

Timeline of Historic District Work

2023

May 2, 2023: Special Committee established by Chair Frenn, consisting of Commissioner Ryan Carter and Commissioner Kirk Smith.

May 16, 2023: Report by Special Committee; decision to place this discussion topic under Item 13 on Agenda going forward. Activities reported:

- Heritage Association - Special Committee met with Heritage Association; discussion of past individual efforts to develop inventory of historic properties.
- El Dorado County Association of Realtors (EDCAR) - Commissioner Carter planned to discuss efforts to spread awareness about historic district information; potential to include disclosures in listings.
- Placerville Economic Advisory Committee - agenda'd the topic of updating historic inventory. PEAC decided not to address.

Chair Frenn advocates for the City to be the informer on historic districts - with handouts and via website. Commissioner Kiehne suggests looking at other communities for how to potentially list on the title. Chair Frenn asks the subcommittee for an outline on a workshop.

June 6, 2023: Commissioner Smith contacted the Interior Department to discuss Secretary of the Interior (SOI) guidelines. Commissioner Smith reports that the current inventory from 1984-85 organized by Heritage Association is incomplete and they are seeking financing from the City to complete the inventory. Commissioner Kiehne questions if grant money is available to support this effort, rather than City funds. Commissioner Smith confirms that there could be external funding available. Priorities memorialized include updating inventory, engaging historic society groups, and seeking grant funding for this effort. No progress update on EDCAR.

June 20, 2023: Commissioner Smith reports that they have reached out to academic departments to discuss inventory update assistance. Commissioner Smith presents examples of historic documentation and highlights the lack of in-depth information formally collected for City inventory. Commissioner Carter presented to the City Council the need to update the inventory. Commissioner Smith advocates for using graduate students to write grants for this effort. Commissioner Carter highlights the disparate inventories currently in place and need to formalize these and make them more cohesive. Chair Frenn advocates for a resolution on this topic. Commissioner Lepper advocates for development of signage to notify the public of the existence of historic districts. Chair Frenn advocates for a more complete inventory of not just buildings but also monuments, etc.

July 18, 2023: extensive discussion around property application in Cedar Ravine district and what rules are currently in place, particularly with regards to contributing vs. non-contributing properties.

August 8, 2023: Heritage Association presents to City Council regarding desire to update inventory and requesting funding to do so (see City Council meeting 8/8/23)

https://www.cityofplacerville.org/media/City%20Council%20Staff%20Reports/2023/08%2008%202023/12.2_AttD%20HAEDC%20proposal%207%2031%2023.pdf

August 15, 2023: Discussion by Planning Commission regarding proposal given to Placerville City Council on August 8, 2023 requesting \$60,000 for funding by the Heritage Association, prior to Planning Commission review. The Heritage Association suggested the City hire a consultant identified by them. Council responded that more specifics were needed and that the proposal needed a lot more information to be entertained. Public comment noted that the Attorney General of CA ordered the status of the Heritage Association as a 501c3 charitable organization be revoked in May 2010. Commissioner Carter states there are flaws in the proposal and a need to refine. Commissioner Kiehne expresses severe disappointment in the proposal being presented prior to Planning Commission review with three Planning Commission members present and disappointment in quality, detail, and optics. Commissioner Carter states for the record that he is Treasurer of the Heritage Association. Commissioner Smith states for the record that he is the President of the Heritage Association. Extensive discussion of the appropriateness of actions.

August 29, 2023: Joint meeting of City Council and Planning Commission on historic guidelines and priorities of the City, with a professional consultant leading the conversation.

September 5, 2023: Special Committee's charge refined by Chair Frenn to develop a list of priorities for historic districts. Chair Frenn notes that representation as a Planning Commissioner versus a Heritage Association member needs to be very clear and upfront and that the Planning Commission should be the first body to review. Commissioner Smith states he was given a "directive by Finance Director Dave Warren" to present a proposal for funding for historic district preservation. No further detail on this directive is provided. Commissioner Kiehne expresses concern about transparency in subcommittee activities. Discussion regarding the subcommittee presenting workable priorities as being the key need for the Commission to move forward.

October 3, 2023: Commissioner Carter states the subcommittee should have a recommendation memo at the next meeting.

November 17, 2023: Subcommittee recommendations are still being developed.

December 5, 2023: Commissioner Carter states more time is needed to develop priorities. Commissioner Kiehne states she completed training through the CA Preservation Foundation, the "SOI Bootcamp," on how SOI standards are being implemented in other cities and current trends and challenges in preservation.

December 19, 2023: Commissioner Smith advocates for workshops. Chair Frenn requests that the priorities memo be produced first.

2024

April 2, 2024: Special Committee produces their recommendations memo (attached below). Commissioner Lepper provides written feedback due to absence. Commissioner Smith relates conversations with the county recorder's office regarding potential for notification on properties in the historic district. Commissioner Smith advocates for workshops. Commissioner Carter identifies Grass Valley as an ordinance to potentially replicate but states that memo is a "10,000 ft viewpoint" of priorities. Commissioner Kiehne states that a systematic examination of our application of the SOI

standards is a good place to start our work and that many of the recommendations require City Council instigation and resource allocation. Chair Frenn advocates for future training on this topic, as appropriate. Commissioner Kiehne disagrees with the need for a separate Historic Advisory Committee and to instead continue these discussions within the Planning Commission to refine historic preservation work.

Development Director Rivas states that the recommendation of the expansion of the historic districts to include Main St as being something outside of this purview, as it is already in the City policy. City Manager Morris expresses concern for staff time and resources being able to be allocated to this work and the need for City Council to review and set the priorities.

Commissioner Smith states that Grass Valley has extensive resources for homeowners and lists of historic background information on properties in historic districts. Commissioner Smith states that Commissioner Lepper could be a resource for refining our resources without utilizing staff time. Commissioner Carter reiterates sensitivity to staff resources and that this is a “high-level” view of recommendations and primarily overarching, long-term goals for historic preservation. Commissioner Kiehne asks for clarification on how to move this forward with regards to recommendations to the City Council. The Commission agrees to refine the recommendations prior to making recommendations to the City Council. Chair Frenn proposes a Standing Committee (rather than a Special Committee) be established in order to continue this work as an agenda item under Item 13 on the agenda and establish a road map for taking on this work. Commissioner Frenn requests that Commissioner Smith and Commissioner Carter agree to serve on the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee was not established due to the item not being correctly agenda itemized. Commissioner Kiehne requests that the Standing Committee responsibilities and term length be clearly defined prior to establishment.

April 16, 2024: no video available. From minutes:

“Chair Frenn informed the Commission that there is a continued need for more effort regarding the City’s Historic Districts. Based on discussion with Staff, Chair Frenn would like to change the item from a Special Committee to a Standing Committee. Written comment by Chair Frenn was distributed prior to the meeting and made available to the Public. Following discussion, Chair Frenn proposed to create a Special Committee with a task of refining and finalizing the memorandum provided to the Commission on April 2, 2024 to be brought back to Planning Commission for the June 18, 2024 meeting, subject to Staff’s availability. In a single motion, Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Lepper, moved to create the Special Committee as described.”

May 13, 2024: email from Past Chair Frenn https://evogov.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/meetings/17/staff_reports/972.pdf

May 21, 2024: Commissioner (Past Chair) Frenn references his May 13 letter and states that it needs refinement but expresses his desire for this work to continue. Public comment received stating concern about the lack of details on the composition and charge for the continued appointment of a Special or Standing Committee and lack of record for that conversation. Chair Kiehne expresses similar concerns about the memo and the Standing Committee charge with a desire to continue to refine this work prior to sending it to the City Council within the larger Planning Commission. Past Chair Frenn agrees that a Standing Committee is not appropriate and that the work should continue within the larger Commission. Commissioner Smith states that the April 2, 2024 Special Committee memo is the final product that will be produced and all future work should be handled by the larger Planning Commission. City Staff Hunter

clarifies that the Special Committee stated that they would refine their memo for the June 2024 meeting. Past Chair Frenn agrees that refinement is necessary. Commissioner Smith states that all five Commissioners should be involved in identifying priorities and evaluating standards going forward. Development Director Rivas clarifies that the Special Committee had committed to refining their memo, not the larger Commission. Commissioner Frenn agrees that his memo should be refined and include recommendations developed in Planning Commission discussions. Discussion regarding appropriateness of a Special Committee, Standing Committee, or work by the larger Commission. City Manager Morris clarifies that it would be his recommendation that the Commission continue its work to refine its communications prior to sending them to the City Council and that a Committee is unnecessary. Commissioner Lepper agrees that a more robust “road map” is needed to be developed and refined prior to submission to City Council, as committed to by the Special Committee. Somewhat convoluted discussion continues and eventually, a motion is made to develop a new letter to City Council.

June 4, 2024: Commissioner Smith states that they will be working on a new, more detailed memo for the June 18, 2024 meeting regarding priorities and next steps for this work. Commissioner Lepper seeks to clarify what specific priorities will be included and requests specific task assignments to see what work can be done by Commissioners vs City staff. City Staff Hunter and Rivas clarify that the memo should include concrete suggestions that the City Council can review and approve or deny. Commissioner Lepper expresses a desire for specifics, timelines, and assignments rather than high-level ideas. Commissioner Smith advocates for public workshops and states that inventory cannot be completed under current conditions. Commissioner Lepper reiterates a focus on tangible and achievable next steps within the current resources available as well as a desire to move away from high-level discussions and focus on what can be done. Vice Chair Carter states that they will attempt to refine in that way.

June 18, 2024: Commissioner Carter states that an updated memo is not ready as they would like to incorporate suggestions from Commissioner Lepper into the new memo version to include specific next steps. Chair Kiehne requests that Commissioner Lepper put her thoughts into a document.

July 2, 2024: Minor update that Commissioners are working independently on updated comments regarding what will go to City Council.

August 20, 2024: Review of comments from Commissioners Frenn and Lepper. Commissioner Smith expresses the importance of workshops, challenges with updating inventory, and opposition to classifying downtown Main St as a historic district. Commissioner Kiehne focuses on reviewing Commissioner edits to his memo and how to move the memo forward to City Council. Chair Kiehne notes that Mills Act is not relevant to the work at hand. Discussion about the value of workshops. Commissioner Carter discusses moving the document from “aspirational” to “actionable” - remove reclassification of downtown district and Mills Act, remove reestablishment of Historical Advisory Committee. Commissioner Carter suggests any workshop to be held would be regarding a public notice about updating the Ordinance related to historic district standards once that process begins. Commissioner Carter recommends the third priority be updating historic inventory. Chair Kiehne suggests combining all work products into one to present to the City Council and link to the existing ordinance. Chair Kiehne directed to write a summary memo of work to date.

September 3, 2024: Commissioners Carter and Smith submit an updated memo from the Special Committee. Commissioner Lepper also submits a suggested version of a memo formatted to City Council. Chair Kiehne in the process of drafting a final memo to the City Council. Discussion of Commission priorities for inclusion in final memo: Commissioner Smith advocates for public workshops regarding updating the standards and the need for public input prior to making recommendations to City Council. Commissioner Smith discusses the merits of Main St becoming a historic district. Commissioner Lepper reviewed charges of the Historic Advisory Committee and identified three areas that were lacking - all were addressed in recommendations. Chair Kiehne reaffirms that the memo will address ordinance mandates and potential updates needed. Commissioner Smith discusses engagement of local historical societies. Commissioner Frenn reiterates the need to list priorities for Council under mandate - why, what, and how.

October 1, 2024: Commissioner Smith makes a motion that the Special Committee memo be adopted and a workshop be scheduled before year-end and states the Special Committee would be available to implement the workshop. Discussion about confusion about which memos are new and previously submitted. Further discussion by Commissioner Smith about scheduling a workshop. Commissioner Carter expresses support for Chair Kiehne's memo going forward to the City Council. Chair Kiehne describes her goal for the memo. Commissioner Smith advocates for scheduling of a public workshop, Chair Kiehne clarifies need for City Council approval prior to scheduling. Further discussion about public workshops. Commissioner Lepper disapproves of a workshop prior to year end and supports forwarding Chair Kiehne's memo to City Council. Commissioner Frenn agrees. Further discussion of workshop and memos. Chair Kiehne's memo priority ordering is discussed and ultimately approved to be sent to the City Council. The Special Committee is disbanded. Copy of Planning Commission memo to City Council found here: https://evogov.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/meetings/17/staff_reports/1225.pdf

October 22, 2024: City Council reviews memo from Planning Commission. Timeline review by Development Director Rivas:

- June 14, 2022 - City Council requests review of historic asset inventory and to schedule a joint meeting to discuss historic standards and guidelines
- May 2, 2023 - Chair Frenn establishes Special Committee
- August 29, 2023 - Joint meeting of CC and PC held with a consultant
- April 2, 2024 - Special Committee provided draft memorandum of priorities
- April 16, 2024 - Special Committee renewed to continue to refine priorities
- October 1, 2024 - Memorandum approved to be sent to City Council

Written comment received from Ryan Carter. Kirk Smith spoke in personal capacity - advocates for a public workshop; advocates for updating of standards; lists his priorities for a workshop. Development Director Rivas clarifies that the memorandum before City Council was not modified by staff. Ryan Carter spoke in personal capacity - states goal as being to move this topic forward. Kris Kiehne spoke as Chair of the Planning Commission as well as a citizen - reiterated that the memo was the result of work by the Planning Commission as a whole, as informed by the Special Committee as well as the joint meeting between City Council and Planning Commission.

Mayor Neau discusses a disconnect between direction from Council and the outcome of the Special Committee. Mayor Neau understood after the joint meeting that standards had now been clarified

and indeed offered flexibility. Mayor Neau references discussion in October 2023 about statements about the original intention of the establishment of the historic districts.

Councilmember Clarici expresses disappointment in the contents of the memo not addressing what homes need to be included in strong historic oversight within districts.

Mayor Neau addresses each recommendation:

1. Mayor Neau willing to help with updating the website, helping draft informational fliers for water bills. Signage for entryways to historic districts is a funding request and should be taken on by a non-profit. Workshops are also a funding request and information is not complete to hold them yet.
2. Historic District inventory - reference to \$56K request by Mr. Smith and Mr. Carter for their non-profit to do the inventory. 501c3 was not in good standing and so this could not be considered. Supports Heritage Association taking on the inventory assessment and completion but in a private capacity.
3. Current or new historic district ordinance - not directly addressed.
4. SOI has been determined to have flexibility via joint workshop. Kris Kiehne has taken training online for how to apply the SOI standards to historic homes, with a particular focus on windows, siding, decking and this should be our highest priority. Need to focus on most requested items and how we can justify their approval.

Mayor Neau clarifies that significant funding has been allocated toward historic preservation and the City has been an active partner. However, further resources for this cannot be allocated at this time and should be sought by external partners.

Councilmember Saragosa expressed a lack of understanding/confusion on the process and outcome of the Planning Commission discussion on October 1, 2024. Reflects on past items that are regularly addressed - windows, siding. Stated that going in front of three Commissions (Historic Advisory, Planning Commission, City Council) was too onerous on staff and homeowners and that is why the Advisory committee was disbanded. Less concerned with revising ordinance as it is not commonly questioned. Expressed need for consistency in how rules are applied. Expressed support for utilizing fire resistant materials, etc. as an evolution of the needs of homeowners, especially if the look is the same. Requests clarification for new baseline for allowable materials within the standards by mid-2025. Inventory list is a priority for Councilmember Saragosa but does not see the resources as being available directly from the City right now - should be completed by outside groups. Redrawing historic districts is not a priority as safeguards are already in place.

Councilmember Clarici clarifies that the Historic Advisory Committee was suspended due to lack of volunteers to serve on it. Agrees that historic resources in town are protected under current rules. Finds that the history of the town has been preserved in his 40 years of residency. Requests more specificity in rules applied to homes in historic districts and ensuring that they are reasonable for the homeowner while preserving the overall look of the districts. Suggests he would need 80% of property *owners* to advocate for a creation of a downtown historic district, not tenants. Advocates for identifying contributing vs. non-contributing homes within districts.

Councilmember Gotberg expresses concerns about prioritization of resources. Wildfire safety is a priority while maintaining aesthetics. Questions whether a year cutoff be implemented so that SOI standards will not be applied to them. Clarifies that strict adherence not be applied universally but rather only to specific properties.

Councilmember Saragosa agrees and thinks the Commission has been “consistently inconsistent” in what is allowed. Priority should be consistent updated standards and identifying contributing properties. Finds the Planning Commission to be the correct place for these determinations to be made.

Councilmember Yarborough agrees that strict SOI standard application is not an appropriate method for evaluation. Researched standards for historic districts to ensure he would not be held to strict historical standards due to burden on homeowners when purchasing his home. Finds that identifying contributing vs. non-contributing properties is a priority. Main priority is establishing clear and consistent expectations for homeowners. Needs of homeowners have changed with the environmental concerns and requirements.

Development Director Rivas suggests eliminating the goal of establishing a downtown historic district be removed from the General Plan due to the safeguards already in place. Inventory updating will require expertise and is a large goal. Unique and original homes should be identified and if modified, should not be considered contributing. Wildland urban interface is a priority. SOI standards should be viewed as flexible and realistic unless the home is on a state or federal register.

Council members are not in favor of removing the downtown historic district goal from the Plan but do not want to move forward with it unless there are unanimous requests by property owners. Councilmember Saragosa sees SOI clarification as the priority. City Manager Morris agrees that updating the website is achievable in the very near future and seeks clarity on SOI standard updates. Councilmember Gotberg agrees that the Planning Commission should continue to move this topic forward with regards to SOI standards.

November 19, 2024: City Manager Morris developing memo for City Council direction on Historic District priorities. Commissioner Frenn volunteers to research surrounding communities and develop ideas to move specific actions forward within the Planning Commission. Commissioner Smith inquires whether the Commission could produce a specific list of standards for historic districts that include updated materials, etc. City Manager Morris states that those questions will be addressed in the City Council memorandum.

December 3, 2024: Discussion about state, federal, and local sites potentially eligible for tax credit program. Chair Kiehne notes that properties must be listed on official registries to qualify. Informative in nature, list of potential properties listed by staff for review. Commissioner Smith inquires about making this list publicly known via website and sent to addresses on the list. City Manager Morris intends to have this be available. Commission acknowledges that this program is not relevant to most homeowners in the City. Commissioner Frenn acknowledges value in having historic blurbs associated with the properties listed, potentially done by historic societies. Commissioner Lepper agrees that website cohesion is key to capturing this information in perpetuity.

2025

January 7, 2025: Commission receives official memo stating the priorities of the City Council on this matter going forward. Commissioner Frenn inquires about holding a specific workshop. City Manager Morris states that we could but would want to be careful about staff resources and intention of the workshop and to include it within regular meetings. Chair Kiehne suggests taking smaller bites of the recommendations by City Council within regular Planning Commission meetings. Commissioner Smith advocates for specific public workshops. Discussion about establishing a downtown historic district.

Chair Kiehne clarifies that we should focus on moving forward on the City Council recommendations only - they are specific and actionable and the direction given. Chair Kiehne suggests having a standing agenda item so that we can present updates as they are achieved by Commissioners. Commissioner Smith advocates for developing specific guidelines and findings for Planning Commission findings on historic district homes. City Manager Morris confirms that this aligns with the direction of the City Council. Commissioner Lepper commits to looking for examples to follow from other cities. City Manager Morris asserts that the Commission should focus on the City Council priorities. After much discussion regarding priorities, the Commission agrees to move forward tackling these recommendations. Copy of City Council memo to Planning Commission here: https://evogov.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/meetings/17/staff_reports/1188.pdf

January 21, 2025: Commissioner Lepper states that there are updated SOI Sustainability Standards that came out in 2024 and seem to comply with the goals of the Commission - to have more flexible standards to work with that incorporate fire safety and energy efficient materials within historic districts. Commissioner Lepper feels that these could be utilized in lieu of drafting new and specific standards for the City. The Commission agrees to review these standards prior to the next meeting.

February 18, 2025: Planning Commission discussion regarding responding to City Council direction. Commissioner Lepper and Chair Kiehne submit documents relating to the direction of the City Council memo. Chair Kiehne focused on recommendation #4, findings and standards. Commissioner Lepper presents research she has done on other city's methods in California, highlighting ways that the Placerville website could replicate their format and improve public facing information. Commissioner Lepper identifies that Placerville-specific standards may not need to be developed based on the direction from the joint City Council-Planning Commission meeting that SOI standards, including the newly discovered sustainability standards, are sufficient. Commissioner Lepper suggests that the Planning Commission could begin to tackle and reformat documents currently on the website in upcoming meetings. Commissioner Frenn suggests we keep momentum on this and suggests that Commissioner Smith could pursue non-profit interest in funding signs and other suggestions that City Council does not deem suitable for funding at this time. Commissioner Frenn notes that while he would prefer a workshop, the City Council has not endorsed this as a viable option at this time. Commissioner Frenn notes that the Planning Commission appears to have more flexibility than has been undertaken before and the need to highlight properties that should be held to a higher standard. Discussion regarding material replacement and the need for clear articulation to the public. Commissioner Smith advocates for a public workshop and discusses examples of historic buildings in receiverships in City limits. Commissioner Lepper requests an outline be developed by Commissioner Smith for the proposed workshop. Commissioner Frenn agrees that a framework needs to be developed prior to having a workshop. Chair Kiehne agrees that an outline and examination of associated costs and staff time are necessary. Chair Kiehne notes that the SOI standards in place are sufficient for analysis of projects under the Placerville ordinances. Chair Kiehne suggests the focus should be on standardized findings for historic applications. Commissioner Smith states that sustainability considerations should be included in application review, suggesting experts come in and a list of materials be created. Chair Kiehne notes that that is not something that could be easily maintained by staff and applications can be reviewed as they come before the Planning Commission. Chair Kiehne reiterates the need for clarification on the purpose of a public workshop prior to scheduling, headed by Commissioner Smith. Commissioner Frenn states that there is plenty of work to

be done prior to a workshop while Commissioner Smith develops a plan for his proposed workshop. Commissioner Lepper confirms that she will continue to work on the public facing information and the need to examine inventory, particularly identifying “contributing” properties in the historic districts. Public comment received by (now City Councilmember) Ryan Carter stating that Grass Valley is a good example to follow and that the discovered SOI Sustainability Standards and Preservation Brief on Substitute Materials are a great medium for evaluation that he advocates for utilizing. Ruth Carter comments on utilization of “like for like” phrase in evaluation and that the standards are focused on the overall look rather than the specific material. Chair Kiehne agrees. Commissioner Smith to develop a workshop outline, Commissioner Lepper to meet with Jackie Neau to discuss website development, Planning Commissioners to review Chair Kiehne’s suggested standard findings.

March 18, 2025: minor update to new Commission members that historic review process work is ongoing. Commissioner Lepper had continued her work in reviewing the current City website. Intent to agendize this topic when progress has been made.

April 1, 2025: Commissioner Lepper presents a document listing disjointed information found on the current City website and her intent to work on bringing those into one “home” on the site. Chair Kiehne notes that an updated map of districts would be helpful for homeowners seeking information on whether they are in a historic district. Staff Hunter suggests a geographic information systems (GIS) specialist on staff may be able to produce this and that this effort is underway. Chair Kiehne reiterates request for review on her suggested standard findings to potentially be incorporated into historic district evaluations.

May 1, 2025: Commissioner Lepper presents slightly reformatted inventory lists that she has pulled from the website for new Commissioners to see what properties are currently officially listed on inventories by the City and make them more dynamic for analysis. City Manager Morris states that the GIS map of properties in historic districts is in progress at the City level. Chair Kiehne states she watched a webinar by the CA Preservation Foundation on historic preservation standards for historic homes.

June 17, 2025: Chair Kiehne reiterates her request that the Commission provide feedback on her suggested standard findings from earlier in the year. Commissioner Stratton states she is willing to review and put efforts toward this topic. Commissioner Lepper commits to reviewing prior to the next meeting. Chair Kiehne requests that this topic continues to be agendized and Staff Kendrick notes that it will be incorporated as allowed by staff time as her intent is to align these topics with ongoing administrative review. All agree that this work is important to continue to make progress in.

July 15, 2025: Chair Kiehne recaps past efforts around historic district work and changes in the industry in response to wildfire concerns. Chair Kiehne would like to provide an update to the City Council on this topic, highlighting that the Commission is actively working on their suggested priorities. Commissioner Lepper provides her feedback on Chair Kiehne’s suggested findings and suggests we next focus on identifying contributing properties. Commissioner Lepper states she will review the draft of the GIS map provided by the City and work on ideas to incorporate updates to the website in coordination with this map. However, due to this topic not being properly agendized, the discussion was halted and postponed until the next Planning Commission meeting.

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 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.

Attachment A: [City Council Resolution Number 7896- Established the Historic Advisory Committee](#)

Attachment B: [City Council Resolution Number 8295- Suspending of Historic Advisory Committee](#)

Standard Findings for Historic Review, suggested edits by Commissioner Lepper:

- The Planning Commission has determined that the SOI Standards have been applied in a reasonable manner, taking into account economic and technical feasibility. [Subject Application] replaces [Subject Item] with material that conveys physical compatibility with existing materials/context and preserves the distinctive visual features of the existing historic structure.
- The overall effect of the project, as proposed or amended, is consistent with the historic context of the property and surrounding area. The project, as approved, is a minimal change to the overall external property.
- Placerville is located in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The project, as proposed or amended, utilizes material(s) that preserve the physical and visual attributes of the existing structure but are superior with regards to sustainability and/or fire resistance.