

From: Louis Perrochon
Sent: Monday, May 3, 2021 9:39 AM
Subject: Downtown Precise Plan Update Study Sessions

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

Good morning!

I have two comments in this context. One written comment for the meetings, and one comment about the Web site.

<https://www.mountainview.gov/depts/comdev/planning/activeprojects/downtownupdate.asp>

says there are no meetings planned, but I did get the yellow card from you that announces two meetings. It may be worth updating the Web site.

As of the meetings, here is my comment:

"Please make the pedestrian zones in the first few blocks of Castro permanent. This was the best quality of life improvement in Mountain View in 20+ years, and we only experienced it in a pandemic. With the economic opening, it will become even more amazing. It may require some modification based on the learnings, e.g. reducing loud outdoor music, but it is clearly a much better use of the space than parking and driving cars."

Thanks

Louis Perrochon

From: Robert Chang
Sent: Monday, May 3, 2021 2:44 PM
Subject: Downtown Precise Plan Update

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

Dear Mr. Anderson,

Thank you for your outstanding long-time service to Mountain View. I really appreciate your many efforts on behalf of the downtown business community. We are proud of your achievements, and glad to see your work benefiting the people of Mountain View.

For years now, downtown buildings have been seeing an increase in vacancies as well as the duration of vacancies. The pandemic has only exacerbated the issue to the point where today, walking downtown one sees many empty windows covered in “For Lease” signs. I’ve seen an overall ground floor vacancy rate of 20-30%, and much higher rates of vacancies on higher floors. This does not cover occupancy by businesses who have not been able to pay rent, resulting in a much lower recovery rate for landlords.

Attached are some recent photos. This vacancy blight is unfortunately a vicious cycle. Empty buildings make it harder to attract new businesses and existing ones feel less compelled to renew, resulting in even more vacancies.

To reverse this trend and prevent downtown streets appearing unoccupied by lots of abandoned buildings, we need to help downtown property owners and businesses by 1) removing more stringent building requirements and design guidelines, and 2) being more flexible in allowing different kinds of space use, especially for the ground floor. This should include encouraging more professional businesses such as CPA’s, lawyers, computer consultants, and travel agencies to establish offices downtown. These would only require small spaces but, being a great convenience to residents, would draw in many from the surrounding neighborhoods.

Brick-and-mortar retail, as you know, continues to merge with e-commerce, and retail tenants are increasingly hard to come by. We need to allow other uses for retail units without putting too much of a burden on building owners to find and justify a tenant fulfilling a limited range of criteria. Expanding these criteria and making the process to open a business a smooth and transparent one can create a more vibrant downtown providing a broad range of services and attractions to residents of Mountain View and beyond.

Best regards,

Robert Chang

There are many vacant buildings downtown, such as these on just 1 block.

Some units have been “for lease” for more than 4 years!



ALL PHOTOS WERE TAKEN ON 4/26/21

From: Hala Alshahwany
Sent: Tuesday, May 4, 2021 10:47 AM
Subject: Community Vs. Densification

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

Dear Planning Division Director & Staff,

I have grave concerns regarding recent development proposals in our city to change current zoning limits and enable higher densification. I have attended several EPC and city council meetings/study sessions (e.g. the 555 Middlefield Rd proposal, the up-zoning staff proposal, and more recently AZ mtg regarding 773 Cuesta Dr proposal), and felt that in every single meeting there was a great push by staff and some council members for densification with no regards to the existing community's well being or the city's environmental sustainability.

Here are my ideas for meeting economic, social and environmental justice while keeping MV a community with balanced living:

- * Conversion to high density near transit must consider established communities and the surrounding environment; e.g. Cypress Point Dr (impacted by 555 Middlefield proposal) a substandard dead-end street with already medium density dwellings up to 3 stories, many heritage trees and established habitats, and a busy Adult Education Center, should remain at medium density.
- * Every attempt should be made to preserve ALL of the heritage trees and mature green canopy in all the proposed developments. These trees are not replaceable sources of air purification and beauty. Climate change is not waiting another 30 yrs for young trees to do what the existing ones are doing.
- * Ensure developments are built with sidewalks 6-8 ft wide with tree strips buffer added to encourage pedestrians use.
- * Require varied architectural designs to make buildings appealing and interesting with maximum 3-5 stories high (if appropriate & accommodating to surrounding neighbors) for light and air allowances.
- * Finally and most importantly increase the percentage of low income affordable housing up to 30-40% to really achieve economic & race equity. This can be accomplished by the the city perusing community land trusts with other entities, as was done in San Francisco, Oakland and other Bay Area cities.

My understanding is that MV has already met the state RHNA (Regional Housing Need Assessment) requirements for the next cycle by approving 11,000 units to be built in the next 10 years. So why push for unbalanced developments that can be detrimental to our community when we have the ability to do it right for now and for the far future. It is time to conduct city

wide community meetings to establish a comprehensive general/precise plans for how all of Mountain View's future should look like.

I hope I can count on your support and positive actions to meet the above objectives.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Hala Alshahwany

Member of MV Environmental Sustainability Task Force-2

Resident

From: Cox, Robert

Sent: Wednesday, May 5, 2021 10:46 AM

Subject: Livable Mountain View Comments on EPC Item 5.1 "Downtown Precise Plan Update (Phase 1)".

Chair Cranston, Vice Chair Lo, and Members of the Environmental Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Item 5.1 "Downtown Precise Plan Update (Phase 1)".

YES, OUR DOWNTOWN IS UNIQUE AND SHOULD BE PROTECTED

We appreciate staff's recognition that "the existing historic resources in downtown are protected through the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and CEQA." and will continue to monitor and provide comment on development proposals in the historic area of our downtown. We also agree (per Exhibit 4) that *"The eclectic mix of buildings in the historic area of Castro Street is a rare asset, found in only a handful of Bay Area suburban downtowns.... a mixture of ages and architectural styles (with)... unifying characteristics including limited height, narrow building widths and small storefronts that create a fine-grained pedestrian scale and a largely continuous frontage of retail and restaurant uses."* And that our downtown *"possesses what developers spend years, and untold sums, trying to recreate, often unsuccessfully. This is a neighborhood of intimately scaled buildings that displays a patina earned only through decades of organic growth"*...making this the *"heartbeat of the City"* (Downtown Precise Plan, page 4).

- (1) We support programs to help defray the cost of to the owners of maintaining the facades of buildings in districts A, G, and H, as an alternative to significant redevelopment.
- (2) We also support staff recommendation to remove administrative office as a permitted use in areas A, G, and H. However, we also recommend **additional controls** to limit the number, percentage and aggregation of office uses in areas A, G and H to prevent the look and feel of the downtown from being severely compromised, as is already happening in some areas.

OUR DOWNTOWN IS ALREADY A HISTORIC DISTRICT AS SET FORTH BY STATE LAW

We are, however, extremely disappointed that the staff report concludes that "downtown Mountain View does not meet the criteria to create a downtown historic district". Staff seems to base this conclusion there being only 8 buildings of historic significance but declines to inform the EPC or the public what they are.

What law or ordinance supports this statement in the staff report?

We ask for the staff to amend its report and provide *complete transparency* as to the unnamed buildings and the criteria it used for its finding given that we have, for decades had an Area H "**Historic Retail District**" designation in the Downtown Precise Plan (page 72), a plan which was passed by City Council after its official inventory of historic buildings.

Given the lack of factual and statutory references in the staff report we offer the two attachments which we believe to be clear and concise explanations of what a Historic District is and the authority for our long-standing downtown Historic District designation:

Attachment A, an excerpt from The Los Angeles Conservancy sums it up well at:

<https://www.laconservancy.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/About%20Historic%20Districts.pdf>

What Are Historic Districts? A historic district is a formally designated group of buildings, structures, sites, and spaces that relate to one another historically, architecturally, and/or culturally. A district can span part or all of a neighborhood. It can be large or small, can represent any architectural style(s), and can include streetscape and landscape elements. Individual buildings within a district don't need to be highly significant on their own.

Attachment B shows California law supports the Historic District designation by our past Council and makes it clear there is no requirement of state or federal historic designations of any or all particular buildings, although we believe multiple buildings downtown would in fact qualify.

Section 18955 of the Health and Safety Code defines a "qualified historical building or structure" as **"any structure or property, collection of structures, and their associated sites deemed of importance to the history, architecture, or culture of an area by an appropriate local or state governmental jurisdiction. This shall include structures on existing or future national, state or local historical registers or official inventories, such as the National Register of Historic Places, State Historical Landmarks, State Points of Historical Interest, and **city or county registers or inventories of historical or architecturally significant sites, places, historic districts,** or landmarks. **This shall also include places, locations, or sites identified on these historical registers or official inventories and deemed of importance to the history, architecture, or culture of an area by an appropriate local or state governmental jurisdiction."****

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues and the preservation of our unique downtown.

Louise Katz, Robert Cox, Nazanin Dashtara, Hala Alshahwany, and Mary Hodder
For the Steering Committee of Livable Mountain View

ATTACHMENT A from the LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY

<https://www.laconservancy.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/About%20Historic%20Districts.pdf>

What Are Historic Districts? A historic district is a formally designated group of buildings, structures, sites, and spaces that relate to one another historically, architecturally, and/or culturally. A district can span part or all of a neighborhood. It can be large or small, can represent any architectural style(s), and can include streetscape and landscape elements. Individual buildings within a district don't need to be highly significant on their own.

The area's overall cohesiveness, uniqueness, and architectural integrity are what matters. Historic districts can go by any number of names, including Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs), historic districts, and landmark districts. Yet they all represent a commitment to recognizing and protecting their community's architectural heritage, as well as the awareness that preservation truly does begin at home.

There are three types of historic district designation: • National: Listing in the National Register of Historic Places • State: Listing in the California Register of Historical Resources • **Local: Designation by the city/municipality.** National and state designations offer recognition and certain protections under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). However, as with individual landmarks, local designation offers the most protection through local land-use planning and review. This website addresses only locally designated historic districts. Each locality has its own process for designating and managing historic districts, as well as its own level of protection for them. **Yet historic districts share some basic elements: Geographic Boundaries Most historic districts are composed of a contiguous grouping of structures.** These structures **often share a common development history:** they may have been part of a single development tract, have a well-defined period of construction or architectural style, have consistent design.

About Historic Districts elements such as a planned street pattern or uniform setback, or relate to a significant cultural event or movement. In some cases, historic districts can consist of a non-contiguous group of structures related thematically to one another. For instance, they may have been designed by the same architect or were part of a design program, or they may feature a specific technological or manufacturing innovation. Criteria for Designation Within the boundaries of a historic district, most of the structures must be considered "contributing," meaning that they are historically significant to the neighborhood and have maintained the integrity of their original design. **A historic district will inevitably include some percentage of "non-contributing" structures as well—those built outside the district's established "period of significance," as well as those that have been greatly altered.** The "period of significance" is usually the time period in which most of the original construction in the neighborhood occurred.

ATTACHMENT B STATE HISTORIC BUILDING CODE

https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21410

One of California's most valuable tools for the preservation of historic resources is the **California Historical Building Code** (CHBC), which is defined in **Sections 18950 to 18961 of Division 13, Part 2.7 of Health and Safety Code (H&SC)**. The CHBC is intended to save California's architectural heritage by recognizing the unique construction issues inherent in maintaining and adaptively reusing historic buildings. The CHBC provides alternative building regulations for permitting repairs, alterations and additions necessary for the preservation, rehabilitation, relocation, related construction, change of use, or continued use of a "qualified historical building or structure."

Section 18955 of the Health and Safety Code defines a "qualified historical building or structure" as **"any structure or property, collection of structures, and their associated sites deemed of importance to the history, architecture, or culture of an area by an appropriate local or state governmental jurisdiction.** This shall include structures on existing or future national, state or local historical registers or official inventories, such as the National Register of Historic Places, State Historical Landmarks, State Points of Historical Interest, and city or county registers or inventories of historical or architecturally significant sites, places, historic districts, or landmarks. **This shall also include places, locations, or sites identified on these historical registers or official inventories and deemed of importance to the history, architecture, or culture of an area by an appropriate local or state governmental jurisdiction.**"

The CHBC's standards and regulations are intended to facilitate the rehabilitation or change of occupancy so as to preserve their original or restored elements and features, to encourage energy conservation and a cost effective approach to preservation, and to provide for reasonable safety from fire, seismic forces or other hazards for occupants and users of such buildings, structures and properties and to provide reasonable availability and usability by the physically disabled.