



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: October 17, 2018
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Justin Greving, Preservation Planner, 415-575-9169
REVIEWED BY: Timothy Frye, Historic Preservation Officer, 415-575-6822
RE: Façade Retention Policy Discussion Part 4

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

On December 8, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission discussed the issue of façade retention and explored a range of projects that featured some form of façade retention. At the end of the discussion, Commissioners requested a follow-up presentation focusing on San Francisco-based façade retention projects with additional information about the process of design review and approval for these projects. On April 6, 2016, planning staff followed up with a brief presentation on various examples of façade retention projects in San Francisco with some additional context about the process of approvals for these projects. On August 2, 2017, Commissioners reviewed and commented on a draft policy memo on the topic of façade retention.

The purpose of this discussion is to review and comment on the revised draft language of the policy memo on façade retention presented by planning staff. The draft façade memo has been reviewed by San Francisco Heritage and staff will relay comments by Heritage to the Commissioners during the hearing. It is anticipated that Commissioners will have comments on the memo and it will see some revisions. Planning staff would also like to take the memo to the Planning Commission at some point in the future.

Information from previous HPC hearings on façade retention have been provided to the Commissioners to give some background for this discussion.

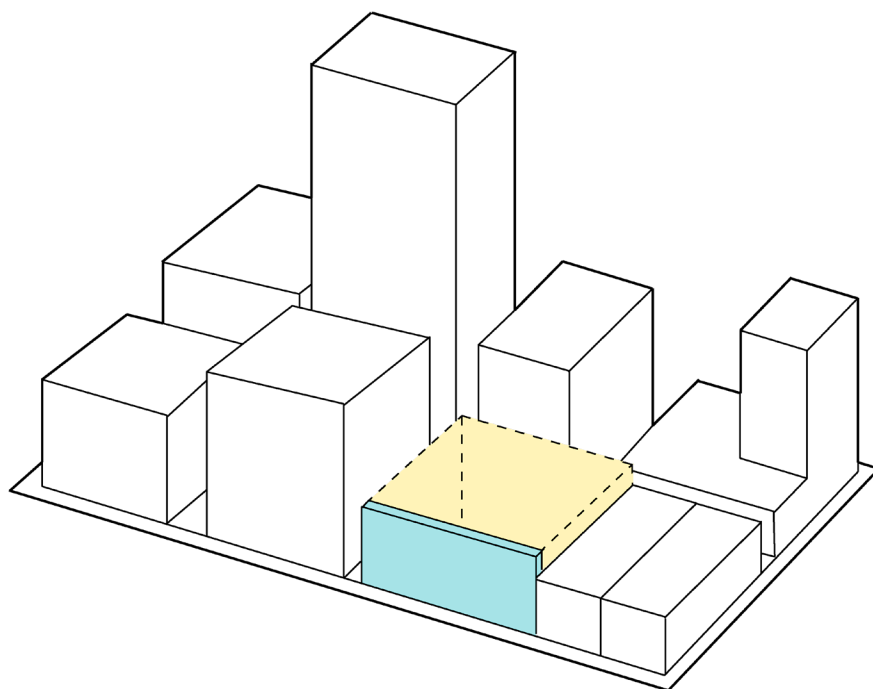
Attachment A: Draft Façade Retention Policy Memo, dated October 10, 2018

Attachment B: Previous draft of Façade Retention Policy memo, dated August 2, 2017

Attachment C: Excerpts from previous façade policy discussions on 12/8/2015 and 4/6/2016

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HISTORIC BUILDING FAÇADE RETENTION: DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION



The purpose of this memo is to clarify how portions of a historic building could be incorporated into a larger development to support design goals within a dense urban environment. It is important to note that application of these guidelines will not achieve conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards nor do they reflect widely-accepted preservation practice. This memo applies to projects in a dense urban environment of mixed commercial, residential, and industrial neighborhoods where:

- » A historic building would otherwise be removed entirely and,
- » The department has determined retention of a portion of the historic building may have a positive benefit to the surrounding urban context.

Each proposal will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The following factors will be taken into consideration: building significance, setbacks, character, and interior spaces. Adherence to these guidelines is intended to allow the retained portion of the building to communicate with the surrounding context as well as provide a sensitive transition within the overall development.

BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE

The portion of a building to be retained should be integrated into the overall design.

If a project voluntarily proposes to retain a portion of a historic building, there are certain important elements of that resource, also referred to as **character-defining features**, that should be retained. In many instances it will be necessary to retain more than a single elevation of these features to achieve this goal. The following considerations should be addressed:

- » A building significant for associations with the past should **retain** portions or features related to that past.
- » Additions or substantial alterations should reference and relate to these important elements.
- » The context surrounding the historic building must also be addressed so that its relationship to the adjacent buildings is not lost.

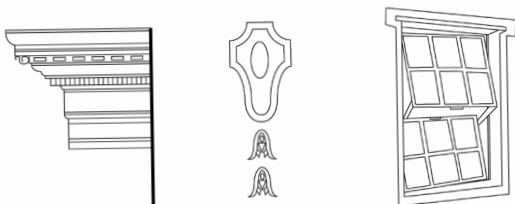


FIGURE 1

The above illustrations are examples of character-defining features found on historic facades, such as cornice details, decorative plasterwork, window openings, and millwork.

SETBACKS

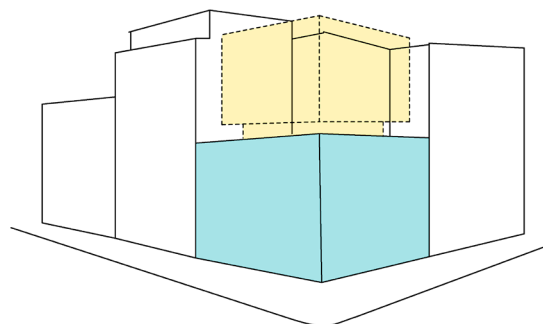
Substantial horizontal setbacks and vertical breaks should maintain viewsheds of the historic building and provide visual separation from the new development.

The appropriate **height** of a **vertical break** and **depth** of the **horizontal setback** should be based on the **size** and **scale** of the addition and the character of the surrounding context.

- » If the portion to be retained is located on a **corner** and the new construction will be highly visible, a substantial **horizontal setback** from all public-facing elevations may allow the historic portion of the building to retain a sense of its relationship to the surrounding context.

FIGURE 2

Because the portion of the building to be retained is located on a prominent corner, the new addition has been located with a substantial **vertical break** and **horizontal setback** (as shown outlined). This allows the historic portion of the building to retain a sense of the **surrounding context**.



- » If the retained portion of building is located in the middle of the **block**, a **horizontal setback** of smaller proportions may be possible, provided the new development is partially obscured by surrounding taller properties, or is setback sufficiently to distinguish between the massing of the overall development and the retained portion of the historic building.
- » A **vertical break** in the massing on its own may be a dynamic gesture that successfully achieves a visual separation between a historic façade and a new addition.
- » Occasionally a **vertical break** in the massing of one to two floors, **in addition to a horizontal setback**, can achieve the desired visual separation between the addition and the historic building.

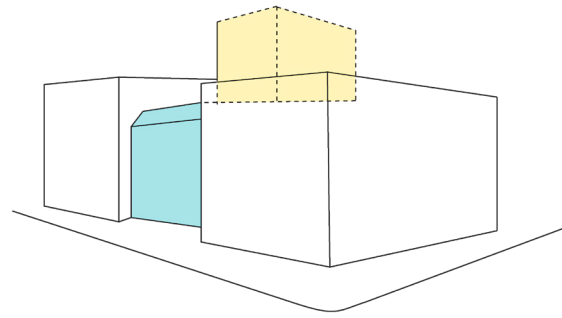


FIGURE 4

This mid-block addition features a horizontal setback. The surrounding size, scale, and massing of the neighboring buildings helps mask the addition from the public right of way. The scale of the neighboring buildings calls for a larger horizontal setback to minimize views from the public right of way.

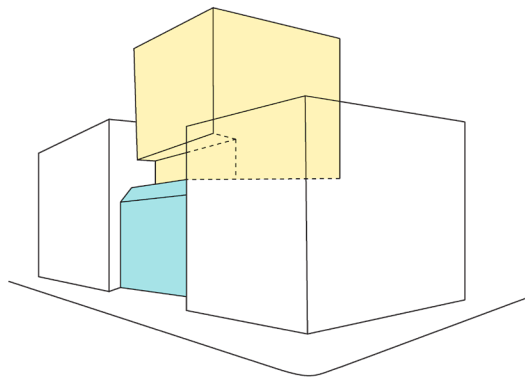


FIGURE 3

This mid-block addition features a vertical break in the massing and a reduced horizontal setback. The surrounding size and scale of the neighboring buildings helps visually distinguish the addition from the public right-of-way.

Flat roofs pose less of a problem for an addition as they are generally not visible from the public right-of-way. If a roof form is an important part of the historic building's composition, address the following:

- » Roof types that are more **architecturally distinct** (such as gabled, mansard, or hipped, etc.) may require further setbacks to allow the new development to be sensitive to the character of the roof form.

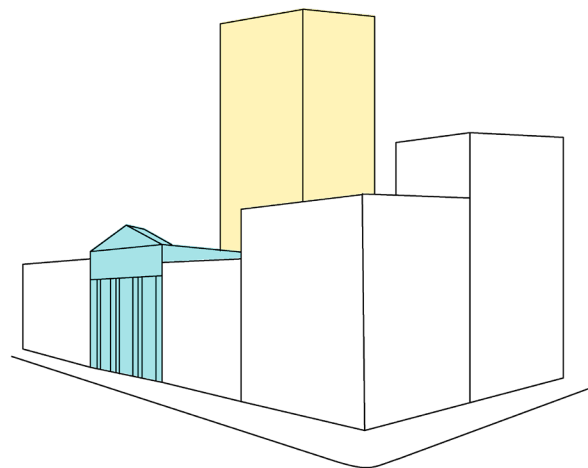


FIGURE 5

Where there is a unique roof form, the new massing should provide a deep setback to avoid obscuring or altering the character-defining feature of the historic building.

CHARACTER

Widely-accepted preservation practices should be employed on the retained portion of the historic building so that it retains a harmonious and relatable relationship to the overall development.

- » For the portion of the building to be retained, all **historic architectural features** should be retained and **non-historic alterations** should be removed.
- » When appropriate, missing or damaged **character-defining features** should be **reconstructed** or **repaired**.
- » All new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and interior partitions should **not interfere** with the portion of the building to be retained.

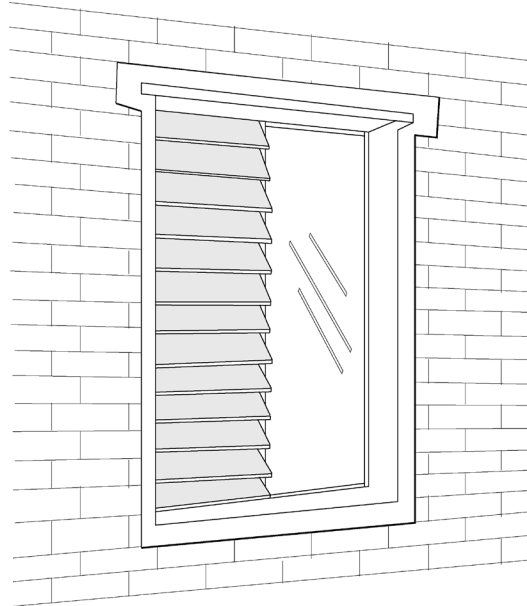
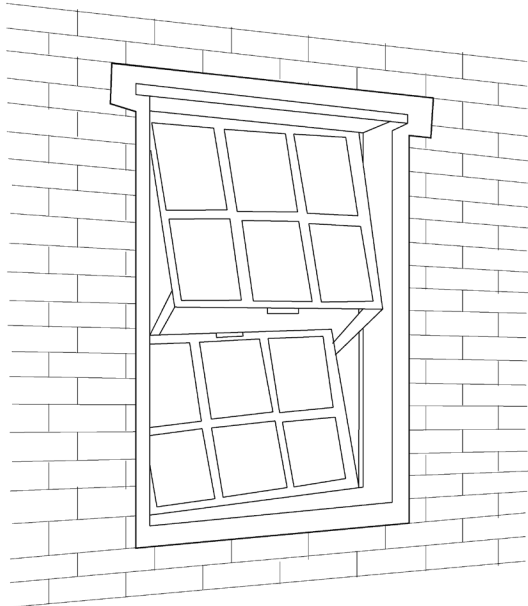


FIGURE 7

Interior partitions, mechanical, and electrical equipment should not interfere with historic windows.

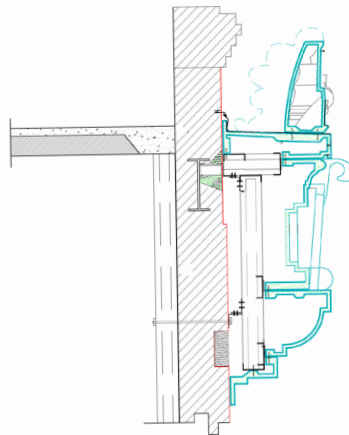


FIGURE 6

Historic cornices are an example of character-defining features that should be restored and retained. Where a cornice feature is missing, contemporary materials, such as Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete (GFRC) or Fiber Reinforced Polyester (FRP) may be employed as a substitute for terra cotta, cast stone, or pressed metal.

INTERIOR SPACES

Sensitive transitions from the retained portion of the building into the larger development should be designed to maintain a sense of the building's historic context and use.

- » Some interior spaces, such as those within churches, large assembly halls, or other publicly accessible spaces, contain **rich detail** and/or are important character-defining spaces that communicate a building's history. Coupling these interior spaces within the new development is a meaningful way to maintain this historic association.
- » Careful consideration should be given to the **transition** of the space between the retained portion of the historic building and the interior spaces within the new structure.

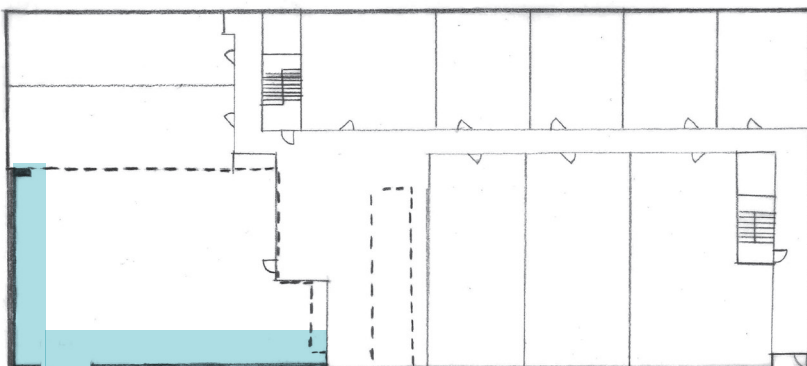
FIGURE 8

This historic interior volume has been retained as part of the new addition which allows for a meaningful transition between the old portion of the building and the verall development.

EXISTING



PROPOSED



- » **Interior volumes** should be studied to determine how they relate to the exterior as this may inform floor levels, ceiling heights, transition spaces, and how the retained portion of the historic building should be incorporated within the new development.

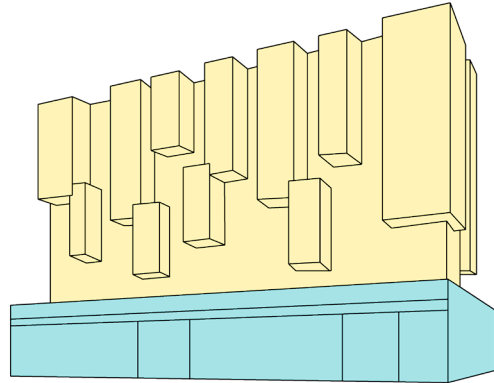
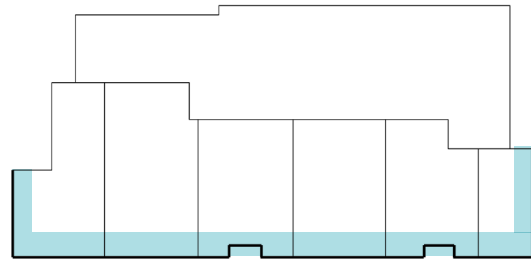


FIGURE 7

The floorplan of the new development demonstrates the character-defining storefront configuration will be retained to maintain the fine-grain ground floor experience of the historic building.



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SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution No. XXXX

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 2ND, 2017

ADOPTION OF A POLICY STATEMENT TO CLARIFY FACTORS FOR THE PROJECT SPONSOR TO ADDRESS WHEN VOLUNTARILY INCLUDING A PORTION OF AN EXISTING BUILDING IN A LARGER DEVELOPMENT FOR URBAN DESIGN PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, Section 101.1 of the Planning Code includes the Priority Policy that historic buildings be preserved; and the loss of historical resources through demolition or adverse impacts from alteration should be avoided whenever possible, and historic preservation should be used as a key strategy in achieving the City's housing and environmental sustainability goals through the restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Planning Department provide clear direction regarding the restoration and rehabilitation of properties designated pursuant to Articles 10 and 11 of the Planning Code and this statement is not intended to be used for properties under said designations; and

WHEREAS, less design guidance has been prepared for significant alterations to the many non-designated historic properties throughout San Francisco where a project team voluntarily proposes to retain portions of an existing building within a larger development project for the purpose of achieving a more successful design; and

WHEREAS, the HPC in its role under the City Charter to provide advice to the City for projects that involve historic or cultural resources offers this policy statement for clarification purposes and gives deference to the Planning Commission and other agencies in their discretionary responsibilities that do not involve the HPC.

WHEREAS, at its regularly-scheduled hearings on December 2nd, 2015, and again on April 6th, 2016, the HPC led a discussion with the Planning Department and the public on the notion of façade retention in an effort to better understand what it means and where it may or may not be appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the HPC defines façade retention as when all portions of an existing building are demolished except for one or more exterior building walls that face a public right-of-way, and the retained walls are integrated into the construction of a new, and often much larger, structure ; and

WHEREAS, the HPC has determined that the practice of façade retention is not encouraged given this body's role in ensuring the protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of structures that are reminders of the social and cultural contributions of past eras, important events, people, or architecture; and

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

WHEREAS, the HPC concurs with commonly-accepted notion that the manner in which historic properties were used and experienced includes interior features and spatial relationships that are critical elements that give the exterior façades context and relevance; and

WHEREAS, the HPC clarifies the following policy will not avoid a significant impact to a historic resource for the purposes of CEQA and has provided separate guidance on the development of preservation alternatives in HPC Resolution No. 0746; and

Now therefore be it RESOLVED that the Commission hereby ADOPTS the following policy and directs the Planning Department and Project Sponsors to address the following factors when a portion of a historic building is proposed to be incorporated into a larger project for a specific benefit or design purpose. The factors include: BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE, SETBACKS, CHARACTER, AND INTERIOR SPACES.

BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE

If a portion of the building is to be retained keep in mind the benefit and meaning the retained portions provide within the overall design.

If a project voluntarily proposes to retain a portion of a historic building, there are certain important elements of that resource, or **character-defining features** that should be retained. In many instances it will be necessary to retain more than a single elevation to achieve this goal. The following considerations should be addressed:

- A building significant for associations with the past should **retain** portions or features related to that past.
- Additions or substantial alterations should be located in areas that **will not disturb** those important elements.
- The **surrounding context** of the historic building must also be maintained so the immediate setting is not lost.

SETBACKS

Substantial horizontal and vertical setbacks are helpful in maintaining viewsheds of the historic building and visual separation from the new development.

In all cases the appropriate **height** of a **vertical setback** and **depth** of the **horizontal setback** will be determined by the **size** and **scale** of the addition and the character of the surrounding context.

- If the portion to be retained is located on a **corner** and the new construction will be highly visible, a substantial **horizontal setback** from all public-facing elevations is needed for the historic portion to retain a sense of its relationship to the surrounding context.
- If the portion to be retained is located **mid-block**, a **horizontal setback** of smaller proportions may be possible, provided the new development is partially obscured by surrounding taller properties or is setback sufficiently to read as a separate building.
- Occasionally a **vertical setback** of one to two floors, in addition to a **horizontal setback**, can achieve the desired visual separation.

- In other rare cases a **vertical setback**, or a **vertical hyphen**, may be appropriate in providing a visual break between a historic façade and a new addition.

If a **roof form** is an important part of a building's composition, address the following:

- **Flat roofs** pose less of a problem for an addition as they are generally not visible from the public right-of-way.
- Roof types that are more **architecturally distinct** (such as gabled, mansard, or hipped, etc.) will require further setbacks to allow the new development to be sensitive to the character of the roof.

CHARACTER

Best preservation practices should be used on the retained portion of the building so that it retains benefit and meaning to the overall development.

- All **character-defining features** should be retained and **non-historic alterations** should be removed.
- Missing or damaged **character-defining features** should be **reconstructed** or **repaired**.
- All mechanical, electrical, and plumbing as part of the new project should **not interfere** with the portion of the building to be retained.

INTERIOR SPACES

Sensitive transitions from the retained portion of the building into the larger development should be designed to maintain a sense of the building's historic context and use.

- Some interior spaces, such as those within churches, large assembly halls, or other publicly accessible spaces, contain **rich detail** and are important character-defining spaces that communicate a building's importance. These interior spaces should be incorporated or addressed within the new development in a **meaningful way**.
- While other interior spaces may not necessarily be significant, careful consideration should be given to the **transition** of space between the old portion of the building and the new addition.
- **Interior volumes** should be studied to determine how they relate to the exterior as this may inform not only if some interior spaces/volumes should be retained, but also how the portion of the historic building should be incorporated with the addition.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Commission at its meeting on August 2nd, 2017.

Jonas P. Ionin

Acting Commission Secretary

AYES: xxxx

NOES: xxxx

Resolution XXXXXX
August 2nd, 2017

Facade Retention Policy Discussion

ABSENT: xxx

ADOPTED: August 2nd, 2017



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: December 2, 2015
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Justin Greving, Preservation Planner, 415-575-9169
REVIEWED BY: Timothy Frye, Preservation Coordinator, 415-575-6822
RE: Façade Retention Policy Discussion

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

On March 18, 2015 The Historic Preservation Commission adopted Resolution No. 0746 to clarify expectations regarding the preparation of preservation alternatives in Environmental Impact Reports. This resolution specifically omitted language about façade retention to allow for a discussion of the topic from a historic preservation and urban design perspective at a later date. Planning Staff will provide a brief presentation on various examples of façade retention projects within the United States.

As background material on the subject of façade retention, Planning Staff have provided an excerpt from, *Architecture of Compromise: A History and Analysis of Facadism in Washington, D.C.*, a thesis prepared by Kerensa Sanford Wood in 2012 in partial fulfillment of a M.S. in Historic Preservation at Columbia University. This excerpt provides a brief history of façade retention in the United States, explores recent scholarship on the subject, and explains some definitions of the practice. The purpose of this background reading material is to examine the definition of façade retention and understand some of the more recent scholarship and architectural criticism on the subject. The following questions regarding façade retention as a preservation practice may be useful starting points for discussion among commissioners: When is it acceptable to preserve part of a building in one instance and the “whole” building in another? Are there instances when façade retention may be an acceptable practice from an urban design perspective? Can the issue of façade retention be addressed in the form of guidelines or written policy, or must it be dealt with on a case by case basis?

Planning Staff have also provided a photo attachment of buildings that feature varying forms of façade retention. Commissioners are invited to look at the projects and decide which ones, if any, are appropriate urban design or preservation alternatives.

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**ARCHITECTURE OF COMPROMISE:
A HISTORY AND ANALYSIS
OF FACADISM IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Kerensa Sanford Wood

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
Master of Science in Historic Preservation
Master of Science in Urban Planning**

Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

Columbia University

May 2012




LITERATURE REVIEW

There are few texts dedicated to the history and analysis of facadism. A thorough literature review was conducted on the theory, typology, and history of facadism. The three major texts on facadism were written by European conservators, architects, preservationists, and theorists. They include: *Facadism* by Jonathan Richard (1994), *The Construction of New Buildings Behind Historic Facades* by David Highfield (1991), and conference proceedings from the ICOMOS conference on *Facadisme et Identite Urbaine* (1999). British conservator John Earl's text *Building Conservation Philosophy* (2003) was also consulted. The European notion of preservation and heritage differs from that in the United States, as do histories and policies. Nonetheless, the following literature review provides a platform from which the parameters of what constitutes facadism can be defined; a list of motivations can be compiled; and series of themes and issues can be extracted.

The following texts by US preservationists were also reviewed: *The Future of the Past* by Steven W. Semes (2009), "Report on the State of Preservation in Washington, D.C." by Donovan Rypkema (2003). The discussion on facadism in American texts is predominantly relegated to a paragraph in texts on preservation theory and history. Lastly, in order to develop a snapshot into the history of the phenomenon, a number of articles from publications nationwide were reviewed.

5 Gutheim, Frederick and Antoinette J. Lee. *Worthy of a Nation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. 2006.

6 Hilzenrath, David. "Mixing the Old With the New; Debate Rages Over Preserving Old Buildings as Facades" *The Washington Post*, 13 Aug 1988: e01.

In opening a conference on the subject of facadism and urban identity, Jean-Louis Luxen (ICOMOS Secretary General in 1999) said that facadism is a difficult subject to broach as, “there seems to be no consensus between us on the subject, [thus] how can we reach a clear viewpoint when we have to confront the most varied situations and consider each particular case within its context.”⁷ Facadism is defined in myriad ways by architects, architectural historians, preservationists, public historians, and the public. The analysis of its evolution, desirability, necessity, and impacts are largely opinion, with few to no objective studies.

British scholar Jonathan Richard literally “wrote the book” on facadism. His *Facadism* tracks the history of the phenomenon in a number of small to mid-size cities in England. In the introduction, Richard states that there is no universal definition of facadism, and further, there is not even a universal term for the typology that it encompasses. He says that some architects argue that facadism occurs when an emphasis is placed on the design of the façade, whereas façade retention is the preserved façade with new constructed behind. He concludes that both are facadism.⁸

Richard includes the following activities in his study of facadism: preservation of facades of historic buildings; construction of new buildings behind historic buildings; the reconstruction of demolished/destroyed historic buildings; and the imitation of generic historic facades.

David Highfield, who has conducted and written at length about the phenomenon in England from a technical perspective, calls this type of project, “façade retention” not “facadism.” In his book, he lists a “scale of [seven] redevelopment options,” which begins at full retention of the existing structure and ends with demolition and replacement. He considers three of the seven options a façade retention. His “facadism” typologies are as follows: retention of all facades and demolition of an interior; retention of two facades and demolition of the interior; and the retention of one façade.⁹


John Earl dedicates five pages in his text on conservation theory to what he calls “skin-deep preservation.” He does not define this term, but instead describes a number of types: in one instance of skin-deep preservation, one-tenth of a building is preserved in front of a modern addition and becomes a “souvenir”; in other instance, the front room of a historic building is preserved; and in yet another, the entire building is preserved and incorporated into a larger structure, “its fate being inextricably tied to that of a larger alien...structure.”¹⁰ He is the only author to discuss the retention of more than just the façade.

7 Facadisme et Identite Urbaine. International Conference. Paris 2001. pg 158.

8 Richards, Jonathan. Facadism. New York: Routledge, 1994. pg 7.

9 Highfield, David. The Construction of New Buildings Behind Historic Facades. Taylor & Francis, 1991. Chapter 1.

10 Earl, John. Building Conservation Philosophy. Donhead Publishing, 2003. pg 88.



The text *Facadisme et Identite Urbaine* (2001) is a collection of essays on facadism in Europe written by scholars who presented at colloquium in Paris held by ICOMOS. The thirty-six essays provide a glimpse into the various types of interventions defined almost uniquely by each author. In the introduction, however, the editor (Francois Barre, Director of the French Department of Architecture and Heritage) defines facadism as, essentially, the preservation of only the façade, and the destruction of the interior in order to provide modern space. Barre, in a similar fashion to Richard, includes the following types of intervention as facadism: the preservation of the original façade, two, a faithful reconstruction, and three, the dismantling and reconstruction of a façade elsewhere from its original location.¹¹ Barre adds the specification of moving a façade as facadism.

Causes

Barre asks, what are the causes of facadism and is it unavoidable? He states that there were and are a number of general motivations: cultural (the value of the time), economic (development pressures), legislative (preservation laws and zoning), and technical (functionality). Richard identifies a number of more nuanced reasons for facadism: retention of streetscape; functional obsolescence; and downtown revitalization.¹² Highfield identifies a number of reasons why facadism is chosen as a preservation approach. While he lists policies in England that do not pertain to the US, the following motivations do apply: demand for prestigious buildings with modern amenities; need for additional space by increasing additional floors; to preserve the historic value of the façade and/or streetscape; when the interior is dilapidated; when interior has been unrecognizably altered; in order to comply with building and fire codes; nonfunctional configuration of current internal layout; and in general, the economic viability.¹³

Compromise

Highfield writes about what he calls the ‘realist’s view’ and the ‘purist’s view’ on facadism. Purists believe, he says, that, “if a building is worth retaining, it should be retained in its entirety, and that using parts of a shell to conceal new accommodation is an extremely false solution,” while realists argue that it is a, “compromise [that] is necessary...some destruction and loss is inevitable if the needs of both the developer and the conservationist are to be satisfied.”¹⁴ Highfield says that in

11 *Facadisme et Identite Urbaine*. pg 18.

12 *Ibid.*, p.16-22.

13 Highfield, David. *The Construction of New Buildings Behind Historic Facades*. Chapter 2.

14 *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.

most cases, while conservationists will most often advocate for the preservation of the whole building, that they understand that façade retention may be a more “practicable and realistic solution.”

Earl asks in his text if façade preservation is ever acceptable, and answers that, “we should never say never” and cites examples of where the meticulous preservation of the elevation of a building was better than losing it altogether.¹⁵ He echoes similar sentiments that façade preservation is not preservation, but instead the “continuity in the townscape.”¹⁶

Jean-Louis Luxen raises a poignant paradox: preserving the interior of a building is important in telling the history of a building; however, emphasis has been continually placed on the exterior, and the context of a building in a greater urban space.¹⁷ Barre echoes his concerns: “we condemn facadism but only have laws that protect exterior.” He quickly asks, should we protect all interiors? No, is the answer, in general. He says, though “in either case, construction or conservation, the worst solution would be a reduction of architecture to the facades alone; to an existent that would consist of mere appearance, public space that becomes public image.”¹⁸

US Texts

Although there has not been a text produced on facadism in the United States, the issue has been discussed through a variety of means. Roberta Gratz wrote in her book *Cities Back from the Edge*, “...preservation has to be about more than bricks and mortar. Otherwise old buildings become only a façade, a costume, a cover-up for the erosion of citiness and historical continuity and a cover-up for the sameness engulfing the city and countryside alike.”¹⁹ While Gratz does not explicitly use the term “facadism” or “facedomy” or “facade preservation” she is observing a trend that compromises the historic integrity of cities.

Preservation economist Donovan Rypkema has written extensively about facadism, predominantly in the DC area. He writes in his “2003 Report on Preservation in DC” that “false history” is one of the major preservation issues in DC. He says façade projects (he uses the term “facadomy”) are projects in which the historic façade of a building (in some cases just four inches of brick) is preserved in front of new construction, or, “Halloween preservation...keeping the mask and throwing away the building.”²⁰ He says that motivations for preserving the façade are to achieve a “sense of

15 Earl, John. *Building Conservation Philosophy*. pg 88.


16 Ibid., pg. 89.

17 *Facadisme et Identite Urbaine*. pg 18.

18 Ibid., pg. 266.

19 Gratz, Roberta B. *Cities Back from the Edge: New Life for Downtown*. NY: John Wiley, 2000.

20 Rypkema, Donovan D. *Planning for the Future, Using the Past: The Role of Historic Preservation in Building Tomorrow's Washington, DC*. September 2003.



place” that “can rarely be created over night.” He admits that if “properly done” that a façade project can reinforce the urban form, the historic streetscape, and that even, it could be utilized “under the most limited of circumstances should be used as an urban design tool.” However, he makes blatantly clear that this is not a form of preservation, but a “Disneyesque imitation of historic preservation – historic preservation as movie set.”²¹

In the book *The Future of the Past* (2009), which focuses on how historic resources are manipulated, Steven Semes discusses facadism on one page of his 200+ page book. He says that there was a wave of “demolition of the interiors of protected buildings, leaving only their facades and incorporating them into new, larger, and more economically profitable buildings.”²² He calls these instances “travesties” that reduce the façade of historic buildings to “ornamental frontispieces, masks, or bases to massive new structures completely different in composition, materials, style, and scale.”²³ While he understands that facadism might be a necessary compromise in some situations, it is ultimately, “a betrayal of the fundamental aims of the preservation movement.”²⁴ He makes an interesting and worthy point that needs to be considered, and dealt with, within the fundamental theory of preservation: he says that facadism is a symbol of the “narrow focus” that preservationists take in regards to the historic structure...that a premium is placed on the material fabric, with a “disregard of a building’s formal design, structural integrity, use, interior space, or urban context.”²⁵ He, unlike the European academics, concludes his brief discussion by saying that in some cases, “preservationists must recognize that the meaningful life of a designated building has passed and open up the site for reasonable new development. But by insisting on the routine retention of historic facades in visually lobotomized form, preservationists have served the interest of neither historic buildings nor quality new ones. This is not preservation, but a crude form of architectural taxidermy.”²⁶

While there are varying definitions of the term, and varying names for the concept, the salient idea is in a façade project, the facade of the building no longer has an architectural, functional, and historical relationship with the rest of the building. This begs the question: what is a building, and what gives it its significance? Why is it deemed acceptable to preserve part of a building in one case, and the whole building in another? This type of inconsistency weakens the legitimacy of the historic preservation ordinance, and the historic preservation efforts of a city.

21 Ibid.

22 Semes, Steven W. *The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation*. NY: W.W. Norton. 2009. pg 238.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., pg. 239.



History of Facadism

Numerous articles and books cite the earliest examples of facadism in ancient Rome recorded by Plutarch through Alberti's Sant'Andrea (1400s) in Rome.²⁷ These are not examples of the tension between developers, preservationists, and government. Instead, the following is a brief timeline of modern facadism in Europe and the United States.

Modern facadism in Europe emerged out of a series of conditions: destruction of the built environment during World War II, development pressures in built-up areas protected by heritage legislation, and tourism development. Early proliferation of this project typology is seen in Germany, France, Belgium, and Great Britain. In *Facadisme et Identite Urbaine*, Barre breaks down the waves of facadism in Europe. In the 17th and 18th centuries, facadism was employed to beautify cities; postwar, it was used to preserve what little historic material remained during rebuilding efforts; and in response to speculative development pressures later in the 20th century.²⁸

British author John Pendlebury attributes facadism to the promotion of mid-century downtown redevelopment that resulted in the demolition of swaths of the existing built environment. He writes that this had stopped in the 1980s with the emergence of an urgent need to preserve what remained after these government-driven efforts. The preservation movement was riddled with conflict: government embraced market principles that would lead to the demolition of buildings so that the sites could be reconfigured for their highest and best use. However, the government also established preservation policies that were in direct conflict with the market. Facadism was a result of this contradiction. Neither the developers, preservationists, nor government officials were content with this compromise.²⁹


While there are several facadism projects in the country that predate the 1980s, this is when facadism picks up pace in the United States. The US was not at the whims of Hausmann's urbanism, nor did it have to rebuild its cities after World War II. What it does have in common with the waves of facadism in Europe, though, is the hot real estate market in the 1980s.

In a 1985 *The Washington Post* article, architectural critic Benjamin Forgey described preservation and development in Washington, D.C. He called facadism the "city's second-favorite architectural game, Save a Façade," and stated that architects, developers, and preservationists disliked this type of compromise. Forgey used terms such as "theatrical" and "billboard" to the past. More importantly, he highlighted the crux of the issue: although this particular historic property

27 Schumacher, Thomas L. "Facadism" Returns, or the Advent of the "Duck-orated Shed" *Journal of Architectural Education*, 2010 Vol. 10. pg 128.

28 *Facadisme et Identite Urbaine*. pg 18.

29 Pendlebury, John. "Urban conservation and the shaping of the English city" *The Town Planning Review*, 2011 Vol. 82. pg 361.



was indeed historic, it did not receive landmark status until after the site was acquired for redevelopment. There was no funding to preserve the property, so, the only alternatives were demolition or preserving the façade. The architect working on the project said that preservation was “impossible” because of the high density zoning envelope.³⁰

Forgey’s article highlighted the different approaches that architects take to this type of project. Some architects have preserved parts of the building and have built additions and/or reconstructions in the exact style of the original, while others use a more contrasting approach so as to highlight the differences between the old and the new. Already, in the mid-1980s, journalists were asking: “How many building-billboards do we want?”³¹ A few years later, Forgey reflected on facadism in another article in *The Washington Post*. He said that it was “born of necessity” in the 1970s as the zoning in downtown allowed for much larger buildings than existed there at the time. He changed his opinion on the typology, saying that there a number of examples in DC that benefit the architecture of the city, calling them “wonderful deception[s]” as architects, developers, and preservationists have “become better at it.”³²

New York architectural critic Paul Goldberger discussed the emerging phenomenon in the 1980s as it began to appear, briefly, in New York City in his article “‘Facadism’ on the Rise: Preservation or Illusion” in *The New York Times*.³³ Goldberger described facadism in Washington, DC as serving, “as a frequent means of detente between preservationists and developers.” He agrees that facadism may be a quick and easy solution to the problem of preserving a historic property in a neighborhood zoned for a higher and best use, for example. However, “to save only the facade of a building is not to save its essence; it is to turn the building into a stage set, into a cute toy intended to make a skyscraper more palatable. And the street becomes a kind of Disneyland of false fronts.” Goldberger described a situation in which developers who had purchased a historic building had planned to demolish it to build a skyscraper. The city objected to this and designated the building a landmark. The architect working with the developer created a solution: maintain the façade and build a skyscraper at the rear. The Landmarks Preservation Commission approved the design in order to “appear flexible.” However, preservation groups declared that this was a breach of the spirit of the landmarks law. Goldberger said that, ultimately, these historic structures are buildings, not “sentimental objects” and, “to turn an older building of distinction into a fancy front door for a new tower is to respect neither the integrity of the new or that of the old, but to render

30 Forgey, Benjamin. “The State of the Capital” *The Washington Post*. 29 Aug 1987.

31 Forgey, Benjamin. “Our Town, Revisited; For the Architects’ Convention, a Look Back to 1974” *The Washington Post*. 18 May 1991: G.01.

32 Forgey, Benjamin. “History’s Fabulous Face Lift; Cast-Iron Facade Welcomes Visitors To Bygone Baltimore” *The Washington Post*. 10 Aug 1996: C.01.

33 Goldberger, Paul. “‘Facadism’ on the Rise: Preservation or Illusion?” *The New York Times*. 15 July 1985.

both buildings, in a sense, ridiculous.”

Christopher Swope, editor of *Governing*, discussed the emergence of facadism in Philadelphia in the 1970s.³⁴ These projects were controversial and he has found that, “usual politics of development and historic preservation [were] turned on their head.” In these cases, developers have argued for preserving the façade, while preservationists disapproved of the compromise, “afraid of setting many precedents with these hybrids.” In some cases, preservationists argued for demolition in the face of the facadism alternative. There has been a resurgence of facadism in Philadelphia as demand for housing increases in Center City.³⁵ Swope has witnessed the controversial nature of these projects even within the preservation community: some see it as a “suitable compromise between growth and preservation” while others disagree. Mary Oehrlein, a preservation architect in DC, states that this type of project is “sometimes the only way to balance the developer’s right to build a large amount of usable space with the desire to keep old appearance at street level.”³⁶ It is clear that even after over three decades of this type of project, even professionals within the field do not have a clear answer as embrace or advocate against facadism.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

34 Swope, Christopher. “Nightmare on Pine St.? Melding historic facades with modern buildings can yield odd results,” *Governing*, 2005 Vol. 17 (8).

35 Swope refers to the York Row and St. James project, 2003.

36 Swope, Christopher. “Nightmare on Pine St.?”

37 Goldstein, Marilyn. “Some Call it Facadism” *Newsday*, 16 Nov 1985: 03.

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Façade Retention Policy Discussion



1. St. Paul's Cathedral, Macau. Constructed early 1600s, altered in the late 20th century.

(Image credit:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:20091003_Macau_Cathedral_of_Saint_Paul_6542.jpg)



2. Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company, 510 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA. Constructed 1838 and 1902, altered 1975. (Image credit: http://www.curatorscorner.com/2015_06_01_archive.html)



3. Second Branch Bank of the United States, originally located on Wall Street, New York City, NY, relocated to the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. Constructed 1838, altered/relocated 1915. (Image credit: <http://www.chunhoetang.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/DSCF0005-2.jpg>)



4. Colombo Market, Front Street and Pacific Avenue, San Francisco, CA. Constructed 1874, altered 1965. (Image credit: <http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=File:Macarthur-park-gate-and-park4344.jpg>)



5. Chicago Stock Exchange, originally at the corner of Washington and LaSalle streets, Chicago, IL, relocated to E. Monroe Street and S. Columbus Drive, Chicago, IL. Constructed 1893, altered/relocated 1973. (Image credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChicagoStockExchange01.jpg>)



5. Maxwell Street, corner of W. Maxwell and S. Halstead streets, Chicago IL. Constructed in the early-nineteenth century, altered/relocated 1994. (Image credit: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/194499277627948801/>)



6. International Spy Museum, 800 F Street, NW, Washington D.C. Constructed in the mid-nineteenth century, altered 2003.
(Image credit: <http://entertainmentdesigner.com/news/museum-design-news/the-international-spy-museum/>)



7. 1634-1690 Pine Street, San Francisco, CA. Constructed in the early-twentieth century, currently under construction. (Image Credit: Mike Buhler, San Francisco Heritage)



8. Jewelers Row, 60 E Monroe Street, Chicago, Il. Constructed mid-1870s, altered 2009.
(Image credit: <http://wibiti.com/images/hpmain/052/266052.jpg>)



9. Chronicle Building, 690 Market Street, San Francisco, CA. Constructed 1890, altered 2003.
(Image credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritz-Carlton_Club_and_Residences#/media/File:Ritz-Carlton_Club_and_Residences,_San_Francisco.jpg)



10. California Electric Light Building, 178 Townsend Street, San Francisco, CA. Constructed 1908, altered 2012. (Image credit: Google street view)



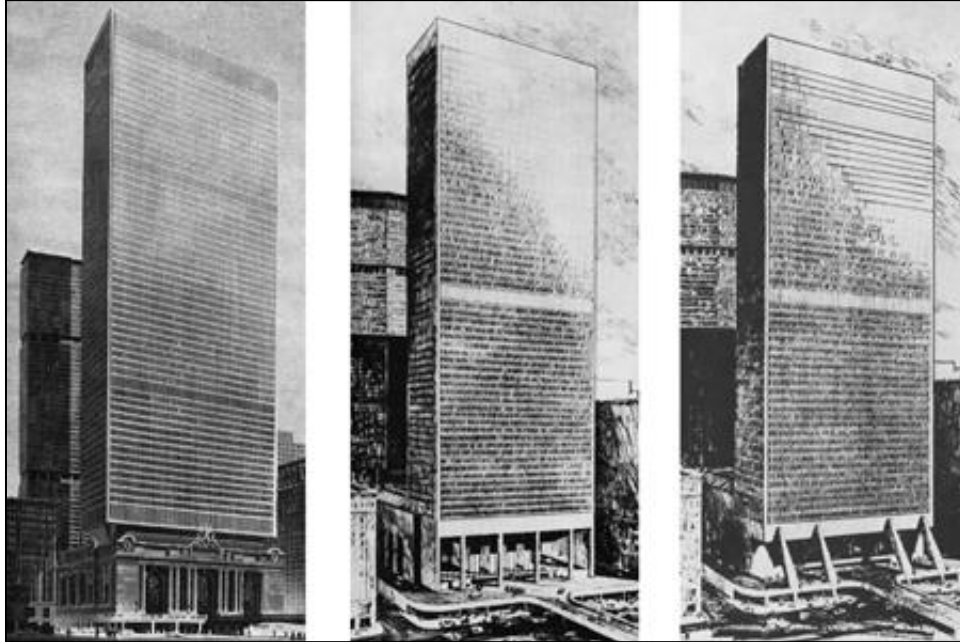
11. Sexauer Garage, 2656 N. Halsted Street, Chicago, IL, Constructed 1924, altered 2007. (Image credit: http://www.wbez.org/system/files/styles/original_image/llo/insert-images/3745195966_77dc25a776_z.jpg)



12. The Mission, 1625 14th Street, NW, Washington D.C. Constructed late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, altered 2014. (Image credit: Tim Frye, SF Planning Department)



13. McGraw Hill Building, 520 N Michigan Avenue, Chicago II. Constructed 1929, altered 2000. (Image credit: https://www.flickr.com/photos/anomalous_a/6746339749)



14. Grand Central Station, 89 E 42nd Street, New York City, NY. Constructed 1913, proposed alteration 1968. (Image credit: <http://www.architakes.com/?p=13036>)



15. 837 Washington Street, New York City, NY. Constructed 1938, altered 2014. (Image credit: http://ny.curbed.com/archives/2014/05/09/inside_morris_adjmis_twisty_andSexy_high_line_neighbor.php#536d2d79f92ea14d270223a5)



16. Bank of California, 400 California Street, San Francisco, CA. Constructed 1908, altered 1967.
(Image credit: <http://www.sanfranciscodays.com/photos/large/bank-of-california.jpg>)

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SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: April 6, 2016
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Justin Greving, Preservation Planner, 415-575-9169
REVIEWED BY: Timothy Frye, Historic Preservation Officer, 415-575-6822
RE: Façade Retention Policy Discussion Part 2

1650 Mission St.
 Suite 400
 San Francisco,
 CA 94103-2479

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
 Information:
415.558.6377

On December 8, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission discussed the issue of façade retention and explored a range of projects that featured some form of façade retention. At the end of the discussion, commissioners requested a follow-up presentation focusing on San Francisco-based façade retention projects with additional information about the process of design review and approval for these projects. Planning Staff will provide a brief presentation on various examples of façade retention projects in San Francisco before opening the conversation up to commissioners to discuss the specific projects in more detail.

To aid in the discussion, Planning Staff have provided drawings and photos of several of the projects scheduled for discussion.

Attachment A: Project photos (11 pages)



	<u>Project Address</u>	<u>Date Approved</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
1.	1 Sansome Street	1981	1-2
2.	1634 Pine Street	2014	3-4
3.	1314 Polk Street	2000	5-6
4.	690 Market Street	2004	7-9
5.	736 Mission Street	2001	(none)
6.	1800 Market Street	1998	11-14
7.	178 Townsend Street	2009	15-20
8.	421 Arguello Street	2004	21-22
9.	1335 Larkin Street	2015	23-26
10.	469 Eddy Street	2016	27-32
11.	39 Chattanooga Street	2008	33-36
12.	15 Baker Street	2014	37-41

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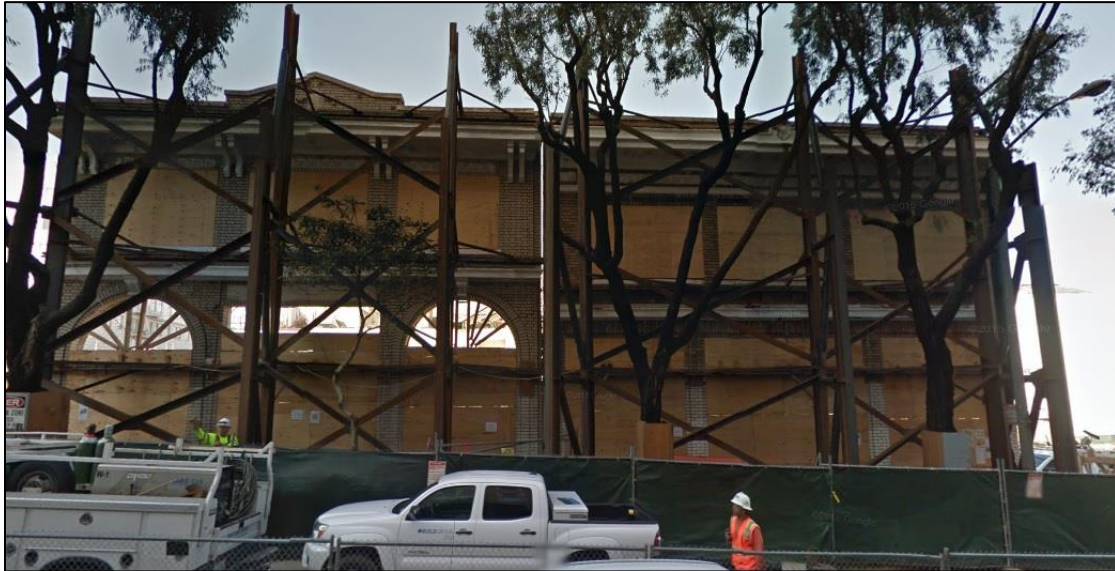
Façade Retention Policy Discussion Part 2
Attachment A: Project photos



1. 1 Sansome, photo taken pre-alteration (Image credit: SF Planning Department files)



2. 1 Sansome, photo taken after 1982 alteration (Image credit:
<http://barkerpacific.com/pages/projects.php?project=onesansome>)



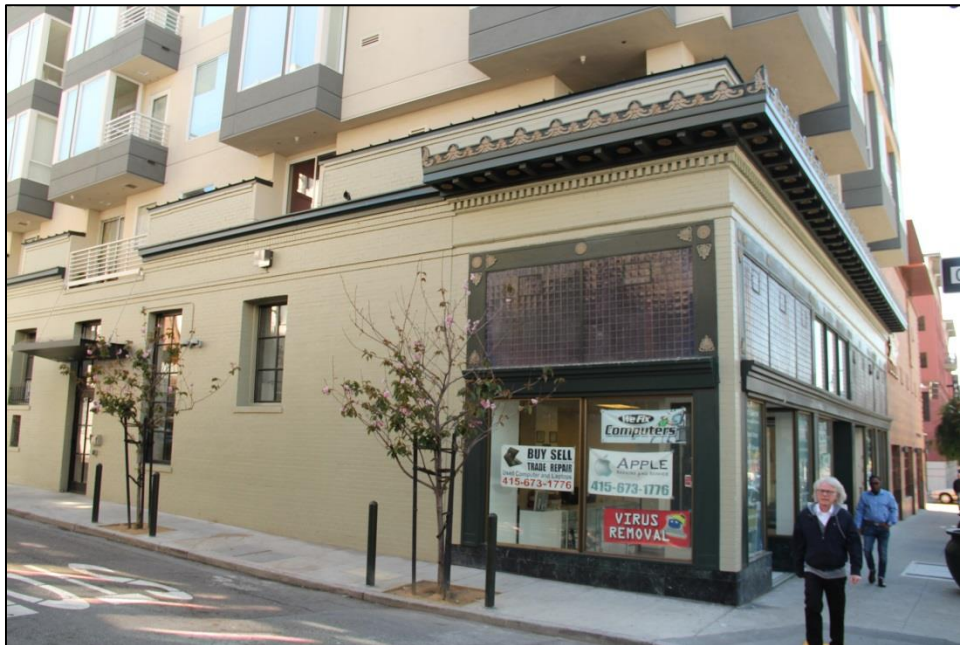
3. 1634 Pine Street, under construction (Image credit: Google street view)



4. 1634 Pine Street, under construction (Image credit: SF Planning Department)



5. 1314 Polk Street, photo taken ca. 1980s (Image credit: SF Planning Department files)



6. 1314 Polk Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning Department)



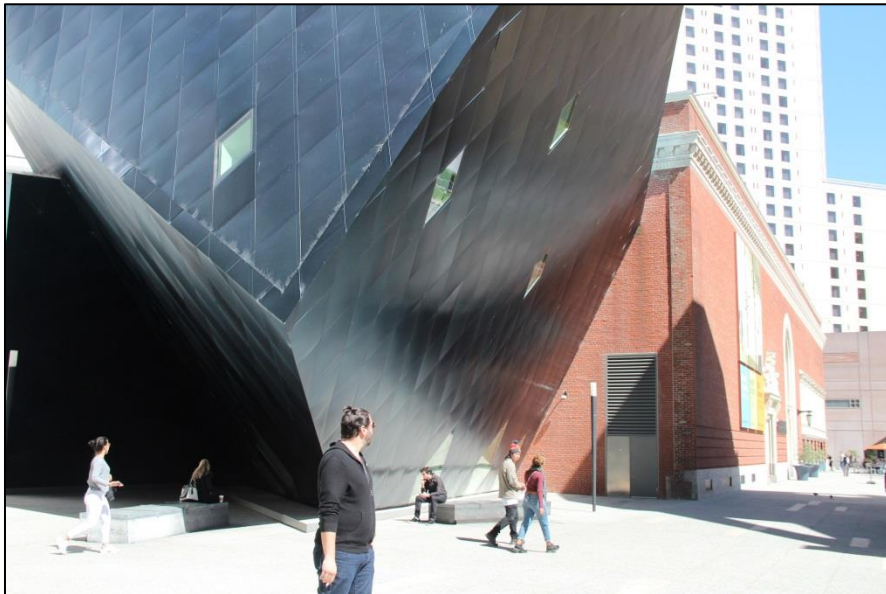
7. 690 Market Street, before removal of 1960s cladding (Image credit: SF City Guides)



8. 690 Market Street, current photo (Image Credit: SF Planning Department)



9. 736 Mission Street, before alterations (Image credit: SF Planning Department files)



10. 736 Mission Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning Department)



11. 1800 Market Street, before renovation (Image credit: http://www.friendsof1800.org/HISTORY/grand/fallon99_600.jpg)



12. 1800 Market Street, after renovation
(Image credit: http://imgs.sfgate.com/inline/c/pxs/2004/04/11/cm_lgbt-3.jpg)



13. 178 Townsend Street, before alterations (Image credit: Google street view)



14. 178 Townsend Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning department)



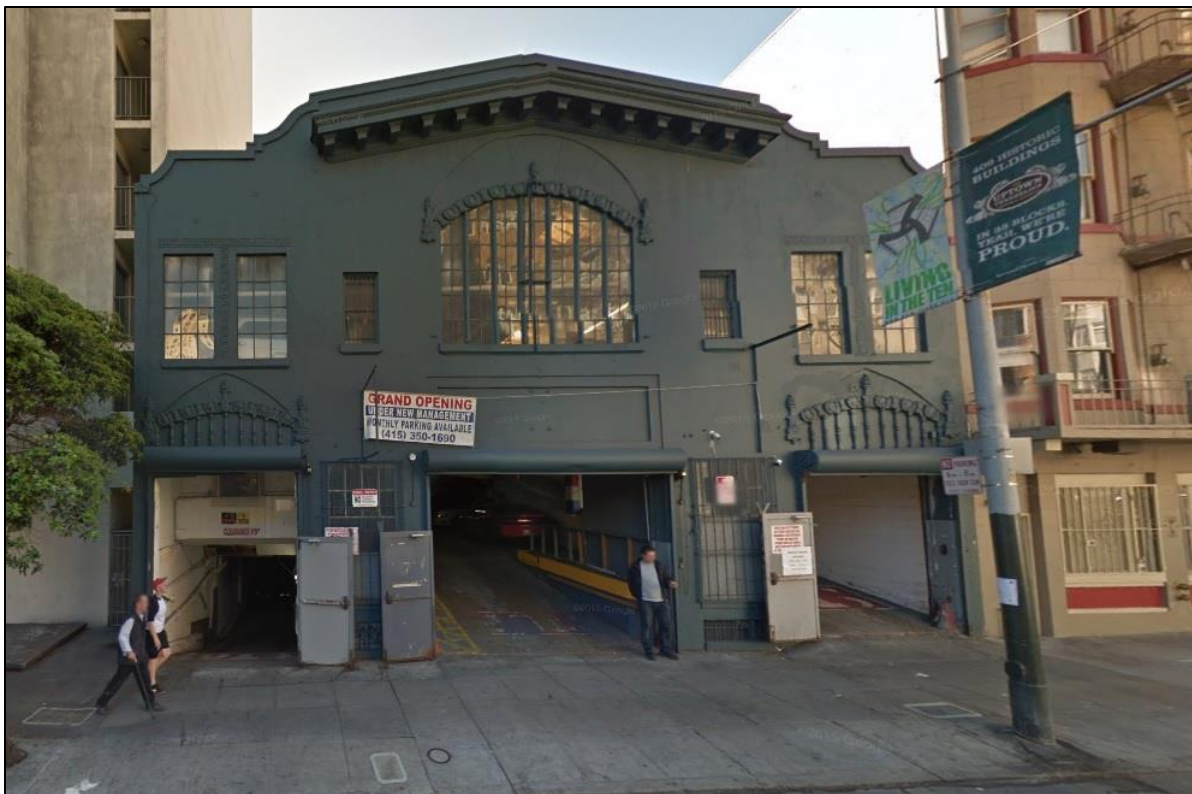
15. 421 Arguello Street, under construction (Image credit: Google street view)



16. 421 Arguello Street, current photo (Image credit: Google street view)



17. 1335 Larkin Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning Department)



18. 469 Eddy Street, current photo (Image credit: google street view)



19. 39 Chattanooga Street, current photo (Image credit: Bing maps)



20. 15 Baker Street, before alterations (Image credit: Google street view)



21. 15 Baker Street, current photo (Image credit: Google street view)