

# FRESNO



## Fresno General Plan Update Historic & Cultural Resources

**PRELIMINARY  
WORKSHOP  
DISCUSSION  
DRAFT**

January 2013

Development and Resource  
Management Department

City of  
**FRESNO** 

# 8

## Historic and Cultural Resources Element

### Preliminary Workshop Discussion Draft of the City of Fresno General Plan Update

The Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter is one of the many Elements noted below that when combined will ultimately comprise the Draft Fresno General Plan Update, anticipated to be released as a comprehensive document for public review and formal comments in March-April 2013.

- Urban Form, Land Use, and Design Element
- Mobility & Transportation Element
- Parks, Open Space and Schools Element
- Healthy Communities Element
- Historic and Cultural Resources Element
- Resource Conservation and Resilience Element
- Public Utilities Element and Services Element
- Noise and Safety Element
- Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability element
- Implementation Element
- Housing Element

Fresno was founded in 1872 by the Central Pacific Railroad in the middle of a barren sandy plain. The nearest substantial supply of water was the San Joaquin River, 10 miles to the north. The Contract and Finance Company, a subsidiary of the railroad, laid out the town in a rigid “gridiron” plan. The town grew slowly but in 1874 wrestled the county seat away from the former mining town of Millerton.

In 1875 the first of many agricultural colonies was developed, drawing farming families from around the United States and from Europe. These colonies were constructed with miles of tree-lined boulevards and with water delivered to the individual farms through a lacework of canals, laterals and irrigation ditches.

Fresno was incorporated as a city in 1885 and by 1900 was the market center for what is now the richest farming region in the United States. Emigrants from China, Japan, Armenia, Russia (Volga Germans), Mexico and most recently Southeast Asia have contributed to the character and cultural heritage of the place.

In addition to the range of architectural styles found across the United States, Fresno has a vernacular tradition of building in adobe and hardpan, including mid-century modern garden office complexes constructed of stabilized adobe



*Santa Fe Depot (1899) HP #11  
(National Register)*



*Bing Kong Tong Association Building  
(1900) HP #66*



*Chateau Fresno Avenue (Kearney  
Boulevard) (1889)*



Old Fresno Water Tower (1894) HP #1 (NR) (Photo: Khaled Alkotob)

### For further information on Fresno's history and architectural heritage:

Architecture, Ethnicity and Historic Landscapes of California's San Joaquin Valley. Edited, Karana Hattersley-Drayton. City of Fresno: Planning and Development, 2008.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton, "Urban Form Working Paper: Historic Preservation," City of Fresno: Development and Resource Management Department, 2012:  
[www.fresno.gov/preservation](http://www.fresno.gov/preservation)

Kevin Enns-Rempel, "A Guide to Historic Architecture in Fresno California:"  
<http://www.historicfresno.org>

"Map Atlas Fresno Existing Conditions Report: General Plan and Code Update," Fresno: Development and Resource Management Department, August 2011.

See also the City's historic preservation web page for additional information:  
[www.fresno.gov/preservation](http://www.fresno.gov/preservation)

brick. Additional important local property types are the extant summer kitchens (backhaus) constructed by the Volga Germans, the "bungalow courts" scattered through the city's older neighborhoods and tankhouses tucked behind or adjacent to a farmhouse. The city's rail, agricultural and ethnic history is imprinted on the landscape and in the resources, both above and below ground, which link residents to their past and provide a design aesthetic for new construction.

Fresno citizens, whether descendants from early pioneers or recent transplants, value their city, which still functions for many like a small town. They speak with affection about the agricultural green belt which surrounds the City with its geometric fields of grapevines and row crops; the Classic Revival high rise buildings along the Fulton Mall; Fresno's ethnic diversity and the endless opportunities for trying something, anything new.

The City Council has found that "the preservation, protection and use of historic resources and districts are a public necessity..." and in 1979 adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance, since amended and updated in 1999, 2010 and 2012. The Ordinance established both a citizens' Historic Preservation Commission as well as a Local Register of Historic Resources, patterned after the National Register of Historic Places. The Local Register includes three separate landmark programs: individual designation on the Local Register of Historic Resources, inclusion within a Local Register District and the Heritage Property program. In 2004 Fresno was the first city in California to be designated a "Preserve America Community" by former First Lady, Laura Bush.

### RELATIONSHIP TO GENERAL PLAN GOALS

Historic preservation is important in economic revitalization and heritage tourism. The adaptive reuse of older buildings is also "green" and contributes to the City's commitment to become fully sustainable. The Historic and Cultural Resources Element's historic resource objectives and policies provide a philosophical context and road map for the City's historic preservation program and are implemented through the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (FMC 12-1600 et seq).

The Element also supports three of the General Plan's goals: <sup>1</sup>

6. Protect, preserve, and enhance natural, historic, and cultural resources.

*Emphasize the continued protection of important natural, historic and cultural resources in the future development of Fresno. This includes both designated historic structures and neighborhoods, but also "urban artifacts" and neighborhoods that create the character of Fresno.*

15. Improve Fresno's visual image and enhance its form and function through urban design strategies and effective maintenance.

<sup>1</sup> The commentary in italics following certain goals is not part of the goal itself, but is instead advisory and informational language intended to further discuss and clarify the goal to help guide the objectives of the General Plan.

17. Recognize, respect, and plan for Fresno's cultural, social, and ethnic diversity.

*Emphasize shared community values and genuine engagement with and across different neighborhoods, communities, institutions, businesses and sectors to solve difficult problems and achieve shared goals for the success of Fresno and all its residents.*

## CITYWIDE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

These policies maintain a citywide program consistent with the State and Federal Certified Local Government program and state laws and regulations related to historic and cultural resources.

### OBJECTIVE

HCR-1 Maintain a comprehensive, citywide preservation program to identify, protect and assist in the preservation of Fresno's historic and cultural resources.

### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

HCR-1-a **Certified Local Government.** Maintain the City's status as a Certified Local Government (CLG) and use CLG practices as the key components of the City's preservation program.

HCR-1-b **Preservation Office, Commission and Program.** Maintain a Preservation Office, Historic Preservation Commission, and program to administer the City's preservation functions and programs.

HCR-1-c **Historic Preservation Ordinance.** Maintain the provisions of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, as may be amended, and enforce the provisions as appropriate



Hotel Fresno (1912) HP#166  
(Photo: 1917 Pop Laval)



First Mexican Baptist Church (1924)  
HP#23



Katherine Riding Parry and Friends, Fresno 1912,  
Photo Courtesy: Bob Riding



Bernhauer Home (1920)  
Huntington Boulevard

## IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION

### OBJECTIVE

HCR-2 Identify and preserve Fresno’s historic and cultural resources which reflect important cultural, social, economic and architectural features so that community residents will have a foundation upon which to measure and direct physical change.

### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

HCR-2-a **Identification and Designation of Historic Properties.** City staff and the Historic Preservation Commission shall work in tandem to identify potential historic resources and districts and to prepare nomination forms for Fresno’s Local Register of Historic Resources as funding is available. Historic resources may include not only buildings but also structures, objects and sites, as well as cultural and historic landscapes and traditional cultural properties (as defined by the National Park Service) – examples include farm complexes, canal systems, signage, gardens, infrastructure such as lighting and street furniture, and landscaped boulevards. As appropriate, resources may be forwarded to the State Historical Resources Commission for consideration for the California Register of Historical Resources and/or the National Register of Historic Places.

HCR-2-b **Historic Surveys.** Prepare historic surveys according to California Office of Historic Preservation protocols, as funding is available. Prioritize the survey of resources located on parcels within the Bus Rapid Transit corridors slated for development and intensification.

HCR-2-c **Project Development.** Prior to project approval, a subject parcel and its Area of Potential Effects (APE), without benefit of a prior historic survey, will be evaluated and reviewed for the potential for historical and/or cultural resources by a professional who meets the Secretary of Interior’s Qualifications. Survey costs shall be the responsibility of the project developer.

HCR-2-d **Alternate Public Improvement Standards.** Preservation, planning and public works division staff shall work collaboratively to develop potential Alternate Public Improvement Standards for historic landscapes, such as Kearney Boulevard, to ensure that new infrastructure is compatible with the landscape and yet meets the needs of all users including motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, and provides for proper traffic safety and drainage.



Tower Theater (1939 HP #190)



Herndon Canal in Fig Garden  
Photo caption.



Early Brick Farmhouse, After  
Unsuccessful Relocation (c2004)

HCR-2-e **Archaeological Resources.** Consider State Office of Historic Preservation guidelines when establishing CEQA mitigation measures for archaeological (sub-surface) resources. HCR-2-f

**Demolition Review.** Require that preservation staff review all demolition permits to ascertain whether or not a resource scheduled for demolition is potentially eligible for listing on the Local Register of Historic Resources. Potential resources that appear to meet the threshold for individual eligibility will be reviewed by the City’s Historic Preservation Commission and referred as appropriate to the City Council for consideration and a final determination before demolition may be approved.



*Archaeologist Sarah Johnston and Team Screening fill Chinatown (2007)*

HCR-2-g **Minimum Maintenance Standards.** The City’s preservation staff and Commission will work in tandem with the Code Enforcement division of the City of Fresno to ensure that the minimum maintenance provisions of the Historic Preservation Ordinance are enforced.

HCR-2-h **Preservation Mitigation Fund.** Consider the potential for a Preservation Mitigation fund to help support efforts to preserve and maintain historic resources.



*Casement windows, YWCA Residence Hall (Julia Morgan, 1921) HP#9 (NR)*

HCR-2-i **Window Replacement.** City staff will work with the building department to develop appropriate building permit requirements for window replacement in order to preserve the architectural integrity of the city’s established neighborhoods. In addition, City staff will evaluate on a project-to-project basis the best solution for window replacements in federally funded housing projects, with a consideration for health and safety, historic values, sustainability and the bottom line.

HCR-2-j **City-owned Resources.** Maintain all City-owned historic and cultural resources in a manner that is consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

HCR-2-k **City Historic Preservation Team.** Establish an inter-departmental Historic Preservation team to coordinate on matters of importance to history and preservation.



*Del Webb Building (1963)*

## THE NEW CITY BEAUTIFUL



*"Field With Bulldozers,"*  
Elaine Lynn (2007; City of Fresno)



*"Eucalyptus on Chestnut Avenue"*  
Adam Longatti



*Hmong Strawberry Farmer, Fresno*  
(Photo: Joel Pickford)

A great city is a mix of older buildings and new, where the past is respected but change is also considered vital for a healthy community. Collaboration among a variety of special interest groups in creating a successful city is critical. The “New City Beautiful” policies recognize the importance of these philosophical connections by reference to the urban planning principles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which linked art, architecture, urban planning and health.

Fresno’s history is rooted in agriculture, which still forms the basis for much of its heritage, industry, and wealth. The preservation of cultural and historic landscapes in general—and the conservation of agricultural lands in particular—is a critical component of protecting and promoting Fresno’s identity. A major component of this General Plan is the preservation of nearby agricultural landscapes through the promotion of infill and compact development and the decision to not pursue expansion of the City’s Sphere of Influence. The Urban Form, Land Use, and Design Element contains objectives and policies regarding the preservation of agriculture.

### OBJECTIVE

HCR-3 Promote a “New City Beautiful” ethos by linking historic preservation, public art, planning principles for complete neighborhoods with green building and technology.

### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

HCR-3-a **Adaptive Reuse.** Encourage the adaptive reuse and integration of older buildings into new projects, pursuant to the City’s dedication to a sustainable Fresno.

HCR-3-b **Public Art.** Collaborate with the arts community to promote the integration of public art into historic buildings and older neighborhoods. Link arts activities (such as Art Hop) with preservation activities.

HCR-3-c **Context Sensitive Design.** Work with the development and planning communities to ensure that infill development is context sensitive in its design, massing, set-backs, color, and architectural detailing.

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

### OBJECTIVE

HCR-4 Foster an appreciation of Fresno's history and cultural resources.

### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

HCR-4-a **Inter-agency Collaboration.** The City and the Historic Preservation Commission will work with public agencies and non-profit groups to provide activities and educational opportunities which celebrate and promote Fresno's history and heritage.

HCR-4-b **Heritage Tourism and Public Education.** Promote heritage tourism and the public's involvement in preservation through conferences, walking tours, publications, special events and involvement with the local media.

HCR-4-c **Training and Consultation.** As time and resources allow, City staff and historic preservation commissioners shall provide training, consultation and support to community members regarding Fresno's history, use of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the California Historical Building Code.

HCR-4-d **Public Archives.** As time and resources allow, maintain public archives which include information on all designated historic properties as well as historic surveys, preservation bulletins, and general local history reference materials. Post survey reports, Commission minutes and agendas, and other information of public interest on the historic preservation page of the City's website.

HC-4-e **Preservation Awards.** Honor the best work in preservation and neighborhood revitalization through a biennial Mayoral Preservation Awards program.

HCR-4-f **Economic Incentives.** Investigate the potential for developing a Mills Act program and funding for the Historical Rehabilitation Financing Program (FMC Article 3, Section 8 et seq.).



*Vernacular Architecture Forum Conference Tour (2008)*



*"Fresno, California" Postcard, Historic Resources and Heritage Tourism*



*Roessler Winery (1893) Adobe with Stucco Cladding*

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WORKSHOP DISCUSSION DRAFT