



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Community-Sponsored Survey: Oceanside

Where is Oceanside?

Oceanside is the historic name for the turn-of-the-century beachside community that developed in the area roughly bounded by Golden Gate Park, 37th Avenue, and Sloat Boulevard. This distinct neighborhood of small houses and beach cottages – with strong ties to early artistic and bohemian communities – was referred to as the Oceanside from approximately 1900 into the 1920s. Dwellings dating from the early period of the Oceanside neighborhood's development (1900-1914) are rare survivors; fewer than 10% have survived relatively intact. By the 1930s, with the advent of mass construction of residential tracts, the area was considered part of the larger Sunset District and its original moniker dropped.

Why was this neighborhood surveyed?

In 2008, the Sunset Parkside Education and Action Committee (SPEAK) initiated Phase II of an architectural study of the surviving Oceanside buildings. Founded in 1969, SPEAK is an active neighborhood organization with a long history of involvement in neighborhood-based planning, architecture, and historic preservation issues.

SPEAK commissioned the Oceanside Survey in order to assemble historic information about the buildings within the study area and to determine which of those buildings have some special historic, cultural, or architectural significance. SPEAK was awarded grants from the San Francisco Historic Preservation Fund Committee and San Francisco Beautiful to hire a qualified architectural historian consultant firm to conduct the survey.

In May 2010 and in March 2012, SPEAK hosted informational community meetings related to the survey and its findings. Planning Department staff was on hand to provide additional information regarding the survey process. Property owners were notified of these meetings, as was the wider Sunset District community.

What building documentation is produced during a typical survey?

Most properties within a survey receive DPR 523-A Primary Record form documentation. This *Reconnaissance* level survey form includes a description of the building and alterations, a photograph, and documentation of the building's age. A smaller number of properties also receive more intensive documentation and evaluation in the form of a DPR 523-B Building, Structure, & Object Record. These *Intensive* level survey forms include an assessment of the building's historic context, significance, construction history, integrity, and eligibility for listing in local, California, or National registries. A [California Historical Resources Status Code](#) is assigned to each DPR 523-B form. These status codes were developed by the [California Office of Historic Preservation](#) to document a property's eligibility (or ineligibility) to local, California, or National registries.

Finally, DPR 523-D District Record forms are used to document and evaluate significant groupings of buildings. Individual buildings within a proposed district are identified, evaluated, and assigned a California Historical Resources Status Code.

Can property owners opt out of a survey?

Survey activity is conducted from public rights-of-way. Individual property owners can not opt out of a survey.

How many properties were surveyed and how many were found to be historic?

The consultant firm, Kelley & VerPlanck Architectural Consulting, evaluated 57 individual properties on DPR 523-AB forms and made the following determinations:

- 31 properties qualify as eligible historic resources.
- 23 properties do not qualify as eligible historic resources.
- 3 properties require further research in order to make a determination as to historic status.

The consultants also evaluated five clusters of buildings on DPR 523-D forms for potential eligibility as historic districts and made the following determinations:

- 3 small clusters qualify as eligible historic districts. These three eligible historic districts contain a total of 37 properties.
- 2 small clusters do not qualify as eligible historic districts. These two non-eligible clusters contain a total of 11 properties.

Due to budget constraints, the consultant firm did not evaluate all properties included in the Oceanside survey. Instead, the consultant firm provided *Reconnaissance* level written documentation (without evaluation) of 403 buildings on DPR 523-A forms. No determination as to historic status was made for these 403 properties.

What is the role of the Planning Department in this survey?

Although the Oceanside survey was initiated, funded, and managed by SPEAK, the Planning Department (Department) and the Department's Survey Advisor's Group were closely involved in the review of the consultant's survey findings. The Department is also tasked with providing recommendations for adoption to the Historic Preservation Commission at a noticed public hearing and transmitting survey findings to the California Office of Historic Preservation. If the survey is adopted, the Department will add the survey findings to its property database.

Does the survey mean that my property is a Landmark?

No, the results of a survey are not a Landmark designation of a building. A survey is an information gathering tool. Landmark designation is a completely separate process that requires additional property owner notification and several public hearings at the Historic Preservation Commission and Board of Supervisors.

As a property owner, what are the potential benefits of the survey?

Owners, tenants, and prospective buyers generally see an advantage to a completed survey evaluation because knowing a building's historic status ahead of time brings more certainty to any future permitting processes. Without a survey evaluation, the building permit applicant is usually responsible for providing historic background information on a building. Obtaining this information can increase the time or costs associated with any proposed alterations to a building that was constructed over 50 years ago. A survey is beneficial because the qualified consultant has already completed this part of the review process.

To be clear, although over 400 buildings were identified as part of the Oceanside Survey and *documented* on DPR 523-A forms, far fewer properties were *evaluated* on DPR 523-B and DPR 523-D forms. Only those properties that were *evaluated* and determined to be eligible (or not eligible) historic resources receive this benefit.

Surveys also identify properties that can be designated. There are three separate levels of designation of historic resources: Local (Article 10 & 11), State (California Register of Historical Resources), and Federal (National

Register of Historic Places). All three designations qualify buildings to use California's State Historical Building Code. Designations at the Local or National level may qualify to apply for federal tax credits or a property tax reduction provided by the Mills Act.

As a property owner, what are the potential disadvantages of the survey?

The determination of whether a property is of historic, cultural or architectural value is based on factual documentation. While there will always be some owners or tenants that do not agree with the final determination, a survey strives to evaluate each property within the study area in a balanced and objective manner. If there is a factual error in survey documentation or you have additional information regarding a property, please let us know.

While some may see a historic survey determination as a disadvantage, the truth is that the permit review process is identical for all properties regardless of whether or not a survey has been completed. With or without a survey, California State regulations require the Planning Department to make a determination on the historic status of a property when many types of building permit applications are submitted for review. A survey provides the needed information to complete that review and facilitates the Department's permit review process.

Will the survey make it harder to remodel the interior of my property, such as remodel my kitchen or bathroom?

No. Historic resource surveys focus only on the exterior of a building. There is no change in the manner in which the Department reviews building permit applications to remodel the *interior* of a residential building or commercial space. There are no additional fees, extended review periods, or delays in the processing of a permit application for interior work to a surveyed property.

Will the survey make it harder to change the exterior of my property, such as replace my windows?

A common misconception is that a historic building cannot be altered and is "frozen in time." While the Planning Department is generally concerned with exterior work that is visible from the surrounding public right-of-way, such as the street or the sidewalk, the survey results do not prohibit one from making alterations to the exterior.

Obtaining a permit to make exterior alterations on a historic property can be accomplished as quickly as any other permit. Larger projects, such as visible additions, or projects that do not meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, may require additional design review. Understanding a building's historic status ahead of time brings more certainty to the permitting process and will facilitate the Planning Department's review of any proposed exterior changes.

In regards to windows, the Planning Department has developed [window replacement standards](#) that apply across San Francisco to all properties, surveyed or not.

For more information, contact Mary Brown, Preservation Planner, at 415-575-9074 or mary.brown@sfgov.org.

For a detailed explanation about the types of documents produced for a survey, visit:
<http://www.sfplanning.org/index.aspx?page=1835#explain>.

To view PDFs of all Oceanside survey DPR 523-A, 523-B, or 523-D forms, visit:
<http://www.sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=3071>