



Historic Resources Board Staff Report

From: Planning and Development Services Director
Lead Department: Planning and Development Services

Meeting Date: May 9, 2024
Report #: 2404-2961

TITLE

Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of April 11, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Historic Resources Board (HRB) adopt the attached meeting minutes.

BACKGROUND

Attached are minutes for the following meeting:

- April 11, 2024

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: HRB 4.11 Minutes

AUTHOR/TITLE:

Amy French, Chief Planning Official



HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES, April 11, 2024

Council Chamber & Virtual Zoom
8:30 A.M.

Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz; Vice Chair Samantha Rohman; Board Members Christian Pease and Caroline Willis

Absent: Board Members Gogo Heinrich, Michael Makinen and Margaret Wimmer

Public Comment

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

City Official Reports

1. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Chief Planning Official Amy French reported the absence of Board Members Heinrich and Wimmer. The decision for monthly meetings, at the Chair's discretion, was affirmed as per the Palo Alto Municipal Code. No quarterly Historic Resources Board (HRB) meetings are currently scheduled, with a potential meeting in July. Ms. French is preparing a report for the City Council to propose modifications to the HRB composition and member count. While drafting the Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report, she discovered that the CLG requires a minimum of five members, including at least two professionals from a diverse range of professions. She is working on an ordinance change to align with this requirement, suggesting a reduction of two professionals who could be architects or from other professions. Ms. French presented the proposed changes to the draft language and advised that they would be posted online as a proposal to Council in May, followed by a recruitment process for an additional candidate.

Board Member Willis inquired about the omission of the April 25, 2024, meeting from the schedule.

Ms. French clarified that the Board has adopted a monthly meeting schedule, at the Chair's and Staff's convenience. With a Historic Planner joining the staff in May, the team anticipates increased capacity to support quarterly meetings. The frequency of meetings may be reassessed by the next Chair. The upcoming meeting is scheduled for May.

Board Member Willis requested Ms. French to email the proposed ordinance changes.

Ms. French agreed to the request.

Action Items

2. PUBLIC HEARING/QUASI-JUDICIAL. 411 Kipling Street [24PLN-00032]: Request for Historic Designation Reclassification, From a Local Historic Resource Category 4 to a Category 2. Environmental Assessment: No project under California Environmental Quality Act and CEQA Guidelines per Section 21065. Zone District: CD-C (P) - Downtown Commercial with Pedestrian Shopping Combining District. For More Information Contact Kristina Paulauskaite at Kristina.Paulauskaite@CityofPaloAlto.org.

Associate Planner Kristina Paulauskaite advised that she was assisting Ms. French with the Historic Program with the City of Palo Alto (City). She presented an overview of the request to reclassify 411 Kipling Street from Category 4 to Category 2. This building, located in the Commercial Downtown with the Pedestrian Shopping Combining District zone, offers a contrast to the larger commercial scale and higher density of University Avenue. The building's history was discussed. Constructed in 1902 as a one-and-a-half story home by George Wilbert Mosher, a prolific contractor and craftsman, the building remained largely unchanged until the late 1980s. Mr. Mosher, who constructed hundreds of buildings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, made 411 Kipling Street a prime example of the early Palo Alto "Square Cottage" building type, featuring stylistic elements of Colonial Revival and Queen Anne Free Classic. In 1985, the building was surveyed for the Historic Resources Inventory and added to the local register as a Category 4 building, a classification for good examples of architectural styles that relate to the character of a neighborhood grouping in scale, materials, proportion, or other factors. It is not within the National Register of Historic District boundaries. In November 2023, Page & Turnbull prepared a Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) for the City at the applicant's expense. The HRE found the subject property individually eligible for listing in the City's Historic Resources Inventory under Criterion 2, 5, and 6. In February 2024, Mark Sterns, on behalf of Hayes Group Architects, submitted a Major Historic Resources Board Review. The applicant requested a reclassification of the one-story commercial building from a "Contributing Building" Category 4 resource to a "Major Building" Category 2 resource on the Palo Alto Historic Inventory. The staff concurred with the findings of the Page & Turnbull evaluation and supported the upgrade from a Category 4 to a Category 2. The Historic Resources Board (HRB) was requested to recommend the reclassification from Category 4 to Category 2 to the City Council for approval, disapproval, or modification. In addition to the recommended action, the HRB may continue or deny the reclassification.

Ken Hayes, applicant, informed that 411 Kipling Street was originally built as a residential rental property. He highlighted that the immediate vicinity is an early 20th-century residential block, where every building, except the former Apple building, is locally listed as a Category 2, 3, or 4 historic structure. According to the Sanborn maps, 411 Kipling appears to be the first structure erected on that specific property. Mr. Hayes presented pictures of the building to showcase its stylistic elements and echoed Ms. Paulauskaite's comments about the building's classification process. He urged the Board to endorse the efforts to memorialize the building and support the Staff's recommendation.

John Shenk, applicant, expressed his gratitude to the Board and shared his anticipation for the processing of this matter. He considered Kipling as one of the most unique streets in Downtown. He voiced his enthusiasm to aid in preserving the building and enhancing its significance to the community. He observed that the public was largely unaware of these historic buildings that deserved more recognition.

Board Member Willis inquired if Mr. Shenk had thought about a Historic District on Kipling Street.

Mr. Shenk confirmed that he had, although he was unsure of its implications. He noted that almost the entire block, with each of the homes in their various states of categorization, could be considered. He suggested collaborating with Mr. Hayes to explore this possibility.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz invited further discussion from the Board.

Board Member Willis proposed that the Board should consider aligning the rest of the inventory with the City's current standards at some point.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz agreed that the request was reasonable and asked for a motion.

MOTION

Motion by Board Member Willis that the HRB recommend the City Council reclassify the building at 411 Kipling Street from a 'Contributing Building' Category 4 resource to a 'Major Building' Category 2 resource on the Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory. Seconded by Board Member Pease, the motion passed (4-0-0-3) by roll call vote.

3. PUBLIC HEARING/QUASI-JUDICIAL. 271 University Avenue [24PLN-00039]: Request for Historic Designation Reclassification, From a Local Historic Resource Category 3 to a Category 2. Environmental Assessment: No project under California Environmental Quality Act and CEQA Guidelines per Section 21065. Zone District: CD-C (GF)(P) -Downtown

Commercial with Ground Floor and Pedestrian Shopping Combining District. For More Information Contact Kristina Paulauskaite at Kristina.Paulauskaite@CityofPaloAlto.org.

Ms. Paulauskaite presented a proposal to the Staff for the reclassification of 271 University Avenue from Category 3 to Category 2. This property, located in the Downtown North neighborhood, is prominently positioned along the commercial corridor of University Avenue. The building, a fine example of the Art Deco style, was constructed in 1930. From its inception until the 1940s, only a handful of modifications were made. In 1946, a fabric awning was added, and in 1965, the original storefront system was replaced with a new aluminum roll-up and swing glass storefront door system. From then until 2015, various other changes were implemented, but no major alterations have been made since. The building is a notable work of Carl I. Warnecke, a respected Bay Area architect who left a significant legacy in the architectural field, particularly in the East Bay. He primarily worked in Oakland and Piedmont through his partnership with Chester H. Miller, an Oakland native who gained his architectural knowledge through vocational training rather than formal education. Ms. Paulauskaite emphasized the building's Art Deco style, its historical significance, and the timeline of its construction and modifications. The Staff agreed with her findings and supported the proposal to upgrade 271 University Avenue from a Category 3 to a Category 2 resource. The building is recognized as an exceptional work of Carl I Warneke and an outstanding representation of the Art Deco Zig-Zag Moderne style. The Historic Review Board (HRB) is being asked to recommend this reclassification from Category 4 to Category 2 to the City Council for their consideration and potential approval, disapproval, or modification. The HRB also has the option to continue or deny the reclassification process.

Ken Hayes, applicant, expressed his gratitude to the staff for their assistance in advancing the application. He voiced his support for the project at 437 Kipling, which is currently under consideration for recognition as a Category 2 resource. He drew attention to the building's Art Deco style, its historical significance, and the modifications it has undergone over time. The building is currently designated as a Category 3 resource, indicating local significance. The city engaged the services of Page & Turnbull, funded by the applicant, to evaluate the building's eligibility for elevation to Category 2. The Historic Resources Evaluation (HRE) determined that the property qualifies for listing in the City's Historic Resources Inventory under Criteria 2, 5, and 6. Mr. Hayes urged the Board to endorse this unique Palo Alto building and support the staff's recommendation to elevate it from Category 2 to Category 3

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz opened the floor for discussion among the Board Members.

Board Member Willis expressed her admiration for the building, describing it as one of her favorites in town. She recalled witnessing its construction in the 1980s and advocating for more extensive restoration of the first floor. Despite the fact that the interior of the building is not entirely original, Board Member Willis appreciated the preservation of much of the original detailing. She felt the building was on the verge of qualifying for Category 1, but believed the first-floor façade could be a potential obstacle.

Vice Chair Rohman reflected on the city's rich architectural diversity, expressing her appreciation for the care and effort invested in preserving these buildings and enhancing their status to ensure their continued preservation.

MOTION

Motion by Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz that the HRB recommends the elevation of 271 University Avenue to a Category 2 on the Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory for consideration by Council. Seconded by Vice Chair Rohman, the motion passed (4-0-0-3) by roll call vote.

Board Member Willis communicated to Mr. Hayes and Mr. Shenk that the Board is looking for an additional member. She said that any suggestions from them would be highly appreciated.

[The HRB adjourned for a brief intermission at 9:08 a.m. and reconvened at 9:14 a.m.]

4. Historic Resources Board Discussion of Work Plan for 2024-25 and Review of Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report

Ms. French presented the staff report, discussing both the Work Plan and the CLG Annual Report. On March 28, the HRB initiated discussions on the achievements from 2023-24 and potential objectives for the 2024-25 work plan. The proposed goals encompassed a limited modification to PAMC 16.49 and clarifications

about the HRB's role (Goal 1), enhancement of preservation outreach including improved communication methods for community accessibility (Goal 2), training on the State's historic building code (Goal 3), and additional preservation incentives, incorporating ideas from the 2023 reconnaissance survey/inventory update (Goal 4). Ms. French proposed extending the current work plan until the end of June, enabling the Board to complete the Mills Act Program in May and June. She noted that the topics were organized into three draft goals, with the State Historic Building Code training included in Goal 2. She explained that Goal 1 would necessitate Council direction and accommodation in the PDS department work plan. Given the City's CLG status, any changes to the historic ordinance would need State office of historic preservation approval before adoption. The implementation of draft work plan Goal 1 could commence in July, pending Council direction. The HRB is scheduled to present the nominations to the Council on April 22, 2024. The HRB will deliberate on language clarifications regarding its role on three potential topics: the nomination process, the impact of HRB recommendations on exterior modifications, and the downgrading or removal of a locally listed Category 1 or Category 2. Ms. French emphasized clarifications concerning Goal 1 nominations, HRB suggestions/recommendations, and category downgrading. Goal 2 aims to discover innovative methods to promote preservation, including the application of existing zoning code incentives and the State historic building code. The goal also involves enhancing communication methods to provide the community with accessible information, such as using videos to help property owners understand local and State preservation incentives and codes. Additionally, it includes enabling the HRB staff liaison(s), the City's historic preservation consultant, and the Chief Building Official to conduct ongoing training for the HRB, staff, and the community on the use of the State's historic building code. Goal 3 pertains to additional incentives, requiring Council direction and accommodation in the PDS department work plan. The goal seeks to extend the community engagement initiated during the 2023 reconnaissance survey/inventory update.

Board Member Willis expressed her preference to remove the topic of "removal or downgrading of a locally listed Category 1 or Category 2." She acknowledged the necessity of addressing this issue, but suggested prioritizing other tasks. Her recommendation was to focus on updating the current inventory.

Ms. French pointed out that task was already included under Goal 1 (c) as a related activity, which involves conducting a survey of all existing 1970s/1980s HRI properties listed in the inventory.

Board Member Willis inquired about the presence of any 1970s/1980s properties in the inventory.

Ms. French clarified that these properties were identified and listed during that period, not necessarily built. She further emphasized the importance of this activity and predicted the need for an HRB subcommittee and additional resources due to potential outreach requirements. She also mentioned the involvement of a qualified consultant for form preparation and anticipated that the work might extend beyond the current work plan timeframe. However, she expressed optimism about the upcoming addition of a new staff member to assist with these tasks.

Board Member Willis understood Ms. French's points but emphasized the need for the Board to lobby the Council more actively. She suggested exploring more efficient techniques for addressing these issues.

Ms. French proposed modifying Goal 1 (c) to align more closely with the related activity.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz suggested renaming Goal 1 (c) to "category changes."

Ms. French agreed that would cover potential changes such as the removal of demolished properties from the inventory.

Vice Chair Rohman concurred with the proposed classification of Goal 1 (c) as "category changes" and expressed her support for the discussed modifications.

Ms. French stated that Goal 1 (c) would involve conducting a survey of all existing properties to determine any necessary category changes.

Vice Chair Rohman sought clarification, asking if they would be reviewing all items currently on the inventory, including those confirmed in the meeting held on April 22, 2024.

Ms. French clarified that the focus would be on properties surveyed during the 1970s and 1980s, as the ones confirmed recently would not be included.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz added that would involve both upgrades and downgrades for consistency, as well as removals for any properties no longer in.

Board Member Willis suggested modifying the report to refer to "inventory properties" for clarity, as the term "existing 1970s/1980s properties" could be confusing.

Ms. French hoped that in the report it says Category 1 and Category 2 but acknowledged needing to make changes to the work plan to state, "historic resources inventory properties prior to April 22, 2024."

Vice Chair Rohman asked whether they should consider everything prior to when the current Board was seated.

Ms. French said she could state "prior to the 2023 survey." She asked for clarification regarding whether she should change Goal 1 (c) to Goal 1 (a).

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz felt that keeping it as Goal 1 (c) was appropriate.

Ms. French explained that Goal 1 in its entirety was to modify Chapter 16.49, and the current discussion did not pertain to this modification. She proposed having four goals and suggested extending the current term to the end of June. If the Mills Act is addressed now, it could replace the placeholder for Goal 4.

Board Member Pease inquired if this would reorder or eliminate the Mills Act.

Ms. French proposed that if the term of the work plan is extended to the end of June with the current Board, and the Mills Act is addressed now, it could be removed from the next year's work plan and replaced by the current discussion as Goal 4.

Board Member Willis asked Ms. French about the Council's potential commitment to the Mills Act and its impact on more than three properties.

Ms. French responded that she did not have a clear sense of it, but based on past experiences, the support has been minimal. The Board would complete their part, prepare a report, and see what could be done.

Board Member Pease asked if it was appropriate to discuss the scope of the Mills Act review at this point or if they would need to wait.

Ms. French welcomed the discussion and mentioned that there would be room on the agenda of the next meeting to tackle the Mills Act.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz invited discussion regarding Goal 2 from the Board.

Vice Chair Rohman thought this was an important goal and did not feel it should be Goal 2. It is stated that the Commission is to identify, evaluate, register, and preserve historic properties, and she thought that should be prioritized first. She felt incentives were more important than communication/promotion.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz said she would be supportive of that as well.

Ms. French sought clarification on whether the goal of communication/promotion was being changed to incentives.

Board Member Willis clarified that the discussion was about reordering the goals.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz believed the discussion was about reordering and prioritizing the current Goal 3 over the current Goal 2.

Board Member Pease said he agreed with reordering but wanted to emphasize the need to distinguish between general public outreach and addressing specific complaints about confusion and misunderstanding. He suggested that this change in order could help drive the other goals.

Vice Chair Rohman suggested rewording Goal 2 to make it clear that the goal is education.

Ms. French asked if the title of Goal 2 should be changed to "Education."

Board Member Pease suggested renaming it to "User Support," emphasizing the need to provide easy and quick learning resources for those trying to understand the process.

Board Member Willis proposed renaming the goal to "Communication/Education." She shared her struggle with creating a chart for incentives and expressed the need to make the code easier to understand.

Ms. French felt the challenge faced was that people like Mr. Hayes and others who do this kind of work knows the codes in and out, but homeowners who are new to the process are unfamiliar with the codes.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz acknowledged the complexity of the code and the limitations it places on simplifying the presentation of various incentives, options, and classifications.

Ms. French pointed out the complexity of the review process and the difficulty of explaining it, especially for projects subject to CEQA. She emphasized the importance of Board discussions in this context.

Vice Chair Rohman suggested replacing the word "promote" in Goal 2 with "education" to reflect the goal of creating user-friendly, educational resources.

Ms. French noted down "new user-friendly resources" and asked if this would become Goal 1.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz clarified that it would become Goal 3. She recapped the goals as follows: Goal 1 is to modify the ordinance, Goal 2 is to implement preservation incentives, Goal 3 is to focus on education, and Goal 4 pertains to properties surveyed in the 1970s and 1980s.

Board Member Willis sought clarification on whether Goal 2 would remain as it is.

Ms. French pointed out that it was moved to Goal 3. She reiterated the goals: Goal 1 involves Chapter 16.49 modifications, Goal 2 focuses on additional preservation incentives, Goal 3 is about education and creating user-friendly resources, and Goal 4 is to conduct a survey of all existing inventory properties before the action on April 22, 2024, excluding those in the 2023 inventory update.

Vice Chair Rohman suggested upgrading Goal 4, which involves re-examining the 70s/80s inventory, to one of the top three goals.

Board Member Willis proposed moving incentives to Goal 4, allowing the Board to apply learnings from Goals 2 and 3.

Board Member Pease expressed openness to reordering but emphasized that discussing incentives was the quickest way to address the Mills Act. He suggested presenting a comparison of incentives between commercial and residential properties and any Board suggestions for Council, rather than rewriting the Mills Act drafts.

Ms. French advised that the adopted workplan would be discussed on April 22, 2024. She planned to repackage and send out information stating that the Mills Act and other incentives had been discussed. She explained that incentives to the zoning code would require Planning Commission review and would not go to Council in Q1 of the fiscal year. She felt that having incentives as Goal 4 made sense timeline-wise, and a subcommittee could continue discussing incentives.

Board Member Pease expressed confidence in Ms. French's judgement. He questioned the impact of transferable development rights on three downtown properties, all represented by the same professional. He voiced concern about the lopsided situation in residential areas and the risk to more buildings in town than anything downtown or commercial. He expressed worry about houses being replaced by cookie-cutter mansions and advocated for opportunities for property owners to consider preserving them fairly.

Ms. French clarified that assigning a number to a goal does not prevent work from commencing. Once designated as Goal 4, it is on the Board's radar to seek permission to allocate resources. Meanwhile, a subcommittee could collaborate with staff to discuss previously heard matters and work on this table.

Board Member Pease expressed his understanding of the sensitivity and including it in the work plans. However, he emphasized the importance of the Board establishing a credible framework, without which he saw no need for staff work.

Ms. French proposed taking a vote.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz responded that she would prefer not to vote on the order if the Board could agree that all items are important and will be addressed.

Ms. French suggested removing the numbers entirely, listing the items in order of appearance with bullet points

Board Member Willis felt that numbers would be useful for reference purposes.

Ms. French highlighted that the work plan specifies the quarter to initiate each goal. She explained that if it is a Category 4, she could still refer to it along the lines of "begin quarter 1 with subcommittee meeting with staff..." and leading up to more extensive work.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz agreed with this approach

Ms. French initiated a discussion on the CLG Report, covering October 2022 through September 2023. During this period, there were thirteen HRB meetings, with eight HRB members serving due to a member's departure and a replacement joining. HRB members and staff attended various trainings, which were individually reported. She mentioned that she would attach a list of properties previously deemed 'potentially eligible' that were professionally evaluated for eligibility for the California Register during the reporting period. The report, found on page 39 of the packet, includes these details. She also mentioned that the Office of Historic Preservation would provide feedback on any draft changes to the historic ordinance.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz noted that all of her trainings were through the California Association of Museums Annual Conference. The Palo Alto Art Center was a moderator for one of the panel discussions, but it was all through the Annual Conference.

Ms. French acknowledged this and agreed to make the necessary adjustment.

Vice Chair Rohman mentioned her participation in the Secretary of Interior Standards Bootcamp organized by the California Preservation Foundation.

Ms. French replied requested the details and agreed to make the appropriate adjustments.

Vice Chair Rohman agreed to provide the information via email and inquired about including her degree courses.

Ms. French welcomed this addition.

Board Member Willis suggested an edit on page 142 of the membership section to include professional titles, such as "H. Caroline Willis, Architect" and the same for Board Member Heinrich.

Ms. French agreed to the adjustment and confirmed that she would initiate contact with Board Member Heinrich.

Board Member Questions, Comments, Announcements or Future Meetings and Agendas

Ms. French informed the Board of an upcoming meeting scheduled for April 22, 2024, and assured them that she would forward the details once they were published.

Board Member Willis shared that the Palo Alto Stanford Heritage (PAST) will resume tours starting in May. Some of the scheduled tours include Stanford's Palo Alto on May 11th, Upper College Terrace on May 18th, University Avenue on May 25th, and Greenmeadow on June 1st.

Ms. French mentioned that the PAST website can be accessed via the City website.

Adjournment

MOTION

Motion by Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz to adjourn. Seconded by Board Member Pease, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

Item 5

Attachment A - HRB 4.11

Minutes