

HISTORICAL RESOURCES IN HERMOSA BEACH

The City's historic resources preservation program established in 1998 encourages property owners of historically significant structures or sites to voluntarily apply for local landmark status. A number of financial Incentives are available to the owners of landmark properties. For more information about the program please contact Planning Staff at the Hermosa Beach Community Development Department at (310) 318-0242.

HERMOSA BEACH'S HISTORIC RESOURCES

Protecting the integrity of historic resources in Hermosa Beach is one way that Hermosa Beach can distinguish itself from 'everywhere USA.' As of June 2009, three buildings have been designated for protection under the City's Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance.

- The '*Bijou Theater*' at 1229-1235 Hermosa Avenue is a local and state designated landmark.
- The *Bank of America Building* at 90 Pier Avenue and *Hermosa Hotel* at 20-26 Pier Avenue are designated as potential landmarks that warrant further study by Section 17.53.040(B) of the Historic Preservation ordinance (per Planning Commission Resolution No. 98-65).
- The *Community Center* was designated a locally significant landmark for the purposes of a grant application (City Council Resolution 02-6216).

A Certificate of Appropriateness granted by the City Council is required prior to alteration of the exterior or interior of a designated landmark or potential landmark on a list of historic resources established by City Council being considered for landmark status.

The City's General Plan Land Use Element (Historic Preservation) designates 28 resources as potentially significant including those listed above, although several have been demolished and others have been significantly altered: [Historic Resources Map](#)

As time marches on, more resources become potential candidates by virtue of their age and community significance. However, without specific identification, designation and protection, the community cannot be assured that these resources will remain intact.

HISTORIC RESOURCES PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The City's [Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance in Municipal Code Chapter 17.53](#) is intended to identify and ensure the long-term protection and use of historic resources, such as buildings and structures, sites and places within the City that reflect special elements of the City's architectural, artistic, cultural, historical, political, and social heritage.

Historic Landmark Eligibility:

To be considered as a historic landmark, a historic resource must be at least 50 years old. However, a historic resource at least 30 years old may be eligible if the City Council determines it is exceptional or is threatened by demolition, removal, relocation, or inappropriate alteration.

The resource must also meet one or more of the following criteria:

- exemplify or reflect special elements of the City's cultural, social, economic,

- political, aesthetic, engineering, or architectural history
- are identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history
- embody distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship
- represent notable work of a builder, designer, or architect
- has a unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature or landmark of a neighborhood, community, or the City.

Designating and Protecting a Site or Building as a Historic Landmark:

The property owner may apply for local historic landmark status. Other interested persons or the City itself may also pursue designation. Property owners or interested persons should review the information in the *Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance* before contacting Planning staff at the Community Development Department at (310)318-0242.

Under the City's ordinance, property owners have a duty to maintain landmark resources in good repair. Landmark properties cannot be altered or removed without being granted a 'Certificate of Appropriateness' by the City Council. Property maintenance and some minor modifications are allowed without going through this process; property owners or managers should confirm with Community Development staff whether proposed work may proceed without a 'Certificate of Appropriateness'. The ordinance also provides procedures for removing the landmark designation.

INCENTIVES

Protection of historic resources preserves our cultural past and maintains Hermosa's identity. Some communities have 'marketed' these resources as an important part of their economic development programs. Property owners can be proud of their contribution and also obtain financial incentives. However, historic designation also imposes responsibilities to maintain the building as detailed in the City's ordinance.

Historical Building Code:

Repairs, alterations, restorations, or changes in use of historic landmarks may conform to the California Historical Building Code as an alternative to building standards adopted by the City.

Mills Act Program:

The Mills Act is a state tax incentive law that allows cities to enter into contracts with the owners of historic structures. This contract provides a method of reducing property taxes by 50 percent or more in exchange for the continued preservation of the property.

To qualify for the Mills Act, a building must first be designated as a local landmark or be a contributing structure within a designated local historic district approved by the City Council.

The Mills Act enables the City Council to enter into 10-year contracts with owners of historic properties. The owners agree to maintain and, if necessary, rehabilitate their historic structure. The property may be owner occupied or income property.

The contract automatically renews itself annually so that the term of the contract is always 10 years unless the property owner or City files a 'notice of nonrenewal' electing not to renew, for

any reason. Nonrenewal terminates the contract at the end of the current 10-year term. The owner may also petition the City to initiate an 'immediate cancellation.' If the City approves immediate nonrenewal, a penalty equal to 12.5 percent is imposed. The City may also cancel the contract, but only in the case of breach of the contract conditions.

Participation in the Mills Act Program is administered by the City. Information about this state law, including tax abatement issues, is available at the [State Office of Historic Preservation](#) – click on Incentives.

Other incentives:

Information on other federal and state incentives is available at the [State Office of Historic Preservation](#) – click on Incentives.

HOW CAN I HELP TO PROTECT HERMOSA BEACH'S RESOURCES?

Owners of potential historic resources and other interested persons or groups may contact the Community Development Department at (310) 318-0242 for more information.

The criteria are for listing are:

- exemplify or reflect special elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, or architectural history
- are identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history
- embody distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship
- represent notable work of a builder, designer, or architect
- has a unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature or landmark of a neighborhood, community, or the City.
- is at least 50 years old, or at least 30 years old if determined by the City Council to be exceptional or threatened by demolition, removal, relocation, or inappropriate alteration.

HERMOSA BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Hermosa Beach Historical Society <http://www.hermosabeachhistoricalsociety.org/> exists for the purpose of preserving and chronicling the history of Hermosa Beach. Established in 1987, its offices and the museum are located in the Hermosa Beach Community Center, 710 Pier Avenue (310) 318-9421.

LINKS

- *City of Hermosa Beach, Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance: Municipal Code Chapter 17.53* <http://www.hermosabch.org/index.aspx?page=462>
- *Hermosa Beach Historical Society:* <http://www.hermosabeachhistoricalsociety.org/>
- *State Office of Historic Preservation:* <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/>

8/21/2011