



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE AND REGISTER UPDATE

Historic preservation of the built environment is at the heart of creating vibrant and meaningful places. Mountain View's historic buildings and sites represent the community's unique history and physical development over time. They contribute to a sense of place and identity for local residents. While future development patterns and lifestyles no doubt will change, the city's historic built environment maintains a dependable, expressive connection to its past. Historic preservation does not simply mean keeping old buildings exactly as they were in the past. Rather, contemporary preservation practice includes a dynamic set of considerations—cultural, economic, environmental—that recognize the numerous benefits that come with maintaining and rehabilitating historic buildings for future generations.

The City of Mountain View's Historic Preservation Ordinance (Ordinance) includes procedures for designating properties as historic resources on the local Register of Historic Resources (Register) and removing properties from the Register, procedures for approval of modifications to historic resources, and incentives to encourage the preservation of historic resources. These provisions were adopted in 2004 along with a Register of Historic Resources. There are currently 48 properties on the Register.

The City of Mountain View Historic Preservation Ordinance and Register Update is necessary for the following reasons:

- Updates to the Ordinance and Register are occasionally necessary as the periods of historic significance and community goals pertaining to historic preservation change over time.
- Updating the Register will streamline development review by reducing the need for historic studies on many projects.
- Updating the Ordinance provides the opportunity to establish a process and criteria for the designation of local historic districts, which is not currently included in the Ordinance.
- The City has identified additional areas of clarification which would improve the Ordinance and its role in development review.

The City of Mountain View Planning Division is working with Page & Turnbull, a historic preservation planning and architecture firm with offices in San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, and Sacramento. The City of Mountain View Historic Preservation Ordinance and Register Update includes five tasks with the goal of updating the city's Register of Historic Resources:

1. Historic Preservation Ordinance Update
2. Historic Context Statement
3. Citywide Historic Resources Survey
4. Register of Historic Resources Update
5. Nomination of select Castro Street properties to the National Register



The following Frequently Asked Questions pertain to each of the five tasks listed above.

1. HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FRAMEWORK UPDATE

Why does the Historic Preservation Ordinance require an update?

As described in the introduction, an update to the [Historic Preservation Ordinance](#) will provide the opportunity to make the ordinance work more effectively for the Mountain View community. Updates may include establishing a process and criteria for the designation of local historic districts, which are not currently included in the Ordinance, and improved incentives for owners to maintain their historic resources. The update will address additional areas of clarification which would improve the Ordinance and its role in the City's development review process. The updated Ordinance will provide the legal framework for recognizing, protecting, and managing changes to the City of Mountain View's historic resources.

Who will be affected by updates to the Historic Preservation Ordinance?

The Historic Preservation Ordinance is currently applicable to all properties that are listed on the Mountain View Register of Historic Resources, as well as properties that have been found eligible for the National Register or California Register. The on-going citywide historic resource survey may identify additional properties that are eligible historic resources.

When will the Historic Preservation Ordinance Update be completed?

The Historic Preservation Ordinance Update is scheduled to be prepared from Summer 2025 to Spring 2026. Community meetings and study sessions with the Environmental Planning Commission and City Council will be conducted in Summer/Fall 2025 to solicit input on the priorities and approach to ordinance updates. Final review and adoption of the Historic Preservation Ordinance Framework Update by the Environmental Planning Commission and City Council is anticipated to occur in Spring 2026.

How can you get involved?

A draft of the updated Historic Preservation Ordinance will be available for public review and comment in Early 2026. You can also attend Community Workshops which will be scheduled in Fall 2025.

2. HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

What is a Historic Context Statement?

A Historic Context Statement (HCS) is a specialized historic study. It focuses on the physical development of an area over time—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 of Mountain View. This provides a framework that helps in the identification, evaluation, and treatment of historic properties.

What is the purpose of a Historic Context Statement?

The Historic Context Statement:

- Helps the community to better understand historic properties, even in the absence of comprehensive knowledge about specific buildings
- Provides information and evaluative framework that form the basis for a citywide historic resources survey
- Supports the update of the Mountain View Register of Historic Resources
- Informs future preservation planning decisions and programs

What is not included in an Historic Context Statement?

An Historic Context Statement is a summary of the city's physical development. It is not intended to be a comprehensive community history, nor does it evaluate the significance or eligibility of individual properties to be considered historic resources.

What does historic significance and integrity mean?

The Historic Context Statement will provide an evaluation framework, which will outline the significance and integrity criteria that a property must meet in order to be considered eligible for listing on a historic register. Historic significance and integrity are two interrelated concepts that provide the foundation for identifying historic resources. A property must be significant within the context of history. Historic context themes often relate to the historic development of a community, such as commercial or industrial activities. They may relate to the occupation of a group or individual, the rise of an architectural movement, the work of a master architect, specific events or activities, or a pattern of physical development that influenced the character of a place at a particular time in history.

Historic integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance from the past through its physical characteristics. Based on guidance from the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places, historic integrity is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Who uses the Historic Context Statement?

The Historic Context Statement may be used by anyone. It is intended to help property owners, members of the community, architects, historic resources planning consultants, city planners, and decision-making bodies such as the Environmental Planning Commission, recognize and consider protection of historic properties.

A photo or mention of my property appears in the Historic Context Statement. Does this mean it is historically significant?

Not necessarily. The photos in the Historic Context Statement 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 Historic Context Statement does not automatically mean that the property is an eligible historic resource.



Will the Historic Context Statement place restrictions on my property?

No, not by itself. The Historic Context Statement is an informational document that is intended to provide a framework for the citywide historic resources survey and integrate with the City's existing development review process. It will help building owners, planners, and other interested parties evaluate the potential historic significance of a property, but it does not establish any official designations, development restrictions, or other limitations.

When will the Historic Context Statement be prepared?

The Draft [Historic Context Statement](#) was made available for public comment through September 9, 2024. Revisions have been made to the Historic Context Statement based on public and City staff comments, and the document will be taken to the City Council for adoption at the end of the project.

3. CITYWIDE HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY UPDATE

Why is a Citywide Historic Resources Survey needed?

A citywide survey of Mountain View's older buildings for historic significance was conducted in 2008, but the survey was never formally adopted by City Council and the information prepared in that survey is now 17 years old. In addition, age-eligible properties in Mountain View (those that are at least 50 years old) have not been surveyed, though they may possess historic significance. A Citywide Historic Resources Survey, conducted according to today's best practices, was undertaken to assess all age-eligible properties.

How was the Citywide Historic Resources Survey conducted?

In order for these properties to qualify as historic resources, they need to meet evaluation criteria as well as retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance today. Page & Turnbull undertook a two-tiered approach to the survey. In 2023, a high-level ("reconnaissance-level") survey was conducted of all properties at least 45 years old. Approximately 10,000 age-eligible properties were reviewed, and a select number were identified for further historic evaluation.

An intensive-level survey was undertaken in 2024 of all properties documented in the prior 2008 survey, properties currently listed in the Mountain View Register of Historic Resources, Area H of the Downtown Precise Plan (six blocks including and surrounding the 100 to 300 blocks of Castro Street), and all properties (excluding R1 and R2 zoning) identified as potentially eligible historic resources in the reconnaissance-level survey.

This intensive-level survey identified properties that may be added to or removed from the Mountain View Register of Historic Resources and properties that are individually eligible for listing in the California Register and/or National Register. The intensive-level survey utilized the Historic Context Statement evaluation framework and required additional property-specific historic research. The methodology for the survey and the survey results was summarized in a Survey Report.