



"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."

Planning Commission Memorandum

Meeting Date: August 19, 2025

Prepared By: Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

SUBJECT: Update on Historic District Guidelines and Proposed Standard Findings for Discussion

This memo provides an update on the Planning Commission's efforts to address City Council Recommendation 4 (per October 22, 2024, Planning Commission memo and January 7, 2025, City Manager response) regarding the systematic examination of the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards and the development of a framework for consistent decision-making in historic district project reviews.

Progress Update Since July 15, 2025:

- Commissioner Lepper has submitted edits (see Attachment B) to the draft standard findings proposed by Chair Kiehne on January 28, 2025, memo (see Attachment A), refining language to emphasize physical compatibility, sustainability, and fire resistance in alignment with SOI Technical Brief No. 16 and Placerville's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.
- The GIS map of historic districts, under development by City staff, is nearing completion to assist in identifying contributing vs. non-contributing structures, addressing Council priorities on Age of Structure and Historic Designation.
- Commissioner Lepper continues to review the City's website to consolidate historic district resources, including the digitized Historic Structure Inventory, ordinances, maps, and SOI Standards (available at <https://www.cityofplacerville.org/historic-districts-residential>).

Proposed Standard Findings (with Commissioner Lepper's Edits):

- For your review and potential adoption, the following findings are proposed for use in historic district project evaluations:
- The Planning Commission has determined that the SOI Standards have been applied in a reasonable manner, taking into account economic and technical feasibility. [Subject Application] replaces [Subject Item] with material that conveys physical compatibility

with existing materials/context and preserves the distinctive visual features of the existing historic structure.

- The overall effect of the project, as proposed or amended, is consistent with the historic context of the property and surrounding area. The project, as approved, is a minimal change to the overall external property.
- Placerville is located in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The project, as proposed or amended, utilizes material(s) that preserve the physical and visual attributes of the existing structure but are superior with regards to sustainability and/or fire resistance.

These findings are designed to be adaptable, similar to CEQA exemptions, ensuring consistent and fair application while allowing flexibility for wildfire safety and common concerns (e.g., windows and siding).

Items for Discussion:

1. Review and finalize the proposed standard findings for use in project reviews.
2. Discuss progress on website enhancements and GIS map integration to improve public access to historic district information.
3. Consider next steps for defining a “working” era of significance (e.g., 1860-1930) for contributing structures and additional findings based on comparisons with other California communities.
4. Evaluate requiring applicants to submit high-quality photos or samples of proposed materials for accurate review.

These efforts align with City Council priorities on wildfire safety, common concerns, and establishing historic designation cutoffs.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Chairperson Kiehne memo dated January 28, 2025
- B. Commissioner Lepper’s timeline, background and suggested findings
- C. Draft Planning Commission Efforts spreadsheet

INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

City of Placerville City Code
Ordinance 1280 (Establishing Residential Historic Districts)
Ordinance 1474 (Regulating Protection and Enhancement of Historic Buildings)
Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings
Preservation Brief No. 16