

Capitola considers forming historical district along creek

Capitola will look at creating a historical district along Soquel Creek that would include about 50 residences on Riverview Avenue, Riverview Drive, and Blue Gum Avenue.

The first public discussion on the historical district will be at the Planning Commission meeting, Thursday, 7 p.m. in City Hall.

The historical district was originally intended for the Village area which, if destroyed by any kind of disaster, could not be rebuilt the same way under Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidelines.

However, the survey, conducted by the Santa Cruz historical consulting firm of Rowe and Associates, did not find a large enough percentage of buildings in the Village area to qualify it as a district.

Rick Karleen, chairman of the Planning Commission, said under FEMA guidelines, if any building in the flood zone is more than 50 percent destroyed in a disaster such as a flood or

fire, it would have to be rebuilt above the floodplain. In the Village area, this would mean being rebuilt on stilts about eight feet high.

Many of the buildings in the Village, he added, are also in the flood way. Under FEMA guidelines, these buildings could not be rebuilt at all.

FEMA is the federal agency which provides emergency insurance at a nominal fee.

"We'd be back to square one if there was a major flood," Karleen said. "The character of the Village just wouldn't be the same."

Karleen added there was another reason for the survey — to see if the Planning Commission should develop some guidelines so that older houses would be preserved.

Besides the 50 residences that could become part of a historical district, the survey listed about 50 other residences in the Depot Hill and Lawn Way areas that have historic value.

Twelve historic residences in

the city were listed as potential National Register properties.

Charles Rowe, of Rowe and Associates, said most of the buildings were designated as historical for their architectural value. They range in the date built from just before the turn of the century to 1935.

Some of the residences are in a Victorian style, but most of them denote a vernacular style of architecture that was peculiar to Capitola during the early part of the century when the city blossomed as a seaside resort.

Planner Susan Tupper said the meeting Thursday is to "turn over the results of the survey to the public."

Tupper said the Planning Department has received many calls from residents asking if the historical designation affects them in any way.

Under present ordinances, she said, historically-designated property owners have the same options with their properties as they had before the survey.