



Public Comment Item 12.4

Ryan Carter <ryan@carterforplacerville.com>
To: Regina O'Connell <roconnell@cityofplacerville.org>

Tue, Oct 22, 2024 at 2:05 PM

Hello Regina,

I am attaching a file that I would like to submit as public comment on agenda item 12.4.

Please include the following information for context so the council knows what it is and where it came from.

"This is the original memo submitted to the full Planning Commission by the Historic Review Special Committee. It is the document that we used as a basis for our conversations as a full commission and resulted in the final document before you in tonight's meeting. I am submitting it as public comment so you have the full context of the item."

Thank you!

Ryan Carter



Priorities Memo Final- Placerville Historic Review Special Committee.docx
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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 13th, 2024

To: Planning Commission

From: Ryan Carter and Kirk Smith- Members of the Historic Review Special Committee

Subject: **Suggested Priorities of the Planning Commission in its role as the Historic Advisory Committee.**

On September 5, 2023, Planning Commission Chair Frenn asked the Historic Review Committee to prepare a list of priorities, proposals and goals. We have sought to do that with this report.

BACKGROUND: Placerville was the center of the Gold Rush, something historians have often described as the world's largest migration, and it was at that time third largest city in California. The City Council has over the years sought to take steps to preserve Placerville's special historic character. In 1981, for example, the City Council created four historic districts and at various times adopted ordinances creating special building standards to be used for buildings in those districts.

On January 8, 1991, the City Council Enacted Ordinance 1474 for the purpose of establishing "conditions and regulations for the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of the old and historical buildings in historical districts of the city and the perpetuation of historic type architecture within historical districts, which have special historical and aesthetic interest and value." On January 11, 2011, the City Council modified the previous construction requirements by enacting Ordinance 1640 to adopt the Secretary of the interior "Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings" that established stronger and more comprehensive coverage for protection of historic buildings.

The City Council established the Historic Advisory Committee on two occasions, the first in 1980 and the second in 2011. When the City Council dissolved that body on March 10, 2015, it transferred to the Planning Commission the mandate that had been vested with that committee. These duties include the following:

- The preservation of historic resources, including buildings, structures, objects, monuments and markers as our legacy to the future generations.
- Act in an advisory capacity to the Planning Commission and City Council in all matters pertaining to historical resources/districts.
- Review applications to alter facades visible from a public right of way or to demolish all or part of any structure which is listed on an inventory of historic buildings, structures, sites or resource.

- The Committee shall advise and make recommendations to the Planning Commission with respect to discretionary permit requests within 300' (three hundred feet) of historic resources and shall advise the Commission on appropriate means to maintain the integrity of the historic resource(s).
- The Committee shall make recommendations to the Planning Commission with respect to such applications within ten days of the Committee meeting scheduled to hear such requests. In the event that the Committee fails to assemble a quorum or make a recommendation to the Planning Commission within ten (10) calendar days of receipt or consideration on the resources, then the matter shall be forwarded to the Planning Commission without a recommendation from the Committee.
- Maintain a local inventory of historic resources within the City, as established by the City Council. Make recommendations to the City Council to update the inventory.
- Investigate and report to the City Council on the use of various federal, state, local, or private funding sources and mechanisms available to promote historical preservation in the city.
- Make recommendations to the Planning Commission and the City Council on amendments to the Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources Element of the City's General Plan.
- Advise City Council and City boards and commissions as necessary on historic preservation issues.
- Provide advice and guidance upon the request of the property owner or occupant, on the restoration, alteration, decoration, landscaping, or maintenance of any historical resource, or property within historic district.
- To perform any other functions that may be designated by resolution or motion of the City Council.

PROPOSAL: The Historic Review Special Committee feels it is paramount that any priorities we set fall within the guidelines established in City Council Resolution #7896, the establishing document for the Historic Advisory Committee.

During the September 5th regular meeting of the Planning Commission, several suggestions were offered by members of the commission for inclusion in this list of priorities.

1. Consider establishing a new Ordinance similar to other local historic cities.

Since those duties were delegated to the Planning Commission nearly nine years ago, we are not aware of the Planning Commission having engaged in a systematic examination of the city's historic preservation requirements that utilize the strict Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties [hereinafter Secretary of the Interior's Standards] and the procedures used for their administration. We propose that this be the

first priority for Planning Commission review to enable us to advise the City Council of our findings and recommendations.

There have been many questions raised about these matters by members of the public appearing before us including applicants, members of the Commission and from members of the City Council.

Questions often raised include but are not limited to the following:

While the Secretary of Interior's Standards were designed for historic federal properties, are those strict standards used for historic treasures like Mount Vernan appropriate for Placerville?

Should these standards take into account other public policy considerations, beyond preserving historic structures, such as energy efficiency and fire safety? Although there have been decisions allowing double pane vinyl windows in portions of properties that do not face the street, does that serve to undercut energy conservation?

Should more flexibility be permitted in our ordinance to accommodate more modern materials so long as they maintain the original styling of what they would replace? Double pane insulated windows are made in a variety of materials and styles so should those energy efficient materials be permitted so long as they maintain the appearance of windows that they would replace? These are the kinds of questions that can be addressed.

In addition, questions have been raised about the ways this information is presented to the public. In the course of site plan reviews, we often hear from people living in the historic districts that did not know of the special building standards or review processes prior to starting projects. This issue can be examined, and methods developed, for ensuring that all owners in the historic districts know of their responsibilities and obligations specific to their historic properties.

Is the information the city offers about the standards, and the requirements for following them, presented in a user friendly and easy to understand way? Studies have shown that properties in historic districts that follow historic construction guidelines experience increased property values. The Planning Commission could explore ways of making this information more readily available to property owners and contractors.

We believe that the examination of these issues should be made by the entire body of the Planning Commission and should be made after holding workshops on its various segments. It will not be easy, we believe, to have the public take their time to participate if they are limited to 2 or 3 minutes. We believe an informal workshop for public input would be an appropriate starting point, followed by more formal meetings like the city held last year with a joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting.

We believe that a concerted effort should be made to publicize these workshops and solicit public input. There is no way to know what kind of response we would get, or how many people would show up, but it is important to gain the benefit of the largest number of informed people with different experiences. No matter what we might recommend, it is likely to have gained more respect when the public knows that the Planning Commission valued their information and that it helped produce our best work.

Other suggestions for inclusion in the list of priorities are:

- **Community Engagement- Improved Communication, Improve Website, Education/Outreach, Buy-In**

We believe that this is an important but ancillary goal. As we addressed above, the city website and any additional outreach to the public should be focused on the responsibilities of property owners in historic districts and on the benefits of the standards to the property owners and the City as a whole. Through this process, we hope the City can foster a feeling of engagement from the public. Education and buy-in should be a natural byproduct of this engagement.

- **Update / Expansion of Register of Historic Resources**

We believe that this should be an ongoing goal. Many property owners are hesitant to be included on the local or state register of historic places. Engagement with local historical groups could be invaluable in this effort as they have the closest connection to these properties and their owners. The city and Planning Commission (in its capacity as the Historic Advisory Committee) could encourage and facilitate these groups in their effort to reach out.

- **Mills Act participation / Certified Local Government**

Moving forward we hope that the city, with the assistance of local historic groups, will craft all of its actions with an eye towards inclusion in the Mills Act. Becoming a Certified Local Government is not an overnight project, but we believe that it should be a long-term priority. A better understanding of the requirements would help the Planning Commission make decisions in a manner that is consistent with inclusion in this program.

- **Expansion of Historic Districts to include Main Street**

This is another long-term goal that has been discussed for decades. A lot of the background work has been done in the past and a lot of push back has been encountered by the proponents of this goal. The city has, on certain projects, included this possibility in the planning documents for projects within this proposed Historic District. The Planning Commission could recommend that this practice continue for all major projects within the Main Street Corridor, and that all environmental reviews include the possibility of future

inclusion in a Main Street Historic District. In doing this, future barriers can be addressed and removed now so as not to create impossible to remedy roadblocks should the city choose to pursue this option.

- **Reestablish Historic Advisory Committee**

Staff have expressed concerns about this item relative to the resources required to reestablish this committee. We are sympathetic to this concern, but we felt it was important to include it in this list for future consideration. If the city is successful in its efforts to include and educate the public about our historic preservation, a natural result of that effort may be a call for the re-establishment of this committee. We believe this would be the ultimate measure of success. If enough members of the public want to be involved to the point of volunteering, that would indicate that the City was successful in achieving the buy-in it seeks.

CONCLUSION:

We recommend that the Planning Commission conduct public workshops on specific priority matters selected by the commission with dates to be scheduled in accordance with dates approved by the commission. We believe that public workshops are important to enable us to obtain the best guidance and information possible from broad sectors of the public. Doing so can also enhance respect for the final recommendations put forth by the commission. This effort would assist us in performing those duties set forth by the City Council for the Planning Commission nearly nine years ago.

Attachments:

Attachment A: City Council Resolution Number 7896- Established the Historic Advisory Committee

Attachment B: City Council Resolution Number 8295- Suspending of Historic Advisory Committee