



## Planning Commission Staff Report

October 14, 2015  
Item 6.a.

**SUBJECT:** P15-0384

**APPLICANT:** City of Pleasanton

**PROPERTY OWNER:** Various

**PURPOSE:** (1) Consider an amendment to the Pleasanton Municipal Code to expand design review authority to include the first floor of historic homes in residential zoning districts within the Downtown Specific Plan Area; and (2) review the Historic Resource Survey of the residential structures Downtown that were built before 1942.

**GENERAL PLAN/  
ZONING:** Various

**LOCATION:** Downtown Specific Plan Area

**EXHIBITS:**

- A. [Draft Amendment to the Pleasanton Municipal Code](#)
- B. [Draft Historic Resource Survey](#)
- C. [List of Structures Determined to be Historic Resources](#)
- D. City Council Approved Amendments to the [General Plan](#), [Downtown Specific Plan](#), [Downtown Design Guidelines](#), and [Pleasanton Municipal Code](#)
- E. [Downtown Specific Plan Boundary Map](#)
- F. [Public Comments](#)

### I. BACKGROUND

Downtown Pleasanton, considered the cultural and commercial heart of Pleasanton, features most of the City's oldest buildings. In 2011, after having difficulty interpreting some of the City's historic preservation policies while reviewing projects, the Planning Commission recommended that the City Council re-evaluate the Downtown historic preservation policies, guidelines, and processes as a Council Priority. The City Council agreed with the Commission's recommendation and in December 2011, the City Council appointed a seven-member ad hoc Historic Preservation Task Force comprising two Planning Commissioners and five at-large Pleasanton residents to review the historic preservation policies, guidelines, and processes for properties in Downtown. After 12 Task Force meetings, four public outreach meetings, and one public workshop, the Task Force developed and recommended amendments to the General

Plan, Downtown Specific Plan, Downtown Design Guidelines, and Pleasanton Municipal Code to modify existing historic preservation policies and design guidelines, implement story pole requirements, and address demolition by neglect.

On June 4, 2013, the Task Force updated the City Council on the results of their work and requested direction on specific items the Task Force was considering. One of those items was whether to undertake a professional comprehensive resource survey of the older structures Downtown to determine which structures are considered historic resources. The Council supported completing such a survey. Because the criteria to analyze whether a structure is historic first needed to be determined, the survey could not be started until after the Council took action on the amendments. Another item discussed at the hearing was whether the City's design review authority should be expanded to include the first floor exterior of structures on certain categories of homes—either all homes that are determined to be historic or all homes in a potential Historic District. At that time, the Council indicated that it was not interested in pursuing this item.

At its public hearing of January 21, 2014, the City Council approved amendments to the City's historic preservation policies and regulations (please see Exhibit D). Although the adopted amendments did not include any changes to the City's design review authority, the Task Force had recommended that the City Council continue to evaluate this item. The Council agreed to have future discussion of this subject, which occurred at the November 18, 2014 City Council hearing. At that hearing, the Council directed staff to initiate a Municipal Code amendment to expand design review authority to include the first floor exterior of historic homes in residential zoning districts within the Downtown Specific Plan Area. At that same hearing, the Council approved a professional services agreement with Architectural Resources Group, Inc. (ARG) for the preparation of a historic resource survey of the residential structures Downtown that were built before 1942 to determine which are considered historic resources.

ARG has completed the historic resource survey which is being presented to the Commission for its review and comment. Staff has also prepared the draft Municipal Code amendment to expand the City's design review authority for historic residential structures. Following review and recommendation by the Commission, the historic resource survey and Municipal Code amendment will be forwarded to the City Council for review and final decision.

## **II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION**

### **Municipal Code Amendment**

The City's design review authority is established in the Design Review Chapter (Chapter 18.20) of the Pleasanton Municipal Code. The Municipal Code currently requires Administrative Design Review approval by the Zoning Administrator (staff-level approval) for additions to all single-family homes in the City which exceed 10 feet in height—meaning that all changes below 10 feet in height are not subject to design review. Changes 10 feet or less in height (generally the first floor) are often problematic in historic structures because they can affect a building's architectural integrity. The location, spacing, and size of window and door openings, as well as the type of windows and doors, are often significant character-defining features of historic homes. The design of porches and exterior wall and foundation cladding can also be important. Since the City does not currently have design review authority for such changes to historic

homes, owners can currently remove or change significant character-defining features without triggering a City review and approval process. The proposed Municipal Code amendment would modify Chapter 18.20 to specify that Administrative Design Review approval is required for exterior modifications (any floor/height) to single-family homes in residential zoning districts within the Downtown Specific Plan Area that are determined to be historic resources. The Code amendment is limited to the Downtown Specific Plan Area as it contains most of Pleasanton's historic structures and the Council had previously determined that it did not want to create new historic preservation regulations beyond the Downtown Specific Plan Area. Commercial properties are not included in the Code amendment because the City currently has design review authority for exterior changes to commercially-zoned Downtown properties regardless of height/location on the building. Furthermore, based on overwhelming desire by the Downtown commercial property owners to exclude their properties from any new regulations, the Council-approved amendments did not include changes to the regulations concerning commercially-zoned properties.

When the Council initiated the Municipal Code amendment, it indicated that it would like the Commission to discuss and recommend which types of modifications the Commission felt should be subject to design review—for example, whether changing the exterior paint color would trigger design review approval. Staff has drafted two options for the Commission's consideration (the Commission may select one of these options as written or create its own):

- Option 1 would include all exterior modifications; and
- Option 2 would specify only certain exterior modifications that are subject to design review.

With Option 2, staff focused on exterior modifications that are addressed in the Downtown Specific Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines. For example, there is a Guideline which encourages the use of materials that are appropriate to the architectural style of the home (e.g., stucco wall material for Spanish or Mediterranean homes, horizontal wood siding for Victorian homes, etc.). Therefore, staff identified changes to the exterior wall material/cladding as modifications that would be subject to design review. Similarly, since there isn't a Specific Plan policy or Guideline which addresses the color of homes, changing the house color would not trigger design review under Option 2.

Option 1 (new text is underlined):

**18.20.010 Projects subject to design review.**

B. The zoning administrator shall review and make decisions concerning the following classes of projects:

*[No change to Sections 18.20.010.B.1 through 18.20.010.B.14]*

15. All exterior modifications, alterations, or additions to single-family houses in residential zoning districts within the Downtown Specific Plan Area that are considered historic resources as defined by the Downtown Specific Plan.

During some of the prior Task Force and Council meetings, several property owners expressed a desire to protect historic residences while not over-regulating homeowners wishing to improve their residences. Staff believes that Option 1 could be onerous to homeowners since any exterior modification would be subject to design review (e.g., changing a mailbox on the home), but this option does ensure the most control over the character and details for historic structures in the Downtown.

Option 2 (new text is underlined):

**18.20.010 Projects subject to design review.**

B. The zoning administrator shall review and make decisions concerning the following classes of projects:

*[No change to Sections 18.20.010.B.1 through 18.20.010.B.14]*

15. Additions and exterior modifications/alterations listed below to single-family houses in residential zoning districts within the Downtown Specific Plan Area that are considered historic resources as defined by the Downtown Specific Plan:

- a. Wall and foundation cladding including, but not limited to, material, finish, shape, orientation, and joinery.
- b. Porches and balconies including, but not limited to, banisters/railings, balusters, posts/supports, and material.
- c. Windows including, but not limited to, window shape, size, placement, operation, material, trim/surround, mullions/glazing pattern, and recess from the exterior wall.
- d. Roofs including, but not limited to, roof form, eaves, material, color, and pitch.
- e. Chimneys including, but not limited to, material, finish, location, size, and shape.
- f. Front doors.
- g. Architectural trim and details, including but not limited to, corbels, knee braces, brackets, cornice, dentils, etc.

Staff believes that limiting the scope of review to the items that are currently addressed in the Specific Plan and Guidelines (Option 2) is reasonable and appropriate and would be sufficient to protect the architectural integrity of historic buildings in the Downtown Specific Plan Area. In addition, Option 2 would allow homeowners to make minor modifications to their residences without City review (e.g., replace side and rear doors, light fixtures, address numerals, and mailboxes). Therefore, staff recommends that Option 2 be utilized.

Applicability

The Municipal Code amendment would apply only to single-family homes in residential zoning districts in the Downtown Specific Plan Area (see attached map, Exhibit E) that are considered "historic resources" per the January 2014 definition approved by Council:

If a residential building in a residential zoning district built before 1942 is determined using the "Pleasanton Downtown Historic Context Statement" to be eligible for listing in the California Register, then it is considered a historic resource by the City. The 1942 date shall be revisited every 10 years to determine if a change is warranted.

Following Council acceptance of the attached historic resource survey, the City will know which structures would be considered historic resources and subject to expanded design review authority. Applicants wishing to make exterior modifications to a historic resource will save between 1 to 1.5 months in their project schedule and approximately \$5,000 because they will not have to complete their own historic resource analysis. The remaining application process is the standard Administrative Design Review process with the Planning Division. The Administrative Design Review process entails staff mailing a notice to inform the adjacent neighbors of the application, which occurs concurrently with staff's review of the application. If no neighbor objection is received within seven days and following staff's determination that the application complies with the applicable zoning regulations and that the changes are consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan Policies and Downtown Design Guidelines, the application would be approved by the Zoning Administrator.

### **Historic Resource Survey**

Exhibit B is the historic resource survey of the residential structures in the Downtown Specific Plan Area that were built before 1942. A total of 201 residential structures were surveyed and a determination was made regarding whether they are historic resources based on the above definition adopted by the City Council.

Pages 2-5 of the survey explains in detail the criteria for determining whether a structure is historic. In general, if the structure meets one or more of the following California Register<sup>1</sup> criteria and retains its integrity (i.e., it has not been altered such that its historic materials or features or original form have been removed or destroyed) then it is considered a historic resource:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

Based on the historic resource definition adopted by Council, ARG determined that 88 structures in the survey area met the definition and would be considered historic resources (see Exhibit C for the addresses of these structures). Approximately 53 percent (106 structures) did not qualify as historic resources. The survey noted that many of these structures have been altered, resulting in the loss of original material and form, making them no longer eligible as historic resources. Eleven structures were determined to be constructed after 1941 and their eligibility as a historic resource was not assessed.

Staff notes that five structures were not included in the survey as they previously had historic evaluations completed as part of a development application. These structures are located at

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<sup>1</sup> The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is a listing of resources of architectural, historical, archaeological, and cultural significance within the State of California.

229 Kottinger Dr., 205 Neal St., 4349 Second St., 4466 Second St., and 4189 Stanley Blvd. The structures at 229 Kottinger Dr., 4349 Second St., and 4466 Second St. were determined to be historic resources while the structures at 205 Neal St. and 4189 Stanley Blvd. did not qualify.

The historic resource survey will have several benefits: it will save property owners/applicants time and money since they won't have to hire a consultant to prepare an individual property survey (which typically can cost about \$5,000 and take 30-45 days to complete); it will let owners/applicants know whether a structure is considered historic or not and allow them to plan their additions/modifications accordingly; and it will aid staff in its review of projects and protection of the historic character of Downtown.

### **III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

To provide the public with additional time to review and comment on the historic resource survey, a notice regarding the availability of the survey was sent on September 17, 2015, to the property owners and tenants within the Downtown Specific Plan Area (shown on Exhibit E), the former Historic Preservation Task Force members, and interested parties who contacted staff during the Historic Preservation Task Force meetings. Emilie Cruzan, former Historic Preservation Task Force member, sent an email asking the Commission to recommend the adoption of the historic resource survey. Linda Garbarino, former Historic Preservation Task Force member, sent an email indicating her support of a Municipal Code amendment to allow the City to regulate the first ten feet of historic homes within the Downtown. Ms. Garbarino also requested that the amendment apply to the surveyed homes that did not qualify as historic resources. Staff had also received an email from George Emmett, 417 St. Mary St., indicating his opposition to designating his home and any others as historic. The emails are attached as Exhibit F. Staff also received a phone call from Andrew Shaper, 386 Division St., indicating his concern with the desire of others to control what he can do on his property beyond what the current zoning allows. He felt that the prior modifications to the historic preservation policies were not fair or necessary. Staff also spoke to the owners of 541 and 621 St. Mary St. who had minor corrections to the information on their properties (which staff will forward to ARG for incorporation into the survey).

A separate public notice was later sent regarding the proposed Municipal Code amendment, survey, and related Planning Commission public hearing to the same list of people as noted above. The public notice was also published in *The Valley Times*. At the time this report was written, staff had received additional email correspondence from Linda Garbarino (see Exhibit F) requesting that the Municipal Code amendment also apply to the homes built before 1942 that did not qualify as a historic resource. Staff will forward to the Commission any additional public comments as they are received.

### **IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

This project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3), as it has been determined that the Municipal Code amendment will not cause a significant negative effect on the environment, and will in fact protect historic resources by making the City's historic resource regulations more robust.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Staff supports the draft Municipal Code amendment, as described in Option 2 above, and believes that it will help protect historic homes that are valued by the community and ensure that changes to historic homes are consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines.

The historic resource survey will benefit both property owners and applicants by saving them the time and expense of hiring a consultant to conduct an individual survey and by letting them know whether a structure is considered historic or not, allowing them to plan their additions/modifications accordingly. It will also aid staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council in their review of applications that involve changes to residential structures constructed before 1942.

## **VI. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. Find that the proposed amendment to the Municipal Code is statutorily exempt from CEQA;
2. Recommend the City Council accept the Historic Resource Survey; and,
3. Adopt a resolution recommending approval of Case P15-0384, amendment to the Pleasanton Municipal Code as shown in Exhibit A, and forward the application to the City Council for public hearing and review.

*For questions or comments about this project, please contact: Steve Otto, Senior Planner at 925-931-5608 or [sotto@cityofpleasantonca.gov](mailto:sotto@cityofpleasantonca.gov)*