This past December, Supervisor Aaron Peskin introduced the Housing Preservation and Expansion Reform Act, which aims to stop illegal demolition of existing (often historic) housing and preserve rent-controlled and affordable housing, while easing the production of housing that actually serves San Francisco communities.

Housing Preservation and Expansion Reform Act

STORY ON PAGE 6
Life does not slow down at Heritage. On any given day you might find the Haas-Lilienthal House filled with visitors and third-graders imagining life over 100 years ago, or encounter a concert, a holiday ball, or a haunted house. From the ballroom to the attic, the house supports Heritage, educates tourists and residents about San Francisco history, and accommodates our eight dedicated staff.

With Heritage President and CEO Mike Buhler, the staff is behind the scenes carrying out our work. House Manager Heather Kraft oversees the events and rentals that are essential to our operation. Museum and Docent Coordinator Pam Larson trains our docents and is central to the tours conducted on site. Our dedicated, long-time Research Assistant, William Beutner, is in charge of the Heritage Archive, a significant collection of San Francisco history materials. Deborah Grant, V.P. of Advancement, and Claire Flanegin, Advancement Associate, lead our fundraising efforts and Soirée planning. Organizational finances are handled by V.P. of Finance and Operations Kevin Bulivant.

In March we said goodbye to one talented and hardworking staff member and announced a new position. Communications and Programs Manager Terri Le produced this newsletter, developed and oversaw the Lecture Series, social media, Discover SF (a summer youth project), and produced new programs that have broadened Heritage’s constituency. We thank Terri for her dedication and wish her the best in all of her future endeavours. By late spring we expect to announce our new V.P. of Advocacy and Programs. This long-anticipated and much-needed senior-level staff person will significantly strengthen our involvement in public policy citywide. Once in place, the new V.P. will help Heritage achieve its policy goals by bringing partners together, providing technical support, and leading advocacy campaigns.

With regard to our core mission to advocate for historic and cultural resources, in the following pages you will read of Heritage’s support for Supervisor Peskin’s Housing Preservation and Expansion Reform Act, created to address the illegal demolition of the city’s housing stock. Both the historic Willis Polk-designed home at 841 Chestnut/950 Lombard and Richard Neutra’s Largent House at 49 Hopkins are victims of the blatant disregard for the planning process this legislation addresses. You will also read about our efforts to help sustain a traditional typefoundry and letterpress-printing facility through an Alice Ross Carey Preservation-Fund grant to The Grabhorn Institute/Arion Press, as well as grants to the Mechanics’ Institute and San Francisco Neon.

Finally, without our members and other supporters, none of this work would be possible. Please join our Soirée celebration on Saturday, May 18th, in the iconic Garden Court at the Palace Hotel. I hope to see you there.
Two New Deal-era Public Schools Declared City Landmarks

On March 5, 2019, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously approved designation of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School (460 Arguello Boulevard) and the former Sunshine School (2728 Bryant Street) as San Francisco City Landmarks. A third Landmark nomination for George Washington High School (600 32nd Avenue) is currently stalled amid intensifying calls to paint over Victor Arnautoff’s “Life of Washington” twelve-panel mural in the school’s entry lobby. (The next issue of Heritage News will examine the ongoing controversy surrounding the mural.)

Co-authored by Christopher VerPlanck and Donna Graves, the nominations comprehensively document the three public schools as exemplars of New Deal-era public art and architecture in San Francisco. Funded by the San Francisco Historic Preservation Fund and led by Heritage, the project also includes a citywide historic-context study on New Deal-era buildings, artworks, open spaces, and infrastructure.

Because the school district is not subject to city jurisdiction, local historic designation is largely honorific. Nevertheless, in May of 2018, the school board voted to oppose all three nominations over concerns that historic designation could complicate the potential removal of the George Washington High School mural. After the school board’s rebuke, the nominations languished until Supervisor Aaron Peskin, Land Use and Transportation Committee chair, brought forward the two non-controversial nominations early this year.

Built 1935-37, the Spanish Colonial Revival-style “Sunshine School for Crippled Children” is one of San Francisco’s most distinctive public school buildings. It is socially significant as the first public school building specifically designed for children with disabilities west of the Rockies. Progressive public-health professionals and teachers of children with disabilities increasingly believed that disabled and chronically ill children should attend school in safe and accessible buildings separate from the mainstream. The Sunshine School was designed with a barrier-free floor plan prefiguring the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act over 50 years later. Those responsible for building the Sunshine School were imbued with a sense that they were advancing the cause of social justice, by ensuring that previously marginalized communities had access to the same opportunities as “normal” Americans. The school building was renovated in 2014 and today houses Hilltop High School, a program for pregnant and parenting teens; San Francisco Family Service Agency, providing childcare services; and the office of San Francisco Education Fund.

Designed by master architect Timothy Pflueger and completed in 1930, Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is architecturally significant as San Francisco’s only Dutch/German Expressionist style building. Hallmarks of this exceedingly rare style include the school’s polychromatic clinker brick and terra-cotta tile cladding, corbelled brickwork laid in geometrical zig-zag and diaper patterns, and its basketweave balustrade, among other features. Roosevelt Middle School also exhibits high artistic values in its three New Deal murals sponsored by the Public Works of Art Project. Painted four years after the school was completed, the murals include two by Horatio Nelson Poole in the main lobby (Land and Harvest) and one above the entrance to the auditorium on the second floor level by George Nelson Walker (Education).
Three Projects Receive Preservation-Fund Grants

**Heritage** is pleased to announce the February 2019 round of Alice Ross Carey Preservation-Grant Fund (ARCPF) awardees, including The Grabhorn Institute/Arion Press ($5,000), the Mechanics’ Institute ($3,000), and San Francisco Neon ($2,500).

**The Grabhorn Institute/Arion Press**

The Grabhorn Institute was founded in 2000 in order to preserve and perpetuate one of San Francisco’s last integrated-type foundry, letterpress printing, and bookbinding facilities as a living museum and educational center. In 2007, the non-profit organization assumed stewardship of publisher Arion Press, with roots in San Francisco stretching back to 1920, and Mackenzie & Harris, or M&H Type, founded in 1915. The three branches are co-occupants of the letterpress production facility in the Presidio of San Francisco and are open to the public Monday through Friday.

The ARCPF grant will help fund a new paid apprenticeship in typography, typecasting, and Monotype composition at M&H Type, which is the oldest and largest surviving typefoundry in America. The apprentice will learn type production and equipment maintenance and participate in public-education programs devoted to historic bookmaking processes, including: the history and techniques of “hot metal” type production from two full-time type-casters in the foundry, as well as training in the use, maintenance, repair, and restoration of the century-old machinery used in these processes. The apprentice will also be immersed in related aspects of hand composition, printing, and bookmaking, and learn to operate historic letterpress equipment. The apprenticeship will last one year, in which the apprentice will participate in at least three book-publishing projects for Arion Press, fine printers, and publishers of deluxe limited-edition books, as well as contract jobs, to gain exposure to the variety of contemporary applications of the craft of typecasting.

At the end of the apprenticeship period, s/he may be offered the opportunity to extend the apprenticeship for an additional year. Both of the two full-time employees of M&H Type and all three full-time employees in the bindery and print shop at Arion Press are graduates of the apprenticeship program.

By preserving and continuing the historic practice of casting lead type, including teaching new apprentices to restore and maintain the historic equipment integral to this process, the Grabhorn Institute is sharing the living story of typecasting and printing in San Francisco with the public.

**Mechanics’ Institute**

Founded in 1854, the Mechanics’ Institute is one of the oldest cultural and educational institutions on the West Coast. Its mission is to provide a center for intellectual and cultural advancement through its fully-staffed library, expert instruction and competition in chess, and robust public programming throughout the year.

Designed by master architect Albert Pissis, the Beaux Arts Mechanics’ Institute Building was completed in 1909. During its construction, three of Pissis’ previous structures were under reconstruction in downtown San Francisco, having been gutted by fire after withstanding the 1906 earthquake: the Emporium, Flood Building, and Hibernia Bank. Located at 57-65 Post Street between Kearny and Montgomery, the Mechanics’ Institute Building is designated San Francisco Landmark No. 134. In its definitive inventory of downtown buildings, Splendid Survivors (1979), Heritage hailed “the very beautiful circular iron and marble
For the second consecutive year, the ARCPF grant award will sponsor a three-day Neon Speaks Symposium, including tours, demos, and presentations on the past, present, and future of historic neon-sign preservation/restoration. Now in its second year, the symposium provides an important venue for sign owners and community stakeholders to share information, case studies, and comprehensive guidelines to ensure their historic neon signs are preserved and restored using best practices. The gathering brings together experts, stakeholders, and people who care about the preservation of historic neon signs, as well as the legacy businesses and neighborhoods these signs represent.

The grant will also support completion of the Tenderloin Neon A-Z survey and webpage. The survey will document one-hundred-plus neon signs in the Tenderloin and will include sign size, type, condition, historic and aesthetic value, and business activity. The survey will be used by the city-administered SF Shines grant program to determine the best candidates for sign-restoration grants. The finished survey will be published as an image-rich webpage on sfneon.org.

Established by Heritage in 2014, the Alice Ross Carey Preservation-Grant Fund continues to be an important funding source for community-based planning, outreach, capital improvement, and interpretive programs or projects. Heritage is now accepting applications for the next round, due August 1. To learn more about the grant guidelines, please visit sfheritage.org/alice-ross-carey-preservation-fund/.

San Francisco Neon/Historic Sign Network

San Francisco Neon’s mission is to raise awareness, create dialogue, and promote information-sharing about historic neon sign preservation projects; promote history and culture of small businesses and the artistic legacy of neon-sign design; and increase neighborhood vibrancy in low-opportunity neighborhoods and historic corridors.
This past December, Supervisor Aaron Peskin introduced the Housing Preservation and Expansion Reform Act – also referred to as the Protect and Preserve Act – which aims to stop illegal demolition of existing (often historic) housing and preserve rent-controlled and affordable housing, while easing the production of housing that actually serves San Francisco communities. Co-sponsors of the Act include Supervisors Fewer, Mandelman, and Yee.

The Protect and Preserve Act would accomplish this by: (1) creating a single clear and implementable definition of “demolition” that includes the loss of residential housing by any means; (2) discouraging large home expansions while incentivizing neighborhood-scale density; and (3) enhancing penalties and ensuring their enforceability by the San Francisco Planning Department and Department of Building Inspection. San Francisco Heritage has participated in the Demolition Reform Community Working Group convened by Supervisor Peskin since its inception in early 2018, working alongside a broad coalition of community, affordable-housing, tenant-rights, and historic-preservation advocates.

As the city continues to approve massive home expansions that only enhance private benefits, the proposed legislation would eliminate incentives to tear down existing buildings, prevent unit mergers, protect the city’s historic assets, and otherwise incentivize responsible density with equitably sized and habitable living spaces. A guiding premise of the Protect and Preserve Act is that the best way to prevent the loss of affordable and rent-controlled housing – and the people living in that housing – is to protect that housing from demolition, merger, conversion, or speculative eviction. The premise applies equally to the city’s historic and architecturally significant homes.

A Tale of Two Demolitions

The illegal destruction of 841 Chestnut/950 Lombard is widely considered one of the most egregious examples of demolition by serial permitting in San Francisco. Developer Troon Pacific – aka Eight Forty-One, LLC – purchased the Willis Polk-designed residence in 2014 for $4.5 million. Four years, twelve permits, and a half-dozen complaints later, the completely refashioned and rebuilt property was listed in October 2018 for $45 million – ten times the previous purchase price. “Among its opulent and excessive features,” wrote Curbed SF at the time, are a “Japanese water-filtration system that allegedly improves your skin and hair, a cantilevered infinity pool, and a shower and sauna with glass walls overlooking the city.” The new home resembles Polk’s design, yet virtually nothing original remains.

Without admitting any wrongdoing, Troon Pacific reached a record monetary settlement with the city for $400,000 after it was accused of removing all of the Willis-Polk home’s exterior walls and windows, contrary to what the permit allowed. Although it was the largest settlement ever paid by a developer for the illegal demolition of a single-
family home in San Francisco, the fine represents less than one percent of the $45 million listing price.

Crucially, the Protect and Preserve Act would halt so-called “serial permitting” of demolitions, in which a property owner gets a series of permits for small changes that eventually result in complete demolition. This disturbing trend follows a typical pattern: the owner/developer is often listed as an anonymous LLC (i.e. Eight Forty-One, LLC), an initial permit is pulled for relatively harmless work, followed by a series of modifications for “alterations without plans” that incrementally expand the scope of work until the original building is eviscerated.

The unpermitted demolition of Richard Neutra’s Largent House (49 Hopkins Avenue) in early 2017 further underscored the need for comprehensive legislation. Built in 1936, the house was one of only five San Francisco residences designed by Neutra. The property was marketed in 2014 as “one of the most unique and inspiring architectural spaces in San Francisco ... an exceptionally rare offering that has been lovingly cared for.” Renovation plans approved by the city in 2014 would have retained and expanded the original home, but it was not to be: The home was spontaneously demolished by the owner’s contractor, purportedly out of concern for worker safety. In December of 2018, the owner came back to the Planning Commission to request after-the-fact permission to replace the Neutra’s two-story, 1,312-square-foot residence with a three-story, 3,960-square-foot residence – three times the original size.

As stated in Heritage’s testimony to the Planning Commission on December 13, 2018, “The question before you, once again, is whether the sponsor can demolish existing housing stock with impunity and then be rewarded. Despite the willful and acknowledged wrongdoing here, the project sponsor is asking for the benefit of the doubt, invoking the contractor’s judgment call to demolish. As we have seen time and again, there is an overwhelming financial incentive to transgress with very little risk of penalty. We ask that you assist in remedying that.” In a stunning rebuke, the Commission unanimously voted to require the current owner to rebuild the house based on the original 1935 drawings. The unprecedented decision by the Planning Commission garnered international media coverage and stands as a powerful cautionary tale for future would-be offenders.

While demolition of the Willis Polk and Neutra homes are two high profile case studies, they belie the loss of nearly 4,300 rent controlled or affordable homes in San Francisco over the past 10 years. They exposed glaring inconsistencies and inadequacies of the city’s existing permitting, oversight, and enforcement practices, and the insufficiency of existing remedies for illegal demolition of residential structures. Inconsistencies in the Code have enabled savvy speculators and contractors to game the system, evade public scrutiny, and destroy historic resources without serious consequence – and for enormous profit. If approved, the Protect and Preserve Act would significantly enhance the administrative penalties assessed against illegal demolition of historic properties. Those penalties would include a baseline $500,000 penalty for the demolition of historic structures, which would be deposited into the city’s Historic Preservation Fund.

**The Path Forward**

In February of 2019, Supervisor Peskin introduced a procedural resolution to extend Planning Commission’s window to consider the Protect and Preserve Act by another 90 days. The extension was granted out of deference to feedback from community stakeholders and the city departments – namely the Planning Department and Department of Building Inspection – that will be charged with implementing and enforcing the new law. Meanwhile, Supervisor Peskin and his staff have been fielding and soliciting input from an array of stakeholders, city departments, and neighborhood organizations to ensure that the original legislative intent remains intact, while allowing amendments to provide greater clarity, and to ensure effective implementation and enforceability.

The Planning Commission is required to schedule a hearing and act on the proposed legislation sometime before June 15. There will also be public hearings before the Historic Preservation Commission, Board of Appeals, and Building Inspection Commission. Stay tuned for hearing dates as they are confirmed.
This speculative rendering for a “boutique residential development opportunity” at 1641 Jackson Street, a parcel currently listed for sale, illustrates how indiscriminate upzoning could impact older and historic buildings.

2019 State Housing Bills and Historic Preservation

The San Francisco Chronicle banner headline of Tuesday, March 5, 2019 sums up the current legislative session in Sacramento: “Blitz of Housing Legislation: Lawmakers push 200 bills, many likely to upset local governments.”

In December, State Senator Scott Wiener introduced a new version of his sweeping housing legislation that failed last year as SB 827, now reformulated and renamed SB 50. Senator Wiener’s bill aims to spur housing development near transit and job centers. It would prevent cities and towns from banning apartment construction in certain specified areas by removing any density maximums. RH-1 and RH-1 (D) zoning would be made illegal statewide under SB 50. Local jurisdictions would be required to allow apartment buildings on parcels located within a half-mile of a rail transit station, a quarter-mile of a high-frequency bus stop, or within a “job-rich” neighborhood. In these areas, regulatory parking minimums would be sharply reduced and zoning codes would have to allow buildings to be up to either 45 or 55 feet tall depending on local factors.

In San Francisco, SB 50 would upzone 96 percent of the city in one fell swoop and incentivize real-estate speculation. SB 50 would make certain projects up to 85 feet in height eligible for ministerial permitting, and thus avoid discretionary environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This would increase the amount of unmitigated adverse environmental impacts, including demolition of many historic resources, while stifling public input.

SB 50 only refers to CEQA and does not explicitly prohibit demolitions of local, state, or national historic resources. The bill would dramatically increase development pressure on the vast majority of eligible historic resources in San Francisco and incentivize their demolition.

Conversely, Senator Mike McGuire, D-Healdsburg, has introduced an alternative bill – SB 4 – that could be described as a kinder, gentler version of Senator Wiener’s legislation. It exempts parcels that are located in an “architecturally or historically significant historic district” (as defined in Public Resources Code 5020.1(h)) from receiving a density bonus and mandates that any project seeking a bonus must not require demolition of a historic structure placed on a national, state, or local historic register. From a preservation standpoint, Senator McGuire’s bill is clearly preferable to SB 50.

Because of the proposed changes, Heritage is already hearing from neighborhoods exploring historic-district designation as “safe harbor” from indiscriminate upzoning under SB 50 or SB 4. The Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association is fundraising to formally list the identified Duboce Triangle historic district on the California Register of Historical Resources, helping to protect the area from increased development pressure that would result from any version of state housing legislation.

It is imperative that Senator Wiener and Senator McGuire hear from you about your concerns regarding SB 50 and your support for its alternative, SB 4. Please contact Senator Wiener’s office at 916-651-4011 or through sd11.senate.ca.gov/contact; contact Senator McGuire’s office at 916-651-4002 or senator.mcguire@senate.ca.gov. Please copy other members of the Senate Transportation Committee and Housing Committee, listed at stran.senate.ca.gov/.


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Heritage wishes to thank our generous 2018 supporters
Legacy Circle Profile: Linda Jo Fitz

For almost as long as there has been San Francisco Heritage, there has been Linda Jo Fitz. Beginning in 1973 as Heritage’s sole employee, Linda has worn many hats during the organization’s history. A 1975 issue of Heritage News invites the reader to call her for “information regarding façade easements” and, five years later, she is introduced as Assistant Director. During Heritage’s early days, Linda helped to strengthen and expand the preservation work being done around San Francisco. For over forty years, she has continued to support Heritage’s mission as a staff member, board member, Soirée underwriting committee chair, and now through her Legacy Gift.

A fifth-generation Californian raised in Petaluma, Linda attended UC Berkeley and moved up north to Woodland in the late 1960s. She quickly became involved in fundraising for the preservation of the Woodland Opera House — a nineteenth-century vaudeville theater. This campaign led to further preservation efforts to research the history and architecture of the area’s Victorian homes, which the committee was then able to use for house tours. Linda recalls that she became “hooked on historic preservation” and looked to her move to San Francisco to “convert this avocation into a vocation, which led to Heritage.”

Linda’s passion for preservation was a natural fit for San Francisco as urban redevelopment took hold of the city in the 1970s. Soon after she joined as an employee, Heritage began a survey of downtown San Francisco historic architecture. Linda coordinated a series of walking tours of the area to supplement this survey and allow the public to experience the buildings included in the assessment. “I became familiar with our historic downtown and am still thrilled to walk in the vicinity of Sutter and Montgomery.” The blocks surrounding this street corner hold some of her favorite structures: the Hallidie, Hunter-Dulin, and Mills Buildings.

Linda has decided to make a legacy gift to San Francisco Heritage because of her long history with preservation and with Heritage. By leaving a contribution in her estate plans, Linda is helping to protect the diversity of the city’s cultural and architectural inheritance. “I have spent over 40 years as a Heritage staff and board member, so I know how important every contribution is to Heritage.”

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*Deceased
May 18, 2019, 6 PM - 12 AM
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Save the date! Join us on Saturday, May 18, 2019, for Heritage’s annual Soirée at The Palace Hotel in San Francisco.

March 2019
MONDAY, MARCH 22, 9 AM — 4 PM
Affordable Housing through Adaptive Reuse Workshop
Pier 1, The Embarcadero
Tickets at www.californiapreservation.org

April 2019
APRIL 26-28
Neon Speaks Festival & Symposium
San Francisco-Oakland
Tickets at www.sfneon.org

May 2019
MAY 8-11
California Preservation Conference
Hilton Palm Springs
400 E Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2 PM
Victorian Spring Afternoon Tea
Haas-Lilienthal House
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