

Fact Sheet on Historic District Designation for Sheffield Village Property Owners and Residents

July 2003, as prepared by Chris Barker

What is a Historic District?

A Historic District is a neighborhood or other area that is officially recognized and protected because of its historical and architectural significance. The *Sheffield Village Residential District* may qualify for this status as an example of one of the first Planned Residential Developments in California.

Why seek district designation?

Designation formally recognizes the unique character and significance of Sheffield Village. The village's pride and identity are communicated to new as well as current owners and residents, city officials and the public at large. Design standards that respect the historic character of the village enhance property values as the neighborhood evolves. Currently there is one direct financial incentive, the waiver of City design review fees. Other incentives including property tax reduction under the Mills Act are being studied.

How does designation take place?

A nomination is filed with the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, a City-appointed panel of seven citizens with expertise in history, architecture, preservation, planning and real estate. The Landmarks Board may decide to recommend designation to the Planning Commission, which in turn makes a recommendation to the City Council. Each of these bodies hears testimony from property owners, residents and the public. If they are convinced that the nominated property is worthy of designation and that there is substantial community support for designation, the City Council passes an ordinance designating the Landmark or Historic District. The designation is recorded with the County Recorder so that all future buyers and public agencies will be aware of the historic status.

The nomination for the Sheffield Village Historic District will be prepared and filed by a committee of the Sheffield Village Homeowner's Association. Both the Association and the City will make sure that all property owners and interested parties are notified of the public hearings at the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission and City Council, where you can state your opinions on the proposed designation and have your questions answered.

What will change if Sheffield Village becomes a Historic District?

All residential buildings in Oakland already require design review for exterior changes, additions, and new construction. Most of Sheffield Village's buildings, as single family houses, now receive Special Residential Design Review. In a Historic District, design review may look more closely at the historic features of each building ("character defining elements"—especially siding, windows, and porches) as well as how the project fits into the village as a whole. The City's book *Rehab Right* offers excellent practical advice. Demolitions will also be subject to design review.

What won't change?

There are a lot of myths about regulations on historic buildings. Designation does not affect your ability to sell or finance the property—in fact many buyers and lenders appreciate the stability that historic status offers. It will not cause your property taxes to rise. Historic designation has no effect on the interior of a privately owned building. Nor does it freeze the exterior appearance for all time. Exterior changes are expected and allowed, as long as they are in keeping with the character of the building and the neighborhood. (Knowledgeable City staff and Landmarks Board members can help owners accomplish home improvements compatibly.) The City cannot take the initiative to require you to restore your building, and you would not be required to do a costly reconstruction of a historic building destroyed by a disaster.

Current and proposed regulations:

	Currently	S-20 Historic District
One- and two- unit residential buildings:		
Minor repairs, alterations, and additions	Exempt from Design Review. - Repair/replacement matching existing (windows, siding, porch) - Small additions (less than 10% of floor, footprint, or wall area) that match existing building - Paint & roofing	Exempt, same as currently
All other alterations and additions	Special Residential Design Review (SRDR) – Staff review using checklist or criteria, within 15 working days - No notification to neighbors	Same as currently, except: - Planning Director can refer project to Landmarks Board for review and public notice if it affects visible historic character - Project must meet design guidelines adopted by Planning Commission or Landmarks Board (<i>Rehab Right</i> as interim guidelines for contributing or potentially contributing buildings) - Design review fees are waived
New construction	Special Residential Design Review (SRDR) – Staff review using checklist or criteria, within 60 calendar days - No notification to neighbors	Regular Design Review, looking for compatibility with historic district - Notification to neighbors - Planning Director may refer to Landmarks Board - Decision within 15 working days maximum - Appealable to Planning Commission
Demolition	Permitted if plans are submitted and approved for a replacement project.	Demolition of a contributor or potential contributor requires Regular Design Review, 240-day postponement, may require environmental review and/or mitigations
Three-unit or larger residential buildings:		
Alterations, additions, and new construction	Regular Design Review: - Staff review - Notification to neighbors - Decision within 60 days maximum - Appealable to Planning Commission	Same as currently, except: - Planning Director may refer to Landmarks - Project must meet design guidelines adopted by Planning Commission (<i>Rehab Right</i> as interim guidelines for contributing or potentially contributing buildings) - Design review fees are waived
Demolition	Permitted if plans are submitted and approved for a replacement project.	Demolition of a contributor or potential contributor requires Regular Design Review, 240-day postponement, may require environmental review and/or mitigations
Non-residential buildings:		
Alterations and additions	Regulations address height and floor area ratio only (except telecommunication facilities)	Regular Design Review, looking for compatibility with historic district - Planning Director may refer to Landmarks Board

We look forward to your involvement.

Please contact Chris Barker, Chairman of the Sheffield Village Historic Designation project via email at cbarker@chrisbarker.com with questions and comments.