

Chapter 3:
IDENTIFYING HISTORIC PROPERTIES

**OBJECTIVE 1: IDENTIFYING PROPERTIES
POTENTIALLY WARRANTING PRESERVATION**

To adopt an objective, consistent, well-documented, and widely-accepted method for identifying which properties warrant, or may warrant, preservation effort and for determining the relative importance of each of these properties so that preservation efforts may be appropriately gauged.

For an effective historic preservation program, properties which may warrant preservation must first be identified. The usual process is a historical and architectural survey or inventory.

The City has been conducting the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey since 1979 and conducted the Citywide Preliminary Historical and Architectural Inventory in 1986 (See Chapter 2 and Technical Report, Chapter 4, Section F.5). However, neither survey covers all properties in the City and neither has been formally adopted as the City's official method for determining which properties may warrant preservation. Moreover, the two surveys only provide the information necessary to make preservation determinations; they do not make the determinations themselves.

The following policies and actions use these surveys to determine which properties may warrant preservation effort and list the steps necessary to complete and maintain the surveys.

**POLICY 1.1: HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL
INVENTORY**

The City will establish and maintain a Historical and Architectural Inventory which covers all of Oakland. The Inventory will investigate all individual pre-1946 properties and areas throughout the City and will evaluate each property and area according to the table entitled "Historical and Architectural Inventory Rating System". The Inventory will consist of a Reconnaissance Survey which will cover the entire City as quickly as possible and an Intensive Survey that will perform detailed research and evaluation. The Reconnaissance Survey will serve as an interim Inventory for properties not yet covered by the Intensive Survey.

Policy's 1.1's "Historical and Architectural Rating System" is shown in Table 3-1 and described further in Appendix C. It is the same system now used by the existing Cultural Heritage Survey and Citywide Preliminary Historical and Architectural Inventory. The system uses five tiers (A-B-C-D-E) to rate individual properties and two tiers (**Areas of Primary Importance**, and **Areas of Secondary Importance**, or **APIs** and **ASIs**) to rate multiple properties and districts. Individual properties can have both "existing ratings" and "contingency ratings". Properties located in APIs and ASIs can be either "contributors", "noncontributors" or "potential contributors" to the API or ASI.

The five ratings and the bold face terms above are used throughout the Historic Preservation Element and are a primary basis for most of the Element's policies and actions. See Table 3-1 and Appendix C for definitions of these ratings and terms. Appendix C includes photographs showing examples of properties receiving various ratings.

TABLE 3-1: HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY RATING SYSTEM.
(Incorporated by reference into Policy 1.1)

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY RATINGS

A - Highest Importance. Properties of exceptional historical or architectural value which are clearly eligible individually for the National Register of Historical Places. Properties generally appropriate for an "A" rating include those which are outstanding examples of an important style, type, or convention, or which are intimately associated with a person, organization, event, or historical pattern of extreme importance at the local level or of major importance at the state or national level.

B - Major Importance. Properties of major historical or architectural value, but less important than those rated "A". Although most Bs are individually eligible for the National Register, they may be somewhat marginal candidates. Properties generally appropriate for a "B" rating include those which are especially fine examples of an important style, type, or convention or which are intimately associated with a person, organization, event, or historical pattern of major importance at the local level or of moderate importance at the state or national level.

C - Secondary Importance. Properties having sufficient historical or visual/architectural value to warrant limited recognition but which do not appear individually eligible for the National Register. Properties generally appropriate for a "C" rating include those which are superior or visually important examples of a particular style, type, or convention and most buildings which were constructed prior to 1906.

D - Minor Importance. Properties which are not individually distinctive but which are typical or representative examples of an important style, type, convention or historical pattern. The great majority of Oakland's pre-1946 properties fall into the "D" category.

E - Of No Particular Interest. Properties which are not representative of any important style, type, convention, or historical pattern and are visually undistinguished.

* - **Not Rated.** Properties built or established after 1945. Also pre-1946 properties that have been totally and irreversibly remodeled since 1945.

Existing Ratings and Contingency Ratings

Properties having conditions or circumstances which could change significantly in the future are assigned two ratings. The first, or "existing" rating, shown by an upper case letter, describes the property under present circumstances. The second, or "contingency" rating, shown by a lower case letter, describes the property under possible future circumstances.

The following properties normally receive both ratings: (i) properties which have been altered in a manner adversely affecting their Character-Defining Elements but which would receive higher ratings if the alterations were reversed; (ii) occasional post-1945 properties which are "Not Rated" because they are too new, but which are likely "A" or "B" candidates when they are older; and (iii) properties believed to have historical importance which has not been documented, but which would receive higher ratings if such documentation becomes available.

For example, a property rated "E/b" would be considered an "E" in its present condition or circumstance, but a possible "B" under a specific future circumstance such as an altered property that is later restored.

MULTIPLE PROPERTY RATINGS -- AREAS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE AND AREAS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE

Areas of Primary Importance (APIs) are historically or visually cohesive areas or property groups which usually contain a high proportion of individual properties with ratings of "C" or higher and appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places either as a district or as a historically-related complex. At least two-thirds of the properties in an API must be "contributors" to the API, i.e. they reflect the API's principal historical or architectural themes and have not had their character changed by major alterations.

Properties which do not contribute to an API because of alterations, but which could contribute if the alterations are at least partly reversed, are "potential contributors" to the API. Properties which do not reflect the API themes are "noncontributors".

Areas of Secondary Importance (ASIs) are similar to APIs, except:

- potential contributors to the ASI are counted for purposes of the two-thirds threshold as well as contributors; and
- ASIs do not appear eligible for the National Register.

By adopting this rating system, Policy 1.1 establishes the existing surveys as the City's official Historical and Architectural Inventory. The "Reconnaissance Survey" referred to in Policy 1.1 is the Citywide Preliminary Historical and Architectural Inventory, while the "Intensive Survey" is the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey.

Policy 1.1 is a commitment to complete both the Reconnaissance and Intensive Surveys. The Reconnaissance Survey can be finished fairly quickly, but the Intensive Survey will require a much longer period, perhaps 10-15 years.

ACTION 1.1.1: RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY

Complete the Reconnaissance Survey.

Completing the Reconnaissance Survey will require:

- (a) surveying the relatively small part of Oakland that was not included in the original 1986 Survey; and
- (b) photographing properties receiving existing or contingency ratings of "C" or higher or located in APIs or ASIs. The photographs will provide the primary basis for the Survey's ratings and will document properties which could later be altered or demolished.

ACTION 1.1.2: INTENSIVE SURVEY

Develop a long range plan and schedule for completing the Intensive Survey, including a priority list of properties and areas to be surveyed.

The priority list should be based on the Reconnaissance Survey results and on whether an area or class of properties may be threatened. The plan should involve community and business groups, other City departments and official bodies such as the Landmarks Board and City Planning Commission.

ACTION 1.1.3: INVENTORY DATABASE, LISTS AND MAPS

Prepare and maintain a comprehensive computerized database, lists and set of maps of properties included in the Reconnaissance and Intensive Surveys.

The database will be developed concurrently with completion of the Reconnaissance Survey (Action 1.1.1). The database will be organized by address or location and, for each property, show the Reconnaissance or Intensive Survey rating; National Register status; Landmark, Preservation District or other local designation status; year constructed or established; the architect, designer and/or builder, if known; identified interior spaces of major significance, if any; and other information as appropriate. The database should be incorporated into the proposed citywide land-use database (see Action 5.1.7).

The database will be used to generate a wide variety of lists of surveyed properties. The most important list would show properties receiving existing or contingency ratings of "C" or higher and properties located in APIs or ASIs. These properties are identified for possible preservation efforts by Policy 1.2 below and Policies 2.2 and 2.5 in Chapter 4. Other lists could show properties designed by a particular architect; those receiving "A", "B" or other specified ratings; and those representing "special development opportunities", e.g. vacant noncontributing parcels appropriate for new infill development in APIs or ASIs, or altered buildings which would have a better appearance if restored to their original or historic design.

The database and lists should be supplemented by a system of easily reproducible citywide maps. The maps should show all individual properties with existing or contingency ratings of "C" or higher and all properties located in APIs or ASIs. The maps should be prepared as part of the City's proposed computerized Geographic Information System (GIS).

ACTION 1.1.4: UPDATING THE INVENTORY

Establish a process for updating the Reconnaissance and Intensive Surveys as new information is obtained and to reflect changes to surveyed properties.

There is presently no way to monitor demolitions, alterations, and other changes to surveyed properties. These changes sometimes significantly affect a property's character and can modify the property's Survey ratings.

The City's computerized Permit Tracking System, if linked to the Historical and Architectural Inventory database, would assist the updating process.

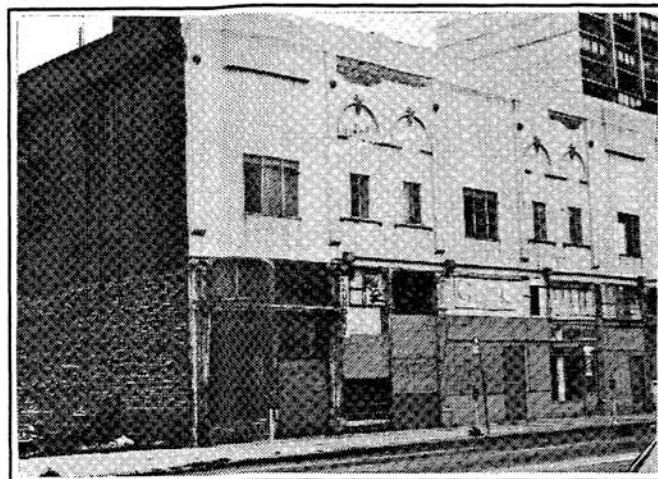
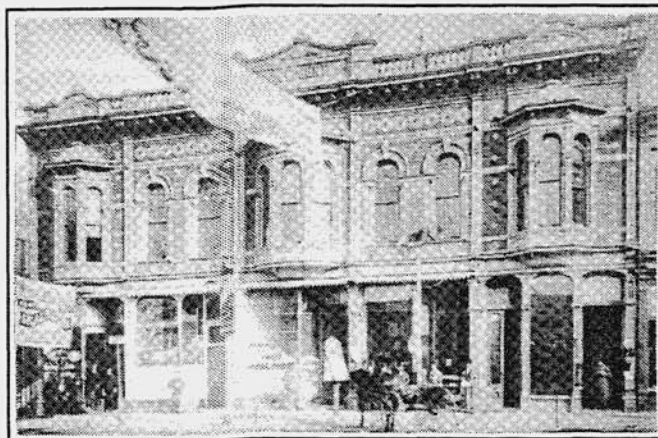
POLICY 1.2: POTENTIAL DESIGNATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES

The City considers any property receiving an existing or contingency rating from the Reconnaissance or Intensive Surveys of "A" (highest importance), "B" (major importance), or "C" (secondary importance) and all properties determined by the Surveys to contribute or potentially contribute to an Area of Primary or Secondary Importance to warrant consideration for possible preservation. Unless already designated as Landmarks, Preservation Districts, or Heritage properties pursuant to Policy 1.3, such properties will be called "Potential Designated Historic Properties".

This policy describes the specific minimum significance thresholds for properties which may warrant preservation effort by the City.

The thresholds are those most consistent with the broad scope of Chapter's 2's Historic Preservation Goals. The "C" rating is the minimum threshold because "C's" have superior historic, architectural, or aesthetic value and are numerous enough to significantly influence the City's character in the manner envisioned by the Goals. "C's" include most pre-1906 properties including most Victorians. Some are borderline National Register candidates.

Treating contingency "A's", "B's" and "C's" according to their potential value if restored recognizes the design and development opportunities presented by these properties and the major role their restoration could have in Oakland's revitalization. Including API and ASI contributors and potential contributors will promote preservation of Oakland's more distinctive districts and neighborhoods.



Development opportunities presented by remodeled properties: Leimert Block, 458-466 8th Street. Italianate Victorian built 1873-74 (top), poorly remodeled in 1950s (middle) and restored in 1980s (bottom).

The generalized distribution of Potential Designated Historic Properties is shown in Figure 3-1.

ACTION 1.2.1: LIST OF POTENTIAL DESIGNATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Prepare a list of Potential Designated Historic Properties. Ensure that the list's information is available to the public.

Potential Designated Historic Properties will be included in Action 1.1.3's Historical and Architectural Inventory database and will also be available as a separate list. The list will be kept at the Permit Counter, and be readily available to the public. The list will be consulted along with Landmark, Preservation District and Heritage Property designations, as part of the Zoning staff's response to requests for how a property is zoned. This will help ensure that property owners and developers are aware of whether the property might be considered historic.

POLICY 1.3: DESIGNATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES

The City will designate significant older properties which definitively warrant preservation as Landmarks, Preservation Districts or Heritage Properties. The designations will be based on a combination of Historical and Architectural Inventory Ratings, National Register of Historical Places criteria, and special criteria for Landmarks and Preservation District eligibility. Landmarks, properties which contribute or potentially contribute to Preservation Districts, and Heritage Properties will be called "Designated Historic Properties".

The designation procedures and specific designation criteria for Landmarks and Preservation Districts are in Chapter 4, Policies 2.2 and 2.3.

The Heritage Property designation replaces the preservation study list (see discussion in Chapter 2). The designation procedures and specific designation criteria for Heritage Properties are in Chapter 4, Policy 2.5.

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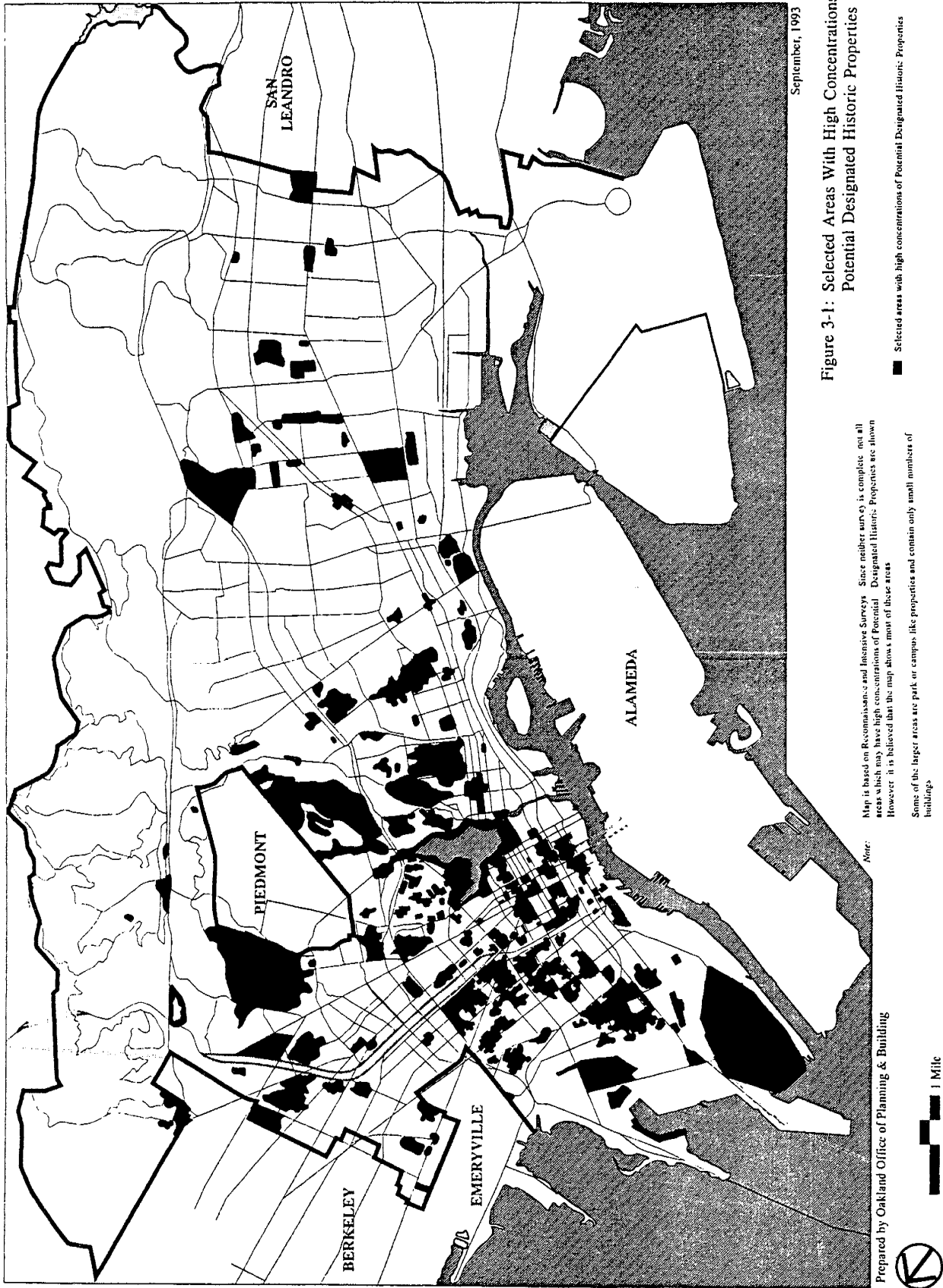


Figure 3-1: Selected Areas With High Concentrations of Potential Designated Historic Properties

NOTE: This map was prepared in September 1993, based upon data available at that time. It may contain errors and may not be complete. Circumstances may have changed since 1993. Updated information is available from the Planning and Zoning Division of the Community and Economic Development Agency.