



## HOW TO USE THE CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

### What is a Historic Context Statement?

San Francisco's [Citywide Historic Context Statement](#), begun in 2020, forms the foundation for future fieldwork and decision making for [SF Survey](#). It builds upon the Department's past historic context and survey efforts and incorporates recently completed and in-progress historic context statements.

According to the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), "historic context statements are intended to provide an analytical framework for identifying and evaluating resources by concisely explaining what aspects of geography, history, and culture significantly shaped the physical development of a community or region's land use patterns and built environment over time, what important property types were associated with those developments, why they are important and what characteristics they need to have to be considered an important representation of their type or context."<sup>1</sup>

San Francisco's Citywide Historic Context Statement aims to determine the significance and rarity of properties across San Francisco. The in-progress Citywide Historic Context Statement consists of contexts, sub-contexts and themes which are organized within four broad categories of Architectural, Cultural, Thematic, and Geographic contexts. Components of the Citywide Historic Context Statement will be completed over the next several years and can provide important historical information about properties and sites across San Francisco. To track progress on the Citywide Historic Context Statement, please visit the [project webpage](#).

<sup>1</sup> Marie Nelson, ["Writing Historic Contexts."](#) California Office of Historic Preservation.



### Thematic Historic Context Statements

Thematic historic context statements cover periods of development that are significant to the history of San Francisco (ex. Streetcar Suburbanization (1880-1920), as well as significant events (ex. 1906 Earthquake and Reconstruction), and the development of specific property types across the city (ex. Post Offices). These documents should be utilized for property evaluations that may convey significance under Criterion A/1 (Events).<sup>2</sup>



### Architectural Historic Context Statements

Architectural historic context statements cover stylistic periods that are significant to the history of San Francisco. Each architectural historic context statement corresponds to a period of development and the architectural styles that were most popular during the period. For example, the *Victorian Era Styles (1870-1910) Historic Context Statement* provides a brief historical overview of the period before providing information on relevant architectural styles including Italianate, Stick/Eastlake, Queen Anne, Second Empire, and Richardsonian Romanesque. Refer to [Preservation Bulletin](#) for guidance on identifying an architectural style. Each architectural historic context statement identifies character-defining features associated with each style and provides examples for reference. These documents should be utilized for property evaluations that may convey significance under Criterion C/3 (Architecture).



### Cultural Historic Context Statements

Cultural historic context statements cover the history of cultural and/or ethnic groups that are significant to the history of San Francisco. To date, several culturally focused historic context statements have been completed (ex. *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco*) with many more to be drafted over the life of SF Survey. Cultural historic context statements provide information on significant events, people, and buildings of significance to different communities. These documents should be utilized for property evaluations that may convey significance under Criterion A/1 (Events) and/or B/2 (People).



### Geographic Historic Context Statements

Geographic historic context statements cover the history of distinct neighborhoods in San Francisco. They typically include the historical development of a particular neighborhood, as well as common property types and architectural styles found in the neighborhood. To date, many geographic historic context statements have been completed (ex. *Eureka Valley Historic Context Statement*). Geographic historic context statements provide information on events, people, and buildings relevant to the respective neighborhood. These documents should be utilized for property evaluations that may convey significance under Criterion A/1 (Events), B/2 (People), and/or C/3 (Architecture).

## Criteria for Evaluation Used in Historic Context Statements

### Significance

Significance establishes why, where, and when a property is important. The criteria for significance, as established by the NPS, are identical at the federal, state, and local level. The criteria apply to buildings as

<sup>2</sup> Federal, state and local historical registers have four criteria whereby you can evaluate the significance of a property: Criterion A (or 1) Events, Criterion B (or 2) People, Criterion C (or 3) Architecture, and Criterion D (or 4) Information Potential. Please see [National Register Bulletin 15](#) for more information on these criteria and framework for evaluating properties for historic significance.

well as landscapes. Properties are evaluated for significance within their relevant historic contexts using the following adopted criteria:

National Register	California Register	Definition
Criterion A	Criterion 1	Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Criterion B	Criterion 2	Associated with the lives of persons significant to our past.
Criterion C	Criterion 3	Displays significant characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, work of a master, high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
Criterion D	Criterion 4	Yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Integrity**

Integrity is the authenticity of physical characteristics from which resources obtain their significance. When a property retains its integrity, it is able to convey its significance, its association with events, people, and designs from the past. Integrity is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Properties associated with an important event or person should retain sufficient integrity such that “a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists today.”<sup>3</sup> The aspects of integrity apply to buildings and to designed landscapes. The National Register defines the seven aspects of integrity as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. Except in rare cases, the relationship between a property and its historic associations is destroyed if the property is moved.
- Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Design can also apply to districts. For districts significant primarily for architectural value, design concerns more than just the individual buildings or structures located within the boundaries. It also applies to the way in which buildings, sites, or structures are related.
- Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the character of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves how, not just where the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space.

<sup>3</sup> National Park Service. National Register Bulletin No. 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. A property must retain the key exterior materials dating from the period of its historic significance.
- Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character.
- Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character.

## What is the regulatory basis for historic preservation?

### Federal Level

In the United States, the concept of preserving a community's architectural past emerged during the decades preceding the Civil War and focused on colonial buildings and other structures connected with important figures in American history. Public concern over the possible loss of historic sites and buildings of importance to the nation's heritage prompted Congress to adopt the Antiquities Act of 1906, offering protection to prehistoric and historic sites located on federal properties. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 established a national policy of preserving historic resources of national significance and created the National Historic Landmark Program. This legislation empowered the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the National Park Service, to use the Historic American Buildings Survey to survey, document, evaluate, acquire, and preserve archaeological and historic sites.<sup>5</sup>

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 established a number of programs that deal with historic preservation at the federal and state levels. The National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the Secretary of the Interior, was created as a federal planning tool and contains a list of national, state, and local districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. In addition, the NHPA created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent federal agency that serves as the primary federal policy advisor to the President and Congress, recommends administrative and legislative improvements for protecting our nation's heritage; advocates full consideration of historic values in federal decision-making; and reviews federal programs and policies to promote effectiveness, coordination, and consistency with national preservation policies. The NHPA also established the review process known as Section 106, in which federal undertakings must be assessed for potential impact on historic resources.<sup>6</sup>

Both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 similarly require consideration of a project's effects on historical, architectural, and archaeological resources as part of the environmental review process. In 1983, the Secretary of the Interior released Preservation Planning Standards and Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties that are used nationwide and under CEQA to guide appropriate preservation strategies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> National Park Service. National Register Bulletin No. 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

### State Level

The State of California maintains preservation programs through the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) within the California Department of Parks and Recreation. This office is administered by the State Historic Preservation Officer and overseen by the State Historical Resources Commission, whose members are appointed by the Governor. The office maintains the California Register of Historical Resources, which lists properties designated by federal, state and local authorities.<sup>8</sup>

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is the foundation of environmental policy and law in the state of California and encourages the protection of all aspects of the environment, including historical resources. Under CEQA, state and local governmental agencies must consider the impact of proposed projects on historic resources.<sup>9</sup>

Preservation of resources from the Recent Past is one of the top 10 goals outlined in the California Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2006-2010. The Plan notes that “In California the demolition in recent years of buildings by master architects Edward Durrell Stone, Richard Neutra, and Rudolf Schindler, to name a few, has heightened the sense of urgency for the need to study and better understand the cultural resources of the Modern Age.”<sup>10</sup>

### Local Level

At the local level, there are numerous studies, mandates and guidelines pertaining to the identification, evaluation, and preservation of historic and cultural resources in San Francisco. San Francisco’s commitment to retaining its historic fabric is codified in Section 101.1 of the Planning Code, which sets forth eight Priority Policies, including Policy 7: That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved.

The San Francisco Planning Department’s 1966 study “The Preservation of Landmarks in San Francisco” outlined goals for City legislation to protect architectural and historic resources. In 1967, the Board of Supervisors adopted a landmarks ordinance, Article 10 of the Planning Code, which established the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (Landmarks Board).” In 1985 the Downtown Plan was adopted as part of the General Plan, and Article 11 of the Planning Code implemented the preservation policies created for that Plan. Finally, the General Plan’s introduction incorporated a 1986 voter-approved initiative, known as Proposition M, that added Section 101.1 to the Planning Code.

In 1995, San Francisco became a Certified Local Government (CLG) under the provisions of the NHPA. CLGs must comply with five basic requirements:

- Enforce appropriate state and local laws and regulations for the designation and protection of historic properties
- Establish a historic preservation review commission by local ordinance
- Maintain a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties
- Provide for public participation in the local preservation program
- Satisfactorily perform responsibilities delegated to it by the state

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> National Park Service. National Register Bulletin No. 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2002).

In 2008, voters approved a charter amendment to replace the LPAB with a newly created Historic Preservation Commission that has expanded powers over historic resources in San Francisco. The new Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on building permit applications that involve construction, alteration or demolition of landmark sites and resources located within historic districts. The HPC may also review and comment on projects affecting historic resources that are subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and/or projects subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The HPC also approves Certificates of Appropriateness for alterations of Landmarks and properties located within Article 10 Historic Districts. The Modern context statement will be brought to the HPC for adoption in the Fall of 2010.

At the local level, Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code provides for official designation of Landmarks, Historic Districts, and Structures of Merit that have “a special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.” In addition to properties officially designated under Article 10, the City and County of San Francisco also recognizes those properties identified as eligible resources in adopted informational historic and cultural surveys. Properties lacking official designation at the local, state, or federal levels, and also lacking documentation in an adopted informational survey, may still be considered potential resources pursuant to San Francisco Preservation Bulletin No. 16, “City and County of San Francisco Planning Department CEQA Review Procedures for Historic Resources.”

## Selecting the Appropriate Historic Context Statement(s)

When conducting research on a property or site in San Francisco, historic context statements can provide important historical information related to its development or associations with significant people and/or cultural or ethnic groups. When determining which historic context statements might be relevant for a specific property, consult the [Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework](#). The Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework provides an outline of historic context statements and themes that have been completed or identified for completion. When completing research for a property, consider what neighborhood the property is located in, what architectural features it appears to have, and any ties it may have to cultural or ethnic groups. Upon initial research, utilize the Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework to determine which historic context statements may be most relevant for your property. The Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework documents that have been completed, are in progress, or need to be started. Drafts of newly completed historic context statements will be posted on the [project webpage](#) as they become available.

## Using Historic Context Statements

While historic context statements vary in structure and formatting, each document generally contains an introduction, historic narrative, and evaluative framework. The introduction of the document outlines the scope including historic period and property types covered. The historic narrative section of the document provides general background information that is relevant to the historic context statement. Addresses of relevant properties are often called out with information provided related to associated events and people (including architects, builders, or significant community figures). Finally, each context statement contains an evaluative framework that will establish significance, based on the California Register and National Register criteria. Each context’s evaluative framework also provides period(s) of significance, character-defining features, and property types. An integrity analysis is also provided, which outlines the physical aspects that a property must retain to be considered significant for its association with a particular context. As a general

practice, lower integrity thresholds are allowed for properties that are associated with significant events (particularly cultural and/or cultural events) and/or persons.

Historic context statements do not result in the automatic historic designation of a property. Rather, they provide information and a framework for evaluating these properties throughout SF Survey. Many historic context statements completed by the Department provide examples of properties that may be considered eligible or ineligible for historic designation. These properties can be used as a guide when conducting evaluations for new properties using the Citywide Historic Context Statement.

For guidance on using the Citywide Historic Context Statement, please consider the attached examples. Documents with no hyperlinks have not been completed and will be made available on our website once finalized.



**1478 31st Avenue**

Outer Sunset  
1931  
built by Christian Anderson



**Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework**

Four circular icons arranged horizontally. From left to right: a classical building with columns, a paint palette and pencil, a globe with a building, and a map with a location pin.

<p><b><u>Sunset Residential Builders Historic Context Statement (1925-1950)</u></b></p> <p>The property is an example of twentieth century residential tract development in the Sunset.</p>	<p><b>20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival Styles</b></p> <p>The property is an example of a barrel-front Mediterranean Revival house.</p>	<p><b><u>Architecture, Planning, &amp; Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies</u></b></p> <p>The property was built by Christian Anderson, a well-known builder most active in the Sunset.</p>
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## 1820-1824 Mason Street

Russian Hill/North Beach  
1911



### Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework



#### North Beach

The property falls within the boundaries of the *North Beach Historic Context Statement*.

#### **1906 Earthquake and Reconstruction**

The property is located within the boundaries of the 1906 fire line and appears to have been rebuilt in the decade following the Earthquake and Fire.

#### Progressive Era & Early Revival Styles (1890-1930)

The property is an example of a Classical Revival flats building.

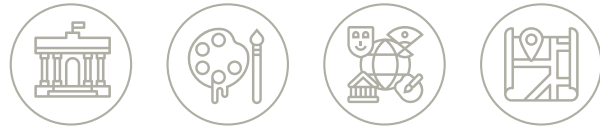


## 3293 Mission Street

Outer Mission  
c. 1900 (remodeled c. 1935)



### Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework



### Neighborhood Commercial Buildings (1865-1965)

The property is an example of a c. 1900 storefront later remodeled in the popular Art Deco style.

### Modernistic Styles (1925-1965)

As it stands today, the building is an example of small-scale Art Deco commercial architecture in San Francisco.



## 1698 Post Street

Japantown  
1979



### Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework



#### Japantown

The property falls within the bounds of the Japantown Cultural District. Additionally, a longtime Japanese/ Japanese American business, Soko Hardware, occupies the building.

#### Neighborhood Commercial Buildings (1865-1965)

The property is an example of a larger scale, post-1965 commercial property in San Francisco.

#### San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design (1935-1970)

The property is designed in the Japanese-inspired Modern style.



## 573-575 Castro Street

Castro Upper Market  
1893-1894

### Citywide Historic Context Statement Framework



### Neighborhood Commercial Buildings (1865-1965)

The property is an example of mixed-use Victorian-era commercial property.

### LGBTQ+ History

This was the residence of Harvey Milk, prominent gay rights activist, as well as the home of his business, Castro Camera, and his campaign headquarters.

### Victorian Era Styles (1870-1910)

The property is designed in the Stick-Eastlake style, featuring stickwork, a bracketed cornice, and a pedimented gable, among other details.

### Architecture, Planning, & Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies

The property was built by Fernando Nelson, a well-known builder.