

Hand-delivered
5/13/26
Becky Steinbruner

CORRESPONDENCE FOR COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION May 13, 2026 Meeting re:
Rezoning Redman-Hirahara Property

From: Becky Steinbruner (ki6tkb@yahoo.com)

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Date: Thursday, May 7, 2026 at 05:23 PM PDT

Dear Santa Cruz County Planning Commission,
Please do not re-zone the Redman-Hirahara property to remove historic designation. Your Commission can always revisit the rezoning issue for this parcel next year, because the County is mandated by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to submit annual reports regarding rezoning and General Plan updates, per Government Code Sections 65400 and 65700. <https://ici.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/>

Unlike the other two parcels that you are also being asked to re-zone to remove historic designation, the historic structure designed by William H. Weeks and built for the Redman family in 1897 still exists, although in a state of disrepair due to owner neglect. The matter of it's de-listing from the County historic resources register by the County Board of Supervisors on August 5, 2025 was NOT a unanimous vote. The house and property remain on the National and State Historic Registries.

The property owner requested the County Historic Resources Commission de-list the house. The Commission offered to pay the \$600 fee for the County Building Official to visit the site and determine that the house is "not habitable". Ultimately, the property owner paid for the inspection report. There was never any interior inspection by a structural engineer to evaluate whether or not the framework of the house is sound. An historic architect whose certification had lapsed offered to evaluate the house but never went inside, instead basing his analysis on three videos scraped from the internet of nighttime intruders rummaging in the house while wearing headlamps.

The Board of Supervisors received no written recommendations from the Historic Resources Commission regarding de-listing the Redman-Hirahara House and Farmstead.

The National Parks Office requires a CEQA analysis

Despite there being significant known populations of bats inhabiting the house, staff deemed it CEQA exempt.

The 2024 PhD thesis of Dr. Jacob Stone carefully catalogued the importance of the buried cultural and historic artifacts found at the Redman-Hirahara property near the house by Cabrillo College archaeologic instructor Mr. Rob Edwards and his students. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7xb523s0>

If the property is re-zoned to erase all historic designation, there will be *nothing* to stop the current or future property owner from bulldozing the land without any regard for other buried artifacts likely to exist on the property adjacent to the house.

Currently, the property owner is in default for unpaid property taxes on the parcel (APN 052-271-04) since 2022. <https://ttc.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Taxbills/TaxBills>

The matter is and continues to be under litigation in Santa Cruz County Superior Court (Case 25CV02808). The matter is not yet set for trial. The Petitioner has made it known that an appeal is certain if the judgement to reconsider the County's actions to de-list the historic property is unfavorable.

De-listing a structure on the National Historic Registry is governed by federal regulation 36 CFR 60.15: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/36/60.15>

The County failed to make any of the findings required by this law when approving the owner's request to de-list the property.

De-listing an historic structure triggers a CEQA analysis because de-listing leads to demolition, salvage or relocation.

According to the California State Office of Historic Preservation

Definition of Project: *Delisting a property that leads to demolition or significant alteration is considered a "project" that could have a substantial adverse change on a historical resource.*
Mandatory Review: *CEQA requires public agencies to evaluate impacts on historical resources listed in or eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources.*
Significance: *If a structure is listed or eligible for listing (which often includes National Register sites), it is considered a historical resource, and its removal is a significant impact requiring analysis.*
Exception: *If it is known with certainty that the action will have no possibility of a significant impact, a "common sense exemption" might apply, but this is not standard for removing designated landmarks.*
Process: *A qualified historian is usually required to document the resource before any action, The significance of an historical resource is materially impaired when a project:*

(A) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources; or

(B) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or

(C) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for purposes of CEQA.

The appropriate mitigation depends upon the specific historical resource being affected. Mitigation must be feasible and fully enforceable. It may include avoiding, minimizing, reducing, or rectifying the impact. The question of whether mitigation is feasible takes into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological limitations. (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15364).

Therefore, with all due respect, I request that your Commission table re-zoning the historic Redman-Hirahara property until the litigation is finalized.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner