



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Christopher Burton

**SUBJECT: PP24-012: San José Eichler
Neighborhood Objective
Design Standards**

DATE: November 13, 2025

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) Consider an exemption in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15331 for Historical Resource Rehabilitation.
- (b) Adopt a resolution approving the San José Eichler Neighborhood Objective Design Standards for exterior changes to Eichler houses listed on the San José Historic Resources Inventory that require a Single Family House Permit or other Planning permit that involves historic review.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

The Eichler Neighborhood Objective Design Standards (Eichler ODS) are objective design standards that would be applied when exterior changes are proposed to properties in Eichler neighborhoods listed in the San José Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) that require design review through a Single Family House Permit. At present, Fairglen Additions is the only Eichler neighborhood listed on the HRI to which the design standards would apply. If other Eichler neighborhoods were designated in the future and listed on the HRI, the Eichler ODS would also apply to those properties.

The Eichler ODS would not introduce any new processes or requirements, would not apply to interiors or landscaping, and would not require retroactive compliance for permitted work.

Key features of the Eichler ODS include:

- 1) Consistency with existing review processes required for properties listed on the HRI:

Supplements *Your Old House: Guide to Preserving San José Homes*, which primarily addresses earlier architectural styles (e.g., Italianate, Queen Anne, Craftsman, Tudor Revival). The Eichler ODS close the gap for Mid-Century Modern design.

2) Alignment with preservation best practices:

The Eichler ODS are written to align with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines and provide clear guidance for maintaining, repairing, and modifying Eichler homes. This ensures that projects designed in conformance with the Eichler ODS support the historic character of Eichler neighborhoods.

BACKGROUND

Joseph Eichler developed seven residential tracts in San José between 1952 and 1963. The tracts contain a total of approximately 480 homes located in five suburban neighborhoods. Houses developed by Eichler Homes in the 1950s and 1960s were designed by the architectural firms of Anshen & Allen, Jones & Emmons, and Claude Oakland & Associates. San José's Eichler neighborhoods represent an important concentration of Mid-Century Modern residential architecture.

In 2016, efforts to preserve and guide future change in one of these Eichler neighborhoods began when residents of Fairglen Additions formed the Fairglen Additions Preservation Committee (Committee) to pursue recognition of their community's historic significance. The Committee prepared a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination and Multiple Property Documentation ("Housing Tracts of Joseph Eichler in San José, California, 1952–1963"), which resulted in the listing of Fairglen Additions on the NRHP in 2019 and its subsequent listing on the San José Historic Resources Inventory (HRI).

The Eichler ODS were initiated and driven by the Committee, which drafted neighborhood design guidelines following the NRHP and HRI listings to assist property owners in maintaining and modifying Eichler homes while protecting their defining features. These community-developed guidelines needed refinement into objective design standards to comply with state housing laws so the City retained consulting firm, Page & Turnbull, to align the design guidelines with State legislation requiring clear, measurable standards and to ensure their consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (SIS).

The project resulted in the Eichler ODS, which draw upon the Fairglen Additions NRHP nomination, community input, and consultation between Page & Turnbull, the Fairglen Additions Preservation Committee, and City staff.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of the Eichler ODS is to balance growth and change in San José's Eichler neighborhoods with the preservation of their distinctive Mid-Century Modern architectural character.

The Eichler ODS address a longstanding gap in San José’s preservation framework by providing clear, Eichler-specific, objective standards consistent with state law. Adoption of these standards will streamline project review, enhance the City’s ability to preserve the distinctive character of Mid-Century Modern Eichler neighborhoods, and support neighborhood identity. By codifying these standards, the City would provide homeowners and applicants with a predictable, transparent framework while ensuring strong preservation outcomes and compliance with state requirements for housing production and objective standards.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

If adopted by City Council, the Eichler ODS would apply to all new Single Family House Permit applications submitted after the effective date (30 days post-approval) for Eichler neighborhoods listed in the San José Historic Resources Inventory.

COORDINATION

The preparation of the proposed resolution and this memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney’s Office.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City’s Council Agenda website for the December 2, 2025 City Council meeting.

Staff implemented extensive outreach throughout the development of the Eichler ODS:

- [Project Website](#)¹ (September 2024): Hosted background information, draft documents, and opportunities for public input.
- [Draft Document Circulation](#) (October–November 2024): Made available for public review and written comments. Email notifications sent to neighborhood groups, Council offices, interested individuals, Preservation Action Council San José, and the Eichler Network (October 15, 2025).
- [Community Meeting](#) (October 24, 2024): Hybrid meeting with staff presentation, public Q&A, and recording posted online.
- [Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting](#) (November 6, 2024): Public and Commission comments were received.

¹ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/planning-building-code-enforcement/planning-division/historic-resources/san-jos-eichler-neighborhood-objective-design-standards>

- Comment Review: All input was reviewed by Page & Turnbull and City staff, leading to revisions finalized in August 2025.

Staff followed City Council Policy 6-30: Public Outreach Policy and all legal requirements, in that the notices for the public hearing were posted on the City's website and published in the San José Post-Record at least 20 days prior to the public hearing.

This outreach ensured transparency, allowed for substantive community input, and shaped a final document reflecting neighborhood priorities and citywide preservation goals.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT

Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) conducted a public hearing on October 1, 2025 and received public comment. Ben Leech, Preservation Action Council San Jose Executive Director, expressed appreciation for all the work that followed the listing of Fairglen Additions on the NRHP, including the preparation of the Eichler ODS. He commented that the historic preservation community is trying to wrap its head around what objective design standards are in this new climate, and this project has been an extremely worthwhile exercise to go through, benefiting a very unique collection of buildings. Mr. Leech expressed appreciation for the support of staff, the neighborhood, and the project consultant in a project that resulted in a net positive for the City. There was no commission discussion. The HLC voted 4-0-2 (Royer and Arnold absent) to approve the staff recommendation (Exhibit A).

The Planning Commission (PC) conducted a public hearing on November 19, 2025 and received public comment.

Sally Zarnowitz, member of the Fairglen Additions Preservation Committee, commented that the Committee asked for the standards following the listing of the neighborhood on the NRHP. She noted that residents were looking for specific guidance on how to maintain the houses and to take advantage of the streamlined Single Family House Permit process conducted by staff. Ms. Zarnowitz commented that the process has been going well and that the Eichler ODS were discussed at the 2025 Historic Landmarks Commission Retreat, which included a neighborhood tour with Planning staff. She commented that the neighborhood is thriving and is a good example of when the community wants historic preservation, and they proactively collaborate and take pride in it. Ms. Zarnowitz commented that the Eichler ODS facilitates the continued use of the houses and ADU construction, understanding that density and housing are still needed while maintaining the character of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Oliverio thanked staff, Ms. Zarnowitz and the Fairglen Additions neighborhood. He noted that when he was on the City Council in 2013, he hosted an Eichler documentary, and most of the attendees were from Fairglen Additions. Commissioner Oliverio commented that by preserving these neighborhoods, it allows

people now and later to drive through history, and Eichler owners are some of the proudest owners he knows.

Commissioner Barocio inquired whether there are any changes that would be typical now that may not be feasible moving forward under the Eichler ODS. Staff responded that there shouldn't be any because the houses were built post-World War II with more modern materials like metal windows that are common today.

The PC voted 9-0-1 (Casey absent) to approve the staff recommendation (Exhibit B).

CEQA

Adoption of the Eichler ODS is exempt from CEQA for the following reasons:

- Not a "project" under CEQA (Guidelines §§15060(c)(2), 15378): The standards do not directly cause physical changes in the environment;
- Common Sense Exemption (Guidelines §15061(b)(3)): There is no possibility that adoption of the Eichler ODS would result in a significant environmental effect; and
- Historic Resource Rehabilitation Exemption (Guidelines §15331): The Eichler ODS are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and will guide work that preserves historic resources.

Therefore, no additional environmental review is required.

PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

/s/

Christopher Burton
Director, Planning, Building and Code
Enforcement
Planning Commission Secretary

The principal author of this memorandum is Dana Peak Edwards, Principal Planner and Historic Preservation Officer, Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department, at dana.peak@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 534-2990.

ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit A: Historic Landmarks Commission Staff Report, October 1, 2025

Exhibit B: Planning Commission Staff Report, November 19, 2025

also conducted a field survey in April 2024, documenting Eichler homes in San José and in other Bay Area jurisdictions with similar models.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of the Eichler ODS is to balance growth and change in San José's Eichler neighborhoods with the preservation of their distinctive Mid-Century Modern architectural character. The Eichler ODS are available online through the web link in Attachment 1 of this memorandum.

Key Features of the Eichler ODS include:

- Consistency with existing review processes:
Supplements *Your Old House: Guide to Preserving San José Homes*, which primarily addresses earlier architectural styles (e.g., Italianate, Queen Anne, Craftsman, Tudor Revival). The Eichler ODS close the gap for Mid-Century Modern design.
- Alignment with preservation best practices:
The Eichler ODS are written to align with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines and provide clear guidance for maintaining, repairing, and modifying Eichler homes. This ensures that projects designed in conformance with the Eichler ODS uphold the historic character and integrity of Eichler neighborhoods.
- Scope and application:
 - The Eichler ODS apply only to exterior changes requiring a Planning permit.
 - They do not apply to interiors or require retroactive compliance.
 - They apply only to Eichler neighborhoods listed in the HRI. At present, Fairglen Additions is the only such tract.
- Implementation: Once adopted by City Council, the standards would apply to all new Planning applications submitted after the effective date (30 days post-approval).

The Eichler ODS address a longstanding gap in San José's preservation framework by providing clear, Eichler-specific, objective standards consistent with state law. Adoption of these standards will enhance the City's ability to preserve the distinctive character of Mid-Century Modern Eichler neighborhoods, streamline project review, and support neighborhood identity. By codifying these standards, the City provides homeowners and applicants with a predictable, transparent framework while ensuring strong preservation outcomes and compliance with state requirements for housing production and objective standards.

Staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission forward a recommendation of approval to City Council.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The City implemented extensive outreach throughout development of the Eichler ODS:

- [Project Website](#) (September 2024): Hosted background information, draft documents, and opportunities for public input.
- Draft Document Circulation (October–November 2024): Made available for public review and written comments.

- Community Meeting (October 24, 2024): Hybrid meeting with staff presentation, public Q&A, and recording posted online.
- Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting (November 6, 2024): Public and Commission comments were received.
- Comment Review: All input was reviewed by Page & Turnbull and City staff, leading to revisions finalized in August 2025.
- Noticing: Mailed notice sent to Fairglen Additions property owners/occupants (October 4, 2025) and email notifications sent to neighborhood groups, Council offices, interested individuals, Preservation Action Council San José, and the Eichler Network (October 15, 2025).

This outreach ensured transparency, allowed for substantive community input, and shaped a final document reflecting neighborhood priorities and citywide preservation goals.

CEQA

Adoption of the Eichler ODS is exempt from CEQA for the following reasons:

- Not a “project” under CEQA (Guidelines §§15060(c)(2), 15378): The standards do not directly cause physical changes in the environment.
- Common Sense Exemption (Guidelines §15061(b)(3)): There is no possibility that adoption of the Eichler ODS would result in a significant environmental effect.
- Historic Resource Rehabilitation Exemption (Guidelines §15331): The Eichler ODS are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and will guide work that preserves historic resources.

Therefore, no additional environmental review is required.

/s/

MANIRA SANDHIR, DEPUTY
DIRECTOR
FOR CHRISTOPHER BURTON
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING, BUILDING AND CODE
ENFORCEMENT

For questions, please contact Dana Peak Edwards, City of San José Historic Preservation Officer and Principal Planner, at Dana.Peak@sanjoseca.gov.

Attachments:

1. [San Jose Eichlers Objective Design Standards](#)
2. [Public Comment](#)
3. [Draft Resolution approving the San José Eichler Neighborhood Objective Design Standards \(PP24-012\)](#).



Memorandum

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE EICHLER
 NEIGHBORHOOD OBJECTIVE
 DESIGN STANDARDS
 (PP24-012)

FROM: Christopher Burton, Director,
 Planning, Building, and Code
 Enforcement Department

DATE: November 19, 2025

COUNCIL DISTRICT: CITYWIDE

Type of Permit	N/A
Demolition	N/A
Proposed Land Uses	N/A
New Residential Units	N/A
New Square Footage	N/A
Additional Policy Review Items	
Tree Removals	N/A
Project Planner	Dana Peak Edwards, Historic Preservation Officer
CEQA Clearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a “project” under CEQA (Guidelines §§15060(c)(2), 15378): The standards do not directly cause physical changes in the environment. • Common Sense Exemption (Guidelines §15061(b)(3)): There is no possibility that adoption of the Eichler ODS would result in a significant environmental effect. • Historic Resource Rehabilitation Exemption (Guidelines §15331): The Eichler ODS are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and will guide work that preserves historic resources.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council:

1. Consider an exemption in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15331 for Historical Resource Rehabilitation; and
2. Adopt a resolution approving the San José Eichler Neighborhood Objective Design Standards (PP24-012).

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Joseph Eichler developed seven residential tracts in San José between 1952 and 1963. The tracts contain a total of approximately 480 homes located in five suburban neighborhoods. Houses developed by Eichler Homes in the 1950s and 1960s were designed by the architectural firms of Anshen & Allen, Jones & Emmons, and Claude Oakland & Associates. San José's Eichler neighborhoods represent an important concentration of Mid-Century Modern residential architecture.

In 2016, efforts to preserve and guide future change in one of these Eichler neighborhoods began when residents of Fairglen Additions formed the Fairglen Additions Preservation Committee (Committee) to pursue recognition of their community's historic significance. The Committee prepared a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination and Multiple Property Documentation ("Housing Tracts of Joseph Eichler in San José, California, 1952–1963") which resulted in the listing of Fairglen Additions on the NRHP in 2019 and its subsequent listing on the San José Historic Resources Inventory (HRI).

Following the listings, the Committee drafted neighborhood design guidelines to assist property owners in maintaining and modifying Eichler homes while protecting their defining features. These community-developed guidelines needed refinement into objective design standards so the City retained a qualified historic preservation consulting firm, Page & Turnbull to:

- Align with recent State housing legislation requiring clear, measurable standards.
- Streamline the City's design review process.
- Ensure consistency with professional preservation practices and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

The project resulted in the San José Eichler Neighborhood Objective Design Standards (Eichler ODS) which draw upon the Fairglen Additions NRHP nomination, community input, and consultation between Page & Turnbull, the Fairglen Additions Preservation Committee, and City staff. The consultant team also conducted a field survey in April 2024, documenting Eichler homes in San José and in other Bay Area jurisdictions with similar models.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Eichler ODS (Exhibit A) are objective design standards that would be applied when exterior changes are proposed to properties in Eichler neighborhoods listed on the HRI that require a Planning permit, like a Single Family House Permit. At present, Fairglen Additions is the only Eichler neighborhood listed on the HRI to which the design standards would apply. The Eichler ODS would not apply to interiors or require retroactive compliance.

Key Features of the Eichler ODS include:

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PROJECT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

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If adopted by City Council, the standards would apply to all new Planning applications submitted after the effective date (30 days post-approval).

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council.

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION HEARING

The Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) conducted a public hearing on October 1, 2025 and received public comment (Exhibit B and Exhibit C).

Ben Leech, Executive Director, Preservation Action Council San Jose, expressed appreciation for all the work that followed the listing of Fairglen Additions on the National Register of Historic Places, including the preparation of the Eichler ODS. He commented that the historic preservation community is trying to wrap its head around what objective design standards are in this new climate and the project has been an extremely worthwhile exercise to go through, benefiting a very unique collection of buildings. Mr. Leech expressed appreciation for the support of staff, the neighborhood and project consultant in a project that resulted in a net positive for the City.

There was no Commission discussion. The HLC voted 4-0-2 (Chair Royer and Commission Arnold absent) to approve the staff recommendation.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

Adoption of the Eichler ODS is exempt from CEQA for the following reasons:

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PUBLIC OUTREACH

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- Comment Review: All input was reviewed by Page & Turnbull and City staff, leading to revisions finalized in August 2025.
- Noticing: Mailed notice to Fairglen Additions property owners/occupants and newspaper publication in the San Jose Post Record.

This outreach ensured transparency, allowed for substantive community input, and shaped a final document reflecting neighborhood priorities and citywide preservation goals.

Written comment was electronically submitted to the HLC at the October 1, 2025 hearing. All written comment submitted to the HLC is included in this memorandum as Exhibit D. No questions or comments have been received via the project website, telephone or email as of the publishing of this memorandum.

Project Manager: Dana Peak Edward, Principal Planner and Historic Preservation Officer

Approved by: Manira Sandhir, Deputy Director of Planning

[Please click on the title of each exhibit to view the document:](#)

ATTACHMENTS:
<u>Exhibit A: Eichler Neighborhood Objective Design Standards</u>
<u>Exhibit B: October 1, 2025 Staff Report Historic Landmarks Commission</u>
<u>Exhibit C: October 1, 2025 Approved Action Minutes Historic Landmarks Commission</u>
<u>Exhibit D: October 1, 2025 Historic Landmarks Commission Public Comment</u>
<u>Exhibit E: Eichler Standards Draft Resolution</u>