

OMGIVNING

June 13, 2022

Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission
70 W Hedding Street
10th Floor, East Wing
San Jose, CA 95110

Christopher Manning, Chair
Tere Johnson, Vice Chair
Perlita Dicochea
Lila Gemellos
Pria Graves
Bill Hare

Subject: Adaptive Reuse of San Jose Former City Hall

Dear Chairperson Manning and Esteemed Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and to share our perspective of adaptive reuse based on our experience.

Introduction - About Omgivning

Founded in 2009, Omgivning has focused on the revitalization of cities through the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and spaces. We have touched over 500 existing buildings in the Los Angeles area and have been a critical component of Downtown LA's resurgence. We are expanding our services to design for a variety of projects and expand our imprint across greater Southern California and further afield.

- Architecture and Interiors firm specializing in adaptive reuse and urban infill projects.
- Services provided are from feasibility studies through to execution of construction.
- 80-90% of Omgivning's projects are Adaptive Reuse.
- Project Portfolio includes mixed-use projects, market-rate and low-income housing, workplace, hotel, restaurants/bars, and retail.
- Wide spectrum of projects from small, local cafes up to a 2-Million square foot adaptive reuse of a historic landmark warehouse/retail to mixed-use housing.
- We understand the Client's/Developer's goals and budgets and are experienced in creatively addressing challenges that arise from unforeseen conditions during construction.
- Omgivning's advocacy efforts demonstrate our commitment to urban revitalization by uniting the many interests of legislators, developers, planners, residents, fellow architects, and planners.

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The Value of Adaptive Reuse

The positive impacts of Adaptive Reuse can be seen in its ability to help combat climate change, provide much-needed housing, and reinforce community building. Omgivning's goal is to design buildings and spaces that have market value as well as social and environmental value.

- Creating new housing units through reusing existing underutilized buildings is the most environmentally sustainable way to meet our housing production needs. Building reuse offers substantial environmental savings over demolition and new construction. According to a report by Preservation Green Lab, "It can take up to 80 years for a new, energy-efficient building to overcome the negative climate impact created during construction". Reusing existing buildings means not only preserving the embodied energy and value investment made into the building, but also important cultural pieces that contribute to the character of a neighborhood or the city at large. Reusing existing buildings for new residential uses are usually more acceptable to residents of the surrounding neighborhood, reduce traffic, and have less occupants.. They create a more holistic mixed use community which has become ever more popular and necessary. Lastly, each community must address state-mandated Regional Housing Needs Assessment allocations and the Adaptive Reuse of buildings can help to solve a region's housing crisis.

Project Feasibility

Based on our review of both the "2020 Feasibility Study" by Gensler and Cumming and the "infeasibility Analysis of Retaining Former San Jose City Hall" we have identified many areas that are either unclear or are not a fair portrayal of the redevelopment potential of the SJ former City Hall. The following are our biggest concerns about the misrepresentation of this project's potential.

- The construction cost/sf is at LEAST double what we would anticipate it to be.
- The notion that the reuse would be "inconsistent with the County's sustainability policies" seems to be reverse of reality. Reuse of a building is the greenest thing we can do and there are many ways that this building can be renovated to be highly energy-efficient, even a high level LEED certification.
- The maximum number of potential residential units on Site D with both reuse of city hall and new construction is vastly misrepresented and could likely meet or exceed the maximum number of units shown.

Based on our experience the former City Hall would be an outstanding candidate for housing or even hotel. We feel that the reports showing the adaptive reuse to be infeasible are inadequate and inaccurate. Adaptive Reuse of historic buildings and sites are a specialty niche in Architecture and requires extensive experience to evaluate. The consultants who prepared the reports are highly experienced, but not in historic adaptive reuse projects.

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Please consider whatever course of action is acceptable but to allow more study to prove the feasibility of the reuse of this building.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karin Liljegren', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karin Liljegren, FAIA,
Omgivning Architecture and Interiors
Principal and Founder

Karin Liljegren, FAIA, IIDA

Founder + Principal



Karin Liljegren has dedicated her career to community building, sustainability and advocacy by embracing adaptive reuse as a powerful means to revitalize our cities. In 1999, she worked on the very first projects under Los Angeles's Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, which launched her understanding of the challenges and opportunities of adaptive reuse.

The power of adaptive reuse projects to become a solution to today's housing shortage is of particular interest to Karin. Many of the firm's multifamily housing projects are adaptive reuse of historic buildings and these projects pay careful attention to preserving and enhancing the historic fabric as a means to foster community growth and pride.

Karin founded Omgivning in 2009 and the firm has built a reputation for uncovering potential in underutilized buildings by transforming them into multifamily housing, hotels, offices, and restaurants. Omgivning has grown and expanded in greater Southern California and beyond, having touched more than 500 buildings, over 50 of which were designated historic adaptive reuse projects.

Education

University of California, Los Angeles
Master of Architecture

University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Bachelor of Arts in Architecture

License

Architect, California, C28158

Organizations & Community

American Institute of Architects
• College of Fellows 2020

American Institute of Architects Los Angeles
• Historic Resources Committee, Member 2021
• Interiors Committee, Member, 2014-Present
• Member since 1997

Los Angeles Conservancy
• Board of Directors, 2021-2022
• Juror for 2011 awards
• Member since 1999

California Preservation Foundation
• Speaker at numerous events
• Member since 2011

National Trust for Historic Preservation
• Speaker at numerous events
• Member since 2011

Urban Land Institute
• Redevelopment and Reuse Council, Invited Member, 2018-2024
• Invited speaker at numerous events
• Women's Leadership Initiative, 2018-Present
• Women's Development Collaborative, 2018-Present
• Member 2000-2003, 2017-Present

Los Angeles Mayor's Non-Ductile Concrete Ordinance Task Force
• Initiator and Chair, 2019-Present

Central City Association
• Co-Chair of Transportation, Infrastructure and Environment Committee 2017-2018
• Downtown 2020 Committee
• Ad Hoc Development Reform, 2010
• Movers & Shakers Committee, 2003-2005
• Member since 2001

Bringing Back Broadway Committees
• Broadway Sign District Committee 2012-2015
• Commercial Reuse Task Force
Co-led group to create the Historic Broadway Community Reuse Bulletin, 2008-2013
• Broadway Stakeholders Committee Appointed Trustee, 2015-2018
• Preservation & Infrastructure Committee Member, 2008-2010
Chair, 2011-2014
• Economic & Tourism Committee Member, 2010-2014
• Streetcar Committee Member, 2010-2014

June 13, 2022

Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission
70 W Hedding Street
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San Jose, CA 95110

RE: FEASIBILITY OF ADAPTIVE REUSE FOR FORMER SAN JOSE CITY HALL

Dear Commissioners,

Swinerton Builders has reviewed the 2020 Feasibility Study developed by Gensler and Cumming as well as the documents and discussion contained within the 2022 Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) regarding the feasibility for adaptive reuse of the former San Jose City Hall. Swinerton firmly believes in adaptive re-use as a viable solution to address pressing housing needs while also greatly reducing the embodied carbon when compared to baseline new construction. We feel this project warrants further review than presently outlined in the FEIR for the following reasons:

- The cost studies currently suggest the cost of adaptive reuse to be more than the cost of new construction (on a cost per SF basis) which appears to have missed opportunities thru reuse of structure and portions of the existing skin. This appears to disproportionately weight against the adaptive re-use.
- The soft costs associated with the adaptive re-use study similarly are noted to be nearly double those expected in the new construction scenario despite the anticipated schedule savings associated with adaptive re-use which should in fact reduce the overall soft costs not increase them.
- The “maximized” site studies suggest no alternative for adjacent new construction around the existing building to allow for more efficient use of the site to achieve the goals of additional housing.
- Neither adaptive re-use study contemplates scenarios to activate the roof of the existing building to gain additional GSF for program space.
- None of the studies discuss or contemplate the opportunity for alternative project delivery methods such as P3 nor does it appear a Request for Interest or Request for Proposal to solicit market feedback for various potential re-use opportunities was contemplated.
- The studies appear to limit the review of sustainability to the base building upgrades and title 24 performance without contemplating the reduction in embodied carbon and opportunities to improve operational carbon impacts associated with the reuse of the structure

Given these points we believe further study of the potential opportunities for adaptive re-use of the former City Hall is warranted.



2880 Lakeside Drive, Suite 300
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swinerton.com

About Swinerton

Swinerton traces its roots back to 1888, when a young Swedish immigrant formed a brick masonry and contracting business in Los Angeles to serve the growing city in its post-Gold Rush building boom. Since our earliest days building along the Western frontier, the company has survived and thrived through two world wars, the Great Depression and Recession, dynamic cultural movements, and natural disasters. Since Swinerton's earliest days, our exceptional craftsmanship has helped us create celebrated landmark projects throughout the West and beyond.

The company now has over 4,000 employees from coast to coast, and still operates under California contractor's license number 92—the one it obtained in 1927 when the state first began issuing licenses. Many Swinerton-built structures now claim a spot on the National Register of Historic Places and other architectural preservation lists.

A culture of innovation and flexibility has been essential to Swinerton's enduring success.

The construction industry is constantly evolving, and we've seen innumerable changes in our 133-year history. As builders, we recognize our responsibility to preserve natural resources for future generations, and we're building for the future through our commitment to sustainability. Swinerton is committed to green building initiatives that create structures that will operate cleanly and efficiently for many years to come.

Sincerely,
SWINERTON BUILDERS

Kyle Burnham, PE, LEED AP, Assoc. DBIA
Preconstruction Manager

docomomo_us

documentation and conservation

of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the
modern movement

Northern California Chapter

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June 13, 2022

Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission
70 W Hedding Street
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San Jose, CA 95110

Re: Proposed Demolition of Former San Jose City Hall

Dear Chairperson Manning and Esteemed Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of the board of the Northern California chapter of Docomomo US to express our concern about the proposed demolition of the former San Jose City Hall. Docomomo US/NOCA is the Northern California chapter of the international non-profit organization Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement (DoCoMoMo), established nearly 35 years ago to provide leadership, education, and advocacy assistance to people committed to saving places and collectively shaping the future of America's stories.

We concur with the *San Jose Modernism Historic Context Statement* (2009) and the numerous previous findings by qualified architectural historians that the former San Jose City Hall building is a significant local historic resource both for its exemplary Modernist design and for its association with the civic growth of San Jose and its progressive values—including being the first major American city to appoint an Asian American mayor (Norman Mineta, 1971-1975) and a female mayor (Janet Gray Hayes, 1975-1983). The value of Modernist icons such as the former San Jose City Hall goes beyond their aesthetic value—this building holds symbolic value for the community, and has served as the site of many important civic moments and community gatherings over the years.

Docomomo US/NOCA is particularly concerned that the proposal to demolish the former San Jose City Hall building does not include any future use for the site, and that the feasibility study for the reuse of the building did not adequately address incentives such as tax credits or the environmental impact of demolition of this large, existing building. It has been well-demonstrated through research, including by the Preservation Green Lab of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, that the “greenest” building is the one that already exists, even when taking into account existing energy performance.

We believe that approval of the demolition of the former San Jose City Hall would set a dangerous precedent with regards to the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County's commitment to historic preservation, including its own preservation ordinance (Santa Clara County Historic Preservation Ordinance, Sec. C17-16), and its commitment to sustainability.

Numerous recent examples have proven the financial viability of the adaptive reuse of Modernist civic and commercial office buildings to meet current needs and environmental sustainability goals. Of the many examples, the former Las Vegas City Hall (built 1977 as a city hall, now a tech office), Hotel Marcel New Haven (built 1970 as an office building, now a hotel), the Standard Hotel (built 1955 as an office building,

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of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the
modern movement

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now a hotel) in downtown Los Angeles, and the Mayflower Apartments (built 1962 as an office building, now mixed-income apartments), are just a few that are examples of successful and beloved adaptive reuse projects.

Even in just the past few years with the COVID-19 pandemic, the needs of cities have changed dramatically. Now is the perfect opportunity to solicit additional ideas or proposals for adaptive reuses of this site, with serious due consideration of available tax credits and other incentives, and to reimagine how this aesthetically striking and history-laden building could continue to serve the community.

Docomomo US/NOCA commends Preservation Action Council of San Jose (PAC*SJ) for their diligent review of the materials regarding the former San Jose City Hall site and supports their recommendations to:

- Endorse FEIR's environmentally superior "No Project" alternative
- Recommend denial of Landmark Alteration Permit
- Endorse PAC*SJ offer to fund peer review/reuse analysis
- Recommend no action on FEIR certification to allow for further study and/or RFP of adaptive reuse.

In summary, we strongly oppose the demolition of the former San Jose City Hall and support future serious exploration of adaptive reuse alternatives.

Sincerely,

Hannah Simonson

Hannah Simonson, President
Docomomo US/Northern California

cc: Christopher Manning, Chair; Tere Johnson, Vice Chair; Perlita Dicochea; Lila Gemellos; Pria Graves; Bill Hare; Preservation Action Council of San Jose

ALAN HESS
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4991 CORKWOOD LANE
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June 8, 2022

Christopher Manning, Chair
Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission
Tere Johnson, Vice Chair
Perlita Dicochea
Lila Gemellos
Pria Graves
Bill Hare
bnc@cob.sccgov.org

re: Former San Jose City Hall

Dear Chairman Manning and Commissioners:

San Jose's decision to build a Modern city hall in 1958 was a clear proclamation of the city's vision for its future, when "Silicon Valley" as we know it was still in its infancy. Nonetheless the city saw the possibilities and built for that future with a gleaming example of civic pride and modernity.

Today that city hall building offers San Jose the same opportunity to establish a clear direction for our future by embracing the values of sustainability, innovation, and pride in the city's unique roots. I fully support the preservation and adaptive reuse of this singular building so that it and all it symbolizes will remain a vital part of the city's life.

Certainly the city hall's International Style architecture still embodies that progressive spirit. That design by San Jose architect Donald Haines is an excellent (and increasingly rare) example of the International Style locally.

True to Modern architecture's fundamental concepts, the building's forms express its functions: a four-story office wing for civic servants, a low wing for a council chamber where citizens address their elected officers.

Haines used bold but simple geometric shapes — curves and rectangles, some solid, some transparent. The dynamic arc of the facade greets citizens with a welcoming embrace in a way that a flat facade would not. Curving forms throughout the design are a unifying motif, echoed in the council chambers and

the dramatic floating stairway in the main lobby. A splash of color connects the building with the blue skies of Santa Clara County.

Tearing down a historic landmark as well known as city hall would send a message of wastefulness. The energy embodied in the manufacturing of its materials (steel, glass, not to mention the energy used in transporting and constructing those materials) would be simply thrown away.

Even if a 100% green building replaced it, it would take years to pay back the energy lost through demolition.

In my many years observing San Jose, I have seen too many excellent Modern buildings needlessly demolished. The historic IBM campus on Cottle Rd. and the handsome checkerboarded Pestana building at S. First and San Carlos (now a parking lot) are just two examples of such lost opportunities.

The fitting answer for today is to adaptively reuse city hall for another appropriate function. As architect Donald Haines fashioned a symbol for his era, today's creative San Jose architects and developers can make this building a symbol of San Jose's commitment to a sustainable future, as a hotel, school, apartments, offices — the possibilities are great.

Adaptive reuse is the trend nationally. I see these opportunities in my role as Commissioner on the California Historical Resources Commission (though I am writing here as an architect, author, former architecture critic for the *San Jose Mercury News*, and an independent expert.) Las Vegas' former city hall (1977) now serves as corporate headquarters for a major internet retailer. The Pirelli Headquarters (1970) in New Haven is soon to open as an upscale hotel. The Philadelphia Savings Fund Society office building (1932) was also repurposed as a hotel, as was the TWA terminal (1962) at JFK Airport. A recent journal article by a successful architect-developer specializing in adaptive reuse outlines the concept: <https://omgivning.com/journal/>

San Jose always looks to the future. In facing today's challenges, it can address the need for wise resource use while enriching our streets with the memories, diversity, and unique character that historic buildings represent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Hess". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "H".

Alan Hess

cc: Ben Leech, Andre Luthard

From: **Sally Zarnowitz** <snzarnowitz@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jun 13, 2022 at 10:35 AM
Subject: June 16, 2022 HHC Agenda Item 5 Former San Jose City Hall
To: <bnc@cob.sccgov.org>

June 13, 2022

Historical Heritage Commission
County of Santa Clara

Dear Commissioners,

With its distinctive curved glass curtain wall facade, Former City Hall features a grand entry space where an aluminum stair winds up to the second floor. Prominent and familiar to those who called San Jose their home in the second half of the twentieth century, its architecture is an important and early architectural example of the Modern office building in the Bay Area - and one of the few remaining in the city.

It's the central public place where a new diversity of concerned citizens led our agricultural outpost into a major American city under visionary leaders and managers. Local institutions such as the City of San Jose along with others like the County of Santa Clara, San Jose State and major industries such as Lockheed also opened opportunities up to new groups during the period. In 1971, Mayor Norman Mineta became the first Asian-American mayor of a major U.S. city, and In 1975 Mayor Janet Gray Hayes followed as the first female mayor of a major U.S. city, continuing the work in balancing urban growth with quality of life issues.

Former City Hall today stands as an urban symbol to the greater Bay Area of how to enable progressive leadership for the good of all. I believe there are alternatives for reuse of this symbolic building, alongside dense new housing, that can meet fiscal and social objectives. The Landmark Alteration Permit for demolition without a proposal should be denied, and a robust search for proposals for such alternatives should continue.

Respectfully,

Sally Notthoff Zarnowitz, Architect, LEED AP
1642 Fairlawn Ave.
San Jose CA 95125

Juliet M. Arroyo

Historic Resource Professional

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323-819-0044 cell

June 12, 2022

Santa Clara County, Historical Heritage Commission

70 W Hedding Street

San Jose, Ca 95110

Christopher Manning, Chair

Tere Johnson, Vice Chair

Perlita Dicochea

Lila Gemellos

Pria Graves

Bill Hare

And

County of Santa Clara Department of Planning and Development

Lara Tran, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Former San Jose City Hall, 801 Mission Street, San Jose Ca – Commission Recommendation on the Proposed Alteration Permit to Demolish the Historic Resource under Section C17-15 of the County Code of Ordinances.

Dear Commission Members and Staff:

I respectfully submit this letter to the Commission asking project review questions, identifying procedural inadequacies, and claiming analysis deficiencies related to the CEQA process/EIR documentation, and the local historic review process under the San Jose City and Santa Clara County Historic Preservation Ordinances for the proposed demolition of the Former San Jose City Hall.

I am a Historic Resource Professional with over 20 years of experience in the field and was the City of San Jose Historic Preservation Officer between April 2018 and July 2020. I am also a CEQA practitioner. I am seeking further information as highlighted below to better understand the project proposals, the review process, and future implications. Please provide responses via mail or email, or within a subsequent document. Additionally, I request to be notified of additional documentation released and I request to be notified in advance of any actions surrounding the proposed demolition, including any agency deliberations, findings, or decisions. My contact information is at the top and end of this letter. I thank you in advance.

I am also a former resident of the North First Street neighborhood. I lived a couple of blocks south of the subject property. As a California native who has lived and seen many places in the State, I cannot think of any place that has such a large concentration and wealth of California history and architecture in one place. From the native lands of native peoples to the Spanish period, to the pueblo period, and all periods represented up to the Post-Modern period. From Japantown to the Hensley District to the

Juliet M. Arroyo Letter, June 12, 2022

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former site of the Hotel Vendome and the early train station. From Eastlake Victorian to Corporate Modernism and some of the best works of Wolfe and Higgins, and other noted architects. The location and architecture of the Former San Jose City Hall including its role in the City of San Jose's governmental history enhances the richness of this neighborhood. The subject property is a key part of what I view as one of California's best living history and architectural museums free and available for all to see and experience.

CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act)

- 1. Project Description (Project Segmentation and Replacement Project).** It appears that the project is being segmented which is against CEQA rules. CEQA requires that a lead agency evaluate the impacts of the "Whole of the Project" rather than its phases or parts. I understand that the details of a future replacement project on the subject site may be unknown at this moment, however, there is substantial evidence that a replacement project on the site is highly feasible, particularly since the County Master Plan provides for (and encourages) the redevelopment of the site and there is a strong market for particularly housing in the area, close to transportation and jobs centers. The demolition EIR discusses the potential capacity of the site for 410 residential units on the parcel and up to 670 residential units on Site D at the corner of the Master Plan but does not analyze the potential environmental impact of that development. This appears to be the replacement project that needs to be evaluated with the review of the demolition. Demolition and site preparation is one of the earliest steps in the redevelopment process. A housing project seems viable given the regional housing goals. Office use is also reasonable given the presence of County services in the area and the proximity to downtown San Jose, along with the flexibility of the interior spaces. Several uses could easily occupy the space, particularly with the large open floors. Could the County redevelop the site itself, or would it partner with a private entity, or offer the site up for sale and redevelopment to another public agency or a private entity. These are questions associated with a replacement project which seems viable in the near-term. Also could there be an interim use on the site, such as parking, or a public park? Would the vacant lot be fenced for security reasons? Would there be some type of landscape plan? Would it be a safe parking site for the unhoused? Also, could there be a temporary use for the historic building in advance of redevelopment. A vacant lot is not a desired land use. Many jurisdictions (including the City of San Jose) have development code provisions against demolition without a replacement project approved due to concerns of blight associated with vacant lots in an urban area. Does the County have a similar provision or policy in their code? Is the vacant lot proposal just an interim use? A long-term vacant lot might be a nuisance. **Request: The EIR needs to disclose and evaluate the whole of the project, and not just the first phase demolition activity. Please provide more information about what type of replacement project the County would consider, consistent with the Master Plan, at least a replacement project that the market supports, maximizes the development potential of the site, meets objectives, and is environmentally sensitive.**
- 2. Project Objectives (To Reduce Costs).** The stated objective of the project (demolition) is to: "Reduce the County's costs related to the former San Jose City Hall facility (e.g., maintenance, security, utilities)". All buildings require on-going maintenance and costs, occupied or not occupied. It appears that the reason for the project is to reduce costs of an unoccupied building,

that is not providing a return, or that maintenance costs are unworthy because the building is not being used. The “Infeasibility Study”, Attachment B to the June 16, 2022 Staff Report states that the annual maintenance cost for the subject building is \$100,000. If the objective is to reduce these costs, then there needs to be a better analysis of the total costs of demolition versus the on-going maintenance costs given a future horizon. The demolition costs analysis needs to be complete and fully disclosed. It needs to include the pre-demolition costs, such as the costs associated with the EIR, direct and indirect costs, permitting costs, recycling and salvage costs, the costs for the mitigation measures, monitoring, and reporting included in the EIR, and post demolition costs, such as watering and maintaining vegetation, security for the vacant lot/parking lot, and on-going maintenance of the property once vacant. Hidden costs also include consultant and staff time processing the demolition proposal. How many years of on-going maintenance costs would it take to equal the complete costs for demolition planning, construction, disposal/recycling, mitigation, and property maintenance. There needs to be some explanation why the building is not being used. Is the County uninterested in the upkeep costs for government office occupancy? An occupied building may justify the maintenance costs. Could the building be rented or leased with proceeds to cover maintenance costs? **Request: A complete and fully disclosed analysis of on-going property maintenance costs versus total demolition costs is needed to fully understand the project and how it relates to the objectives of cost savings. Information should be provided that explains why the building is not occupied.**

3. **Project Alternatives (Must be Related to Objectives)**. Reuse alternatives or redevelopment of the subject property as listed in the EIR would not achieve the stated objectives which is to reduce on-going maintenance costs. These alternatives would result in substantial increased costs to the County and not reduce the costs associated with the property. Alternatives must relate to costs. One alternative would be to occupy the building with County offices or County services to justify the on-going maintenance needs. Another alternative would be to reduce costs among other County facilities to continue the on-going maintenance cost of the subject property. Another alternative would be to lease the building and apply the rents towards a maintenance program for the building. Another alternative could be to occupy the building for County purposes and demolish a non-historic building among the County’s facilities experiencing high on-going maintenance costs. **Request: The alternatives should either be related to the objective of cost saving or a replacement project should be included, and reuse options presented as alternatives.**

4. **Project Background (Helps to Better Understand the Project and its Objectives)**. The EIR states that the County acquired the building in 2011. The attached “Infeasibility Study” states that the County acquired the property as partial payment toward the City of San Jose’s past due redevelopment obligations. More information about the acquisition should be provided to better understand the project and its objectives. It’s not clear why the County would accept a building that it now considers too expensive to maintain. Has the County looked at the options of selling, gifting, or leasing the building and transferring the maintenance duties to another public or private entity? Has the County considered subdividing the parcel to separate the historic building from other lands? **Request: Can more background information be provided about the acquisition of the property?**

5. **Project Permitting (What Approvals are Required by Agencies).** What are the discretionary actions involved in the project approval process? What other agencies are involved in the process? Have consultations occurred with these other agencies. Has consultation and review been provided by the City of San Jose? Is the County the only lead agency? Are there responsible agencies? Does the County have sole approval authority over its own project? What authority grants this position? **Request: More information is needed to better understand the County's sole responsibility for the project approval.**

6. **Public Agency Review.** Who were the agencies and persons the Draft EIR was sent to? An early NOP letter was included from the City of San Jose which asks the County to consider reuse options and that a vacant lot is not desirable. Was there any subsequent letters from the City? **Request: Can the list of persons and agencies that the Draft EIR was sent to, be made available, or published on the County's website?**

7. **County Findings of Fact/Statement of Overriding Considerations.** In a future County action to certify the EIR, adopt findings and provide a Statement of Overriding Considerations, I'm not sure what Overriding Consideration would be applicable. I am not convinced that the maintenance costs are so excessive that they warrant the demolition of a historic resource. The building could be rented with proceeds that can cover a maintenance contract with a private company, should County staff be limited. More housing, especially affordable or supportive housing is a worthy goal, but that does not accomplish the project (demolition) objective to reduce maintenance costs. This would be the replacement project which needs to be considered in the EIR to fully understand all the environmental consequences. **Request: Can more information be provided which connects the objective of cost savings against the loss of a historic resource?**

HISTORIC RESOURCE PROJECT REVIEW

1. **Demolition Permit Findings (Reuse Subject Building and Build New Around It).** Under Section C17-16 (D) of the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance, a proposed demolition of a historic resource requires findings. The finding that there are no feasible alternatives to demolition based on substantial evidence must be made before demolition approval. The Staff Report for the June 16, 2022 Commission meeting includes an "Infeasibility Study" (Attachment B) and a study of the maximum development potential of the subject parcel and Site D of the Master Plan. Both studies lack an analysis showing the option of retaining the subject historic building for reuse along with maximizing the development capacity of other portions of the subject parcel (APN 259-04-023) or of Parcel D or of the Master Plan. The attached study estimates that 410 residential units could be built on the subject parcel, or 670 residential units could be built on Site D after demolition. This analysis does not consider the option to adaptively reuse the building while also constructing a new building around the historic building. It also does not consider additional locations for the development potential represented by the subject parcel. Within the Master Plan area, there are multiple surface parking lots which could be consolidated

into a parking structure, thus creating additional development capacity for housing, office, or other uses. The preservation and reuse of the former City Hall, combined with new construction within the subject parcel or within Site D is a feasible option that would yield the maximum development potential of the land. And such new construction compatible with the historic building could meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties and could be exempt from CEQA. This feasible alternative was not considered or studied. **Request: The existing feasibility study and redevelopment options need to be realistic and broadened to study reuse of the historic resource in place with new construction surrounding the subject building, within the subject parcel capacity, Site D capacity, and the entire Master Plan capacity.**

2. **Demolition Permit Findings (Reuse Subject Building with Incentives).** The reuse options should also include the use of incentives for historic preservation, particularly those listed in Section C17-24 of the County Code, however, there are additional incentives not listed. Included in the County Code applicable to a reuse option are, the State Historic Building Code, Affordable Housing Tax Credits, Historic Preservation Tax Incentives, and Historic Preservation Easements. Other incentives listed would not benefit a public owner, but would benefit a private owner, such as the Mills Act, relaxed zoning requirements, permit expediting, promotion, and technical assistance. Incentives available at the local, State, and National level have been created for the purpose of making the adaptive reuse of historic buildings feasible. **Request: Include all applicable incentives to the feasibility study to determine how the combination of financial and land use incentives would make preservation possible.**
3. **Demolition Permit Findings (Reuse Subject Building to Improve the Social and Built Environment).** The feasibility studies should also examine the negative impacts of a proposed future vacant lot/parking lot considering blight, security needs, nuisance attraction, maintenance of landscaped areas, maintenance of parking/hardscape area, environmental degradation due to disposal of construction and building material waste, an eyesore created at a key intersection, as well as the social and environmental costs associated with the loss of a historic resource. The adaptive reuse of historic buildings is associated with improved placemaking, identity, and sense of place, and improves the health and well-being of the community. **Request: The existing feasibility study should include the improved sense of place that comes with reusing a historic property.**
4. **Benefits and Responsibilities as a Certified Local Government (CLG).** Santa Clara County is a CLG and with that status, the County agrees to abide by the rules and regulations of historic preservation at the local, State, and National level including maintaining a qualified historic commission and a qualified preservation ordinance. In making the findings for demolition of a historic resource under a local historic preservation ordinance, the intent is that the case for demolition of a historic resource needs to be very strong and compelling. The case presented in the staff report, documentation, the feasibility study, and EIR stating against reuse viability and feasibility, is not compelling, and is not strong enough to be able to make the required findings for demolition under Section C17-16(D). **Request: Information and missing analysis as mentioned in this letter should be provided to adequately make this "No other feasible**

alternative” finding as intended under the Ordinance. A case where there is no doubt among professionals, the public, and review bodies based on substantial evidence needs to be presented to warrant demolition of a historic resource. Additionally, the review and the evidence should be objective, and all information disclosed.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Juliet M. Arroyo

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June 16, 2022

Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission
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Via email: bnc@cob.sccgov.org

Christopher Manning, Chair
Tere Johnson, Vice Chair
Perlita Dicochea
Lila Gemellos
Pria Graves
Bill Hare

Re: HHC Agenda Item #5: Former San José City Hall

Dear Commissioners,

As a former Commissioner I thank you for committing valuable hours of your life to protect and preserve the important historical buildings, sites and objects that give the sense of place, heritage and purpose to our County.

The referenced agenda item relates to one of the most important buildings in the County and of extreme significance in the City of San Jose. When I served six years on the San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission, the building had not yet reached 50 years old, but we knew it was a very important landmark-a symbol of the pride San Jose had as it embraced change from an agricultural past to one of inventions and progressive future. It stated to me that this was a city of potential. As a young mother in 1964, when I visited City Hall it was welcoming and sparkling. Carp swam from the outside pool into the lobby. Children sat on the open stairs to watch. Offices opened onto a corridor contained by a curved glass wall- and no one was behind locked doors or hiding in fear. Residents were welcomed and treated with courtesy by the receptionist at the curved lobby desk. It was the last in a line of City halls all designed by San Jose architects.

It was in this building that the first iteration of the City's landmark ordinance was proposed, and where I met with Mr. Frank Brown, the Building Official, to discuss an alternative code for historic buildings. With the support of Mayor Mineta both ordinances were approved unanimously. Later Councils would continue the recognition of San Jose's historic landmark buildings and sites.

Today the building belongs to Santa Clara County and we residents of San Jose must hope and have faith that this extraordinary building will receive the care and appreciation that is so important. Just as the Courthouse on St. James Park is a symbol of justice from a past era, so too is the modern architecture of the San Jose City Hall, a symbol of a progressive city ready to enter a bright future in the second half of the twentieth century. The San Jose City Hall deserves your support and preservation. Years of neglect have not diminished its significance.

Respectfully,



Bonnie Bamburg

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