

Historic Resources Survey FAQ's

What is a historic resources survey?

A historic resources survey is a systematic process to research, identify and document properties that reflect our community's growth and development. Sometimes surveys focus on specific themes such as architecture, city planning, social history, ethnic heritage, politics, industry, transportation, commerce, entertainment, while others may focus on specific neighborhoods. Historic resources include buildings, structures, objects, cultural landscapes, natural features and groupings of related resources in an area which are known as historic districts.

How is a historic resources survey conducted?

We begin by researching a property, area or district to provide a basis to evaluate significance. Survey teams then walk through a neighborhood in order to record architectural, physical, and visual qualities and characteristics; assess the impacts of changes or alterations; and document overall condition of the property through photographs. These field inspections only document the exterior of resources and are conducted from the public right of way and do not need to obtain access to private property. While surveyors are free to answer questions about the survey process, they do not ask any questions of property owners or residents.

How are resources evaluated?

Individual resources and districts are evaluated for significance in accordance with criteria established for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources as well as for local designation as City Historical Landmarks. Surveys must document all properties within a specific study area, so results will identify resources that are eligible for designation as well as those that do not meet the criteria for designation.

Do surveyed resources automatically become designated?

No. Surveys identify and evaluate resources that may be eligible for designation, but no actual designation results directly from survey activity. Designation as a City Historical Landmark, and nominations to the California or National Registers are separate processes which includes a written

application, formal evaluation, property owner notification and public hearings before a decision is rendered.

How will survey information be recorded?

Information about properties and districts will be collected in paper and electronic form and then recorded electronically in the City database. Information on surveyed properties will become accessible from the City of Arcata web site with new data added as survey work progresses.

What type of information will be included?

The database includes various types of information on individual properties and historic districts relating to construction history, architecture, significance and relevant evaluation criteria. The database will also include photographs, maps and other information as they become available.

Who will conduct the surveys?

The survey and resource evaluations will be completed by a consultant team that meets professional qualification standards in historic preservation with the assistance of volunteers from your community.

Can resources that are less than 50 years old be considered "historic"?

A resource that is less than 50 years old may not be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places unless it is of "exceptional importance." In California, a resource may be considered eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources if it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand and gain a scholarly perspective on its historic significance. It does not need to meet the National Register's "exceptional importance" test.

Will archaeological resources be surveyed?

Archaeological resources will not be surveyed as part of this survey project but may be included in a future phase.