

From: Lee Quintana, Chair HP  
To: HPC  
Re: Draft letter prepared by the AdHoc Committee for HPC Study Session  
And attachments

The draft letter includes an extensive list of recommendations . We anticipate that the final letter will include a reduced number of primary recommendations as well as a list of additional recommendations for the consideration of the Council.

In preparation for the Study Session and to help focus the discussion:

- Review Article VIII, Division 3, and Sec. 29.10.09030 of the Zoning Code and the Residential Design Guidelines
- Prepare of a list of what are your top priorities (5-7) from the draft letter or any we may have missed

Additional background information is included in Attachments 1 & 2. Attachment is quote from John Steinbeck that will hopefully make you laugh or at least smile.

- Attachment 1: Comments from Anne Bloomfield, May 10, 1991
- Attachment 2: Findings- related to a request for a determination that a pre-1941 primary structure has no historic significance or merit. And a discussion of historic integrity
- Attachment 3: A quote from John Steinbeck's The Log From the Sea of Cortez Chapter 4

Los Gatos appears to have slept through the Depression of the 1930s with very little building construction. It only really awakened in the 1950s, and later with the prosperity of Silicon Valley.

Styles of buildings in Los Gatos by and large appear to have followed the historic succession of designs common to much of California: Italianate in the 1870s, Stick in the 1880s, Queen Anne in the 1890s, Colonial and Classical Revival in the 1900s and beyond, Craftsman and Bungalow in the 1900s through 1920s, and a sprinkling of Mission or Mediterranean Revival throughout the 20th century. There are exceptions, such as the Forrest House at 120 Oak Meadow, built 1890 in the Greek Revival style of the 1850s and 1860s.

Actually, the "styles" in Los Gatos were usually a question of a few ornamental bits tacked onto vernacular builders' houses. More important than style names are the forms and types of the buildings, their materials, and what the National Park Service calls their "character defining features." These vary from one building to the next and create the variety and liveliness that are the hallmark of historic architecture. Character defining features usually include the particular shape of the roof, the proportions and relationships and trim of the window and door openings, the porch if any and its decorations, the setback and massing, often the siding. In other words, character defining features are those aspects of the building's appearance that set it off from others and make it a unique resource.

Most historic houses in Los Gatos are modest rather than grand. They tend to be small, and the yard is usually much bigger than the house, reflecting a taste for outdoor living in this mild climate. Most of the houses have only minimal stylistic references, such as a tall and narrow Italianate window shape, or a baseball bat-shaped Queen Anne porch post. This simplicity probably results from Los Gatos' modest economy during its first century after Forbes Mill, and from the fact that many houses were built as casual, vacation or second homes for people who wanted relief from urban formalities and crowding. Dressing them up now to match a textbook idea of a style would be a falsification of Los Gatos' true history, where houses have tended unconsciously to follow Berkeley sage Charles Keeler's dictum of architecture as "landscape gardening around a few rooms to use in case of rain." /32/

In recent years Los Gatos has experienced explosive growth in area, population, commerce, and real estate values. Problems have arisen in guiding and controlling the growth. There is demand to enlarge or replace small historic houses, but at the same time the Town's historic identity is recognized as a commercial and cultural asset. It is important to nurture the historic buildings and districts carefully to avoid losses through demolition or insensitive additions and alterations, and to keep, as nearly as possible, the original proportion of house to land in the streetscape.

--Anne Bloomfield  
10 May 1991

Attachment 1

## FINDINGS:

- A. Findings - related to a request for a determination that a pre-1941 primary structure has no historic significance or architectural merit.

\_\_\_\_\_ In evaluating a request for a determination of historic significance or architectural merit, the Historic Preservation Committee shall consider the following:

1. The structure is not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the Town;
2. No Significant persons are associated with the site;
3. There are no distinctive characteristics of type, period or method of construction or representation of work of a master;
4. The structure does not yield information to Town history; or
5. The integrity has been compromised such that the structure no longer has the potential to convey significance.

### Historic Integrity

The seven aspects of historic integrity are defined in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Historic integrity is "the ability of a property to convey its significance," and historic properties either retain their integrity or they do not. To retain integrity, a resource must retain several and usually most of the seven aspects of integrity:

1. *Location*: the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
2. *Design*: the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
3. *Setting*: the physical environment of a historic property.
4. *Materials*: the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
5. *Workmanship*: the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
6. *Feeling*: a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
7. *Association*: the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

The evaluation of historic properties must be grounded in an understanding of the physical features of the resource, and how they relate to historical significance. *National Register Bulletin 15* notes that the evaluation for integrity can begin only after the evaluator understands the property's significance: *why* the resource is significant, *when* the resource is significant, and *where* it is important. A resource need not be "frozen in time" to retain its historic integrity. Properties evolve over time, and those changes themselves may have acquired historic significance. But the resource must still have the essential physical attributes that identify it as the historic property.

From John Steinbeck, The Log From The Sea of Cortez Chapter 4.

In our naivete, we considered that our State Department, having much business with the Mexican government, might include a paragraph about us in one of its letters, which would convince Mexico of our decent intentions. Besides, we told ourselves we were American citizens and the government was our servant. Alas, we did not know the diplomatic procedure. In due course, we had an answer from the State Department. In language so diplomatic as to be barely intelligible it gently disabused us. In the first place, the State Department was *not* our servant, however other departments might feel about it. The State Department had little or no interest in the collection of marine invertebrates unless carried on by an institution of learning.... The government never made such representations for private citizens. Lastly, the State Department hoped to God we would not get into trouble and appeal to it for aid. All this was concealed in language so beautiful and incomprehensible that we began to understand why diplomats say they are "studying" a message from Japan or England or Italy. We studied this letter for the better part of one night, reduced its sentences to words, built it up again, and came out with the above-mentioned gist. "Gist" is, we imagine, a word which makes the State Department with its vulgarity.

There we were, with no permits and the imaginary soldier still upset by our oxygen tube. In Mexico, certain good friends worked to get us the permits; the consular general in San Francisco wrote letters about us, and then finally, through a friend, we got in touch with Mr. Castillo Najera, the Mexican ambassador to Washington. To our wonder there came an immediate reply from the ambassador which said there was no reason why we should not go and that he would see the permits were issued immediately. His letter said just that. There was a little sadness in us when we read it. The ambassador seemed such a good man we felt it a pity that he had no diplomatic future, that he could never get anywhere in the world of international politics. We understood his letter the first time we read it. Clearly, Mr Casillo Nejera is a misfit and a rebel. He not only wrote clearly, but he kept his word. The Permits came through quickly, and in order. And we wish here and now to assure this gentleman that whenever the inevitable punishment for his logic and clarity falls upon him we will gladly help him to get a new start in some other profession.