



Frequently Asked Questions: Historic Resources Review of Exterior Changes to Faculty/Staff Homes in Unincorporated Santa Clara County

1. If I have a home that was built more than 50 years ago, what is the current process for review of any exterior changes?

First you submit your plans to Stanford's Faculty/Staff Housing Office. Prior to approval of any exterior work on a building that is 50 years old or older, FSH sends the plans to Stanford Heritage Services, which conducts a preliminary review for consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties (the Standards).

For example, replacement "in kind" of deteriorated materials is preferred under the Standards: wood windows should be replaced with wood windows, metal windows with metal windows, wood siding with wood siding, etc. In some cases, replacement "in kind" has not been feasible and exceptions have been approved.

Additions and alterations are also reviewed. Additions to the sides and rear of a home are generally acceptable under the Standards, provided that the scale and materials are compatible. Alterations to the front of a house require more care to preserve the historic appearance of the building.

Once you have obtained university approval for your exterior changes, ordinarily you proceed to the County for a building permit. However, there are two situations that require additional, discretionary County permits for exterior changes. First, for any home that Santa Clara County has designated as a "landmark," exterior changes are reviewed by the County, and County approval of a landmark alteration permit is required. A home cannot be designated a landmark without the homeowner's consent and there is currently only one home in the faculty neighborhoods that is a County-designated landmark. (The Hoover House and Hanna House are National Register Landmarks but not County landmarks.)

Second, if the County has applied "-h historic preservation combining district" zoning to a property, then the County exercises its own discretion in deciding whether to approve exterior changes. Currently there are no -h districts in the faculty neighborhoods.

Please note that these rules apply to exterior changes to buildings; *demolition* requests for buildings more than 50 years old are more complicated and more likely to be denied at both the university and the County level.

2. *Is this process different if Stanford owns the home?*

No. Stanford projects must follow the same procedures and review.

3. *When and how was this process established?*

The Stanford process was formalized in 2006, following inquiries from Santa Clara County regarding historic preservation in the faculty neighborhoods. The new procedures were posted on the FSH website and discussed with the SCRL Executive Committee at that time.

4. *Is this process different for Stanford than the rest of Santa Clara County?*

As explained above, the internal Stanford process precedes and is different from the County's process. All generally applicable County ordinances apply in the faculty neighborhoods; the two key ordinances for this process are the zoning ordinance and the historic preservation ordinance.

First, single family homes in the faculty neighborhoods are governed by the County's zoning ordinances. There are two neighborhoods elsewhere in the County that have been identified as historic districts. There, "-h historic preservation combining district" regulations require design review for exterior changes to all houses in those districts regardless of age. Design review approval requires review and recommendation by the County Historical Heritage Commission and a public hearing by the County Zoning Administrator. This review process is more restrictive than the current Stanford or County process in the faculty neighborhoods.

The County's existing historic preservation combining districts in other neighborhoods also impose substantive development standards that can constrain design options. Exterior changes must be compatible with the historic character of the district. In addition, setbacks, building height, building size, exterior materials and colors, window forms, and landscaping are regulated within these historic combining districts.

Second, the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance applies throughout the County, including at Stanford. For houses listed as County Landmarks, this ordinance requires County approval of a landmark alteration permit for proposed exterior changes. Currently these procedures only apply to one home at Stanford.

Finally, under the Historic Preservation Ordinance, houses that are not landmarks and not located in an -h district may still be included in the County's Heritage Resource Inventory as "historic resources." Inclusion on this Inventory, standing alone, does not affect your ability to make exterior changes to your home (but would restrict your ability to demolish it). Currently a handful of faculty neighborhood houses are listed on the County Inventory.

5. What actions did the County's Housing, Land Use, Environment, and Transportation (HLUET) Committee consider at its most recent meeting regarding the San Juan Residential District (faculty housing subdivision including: San Juan, Pine Hill, Hill, Pierce Mitchell Neighborhoods)?

At its meeting on June 20, the HLUET Committee received a report stating that County staff plans to engage a consultant to perform a Historic Resource Survey of the "San Juan Residential District." The HLUET Committee also considered plans to evaluate the existing built environment within the area and to assemble a public "advisory group" that will provide advice to the County "at key decision points during the survey process."

(The "San Juan Residential District" includes all faculty homes between Campus Drive East and Page Mill Road. This can be confusing as the San Juan Subdivision is much smaller than this – from Alvarado Row to Junipero Serra Boulevard but ending at Frenchman's Road – and the "San Juan Hill" neighborhood is even smaller.)

6. What is a historic resource survey?

A historic resource survey determines which, if any, buildings in a certain area are historically significant, meaning that they meet specified listing criteria. The survey establishes a local framework for evaluation (called a "historic context") and then applies the criteria for listing on the County Inventory, California Register and National Register to identify significant buildings.

Under California guidance, all buildings over 45 years old within the survey boundary should be evaluated. Groups of buildings or entire neighborhoods may also be evaluated for their potential to comprise one or more historic districts. In historic districts, buildings can be individually significant, significant as "contributors" to the character of the district (but not individually significant) or non-contributors.

Volunteers and local historical groups may provide assistance with a survey; however, a historic survey must be prepared by professional(s) who meet qualification standards for an architect, historian, architectural historian and/or archaeologist.

7. How are historic resource surveys used by Santa Clara County?

Santa Clara County uses historic resource surveys as its starting point to identify potential landmarks, historic districts, and historic resources (i.e., properties included in the County's Heritage Resource Inventory).

8. What does it mean if the survey identifies my house as historically significant, or potentially historically significant?

The survey, standing alone, does not change the status of your home, but if the survey is prepared by a qualified professional, these conclusions about your house may create a "fair argument" that the house is a historic resource under CEQA. The Board of Supervisors may place your home on the Heritage Resource Inventory or within an -h combining district based on the conclusions of the survey and without owner consent.

The County could also begin proceedings to list your home as a County Landmark but, the Board of Supervisors cannot actually designate your home as a landmark without your and the university's consent.

Under existing zoning ordinances, listing of your home on the County Inventory should not affect County review of your permit for exterior changes. However, those ordinances could be changed.

If an -h district is added to encompass your home, exterior changes to the house may be required to meet design guidelines and other historic preservation standards. Many exterior changes would require a county permit.

Exceptional buildings may be nominated as landmarks. Landmarks are subject to heightened design review and very few if any exterior alterations would be permitted.

It may be very difficult to demolish a house that fits into any of these three categories.

9. What input do I have into the survey?

Santa Clara County plans to hire a consultant to conduct the historic resources survey. During the survey process, you may have input as a member of the public, because a historic survey conducted for the purpose of the Heritage Resource Inventory "shall involve public participation" under the County's rules. After the survey is complete, the Historical Heritage Commission would review the findings of the survey and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding listing on the County Inventory. The Historical Heritage Commission hearings and Board of Supervisors' meetings would present additional opportunities for comment.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Historic Preservation Ordinance

The County of Santa Clara adopted an ordinance in 2006 that added review steps for County Landmarks and properties listed on the Heritage Resource Inventory. The Historic Preservation Ordinance can be viewed online at https://library.municode.com/ca/santa_clara_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITCCODELAUS_DIVC17HIPR#TOPTITLE.

Historic Resource Survey

(RESOURCE: SANTA CLARA COUNTY'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE)

A) the process of systematically identifying, researching, photographing, and documenting historic resources within a defined geographic area, and b) the resulting list of evaluated properties that may be consulted for future designation. All surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Identification and Evaluation, as may be amended.

In order to identify and evaluate the significance of a building, structure, site or object the following information is documented: 1) description of the property's physical appearance, 2) assessment of its historic, architectural, or archeological integrity; 3) statement of its significance, 4) map with clearly delineated boundaries, and 5) photographs. The survey results in a list of evaluated properties that may be consulted for future designation. The survey process shall involve public participation and the evaluation results shall be made available to the public.

Heritage Resource Inventory

(RESOURCE: SANTA CLARA COUNTY'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE)

Historic resources evaluated in a historic resource survey that potentially meet the designation criteria outlined in the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance, [Chapter 3.50 of the Zoning Ordinance](#) or Division C16 of the County Code or listed in federal or state registers may be added to the heritage resource inventory by the Board of Supervisors with consideration of a recommendation by the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission. Notice shall be provided by mail to the property owner and occupant of the subject historic resource at least 30 days prior to the scheduled Historical Heritage Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings, in accordance with all applicable laws. Notice shall include the date, time and place of the meeting, a general explanation of the proposed listing to be considered, and a general description of the property location.

Properties listed in the Inventory are subject to a demolition review process by the HHC and the Board of Supervisors under [Santa Clara County Code, Section C17-23](#).

Historical Heritage Commission

(RESOURCE: SANTA CLARA COUNTY WEBSITE [HTTPS://WWW.SCCGOV.ORG/SITES/DPD/COMMISSIONS/HHC/PAGES/HHC.ASPX](https://www.sccgov.org/sites/dpd/commissions/hhc/pages/hhc.aspx))

The Historical Heritage Commission (HHC) was established by the Board of Supervisors to protect, preserve, and promote historic resources within Santa Clara County. It is comprised of volunteer community representatives, with two commissioners representing each of the five County supervisorial districts and one member serving at-large.

The HHC ordinarily meets the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM in the Board of Supervisors Chambers. The HHC administers grant programs, manages listings on the Historical Resources Inventory, recommends listing of Landmarks and issuance of Mills Act Contracts to the Board of Supervisors, provides comments to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on Environmental Impact Reports, and reviews permit applications for alterations to Landmarks, demolition of properties on the Heritage Resource Inventory, and alterations to properties in -h-combining districts.

Landmark

(RESOURCE: SANTA CLARA COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE)

The Board of Supervisors may designate those historic resources as "landmarks" which meet the following designation criteria:

1. Fifty years or older. If less than 50 years old, sufficient time must have passed to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the historic resource and/or the historic resource is a distinctive or important example of its type or style; and
2. Retains historic integrity. If a historic resource was moved to prevent demolition at its former location, it may still be considered eligible if the new location is compatible with the original character of the property; and
3. Meets one or more of the following criteria of significance:
 - a. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
 - b. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history;
 - c. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values; or
 - d. Yielded or has the potential to yield information important to the pre-history or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

Designation may be initiated by any of the following parties:

1. Owner(s) of the historic resource proposed for designation or authorized representative of the owner; or
2. Historical Heritage Commission; or
3. Board of Supervisors.

Written consent by the owner is required for Landmark listing.

Zoning (Zoning Ordinance)

(FROM SANTA CLARA COUNTY MUNICIPAL CODE)

The zoning ordinance divides the unincorporated territory of the county into geographical districts designated as zoning districts. Groups of these districts are designated as zoning for rural uses, resource conservation, open space and environmental protection, while the remainder are designated as zoning districts for urban uses. The zoning ordinance establishes regulations limiting the use of land and structures, the location, height and bulk of structures, the open space about buildings and principal uses, and provides for such other measures that will accomplish the purposes of the zoning ordinance and the general plan.

-h Historic Preservation Combining District

(RESOURCE: SANTA CLARA COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE)

The "-h" combining zoning district is intended to provide for the preservation of historic sites, historic structures, buildings of architectural significance, and other natural and human-made heritage resources which are included in the National Register of Historic Places, or which are otherwise designated as a registered cultural heritage resource.

Each application of a historic preservation combining zoning district to an area shall be indicated by the designator "-h" added to the base zoning district designation, and each shall be numbered in order of application (e.g.: "-h1", "-h2", "-h3", etc.). The policies, standards, and criteria of the "-h" historic preservation combining district prevails over any conflicting regulations of the applicable base zoning district.