



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

## SAN FRANCISCO CITYWIDE CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY

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## 01 Introduction

Historic preservation programs help communities acknowledge the past and plan for the future. These programs can support communities holding conversations on how to navigate change, while keeping what is meaningful for the benefit of present and future generations. In a dynamic place like San Francisco, where the histories of many communities come together, these conversations and decision-making processes need to be broader, reaching more communities, and collaborative, with communities guiding the interpretation and preservation of what is collectively valued and protected.

The *San Francisco Citywide Cultural Resources Survey (SF Survey)* is a multi-year program supported by the San Francisco Planning Department to identify and document places and resources of cultural, historical, and architectural importance to San Francisco's diverse communities. These places and resources include tangible aspects of our environment, such as buildings, structures, objects, landscapes, sites, and districts, as well as intangible aspects, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, festivals, and traditional crafts. The identification and recognition of intangible aspects can also include places and resources that were lost and are essential to our understanding of the present. *SF Survey* supports the recognition of the cultural resources<sup>1</sup> of San Francisco's communities to expand a collective sense of belonging and understanding of the City's history.

*SF Survey* brings together interconnected efforts that inform the Planning Department's work on land-use decisions, landmark designations and cultural heritage initiatives. The program's purpose is to (1) support community-led cultural empowerment efforts through partnerships, programming, and historic preservation protections and incentives, and (2) facilitate the historic review process for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), building permit applications, development projects, and area plans. *SF Survey* efforts include: fieldwork, research, evaluation, and adoption of findings at the Historic Preservation Commission; approach to Intangible Cultural Heritage; development of historic context statements; and maintenance of the SF Cultural Heritage digital site.

The Community Engagement Framework supports *SF Survey* efforts, energizing public engagement in historic preservation and cultural heritage conservation<sup>2</sup>, with a focus on communities underrepresented in preservation planning. The Framework outlines strategies and collaborations with community partners, historic preservation peers, culture bearers<sup>3</sup>, and community members, to ensure knowledge of what is meaningful to communities guides the work of the Planning Department.

### Premise

San Francisco has a history of implementing discriminatory policies, programs, and practices that perpetuate racial inequities “compounded by the intersection of race with class, gender, sexuality, immigration status, linguistic accessibility, disability, and other social identities and experiences.”<sup>4</sup> The City, its Historic Preservation Commission, and Planning Department, have implemented land use and zoning policies that “segregate,

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural resources are buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts that are culturally, historically, and architecturally important to our communities and the city.

<sup>2</sup> Cultural heritage conservation is defined by San Francisco Cultural Districts as “to preserve, promote and develop cultural and historic buildings, businesses, organizations, traditions, arts, events, and district aesthetics.”<sup>3</sup> Culture bearers: As defined by the Planning Department, an individual or group that embodies and transmits culture and endows special meaning to places and things.

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<sup>4</sup> Historic Preservation Commission, Resolution No. 1127 Centering Preservation Planning on Racial and Social Equity, hearing date July 15, 2020, 2.

displace, disposes and extract wealth, land, and resources from American Indians, Blacks, and other communities of color.”<sup>5</sup> Discriminatory institutional and systemic mechanisms have facilitated the forced removal, exclusion and erasure of property, history, heritage, and culture belonging to these communities. Today we share a built environment that “more often reflects the accomplishments and narratives of white people rather than the accomplishments and narratives of American Indian, Black and other peoples of color.”<sup>6</sup>

The Planning Department, Historic Preservation Commission, and the historic preservation profession have been responsible for assessing the cultural and historical “value” of places through a regulatory process that involves “evaluation of significance”<sup>7</sup>. These “expert” driven evaluations have excluded American Indian, Black, and other communities of color from the documentation and decision-making processes, resulting in a narrow and incomplete approach to the interpretation and preservation of what is collectively valued and protected. As this regulatory framework continues to drive sensitive conversations and decisions related to cultural heritage, racial and social inequities are being challenged. In 2020, the Historic Preservation Commission directed the Planning Department to center preservation planning on racial and social equity.<sup>8</sup> Key recommendations to the Planning Department include (1) exploring creative approaches to “incorporate new ways of honoring and sustaining cultural heritage” and (2) expanding participation, building capacity, and funding partnerships with American Indian, Black, and other communities of color to ensure these communities can guide and lead the preservation of their historic resources and cultural heritage.

## Document Purpose

The purpose of this “living” document is to serve as a roadmap for the engagement and collaboration strategies that will guide and inform *SF Survey*. The goals of the Community Engagement Framework are to:

- Expand the engagement of communities underrepresented in preservation planning efforts, including American Indian, Black, and other communities of color, youth, LGBTQ+, and English as Second Language (ESL) communities.
- Engage Cultural Districts, community-based organizations, community members, and historic preservation peers in the co-creation of more inclusive processes related to cultural heritage and preservation planning through community-led conversations.
- Develop dynamic partnerships and collaborations with Cultural Districts, culture bearers, historic and cultural advocacy organizations and institutions, SF Planning, and the Historic Preservation Commission. Collaborations will aim to build capacity and foster the transmission of cultural heritage through knowledge-sharing events and public programming.
- Create deeper partnerships that allow collaboration, supported by evolving or “living” tools where a greater need for community agency is required.

## 02 Context

The Historic Preservation Commission’s and the Planning Department’s efforts to safeguard San Francisco’s built environment and heritage have increasingly focused on identifying and preserving cultural resources associated with communities of color and other marginalized groups.<sup>9</sup> These efforts include community partnerships to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>7</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* defines significance as, “representative of an important part of history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of an area.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Historic Preservation Commission, Resolution No. 1127 Centering Preservation Planning on Racial and Social Equity, hearing date July 15, 2020, 6.

collaborate on the development of historic context statements, many of which are still to be adopted and will require deeper community engagement. The adoption of these documents will give visibility to the significant contributions and stories of marginalized communities and help the City understand what needs to be protected.

Recognizing that many aspects of the cultural heritage of marginalized social, racial, and ethnic groups are not represented in the built environment, the Historic Preservation Commission has developed tools such as the Legacy Business Registry and the Cultural Districts Program, which aim to recognize and sustain the living aspects of culture.

The proposed community engagement strategies are informed by the Historic Preservation Commission directive to center preservation planning on racial and social equity. They are also informed by community feedback from ongoing Planning Department efforts, such as the development of historic context statements and the research of an approach to intangible cultural heritage (key findings outlined below). Additionally, the community engagement strategies build on recommendations emerging from collaborations with community partners.

### **Intangible Cultural Heritage Focus Group Findings**

The Planning Department is researching an approach to consider the non-physical aspects of a community's cultural heritage, also known as Intangible Cultural Heritage, which include oral traditions and expressions; performing arts; social practices; rituals and festivals; and traditional crafts. From September 2020 through February 2021, Planning staff facilitated conversations with Cultural Districts, culture bearers, and advocates.<sup>10</sup> These conversations highlighted the need to address the reasons why material culture from marginalized communities is not represented in the built environment, and honor and support the continuous living aspect of their cultures. This approach challenges existing tools and criteria for identifying and documenting cultural resources that are not designed to capture the invisible histories that places hold, the histories held by community (oral traditions, relationships, moments in time), and the culture and way of life of oppressed and displaced communities.

Findings from these focus group conversations indicate that preservation processes with a "cataloguing" approach that are geared toward legislative action (adoption) are challenging to many cultural groups. Focus group participants discussed how, driven by prioritization, such top-down processes result in the exclusion of many communities and what they value. To some communities "cataloguing" can be traumatic (processing the loss of cultural knowledge and traditions), anxiety-inducing (perceived as a big responsibility that needs to be comprehensive), divisive (undermining of existing community-led efforts and confronting cultural groups to variants in memory), and extractive. Participants mentioned that some communities do not trust the government with their culture. They cautioned the role of government in developing a "comprehensive" catalogue of cultural values and traditions and reflected on how over-regulation could amplify harm to marginalized communities.

### **Center Preservation in Racial and Social Equity**

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<sup>10</sup> Focus groups held with culture bearers and advocates as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Methodology Project methodology for tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets project, September 2020 to February 2021.

Focus group participants were highly concerned about racial and social equity in preservation matters. The cultural losses resulting from redevelopment, gentrification, displacement, genocide, and inequality, as well as the lack of opportunities to heal from such losses and sustain the way of life of their communities were common themes in these conversations. Participants recommended the following priorities should guide future preservation efforts:

- Recognize cultural loss and document what led to—and continues to—perpetuate such loss.
- Advance racial and social equity and amplify the voices of women and the most marginalized members within cultural groups.
- Foster cultural competency and protection of rights needed to ensure communities can exercise the right to express their culture and feel safe.
- Develop trust-based partnerships with communities by building relationships that honor and respect the layers of community knowledge and traditions.
- Support allyship across cultural communities while respecting and acknowledging the distinctive role of the Ramaytush Ohlone as original inhabitants and stewards of San Francisco.
- Align resources and organizing capabilities behind community-driven efforts and initiatives.
- Develop clear and transparent communication and decision-making protocols, and manage information with accountability.

Focus group participants expressed the need for San Francisco to develop a shared framework that embraces a broader definition of cultural values and traditions, creating common language for the City and communities to approach cultural heritage. Participants also referred to this framework as a "cultural empowerment movement" or a "cultural history and cultural freedom movement."

### **Recommendations for an Updated Approach to Preservation**

Recognizing that "community is the source of culture," culture bearers and advocates made recommendations for an updated approach to preservation. Key recommendations included:

- *Partnerships* – Working in partnership with other city agencies, community-based cultural organizations, and culture bearers. For example, formalizing collaborations related to cultural heritage between Planning and the San Francisco Public library, and funding of existing community-based initiatives, events, and cultural curriculum in public schools.
- *Knowledge-sharing and cultural awareness* – Providing assistance in transmitting and sustaining cultural heritage, with a focus on younger generations, communities underrepresented in preservation planning, and groups beyond the culture holders. Raising awareness of diverse histories and cultural values across communities, and within City departments and the historic preservation profession. Developing a common language, framework, and values for the City and communities to approach cultural heritage.
- *Accountability and Transparency* – Correcting knowledge-sharing patterns that exclude certain groups by lifting barriers to access knowledge and information, implementing transparent engagement and data management processes, and managing information that belongs to the community *with the Community*. Planning should improve processes to remain accountable and respectful of the agency of culture bearers and cultural communities.

## 03 Equity and Participation Goals

### Equity Goals

The community engagement framework implements the Historic Preservation Commission resolution to center racial and social equity. Community engagement efforts will prioritize the engagement of communities underrepresented in preservation planning efforts. Priority groups for engagement include (but are not limited to) the following communities and their intersecting racial and social identities and experiences:

- Youth and seniors
- American Indian communities, specifically Ramaytush Ohlone, local culturally affiliated California Native American tribes, and local urban American Indians
- Black and other communities of color
- Low-income communities
- English as Second Language (ESL) communities
- LGBTQ+ communities

### Participation Goals

A multi-layered community engagement approach will seek to further connect with community members across the public participation spectrum, balancing wider public and mini-public approaches<sup>11</sup>:



- *Inform* neighbors, community partners and the public about the *SF Survey* processes and findings.
- *Consult* neighbors and the public on community histories to inform *SF Survey*.
- *Involve* community partners in *SF Survey* fieldwork and the evaluation of draft findings.
- *Collaborate* with community partners in the co-creation of tools to inform the work of the Planning Department and support community-led cultural advocacy efforts (i.e., “living” documents, knowledge-sharing protocols, collaborative digital platform).
- Support community-led *empowerment*
  - (1) advance the representation of priority groups in careers related to cultural heritage conservation, historic preservation, and planning;
  - (2) create opportunities for community partners to shape the Planning Department historic preservation workflows and practices; and
  - (3) support community-led cultural empowerment efforts, and honor the contributions and histories of communities underrepresented in preservation planning efforts.

On a periodic basis, *SF Survey* will share progress and seek review, comment, and document approval at Historic Preservation Commission Hearings. *SF Survey* will engage with the Board of Supervisors regarding phasing, events in their districts, and collaboration with community partners.

<sup>11</sup> James Pow (2023) Mini-Publics and the Wider Public: The Perceived Legitimacy of Randomly Selecting Citizen Representatives, *Representation*, 59:1, 13-32, DOI: 10.1080/00344893.2021.1880470

### Overview of Community Engagement Strategies & Workstreams

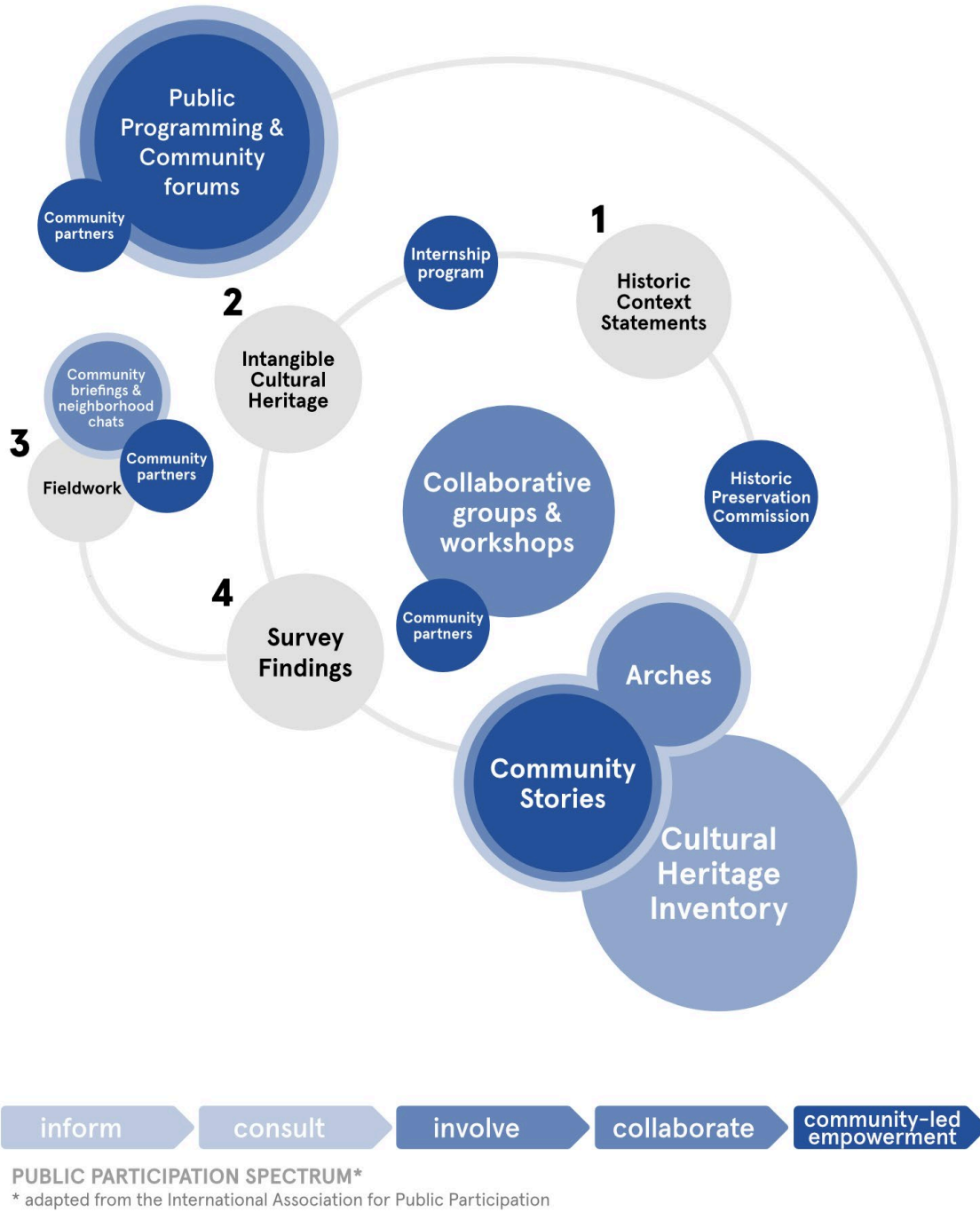


Diagram 1: Interconnected community engagement strategies and workstreams (numbered)

Approach	Strategy		SF Survey (workstreams)				Participation goals	Reach	Community Partners
			HCS	ICH	Fieldwork	Findings			
Internal	(1) Internship						Support community-led Empowerment (1)	Priority groups (youth 18+)	Planning’s summer internship program
Mini-public	(2) Community briefings						Inform and consult	Community partners from priority groups within fieldwork areas.	Cultural/ history advocacy groups, Cultural Districts, cultural centers, merchant associations and legacy business network.
	(3) Neighborhood chats						Involve		
	(4) Collaborative groups and workshops						Collaborate Support community-led Empowerment (2)	Community partners within fieldwork areas and/or in a neighborhood with a HCS in progress.	Community-based organizations, cultural advocacy groups, Cultural Districts, faith-based organizations, cultural centers, community knowledge bearers, design organizations, and historic preservation peers. San Francisco Public Library.
Maxi-public	(5) Digital Platforms	SF Cultural Heritage & Community Stories (Arches)					Involve Support community-led Empowerment (3)	Community partners, general public, neighbors in fieldwork areas.	
		Website & other					Inform	General public	
	(6) Public Programming & Community forums						Inform and consult Support community-led Empowerment (3)	General public with a focus on youth, seniors, all-incomes, and multi-lingual communities.	San Francisco Public Library, cultural/history advocacy groups, Cultural Districts, cultural & community centers
	(7) Historic Preservation Commission						Inform	General public	Historic Preservation Commissioners

Table 1: Overview of community engagement strategies

HCS – Historic context statements

ICH – Intangible Cultural Heritage approach

Fieldwork – SF Survey fieldwork activities

Findings – Evaluation of findings



## 04 Strategies and Partnerships

### Strategy 1: Internship Program

*Partner(s): Planning's Summer Internship Program*

Representation within Planning is a key component of centering preservation planning in racial and social equity and a major concern for priority communities. Areas of underrepresentation often include the design of community outreach efforts, the make-up of teams liaising with communities, as well as policy design and decision-making processes. An internship program focused on creating opportunities for priority communities within the Planning Department, and more specifically in the field of cultural heritage conservation and preservation planning, is a first step towards expanding representation. The internship program could support all strategies across *SF Survey* workflows. Recruitment could reach local high school seniors and higher education students and link to further resources and access to career development, training, and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

### Strategy 2: Community Briefings

*Partner(s): Cultural/ history advocacy groups, Cultural Districts, cultural centers, merchant associations and Legacy Business network.*

Community Partners will convene, co-host and/or co-facilitate events with SF Planning staff and will be involved in the development of agendas. Community briefings will aim to inform community partners prior to commencing fieldwork activities and involve them in fieldwork-related activities. Capacity-building topics could include introductions to fieldwork and evaluation process, to SF Cultural Heritage (Arches), and Communities Stories Form.

*Tools:* Introductory presentation, draft findings presentation, Memorandum of Collaboration, Community Input Dashboard, Communities Stories Form.

### Strategy 3: Neighborhood Chats (Fieldwork)

*Partner(s): Cultural/ history advocacy groups, Cultural Districts, cultural centers, merchant associations and Legacy Business network.*

Neighborhood chats will enhance fieldwork activities by integrating technical work and community engagement, and ensuring a survey process that is more accessible and friendly. Neighborhoods have a wealth of community organizations with boots on the ground that may be interested in accompanying the survey team to guide informal conversations with neighbors. Staff conducting the survey will make themselves visible by wearing an orange lanyard. A dedicated member of staff and/or a community partner will be available during field surveys to answer neighbors' questions and engage in conversation. The Community Stories Form (see entry below) may support the documentation of materials and feedback from these interactions. Neighbors may also be invited to participate in future *SF Survey* community events or join the newsletter.

*Tools:* Postcards, Neighborhood chat facilitator guide, FAQ's, Communities Stories Form.

## Strategy 4: Collaborative groups and workshops

*Partner(s): Cultural Districts, cultural advocacy groups, historic preservation peers, and community knowledge and culture bearers.*

Create a framework to collaboratively develop cultural context statements, approach Intangible Cultural Heritage, and evaluate fieldwork draft findings with community partners. Department staff will work to build capacity within communities, form partnerships, and collaborate with organizations and community knowledge and culture bearers. Collaborations may span all stages of the project, from initiation through adoption of statements and findings, and beyond.

*Tools:* Memorandum of Collaboration, draft findings evaluation tables and maps, Community Stories Form, website, SF Cultural Heritage (Arches), Community Input Dashboard.

## Strategy 5: Digital Platforms

### SF CULTURAL HERITAGE (ARCHES)

SF Cultural Heritage is an online information management platform created specifically to support SF Survey efforts. This publicly accessible website highlights the interconnections of San Francisco's cultural heritage and shares SF Survey Findings, including information gathered through community submissions and historic research.

This digital tool responds to community feedback to invest in digital resources that are accessible and interactive, and is the result of a partnership between the San Francisco Planning Department and the Getty Conservation Institute, with the assistance of Farallon Geographics. It is powered by Arches, an open-source heritage data management platform developed by the Getty Conservation Institute and the World Monuments Fund.

SF Cultural Heritage will interface with existing systems like the SF Property Information Map. The platform serves as San Francisco's living cultural resources inventory, an important outcome of the SF Survey program. This platform will allow for future additions and changes to the city's cultural resources over time, as new information is aggregated.

The platform environment supports:

- Text and images
- Organization and access to references and research sources
- Image upload and commenting by community collaborators (with permissions)
- Editing by community moderator and Planning staff
- Geo-referenced visualization of *SF Survey* findings, historic context statements, and Intangible Cultural Heritage references, integrated with the San Francisco Property Information Map.

*Tools:* <https://sfculturalheritage.org/>

### **COMMUNITY STORIES FORM (SUPPORTED BY ARCHES)**

“Community Stories” involves the public in the recognition of people, places, experiences, and memories that hold meaning to communities. This publicly accessible digital survey form aggregates contributions from the public and links to SF Cultural Heritage, over time giving visibility to patterns of meaning and expanding participation in preservation planning efforts. The tool supports fieldwork interactions with the public (neighborhood chats), community briefings, public programming, and community-led initiatives. To bridge technological gaps, Community Stories surveys are available in print and language options. Future public programming opportunities may be explored in collaboration with community partners.

*Tools:* <https://sfculturalheritage.org/plugins/community-stories-form>

### **COMMUNITY INPUT DASHBOARD**

The Community Input “dashboard” identifies global themes to help staff and communities track and advance areas of community concern and interest over a multi-year implementation and interrelated efforts. The dashboard is the result of aggregated community input collected during meetings, workshops, briefings, and other events.

*Tools:* Community input dashboard (digital platform TBD)

### **WEBSITE AND NEWSLETTER**

*SF Survey* project webpage on the Planning website ([sfplanning.org/sfsurvey](http://sfplanning.org/sfsurvey)) will have *SF Survey* updates, survey areas, and calendar of *SF Survey* community events. The project team runs a quarterly Newsletter to keep community partners, interested organizations, and the general public informed. Updates in social media and local newspapers are shared by community partners.

*Tools:* Project webpage ([sfplanning.org/sfsurvey](http://sfplanning.org/sfsurvey)), newsletter, and various local newspapers.

### **Strategy 6 Public Programming and Community Forums**

*Partner(s):* City agencies with a broad community reach (i.e., San Francisco Public Library), cultural/ history advocacy groups, Cultural Districts, and cultural centers.

Explore opportunities to co-create events, programs or projects that support community-led cultural efforts, enhance cultural awareness, and celebrate the contributions and histories of communities underrepresented in preservation planning. Programs center priority groups for engagement, and aim to be accessible to all income levels. Public programming may align with planned cultural programming or initiatives by community partners, and supports multiple SF Survey workstreams.

*Tools:* Memorandum of Collaboration, FAQs, activities to engage families with children, Community Stories Form, Community Input Dashboard.

## **Strategy 7 Historic Preservation Commission**

*Partner(s): Historic Preservation Commissioners*

### **“LIVING” DOCUMENT PROGRAM**

Based on community feedback, Department staff has incorporated language into the Historic Preservation Commission adoption resolution that allows for historic context statements to be considered “living documents.” This provision allows for Department staff to further refine documents as required and suggested by community members after Historic Preservation Commission adoption hearings and throughout the life of SF Survey. The language within the adoption resolution will hold Department staff accountable to maintaining historic context statements as living documents and provide greater transparency with communities. This approach and the tools needed will evolve through collaborations with community partners across workstreams.

## 05 Supporting Tools and Document

SF Survey FAQs

Memorandum of Collaboration (Template)

Community Input Dashboard

Glossary of Common Terms

Community Partners Outreach Methodology

Community Input Tracking Methodology

SF Community Engagement Team Guide

Workflows for Community Engagement (included in the SF Community Engagement Team Guide)