

**From:** Emese Wood [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Thursday, February 22, 2024 1:15 PM

**To:** [rsantiago@goldengate.org](mailto:rsantiago@goldengate.org) <[rsantiago@goldengate.org](mailto:rsantiago@goldengate.org)>; Lindsay Lara <[lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org)>

**Subject:** Design for 1929 Northwestern Pacific Railroad Depot in the San Rafael Transit Center Project

Dear Mr. Santiago and Members of the City Council,

I am writing in regard to the design of the historic 1929 Northwestern Pacific Railroad Depot, and the way it will be incorporated into the redesign of the San Rafael Transit Center. As I understand it, the current plans call for the reuse of parts of the 1929 building, but in a fragmented way, literally gutting it with a central open courtyard in between fragments of the older building. I don't believe that this design respects the integrity of the historic structure. The Depot is a building with a meaningful history for the city of San Rafael, as well as architectural significance as an example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. I would like to urge that the building be restored and reused in its entirety. I appreciate that the design team has made an effort to include important features of the 1929 Depot, but it has not gone far enough. They should save and restore the entire exterior, reconstructing parts of it if necessary. It will make a beautiful and welcoming entry into our wonderful city.

Respectfully submitted,

Emese Wood

[REDACTED]

San Rafael, CA, 94901

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**From:** Sue Burrell [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 23, 2024 4:11 PM  
**To:** Raymond Santiago <[rsantiago@goldengate.org](mailto:rsantiago@goldengate.org)>; Mayor Kate <[kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org)>;  
Lindsay Lara <[lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: Letter on Transit Center for March 4 Council Meeting

I'll try this again. I left the period out of Lindsay's email address, and sent only a fragment of the SRHS letter. Hopefully this will be right. Thank you, Sue Burrell

On Fri, Feb 23, 2024 at 4:04 PM Sue Burrell [REDACTED] wrote:  
Please see attached letter and enclosure for consideration in the discussion of the Transit Center Project at the March 4 Council Meeting. Thank you, Sue Burrell

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Sue Burrell  
[REDACTED]  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
[REDACTED]

Sue Burrell

San Rafael, California 94901

February 23, 2024

Raymond Santiago, Project Manager  
San Rafael Transit Center  
Golden Gate Highway and Transportation District

Members of the San Rafael City Council  
1400 Fifth Avenue, Room 203  
San Rafael, CA 94901

(By electronic submission to [rsantiago@goldengate.org](mailto:rsantiago@goldengate.org); [kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org); [lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org))

Re: Design for 1929 Northwestern Pacific Railroad Depot in the San Rafael Transit Center Project - Request for Modifications to Current Design

Dear Mr. Santiago and Members of the San Rafael City Council:

This letter is written in anticipation of the March 4, 2024, presentation by the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District to the Council on the San Rafael Transit Center Project – and specifically, the parts relating to plans for the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Depot. I urge you to work with the San Rafael Heritage Society to implement the design suggestions made in their December 13, 2023, letter detailing what should be modified to better honor the original Depot, and create a wonderful new gateway to our City.

We are fortunate to have the historic Depot already existing in close proximity to the site for the new Transit Center. It is gratifying that the conceptual design includes the use of parts of the Depot building. But the current design appears to call for demolishing the underlying building and saving only parts of the facades to be used in a much different spatial relationship. In my view, a re-creation of the historic building should be the centerpiece. I also agree with the recommendations of San Rafael Heritage Society members calling for:

- Restoring the exterior form and appearance of the 1929 Depot and retaining the existing arcade and west elevation of the Depot and Baggage building – and retaining the existing spatial relationships - so if the building is rebuilt, it will look like the old Depot.
- Replacing the proposed courtyard with an interior space that would be similar to the original waiting room. This space could serve several functions. It could have publicly accessible offices for the transit agencies; provide space for the café,

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Letter to Raymond Santiago and San Rafael City Council  
Design for Railroad Depot in Transit Center  
February 23, 2024

including seating for people in inclement weather; and offer space for public art or murals.

The history of San Rafael is very much intertwined with railroads. The new Transit Center, with a re-done Depot building as its centerpiece, would provide a wonderful means of preserving that history, and a welcoming place for visitors and residents alike. It is clear that a great deal of thought has already gone into this project. Please take the time now to fine-tune the design.

Sincerely yours,



Sue Burrell  
Member, San Rafael Heritage Society

Encls.

cc: Lindsay Lara, San Rafael City Clerk

# SAN RAFAEL HERITAGE

P.O. BOX 150665, SAN RAFAEL, CA 94915-0665



Raymond Santiago, Project Manager  
San Rafael Transit Center  
Golden Gate Highway and Transportation District

December 13, 2023

[rsantiago@goldengate.org](mailto:rsantiago@goldengate.org)

Subject: 1929 Northwestern Pacific Railroad Depot  
709/711 Fourth Street

Raymond:

We wish to thank the District's design team for what they have incorporated including important features of the historic 1929 building. San Rafael Heritage is concerned about the District's plans for the Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWP) Depot building. Our goal is to save the entire 1929 depot building exterior.

We are very alarmed by several statements of the buildings lack of historic merit. This appears to be due to additions made since its original January 1929 opening. Although they occurred during the railroad's "Period of Significance" SRH is not advocating for the retention of the mid-1940s addition with the possible exception of the raised shaped mission parapet (SMP) over the Streamline Moderne entry.

We must however emphasize what we expect to see with the relocation and restoration (or reconstruction) of the building. The following itemizes our intent:

**EAST FAÇADE:** This is correctly shown on the recent rendering, glassed in where there were open arches originally. It is shown correctly but the cold grey color is chilling and not appropriate. We appreciate the use of the NWP logos and light fixtures in the restoration of this façade.

**NORTH END:** This must be more open to the north plaza than original as it was the station agent door entering into a controlled space, a use no longer needed. With the removal of the north end additions (1951 & 1987) two original arches may be revealed; if not, they should be replicated and treated similar to the arcade as shown in the recent rendering. Of course the single NWP logo and light should be replaced.

The most alarming image at the December 6<sup>th</sup> workshop was the total disconnect between the northeast SMP vestibule and the west façade with a full gable and modern glass wall. To replicate the entire passenger waiting room includes the recreating the original roof forms, a raised gable surrounded by flat roof sections, one of which is the arcade. The original gable angle is correctly shown on details from the 1983 2<sup>nd</sup> floor addition as the architect of the 1980s additions was very appreciative of the buildings former use. It appears the intent of the current plans is to truncate the structure. A way must be found to properly replicate this portion of the building in its full dimension.

**WEST FAÇADE:** should retain its "industrial" look with all metal double-awning windows intact. The entire face should include the central raised SMP, the 5-arch passenger waiting room to the north and the 5-arch baggage building with a central glazed arch entry door as originally constructed to the south. It will be necessary to replace the northern-most window to match the others.

When viewing this face, it was noted that there are two circular irregularities in the stucco. These match the NWP logo in shape and size and include light fixture boxes below. They are located above the union of the central entry door and its flanking companion glazed arches. Now we know that there were similar treatments on both sides and wish to see them replaced.

With the exception of the south end and east façade of the baggage structure, the original building is clearly visible; we are adamant that all of these features remain.

Our organization is in favor of additional interior space in the baggage building that could possibly be used for a kitchen to service the waiting room, arcade and north plaza. We are not in favor of the central open courtyard,

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especially with the image of a redwood tree in the rendering. This definitely is inconsistent with the restoration of the NWP Depot building to its 1929 image.

Relating to 709/711 Fourth Street, this building was never meant to be on a corner. The Fourth Street façade is one of the finest Stick Style Italianate structures on the entire length of San Rafael's main street. This newly created condition exposes a huge blank wall that will require a second decorative facade. Room must be allowed for an addition to this building, a decorative façade that would create a space for another tenant.

For this reason alone the through street to the west cannot be constructed as shown. It is actually just a driveway to the lower level parking garage and as such does not require so much space. The newly created 1929 depot could be fully dimensioned as original. The elimination of this full sized new roadway would allow both for the above referenced addition to the Fourth Street building and frame the now much improved and widened plaza to create a far better feature for our downtown gateway.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns,



Leslie Simons, President  
San Rafael Heritage

cc: See email address list