



PLANNING DIVISION

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Memorandum

Date: October 15, 2008

To: Historic Resources Board

From: Dennis Backlund
Historic Preservation Planner

Department: Planning and
Community Environment

Subject: Discussion of Potential Topics for the Joint HRB-City Council Meeting Currently Scheduled for November 10, 2008.

Introduction

The Joint Council-HRB meeting is currently scheduled for Monday, November 10, 2008, at 6:00 pm in the Council Conference Room.. The Board will have its final opportunity to develop its Joint Meeting agenda at the regular HRB meeting of October 15, 2008 which will allow a 3-week period to develop the visual displays that will correspond to the agenda items.

At the March 5th HRB meeting the Board conducted a discussion of possible topics for the HRB's meeting with the City Council, and made the following suggestions.

Topics Proposed by the Board at the March 5, 2008 HRB Meeting

Board Members suggested the following topics for the Joint HRB-City Council meeting:

- Present historic preservation as one of the original "green" policies.
- Market historic preservation through educational materials, especially brochures regarding the historic preservation program. The historic education program is sometimes the only method of preventing demolition.
- Present the HRB's work program for the coming year with an action plan for implementation. Include topics from the most recent HRB Retreat such as protection measures for historic buildings in construction areas, and proposed new incentives such as residential Transferable Development Rights (TDRs) and extending to additional historic properties the currently existing incentive of exemption of attics and basements from floor area calculations.

- Present the current historic incentive program and indicate the most recently approved incentives such as the Planned Community zone at 449-451 Addison Avenue
- Display poster-size photos on the walls of the Council Conference Room for the Joint Meeting. Suggested subjects for the photos included (1) preservation success stories, (2) endangered buildings such as significant small properties and cottage courts including those designed by Pedro deLemos, and (3) photos of the major historic architects of Palo Alto, and indicate that information on historic architects could serve as a promotion of the City's "Destination Palo Alto" program.
- Present copies of interesting historic documents, including (1) real estate ads from the 1940's and 1950's from areas like Professorville that housed students and low-income workers at the time, and then show real estate ads from the same areas today that reveal how these areas have become fashionable and very expensive historic neighborhoods, and (2) real estate ads from the 1920's for what were then "tract" houses on the trolley line.

Staff Suggestion

Staff suggests for the discussion at the October 15, 2008 HRB meeting that Board Members work toward a systematic agenda for the Joint Meeting. Staff observes that the City Council has shown great interest in three major topics over the last year, and staff suggests that the HRB could develop a Joint Meeting agenda that relates historic preservation to these three ongoing topics: (1) protecting the quality of life in Palo Alto, (2) addressing global warming and environmental protection, and (3) enhancing the City's economic health. Staff is including below a possible approach to this type of agenda for the Board's consideration.

Joint Meeting of the City Council and the Historic Resources Board

Agenda

1. The Role of Historic Preservation in Palo Alto's Quality of Life

This item would inform the several new Council Members how the HRB's program enhances the unique quality of life in Palo Alto by conserving the history of the City and its finest historic buildings. It could be observed that historic buildings and sites are usually the primary foundation of a community's uniqueness. This is recognized by the publishing market which typically selects historic images for tourist postcards of Palo Alto. This Joint Meeting agenda item could be illustrated by local preservation success stories—including discussion of historic incentives that made some of these projects possible—which have been achieved since the last Joint HRB-City Council Meeting in late 2006. The success stories could be visually presented in poster-size color photographs on the walls of the Council Conference Room. Success

stories could include the completion of the restorations of the house at 650 Waverley and the Maybeck House, the completion of Children’s Library, the waiting room at the downtown Caltrain Depot, the exterior rehabilitation of St Thomas Aquinas Church—the City’s oldest church--, the rehabilitation of 318 Lincoln where philosopher William James was visiting during the 1906 earthquake, and the restoration of the Pedro deLemos interior at 520 Ramona Street, now called the “Wine Room.”

2. Historic Preservation’s Benefits for Global Warming and Sustainability Issues

Several HRB Members and staff attended a recent National Trust event in Berkeley where the president of the National Trust, Richard Moe, demonstrated the crucial role of historic preservation in reducing global warming and enhancing sustainability.

3. Historic Preservation’s Benefits for the Economy of Downtown and Residential Districts

Palo Alto is well known for including economic enhancement elements in its community programs. The “Purpose” section of the Historic Preservation Ordinance includes in Section 16.49.010 (c) the following goal “Stabilize and improve the economic value of certain historic structures, districts and neighborhoods.” The HRB could include a brief presentation to the Council on the economic benefits to the city of the historic preservation program (that is, how historic preservation helps generate revenue for the city), and this subject could be of special interest in the potentially challenging times ahead for the city’s continuing economic strength.

Attachment

Notes for potential topics for the Joint HRB-CC Meeting proposed by HRB Chair Bernstein.

