



Historic Resources Review Board

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REF240031 - COUNTY OF MONTEREY (PORTER-VALLEJO MANSION)

Public hearing to make a recommendation to the department of Public Works, Facilities, and Parks regarding proposed alterations to the historic Porter Vallejo Mansion, including

Project Location: 29 Bishop Street, Royal Oaks (Assessor's Parcel Number 117-323-013-000)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the County of Monterey Historic Resources Review Board (HRRB) adopt a resolution recommending that:

- 1) The alterations to a historic resources (the Porter Vallejo Mansion), including a new stairway egress with new fire exits on the second and third floors; new outdoor space with new shade structures and picnic tables; and new sustainable landscaping will neither adversely affect the significant architectural features of the designated resource nor adversely affect the character of historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of the designated resource and its site;
- 2) The project is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, under the treatment approach of rehabilitation; and
- 3) The project qualifies for a Class 31 categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15331, and that none of the exceptions from Section 15300.2 apply.

SUMMARY:

The Porter Vallejo mansion is a historic site being used as the Pajaro Library. The mansion is significant for its association with John Porter, who was a major force in the development of the Pajaro Valley, and for its remodeled design by Architect William Weeks, which transformed the home into a Queen Anne style while maintaining its original Gothic Revival features. A detached water tower is also on the site and is a contributing structure to the site's significance.

County Public Works Facilities, and Parks (public works) are proposing rehabilitation and site improvements. This phase of improvements includes a redesign of the patio area southeast of the mansion, with new benches and shade structures, replacement of landscaping with sustainable alternatives, and a new emergency egress from the second and third floors. County Public Works have provided two options for the patio redesign for consideration by the HRRB. Option one includes triangular canvas sunshades with metal frames supported by metal posts to cover two groupings of picnic tables, a round reading area with concrete seating and a platform with a rounded backdrop, as well as a metal fence. Option two includes two square pergolas with metal posts and wooden slatted roofs to cover two groupings of picnic tables. Additionally, County Public Works has provided two material options for the new emergency egress from the second and third floor, one in wood and one in steel. While both options would be consistent

with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, staff are recommending that the triangular canvas for the patio area option be selected, as the historic report prepared for the project (Exhibit D) states that this option is more minimalist and less obtrusive and would lessen visual impact on the mansion. Similarly, staff are recommending the steel option for the emergency egress be selected, as the historic report states this option will be visibly lighter and clearly differentiated from the mansion.

DISCUSSION

Background and Historic Significance

The Porter Vallejo Mansion is a historical home of John Porter, whose role as significant figure within the Pajaro community as a businessman and community leader falls under Criterion B of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). In the 1870s, John Porter moved the one and a half story residence from the Vallejo property to its current location and hired Architect William Weeks to remodel the home into a 23-room, three-story house. This remodel is also significant as an example of the early architectural work from Weeks and meets Criterion C of NRHP. The Porter Vallejo Mansion is notable for Week's ability to convert the home into the Queen Anne style while maintaining the home's original Gothic Revival features. The house is listed on the National and Monterey County historical registers and has been used as the Pajaro Branch Library since 1996.

Previous Alterations Scope

Previous alterations to the mansion were proposed and heard by the HRRB on October 5th, November 2nd, and December 7th 2023, in order to address flood damage from the 2023 Pineapple Express storm and to adapt the building to be more resilient to flood risk in the future. Those alterations included removing and elevating the mechanical equipment; replacing the roofing; removing and repairing/replacing portions of the siding and windows; and associated site improvements including the removal of a non-historic trellis and play equipment, mothballing of a historic water tower, and installation of a three-foot-tall perimeter white picket fence. The project was conditions by the HRRB on December 7th 2023, and recommended conditions which were incorporated into the building plans.

Current Historic Residence Scope

The project proposes to add a stairway and two new fire exits to the main building. The stairway will connect a new dormer exit on the third-floor North-West elevation to a new exit on the second floor South-West elevation of the 1924 addition to the home. According to the National Register nomination the 1924 addition is not character defining and is outside of the period of significance; additionally, the National Register nomination states that the 1924 addition, where the second-floor exit is proposed, was detrimental to the historic layout of the home. Public works has provided two options for building material for the proposed stairway, either wood or steel, and are looking for the HRRB to provide a recommendation.

Current Site Improvements Scope

The project proposes a remodel to the outdoor space used by the library, including the removal of the existing play equipment, ADA ramp, chain link fence, and wooden pergola Public works has provided two different design options for the new outdoor space for the HRRB's consideration. The first option includes triangular canvas sunshades with metal frames and metal support posts to cover two groupings of picnic tables. The second option includes two

square pergolas with metal posts and wooden slatted roofs to cover two grouping of picnic tables. Both options also include a round reading area with curve concrete seating, a platform with a rounded backdrop, and a metal fence with vertical pickets and posts. The project also proposes to replace the current water-intensive lawn with a permeable decomposed granite surface as well as the planting of native, drought tolerant, low-maintenance, non-toxic plants.

Analysis

The proposed project and associated site improvements are consistent with Standards One, Two, Nine, and Ten of the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI's) Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. The proposed egress stairway and fire exits will be installed on the 1924 addition to the home which is considered a non-character-defining addition making it consistent with Standards One and Two which require minimal change to distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships, and that the historic character be retained and preserved, respectively. The proposed egress stairway and fire exits will be painted to match the field color of the mansion and are proposed to be built in either wood or steel with a wooden frame for the second-floor exit and a gable roof cap dormer for the third floor exit making it consistent with Standard Nine which requires new additions to be differentiated yet compatible with the historic design. Additionally, the proposed egress doors and stairway could be removed without affecting the form or integrity of the home making it consistent with Standard Ten.

The proposed outdoor space remodel will be placed in the same location as the existing outdoor space and does not involve any character-defining features and therefore is consistent with Standards One and Two. Two options are provided for the outdoor space remodel, in both the fence and reading area will be compatible with the home and are therefore consistent with Standard Nine. Of the two options provide for the sunshades, the provided historical Report claims that Option one is more minimalist and less obtrusive and therefore is more consistent with Standard Nine. The proposed outdoor remodel could be removed without impact to the form or integrity of the home and therefore is consistent with Standard Ten.

CEQA

CEQA Guidelines section 15331 categorically exempts projects limited to the maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation, or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The project consists of the repair and rehabilitation of a historic property consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards under the treatment approach of rehabilitation, consistent with the intent of this exemption, and none of the exceptions from CEQA guidelines section 15300.2 apply in this case:

- Class 31 exemptions are not qualified by their location;
- Repairing and rehabilitating a historic property would not contribute to a cumulative environmental effect;
- There are no unusual circumstances associated with the project that would create the reasonable possibility of a significant environmental effect;
- The project would not cause damage to scenic resources within view of a state scenic highway;
- The project is not on a hazardous waste site listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; and

- The project would not cause a substantial adverse change to a historical resource.

Prepared by: Joseph Alameda, Assistant Planner

Reviewed and Approved by: Phil Angelo, Senior Planner

The following attachments are on file with Housing and Community Development:

Exhibit A - Draft Resolution

Exhibit B - Project Plans, Colors and Materials and Renderings

Exhibit C - Phase I Historic Assessment (LIB230273)

Exhibit D - Phase II Historic Assessment, including Addendum dated August 30, 2024
(LIB230334)

cc: Florence Kabwasa-Green (applicant); Project File REF240031