

2011 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design Historic Context Statement



The mid-century modern San Francisco County Fair Building.

The *San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design Historic Context Statement* (Modern context statement) is the first historic context statement in northern California to focus on Modern architecture and landscape design and its pioneering San Francisco Bay Area-based practitioners. It provides a framework for consistent, informed evaluation of buildings and landscapes constructed between 1935 and 1970, providing a contextual foundation essential for the identification and designation of San Francisco's significant Modern resources.

The context statement closely examines the cultural, economic, social and geographic factors that influenced the regional Modernism that evolved in the San Francisco Bay Area and links specific property types to identified themes, geographic patterns, and time periods. It identifies character-defining features of Modern architectural and landscape design and documents significance, criteria considerations and integrity thresholds. Further, the Modern context statement contains more than 100 architect and landscape architect biographies and documentation of more than 1,000 of their buildings and landscapes located in San Francisco.

Funded by a matching \$25,000 Certified Local Government Grant, the San Francisco Planning Department was able to significantly broaden the scope and documentation of the project by recruiting three qualified interns to assist with the in-depth archival research that contributes to the unusually robust documentation contained in the context statement. That expanded scope also reflects hundreds of hours of unpaid work by Department staff and interns who canvassed neighborhoods seeking examples of Modern buildings and landscapes. The context statement was further enhanced by this

extensive field work and related building permit review of hundreds of properties, which identified previously unknown works of Master architects and lesser-known designers.

The context statement identifies a new category of building, described as “Contractor Modern,” which is not a style per se, but, rather, the absence of style—buildings that selectively borrow from the basic design tenets of Modern design, particularly the lack of exterior ornament, in the pursuit of inexpensive construction costs.

Read the complete San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design Historic Context Statement: <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1054/files/sfmod.pdf>