

Landmark decision

SV ponders fate of Evans House

By MAY WONG
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — History buffs here fear that one of the last vestiges of the city's early settlers soon may fall to a wrecking ball.

The city proposes to demolish the near century-old Hugh Evans House to make way for long-planned road improvements at the Mount Hermon Road/Highway 17 interchange.

But last month, it failed to win a demolition permit from the Scotts Valley Cultural Resources Preservation Commission, which named the Gothic Revival-style home a historical landmark in 1990.

Citing the high cost of moving the structure and a lack of alternative sites, City Manager Chuck Comstock appealed. Relocating the house and bringing it up to building codes could cost more than \$100,000 and "is beyond the financial capability of the city," Comstock argued.

Tonight, the City Council is scheduled to hear the appeal and decide whether the number of historical landmarks in Scotts Valley will remain at three or be reduced to two.

The other two historic landmarks in Scotts Valley are the Scott House located near City Hall and the Polo stables on the Polo Ranch property owned by Borland International.

"I recognize these are hard times

for government entities," said Gail Burk, chairwoman of the Cultural Resource Preservation Commission. "But it's a matter of weighing yet another loss of funds versus a permanent loss of a structure for all time, which in my view is a more significant cost."

The Evans House, at 27 Mount Hermon Road, is located near the southbound on-ramp to Highway 17. Though thousands of motorists drive by the house every day, probably few know its historical significance, Burk said.

The house is the only remnant of the Gothic Revival architecture in Scotts Valley. Historians say the gabled structure was built by Thomas Kilfoyl, one of the early settlers of Scotts Valley. In 1894, Hugh Evans bought the farm house, along with two horses, four cows, one calf and an old spring wagon.

The home's most recent owner, Bei-Scott Properties, rented it out until earlier this year, when city officials condemned the property and took possession after negotiations with Bei-Scott to relocate the house failed.

The building stands in the middle of a proposed road that is part of the improvements planned by the city more than four years ago.

The project, called Gateway South, will reconfigure the roads on the traffic-congested entrance and exit

onto Highway 17.

Ken Anderson, the city's public works director, said planners assumed the Evans House would be demolished or relocated by the owner. They drew the plans before the house gained landmark status, he said.

The \$4 million assessment district approved for the Gateway South project did not take into account the cost of relocating the Evans

House, he said.

But where there's a will, there's a way, said Burk.

"I challenge the city of Scotts Valley to view the Evans House as an asset rather than an impediment," Burk said.

She thinks the city could find a way to preserve the house, use it as a boutique, tea shop or a day-care facility, and be reimbursed later by redevelopment funds.

"It's about time we save one or two of our historic buildings," said Jack Boone, treasurer of the Scotts Valley Historical Society, referring to other landmark structures torn down for new development.

"There are very few people who really care whether an old house is saved or not," he said. "But I think every place needs some basic feeling of the history of that individual town."



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Preservationist Gail Burk wonders how many people know of the house's significance.