



"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."

Planning Commission Memorandum

Meeting Date: October 7 15, 2025

Prepared By: Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

PURPOSE

This memorandum provides background and considerations for the Planning Commission's discussion on appropriate fencing materials within the City of Placerville's historic districts, as outlined in the Historic District Design Guidelines. The goal is to guide potential updates to the City's Zoning Ordinance or Preservation Guidelines to preserve the historical character of districts including Sacramento Street/Chamberlain Street and Spring Street/Coloma Street, while addressing modern needs. No formal action is requested; this discussion will inform future policy recommendations.

BACKGROUND

Placerville's historic districts, including Sacramento Street/Chamberlain Street and Spring Street/Coloma Street, are recognized for their Gold Rush-era heritage, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These areas reflect the City's early development with architecture from the 1850s, guided by the Zoning Ordinance (Section 10-4-10) and the Historic District Design Guidelines. Fencing in these districts must align with historical authenticity, emphasizing materials and designs from the Gold Rush period, while meeting contemporary needs for privacy, security, and maintenance.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Current Standards

- Zoning Ordinance: Requires quality, low-maintenance materials compatible with landscaping and historical site design. A minimum 4-foot solid fence or hedge is mandated in residential zones near parking areas.
- Historic District Design Guidelines: Recommends period-appropriate fencing:
 - Native Rock and Wood Picket Fences: Metal and white picket fences are encouraged as decorative elements common during the Gold Rush era.
 - Mechanical Equipment: Should be screened and buffered to maintain historical character.
 - Rehabilitation Guidelines: Emphasize matching existing or original materials, avoiding incompatible additions like diagonal or vertical siding, asphalt siding, aluminum siding, or artificial stone.

- Preservation Principles: Materials should replicate the original composition, color, and texture. Modern materials such as vinyl, chain link, or plastic signs are discouraged.

District-Specific Notes

- Sacramento Street/Chamberlain Street: Fencing should complement the residential and commercial mix, with native rock or white picket fences enhancing the streetscape.
- Spring Street/Coloma Street: Emphasizes decorative fencing like metal or wood pickets, aligning with the area's historical residential and community buildings.

Potential Next Steps

- Develop a tailored list of approved materials (e.g., native rock, wood, metal) and prohibited materials (e.g., vinyl, chain link) based on the Historic District Design Guidelines.
- Require design review for new fences to ensure compatibility with these districts' historical contexts.
- Engage residents, the Placerville Historical Advisory Committee, and local preservation experts for input.
- Review fencing standards from similar Gold Rush-era districts for comparative insights.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends discussing material preferences, potential restrictions, and next steps for updating guidelines specific to Placerville's historic districts, guided by the Historic District Design Guidelines. The Commission's direction will inform future amendments to preserve historical integrity.

INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

City of Placerville City Code
Historic District Design Guidelines