

2007_07_24HuntBoyerTankHouseLtr

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Mr. Hiatt,

I write concerning the adequacy of the EIR and the subsequent fate of the Hunt Boyer Tank House.

MCPDEIR p. 2 Background: paragraph4: *The RFP/Q included the City's interest in seeing proposals that included the commercial space connected to the Theater (Clarence Cooper Insurance) as well as the Mansion and Tank House properties to work in conjunction with the theater and provide viable income to support the operation of the theater.*

Given the proposed project, Mishka's Cafe, which entails at a minimum the relocation of the Tank House if not its actual demolition, and that the proposed project conforms to the invitation issued by the city to conceive of projects that would support commercial interests in the area, i.e. the Varsity Theater, I believe the EIR to be inadequate in the following respects: 1) consideration of the loss of public or civic space surrounding the Tank House; 2) failure to demonstrate that the Varsity Theater or other nearby businesses will fail should the proposed project not be approved.

As to my first point, there is an attractive, paved and planted plaza surrounding the Tank House and adjacent to the Dresbach Mansion that has only to be reclaimed by its negligent landlord, the City of Davis, to become valuable to the downtown. Currently there is a dearth of civic space in Davis to the extent that excluding the rail depot and the E Street Plaza, only a few tiny areas occur scattered among the downtown blocks. The rail depot and platform are somewhat removed from downtown circulation. Due to the proximity of parking and street traffic use of the E Street Plaza is very poorly buffered from auto exhaust and noise. Referring to the map provided in the MCPDEIR 5.1 Land Use document, the remaining designated parks, excepting Central Park located outside the downtown core, are nothing but strips of grass.

As to my second point:

MCPDEIR PROJECT OBJECTIVES *The objectives of the Proposed Project are to:*

- *Create new retail/commercial development that complements existing entertainment uses in the Core Area*
- *Increase the vitality on the block and surrounding area by adding a ground floor café/restaurant that will in turn help support the vitality of the Varsity Theater*
- *Develop a project that is compatible with the adjacent historic resources*
- *Create a project that is economically viable and generates direct and indirect fiscal benefit to the City*
- *Remedy an unsafe public building for the protection of public health and safety*

The MCPDEIR does not contain information to lend credibility to the statement that the Varsity needs "help to support" its vitality. Given the negative and sustained impacts to the historic character of the site there should be ample figures available and provided in the EIR to lend credence to this assertion. Otherwise one is free to assume that without such figures the rationale for promoting this project is fiction.

Likewise it is not a given that a cafe would be compatible with the adjacent historic resources if by its building, part of the adjacent resource is lost or reduced. Previous comments on the alternative of relocating the Tank House to the more exposed west side of the Mansion remark on the obstruction of the view of the Mansion; the Tank House would also be more exposed to weather, auto exhaust, and suffer a kind of marginalized usefulness to the site.

Finally, the remedy for an unsafe public building would obviously be for the building's owner, the City of Davis, to make it safe. If safety is not in the budget given current income, there are remedies for raising funds that would celebrate the rare, the interesting, the historic qualities of the unsafe building and encourage in Davis citizens a proper sense of ownership and stewardship of its few historic treasures.

To conclude, the following alternative does seem viable, and in fact the most environmentally sustainable given the potential for regaining civic space downtown as well as the lack of documentation that the Varsity Theater needs or gains substantial "support" for its operation from the building of Mishka's Cafe:

MCPDEIR Alternatives page 8, Alternative 2, paragraph2: *The Tank House could be reused either for public use such as a visitor/community information kiosk or as a small retail shop (i.e. flower or produce stand), or as a support use/function to the primary uses in the Mansion. Improved walkways and landscape areas around the Tank House would complement the Tank House use, provide public seating areas, and enhance the entrance to the Mansion Square complex to the south.*

I sincerely hope the inadequacies of this EIR will be forthrightly addressed by the project developers and city planners. It would be particularly shameful if neglect of the underpinnings of the questionable assertions it contains results in this length of 2nd Street becoming a downtown mall with food court.

Very truly yours,

Sheryl L. Gerety