



Staff Report

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**File #:** 22-0830

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**REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION**

**DATE:** 11/02/2022

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**FROM:** Planning and Development Department

**SUBJECT:**

Request from Mayor Speake to explore possible revisions to the City's Historic Resources Ordinance, [Corona Municipal Code Chapter 17.63](#).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Mayor Speake is asking the City Council to consider approving an Ad-Hoc Committee to review and possibly amend certain sections of the City's Historic Resources Ordinance. The City's current ordinance was adopted by the City Council in 2001 and was created in collaboration with the Corona Historic Preservation Society to establish criteria for listing a historic landmark and for the alteration, relocation, or demolition of historic resources.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the City Council** provide staff with direction on one of the options presented by staff or with another preferred course of action.

**PROPOSED OPTIONS:**

Option 1. City Council approve the creation of an Ad-Hoc Committee to evaluate and discuss possible amendments to the City's Historic Resources Ordinance and report back to the City Council on future action items.

Option 2. Defer this request to a future City Council Policy Workshop to allow for consideration of the workload associated with this project within the context of other Council priorities.

Option 3. Continue with the Historic Resources Ordinance as adopted.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City's Historic Resources Ordinance (CMC Chapter 17.63) was adopted by the City Council in 2001. The Historic Resources Ordinance was adopted at the same time as the Historic Resources

Element of the General Plan. City staff collaborated with the Corona Historic Preservation Society during the creation of the ordinance and Historic Resources Element.

The Historic Resources Ordinance promotes the recognition, preservation, and continued viability of historic resources in the City. The ordinance describes the criteria for approving a property or structure as a local landmark on the Corona Register of Historic Resources and for listing a geographical area as a historic district. The ordinance also describes the process for the alteration, relocation, or demolition of historic resources.

Consistent with the Historic Resources Ordinance, the City established a Corona Heritage Inventory, which lists all properties that are considered a potential resource because of its age, and either its context in the neighborhood, its association with an historic event or period, or its significance to the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, cultural, social, artistic, political, or military history of Corona. The inventory identifies the location of the property, the type of structure, the age, and the potential for being listed as a landmark on the Corona Register. A property's potential is ranked as either high, moderate, or low. Currently there are 529 properties listed on the Heritage Inventory.

Heritage Inventory properties may or may not be eligible for listing on the Corona Register of Historic Resources as a landmark. Property owners are responsible for applying to have their property approved as a historic landmark based on the listing criteria described in the ordinance. The City Council has approved 62 landmark properties.

Properties that have been granted historic landmark status in the City are eligible to enter into a Historic Property Preservation Agreement, commonly known as the Mills Act. The Agreement allows the owner to receive a reduction in property taxes in exchange for the property owner's commitment to specific restoration improvements and satisfactory maintenance of the property. The City Council has approved 45 Historic Property Preservation Agreements.

Mayor Speake's request involves the following:

- Formation of an Ad-Hoc Committee, for a limited time, to review possible changes to the ordinance.
- Review the existing ordinance to determine if changes need to be made, such as removing the criterion that the age of the structure shall be at least 50 years old, and replacing it with structures built in a certain era.
- Rather than limit properties to a "landmark" status, explore the creation of additional categories to create a pathway for homes to be recognized and qualify for a Historic Preservation Agreement under the Mills Act.
- Review historic preservation ordinances and guidelines of other cities, such as Riverside and Redlands, to determine if additional criteria should be applied to Corona.
- Explore changes to the City's Historic Property Preservation Agreement.

**ANALYSIS:**

The proposed request would require the commitment of time from City staff in the Planning and Development Department to assist the Ad-Hoc Committee at meetings, with research, and the preparation of materials. Staff's workload is determined by application submittals from the public, the management of projects, and plan reviews. The Department would need to adjust project assignments among staff so that the staff assigned to work with the Ad Hoc Committee would be able to attend to the associated tasks.

If the Ad Hoc Committee recommends changes to the existing ordinance, an amendment to the ordinance would need to be prepared and considered at a public hearing by the Planning and Housing Commission and subsequently by the City Council.

The timeframe anticipated for the ad-hoc committee work is approximately 10 months.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The Department would divert current staffing resources from normal operations to the Ad-Hoc Committee in order to fulfill this assignment. Contract or consulting staff may be required to backfill Department needs in order to ensure operational quality.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. There is no possibility that this action will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

**PREPARED BY:** JOANNE COLETTA, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR