

**From:** [Janice Cunningham](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** overlay  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2025 2:10:44 PM

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Dear City Council,

I will make this a short letter as what I am going to say has probably already been said but I think you should know there are more of us out here.

1. the overlay could be better used on an individual project basis. Agreed that there are vacancies on lots as well as empty buildings. Does building more buildings with the hopes of occupancy make much sense when we already have vacant buildings waiting, for whatever reasons? Maybe price for rents could be the stumbling block there.

2. the projected new very tall hotel is not in keeping with the rest of the town's architecture. Why can we not have a design that is similar to the hotel they are building in Healdsburg? That one is so much more in keeping with the existing character of the town.

From reporting in the local paper, it looks like most of you have already decided what you think works for all of us. Don't forget to check in on those of us who are not buying the process right now? Grand sweeping actions often come up short.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Petaluma

**From:** [TrapDoor S](#) [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Comment on Downtown Overlay for 2/24 city council meeting  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2025 5:19:31 PM

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I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed downtown overlay, a change being driven forward to accommodate the EKN Appellation Hotel project.

My wife and I are lifelong Petalumans who intend to raise our family in this town, I am deeply troubled that this zoning change fails to address our community's actual needs. Instead, it primarily serves outside investors and luxury travelers at the expense of those who call this city home.

Petaluma does not face a hotel shortage. With nearly a dozen existing hotels operating below full capacity, the economic justification for changing our downtown zoning deserves scrutiny. If our goal is genuine economic revitalization, why not invest directly in our local businesses rather than modify our downtown character to accommodate luxury development? The projected revenue appears modest compared to our city's overall budget, and there's no guarantee this won't come at the expense of our current hotels and businesses resulting in an even smaller financial benefit.

This overlay risks accelerating the transformation of Petaluma into a city that prioritizes high-end tourism over its residents. We've witnessed how similar zoning changes across California have reshaped small towns, creating environments where longtime residents can no longer afford to live or enjoy their own downtown areas. The introduction of luxury establishments inevitably leads to higher prices throughout the surrounding area, potentially displacing the very people who have made our downtown vibrant for generations.

While I support thoughtful housing and business development, this overlay serves neither purpose. Despite significant community opposition, this proposal continues to move forward, raising questions about whose interests are truly being served. The apparent disconnect between public sentiment and council action is concerning.

I urge you to reconsider this decision. Approving this overlay would signal that Petaluma's character and community values are negotiable. You would be telling lifelong residents, working families, and future generations that their voices carry less weight than those of corporate developers.

This is indeed a defining moment for our city. Please choose to protect Petaluma's character and community over profit-driven development. Vote NO on the downtown overlay.

Thank you,

JB

**From:** [Joan Cooper](#)  
**To:** [-- City Clerk](#)  
**Cc:** [Thomas Lewis](#); [roger mcerlane](#); [Owen Lang](#); [Joan Cooper](#)  
**Subject:** Please enter into Public Comment City Council Meeting 2/24/25  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2025 9:33:51 AM

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Dear Ms. Corley:

Please enter our comment below into the record. Would appreciate it read aloud.

RE: Agenda item 8

Vote on FEIR

Vote on General Plan Amendment to include Housing Overlay affecting Historic District changes in height and lot coverage

Hello Council members DeCarli and Quint:

We are pleased to welcome you as new council members and look forward to working together to make Petaluma prosperous, healthy, and beautiful.

There are differing opinions on how this is to be achieved.

Both of us have deep experience in preserving the natural environment (Joan Cooper) and designing streetscapes, masterplans, and built environments (Owen Lang, FASLA) . We are 40 year long Petaluma homeowners. Based on this experience, we urge you to vote NO tonight on the FEIR and NO on the General Plan amendment re the Housing Overlay modifying the Historic District protections.

We are counting on you to oppose the Overlay and protect our Historic District from 6 story (68 ft) out of scale building development required by one applicant, the EKN Appellation hotel.

Height restrictions in the Historic District were enacted to preserve the scale of the visual landscape, enhance the pedestrian experience, and invite both tourists and residents to the Petaluma of yesteryear, while they are enjoying the restaurants and shops of today.

"Pie in the sky" estimates of increased visitor foot traffic and their money flowing into the businesses in the Historic Petaluma do not subtract the loss in business due to traffic snarls, insufficient parking, resulting negative impacts on revenue for small businesses, and the degradation of the pedestrian experience.

Petaluma's Historic district needs to be treasured, not destroyed by buildings that cast shadows on the sidewalks, loom over pedestrians, and block vistas. The future design of the district should be an integrated web of buildings, with new buildings complimenting old, in

scale and proportion to the fabric of the district. Housing is a necessity, multi story housing in the HIstoric District is not.

We urge all Council members, old and new, to Vote NO tonight here at the City Council and to stand up for our HIstoric District's character - the Golden Goose that draws thousands of visitors each year. New residents and second and third generation Petalumans alike understand that we must treasure our history, not spoil it for short term tax gain.

Joan Cooper

Owen Lang, FASLA

[REDACTED].Petaluma, CA [REDACTED]

**From:** [John Cunningham](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** The Overlay !  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2025 10:34:37 PM

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Dear City Counsel of Petaluma,

My name is John Cunningham and I have been in Petaluma since 1966 when I first arrived here in the US Army. I am not against progress but I feel the overlay will not be a good thing for the historic downtown Petaluma. In my mind it will change the good small town feeling that so many people come from far and near to enjoy. Please don't spoil it for money.

Thanks

**From:** [Joy Lanzendorfer](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk; [citycouncilofpetaluma@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:citycouncilofpetaluma@cityofpetaluma.org); [Kevin McDonnell](#); [Karen Nau](#); [John Shribbs](#); [Quint Frank](#); [Janice Cader-Thompson](#); [Barnacle, Brian](#)  
**Subject:** Against the Overlay  
**Date:** Friday, February 21, 2025 2:06:43 PM

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Dear City Council,

I'm a Petaluma homeowner who lives on Cherry Street. My son goes to Mary Collins School. I've lived here for 20+ years and my family has lived in Sonoma County for five generations.

I'm writing to express that I am against the overlay that is proposed for downtown Petaluma. I feel strongly that allowing buildings to grow past the historic heights of this town is detrimental to our quality of life, as well as our cultural and economic heritage.

Petaluma is a charming place to live because its historic heart has been preserved. The downtown is quaint and lovely, and has looked essentially the same for well over a century. If you allow large buildings to come in, it will no longer look like that. That will destroy something essential to the nature of our town, ruining forever its character and erasing its history. Future generations will know what you did and will be sad and angry that you ruined their cultural heritage for the sake of someone's hotel project.

Sometimes a single City Council can do so much damage to a city that it is never the same. At some point in the 1960s, a mall was built in the center of Santa Rosa. To please some short-term greedy business people, the ugly mall destroyed the flow of the city, permanently dividing it in half. Even though the city still has some of its original historic buildings, Santa Rosa will never be the lovely 19th-century town it once was because the City Council of that time allowed the mall to be built. And, as the economic realities of retail sales have changed, today the mall is financially struggling, with many empty stores and few customers. The mall is now a blight on Santa Rosa, a town that once was as charming as Petaluma is today.

Petaluma does not need another hotel. We have Hotel Petaluma, Hampton Inn Petaluma, and Metro Hotel & Cafe all within walking distance of each other. There are also plenty of hotels on the outskirts of the city.

As much as some in the city government seem hellbent on turning our town into a tourist hub and bedroom community for San Francisco, Petaluma is still a unique place with a vibrant agricultural history and quirky all-American spirit. The nature of its spirit is anchored in our lovely downtown. Please don't let the greed and demands of yet another developer destroy that for those who live here, and for future generations. Let's preserve what we have and be smart in how we grow.

Sincerely,

Joy Rankin

AKA

Joy Lanzendorfer

- Author of [Right Back Where We Started From](#)
- [OhJoy.Org](#)

**From:** [Kathy](#)  
**To:** [-- City Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** My family supports the Proposed Hotel and Overlay District  
**Date:** Saturday, February 22, 2025 1:29:28 PM

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Add our family to the long list of my neighbors who want the the Appellation Hotel to be constructed on the vacant lot downtown. Can't wait to take out of town guests to the showpiece of downtown Petaluma. Roof top views will be amazing I'm sure.

The new renderings are very nice. The set back of the upper floors are brilliant..  
Please support the next step to a better Petaluma.

Thank you,  
Kathy Shatto  
Petaluma, CA

Sent from my iPad

February 24, 2025

## Comments to the Council

### **DOWNTOWN HOUSING & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OVERLAY & EKN APPELLATION HOTEL PROJECTS**

As a resident of Petaluma living in the southeast part of town, I would like to express my support for the Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay (referred to as Overlay) and the EKN Appellation Hotel Project (referred to as Hotel). My focus here is in using the Overlay and Hotel not just for economic gain, which I believe it will have, but as catalysts for improving the experience of pedestrians in our wonderful downtown area.

1. **I encourage the city council to adopt the Overlay.**

When implemented effectively, an Overlay strategy can foster innovative streetscape planning in the downtown area, creating an inviting and functional environment focused on the pedestrian rather than the automobile. A layout designed with human needs in mind enhances walkability, which is crucial for the economic success and vitality of downtown businesses. It's essential to consider the pedestrian as the primary focus when evaluating the scale and style of developments within the Overlay area. I urge the council, commissions, and staff to prioritize a people-friendly scale in their planning. For instance, in central business districts, narrow streets with tall buildings or excessively wide streets with shorter buildings do not create welcoming spaces because the scale is inappropriate for people. Instead, each development should maintain a site-specific balance of height and width to ensure a visually harmonious streetscape appropriate for the area.

2. **I encourage the city council to approve the Hotel, with the hope that the development is used as a catalyst to the type of streetscape I described earlier.**

The council should approve both the Hotel and the Overlay for the following reasons:

- The revenue generated by the Hotel through development fees, TOT fees, and property tax can assist the city in lessening the burden of property tax on all citizens of the city. It can generate funding that can also be targeted for downtown improvements that will make our city more walkable (as someone recovering from hip replacement surgery, I can personally attest to the difficulty navigating our downtown sidewalks and ramps).
- The Overlay and the Hotel present an opportunity beyond economics for the city to be inventive in the streetscape design in the surrounding area. Any new developments in Overlay areas should be seen as catalysts for proper, human-friendly streetscapes. This allows for getting it right in a consistent and compatible way. Given the Hotel's location near Center Park, this would seem a good place to start reimagining that little old park that once was a community hub

and now is nothing more than a set of dangerous crosswalks in the automobile dominated area between the east side of Petaluma Blvd. North and store fronts on the far west side.

**3. The city develop a streetscape plan for downtown.**

If not already standard operating procedure of city planning decision making, there is an inherent need to ensure that our plans for downtown whether they be parking management, special overlay development, or any other plans are implemented together and not a piece meal, lot by lot, independent of each other. A cohesive plan is necessary that has council, staff, subject matter experts, and above all, genuine citizen participation.

In closing, with an overlay and streetscape development strategies, Petaluma can incorporate an innovative and necessary set of proper planning strategies that will help offset the negative consequences of the automobile for the people of Petaluma and our visitors. It will also enhance the downtown economy adding important and much needed revenue to the city coffers. The best downtowns are those that understand that people - not automobiles - are the primary unit of analysis for planners to focus upon in creating vibrant, healthy, and enriching streetscapes. The Overlay and Hotel should act as the catalyst for these necessary changes.

Sincerely,

Keith Schildt



For example, in a previous comment regarding the Downtown Area Parking Management Plan, I highlighted the long-standing struggle of Center Park, which has tried to balance its role as a parking area and a civic space – resulting in no success in either role. This history can provide valuable insights for our current planning decision. I wrote “by reclaiming and eliminating the paved diagonal parking area on the western side of Center Park and transforming it into a pedestrian-friendly gathering space, we can restore its historic role as a central community hub” (see the picture on the next page that looks towards the proposed Hotel).



“Changing the current diagonal parking spots to short-term parallel parking next to the shops and restaurants would facilitate deliveries to these establishments and allow services like taxis, ride-hailing (e.g., Uber), and food delivery (e.g., DoorDash) to operate smoothly. This change would also free up additional land for Center Park, resulting in a much safer pedestrian experience compared to the current auto-dominated environment.”

Incorporating elements from the hotel's active edge (see the picture below, focusing on the amenities rather than the building facade) would significantly enhance the streetscape near Center Park. With similar plantings, trees, and a well-designed sidewalk area, a cohesive streetscape would emerge that is both more visually appealing and safer for pedestrians than the current setup.



This example also demonstrates the inherent need to ensure that our plans for downtown whether they be parking management, special overlay development, or any other plans are implemented together and not piecemeal, independent of each other.

With the development fees being paid and the tax revenue generated, the city can fund these improvements in Center Park. Perhaps the city could also ask the developer to help source materials and take advantage of economies of scale by making larger purchases, as well as using the same contractors for the project.

In my previous written comments to the Council, I finished with the following and will do so again here (with some slight editing):

With our current automobile-dominated planning scheme comes many well documented negative effects on our local public health. With an overlay and streetscape development strategy, Petaluma can incorporate an innovative and necessary set of proper planning strategies that will help offset those negative consequences of the automobile for the people of Petaluma and our visitors. It will also enhance the downtown economy adding important and much needed sales tax revenue to the city coffers. The best downtowns are those that understand that people - not automobiles - are the primary unit of analysis for planners to focus upon in creating vibrant, healthy, and enriching streetscapes.

Sincerely,

Keith Schildt



**From:** [Kimberly Scot](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay  
**Date:** Friday, February 21, 2025 2:07:07 PM

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February 21, 2025

Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay

Petaluma City Council Members,

Greetings and appreciation for your dedication to Petaluma and Petalumans. I understand that you possess more information than the average citizen, and that you have been advised (promotionally and otherwise) to vote in a particular manner. My inclination is to support the decisions you make based on what I don't know, however, I stand firmly against the continuation of plans for the proposed Hotel and Overlay.

I also want to express my appreciation for those in the community who have worked hard, without the benefit of the resources available to the Council, to represent those of us who believe that the proposed Hotel and Overlay are a bad fit for the the social, environmental, and economic future of Petaluma.

I leave the details of that position to others, while I raise a new and substantial concern that demands our attention as Petalumans and our representatives. Months ago I asked that you consider the uncertainty of the implications Petaluma may face based on the National Elections. We could not have known then how essential it would be for us to pull together as a community in dealing with the unknown. Now we know the implications and can only imagine the immediate shortfalls that may arise in addressing the most basic needs of the community. I suggest the necessity of the moment calls us to be vigilant and ready to act in the event of the chaos we are likely to face. This is a moment of extreme uncertainty and must not be confused with business as normal. If it is not the position of the majority to end the Hotel and Overlay project, as I would promote, I ask that you postpone any forward action in light of this extraordinary moment.

Thank you again for the responsibility you have taken on in representing Petalumans.

Kim Scot

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Petaluma, CA.  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [Kimberly Fields](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Please. This Is All Petaluma Natives" Concern  
**Date:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 9:20:38 PM

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Dear City Clerk, This Has Been Going On For I'm Not Sure How Many Month's Or Years But There Is Absolutely No Clearance Way For Those Big Greedy Money Spenders Who Are All Trying To Jump Into Petaluma's Historic Downtown! No Way! What's Wrong With Those Greedy and Clueless Crooked Minded Big Money Spenders? They Can't Ever Make Anything Better For Petaluma's Historic Downtown! No Way! And Those Clueless Big Greedy Crooked Minded Big Money Spenders Need To Leave Petaluma Historic Downtown Alone! Because It's Not Broken! As Well As They're Numbers Are Not Matching Up With Petaluma's County Clerks Office! Because Petaluma's Historic Downtown Overlay Can Not Ever Be Changed! It's Fine The Way It Is!! The Big Money Spenders Need To Go Find Somewhere Else To Go Bother And With Their Own Stupid Greediness! The Big Money Spenders Are All Out For Their Own Greed! That's So Obvious! Because Our Petaluma Historic Downtown Is Not Suited For At All For Big Money Spender's Sky-high Skyscrapers! That's Ridiculous! Petaluma's Historic Downtown Does Not Need To Be Fixed! Let Alone Get All Built Up With Sky-high Skyscrapers! That's Ridiculous! No Way Because It's A Complete Hazard! There's Just No Way! No Way! The Big Greedy Money Spenders Can Not Disrupt, Antagonize, And Or Mismanage Petaluma's Community! And Or As Well As Those Greedy Big Money Spenders Can Not Mess Around With The Lives Of All Of The People Who Are Either Living In Or Near Petaluma's Historic Downtown. Big Money Spenders Need To Be Directed Out Of Sonoma County Somewhere Else To Another Town Or State That Would Or Could Ever Need Their Facelift Help! Because Petaluma's Historic Downtown Never Called Them For Anything! Sincerely,  
Kimberly A. Fields A Petaluma Native Since 1960 Born and Raised In Petaluma, Ca.

**From:** [lydiaasselir](#) [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT / February 24, 2025 City Council Hearing on the Final EIR and Overlay Ordinance  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 19, 2025 6:36:14 PM  
**Attachments:** [PHA rebuttal.Rex Hardware.Verplank.pdf](#)

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Dear Mayor McDonnell and Members of the City Council,

Almost two years ago, a downtown zoning Overlay was proposed that would permit a 70-foot-tall hotel. That Overlay initially encompassed all of Historic Downtown Petaluma but eventually morphed into three smaller areas. During that time, I have spoken out on those elements of the Hotel, the Overlay, and the planning process that seemed to be either arbitrary or disingenuous. Now, as the City Council is poised to approve the Downtown Overlay, I wonder if my concerns were ever heard.

**These core truths continue to frustrate me:**

1. **The Overlay is a charade.** It was invented for the sole purpose of allowing the EKN-Appellation Hotel to proceed, ahead of the decision-making and community buy-in that will be taking place as part of the General Plan Update.
2. **The Overlay is a sales job on the community.** By rebranding the Overlay as a “Housing” Overlay, this narrative of incentivizing housing is what the community thinks is being done. It’s a lie.
3. **The Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay does not in fact allow more dense housing to be built downtown beyond what today’s zoning permits.** Housing density remains at 30 dwelling units per acre, which equates to three stories of housing units—something that can be accomplished without an Overlay. The 6-story hotel needs the Overlay in order to proceed, but 3 to 4 story housing doesn’t.
4. **The gaslighting continues.** The Final EIR specifically calculates the increase in non-residential square footage as a benefit of the Overlay, but cannot say the same for housing. Yet when public commenters asked why there wasn’t a hotel-only alternative in the EIR, the response was that a hotel-only option is inconsistent with the City’s goal to build more housing.

\*\*\*\*\*

As for the FEIR, ten days wasn’t enough time to substantively review the 444 pages of the document itself, or the 1133 pages of public comment and subsequent responses.

Nevertheless, these four items stood out in my speed-reading of the FEIR:

**Chapter 2 / Project Description** (FEIR Pages 2-31 to 2-32)

- In multiple sections of the FEIR, the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) language has

been modified to make “Exceptional Architecture” mandatory and move it into CUP1, as opposed to remaining Optional in CUP2. This is an improvement.

- Additionally, language has been added to note *“The determination of exceptional architecture/design shall be guided by the input of a qualified professional chosen by the City.”* This, too is an improvement.
- I appreciate that “Exceptional Architecture” has been made more important, though I still feel the definition of what qualifies as exceptional architecture is subjective and the conditions listed pose a low bar for approval.
- I also appreciate that a qualified professional must provide input to the Planning Commission during the CUP process. This is crucial, as the Planning Commission is devoid of any architects.

### **Chapter 3 / Environmental Impact Analysis**

- Exhibit 3.1-2 / Map of Contributing Buildings to the Historic Commercial District shows Rex Hardware as a contributing building within the Historic Commercial District boundary.
- Exhibit 3.2-2 / Map of Properties by Eligibility indicates that Rex Hardware has been assessed and found ineligible to be considered a contributing building in the Historic Commercial District.
- Appendix B of the Draft EIR (Cultural Resources Supporting Information) takes great pains to prepare documentation to submit to the State that would classify Rex Hardware as a non-contributing building, even though it was reconstructed to mimic the original historic buildings lost in the 2006 fire.
- The FEIR responses dismiss outright the independent report submitted as public comment by architectural historian Christopher VerPlanck as to why Rex Hardware should remain a contributing building. I have attached Mr. VerPlanck’s report here.
- **What to do?** Does the City Council really want to further chip away at the edges of our Historic Commercial District? The set of Master Responses to Public Comment about Rex Hardware (see Vol. 2 on page 2-31) even notes that: *“Locally, there is nothing to preclude the City from continuing to treat 313 B Street as an eligible resource if the City chooses to do so...”*
- EKN needs to know, though, because if Rex Hardware remains a contributing building, they will need to re-design the hotel in order to provide an additional 10-foot wide step-back all along the west property line adjacent to Rex’s building.

### **Chapter 4 / Additional Effects Evaluated in the Initial Study** (FEIR Page 4-71 to 4-73)

- Transportation Mitigation Measure EKN TRA-1 has been expanded to describe the basis for a more comprehensive transportation plan for the hotel. One of the measures states: *“Employees will be instructed to park on the Hotel grounds and will be prohibited from parking in public spaces/streets.”*
- If this is indeed the plan, where will hotel and restaurant patrons park, if not in the garage? There are certainly no other “hotel grounds” on which to park except below grade.

### **Chapter 6 / Alternatives to the Proposed Project** (FEIR Page 6-5 to 6-35)

- Three alternatives were described in the Draft EIR:
  - **Alternative 1/ No project**

- **Alternative 2 / Reduced Area C** (*Exhibit 6.1 shows a significant reduction, as suggested by the Planning Commission in Nov 2023*)
- **Alternative 3—Reduced Project Height** for the hotel
- None of these alternatives were further commented on or amended in the FEIR. I would think that the City Council would want to weigh in on Alternative 2 / Reduced Area C, since discussions on this topic have occurred in various public meetings over the months.
- Finally, The FEIR responses dismiss public comments about why there wasn't a "Hotel-Only" alternative, mostly on the basis that a hotel-only option doesn't meet the city's goals for providing more housing.
- **AGAIN, THIS IS COMPLETELY DISINGENUOUS!** Since the Overlay does not increase housing density Downtown, an Overlay isn't necessary to build housing. Housing could continue to be built to the current density, without need of an Overlay.

I urge a "no" vote on the Overlay. Let's wait for the General Plan Update to be hashed out.

Thank you.

Lydia Asselin

[REDACTED]

Petaluma, CA [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [lydiaasselin](#) [REDACTED]  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Cc:** [Kevin McDonnell](#); [Karen Nau](#); [John Shribbs](#); [Quint, Frank](#); [Janice Cader-Thompson](#); [DeCarli, Alex](#); [Barnacle, Brian](#)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT / Downtown Overlay Public Hearing 2/24/25  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2025 6:24:04 PM  
**Attachments:** [What if the hotel were dwelling units instead.pdf](#)

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I would like to submit for inclusion into the written public comments the attached two-page illustration on **Downtown Housing Density** as a way of helping the community visualize what 30 dwelling units per acre might look like.

Because we all know the footprint of the proposed hotel site (it's one-third of an acre), I've used it as an easy way to think about how much space dwelling units take up. The hotel site, at 1/3 acre, would be allowed 10 dwelling units if it was thought of as housing. For reference, I looked at the size of the apartment units at Theater Square, then I imagined what the typical floor plan of Appellation Hotel guestrooms would equate to if they were similarly sized apartments instead.

Thank you,

Lydia Asselin

[REDACTED]  
Petaluma, CA [REDACTED]

**WHAT IF THE EKN / APPELLATION HOTEL WAS HOUSING INSTEAD?**

**Hotel lot size: 14,256 sq ft (equivalent to 1/3 of an acre)**

General Plan allows for 30 dwelling units per acre, so the hotel site would only allow 10 dwelling units

The Hotel & DEOO Environmental Impact Report indicates that current housing density of 30 DU's/acre will not change.

**FAR = 2.5 (current) 35,640 allowable sq ft for this lot size**

**FAR=6 (proposed) 85,536 allowable sq ft for this lot size**

**Current Hotel plans:**

Level 1 sq ft	12,727	
Level 2 sq ft	12,117	49,078 sq ft if kept to
Level 3 sq ft	12,117	45-ft height limit
Level 4 sq ft	12,117	
Level 5 sq ft	11,502	
Level 6 sq ft	4,220	
<b>total sq ft above grade</b>	<b>64,800</b>	<b>(excludes basement parking)</b>

Note: square footage figures are based on architectural plans dated 9/8/23 posted on City of Petaluma's Planning website

Let's use the current hotel floor plan and see how many apartment units might fit.

It is possible to fit five dwelling units on a floor, ranging from 1300 sq ft to 2100 sq ft.

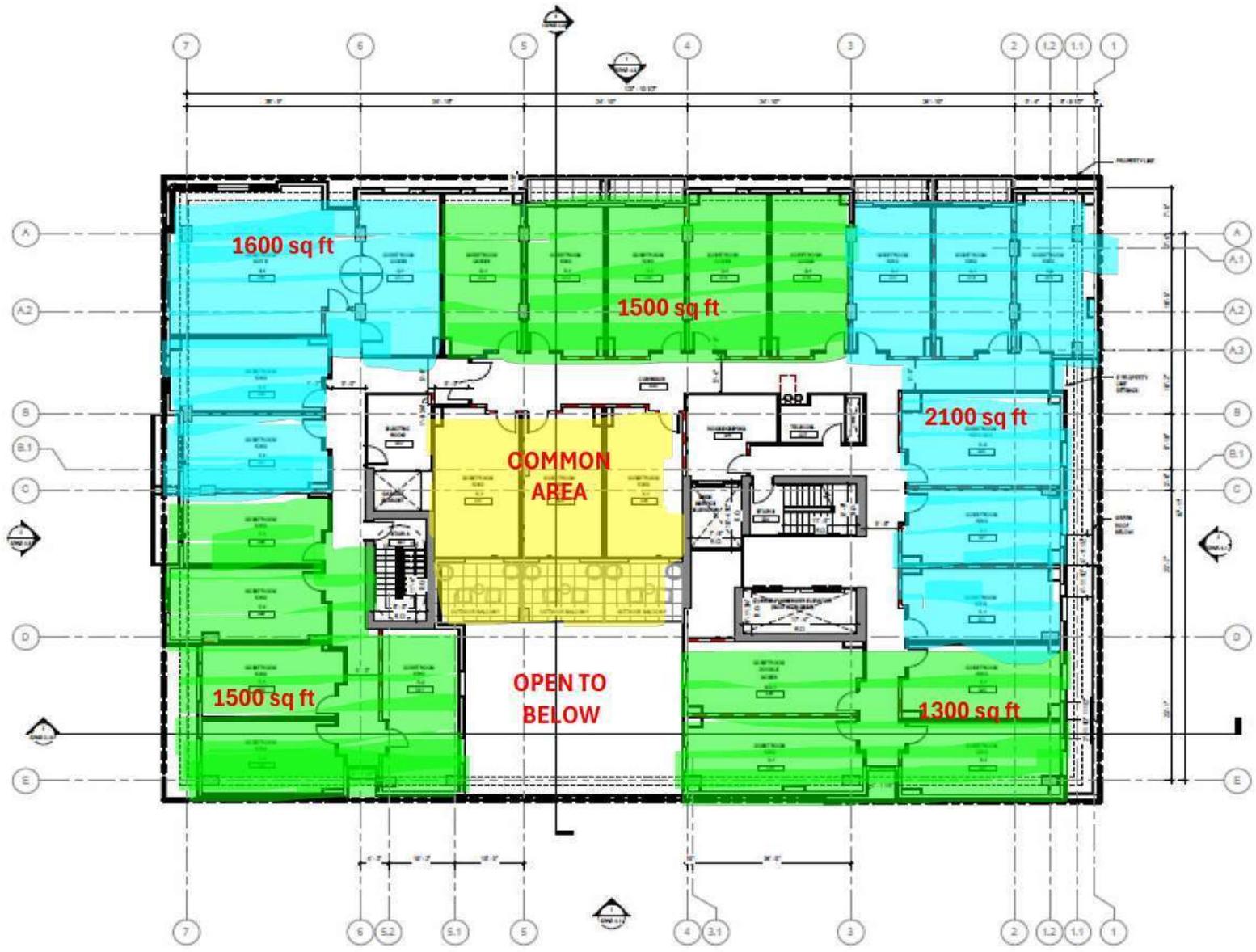
In this scenario, all allowable dwelling units for the 1/3 acre site would fit on two residential levels:

Level 1	Retail, Restaurant, or other non-residential use
Level 2	Residential; 5 dwelling units averaging 1600 sq ft each
Level 3	Residential; 5 dwelling units averaging 1600 sq ft each

If the housing density were to be increased downtown from 30 dwelling units per acre to 45 dwelling units per acre with the General Plan Update, the 1/3 acre hotel site could allow 15 dwelling units. In this scenario, all allowable dwelling units would fit on three residential floors.

Level 1	Retail, Restaurant, or other non-residential use
Level 2	Residential; 5 dwelling units averaging 1600 sq ft each
Level 3	Residential; 5 dwelling units averaging 1600 sq ft each
Level 4	Residential; 5 dwelling units averaging 1600 sq ft each

Staff Report for 2/24/25 CC meeting re: GPU alignment says maximum density being proposed in the Urban Core Mixed Use designation is 45 dwelling units per acre. (see pg. 16)



Using the EKN/Appellation Hotel's typical floor plan, here's how apartments might lay out. Square footages are similar to the Theater Square apartment sizes: (1BR 750-1200 sf; 2BR 1200-1600 sf; 3BR 1200-1600 sf)

**From:** [Ann Ledoux](#)  
**To:** [-- City Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Downtown overlay  
**Date:** Monday, February 17, 2025 10:53:57 PM

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I am not in favor of Petaluma downtown overlay. I am for the preservation of our historic downtown. No overlay, please.

Margaret Ledoux  
Petaluma Ca [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Maya Anderelli](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk; -- City Council  
**Subject:** Opposition to Proposed Development Overlay in Downtown Petaluma  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 18, 2025 6:52:06 PM

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Dear Members of the Petaluma City Council,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed development overlay for downtown Petaluma. While I understand the need for economic growth and revitalization, this proposal threatens the very character that makes our city unique and beloved by both residents and visitors.

Petaluma's historic downtown is one of its greatest assets, offering a rare glimpse into California's rich history. As highlighted in a recent San Francisco Chronicle article, our downtown is celebrated for its well-preserved Victorian and iron-front buildings, small independent businesses, and walkable charm. By allowing large-scale hotel developments to reshape the landscape, we risk losing what makes Petaluma special in the first place. A single high-profile project should not dictate sweeping zoning changes that could forever alter the historic integrity of our downtown.

Furthermore, why must the approval of one hotel project open the door to an entire overlay district that encourages similar large-scale developments? The city's approach should be thoughtful and case-specific, not a blanket approval that paves the way for unchecked development. If the city believes a single hotel is appropriate, that should be evaluated individually — without sacrificing the entire downtown to further large-scale projects that could erode its historic character.

Additionally, while the city pushes for new developments, it continues to allow some of our most treasured historical landmarks to remain vacant due to excessive red tape and bureaucratic obstacles. Sites like the Walnut Park Grill and the historic building at 4th and C remain unoccupied, despite

interest from potential tenants. Instead of altering the landscape of downtown with large hotels, why not prioritize filling and preserving the spaces that already exist?

Petaluma has always balanced progress with preservation. I urge you to reject the proposed development overlay and instead focus on policies that support small businesses, protect our historic buildings, and maintain the character of downtown that makes Petaluma truly special.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maya Anderelli

Petaluma citizen since 1994

**From:** [Sue Riley](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Cc:** [Mike Riley](#); [Sue Riley](#)  
**Subject:** NO to the Appellation Hotel and Downtown Overlay  
**Date:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 8:36:57 AM

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Esteemed Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Members, and City Clerk:

We write to reiterate our earlier communication in December 2023 regarding the proposed EKN-Appellation Hotel and Downtown Overlay.

**We are strongly opposed to the proposed Downtown Overlay and are especially opposed to a 6-story hotel (a whopping 75 feet tall, rather than the General Plan's current height maximum of 45 feet) that is not in keeping with Petaluma's unique and charming Downtown. We urge you to vote "no".**

Thank you.

Mike and Sue Riley

[REDACTED]  
Petaluma, CA [REDACTED]

**From:** [Michael Deverell](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Strong support for overlay and hotel  
**Date:** Friday, February 21, 2025 3:31:24 PM

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I strongly support the overlay and the hotel plan. Below is the contents of a letter from me to all council members regarding my support. Two points to add. One, doing what we have been doing for the past decade is not going to revive Petaluma's historic district. A change of course is needed. Two, investors are willing to significantly invest into the historic district on a piece of land that has been vacant for a very long time. Let's not discourage future investors from dealing with Petaluma. We that investment.

Mike Deverell

[REDACTED]  
Petaluma, CA [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Letter to City Council and Mayor

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Michael Deverell [REDACTED] >  
**Date:** Thu, Sep 19, 2024 at 9:18 AM  
**Subject:** The Decline of Petaluma's Historic Commercial District

In August of 2023 I counted the empty/unused stores/offices on Water St., Petaluma Blvd., Kentucky St. and 4th St. between D Street and Lakeville. The count was 18-20. I did the same in Sept. 2024. The count was 22-24. Both counts represent a significant decline in economic activity in what I regard as Petaluma's historic commercial/business district. The highlights are three empty buildings at the intersection of Petaluma Blvd. and Washington, and the numerous chain linked fenced properties and growing urban blight near the south end of the district. This level of empty buildings represents a significant decline in economic activity. That decline is visible in the increasing blight and poorly

maintained/dilapidated structures in the district. The district is increasingly unattractive for visitors and those of us living in Petaluma.

This decline has occurred over the last decade or so, including the impact of the pandemic. However, the pandemic can not be blamed for all of this decline. In visiting cities of similar size to Petaluma, most have far fewer empty spaces. My conclusion is that Petaluma's decline is due to:

- Retail competition from internet retailing and from two additional shopping centers built in Petaluma in the last decade or so. Like a large majority of American cities, Petaluma simply has too much retail space to meet the needs of the local population.
- Very low demand for office space and other mixed use space, banks for example. This is similar to most cities who have an excess supply of office space which is likely to exist for a long time.
- Insufficient visitor and other non-residents numbers to replace the demand from local shoppers.
- Failure of local government, the local business community and property owners to recognize this slowly growing decline. Examples are local governments making it slow and expensive to improve a property or get the property ready for a new use and property owners failing to maintain and improve their properties.
- Slow growth of the local population and thus slow growth in demand

Without a significant change to policy and practice this decline is likely to continue. We have opportunities now and will have in the future to change this direction. Sticking to the old/current thinking will not improve this situation. The most likely and straightforward improvement is to put more people into the historic commercial district. How do we do this? Here are two suggestions:

- More housing in or close to the district. Examples are La Via and Oyster Cove. There are numerous infill spaces, some large and some small, in and around the district that can be used for housing. They can not be used for retail or office space as there is very little demand for either.
- More lodging, hospitality and food service space, with some associated parking, in or close to the district that will increase the number of visitors in the district.

This type of development can be done without threatening the historic buildings or the character of the district. For example, the construction immediately adjacent to a historic building might be a problem but a block or two away could be acceptable. There are many cities of Petaluma's size and historic character who are successful with this approach to maintaining the economic vitality of their historic districts.

This brings me to the Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel proposals.

"Economic opportunity" are best words to describe what these overlays will create for the historic commercial district. The overlay covers land and properties that are not historic. In my view those properties should not be and

should not have been included in a historic district. Removing these properties from the historic district will create investment opportunities for local and other investors to add housing to Petaluma in areas where most services and retailers are within walking and biking distance. That will put more people into the historic commercial district with no impact on the historic buildings.

I understand that building housing in the overlay areas may create an issue with state regulations. We should implement the overlay and work with the state to resolve those issues.

As for the hotel, I strongly encourage all who agree or disagree with the proposal to go to the City's web site and study the proposal. In particular, focus on:

- The architectural rendered views of the completed hotel from various directions. I recognize that proposed height is a concern of many. When viewed in the surroundings of the hotel, height of the hotel is less impactful due to setbacks of the floors five and six, the distance from nearby structures, substantial open space near the hotel and the height of some of the nearby buildings like the old grain mill.
- The plans for the street facing facades are a modern interpretation of Petaluma's old and historic buildings.
- The hotel is close in height to the Petaluma Hotel.

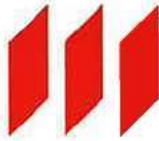
A significant favorable economic impact is likely from the hotel due to:

- Putting more people into the historic district without driving to get there from their lodging
- Creating significantly more tax revenue for the city which is needed to fund other projects, for example, the trestle restoration.
- Removing a chain link fenced property that has been vacant for many years and contributes to urban blight.

I look forward to approval of these proposals and revitalization of Petaluma's historic commercial district.

Thank you for reading this and my June email regarding the chain link fences and urban blight.

Mike Deverell  
[REDACTED], Petaluma



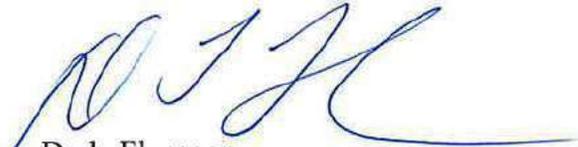
## MKD GREAT PETALUMA MILL, LLC

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Petaluma City Council,

We represent the ownership of the Great Petaluma Mill (my husband and I bought the Property in 2007). Like many, we were attracted to purchase the building due to the charm of Downtown Petaluma and the belief that this area would continue to grow and thrive, drawing additional dwellings and visitors to Petaluma as a destination. To some degree this has happened but its full promise and potential has not yet been realized in our opinion. Having additional visitors via a well-designed and economically feasible hotel project would be helpful to drive additional shoppers and visitors to the area. To that end, we support the City's efforts in that regard.

All The Best,



Darla Flanagan

(Owner-MKD Great Petaluma Mill)

**From:** [Nancy Chien-Eriksen](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Overlay compromise  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2025 4:12:32 AM

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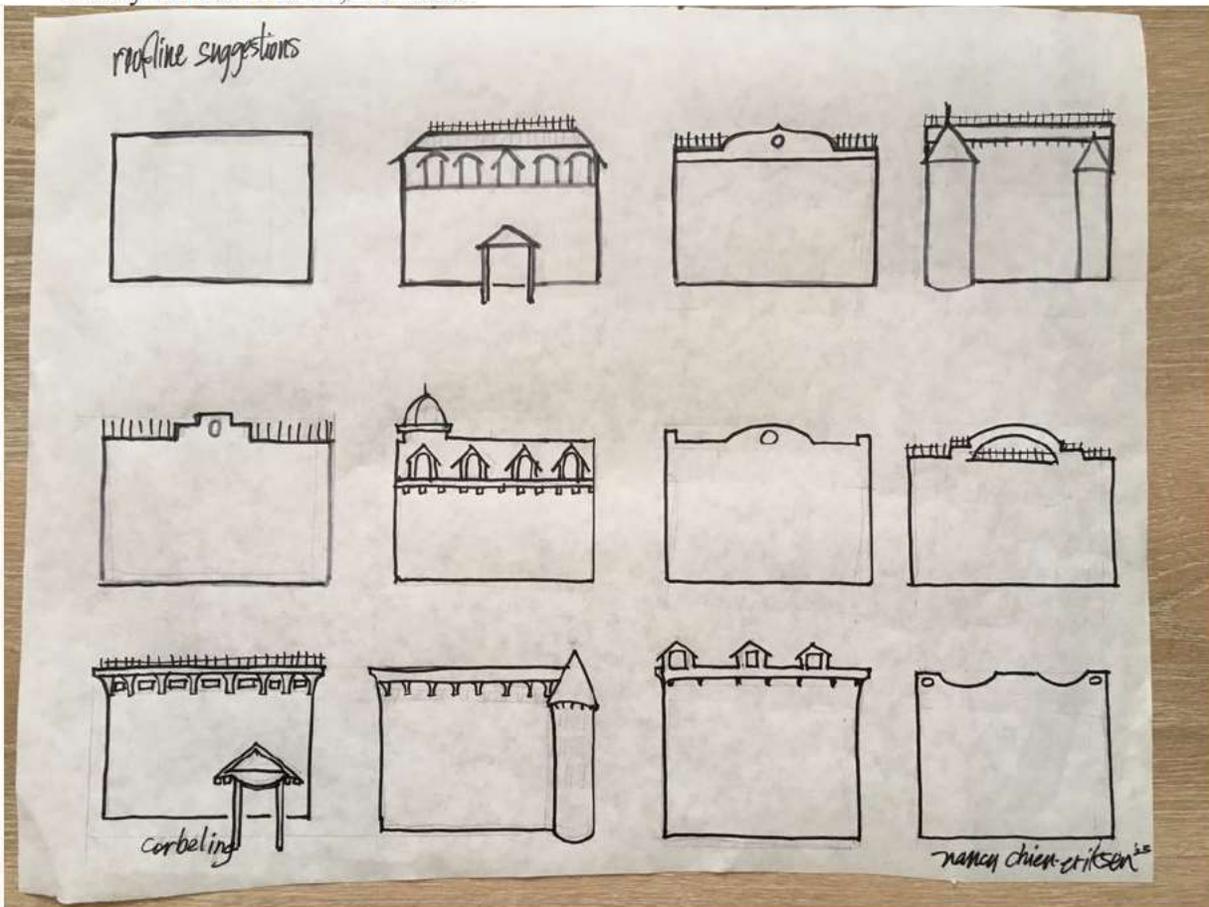
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I wish to ask you to reconsider the downtown height restriction so that the main building height stays around 45 ft but allowing certain elements such as cupola, clock tower, set back or recessed chimneys or decor to reach the 69 ft height—not the entire structure. This compromise would encourage more character to complement the historical nature of our unique downtown.

I also submit suggestions for rooflines that are not a boring box—something that too many architects rely on. Façades should also have ins and outs compared to flat.

Thank-you,

Nancy Chien-Eriksen, Petaluma



Feb. 18, 2025

Dear Petaluma City Council Member:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding the proposed amendments for the Downtown Housing and Economic Overlay.

I would like to state my opposition to the Downtown Housing and Economic Overlay and Appellation Hotel as currently proposed. My objections are listed below:

### **Appellation Hotel**

1. The height, scale and architectural design do not meet standards required by the City's Historic District Guidelines. The design is totally out of character with both new and historic buildings within the District.
2. No attempt has been made to blend the new design with existing buildings in the area.
3. The height of the current proposed hotel exceeds that of adjacent buildings and is too big for the small lot.
4. Inadequate parking for the number of rooms proposed.

### **Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay**

The Downtown Historic District requirements were developed to maintain the character of surrounding neighborhood and should be complied with. The request to exceed height requirements should be denied. We don't change guidelines developed over years of input and community support just to accommodate a developer.

The Overlay includes existing buildings, businesses and residential neighborhoods that will be impacted with development that exceeds height and scale guidelines. Development on empty lots designated for housing need to follow existing guidelines and height restrictions for that area. I do not support changes to these requirements. Housing needs to have adequate parking to reduce impacts to surrounding streets.

I don't care if a vacant lot generates low taxes. Increasing taxes on a plot of land is a short-sighted reason to approve changes to the historic district guidelines. Someday a developer who wants to follow city guidelines will come forward and build housing or a hotel or some other business that will compliment the area, not detract from it. I'm not opposed to development, I only want it to comply with existing guidelines that have prevented irreparable damage to the Historic District.

Has the City Council ever considered a city-wide survey to gauge support? I would support a city-wide referendum to give the citizens of Petaluma more voice in deciding either for or against the hotel and overlay proposals.

Please step back to consider what the area is losing by approving the Overlay and hotel as currently proposed. Tourists and citizens alike love downtown Petaluma. It's a big reason why I moved here in 1985- the thriving and bustling historic downtown. I love walking the downtown and I support it's businesses there. Once you allow developers the latitude to not follow the historic guidelines you can't go back. You can't say "yes" to one and not others. This decision will have irreparable damage to the thoughtful approach of keeping Petaluma unique. Oddly, it's probably the reason why EKN Group chose the location of their hotel- the area has a lot to offer. Yet they designed a building completely out of character for the downtown with no regard to it's impact.

Petaluma is one of the few communities to make the decision to preserve what it has. You only have to travel to downtown Santa Rosa to see what happens when you don't.

Respectfully,  
Nancy Rogers

██████████  
Petaluma, CA 9██████████  
██████████

**From:** [Nick Green](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Charles Palmer  
**Date:** Friday, February 21, 2025 11:03:14 AM

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If you haven't already done it, Here is a draft that you can send or modify:

Dear City Councilmebers,

My family and I support the overlay ordinance. It could bring much needed money and revitalization to our downtown area.

It is old and boring. It's great if it was 1955 but it's not. Families need more options and the city needs more business.

Please keep up with the demand.

Thank you

-Nick Green

**From:** [peter almond](#)  
**To:** [Greg Powell](#); -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Re: Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel  
**Date:** Saturday, February 22, 2025 10:42:08 AM  
**Attachments:** [emailsig\\_citylogo\\_d1\(2\)\\_8dc70e30-864c-4f5e-895d-2f18a1bef6ab.png](#)  
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Letter responding to email from Greg Powell of the M company Petaluma planning.

The email to which this message reacts is a document dump on a late sunny Friday afternoon, Mr. Powell. Along with your admonition that citizens attending the M Company's City Council session on Monday, the 24th of February (the email from your hq arrived on Friday, the 21st) who wish to comment on the issues involving the M company's overlay proposition had better read all the related documents cited in your email.

One is wondering, will there be a quiz?

The document about your company's overlay plan uses the word update to explain the radical zoning changes M proposes in this development scheme. Video of the Nov. 18, 2024 City Hall M company workshop shows that "redevelopment is a good thing" for the impacted downtown zones, according to Councilwoman Janice Cader Thompson. We don't know what kind of redevelopment or when it will happen, but it will improve upon the urban blight of chain-linked stretches she describes of her hometown's Petaluma Blvd.

With advocates like that who needs friends? What she does know is that having hotel anchors at both ends of a downtown stretch is a vision for Petaluma's future - the existing Petaluma Hotel and the B Street bistro based Appellation.

There the working people of Petaluma can feast on one of the food chains dozens of restaurants in places like DC, NYC, Napa, Reno (not Tahoe), and so forth. At the Palmer place will be food that features steak in the range of 80 bucks per person.

That's what makes Mayor McDonnell's comment to me in a Nov. 24, 24 letter rich:

**"I think that we all need to be more involved in solving for social good and a little less concerned on protecting our privilege."**

What cloak of virtue is there in a high end hotel chain with \$300 beds and a restaurant chain that offers \$5 dollar parker house rolls and 95 dollar wagyu steaks or a tomahawk for two at 155?

The hotel projects privilege and lands it on Petaluma. It's embarrassing, putting aside the architecture school 101 pathetic look.

That's what the overlay is about? Along with vague and deceptive virtue splaining of housing, which no one from Washington to Washington can figure out in this economy; or equally vague and really grotesque notions of economic development.

Ms. Cader Thompson's vision of two hotel anchors on a hill suggests fill in as practiced by your local shopping mall. Wonderful (and historic) urban neighborhoods turned into franchise boasting Saks and Brooks and Abercrombie's, etc. maybe even a HR or a Crate and...?

The quirk and wonder of Petaluma is that it offers almost none of those things now. But anchoring it in part with a chain hotel and eatery suggests that Kansas City is in our sights. Where everything...even rooftop saloons....

Or more adjacent, Redwood City, where a truly funky downtown full of character got taken over by 6 story housing and accompanying retail fitting for the middle and upper income the housing offers. In that case a town full of authentic charm turned into another dull middle class bedroom community in character and SES.

Where is the vision, both in developing quirk and charm and the all important dollar in the vague slogans and planning jargon (doesn't "pencil out" M staff state at each public discussion of the 6 story overlay vision)?

"Everything's up to date in Kansas City...We've gone about as far as we can go..." wrote Meredith Willson, the musical's author. Petaluma aspires in this poorly conceived and lengthily explained trojan horse of a project where one cannot tell tail from dog, just that something wags.

It is so deeply disappointing and just plain sad. That the leaders and their hired M company executors could not engage with and show respect to an alert and concerned community.

The community wants to grow and understands the need for real economic growth and real housing. Not a single public comment has stated that these goals are not valid and worth real effort.

The official city time and money that have gone into promoting a poorly planned hotel project is really not only short-sighted but shameful for a community this ready to change and grow.

This is a once and only moment to have the longview on what a place represents - to itself and to its visitors, its businesses, its good works, its remarkable somewhat peculiar history along a once vibrant river.

If a 6th floor roof bar is what passes for vibrancy in the M company and City Council vision for Petaluma then all you got is bland views blocking the sight of rolling hills and that old river. And Teslas pulling up to valet parking.

Sincerely,  
peter almond

On Fri, Feb 21, 2025 at 5:03 PM Greg Powell <[GPOWELL@cityofpetaluma.org](mailto:GPOWELL@cityofpetaluma.org)> wrote:

**On Monday, Feb. 24, the City Council will host a public hearing** to consider Certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR), Adoption of Final EIR Findings of Fact and MMRP, and Adoption of Amendments to the General Plan, the Implementing Zoning Ordinance, and the Zoning Map, which are required legislative actions for the Downtown Housing &

## Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel Projects.

While the City Council meeting starts at 5:00 PM, the above-described **public hearing is scheduled to begin on Monday, February 24, 2025, at or after 6:30 PM.**

If you choose to participate in this discussion, we encourage you to review project materials available at <https://cityofpetaluma.org/economic-opportunity-overlay-ekn-appellation-projects/>.

The City Council agenda, public hearing staff report, and associated attachments are available at <https://cityofpetaluma.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplateId=18389>.

### Greg Powell

Principal Planner, M-Group Consulting  
Planner serving the City of Petaluma  
City of Petaluma | Planning  
[Schedule a Virtual Counter Appointment](#)  
GPOWELL@cityofpetaluma.org



Report issues through our new service request app! Download [engagEPetaluma](#) on [Google](#) or [Apple](#).

**From:** [Rachel H. van Gorp](#)  
**To:** -- City Clerk  
**Subject:** Support for the development of our downtown business district  
**Date:** Friday, February 21, 2025 10:44:35 AM

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

Dear City Councilmembers,

My family and I support the overlay ordinance. It could bring much needed money and revitalization to our downtown area. As homeowners in Petaluma, we support the development of our downtown business district.

Thank you,  
Rachel H van Gorp