



455 County Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor | Mail Drop PLN 122  
Redwood City, CA 94063  
(650) 363-4161  
planning.smcgov.org

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), public agencies must review the environmental impacts of public projects and private projects that require a discretionary permit, including potential impacts to historical resources. According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, 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. A categorical exemption from further analysis under CEQA cannot be used for a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(f)).

Any project that proposes a substantial change (e.g., addition, remodel, or demolition) to a structure 50 years or older<sup>1</sup> or its immediate surroundings will be evaluated to (1) determine if the structure qualifies as a historical resource under CEQA and (2) if so, identify the project's potential impact on historical resources.

### When is a historical resource evaluation report required?

The California Office of Historic Preservation uses a threshold of 50 years for purposes of inclusion in the Office of Historic Preservation filing system (see [Instructions for Recording Historical Resources](#)). Please note that the 50-year age reference is a discretionary guideline; there are circumstances where a property less than 50 years old may be potentially significant and applicants may be required to submit supplemental documentation.

A historical resource evaluation report is required when **both of** the following conditions apply:

1. The existing structure is 50 years or older<sup>2</sup>.
2. A "discretionary" development application proposes a substantial adverse change<sup>3</sup> to an existing structure or its immediate surroundings which would materially impair the structure (as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(2)<sup>4</sup>); and

The Historical Resource Evaluation Report must be prepared by a qualified architectural historian and include, at a minimum, background/history of the property, assessment of whether the property is listed in or eligible to be listed in a local, state, or federal register of historical resources, identify any potential impacts of the project on the property, and any mitigation measures to reduce project impacts. Planning staff may refer the report to the San Mateo County Historical Resources Advisory Board (HRAB) for review.

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<sup>1</sup> Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Chapter I, Part 60, §60.4.

<sup>2</sup> For purpose of determining age of a building or structure, the San Mateo County Planning and Building Department shall consider the age to be counted from the date of official County building permit final, or in the absence of County records, other supporting documentation as accepted by the Community Development Director.

<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(1), a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource means 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.

<sup>4</sup> Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(2), the significance of an historical resource is materially impaired when a project demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that: (a) convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources, including as determined by a lead agency for purposes of CEQA; or (b) account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resource pursuant to Section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code (PRC), or its identification in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements of Section 5024.1(g) of the PRC, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant.



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**The historical resource evaluation report must evaluate the following criteria to determine whether the property qualifies as a historical resource under CEQA (a property qualifies as a historical resource if it meets any one of the criteria below).**

- A. The property meets any of the criteria of CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5:
  - (1) A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources.
  - (2) Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which the County determines to be historically significant because it meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources, including the following:
    - a. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
    - b. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
    - c. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
    - d. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
- B. A resource included in a local register of historical resources. *As of November 2023, the County only has one property in the local register:*
  - Historic Montara School located at 496 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Montara
  - Assessor's Parcel Number: 036-091-250
- C. The property is included in the Coastal Historical Resources Inventory and has an eligibility rating of 1 to 5D for listing on the local, State, or Federal historic register as an individual contributor or part of a district, [available online](#).
- D. The property is included in the General Plan Overview and Background Issues Historical and Archaeological Resources Appendix B (Inventory of County Historic Resources), [available online](#).
- E. The property is listed on the State or Federal historic register; listed resources can be found online through the [California Office of Historic Preservation](#) and the [National Park Service](#).

### **What are the implications for my project?**

If your project has the potential to result in a substantial adverse change to an historical resource, then it will not qualify for a categorical exemption, and either an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be required:

- 1. An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration may be used when the project's impacts can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level (for example, an addition to a historic building that will comply with the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#)).
- 2. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be required if the project will have significant unavoidable impacts to an historical resource. In addition, a statement of overriding considerations would be necessary for the County to approve the project. CEQA requires the County to balance the economic, social, technological, or other benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental risks in a statement of overriding considerations accompanying approval of a project with significant unavoidable impacts (CEQA Guidelines Section 15093).

(Note that other features of your project and its impact on other environmental resources may also influence the appropriate level of environmental documentation.) In either of the above scenarios, Planning staff will refer the



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Historical Resource Evaluation Report, including any recommended mitigation, to the San Mateo County HRAB for review and comment.

#### *Consultant Resources*

For a list of architectural historians who are known to provide service in preparing Historical Evaluation Reports, please refer to the [California Historical Resources Information System \(CHRIS\) consultants list](#).