

CHAPTER 14

THE BRICKELLTOWN CHARACTER AREA



The Brickelltown Character Area comprises much of the land between Donner Pass Road and High Street, as well as a few structures on the northeast side of Interstate 80. The area includes a row of buildings along the western portion of Donner Pass Road, built at the foot of a large cut in the hillside to the north of the highway. Railroad tracks lie south of Donner Pass Road. Note that historically this neighborhood extended farther to the west, but several structures were removed for construction of the interstate interchange and those parcels are excluded from the Character Area boundary. Today, Brickelltown serves as the western gateway to Truckee.

Historic Significance

Along Donner Pass Road, Brickelltown was the location of Coburn's Station, one of the early Truckee settlements destroyed by fire. Today this neighborhood is home to some of the oldest residences in Truckee. It is known for its large Utilitarian and Victorian style residences, many of which have been converted to commercial uses. The buildings in this area are made almost exclusively from wood. Many of these houses were part of a subdivision planned by the Truckee Lumber Company. Perhaps the most notable residential structure in the neighborhood is the Kruger-White House. Kruger, along with E.J. Brickell, owned the Truckee Lumber Company. Partly due to the large number of Brickell's family members that settled in

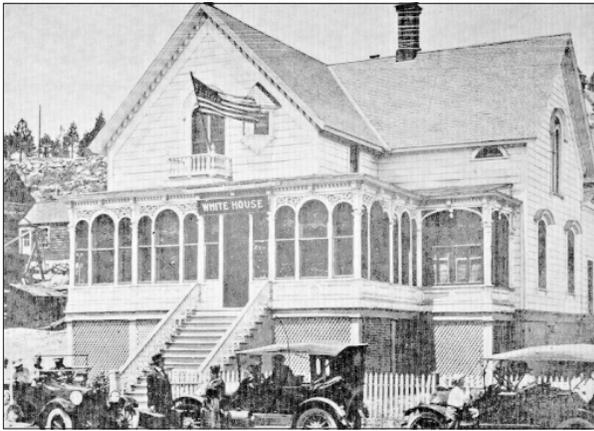
the neighborhood, it bears his name. Brickelltown's long association with the two owners of the former Truckee Lumber Company is an important part of its history.

There has been a long history of mixed uses. One of the most notable non-residential uses was for accommodations. In 1904, C.B. White, a banker and Southern Pacific Railroad Ticket Agent, purchased the Kruger residence. During the early twentieth century, the Whites opened the home as the "White House Hotel."



The Brickelltown neighborhood is located at the base of a steep hill near the western entrance of downtown.

☞ Please see page 97 (Chapter 13: General Guidelines for New Buildings) for a map that shows this Character Area in its Truckee context.



A historic photo of the White House Hotel, now known as the Kruger-White House.

Historic Character Description

Historic maps show that the area was predominantly residential in character, except for some commercial uses located in close proximity to the Commercial Row. Virtually all of the residential structures had front porches facing the street. Many of these porches spanned the entire width of the building, but some were L-shaped, and wrapped around to the side of the house.

Historically, a typical parcel had one large structure located at the front (near Donner Pass Road), with smaller supporting buildings located in the rear (toward the hillside). The buildings followed the curvature of the hillside, but still appeared to be in relative alignment with one another as viewed from the street. Somewhat reflective of the commercial character of the downtown area, buildings in Brickelltown were a little more densely constructed at the eastern end, near the Commercial District. This served as a transition between the commercial uses and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Buildings in the western portion of the neighborhood were therefore a little more spread out.



A mix of building types in Brickelltown provides a sense of visual diversity.

Current Character

Today, the Brickelltown Character Area is noted for a steep hillside backdrop that defines the northern boundary. Due to the railroad right-of-way across the street, most of the structures here are located on only the north side of Donner Pass Road.

A mix of building types in this Character Area, that date from 1885 to 1930, provides a sense of visual diversity. Examples of traditional domestic, commercial and industrial architecture are found in this small neighborhood. Most buildings are simple in design, although some ornamentation was used historically. The smaller buildings tend to exhibit very few details, reserving most ornamentation for porches on domestic buildings and cornice lines for commercial architecture.

The Character Area is presently dominated by historic period residences, although some modern garage and warehouse buildings exist. Additionally, several historic residences have been converted into commercial uses. The showpiece of this area, as well as the community, is the Kruger-White House. This elaborate, Italianate mansion stands in great contrast to the more modest gable-front and cross-wing workers' cottages that flank it.

Exterior wall materials traditionally were horizontal lap siding, for commercial and residential architecture alike. Stone was used generally for foundations.

The limited combination of roof forms found on the buildings creates another striking feature. Most are simple gable roofs, with ridge lines perpendicular to the street. Wood shingles and standing seam metal were used on many early buildings, while today composition shingles are frequently used.

Even though the Brickelltown Character Area is both domestic and commercial in character, most buildings are located near the street edge, although small front yards are important historic features. Building entrances are also close to the street. A varied line of building setbacks is seen, although a sense of street wall defined by building fronts is present. Parking is typically located in the front yard. Retaining walls are located in rear yards.



Wood shingles and standing seam metal were used on many early buildings in Brickelltown.



The Character Area is presently dominated by historic period residences, although some modern garage and warehouse buildings exist.

Some key design characteristics of this Character Area are:

- Simple roof forms
- Raised porch entrances on domestic buildings
- Gable front on domestic buildings
- Some raised foundations
- Horizontal wood lap siding is the prominent building material
- Variety of architectural types and styles
- Simple detailing on simple buildings
- Elaborate detailing exists on larger, high-style structures
- Buildings are one or two stories in height
- Varied orientation of ridge lines on gable roofs
- Small front yards

Design Goals & Policies

The Brickelltown Character Area should continue to develop in a coordinated manner so that an overall sense of visual continuity is achieved. Preservation of the historic integrity of this area is a primary goal. Gabled buildings, with small front yards, should be the predominant theme. At the same time, the walking experience should be enhanced for pedestrians and the visual impacts of parking on site should be minimized. Projects that include a primary building with a subordinate secondary structure will aid in maintaining the historic character of the area.

The design goals for the Brickelltown Character Area are:

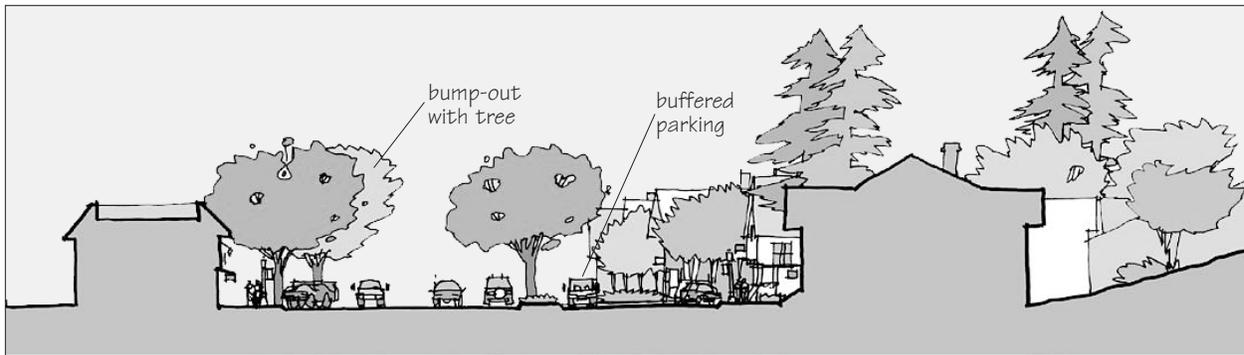
- To emphasize the preservation and restoration of historic structures, when feasible
- To maintain the general historical alignment of buildings
- To maintain traditional building mass, scale and forms along the front line of properties
- To locate additional building mass (when necessary) to the rear of the property
- To continue the use of traditional building materials
- To use the hill cut to conceal additional building mass
- To minimize visual impacts of hill cuts, use landscaping, stepped retaining walls, stem walls, and similar construction methods.
- To enhance the pedestrian experience
- To minimize the visual impacts of cars



Enhancing the pedestrian experience should be one of the goals for the Brickelltown Character Area.



The Brickelltown Character Area should continue to develop in a coordinated manner so that an overall sense of visual continuity is achieved.



If parking must be located to the front, it should be separated from the building front with a small yard and should be buffered from the street.

Design Guidelines for New Buildings

1. Streetscape

The Brickelltown Character Area establishes the outermost edge of development in the downtown. Any changes to the streetscape should result in projects that respect the historic street curvature. Additional streetscape enhancement should maintain front yards where feasible.

A. Maintain the historic street curvature.

- 1) Where new streetscape elements are introduced, the historic layout of the street form should be preserved, to the extent feasible.

B. Any new front yards should match the dimensions of historic front yards along the street.

- 1) These may be developed as courtyards, but should continue to convey a modest residential yard character, to the extent feasible.

C. Maintain historic yard character.

1. Locate sidewalks along front edge of yards.

2. Parking

Parking on site should be visually subordinate to the residential character of the street.

A. Locate parking to the rear when feasible, or positioned to the side, but behind the front building line.

B. If parking must be located to the front, it should be separated from the building front with a small yard and should be buffered from the street.

References:

☞ See also Chapter 10: Design Guidelines for Site Features and Chapter 13: General Guidelines for New Buildings.

3. Mass and Scale

The original residences and small, false-front commercial buildings contribute greatly to the overall character of this area. Although a few larger institutional structures exist, the smaller size and gable roof forms of the simple residences and businesses dominated the scene historically and should continue to do so.

A. Maintain the average scale of one- and two-story buildings along the street.

- 1) As a means of minimizing the perceived mass of a project, consider developing a set of smaller buildings, with one primary building and other subordinate structures, rather than one large structure.
- 2) Consider a series of small building modules, or components, that may be interconnected.

B. Maintain the similarity of building heights.

- 1) The apparent height of the primary facade should not exceed two stories. This includes additions and new construction.
- 2) Taller portions may step back from the street side.

4. Building and Roof Form

Historically, individual building forms were simple rectangular solids with gabled roofs, and false-front facades obscuring them on commercial structures. This tradition should be continued in new development.

A. Use building forms similar to those found traditionally.

- 1) Vertically-oriented rectangular shapes are typical and are encouraged.
- 2) One simple form should be the dominant element in a building design.
- 3) Building forms that step down in size to the rear of the lot are encouraged.
- 4) Smaller, secondary buildings should be simple rectangular shapes, as well.

B. Use roof forms that are similar in scale and character to those used historically.

- 1) Sloping, gable roof forms should be the dominant shapes.
- 2) Traditional roofs are simple and steeply pitched and most have gabled ends facing the street. Most primary roofs have pitches of 9:12, although some are as low as 7:12.
- 3) A flat roof also may be considered for secondary portions of a building.
- 4) Roofs composed of a combination of planes, but simple in form, are also encouraged.
- 5) Ridgelines should be similar in length to those seen historically.



Place the height of the porch decks at an elevation similar to those found historically when feasible.

5. Porches

Porches are especially characteristic of the Brickelltown Character Area. Although a wide variety of design details for porches is found, the basic organization of a porch as an entry element is an important feature that should be continued.

A. Use porches to define front entrances.

- 1) New porches should be similar in mass and size to those found historically in the Character Area.
- 2) Place the height of the porch decks at an elevation similar to those found historically when feasible.
- 3) Porches should have a finished (painted) appearance.