

# GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS USING THE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT FOR PROPERTY EVALUATIONS

## GETTING STARTED

Los Angeles' citywide Historic Context Statement (HCS) is designed for use by SurveyLA field surveyors and by all agencies, organizations, and professionals completing historic resources surveys in the city of Los Angeles.

The context statement is organized using the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) format developed by the National Park Service for use in nominating properties related by theme to the National Register of Historic Places. This format provides a consistent framework for evaluating historic resources. It has been adapted for local use to evaluate the eligibility of properties for city, state, and federal designation programs and to facilitate environmental review processes. Familiarization with the structure and content of the HCS is critical to applying it properly. For more information see <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16b/>.

## SELECTING THE APPROPRIATE CONTEXT AND THEME

The first step to property evaluation is the identification of the appropriate context/theme combination using the context statement outline available at [http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Historic%20Context%20Statement%20Outline\\_Jan%202016.pdf](http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Historic%20Context%20Statement%20Outline_Jan%202016.pdf). Note that historic contexts cover both individual resources and historic districts.

Properties may be significant under more than one context/theme combination and surveyors and other evaluators should use all that apply. For example, a single family residence may be a significant example of a Craftsman Bungalow under the context/theme "Architecture and Engineering: Arts and Crafts Movement" and may also be the residence of a noted person in the entertainment industry under the context/theme "The Entertainment Industry: Residential Properties Associated with the Entertainment Industry." Or a Post WWII car wash may be a significant example of a property type under the context/theme "Commercial Development and the Automobile: Car and Car Services" and an excellent example of the Googie style under the context/theme "Architecture and Engineering: "Postwar Modernism: Mid-Century Modern."

The theme narratives are in development; those published to date are organized by context and available at <http://preservation.lacity.org/survey/historic-context>. In cases where the narratives are not yet available, refer to the historic context summary tables at <http://preservation.lacity.org/survey/historic-context> (see also below).

## ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS, CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES, AND INTEGRITY ASPECTS

Using the Multiple Property Documentation approach, each of the theme narratives is followed by a discussion of related property types and their associated eligibility standards, including

character-defining/associative features and integrity aspects, which are applied in the evaluation process.

The eligibility standards, character-defining/associative features, and integrity aspects are guidelines for field surveyors making property evaluations. They represent the strength of the association of a resource to a theme and identify physical and associative features a property must have to be a good example of a type within a theme.

- Properties do NOT need to meet ALL eligibility standards and character-defining/associative features to be eligible; these are guidelines based on knowledge of known significant examples of property types.
- Integrity aspects and considerations are guidelines for assessing resource integrity within a specific context/theme. There are many variables to consider in assessing integrity depending on WHY a resource is significant.

## USING THE PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

Periods of Significance (POS) for contexts and themes were developed early on in the SurveyLA process to guide field evaluations and were based, at that time, on designated resources and known resources identified through research and previous survey evaluations. Many of these have been revised/refined based on actual survey findings and additional research conducted for developing theme narratives.

Surveyors and other evaluators are advised to use professional judgment in applying a POS to properties as it is possible that resources may be identified over time that fall outside a POS and still meet eligibility standards. For example, a 1961 example of Late Colonial Revival style architecture may be determined eligible although it is outside the 1960 end date for this theme.

**POS end date of 1980:** The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and, therefore, has been used as the end date of the POS for many themes. In these cases, the end date is arbitrary and should be extended over time. For example, the 1980 POS end date for the context/theme “Institutional Development: Social Clubs and Organizations” should be expanded over time to include organizations and meeting places significant beyond 1980.

## ABOUT THE HISTORIC CONTEXT SUMMARY TABLES

The historic context summary tables available at <http://preservation.lacity.org/survey/historic-context> were developed prior to starting any SurveyLA field work and were specifically designed to guide evaluations in the field using the custom-designed mobile field application called the Field Guide Survey System (FiGSS). Essentially the tables “summarize” the content of the theme narratives into data fields, following the Multiple Property Documentation format, which are then loaded in the FiGSS application. When recording/evaluating a property, field surveyors select the applicable context/theme/property type combination from a series of drop down lists. The eligibility standards, character-defining/associate features and integrity aspects for that particular context/theme/property type (CTP) combination appear as a series of check boxes from which surveyors select to determine if the resource they are evaluating meets criteria for eligibility. All standards do not need to be checked. For example, there are many character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, but a building does not need to have all of them to be an excellent example of the style.

- Note that the summary tables were developed to guide SurveyLA field surveys, but the final evaluation standards developed for and published with each theme narrative may be slightly revised to account for analysis following the completion of surveys citywide. For example, a period of significance may be extended or contracted to reflect actual dates of recorded resources. Or an additional standard may be added to account for the rarity or prevalence of a resource type in a particular part of the city.