



CONTINUITY

Newsletter of the Preservation Action Council of San José

Volume 3, Number 2, March/April 1992

City Enhances Seismic Retrofit Program

The San Jose City Council has approved recommendations by the city administration to enhance parts of the city-mandated seismic retrofit program. These changes are due to less-than-enthusiastic response from building owners to the requirement that plans must be completed by this May, and construction finished by 1995.

One of the key features is the creation of a financial district for unreinforced masonry buildings. Buildings owners pay \$500 to join the district to defray the expense of creating the district. In return, construction funds will be available to participating owners at a taxable market rate with a 20-year payback. The owners will arrange for the work to be done and then be "reimbursed" for the cost from the district funds.

The other major feature is a redefinition of the May deadline. Originally, this deadline was for the *submission* of completed plans so that the owner could qualify for a minimum \$6,000 design grant. Now the May deadline is when owners must submit information to the city showing that design services have been secured (rather than completed) and that plans will be submitted within 120 days of the May deadline. The 1995 date for completing retrofit work has not changed.

The city hopes that this program and others already in place will encourage owners to move forward with plans.

Seismic Retrofit Task Force Plans Workshop for Building Owners

Peter Fenerin

The Seismic Retrofit of Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Buildings Task Force is planning a workshop for building owners at the Eulipa restaurant on Saturday, March 21, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. On hand to work with owners and answer their questions about seismic retrofit and city processes will be experts in seismic retrofit, building owners who have already retrofitted their buildings, and representatives of the City of San Jose.

Many building owners are overwhelmed by the decisions they need to make and the complexity of the task. To assist them, we are developing a decision tree which pulls together all the decisions they need to make and what's involved at each step.

Members of the task force include Jim Arbuckle, Rene Cortinaz, Peter Fenerin, Frank Guyre, April Halberstadt, Karita Hummer, Linda Larson, and Craig Mineweaser.

We've been very pleased with the participation of city and Redevelopment Agency staff in our task force efforts. Ed Janke, president of the Historical Landmarks Commission attended our first meeting and helped us get going, giving us his perspective on the importance of historic URM structures.

Bob Silverstein, URM liaison for the city, was also at that first meeting and

gave us some valuable insights about how the task force can work with the city.

John Lusardi, the Redevelopment Agency's URM program manager, attended our most recent meeting. His insights and ideas were very valuable.

We look forward to continuing our association with these dedicated people in the future as we accomplish our mutual goals.

Want to be part of this task force?
Call Peter Fenerin at (415) 322-7440.

River Street Options Explored

Karita Hummer

On Sunday, February 9, the Preservation Action Council of San Jose's River Street Ad Hoc Committee sponsored an informational walking tour of the historic River Street area. This area is now in the path of the planned Army Corps of Engineers flood control project and the Guadalupe River Park. Representatives from the San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission, the San Jose Historical Museum, the

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River Street

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Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Jose, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, Friends of the Guadalupe River Park, the Market-Almaden Neighborhood Association, Preservation Action Council, and others attended.

The Preservation Action Council supports the flood control project and the Guadalupe River Park. We also urge that all options for saving the buildings be explored.

Our purpose was to facilitate discussion and to consider options for buildings in the area, as well as to formulate our own recommendations. The area, in the vicinity of River Street between West Santa Clara and St. John streets, is eligible for the National Register of Historic places. It contains 25 contributing structures, most of them vernacular workers' homes from the turn of the century, and others from the Civil War period.

Though we are still finalizing our recommendations, we outlined our observations and impressions thus far.

For example, we suggested that the site and buildings be used in creative ways to solve other city concerns including promoting tourism, affordable housing, and office space for nonprofit organizations.

We suggested that some, if not all of the buildings can be saved and integrated into the park for uses such as a natural history museum, shops, or mercado.

We cited examples of cities that have used historical districts containing vernacular architecture to bring vitality and excitement to their communities. One example is San Luis Obispo's River Walk.

At a minimum, and as a last resort, we suggested that the most important buildings be spared and moved as a collection (ideally) or individually to other historic areas of the city.

For more information or to help out, contact Karita Hummer (408) 971-0940 or April Halberstadt (408) 293-2860.



A house on the River Street informational walking tour.

Nancy Newlin photo

March Open Board Meeting Includes Reception for Advisory Board

Our advisory board members have distinguished themselves in local historic preservation projects and also serve as key contributors to the success of the Preservation Action Council. To give them an opportunity to meet each other, and to meet our Board of Directors and members, we're inviting them to a reception at the conclusion of our March open board meeting.

Here is the schedule of events for that evening. Please note that the open board meeting *begins one half hour earlier* to accommodate this special event.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 6:30 — 7:30 | Open board meeting |
| 7:30 | Introduction of advisory board members by Karita Hummer |
| 7:40 | Short introduction to our 1992 projects by Sharon Heinrichs, Program Committee chairperson |
| 7:45 — 9:00 | Advisory board reception with refreshments. 1992 project boards (see description below) on display for viewing |
| 8:00 | Tour of Le Petit Trianon by Keith Watt |

Each project board includes a photograph of the project, a description of the situation with its current status, the person responsible, and the current needs. Members and guests also can pick up a printed copy of the project boards for later review.



From the President

by Karita Hummer

Editor's note: Following is an abbreviated version of the 1991 Preservation Action Council Annual Report. To obtain a complete copy, contact Karita at (408) 971-0940.

This past year was quite significant for the Preservation Action Council. We accomplished a lot, and, in the process, gained considerable community recognition and respect.

One of our earliest efforts for the year was the Scheller House, a Colonial Revival structure on the San Jose State University campus. Slated for certain demolition, our organizing and coordinating efforts saved the building from that fate.

As a result of our annual board of directors retreat in April, we decided to focus more on our internal organizational goals of fundraising, membership recruitment, and restructuring the organization.

Preservation Week in May was ambitious with three high-quality, major events: a panel on historic theatres, a panel cosponsored with the Victorian Preservation Association (VPA) on seismic retrofit, and a benefit arts reception at the Bingham Gallery and Vigal Coffee Roasting Co.

Also in May, we won the Sourisseau Academy's Local History Award for an organization, receiving a \$500 prize. It was a real vote of confidence from a well established history organization in our community, and we felt quite honored.

The Program Committee released the six-month comprehensive feasibility

study for the historic First Church of Christ, Scientist, in May. The report cited its structural integrity, potential uses, and relatively low restoration costs as the building's strong assets. We shared the report with the Redevelopment Agency and later presented it to the City Council. It was well received.

In June, we conducted a phone-a-thon for membership renewal, with John Pinto contributing the use of his office and phones for the drive. Membership rose to 180 persons, and additional members became involved.

The Community Relations committee had exhibits at Living History Days at the San Jose Historical Museum and at Tapestry 'n' Talent. Several persons from our organization on TV four times during the year, three times on KNTV, and once on cable TV 2B Heritage.

Volunteers have been recruited from the Volunteer Exchange and through the San Jose Mercury News volunteer opportunities column. Our current volunteer job openings are: volunteer coordinator, education subcommittee chair, special events planners, project application counselor, building monitors, government affairs, subcommittee chairpersons, legal analysts, liaisons to various organizations, writers, artists, speakers, project leaders, exhibit designers, press release writers, data processors, secretaries, fundraisers, grantwriters, accountants, liaisons between committees, librarian, and office manager.

The Fundraising Subcommittee successfully raised funds for the Architecture/History Open House, bringing in \$1,000 from the Hugh Stuart Center Charitable Trust, San Jose Downtown Association, California Business Bank, Robinson and Wood Attorneys at Law, Sumitomo Bank, the Victorian Preservation Association, O'Brien and Associates,

and Bank of America, Washington Square Branch.

The Architecture/History Open House Tour of the Downtown Historic Commercial District occurred on October 5. This event tapped all our resources. We feel proud that it attracted over 300 participants and drew considerable attention to the importance and needs of this national historic district.

But that's not all! The Program Committee initiated and has been coordinating other projects as well. The Watchdog Subcommittee has carefully reviewed the River Street area, which is proposed for demolition to make way for flood control and the Guadalupe River Park, and is urging that Section 106 guidelines be followed to mitigate against harm to historic structures.

The José Theatre Task force has been formed to review how that building might be saved.

We are participating in meetings on the Lincoln-Auzerais (also known as Midtown) district to ensure preservation of historic buildings there.

A Seismic Retrofit task force has been formed to contribute to efforts in the city to upgrade buildings for seismic retrofiting. This will be a networking effort to put owners in contact with each other through a workshop to facilitate decision-making about seismic retrofit questions.

In addition, the Preservation Action Council is proposing a significant involvement in safeguarding the buildings on the Bernal-Joice ranch in the Santa Teresa area, where several very important buildings still remain that reflect a major part of our heritage in the valley. We have started to correspond with the County Department of Parks and Recreation, County

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From the President

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of Santa Clara on this matter. In addition, we stand ready to involve ourselves in protesting the demolition of buildings on the old Mosby Ranch.

We have expressed our concerns regarding the proposed Trinity Office Center's potential impact on the historic Trinity Church and have requested the utmost scrutiny of those plans.

We have established an extensive network of relationships with other agencies and entities, with liaisons to the Redevelopment Agency, the Urban Design Review Board, the Fox Theatre Advisory Board, the City of San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission, and the Downtown Association. We clearly have established a presence in the community and are establishing additional liaison relationships with other organizations.

We will continue to keep our members informed on the status of tax credits for historic preservation and what measures are being considered for restoring them.

As the new year began, we participated in planning a nonprofit track for the California Preservation Foundation Conference in Eureka in April, 1992.

Likewise, the California Preservation Foundation requested that we co-sponsor a real estate conference with them, along with the Historic Landmarks Commission, the City of San Jose Redevelopment Agency, and the Downtown Association. The conference, aimed at preservationists, architects, contractors and others, took place on February 29.

Throughout the year, most of our meetings and two of the Preservation Week events were held at Mother Olson's Inn, thanks to Keith Watt's great generosity.

Leadership on all these projects was provided by many people. To name just a few, many thanks to Bonnie Bamburg, Paul Bernal, Greg Cassella, Rene Cortinaz, Peter Fenerin, Jeff George, Bill Graham, April Halberstadt, Sharon Heinrichs, Scott Hinrichs, Laura Horman, Barbara Jackson, Tom King, Linda Larson, Beverly Ledwith, Franklin Maggi, Patti Massey, Betsy Mathieson, Jackie McIntyre, Craig Mineweaser, John Mitchell, Nancy Newlin, Gary Parks, Don Schallock, Theo Van Dyne, and Bill Zavlaris.

1991 was quite a year. Undaunted, we are moving right along in 1992 at as fast a clip as ever.



Recycle CONTINUITY

When you're finished with your copy of *CONTINUITY*, please post it in your office or pass it along to a friend. We appreciate your efforts to help us promote our organization and attract new members.

José Theatre Task Force Tours Theatre

Gary Parks

Recently, the José Theatre Task Force toured the theatre to see it close-up and evaluate its potential for restoration and reuse. They were impressed by the original lighting fixtures, aisle standards, and plaster work detailing. The task force consensus is that the building can be restored at a reasonable cost, and that it could fill a great need of San Jose's cultural community.

The next challenge for the task force is to locate a tenant who would make it feasible for the owners to retrofit the building. The committee is concerned that seismic retrofit plans be done in time to meet the city's URM deadline. (See seismic retrofit article on the front page.)

To get involved with this task force, contact Gary Parks at (408) 371-9103.

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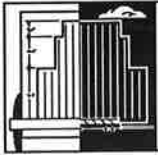


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A City by Design

After Catastrophe, Part 2

Bill Zavlaris

Editor's Note: This is the second of two parts on the Oakland/Berkeley hills fire of October 20, 1991. The first part appeared in the January/February issue of CONTINUITY. In the first part, Bill reviewed the magnitude of the loss from the architectural and urban design standpoints. In this concluding part, he gives specific suggestions for measures to prevent such losses in the future. In our May/June issue, Bill continues his architectural history survey of San Jose.

Certain planning code changes could greatly alleviate the potential for another firestorm in the Oakland/Berkeley hills. These changes include: different roofing and siding materials, less flammable landscaping, wider roads, and reliable backup water-pumping equipment.

A requirement for tile roofing and a minimum of natural wood siding need not destroy the very quality that makes these areas so unique. There are various new roofing materials that are both fire resistant and aesthetically pleasing. Options range from the standard red Spanish tile to various composite materials that retard flames. Exteriors also offer many options from the traditional wood siding. Cement slab, poured concrete, cinder block, and the ubiquitous stucco all offer acceptable alternatives to wood. Many of these materials in fact can be imprinted to appear as wood siding if that is the design desired.

None of these suggestions are revolutionary. Following the 1927 Berkeley fire, which destroyed a large number

of houses by genius Bernard Maybeck and his contemporaries (including his own residence), Maybeck spent the rest of his life developing a wide variety of fire resistant exterior designs. These designs ranged from "bubble brick" (woven sacks dipped into a cement-like solution) to the use of simple cinder block. He used cinder block in both his own second house, and in the much larger residence that he designed for his son, Wallen, located in Kensington.

Even Maybeck's more standard stucco, Mediterranean revivalist-inspired houses constructed after the fire reflect the incredible creativity that a master architect can provide. These new forms are the antithesis of his wooden chalets and bungalows of the early twentieth century, but they are nonetheless equally impressive in design both as individual houses and within the neighborhood.

" . . . we can prevent disasters of this magnitude . . . and ensure that the rebuilt neighborhoods will provide . . . the same beauty."

Changes should be made to define allowable landscaping materials. We now know that certain eucalyptus varieties should never have been planted in such profusion throughout the wild lands of the state. Laws should be established for removing such species (as well as the equally flammable Monterey Cypress) and prohibiting new plantings of these trees and other highly volatile plant materials.

The roadways should be a minimum width that allows both emergency vehicle entry as well as quick evacuation. Reconfiguring lot lines around these new standards should constitute an acceptable trade-off for public health and safety. In this same regard,

smaller emergency vehicles (similar to ones that are required to negotiate the narrow roads of Europe) should be mandated for hillside neighborhoods.

Preventive facilities such as nearby reservoirs with emergency backup pumping equipment should be available and tested monthly for readiness.

People will not be abandoning these areas (nor similar neighborhoods in Los Gatos, Saratoga, Woodside, Corte Madera, Orinda, or Danville). To see why, I suggest a winter drive up Tunnel Road, entering Berkeley from Highway 24 to the south. The view begins with the devastation of charred hillsides, decimated residences, and an almost lunar-looking landscape. But as you approach the Claremont Hotel, you cross the fire line and the neighborhood is once again one of grand architecture and lush vegetation.

Walking through the Claremont District or along the pathways of Panoramic Hill in Berkeley, as I did shortly after the fire, reaffirms the qualities that exemplify these neighborhoods. Much has been lost, but so very much more remains.

An even better walk is through the area that was leveled in the fire of 1927, around Buena Vista Way and along Rose Walk in North Berkeley. This walk gives you a sense of renewal, because this area was also once a charred hillside. Over time, and with thoughtful design and planting, it has become beautiful again. The areas that are now so painful to behold also will be reborn. With care and vigilance, we can prevent disasters of this magnitude, and with a continued commitment to quality design, we can ensure that the rebuilt neighborhoods will provide future generations the same beauty and high standards as did their predecessors.

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A City by Design

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One final thought while reflecting on the October fire. Like all deaths, the loss of these neighborhoods brings with it great pangs of regret. I feel that I didn't totally appreciate their special qualities. Of course, this perception is wrong. I did enjoy them; but was given a shocking dose of mortality and the ephemeral essence of all things be they human, man-made, or natural. What this experience should reaffirm in all of us is the appreciation and revelation in those things that are unique and beautiful today. In our zeal to create the future, we should never forget to enjoy what we have at this moment.

In the context of architecture and urban design, this realization should reaffirm our commitments to appreciating the best of our existing built environment and to advocating only the highest quality contemporary design in future projects. The beauty of Spanish Colonial Santa Barbara rising from the rubble of an earthquake, and the spectacular post-1907 earthquake architecture found in the downtown and civic center areas of San Francisco show us how catastrophe also can mean golden opportunity.

Such optimism for an ever-improving future (all the while never taking for granted the superlative examples of design that surround us today) must be our ultimate response to such dispiriting disasters as the October 20 fire.



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Craig Mineweaser, A.I.A.

Preservation Profile highlights people who have a long-standing interest in and commitment to historic preservation.

Paul Bernal

When you first meet Craig Mineweaser, you are overcome by his smile and his nice words. They go with him. He is never without them, no matter how many times you see him. And, if you travel in San Jose's history circles, you encounter him often.

He is currently the treasurer of the San Jose Historical Museum Association, and is past chair of the association's Development Council. Although he has only been with the museum association for four years, he "jumped in with both feet," said Mineweaser. Besides museum volunteerism, he is on the Board of Directors of the Preservation Action Council of San Jose and is a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Association for Preservation Technology, and the California Preservation Foundation.

Mineweaser initially became involved in these groups because of his business. Mineweaser & Associates is an architectural, interior design, and planning company. He came to San Jose in 1980 because "every architecture firm that I worked for in Pennsylvania closed." His wife grew up in San Jose and, most important to his livelihood, construction was still strong in the Bay Area in the early 1980s. So he moved here, happy to be near his wife's family.

Upon arriving, Mineweaser designed institutional, commercial, and residen-

tial structures. His primary projects were new malls and shopping centers; he "... never hooked up with any history groups." But after years of architectural design in California, he "got turned off because there was no sense of the past. Knock it down was the prevailing philosophy out here." Mineweaser says, "I was particularly disturbed because buildings that we were knocking down were every bit as good as the buildings we were recycling on the East Coast. Every building we worked on in Pennsylvania was old. It was taken for granted that you recycle buildings [in Pennsylvania] because [there] you have to. In many cases, it was the most economical way to do it."

After a while, Mineweaser began gravitating toward preservation groups. He joined the National Trust and the California Preservation Foundation because that is where preservation was being discussed in terms of architecture and construction. Mineweaser felt an obligation to learn about preservation so that he could look at buildings with a perspective that would allow him to save some of our past. "Every old building has a story to tell and I like mysteries. If you carefully investigate people's lives, cultures, and societies, the story unfolds for you," says Mineweaser. His firm now specializes in preservation projects as well as designing new structures.

" [Preservation gives me] a real sense of community. "

Mineweaser believes that the association between preservation and design enables him to constantly learn anew. "My training is continuing. I went to the Seismic Retrofit Conference [last October] and it was particularly interesting to me that I never stop learning about, first, new materials on the market and, second, new ways to re-use buildings. As David

McCullough said at last October's National Trust conference, 'Americans are always asking what's new? and with preservation, the question is: What's new regarding what's old?' What is great is that people are going back to the trades that have been practically forgotten. Plaster work, faux painting, and other crafts are now being taught again."

Mineweaser joined the Preservation Action Council of San Jose because he was "... drawn into the exciting concept of fostering appreciation of what's important in city structures and appreciation of good design." He believes that groups such as the Preservation Action Council bring a sense of connectedness to the community. "That is why I got back into preservation. I feel a real sense of community."

January Board Election Results Announced

The Preservation Action Council of San Jose has completed the election of members of the Board of Directors and a new vice president.

Re-elected to one-year terms were Marvin Bamburg, Patti Massey, James Vasconcellos, Cherilyn Widell, and Bill Zavlaris. Craig Mineweaser, John Mitchell, and Nancy Newlin were newly elected. Mitchell and Newlin have one-year terms, and Mineweaser has a two-year term.

Paul Bernal, formerly co-chairman of the Program Committee, was elected vice president to replace Betsy Mathieson who remains on the board. Sharon Heinrichs is now the chairman of the Program Committee and the secretary post is vacant.



April Halberstadt

The Watchdog Committee of the Preservation Action Council of San Jose keeps an eye on historic buildings that are threatened by rehabilitation, demolition, or neglect.

Several of the properties spotted by watchpuppies have become projects requiring a task force or ad hoc committee. These include River Street, the José Theatre, and unreinforced masonry buildings. Look for reports on these elsewhere in *CONTINUITY*.

Here are some of the historic properties we are currently watching:

- The Lincoln-Auzerais (also known as Midtown) redevelopment area which contains commercial and residential properties and the Cahill Street train station.
- Small Victorian houses near the new San Jose arena which may be lost due to the Guadalupe River Park and the arena parking lots.



The Preservation Action Council of San José is a non-profit membership organization providing information to property owners and education to the public, and promoting programs and policies for historic preservation and compatible new architectural design.

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And a thank-you and celebration for:

- The Schellar House, on the San Jose State University campus, originally scheduled for demolition last year is still alive and well.
- The Market-Almaden Neighborhood Association's vigilance and quick action saved a residence in the area from demolition. Bulldozers arrived on the site despite notices posted on the building that it was not to be demolished.
- The Wehner House in Evergreen is for sale, but only to someone who will maintain and cherish it.

Photo of Old A&D Emporium Sought

Edward Allegretti of San Jose is seeking a photograph of his grandfather's store, the A&D Emporium, located in the New Century Block on Santa Clara Street between First and Second streets from 1935 until 1953. Contact him at (408) 292-1972 or (408) 256-4566, extension 5112 if you can help. He'll pay for your time and other relevant expenses.

Calendar

March

- 2 (Monday) Finance and operations committee meeting. John Mitchell's, 209 S. 14th St., 7:30 p.m., 288-6459.
9 (Monday) Program committee meeting. April Halberstadt's, 240 S. 13th St., 5:45 p.m., 293-2860.
9 (Monday) Executive board meeting. Karita Hummer's, 96 Fox Ave., 7:00 p.m., 971-0940.
11 (Wednesday) Community relations committee meeting. Patti Massey's, 1281 Fremont St., 7:00 p.m., 297-9478.
16 (Monday) Open board of directors meeting, **6:30 p.m.**, reception for advisory board, 7:30 p.m. (See article on page 2.) Le Petit Trianon, 72 N. 5th St., 971-0940.

April

- 6 (Monday) Finance and operations committee meeting. John Mitchell's, 209 S. 14th St., 7:30 p.m., 288-6459.
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23 - 26 California Preservation Foundation annual conference, Eureka. (510) 763-0972.

May

- 10 - 16 Preservation Week. (See the May issue of *CONTINUITY* for details.)



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