Discussion Draft Report

Chapter 1: Introduction

The New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines are designed to allow change to take place in a mindful way that brings vibrancy to the district while retaining the architectural and cultural qualities that make it a unique historic neighborhood. Many upper floors are currently vacant and the streets are not as busy as they once were. An increase in people living, shopping, working, and visiting will bring energy necessary for the District to thrive again. New infill on vacant lots, and the preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings in accordance with the National Park Service’s standards and approval from the City of Portland Historic Landmark Commission, will help retain the District’s desired character. This vision promotes the retention of historic resources, compatible development, the preservation of the district’s cultural significance and authenticity, and the enhancement of the pedestrian right of way. This vision can be accomplished by understanding the background and historical context of the district and through the appropriate use of the guidelines.

Purpose of Document

Design guidelines for New Chinatown/ Japantown are intended to preserve and enhance the integrity and historic significance of the National Register-listed historic district. This document serves as the approval criteria for additions or exterior alterations to existing buildings, and for new construction within the historic district. These design guidelines are also intended to supplement the Portland Bureau of Transportation standards, which apply to the construction or alteration of structures or surfaces in the right-of-way, especially at unique streetscapes such as the district’s Festival Streets. Primarily intended to retain and strengthen the architectural and cultural qualities that make the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District significant, the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District design guidelines incorporate local best practices, concepts from the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, and unique attributes found in the historic district. If property owners are seeking historic tax incentives they should concurrently work with the State Historic Preservation Office as well as the City of Portland to ensure that the project will be approvable under both sets of criteria.

Design guidelines are land use approval criteria that must be met as part of the City of Portland’s Historic Resource Review process. Applicants seeking to alter, add on to, or construct a new building within the historic district boundaries are required to explain, in their Historic Resource Review application, how their proposal meets each applicable guideline.

Applicable Design Guidelines

Design and Historic Resource Review within Portland’s Central City includes multiple layers of design guidelines. The Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines make up the foundational set of design guidelines upon which this system is based. These fundamental guidelines apply everywhere within the Central City, but are augmented by additional district design guidelines that apply only to specific sub-districts, such as historic districts and the Willamette River Greenway. Design guidelines are drafted to avoid conflicting requirements. However, should conflicts arise, the most district-specific set of design guidelines will control. In the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District, both the Central City Fundamental and these district-specific design guidelines apply. The New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District Guidelines take precedence if conflicts with Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines arise. Where the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District
The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District overlaps with the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District design guidelines apply, as well as New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, A9, and B3. Though New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is in the River District, the River District Design Guidelines do not apply.

**Historic Resource Review in Portland**

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is a special area, important to the city’s past, present, and future identity. To ensure that new construction, alterations, and additions to existing buildings preserve the physical integrity of historic resources, the City of Portland applies Historic Resource Review to this Historic District. Staff in the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) and citizens appointed to the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission manage the Historic Resource Review process. The Historic Landmarks Commission is a volunteer board comprised of members with expertise in design, development, and historic preservation. Historic Resource Review takes into consideration many aspects of a given proposal, such as building siting, exterior materials, and the location of parking. In general, interior changes are not subject to Historic Resource Review. Historic Resource Review gives designers flexibility, while ensuring the preservation of historic resources and the compatibility of new development. Historic resource review provides opportunities for the public evaluation of new construction as well as other changes to buildings and sites. In the Historic Resource Review processes, a proposal is evaluated against the applicable approval criteria (typically historic district design guidelines, such as the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic district Design guidelines) and any other regulations being proposed for modification or adjustment.

The land use review process varies with the type, size, and location of the proposal. Smaller proposals are initially reviewed by staff and the process generally takes two to three months. Larger proposals are reviewed at a public hearing by the Historic Landmarks Commission with a process of about three to four months. Owners of nearby properties are notified and testimony from individuals, organizations, and neighborhood associations is encouraged. Optional design advisory meetings are available to help designers achieve project approval prior to submitting for their Historic Resource Review.

Additional information on land use review types is available from the Bureau of Development Services, 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 1500, Portland, Oregon, 97201, or by calling 503-823-7526.

**Potential for Archaeological Resources**

The potential for subsurface historical archaeological sites and artifacts throughout the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is high. If a project includes below-grade work, there is a potential for archaeological finds. Archaeological sites and objects and human remains on public and private property are protected by state law (see ORS 358, ORS 390 and ORS 97). Caution is recommended during demolition, excavation or other ground disturbing activities in the district. Property owners may wish to consult with a professional archaeologist or the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) prior to such work, in order to avoid unnecessary project delays. If cultural materials are discovered during demolition, excavation, or even remodeling, all work should cease immediately and SHPO contacted. Applicants should ensure that the development team or contractor on the project has the protocol in place to protect any such finds and to allow them to be professionally recorded and removed. The excavation, injury, alteration or destruction of an archaeological site or removal of an archaeological object from public or private lands without an archaeological permit from SHPO is a violation of state law.
Terms/ Concepts

The terms below are used throughout the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District guidelines document. These concepts are discussed in order to provide background for their use within the document, and not necessarily as a definition as would be provided by a dictionary.

- Compatibility and Differentiation

Compatibility is the quality of being similar to, sympathetic to or achieving harmony with others. Compatibility is a key concept for new construction or changes to existing buildings within a Historic District. Compatibility must be considered not only to the affected building or buildings in immediate proximity, but also within the overall District. Architectural compatibility in a historic district is achieved when a project reflects many, but not necessarily all, of the important characteristics of the district.

These Design Guidelines are to be used by and within the local regulatory environment, but the National Park Service (NPS) also has a role in managing Portland’s historic resources. This is because the NPS has the authority to de-list individual properties from Historic Districts, deny Federal tax credit applications for owners seeking to use incentives, or even de-list an entire Historic District. Accordingly, these guidelines incorporate NPS guidance for achieving compatibility, in order to ensure relative alignment between local and Federal review standards.

The NPS recognizes and seeks differentiation in addition to compatibility. Differentiation is the quality of being distinct from another. Architectural differentiation is achieved when a project is seen as clearly a product of its own time; a contemporary insertion. How does one find the right balance between these two concepts? There are a range of approaches, with the appropriate choice being informed partly by the scale and degree of the project.

The first and most straightforward approach is visual replication of historic construction, either interpretation or reconstruction. In this approach, there is still differentiation between the new and the existing, but the differentiation is achieved at a very small level; perhaps as insulating glass being used in a new window that otherwise matches existing single-pane windows. This approach should be especially considered if there is a missing element that can be brought back in order to complete a pattern or to achieve the original intent of symmetry in an existing building.

For a larger addition or new construction, the approach to achieving both compatibility and differentiation will most commonly be a contextual response ranging from an interpretation of a historical building style or type to a more contemporary insertion that references the immediate context. The NPS suggests several, albeit contradictory, design techniques as effective ways to construct an addition to a historic building, including “Avoid designs that unify the two volumes into a single architectural whole...,” and “Base the size, rhythm and alignment of the new addition’s window and door openings on those of the historic building.”¹ In general, a successful design will incorporate most of the features of a single historic building style (not multiple styles) found in the Historic District, drawing especially from examples of that style surrounding the site.

One final approach is the idea of juxtaposition, where the new construction is pushed so far from the patterns, material, scale, or other Historic District reference as to become completely abstract. This approach has been used in other locations and has both supporters and detractors. Juxtaposition should be used with caution as it is generally not supported by the NPS and also is difficult to achieve the required level of abstraction.

¹ Preservation Brief #14, p7-8
However, it may be used successfully at a small scale; for instance where a historic entry might be highlighted by an additive, but very contemporary, new design insertion.

- Authenticity

Authenticity is the quality of being genuine or real. Cultural authenticity on a project in the district is achieved when a project incorporates well-researched and well-understood architectural references to the Japanese or Chinese architectural tradition and cultural background. To avoid “kitsch,” a designer should know where those references come from and what they mean to the culture that developed them.

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District was never an enclave of any single ethnic group or culture; nor was it the only place in the Portland where persons of Chinese or Japanese ancestry could live or work. Rather, it developed over time, first in the established styles and forms of the mainstream Caucasian culture and then by alterations and additions executed by immigrant cultures. The district therefore represents a unique amalgam of cultures and changes over time. Unlike many other ethnic/cultural historic districts on the west coast, distinctively Asian building types were not introduced here, even when the owners or developers were part of the Chinese or Japanese community.

In her book “Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon,” author Rose Marie Wong explains the architectural hybrid that resulted in the district:

“In their revisions to existing structures, the Portland Chinese created an architectural manifestation of their own, something identifiable as a cultural vernacular. Most simply put, the majority of the buildings were not designed by architects, nor did they resemble any academically recognized architectural style, certainly not in the sense that society envisioned as authentically “Chinese.” Without using obvious elements such as pagoda-style roofs, tiling, and turreted building shapes, the immigrant residents expressed their cultural identity through the easier means of applied decoration and ornament. This, along with their presence, created the “image” of a Chinese district.”

Projects that seek to authentically support the cultural significance of the District are highly encouraged. Such projects must still respect the character of the District as primarily Western architecture with Eastern architectural additions and influences. In other words, the underlying building forms, patterns, and materials of a (Western) architectural style original to the district should still be evident, even in a new building. Projects in the district are not required to incorporate culturally authentic details or references.

The design of a project, whether employing Chinese or Japanese design influences or not, should be compatible with the original buildings in the District and with those Contributing buildings in the immediate vicinity of the site. If a new project takes place on the site of a culturally or architecturally important building which has been removed, or an existing such building is renovated, then some recognition of the significance of the place is encouraged at the ground floor level (see Guideline A9).

Buildings that are Contributing in the District for their association with Chinese or Japanese heritage in Portland are shown on the map at end of Chapter 2. Culturally authentic alterations or references should not be combined in a project or in a single building, even if a building or site did have a history of association with both the Japanese and Chinese communities. Also, it is important to recognize that other, more recent buildings and elements in the District also have gained historic significance for their cultural associations, such as the Chinese gateway.

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Contributing and Non-contributing

In a locally or nationally listed historic district, Contributing properties or resources are designated as adding to the historical integrity or architectural qualities that make the historic district significant.

The historic status of each building, expressed as either Contributing or Non-contributing, is a form of classification used in a National Register of Historic Places nomination to designate historic resources based on their retention of historic integrity. However, these classifications are not permanently affixed to a resource. In fact, it is possible to restore the integrity of existing non-contributing historic buildings to a point where the National Register nomination for the district could be amended to change a building’s status from historic non-contributing to contributing. However, it is also possible that a contributing building can be reduced to a non-contributing status if its historic integrity is compromised.

In addition to embodying distinctive characteristics of an architectural style, historic resources within a Historic District can also be found significant for their association with significant people of our past and/or with significant events. These criteria address historic resources where cultural significance is more important than architectural classification and character-defining features. Given the rich cultural significance of the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, these criteria, with supporting evidence, can also be used to amend the classification of a building within the district from non-contributing to contributing.

The following map shows the current Contributing and Non-contributing buildings, as designated by the National Park Service, within the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District.
How to Use this Document

Design guidelines are qualitative statements that address the desired character of development within the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. Their qualitative nature is intended to provide flexibility for designers and developers to achieve the City’s and the Historic District’s urban design goals. Although discretionary in nature, these guidelines are the sole criteria for decision-making and will act as a foundation to which additions, alterations, and new construction will be approved in the district.
Each design guideline has a title, background statement, guideline language, and examples of projects that have successfully met the guideline or exhibit qualities that the guideline addresses. Only the guideline language is adopted by ordinance.

Thresholds and Procedures

Proposals must meet all the applicable guidelines in each category of guidelines that apply to the type of project proposed. Development proposals vary in size, scale, and complexity; therefore large proposals such as new construction face different design considerations than smaller proposals such as changing the sign system on a commercial storefront. The applicable category(s) of design guidelines is tailored to the size, scale and complexity of the proposal.

The general guidelines apply to all projects in the District. Individual guidelines may not be applicable to the project, but all proposals will apply this category of guidelines.

The alterations guidelines are for use in making changes to existing buildings that do not increase the building’s height or size.

The additions guidelines are used for new exterior wall or roof areas of the building, however the alterations guidelines must still be used for changes to the existing building façades or roof.

When horizontal additions to buildings have 25 linear feet or more of new street frontage and a pedestrian entrance, the guidelines for new construction apply instead of the guidelines for additions. The guidelines for alterations continue to apply to the existing building.

In some cases, designers may use all guidelines categories: alterations for changes to the existing building façade, additions for additional stories or penthouses, and new construction for a large horizontal addition. In all cases, both General guidelines as well as the Central City Fundamental guidelines (separate document) also apply.
What guidelines apply to my project? If there is no new floor area, then the General guidelines and the Alterations guidelines apply. If there is new floor area proposed, the General guidelines apply, as well as other guideline categories as illustrated:

- **New Building (green) but no changes to existing (grey) building(s)?** GENERAL and NEW CONSTRUCTION

- **New Building (green) with changes/ additions to an existing (grey) building and an addition with 25 feet or more of new street frontage?** GENERAL, NEW CONSTRUCTION, and ALTERATIONS

- **Addition (green) with 25 feet or less of new street frontage?** GENERAL, ADDITIONS, and ALTERATIONS
Chapter 2: History, Character, and Context

Background

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989 for its multiethnic heritage and for its role in and association with Portland’s early growth as an industrial and commercial center. The district is also recognized for its retention of historic architecture built during its period of significance (1880-1943).

Written with emphasis on the Chinese experience within the district, the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District nomination found the district to be nationally significant “for its history as the largest and most intact Chinatown in Oregon.” However, it should also be noted that the district was equally important to Portland’s early Japanese community, as well as to African American, Greek, Jewish, and Scandinavian immigrant groups throughout its 1880-1943 period of significance. Research conducted after the district was designated has found that the Chinese and Japanese communities were the largest and most enduring ethnic presence during the district’s period of significance. The presence of these groups was exhibited in adaptations made to the built environment to reflect their Asian heritage and by establishing a safe social setting that included schools, churches, social and political associations, grocery and department stores, pharmacies, hotels, restaurants, and laundries among many other institutions required for everyday life. Beginning with the onset of World War II, political, economic, and social factors contributed to the exodus of Chinese and Japanese residents, businesses, and patrons from the district. However, the district still retains much of its early ethnic and cultural significance as well as its historic architecture.

Efforts to officially recognize New Chinatown/Japantown for its significance began in the 1970s, stimulated by local Chinese revitalization efforts. At the time, new Chinese restaurants, groceries, and Asian import and medicine shops were opened, and existing Chinese businesses expanded. This wave of growth and change also included a $275,000 restoration of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) building, which was funded in part by the Republic of China and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. By the late 1970s, the CCBA had established a Chinatown development committee and revitalization plan, which was adopted by Portland City Council in 1984. The installation of bilingual street signs and ornamental street lights followed, capped by the erection of the Chinatown Gate in 1987. The Gate, which was at the time the second largest Chinese gateway in the United States, was a gift of the Republic of China to the City of Portland, marking the NW 4th Avenue entrance to Portland’s Chinatown.

Following the erection of the Chinatown Gate and the Historic District designation 1989, recent efforts to enhance and distinguish the district and its immediate surroundings, have included the construction of the Lan Su Chinese Garden just outside of the District at NW Everett Street and NW 3rd Avenue in 2000, the creation of two Festival Streets located in between NW 3rd and 4th Avenues along NW Davis and Flanders Streets, and the installation of bronze plaques within sidewalk masonry pavers on NW 3rd and 4th Avenues which include link members of the various ethnic communities to buildings within the district.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 8-15.
Setting

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is located three blocks west of the Willamette River and north of West Burnside Street in the Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. It consists of ten city blocks bound by NW Glisan Street to the north, NW 3rd Avenue to the east, West Burnside Street to the south, and NW 5th Avenue to the west. The district is adjacent to the Pearl District neighborhood to the north and west, and intersects the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District to the southeast. The Skidmore/Old Town boundary overlaps New Chinatown/Japantown along NW 3rd Avenue between West Burnside and NW Everett Streets. The district currently includes multiple businesses, apartments, restaurants, social services, hotels, and parking lots. Maximum height and Floor Area Ratios (FAR) allowances within the district are established by the Central City Plan District.

Historical Context

Prompted by the discovery of gold in California in 1848 and a new shipping route from San Francisco, Chinese immigrants found their way to Portland by 1851. Early Chinese immigrants in Portland quickly established laundries and restaurants along Front Street (now Naito Parkway), catering to incoming Americans. They also brought wives from China and a few became labor contractors, paying to transport and provision poor Chinese laborers from Southeast China to work in the Northwest. Most Chinese laborers at this time did not expect to remain in the United States permanently, as they arrived with the intent to make money and return home to their families. Such sojourners retained their language, customs, and traditions.

Records show that by the late 1860s, Chinese were employed by local employers, such as the Oregon Iron Company, the Clackamas Paper Manufacturing Company, and the Oregon woolen mills. By 1870, Chinese immigrants also found employment in the railroad industry working for companies such as Northern Pacific and Central Pacific constructing rail lines. Years later, Chinese labor shifted from the railroad industry to fish canneries along the Columbia River where over 2,000 Chinese were employed by 1874. Additionally, Chinese labor was also used to log forests, mine, build roads, and dig waterway, which contributed to building Oregon’s early infrastructure. Regardless of their active role in contributing to Portland’s economy, Chinese laborers were openly discriminated against during the process. Bills, taxes, and ordinances all were used to steer and suppress Chinese immigrants from obtaining power, money, or property.

In response to violent protests on the West Coast by those who feared competition from Chinese laborers and growing attempts to prohibit Chinese immigration by the United States government, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act prohibited further immigration by Chinese laborers, the naturalization of Chinese immigrants in the United States, and the right to bring wives and children. This persecution and discrimination against Chinese workers not only led to the growth of Japanese immigration to fill the roles previously held by Chinese, but also drove local Chinese immigrants to create their own community and way of life along SW 2nd Avenue where they ultimately created an enclave of Chinese culture and identity, known as Old Chinatown. In addition to the Chinese community, a second community of Chinese vegetable farmers lived and worked in a rare rural setting within Portland known as Tanner Creek (now Goose Hollow) until 1910.

During this time, Portland’s Japantown, or Nihonmachi, was being created north of West Burnside Street as a hub for new Japanese immigrants. Arriving in Portland in the 1890s to find work throughout the West Coast, hundreds of young Japanese male immigrants - similarly to the Chinese - worked on “railroads, lumber mills,

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farms and fish canneries.” Originally, Japantown’s boundaries were much broader than the current New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, stretching from SW Ankeny to NW Glisan Streets with a concentration of businesses on NW 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Avenues. At its height around 1940, Japantown occupied a 10 to 12 block area north of West Burnside Street, primarily between NW 2nd and 6th Avenues.

Prior to the rise of Japantown, only a few Chinese laundries and other small businesses were established north of West Burnside Street. However, after a fire in 1873 destroyed “17 of the 62 existing Chinese businesses” in Old Chinatown, many Chinese business owners and residents began a slow migration from Old Chinatown to Japantown, which would later be defined as New Chinatown/Japantown. By 1885, “the number of Chinese businesses in New Chinatown increased from 63 to 123,” including “a hospital, four churches, two Joss Houses, five Herb Shops, and a theater.” Old Chinatown remained the focal point for Chinese economic, cultural, and residential life and activity in Portland until after the turn of the century, when New Chinatown eclipsed it.

In addition to early factors which prompted Chinese to seek new residency in New Chinatown, Old Chinatown also experienced, like the rest of Portland in the wake of the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, a building and population boom. This quickly upended many Chinese residents and business owners due to rising rents and property values. Other contributing factors such as the 1904 decision of the United States government to make Chinese Exclusion its permanent immigration policy and the rise of racial discrimination throughout Oregon also led to this continued migration. During this transition to New Chinatown, many prominent Chinese merchants from Portland took their businesses and their accumulated wealth to Seattle, San Francisco, and back to China. Others fled to new labor markets in rural Oregon or were given passage home to China by the Chinese government or charitable labor contractors. For those who stayed and for new Chinese immigrants arriving after 1904, the best option was to relocate to New Chinatown, which was reinforced by the construction of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) building in 1911.

As old businesses found new quarters, new businesses proliferated, and family, clan, district, and political associations began to establish headquarters in New Chinatown, the district expanded beyond NW 4th Avenue, west to NW 6th Avenue and east to NW 3rd Avenue, areas which also housed Japanese residents and businesses, as well as Jewish and Greek businesses. For the Chinese living east and west of NW 4th Avenue, as well as on the east-west streets, housing often had to be carved from within family businesses, usually as an apartment behind the store on the ground level and/or as a loft built mid floor to serve as storage and sleeping quarters.

Though sharing an overlapping boundary north of West Burnside Street, Japantown residents’ housing needs and solutions were different from the Chinese. Unlike the punitive restrictions placed on Chinese immigration during the long Exclusion era, Japanese immigrants were not restricted by nationality, class, or gender, meaning that both Japanese merchants and workers, including farmers, were allowed to bring wives and families to the United States until Immigration Act of 1924. As a result, the gender ratio in Japantown was much closer to equal than was the case for New Chinatown. It also meant that Japantown had many large families in need of housing. The solution for the Japanese to the persistent housing shortage in the district was to assume the management of residential hotels. In exchange for the grueling and gritty work of looking after

9 Ibid., 8-14.
10 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
day laborers and pensioners, Japanese hotel managers’ families were provided with apartments in one of many two- and three-story residential hotels within district that were built in the first two decades of the twentieth century to accommodate incoming workers.

Between 1910 and 1940, both New Chinatown and Japantown developed into thriving ethnic communities. With the rise of Japanese families in the early 1920s, Japantown grew to become the heart of Portland’s Japanese community. Over time, this growth included hotels, bath houses, laundries, Japanese groceries, restaurants, gambling halls, doctors and dentists, and Buddhist and Christian churches. Other institutions and actives included a Japanese newspaper, sports teams, and Boy Scout troop. The district also hosted a Japanese Hotel Association which had more than 100 members and a Japanese language school. One account found that “after a full day attending public school, the students spent two hours each weekday, as well as Saturday morning, in Japanese school.” With a concentration of over 100 Japanese businesses located within a six or eight block area, by 1940, Japantown had “evolved into a self-sufficient, Japanese-speaking community,” which not only provide services to early immigrants, but also “the greater Japanese community throughout Oregon.”

The Japantown which many called home disappeared in the spring of 1942, suddenly and involuntarily. After the Japanese government attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, many Japanese throughout the West Coast became subject to instant discrimination. In 1942, Executive Order 9066 required that “all persons of Japanese ancestry were removed from the West Coast and placed into concentration camps.” In early May of that year, notices were posted throughout Japantown giving Japanese citizens only two weeks to gather their belongings to one suitcase and report to the a government Assembly Center in North Portland. Overnight, Japantown was vacated leaving a lasting impact on its viability. After the War, some Japanese returned to Portland and Japantown to manage residential hotels in the 1950s, however many left the West Coast altogether. Other organizations, such as the Japanese American Citizen League, Japanese Ancestral Society, as well as Japanese restaurants and businesses have also returned to Japantown. More recently, the establishment of the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center and the creation of the Japanese-American Historical Plaza in 1990 continue to express Japantown’s heritage.

Beginning around the same time, New Chinatown, like Japantown, also experienced a decline in residents, businesses, and associations, which once made it a vibrant community. Beginning with the passing of the Magnuson Act of 1943, which repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and allowed resident Chinese and Chinese Americans to become naturalized citizens and buy property, families living in New Chinatown began in earnest to look for homes in southeast Portland’s Ladd’s Addition. Over the next 50 years housing needs would continue to precipitate outmigration of resident families from New Chinatown, primarily to southeast and northeast Portland where a secondary Chinese business district developed along SE 82nd Street beginning in the 1950. However, New Chinatown remained the Chinese business and cultural center of Portland for years as many Chinese and Chinese-Americans became first time property and business owners during the 1940s to 1970s. Nevertheless, social and economic factors such as a greater acceptance of Chinese during World War II

16 Ibid.
19 Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis, Beyond the Gate: A Tale of Portland’s Historic Chinatowns.
due to China’s alliance with the United States, the growth of middle class Chinese families and an emergent Chinese-American identity, the impact of both the Great Depression and the World War II on New Chinatown’s aging building stock, and changes in occupational and business opportunities, have unmistakably transformed New Chinatown.

Overall, both New Chinatown and Japantown were always fragile constructions, where both groups struggled to gain a livelihood due to the social and economic environment during the district’s period of significance (1880-1943). In response to racial discrimination, limited housing particularly for large families, and a lack of jobs outside of New Chinatown and Japantown, these two communities made ethnically distinctive adaptations to their environment, established a community, and created a home we now call the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.

**Urban and Architectural Character**

The National Park Service listed New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District in the National Register for multiple reasons, including its multiethnic heritage, industry, and architecture. Of these three, its retention of early 20th-century architecture and 19th-century development most clearly defines its urban character. Architecturally, the district is defined by three contributing styles common during its period of significance (1880-1943). These styles include 20th Century Commercial, which is the most prominent, Italianate, and Moderne. Other styles and sub-styles found within the district include Richardsonian Romanesque and Mission Revival. In addition to these historic styles, new development and alterations to contributing and non-contributing resources have also added to the architectural diversity found within this district. However, though the district consists of new and historic architecture, which now spans three centuries, its overall character is derived from its three primary contributing styles. Collectively, these three styles make up three-fourths of all buildings within the district and all of those buildings designated as contributing, giving the district an underlying stylistic uniformity. Most of the 20th Century Commercial-style buildings and the one Moderne building occupy a quarter-block (100’ x 100’) footprint and range in height from one to seven stories. Italianate style buildings have smaller footprints, but on average are three stories tall. The most common exterior building materials used within the district is brick in widely varying color ranges and concrete stucco.

In addition to the contributing architectural styles themselves, the Chinese and Japanese communities within the district uniquely shaped its physical character, though not necessarily in overt manner. Many times, when buildings were occupied by, constructed for, or by Asian owners, little to no permanent exterior design elements were used to identify the Chinese or Japanese community. Traditionally, the buildings were built in one of the three contributing styles, most commonly 20th Century Commercial. However, with time and the development of the district into a multiethnic community, cultural adaptations were made to the buildings to reflect Asian heritage, particularly Chinese. Using the existing built environment as a form of expression, it was not uncommon for Chinese occupants to apply or repurpose upper-level wrought-iron balconies as extended living space or gardens, or alter existing storefronts with signage or cloth awnings. Other vernacular adaptations to the existing buildings within the district included the use of hanging lanterns, the application of long horizontal arched awnings at the upper levels, the flying of political flags, the addition of signs and shrines with Asian characters, and the removal of upper-level walls or windows to create recessed balconies, as well as other cultural adaptations. Derived from regional architectural practices retained from China, many of the buildings within the district had an order of storefront commercial at the ground floor, social or association spaces at the second floors, and living quarters at the top floors. This hierarchy aligned with the placement of signage, exterior and recessed balconies, and shrines. Architecturally, balcony spaces were meant to help keep interiors cool during the summer and warm in the winters. They also allowed for residents to hang dry their clothes in an urban setting, provided space for children to play, and created places for households to worship.20 Collectively, these smaller-scale cultural alterations have contributed to the district’s architectural

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character, which has helped to not only define the district, but also express its cultural heritage. Physical adaptations that expressed a Japanese cultural influence are not obvious today, although the added signs advertising Japanese-owned businesses or restaurants used Japanese characters. Most of the changes to buildings that occurred prior to 1942 in Japantown were interior, such as the bathhouses in the basements of several hotels.

Today, the character of the district can also be described as highly urban, with existing buildings constructed to the right-of-way lot line. Though there are gaps in the street façades on many blocks, for the most part the vacant parcels are limited to a quarter block. Currently there are two exceptions; one at Block 25 in the northeast corner of the district, where almost 75% of the block is vacant; and the other at Block 33, bounded by NW 4th and 5th Avenues, and NW Couch and Davis Streets, which is a surface parking lot across its entirety.

Street, Lot, and Block Patterns

The site of the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District was originally owned by Captain John H. Couch as part of his 640-acre land claim that stretched one mile north of West Burnside Street and one mile west of the Willamette River to Northwest 20th Avenue. Beginning in 1850 as part of a multiphase project, Couch platted his land in a traditional grid plan with streets oriented to true north.

Located in the southeast corner of Couch’s Addition, the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District site was originally comprised of 200-foot square blocks surrounded by 60-foot wide streets. Though this spatial framework continues to define the district, changes along West Burnside Street and NW Glisan Street have altered its once uniform block and street pattern. In 1931, West Burnside was widened from its original 60-foot width, to approximately 100 feet. This widening has resulted in the reduction of the original 200-foot blocks immediately north of West Burnside Street by 20 feet. Similarly, the widening of NW Glisan between NW 4th and 3rd Avenues from 60 feet to approximately 80 feet by 1933 also changed the district’s street pattern.

Within the district, the 200-foot blocks also experienced developmental changes over time. Historically, the block lots were divided into halves, quarters, eights, and sixteenths, in addition to having a wide variety of building types. According to Sanborn fire insurance maps, the district’s blocks in 1889 featured single dwellings, storefront businesses, and vacant lots, which commonly occupied one lot and in some cases an entire block. By 1901, the density of the district had increased with the continued development and infill of its existing blocks, which included multiple storefront businesses, boarding houses, and schools in addition to non-commercial or domestic building types, such as warehouses and stables. By 1908, few if any vacant lots remained within the district, with most lots occupied by larger quarter and half-block buildings. In cases where quarter and half-block buildings were absent, blocks were densely infilled; however some still featured single dwellings. By 1924, blocks within the district were almost exclusively developed with quarter-block and half-block buildings, many of which continue to define the district’s built environment today.

Over time, the district’s historic block, lot, and street pattern, and collection of one- to seven-story buildings created a streetscape that has helped define its urban character. Today, this character and historic framework remain evident even though changes, such as the increase of vacant lots and the construction of a MAX light rail line on NW 5th Avenue, have altered its historic character slightly.

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Throughout the history of the district, design and material characteristics of its streetscapes and public realm, like the district itself, have evolved. These elements including paving materials, sidewalk characteristics, street lighting, signage, awnings, balconies, landscape features, public art, and cultural adaptations gave pattern and texture to the district’s urban form.

Some of the first streets within the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District were paved with macadam or broken stone, stone blocks, and asphalt. According to the 1894 Paving Map of Portland, macadam was used on NW 4th and 5th Avenues, stone block paving was used on NW Glisan Street, and asphalt was used on NW 3rd Avenue. By 1913, the district’s stone block streets were shared with multiple streetcar lines on NW 3rd Avenue and West Burnside Street, and an Oregon & California Railroad line on NW 4th Avenue. By the early 1920s, many of the streets were still constructed of cobblestone; however adjacent streets, such as NW 2nd Street, were smoothly paved with asphalt or rolled aggregate and oil, which were common during the time. Asphalt paved streets were not exclusively used within the district until the 1940s. With the rise of asphalt paving and automobile use, the streetcars that ran through the district as early as the 1890s, became obsolete by the 1950s when streetcar lines were converted to bus routes and the tracks were paved over. In 2009, a MAX light rail line was constructed on NW 5th Avenue, giving the district its first rail transit in over fifty years. The remaining streets within the district are finished with asphalt and include painted crosswalks.

In the early 1900s, sidewalks within the district were wide and constructed of concrete. Though the material and overall dimensions of the sidewalks have not changed much, other elements and features located on the sidewalks have. Early sidewalks featured metal hitching posts, wood telephone poles, streetcar poles, lantern posts, and sidewalk elevators, as well as metal lamp posts. By 1920, sidewalks featured wood benches, vending carts and displays, metal street clocks, and fire hydrants. Years later, metal traffic signals, pedestrian walk signs, and parking meters were installed throughout. Over time, the district’s sidewalks have lost historic elements such as street clocks and hitching posts. Currently, sidewalks within the district are constructed out of concrete and feature widened or rounded corners with ramps. Sidewalks located on NW 5th Avenue feature brick pavers and were installed as part of the MAX light rail transit corridor. Additionally, sidewalks include wayfinding signs, ATM machines, metal and wood benches, bike racks, pay phones, trash receptacles, traffic signals, pedestrian walk signals, and bus stops.

Lighting within the district has also changed over time. Some early turn-of-the-century lighting fixtures included metal lamp posts topped with five glass globes and street lanterns hung from wood poles. In 1914, metal lighted archways known as the Great Light Way were installed at each intersection on NW 3rd Avenue in an attempt by boosters to retain Portland’s commercial center near the Willamette River. These archways supported a trolley car system and featured a centralized glass globe fixture above the street, light bulbs, and globe light fixtures atop each their concrete column bases at the pedestrian level. However, due to street widening projects and the Depression the lighted archways were removed. By 1927, metal double headed lamps were installed throughout the district, most likely replacing gas lamps, which were once located along NW 4th Avenue. In addition to the

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24 Ibid.
double-headed lamps, large cantilevered street lights arrived in 1970. At this time, the wood telephone and lamp posts were removed. Other lighting elements found within the district include suspended traffic signals, lighted billboards, and signage. The district currently features historic double-headed metal street lamps, which are painted red within the district boundary, metal cantilevered traffic signals at major intersections along NW 3rd Avenue, and metal traffic signal posts with pedestrian walk signs on NW 5th Avenue.

Historic building elements found within the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic district included signs, awnings, balconies, and other cultural adaptations. The earliest signs, which can still be seen in many places, were painted signs typically on the sides of buildings along the top for visibility. Attached signs were typically located above the first-level store fronts either horizontally or vertically. In some cases, signage was installed as high as the building s cornice. By 1913, large vertical signs were installed at the corners of many buildings. Around this time, adaptations by Chinese residents within the district could also be observed on building façades. Many of these cultural adaptations no longer exist, but for a handful of examples. Other sign types such as painted signs on building walls, larger fluorescent internally lit signs, and neon were used within the district. The district also included semi-uniform cloth awnings at the storefront level of many buildings, which created a canopy over the concrete sidewalk. By 1927, metal fire escapes were also installed on building façades. Many of these were repurposed to serve as balcony spaces for the users of the buildings. Today, the district has retained some original building elements first introduced during its period of significance, such as fire escapes, large signs, and flag poles. However, since 1943 the district has also seen the introduction of new streetscape elements such as illuminated boxed signs and metal cantilevered awnings.

Landscape features within the district were historically limited. Around 1915, mature trees were located on NW 4th Avenue; however, after the construction of dense development, historic images show few landscape elements. By 1969, cherry trees were planted around Block 33, which at that time was already a vacant lot. Today, the district includes street trees, saplings, and bushes in rectangular and round grade-level planters with and without metal grills, and rectangular stone planters with vegetation and Chinese palm trees within its Festival Streets, on NW Davis and on NW Flanders.

Prior to the district’s listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, changes were made to incorporate and support its cultural heritage. These changes include the construction of the Chinatown Gate at NW 4th Avenue and West Burnside Street, the addition of bilingual street signs, and painted street lamps in the 1980s. More recent elements include public art pieces, such as the Festival Streets and installation of bronze plaques within masonry pavers throughout the district. The restoration of the Hung Far Low sign at the corner of NW 4th Avenue and NW Couch Street and the addition of Chinese characters around door openings and underneath cornice lines of several buildings also reinforce the continued efforts to preserve the district’s cultural significance.

Based on their proximity, function, and concentration of different ethnic communities, NW 3rd, 4th, and 5th Avenues within the district each retain different cultural histories and somewhat differing characters. Located in the east of the district, NW 3rd Avenue shares its history with the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District through its cast-iron storefront façades and Italianate buildings. It also holds significant cultural importance to the Japanese community. Historically, NW 3rd Avenue held a high concentration of Japanese operated businesses, such as hotels, retail, restaurants, and laundries. Though the New Chinatown and Japantown boundaries were intertwined, each community had cultural cores that still exist today. For the Chinese community, NW 4th Avenue represented the heart of the New Chinatown. Like NW 3rd Avenue for the Japanese community, NW 4th Avenue reflected a high concentration of Chinese associations, clubs, businesses, restaurants, and laundries. Today, NW 4th Avenue continues to act as a significant thoroughfare for the Chinese community as it now includes the Chinatown Gate, cherry trees, and existing Chinese associations and businesses. Located one block west, NW 5th Avenue exhibits a different history. Historically, NW 5th Avenue was a concentrated center of industrial and commercial uses. Though the Chinese and Japanese communities owned businesses along NW 5th Avenue, it never held the focus of either culture like NW 3rd and 4th Avenues did and, to some extent, still to do. The architecture along NW 5th Avenue, which includes the tallest contributing buildings within the district, continues to illustrate its historic light industrial and commercial uses.
Overall, the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District streetscape elements have evolved and endured over time. Though many original elements have been lost, altered, or changed, the streetscapes retain much of their integrity through their historic and culturally significant buildings, spaces, relationships, and historic elements.

*Styles of Contributing Buildings in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District*

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is architecturally defined by three contributing architectural styles: 20th Century Commercial, Italianate, and Moderne. Though the district currently includes other historic and contemporary styles, these three styles represent all of the district’s twenty-six contributing buildings, which include twenty-two 20th Century Commercial-style buildings, three Italianate-style buildings, and one Moderne-style building.

![New Chinatown/Japantown Contributing Buildings Style Map](image)
20th Century Commercial

Twentieth Century Commercial-style architecture was commonly constructed throughout the United States from 1890 to 1920. Typical design characteristics of 20th Century Commercial-style architecture include simple, forms of one to four stories, high ground floor storefronts, brick and masonry façades, corbelled cornices, and flat roofs with parapets. Other common features include recessed entrances, translucent window and door transoms over the storefronts, decorative brick work, and symmetrical fenestration. 20th Century Commercial-style buildings can have other stylistic influences added, or appear in a more industrial or warehouse building type. Some examples within the district include the Blanchet House (c1905), the Pallay Building (1908), the Royal Palm Hotel (1913), the Hung Far Low Building (1916), and the Goldsmith Co. (1924).
Italianate-style architecture was common throughout the United States from 1840 to 1885. Traditional architectural design characteristics of Italianate architecture include simple forms of two to four stories, deep recessed windows and doors, brick and stucco, tall, narrow arched windows with hood molds, frames, and bracketed or pedimented crowns, quoins, belt courses, and a low-pitched or flat roof with parapet. Other features and details include prominent bracketed cornices with wide overhanging eaves and elaborate double-door entrances with detailed surrounds. Examples within the district include the Society Hotel (1881), the Sinnot House (1883), and the Hip Sing Association (1889).
Moderne or Streamline Moderne was a popular architectural style within the United States from 1930 to 1955. Typical architectural features of Moderne-style architecture include horizontal massing, cubic forms with flat walls finished with concrete or stucco, asymmetrical façades, metal framed windows arranged in a horizontal band, and flat roofs with small parapets. Other common design characteristics include cantilevered awnings and glass brick. The one example within the district is the Zellerbach Paper Co. (1940).
Cultural adaptations to existing buildings within the district were a common and significant expression of Asian culture during its period of significance. These adaptations were predominantly conducted by Chinese occupants and owners, and included the repurposing or installation of upper-level wrought-iron balconies as extended living space or gardens, altering existing storefronts with signage or cloth awnings, the addition of lanterns, the application of arched horizontal belt awnings at the upper levels, displaying of political flags, and the creation of signs and shrines with Asian characters.
Change and Ethnic and Cultural Impacts

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District reflects successive layers of development, change, and the cultural heritage of more than one immigrant community. As such, its significance cannot be tied to any one moment in time or even to one ethnic group. Since 1989, after the district was placed on the National Register, new information and continued research on the district has uncovered significant dates, associations, and other elements that the original nomination lacked. This contextual background and history is an important part of the significance of the district, though not well covered in the nomination.

In addition to our fuller understanding of the history of the district, the district itself has also continued to change. Some of these changes, though not yet historic, have gained cultural importance to the Chinese community, such as the Chinatown Gate.

According to the National Register nomination, "The character of Chinatown has changed as past traditions are absorbed into the present. The Chinatown of a century ago with its unusual sights, sounds, and smells has been replaced with a more integrated approach to life. Traditional needs for social and familial associations have diminished as Chinese Americans have been assimilated into the mainstream of American life and institutions." Though this describes a specific time in the district, it also identifies the constant evolution of place and that with each era of New Chinatown/Japantown comes an element of significance and cultural importance.

The New Chinatown/Japantown Cultural Affiliation Maps portray two periods within the district’s period of significance in addition to new elements added to the district after 1943. The maps show an association with each of the building within the district from 1880-present. Though, affiliations have changed over time, and the 1943-Present map may not represent today cultural landscape exactly, the identification of affiliation is true to a time within that each period and district. For many, these buildings still retain cultural importance regardless of their existing ownership or function. Furthermore, these maps also show the drastic changes to the district’s Chinese and Japanese affiliation after 1943.

25 Northwest Heritage Property Associates, 8-16.
New Chinatown/Japantown Cultural Affiliation Map (1880-1943)
Chapter 3, Design Guidelines

There are four categories of guidelines in the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines. Not all projects will use all guidelines. Each category explains when to use those guidelines. For projects in the Skidmore Old Town Historic District overlap area, the Skidmore Old Town Historic District Design Guidelines will apply, as well as New Chinatown/ Japantown guidelines A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, A9, and B3. All projects will concurrently use the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines.

A. General Guidelines

These guidelines apply to all exterior alterations, additions, or other exterior projects that change the built environment in the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District (except in the overlap area with the Skidmore Old Town Historic District). Additional categories of New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines are likely to apply depending on the project scope.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>This guideline may be accomplished by...</th>
<th>Illustrative Photo/ Graphic and block number if within New Chinatown/ Japantown</th>
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<tr>
<td>A1.</td>
<td>Use durable, high-quality materials and finishes for new construction or additions. Consider brick, masonry, or painted stucco finishes for the primary exterior surfaces in the District. Brick patterns and depth details at window heads and cornices are encouraged.</td>
<td>• Providing designs that incorporate brick patterning, corbelling, insets and projections, or other traditional brickwork details. Many of these details are achievable in modern brick veneer construction. Brick size and texture, joint width, and other small-scale design features can provide a sense of the craftsmanship and texture of the older buildings.</td>
<td>Provide designs that incorporate brick patterning, corbelling, insets and projections, or other traditional brickwork details. Many of these details are achievable in modern brick veneer construction. Brick size and texture, joint width, and other small-scale design features can provide a sense of the craftsmanship and texture of the older buildings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In traditional Chinese architecture, materials such as wood, glazed terra cotta, ceramic tile, and stone were common, but it is important to note that these materials do not appear in any quantity in the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District. Rather, for projects seeking to incorporate authentic Chinese details, these materials should be used more as accents within the more typical “field” materials of the District, which include brick, masonry, and concrete stucco. Contemporary materials are also encouraged as accents, especially if expressing a cultural design influence. Color alone may also be used to suggest a Chinese cultural influence or affiliation. Chinese architecture historically tends towards bolder colors such as yellow, red, green, or polychrome than the muted palette of late 19th Century and early 20th Century American architecture.</td>
<td>• Using smooth concrete stucco finishes, rather than textured or noticeably “sanded.” • Using durable and high-quality contemporary materials such as glass, and steel as accents in combination with traditional materials such as masonry or concrete stucco. • Avoiding the use of paint on previously unpainted brick or masonry. Removal of</td>
<td>Using smooth concrete stucco finishes, rather than textured or noticeably “sanded.” Using durable and high-quality contemporary materials such as glass, and steel as accents in combination with traditional materials such as masonry or concrete stucco. Avoiding the use of paint on previously unpainted brick or masonry. Removal of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In historic Japanese urban architecture, wood was by far the most predominant material, but brick and concrete were also commonly used by the mid 1800s. A more muted, earth-tone range of natural materials, or dark wood contrasted with very</td>
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Avoid painting brick, but if existing brick is fully painted, as at the Columbia River Ship Supply building, repainting is fine.
light or white areas, were typical Japanese color palettes. Contemporary materials are also encouraged at the detail level, especially if used to express an Asian design influence. Paint to reveal originally exposed surfaces is encouraged, but should be undertaken by gentle means.

- Using wood in storefronts, signs, or other accents

This eye clinic building in Columbus OH uses multiple brick details to create a sense of texture, craft, and detail. (Belden Brick website image)

| A2. Authentic design expressions of an Asian cultural group with ties to the District are encouraged, but not required, for new construction, new additions, or minor alteration projects. | The existing architecture of the New Chinatown/ Japantown consists almost entirely of Western architectural styles. Many of the older buildings show changes made over time, some of which illustrate a Chinese cultural influence. There are also more recent additions to the District such as the Tuck Lung Building (1977) which was constructed in a hybrid style; and the Chinatown Gate itself (1989) which was constructed in an authentic Chinese architectural style. Notably, this is the only structure within the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District which is entirely Chinese in its architectural expression. New construction or additions in the District may show a cultural influence or affiliation through contemporary, authentic details incorporated into a historic Western style found in the District. However, Asian motifs or details are not required. Examples of details showing a Japanese influence might include contrasting dark and white materials, a focus on the material or textural quality of architectural surfaces, signs with Japanese characters, and an overall simplicity of forms and planes. Chinese-influenced details or embellishments might include curved canopies above the ground floor level, flags or banners, signs with Chinese characters, decorative tile and metalwork, and upper-level balconies. |
| --- |
| Using contemporary, but compatible, materials or colors to evoke a connection to Chinese or Japanese architecture. Using contemporary, but compatible, details to evoke a connection to Chinese or Japanese architecture. Adding removable design elements to either new or existing buildings which reflect a Chinese or Japanese affiliation. These elements may include signs, decorative panels or entry surrounds, banners, upper-level planter boxes, and other embellishments. |
| The CCBA building was constructed in 1911 and is a good example of a 20th Century Commercial style building with details influenced by Chinese architecture. |
| This contemporary building in Tehran (Checker Box office complex by Arsh Design) uses sliding wood screens on the exterior, a sunshading device which also recalls traditional Japanese screen walls. |
The storefront and parapet detailing on this building on block 27 adds colorful, rich detail to the street environment.

The Chinese Freemasons Building in Vancouver BC shows Chinese-influenced recessed balconies on one façade. (Image from Canada’s Historic Places website)

Recessed horizontal balconies and the use of materials such as tile add culturally-derived details to a new design inspired by the 20th Century Commercial style.
A3. Use signs to help preserve the District’s character. Design dimensional, multi-part signs compatible with the District. Larger projecting signs than allowed by code standards are encouraged along 3rd and 4th Avenues in the District.

Retain historic faded painted signs where practical, but other large flat wall signs are discouraged, unless re-establishing a historic painted wall sign.

Size and place signs and their structural support systems so that significant architectural or historical features of Contributing buildings are not concealed or disfigured.

The New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District represents the only Historic District in Portland nominated primarily for its cultural importance. As one of the most visible representations of the Japanese or Chinese culture, signs can have a meaningful impact in preserving the district’s character. Along 4th Avenue, the “heart” of New Chinatown and the location of the Chinatown Gate, signs with an Asian character and a noticeable size will help to provide the ambience of a unique district. Along 3rd Avenue, which was at one time the center of Japantown and also the location of the Great Light Way archways, large projecting signs can again help to signify the District and support its desired character.

Projecting signs in particular bring a sense of the unique additive detailing prevalent in the District. The Portland Zoning Code allows at least 32 sf of building-face sign area per tenant, but projecting signs are limited by code to no more than 30 sf in the right-of-way. 3-dimensional, ornate or multi-part projecting signs in the District are encouraged, and those types of projecting signs in sizes larger than allowed by the sign code are specifically encouraged along 3rd and 4th Avenues. Signs may be illuminated, though the materials and construction method of the sign is important. Plastic should not be the primary “face” material of the sign, but should be used with metal, neon, glass, and/or other materials in a layered design.

Historic faded signs on brick building sides contribute also to the historical character of the District and should be retained as much as possible. Large new flat wall signs are discouraged.

- Creating new dimensional projecting signs throughout the district.
- At locations along 3rd and 4th Avenue, creating new dimensional projecting signs that are potentially larger than allowed by code.

Retain faded painted signs in the District.

This sculptural, projecting sign on NW 3rd Avenue is 40 sf in area. Signs of this size and quality are encouraged.

This 2006 image of Chinatown in Philadelphia shows how a multitude of projecting signs on the more muted brick buildings provides a sense of visual interest and excitement.
A4. Provide researched history plaques or information at the ground floor level of sites that have or had a Contributing or culturally significant building.

For a map of properties in the District that are known to be culturally significant, see page x at the end of Chapter 2. At these properties, recognition of the important and interesting background of the building (or of a building no longer on the site) will help to preserve these stories for the next generation. The stories or historic background may be told by imagery, text, and/or date stamped cornerstone, but information should be readable from the public right-of-way.

Use sources for research such as the Historic District Nomination, books included in the Chapter 2 bibliography of this document, and other historical information and archives.

- Stamping the concrete base or an inserted concrete marker with the date a new building or addition was constructed.

A5. Balconies facing the street are encouraged if compatible with the building's style. Projecting or recessed horizontally-oriented balconies should be visually open, with metal railings.

Recessed balconies are a common feature of Chinese regional architecture. During the early 1900s, additive balconies, repurposed fire escapes, and alterations creating horizontal building recesses above the street level created a series of open-air living spaces in the District. Most of these no longer exist.

New balconies on existing, even on Contributing, buildings may be added if appropriate to the style of the building. Generally, buildings with relatively flat, unornamented surfaces would be compatible with added balconies. Balconies at new construction are encouraged in order to bring more life to the street environment. Both recessed and projecting balconies should incorporate metal railings rather than glass.

- Designing horizontal recesses in a building façade, similar to the CCBA, rather than vertical “slots” as in the Old Town Lofts development.

A6. Focus exterior lighting on the pedestrian environment. Include muted upper-level spot lighting to highlight architectural features, but not to wash large areas or as a linear feature.

Lighting in the District was historically not restrained, though light fixtures did not provide nearly the level of illumination that modern fixtures do. Lighting was focused on the street-level environment, however, with the exception of signs, some of which were projecting or affixed at the roof. New light fixtures or illuminated features should continue to be focused on the ground floor and street level of buildings. Upper-level lighting may highlight certain architectural features of the building, but should not extend along the full length of a cornice or other linear feature. Signs may also be illuminated (see sign guideline, A3).

- Including pedestrian-scale lights in a regular rhythm along the storefront-level building façade.
- Using light fixtures that are compatible with the character of the Historic District
- Selectively lighting outstanding architectural features or details on older buildings.
A7. New canopies or awnings of glass and metal, canvas, or other durable materials are encouraged.

Fit new ground floor awnings or canopies within the width of the storefront bay. If possible, keep awning heights below the transom. Maintain visually open awning ends to preserve a pedestrian view along the sidewalk.

New canopies or awnings at the ground floor level of buildings should be designed specifically to the size of the storefront or entry opening. Awnings were historically cloth awnings at storefront bays, which could be extended out or pulled in depending on conditions. Holding awnings or canopies within each storefront bay preserves the character of the District by ensuring that elements within the pedestrian environment in New Chinatown/Japantown are textural, varied, small in scale, and occurring at a regular rhythm. Designs should be open at ends so views along the direction of travel are not blocked. Avoid long canopies covering multiple storefront (ground floor) bay openings.

- Designing canopies which project out to create a series of additive horizontal elements above the sidewalk.

These projecting awnings at block 28 allow the transom windows to remain visible.

A8. Hide rooftop mechanical or equipment (HVAC, solar arrays, antennas, etc) from the right-of-way by pushing it back from street-facing roof edges, or at new construction or new additions, by designing the building with a compatible parapet edge.

Rooftop equipment should not be visible, or be only slightly visible, from the right-of-way. New construction or new addition projects have the opportunity to create a parapet condition, enabling rooftop mechanical equipment to be closer to the roof edge without being seen.

For new construction or new additions, the roofscape should be carefully designed and considered. Corral mechanical units into one zone or area, and consider opportunities to provide rooftop uses such as green roofs or solar panels where these structures would not have an impact on views from the right-of-way.

- Considering mechanical equipment, elevator over-runs, and other rooftop elements in the initial design of a new building or an addition. These elements can be gathered together away from the street-fronting roof edges, and/or can be screened by a building parapet.
- Locate rooftop equipment additions with sightlines from the ground plane in mind, to avoid visibility.

These “before” and “after” images of a historic building show an added solar panel array that was lowered to avoid visibility (Image National Park Service).

Washington High School redevelopment drawing (courtesy of Venerable Properties) showing new mechanical and elevator over-runs set back from the street-facing roof edge.
A9. Reflect the desired character of the District when making improvements in the right-of-way and at exterior walking surfaces that are extensions of the sidewalk.

Where buildings face Festival Streets, consider the design of the right-of-way elements in building facades (whether new or existing buildings) and allow for compatibly-scaled openings.

Where the lower floors of buildings face 4th Avenue, consider creating mirroring form and scale elements across the street.

<p>| Streetscapes in this urban historic District are as important as buildings in setting and defining the District’s character. Streetscapes are the District’s only public open spaces both historically and currently. Most sidewalks in the District will reflect the standard concrete pattern and finish. On private property, where there are entry recesses or other extensions of the sidewalk surface, the use of a material at the walking surface such as mosaic tile, terrazzo, or masonry alone or in combination with concrete, is encouraged. Retain existing stepped-up stone bases at historic storefronts where possible. At Festival streets especially, the design, materials, and placement of raised planters and art creates opportunities for buildings to respond to these special features. Creating openings facing the Festival streets and encouraging new uses to spill out into these special areas will support varied uses and increased vitality within the District. At 4th Avenue, which historically is the center of Chinatown, the Chinatown gate defines one end of the streetscape. Consider symmetrical responses at the first several floor levels across the 4th Avenue spine. These elements, which might include strong cornice lines at the same height, signs of about the same size and placement, projecting sunscreen elements, or other features, will reinforce the importance of the 4th Avenue view corridor and streetscape and enliven its character by further additive elements. 5th Avenue reflects the City’s light rail street standards, with brick sidewalks and large round planters. Throughout the District, utility lines are appropriately buried rather than overhead, and other utility meters and boxes should also be kept below-grade. | Creating textural interest and a sense of District continuity by giving design attention and material compatibility to the walking surface, whether on private property or in the right-of-way. Acknowledging the right to accessibility while retaining historic step-up entries and surfaces where possible. Creating new opportunities for buildings with frontage onto Festival streets to open up to those streets, ensuring that the openings are compatible with the existing architecture of the building. Using special threshold surface materials and treatments that reflect the unique character of the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, such as masonry, tile, or terrazzo. Where appropriate, mirroring strong projecting elements fronting 4th Avenue in development or alterations across the street. | This standard vault surface on Block 27 would better enhance the qualities of the district if it were darker (non-shiny) with a different pattern. Festival street art and planter area This recessed entry at the Royal Palm Hotel building is finished with tile. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>A10. If security features are desired, carefully integrate such features with the building. Moveable gates or roll-down doors are preferred to minimize the visual impact on storefronts during the day. Provide a motion sensor for safety lighting to avoid all-night illumination.</th>
<th>As a result of security concerns, some building owners and tenants in the District have installed security features such as roll-down gates, window grilles, and flood lighting. These features can have a negative impact on the character of the District. Security gates or grilles should open during the day, rather than being permanently affixed.</th>
<th>This expanding metal gate at Block 29 is an example of a security feature that negatively impacts the pedestrian environment because it is permanently closed.</th>
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<tr>
<td>A11. Visually minimize the size and expression of garage entries, and keep loading in the right-of-way, rather than on site, as much as possible. Parking is likely to remain an important amenity in the District for the foreseeable future. Though off-street parking was not typically found in the District through 1943 (the end of the period of significance), other auto-related uses such as garages became increasingly common in the late 1910s into the 1930s. Many buildings included vehicular openings which were the same size as storefront bays, and in the same pattern. New garage openings should follow this strategy as much as possible, and should include a door which can be closed to limit pedestrian views into a dark car ramp or into a brightly lit parking garage.</td>
<td>• Maintaining a similar size opening for garage entries as the building’s storefront openings. • Ensuring that any on-site loading spaces are not visually open to the sidewalk. If the loading space is on site, it should have a door along the sidewalk similar to a garage opening. • Using translucent materials in garage doors to prevent direct views of interior light fixtures.</td>
<td>The Blanchet Hospitality House building on block 25 includes doors to the garage with perforated metal panels along the bottom and translucent panels above.</td>
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<td>A12. Incorporate an architectural edge along the sidewalk for any surface parking or off-street loading areas. Incorporate active uses such as food carts along the sidewalk wall, open parking or loading areas must include a fencing or architectural edge along the right-of-way. Food carts or other temporary active uses may be used as part of the edge. Bamboo or wood designs that emphasize the cultural character of the district are strongly encouraged.</td>
<td>In order to provide a sense of a street wall, open parking or loading areas must include a fencing or architectural edge along the right-of-way. Food carts or other temporary active uses may be used as part of the edge. Bamboo or wood designs that emphasize the cultural character of the district are strongly encouraged.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
B. Guidelines for Alterations

These guidelines are to be used for projects that make changes to the exterior of existing buildings in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, but do not increase the existing building’s height or size. General guidelines (A) will also apply, and potentially other New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines depending on the project scope.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
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<tr>
<td>B1. Retain the original character-defining features of the building when making alterations. If replacing a missing feature (such as a cornice), use historic evidence as a basis for the design.</td>
<td>Character-defining features of each Contributing style in the district are illustrated in Chapter 2. (Illustrated features may not exactly correspond to the specific building to be altered, but should be used as a general guide). These important features should be preserved as much as possible because they are “markers” defining the style and often the era of construction of the building. If the building is not Contributing within the District, its important stylistic features should be retained. In cases where historic features have deteriorated to the point where repair is not feasible and replacement is necessary, replacement features should be a visual match to the removed features. Cast iron should be retained where it exists. Proposals that seek to replace a missing character-defining feature on a building should use historic photos or drawings as a guide to the design. If no historic evidence is found, a simplified</td>
<td>• Preserving the original building’s most important and character-defining features, such as its multi-pane steel windows, original storefront openings and pattern, or its stepped parapet.</td>
<td>This curved-wall glass block entry is a character-defining feature of the building. It shows the “Moderne” sub-style detailing used on this primarily 20th Century Commercial style building on 4th Avenue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and more contemporary version of the feature might be appropriate.

### B2. Retain any changes to the building that have in themselves acquired historic significance.

Most older buildings have exterior changes that were made over time. If the changes were made 50 years ago or more, those changes may have acquired historic significance. In the New Chinatown/ Japantown Historic District, historic physical alterations that were made by one of the predominant ethnic communities are an example of changes that should generally be kept to show the building’s history and affiliations and the District's history over time.

![This Italianate building on NW 3rd Avenue retains its added curving canopy across the face of the building. This cultural alteration allowed some weather protection for the balcony (fire escape) below, and has acquired historic significance.](image)

### B3. Design alterations to be respectful of the original style, type, and design of the building. Ensure that architectural elements from other historic building styles or types are not introduced.

Proposed changes to the building should respect the original building style, especially retaining original bays and openings such as the historic storefront width and height.

Features or elements specific to another historic style, even one found in the District, should not be used.

If the building has had an affiliation with one or more of the District’s cultural and ethnic groups, then the owner may express a single cultural affiliation and history through culturally authentic additive details. Such details might include parapet or other rooftop edge detailing, entryway surrounds, projecting metal balconies, signs, and other architectural elements which illustrate or suggest the building’s cultural significance. These details should be identifiable contemporary so as not to create a false sense of historical development.

- Using contemporary building details which tie the building back to its ethnic or cultural history, but don’t create a false sense of that history.

This storefront entry on Block 29 was altered in the 1960s or 1970s. Although this is a radical alteration of a storefront opening, it may be appropriate at a historically and culturally important building entry point.

![This storefront entry on Block 29 was altered in the 1960s or 1970s. Although this is a radical alteration of a storefront opening, it may be appropriate at a historically and culturally important building entry point.](image)
This San Francisco storefront uses wood and geometric styling to reflect a modern Japanese aesthetic (Craig Steely Architecture).

| B4. Historic materials should be retained and repaired (as much as possible). Where necessary, replace historic materials on existing buildings with the same material. |
| Building materials used for alterations should generally be the same as the old materials they are replacing. If there are cost, availability, or other reasons why the material cannot be the same, the new material should visually match the historic material. |

| B5. Keep alterations or new elements visually secondary to the original features of the building. |
| Alterations or new features should be identifiably contemporary and differentiated from the primary building. New features should be secondary to the primary and original building’s design aesthetic. To ensure that newer features do not visually overwhelm the historic building, the added elements should enhance historic features rather than being visual distractions from the historic features of the building. |
| • Designing new features to fit cleanly within existing fenestration  
• Using abstracted forms or details in new features, without ornamentation or excessive detailing  
• Keeping contemporary insertions at a limited size and scope so as not to overwhelm the original features of the building. |

These “before” and “after” views of masonry repair at Washington High School illustrate the visual match of the new material with the historic material.

This modern entry canopy and tenant sign facing 5th Avenue add respectful, yet contemporary details.
### B6. Undertake seismic improvements in the most unobtrusive way possible, limiting visual impacts to the front façade of a building.

There are a number of historic unreinforced masonry structures in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. These buildings may be especially dangerous in a seismic event. Seismic retrofits are therefore critical to the longevity and character of the District. Seismic retrofits with the least visual impact keep metal bracing or shear walls to the interior and away from existing openings, but still allow for desired upgrades to take place.

- Working with existing structural materials to the extent possible.

The seismic retrofit at the Telegram Building in SW Portland added a shear wall at the inside face of the exterior wall, but kept historic window openings clear.

The Overland Warehouse seismic retrofit solution was able to retain existing heavy timber and add metal reinforcements at the timber joints and between the brick walls and the timbers. Photo Emerick Architects

### C. Guidelines for Additions

These guidelines are to be used for projects that add floor area to an existing building in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, as long as the new floor area does not add more than 25 feet of new street façade. (In those cases, guidelines for New Construction (D) will apply rather than Additions guidelines). Additions guidelines are to be used for the new portions of the building, but the Alterations guidelines (B) continue to apply to the existing portions of the building. General guidelines (A) will also apply.
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<td>C1. Ensure that additions are primarily compatible with the original style, form, and massing of the existing building. Design additions to be secondarily compatible with Contributing resources in the overall district.</td>
<td>The design of the new addition should visually relate to the design of the original building, especially if the original building is Contributing in the District. There should be more similarities than differences; in other words the design should be more compatible than differentiated from the original. The design of the addition should take into account first the design of the existing building, and second, the design of the Contributing resources in the District.</td>
<td>• Visually matching most of the original characteristics of the building in the new addition. • Not attempting to replicate highly decorative or detailed elements of the original building in the addition, but providing new elements or details at the new wall areas that reference some of those original details.</td>
<td>The compatible addition to this apartment building uses the same tan brick, horizontal banding, and other features from the original 1914 design. (Image from NPS preservation brief 14)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| C2. Design horizontal additions to Contributing buildings either to appear to be a new building, or as a visually secondary and more contemporary version of the original façade, using highly compatible massing, materials, and design features. | A relatively small-scale addition might continue the overall design, appearance, materials, and patterns of an existing building as long as the new addition defers to the original building. The addition should be visually secondary, and in most cases “quieter” than the primary resource. It is important to acknowledge the need for expanded floor plates in some historic buildings in order to meet modern building, seismic, and fire codes. Horizontal building additions are, in some cases, necessary to allow a historic building to be fully used and preserved. | • Maintaining most of the design characteristics of the original building wall in additions of floor area. • Allowing a very small addition of floor area (such as an added elevator tower on an existing building) to be more contemporary in materials and expression, as long as the new element does not detract from the historic architecture. | The addition to the historic Park Plaza building in Baltimore, on the right, uses proportional windows, a similar color palette, and other features that reflect those of the historic building. (Marks Thomas Architects) |
C3. Design vertical additions to Contributing buildings to limit the visual impact of the addition. Additions should be visually secondary to the primary original building.

   Treat vertical additions to Non-contributing buildings to be compatible with the District as a whole.

Continue the overall structural rhythm from the lower levels into upper-level walls. Retain a visual sense of the vertical structure in upper level wall areas.

Vertical additions should be differentiated from the original building by a change in material or other visual shift, but should recognize and continue the rhythm and proportion of openings or bays below. Because vertical additions can significantly change the character, scale, and proportion of a historic building, additions of a limited height or scale will more easily achieve compatibility with the scale of the Contributing building.

   It is important to acknowledge that the development potential within the District will drive some vertical addition proposals to be more than a single added story. To be successful, the architecture and scale of the new development must defer to the Contributing building. Extending the same wall planes up from the historic building at all sides will not adequately preserve a sense of the building’s original volume.

The District’s overall character is derived from its historic buildings. While vertical additions may be compatible with these older buildings, they should act as a background to the original historic construction.

- Taking advantage of transfer opportunities for sites with a big disparity between the development potential of the site and an existing low historic building. Code-allowed transfers allow for the unused height or bulk to be a commodity for sites outside of the District.
- Setting back the street-facing plane of the addition from the existing street wall. A single-story penthouse addition on an existing multi-story building can be almost invisible from the street plane if set back.
- Visually retaining a sense of the original volume of the building
- Using shifts in material and/or color at the new addition, while continuing other aspects of the building’s design such as the pattern and proportion of openings.
- Keeping or creating a historically appropriate projecting cornice element to define the historic streetwall height

The added set back penthouse level on the historic Telegram Building in SW Portland has a very limited impact on views from the right-of-way.

The added upper levels at the Piggly Wiggly MacMarr building in Denver are stepped back from the historic walls in order to retain the decorative parapet and respect the original volume of the building (image from Flickr-TEMP)
D. Guidelines for New Construction

These guidelines apply to projects that add floor area to an existing building (as long as the area includes at least 25 feet of linear street-facing wall) or to new infill projects in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. If an existing building is to have exterior alterations or additions, then the Alterations guidelines (B) continue to apply to the existing building. General guidelines (A) will also apply.

D1. Design the new structure to be inspired by one of the historic styles found in the District. The new design should be compatible with neighboring Contributing buildings, and may use differentiation to allow the new structure to be a product of its time.

New construction in the Historic District will inevitably contrast somewhat with the older buildings. However, the design of newer buildings should start with a template of a historic style found in the District, in order to keep a high degree of compatibility of overall design in the District. By far, the most prevalent building style in the District is 20th Century Commercial style, also sometimes called “Streetcar-Era Commercial.” This style in particular can tolerate a relatively wide range of expression, as well as more contemporary or ethnically-inspired details. Other styles may also be used as the starting point for the design of new construction.

- Constructing new buildings that are inspired by the defining characteristics of one of the Contributing styles in the District.
- For large additions, using most of the defining characteristics of the original building in the addition.
- Designing new street-facing facades which directly incorporate features of Contributing buildings in the District.

The Mercy Corps Addition (on the right) to the historic Packer Scott Building used the historic scale and massing, cornice form, and window proportion of the original building. The new façade uses a red terra cotta color scheme.
The design of new construction should not overly draw attention away from the historic buildings in the District.

D2. Reflect the form and proportion of the District’s Contributing buildings in new construction. Compatible forms are simple, with a flat or minimally pitched roof and strong cornice lines or parapet edges. Use intermediate scale vertical shifts to visually break full-block facades into smaller components.

Contributing building forms in the District are simple volumetric shapes, typically square or rectangular with no setbacks. This “blocky” overall development form should be matched in new construction.

The District includes mostly quarter-block and smaller development, though there were historically half-block buildings with full-block façades.

While new development may have a unified street face for as much as an entire Portland block, a street-facing façade should also be broken by an intermediate scale and rhythm where building fronts are longer than a quarter-block (100 feet) of frontage.

Adjacent forms should be used to inform new construction. If the new construction is a large horizontal addition, the new work may be differentiated from the existing Contributing building so that the addition appears to be a separate, but related, building.

- Using variegated rooflines to break the apparent scale of a full-block building façade.
- Where a building has a full-block face, changing the proportion of one or more vertical bays to visually group areas of the building façade into smaller areas.
- Extending the apparent massing of a neighboring Contributing building into the form of new construction.
- Creating a linear projecting element such as a strong cornice or upper-level belt awning to break height and reflect similarities with nearby Contributing buildings

The Blanchet Hospitality House development, on block 25, reflects the historic form, scale, and massing of the District.

This infill development (white building second from left) is University Lofts, in Cleveland (City Architecture). The development uses its neighbor’s roofline and its pattern and proportion of openings.
| D3. Relate the height of the new structure to the height of adjacent Contributing buildings. | The street wall height of an adjacent Contributing building or buildings should be continued into the new construction, with strong horizontal articulation of the cornice or parapet line. Above this, if the building is significantly taller than its neighbors, the building should employ one or more strategies to reduce the impact of the taller height, such as a stepback, a horizontal projecting band or cornice, and/or a change in materials or color. | • Extending a strong cornice or parapet line from an adjacent Contributing building into the design of new construction  
• Visually minimizing additional height through strategies such as step-backs, change of materials, and color shifts. | In this drawing of new construction (on right) next to a Contributing building, the cornice line of the older building is pulled across the façade of the new building. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>D4. Extend the primary mass of the new structure to street-facing property lines in order to provide or restore a sense of the street wall.</th>
<th>Buildings in the District from about 1910 on were constructed with no setback from the street. The District became increasingly dense and streets were the only public open space. Streetscapes were defined by the roadway with raised sidewalks on either side (originally constructed of wood or concrete) with a continuous wall of buildings of varying heights between one and seven stories. Some of the original buildings in the District had rear courtyards or light wells, but these were private spaces that could not be seen from the street. Proposals for additions or new construction that include breaks or gaps in the street wall should be carefully considered so as not to detract from the defining sense of urban enclosure along the street. Small insets in the building wall, such as a horizontal recessed or projecting balcony at an upper floor or an inset storefront entry, provide relief and interest to the streetscape environment. Where building proposals are significantly taller than nearby Contributing buildings, the building wall or walls may step back above a building base that reflects the massing of adjacent Contributing buildings.</th>
<th>• Providing depth and relief to the street-facing façade of a building by including recessed entries, windows, and other features, but bringing the majority of the building wall to the property line.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The upper building wall may step back from street-facing property lines as long as there is a strong and consistent street wall at the base of the building.</td>
<td>• Providing depth and relief to the street-facing façade of a building by including recessed entries, windows, and other features, but bringing the majority of the building wall to the property line.</td>
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D5. Design street-facing walls with a regular rhythm of bays and features.

Street-facing façades of Contributing buildings in the District were designed with a regular rhythm of structure, bays, and openings. While modern structural systems allow for a much wider variety of openings and materials, a regularity of bays and design features should be evident at new street-facing walls. This does not necessarily mean that new façades must be symmetrical, but an underlying modularity and alignment of openings in the new structure will be compatible with the District.

The overall repetitive module of a storefront bay within the District is a critical feature of the historic character of the District, providing pedestrian-scale texture, interest, and flexibility.

In some cases, new buildings taller than Contributing buildings in the District may employ height-minimizing strategies including:

- Creating horizontal lines (such as a continuous band of transom windows) that carry through a building’s storefront bays.
- Using vertical alignments for structural or masonry wall elements.

This 1921 photo looking west into the District from Couch and 2nd Avenue illustrates the historic and continuous street wall in the District.

The second-story windows in this historic building are grouped into sets of three above each storefront bay.
shifting the pattern of openings and bays above a more regular base. In these cases, the upper building wall design may be somewhat less regularized, but should still visually relate to the base of the building.

| D6. At the ground level of buildings, provide changes of plane and small-scale detail to enhance the quality, texture, and compatibility of the street environment. | Contributing (or historic) storefront typically has a low base with inset panels or a rough-textured masonry. Glass is inset from the storefront frame and the frame inset from the pilasters or wall. Clear glass transoms occur in a regular spacing above storefront windows. These storefront bays provided a rich, textural, and detailed street-level environment. Operable storefronts within a typical storefront bay are encouraged, especially on Festival street facades. | • Bringing a contemporary design sensibility to storefront openings. New storefront should use small-scale detail and texture to recall and interpret a historic storefront bay, but not all of the historic elements are necessarily required in the new design. • Choosing a contemporary storefront system that has small-scale detail and texture. • Keeping a human scale in the dimensions of elements and details at the ground floor level. Such considerations as the height of transom windows and awnings, brick detailing or patterning, and special entryway conditions reinforce the human scale. | This rendering of a design for the Con-way blocks in NW Portland has a traditional, regular pattern of openings (Jones Architecture). Despite some differences from the historic 20th Century commercial style, this design shows its stylistic inspiration. | The historic features of the original wood storefront at the Blanchet House include rich decorative detailing. |
| D7. Place the height of new window sills to align with windows in adjacent Contributing buildings. | Existing Contributing buildings in the district, especially those adjacent to new construction, should be used as a general template for sill heights and apparent floor heights in new construction. 20th Century Commercial style and Italianate buildings typically have a tall ground floor with clear or very lightly tinted glass storefront openings. Above the ground floor, the wall patterning of new construction should convey a sense of the proportion, size, and inset depth of historic window openings. Glass should not predominate in walls above the ground floor in new construction or major additions. Window materials above the ground floor should be wood or steel, or materials that may... | • Designing the floor plates of new buildings in relative alignment with those of adjacent Contributing buildings. |
be painted and dimensioned to look like wood or steel, such as aluminum-clad wood. Window divisions may use modern “grid” dividers so long as the exterior face of the window includes a surface “grid” approximately as deep as it is wide.

This rendering for the new addition to the historic Grove Hotel shows upper level windows in general alignment and using a similar proportion to the windows at the adjacent Contributing building on 4th Avenue.

D8. Provide visual interest to exposed lot-line walls through elements such as expression of floor lines, art, or inclusion of openings where allowed.

Exposed lot-line walls are created not only by vacant lots in the District, but also when a new taller building extends above a shorter adjacent building.

When a new lot-line wall is created next to a developed lot, the wall typically is not allowed to have openings due to fire code regulations. However, if the adjacent development is set back from the lot line, there may be an allowance to create windows in the new lot line wall.

For most situations, the lot line wall should include visual and textural interest such as the expression of floor lines or the wrapping of front façade materials for an appropriate distance back.

This painted Portland mural creates interest on an otherwise unexciting wall. (Photo: Anthony Taylor)