
From: Serge Bonte
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 11:10 PM
To: City Council
Subject: re: 12/9/25 Meeting - Agenda Item 6.1 Historic Preservation Ordinance and Historic Register Update

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Honorable Mayor and City Council Members,

I live right next to one of Mountain View historical houses (that house was moved within a large lot to make room for 3 additional homes, we all share a private driveway). And we're very grateful for that chance and for the existing preservation programs in Mountain View.

1. Historical Context

That said, a building is not historical just because it is over 50 years old (otherwise, I would have been a historical figure for the past 10 years already :). I feel that some of the resources surveyed and proposed for preservation provide little to no historical value.

As an example, this property on El Camino which is proposed to be added to the register.

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site Distri

P5a. Photo



There is nothing notable about the architecture and the proposed inclusion is because it is associated with the theme of Automotive Commercial Development (1945-1979) per Mountain View's proposed historical context.

That theme could be associated with any town in the USA and there is nothing special about automotive services in Mountain View (El Camino Real is not Route 66).

I realize that Mountain View, California and the USA are all much younger than my hometown of Nice, France. However, I feel that some of the themes in Mountain View's historical context set a very low bar for historical significance worthy of preservation

2. Removal of Opt-out choice for property owners

As you know, a few weeks ago the City decided to raze the current Public Safety building even though it was historically significant (certainly an order of magnitude more significant than the building in the picture above). In other words, the City opted out...but wants to ban that option for private properties. That doesn't strike me as fair. It could also prevent property owners from leveraging the recent upzonings which might very well lead to litigation.

3. Historical District and SB79

Like many others I'd like to preserve as much as possible of the Castro Pedestrian Mall. It sounds like this "might" be possible via an alternate plan but I'm not sure a historical district can be established quickly enough (also many of the buildings on Castro are not that significant).

Whatever method works best, please get on it quickly.

Regarding the scope of that downtown historic district, I would limit it to just the 3 pedestrian mall blocks on Castro Street, I have seen some advocacy to extend that area to Franklin and Hope, that's excessive as it encompasses too many lots already redeveloped (parking garages, former 23 and me building....).

I understand that an alternate plan would require reallocation of density. If you limit the historic district to just 3 blocks on Castro, that reallocation could happen Downtown by simply enlarging the highest density radius from 0.25 miles to 0.3 miles (as an example). Such a plan would hopefully preserve the pedestrian mall as we know it while still allowing the highest density near the highest quality transit in Mountain View.

Sincerely,

Serge Bonte

From: Carol Donahue
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 8:13 PM
To: City Council
Subject: comment on 6.1 Historic Preservation Ordinance and Historic Register Update.

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Honorable Members of the Mountain View City Council:

As a board member of the Mountain View Historical Association, I am writing to comment on the City Council meeting of December 9, 2025, public hearing on agenda item 6.1 Historic Preservation Ordinance and Historic Register Update.

As the impact of SB79 on our historic downtown is now known, the designation of a historic district to be placed on the Mountain View local historic register (which would include the downtown historic retail district and adjacent commercial buildings) is now one of the most significant and time-sensitive of the actions needed to preserve the character and vitality of our downtown with the creation of an SB79 local alternative plan.

We request the support of Council on this issue as there is no other option if we are to have a historic downtown that preserves the history, identity and vibrancy of our city, particularly in this time of massive urbanization.

Respectfully,

Carol Donahue (she/her)
Board Member



MOUNTAIN VIEW
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

www.mountainviewhistorical.org

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From: James Kuszmaul
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 8:53 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Kamei, Ellen; Ramos, Emily Ann; Hicks, Alison; McAlister, John; Ramirez, Lucas; Showalter, Pat; Clark, Chris; Mountain View YIMBY
Subject: Item 6.1 Comment on Historic Preservation Item

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Mayor Kamei & City Councilmembers,

On behalf of Mountain View YIMBY, I am writing to express several concerns about the current direction of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and Historic Register Update. Our goal is to ensure that Mountain View's approach to historic preservation prioritizes the preservation of genuinely unique historic resources while ensuring that we respect Mountain View's history of being a vibrant, diverse, and continually changing city that welcomes new neighbors, stays affordable for current residents, and allows architectural innovation.

As such, we appreciate that a reason for the Update is to facilitate CEQA by having a prepared list of known historic resources. We also appreciate the desire to assist people with properties on the Historic Registry to make changes that do not impact the historically notable aspects of their property. However, implementation matters immensely to effectiveness.

Our concerns center largely around the overly broad definition of a "historic resource," with nothing to distinguish properties worthy of substantial protection from those simply old enough with no significant changes. For instance, 251 Chiquita Ave's eligibility for the registry is based on it being "a good local example of a Craftsman bungalow built during a period of increased housing development for local employees of the Pacific Press Association." (Page 129, ATT 5). The report includes the photo below, with notes that most of the external-facing architectural elements would be considered "character-defining features," including the roofing, cladding, windows, porch, eaves, and vents.



The justification for most properties on this list appears to be similar, with similar sets of things included in the "character-defining features." Combined with staff's recommendation for a far more onerous opt-out process, essentially any 50+ year old building in Mountain View without substantial alterations would face onerous permitting procedures for any changes (whether seismic retrofits, fire safety, or accessibility fixes). While procedures would exist for many of these things, whether via the California Historic Building Code or via city-

administered exemptions, we have consistently seen that extra procedural barriers & approvals meaningfully increase the cost of making such improvements, and thus lead to lower-quality, less-accessible, and less-safe housing for residents.

With these things in mind, we would suggest the City:

- Maintain clear & objective criteria that it will use when it needs to perform CEQA analysis, and endeavor to identify properties meeting those criteria in advance. This does appear to be the current direction of the project, we hope that it continues so that CEQA analysis can be performed expeditiously when needed.
- Separate properties significantly critical enough to preserve from those less so
 - For significantly critical properties, the city should work with the property owners to determine the long-term cost of maintaining the historically notable features and ensure that the burden for doing so falls on the city making the designation and not on the property owners, who now or later may have neither the money nor the interest to maintain. In extraordinary cases, the city may choose to take direct ownership, as is the case for the Rengstorff House and the Adobe Building.
 - For less significant cases, the city should continue to allow property owners to opt-out. As seen in the public comment in Attachment 8, some property owners are excited about preserving the historic nature of their own property, but do need the Mills Act compensation to afford it. Allowing this to continue for less-significant properties is appropriate, but we should not be forcing these property owners to participate in the Historic Registry.
- Not to introduce historic districts. It is not clear what the purpose of local historic districts is. At this time, there is no area in Mountain View where every property should be automatically considered worthy of government-designated preservation, unless the district were defined so narrowly to be individual buildings. If the city is to create a process for this, however, it should require a far higher threshold than 50% of property owners approving. While 50% may be appropriate for a petition to consider creating a district, the city should also require a super-majority (e.g., 75%) of property owners or residents to formally approve of the district.
- Provide explicit exemptions for accessibility and safety-related improvements to designated properties.

Mountain View YIMBY does acknowledge the work of staff and the consultant in compiling the comprehensive history used in the draft survey. It is important to note that the physical preservation of building facades is not the only way to preserve and teach our history. We would love to see some of the work that has already been done preserved and collated into a more approachable form so that more people can learn about Mountain View's history through architecture. However, if we are to truly respect Mountain View's history, we cannot forget that it is the people, not the buildings, that make Mountain View the city that it is.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

James Kuszmaul, on behalf of MV YIMBY



From: Leslie Murdock
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 10:04 PM
To: City Council
Subject: SB79 hearing on the city's Historic Ordinance and Local Register

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Honorable Council Members,

As the impact of SB79 on our historic downtown is now known, the designation of a historic district to be placed on the Mountain View local historic register (which would include the downtown historic retail district and adjacent commercial buildings) is now one of the most significant and time-sensitive of the actions needed to preserve the character and vitality of our downtown with the creation of an SB79 local alternative plan.

We request the support of council on this issue as there is no other option if we are to have a historic downtown that preserves the character, history, identity and vibrancy of our city, particularly in this time of hyper urbanization.

Thank you
Leslie Murdock and Kathy Hall

From: IdaRose Sylvester
Sent: Tuesday, December 9, 2025 11:18 AM
To: City Council
Subject: Please consider a Downtown Historic District

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Dear Mayor Kamei and Councilmembers,

Please consider a Downtown Historic District tonight.

Our downtown's history is much more than a few iconic buildings designated as historic; it's the story Castro Street tells as a whole, the history that comes to life when viewed holistically. While standing at the train station, you see the view that inspired someone to name the city "Mountain View." As you walk down the street, stories of past families, businesses, social trends, and our rich cultural heritage, are revealed.

Mountain View's downtown is unique; many cities never had or have lost their historic core. Preserving our historic core has economic benefits—many we could better optimize—and holds opportunity for building civic pride and engagement, helping build a stronger community for all.

Thank you for your consideration,

IdaRose Sylvester
Mountain View Historical Association