

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERTY HILL

The Liberty-Hill Landmark District is a significant architectural representation of nineteenth century middle class housing and is one of the earliest residential “suburbs” in San Francisco. This district developed along San Francisco’s oldest road, Valencia Street, which roughly aligns to the old “San Jose Mission Road” that connected Mission Dolores (founded in 1776) to Mission San Jose. After the Gold Rush of 1849, San Francisco grew rapidly as evidenced by the construction of the City’s first street railroad, which began service on Valencia Street in 1860. In 1864, local citizens pooled their money to form the San Francisco Homestead Union, which allowed them to buy and subdivide a large tract of land, including the future Liberty-Hill Landmark District. Some excess lands were sold to developers. The Real Estate Associates (TREA), the largest builder of speculative housing in San Francisco in the 1870s, developed Lexington and San Carlos Streets, as well as a number of other streets in the district. A mostly Victorian-era district, architectural styles include Italianate, Stick, and Queen Anne. Houses range in size from the small workingman’s rowhouses on Lexington and San Carlos Streets, which feature uniform facades and setbacks, to the architect-designed houses on Liberty and Fair Oaks Streets, designed by well-known Bay Area architects, including Albert Pissis and the Newsom Brothers.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

The preservation of significant historic and cultural properties is a vital component of planning and managing the built and natural environment in San Francisco. Landmarks and landmark districts are unique and irreplaceable assets to the City and its neighborhoods. Landmark districts are regulated by Article 10 of the Planning Code. Since 1967 San Francisco’s Historic Preservation Program has identified and protected a wide range of the City’s rich history as depicted in its buildings, districts, places, structures, or objects.

As staff to the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Department’s preservation planners work with property owners, City departments, and the general public to promote the preservation of these resources through incentives, long-range preservation planning efforts, public outreach, and technical assistance.



The locator map above shows the Landmark Districts found throughout the City of San Francisco.

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This guide highlights a small selection of the area’s historical buildings. To learn more about landmark districts and historical buildings, visit sfplanning.org.

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HISTORIC WALKING TOUR GUIDE

LIBERTY-HILL LANDMARK DISTRICT

10 BLOCKS 298 PARCELS DESIGNATED IN 1985

The Liberty Hill historic district features Victorian-era residences designed primarily in the Italianate, Stick, and Queen Anne styles. It contains a mix of uniform developer-built tracts for the working class and larger, custom-designed residences for middle-income home buyers. It includes mixed-use buildings, primarily along Valencia Street, that feature ground-level retail spaces.

1 20th Street

The 1906 earthquake resulted in extensive fires across the City. In an attempt to control the spread of the fire, houses on the north side of 20th Street were demolished. The fires were extinguished on 20th Street between Valencia and Dolores Streets. The blocks remain as a physical reminder of the disaster. The south side depicts a variety of residential properties designed prior to 1906 that were spared from destruction, while the north side represents the styles that became popular during reconstruction efforts.



6 3333-3345 21st Street
These three houses were designed between 1885 and 1890 in the Stick style. They feature elaborate milled ornament, such as spindles, buttons, columns.



7 MIXED-USE BUILDINGS
956-988 Valencia Street
From the 1860s to 1950s, a rail line ran on Valencia Street connecting the Mission to downtown. These mixed-use ground floor commercial storefronts with apartments above were built between 1875 and 1912 in the Italianate, Edwardian, and Tudor styles.



2 3755 20th Street
This Italianate house, designed by architect Charles Shaner, was built in 1889. A beautiful high style example, it features characteristic details such as a heavy bracketed cornice, narrow framed arched windows and a single-story entry portico.



4 3765 20th St.
This small flat front Italianate, with Greek Revival characteristics was built in 1876. It features a gabled roof with an Italianate cornice and Classical paneling designs. The inset front entry is flanked by fluted Corinthian columns and a classical pediment.



8 929-945 Valencia Street
This collection of four Italianate residences was built in 1876, by TREA as part of a much larger row of similar houses. Unified by common Italianate characteristics, each one has unique decorative elements including different column capitals, window hoods, and paneling designs.



3 3733-35 20th St.
This Stick style residence, built in 1880, features a gabled bay, board and batten detailing and decorative truss within the gable. It is a two-story version of its neighbor to the east. Before electricity was common, homeowners relied on the large windows for natural light and cross ventilation.



5 900 Guerrero Street
This Queen Anne mansion was constructed in 1895 for John Daly, an established dairy farmer. Daly owned 250 acres of land just outside the county line, but moved to San Francisco for better schools for his children. His former farm land is now known as Daly City.



9 10 ITALIANATE ROW HOUSES
Lexington & San Carlos Streets
These two streets exhibit the most impressive and intact examples of 1870s spec-built housing in San Francisco. Built by TREA between 1875 and 1877 as an affordable working-class housing option, these Italianate row houses were built in one of two styles – either the flat front Italianate found on Lexington Street or the single bay Italianate found on San Carlos Street.