

Tower District Specific Plan Update | DRAFT Objectives and Policies

Conservation & Historic Preservation

**Asterisks indicate where policies are adapted from current Specific Plan*

CHP 1: Recognize and protect the Tower District's historic and cultural identity.

CHP 1.1: Develop a historic context statement for the Tower District. KEEP

A comprehensive historic context statement should be developed by a qualified cultural resource professional, which describes: the district's physical, social, and cultural development; identifies physical patterns associated with those developments; and recommends eligibility criteria and integrity thresholds for the designation of historic resources. The context statement should provide a consistent foundation for decisions about the identification, evaluation, and designation of historic properties in the community. The historic context statement should be developed in accordance with the standards and guidance provided by the National Park Service and the California Office of Historic Preservation. The historic context statement should be developed with the input of community members, local historic and cultural organizations, local social and educational institutions, and should consider the large body of previous historic resources studies developed for the City of Fresno, including studies within the Tower District.

Recognize that the historic context statement will be used to evaluate whether a potential historic resource should be designated, and that, by identifying character defining features within subdistricts, the statements can guide the development of context-appropriate development standards and guidelines. Also note that the historic context statement should address contributions by persons and populations that have previously been overlooked or marginalized, such as women, communities of color, and the LGBTQ+ community.

- Discussion to add new policy: The City should maintain a properly trained historic preservation employee and maintain the City's certified local government standard.
- Discussion on former survey of Tower District (done for original Tower Plan) and list of historic resources.

CHP 1.2: Protect the Tower District's cultural history and resources. KEEP

Using historic context statements as a guide, continue to apply standards and procedures that regulate the alteration of designated historic resources, whether buildings and/or site features, and seek to prevent their loss. Encourage the character of infill development to be compatible within its historic context. Consider the adoption of context-appropriate design standards, in recognition that some new housing projects may not be exempt from discretionary review. Note that incompatible new construction could distract from historic buildings, especially when adjacent to historic buildings, and could alter the character within historic districts. Also reinforce the historic character of the Tower District public streets and open spaces, by establishing design standards for features like lighting, furnishings, trees, and landscape.

- Discussion to add policy to reinstate historic resources, structures and amenities which had previously been removed.

CHP 1.3*: Conduct new historic resources survey(s) of the Tower District. **KEEP**

Update historic resource surveys for the area. An updated historic resource survey should be used to establish a new baseline for historic preservation within the Tower District.

[Adapted from Goal 4, Objective 1, Policy 1.]

CHP 1.4*: Revive designation efforts for previously proposed historic districts. **REVISE**

The 1991 Tower District Specific Plan proposed several areas as potential historic districts that have not been formally listed or designated in the intervening years. The identified potential historic districts include:

- Adoline-Palm District (proposed)
- Terrace Gardens District (proposed)
- Wilson's North Fresno Tract District (proposed)
- Lower Fulton-Van Ness (proposed)
- Bungalow Court District (proposed)
- Area bounded by Olive and Van Ness, down to Elizabeth and San Pablo – east of Van Ness
- South of Belmont, West of Broadway

Prioritize these areas for historic resource surveys and the evaluation of designated and potential resources, to provide for their potential designation as historic districts.

[Adapted from Goal 4, Objective 2.]

CHP 1.5*: Evaluate designation of potential resources. **REVISE**

Using historic resource survey(s) and community engagement for guidance, identify and evaluate properties that may be eligible for historic designation. These properties should be researched for their historic significance and, if eligible, nominated for designation accordingly. Properties located in the Tower District that have been discussed as potential historic resources include but are not limited to the following:

- Historic hitching posts,
- Van Ness Avenue "pineapple" streetlights,
- Historic signage, and
- Shrine of St. Terese Church and School.
- Sidewalk WPA stamps
- Stone gateway features on Palm and Van Ness
- Granite curbs

[Adapted from Goal 4, Objective 2.]

CHP 1.6: Highlight assets important to community identity. **KEEP**
Buildings, structures, objects, and sites that are not eligible for listing or designation as historic resources may still contribute to the character and identity of the community. These can include:

- Buildings that house or once housed long-term local businesses or institutions,
- Neighborhood-serving commercial nodes such as Weldon and Echo avenues near Fresno High School, the intersection of Van Ness and Floradora (Van Ness Village), and Fulton Street (south of Olive), and
- Street features such as streetlights, street signs, street trees, sidewalk parkways, and street medians not distinguished as historically significant.
- Recognize historic businesses and institutions which continue to operate in the district.

Although assets such as these may not be eligible for listing as historic resources, they can be highlighted for special planning consideration of strategies for maintaining these assets or aspects of these assets that contribute to the identity of the Tower District.

CHP 1.7: Elevate the visibility of historic elements in the Tower District. **KEEP**
Actively promote historic resources in the Tower District through walking tours, brochures, online resources, interpretive signage, plaques and displays. Use the District's rich history as a draw for economic activity, including historic tourism, and community enjoyment.

CHP 1.8: Heritage Trust and Historic Preservation Fund. **REVISE**
Study the creation of a City of Fresno Heritage Trust and Historic Preservation Fund to support acquisition, rehabilitation, and maintenance of historic resources. Evaluate the feasibility of a right-of-first refusal program for the Trust to acquire historic properties.

- **Discussion on who controls the Heritage Trust and Historic Preservation Fund**

CHP 1.9: Historic museum. **KEEP**
Consider supporting the establishment of a museum in the Tower District, representing the Tower District, using an historic building or buildings as an interactive place of learning.

- **Discussion to explore potential nexus with proposed Tower District library.**

CHP 2: *Maintain and enhance neighborhood character-defining elements.*

CHP 2.1*: Provide historic preservation information, training and accountability. **REVISE**
Provide information and training to help community members, new buyers, real estate professionals, government officials, staff, and other stakeholders to better understand the benefits, responsibilities, and potential difficulties of owning and managing historic properties. Work to preserve historic properties that have fallen into disrepair due to the neglect of their owners. Information **readily available** and

helpful to community members should include the following:

- Basics regarding historic context, significance, integrity, and eligibility for historic listing on both local and national registers.
- Processes and requirements for nomination and designation of historic resources,
- Conformance with existing preservation standards and guidelines,
- Available preservation incentives including Mills Act contracts, use of the California Historic Building Code, and technical assistance,
- Environmental benefits of reusing existing materials and infrastructure, and
- Potential economic benefits of preservation, by creating new opportunities for employment, tourism, education, and cultural activities.
- Education to City leaders, community members, real estate professionals and other stakeholders on the value of historic preservation

[Adapted from Goal 4, Objective 1, Policy 2.]

- Discussion to also include information about the Specific Plan and design guidelines district-wide and distinction between design review for non-designated properties and HPC for designated properties.

CHP 2.2*: Protect and maintain existing character-defining streetscape elements. **REVISE**
Provide protection and maintenance, including replacement, when necessary, of existing character-defining streetscape elements such as streetlights, tree lawns and street trees in addition to elements as referenced in Policy 1.5.

- Discussion to preserve streets with historic character.

[Retained Goal 2, Objective 1, Policy 3.]

CHP 2.3: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in historic properties. **KEEP**
Work with the Historic Preservation Commission and the Tower Design Review Committee to create ADU design standards to maintain ADU compatibility within historic districts.

- Discussion to consider additional pre-approved ADU construction plans that complement the varied architecture of Tower homes.

CHP 2.4: Affordable housing. **KEEP**
Work with affordable housing developers to consider acquiring historic and/or older vacant buildings for the creation of affordable, multifamily housing through appropriate modernization and adaptive reuse.

- Discussion on further resources and process on implementation of this policy

CHP 3: ***Use zoning and design standards to support conservation of historic neighborhood character.***

CHP 3.1*: Refine design standards. **KEEP**
Work with the Historic Preservation Commission and the Tower Design Review Committee to craft design standards and guidelines as may be used for historic properties and districts that conserve historic character, while minimizing the impact

on economically vulnerable homeowners and renters. Recognize that California law has eliminated discretionary authority over the review of qualifying multifamily housing and residential solar projects and that, in such instances, objective standards may be needed to maintain compatibility.

- Discussion to include window replacement in this provision.

[Adapted from Goal 4, Objective 1, Policy 3.]

CHP 3.2*: Pedestrian-oriented commercial development. **KEEP**
Restrict opportunities for development of suburban-style, strip commercial uses. Establish development standards that support the creation of new and maintenance of existing pedestrian-oriented storefronts, by regulating ground-level use, entry, and window patterns.

- Discussion to ensure drive-throughs are prohibited in Tower
- Discussion to include regulations for commercial development to comply with the character of Tower District

[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 1, Policy 1.]

CHP 3.3: Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. **KEEP**
Continue to establish streamlined approval processes, clear standards, guidance, and example plans for the reuse of historic buildings to allow alterations that maintain the building's historic significance and integrity. Standards should address typical reuse strategies such as additions to historic buildings, adaptive reuse of historic buildings for new uses, conversion of historic single-family properties for multi-family use, and the construction of ADUs. These standards can be tailored to specific property types within the Tower District.

See chapter 3 Land Use for more detailed policies.

CHP 4: *Coordinate plans and programs of the Tower District and Downtown Fresno to emphasize the historic connection.*

CHP 4.1*: Connection to Downtown. **KEEP**
In all facets of development including streetscape, land-use and urban form, reinforce the historic relationship between Fulton and Van Ness Corridor and Downtown, through building form, street design, and signage.

[Adapted from Goal 1, Objective 1, Policy 1.]

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Add policy "when necessary, pursue Code Enforcement to ensure historic resources are adequately maintained"