Santa Barbara African American / Black Historic Context Statement

In partnership with
Healing Justice Santa Barbara
City of Santa Barbara Community Development, Planning Division
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St. Paul A.M.E. Church, ca.1940s. Source: Black Gold Cooperative Library System Digital Collection.
What is a historic context statement?

“An organizational structure for interpreting history that groups information about historic properties that share a common theme, a common geographical area, and a common time period.”

-National Park Service

That is, it is the history of the physical development of a place during a certain time and organized by themes and patterns.

What is a historic context statement?

The Santa Barbara African American / Black Historic Context Statement will:

- Summarize or synthesis the community’s history, specifically related to its physical development
- Identifies significant themes, patterns, trends, and property types
- Provides framework for identification, evaluation, and treatment of historic resources
- Not intended to be a comprehensive community history or chronology
Why do we need context statements?

• To better understand historic resources, even in the absence of comprehensive knowledge about specific buildings

• To establish historic and cultural preservation goals & strategies

• To support and update the City's inventory of historic properties

• To provide the basis for future preservation planning decisions & programs

• To inform other aspects of larger planning processes
Who uses context statements?

• Decision-making bodies
• City Planning staff
• Property owners
• Residents
• CEQA Consultants
• Historians

Our Process

Synthesize • Field Testing • Listen • Educate • Listen • Quantify • Refine • Deliver

Research/Fieldwork  Community Engagement  HCS Development
Context Statement Methodology

Research / Fieldwork Phase

• Review existing documentation

• Perform research at local, regional, and online repositories

• Identify potentially significant themes and sites

Original Second Baptist Church building at 26 Gutierrez, before 1920s renovation. Source: California Eagle, November 15, 1915
Context Statement Methodology

Community Involvement

- Gather public input throughout process
- Advisory Group check-ins
- Community Workshops / Outreach
- Historic Landmarks Commission Concept Review Meeting & Public Hearing
Context Statement Methodology

Writing Phase

• Historical overview by time period / milestones

• Identify significant themes, patterns, trends, events, places, and people

• Identify property types and requirements for historic designation in relation to historic themes

• Recommendations and priorities

Members of the Unity Lodge No. 22 F.A.M Santa Barbara, not dated. Source: African American Museum & Library at Oakland via Oakland Public Library.
Significant Historic Themes

Historical Overview, 1769 to ca. 1980, with

- **Theme**: Housing Patterns & Residences
- **Theme**: Black-Owned Businesses & Business Districts
- **Theme**: Religion & Spirituality
- **Theme**: Civic Engagement
- **Theme**: Entertainment and Cultural Establishments

Progress to Date

- Kick-off meeting with Planning Department staff and Advisory Group
- Review research collected by HJSB
- Archival research underway
  - Census data
  - Historic newspapers
  - Maps and photographs
- Preliminary list of potential historic sites
- Initial outreach for oral history interviews

Example of advertising in the *California Eagle* newspaper for Santa Barbara businesses catering to Black travelers. Source: *California Eagle*, September 30, 1922.
To find out more, share stories and photographs, or to be involved, please contact:

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