



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 01/28/2026

ITEM NO: 1

DATE: January 23, 2026
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Consider an Appeal of a Community Development Director Decision to Deny a Request to Remove a Pre-1941 Property from the Historic Resources Inventory for Property Zoned C-1. **Located at 647 N. Santa Cruz Avenue.** APN 410-14-015. Exempt Pursuant to CEQA Section 15061(b)(3). Request for Review PHST-25-022. Property Owner/Appellant: 647 N. Santa Cruz Ave, LLC. Applicant: Lance Tate. Project Planner: Ryan Safty.

RECOMMENDATION:

Deny the appeal of the Community Development Director decision to deny a request to remove a pre-1941 property from the Historic Resources Inventory for property zoned C-1, located at 647 N. Santa Cruz Avenue.

PROJECT DATA:

General Plan Designation: Neighborhood Commercial
Zoning Designation: C-1; Neighborhood Commercial
Applicable Plans & Standards: General Plan, Town Code, Residential Design Guidelines
Parcel Size: 24,703 square feet (0.57 acres)
Surrounding Area:

	Existing Land Use	General Plan	Zoning
North	Residential and Commercial	Medium Density Residential and Neighborhood Commercial	R-1D and C-1
South	Residential and Commercial	Medium Density Residential and Neighborhood Commercial	R-1D and C-1
East	Commercial	Neighborhood Commercial	C-1
West	Residential	Medium Density Residential	R-1D

PREPARED BY: Ryan Safty
Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Planning Manager and Community Development Director

CEQA:

The project is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, Section 15061(b)(3): A project is exempt from CEQA when the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA only applies to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question will have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

FINDINGS:

- The project is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, Section 15061(b)(3): A project is exempt from CEQA when the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA only applies to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.
- As required to remove a pre-1941 property from the Historic Resources Inventory.

ACTION:

The decision of the Planning Commission is final unless appealed within ten days.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is located on the west side of N. Santa Cruz Avenue, just south of the Blossom Hill Road intersection (Exhibit 1). The property is currently developed with a two-story, 4,086-square foot office building at the front of the site, and a 929-square foot single-family residence at the rear. The Santa Clara County Assessor's Database lists a construction date of 1978 for the property; however, that date reflects the date of construction of the office building at the front of the site. The existing residence at the rear of the property was not included in the 1990 Anne Bloomfield Survey, likely due to the office building obstructing view. The property is not within a historic district or LHP overlay. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (Attachment 2 of Exhibit 3) show the residence on the property as early as 1928, with a rear addition occurring sometime between 1928 and 1944. The applicant's historic report (Attachment 3 of Exhibit 3) estimates that the residence was constructed in 1924.

On November 19, 2025, the Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) considered a request to remove the subject property from the Historic Resources Inventory (HRI). The applicant's historic report (Attachment 3 of Exhibit 3) indicates that, based on their research and experience, the findings for removal from the HRI could be made, noting that the residence was not associated with events important to the Town, not associated with significant persons, not representative of work of a master, does not yield information to the Town's history, and its integrity has been compromised. The HPC received the staff report, held a public hearing, and

discussed the request. The HPC voted four-to-one to recommend denial to the Community Development Director, finding that the residence still has integrity and is typical of the Craftsman style (Exhibit 4). The audio from this meeting is available on the Town's website at <https://losgatos-ca.municodemeeetings.com/bc-hpc/page/historic-preservation-committee-special-4>. On November 21, 2025, the Community Development Director denied the request for removal (Exhibit 5).

On November 25, 2025, the decision of the Community Development Director was appealed to the Planning Commission by an interested person, Michael Amidi, a member of the ownership team of 647 N. Santa Cruz Ave., LLC (Exhibit 6). On the appeal form, the appellant indicates that the appeal should be granted as the HPC relied on insufficient evidence, and the property does not meet the Town's criteria for inclusion in the HRI.

Pursuant to Town Code Section 29.20.255, any interested person, as defined by Section 29.10.020, may appeal to the Planning Commission any decision of the Community Development Director determining matters pertaining to historic preservation. For residential projects, an interested person is defined as "a person or entity who owns property or resides within 1,000 feet of a property for which a decision has been rendered and can demonstrate that their property will be injured by the decision." The appellant meets the requirements.

Pursuant to Town Code Section 29.20.265, the hearing for the appeal must be set for the first regular meeting of the Planning Commission more than five days after the date of filing the appeal. Due to legal noticing timelines, holiday closures, and timing of the applicant's addendum to their historic report, the January 28, 2026, Planning Commission meeting is the first regular meeting available to consider the appeal. The Planning Commission may hear the matter anew and render a new decision on the matter.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

A. Location and Surrounding Neighborhood

The subject property is located on the west side of N. Santa Cruz Avenue, just south of the Blossom Hill Road intersection (Exhibit 1). The property is one-half acre, with an office building and parking lot developed at the front of the lot, and the existing residence at the rear, behind a fence. The surrounding properties contain a mixture of single-family residential and commercial development, with the commercial development fronting N. Santa Cruz Avenue.

B. Project Summary

The property owner is appealing the Community Development Director's decision to deny the request to remove a pre-1941 property from the HRI.

DISCUSSION:

A. HPC Authority and Applicability

Town Code Section 29.10.020 defines “Historic Structure” as “any primary structure constructed prior to 1941, unless the deciding body has determined that the structure has no historic significance and should not be included in the Town Historic Resources Inventory.” The applicant’s historic report notes an estimated construction date of 1924; therefore, the subject property is included on the HRI as a presumptive historic residence.

Town Code Sections 29.20.700 and 29.80.222 provide that the Community Development Director, upon recommendation by the HPC, determines matters pertaining to historic preservation that are not assigned to the Planning Commission. Section 29.80.227 (6) provides that it is the power and duty of the HPC to make a recommendation to the Community Development Director on requests for removal of a pre-1941 property from the HRI.

Pursuant to Town Code Section 29.80.215, the purpose of the Town’s Historic Preservation Ordinance states:

It is hereby found that structures, sites, and areas of special character or special historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value have been and continue to be unnecessarily destroyed or impaired, despite the feasibility of preserving them. It is further found that the public health, safety, and welfare require prevention of needless destruction and impairment, and promotion of the economic utilization and discouragement of the decay and desuetude of such structures, sites, and areas.

The purpose of historic preservation is to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the public through:

1. The protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of structures, sites, and areas that are reminders of past eras, events, and persons important in local, State, or National history, or which provide significant examples of architectural styles of the past or are landmarks in the history of architecture, or which are unique and irreplaceable assets to the Town and its neighborhoods, or which provide for this and future generations examples of the physical surroundings in which past generations lived.
2. The development and maintenance of appropriate settings and environment for such structures.
3. The enhancement of property values, the stabilization of neighborhood and areas of the Town, the increase of economic and financial benefits to the Town and its inhabitants, and the promotion of tourist trade and interest.

4. The enrichment of human life in its educational and cultural dimensions by serving aesthetic as well as material needs and fostering knowledge of the living heritage of the past.

Residential Design Guidelines Section 4 notes that the Town has a wealth of older homes, many homes constructed prior to 1941, and may be found throughout Los Gatos. It is Town policy to preserve these resources whenever possible and practicable, and to require special care in the remodeling of and additions to them. All pre-1941 structures have the potential to be historically significant. Section 4.2 notes that the Town recognizes a historic resource as follows:

- Any structure/site that is located within an historic district (Broadway, Almond Grove, Fairview Plaza, University/ Edelen, and Downtown Commercial); or
- Any structure/site that is historically designated; or
- Any primary structure that was constructed prior to 1941, unless the Town has determined that the structure has no historic significance or architectural merit.

Lastly, Section 4.6 of the Residential Design Guidelines speaks specifically to pre-1941 structures and provides that pre-1941 structures have the potential to be historically significant, but not all will necessarily be classified as historic. Applications for removal, remodeling, or additions to structures constructed prior to 1941 will be reviewed by staff to determine their historic merit and contribution to the surrounding neighborhood. An initial evaluation will be made utilizing the 1991 Historical Resources Survey Project for Los Gatos. Staff may, at the discretion of the Community Development Director, refer a project application to the HPC for its input and recommendations.

When considering a request for a determination that a pre-1941 primary structure has no historic significance or architectural merit, the HPC considers the following in their recommendation to the Community Development Director:

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.

These criteria are derived from the criteria used by the National and State Registers of Historic Places and reflect the purpose provided in the Town's Historic Preservation Ordinance found in Section 29.80.215 of the Town Code.

B. Historic Preservation Committee

On November 19, 2025, the HPC received the staff report, held a public hearing, and discussed the request (Exhibits 3 and 4). Following discussion, the HPC voted four-to-one to recommend denial to the Community Development Director.

Specifically, the HPC reviewed the request in relation to the five criteria to determine if a pre-1941 structure has historical significance or architectural merit. The first four criteria appeared as if they could be met: 1) the structure is not associated with events that made a significant contribution to the Town; 2) no significant personas are associated with the site; 3) no distinctive characteristics of construction; and 4) structure does not yield information to Town history. However, based on the information presented to the HPC at that time of the hearing, criterion number five could not be met: 5) the integrity has been compromised such that the structure no longer has the potential to convey significance.

On November 21, 2025, the Community Development Director denied the request for removal without prejudice (Exhibit 5).

C. Appeal to Planning Commission

The decision of the Community Development Director was appealed on November 25, 2025, by the property owner, Michael Amidi, a member of the ownership team of 647 N. Santa Cruz Ave., LLC (Exhibit 6). On the appeal form, the appellant indicates that the appeal should be granted as the HPC relied on insufficient evidence, and the property does not meet the Town's criteria for inclusion in the HRI.

An addendum report from the appellant was provided to support the appeal on January 7, 2026 (Exhibit 7), which focuses on criterion number five and determines that the integrity of the residence has been compromised such that the structure no longer has the potential to convey significance.

As noted in Exhibit 7, the original 1924 residence was a minimal Craftsman style home that has been significantly altered over time. Pictures were provided, showing the enclosing of the front porch, rear addition, and roof modifications and extensions. The addendum report notes that the rear addition introduced Neo-classical columns which also diminishes the Craftsman character. In response to the fifth criterion for removal, the report notes that, "the 1924 house has extensive alterations that greatly diminish the minimal Craftsman elements of the original design."

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Written notice was sent to property owners and tenants within 300 feet of the subject property. At time of publication of this report, no public comment has been received.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The project is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, Section 15061(b)(3): A project is exempt from CEQA when the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA only applies to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question will have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

The property owner is appealing the Community Development Director's decision to deny the request to remove a pre-1941 property from the HRI for property zoned C-1, located at 647 N. Santa Cruz Avenue.

B. Recommendation

For reasons stated in this report, it is recommended that the Planning Commission deny the appeal and uphold the decision of the Community Development Director to deny the request to remove a pre-1941 property from the HRI.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

1. Continue the matter to a date certain with specific direction;
2. Grant the appeal and remove the subject property from the HRI, making the findings provided in Exhibit 2; or
3. Remand the appeal to the HPC with specific direction.

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SUBJECT: 647 N. Santa Cruz Avenue/Appeal of PHST-25-022

DATE: January 23, 2026

EXHIBITS:

1. Location Map
2. Required Findings for Granting Appeal
3. Historic Preservation Committee Staff Report and Attachments, November 19, 2025
4. Historic Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes for November 19, 2025
5. Historic Preservation Committee Action Letter, November 21, 2025
6. Appeal of the Community Development Director decision, received November 25, 2025
7. Addendum to Historical and Architectural Evaluation Report