



HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING SYNOPSES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

**Regular Meeting
Commencing at 6:30 p.m.
City Hall Tower
Third Floor, Conference Room T-332
First Floor, City Hall Tower
200 East Santa Clara Street
San José, California**

Commission Members

**Rachel Royer, Chair
Sara Ghalandari, Vice Chair
Harriett Arnold
Himat Baniwal
Lawrence Camuso
Steve Cohen
Jimi Kogura**

**Christopher Burton, Director
Department of Planning, Building & Code Enforcement**

WELCOME

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: *Chair Royer, Vice Chair Ghalandari, Commissioners Baniwal, Camuso, Cohen and Kogura*

ABSENT: *Commissioner Arnold*

1. DEFERRALS

No Items

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

No Items

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

No Items

4. PLANNING REFERRALS

No Items

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. **Historic Preservation Month 2026**

Recommendation: Receive verbal report on upcoming new Storymap web page and launch of a digital community storytelling project called “My San José.”

Dana Peak Edwards, the City’s Historic Preservation Officer, reported on these items planned for release for Historic Preservation Month in May 2026. She stated that a Historic Preservation Month proclamation is anticipated, as well as new webpages to highlight the story maps that have been created for Alviso, Five Wounds Urban Village Area, Martha Gardens and Eichler Neighborhood Fairglens Additions and the My San José storytelling project. Ms. Peak Edwards reported that the My San Jose project will be an interactive GIS program where people can select a point on a map of San José to highlight places significant to them, add information why and upload photographs of the property. She noted stories can be contributed on properties already listed on the Historic Resources Inventory and places that have not yet been identified. Ms. Peak Edwards reported it may be possible to provide a “sneak peek” in April before the official roll out.

6. REFERRALS FROM CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, OR OTHER AGENCIES

a. **[Five Wounds Trail and Coyote Creek Trestle](#)**

Recommendation: Receive status report from the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department on the preparation of the Five Wounds Trail 2025-2027 Master Plan and environmental review process.

Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) Project Manager, Liz Sewell, introduced herself, Raymond Costantino, Deputy Director of the Capitol and Planning Division, the project team including Yitong Zhang, Yoshifumi Yano, and project engineering consultant and provided an informational presentation on the project. Ms. Sewell presented an overview of the project and its history, structural and historical studies conducted, case studies of trestle preservation in other cities and opportunities for community input. She noted key factors for consideration in determining project options are creek conveyance, environmental impacts, and health and safety. Ms. Sewell stated that on-going trestle maintenance (fire damage and other unpredictable work) costs is approximately \$125,000 per year and community feedback will guide how the trestle's history is honored. She noted there will be multiple opportunities to provide comment, but the dates have not yet been established.

Chair Royer opened public comment.

Keith Ball, Save Our Trails board member, referred to a letter he submitted via email to the Historic Landmarks Commission on February 22, 2026 and urged the consideration of Option 3 to retain the trestle in place.

Bruce Victorine, Save Our Trails Vice President, commented representing the D7 Leadership Group of San Jose. He read a letter on behalf of the group and reported that at its February 5 2026 general meeting the D7 Leadership Group of San Jose voted to support the preservation of the trestle and Option 3 for the project.

*Ben Leech, Executive Director of Preservation Action of San Jose (PAC*SJ), commented that PAC*SJ is proud to support the Save Our Trails and D7 Leadership groups and their efforts to advocate for the preservation the trestle. He commented that PAC*SJ is encouraged by the two viable preservation alternatives and encouraged the stakeholders to recognize preservation as an opportunity rather than an impediment to the project. Mr. Leech commented that incorporating the trestle would enhance the project and noted that activating the trail should address past challenges with vandalism if the trail is successful. He commented that the environmental impact report should include more detail about the case studies analyzed.*

Larry Ames commented that he spent several years trying to preserve the Willow Glen trestle which had a narrow right-of-way. He noted that the Coyote Creek trestle has land on the side with room (50 feet) to construct a new bridge near the historic trestle. Mr. Ames commented on circumstances with the case studies that are different from the project site and responded to the creek conveyance, environmental impacts, and health and safety factors presented by PRNS. He noted that he received a letter from the grandchildren of the engineer who designed the bridge and provided that history.

Bill Rankin, Save Our Trails President, commented that the history of the trestle is worth saving and that a new bridge does need to be installed; however, he suggested that the new bridge be constructed to the east where there would be a shorter span. Mr. Rankin noted the railroad's importance to the historical development of Valley of Heart's Delight.

*Mike Sodergren, PAC*SJ, commented that the trestle was built to handle massive trains, river flows and fires which is why is it still extant. He commented that with activation of the area the vandalism should be reduced and there would be more eyes on the historic*

resource and its story. Mr. Sodergren commented that we should work hard to save the trestle.

Chair Royer closed public comment and called for commissioner comments and questions.

Commissioner Kogura commented that it would cost less money to build a bridge with a shorter span nearby and it would add to the project cost to demolish the historic trestle. He commented without the structure present it would be difficult to tangibly represent the importance of that railroad history to San José and the United States. Commissioner Kogura noted that the added element of the grandchildren of the engineer who designed the bridge and how he had a lasting impact on not only his family but also San José. He commented that it would be helpful to have cost breakdowns to gain a better understanding of the project options. Commissioner Kogura noted that the trestle is eligible for listing on the national, state and local levels.

Commissioner Camuso inquired about approximate costs associated with the three project options. Ms. Sewell responded that the costs are included in a report on the [project web site](#). She reported that the cost of construction for the retrofit would be approximately \$11.28 million assuming the timber is in good condition with a \$125,000 annual maintenance cost to address vandalism, and a new bridge would be approximately \$11.69 million with a \$10,000 annual maintenance cost. Commissioner Camuso commented that one of the options is to build a new bridge next to the trestle and retain the trestle and this would be a viable option. The consulting engineer commented that they are starting to compare other criteria for the project options. He commented that if the new bridge were constructed further east from the historic trestle the north abutment would be located where there is a land fill and the biological impacts of this location create greater challenges.

Vice Chair Ghalandari commented that she enjoyed hearing all the comments from the community on the value of the trestle which should be taken into consideration. She commented that there is little financial difference between the retention of the trestle and building a new bridge and demolition. Vice Chair Ghalandari commented that if the bridge is proposed to be demolished then there would be added cost and time to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR). Ms. Sewell responded that she understands that an EIR would be required for either option due to the creosote leaching into the water. Vice Chair Ghalandari commented that she looks forward to reviewing the EIR analysis.

Commissioner Cohen inquired what would happen with the comments provided at the Historic Landmarks Commission meeting. Ms. Peak Edwards responded that there will be a community meeting that includes information on the Notice of Preparation of the EIR where comments will be received. Raymond Costantino responded that staff would take forward the comments of the community and will include them as part of their notes and documentation. Commissioner Cohen inquired about the project funding sources. Ms. Sewell responded that the project will be partially funded by a VTA Measure B grant for the Five Wounds Trail and environmental review. She reported that there is currently no funding for remediation or construction. Commissioner Cohen suggested that the City should see if there are any historic preservation grants that could be leveraged for the project. He inquired why the City did not implement any measures to prevent the vandalism of the trestle, like fencing. Ms. Sewell noted a fence was erected at the entrance to the bridge and the Beautify San Jose team periodically cleans and maintains the area. Commissioner Cohen responded that the City has a history of demolishing historic structures because it is cheaper and easier. He noted that other municipalities recognized the historic importance of remaining railroad trestles and have gone to the

effort of saving them, though some structures burned for various reasons. Commissioner Cohen commented that the creosote would not drip into the water and only leaches when water interfaces with the wood. He commented that there is likely not much creosote left on the trestle since it has not been recoated in decades. Commissioner Cohen suggested that if the structure is prone to fire, then sprinklers could be installed. He commented that there were many speakers and no one commented they do not want the trestle. Commissioner Cohen commented that the benefits of retaining the trestle should also be studied in the EIR, including tourism. He noted that the commentators are not historians, but they are trail advocates in support of the trestle preservation which offers another perspective. Commissioner Cohen commented that detailed information should be provided on the costs associated with the three option and basic maintenance should not impede historic preservation. He noted that trestle maintenance has been limited to putting out fires. Commissioner Cohen inquired about one of the submitted letters stating that the City had already selected Option 2. Ms. Sewell responded that a fact sheet on the website states that the City selected Option 2 as the responsible option but all the options would be analyzed in the EIR. She noted a project description has not been prepared.

Chair Royer inquired if the project would be brought back to the Historic Landmarks Commission during the EIR process. Ms. Peak Edwards responded that it would be brought to the commission if the EIR comment period coincides with the commission's meeting schedule. Chair Royer commented that the Historic Landmarks Commission should have a more formal opportunity to comment on the project and have those comments incorporated into the EIR. She thanked the City for the early referral. Chair Royer commented that the overwhelming consensus in the room is that the trestle is an important structure and is a physical representation of the culture. She noted it is unique as a landscape feature and an engineering structure, rather than a building.

The Historic Landmarks Commission provided comments on the referral and no formal action was taken.

7. OPEN FORUM

Mike Sodergren, Preservation Action Council San Jose, passed out copies of his email to the Historic Landmarks Commission on Senate Bill 79. He inquired about the Historic Landmarks Commission's ability to send a representative to speak on City Council items related to historic preservation.

Commissioner Cohen inquired if there was a representative from the Historic Landmarks Commission on the General Plan Task Force. Staff responded that the task force is the Planning Commission. Commissioner Cohen proposed that projects come to the Historic Landmarks Commission for comment before a staff recommendation is formulated and they are formally agendaized for consideration.

8. GOOD AND WELFARE

a. Report from Secretary, Planning Commission, and City Council

Ms. Peak Edwards reported that she would be making a presentation to the City Council on March 17th on Senate Bill 79 and Assembly Bill 130 and will report on the outcome at the April Historic Landmarks Commission meeting.

b. Report from Committees

i. Design Review Subcommittee:

- 1) No meeting held on December 18, 2025, January 15, 2026 or February 19, 2026. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 11:00 a.m..

c. Approval of Action Minutes

i. **Recommendation**[Approve Action Minutes for the Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting of December 3, 2025.](#)

Commissioner Cohen made a motion to approve the December 3, 2025 action minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Camuso and approved 6-0-1 (Arnold absent).

d. Status of Circulating Environmental Documents

No Items

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.