

# Planners eye additional Village historical districts

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A \$9,700 plan to create a historical district along Soquel Creek in Capitola was presented to the city Planning Commission Thursday night.

If approved by the state, the plan would allow designated buildings to bypass some federal flood regulations and receive tax incentives when remodeling.

In addition to the Soquel Creek area, which includes about 50 buildings along Riverside Avenue from Stockton Avenue to Oak Drive, three other sites have been named as possible historical districts. Those sites include about 20 residences in the Six Sisters and Lawn Way area along The Esplanade, the Venetian Court area adjacent to the Capitola Wharf and about 40 residences in the Depot Hill area.

Twelve individual buildings were also named as potential National Register properties, a designation that would give them the same benefits as buildings in historical districts.

Buildings listed as significant or contributing to a historical district would not have to follow the stringent Federal Emergency Management Agency guidelines that control reconstruction in the Capitola flood zone.

Under those guidelines, if a home in the city's flood plain is more than 50 percent destroyed in a disaster such as a flood or fire, it has to be raised above the flood plain when it is rebuilt. That means that if the house is 9 feet above sea level and FEMA guidelines place the flood plain at 20 feet above sea level, the house would have to be rebuilt on 11-foot stilts.

If the building is in a historical district, Planner Susan Tupper said, "then you would be able to rebuild your structure basically the way it was before."

Homeowners would also be able to take advantage of tax incentives provided "to help restore and preserve the historical integrity of the house," Tupper said.

When the survey of 245 build-

ings in Capitola was begun about three months ago, the idea was to create one historical district that would include Capitola Village, Tupper said. Such a plan, it was thought, would provide relief to the most people affected by the FEMA regulations.

However, Rowe and Associates, the historical consulting firm hired by the city to do the survey and historical-district application, could not find enough buildings in the Village to qualify it as a district.

"The state uses a thumbnail rule of 75 percent," Charles Rowe said.

Because so much remodeling and rebuilding has been done in the Village, his firm could not make the finding that 75 percent of the buildings are historically significant or contributing, he said.

The only application now being made to the State Historical Review Commission is for the Riverview Avenue area. However, if residents of the other three areas — Six Sisters/Lawn Way, Venetian Court and Depot Hill — say they would like them declared historical districts, Tupper said an appeal will be made to the City Council for money to make those applications as well.

For each area, the applications and documentation of historical significance of the buildings would probably cost about half of the \$9,700 that was spent on the citywide survey, Tupper said, placing the total for all three in the neighborhood of \$15,000.

For an application to be made, 50 percent of the residents in a given area must agree to it, Tupper told the 50 people attending last night's meeting. Owners of individual buildings considered for listing in the National Register of Historic Places must also agree.

Tupper stressed that inclusion in the register has no effect on future remodeling or construction unless the owner wishes to take advantage of tax incentives.

Those buildings listed as contributing to or significant to a historical district are the only ones that could bypass FEMA

regulations.

The major advantage in designating historical districts rather than naming individual buildings is that more buildings can be included, Tupper said. These are the buildings that are not "significant," yet are listed as "contributing" to the historical district.

"You can include a number of structures which probably would not qualify on their own," she said.

When asked by an audience member about the negative aspects of being included in a historical district, she said that local ordinances could then be made that would apply special rules to such areas.

For example, she said, "the city could pass an ordinance which says all buildings in historical districts have to be purple."

However, the chances of the city imposing such narrow ordinances are slim, Tupper said.

"Certainly the city would be willing to try and make it work for people," she said.

Rick Karleen, chairman of the Planning Commission, recommended that residents ask for inclusion in the historical districts because it would give those in the flood plain more latitude in rebuilding.

"I know that if you want to remodel your house, you'd be tied up a little bit with it," he said of the historical designation, "but you'd be tied up worse without it."

Tupper said the Riverview Avenue area could be declared a historical district sometime next spring. A progress report will be presented to the City Council at its Nov. 26 meeting (moved to Tuesday because of Thanksgiving).