



Historic Resources Board

2024-2025 Workplan Overview

Date approved by HRB 4/11/2024 (Amended 8/8/2024)

Staff Liaison: Steven Switzer, Historic Preservation Planner
Lead Department: Planning and Development Services

About the Commission

The HRB is now five members, effective July 4, 2024. Four candidates are set for August 2024 interviews, for two positions. The City is a Certified Local Government (CLG) responsible for historic preservation - to identify, evaluate, register, and preserve historic properties within its jurisdictions and promote the integration of local preservation interests and concerns into local planning and decision-making processes. Staff prepares an annual report of the activities of the Certified Local Government each spring for the prior year and submits these to the State Office of Historic Preservation. This HRB Work Plan covers July 2024 - July 2025. HRB member terms are for 3 years and are staggered per PAMC Section 2.27.020. For more information please visit <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/City-Hall/Boards-Commissions/Historic-Resources-Board>. The Department webpages are a wealth of information, go to: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Planning-Development-Services/Historic-Preservation>

Current Commissioners

Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz (chair), Samantha Rohman (vice chair), Christian Pease, and *Caroline Willis, Margaret Wimmer or Mike Makinen (until two successors are appointed)*

Mission Statement

Per Palo Alto Municipal Code Chapter 2.27 Historic Resources Board, Section 2.27.040 Duties, HRB purview is:

- (a) Render advice and guidance to a property owner upon the owner's application for alteration of any historic single-family or duplex building in the downtown area and any such building designated as significant elsewhere in the city
- (b) Inform the ARB of the historical and/or architectural significance of historic commercial and multiple-family structures in the downtown area and any such buildings designated as significant elsewhere in the City that are under review by the ARB. Submit recommendations to the ARB regarding proposed exterior alterations of such historic structures
- (c) Recommend to the Council the designation of additional buildings and districts as historic. Research available information and add historical information to the inventory sheets of historic structures/sites. This inventory is maintained in the department of planning and development services.
- (d) Perform such other functions as may be delegated from time to time to the HRB by the City Council.

Prior Year Accomplishments

During the work plan period the HRB held 14 public meetings, met the objectives in the 'ongoing' goals 1 and 2 of the plan, completed goal 3 of the plan (providing recommendations on nominations of properties previously found eligible for the National and State historic registers to the City's local historic inventory, unless property owners submitted objections to listing; known as the 2023 Historic Reconnaissance Survey), and many objectives set forth in goal 4 of the plan. The staff continued to implement policy L7.2 as an ongoing activity, and conducted three evening community meetings over the plan's term, to further encourage community participation.



CITY OF
PALO ALTO

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PURPOSE STATEMENT:

The Board/Commission's goals and purposes (purview) are set in Palo Alto Municipal Code Chapter 2.27 Historic Resources Board, Section 2.27.040 Duties. These duties include reviewing alterations to historic resources and providing recommendations on nominations to the local historic resources inventory. The City's historic program includes the implementation of Comprehensive Plan policies on an ongoing basis including Policy L7.2 (preparation of historic evaluations to determine eligibility for the California Register of Historical Resources and associated tracking), Policy L7.1.1 (recommend eligible resources to the local inventory), and Policy L7.1.2: Reassess Historic Preservation Ordinance.

PROJECT/GOAL 1:

Limited modification to PAMC 16.49, historic preservation, providing clarifications regarding the HRB's role. The HRB could discuss language providing clarifications of its role with respect to three potential topics: (a) the nomination process, (b) the effect of HRB recommendations regarding exterior modifications to residential historic resources, and (c) category changes (upgrades, downgrades, removals)

BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
The benefits are providing clarification of the HRB's role for the public	Subject to Council direction, to begin in the second quarter	City Council direction and accommodation in the PDS department workplan would be needed. HRB subcommittee and staff of planning and city attorney departments to prepare draft amendments for Council review and adoption	Well-written ordinance language that assists the public's understanding and calms the fears of property owners about governmental overreach	Council may provide direction to modify PAMC 16.49; CLG cities maintain historic preservation ordinances.
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Priority is high to enable greater understanding of the HRB's role and address property owners' concerns with respect to Goal items (a) and (b)		Lower priority: Goal item (c) - listed historic resources placed on the City's inventory in the late 1970s and 1980s have not been reviewed to determine whether any modifications reduce critical aspects of integrity and drop or lower the properties' local historic resource category.		Council may provide direction to modify PAMC 16.49; CLG cities maintain historic preservation ordinances

<p>PROJECT/GOAL 2: Education and Creating New User-Friendly Resources/Communication Regarding Historic Preservation. (a) find new ways to promote preservation, including use of the existing zoning code incentives and State historic building code (b) improve upon communication types to provide the community accessible information, including the use of videos (linked to the City's and State's webpages) to help property owners understand the local and State preservation incentives and codes, (c) continue to provide updates to the historic review process bulletin as needed to communicate CEQA requirements related to PAMC 16.49 and listed historic resources, and (d) enable the HRB staff liaison(s), the City's historic preservation consultant, and Chief Building Official to implement training providing an ongoing opportunity for HRB members, staff, and the community to gain working knowledge as to the use of the State's historic building code</p>				
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
The benefits would be to improve preservation in Palo Alto and clarity for owners of historic properties.	Goal 2 to begin during plan quarter 1 and continue through quarter 2 (October - December)	Staff of PDS would be tasked as well as an HRB ad hoc committee to make progress.	Website contains links to information resources and videos, to assist property owners, staff, and others.	N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Item (a) a table of existing zoning code incentives and another table of historic building code provisions and Item (b) improvements to types of communications used to promote historic preservation.		Items (c) and (d)		N/A
<p>PROJECT/GOAL 3: Conduct a survey of the local inventory resources listed prior to the 2023 Historic Reconnaissance Survey, to determine historic conditions. If Council directs a survey update, that work would require resources and may extend into the next year work plan.</p>				
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
Determining conditions of existing inventory properties (listed prior to April 22, 2024) would allow better clarity.	Subject to Council direction/ resource allocation and to begin in fourth quarter	Budget for and assistance from qualified consultant to assess conditions of inventory properties listed prior to April 22, 2024	Data on conditions of buildings placed on the local inventory prior to April 22, 2024	No
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE

Properties that have been demolished remove from local inventory		Properties that have lost integrity over time that may need a category change		No
<p>PROJECT/GOAL 4: Additional preservation incentives (a) discuss and recommend additional zoning code incentives to continue the community engagement process that began with the 2023 reconnaissance survey/ inventory update; (b) represent the HRB's interests during public hearings, or participate in joint meetings with the Planning and Transportation Commission and City Council, to review any proposed zoning code modifications incentivizing historic preservation incentives; (c) outreach to the community after adoption of any adopted new incentives.</p>				
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
Benefit will be for all property owners who do not currently see any benefit to listing their property on the City's historic inventory	Goal 2 to begin during plan quarter 2 (item a) and subject to Council direction, continue through quarter 4 (April - June 2025, items b and c)	PDS staff and CAO staff. City Council direction and accommodation in the PDS department workplan would be needed.	More historic properties are preserved for future enjoyment of the owners and community, due to the additional incentives.	Council may provide direction to modify PAMC title 18.
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Item a is to gather ideas for new incentives in the zoning code to add to a table of existing incentives in the zoning code.		Subject to Council direction, items b and c would follow item a.		N/A
<p>PROJECT/GOAL 5: Establish a Historical Preservation Award Program. (a) discuss and determine the selection criteria for eligible projects and/or properties; (b) discuss and determine frequency of awards (e.g., annual, bi-annual, 5-year cycle, etc.); (c) select projects and/or properties to award; (d) conduct an award ceremony and present historic preservation awards.</p>				
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED

<p>A HRB historical preservation award program would express appreciation for the efforts to preserve and protect Palo Alto's culturally, historically, and architecturally significant places that create a vibrant and sustainable community that fully reflects Palo Alto's diverse past.</p>	<p>Goal 5 to begin during plan quarter 1 (item a) and continue through quarter 4 (April - June 2025, items b and c)</p>	<p>Staff of PDS would be tasked as well as an HRB ad hoc committee to make progress.</p>	<p>Establish historic preservation award selection criteria and frequency of awards by end of 24-25 Fiscal Year.</p>	<p>Comprehensive Plan Policy L-7.6</p>
<p>HIGH PRIORITY</p>		<p>LOWER PRIORITY</p>		<p>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</p>
<p>Item (a) discuss and determine the selection criteria for eligible projects and/or properties and establish award frequency, and Item (b) discuss and determine award frequency (e.g., annual, bi-annual, 5-year cycle, etc.)</p>	<p>Items (c) and (d)</p>			<p>No</p>
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