

4/12/79 Historic Buildings

Advantages Of Historic Landmark Status Questioned By SC Council

It may be more difficult in the future for buildings to be awarded "historic landmark" status by the city of Santa Cruz.

The Santa Cruz City Council Tuesday balked at awarding landmark status to four proposed structures pending a study by the city staff on what tax advantages owners get and what criteria are used for choosing buildings for the historic landmark designation.

Councilman John Mahaney questioned that all the buildings now listed in the city's Historic Building Survey "need to be historic landmarks."

Mahaney noted there "are apparently tax advantages" in getting buildings designated as historic landmarks and he asked for a staff study to determine what the granting of these advantages

cost other city taxpayers.

Joe Hall, a senior city planner, said there are in some cases tax advantages in the form of accelerated depreciation on improvements to preserve the structures.

Hall said, however, that in all cases it is through the council that such advantages would be provided.

Vice Mayor Larry Edler virtually raised the hackles of two members of the city's Historic Preservation Commission when he called for a closer look at the way the city now defines what is historic.

Commissioners Virginia Sharp and Doni Tunheim listened wide-eyed when Edler said, in part:

"There has got to be a better way to define history. If we let everyone who

has a house that looks funny call it historic, we'll soon be preserving Early American Orange Crate."

Councilman Bert Muhly came strongly to the defense of the historic preservation program. He pointed out that Santa Cruz is a tourist town and that people come here to enjoy and study the broad diversity of architecture, and he said:

"Any walking tour of the town by the children shows examples of architecture to them that we ourselves don't know about."

So far, 18 buildings have been awarded historic landmark status. But the four proposed Tuesday night Cooperhouse, and residential structures at 203 Highland, 1135 North Branciforte and a bar at 1545 Pacific Ave. will have to await the study outcome.