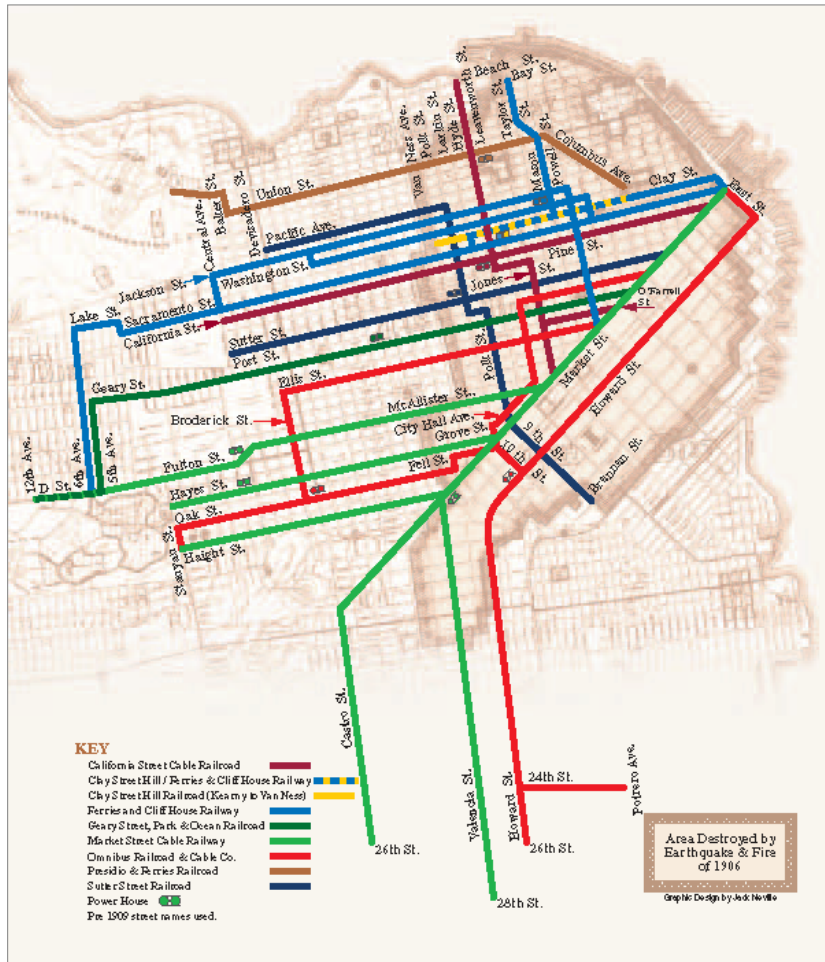


The two- to three-story brick buildings of Jackson Square are dwarfed by later high-rise developments. Photo: 1962, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Locations for housing were generally linked to early transportation corridors, some of which perpetuated the courses of the trails that had connected the three earliest Spanish-Mexican settlements (mission, presidio, and pueblo). In the 1850s and 1860s, expansion of residential neighborhoods was limited by sparse transportation by the young municipality's reluctance to provide costly services to outlying areas, and by Mexican landowners defending legal claims to their ranchos. However, these issues were resolved and by the 1870s, residential streetcar suburbs had begun westerly and southerly marches that would continue through the turn of the century, notably in the large Western Addition and Mission Districts. Citywide, building booms and busts were closely linked to regional

¹⁰ Background material was summarized and excerpted from the Planning Department's draft Preservation Element (2009).

economic events, including the discovery of the Comstock Silver Lode in 1859, and the economic depressions of the 1870s and 1890s.



San Francisco's cable car routes, mapped to fullest extent, in 1890s. By 1891, electric streetcar lines supplemented existing cable car service.

Source: Cable Car Museum

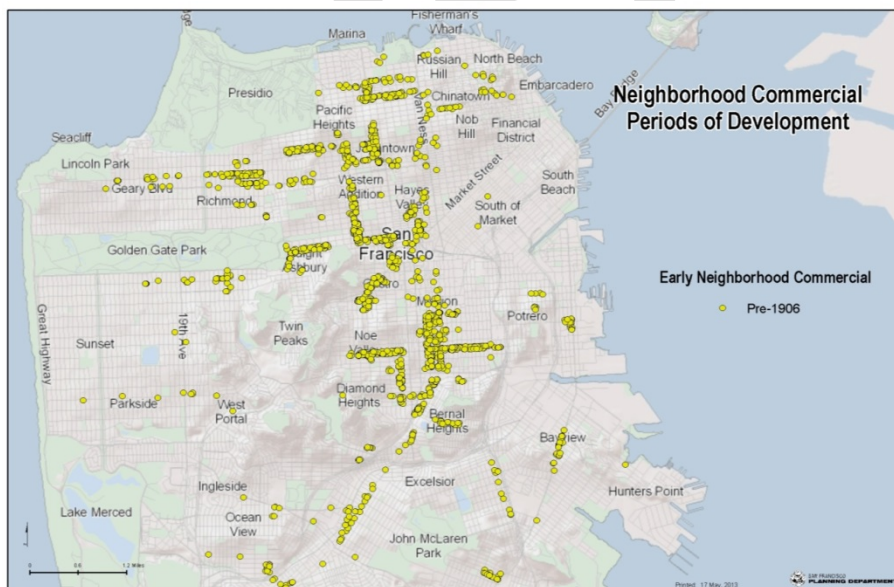
Commercial Geography: Neighborhood Commercial Development

Smaller neighborhood-serving commercial corridors were established in conjunction with emergent rail-based suburbs outside of the downtown commercial core and shopping district. Advances in transportation technologies and expansions in service from the 1860s to 1890s were key influences in the residential and commercial development of the City. On a macro scale, completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 facilitated the importation of people (laborers and consumers), trade, and building materials such as brick and stone. Locally, mass transit provided a means for people without independent transportation to live further from the commercial and industrial core, beyond walking distance. Mass transit vehicles were rudimentary at first, appearing in the form of horse-drawn cars on tracks in the late 1850s and early 1860s. A significant innovation occurred with Andrew Hallidie's invention of the cable car in 1873, providing the means to conquer San Francisco's hills and thereby making steeper slopes available to residential development. Electrification of the lines began gradually in the 1890s and accelerated after the turn of the century. By the late nineteenth century, cable car lines and electric streetcar lines ran on most major streets of San Francisco, extending earlier housing patterns further westward and southward.

Begun in the 1860s, with private omni-bus transport into the emerging Mission District and Hayes Valley, and spurred by proliferating cable car routes in the 1870s–1880s, and electric streetcars in the 1890s, the surging residential expansion into the southern and western lands was accompanied by scattered commercial development and multi-block commercial corridors. Commercial establishments during this period typically served the immediate neighborhood and were not destinations in their own right. Concentrated commercial corridors grew along Mission and Valencia Streets in the Mission District, Haight Street, Fillmore Street in the Western Addition, 24th Street in Noe Valley, Hayes Street in Hayes Valley, Castro Street in Eureka Valley, Columbus Avenue in North Beach, California and Sacramento Streets in Pacific Heights, among others. These commercial corridors were typically located on the flatter blocks of these often hilly neighborhoods. The terminus of commercial uses usually corresponded with an increase in slope. Dispersed corner stores, which typically consisted of a grocer’s market, were built in solidly residential blocks, regardless of the often steep terrain.

Not all neighborhood commercial buildings constructed during this period of development were associated with the residential development spurred by expanding public transit lines. For example, the commercial district on Third Street in the Bayview District, known as “Butchertown,” developed in association with the corrals, slaughterhouses, and tanneries in an industrial neighborhood far removed from the downtown core. Scattered commercial uses emerged in other neighborhoods on the far margins in San Francisco, including the bohemian beachside community of Oceanside in the 1890s, as well as and adjacent to the large horse racing track in isolated outlying areas of that would later become the Ingleside and Richmond neighborhood.

Neighborhood commercial corridors from this period typically contained a mix of one-story single-business establishments and multi-story mixed use buildings. As the neighborhoods extended south and west from the central business district, older residential buildings were frequently converted to feature commercial use at the ground story. Toward the turn-of-the-century, commercial buildings increasingly contained multiple, narrow storefronts. In terms of stylistic influences, the design of neighborhood commercial buildings from this period was closely aligned with residential design.



Map showing surviving examples of pre-1906 buildings located in neighborhood commercial districts. Not all of the nearly 2,000 buildings contain ground story storefronts.

Note: Commercial buildings located outside of zoned commercial corridors are not displayed.

Commercial Geography: Downtown Shopping District

The densest commercial corridors were concentrated in San Francisco’s downtown, and by the 1890s, large-scale department stores provided specialized shopping experiences. The Emporium opened in 1896, described by one

shopper as “a new plan for San Francisco—a great department store—with everything in it imaginable.”¹¹ After the 1906 disaster, several large department stores, including City of Paris, White House, Hales, Pragers, Roos Brothers, Davis-Schonwasser and Co., Shreve and Co., I Magnin, and the Lace House were built in the downtown shopping core.¹² In addition to sales, these Department stores offered myriad amenities for the largely female customer base. The Emporium, for example, in 1901 offered a reading room stocked with writing materials, a nursery, emergency hospital, post office, telegraph office, theater ticket office, beauty salon, public telephones, lunch rooms, an information center, and art galleries.¹³

Storefront Stylistic Influences

Storefront design drew from residential design elements associated with later Victorian era (circa 1870s–1900) and Edwardian era (circa 1900–1910) styles and ornament. Slender columns capped with leafy capitals were often incorporated at the storefront as were incised woodwork and button moldings associated with Italianate, Stick-Eastlake, and Queen Anne styles. Occasionally, window transoms were bordered with Queen Anne colored or stained glass. Bulkheads often featured raised panels similar to the wood spandrel panels found beneath the windows of residential buildings. One-story storefronts occasionally adopted a Western False Front style, with flush façade and a prominent tabbed parapet. Fluted pilasters, simple columns, and intermediate cornices, characterized later storefronts, which often emulated the more restrained Classical Revival designs associated with the Edwardian era.

In 1886, *The Decorator and Furnisher* provided some guidance on suitable storefront design, detailing, and color:

A front should, as far as possible, be so decorated as to form a suitable frame to the goods exposed in the window, and with this object, it is often advisable to save the decorations to be completed when the trade of the occupier is known. As a general rule, however, brilliant coloring does not find favor with shopkeepers. Probably they have discovered that it detracts from the effect of the window, which may be the reason why the gaudy brass finishings, once so common, are now less in request. Somber greens, browns, chocolate, and black are suitable where there is no very broad surface to be covered, while moldings and enrichments may be picked out in gold, vermilion, and bright blue.¹⁴

Many storefronts were selected from commercial pattern books, similar to the residential pattern books that proliferated during the Victorian era. Pattern books offered a range of storefront systems, including “straight front” and “recessed front,” and numerous options for transoms, doors, moldings, and bulkhead ornamentation. Some pattern books offered cast iron storefront systems, and from the 1860s to 1910s, cast iron storefronts and elements could be ordered through catalogs.¹⁵ Although the cast iron storefront heyday lasted nearly two decades—from the 1860s to late 1880s, such systems appear fairly rare in San Francisco’s neighborhood commercial buildings, which were typically framed and clad in wood. Cast iron storefronts were more commonly installed on buildings located within the downtown commercial core.

¹¹ As quoted in Jessica Sewell, “Sidewalks and Store Windows as Political Landscapes,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Volume 9, *Constructing Image, Identity, and Place*. (2003), 86.

¹² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁴ “Store Front Decoration,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, January 1886, 120.

¹⁵ Martin Treu, page 37.



Late Victorian flats & store buildings on Fillmore Street. Robert's Book Exchange (1904).

Source: Behrman Collection, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Store Interiors

Store interiors from this period of development were private spaces, largely screened from public view from the sidewalk. Interiors often featured high ceilings clad in embossed tin or flush wood and featured tinned sheet-iron fixtures. Kerosene or gas lamps hung from the ceilings. Goods were displayed in tall shelving units located behind staffed counters and in stand-alone show cases on the sales floor. Show cases came in myriad forms, including curved counter cases, squared corner cases, upright cases, shelved perfumery cases, L-shaped corner counter cases, and large wall-cases.¹⁶ Typically, sales clerks procured merchandise for the customer. Larger storage rooms at the rear of the store often contained the bulk of the merchandise. In a 1951 booklet promoting storefront modernization, the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co. derisively described the interior mechanics of selling during this earlier period of development:

The stock area of yesteryear's store consisted, for the most part, of bundles, barrels, bales, and bunches stacked helter-skelter. Customers brought their own jugs or pails for liquids. And brown wrapping paper, pokes and string were consumed in huge quantities...The customer fought his way along dark, narrow aisles stacked high with inaccessible merchandise to await his turn at the wrapping counter where it seemed everything he wanted was procured in bulk from the dark recesses of the back room.¹⁷

¹⁶ Atlanta Show Case Co., "Show Cases of All Kinds," Atlanta, Georgia, 1889.

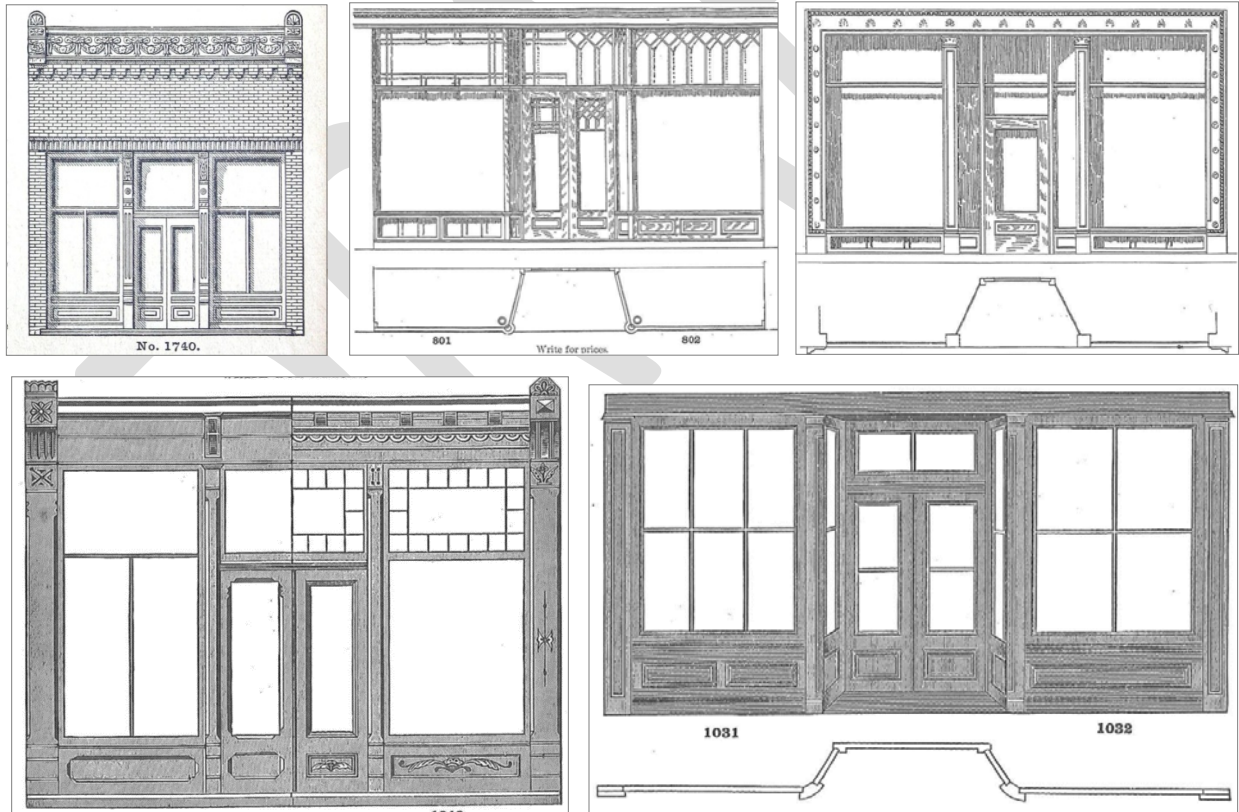
¹⁷ Find source.



Interior of the Pioneer Book Store, c.1880s, 168 Montgomery Street.

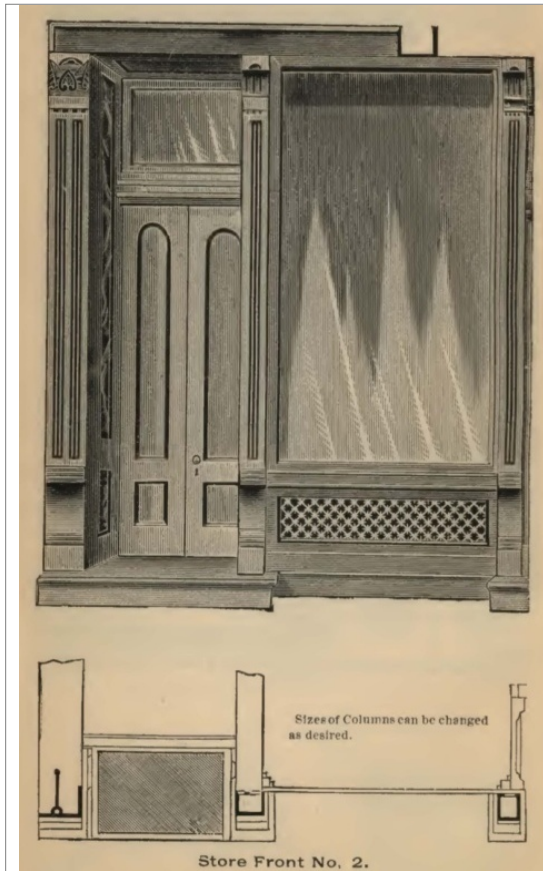
Source: Calisphere, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

Victorian Storefront Catalogs



Top: Example of an inexpensive brick and cast iron storefront offered in the 1900 "George L. Mesker & Co Architectural Iron Works Storefront" pattern book. It was part of the company's "cheap brick fronts" series and was offered in straight or recessed fronts.

Bottom: Examples of wood storefront systems offered in turn-of-the-century pattern books. Pattern books offered a range of customizable storefront elements including a variety of bulkhead paneling, doors, "recessed front" or "straight front," cornice details, columns, ornament, squared or chamfered openings, and, notably, a wide range of window configurations, particularly divided-light windows.



Left: A narrow storefront system offered in 1887.

Sources: "Late Victorian Architectural Details," revised 1898; Carr & Adams Co. of Des Moines, Iowa, c.1902-1903 (Noreen Humphries, 1976); and "Manual of the Bouton Foundry Company" (1887).

Storefront Differences Based on Business Type

There were significant differences in the appearance of storefronts for different types of businesses. Saloons, for example, typically did not feature window displays or shop windows and instead would "religiously screen their lower sashes with ground glass."¹⁸ Ground glass has a rough nontransparent appearance which provided light while obscuring patrons and activities within a saloon from public view. Likewise, businesses such as Faro game halls (gambling), billiards, cigar dealers, and wine cellars did not prominently display their wares or attract attention to their establishments through large shop windows and displays.¹⁹

The sale of food, including meat shops, poultry stands, fish stands, and other food products were typically sold behind counters and did not rely on prominent show windows.²⁰ Fruit and vegetable stores were occasionally partially open air—lacking even windows and doors—with produce stacked and displayed outside the shop. At the time such shops and displayed goods were described as "open from wall to wall and even trespass upon the sidewalk."²¹

¹⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 20, 1896, 22.

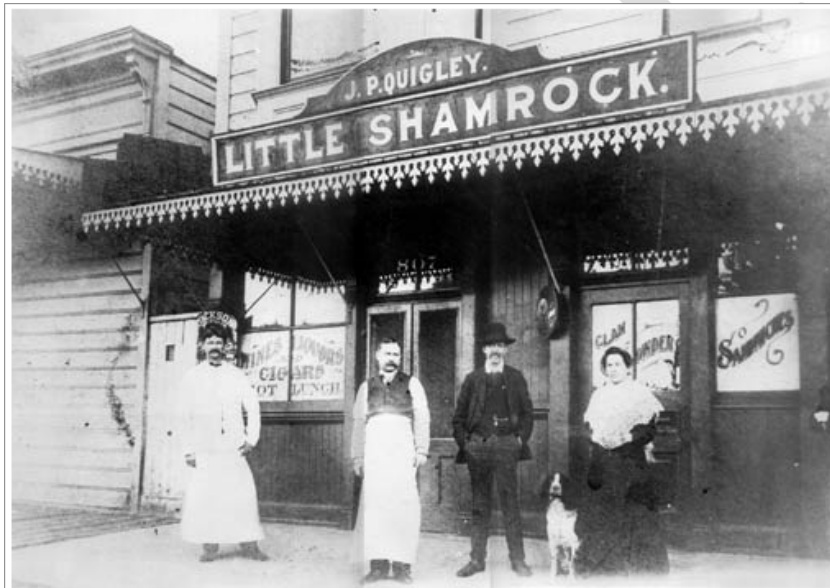
¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*



Left: Chinatown grocer, example of the fully open storefront of a produce seller. No date. Source: California Historical Society



Left: Little Shamrock tavern on Lincoln Avenue, c. 1905. Source: Little Shamrock (Western Neighborhood Project)

EARLY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT: 1865 - 1905



1035 Guerrero St.
Built: c.1880

1. WINDOWS & WINDOW DISPLAY SPACES
2. BULKHEADS
3. VESTIBULE (INCLUDES SHAPE, SOFFIT, PAVING, AND DOOR)
4. TRANSOM WINDOWS
5. CORNICE, AWNING, CANOPY
6. PIERS & FACING MATERIAL
7. SIGNAGE

An extremely rare example of an original c.1880 neighborhood storefront with divided sash display windows, raised window display spaces, and intact glazed window screens at the rear. Source: SF Planning Dept.

Storefront Components & Retailing Concepts

The following section documents retailing concepts as expressed in storefront components during the period 1865 to 1905.

1. WINDOWS AND WINDOW DISPLAY SPACES

Window displays were essentially self-contained spaces within the store, directed toward passers-by on the sidewalk rather than shoppers within the stores. Window display spaces were referred to at the time as “Shop Windows.” These spaces featured raised platforms, typically the height of the bulkhead, that extended several feet (with typical depths of 3’ to 6’) toward the rear of the store.²² The window transparency expanded the store’s reach closer to the sidewalk and the shop window was considered an important space for selling and enticing potential customers to enter the store. Shop windows nearly always contained a backboard or screen at the rear of the display, which further reinforced the self-contained space of window displays.²³ These solid wood or screened backdrops were often hung with additional display goods, which blocked views from the sidewalk into the selling space of the store’s interior.²⁴

Window Dressing

Shop windows were used as stages to display goods for sale and some merchants went to great lengths to create artistic staging and theatrical effects. As noted in an 1896 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, certain types of businesses relied heavily on staged window displays, including “toy stores, the dry goods, millinery shops, art print stores, florists’ shops, book stores, music stores, curio shops, and hardware stores...which make the greatest effort to place their wares before the public in the most attractive form.”²⁵ The show window space was described as “air tight, dust-proof and fly-excluding,” with transparent walls which could be quickly converted to effective advertising spaces through the artful display of goods.²⁶

This new emphasis on advertising display gave rise to new terms and occupations, including “window dressers” and “window trimmers.” The *San Francisco Chronicle* describes this evolution, “The window trimmer is a purely modern evolution and the adoption of this profession.”²⁷ The term “window dressing” evolved from this new importance placed on window displays and a properly “dressed window” was often achieved through draping towels, and bolts of sheeting to create drapes, banners, and veils.²⁸

Glass Technology

Early San Francisco display windows featured smaller panes of glass separated by wood muntins. This segmented appearance was due to the cost and technical limitations of producing large sheets of glass. Photographs and illustrations from the 1860s to 1880s commonly show two-over-two divided light shop windows. Larger sheets of rolled plate glass were introduced in the 1880s, particularly in larger shops of the downtown commercial core, though divided lights were still installed into the 1890s. Extant examples of segmented window displays are extraordinarily rare in San Francisco. One known example is located at 1035 Guerrero Street in the Mission District.

²² The depth of the shop window display depended in part upon the depth of the recessed vestibule, if any. The estimate of 3’ to 6’ is based upon a review of photographs from this period of development.

²³ Sewell.

²⁴ Paul Groth, “Ordinary Storefronts of the Twentieth Century: Articulating the Lines between Shoppers and Retailers.” Long lecture version notes for lecture presented to City Planning Department, City of San Francisco, July 18, 2006. Used with permission..

²⁵ “Shop Windows,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 20, 1896, 22.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ SF Chronicle.

²⁸ Ibid.



Left: 322-324 Bush Street in 1875. Also visible are the rear display boards at the back of the window display.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library



Above: An illustration of storefronts on Battery Street, between Bush and Pine, from 1895 shows examples of two-over-two and two-over-three divided light display windows.



Left: 9 Montgomery Street in 1873.

Sources: David Rumsey Historic Map Collection (above) and Society of California Pioneers (left)

Lighting

Candles, kerosene, and oil lamps provided the earliest illumination for shop windows and interiors. Gas jets commonly provided additional light in the 1890s. By the turn of the century, there were three key types of shop window lighting installations. Open window lighting featured hanging lamps suspended into the display area. These inverted glass lamps often were curved to increase reflectivity and a single inverted lamp was often sufficient for a small display window.²⁹ Deck lighting consisted of hidden and enclosed lights which provided uniform illumination of the window display area through a transparent or translucent ceiling or “deck.” Light diffusion was achieved by

²⁹ T.J. Litle, Jr. "Show Window Illumination by the Reflex Light," published by the Welsbach Company (Gloucester, New Jersey: 1908), 14.

using ground glass on the deck. Less common was the use of exterior lamps to project light from the exterior into the window display area.³⁰ Some effort was given to recess the lights above the range of vision, to hide gas pipes, and to provide a convenient method of lighting the pilot light, adjusting the flame, and extinguishing the lights, including timed shut-off functionality.

Toward the end of this period of development, the shift from kerosene and gas lighting to the newly introduced electric incandescent lighting would have a major impact on the lighting of stores and display windows. Larger stores, such as the Roos Brothers Department Store, installed the new electric lighting system which cast a brilliant new quality of light, which the *San Francisco Chronicle* described as “The incandescent lights arranged in reflecting circles in the ceiling of the immense show windows make a brilliant light at night, and are something novel in the light line... Prettier show windows have never been seen in this city.”³¹ Neighborhood commercial stores soon followed and the shift to electric illumination was rapidly adopted.

2. BULKHEADS

Bulkheads from this era were fairly low and typically wood clad, often with raised wood paneling. A review of photographs indicate that bulkheads of larger stores located in the downtown core often were extremely low (approximately 1' tall), while neighborhood commercial storefronts were slightly higher, typically 1' to 2'. Paneled wood bulkheads were common, though the introduction of small ceramic tiles emerged at the turn of the century.

Given the importance of transparency to view window displays and display merchandise, it was important for the windows to be free of “frosting” or condensation. This problem was addressed through the insertion of iron grilles or vents at the base of the bulkhead, which provided air circulation from the outside into the window display. This further reinforced the concept that the window display was more closely connected to the sidewalk than to the interior selling space of the store.³² Each bulkhead typically featured a small vent, often with decorative patterns.

3. VESTIBULE

Entrance doors were typically accessed via an angled recessed vestibule, flanked by display windows, parallel to the screen at the back of window displays. This recessed entrance served as an extension of the sidewalk and was desired by merchants because it served to funnel potential customers directly into the store. This configuration extended a store’s display space, which allowed for window shopping after hours and served to pull shoppers over the threshold from the sidewalk to the store. An observer in 1903 described this phenomenon, “The easily tempted customers...find themselves, literally, in the shop before they are aware.”³³ Early vestibules were paved with wood flooring, which were later replaced with the common hexagonal tile paving featuring a polychromatic trim. Some vestibules were level with the sidewalk while others featured a single stair.

A partially glazed panel wood door was the primary entrance into the commercial space. The door aligned with the back screen of the window display and often matched the wood paneling or decorative elements found at the primary residential entry and/or the upper stories’ fenestration and façade detailing. Wider vestibules occasionally featured a pair of hinged doors. Doors were typically topped with an operable ventilator or a fixed wood transom.

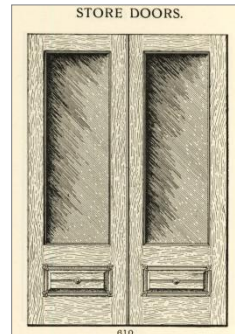
³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, “Manufacturers and Merchants Look Forward to Good Times,” September 4, 1897.

³² Sewell.

³³ As quoted in Paul Groth’s presentation, ““Ordinary Storefronts of the Twentieth Century: Articulating the Lines between Shoppers and Retailers.”

Later, as fire and building codes mandated that commercial doors swing outward instead of into the interior, the vestibule provided a convenient space for outward swinging doors, thereby lessening conflict with passersby on the sidewalk.³⁴



Far Left: Example of vestibule paving options from a 1905 tile manufacturers' catalog.

Left: Wood paneled glazed double doors offered in 1905 by a wood sash and door manufacturer.

Source: Minton Tiles Complete Price List, 1905; Rouch & Musser Sash and Door Co., 1905.

4. TRANSOM WINDOW

In order to increase light into the interior of stores, many storefronts featured a band of transom windows topping the primary display windows. Transoms commonly featured narrow turned muntins spaced roughly 1' apart. Transom windows were often operable, configured as casement, awning, and pivot. Most were set in vertically oriented rectangular openings, though some featured individual arched openings or more elaborate designs.

5. CORNICE / AWNINGS / CANOPY

Typically, an intermediate cornice or molded beltcourse divided the storefront from the upper story. Cornice design ranged from simple beltcourses or crown molding to projecting cornices supported by brackets and ornamented with dentils. The intermediate cornice's design typically mirrored the main cornice at the building's parapet.

Awnings and shades were used to reduce glare on the storefront windows and to provide a backdrop for signage and lettering. Awnings consisted of free-hanging canvas spread on a wood or metal framework. Occasionally, awnings were fixed and constructed from wood. In the late 1800s, operable awnings allowed merchants to retract or expand awnings based on exposure and operating hours. Valances hung from the front of the awning and were often trimmed with what appears to be wood or sheet metal cut-outs in the shape of inverted fleur-de-lys. Historic photographs indicate that awnings were prevalent on commercial corridors.



Left: Undated view of Hubbert's Market, likely from the 1880s. This style of trimmed awning is common in photographs from this era. Location in SF unknown. Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library



Below: Hogan's grocery store, corner of Fell at Webster Street, 1883. Demolished. Source: UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library

Note the multi-light display windows on both stores.

6. PIERS AND FACING MATERIAL

Storefront piers of neighborhood commercial buildings were typically wood and often featured columns, pilasters, or decorative elements associated with the building's overall architectural style. A flush fascia and intermediate cornice typically separated the storefront from the upper stories. The upper stories of multi-story commercial buildings were typically clad in horizontal channel drop wood siding or flush wood siding.



7. SIGNAGE³⁵

The form and function of signs and the relationship of signage to commercial buildings evolved slowly during the nineteenth century. In the early 1800s, commercial signs were mounted on stand-alone posts and were completely disengaged from the building. By the 1820s, the practice of attaching a sign flush with a commercial building's façade—engaged with the building—began to supplant the stand alone post method.³⁶ These early wall signs were

³⁵ This section on signage draws heavily from Martin Treu's excellent study of signage and storefronts, *Signs, Streets, & Storefronts: A History of Architecture and Graphics Along America's Commercial Corridors*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press).

³⁶ Martin Treu, *Signs, Streets, & Storefronts: A History of Architecture and Graphics Along America's Commercial Corridors*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), 22.

often vertically oriented and contained lines of text and graphic representations of the goods or service on offer (a drawing of a shoe, for example, would indicate to the illiterate that it was a cobbler's shop). As fully text-based signage became more common, due in part to increased literacy, the graphic representations were dropped and signage trended toward a horizontal orientation.³⁷ These horizontal signs—which were the dominant sign type found during the 1865 to 1905 period of development—were either painted directly on the building or flush-mounted to the building's fascia. Occasionally, the type of service rather than the establishment name was all that was painted on the signs, for example, “drug store,” “saloon,” or “hotel.” Smaller projecting signs followed soon thereafter.

Photographs of San Francisco's early commercial buildings, particularly in the downtown commercial district, show a profusion of painted, mounted, and projecting signs. Most signs were painted or wall mounted at the fascia and upper stories. Some signs were painted on the parapet and a few were attached to rooftop structures. Signs were also hung from within the window display area, painted on awnings and valances, and painted or mounted on bulkheads. This period also saw unresolved tension between architects (who provided minimal space for signs on their increasingly ornamented commercial buildings) and merchants (who were far more interested in maximizing their signage and advertising potential than in maintaining the architect's subordinate view of signage).³⁸ Given the dearth of space specifically designated for signage, typically confined to a narrow fascia band above the display windows, merchants often preferred to slather additional signs on all available surfaces of the building rather than defer to architectural design or ornament.

In the late nineteenth century, sign makers introduced a new highly decorative sign type—the sparkling “chipped-glass” sign. The surface of this glass was masked, then chipped to produce the sparkling effect. Such signs were often fastened to the fascia or within the entrance vestibule.³⁹

Given the inherent temporary quality of painted, fabric or wall signs, the widespread devastation of the 1906 disaster, and the limited number of extant neighborhood commercial properties from this era, it is unlikely that signage from this period of development remains.

³⁷ Martin Treu notes that “offsite ownership, space leasing, and shorter-lived businesses” may also partially explain the change to text-based signs as identification could be altered more easily. *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁸ Source Treu here.

³⁹ Treu, 38.

Evaluative Framework:

Early Neighborhood Commercial Development (c. 1865–1905)

SIGNIFICANCE

This period of development is characterized by the expansion of residential suburbs and related commercial corridors beyond the downtown commercial core. Commercial strips emerged typically along the flatter sections of what was often hilly topography. Clusters of commercial blocks expanded perpendicularly from the spine of major transit corridors, and scattered examples of commercial spaces emerged within purely residential blocks. In some cases, a commercial building's significance is directly related to the storefront space. A storefront that retains its intact Queen Anne style detailing, for example, may derive its significance specifically from the storefront design. In other instances, significance is derived from associations related to the building as a whole. Significant themes and related criteria associated with this period of development are described below.⁴⁰

CRITERIA A/1 (EVENTS)

Suburban Expansion & Commercial Development, c. 1865–1905

Commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with events related to the neighborhood expansion that followed the extension of streetcar lines into the newly developing suburbs such as the Mission District, Hayes Valley, Western Addition, Haight, and Fillmore, among others. Corner stores located in purely residential areas and stores that projected out from the spine of primary commercial corridors may also qualify as significant under these criteria for their association with residential development beyond the commercial core.

Commerce at the Margins, c.1865–1905

Commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with commercial development related to industry or leisure in the outlying areas of San Francisco. Examples include early commercial buildings associated with racetracks or roadhouses and/or commercial buildings associated with industry located at the City's margins, such as "Butchertown," the iron works, or dynamite factories.

Significant Businesses

Commercial buildings closely associated with an important business, type of business establishment, or business practice, may qualify as significant under Criteria A/1.

Culturally Significant Businesses

Commercial buildings closely associated with specific events or historic trends that have influenced cultural or ethnic communities may qualify as significant under Criteria A/1. Examples could include a hotel that served newly arrived emigrants from China or a grocery store that provided imported Japanese goods which contributed to and nurtured the continuation of Japanese life-ways within the community.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Other themes may be identified on a case-by-case basis.

⁴¹ The significance discussion related to culturally significant commercial buildings is drawn from the significance considerations contained in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement* (May 2011) adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission on September 19, 2013.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: Some properties may also qualify as significant under Criteria A/1 and C/3 (architecture). The extreme scarcity of intact neighborhood commercial buildings from this period of development should be considered when evaluating significance.

CRITERIA B/2 (PEOPLE)

Significant Persons

Commercial buildings closely associated with a significant person, such as an important merchant, may qualify as significant under Criteria B/2. For these properties to qualify as significant, they should be the best remaining building associated with the significant person.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: During this period of development, it is more likely for buildings to qualify as significant under Criteria B/2 as individual properties rather than contribute to a historic district. The extreme scarcity of intact neighborhood commercial buildings from this period of development should be considered when evaluating significance.

CRITERIA C/3 (ARCHITECTURE)

Neighborhood Commercial Architectural Expression, 1865–1905

Neighborhood commercial buildings that display exceptional architectural design, are a representative or a transitional work of a master architect, or are a fine example of a type, may qualify as significant under Criteria C/3. Commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with significant changes in retailing concepts such as the design of shop windows as a central advertising and marketing medium and/or the design of the vestibule to lower threshold resistance. Architectural significance may be expressed at the storefront and/or at the building's upper level(s). Some buildings will have more than one period of significance, inclusive of the date of construction and storefront alteration(s) that have gained significance in their own right.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: Historic districts may overlap periods of development. The extreme scarcity of intact neighborhood commercial buildings from this period of development should be considered when evaluating significance.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES (1865–1905)

Single-Story Commercial

This property type consists of a single-story commercial use. It may contain one or more storefronts within a single property. Examples of intact storefronts from this period of development are exceedingly rare.

Right: 2505 24th Street, c. 1900. Building's storefront was later remodeled.



Residential Corner Store

Scattered in residential neighborhoods citywide, the corner store property type from this period of development typically consists of ground story retail—often oriented toward the corner—topped with one- to three- residential stories. The recessed corner entry often, though not always, featured a single supporting column at the corner. Examples of intact storefronts from this period of development are exceedingly rare.

Right: 2700 Sutter Street (c. 1900).



Mixed-Use Commercial

Common along neighborhood commercial corridors, this property type features a storefront at the ground story and offices, residential, or other uses at the upper stories. Typically these buildings were two-to-four-stories in height. Examples of intact storefronts from this period of development are exceedingly rare.

Right: 2406-2408 Folsom Street (c. 1885).



Integrity

To qualify for listing in local, state, or national registers, a commercial property associated with a significant theme must also retain sufficient integrity with which to convey its significance. The evaluation of commercial buildings is particularly challenging given the nature of retailing, with its emphasis on frequent storefront modernizations. Nonetheless, an integrity evaluation *must* include evaluation of the building as a whole, rather than as separate components of storefront and upper story/s. Challenges are myriad. Commercial buildings often featured more than one storefront, resulting in additional issues for evaluation when one storefront retains high physical integrity and others display a range of alterations. At times, the storefront level retains exceptional physical integrity while the upper story/s have been substantially altered. Adding to the complexity, some storefront alterations have gained significance in their own right, resulting in differing periods of significance and themes associated with a single building. The following integrity considerations and examples provide some guidance to the often case-by-case evaluation of neighborhood commercial buildings and districts.

Intact original storefronts from the 1865 to 1905 period of development are extraordinarily rare. Given the scarcity of extant commercial property types from this era, due in part to the scale of destruction resulting from the 1906 earthquake and fire, additional discretion is recommended for evaluating physical integrity. Most storefronts of surviving properties from this period have been altered. In the rare instance that a storefront from this period retains integrity, but the upper stories have been altered, the building as a whole may still retain sufficient integrity to convey significance to a specific theme.

The aspects of integrity most important for Criteria A/1 are determined by the association. Likewise, the retention of essential features in order to convey significance is determined by the identified significance and period of significance. Depending upon the association, certain aspects of integrity, such as feeling, location, setting, or association, may have a higher importance than the physical aspects of integrity, material, design and workmanship.

Properties associated with an important event or person should retain sufficient integrity such that “a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists today.”⁴² In general, a lower threshold of integrity is appropriate for properties significant under Criteria A/1 or B/2, provided there is sufficient historic fabric to convey the association with a significant event, trend, or person. Buildings that are significant solely for architecture, Criteria C/3, must retain higher integrity of materials, design, and workmanship.

In general, in order to qualify for individual listing, a commercial building with significance derived specifically from the storefront should express integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Such storefronts should retain a substantial portion of the historic storefront features, including recessed vestibule shape, bulkhead, and transom. A storefront that has been altered in a compatible manner, may, for example, retain the shape of the recessed vestibule, yet feature contemporary bulkhead cladding and new window system. Buildings that no longer retain sufficient integrity to qualify for listing individually, may still retain sufficient historic material to qualify as a district contributor. Within historic districts, the threshold of integrity for contributing buildings is lower and takes into account the expected level of change inherent in commercial districts, particularly at the storefront.

⁴² National Park Service, Bulletin No. 15.

Examples of Significance and Integrity Evaluations



Mixed-Use

Built c. 1880s, storefront added c. 1920s.

This Italianate flats building on Fillmore Street was raised in the 1920s to insert a ground story storefront along this expanding commercial corridor. The storefront has since been altered. The upper stories retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship from the historic Victorian era design. Because the subsequent storefront alterations and residential entry are in keeping with the character of storefronts from this era (recessed vestibule and bulkhead), the building retains sufficient integrity to convey significance under Criteria C/3.



Mixed-Use

Built 1895, contemporary storefront alterations.

1831-1835 Ocean Avenue retains many of its original features at the upper story, but the storefront level has been altered to such a degree that it would no longer convey significance for its architecture under Criteria C/3. However, the building is significant under Criteria A/1 due to its unusual history and status as the sole remaining commercial building associated with a large horse racing track and related commercial establishments constructed on this block in the 1890s. As such, the substantial alterations at the ground story do not impact the building's integrity to such a degree that it no longer retains integrity. The building qualifies as an individual historic resource under Criteria A/1.

Character-Defining Features

When present, character-defining features of neighborhood commercial buildings from the 1865–1905 period of development may include design elements associated with the storefront and/or upper stories. Character-defining features may be associated with the original building, the original storefront, and/or with storefront alterations that have gained significance in their own right. Additional character-defining features may be identified on a case-by-case basis when evaluating individual buildings and historic districts.

Character-defining features specific to the storefront may include, but are not limited to:

- Recessed vestibule (typically squared or angled)
- Low bulkheads that extend into the vestibule area, often with a decorative metal vent
- Smaller fixed display windows separated with wood sash frames
- Raised window display area (typically the height of the bulkhead)
- Transom windows, typically with wood mullions and set in a fixed, pivot, or awning configuration
- Glazed wood-framed entry door topped with a wood-framed operable ventilator
- Signage
- Design elements and ornamentation associated with a particular style
- Materials and finishes including:
 - Wood paneled bulkheads
 - Wood paneled soffit
 - Wood flooring or tile paving within the vestibule

Character-defining features at the cornice and/or upper stories may include, but are not limited to:

- Parapet, roof form, and cornice details
- Window openings, materials, and bay configuration
- Entrances to the upper stories
- Wood cladding at exterior elevations
- Design elements and ornamentation associated with a particular style

Additional character-defining features may include:

- Sidewalk lights that provide illumination into the basement area

Period of Development:

Neighborhood Commercial Expansion, 1906–1929

Period Background, 1906–1929⁴³

On April 18, 1906, a massive earthquake struck San Francisco, one of the most significant events in the City's history. Although the quake itself did relatively little damage to San Francisco structures not located on filled land, the many ruptured gas lines, overturned furnaces, and toppled brick chimneys soon produced scores of fires that quickly spread unchecked throughout the City. Damaged water mains made firefighting extraordinarily difficult. The downtown and industrial districts were consumed entirely before the intense fires turned on the City's residential neighborhoods, most of which were constructed of wood that served to kindle the great inferno. For three days the fires blazed, and some 28,000 buildings were destroyed, including almost every structure east of Van Ness Avenue and Dolores Street, and north of 20th and Townsend Streets, an area that includes today's Financial District, North Beach, Russian Hill, South of Market, and the northern Mission District. Some pockets within the fire line escaped destruction, including portions of Telegraph Hill. An estimated 3,000 or more people perished in the conflagration, and approximately 250,000 people—more than half of the entire 1906 population of San Francisco—were left homeless by the disaster.

The rebuilding and recovery of San Francisco from the 1906 disaster earned it the moniker, "The City That Knows How." The City's reconstruction, despite occurring without central planning or leadership, resulted in modernization of the financial and industrial bases, densification and expansion of residential neighborhoods, wholesale social and economic reorganization of the City, and ultimately a new San Francisco. The sheer scope and magnitude of the physical rebuilding effort, which involved over 500 city blocks and four-fifths of the City that had been destroyed, was astounding. Just as extraordinary was the pace of the rebuilding, as entire burnt districts were rebuilt just a few years after the disaster and the destroyed areas were nearly completely built out within a decade.

Rebuilding of the City began within months of the 1906 disaster. The early focus of reconstruction was the downtown commercial district, which was entirely rebuilt and modernized within three years. The immense South of Market district, which was a mix of working class residences and industry prior to the disaster, was rebuilt as primarily industrial and large-scale commercial. Higher density housing was constructed in rebuilt and surviving residential neighborhoods, which increased in population. Higher-income housing moved westward, while lower-income housing was pushed farther south. In order to accommodate the urgent citywide housing needs, multi-unit flats were increasingly constructed in rebuilt residential neighborhoods. Although many of the outlying residential neighborhoods were permitted to rebuild with wood, post-disaster fire codes were enacted in the downtown and South of Market districts that resulted in widespread fire-resistant construction in brick and concrete.

Additional factors in neighborhood and commercial development during this period include the closure and removal of cemeteries from the City, beginning around the turn of the century, which opened up large tracts of land for residential and associated neighborhood-serving commercial development, primarily in the Inner Richmond and Laurel Heights neighborhoods.

Neighborhood commercial buildings built during the reconstruction era, roughly spanning 1906-1913, range from one-story wood-frame retail spaces to large-scale multi-story apartment buildings featuring numerous storefronts at the ground story. Reconstruction led to the marked densification of San Francisco, with larger multi-unit structures replacing many single-family houses and commercial spaces.

⁴³ This background section was summarized and excerpted, in large part, from the Planning Department's draft Preservation Element (2009).

The citywide building boom that began after the 1906 disaster remained strong until 1913 when San Francisco was impacted by a national recession. The first years of United States involvement in World War I likewise curtailed building activity. A nationwide economic boom during the 1920s correlated with another wave of building activity in San Francisco and with the enactment of the City's first Planning Code in 1921, which mandated the geographic separation of incompatible land uses. The Stock Market Crash of 1929, which resulted in a near immediate collapse of the building industry, marks the end of this period of development.

Geography of Commercial Spaces

The opening of streetcar tunnels in 1918 and 1928 in the City's largely undeveloped west end, as well as the adoption of mass automobile use beginning in the 1920s, spurred residential development in outlying areas of the City. Construction of streetcar tunnels and the extension of streetcars into the south and southwest areas of San Francisco facilitated residential construction, including the development of planned residence parks such as Forest Hill and St. Francis Wood. Vast areas of the Sunset and Richmond Districts in western San Francisco, and the Excelsior District in southern San Francisco, were built out from the 1920s through the 1940s with tract housing and neighborhood commercial strips. The later years of this period are marked by the mass adoption of automobiles, enabling development in further out areas not yet served by public transportation.

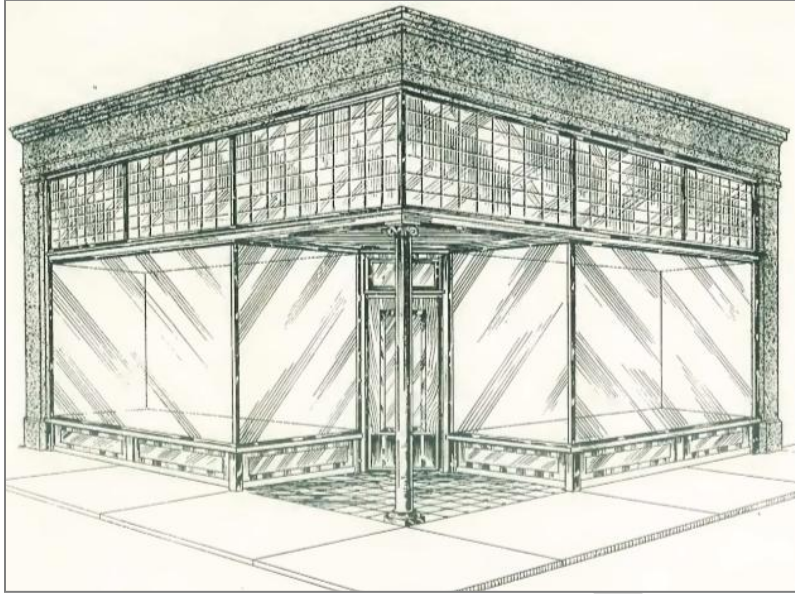
Several discrete new neighborhoods with associated commercial spines developed during this period of development. Developers of the Westwood Park and Ingleside residential subdivision, carved from the vast Adolph Sutro land holding in the southern region of San Francisco, were instrumental in championing and developing a 10-block core of one- to two-story commercial buildings along Ocean Avenue in the late 1910s. A few years after the close of the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1919, the exposition site was developed as a new large-scale neighborhood—named the Marina District, at the City's northernmost shoreline—of houses, duplexes, and scattered apartment buildings. A neighborhood commercial core developed along a five-block stretch of Chestnut Street. This commercial core remains distinctive for the concentration of Art Deco-inspired commercial buildings. In the Sunset District, commercial development extended along existing corridors—Taraval, 20th, Irving, and Judah Streets—and emerged on short (one- to three-block) stretches amidst the developing sand dunes.

Anchored by a growing number of large-scale department stores, the City's shopping core remained downtown centered around Union Square. From roughly 1910 into the 1950s, Market Street was an entertainment destination, known as "the Great White Way,"⁴⁴ with numerous theaters and movie houses, many of which featured brilliantly illuminated electric signs. Only a handful of department stores and variety stores, such as Woolworths, were located in neighborhood commercial districts outside of the commercial core by the 1920s.⁴⁵ During the 1920s and 1930s, several commercial corridors competed directly with Downtown for customers. Fillmore Street and Mission Street both featured new large-scale department stores and movie theaters that attracted a customer base beyond their respective immediate neighborhoods.

Neighborhood-serving corner stores were built along commercial strips and in primarily residential blocks of San Francisco. Such stores often sold groceries and or liquor. Corner stores ranged from single-story structures to mixed-use residential buildings, typically two- to four- stories in height, and were typically oriented toward the corner, with a center post providing additional structural support. Not all corner stores were designed with a center post; some featured an entryway at the side rather than corner of the building.

⁴⁴ A keyword search of the *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper archives indicates that the use of the term Great White Way in reference to San Francisco was in 1910. Numerous cities across the country featured "Great White Ways" modeled after New York's brilliantly illuminated theater district.

⁴⁵ Based on review of 1925 San Francisco City Directory.



Basic one-story corner storefront system offered by Zouri in 1921. Source: Zouri Safety Key-Set Store Front Construction, catalog, 1921.

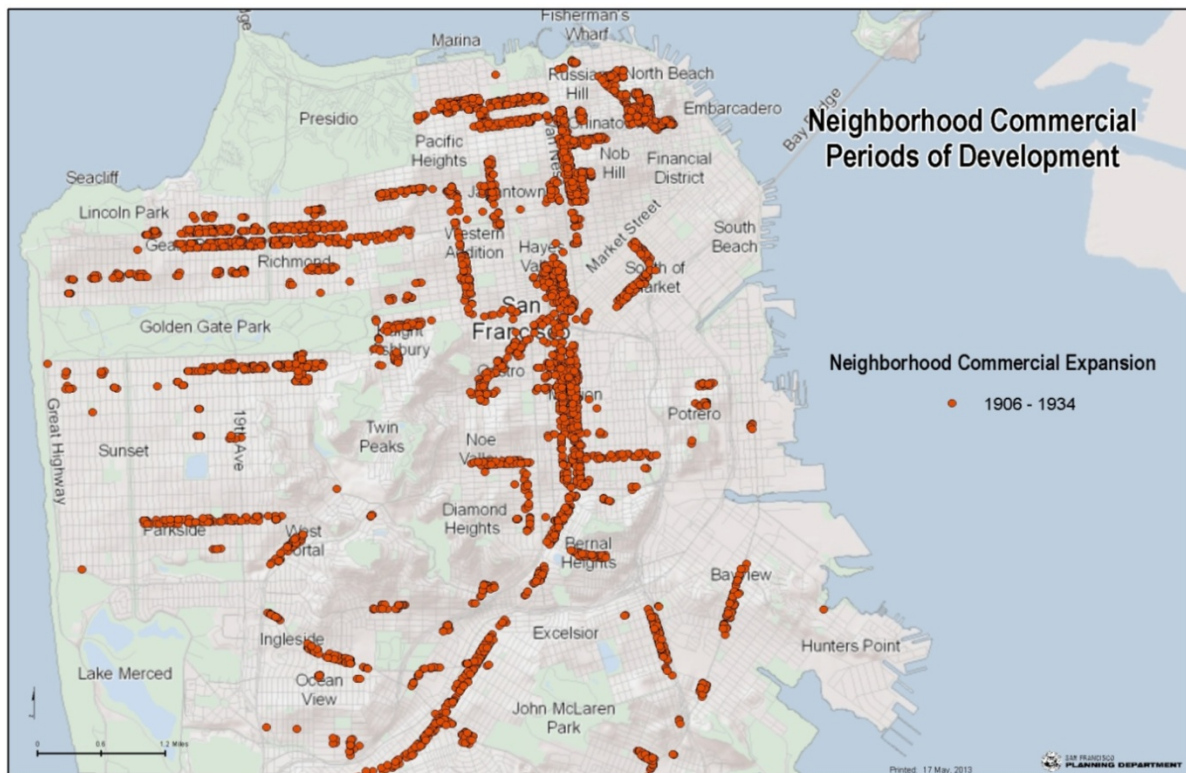
Impact of Government Regulations

Newly introduced government controls—zoning, building and fire code requirements, and signage regulations—during this period impacted the appearance and use of commercial buildings and related signage. New building code requirements mandated that commercial doors swing outwards, rather than inwards, which impacted the shape and depth of vestibules. In the immediate aftermath of the 1906 disaster, new fire codes mandated the use of brick in an enlarged fire limit boundary, which included the formerly low-density primarily residential Tenderloin neighborhood. The appearance and location of signage was also codified beginning with a 1905 ordinance to regulate the size and character of roof signs and signs mounted to the walls of buildings.⁴⁶

San Francisco's first zoning ordinance, adopted in 1921, regulated only the use of buildings, not the height or bulk. The ordinance and zoning map mandated the separation of certain uses and restricted commercial uses to certain streets and street corners. This restriction was tremendously beneficial to existing neighborhood retail stores along streetcar lines and major transportation corridors as it curbed potential competition from new stores opening within residential neighborhoods.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *San Francisco Chronicle*, "To Limit the Size of the Signs, October 21, 1905, 5.

⁴⁷ Marc A. Weiss. "The Real Estate Industry and the Politics of Zoning in San Francisco, 1914-1928," *Planning Perspectives*, 316.



Map showing extant buildings constructed from 1906 to 1929 in neighborhood commercial districts. Most of these 4,220 buildings contain commercial storefronts. Commercial buildings located outside of zoned commercial corridors are not displayed, nor is the downtown commercial core.

The Reconstruction-era (1906–c.1913) emphasis on densification accelerated a risk-reduction trend adopted by developers and property owners begun at the turn-of-the-century. Financial risk was reduced by developing multiple smaller storefront spaces rather than one large space. As geographer Paul Groth notes, nearly half of all retail stores closed within a year of opening. Multiple commercial tenants reduced a developer’s investment risk due to broken leases and vacancies and ensured steady cash flow even if one tenant went bankrupt.⁴⁸

In response to the threat from department stores, by the 1920s, merchants were increasingly turning to diversified sales.⁴⁹ Most notably, former specialty food shops—bakeries, fish markets, meat markets, and groceries—were merging into larger supermarkets. Drug stores increasingly featured soda fountains, cigar stands, books, cosmetics, variety goods, and public telephones.⁵⁰ This period of development also saw a burgeoning interest and expansion in chain stores. In order to compete with the buying power of large department stores, smaller specialty shops increasingly banded together as chain store groups to increase their buying power and to share advertising costs.⁵¹

Updating Older Storefronts

By the 1920s, merchants and property owners were increasingly stripping historic wood storefronts of Victorian- and Edwardian era ornament and installing new tiled storefronts, which offered a sleeker, modern appearance. Shop windows separated with heavy columns and divided light wood sashes were replaced with larger sheets of modern

⁴⁸ Groth.

⁴⁹ Ketchum, Morris. *Shops and Stores*, (Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1957), 12.

⁵⁰ Ketchum, 174.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

plate glass set in metal frames, with squared polychromatic ceramic tiles at a lower bulkhead and prismatic glass transoms. Storefront manufacturers and retailer trade groups both promoted the financial benefits of “investing” in a modern storefront. Lewis Rogers, editor of *Merchants Record and Show Window*, argued, “Any merchant who continues year after year to maintain his business under the handicap of the antiquated front is in most cases a victim of exaggerated conservatism or procrastination ... some merchants have become accustomed to their old fashioned fronts and accept them as a matter of course.”⁵² Several manufacturers of storefront systems—notably Kawneer Company and the Detroit Show Case Company (Desco)—aggressively promoted the replacement of older storefronts with their new modern systems. In a 1922 publication, *Store Fronts: Remodeling Store Fronts Is One Of the Most Profitable Branches of the Contracting Business*, Desco provided strategies, talking points, form letters, sales pitches, and storefront designs to assist carpenters and contractors in convincing merchants and property owners to update their old-fashioned storefront, preferably with a modern Desco system.

The Kawneer Company’s founder, Francis John Plym, is credited with inventing a revolutionary metal sash storefront window framing system that allowed for larger sheets of undivided plate glass.⁵³ Patented in 1906, Plym’s invention, which pertained to the “production of a small, unobtrusive, and durable Sash-bar, the portion of construction surrounding and supporting the window glass,” was rapidly adopted as a replacement to the standard wood framed storefront windows, which were subject to expansion, condensation, and rot, and less conducive to larger panes of plate glass. Plym’s system allowed for a larger plate glass display window, and obviated the need for divided light sashes. Its mass production corresponded with the reconstruction effort following the 1906 disaster in San Francisco, and builders reportedly widely incorporated the new metal sash system in rebuilding efforts. One observer wrote in a letter to Plym that San Francisco’s main commercial thoroughfare, Market Street, ought to be renamed Kawneer Street (in recognition of the widespread use of the company’s sash system).⁵⁴ Based in Michigan, Kawneer opened a second plant in 1912 in Berkeley, California.⁵⁵

Notably, manufacturers during this period focused on upgrading storefront systems rather than the exterior elevation in its entirety. A review of storefront catalogs and related materials reveals no discussion of compatibility with upper stories and modernizing upper stories to match the new storefront.

Also noteworthy is the prominent role of the architectural products manufacturer in storefront design. In a storefront guide from the early 1920s, Pittco notes its role as a de facto architectural consultant “Where an architect is not available, the numerous distributing warehouses and factories of the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company may be called upon to give expert advice and assistance.... Thus they are prepared to advise as to the most appropriate design and to give competent instruction and direction in the matter of its execution.”⁵⁶

Lodges & Halls

This period of development also saw the construction of fraternal lodges, benevolent associations, and union halls that featured ground-story commercial space. Income generated from the storefront space helped fund activities in the upstairs union hall or lodge space.

⁵² Lewis Rogers, *The Art of Decorating Show Windows and Displaying Merchandise* (Chicago: The Merchants Record Company, 1924), 25.

⁵³ http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/kawneer.html

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ The Kawneer plant was designated an official Berkeley Landmark in 1986.

⁵⁶ “Modern Store Front,” booklet produced by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, 1923, 97.



Left: One of eight blueprints for combined storefront and fraternal halls / lodges offered in 1909 by the Radford Company.

Right: Built in 1906, the Sheet Metal Workers Hall features a decorative sheet metal façade that mimics the appearance of stone. The ground story space was originally occupied by a liquor and cigar store.

Sources: Radford's Store & Flat Buildings, 1909; SF Planning.

Shop Windows

Merchants and manufacturers continued to promote and implement visually prominent window displays in the discrete space of shop windows, which were known at that time as “silent salesmen.”⁵⁷ Desco stressed the economic and aesthetic value of the window display spaces, advising retailers that “the most valuable space in the entire building is that part taken up by the show windows.”⁵⁸ *The Grocer's Window Book: A Compilation of Practical Plans for Displaying Merchandise* (1919) provided nearly 200 examples of dressed show windows, covering a variety of themes. Some displays were purely artistic, incorporating various sundries, particularly cans, bottles, and cartons, into decorative arrangements. Others focused on a specific set of products, such as displays for flour and baking materials or displays for packaged goods. Still others referenced specific holidays, such as the “Lincoln Window for Martyr's Birthday,” which incorporated a miniature log cabin built of candles and “A Lenten Display of Fish and Cheese” which featured a castle made of stacked cheese. Guides and catalogs likewise suggested shop window displays for a range of durable goods, including the proper way to display writing paper, school supplies, linens, ribbons, shoes (typically on pedestals), clothing (on forms and wax figures), candy, jewelry, musical instruments, hardware, dishes, drugs, and toiletries. Smaller products, such as pens or pencils, small jars, or, in one case—hot water bottles—were often arranged in repeating patterns, occasionally filling the shop window.

By the 1910s, the recognition of the primary importance of window displays led to the professionalization of the field, with the occupational titles “window dresser” and “window trimmers” transitioning to “display man,” and the

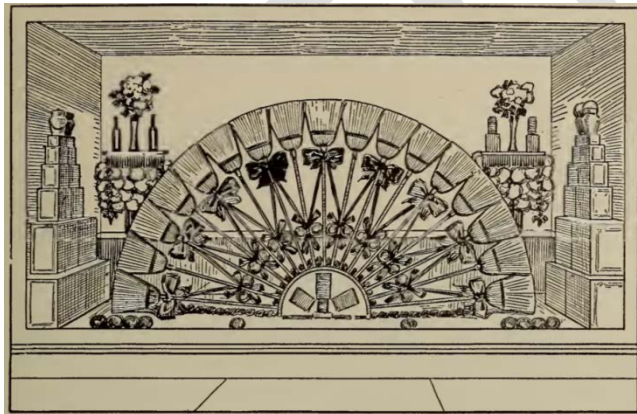
⁵⁷ Store Fronts: Remodeling Store Fronts is One of the Most Profitable Branches of the Contracting Business (Detroit, MI: Detroit Show Case Company, 1922), 24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 19

formation of professional societies such as the International Association of Display Men.⁵⁹ Rather than merchant-produced window displays, increasingly these display men created displays for a range of merchant clients. Chicago's Koester School even offered a four- to eight-week course in "Window Display, Advertising, and Card Writing."⁶⁰ The *San Francisco Chronicle* describes this evolution in shop window materials and displays from "the time when a collection of household junk was shown behind a small-paned sash simply to let the public know what sort of goods the merchant had to the finest production of the window dresser's art displayed amid settings that cost a fortune in themselves."⁶¹

Specialized window display props—including hat stands, collar stands, wooden hose forms, pedestals, card holders, plateaux, clothing stands, heel rests, dividers, millinery stands, adjustable racks, cane holders, haberdasher, card easels, tabourette, display tables, drape tops, and sign easels—proliferated during this era.⁶² The use of life-like wax figures in storefront displays was increasingly common by the 1920s. Though, the high cost of such figures likely limited their use to larger stores located in the downtown shopping district, rather than neighborhood commercial shops. Less expensive papier-mâché forms were also used to display clothes, with the belief that the display of clothes on a human form "is a stimulant to business, for the psychological reason that women (in particular) are keen to see how a garment will look on others."⁶³ Manufacturers recommended that clothing stores and other stores using mannequins (also known as clothing dummies) should drop the height of the vestibule.

Draped fabric and internal valances were increasingly used by the 1920s to frame shop window displays and to hide from view the increasing number of lamps and lighting systems used to illuminate shop window merchandise. Made of materials ranging from velour, to appliqued satin, to coarse muslin, to semitransparent veils, and often draped, gathered, and fringed, valances were used to "soften the hard commercial aspect of merchandise displays and convey a subtle impression of warmth and 'hominess' that has a most satisfying result on their prospective customer."⁶⁴



Left: One of the nearly 200 shop window display ideas contained in "The Grocer's Window Book," 1919.

⁵⁹ The recent replacement of the term "window trimmer" with "display man" is mentioned in a letter to the editor included in the January 1918 edition of "Merchants Record and Show Windows," page 39. An ad for the association is found in the January 1918 edition of "Merchants Record and Show Window," page 54.

⁶⁰ Advertisement in *The Art of Decorating Show Windows and Displaying Merchandise* (Chicago: The Merchants Record Company, 1924), unnumbered advertisement at rear of book.

⁶¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Shop Window Dressing in America," December 2, 1910, 6.

⁶² A sample of window display fixtures listed in a catalog from the 1910s: "Window Display Fixtures that are Dependable," (Chicago, Illinois: Artistic Wood Turning Works, circa 1910s).

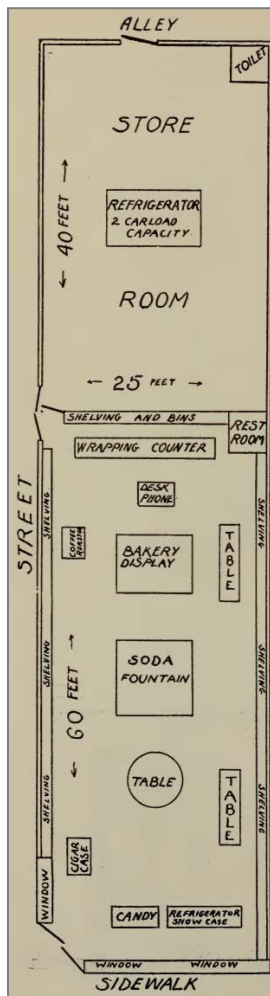
⁶³ *Ibid.*, 09.

⁶⁴ Rogers, 40-41.

Interior Layout

Up until roughly the 1920s, the interior of shops remained largely unchanged from earlier periods, though there were notable differences in the interiors of different types of shops. The interior of men's clothing stores were known to imitate the English shop experience, with dark woodwork and "a heavy 'roast beef and plum pudding' atmosphere."⁶⁵ Lighting was typically provided by incandescent lamps hung from the ceiling, which cast a yellow-tinted direct light.⁶⁶ Larger variety stores as well as small retail establishments increasingly incorporated an open mezzanine level to provide additional selling space to tall one-story commercial buildings. Lined with a balcony overlooking the primary selling area, this mezzanine level became a popular configuration for retail establishments. The mezzanines were either oval or squared and hugged the perimeter of the store. Prominent wood staircases, often located toward the rear of the store, led to the mezzanine level. Excellent examples of extant wood mezzanines are found on Mission Street in the Mission District.

For the most part, sales clerks still assisted customers from behind stocked cases. Although this era did witness a shift towards self-service, retailers favored glazed cases and shelves that prevented customers from physically touching the items on offer. As one booklet noted, enclosed store fixtures such as glass display cases protected merchandise from theft and damage by "inoffensively prevent from yielding to the general, almost unconscious, habit of handling goods unnecessarily."⁶⁷



Left: Grocer interior plan (1915) shows reliance on perimeter shelving units and ample storage at rear.

Top: Store interior in 1919. In the days prior to self-service shopping, stores relied on heavy staffing to assist customers.

Above: Store interior in 1923. Sales clerks have moved out from behind the shelves; a step closer to self-service.

Sources: "The Grocer's Window Book," 1915, rev. 1919; "Modern Store Fronts," 1923.

⁶⁵ Morris Ketchum, *Shops and Stores*, (New York: Reinhold Publishing Company, 1948, rev. 1957), 66.

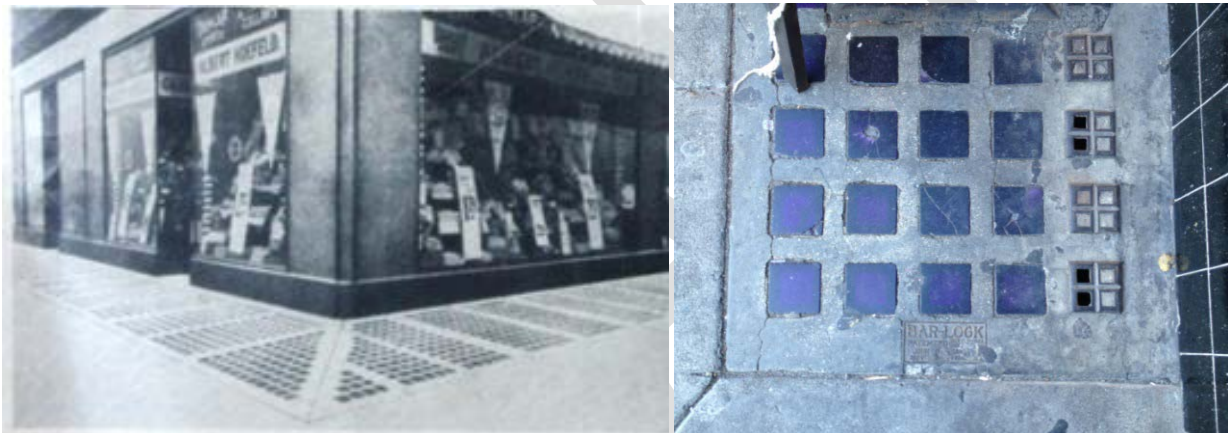
⁶⁶ Alex Wall, *Victor Gruen: From Urban Shop to New City*, (Barcelona: Actar, 2005).

⁶⁷ "Modern Store Front," booklet produced by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, 1923, 105.

Basements

In the early 1900s, proprietors of dry goods stores and department stores increasingly expanded their sales capacity by converting basements into useable sales areas. The newly converted basement sales area, previously used for overflow stock, was typically reserved for lower priced goods and sale items.⁶⁸ The term “bargain basement” and the understanding that discounted items were sold in the basement is linked to this early 1900s expansion of commercial selling spaces. Basement stores in San Francisco were generally found in the downtown shopping district and in larger dry goods or department stores along neighborhood commercial corridors.

As a supplement to expensive electric lights, indirect illumination was provided to basements or sub-sidewalk spaces via prismatic vault lights embedded in concrete panels. Circular or squared pieces of prismatic glass, typically 2 ¾” or 4” were embedded in concrete panels extending several feet from the front of the storefront.⁶⁹ The sidewalk lights were used alone or in conjunction with metal sidewalk doors that provided direct access from the sidewalk to the basement storage spaces below.⁷⁰ The outward opening metal panels were watertight.



Left: Example of sidewalk lights, from “Daylighting, Catalog 21,” produced by American 3Way-Luxfer Prism Co. 1920. Right: Sidewalk vault lights with colored glass at 2193 Mission Street.

Adding Stores to Residential Buildings

As development pressure and the value of land in San Francisco increased, it became increasingly profitable and common for residential property owners to add commercial space to existing buildings. Entire houses were raised to insert a ground level store. Small commercial buildings were also erected in front yards. The conversion of residential buildings to commercial uses typically occurred on flatter terrain and often extending out from smaller, existing commercial blocks. Some extant commercial blocks—such as sections of Divisadero, Fillmore, and Union Streets feature large concentrations of formerly residential blocks that were converted to mixed-use. Much of this development appears to have been completed in the 1910s and some of the earliest conversions were planned in the immediate aftermath of the 1906 disaster. The surviving mansions on Van Ness Avenue, for example, temporarily housed the City’s leading department stores during the rebuilding effort. Prior to the zoning effort of 1921, there were no controls mandating a separation of land uses.

⁶⁸ *The Basement Store*, (New York City: Butler Brothers: Exclusive Wholesalers of General Merchandise, 1914), 5.

⁶⁹ *Daylighting: Prism Transoms, Sheet Prism Glass, Diffusing Tile, Sidewalk Lights, Floor Lights, Skylights, Sidewalk Doors, and their Accessories, Catalog 21*, American 3Way-Luxfer Prism Co., (Chicago, IL: 1920), 14-23.

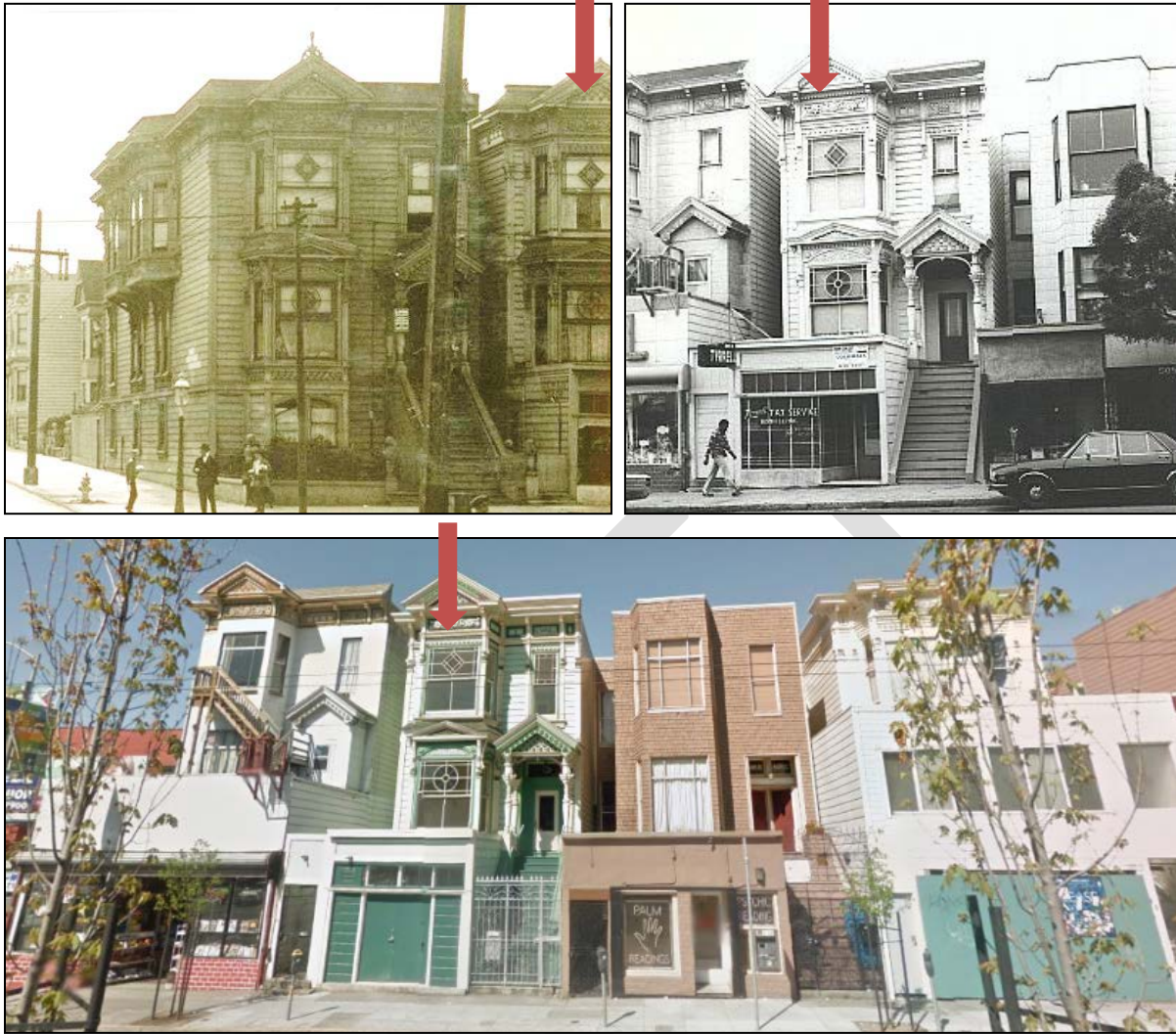
⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.



Above: View taken in 1906 of residential flats on Van Ness Avenue with added (post-disaster) ground story commercial spaces. Not extant.

Source: California Historical Society

Buildings on the 500 block of Divisadero Street in the Western Addition illustrate the evolution of a Victorian era block of residential buildings to a commercial shopping district. The block features elaborately detailed Stick-Eastlake houses constructed c.1890s. Over a period of several decades, commercial stores were built in the front yards setback of every building on this block. A review of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and city directories reveal the evolution of a representative building—503 Divisadero Street. At some point between 1905 and 1919, a one-story pop-out commercial space was constructed in the front yard set-back and the single-family house was converted into flats. In 1919, the pop-out space housed a tailor shop. By then, five other buildings on the block had likewise been expanded to include ground story commercial spaces, including a market, bazaar, grocery, candy store, and hardware store. By 1950, all buildings on this block face featured some commercial use, primarily through one- to two-story pop-out structures in the front yard setback. Businesses in the 1950s remained neighborhood-serving and included a liquor store, tailor, cigar store, bookstore, candy store, hardware store, market, bar and grill, and cleaners.



503 Divisadero Street in 1921 (top left), in 1976 (top right) and a contemporary view (left).

Sources: Calisphere, 1976 Architectural Survey field form and Google Street View

Architectural Styles and Design Influences

The 1906 to 1929 period of development witnessed major stylistic shifts as architects and builders moved away from late Victorian and Edwardian era styles to a new design vocabulary that drew largely from various regional revival styles, a renewed interest in California's Missions legacy, and the sleekly Modern materials and forms associated with the nascent Art Deco movement.

Mediterranean Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Mission Revival Styles

The Panama Pacific Exposition held in San Diego in 1915 had a major impact on the new trajectory of twentieth century architectural design. San Diego's Exposition featured a complex of Spanish Baroque buildings, designed by southern California architect Bertram Goodhue, which impacted residential, institutional, and commercial design throughout California. Exposition buildings provided a different architectural focus, one that was attuned to the American West. This California-based vocabulary drew primarily from Spanish-Colonial influences, which, in addition to referencing the Spanish-Mexican heritage of the area, was easily adapted to California's climate and natural environment. In the latter 1910s and 1920s, the resulting styles such as Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial

Revival, and Churrigueresque, were adapted for the construction of prominent new religious and civic buildings. In San Francisco, a fusion of these styles also dominated the single-family residential architecture of the western neighborhoods in the 1920s and 1930s. New commercial corridors from this era likewise often incorporated elements from Mediterranean and Mission Revival styles.

The terms “Spanish Colonial Revival” and “Mediterranean Revival” are often used interchangeably to describe a style that incorporates red Spanish clay tile roofs, stucco walls, and arched window and door openings. This style of building is also referred to occasionally as Mission Revival, Spanish Eclectic, Pueblo Revival, Mediterranean Colonial, and Monterey Revival.⁷¹ For the sake of simplified classifications related to commercial buildings, this context statement groups all commercial buildings that reference the Spanish, Mexican, Italian, and Moorish influences associated with the Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival styles into a single style—Mediterranean Revival. Design elements associated with commercial iterations of the Mediterranean Revival style include red Spanish clay tile parapets or coping, pent roof forms, stucco exterior cladding, and occasionally, arched transom windows, arched rear window display doors or window openings at the upper stories. The style reflects an eclectic synthesis of design elements from the Mediterranean region and it references California’s Spanish Colonial and Mission legacy. It is rooted in Spanish Colonial architecture as built in California, rather than Spain. Commercial buildings that reflect the Mission Revival stylistic influences typically feature a shaped parapet reminiscent of the region’s Spanish-era Missions.

Based on field visits and review of historic photographs, it appears the Mediterranean Revival design elements were typically applied to entire buildings rather than specifically to the storefront system. Occasionally, commercial buildings of this style featured arched transom openings, Spanish style ceramic tile accents, and turned wood transom mullions. Mediterranean Revival design influences are commonly found on commercial buildings from the 1910s to 1920s, but by the early 1930s, the style, as applied to commercial architecture, had run its course in San Francisco. Notably, efforts to promote storefront modernization by storefront manufactures typically did not promote the style.



Left: Mediterranean Revival, 2434-2444 San Bruno Avenue, built in 1906. The building displays altered storefronts. Right: Mediterranean Revival, 3121-3125 Castro Street, built in 1931. The building retains its original storefronts.

Photos: SF Planning

⁷¹ Spanish Colonial Multiple Property Submission (Mobile, Alabama):F-1; Gregory, *Be It So Humble*, 108; McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*; Morgan, *The Abrams Guide to American House Styles*; Cunliffe and Loussier, *Architecture Styles Spotter's Guide: Classical Temples to Soaring Skyscrapers*; Gebhard, “The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930), *Society of Architectural Historians*, (May 1967): 131-147.



Top: Spanish Colonial Revival, 2401-2417
California displays altered storefronts.



Bottom: Spanish Colonial Revival, 2035-2047
Fillmore retains its original storefronts.

Photos: SF Planning

Other Period Revival Styles

For a short period, neighborhood commercial buildings from the 1910s to 1920s incorporated medieval designs and elements from vernacular European structures. The introduction of Period Revival styles—and a close relative, the Storybook style, in the 1920s—is credited, in part, to the overseas experiences of American soldiers during World War I. At that time, soldiers were exposed to structures of the rural European countryside, and postcards transmitted these images to a wider audience back home. Articles and advertisements frequently invoked “Old World charm.”



Top: A 1921 commercial building at 1700-1720 Ocean Avenue, modeled on a thatched English cottage. The prominent corner building was designed and built by the Morbio Brothers who developed the adjacent Westwood Highlands subdivision. Photo: Google Street View.

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Storybook Style

Storybook, a subset of Period Revival style, is an exuberant style inspired by medieval European vernacular forms. Emblematic features such as turrets, dovecotes and the meandering transition from masonry to stucco attempted to evoke picturesque, aging European buildings.⁷² The primary hallmarks of the Storybook style are exaggerated, often cartoonish interpretation of medieval forms, the use of artificial means to suggest age and weathering, and whimsical designs.⁷³ Also referred to as Fairy Tale, Disneyesque and Hansel & Gretel, the style originated in Los Angeles in the early 1920s. It was linked to the silent film industry, in particular the experience of Hollywood set designers in evoking the exaggerated appearance of age and ruins; the fact that many silent films were set in Europe; and the “demand for homes that reflected the fantasy of film.”⁷⁴

In the late 1920s, Storybook style migrated to the San Francisco Bay Area, with significant architect-designed residential compounds built in Berkeley and Oakland. In San Francisco, the style dates to a short time frame, approximately 1930 to 1935 and known examples are largely limited to several residential tracts in the Sunset District as well as individual houses scattered citywide. Very few commercial buildings were designed in the Storybook style.



*Atlas Stair Building Co., 2901 22nd Street. Designed in 1933 by Charles Schuotz and F. W. Dakin as a shop and office.
Right: 2501 Shore Boulevard. Designed in 1934 as apartments and a tavern*

Photo: SF Planning

⁷² Aaron Gellner, *Storybook Style: America's Whimsical Homes of the 1920s*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 18.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival style experienced an unexpected resurgence in popularity as applied to commercial buildings, particularly at the cornice and parapet. In the 1920s, the Gothic influence is most often found on one-story commercial buildings, with multiple storefronts. Pointed gothic arches, usually in the form of transom windows or applied ornamentation, are hallmarks of the style, though additional decorative elements are often found including tracery, foils, shields, and turned spires. Unlike the Period Revival styles, there does not appear to be a complementary adoption of the style in domestic architecture during the same time period. It was a style most often applied to religious buildings and larger apartment buildings.⁷⁵



Gothic Revival details at the parapet of a one-story commercial building, 2279 Mission Street. Architect Andrew Knoll designed the building in 1921.

Photo: SF Planning

Brick / Wood Utilitarian

Though not an architectural style per se, simple brick commercial buildings emerged as a fairly common property in the 1910s and 1920s. With minimal ornamentation limited to a simple tabbed parapet or a corbeled cornice, they formed a recognizable subtype of one- to two-story commercial buildings. Occasionally, the masonry's coloring or bond pattern provided additional ornamentation. The post-1906 building code requirements mandated masonry (as opposed to wood) construction within the enlarged fire limit zone; however, these simple brick buildings are also found along many commercial corridors constructed during this period of development. A wood version of this simple utilitarian commercial building was also constructed during this period of development. It, too, was characterized by small scale, simple cornice detailing, and/or a tabbed parapet.



Two-story blonde brick building at 3743 Mission Street (1926). The storefront was later re-clad in contemporary brick.

Photo: SF Planning

⁷⁵ David Gebhard et. al., *The Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California*, (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith), 568.



Stucco clad, wood-frame utilitarian commercial building at 1400 Polk Street (extant), built in 1920.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (photo taken 1927)

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Art Deco

Beginning in the late-1920s, the sleek and graphic elements of the Art Deco style were adopted in San Francisco, particularly in the design of commercial and public buildings such as theaters, hotels and office buildings. A precursor to the Art Moderne and Streamline Moderne styles, Art Deco was popularized by the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts) held in Paris. The exposition brought together Europe's leading Modern artists, designers, architects, furniture makers, and craftspeople. Among its exhibits were thoroughly modern show windows and display designs. European in origin, the stylized motifs and forms of Art Deco were introduced to American audiences in the years immediately following the Exposition. The style's bold, futuristic look was further disseminated through films of the late 1920s.⁷⁶

Art Deco design is noted for its use of rich materials and profuse ornament of zigzags, rays and chevrons, stepped arches, stylized floral forms, and the repetition of forms and motifs. Art Deco design motifs are derived from a variety of sources including Egyptian, Mayan and "Oriental" art and architecture. It developed from a renewed interest in the exotic, an interest stimulated in part by the discovery of King Tut's tomb in 1922. The geometric forms of Cubism also influenced the style as did the use of zigzags, chevrons, and rays by earlier German Expressionists.⁷⁷

The onset of the Great Depression in 1930 and the resultant widespread decrease in building activity curtailed the construction of Art Deco buildings. As a result, relatively few buildings in San Francisco were designed in this style and the style was largely replaced by the more restrained, softer and curvier Streamline Moderne in the mid-1930s. The Art Deco style is associated with San Francisco's commercial and institutional buildings in the late 1920s and into the early 1930s and is less commonly found in domestic architecture. The retail corridor along Chestnut Street in the Marina District features a concentration of one- to two-story Art Deco commercial buildings. Isolated examples of one-story storefronts are found in the outlying areas of San Francisco including the Richmond and the Sunset Districts.



Left: 3239 Balboa Avenue, built 1934. Right: 2049 Fillmore Street. Photos: SF Planning

⁷⁶ Michael F. Crowe, *Deco By the Bay: Art Deco Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1995), 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL EXPANSION: 1906-1929



980 Valencia St.
Built: 1907

1. WINDOWS & WINDOW DISPLAY SPACES
2. BULKHEADS
3. VESTIBULE (INCLUDES SHAPE, SOFFIT, PAVING, AND DOOR)
4. TRANSOM WINDOWS
5. CORNICE, AWNING, CANOPY
6. PIERS & FACING MATERIAL
7. SIGNAGE

RETAILING CONCEPTS & STOREFRONT COMPONENTS

The following section documents retailing concepts as expressed in storefront components during the period 1906 to 1929.

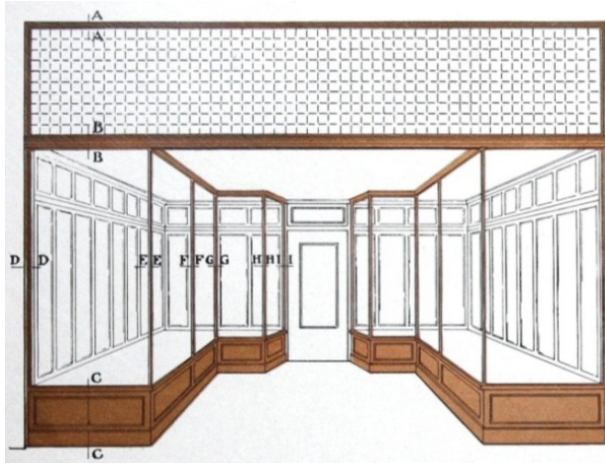
1. WINDOWS AND WINDOW DISPLAY SPACES

The window display area consisted of a raised wood platform, which matched the height of the bulkhead, extending from the front window to a depth equal to the depth of the recessed vestibule. Window display spaces were enclosed spaces, with back walls that blocked open views from the sidewalk into the interior of the store. These operable back walls, described as “show case doors” were produced as solid panels of wood or, later in the 1920s, as glass doors. The rear walls were occasionally topped with transom windows to provide additional light into the interior of the store. Some of the window display spaces featured wood paneling or crown molding on the side walls. By 1918, manufacturers were producing specific products for the back wall of the window display, including “Compo-Board,” marketed as substantial, attractive show window backgrounds and EZY-Bilt window boards.⁷⁸ Known as composition boards, these background panels were composed of wood, paper, and binding cement, and were typically produced in 4' wide panels.⁷⁹ Easier to manipulate and far less expensive than wood, the temporary quality of composition boards helped facilitate the retailing concept of continually rotating window displays. Composition

⁷⁸ Advertisement for Compo-Board included in “Merchants Record and Show Windows”....page xiv.

⁷⁹ Rogers, 65.

boards were often covered in fabric, painted or stenciled, sawn to create openings, shapes or cut-outs, and nailed flush to the back frame of the window display. Given the temporary nature of window displays from this era and the materials used to produce composition boards, extant examples in San Francisco storefronts are unlikely. Remnants of permanent back walls and/or show case doors are extremely rare.



Left: Paneled side and rear backing walls of window display spaces are shown in this storefront diagram from 1927. Right: 4531 Mission Street displays an intact Kawneer style storefront. Source: Kawneer Solid Cooper Store Fronts catalog



Left: Rare, intact example of a paneled storefront display area at 3274 Mission Street. It features a coffered ceiling and intact display backing, including a painted over decorative glass transom. Building constructed 1906, storefront appears to date to c.1920s.

Window Frames

As detailed earlier in this chapter, the Kawneer Company pioneered the use of metal sash storefront window frames, which allowed for larger sheets of undivided plate glass. Produced beginning in 1906, this new technology signified a shift away from wood framed storefront windows to metal frames, often copper or bronze.

Corner sash bars were typically covered with raised metal miter caps, affixed with visible screws. In the 1910s, flat metal window surrounds embossed with a fretted design also gained in popularity. By the 1920s, the corner sash was occasionally abandoned altogether in favor of a beveled window corner join that increased the transparency of display windows.



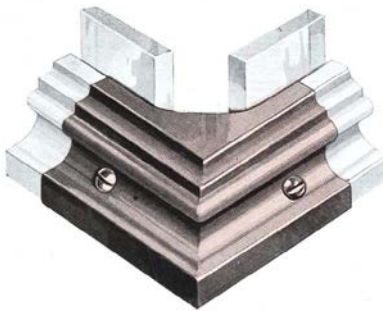
Left: Extruded metal corner bar with mitre cap, San Bruno Avenue.

Below: Fretted window sash, Polk Street.



Top left: Frameless beveled edges of storefront on Chestnut Street.

Top right: Detail view of beveled corner and mitre cap.



Left: Illustration of mitre cap to cover joint of two beveled glass plates. Source: "Storefronts: Remodeling Storefronts is One of the Most Profitable Branches of the Contracting Business," (Desco, 1922).

Lighting

This period of development witnessed an important shift to electric lighting. Trade books and periodicals offered myriad options and advice for the novel electric illumination including the use of colored gelatine screens to introduce color effects into nighttime displays; proper spacing and use of reflectors to diffuse light; strategies to eliminate glare (day and night); and the importance of obscuring lamps from storefront displays.⁸⁰ In 1907, *Architectural Review* described the potentially dramatic effect of show window lighting, "The show-window should be treated as the proscenium arch of the theatre, where the light, itself concealed, illuminates the actors."⁸¹ Show windows were lit even during daylight hours in order to overcome reflections and reduce glare.⁸² Merchants eagerly

⁸⁰ Rogers, 26-39.

⁸¹ Walters, Henry L. "Modern Store Fronts," *The Architectural Review*, June 1907, 156.

⁸² *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Light Effects of Store Windows Aid Business Man," May 9, 1920, F4.

embraced electric lighting and signage—to such an extent that by 1920 there was insufficient supply to meet demand. For several months in 1920, after a failed voluntary request to conserve energy, the State ordered a mandatory two-month black-out of electrical advertising, display signs, and show window lighting in San Francisco and other cities in central and northern California.⁸³

2. BULKHEADS

Into the 1900s, neighborhood storefront bulkheads were typically 1' to 2' in height, wood clad, often with wood paneling and metal ventilation grilles. In some cases, bulkhead height correlated with the type of business and products offered. Desco, for example, recommended 18 inches as a “safe, average height” for general merchandise, and “in the case of jewelry and shoes, the bulkhead should be no lower than 24 inches.”⁸⁴ The firm likewise recommended a low bulkhead for furniture stores.

By the 1910s, many store owners opted for polychromatic ceramic tiles as bulkhead cladding material, often with a line of triangles or other shapes as accent trim. Occasionally, the tiles traveled above the bulkheads to frame the window piers. Common colors were black, blue, and maroon and most tiles were 4”x4”. Some storefronts were clad in colorful terra cotta tiles, often with fluted patterns. Bulkhead grilles were likewise offered in myriad decorative patterns. Marble veneer cladding of bulkheads—typically green or black marble—was occasionally used to present a dignified, upscale appearance.

Bulkhead Cladding Materials



⁸³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, “Display Lights Ordered Out in San Francisco,” August 31, 1920, 1.

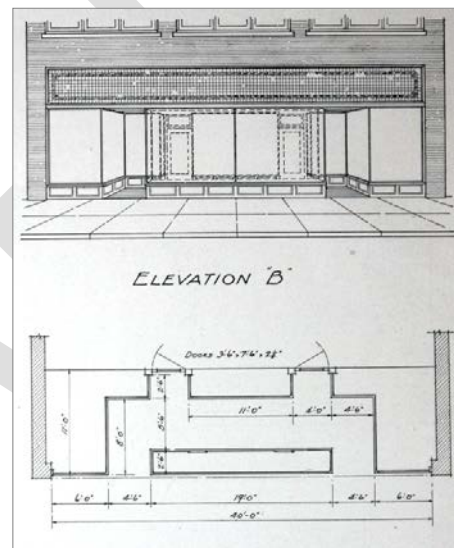
⁸⁴ *Store Fronts: Remodeling Store Fronts is One of the Most Profitable Branches of the Contracting Business*, (Detroit, MI: Detroit Show Case Company, 1922), 19.



Glazed bulkhead tiles in the 1910s to 1930s were often polychromatic and offered in flush, fluted, and/or embossed forms. Tiles were used widely as a bulkhead material due to their versatility, eye-catching designs, and low initial and maintenance costs.

3. VESTIBULE

In the early 1910s, the standard recessed vestibule in an angled or squared configuration, gave way to myriad shapes and increasing depth. By the 1920s, vestibules were often deeply recessed. Front doors were located up to 15' feet back from the property line, essentially extending the public sidewalk space into the store space. These deeply recessed storefront vestibules provided a tremendous amount of display space for “window shoppers” and provided additional opportunities for potential customers to browse the goods at night and/or when the shop was closed. A storefront guide from 1923 notes the importance of increased display space, particularly for narrow commercial frontages, “The casual visitor who steps in far enough to examine the rear most cases will find himself close to the door and is likely to enter.”⁸⁵ Merchants and trade groups were well aware of the expanded advertising and selling opportunities provided by inviting vestibules and electric lighting. As noted in *The Art of Decorating Shop Windows and Displaying Merchandise* (1924), “It is at night also—in the evening after the store is closed—that the average passerby has more leisure and is in a frame of mind receptive to the suggestions made by the show window displays. The theater crowds, the patrons of restaurants and nearly all who pass during the hours of general recreation are excellent prospective customers.”⁸⁶ Some vestibules, particularly those on slopes, featured a raised lip or step from one to six inches in height, while many others were level with the sidewalk.



Elevation and plan view of an arcade style storefront system sold by the Detroit Showcase Company, with a free-standing center display case.

Source: “Storefronts: Remodeling Storefronts is one of the most profitable branches of the contracting business,” (Desco, 1922).

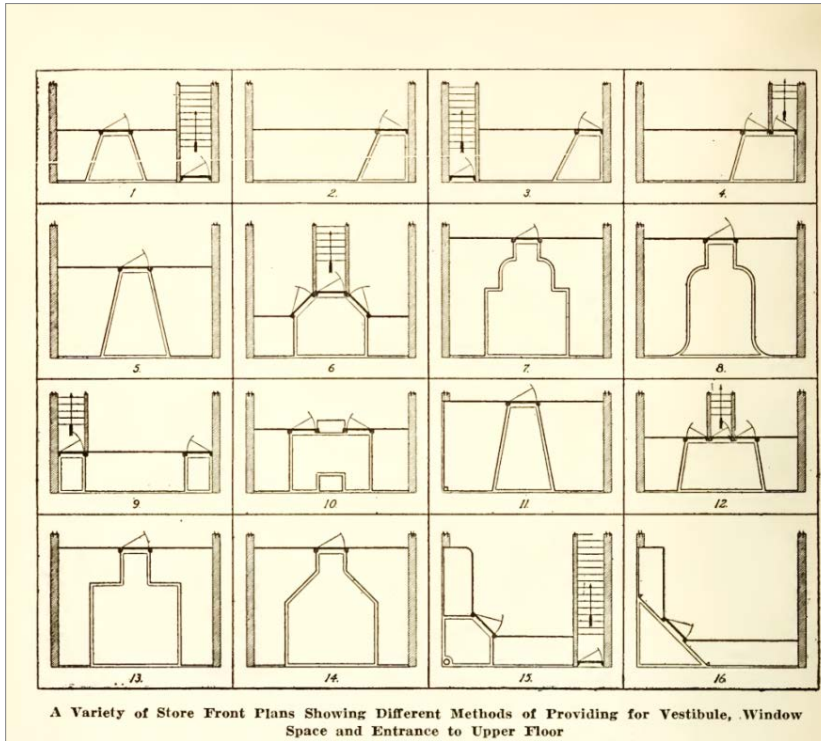
A 1922 Desco catalog describes a new “so-called arcade store front” increasingly designed for department stores and large clothing stores, to “cause people to walk inside the store front and there, without being jostled, take their time to look around.”⁸⁷ This arcade storefront featured a deeply recessed, wide vestibule area that contained prominent, floor-to-ceiling display cases. The first known example of an arcade style entrance in San Francisco was a remodeled

⁸⁵ *The Modern Store Front*, booklet produced by the Pittsburg Plate Glass Company, 1923, 93.

⁸⁶ Rogers, 109.

⁸⁷ Store Fronts: Remodeling Store Fronts is One of the Most Profitable Branches of the Contracting Business, (Detroit, MI: Detroit Show Case Company, 1922), 19.

(in 1905) entrance to the S. N. Wood & Co. clothing store on Market Street. Described in glowing terms by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the storefront featured display windows separated by a full-height central dome. ⁸⁸ The clothing store was destroyed in the 1906 disaster.

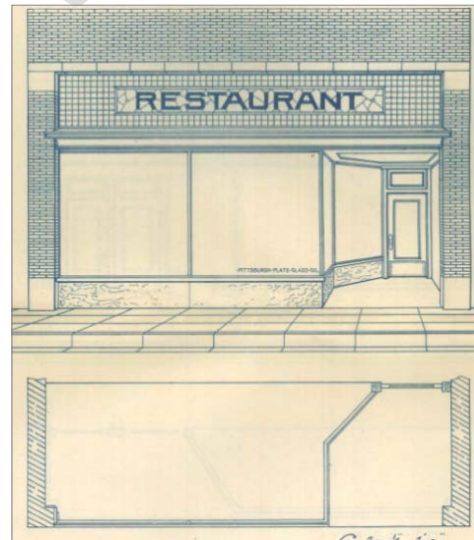


Left: A variety of storefront floor plans and vestibule shapes as shown in "The Grocer's Window Book," from 1914 and 1919, page 12.

Below left: One of two zigzag storefront vestibules of a three-story mixed-use building on Valencia Street, built in 1925. The windows are beveled at the corners, to create the appearance of a frameless window.

Below right: Easy Set system. Pittco Catalogs, c. 1920s

Photos: SF Planning



Paving, Soffits, Doors

Small ceramic tiles with a patterned border remained a common vestibule paving during this period of development. Typically laid with 1" hexagonal or square tiles, vestibules occasionally served as a space for additional signage as the tiles could spell out the shop name or address. More common however, were simple white hexagonal tiles

⁸⁸ "Arcade Entrance a Business Novelty," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 8, 1905.

bordered by colored tiles laid in fretted or decorative pattern. Common colors for the border were blue or black. In the 1920s, golden or beige-toned tiles—often described in tile catalogs as “Antique”—increased in popularity and were offered in a wide range of complex patterns. Occasionally, storefront vestibules were paved with irregularly shaped chipped marble mosaic tiles, also with a patterned border, which presented as rustic and mottled. This type of paving, however, is more commonly associated with vestibules or lobby areas of apartment buildings.

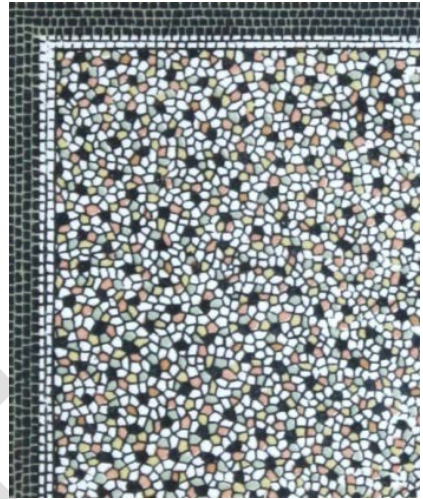
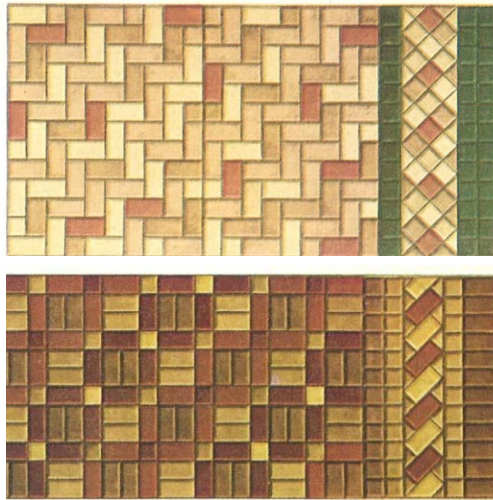
By the late 1920s, the hexagonal tile paving of storefront vestibule floors met stiff competition from an increasingly popular variegated terrazzo paving, a smooth marble aggregate, sometimes extending into the public right-of-way. Brass divider strips separated sections of the design to create fine-grain graphics, including words, geometric patterns, or specific graphics.

Storefront entrances typically featured a single glazed wood door, often with a metal mail slot or kick plate beneath the glazing. Retailers were advised to design doors large enough for the passage of baby carriages. Most entrances also featured a wood-sash ventilator (transom window) above the door, set in a hinged or pivot configuration.⁸⁹ Occasionally the ventilator featured a decorative muntin pattern that matched the upper story fenestration. Revolving doors were introduced during this period, though most were reserved for larger dry goods, department stores, banks, office buildings, hotels, and larger restaurants.⁹⁰

The ceilings of vestibule spaces typically featured paneled or flush wood soffits. Even as tiled bulkheads rose in popularity, the soffit generally remained wood clad. A gas or incandescent lamp often hung from the center of the soffit.

⁸⁹ Ibid. page 19

⁹⁰ *Revolving Doors*, (Van Kannel Revolving Door Company: New York City, 1910).



Left: Examples of hexagonal ceramic pavement, script, borders and details from Lloyd Floor & Wall Tile Co., 1928.

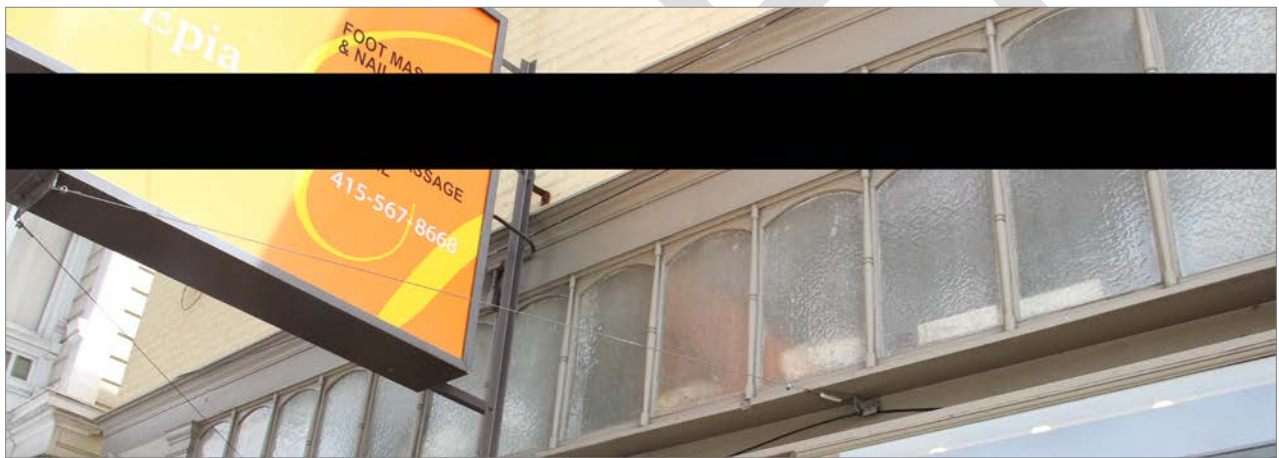
Top and Middle: Examples of the earth-toned "Antique" and "Golden Pastels" shades that gained popularity in the late 1920s. Source: Friderichsen Floor & Wall Tile Co., Catalog No. 10., 1929.

Above right: Example of chipped marble mosaic pavement. Source: Designs for Marble Mosaic Pavements and Decorations, Burke & Co., 1914.

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4. TRANSOM WINDOWS

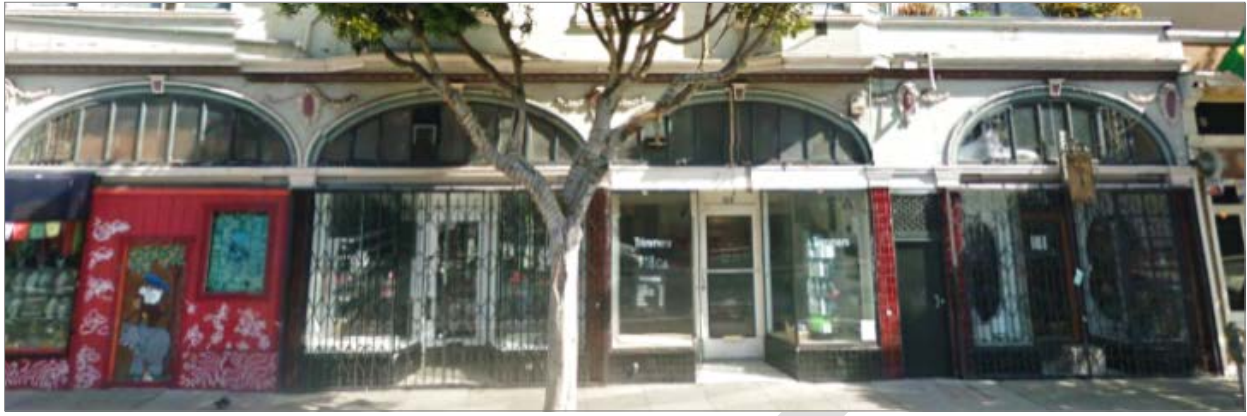
The design and configuration of storefront transoms during this period of development were similar to previous decades, typically featuring divided wood windows separated by squared or turned wood muntins. Transoms were set as fixed, pivot, and awning windows. Some storefronts featured elaborately detailed or arched transoms influenced by the Mediterranean Revival style and Arts and Crafts movement. The use of a new glass technology—prismatic glass—which radically changed the appearance of transoms, also peaked during this period of commercial development.



Top row: The transom at 2277 Union Street features arched openings, slender muntins and columned mullions.

Second Row: 1222 Divisadero Street features a more delicate version of the above design, with attenuated muntins and arched openings.

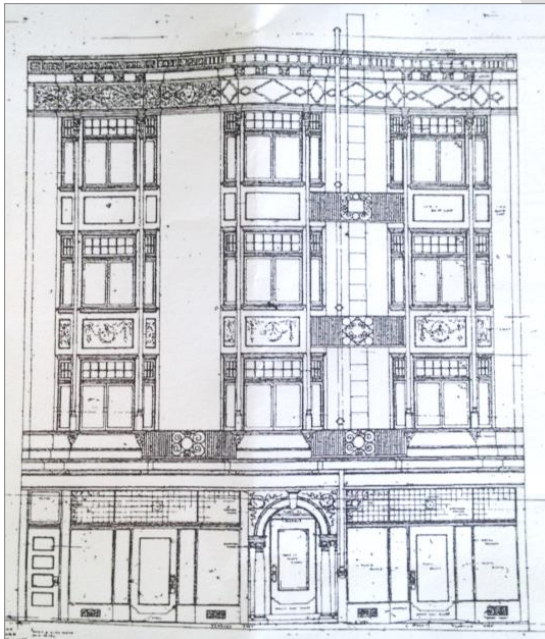
Left: Transom at 225 Gough Street, influenced by Arts and Crafts design.



Above: Arched transom openings of an Edwardian-era building on Haight Street. Photos: SF Planning and Google Street View.

Prismatic Glass

Prismatic glass was incorporated into the transom to concentrate light and diffuse it into a shop's interior. Though introduced in the 1890s, the glass was most commonly used in San Francisco during the Reconstruction era and into the early 1920s. The glass is smooth on the exterior with raised ribs on the interior. The resultant ridges refract light into the interior of buildings.⁹¹ Prismatic glass was typically manufactured as small (roughly 3" x 3") tiles joined by lead or zinc, though the glass was also offered in geometric designs such as diamond shapes. Use of the glass in storefront transoms appears popular into the 1920s, as evidenced by Desco's near-universal use of prismatic transoms in its trade catalogs.⁹² Electrical lighting led to a reduced reliance on prismatic glass and the transom material was largely abandoned by the 1930s.



Left: Original plans for 980 Valencia Street. Built in 1907 by George Lang, the four-story building features two storefronts and 18 residential units and is representative of the densification that characterized the reconstruction era. Fenestration at the upper stories consisted of divided-light wood sash windows. The storefront and upper stories retain high physical integrity.

Below: Prismatic glass detail of 980 Valencia Street.



⁹¹ National Park Service. *Repair and Reproduction of Prismatic Glass Transoms*. (Washington, DC, 2001).

⁹² Storefront and glass manufacturer catalogs that promote or contain prismatic glass transoms into the 1920s include Desco, Pittco, and the Lloyd Floor and Wall Tile Co.

5. CORNICE, AWNING, CANOPY

An intermediate cornice typically separated the storefront from the upper stories. Cornices from this period were similar to those constructed in the previous decades and typically consisted of a simple belt course or slightly projecting intermediate cornice that referenced the building's upper cornice at the parapet. A narrow fascia near the cornice was typically used for signage, though merchants often added larger signs that covered the fascia and cornice.

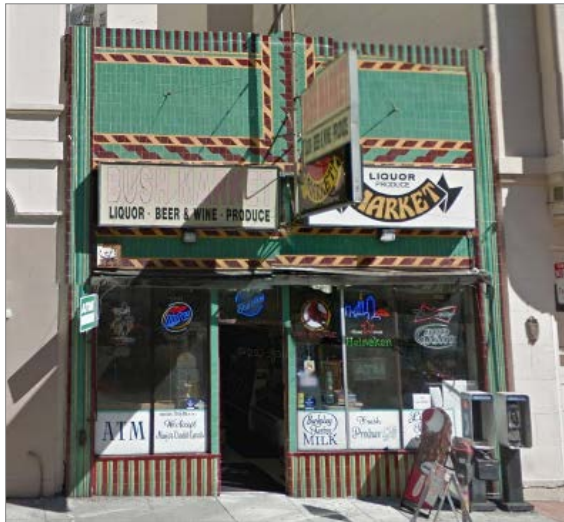
Retractable fabric awnings were used to reduce glare and protect goods from direct sunlight. Larger wood canopy structures were also built to protect pedestrians from weather. These larger canopies were often massive in form and typically were built on larger commercial buildings featuring multiple storefronts. The face of these canopies was used for additional signage.



Left: Oversize wood canopy of a tall one-story commercial building at 3296 22nd Street in the Mission District. The canopy extends over all six storefronts of this corner building. Right: Projecting wood canopy sign at 3500 22nd Street with neon lettering. Photos: SF Planning

6. PIERS AND FACING MATERIAL

Piers flanking the display windows, at the storefront's perimeter, were often subordinate to the overall design. Piers were commonly clad in the same material as the bulkhead. During the Reconstruction era, this portion of the storefront was often wood, occasionally with decorative elements such as pilasters or simple columns. Later, into the 1920s, glazed ceramic tile, marble veneer, or decorative terra cotta tiles were used to clad the piers, occasionally extending into the upper story's design.



Top left: 826 Bush Street, built 1916. The decorative terra cotta facing material at the bulkhead extends up the piers and covers the upper façade and parapet.

Top right. Simple stuccoed piers flank the storefronts of 2032-2064 Polk Street, built 1907.

Left: Catalog of Lloyd Floor & Tile Co., offers an option for fully tiled the piers and mullions. 1928.

Photos: Google street view and SF Planning

7. SIGNAGE

The advent of electricity and production of affordable electric signs at the turn-of-the-century signaled a major shift in commercial signage. By 1906, there were a reported 75,000 electric signs in the United States.⁹³ Due to their bulk, early electric signs were projecting rather than flush-mounted and typically consisted of a “porcelain-enameled center panel surrounded by a border of lamps.”⁹⁴ The early electric sign boxes were often black or dark blue and mounted at a building's fascia with a slight tip to accommodate the building's cornice and projected out over the sidewalk.⁹⁵ A typical double-sided panel sign, with 12 bulbs per side, cost an estimated \$3.00 to \$7.00 per month to run, depending upon the number of hours it was turned on.⁹⁶ According to a trade catalog from 1906, the cost was worth it as the novel and popular electric signs were an “eloquent plea to the public; everybody who sees it thinks it

⁹³ Treu, 51.

⁹⁴ Treu, 51-52.

⁹⁵ Treu, 52-53.

⁹⁶ According to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) Calculator from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2015 equivalent of this is \$77 to \$178.

is pretty; everybody admires it, and is attracted to it and the brilliant show windows and goods which it advertises."⁹⁷ Other early electric signs featured fixed or interchangeable letters punched with inset sockets on each letter. Referred to as "attraction lettering," these sign letters were available flush or raised and were more often used by theaters, department stores, and larger establishments that could afford the electricity costs required for more numerous bulbs.⁹⁸ By the 1910s, electric signs were elongated to form vertical projecting blade signs. New electric signage was enthusiastically embraced by merchants and the public. Occasionally innovations were announced in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, including this review in 1913, "Letters in a new electric sign are made to scintillate like gems by revolving colored screens between incandescent lamps and prismatically cut pieces of glass."⁹⁹ By the 1920s, merchants commonly incorporated illuminated signs.

San Francisco boasted one of the nation's earliest internally lit theater marquee sign boxes. Designed in 1917 for the California Theater (since demolished), the projecting marquee featured several lines of white glass letters that could be moved on the black background and changed to announce new films.¹⁰⁰



Top left: Example of an "attraction lettering" iron clad electric sign featuring porcelain-faced letters in interchangeable type. Each letter is fitted with sockets for incandescent bulbs.

Top right: Example of a basic electric panel sign, which were typically bordered with 10-14 bulbs.

Left: An oversize wall sign, shaped like an ostrich feather, on the Cawston Ostrich Farm shop at 54 Geary Street in San Francisco featured dozens of multi-colored electric light bulbs. The building is extant though heavily altered, including removal of the sign.

Sources: "Iron Clad Electric Signs," trade booklet produced by the Electric Motor & Equipment Co., October 1, 1908; *Electric Sign Catalogue of the Metropolitan Engineering Co.*, 1906; and *South Pasadena Library*, c.1915.

⁹⁷ "Electric Sign Catalogue of the Metropolitan Engineering Co.," Brooklyn, New York, 1906, 36.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹⁹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, "A New Innovation," May 22, 1913, 11.

¹⁰⁰ *Treu*, 60.

Evaluative Framework:

Neighborhood Commercial Expansion (1906–1929)

SIGNIFICANCE

This period of development is characterized by the post-disaster rebuilding effort which resulted in denser residential and commercial districts, the expansion of residence parks and streetcar suburbs and related commercial cores to the south and west, and the construction boom of the mid-1920s. Clusters of commercial blocks often grew adjacent to rather than within the new residence parks developing in the western and southern areas of the City. Several new streetcar lines spurred commercial development along the transit corridors.

In some cases, a commercial building's significance is directly related to the storefront space; in other cases, significance is derived from associations related to the building as a whole. Significant themes and related criteria associated with this period of development are described below.¹⁰¹

CRITERIA A/1 (EVENTS)

Reconstruction-Era Neighborhood Commercial Development, 1906-c.1913

Neighborhood commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with the frenzied period of reconstruction that followed the 1906 disaster. Economics and political pressures associated with reconstruction resulted in the densification of residential neighborhoods and the construction of larger residential apartment buildings with multiple ground story storefronts, representing a significant shift in the form, density, and character of the City's earliest residential neighborhoods.

Suburban Expansion & Commercial Development, 1906–1929

Commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with significant events related to the neighborhood expansion that followed the extension of streetcar lines into the newly developing residence parks and outer suburbs such as Ocean Avenue, Geary Boulevard, and the Excelsior District. Corner stores located in purely residential areas and stores that projected out from the spine of primary commercial corridors may also qualify as significant under these criteria for their association with residential development beyond the commercial core.

Significant Businesses, 1906–1929

Commercial buildings closely associated with an important business, type of business establishment, or business practice may qualify as a significant business. An example of a significant business is the Visalia Saddle Company's store and factory on Market Street. Considered one of the premier western saddleries, the company helped perfect and contributed to the widespread adoption of the "western saddle."

Culturally Significant Businesses, 1906–1929

Commercial buildings closely associated with specific events or historic trends that have influenced cultural or ethnic communities may qualify as significant under Criteria A/1. Examples could be culturally supportive community institutions such as a hotel that served newly arrived emigrants or a grocery store that provided imported Japanese food or goods which nurtured the continuation of Japanese life-ways

¹⁰¹ Other themes may be identified on a case-by-case basis.

within the community.¹⁰² The City's pioneering drag club, Finocchios, opened in 1929, would likewise qualify under this criteria.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: Given the tremendous amount of construction activity during this period of development, it is likely that many of these buildings are significant under Criteria A/1 individually and/or as contributors to a historic district—to a greater extent than in other periods of development. Some properties, such as those significant for association with reconstruction, may also qualify under Criteria C/3 (architecture).

CRITERIA B/2 (PEOPLE)

Significant Persons

Commercial buildings closely associated with a significant person, such as an important merchant who contributed to retailing, neighborhood development, or manufacturing may qualify as significant under Criteria B/2. Additional research is required to identify significant persons from this period of development.

CRITERIA C/3 (ARCHITECTURE)

Neighborhood Commercial Architectural Expression, 1906–1929

Neighborhood commercial buildings that display exceptional architectural design, are the work of a master architect, or are an excellent example of a storefront type may qualify as architecturally significant. Commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with significant changes in retailing concepts such as the zigzag or deeply recessed vestibules; with significant expressions of a particular style; and/or as important examples designed by master architects such as the Julia Morgan-designed commercial building on Polk Street which features ornate wood carvings and detailing. Architectural significance may be expressed at the storefront and/or at the building's upper level(s). Some buildings will have more than one period of significance, inclusive of the date of construction and storefront alteration(s) that have gained significance in their own right.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: It is more likely for an individual neighborhood commercial building to be eligible for listing under Criteria C/3 than under Criteria A/1 for B/2. Historic districts may the overlap periods of development identified in this historic context statement. Certain discontinuous property types, such as Art Deco commercial buildings, may potentially qualify for listing as a National Register Multiple Property Submission.

¹⁰² The significance discussion related to culturally significant commercial buildings is drawn from the significance considerations contained in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement* (May 2011) adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission on September 19, 2013.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

PROPERTY TYPE: Single-Story Commercial

Commonly found along outlying streetcar suburb commercial corridors, this property type consists of a single-story commercial use. A single building may contain one or more storefronts.

Right: 2035 Fillmore Street (1926)



Residential Corner Retail

Scattered in residential neighborhoods citywide, the corner store property type from this period of development typically consists of ground story retail topped with one- to four- residential stories.

An identified subtype is the residential corner store building featuring a grocery store, typically oriented toward the corner, at the ground story. The upper, residential stories typically feature projecting bay windows, wood or stucco cladding, double-hung wood windows (occasionally with decorative divided lights), and classically inspired or period revival design elements including projecting parapets, cornice details, and applied ornament.

Right: 1250-1262 Mason Street (1912)



Multi-Story Commercial

Uncommon in neighborhood commercial districts, multi-story commercial buildings feature a ground story storefront and commercial or production uses at the upper stories.

Right: McCrosky Mattress Factory, 1687 Market Street (1925)



Mixed-Use Commercial

Common along neighborhood commercial corridors, this property type features a storefront at the ground story and offices, residential, or other uses at the upper stories. Typically built as two- to five-stories in height. Upper stories feature wood or stucco siding, double-hung wood windows, parapet and cornice details, and ornament related to specific styles. Entrances of larger apartment buildings are often prominent with copious ornamentation, while smaller buildings tend to feature a restrained, subordinate entrance to the upper story.

Right: 2105 Fillmore Street (1911).



Lodge/ Hall / Commercial

Fraternal lodges or union halls with a ground story commercial use are scattered throughout San Francisco's neighborhoods. The ground story space provided income for the hall or lodge. The Hall's name or insignia is often located at the fascia or spandrel panels at the upper story.

Right: Sheet Metal Workers Hall, 224-226 Guerrero Street (1906).



Integrity

To qualify for listing in local, state, or national registers, a commercial property associated with a significant theme must also retain sufficient integrity with which to convey its significance. The evaluation of commercial buildings is particularly challenging given the nature of retailing, with its emphasis on frequent storefront modernizations. Nonetheless, an integrity evaluation *must* include evaluation of the building as a whole, rather than as separate components of storefront and upper story/s. Challenges are myriad. Commercial buildings often featured more than one storefront, resulting in additional issues for evaluation when one storefront retains high physical integrity and others display a range of alterations. At times, the storefront level retains exceptional physical integrity while the upper story/s have been substantially altered. Adding to the complexity, some storefront alterations have gained significance in their own right, resulting in differing periods of significance and themes associated with a single building. The following integrity considerations and examples provide some guidance to the often case-by-case evaluation of neighborhood commercial buildings and districts.

Intact original storefronts from the 1906 to 1929 period of development are fairly rare and a good number of these are storefront alterations of buildings constructed prior to 1906. In many cases, the storefront retains its historic transom and recessed vestibule shape, but the bulkhead and display windows were altered with new materials finishes. Given the relative scarcity of extant commercial property type from this era, additional discretion is recommended for evaluating alterations, particularly for those storefronts constructed in the 1910s. In the rare instance that a storefront from this period retains integrity, but the upper stories have been altered, the building as a whole may still retain sufficient integrity to convey significance to a specific theme.

The aspects of integrity most important for Criteria A/1 are determined by the association. Likewise, the retention of essential features in order to convey significance is determined by the identified significance and period of significance. Depending upon the association, certain aspects of integrity, such as feeling, location, setting, or association, may have a higher importance than the physical aspects of integrity, material, design and workmanship.

Properties associated with an important event or person should retain sufficient integrity such that “a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists today.”¹⁰³ In general, a lower threshold of integrity is appropriate for properties significant under Criteria A/1 or B/2, provided there is sufficient historic fabric to convey the association with a significant event, trend, or person. Buildings that are significant solely for architecture, Criteria C/3, must retain higher integrity of materials, design, and workmanship.

In general, in order to qualify for individual listing, a commercial building with significance derived specifically from the storefront should express integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Such storefronts should retain a substantial portion of the historic storefront features, including recessed vestibule shape, bulkhead, and transom. A storefront that has been altered in a compatible manner may, for example, retain the shape of the recessed vestibule, yet feature contemporary bulkhead cladding and new window system

Within historic districts, the threshold of integrity for contributing buildings is lower and takes into account the expected level of change inherent in commercial districts, particularly at the storefront.

¹⁰³ National Park Service, Bulletin No. 15., “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” 2002.

Examples of Significance and Integrity Evaluation



Mixed-Use Commercial

Built 1906, storefront remodeled c.1980s

2434–2444 San Bruno Avenue is a mixed-use commercial building that was altered at the storefront level. Though altered, the storefront retains a recessed vestibule shape, bulkhead, and historic transom. The upper story retains unusually expressive elements of the Mediterranean Revival style including arched window openings, multi-light windows, applied ornamentation, pent roof forms, a tower element, crenellations, and Spanish clay tiles.

Given the expressive architecture at the upper stories, and sympathetic storefront alterations, this building appears eligible for listing in the National Register as an individual historic resource.



Single-Story, Multiple Storefronts

Built 1924, major remodel in 1980s

When built in 1924, the three storefronts of this single-story building at 1939–1945 Ocean Avenue featured deeply recessed zigzag arcade-style vestibules. The building's wood sash transom appears largely intact as are the cornice details. One of the storefronts retains high physical integrity, while the other two have seen substantial renovations, including the partial filling in of the deeply recessed shaped vestibule.

Despite incompatible alterations at two of the three storefronts, there remains sufficient historic fabric for the building to convey its significance. Its character-defining features include the transom, cornice, and remaining intact storefront.





Single-Story, Multiple Storefronts

Built 1920, remodeled 1930s and 1950s

2749-2756 Mission Street features stylistic elements that reflect remodeling during distinct eras. A classically inspired cornice lines the roofline of both stores. The far left storefront, remodeled c. 1930s, is an exceptional example of Streamline Moderne modernization, featuring large curved glass show windows and a deeply recessed vestibule. The storefront to the right is a representative example of Midcentury Modern storefront design, with an angled recessed vestibule, and canted display windows that. The area above both storefronts has been altered, more so above the 1950s-era storefront, and the transom was removed.

This building's significance is derived from its two eras of storefront remodeling and appears eligible for listing as an individual historic resource. Its period of significance could include the date of construction and the dates of remodeling, c. 1930s and c. 1950s.



Mixed-Use Commercial

Built 1924, remodeled 1930s

1919-1921 Ocean Avenue is a mixed-use commercial building with an impressive remodeled storefront. The upper story retains integrity from its date of construction (1924). In the 1930s, the storefront was re-clad in polychromatic terra cotta tiles punched with octagonal display openings. The building's individual significance is derived from its association with storefront modernization programs, and as such has a period of significance dating to its construction (1924), and remodeling (1930s). It appears eligible for individual listing.



Single-Story, Multiple Storefronts

Built 1929

1931-1935 Ocean Avenue is a one-story commercial building featuring three remarkably intact storefronts. The building retains high physical integrity at the transom and roofline as well as at the storefronts. The building's expressive design and integrity make it eligible for listing individually on the California and National Registers.

Character-Defining Features

When present, character-defining features of neighborhood commercial buildings from the 1906 to 1929 period of development may include design elements associated with the storefront and/or upper stories. Character-defining features may be associated with the original building and/or with storefront alterations that have gained significance in their own right. Additional character-defining features may be identified on a case-by-case basis when evaluating individual buildings and historic districts.

Character-defining features specific to the storefront may include, but are not limited to:

- Recessed vestibule (often angled, deeply recessed, or in a zigzag forms)
- Low bulkheads that extend into the vestibule area
- Raised window display area (typically the height of the bulkhead)
- Show window display walls, doors, or windows at the rear of the display area
- Fixed display windows (often with beveled, butt jointed, or fretted metal sash frames)
- Transom windows, typically with wood mullions and set in a fixed, pivot, or awning configuration
- Glazed wood-framed entry door topped with a wood-framed operable ventilator
- Design elements and ornamentation associated with a particular style
- Signage
- Materials and finishes may include:
 - Wood paneling, square glazed ceramic tiles, or sculpted terra cotta tile forms at the bulkhead
 - Wood paneled or coffered soffit
 - Wood, tile, or terrazzo paving at the vestibule

Character defining features at the cornice and/or upper stories may include, but are not limited to:

- Parapet, roof form, and cornice details
- Window openings, materials, and bay configuration
- Entrances to the upper stories
- Wood, brick, or stucco cladding at exterior elevations
- Design elements and ornamentation associated with a particular style

Additional character defining features may include, but are not limited to:

- Building setback, if any (typically buildings were not set back from the sidewalk)
- Presence of sidewalk vault lights
- Height, scale, and massing

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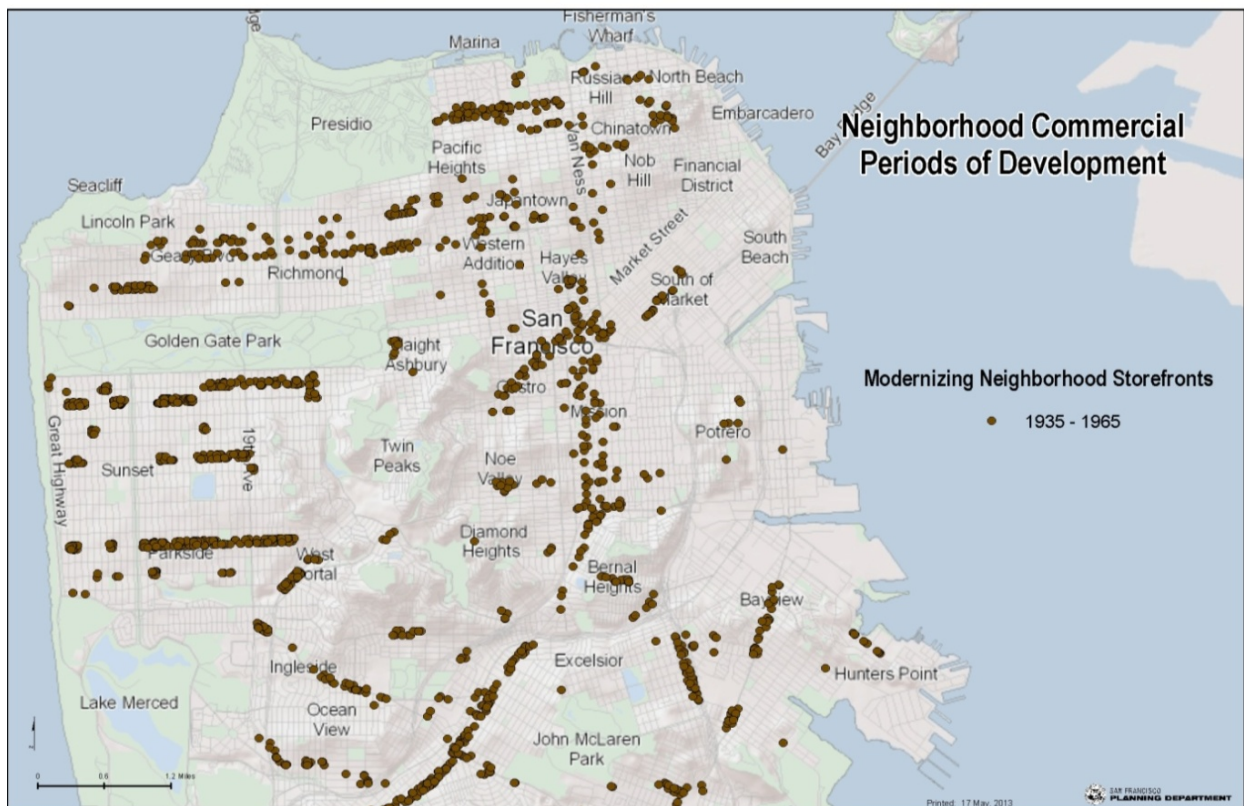
Period of Development:

Modernizing Neighborhood Storefronts, 1930 – 1965

Overview: Development Patterns

Social, economic, and technological forces profoundly influenced the form, location, and styles of neighborhood commercial buildings in San Francisco from 1930 to 1965. On commercial corridors, the appearance of retail storefronts was transformed from the 1930s to 1950s as storefront facades were designed or remodeled in sleek Modern styles. Widely implemented New Deal programs stimulated storefront modernization from 1935 to 1943. Following the end of World War II, an unprecedented surge in consumer spending led to increased retail competition, aggressive marketing campaigns, and further modernization of storefronts in attempts to lure shoppers. The widespread adoption of automobiles vastly increased the speed and extent of mobility in San Francisco and impacted the organization and types of new commercial development. New forms of automobile-oriented commercial development included retail strips, shopping centers, and businesses such as motels and drive-ins.

Beginning in the 1930s, most new commercial development outside the downtown core was sited on vacant land or in older neighborhoods that had been razed for redevelopment project areas. Vacant lands included the sand dunes of the Sunset District and former cemetery land near Pacific Heights. Unlike residential development of this period, which exploited the undeveloped steeper slopes, commercial development was generally limited to undeveloped flat lands and areas slated for redevelopment. Primary locations of new large-scale commercial development include the Stonestown shopping center near the Pacific Ocean; the Diamond Heights shopping complex; the Sears shopping center on Geary Boulevard; and mixed-use residential, office, and retail centers related to the Golden Gateway redevelopment project area. Smaller-scale commercial corridors associated with new builder tract developments include Laurel Village on California Street, West Portal Avenue, and new neighborhood-serving retail corridors along Taraval, Irving, and Judah Streets in the Sunset District. Storefront modernization and in-fill retail construction was concentrated along the historic commercial corridors of Mission Street, Market Street, and Union Square.



Map showing extant buildings constructed from 1930 to 1965 in existing neighborhood commercial zoning districts. Most of these 1,542 buildings contain commercial ground story storefronts. Note: Commercial buildings located outside of commercial corridors are not displayed.

Impact of Government Regulations

Local government controls during this period of development continued to impact the form, location, and appearance of commercial buildings and signage. The 1944 zoning ordinance introduced designated commercial districts. Existing stores and businesses located outside these new zoning districts were allowed to remain as a non-conforming use; however, no new stores were permitted in the vast areas zoned for residential uses. The impact of the 1944 zoning update effectively prohibited newly emerging neighborhoods in the Bayview, Excelsior, and portions of the Sunset District from building the iconic neighborhood-serving corner store and from converting residential buildings to commercial uses outside of designated commercial zones. Other planning code requirements and new fire and building code requirements during this period likewise had an impact. Fire and building code requirements impacted the appearance and form of storefronts, including inward-swinging¹⁰⁴ entry door requirements, limitations on the size and placement of projecting signs, new required means of egress, size limitations for new buildings on corner lots, off-street parking requirements for new commercial buildings, and the establishment of signage controls. On a national scale, federal policies—such as the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, which set signage controls—likewise impacted the appearance of neighborhood commercial corridors.

New Deal Program to Modernize Main Street

Storefront modernization related to the federal New Deal program of loan guarantees is a significant theme related to commercial development in San Francisco. The construction industry took an enormous hit from the economic downturn precipitated by the 1929 stock market crash. In the early 1930s, approximately 90% of the nation's

¹⁰⁴ Confirm inward v. outward swinging requirements.

architects and engineers were out of work.¹⁰⁵ In an effort to revive the stagnating construction industry—an industry inclusive of contractors, architects, carpenters, and related trades, as well as manufacturers of building materials—the federal government in 1934 passed the National Housing Act (NHA), which created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Title I of the NHA was designed to counteract the effects of the Depression by stimulating the building industry and consumer spending through the modernization of commercial storefronts.¹⁰⁶ Initially, modernization efforts focused on the construction and rehabilitation of residential structures (Title II of the NHA), but by 1936 47% of the loans issued were for the modernization of commercial buildings. Although these were not direct loans, the loans were government-backed, thereby providing smaller businesses with much needed access to capital and banks with a low-risk lending model.

The FHA's Modernization Credit Plan provided government-insured, low-interest private loans for the modernization of existing storefronts. The loans were heavily promoted by the FHA, with the support of construction-related manufacturers, under the "Modernize Main Street" public relations campaign. By the fall of 1934, the FHA and its partners had produced 60 booklets, brochures, and related materials promoting the modernization effort and had promoted the loan program through advertisements, locally based campaigns, caravans and industry-sponsored design competitions. Key industry boosters included the glass manufacturers Libbey-Owens-Ford (L.O.F.), Pittsburg Plate Glass Co. (Pittco), and U. S. Steel. National companies such as Kawneer advertised widely in trade publications, offering complete storefronts inclusive of structural glass, extruded metal settings, doors, and fenestration.

Over 8,000 communities, including San Francisco, participated in campaigns to promote the loan program and during the Modernization Credit Plan's first five years, the value of the loans totaled \$5,000,000,000. Manufacturers, architects, and contractors immediately realized the potential to open up new markets for their services and actively promoted the loan program to the merchant community. In 1935, over 10,000 storefronts nationally were modernized using the Pittco line of storefront products. A related local campaign, "Start to Shine for '39" further promoted storefront modernization in advance of the Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE) held in San Francisco in 1939. Modernization was also promoted at the GGIE itself where L.O.F. built a corporate pavilion highlighting Vitrolite (structural glass) and "Extrudalite" (metal trim) product lines for storefronts. Initially structured as a temporary emergency provision, the Modernization Credit Plan was subsequently renewed until 1943.

Manufacturers increasingly developed new products in order to stimulate a market for fashionable, modern storefront facades. Glass manufacturers, whose industry had been devastated by the Depression, sought to expand product lines



The garage of this flats building at 2335-2339 Chestnut Street (built in 1925) was replaced with a pop-out commercial space c. 1938. The curved fascia, glazed tile bulkhead, and metal fittings reflect elements of the Streamline Moderne style. Photo: SF Planning

¹⁰⁵ Gwendolyn Wright, *USA Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 113.

¹⁰⁶ Gabrielle Esperdy, *Modernizing Main Street: Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

from primarily automobile-based to include architectural glass for retailers.¹⁰⁷ These new products and technological innovations included the ability to bend structural glass, to extrude metal into flush moldings and settings, and expanded tinting options for structural glass. New, aggressively marketed products included the “complete storefronts” produced by the Kawneer and Pittco. The Berkeley-based Zouri Company advertised its “Complete Store Fronts” which included any combination of the following components: sash and bars, awning bars, moldings and shapes, sign letters, Alumilite facing, and porcelain enamel facing.¹⁰⁸ Carrara and Vitrolite, tinted structural glass, which had previously been used exclusively in building interiors, were promoted as modern, sleek, and inexpensive *exterior* facing materials. Advertisements, such as one for “Enduro” iron enamel panels, literally promoted “new faces for old buildings.”¹⁰⁹ New storefront designs were marketed as data driven; one pamphlet described storefront design as “almost a science” and that “from facts uncovered by selling research, industry has developed specialized products and practices to give new form and brilliant beauty to the place where buyer and seller meet.”¹¹⁰ These new technologies and building materials helped inform development of the dominant style promoted by manufacturers and architects—a style now commonly referred to as Streamline Moderne or Moderne. Sleek Moderne storefronts were designed to draw in shoppers and spur consumer confidence and spending.

San Francisco architects and merchant associations played active roles in promoting the local “Modernize Main Street Campaign.” Beginning in fall 1935, unemployed architects photographed key commercial corridors and prepared before-and-after sketches, demonstrating possible modernization schemes for individual buildings.¹¹¹ Merchant associations hosted events to present these before-and-after slide shows of modernized storefronts. Merchants were canvassed in over 20 retail districts, with a particular focus on Market Street and Union Square. The aggressive marketing and merchant outreach worked. San Francisco’s FHA office reported over \$15,000,000 in insured loans between October 1935 and May 1936.¹¹² Extant examples of modernized storefronts are scattered across San Francisco and provide a visible connection to the past and the economic programs promoted by the New Deal.

RETAILING AND POSTWAR CONSUMERISM

The trend toward modern design and evolution in retailing concepts continued in the 1940s and the post-World War II era. The postwar building boom that stimulated both residential and commercial construction coincided with a surge in consumer spending. Described as “the greatest onslaught of consumerism ever,”¹¹³ the exponential increase in pent-up consumer spending resulted in increased competition and the practical desire for eye-catching, fashionable storefronts. Storefront design from the mid-1940s and up into the 1960s reflected innovations in retailing and styles.

Marketing: Miracle Miles

Commercial districts dubbed “Miracle Miles” by realtors and



Dollar Days on Mission Street's Miracle Mile in 1959.

¹⁰⁷ Wall, 44.

¹⁰⁸ Advertisement, *Architect & Engineer*: October 1940: 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹¹⁰ *How to Plan and Construct Modern Storefronts*, 1938. L.O.F.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Jim Heimann, *Shop America: Midcentury Storefront Design 1938-1950*, (Koln: Germany, 2007), 9.

business associations were found throughout the country, with the earliest reference to the phrase attributed in the mid-1930s to the Wilshire Boulevard commercial district in Los Angeles.¹¹⁴ The Mission Street Miracle Mile in the Mission District is the only Miracle Mile found in San Francisco. The exact date of its naming is unknown; however, it is reasonable to assume that the moniker was in place by the early 1940s. At that time, this stretch of Mission Street (roughly between 16th and 25th Streets) featured numerous large-scale movie theaters, department stores, and smaller specialty shops, and was in direct competition with the downtown shopping district. The Mission Merchants Association aggressively promoted and offered numerous inducements including holiday decorations, parades, and “Dollar Days” sales promotions. Mission Street was promoted as the Miracle Mile until at least 1960.

Neighborhood Department Stores

Thriving neighborhood commercial corridors, particularly those on Mission Street and Fillmore Street in the Western Addition increasingly competed for customers with the downtown shopping core. In 1943, for example, 40% of the City’s department stores were located outside of downtown, mostly along the length of Mission Street.¹¹⁵ Downtown department stores also opened neighborhood branches, such as Hales Department Store on Mission Street’s Miracle Mile. Large-scale variety stores, such as Woolworth’s were also well represented in the neighborhoods. In 1943, Mission Street sported six variety stores—listed in the city directory as “Department Store – 5 cents to \$1. 00— and such stores were well represented (with 24 stores) along neighborhood commercial corridors throughout the City, including outlying areas in the Sunset District, Richmond District, Portola, and Excelsior.¹¹⁶



Sears, Roebuck & Co. Building at 3120 Mission Street, 1929.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

Storefront Branding

With an increase in chain stores in the 1940s came concerted efforts by merchants to brand their businesses and storefronts. Combining standardized signage with distinctive materials and design elements, merchants were able to provide a unified appearance to storefronts that were not necessarily identical. Sherry’s liquor stores, for example, developed a recognizable brand through a specific design vocabulary for its neighborhood stores in the early 1940s.¹¹⁷ Though not identical, the Sherry’s storefronts at 2156 Chestnut Street, 5620 Geary Boulevard, 254 West Portal Avenue, 1800 Irving Street, and 1124 Market Street were united by Modern materials and design—including shiny black structural glass bulkhead cladding, contemporary vestibule shapes, and distinctive neon signage. Larger chains also developed distinctive commercial styles during this period, including the Denny’s prototype design in 1958 (built in Los Angeles), which featured the diner’s distinctive tapered signage, slanted overhanging roof form, and fusion of rustic faux stone cladding with sleek Modern forms that would later be referred to as Coffee Shop Modern.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Homer Aschmann and Kelsie B. Harder, “Miracle Mile.” *American Speech*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (May, 1957): 157.

¹¹⁵ Based on a review of department stores listed in the 1943 San Francisco City Directory. In 1925, just two of the City’s 11 department stores were located outside of the downtown commercial core, both on Mission Street.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Based on building permit research, the west portal store had neon sign installed in 1941.

¹¹⁸ Hess, Alan. *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books), 66-127.



Top left: 254 West Portal Avenue, opened in 1941. It was the chain's 11th store. The storefront shape is extant, though the Vitrolite cladding was replaced with ceramic tiles in 1970. The neon sign was removed at an unknown date.

Bottom left: 5620 Geary Boulevard, opened in 1942. Its Vitrolite cladding was later replaced with stucco and the neon sign removed, though the storefront's basic form remains.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library



BASEMENT AND GARAGE CONVERSIONS

The conversion of residential garage spaces into neighborhood-serving stores continued during this period of development. This practice was particularly common along residential or mixed-use streets zoned as commercial during the 1921 and 1944 zoning efforts. Small-scale detached garages as well as garages integrated into the basement of residential buildings were converted to storefront spaces. The size of these stores was typically small, limited by the size of the former garage space.



Top left: Constructed c. 1928 as a detached garage, this small space at 3173 21st Street was converted in 1957 into an office, and later used as a beauty salon. Top right: The deeply recessed garage opening of this 1941 duplex on Capp Street was converted into a photography studio in 1951. It now houses a dry cleaner. It is the only such conversion on this block of nearly identical tract duplexes. Photos: SF Planning and Google Street View

Storefront Differences Based on Type of Store

New storefront typologies were promoted by manufacturers and trade groups to cater to a range of commercial establishments.¹¹⁹ Storefronts that showcased smaller goods such as jewelry, for example, were far different from storefronts designed for banks, barbers, or bars. A guide to storefront design from 1938 recommended higher bulkheads for stores selling smaller products—products that could typically be held by hand—such as bakeries, jewelry stores, liquor stores, and delis.¹²⁰ Larger goods required lower bulkheads for proper display.¹²¹ Likewise, merchants offering an exclusive product or service were counseled to design storefronts that were differentiated from stores offering everyday goods. *Shops and Stores* (1948/1957) recommended the following configurations for different classes of shops:

A closed shop front with a sign, one or two show windows, and an entrance door—all set on the sidewalk building line—may be the answer for an exclusive shop. A deep store front lobby, lots of show windows, varied display, and a visually open entrance wall will best satisfy those shops that sell average-priced goods to a volume trade.¹²²

Morris Ketchum’s influential guide concluded that “large show windows with low bulkheads are needed for clothing mannequins, small eye-level show cases for accessory merchandise.”¹²³ Flower shops typically adopted the “open storefront system, with vast expanses of glass, with little need for hidden storage.”¹²⁴ To use a closed front on a flower shop, one guide cautioned, “would be equivalent to lowering the curtain at the theatre.”¹²⁵ By the 1950s, the accepted standard of closed fronts for jewelry stores, no longer held true and increasingly such stores adopted the open front system.¹²⁶ Varied window displays, including the use of shadow boxes, were used to entice shoppers into the jewelry or luxury goods store.

¹¹⁹ The Libbey-Owens-Ford glass company patented the “Visual Front” storefront system, consisting of plate glass and aluminum sash, in 1949. More information about the visual front and open front storefront systems is found in the following section, “Storefront Components and Retailing Concepts.”

¹²⁰ *How to Plan and Construct Modern Storefronts*, L.O.F, 1938

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Ketchum, 166.

¹²³ Ketchum, 166.

¹²⁴ Ketchum, 149.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Ketchum, 150-152.



Frank Lloyd Wright's V.C. Morris gift shop, 140 Maiden Lane.

Larger stores with extensive street frontages—such as neighborhood department stores, large drug stores, grocery stores, dry goods, automobile showrooms, and furniture stores—demanded a substantial amount of floor space for window display areas. These larger stores often were designed with broad vestibules containing multiple doors in order to handle increased foot traffic. Display areas, likewise, were wide and deep, often with low bulkheads. Occasionally, new larger stores were created by gutting and combining smaller storefronts constructed in earlier periods.

Grocery Stores

During the postwar era, grocery stores developed a new property type—supermarkets—which catered to the automobile-driving customer. An open, visual front was recommended for the design of grocery stores in order to provide a full view of the store's interior and often-colorful goods on offer.¹²⁷ These new supermarkets featured self-service, cutting-edge technology and, oftentimes, striking new Modern design. According to a Historic Resource Evaluation of San Francisco's Marina District Safeway, the building, designed by Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons (WBE) and constructed in 1959, is "credited with being the prototype of a design that would be widely copied throughout California and the rest of the country."¹²⁸ Key elements of the building's design include a barrel-vaulted roof, glass wall arch, and interior skylight. Its interior featured the latest advancements in grocery technology including a "mechanized meat market where the meat cut by butchers is carried via conveyor to an automatic cellophane packaging machine; a rotisserie where customers can buy ready-cooked whole chickens; and a new type of register with the cash drawer underneath the wrapping table."¹²⁹ In California alone, WBE designed at least 70 Safeway stores between 1954 -1965, many in this recognizable barrel-vaulted construction (nine of which were located in San Francisco).¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ketchum, 173.

¹²⁸ Jonathan Lammers, California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523B form for 11-15 Marina Boulevard. 2007.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ University of California, Environmental Design Archives, William Wurster Collection, Excel spreadsheet of Wurster projects.



Sunset Super Grocery, located at 2415 Irving Street, was designed by architect H.C. Baumann in 1949.

Source: San Francisco Public Library

Below: This "Marina Safeway", at 3372 Mission Street, was constructed in 1966 as one of the last of this prototype.

Source: Google Maps



Evolution of Bank Design

Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century bank buildings in San Francisco borrowed from the Beaux-Arts design vocabulary in order to project a feeling of prosperity, prestige and fiscal security. Massive in scale, with lavish ornamentation, banks embodied economic security through high-style Classical design. Such buildings and designs were rapidly transformed during this period of development with the wide adoption of Modern progressive bank design. The Stock Market crash of 1929 and failure of nearly a third of the nation's banks precipitated monumental changes in bank practices; such changes had a major influence on subsequent bank design. As the industry moved from "a staid conservative business into a highly competitive mass-marketed industry," the design of banks rapidly shifted from traditional Classical banking temples to "open, glowing, glassy stores, incorporating the newest technologies, aesthetics, and materials, inviting to all, and staffed by merchandisers."¹³¹ The new designs were intended to distance the industry from causal association with the Great Depression and to reestablish consumer confidence. Furthermore, regulations that had banned or restricted the presence of neighborhood branch banks were lifted, allowing for the proliferation of smaller-scale neighborhood-serving banks.¹³²

¹³¹ Carol J Dyson and Anthony Rubano, *Banking on the Future: Modernism and the Local Bank. Preserving the Recent Past*, ed. Deborah Slayton and William G. Foulks, (Preserving The Recent Past 2, 2000), 2, 2-43.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 2-45.

In San Francisco, the earliest versions of these new progressive bank buildings incorporated stripped-down design elements from the Moderne style, what has been described as “Streamlined Classicism.”¹³³ An extant example of this stripped Moderne style is the West Portal Branch of the San Francisco Bank, constructed in 1935. Designed by architect W. D. Peugh, the rounded exterior was clad in Travertine marble and featured cast bronze grillwork.¹³⁴ The bank was highlighted in the October 1935 issue of *Architect & Engineer*.



Architect W.D. Peugh's Streamline Moderne bank at 2 West Portal Avenue, 1935.

Source: Architect and Engineer, October 1935.

The post-World War II building boom fueled the re-birth of the banking sector and led to a competitive, mass-market industry. As banks aggressively pursued new customers, the prevailing view of bank architecture shifted again with bank design attempting to emulate modern retail storefronts, including employing large expanses of plate glass. The California Savings Bank on Geary Street, with its floor-to ceiling plate glass front and luminous ceilings, is an excellent example of this “bank as store” model. These new designs incorporated innovations and efficiency, including new walk-up and drive-in windows that did not require customers to actually enter the bank.

¹³³ Ibid., 2-44.

¹³⁴ “Banks,” *Architect & Engineer*. (October, 1935): 40.



Left: View taken in 1956 of the new California Savings Bank, at 46 Geary Street. Designed by architect Ward Thomas, the bank featured a visual open front, open-plan interior, opaque spandrel panels, a projecting box overhang, blade sign, and 'floated lighting ceilings' made of 50' plastic fixtures fitted with fluorescent tubes.

Right: View taken in 1976 of the WBE's Bank of America branch bank. The extant, though altered, bank is located at 275 Ellis Street in the Tenderloin.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library and 1976 Architectural Survey field form

In the early 1960s, Bank of America experimented with new Modern designs for its San Francisco neighborhood branch banks. The banks are small scale, built of reinforced concrete, and represent a radical break from earlier designs. The influential firm Wurster, Bernardi, Emmons designed 275 Ellis Street, the "first Modern Bank of America design in San Francisco" in 1963.¹³⁵ It was stylistically linked to the New Formalist freestanding Modern pavilions designed by Philip Johnson and Minoru Yamasaki.¹³⁶ Two years later, Neil Smith Associates designed a similarly small-scale Modern concrete Bank of America branch bank. Located at 1660 California Street in the Russian Hill neighborhood, this 1965 branch featured a futuristic circular entry stairway.

Bank architects in the late 1950s and 1960s experimented with metal sheathing materials, barrel-vaulted roof forms, arches and cutouts, canted roof planes, and exaggerated geometries.¹³⁷ San Francisco banks from this time exemplify many of these design strategies. A boxy, curtain wall bank design was common by the 1960s.

Post-War Consumerism & Retailing

Corner Stores

The corner store, a common property type in residential areas during prior periods of development, underwent a shift in form and function in the 1930s to 1960s. The ubiquitous three-story building with a ground story commercial space topped by two residential stories, projecting bays windows, and a columned entrance oriented toward the corner, was no longer the dominant form for corner stores. In its place was a simple one-story corner store, which

¹³⁵ 1976 Architectural Survey Field Form, San Francisco Planning Department.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Dyson and Rubano, 2-47, 2-48.

often functioned primarily as a liquor store. The prevalence of this period's new form of corner store was observed during field visits and review of historic photographs. Additional research is needed to document the factors associated with this shift.



Mayfair corner store at 2901 Irving Street in the Sunset District (1945). Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Services

Stores selling services rather than products likewise adopted specialized storefront designs. The service field was large and varied, inclusive of personal service shops such as beauty salons, tailors, groomers; household shops such as laundries, dry cleaning, and small appliance repair; business establishments such as realty and loans, and personal finance.¹³⁸ Service establishments that involved processing or craftsmanship used prominent displays in open front systems. Other establishments prioritized maximized advertising space and privacy, in such cases, a closed front or billboard front was more commonly incorporated. In some cases, primary importance was placed on the entire store façade rather than the display windows. Occasionally, windows were subordinate or of an unusual size, or the window was glazed with an opaque, colored or patterned glass for privacy.¹³⁹ In general, because services did not typically need to draw customers in with elaborate displays, the display windows and vestibules of stores selling a service were shallower than their retail counterparts.

Interior Layout: Machines for Selling

By opening up the store front and uniting the exterior with the sales spaces, architects and designers of the 1940s disproved the old theory that "a store front was one thing and the store inside another."¹⁴⁰ New, more efficient forms of interior fluorescent lighting also impacted the exterior storefront design. Using translucent plastic panels backlit with fluorescent tubes, designers were able to create "floated lighting ceilings" that obviated the need for windows to provide exterior light. Touted as "glowing cylinders of light," the new fluorescent tubes provided an energy-efficient, cool light that diffused over large areas, allowing designers to "make your own daylight."¹⁴¹ In 1940, one firm marketed the tubes as "packets of sunlight."¹⁴² As a result, some storefront designers covered exterior windows with

¹³⁸ Ketchum, 169.

¹³⁹ Libbey-Owens-Ford, "How to Plan and Construct Modern Storefronts," 1938.

¹⁴⁰ Ketchum, 14.

¹⁴¹ You Have Lived To See a Miracle of Lighting, trade booklet produced by Hygrade fluorescent manufacturers, 1940, 8.

¹⁴² Ibid., 13.

sheathing to create dramatic backdrops for signage. These “closed shop windows” and “billboard fronts” are discussed later in this chapter.

Influential publications, such as *Contemporary Shops in the United States* (1946) and *Shops and Stores* (1948, revised 1957) provided guidance on interior arrangements and considerations such as interior traffic flow and merchandise locations, placement of reserve stock areas, sales departments, self-service and self-selection (which speeds sales and stimulates “impulse” buys), aisle widths and selling operations spaces, departments, open selling, flexible sales floor planning, maximum visibility, illumination options, and seasonal demands.¹⁴³ Merchants were offered myriad interior sales display options and considerations, ranging from island departments, wall departments, sales fixtures, built-in displays, central or dispersed cash transactions, pneumatic tubes to service charge transactions, and wrapping stations. Specialized equipment for specific merchandise included fitting rooms, listening booths for record departments, and X-ray machines for shoe departments.¹⁴⁴ Lighting was used to create moods and make browsing and buying more visually appealing. Credited with designing the first American store to use fluorescents, influential architect Victor Gruen used light “consciously for its psychological effects.”¹⁴⁵ Artificial lighting, particularly filament and fluorescent lighting, was used extensively in a shop’s interior for lighted niches, showcase lighting, valance lighting, shelf lighting, and spot-lighted interior displays. Mirrored walls were used to increase the impact of displayed merchandise, to multiply color and movement, to reflect light, and to create the illusion of added width or depth.¹⁴⁶ This careful planning of space, lighting, and sales fixtures reflected a shift from what was described in 1957 as the “casual disorder of the old country general store to the carefully calculated organization of sales fixtures, service equipment, displays, and customer services found in the best shops and stores today.”¹⁴⁷ This shift—data driven, though often wildly creative—embodied the concept of shops as “machines for selling.”

¹⁴³ Ketchum, 34-42.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43-55.

¹⁴⁵ As quoted in *Victor Gruen: From Urban Shop to New City*.

¹⁴⁶ “How to Give Your Store the Look that Sells,” Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, 1951, 22-24.

¹⁴⁷ Ketchum, 55.



Examples of retailing concepts expressed in San Francisco store interiors.

Top Left: Streamlined cashier's stations at a Safeway store (1953).

Top Right: Biomorphic forms, accent lighting, and generous seating characterize the Bond's Department store remodel (1949).

Left: Sleek built-in display cases at J.C. Penney's (1944).

Bottom Left: Interior of Leed's shoes 2600 Mission Street, (1949).

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Automobile-Oriented Businesses

Commercial buildings that specifically catered to the automobile included drive-in restaurants, drive-in theaters, and drive-thru banks. Unheard of prior to the 1930s, these new building forms enabled consumer spending within the confines of automobiles. Once common and recognizable for their often Googie-inspired architecture, such buildings are largely extinct in San Francisco. A few drive-in restaurants remain, though further research is required to document the historic contexts and extant buildings associated with automobile-oriented businesses.



Left: Mel's Drive-in, located at 140 Van Ness Avenue, near Mission Street (demolished).

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Retail Strips

Commercial strips developed during the 1950s and 1960s differed from prior commercial development, due to the primary importance of off-street parking. Generally, the off-street parking was located in large surface lots in front of the stores. The Laurel Village retail strip, however, incorporated a large parking lot concealed behind the stores, creating a buffer between the retail and the associated residential tract.

Of the new retail strips developed during this period of development, only a few are known to have fully embraced Modern design. The two-block Ocean Avenue retail corridor located adjacent to the Lakeside neighborhood between 19th Avenue and Junipero Serra Boulevard, opted instead for Regency Revival-inspired storefronts for most of its one- to two-story mixed-use buildings.¹⁴⁸ The Miraloma Tower Market featured a restrained Moderne design at the large anchor grocery, though the other buildings were of traditional or revival styles. Commercial development along Irving and Judah Streets in the Sunset District featured a non-contiguous scattering of one- to two-story retail and office buildings designed primarily with Moderne influences or in a restrained Midcentury Modern style. From 1935 to 1960, San Bruno Avenue in the Portola neighborhood saw scattered construction of new commercial buildings.

¹⁴⁸ Notable exceptions include Harold Stoner's (1941) futuristic Streamline Moderne design of the Lakeside Senior Medical Building located at the corner of Ocean Avenue at Junipero Serra Boulevard and the (1963) Midcentury Modern Lakeside Medical Center.



Constructed in 1942 and remodeled in 1958 (pictured), the Tower Market anchored a several-block retail strip in the Miraloma neighborhood.

Source: mtdavidson.org

Cemeteries to Commercial Corridors

Buildings along the two-block Laurel Village commercial strip were constructed from 1948 to 1953 on the south side of California Street in the upscale Laurel Heights neighborhood. The late development of this commercial corridor is due to its location atop recently vacated cemetery land. It was associated with and adjacent to the Laurel Heights residential tract development, also built on former cemetery lands, a middle- to upper-income neighborhood developed from 1948 to 1953 by the Heyman Brothers. The commercial strip was anchored by the Cal-Mart grocery store and consists of one- to two-story retail spaces. The primarily Midcentury Modern storefronts are characterized by cantilevered overhangs, flat roofs, and large expanses of plate glass. A rear off-street parking lot separates the commercial strip from the adjacent Laurel Heights residential development.



Left: Cal-Mart Grocery Store, 1952.

Source: *San Francisco Public Library*

Also built atop former cemetery lands, the Sears, Roebuck, and Company-anchored shopping center on Geary Boulevard at Masonic Avenue, was closely associated with the new Anza Vista residential development. Designed by W. D. Peugh, the Sears department store, described as one of the largest in the nation, opened in late 1951. The \$1.5 million, three-story department store featured both a raised parking platform and surface parking lot that could accommodate 1,000 automobiles.



Left: Sears, Roebuck & Co. store at Geary and Masonic.

Source: San Francisco Assessor's photograph collection, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (1964)

Shopping Centers

New concepts in integrated planning resulted in the development of regional shopping centers. Introduced in the United States during the 1920s, shopping centers were some of the first common building forms reconfigured to accommodate mass automobility.¹⁴⁹ Built in outlying urban areas, regional shopping centers often comprised one- to two-story buildings, encircled by an abundance of free off-street parking. This new type of retailing destination represented a radical break from traditional, unplanned retail growth. Rather than individually owned buildings facing the street and built to the full extent of the lot, these new low-density shopping centers were separated from the street by large parking lots and often featured internal entrances and courtyards. Massive in scale, shopping centers were anchored by one or several department stores and numerous smaller retail shops. Unlike strip malls, shopping centers incorporated pedestrian courtyards and walkways, creating a unique shopping environment sheltered from traffic and parking lots.

San Francisco's first shopping center is located in Stonestown, a planned neighborhood and commercial destination near the Sunset District. Developed by the Stoneson Brothers on a vacant 65-acre site, the planned community included the shopping center, four 10-story mid-rise apartment towers, and 10 three-story low-density garden apartments. The residential portion of the development (set on 25 acres) was designed by San Francisco architect Angus McSweeney.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center in Washington DC 1930-1941." *The Journal of Architectural Historians* (March 1992): 5.

At the time of construction, beginning in 1950, the Stonestown shopping center was billed as “the most extensive outlying commercial center in California.”¹⁵⁰ Set on 40 acres adjacent to 19th Avenue, a major arterial, the shopping complex was further divided by interior streets and open-air, pedestrian-only promenades. Designed by Los Angeles-based architect Welton Becket and developed by the San Francisco-based Stoneson Development Corporation (Ellis and Henry Stoneson), the shopping center was anchored by the 300,000 square foot Emporium department store and featured a movie theater, medical building, restaurant, gas station, bank, and smaller individual retail stores. Its spacious stores reflected up-to-date theories in retailing. The mid-size Butler Department Store, for example, featured air-conditioning, wide shopping aisles, and “open-type selling displays” within its three floors. The shopping center opened in August 1952 and represented a direct threat to the historic commercial centers along Mission Street, Union Square, and downtown San Francisco.

With a stated goal to provide shopping facilities and services to meet every need, the shopping center was designed to “service and supply” the estimated population of 250,000 in the area.¹⁵¹ Services included the (extant) Stonestown Medical and Dental Center, a five-story medical complex designed in the Midcentury style. It opened in 1953 with offices for 65 doctors and 15 dentists.¹⁵² During the 1980s, the main portion of the shopping center was completely remodeled into the now-standard enclosed mall structure. The pedestrian streets and walkways are gone. Small remnants of the original design and buildings remain, particularly near the intersection of 20th Avenue and Buckingham Way, though only a few buildings, including the medical building, retain high integrity.¹⁵³



Left: The Emporium at Stonestown (1964). Right: Stonestown Shopping Center (1959).

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

STYLISTIC INFLUENCES

By the 1930s, the Neoclassical and Period Revival styles of previous decades were losing favor to new Modern styles and materials, particularly in the postwar era. Younger architects were often dismissive of these earlier derivatives. In 1952, Morris Ketchum derided the earlier revivalist designs, “Architects everywhere had disguised their shops as

¹⁵⁰ Stonestown: A City Within A City,” *Architect and Engineer*. (July 1950): 15.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Caption from San Francisco Public Library digital photograph. September 10, 1953.

¹⁵³ Susan Dinkelspiel Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook to San Francisco and the Bay Area*. (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2007), 105. Why?

Italian palaces, Tudor cottages, or Georgian town halls.”¹⁵⁴ Rather than look to the past for inspiration, Ketchum’s contemporaries developed new storefront styles based on a Modern design vocabulary, including styles that are now known as Streamline Moderne, Midcentury Modern, Googie, and New Formalism.

Streamline Moderne

Described as a unique American style,¹⁵⁵ Streamline Moderne is considered the first “modern” style to gain widespread acceptance in mainstream America. Streamline Moderne, also referred to as Art Moderne, Moderne, Modernistic, or Depression Modern, was a conscious architectural expression of the speed and sleekness of the Machine Age. The style referenced the aerodynamic forms of airplanes, ships, and automobiles of the period with sleek, streamline rounded corners and curves, and evoked a machine-made quality. It evolved from the Art Deco movement and incorporated design elements associated with the International Style. Nationwide, construction in this style began in the 1930s and peaked around 1940.

In San Francisco, the period of construction of Streamline Moderne buildings began in the mid-1930s and continued through to at least 1950. This period overlapped with the precipitous decline in building construction due to the impacts of the Depression and bans on non-war-related building construction enacted during World War II. As a result, relatively few buildings were constructed in the early iteration (pre-1945) of Streamline Moderne. This style is most closely associated with small-scale residential tract development; it was not uncommon, however, for older commercial storefronts to be remodeled to incorporate elements of this popular style. Streamline Moderne was the dominant style promoted by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in its storefront modernization campaigns begun in 1934. While some retail buildings were originally constructed in the Streamline Moderne style, it was far more common for older commercial storefronts to be stripped of their original ornament and sheathed with new Moderne storefront components.



Left: Stein's at 33 Kearny Street, 1940. Demolished. Source: Gabriel Moulin Studios Collection (permission pending)
Right: 2756 Mission Street, a rare example of intact curvilinear display windows. Photo: SF Planning

The style incorporated newly developed products such as Vitrolite glass and Carrara glass (tinted structural glass), porcelain enamel, extruded aluminum and stainless steel fittings and fixtures, ceramic veneer, glass block, and advancements in building technologies such as the ability to bend structural glass. Design elements of Streamline Moderne storefronts and commercial buildings include oval or semi-oval window glazing; angled and recessed entry vestibules; decorative terrazzo paving, which occasionally extended onto the sidewalk; colored structural glass used as facing or accent material; rounded corners and overhangs; curved plate or structural glasses and bulkheads;

¹⁵⁴ As quoted in Paul Groth's presentation.

¹⁵⁵ Lester Walker, *American Shelter*, (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1996), 220.

aluminum, stainless steel, chrome, and or wood used for door and window trim; speed lines (bands of horizontal piping, also known as “speed whiskers”¹⁵⁶); smooth stucco or concrete wall surfaces; glass block windows, occasionally curved; porcelain enamel facing (Enduro and Veribrite), often in a squared pattern; Vitrolux accents (color-infused tempered plate glass) used for nighttime illumination; and extruded metal door and window frame settings, often anodized. Signs often comprised individual letters, in a sans-serif, contemporary type face. These bold new forms and materials were incorporated in storefront design in an effort to draw in shoppers and spur consumer confidence and spending.

Extant examples reflect the innovations and changes in American retailing during the 1930s-1950. Today, only scattered examples of Streamline Moderne storefront design remain.



Left: View taken 1941 of a newly remodeled storefront of a c.1909 building. The shallow, articulated vestibule at 1620 Polk Street is unusually wide and design represents a transition between Streamline Modern and Midcentury Modern.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Midcentury Modern Commercial Design

Midcentury Modern is a term used to describe an expressive, often exuberant style that emerged in the decades following World War II.¹⁵⁷ Influenced by the International Style and the Second Bay Tradition, Midcentury Modern was a casual, more organic and expressive style, and was readily applied to a wide range of property types.

The decades following the end of World War II represent the nation’s longest period of continuous growth. Construction-related expenditures increased nearly every year from 1946 to 1969.¹⁵⁸ In San Francisco builder-developers and architects were experimenting with new functional iterations of Modern designs. Midcentury Modern was the primary style applied to everyday commercial buildings. It was the most common Modern style built in San Francisco from 1945 to 1970. To a lesser extent, styles such as New Formalism and Googie/Futurism were incorporated in commercial design.

¹⁵⁶ Michael F. Crowe, *Deco By the Bay: Art Deco Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1995), 3.

¹⁵⁷ The term Midcentury Modern was generated by the public rather than scholars. The Riverside Modernism Context Statement provides a similar definition for the sub-style it refers to as “Mid-Century” Modern design. Recent Modern Age context statements developed by Pasadena, San Diego, and Fresno, California, have defined region-specific versions of Midcentury Modern design. Fresno and San Diego deemed their regional versions the Contemporary Style, while Pasadena defined its Midcentury Modern style as the postwar iteration of the International Style.

¹⁵⁸ Michael A. Tomlan, “Building Modern America: An Era of Standardization and Experimentation,” in *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 42.

Postwar prosperity and burgeoning consumerism initiated major reinvestments in urban retail spaces. Midcentury Modern eclipsed the popularity of Streamline Moderne designs as new storefronts were increasingly designed with expansive “Visual Front” display windows. Described in more detail in the following storefronts component section, the “visual” or “open front” storefront innovation marked a clear shift in retailing and storefront design. Visual front display windows afforded clear views into the interior of the store, unobscured by the back wall of earlier storefront display spaces. In this way, the store itself became the display window, rather than the discrete space of earlier window displays.

In addition to the open front system, Midcentury Modern design elements associated with commercial architecture include cantilevered roofs and overhangs, canted windows, stucco siding, projecting boxes that frame the upper stories, floor-to-ceiling display windows, flat or shed roof forms, vertical corrugated siding, stacked roman brick cladding, integrated bulkhead planters, deep and wide storefront vestibules, terrazzo paving, metal screens or sheaths, aluminum awnings or canopies (zigzag, corrugated metal, or sheet metal), jalousie transom windows, and base mounted signage or “advertising front” lettering. New technology and materials, such as plastic laminates, spandrel glass, and anodized metal sheaths were also incorporated in Midcentury Modern commercial buildings.

Midcentury Modern design—even in commercial buildings—reflected the period’s embrace of indoor-outdoor living. Design elements such as overhanging trellises, pergolas, atriums, and planters integrated in the building’s design literally wedded the building form to the environment. Integrated bulkhead planters and the use of projecting trellises, in particular, were a notable design element of commercial buildings that sold a service rather than a product.



Above: A 1948 remodel of the Mission District Leed's Shoes. Of particular note are the floating cantilevered display boxes. The storefront was demolished in the 1990s.

Right: Storefront façade of a dental building at 2484 Mission Street, built in 1927, remodeled in the Midcentury Modern style.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library; SF Planning



Googie / Space Age Architecture¹⁵⁹

Several unusual design elements are associated with Googie-inspired storefront design. The iconic boomerang form was used in signs, stand-alone structures, and patterns. Small, sculptural dingbats (also referred to as the Sputnik

¹⁵⁹ This section on Googie / Space Age architecture was summarized from Alan Hess' *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004).

and starburst), shaped like an exploding atom to suggest space age imagery, were used in signs and as stand-alone decorative elements. A projecting zigzag shape was a purely decorative motif used to suggest engineered folded plates and modernity. Biomorphic or free form shapes, including the hyperbolic paraboloid and concrete shell vault, brought eye-catching modern elements to traditional commercial spaces. The stand-alone tapered pylon sign, often with cantilevered or attached lettering is likewise evocative of Google-inspired design. There are few extant examples of Google-inspired design in San Francisco.

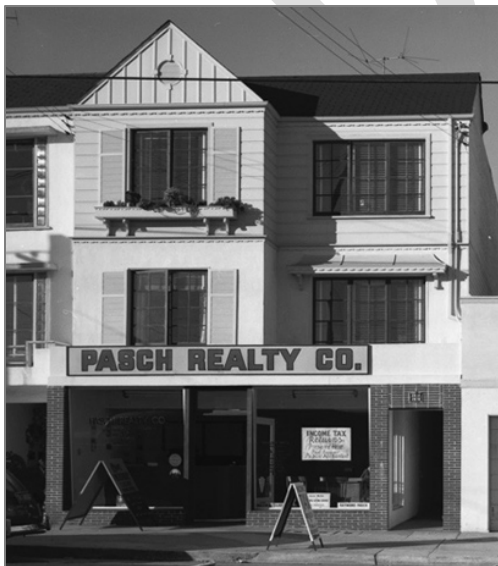


Left: Googie style motel at 2015 Greenwich Street.

Source: SF Planning

Colonial Revival

In stark contrast to the Modern influences that dominated midcentury storefront design, the Colonial Revival style of the 1940s offered a traditional, homespun option for the design of storefronts in the 1940s to 1950s. More commonly used in tract house design, in a variety of iterations (Dutch Colonial, Georgian Colonial, American Colonial, and Cape Cod Colonial), Colonial Revival was the dominant house style nationwide, particularly on the East Coast, in the 1920s to 1940s. The restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia during the 1930s exposed the style to a wider audience. By the early 1940s, the number of source books on colonial architecture had more than doubled, reflecting the widespread acceptance and popularity of the style.¹⁶⁰ Scattered examples of the style are found in San Francisco's commercial districts. Commercial buildings typically expressed simple gestures of the style rather than a full embrace. Modest design gestures at the storefront, such as the presence of shutters, dormers or wood clad gable ends, and divided light windows signified Colonial influence.



Above Left: Built in 1938, 230-244 West Portal Avenue is a one story Colonial Revival with front facing gable and arched dormers.

Above Right: A detail of one of the Colonial Revival storefronts at 230 West Portal Avenue.

Left: Built in 1946, 2620 Judah Street features Colonial Revival design at the upper stories and a Midcentury Modern storefront.

Source: SF Planning, San Francisco Assessor's Collection at the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (1951).

¹⁶⁰ Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," 111.

New Formalism

New Formalism, also known as Formalism or Neo-Formalism, represented a Modern interpretation of Classicism in American architecture from 1950 to 1965.¹⁶¹ Architects linked to the style include Edward Durrell Stone, Philip Johnson, Paul Rudolph and Minoru Yamasaki.¹⁶² A common style for Southern California apartment buildings, New Formalism buildings are relatively rare in San Francisco and are most often associated with early 1960s bank design. The style is characterized by slender arches, strict symmetry, flat roofs, vertical lines, and columnar supports.¹⁶³



Top left: The Bay View branch bank (1964), located at 3rd and Quesada Streets, extant. Top right: A New Formalist bank located at Mission and 21st Street. The turn-of-the-century building was remodeled in the New Formalist style in 1968.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library and SF Planning

Influential Architects

During this period, several Modern architects emerged as national leaders in the design of innovative storefronts and formed influential relationships with major storefront manufacturers. The Kawneer Company, for example, commissioned the firm Ketchum, Gina & Sharp to design a storefront prototype that incorporated its colorful line of Carrara structural glass. The firm's design incorporated structural glass surrounds as well as copious amounts of plate glass at the storefront displays and was featured on the cover of *Pencil Points* magazine in 1945.¹⁶⁴ Morris Ketchum Jr., author of *Shops and Stores* (1948), went on to design at least 31 glass-covered store plans for the Kawneer Company in the 1940s.¹⁶⁵ Pittco commissioned Victor Gruen and Elsie Krummeck to design what became an influential storefront prototype—for which free blueprints were distributed to merchants—which was widely featured in the firm's advertising. The firm also designed storefronts for the mass-market Graysons clothing store chain, including a store in San Francisco's West Portal neighborhood. Gruen later pioneered the design of shopping centers and is regarded as the "father of the shopping mall."¹⁶⁶ Other Modern master architects who designed storefronts for architectural products manufacturers include Morris Lapidus, who designed storefronts featured by the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa),¹⁶⁷ Eliel and Eero Saarinen, Pietro Belluschi, William Lescaze, and Walter Gropius (Pittco, in 1944 and 1945),¹⁶⁸ Raphael Soriano, and Marcel Breuer.

San Francisco contains several examples of small-scale commercial works by master architects including Frank Lloyd Wright's V.C. Morris Gift Shop (an excellent example of "Closed Front" storefront design) and early works by

¹⁶¹ Burden, 135.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁶³ Jeanne Lambin. *Preserving Resources from the Recent Past*. (Washington D.C.: A National Trust Publication, 2007), 26.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹⁶⁵ Wall, 45.

¹⁶⁶ Alex Wall.

¹⁶⁷ Treu, 200.

¹⁶⁸ Treu, 162.

architects who later gained great acclaim. Mario Ciampi, for example, designed several neighborhood commercial buildings in the Excelsior District early in his career.



A before-and-after comparison of Gruen & Krummeck's design of the Graysons clothing store in West Portal. Left: View c.1943 soon after completion. Right: Contemporary view of the former Graysons, now subdivided into four stores (160-170 West Portal Avenue). The generous side show windows remain, though they now house small businesses. Sources: "Contemporary Shops in the United States" (1946) and SF Planning.

Local Suppliers

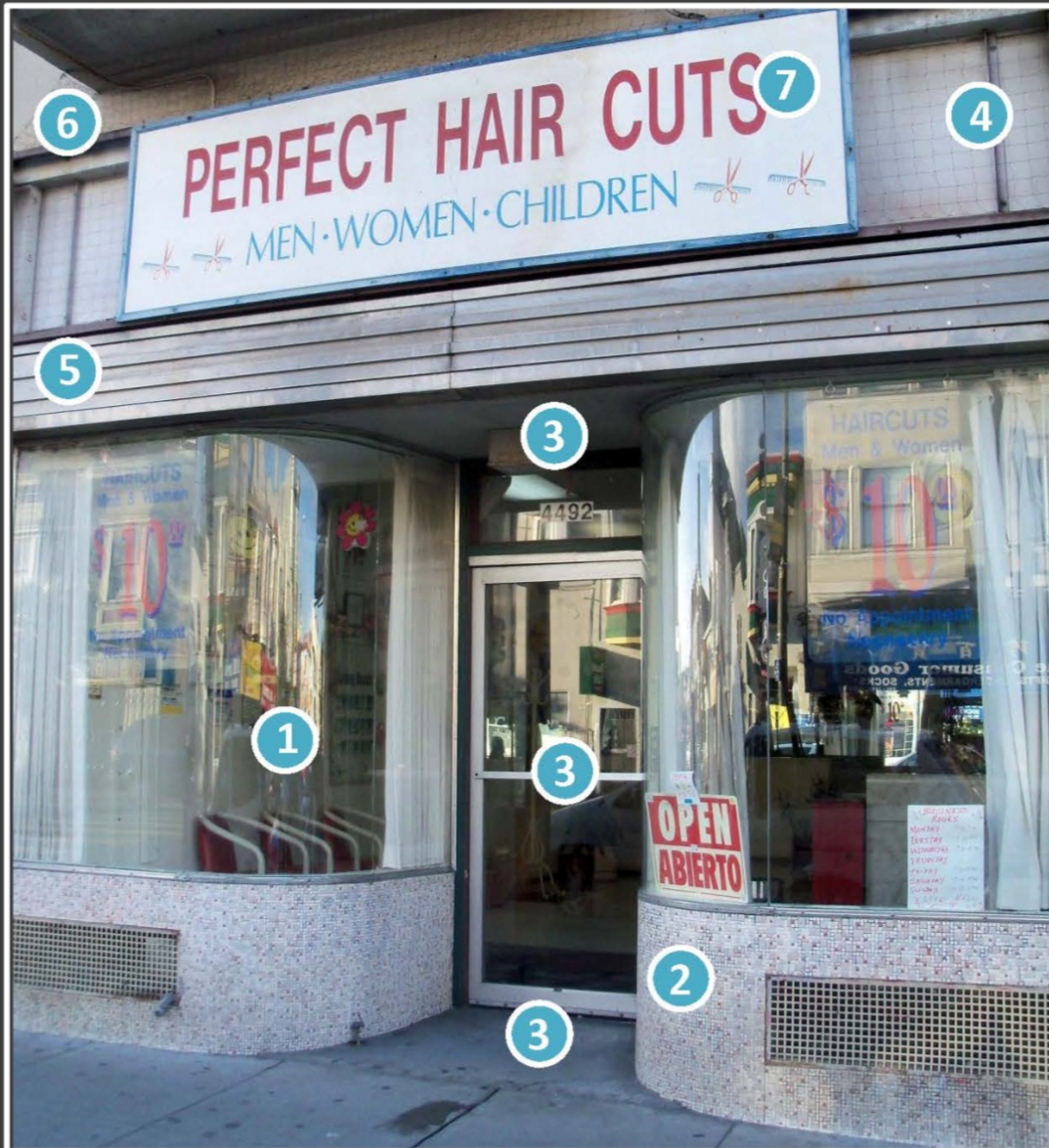
Aggressive marketing campaigns, begun during the New Deal modernization efforts and continuing into the postwar era, by architectural products manufacturers resulted in the production of copious catalogs and advertisements marketing these new storefront designs. In addition to local sales offices for the major storefront product manufacturers (L.O.F., Zouri, Pittco, and Kawneer) several dealers and manufacturers were listed in San Francisco city directories (or on original building permits) in the 1940s as providers of storefronts, including Fink & Schindler Co. (332 Brannan Street), Mullen Manufacturing (60 Rausch Street), Royal Showcase Co. (770 McAllister Street), National Store Fixture (2750 19th Street), Regal Manufacturing Co. (1306 Fulton Street), and Beal Store Equipment Co. (2745 16th Street). Many more firms provided store fixtures and fittings.



Left: 2034 Clement Street, unknown contractor's office. Extant, altered.

Source: San Francisco Assessor's Collection at the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (1951)

MODERNIZING NEIGHBORHOOD STOREFRONTS: 1930 - 1965



4492 Mission St. Built 1918, remodeled 1941/1963

1. WINDOWS & WINDOW DISPLAY SPACES
2. BULKHEADS
3. VESTIBULE (INCLUDES SHAPE, SOFFIT, PAVING, AND DOOR)
4. TRANSOM WINDOWS
5. CORNICE, AWNING, CANOPY & VERTICAL ELEMENTS
6. PIERS & FACING MATERIAL
7. SIGNAGE

STOREFRONT COMPONENTS & RETAILING CONCEPTS, 1930–1965

The following section documents retailing concepts as expressed in storefront components during the period 1930 to 1965.

1. WINDOWS AND WINDOW DISPLAY SPACES

In the 1930s and into the 1940s, the view into a store's interior from the sidewalk was still blocked by the rear wall or screen at the back of the window display area. The window display area remained a separate space and goods were displayed on raised platforms as in earlier eras. The design of windows and bulkheads, however, changed dramatically in concert with the growing popularity of the Streamline Moderne style. New curved windows and bulkheads, oval-shaped window frames, and sleek façade cladding transformed the appearance of the storefront and, occasionally, the upper story(s).

Open Front / Closed Front

The appearance of storefronts underwent a second dramatic transformation in the mid-1940s and 1950s, with the introduction of what were called “open front” or “Visual Front” storefronts.¹⁶⁹ These new storefront systems put the entire street-level merchandising area within the store on display. The former window display area—including the raised platform and rear wall or screen at the back—was replaced with nearly floor-to-ceiling windows that allowed full visual access into all areas of the store's interior. These new large expanses of glass were designed to reduce the barrier between pedestrians and the goods displayed inside.¹⁷⁰ Glass manufacturers, such as L.O.F., who produced the 1945 storefront catalog, “Visual Fronts,” heavily promoted the new expanded use of glass. In early 1950, a mobile caravan of Pittco model storefronts began a three-month tour of major western cities. The model stores featured twelve one-eighth scale model storefronts that could serve as basic designs for architects and builders. The caravan manager stated, “Architects throughout the nation are becoming increasingly conscious that ‘display’ is one of the most important words in any merchant's vocabulary. Display of the entire merchandising area on the street level is what the merchant wants. And it's what he gets in the ‘open-front’ type of store.”

In contrast, this period also saw the promotion of “closed-front” storefront systems for certain high-style storefronts. Influential store designer Morris Ketchum noted, “A closed shop front with a sign, one or two show windows, and an entrance door—all set on the sidewalk building line—may be the answer for an exclusive shop.”¹⁷¹ Frank Lloyd Wright's V.C. Morris gift shop at 140 Maiden Lane (1948) is an example of a closed storefront system. These closed-front systems did not, however, reach the popularity and acceptance of the open-front storefronts.

Glass Technology and Frames

By the 1930s, windows were typically framed in metal sash—aluminum, bronze, and stainless steel—rather than wood. Metals were extruded, cast, or rolled into a variety of shapes. In 1930, the L.O.F. glass company introduced its “Extrudalite” storefront sash systems, which featured extruded metal sash and sills in streamlined, wave-like patterns favored for Streamline Modern style storefronts.¹⁷² In contrast to flat metal or wood storefront sash, the Extrudalite system gave “the optical illusion of waviness.”¹⁷³ Pittco also shifted its focus to extruded, rather than rolled, metal in 1933, introducing two lines of extruded storefront systems: Pittco De Luxe and Pittco Premiere.

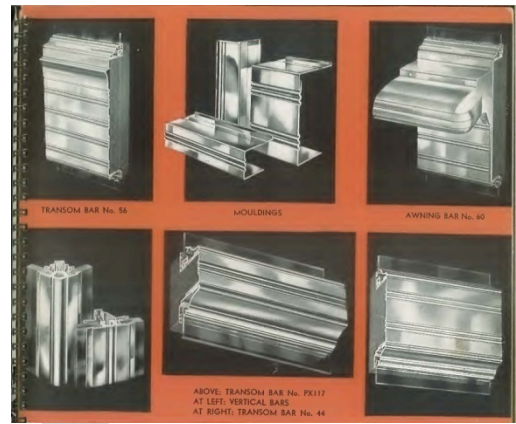
¹⁶⁹ Libbey-Owens-Ford patented the term “Visual Front” in 1945.

¹⁷⁰ It wasn't simply the height of the glass that was new—storefront windows in the nineteenth century were occasionally just as tall—it was the direct visual connection to the goods on display in the interior of the store that represented a radical new concept in retailing. This visual connection was provided by the removal of the enclosed storefront display area that characterized earlier decades of storefront design.

¹⁷¹ Ketchum, 166.

¹⁷² Libbey-Owens-Ford, “Glass,” booklet, 1930.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 24.



Left: Detail of "Extrudalite" storefront sash frames offered by the L.O.F. glass manufacturers. 1930. Right: Metal storefront sash and transom bars offered by Pittco, 1940. Sources: *Glass in Architecture*, 1930; *Glass and Storefront Products*, 1940, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company.

In the 1950s, as open front storefront systems gained popularity, large sheets of glass were often joined with division bars, some set in distinctive patterns. The size and appearance of division bars depended, in part, upon the weight of the glass panels. Division bars were used to join horizontal and vertical sheets of glass and could form a character-defining pattern.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, merchants highlighted specific, small products in inset or projecting window display boxes. Freestanding display cases were occasionally placed in center of expansive lobby vestibules. Extant examples are rare in San Francisco.



Left: Inset window display at 311 West Portal Avenue.

Right: The window display box at 59 West Portal Avenue projects over the high bulkhead, creating a floating effect.

Photos: SF Planning

2. BULKHEADS

Bulkhead heights often correlated with the type of business and the size of the items on display. Canted windows atop bulkheads were occasionally designed for Midcentury Modern storefronts. Display windows occasionally projected over the bulkhead to create an appearance of floating. In the 1950s–1960s, bulkheads were commonly clad in small, colorful 1" ceramic tiles set in a mosaic pattern. Storefront planters integrated into the bulkhead were a short-lived design fad beginning in the late 1940s. Planter boxes were integrated with the storefront wall, generally at the entryway. Often clad in the same material as the exterior walls—stacked roman brick, brick, field stone are common—the planters appear as an extension of the wall. These low planters were landscaped with shrubs or other small plantings. Small-scale medical or service buildings also incorporated planters in their entryways.



Left: In addition to low bulkhead planters, the Granada Cafe, built in 1949, on Mission Street in the Excelsior District featured many Midcentury Modern design elements including individual sheet metal letters, a recessed, asymmetrical entryway, overhangs, and brick veneer.

Below: 220 West Portal Avenue features similar Midcentury Modern design details including the brick bulkheads, planter box (lower right corner), display case and the aluminum window sashes and door.

Photo: SF Planning



3. VESTIBULE

This period of development witnessed a continued evolution of storefront vestibule shapes. In the 1940s, the design of vestibules shifted from shallow angles or zigzag patterns to deep, wide squared entrance lobbies flanked by squared display windows. Occasionally, a stand-alone glass display case was set in the center of the vestibule. In the 1950s, asymmetrical diagonal vestibules grew in popularity. These shallower, angled vestibules reflected shifts in retailing that prioritized maximizing selling space or window shopping space.¹⁷⁴ The shift to “open front” storefront systems likewise represented the first major shift away from the rhythm created by recessed vestibules along commercial corridors.



Left: Deeply recessed angled vestibule at 5521 Geary Boulevard. Center: Terrazzo paving on San Bruno Avenue. Right: A sample of terrazzo paving options. Source: “Mosaic & Terrazzo” (1931) and SF Planning

The trend toward fully transparent “open front” systems extended to the entrance area and door as well. In 1937, Pittco introduced the “Herculite Door,” the first frameless, all-glass door made of thick tempered glass.¹⁷⁵ Other manufacturers soon followed and fully transparent doors with minimal metal frames rapidly gained in popularity. Stores with heavy foot traffic and/or wide entry vestibules often featured tempered double doors flanked by sidelights. Smaller shops featured a single door or a door with two sidelights. Door frames were offered in Alumilite aluminum, brushed or polished bronze, and chrome-plate bronze.¹⁷⁶ Automatically opening doors—known as “invisible doormen”—were introduced in the early 1950s. Examples include the Pittcomatic mechanical door opener, with a hidden mechanism that opened and closed single and paired doors. By 1960, Kawneer offered an electric automatic opener with separate entry and exit doors separated by a projecting metal handrail. Jalousie windows replaced pivoted ventilators above the entrance door. Terrazzo remained a popular vestibule floor paving material throughout this period of development.



Left: Expansive vestibule lobby flanked by deep show window displays. Center: Terrazzo paving on San Bruno Avenue. Right: A sample of terrazzo paving options. Source: “Mosaic & Terrazzo” (1931) and SF Planning

¹⁷⁴ San Francisco Planning Department. Mission District Storefront Design identification chart, unpublished, 2008.

¹⁷⁵ Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, “Glass Manual,” 1946, Section D-3, 4.

¹⁷⁶ Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, “How to Give Your Store the Look that Sells,” 1951, 30.

4. TRANSOM WINDOWS

Along with the shift to Modern styles and materials, storefront design in the 1930s tended to eschew the use of transom windows. The popular “open front” storefront systems resulted in window openings that extended nearly from floor to ceiling, obviating the needs for separate transom windows. Likewise, the use of hollow glass block provided additional light while presenting a more modern appearance. New fluorescent lighting provided better interior light which lessened the importance of additional light provided by the transom.

Based on site visits, it appears that some historic transoms of buildings that were remodeled during this period often are intact, though are thoroughly hidden beneath sign boards, plywood coverings, or box canopies.



Left: 3522 Geary Avenue built in 1955.
Source: SF Planning

5. CORNICE, AWNING, CANOPY, VERTICAL ELEMENTS

Notably, classically influenced detailing at the cornices and roofline during this period of development were minimized in favor of sleeker, flush façades. One-story buildings were topped with simple, flush coping rather than projecting cornice parapets.

Fabric awnings have long been used along commercial corridors. However, the increasing popularity of Modern design led to a corresponding decrease in the use of traditional old-fashioned fabric awnings.¹⁷⁷ The modernization efforts of the 1930s to 1940s appeared favor sleeker designs unobscured by large awnings and canopies. When used, fabric awnings were typically retractable. By the 1950s, however, widely available aluminum awnings, such as Kawneer’s “Shadelite” brand of awnings, and flat-metal canopies were increasingly used by merchants. The flat metal canopies could extend across a single storefront or connect a row of storefronts. The canopies were particularly common in commercial areas with concentrations of Midcentury buildings, though many have been replaced.¹⁷⁸ Examples of aluminum canopies are rare in San Francisco; however, several blocks of Mission Street in the Excelsior District feature a concentration of corrugated metal canopies. Occasionally, awnings were shaped in exuberant geometric patterns, such as zigzags, for eye-catching, Googie-inspired storefronts.

¹⁷⁷ Chad Randl. *Preservation Brief #44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings*, National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, United States Department of Interior.

¹⁷⁸ In 1976, geographer Paul Groth found that 60% of commercial buildings within his Berkeley, California study area had aluminum awnings. By a 2004 re-survey of the same area, no awnings remained.

A unique design feature closely associated with Midcentury Modern design is the projecting vertical element. Beginning in the 1950s, vertical elements were incorporated in the design of larger commercial buildings and occasionally in small-scale medical or service buildings. Often rectangular or slightly canted, the vertical element provided a break in a building's horizontal massing and was often used as a base for signage. Smaller iterations of these elements formed angled fins.



Top: The Lick Market on 7th Avenue in the Sunset District featured "open-front" display windows, a projecting canopy and a projecting vertical element.

Bottom Left: Jim's Restaurant on Mission Street features a rare example of a zigzag canopy.

Right: Flat projecting canopies made of corrugated metal, though rare in other commercial districts, are common storefront features in the Excelsior District.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

6. PIERS AND FACING MATERIAL

A review of historic photographs indicates that storefront piers from this period were more prominent than in earlier eras, though many storefronts lacked visible piers altogether. The decorative columns and pilasters of earlier eras were largely abandoned in favor of flush surfaces that typically matched the cladding at the bulkhead. Cladding material included ceramic tile, porcelain enamel, Formica, ceramic veneer, stucco, Masonite, and structural glass products. Several important advances in glass production technologies introduced new glass elements into storefront design including the use of hollow glass blocks, structural glass cladding, and spandrel glass. New technologies allowed for translucent, opaque, colored, and textured glass, and glass tempered to new strengths.

Re-Cladding

The “re-skinning” of buildings rapidly gained in popularity in the 1940s. Updating a commercial building’s upper stories typically did not require structural upgrades. As recommended in *Shops & Stores* (1957), “It is only necessary to strip off any projecting “ornamental” features and then to apply metal framing members to which, in turn can be attached a new weather proof surface veneer.”¹⁷⁹ The historic ornamental features—typically the cornice, brackets, window hoods, projecting sills and lintels and applied decoration—were removed in order to provide a flush surface for hanging the building’s new skin. From this new metal framework were hung panels of marble, structural glass, metal, or porcelain enamel sheathing.

Billboard Fronts

By the 1950s, the upper story(s) of commercial buildings was increasingly designed or re-clad in solid materials to create a dramatic background for signage. Retailers and architects referred to this as a “billboard front.” Often, the existing upper story windows were fully covered by paneling such as squared porcelain enamel panels, terra cotta, aluminum, or a new wood product such as plywood. Porcelain enamel was particularly popular as an exterior wall cladding due to its low cost, minimal maintenance, variety of available forms, and range of permanent colors.¹⁸⁰ Occasionally, wooden dowels were split and applied as an exterior decorative wall finish, providing a dramatic backdrop for applied signage. Plywood sheets were finished in waterproof plastic laminates and applied to exterior walls as sign backgrounds.¹⁸¹



The Butler Brothers Department store (1952) at Stonestown featured a “billboard facade” with script lettering readable from an automobile.

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

¹⁷⁹ Ketchum, 157.

¹⁸⁰ Ketchum, 95.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

Sheathing Materials

In the 1950s, the ever-evolving Kawneer company offered seven colors of "Zourite," a lightweight porcelain enameled aluminum facing material.¹⁸² Aluminum was an inexpensive, versatile material in search of a new market. Used widely by the defense industry during World War II, aluminum manufacturers looked to architectural facing as a new market in the postwar era. Firms like Alcoa (the Aluminum Company of America) and Reynolds aggressively marketed lightweight industrial aluminum siding in flush, ribbed, and fluted textures as a commercial cladding material. Mirrors were also promoted by storefront manufactures as a facing material for bulkheads, spandrels, upper stories, and window and door trim, though it does not appear the use of mirrors as a facing material was widely adopted. Popular facing materials from this period of development are described below.



Zourite brochure published by the Kawneer Company.

Source: Collection of Jim Draeger, through the Association for Preservation Technology. Accessed through Archive.org's Building Technology Heritage Library.

Structural Glass Facing¹⁸³

Structural glass was successfully marketed in the 1930s as an exterior facing at the piers, bulkhead, and upper story(s). It was frequently incorporated in the design of Streamline Moderne storefronts during the modernization efforts of the mid 1930s and 1940s. Structural glass is a broad term for tinted opaque glass slabs used as a facing material. Its thickness ranged from ¼" to 1¼." Used originally in the early 1900s as a sanitary interior facing material for hospitals, corridors, kitchens, and bathrooms, structural glass was successfully marketed as an exterior facing material in the 1930s. A highly malleable material, structural glass could be colored, polished, bent, laminated, inlaid, and carved. By the late 1930s, structural glass was available in more than 30 colors and in striated or dendritic patterns. The two dominant brands were the Pittco's Carrara glass and L.O.F.'s Vitrolite glass. Popular exterior finishes were glossy, colorful, and mirror-like. Extremely popular throughout the 1940s, use of structural glass waned by the 1950s, edged out by facing materials such as porcelain enamel. Structural glass is no longer produced in the United States.

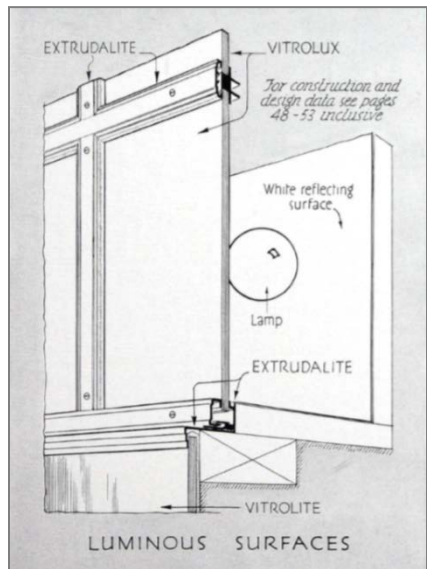
Advances in the lighting of storefront displays during this period included the design of luminous storefronts, which glowed with colorful light. This luminous effect was achieved by the use of colored structural glass lit by lamps and

¹⁸² Kawneer Company, "Aluminum Storefronts," promotional material, 1960.

¹⁸³ The discussion on structural glass draws from Carol J. Dyson, "Structural Glass," in *Twentieth Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, ed. Thomas C. Jester (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 201.

electrical equipment hidden behind the structural glass in hollow panels. Structural glass diffuses light; when backlit, the glass glowed and the location of the lighting source was impossible to discern.

FACING MATERIALS



Left: Suggested placement of hidden lamp behind translucent, light-diffusing Vitrolux structural glass facing material. Right: Typically polished to a smooth finish, Vitrolite, (and its primary competition, Carrara glass) was pitted, sand blasted, fluted, shaded, etched, chipped, and inlaid for decorative effects. Sources: Extrudalite & L.O.F. Glass Products (1938) and "How to Plan and Construct Modern Store Fronts" (1938).



Structural glass was prominently featured on the front of the Foster's Cafeteria at 20 Geary Boulevard (1964).

Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Glass Block¹⁸⁴

Square glass blocks were also popular during this period of development. Stacked like brick, glass blocks were used to create non-load-bearing partitions, curved walls, exterior windows, interior walls, and exterior walls. Most glass blocks were 6" squares. Introduced in the 1930s, the Modern, translucent appearance of hollow glass block made it a

¹⁸⁴ The discussion on glass block draws from Dietrich Neumann, Jerry G. Stockbridge and Bruce S. Kaskel, "Glass Block," in *Twentieth Century Building Material: History and Conservation.*, ed. Thomas C. Jester. (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 194-198.

preferred material for window walls as well as accents. L.O.F. introduced the first commonly used hollow glass block, Insulux, in 1935. Extremely popular, over 20 million blocks had been sold by 1940. According to a 1940 article in *Architectural Forum*, never had “a new building product caught on so quickly.”¹⁸⁵ In San Francisco, site visits reveal that glass block, including curved glass block, was commonly incorporated into the design of bars. By the 1950s, storefront manufacturers had largely shifted their focus from structural glass facing materials and glass block to aluminum, stucco, brick, decorative stone, terrazzo, and porcelain enamel.



Horizontal bands of glass blocks, speedlines, and a flush facing material characterize this 1939 Streamline Moderne building on Polk Street.

Photo: SF Planning

Decorative Plastic Laminates

The postwar construction boom saw exponential increases in the use of decorative plastic laminates.¹⁸⁶ These decorative plastics, which could be curved to produce a range of components, took many forms including lighting fixtures, wall panels, countertops, wainscoting, storefronts, illuminated sign displays and exterior veneers. In the 1930s-40s, laminates were commonly used in storefront modernization efforts and are often found in semi-public spaces such as lobbies, diners, and coffee shops.

Thin Stone Veneer

Thin stone veneer was used to present a “richly conservative and institutional flavor” to storefront facades, entrance floors, and stairways.¹⁸⁷ Marble veneer, in particular, was a popular finish for storefront walls, columns, floors, and soffits.¹⁸⁸ Non-load-bearing veneers of granite, marble, travertine, limestone or slate were applied to a building’s exterior as a decorative finish.¹⁸⁹ It was cut from stone blocks in thicknesses ranging from 7/8” to 2”.¹⁹⁰ Interior and exterior walls were clad in travertine veneer, giving a distinctive warm, pitted surface appearance. Beginning in the 1930s, thin stone veneer was incorporated into curtain walls and used as cladding at bulkheads and/or the upper facade. Refinements in manufacturing helped spur increased use of thin stone veneer in the 1950s. By then,

¹⁸⁵ “Glass Block,” *Architectural Forum* (May 1940): p 327, as quoted in Dietrich Neumann, Jerry G. Stockbridge and Bruce S. Kaskel, “Glass Block” in *Twentieth Century Building Material: History and Conservation.*, ed. Thomas C Jester. (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 197.

¹⁸⁶ Anthony J. T. Walker, Kimberly A. Konrad, and Nicole L. Stull, “Decorative Plastic Laminate,” in *Twentieth Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, ed. Thomas C. Jester (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 128.

¹⁸⁷ Ketchum, 86.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 86-88.

¹⁹⁰ Michael J. Scheffler and Edward A. Gerns, “Thin Stone Veneer,” in *Twentieth Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, ed. Thomas C. Jester (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 168.

standardized veneer panels generally measured 3'x3' or 4'x4'. In the late 1950s it was incorporated into precast concrete panels.

*Porcelain Enamel*¹⁹¹

Porcelain enamel sheets and panels were commonly used for storefronts, schools, offices, and institutional buildings. Porcelain enamel is created by fusing a thin coating of glass to metal (commonly steel, iron, aluminum, and stainless steel) at extremely high temperatures. Widely used in the interior of buildings since the 1920s for products such as appliances, kitchenware, sinks, and bathroom fixtures, the use of porcelain enamel as an exterior cladding material was first promoted by the Porcelain Enamel Institute in the 1930s. Available in a variety of finishes, the glossy versions (also called lustrous or glazed finishes) were the most popular in the 1930s. By the late 1940s, textured finishes had gained in popularity. Occasionally, the underlying metal panels were corrugated, crimped, or embossed. Matte and semi-matte finishes were extensively used in the 1960s. While available in shingles and tiles, porcelain enamel was most commonly produced as custom-sized architectural panels. Used to project an appearance of modernity, the increased demand for porcelain enamel panels as a facing material for storefronts and commercial buildings coincided with the popularity of the Moderne style. Although the sheets and panels could be attached with screws, by the 1930s, flanged veneer panels were the most common method of installation. By the early 1950s, spandrels for curtain wall systems incorporated porcelain enamel panels.



Left: 2621 Judah Street, Facing material at upper story appears to be porcelain enamel or a thin ceramic veneer.

Source: San Francisco Assessor's photograph collection, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (1951)

¹⁹¹ This section on porcelain enamel is summarized from: Thomas C. Jester, "Porcelain Enamel," in *Twentieth Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, ed. Thomas C. Jester (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 255.

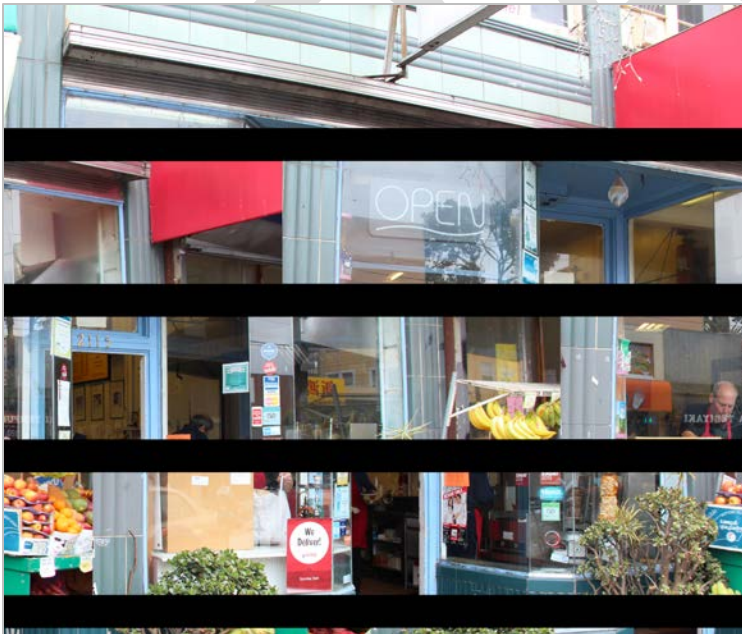


Left: 754 Clement Street features a porcelain enamel storefront which was most likely constructed when See's Candies moved into the building in 1962.

Source: SF Planning

*Ceramic Veneer*¹⁹²

Ceramic veneer is a thin, machine-pressed type of terra cotta (a fired clay product that can be molded into various shapes). Usually glazed, it was first produced in the 1930s as an earthquake-resistant exterior cladding. It was generally less than 1½" thick and came in standardized sizes, up to four-foot squares. Commonly promoted as a modernized storefront cladding into the 1960s, ceramic veneer could also be used in panels for curtain walls. Production of ceramic veneer was more mechanized, less labor intensive and less costly than production of terra cotta; after World War II, ceramic veneer largely replaced terra cotta in new construction.



Left: A ceramic veneer storefront at 2215 Irving Street constructed in 1936.

Source: SF Planning

¹⁹² This section on ceramic veneer is summarized from: Deborah Slaton and Harry J. Hunderman, "Ceramic Veneer," in *Twentieth Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, ed. Thomas C. Jester (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 156-161.

Fieldstone / Brick / Roman Brick

Commonly used as a storefront accent material in the 1950s, the rustic and naturalistic fieldstone often provided contrast to smooth surfaced facades. According to a guide on storefront design from 1957, the use of fieldstone in Modern buildings represented “a conscious attempt to add a softly romantic note to the conventional severity of contemporary architecture.”¹⁹³ Thin, elongated “roman bricks” were commonly used as accents or veneer on 1950s storefronts. In the 1960s, stack-bond brick, which produced sharp vertical lines, grew in popularity. Standard brick was occasionally used as a bulkhead material during storefront remodeling efforts of the 1950s and 1960s. Clusters of these storefronts are found on Mission Street in the Outer Mission. In contrast to the sleek flush façades of the 1930s, these brick bulkheads projected out from the windows, creating a subtle articulation at the storefront.

Terrazzo

By the mid-century, terrazzo was used on walls and creating elaborate patterns and store names in the entry vestibule.¹⁹⁴



Above and left: The storefront of this Mediterranean Revival flats building (1928) on Chestnut Street was remodeled and re-clad in a sparkling terrazzo aggregate in the 1950s.

Photo: SF Planning

¹⁹³ Ibid., 88.

¹⁹⁴ Dyson. I HPA page 16

7. SIGNAGE

Signage and the relationship of signs to buildings evolved dramatically during this period of development. Letters and signage were increasingly incorporated as an integral component of a commercial building's overall storefront design. Occasionally a building's upper stories were used as an advertising billboard, with the business name spelled out in giant letters readable from a moving automobile.

Illuminated signs were common, including the back-lit silhouette signs, the glass "enclosed lamp signs" precursors to the plastic box signs, and lettering made of exposed channel-set neon tubing. Neon was often affixed to projecting double-sided metal signs that had a staggered form resembling a squat handgun. Neon signs remained popular through the 1940s, though by the early 1950s back-lit plastic signs emerged as a new and increasingly popular sign type. It is estimated that by 1955, these new boxier plastic signs dominated the new sign business in San Francisco.¹⁹⁵ Restaurants, bars, donut shops and other businesses that were open at night were the most likely to use neon or animated signage.

Signage composed of individual letters made of stainless steel, sheet metal, porcelain enamel, wood, or aluminum were used extensively beginning in the mid-1930s. These letters generally utilized a Modern sans-serif typeface (or occasionally script), and were bolted or base-mounted to facades, canopies, and rooflines.¹⁹⁶

Projecting signs were affixed to the building's façade, often internally lit and covered with a printed translucent plastic or glass face. Occasionally, sign lettering was slightly raised, rather than simply painted on the plastic face. Plastic box signs were double-sided, thick enough to accommodate internal lights, and framed with metal. Projecting and blade signs also used neon tubing for lettering and graphics. Less common in San Francisco are stand-alone post signs, which were occasionally used by businesses targeting an automobile-driving customer base. Stand-alone signs were more common in suburban areas than in urban ones, though there are a few examples in San Francisco.



Left: Projecting blade sign with animated neon lettering, Chestnut Street (1951). Center: Projecting neon sign with arrow graphic lit with incandescent bulbs, 24th Street. Right: Stand-alone post sign for Whiz Burgers, South Van Ness Avenue. Photos: SF Planning

¹⁹⁵ Groth.

¹⁹⁶ Carol J. Dyson, "How to Work with Storefronts of the Mid-Twentieth Century: A Mid-Twentieth Century Storefront Components Guide" in *Illinois Historic Preservation Agency* (2007), <http://www.illinois-history.gov/ps/midcentury.htm>, 9 (accessed July 2010).



Far left: The font of this plastic sign on 24th Street reflects the neighborhood's Latino culture and may be a character-defining feature of the building.

Left: This illuminated plastic sign features an unusual textured face and subtly raised letters. Corner of Market and 14th Streets. Photo: SF Planning

DRAFT

Evaluative Framework:

Modernizing Neighborhood Storefronts (1930–1965)

SIGNIFICANCE

This period of development is characterized by radical shifts in retailing concepts and forms; focused efforts to remodel older storefronts; the influence of New Deal era programs to stimulate the construction industry; and the introduction of Modern designs and materials. In general, it was more common for the storefront of an older building to have been remodeled during this period rather than a new commercial building constructed. As a result of storefront modernization efforts, this era is more likely to produce buildings with notable differences between the design of storefront and upper story. In some cases, a commercial building's significance is directly related to the storefront space; in other cases, significance is derived from associations related to the building as a whole. Many buildings are likely to have two separate periods of significance. The variety of styles, materials, and property types constructed during this period reflect the tremendous economic and aesthetic shifts that took place. Neighborhood commercial buildings may derive significance from the following identified themes.¹⁹⁷

CRITERIA A/1 (EVENTS)

Commercial Modernization, 1930–1965

Neighborhood commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with significant events (Criteria A/1) such as the New Deal or “Shine for ‘39” storefront modernization campaigns; with the “Miracle Mile” shopping district; with early automobile-oriented businesses including drive-in businesses; and with the impact of post-Depression banking practices on neighborhood commercial bank design. The period from 1935 to 1960 represents a particularly dynamic era of storefront evolution as merchants availed themselves of an array of new materials, aesthetics, and retailing strategies to tap into a post-Depression and post-war period of consumer spending.

Significant Businesses, 1930–1965

Commercial buildings closely associated with an important business, type of business establishment, or businesses practice (such as storefront branding) may qualify as significant under Criteria A/1. An example of an important business that would qualify under these criteria is the country's first Gap clothing store located on Ocean Avenue. Examples of early or influential storefront branding may include the Sherry's liquor stores or the barrel vaulted Safeway grocery stores designed by Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons.

Culturally Significant Businesses

Commercial buildings closely associated with specific events or historic trends that have influenced cultural or ethnic communities may qualify as significant under Criteria A/1. An example of this association is the building that housed the innovative jazz club Jimbo's Bop City and Marcus Books, which was a haven for Black intellectualism and empowerment. Mnasidika, an early Haight store that catered to hippie counter-culture likewise also qualifies as significant (TBD, pre-1966?). Additional research may indicate that the proliferation of African American storefront churches in the 1950s and 1960s may also qualify under this criteria. Other examples could include a community bodega in the Mission District that provided masa and handmade tortillas to the new immigrants to that emerging Latino neighborhood.

¹⁹⁷ Other themes may be identified on a case-by-case basis.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: During this period of development, it is more likely for buildings to qualify as significant under Criteria A/1 as individual properties than as contributors to a historic district. Certain discontinuous property types, such as storefront churches, may potentially qualify for listing as a National Register Multiple Property Submission. Some properties, such as those significant for association with the storefront modernization programs, will likely also qualify under Criteria C/3 (architecture).

CRITERIA B/2 (PEOPLE)

Significant Persons, 1930–1965

Commercial buildings closely associated with a significant person, such as an important merchant who contributed to retailing, neighborhood development, or the service industry, may qualify as significant under Criteria B/2. Examples include Harvey Milk’s Camera Shop, which served as a hub for Harvey Milk’s political activities; Sam Jordan’s Bar, for its association with Sam Jordan, an early African American business owner in the Bayview and first African American candidate for mayor; and the City Lights Bookstore, for its association with Beat poets Alan Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: During this period of development, it is more likely for buildings to qualify as significant under Criteria B/2 as individual properties rather than contribute to a historic district.

CRITERIA C/3 (ARCHITECTURE)

Neighborhood Commercial Architectural Expression, 1930–1965

Neighborhood commercial buildings that display exceptional architectural design, are the work of a master architect, or are an excellent example of a type may qualify as significant under Criteria C/3. Commercial buildings associated with this theme may be significant for their association with significant changes in retailing concepts such as the “Visual Front” storefront design and/or the inventive incorporation of Modern materials and finishes. Architectural significance may also be derived from the presence of rare stylistic elements such as curved glass windows, structural glass cladding, deeply recessed and/or zigzag vestibules, the complexity of design, and/or Art Deco-inspired stylistic elements. Architectural significance may be expressed at the storefront and/or at the building’s upper level(s).

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: It is more likely for an individual neighborhood commercial building to be eligible for listing under Criteria C/3 than under Criteria A/1 for B/2. Except in a few discrete developments developed largely in the 1940s to 1950s—California Street, Parkmerced, West Portal and Stonestown, for example—it is likely that eligible historic districts will contain a wide range of styles and property types. Certain historic districts may overlap periods of development. Certain discontinuous property types, Art Deco commercial buildings for example may potentially qualify for listing as a National Register Multiple Property Submission.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

Single-Story Commercial

Commonly found along streetcar suburb commercial corridors, this property type consists of a single-story commercial use. It may contain one or more storefronts within a single property.

Right: 2484 Mission Street (remodeled c. 1960).



Corner Store

By 1930, construction of this property type had waned. Corner store buildings during this era typically did not feature window bays. Scattered examples are found throughout the City, though most examples are found in outlying neighborhoods.

Right: 1750-1760 Polk Street (1939).



Multi-Story Commercial

Relatively uncommon in neighborhood commercial districts, multi-story commercial buildings feature commercial uses at both the ground story storefront and the upper stories.

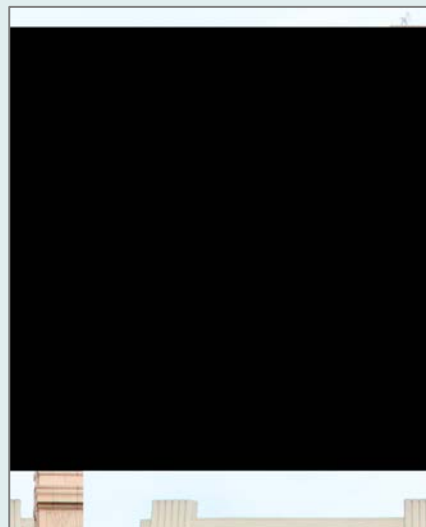
Right: 2080 Chestnut Street (1933).



Mixed-Use Commercial

Common along neighborhood commercial corridors, this property type features a storefront at the ground story and offices, residential, or other uses at the upper stories. Typically two- to four-stories in height.

Right: 3293 Mission Street (constructed c. 1900, remodeled c. 1935).



Integrity

To qualify for listing in local, state, or national registers, a commercial property associated with a significant theme must also retain sufficient integrity with which to convey its significance. The evaluation of commercial buildings is particularly challenging given the nature of retailing, with its emphasis on frequent storefront modernizations. Nonetheless, an integrity evaluation *must* include evaluation of the building as a whole, rather than as separate components of storefront and upper story(s). Challenges are myriad. Commercial buildings often featured multiple storefronts, resulting in additional issues for evaluation when one storefront retains high physical integrity and others display a range of alterations. At times, the storefront level retains exceptional physical integrity while the upper story(s) has been substantially altered. Adding to the complexity, some storefront alterations have gained significance in their own right, resulting in differing periods of significance and themes associated with a single building. The following integrity considerations and examples provide some guidance to the often case-by-case evaluation of neighborhood commercial buildings and historic districts.

Intact original storefronts from the 1930 to 1965 period of development are relatively common and many of these storefronts include alterations to buildings constructed prior to 1906. However, intact storefronts from the 1930s to 1940s are fairly rare. Given the relative scarcity of extant commercial property type from these decades, additional discretion is recommended for evaluating alterations. In the rare instance that a storefront from this period retains integrity, but the upper stories have been altered, the building as a whole may still retain sufficient integrity to convey significance to a specific theme.

The aspects of integrity most important for Criteria A/1 are determined by the association. Likewise, the retention of essential features in order to convey significance is determined by the identified significance and period of significance. Depending upon the association, certain aspects of integrity, such as feeling, location, setting, or association, may have a higher importance than the physical aspects of integrity, material, design and workmanship.

Properties associated with an important event or person should retain sufficient integrity such that “a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists today.”¹⁹⁸ In general, a lower threshold of integrity is appropriate for properties significant under Criteria A/1 or B/2, provided there is sufficient historic fabric to convey

¹⁹⁸ National Park Service, Bulletin No. 15.

the association with a significant event, trend, or person. Buildings that are significant solely for architecture, Criteria C/3, must retain higher integrity of materials, design, and workmanship.

In general, in order to qualify for individual listing, a commercial building with significance derived specifically from the storefront should express integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Such storefronts should retain a substantial portion of the historic storefront features, including vestibule shape, bulkhead, and transom (if any). A storefront that has been altered in a compatible manner, may, for example, retain the shape of the recessed vestibule, yet feature contemporary bulkhead cladding and new window system.

Within historic districts, the threshold of integrity for contributing buildings is lower and takes into account the expected level of change inherent in commercial districts, particularly at the storefront.

Examples of Significance and Integrity Evaluations



Mixed-Use

Built c. 1880s, storefront altered 1913 and 1938

This Victorian era commercial building at 3293 Mission Street was remodeled in 1913 (its projecting bay was removed and storefront altered) and again in 1938 when the new Streamline Moderne storefront system was installed and the upper story designed to match. The 1938 remodel featured smooth stucco cladding, speed lines, Deco-inspired elements, a Vitrolite-clad bulkhead, oval glass elements, and new display window and residential entrance. The remodel converted the use from a store to a real estate office. Remodeling was completed by the Beal Store Equipment Co. Although the building no longer retains integrity relative to its Victorian era construction date, it is a good example of New Deal era modernization programs of the 1930s and retains sufficient physical integrity to convey significance under Criteria A/1 (events) and Criteria C/3 (architecture).



Mixed-Use

Built c.1890s, storefront added in 1950

This Queen Anne building located on the former "Mansion Row" of Howard Street/South Van Ness Avenue was altered in 1950 to incorporate a commercial structure in its front and side yards. The one-story commercial building features elements of Midcentury Modern design, but is not a fully expressed example of the style and would not be considered architecturally significant. The historic residential portion of the building was re-clad in asbestos shingle siding and features replacement aluminum slider windows. The building does not retain sufficient integrity to convey its association with the Mansion Row era due to the insertion of the store and upper story alterations and hence is not individually eligible under Criteria 1/A or 3/C.

Character-Defining Features

When present, character-defining features of neighborhood commercial buildings from the 1930 to 1965 period of development may include design elements associated with the storefront and/or upper stories. Character-defining features may be associated with the original building and/or with storefront alterations that have gained significance in their own right. Additional character-defining may be identified on a case-by-case basis when evaluating individual buildings and historic districts.

Character-defining features specific to the storefront may include, but are not limited to:

- Recessed vestibule (often angled, v-shaped or squared)
- Bulkheads that extend into the vestibule area
- Raised window display area (typically the height of the bulkhead), occasionally canted over the bulkhead
- Open front storefronts feature glass windows that extend nearly to grade and are set on low curbs
- Fixed display windows (occasionally rounded, though more often beveled, butt jointed, or framed with extruded aluminum sash)
- Transom windows are often wood framed, though unlike earlier periods, the presence of storefront transoms are not universal
- Glazed wood-framed entry door topped with a wood-framed operable transom
- Fully glazed aluminum or stainless steel doors, often with jalousie transom
- Design elements and ornamentation associated with a particular style
- Signage
- Materials and finishes include:
 - Square glazed tiles or sculpted terra cotta tiles at the bulkhead
 - Carrara glass cladding, particularly at the bulkhead
 - Wood paneled soffit
 - Tile or terrazzo paving at the vestibule
 - Glass block, occasionally curved

Character defining features at the cornice and/or upper stories may include, but are not limited to:

- Parapet, roof form, and cornice details such as speedlines
- Window openings and sash material (typically wood or by the 1950s, aluminum)
- Entrances to the upper stories
- Wood or stucco cladding at exterior elevations
- Metal screens or sheaths
- Design elements and ornamentation associated with a particular style

Additional character defining features may include, but are not limited to:

- Building setback, if any (typically buildings were not set back from the sidewalk)
- Height, scale, and massing
- Terrazzo paving that extends into the sidewalk right of way

Chapter 9

1970s-2000s Storefront Trends

Since the late 1960s storefront trends across the nation have continued to evolve. The following is a brief overview of notable trends, materials, and styles.

1970s

- The mansard roof form, which evokes iconic Parisian roof forms and the Second Empire style of the 1890s, found new popularity in storefront design.
- A rustic, masculine image was projected through the use or combination of “logs, rough-sawn and dark-stained wood, thick cedar shakes, or field stone,” on storefront facades, particularly for bars and restaurants.¹⁹⁹
- The backlash against the perceived blight and garishness of commercial signs, particularly along retail corridors continues at a national level.
- Expanding fast food chains bring their distinctive designs for stand-alone restaurants including Taco Bell’s Mission Revival style architecture and der Wienerschnitzel’s iconic A-frame form. The dramatic cantilevered roof forms of Foothill College, designed in 1961 by the renowned firms of Ernest Kump and Masten & Hurd, was later re-interpreted in the form of Pizza Hut restaurants.



1980s

- Beginning in 1980 and continuing to the present, most new and remodeled stores were installed with thick, squared window frames of black or bronze-colored anodized aluminum.²⁰⁰ Remodeling efforts often replaced the historic recessed vestibule space with a flush façade.
- The Planning Department established Neighborhood Commercial Districts in the Planning Code (1987).

1990s

- The 1990s witnessed a trend toward a historic interpretation of wood-paneled storefronts from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Merchants removed the brick, aluminum frames, and Masonite panels of midcentury design and replaced these with wood windows, canvas awnings with free floating valances, and paneled wood spandrels. As geographer Paul Groth notes, this strategy was especially embraced by coffee shops, bagel stores, and high-end restaurants.²⁰¹ The practice has engendered some controversy, particularly as

¹⁹⁹ Groth.

²⁰⁰ Groth.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

expressed on Main Street projects, due to the potential for false history and the removal of potentially significant midcentury architectural expression.²⁰²

- Most new and remodeled storefronts were installed with thick, squared window frames of black or bronze-colored anodized aluminum.²⁰³
- In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility requirements mandate standards for access to commercial establishments by people with disabilities. Examples of the types of requirements include minimum widths for vestibules and entry doors, slope requirements, automatic door openers, an alternate to stairs entrances, hand-rails in certain instances, and the opening configuration of doors.
- New building code requirements mandate that neon signs be enclosed in glass or plastic, or be located on the store's interior.²⁰⁴

2000s

- Some establishments, most notably, cafes, restaurants, and boutiques, have developed a woodsy, artsy aesthetic by applying salvaged wood to the storefront's walls and bulkheads. The reclaimed wood often features remnants of paint and/or is stained a light blond. Store interiors, likewise, are occasionally clad in salvaged wood.
- Most new and remodeled storefronts were installed with thick, squared window frames of black or bronze-colored anodized aluminum.²⁰⁵
- Cafes and restaurants are increasingly designed as open air, with accordion style windows or doors.
- Brick and mortar businesses face increased competition from internet sales.

²⁰² Herb Stovel. "Scrape and Anti-Scrape: False Idols on Main Street," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology*, Association for Preservation Technology International, Volume 17, Number 3/4, 51-55.

²⁰³ Groth.

²⁰⁴ Need to confirm year and exact code requirements.

²⁰⁵ Groth.

Chapter 9

Preservation Goals and Recommendations

A. FURTHER RESEARCH AND FIELD WORK

The following is a set of recommendations for future activities related to the documentation, evaluation, and protection of significant neighborhood commercial buildings and storefronts.

1. Conduct an evaluative survey of neighborhood commercial corridors. Such a survey would provide greater certainty to prospective commercial tenants and property owners, and assist in the identification of character-defining features to protect during any required tenant improvements or seismic or accessibility upgrades.
 - For example, the Polk Street NCD has a number of architecturally significant properties with LGBTQ associations, which was not researched as part of this study. Or, upon further study, Polk Street could also be determined to be an extension of the Upper Tenderloin National Register District.
2. Conduct a historic resource survey to further refine the boundaries of the clusters.
3. Add exceptionally designed and/or rare neighborhood commercial buildings identified during the development of this context statement to the Historic Preservation Commission's Landmark Designation Work Program. Prioritize the following types of buildings for landmark designation:
 - Rare, intact examples of neighborhood commercial buildings constructed prior to the 1906 disaster, such as 1035 Guerrero Street, 2700 Sutter Street, and 1401 Lyon Street.
 - Rare, intact examples of significant neighborhood commercial buildings that display unusual storefront elements such as deeply recessed and/or zigzag vestibules, curved display windows, structural glass cladding, or exuberant terra cotta cladding. Examples of such buildings include 2080 Chestnut Street and 2756 Mission Street.
 - Exceptional examples of neighborhood commercial buildings and/or storefronts designed in the Streamline Moderne, Art Deco, or Midcentury Modern style. Examples of such buildings include 3231-3239 Balboa Avenue and clusters of Art Deco-inspired buildings located on Chestnut Street in the Marina District.
4. Develop a website to provide property owners and commercial tenants with PDFs of the Storefront context statement and Design Guidelines, links to seismic and accessibility requirements, and links to resources focused on the repair and retention of historic features and cladding materials.
5. Develop cultural and social historic contexts, as they relate to storefronts.
 - For example, a historic context statement focused on the history and significance of African American storefront churches from the 1950s to 1970s.
 - For example, a historic context statement focused on early automobiling, gas stations, garages, travel, and lodging across the city examining traffic routes, motels/hotels and "mile-houses" from the 1910s through the 1960s. Or, garages, livery stables, car barns, and other transportation related structures as they relate to the city's infrastructure and development.

- For example, a historic context statement focused on cultural heritage across the city. The Geary Boulevard NCD retains a strong Russian/Russian American presence and the Excelsior-Outer Mission NCD retains a strong Italian American presence, specifically a post-World War II-era Italian-American presence.
 - For example, further refining the boundaries of a Stick/Eastlake style commercial and residential district that was identified as a California Register-eligible district as part of the survey of the Divisadero Street NC-2. This area has an unusually high concentration of Stick/Eastlake style architecture dating from the 1870s through 1900, but the district may include older properties such as San Francisco Landmark No. 32, a Gothic Revival residence dating from 1850.
6. Conduct a historic resource survey to further examine potential thematic historic districts across the city.
- For example, a discontinuous district of each of the following property types: garages, banks, theaters, grocery stores and/or supermarkets, or the buildings of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company.
 - For example, a discontinuous district of the best examples of commercial architecture of various styles across the city, a “Neighborhood Icons” historic district.

B. TOOLS TO PRESERVE SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

There are a number of existing tools that can help promote the preservation of significant buildings in San Francisco. The following list briefly outlines tools that are primarily concerned with preserving extant properties. The San Francisco Planning Department, the State of California, and the federal government offer some preservation incentives to assist property owners with the costs of owning and maintaining registered historic properties.

- a. **Encourage the Use of the Mills Act for designated historic resources.** Enacted by the State of California in 1976 and adopted by the City of San Francisco in 1996, the Mills Act allows the City to enter into a contract with owners of privately-owned historic properties to ensure the rehabilitation, restoration, preservation and long-term maintenance of the property. In exchange, the property owner receives a reduction in property taxes for the life of the contract.
- b. **Encourage the use of the California Historic Building Code (CHBC).** Historic buildings may not meet the standards of modern building codes, including the Uniform Building Code, City Building Code, Fire Code and Plumbing Code. However, the CHBC can often provide creative solutions to achieve health and safety requirements in historic buildings. The measures permitted by the CHBC are more sensitive to the historic conditions of a building than standard building codes. Building owners may also enjoy substantial cost savings when rehabilitating a historic structure using the CHBC. The Department of Building Inspection applies the CHBC, including determining which buildings are eligible.
- c. **Encourage the use of the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Incentives.** The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program is one of the nation’s most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs. There are two levels of tax incentives. A 20 percent Rehabilitation Tax Credit is available for properties rehabilitated for commercial, industrial, agricultural or rental residential purposes, but is not available for properties used as private residences. A 10 percent Rehabilitation Tax Credit is available for the

rehabilitation of non-historic buildings placed in service before 1936. The building must be rehabilitated for non-residential use.

- d. Encourage façade easements for designated historic resources.** A façade easement ensures the preservation of a property's significant exterior features while allowing the owner to continue to occupy and use the property. The easement is created by deed and is typically donated or sold to a public or private preservation organization. Either the City or a qualified preservation group, such as San Francisco Architectural Heritage, can hold title to the easement. It allows the property owner a one-time tax deduction and the easement holder has the right to review any changes to features covered by the easement.
- e. Landmark Designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code.** As previously mentioned, Article 10 landmarks encompass individual buildings and districts considered historically, architecturally or socially significant. Buildings designated under Article 10 receive specialized review and protection by the City. As a benefit, property owners are eligible for various preservation incentives, such as the Mills Act and use of the California Historic Building Code.

Each of the tools described above can be used to rehabilitate and preserve important buildings and structures. Many preservation tools, however, require that buildings meet rigorous criteria. This can be a challenge for culturally significant properties which may not rise to the level of significance necessary for local, state or national designation.

C. TOOLS TO PRESERVE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTER

The following strategies include tools to address the preservation of cultural and social heritage assets, which are often intangible elements that cannot be managed through current preservation practices. Some tools would be implemented by City agencies, such as the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) and the Planning Department. They also include tools that would require implementation and oversight by the community itself.

1. San Francisco Legacy Business Registry and Preservation Fund

The Legacy Business Registry is open to businesses and nonprofits that are 30 years or older, have been nominated by a member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor, and in a hearing before the Small Business Commission, prove that they have made a significant impact on the history or culture of their neighborhood. Only 300 businesses can be nominated annually and all applicants must agree to maintain the historic name and craft of their businesses. The legislation is directly inspired by, and builds upon, Heritage's Legacy Bars & Restaurants initiative launched in 2013.

Proposition J was approved by voters in the fall 2015 which created the Legacy Business Preservation Fund. The program allows Legacy Businesses on the registry to be eligible for an annual grant of \$500 per employee, as well as offers an annual \$4.50 per square foot grant to property owners who extend 10 year leases to Legacy Business tenants. Annual grants will be capped at \$50,000 per Legacy Business and \$22,500 for building owners. Annual costs for the fund are projected at \$3 million for the first year with an estimated annual new appropriation to the Legacy Businesses Fund of \$3 million per additional year. The program is administered through the San Francisco Office of Small Business and the San Francisco Planning Department.

Each of these properties requires further research to determine whether they qualify for historic registration. Those properties deemed eligible for local landmark status can be proposed for inclusion on the Historic Preservation Commission's Landmark Designation Work Program. Individual citizens or community organizations can also submit landmark nominations to the Planning Department via the Department's Application for Historic Landmark Designation. Grants and other funding mechanisms should be explored to pursue nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. It should be noted that nominations for religious properties may require the permission of the congregation

2. Implement Invest in Neighborhoods

Invest in Neighborhoods is a new program of OEWD. The purpose of Invest in Neighborhood is to foster job creation and economic development in neighborhood commercial districts through the strategic deployment of existing City programs. These programs offer an array of tools focused on neighborhood revitalization and business development that could assist with a range of benefits, including:

- **Design and development assistance** could be targeted to specific businesses and buildings (e.g., compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act) and/or be provided to the neighborhood in general.
- **Loans/grants/financial assistance** could be targeted to businesses, organizations, and institutions, including the SF Shines: Façade and Tenant Improvement Grant. Auntie April's on the Third Street corridor in the Bayview recently took advantage of this grant.
- **Marketing services, business recruitment and programming** could all be targeted to commercial corridors and cultural events. They can also be used to market neighborhoods to other San Franciscans.
- **Technical assistance** can help businesses, organizations and promoters of cultural events navigate the City's permit system.
- **Organizational support** could be targeted to specific organizations, including those that are involved with traditional arts, crafts and practices.
- **Creating a single point of contact** within City government to help support all cultural preservation and enhancement efforts.

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