Urban Design and Preservation Element

Introduction

The Urban Design and Preservation Element includes the subjects usually called "historic preservation" and "urban design," but it is not limited to them. With special emphasis on visual character and cultural meaning, it addresses Berkeley's whole built environment—by which is meant here not just buildings but also urban landscape features such as gardens, streets, and parks. The Element's intended scope is comprehensive, covering entities both large and small: broad patterns such as general building scale and "grain" but also little things like the trees and lampposts on a street or the decorative features on an old house or a new store.[1]

The citizens of Berkeley have a long tradition of caring about the development and the quality of their built environment. Berkeley was one of the first cities in the country to establish a Planning Commission (1915) and to enact zoning regulations.

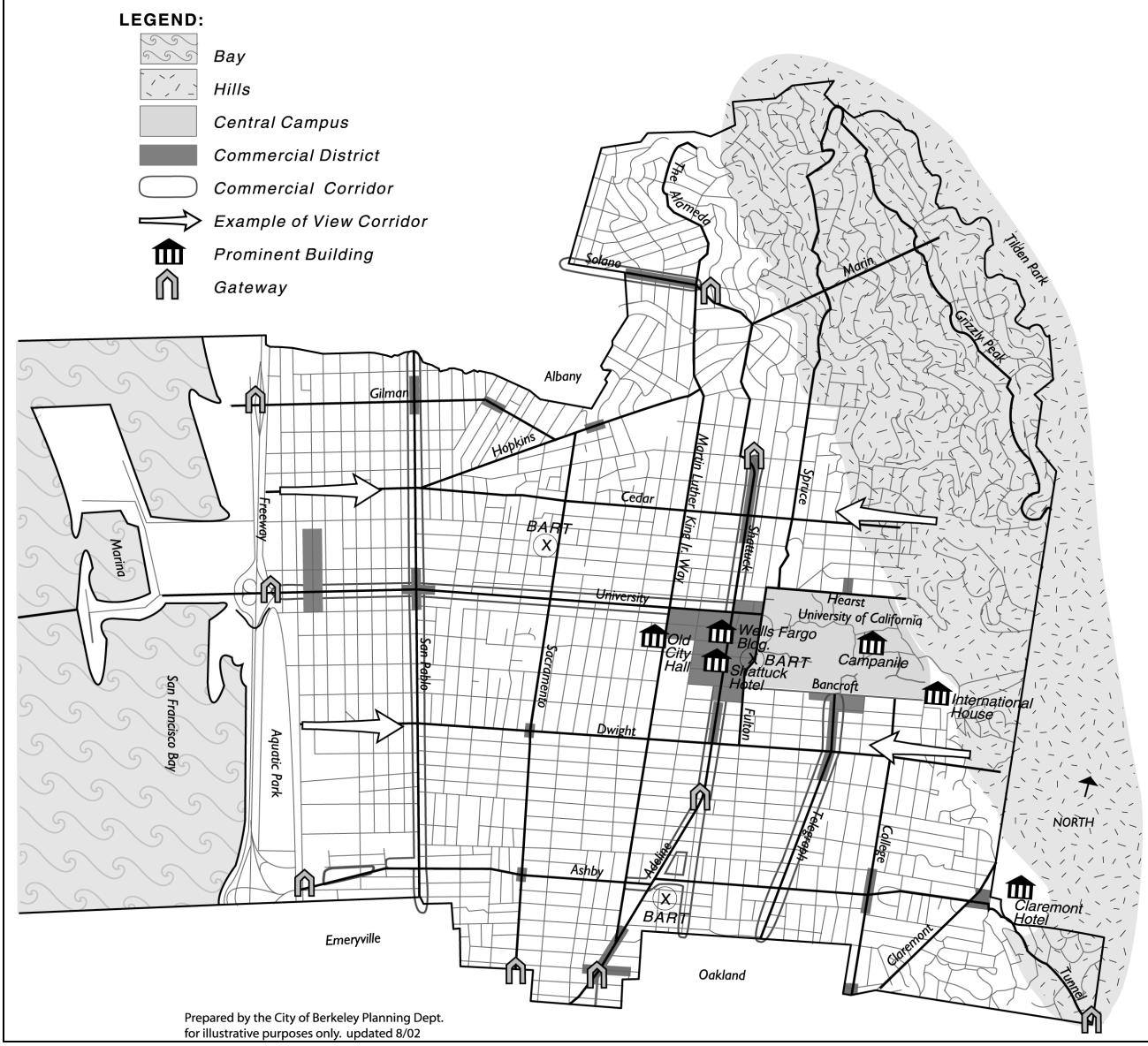
Policy Background

Major Urban Design Features

Figure 24 depicts some of Berkeley's most significant urban design features.

[1] Graphic improvements and additions have been made with assistance from John English and the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

Figure 24: **Some Major Urban Design Features**



Natural Setting

'Berkeley's original setting has changed considerably. The shoreline has been pushed westward by filling. On the city's opposite side, hilltops and slopes have been altered. Across the terrain, open fields and native vegetation have given way to a whole city with its structures, streets, and introduced plant species.

But what remains is basic and powerful, yet in need of protection. There are striking views, especially the silhouette of the hills and the panorama of the Bay, and the bright afternoon light culminating in gorgeous

sunsets behind the Golden Gate. Less conspicuous but significant, some creek segments are still open to the sky. ’

The Built Environment

Berkeley has within its borders a remarkably appealing and diverse wealth of buildings and landscapes aptly reflecting the city’s rich and significant history. Most of its buildings were constructed between 1875 and 1940: a fact that has everything to do with Berkeley’s essential physical character today. Notably, the expression here of the Bay Region’s response to the Arts and Crafts Movement, inspired around the turn of the century largely by the city’s natural setting, has given Berkeley a particular architectural distinction.

The story of how Berkeley developed can largely be read by just viewing the urban tapestry itself. Building styles, which are usually quite traceable to particular periods, tellingly vary from area to area and often from street to street. In some places, different stages of development are revealed by an occasional remnant Victorian, or by the area’s general mixture of later styles. The early transportation hubs can still be detected by the evidence of commercial centers and building clusters from different decades.

Broadly speaking, the areas close to the University and Downtown had their initial construction in the 19th Century, though many of them were later substantially rebuilt. West Berkeley, and the village of Lorin in South Berkeley, also had their start in the 19th Century. The initial pattern was a response to the original transportation system of boats, streetcars, and trains. The areas in between remained largely open for some time then filled in, especially in the 20th Century’s first three decades. The expanded suburban development in the hills followed the opening of new streetcar lines, the 1906 earthquake, and ultimately the common use of the automobile.

Unfortunately, Berkeley has lost many of its important historic buildings and landscape features, while others are potentially threatened. And while in recent decades there has been much notably good new construction, there have also been many poorly designed new buildings that are incompatible with the design and scale of the older structures around them.

Neighborhoods and Districts

To a large degree, the “building blocks” of Berkeley’s character and image are its many specific neighborhoods and districts. Berkeleyans identify strongly with the particular areas they live, work, or shop in, and with the distinctive building features and landscapes that define them.

A number of neighborhoods were conceived as “planned neighborhoods,” with special amenities such as parks or entrance pillars. Other neighborhoods began as routine subdivisions, but in recent decades efforts have been made to improve some of them by adding amenities like mini-parks and traffic-control devices.

A few of Berkeley’s most notable neighborhoods and districts include the following:

- West Berkeley is an area comprised of a number of subareas (some in themselves much more homogeneous than others), but overall having by far Berkeley's widest range of building and site types, from a 5,700-year-old shell mound site to Victorian buildings reflecting Berkeley's earliest '49er settlement to bold factory forms expressing the district's longstanding industrial role to sleek new commercial buildings and high-tech start-ups.

- The Telegraph or "Southside" area has been greatly affected by post-1950 University expansion but has retained many important remnants of the old college-oriented neighborhood. It is now nationally known for its vibrant main commercial street, and enjoys direct proximity to UC's main campus (the latter itself compromised in recent decades, but still anchored by the splendid complex of Beaux-Arts buildings at its heart and graced by generous open glades, tree clusters, and Strawberry Creek).

- The Northside has also been heavily impacted by post-1950 change (not to mention the 1923 fire and subsequent rebuilding), but still displays enough fine early buildings and street features to remind us of the area's close connection with Bernard Maybeck and the Hillside Club and its crucial role in the Arts and Crafts Movement and the "First Bay Tradition" of architecture.

- The Downtown (at left) is a rare example of a commercially viable downtown of this size which, although it has lost many of its grand Beaux-Arts buildings, still retains its basic early-20th-Century feel, with generally cohesive massing and scale and common decorative themes from that period. It thereby enjoys a unique competitive advantage over other cities' chaotic or bland commercial centers.

- The Elmwood shopping district is a memorably compact, clearly bounded area with basically quite consistent building styles (at right).

- The "San Pablo Park" neighborhood is a planned area, this one highlighted by the unusually big open space that was reserved in its middle (below).

- The Northbrae district (consisting of several related tracts, such as Northbrae Terrace and Berkeley Heights, that were subdivided between 1907 and 1910) is a planned community with pleasantly curving streets, native-stone pillars along The Alameda, and several small parks.

A full list of Berkeley's neighborhoods and districts would be very lengthy. In some of them the building styles are quite consistent, while other areas are architecturally more composite. Some neighborhoods and districts now have a clearer identity, and stronger "image," than others. But for a full understanding of Berkeley's character and potential, all the areas are important.

Recognizing the particular character of areas, the City Council has

adopted a series of area plans, including the Waterfront Plan (1986), Downtown Plan (1990), South Berkeley Plan (1990), West Berkeley Plan (1993), South Shattuck Strategic Plan (1997), and University Avenue Strategic Plan (1997).

Existing Preservation and Design Programs

Berkeley now has a number of regulations and other programs to protect and enhance the built environment through preservation and good design, including those listed below and the programs described in the other elements of this General Plan.

Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance - In 1973 the citizens of Berkeley—responding to a period during the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s of unchecked demolition and inappropriate replacement construction — voted into law by popular acclaim the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance. It was the first of its kind in the country. The NPO established tight restrictions on demolition of residential structures and established public hearing requirements for housing projects. Most of the NPO has by now been incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance.

Landmarks Preservation Ordinance - In 1974 the City Council, reflecting widespread concern about loss of historic resources, adopted the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO). The ordinance created the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), composed of nine Berkeley residents each appointed by the Mayor or another member of the City Council. The LPO gives the Commission authority to make landmark, structure of merit, and historic district designations. Proposals for designation can be initiated by private application or petition, by the LPC itself, or by the City Council, Planning Commission, or Civic Arts Commission. The LPC also reviews permit applications for alteration, construction, or demolition of landmarks, structures of merit, and structures in historic districts.

The Landmarks Preservation Ordinance establishes criteria that the LPC must use when considering proposed landmark and historic district designations. They are as follows:

1. *Architectural merit:*

    a. *Property that is the first, last, only or most significant architectural property of its type in the region.*
    b. *Properties that are prototypes of or outstanding examples of periods, styles, architectural movements or construction, or examples of the more notable works of the best surviving work in a region of an architect, designer or master builder, or*
    c. *Architectural examples worth preserving for the exceptional value they add as part of the neighborhood fabric.*

2. *Cultural value: Structures, sites and areas associated with the movement or evolution of religious, cultural, governmental, social and economic developments of the City.*

3. *Educational value: Structures worth preserving for their usefulness as an educational force.*
4. *Historic value: Preservation and enhancement of structures, sites and areas that embody and express the history of*

Berkeley/Alameda County/California/United States. History may be social, cultural, economic, political, religious or military.

5. *Any property which is listed on the National Register described in Section 470A of Title 16 of the United States Code.*

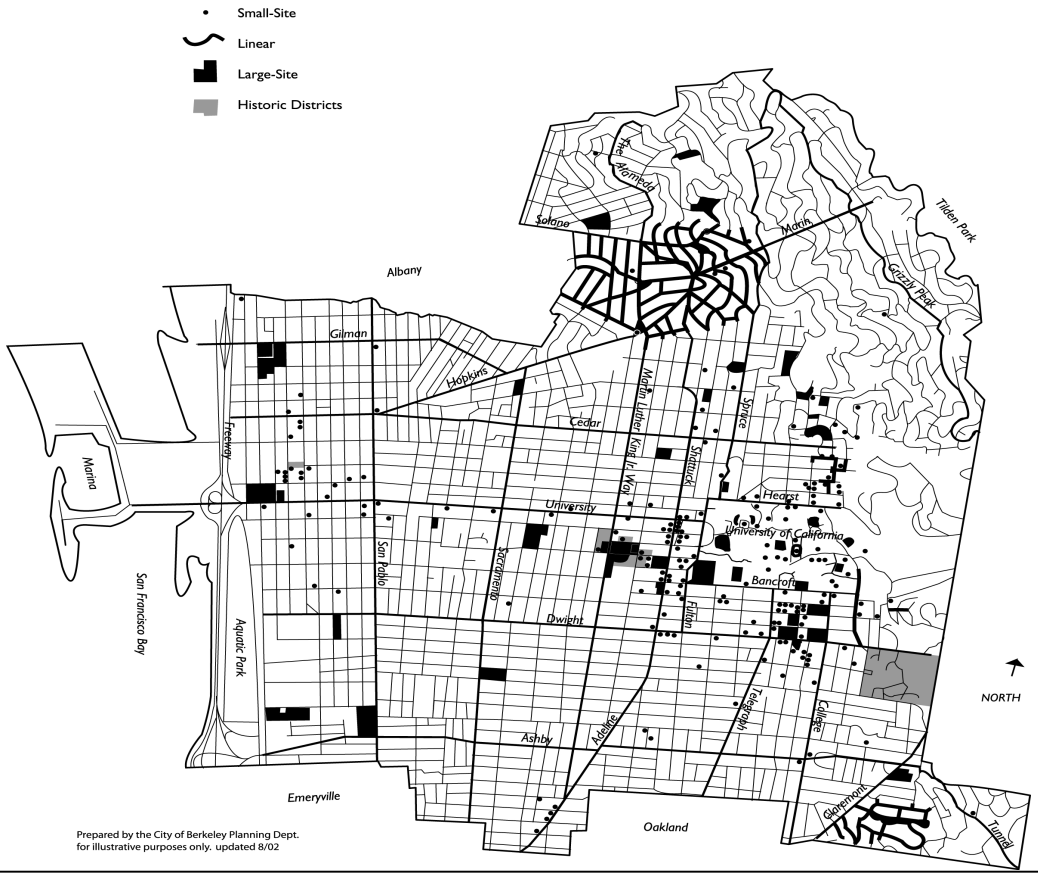
Criteria that the Commission must use when considering a structure for structure of merit designation are as follows:

1. General criteria shall be architectural merit and/or cultural, educational, or historic interest or value. If upon assessment of a structure, the commission finds that the structure does not currently meet the criteria as set out for a landmark, but it is worthy of preservation as part of a neighborhood, a block or a street frontage, or as part of a group of buildings which includes landmarks, that structure may be designated a structure of merit.

2. Specific criteria include, but are not limited to one or more of the following:

a. *The age of the structure is contemporary with (1) a designated landmark within its neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings, or (2) an historic period or event of significance to the city, or to the structure's neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings.*
b. *The structure is compatible in size, scale, style, materials or design with a designated landmark structure within its neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings.*
c. *The structure is a good example of architectural design.*
d. *The structure has historical significance to the city and/or to the structure's neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings.*

Figure 25: **City-Designated Landmarks, Structures of Merit and Districts as of November 2001**



As of November 2001, the City had designated 209 landmarks, 28 structures of merit, and 3 historic districts. Figure 25 shows the locations of those designated historic resources.

Non-Residential Building Protection Ordinance - In 1982 the City Council adopted the Non-Residential Building Protection Ordinance (since merged into the Zoning Ordinance) to require a Use Permit for proposed demolitions of commercial and other nonresidential buildings, and require referral to the LPC for review where such a structure is 40 or more years old.

Surveys - The Landmarks Preservation Commission maintains an ongoing list of properties for potential designation. In 1977-1979 the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association in conjunction with the City, with a grant from the State Office of Historic Preservation, did a survey and documentation of about 650 structures and sites, known as the "State Historic Resources Inventory." It was a representative survey rather than a full compendium. In 1978 BAHA, with a grant from the San Francisco Foundation, did a detailed survey of Downtown. In 1987 it closely appraised much of West Berkeley. Concentrated surveys have also been done in a few other areas. However, most of the City still has not been surveyed in depth.

Certified Local Government - In 2000, Berkeley was designated a Certified Local Government by the State Office of Historic Preservation. This included certification of the LPO as containing proper procedures and review criteria consistent with State and Federal guidelines for a landmarks preservation ordinance. Under the Certified Local Government program, Berkeley is eligible for Federal preservation grants and survey funding.

Design Review **-** In 1986, the City Council amended the Zoning Ordinance to include requirements for design review of proposed new construction and exterior alterations in non-residential zones. (Design review is now also required for commercial and mixed use projects in the R-4 multi-family residential zone.) In most cases design review is done by the City staff or Design Review Committee (DRC), depending on the type of permit required. For projects that require a public hearing before the Zoning Adjustments Board, the DRC makes a recommendation to the Board. Projects that involve designated landmarks, structures of merit, or historic districts are reviewed by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Various design guidelines have been adopted for use in the design review process, some of which apply in all non-residential zones and some of which apply in the Downtown area.

In 1997, the City adopted a comprehensive set of design guidelines for Downtown Berkeley. The guidelines are intended to assist project designers, City staff, and City decision makers with the design review process in the Downtown. The Downtown design guidelines may serve as a model for future design guidelines for other Berkeley districts. In 2000, the City issued a draft set of comprehensive guidelines for the Southside area. The Planning Commission is currently reviewing those guidelines with the rest of the draft Southside Plan.

Other Zoning Controls - The Zoning Ordinance also contains various other relevant controls, which give some protection to Berkeley's built environment and regulate the size, height, bulk, and configuration of new buildings.

Benefits of Preservation and Good Design

Keeping older buildings and landscape features and ensuring good new design offer many important advantages, including:

1. Economic Benefits:

   a. Stability of Residential and Commercial Areas - The city's special character can be a powerful tool for the economy as well as community identity. When public policy clearly favors preservation and good design, this gives a level of stability that helps attract investment.

   b. Cost and Time Savings - Fixing up an old building sometimes costs less and takes less time to complete than constructing a new one of the same size for the same use.

   c. Conservation of Natural Resources - As opposed to new construction, rehabilitation uses a smaller amount of building materials and less energy.

   d. Opportunities for Small Business - Older buildings often have kinds of spaces that are especially suited to small companies and start-ups.

   e. Economic Growth - A strong visual identity helps attract visitors, customers, and businesses.

2. Community Identity:

   a. Beauty - Older buildings, well-designed new buildings, and appropriate landscape features very often have a beauty valuable for its own sake.

   b. Continuity - Older buildings, quality new buildings, and good landscaping provide a sense of permanence and well-being.

   c. Understanding - Older buildings give an enhanced understanding of who we are, where we have been, and where we might be going.

Protection of Existing Resources

It is vital to preserve historically or culturally significant individual structures and sites, but it is also important to look well beyond that. Individual historic resources must be considered within the context of groups of buildings, the streetscape, areas and neighborhoods, and indeed the city as a whole.

Special attention should be given to protecting not just "historic districts" as such but also areas in general that are visually cohesive or have a desirable strong character. Potentially useful for at least some of these is the concept known as a "conservation district," which a number of other cities use to tailor regulation to the situations in distinctive areas that may not qualify as historic districts per se but which nonetheless deserve special protection.

Rather similarly, concern is needed for vernacular buildings ("ordinary" ones characteristic of their times or locales) that may not be individually "significant" but which do have visual interest, and which in the aggregate make up most of Berkeley's good urban fabric.

Concern is of course needed not just for desirable buildings (or aggregations or portions of buildings) but also for good landscape elements, whether natural or man-made. Among other things these include gardens, which so often greatly enhance their surroundings; the so-called "urban forest," composed by trees on streets, on private lots, and in public open spaces; natural features such as Founders' Rock; and various kinds of outdoor structures such as decorative fences, ornamental public stairways (like the one on Orchard Lane), and historic lamp posts or entry pillars.

Protection is needed even for some things which are unseen or undiscovered. Archaeological resources, the material remains of past cultures or periods, often remain hidden till the ground is opened up for construction or utility work.

Looking beyond ordinary circumstances, we must anticipate how our buildings and landscape elements may be affected by the inevitable next big earthquake, firestorm, or other major disaster, and by the various pressures and demands of the immediate post-disaster period.

Financial Incentives for Preservation

A comprehensive preservation strategy cannot rely wholly on controls against doing things. It needs also to include positive rewards. Requiring property owners to preserve their properties and forgo future development opportunities has financial implications for those property owners. Therefore a preservation program should include financial incentives that help to mitigate the financial costs to the property owners of preservation requirements. Although various incentive programs are already to some extent operational in Berkeley, much more can and should be done.

Incentives for preservation may take any of several general forms, including direct grants or loans, tax-reduction mechanisms, special exceptions from regulations or regulatory procedures, and provision of technical assistance. They may be available from various sources, including the City, other governments, and/or private or nonprofit organizations.

Specific incentives that are presently or potentially available include:

- The State Historical Building Code (for certain qualified historic buildings, this allows using alternatives to various normal code requirements that would otherwise be costly and/or impair the building's character).

- The Federal Government's Rehabilitation Tax Credit (for major work of appropriate design on certain historic or old buildings to be used at least in substantial part for income-producing purposes, this allows specified percentages of the cost to be credited against income tax).

- Mills Act contracts (for certain historic properties, whether commercial or residential, a city and the owner can make a 10-year, renewable contract to reduce property tax in exchange for the building's being preserved).

- Façade easements (for qualifying historic buildings, whether commercial or residential, the owner can donate to a city, or to a nonprofit organization with a relevant program, an easement which guarantees that the façade will remain, and in exchange can get a property-tax reduction).

- State park-bond funds (some of this grant money can be used to rehabilitate buildings that are publicly owned or controlled, potentially including ones for which a façade easement has been donated to a city).

- Marks Act Historical Rehabilitation Bonds (local governments can issue these and use the proceeds to make loans for rehabilitating historic commercial properties).

- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG money can be used to provide loans or grants for qualifying rehabilitation projects, which may involve historic buildings).

- Technical assistance (governments and other organizations can give free or low-cost advice on how to properly maintain or alter buildings).

Design of New Buildings and Alterations

Over the twenty-year term of the General Plan, Berkeley will continue to evolve architecturally. Though the city is largely "built out," it still offers numerous and varied opportunities for renewing the urban fabric. Old buildings will live out their useful lives and be replaced. Many sites, particularly along commercial streets, are now occupied by nondescript and unsightly structures. Major new projects, such as Vista College, Library Gardens, and the Oxford parking lot development—all in Downtown—and the Ed Roberts Campus at the Ashby BART station, are presently in the works. More are sure to come, both Downtown, where revitalization is well underway, and in other parts of town. Streetscapes and landscapes are also undergoing renovation and will continue to do so.

New construction presents the citizens of Berkeley with an even more formidable challenge than historic preservation: seeing that the new not only complements and enhances the old, but that it also makes its own distinctive contribution to the built and natural environments. We need to cultivate vitality in our townscape just as we seek it in other aspects of civic life. To that end, the design review and project approval process should encourage architectural creativity, innovation, and the making of tomorrow's new landmarks.

Of course, what design is suitable in any specific case significantly depends on the

particular location. A given design that would be welcome in one location could be quite out of place in another. Since areas of the city vary greatly in their intrinsic character and their degree of homogeneity, the design of a new building should be sensitive to these differences.

Outreach

Historic and cultural resources are much more likely to be preserved if citizens are aware of them and believe in their importance. Similarly, new buildings and alterations are much more likely to be conceived and designed suitably if owners and developers understand the broader context and what Berkeley will expect of their projects.

Many parties, including the City and private groups like BAHA, the Berkeley Historical Society, and Berkeley Design Advocates, can and should be involved in the needed outreach.

Element Goal

As the Bay Area and California have grown, older cities like Berkeley have become more and more distinctive in character compared to the sprawling suburbs around them. Berkeley remains a city of lively "Main Streets," livable real neighborhoods, and cherished older buildings, all of which contribute to its sense of place and give it a dimension of visual richness and social and economic diversity that the suburbs cannot rival. Berkeley is a highly visible example of a built environment that "works."

The overall goal of the Urban Design and Preservation Element is to:

Protect and enhance Berkeley's special built environment and cultural heritage by carefully conserving the numerous existing good buildings, areas, and other features and ensuring that new elements are so located and designed as to respect and strengthen the whole.

Element Objectives

To achieve the Urban Design and Preservation Element goal will require pursuing four objectives:

1. Protection of Existing Resources - Preserve historically or culturally important structures, sites, and areas and protect the character of Berkeley's neighborhoods and districts. (*See the Land Use Element for more policies on the Character of Berkeley.)*

2. Preservation Incentives - Provide incentives for the preservation of historic and cultural resources.

3. New Construction and Alterations - Ensure that new construction and alterations are well designed and respect and enhance the existing environment.

4. Outreach - Promote awareness and understanding of Berkeley's built environment and cultural heritage, and of how to preserve and improve them.

Policies and Actions

Protection of Existing Resources

Policy UD-1 Techniques
Use a wide variety of regulatory, incentive, and outreach techniques to suitably protect Berkeley's existing built environment and cultural heritage.

Actions:

A. Identify and protect historically significant structures, sites, districts, and neighborhoods. *(Also see Land Use Policy LU-2.)*

B. Develop a comprehensive program that will indicate, in more detail, needed in-depth surveys and other actions to protect Berkeley's built environment and cultural heritage.

C. Conserve and update the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance.

D. Encourage widespread public participation in the identification and designation of historically or culturally important buildings, sites, and areas.

E. Review and revise the Zoning Ordinance, in general, as appropriate to further the protection of historic and cultural resources.

F. Take full advantage of all State of California preservation programs such as the Certified Local Government program.

G. Through code enforcement and other activities, provide early intervention to promote timely upkeep of historic and cultural resources, and thereby avoid continued neglect that could eventually make such resources unsavable.

Policy UD-2 Regulation of Significant Properties
Increase the extent of regulatory protection that applies to structures, sites, and areas that are historically or culturally significant.

Actions:

A. Continue the designation of additional landmarks, structures of merit, and historic districts as a crucial function in preserving historical resources.

B. Consider revising the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance so as to prohibit demolition of designated landmarks, except in unusual cases where rigorous prescribed findings are made by the Landmarks Preservation Commission and/or the City Council.

C. For any public or private project that may adversely affect an archaeological site, consult with the North Central Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System, require site evaluation as may be indicated, and attempt to prevent or mitigate any adverse impacts.

Policy UD-3 Regulation of Neighborhood Character

Use regulations to protect the character of neighborhoods and districts, and respect the particular conditions of each area. *(Also see Land Use Policies LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-16, LU-17, and LU-21.)*

Action:

A. Consider the creation of a new regulatory classification of "conservation district" to protect areas with distinctive architectural or environmental characteristics.

Policy UD-4 Inventory
On an ongoing basis, maintain, expand, and update the inventory of historic and cultural resources.

Actions:

A. Actively expand the inventory of historic and cultural resources, with particular attention to areas where development pressure is expected, and make the inventory results prominently available to citizens and potential developers.

B. Fully incorporate the identity of inventoried historic and cultural resources into the City's Geographic Information System and permit system.

C. Acquire and maintain generalized information on what parts of Berkeley, and which types of sites, are sufficiently likely to contain notable archaeological materials as to warrant further, site-specific investigation.

Policy UD-5 Architectural Features
Encourage, and where appropriate require, retention of ornaments and other architecturally interesting features in the course of seismic retrofit and other rehabilitation work.

Action:

A. Use design review and establish new effective means to protect architectural features and ornaments that have historical value or visual interest.

Policy UD-6 Adaptive Reuse
Encourage adaptive reuse of historically or architecturally interesting buildings in cases where the new use would be compatible with the structure itself and the surrounding area.

Action:

A. Add to the primary missions of the City's Office of Economic Development, the encouragement of adaptive reuse and of the preservation of historic resources.

Policy UD-7 Disaster Preparedness
Encourage and support the long-term protection of historically or architecturally significant buildings to preserve neighborhood and community character. *(Also see Disaster Preparedness and Safety Policy S-11 and Housing Policy H-15.)*

Actions:

A. Encourage, and where appropriate require, owners of historically or architecturally valuable buildings to incorporate disaster-resistance measures to enable them to be feasibly repaired after a major earthquake or other disaster.

B. Create incentives for owners of historic or architecturally significant structures to undertake mitigation to levels that will minimize the likelihood of demolition and maximize the ability to repair or avoid damage in the event of a natural disaster.

C. In preparing for the period after the next big earthquake, firestorm, or other major disaster, establish preservation-sensitive measures including requirements for temporary shoring or stabilization where needed; arrangements for consulting with preservationists; expedited permit procedures for suitable repair or rebuilding of historically or architecturally valuable structures; and, where appropriate, provisions for replanting. Encourage use of FEMA funds for rehabilitation of such structures wherever possible.

Policy UD-8 Public Works Projects
In public works projects, seek to preserve desirable historic elements such as ornamental sidewalk features, lampposts, and benches.

Actions:

A. Carefully review planned utility undergrounding, sidewalk repair, and other public works projects to avoid unnecessary removal of light fixtures, planting, and other features with historic or aesthetic value.

B. Establish procedures for the review of work by PG&E, EBMUD, and other agencies responsible for work in the public right-of-way.

C. Provide for review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission of public works projects involving potential change to desirable historic elements.

Policy UD-9 Trees
Wherever feasible and appropriate, tree replacement should emphasize maintaining historic planting patterns and native species and be consistent with the City of Berkeley 1990 Street Tree Policy or subsequent tree policies. *(Also see Environmental Management Policies EM-28 through EM-33.)*

Policy UD-10 The University of California
Strongly support actions by the University to maintain and retrofit its historic buildings, and strongly oppose any University projects that would diminish the historic character of the campus or off-campus historic buildings. *(Also see Land Use Policies LU-36 and LU-37.)*

Actions:

A. Actively review the University's "New Century Plan" process, and subsequent revision or replacement of the Long Range Development Plan, and urge UC to fully reflect preservation concerns in that planning.

B. Explore possibilities for a jointly funded "stewardship" program between the University and the local community groups for the preservation and protection of historic resources on the UC campus and in adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy UD-11 Public Schools
Urge the Berkeley Unified School District to maintain and improve its historic buildings and sites in an architecturally sensitive manner. *(Also see Land Use Policy LU-42.)*

Action:

A. Maintain close liaison with the Berkeley Unified School District to identify and actively comment on, at an early stage, aspects of impending District projects that could destroy or impair historic resources.

Preservation Incentives

Policy UD-12 Range of Incentives
Seek to maintain and substantially expand the range and scale of incentives that the City and/or other entities make available in Berkeley for the preservation of historic and cultural resources.

Actions:

A. Continue to encourage owners and developers to make use of the State Historical Building Code where appropriate.

B. Continue to use some Community Development Block Grant and redevelopment money to assist in rehabilitating structures with historic or cultural value.

C. Encourage owners of historically or culturally significant buildings to utilize the Rehabilitation Tax Credit and the Mills Act.

Policy UD-13 Regulations
Review zoning and other regulations and procedures, and where appropriate revise them to provide new incentives for preservation and remove or reduce disincentives.

Actions:

A. Consider possible new permit-fee waivers or reductions, and/or permit fast tracking, for projects that involve preserving historically or culturally significant structures.

B. Consider waiving or reducing parking requirements for projects that involve rehabilitating significant buildings.

Policy UD-14 Other New Incentives
Consider potential new funding, tax-reduction, and technical-assistance incentives that the City and/or other entities could provide to facilitate preservation.

Actions:

A. Consider providing new or expanded sources of financial assistance for unreinforced-masonry and other structures, including historically or culturally significant ones that need seismic retrofit.

B. Consider extending to additional commercial areas the availability of loans or grants for façade improvements.

C. Establish or expand opportunities for the City, and/or nonprofit organizations, to accept facade easements on qualifying buildings.

D. Encourage neighborhood and preservation groups to establish local funding partnerships and raise local funds for neighborhood preservation efforts.

Policy UD-15 Partnerships
Continue or establish formal or informal partnerships with other public agencies such as the State Office of Historic Preservation, nonprofit organizations such as BAHA, and the private sector.

New Construction and Alterations

Policy UD-16 Context
The design and scale of new or remodeled buildings should respect the built environment in the area, particularly where the character of the built environment is largely defined by an aggregation of historically and architecturally significant buildings. *(Also see Land Use Policies LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-17, and LU-21.)*

Policy UD-17 Design Elements
In relating a new design to the surrounding area, the factors to consider should include height, massing, materials, color, and detailing or ornament.

Policy UD-18 Contrast and Cohesiveness
The overall urban experience should contain variety and stimulating contrasts achieved largely through contrast between different areas each of which is visually cohesive.

Policy UD-19 Visually Heterogeneous Areas
In areas that are now visually heterogeneous, a project should be responsive to the best design elements of the area or neighborhood.

Policy UD-20 Alterations
Alterations to a worthwhile building should be compatible with the building's original architectural character.

Action:

A. In cases where a well-designed building's original character has since been destroyed by a poorly designed remodel, new alterations to reverse those changes can be used to improve the character of the area.

Policy UD-21 Directing Development
Use City incentives and zoning provisions to direct new development toward locations where significant historic structures or structures contributing to the character of the area will not need to be removed.

Policy UD-22 Regulating New Construction and Alterations
Regulate new construction and alterations to ensure that they are individually well-designed and that they are so designed and located as to duly respect and where possible enhance the existing built environment.

Actions:

A. Continue to require full Use Permits (with public hearings) for all substantial projects, thereby enabling both the imposition of area-sensitive conditions of approval and a ready means for citizen input.

B. Continue to encourage, and consider requiring, consultation with interested citizen groups in the early stages of a project.

C. Consider requiring developers to have a formal conference with City staff before they submit actual permit applications.

Policy UD-23 Design Review
Ensure that the design review process ensures excellence in design and that new construction and alterations to existing buildings are compatible with the best elements of the character of the area.

Actions:

A. Review the existing design guidelines, some of which were formulated over a decade ago, for possible improvements.

B. Enable and encourage greater citizen input in the design review process.

C. Explore revisions to the membership requirements for the Design Review Committee to increase the number of design professionals on the Committee and alter the requirement that certain existing board members such as the chair of the Zoning Adjustments Board sit on the Design Review Committee.

Policy UD-24 Area Character
Regulate new construction and alterations to ensure that they are truly compatible with and, where feasible, reinforce the desirable design characteristics of the particular area they are in.

Actions:

A. In reviewing the design guidelines, give special attention to their adequacy in making projects harmonize with their particular surrounding area.

B. Consider preparing special sets of design guidelines for selected districts that now lack special area guidelines.

Policy UD-25 Facades and Exterior Features
Buildings should have significant exterior features and facades that stimulate the eye and invite interested perusal.

Policy UD-26 Pedestrian-Friendly Design
Architecture and site design should give special emphasis to enjoyment by, and convenience and safety for, pedestrians. *(Also see Land Use Policies LU-11, LU-20, LU-21, LU-26, and LU-27 and Transportation Policy T-47.)*

Actions:

A. Use regulatory review to promote pedestrian-friendly design.

B. Ensure proper placement of elements such as doors and windows, in relation to the sidewalk and streetscape, to ensure pedestrian-friendly design and increase public safety.

Policy UD-27 Relation to Sidewalk
Projects generally should be designed to orient the main entrance toward the public sidewalk, not a parking lot, and avoid confronting the sidewalk with a large windowless wall or tall solid fence.

Policy UD-28 Commercial Frontage
Commercial buildings on streets with public transit generally should have no appreciable setback from that street's sidewalk, except in the case of occasional plazas or sitting areas that enhance the area's pedestrian environment.

Policy UD-29 Signs
Signs should contribute aesthetically to, rather than detract from, the site they are on and the general streetscape.

Action:

A. Explore and consider ways to achieve removal of unsightly signs, while considering the needs of area merchants.

Policy UD-30 Planting
Ensure that, where feasible, new developments respect and contribute to the urban landscape by retaining existing on-site trees and/or, if appropriate, planting suitable new ones on-site or in the street right-of-way. *(Also see Environmental Management Policies EM-29 through EM-31.)*

Policy UD-31 Views
Construction should avoid blocking significant views, especially ones toward the Bay, the hills, and significant landmarks such as the Campanile, Golden Gate Bridge, and Alcatraz Island. Whenever possible, new buildings should enhance a vista or punctuate or clarify the urban pattern.

Policy UD-32 Shadows
New buildings should be designed to minimize impacts on solar access and minimize detrimental shadows.

Action:

A. In appropriate cases where a project could have significant impact on views or access to sunlight, require evaluation of those potential impacts.

Policy UD-33 Sustainable Design
Promote environmentally sensitive and sustainable design in new buildings. *(Also see Environmental Management Policies EM-5, EM-8, EM-26, EM-35, and EM-36.)*

Actions:

A. Promote compliance with green building standards for solar accessibility and orientation, energy efficiency, etc.

B. Encourage use of recycled building materials.

C. Establish guidelines that will help to integrate environmentally sensitive and sustainable designs into the built environment.

Policy UD-34 Public Art
Support, present, and encourage others to support or present works of public art.

Policy UD-35 Public Improvements
Undertake, and/or participate in, major improvement projects aimed at making the streetscape more enjoyable, clarifying and strengthening the urban pattern, and generally enhancing Berkeley's physical character. Public works projects should be designed to make it easier for people to orient themselves within Berkeley and understand and appreciate the city's various districts and neighborhoods, as well as to generally enhance the urban environment.

Actions:

A. Continue to use interdepartmental review to help achieve suitable design of City improvement projects.

B. Remove existing features that detract from the cityscape, such as unsightly signs and overhead utilities.

C. Emphasize the special characteristics of each district and neighborhood through distinctive public landscaping, street lighting, and pedestrian amenities.

D. Recognize and identify district centers, boundaries, and gateways with distinctive landscaping and physical design improvements.

E. Use pedestrian-scale lighting, wide sidewalks, street trees, gateway features, and other public improvements to reinforce and enhance residential and commercial area character and identity, and improve conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

Outreach

Policy UD-36 Information on Heritage
Promote, and encourage others to promote, understanding of Berkeley's built and cultural heritage, the benefits of conserving it, and how to sensitively do that.

Actions:

A. On an ongoing basis, make readily available to the public the identity of historic and cultural resources that have been officially designated or have been found to be important by the City's inventory.

B. Continue the existing program for putting plaques on significant buildings and sites.

C. Promote, or encourage others to promote, guided and self-guided tours of historic and cultural resources.

D. Encourage the Berkeley Unified School District to incorporate into its curricula instruction about Berkeley's history and built heritage.

Policy UD-37 Information on Incentives
Distribute, and encourage others to distribute, information on the incentives available to assist in preservation.

Actions:

A. Give, or encourage others to give, public recognition to outstanding examples of preservation work.

B. Prepare a summary booklet about preservation programs in Berkeley, the benefits of preservation, and available incentives for it, and make this booklet available at prominent locations including libraries and the Permit Service Center.

Policy UD-38 Tourism
As an economic development strategy, promote the city's cultural and architectural heritage.

Action:

A. Promote the Civic Center as a historic resource listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Policy UD-39 Information on Designing New Buildings
Promote, and encourage others to promote, understanding of how new buildings and alterations should be designed to provide good facilities that respect and enhance their context.

Actions:

A. Make the City's design review guidelines widely available.

B. Give, or encourage others to give, public recognition to good examples of suitably designed new buildings and alterations.