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Petaluma, CA 94952

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July 15, 2023

City of Petaluma
22 Bassett Street
Petaluma, CA 94952

Dear Mayor, City Council members and Planning Commission members,

I am writing to formally oppose ANY building form overlay in Petaluma's downtown area.

I am not opposed to high-density development in Petaluma. I am only opposed to it in the downtown area. I am in favor of high-density development on non-downtown parcels within a half mile of a SMART station. I am not critical of the 5-story La Via Luxury Apartments, although I would prefer it were a bit closer to the Petaluma Downtown SMART station (at least residents at these apartments don't need to cross a drawbridge to reach the station).

I dislike 100% lot fill where alleys are not present because it places unsightly and odorous utility/garbage functions adjacent to pedestrian areas. In my opinion, the garbage collection systems at the 100% lot filled projects at Theatre Square are less than successful.

I attended the "Know Before You Grow" session on 7/12/2023 and learned that the proposed boundaries for a downtown building form overlay keep shifting. I was disappointed to hear Planning Manager Andrew Trippell refer to virtually every non-historic commercial structure in downtown Petaluma as "underutilized," practically suggesting these buildings be bulldozed to make way for high-rise buildings with 100% lot fill to maximize economic benefit to the city. Most of these parcels which Mr. Trippell referred to as "underutilized" house successful businesses which serve our community well. Why threaten these businesses with relocation by encouraging redevelopment on these specific parcels? Why not instead focus on only the redevelopment of blighted properties (at a scale already allowed for in our General Plan)?

I am not convinced that downtown high-rise buildings are a panacea for Petaluma's economic woes. I believe the economic impacts of same, as well as long-term downtown parking solutions, need much further study before this building form overlay can be adequately analyzed.

Lastly, I suggest that if city leaders wish to continue considering a downtown building form overlay, they educate and then poll residents to determine if this is something our community truly desires.

Thank you for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,

Todd Gracyk

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