

**DRAFT — WORK IN PROGRESS**

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**CONTENTS**

**Dedication.....vii**

**Acknowledgments .....ix**

**Purpose .....xi**

**Background.....xiii**

**The Historic Structures Ordinance, The District, and the City Charter  
.....xiv**

**Architectural Guidelines ..... 1**

A. Architectural Character and Building Descriptions 1

1. El Paseo, 1922-24, 1928-29 Casa De la Guerra, 1819-1827 4

2. Characteristic Streetscape: Janssens/Orella/Birk Building 7

3. Santa Barbara County Courthouse ..... 9

4. Medical Offices - 1927 ..... 17

5. Meridian Studios and Lugo Adobe ..... 19

Ca. 1830; 1923 and 1925 ..... 19

6. Theatres..... 21

7. National Guard Armory, 1937-1938 ..... 23

8. Santa Barbara Historical Society ..... 24

Museum and Library, 1965..... 24

9. Santa Barbara City Fire Station No. 3 ..... 25

10. Arlington Center for the Performing Arts (duplicate? see 6. Theatres) 26

11. Office Building ..... 27

12. <building> ..... 28

13. Wells Fargo Bank .....	29	
14. Santa Barbara Bank and Trust .....	29	
15. Sak's Fifth Avenue (store and marquee) .....	30	
16. Coach Leathergoods .....	31	
B. Massing .....	32	
C. Volumes .....	32	
D. Paseos, <u>Plazas</u> and Courtyards .....	32	
E. Landscaping and Plants .....	32	
F. Lighting.....	34	
G. Signing .....	34	
Arcades .....	34	
H. Other Architectural Styles.....	35	
I. Public Art.....	35	
J. Details and Points of Consideration For Buildings and Landscaping in El Pueblo Viejo. ....	35	
1. General Considerations: .....	35	
2. General Site Considerations: .....	35	
<u>Automobile Parking</u>		
3. General Design Considerations: .....	36	
4. Specific Design Elements: .....	36	
a. Arcades and Loggias	3	6
b. Arches and Lintels	3	6
c. Awnings	3	7
d. Balconies	3	8
e. Colors	3	8
f. Columns, Cornices, Moldings, and Entablatures	3	8
g. Corbels and Brackets	3	8
h. Downspouts, Gutters, and Leaderheads	3	8
i. Equipment	3	8
j. Fenestration	3	8
k. Fountains	3	8
l. Iron Work	3	8

m. Paving	3	8
n. Pergolas and Trellises	3	8
o. Piers and Pilasters	3	8

**Appendix A**

City Charter Section 817.....	41
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**Appendix B**

Chapter 22.22.....	42
Historic Structures Ordinance.....	42
<u>Technical Appendix-</u>	

**Appendix C**

List of Historic, Specimen and Landmark Trees in El Pueblo Viejo	42
--	----

**Appendix D**

List of Principal 18th and 19th Century Adobes within the El Pueblo Viejo District	42
--	----

**Appendix E**

List of Notable Arcades .....	43
-------------------------------	----

**Appendix F**

List of Plant Materials Recommended For El Pueblo Viejo	43
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**Appendix G**

Further Readings, with Particular Emphasis on Illustrations	44
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<b>Publications background and acknowledgments</b>	45
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# DEDICATION

**DAVID GEBHARD, Ph.D.**

**1927 - 1996**

The Historic Landmarks Commission dedicates  
This volume to David Gebhard, architectural historian, as an expression of its esteem and  
deep appreciation for his twenty-two years of service on the commission.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## PURPOSE

These guidelines are intended to assist the public in the Historic Landmarks Commissions review process by clarifying the design criteria and procedures for El Pueblo Viejo District. These guidelines will be the basis for decisions of the Historic Landmarks Commission. They are intended for use by architects, designers, property owners, tenants, residents, government agencies, and the general public, to help comply with City of Santa Barbara Charter, and Municipal Code Chapter 22.22, the historic structures ordinance.

Procedures for Historic Landmarks Commission meetings are set forth in a separate document, approved by the Commission and City Council, entitled “Historic Landmarks Commission Rules and Procedures.”

## BACKGROUND

Since the establishment of the Presidio and the Mission at the end of the 18th century, the City of Santa Barbara has enjoyed a reputation for its distinctive architectural character. This character has been enhanced by the consistent review of new or remodeled buildings to assure the sensitive relationship between historic older structures and new buildings. While the buildings of each decade express their own times, the

continuance of Santa Barbara's Hispanic architectural tradition has created a sense of specific place. This Hispanic architectural tradition has been inspired by buildings designed for similar climatic conditions along the Mediterranean Sea, particularly in Andalusia in Southern Spain, and in early Southern California.

The successful adaptation of these architectural forms, using simple materials and light colors, has resulted in the achievement of an architectural harmony that gives Santa Barbara its own distinction. This harmony has been continued by a working relationship between the community and the designers of the buildings.

The City of Santa Barbara was one of the first communities in the United States to conceive of historic preservation as an integral element in the planning process. At first this concept was pursued by civic groups — The Plans and Planting Committee of the Community Arts Association and the Architectural Advisory Committee — both of which were formed in 1922. Their efforts were augmented in 1923 by the official establishment of a City Planning Commission, and in 1925 by the organization of a City Architectural Board of Review (1925-26). In 1947, a new City Architectural Board of Review was founded. In 1960 the Advisory Landmark Committee was created to aid in the review process for the newly created El Pueblo Viejo district. In 1977, with the adoption of a new Historic Structures Ordinance, the Advisory Landmark Committee was replaced by the Landmarks Committee. In 1993 the City Charter was amended to create the present Historic Landmarks Commission, and to insert the designation of El Pueblo Viejo. One of the principal duties of the Commission is to review projects within El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District, which now encompasses the original historic core of the City, the areas around the Mission, the oceanfront, and the scenic entrances to the City (see accompanying map).

Historically, precedent may be found for aesthetic controls in Roman and Parisian laws of antiquity and within our Hispanic tradition in the "Laws of the Indies." In 1910 the United States Congress created the Fine Arts Commission to preserve the dignity of the national monuments in Washington.

D.C. In 1937 the Louisiana Constitution was amended to preserve the New Orleans Vieux Carre District. In 1954 the United States Supreme Court resolved any doubts over laws of an aesthetic nature in the case of *Berman vs. Parker*, ruling that a legislature may determine that a city shall be beautiful as well as healthful.

In 1915 the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego helped to inspire a California Spanish colonial architectural revival in which Santa Barbara, with its substantial colonial inventory, enthusiastically shared. This was accelerated in Santa Barbara during reconstruction following the destruction and damage to many downtown buildings by the 1925 earthquake.

## ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

### EL PUEBLO VIEJO LANDMARK DISTRICT

#### Introduction

The City of Santa Barbara is known for its historic character, pedestrian-friendly qualities, and exemplary architecture. It is a distinctly urban environment, softened by vistas of the mountains, ocean, and the attention to detail that is evident in both the built environment and landscaped open spaces.

El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District (EPV) is situated primarily in the center historic core of the City but also includes portions of the waterfront and important entry gateways into the City. The appearance of the City's character is enhanced by encouraging and regulating the compatibility of architectural styles within El Pueblo Viejo reflecting unique and established architectural traditions.

The City, its residents and the Historic Landmarks Commission have specific goals to safeguard the heritage of the City by providing for the protection of landmarks representing significant elements of its history. It is important that appropriate design guidelines are provided to assist and direct how new development can fit into the District.

Most new development in El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District will be either infill development of vacant properties or the redevelopment of existing buildings. Due to the close proximity of buildings to one another and the established urban fabric of the downtown, it is important that new development be compatible with and compliment the character of the District, enhance existing natural features, and incorporate appropriate landscaped open spaces. It is recommended that design professionals carefully study the City's Urban Design Guidelines to better understand the City's goal of encouraging pedestrian, transit friendly designs and human scale development. The following architectural guidelines represent the main design principles and criteria that should be considered for new development within the District.

#### COMPATIBILITY OF NEW DEVELOPMENT WITH THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

- *Design developments to complement and enhance the character of Santa Barbara, the surrounding neighborhood, and existing adjacent developments, while allowing each development to retain a distinct visual identity.*

- Incorporate natural features and landscaped open spaces into developments to provide a sense of openness and continuity and enhance the environment of El Pueblo Viejo.
- Design developments to respect the arrangement of buildings and open spaces on adjacent sites and provide opportunities for enhanced circulation, solar access, and views.
- Design large or tall buildings with yard setbacks to reduce the apparent size
- Vary building heights in buildings and along streets to protect the character of historic streetscape
- Consider subterranean parking garages into design of larger buildings as they reduce the scale and heights of buildings.
- Flat roofs are discouraged on tall building.
- Reduce the scale and size of windows at each floor level of a multi-story building to assist in the reduction of apparent visual mass of upper floor levels.

### **1.1 Compatibility with the Character of the City, the Surrounding Neighborhood, and Adjacent Properties**

Because every project will be unique in its setting and form, the HLC will need to exercise discretion when evaluating whether a proposed development will be compatible with the existing environment.

To preserve the existing architectural character of EPV, special attention shall be provided to insure compatibility with setbacks and scale of existing neighborhoods and adjacent buildings. The apparent height of a building can be greatly mitigated by generous landscaped areas and setbacks. Stepping back ascending floors as well as simplifying details, reducing the size of openings are a few ways to reduce scale and bulk. Roof profiles of large buildings should generally be broken up to provide varied height and scale. Attention must be paid to all sides of a structure as there is no “rear” of taller buildings in Santa Barbara.

Generally, proposed developments should demonstrate compatibility on three different levels:

- The development should be compatible with the distinctive architectural character of Santa Barbara;
- The development should be compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood; and
- The development should be compatible with immediately adjacent developments.

**While it is generally desirable for new developments to adapt and use design palettes similar to those of surrounding developments, they must also be made to possess unique characteristics and qualities.** The elements listed in the following sections may make a development compatible with its surroundings while allowing it to retain a distinct identity.

- 1.1.1 The design review process should involve an evaluation of the compatibility of proposed developments with Santa Barbara's distinctive architectural character, the overall neighborhood, and adjacent developments. Architects and designers must demonstrate thoughtful planning and consideration as to the degree of compatibility that their proposed projects exhibit.

Drawings, models, or other graphic communications presented to the design or development review boards should show neighboring buildings and important features of adjacent sites in sufficient detail to demonstrate the relationship between the proposed development and its surroundings. As a general rule, views of the proposed project and its neighbors should be provided as seen from public areas (e.g., the street and sidewalk). Story poles may be required in order to evaluate a proposed development.

## **1.2 Structures**

The following structure design techniques, when applied in combination with the design techniques in sections 1.4 and 1.5, may make a proposed development compatible with the existing environment. These techniques include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use an architectural style similar to surrounding structures;
- Adapt and incorporate prominent or distinctive design elements from neighboring structures (e.g. rooflines, recesses, projections, towers, and balconies);
- Design the structure in a size, bulk, and scale that is comparable to existing surrounding developments;
- Coordinate the form and height of the new structure with existing structures in a block; and
- Use colors or materials similar to those of adjacent developments.

- 1.2.1 Consider the transition from one structure to the next. Each structure must exhibit its own unique character, while displaying careful consideration of the character of surrounding structures.

No written ordinance or set of guidelines can detail fully all aspects of the design criteria of El Pueblo Viejo District. While the following guidelines and their accompanying illustrations will help answer specific questions about Santa Barbara's Hispanic architectural tradition, one of the most valuable ways of understanding that tradition is to walk through central Santa Barbara and observe the designs of the buildings, their details, and their relationship with one another.

It is not the objective of these guidelines to suggest open imitations of any existing examples of architecture within the district, or elsewhere. They should be used as guides to assist in a creative continuation of architectural design within the framework of the City's Hispanic tradition.