

MICHAEL J. SMITH

██████████ SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901

City of San Rafael  
Planning Commission  
1400 Fifth Ave., Rm. 209  
San Rafael, CA 94901

March 5, 2021

Re: Appeal of Historic Designation  
1504-1522 Fourth Street  
San Rafael, CA 94901

Dear Commissioners:

As a fourth generation San Rafael resident and businessperson and former planning commissioner of San Rafael, I am writing to appeal the historic eligibility as a contributor for the building I own at 1504-1522 Fourth Street, San Rafael CA. I do not believe there are significant architectural features that would cause it to qualify.

There is some background to these buildings that may not be readily apparent from the public record or an evaluation focused solely on a cursory review of the exterior and should inform the report. 1502-1528 4th Street is in fact three separate buildings built on separate dates. The buildings are legally on two APN's that have been functionally and physically merged over time. Each of these buildings have their ground floors at different elevations, matching the slope of the street.

APN 011-202-11 contains one building with three addresses 1522, 1520 & 1518 4th Street. Its original purpose was primarily industrial, serving as an automotive repair garage for most of its early history. The facade has been completely remodeled and modernized (with permits) and dates to the early 2000's. The Historic designation correctly identifies this as a class "E" building.

APN 011-202-14 contains two separate, independently constructed buildings. 1512 4th Street is the middle building and is the main address currently occupied by Bordenave's Bakery. This is also an industrial building that contains no outward architectural details that would lend itself to any historic designation. Although, it shares a single APN number with its neighbor at 1504 Fourth Street / 1009 E Street, this building should clearly be bifurcated for purposes of the historic evaluation. It is currently incorrectly lumped in with the corner building on the various maps and in the evaluation.

The corner building at 1504 Fourth Street / 1009 E Street currently houses two tenants with a traditional retail use on the corner while the other space is an industrial use utilized as a telecoms switching station. Although the building has an attractive frieze along the upper section with

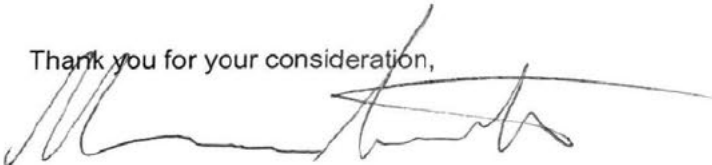
ornamental lions at the entrance, there is nothing notable about this square building with a flat roof, with no other structural articulation or ornamentation. It was modified (with permits) as the original transom windows have been filled in and the current tile at the ground level is new.

All three buildings are outdated and functionally obsolete. The rear tenant spaces lack any useable natural light with no windows, no visibility as they are too far from the street window line, and with varying floor levels they do not match any modern tenant demand. They are clearly not aligned with current market tastes or standards. Its historic designation is not warranted and should be downgraded to facilitate their modernization and reuse, otherwise it would in fact limit the very upgrading that the City is emphasizing for Downtown San Rafael.

There are errors in the DPR form that should be corrected and thereby remove some criteria used in the building's historic determination. On the final page of the evaluation it states "Its continued use as a residence allows it to retain integrity of association." The building contains no residential use whatsoever and is in fact occupied by commercial uses. The original use was automotive from inception. The historical automotive identity is no longer associated with the building in any fashion and these historic industrial uses are not appropriate (or allowed) for this area of downtown San Rafael. In addition, the DPR for this building depicts the incorrect site on the map on the 2nd page and should be corrected.

I would also like to point out that the site presents an ideal opportunity for redevelopment as a mixed use project with the majority being residential with some ground floor retail. Its designation as a contributing resource will clearly inhibit potential redevelopment. As repeatedly stated in the Precise Plan and the General Plan 2040, the City should be prioritizing this site for adaptation into residential uses. There is only one other owner besides myself that own all five parcels between E Street and the parking lot at 1532 4th street (next to Guide Dogs of Blind). It would take only two parties to agree to re-develop and combine these into one 63,000+ feet parcel comprising almost 1.45 acres. It is one of, if not the largest prime site downtown other than 1001 Fourth Street with this much potential. I suggest the City consider more carefully before limiting such a potential project before it can even be started.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Michael J. Smith