The Secretary of the Interior Standards (SOIS), administered by the National Park Service under the Department of the Interior when assessing the treatment of individual historic structures and structures within national historic districts, were developed decades ago.

Currently, the majority of preservation programs across the country, including San Francisco, rely on these federal Standards as a foundation for project review at the local level. Most of these programs supplement the SOIS with locally established guidelines.

While the SOIS have generally served San Francisco satisfactorily, their use as the primary approval criteria has two primary deficiencies:

1. They are broad, and thus subject to varying levels of interpretation;
2. They don’t provide direction specific to San Francisco’s unique urban and historic environment.

The historic design guidelines will be more specific in their nature to provide clear direction on rehabilitation practices on materials unique to San Francisco.

The guidelines will provide direction on a wide variety of projects including vertical additions as seen above.

The historic design guidelines will provide guidance to new construction within historic districts of San Francisco.
**Context and Character**
Create sustainable and exceptional designs that strongly complement character-defining features and the surrounding historic context.

**Historic Materials**
Retain character-defining features and localize work to only those areas in need of attention.

**Public Realm**
Design in a manner that has a positive effect on the public realm and retains character-defining features.

**Life Safety and Accessibility**
Provide safe and accessible environments without negatively affecting character-defining features for future enjoyment by all.

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**Project Areas Include:**
- Site Design
- Additions & Infill Construction
- Interior Features
- Exterior Materials
- Roof Features
- Windows & Doors
- Entry Stairs, Porches, etc.

- Garages
- Storefronts
- Signs & Awnings
- Landscape

- Seismic Retrofit
- Accessibility

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**Feedback**

WHAT PROJECT TYPES OR CONTENT ARE WE MISSING?

*please write them here or fill in under the project areas above*
CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

Create sustainable and exceptional designs that strongly complement character-defining features and the surrounding historic context.

Understand and take inventory of characteristics within a neighborhood or district that make it unique. Consider the larger site, adjacent buildings, public plazas and streets that neighbors make their own.

New construction should maintain existing character by relating to the prevailing height, mass, proportions, rhythm and composition of existing significant and contributory buildings.

Contemporary materials on new construction should relate to the existing context of the neighborhood.

Solar panels should match the slope of the roof.

Additions should be located on a secondary facade and be respectful of neighboring openings and massing.

New construction may use a contemporary material but should then relate strongly in massing and fenestration pattern.

Provide setbacks from public right-of-way to avoid obscuring character-defining features and to allow additions to appear secondary to the historic building.

Where the historic character of a district is mixed, consider the features that unify buildings, including the opening sizes and material palette.

NOT RECOMMENDED

Create sustainable and exceptional designs that strongly complement character-defining features and the surrounding historic context.

FEEDBACK

suggest photos, projects, or captions here!

San Francisco Planning
PUBLIC REALM

Design in a manner that has a positive effect on the public realm and retains character-defining features.

Historic millwork seen at the entry door, garage surround, and windows has been retained with the new garage door designed to fit into existing framing.

Many unused garages may accommodate an Accessory Dwelling Unit. Historic garage openings should retain the opening size, materials, and transom windows where applicable.

The pedestrian experience can be improved by installing contemporary planters and landscaping that respects the historic features of the garage and entry.

Front yard setbacks can not only enliven the public realm but also represent the historic pattern of development.

Garages should be installed without altering or dramatically changing the proportion of the building or the historic characteristics of a building, including the bay window or belt course. In some cases the building may be lifted (top left) to accommodate a new garage. Appropriate garage door materials include solid wood panels with some openings for glazing.

New or altered garage doors should feature simple detailing and avoid a deeply recessed or projecting design. Entry doors should be merged with the garage rather than installed at a separate opening in order to create a single, unified opening on the building face.
Many of San Francisco’s buildings have very detailed facades. Repair and match historic dimensions and profiles of all millwork.

Entry sequences are often a defining character of both an individual building and a consistent streetscape - these features, when found on the primary facade, should be maintained in materials, orientation and dimension.

The Rousseau tract homes include a variety of character-defining features such as arched openings, turrets, ornamental pilasters, tile and shingle roofs, and consistent front yard setbacks.

Terrazzo front entry stairs, while not original, are a later alteration found widely throughout the city in residential neighborhoods – these features can often take on significance of their own.

Brick comes in a variety of patterns and pigments, such as this Flemish bond brickwork. When replacing, make sure to match the pigment in the field before choosing your materials.

This building possesses a variety of character-defining features, both at the ground level storefront and transom as well the rounded bay window and curved windows above. All of these should be retained if the building were to be altered.

Historic windows can feature character-defining details, treatments, and configurations that are difficult or costly to reproduce. Unless deteriorated beyond repair, historic windows should always be preserved and repaired as needed.
Provide safe and accessible environments without negatively affecting character-defining features for future enjoyment by all.

Care should be taken to protect and retain historic features when undertaking seismic retrofitting and/or installation of ground floor accessory dwelling units.

When adjusting entryways for accessibility, the historic vestibule condition should be retained with historic tile reincorporated as is feasible.

Avoid visible trusses as well as those located at the exterior of the storefront. Installing seismic reinforcements at the interior maintains transparency and the historic integrity of the property.

Where possible, visibility of seismic reinforcements like braces and trusses should be avoided.

Wireless push buttons can be mounted onto a new panel to avoid damage to historic materials.

Dual-switch bollard posts (high-low) are an ADA-compliant alternative to push buttons.

Although the landing may need to be adjusted to accommodate an accessible entry, historic tile at both the landing and bulkhead (bottom-most component of the storefront) should be preserved. Patterned tile work should be reinstalled when leveling a landing.
San Francisco’s neighborhoods are unique. Help us with photo examples and language to describe specific characteristics in the built environment.

**Mission Street** is characterized by active ground floor commercial uses with an abundance of signage and color.

**Jackson Square** is composed of some of the oldest buildings in the city that are commonly constructed of brick in Georgian and revivalist designs.

**The residential streets of Liberty-Hill** are often lined with largely intact, uniform Victorian homes.

**A diverse mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses make up certain areas,** reflecting the ways in which that region has changed and developed over time.

**Uniform setbacks, front stairs, and landscaping can provide a rich and welcoming pedestrian experience.**

**Many of San Francisco’s neighborhoods are composed of homes consistent in scale, massing, and architectural character.**

**Much of the historic downtown consists of commercial masonry buildings in a variety of scales and styles.**

**Buildings throughout the city have been constructed to respond to San Francisco’s unique topography with elements such as stepped heights.**

**NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIC CHARACTER**

**FEEDBACK**

tell us about your neighborhood here with places, characteristics, or architectural elements you cherish.