

# SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
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**Agenda Number:**  
**Prepared on:** 6/25/03  
**Department Name:** First and Second District  
**Department No.:** 011  
**Agenda Date:** 8/19/03  
**Placement:** Departmental  
**Estimate Time:** 20 minutes  
**Continued Item:** YES  
**If Yes, date from:** 8/12/03

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Naomi Schwartz, First District Supervisor  
Susan Rose, Second District Supervisor

**STAFF CONTACT:** Robert Ooley, AIA, County Architect, 568.3085  
General Services Department--Facilities Divisions

**SUBJECT:** Santa Barbara County Courthouse National Historic Landmark Application (NHL)  
and Courthouse Conservation Advisory Task Force  
First Supervisorial District

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## Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Direct staff to submit the National Historic Landmark application for the Santa Barbara County Courthouse to the Department of Interior, National Parks Service.
- B. Authorize the Chair to forward letters requesting support from the State Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and US Representative Lois Capps.
- C. Authorize the County Architect to establish the Courthouse Conservation Advisory Task Force.

## Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation(s) are primarily aligned with Goal No. 1. An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community

## Executive Summary and Discussion:

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse ([www.santabarbaracourthouse.org](http://www.santabarbaracourthouse.org)) was constructed between 1926 and 1929 on the original site of the 1875 County Courthouse, 1883 Stone Jail, 1887 Hall of Records & Public Hospital site in downtown Santa Barbara. Through County leadership, the process of realizing the current day courthouse included much civic involvement. The new courthouse became needed after the devastating early morning earthquake on June 29, 1925 rocked the city from ocean to mountains. Many downtown building facades crumbled into the street with the destruction making the front-page news around the world! While great suffering occurred, many civic leaders saw the opportunity to implementing their vision of a New Spain in America.

When the June 29<sup>th</sup> earthquake occurred, the County realized its opportunity to constructed larger quarters for its operations as well. Under the leadership of Charles Leo Preisker (Board Chair-5<sup>th</sup> District) the William Mooser Company, architects and builders were hired to design and construct the new Santa Barbara County Courthouse, Hall of Records, Jail, and Administration facilities. The buildings and grounds have fulfilled all the hopes of its creators as a public place of honor among the community. It is also a beloved place to visit by thousand from around the world.

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse is a Local Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On August 8, 2003 the State Historic Resources Commission designated the Santa Barbara County Courthouse a State Historic Landmark.

#### National Historic Landmark Application

The long-term preservation of this much beloved property is dependant upon gaining higher landmarking designations. Obtaining a National Historic Landmark designation will benefit the Santa Barbara County Courthouse in two specific ways: first, a greater protection for the myriad of historic resources on the property. Secondly, with a National Historic Landmark designation, fund raising for the conservation and preservation of the Courthouse will be easier. Many potential funding sources require National Historic Landmark status as a condition of funding. Additionally, with National Historic Landmark designation, FEMA resources become available should the property sustain damages during a declared event.

The structure of the National Historic Landmark application is provided by the National Parks Service and contains eleven sections. Sections seven and eight contain key components. Section seven is a detailed text description of all resources. Section eight, the most important element of the application contains the *National Historic Context and Statement of Significance*. Christine Palmer, an Architectural Historian developed the *Context Statement* and while the County Architect developed the *Significance Statement*. Each statement was completed after extensive research in compliance to the specific National Parks Service designation criteria and Thematic Studies criteria. The National Historic Landmark application is attached to this board letter and available on the Courthouse Web Site at [www.santabarbaracourthouse.org](http://www.santabarbaracourthouse.org).

It is critical obtaining National Historic Landmark designation that we clearly demonstrate that the Courthouse contains a high level of *historical integrity*. The two photographs below demonstrate a very high level of *historical integrity* found at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. The photograph on the left was taken just before the landscaping was completed in 1929. The photograph on the right was taken in early 2002 from the same point. The only change is mature landscaping.



View of Garden, 1929



View of Garden, 2002

### Support Letters

National Historic Landmark applications that are accompanied with support letters tend to move smoother through the review process. With the Board's action today requests for support letters from our Congressional Delegation will be sought and forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior. In addition, community organization support letters are equally important.

To date, the Mayor of Santa Barbara, the District Attorney and Judges Adams and Ochoa have provided support letters which are attached to this board letter.

### Courthouse Conservation Advisory Task Force

With a supportive action of the Board's today, the Courthouse Conservation Advisory Task Force will be created. The single focus of the *Courthouse Conservation Advisory Task Force* is to provide a community process for the creation of a detailed Conservation and Preservation Work Plan for the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. The Task Force would be comprised of individuals with in-depth experience in the following areas: architecture, architectural history, materials and methods, historic preservation, landscaping, engineering, furniture restoration or conservation and art restoration or conservation.

The *Courthouse Conservation Advisory Task Force* composition will include a total seven members, three of which will be permanent members. The three permanent members will be representatives of the following: General Services Department, the County Parks Department and the Courthouse Docent Council. Consideration for nomination to the Task Force will be by open application process, with the First District Supervisor making appointments. Once created, the Task Force will create its standing rules and bylaws for conduct of its business. All Courthouse Conservation Advisory Task Force meetings will be open to the public, with proceedings posted on the Courthouse Web Site at [www.santabarbaracourthouse.org](http://www.santabarbaracourthouse.org).

### **Mandates and Service Levels:**

No change in program or service levels.

### **Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

The operational costs of Task Force are expected to be minimal and will be funded 063/1207 Courthouse Use Fee revenues.

### **Special Instructions:**

Please send a copy of the "minute order" to Robert Ooley, AIA, County Architect, Facilities Services Division, General Services Department.

### **Concurrence:**

Parks

General Services