

## NEW CHINATOWN/JAPANTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES



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*Copies of the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines and specific historic district design guideline documents are available at the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.*

*Please call 503-823-7700, or visit [www.portlandoregon.gov/bps](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps)*

*Cover Image: Sketch showing Chinese/Japanese cultural adaptations  
Project funding provided by the Portland Development Commission.*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines are adopted land use approval criteria that protect the architectural integrity and cultural significance of Portland's New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. Chapters 1 and 2 of the document provide background on the purpose of the design guidelines and describe the unique architectural and cultural qualities that make the district historically significant. General Guidelines, Alteration Guidelines, Addition Guidelines, and New Construction Guidelines can be found in Chapter 3. Only the adopted guidelines in Chapter 3 serve as land use approval criteria.

The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is important to Portland's past, present, and future identity. The design guidelines are intended to encourage respectful changes to the district's built environment, create opportunities for increased use, and retain its architectural and cultural qualities.

## VISION STATEMENT

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 important architectural and cultural qualities that make it a unique historic neighborhood.

The vision for the future includes a vibrant, economically healthy neighborhood, activated by tourism as well as an increase in people living, shopping, and working in the district. Historic buildings are rehabilitated and seismically upgraded. There are new buildings on formerly vacant lots and vertical additions above some of the district's older buildings. A regular series of tall, glass-fronted storefront bays activate the pedestrian level. Most buildings have a strong projecting cornice or a parapet with design detail, and there are some higher buildings visible above four or five stories. New buildings have a traditional base level that blends well with the



*Society Hotel, NW 3rd Avenue and NW Davis Street, 2016.*

older buildings. Secondary materials and design insertions at both new and older buildings bring to mind a Japanese and/or Chinese design aesthetic. This aesthetic is reinforced by projecting signs, flags, and new horizontal balconies with varying metal railing designs. This vision promotes the retention of historic resources, encouragement of compatible development, the preservation of the district's cultural significance and authenticity, and the enhancement of the pedestrian right-of-way.

## PURPOSE OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

Historic district design guidelines provide guidance to property owners, designers, architects, and developers as to the desired architectural character of alterations, additions, and new construction in a historic district. The guidelines in Chapter 3 serve as the approval criteria for exterior alterations and additions to existing buildings, and for construction of new buildings within the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. Intended to retain and reinforce the architectural and cultural qualities that make the district significant, the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines are informed primarily by unique attributes found in the historic district, secondarily by local best practices, and thirdly by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.



*Wong's Cleaners sign on NW 3rd Avenue. Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.*

Design guidelines are land use approval criteria that must be met as part of the City of Portland's Historic Resource Review process. Applicants are required to explain, in their Historic Resource Review application, how their proposal meets each applicable guideline in Chapter 3.

## APPLYING DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design and Historic Resource Review within Portland's Central City often requires meeting approval criteria found in multiple layers of design guidelines. The Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines make up the foundational set of design guidelines in the Central City. These fundamental guidelines apply to the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, but are augmented by the district-specific design guidelines found in Chapter 3 of this document. Citywide, design guidelines are intentionally developed to avoid conflicting requirements. However, when conflicts arise between guidelines, the most district-specific design guidelines govern. In the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, both the Central City Fundamental and Historic District design guidelines apply, with Chapter 3 of this document taking precedence when conflicts arise with Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines.

A portion of the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District overlaps with the Skidmore/Old Town National Historic Landmark District on the west side of NW 3rd Avenue. In this overlap area, the Skidmore/Old Town, New Chinatown/Japantown, and Central City Fundamental design guidelines all apply. For more details, see Chapter 3.

Although the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is in the River District, the River District Design Guidelines do not apply.



## HISTORIC RESOURCE REVIEW

The City of Portland applies Historic Resource Review to proposals for new construction, exterior alterations, and additions to the city's historic resources. Historic Resource Review ensures that the physical integrity of these designated historic properties and districts is preserved in a way that conveys their significance. The Historic Resource Review process is managed by Bureau of Development Services staff and by citizens appointed to the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission (PHLC). The PHLC is a volunteer board composed of members with expertise in design, development, and historic preservation.

Historic Resource Review takes into consideration the appearance, quality, and appropriateness of physical changes to historic resources. Historic Resource Review generally does not consider interior building changes that are not visible from the public right of way. As a type of discretionary land use review, Historic Resource Review ensures the preservation of historic resources and the compatibility of new development, while allowing a degree of flexibility for applicants. During the Historic Resource Review process, a proposal is evaluated against the applicable approval criteria (such as the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines) and any other regulations being proposed for modification.

The land use review process varies with the type, size, and location of the proposal. Smaller proposals are reviewed by Bureau of Development Services staff, and the process generally takes two to three months. Larger proposals are reviewed 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 accepted and encouraged. Optional Design Advice meetings are available prior to making application for Historic Resource Review to provide greater predictability to potential applicants.

If property owners are seeking state or federal historic tax incentives for rehabilitation of a contributing building, the proposal may be subject to reviews by other agencies that in some cases will be more stringent than the City of Portland's Historic Resource Review process.

Additional information on Historic Resource Review and other land use reviews in Portland is available from the Bureau of Development Services, 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 1500, Portland, Oregon, 97201, or by calling 503-823-7526.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The Portland Zoning Code does not apply regulations for managing archaeological resources in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. The protection and management of subsurface archaeological resources such as objects, human remains, and sites are governed by state law (see ORS 97, 358, and 390).



*The Mason, Ehrman & Co. Building, NW 5th Avenue and NW Everett Street, c1908. Courtesy of the Portland Development Commission.*

The potential for archaeological resources is high within the boundary of the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. As such, property owners may wish to consult with a professional archaeologist or the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) prior to commencing ground-disturbing activities. If subsurface archaeological resources are discovered, all work should cease immediately and the SHPO should be contacted. The proper removal of discovered archaeological resources may provide unique opportunities for on-site or in-district public history displays. For help with artifact identification and display, contact the SHPO.



Hip Sing Tong Building, c1950s, NW 3rd Avenue. Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

## TERMS/CONCEPTS

The terms below are used throughout this document. These concepts are discussed here in order to provide background for their use in the New Chinatown/Japantown Design Guidelines, and not necessarily as definitions that would be provided by a dictionary.

### ***Compatibility and Differentiation***

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

*Differentiation* is the quality of being distinct from another. Architectural differentiation in a historic district 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 divergent 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 to balancing compatibility and differentiation is replicating historic precedents found in a historic context, either through interpretation or reconstruction. In this approach, there is still differentiation between the new and the existing, but the differentiation is achieved at a very minor level, such as insulated glass being used in a new window that otherwise matches the proportions and recess of existing single-pane windows. This approach is especially appropriate if there is a missing element that can be returned in order to complete a pattern or to achieve original symmetry in an existing building or site.

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 historic building style found in the district to a sensitive, yet contemporary, insertion that relates to its immediate context and/or exhibits character-defining architectural features found in the district.

The National Park Service 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.”<sup>1</sup> In general, a successful new building design will incorporate most of the features of a single historic building style (not multiple styles) found in the historic district and relate to character-defining features found on neighboring properties and contributing historic resources found throughout the district.

*Juxtaposition* is taking the concept of differentiation to its extreme. A project using juxtaposition does not reflect features of its surroundings, even in a re-interpreted way, but stands in contrast to existing patterns, materials, scale, or other historic district references. Juxtaposition as it relates to the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is generally discouraged as it is not supported by the National Park Service due to the difficulty in achieving the required level of abstraction without damaging the integrity of the district. However, juxtaposition may be successful at a small scale, for instance where a historic entry might be highlighted by an additive, but contemporary, new design insertion. Juxtaposition may also be appropriate if small-scale authentic Chinese or Japanese design expression is sensitively applied to an existing or new building.



The Tuck Lung Building, NW 4th Avenue and NW Davis Street. Courtesy of the Portland Development Commission.

### **Authenticity**

*Authenticity* is the quality of being genuine or real. Cultural authenticity in a historic district is achieved when a project incorporates or retains architectural references to the cultural or ethnic history of the site, building, or district. To avoid "kitsch" or cultural misappropriation, such references must have historic precedent by the culture(s) that developed or historically used such expressions or adaptations. The designer of a culturally authentic project should know where those architectural references come from and, if appropriate, what they mean to the culture that developed and/or use them.

It is important to recognize that the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District was physically shaped not only by immigrant communities, but by its late 19th- and early 20th- century architecture. The district was never an exclusive enclave of a single ethnic group or culture; nor was it the only place in Portland where persons of Chinese or Japanese ancestry lived or worked. Unlike many other Chinese and Japanese pre-WWII immigrant communities on the West Coast, New Chinatown/Japantown was developed primarily within an existing built environment. Although new buildings were not Chinese or Japanese in style, both Chinese and Japanese cultures altered their surroundings by introducing design expressions and adaptations such as balconies, awnings, and signs.

The district’s character was developed over time, with established architectural styles of the mainstream Western culture being altered and supplemented by design expressions of immigrant Chinese and Japanese cultures, primarily in the period of 1880 to 1943. The district therefore presents a unique amalgam of cultures and changes over time. Some of the comparable ethnic and cultural historic districts on the West Coast exhibit buildings of a more distinctively Asian building type; however, buildings in Portland’s New Chinatown/Japantown remained more rooted in Western architectural styles, even when the owners or developers were part of the Chinese or Japanese community.

<sup>1</sup> Anne E. Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks, Preservation Brief #14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2010), 7-8.



In her book *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon*, author Rose Marie Wong explains the architectural hybrid that came to define the district's physical form:

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.<sup>2</sup>

Authentic design expressions informed by the cultural significance of New Chinatown/Japantown are highly encouraged when changes to the district are being proposed. To be successful, such expressions must take into account the district's unique blending of Western architectural styles augmented by Chinese or Japanese alterations and applied additions.

The design of a project, whether employing Chinese and/or Japanese design influences or not, should be compatible with buildings in the district (both extant and demolished), especially those in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Although authentic Chinese and/or Japanese design expressions related to the history of the historic district are highly encouraged, they are not required.

### **Contributing and Noncontributing Resources**

In a historic district, *contributing resources* are those that convey the physical integrity and/or cultural significance that characterized the historic district during its period of significance. *Noncontributing resources* are those that were built after the period of significance or have been so altered as to not convey sufficient physical integrity from the period of significance.

The status of each property, expressed as either contributing or noncontributing, is a form of classification used in a National Register of Historic Places nomination and acknowledged in the Historic Resource Review process. The National Register nomination for New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District in 1989 determined

the classification of contributing or noncontributing. However, classification can be changed. It is possible to reclassify as contributing a building built during the period of significance that has been restored since the time of the district's listing. Alternatively, a contributing resource can be reclassified as noncontributing if its historic integrity is compromised. If enough resources are reclassified as noncontributing, an entire district's historic designation can be removed.



*The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Building, NW Davis Street, prior to 1980s renovations. Courtesy of the Portland Development Commission.*

<sup>2</sup> Rose Marie Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 221.

## HOW TO USE NEW CHINATOWN/JAPANTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The design guidelines in Chapter 3 are qualitative statements that, when taken together, encourage the desired character of changes within the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. Although discretionary in nature, the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines are land use approval criteria that must be met for additions, alterations, and new construction to be approved in the district.

Each design guideline has a title, contextual background statement, and examples of design expressions that may meet the guideline.

Applicants must demonstrate that all guidelines applicable to their design have been met. Because design changes vary in size, scale, and complexity, not all guidelines apply to all proposals. There are four categories of design guidelines for New Chinatown/Japantown:

1. **General Guidelines** apply to all projects in the historic district.
2. **Alteration Guidelines** apply to changes to existing buildings (both contributing and noncontributing) that do not increase the building's height or size.
3. **Addition Guidelines** apply to increases in vertical or horizontal exterior wall area of any existing building. Addition Guidelines only apply to horizontal additions creating up to 25 feet of new linear frontage.
4. **New Construction Guidelines** apply to new buildings and to horizontal additions to existing buildings that are greater than 25 linear feet in width.

Applicants will typically have to meet design guidelines in multiple categories (such as General and Alteration). In some cases, designers or applicants may be required to use all guidelines categories: Alteration Guidelines for changes to an existing building façade, Addition Guidelines for additional stories and small horizontal additions, and New Construction Guidelines for a horizontal addition larger than 25 feet in width.

It is important for applicants to note that the General Guidelines in Chapter 3 of this document and the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines (separate document) apply to all exterior changes in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.

## NEW CHINATOWN/JAPANTOWN CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS MAP



## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Each guideline addresses a specific topic, but has the same components.

The **TITLE** is in capital letters, bold, and uses an alpha-numeric prefix that relates to the framework described on the preceding pages. For example, Guideline B2: DESIGN OF ALTERATIONS is the second guideline of Section B, ALTERATION GUIDELINES.

The **BACKGROUND** statement outlines the reasons for the design guideline and the goals that the City wishes to achieve. The background statement also provides clarification among related or similar design guidelines or adds more detail to the guideline language. This information helps inform application of the guidelines, but does not serve as approval criteria.

The **DESIGN GUIDELINE LANGUAGE** serves as the actual approval criteria.

The **accomplished by** statements and photographs are provided to exemplify and illustrate how guidelines may be met. In many cases the descriptions are followed by pictures of examples. The accomplished by's and the examples must not be considered as the only possible design solutions. They are intended to stimulate new ideas and provide direction for designers and developers, but are not approval criteria.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES B2: DESIGN OF ALTERATIONS

#### B2: DESIGN OF ALTERATIONS

##### BACKGROUND:

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 a different historic architectural style, even one found in the district, should not be used.

Culturally authentic details such as parapet or other rooftop edge detailing, entryway surrounds, awnings, projecting balconies, signs, and other design elements which illustrate or suggest a building's Japanese or Chinese affiliation may be appropriate depending on the change's impact on historic materials.

##### GUIDELINE B2

DESIGN ALTERATIONS TO BE RESPECTFUL OF THE ORIGINAL STYLE, TYPE, AND DESIGN OF THE BUILDING.

##### Guideline B2 may be accomplished by:

- Using contemporary building details which tie the building to its ethnic or cultural history, but don't create a false sense of that history.
- Ensuring that architectural elements from other historic building styles are not unintentionally introduced.
- Integrating authentic design elements in ways that minimally impact the existing building's historic materials and overall stylistic presentation.



*The Overland Warehouse at 4th and Davis was rehabilitated to retain the historic pattern of window and storefront openings. Historic materials were repaired and, where necessary, replaced with materials in keeping with the original. Images courtesy Emerick Architects.*



## 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, architecture, and role in and association with Portland's early growth as an industrial and commercial center. The district is also recognized for its historic architecture built during its period of significance (1880 to 1943).<sup>3</sup>

Written with emphasis on the Chinese experience in the district, the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District nomination found the district to be locally and nationally significant “for its history as the largest and most intact Chinatown in Oregon.”<sup>4</sup> However, subsequent research has demonstrated that the district was equally important to Portland's early Japanese community, as well as to African, Greek, Jewish, and Scandinavian immigrant groups throughout 1880-1943.

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 two primary groups was exhibited in adaptations made to the built environment to reflect their Asian heritage and by establishment of 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 reduced the number and visibility of Chinese and Japanese residents, businesses, and patrons in the district. However, the district retains sufficient ethnic and cultural significance and historic architecture to convey its importance as one of Portland's National Register historic districts.

Efforts to officially recognize New Chinatown/Japantown for its significance began in the 1970s, stimulated by local Chinese revitalization efforts. At that time, new Chinese restaurants, groceries, and Asian import and medicine shops were opened, and existing Chinese businesses expanded in the district. 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 and marks the NW 4th Avenue entrance to the historic district.<sup>5</sup>

Following the construction of the Chinatown Gate and the National Register designation in 1989, efforts to enhance and distinguish the district and its immediate surroundings have included the construction of the



*Aerial view of New Chinatown/Japantown c1933. City of Portland Archives, Oregon, #A2011-024.*

<sup>3</sup> Northwest Heritage Property Associates, Portland New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District National Register of Historic Places Form (Washington, D-C: U-S Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1989). Title page.

Lan Su Chinese Garden just outside of the district at NW Everett Street and NW 3rd Avenue, the creation of two Festival Streets located along NW Davis and Flanders Streets between NW 3rd and 4th Avenues, the installation of bronze history plaques within sidewalk masonry pavers on NW 3rd and 4th Avenues, the installation of red street lamps, and the creation of a Japanese-American Historical Plaza three blocks east of the district.

## SETTING

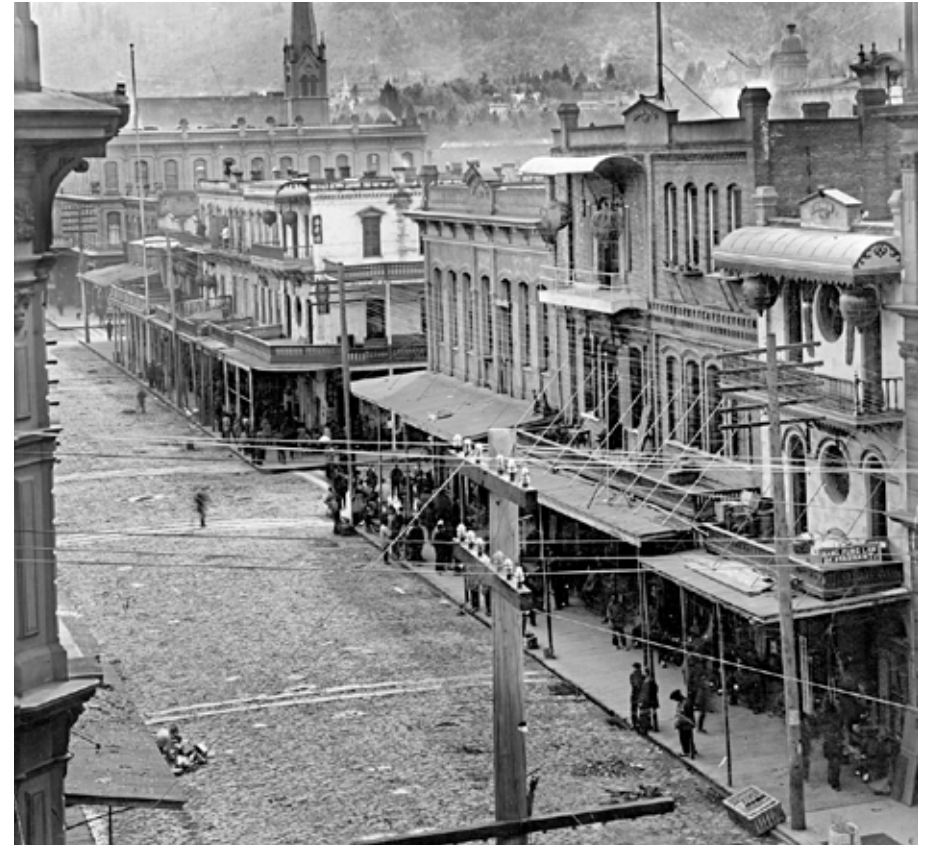
The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is located three blocks west of the Willamette River and immediately north of West Burnside Street in the Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. It consists of ten city blocks bound by NW Glisan Street to the north, NW 3rd Avenue to the east, 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 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 Ratio (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 the opening of a shipping route from San Francisco, Chinese immigrants had arrived in Portland by 1851. Early Chinese immigrants in Portland quickly established laundries and restaurants along Front Street (now Naito Parkway), catering to the broader population. A few men became labor contractors, paying to transport and supply 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; they arrived with the intent to make money and return home to their families, although some men brought wives from China. Such sojourners often retained their language, customs, and traditions.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis, *Beyond the Gate: A Tale of Portland's Historic Chinatowns* (Portland, OR: U.S. Oregon Historical Society, 2016).

Records show that by the late 1860s, Chinese immigrants were employed by local employers such as the Oregon Iron Company, the Clackamas Paper Manufacturing Company, and Oregon Woolen Mills. By 1870, Chinese immigrants also found employment constructing railines for companies such as Northern Pacific and Central Pacific. In the ensuing years, Chinese labor shifted from the railroad industry to fish canneries along the Columbia River where more than 2,000 Chinese were employed by 1874.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter, Chinese labor was also used to log forests, mine for gold, build roads, and dig waterways. Regardless of their active role contributing to the development of Portland's economy, Chinese laborers were openly discriminated against. Bills, taxes, and ordinances were used to suppress Chinese immigrants from obtaining power, money, and property.



"Old Chinatown", SW 2nd Avenue, looking southwest, c1890. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.



In response to violent protests on the West Coast instigated by workers who feared competition from Chinese laborers, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. That law prohibited further immigration by Chinese laborers, the immigration of resident Chinese laborers' wives and children, and the naturalization of Chinese immigrants already living in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Discrimination against Chinese laborers led to the growth of Japanese immigration to fill the same roles. Chinese merchants and their families who were exempt from Chinese Exclusion built a substantial Chinese community and way of life centered along Portland's SW 2nd Avenue, numbering 10,000 persons at its height in 1900. In addition to this community which later became known as "Old Chinatown," a second community of Chinese gardeners lived in rural portions of the city, such as along Tanner Creek (now Goose Hollow).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Northwest Heritage Property Associates, *Portland New Chinatown/Japantown*, 8-4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8-5.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas Lee, Chinese Americans in Oregon, [http://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinese\\_americans\\_in\\_oregon/#.Vzugabn2aUk](http://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinese_americans_in_oregon/#.Vzugabn2aUk).



NW 4th Avenue, looking northwest, 1915. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

During the later years of the 1800s, Portland's Japantown (known as Nihonmachi) took root north of West Burnside Street as a hub for new Japanese immigrants. Arriving in Portland in the 1890s to find work along the West Coast, hundreds of young Japanese males, similar to their Chinese counterparts, found work at or with "railroads, lumber mills, farms and fish canneries."<sup>10</sup> Japantown's boundaries were once much broader than the current New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, stretching from SW Ankeny to NW Glisan streets with concentrations 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 businesses were established north of West Burnside Street. However, after a fire in 1873 destroyed "17 of the 62 existing Chinese businesses"<sup>11</sup> in Old Chinatown, Chinese business owners began a slow migration from south of West Burnside Street to what would later be called New Chinatown. Nonetheless, by 1885, the number of Chinese businesses in Old Chinatown "increased from 63 to 123."<sup>12</sup> 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.

Like the rest of Portland in the wake of the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, Old Chinatown experienced a building and population boom which prompted many Chinese to rapidly seek new residency in New Chinatown. The new arrivals quickly displaced many longtime Chinese residents and business owners due to rising rents and property values.<sup>13</sup> Another contributing factor that led to the increased migration of Portland's Chinese population north of West Burnside Street was the 1904 decision by the United States government to make Chinese Exclusion its permanent immigration policy.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, *A Glimpse of Portland's Japantown 1940: A Tour Guide* (Portland, OR: Nikkei Legacy Center, 2002), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Northwest Heritage Property Associates, *Portland New Chinatown/Japantown*, 8-13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Marie Rose Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon*, 256-262.

<sup>14</sup> Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis, *Beyond the Gate: A Tale of Portland's Historic Chinatowns*.



During this transition to New Chinatown, many prominent Chinese merchants from Portland took their businesses and their accumulated wealth to Seattle, San Francisco, or 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.<sup>15</sup> This move was reinforced by the development of two blocks by Chinese investors along NW 4th Avenue between NW Davis and Flanders streets in 1909 and the construction of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) Building in 1911.<sup>16</sup> Though Chinese could not own property or land at this time they paid for the construction of these buildings, which in turn helped solidify New Chinatown's presence as the center of Portland's Chinese community.

As old businesses found new quarters and new businesses proliferated, and as family, clan, district, and political associations began to establish headquarters in New Chinatown, the district expanded beyond NW 4th Avenue. The Chinese population made inroads 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 both storage and sleeping quarters.

Though sharing an overlapping area 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 Act era, Japanese immigrants were not restricted by nationality, class, or gender, meaning that both Japanese merchants and workers were allowed to bring wives and families to the United States until the passage of the 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 Japanese solution 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 day laborers and pensioners, Japanese

hotel managers' families were provided with apartments in one of the many two- and three-story residential hotels within the district that were built in the first two decades of the twentieth century to accommodate incoming workers.



*Tokio Sukiyaki Japanese Restaurant, NW 4th Avenue between NW Flanders and Everett Streets, c1941. Courtesy of the Oregon Nikkei Endowment.*

<sup>15</sup> Marie Rose Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon*, 256-262.

<sup>16</sup> Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis, *Beyond the Gate: A Tale of Portland's Historic Chinatowns*.

Between 1910 and 1940, both New Chinatown and Japantown developed into thriving, overlapping ethnic communities. In Japantown, hotels, bath houses, laundries, groceries, restaurants, gambling halls, doctors and dentists, and Buddhist and Christian churches were established by the 1920s. Other institutions and activities included a Japanese newspaper, sports teams, and a Boy Scout troop.

The district also hosted a Japanese language school and a Japanese hotel association which had more than 100 members. 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.”<sup>17</sup> With a concentration of more than 100 Japanese businesses located within a six or eight block area, by 1940, Japantown had “evolved into a self-sufficient, Japanese-speaking community,”<sup>18</sup> which provided services not only to early immigrants, but also to “the greater Japanese community throughout Oregon.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Katagiri, Cannon Kitayama, Liz Nakazawa, *Nihonmachi: Portland's Japantown Remembered* (Portland: Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, 2002), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, *A Glimpse of Portland's Japantown 1940: A Tour Guide* (Portland: Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, 2002), 2.



*Lion Dance Class, c1930s. Courtesy of the Portland Chinatown History Foundation.*

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 immediate discrimination. In 1942, Executive Order 9066 required that “all persons of Japanese ancestry were removed from the West Coast and placed into concentration camps.”<sup>20</sup> In early May of that year, notices were posted throughout Japantown giving Japanese citizens only two weeks to gather their belongings in one suitcase and report to a government assembly center in North Portland.<sup>21</sup> Overnight, Japantown was vacated, leaving a lasting impact on the people and place that had occupied the district.

After the war, some Japanese returned to Japantown to manage residential hotels in the 1950s; however, many Japanese left Portland and the West Coast altogether. A few organizations such as the Japanese American Citizen League and Japanese Ancestral Society, as well as a handful of Japanese restaurants and businesses, did return to Japantown. More recently, the establishment of the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center and the creation of Waterfront Park's Japanese-American Historical Plaza have further restored the visibility of Japantown's heritage.<sup>22</sup>

Around the same time, New Chinatown also experienced a decline in residents. Beginning with the passage of the Magnuson Act of 1943, which repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and allowed 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.<sup>23</sup> Over the ensuing decades, housing needs continued to precipitate outmigration of resident families from New Chinatown, primarily to southeast and northeast Portland where a secondary Chinese business district (known today as the Jade District) developed along 82nd Avenue beginning in the 1950s.

<sup>19</sup> Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, *Nihonmachi: Portland's Japantown*, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/nikkeialbum/albums/44/slide/?page=2>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Heather Andrews, *Beyond the Gate: An Ethnic History of Portland's Nihonmachi and New Chinatown* by Foot (Portland: Heather Andrews, 2010), 6.

<sup>22</sup> Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis, *Coming Home: Voices of Return and Resettlement* (Portland, OR: Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, 2012-13), Map of Nikkei Hotels in 1950.

<sup>23</sup> Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis, *Beyond the Gate: A Tale of Portland's Historic Chinatowns*.

However, New Chinatown remained the Chinese business and cultural center of Portland for years, and many Chinese and Chinese Americans bought their first property or opened their first business in the district from the 1940s to 1970s. This retention of property and businesses helped anchor the district for decades and contributed to its recent culturally significant additions, such as the Chinatown Gate, the Lan Su Chinese Garden, the Festival Streets, and bronze plaques.

Nevertheless, social and economic factors such as a greater acceptance of Chinese during World War II due to China's alliance with the United States, the growth of middle class Chinese families, emergence of a Chinese-American identity, the impact of both the Great Depression and World War II on New Chinatown's aging building stock, and changes in occupational and business opportunities have unmistakably transformed New Chinatown since the district's period of historic significance.<sup>24</sup>

Both New Chinatown and Japantown were fragile constructions where both groups struggled together 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 for families, and a lack of job opportunities outside of New Chinatown and Japantown, these two communities made distinctive adaptations to their environment, established and matured a community, and shared a home in what we now call the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.

<sup>24</sup> Northwest Heritage Property Associates, Portland New Chinatown/Japantown, 8-15.



Tanaka Benjamin Portland office, c1930. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.



Hop Sing Tong Headquarters, NW 4th Avenue and Everett Street, c1931. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.



## URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The National Park Service listed the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District in the National Register for multiple reasons, including its significant multiethnic heritage, concentration of historic architecture, and contributions to Portland's Industrial development. Of these three reasons, the district's retention of late 19th- and early 20th-century architecture most clearly defines its urban character today. Architecturally, the district is defined by three contributing styles common during its period of significance (1880-1943). These styles are 20th Century Commercial, Italianate, and Moderne.

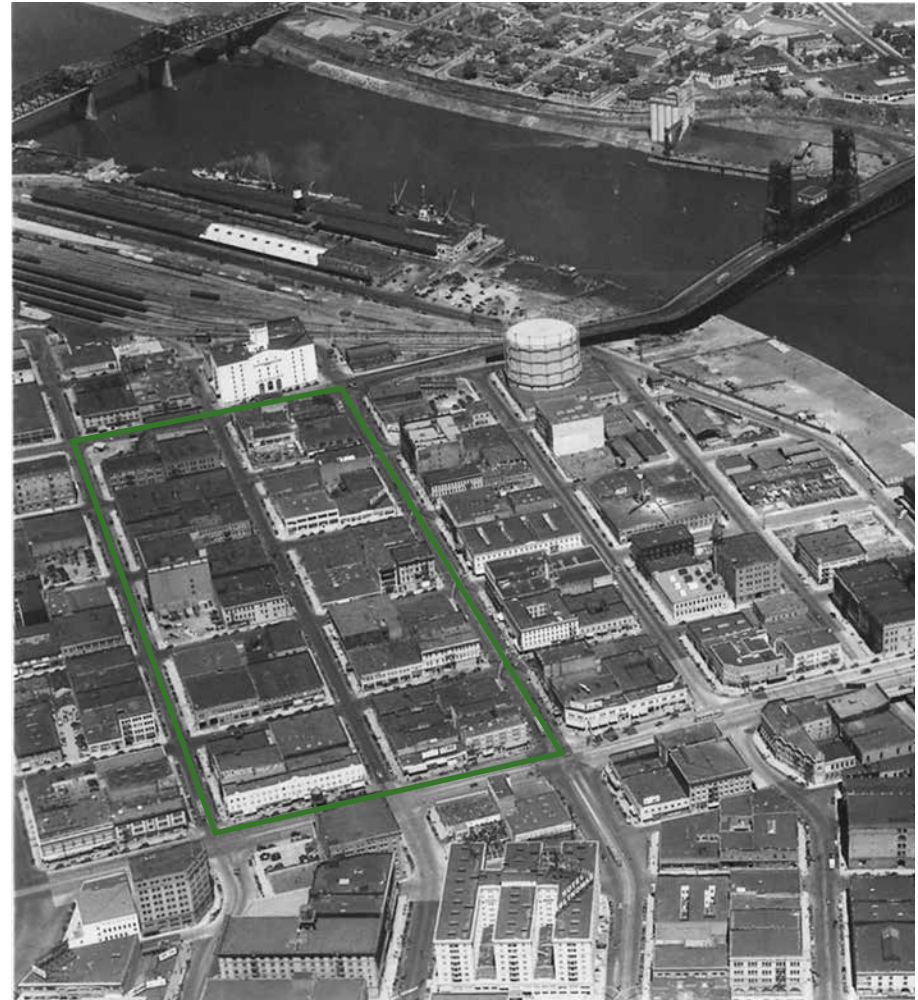
Other styles and sub-styles found within the district include Richardsonian Romanesque and Mission Revival. In addition to these historic styles, alterations to historic buildings, new construction, and right-of-way improvements have added to the architectural diversity of the district. However, although the district consists of new and historic buildings which now span three centuries, its overall character is derived from the three historic architectural styles. Collectively, these three styles make up three-fourths of all buildings within the district, 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. The Italianate-style buildings generally have smaller footprints and are on average three stories tall. The most common exterior building materials found within the district are brick and concrete stucco, both in widely varying color ranges.

In addition to the district's architectural styles, the built environment in the district was uniquely shaped by the Chinese and Japanese communities. Generally, buildings built in the district were one of the three contributing styles but originally displayed few to no permanent exterior design expressions related to Chinese or Japanese architecture. However, with time and the development of the district into a multiethnic community, cultural adaptations were made to buildings to reflect the occupants' Asian heritage, particularly Chinese.

Using the existing built environment as a form of expression, it was common for Chinese occupants in the district to apply or repurpose upper-level wrought-iron balconies as extended living space or gardens, alter existing storefronts with projecting signage, and add storefront awnings. Other vernacular adaptations to the existing buildings within the district included the application of long

horizontal arched awnings at the upper levels, hanging lanterns, the flying of political flags, the addition of signs, and the removal of upper-level walls or windows to create recessed balconies.



*Aerial view of New Chinatown-Japantown in 1935. City of Portland Archives, Oregon, #2005-005.*

Many of the buildings within the district had storefront commercial uses at the ground floor, social or association spaces at the second floor, and living quarters at the top floors. This hierarchical arrangement was derived from traditional architectural practices retained from China. The hierarchy aligned with the placement of signage, exterior and recessed balconies, and the application of other cultural elements. Functionally, 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.<sup>25</sup>

Collectively, these smaller-scale cultural adaptations created a unique built environment character during and after the period of significance, which not only defined the district but visually expressed its cultural heritage. Although no exterior adaptations expressing Japanese cultural influence are visible today, added signs advertising Japanese-owned businesses and restaurants using Japanese characters were present before 1942. Generally, however, much of the Japanese influence on the built environment that occurred prior to 1942 was interior, such as the bathhouses in the basements of several hotels.

Overall, large-scale authentic Chinese and Japanese architectural expressions such as materials, form, and roof styles did not originally exist in this district due to the groups' assimilation into the district's existing late 19th- and early 20th-century architecture. While in some cases whole buildings, such as the CCBA Building reflected an overall Chinese design, for the most part the buildings within the district reflect a unique combination of existing architectural styles and cultural adaptations. The restoration of the Hung Far Low sign at the corner of NW 4th Avenue and NW Couch Street and the addition of Chinese signage representing associations or tongs around door openings and underneath cornice lines of several buildings continue to reinforce this vernacular design approach within the district.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Erling Groth and Todd W. Bressi, *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven, MA: Yale University, 1997), 82.

## 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.<sup>26</sup> 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 originally had 200-foot square blocks surrounded by 60-foot wide streets. Although 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 resulted in the reduction of the original 200-foot blocks immediately north of West Burnside Street by 20 feet. Similarly, the 1933 widening of NW Glisan Street between NW 3rd and 4th Avenues from 60 feet to approximately 80 feet also changed the district's block pattern.

<sup>26</sup> Northwest District Association, *Northwest Portland Historic Inventory: Historic Context Statement* (Portland, OR: Northwest District Association, 1991), 8.



*Aerial New Chinatown/Japantown looking northwest, 1938. Intersection of NW 4th Avenue and Everett Street at center. City of Portland Archives, Oregon, #A2010-001.*

Within the district, the 200-foot blocks also experienced developmental changes over time. Historically, the block lots were divided into halves, quarters, eighths, and sixteenths. According to Sanborn fire insurance maps, the district's blocks in 1889 featured a mix of single dwellings, storefront businesses, and vacant lots. By 1901, the density of the district had increased with the continued development and infilling of its existing blocks, which included multiple storefront businesses, boarding houses, and schools, in addition to 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. By 1924, blocks within the district were almost exclusively developed with quarter- 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 construction of contiguous one- to seven-story buildings created a streetscape that defined its urban character at the end of the period of significance. Today, this character and historic framework remain evident with existing buildings constructed to the right-of-way line. Changes such as the increase of vacant lots after 1950 and the construction of a MAX light rail line on NW 5th Avenue in 2009 have altered its historic character slightly.

## STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS AND PUBLIC REALM

Throughout the history of the district, design and material characteristics of its public realm have also evolved. These elements, including paving materials, sidewalk characteristics, street lighting, signage, landscape features, public art, and other cultural adaptations, provide texture to the district's urban form.

Some of the first streets within the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District were paved with macadam, 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.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Thompson, Portland Streetcar System, [http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/portland\\_streetcar\\_system/#.Vz14tbn2aUk](http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/portland_streetcar_system/#.Vz14tbn2aUk).

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.<sup>27</sup> The MAX light rail line constructed in 2009 on NW 5th Avenue gave the district its first rail transit in more than 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. Although the material and overall dimensions of the sidewalks have not changed much, other elements and features located on the sidewalks have. Early sidewalks featured wood telephone poles, streetcar poles, lantern posts, sidewalk elevators, and metal lamp posts. By 1920, sidewalks also 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, glass inserts, and historic lamp posts. Today, the sidewalks feature wayfinding signs, ATM machines, metal and wood benches, bike racks, pay phones, trash receptacles, traffic signals, pedestrian walk signals, and bus stops.



*Paving Map of Portland January 1, 1895. Courtesy of Portland Archives, accession #2014-001.*



Lighting within the district has also changed over time. Early turn-of-the-century lighting fixtures included metal lamp posts topped with glass globes and street lanterns hung from wood poles. In 1914, lighted metal 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.<sup>28</sup> Due to street widening projects and the Depression, the lighted archways were gone by 1940.<sup>29</sup> By 1927, metal double headed lamps were installed throughout the district. Large cantilevered street lights arrived in 1970.

Projecting building elements found within the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic district included signs and awnings. The earliest signs were painted, typically along the top sides of buildings for visibility, but attached signs located above the first-level storefronts, both horizontally or vertically, arrived after 1900. By 1913, large vertical signs had been installed at the corners of many buildings. Other sign types such as painted signs on building walls, larger fluorescent internally lit signs, and neon signs 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.

Landscape features within the district were historically limited. Following the construction of dense development in the early 1900s, historic images show few landscape elements. By 1969, cherry trees were planted around Block 33, which at that time was 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 the Festival Streets on NW Davis and NW Flanders Streets.

Based on their proximity, function, and concentration of different ethnic communities, NW 3rd, 4th, and 5th Avenues each differ in physical characteristics and ethnic history.

NW 3rd Avenue shares its history with the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, with a number of cast-iron storefront façades and Italianate buildings. Historically, NW 3rd Avenue held a high concentration of Japanese-operated businesses, such as hotels, retail, restaurants, and laundries.

<sup>28</sup> Dan Haneckow, Great Light Way (3rd St., Portland), [http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/great\\_light\\_way\\_3rd\\_st\\_portland\\_/#vzJXSbn2aUk](http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/great_light_way_3rd_st_portland_/#vzJXSbn2aUk).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

NW 4th Avenue represented the heart of New Chinatown and featured many 20th Century Commercial-style buildings. Like NW 3rd Avenue for the Japanese community, NW 4th Avenue had 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.

NW 5th Avenue exhibits a different history. Although 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 do. The architecture along NW 5th Avenue, which includes the tallest contributing buildings within the district, continues to illustrate the light industrial and commercial uses that characterized the district during the period of significance.

Overall, streetscapes in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District have evolved and endured over time. Although many original elements have been lost, altered, or changed, the streetscapes retain much of their integrity through their architecturally and culturally significant buildings, spaces, and elements.

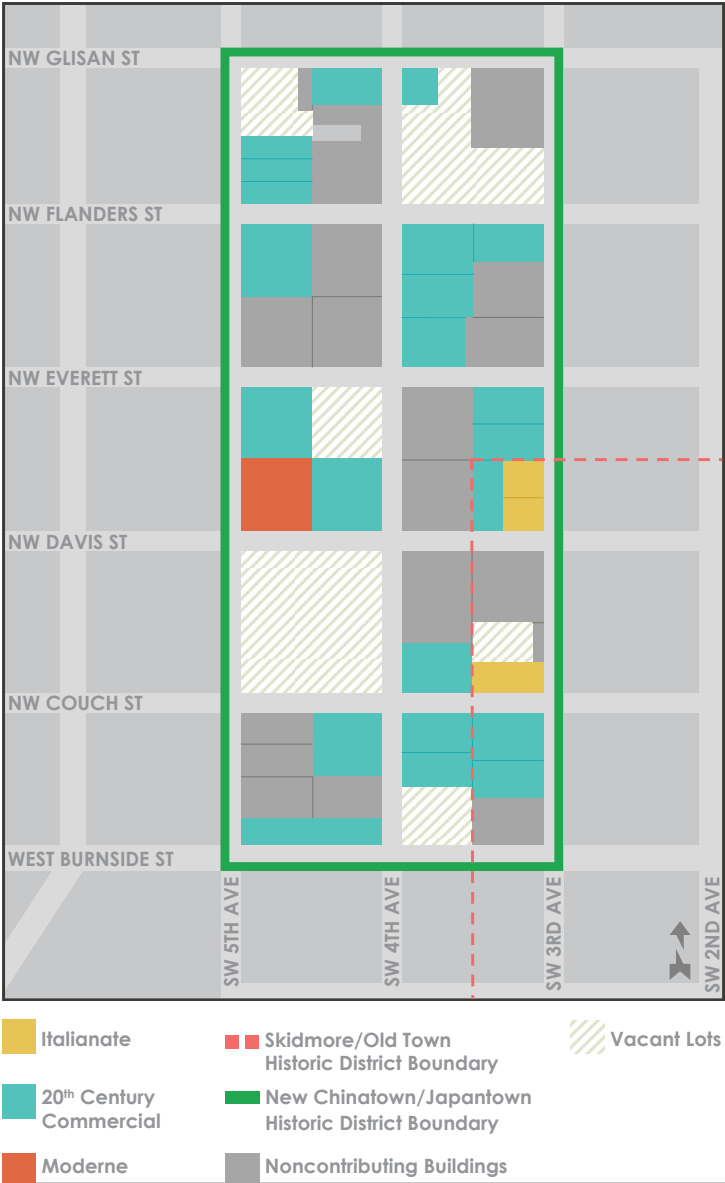


*Chinatown Gate, 1987. City of Portland Archives, Oregon, #A2010-003.*

**STYLES OF CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS IN THE NEW CHINATOWN/JAPANTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT**

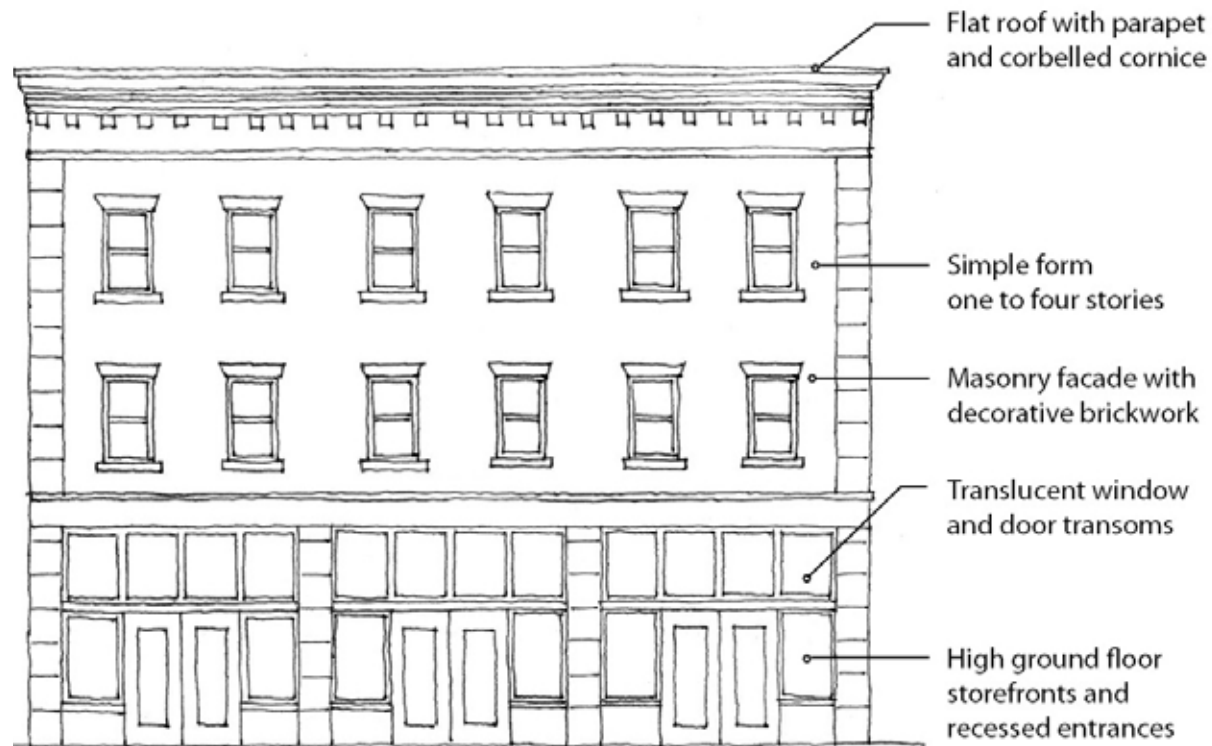
The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is architecturally defined by three contributing architectural styles: 20th Century Commercial, Italianate, and Moderne. Although the district currently includes other historic and contemporary styles, these three styles represent all of the district’s twenty-six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

NEW CHINATOWN/JAPANTOWN CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS MAP



**STYLE: 20TH CENTURY COMMERCIAL**

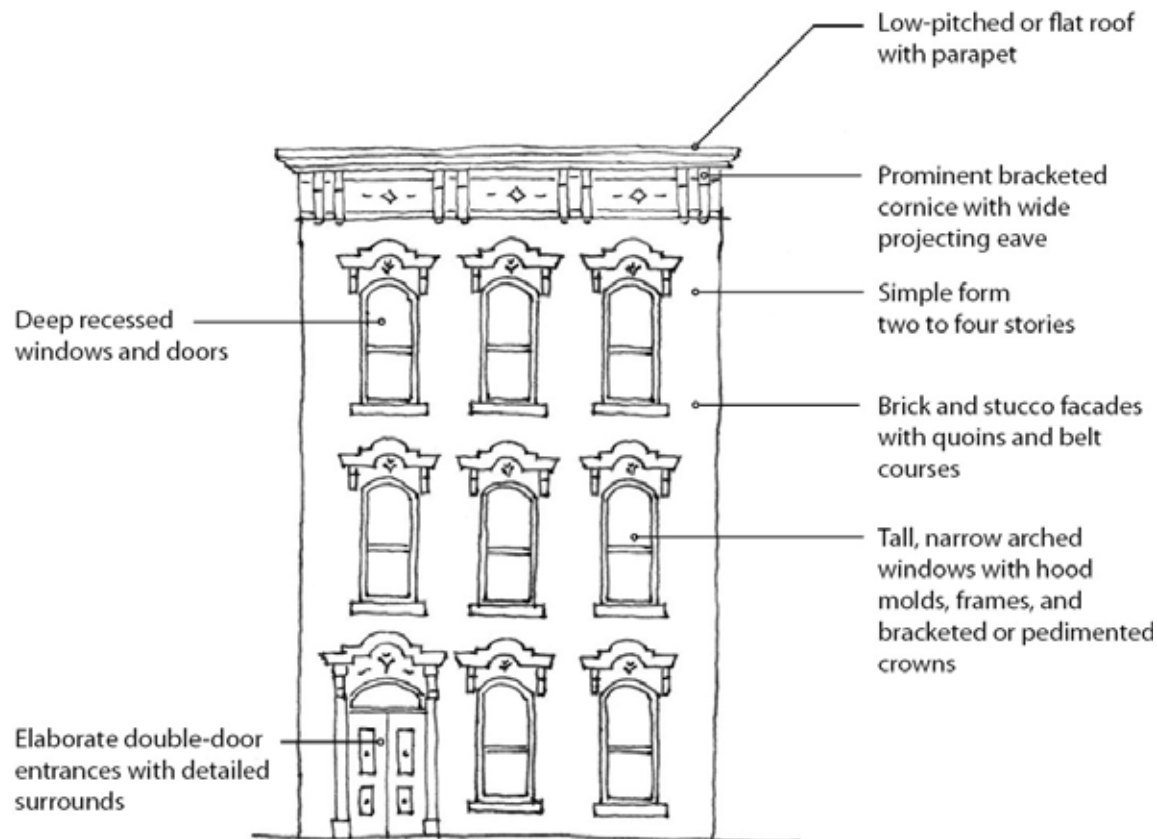
Twentieth Century Commercial-style architecture was common throughout the United States from 1890 to 1920. Typical design characteristics of 20th Century Commercial-style architecture include simple forms of one to four stories, high ground floor storefronts, brick and masonry façades, corbelled cornices, and flat roofs with parapets. Other common features include recessed entrances, translucent window and door transoms over the storefronts, decorative brick patterns, and symmetrical bays and fenestration. By far the most common architectural style in the district, examples include the Blanchet House (Yamaguchi Hotel) (c1905), the Pally Building (1908), the Royal Palm Hotel (1913), the Hung Far Low Building (1916), and the Goldsmith Company Building (1924).

**STYLE DETAILS WITHIN THE DISTRICT***Corbelled cornice**Masonry facade**Ground floor storefront with recessed entrance*



**STYLE: ITALIANATE**

Italianate-style architecture was common throughout the United States from 1840 to 1885. Traditional characteristics of Italianate architecture include simple forms of two to four stories, deep recessed windows and doors, cast iron, 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 (Portland Seamen's Bethel) (1881), the Sinnott House (Couch Street Fish House) (1883), and the Hip Sing Association (1889).

**STYLE DETAILS WITHIN THE DISTRICT***Narrow arched windows with hood molds**Stucco and belt courses**Simple four-story form*

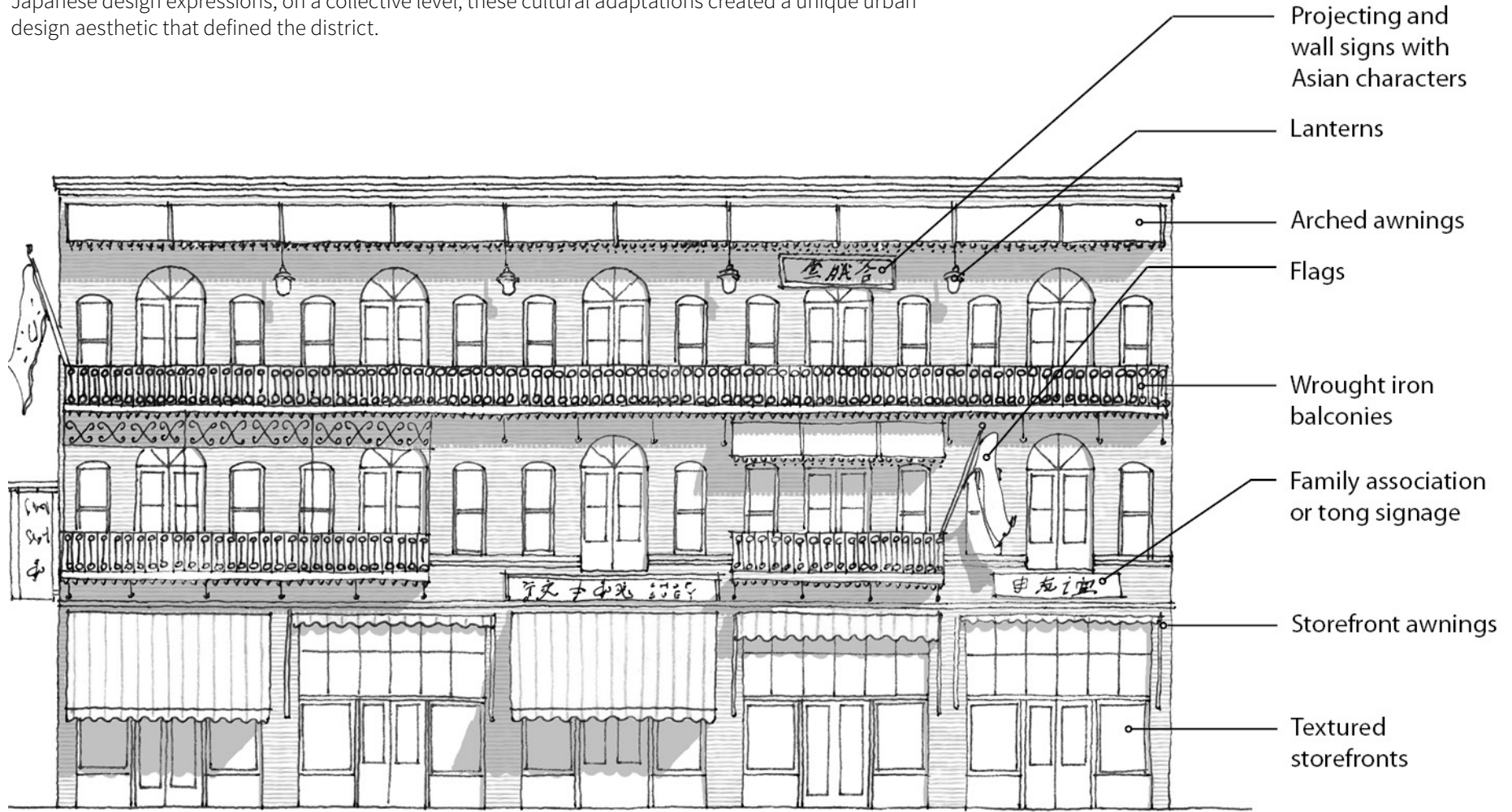
**STYLE: MODERNE**

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 curved building corners, cantilevered awnings and glass brick. The one example within the district is the Zellerbach Paper Co. (1940).

**STYLE DETAILS WITHIN THE DISTRICT***Asymmetrical facade**Glass block**Metal framed window*

## CULTURAL URBAN DESIGN ADAPTATIONS

Cultural adaptations to existing and sometimes new buildings within the district were a common and significant expression of Chinese and Japanese culture during the 1880 to 1943 period. These adaptations were predominantly conducted by Chinese occupants and owners and included the repurposing or installation of horizontally-oriented upper-level projecting and/or recessed balconies as extended living space or gardens, altering existing storefronts with signs and cloth awnings, applying horizontal arched awnings at the upper levels, displaying political flags, adding hanging lanterns, installing signs with Asian characters. Although not every building exhibited Chinese and/or Japanese design expressions, on a collective level, these cultural adaptations created a unique urban design aesthetic that defined the district.





## 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 lacks.

In addition to developing a better 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, 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.”<sup>30</sup>

The New Chinatown/Japantown cultural affiliation maps on the following page show buildings, spaces, and structures that had or continue to retain their cultural affiliations during and after the district’s period of significance (1880-1943).



*The Royal Palm Hotel, at NW 3rd Avenue and NW Flanders Street, was built in 1913. Japanese steam baths were added in the basement in 1932. Photo 1989, courtesy of the Portland Development Commission.*

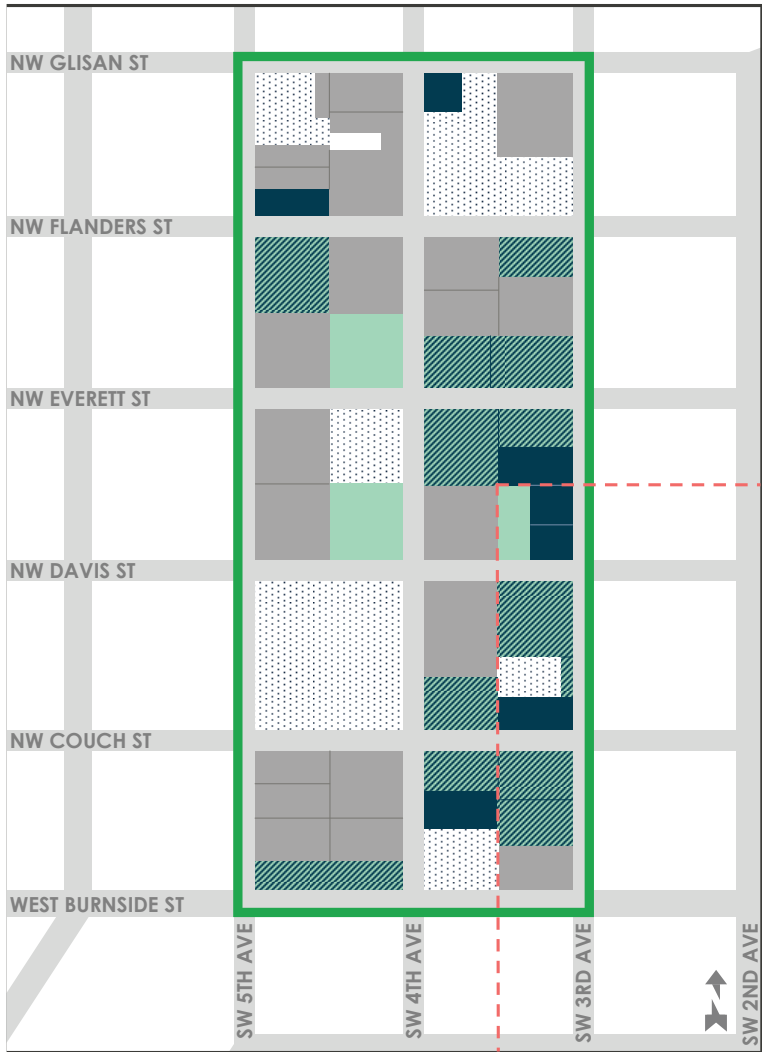


*The Royal Palm Hotel, at NW 3rd Avenue and NW Flanders Street, 2016.*

<sup>30</sup> Northwest Heritage Property Associates, Portland New Chinatown/Japantown, 8-16.

MAPS SHOWING CULTURAL AFFILIATION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

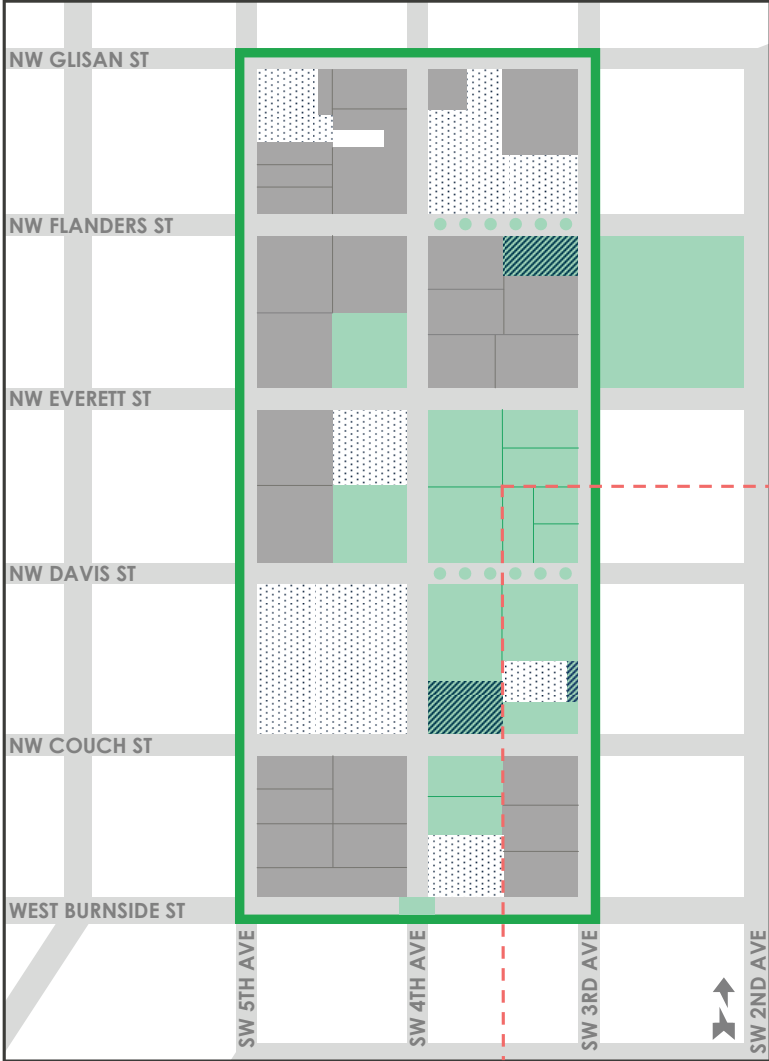
1880-1943



LEGEND:

- |                     |                                  |  |             |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Japanese-Affiliated | No Significant Affiliation       | New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Boundary | Vacant Lots |
| Chinese-Affiliated  | Chinese- and Japanese-Affiliated | Skidmore/Old Town Historic District Boundary       |             |

1943-PRESENT



## Chapter 3: Design Guidelines

The following design guidelines are approval criteria for Historic Resource Review in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. There are four categories of guidelines: **General**, **Alteration**, **Addition**, and **New Construction**. Not all projects will use all guidelines. Each category explains where those guidelines apply. For projects in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District overlap area, the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District Design Guidelines and New Chinatown/Japantown Guidelines apply. In addition to these Historic District Design Guidelines, the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines apply to projects in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- A1 INTEGRATE AUTHENTIC CHINESE AND/OR JAPANESE DESIGN ELEMENTS IN KEEPING WITH DISTRICT CHARACTER.
- A2 USE DURABLE, HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS AND FINISHES.
- A3 USE DIMENSIONAL SIGNS AND RETAIN HISTORIC SIGNS TO HELP PRESERVE THE DISTRICT'S CHARACTER.
- A4 INTEGRATE HORIZONTALLY-ORIENTED BALCONIES IF COMPATIBLE WITH THE BUILDING'S STYLE.
- A5 FOCUS EXTERIOR LIGHTING ON THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT.
- A6 PROVIDE TEXTURE, SMALL-SCALE DETAIL AND A RICH PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT AT THE GROUND FLOOR.
- A7 MINIMIZE THE VISIBILITY OF ROOFTOP MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT FROM THE RIGHT-OF-WAY.
- A8 REFLECT THE DESIRED STREETScape CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT IN RIGHTS-OF-WAY, AT BUILDING ENTRIES, AND IN SPECIAL PLACES.
- A9 PROVIDE VISUAL INTEREST TO EXPOSED LOT-LINE WALLS THROUGH ELEMENTS SUCH AS EXPRESSED FLOOR LINES, ART, OR INCLUSION OF OPENINGS WHERE ALLOWED.

A10 INCORPORATE AN ARCHITECTURAL EDGE AND/OR ACTIVE USE ALONG THE SIDEWALK ALONG ANY SURFACE PARKING OR OFF-STREET LOADING AREAS.

A11 PROVIDE PUBLIC HISTORY PLAQUES OR INFORMATION AT THE GROUND FLOOR LEVEL.

### GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS

- B1 RETAIN AND REPAIR HISTORIC FEATURES AND MATERIALS
- B2 DESIGN ALTERATIONS TO BE RESPECTFUL OF THE ORIGINAL STYLE, TYPE, AND DESIGN OF THE BUILDING.
- B3 KEEP ALTERATIONS OR NEW ELEMENTS VISUALLY SECONDARY TO THE ORIGINAL FEATURES OF THE BUILDING.
- B4 UNDERTAKE SEISMIC IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MOST UNOBTRUSIVE WAY POSSIBLE.

### GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS

- C1 ENSURE ADDITIONS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE ORIGINAL STYLE, FORM, AND MASSING OF THE EXISTING BUILDING.
- C2 DESIGN HORIZONTAL ADDITIONS TO CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS EITHER TO APPEAR TO BE A NEW BUILDING, OR AS A VISUALLY SECONDARY VARIATION OF THE ORIGINAL.



- C3 DESIGN VERTICAL ADDITIONS TO CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS TO LIMIT THE VISUAL IMPACT OF THE ADDITION.

### **GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION**

- D1 DESIGN THE NEW STRUCTURE TO BE INFORMED BY ONE OF THE HISTORIC STYLES FOUND IN THE DISTRICT.
- D2 REFLECT THE FORM AND ARTICULATION OF THE DISTRICT'S CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS IN NEW CONSTRUCTION.
- D3 RELATE THE VERTICAL COMPOSITION OF THE NEW STRUCTURE TO NEIGHBORING CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS.
- 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.
- D5 DESIGN STREET-FACING WALLS WITH A REGULAR RHYTHM OF BAYS, OPENINGS, AND FEATURES.
- D6 WINDOWS AND WINDOW OPENINGS SHOULD BE OF A SIMILAR PROPORTION, RECESS, AND ALIGNMENT TO THE ORIGINAL WINDOWS IN CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS.



*Looking north along NW 4th Avenue in New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, 1979. Courtesy of Norm Gholston.*

# A: General Guidelines

General Guidelines apply to all exterior alterations, additions, or other projects that change the built environment in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. Depending on the scope of the change, additional categories of New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines are also likely to apply.

## A1: DISTRICT CHARACTER

### BACKGROUND:

Early 20th-century architecture most clearly defines the urban character of the district. Three styles in the district provide a degree of uniformity: 20th Century Commercial, Italianate, and Moderne. The Chinese and Japanese communities uniquely shaped their environment by adding adaptations and embellishments to these regular building forms.

Examples of Chinese details or adaptations to Western building styles include arched awnings above upper-level balconies, recessed or projecting horizontal balconies facing the street, decorative metal detailing such as railings and gates, and the use of applied ornamentation on wall areas within distinct borders or frames. Other details are typically more intrinsic to a building's original construction: tiled roof projections (typically not as the entire roof), expressed lintels at openings and/or post-and-lintel conditions, and diamond-shaped, hexagonal, or other non-square openings as accents.

In traditional Chinese architecture, materials such as wood, glazed terra cotta, ceramic tile, and stone were common, but these materials do not appear in any quantity in the district. Chinese architecture historically tended towards bolder colors such as yellow, red, green, or polychrome.

Exterior examples of adaptations to buildings made by Japanese residents or immigrants are rarer, but there are some observed commonalities in other historic West Coast Japantown communities. These include building details showing a strong lintel expression, half-timbering, and the use of brackets (typically wood) at cornices or entries. In historic Japanese urban architecture, wood was by far the most predominant material, but brick and concrete were also common by the mid 1800s.



*The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Building was constructed in 1911 and is a good example of a 20th Century Commercial style building with Chinese-influenced details such as the decorative metalwork, recessed balconies, hipped tiled roof projection at the cornice, and expressed lintels, as well as added embellishments such as signs, rich colors, and hanging flags.*

## GUIDELINE A1

INTEGRATE AUTHENTIC CHINESE AND/OR JAPANESE DESIGN ELEMENTS IN KEEPING WITH DISTRICT CHARACTER.

### Guideline A1 may be accomplished by:

- Demonstrating the appropriateness of proposed elements through an understanding of the historic significance of the district and site. This may be accomplished through site research, photographic documentation, engagement with district stakeholders, and/or reviewing the background provided in chapter 2.
- Using architectural elements, materials, or colors to evoke a connection to Chinese or Japanese urban design.
- Using traditional or contemporary details to evoke a connection to Chinese or Japanese architecture. Examples of details showing a Japanese influence might include a focus on the material or textural quality of architectural surfaces and an overall simplicity of forms and planes. Chinese-influenced details might include horizontal projecting or recessed balconies above the ground level.
- Adding removable design elements or embellishments to either new or existing buildings which reflect a Chinese or Japanese affiliation. These elements may include signs, decorative panels or entry surrounds, flags or banners, upper-level planter boxes, color, and other embellishments.
- Using horizontal projections, such as balconies and awnings, at upper floor and cornice levels.
- Refraining from use of Chinese or Japanese designs, symbols, or characters that are culturally misappropriated or on contributing buildings that do not have a history of Japanese or Chinese affiliation.



*The Chinese Freemasons Building in Vancouver, BC, shows Chinese-influenced recessed balconies. Courtesy of the National Trust for Canada.*



*The Hancock Lofts in Malibu, California, uses sliding wood shutters, a sunshading device which also recalls traditional Japanese screens. Courtesy of ericstaudenmeier.com.*





*The storefront and parapet detailing on the House of Louie Building on Block 27 adds colorful, rich detail to the street environment.*



*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.*

## A2: MATERIALS AND FINISHES

### BACKGROUND:

Brick, masonry, and painted stucco finishes are the primary exterior wall surfaces in the district. Most of the contributing buildings are brick and incorporate traditional brick patterns and depth details, especially at window heads and cornices. Windows and storefronts are generally made of wood and metal, with depth and texture evident in the materials.

### GUIDELINE A2

USE DURABLE, HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS AND FINISHES.



*The predominant wall finish at the Sinnott House is a smooth concrete stucco.*

### Guideline A2 may be accomplished by:

- Using quality materials and finishes consistent with those used on contributing buildings in the district.
- Replacing missing features on contributing buildings with materials in keeping with the building's original materials.
- Providing designs that include brick patterning, corbelling, insets and projections, or other traditional brickwork details. Brick size and texture, joint width, and other small-scale design features can provide a sense of continuity with the craftsmanship and texture of contributing buildings.
- Using smooth concrete stucco finishes, rather than textured or noticeably sanded wall treatments.
- Using durable and high-quality contemporary materials as secondary accents in combination with traditional primary wall materials such as masonry or concrete stucco.
- Avoiding the use of paint on previously unpainted brick or masonry. Removal of paint to reveal originally exposed surfaces is encouraged, but should be undertaken by gentle means.
- Using accent materials, finishes, and/or color to evoke an authentic Chinese or Japanese design influence.



*Stucco is most commonly found on Italianate styles in the district.*



*Avoid painting brick, but if existing brick is already fully painted, as at the Columbia River Ship Supply building, repainting is acceptable.*





*The Union Gospel Mission Building brickwork has highly contrasting mortar joints.*



*The Haradon Building, on 5th Avenue, exhibits highly detailed and sculptural brick details.*



## A3: SIGNS

### BACKGROUND:

The district represents the only historic district in Portland nominated primarily for its cultural importance. As one of the most visible representations of the Japanese and/or Chinese culture, signs can have a meaningful impact in preserving the district's character.

Projecting signs in particular bring a sense of the unique cultural influence prevalent in the district.

Along 4th Avenue, the heart of New Chinatown and the location of the Chinatown Gate, signs of noticeable size and/or authentic Chinese design expressions will help to provide the ambience of a unique district. 3rd Avenue was at one time the center of Japantown and also the location of the Great Light Way archways. At these two streets, projecting signs larger than 30 square feet were part of the streetscape, and can again help to signify the district and support its desired character.

Historic faded painted signs on brick buildings contribute to the character of the district and should be retained as much as possible.

### GUIDELINE A3

USE DIMENSIONAL SIGNS AND RETAIN HISTORIC SIGNS TO HELP PRESERVE THE DISTRICT'S CHARACTER.



*Retain faded painted signs in the district.*

### Guideline A3 may be accomplished by:

- Creating new three-dimensional, ornate, or multi-part projecting signs throughout the district.
- At locations along 3rd and 4th Avenue, creating new dimensional projecting signs that may be larger than 30 square feet in size, if compatible with the historic character of the district. Modification through Historic Resource Review can be used for approval of these larger signs.
- Creating new wall signs that respect and keep visible the architectural features of the building. Large new flat wall signs are discouraged.
- Retaining historic faded painted wall signs and/or allowing for murals or other art at visible end walls or lot-line walls.
- Sizing and placing signs and their structural support systems so that significant features on contributing buildings are not concealed or disfigured.
- Using metal, neon, glass, acrylic, and/or other materials in a layered projecting sign design, incorporating illumination if desired. Plastic is discouraged from being used as the primary "face" material of the sign.



*This 1987 image at night along NW 4th Avenue shows a multitude of projecting signs on the more muted brick buildings, providing a sense of visual interest and excitement. Photo by Bruce Forster, City of Portland Archives, Oregon, #A2010-003.*



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



*This wall sign at the Tuck Lung building was designed to fit in the hexagonal brick surround.*



## A4: BALCONIES

### BACKGROUND:

Recessed and projecting balconies are a common feature of Chinese regional and vernacular 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, but their presence during the period of significance make them a desired feature to retain and reintegrate in the district.

New balconies on existing, even contributing, buildings may be added if appropriate to the style of the building and if only minimally impactful to historic materials. Generally, added balconies would be compatible with buildings with relatively flat, unornamented surfaces. Balconies on new construction are especially encouraged in order to bring more life to the street environment.

### GUIDELINE A4

INTEGRATE HORIZONTALLY-ORIENTED BALCONIES THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE BUILDING'S STYLE.



*This building on NW 4th Avenue in New Chinatown/Japantown no longer exists, but this 1931 image shows the upper-level projecting balcony typical of the district. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.*

### Guideline A4 may be accomplished by:

- Incorporating balconies on new and noncontributing buildings that read as horizontal recesses in or projections.
- Retaining balconies and/or fire escapes on contributing buildings.
- Avoiding glass railings at balconies in favor of metal and/or wood railing designs.
- Retaining a sense of visual openness at upper balconies, whether projecting or recessed, by use of horizontal designs that span multiple bays.
- Capping horizontal projecting balconies with horizontal awnings, where appropriate.



*The Waldo Building on SW 2nd Avenue in "Old Chinatown" has an inset balcony.*



## A5: LIGHTING

### BACKGROUND:

Historically, lighting was focused on the street-level environment, with the exception of signs, some of which were projecting or affixed at the roof. Illuminated signs (see sign guideline A3) historically provided extensive levels of illumination in the district.

New light fixtures or illuminated features should continue to be focused on the ground floor and street level of buildings, but retain the historic feel of the level and type of illumination that may have been provided by incandescent lights.

### GUIDELINE A5

FOCUS EXTERIOR LIGHTING ON THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT.



Exterior lighting on Washington High School in SE Portland illuminates both the pedestrian realm and character-defining features of the building. Photo courtesy Venerable Properties.

### Guideline A5 may be accomplished by:

- Including pedestrian-scale lights in a regular rhythm along the storefront-level building façade.
- Using light fixtures that are sensitive to the character of the building and historic district.
- Selectively lighting outstanding architectural features or details on older buildings.
- Including muted upper-level spot lighting to highlight architectural features, but not to wash large areas or as a linear feature.
- Incorporating low wattage exposed-bulb theater or Tivoli-style lights on projecting building elements such as entry canopies or signs.
- Being sensitive to the quality of the light at the ground level environment, avoiding harsh illumination such as provided by sodium or fluorescent fixtures.



The Tivoli-style lights at the Simon Building façade add a festive atmosphere to the street level.

## A6: GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT

### BACKGROUND:

Storefronts are an important element in the district and historically were indicators of Chinese and/or Japanese occupancy of buildings. Storefront systems typically had 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 in repetition, but with variations, provided a rich, textural, and detailed street-level environment.

Historically, cloth awnings were used at individual storefront bays, which could be extended out or pulled in depending on weather conditions. Designing new awnings to fit within each storefront bay preserves the character of the district by ensuring that elements within the pedestrian environment are textural, varied, and occurring at a regular rhythm.

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 are generally discouraged, but when necessary should be as minimally visible as possible.

Parking is likely to remain an important amenity in the district for the foreseeable future. Though offstreet 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.

### GUIDELINE A6

PROVIDE TEXTURE, SMALL-SCALE DETAIL AND A RICH PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT AT THE GROUND FLOOR.

#### Guideline A6 may be accomplished by:

- 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.

- Using small-scale changes of plane and texture in the design of new storefronts to recall and interpret historic storefront features.
- Designing awnings to create a series of additive horizontal elements providing cover above the sidewalk. New ground floor awnings should use durable, high-quality materials such as metal, woven fabric, canvas, or glass and be designed specifically to the size of the storefront or entry opening.
- Minimizing the visual impact of security features such as moveable gates or roll-down doors by inseting such features into the storefront bay opening.
- Providing a motion sensor for safety lighting to avoid all-night illumination.
- Keeping garage entry openings a similar size as storefront openings found in the district.
- 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.



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





*The folding security gate at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association was designed to fit its opening with minimal impact to the storefront and adds Chinese decorative detail to the entry.*



*This San Francisco storefront uses wood and geometric styling to reflect a modern Japanese aesthetic. Courtesy of Craig Steely Architecture.*



*The new storefront system at the historic Minnesota Hotel building has a fine-grain level of detail.*



## A7: ROOFTOP EQUIPMENT

### BACKGROUND:

Most of the mechanical equipment, ducts, and other rooftop features currently in place are modern additions to the district. As such, rooftop equipment should not be visible, or be only slightly visible, from the right-of-way. For new construction or new additions, the roofscape should be carefully designed and considered. 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 visually detracting from the building and overall district.

### GUIDELINE A7

MINIMIZE THE VISIBILITY OF ROOFTOP MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT FROM THE RIGHT-OF-WAY.

### Guideline A7 may be accomplished by:

- Gathering mechanical equipment, elevator over-runs, and other rooftop elements together away from the street-fronting roof edges, and/or screening by a building parapet.
- Providing a unified design for rooftop elements.
- Minimizing visibility of rooftop elements such as rooftop equipment, stair over-runs, or mechanical enclosures from the right-of-way.
- Providing rooftop uses such as green roofs or solar panels where these structures would not have a significant impact on views from the right-of-way.



*The Society Hotel's parapet condition masks solar panels and a rooftop deck space. Courtesy of Addam Goard.*



*The roof of the historic Society Hotel on NW 3rd Avenue includes solar panels which are fully screened from street-level views by existing parapets.*

## A8: STREETSCAPE CHARACTER

### BACKGROUND:

Streetscapes in this urban historic district are important elements that help define the district's character. Streetscapes are the district's only public open spaces both historically and currently.

At NW 4th Avenue, which historically was the center of New Chinatown, the Chinatown Gate defines the south end of the district. The importance of the NW 4th Avenue streetscape should be reinforced by new buildings, additions, and exterior alterations meant to enhance and enliven its character. The NW 4th Avenue streetscape is envisioned as having visual priority over the streetscapes of the cross streets.

At Festival Streets especially, the raised planters and art create opportunities for buildings to respond to these special features, especially at the ground floor.

NW 5th Avenue is part of the Transit Mall, with brick sidewalks and large round planters.

Throughout the historic district, utility lines are appropriately buried rather than overhead, and other utility meters and boxes should also be kept below-grade.

### GUIDELINE A8

REFLECT THE DESIRED STREETSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT IN RIGHTS-OF-WAY, AT BUILDING ENTRIES, AND IN SPECIAL PLACES.



Chinatown Gate, c1986. Photo by Bruce Forster, courtesy of Portland Development Commission.

### Guideline A8 may be accomplished by:

- 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. Special threshold surface materials such as masonry, tile, or terrazzo reflect the unique character of the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.
- Locating accessible entries in a manner that preserves historic step-ups, while providing accessibility to the building.
- For new buildings or additions fronting NW 4th Avenue, prioritizing a contextual relationship with the contributing buildings that also front NW 4th Avenue. Where appropriate, incorporate strong projecting elements and/or stepbacks facing NW 4th Avenue to enhance and restore a main street uniformity.
- Where new and non-contributing building walls face Festival Streets, providing compatibly-scaled and detailed openings, thereby encouraging uses to spill out into these special areas and support increased vitality within the district.
- Where NW 3rd Avenue buildings face the Lan Su Garden, or where NW 4th Avenue buildings are in proximity to the Chinatown Gate, providing respectful contextual responses to these important places.
- Aligning street trees and landscaping to relate to building and right-of-way features.



The threshold condition at the Society Hotel uses mosaic tile.

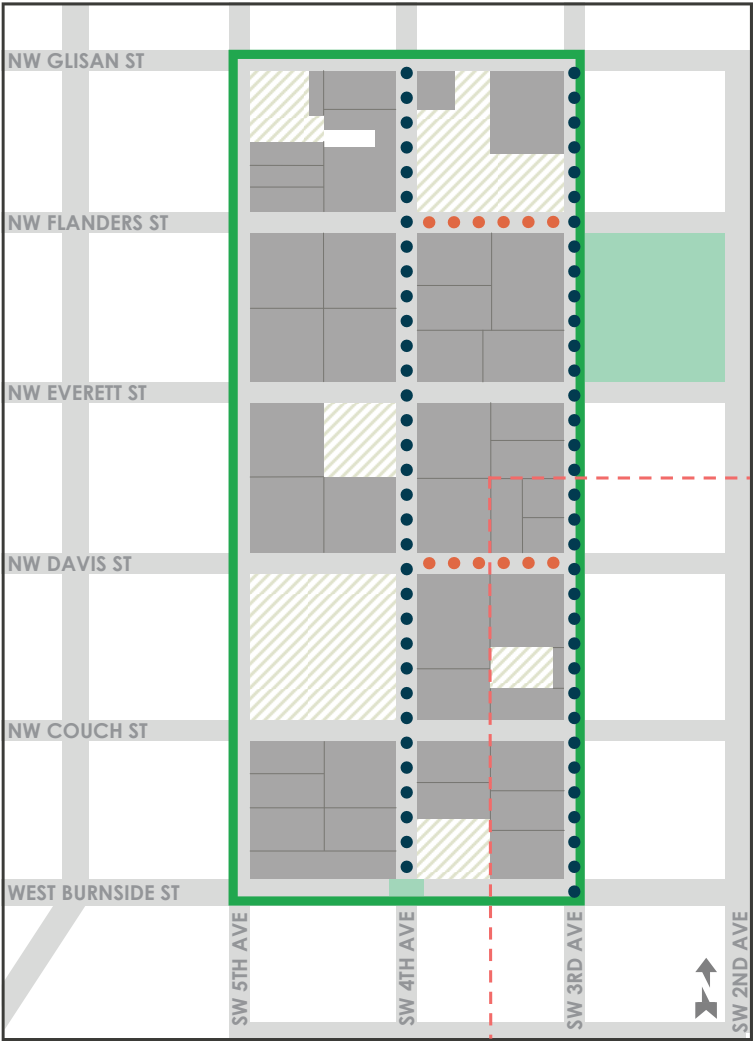


Festival Streets are marked by planters with Chinese palm trees, artwork, special paving, and other elements. New and existing buildings facing these streets have an opportunity to respond to the street design.



The storefront windows at this NW Portland building open up toward the sidewalk. A similar condition may be appropriate facing Festival Streets.

MAP SHOWING SPECIAL AREAS IN THE DISTRICT



- Existing Buildings
- Culturally Significant Attractions
- Vacant Lots
- Special Signage Streets
- Festival Streets
- New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Boundary
- Skidmore/Old Town Historic District Boundary



## A9: EXPOSED LOT-LINE WALLS

### BACKGROUND:

Exposed lot-line walls are visible when there are vacant lots in the district and when a taller building extends above a shorter neighboring building. Historically, lot line walls in the historic district were simple brick walls, which were often painted with signs across the top. Many of these “ghost” signs are still visible today.

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 or other construction requirements met, 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 and/or elements into at least a portion of the side wall.

### GUIDELINE A9

PROVIDE VISUAL INTEREST TO EXPOSED LOT-LINE WALLS THROUGH ELEMENTS SUCH AS EXPRESSED FLOOR LINES, ART, OR INCLUSION OF OPENINGS WHERE ALLOWED.



*This painted mural creates interest on an otherwise unexciting wall.*

### Guideline A9 may be accomplished by:

- Designing new exposed lot-line walls with intrinsic detailing and textural interest.
- For existing and new end walls, providing for embellishments, murals, or other art; incorporating and/or retaining historic faded painted signs where those exist.
- Avoiding fully painting unpainted historic brick walls.



*The end wall at the Blanchet Hospitality House at NW 3rd and Glisan Streets shows floor line delineations and texture. Courtesy of Addam Goard.*

## A10: ARCHITECTURAL EDGE

### BACKGROUND:

Although surface lots are generally discouraged, open parking or loading areas should include fencing or an architectural edge along the right-of-way in order to retain a sense of a street wall. Reflecting the character of the historic district in the materials and/or details of the fence or screen is strongly encouraged. The design should also consider an edge condition with visual openings or partial screening to support the livability and safety goals of the neighborhood, which include maintaining usability, safety, and deterring unwanted activities.

The Portland Zoning Code also has screening requirements that must be met for new or redeveloped parking areas.

For existing parking areas, active food carts facing the sidewalk are strongly encouraged. While there is no requirement for improving the entire edge of an existing parking lot, additions of fencing or landscaping will improve the appearance of the lot and help to define a street edge.

### GUIDELINE A10

INCORPORATE AN ARCHITECTURAL EDGE AND/OR ACTIVE USE ALONG THE SIDEWALK ALONG ANY SURFACE PARKING OR OFF-STREET LOADING AREAS.



*Food carts in SW Portland provide a visual screen between the parking lot and the sidewalk.*

### Guideline A10 may be accomplished by:

- Creating a built edge that provides a partial visual screening between pedestrians and the interior of the site.
- Utilizing designs that emphasize the cultural character of the district in the materials and details of the fence or screen.
- Incorporating active uses such as food carts along the perimeter of a surface parking area where possible.



*The solid perimeter wall at the Lan Su Garden is punctuated by a series of openings with decorative screens using Chinese designs. This idea could be used at a parking lot edge as well.*

## A11: HISTORY DISPLAY

### BACKGROUND:

For a map of properties in the district that are contributing resources, see page 21. For a map of properties in the district that are known to be culturally significant, see page 27. At these properties, recognition of the site's significance will help to preserve the district's stories for future generations.

### GUIDELINE A11

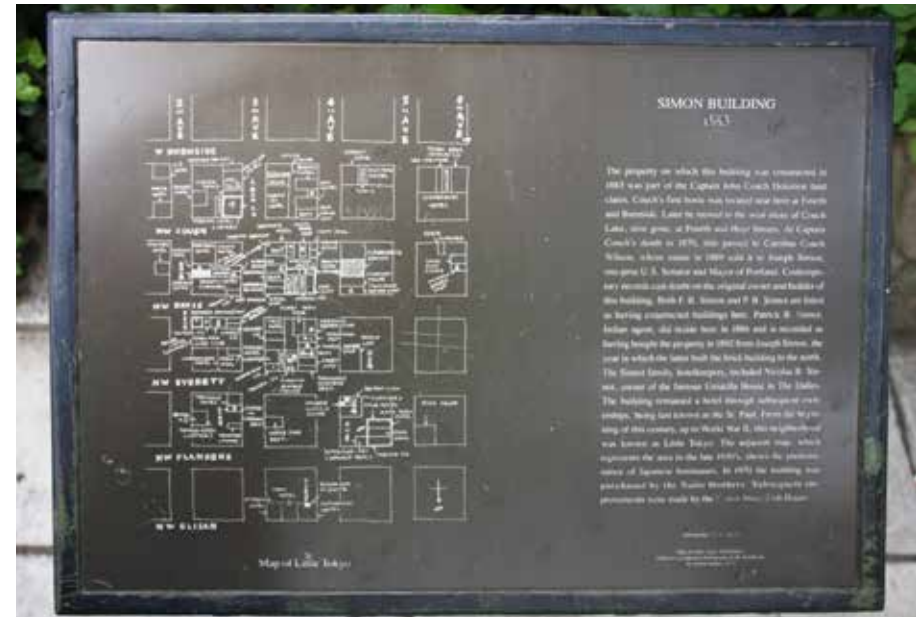
PROVIDE PUBLIC HISTORY PLAQUES OR INFORMATION AT THE GROUND FLOOR LEVEL.

#### Guideline A11 may be accomplished by:

- Visually displaying stories or historic background through imagery, text, or displays readable from the public right-of-way.
- Using sources for research such as those cited in Chapter 2 of this document.
- Stamping the concrete base or an inserted concrete marker with the date a new building or addition was constructed.
- Following the examples of projects that use such plaques, providing consistency in size and placement throughout the district.
- Allowing for modern media art installations which may use lighting or other wall-mounted elements to convey historic information or an experience, especially at the pedestrian level.



New buildings can use a date-stamped cornerstone such as this historic one at a church on NE Fremont Street.



This plaque, located in front of the Simon facade on NW 3rd Avenue, provides historic information for passers-by.



## B: Guidelines for Alterations

Alteration 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. These guidelines apply to both contributing and noncontributing buildings. General Guidelines (A) also apply, and potentially other New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines depending on the project scope.

### B1: HISTORIC FEATURES AND MATERIALS

#### BACKGROUND:

The character-defining features and historic materials found on contributing buildings are significant and should be preserved and repaired with sensitivity. Character-defining features are “markers” that define the style and often the era of construction of buildings (chapter 2 features an illustrated guide of typical character-defining features).

Predominant exterior building materials on contributing buildings in the historic district generally were made or finished by hand. These materials help to create a degree of imperfection which adds to the softness and character of the wall surfaces. 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 may be contemporary but should visually match the historic material. 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.

Both contributing and noncontributing buildings exhibit exterior changes that were made over time. If the changes were made 50 years ago or more, those changes may have acquired historic significance. Physical alterations that were made by one of the predominant ethnic communities are an example of changes that should generally be retained to show the building's and the district's history and affiliations over time.

#### GUIDELINE B1

#### RETAIN AND REPAIR HISTORIC FEATURES AND MATERIALS

##### Guideline B1 may be accomplished by:

- Preserving the original building's most important and character-defining features.

- Researching historic photos or drawings as a guide to the design for replacing a missing character-defining feature on a building. If no historic evidence is found, a simplified and more contemporary version of the feature may be appropriate.
- Repairing, rather than replacing, materials that help to define the character of the building. Retention of original wood or steel frame window sashes is especially encouraged. Where necessary, replacing historic materials on existing buildings with the same material or a visual match.
- Retaining exterior modifications associated with authentic Japanese and/or Chinese cultural adaptations.



*This curved-wall glass block entry is a character-defining feature of the building. It shows the Moderne sub-style detailing used on this 20th Century Commercial style building on NW 4th Avenue.*



*This Italianate building on NW 3rd Avenue retains its added upper-level awning, projecting sign, and fire escape. These alterations have acquired historic significance.*



*The historic and iconic Hung Far Low sign was rehabilitated and re-installed in its original location, though the restaurant is no longer in operation.*



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

## B2: DESIGN OF ALTERATIONS

### BACKGROUND:

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 a different historic architectural style, even one found in the district, should not be used.

Culturally authentic details such as parapet or other rooftop edge detailing, entryway surrounds, awnings, projecting balconies, signs, and other design elements which illustrate or suggest a building's Japanese or Chinese affiliation may be appropriate depending on the change's impact on historic materials.

### GUIDELINE B2

DESIGN ALTERATIONS TO BE RESPECTFUL OF THE ORIGINAL STYLE, TYPE, AND DESIGN OF THE BUILDING.

#### Guideline B2 may be accomplished by:

- Using contemporary building details which tie the building to its ethnic or cultural history, but don't create a false sense of that history.
- Ensuring that architectural elements from other historic building styles are not unintentionally introduced.
- Integrating authentic design elements in ways that minimally impact the existing building's historic materials and overall stylistic presentation.



*The Overland Warehouse at 4th and Davis was rehabilitated to retain the historic pattern of window and storefront openings. Historic materials were repaired and, where necessary, replaced with materials in keeping with the original. Images courtesy Emerick Architects.*



## B3: HIERARCHY OF ALTERATIONS

### BACKGROUND:

To ensure that newer features do not visually overwhelm the historic building, added elements should enhance historic features rather than being visual distractions from the historic features of the building. Alterations or new features should be secondary to the style, materials, and form of the existing building.

### GUIDELINE B3

KEEP ALTERATIONS OR NEW ELEMENTS VISUALLY SECONDARY TO THE ORIGINAL FEATURES OF THE BUILDING.

#### Guideline B3 may be accomplished by:

- Designing new features to fit cleanly within existing fenestration
- Using abstracted forms or details in new features, without ornamentation or excessive detailing, in order to avoid visually competing with original detailing.
- Keeping contemporary insertions at a limited size and scope so as not to overwhelm the original features of the building.



*This modern entry canopy and tenant sign facing NW 5th Avenue add respectful, yet contemporary details.*

## B4: SEISMIC IMPROVEMENTS

### BACKGROUND:

There are a number of historic unreinforced masonry structures in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. These structures may be especially dangerous in a seismic event. Seismic retrofits are therefore critical to the longevity and character of the District.

To ensure that newer features do not visually overwhelm the historic building, added elements should enhance historic features rather than being visual distractions from the historic features of the building. Alterations or new features should be secondary to the style, materials, and form of the existing building.

### GUIDELINE B4

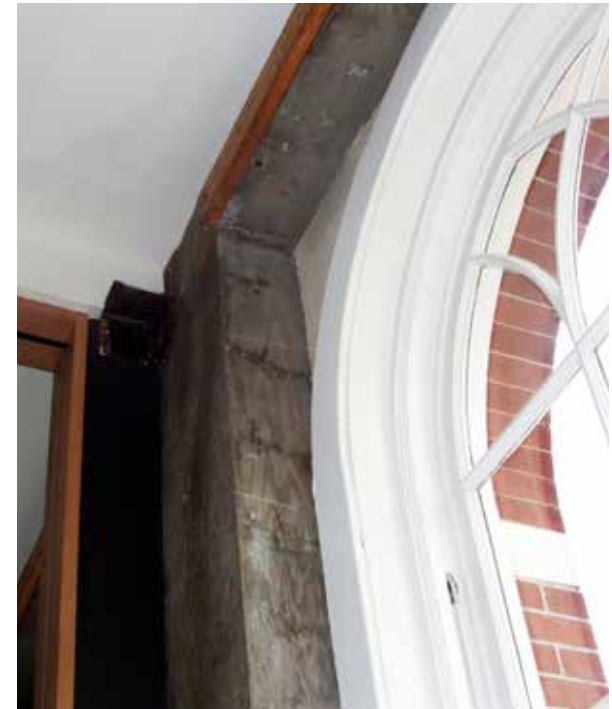
UNDERTAKE SEISMIC IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MOST UNOBTUSIVE WAY POSSIBLE.

#### Guideline B4 may be accomplished by:

- Seismically upgrading historic buildings.
- Retaining and strengthening existing structural materials to the extent possible.
- Prioritizing solutions that retain historic materials and do not impact window openings or the exterior of buildings.



*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. Courtesy of Emerick Architects.*



*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.*

## C: Guidelines for Additions

Addition 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) apply). Addition Guidelines are to be used for new portions of the building, but the Alteration Guidelines (B) continue to apply to changes to the existing building. General Guidelines (A) will apply.

### C1: COMPATIBILITY

#### BACKGROUND:

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 the addition; in other words the design should be more compatible than differentiated from the original.

#### GUIDELINE C1

ENSURE THAT ADDITIONS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE ORIGINAL STYLE, FORM, AND MASSING OF THE EXISTING BUILDING.

#### Guideline C1 may be accomplished by:

- Visually matching most of the original characteristics of the building in the new addition.
- Designing additions to be primarily compatible with the original building and secondarily compatible with contributing resources throughout the district.
- 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.



*The compatible addition (left) to this apartment building uses the same tan brick, horizontal banding, and other features from the original 1914 design. Courtesy of Gary Chilluffo.*



*The 1952 addition (right) to the 1925 north wing of Grant High School, on NE 36th Avenue, is compatible due to its size, scale, materials, and window alignments.*



## C2: HORIZONTAL ADDITIONS

### BACKGROUND:

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. Additions to contributing buildings should be visually secondary to the historic 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.

### GUIDELINE C2

DESIGN HORIZONTAL ADDITIONS TO CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS EITHER TO APPEAR TO BE A NEW BUILDING, OR AS A VISUALLY SECONDARY VARIATION OF THE ORIGINAL.

#### Guideline C2 may be accomplished by:

- Maintaining most of the design characteristics of the original building facade 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.
- Using highly compatible massing, materials, and design features.



*The addition (right) to the historic Park Plaza building in Baltimore uses proportional windows, a similar color palette, and other features that reflect those of the historic building. Courtesy of Marks, Thomas Architects.*

### C3: VERTICAL ADDITIONS

#### BACKGROUND:

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.

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 may not adequately preserve a sense of the building's original volume depending on the building and/or site.



*Vertical additions can be designed to be minimally visible from the street, as evidenced by the Crane Building in Northwest Portland (left) and Telegram Building in Southwest Portland (right).*

### GUIDELINE C3

DESIGN VERTICAL ADDITIONS TO CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS TO LIMIT THE VISUAL IMPACT OF THE ADDITION.

**Guideline C3 may be accomplished by:**

- Taking advantage of transfer opportunities provided in the Portland Zoning Code for sites with a disparity between a property's development allowances and its existing historic building.
- Stepping 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 level if set back.
- Designing additions to visually retain a sense of the original volume of the building and to be visually secondary to the primary original 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.
- Treating vertical additions to noncontributing buildings to be compatible with the district as a whole.
- Continuing the overall structural rhythm from the lower levels into upper-level walls, and retaining a visual sense of the vertical structure in upper level wall areas.



*The added penthouse on the historic Telegram Building on SW Washington Street is set back from the façade and is almost invisible from the street.*



## D: Guidelines for New Construction

New Construction Guidelines apply to projects that add significant floor area to an existing building (more than 25 feet of linear street-facing wall) and to new infill projects in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. If an existing building is to have exterior alterations or additions, then the Alteration Guidelines (B) and Additions Guidelines (C) continue to apply. General Guidelines (A) also apply.

### D1: BUILDING STYLE

#### BACKGROUND:

By far, the most prevalent architectural style in the district is the 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 culturally-inspired details. Other styles found in the district may also be used as the starting point for the design of new construction, but new construction should respond to and support the overall architectural continuity of the district.



*The Gregory Building in Northwest Portland (left) features elements characteristic of the Moderne style, while the L.L. Hawkins Building in Northwest Portland (right) features elements characteristic of the 20th Century Commercial style. Courtesy of Addam Goard.*

#### GUIDELINE D1

**DESIGN THE NEW STRUCTURE TO BE INFORMED BY ONE OF THE HISTORIC STYLES FOUND IN THE DISTRICT.**

#### Guideline D1 may be accomplished by:

- Constructing new buildings that are inspired by the defining characteristics of one of the contributing styles in the district.
- For horizontal additions larger than 25 feet of street facade, using most of the defining characteristics of the original building in the addition.
- Designing new street-facing facades to directly incorporate features of contributing buildings in the district.
- Complementing the architecture of the historic or contributing buildings in the district and not overly drawing attention to the design of new construction through excessive differentiation or juxtaposition.
- Incorporating the existing Romanesque-style Simon Building façade on NW 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue into a new structure, being respectful of the character-defining features of the façade.

## D2: FORM AND ARTICULATION

### BACKGROUND:

Contributing building forms in the district are simple volumetric shapes, typically square or rectangular with no setbacks. This “blocky” overall development form should be evident in new construction. Compatible forms are simple, with a flat or minimally pitched roof and strong cornice lines or parapet edges.

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.

### GUIDELINE D2

REFLECT THE FORM AND ARTICULATION OF THE DISTRICT'S CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS IN NEW CONSTRUCTION.

#### Guideline D2 may be accomplished by:

- 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.
- Using variegated rooflines to break the apparent scale of a full-block building façade.
- Extending the apparent massing of a neighboring contributing building(s) into the form and/or design of new construction.
- Creating a linear projecting element such as a strong cornice or upper-level horizontal awning to break height and reflect similarities with nearby contributing buildings.
- Where buildings have frontage on NW 4th Avenue, relating building features first to the NW 4th Avenue streetscape and second to the side streets.



The white building, second from left, is University Lofts, an infill project between historic buildings on Euclid Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio. The façade uses the height, window proportion and alignment, and other strategies to fit into its context. Courtesy of City Architecture.



The Blanchet Hospitality House development at NW 3rd Avenue and Glisan Street reflects the historic scale, massing, materials, and pattern of openings found in the district.

## D3: VERTICAL COMPOSITION

### BACKGROUND:

When new construction is of similar height to neighboring buildings, the street wall height of adjacent buildings should be continued into the new construction, with strong horizontal articulation of cornice or parapet lines. If the building is taller than its neighbors, the building should employ one or more strategies to reduce the impact of the taller height, such as a setback, a projecting horizontal band, awning, cornice, and/or a change in materials or color.

### GUIDELINE D3

RELATE THE VERTICAL COMPOSITION OF THE NEW BUILDING TO NEIGHBORING CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS.

#### Guideline D3 may be accomplished by:

- Extending a strong cornice or parapet line from a neighboring contributing building(s) into the design of new construction.
- Visually minimizing heights in excess of neighboring buildings through strategies such as step-backs, projecting horizontal elements, change of materials, color shifts, and/or shifting or grouping the pattern of openings and bays above a more regularized base.



*In this drawing of new construction (on right) next to a contributing building, the cornice line of the older building is reinterpreted into the façade of the new building.*



## D4: BUILDING MASS

### BACKGROUND:

Historically, streetscapes were the only public open space in the district. 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, however, such as a horizontal recessed balcony at an upper floor or an inset storefront entry, provide relief and interest to the streetscape environment.

### GUIDELINE 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.**

#### Guideline D4 may be accomplished by:

- 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.
- Where buildings are proposed to be significantly taller than nearby contributing buildings, retaining a street wall base that meets the property line and generally aligns with the height of adjacent contributing buildings. Above this street wall base, the upper building wall or walls may step back.



*Looking north along NW 4th Avenue c1910, there is a strong and consistent street edge formed by the buildings on either side. Courtesy Oregon Historical Society.*



*This 1939 image looking south along SW 2nd Avenue, the heart of Old Chinatown, shows a similarly urban quality to the streetscape. The only visible gaps in the street "wall" occur at cross streets. City of Portland Archives, Oregon, #A2005-001.*

## D5: STREET-FACING WALLS

### BACKGROUND:

Street-facing façades of contributing buildings in the district were designed with a regular rhythm of structure, bays, and openings. 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.

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.

### GUIDELINE D5

DESIGN STREET-FACING WALLS WITH A REGULAR RHYTHM OF BAYS, OPENINGS, AND FEATURES.

#### Guideline D5 may be accomplished by:

- Creating horizontal lines (such as a continuous band of transom windows) that carry through a building's storefront bays.
- Generally using vertical alignments for structural or masonry wall elements. In cases where a building may be taller than contributing buildings in the district, the design of the upper building walls may be somewhat less regularized above the street wall, but should still visually relate to the base of the building.
- Designing a regular storefront bay size that is compatible with those of contributing buildings.
- Employing variations of bay width in a regular pattern, such as A-B-A-B-A. This does not mean that a new building must be entirely symmetrical, but the pattern of openings and features should be compatible with the district.



*The second-story windows in this historic building are grouped into sets of three above each storefront bay.*



*This rendering of the WorldMark Building in Southwest Portland shows the continuation of a streetscape wall with a regular rhythm of openings. Image courtesy SERA Architects.*

## D6: WINDOWS AND WINDOW OPENINGS

### BACKGROUND:

20th Century Commercial style and Italianate buildings typically had a tall ground floor with clear or very lightly tinted glass storefront openings. Upper-level windows in these two styles were rectangular in proportion. Italianate style windows were most typically wood double-hung, with a narrow, tall proportion. 20th Century Commercial style windows were typically also wood, and may have been double-hung, casement, awning, or some combination. The Moderne style and sometimes the 20th Century Commercial style typically had metal divided-light windows, more horizontal than vertical in proportion.

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.

### GUIDELINE D6

WINDOW AND WINDOW OPENINGS SHOULD BE OF A SIMILAR PROPORTION, RECESS, AND ALIGNMENT TO THE ORIGINAL WINDOWS IN CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS.

#### Guideline D6 may be accomplished by:

- Designing the floor plates of new buildings in relative alignment with those of adjacent contributing buildings.
- Using depth and proportion to ensure that new window openings are compatible with nearby contributing buildings.
- Avoiding designs that use glass as the predominant wall material above the ground floor.
- Using traditional window materials above the ground floor such as wood or steel, or materials that may be painted and dimensioned to look like wood or steel, such as aluminum-clad wood.
- Providing window divisions (muntins, traditionally) that have depth. Modern “grid” dividers may be used, so long as the exterior face of the window includes a surface “grid” with adequate depth.



*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 NW 4th Avenue. Courtesy of Naito Development.*