



Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement

ROSALYNN HUGHEY, DIRECTOR

July 6th, 2020

Thai-Chau Le
Supervising Planner
City of San Jose
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113
VIA EMAIL (Thai-Chau.Le@sanjoseca.gov)

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
St. James Park Capital Vision and Performing Arts Pavilion Project
(File No. PP16-037 + HP19-008)

Dear Ms. Le:

I am writing to you as the Chair and empowered representative of the City of San Jose's Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC), with the HLC's comments regarding the potential historical impacts of the above-referenced project. The proposed scope of work is within the Saint James Square City Landmark and National Register Historic District (HD84-36), and immediately adjacent to multiple individual City Landmark Structures.

Per the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, and the Historic Preservation Goals and Policies of the Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan, the HLC is the City's quasi-judicial body tasked with the preservation of the City's historic built environment. The HLC provides project design comments and recommendations through Commission meetings and the smaller Design Review Committee (DRC). Over the course of the planned revitalization of St. James Park, the DRC and HLC have been provided with project updates. The Draft EIR formally came before the HLC on June 3rd, 2020.

At the June 3rd, 2020, HLC meeting, in a 6-0-1 decision, the Commission voted to authorize the Chair to forward the Commission's comments to the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement. The consensus of the Commission was that, while many of the comments provided previously by the DRC and HLC have been addressed, there are additional comments and details that remain unresolved.

Our additional comments include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The HLC applauds the project's intention to revive St. James Park as a social focal point for the City. This is an appropriate acknowledgement of the role that the original 1868 park played during the 19th and most of the 20th centuries.
2. Maintaining the historic perimeter, in both the spirit of the 'Memorial Walk' and the retention of the statues and memorials, is of the utmost importance. The restoration of formal gardens would approach false historicism; instead, the proposed 'Memorial Walk' embraces the history and placemaking of St. James Park, while acknowledging that the best means by which to engage the surrounding residents with the park has evolved in the last one hundred and fifty years.
3. The park's utility and historical integrity were dealt a severe blow when it was bisected by the VTA tracks. While we applaud many aspects of the current proposal, we continue to feel that the park would be better served by the relocation of the VTA tracks.

4. The self-professed mandate of the Levitt Pavilion project is ‘Building Community Through Music’, with an annual minimum of (50) free concerts. While the ability of music to draw people together is undeniable, this cannot be allowed to come at the expense of other visitors to the historic park, residents and tenants of the surrounding City Landmark structures, and the integrity of the Saint James Square City Landmark and National Register Historic District as a whole. Therefore, we consider the establishment of a decibel limit for all public performances in the park to be an essential mitigation measure, one that should be strictly and consistently enforced.
5. The quantity of trees proposed for the reconfigured park is an appropriate nod to the original intent of the park, and a welcome attempt to encourage uses in addition to the concert venue.
6. The impact of the proposed development on mitigation measures provided as a part of previous alterations to St. James Park should be considered in detail as part of both the project analysis and the revised park’s built form. The existing fountain is an appropriate example. While not original, it was installed to mitigate the substantial impacts on the park of previous changes to the park, the most ill-advised of which were the placement of 2nd Street and the VTA tracks. Any capital vision for the park should address the park’s history of mitigations and alterations.
7. The emphasis placed on the ‘Memorial Walk’ as a nod to the previous formal gardens should be reflected in the materials and finishes. The use of brick or a macadamized surface would be the most appropriate choice. Should a surface such as stamped concrete, which would require less maintenance, be selected, the pattern and color should be such that it acknowledges this more historically accurate materials. A mix of low maintenance materials at the areas of heaviest circulation – including access points for maintenance vehicles – could be appropriately balanced by the use of more historically accurate materials along the more pedestrian portions of the ‘Memorial Walk’.
8. Embracing the modern reality of the need for a children’s play area presents the opportunity for a nod to the history of the park as well. One need only look to Theodore Lenzen park to see how this can quite easily be accomplished. The replication of canned fruit labels and signage along the perimeter fence gives a depth and meaning to the enclosure, far beyond the non-descript powder-coated aluminum. It provides insight into the context of San Jose as part of the Valley of Heart’s Delight, and the storied history of the canneries. A similar approach should be taken as part of the capital vision; any play area within St. James Park should clearly acknowledge its surroundings, rather than be composed solely of anonymous play structures that could just as readily be found in any number of community parks. Street cars were common in the downtown area from the 1880s through the 1930s. The inclusion of a miniaturized streetcar would provide a special ‘destination’ element to the play area, while prompting further discussion by visitors of the historical roots of downtown.
9. Multiple points of entry to the park is a welcome part of the capital vision. Placing historic markers at these points of entry would allow the circulation pattern to not only encourage entry into St. James Park, but provide additional background on the historic contributing structures lining the park. These include the Santa Clara County Courthouse, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, the Unitarian Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, the Sainte Claire Club, and Scottish Rite Temple. The placement of these buildings around the perimeter of the park was a conscious, deliberate choice; St. James Park as a public square, and gathering place for worshippers and congregants, is an aspect of its history that should be embraced and elaborated upon by the proposed signage and historic markers.
10. In Las Gatos, the historical markers in Vasona Park tell history in stages, addressing the Ohlone period, the Spanish / Mexican era, the early US period, and beyond. A similarly well-thought-out series of markers would be a welcome addition to Saint James Park. Furthermore, the capital vision should embrace San Jose’s self-proclaimed status as the ‘Capital of Silicon Valley’, and include QR codes to provide additional pictures, resources, or augmented reality (AR) engagement for those who are interested. Some potential ideas for historical markers are as follows:

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- a. St. James Park was once owned by James Frazier Reed, one of the City's founders. Reed later sold the back to the City for the same price he had paid for it initially.
- b. In the 1850s, the land was used as a hog farm and drill field.
- c. Street cars from the train depot built in 1864 brought many visitors to the park. The Bassett Street depot closed in 1935, moving to Cahill Street, the current home of the National Landmark Diridon Station.
- d. The Naglee monument was designed by Paul Phillippe Cret, a preeminent early 20th century architect, and the head of the architecture school at the University of Pennsylvania, which remains to this day one of the nation's most highly-considered architecture schools. Henry Naglee's monument should be retained as part of the capital vision, with its inscription of Naglee's accomplishments.
- e. At the entrance to St. James Park opposite Trinity Episcopal Church (81 North Second Street), an appropriate marker would acknowledge Reverend Peter Williams Cassey as the 'founding father of Black San Jose'. In 1862, Reverend Cassey established a secondary school for San Jose's black students.
- f. In 1887, the City hired Rudolf Ulrich to remove some of the trees to afford more sunlight to the flower beds.
- g. 'The Valley of Heart's Delight' was the term used to describe Santa Clara Valley during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Farmers, canners, and ancillary industries formed the heart of San Jose's economic and civic identity during much of that time; from the 1880s until 1950, Santa Clara Valley would claim to be the 'Garden Spot of the State'.
- h. The McKinley Monument should include a historical marker describing McKinley's speech of May 13, 1901. The community gathered the funds needed to commission a statue or monument after McKinley was assassinated later that year. Sculptor Paul Schmidt created the McKinley statue, in addition to dozens of other significant works in San Francisco and elsewhere.
- i. The nearby Hotel Vendome, built in 1888, was commissioned after the small San Jose business community felt that the City lacked a first-class, resort hotel. Initially, the Vendome Corporation sought approval to locate the new hotel in St. James Park itself, before settling on the twelve-acre estate of Josiah Belden, one of San Jose's early mayors, on North First Street. It catered to upper class visitors from 1889 until 1930.
- j. An historical marker recounting the lurching of Brook Hart's kidnappers and murderers in 1933 should be duly considered. The marker should be placed close to the Courthouse, noting that the kidnappers were held in the courthouse before being brought out to the park and lynched.
- k. Some of the source material for these proposed markers can be found in the following, all of which should be part of the background and context for the design of any revisions to St. James Park:
 - i. *Signposts Revisited* (Patricia Loomis)
 - ii. *Reflections of the Past* (Charlene Duval)
 - iii. *Sunshine, Fruit, and Flowers* (San Jose Mercury, 1890)
 - iv. *Historical Highlights of Santa Clara Valley* (Jack Douglas)
 - v. www.sjpl.org (McKinley Monument background info)
 - vi. www.vendome.org

As a project within both a City Landmark District and National Register Historic District, and surrounded by multiple individual City Landmarks, the importance of properly addressing the potential impacts of this project on historic resources cannot be overstated. Given the scope of the proposal, this is a once-in-a-generation, if not once-in-a-lifetime, undertaking in the heart of one of San Jose's most historic areas. Therefore, adherence to, and compliance with, both the Secretary of Interior Standards and the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance must be a primary tenet of the design scheme. Towards that end, the HLC looks forward to further collaboration with the design team and City Staff, to ensure that the details and specifications for the proposed revitalization of St. James Park maintain this high standard.

Sincerely,



Edward Saum
Chair, City of San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission

cc: Councilmember Raul Peralez
Rosalynn Hughey, Director, Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
Juliet Arroyo, Historic Preservation Officer