



Landmarks Preservation Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR
May 10, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)
 Submitted by: Charles Enchill, Chairperson, Landmarks Preservation Commission
 Subject: Budget Referral: City-wide Historic Context Statement

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the FY 2023 June budget process an amount between \$250,000 to \$275,000 from the General Fund for Berkeley's first City-wide Historic Context Statement.

BACKGROUND

At a regular meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission on March 3, 2022, the LPC took action to send to Council the attached Letter of Support (Vote: 7-0-0-2; Moved: Leuschner; Second: Schwartz; Yes: Adams, Crandall, Enchill, Finacom, Leuschner, Montgomery, Schwartz; No: none; Abstain: none; Absent: Johnson, Twu).

SUMMARY

The LPC recommends that City Council refer an amount between \$250,000-275,000 to the FY 2023 budget (in June 2022) for preparation of Berkeley's first City-wide Historic Context Statement (HCS). The HCS would respond to the increasing growth pressures facing the city and the resultant conflicts between growth and preservation of existing housing. It would create a centralized resource for developers and property owners in place of the piecemeal requirements which are costly to them and time-consuming for city staff. It would conform to the practice of the National Park Service and other California Certified Local Governments which have prepared such statements; and it could provide the framework for a City-wide historical survey in the future.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

This referral refers to the budget process the consideration of an amount between \$250,000-\$275,000 from the General Fund for a citywide Historic Context Statement.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

Historic studies and surveys can help protect existing buildings which are associated with substantial embodied carbon.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

City Council may consider this item for a future budget cycle.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Fatema Crane, Secretary, Landmarks Preservation Commission, 510-981-7413

Attachments:

1: Letter of Support – Landmarks Preservation Commission to City Council, dated March 3, 2022

Date: March 3, 2022

To: City Council

From: Landmarks Preservation Commission

Subject: Funding Request for Development of a City-wide Historic Context Statement

Executive Summary

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is requesting that City Council refer \$250,000-275,000 to the FY 2023 budget (in June 2022) to fund a Historic Context Statement (HCS). We believe that this budget will realistically cover the cost of an HCS that addresses the chronological/neighborhood development of Berkeley, a selection of chapters on thematic/cultural histories in Berkeley, and an additional evaluative framework. It is difficult to estimate the costs of an HCS until the RFP period, and the costs of public hearings/input may inflate the budget, hence a range. The impacts of COVID-19 may also affect the HCS budget, which is another reason for this range.

The City of Berkeley is facing enormous growth pressure which impacts its existing historical fabric. This growth comes from, but is not necessarily limited to: growth in enrollment of the UC campus; growth in the Bay Area job market for technical workers who desire to live in Berkeley; changes in State Law permitting greater density in a majority of neighborhoods; and lack of privately-owned undeveloped land. As a result, the City's jurisdictional bodies (Zoning Adjustments Board, Landmarks Preservation Commission, and City Council) face increasing conflicts between preservation of existing housing and construction of new housing. In addition, homeowners, housing developers and design professionals, must already work under the constraints of government regulation and financing implications, and even the uncertainty about historic preservation of individual properties.

Resolving these conflicts is extremely difficult. For a medium-sized city, the history of Berkeley is remarkably complex. A bayfront workers settlement, largely immigrant; farms and dairies; an academic community who commissioned a selection of impressive architects for their homes; development of blue-collar housing in the flats, including a significant population of African-Americans and Japanese immigrants; and development of the streetcar suburbs in the hills are just some of the large themes in Berkeley's history. Even a single block of the built environment is an expression of the people, movements,

and histories that have occupied it. A given block in Berkeley might contain a Bernard Maybeck, a nondescript building significant for Berkeley's pre-World War II Japanese American community, or a garage where revolutionaries planned a renowned protest. None of these sites, however, exist in a vacuum. They are the results of larger-scale forces, movements, ideas, and contexts. Berkeley's built environment — more than most — is the result of many pioneering ideas on living and architecture. The city's history is one of the most dimensional in California (if not the United States), and its built environment expresses that.

The history of Berkeley, its university, its residents, architects, politicians have been the subject of many studies and books, but never have they been centralized in any formal manner — or at least in a manner which seeks to make history central to city planning efforts. It is a standard preservation practice for cities as culturally and historically rich as Berkeley commission a citywide HCS, or ultimately, a Historic Resources Survey (HRS). Berkeley has only an outdated "windshield survey" from the 1970s and an HCS of Downtown Shattuck with a district survey from 2015. Because of this, historical information is fragmented, at times inaccessible, and difficult to reference.

A Historic Context Statement, the integral piece to a City-wide survey, would serve to not only resolve conflicts that are being accelerated from growth, but also centralize historical information, and further the policies within Berkeley's General Plan. An HCS would provide a more complete and robust picture of Berkeley's history and illuminate other areas to further document and survey. An HCS is a sizable document with many "chapters," but there are typically two sections. The first is a general historical overview of a city where each chapter addresses a chronological period of growth and development (e.g.: Founding of the College of California and Berkeley 1860-1870). (The Downtown Shattuck Avenue survey would essentially be under the umbrella of this section of a HCS.) The second part of an HCS, which is more flexible and subject to the ideas of the commission, explores significant themes. These chapters might address the history of ethnic community, a political movement, or other histories which aren't confined to a single period of growth.

A city-wide survey is a long-term goal for LPC, but staff's current workload only allows for an HCS. However, an HCS is the first step of a city-wide survey (a more quantitative, case-by-case evaluation of a City's built environment). Given more staff time, perhaps from a reduced workload because of the HCS, a city-wide survey could be commissioned in the future and the HCS could be its first piece. Regardless, the following are examples of Historic Context Statements completed by other cities:

- [Palm Springs: Historic Resources Inventory & Context Statement](#)
 - Note: the Historic Context Statement is the main piece of the city-wide survey. Palm Springs also has a good example of the general development/growth chapters, which are the first section as previously discussed.
- [San Francisco: Historic Context Statements](#)
 - San Francisco has completed numerous individual HCSs as well, but organizes them under categories: Cultural, Geographic, Thematic, and Architectural. They have very good examples of thematic chapters, the second section of a HCS as previously discussed.
- [San Diego: Historic Contexts and Surveys](#)
 - The City of San Diego does an excellent job organizing their HCSs with and without surveys (bottom of webpage).

In addition, we'd like to point out two documents which refine the scope of the HCS and a City-wide survey (a plausible future goal, but not a current goal):

- [The Los Angeles Historic Resource Survey Report: A Framework for a Citywide Historic Resource Survey](#) (see pages 19-30)
 - Perhaps the most complete and definitive guide to creating a city-wide survey in California, as well as the HCS.
- ["Writing Historic Context Statements" by the CA Office of Historic Preservation](#)

More than anything, however, the HCS creates a comprehensive understanding of a city's history and where it is expressed in the built environment. This serves a valuable function in the planning department, particularly for a city with such a stock of historic resources. In outlining these important sites, the HCS aids Planning in targeting development (or in other cases, aids developers in understanding properties are most likely to be historic resources). The different chapters of the HCS are easily paired with Specific and Neighborhood Plans, if not the General Plan.

Since the 1970s, the City has not invested money in primary historic resource research and documentation. Because of this, Berkeley has no centralized resource to reference, much of its preservation planning is reactive and discretionary. One example of this is the Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE), a requirement which is expensive for property-owners, time consuming for staff, and overwhelmingly does not result in identification of historic resources. When a structure >40 years old files a permit for "substantial" changes (which may include an ADU or a bedroom addition), an HRE is required to analyze whether the property could be a historic resource. HREs cost homeowners anywhere

between \$3,000 and \$10,000 which is yet another way project costs pile up, projects are prolonged for both staff and the property owner, and unpermitted work is galvanized.

The HCS could aim to reduce costs or the need of stand-alone studies. (The HRE would still be required for demolitions and projects which affect historic resources.) This would be accomplished by adding an "Evaluative Framework" to the HCS, an addendum which clarifies historic resource designation criteria, eligibility, and would further streamline staff time. The Evaluative Framework sets a guiding framework for staff and LPC decisions on historic resources in addition to saving countless homeowners thousands of dollars per project. Because an HCS is most effective as it stays updated or periodically captures additional themes, it provides guidance on properties *most likely* to be historic resources. The HCS, however, does not prohibit any property from being designated a Landmark/Structure of Merit based on new information that may have been unknown during the time of the HCS.

Berkeley is a city with an incredible history that is reflected in its built environment. A Historic Context Statement is a standardized preservation practice, not to mention an expected practice by the Certified Local Government program, of which Berkeley has been a member since 2000. As our city undergoes housing development, battles over preservation are only going to worsen. An HCS is integral to avoiding these conflicts, targeting sustainable development, and incentivizing preservation. It is a resource for historians and city planners alike, one that seeks to assemble the many histories which make Berkeley such a historic place.

To this effect, the Landmarks Preservation Commission is requesting that City Council refer \$250,000-275,000 to the FY 2023 budget (in June 2022) to fund a Historic Context Statement. We believe that this budget will realistically cover the cost of an HCS that addresses the chronological/neighborhood development of Berkeley, a selection of chapters on thematic/cultural histories in Berkeley, and an additional evaluative framework. It is difficult to estimate the costs of an HCS until the RFP period, and the costs of public hearings/input may inflate the budget, hence a range. The impacts of COVID-19 may also affect the HCS budget, which is another reason for this range.

Signed by Charles Enchill, LPC Chairperson

On behalf of the Landmarks Preservation Commission

Vote: 7-0-0-2

Yes: Adams, Crandall, Enchill, Finacom, Leuschner, Montgomery, Schwartz; No: none; Abstain: none;

Absent: Johnson, Twu.