

Historic Districts of Riverside

An important part of what makes Riverside a special place to live is its abundance of historic resources. Preservation of these resources fosters civic and neighborhood pride and forms the basis for maintaining community character. With this understanding, the City of Riverside has an active historic preservation program that calls for the identification and protection of these resources.

Historic districts are designated by the City Council upon recommendation by the Cultural Heritage Board. The district designation process allows citizens to take part in deciding the future of their neighborhoods.

In accordance with Riverside's Cultural Resources Ordinance, a historic district is a geographically defined area within Riverside that has a significant concentration of historic resources. An area may be distinct for the quality of architecture as well as for the story it tells about the city's growth and development.

Designating historic districts means more than preserving architecture. Local districts give a tangible link to the past – a way to bring meaning to history and people's place in the community. District designation also encourages the rehabilitation and maintenance of properties and can serve as a marketing tool to attract visitors, tourists, and new residents.

Riverside boasts nine historic districts. They include both residential and commercial properties and represent a variety of architectural styles, historical themes, and development patterns. This brochure takes you on a tour of those neighborhoods that help define the city's unique identity.

Colony Heights Historic District (1903-1940)

(Bounded by Redwood Drive, Pine Street, Mission Inn Avenue and Third Street)
This residential district was part of the Southern California Colony Association's 1870 purchase and lies immediately north of the original "Mile Square" boundaries. As part of the area's second wave of residential growth and development, Colony Heights boasts some of Riverside's finest examples of early twentieth century architectural styles including Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Colonial Revival. A significant concentration of the residences were designed and built by well-known local architects, such as G. Stanley Wilson, Henry L.A. Jekel, and L.C. Waldman.

Heritage Square Historic District (1880-1920s)

(Bounded by First Street, Fifth Street, Orange Street, and Mulberry Street)
The district is located north of Riverside's downtown core within the northeast portion of the original "Mile Square," as laid out by the Southern California

Colony in 1871. It is significant as one of the earliest residential developments in the city. The district reflects the variety of architectural styles popular in the area during the turn-of-the twentieth century, and is particularly rich in Victorian-era styles. Period Revival as well as Arts and Crafts architecture of the early twentieth century reveal the evidence of the second phase of growth in the neighborhood, as large estates were subdivided to accommodate smaller, single story homes and duplexes. Heritage Square is also associated with a number of pioneer families and prominent individuals in the history of Riverside.

Mission Inn Historic District (1871-1946)

(Bounded roughly by Sixth Street, Eleventh Street, Market Street and the Riverside 91 Freeway)

This commercial district is the old downtown core, and is comprised primarily of commercial and government buildings. It encompasses part of the Seventh Street Historic District and is distinctive for its embodiment of the Mission Revival style. Other styles include Spanish Colonial Revival and Art Deco with a variety of building materials such as ceramic brick, terra cotta and rough-hewn granite. Well-known architects of the district include Arthur Benton, Julia Morgan, G. Stanley Wilson, and Myron Hunt. Major focal points include the Mission Inn, the Riverside County Courthouse, the First Congregational Church, and the Fox Theater. The district features numerous resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Mount Rubidoux Historic District (1903-1935)

(Bounded by Redwood Drive, University Avenue, Mount Rubidoux Drive and Indian Hill Road).

The design of this neighborhood, west of downtown, was intended to enhance the natural features of Mount Rubidoux. In addition to bankers and financiers, the area was home to growers, packers, manufacturers and others made rich by Riverside's burgeoning citrus industry. Notable local architects including Franklin Burnham, G. Stanley Wilson, Robert H. Spurgeon and Henry L. A. Jekel designed houses in the Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Tudor and Norman Revival styles. Building in the district began in 1903 and increased over the next several years due to the proximity of the neighborhood to the Seventh Street streetcar line which provided easy access to downtown.

Prospect Place Historic District (1887-1945)

(Bounded by Orange Grove Avenue, Prospect Place and Stadium Avenue and includes Fifteenth Street, between Main Street and Orange; Orange Street, between Prospect place and just northeast of Fifteenth; and a section of Main Street northwest of Fifteenth) Located just south of the original "Mile Square," Prospect Place is one of Riverside's first truly residential neighborhoods. The district's early residences were single family houses ranging from opulent Queen Annes to simple bungalows. Later practices favored zoning downtown single

family residential areas for commercial, office, and high density residential uses. As a result of this practice, the original Prospect Place neighborhood has largely been replaced with offices and apartments. Its designation as a historic district, however, has saved it from complete conversion to commercial, office, and institutional uses.

Rosewood Place Historic District (1916-1945)

(Rosewood Place, between Palm Avenue and Brockton Avenue)

This district represents one of Riverside's most architecturally coherent neighborhoods in terms of period, style, and scale. The environment as a whole, including sidewalks, driveways and streetlights, is intact. Architectural styles are predominantly Craftsman, Italian Renaissance Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival. The parcels on each side of Rosewood Place are part of the larger "Wood Streets" area.

Seventh Street East Historic District (1880-1945)

(Mission Inn Avenue/Seventh Street between Kansas Avenue and the Santa Fe Railroad tracks)

The Seventh Street East Historic District is primarily residential, but also includes two historic depots, a citrus packing house, the site of City founder John North's original home (now North Park). Residential development east of downtown was made possible in part by the Gage Canal, which brought water to the area. The district includes excellent examples of Victorian era architectural styles dating from just after the subdivisions, as well as later Craftsman, Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival and Classical Revival styles. The Seventh Street East district embraces many facets of downtown Riverside's social history and continues to function as a vital hub of community activity.

Wood Streets Historic District (1916-1940)

(Bounded by Beechwood Place, Magnolia Avenue, and Ramona Drive)

The Wood Streets Historic District offers perhaps the most cohesive neighborhood design to be found in the city of Riverside. This area contains excellent examples of Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival style residences. The neighborhood was originally devoted to orange groves until 1913, when a fill was placed across the Tequesquite Arroyo allowing Magnolia Avenue to connect with downtown. Proximity and easy access to downtown made this area desirable for residential subdivision. A developer named Dr. Edward H. Wood used his name as a suffix to the first street name, Homewood Court, and so began a series. The Wood Streets have long served as a middle-class stronghold of Riverside.

Seventh Street Historic District (1889-1945)

(Mission Inn Avenue from Rubidoux Drive to Vine Street)

This district includes a grouping of some of Riverside's finest commercial and residential architecture, as well as the historic citrus tree pergolas, Raincross streetlights, and the Buena Vista Bridge. Also known as City Landmark No. 40, it was named before Seventh Street was changed to Mission Inn Avenue and prior to the designation of the Mission Inn Historic District, which encompasses the eastern portion of the district.

Architectural Styles of Riverside's Historic Districts

Riverside's historic districts include a wide variety of architectural styles dating from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s. The following identifies the most prevalent styles with a description of the features that characterize each.

Queen Anne (ca. 1880-1900)

These ornate, one or two story Victorian-era houses feature asymmetrical façades, steeply pitched complex roofs with front-facing gables, patterned shingles, partial or full-width single story porches, towers, and bay windows. Decorative detailing includes turned wood columns with spindlework ornamentation, brackets, and stained and leaded glass.

Mission Revival (ca. 1890-1920)

The style emerged in the late 1880s to 1890s in a regional architectural movement that drew from the precedent of the Franciscan Missions. Nowhere in Southern California was this influence found stronger than in Riverside. The characteristics include a low-pitched red-tile roofs, stucco walls, curvilinear dormers and parapets, quatrefoil windows, and details in wood, iron, and tile. The style was used widely for civic and commercial architecture, particularly evidenced in the city's downtown. Riverside's Mission Inn is the largest Mission Revival style building in the United States.

American Colonial Revival (ca. 1895-1925)

This style came into fashion in the late-nineteenth century with a resurgence of interest in the early English and Dutch houses of New England. During the 1920s and 30s it was one of the most popular choices for residential architecture. Features typical of the style include symmetrical main façades, side gabled roofs, centrally placed front entrances often treated as gabled porticos, horizontal wood siding, recessed porches with column supports, and double-hung windows with shutters.

Beaux Arts (ca. 1885-1930)

This style is heavily influenced by French architecture and many of the architects who worked in this style had studied in France. Common features are masonry walls, symmetrical facades, coupled columns, monumental stairs, figure sculpture, heavy stone basements, and decorative swags. The Riverside County Courthouse is an excellent example of the style.

Craftsman (ca. 1900-1918)

The Craftsman style developed in Southern California during the Arts and Crafts period and stressed the importance of relating the building to its surrounding landscape in both design and materials. Craftsman houses have a low, horizontal emphasis and are characterized by low-pitched roofs with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, full or partial width porches, wood shingles or siding, and the use of stone and brick. Modest Craftsman bungalows (one or one-and-one-half stories) were among the most popular houses in Southern California.

Spanish Colonial Revival (ca. 1920-1930s)

The beginnings of this style date to 1915, when it was introduced at the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. The style was widely used throughout Southern California for both commercial and residential properties, and is characterized by stuccoed exteriors, low-pitched tile roofs, arched window and door openings, and front or side porches. Balconies, railings and window grilles are also common.

Tudor Revival (ca. 1920-1930s)

Tudor Revival is based on the English building traditions of Late Medieval times. They are easily recognized by the decorative half-timbering found on most examples. Other characteristics include steeply pitched roofs; stucco exteriors; a façade dominated by one or more prominent cross gables; tall, narrow multi-paned windows in groups; and massive chimneys. This was a popular style for suburban houses, especially in the 1920s and 30s.

French Provincial (ca. 1920s-1930s)

The popularity of this style is generally attributed to the World War I period, when many Americans served in France. Characteristics include light colored stucco exteriors; steeply pitched roofs; shingle or shake roof coverings, brick chimneys, double hung or casement windows, and heavy wooden front doors.