



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

STRUCTURE OF MERIT INFORMATION



DEFINITION:

A *structure of merit* is a historic resource designated by the Historic Landmarks Commission that deserves official recognition as having historic, architectural, archaeological, cultural or aesthetic value and which is designated a *structure of merit* under the provisions of Santa Barbara Municipal Code Chapter 30.157.

ELIGIBILITY:

In considering a proposal to designate a structure as a *structure of merit*, the Historic Landmarks Commission site or feature must be at least 50 years of age, meet one or more of the criteria outlined below, and retain historic integrity. The Historic Landmarks Commission must find that the structure, site or feature retains enough historic integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association that it conveys its historic significance in accordance with the most recent National Register of Historic Places Bulletin How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. The Historic Landmarks Commission must find that the structure, site or feature meets one or more of the following Significance Criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution in our past;
2. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic or historic value, or represents a significant and distinguishable collection whose individual components may lack distinction;
4. It yields, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history; or
5. Its unique location or singular physical characteristic represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood.

PROCEDURE:

1. The Architectural Historian will prepare a Historic Significance Report recommendation on the proposal. The proposal will be scheduled for a noticed public hearing at the Historic Landmarks Commission. If the Historic Landmarks Commission approves designation as a Structure of Merit, the Historic Landmarks Commission shall adopt a Resolution of

Designation or deny the designation, the decision shall become final within 10 calendar days unless appealed directly to the City Council.

2. Resolution of Designation of Structure of Merit. Upon the Historic Landmarks Commission's adoption of a Resolution of Designation as a Structure of Merit (or upon a final decision of the City Council on an appeal resulting in such designation), the City's Architectural Historian shall record the Resolution of Designation in the Office of the Recorder, County of Santa Barbara, within 30 calendar days of the Historic Landmarks Commission's adoption or the City Council's final action, mailing a copy of the final recorded resolution to the property owner(s).

BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL PLANNING FEES WAIVED

The planning department waives the fees for projects requiring administrative approvals. Project that entail ordinary maintenance often can be approved administratively and the fees for the administrative approval is waived on historic buildings as a benefit to owners restoring and maintaining the important historic resources of the City.

PRESERVATION BENEFITS

Historic preservation is not just about regulations that prevent inappropriate changes to historic resources. Residential homeowners also find that property values stabilize or increase when historic preservation standards are used in rehabilitating their homes. This occurs in part because of the investments made to rehabilitate the homes, as well as the added prestige of owning a designated structure. Nationwide studies also show that preservation projects contribute more to the local economy than do new building programs because each dollar spent on a preservation project has a higher percentage devoted to labor and to the purchase of local materials. By contrast, new construction typically has a higher percentage of each dollar spent devoted to materials that are produced outside the local economy and to special construction skills that may be imported. National and California State studies have proven that local designation provides the following benefits:

- Eligible to apply for a property tax reduction with the Mills Act program
- Eligible to use the California Historical Building Code for some relief on current building codes.
- Increases property values
- Preserves the physical history of the area
- Promotes an appreciation of the physical environment
- Fosters community pride and self-image by creating a unique sense of place and local integrity
- Increases the awareness and appreciation of local history
- Attracts potential customers to city businesses
- Increases city tourism

STATE AND FEDERAL TAX CREDIT INCENTIVE

Economic incentives are available to historic preservation projects at the local, state, and federal levels. The State of California and the Federal Government offers rehabilitation tax credits to designated and qualified projects and properties.

MILLS ACT PROPERTY TAX INCENTIVE

The Historical Property Contract Program (Mills Act) provides property tax abatement to properties designated as Structures of Merit or City Landmarks. Under the program, property owners receive a significant reduction in local property taxes in exchange for their promise to actively participate in restoring, rehabilitating, repairing, and preserving their properties. Participants enter into a perpetual 10-year contract with the City. For details, please refer to the web site:

<http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/services/community/historic/preservation/mills.asp>

CALIFORNIA STATE HISTORICAL BUILDING CODE

One of California's most valuable tools for the preservation of historic resources is the California State Historical Building Code (CHBC), which is defined in Sections 18950 to 18961 of Division 13, Part 2.7 of Health and Safety Code (H&SC), a part of California Law. The CHBC is intended to save California's architectural heritage by recognizing the unique construction issues inherent in maintaining and adaptively reusing historic resources. The CHBC provides alternative building regulations for permitting repairs, alterations, and additions necessary for the preservation, rehabilitation, relocation, related construction, change of use, or continued use of a "qualified historical building or structure." The CHBC's standards and regulations are intended to facilitate the rehabilitation or change of occupancy so as to preserve their original or restored elements and features, encourage energy conservation and a cost effective approach to preservation, and provide for reasonable safety from fire, seismic forces, or other hazards for occupants and users of such historic resources, structures, and properties, and to provide reasonable availability and usability by the physically disabled.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

"The greenest building is one that is already built." Preserving an historic structure is sound environmental conservation policy because "reusing" saves energy and reduces the need for producing new construction materials. Many historic resources are inherently "green" in the following ways:

- Energy is not consumed to demolish a building and dispose of the resulting debris.
- Energy is not used to create new building materials, transport them, and assemble them on site.
- The embodied energy which was used to create the original building and its components is preserved.

- By reusing older historic resources, pressure is reduced to harvest new lumber and other materials that may have negative impacts on the environment.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The City of Santa Barbara completes surveys of buildings in order to identify, categorize, create inventories and possibly designate buildings based on the level of known historic significance.

Only exterior alterations must be reviewed by the HLC and determined to not cause a substantial adverse change in the historical significance of the resource in order to be approved. Additions or alterations are also likely to be approved if they are compatible with the neighborhood, with the existing structure and if essential features that make the structure historically significant are retained.

The Historic Landmarks Commission does not review any interior changes.

Historic resources are integral components of the City's heritage because they are historically or architecturally significant. The Structure of Merit designation status was established to encourage the preservation of our City's streetscapes and building fabric. Structures of Merit are historically significant, but to a lesser degree than a City Landmark. The HLC designates a resource a Structure of Merit. The determining factors of a Structure of Merit designation rather than a City Landmark designation are: the amount of eligibility criteria met, the level of integrity of the historic resource and, the quality or number of resources of this type remaining in the City. Once designated a Structure of Merit, all exterior alterations are under the jurisdiction of the HLC.

Before a project is approved, the Historic Landmarks Commission must determine that one or more of the following findings are applicable to the proposed alteration, relocation, or demolition:

1. The exterior alterations are being made to restore the historic resource to its original appearance or in order to substantially aid its preservation or enhancement as a historic resource; and
2. The exterior alterations are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. 3. The Structure of Merit has been damaged by an earthquake, fire, or other similar casualty such that its repair or restoration is not reasonably practical or economically feasible and specific measures have been imposed as pre-conditions on the demolition or alterations, which measures mitigate the potential for adverse historic resource impacts resulting from loss of the Structure to a less than significant level or which measures are sufficient to warrant a finding of overriding considerations pursuant to the CEQA.
3. Specific measures have been incorporated into the project scope to mitigate the loss of the Historic Resource to a less than significant level;
4. The historic resource has been damaged by an earthquake, fire, or other similar casualty such that its repair or restoration is not reasonably practical or economically feasible as supported by substantial evidence provided by at least one qualified structural engineer or architect qualified in historic preservation. The Historic Landmarks Commission may require, as conditions of approval of a demolition, that the property owner(s) salvage historic materials from the property and /or provide archival quality photo documentation of the remaining historic materials of the structure, site or feature to the City;

5. Preservation of the historic resource is not economically feasible or practical, or no viable measures could be taken to adaptively use, rehabilitate, or restore the historic resource as supported by substantial evidence provided by at least one qualified historic preservation specialist, structural engineer (qualified in historic preservation), or architect (qualified in historic preservation) sufficient to warrant demolition; or
5. A compelling public interest justifies demolition