

Davis Historical Society



Davis, California

davisvilletoday.

The Saga of Infill in the “Olds” by Jim Becket

Special points of interest:

- Infill is happening in the Olds. Have you noticed?
- The 1021 5th St. “Planned Development Project” is an example.
- Both neighbors and DHRMC respond.
- Infill and Overfill are terms now in use!
- In development circles, its called densification.

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For many, the solution for housing the growing population in Davis is “infill.” Much of it is going on, but unless one lives in the proximity of it, it is easy to overlook, and to accept without question.

For example, how many times have you driven past the house pictured below, 1021 5th Street,



without giving it a second thought? Or, if you have thought about it, what has that thought been? Maybe that it doesn’t look too sharp and the yard hasn’t been watered in years? Or maybe even that it is an “eyesore?” A place to “fix

up” and live in? Or a place to tear down, create a spot for “infill” and fill it in with a money making structure(s) of some kind?

For the residents of Old East and Old North, it is a discussion that goes on around them daily. (Both neighborhoods now have associations to address

this and other issues.) The activity of infill is complex, with many ramifications. For many, it is an issue only when it is “in my backyard,” but for those interested in preserving the historical character of appropriate parts of Davis, it is an everyday issue.

So what is involved in the process? The previous picture is a frontal view of

1021 5th. It may not be impressive as a historic residence, certainly not to the extent of it’s neighbor across the intersection, 534 J, pictured below (The historic Tufts Mansion), but it is representative of the



historic character of the area, and appears in better condition than its across the street neighbor at 437 J. A construction company sign already adorns that fence and its fate is also under consideration.

The house behind 1021 5th, 511 J Street, is yet another example of the character of the

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President's Message & Proposed Agenda



President John Lofland will call the meeting to order at 2:00 PM, Sunday, October 10, 2004, at the Hattie Weber Museum of Davis

6. New Business & Roundtable discussion on the emerging conflict between densification of the 1917 City and historic preservation



Will enlightened ideas emerge?

from JOHN LOFLAND

In its almost two years of existence, the DHS has achieved many things. Not least of these is a web site on which those achievements are displayed in detail.

But, as experienced by other new organizations, the initial burst of exuberance and novelty has begun to wane. The realities of long-slog have set in.

One part of this reality is a recognition that the number of people interested in doing DHS work in a regular way is very small, perhaps too small to sustain a full organization.

As I said at our Second annual meeting on November 16, 2003 and again at our February 13, 2004 meeting, we therefore need to downsize.

No one has objected to this direction. So we will move farther down this road at our Third Annual meeting on Sunday, October 10, 2 PM at the Hattie Weber Museum of Davis.

I propose the following agenda. Feel free to ask for changes

and additions prior to the meeting or at its start.

Proposed Agenda

1. Adoption of an Agenda
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of May 2 (held at the Yolo County Archives), Sharla Harrington
3. Treasurer's report, Dennis Dingemans
4. Confirmation of Officers and Members of the Board of Directors. As agreed on by consent at the meeting of February 13, 2004, all officers and board members will continue in office until resignation requires a replacement. At that point, remaining Board members will appoint a new person to the vacant position.

At this time, I know of only one person who has said he/she will not continue in office at term's end. That is me. My two year term ends at the Annual Meeting and I do not want to continue as President. I do want, though, to continue to manage the web site and the email lists and otherwise to be actively involved.

The six other members of the Board should, therefore, help organize an effort to appoint a new DHS President. Collectively and indi-

vidually in some cases. I have asked members of the Board to take action on this matter.

5. Committee Reports from those committees that desire to report. The committees are:
 1. Education, Sharla Harrington & Mark DuPree
 2. Research, John Lofland
 3. Publication, Lyn Lofland
 4. Preservation, Merrily DuPree
 5. Archives, Mary Ann Harrison
 6. Newsletter, Jim Becket
 7. Membership/Publicity, Jane Williamson Lewis
 8. and 9. Website and email, John Lofland

6. New Business & Roundtable discussion on the emerging conflict between densification of the 1917 City and historic preservation. I am inviting informed residents and observers of the four downtown areas to attend and to report on recent developments (pun intended) and lines of action in their respective neighborhoods. After these reports, discussion will be "roundtable."

Brouhaha Over the Terminal Hotel Exhibit in the Chen Building

by John Lofland

The City permit to build the "Chen Building" required a publicly accessible "didactic display of the Terminal Hotel Building as well as the 'Davis Arches' mural" in the building. The owners were required to contribute up to \$3,000 to pay for it.

The task of developing the display was assigned to the Historical Resources Management Commission (HRMC), which passed the task to a subcommittee and staff.

In May of this year, HRMC staff person Esther Polito asked me if the project could use a number of my digitized images in the display, which would be in a wall case in the lobby of the Chen Building.

I agreed to provide whatever images they wanted and made a number of suggestions for images and objects.

Time went by and in July a staff assistant sent me a list of images the project wanted under the caption "the focus of the display is the history of the 2nd and G area." Indeed, most of the pictures requested had *nothing* to do with the Terminal Building or the Arch Mural. Several were of G Street long before the building was even constructed.

I wrote back that the display so conceived subverted the clear language of condition 15 (quoted above). Because it did, I withdrew from my agreement to help them.

In my letter of withdrawal, I suggested the designers were engaged in some classic tactics of sanitizing history, those of changing the topic, diluting the focus, and distracting attention. I suggested that it would be good to read James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America*, which is a detailed analysis of falsehoods and distortions in public displays of history.

According to the minutes of the HRMC meeting of July 19, "staff stated that it could be preferable to find an independent third party to compose the text for the display. Commission concurred, and recommended by consensus that staff seek independent assistance." In addition, the minutes say the "Council may provide clarification of the focus" (read soften the requirement).

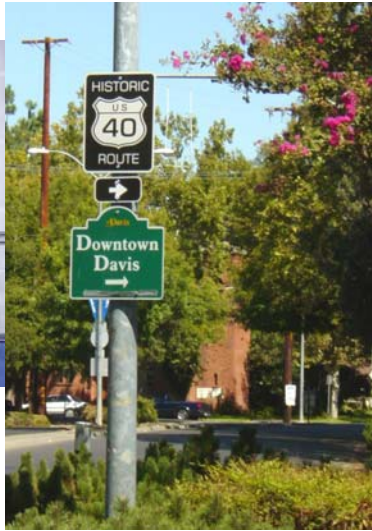
Stay tuned. The most interesting parts of this little saga are yet to come!

The problem, of course, is that there is no way to make a "didactic display" of the building and the mural without offending a great many people. The interesting part will be: Who will they decide to offend?



The demolition of the Terminal Hotel Building and the Arch Mural on the North wall. This picture taken from the cover of John Lofland's book, "Demolishing a Historic Hotel. A Sociology of Preservation Failures in Davis, California." It is rather graphic by itself.

Historic US 40 Signs in Davis & Where's 99? By Jim Becket



Above is one of the "Historic US Route 40," located on the corner of Russell and B Streets.

As predicted in an article by Maddy Ryen in the Davis Enterprise dated July 19, 2004, Historic Route 40 signs are now visible in Davis. They are sprinkled along Russell Blvd., Fifth St., B St., First, then under the historic RR crossing and on out to I80, true to the historic route. (Admittedly the route looks a little different

now, but the general path is the same.) There are signs (yet) on the routes leading in or out of town.

If historic highway routes are important enough in Davis to warrant special signs, is it possible that historic 99 should be so recognized as well? The two followed the same path through Davis, but split at the "Davis Y" (113 and Russell). A sign visible in one of the photographs of the "Subway" in Lofland and Haig's "Davis California 1910s-1940s" shows a sign with both markers. "Old 99" connected Davis with the rest of Yolo County to the North, and rem-

nants of it, scattered along I-5, may be traveled all the way to the Colusa County line and beyond, even in the State of Washington.

In rural areas, the sign posts declare the route, where it still exists, to be "Old Highway 99," or "Old Highway 99W" depending on location. (In Northern California, Hwy 99 split into 99E and 99W in Sacramento, with 99E going North through Chico and then West, rejoining 99W at Orland.)

In terms of North-South travel, "Old 99" was just as significant for Davis as "Old 40" was for East-West travel.



The above picture is taken from Lofland and Haig, "Images of America, Davis California, 1910s-1940s" (Page 17) with a blow-up of the highway sign which is on the far left of the original photograph.

And Then There's the Historic Richards Blvd Underpass

Included in the picture above is another topic of great debate in our history, the Richards Blvd Underpass. No matter what you may think of it — love it or hate it — it is a permanent part of our historical heritage, integral with the historic roads which were funneled through it.

Now that "above ground historic marker signage" has become legitimate, it may be appropriate to consider doing something to visually indicate why a less than attractive RR underpass, which creates car and bicycle traffic hazards, is historically important. It also involves, of course, the RR,

around which much of Davis history revolves.

In the same vein, there is nothing anywhere to depict the history of the Davis Y, which was the transfer point for public transportation, other than the RR, for many years. Is it time to recognize, in a visible way, other means of transportation than the bicycle in our past?

Infill, cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

neighborhood. This house, pictured below, is now part of the same "Planned Development



project" and its fate is being considered along with 1021 5th.

Where do things stand at the moment? Plans are under consideration by the decision making bodies of the City. The minutes of the June 21 Historical Resources Management Commission (DHRMC) meeting note the following:

The applicant intends to

1. Retain the existing structure at 1021 5th.
2. Remove the accessory buildings and
3. the house at 511 J.
4. Repair existing materials on 1021 5th.
5. Add 2 duplexes designed to look like individual structures

with individual garages.

Neighbors' comments:

1. Other high density projects have caused frequent problems with noise and partying.
2. Concern that there is not enough parking to accommodate the number of cars that might accompany the high density development.
3. Expressed considerable concern over the removal of the house at 511 J, maintaining that it is not too small and "in good keeping with the character of the neighborhood."

Commissioners also had comments and recommendations:

1. Agreed by consensus that attaching the house to the garage (as proposed) "would detract from its historic character."
2. "Strongly preferred" that it be maintained and high-

lighted as a separate structure.

3. Agreed it would be preferable to retain the 511 J Street house.
4. While agreeing that the "massing and scale of the duplexes is appropriate to the neighborhood,"
5. They are not in proportion to lot sizes.
6. Agreed by consensus that their preference would be to retain the 511 J St. house.

The next step is the Planning Commission, a totally different body than the DHRMC, which is playing by, and interpreting through, a different set of "guidelines."

Clearly, there is no universally understood city-wide policy on infill, period, let alone in the "Olds." The terms "infill" and "overfill" have been coined in the street, while "densification" and "sprawl" are used in planning circles.

The City will now hire a consultant to come up with new solutions.



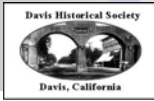
The fate of 511 J Street is really up in the air. Demolition, additions on the back, and even moving have all been proposed.



There is no question that there is open space behind and to the side of 1021 5th and 511 J. The question is how much openness will be left after infill.



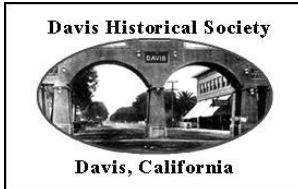
437 J Street sits across the street from 1021 5th and is also under consideration as an infill site. Will it's generous backyard, as shown in the above picture and is characteristic of the neighborhood, remain as open space, or be infilled?



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We're on the web!
davishistoricalsociety.org

The Purposes of the Davis Historical Society*

The purposes of the DHS are to carry on programs of public education on the history of Davis, to encourage historical preservation in the Davis area, and to promote research and publication on Davis history, including the archiving of historical documents and artifacts.

The first letters of the five words summarizing these purposes spell the word "paper." These words are: Publication, Archives, Preservation, Education, Research.

* As listed on the Web

Board of Directors:

President, **John Lofland**; Secretary, **Sharla Harrington**; Treasurer, **Dennis Dingemans**; Vice-President, **Phyllis Haig**

Directors at Large:

Mary Ann Harrison, Audrey Hastings, Richard Hastings

Infill in The Olds: Character Assassination? An Editorial

Character. Historic Character.

Just words? Or do they have relevance and meaning in Davis today? We hope to imply that by calling this Davis Historical Society newsletter *davisvilletoday*. We believe the DHS should answer that question in the affirmative. (And we'll stick with the title, at least for awhile, even though President John wants us to realize that nobody pays any attention to newsletter titles anyway.)

The term **character** appears frequently in discussions relative to proposed changes in Davis. Often it is prefaced by the term **small town**. Retaining our "small town character" is important to a lot of folks. But to try to define the character of Davis is difficult at best,

and the small town footprint was lost years ago.

When considered neighborhood by neighborhood, however, the task is more feasible. And certainly, in the historic neighborhoods, those included within the 1917 footprint of Davisville, for example, the task is even easier. The term then becomes **historic character**, as used by both neighbors and commissioners in the discussion of the Planned Development Project at 5th and J (pages 1 & 5).

But competing with the preservation of the "historic character of the Olds" is the popular concept of Infill. While there are infill guidelines, the agendas of the DHRMC, the Planning Commission, and, on appeal, the City Council, prove

that the guidelines are not being observed to the extent or manner we would like.

Character assassination is frequently proposed.

On the other side, there is the pressure to densify to ease growth headaches. Then there are the economic realities of restoration and infill. Projects must be at least paid for and in the case of infill developers, profit turned.

Do we have a cohesive picture of what is in character in the Olds? If so, is it articulated to those planning infill sites? Can we do more "upfront" rather than just waiting for hearings and protesting piecemeal? Should the DHS be involved directly? **Will item #6 of President John's agenda provide answers?**