

DESIGNING FOR CONTEXT WITH RETAINED ELEMENTS

SPECIAL TOPIC DESIGN GUIDELINES



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Planning



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Retained Elements / Special Topic Design Guidelines

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Designing with Retained Elements

Much of San Francisco consists of older buildings that provide familiar neighborhood fabric, and which establish how neighborhoods feel, express identity, and define their own context. Development projects often seek to remove smaller existing buildings for financial, architectural, and use reasons. While these underbuilt or "soft" sites are commonly ripe for new development and potential higher and better use, their collective loss can feel destabilizing to residents in the broader context of neighborhood change. To address these challenges, the following guidelines establish methods for deciding when and how to retain all or a portion of an existing structure in an intentional and sensitive manner to maintain neighborhood character.

Successful new development can reinforce and enhance the physical patterns of neighborhood by connecting to the existing built environment in a positive manner. Existing buildings often feel familiar and anchoring to residents, express neighborhood harmony, and provide architectural character and with greater quality and details than typically achievable with today's construction methods and costs. And equally desirable, maintaining and rehabilitating an existing building results in more environmental benefits.

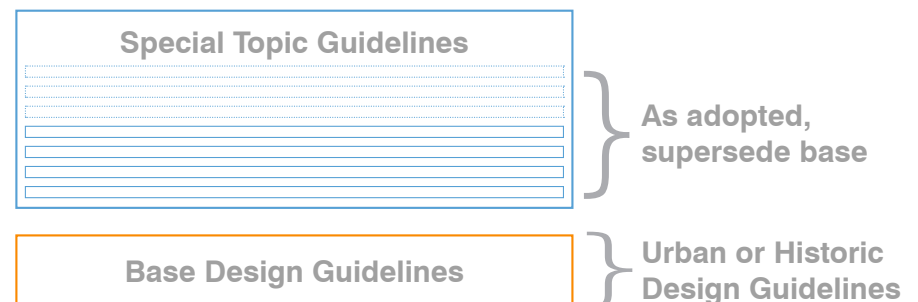
New development, however, can support better quality and more plentiful housing, refresh or revive retail, or provide space for badly needed institutional uses. These guidelines offer a way to achieve sustainability objectives, such as water, embodied, energy, and new energy use, resulting in meaningful and cohesive architecture that supports the uses needed for the City, and to maintain neighborhood character.

These guidelines apply to a site that proposes to retain part of an existing structure. These guidelines are not considered rehabilitation by the Planning Department.

Guideline Origin

The Planning Department, in consultation with the Planning and Historic Preservation Commissions and city stakeholders, has developed this set of guidelines to direct project applicants and design teams to study and explore ways to combine elements of existing structures and new development. One goal of these guidelines is to provide greater clarity on façade retention which is often mischaracterized as a form of historic preservation. Where the practice of retaining only a façade was once lauded as a preservation success, today we are more aware of how it diminishes history of a building, especially the social and cultural history of San Francisco and its people. These guidelines are not to be applied to historic preservation projects.

Using the Urban Design Guidelines (UDGs) as a base, these more specific guidelines seek to avoid development where existing building elements are retained in a superficial or inauthentic way. These guidelines instead ask projects to define the deeper relevance of maintaining all or parts of an existing building and to both express harmonious relationships and articulate dynamic associations between an existing structure and its role in a larger development.



Application of the Guidelines

The Retained Elements Special Topic Design Guidelines apply in instances where visible parts of existing buildings are incorporated into new development in all zoning districts. They work in concert with the UDGs. Consistency with both sets of guidelines is mandatory in the approval process. Should application of the respective guidelines conflict, these Special Topic Design Guidelines supersede the UDGs.

These guidelines do not apply to properties identified as City Landmarks under Article 10 or Significant or Contributory Buildings under Article 11 of the Planning Code. The application of these guidelines will not achieve conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.



Historic Resource Demolition

The Historic Preservation Commission or planning staff may request, in rare cases, application of these guidelines during the alternatives development process as part of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or as part of impact minimization for a project that proposes demolition of an historic resource. Such an alternative would not be considered rehabilitation. Use of these guidelines would not result in a less than significant impact to historic resources for the purpose of CEQA review.

Guideline Structure

Each guideline is described at the top of the page, followed by a sidebar that explains the rationale for the guideline, a range of means by which one might achieve that guideline, and illustrations that further describe its application. The range of means describes important parameters and methods by which a project can meet the guideline, but is not a prescriptive list. Projects may satisfy the guideline by applying one or all of the means or by suggesting something unique to the project that meets the intent. The guidelines are organized to relate and elaborate with more specificity to the relevant guideline in the UDGs. For example, S1.1 of the Retained Elements Special Topic Design Guidelines is related to S1 of the UDGs.

Note that the examples given under each guideline are being shown to exemplify principles of that specific guideline and are not intended to demonstrate compliance with all other guidelines and standards both inside and outside of this document. All examples are found in San Francisco except as noted on introductory pages for each section.

| GUIDELINE | RECOMMENDED ANALYSIS | RATIONALE | RANGE OF MEANS | EXAMPLE |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| A3.1 HARMONIZE MATERIALS IN NEW DEVELOPMENT WITH RETAINED ELEMENTS | | | | |
| <p>The choice, quality, location, and detailing of materials and openings can greatly enhance the compatibility between new buildings and existing structures. They should feel like a family rather than trying to match or have one part look like an accessory to the other.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » In new construction, express a pattern of structural elements and organizing geometry that extends and relates to the overall rhythm of the existing building » Extend a common architectural expression between existing and new development, such as: frame and infill, volumetric projections, layered volumes, compositional grids, etc. » Intentionally offset or inverse elements in the new development to provide conceptual consistency in the union of the existing and proposed architectural components. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Contrast the material qualities of a new development in specific situations to highlight the existing element. » New facades should not only be harmonious with retained elements but offer their own architectural integrity » Synchronize or extend fenestration and material patterns and proportions in retained elements; such as: deep punched openings, extensive glazed curtainwall, solid/void ratios, align elements between old and new parts even when other elements are more randomized. |  |  |
| <p>Analyze: Look for common window patterns and material types on the existing structure and in the neighborhood.</p> | <p>Use a similar material in a different way to find harmony and intentional difference in architectural expression.</p> | <p>Using a strong contrast of material qualities with a setback can help new development read as an urban layer.</p> | |  |

Weighing the Options

When investigating a new development proposal on a site that includes an existing structure that is not a resource, applicants should:

1. Determine the visual contributions of an existing structure as a component of the broader neighborhood context.
 - » What exterior features establish the public identity of the structure(s)?
 - » Does it include a public use, either currently or formally?
 - » Does it function as an informal visual marker for the neighborhood?
 - » Are there important art elements that are characteristic of the building or neighborhood?
 - » Does the existing structure help establish a pattern of similar buildings in the neighborhood?
 - » Are there successful, similar types of projects in the neighborhood and what do they retain?
 - » Is it of physical interest? If so, does it present features, scales, or qualities not found commonly in contemporary architecture?
2. Technically evaluate the existing structure to see if it can be feasibly integrated.
 - » What is the structural and material condition of the existing structure?
 - » Will its integration contribute important public-serving aspects in the project?
3. Determine the fundamental site relationships, massing, spatial or compositional ideas found in the existing architecture.
 - » How much of the existing structure should be retained to support neighborhood context and use?
 - » Which critical materials, walls, volumetric elements or details that embody the existing structure should be retained?
4. If a new building is proposed in lieu of the existing one, evaluate its replacement.
 - » Are there key interior spaces to be retained in whole or in part?
 - » Using this document, what are the potential design options, and do they find the right balance of public benefits and project objectives?
 - » Is the architecture of the replacement project as good as or superior to the existing structure?
 - » Does the replacement project represent greater physical durability and overall long-term contribution to the neighborhood context?
 - » Does the replacement project express the same level of detail, materials, and response to distinct neighborhood conditions as the existing one?
 - » If the existing building has a formal or informal public function, does the replacement project provide the opportunity for distinction and usability in a similar way?

The answers to the above questions should be studied, considered, and presented in pre-application meetings with neighbors, in Planning Department applications, and at public meetings and hearings.

Historic Resource Demolition

For historic resources, an applicant should only use these guidelines when directed by Planning Department staff or the Historic Preservation Commission. Use of these guidelines is not considered rehabilitation by the Department and would not result in a less than significant impact to historic resources for the purpose of CEQA review.

Glossary

Compatible

Able to exist or occur together without conflict.

Complement

Something that goes well with something.

This document uses this term to express how elements can be adjacent and agreeable in scale, proportion, composition, and type but not identical in style or manner.

Existing element

Part of a building or landscape present on a site.

Harmonize

To be combined or go together in a pleasing way. Like complement, this document uses this term to describe how elements can visually fit together, or make meaningful relationships without being identical or duplicative.

Historicism

Reference or influence of patterns or approaches of the past. False or cursory historicism is often used to suggest an unwarranted or excessive regard of the importance of past styles or a misappropriation or replication of a historic motif that implies it is itself historic.

Horizontal hyphen

A horizontal surface or spacer that is placed between two parts of a building to separate or otherwise clarify a distinction between the two. This element is commonly used to denote an existing structure and new development. A horizontal hyphen may be narrow or wide and is often expressed in a different material than both adjacent volumes. It is often combined

with a small setback to increase its legibility as a change in building volume.

Integrity

The state of being whole and undivided. For these guidelines, architectural integrity refers to a project being internally consistent in all design choices (eg: geometry, materials, form, etc.).

Original features

Parts of a building or building facade that express architectural character that were present when the structure was first built.

Retained element

Part of a building or landscape that already is built on a development site that is included in a new building project on that site. This can include a full facade, a tower or spire, a storefront, a building volume, a mural, a wall, a roof or roof line, or anything that is recognizably used from a previous structure.

Reveal

In a facade, a recess or gap, often in the shape of a "C" in section, made in cladding to indicate a change in material, plane, or "reveal" the edge of something else.

Solid/Void Relationship

The ratio of open space to solid plane within a defined area. In architectural conversation, this term most often references the amount of openings in a front facade.

Streetwall

Combined facades of buildings generally built to the property line facing a street or open space. A

clear streetwall helps define "the urban room" of the public realm. A consistent streetwall that is visually interesting and has active ground floor uses promotes pedestrian activity.

Subordinate

Treat or regard as of lesser importance than something else. In the case of new development on a site with retained elements, an addition to retained elements should be less visually prominent from the public realm in form, material, and texture.

Vertical expansion or vertical addition

An expansion of the building envelop above its present height. Typically, this means adding one or more stories to an existing building.

Vertical hyphen

A vertical surface or spacer that is placed between two parts of a building to separate or otherwise clarify a distinction between the two. This element is often used to denote an existing structure and new development. A vertical hyphen may be short or a full floor or more. It is often combined with a material change and small setback to increase its legibility as a change in building volume.

Volume

A three-dimensional measure of space that comprises a length, a width, and a height. In architecture, a volume can describe a three-dimensional portion of a building or shaped element.

Volumetric

relating to the measurement of volume.



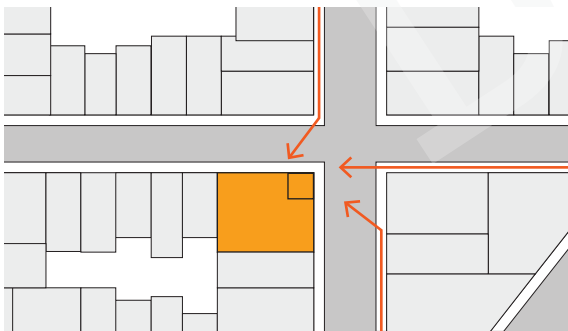
S SITE DESIGN

S1.1 Sustain existing features that define a neighborhood

S2.1 Establish new massing to be compatible with the context

S1.1 SUSTAIN EXISTING FEATURES THAT DEFINE A NEIGHBORHOOD

Buildings often present important and distinct elements that act as landmarks for residents and visitors. Examples include: spires, large signage, clocktowers, murals, gateways, unusual rooftop elements, or other distinct markers.



Analyze: Identify distinct volumes or large design features. Diagram how they are perceived in the neighborhood and how to maintain those vantage points.

- » Retain and highlight interesting roof forms and elements, such as clocktowers, spires, architectural features, fenestration as part of the new building. Maintain their visual presence from key locations and public view corridors.
- » Maintain existing pedestrian pathways and gateways when possible to continue existing pathways, edges, and boundaries in the neighborhood and add new development where volume already exists or naturally participates in the overall massing.
- » Retain partial or fragments of walls only in exceptional circumstances where existing textures, material qualities, or architectural

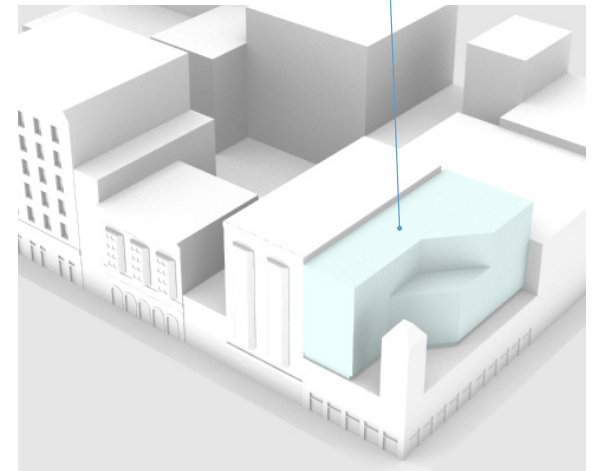


Types of important building elements that mark neighborhoods.

reference produces a distinct neighborhood experience.

- » New volumetric elements can be retained or isolated from other parts of existing structures if they are visually distinctive.
- » Maintain existing murals or art installations when recognized as important to the neighborhood or broader community. This can be done by either leaving them in place or providing a new and sustainable backdrop for their visibility. Provide additional protection for their long-term durability and maintenance.

NEW MASSING IS SCULPTED AROUND THE EXISTING STRUCTURE



Roof types that are more architecturally shaped may require further setbacks and sculpting.

S2.1 ESTABLISH NEW MASSING TO BE COMPATIBLE WITH THE CONTEXT

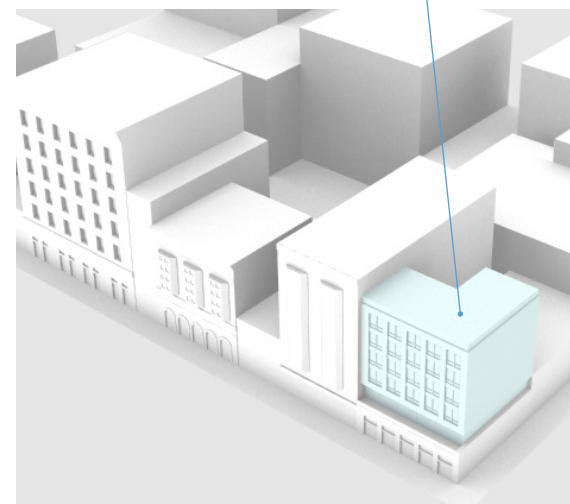
Add new building mass thoughtfully to existing building volumes so that it complements the existing scale, circulation, and forms on the site. This helps new project volumes feel natural to the city and extend familiar environments.

- » Discover the common widths, heights, and proportions of existing massing to see how added volumes can extend or build upon them.
- » At corner sites, substantially retain both sides of existing facades to maintain a reading of the existing volume.
- » Look for natural or subordinate ways to place massing on a site with an existing structure, including underground, alongside, or behind, not just as a vertical addition.
- » Break new massing in proportion with the existing building synchronize new and existing volume.
- » Look at patterns of open space on the block or site to see how volume can complement its use and definition.

NEW MASSING FOLLOWS THE BLOCK PATTERN OF SMALLER FRONTAGES



NEW MASSING FILLS IN AN OPEN CORNER ENHANCING THE BLOCK

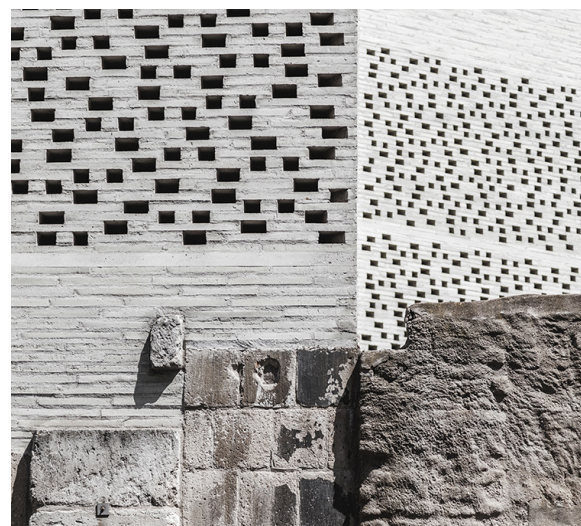
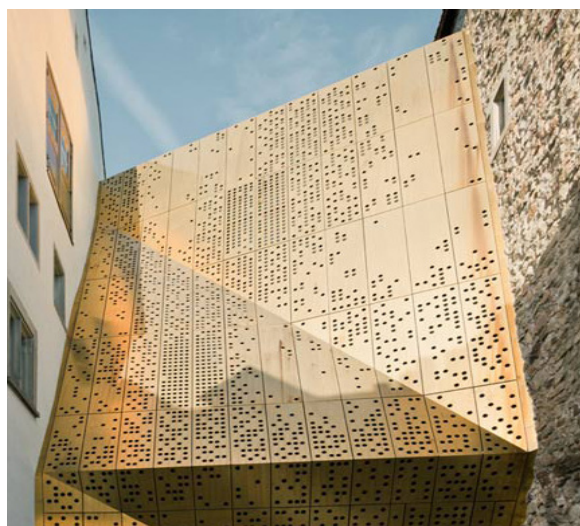
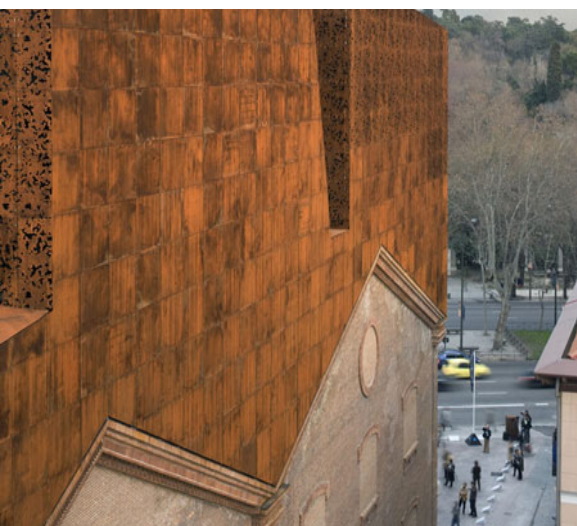
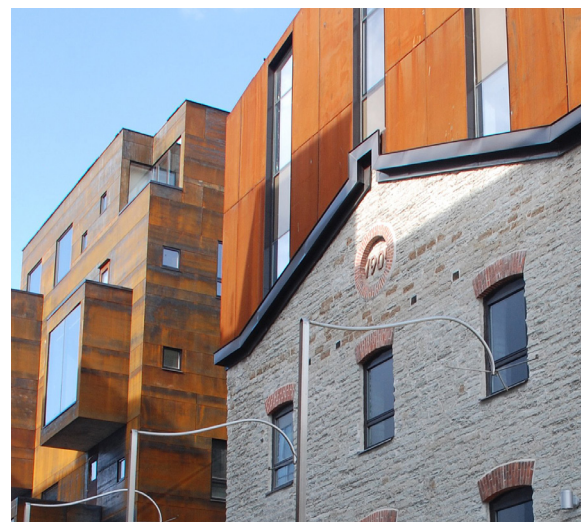


Analyze: Diagram the site volumes. Find common proportions, heights, widths, and open space patterns.



Common massing proportions and logics can help older and newer buildings relate to one another.

Use the additional massing to help a smaller building join the scale and patterns of the block.



A ARCHITECTURE

- A2.1 Modulate new development to support retained massing and façade edges
- A2.2 Articulate a clear relationship between new development and retained elements
- A3.1 Harmonize materials in new development with retained elements
- A6.1 Restore and highlight existing features
- A8.1 Revive and animate retained ground floor elements

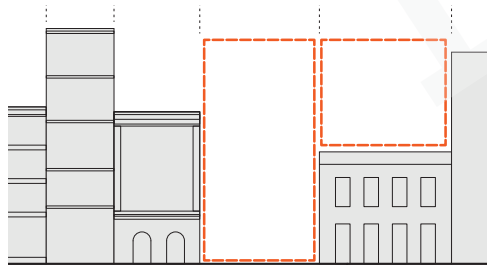
A2.1 MODULATE NEW DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT RETAINED MASSING AND FAÇADE EDGES

Where the existing structure location or streetwall presence varies on a more complex lot, the new development may complement it by stepping back behind important existing features and stepping forward to fill in undesired openness.

- » Avoid enveloping an existing facade with new development when the proposed project has a longer frontage than the retained element. In most cases, new development should only be in (or near) the same plane of the existing facade along one edge of the retained frontage. Consider setbacks along additional edges.
- » Maintain a corner volume of existing fabric where available so that the proportions of the front and side work together to maintain depth and fit the modulation of the block. New development can follow these scales or proportions.
- » Synchronize the break between retained elements and new massing with any longer facades on the new development to harmonize it with neighborhood patterns.
- » Create entries or public open space to highlight the breaks between existing and new masses.
- » Add bay windows, where contextually appropriate for the neighborhood pattern, to help modulate a new facade.

NEW MASSING
COMPLEMENTS THE
SIZE AND SCALE OF
NEARBY BUILDINGS

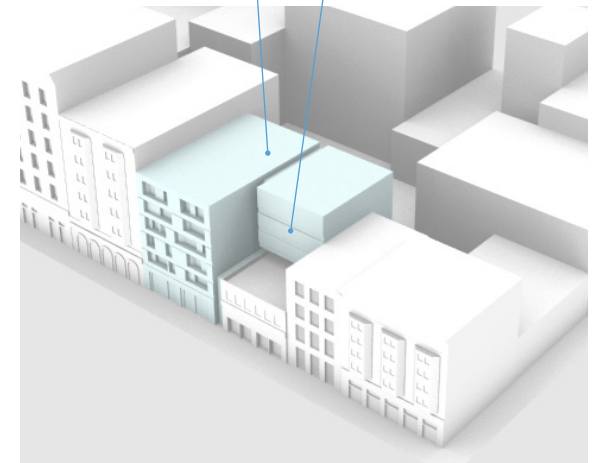
BREAK ADDITIONAL
MASSING TO AVOID
OVERWHELMING
THE RETAINED
FAÇADE



Analyze: Diagram the existing and potential streetwall to find ways to express similar widths and heights.



Evaluate how much of the facade and interior should be retained to maintain a durable use, expression, and presence. Maintain a corner.



Modulating a new facade behind an existing one helps two masses feel like a natural layering of the city.

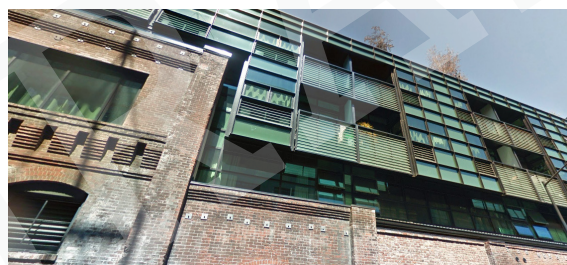
A2.2 ARTICULATE A CLEAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEW DEVELOPMENT AND RETAINED ELEMENTS

Demonstrating a clear or intentional relationship between new and old parts of building helps a viewer to read the more complex layers of a project. This layering of information, or expression of evolution feels natural in a city environment.

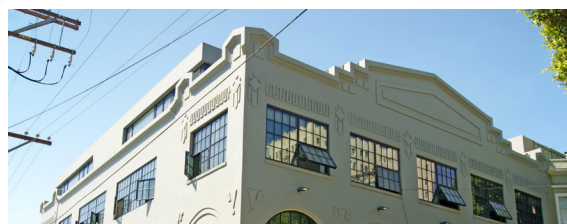


Setbacks and material variation in combination help articulate when different parts of the building were built.

- » New development should be volumetrically distinct from retained elements. Employ a vertical or horizontal hyphen to create a sense of volume change between new development and retained elements. Vertical hyphens should be tall and deep enough that they do not visually collapse from the viewpoint of pedestrians.
- » Contrast material type between an existing wall and a new wall to clarify the use, meaning, access, or construction technique between the two projects. This is especially useful where entry points may be added.



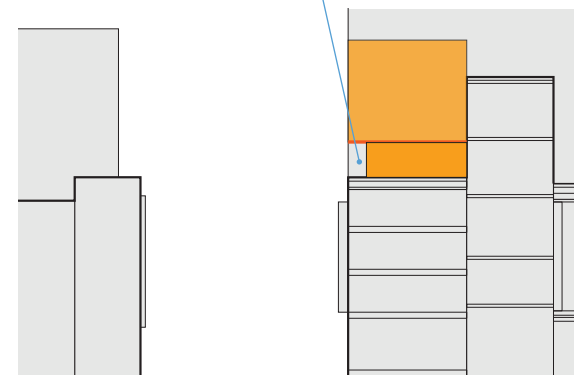
Hyphens can move horizontally and vertically with the profile of the existing structure.



Vertical additions can contextually sit on top of new development by crafting setbacks appropriate to pedestrian viewpoints.

- » Interior spatial volumes defined by existing elements should be distinct from those defined by new development. Retained elements should naturally define, scale, and coordinate with the volumes that sit behind them.
- » For unique locations, such as abandoned industrial sites, retention of features, such as cobblestones, rail spurs, or existing “ruins” should highlight and authentically demonstrate their distinct landscape and organic edges.
- » Avoid minor or architecturally-scaled hyphens or setbacks that only highlight an existing facade as a “surface.”

A VERTICAL HYPHEN
AS A FULL FLOOR

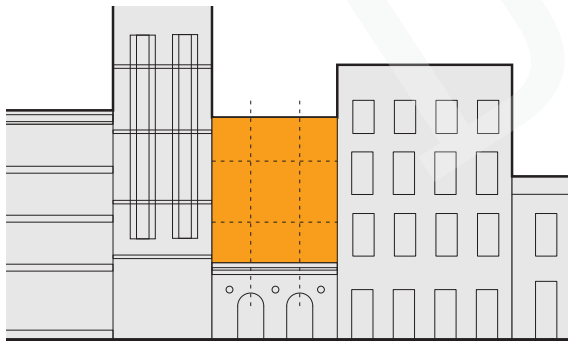


Indent or setback new floors that sit above retained elements to highlight the change in structure, space, and age of new construction.

A3.1 HARMONIZE MATERIALS IN NEW DEVELOPMENT WITH RETAINED ELEMENTS

The choice, quality, location, and detailing of materials and openings can greatly enhance the compatibility between new buildings and existing structures. They should feel like a family rather than trying to match or have one part look like an accessory to the other.

- » In new construction, express a pattern of structural elements and organizing geometry that extends and relates to the overall rhythm of the existing building
- » Extend a common architectural expression between existing and new development, such as: frame and infill, volumetric projections, layered volumes, compositional grids, etc.
- » Intentionally offset or inverse elements in the new development to provide conceptual consistency in the union of the existing and proposed architectural components.
- » Contrast the material qualities of a new development in specific situations to highlight the existing element.
- » New facades should not only be harmonious with retained elements but offer their own architectural integrity.
- » Synchronize or extend fenestration and material patterns and proportions in retained elements; such as: deep punched openings, extensive glazed curtainwall, solid/void ratios, align elements between old and new parts even when other elements are more randomized.



Analyze: Look for common window patterns and material types on the existing structure and in the neighborhood.



Use a similar material in a different way to find harmony and intentional difference in architectural expression.



Using a strong contrast of material qualities with a setback can help new development read as an urban layer.

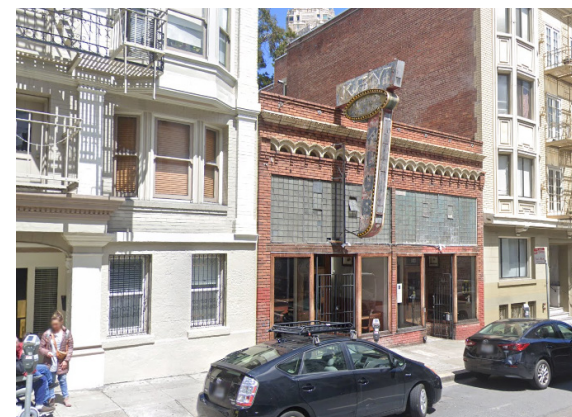
A6.1 RESTORE AND HIGHLIGHT EXISTING FEATURES

Over time, many existing buildings have been modified to accommodate new uses and needs. When renovated or incorporated into a new project, retained elements should be restored or re-animated, further enhancing authenticity and cohesion.



Analyze: review historic drawings or photographs and document previous openings or building elements on the existing fabric.

- » Some interior spaces, such as those within churches, warehouses, assembly halls, or other publicly-accessible spaces, contain details and spatial characteristics that convey a building's original use. Design sensitive transitions from the retained and new building elements to maintain this connection.
- » Design lighting to accentuate the important aspects of the retained element. Consider how it is legible during the day and night.
- » Open previous window or door openings to revive the originally intended wall transparency or operability.
- » On exterior wall surfaces, remove later layers and restore original cladding surfaces, where possible and when desirable, as some surfaces have acquired significance or character in their own right.
- » Cornices are an example of an architectural feature that should be restored, retained, or recreated. 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. Ghosting, scarring, and other visual evidence may help explain past alterations.
- » Repair or restore details or distinctive architectural features, such as decorative entry or rooftop features, to original shape and /or texture.
- » Replace decorative features that were removed through an authentic reproduction. In all features that are restored or replaced, use original or similar material types and finishes.
- » Provide moldings, trim, or other original features surrounding windows that have been previously removed or altered.
- » To ensure a harmonious relationship with the overall new development, all mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and interior partitions should not visually interfere with the existing building's character.



Restoration of existing elements, such as prism glass, can greatly contribute to character and context.

A8.1 REVIVE AND ANIMATE RETAINED GROUND FLOOR ELEMENTS

The ground floor is often a key part of retained elements and contributes to active revival of the building on its site. To avoid a superficial appearance, it is important that the interior space and use of ground floors match well to the exterior building façade.

- » Restore existing storefronts to maximize transparency, visibility into the depth of the commercial space, and physical access. Look for infilled masonry frames where material was added for easy places to restore visibility.
- » Include volumetric entries to support the original intent of storefront access and window shopping.
- » Restore storefront openings including materials, configuration, and finishes. The ground floor interior should reflect the character of the existing structure and be distinct from any new development.
- » Include hierarchy in building entries so that residential and commercial openings are visually distinct.
- » Include and reference the original scale and types of signage in new sign programs.
- » Explore uniform lighting strategies that support highlighting special character elements on the facade visible to pedestrians.

SUPPORT
ORIGINAL
ENTRIES

OPEN PANEL AREAS OF
THE ORIGINAL FACADE
THAT WERE FILLED IN

LOOK FOR ORIGINAL
AREAS OF SIGNAGE



Analyze: use original drawings and physical evidence to evaluate the restoration of the ground floor elevation and plan.

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|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
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