



Neighborhood considers 'historic district' designation

BY SIMON WONG

Members of the Historic Prospect Hill Neighborhood Association (Prospect Hill) met with Hayward Planning Manager Richard Patenaude for an overview of the city's Historic Preservation Program to consider designation of their neighborhood as an "historic district."

"The rationale for a Historic Preservation Program is that historic Hayward continues to look like Hayward and maintain our unique character rather than resemble every other community across the state or country," explained Patenaude.

Council approved an historical resources survey, the associated inventory of historically and architecturally significant buildings in the city, incentive programs and the goals and objectives for historic preservation on June 1, 2010.

The survey identifies the types of historic properties within the City of Hayward, neighborhoods or potential historic districts, areas devoid of historic resources, properties that do not warrant more attention and potentially significant individual buildings or areas that merit further evaluation.

Of the approximate 2,500 properties built before 1946, just over 800 have a medium-to-high level of integrity. About 1,000 have low integrity. In the Downtown area and centre of Hayward, pre-1959 construction was considered. A structure is said to have integrity if it retains enough of its original fabric/appearance, and character-defining, architectural features to convey its historical importance.

Upper B Street, Prospect and lower B Street (aka Street Car District) neighborhoods were quickly identified as historic districts, before other parts of the city which will be re-

and restored several historic properties, including the Linekin Building on Main Street, and are the catalyst and continuing advocates for the neighborhood's potential designation as an historic district. Their idea gained momentum when Council adopted amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance in 2010. The historic resources survey was commissioned while Greg Jones was Hayward City Manager; he succeeded Frank as president of the Historic Prospect Hill Neighborhood Association and both have engaged the city to determine the realities of being an historic district and how they might affect property owners," explained Prospect Hill resident and former Councilwoman Anna Laveria May.

The neighborhood association will establish a committee, with which Patenaude will work closely, for detailed consideration of the matter. If Prospect Hill decides to become an historic district, approximately 200 properties will be researched and documented in readiness for Planning Commission hearings.

Prospect Hill's provisional boundaries, as per the historic resources survey, are Mission Boulevard, San Lorenzo Creek, a section of Foothill Boulevard and A Street. A clearer idea of which properties might be within the city's first historic district will emerge as talks progress.

For more information, contact Richard Patenaude, Planning Manager, 777 B Street, Hayward, CA 94541-5007, call (510) 583-4213 or email richard.patenaude@hayward-ca.gov. Download a copy of the City of Hayward Historic Preservation Ordinance at <http://tinyurl.com/3pbykv3>.



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visited for closer inspection, because of their high concentration of sites of interest and the likelihood of change in a short period.

A site or structure's inclusion on the list does not mean automatic, official designation as an historic building. The program is voluntary; owners should apply for such a designation for their property, otherwise the building's status remains unchanged. Designation can be removed, if property owners subsequently change their mind.

Ownership of an historic property brings benefits and obligations. Designation as an historic district could prevent unwanted change. Potentially, fees to the city might be waived in exchange for designation. Many such properties do not meet modern zoning requirements so the opportunity exists to develop special zoning regulations to protect their character and that of the neighborhood.

A building permit for alterations to an older property typically requires upgrades to current standards. The California Historic Building Code, however, allows alternative improvement methods, if they do not impact health and safety; for instance, new decks have higher railings than those on old homes which, according to the state Historic Building Code, can retain the shorter height.

Under the Mills Act 1972, an historic property may qualify for up to 60 percent property tax relief, annually, if the owner enters into a contract with the city to renovate and maintain the property's historical and architectural character for at least 10 years. Each year, Mills Act contracts, including the associated benefits and obligations, are renewed automatically and transfer to all subsequent owners during the contract period.

Local governments participate in the Mills Act program because they recognize the economic benefits of conserving resources and reinvestment and the importance of historic preservation in revitalizing older areas, tourism, civic pride, sense of place, quality of life and continuity with the community's past.

Owners of historic properties can also qualify for federal tax credits. A 10 percent tax credit is available for properties built before 1937. A 20 percent tax credit can be applied to improvements that meet national preservation standards.

Additionally, studies indicate historic districts often have higher property values; such neighborhoods are considered desirable and property owners are committed to maintenance.

"If Prospect Hill does not become an 'historic district,' individuals can still seek 'historic' designation for their own property to access the benefits," clarified Patenaude.

The city can work with historic districts and property owners to devise mutually acceptable guidelines, with flexibility for change, to prevent loss of historic character and properties falling into a state of disrepair, such as the types of project the city would review. Minor projects and general maintenance are not subject to public hearings unless they materially alter the building's character. This also applies to historic commercial buildings. Most cities do not look at interior alterations.

The City of Hayward is also working on general design guidelines for infill development to ensure it is in keeping with surrounding structures and the character of the area.

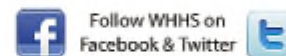


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