



ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

TO: Alameda County Parks, Recreation, & Historical Commission
FROM: Dominic Lucchesi, Planner
MEETING DATE: August 6, 2026
RE: Castro Valley Historical Context Statement

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Alameda County Planning Department has retained the architecture firm Garavaglia Architecture, Inc. to conduct a historic survey of Castro Valley. The project was initiated in June 2026 and is expected to conclude by Summer 2028.

An initial task in the project is the drafting of a historical context statement for Castro Valley. A historical context statement is a research document that explains the development of an area's built environment – such as buildings, landscape, and infrastructure. It connects a region's broader history, culture, and economic trends to physical structures, providing a framework to evaluate whether a property is historically significant.

Garavaglia staff requests feedback from the Parks, Recreation, and Historical Commission (PRHC) on the list of proposed themes and representative building types (Attachment 1) and asks if there are any underrepresented communities that should be considered. As local subject-matter experts, PRHC feedback is important and will help ensure the survey authentically represents the community's history and diversity.

BACKGROUND

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors adopted the Historic Preservation Ordinance in 2012 to guide efforts to identify, protect, and encourage the preservation of significant architectural properties in unincorporated Alameda County. A key tool in these efforts is the historic resources survey, a process of systematically documenting historic properties that provides foundational data for informed planning, preservation and development decisions.

To date, the Planning Department, in coordination with the PRHC, has completed four historic resources surveys in the unincorporated areas:

- Preliminary Cultural Resources Survey: Ashland & Cherryland Districts (1998)
- Unincorporated San Lorenzo Historical Building Survey (2000)
- Historical and Cultural Resources Survey: East Alameda County (2005)
- Unincorporated Alameda County Historic Survey Report (2008)

At the PRHC's request, Planning Department staff presented an analysis of properties in unincorporated Alameda County that are more than 50 years old, a common threshold for historic significance, at its meeting on December 5, 2024. The analysis identified nearly 30,000 properties that meet this criterion. Based on these findings, the PRHC directed staff to focus the next survey on Castro Valley because it contains more than 13,000 potentially historic properties and has not previously been surveyed.

Planning staff returned to the PRHC on February 5, 2026, to present the draft scope of work for the historical survey of Castro Valley. The PRHC unanimously approved the scope of work on March 5, 2026.

On March 13, 2026, the Planning Department issued an Informal Request for Proposals (IRFP) No. PLN2026-001 to procure a consultant to conduct the historical resources survey of Castro Valley. The scope of work includes project management, the preparation of a historical context statement,

reconnaissance and intensive field surveys, a summary report, and participation in public meetings.

Oversight of the Historical Resources Survey of Castro Valley is consistent with the duties and powers of the PRHC, as outlined in Alameda County Municipal Code, Section 2.86.070. The County's Historic Preservation Ordinance further requires maintaining a list of all surveys and using survey findings to identify and protect potentially historic resources (Section 17.62.040).

In addition, the historical resources survey of Castro Valley advances the following Goals and Actions as described in the Castro Valley Area Plan:

- Goal 5.6-1: Protect historic sites and structures and other cultural resources that help to maintain the special character and identity of Castro Valley and represent important physical connections to the community's past.
- Action 5.6-1: Complete Historical Resources Survey. Complete the Historical Resources Survey of the Castro Valley Planning area and prepare documentation that appear eligible for listing in the State register.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests that your Commission review the attached list of proposed themes and representative building types for the historical context statement for Castro Valley, consider the inclusion of any underrepresented communities, take public testimony, and provide feedback on the proposal. Staff will then share this feedback with Garavaglia Architecture.

Attachments

1. Attachment 1 – Proposed themes and building types for the Castro Valley Historic Context Statement



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Summary Themes for Castro Valley Historic Context

Statement:

Introduction

The main sources for the development of the Castro Valley Historic Context are as follows:

- Carey & Co. *Unincorporated Alameda County Historic Survey and Preservation Ordinance. County of Alameda: Alameda County, California.* April 4, 2008.
- Corbett, Michael R. *Historical and Cultural Resource Survey: East Alameda County.* Lisa Asche, Alameda County Community Development Agency: Hayward, California. June 17, 2005.
- Kelly, Richard J. *Rancho to Ranch Homes: Mapping the Evolution of Castro Valley, California.* Rancho San Lorenzo Publishers: Castro Valley, California. 2023.

Most theme section headers have been taken from the Carey & Co. survey, in order to maintain consistency with prior survey efforts. Theme section headers that do not come from the Carey & Co survey are underlined. Some theme headings have been adapted to better fit the unique history of Castro Valley.

3.1a Native Inhabitants

This section will outline the development and history of native cultures with a focus on the Ohlone people up until Spanish contact. This includes the nature of Ohlone settlement, ways of life, and means of sustenance.

3.1b Spanish & Mexican California (1821-1845)

This section will outline the rise and fall of the Spanish empire, the beginning of the secularization of the Mission System, and the development of the Rancho system. It will also include the effects of the Rancho system its effects on the local populace up until the annexation of California after the Mexican-American War.

3.1c American Period and Early Infrastructure (1845-1875)

The arrival of Americans en-masse beginning with the Gold Rush and its effects on the Rancho system. This section will cover the impact of Americanization on the local region, the infrastructures, and the early settlers of Castro Valley.

3.1d Transportation, Railroads, and Town Growth (1860-1895)

Early transportation followed trade routes established before Americanization. Railroad speculation that followed had a direct effect on founding individual towns and town growth all across the country. This section will cover the growth of the various trails and railroads that helped develop Alameda County.

3.1e Automobiles and Highway Development (1890-1973)

The automobile increased accessibility to more remote parts of Alameda County. Castro Valley was uniquely situated on the Lincoln Highway to link East County with Hayward. This section will cover the direct impact increased automobile transportation and highway development had on Castro Valley.

3.1f Agriculture (1890-1940)

Agricultural developments occurred throughout the County, including the growth of grain and vegetables. Castro Valley specifically was known for Eucalyptus tree farms and fruit. This section will cover the development of Castro Valley's agriculture.

3.1g Poultry (1910-1970)

Poultry was a unique development in Castro Valley. While small-scale Poultry operations took place all over Alameda County, the unique confluence of immigration, railroads, ample space from subdividing orchards, and economic factors made Castro Valley the 2nd largest Poultry area in California behind Petaluma. This section covers the unique factors that lead to the development and downfall of the Poultry industry in Castro Valley.

3.1h Culture and Religion (1870-Current)

This section will cover the unique cultural influences of people, movements, and religion in Castro Valley. This includes Portuguese and Danish settlement and the lives of important figures in Castro Valley's history.

3.1i Commercial Development (1910-Current)

This section will cover the commercial development of Castro Valley from 1910 to the present. This section will touch on the themes of early commercial development of Castro Valley Boulevard, the suburbanization trends of the 1940s, and the post-war



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commercial developments including malls, parking lots, and suburban commercial districts.

3.1j Mid-War and Post-War Tract Housing (1940-Current)

This section will cover Industrial growth during WWII, the Japanese and Italian exclusions, the end of WWII and the GI Bill, and post-war tract housing. All of these themes represent an important part of Castro Valley's history and have had an impact of the physical layout and expansion of Castro Valley.

3.1k Modernist Architecture (1945-1975)

Preliminary investigations have revealed a small but important group of buildings constructed by some of the brightest modernist architects working in the Bay Area. This includes but is not limited to architects, builders, designers, and developers like William Wurster, Hayes and Hanamoto, Joseph Eichler. This section will cover the development of Modernist Architecture in Castro Valley through the lens of these master architects, builders, designers, and developers.