



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



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## **POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT EVALUATION OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Effective June 12, 2019, staff shall implement the policies and follow the guidelines and procedures pertaining to historic resources, as identified in the attached documents, when evaluating projects subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Bruce Durbin, Ordinance Studies Section, at (213) 974-6461 or [bdurbin@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:bdurbin@planning.lacounty.gov).

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### Attachments:

CEQA Policies and Guidelines for Historic Resources  
CEQA Procedures for Identification of Historic Resources

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# POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR CEQA EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

## I. Introduction

A. According to CEQA, a project that causes a substantial adverse change to a historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. This document contains policies related to the evaluation of historical resources for CEQA purposes. The policies are identified in this document as Policy 1, 2 and 3. Additionally, this document provides guidance on the following:

1. Historical resource determination and significance;
2. Substantial adverse change to historical resources and significant environmental effect;
3. Categorical exemptions related to historical resources;
4. Mitigation for projects adversely impacting historical resources;
5. Historic Resource Assessment Report requirements; and
6. Appropriate CEQA document determination.

B. For CEQA purposes, historical resources include archaeological sites. However, archaeological sites are beyond the scope of this document. See [California Code of Regulations \(CCR\) Section 15064.5\(c\)-\(f\)](#) for guidance on archaeological sites.

## II. Historical Resource Determination and Significance

Pursuant to CCR Section 15064.5(a), historical resources include resources that are:

- A. Listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), which includes National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listings.
- B. Listed in the County Register of Landmarks and Historic Districts (“County Register”) or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements of [Public Resource Code \(PRC\) Section 5024.1\(g\)](#). CCR Section 15064.5(a)(2) states, “A lead agency must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that the resource is no longer historically or culturally significant.”

C. Determined by the County to be historically significant.

1. Pursuant to CCR Section 15064.5(a)(4), the fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, not included in a local register of historical resources or identified in an historical resources survey does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be an historical resource.
2. Policy 1: In addition to criteria A and B of this section, the County considers a resource historically significant if:
  - a. It meets the criteria for landmark designation pursuant to Los Angeles County Code (“County Code”) Section 22.124.070.A-C (Attachment A); or
  - b. It appears to be a contributing property to a historic district that appears eligible for designation by the County. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.080, a *contributing property* is a property within a historic district that has characteristics and features that relate to the historic context and historic significance of the historic district. *Historic district* designation criteria is identified in County Code Section 22.124.070.D (Attachment A).

**III. Substantial Adverse Change and Significant Effect**

- A. Pursuant to CCR Section 15064.5 (b), a project “that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment.” *Substantial adverse change* means the physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired. *Materially impaired* is when a project demolishes or materially alters those character defining features of a resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for inclusion in the CRHR, local register, or historic resource survey.
- B. *Historical integrity* (“integrity”) is the ability of a historical resource to convey its significance. Pursuant to CCR Section 4852(c), integrity is the authenticity of an historical resource's physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource's *period of significance*, the span of time during which significant events and activities occurred. There are seven aspects of [integrity](#). Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Alterations over time to a resource or changes in its use may themselves have historical, cultural, or architectural significance.

- C. Policy 2: Project impacts that reduce a historical resource's overall integrity, such that the resource would no longer be eligible for listing in the CRHR or County Register, shall be regarded as a substantial adverse impact to the resource, resulting in a significant effect on the environment.
- D. Project actions that affect a historical resource but do not result in a tangible perceptible change, do not qualify as a significant effect. For example, modifications to a historical resource's interior space that is not held open to the public would not be considered a significant effect.

#### **IV. Categorical Exemptions**

- A. CCR Section 15300.2(f) states "a categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource."
- B. Pursuant to CCR Section 15331, projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings](#) ("SOI Standards and Guidelines"), are categorically exempt from CEQA (Class 31 - Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation).

#### **V. Mitigation**

- A. Pursuant to CCR Section 15064.5(b)(3), generally a project that follows the SOI Standards and Guidelines shall be considered as mitigated to a level of less than significant impact on the historical resource. SOI Standards and Guidelines are available online. Typically, it is the Standards for Rehabilitation (Attachment B) that are applied to land development projects. The SOI Guidelines provide interpretation of the SOI Standards.
- B. CCR Section 15064.5(b)(4) states, "A lead agency shall identify potentially feasible measures to mitigate significant adverse changes in the significance of an historical resource. The lead agency shall ensure that any adopted measures to mitigate or avoid significant adverse changes are fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other measures."

#### **C. Mitigation Measures**

Following are types of acceptable mitigation measures:

1. Require project to comply with SOI Standards and Guidelines.
2. Redesign the project to avoid adverse impacts

3. Retain rather than remove character-defining features.
4. Relocate historical resource to a compatible location that retains its historic features and compatibility in orientation, setting, and general environment (CCR Section 4852(d)(1)). Relocation may be acceptable mitigation when the property meets the guidelines outlined by [NRHP Criterion Consideration B](#).
5. Documentation for archival purposes (drawings, photographs, and/or displays) following the standards and guidelines for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). Typically, this measure does not mitigate impacts to a less than significant level. However, mitigation measures that are feasible must be proposed. (CCR Section 15126.4(b)(2)).

The following types of measures are useful to include to ensure compliance with the specified mitigation standard.

6. SOI qualified architectural historian shall assess project design for conformance with SOI Standards and Guidelines prior to issuance of building permit, and at 50% and 100% completion (including site visits); assessment reports shall document the review. If project design does not conform to the SOI Standards and Guidelines, no building permit shall be issued. If the project does not conform to the SOI standards at 50% or 100% completion, the County shall be notified, and work on the project shall be halted until the failure to comply with SOI standards has been remedied.
7. Retain a SOI qualified architectural historian to oversee and advise on construction activities related to the historical resource and ensure compliance with the specified mitigation performance standard.
8. A measure that requires future study to develop project-specific mitigation measures or which requires future oversight and advise, but does not specify the performance standard to be met (such as SOI conformance, or retention of specific character-defining features) is inadequate mitigation unless paired with mitigation measures which provide the mitigation standards to be met by the project. Mitigation measures should be written to specify the party responsible for mitigation, the timing of mitigation, the party responsible for mitigation monitoring, and the timing of mitigation monitoring.

## **VI. Historic Resource Assessment**

- A. Policy 3: The Department of Regional Planning (DRP) may require applicants to submit a Historic Resource Assessment (HRA), Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 report as

applicable, to determine a property's historical significance, identify project impacts to a historically significant resource and provide recommendations to mitigate impacts.

- a. Phase 1 HRAs are limited to determining if a property is architecturally historically significant only ([California Designation Criterion 3](#) or County Designation Criterion 22.124.070.A.3).
  - b. Phase 2 HRA.
    - i. If the Phase 1 HRA determines that a resource is historically significant, then a Phase 2 report will be required.
    - ii. In addition to determining historical significance for all California and County designation criteria, Phase 2 reports identify project impacts to the historically significant resource and provide recommendations to mitigate impacts.
    - iii. Applicants may choose to submit a Phase 2 instead of a Phase 1 HRA when a historically significant resource has been identified and therefore eliminating the need for the preparation of both reports.
    - iv. Phase 2 reports are required to determine historical significance for EIRs.
- B. Typically HRAs are required for properties where the resource is 45 years or older, [as recommended by the California Office of Historic Preservation](#). For most properties, the County criteria for designation is 50 years or older. See Attachment A for County designation criteria. The threshold of 45 years accommodates the sometimes lengthy land development entitlement process.
- C. HRA Requirements:
1. HRAs must be prepared by an architectural historian who meets the [SOI Historic Preservation Professional Qualifications Standards for Architectural History](#). [Los Angeles Conservancy maintains a list of qualified professionals](#) that includes Architectural Historians.
  2. All work shall be completed in accordance with the SOI's Standards and Guidelines for historic preservation, including standards for planning, identification, evaluation, registration, and historical documentation.
  3. Revised reports will be required if DRP determines the submitted report is missing required components, inadequate in substantiating findings, inaccurate in description of eligibility or existing condition of the property, or if additional analysis is necessary.

4. Phase 1 HRAs may be on letterhead and must include:
  - a. Evaluation of the property for historical significance, including listing and/or eligibility for listing in the California and County registers as an individual property and as a contributor to an existing or potential historic district. To determine existence of a potential historic district, the evaluation must be supported by a reconnaissance survey of the immediate project vicinity, such as adjacent blocks. A boundary description or boundary map of the potential historic district is not required.
  - b. Map of the survey area and photos of the parcels included in the survey with descriptive captions for each photo that includes associated addresses.
  - c. Description of the regulatory standards.
  - d. Summary of previous evaluations and/or designations.
  - e. Description of applicable historic contexts.
  - f. Description of the property that includes the site, architecture and history of the construction.
  - g. Evaluation of the property's eligibility under the California and County designation criteria (see Attachment A).
  - h. Period of significance.
  - i. Integrity assessment.
  - j. Reference section that identifies all sources used in the report.
  - k. Completion of the appropriate State of California Historical Resources Inventory California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 forms.
  - l. Resumes of authors/contributors to demonstrate how they meet the Secretary of the Interior's Historic Preservation Professional Qualification Standards for Architectural History.
  - m. Current photographs of the property and its vicinity, and copies available building permits and/or other building records.

5. Phase 2 HRAs must be in professional report format and include all aspects of a Phase 1 HRA plus:
  - a. A history of property owners/occupants from a Title search;
  - b. Records search (1-mile radius) from the South Central Coastal Information Center at California State University, Fullerton;
  - c. A historic district boundary map if the property is a contributor to an existing or potential historic district;
  - d. If eligible for listing, a list of the character-defining features of the property that convey its historical significance from its period of significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for listing;
  - e. Assessment of project impacts to the historical resource, including its character defining features. The assessment should include a description of the project, proposed plans for the project, the thresholds for a significant impact, an assessment of whether the project is in conformance with the SOI Standards and Guidelines and if not, whether it would result in material impairment of the resource; and
  - f. Recommendation of mitigation measures to avoid and/or reduce impacts to the historical resource to a level of less than significant.

## **VII. CEQA Documents**

For projects with impacts limited to a historical resource, the following guidance is provided for determining the appropriate CEQA document:

- A. If the project would have no effect on an historical resource it may be eligible for a Negative Declaration.
- B. If the project is designed to be consistent with SOI Standards and Guidelines; must be redesigned to comply with the SOI Standards; or must be redesigned to avoid resulting in material impairment; or if a historical resource is being relocated, a Mitigated Negative Declaration may be prepared which specifies the measures required to avoid impacts or to ensure that impacts are reduced to a level considered less than significant.
- C. If a project's impact to a historical resource cannot be mitigated to a level of less than significant, a Focused EIR will be required.

Attachments:

- A. Criteria for Designation of Landmarks and Historic Districts
- B. SOI Rehabilitation Standards



**ATTACHMENT A**  
**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION OF LANDMARKS AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

22.124.070

- A. A structure, site, object, tree, landscape, or natural land feature may be designated as a landmark if it is 50 years of age or older and satisfies one or more of the following criteria:
1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  2. It is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located; or possesses artistic values of significance to the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  4. It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, significant and important information regarding the prehistory or history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  5. It is listed, or has been formally determined eligible by the United States National Park Service for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed, or has been formally determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing, on the California Register of Historical Resources;
  6. If it is a tree, it is one of the largest or oldest trees of the species located in the County; or
  7. If it is a tree, landscape, or other natural land feature, it has historical significance due to an association with an historic event, person, site, street, or structure, or because it is a defining or significant outstanding feature of a neighborhood.
- B. Property less than 50 years of age may be designated as a landmark if it meets one or more of the criteria set forth in subsection A of this Section, and exhibits exceptional importance.

- C. The interior space of a property, or other space held open to the general public, including but not limited to a lobby, may be designated as a landmark or included in the landmark designation of a property if the space qualifies for designation as a landmark under subsections A or B of this Section.
- D. Historic districts. A geographic area, including a noncontiguous grouping of related properties, may be designated as an historic district if all of the following requirements are met:
1. More than 50 percent of owners in the proposed district consent to the designation;
  2. The proposed district satisfies one or more of the criteria set forth in subsections A.1 through A.5, inclusive, of this Section; and
  3. The proposed district exhibits either a concentration of historic, scenic, or sites containing common character-defining features, which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by plan, physical development, or architectural quality; or significant geographical patterns, associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of parks or community planning.

**ATTACHMENT B**  
**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.