

FACT SHEET: Historic Context Statements

What is a Historic Context Statement?

A historic context statement is a document to organize and interpret history. It pulls together information about a particular theme, in this case LGBTQ history; in a geographic area, such as San Francisco; and for a given time period. In this case, the time period is from the late 19th century to the 1980s. The historic context statement pays particular attention to how the theme is related to the built environment. For example, what buildings and sites are important to San Francisco's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) history?

Historic context statements for the African American community, Latino community, and the Filipino community in Western SoMa are currently in development or have been recently completed. Other recently adopted historic context statements focused on Japantown, SoMa, the Mission District, Sunset District tract houses, and Modern architecture and landscape design.

How will the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement be used?

The San Francisco Planning Department uses historic context statements to guide the surveying, identification, and evaluation of buildings and sites. The LGBTQ Historic Context Statement will build upon previous research and documentation of significant people, events, and properties associated with LGBTQ history in San Francisco. It will provide a contextual framework for identifying significant buildings and sites and will aid in future property evaluations.

The Historic Preservation Commission has made it a priority to identify places associated with San Francisco's social and cultural heritage. A historic context statement serves as a guide for the identification of those places. The historic context statement will also provide recommendations for tools to recognize, celebrate, and protect LGBTQ contributions to San Francisco. One way to recognize these places is through landmark designation. Landmark status was recently granted to the Twin Peaks Tavern. Other examples of landmark designations related to LGBTQ history include the Harvey Milk Camera Shop (Landmark No. 227) and the San Jose Theatre/AIDS Quilt building (Landmark No. 241).

Who is working on the historic context statement?

A team of historians, sponsored by the GLBT Historical Society, is developing the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement. The team is led by architectural historian Shayne Watson and public historian Donna Graves. A Project Advisory Committee made up of scholars, preservation professionals, and community activists will guide the review and development of the historic context statement. Funding is provided by a grant from the Historic Preservation Fund Committee, and additional technical support and review is provided by the Planning Department. A final draft of the historic context statement will be submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission for consideration of adoption at a public hearing.

How can I participate?

To learn more about the project or to share stories focused on the LGBTQ experience, please contact the project historians Donna Graves and Shayne Watson at sflgbthistory@gmail.com.

For general questions about the use of historic context statements or the Historic Preservation Commission's review and adoption process, contact Mary Brown, Preservation Planner, at 415-575-9074 or mary.brown@sfgov.org.

<http://LGBTHistory.sfplanning.org>

