



Historic Resources Board

Staff Report (ID # 11977)

Report Type: Study Session **Meeting Date:** 2/25/2021

Summary Title: Review and Discussion of Annual Reports

Title: Review and Discussion of Annual Reports Including Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report and Comprehensive Plan Implementation Annual Report

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Historic Resources Board (HRB) receive a presentation about the draft Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report for the period October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020.

Staff will also provide an update regarding the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Annual Report, with particular attention to the City's historic preservation programs.

Background

2019-20 Annual CLG Report

Staff is preparing the CLG Annual Report for 2019-2020. The attached documents provide information on the deadline and the State's template for the annual report. The State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) collects information related to how the CLG program is working. The National Parks Service (NPS) collects "products" information such as the number of properties designated. OHP sends these CLG reports to the NPS on behalf of the CLGs.

Filing of the CLG Annual Report allows local governments to qualify for OHP grants. To qualify for a 2021-2022 OHP grant, CLGs must file documentation for the reporting period by the deadline. Last year's deadline to file was April 17, 2020, which staff met. Because staff met the filing deadline, the City qualified for and submitted a grant request to OHP in the fall of 2020. The OHP determined which jurisdictions qualified to distribute the remaining \$103,000 grant funding; staff has not received word as to whether a portion of the funding is available to Palo Alto.

OHP has not yet identified the 2021 deadline for filing the CLG annual report. Staff will provide the HRB with a completed report and cover letter at the HRB's March 25th meeting. The cover letter typically characterizes Palo Alto's program as primarily an incentive-based historic preservation and public outreach program, assisted by a qualified historic preservation consultant(s).

The cover letter typically highlights actions related to historic preservation during the reporting period. Last year, staff included a mention of:

- Awards received for the Eichler Neighborhood Design Guidelines.
- Implementation of Comprehensive Plan policies supporting historic preservation.

During the review period October 2019 through September 2020, the HRB held five public hearings. During the period, staff continued with Comprehensive Plan program L7.2 (which is cited later in this report). A total of five properties were found individually eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources, and 17 properties were found ineligible for the California Register of Historic Places. Since adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in December 2017, 15 properties have been found eligible for listing on the California Register and approximately 43 properties were determined ineligible for California Register listing.

Prior CLG Reports

Last year, on April 9, 2020 staff presented the annual CLG to the HRB. The annual report included links to the April 9th video¹ and staff report² and minutes to all nine of the HRB meetings held during the review period.

Prior CLG reports had discussed a draft OHP Grant proposal staff had written for the preparation of a Modern Era Context Statement. There will be an opportunity to submit the proposal in 2021.

Discussion

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Update

The Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) was scheduled to receive a report regarding progress on the Comprehensive Plan Implementation and Housing Element on February 24, 2021. The PTC staff report that covers the 2020 year will be viewable from this link: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/ptc/default.asp>.

Staff will provide a brief presentation to the HRB members regarding the status of Comprehensive Plan Policy implementation, focusing on historic preservation policies. Last year

¹ HRB video April 2020 <https://midpenmedia.org/historic-resources-board-46-492020/>

² HRB staff report April 2020: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/76070>

the PTC reviewed the annual report in February 2020³ and forwarded their recommendations to the City Council in March 2020. The report covering the 2020 reporting period indicates a status for five of seven policies under Goal L-7: ‘Conservation and preservation of Palo Alto’s historic buildings, sites, and districts.’

- L7.1.1 Update and maintain the City’s Historic Resource Inventory to include historic resources that are eligible for local, State, or federal listing. Historic resources may consist of a single building or structure or a district.
 - The report noted the Historic Resource Inventory has not been updated to list the eligible State and National eligible resources. This would require Council action. However, the GIST system shows eligible resources. When properties are found California Register Eligible and ineligible via ongoing individual evaluations, the staff systematically updates the City’s GIS system.

- L7.2 Program: “If a proposed project would substantially affect the exterior of a potential historic resource that has not been evaluated for inclusion into the City’s Historic Resources Inventory, City staff shall consider whether it is eligible for inclusion in State or federal registers prior to the issuance of a demolition or alterations permit. Minor exterior improvements that do not affect the architectural integrity of potentially historic buildings shall be exempt from consideration. Examples of minor improvements may include repair or replacement of features in kind, or other changes that do not alter character-defining features of the building.”
 - The report noted that Implementation of Policy 7.2 commenced in January 2018. A report to the HRB presented a summary of properties for which historic resource evaluations had been prepared since January 2018, to consider potentially historic buildings – particularly, homes constructed prior to 1948 identified as potentially eligible for California Register of Historic Resources, when owners are considering or have submitted proposals for major alterations or demolition. Staff also considers non-residential and other properties for eligibility, when Architectural Review or other discretionary applications are submitted.

- L7.8.1 Promote and expand available incentives for the retention and rehabilitation of buildings with historic merit in all zones and revise existing zoning and permit regulations to minimize constraints to adaptive reuse.
 - The report noted code changes implemented in 2019: (1) Incentives available previously only to Inventory Categories 1 and 2 homes were expanded to allow

³ PTC report 2020: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/75222>

use for Inventory Category 3 and 4 homes, and (2) subdivision incentive for historic preservation was adjusted to allow the historic property on the front lot of a propose subdivision and allow the subdivision even when only one existing home is on the property to be subdivided.

- L7.8.2 Create incentives to encourage salvage and reuse of discarded historic building materials.
 - The report noted the Public Works Department implemented a deconstruction ordinance for approved demolitions; it became effective in June 2020.
- L7.8.3 Seek additional innovative ways to apply current codes and ordinances to older buildings. Use the State Historical Building Code for designated historic buildings.
 - The report noted the study session with the HRB on the HBC in early 2019.

Two policies/programs under Goal 7 had the status ‘not yet commenced’:

- L7.1.2 Reassess the Historic Preservation Ordinance to ensure its effectiveness in the maintenance and preservation of historic resources, particularly in the University Avenue/Downtown area
- L7.12.1 Review parking exceptions for historic buildings in the Zoning Code to determine if there is an effective balance between historic preservation and meeting parking needs.

Other goals relevant to HRB’s interests are Goals L-2, L-4, and L-6:

- Goal L-2: An enhanced sense of “community” with development designed to foster public life, meet citywide needs and embrace the principles of sustainability.
- Goal L-4: Inviting pedestrian scale centers that offer a variety of retail and commercial services and provide focal points and community gathering places for the city’s residential neighborhoods and employment districts.
- Goal L-6: Well-designed buildings that create coherent development patterns and enhance city streets and public spaces.

Under these goals, four programs are of interest:

- L2.4.6 Explore changing the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) ordinances for both buildings of historic significance and for seismic retrofits so that transferred development rights may only be used for residential capacity. (NO STATUS 2020)
- L4.8.1 Prepare a Coordinated Area Plan for Downtown.

- The report noted: PDA Downtown established in January 2020.
- Note for 2021: A letter of interest was submitted to ABAG grant program in February 2021 to assist in starting this project.
- L4.10.2 Create regulations for the California Avenue area that encourage the retention or rehabilitation of smaller buildings to provide spaces for existing retail, particularly local, small businesses.
 - The report noted: Historic preservation program needs influx of grant funds and personnel before this program is embarked upon. City Council direction required to commence work.
- L6.1.1 Promote awards programs and other forms of public recognition for projects of architectural merit that contribute positively to the community.
 - The report noted: ARB awards occur every five years per ARB bylaws. The next ARB awards is 2020. Historic preservation awards are under consideration.

If HRB members have input for the CLG annual report, such as additional trainings attended during the reporting period, staff asks that the input be submitted by March 25, 2021. The trainings HRB members can report are those completed during the reporting period (October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020). The City assists HRB members to attend historic preservation training sessions, by covering the cost of registration.

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