

## Jones, Jessica

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**From:** kevin@parkermtg.biz  
**Sent:** Monday, January 20, 2025 12:45 PM  
**To:** Jones, Jessica  
**Cc:** Nick Abbott  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Cultural Heritage/Design Review Board Consolidation

Jessica,

I hope you are well.

My name is Kevin Kline, I am a resident of Santa Rosa and owner of a few properties located within the City's Preservation Districts. I am considering improvements at each of the properties I own.

I have noticed the City Council and Staff are considering consolidating the Cultural Heritage and Design Review Board's. I plan to attend the the February 4 Public Meeting on the topic. I am in full support of the proposed changes.

Questions:

- 1.) When will the Council formally vote to decide wether approve or deny the proposed changes? (On Feb 4 or later?)
- 2.) If approved, when would the proposed changes become affective?

<https://www.srcity.org/4117/Landmark-Alteration-Process-Improvements>

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**From:** [Denise Hill](#)  
**To:** [CityCouncilListPublic](#)  
**Cc:** [jjones@srcity.com](mailto:jjones@srcity.com); [Murray, Susie](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 16.1 PUBLIC HEARING - LANDMARK ALTERATION PROCESS and CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD AND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MERGE  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 3:14:58 PM

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Mayor and City Council:

As a long-time supporter of our City's historic built element, I can accept the merge of the Design Review (DRB) and Cultural Heritage (CHB) boards proposed in item 16.1 on Tuesday's agenda. However, the current proposal of a merged CHB/DRB will result in just two members dedicated to projects typically reviewed by the entire Cultural Heritage Board in the past. When presented to the DRB board last fall, those board members were concerned about this and stated they did not feel qualified to vote on Landmark Alteration projects. For this reason, it is imperative that the following be provided to ensure there is still adequate and knowledgeable overview for projects proposed by historic district building owners if/when the two boards are merged.

1) **Certified Local Government (CLG) Program designation.** This designation provides City staff and board members with limited knowledge in historic preservation the opportunity to submit questions to CLG members from other communities and the State Historic Office of Preservation (SHPO). In addition, SHPO staff also uses a listserv to forward information about training opportunities, publications, grants, and a variety of technical assistance. Lastly, Federal funds available for future surveys of historic areas are available to CLG members.

(The Council will need to direct the City's Planning Division staff to pursue CLG designation which they will do by analyzing not only the staff time involved in obtaining the CLG designation, but also the staff time involved in maintaining the designation, and any other potential cost implications of related work and return with this information along with a budget amount.)

2) **Annual preservation training** will be necessary for both Planning Division staff and any new CHB/DRB board members. Online trainings are offered by several organizations such as the California Preservation Foundation at nominal fees.

**There is lots of information online specific to the proposed merge and changes to the LMA process:**

The City has posted information on their website: <https://www.srcity.org/4117/Landmark-Alteration-Process-Improvements>

I would recommend also viewing the presentation by Brian Meuser's (former Chair of the CHB) to the Historical Society of Santa Rosa's members and the DRB and Planning Commission meetings where staff proposed the changes mentioned above.

HSSR Presentation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiKEviHbz18&t=1s>

Planning Commission 12/12/24 Meeting

[https://santa-rosa.granicus.com/player/clip/3355?view\\_id=2&redirect=true](https://santa-rosa.granicus.com/player/clip/3355?view_id=2&redirect=true)

Design Review Board 11/7/24 Meeting

[https://santa-rosa.granicus.com/player/clip/3359?view\\_id=2&redirect=true](https://santa-rosa.granicus.com/player/clip/3359?view_id=2&redirect=true)

**Landmark Alteration Permit Fee Increase:**

There is a good chance also that the Landmark Alteration Fees will be on the Council's sometime in February since only the Council can approve or alter such fees (the DRB and the Planning Commission are not allowed to vote on them). Most of the Cultural Heritage board (CHB) members including the chair Brian Meuser resigned in protest when the fee increased were announced last July. The consultant hired to revamp all City fees advised a Minor Landmark Alteration (LMA) Permit be increased from several hundred dollars to over \$8,000. The new LMA procedures for applicants will also require a report by a certified historian that could cost an additional several thousand dollars. While having a historian report on any significant alterations is a good safety net, there is valid concern that these fees are not feasible for the average homeowner in most of the City's historic districts. I join many others in my concern that the increase in permit fees for residents who live in historic homes and/or districts will result in homeowners by-passing applying for permits and the critical review process. In addition, the recent exorbitant increase could be considered discriminatory since it only applies to a specific group of city residents based on their location within the city. I would strongly urge the Council to have the city roll back the fees to what they were prior to July 1, 2024 or eliminate them entirely. The majority of those living in our designated historic districts are young families and seniors – two demographics that do not have significant cash reserves. Maintaining and upgrading a home that is 100+ years old is already more costly for the owner of such a home. Home improvement costs are at an all-time high and insurance companies have started dropping fire insurance coverage for these residents with older homes requiring them to purchase expensive fire insurance from the State. Imposing any additional fees on these home owners becomes a deterrent to maintaining our finite historic home inventory and negatively affects the value of properties along with Santa Rosa's cultural and built history. I would also like to suggest that the city remove the term "subsidizing" when covering the cost of the LMA permit process for applicants and replace it with "investing". There are many advantages to "investing" in these neighborhoods not the least of which by doing so supports first-time home buyers, senior housing, and the attraction to visitors who enjoy the unique history of a place when traveling typically resulting in a longer stay.

Thanks for your time and consideration of this critical item,

Best,

*Denise Hill*



*Preservationists know that one of the foundations of a vibrant community is an active appreciation of the past.*

*We want to live in communities that are identifiable and distinct and that have a strong sense of the past.*

*Preserving our historic structures is not only economically sound, but helps create a sense of community and identity for generations to come.*