

Why does Arcata need a Historic Resources Survey?

The Arcata Historic Resources Survey will be the first comprehensive look at historical resources in the last 30 years. Surveys are the primary planning tool to identify, record and evaluate historic properties and districts within a community and establish a solid foundation for a comprehensive and up to date historic preservation program.

Because much of Arcata had not been surveyed within the last 30 years, it is difficult for City officials, preservationists and community leaders to identify all of the significant historic resources throughout the city. Without a survey, many valued historic resources lack any identification or protection.

One result is that sometimes people may try to save a historic property when a demolition permit is pending or already underway. In this situation, property owners or developers who have already gone through the permitting process may understandably feel blind-sided. Providing accurate and complete information can help property owners plan appropriately

Earlier studies of historical resources often focused entirely on building architecture, and on national significance. Current federal and state standards recognize resources for their connection to people, places and events that may be significant on a local, state, or national level.

For example, when considering a nomination a nomination to the City's landmark program the City must consider whether other similar properties may be more significant or more representative of this architectural style and building type. The citywide survey will provide decision makers with a comprehensive framework for reviewing these resources, and enables the community to decide how it wants to document, preserve and interpret its past.

How will survey information be used?

The survey results will have a number of important uses to support City policy goals:

Zoning Decisions and Plan Approval: The survey will provide accurate, detailed information on historic properties to local planners so that proposed changes do not adversely affect the character of our community, unique neighborhoods and landscapes.

Environmental Review: The survey will provide a more objective, comprehensive basis for local review of projects which could impact potential historic resources under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA.)

Cultural Tourism: The survey, and online information on historical resources, will be useful to a variety of visitors, businesses, and residents in planning trips, tours, and economic development projects.

Disaster Response: The survey will provide valuable information to quickly identify which properties may be historically or architecturally significant so that demolitions do not occur without appropriate review.

Potential Future Designation: The survey will identify potential historic districts and individual properties eligible for designation, which may enable property owners to take advantage of financial incentive programs.