



Historic Background

San Rafael, being the oldest city in Marin County, has many older buildings that contribute greatly to its character. City regulations protect a number of buildings designated as local landmarks. The City Council adopted a survey of older, architecturally interesting buildings and structures known as the Historical/Architectural Survey which includes 305 sites throughout the City. This survey was prepared using the California Office of Historic Preservation standards and criteria for classification. Properties on this list are considered potential historic resources and warranting preservation.

Environmental Determination

The impacts of a project on potential historic resources are examined as part of the planning application process, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA Guidelines section 15064.5 states historical resources may include any “*object, building, structure, site, area, place, record or manuscript ... the lead agency [City determines to be] associated with events [or] persons important in our past [or] embodies ... distinctive characteristics*”. Section 15331 of the CEQA Guidelines identifies when a project involving historical resource restoration or rehabilitation may be exempt from environmental review. Projects that require demolition or significant modification to the exterior of a potential historic resource in a way that reduces its historic value usually may require preparation of a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for consideration as part of the City’s development review process.

Evaluation by a qualified architectural historian is usually required to consider changes to a building, structure or property containing an historic resource, or that would impact an historic resource. This review would include evaluation using the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995), accessible online at: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>

Historic Survey

The San Rafael Historical/Architectural Survey lists structures and areas having historical significance. Structures on the list must be presumed a significant resource, unless evidence to the contrary is provided. (Any structure that also meets the criteria for listing on the State’s Register of Historical Resources must also be considered a potentially significant historic resource).

Historic Preservation Ordinance

The City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 2.18 of the Municipal Code) requires Planning Commission review of exterior modifications or demolition of structures listed as Landmarks and those within a Historic District. The City Council has the authority to add or eliminate properties or districts to the Historical/Architectural Survey.

Historic Properties List

The San Rafael Historical/Architectural Survey was last updated in 1986, and includes rankings of the historic significance of these various structures and sites. The survey is accessible online:

<http://docs.cityofsanrafael.org/CommDev/Planning/documents/historical-architectural-survey.pdf>

The following sixteen sites have been designated as local Landmarks:

- ❖ The Mulberry House (1149 Fourth Street)
- ❖ The Chisholm Residence (1505 Fifth Avenue)
- ❖ 1800 Fifth Avenue
- ❖ The Flatiron Building (724 B Street)
- ❖ The Boyd House and Memorial Park (1125 B Street)
- ❖ Holtwood (510 Belle)
- ❖ The McNear Brick Barn (525-569 Biscayne Drive)
- ❖ The Schlosser/Cole Residence (1023 E Street)
- ❖ The Bradford House (333 G Street)
- ❖ The Robert Dollar House (115 J Street)
- ❖ The McNear Residence (121 Knight Drive)
- ❖ Dr. Hawkins' Residence (418 Mission Avenue)
- ❖ The Robert Dollar Estate a.k.a. Falkirk Mansion (1408 Mission Avenue)
- ❖ The Isaac Jessup House (10 Sentinel Court/241 West End Avenue)
- ❖ The Jessup/Dunand House (14 Sentinel Court)
- ❖ The Litchfield Sign (737 E. Francisco Blvd.)

The following three sites have been designated as historic districts:

- ❖ The Victorian Village (1623-27 Fifth Avenue)
- ❖ The French Quarter (901-911 Irwin Street)
- ❖ 1811-1817 Grand Avenue

More information on all structures and sites on the City's Survey can be obtained at the Planning Division in City Hall (1400 Fifth Avenue).

(updated. 7.2015)