

June 11, 2023

As long-time residents of Petaluma's west side, we are deeply concerned about the proposed Hotel Weaver project. The developers claim to want to "embrace the history of Petaluma." We believe the building as it is currently designed – and the proposed new IZO zoning overlay – threatens our historic architectural heritage.

The current building height, floor area ratio, and lot coverage maximums exist to ensure that new construction is consonant with the existing architecture of downtown Petaluma. The theater district, for example, was successfully integrated into our downtown because the developers abided by those restrictions. New buildings that significantly exceed these limits threaten to overshadow the historic area. The proposed hotel could easily be scaled back to include two floors for hotel rooms instead of three, thus remaining within the existing limits. The only reason to build a building this massive is to maximize profits. That's not reason enough.

We are even more alarmed by the proposed IZO zoning overlay, which would open the door to other oversized buildings even in areas that are currently residential. It's easy to imagine developers proposing a similarly massive buildings in in the same block, for instance (where an empty bank now stands) and another across the street, in front of the historic post office. And there are plenty of other parcels in the proposed district that would be attractive to developers. Over time, the proposed IZO zoning overlay would irreversibly alter the character of the westside. That would be a great loss to our unique city. Petaluma remains special because, unlike so many cities, we have retained so much of the historic feel of our town.

We respectfully ask the developers and the city planning commission to explain why we need to change existing building restrictions, not only for this particular project but for a significant swath of downtown? What do we gain by increasing the height, floor area ration, and lot coverage maximums?

For now, we want to express our opposition to the current proposal, both for the proposed hotel and the IZO zoning overlay.

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