



County of Santa Cruz

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July 6, 2022

AGENDA: July 11, 2022

Historic Resources Commission
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean St.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: Review the proposed amendments to General Plan policies regarding Historic Resources in the Sustainability Update and provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors

Dear Commissioners:

The purpose of today's meeting is to review amendments to Historic Resources policies provided in Chapter 5 of the General Plan, proposed as part of the Sustainability Update, and provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors regarding the proposed amendments. In accordance with Chapter 2.58 of the Santa Cruz County Code, the powers and duties of your Commission include reviewing the historic preservation element of the General Plan and recommending appropriate additions or revisions to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Staff will provide your Commission's recommendation to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors at public hearings later this fall.

Overview of the Sustainability Update

The Sustainability, Policy and Regulatory Update (Sustainability Update) provides a framework for development in the unincorporated County over the next 20 years, with new policies and regulations to support more sustainable communities. The Sustainability update builds upon prior community engagement efforts, including the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan accepted in 2014. The Update focused primarily on sustainable development within urban areas, with new policies supporting more efficient use of urban land, with increased housing and transportation options, and community investment, while retaining the existing policy and regulatory framework that

protects natural and cultural resources including historic resources, and that focuses new development within urban areas.

The Sustainability Update includes an update to the County's General Plan, which provides the blueprint for development in the County over the next 20 years. As the primary focus is on development and improved transportation choices within urban areas of the County, the Sustainability Update includes a comprehensive update to Chapter 2 of the General Plan, The Built Environment, and Chapter 3 of the General Plan, Access and Mobility. The project updates selected policies in other chapters of the General Plan. An additional focus of updating the General Plan is to clarify existing policy language, update or remove outdated policies, ensure consistency between the General Plan and County Code, and ensure consistency with state law.

Chapter 5 of the General Plan, renamed the Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Conservation Element, provides the goals, objectives and policies for the preservation, conservation and management of natural and cultural resources, including historic resources. Implementation strategies in the General Plan include specific actions to implement General Plan policies over the 20-year planning horizon. The update to Chapter 5 retains the existing policy framework protecting natural and cultural resources, while updating and strengthening selected policies, with a more extensive update to policies for agricultural land.

In addition to updating the General Plan, the Sustainability Update also amends and modernizes regulations in the Santa Cruz County Code where needed to implement new General Plan policies, focusing primarily on the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 13.10. Chapter 16.42, Historic Preservation, is not proposed to be amended as part of the Sustainability Update.

Update to Historic Preservation Policies in the Sustainability Update

Objective 8.2 in Chapter 5 of the updated General Plan, and implementing policies under this objective (Exhibit A), provide the policy framework historic resources in the County:

Objective 8.2. To protect and where possible restore buildings, sites and districts of historic significance to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the community.

The intent in updating historic resources policies in the General Plan is to strengthen the policy basis for protecting and preserving historic resources, and support future updates to Chapter 16.42 of County Code, Historic Preservation. Since the General Plan provides the community vision for development in the County for the next 20 years, the updated policies can provide the additional time needed for community outreach work and research to develop comprehensive and well-conceived ordinances that can be supported by the Community and decision-makers. There is also the opportunity to update General Plan policies where appropriate as well as the SCCC in the future after the approval and adoption of the Sustainability Update.

The updated policies in the Sustainability Update for protecting historic resources and preserving the cultural heritage of our community are intended to support the goals and concerns of your Commission over the past several years and address historic preservation priorities. Exhibit A provides the complete updated Historic Resource Objective, policies, and implementation strategies in Chapter 5 of the General Plan. The underlined text indicates new proposed language, and the strike-through text indicates language proposed to be deleted. The document also includes text boxes that explain additional proposed changes that are not discussed below, including changes that clarify policy language or remove outdated policy language. Below is a review of the key substantive changes to policies and strategies.

Support for the maintenance of designated historic buildings

Currently, the General Plan and SCCC do not include a requirement for maintaining historic buildings. The County has adopted the Uniform Code for the Abatement of Dangerous Buildings, which requires action for buildings deemed to be dangerous or a nuisance, but does not otherwise require maintenance of buildings, including historically designated buildings. County staff and your Commission have become concerned that this approach can negatively impact historic buildings, as buildings that are not properly maintained can continue to deteriorate, ultimately leading to the loss of our historic heritage that the General Plan is intended to protect.

New Policy ARC-8.2.7 recognizes that the lack of maintenance of historic resources can lead to loss of the resource, and provides flexible language that supports future code amendments that encourage or require the maintenance of historic properties:

Historic Resource Property Maintenance. Encourage the maintenance and upkeep of historic resources to avoid the need for major rehabilitation and to reduce the risks of demolition, loss through fire or neglect, or impacts from natural disasters.

New language is also added to the existing Implementation Strategy 8.2j to support the preservation and maintenance of historic resources, to consider revising zoning regulations to allow for “expanded and greater flexibility for allowed uses.” This would be implemented by a new ordinance previously discussed with your Commission that would allow for additional uses for a historic property beyond those otherwise allowed in the zone district, where such uses would support the maintenance or rehabilitation of a historic resource. The strategy also calls for evaluating new “incentives for retaining and maintaining historic resources.” Staff will work with your Commission to develop ordinance amendments that implement these policies and strategies regarding the maintenance of historic resources.

Review required for demolition of structures not previously surveyed

Current practice in the County Planning Department is to require review of structures that are 50 years old or older that have not been previously surveyed when a discretionary permit is submitted for a property. Staff also requires a historic evaluation

of the property when there is evidence that the property may qualify for listing as a historic resource. New Strategy ARC-8.2p calls for this practice to be continued:

ARC-8.2p Continue the review of proposed applications for demolition of any structure more than 50 years old that has not been previously surveyed for historic significance, and require a historic report prepared by a qualified historic consultant for structures that may have the potential to qualify as a historic resource as determined by County Planning staff.

Environmental Review

New policy ARC-8.2.8 states that “Environmental review shall be required for any project with the potential to significantly impact historic resources.” This clarifies and reinforces existing practice to conduct environmental review for any project that may impact historic resources, in order to ensure that projects conform with County code requirements and the Secretary of the Interior standards for historic properties.

Funding for historic surveys

Existing strategy 8.2a requires maintaining and updating the Historic Resources Inventory. New language is added to this strategy, to “seek funding for update the Santa Cruz County Historic Resources Inventory, prioritizing surveys in areas that have not been updated recently.” The updated language provides support for seeking funding necessary for survey updates. Adding this language to the General Plan indicates that survey updates are a priority for the County.

Improving access to public information on the website

To improve public access to information and support actions by property owners to maintain and improve historic properties, a new Strategy ARC 8.2b is added to the General Plan:

ARC-8.2b Update information on the Planning Department website regarding resources and incentives available to property owners to maintain and improve historic properties, including existing Zoning incentives, the California Historic Building Code, grants, and tax incentives.

County Historic Context Statement

The existing County Context Statement was prepared in 1994, and does not provide a complete historic context for the County. Your Commission has previously discussed updating this context statement. The existing strategy ARC-8.2g calls for preparing a Historic Resources Element to the General Plan. However, providing historic resource policies within the Agriculture, Natural Resource and Conservation Element is an effective approach for addressing historic preservation in our community. Therefore, ARC-8.2g has been updated to delete language calling for a separate Historic Resources element and instead provides support to consider updating the Context Statement:

ARC-8.2g Consider applying for grant funds and updating the County Historic Context Statement to provide a more complete context with which to evaluate the significance of historic properties and assist in identifying properties that may qualify for listing on the Historic Resources Inventory.

Broaden support for museums and other organizations supporting historic preservation

A new strategy provides a policy basis to consider support for other local organizations in addition to the MAH that are involved in historic preservation and public education regarding historic resources and the historic heritage of our community.

ARC-8.2o Support local museums and other local organizations involved in historic preservation to increase community awareness and appreciation of the value and importance of historic preservation.

Environmental Review

As was noted previously to your Commission, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Sustainability was prepared by Dudek in consultation with county staff, providing an analysis of the project's potentially significant effect on the environment. The EIR also considers the potential environmental impact of increased development under the Sustainability update. Mitigation measures are also provided, where these measures can lessen the potential impact to the environment. The EIR includes an analysis of potentially significant impacts to historic resources. Under CEQA, resources that meet state of California criteria for designation would be considered as historic resources, as well as resources that are designated as historic.

The EIR takes a very conservative approach, noting that as the EIR is a program-level analysis, it is not possible to determine if any individual project would result in a potentially significant impact to a historic resource. The "Project Impact Analysis" for historic resources provided in section 4.5.4.3 of the EIR (Exhibit B) notes that County code requirements provide standards for development projects which implement the Secretary of the Interior Standards, such that projects that conform with these standards would protect the historic significance of a resource and would not negatively impact the historic resource. However, the EIR notes that "preservation, reuse, maintenance, and/or avoidance of historical resources may not always be feasible, especially with potential redevelopment and intensification of uses in the USL, and recordation of a significant historical resource, alone, would not constitute adequate mitigation for a substantial adverse change to that resource. Therefore, because the potential for future development accommodated by the Sustainability Update to cause a substantial adverse change to an historical resource cannot be precluded, impacts to historical resources are conservatively considered *potentially significant*."

To reduce the potentially significant impact to historic resources, the EIR includes two mitigation measures, to be implemented by the County:

MM CUL-1: Historic Resources Assessment and Project-Level Mitigation.
Require preparation of an historic resources evaluation for any development

proposal containing a structure or structures 50 years old or older and that are not identified as historic resources in the County HRI. If the structure(s) may potentially meet the criteria for listing as an historic resource, and proposed development would have the potential to impact the historic significance of the structure(s), the development applicant shall provide an historic assessment of the structure(s) prepared by a qualified historic consultant. The historic assessment shall include a completed DPR 523a form and a letter prepared by the historic consultant stating whether the property has historic significance. If it is determined by the Community Development & Infrastructure Department based upon the historic assessment that a development would impact a structure that is eligible as an historic resource under CEQA definitions, the County shall consider measures that would enable the project to avoid direct or indirect impacts to the building or structure, including designs consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. If the building or structure can be preserved, but remodeling, renovation or other alterations are required, this work shall be conducted in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

MM CUL-2: Resource Documentation. If a significant historic building or structure is proposed for major alteration or renovation, or to be moved and/or demolished, the County shall ensure that a qualified architectural historian thoroughly documents the building and associated landscape and setting. Documentation shall include still and video photography and a written documentary record/history of the building to the standards of the Historic American Building Survey or Historic American Engineering Record, including accurate scaled mapping, architectural descriptions, and scaled architectural plans, if available. The record shall be prepared in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer and filed with the Office of Historic Preservation. The record shall be accompanied by a report containing site-specific history and appropriate contextual information. This information shall be gathered through site specific and comparative archival research, and oral history collection as appropriate.

Staff will develop ordinance amendments to implement the above mitigation measures, and will bring them to your Commission for review. The implementation of the above mitigation measures will strengthen the protection of buildings that qualify for listing as a historic resource but are not yet surveyed, as well as the process for documenting any resource that is approved for demolition, per the existing requirements in the SCCC and per the review required under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Sustainability Update focuses on updating the framework for development in urban areas to support sustainable communities, while maintaining the overall policy and regulatory framework preserving natural and cultural resources, including historic resources. While not a primary focus of the Sustainability Update, amendments to

historic resource policies and strategies in the General Plan reinforce the importance of historic preservation in the community. These policies and strategies provide the policy basis for updating regulations to support the maintenance of historic properties, obtain funding for new surveys, consider updating the Historic Context Statement, and improve public information regarding historic resources on the County website.

As was previously noted, staff will bring to your Commission for review ordinance amendments that allow for additional uses for a historically designated property beyond those allowed in the zone district, where such uses would support the maintenance or rehabilitation of a historically designated property. Staff will also bring an ordinance for your Commission that implements Mitigation Measure CUL-1 in the EIR, requiring a permit and evaluation for the demolition of a structure 50 years old or older that has not been previously surveyed, a historic evaluation for a property which may qualify for listing, and standards requiring that the remodel or renovation of a structure determined to qualify for listing comply with the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Staff will also prepare an ordinance to implement mitigation measure CUL-2, to add to the demolition requirements in the SCCC Chapter 16.42 to require appropriate documentation for any resource for which demolition is approved.

Staff will work with your Commission to identify and prioritize actions to implement new and updated policies and strategies that support historic preservation in our Community, and to prepare ordinance amendments where appropriate, ensuring the continued preservation of our historic heritage for future generations.

It is, therefore, **recommended** that your Commission review the proposed amendments to General Plan policies regarding Historic Resources in the Sustainability Update (Exhibit A), and recommend that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors approve the proposed amendments.

Sincerely,

Annie Murphy

Secretary to the Commission

Exhibits

- A. Strike-through copy of the proposed amendments in the Sustainability Update to Historic Preservation policies in the General Plan
- B. EIR Section 4.5.4.3, Project Impact Analysis