

E-MEMO July 26, 2007

TO: Ken Hiatt, Deputy City Manager/Redevelopment  
Ike Njoku, Planner

FR: Jim Becket, Resident, City of Davis

CC: Rand Herbert, Chair DHRMC

SUBJ: DEIR, Mishka's Café Project

By way of introduction, I am far from an expert on historic preservation and therefore make comments on the adequacy of a Draft EIR with a great deal of reservation. Technically, I do not have the expertise, so I'll leave the technical remarks to those who do know. On the other hand, I am a life long resident of Yolo County, as were my parents and grandparents. My place of residence has been in Davis since 1964. Therefore, I think I know a little bit about what gives a property historical significance in Davis and in Yolo County from a lay person's perspective, even though I may not know the proper technical terms and/or procedures. In addition, I have been a volunteer in matters related to planning in the downtown for several years, and am at least somewhat familiar with some of the politics of the situation. I have been disturbed by manipulations that have gone on in recent years downtown, which continue with this DEIR, and the power that a few individuals currently have over the future of downtown. From that perspective, I find the DEIR inadequate in the general sense that it under-represents the perspective of the "ordinary," non-downtown Davis resident.

Another general, introductory statement is that I believe this DEIR is the most extensive I have seen since I have been volunteering in historical matters in Davis, and I commend staff and the consultants that have been used for the effort. The number of alternatives, and the extensive treatment of

alternatives, is extraordinary. Even this extensive, commendable effort, however, appears to have produced an inadequate document, it seems to me, in terms of its conclusions as they relate to the non-business owning resident of Davis.

Perhaps the major inadequacy of the DEIR is that it does not adequately address the initial purpose of the project as it reviews all the alternatives, which was to contribute to the viability of the commercial endeavor at the Varsity Theatre.

As a member of the general public, the section of the DEIR which is the most useful in looking at the adequacy of the DEIR is the Potential Areas of Controversy, as this section states that the site is governed by competing goals and objectives. Such a statement itself is a major deficiency of the DEIR. Yes, commercial revitalization of the area is to be supported, and goals/policies promoting preservation, adaptive reuse and the sensitive handling of listed historic resources have also been adopted. **However, these two sets of goals and/or policies do not have to be competing, yet the DEIR fails to address that possibility.** It is important to note that previous efforts on this site did so – Mansion Square was obviously developed with both goals in mind. It would seem logical to me that both goals would continue to be kept in mind and attempts made to enhance what has already been done, rather than make the situation worse. For example, one of the ways commercial revitalization of the area might be achieved would be to look at ways the project would assist the businesses in Mansion Square, as well as the Varsity and other businesses along Second Street. The business owners in Mansion Square do not appear to be represented in the analysis, yet the A frame signs which dot the area would indicate on a practical level that they are seeking help. It would seem like improved access to, and the increased visibility of, Mansion Square businesses should have been a consideration of this project and its alternatives.

This is a major deficiency of this DEIR.

It appears to me, as an ordinary member of the public, that Alternative #6 could easily address both sets of goals/policies in a complimentary, rather than competing, manner. Alternative #5 might also, if modified to create more open space between the Mansion and a re-sited tank house. However, it would appear that neither the Project nor any of the other alternatives could do so.

The DEIR is inadequate because it does not address the possibility that a project might be complimentary to both sets of goals/policies, rather than being competitive.