



Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council

**DISCUSSION REGARDING AMENDING THE HISTORIC RESOURCES
PRESERVATION ORDINANCE (Hermosa Beach Municipal Code Chapter 17.53)**
(Community Development Director Alison Becker)

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends City Council discuss and provide direction regarding amending the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Executive Summary:

At its August 26, 2025 meeting, the City Council directed staff to prepare a discussion of the Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance. Staff recommends City Council consider and discuss whether to direct staff to initiate an amendment to the program.

Background:

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance was adopted by the City Council on November 10, 1998, through Ordinance 98-1186 and is codified in Chapter 17.53 of the Hermosa Beach Municipal Code (**Attachment 1**). At the time of adoption there were three buildings designated as "potentially historic landmarks." As of October 2025, there are now a total of five properties designated as either a local landmark or "potentially historic landmarks". The following is list of the designated properties:

1. "Bijou" building at 1227-1235 Hermosa Avenue, a locally designated landmark.
2. "Bank of America" building at 90 Pier Avenue, locally designated as potentially historic.
3. Hermosa Hotel building at 20-26 Pier Avenue, locally designated as potentially historic.
4. Hermosa Beach Community Center building at 710 Pier Avenue, locally designated as a landmark.
5. Craftsman Style Residence at 2204 Monterey Boulevard, locally designated as a landmark.

Past Commission and Council Actions

Meeting Date	Description
<p align="center"><u>Planning Commission</u> October 20, 1998</p>	<p>Planning Commission recommends approval of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and adopted Resolution No. 98-65 designating the following properties as “Potentially Historic Landmarks”: 1) Bijou building at 1227-1235 Hermosa Avenue, 2) Bank of America building at 90 Pier Avenue, 3) Hermosa Hotel building at 20-26 Pier Avenue (Resolution 98-65).</p>
<p align="center"><u>City Council:</u> November 10, 1998</p>	<p>City Council adopted the Historic Preservation Ordinance (HBMC Chapter 17.53) via Ordinance 98-1186. The Ordinance incorporates by reference Planning Commission Resolution 98-65, including Exhibit A, designating “potential historic landmarks.”</p>
<p align="center"><u>City Council</u> April 27, 1999</p>	<p>City Council designated Bijou Theater at 1227-1235 Hermosa Avenue as a local Historic Landmark. (Resolution 99-5980)</p>
<p align="center"><u>City Council</u> July 23, 2002</p>	<p>City Council designated the Hermosa Beach Community Center as a local Historic landmark. (Resolution 02-6216)</p>
<p align="center"><u>City Council:</u> April 25, 2023</p>	<p>City Council designated a craftsman style residence at 2204 Monterey Boulevard as local Historic Landmark. (Resolution 25-7486)</p>

At the August 26, 2025 meeting, City Council directed staff to prepare a discussion item for a future meeting regarding possible amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. This request was broadened from an initial proposal to discuss the elimination of the “potential historic landmark” designation for the former Bank of America building at 90 Hermosa Avenue.

Discussion:

Under the Historic Preservation Ordinance, both “landmark” and “potential historic landmarks’ are required to obtain a certificate of appropriateness for any work on the property. Pursuant to Hermosa Beach Municipal Code §17.53.040 a, “Certificate of Appropriateness means a certificate approving such plans, specifications, design, or statements of work, for any proposed alternation, restoration, demolition, removal, or relocation, in whole or in part, of or to improvements relative to designated to landmarks, or landmarks contemplated for historic preservation designation as reflected in Planning Commission Resolution No. 98-65.” All work performed on a designated building must obtain a certificate of appropriateness. Currently, the City Council is the designated decision-maker for all certificates of appropriateness. However, in practice, minor projects, such as new signage and paint, which can be easily reversed, have been reviewed and approved ministerially.

Historic Resources and CEQA

Removing a property from the local designation of local “landmark” or “potentially historic landmark” under the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance does not eliminate the City’s obligation to comply with a historic review when the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is triggered. CEQA is applicable to all discretionary applications that have potential to cause an environmental impact and either require public agency funding and/or projects requiring a public agency’s approval of a discretionary application (Precise Development Plans, Conditional Use permits, Zone Text Amendments, etc.). Under CEQA, a building is not automatically considered historically significant because it is over 50 years old; rather, it requires a professional evaluation to determine its significance. Historical significance is based on specific criteria for local, state, or national registers, which include associations with historical events or people, architectural characteristics, or potential to yield important historical information. Properties younger than 50 years old can also be considered significant if they are of exceptional importance.

In 2018, the City Council adopted PLAN Hermosa and certified the Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR). As part of the EIR analysis, a reconnaissance study (“windshield survey”) of historic properties was prepared. At that time the 220 properties based on a windshield survey conducted in 2016 were identified as potentially historic and this included the former Bank of America Building at 90 Hermosa Avenue (**Attachments 2 and 3**). Due to the potential for future development that might result from the implementation of the General Plan, mitigation measures were necessary to reduce the impact. The following are the most relevant mitigation measures to consider (**Attachment 4**):

MM 4.4-4a - The City shall require project applicants of discretionary projects to conduct historical resources studies, surveys, and assessment reports on a project-by-project basis, when a project proposes to alter, demolish, or degrade a designated landmark or a potential historic landmark as defined by Hermosa Beach Municipal Code Section 17.53.

MM 4.4-4d - Historical resources studies, surveys, and assessment reports shall be performed by persons who meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation (48 CFR 44716).

In practice, staff have used this windshield survey as a screening tool for whether a further historic assessment is required. Windshield surveys are a “building block” for historic preservation and only consist of description information of the building, structure, site, or objects and are generally limited to architecture style, and date of construction. It has been nearly ten years since the last windshield survey, and each year, additional buildings may become historically relevant. The purpose of CEQA is to disclose potential environmental impacts to decision-makers and the public about projects, and to consider alternatives and mitigate impacts to the maximum extent feasible.

As the City Council considers amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance and balancing a range of priorities which can be contrary to each other, it should consider providing direction on the following:

Should the “potential historic landmark” designation be removed from a structure or structures on the Exhibit to PC Resolution 98-65?

If yes, provide direction on whether this should be conducted at the time an owner commissions a historic assessment prepared by a third-party consultant or direct staff to update the ordinance and allocate the funds necessary for a detailed historic building review.

Should the application of a Certificate of Appropriateness be limited to designated historic structures?

If yes, provide direction to make the necessary changes to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Should this be incorporated into the larger Zoning Code Update or prioritized and developed independently?

The Planning Commission previously recommended changing the review authority for Certificates of Appropriateness from City Council to the Planning Commission as part of the Zoning Code Update. It is anticipated that the Zoning Code update will be scheduled for City Council’s consideration as part of the update to the Administrative Processes and Procedures in December. In addition, staff intend to update the Historic Preservation Ordinance as part of the Zoning Code update to formalize a threshold of scopes of work that may be reviewed and approved by the staff ministerially. Finally, the foundational windshield survey of PLAN Hermosa is nearly 10 years old and at a minimum, is scheduled to be updated in 2026.

Historic Resources and PLAN Hermosa

As the City Council considers providing direction for amendments to the Historic Ordinance, it should consider the relevant Goals and Policies of the General Plan. There are numerous goals and policies of the General Plan that the City Council must prioritize. However, the following highlights relevant Goals and Policies related to historic preservation:

Goal 5. Quality and authenticity in architecture and site design in all construction and renovation of buildings.

- Preservation and adaptive reuse. Provide incentives for the preservation or adaptive reuse of historic structures and iconic landmarks.

Goal 10. A strong sense of cultural and architectural heritage.

- **Policy 10.1** Historic landmarks and districts. Encourage the voluntary designation of potentially historic resources such as landmarks or historic districts.
- **Policy 10.2** Protect designated landmarks. Continue to use the Certificate of Appropriateness process for reviewing applications to demolish or alter designated landmarks.
- **Policy 10.3** Public and institutional facilities. Consider the designation of potentially historic public or institutional resources under threat of demolition or deterioration.
- **Policy 10.4** Historic resources as cultural tourism. Promote historic places and cultural tourism as an economic development strategy.
- **Policy 10.5** Adaptive reuse and sustainable development. Promote historic preservation as sustainable development and encourage adaptive reuse of historic or older properties.
- **Policy 10.6** History and cultural heritage. Support and encourage efforts to document and share the cultural heritage and history of Hermosa Beach.
- **Policy 10.7** Culturally inclusive planning. Ensure that historic preservation planning is culturally inclusive and reflective of the unique background and diversity of neighborhoods in the city.
- **Policy 10.8** Incentives and technical assistance. Provide expert technical assistance to owners of potentially eligible and designated historic properties with tools and incentives to maintain historic resources.
- **Policy 10.9** Salvage architectural features or materials. Encourage the preservation or reuse of historic architectural features on site or within the community.
- **Policy 10.10** Archaeological and paleontological resources. Recognize the prehistory and history of the city and strive to identify, protect, and preserve archaeological and paleontological resources.

Finally, the number of designated historic resources is one of ten community progress indicators in the General Plan that should be increased. Community indicators were established to help the City Council, staff and the community to understand, evaluate, and disclose how a particular decision or policy aligns with those established values.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact related to the recommended action. However, depending on City Council direction, staff would evaluate any fiscal impacts to the General Fund.

Attachments:

1. Hermosa Beach Municipal Code Chapter 17.53
2. Windshield Survey

3. Map of Potentially Historic Structures
4. PLAN Hermosa Summary of Mitigation Measures

Respectfully Submitted by: Alexis Oropeza, Planning Manager

Concur: Alison Becker, Community Development Director

Noted for Fiscal Impact: Brandon Walker, Administrative Services Director

Legal Review: Jason Baltimore, Interim City Attorney

Approved: Steve Napolitano, Interim City Manager