

San Rafael Heritage Comments for Planning Commission hearing June 29, 2021

Speaker: Linzy Klumpp

1st point: Regarding the Downtown Precise Plan staff response to the SRH letter of January 6, 2021, Staff response Number 1. Our SRH letter states (originally referring to Section 5.): "that a building important to the local community may be protected as a local landmark whether or not it meets Secretary of the Interior standards."

The staff response: "Per the recommendation of the City's historic preservation consultant (Garavaglia Associates), the Plan recommends using the Secretary of the Interior Standards in order to make the Ordinance more predictable, consistent with state and federal law, and legally defensible."

Even though this response is not in the recent redlined version of the DTPP, the staff comment should be stricken as it is unnecessarily harsh. It creates a situation that may attract a cause of action. It is not an actionable offense to call for local landmark status.

2nd point: Regarding the various incentives possible for historic preservation, these programs are meant to encourage property owners to seek a higher rating and possible landmark status for their property. The intent is to allow a building that may not qualify for either state or national status, but is important to the history and development of San Rafael, to qualify locally. The use of incentives would allow lesser ("C" rated) buildings to upgrade and possibly become eligible for State or Federal listing. It could take the economic pressure off owner's desire to demolish versus restoration by using tax reduction incentives.

And so, with the General Plan 2040, we will continue to collaborate with city staff, and soon with the City Council for inclusion of additional points we consider important. We have accommodated certain parts of the DTPP for it to be more flexible and less restrictive on neighboring properties. We fully expect the City Council will follow through with certain revisions. San Rafael Heritage is forward-looking and fully understands the need to balance new development with historic preservation.