

Study of Historic Property Types

I. Introduction

A. Project Description

This reference section provides an assessment of historic property types along the Main Street and Thompson Boulevard Corridors in the Midtown area of Ventura, California. In order to make these assessments, the following project tasks were identified:

1. Review existing maps, photographs, and streetscape photo collages;
2. Identify “historic property types” and their characteristics within the project area;
3. Present a list of potentially historic neighborhoods within the project area, based upon tract and subdivision maps; and
4. Provide a brief development context of the project area.

The purpose of this section is to establish an historic context within which historic resources can be appropriately evaluated. This context is intended to highlight trends and patterns critical to the understanding of the built environment, and to act as a framework for future efforts to identify historic, architectural, and cultural resources in the Midtown area of Ventura. It may also serve as a guide to enable citizens, planners, and decision-makers to evaluate the relative integrity and significance of individual properties.

Note that the assessments contained in this report are based upon photo documentation only and do not fully address material integrity or historic significance. A definitive determination of a property’s eligibility for historic designation – at the local, state, or national level -- would require a historic resources survey, including field evaluations and property-specific research.

B. Establishing an Historic Context

In order to understand the significance of resources within a particular area, it is necessary to examine those resources within a larger context. By placing these resources within the appropriate historic, social, and architectural perspective, the relationship between an area’s physical environment and its broader history can be established.

According to standard preservation practice, an historic context statement consists of two components: (1) a narrative describing the broad patterns of historical development in a community or its region, and (2) identification of associated historic property types that may represent these patterns. National Register Bulletin 16A, written by the National Park Service, defines an historic context as “a body of information about historic properties organized by theme, place, and time.” Historic context is linked with tangible built resources through the concept of property type, a “grouping of individual properties based on shared physical or associative characteristics.” The purpose of such a context statement is to provide decision-makers and the community with a framework for the identification of historic resources and the determination of their relative significance.

II. Historic Property Types

Historic property types represented within the Midtown area of Ventura were identified by reviewing streetscape photo collages. The photo collages portray the street frontage of Main Street, Thompson Boulevard, and associated side streets through Midtown Ventura. Identification of historic property types included an assessment of multiple property characteristics, including:

1. Building form (scale, number of stories)
2. Building materials (brick, wood, stucco)
3. Architectural style (Victorian-era, Craftsman, Period Revival, Mid-century Modern, vernacular)
4. Use (single family residential, multiple family residential, commercial)
5. Period of historical development (early-20th century, mid-20th century)

Note: These assessments are based upon careful examination of the streetscape photo collages only, and are therefore somewhat speculative. A thorough evaluation of historic property types and their associated characteristics would require a historic resources survey.

Bases upon the above assessments, useful nomenclature was developed that provided for the categorization of these properties in a meaningful way. Property types were defined according to the above characteristics, or character-defining features. Through this process, eight categories have been established as follows:

A. Early 20th-century single family residential

This group is defined by the single-story detached house, constructed between 1910 and 1930. Typical architectural styles from the period include Victoria-era, Craftsman, and Period Revival styles, particularly Spanish Colonial Revival style.

B. Early 20th-century multiple family residential

This category contains one-story duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts, as well as two-story apartment houses, constructed between

1910 and 1930. As listed above, represented styles include the Victoria-era, Craftsman, and Period Revival styles.

C. Early 20th-century commercial

Commercial properties from 1910 to 1930 were typically brick in construction, often with wood-frame storefronts. Buildings are one and two stories in height and set at the street. Most are vernacular in style, though some display the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

D. Mid-century single family residential

This category is characterized by the one-story detached house constructed between 1930 and 1970. These structures are typically wood-frame in construction with stucco exterior cladding. Prevalent styles include Minimal Traditional, Mid-century Modern, and Ranch.

E. Mid-century multiple family residential

This group is defined by two-story apartment buildings constructed between 1930 and 1970. Characteristically wood-frame with stucco wall cladding, these structures often are vernacular or Mid-century Modern in style.

F. Mid-century commercial

Commercial development between 1930 and 1970 is characterized by single-story storefronts designed in the vernacular or Mid-century Modern styles. Construction is typically wood-frame with stucco exteriors and metal-frame plate-glass fenestration on the street facade.

G. Mid-century roadside

A subset of the above mid-century commercial, roadside architecture is designed to appeal to the motorist. Examples include drive-in markets, motels, service stations, and car washes. These structures employ similar materials and styles as their commercial counterparts above.

H. Other

This category includes property type not captured above, including churches, early industrial buildings, etc.

Representative examples of each of the identified historic property types are presented in the table below.

Property Type	Characteristics	Representative Photo
A Early 20th-century single family residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-story detached house • Victoria-era, Craftsman and Period Revival styles (particularly Spanish Colonial Revival style) • 1910-1930 	
B Early 20th-century multiple family residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One- and two-story • Bungalow court, duplex, fourplex, apartment house • 1910-1930 	
C Early 20th-century commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One- and two-story • Set at the street • Brick construction, wood-frame storefronts • Vernacular, Spanish Colonial Revival styles • 1910-1930 	
D Mid-century single family residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-story detached house • Wood-frame construction, stucco cladding • Minimal Traditional, Mid-century Modern, Ranch styles • 1930-1970 	

	Property Type	Characteristics	Representative Photo
E	Mid-century multiple family residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-story apartment building • Wood-frame construction, stucco cladding • Vernacular, Mid-century Modern styles • 1930-1970 	
F	Mid-century commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One- and two-story • Set at the street • Wood-frame construction, stucco cladding, metal-frame storefronts • Vernacular, Mid-century Modern styles • 1930-1970 	
G	Mid-century roadside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One- and two-story • Wood-frame construction, stucco cladding, metal-frame storefronts • Vernacular, Mid-century Modern styles • Drive-in markets, motels, service stations • 1930-1970 	
H	Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious (church) • Industrial 	

III. Historic Context of Mid-Town Development

A. Introduction

A historic context is “a body of information about the historic properties organized by theme, place and time.” Historic context is linked with the built environment through the concept of “property type,” a “grouping of individual properties based on shared physical or associative characteristics.” The purpose of a context statement is to provide a framework for the identification of historic resources and the determination of their relative significance.”

A context statement identifies various historical factors that shaped the development of the area. It may include, but need not be limited to: historical activities or events; historic persons; building types, materials and architectural styles and patterns of physical development.

This brief historic context statement provides a narrative overview of the development of Midtown from its early settlement in 1906 through the building of U. S. Freeway 101. Themes and associated property types include residential development; commercial development; transportation patterns; and community planning.

Early Period of Development of San Buenaventura

Prior to exploration by Spanish navigators, the area known as San Buenaventura was inhabited by the Chumash Indians for thousands of years. From 1542 to 1782 Spain explored and conquered this area, and established settlement with the founding of Mission San Buenaventura. From 1782 to 1834 the Mission was the hub of civilization. From 1834 to 1869, the Missions were secularized by the Mexican government. During this period Californio ranchos flourished, until their demise occurred with a drought in 1864. When the Transcontinental Railroad was completed, the railroad brought the first land boom and early settlement of European/Anglo occupation. From 1887 to 1903, the completion of the Newhall spur of the Southern Pacific Railroad to Ventura brought about a second land boom. A more complete context of the built environment can be found in documents related to the historic resources survey of Downtown.

Annexation Midtown (1906)

In 1903, rancher Dixie Thompson owned all the land east of the city from the Sanjon Barranca. In 1913, the Adam Phillips Company (owners of the Ventura Water, Light, and Power Company) purchased most of the available Thompson Ranch and subdivided it for tract housing and development. In April of 1906, the city annexed 627 acres of the Thompson Ranch, along with additional land, to expand its territory to 1900 acres.

Oil Boom of the 1920s Begins Midtown Development (1921 – 1930)

In 1914, Ralph B. Lloyd formed the State Consolidated Oil Company and began leasing oil-bearing lands along both sides of Ventura Avenue. In 1915, the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego popularized Spanish architecture in California, ushering in the era of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The Oil Boom of the 1920s, proved to be the largest and most comprehensive growth period in the Ventura’s history.

Between 1921 and 1930, subdivision tracts were laid out between the western border of Midtown (the Sanjon Barranca, Crimea Street, Aliso Street along the Cemetery, and into the hills) to the eastern border along Mills Road. By 1928 the city had grown eastward to Evergreen Drive on the southeast and Fairview Drive on the northeast. Washington Street School (96 Mac Millan Avenue, built in 1924) was constructed. The corridors of Main Street and Thompson Boulevard remained virtually vacant. The predominant style of architecture for the residential structures built during this period in Midtown was the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. Newspapers from 1921 to 1929 ran weekly advertisements of house plans in this genre and would publish daily lists of building permits issued, boasting that the city was the leader in the state for the number of permits granted.

Post World War II Prosperity to the Freeway (1945 – 1966)

Throughout the Depression and World War II, construction came to a complete halt as economics and then scarcity of raw materials made construction infeasible.

With the establishment of the military bases at Port Hueneme and Point Magu, thousands of families decided to make the area their permanent home. From the onset of World War II in 1941, housing began to fill in from Seaward to Mills Road. Subdivision maps show a marked increase in housing after World War II. The commercial corridors of Main and Thompson began to contain structures whose uses served the commercial interests of the adjacent housing. There was an emphasis on auto related businesses, with several auto courts and roadside motels lining Thompson Boulevard, used as Highway 101 at this time.

By 1966, the housing subdivisions extended well past Mills Road. The commercial corridors of Main and Thompson were built out with offices, markets, banks, restaurants, medical and dental offices, churches and auto-related services. The largest commercial store was the Sears and Robuck building (located at 2750 Main Street and built in 1948). These buildings form the nucleus of the existing built environment on the commercial corridors in Midtown.

Although officially annexed into the city in 1906, the residential development of Midtown did not come to fulfillment until the 1920s and continued until the end of World War II. The commercial development along the corridors of Main Street, Thompson Boulevard, and Loma Vista Drive did not take place until after World War II and was concentrated between the years of 1950 and 1966.

B. Selected Chronology

The following chronology is not a comprehensive history of the Midtown area. Rather, it is intended to highlight activities and events important to the understanding of the built environment of the area known as Midtown in the city of San Buenaventura.

1542 – 1782 – The period of European exploration of San Buenaventura.

1782 – 1824 – The Mission Period of settlement.

1834 – 1869 – Secularization of the Missions, Californio rancho period, and the early settlement of European/Anglo occupation of the city.

1869 – 1887 – Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and the first land boom of San Buenaventura.

1887 – 1903 – Completion of the Newhall spur of the Southern Pacific Railroad and the second significant land boom of San Buenaventura. The town is approximately one mile square, or approximately 740 acres at the end of this period.

1903 – 1905 – The beginning of the City Beautiful Movement in Ventura. In February of 1903, Dixie Thompson authorizes the building of Thompson Boulevard and it is approved by the County Board of Supervisors. In April of 1903, Dixie Thompson dies and his land is put up for sale. In November of 1905, the Adam Phillips Company purchases the Thompson Ranch and a campaign for annexation begins.

1906 - On April 10, 1906, the city votes for annexation of portion of the Thompson Ranch (627 acres) and additional areas east of the town to now expand it's borders to encompass 1900 acres. The Adam Phillips Company forms the San Miguel Company for the purpose of subdividing the land for tract housing developments.

1909 – 1910 – Businessperson, A. C. Gates, procures 100 acres of the Thompson Ranch from the San Miguel Company and creates the first subdivision called The Beach Tracts. In December of 1909, County Supervisor T. C. Gabbert purchases land from the San Miguel Company and offers the second tracts of land for development along Thompson Boulevard. Securing a tourist hotel is the anchor of the subdivision of the Beach Tracts, and Ojai socialite, Mrs. Pierpont-Ginn buys Tract 25 and by September of 1910, the Pierpont Inn opens its doors.

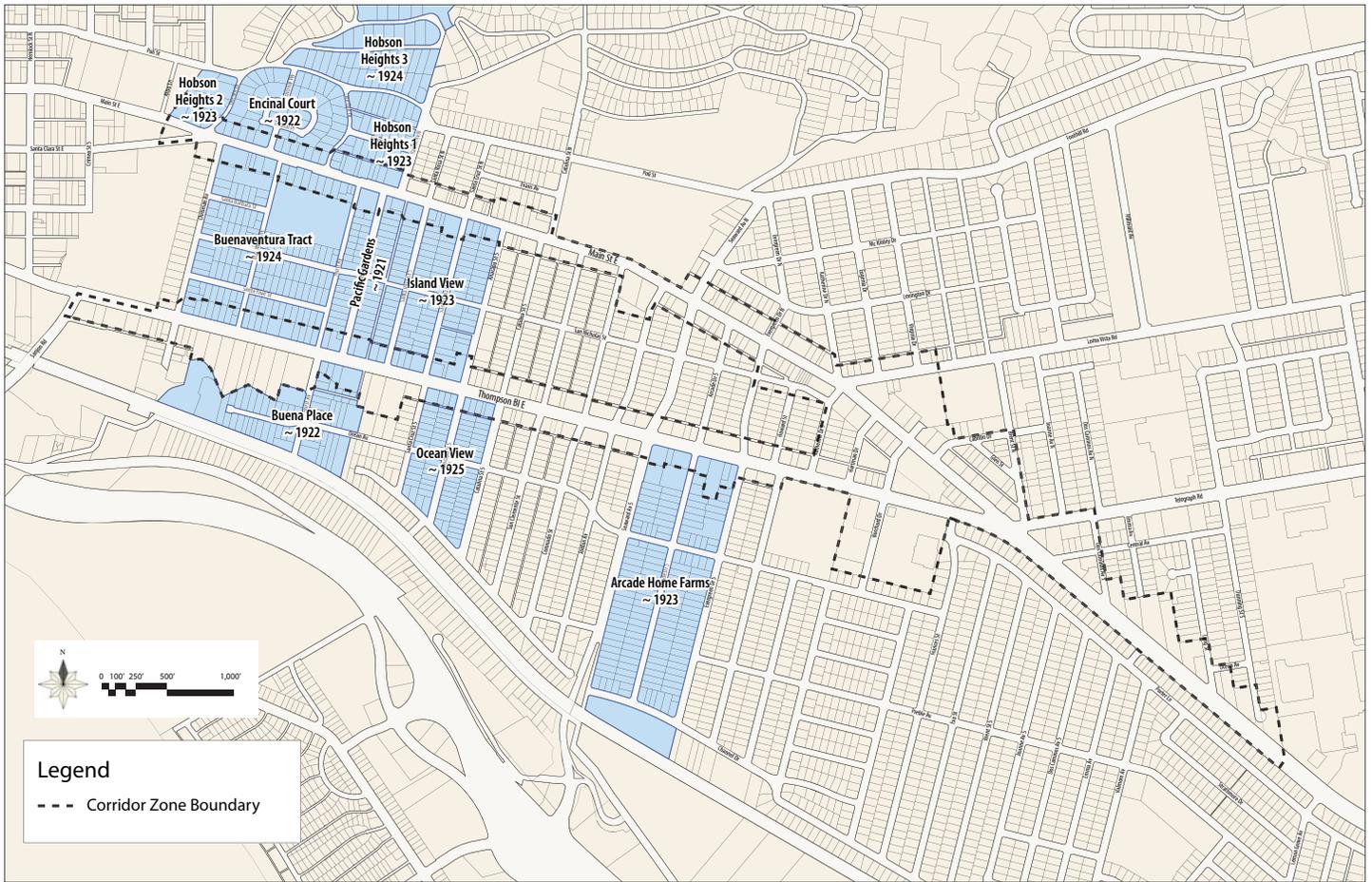
1914 – Ralph B. Lloyd forms the State Consolidated Oil Company and begins leasing oil-bearing lands along both sides of Ventura Avenue.

1915 – The Panama-California Exposition in San Diego popularizes Spanish architecture in California, ushering in the era of the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

1921 – Shell Oil Company strikes large deposits of oil in the Ventura Avenue area and the third significant period of development for San Buenaventura begins, called the Oil Boom of the 1920s. In September of 1921, the Pacific Gardens Tract (bordered north and south by Main Street, Thompson Boulevard and east by Pacific Avenue) is surveyed for land development and offered for sale.

1921 – 1945 – The residential portion of Midtown is developed primarily during the Oil Boom and continues after the Depression with the establishment of Port Hueneme and Point Magu in Oxnard. It reaches its eastern border by the end of World War II.

1950 – 1966 – The commercial corridors of Midtown do not develop until after World War II. The post war era of prosperity brings demand for goods and services to the residential population and the building of the freeway makes faster commuting possible. By 1966 most of the extant buildings along the Main, Thompson, and Loma Vista corridors are constructed.



IV. Historic Tracts and Subdivisions

The map above diagrams potential historic neighborhoods in Midtown. Details on some of these tracts and subdivisions are outlined below:

Arcade Home Farms

Date: April 1923

Subdividers: Purkies & Cannon.

Owners: Madge B. Chrisman, Aratus Everett, Eva P. Everett, Ernest E. Everett, N. Sydow Everett. Haley E. Stiles, Arcade Building Company, L.A. Durfee (president), John A. Lagomarsino (secretary).

Streets: Arcade Drive, Channel Drive, Evergreen Drive, Dixie Drive (Ocean Avenue), Ocean Drive (Seaward Drive), Thompson Avenue (Thompson Boulevard).

Buena Place

Date: December 1922

Owners: T.G. Gabbert, Horace Yeaman, M.A. Hall, Thomas and Helen Newby, D. Lacy, Theresa Clark, Richard and H. Mary Langdon.

Streets: Pacific Avenue (Hurst Street), Ocean Avenue. (Tract did not go north of Langdon Way)

Buenaventura Tract Resubdivision

Date: April 1924
Owners: Gilip W. and Jennie M. Chrisman.
Streets: Chrisman Avenue, MacMillan Avenue, Old Conejo Road (Main Street), San Nicholas Street, Santa Barbara Street, Santa Clara Street, Santa Ynez Street, Thompson Avenue (Thompson Boulevard)

Encinal Court

Date: August 1922
Subdividers: M.M. and Huldah A. Perkins, A.L. and Helen B. Hobson.
Streets: Encinal Court - westerly portion between East Main and Ocean View Drive (Poli Street), Lincoln Drive, Live Oak Drive, Old Conejo Road (Main Street), Ocean View Drive (Poli Street).

Hobson Heights 1

Date: August 1923
Owners: A.L. and Helen B. Hobson.
Streets: Evans Avenue, Live Oak Drive, Main Street, Pacific Avenue, Ocean View Drive (Poli Street), Old Conejo Road (Main Street).

Hobson Heights 2

Date: September 1923
Owners: A.L. and Helen B. Hobson.
Streets: Lincoln Drive, Main Street, Poli Street.

Hobson Heights 3

Date: April 1924
Owners: A.L. and Helen B. Hobson.
Streets: Barnard Way (Lincoln Drive), Encinal Court - westerly portion between East Main and Ocean View Drive (Poli Street), Lincoln Drive (Marisol Drive and Monita Drive), Live Oak Drive, Pacific Avenue, Ocean View Drive (Poli Street).

Island View Extension

Date: February 1923
Streets: Anacapa Street, San Clemente Alley, San Miguel Alley, San Nicholas Street, Santa Cruz Street, Santa Rosa Street, Thompson Avenue (Thompson Boulevard).

Ocean View Tract

Date: March 1925
Subdividers: Clarence I. and Madge B. Chrisman, Joseph M. and Edith M. Argabrite, Gilpin W. Chrisman.
Streets: Anacapa Street, Catalina Street, Channel Drive, Ocean Avenue, Santa Cruz Street, Thompson Avenue (Thompson Boulevard).

Acknowledgements

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Christy Weir, Mayor
Bill Fulton, Deputy Mayor
Carl E. Morehouse
Neil Andrews
Brian Brennan
James L. Monahan
Ed Summers

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The structure, format, and content of this Development Code is based in large part on the SmartCode v8.0, and the Ventura Downtown Specific Plan.

The 2001 Midtown by Design, 2005 Midtown Charrette, and the 2005 General Plan served as the planning framework for this Development Code. These planning documents and other relevant information is posted on the Midtown Corridors Development Code website: www.cityofventura.net/midtown.