



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: February 13, 2019

TO: Historic Preservation Commission

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RE: Informational Presentation
Citywide Cultural Resources Survey

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The Citywide Cultural Resources Survey is a multi-year effort to systematically identify, evaluate and document properties and places that reflect important themes in San Francisco's architectural, social, and cultural history. The survey will serve many purposes but is intended to address:

- **Community Identity:** Since 1967, survey information has been collected for various parts of the City; however, many San Francisco neighborhoods have not been surveyed. A completed survey for all of San Francisco will provide a broader lens to ensure all cultural perspectives are recognized in the built environment.
- **Disaster Planning & Recovery:** A completed survey is a crucial step in preparing for and responding to environmental or human-created hazards. The information collected from this survey will help the City identify projects and actions necessary to assist communities to recover effectively, and it will ensure that places and activities that matter to the community are considered in recovery decisions. For property owners, integrating the survey into disaster recovery planning will expedite access to financial assistance at the State and Federal levels.
- **Local Economy:** A completed survey allows everyone to communicate more effectively by providing an understanding of the features important to the community. This in turn helps our local economy by simplifying the review time and cost of application processes to open a business, build a new home, or make improvements to an existing property.
- **Support New Housing:** San Francisco is a city steeped in a rich history. More than half of San Francisco was built out by World War II, which sometimes makes it difficult to redevelop sites without affecting historic resources. A completed survey helps minimize these conflicts by providing another tool to make informed decisions on where new housing should be located, and which buildings can take on higher density to minimize policy conflicts, reduce costs, and streamline permit processing.

BACKGROUND

As a Certified Local Government, San Francisco is required to maintain a system to survey and inventory historic resources. The City has been conducting surveys since the inception of the historic preservation program in 1967, however, only approximately 20 percent of the City's properties have been surveyed. Further, while several large surveys were conducted in the past decade, these surveys have mostly been affiliated with projects, such as area plans (Eastern Neighborhoods, Market & Octavia, Central SOMA) or have focused on an individual neighborhood or building-type. The San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association ("SPUR") and San Francisco Architectural Heritage ("Heritage") report, *Historic Preservation in San Francisco: Making the Preservation Process Work for Everyone* (7/2013), stressed the

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need for the City to provide historic resource survey information citywide and there has been growing support for such a survey from the public and City government since 2013.

CITYWIDE CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY

Beginning in earnest in 2017, the Planning Department began collaborating with the Getty Conservation Institute (“GCI”) to configure the open-source Arches software platform (“Arches”) – a data collection and inventory management system for cultural resources developed by GCI and Farallon Geographics Inc.– for a citywide survey of San Francisco. As both a data collection and a data management tool, Arches will allow for efficient and comprehensive documentation using limited resources and increase opportunities for public participation in data collection efforts. In Summer 2018, Planning Department Preservation interns and staff conducted a pilot survey of a portion of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood to test the Arches software.

Planning Department Preservation Survey Team has also been developing a citywide survey methodology to address:

- survey phasing plans for field work and survey adoption
- survey outreach, including Survey Advisory Group
- data collection and research methodology
- evaluative criteria and integrity thresholds
- historic themes and contexts

The Survey Team has also focused on preparing and reviewing community- or consultant-prepared Historic Context Statements documenting physical development as well as social and cultural history. These social and cultural histories identify significant historic themes and provide evaluative frameworks for properties throughout the City. To better understand the documentation that has already been completed, staff have also been cataloging and mapping past surveys and context statements in order to identify themes and contexts as well as geographies that still need to be addressed as part of the Citywide Survey.

In the informational presentation, staff will provide an overview on the citywide survey, including:

- Legacy Data: Present the results of our analysis of where previous surveys have been conducted and what historic documentation or context statements have been prepared.
- Arches: Provide information about Arches software and how this software is intended to be utilized for the citywide survey.
- Methodology: Present an overview of proposed survey methodology, including evaluative criteria and integrity thresholds, data collection and research approach, outreach, and proposed survey phasing and duration.