

From: [Trippel, Andrew](#)
To: [Orozco, Uriel](#)
Subject: Fw: Hotel Weaver and Proposed IZO Zoning Overlay
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 11:18:08 AM
Attachments: [Weaver Hotel and Zoning Overlay.docx](#)

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2023 10:31 PM
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Subject: Re: Hotel Weaver and Proposed IZO Zoning Overlay

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OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

June 13, 2023

Dear Historic & Cultural Preservation Committee members and Planning Commissioners –
Please see attached comments on tonight's joint meeting on the Hotel Weaver and proposed
IZO Zoning Overlay for the 14 block area of Petaluma's downtown. Please add my comments
to the public record for this item.

Thanks kindly. Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

June 13, 2023

Dear Historic & Cultural Preservation Committee members and
Planning Commissioners –

Petaluma's uniqueness as a river town, with its rural/agricultural past and storied architecture, "unmatched in California", is what makes it a huge draw for citizens and tourists alike. We have the greatest number of ironfronts West of the Mississippi. If you google Petaluma, note the images that are featured on Wikipedia and websites like visitpetaluma.com. They feature some of our more prominent and beautiful architectural triumphs, including Petaluma's most recently anointed boutique hotel, the historic Silk Mill, now a Hampton Inn. What other elite tourist towns, like Healdsburg, Sonoma, and Napa so clearly understand is that you don't mess with this uniqueness but, rather, enhance it. When Napa expanded their downtown with their riverfront, they understood that their role was, "not to transform the downtown, rather to work within the framework, character and history that Napa already provided" (see below).



Napa's Riverfront

When these other wine country tourist towns build a new hotel or housing development, they do so with *class and elegance* (e.g., Healdsburg's new Mill District development, and their numerous

BOUTIQUE hotels, Hotel Healdsburg, the H2 Hotel) that *match their existing brand*. The design and scale emphasize a sense of place and beauty. Healdsburg's hotels also comprise a lot of greenscape.



Healdsburg's award-winning Hotel within full view of the historic downtown



Hotel Healdsburg



Hotel Healdsburg

We ***don't*** have to be the ugly cousin to these gorgeous tourist towns and more resemble, for example, San Rafael and Santa Rosa – with their

oddball jumble of high buildings, and utterly unmemorable downtowns. But it appears that's where we are headed with the current leadership – which will be a tragic miss on every level. Healdsburg/Sonoma/Napa would *never* allow big, blocky chain hotels or out-of-scale tall structures that mar their scenic views and remind people of (unfortunate) Rohnert Park, such as the pre-fab Marriott hotel that Petaluma approved that blocks views of our river and hills. So, what is our capacity at this moment in time to learn from the masters (*i.e.*, the ones who get it right time and again)?

We Petalumans have a responsibility for the beauty and history of our town, to similarly not destroy it. Petaluma has a storied agricultural history, with a downtown & surrounds that reflect that, in the highly-visible waterfront mill, Dairyman's Feed silo, and with viewsheds of our iconic hills from our downtown, for which our town is named (Petaluma = little hills). Even Paris, France, a major city, has set strict height limits that, "enable Paris to retain its beauty and well-proportioned scale. It also allows Paris' famous monuments – the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Basilica of Sacre-Coeur – to reign unchallenged" (height limits are also part of Paris Mayor's Bioclimatic Urban Plan to reduce carbon emissions). Note that every single census tract in Petaluma is already adversely impacted by traffic emissions (Raimi + Associates consultants). We don't need more congestion and unhealthy air.

While it's vital that we protect our farms and green spaces from encroachment, that can't result in a panicked narrative that leads to truly bad planning decisions, like this proposed Building Form Overlay (IZO zoning overlay) of Petaluma's downtown district. We have to focus on growing in an intelligent, measured way, approving structures that are beautiful and that will delight tourists and residents alike. Developers will always try and negotiate the best outcome. With this proposed IZO zoning overlay, not only are we *not* going to be allowed to place obligations on developers (they will be able to flout our planning policies with vastly inflated densities and height/lot coverage breaches), but we're also going to end up with a lot of ugly, outsized structures that don't make sense for us as a town. This zoning overlay will greatly impact our functionality, increase our pollution, and irreparably impact

our unique brand. It will open us to enormous exploitation by developers, and trample the interests of us citizens.

The last thing Petalumans want is for new builds to dwarf our iconic structures. We want to maintain our unique sense of place. In short, a re-zoning overlay of our historic and downtown district that would allow for higher than normal buildings, and buildings that cover more of a lot would be a terrible thing to have come to pass for our beautiful town. **Please vote the IZO zoning overlay down and allow the citizens – not developers – to maintain control of what gets built in our downtown.**

In regards to EKN's Hotel Weaver specifically, the current lot comprises 2 parcels in our historic district, and the hotel would occupy a prominent corner on Petaluma's main boulevard, in full view of the majestic Italianate iron fronts, Masonic clock tower, Brainerd Jones's neo-classical Carnegie Library built in 1904, and the Old Petaluma Mill. ***By necessity, that merits a high bar in terms of architectural design.***

There are rules regarding context and the physical look of new builds on historic lots (which the IZO zoning overlay would obliterate). EKN's 6-story hotel design, a CAD-generated, oversized structure, reminiscent of an office building in a place like Sacramento, does not conform to our historic guidelines. It would exceed our current planning policies for Floor Area Ratio (FAR), building height, and lot coverage maximums. Strolling down Petaluma's main drag, where one now sees Petaluma's iconic Victorian clock tower silhouetted against the sky, you would instead see the modern, 6-story Hotel Weaver rising above it. It has no place here in this historic town; it doesn't in any way represent Petaluma's unique brand.



Petaluma's Masonic Clock Tower

In (stark) contrast to EKN's proposal, other hotels in Petaluma's downtown are congruent with our illustrious architectural past. The Petaluma Hotel has the advantage of a welcoming courtyard, u-shaped design, and pleasing countenance, and the Hampton Inn's Twine Factory exterior has charm to spare (and it was only ever intended to be a perfunctory commercial building, and not decorative). But it's a classic, as is the Burdell building in the vicinity.

Any proposed addition to EKN's vacant lot, that would visually compete with our town's brand, its majestic ironfronts (listed as Petaluma's "most significant architectural gems"), iconic clock tower and library, ***all of which are listed on the National Historic Register***, must be judiciously and meticulously considered by the town's inhabitants. Charlie Palmer, who has his Dry Creek Kitchen on Healdsburg's leafy square, well knows that Healdsburg would never allow EKN's hotel structure in their town. Look, for example, at what Santa Rosa has approved as a boutique hotel in its historic Courthouse Square: the exterior of the new hotel ***is designed to mesh*** with the existing beaux arts Empire building on the square, a Santa Rosa landmark since 1908.

Newer builds in close proximity to our downtown (*e.g.*, Petaluma's theater district) have been sensitive in their design to our storied historical past – just as is done in Healdsburg/Sonoma/Napa. And any arguments claiming Hotel Weaver's vacant lot is outside the historic district are bunk. The theater district further to the South describes itself as, "the heart of downtown Petaluma". And both the historic D Street Bridge and Walnut Park, as well as many grand Victorian homes and our historic post office (listed on the National Register), lie to the South of the Hotel Weaver lot. In 2000, the U.S. Library of Congress officially recognized Petaluma's Walnut Park, built in 1873, as a "Historic American Landmark".

EKN's hotel design needs to fit within the framework, character and history that Petaluma historic downtown already provides. They don't have to reinvent the wheel. If they want to build a blocky structure, they can build a classic structure with awnings (and warmth) like the Hotel Rose in Santa Rosa's historic railroad square (image below).



Santa Rosa's Historic La Rose Hotel

When an addition was required to the historic Silk Mill (originally built in 1892), renowned architect Brainerd Jones designed the (seamless) addition to go with the original classic Georgian Revival style of the mill. (all this effort for a perfunctory twine factory!). Today, we are grateful for this design foresight. With Hotel Weaver, now we're talking about a ***significant*** addition to our storied downtown historic district; a

structure that would dwarf our iconic historic clock tower iron front and McNear buildings. The fact that this hotel will be adjacent to one of our downtown's most picturesque blocks, makes it an obligation to fit into the character of Western Petaluma. Let's do right by our unique brand, as Healdsburg/Napa/Sonoma routinely do. Those are the towns we want to emulate – to be successful.

Petaluma residents want this to be a hotel they can call their own, and be proud of. Recall that there were 850 individuals that contributed to the financing and support of The Petaluma Hotel. Pretty darn progressive for the 1920s. And "Visionary architects from San Francisco" were recruited to design it. The design of this prominently-placed hotel in our historic downtown needs to be more of a community-influenced process.

Buildings stand for a long time; typically 50-100 years. What we are making now, we will all have to live with for a very long time. We cannot afford to diminish our brand with yet more botched urban development/blight as we saw with the inappropriate Marriott hotel. Please do not approve the Hotel Weaver as designed, and do not approve the IZO zoning overlay – that would result in Petalumans losing control over the design process of structures in its downtown – and grossly alter the face of our historic district.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Petaluma Resident.

Petaluma Resident