

Chapter 6: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. INTRODUCTION

Fresno's heritage is evident in its many historic and cultural resources. Many neighborhoods within the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan are distinguished by their unique historic character. Revitalization efforts that recognize that character as a primary asset have proven to be effective in communities throughout the country. Well-maintained historic properties convey reliability and stability, making the community more attractive to new businesses, residents, and visitors.

This Community Plan emphasizes preservation and adaptive reuse. The late 19th and early 20th-century urban pattern can provide the foundation for a desirable urban form that integrates various land uses, the transportation network, parks, and open space in a coordinated manner. Using the existing built environment as a catalyst not only protects Fresno's heritage, but can also strengthen and support a wide range of the City's economic development and quality of life goals.

The following terms are used in this chapter to describe properties that may warrant consideration for their historic significance. The definitions are intended to be specific for this Community Plan and may deviate from concepts that have been codified in standards and guidelines developed by the National Park Service, the Department of the Interior, and professional practitioners, including historians, architects, archeologists, and urban planners.

Historic resource - A building, structure, object, or site that has been listed on a local, state, or national register of historic resources.

Potential historic resource - A building, structure, object, or site that has been determined eligible for listing on a local, state, or national register of historic resources in a historic resource survey that meets all of the requirements of Public Resources Code, section 5024.1(g) but has not been formally listed.

Historic district - The term is defined in the Fresno Municipal Code as "any finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or any geographically definable area which possesses a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development."¹ As used in this document, "historic district" refers to groupings or concentrations of resources that have been formally listed on a local, state, or national register of historic resources.

Potential historic district - A grouping or concentration of resources as defined in the Fresno Municipal Code that has been determined eligible for listing on a local, state, or national register of historic resources in a historic resource survey that meets all of the requirements of Public Resources Code, section 5024.1(g) but has not been formally listed.

Historic character - The general form, appearance, and impression of a neighborhood or area established by extant development from the past. The term is used generally to recognize development patterns from Fresno's past and is not meant to imply officially recognized historic significance.

¹ City of Fresno Municipal Code Section 12-1603(s).

B. CONTEXT

Downtown Fresno and its immediately surrounding neighborhoods include some of the City's oldest and earliest developed areas, and have previously been subject to extensive surveys and studies. These earlier survey efforts have identified numerous individual historic and potential historic resources and several potential historic districts, including resources found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources. Several properties are listed in the National Register and many others have been designated as local historic resources by the City. Establishing a designated historic district requires a majority vote of property owners, the Historic Preservation Commission, and City Council approval. **Figure 6-1** shows the existing Historic Resources and Historic Districts in the Downtown and surrounding areas.

1. Jane Addams Neighborhood. The Jane Addams neighborhood is largely characterized by open space, empty lots and some mid-to-late 20th Century commercial development brought on by the construction of State Route 99. The area's centerpiece is Roeding Park, a public park which houses the Fresno Chaffee Zoo. Dating from the first decade of the 20th Century, Roeding Park was determined eligible for listing on the National Register as a historic district² and possesses many characteristics of a historic cultural landscape³. This area of Jane Addams was once served by a streetcar line that traversed Roeding Park.

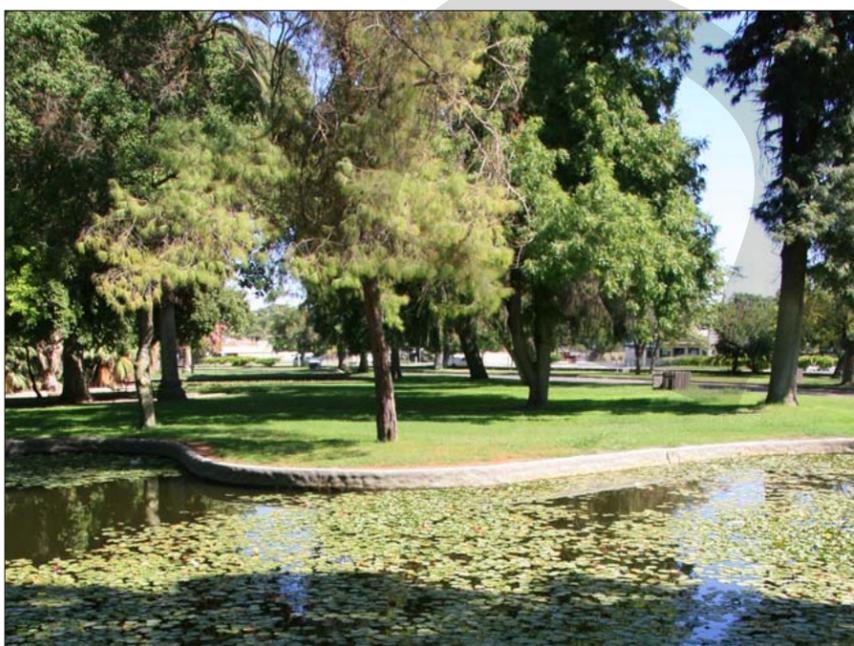
With the exception of Roeding Park, the Jane Addams Neighborhoods contain few previously identified historic or potentially historic properties.

2. Southwest Neighborhood. The Southwest area is a largely working-class residential area that has been home to several waves of immigrant and ethnic communities, including African-Americans, Armenians, Volga Germans from Russia, Hispanics, Italians, and Japanese. The majority of homes date from the early 20th century through the 1960s. Some homes remain from the late 19th century. Prominent architectural styles include Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Spanish Revival, Minimal Traditional and Ranch. Historic integrity throughout the Southwest area is often poor due to alterations and more recent infill.

After World War II, the Southwest became increasingly associated with Fresno's African-American and Hispanic communities. Much of the built resources associated with these communities have been demolished to develop more recent affordable and low-income housing, schools, and recreational facilities. Remaining buildings, structures, objects, and sites from the early development of these communities may hold potential historic significance in this context and warrant further study.

² Analysis by Page & Turnbull 2008-2009. As of August 2011, Roeding Park has not been formally listed on the National Register.

³ The Cultural Landscape Foundation website accessed August 26, 2011. <http://tclf.org>



Roeding Park is the centerpiece of the Jane Addams neighborhoods.

The Southwest area contains a handful of previously identified historic and potentially historic properties including one of Fresno's designated historic districts. Important historic properties include:

a. Chandler Field/Fresno Municipal Airport. One of three officially designated historic districts in Fresno, the Chandler Field/Fresno Municipal Airport Historic District is located approximately two miles west of Downtown Fresno, along the north side of historic Kearney Boulevard. The WPA-era buildings are clustered in a campus setting that includes landscaping, several Beaux Arts-style lampposts and surface parking.

b. Kearney Boulevard. This tree-lined boulevard with a Deco/Moderne gateway has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It was originally developed as part of M. Theo Kearney's "Chateau Fresno" property, located outside the Plan Area, which was never completed.

3. Lowell Neighborhood. The Lowell neighborhood is one of the oldest residential neighborhoods in Fresno, and is the most intact and cohesive early neighborhood within the Community Plan area. It contains significant concentrations of late-19th and early 20th century homes, including Queen Anne, American Foursquare, Neo-classical, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, and Spanish Revival architectural styles. Over forty of the City's designated historic properties are located here; many other neighborhood properties (both individual properties and historic districts) have been previously identified through survey or environmental review.

Geographically isolated from the rest of Downtown by the construction of State Route 180, the historic character of Lowell has largely been retained through years of neglect. Despite incompatible infill, many properties in disrepair, and some vacant lots, the Lowell area continues to exhibit the mature tree canopies, uniform setbacks, and regular rhythm of single-family houses and cottages indicative of the area's prosperous working-, middle-, and upper-middle class origins. These qualities and the building stock distinguish Lowell as an important early neighborhood in Fresno which retains much of its original character. The protection and enhancement of Lowell's historic and potentially historic resources should be a primary concern in the City's current revitalization efforts.

Clusters of older properties just south of Divisadero continue Lowell's historic fabric into Downtown before transitioning to the commercial character of the central business district. While



Kearney Boulevard has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

these properties are not located in the Lowell planning area, they should be considered as part of any planning efforts in Lowell.

In 2008, a portion of the Lowell area west of N. Park Avenue was surveyed by Galvin Preservation Associates (GPA). GPA identified three areas as potential historic districts. The GPA Survey also identified several individual buildings as potential historic resources.

The 2008 GPA survey identified three areas as potentially eligible for designation on the local historic register as Historic Districts, one of which was also found eligible for the National Register. These are as follows:

a. Yosemite Avenue Worker's Cottage Historic District.

Identified as eligible for local designation, the potential Yosemite Avenue Worker's Cottage Historic District contains excellent examples of turn-of-the-century worker's cottages constructed between 1898 and 1906, with one property constructed in 1915. This potentially eligible local historic district is located on the 100 block of N. Yosemite Avenue and includes 14 contributing properties on the west and east side of the block, just south of Nevada Avenue.

b. Lower Van Ness Historic District. Identified as eligible for local designation, the potential Lower Van Ness Historic District contains a collection of residential properties constructed between 1898 and 1919 in the Neo-classical cottage, Queen Anne, and Craftsman styles. This potentially eligible local historic district is located on the 100 block of N. Van Ness Avenue and includes 21 contributing properties and 2 non-contributing properties. The district boundaries include the east and west sides of the 100 block of N. Van Ness Avenue between Nevada Avenue to the north and Voorman Avenue to the south.

c. North Park Historic District. This large collection of early 20th-century and Craftsman homes constructed between 1902 and 1919 was found eligible for the National Register as a potential historic district. The potential district is bounded by State Route 180 to the north, the west facing side of Yosemite Avenue to the west, the east facing side of N. Van Ness Avenue to the east, and Nevada Avenue to the south. The district boundaries include approximately 66 parcels, with 49 contributing buildings, 9 non-contributing buildings and 8 vacant lots.

4. Jefferson Neighborhood. Located just east of Lowell, the Jefferson area shares Lowell's development history and many neighborhood characteristics. Like Lowell, Jefferson contains

late-19th and early 20th century homes of similar vintage and architectural style. However, Jefferson has suffered more damage from demolition and infill development and is less intact and cohesive than Lowell. Several properties in Jefferson have been designated by the City as historic resources. The neighborhood also contains two previously identified potential historic districts.

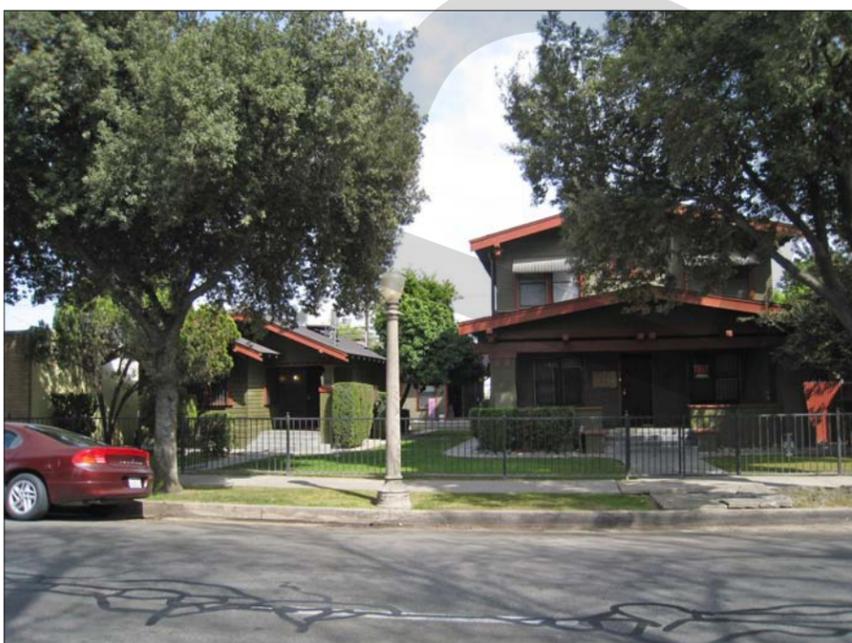
Like Lowell, Jefferson was geographically isolated by the construction of State Routes 180 and 41. While recent redevelopment on assembled lots characterizes a large portion of the neighborhood, several streets maintain collections of single-family houses and cottages. These streets provide a template for neighborhood revitalization and compatible infill.

The Jefferson area contains over 20 previously identified properties and two potential historic districts. Thirteen properties have been designated by the City as historic resources. In addition to the properties that have been identified as individually significant, the Jefferson neighborhood was also surveyed in 1994 as part of the Ratkovich Plan which identified 2 potential historic districts:

a. Bellevue Bungalow District. This potential historic district consists of 15 Craftsman style residences on Howard Avenue and Thesta Street south of Belmont Avenue, dating from 1920-1922. The potential district was identified in 1994. Therefore, the evaluation can no longer be considered current as conditions have most likely changed and survey methodology and evaluation criteria have evolved considerably over the past 16 years. For these reasons, the potential Bellevue Bungalow District needs to be re-evaluated.

b. East Madison District. Located on Madison between Fresno and Angus streets, the potential East Madison Historic District contains Craftsman style homes developed between 1910 and the early 1920s. Like the Bellevue Bungalow District, East Madison was identified in 1994 and needs to be re-evaluated to acknowledge any condition changes and incorporate more recent survey methodology and evaluation criteria.

5. Southeast Neighborhoods. The Southeast area is very large, encompassing several distinct areas and eras of development. While the Southeast contains some industrial areas and several major commercial thoroughfares, the majority of the Plan Area is residential. Most homes date from the early- and mid-20th century and are constructed on the City's late 19th century grid street pattern that aligns with the cardinal directions. A handful of areas break from the grid in the self-contained subdivision style associated with the post-war era. Prominent architectural



Houses along Van Ness Avenue between Nevada and Voorman Avenues built between 1898 and 1919.



Jefferson Neighborhood's Craftsman bungalows in the Bellevue Bungalow District date from the early 1920's.

B. CONTEXT (Continued)

styles include Colonial Revival, Prairie Craftsman, Tudor Revival, Storybook, Spanish Revival, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch.

In addition to residential neighborhoods, the Southeast contains a considerable grouping of industrial properties in the southwestern portion of the subarea near the railroad and State Route 41. Several of these properties represent Fresno's early industrial history and have been designated as historic properties by the City.

Historic integrity throughout the Southeast area is somewhat fragmented due to alterations and large areas of more recent development. Several neighborhoods have retained their original character from the early 20th century, including the trees and landscape features that remain from their initial periods of development. While these neighborhoods may not meet criteria for designated historic districts, they deserve special planning consideration to protect historic elements and guide infill.

The Southeast area contains over 30 previously identified potentially historic properties; 26 properties have been designated by the City as historic resources. These include a high school and a collection of industrial buildings in addition to outstanding residential properties. One potential historic district has been identified to date:

a. Huntington Boulevard Historic District. The potential Huntington Boulevard Historic District, has been previously identified. It consists of early 20th Century residential properties located on Huntington Boulevard from First Street on the west to Cedar Avenue on the east. An application for designation as a Local Historic District was approved by the City's Historic Preservation Commission in December, 2008. Documentation of the District is currently being developed by City staff in preparation for a formal nomination submission.

6. South Van Ness Industrial District. The potential South Van Ness Industrial District contains a considerable grouping of industrial properties. Several of these properties represent Fresno's early industrial history and have been designated as historic properties by the City.

7. Special Property Types. Several property types have been identified as potentially historically significant to Fresno's development history and can be found in several areas of the City.

a. Bungalow Courts/Courtyard Housing. Bungalow courts and courtyard housing have been identified as an important residential property type in Fresno. One hundred and twenty-

seven courts were identified through a city-wide reconnaissance level survey in 2004.

b. Garden Offices Complexes. Regional office park design of the post-World War period incorporated a series of low-rise, office buildings connected by open air gardens and atriums. Architects Robert Stevens and Gene Zellmer are notable pioneers of this building type, and often used Hans Sumpf stabilized adobe bricks in construction.

c. Early Housing and Associated Structures. Early folk/vernacular housing types such as Shotgun Houses and Hall & Parlor Houses are increasingly rare in Fresno. Ancillary buildings such as Carriage Houses and the summer kitchens of the Volga German community should also be treated with special attention.

d. Sites, Structures, and Objects. It is important to note that properties other than buildings may also be historically significant. In Fresno, these may include signs, lampposts, street furniture, fountains, statues, public art, and infrastructure such as bridges and canals.

C. KEY DEFICITS

In 1979, the City of Fresno's City Council adopted a historic preservation ordinance, which was amended in 1999 (FMC 12-1600 et seq.). While numerous buildings, structures, objects, and sites located within the Community Plan areas have been preserved and protected through the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, several issues continue to threaten the City's historic character and unique heritage.

- **Destruction of potential historic resources.** A large number of potential historic buildings are being renovated without regard for the building's potential significance. Many buildings have been irreparably altered.
- **Loss of potential historic districts.** The historic character of areas identified as potential historic districts is being compromised by the demolition or inappropriate renovation of individual buildings.
- **Need to update historic resources inventories.** While the City's current Historic Resources database contains over 4,885 entries, many potential historic resources that have not been formally designated by the City are absent from the database.
- **Need for guidance on rehabilitation of potentially historic buildings.** Property owners appear to lack information and guidance for how to rehabilitate older and potentially historic buildings. As a result, potentially historic resources have been rehabilitated



The proposed Huntington Boulevard Historic District consists of large early 20th Century properties located on Huntington Boulevard between First Street and Cedar Avenue.



Bungalow Courts are an important residential property type in Fresno.

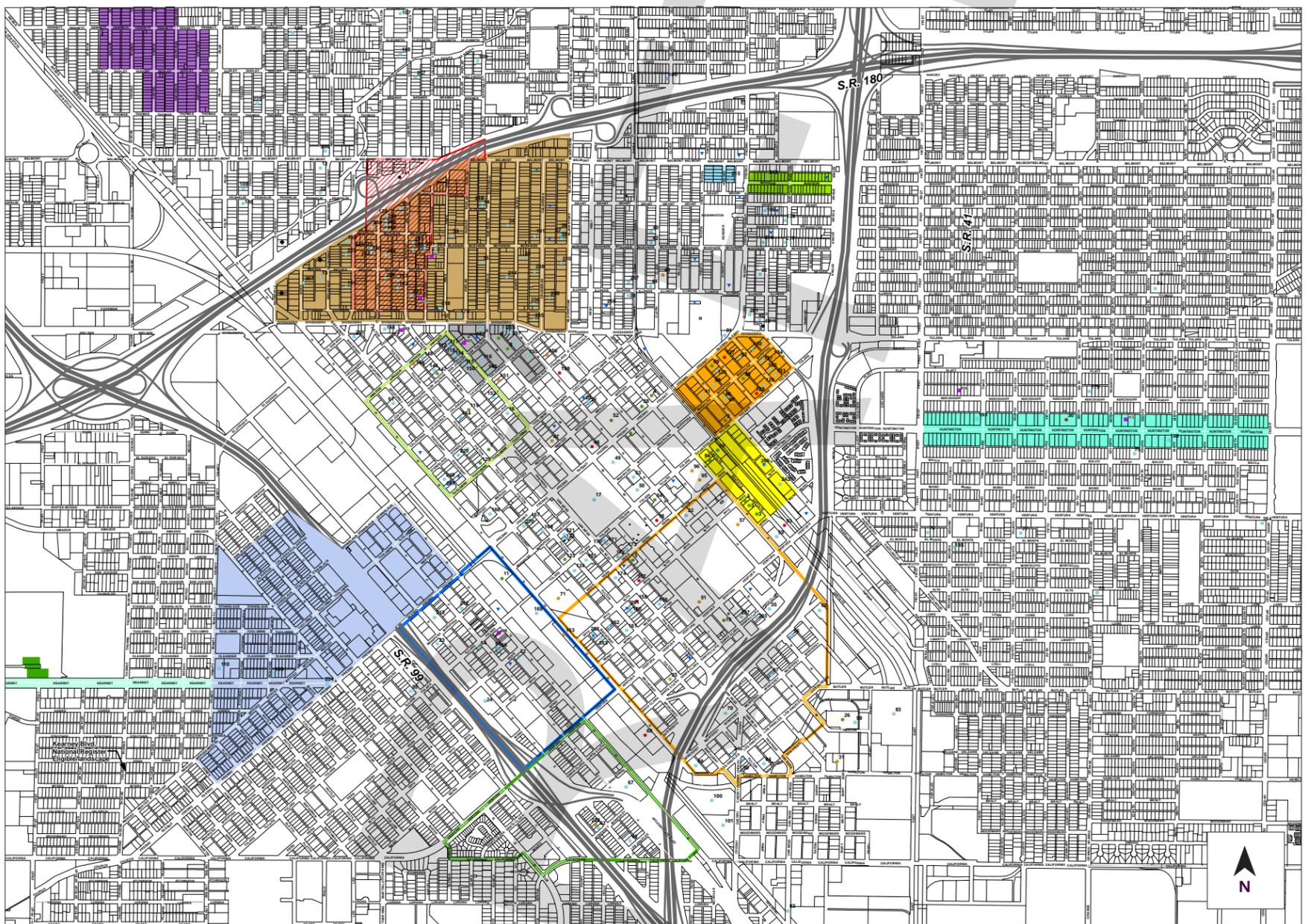
D. VISION FOR CHANGE

in ways that impact the integrity of the potential resources and the character and context of the surrounding area.

- Incompatible Infill.** Incompatible infill is a primary cause of damage to the area’s historic character, particularly in those areas where smaller parcels have been assembled. The lack of design standards relative to nearby historic sites has compromised the historic fabric of the neighborhoods.

Downtown Fresno and its neighborhoods are connected to their heritage and culture through a diverse network of buildings, places and activities. The Downtown Neighborhoods area contains one of the largest concentrations of historic resources in the Central Valley and is a source of identity and community pride for Fresno’s residents. Visitors to the area are treated to a wide variety of buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts that represent Fresno’s diverse history from the earliest years to the present. The City has strong standards for ensuring the preservation of historic resources for future generations, and new investment is compatible with and sensitive to the existing character of each neighborhood.

FIGURE 6-1 - HISTORIC RESOURCES AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS*



KEY

EARLY ETHNIC NEIGHBORHOODS

- Chinatown
- Italian Neighborhood
- Germantown
- Old Armentiantown

HISTORIC DISTRICTS: DESIGNATED AND PROPOSED

- Adoline - Palm (Proposed) (1991 Tower District Specific Plan)
- Bellevue Bungalow (Proposed) (1994 Ratkovich Plan)
- Chandler Field/Fresno Municipal Airport (Designated 2005)
- East Madison (Proposed) (1994 Ratkovich Plan)
- Huntington Boulevard (Proposed)
- Lower Fulton - Van Ness (Proposed) (1991 Tower District Specific Plan)
- L Street (Proposed) (1994 Ratkovich Plan)
- North Park (Proposed) (1994 Ratkovich Plan)
- Porter Tract (Designated 2000)
- Santa Fe Warehouse (Proposed) (1994 Ratkovich Plan)
- St. Johns (Proposed) (1994 Ratkovich Plan)
- Terrace Gardens (Proposed) (1991 Tower District Specific Plan)
- Wilson Island
- Wilson's North Fresno Tract (Proposed) (1991 Tower District Specific Plan)

SYMBOLIZATION

- Local Register of Historic Resources
- National Register of Historic Places
- Local Significance
- Relocated Outside City
- Demolished Properties
- ◆ 1991 Weitz Survey
- ▼ 1994 Ratkovich Survey
- Heritage Properties
- Uptown Culture-Arts District

* This Figure is current as of March, 2011. An updated map will be provided upon Plan adoption. The portions of the Downtown Neighborhoods not shown in this Figure do not contain historic resources or historic districts as of March, 2011.

Source: City of Fresno Planning and Development

E. GOALS AND POLICIES

6.1 Identify potential historic resources through context development, survey, evaluation, and designation.

Intent: Federal, state and local regulations that protect historic and cultural resources are based on identification and designation. In order to maintain and protect a community’s built legacy, it is necessary to identify the properties that are meaningful to the community’s historical development and contribute to its character. Identification is the first step in establishing priorities for the restoration and protection of a community’s resources.

- ▶ **6.1.1** Identify, document and promote all historic and cultural resources, and potential resources within the Downtown Neighborhoods. (CAP Urb 7-3)
- ▶ **6.1.2** Enhance the City’s database of all designated, evaluated, and potential historic resources and make it easily accessible to the community and affected property owners.
- 6.1.3** Understand the types and locations of historic resources and potential historic resources throughout the City.
- 6.1.4** Promote awareness of resources important to the City’s history within the community.
- 6.1.5** Incorporate knowledge of historic and potentially historic resources into planning and development.

6.2 Protect historic and cultural resources from demolition and inappropriate alterations.

Intent: To strengthen the procedures and mechanisms that will help protect historic resources. Inappropriate alterations and/or additions to historic resources raise important concerns. Historic resources, and/or the context in which they are meaningful, may be damaged due to alterations, additions or demolition.

- ▶ **6.2.1** Preserve, rehabilitate, and reuse historic resources with materials and finishes consistent with their original design.
- ▶ **6.2.2** Protect the unique historic resources in each of Downtown Fresno’s subareas as a means of enhancing the unique identity and character of each subarea.
- 6.2.3** Provide educational forums for policy makers that stress the role of preservation as an economic tool in revitalization.
- ▶ **6.2.4** Discourage the demolition or inappropriate alteration of potential historic resources and encourage their appropriate

renovation by providing guidance and incentives for rehabilitation and compatible alterations.

- ▶ **6.2.5** As funds become available, provide more Historic Preservation staff to manage a more robust Historic Preservation program.
- 6.2.6** Encourage salvaging of architectural elements that would otherwise be transported to landfills as a result of alterations or demolition.
- 6.2.7** Encourage sympathetic rehabilitation and assist owners with adapting their homes to current needs while retaining historic integrity.
- 6.2.8** Protect historic and cultural resources in each of the subareas in the Downtown Neighborhoods.
 - Use Roeding Park and its historic features as a focal point for redevelopment of the Jane Addams area.
 - Ensure that Roeding Park and the Fresno Chaffee Zoo are preserved and enhanced as regional destinations.
 - Rehabilitate the historic portions of Roeding Park according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards to preserve this outstanding example of landscape design and historically-significant arboretum.
 - Preserve, rehabilitate, and reuse the historic industrial buildings in the South Van Ness subarea.
 - Designate Kearney Boulevard as a Scenic Route to further protect its scenic qualities and reestablish the Boulevard as an important address within Fresno.
 - Begin the process to designate the three potential districts in Lowell that were determined to be eligible for listing on the local register as historic districts in the 2008 GPA survey. Designation of historic districts requires the consent of a majority of the property owners within the proposed district. (See FMC, section 12-1610(c).)
 - Complete the local designation process for the potential Huntington Boulevard Historic District.
- 6.2.9** Sponsor a regular “State of Historic Preservation” colloquium for policy makers, city staff, and community members to address and discuss preservation and cultural heritage issues.



Incompatible infill is a primary cause of damage to the Plan Area’s historic character.

The preservation of historic buildings such as the Santa Fe Station, connects Fresno to its heritage and culture.

6.3 Protect historic resources and their setting from incompatible new development within historically sensitive areas.

Intent: The value of a historic structure is greatly diminished if it is surrounded by incompatible more recent development. When new buildings are introduced adjacent to historic resources, it is important that they are designed in a manner that reinforces the historic character of the area.

- ▶ **6.3.1** Preserve, rehabilitate, and reuse historic resources consistent with their original design.
- ▶ **6.3.2** Restore and maintain the historic character of neighborhoods.
- ▶ **6.3.3** Require new development to be compatible with the massing, scale, setbacks, and pedestrian-oriented disposition of adjacent historic resources.
- 6.3.4** Pursue stricter code enforcement to eliminate inappropriate alterations (including “stucco wraps”).

6.4 Promote the preservation of historic and cultural resources through financial incentives and technical assistance.

Intent: Financial incentives, including federal tax credits, preservation easements, and property tax abatements can be used to help fund the rehabilitation of historic properties. These incentives can defray the costs of a potential rehabilitation. Technical assistance regarding character-defining features, construction techniques, treatment of historic materials, and compatible replacement materials will result in many more historic and cultural resources preserved for future generations.

- ▶ **6.4.1** Provide technical assistance and financial incentives for property owners to rehabilitate their properties in a manner that doesn't degrade historic integrity. Promote and make accessible the available resources – including the Community Development Block Grants program, the Mills Act, and technical assistance – to owners of historic buildings.
- ▶ **6.4.2** Identify and promote funding sources for the rehabilitation of historic properties. Promote, and where possible provide, low-cost funding for revitalization of residential properties.
- ▶ **6.4.3** Re-establish and fund as resources are available the City's low interest loan program for historic property owners.

- ▶ **6.4.4** Sponsor preservation workshops at the neighborhood level to provide technical assistance to property owners concerning the maintenance, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources and potential historic resources.

- 6.4.5** Work with construction trade groups to support apprenticeship programs that teach restoration techniques such as lead paint remediation, historic woodworking and finishing.

- 6.4.6** Expand the existing facade improvement program to incorporate guidelines for the rehabilitation of historic storefronts.

6.5 Integrate historic preservation into the community and economic development strategies.

Intent: Historic preservation is a proven, effective community and economic development strategy. Unique historic structures are the signature of many communities and Fresno is no exception. Historic preservation projects result in investment in the local economy. Policies that help preserve neighborhoods involve both historic preservation and economic development.

- 6.5.1** Capitalize on Fresno's historic landmarks and resources.

- Work with local agencies to better incorporate preservation and historic sites into heritage tourism programs.
- Install the “Preserve America” signs in downtown Fresno.
- Develop wayfinding signs from SR 99 that advertise Fresno's “historic downtown.”
- Prepare an updated walking tour of downtown Fresno which highlights historic sites and neighborhoods.
- Make available the New Deal walking tour brochure of Fresno prepared by the National Trust in 2008.

- ▶ **6.5.2** Use historic preservation as a basic tool for neighborhood improvements and community development.

- 6.5.3** Engage community members and groups to gather information regarding historic resources.

- ▶ **6.5.4** Encourage maintenance of both designated and potential historic resources to help restore the historic character of neighborhoods.

- 6.5.5** Support neighborhood revitalization programs designed to foster an appreciation of Fresno's distinctive housing types.



A house is rehabilitated with materials and finishes that are consistent with its original design.



New development that is incompatible with the massing, scale, setbacks, and pedestrian-oriented disposition of buildings in historically sensitive areas.

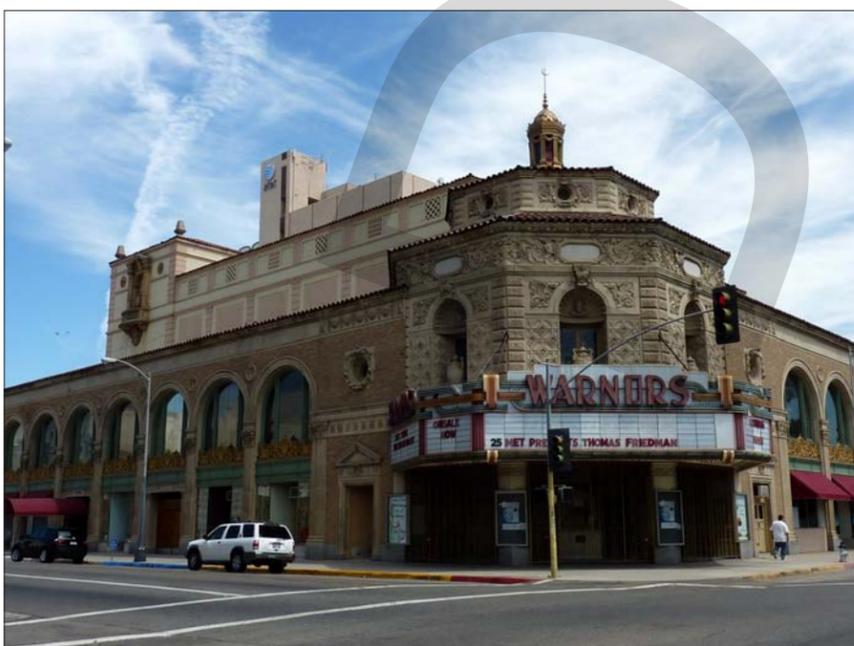
E. GOALS AND POLICIES (Continued)

6.6 Protect archeological resources from the impacts of new development.

Intent: To ensure that archeological resources discovered during the construction process are identified, evaluated, and treated as warranted.

- ▶ **6.6.1** Require that all mitigation measures for archeological resources be consistent with the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) guidelines.

DRAFT



Fresno Landmarks such as the Warnors Theater can help spark investment in the local economy.



This building on the corner of F Street and Tulare Street is a source of identity and pride for Fresno residents.