

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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The heritage of San Francisco is preserved in its historically significant buildings, sites, districts, and other resources. These historic resources are important to quality of life in the city, and they help to make it attractive to residents, visitors, and businesses. They provide continuity to the events, places, people, and architectural styles of the city’s storied past. Plan policies should promote the identification, protection and rehabilitation of known and unknown historic resources to assure that they accommodate for current populations as well as future generations.

The Showplace Square survey area lies south of downtown, where the pasture lands of Potrero Nuevo formerly gave way to the large marsh lands and open water of Mission Bay. Today, Showplace Square sits at the juncture of two street grids – the diagonal streets of South of Market (SoMa) to the northeast and the north-south blocks of the Potrero Hill neighborhood to the south. Showplace Square is surrounded by more well-known districts, including SoMa to the north, the Mission District to the west, the Central Waterfront to the east, and Potrero Hill to the south. While the history of Showplace Square is definitely connected to the histories of these adjacent areas, it remains somewhat distinct from them.

Unlike SoMa, Potrero or the Mission, the Showplace Square survey area never had a significant long-standing residential concentration, nor was it ever as heavily industrial as the Central Waterfront. Instead, Showplace’s location on the edge of both residential and industrial areas made it a natural center for lighter industrial uses and commercial

warehouses. This history is evidenced by the eclectic mix of early twentieth century commercial and industrial buildings that remain in the area today.

Initial commercial development in the Showplace Square survey area was located near Mission Creek. As early as 1853, factory owners ran slaughterhouses in the northeast corner of the survey area, on Brannan Streets between Sixth and Ninth Streets. “Butchers’ Reserve,” as it came to be called by city ordinance, was named for the many butchers who chose to establish their businesses in this area because of the tidal movement from Mission Bay that would wash the area twice a day and remove the waste being discarded out of the buildings. Butcher’s Reserve later moved south near Islais Creek, where it was rechristened “Butchertown.”



Buildings appeared near Showplace Square as early as the late 1870s along Sixth Street north of Mission Creek Channel. South of the Channel, business were established along Sixth Street as the land was reclaimed from Mission Bay in the 1880s and 1890s. By the end of the nineteenth century, Sixth Street was lined with lumber yards and planing mills interspersed with saloons, vacant land and dump-related activities, including portions of “Dumpville.” According to Sanborn maps, the outlying areas of Showplace Square housed lumber-related industries as late as 1929. Dwellings were restricted to a few boarding houses. No remaining building resources within the survey area of Showplace Square date from the nineteenth century. Jackson Playground, however, appears on an 1873 map of the area as “Jackson Park.”

The Showplace Square survey area includes a preponderance of large commercial and industrial buildings from the first few decades of the twentieth century. Many of these buildings are of reinforced concrete masonry construction, a building technology that was particularly popular in the wake of the 1906 earthquake and fire. Because concrete had proven fire-resistant on the East Coast, San Francisco engineers turned to concrete as the fireproof building material of choice, and to reinforced concrete for its additional resistance to earthquake damage.

The historic preservation objectives and policies of the Showplace Square/Potrero Hill Plan provide for identification, retention, reuse, and sustainability of the area’s historic properties. As the area changes and develops, historic features and properties that define it should not be lost or diminished. New construction should respect and relate to the Showplace Square/Potrero Hill’s historical contexts. The Plan regulates sound treatment of historic resources according to established standards, it encourages rehabilitation of resources for new compatible uses, and it allows for incentives for qualifying historic projects. As greater understanding of Showplace Square/Potrero Hill’s important historic resources is gained through ongoing survey and property evaluations, the preservation policies of the Plan may be revised or augmented to incorporate the new information.

OBJECTIVE 8.1

IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES WITHIN THE SHOWPLACE SQUARE AREA PLAN

Individually significant historic resources or historic districts are often identified by a historic resource survey or a historical context statement. While a number of historic resource surveys have been completed in the Showplace Square plan area, it is expected that additional historic resource surveys in the Showplace Square plan area will document a substantial number of previously unidentified historic resources.

Historic resource surveys and historical context statements help the Planning Department determine eligibility of resources for designation at the local, state, and/or national level. Official designation in turn, fosters civic pride in historic preservation for the benefit of the Showplace Square plan area and the city as a whole.

Materials, styles, and property types from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries are more widely appreciated and studied than those associated with the recent past. However, there are some structures that have developed exceptional cultural or historic significance as part of our recent past. These resources - buildings, objects or landscapes - deserve consideration in the preservation process. The Planning Department will continue to develop historical context statements and to conduct historic resource surveys in the Showplace Square to identify historic and cultural resources from the distant past as well as from the recent past.

POLICY 8.1.1

Conduct context-based historic resource surveys within the Showplace Square Area Plan.

POLICY 8.1.2

Pursue formal designation of the Showplace Square historic and cultural resources, as appropriate.

POLICY 8.1.3

Recognize and evaluate historic and cultural resources that are less than fifty years old and may display exceptional significance to the recent past.

OBJECTIVE 8.2

PROTECT, PRESERVE, AND REUSE HISTORIC RESOURCES WITHIN THE SHOWPLACE SQUARE AREA PLAN

Significant historic and cultural resources located in the Showplace Square plan area include individual properties and districts that are listed on or eligible for the National or California Register, or that are designated as Landmarks or Districts under Article 10 of the Planning Code. These historic and cultural resources cannot be replaced if

lost to demolition or altered in such manner their historic significance is diminished. To retain this significance, there are a number of ways to protect, preserve and reuse historic resources within the Showplace Square plan area.



The established Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties provide guidelines for managing any change to a historic resource and for appropriately addressing historical materials, features, and character. In other instances, because many historic and cultural resources no longer retain their historic use, it is desirable to adapt historic resources to accommodate compatible new uses while preserving character-defining features. The Planning Department will support rehabilitation and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings within the Showplace Square Area Plan pursuant to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

POLICY 8.2.1

Protect individually significant historic and cultural resources and historic districts in the Showplace Square Area Plan from demolition or adverse alteration.

POLICY 8.2.2

Apply the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties in conjunction with the Showplace Square Area Plan objectives and policies for all projects involving historic or cultural resources.

POLICY 8.2.3

Promote and offer incentives for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings in the Showplace Square plan area.

OBJECTIVE 8.3

ENSURE THAT HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONCERNS CONTINUE TO BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ONGOING PLANNING PROCESSES FOR THE SHOWPLACE SQUARE PLAN AREA AS THEY EVOLVE OVER TIME

New information regarding historic and cultural resources is discovered on a regular basis. As new information is compiled, it should be utilized to update and revise the policies set forth in the Showplace Square Plan. It is also important that throughout the planning process, the Planning department work with various city agencies to ensure the protection and preservation of historic resources.

Historic resources are particularly vulnerable to deterioration due to their age and lack of maintenance. Neglect can result in effective demolition of a historic resource and alterations executed without the benefit of the appropriate city permits have the potential to diminish the significance of a historic resource. Owners of all properties

have a responsibility to maintain their investment in good condition and to obtain City approval for alterations.

Valuing the historic character of older buildings can help to protect these structures in the event of a natural disaster. Older buildings are among those most vulnerable to destruction or heavy damage from events such as earthquake or fire, resulting in potential danger to life safety as well as an irreplaceable loss of the historic fabric of San Francisco.

Valuing the historic character of neighborhoods can preserve economic diversity. In some cases, older buildings that are responsibly rehabilitated may be more affordable than new construction. These buildings may be opportunities for low and moderate income households to find affordable housing.

POLICY 8.3.1

Pursue and encourage opportunities, consistent with the objectives of historic preservation, to increase the supply of affordable housing within the Showplace Square plan area.

POLICY 8.3.2

Ensure a more efficient and transparent evaluation of project proposals which involve historic resources and minimize impacts to historic resources per CEQA guidelines.

POLICY 8.3.3

Prevent destruction of historic and cultural resources resulting from owner neglect or inappropriate actions.

POLICY 8.3.4

Consider the Showplace Square Area Plan's historic and cultural resources in emergency preparedness and response efforts.

POLICY 8.3.5

Protect and retrofit local, state, or nationally designated UMB (Unreinforced Masonry Buildings) found in the Plan Area.

POLICY 8.3.6

Adopt and revise land use, design and other relevant policies, guidelines, and standards, as needed to further preservation objectives.

OBJECTIVE 8.4

PROMOTE THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE INHERENTLY "GREEN" STRATEGY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A commitment to retaining and preserving historic resources saves, preserves, recycles and reuses valuable materials that contain embodied energy. For this reason, the preservation, protection and reuse of historic and cultural resources are "green" strategies

that can be applied to the built environment and help the City to achieve broader goals of sustainability.

POLICY 8.4.1

Encourage the retention and rehabilitation of historic and cultural resources as an option for increased sustainability and consistency with the goals and objectives of the Sustainability Plan for the City and County of San Francisco.

OBJECTIVE 8.5

PROVIDE PRESERVATION INCENTIVES, GUIDANCE, AND LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE SHOWPLACE SQUARE AREA PLAN

Preservation incentives are intended to offset the cost of preservation and encourage property owners to maintain, repair, restore, or rehabilitate historic and cultural resources. A number of financial incentives are available to owners of historic and cultural resources to assist in preservation.

On a local level, San Francisco offers preservation incentive programs, and other incentives are offered through California Office of Historic Preservation. These include federal tax credits for rehabilitation of qualified historical resources, property tax abatement programs (the Mills Act), and tax reductions for preservation easements. Grants, loans, and other funding sources are also available from public and private organizations. Preservation incentives can result in tangible benefits to property owners.



On a State level, the California Historic Building Code (CHBC) permits alternate design approaches to the regular Building Code that can minimize adverse impacts while still providing for health and safety. The CHBC can be used to find creative solutions to protect materials and methods of construction that might not otherwise be permitted under the standard Code. Property owners seeking to rehabilitate historic buildings may also be able to realize cost savings when rehabilitating an historic structure by using the CHBC. The CHBC protects California’s heritage by recognizing the unique construction problems inherent in historic buildings and providing an alternative to the regular Building Code.

Another good resource for incentive programs and education is the Planning Department staff. The Planning Department retains a core staff of Historic Preservation Technical Specialists who are available to share expertise with the public and other government agencies. Because the City and County of San Francisco is the largest owner of officially designated landmarks in the City, the planning staff will work to share their expertise with other agencies to identify, maintain and rehabilitate the publicly owned historic and cultural resources in the Showplace Square plan area. With the guidance of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, the City will also lead by example and demonstrate good stewardship of its resources by maintaining, rehabilitating, and restoring its publicly owned historic resources within the Showplace Square plan area.

POLICY 8.5.1

Disseminate information about the availability of financial incentives for qualifying historic preservation projects.

POLICY 8.5.2

Encourage use of the California Historic Building Code for qualifying historic preservation projects.

POLICY 8.5.3

Demonstrate preservation leadership and good stewardship of publicly owned historic and cultural resources.

OBJECTIVE 8.6

FOSTER PUBLIC AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES WITHIN THE SHOWPLACE SQUARE AREA PLAN

San Francisco residents, merchants, and local historians may possess and have access to valuable historic information not widely known about buildings or other resources that would be useful in the evaluation process. The public can play an important role in identifying historic resources by participating in City surveys and context statement development or by submitting Potential San Francisco Landmark Evaluation forms to begin a formal designation process. Such participation can help to promote greater

civic pride and awareness of the historic and cultural landscape of the Showplace Square plan area which is also helpful for the planning and environmental decision-making process.

POLICY 8.6.1

Encourage public participation in the identification of historic and cultural resources within the Showplace Square plan area.

POLICY 8.6.2

Foster education and appreciation of historic and cultural resources within the Showplace Square plan area among business leaders, neighborhood groups, and the general public through outreach efforts.