Community Development Department
MEMORANDUM

Date: July 11, 2014
To: Historic Preservation Review Commission
From: Suzanne Thorsen, Associate Planner
Re: DHCP – Relation to Historic Context

BACKGROUND:
The Historic Preservation Review Commission's Priority List of Discussion Items identifies an update to the Downtown Historic Conservation Plan (DHCP) as a priority and includes several sub-topics for discussion. These discussions will assess the existing DHCP and identify areas of improvement so that the City will be positioned to apply for grants that may become available to fund an update. In order to address the sub-topics that have been identified within the timeframe for the 2015 grant application cycle, staff hopes to agendize one to two discussion topics for each meeting of the Commission.

An update to the DHCP is not presently budgeted or scheduled, and must first be authorized by the City Council.

SUMMARY:
The City of Benicia Historic Context Statement was adopted in February 2011 to provide a framework for ensuring that new development, remodeling and building renovation is compatible with existing historic resources. The Statement includes detailed information about Benicia's historical and architectural heritage, as well as recommendations to advance preservation goals. Together with the Historic Survey (2009), completion of the Historic Context was intended as part of a broad, comprehensive approach to preservation in Benicia that would ultimately also include an update to the DHCP.

The Historic Context Statement provides information that, if incorporated into the DHCP, could provide more specific guidance for property owners and commissioners to evaluate changes to residential property, including rehabilitation and restoration. These include:

- A description and photograph examples of architectural styles found in Benicia, including the general timeframe of their prominence and a description of character-defining features associated with each style (example: p. 91-98).
- A discussion of how buildings may acquire significance with respect to

events, persons, architectural design or the ability to convey information about construction methods, materials, or evolution of local residential building development (example p. 99-100).
- Integrity considerations (example p. 100-101).
- Information about the significance and integrity of commercial, institutional and industrial building types that may advance their preservation beyond the guidance presently contained in the DHCP (example p.102-108).

The Historic Context Statement additionally includes preservation goals and recommendations that should be considered in preparing a scope of work for any future update to the DHCP, primarily relating to the adoption of guidelines to facilitate treatment or restoration efforts in accordance with the Secretary of Interior Standards and lessen the impact of new infill construction on the setting of historic properties (p.183). Recommendations of the Historic Context relating to additional survey efforts or designation of new landmarks relate to a separate item on the Commission's Priority List of Discussion Items (Discussion Topic Priority #6) and are outside the scope of an update to the DHCP (Discussion Topic Priority #2). Therefore, new survey or designation efforts should not be the focus of discussion about the DHCP, which is scheduled for the Commission meeting of July 24, 2014.

A copy of the Historic Context Statement may be found on the City's website at www.ci.benicia.ca.us, Planning Division homepage under "Current Projects".

FURTHER ACTION:
Discuss the relation of the DHCP to the Historic Context Statement to identify areas of disconnect or in need of updating, then direct staff to prepare and retain summary of Commission feedback for informational purposes in preparation of future grant applications to fund an update.