

# City of Eureka

## Downtown Core Area Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past

**Draft 1**

Submitted to:

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## Downtown Core Area Context Statement for the Recent Past

This report establishes a foundation for formulating planning efforts with a focus towards historic preservation within the City of Eureka's Downtown Core Area; it also forms the basis for additional review, research and documentation of historic resources in the downtown core area.

Because of geographic and physical constraints, the availability of vacant developable land within the City is very limited, particularly commercial and industrial lands. As such, when it comes to commercial and industrial development, the focus is primarily on redevelopment and in-fill development. Clearly, one of the prime areas for redevelopment/in-fill development is the downtown commercial core area – the subject of this report.

Although the City does not require off-street parking for core area commercial uses, because of the heavy reliance on the private automobile many developers who are expending great dollar amounts on redevelopment insist that off-street parking be constructed to support their development. At present, the method for obtaining vacant land for surface parking is to demolish nearby buildings. This, of course, poses a substantial risk to historic resources in the downtown core area. Although the City remains committed to preservation of our historic resources, we also are very cognizant of the necessity for economic development. It is this pressure for redevelopment and the need to balance redevelopment efforts with historic preservation that resulted in the City's grant proposal for the preparation of this report. The City's desire is to gain a framework in which to formulate a plan that fairly balances these often competing pressures (i.e., redevelopment and historic preservation).

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## 1.0 Background and Objectives

### 1.1. Introduction

The Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past & Downtown Core Area Reconnaissance Survey has been developed for the City of Eureka and was prepared with the support of Certified Local Government grant (Grant Project Number 06-03-18204). Findings from both the survey and the context framework are intended to help evaluate historic resources constructed between c. 1935-1965 in the Core Area of downtown Eureka. The Downtown Core Area Reconnaissance Survey is provided in a separate report.

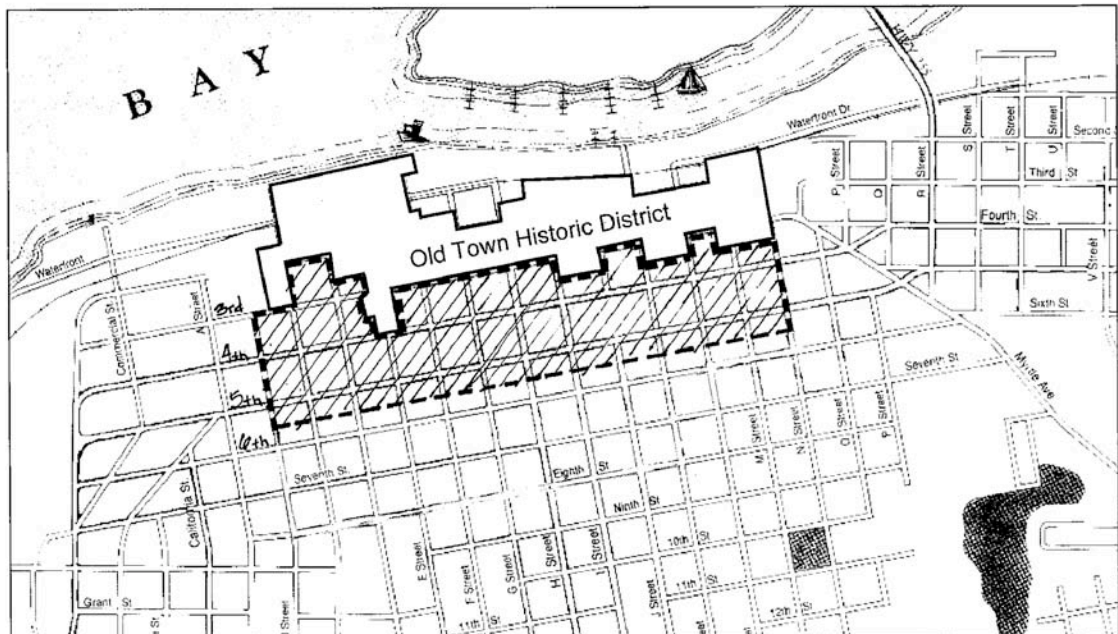
### 1.2. Location & Boundaries

The Downtown Core Area project area contains approximately 26 blocks and is generally defined as the area

- East of "B" Street
- West of "N" Street
- South of southern line of the Old Town Historic District
- North of the 1/2 block between 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Streets.

The Context Statement for the Recent Past framework was developed only for the survey area shown on the map below.

### Downtown Eureka Reconnaissance Survey



(from Eureka Visitors Map, North Coast Advertising Agency, 1986)



**1.3. Historic Context Statement Objectives**

This Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past for the Downtown Core Area is a framework that will broadly identify property types, historical developments and patterns of growth for the period of approximately 1935 to 1965. Specific significant events for the period, and important people and/or ethnic groups associated with the area were not developed due to lack of available information. Historic context statements are important for the preservation planning process. The Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past is meant to provide the City of Eureka with a means to evaluate potential resources for their associative, or historic, value. This will provide the City with information for future preservation initiatives.

## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1. Historic Context Statement Methodology

The development of historic contexts is important for the preservation planning process. It is the framework to organize preservation activities such as identification, evaluation, registration and treatment of historic properties in a manageable methodical manner. Main sections of historic contexts are generally organized into “themes’ or areas of significance as identified

National Register Bulletin 15 further explains that a determination must be made on how the theme of the context is significant in the history of the local area, the State, or the nation. “A theme is a means of organizing properties into coherent patterns based on elements such as environment, social/ethnic groups, transportation networks, technology, or political developments that have influenced the development of an area during one or more periods of prehistory or history. A theme is considered significant if it can be demonstrated, through scholarly research, to be important in American history. Many significant themes can be found in the list of Areas of Significance used by the National Register.” This list is quoted as follows:

#### **Areas Of Significance:**

- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Archeology
  - Prehistoric
  - Historic--Aboriginal
  - Historic--Non-Aboriginal
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Community Planning and Development
- Conservation
- Economics
- Education
- Engineering
- Entertainment/Recreation
- Ethnic Heritage
  - Asian
  - Black
  - European
  - Hispanic
  - Native American
  - Pacific Islander
  - Other
- Exploration/Settlement

Health/Medicine  
Industry  
Invention  
Landscape Architecture  
Law  
Literature  
Maritime History  
Military  
Performing Arts  
Philosophy  
Politics/Government  
Religion  
Science  
Social History  
Transportation  
Other

Themes are then tailored to accommodate areas of significance specific to a particular community when appropriate. In this way, contexts follow a common thread of understanding regarding building development and growth patterns, cultural and ethnic evolutions and economic changes etc., while allowing for customization or specification in areas that define community character.

The City of Eureka's existing Historic Context is described primarily in two places: the publication *Eureka: An Architectural View* - a.k.a. "Green Book", 1987 and the City of Eureka's Historic Preservation Plan, 2004. The context statement for the recent past is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. It was developed as a framework to be built upon utilizing established applicable areas of significance consistent with the Historic Preservation Plan and "fine tuning" as additional information comes to light.

This Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past for the Downtown Core Area addresses the area for the period of approximately 1935 to 1965 by analyzing existing information and incorporating new research.

Existing resources consulted include, but were not limited to, the following:

- *Eureka: An Architectural View* - (a.k.a. "Green Book") [1987]
- City of Eureka Historic Preservation Plan [Draft 5 - March 10, 2004]
- Eureka [Old Town] Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form [1991]

New resources consulted include, but were not limited to, the following::

- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps [1949, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1964]
- County Assessor Property Files
- City of Eureka Building Files

- Period Photographs from Lloyd Stine Collection (Appendix C)

### **3.0 Findings**

#### **3.1. Context Statement 1935-1965**

The survey area within Eureka experienced change between the years of 1935 to 1965, but it is in the post-WWII years that localized patterns are established and/or reinforced. The area, generally bounded by B Street to the west and N Street to the east, is located between the Old Town Historic District (to the north) and a solid residential area (to the south). From 1935 to 1946, Eureka followed national trends in building, road construction, and automobile ownership. During the Depression years, private building projects plateaued due to the depressed economy. Government sponsored municipal projects, however, are notable for their scale and their ability to provide employment. During the years of World War II, war prioritization restricted private building projects in large part. Despite these economic and wartime restrictions, commerce continued in the survey area and automobile ownership rose, as evidenced by individual stores, and automobile-related buildings feature architectural styling from the 1930s and 1940s.

The post-WWII economic boom is evidenced in the study area by construction of large department stores clustered on or near F Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> streets. These stores solidified a mercantile core within the study area while older building stock throughout the area was recycled through internal re-division and modernization of street wall facades. Newer commercial buildings and institutional buildings (such as banks) tended to be setback from the street to provide parking. Motels appear during the last ten years of the period of study and are located at the west and east ends of the study area, with most of motel development clustered on 4<sup>th</sup> street between K and M streets. These motels are typically non-chain enterprises. These one or two-story linear or “L” shaped buildings are setback from the street to providing parking adjacent to the rooms. Diners are typically located directly adjacent to the motels.

Automobile and transportation related changes appear as well. The completion of the Eureka Slough Bridge in 1956 and the establishment of single-direction traffic on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> streets in the same year is evidence of traffic planning goals in a period of unprecedented highway construction. For the survey area, however, the increase in auto service-related business is generally correlated to the larger trends in post WW II private auto ownership. Along the length of 4<sup>th</sup> street, these businesses increase in number while existing service stations are modernized in appearance and function. Auto service stations do also appear on 5<sup>th</sup> street but are fewer in number, are not clustered, and occur as a result of demolition of existing building stock and/or utilization of vacant lots. The construction of the new International Style County Courthouse and City Hall complex between I and J and

**Eureka Downtown Core Area Recent Past Resources Historic Context Statement**

between K and L Streets in the early 1960s represents the greatest concentration of change. In addition to demolishing late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings utilized by government agencies, the project razed buildings on nearby lots. These cleared lots, in addition to existing vacant lots were transformed into parking lots.

The following Context Statement Framework identifies areas of significance for Eureka's downtown core area that existed during the period of significance and does not represent that there are buildings remaining within these areas.

### **3.2. Context Statement 1935-1965 Framework**

#### **Economic Developments (1935 - 1965)**

##### **1 The Depression Years (1935 – 1941) – Economic Developments**

###### **1.1 Commerce/Transportation**

Auto garages, service stations, and sales centers are most prevalent along 4<sup>th</sup> Street. These auto-related businesses, many of which are located at the corners of lots, at a diagonal to the intersection, are constant elements of 4<sup>th</sup> Street despite the economic conditions of the period. The passenger bus station and a cabstand are also located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. This theme represents an opportunity for further research to identify specific trends within the study area.

###### **1.2 Commerce/Retail/Office**

Local and national chain department stores provide retail-shopping opportunities for household goods within the study area. Chain department stores such as Montgomery Ward's, Woolworth's, and Kress are clustered along F Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets. Local storefront retail is updated via new stores and modernizing of existing facades. Commercial apartment buildings are also constructed. This theme represents an opportunity for further research to identify corporate biographies for stores within the study area.

###### **1.3 Commerce/Recreation**

Regional tourism along the Redwood Highway corridor is generally depressed. Rooming houses and hotels are present in the study area, but no additional lodging opportunities are constructed. Movie theaters are constructed in Eureka, but not in the study area; existing theaters continue to operate. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

###### **1.4 Transportation**

Despite Depression, private auto ownership increases. Road construction projects and infrastructure upgrades, as a means to alleviate unemployment, do not appear to impact the study area. This theme represents an opportunity for further research to identify specific trends within the study area.

## 2 The WWII Years (1941 - 1945) – Economic Developments

### 2.1 Commerce/Transportation

Auto garages, service stations, and sales centers are most prevalent along 4<sup>th</sup> Street. These auto-related businesses are constant elements of 4<sup>th</sup> Street despite the economic conditions of the period. The passenger bus station and a cabstand are also located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. This theme represents an opportunity for further research to identify specific trends within the study area.

### 2.2 Commerce/Retail/Office

Local and national chain department stores provide retail-shopping opportunities for household goods within the study area. Chain department stores are clustered along J Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets. Local storefront retail is updated via new stores and modernizing of existing facades. This theme represents an opportunity for further research to identify corporate biographies for stores within the study area.

### 2.3 Commerce/Recreation

Regional tourism along the Redwood Highway corridor is generally depressed. Rooming houses and hotels are present in the study area, but no additional lodging opportunities are constructed. Movie theaters are constructed in Eureka, but not in the study area; existing theaters continue to operate. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### 2.4 Transportation

Wartime restrictions limit bus service and private auto usage. Road construction projects and infrastructure upgrades do not appear to impact the study area. This theme represents an opportunity for further research to identify specific trends within the study area.

## 3 The Post War Years (1946 - 1965) – Economic Developments

### 3.1 Commerce/Transportation

Auto garages, service stations, and sales centers are most prevalent along 4<sup>th</sup> Street although service stations are constructed along 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The passenger bus station is located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Motor freight (trucking) facilities are located near the intersection of 4<sup>th</sup> and C Streets. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### 3.2 Commerce/Retail/Office

Local and national chain department stores provide retail-shopping opportunities for household goods within the study area. Daly's, a local department store goes in at 4<sup>th</sup> and G Streets, and a JC Penney is located at 5<sup>th</sup> & E Streets. Some intact examples of these large commercial buildings constructed during the period are clustered between E and I Streets and 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. Local storefront retail is updated via new stores and modernizing of existing facades; intact examples can be found along 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Office/mixed-use buildings are constructed during the 1950s; intact examples are scattered throughout study area. Residential buildings are converted to commercial uses; intact examples are clustered between K and M Streets. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### 3.3 Commerce/Recreation

Post-war tourism on the Redwood Highway tourism rebounds (not in study area). Motels (w/ adjacent parking) are constructed at the east and west ends of the study area. The City Center Motel, located at 4<sup>th</sup> & M, was constructed in 1955 and was expanded in 1962. The Eureka Travelodge, located at 4<sup>th</sup> & B, is constructed by 1964. Diner-type restaurants are constructed in direct proximity to these motel developments. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### 3.4 Transportation

Post-war developments in transportation construction occur outside the study area. For instance, Eureka Slough Bridge completed in 1956 and 5<sup>th</sup> Street completed to U Street in the same year. Within the study area, however, 4<sup>th</sup> Street lanes directed east-bound (one-way) after 1956 and 5<sup>th</sup> Street lanes directed west-bound (one-way) at the same time. A Highway 101 freeway is called for in 1965 General Plan. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

## 4 Representative Property Types – Economic Development

### 4.1 Identification

#### 4.1.1 Commerce/Transportation

- 108 4<sup>th</sup> Street [1948]
- 202 3<sup>rd</sup> Street [1954]
- 215 C Street [1956]



108 4<sup>th</sup> Street



202 3<sup>rd</sup> Street



215 C Street

4.1.2 Commerce/Retail/Office

- 523 & 525 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1930, remodel 1960]
- 324 F Street [1947]
- 301/305/307/311/315 F Street [1950]
- 718 3<sup>rd</sup> Street [1958]
- 204/219/222 4<sup>th</sup> Street [1951]
- 730 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1954]
- 1939 4<sup>th</sup> Street [1903, remodel 1947, 1994, 2001]
- 515 L Street [1944, remodel 1955, 1986]
- 1122/1126 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1926, remodel 1957, 1964, 1965]



301/305/307/311/315 F Street



718 3<sup>rd</sup> Street



515 L Street



1122/1126 5<sup>th</sup> Street

4.1.3 Commerce/Recreation

- 1130 4<sup>th</sup> Street [1955, remodel 1958]
- 1137 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1958, add. 1962, 1982]
- 1111 5<sup>th</sup> Street [c. 1959, remodel 1972, 1997]
- 136 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1965]



1137 5<sup>th</sup> Street



136 5<sup>th</sup> Street

4.2 Description

See attached DPR 523A forms.

4.3 Significance

Properties have not yet been evaluated.

## **Civic, Government, And Social Institutions (1935 – 1965)**

### **1 The Depression Years (1935 – 1941) - Civic, Government and Social Institutions**

#### **1.1 Government/Politics**

Federal government work-relief programs contribute to the economic health of the area, though no resources are constructed in the study area. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) established camps in Humboldt County and The Works Progress Administration (WPA) erects the Eureka Municipal Auditorium in 1935. On the local civic front, Eureka establishes its first Planning Commission in 1940. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

#### **1.2 Entertainment/Recreation**

Movies serve as a primary form of entertainment during the Depression. Movie houses, such as the Eureka Theater (1937), are constructed to meet demand, though not in study area. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### **2 The WWII Years (1942 – 1945) - Civic, Government, and Social Institutions**

#### **2.1 Government/Politics**

The City Government passes the first zoning ordinance in 1942. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

#### **2.2 Entertainment/Recreation**

This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### **3 The Post-War Years (1946 – 1965) - Civic, Government, and Social Institutions**

#### **3.1 Government/Politics**

Government-related construction activity increases in the post-war years. Planning staff begins work on General Plan document. A government building is erected at 409 K Street in 1955. Residential buildings in the vicinity are used for government office purposes. The old City Hall and County Jail are demolished in 1958 and by 1960 are replaced with the County Government Center, consisting of the County Courthouse (between 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> / I & J Streets) and the

City Hall (between 5<sup>th</sup> & K Streets). The City's General Plan is adopted 1965. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### 3.2 Entertainment/Recreation

This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

#### 4 Representative Property Types - Civic, Government, and Social Institutions

##### 4.1 Identification – Government/Politics

- 409 K Street [1955]
- County Courthouse (between 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> / I & J Streets) [1960]
- City Hall (between 5<sup>th</sup> & K Streets) [1960]



County Courthouse  
(between 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> / I & J Streets)

4.2 Description

See attached DPR 523A forms.

4.3 Significance

Properties have not yet been evaluated.

## Architectural Developments (1935 - 1965)

### 1 The Depression Years (1935 – 1941) – Architectural Developments

#### 1.1 Architectural Styles

Art Deco and Streamline Modern designs for buildings are seen in the study area, particularly on Auto Service centers, new commercial buildings, department stores, and facades for existing commercial storefronts. Classical Revival styles are also seen for commercial properties. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### 2 The WWII Years (1942 - 1945) – Architectural Developments

#### 2.1 Architectural Styles

Commercial Modern (Contemporary) designs for buildings are seen in the study area, particularly on Auto Service centers, new commercial buildings and facades for existing commercial storefronts. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

### 3 The Post –War Years (1946 - 1965) – Architectural Developments

#### 3.1 Architectural Styles

Commercial Modern (Contemporary) and International Style designs for buildings are seen in the study area, particularly on Auto Service centers, new commercial buildings, department stores, office buildings, truck freight facilities, motels, and facades for existing commercial storefronts. Diners and restaurants, typically adjacent to motels, tend to display more expressive features, such as varied roof forms. The International Style is most developed in the new County Courthouse/City Hall Complex. Older Minimal Traditional and Rustic style residences are converted to commercial use. This theme represents an opportunity for further research within the study area.

## 4 Representative Property Types – Architectural Developments

### 4.1 Identification

#### 4.1.1 Art Deco/Streamline Modern

- 523 & 525 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1930, remodel c. 1960]
- 324 F Street [1947]



523 & 525 5<sup>th</sup> Street



324 F Street

4.1.2 Classical Revival

- 302 4<sup>th</sup> Street [1936]



302 4<sup>th</sup> Street

4.1.3 International Style/Commercial Modern (Contemporary)

- 301/305/307/311/315 F Street [1950]
- 718 3<sup>rd</sup> Street [1958]
- 734 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1958]
- 136 5<sup>th</sup> Street [1965]
- County Courthouse (between 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> / I & J Streets) [1960]



301/305/307/311/315 F Street



718 3<sup>rd</sup> Street



734 5<sup>th</sup> Street



136 5<sup>th</sup> Street



County Courthouse

4.1.4 Minimal Traditional

- 515 L Street [1944, remodel 1955, 1986]



515 L Street

4.2 Description

See attached DPR 523A forms.

4.3 Significance

Properties have not yet been evaluated.

#### 4.0 Recommendations

The Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past is intended to identify historic resources constructed between c. 1935-1965 in the Core Area of downtown Eureka. The following recommendations are offered to help move preservation efforts in the City of Eureka to the next appropriate phase and to provide suggestions for a more efficient approach.

1. Develop contexts to identify specific significant events for the period and important people and/or ethnic groups associated with the area.
2. Conduct additional research in each context category to bring greater depth and understanding of each context, and to meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for historic contexts.
3. Consolidate context information available in the publication *Eureka: An Architectural View* - (the "Green Book") and the City of Eureka Historic Preservation Plan, along with the Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past into a single document.
4. Apply the Historic Context Statement for the Recent Past citywide.
5. Actively promote the Local Incentive Programs such as the Revolving Loan Fund and the Facade Improvement Program to protect and retain integrity of properties in the study area
6. Implement and monitor the policies outlined in the draft Historic Preservation Plan to protect and preserve properties.

These recommendations are respectfully submitted.

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