



February 20, 2025

Mayor Kevin McDonnell, City Council Members
Peggy Flynn, City Manager
11 English Street
Petaluma, CA 94952

Dear Mayor McDonnell, City Council Members, and City Manager,

Following up on our November 2024 letter, we are submitting this updated correspondence to reflect our ongoing discussions and considerations regarding the Downtown Overlay proposal.

The Petaluma Downtown Association board of directors (PDA) and the Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee recently conducted two workshops with city staff to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Downtown Overlay proposal. Our organizations share a common goal: fostering a thriving, economically vibrant downtown that honors Petaluma's rich history while ensuring it remains a premier destination in the North Bay. While this letter does not represent the official position of the Petaluma Chamber, we acknowledge that both organizations have taken the time to thoroughly assess the proposed initiative.

PDA Key Concerns Raised by Downtown Merchants

The PDA recognizes the potential benefits of the Downtown Overlay in encouraging investment, promoting creative infill development, and supporting the adaptive reuse of buildings. However, we firmly believe that any city-led development initiative must also address the following key concerns:

1. **Retail Formula Policy** – Establishing a policy to protect local businesses from displacement due to rising rents and an influx of chain or franchise businesses is essential.
2. **Downtown Access & Parking** – The city's recent efforts to conduct a comprehensive parking survey as an initial step in assessing the downtown business community's needs was appreciated. The PDA is committed to participating in discussions and working toward solutions. A comprehensive approach is necessary to ensure ease of movement for residents, visitors, and merchants while maximizing shared public spaces and integrating alternative transportation options such as LumaGO. We echo the Chambers' remark that Parking needs to be managed in connection with every project considered for the downtown area.
3. **Blighted & Underutilized Properties** – Enacting ordinances to encourage the maintenance and redevelopment of neglected properties is necessary. A program should be developed to support and incentivize property owners to redevelop, repurpose, or sell underutilized buildings.

Downtown Overlay Considerations

The PDA supports the concept of a luxury hotel in downtown Petaluma, recognizing the benefits of increased foot traffic, business growth, and expanded hospitality options.

The PDA supports Overlay locations A, B, and C, with the following considerations:

- **Height Restrictions** – To preserve the historic district's visual integrity, new buildings should complement rather than overpower the streetscape. We request that the city establish regulations ensuring new structures do not exceed the height of tallest existing Downtown building (The Mutual Relief Building at 4th & Western) maintaining consistency with the existing downtown character and aesthetics.
- **Overlay Footprint Adjustments** – We prefer the original footprint of Area C as previously presented and recommend reconsidering the inclusion of Area B or implementing a phased approach to Area C.

PDA Perspective on Development

As stewards of the downtown, we view the Downtown Overlay as a discretionary tool - not an entitlement, that establishes base parameters for developers and city departments. It does not grant automatic project approval. Instead, we expect projects to be evaluated individually, with a continued focus on:

- Preserving the unique historic character of downtown. Downtown Petaluma represents our area's historical roots, future aspirations and business vitality. The downtown is a cultural and social hub that attracts residents, workers, and tourists alike. It's a place that our community gathers for events and celebrations, which fosters a sense of local pride and shared identity.
- Consider walkability and pedestrian activation along with employee and customer parking with all new developments.
- Encouraging residential development to create a dynamic downtown environment that supports businesses, affordable housing, enhances foot traffic, and contributes to a thriving local economy.
- Integrating projects into a broader economic development strategy.
- Providing transparent community engagement to clarify the purpose and impact of the Downtown Overlay.

Moving Forward Together

The PDA remain committed to fostering a balanced, well-planned downtown. We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts toward a prosperous downtown for years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Marie McCusker

Executive Director, Petaluma Downtown Association

On behalf of the PDA Board of Directors

From: [Remy Carini](#)
To: [-- City Council](#)
Subject: Downtown Overlay objection
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 9:07:04 AM

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My name is Remy Carini and I absolutely OBJECT to the Downtown Overlay!

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Rob Nealon](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Petaluma development
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 12:45:02 PM

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I'm a long time resident of Petaluma and I'm emailing you to voice support for the overlay in downtown and for the construction of a new hotel.

thank you

Rob Nealon

From: [Robin Mills](#)
To: [-- City Council](#)
Subject: Please vote against the overlay
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 7:01:06 AM

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I am a current resident of Petaluma

Please vote against the overly of downtown Petaluma. It will ruin the look and feel of downtown and its charm. There is no guarantee of income from the hotel but once built there is guarantee of permanent blight in the skyline

Robin Mills
[REDACTED]
Petaluma, Ca

Robin Mills CSC, MA

[REDACTED]
Photography

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Rosemary Hart](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Charlie Palmer Hotel
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 4:38:04 PM

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Hello,

I just wanted to let you know that I support the Charlie Palmer hotel being built at Petaluma Blvd and B Streets. I hear you don't get many letters in support, so I thought I'd send an email. please share with the City Council.

Thank you,
Rosemary Hart

From: [Samantha Fullerton](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Overlay ordinance
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 10:53:08 AM

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Dear City Councilmembers,

My family and I support the overlay ordinance. I grew up here and I think we can still value the history & charm and still be a little modern and new. It could bring much needed money and revitalization to our downtown area.

Samantha & Nick De La Montanya

Sent from my iPhone

From: [sherry.sandberg](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Public Comment regarding Downtown Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 11:00:49 PM

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Dear Mayor McDonnell and City Council Members,

I am writing to you to again object to your passage of these proposals. Not much has changed over the last few years of this hotel application. A few color motif modifications to the proposed hotel were presented, none of which appropriately addressed the big box store look of the 6 story building. Also, instead of voting only on the hotel proposal (which would not pass zoning laws), our outsourced M Group city planning manager, Andrew Trippel, convinced the EKN applicant to apply for a zoning overlay, the only way for the hotel to get approval.

Reading in the Feb 21st edition of the Argus Courier that the city council would vote 5-2 to approve these proposals on 2/24/25 was very disappointing. Our City Attorney Danly repeatedly stated that council members could not reveal their votes in advance of the actual vote according to the Brown Act. I suppose that is untrue or a loophole was found.

Before embarking on a major downtown zoning change, the city should provide a cost benefit analysis of the proposed hotel and the zoning changes. Look at all of the existing businesses that would lose customers and revenue by proceeding; put a cost on that. I also believe that not all environmental impacts can be mitigated. The EIRs presented were not sufficient. Utilities, Fire services, noise ordinances, increased traffic and other issues have not been sufficiently studied.

I don't know what is really behind the city's motivation to push through this zone change and the 6 story hotel. I have my suspicions and will do my best to work with others to find the truth. It's important for everyone.

Sleep well and may karma prevail.

Sincerely,
Sherry Sandberg
Petaluma downtown taxpaying homeowner

From: [Sonya Karabel](#)
To: -- [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Downtown Overlay Comment
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 3:03:58 PM
Attachments: [Overlay amendment hotel jobs housing analysis.docx](#)

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I am attaching suggested amendments to the Downtown Overlay from UNITE HERE Local 2, the hotel workers' union. These amendments would allow the City to take a closer look at the impacts of the proposed Appellation Hotel on Petaluma's jobs and housing imbalance.

Best,

Sonya Karabel
Researcher
UNITE HERE Local 2 & 49

The Planning Commission may approve a Conditional Use Permit to allow for additional height up to 45 feet pursuant to the findings listed in this subsection and the review criteria set forth in Section 24.060.E:

- *For projects including a hotel*
 - *That the City has conducted an analysis of the impact of the hotel project on the jobs-housing balance in the City of Petaluma, including how much demand for affordable housing the project will create as compared to the amount of affordable housing created as part of the project and that could be funded by the commercial housing linkage fee associated with the project and whether employees will be able to afford housing in Petaluma.*
 - *The analysis will be based on all pertinent information. To facilitate the analysis, the developer must submit with the application the following preliminary employment data to the City, to the extent known: number of permanent jobs to be created in the operations of the hotel, type of job (part-time or full-time), wages, and benefits. The developer may submit updated information to the City at any time during the application process.*
 - *That the jobs-housing analysis accurately estimates, to the extent reasonably possible, the foreseeable impact of the project on the jobs-housing balance in Petaluma and is adequate to inform the Planning Commission's decision on the Conditional Use Permit.*
 - *That*
 - *A) the project will contribute favorably to Petaluma's jobs-housing balance or*
 - *B) that the project's benefits to the City overall outweigh its negative impact on Petaluma's jobs-housing balance.*

From: [Steve Schramm](#)
To: -- [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Opposed to the Downtown Overlay
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 5:48:22 AM

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I am opposed to the changes proposed by the Downtown Overlay and to the proposed six story hotel being advocated by developer EKN.

Steve Schramm

[REDACTED]
Petaluma, CA [REDACTED]

From: [susan kirks](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Comment - Agenda Item 8l
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 9:01:51 PM

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For the current Mayor and City Council members,

I am not seeing a Final EIR with impacts and mitigations in the information included for the limited environmental review

It appears the hotel has been included in Findings related to the overlay zone. Are you planning to certify a Final EIR on both the overlay zone AND hotel?

Where are supporting studies for conclusions of no "effects" or potential impacts that were not even evaluated in the limited EIR?

The for profit M Group consultants are bringing to elected people who are supposed to represent the community an odd compilation of Findings of Fact, your designated role, and functioning as advocates for the developer. Some of you have had conversations with the restaurateur, developer rep, and/or business owners in Petaluma about direct or indirect income to you or family members with investments in local beverage and other businesses.

Why is it so important to try and approve this overlay zone and then hotel under the old General Plan about to expire?

I oppose this overlay zone and the proposed hotel as do many in Petaluma .The DEIR should not have received your majority vote to move to Final.

The Planning Commission EIR review, except for Commissioner Racusen'a questions, input and NO vote on the DEIR, was inadequate.

There is no reason whatsoever to certify the FEIR for this overlay zone and certainly not for the proposed hotel. .

Susan Kirks

From: [Susan Muscatell](#)
To: -- [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Hotel and overlay
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 1:07:44 PM

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I fully support both the hotel and overlay. Our city needs to have some have more vibrant attractions and less empty lots with chain link fencing. The small shops downtown will thrive! Thank you for supporting this!

Susan

[Susan Muscatell](#)

[REDACTED]

[Petaluma, Ca.](#) [REDACTED] 2

[REDACTED]

From: [teddyherzog](#)
To: -- City Clerk
Subject: Downtown overlay - growing our town for the future
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 10:06:57 AM
Attachments: [Canva of the two hotels.png](#)

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Hello All,



Hotel Petaluma:

loved restaurant
5 story hotel
bar in lobby
two other small retail
zero parking on site

proposed EKN hotel:

potential high demand restaurant
5 story hotel
6th story roof top bar
parking in basement



No need to guess or imagine. What would the impact be of the proposed EKN hotel be on the street downtown? What would your experience be as you walked by? Simple. Go walk by the Hotel Petaluma. Similar land use. Similar building program. Similar size building. Similar location.

I would expect the EKN Hotel to activate the street (get people walking around, in and out of the building) similar to how the Hotel Petaluma does now. Probably the EKN rooftop bar would be a much more intensive land use than the bar in the lobby of Hotel Petaluma.

The EKN hotel clientele would be a different group than those that currently frequent Hotel Petaluma. Some might think that the economy of downtown Petaluma is a "zero sum game" but actually we would add new people to our downtown, new people with money walking around other businesses and additional money coming into our City coffers (to fund projects like The Trestle, the Caulfield Bridge, etc.)

We could invite EKN in to submit their application for their proposed hotel. Or, you know, we could "keep things the same", wait for imaginary projects, and likely produce the same results on the economic vitality of our downtown that we produced over the past 20 years.

I probably won't show live Monday night at the "big event" at City Council. But I'll look forward to hearing what people have to say about growing our town for the future.

Teddy Herzog

From: [Valentina Osinski](#)
To: -- City Clerk
Subject: Re: City Council Meeting Feb 24th, 2025 | The Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay at B and Petaluma Blvd S.
Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2025 8:45:25 PM

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I am writing this for the city council meeting on February 24th regarding the [Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay](#).

My input is a firm NO NOO NOOO!

What makes Petaluma so magical and charming is the *lack* of this type of development. I am 100% confident that if you polled the average person walking through Petaluma, the people who are supporting the vibrancy of this town directly through their patronage, the vast majority of them would say that buildings and development agendas of this nature are NOT what they want to see here.

Any development in Petaluma needs to maintain the scale and old world charm that has been so lovingly preserved here. The particular building currently in question at B and Petaluma Blvd S is too large, out of character architecturally, and creates an eyesore rather than enhances the downtown experience.

If you want to bring vibrancy to the downtown, create incentives for unique and local businesses to occupy the currently vacant buildings. A large, ugly hotel that only enhances the pocket books of the developer and owner will not reinvigorate the downtown.

Now, if you were to entertain the idea of a smaller scale, unique, boutique hotel for that corner, let's all take a look and revisit the subject.

But this particular plan is not "the one".

Valentina Osinski
Edith Street
Petaluma

From: [William Sell](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: EKN Appellation hotel public hearing
Date: Saturday, February 15, 2025 1:04:03 PM

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I am out of town for the meeting on the February 24th meeting, but wanted to share my thoughts on the hotel. We live at 1 Keller St, Petaluma, CA 94952, so this project is very close to our home. We have several concerns regarding the proposed hotel. I have listed them for clarity.

- Parking should fully accommodate both employees and guests, and this should be designed for the corner case condition of full occupancy. Spilling out onto the surface streets is not an option as it would affect local residents
- The parking area should not be below the grade of the river as this would be subject to flooding.
- The hotel should not exceed the height of other buildings downtown. Respect the rules which are already in place, not make exceptions. And going higher in an earthquake zone seems ridiculous.
- The hotel design should be either in the style of existing Petaluma architecture or a modern art design. The proposed design looks very dull and not inspiring at all.

If these conditions were met, I am not opposed to the project. I will say that the proposed room rates for the hotel are likely to make it very exclusive and the need for another hotel is somewhat questionable when we have the String Factory, the Sheraton, the new one going south of town, plus the downtown hotel, but that is my take.

Thanks for listening

Bill and Jane Sell

From: [Anisa THOMSEN](#)
To: -- City Clerk
Subject: No Representation for Major Decision
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 12:10:46 PM

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The City Council of Petaluma is voting tonight on a significant issue that will shape the future of the town. However, it appears that the District 5 representative, Alex DeCarli, will not be allowed to vote because he owns property adjacent to the lot in question. The residents of District 5 overwhelmingly oppose the overlay/hotel proposal, and we have no voice in the matter; hence, this letter stating as such.

It is disheartening that the council wants to move ahead with a project that clearly the citizens do not want. It is also curious that suddenly the city is concerned with "conflicts of interest." It appears the city picks and chooses that definition to fit the developer agenda.

Anisa Thomsen

[REDACTED]

Petaluma, CA 94952

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] t

From: Francine
To: -- City Council
Subject: Overlay
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 9:46:34 AM
Attachments: IMG_4229.PNG

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From FrancineHatfield

AT&T Wi-Fi 9:24 AM 94%



For you Recent Nearby Trending

email??

[jcaderthompson@cityofp
etaluma.org](mailto:jcaderthompson@cityofp
etaluma.org)

Dear CC member- happy to add my name to the list of folks who DO NOT want the downtown overlay that the CC presumes is a favorable thing. I do not want to

rewrite history (unlike
many in politics). I won't
vote for politicians who do
not listen to their
constituents. And I don't



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For Sale



Notifications

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Jennifer Jensen](#)
To: -- [City Council](#)
Subject: M-Group and Proposed Hotel
Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2025 7:48:14 AM

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

Dear Petaluma City Council,

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed construction of a 6-story hotel in downtown [City Name]. This project goes directly against the expressed will of the community and could have significant negative effects on our neighborhood's character, environment, and livability.

The scale and size of this hotel are completely out of place with the surrounding buildings, which will disrupt the local aesthetic and create a negative visual impact. Our community has worked hard to maintain a unique, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, one that prioritizes small businesses, local culture, and open spaces. A hotel of this size would overshadow these efforts and introduce increased congestion, noise, and traffic that would detract from the charm and functionality of downtown.

Additionally, the proposed development threatens the livelihood of local small businesses that rely on the human scale and character of the area. If the hotel is built, it could lead to the displacement of these vital businesses, which would diminish the economic diversity that currently benefits the community.

We must prioritize responsible development that aligns with our collective vision and serves the long-term needs of the people who live here. The overwhelming opposition from residents is a clear signal that this is not the type of growth we want for our city.

I urge you to reconsider this project and instead invest in development that truly reflects the values and aspirations of the community. Our voices must be heard, and the decisions made today should protect the future of our beloved downtown.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jensen
Petaluma, CA
[REDACTED]

From: [Karin Beddow](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Overlay and Hotel
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 11:38:41 AM

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Hello, City Council Members,

I am writing to express my negative opinion on the proposed Petaluma Hotel. I would not like the hotel as it is currently being presented. The design is too modern and it will be too tall. This development doesn't match our town and will only bring in low-paying jobs. Yes, there will be revenue from patrons who stay, however, most low/middle class people won't be able to afford to stay there. As a 35-yr. resident of B Street, I am very concerned about parking and traffic, as well.

I would attend tonight, but last time I did, the meeting went on past midnight, and quite frankly, I feel that City Council members and planners make it very hard to understand the process. Furthermore, it seems like the decision has been made.

Sincerely,

Karin Beddow

[REDACTED]

Petaluma.

From: [Marcy Cooper](#)
To: [-- City Council](#)
Cc: [Janice Cader-Thompson](#)
Subject: Overlay
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 10:50:09 AM

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Dear CC member- happy to add my name to the list of folks who DO NOT want the downtown overlay that the CC presumes is a favorable thing. I do not want to rewrite history (unlike many in politics). I won't vote for politicians who do not listen to their constituents. And I don't trust people who won't believe facts.

Best,

Marcy Cooper

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Maira Su](#)
To: [-- City Council](#); [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: RE: EKN Hotel and Overlay
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 10:35:57 AM

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Dear City Council/Clerk - Please add my comments to the record for tonight's discussion of the overlay. I am 100% opposed to our violating our carefully-crafted historic regulations to allow for exceedances in lot coverage, density and building height. Those regulations were crafted over many years with a great deal of public input. What is happening now with this overlay and dicey hotel - with an applicant that has a poor financial record for defaulting - is not that.

The Sonoma and Healdsburg Plazas are the #1 and #2 most visited attractions in Sonoma County. This is precisely because they are human-scale (1-2 stories in height) and beautiful. Sonoma and Healdsburg have nowhere near the number of historic structures that Petaluma does, yet they are extremely careful to stay on brand, keeping all new builds at 3 stories, maximum. When Napa rebuilt its majestic waterfront, it did the same: 3 stories. Again, human-scale.

The downtown and surrounding neighborhoods don't want to see our historic town dwarfed by 6-story (and higher) structures. They don't want the viewsheds of our iconic hills - for which our town is named - blocked. They most certainly don't want to see builder density bonuses result in structures without associated parking, such that everyday looks like Butter n' Eggs Day, with vehicles parked all over neighborhoods. The 6th street district already struggles with this already in regards to Hotel Petaluma. And, as Raimi + Associates have shown, every single census tract in Petaluma is adversely impacted by traffic emissions. The EKN hotel would result in an increase of over 900+ cars everyday on Petaluma Boulevard, and cause the D Street/Petaluma Blvd intersection to receive a failing grade.

The City Council "vision" is not that of the citizens at large. Please respect the wishes of the majority of the townspeople/taxpayers, and walk back this idea of an overlay. We have a State-awarded YIMBY for our Housing element. Focus on that and respect the extant regulations surrounding our lauded Historic District. The expert SF architectural historians Paige & Turnbull have said we have, "architecture unmatched in California". That is, in all of the State of California, we are a one-off. We are nationally recognized for this in numerous travel publications. What you are attempting to do - to violate our Historic District Regulations with this overlay - cannot easily be undone. This is a decision for ALL of Petaluma - not for a few City Council members.

Thank you.

Sincerely, Moira Sullivan

Petaluma Area
CHAMBER
of COMMERCE

RECEIVED

FEB 20 2025

CITY CLERK

February 18, 2025

Hon. Mayor McDonnell and Hon. City Councilmembers,

For nearly 2 years, the City has been assessing the creation of an overlay for the City's downtown area. As currently proposed, the overlay defines three separate areas within the downtown, noted as areas A, B and C. In assessing the proposed overlay, it is important to distinguish between recognizing the potential value of a downtown overlay and any specific project that may be proposed for the downtown area.

Through this process, assessment of the proposed overlay has been viewed by two distinct perspectives.

The proponents of the overlay appear focused on the potential economic benefits of the overlay. Proponents cite economists and economic theories about the efficiencies of creating economic activity in a city's downtown area. They are properly concerned about improving the economic vitality of the downtown area and generating revenue for the City's budget. The problem is that the advocates do not focus sufficient attention to preserving the unique character of Petaluma's downtown which has organically evolved over more than 150 years. Although preserving the downtown area is frequently mentioned, proponents do not provide specific plans for how the City will preserve the character of the downtown.

The opponents of the proposed downtown overlay view a mirror image of the proponents. They are singularly focused on preserving the character of downtown, preserving the user experience (whether resident or visitor), and keeping the existing aesthetic. The opponents recognize that downtown Petaluma is special. It could not be created out of whole cloth today. The unique character of downtown Petaluma is an important element that attracts people to the area. Although they recognize that it is important to maintain economic vitality downtown, they do not offer plans that will realistically increase the economic efficiency of the City's downtown.

To move forward, the City needs to merge these two approaches in a meaningful way.

The Petaluma Area Chamber of Commerce (The Chamber) and the Petaluma Downtown Association (PDA) participated in two workshops that were coordinated by City staff. Both the Chamber and the PDA are organizations

The
Petaluma Area
Chamber of
Commerce
is an association of
businesses and
professionals working
together with a
commitment to
support and improve
a healthy business
community in order
to enhance the
quality of life in the
greater Petaluma
area.

6
PETALUMA
BOULEVARD N.
SUITE B-11

PETALUMA
CALIFORNIA
94952

TELEPHONE:
(707) 762-2785

E-MAIL:
pacc@petalumachamber.com

URL:
www.petalumachamber.com

focused on the business community with the shared goal of increasing the economic vitality of the City's downtown while preserving its historic aesthetic. The workshops educated board members about the proposed overlay. One goal was to assess whether the two organizations could present a common position with regard to the downtown area.

The Chamber is mindful of the two letters previously submitted by the PDA. In those letters, the PDA expresses a level of support for the downtown overlay that the Chamber is not prepared to provide. The Chamber has historically provided its support or opposition to projects or proposals where the terms are static and defined. The parameters of the proposed downtown overlay currently remain undefined. Accordingly, the Chamber does not take a specific position with regard to the proposed overlays.

However, based on having participated in the two workshops with the PDA, and having attended the workshops City staff has provided for City Councilmembers, we offer the following observations about the overlays:

- The proposed overlay provides important new options to developers who are considering projects in the downtown area. These new options should help invigorate potential investment in downtown and increase the economic vitality of downtown.
- The new options are discretionary and not a matter of right to developers. The discretionary process occurs in a number of ways. Some aspects are formal processes such as approval of a conditional use permit (CUP). Other aspects are less formal and are exercised by city staff. It is important for the City to focus on the discretionary approval process at all levels. Although it is likely not possible to assuage the concerns of the opponents, a key tool for addressing their concerns is to make sure that assessing the impact on the downtown aesthetic is always part of the discretionary process. The process should never allow a developer to substitute other improvements or benefits as a way of limiting or removing the assessment of the impact of the project on the downtown aesthetic.
- Housing is not needed in the downtown area to meet the City's RHNA requirements. However, adding residential development in the downtown should increase the user base and the vibrancy of the downtown area.
- There is support for the overlay in all three areas. The support for area C was unanimous. Some expressed concern that areas A and B will allow for buildings that will negatively impact sight lines that are important to the character of downtown.
- Parking is a key discussion point for any project. Each development will likely have a negative impact on the downtown area if the flow of vehicles is not properly managed. It is not sufficient to simply take away parking and expect

that the issue will self-adjust. Parking needs to be managed in connection with every project considered for the downtown area.


- Parking is not a goal of itself. Parking is about access to the resources that are available downtown. There are many ways to provide access, and parking is a key element that is relied on by many members of the public. The City also needs to assess other options for providing access to downtown. The City's launch of LumaGo is an important example of providing alternative ways of accessing downtown.
- The Chamber joins the PDA in advocating for programs that encourage owners of blighted and underused properties to either pursue developments of their own or sell those properties to those who will.

Although there may be conceptual support for the overlays, there is concern that the approval of the overlays is the first and only step in assessing the proposed EKN Hotel. There is concern that including area A will become a de facto approval of the EKN Hotel, as currently proposed. The members of the City Council, the City Manager, and city staff need to clearly separate approval of the downtown overlay and approval of the EKN Hotel.

The Chamber applauds the City's exploration of the downtown overlay as a new tool for improving the economic vibrancy of downtown and the City as a whole. If the overlay is to be approved, the City has an obligation to establish a process to preserve the downtown aesthetic. It cannot merely be a stated goal.

On behalf of the Petaluma Chamber of Commerce,

Kathleen Stafford, President

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "K. Stafford", written in blue ink. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large loop at the end.

From: [peter a \[REDACTED\]](#)
To: [Greg Powell](#); -- City Clerk
Subject: M Company's Overlay not ready for prime time
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 2:57:55 PM

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

Dear Mr. Powell:

The M company projects in Petaluma government offices known as the D H and EO & EKN Appellation Project (overlay) are not ready to be moved to final adoption.

The overlay has created a kind of dissonance, a disaffection with city planning offices that reasonable concerns are not debated in public processes. This has brought suspicion of the M Company's interests and role in this project and others in which it has its hands.

The radical restructuring of planning proportions in the areas affected will bring irrevocable change to the character and culture of downtown Petaluma.

Alternative ideas about what kind of economic development have gone unaddressed. Questions concerning the vast economic enterprise this hotel offers, and the nature of the kind of housing that is fitting to the overlay chunks involved go unaddressed.

The Notice also calls for amendments to the General Plan, the Implementing Zoning Ordinance, and the Zoning Map. Not one of these matters has received public presentation and discussion, neither in written form nor in public discussion before the City Council or the Planning Commission.

Most troubling is asking for amendment approval to the General Plan before the matter is similarly discussed in writing nor again in public discussion. How can the General Plan be amended before the plan itself has been discussed in writing and in public meetings?

Because of the awkward linking of hotel and downtown overlay, the hotel approval has undergone lengthy processes. But neither the content of the hotel and its impact on the city nor the radical shift in scale of the immediately impacted areas ABC overlay have received adequate discussion.

What the M company planning process has given the City of Petaluma is a disaster waiting to happen. It has distanced the citizens of Petaluma further from a vital planning process where potentially doubling in scale of a major adjacent area to the city's vaunted historic preservation district threatens and promises to introduce banality where proud if quirky culture now exists.

The bulky hotel design let alone its scale and scope dominate the future of a major access point to the essence of Petaluma as visitors and tourists always see it. It is ironic that the planning process yields a result that will kill off the purpose of the effort in order to "save the town" with promised revenue of various sorts.

And the same goes for the radical expansion of dimensions in the overlay areas. No sooner will developers go for the expanded scale than they will insist on expanding the actual sections of the overlay to meet their economic requirements. And the city

will pass along this imperative to its citizens. And as they say, there goes the community, the very thing that might attract people to Petaluma in the first place.

A collaborative and mutually respectful planning process is within our grasp - yours and the citizens of this town. How to grow a city without smothering and crushing its spirit. Why have you done it this way? There are great towns that have developed economically and with pizzazz and elegance. The tone the planners have set in those instances are full of imagination and show a proportion to the existing community, a respect for its citizens and a sense of legacy for future generations.

M stands for Moses in the planning world and there are elements of the power brokering associated with the man. What Petaluma needs is a little more Jane Jacobs and a lot less M for Robert Moses.

It's there for you to embrace and to help bring Petaluma to a durable future of distinction and character.

Sincerely,
peter almond

From: [Tracy Wilson](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Overlay
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 12:37:00 PM

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from [REDACTED]. 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.---

Hi.

I vehemently oppose the overlay and the hotel. From everything I've read it looks like the city council has already decided!

Count me in as opposing it!

I will be there tonight

Thank you

Sent from Tracy's iPhone