

**Survey Report**

**Reconnaissance Survey**  
**“Old Town and South to 24<sup>th</sup> Street”**  
**Anacortes, WA.**

Certified Local Government Grant No. FY09-61019-004

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a reconnaissance-level survey of historic properties in Anacortes, Washington. The project took place between November 2008 and March 2010. It was funded by Federal dollars from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior and administered by the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Julie M. Koler, historic preservation consultant under contract with the City of Anacortes, conducted the project with the assistance of members of the Anacortes Historic Preservation Board and the Anacortes Museum. This project builds upon four previous surveys undertaken in 1976, 1987, and 2007. The primary focus of the subject survey was the Old Town neighborhood; however, additional properties located in the area south of Old Town between 12<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> streets were also documented.

Anacortes is a city of approximately 16,300 people. It is located on Fidalgo Island in the northwest part of Skagit County, Washington. The Old Town neighborhood is located at the northern end of the city. The surveyed area is approximately 318 acres in size. It is bounded by 12th Street on the south, R Avenue on the east, A Avenue on the west, and Guemes Channel on the north.

Seventy-three properties that were only partially recorded in a survey of the Old Town neighborhood in 2006/2007 were documented to reconnaissance-level standards in this project. An additional 46 properties in the neighborhood were determined to meet criteria for inclusion in the city's Historic Property Inventory and were recorded and entered into the DAHP's Access database. The total number of surveyed properties in the Old Town neighborhood is 336.

The Anacortes Historic Preservation Board contributed a great deal of time to the project enabling the scope to be expanded beyond the original contract with DAHP. A windshield survey of properties built before 1940 in the area between 12<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> streets was conducted and 60 additional properties were added to the database.

A comprehensive historic context statement for the City of Anacortes is contained in the 1987 Historic Resource Survey Report and was not reproduced here. Copies of the Anacortes Historic Resource Inventory are located in the offices of the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in Olympia, Washington, and the Anacortes Museum.

The following products were prepared in the course of this project:

- 177 new DAHP Access Database entries; and
- *Survey Report* and *Master Map* of surveyed properties.

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## **Background**

This report presents the findings of a reconnaissance-level survey of historic properties built prior to 1940 in the Old Town neighborhood of Anacortes, Washington and the residential area directly south of Old Town between 12<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> streets. The project took place between November 2008 and March 2010. Its purpose is to provide comprehensive information required by the City of Anacortes, the Anacortes Historic Preservation Board, the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, property owners, and other interested parties, to make informed decisions about historic resource management. One-hundred and seventy-seven properties were documented in this project. Approximately 318 acres were surveyed. The project did not include identification of pre-historic or historic archaeological resources.

### *Project Area*

The Old Town neighborhood lies within the city limits of Anacortes, Washington. Anacortes is a city of approximately 16,300 people located on Fidalgo Island in the northwest part of Skagit County, Washington. Old Town is located at the north end of the city. It is bounded by 12th Street on the south, R Avenue on the east, A Avenue on the west, and Guemes Channel on the north. The city's historic commercial core bisects the neighborhood, and the waterfront is home to a variety of industries. For a detailed description of the neighborhood see *City of Anacortes Historic Property Survey Report 1987* Koler/Morrison Planning Consultants. The area between 12<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets consists of standard city lots. The majority of houses in this area were built prior to 1950.

### *Previous Work*

This project follows three previous surveys undertaken in Old Town. The first was completed in 1976. It was conducted by volunteers coordinated by staff at the Anacortes Museum. Documentation consisted of black and white photographs of each recorded property and some historical information where it was available. The second survey was completed in 1987. It was conducted by Koler/Morrison Planning consultants for the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. The survey area included the downtown commercial core, the central and eastern-most portions of Old Town, the waterfront encompassing these two areas, and the Cap Sante neighborhood. One hundred and three properties were documented at that time, of which 80 are located in Old Town. The third was conducted in 2006/07 by Andrews History Group and included the area north of 12<sup>th</sup> between R and A Avenues. This is the first historic property survey in the area between 12<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets.

### *Project Personnel*

Susan Rooks, Chair of the Anacortes Historic Preservation Board, and Steve Oakley, Historic Preservation Board liaison and Director of the Anacortes Museum, coordinated the overall project, providing support materials, and liaison with City staff and elected officials. Susan also assisted with property identification, collection of tax assessor data (08 properties) and data entry. Jim Young, Historic Preservation Board member, assisted with organization of survey data, editing the database, property identification and

collection of tax assessor information. He also entered information into the database. Robert Hoxie, GIS Coordinator for the City of Anacortes, prepared the maps and queried property listings per Jim Young's requests.

Julie Koler served as project consultant, participating in the field survey, writing physical descriptions and statements of significance, editing final database entries, and completing this report. Ms. Koler meets the professional qualifications for survey personnel set forth in 36 CFR 61.

A database containing information on each of the surveyed properties is located at:

- Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
1063 S. Capitol Way, Suite 106  
PO Box 48343  
Olympia, WA 98504
- Anacortes Museum  
1305 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Anacortes, WA 98221

## **The Survey Process**

### *Objectives*

The objectives of this project were to complete a comprehensive reconnaissance-level survey of the Old Town neighborhood and to enter this information into the DAHP's Access database. Because this was a reconnaissance-level survey, additional research and analysis will be required before the properties can be evaluated for historic significance.

### *Methodology*

This project adhered to the standards and procedures identified in NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN No. 24 - *Technical information on comprehensive planning, survey of cultural resources, and registration in the National Register of Historic Places*, and guidelines established by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. It consisted of the following phases: mobilization; field survey, recording, gathering of tax assessor information; data entry; preparation of the survey report and master map; and public outreach.

### Field Survey, Recording & Gathering of Tax Assessor Information

Field examination consisted of recording descriptive information on the field forms including construction materials and architectural features; assessing degree of alteration and potential architectural significance; and shooting digital photographs. Assessment of physical integrity was based on degree of alteration within four areas: building form, footprint/plan, fenestration material and pattern, and exterior cladding. Each recorded

property was assigned a field site number. Concurrent with field recording, tax assessor information for each property was obtained.

#### Preparation of Written Narratives & Data Entry

An electronic inventory form containing tax assessor, locational, and field data was prepared for each property, and physical descriptions and statements of significance were written. Statements of significance addressed architecture and physical integrity based on available information.

#### Survey Report, Master Map & Inventory Form Production

The *Survey Report* and *Master Map* were prepared. Final electronic and hard copy inventory forms were prepared including: field data, physical description, preliminary statement of significance, and digital photographs. All relevant data was compiled in the Microsoft Access database created by DAHP, which can be sorted by multiple categories (construction date, parcel number, owner, building type, etc).

## **Findings**

### *Properties*

The City of Anacortes uses criteria modeled after the National Register of Historic Places (36 CFR 60) to determine whether a property qualifies for landmark designation. To be eligible for designation a property must possess physical integrity and significance. Physical integrity is the authenticity of a property's historic identity based on physical characteristics such as location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. "Significance" is defined by association with historic events, important people, distinctive design or physical characteristics, or the potential to provide important information in history or prehistory.

With the exception of one commercial building, the majority of properties documented in this project are single-family residences. As noted in previous studies (Koler/Morrison 1987), there are few pure examples of historic architectural styles in the city. Most of the early dwellings were constructed by local builders or the home owners themselves. Many of the buildings are hybrids, incorporating features of different styles. For the purpose of this inventory buildings were categorized by style based on the most prominent features. For an in-depth discussion of architectural styles in the study area see *City of Anacortes Historic Property Survey Report 1987* Koler/Morrison Planning Consultants.

Most of the houses documented in this study have been altered. The most common changes are to windows, followed by alterations to siding and porches. The overall historic character of Old Town has also been impacted by new construction which has, for the most part, not been compatible in size and scale with the neighborhood's older housing stock.

Although a number of individual buildings were found to be potentially eligible for local landmark designation and listing in the National Register of Historic Places, there is not sufficient continuity in the streetscape for any areas in Old Town or the area south of 12th to be considered for historic district listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Despite this, a number of small ensembles were identified in Old Town which, as a group, convey strong historic character and should be given priority for preservation. These include:

- 803, 807-09, 813, 815, 819 4th Street
- 702 “O” Avenue and 1105, 1109-19 7<sup>th</sup> Street
- 1108, 1110 or 1112, 1116, 1120 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
1111, 1115, 1119 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
1201, 1211, 1215, 1219 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
1202, 1208, 1214, 1220 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
1204, 1210, 1216, 1220 6<sup>th</sup> Street
- 701, 804 K Avenue and 1403 7<sup>th</sup> and 1419, 1420, 1502 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 1502 9<sup>th</sup>
- 1219, 1213, 1211, 1207, 1203 10<sup>th</sup> Street
- 1403, 1405, 1409 10th Street

#### *Historic Districts/Overlay Zone*

The Anacortes Municipal Code does not enable designation of traditional historic districts (only individual buildings may be listed on the local register). In 2009, however, the City Council, responding to citizen concerns, recognized that new development in Old Town was adversely impacting the area’s character and adopted an historic overlay district. The purpose of the overlay district is to encourage “sensitively designed infill in keeping with the existing character of Old Town.” The district includes the area from 12 Street north to the Guemes Channel and from D Avenue east to the mid-line of O Avenue, most of the area covered in this survey and inventory project. In establishing the district, the Council adopted standards for certain land uses and building forms, but it did not address rehabilitation or restoration of historic building fabric. Thus, short of listing individual buildings in the local register, which requires the consent of each owner, there are no protections for the historic houses that give Old Town its unique character.

#### *Survey and Inventory*

During the course of this project, the Board identified 168 additional pre-1940 buildings (all outside of the study area) and entered locational data and photographs into the HPI database forms. This represents the completion of comprehensive identification of all pre-1940 properties in the city. Database files for these properties will be submitted to the DAHP upon completion of reconnaissance-level documentation.

### *Central Business District (CBD)*

The city's historic business district along Commercial Avenue was not included in this update. It was surveyed in a 1987 survey and inventory project. The City Council recently passed an ordinance which seeks to "encourage increased residential opportunities" within the CBD (AMC 15.45). This legislation increases the threat of demolition and inappropriate alterations to historic commercial buildings that cannot readily accommodate housing space. The City is moving forward to develop design standards for the CBD with the goal of mitigating adverse impacts to its historic character.

### *Anacortes Preservation Board*

Since its creation the Anacortes Preservation Board has been staffed by the Anacortes Historical Museum. The liaison between the Board and the City is the Director of the Museum. This has worked well for purposes related to initial planning, community outreach, and enhancements such as the creation of interpretive markers; however, it is not a desirable structure for the long-term success of the City's preservation goals. Historic preservation functions should be integrated into the City's overall land use planning activities. Ideally the Board should be staffed by a city employee who works in the Planning Department. Without this integration of preservation into broader city land use functions, the possibility of overlooking important preservation opportunities is significantly increased.

## **Recommendations for Future Work**

### *Properties*

- Develop a series of workshops and related technical papers for property owners including, but not limited to, building styles, appropriate paint colors, rehabilitation techniques and materials and so forth. Post on website, and make regular workshops/presentations available to property owners and general public.
- Conduct targeted outreach to owners of "ensemble" properties to encourage them to list their houses on the local register and the National Register of Historic Places.

### *Survey and Inventory*

- Submit a Certified Local Government (CLG) funding proposal to the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to prepare narrative physical descriptions and statements of significance for the 168 pre-1940 properties recently identified by the Board. Include in the proposal time to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis (for architectural significance) of all domestic buildings included in the City's HPI.
- Submit a CLG funding proposal to the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to update the HPI in the historic business district (Commercial Avenue). A number of buildings have been restored since this area was surveyed in 1987 and

need to be added to the HPI; others have been altered and these changes need to be documented. The updated HPI would be useful in developing design guidelines for the business district, which are anticipated as part of the recently adopted legislation (AMC 15.45) that seeks to increase residential occupancy in the area.

#### *Central Business District*

- Develop design guidelines for the CBD in cooperation with the Preservation Board based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Because the CBD retains strong historic character, the Board should be designated as the review body for proposed demolition, new construction or alterations to existing buildings.

#### *Incentive Development*

- Develop incentives to encourage property owners to list their buildings on the historic register.

#### *Anacortes Preservation Board*

- Move responsibility for staffing the Anacortes Preservation Board to City Planning staff.

#### *Education and Outreach*

- Promote historic preservation awareness and increase interaction with groups that impact historic preservation resources such as architects, realtors, planners, lawyers, contractors, visitor industry, cultural organizations, building industry, and the police.
- Develop historic preservation related videos for classroom and public television use.
- Make presentations on historic preservation related topics at education workshops and conferences, and respond to teacher requests for information support.
- Make classroom presentations on historic preservation related topics and participate in career days at the schools.
- Develop historic preservation related curriculum materials for placement on the internet.
- Produce public service announcements that provide a telephone point of contact for historic preservation concerns.
- Develop additional publications and pamphlets to educate the visitors/residents on local history.
- Encourage public television programming, which might include site visits or panel discussions that relate to historic preservation.
- Publish a pamphlet on the city's historic properties i.e. the "Architectural Style Guide"
- Publish articles on topics of common interest in appropriate trade and professional publications.
- Participate in appropriate professional workshops and conferences.