

## Jones, Jessica

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**From:** Murray, Susie  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 10:42 AM  
**To:** Jones, Jessica  
**Cc:** Brian Meuser  
**Subject:** FW: [EXTERNAL] CHB and DRB Consolidation

Jess,

I'm not sure if this went through the Planning Commission email, and I thought you might like to review Brian's comments too.

Brian,

Thank you for all the work you've put into this. Santa Rosa's lucky to have you.

Sus

**Susie Murray | Supervising Planner | Staff Liaison to the Cultural Heritage Board**

Planning and Economic Development | 100 Santa Rosa Avenue, Room 3 | Santa Rosa, CA 95404

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**From:** BRIAN MEUSER <bmeuser@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 10, 2024 7:42 AM  
**To:** Murray, Susie <SMurray@srcity.org>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] CHB and DRB Consolidation

Hi Suzie

Here's the letter I sent to each member of the Planning Commission.

Dear Chair Weeks and members of the Planning Commission

Thank you for considering my comments related to the Landmark Alteration process improvements and Cultural Heritage Board and Design Review Board Consolidation. I'm going to address three main components as outlined below.

### **Landmark Alteration Process Improvements**

In general, I am very supportive of the proposed streamlining changes. However, I do have some concerns for your consideration.

When the Cultural Heritage Board was created in 1988, its make-up included a professional Licensed Architect, a Licensed General Contractor, a Licensed Engineer, and a Practicing Archaeologist or an

Architectural Historian or Historian. The Planning Department relied on the professionalism and insights of this board for improved decision making related to Landmark Alterations.

Currently, both the Cultural Heritage Board and Design Review Board do not include the professional associations originally envisioned. This is due in part to the City's change to district elections for council seats and the difficulty in finding qualified, licensed individuals who are willing to volunteer to serve on these boards.

The proposed zoning code changes would move many of the decisions previously made by the Cultural Heritage Board to either the "Director" or "Zoning Administrator." Many of the decisions made regarding Landmark Alterations are not black and white and live in areas of grey. Let's take a real-life example: A single family home of 1,000 square feet in the Burbank Gardens Preservation District needs its 90-year-old shingles replaced, and the home's current shingle design is no longer available. To have the original shingles manufactured will cost \$10 a shingle and total around \$25,000 for the entire house. Alternative, more affordable shingles are available for about one-third the cost. If the property owner proceeds with the alternative shingles, will this be a Director Level Permit or, because of the change of materials, a Minor Landmark Alteration Permit?

My concern is how a determination of whether a decision is Director level or a Minor Landmark Alteration and how consistency in these types of decisions be achieved.

With the change in make-up of the boards to more at-large members and with the empowering of the Director and Zoning Administrator to make decisions, there should be a commitment to ensure that staff members have the knowledge and training to make appropriate and consistent decisions. Please consider recommending to the City Council that resources be provided to ensure that staff making Director and Zoning Administrator decisions have the training needed to ensure that preservation goals outlined in the general plan and zoning code are achieved.

### **Cultural Heritage Board and Design Review Board Consolidation**

In general, I am supportive of the new, consolidated board. The new board will review Major Landmark Alteration Permits that involve additions to single family structures 500 square-feet or greater and additions to non-residential or multi-family residential structures of 5,000 square-feet or greater or small projects that involve significant changes to the structure.

In the past, the Design Review Board and the Cultural Heritage Board have often had differing views on commercial LMA projects within historic districts. This is understandable as the Statement of Purpose of the Design Review Board and the Cultural Heritage Board have different goals. The Design Review Board considers the location, design, site plan configuration and overall effect of the proposed projects upon the surrounding properties. The Cultural Heritage Board considers the historic preservation of the city's historic landmarks as well as identifying historic landmarks and promoting historic preservation. Additionally, because there are areas in the historic districts that have a Downtown Station Area Plan overlay, the Design Review Board may see these areas as opportunities for new development where the Cultural Heritage Board may feel these areas need to be protected from development. Height of the structure has been the biggest issue in the past.

My concern is that the professional make-up of this board needs to reflect the Statement of Purpose of both the DRB and the CHB and ensure the goals of both boards are reflected. It is important the

professional qualifications of the board members reflect this in the consolidated board’s design. Along with the proposed zoning changes, please consider recommending that the City Council ensure their appointees meet these necessary qualifications. In addition, please consider recommending the City Council appropriate the necessary funds to allow for training of the members of the new Design Review/Cultural Heritage Board.

**Landmark Alteration Fees**

Fees are not your purview but I feel they need to be mentioned given the relevance to meeting preservation goals. You’ll recall that fees for alterations in preservation districts increased significantly on July 1, 2024.

<b>Type of Fee</b>	<b>Prior to July 1, 2024</b>	<b>After July 1, 2024</b>
<b>Concept Review</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$2,088</b>
<b>Neighborhood Meeting</b>	<b>\$1,253</b>	<b>\$2,088</b>
<b>Minor Landmark Alteration Permit</b>	<b>\$409</b>	<b>\$8,830</b>
<b>Major Landmark Alteration Permit</b>	<b>\$1041</b>	<b>\$17,762</b>
<b>CHB Meeting</b>	<b>\$533</b>	<b>\$1,219</b>

If these fee changes are not addressed, the resulting negative effects will make the proposed zoning code changes moot as owners of historic properties may no longer get permits, do work without a permit, move out of the historic district, not move into a historic district or seek action to remove the historic designation from their neighborhood.

Please consider recommending the City Council reduce or eliminate fees for alterations of historic buildings to encourage property owners to get permits and to ensure changes to historic properties are properly reviewed.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Brian Meuser  
Former Chairman of the Cultural Heritage Board (2019-June 2024)

**From:** [Denise Hill](#)  
**To:** [PLANCOM - Planning Commission](#)  
**Cc:** [Jones, Jessica](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 11.2 PUBLIC HEARING - LANDMARK ALTERATION PROCESS  
**Date:** Friday, December 6, 2024 9:44:48 AM

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Good Morning Planning Commissioners,

In regards to item 11.2 on your December 12 agenda, we would encourage each of you to view the attached YouTube video produced by the Historical Society of Santa Rosa. It provides an up-to-date overview of the history of the City's efforts in historic preservation along with the history of the Cultural Heritage Board. We believe it will provide important context before voting on any changes to the Landmark Alteration process.

[A Brief History of Historical Resource Preservation in the City of Santa Rosa](#)

Thank you for your time doing this,

*Denise Hill*, Board Member

<https://historicalsocietysantarosa.org/>



**From:** [oldbldgs@sonic.net](mailto:oldbldgs@sonic.net)  
**To:** [PLANCOM - Planning Commission](#)  
**Cc:** [Denise Hill](#); ["Brian Meuser"](#); ["Cappie Garrett"](#); [diana@preservationplans.com](mailto:diana@preservationplans.com); [bryanmuch@gmail.com](mailto:bryanmuch@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments On Planning Commission Agenda Item 11.2  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 1:05:34 PM

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Mark DeBacker, architect.

[REDACTED] (proposed Benton's Addition Historic District)

Appointed to CHB (Vice Chair) 2009-2021

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the potential changes to the Landmark Alteration Review process and reconfiguration of the Boards for that review.

Regarding Agenda Item 11.2 PUBLIC HEARING - LANDMARK ALTERATION PROCESS  
IMPROVEMENTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD AND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
CONSOLIDATION

In my time on the Cultural Heritage Board, we always sought to find a path forward for the applicant that would have the least financial impact and avoid the need to delay the project with additional hearings or requirements. I have the following comments regarding the proposed changes:

1. I am deeply concerned about the qualifications (with no offense intended) of the Director of Planning and Economic Development, the Zoning Director and the composition of the Design Review Board/future DRPB. The significance of a property goes beyond it's appearance and specialized knowledge of Native American history, the Spanish/Mexican era, the area's historical figures/families and architectural styles is needed in order to inform decisions about a site's significance and the appropriateness of proposed alterations. There was a time when City Staff and CHB had the qualified staff/appointees to make these decisions, but sadly, that is not the case currently.
2. I fully support Denise Hill's comments on the Landmark Alteration Guidelines – Demolition, and Chapter 20-58, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION.
3. Brian Meuser is also correct that the fee issue MUST be resolved if the City plans to maintain its commitment to our older neighborhoods and key properties.
4. Brian Meuser is likewise correct regarding the difficulties in getting qualified Board Members due to District elections. Qualified Boards are key to obtaining State and Federal grants and Certified Local Government (CLG) certification, not to mention good day to day decisions on this City's historic fabric.
5. Mid-Century Modern (MCM) architecture is trending in popularity. Santa Rosa is blessed with remarkably intact neighborhoods and structures, (including City Hall). In the early sixties, this town was thriving with large corporations choosing to locate here. This was in part because of the climate, but also the pared down, modern

architecture that was creating new neighborhoods and community structures (the Flamingo, Los Robles Lodge, The Astro Hotel, El Rancho Tropicana and the town plaza, to name a few). These neighborhoods and the remaining resources have recently become eligible for a National Register or Historic District listing. The new DRPB will not have the ability that the CHB did to add new Districts or Resources to the City lists.

6. A Certified Local Government (CLG) certification would open up annual grants for preservation and related projects as well as other State support. One of the often overlooked aspects is that cities with CLG certification get to expedite construction projects on an ongoing basis and particularly following a natural disaster. Reviews that are otherwise required to go the State for approval (adding three months to three years to the process) can be approved locally with a CLG certification. To get this certification, qualified professionals MUST be seated on the appropriate City review boards.
7. At one time, the City had staff who were highly trained in preservation (Heather Hines comes to mind). This was extremely beneficial to applicants. When staff was cut, this fell to the Board themselves, but expertise continued to slip away over time. If the City finds itself unable to hire staff with the needed expertise, I strongly suggest that they lean on reports from qualified historians/preservation architects in the community to provide summary reports on which the DRPB can make educated decisions.
8. The current Design Review Board expressed their discomfort and lack of qualifications for evaluating and recommending resolution of issues on the City's historical resources at their last meeting. Should the City proceed with merging the Boards, I strongly suggest that City budget be annually allocated for a member of City Staff and a Board Member to receive a full-day or more of training from the California Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO) or the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) on the proper use of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and/or Section 106 Historical Review. Budget should be adequate for at least one staff member assigned to this Board and one Board Member annually and this training shall be one of the duties of the job/office.
9. As originally implemented, the CHB had a budget (\$80,000 annually, as I recall) to promote tourism and fund surveys needed to evaluate potential Historic Districts or individual structures worthy of Local Listing/State Listing. An annual budget is needed in order to evaluate new cultural resources as they become fifty years or older, which now encompasses significant Mid-Century Modern structures in our City.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues in your meeting today.

**Mark A. DeBacker**, architect. ICC, APTi, CSI

Historical Preservation Architect  
[OldBldgs@sonic.net](mailto:OldBldgs@sonic.net) [REDACTED]

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## Jones, Jessica

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**From:** Sher Ennis <sennis@aim.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 8, 2024 9:31 PM  
**To:** Murray, Susie; Jones, Jessica  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Proposed Code changes related to Design Review and Preservation Board

Hello,

Please excuse the lateness of this communication intended for inclusion in the 12/12/2024 Planning Commission meeting. I hope these questions/comments/suggestions are received in the spirit of helpfulness I intend.

### § 20-44.020.A

Design Review required. Design Review is required for all telecommunication facilities, except those listed by this Chapter as exempt. The review authority conducting Design Review for minor facilities is the Zoning Administrator and the review authority ~~conducting~~ **conducting** Design Review for major facilities is the Design Review and Preservation Board.

### § 20-50.070.A.1 and 20-50.070.A.2

*I request clarification regarding indemnification in this section. Does the term "agents" include board members? I've repeatedly asked if the City will defend board members who are doing their official duties in the event of a lawsuit from a member of the public. I've not been able to get a definitive answer, which has stopped me from applying to a Board in the past. If board members are not considered "agents", I suggest adding "board members" to this section to incentivize participation.*

### § 20-52.030. TABLE 5-2

*Under the proposed changes, should the Type of Application responsibility at Director level still be "Projects that involve only minor exterior modifications **and are not within an historic district.**"? Won't the Director level review authority include historic districts with the new process proposed?*

### § 20-58.020.C.

See Section 4.7 (Historic Properties and Districts) of the City's Design Guidelines in addition to the requirements of this Chapter.

*Design Guidelines Section 4.7 (Historic Properties and Districts) still refers to the "Cultural Heritage Board or Design Review Board". It should be revised to reflect the new Design Review and Preservation Board (if approved).*

*Also: The link in this section of the current online City Code to Section 4.7 is incorrect. Rather than going to Design Guidelines, it takes a user to Unsafe Conditions in § 18-20.306.1.1.4-7, which refers to "Detached, dislodged or failing connections."*

Enter search term...

City of Santa R... > 2024-06-04 > Code of Ord... > Title 20 Z... > Division 5 Land Use

Search: "See Section 4.7"

Result 1 of 1

(Return to Results) (Clear Search)

Ttl 17 Environmental Protection

Ttl 18 Buildings and Construction

Ttl 19 Subdivisions

Ttl 20 Zoning

Ch 20-58 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

§ 20-58.010 Purpose.

§ 20-58.020 Applicability.

§ 20-58.030 Definitions.

§ 20-58.040 Cultural Heritage

§ 20-58.050 Designation of landmark or preservation district.

4.7 Detached, dislodged or failing connections.

5. Steel that has been subjected to any of the following conditions:

5.1 Deterioration.

5.2 Elastic deformation.

5.3 Ultimate deformation.

5.4 Metal fatigue.

5.5 Detached, dislodged or failing connections.

*Although clearly outside the scope of the upcoming PC meeting, this should be corrected.*

#### § 20-58.050.3

A proposal or application to terminate or modify a landmark or preservation district designation shall be processed under the same rules and procedures required to designate a landmark or preservation district, **and shall require the submittal of a historic resource survey prepared by a qualified professional.**

*I'm not able to find a definition of qualified professional anywhere in the City Code. Who is qualified? Is there a list? Perhaps this can be clarified in § 20-70.020.*

*This requirement is extremely costly. It seems inappropriate to require this for Non-Contributors, which are by definition not significant to the historic district. I suggest this be re-worded to apply only to properties/structures designated as Contributors.*

#### § 20-58.120.A.

The Director of Planning and Economic Development is authorized to make any necessary edits to the Processing Review Procedures for Owners of Historic Properties to ensure **ensure** that the document is maintained consistent with the City Municipal Code.

#### § 20-60.060.G.

3. As it relates to historic and cultural preservation, the DRPB shall perform its duties in compliance with this Chapter and Chapter 20-58 (Historic and Cultural Preservation) and shall:

a. Conduct surveys, as needed, of neighborhoods, objects, places, sites, and structures within the City that may qualify or be eligible for designation as a landmark or preservation district;

*The process of conducting a survey for a preservation district is a tremendous amount of work, which may be why there have been no new districts since 2007. This section seems to imply that board members will do the actual field work and compile the survey. In the past I believe the Cultural Heritage Board was in an advisory position and did not do the actual survey. Should the wording be "Oversee surveys" ?*

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*The following document was difficult to notate. I found several locations where the Cultural Heritage Board is still referenced. Please forgive any difficulty you have in finding/following text.*

## PROCESSING REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR OWNERS OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### Section III

Appointed by the City Council, the seven-member Design Review and Preservation Board is comprised of citizen volunteers with **at up to** two members having special expertise in historic preservation.

*Should "at" be removed?*

Undertaking and updating historic inventories or surveys.

*See previous comments on this topic. Does the City intend that DRPR board members will actually perform this work, or act in an advisory/oversight role?*

### III. SANTA ROSA DESIGN REVIEW AND PRESERVATION BOARD

*Last paragraph in this section:*

Staff from the City's Planning and Economic Development Department provide support for the ~~Cultural Heritage Board~~ **Design Review and Preservation Board**.

### IV. LANDMARKS AND PRESERVATION DISTRICTS

Requests from property owners for designation of Landmarks and from neighborhood groups for designation of Preservation Districts are reviewed by the ~~Cultural Heritage Board~~ **Design Review and Preservation Board**; the actual designation itself is by City Council action.

#### City Determination of Significance

*The concept of qualified professional comes up in the first paragraph - see earlier comments.*

*The edited second sentence seems to read "The following criteria be considered in determining historical significance." A word is missing here. "criteria **will/shall/should** be"?*

#### Consultant Provides Information

*This is the first place I've found where an architectural historian is referenced. Is this the qualified professional? Are there other professions that can prepare this report? Does the City maintain a list? Is the City aware of the fees associated with this? When I spoke with architectural historians in 2018, the quotes for a Historic Resources Survey ranged from \$4,000 to \$12,000. I'm sure they've gone up in the interim. There should be very clear guidelines about when this is required. This additional cost burden is likely to stop many projects in their tracks and incentivize property owners to do projects without benefit of permits.*

### C. EXTERIOR CHANGES ONLY ARE REVIEWED

The reason exterior changes are reviewed is to assure property owners and the neighborhood that the view from the street (the historic streetscape) will be maintained for future generations.

*This statement has been pointed to in nearly every conversation I've had with property owners going through the landmark alteration process and is the root of much public ill will. It specifies the view from the street, yet multiple neighbors have found that the new deck (or similar minor change) they want at the back of their house - not remotely visible from the street - required a landmark alteration permit. In the Frequently Asked Questions section in the guidelines there's a statement that exempts "walkways, decks, etc., that are not readily visible from the public right-of-way." This is the sort of inconsistency that should be studiously avoided in the future.*

#### D. WHAT PROJECTS REQUIRE A LANDMARK ALTERATION PERMIT

Generally, any project that results in a change to a historic building **needs will** require a Landmark Alteration (LMA) Permit prior to doing any work.

*Remove the word "needs"?*

#### B. LANDMARK ALTERATION GUIDELINES - ADDITIONS

7. For the predominant material of the addition, select a historic material, such as wooden siding or stucco, that is compatible with the historic materials of the original building. Contemporary substitute materials, such as synthetic siding, are not acceptable.

*This statement doesn't recognize the addition of contemporary materials that are nearly identical to traditional wood siding in appearance. One example of this is Hardie Artisan siding, which is made of concrete. The profile and dimensions are virtually indistinguishable from wood, hold paint for decades, and provide fire resistance. I suggest this wording be reconsidered.*

#### C. LANDMARK ALTERATION GUIDELINES - DEMOLITION

##### c. Insignificant Accessory Buildings

The City may approve the demolition of insignificant accessory buildings that are located on Landmark properties or within Preservation Districts. The submittal of a historic resource survey, prepared by a qualified professional, such as an architectural historian, would be required in order to determine if the structure is insignificant.

*Again - this will be a significant cost to the property owner, and will incentivize non-compliance. The City should have staff that can make this determination in the vast majority of cases.*

#### 2. Example Mitigation Measures

##### d. Moving a Building Outside a Preservation District

This alternative is **in** most cases is inappropriate...

#### I. LANDMARK ALTERATION GUIDELINES - PAINTING

4. Brick that already has been painted, or any brick for that matter, should never under any circumstances be sandblasted, as this procedure will result in the failure (disintegration) of the material. Property owners are encouraged to consult ~~with the~~ with a qualified architectural historian regarding the heavy cleaning of brick.

#### I. PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL

##### 3. Design Review and Preservation Board Concept Design Review

For larger, more complex projects, conceptual review with the ~~Design~~ **Design** Review and Preservation Board is encouraged, in order to gather feedback early in the process.

If any of these edits don't make sense (or if the email process mangles them), I'm happy to have a quick conversation.

Thank you for your consideration,

~ Sher Ennis

~ [REDACTED]

~ West End Historic District