

**From:** [Calandria At](#) [REDACTED]  
**To:** [-- City Council](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comments on Coucil Mtg. Tuesday, 11.14.2023.  
**Date:** Monday, November 13, 2023 3:34:00 PM

---

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

I am writing to convey my comments about horrific proposed plans for our beautiful town. That's right - town, not city. Read on...

IS/MND COMMENTS. WE ARE VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED TO SUGGESTIONS BY COUNCIL ET AL ABOUT THE RIDICULOUSLY WRONG ZONE OVERLAY THAT WOULD DRASTICALLY & NEGATIVELY AFFECT OUR TOWN. NO! NO ZONE OVERLAY! THE GENERAL PLAN WE HAVE NOW IS FINE. USE IT!

NO! NO! NO! NO SIX+ STORY BUILDINGS HERE! WE DO NOT WANT PETALUMA TO BE RUINED BY OUT OF TOWN DEVELOPERS' ZEAL TO MAKE A PROFIT FOR THEMSELVES AT THE EXPENSE OF PETALUMA & HER CITIZENS M GROUP INCLUDED! THIS TOWN IS A GEM. WE ALL MOVED HERE TO DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM FRENETIC CITY LIFE. WE DO NOT WANT IT! SIX STORY BUILDINGS ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR OUR HISTORIC DISTRICT! WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT? ARE YOU UNABLE TO HEAR US? EKN IS FROM HEALDSBURG - VETO THEIR PERMIT & TELL THEM TO TAKE THEIR HOTEL THERE, OR ELSEWHERE. NOT HERE! NO!

NO! NO! NO! THE HOTEL AT THE B STREET LOCATION IS HORRIBLE AND IN NO WAY NO APPROPRIATE FOR OUR HISTORIC, BEAUTIFUL DOWNTOWN! THE HEIGHT IS WRONG (NOT TO SCALE AT 2-3 STORIES), THE DESIGN IS UGLY FOR THAT LOCATION, THERE IS INADEQUATE PARKING FOR THE LARGE NUMBER OF GUEST ROOMS, TRAFFIC CANNOT BE MITIGATED, NOR SOUND FROM THEIR ROOFTOP DECK DISTURBING & AFFECTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD. WE FEEL THAT THERE ARE OTHER LOCATIONS IN TOWN WHERE THIS HUGE HOTEL CAN FIT ON & HAVE ADEQUATE PARKING. BY THE WAY, NO ONE HAS YET TO SEE AN OCCUPANCY STUDY FROM THE CITY ON THE HOTELS WE HAVE ALREADY WITH LIMITED OCCUPANCY. PERHAPS WE DO NOT NEED THIS NEW HOTEL!

WE ALSO OPPOSE THE IDEA THAT A DEVELOPER-FUNDED EIR IS APPROPRIATE. THE EIR NEEDS TO BE UNBIASED AND DONE BY AN INDEPENDENT COMPANY NOT AFFILIATED WITH M GROUP, DEVELOPERS OR OTHERS WANTING TO MAKE A PROFIT. DO THE RIGHT THING FOR OUR TOWN & CITIZENS!

THANK YOU. M ATKINSON

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

**From:** Carol C [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Council  
**Subject:** Why kill the goose that laid the golden egg.  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 8, 2023 2:48:36 PM

---

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from carolcastillo7@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Counsel members,

Petaluma's downtown is bustling because it is unique. To allow out of character building, to even encourage it, as the proposed overall would do is akin to killing the goose that laid the golden egg. If you change the character of downtown by allowing 6 plus story new buildings you will change Petaluma from a unique river tpwn into anywhere USA. Is that what you really want?It is NOT what you were elected to do.

Sincerely,

Carol Castillo

[REDACTED]

Petaluma

**From:** Carol [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Council  
**Subject:** EKN Hotel and proposed overlay  
**Date:** Friday, November 10, 2023 9:16:14 PM

---

Some people who received this message don't often get email from caroli@sonic.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Dear folks,

I am concerned about the actual economical benefit to Petaluma from this hotel. If the letter writer below is accurate, it's not going to work out.

This doesn't bode well.

Carol Isaak

ps I'm actually even more concerned about the proposed overlay. This is not appropriate in the historic district nor in the area of locally owned small businesses.

Letters to the Argus-Courier, Oct. 6, 2023

**A reader questions the math used in Appellation Hotel's Economic Impact Study. |**

EDITOR: How much would you spend for a room at the proposed Appellation Hotel in Petaluma?

EKN Development Group's Economic Impact Study showcases rosy figures for the hotel's projected revenue. Were our elected officials so blinded by the projected tax dollars flowing into Petaluma's coffers that they didn't ask EKN to show their math?

The report projects \$9.5 million in annual hotel revenue and \$8.5 million in annual restaurant revenue. Are these gross or net amounts?

The report touts tax revenues generated over 25 years. For simplicity, let's assume average annual projected tax revenues: Transient Occupancy Tax: \$1.48 million; sales tax \$1.46 million; property tax \$1 million.

Are these numbers realistic?

TOT tax dollars equal 10% of the hotel room rate and go directly to Petaluma. A TOT revenue of \$1.48 million means \$14.8 million in annual hotel room charges.

At what annual occupancy rate? If 100% of the 93 rooms were occupied every night of the year, the average room would be \$436 per night. A 50% occupancy assumption means a whopping \$872 per night to generate EKN's projected TOT revenue. The TOT revenue of

\$1.48 million doesn't seem realistic.

The sales tax revenue figures are also deceiving. The \$1.46 million figure is the total sales tax collected, though most of those dollars go to the state and county. Petaluma collects just 2% out of the total 9.5% sales tax.

Property tax is collected by Sonoma County to fund schools and county and city services. Only 13% of property tax is destined for Petaluma's coffers!

EKN, show us your work!

*Lydia Asselin,*

*Petaluma*

**From:** [soaks \[REDACTED\]](#)  
**To:** [-- City Council](#)  
**Subject:** Your voters have spoken about the overlay - here is what they say  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:45:56 AM  
**Attachments:** [Nextdoor comments-1.pdf](#)

---

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from soaks\_tan\_0i@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Dead City Council members,

In case you missed these discussion, I am submitting a collage of screenshots that contain the voices and concerns about the quality of life of the Petaluma's (aka your voters) who oppose the decision to alter the zoning and allow for building code changes in our historic downtown allowing for taller buildings with no parking or historical character.

Instead of writing you one letter from one household, I have captured voices that you may have missed from your community who should be included in this discussion. Not every feels comfortable emailing or submitting formal comments and I hope you seek their voices where they do show up which for our community is in social media.

It is with our collective voices that we stand together in opposition of this decision and request that you move the hotel away from the charming historic area and into a more modern location where it fits in with the environment and allows for parking and traffic impacts to be addressed.

Thank you,

From your community of tax paying voters who ask that you support projects that improve their lives and not cater to those of tourists.



**Diane Pelham** • Lower Mountain View • 2d



**Teddy** no, the downtown doesn't need to be our economic engine. Downtown is for locally owned shops and restaurants, antiques and tourists. We have plenty of business parks that keep the economy ticking along.



**Eva Oleander**

Midtown Petaluma • 6 days ago •



Think creatively and show some pride for our town. That's our approach!

It's a small pocket of town and a break from the crowded streets and a place to see the sky. It holds potential for parks and picnics, butterflies, and neighbors, but these ideas don't seem to be included in the vision for our town. Why?

I'd propose that we seek plans that show some hometown pride in our history, human infrastructure, and natural resources.

What if our planning M Group department approached each parcel with an optimism of what it could offer Petalumans first. Residents who walk (and pay) for these streets before the disposable income of tourists whose needs are different, fickle, and fleeting. (Data shows they come for old town charm in the first place)

Share your voice with city council if you agree, any progress should improve the lives of Petalumans and reflect the pride we have for our river town.



Modern on the east side.



Historic on the west.

It's that easy!



**Renee L.** • Petaluma Airport • Edited 1w



**Lance** of course there isn't any. I think some people see hope for more affordable homes in the "overlay" plan in terms of rezoning. However, it is only a hope and is not documented anywhere. If I am wrong and someone can show me where the downtown overlay plan includes specifics on housing that would be great. (edited)



**Janis Phillips**

Midtown Petaluma • 30 Oct • 🌐



This is the biggest issue impacting my life (and I would argue many in our community agree) that our city council is failing to address. Our ALICE population. Asset Limited Income Constrained & Employed.

"When ALICE hurts, we all hurt." - Rogers (see article)

Teachers, fire fighters, servers, cashiers, retail staff, college students, single income families, fixed-income elderly, etc.

<https://share.newsbreak.com/5adrt481>



**Study: Over a third of Sonoma County households struggle to...**

newsbreak.com



**Cherry Palacios** • Tri-School Area • 5d



I definitely would not pay \$500+taxes to stay down Petaluma. Too close to Kentucky Street bars who close at 2am, I believe. I feel sorry for the guests at the Hotel Petaluma at 2am also.



**Heather Kratt** • Petaluma Northeast • 1w



The hotel developers already made it clear that this project is not financially lucrative unless they get the maximum height of 75 feet. The M-Group is now trying very hard to push the idea that the overlay and hotel are separate projects (the overlay was created by the hotel developer in COLLABORATION WITH the M-Group) and that the proposed height is only 60 feet (that will change when the M-Group gets its overlay or amendment to the general plan). If the city council approves the story poles, they will likely be 60 feet tall instead of the hotel's actual desired and required height of 75 feet.



**Ralph Haney** • Sunnyslope McNear • 1w



**Joseph** given the way they tried to force the bathtubs on stilts onto Water Street, I wouldn't expect much in the way of a community vote. However, our Save Water Street coalition, by way of requests for information and demanding an environmental impact report, stopped them in their tracks. It may be time for another coalition of concerned citizens here.



**Joseph and Janet Mauro** • Midtown Petaluma • 1w



Is there any way we can put this up to a VOTE by the folks who live in Petaluma? Seems fair to me. As an aside, why do we need so many hotels? Would folks stay in these hotels - \$\$\$ - just to walk around downtown? Would these folks enjoy walking around midtown (a Realtors designation) or the East side of Petaluma? If its gambling they want, there are several hotels right now in Rohnert Park. Winery visiting? Healdsburg would make more sense. OR..... are there plans afoot for an Indian operated Casino south of town? Suits me. Closer than the Graton Casino.



**Vikki F.** • Rural Near West Side • 1w



Once again, the people in charge are completely destroying our city. This is by far the worst idea. It makes my heart sick.



**Sondra Barrett** • Upper Mountain View • 1w



brillant and now send to city council. how about all the new car congestion.



**Clare Apps** • Oak Hill • 1w



It's sad. I already hate seeing the romper room [dot.com](https://www.dot.com) emeryville condos they put up at the foot of Oak St. I left that chaos years ago for the charm and community of Petaluma and the historic district. Just sad!



**Nan Shoninger** • Oak Hill • Edited 1w

...

Kathy - Having worked in Architecture & Facilities Management firms for about 25 years - I've seen many \$\$\$\$ models for proposed sites. I think you did quite well showing us the potential impact(s). Few people have a innate grasp of spatial relationships and how placing something new into something existing might effect the whole - you do ! Great labor of love for P'town. Well done ! (edited)



**Joseph and Janet Mauro** • Midtown Petaluma • 1w

...

**Jennie** Thank you, Kathy for doing that. It illustrates in no uncertain terms what is at stake! Your model is something the City Council or whomever heads the City's Planning Department should have done. I sincerely hope that Council woman Janice Cader Thompson is not okay with this. Mrs. Thompson and I and others have tried to keep Petaluma from losing its "hometown" charm, in years past. If our City Council is hell bent on building an imposing hotel, why not on the site where Kmart used to be? It seems like it is available. There is plenty of parking, close by, shopping and eateries. What's not to like?



**Jennie Andewiel** • Midtown Petaluma • 1w

...

This is terrible, the city council should be voted out. A lot of people that are moving here that got priced out from bigger expensive neighborhoods are voting for people that want to build our small town into a big expensive city.



**Laurel Marinell** • Midtown Petaluma • 1w

...

**Ralph** the redwood trees would probably be removed in order to build anything!!!!



**Ralph Haney** • Sunnyslope McNear • Edited 1w

...

Nice work, Kathy. The shadows alone from such dominant structures would be a negative impact. Correct me if I'm wrong, but even the beautiful redwood trees in front of McNear's would be dwarfed. (edited)



**Carolyn Holmberg** • Tri-School Area • Edited 1w



I just don't get why our city council and some residents wants Petaluma to lose its charm and look just like your average California city. What makes you think tourists are going to come here when you turn it into San Mateo, San Jose, San Rafael, Redwood City. They are going to want to go to Sonoma or Healdsburg or further North.

I also don't believe that the majority of people want to live in an apartment building just so they can live in Petaluma and look out at another apartment building. I don't like feeling closed in with a corridor of tall buildings.

I help a friend with their rental properties and people are looking to get away from apartment life.

I feel like many residents that support this already have their private residents many have no kids why aren't you willing to sell to a family and you move into an apartment?

Private homeowners get property tax write offs mortgage too their own place are you willing to give that up to a corporate owned apartment building. I know most of you don't like corporations (edited)



Sample of Petaluma NextDoor Comments about the overlay November 2023



**Kathy Myers**

Tri-School Area • 2 Nov • 🌐



## ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Yes, I've taken another trip to the dollar store to make a model. This time to illustrate the potential impact of the zoning overlay to accommodate an up to 70 foot hotel in the historic district— our #1 tourist attraction and beloved by all Petalumans.

On the left is what's there now with the addition of a well designed 45 foot hotel— currently allowed in the historic district guidelines. On the right are potential 70 foot tall mid-rise buildings in the same area that could be built "by right" with a proposed zoning overlay. Imagine the theater district buildings twice as tall.

I speculate that the multi-story parking structure might be for bicycles only (no cars allowed). The buildings could have retail, expensive apartments and lodging, and "workforce housing" (no home ownership or middle class allowed) One building could have a new mixed use classification: the "Work/ Live/ Die" model with the addition of a crematorium on the roof (solar powered, of course).

All kidding aside... the height and design of the hotel, and the far reaching rezoning overlays have consequences. What might be a dream of urbanizing downtown for a select few, could become a nightmare for Petaluma.



**Nan Shoninger** • Oak Hill • 1w



**Ralph** Methinks we might need a few

"mock ups" of the proposed hotel

located at different empty sites around town - such as those you did with the

tubs - are you up for it ??



**Teddy Herzog** Author • Oak Hill • 5d

Maybe it's all working out perfectly.  
Time to update the general plan.  
Which is better downtown? 4 stories or 6 stories?  
Based on what?

Like Reply Share



**Ralph Haney** • Sunnyslope McNear • 5d

**Teddy** 4 STORIES. Based on blotting out the sun; based on crowdedness; based on water usage; based on parking chaos; based on increased traffic; based on historical character; based on public sentiment; based on the will of the majority; based on NO NEED TO CHANGE the historical nature of our unique downtown. Based on the fact that Petaluma already has more than enough hotels to serve the tourists we do draw. Based on the fact we draw those tourists for the uniquely quaint downtown that defines Petaluma. Based on the fact we won't give up this specialness in favor of profits, especially from developers outside our community. Based on the fact this overlay, and the first hotel, set a very dangerous precedent to this Rivertown.



**Marcy Cooper** • Turtle Creek • Edited 5d

If you happen to live and work full time near a rooftop deck -it is awful with light and noise. Great for tourists-not so much for neighborhoods (edited)



**Sherry Sandberg** • Downtown Petaluma • 5d

**Jason** I also am not a fan of more bars downtown. There are many places to have a drink with a meal. I've seen a lot of negative activity & bad behavior out in front of the bars we already have. Is a rooftop bar atop a 6-7 story hotel the best we can do here?



**Jane Hamilton** • Walnut Park/Aqus/Wickersham Park • 5d

...

The lot on B and PBN could be an employment center with ground floor businesses, could be housing, could be a hotel - all within the current zoning. Everything the hotel has painted for us is subject to change. they may decide the rooftop bar is not worth it, the geology may not support the 2 level down parking. EKN's job is to get entitlements by intriguing our council with inflated numbers on the TOT and property taxes and then hand off to a different builder who will for sure come back to the city saying they cant make it "pencil out" the way its designed. Happens all the time! EKN is not going to be the builder. They are only here to get entitlements. Their job is to hold out carrots to make the council jump for it. There is nothing in the overlay that mandates housing. That is another way to entice. What do we need? Oh housing and economic opportunities? Lets call the overlay zones that.



**Cherry Palacios** • Tri-School Area • 3d

...



Renee, I totally agree. Downtown will loose it's appeal if it's built up with high rise buildings and a mega hotel, as it will become just like any other town! The charm will have been destroyed!



**Renee L.** • Petaluma Airport • 3d

...



I am tired of those that are denigrating this town. It is a wonderful place. Downtown areas thrive because the residents love them not because of their appeal to visitors alone. I think much of what is being proposed will not be good for residents and in reality will make our town a lot less attractive to visitors.



**Cherry Palacios** • Tri-School Area • Edited 3d



Hi Teddy, I get tired of you trying to make our town super modern. Most citizens who live here and pay taxes, love the way the town is right now. People visit because they like it too. Petaluma is entertaining, lots of good eateries etc and no hi-rises like SF or Marin and beautiful country side. It's low key and thats why people visit and enjoy living here. Petaluma is still small enough to be considered a country town! Don't ruin it with high rises and mega hotels. Are the developer and the M Company your friends perhaps?

I've put up with your bicycle stuff when nobody uses bikes to any degree, as they don't have time in their busy lives to ride bikes. Waste of city money painting all the roads and confusing citizens, as to where they can and cannot drive. (edited)



**Heather Kratt** • Petaluma Northeast • Edited 3d



**Teddy**, that's the point. Petaluma is NOT a rundown city! The claim that it is or soon will be if we don't build this eyesore of a hotel is ludicrous. Read the recent article in the Press Democrat of what overdevelopment did to Santa Rosa's downtown, the fact that residents no longer want to go there, and how it has harmed the businesses downtown. Also note that Andrew Trippel of the M-Group was involved in that fiasco and is now trying to do the same here. We can't allow the M-Group to destroy our beautiful city! (edited)



**Brook H.** • Tri-School Area • Edited 2d



**Teddy** Honestly, it sounds like you'd be happier in San Francisco or Seattle than here. Your characterization that the downtown area is full of cobwebs and a museum is past the point of hyperbole.

Stating the downtown should become an economic machine while continuing to ignore the fact that Theater Square, which was pitched in the same manner you're now pushing for at B street, and yet here we are, years later, and Basin Street is still trying to fill its spaces.

If you put half the effort into trying to find residents to fill those apartments and businesses as you do in trying to convince the community that yet another colossal build is going to kick the engine into to gear maybe the "alive and vibrant" downtown would finally appease you.

For those of us that appreciate the privilege of living in this community we find that the downtown area is already alive and vibrant and we don't need to add a monolith at the corner of B in order for us to love the community we live in.

As it stands, the residents just aren't buying it and I for sure am beginning to wonder if your getting the same developer kickbacks Brian Barnacle got when he sued the city, costing them millions, for anonymous backers over the Corona Smart Station...another project that hasn't proven to be the cash cow it was marketed to the residents as being. (edited)



**Cherry Palacios** • Tri-School Area • 3d



Renee, I totally agree. Downtown will lose its appeal if it's built up with high rise buildings and a mega hotel, as it will become just like any other town! The charm will have been destroyed!



**Chantel Smith** • Riverview • 3d

Agreed. Evidence shows these kinds of zoning/building exceptions snowball and then we are just another north bay suburb. We already have those options all around us. There is only one town like ours, at least for now.



**Heather Kratt** • Petaluma Northeast • 8h

This pic reminds me of infomercials where everything - including cooking pasta - is in black and white and made to look difficult in order to sell a useless product. This picture certainly doesn't show the Petaluma downtown I know and love.

**From:** greg [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Council; [REDACTED]; Janice Cader-Thompson; Greg Powell; Andrew Trippel; [editor@arguscourier.com](mailto:editor@arguscourier.com); [don.frances@arguscourier.com](mailto:don.frances@arguscourier.com)  
**Subject:** General Plan, Zoning and CEQA comments  
**Date:** Thursday, November 9, 2023 11:02:42 AM

---

Some people who received this message don't often get email from gregcfreitas@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

[citycouncil@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:citycouncil@cityofpetaluma.org)



[jcaderthompson@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:jcaderthompson@cityofpetaluma.org)

[GPOWELL@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:GPOWELL@cityofpetaluma.org)

[atrippel@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:atrippel@cityofpetaluma.org)

[editor@arguscourier.com](mailto:editor@arguscourier.com); [don.frances@arguscourier.com](mailto:don.frances@arguscourier.com)

11/6/23

I have just read, with increasing concern, a public notice sent out regarding a General Plan Amendments, creation of an overlay zone, and a proposed outrageous plan for an oversized spot zoned hotel, this one on the bottom end of B Street. A negative declaration is proposed to be used to give environmental review clearance of all these actions.

I do not support the method of merged hearings on the same day, the proposed changes, or the use of a draft negative declaration rather than a full Environmental Impact Report. I do not also support the size, lack of parking and potential poor designs permitted by an increase to 100% lot coverage for a hotel and current lack of parking for new developments.

**Method of Notice and Actions:**

The public notice I received is vague, using relatively unknown acronyms such as

“FAR” floor area ratios which here relates to the "maximum number allowed floors" and unclear language such as, "non specific mixed land use designations" rather than detailed clarifying language for public notices of this sort. This and other factors make me believe the notice is inadequate public notice for General plan and Rezoning discussion purposes.

What I don't like is deliberately using jammed together hearings which can create confusion among issues and unclarity of process. I've seen this muddled mashed together approach before in other Cities with poor planning. Do we have to be one? The actions proposed, in essence, have all the bad trademarks of finding a way to do “Spot Zoning” using a shotgun approach to approve a project, a project which is currently contrary to the existing General land use Plan and Zoning. The proposed actions require a more impartial and thorough review than what is offered. I am also concerned because the hearings approach and poor recommendations on environmental review show that neutral city staff oversight may be lacking. My suggestion is that you stretch out the hearings to permit clear and separate review of the issues and General Plan changes being considered before taking up relative zoning changes or project reviews.

### **Environmental Comments:**

#### **CEQA is being ignored when it comes to determining if an EIR is needed or not:**

The use of a Mitigated Negative declaration suggested for a General Plan amendment and new zoning standards as recommended is a farce. Diligence is missing. No or little mitigations for the limited negative impacts are shown for many effects that aren't mentioned but will happen if the proposed changes are adopted. Where is the "no project" and "alternate sites" review alternatives? It is clear that the General Plan amendments and proposed new overlay zones are being suggested without thorough analysis or complete environmental review. What are the buildout parking demands and circulation mitigations needed downtown to accommodate the proposed changes? Where are the stats on new housing needed by type and as may be produced by these proposals? Where is the comparison with our current General Plan needs? What is the range of additional buildout expected for the General sssssPlan amendments? What is the assumption basis of projections for these figures? Why is the environmental impact report review not recommended when it is so clear it is needed as a basis for consideration?

Mitigation measures should be required for additional off-street parking, circulation patterns and linked traffic lights, once additional parking and higher traffic demands are shown by a proper EIR (Environmental Impact Report). Just looking at future parking demands caused by the recommended General Plan amendments and increased demand on downtown streets justifies a full EIR. I urge you to require

that an EIR be conducted to include also review site alternatives for the proposed hotel and additional housing and the actual mitigations that would be needed to affect the proposed changes.

I have also looked at the recent building height study of the downtown area which appears to be trying to support increased heights of buildings. The problem is that using church towers which are already exempted in the zoning ordinance as a basis for increased building density and heights is like comparing apples to oranges. Office and housing buildings are not church towers. Using other older buildings built before zoning height requirements were made, as a basis for the recommendations, leaves out the fact that it was these very buildings that caused the City to zoning limit heights to begin with. Church towers from at that time have been excluded from height restrictions regardless of zone.

Technically, an off street parking district exists in the downtown area, and I am under the understanding that new parking places are not required when development occurs. This could be a real problem for new proposals as additional parking demand that is not met with new places will degrade current parking and circulations options. Current available parking is already not enough to support our increasing demand created by new restaurants, as well as intensification in existing buildings. Many upstairs floors in existing buildings downtown are still underutilized. We should find solutions before adding to our parking and circulation problems generated by this proposal. I do not want us to become another Carmel with poor planning, not enough parking and overcrowded streets in our downtown area. Much as we might want to, we are not moving towards using alternatives such as mopeds, bicycle use etc. replacing our ownership of vehicles per household anytime soon.

Increasing the General Plan density under these circumstances without adding new available parking is folly. Two existing downtown parking structures in the area are not designed to handle the existing buildout of the downtown area allowed by the current General Plan and zoning. That means there is not enough parking now, particularly during holidays and on weekends, or for current allowed buildout. It's definitely problematic to add on a new overlay zones. What environmental effects do people driving around to find non existent parking do to the environment and our increasingly crowded street patterns?

Where are the recommendations on traffic lights, traffic levels of service, lane changes, timing, future parking needs for the proposed areas and changes? Where are considerations of alternatives to the proposals? The related environmental Impacts needs to be studied before further actions are taken. Alternative scale, location sites, traffic and parking needs and service access capacities should also be

reviewed by an EIR.

**Hotel Plan:**

There should be an EIR prepared for the proposed hotel on B Street. It will have too big an impact. It is too big, too high, and way under-designed in creating parking spaces and off street service access. There is just not enough parking for hotel staff, restaurants staff, hotel rooms, and restaurant patron demands. The proposal is way out of scale size-wise for the neighborhood, and could easily be an absolute monstrosity with no redeeming architectural grace to fit in with the historic nature of the area. Since 100% lot coverage is proposed, what will the West side or South Easterly sides of the building look like if it is permitted to sit on the property line? Will it show 6 stories of blank wall to people coming down B Street or perhaps as seen coming up the Boulevard? What visual damage to one of downtown's major entrance that would be to see -- I pity anyone having to look at any 6 story blank sides and think about what the City is not doing to protect historic values of Downtown Petaluma. I am an owner located on B street, and will be really upset if I have to look past the historic homes down the street to see something out of place sticking up way above the existing buildings.

**Economic Impact comments:**

If the city wishes to make decisions based on estimated economic return to the city such provided by hotels then the city should look at the effects of another hotel added to the city's overall supply now. A quick review of the existing hotels in town will show that now they are only about half full most of the week with only a slight increase on weekends. This is not good for sustainability of hotels. What I am saying is that more approvals of hotels right now will further weaken existing ones. Under these conditions If we approve more new hotels, overall hotel bed and tax revenues for the city will be unlikely to show much improvement, for some time. What is the actual figures for this? Overbuilding can be a problem lasting for years. Does the city actually know the overall demand for additional hotel space and their overall economic impact in town?

The saying that's coming to me is that people pushing this idea are "GETTING THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE". We expect the City Planning Commissioners and City Council members to require a full review of what is proposed, as well as what is needed here, on behalf of all of us, before taking any further action.

Regarding the proposed actions: Lastly, rushing to an unduly quick approval without all the facts sets a poor planning example and is certain folly for the future of this City. We can be better than this!

Greg Freitas

Freitas Enterprises

American Planning Association, Planners Advocacy Network

Past Community Development Director, City of Petaluma



**JON P. RANKIN**

**Petaluma Ca**

November 10, 2023

Petaluma City Council  
Petaluma City Planning Commission

Re: Proposed Downtown Hotel and Overlay Zones

Dear Council Members & Commissioners

I received the notice as an owner within the area immediately adjacent to and most severely affected by the above listed proposal and was quite frankly shocked by the mass and magnitude of the project. My family has lived in this city since the 1920s and has resided in the downtown area since the early 1970s.

The development of a six-story hotel/commercial/residential structure will certainly destroy the character and fabric of all that is attractive in this historic district. Being in the shadow of such a building will be devastating to the residents who have held historic preservation so dear to our way of life.

Traffic impacts, parking needs, destruction of view sheds, adverse, changes to the ambiance of the downtown area are certain if construction of massive 60 ft buildings is allowed.

There are so many site alternatives on presently vacant land in the city which could accommodate a hotel and housing but would not fundamentally change the very essence of the neighborhood.

The economic benefit the city expects to gain from this zoning change must be balanced with the needs of those who reside nearby and have legitimate expectations of the present character of the Victorian era architecture which presently predominates. There should be at the very least modeling which would show the cumulative impacts of the zoning change.

You are strongly implored to take a reasoned and decelerated analysis of this drastic and irreversible move in the wrong direction.

Very Truly Yours,

Jon P. Rankin

Council members and Planning Department:

At tonight's meeting, I will ask for time to discuss the points I made below in my letter of October 26th.

In addition, I have collected some of the many comments made about your proposal in NextDoor. I assume you do not have time to read long posts and comments on our neighborhood website, so I am attaching 7 pages of comments from the citizens you serve.

It would be a good idea to familiarize yourself with these comments prior to the meeting tonight. They are 99% negative against the proposal for the hotel and Overlay:

Lion Goodman, PCC  
Petaluma, California

I attach my previous letter to you here:  
Lion Goodman, PCC

Clear Beliefs Institute  
[www.ClearBeliefs.com](http://www.ClearBeliefs.com)  
1.707.971.7947  
[Lion@ClearBeliefs.com](mailto:Lion@ClearBeliefs.com)

On Oct 26, 2023, at 8:29 PM, Lion Goodman wrote:

TO: Petaluma City Council Members: [citycouncil@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:citycouncil@cityofpetaluma.org)

Planning Commission:

[rwhisman@yahoo.com](mailto:rwhisman@yahoo.com),  
[heidibauer2000@gmail.com](mailto:heidibauer2000@gmail.com),  
[kvkarch@gmail.com](mailto:kvkarch@gmail.com),  
[bmhooper1@gmail.com](mailto:bmhooper1@gmail.com),  
[darrenracusen@gmail.com](mailto:darrenracusen@gmail.com),  
[rogermcerlane@mac.com](mailto:rogermcerlane@mac.com),  
[jcaderthompson@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:jcaderthompson@cityofpetaluma.org)

Planning Director Andrew Trippel:

[atrippel@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:atrippel@cityofpetaluma.org)

Argus Courier:

[editor@arguscourier.com](mailto:editor@arguscourier.com)

;

[don.frances@arguscourier.com](mailto:don.frances@arguscourier.com)

Regarding "Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel Draft Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration.

I am a resident of Petaluma, My wife has lived here for 25 years. I have lived here for 12 years.

**These are my comments on your Economic Opportunity Overlay and Hotel Draft Study, based on statements made within the document:**

**Page 8:**

"The Petaluma General Plan 2025 was adopted... in 2008 and serves the purpose of reflecting a commitment on the part of the City Council... to carry out the plan, outlines a vision for Petaluma's long-range physical and economic development and resource conservation; enhances the quality of life for ALL residents and visitors;; recognizes that human activity takes place within the limits of the natural environment;; and reflects the aspirations the community..."

**COMMENT:** The proposed Economic Opportunity Overlay and proposed Hotel does NOT enhance the quality of life for ALL residents and visitors. It does NOT reflect the aspirations of the community. If you read the comments on NextDoor about this proposal, they are 95% NEGATIVE toward this proposal.

**Page 8:**

Goals...

1. Maintain a close-knit neighborly and family friendly city.
2. Preserve and enhance Petaluma's historic character...
7. Enhance downtown by preserving its historic character, increasing accessibility and residential opportunities, and ensuring a broad range of businesses and activities
8. Foster and promote economic diversity and opportunities.
- 9.... while ensuring that new development is in keeping with Petaluma's character.
10. Continue efforts to achieve a jobs/housing balance, emphasizing opportunities for residents to work locally.
14. Encourage cultural, ethnic and social diversity.

**COMMENT:** The current proposal for a 6-story hotel does NOT maintain a family friendly and neighborly city. It does NOT preserve NOR enhance Petaluma's historical character. It does NOT enhance downtown by increasing accessibility and residential opportunities. It does NOT foster NOR promote economic diversity and opportunities. (More on this below.). It does NOT ensure that new development is in

keeping with Petaluma's character. It does NOT achieve anything like a jobs/housing balance, NOR does it emphasize opportunities for residents to work locally. People who would work at a hotel cannot AFFORD to live in Petaluma at the pay rate of those jobs. It certainly does NOT encourage cultural, ethnic or social diversity. If you want to accomplish these goals, approve of more non-profit housing developers who will build more low-income housing. NOT a fancy hotel for wealthy visitors.

**Page 11:**

Enhance Petaluma's historic downtown by preserving its historic character...

- Preserve Downtown's historic buildings and features while allowing for infill development that HARMONIOUSLY COEXIST with the historic character ...
- Address traffic congestion and parking issues....

**COMMENT:** This proposal does NOT preserve Petaluma's historic character, nor will a 6-story hotel "harmoniously coexist" with the historic character. The hotel will NOT address traffic congestion and parking issues, in fact it will exacerbate the current traffic congestion and parking issues we are now dealing with.

**Page 16:**

- ... Establish a conditional use permit... to allow for an increase to the building height limit of 45 feet to a maximum of 75 feet
- ... Increase lot coverage limit from 80% to 100%
- ... Increase the FAR limit from 2.5 to 6
- ... Eliminate the setback standards
- ... 93 room 6 story hotel over a below grade, 58-space parking garage.

**COMMENT:** Why would you even CONSIDER increasing the building height limit by 40%, increasing FAR limits by more than double, and eliminate setback standards? It will completely change the character of downtown.

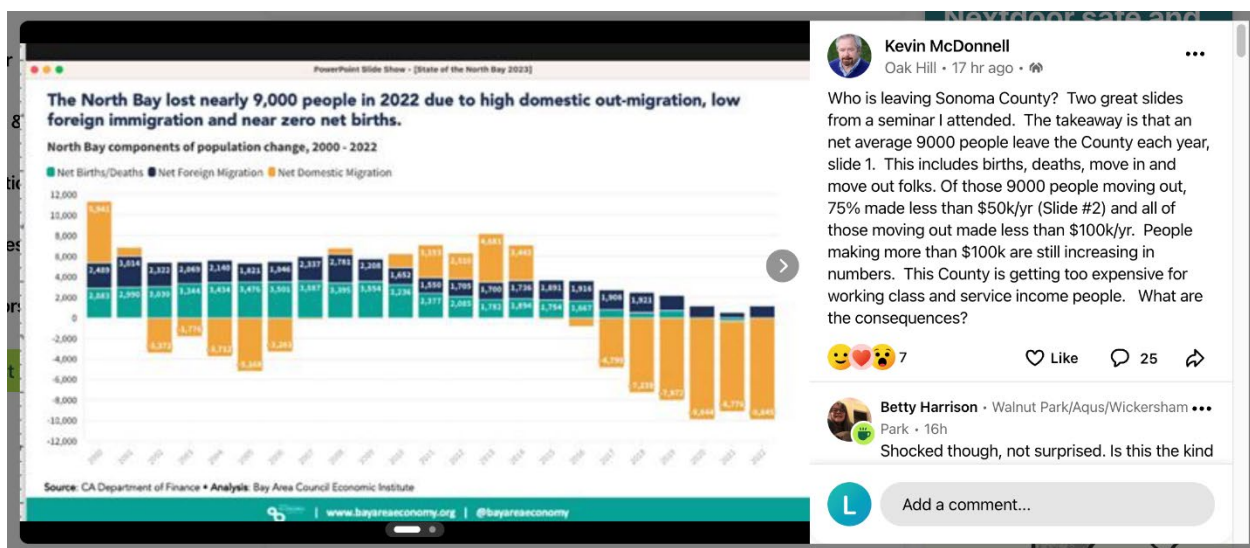
Your Overlay Plan will spread this negative impact out around town to build even MORE 6 story buildings. This is COMPLETELY out of character for downtown Petaluma. In addition, you have 93 hotel rooms, which when fully utilized will house more than 140 people. You're asking for 58 parking spaces? Where will everyone else park? Including the hotel staff? That will be another 40 to 50 cars, because hotel staff won't be able to afford to live downtown. They will have to drive in to work from elsewhere - from further East or North. Causing MORE traffic on the freeways, more pollution, and jamming up downtown streets.

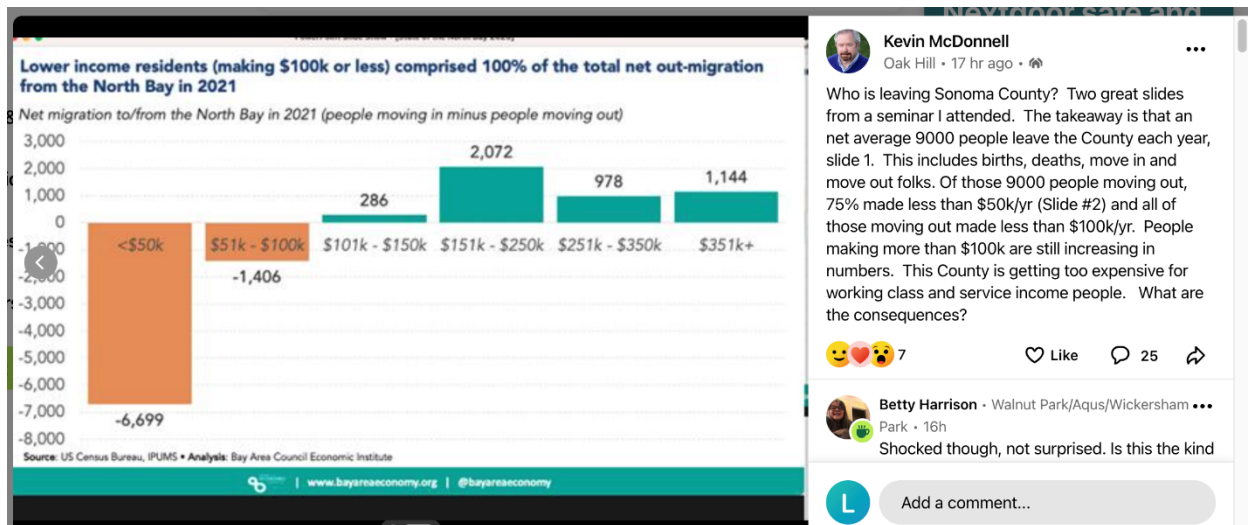
## Page 29:

Though the Overlay component of the project proposes to increase lot coverage, floor area ratio, and building height, thereby increasing the intensity of development permitted, such intensity of development is supported and encouraged but the ongoing General Plan update, which seeks among other objectives to promote affordable housing and a diversity of housing options, ....

**COMMENT:** You say that the General Plan seeks to promote affordable housing and a diversity of housing options. However, the apartment buildings you have already encouraged and approved, and the 8 or 9 hotels you have ALREADY approved and allowed to be built, are NOT affordable housing. This proposal is in direct contradiction to the General Plan.

**Here are the facts,** as posted on NextDoor by Kevin McDonnell who attended an educational seminar on housing in the North Bay, illustrating that the people moving OUT of Sonoma are mostly earning less than \$50,000 per year, and people moving INTO Sonoma are mostly making \$100,000+ per year. Consequently, the county is getting too expensive for working class and service income people :





**COMMENT;** Your Staff has stated that identified impacts can be reduced to "less than significant" with mitigation, however I did not see anywhere in the proposal the exact mitigation efforts that will be taken, or how a 6-story hotel will mitigate visual blockage of downtown, or how a hotel will mitigate the lack of affordable housing in Petaluma. I wonder whether your staff is actually aware of the impact on Petaluma citizens, or whether they are actually trying to mitigate the Owners and Developers' COSTS so they can make more profit?

**COMMENT:** You are treating both the Hotel and the Overlay as one project because the hotel as designed cannot be approved without the overlay zoning being approved. Why don't you separate them so they can be looked at separately? Why are you trying to shove this dual change down the throats of us Petalumans? **COMMENT:** I do NOT want a Mitigated Negative Declaration approved. **There MUST be a complete and official Environmental Impact Report that will cover in detail:** traffic impacts, parking needs, impacts on our Historic District, impacts on views, changes to the ambiance of the downtown, the height and mass of 60 ft buildings, site alternatives, the amount and type of housing the city is hoping to bring into the downtown and the associated traffic, the economic benefit the city expects to gain from this zoning change, and the need for modeling the cumulative impacts of the zoning change. **A complete EIR and CEQA Report MUST be Required for ANY approval of ANY portion of this proposal.**

**FINAL COMMENT:** Petaluma has 30,000 jobs and 85% of those employees live out of town. Many of the people who live in Petaluma don't work in Petaluma. They drive to other cities daily. Young people, single parents, students and young adults can't afford to

live here, so the community is diminished. Petaluma will become just another rich town with no real character or diversity - like Mill Valley, where I lived before. Why not have small housing units that our young people can afford built into the apartments downtown? We have to solve this problem so our hard working families can actually afford to live here.

**I will attend the public meeting on November 14th and wish to speak publicly to these issues.**

Sincerely,

Lion Goodman, PCC  
1335 Canyon Drive, Petaluma

415.686.5805

[liongoodman@gmail.com](mailto:liongoodman@gmail.com)

# Public Comments on the Downtown Hotel and Zoning Overlay from NextDoor.com

From: [City of Petaluma](#)      [Social Media Team at City of Petaluma Social Media](#) •

We've seen misinformation on our social media channels regarding a proposed zoning overlay (new development rules) in select parts of our downtown, and we want to clear up misstatements and direct followers to our webpage where the overlay is explained. [espanol abajo] For example, the Overlay does not propose to demolish any existing buildings. Instead, it is a tool to strengthen and expand the preservation and protection of our existing historic buildings and cultural resources. For example, the Overlay would require all development in the Overlay to be evaluated using our existing Historic Commercial District guidelines, which is currently not a protection that is in place. It will ensure that all future developments complement our existing historic resources if approved. The Overlay builds on several city goals, including maintaining a vibrant downtown, preserving the city's history, and developing in a sustainable way. The community has also identified these goals as essential to inform the city's General Plan update.

----- Comments from the public:

It crosses a line, massively, changing up our iconic historic district. Most of us moved here because of the town it is, and what it represents. The AIA SDAT provided us invaluable insight on how to approach development, including the different nodes east side, mid- Petaluma and so on. Our downtown is already a 15-minute neighborhood. Our viewsheds are vitally important to create not only a sense of place, but also to allow what makes Petaluma visually stunning, its ironfronts, and old ag past (represented by the mill and dairyman's feed), stand out on the landscape. I don't want to see these majestic buildings/vistas dwarfed. I get that the state wants more housing and to yet grow the (unwieldy as is) population past 40+ million, and I also know if towns are destroyed in the process, it will make them much less desirable, livable, etc. we can do better than this. We've had the great privilege of several consummate planning experts, AIA and Berkeley's Urban Land Institute (ULI), the latter paid with public monies, and our City leaders and M Group consultancy are ignoring them 😞. So, yes, these individuals need to go. They don't have a winning, intelligent vision for our beautiful town.

We need to vote in a city council that is strong and will fight for our principles. Seems like the ones who get voted in get paid off.

Right. There was a chance to change the council, but the voters didn't respond. People need to realize that the elected officials are there to do as the majority of the public wants. Too often, decisions are made that seem to benefit only a small group. If we don't like the officials' choices, then they should be replaced.

My understandings are many objections to the overlay being offered: "Under utilized commercial sites" being suggested by M-group. If the focus of the meeting is this and M-group is largely responsible, shouldn't we address this issue? My experience with Heather Hinds of M-group, was her rush to sign off on certifications of occupancy for projects in 2008-9 before important mitigation were met, bike parking. What I learned at that time was M-group didn't get paid until a project is "conditionally" completed: tenants are open for business. The tenant start paying rent and the developer or property owner pays the city mitigation fees owed and paid when the project is completed. The city then pays M-group as the independent contractor for services rendered. The problem is the way they are motivated. Their payment and payroll is not in the best interest of the public. No projects and no completed projects means no money for M-group.. A partial solution might be one or more planners hired by our city as employees that would be supervised by our city manager to represent the public interest.

I've been calling this out with the city for years. Back in 2008 / 2009 City laid off dozens of employees due to the recession . They opted to contract out to private vendors. Consequently, there is no accountability. When you complain to the city the City forwards the complaint to the vendor. Nothing gets done. Or if something gets done it's not in the best interest of the community.

Looks like Petaluma is following the path of Sanrafael

How can the City Council and Planning Committee, ie "The M Group", even consider a hotel of this size, when they can't even give visitors and citizens public toilets in town!

Great question! And, what is being done to encourage business to come into town to fill in vacant space? And, what is the plan to handle more demand on parking . . . the list goes on and on! Please join in sending a letter to our city council asking for very focused analysis of all impacts and to truly come up with a thoughtful vision for Petaluma 2025-2050!

No more building until a more secure source of water is established. Improve infrastructure including number of 1st responders and increasing capacity at the sewage treatment plant

I know more than 8 households (part of Cool Petaluma) who say they refuse to vote for anyone who approves this. I think that's a good idea. I will NOT support any candidates who think this is a good idea for Petaluma, especially when I see so much EMPTY commercial space now.

Tom is right, we don't have enough water for what we already have built let alone for the state mandated housing push and all of our services are understaffed and stretched to the limit. The cops

spend all their time chasing drunks "Petaluma! Party Til Ya Puke!" and drugs. The roads are a joke and the skim-coat they applied is already crumbling away. Imagine paying \$600 for a room and having to dodge the swarms of rats only a block away on Water St.

What is the process for removing City Council members from office? Does anyone know? Let's start a petition at the meeting and continue it here.

it's not imminent. I think the M-Group would like you to think so because it's easier for them to discourage input than defend their position in this. The decision lies with the Planning Commission and City Council. We can and will put an end to this!

, we have the right to recall the three councilmembers who so clearly violated their promise to the voters and decided to blindly support the M-Group in their destruction of our city. But I think our efforts would be better spent on finding and supporting the next council candidates and ensuring we are represented by people who truly represent the community. A lawsuit is the only way to stop these greedy people from destroying our city and I'm confident that will happen. vote them all out and start with people that care about Petaluma instead of people trying to line their pockets.

Just sent my email in as well. Replies are getting more lengthy. First response I got basically said "somebody has to be disappointed," to which I replied... well, how come it is NEVER the developer?

More disingenuous propaganda from the city. This process to approve a jarring and non-conforming Orange County hotel is shameful and disrespectful. The rush to approval driven by promises of an economic miracle for our town is deluded. We've seen the city sign on to other promised riches where we actually gave away or lost millions that never appeared, with the Auto Mall, the Marina Office Park, the Outlet Mall, and others. The Planning Comm needs to reject the proposed IS/MND, and vote to require a full EIR if the Council won't also kill the hotel and zoning overlay proposals.

no they don't know best. They should require the EIR, not help the developer avoid it.

This is propaganda. Several months ago City of Petaluma Planning Manager Andrew Trippel stood in front of an audience at the Petaluma Woman's Club and pointed to a map where the Petaluma Market is located and stated that non-historic buildings in that area of downtown are "underutilized" and should be replaced with 6-story and 7-story 100% lot fill, mixed-use structures to maximize economic benefit to the city. He said that the purpose of the overlay zoning is to encourage high density redevelopment. That can only happen on most of these parcels through demolitions of existing structures. The overlay zoning clearly threatens all businesses within the boundaries by creating new incentives for redevelopment (at a scale I suspect most Petalumans are opposed to). City officials who vote to approve the overlay zoning are in support of Trippel's position.

just to be clear, Andrew Trippel works for the M-Group. He was a planner in Santa Rosa during the five-year period their downtown was destroyed by overdevelopment. The Press Democrat recently wrote about the harm that overdevelopment caused to the downtown businesses.

Meanwhile, nearby luxury hotels In napa and Sonoma are facing an \$80M foreclosure and bankruptcy. This could happen here.

done with the zoning we have, except the “too big for its britches” hotel. We need proactive community development for downtown to bring more things like Amy’s not a hotel designed for Irvine. • Midrise housing products are infeasible in Petaluma due to higher construction costs for these products and relatively low achievable rents / sales prices compared to the Bay Area’s strongest market locations. Market Interesting because the overlay has been promoted as a way to bring in higher density housing downtown but this report is saying it’s actually not feasible. This brings us back to what are the goals of the overlay and who does it serve other than EKN?

On the contrary, this overlay would VIOLATE our Historic District Zoning Regulations, allowing for far greater height, lot coverage, and density exceedances than are currently permitted in our historic downtown. Our 1-3 story historic structures, including our majestic ironfronts, would be positively dwarfed by 6-8 story structures (the M Group hired Strategic Economics to look at the feasibility of up to 8-story structures in the historic downtown). Too often, by the time a project gets to the (near) permitted stage, the public has little to say regarding design, etc. If you want to truly STRENGTHEN the preservation and protection of our historic buildings (as you claim above), you would have told the EKN Hotel developer that their project violated our zoning, and to come back with a conforming, congruent project. You did not do that. Instead, you encouraged them to research an overlay that would change the zoning in our entire historic downtown. I hope the public is not fooled, and does not accept what you are saying here as representing the truth.

The new proposed zone overlay is NOT GOOD for our town. They should abide by the approved one in place. Tell council how you feel about all the vast development they are doing/want to do here! NO new zone overlay, NO to 6 story bldgs, yes to an unbiased, independent EIR. So NOT in favor of this enormous proposed hotel shoehorned on B St. that does not fit in with our historic charm. Too many issues abound that cannot be mitigated - height, traffic, noise, design, footprint, parking... 2-3 stories ok. Sorry only Healy & Nau agreed with the citizens that story poles were a good idea for all to get perspective. Stymied why all council members aren't on board with it.

I don't think the M Group is “progressive” and it's they we're paying \$2.4 million to to “update” our General Plan. They are a for-profit consultancy with profit sharing. As we are paying them to “write” our Gen Plan, they are featuring a hotel that violates our Gen Plan and Historic Regs on their website. Unless we citizens call this unacceptable hypocrisy out and state what we want, then we have no power. Let's all find our power, and quickly.

the city doesn't care about anything but increasing possible income - could give a hoot (wanted to use another word!) about anything else... Welcome to the new Orange County - which I left to come here forty years ago - now I'm ready to leave Petaluma...

Our City is tragically run by a for-profit consultancy (w/ profit sharing) so, yes, as many pricey developments as M Group can get approved, serves to pad their accounts handsomely. Whenever a local needs help with getting permits to upgrade their property (e.g., DiCarli's at 4th and C or the Floodway Market) - M Group finds a way to decline their requests (i.e., no money in it for them and

they have other ideas on THEIR agenda). That is not serving the local citizenry which, ostensibly, they are contracted to do as our city planners. I remember once one of their principals, Brittany Bendix, showed up at an event that everyone was volunteering for and when one of us handed her a task she said, "Oh, we don't volunteer". Of course not!

M Group consultants are not team players. When Safeway (M Group's client) wanted to build a mega gas station, M Group principal Heather Hines signed a [change.org](https://www.change.org) petition exclaiming, "You can never have too many gas stations!" and was regularly seen fraternizing with Safeway's lawyer and Nathalie Mattei, Safeway's real estate exec, on the floor of council chambers

profits in mind, but never bothered to ask the owners and tenants how they feel about being included in the overlay. No surprise, but most of them are opposed to the overlay. How much faith can you possibly have in a "planning" consultancy firm that completely failed to do any sort of planning for this overlay?

Proposal for Alternative site for hotel: Instead of a 6 story hotel at B St/Petaluma Blvd South, how about if the EKN hotel proposal was moved south to that blighted, weed-infested, chain link fenced, City-owned parcel 2-1/2 blocks away: the old, demolished Casa Grande Motel site [red], at 307 Petaluma Blvd. South. The proposed location for the 6 story EKN hotel at B St. / Petaluma Blvd [orange] within our National Register Historic Commercial Downtown District is a terrible choice. The mass, height, lack of parking, and Orange County design conflict badly with our historic downtown's architecture and scale. That's our iconic, treasured and nationally recognized local heritage. The alternative site I suggest here is a larger parcel, outside our historic district, and is accessible from two streets (Petaluma Blvd. So., and 2nd Street) for guests, suppliers, service trucks, and garbage pickups on either side of the parcel. This vacant parcel was traded to the City for a fire station, but has proven too small for it. The City could trade it with the current owner of the parcel on B Street. The hotel would be freed of the zoning and Historic District constraints. It could be much more compatible with the new housing, retail and commercial developments and businesses on 1st and 2nd Street and Pet. Blvd. South. It would be closer to SMART station, and only 2-1/2 blocks to our historic downtown, and 1/2 block to Walnut Park. The EKN Hotel proponents could eliminate most of the problems they now face if they just move 1000 feet south.

The old twine factory, now a Hampton Inn, is quite close (walkable) to downtown and the parking far easier than for the Hotel Petaluma. The parking situation for a hotel at B Street and the Boulevard would be a convoluted nightmare and impede the flow of traffic all around that area.

**From:** [michelleb](#) [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Council  
**Subject:** Zoning overlay/hotel proposal  
**Date:** Friday, November 10, 2023 10:50:45 AM

---

Some people who received this message don't often get email from michelleb@eecpet.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

6-7 story hotel? Zoning overlay?

I'm a bit shocked that you would even consider this. Our downtown is beautiful, full of interesting architecture.

Why would you even consider changing our zoning regulations, they are there to protect the aesthetics of our town.

I am not opposed to building on empty lots, not even opposed to a new hotel – but it must fit in with the vibe of our existing buildings in both height and style.

Shameful to think that our city planners are pushing for this.

Michelle Benedetti

[REDACTED]

Petaluma, CA [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Noel M \[REDACTED\]](#)  
**To:** [-- City Council](#)  
**Subject:** Opposition to the Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel  
**Date:** Monday, November 13, 2023 8:53:45 PM

---

Some people who received this message don't often get email from noelm@dpr.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

**---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---**

I am writing to share my opposition to the Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel and provide public comment for the Historical and Planning Commission hearing on Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup>

- I do not support the method of merged hearings on the same day – this is confusing and born of expediency, which prevents proper review and comment by the public for Historical and Planning related items
- The public notice I received is vague, using relatively unknown acronyms such as “FAR” floor area ratios which here relates to the "maximum number allowed floors" and unclear language such as, "non specific mixed land use designations” rather than detailed clarifying language for public notices of this sort. This and other factors make me believe the notice is inadequate public notice for General plan and Rezoning discussion purposes.
- An non-transparent and internal process was used to develop the content
- Several rounds of reviews of the Overlay were presented to the public for an informational review, however these were absent sufficient public notice and were consistently changing is approach leading to more confusion rather than education of the public.
- Continual modifications of the Overlay have created less understanding of the approach and implication rather than more and in lieu of a clarifying and refining process responding to comments we have the Overlay of the month process. This is simply contrary to a well informed public process
- Insufficient neighbor contact has been engaged by the applicant and the Overlay provides insufficient consideration for the impacts to adjacent historical resources, neighborhood residents, and businesses
- The actions proposed have all the bad trademarks of finding a way to do “Spot Zoning” using a shotgun approach to approve a project, a project which is currently contrary to the existing General land use Plan and Zoning. The proposed actions require a more impartial and thorough review than what is offered. I am also concerned because the hearings approach and poor recommendations on environmental review show that neutral city staff oversight may be lacking. My suggestion is that you stretch out the hearings to permit clear and separate review of the issues and General Plan changes being considered before taking up relative zoning changes or project reviews.
- The use of a Mitigated Negative declaration suggested for a General Plan amendment and new zoning standards as recommended is a farce. Diligence is missing. No or little mitigations for the limited negative impacts are shown for many effects that aren’t mentioned but will happen if the proposed changes are adopted. Where is the "no project” and "alternate sites" review alternatives? It is clear that the General Plan amendments and proposed new overlay zones are being suggested without thorough analysis or complete environmental review.

What are the buildout parking demands and circulation mitigations needed downtown to accommodate the proposed changes? Where are the stats on new housing needed by type and as may be produced by these proposals? Where is the comparison with our current General Plan needs? What is the range of additional buildout expected for the General Plan amendments? What is the assumption basis of projections for these figures? Why is the environmental impact report review not recommended when it is so clear it is needed as a basis for consideration

- The Overlay impact assessments are flawed because they are focused only on the Hotel application and not to the larger impacts of the Overlay. If we are considering parking, traffic, air quality, density, height, bulk, mass, shading, and impacts to historical resources then they need to be evaluation for all of the Overlay locations. The EIR only provides the impacts for the Hotel application.
- On this last point, this is a particularly troubling flaw of the document, in that when the Hotel needs the whole overlay, it gets all the benefits of the increased area, but the Overlay only provides the impacts of the Hotel and does. The Hotel can't stand as applied on it's own, so an Overlay is created, but the impact of the Overlay is focused and provided only for the Hotel
- Mitigation measures should be required for additional off-street parking, circulation patterns and linked traffic lights, once additional parking and higher traffic demands are shown by a proper EIR (Environmental Impact Report). Just looking at future parking demands caused by the recommended General Plan amendments and increased demand on downtown streets justifies a full EIR. I urge you to require that an EIR be conducted to include also review site alternatives for the proposed hotel and additional housing and the actual mitigations that would be needed to affect the proposed changes.
- I have also looked at the recent building height study of the downtown area which appears to be trying to support increased heights of buildings. Using church towers which are already exempted in the zoning ordinance as a basis for increased building density is a flawed and deceiving practice relative to large box type structures such as the proposed Hotel and all other structures proposed by the Overlay
- The EIR is absent a comprehensive parking plan. Parking is only evaluated for the Hotel and not the whole Overlay
- Where are the recommendations on traffic lights, traffic levels of service, lane changes, timing, future parking needs for the proposed areas and changes? Where are considerations of alternatives to the proposals? The related environmental Impacts needs to be studied before further actions are taken. Alternative scale, location sites, traffic and parking needs and service access capacities should also be reviewed by an EIR.
- The Hotel application embedded in the Overlay will have too big an impact. It is too big, too high, and way under-designed in creating parking spaces and off street service access. There is just not enough parking for hotel staff, restaurants staff, hotel rooms, and restaurant patron demands. The proposal is way out of scale size-wise for the neighborhood, and could easily be an absolute monstrosity with no redeeming architectural grace to fit in with the historic nature of the area. Since 100% lot coverage is proposed, what will the West side or South Easterly sides of the building look like if it is permitted to sit on the property line? Will it show 6 stories of blank wall to people coming down B Street or perhaps as seen coming up the Boulevard? There will be visual damage to one of downtown's major entrances and to

- views of the hills from the Turning Circle park and other locations in the East side of the river
- The Conditions Use Permit requirements in the Overlay are meaningless and toothless and prevent suitable project specific applications from having any meaningful project specific reviews. Anything deemed to have economic benefit can have get a Conditional Use Permit in the current Overlay. That is contrary to my understanding of how CEQA should be applied.
  - If the city wishes to make decisions based on estimated economic return to the city such provided by hotels then the city should look at the effects of another hotel added to the city's overall supply now. A quick review of the existing hotels in town will show that now they are only about half full most of the week with only a slight increase on weekends. This is not good for sustainability of hotels. What I am saying is that more approvals of hotels right now will further weaken existing ones. Under these conditions If we approve more new hotels, overall hotel bed and tax revenues for the city will be unlikely to show much improvement, for some time. What is the actual figures for this? Overbuilding can be a problem lasting for years. Does the city actually know the overall demand for additional hotel space and their overall economic impact in town?
  - As the City's own review has shown the proposed tax revenues, BEFORE integration into a comprehensive study, show the applicants revenue calculations are over-estimated by 200%. The City anticipates 1/3 of the revenue proposed by the applicant.

Noel Manerud



Noel Manerud | **DPR Construction** | [www.dpr.com](http://www.dpr.com)



We Exist to Build Great Things.®

**From:** [dekrame](#) [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Petaluma Planning](#); -- City Council  
**Cc:** [rwhisman@yahoo.com](#); [REDACTED]; [Janice Cader-Thompson](#); [Gred Powell](#); [Andrew Trippel](#); [editor@arguscourier.com](#); [don.frances@arguscourier.com](#)  
**Subject:** Re: IS/MND - Petaluma Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel  
**Date:** Sunday, November 12, 2023 3:37:38 PM

---

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---  
12 November 2023

**Re: IS/MND - Petaluma Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel**

Dear MEMBERS OF THE CITY OF PETALUMA PLANNING COMMISSION and HISTORIC & CULTURAL PRESERVATION COMMITTEE,

I am writing to urge that you deny the proposed Petaluma Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay as well as the application in its current form for the EKN Hotel.

As the current process for approval intertwines – confusingly in my estimation – the General Plan amendment and the hotel proposal, my comments in some cases will apply to each consideration.

THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT  
(Overlay and Hotel)

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an EIR must be prepared whenever there is substantial evidence, in light of the whole record, that a project may have a significant effect on the environment.

Clearly, the increase in occupancy and use of the downtown area, the construction impacts, and the usage changes will have a significant effect on the environment.

In the draft proposal to declare negative impact, it is noted: **WHEREAS**, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a)(4), in evaluating the potential environmental effects of the project within the Initial Study, the City tiered from the program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the City of Petaluma General Plan 2025, certified on April 7, 2008 (General Plan EIR) through adoption of Resolution No. 2008-058 N.C.S.;

That 2008 plan indicated: *...despite incorporation of measures and polices to mitigate impacts of build out under the General Plan, the General Plan EIR identified significant and unavoidable impacts related to traffic, noise, air quality, and greenhouse gas emissions; yet the City adopted a statement of overriding considerations, which balanced the merits of approving the plan despite the significant environmental effects;*

As the introduction to the recent housing element adapted earlier this year stated, much has changed since the 2025 General Plan was adopted in 2008.

That same consideration should be applied to the current discussion of the overlay. Much *has* changed, and I do not see how the City can claim to have effectively considered new levels of negative effects – let alone know how to mitigate them - without a CEQA-required Environmental Impact Report.

## TRAFFIC

(Overlay and hotel specific)

I have been unable to find a traffic study as called for with this project.

The current plan for the EKN hotel indicates 93 rooms and 58 parking spaces. The municipal parking assessment district appears to exempt structures within the district from providing off-street parking. It is high time to reconsider that exemption not only in light of the hotel but also the increase in business and residential population.

Does anyone reasonably expect that 40% of the hotel rooms will be occupied by people who have come here by other than automobile?

Current arrival alternatives include bus, SMART train and taxi. Oh yes, bike. (That will certainly be an oft-chosen option!)

I expect the most reasonable means, given the expense of the system, would be bus. This means Golden Gate transit or possibly an airport bus connection.

Have you ever traveled by Golden Gate Transit with luggage? The overhead racks on most of the buses are so narrow even a small backpack will not fit. Suitcases end up taking up seat space or even aisle space, which really becomes unacceptable.

And tourists who arrive from outside the area will have to negotiate multiple modes and changes in services because Golden Gate Transit and SMART do not service the major airports and train stations in the Bay Area.

How will traffic be affected by service vehicles? Where is the loading dock for this? And what will it be like when trucks need to back into such a delivery area?

How many cars will be able to queue waiting for valet service? Will they back into the ONE lane of traffic on Petaluma Blvd?

And for those who come to dine specifically at the hotel, many will be local people, so auto is probably the most used form. Popular times are already difficult for parking. How will that be affected by the addition of an additional load for hotel guests and diners?

How will the increase in congestion and parking from the hotel affect the desire for people to go downtown to shop or dine? Will it create aggravation and an actual drop in customer visits to other

businesses, and contribute to a decline rather than increase in economic activity?

## NOISE AND LIGHT

How far will the sound travel from the rooftop lounge? Indicating that there will be limits on the hours does nothing to afford nearby residents the opportunity to enjoy their own outdoors areas without being bombarded by the playlist dictated by the hotel.

Councilmember John Shribbs made a reasonable recommendation to illustrate the need to portray the noise and lighting generated by the top floor bar/event space. Unfortunately, the council failed to make any provisions for representing the height, light and noise effects upon the surrounding community.

One councilmember referred to the story poles for the Water Street Tub fiasco, and noted how well *that* worked out. It is reasonable to extrapolate that the council voted against any representation as it felt such an undertaking would help solidify public dissatisfaction with the project.

## NEW HEIGHT STANDARDS (Overlay)

I understand from City records that an overlay is being proposed specifically because it allows the hotel in its currently proposed form to exist.

The Economic Impacts Assessment notes that the hotel would be a concrete and steel structure given the height of the building and the additional engineering and structural support required at that height.

Yet the report notes that other structures, especially residential structures, would most likely opt to build out a 45 feet or less as the cost to go higher becomes prohibitive due to structural standards. The increase in cost would make it less likely that a developer would be able to realize a recoupment on the investment of a building over 45 feet.

Since the current height support buildings up to 45 feet, why change such a large area in the downtown just to accommodate the hotel?

There clearly are aesthetic reasons to avoid such new heights adjacent to or within the historical district of the town, and many of the public's comments emphasize that concern.

The General Plan 2025 states: *Maintain the historic-era integrity within the Oak Hill-Brewster and "A" Street Historic districts as adopted local historic districts.*

This hotel design certainly does not integrate with the historical "look" of downtown.

As for setbacks, the older buildings don't have them, and I think that issue could be handled on a per-project basis.

Again, the new parameters in the proposed overlay and hotel definitely have an environmental impact, and need a thorough review as only offered by a comprehensive EIR.

#### SUMMARY

Environmental Impact Reports have often been used as a cudgel by people opposing a project. Members of the current City Council have been supporters of such reviews when they have resisted projects such as the Ranier Connector, Deer Creek shopping Center, Dutra Asphalt Plant, and the Factory outlet and Target shopping centers.

And those same councilmembers have often vociferously railed against the traffic impacts of those projects. (Most recently in opposing the Davidian development on D Street and Windsor.)

So it is rather disingenuous that suddenly these same people decry any attempt to request an EIR for this hotel and overlay project.

I am not against new projects on the downtown area. And I would welcome a comprehensive plan that envisions how such development can work within the current desire by so many Petaluma residents to not bastardize the feeling that is Petaluma.

A robust EIR is a necessary tool in the process of crafting such a forward-looking plan.

Rejecting the EKN hotel proposal and overlay, initiating a new EIR in concert with the new General Plan, and taking the time needed for the community to become involved in the process could do wonders for a city-wide satisfaction of the projects that unfold in the future.

Sincerely,

Peter deKramer

**From:** [Suzanne B \[REDACTED\]](#)  
**To:** [Rizzi, Krystle](#); [Kevin McDonnell](#); [Barnacle, Brian](#); [Janice Cader-Thompson](#); [Mike Healy](#); [Karen Nau](#); [Pocekay, Dennis](#); [John Shribbs](#)  
**Cc:** [-- City Clerk](#); [Orozco, Uriel](#)  
**Subject:** public comment  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:11:12 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

---

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Prior to the meeting tonight which I, unfortunately cannot attend due having tested positive for Covid I would like you to refer to my prior emails stating that I am opposed to the zoning overlay, the proposed EKN hotel; and I am in favor of an EIR report and story poles. I request the information in this referral to go on the public record for the meeting tonight Tuesday, Nov, 12, 2023. My prior emails state my reasons and offer alternate solutions.

In addition, I would to add the following information:

Besides the financial analysis, (that I have forwarded in a prior email) which demonstrates that what EKN is promising the city in financial returns is far from reality. If you haven't already read this, please take the time to do so.

I would like to highlight some of the some of the data taken from the professional Third party economic assessment commissioned by the Planning Department on Nov. 7 2023.

- 1) "Relatively tall and dense midrise housing products are rarely financially feasible to build in Petaluma (and the North Bay generally). The Residential Feasibility Analysis completed for the Petaluma General Plan update found that the analyzed higher-density 3-story, 5-story, and 8-story multifamily building prototypes were unlikely to pencil in Petaluma.<sup>2</sup> The 5-story and 8-story prototypes performed especially poorly, as these products require a costly concrete parking structure or parking podium, respectively."
- 2) "The Downtown Overlay's increased maximum height is likely to have little initial impact on residential development activity, as projects built between 45 feet and 75 feet require higher-cost construction materials and techniques."
- 3) "Overall, the project is expected to generate over \$700,000 in annual tax revenue for the City of Petaluma's budget—primarily from TOT revenues. A full 25-year projection of tax revenue for each tax category is shown in Figure 13. Approximately 75 percent of total expected tax revenue is expected to come from the hotel's TOT revenue, based on hotel room revenue. Over a 25-year period, the hotel would generate \$13.8 million in TOT, \$2.6 million in sales tax, and \$1.4 million in property tax revenue for the City of Petaluma. The General Fund would receive the majority of these funds. In comparison, the applicant's estimates of tax impacts from the projects are shown in Figure 14."

Thank you for taking my opinions and data into consideration when making any decisions regarding changes to the general plan

Suzanne biaggi



SUZANNE BIAGGI

[susanna@sbiaggi.com](mailto:susanna@sbiaggi.com)

707.483.5314

**From:** Tom C [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]; Janice Cader-Thompson; Greg Powell; Andrew Trippel  
**Subject:** Appellation Hotel, Downtown Overlay plan  
**Date:** Sunday, November 12, 2023 10:04:55 PM

---

Some people who received this message don't often get email from tom@petalumaphoenix.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Council and Commission Members:

I have read the Petaluma City's website detailing the Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay. I have also attended meetings and read much about the Appellation Hotel project. It is my informed opinion that the two projects are indeed intertwined, even though representatives of the hotel and some city representatives would have Petaluma citizens believe otherwise.

According to the city's website, it was suggested by our planning staff that hotel developers, the EKN Group, submit a general plan and/or zoning amendments application in order to obtain changes in setback and height restrictions that have been set in Petaluma's current general plan. This led to the overlay plan which would allow the city to avoid having to issue a variance to the EKN Group and they could build beyond current limits.

I believe both plans are not appropriate for downtown Petaluma as presented at this time. I urge both the Petaluma City Council and Planning Commission to deny the application, and send all plans back to the discussion and discovery phase for thoughtful, truthful and open discussion and planning. That planning should include as many citizens as wish to be involved. I would like to see more open meetings and workshops about both of these projects, and I believe many Petalumans agree and will attend those meetings should they be offered.

A few bullet points:

1. I am not comfortable with the increase from a 45' height restriction to a new limit at 70' . It is not in keeping with historic sight lines and compatibility and it is not economically feasible as regards cost per square foot for building housing and office space in the downtown area (this from the economic peer review).
2. The peer review also notes that housing and office spaces will not be in high need or high demand in the downtown area in the near future. To make housing in the downtown area feasible in the future the city will need to mitigate quality of life issues, transportation, shopping, safety and city services. This will need to be sussed out and at this point is not discussed in the current overlay plan.
3. Setbacks and 100% lot fill may not be a problem for developers looking to our town but they are not in keeping with current visual, pedestrian and traffic visions for the future of Petaluma. Services and goods needing space to be delivered and people coming and going in and out of busy doorways is an issue that again needs to be sussed out and is not discussed in the overlay plan.

4. Traffic and parking impacts must be discussed. The city plans to take a negative mitigation stance in regard to the two issues. Both traffic and parking needs will increase with more people downtown and both issues need to be considered in all future planning. Negative mitigation is absolutely unacceptable and will most likely lead to problems and leave the city open to legal actions brought by disgruntled citizens, business owners downtown and citizens at large in our city.

5. The economic projections presented by the city in its reports states that the Hotel and restaurant business will bring 37 million dollars into the city coffers through TOT and sales taxes in the next 25 years, penciling in at 1.4 million dollars a year. The economic review disputes those figures and projects the total annual receipts to the city through taxes to be at close to \$700,000 per annum. Less than half of the city's projections.

6. The historic and cultural review report as presented by the city is apparently wholly unacceptable as noted in the historic peer review. It leads me to wonder, who is responsible for preparing that report and who signed off on its efficacy? And after reading the peer review I wonder if we should be making changes in that city department. As it is written the overlay plan would make it reasonable to demolish several 100 year plus old buildings on Keller Street that have been historically relevant and important to this city for over a century.

There is so much more that has been brought to your attention by so many concerned citizens of this city regarding the Hotel and Overlay project. Those concerns are real and reasonable. What is true is that it is not important or wise to move forward quickly with either of these projects at this time. There is so much left to be discussed and learned about what they will mean to this city. There is plenty of time to figure it all out. The only ones that might be in a hurry are the out-of-town developers that have their interests in mind but not the city of Petaluma.

Please slow down with the decision making part of both of these plans. The city of Petaluma will have to live with the results for a long time to come and wisdom needs to be inherent in all aspects of these moves. Please give this more time and study.

Thank you,

Tom Gaffey  
General Manager  
Phoenix Theater  
Citizen of Petaluma

**From:** [tracywilson94952@gmail.com](#)  
**To:** -- City Council; -- City Council  
**Subject:** Overlay  
**Date:** Monday, November 13, 2023 2:55:47 PM  
**Importance:** High

---

Some people who received this message don't often get email from tracywilson94952@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Hi,

I oppose the overlay. I want the downtown to stay the way it is. Don't want to see a bunch of tall vacant buildings downtown. There's already so much vacancy. How can this even make sense? Not to mention the issue with where are the guests going to PARK? There was a huge uproar about parking several years back and nothing was ever decided. Underground? This proposed hotel is two blocks from the river. What happens if you start digging down? Can the ground withstand that much weight? Two blocks away on D Street and the Blvd. where there is another vacant lot? The future of Petaluma needs to be planned smartly. Not greedily!

How will the tall buildings help maintain a vibrant downtown? And even more of a mystery: how could a tall brand new modern hotel preserve the city's historic charm? Why can't the builder keep the hotel within the current size limitation? Again, I suspect greed.

What about the Planning Commission's analysis clearly states that it would not be financially feasible to put this 6-story hotel in Petaluma. It would cost too much to build and would be "too big for its britches"

Keep the zoning the way it is. Protect Petaluma Historic Downtown

I'm tired of hearing about the M Group and its passing of projects that do not serve the greater good of this town.

That's my two cents!

Tracy Wilson

[Redacted signature block]