



Dedicated to Preserving San Jose's Architectural Heritage

May 14, 2019

San Jose City Council
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

VIA EMAIL AND TESTIMONY

City Council Agenda File 19-327- Item 10.2 Memorandum

Dear Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor, Council & San Jose Planning, Building & Code Enforcement

The Preservation Action Council of San Jose (PAC*SJ) has reviewed the May 2, 2019 Memorandum regarding our Appeal of the Planning Department's approval of SP18-016. The project will allow the demolition of a historic building on a site that dates back to the mid-1800's and the construction of a 22-story, 242' tall mixed-use building.

PAC*SJ has many concerns with this project, specifically objecting to the Planning Department's reliance on an Addendum to a program-level EIR to inform the decision to demolish a structure identified within the City's Historic Resource Inventory and surrounded by a dozen historic structures, at least two of which are eligible for State and National Historic Landmark status. PAC*SJ believes that negative impacts to the City's historic resources are NOT unavoidable. While PAC*SJ sees the sense of establishing a program level EIR for the 2040 Plan, it is unclear when a project level EIR would be appropriate, leading to potential confusion on the behalf of developers and the community in general. To the best of PAC*SJ's knowledge this is the first instance of its application.

In spite of the assertions in the memo, PAC*SJ continues to believe that a program-level (or programmatic) EIR could not possibly analyze the specific project-level impacts that a new project may cause on historic resources or be able to assess the cumulative impacts that this and other future projects in the vicinity could cause. Further, an Addendum is not sufficient to address those impacts. Therefore, we request that Council instruct its Planning Department to conduct a full project specific EIR, while also reviewing this project in the context of likely future projects along the West side of South. 1st Street using the newly adopted Downtown Design Guidelines and the existing Downtown Historic Guidelines We fully expect that future projects will seek permits to demolish the remaining historic structures on South First Street, between San Fernando and Santa Clara Streets. These include circa 1867 Lean Jewelers as well as National and State Register eligible F. Stock/Fischer Pellerano Drugs (circa 1857).

PAC*SJ again requests that height, massing, adjacency, proximity and cumulative impacts be taken into serious account relative to the one block of S. First Street across from the Downtown Historic Commercial District that will be heavily impacted by this project and those possible in the future.

We support development that brings additional residents and businesses to San Jose. Historic resources coupled with quality new development makes for a city that is interesting for residents and visitors alike, while highlighting the things that make San Jose unique from other cities. For a city founded in 1777, we have precious little of our historic architecture left. And for all of the things like cost of housing and traffic that we face, our history provides a counterbalance to those issues, and a sense of place that cannot be replaced.

Please do the right thing and defer the approval of this project, pending a clearer understanding of the facts.

Mike Sodergren
PAC*SJ Vice President – Advocacy