

7.4 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

South San Francisco's growth is notable for the close relationship between industry and community. The development of a residential town in support of new industrial plants was the calculated strategy of local industrialists. With the success of the city's industries, South San Francisco earned an important role as "The Industrial City" of the region.

The conservation of this unique history is the objective of historic and cultural preservation in South San Francisco. In addition to Sign Hill, designated resources in South San Francisco include several residential and commercial buildings in the downtown area. The City's Municipal Code and State and federal law, protect these local, State, and national historic resources from alteration and demolition. The Historic Preservation Commission oversees the protection of these resources. As such, designation is an important tool for preserving reminders of the past that contribute to the City's identity. Equally central, and perhaps more difficult, is the broader goal of conserving the city's unique industrial heritage.



Western Meat Company, East Grand Avenue, 1922. The city's industrial history is significant, although no industrial buildings or sites are currently designated historic resources.

HISTORIC LANDMARKS

South San Francisco's only national historic landmark—Sign Hill—is also its best-known feature. Sign Hill has proclaimed the City's identity since 1891 when the J. Dunn Real Estate Company, South San Francisco's first realtor, initially installed the sign. After a period of several years during which the sign was absent, the Chamber of Commerce had the words "South San Francisco The Industrial City" whitewashed onto the hillside. The concrete letters were installed in 1929. The sign has become a regional landmark, clearly visible to travelers on nearby freeways and to those flying into and out of San Francisco International Airport.

LOCAL LANDMARKS

South San Francisco's older buildings display a wide range of architectural styles, emblematic of the shifting styles that characterize the periods of the city's growth. Queen Anne, Victorian, Neoclassical, Craftsman, Spanish and Mission Revival, Moderne, as well as contemporary styles, are all represented in the city's central neighborhoods.

The city has several historic homes and commercial buildings. Most are located along Grand Avenue near the Civic Center, and around the intersection of Grand Avenue and Eucalyptus Street. In addition, many of the structures in downtown along Grand, Linden, Baden, and Miller avenues were identified as potential historic resources in a comprehensive survey completed in 1986. These buildings are representative of an architectural period, are of local historic prominence, or are well-restored examples of vernacular architecture. Regardless of their role, these buildings contribute to the overall scale and character of the area, and are included on the City's list of potential historic resources, giving the Historic Preservation Commission an opportunity to review all requests for demolition permits in the area.

Although industry played a critical role in South San Francisco's history, no industrial buildings or sites are currently designated historic resources. While buildings representing various historical styles are present in numerous communities in the Bay Area, few communities have manufacturing buildings, and those that remain are disappearing rapidly. The lack of designated industrial buildings puts the community in danger of losing these reminders of its past as new industrial and

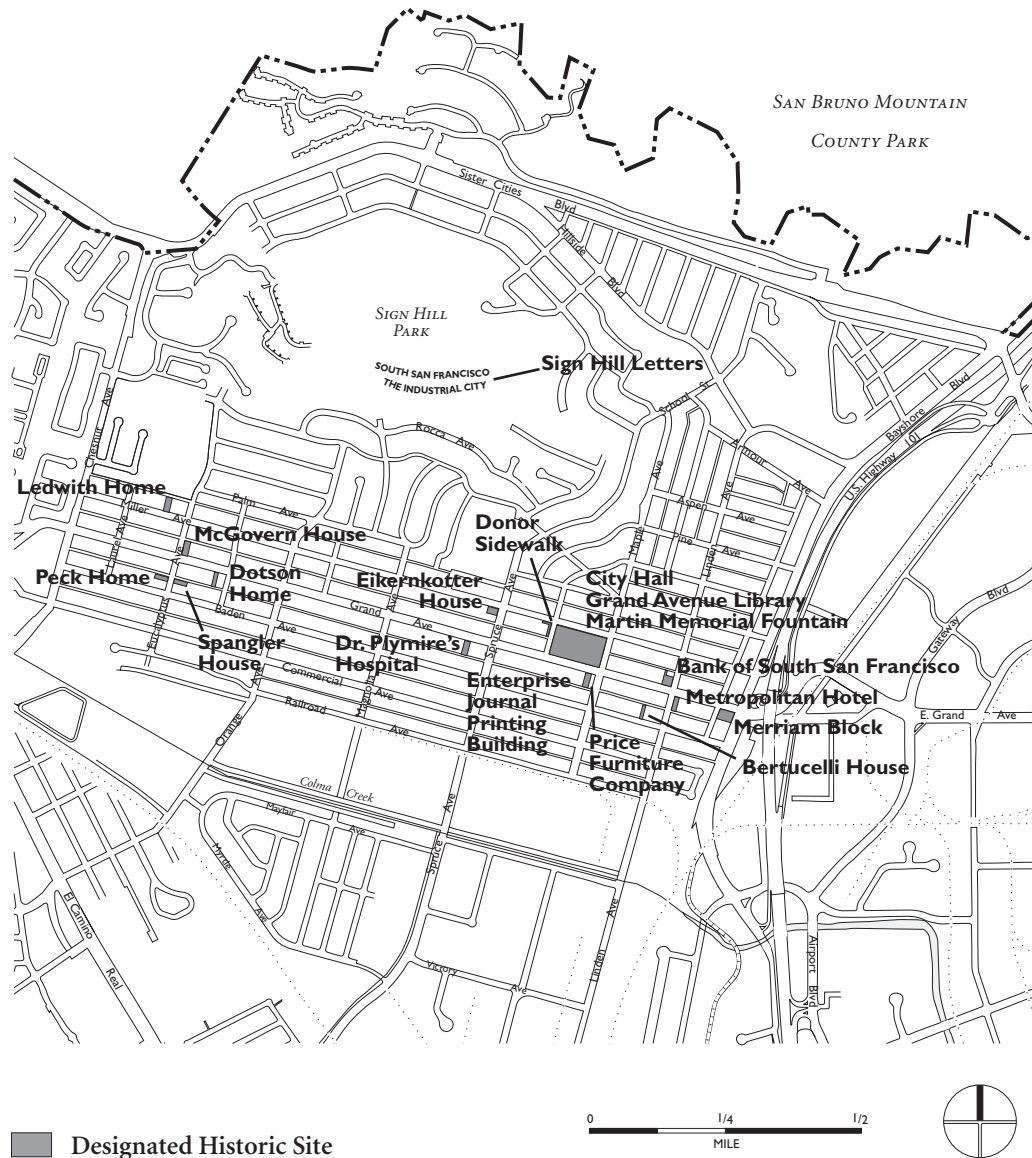


Figure 7-3
Designated Historic Resources

Source: South San Francisco Historic Resources Inventory

commercial uses expand. However, the need to preserve the city’s history must be balanced with the economic considerations of industrial operations.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Consistent with its history as an Ohlone settlement location, South San Francisco has Native American village sites and shell mounds scattered around the city. Known resources include:

- A Native American archaeological village (CA-SMA-299) located within the El Camino Real Corridor Redevelopment Area that contains household items, projectile points, dietary debris, and human burials.
- A large shell mound (CA-SMA-40) and one small shell midden (CA-SMA-40) near the south slope of San Bruno Mountain. The shell mound is considered a significant archaeological resource.

South San Francisco’s coastal location, and its rich history as a center of industry, makes the existence of additional prehistoric and historic archaeological resources likely. While the city is essentially built out, archaeological surveys may be appropriate as part of large project redevelopment activities.

GUIDING POLICIES: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- 7.5-G-1 *Conserve historic, cultural, and archaeological resources for the aesthetic, educational, economic, and scientific contribution they make to South San Francisco’s identity and quality of life.*
- 7.5-G-2 *Encourage municipal and community awareness, appreciation, and support for South San Francisco’s historic, cultural, and archaeological resources.*

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- 7.5-I-1 *Explore the feasibility of establishing a Downtown South San Francisco Historical Commercial District, as designated in figure 7-3, to promote the revitalization and redevelopment of the area.*

The 1986 Historic Resources Inventory recommended designation of the Downtown South San Francisco Historical Commercial District. The proposed district extends along Grand Avenue from Airport Boulevard to Maple Street, just below City Hall and also includes Linden Avenue to a distance of one block from Grand Avenue. The district is composed of late 19th and early-mid 20th century one-, two-, and three-story commercial buildings, with a pattern of large or architecturally prominent buildings at street corners. Several structures have residential apartments above the street level.

Formal designation of the Historical District would be an important economic development initiative in generating interest and support for efforts to revitalize the commercial area.

- 7.5-I-2 *Institute downtown urban design guidelines, and require a design review of developments in the proposed Downtown South San Francisco Historical Commercial District to ensure that the height, massing, and design of buildings furthers Downtown's character (see also policies 3.1-I-4 and 3.1-I-5).*

- 7.5-I-3 *Explore mechanisms to incorporate South San Francisco's industrial heritage in historic and cultural preservation.*

An inventory of industrial buildings in the city would identify important reminders of South San Francisco's industrial history. Without historic designation, these buildings are at risk of being demolished as new industrial and commercial uses expand. The adaptive reuse of these buildings would encourage an architecturally diverse and historic texture in South San Francisco's industrial areas. However, the need to preserve the city's industrial history must be balanced with the economic considerations of industrial operations.

- 7.5-I-4 *Ensure the protection of known archaeological resources in the city by requiring a records review for any development proposed areas of known resources.*

South San Francisco's known archaeological resources are located within areas undergoing development: Terrabay and the El Camino Real corridor. The East of 101 area, which is a likely location for new development, has the potential to contain additional resources due to the extensive marshlands that existed prior to landfill activities. Adequate policies and measures for protection of known and unknown archaeological resources that can supplement CEQA requirements may need to be incorporated into future plans and development activities.

- 7.5-I-5 *In accordance with State law, require the preparation of a resource mitigation plan and monitoring program by a qualified archaeologist in the event that archaeological resources are uncovered.*

CEQA requires the evaluation of any archaeological resource on the site of a development project. State law also protects these resources. City involvement in the identification, mitigation, and monitoring of project impacts on these resources will ensure the protection of South San Francisco's cultural heritage.