

Village leaders cite need for historical preservation

By BOB SMITH

For the past year, a group of Capitola residents have quietly been working on the possibility of an historical preservation program for the small beach city.

Surveys have been made in the city, locating many of the old homes, stores and landmarks.

Programs in other cities have been studied. Contacts have been made with the federal and state governments to see what public and private resources might be utilized by the city to preserve its heritage from the wrecker's ball.

Now the committee is ready to present their work to city officials. A public meeting will be held Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at Capitola city hall.

The group, composed of public and private officials, is looking at a multi-pronged approach to the problem of saving historical buildings.

First, the committee wants to see an historical preservation element included in the Capitola General Plan. The element would set the city's basic policies in future projects involving old buildings and landmark sites.

The second point would be the enactment of an historical preservation ordinance, the establishment of an historical preservation commission, and the possible establishment of an historical district.

Committee member Alvin Wilder, who is also chairman of the city's planning commission, views Thursday's meeting as the second step in the process of gaining public acceptance of the project.

"A year ago, we started to get public awareness of the idea," said Wilder.

"Now we need public knowledge. Eventually we will get public interest," Wilder believes. "If preservation is to work, it will only be with full public knowledge that it is to the advantage of the property

owners and the people of the city.

"But if we are going to get opposition, we want it to be informed opposition," Wilder said, urging everyone interested — pro and con — to attend.

The committee was the outgrowth of some Depot Hill residents' concern that the heritage of their neighborhood could be lost in a few short years as a result of pressure to tear down the old deteriorated buildings, rather than restore them to a second useful life.

"We started with few buildings on Depot Hill," said Wilder, but the committee quickly expanded to cover West Hill and the Village areas — the scenes of Capitola's initial development as a beach resort community a century ago.

The committee, working from an interview conducted by Wilder and former planning commissioner Lewis Deasy in December, 1976, with historian Phil Walker, compiled a list of 32 buildings and sites related to the town's early days.

Jim Reding, another committee member and the owner of the old Hihn's superintendent's building — an historical landmark and the oldest surviving structure in Capitola — argues that property owners can benefit economically from an active preservation program.

Some of the advantages, he says, are in the tax laws.

"Based on the Preservation and Tax Relief Act of 1976," says Reding, "any owner of structure within a historical district can accelerate his depreciation schedule on any repairs made to a structure. This would be a federal income tax advantage which would provide definite positive tax relief on the federal level."

The establishment of an Historical Preservation Commission would also be the vehicle, Reding and Wilder believe, for attracting private and public grants into the city to save the older structures.

Foundations make grants to historic preservation groups, but some restrict their gifts to groups.

Money is also available from the state and federal governments.

"If you have an historic commission, you can apply for the funds that are available," Reding added.

A historical district, established in the city, would operate as an additional legal safeguard for the old buildings.

"An historical district gives the city the right to establish some special architectural controls," said Wilder.

The Mission Inn in Riverside is one example.

And although not an historical district, Palm Springs has used a similar approach to mandate very tight architectural standards for that city.

"Business was very opposed to the idea at first," Wilder said, "but now the Chamber of Commerce does most of the enforcement."

San Jose has a historical area off Market Street.

To Reding, the destruction of the McHugh-Bianci building in Santa Cruz was an example of what can happen without safeguards.

"It wasn't protected then," said Reding, "but it would be extremely difficult to tear it down today because of the protective umbrellas over it — if the community chooses to use them."

The other committee members working on the project include: Lewis Deasy, Councilman Robert Garcia, Mrs. Cecil Carnes, Phil Walker, and Larry Veasey.

Senior discounts now available

Project SCOUT recently announced the availability of their Senior Discount Directory to all participating merchants. Due to the high cost of mailing and transportation, Project SCOUT would appreciate merchants picking up the directories and their window sign, "Participating Merchant" at the Project office, 1126 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. during the week.

Any new businesses who wish to be included in new editions of the directory may contact the discount office, 423-2128.

Probation given for bad checks

Carl Schaarschmidt, 22, of 2505 Old San Jose Road, Soquel, Wednesday was in Santa Cruz Municipal Court placed on probation for one year on a misdemeanor bad check charge.

The defendant had admitted forging checks on his parent's bank account.

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