



HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT USER GUIDE

Information Bulletin No. 27

The Pacific Grove Historic Context Statement (HCS), approved by the City Council on October 19, 2011, identifies development patterns and significant property types within the city. It is intended to be used as a tool to better understand and evaluate the city's historic resources.

The HCS is organized as follows:

- **Section I. Introduction** provides basic project information and outlines research methodology.
- **Section II. Previous Surveys, Studies and Reports** summarizes previous historic resource survey work in Pacific Grove.
- **Section III. Guidelines for Evaluation** provides an overview of the various national, state, and local registration requirements; a summary of significant themes; a definition of each of the major property types found in the city ; and guidelines for evaluating the significance and integrity of these properties.
- **Section IV. Historic Context** includes a narrative of the area's developmental history. This history is broken into six periods that are defined by events, themes, and development trends. Property types associated with each of the six periods are identified and analyzed. The information in this section does not provide any determinations of eligibility, but rather can be used as a reference point when questions arise regarding a property's significance and integrity.

Under separate cover is a document entitled "**Pacific Grove Preservation Program Considerations**," which includes a discussion of potential research topics, survey efforts, designation priorities, and other preservation strategies that the City could undertake, if desired. These recommendations are intended to help prioritize future historic preservation related efforts, and are suggested as "next steps" for the City to consider.

The City of Pacific Grove has already taken several critical steps to protect its historic resources, including the adoption of a Historic Preservation Ordinance (PGMC §[23.76](#)), the creation of a Historic Resources Inventory (HRI), the establishment of a Historic Resources Committee (HRC), and the inclusion of historic preservation goals in the City's General Plan (See Section II of the Historic Context Statement for a complete overview of Pacific Grove's existing historic preservation program). The Pacific Grove HCS is designed to work with these existing plans and policies to improve the evaluation of the city's potential historic resources.

The Pacific Grove HCS does not replace the City's current Historic Assessment (HA) process, which is required in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Instead, the Pacific Grove HCS provides useful information to aid in the preparation of Phase I HAs by qualified consultants, potentially reducing the time and cost involved. Using the HCS as a foundation for Phase I HA will help to strengthen and accredit the HRI, which currently includes approximately 1,300 buildings. The HCS will also be very helpful to the HRC when reviewing Initial Historic Screenings, and should be used as a reference point when questions arise concerning the significance or integrity of individual properties. On the following page is a flow chart illustrating how the HCS might be used to help evaluate the potential historic significance of a building.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Historic Context Statement (HCS)?

An HCS is a specialized historic study. It focuses on the physical development of a city—how and why it developed, what types of properties characterized that development, and whether or not they may be historically significant. An HCS identifies significant themes, patterns and property types, so that interested parties can recognize the forces that shaped the built environment over time. This provides a framework that helps for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of historic resources.

What is not included in an HCS?

A context statement is a summary or synthesis of a city's physical history. It is not intended to be a comprehensive community history or chronology, nor does it evaluate the significance or eligibility of individual properties.

Who uses the HCS?

The HCS may be used by anyone! It is intended to help decision-making bodies, City staff, architects, building owners, residents, and other interested members of the community recognize and plan for historic resources in Pacific Grove.

Can the HCS tell me when my property was built?

Generally speaking, the HCS does not provide specific construction dates. However, it can help you focus on the period when your property was constructed. By reading about the property types and architectural styles that are associated with each period of development, you should be able to make an educated guess about when your property was built.

Where can I learn more about the history of my property?

For those interested in learning more about Pacific Grove's history, we suggest visiting the Pacific Grove Heritage Society, Pacific Grove Public Library, Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, Monterey Public Library (California Room), and California Historical Society. Primary sources you may want to reference include Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, newspaper articles, city directories, census data, and historic photographs. Secondary sources include books and publications, GIS maps, previous historical reports and survey documentation, and internet sources. Local historian Donald Howard provides exceptionally detailed accounts of Pacific Grove's early development in his book, *The Old Pacific Grove Retreat 1875 – 1940*, which should be considered a primary reference for research on Pacific Grove.

What are Sanborn maps, discussed often in the HCS?

The Sanborn Map Company was founded in 1867 by Daniel Alfred Sanborn, a surveyor from Massachusetts. These richly detailed maps—showing building footprints, construction materials, and land uses—were originally created to help insurance companies estimate fire insurance liability. Sanborn Maps were produced for thousands of urbanized areas across the country, and were updated regularly until the 1950s. Today, the maps are publicly available in a variety of physical and digital formats, and are an essential tool for all historians.

Why does the historical information end in the 1960s?

Generally speaking, properties must be at least 50 years old before they can be listed in a historic register, and thus the HCS concentrates on the city's history until the late 1960s. However, a few events and persons from the recent past were briefly mentioned to extend the life of the document, and ensure that it remains useful in the future.

A photo of my property appears in the HCS. Does this mean it is historically significant?

Not necessarily. The photos in the HCS are intended to support the text descriptions, or to provide examples of property types. However, just because a photo of a building appears in the HCS does not automatically mean that the property is historically significant.

Will the HCS place restrictions on my property?

No. The HCS is an informational document that integrates with existing plans and policies. It is designed to help building owners, planners, and other interested parties evaluate the potential historic significance of a property, but does not directly result in official designations, development restrictions, or other limitations. The California Environmental Quality Act and the Pacific Grove Historic Preservation Ordinance (PG Municipal Code Chapter 23.76) are the regulatory documents that guide the treatment of historic resources in Pacific Grove.

Will the HCS affect my property tax?

No. The HCS is an informational document and will not be used for tax assessment purposes. It is also worth noting that concern about negative economic effects is often raised when discussing historic preservation. However, many studies have shown a direct correlation between the creation of historic preservation programs and policies and a long-term increase in property values.

Does the HCS replace the current Historic Assessment Process?

No. The City’s current Historic Assessment process is required in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The HCS will provide useful information to aid in the preparation of Phase 1 Historic Assessments by qualified consultants, potentially reducing the time and cost involved. The HCS will also be very helpful to the City’s Historic Resources Committee, and should be used as a reference point when questions arise concerning the significance or integrity of individual properties.

Where can I find the HCS?

Electronic copies are available at:

www.ci.pg.ca.us/cdd

Reference copies are available at:

Pacific Grove Library
550 Central Avenue

and

Heritage Society Barn
605 Laurel Avenue

Hard copies may be purchased at:

Pacific Grove Community Development Department
City Hall, 2nd Floor, 300 Forest Avenue

For more information on the Historic Context Statement and accompanying Preservation Program Considerations, please contact a planner in the Pacific Grove Community Development Department, at (831)648-3190.