

DESIGN GUIDELINES
FOR
NEVADA CITY, CALIFORNIA

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED SEPTEMBER, 1995
CITY COUNCIL ADOPTED REVISIONS AUGUST 12, 2015



NEVADA CITY, 1920

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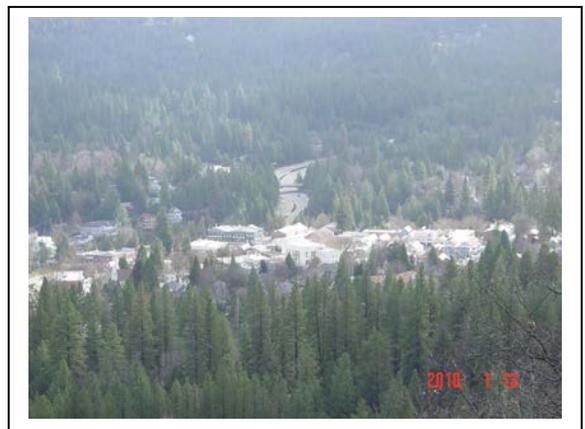
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Photographs and Credits

Searls Library (historical photos)
Nevada County Memories, Presented by *The Union*
City Staff



1910



2010

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1.0 INTRODUCTION



Broad Street – 1920



Broad Street - 2014

1.1 Historic Background of Nevada City

In 1849, the first year of the gold rush, nearly a quarter million people immigrated to California, and nearly ten thousand explored the banks of Deer Creek that ran through Nevada City. Poor men wanted to become rich; rich men wanted to become even richer. There were few women at first, but soon Nevada City became a complete community, with children, families, schools, churches, merchants...and visionaries who knew this town was being built for the future. Not a boom town headed for certain ruin, but a real community, built to last.

The early tent town known as Nevada City, the product of a wild rush for riches, soon became the most prominent city anywhere in the Mother Lode; for a time it was the third largest city in the state.

Among the early pioneers of Nevada City were the four future United States senators...a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court...a chief justice of the California State Supreme Court...two California attorney generals...members of the State Assembly, State Senate, the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. and houses of commerce throughout the nation. They were the authors of important state and federal legislation, including two amendments to the U.S. Constitution. People who helped shape the birth of a new town also helped shape the future of a young state and relatively young country.

Nevada City enjoyed several decades of a healthy mining and logging based economy.

The homes and commercial buildings- of different architectural shapes and sizes--were built by people who traveled from all corners of the globe to join in the search for gold. People's backgrounds were as diverse as the buildings they occupied. This historic diversity is relied upon when considering the present and future.



**Hard Rock
Miners,
Nevada City,
1888**

1.2 Nevada City's Philosophy

In July of 2008 the City Council adopted the City's Mission Statement:

The City of Nevada City is dedicated to preserving and enhancing its small town character and historical architecture while providing quality public services for our current and future residents, businesses and visitors.

Nevada City's neighborhoods are diverse, with a mixture of Victorian homes and miner's cabins equally preserved and equally important to the community-often in close proximity-occupying the same hillside. Wood-frame buildings stand beside impressive brick structures throughout the historic downtown core.

In recent years, this historic foundation has been complemented by a comfortable mix of recreation, creative arts and tourism, along with county, state and federal agencies and several high-tech firms.

Over the years Nevada City has maintained a special look among Mother Lode towns. It has also maintained a special spirit. Local citizens and city officials have implemented ordinances and standards that assist in retaining much of the tradition and architecture, while balancing the community's priceless history with the need for a thriving contemporary economy.

It is the City's desire to balance the needs of the present and future against the heritage of the past, which results in protecting the character of the town. It is important to continue the philosophy that Nevada City will grow without being overly commercialized, overly modernized or overly developed. By the same token, the community recognizes and accepts positive changes that will enhance what is already here; changes that will continue both the spirit and character of a truly special place.

The Planning Commission and staff hope these guidelines illustrate how the City views itself and how ordinances and policies are applied to balance ownership rights with historic preservation responsibilities; to balance a historic past with an unlimited future.



Nevada City Dairy wagon in front of the New York Hotel on Broad Street, about 1900.

These Guidelines are intended to provide guidance in determining suitability and architectural compatibility of proposed projects with preservation and promotion of the historic character of Nevada City. They are not intended to be used as a technical manual for rehabilitating or building structures in the City nor are they intended to dictate mandatory design features. They are intended as a helpful “guide” for property owners, design professionals, and contractors in proposing projects, and for the City officials to consistently evaluate projects assuring that they are sympathetic to and compatible with the unique architectural and cultural qualities of Nevada City. All projects must conform to the development standards contained in the Nevada City General Plan and Zoning Regulations. These Guidelines are intended to implement General Plan policies adopted by Council Resolutions and to supplement Zoning Regulations and the Development Performance Standards therein adopted by Ordinance, which shall prevail in the event of any conflict.

These Design Guidelines will be used during the review of land use permit applications, namely the Architectural Review Application process. The City Council, Planning Commission, Advisory Review Committee, and City staff will refer to the Guidelines for direction and evaluation of project design. The Guidelines implement the City’s General Plan and Zoning Ordinance and encourage the preservation of neighborhoods, as well as historical buildings and features. The Guidelines will provide guidance to the Planning Commission to ensure consistent review of projects.

These Guidelines are applicable to the City’s Architectural Review Application Process. This process is utilized with new construction, exterior alterations to existing buildings, restorations, renovations and demolitions, and any other discretionary projects (public, commercial, industrial and multi-family). A section is also devoted to projects within the City’s Historical District.

The Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 17 of the City’s Municipal Codes) contains several ordinances relative to these Guidelines as listed below and available at City Hall or on the City’s website at www.nevadacityca.gov

1. Historical District Ordinance (Section 17.68.020)
2. Architectural Review Standards (Section 17.88.040)
3. Residential Development (Section 17.72.010)
4. Development Standards (Section 17.80)
5. Building Alteration and Renovation Standards (Municipal Code Chapter 15.12); these standards are applicable to any exterior alteration of buildings in the Historical District or pre-World War II buildings located outside the Historical District (buildings constructed before 1942).
6. Worksheet prepared by the City Attorney which outlines the various standards associated with exterior alterations, demolitions or building within the City. This worksheet is used by the Planning Commission and is a helpful tool in determining the standards applicable to projects inside or outside the Historical District, if a home was built prior to WWII (before 1942), etc.

**Main Street
2015**



**Broad
Street
2010**



2.0 DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

2.1 Planning Commission Approvals

The Planning Commission sits as the Architectural Review Committee for exterior alterations within the Historical District by the submittal of an Architectural Review Application. The Planning Commission reviews applications proposing signage, alterations or additions to buildings and new buildings, window replacement, color changes, and roof replacement.

For Architectural Review Applications requiring Planning Commission action, staff first reviews the submitted applications for completeness. Once deemed complete, staff will distribute the application to staff (City Engineer, Director of Public Works, Fire Chief, City Attorney and City Manager) for comments and any conditions of approval. Staff then schedules the matter for a Planning Commission hearing and a staff report is prepared and the matter is heard by the Commission.

For larger projects which require environmental review, staff prepares or arranges for the appropriate environmental document pursuant to CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) and schedules the matter before the Advisory Review Committee (ARC) which is comprised of two Planning Commission members and staff. The ARC reviews the proposed environmental document and the project (layout and design) and provides recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Nevada City does not have a building inspector or department and therefore contracts with the Nevada County Building Department for issuance of building permits (located at 950 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City CA 95959). Before the County Building Department can issue a permit, two City staff members (either City Planner, City Engineer or Director of Public Works) need to provide sign-off approval on the plans to ensure compliance with any project approval conditions. When required, the plans may need sign-off by the Fire Department staff.

City staff is available to meet to review the application process and welcomes the opportunity to assist in processing applications efficiently. Applications are available at City Hall and online at the City’s website at www.nevadacityca.gov (Planning Department)

**City Hall
317 Broad Street
Nevada City CA
(Built 1937 and
remodeled in
2000)**



2.2 Staff Approvals

The following provides a list of projects that can usually be approved at staff level (most applications require two staff signatures). **The City Planner has the ability to forward any application to the Planning Commission if it is determined the project may result in a significant change to the architecture of the property or generates significant public interest.**

- Roof replacement: Staff can approve like-for-like roof replacements with a Minor Architectural Review Application (inside and outside the Historical District). The Planning Commission is the body to review roof changes (not like-for-like) within the Historical District.
- Minor Additions. Staff can approve minor additions to homes (outside the Historical District) if the materials match and the addition is less than 25% of the existing conditioned living area of the residence.
- Interior Remodel. Staff can sign off on interior remodels (inside or outside the Historical District) that do not affect major changes to the exterior of the home/building such as window or door treatments.
- Deck additions outside the Historical District can be approved by staff. Standard decks are usually on the rear of homes; however ornate or larger decks can be referred by the City Planner to the Planning Commission for review and approval. The Commission approves decks within the Historical District.
- Historic Building Code. The City can recommend implementation of the State Historic Building Code to the Nevada County Building Official (with issuance of building permits) which enables utilization of past building standards. ~~Modern building standards are often not appropriate to older buildings, particularly aesthetically.~~

2.3 Appeals

Appeals of decisions can be made as follows:

1. Appeals of Advisory Review Committee or City Staff decisions may be made to the Planning Commission.
2. Appeals of Planning Commission decisions may be appealed to the City Council.

Appeals shall be made in writing and submitted to the City Clerk within 15 days of the decisions and include information and reasoning as to why the appeal is necessary.

2.4 Permit Time Limits

Project permits approved outside the Historical District must be utilized within two years of City approval. The Planning Commission may grant an extension of time of the permit for one year at a time but not to exceed five years total from the original approval date. Projects approved within the Historical District shall expire one year after issuance (See Section 17.68.160)

3.0 NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Because Nevada City’s neighborhoods are diverse with a mixture of styles and vintages, design compatibility must take into account the context of the neighborhood to determine whether the new project will “fit in.”

The Zoning Ordinance states *“the Planning Commission shall review each application on its own merit and in the context of the neighborhood of the project. For example, plywood siding might be acceptable in an area of modern, similar homes, but not in a neighborhood of old Victorian homes. In new projects, where no existing neighborhood sets the tone of the architectural style, the architecture shall be reviewed for general compatibility with Nevada City’s style of architecture.”*

“Context of the neighborhood” may be defined as those elements such as age and size of homes, lot size and setbacks, which in aggregate create a particular personality, or character of a neighborhood.

Along with the setbacks and architectural style, the following are all features to be analyzed when considering the context of the neighborhood:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Materials | 7. Orientation |
| 2. Proportion | 8. Views |
| 3. Height | 9. Usage |
| 4. Mass | 10. Landscaping |
| 5. Scale | 11. Solar opportunities |
| 6. Topography | 12. Location of the site |

The square footage of the project should conform to the square footage of the majority of houses in the area and care should be taken that the view of adjacent properties not be restricted. The dominant residences in the neighborhood should be noted with the purpose of ensuring that a new structure will not be so imposing, either due to its size or obtrusive lot position (top of hill or corner) as to diminish the stature of historic homes.

When evaluating a neighborhood, it is useful to consider its history. The natural flora as well as trees and vegetation imported by the miners during the Gold Rush era is as distinctive as the homes and should be considered as part of the feel or ambiance of a neighborhood.

Over the years, as the City expanded, more “modern” neighborhoods developed. The Steger Tract (Clay Street, Turpentine) was built in the 1970’s and is an example of a uniform subdivision characterized by ranch style homes on lots of mostly equal size. The multiple family unit project, call Co-Housing, located on West Broad Street was built in early 2000. Scattered throughout the city limits are “mixed” neighborhoods with homes that range from Victorian to ranch to stucco cottage.

New applications are reviewed with the question “**will the project appear as though it’s it was always a part of the neighborhood?**” Below are photos of the varying neighborhoods in Nevada City:



Co-Housing, West Broad Street, 2015



Main Street, 2015

4.0 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN WITHIN HISTORICAL DISTRICT

4.1 History of Historical District

Buildings in downtown Nevada City in the 19th century slowly evolved from canvas tents to logs to wood-frame to stone and brick. Each time there was a major fire in town - and there were several in the 1850's and 60's - the architecture and building materials would change. As a result, the downtown business area - now the core of the designated Historical District - developed a mixed use of materials and styles, and with it a unique architectural mix that we strive to respect and protect.

A pioneer sawmill near Nevada City (Circa 1880)



During the 1950's and 60's, mining and lumbering became less significant as factors in local commerce. In addition, Interstate 80 was constructed over the Sierra. With fewer jobs for local residents, and a reduction in tourist-related automobile traffic resulting from the all-weather interstate to the south, Nevada City faced some difficult economic times. If the city was to survive as a municipality, and preserve an incorporation that dated back to the gold rush, it was necessary to make some significant changes.

Broad Street 1857



Recognizing that Nevada City's greatest assets were its historic past, unique setting, and impressive inventory of 19th century buildings, community leaders decided to plan for the future with an eye on the past.



Broad Street, 1890

In 1968, the City Council and Planning Commission created and approved Ordinance 338 -- now known as the Nevada City Historical Ordinance. The document served as the nexus to lead the town through a decade of major renovation and restoration. In 1972, utilities were undergrounded, gaslights were installed, neon signs were removed, new signs went up and Nevada City became the envy of every other gold rush community in the Mother Lode region. The City proved that a well-planned face-lift was not only possible, but also necessary.

Below is a photograph of Broad Street, Nevada City in 1960 and one taken in 2010.



Broad St., 1960



Broad St., 2010

While the historical ordinance has undergone some minor adjustments since its adoption in 1968, the essence of the original plan remains intact. From the beginning, the City recognized that the historic character and distinctive architecture of many buildings - and the historic district as a whole - warranted special protection.



Looking up Broad Street, approx. 1965



Looking up Broad Street, 2015

By implementing the Historical Ordinance, and proceeding with a downtown betterment project that eventually brought over \$10 million in grant funds to the City, community leaders were affirming their belief that downtown was of great historic significance and was worth preserving. In fact, such preservation was essential to the town's economic and cultural stability.

The City Council and Planning Commission noted that to permit a departure from the established type of architecture in the construction of new buildings or in the alteration of existing buildings within the Historical District, or to permit the uncontrolled use of advertising signs, would be detrimental and would tend to depreciate the value of all property within the district.

The special character or special historical or aesthetic value of downtown buildings required protective measures to ensure that future generations would be able to enjoy the unique design features that make up what is referred to as Mother Lode type architecture.

Several buildings were designated by the City Council as having features reflecting typical architectural styles of the 1849-to-1900 period. Those buildings served as the foundation for renovation of the downtown area.

In stating the purpose of the Historical Ordinance enacted in 1968 (codified in the City Zoning Regulations as Section 17.68.020) the city council declared that the historic downtown area designated was *'...one of great historical interest and aesthetic value [containing] many places and buildings which are important historical exhibits and unique architectural specimens...'*, listing 19 examples of places and buildings that *'...are symbolic of the city's historical past as a mining town during the days of the California gold rush and thereafter.'* Below are photographs of those buildings (larger photographs of designated buildings are available for review at City Hall).



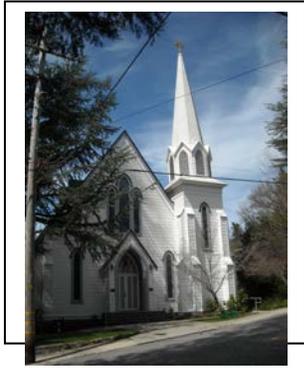
1. The Plaza
101 Broad St



2. Ott's Assay Office
132 Main St



3. Methodist Church
433Broad St



4. Trinity Episcopal
226 Nevada St



5. St Canice Catholic Church
317 Washington St



6. Baptist Church
300 Main St



7. New York Hotel
408/410 Broad St



8. 314 Broad Street



9. 501 Broad St



10. 244 Commercial St



11. Old Chinese Laundry
312 Commercial St



12. National Hotel
211 Broad St



13. Firehouse No. 1
214 Main St



14. Firehouse No. 2
422 Broad



15. Nevada Theatre
401 Broad St



16. Masonic Bldg
110 No. Pine St



17. Searls Bldg
214 Church St



18. The Red Castle
107 Prospect St



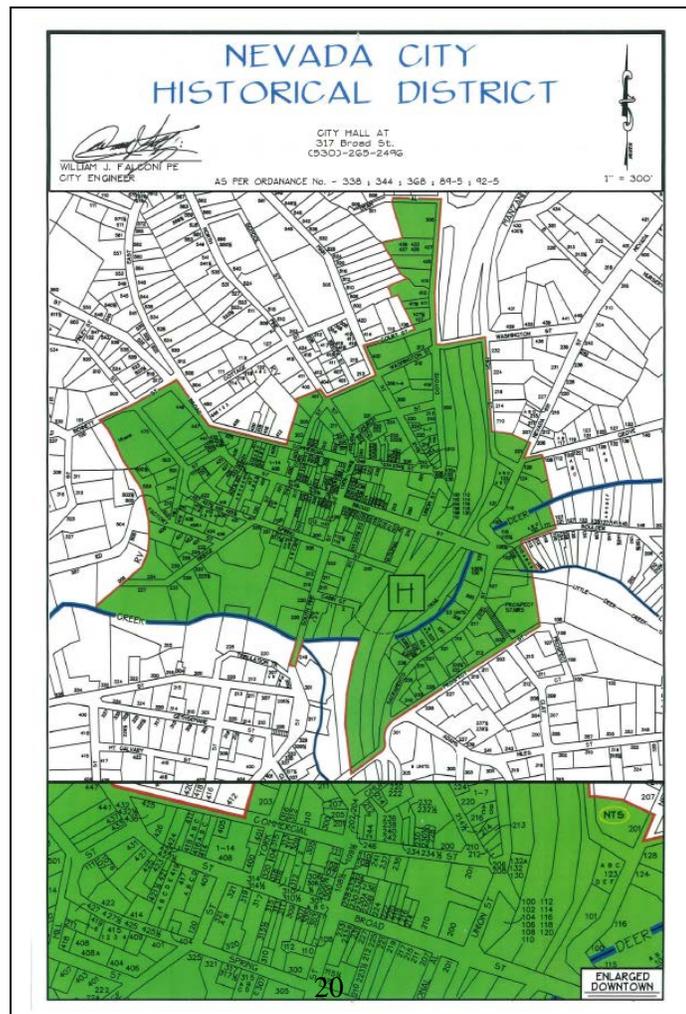
19. The Old Brewery, 107 Sacramento St

In explaining the need for the Historical Ordinance, after designating the exemplary places and buildings, the ordinance continues: *‘The historic character and distinctive architecture of such places and buildings, and of the historic district as a whole, have attracted tourists and visitors to the city in great numbers, thereby augmenting the economy and general welfare of the city and its inhabitants. The preservation of such places and buildings, and of the architectural appearance of the surrounding properties within the district, is essential to the economic and cultural life of the city. To permit a departure from the established type of architecture in the construction of new buildings or in the alteration of existing buildings within the district, and to permit the uncontrolled use of advertising signs therein, would be detrimental to the historical places and buildings and would tend to depreciate the values of all properties within the district. In order to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, it is necessary pursuant to Section 37361 of the California Government Code, to provide for such places and buildings having a special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value, special conditions and regulations for their protection, enhancement and perpetuation, and to provide appropriate and reasonable control of the appearance of neighboring property within public view.’*

It is a mixture of different but compatible architecture and signage that has evolved over the years that contributes to the historic character and distinctive architecture within the historic district of Nevada City. Once the ordinance was in place, alterations or new construction within the Historical District had to conform to Mother Lode style architecture as detailed in the Zoning Ordinance.

**Nevada City
Historical
District Map
(reduced and
not to scale)**

**Copy of
this map can
be found in
the appendix)**



A. Residential Projects within Historical District

City zoning regulations require a permit for construction or alteration of the exterior appearance of any building, including residences, within the Historical District (or contiguous to the streets and alleys of the Historical District, even when across the street), be processed with submittal of an Architectural Review application to be considered and acted upon by the Advisory Review Committee and/or the Planning Commission to assure that the proposed work will be in strict keeping with the Mother Lode era. The ‘Mother Lode’ type of architecture within the Historical District that gives Nevada City its unique character is defined as ‘...that type of architecture generally used in the Mother Lode region of the state of California during the period from 1849 and 1900 and which are exemplified in Nevada City [by the buildings depicted on pages 17, 18 and 19 of these guidelines.’ The goal of architectural review for the permit is to preserve the character of Nevada City architecture in terms of historical value, site coverage and planning, volume and massing, general design and materials. These Guidelines include many historic and current photos illustrating the Mother Lode type of architecture Nevada City wants to preserve and protect. The City Planner can also assist in providing guidance and oversight of the permit application.

Materials – General Guidelines

The historic exterior features of a building should be retained and preserved. Distinctive materials, components, finishes, and examples of craftsmanship should be retained and preserved. Owners are encouraged to reproduce missing historic elements that were original to the building, but have been removed. Physical or photographic evidence should be used to substantiate the reproduction of missing features.

Deteriorated or damaged historic features and elements shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. Where the severity of deterioration or existence of structural or material defects requires replacement, the feature or element should match the original in composition, design, color, dimension, texture, material, and finish, and other visual qualities

Each site should be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Owners are discouraged from introducing architectural elements or details that visually modify or alter the original building design when no evidence of such elements or details exists.

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials or features that characterize the site or building.

Applicants are encouraged to submit samples of building materials (windows, siding, roofing, etc. when possible) for the Planning Commission’s review.

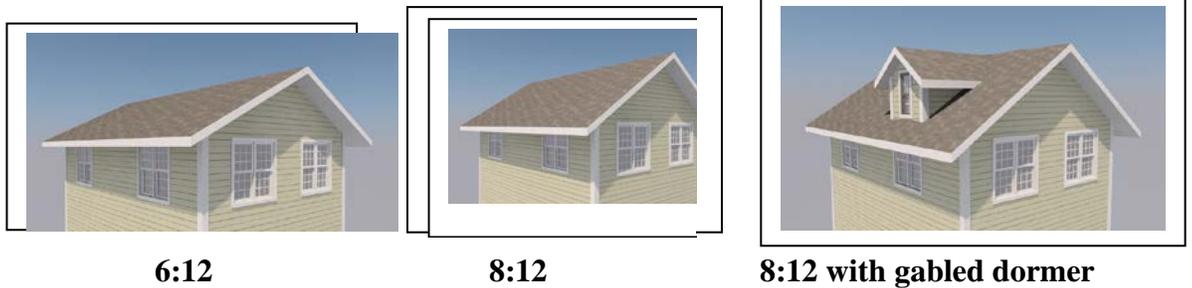
State Historical Building Code

The State Historical Building Code, established in 1975, and part of the California Building Code helps to “facilitate the preservation and continuing use of qualified historical buildings or properties while providing reasonable safety for the building occupants and access for persons with disabilities.” Nevada City’s Historical District, being listed on a qualified National Register of Historic Places, qualifies for recommendation to utilize such Code.

The Planning Commission, when reviewing projects within the Historical District, can recommend to the Nevada County Building Official that certain architectural features that do not meet current building code be permitted under the Historical Building Code. For example, railing heights are currently 42” but were 36” or lower in the past. The Commission’s recommendation to retain that historic railing height can be reviewed by the Building Official for compliance with safety issues. Another example of using the Historical Building Code involves retention of window design and dimensions on older buildings

Features typical of Mother Lode era architecture such as:

- Roof Pitches. Main roofs steeply peaked (6:12 to 12:12 pitch) with overhangs and gable ends are typical. Hipped roofs in the appropriate architectural context are allowed. (Victorian homes were often very vertical in appearance and the relationship of the size of the house to the roof should be considered).



- Siding for Existing Home and other Structures. Painted wood horizontal siding, board and batten are encouraged. Cement fiber board, vinyl siding, and other synthetic siding (such as T-111 siding) is discouraged in older neighborhoods particularly when the neighborhood is in close proximity to pre-1942 homes or if the home itself is pre-1942 or exhibits a style which is not complemented by these types of siding.
- Materials, New Homes. Materials on new homes and other structures will be reviewed against the context of the neighborhood. If modern materials are used, they should match historic materials in appearance.
- Materials, Older Homes. Alterations to older homes should match existing, historic materials. Synthetic materials with no historic basis are discouraged on both existing older home additions and renovations.

Broad Street Home restored in 2011/12



- Trim, railings, and details should have a historic basis and fit the style of the existing home or new structure.
- Roofing material. Asphalt shingles and metal roofing in muted non-glare colors such as tans, blacks, browns, and greens have historically been approved on new homes and additions. The use of corrugated metal has also been approved.
- Solar Panels/Skylights. New roof features should be visually minimized when viewed from the primary public right-of-way
- Exterior Colors. Historical colors are encouraged for commercial and residential buildings in the Historical District. Samples of such colors are available at City Hall. City staff can approve like-for-like color repainting; however changes in colors require Commission approval.
- Covered porches and entries. Such entries and porches usually have lower roof pitches than the main roof.



Covered Porch, Sacramento Street

- Windows. Typical windows include multi-pane, vertical, and bay windows. Wood windows and true divided lights are generally required of additions, renovations and newly constructed homes in older neighborhoods though existing window types may be duplicated.



Bay Window, Broad Street



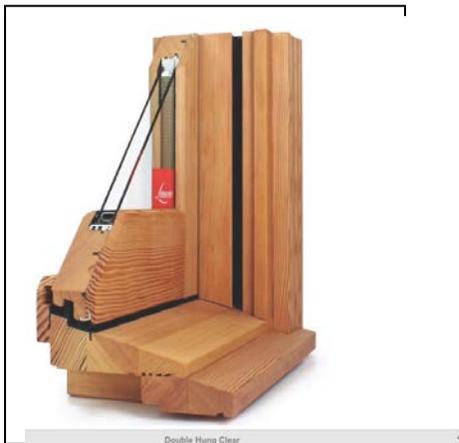
Multi-paned windows, Broad Street

Discussion on Wood Windows

The Design Guidelines have, in the past, preferred the use of historically correct wood windows. The design of windows is continuously evolving as they become more efficient and maintenance free. Wood windows require maintenance throughout their life time, mainly painting. Because of these maintenance issues, the wood window is not as popular as the same window with “cladding” on the wood exposed to the weather. The cladding replaces the layers of paint on the wood window. The cladding can be several materials with aluminum and vinyl being the most popular. The cladding protects the wood and usually never needs painting. This is good for the homeowner and the environment.

There are two important points to be made. First, this discussion is not relative to a vinyl or aluminum window but is for discussion of a clad wood window. It is difficult to make a solid vinyl or aluminum window match the proportions of the true wood window. Secondly, referring to the two images below of an actual wood window and the same window with white colored cladding, it is easy to see that the proportions and dimensions as basically identical.

There also are windows made from fiberglass for strength and low maintenance. The Planning Commission will consider the fact that if the windows have the same proportions of a wood window, they can possibly be considered as meeting the City’s requirements.



Wood Clad Window



Vinyl Clad Window

B. Commercial Projects within the Historical District

City zoning regulations also require a permit with architectural review for erection or exterior alteration of any commercial building or structure and no structure within or adjacent to the Historical District may be removed, demolished or razed without prior approval of a permit for such work as compatible with the architecture within the downtown Historical District. Generally, that architecture involves the use of wood and brick as primary materials, and is generally characterized by such design features as gabled or shed roofs, tall and narrow windows and doors, dormer windows, iron or wooden shutters, balconies, wooden awning and ornamental scroll work. The determination of whether a building conforms with the Mother Lode type of architecture shall include all factors which affect the external appearance of the building including architectural elevations, building materials, colors, finish, lighting, ornamental devices, and signs. Below are examples of these materials.

Applicants are encouraged to submit samples of building materials (windows, siding, roofing, etc. when possible) for the Planning Commission's review

Siding:

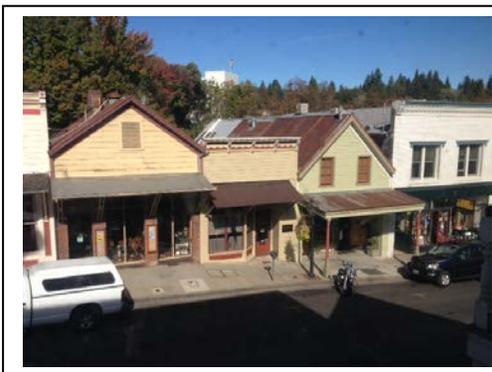


Wood (Spring St)



Wood, Brick (Spring St)

Roofs:



Broad Street

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Parapet: | Wall to protect roof |
| Eave: | Lower border of roof that overhangs the wall |
| Canopy: | Roof-like ornamental architectural structure |

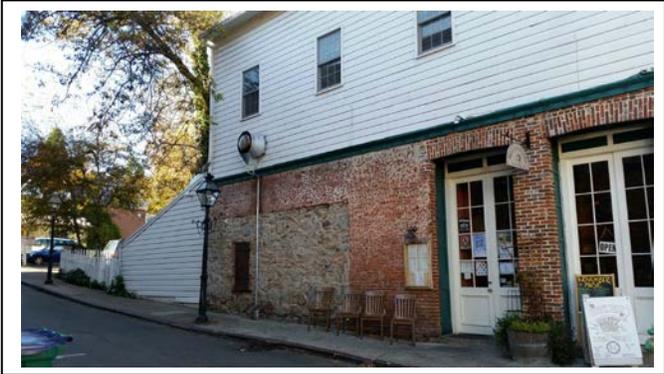
Metal Roofing (Miners Foundry)



Brick / Stone Accents:



North Pine & Commercial Streets



Commercial Street

Details: Awnings/Shutters/ Balconies



Commercial Street



Main Street



Commercial Street Boardwalk

State Historical Building Code

The State Historical Building Code, established in 1975, and part of the California Building Code helps to “facilitate the preservation and continuing use of qualified historical buildings or properties while providing reasonable safety for the building occupants and access for persons with disabilities.” Nevada City’s Historical District, being listed on a qualified National Register of Historic Places, qualifies for recommendation to utilize such Code.

The Planning Commission, when reviewing projects within the Historical District, can recommend to the Nevada County Building Official that certain architectural features that do not meet current building code be permitted under the Historical Building Code. For example, railing heights are currently 42” but were 36” or lower in the past. The Commission’s recommendation to retain that historic railing height can be reviewed by the Building Official for compliance with safety issues. Another example of using the Historical Building Code involves retention of window design and dimensions on older buildings.

The City’s Zoning Ordinance, Historical District, acknowledges the following buildings as referenced in the definition of Mother Lode type of architecture (Section 17.68.030).



218 Broad Street



310 Broad Street

Two Examples of Remodels within Historical District

1. This project involves the remodel of a 1960's metal building and incorporated materials and design of Mother Lode era materials, being wood, brick and metal.



201 Commercial Street - 1960



Remodel in 2014

2. Likewise, the following pictures are of a remodel of a historical building, known as the Powell House. This building was constructed in about 1865 used as a soda works bottling company, was a Baptist church and used for residential units by E. T. R. Powell. In 2012 the owner remodeled the building by converting the basement to conditioned living area containing three 500-square foot apartments; the main floor is commercial use and the upper floor has two 800-square foot apartments.



1965



2015

C. Exterior Lighting within Historical District

The dependence on gaslights as the primary downtown illumination, combined with indirect lighting for business signs, creates a look and feel that separates Nevada City from other communities. Good lighting uses only the amount of light needed for the intended task, whether illuminating a parking area, pedestrian walkway, signage, security or to highlight specific architectural features.



Gas lights installed in 1972

If lighting is desired in addition to that provided by the gaslights, the proposed lighting and fixtures should be included in the permit application for the building construction or exterior alteration or in the sign application, noting that the proposed fixtures and illumination level should be compatible with the Mother Lode era, complementing and not detracting from that appearance.

Exterior light fixtures should strengthen the character of the downtown and provide safety for the public. Fixtures should be compatible with the building's style, period and materials

Neon lighting is not permitted (other than that located within a business and not designed to be visible from the exterior). Internal lighting that is visible from the street and would detract from the character of the Historical District is discouraged.

Temporary holiday lighting on buildings is permitted from November 15 to January 15 (City Council Resolution 2014-44) which in part states: *"To enhance the architecture of the buildings, outlining of buildings shall be permitted in straight lines. The permitted exterior architectural features of a building to be outlined by lights shall be the roofline edge and any shed roof edges."*

Examples of lighting on commercial buildings in the downtown area are below:

EXAMPLES OF LIGHTING IN THE HISTORICAL DISTRICT



Union Street building lighting



Union St. Enlargement



Commercial Street Building



Commercial St Enlargement



120 Bridge Street, KVMR/Theatre Bldg

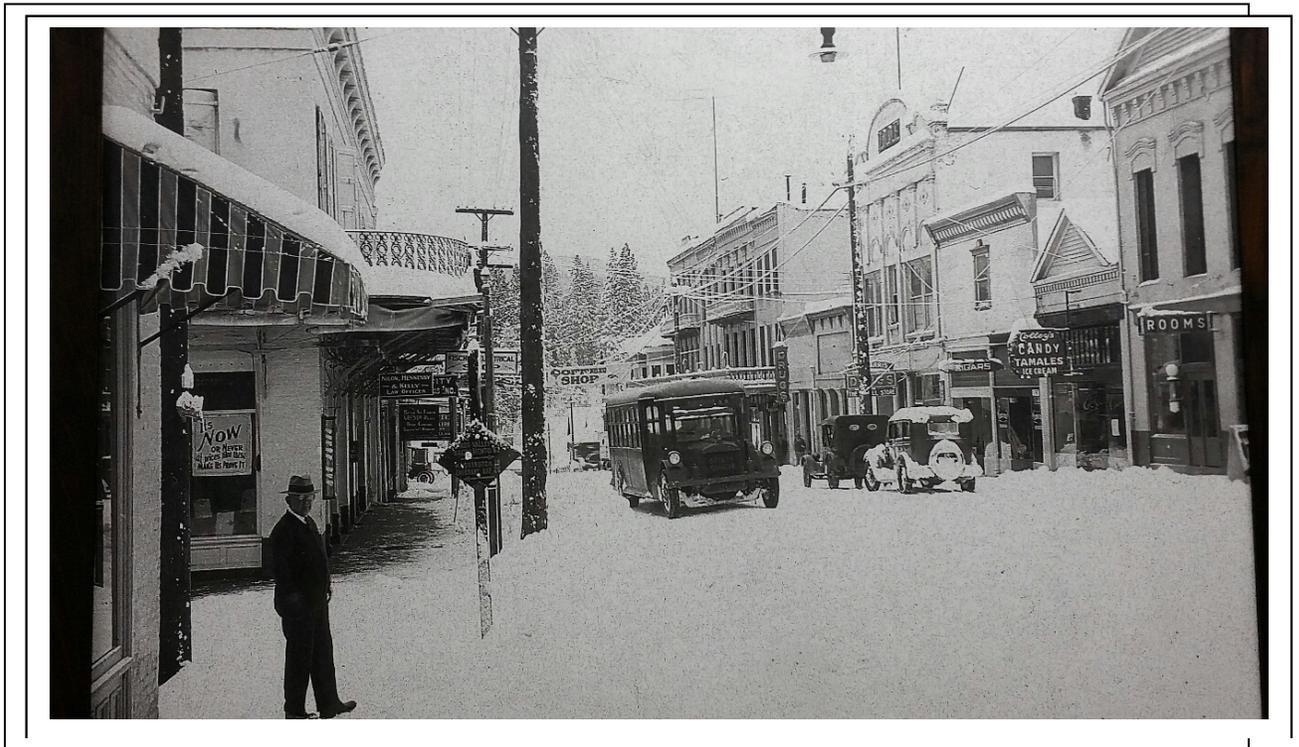


KVMR Lighting Enlargement



300 Broad Street

Broad St. Enlargement

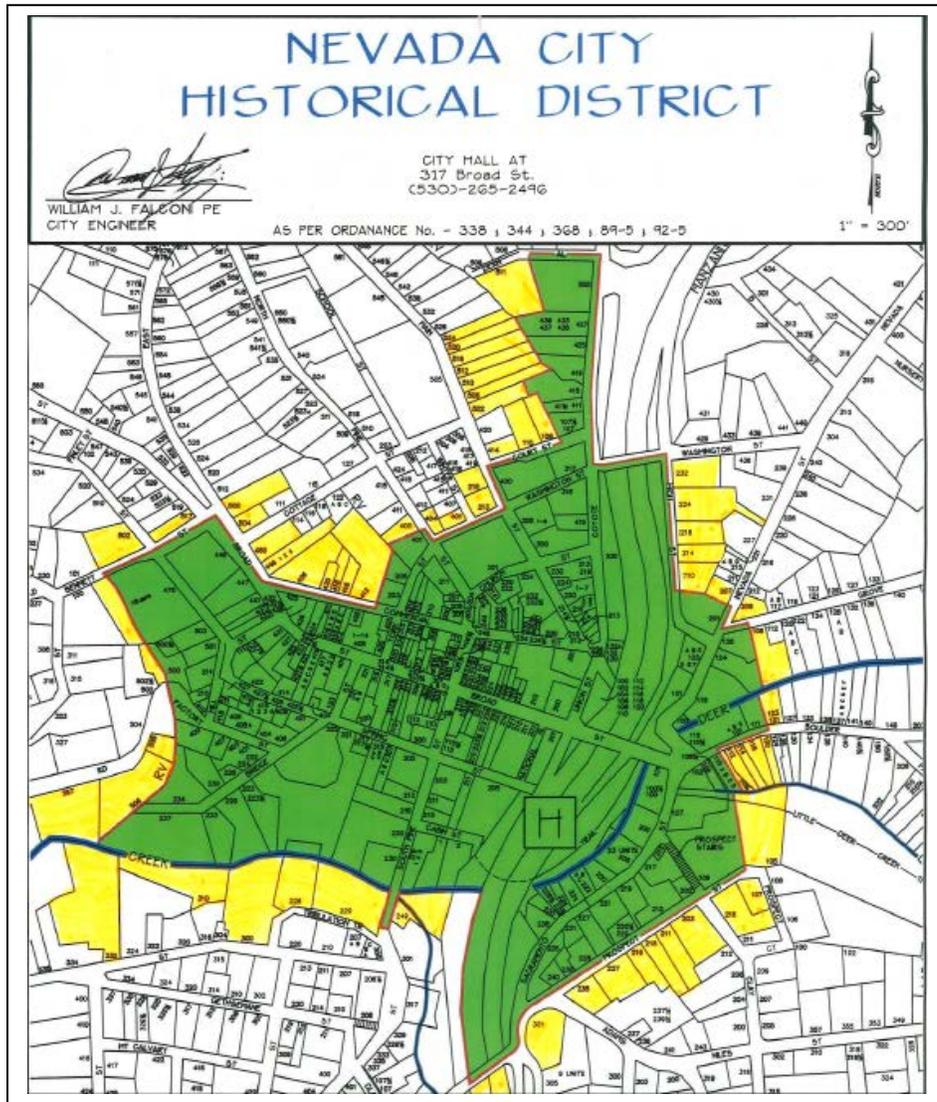


Broad Street -1920

D. MAP OF HISTORICAL DISTRICT INDICATING LOTS THAT BORDER/BOUND HISTORICAL DISTRICT (subject to same standards)

The map below is an excerpt from the City Official Map indicating the boundaries of the Historical District. The Zoning Ordinance Section 17.68.060 states that no buildings of special historical interest or value, or of the Mother Lode type of architecture, situated within the Historical District and **“fronting upon bay of the streets or alleys within or bounding said district,”** shall be torn down, demolished or removed, unless such building is or becomes so dilapidated...”. Further, Section 17.68.070 states that all buildings which are constructed or altered as to their experience appearance, situated within the Historical District and **“fronting upon the streets or alleys within or bounding said district,** shall as to their exterior appearance within public view substantially conform with the Mother Lode type of architecture.

The map has been highlighted in yellow which delineate those properties that **border or bound** the Historical District and therefore would need to conform to the above referenced sections.



5.0 ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW OUTSIDE THE HISTORICAL DISTRICT

5.1 Existing Residential Neighborhoods

Outside the Historical District, in recognition of the diversity of architectural styles that developed in Nevada City and contribute to its character, the City zoning regulations also define as being important to Nevada City and require permits to protect those homes and neighborhoods that are known as being of the pre-World War II era, i.e. pre-1942. Architectural review permits are required for construction or renovation of all buildings and structures in existing neighborhoods – including new construction of or additions to residences or outbuildings; alteration of the exterior appearance; and any removal, demolition or razing and replacing of any part of any such building or structure – to make sure that such projects conform to the ‘context of the neighborhood’ and are generally compatible with the style of architecture therein respecting changes that over time may have acquired significance in their own right.

Distinctive stylistic features and examples of skilled craftsmanship of both Mother Lode and pre-WW II buildings and structures should be treated with sensitivity. Removal or alteration of historical material or distinctive features should be avoided wherever possible and distinguishing original qualities or character of the building, structure or site and environment should not be destroyed. Alterations to older homes should match the existing style, materials and details. Synthetic materials are discouraged. Like-for-like replacements and repairs are recommended.

New projects, additions to homes and renovations, as well as construction of new outbuildings, must be generally compatible with Nevada City’s style of architecture. Such projects should conform to the “context of the neighborhood” previously discussed in these Guidelines

Nevada City Architecture or Mother Lode type of architecture is defined as “that type of architecture generally used in the Mother Lode region of the state of California during the period from 1849 and 1900. Such type of architecture involves the use of wood and brick as primary materials, and is generally characterized by such design features, among others, as gabled or shed roofs, tall and narrow windows and doors, dormer windows, iron or wooden shutters, balconies, wooden awnings and ornamental scroll work.

The determination of whether a building conforms with the Mother Lode type of architecture shall include all factors which affect the external appearance of the building, including, without limitation, architectural elevations, building materials, colors, finish, lighting, ornamental devices and signs.

Features typical of Mother Lode era architecture such as:

- **Roof Pitches.** Main roofs steeply peaked (6:12 to 12:12) with overhangs and gable ends.
Hipped roofs in the appropriate architectural context are allowed. (Victorian homes were often very vertical in appearance and the relationship of the size of the house to the roof should be considered).



6:12 pitch



8:12 pitch



8:12 with gabled dormer

Roof Pitch and Height Limit

The Zoning Ordinance provides the height limit for the various zoning districts, with the residential zones having a height limit of 35 feet. The following heights are recommended:

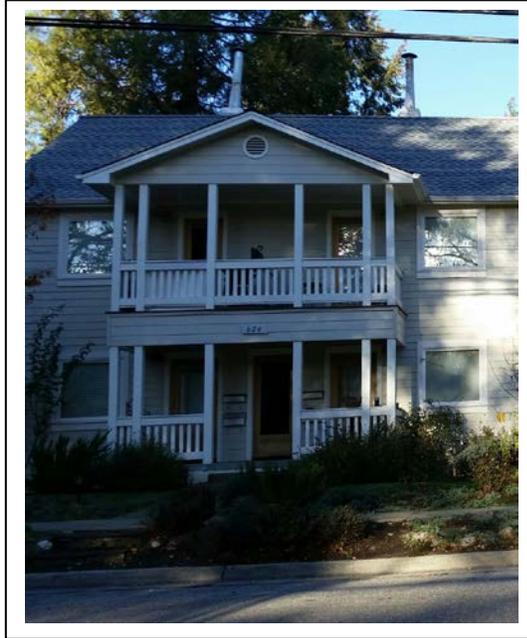
| Roof Pitch | Stories | Height Limit |
|------------|---------|--------------|
| 12:12 | 1 | 28' |
| 12:12 | 2 | 35' |
| 6:12 | 1 | 20' |
| 6:12 | 2 | 28' |

Front, rear and side elevations should be similar in height and size to surrounding homes

- Siding for Existing Homes. Painted wood horizontal siding, board and batten. Cement fiber board, vinyl siding, and other synthetic siding (such as T-111 siding) is discouraged in older neighborhoods particularly when the neighborhood is in close proximity to pre-1942 homes or if the home itself is pre-1942 or exhibits a style which is not complemented by these types of siding.
- Materials, New Homes. Materials on new homes will be reviewed against the context of the neighborhood. If modern materials are used, they should match historic materials in appearance.

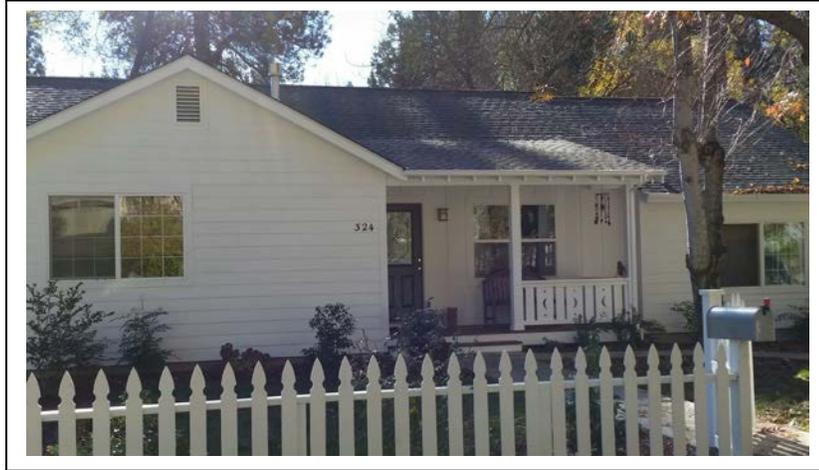
- Materials, Older Homes and Structures. Alterations to older homes and structures should match existing, historic materials. Synthetic materials with no historic basis are discouraged on both existing older home additions and renovations. Removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible
- Covered porches and entries. Such entries and porches usually have shallower roof slopes.

**Zion Street
4-plex**



- Trim, railings, and details should have a historic basis and fit the style of the existing home or new structure.
- Roofing material. Asphalt shingles and metal roofing in muted non-glare colors such as tans, blacks, browns, and greens have historically been approved on new homes and additions. The use of corrugated metal has also been approved.
- Exterior Colors. There is no color review or approval required for change in colors of a home outside the Historical District. However, the following guidelines are recommended:
 - Select colors that are similar to the tones found in the area and on adjacent buildings
 - Muted, soft colors on large wall expanses are encouraged
 - The use of bright, modern colors and intense white color are discouraged.
 - Use subdued colors as the primary color and brighter, contrasting trim when appropriate
 - Incorporate the color from primary building materials, such as stone, brick and

hardwood, as the base colors for new development



Alexander St

- Windows. Typical windows include multi-pane, vertical, and bay windows. Wood windows and true divided lights are generally required of additions, renovations and newly constructed homes in older neighborhoods though existing window types may be duplicated.

**Bay Window
Sacramento St**



Discussion on Wood Windows

The Design Guidelines have, in the past, preferred the use of historically correct wood windows. The design of windows is continuously evolving as they become more efficient and maintenance free. Wood windows require maintenance throughout their life time, mainly painting. Because of these maintenance issues, the wood window is not as popular as the same window with “cladding” on the wood exposed to the weather. The cladding replaces the layers of paint on the wood window. The cladding can be several materials with aluminum and vinyl being the most popular. The cladding protects the wood and usually never needs painting. This is good for the homeowner and the environment.

There are two important points to be made. First, this discussion is not relative to a vinyl or aluminum window but is for discussion of a clad wood window. It is difficult to make a solid vinyl or aluminum window match the proportions of the true wood window. Secondly, referring to the two images below of an actual wood window and the same window with white colored cladding, it is easy to see that the proportions and dimensions as basically identical.

There also are windows made from fiberglass for strength and low maintenance. The Planning Commission will consider the fact that if the windows have the same proportions of a wood window, they can possibly be considered as meeting the City’s requirements.



Wood Clad Window



Vinyl Clad Window

Below are photograph of homes that meet the definition of “Mother Lode Architecture” (Classic 19th Century)



Miner’s Cabin on Cabin Street

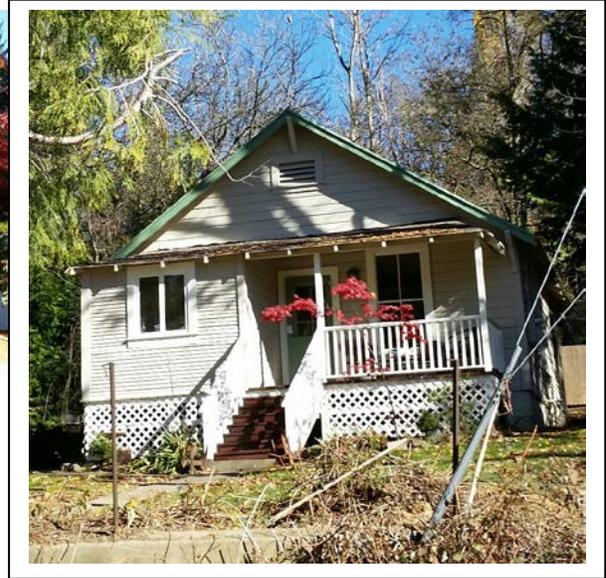
Victorian on Prospect Street



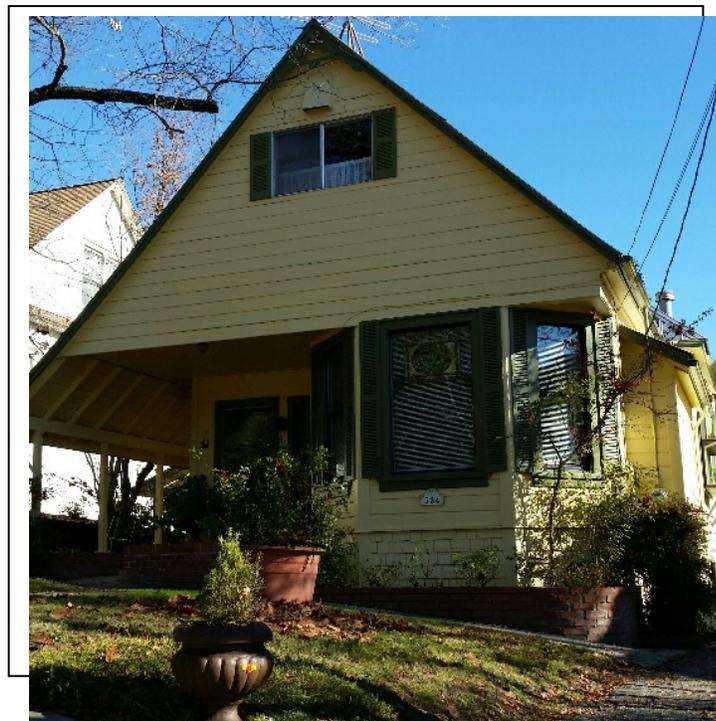
Below are examples of pre-WW II homes 20th Century to 1942



North Pine Street, about 1935



Adams Street, about 1930



Coyote Street, about 1938

Below are examples of 1940's to 1970's homes



**Brock Road, about
1948**



Gold Tunnel Road, 1950's

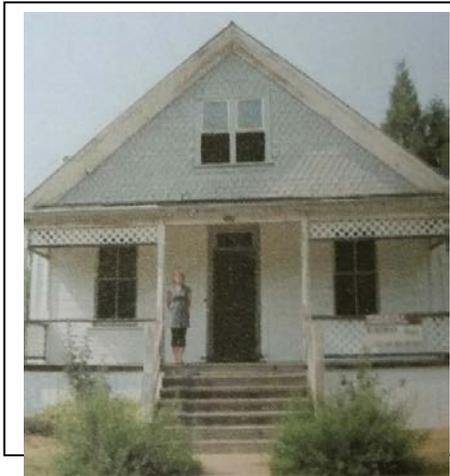


Lindley Avenue, about 1960

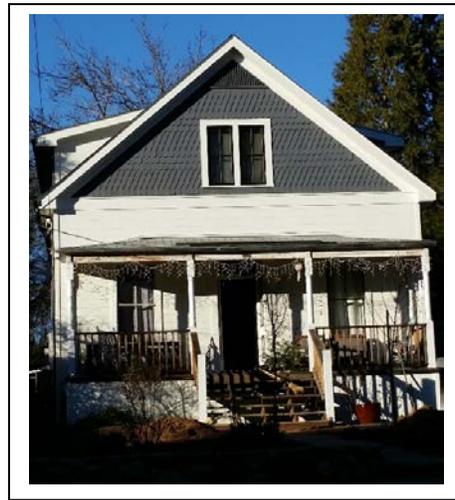


Turpentine Drive, 1970 (part of Steger Tract Subdivision)

Below are a 'before and after' photograph of a renovation consistent with Mother Lode Architecture.



Before (2000)



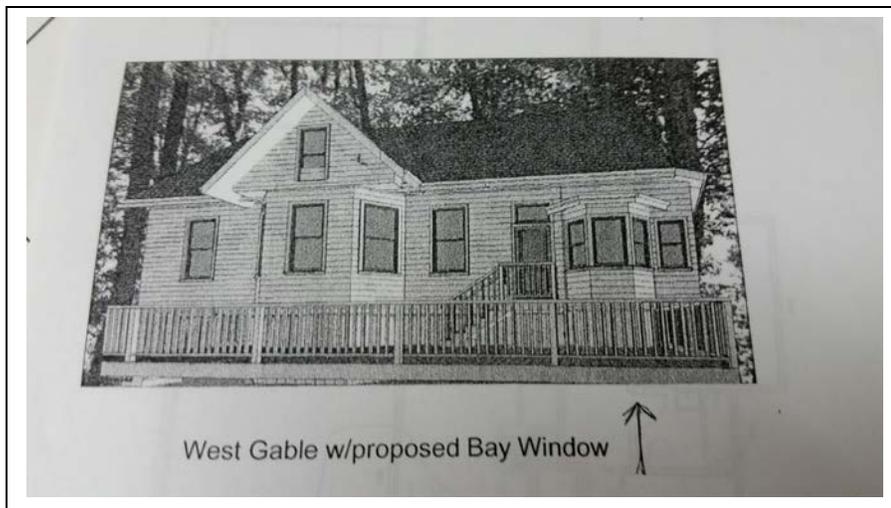
After (2014)

This home on Sacramento Street, built in 1891, was granted approval to remodel the home by adding conditioned living space to the attic area of the home. The home contains 1,348 sq ft and the project added 1,082 sq ft of conditioned area. Interior work to the home was done and like-for-like windows were replaced. The new conditioned area became living space and the roof was raised by 4 feet. New dormers and windows were added to this area and materials matched those of the existing home and those in the immediate area. Railings and steps were replaced.



Winter Street, new home built in 1990 (replacing original due to fire)

Additions. Nevada City is concerned about retaining a mix of housing sizes for affordable housing and historic preservation. As a result, major additions should not overwhelm the original structure. The integrity of the original structure should be retained. Additions to homes that are greater than 25% of the floor area are considered by the Planning Commission. Additions less than 25% with materials matching the home can be approved by staff; however the City Planner always has the ability to send an application to the Planning Commission for approval.



436 Washington Street – 25% addition to west side of home by extending kitchen and adding bay window (2013)

Garages and Accessory Structures, Second Dwelling Units

Accessory building means a “detached subordinate building located on the same premises as the main building or buildings, the use of which is customarily incidental to that of the main building or to the use of the land. Said accessory building shall not be used as sleeping or housekeeping quarters.” However, the City’s second dwelling unit ordinance does encourage second dwelling units above new garages.

Accessory buildings such as guest houses, garages, barns, and workshops should be designed to fit the character of the neighborhood and with adherence to all of the appropriate guidelines in this section. Accessory structures should complement the main building’s architecture (design, materials, color, etc.).

Existing accessory structures often contribute to the significance of the property and should be retained. Repair and restoration of such structures is desired rather than removal. If the structure is pre-WWII or of special historic or architectural value, it will not be permitted to be demolished without approval of a Demolition Permit which requires a finding by the Planning Commission that the building cannot be reasonably repaired or restored. (See Attach #11.2)

Accessory buildings can be detached from the main residence or attached (or may be connected by a breezeway). Accessory buildings need to comply with all requirements as the main residence including setbacks and undergo architectural review by the Planning Commission.

Exceptions to setbacks and design review are small accessory structures (such as tool sheds) that are less than 160 square feet in size; such structures are placed in the rear half of the lot and cannot exceed 30% of the rear yard area. Staff can assist with the placement of such structures to ensure compliance with the zoning ordinance.

Garage patterns in the existing neighborhood should be respected. For example, if rear detached garages are the norm, it is a good idea for any new garages to follow that form. Where single garage doors are common, new two car garages should use two similar doors instead of one larger double door. Regardless, the garage should not be the dominant feature of a front elevation.



Garage behind home – Clay Street



Garage, Alexander Street

Second Dwelling Units

The City adopted Ordinance 2008-14, finding that such dwelling units are an important form of housing that contributes to the character and diversity of housing opportunities in Nevada City. Such a unit is defined as an attached (640 square feet maximum) or detached unit (800 square feet) that is smaller and secondary to the main residence. Second dwelling units can also be constructed above a new garage (640 square feet maximum). A use permit can be submitted by the owner to the Planning Commission for any deviation in unit size.

Second dwelling units are permitted in all zoning districts that allow single family dwellings as a permitted use. The City encourages residential second dwelling units and has imported standards that enable homeowners to create such units to be compatible, as much as possible, with the neighborhood.

Second dwelling units are approved at staff level by the City Planner with submittal of an application, site plan and any required fees. Units are subject to standards such as:

1. Must meet building and fire codes
2. Payment of public water and sewer fees, along with AB1600 Mitigation Fees (can be waived with a 30-year deed restriction ensuring affordable rent at “low” or “very low” income levels as established by the State of California.
3. Each unit shall have one space off street parking space (in addition to two spaces required for main residence).
4. One of the residences shall be occupied by the owner of the property.
5. Lot coverage of all buildings cannot exceed 50 percent.
6. Materials, colors and architecture shall be similar to the primary unit.
7. Lighting shall not spill onto neighboring lots.
8. Entrances shall be screened from neighboring properties.

:



American Hill Rd. - 2nd unit under construction



Chief Kelly Dr. - 2nd unit above garage

5.2 New Residential Neighborhoods

New homes in new subdivisions or previously undeveloped neighborhoods must exhibit high quality design which is compatible and sympathetic to Nevada City's Mother Lode architecture incorporating traditional materials, building lines, features, and landscaping wherever possible. For example:

Features typical of Mother Lode era architecture:

- Roofs may vary in their design and detailing which is more flexible than the review standard in older neighborhoods, but they should be steeply pitched (6:12 to 12:12).
- Wall material - Siding on new homes in new neighborhoods should be high quality and at least reminiscent of traditional materials. Painted siding, cement fiber siding, shingles, and traditionally surfaced stucco are examples or preferred materials though it must be reviewed for furthering the intent of achieving a continuation of Mother Lode architecture. T-111 type siding, vinyl, and other synthetic siding are strongly discouraged.
- Covered porches and entries should be used wherever possible to continue a Nevada City architectural tradition.
- Windows should match the style of the house. Multi-pane, vertical, and bay windows are encouraged with variations to fit the style of the house.
- Trim, railing, and details should fit the style of the new house. The intent should be to add texture, shadowing, contrast, and interest which are reminiscent of the City's older homes.
- Roofing material such as treated wood shingles, asphalt shingles, and metal roofing in muted non-glare colors such as tans, blacks, browns, greens and grays are desired.
- Colors. Colors are not reviewed outside the Historic District. However, the following guidelines are recommended:
 - Select colors that are similar to the tones found in the area and on adjacent buildings
 - Muted, soft colors on large wall expanses are encouraged
 - The use of bright, modern colors and intense white color are discouraged.
 - Use subdued colors as the primary color and brighter, contrasting trim when appropriate
 - Incorporate the color from primary building materials, such as stone, brick and hardwood, as the base colors for new development



Approved Elevations for varied housing styles within a subdivision off Gracie Road



**Lost Hill Drive
Residences
(subdivision approved
in 2000)**



**Canada City Cottages,
multi-family project
approved in 2005**

6.0 DESIGN / SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS IN ALL RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Development of properties, residential or commercial, inside or outside the Historical District, or with any land divisions, require compliance with site development standards included in the zoning ordinance (Chapter 17.80) such as driveway construction, avoidance of any constraints on the property such as water courses and steep slopes while ensuring natural areas are enhanced and preserved. Below are a list of the various topics that will be reviewed with project applications with the goal being development that minimizes the impact on the natural environment and the character of the area. Please consult with the City Planner for assistance and direction on all applicable development standards.

6.1 Site Planning / Site Constraints

The position of buildings on the site and overall site coverage must also fit in with the neighborhood and particularly adjacent structures. City front yard, side yard and rear yard setback requirements apply to all projects. Site constraints and natural features such as rock outcroppings, steep slopes, stream zones and drainages, as well as existing trees and important vegetation shall be delineated on site plans and often preserved. Building orientation and alignment should be in context with the neighborhood.

City staff will request plans be submitted with sufficient detail to determine any constraints of the lot, including a topographical survey.

6.2 Watercourses

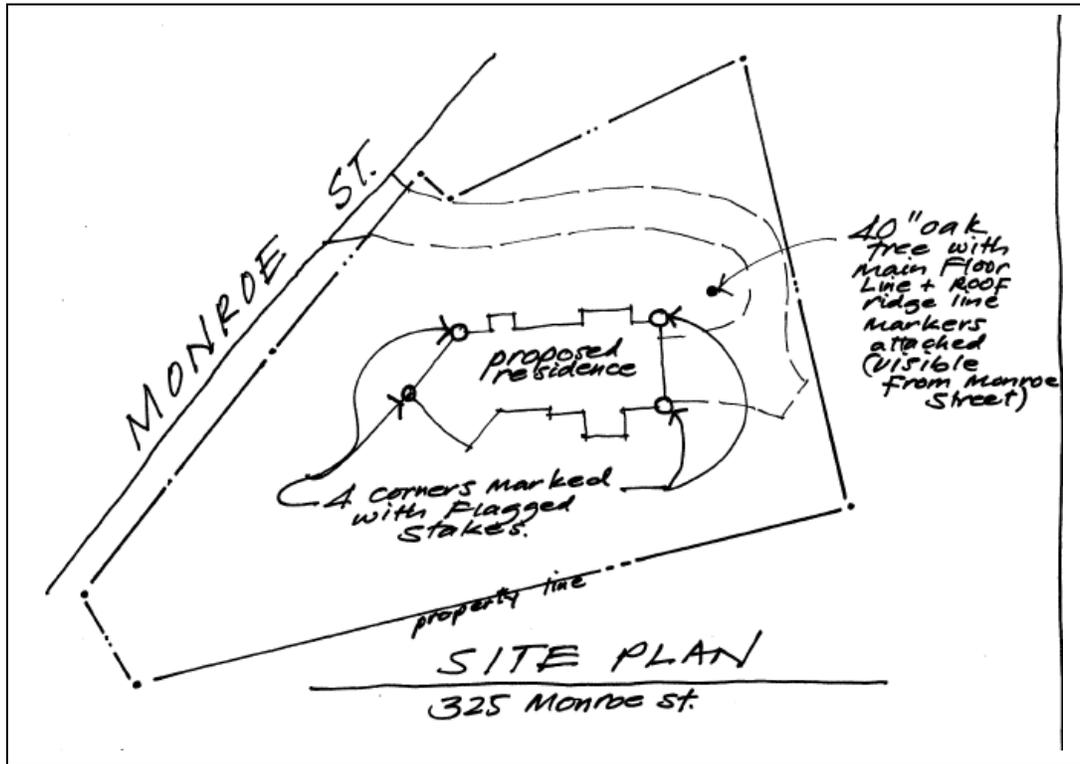
Watercourses on properties are environmental resources and are to be protected from development and setbacks are required as follows:

1. Seasonal Stream – no closer than 25 feet from the centerline of the swale
2. Perennial (year-round) stream – 100 feet from the centerline of the stream

6.3 Steep Slopes

The Zoning Ordinance does not permit any development of any type, including any dwelling, accessory building, roadway, or parking area, permitted on any land where the cross slope exceeds 30% (thirty percent), unless a variance is approved.

Site plan
 Indicating
 Marking of
 Building
 height



Note says: 40" oak tree with main floor line and roof ridge line markers attached (visible from Monroe Street)

6.5 Grading/Slope Adaptation

As City ordinances prohibit building and grading on any cross slopes over 30% without variances, construction of buildings and roads and other development features shall be site adaptive. For instance:

- Structures should step down slopes as **illustrated below**:

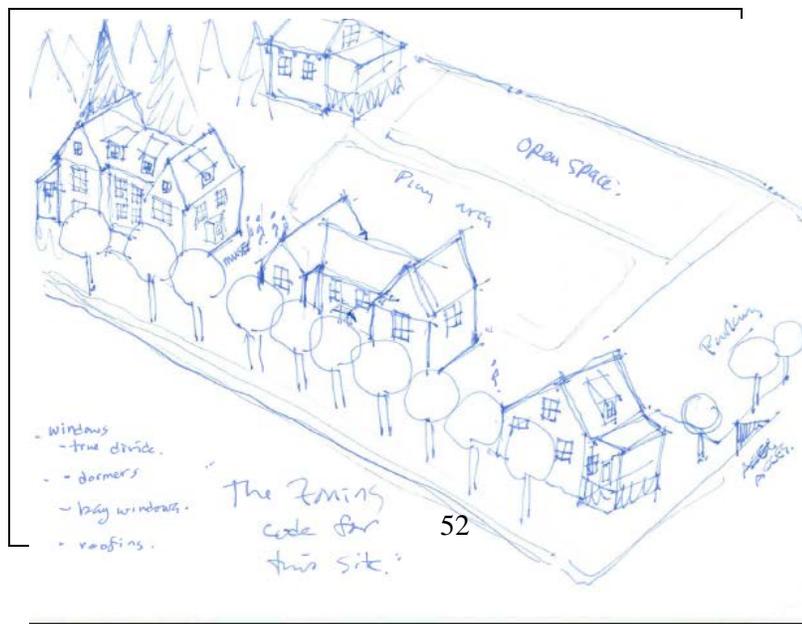


- A combination of retaining walls and manufactured slopes should be used when possible to reduce the extent of cut and fill. Retaining walls should blend with the environment and engineering may be required, based on the height. Retaining walls higher than 4 feet require engineering and plans approved by the Building Department. If greater height is needed, slope stepping should be used with additional walls. In highly visible locations within existing neighborhoods, the walls should include materials that are compatible with the area.
- Cut and fill slopes over 10 feet in height are discouraged. All cut and fill slopes should be revegetated to ensure 100% coverage. Cut and fill slopes should be designed to simulate existing natural contours through use of variable gradients.
- Natural drainage features should be retained and setbacks respected.
- Design of buildings and parking areas should conform to the natural terrain of the land to minimize grading and to ensure the least amount of site disturbance.

6.6 Lot Coverage

The Zoning Ordinance provides lot coverage standards for the various zoning districts. In residential zones, not more than 50% of a site can be covered with impervious surfacing. Lot coverage is defined as that “percentage of the gross lot area covered by structures, paving, walks, and any other impervious areas that prevent normal precipitation from directly reaching the ground.” Lot coverage standards are as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| GB – General Business Zone: | 100% |
| LB – Local Business Zone: | 85% |
| LI – Light Industrial Zone | 75% |
| EC – Employment Center Zone: | 75% except 50% when abutting a residential zone |
| Public/Recreation Zones: | 25% |
| Residential zones - R1, R2, RR | 50% |
| Residential –R3 | Per review by R3 standards |
| All other districts: | 50% |



Architect Chuck
Currett sketch
showing good layout
of a site

6.7 Street/Driveway/Sidewalk Design

The Nevada City General Plan recognizes that the City has many narrow, twisting and dead-end streets and these types of streets contribute to the unique character of the town and should be preserved. The Fire Department provides standards for City Streets, Fire Access Roads and Driveways, being defined as follows:

1. A City street is any street depicted on the City's Official Map, dated 2008.
2. A fire department access road is a road that leads from a City street and serves either a commercial building OR any group of homes in excess of two. Roads shall meet Fire Code requirements, including a minimum, unobstructed width of 20 feet along its entire length.
3. A driveway leads from a City street and shall serve no more than two, single family residences. Driveways shall provide an unobstructed width of 14 feet along its entire length and not be more than 300 feet in length.

Streets which are as narrow as possible given safety concerns and which respect constraints such as topography and existing vegetation are encouraged.

Creative road and driveway designs are encouraged which incorporate topography, trees, and which reflect the tradition, organically developed nature of many Nevada City streets. New construction of homes with roads are required to submit a landscaping plan for review and approval by the Planning Commission; such standards are included in the zoning ordinance and consideration should be given to incorporating the following:

- Sidewalks are encouraged only as extensions of existing sidewalks where they would not detract from the character of a neighborhood.
- Creative pedestrian ways such as meandering paths are encouraged.

New construction of a home with a driveway does not have to submit a landscaping plan. All new roads and driveways will require approval by the Fire Department and City Engineer/DPW.



Typical Driveway



Coyote Street Sidewalk (2014)

6.8 Design to Ensure Privacy

- **Lighting.** Outdoor lighting shall not be directed toward existing residences and shall not increase the lighting intensity on surrounding residential properties such that a nuisance is created. For example, parking lot lighting is discouraged, as is amber lighting or a level of lighting, which is not normally expected in a residential area. (The specific lighting standards can be found within the zoning ordinance in Section 17.80.215.)
- **Windows.** Windows should be placed to maximize privacy impacts for both homeowner and neighbors..
- **Balconies.** Balconies, decks, and other activity areas should be designed to maximize the privacy of existing residences or should be screened by vegetation for the same purpose



Balconies (East Broad Street)

6.9 Fencing

Materials. The city encourages applicants to work with their neighbors in deciding on a fence design and to explore the many examples of traditional fence design in Nevada City. The use of chain link fencing, where visible from the street, is discouraged. Historic materials such as iron, wood, brick, stone, etc. are encouraged.



Fencing Heights.

Fences in the front yard setback are limited in height to 3-1/2 feet for visibility and safety purposes. All fences on side and rear lines of properties cannot exceed 6 feet in height.

Fence height shall be measured as the vertical distance between the finished grade at the base of the fence and the top edge of the fence material. Fences are the actual height of the fence material, ~~not~~ including supporting walls, posts, pillars, or footings.

Tips on Measuring Fences:

Level Ground or Curbs. The following white picket fence was constructed on top of a curb. The fence would be measured from the ground level, not the curb, not to exceed 3-1/2 feet in height.



Retaining Walls. When fences are on a retaining wall the fence is measured from the highest ground point. The fence shown below is measured from the ground behind the fence, supported by the retaining wall.



Fences on a sloped hillside may be sloped or stepped. When building a fence on a slope (as shown in pictures below), the entire panel is stepped up or down so it remains level. The posts are installed plumb, and each panel steps lower or higher as the grade changes. This allows the overall line of the fence to follow the slope in a stair-step fashion. Neither end of the panels may exceed 6 feet in height from ground level.



6.10 Solar/Energy Conservation

Building orientation should respect traditional site plans in the neighborhood. If appropriate, solar orientation is encouraged. Solar applications can be approved at staff level if the property is outside the Historical District. The Planning Commission reviews solar applications to ensure the panels are as obscure as possible.

Projects should include consideration of energy conservation and efficiently, including:

- Buildings should be oriented, when appropriate, to take advantage of solar access for passive lighting, heating, and cooling options.
- Utilize shade trees where appropriate.
- Insulate walls, roofs, floors, and foundations to optimum levels.
- Specify energy efficient mechanical systems and energy management control systems for heating, cooling, and ventilation.
- Encourage passive heating and cooling systems that utilize operable windows and take advantage of natural ventilation.

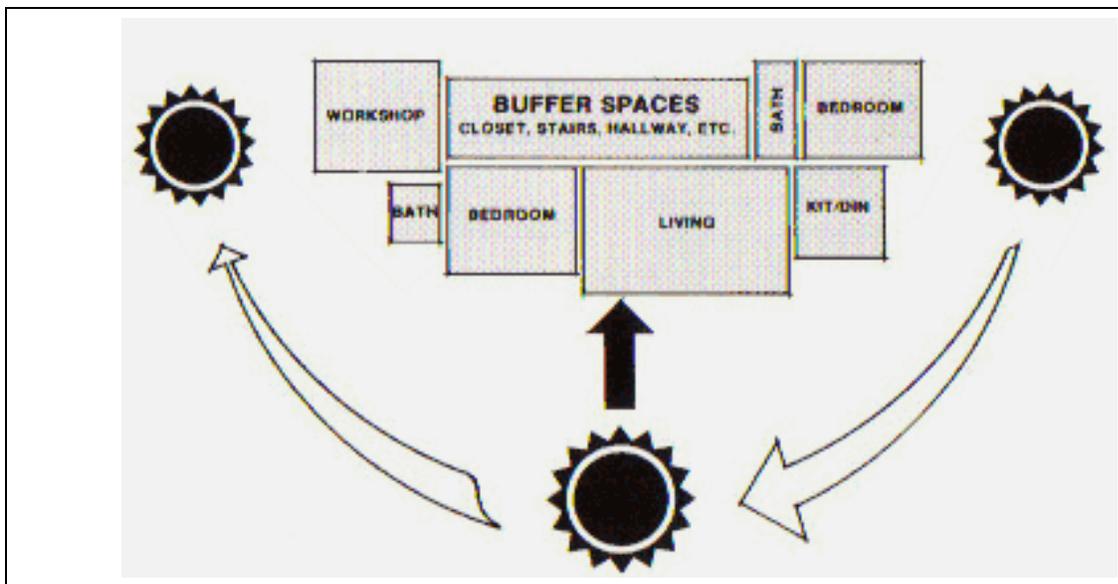


Illustration optimizing utilization of solar

6.11 Height Limits of Buildings

Height regulations are provided in the various zones and can be determined by checking the Zoning Ordinance or contacting the City Planner for assistance.

The basic height limit for principal buildings in the R1, RR and R2 zones is 35 feet with accessory buildings not exceeding 15 feet in height. The R3 zone provides for varying height limits to be determined with individual applications.

6.12 Tree Removal

The City Council finds that the quality of life and character of the city of Nevada City and the value of property in the city are directly related to the large number of native and ornamental trees presently situated within the city which contribute to many things including rural atmosphere and aesthetic appeal, establishment and protection of natural watershed areas, and the control of soil erosion and flooding.

Nevada City is home to several species of protected trees brought to Nevada City by Felix Gillet, a pioneer nurseryman and writer born in 1835 in France. Gillet introduced and bred superior European stock deciduous fruit and nut trees to the United States and California. He owned property on Nursery Street in Nevada City in 1869 cultivating home-grown nursery stock.

The City's tree ordinance was updated in 2004 (Chapter 18.01). The ordinance lists protected trees and provides standards associated with tree removal of any tree with a diameter at breast height of 4" or great (Madrone, Manzanita, Oak) or 6" or great for all other trees.

A Tree Removal Application is required for removal of trees within Nevada City and is either reviewed by City staff or the Planning Commission. Staff can approve trees that are dead, diseased or hazardous. A tree application is submitted, along with photographs and often an arborist or professional report confirming the health of the tree. Such trees are required to be removed within 60 days of date of approval.

Requests to remove healthy trees are reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. An arborist report is also often required and once all required information is submitted, the matter is scheduled for a hearing before the Commission.

With new construction or additions to homes that require tree removal, a Tree Removal Application is included with an Architectural Review Application for review and approval by the Planning Commission. The Commission will often require a replacement or mitigation planting plan to offset the removal of trees. Any tree removal associated with a construction project can be removed only after obtaining a building permit (Section 18.01.060(2a)). City Staff is available to answer any questions and provide assistance through the tree removal process.



Nevada City 1910



Nevada City 2010

7.0 COMMERCIAL, OFFICE OR INDUSTRIAL USES ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL AREAS

When a non-residential use is proposed in close proximity to existing residences or residentially zoned areas, the design should be accomplished to minimize impacts on existing or future residences. The intent should be to ensure that design aspects, which would not normally be expected in a residential neighborhood, are not visible from residences. For instance:

- Signs should be unobtrusive and not be visible from existing or future residences unless the business is located directly across a street from the residences.
- Signs shall be lighted only at such times as the premises are open for business and be turned off after business hours. All illumination shall be indirect.
- Parking areas should not be visible from residences through proper placement or screening.
- Residences converted to businesses should continue to appear essentially as residences in mixed areas. For instance, front lawns should be retained and parking should be placed in the rear or fully screened. Landscaping design should appear residential.
- Site, signage, and interior lighting should not illuminate existing or future residences beyond existing levels.

Design review of all proposals involving interface between residential and non-residential uses shall be publicly noticed and surrounding residences shall be noticed per standard City procedures.



Zion Street businesses next to residential neighborhoods (Reward Street)

8.0 COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, OFFICE / PROFESSIONAL AREAS OUTSIDE THE HISTORICAL DISTRICT

Architecture must exhibit high quality design, which is compatible and sympathetic to Nevada City's Mother Lode architecture incorporating traditional materials, building lines, features, and landscaping wherever possible. For instance:

- Roofs may vary in their design and detailing, but they should reflect steeper pitches (6:12 to 12:12).



Gold Flat Industrial Park

**Tech Center,
Providence Mine Road**



- Wall material - Siding should be high quality and at least reminiscent of traditional materials. Painted siding, hardboard siding, shingles, brick, and traditionally surfaced stucco are examples of preferred materials though it must be reviewed for furthering the intent of achieving a continuation of Mother Lode architecture. T -111 type siding, vinyl and other synthetic siding are strongly discouraged.

- Covered porches and entries should be used wherever possible to continue a Nevada City architectural tradition.
- Windows should be reminiscent of traditional forms. True multi pane, vertical, and bay windows are encouraged.
- Trim, railing, and details should fit the style of the building. The intent should be to add texture, shadowing, contrast, and interest, which are reminiscent of Nevada City architecture.
- Roofing material such as treated wood shingles, asphalt shingles, and metal roofing in muted non-glare colors such as tans, blacks, browns, greens and grays are desired.
- Vary roof lines to preserve views.
- Colors that complement the area are desired and the following should be considered in designing a project:
 - Select colors that are similar to the tones found in the area and on adjacent buildings
 - Muted, soft colors on large wall expanses are encouraged
 - The use of bright, modern colors and intense white color are discouraged.
 - Use subdued colors as the primary color and brighter, contrasting trim when appropriate
 - Incorporate the color from primary building materials, such as stone, brick and hardwood, as the base colors for new development

**Tech
Center,
Providence
Mine Road**



Additional considerations in non-residential projects should include:

- Orient development to take advantage of view corridors and other scenic resources.
- Locate structures within previously disturbed areas when possible.
- Design building and parking areas to conform to the natural terrain of the land and to minimize grading.

Volume, Scale, Massing, Height, Site Coverage

The mass and scale of new commercial establishments should be reviewed within the context of the neighborhood. In newly developed areas, which are not visible from existing neighborhoods, mass and scale should be kept to historically traditional sizes to fit into the urban design of the City as a whole. In general, single structures under 8,000 square feet are encouraged in infill areas in proximity to older neighborhoods. A series of structures are encouraged if additional square footage is needed. (For instance, the Gold Flat Industrial Park is not a concern in this area since it is not in proximity to an older neighborhood.) Considerations include:

- Align roadways and driveways to follow the contours of the site.
- Incorporate and protect environmentally sensitive resources in the site design.
- Preserve significant natural features, particularly trees, water bodies and rock formations.
- Minimize the building footprints in order to relate to the scale and character of the existing development
- Massing should be stepped back from the street edge to avoid visual impact from the street

Signs

- Signs should be unobtrusive and not be visible from existing residences.
- Signs shall be lighted only at such times as the premises are open for business and turned off after business hours, all illumination shall be indirect.
- Signs should not be placed within the roofline of structures.
- Signage is addressed in a specific section of these Design Guidelines. The City Planner can assist with sign standards.

Parking Lot Design

Parking lots should be placed with attention to the surrounding neighborhood. Parking areas should not be visible from residences through proper placement or screening. In other areas, the majority of parking should be placed to the rear or side of structures where visible from the street or surrounding public use areas. 50% tree canopy coverage at maturity is required. Parking standards are contained within the Zoning Ordinance. Considerations include:

- Make pedestrian orientation a primary objective of all projects.
- Locate bicycle racks in a convenient and comfortable location and that do not interfere with pedestrian access.
- Provide parking to the rear of lots and behind buildings so that the buildings face the streets.
- Break larger parking lots into several smaller lots.



**505 Coyote Street
Side Parking Lot**



305 Railroad Avenue

Lighting

Site lighting should be kept to the minimum amount necessary for safety and security purposes. Outdoor light shall not be directed toward existing residences and shall not increase the lighting intensity on surrounding residential properties such that a nuisance is created. For example, parking lot lighting is discouraged, as is amber lighting or a level of lighting, which is not normally expected in a residential area. Site, signage, and interior lighting should not illuminate existing or future residences beyond existing levels. New lighting should be compatible with the level and style of lighting in the area

Landscaping

Projects are required to submit a preliminary and final landscaping plan for all projects that undergo environmental review (except for variances for expansions or alterations to single-family homes). Landscaping plans with projects shall include locations and dimensions of proposed planter areas, fences and general types of materials proposed. Natural vegetation is encouraged to be preserved and incorporated into the landscaping plan. Landscaping should encourage water conservation through retention of existing, on-site vegetation as well as the integration of native or drought tolerant species of plants.



KVMR /Theatre Landscaping Plan

The preliminary landscaping plan may be prepared by the applicant, however the final landscaping plan shall be prepared by a Licensed Landscape Architect or Licensed Landscape Contractor. The final plan shall include certification that a landscaping and irrigation system has been installed. The zoning ordinance provides minimum landscaping standards for new projects.



Landscaping at Nevada County Railroad Museum, Kidder Court



Landscaping at office Building at 505 Coyote Street

EXAMPLE OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Seven Hills Business District, bordered by Zion Street and Searls Avenue, provide shopping and services to the local neighborhoods. Established in the late 1950's, the area provides the City's major grocery store, being the anchor for the district, as well as several retail stores, office and industrial uses. The City adopted a Seven Hills Master Enhancement Plan in 1995; the plan provides several goals for enhancement strategies for the area.



**SPD Grocery Store,
Zion Street**



Argall Way Businesses (behind

Searls Ave Business



9.0 RESTORATIONS / RENOVATIONS / DEMOLITIONS

The Nevada City General Plan contains a primary community goal as:

“The City aims to continue its efforts to preserve and enhance the architectural diversity of historic buildings in the central area, to maintain the remarkable collection of city-owned historic buildings, and to encourage private efforts of historic preservation and restoration.”

The City Council, in 1989, adopted Ordinance 89-06 on February 27, 1989 (Municipal Code Chapter 15.12), which adopted review standards applying to the exterior alterations of buildings, and finding it is important to preserve the exterior appearance and integrity of all buildings in the Historical District and all pre-World War II buildings outside of the Historical District, being those buildings constructed before 1942.

The Municipal Code also provides the following standards that will be held against any such major projects, be it demolition, alteration or renovation:

- Demolition of buildings undergo careful review as the Municipal Code states that every reasonable effort shall be made to provide compatible use for a property that requires minimal alteration of the building, structure or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose.
- The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
- All buildings, structures and site shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations which have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
- Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.

Further standards are included in the appendix of these Guidelines, being a worksheet that will assist in knowing which standards of the City Codes are applicable to projects.

Demolition Permit Required

A demolition permit is required for projects meeting any of the following criteria:

1. Demolition inside the Historical District or property adjacent to the Historical District (refer to map referenced in these Guidelines, Page _____) and in Appendices.
2. Demolition or exterior alteration to any building inside the Historical District or any pre-World War II buildings located outside the Historical District (constructed before 1942)
3. **Major Projects** defined as:
 - a. Whenever 25% or more of the siding will be replaced or 25% of the doors and windows will be replaced
 - b. Whenever 25% of the foundation will be replaced

Planning Commission Process

The Planning Commission acts as the architectural review committee for all applications for the erection or exterior alteration of any buildings and structures, or the removal, demolition or razing of any structures. The Planning Commission implements many sections of the Municipal Code and Zoning Ordinance which contain the standards relative to the alteration or removal of buildings within the City's various zoning districts including inside and outside the City's Historical District.

Demolition Plan Requirements

The Planning Commission, in 2014, approved an update to the City's demolition application which requires the submittal of a "demolition plan" for the Commission's consideration when reviewing such applications. The demolition plan requires answers to the following questions:

1. What materials are being removed?
2. Explain the need for removal of materials, providing evidence that the building has become so damaged or dilapidated that it is unusable and cannot reasonably be repaired or restored
3. Are any of these materials being re-used in the project? Clearly list what materials will be re-used and indicate where in the project they will be utilized.
4. If no materials are being re-used please indicate reasons.
5. What replacement materials are being used? Do they match those being removed? If not, explain why.
6. Explain how the exterior appearance and materials will be preserved, to the extent of the alteration.
7. Indicate how the replacement structure will reflect the style or character of the building being demolished.

The demolition plan shall also include the following attachments:

1. Elevations – Provide elevations clearly indicating the areas to be demolished. This information will be used with any approval as an exhibit clearly designating areas to be demolished.
2. List percentages of walls, windows, and doors to be removed.
3. Evidence as to the condition of the materials (include photographs)
4. Evidence of the structural condition of the building (i.e., include structural analysis by professionals (such as a licensed engineer) and contractor bids, etc.)
5. A complete age and history of the building.

Worksheet to be used with Demolition Projects

The City Attorney, in 2013, prepared a worksheet for the public and the Planning Commission to use when reviewing demolition applications. The worksheet contains standards within the City's Municipal Code and the Zoning Ordinance relating to demolition. The worksheet is divided into the following categories:

1. All buildings and structures, whether inside or outside the Historical District.
2. All pre-WW II (1942) buildings outside the Historical District.
3. Buildings outside the Historical District of special historical or architectural interest or value or are an example of Mother Lode era architecture.
4. All buildings within the Historical District having no special historical or architectural interest, significance, or value.
5. Any buildings in the Historical District having special historical or architectural interest, significance, or value or Mother Lode era type of architecture.

The worksheet is valuable as the applicant can determine, with the assistance of staff if needed, which category suits the proposed project. The standards and Municipal Code sections are cited and the project can be held up to these standards and can be reviewed with the Planning Commission.

EXAMPLE OF RESIDENTIAL DEMOLITION PROJECT – Clay Street

The following pictures and elevations depict a small miner’s cabin built in the 1930’s. Several additions were constructed throughout the years and the materials varied with the different stages of construction. The original home contained 680 square feet. The property is 0.44 acre in size. A portion of the home was constructed in the side yard setback, making the home a ‘non-conforming use.’

In 2010, the new owners proposed a demolition and remodel of the home. The new construction removed the home out of the setback which made the home a conforming structure. The owners proposed increasing the main floor to total 1184 square feet with an 875 square foot unconditioned attic proposed for storage area. The home has an existing 297 square foot basement. Extensive repairs and changes to the damaged, and in some area, the non-existent foundation were approved by the City Engineer. The proposed materials included hardy-plank siding, and vinyl windows with wood trim.

The project application was approved by the Commission finding the architectural elements were very much in keeping with Mother Lode era architecture and the context of the neighborhood, the zoning ordinance and the Design Guidelines.

Below are ‘before’ photos of the home, the proposed elevations and the ‘after’ photos of the finished home.

**BEFORE
1930’s**





Proposed Front Elevation

**AFTER
2010**



EXAMPLES OF COMMERCIAL DEMOLITION PROJECT

1. 120 BRIDGE STREET The KVMR / Theatre project underwent an extensive review project, ensuring that the project met all the standards of the Historical District. The project involved several applications, but the main project was to remove three tin sheds, built in 1900, 1920 and 1930 and replace them with a new 8,100 square foot radio station with access and connection to the back of the historic Nevada Theatre.



**KVMR /Theatre Sheds Before
1900, 1920, 1930**

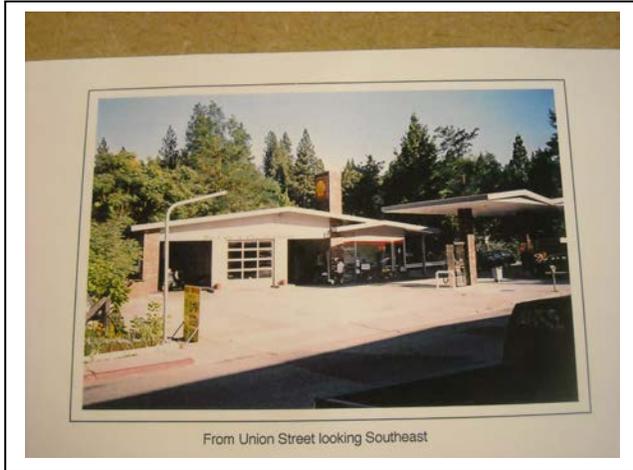


**KVMR / Theatre Project
After 2015**

The three existing tin sheds on the site were demolished but with a careful approach whereby the existing buildings were hand-disassembled, and all useable parts of the existing building being incorporated into the new replacement structure. All useable metal siding and roofing were reused. The structurally-sound wood timbers were incorporated into the new building and used in an exposed manner. Additionally, the design of the ‘replacement building’ was configured to evoke the form and nature of the existing building (the three gable roof-line facing Bridge Street) in order to reflect the importance of historic preservation in the downtown district. Due to this overall approach to the replacement structure, the ‘demolition’ process includes the spirit of ‘reconstruction.’

2. 100 UNION ALLEY

The buildings at 100 Union Street were previously the site of a gas station. In 2004 the gas station was demolished and replaced with a building offering mixed uses of retail, office and apartments.



1960's Service Station Before



2004 Project After

The 2004 application included a commercial site plan proposing to demolish a 1960's era service station (1596 sq ft) and to construct a 14,496 sq ft retail/residential/office space building. The building resulted in four different facades with four retail spaces on the ground level and spaces above providing combined residential/office space. An underground parking garage was provided for 11 vehicles. The materials incorporated design elements of the Mother Lode style, being brick, corrugated metal, stucco and wood, as well as wood windows, iron shutters and balconies.

10.0 SIGNAGE

Design Guidelines for Signage can be obtained from the City Planner and available on the City website (nevadacityca.gov, Planning Dept. link). Signage guidelines are attached to the sign application.

11.0 APPENDICES

- 1. Historical District Map – See City Planner for copy**
- 2. Worksheet providing Municipal Code Sections used in Architectural Review, Demolitions, and Alterations to Homes**