

**PROPOSAL: SAVING SELECTED NON-HISTORIC CARMEL HOMES FROM  
DEMOLITION/EXTENSIVE EXTERIOR REMODELING\***

**MISSION STATEMENT:** to preserve the unique architectural character of Carmel-By-The-Sea residences.

General Plan Objective O1-8 states:

*Preserve the traditional characteristics of scale, good site design and sensitivity to neighboring sites in the single-family residential district through the design approval of new homes, additions and exterior remodeling. Encourage the construction of residences that are diverse and innovative in design yet compatible with the forest setting, site design and materials established by other structures within the neighborhood and adopted Residential Design Guidelines.*

The 1988 General Plan promotes “a preservation program. Such a program will provide a focus for all members of the community to become actively involved in retaining the uniqueness of Carmel and its environment.” The plan goes on to describe the “complementary policies and programs to further the preservation of Carmel’s architectural, cultural, and historic resources.”

**BRIEF BACKGROUND:**

It is no news that real estate prices in Carmel have fueled an increasing trend toward a second home community of wealthy owners, replacing the bohemian professors, artists, and writers of earlier Carmel. This loss of full-time residents and other factors have threatened a sense of community in our small village.

Noted former mayors have fought these trends. Perry Newberry, a journalist, playwright, and political activist, fought to keep Carmel a village in a forest. In 1922 when he was elected Mayor, he was considered “the greatest force Carmel has ever had for the preservation of its beauty, its artistic identity, and fine community spirit.”- *Allan*

*Griffin.* Robinson Jeffers said that Perry Newberry did “more than any other man to keep the town tolerably simple, quiet and tree-protected, in spite of “progress” (*The Carmel Pine Cone, January 3, 2020*). The plaque on the wall at City Hall states that Carmel is “primarily, essentially and predominantly a residential community” (Carmel-by-the-Sea City Council, 1929).

\*Note: commercial buildings are not addressed in this proposal.

Later, Mayor Gunnar Norberg tried to establish Carmel as a “human sanctuary” like a wildlife sanctuary, a *heritage city*. He was quoted as saying “I’ve always tried to hold back the wheels of what is conventionally—and too often foolishly—called progress....today it is perhaps more critical than it has been.” He believed that “to preserve Carmel in some sort of heritage sense there must be altruism, and altruism is very difficult to come by over long periods of time.” (*SF Sunday Examiner & Chronicle, 1976*). The Chair of the Carmel Historic Resources Board states it well: “...maintaining and cultivating this character is a critical way to keep the economic vitality of ...Carmel. People come here as residents or as tourists to visit specifically because of the special character of this little square mile by the sea” (*Eric Dyar, Architect, Pine Cone, January, 2020*).

A committee of fifteen notable Carmelites wrote a 2016 report that addressed several issues, including residential trends in Carmel. They observed that “many new houses are not of the scale, size and design to fit into our village-in-the-forest or into the character of the surrounding neighborhoods.” (*Carmel 2016 Committee Report*). Recently Barbara Livingston, President of the Carmel Residents Association, stated that “visitors come here to escape their hectic lives in the cities. They don’t want to see harshly lit stores or stark modern buildings on treeless streets.” (*The Voice, January/February, 2020*).

“Millions of individual acts of building will together generate a town which is alive, and whole....this is the slow emergence of the quality without a name, as if from nothing.” (Alexander, Christopher, “The Timeless Way of Building” 1979, Oxford University Press).

In spite of the pressure continually exerted to “update” Carmel and encourage “progress,” our village has remained a special place with special buildings, and a destination place for people from all over the world. This has taken work, and the fight to keep at bay those exclusively “out to make a buck” in our village. We are on the verge of losing this fight, as more and more of our cottages are replaced with large modern “anywhere’ designs on our tiny lots.

#### IDEA STATEMENT: WHY WE NEED PROTECTIONS

Many “Carmel Charmers” and other homes of note do not qualify for historic status (see the criteria for historical register below, Table 1). This is for a variety of reasons, one of which is no record of who built it, the year built, etc. Many of these homes are being torn down, mostly to build larger structures, to utilize “highest and best use” standards for the owner/investor.

The purpose of this proposal is to establish a new “level 2” residential status for such homes, with the intent of protecting them from extensive alteration or demolition if possible. This designation would be less restrictive than the standard historic designation (referred to as “level 1” for our purposes), both in qualifications and remodel requirements.

The present trend nationally is toward modern architecture, possibly because it is “in” and/or because owners may want an impressive “trophy” home. New owners in Carmel may not have been steeped in Carmel ways, and if part-time, may be even more resistant to or unaware of local aesthetics. Many of these buildings, in our view, do not fit into the ambiance of Carmel of the past, and hopefully the future. We can make Carmel “anyplace, USA,” but in the process reduce its attraction for residents and tourists alike. We have managed to stave off “progress” for over 100 years. Let’s not lose the battle under our watch!

Opposing Arguments:

*One might say that property owners have the right to do what they want with their own home.* This argument has merit, but any special place has guidelines and restrictions beyond those of most communities. As examples, Venice, Cinqua Terra, the Cotswolds, Solvang, etc. etc. have extensive restrictions to preserve their distinctive history and ambiance. Every location that is a draw for visitors has a consistent identifiable character, and that character requires *restrictions* to survive.

Hand in hand with restrictions is the need for an up-front notification to potential buyers of what it is they may and may not be able to do BEFORE buying a property in Carmel, if possible. That is only fair to the buyer. The level 2 designation could be a badge of honor, further enhancing the value of the residence, especially if financial incentives in the form of reduced city permit fees were attached.

Diversity is another hallmark of the argument for other than Carmel architecture of the past. When applied to architecture, diversity can destroy the “feel” of an area if carried too far, as indicated in the General Plan. Houses that do not fit into the look of other houses on the street jar the senses. Diversity can be evident within a somewhat limited range of architecture consistent with Carmel (see next section).

Yes, there is some “judgment” in determining which houses qualify for being saved, and how extensively, and that is why we have knowledgeable staff and committees to hash out these decisions. There will always be gray areas requiring judgment calls.

#### CHARACTERISTICS/CONSIDERATIONS THAT MIGHT QUALIFY A HOME FOR LEVEL 2 PROTECTION

1. Homes built up through the 1940s (but not restricted to this age)
  2. Storybook, craftsman, Victorian, Mission, Tudor style homes.
- Characteristics may include leaded glass windows, dutch doors/ wood plank doors, stone fireplaces, steep, curving gables, hand carved trim around windows/doors, cathedral ceilings, window boxes, intricate

stonework, ironwork accessories, wood beams—interior and/or exterior, natural redwood interiors, board and batten single wall construction, divided wood framed windows, rolled roof or small wood shingle roof of distinction, dormers/oriels, etc.\*\*\*

3. Built by Murphy, Comstock, Denny and Watrous, Hill, Morgan and others listed in the historic register, BUT not required to have proof/knowledge of builder or restricted to a listed builder/architect.

4. Small homes of the past—one and two bedrooms, one story, often made with redwood siding.

TABLE 1: HISTORIC REQUIREMENTS FOR LEVEL ONE HOMES JUXTAPOSED WITH PROPOSED REQUIREMENTS FOR LEVEL 2 HOMES

<b>HISTORIC REQUIREMENTS (LEVEL 1)</b>	<b>LEVEL 2 HOMES</b>
A. Representative of at least one theme included in the Historic Context Statement.	Same
B. Shall retain substantial integrity (association, feeling, setting, location, design, materials and workmanship)	Not as restrictive, as long as the basic integrity of the house is maintained
C. Fifty years of age and older, and should meet at least one of the four criteria for listing in the CA Register at a national or statewide level of significance, or at a regional or local level of significance:	
1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of CA or the U.S.	Not necessary
2. Is associated with the lives of persons important to local, CA or national history	Not necessary

<p>3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values, Or</p>	<p>Same</p>
<p>4. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, CA or the nation.</p>	<p>Not necessary</p>
<p>D. To qualify for the Carmel Inventory, an historic resource eligible under CA Register criteria no. 3 only, should:</p>	
<p>1. Have been designed and/or constructed by an architect, designer/builder or contractor whose work has contributed to the unique sense of time and place recognized as significant in the Historic Context Statement, or</p>	<p>Not necessary</p>
<p>2. Have been designed and/or constructed by a previously unrecognized architect, designer/builder or contractor if there is substantial, factual evidence that the one or more of the historic context of the City to an extent consistent with other architects, etc. identified within the Historic Context Statement, or</p>	<p>Not necessary</p>
<p>3. Be a good example of an architectural style or type of construction recognized as significant in the Historic Context Statement, or</p>	<p>Not necessary</p>
<p>4. Display a rare style or type for which special consideration should be given. Rare styles and types that contribute to Carmel's unique sense of time and place shall be deemed significant.</p>	<p>Not necessary</p>
<p>E., F. and G.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>
<p>H. A resource less than 50 years old may be</p>	<p>No restriction on age</p>

eligible if it is of exceptional importance to the City, state or nation, base on its unusually strong contribution to history architecture, engineering or culture, or because it is an integral part of an historic district.

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## PROPOSED ALLOWANCES FOR LEVEL 2 HOMES

1. Allow additions to existing homes while keeping the original home intact, using the same style of construction as the original.
2. Allow upgrades inside the home while keeping the exterior appearance as is.
- 3, Allow replacement of existing structure(s) where necessary (due to extensive rot, code compliance issues, etc.) in the same construction style/size as the original, using as many of the original home materials as possible (discreet additions to size also a possibility).

See also the website for Pacific Grove:

[Architectural Review Guidelines for Single Family Residences](#)

- [Appendix I: Working on Buildings on the Historic Resource Inventory](#)
- [Appendix III: Glossary](#)

The proposed Carmel city code changes are consistent with the Level 2 residence proposal (Proposed Zoning Code and Residential Design Guideline amendments, August 21, 2019). Particularly relevant statements from the amendments regarding designs follow:

“ ...standards have been added requiring that ( the home) be sensitive to neighborhood context, incorporate natural finish materials, use earth-toned colors, and to consider using traditional roof forms such as gables.\*\*

### STEPS TO ACCOMPLISHING THE GOAL OF ESTABLISHING LEVEL TWO HOMES\*\*\*

1. City Planning staff would pass along to the HRB via email **only cases for review that alter the exterior of the home**. This includes all homes for which permit applications for **exterior** remodels have been submitted that are not designated historic.



2. Candidates identified would be reviewed by the Historic Resources Board (HRB). The HRB would then make the determination of qualification for a Level 2 home, similar to the procedures for Level 1 (historic) homes. If there is a unanimous “no contest” by the HRB to the email within one work week, staff would proceed as they have in the past, with “determination of ineligibility” established.
3. If a majority (3 or more of 5) HRB board members approve level 2 status, the restrictions delineated in this proposal apply.
4. It becomes the responsibility of the Staff/Planning Commission to enforce restrictions for homes designated as Level 2.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- Brochure for realtors, builders, public, at city hall – a method for notifying of the possibility of level two home designation\*\*
- Seminars, online website city list of examples of level 2 homes and requirements
- Petition, zoning ordinance adoption?
- **Reduced fees for city permits as incentive, once the level 2 designation is assigned?**
- Added incentives for the homeowner to retain the structure, i.e., flexibility in requirements for an older home that was built before many of today’s codes existed, as long as safety/structural requirements are met (reviewers of this proposal suggested that design guideline accommodations might be made such that remodeling and/or updating were more likely a possibility. “We’re not a “one size fits all” town, and yet the current building restrictions and requirements give no leeway to that fact for older homes. Ideally there would be a mechanism for the City planners to step outside the boundaries and apply site-specific criteria with which the homeowner could work).”
- If a home is designated Level 2, the home owner(s) should be able to meet with the HRB, if desired/requested, to discuss their perspective/concerns with the designation and how it impacts their plans for the property..

\*\*\*FURTHER DESCRIPTORS IN DETERMINING LEVEL 2 HOME  
QUALIFICATIONS

Small paned windows, longer than wider

Fencing that is vertical, grape stake, irregular/crude

Arched entries, doors

Carmel stone walls, stairs, chimneys, steps

High peaked roofs

Natural wood and stone exteriors

Irregular/distinctive hinge straps on doors

Subtle soft (amber) lighting and tudor/craftman/mission style/wrought  
iron, wood,, or copper lighting fixtures

Roofs with clay tile, slate, wood shingle or shake, thick-end composition,  
depending on style

*Alexander, Christopher, Ishikawa, Sara, Silverstein, Murray, "A Pattern  
Language"1977, Oxford University Press*

\*\*\*This document would be made available online to every potential buyer  
of homes.

Karyl Hall 2.12.20, revised 3.18.22

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