



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
COMMITTEE REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 10/22/2025

ITEM NO: 2

DATE: October 17, 2025

TO: Historic Preservation Committee

FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Consider a Request for Approval to Construct Exterior Modifications (Siding Replacement) on an Existing Pre-1941 Single-Family Residence on Property Zoned R-1:8. **Located at 155 Hernandez Avenue.** APN 510-40-152. Request for Review Application PHST-25-020. Exempt Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301: Existing Facilities. Property Owner: Catherine Nadeau. Applicant: Marcie Macdonough. Project Planner: Ryan Safty.

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider a request for approval to construct exterior modifications (siding replacement) on an existing pre-1941 single-family residence on property zoned R-1:8, located at 155 Hernandez Avenue.

PROPERTY DETAILS:

1. Date primary structure was built: 1917 (effective year built 1950) per County Assessor's Database; 1910s per Anne Bloomfield Survey
2. Town of Los Gatos Historic Status Code: +, historic and intact or worthy of special note
3. Does property have an LHP Overlay? No
4. Is structure in a historic district? N/A
5. If yes, is it a contributor? N/A
6. Findings required? No
7. Considerations required? Yes

BACKGROUND:

The County Assessor indicates that the residence located at 155 Hernandez Avenue was constructed in 1917, with an effective year built of 1950, which usually reflects significant alterations or additions occurred after the original construction date. The 1991 Bloomfield Survey describes the residence as being built in the Colonial Revival style with an estimated construction date of the 1910s (Attachment 1). The Bloomfield Survey rates the residence as historic and intact or worthy of special note. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show that the footprint of the residence remained consistent between 1928 and 1956 (Attachment 2).

PREPARED BY: Ryan Safty
Associate Planner

On January 22, 2025, the Historic Preservation Committee (Committee) reviewed and approved a request for exterior alterations to this residence, including raising the height of roof, changing the roof pitch, and replacing existing windows with new dual-pane fiberglass windows. Any needed replacement siding was required to match the existing siding. The project plans approved by the Committee are included as Attachment 3.

In the process of construction, the applicant has returned to the Committee due to concerns with the existing exterior siding.

DISCUSSION:

In late August, during construction, the applicant contacted Town staff to request an inspection of the existing exterior siding. Their concerns were related to the deteriorated condition of the existing wood siding, the lack of a vapor barrier, and fire hardening of the existing residence. Planning staff and the Building Official visited the property with the contractor and determined the following:

1. The existing exterior siding is not deteriorated to the point that the Building Official can approve of the “repair” demolition exemption pursuant to Town Code Section 20.10.020 (copied below), and therefore, further demolition or siding removal would need Committee approval;
2. The installation of a vapor barrier would require the removal and replacement of the existing siding, which constitutes demolition unless Committee approval is obtained; and
3. The replacement of wood siding with Hardie board siding is not a kind-for-kind replacement and therefore requires Committee approval.

On September 18, 2025, the applicant submitted for additional Committee review (Attachment 5). The applicant is requesting that the Committee approve replacement of all existing wood siding on the residence with Hardie board siding. As noted in Attachment 5, the reason for this request is to ensure longevity of the existing historic residence. In addition to the deteriorated condition of the existing wood siding, the applicant desires to ensure the residence is weather resistant and more fire resistant.

To make the house more weather resistant, a weather-resistant barrier must be installed on the exterior of the studs, under the existing wood siding. Removing the existing wood siding and replacing it with the existing wood siding would be challenging due to the condition of the existing wood siding. The applicant is requesting Hardie board siding as a replacement and feels that the new Hardie board siding would be consistent with the appearance of the original materials and that a lay person would be unlikely to discern the difference pursuant to Residential Design Guideline 4.8.2 (Attachment 6). Pictures of the existing wood, new wood, and Hardie board siding are shown next to each other in Attachment 5.

Additionally, the property at 155 Hernandez is located within the Very High Fire Severity Area and therefore must follow Wildland Urban Interface guidelines and requirements. One option for compliance with these requirements is installation of non-combustible siding, such as Hardie board material.

The size and profile of the proposed Hardie board siding would be the same and would be installed horizontally to match the existing wood siding. The existing wood shingle siding on the front porch and lower portion of the west elevation would remain (Attachment 5).

Town Code Section 29.10.020 clarifies that demolition of a historic structure means removal of more than twenty-five percent of the wall(s) facing a public street or fifty percent of all exterior walls. When approved by the deciding body, the following is exempt from the demolition definition:

- a. *Replacement.* The exterior wall covering may be removed if the covering is not original to the structure.
- b. *Repair.* The removal and replacement of in kind non-repairable exterior wall covering (siding) resulting in no change to its exterior appearance or historic character if approved by the deciding body.
- c. *Removal.* The removal of an addition(s) that is not part of the original structure and which has no historic significance, as determined by the Historic Preservation Committee. Demolition shall be determined by subsections (1) and (2) above for the original structure, where walls enclosed by additions shall be considered as exterior walls.

Based on the applicant's description of the existing condition of the residence, it is likely that exemption *(b)-Repair* is applicable to this request.

The applicant is seeking a determination from the Committee that the removal and replacement of the siding is appropriate and therefore exempt from the demolition definition. Should the Committee find merit in the request, a recommendation would be forwarded to the Community Development Director. Once approved, Building Permit revisions could be approved by the Town and the project would not return to the Committee.

FINDINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

A. Findings

Sec. 29.10.020. Demolition (historic structures)

All remaining exterior walls must be contiguous and must retain the existing exterior wall covering. No new exterior wall covering shall be permitted over the existing exterior wall covering. The following are exempt from this definition:

- ___ b. *Repair.* The removal and replacement of in kind non-repairable exterior wall covering (siding) resulting in no change to its exterior appearance or historic character if approved by the deciding body.

B. Considerations

Sec. 29.80.290. Standards for review.

In evaluating applications, the deciding body shall consider the architectural style, design, arrangement, texture, materials and color, and any other pertinent factors. Applications shall not be granted unless:

- ___ For pre-1941 structures, the proposed work will neither adversely affect the exterior architectural characteristics or other features of the property which is the subject of the application.

C. Residential Design Guidelines

Section 4.8.2 of the Town's Residential Design Guidelines offers recommendations for exterior building materials on historic resources (Attachment 6).

CONCLUSION:

Should the Committee find merit in the request, a recommendation of approval would be forwarded to the Community Development Director. The proposed work would be completed with a Building Permit and would not return to the Committee for further review.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 1990 Anne Bloomfield Survey
2. Sanborn Map Exhibit
3. Project Plans
4. Property Pictures
5. Project Description
6. Section 4.8.2, Residential Design Guidelines