

From: [Tu, John](#)
To: [Downtown West Project](#)
Subject: Fw: Fw: Historic Resources Comments
Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 1:32:43 PM

Best,
Tong (John) Tu

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From: Andy Wang <wangan@google.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 12:49 PM
To: Tu, John <john.tu@sanjoseca.gov>; Manford, Robert <Robert.Manford@sanjoseca.gov>; Keyon, David <david.keyon@sanjoseca.gov>; Peak, Dana <Dana.Peak@sanjoseca.gov>
Cc: Bhavesh Parikh <bhaveshp@google.com>; Amanda Wolf <amandawolf@google.com>
Subject: Re: Fw: Historic Resources Comments

[External Email]

John, Robert, David, Dana:

The team appreciates your input on historic resources and we've compiled in this note below responses to staff's historic resource comments based on past and recent conversations on these topics. We've also taken the opportunity to dive a little deeper where appropriate. References to DWDSG content are based on the 10/7/20 draft of the Downtown West Standards and Guidelines. City's comments are highlighted below, and our responses are provided in italics. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Bhavesh or me.

Comments related to treatment of historic adjacency
Section 5.15:

- "There is only one standard for historic adjacency, which is architectural height reference. It is recommended that additional San Jose Downtown Design Guidelines and Standards be applied to the project beyond Section 2.3 and 4.2.2 Standard a-c and 4.2.4 Standard a,b,d. ..."
- "... Additional standards are recommended to address color and proportion of materials and openings, potentially reducing the amount of glazing allowed as it is a preferred material, and further addressing the podium level and modulation. ..."
- "... Similar to the lowrise context, there should be skyline stepbacks. Stepback should be applied to the podium level for all areas (in and out of the project site) where new development is adjacent. There should also be a height cap for all. ..."

- "... In the context of historic adjacency, there is more detail (e.g. massing requirements) provided for the Lake House Historic District. This should be applied to all the designated and eligible historic resources, particularly on site. ..."

The project team has incorporated

sensitivity to historic resources by looking at many factors, including their scale, level of importance, land use, and other such contextual considerations -- and balancing these considerations with multiple project objectives. Additionally, the DWDSG incorporates a color and material palette (S5.7.2) that's drawn from the Downtown West environment, and further controls would result in formulaic outcomes that would limit successful, creative, and more thoughtful solutions down the road.

On the DWDSG's approach to historic adjacency:

The DWDSG has been drafted to complement

and build upon San José's Downtown Design Guidelines (DDG), which will in large part apply to Downtown West. DDG standards that apply at Downtown West include a majority of the DDG's section 4.2.4, which regulates historic adjacency design. Specifically, these are DDG standards 4.2.4e-k, which respectively:

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require facade articulation of similar widths to adjacent historic buildings

-

disallow false historicism

-

require windows to be placed on facades visible from historic buildings

-

require some incorporation of historic-compatible material, such as "masonry, terra cotta, limestone, stucco, glass, mosaic, cast stone, concrete, metal, glass, and wood"

-

require compatibility between new and historic material in terms of "scale, proportion, design, finish, texture, and durability"

-

require similar spacing between pedestrian entries as with adjacent historic buildings

-

require a ground floor with similar floor-to-ceiling height as adjacent historic buildings

In addition to and building upon

the above, the DWDSG generally requires that new construction adjacent to historic resources incorporate an architectural height reference (S5.15.1). The architectural height reference is a strategy appropriate for and fully consistent with development abutting historic resources in dense urban areas such as Downtown West, a project area that has not been identified as having or overlapping with a historic district, and which nonetheless may include a number of historic resources intermixed with planned new construction, and would include a variety in composition, scale, styles, and time periods. With such variety, the architectural height reference is a useful and common design strategy for ensuring that new construction -- particularly taller buildings -- establish visual relationships with neighboring historic resources.

The 5M Project, a multi-acre rezoning

and mixed-use development approved in San Francisco in 2015, is a useful example of another project that incorporates the architectural height reference. As with Downtown West, the project's site was not itself in a landmark district, and it similarly included multiple historic resources recognized under CEQA, as well as one individual building recognized under the highest historic designation under the city's planning code (Article 11) for its "highest importance" and "excellent" design relative to other such resources in the city. The [5M Project's Design for Development document](#), a regulatory design implementation document analogous to the DWDSG, also included a standard similar to the DWDSG's S5.15.1 for architectural height reference. This standard (5.1.2) applied to new-construction high-rises that were directly abutting, or across a narrow alleyway from, historic resources identified under CEQA. While none of these resources were designated under the city's planning code, they were nonetheless recognized by the 5M Project's architectural height reference standard, which required that new construction establish relationships with those buildings through various possible design strategies, "including shifts in articulation through change in color, material, pattern of articulation, or module, or by a volumetric shift." In the 5M example, the Article 11 building mentioned above was addressed through the project's land plan itself. The plan

provided for this historic resource to sit apart from new construction and to be framed by a high-quality, active open space -- a design and programmatic strategy intended to provide deference to the project building that had received the highest historic rating. (Note that the planned Gateway Plaza at Downtown West follows a similar strategy relative to the San Jose Water Company building, as described above.)

Given the dense urban environment and the need to balance several objectives, including the retention and celebration of historic resources, both Downtown West's and the 5M Project's regulatory documents are examples that represent an appropriate strategy of thoughtful site planning to 1) retain historic resources in balance with new construction, 2) frame such resources with open space, which provides renewed public opportunity to appreciate, celebrate, and activate historic buildings that might otherwise be underutilized. Both project's regulations also go beyond this foundation by requiring new construction to incorporate design references to historic resources.

In addition, Downtown West goes beyond the 5M Project by creating multiple tiers of deference to historic resources -- going beyond the architectural height reference strategy.

The San Jose Water Company building, the only city landmark on-site, is planned to be framed by an open space, which provides relief to the adjacent San Jose Water Company building, a well-known historic building and the only city landmark on the project site. In addition, the adjacent E1 office building is not only required under S5.15.1 to establish an architectural height reference to the Water Company building, but the DWDSG requires the Santa Clara-facing facade of E1 to respect a 5-degree plane slanting back from the Water Company building (S5.15.2).

The E2 and E3 buildings are similarly further subject to even more massing standards in deference to the Lakehouse Historic District, an off-site historic landmark district that is also a longstanding neighborhood of low-rise, single-family homes, many of which are individual historic resources in their own right. The DWDSG's standards (S5.15.9, S5.15.10, and S5.15.11) create stepdowns and relief in the massing of the E2 and E3 residential buildings, establishing a transition to the lower-rise historic neighborhood. A practical effect of this is a conscious reduction in the possible total residential unit count achievable by the Downtown West project -- a tradeoff that the plan makes in order to balance thoughtful design with other planning and policy priorities, as well as the project's own objectives. Because of these objectives, the project prioritizes standards that have to do with historic-resource relationships according to sensitivity and context.

The project's objectives are articulated

in the Draft EIR's Section 2.14. Without restating these objectives in full, they include:

-

A significant new job center ("sufficient high-quality office space to accommodate the long-term expansion of [the project applicant's] workforce and business operations")

-

"thousands of units of new, high-quality housing ... with sufficient density to maintain day and evening, weekday and weekend activities in Downtown West," plus "affordable housing consistent with the goals set forth in the (Memorandum of Understanding signed by the City and Google)"

-

The retention of "historic resources and assets where feasible to foster a place authentic to San José, and foster contemporary relations to San José's history"

-

Many other objectives that speak to the vibrancy of a new mixed-use neighborhood and the elevation of local ecology in the project's plan

These goals are largely mirrored

in the City's objectives, and in the MOU, as described by the Draft EIR.

The DWDSG's standards (in combination

with applicable DDG standards), and the Downtown West's land plan itself, incorporate and balance the goals above in order to achieve an optimal overall outcome.

Comment related to requirements for demolition

S3.4

- "It is recommended that Section 3.4 address the timing and extent of demolition to occur at one time to ensure that historic resources are not demolished without the initiation of related development activity."

The

City's standard conditions already tie demolition permits to proposed building permits. The City's implementation planner (John Tu) has suggested a similar condition for Downtown West, which may include many complexities related to its timing and delivery.

Language for such a condition is currently being drafted, consistent with the intent of tying demolition to reasonably planned development and/or uses.

Comment related to height limit language for F6 and D5

S5.6.3

- "It is recommended that the height of Blocks F6 and D5 be limited to 1 story, rather than 40 feet, and height limitations be applied to Blocks D4 and F4."

Forty feet would provide the project

the ability to achieve optimum design outcomes, which at final design may contemplate possibilities such as two stories, or one story plus mezzanine, for these structures that will house public-facing uses.

The standard as written would permit variety of scale

and better street-level composition while maintaining the same general low scale.

See first above response for comment

on height limitations.

Comments related to application of the Downtown Design Guidelines

Section 5.15

- "... It is recommended that guidelines (vs. standards) in Section 4.2.4 also be included to provide additional direction for design context. ..."
- "... It is recommended that additional San Jose Downtown Design Guidelines and Standards be applied to the project beyond Section 2.3 and 4.2.2 Standard a-c and 4.2.4 Standard a,b,d. ..."

Section 5.15 of the DWDSG (p215) explains

that both DDG standards and

guidelines would indeed apply unless otherwise noted:

In addition to the standards listed

in this section, the standards and guidelines in project-wide sections apply to all new development including

those facing and adjacent to

historic resources. Project-wide standards and guidelines in

Sections 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10,

and 5.12 as well as DDG Sections 4.2.1, 4.3.3, 4.4.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, and 5.5.1 (unless otherwise noted) require new development to incorporate facade rhythm and streetwall articulation in the pedestrian and podium levels consistent with the scale of the historic resources.

Additionally, Appendix C of the DWDSG

(Conformance Review Checklists) illustrates the applicability of both standards and guidelines from the DDG, including within Section 4.2.4 of the DDG covering historic adjacency.

Comments related to treatment of 150 S. Montgomery and adjacency requirement Section 5.15

- "... The development related to Hellwig Ironworks should comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as a Candidate City Landmark proposed for retention (S5.15.6)."

The concept for 150 S. Montgomery

St is to use cultural programming and iconic design to create a new hub for the project and the city.

This approach relies on a transformative design to expand the building's size for public-facing uses, as well as to bring the building into a new era and

to give it prominence in downtown and citywide. The new 150 S. Montgomery would be a cornerstone of the public-realm and public-life vision for Downtown West, defining a compelling new experience in the Diridon Station area. The Draft EIR accordingly notes

an objective to "build upon the project's location at the convergence of a significant regional and statewide transportation hub and the city's Downtown to create a world-class, architecturally iconic civic/cultural center for the City of San José, particularly

through

the combination and juxtaposition

of historic and contemporary design elements."

In communications related to historic

resources, including with Preservation Action Council of San Jose and with the City's Historic

Landmarks Commission, we've seen support and excitement for this approach, and continue to plan for its fruition as part of the Downtown West plan.

Note additionally that the project's

Draft EIR includes an alternative, the 150 S Montgomery Street Preservation Alternative, that contemplates consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's standards.

- "... There is no architectural requirement for adjacency to historic resources for Block F4 in relation to Hellwig Ironworks. It is recommended that one be applied."

As described above, the plan to reconfigure the Hellwig Ironworks building is about creating an iconic moment in the plan for both Downtown West and San Jose more broadly. Therefore, while the historic building is respected through the provision of a prominent role in the plan, as well as the provision of new public open space framing the building, the design intent does not follow the typical formula of prescriptions around historic buildings, including the architectural height reference, but rather creates a special moment that stands on its own. This allows the building to transform into something new while still legibly retaining its historic essence.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Tu, John <john.tu@sanjoseca.gov>
Date: Tue, Dec 22, 2020 at 9:52 AM
Subject: Fw: Historic Resources Comments
To: Amanda Wolf <amandawolf@google.com>
Cc: sanjoseplan@google.com <sanjoseplan@google.com>, Downtown West Project <downtownwest@esassoc.com>

Amanda,

Find the Historic Review team comments below.

Best,
Tong (John) Tu

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From: Peak, Dana <Dana.Peak@sanjoseca.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2020 9:46 AM
To: Tu, John <john.tu@sanjoseca.gov>
Cc: Manford, Robert <Robert.Manford@sanjoseca.gov>; Downtown West Project <downtownwest@esassoc.com>
Subject: Historic Resources Comments

PDC19-039, PD19-029, GP19-009, PT20-027

Historic Landmarks Commission

Loss of Historic Fabric

The project was reviewed by the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) on January 15, 2020 and November 4, 2020. Please find attached action minutes and two public comments letters.

The HLC and public comment focused on the sheer size of the 81-acre project site and the fact that only three historical resources are proposed to be retained (Kearny Pattern Works and Foundry, Hellwig Ironworks, Stephens Meats sign), impacting the history and culture of the project area. The HLC encourages the applicant to develop a broader preservation vision and strategy that supports the retention and reuse of historic resources. There is an opportunity to creatively integrate existing buildings into the project, including but not limited to the nine historic resources determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources and/or designation as a City Landmark, Structures of Merit listed in the Historic Resources Inventory and existing murals and signs. The HLC encouraged the preservation and relocation of the three houses at 559, 563 and 567 W. Julian Street.

Concern was also expressed regarding to the need to understand the phasing of the proposed development for such a large-scale project.

DWDSG

The HLC is concerned with compatibility of proposed new development within 200 ft of historic resources in relation to design criteria, materials (too much glass in renderings) scale, massing, and height. Concern was expressed that the value of the surrounding historic resources would be diminished. It was suggested that existing historic design guidelines should be incorporated into the DWDSG, and the downtown historic adjacency guidelines should be extended (Section 4.2.4).

Additional Staff Comments

DWDSG

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It is recommended that Section 3.4 address the timing and extent of demolition to occur at one time to ensure that historic resources are not demolished without the initiation of related development activity.

S5.6.3

It is recommended that the height of Blocks F6 and D5 be limited to 1 story, rather than

40 feet, and height limitations be applied to Blocks D4 and F4.

Section 5.15

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In the context of historic adjacency, there is more detail (e.g. massing requirements) provided for the Lake House Historic District. This should be applied to all the designated and eligible historic resources, particularly on site.

There is no architectural requirement for adjacency to historic resources for Block F4 in relation to Hellwig Ironworks. It is recommended that one be applied.

The development related to Hellwig Ironworks should comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as a Candidate City Landmark proposed for retention (Section 15.15.6).

Dana Peak Edwards

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