



DATE: August 11, 2025

TO: Design Review Committee

FROM: Erin Ventura, Contract Planner

RE: 40 Gold Dust Trail - Design Clearance for the remodel of an existing church  
(APN: awaiting new APN)  
Zoning: R-E  
Design Standard District: Historic District  
Applicant: JWCS Design

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve, with conditions, a Design Clearance application for the proposed improvements at 40 Gold Dust Trail (Kingdon Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses), which is located within the Historic District.

**BACKGROUND:**

The applicant, JWCS Design, resubmitted an application for a Design Clearance for the structure located at 40 Gold Dust Trail. The application was originally reviewed by the Design Review Committee at their April 2025 meeting. During the meeting, the Committee asked the applicant to do more research on the structural integrity of the building and the history of the building.

	<b><u>Requirements for Design Clearance:</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed:</u></b>	<b><u>Design Criteria met:</u></b>	<b><u>Recommendations, if any to meet Design Clearance:</u></b>
<b>Zoning</b>	R-E	R-E	Yes	
<b>District:</b>	Historic District			
<b>Lot Size:</b>	NA	31,267 sf	yes	
<b>Set Back requirements:</b>				
<b>Front</b>	35'	40'	yes	
<b>Side</b>	15'	11'	Existing	
<b>Rear</b>	40'	13'	Existing	
<b>Lot coverage</b>	15%	10.12%	Yes	
<b>Are there existing historic features?</b>	Yes	Some will be preserved	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preserve as many historical features as possible for reuse in the new building.</li> <li>- Make available materials that will not be reused by the property owner to the community.</li> </ul>

<b>Structure Type</b>	Masonry and wood framed	Wood Framed	Yes	
<b>Max Building height</b>	35 Ft.	25"	Yes	

### **DISCUSSION:**

The existing structure reflects a simple National Style building that has undergone expansions over time, which has altered some of its original historical character. While the additions made do not fully align with traditional design criteria, the metal roof, masonry and shutters remain as notable features.

The historic building, originally built in the 1870s and once used by the Central Eureka Mining Company, is part of a historic mining site in Sutter Creek, CA. It has been renovated multiple times (notably in 1991, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2009, and 2019) and is currently owned by the Jehovah's Witnesses. (See application materials for a more detailed report on the history of the building.)



Based on multiple structural assessments (2023), the 1870 unreinforced masonry (URM) portion of the building has severe structural deficiencies and does not meet the Life Safety Performance Level (S-3) of ASCE 41-17, which is necessary for buildings in high seismic areas. A summary of the structural assessments:

1. Foundation:
  - Stacked stone foundation is deteriorated and affected by moisture.
  - Mortar erosion and instability in several areas, allowing bricks to be removed by hand.
2. Walls:
  - URM walls are significantly weakened—approximately 25% of mortar is chalky or missing.
  - Mortar application and quality are inconsistent.
  - Height-to-thickness (h/t) ratio exceeds code limits, making them unstable during seismic events.
3. Roof and Floor Framing:
  - 60% of roof framing and 50% of floor framing are affected by dry rot and insect infestation.
  - Connections between roof/floor systems and walls are inadequate or deteriorated.
  - Attic joists embedded in brick have dry rot, and bricks are often loose or missing.
4. Moisture Intrusion and Ventilation:
  - Poor crawlspace drainage and ventilation have led to a persistently damp environment.

- Ongoing pest and mold issues due to moisture retention.

Based on the attached assessments, the building should not be used as a place of worship as it poses a life-safety hazard.

Staff met with the applicant on July 29, 2025 to review the findings of their research and their revised proposal. At that time we discussed repair vs replacement. They are working on an estimate for repair costs but even if repair is feasible, there is no guarantee that the original materials would survive what is would required to bring the building up to code.

Due to many factors, the applicant is proposing to demolish the existing historical building, saving as much of the building material as possible, and reconstruct it with material similar in character.

## **DESIGN STANDARDS**

### **3.3 Design Standards that apply to all Historic District Projects**

#### **3.3.1 Preservation and Treatment of Existing Historic Features**

##### **a. Historical features shall be preserved**

The applicant is proposing to preserve as many historical features as possible with reuse of bricks, stones, shutters, and doors.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the information provided staff is recommending that the DRC approve a Design Clearance of 40 Gold Dust Trail with the following conditions;

1. Reuse as many historical elements as possible including stone and brick, and doors and shutters.
  - a. Any materials that will not be used on site will be made available to members of the community for use.
2. Maintain the existing concrete vault and vault doors.
3. Provide a sign/plaque with photos and historical information on site.