



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Christopher Burton

SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: June 1, 2026

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

SUBJECT: HL26-001 – Landmark Rescission for the Southern Pacific Switching Tower at 725 Chestnut Street

RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Landmarks Commission voted 5-0-2 (Chair Commissioner Royer and Commissioner Arnold absent) to recommend that the City Council:

Adopt a resolution rescinding the landmark designation for the Southern Pacific Switching Tower at 725 Chestnut Street.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

Approximately six years after its landmark designation by the City Council in 1993, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower was dismantled and removed from the property following a fire that severely damaged the structure. There are no remaining historic structures on the site to convey or interpret the property's historic railroad function. Approval of the landmark rescission action for the Southern Pacific Switching Tower at 725 Chestnut Street would support the maintenance of an up-to-date Historic Resources Inventory and ensure that associated Historic Preservation Permit requirements are not applied to a parcel that no longer contains the significant building for which it was designated.

BACKGROUND

As discussed in Attachment A, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower was built in 1927 and controlled switches and signals, from south of Newhall Yard through the College Park Yard. The Southern Pacific Switching Tower first relied on hand-thrown switches, then mechanical switches using rods and wires, and finally electric switches operated remotely. Operations ceased in 1993 due to declining freight traffic and modernization

of technology, and the structure was designated a City Landmark by the City Council on February 23, 1993 (Resolution No. 64399) based on the following findings:

1. Its character, interest, or value is part of the local, regional, state, or national history, heritage, or culture within the historic theme of Communication and Transportation within the Horticulture Era (1870-1918).
2. Its embodiment of elements of architectural or engineering design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represents a significant architectural innovation or which is unique. One of only three remaining unmodified wooden interlocking towers in California, this structure is representative of a past engineering design. The switching function has become obsolete with the advent of computers.

In 1994, the Southern Pacific Transportation Company proposed donating the Southern Pacific Switching Tower, and a roundhouse, turntable, trackage, water tower, and steam cleaner at 575 Lenzen Avenue to Santa Clara County for relocation to the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors accepted the donation, subject to environmental review.

In 1996, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower was significantly damaged by fire. Although Southern Pacific reaffirmed plans to relocate the structure and associated railroad features for the proposed Santa Clara County Steam Railroad Museum, a 1998 feasibility study determined that relocation of the switching tower was infeasible due to the extent of fire damage and recommended deconstruction/disassembly.

On December 21, 1999, the City of San José issued Historic Preservation Permit HP99-11-012 authorizing the dismantling of the roundhouse, turntable, water tower, and Southern Pacific Switching Tower for relocation and reconstruction at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds. The permit specified that the roundhouse would retain its landmark status, but it did not address the landmark status of the Southern Pacific Switching Tower. Following permit issuance, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower was dismantled and removed, and the site is now vacant.

The application to rescind the landmark designation (File No. HL26-001) was submitted by the property owner on March 2, 2026, to clear the title for land transfer, ultimately allowing environmental remediation to be carried out and the site to be appropriately redeveloped.

ANALYSIS

San José Municipal Code Section 13.48.130 provides that the City Council may rescind or amend a landmark designation using the same procedures required for landmark designation under Section 13.48.110. These procedures include nomination, public notification, hearings before the Historic Landmarks Commission and the City Council, and findings that the property has special historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or

engineering interest or value of a historical nature, and that the designation conforms with the goals and policies of the General Plan.

As outlined in the findings above, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower historically embodied the City's railroad and transportation heritage within the broader context of San José's communication and transportation development. During its sixty-six years of operation, the structure served as an interlocking control tower that centralized signal operations and coordinated railroad traffic, providing a physical representation of early twentieth-century rail operations.

The Southern Pacific Switching Tower has since been dismantled and removed from the property, and no remaining historic structures on the site convey or interpret the property's historic railroad function. Because the designated landmark resource no longer exists, the property no longer retains the historic, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or engineering significance for which the designation was originally granted. Additionally, implementation of General Plan Historic Preservation Goal LU-13 (Landmarks and Districts) is no longer feasible at the site, as the vacant property no longer contributes to historic awareness, community identity, or sense of place associated with San José's railroad history.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

If the landmark rescission resolution is approved, the City Clerk shall promptly provide the property owner with a certified copy of the City Council resolution in accordance with the notice procedures set forth in Section 13.48.110 of the San José Municipal Code. The City Clerk shall also record the resolution with the Office of the Recorder for the County of Santa Clara and distribute certified copies to the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, the Director of Public Works, the Building Official, and the occupants of the property.

The location of the Southern Pacific Switching Tower will remain as a point on the Geographic Information System (GIS) map of the Historic Resources Inventory (Public GIS Viewer) for archival history purposes, but it will be noted as "demolished" and will no longer be flagged as a historic resource for the purpose of permitting.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

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PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City Council Agenda website in advance of the June 23, 2026, City Council meeting.

Staff complied with the public noticing requirements of Section 13.48.110 of the San José Municipal Code. Notice of the public hearing was published in a local newspaper and posted at the project site. Information regarding the landmark rescission application, including details of the associated public hearings, was also made available on the Planning Division website, and staff remained available to respond to inquiries.

The Historic Landmarks Commission conducted a public hearing on May 6, 2026. There was no public comment on the item (Attachment B).

BOARD, COMMISSION, COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT

On May 6, 2026, the Historic Landmarks Commission held a public hearing on the landmark rescission and voted 5-0-2 (Chair Royer and Commissioner Arnold absent) to recommend approval to the City Council (Attachment B).

CEQA

The project consists of an administrative action to rescind the City Landmark designation for a vacant parcel. The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the common sense exemption, which applies where it can be determined with certainty that a project would not result in a significant environmental impact.

The subject site is vacant and does not contain any structures or remaining historic resources. The proposed action is administrative only and would not result in physical changes to the environment, including grading, construction, or changes in land use. Accordingly, it can be determined with certainty that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment and is therefore exempt from CEQA.

PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in Section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

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/s/

Christopher Burton

Director, Planning, Building and
Code Enforcement Department

For questions, please contact Dana Peak Edwards, Principal Planner, Historic Preservation Officer, Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department, at dana.peak@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 534-2990.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – May 6, 2026, Historic Landmarks Commission Staff Report with Attachments

Attachment B – May 6, 2026 Historic Landmarks Commission Action Minutes



HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

File No.	HL26-001
Application Type	City Landmark Rescission
Owner	Union Pacific Railroad Company
Applicant	Greenberg Glusker (c/o Sherry Jackman)
Location	725 Chestnut Street
APN	259-09-049
Zoning District	LI Light Industrial
Council District	6
Historic Area	N/A
Historic Resource Inventory	City Landmark
Annexation Date	December 8, 1925 (College Park/Burbank Sunol)
CEQA	Exempt per CEQA Guidelines Section 15331 for Historical Resources and Rehabilitation

APPLICATION SUMMARY:

File No. HL26-001: Application for rescission of City Landmark designation for 725 Chestnut Street (Southern Pacific Switching Tower Building and Site).

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission recommend to the City Council the adoption of a resolution rescinding the City Landmark designation for 725 Chestnut Street which no longer contains the Southern Pacific Switching Tower Building.

PROJECT DATA

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY			
General Plan Designation	Light Industrial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consistent <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent		
Consistent Policies	LU-13.11		
Inconsistent Policies	None		
SURROUNDING USES			
	General Plan Land Use	Zoning	Existing Use
North	Light Industrial	Light Industrial	Light industrial
South	Transit Employment Center	Transit Employment Center	San Jose Market Center
East	Light Industrial	Light Industrial	Light industrial and residential
West	Light Industrial	Light Industrial	Railroad

RELATED APPROVALS	
2/23/1993	HS92-92 Landmark designation of the Southern Pacific Switching Tower Building and Site (Resolution 64399)
7/18/1997	PRE97-571 Preliminary Request for new 4 story self-storage facility
1/11/1999	PRE99-026 Preliminary Request for new 4 story self-storage facility
12/21/1999	HP99-11-012 for two properties at Lenzen Avenue near Stockton Avenue and Asbury Street near Chestnut Street to dismantle the roundhouse, turntable, water tower and Southern Pacific Switching Tower for the purpose of relocating and reconstructing the structures at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds
3/15/2000	PRE00-181 Preliminary Request for new 4-story telecom building
8/27/2019	AD19-764 Permit Adjustment for replacement of perimeter chain link fence with galvanized steel 7-0-foot tall fence. No automated entry gate permitted under this permit

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The subject 0.82-gross acre property located at 725 Chestnut Street is bounded by Asbury Street to the north, the railroad to the west, West Taylor Street on the south, Chestnut Street to the east (Figure 1). The land is vacant with the exception of storage containers and several concrete building pads. The property is surrounded by industrial development to the north and east, and railroad tracks and an overpass to the west and south.

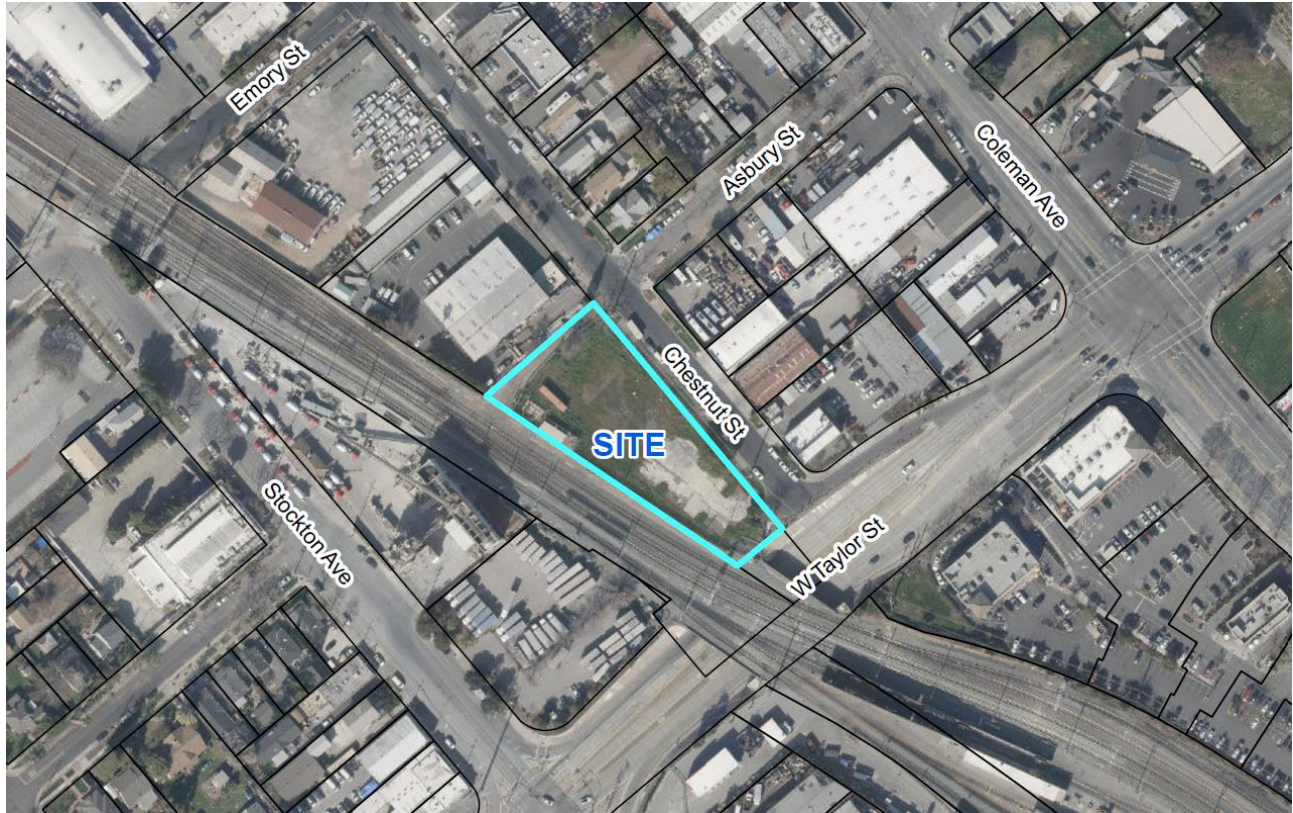
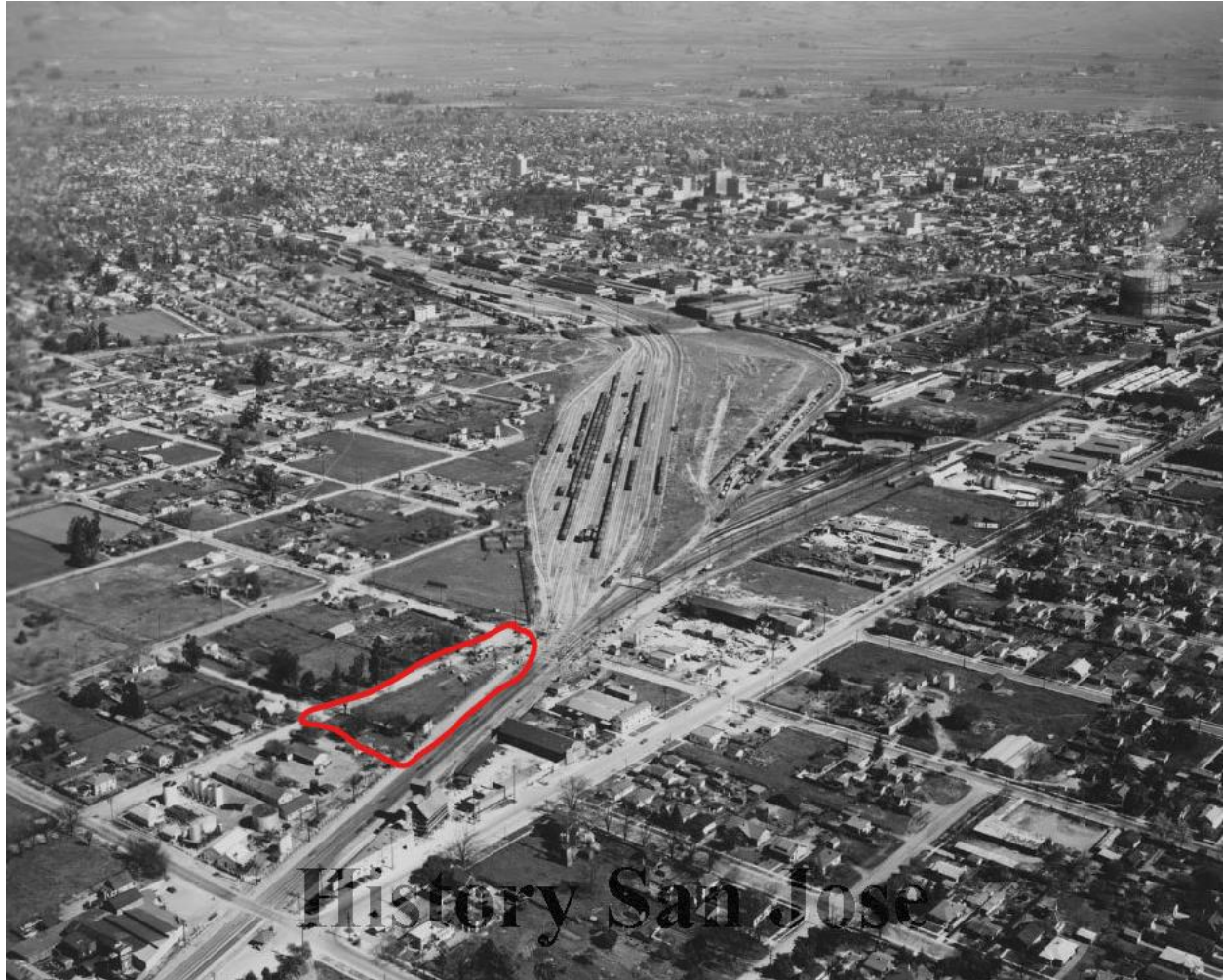


Figure 1: Location Map

An application was submitted on March 2, 2026 on behalf of property owner Union Pacific Railroad Company to rescind the City Landmark designation for the Southern Pacific Switching Tower Building and Site located on the subject property.

The Southern Pacific Switching Tower was built in 1927 and controlled switches and signals from south of Newhall Yard through the College Park Yard (Figures 2-4). The Southern Pacific Switching Tower first relied on hand-thrown switches, then mechanical switches using rods and wires, and finally electric switches operated remotely. Its operation was closed in 1993 due to declining freight traffic and modernization of technology and designated a City Landmark by the San José City Council on February 23, 1993 (Resolution 64399).



*Figure 2: Aerial View of Property with Southern Pacific Switching Tower Adjacent to Tracks
(1940s photo courtesy of History San Jose)*



Figure 3: Southern Pacific Switching Tower (1980s photo courtesy of Willis Marshall)



Figure 4: Southern Pacific Switching Tower (1980s photo courtesy of Willis Marshall)

The following year the Southern Pacific Transportation Company proposed to donate the Southern Pacific Switching Tower, along with a roundhouse constructed in 1893 (also a designated City Landmark HL91-56), turntable and trackage located at 575 Lenzen Avenue, as well as a water tower and steam cleaner to the County of Santa Clara for use by the Santa Clara Valley Railroad Association at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors accepted the offer in April 1994 subject to the completion of environmental review.

In 1996, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower was significantly damaged by fire (Figures 5 and 6). Despite the fire damage, Southern Pacific reaffirmed its commitment to move the switching tower and other associated structures to the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds where the California Trolley and Railroad Corporation planned to create the Santa Clara County Steam Railroad Museum. To inform the feasibility and relocation methods a report was prepared in 1998 that concluded it was not feasible to move the Southern Pacific Switching Tower due to the fire damage and deconstruction/disassembly was recommended.



Figure 5: Southern Pacific Switching Tower Following Fire (photo courtesy of applicant)



Figure 6: Southern Pacific Switching Tower Following Fire (photo courtesy of applicant)

On December 21, 1999 the City of San José issued Historic Preservation Permit (HP99-11-012) for two properties at Lenzen Avenue near Stockton Avenue and Asbury Street near Chestnut Street to dismantle the roundhouse, turntable, water tower and Southern Pacific Switching Tower for the purpose of relocating and reconstructing the structures at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds. The roundhouse was specified to retain its status as a City Landmark at the new location. No mention was made of the landmark status of the Southern Pacific Switching Tower.

Sometime following the issuance of HP99-11-012, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower was dismantled and the building material removed from the property. The subject property is now vacant and surrounded by a chain link fence (Figures 7 - 9).



Figure 7: Southern End of Property Looking West from Chestnut Street (February 2023, courtesy of Google)

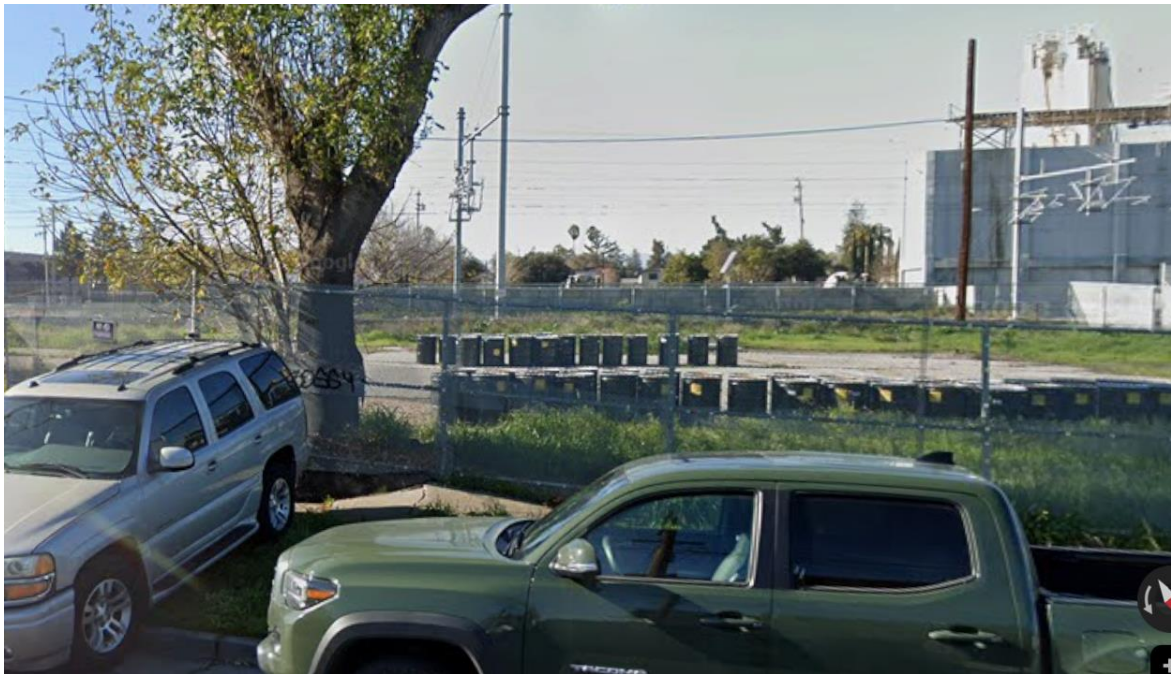


Figure 8: Middle of Property Looking West from Chestnut Street (February 2023, courtesy of Google)

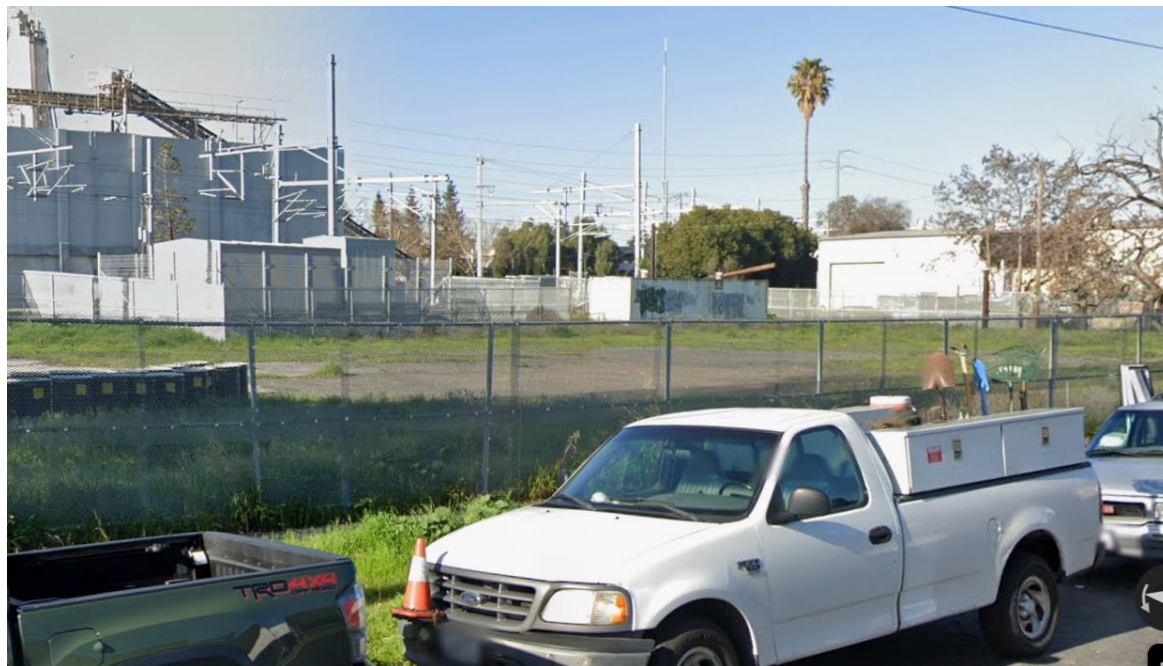


Figure 9: Northern End of Property Looking Northwest from Chestnut Street at Former Location of Switching Tower (February 2023, courtesy of Google)

ANALYSIS

The application to rescind the City Landmark designation was analyzed in conformance with San José Municipal Code Sections 13.48.130 and 13.48.110, and the Envision San José 2040 General Plan (General Plan).

Section 13.48.130 provides that a landmark designation may be rescinded (or amended) by the City Council using the same procedure as designating the landmark (Section 13.48.110) which entails nomination, public notification, hearings by the Historic Landmarks Commission and the City Council, and findings that the property has special historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or engineering interest or value of an historical nature, and the designation conforms with the goals and policies of the General Plan.

The Southern Pacific Switching Tower Building and Site City Landmark designation in 1993 was based on the following findings:

1. Its character, interest, or value is part of the local, regional, state, or national history, heritage, or culture within the historic theme of Communication and Transportation within the Horticulture Era (1870-1918).
2. Its embodiment of elements of architectural or engineering design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represents a significant architectural innovation or which is unique. One of only three remaining unmodified wooden interlocking towers in California, this structure is representative of a past engineering design. The switching function has become obsolete with the advent of computers.

As outlined in the above findings, the Southern Pacific Switching Tower was a physical embodiment of its history within the historic context of San José Communication and

Transportation. The Southern Pacific Switching Tower provided a tangible link to how railroad traffic was managed during its 66 years of operation through interlocking control towers that centralized a group of signals controlled by an operator to coordinate the rail traffic.

The Southern Pacific Switching Tower is no longer present on the property and there are no other historic structures on the property that contribute to the understanding of early twentieth century railroad operations. Historic preservation centers around physical buildings because they offer tangible links to the past that provide sensory, educational, and sometime emotional experiences of history. Since the Southern Pacific Switching Tower no longer exists, the property no longer maintains the special historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or engineering interest or value of an historical nature for which it was designated. In addition, General Plan Historic Preservation Goal LU-13 (Landmarks and Districts) cannot be implemented without the presence of the Southern Pacific Switching Tower because the vacant land does not promote a greater sense of historic awareness about railroad operations, community identity or contribute toward a sense of place.

Staff recommends the rescission of the City Landmark designation because it is in the public interest to maintain an update-to-date Historic Resources Inventory and to ensure that associated Historic Preservation Permit requirements are not applied to parcels that no longer contain the significant buildings for which they were designated.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The project consists of an administrative action to rescind the City Landmark designation for a vacant parcel. The project has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act per CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the common sense exemption which applies only to projects 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 subject site is vacant and contains no existing structures or remaining historic resources. The proposed action is administrative in nature and would not result in any physical changes to the environment, including grading, construction, or alteration of land use.

Therefore, it can be seen with certainty that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment, and the project is not subject to CEQA.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTIFICATION

Staff followed the public notification requirements of Section 13.48.110(F) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. A notice of this hearing appeared in a newspaper of general circulation at least 10 days prior to the hearing, notice was mailed to the owner and occupants of the property, and notification of the hearing was posted along the frontages of the site. The staff report is also posted on the City's website. Staff has been available to respond to questions from the public.

Project Manager: Dana Peak Edwards

Approved by: /s/ Manira Sandhir, Deputy Director for Christopher Burton, Planning,
Building & Code Enforcement Director

Attachments:
1. Resolution 64399 City Landmark Designation
2. Draft Resolution for Rescission of Designation

Owner Address:
Union Pacific Railroad Company 24125 Aldine Westfield Road Spring, Texas 77373



HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING SYNOPSES

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

**Regular Meeting
Commencing at 6:30 p.m.
City Hall Tower
Third Floor, Conference Room T-332
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: *Vice Chair Ghalandari, Commissioners Bainiwal, Camuso, Cohen and Kogura*

ABSENT: *Chair Royer and Commissioner Arnold*

1. DEFERRALS

No Items

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

No Items

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. **HL25-001 & MA25-001:** Applications for City Landmark designation and Historical Property (Mills Act) Contract between the City of San José and the property owner for 647 South 6th Street (William Wang, Owner). Council District: 3. **CEQA:** Exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15331 for Historical Resources and Rehabilitation. **PROJECT MANAGER, RINA SHAH**

Staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission recommend the City Council all of the following actions:

1. Adopt a resolution designating 647 South 6th Street as a City Landmark of special historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or engineering interest or value of a historic nature.
2. Adopt a resolution approving the Historical Property (Mills Act) Contract for 647 South 6th Street between the City of San José and property owner Xiangzhou (William) Wang.

Vice Chair Ghalandari introduced the item.

Rina Shah, Planning Project Manager, summarized the staff report and described the location and history of the house. She noted the property is currently listed on the Historic Resources Inventory as an Identified Structure and Contributing Structure within the Reed City Landmark District. Ms. Shah stated the two and one-half story house was built in 1897 and described the house's character-defining features. She noted it was designed by Wolfe and McKenzie and is a distinctive example of Neoclassical Revival style architecture. Ms. Shah noted the property was documented and evaluated by qualified consultant, Archaeology Resources Management, which concluded the property is eligible for landmark designation in accordance with Municipal Code Section 13.48.110(H) (Historic Preservation Ordinance) under five of the eight significance criteria - 1,4, 6,7 and 8.

Ms. Shah stated the required Mills Act contract findings are outlined in Section 13.48.540 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and discussed how the proposal meets the ordinance findings. She presented the proposed Mills Act contract ten-year work plan and potential locations for the bronze plaque.

Applicant and owner, William Wang, stated that his intent with this project consistently has been to preserve and respect the history and character of the property while making necessary long-term investments in the building's structural integrity. He commented that the work has focused on maintaining the building's original exterior character as much as possible while upgrading the foundation, electrical and plumbing to ensure the building can be safely and sustainably used going forward. Mr. Wang stated that he recognizes the responsibility that comes with owning and maintaining a historic resource and each step has been approached with that in mind. He stated that the goal is not to change what makes the building significant but to ensure it continues to stand and serve for years to come. Mr. Wang commented that he is aligned with the findings in the staff report and supports staff's recommendation.

Vice Chair Ghalandari opened public comment. There was no public comment. She then called for commissioner comments and questions.

Commissioner Cohen inquired how long Mr. Wang had owned the property. Mr. Wang responded he has owned the property approximately six to seven years. Commissioner Cohen commented that he was surprised the building was designed by Wolfe and McKenzie because it is an atypical design. He commented that he is very careful about the Mills Act and suggested the City should regulate it more to ensure contract holders are in compliance. Commissioner Cohen asserted that the plaque would not be an eligible work item under the Mills Act and recommended not putting it on the fence because it may get stolen. He noted that the windows have already been redone, and they are proposed to be redone again in Year 4. Mr. Wang clarified that some windows are not operable, some are cracked and they need to be repaired. Commissioner Cohen suggested that on Year One of the work plan the item should be repair of the concrete steps at the front landscape area of the house instead of plaque installation. Ms. Peak Edwards, Historic Preservation Officer, inquired whether the concrete steps are original to the design and presented a historic photograph in the historic resource documentation showing the steps.

Commissioner Cohen commented on the tile in the front porch area (wall and floor). He noted it is not original and should be changed back to the original wood siding. Commissioner Cohen recommended this work item be included in the work plan. Vice Chair Ghalandari inquired about the permitting process for those types of changes and whether conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards is required. Commissioner Cohen inquired whether there was any historic designation on the house at the time of the material change on the front porch. Ms. Peak Edwards responded that a Historic Preservation Permit was previously issued because the property is located in the Reed City Landmark District. Ms. Shah commented that those changes were not included in the permit. Mr. Wang explained the change was made because that area of the building is not visible from the street. Ms. Peak Edwards explained that Historic Preservation Permits for contributing properties in a historic district tend to be limited to the regulation of building form, exterior materials, and window changes, whereas a more detailed review is done for individual landmarks, particularly those with a Mills Act contract. Commissioner Cohen inquired whether the tile should be removed. Ms. Peak Edwards responded

that the change back to the original wood siding could be incorporated into the work plan.

Ms. Shah noted that bronze plaque installation has been required in the past as an incentive and suggested that it remain on Year One of the work plan. Ms. Peak Edwards noted that the Mills Act contract requires property owners to spend 10% of the property tax savings annually on the preservation and maintenance of the building.

There was discussion about the review of work plans prior to approval and whether the items and cost/expenditure comply with the Mills Act. Ms. Peak Edwards responded that staff reviews the work items but does not request cost estimates. She noted that it is not known in advance of contract approval the amount of property tax savings. Vice Chair Ghalandari inquired if compliance is policed. Ms. Peak Edwards responded that some compliance work has been done in the past and a student intern recently put together a draft monitoring and compliance package for the City's Mills Act contracts. She noted that when the procedures are finalized, they will be implemented and the monitoring and compliance work will begin. Commissioner Cohen commented that in general, Mills Act monitoring and compliance work has not been done by the City, or the Santa Clara County Assessor's Office. Vice Chair Ghalandari expressed concern that if the contracts are not monitored over time the system could be abused.

Commissioner Cohen inquired about the hardscape in the front yard and whether that is allowed. Mr. Wang responded that the unsealed pavers installed with sand allow water to pass through. Ms. Shah commented that code allows up to 50% impervious surface coverage. Commissioner Cohen asserted that 50% of the property must be green area. Ms. Peak Edwards commented the requirement addresses drainage, and not aesthetics.

Commissioner Kogura inquired whether a preservation architect or general contractor has been used. The applicant responded that previous work has been overseen by a general contractor.

Vice Chair Ghalandari made a motion to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Cohen made a friendly amendment to the motion to remove the bronze plaque from Year One of the work plan and replace it with the concrete step repair, and to correct the internal front porch by removing the non-historic tiles along the internal (side) walls of the porch (not the floor) and replacing them with the original wide wood siding (Year Nine). Ms. Shah requested to keep the plaque in Year One along with the addition of the concrete step repair. Commissioner Cohen supported the request. It was clarified that the wood stairs to the front porch should be reconstructed to its original design and materials. The commission discussed whether replacement of the tile on the internal area of the front porch should be required in the work plan. Vice Chair Ghallandari suggested that the money be spent on the preservation of exterior items that are visible from the street, rather than an internal area of the porch. The amended motion was seconded by Commissioner Camuso and approved 5-0-2 (Chair Royer and Commissioner Arnold absent).

- b. **HL26-001:** Application for rescission of City Landmark designation for Southern Pacific Switching Tower Building and Site at 725 Chestnut Street to reflect existing conditions, as the structure was destroyed by fire and is no longer extant (Union Pacific Railroad Company, Owner) Council District: 6. **CEQA:** Exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), a common sense exemption for projects where there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment.

PROJECT MANAGER, DANA PEAK EDWARDS

Staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission recommend the City Council take all of the following actions:

1. Adopt a resolution rescinding the City Landmark designation for 725 Chestnut Street which no longer contains the Southern Pacific Switching Tower Building and Site.

Vice Chair Ghalandari introduced the item.

Dana Peak Edwards introduced the applicant, Sherry Jackman. Ms. Jackman presented an overview of the proposed landmark rescission including the history of the site, donation of the structure to the County of Santa Clara, fire damage, and evaluation of the rescission against the landmark significance criteria.

Vice Chair Ghalandari opened public comment. There was no public comment. She then called for commissioner comments and questions.

Commissioner Cohen inquired who initiated the original landmark designation. Ms. Jackson responded she could research the question and provide an answer at a later date. Ms. Peak Edwards surmised that it was likely the group supporting the development of the railroad museum in order to secure grant money for the project. Commissioner Cohen inquired about maintenance of the structure prior to the fire and Ms. Jackson responded that the relocation was delayed by the required environmental review and the structure was located on a site subject to vandalism even though there was a fence around the structure. Commissioner Cohen inquired about the preservation of the remaining switching tower in Santa Clara. Ms. Jackman responded that it is no longer under the control of the railroad but is part of the South Bay Historical Railroad Society's Museum of Railroad History. Commissioner Cohen inquired if there is a plaque on the landmark site. Ms. Jackman responded there is presently not a plaque on the site which is raw land. Ms. Peak Edwards noted that the site will remain on the Historic Resources Inventory but will not be regulated.

Commissioner Camuso inquired about the use of the property after the environmental remediation is completed. Ms. Jackman responded there is no proposed use at this time because remediation takes a long time and it will need to be determined what type of uses would be allowed given the property's history of contamination. She noted that there has been investigation and remedies are being developed to address the contamination. Commissioner Camuso inquired about the location of the roundhouse mentioned. Ms. Jackman affirmed that it was located on Lenzen Avenue, a rail yard to the east.

Vice Chair Ghalandari made a motion to recommend the City Council adopt a resolution rescinding the landmark designation for 725 Chestnut Street. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cohen and approved 5-0-2 (Chair Royer and Commissioner Arnold absent).

4. PLANNING REFERRALS

No Items

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

No Items

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

No Items

7. OPEN FORUM

Sally Zarnowitz, Preservation Action Council San Jose (PACCSJ), provided an update on the organization's planned Historic Preservation Month activities. She reported that there will be a City Council proclamation on May 12th and PACCSJ's Executive Director will attend the presentation. Ms. Zarnowitz also reported that during the month of May the Endangered 8 will be revealed, there will be a members-only Thursday night opening of the reuse warehouse store on May 28th, and there will be two walking tours with the Japanese American Museum of San José with the proceeds going towards the restoration of the Sakuaye House at History Park. She also reported that PACCSJ is watching state housing legislation, like SB 79 and the Building an Affordable California Act which proposes to change state environmental review requirements.

Edward Saum reported that the City's FY26-27 budget (Neighborhood Services) proposes to close the California Room which is currently open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. five days a week. Sally Zarnowitz added that PACCSJ is asking their members to sign a petition and contact the City Council and City Librarian, and to attend the City Council meeting on May 11th at 9:30 a.m.

8. GOOD AND WELFARE

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

- i. Verbal update on the status of Planning approvals by the City Council, Planning Commission and Planning Director of projects with a historic resource component.

No Items

- ii. [Summary of communications received by the Historic Landmarks Commission.](#)

Commissioner Cohen discussed information provided by the Code Enforcement Division - vacant buildings status list - and commented that the City is trying to address these properties with the tools it has, like increased fines. He suggested a representative from Code Enforcement provide an update on the listed properties to the Historic Landmarks Commission. Commissioner Cohen commented that it is a slow process, but it is happening. Ms. Peak Edwards noted that not all the buildings on the list are historic resources. Ms. Zarnowitz added that it would be helpful to note on the table which properties are historic resources and that there are historic preservation incentives for rehabilitation.

- iii. Verbal update on Historic Preservation Month Proclamation and launch of “My San José” interactive website

Ms. Peak Edwards reported that the Historic Preservation Month proclamation was moved from the May 5th City Council meeting to the May 12th City Council meeting to allow for a formal presentation. She added there will be a soft launch of the “My San José” website and additional promotion in June and July since the Historic Preservation Month theme - All People Are Created Equal - is tied to the Fourth of July and the nation’s birthday.

b. Report from Committees

- i. Design Review Subcommittee:

- 1) No meeting held on April 16, 2026. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 21, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.

c. Approval of Action Minutes

- i. **Recommendation:** [Approve Action Minutes for the Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting of April 1, 2026.](#)

Vice Chair Ghalandari made a motion to approve the Action Minutes for the April 1, 2026, Historic Landmarks Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cohen and approved 5-0-2 (Chair Royer and Commissioner Arnold absent).

d. Status of Circulating Environmental Documents

No Items

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.