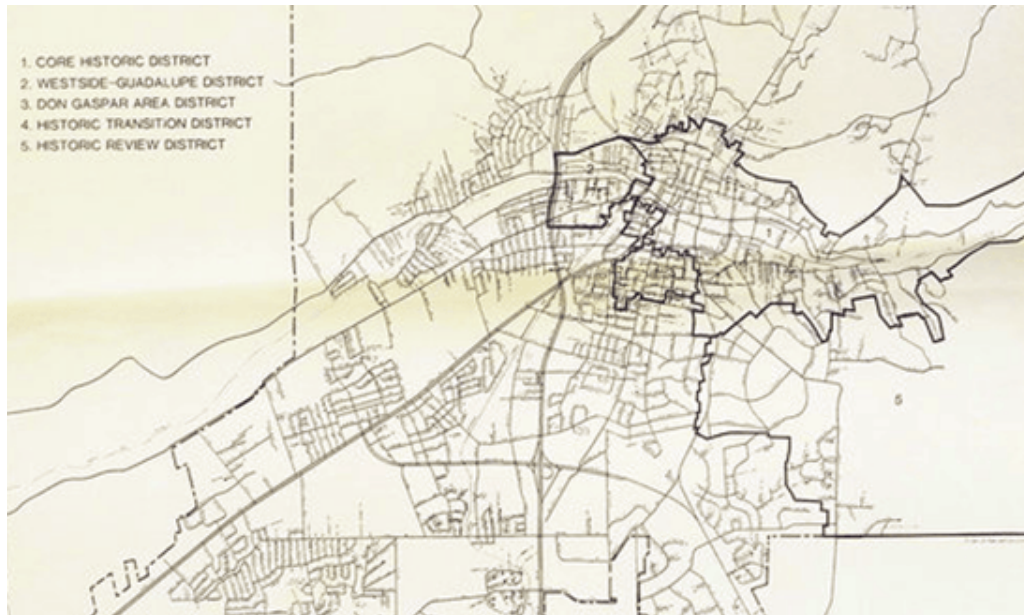


A SENSE OF TIME AND PLACE: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN SANTA FE (Part 6)

Description



Part 6: The Additional Historic Districts

The historic ordinance as enacted in 1957 created only a single historic district; however, it also provided for the designation of additional historic districts in the future. Eligible for such designation are:

• sites, buildings, streets and areas that merit careful preservation, and improvement or alteration only in keeping with their existing character or to restore their older character. Such districts will be those of historical interest or that display the character of Old Santa Fe, or both.

[1]

This description is consistent with the National Register of Historic Places description of historic districts as possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

In 1983, the city exercised its authority and designated four additional historic districts: the Historic Review District; the Historic Transition District; the Don Gaspar Area Historic District; and the Westside-Guadalupe District. Each of these four districts has a different character than that of the original core historic district (renamed the Downtown and Eastside Historic District), and thus each district has a different set of design standards regulating construction. The character of each district and the applicable design standards are as follows.

The Historic Review District

The Historic Review District is located to the east and south of the core historic district. It is a fairly large area geographically, but due to its largely mountainous terrain it is much less developed than the historic area of the Santa Fe river region. The boundaries of this district encompass the area of St. John's College and Museum Hill, as well as much of the Old Pecos Trail and Old Santa Fe Trail areas leading into the city.

The *Historical District Handbook* published by the city planning department in 1996 describes this district as follows:

The Historic Review District is generally located in the southeastern portion of the City. Until the middle part of this century, much of this land remained vacant and undeveloped. With the exception of a handful of early structures, the area had little in the way of architectural precedent. It was considered a visually important area, however, due to its close proximity to the Canyon Road, Acequia Madre and Camino del Monte Sol neighborhoods, due to the fact that is where the historic Santa Fe Trail entered the city, and due to the existence of several regionally significant museums.^[3]

As this description indicates, the Historic Review District is less of a true historic district, and more of a buffer zone. As the city's general plan puts it, "the rise in development of the area, its close proximity to the historic Eastside, and the existence of major entryways into the city gave cause for it to be established as a historic district so as to ensure visual compatibility with older areas of Santa Fe."^[4]

In furtherance of this purpose, the ordinance mandates the appearance of adobe construction in this district:

In order to emulate traditional Santa Fe architecture and construction traditions, it is intended that structures be designed to appear essentially as structures with massive walls which are defined as being built or appearing to be built of adobe construction, wall thickness appearing massive in relation to wall height, and where applicable, the depths of windows, doors and entry opening showing the massiveness of the structure.^[5]

In addition to this general standard, the ordinance also specifies that buildings within this district must comply with the following specific standards:

- Publicly visible exterior walls are to be made of block, stucco, or stone.
- Materials such as aluminum siding, metal panels, mirrored glass, unstuccoed masonry are not allowed.
- The color is to be predominantly brown, tans and earth tones.
- Buildings are to appear to be "wall dominated."
- Flat, gabled, shed, and hipped roofs are allowed, but not folded plate, hyperbolic, mansard or red tile roofs.
- Cantilevers are not allowed except over projecting vigas, beams or wood corbels, or as part of the roof.
- Arches are discouraged except in freestanding walls.
- Wall thickness is to appear massive in relation to wall height, with the depths of window and door openings showing the massiveness of the structure.

These design standards are very similar to those governing "Recent Santa Fe Style" in the core historic district. Taken together, the intent of the ordinance is clear that buildings within the Historic Review District are to harmonize with traditional adobe buildings by also appearing to be made of adobe and employing the same vocabulary of massing, materials, and color.

The Historic Transition District

The Historic Transition District is a small area encompassing the streets located around the railyard area of Santa Fe. The city's *Historical Districts Handbook* describes the history and character of this district as follows:

The area now designated as the Historic Transition District was originally subdivided during the 1880s as a speculative response to the arrival of Santa Fe's first railroad. Although a number of commercial and residential buildings were constructed, primarily in the newly introduced eastern styles, most of the lots in this area remained vacant well into the 1990s.^[6] During the thirties, forties and fifties, property along streets like Guadalupe, Sandoval and Montezuma became home to car dealerships, auto repair shops and a diverse assortment of commercial and light industrial uses. Consequently, though a few historically significant structures still remain, there is little architectural continuity in the area today.^[6]

As this description indicates, this district does not have a strongly defined historic character. Nonetheless, "because of the area's important role in the history and development of Santa Fe, because of its proximity to downtown Santa Fe and the rest of the Historic District, and because redevelopment of the district is inevitable," this area was designated as a historic district in order to "assure a degree of continuity between this area and downtown."^[7] Thus, much like the Historic Review District, this district functions more like a buffer zone than a true historic district.

It is not surprising, then, that the Historic Transition District is subject to the same requirement that traditional Santa Fe styles be emulated. City Code Â§ 14-5.2(G)(3)(b) provides:

In order to emulate traditional Santa Fe architecture and construction traditions, it is intended that structures be designed to appear essentially as structures with massive walls. Structures with massive walls are defined as being built or appearing to be built of adobe construction, wall thickness appearing massive in relation to wall height, and where applicable, the depths of windows, doors and entry opening showing the massiveness of the structure. Solid wall space shall be greater in any facade than window or door space combined.

And the specific standards governing this district are virtually the same as for the Historic Review District:

- Publicly visible exterior walls are made of block, stucco, or stone.
- Materials such as aluminum siding, metal panels, mirrored glass, unstuccoed masonry are not allowed.
- The color of stuccoed buildings is to be predominantly brown, tans and earth tones.
- Buildings appear to be "wall dominated."
- Flat, gabled, shed, and hipped roofs are allowed, but not folded plate, hyperbolic, mansard or red tile roofs.
- Cantilevers are not allowed except over projecting vigas, beams or wood corbels, or as part of the roof.
- Arches are discouraged except in freestanding walls.
- Wall thickness is to appear massive in relation to wall height, with the depths of window and door openings showing the massiveness of the structure.

The Don Gaspar Area Historic District

The Don Gaspar Area Historic District is a residential area bordered by the Capital Complex and Paseo de Peralta on the north, Old Santa Fe Trail on the east, Don Cubero Avenue on the west, and Coronado Road on the south. This area was designated a historic district in 1983 because it represents "three distinct periods in Santa Fe's architecture: the era of the traditional adobe, the influx of eastern styles and materials, and the revival of the

Pueblo Spanish stylistic tradition.^[8] The history and character of the district are described in the *Historical District Handbook* as follows:

The Don Gaspar area is predominantly residential.^[9] The very earliest houses were built in this vicinity prior to the turn of the century and a few can be located on the 1886 Harman Map. Most of these are examples of the traditional Pueblo Spanish and Territorial styles of architecture. The area was first subdivided during the 1890s, and with the coming of the railroad to New Mexico, many houses were built in the Don Gaspar area using materials and styles then popular in the East and Midwest. Italianate, Mansard, Queen Anne and Bungalow styles were each common, as was the extensive use of brick and stone. Despite the popularity of these eastern styles, by the 1920s the architectural direction of the Don Gaspar area had come full circle. Due to the influence of local residents like Carlos Vierra, who strongly advocated a return to the traditional regional style, a Pueblo Spanish Revival Style quickly gained in popularity. The Don Gaspar area is architecturally significant, therefore, not only because many of its early structures remain substantially intact, but also because the area's houses clearly reflect three distinct periods in Santa Fe architecture, the era of traditional adobe, the influx of eastern styles and materials, and the revival of the Pueblo Spanish stylistic tradition.^[9]

The significance of this district has been recognized by its inclusion in the National Registry. The nomination form^[10] provides a useful summary of the district's history and character:

The 455-structure district is predominantly residential. Generally the streets are in an irregular grid pattern. Many of the streets are tree-lined and most lots fronted by walls and fences, so the public rights-of-way are clearly defined. Stylistically, the Spanish-Pueblo Revival predominates, though many other styles are represented, including the Italianate Bracketed, Mission Revival, Territorial Revival, Prairie, and Bungalow. The earliest structures in the district are low adobe houses which line Old Santa Fe Trail and Galisteo, streets that were both shown as mapped in 1766. By 1895 many of the rest of the neighborhood's streets had been projected, if not actually built, and by 1912 most were in place. From 1895 to 1920, brick pitch-roof houses were built along Don Gaspar, Manhattan (now Paseo de Peralta), and Santa Fe Avenue. After 1920 traditional adobe style houses became popular once again and Spanish-Pueblo Revival structures were built and continue to be built throughout the neighborhood. The houses along Allendale, Anita, and Don Cubero are nearly all examples of Spanish-Pueblo, Mission, and Territorial Revival Bungalows built during the 1920s and 1930s. All the other streets have bungalows interspersed with earlier houses. It is these small Spanish-Pueblo Revival houses which form the essential fabric of the neighborhood.^[1] These Southwestern Revival Bungalows were popular from about 1924 through 1950. The diverse architectural character of Don Gaspar is unified by the streetscape. The streetscape is characterized by houses with a fairly uniform setback, walls or fences separating the sidewalk from the front yards, and trees in planting strips between the sidewalk and the street. With a few exceptions, this streetscape pattern is repeated throughout the district and, along with the predominance of the Spanish Pueblo Revival Bungalow, serves to unite the entire district.

Unlike the Downtown and Eastside District, the Historic Review District, and the Historic Transition District, the Don Gaspar Area Historic District is exempt from the requirement of adobe construction or the appearance of adobe construction, reflecting the existence and even predominance of non-traditional historic architecture. Instead, this district permits the use of slump block, stucco, brick, stone, and wood as wall materials, and does not require the use of earth tones as exterior colors. Specifically:

- Publicly visible exterior walls are made of brick and wood, in addition to block, stucco or stone.
- Materials such as aluminum siding, metal panels, mirrored glass, unstuccoed masonry are not allowed.
- Color is not restricted, except for colors that cause "arresting or spectacular effects or with bold repetitive patterns."
- Murals are permitted.
- There is no requirement that buildings appear to be "wall dominated."
- Mansard and tile roofs are not prohibited.
- Cantilevers are not prohibited.
- Arches are not discouraged.
- There is no requirement that wall thickness appears massive in relation to wall height.

The Westside-Guadalupe Historic District

The Westside-Guadalupe Historic District developed on the western outskirts of the plaza area, bounded roughly on the east by Guadalupe Street, on the west by St. Francis Drive, on the north by Paseo de Peralta, and on the south by Manhattan Avenue. The architecture in this district is eclectic. The *Historical Districts Handbook* describes the history and character of this district as follows:

The Westside-Guadalupe neighborhoods began as clusters of Hispanic farms on the outskirts of the more densely developed plaza area. Plots of lands were subdivided into long, narrow parcels oriented such that a maximum number of landowners could have access to the life-giving water of the acequias. The first houses were generally constructed out of adobe in the traditional Pueblo Spanish vernacular, and fronted directly onto narrow dirt streets and ways. With the coming of the railroad to Santa Fe, the Westside-Guadalupe area found itself in the midst of a flurry of economic activity. The construction of a depot and warehouse buildings contributed to an influx of new and different architectural styles. Elements of these styles were soon incorporated with Pueblo Spanish elements creating a rather eclectic architecture now referred to as Santa Fe Vernacular. As Santa Fe grew and the Westside-Guadalupe area became less and less suitable for farming, families began subdividing their property among family members, which has resulted in the area's large number of small, oddly shaped lots.[\[11\]](#)

We also have an informative description of the character of this district in a report prepared by architect Beverly Spears in 1987. Some of the most important observations in the Spears report include the following:

Most of the streets in the district are narrow and relatively straight. Most developed informally as trails or private lanes on relatively flat agricultural land. This informal development resulted in a large number of dead-end streets.' This street pattern greatly contributes to the small scale and intimate feeling of the neighborhood.

With few exceptions, all but the most recent houses of this neighborhood were built by Hispanic families of moderate income using their own construction skills or those of relatives and close friends. Buildings at the edge of the street are more common on the oldest streets including Agua Fria, Alto, and West San Francisco Street. Elsewhere, most buildings are set back from the street, but usually only about fifteen or twenty feet.' The proximity of the houses to the street increases the small scale and intimacy of the neighborhood as does the relatively small size of the houses.

There are a number of outbuildings in the district, including garages, storage sheds, workshops, studios, and little cottages. These buildings are also owner-built and usually sited towards the rear of the property. They increase the diversity of the district and contribute to the perception of the district as a long-inhabited neighborhood rather than a recent subdivision. The irregular building placement and the large number of houses tucked away on private alleys and shared driveways also help dispel a suburban appearance.

The houses of the district were traditionally single-story. The Westside-Guadalupe neighborhood is particularly vulnerable to the jarring effect caused by two-story buildings because of the following: 1) the flat terrain, 2) the scarcity of trees, 3) the small scale of the buildings, 4) the small lot sizes, 5) the narrow streets and small setbacks, 6) the predominance of single-story structures. These factors cause two-story structures to be highly visible if not obtrusive.

the distinction between pitched and flat roofs in this neighborhood is fairly subtle. Many flat roofs in this neighborhood overhang the exterior walls rather than being concealed behind parapets. Most of the pitched roofs have low pitches. Many are shed roofs with a parapet along one, two, or three sides. Steep pitches (30°+) are not characteristic of the district. Most pitched roofs are covered in asphalt composition material in the form of shingles or roll roofing. Corrugated galvanized steel and standing seam roofs are also common.

The small yards of the Westside-Guadalupe Historic District are most often surrounded by a low fence or wall.

Most properties have some sort of wall or fence at the street edge. These are nearly always low (2 or 3 feet high) and most are somewhat transparent, being made of chain link, wire, cast iron, or wood pickets. Walls are often made of river rock or concrete block. The low walls and fences allow houses and yards to be seen from the street; high solid walls drastically alter the streetscape. House facades have traditionally been the dominant streetscape element in this neighborhood.

Color is less limited in the Westside-Guadalupe neighborhood than in many other areas of Santa Fe. Tan and brown stucco predominates, but white buildings are also quite common. Pink, yellow, and green houses can also be found. Woodwork and trim are often painted blue, green or some other colorful hue. Often the paint used for the trim is also used on the mailbox, the wire fence, and other site accessories. Sometimes alternating colors or a checkerboard pattern is used for decorative effect.

[\[13\]](#)

Consistent with this eclectic character, and in common with the Don Gaspar district, adobe construction is not mandated in the Westside-Guadalupe Historic District, nor is adherence to either Old or Recent Santa Fe style. Buildings are, however, still required to be “wall-dominated” (defined as having a geometry that is more defined by walls than by roofs). Style standards specific to the character of this district include the following:

- Publicly visible exterior walls may be made of brick, in addition to block, stucco or stone.
- Materials such as aluminum siding, metal panels, mirrored glass, unstuccoed masonry are not allowed.
- The color of stuccoed buildings is to be “predominantly” in browns, tans, and local earth tones, and “soft pastels” are also allowed.
- Stone and brick are to be in their natural color; white and other colors are allowed for entryways, portales and porches; colors that cause “arresting or spectacular effects or with bold repetitive patterns” are prohibited.
- Murals are permitted.

- Cantilevers are not prohibited.
- Arches are not discouraged.
- Integrated greenhouses are permitted.
- Porches and portales are encouraged.

These style standards only apply, however, to buildings and structures that are “subject to public view from any public street, way, or other public place.”^[14]

In all of these historic districts, the intent is to maintain a “general harmony as to style, form, color, height, proportion, texture and material between buildings of historic design and those of more modern design.”^[15] The very reason for designating these districts is to identify them as areas “that merit careful preservation,” and the intent of the style standards are for the purpose of “maintaining their existing character or to restore their older character.”^[16] In furtherance of this objective, the historic review board is directed to judge proposed alterations or new structures not only for conformity to the specific style standards set forth for each historic district, but also for “harmony with adjacent buildings” and “preservation of historical and characteristic qualities.”^[17] And deviations from the specific style standards are only allowed on a showing that they would not “damage the character of the district.”^[18]

Together, these provisions make clear that it is always the character of the district as a whole that is paramount, and that new building activity must not only comply with the specified style standards for each district, but must also harmonize with each district’s historic architectural character. These style standards thus serve to protect each district’s historic character through controls on new construction. However, the protection of existing historic buildings remained weak, and another decade would pass before the ordinance was reinforced with true preservation standards designed to conserve the historical fabric of each district.

Next: [Part 7: The Addition of Preservation Standards](#)

^[1] Santa Fe Ordinance No. 1957-18, Section 6.

^[2] *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, (National Park Service, revised for internet 1995), 5.

^[3] *Historical District Handbook: A Guide to Architectural Preservation and Design Regulations in Santa Fe’s Five Historic Districts* (Santa Fe: City of Santa Fe Planning Department, 1986), 15.

^[4] Santa Fe General Plan (April 1996), 2-6.

^[5] Santa Fe City Code, Â§14-5.2(F)(2)(f).

^[6] *Historical Districts Handbook*, 17.

^[7] Ibid.

^[8] Ibid., 19.

^[9] Ibid.

^[10] National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Don Gaspar Historic District (1983).

[\[11\]](#) Ibid., 21.

[\[12\]](#) Ibid., 7.

[\[13\]](#) Beverly B. Spears, *Westside-Guadalupe Streetscape and Design Ordinance Report* (City of Santa Fe: 1987), 7-9.

[\[14\]](#) SFCC Â§ 14-5.2(I)(1).

[\[15\]](#) SFCC Â§ 14-5.2(A)(1).

[\[16\]](#) Ord. No. 1957-18, Sec. 6.

[\[17\]](#) SFCC Â§ 14-5.2(J)(3)(f).

[\[18\]](#) SFCC Â§ 14-5.2((C)(5).