

Post/Hazeltine Associates Architectural Historians

213 #A, West Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101

805-682-5751

posthazeltine@cox.net

In Progress Review and Comments

De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Project

1.0 PREVIOUS STUDIES AND BACKGROUND

In 2008 Post-Hazeltine Associates prepared a Phase 1 Historic Structures/Sites Report for the City of Santa Barbara Redevelopment Agency as part of a proposed project to renovate De La Guerra Plaza. The report included a historic context study, descriptions, identification of contributing and non-contributing resources and an application of the significance criteria set forth by the City of Santa Barbara for historic property studies. The report was reviewed and accepted by the City of Santa Barbara Historic Landmarks Commission. In 2020, Post/Hazeltine Associates was retained by the City of Santa Barbara and RRM Architects, to provide consulting services for a proposed project to rehabilitate the plaza. Once preliminary plans have been completed Post/Hazeltine Associates will provide an updated Phase 1 HSR and a Phase 2 HSR evaluating the proposed project's consistency with relevant preservation guidelines.

Since 2020, Post/Hazeltine Associates has reviewed draft plan sets provided by RRM. As part of our review of the draft plans the following comments have been provided to RRM and the City. Please note these comments do not represent a historic preservation review, instead, they were intended to offer guidance to the design team.

De La Guerra Plaza and the Placita Plans

Existing Conditions

As noted in the 2008 Phase 1 HSR, the existing expanse of turf was installed in 1924, after the 19th century City Hall located at the center of the plaza was demolished and replaced with the existing City Hall designed by E. Keith Lockard. The configuration of the lawn has been modified at least two times since the mid-1920s as documented by period photographs. Modifications included: Altering the width of the paving on the northeast side of the plaza, which originally had a jog near its northwest end, and revising the east end of the plaza to its current curved configuration. A review of period photographs taken between the late 19th century and the 2000s indicates the plaza's planting scheme has been modified several times. The oldest surviving plantings are the California Pepper Tree in front of the plaza entrance to City Hall planted sometime in the 19th century and a Washingtonia Palm located near the east end of the Plaza, likely planted in the late 19th century or early 20th century. The existing palms

appear to have been planted sometime after the early 1950s. A sandstone boulder and its bronze plaque identifying De La Guerra House and De La Guerra Plaza as a California Historical Landmark, located at the west end of the plaza was installed in 1950. Existing curbing appears to date from the 1920s and later. As detailed in the Phase 1 HSR, a row of 19th century buildings, which once extended east from City Hall to the News Press Building have been demolished.

Draft Plans

- Paving materials have been simplified and reduced in number which is beneficial. Continuing 'crazy quilt' style paving from De La Guerra House and its paseo to the Plaza is appropriate as this material and style of paving is characteristic of the Spanish Colonial Revival style which characterizes El Paseo. Brick pavers are an appropriate material for walkways and the 00 block of West De La Guerra Street, as this material was often employed in the late 19th century for paving. Scored concrete was often used in early 20th century to pave sidewalks and other public spaces. Concrete sidewalks and curbing surrounding de la Guerra Plaza were installed between the 1920s and 1950s. Consequently, concrete is a supportable material. While it is a period-appropriate material, the finish, color and scoring pattern will require careful consideration to ensure it is compatible with its surroundings. Alternatively, the center of the plaza could be paved with patterned concrete emulating flagstone, which would be period appropriate.
- While many earlier schemes for De La Guerra Plaza included a water feature in the form of a fountain, one was not installed. The placement of the water feature is appropriate. However, its design should be simplified to be contextual with the character of the plaza, which is reductive. While this type of interactive water feature is not "historical," the insertion of a more contemporary feature can be supportable if it is designed to recall the simplicity of its surroundings.
- The insertion of a freestanding loggia on the north side of the plaza is supportable provided its placement does not impair remnants of the Yorba-Abadie Adobe. Inserting a loggia at this location would help define the historic boundary of the Plaza, which was impaired when a row of buildings defining this side of De La Guerra Plaza was demolished. The scale and placement of the loggia appear to be appropriate. However, the design of the structure can be made more contextual with its setting by referencing photographs of the Yorba-Abadie Adobe for materials and design features that would recall, but not copy the Adobe's porch, which faced De La Guerra Plaza.
- The incorporation of additional plantings and raised planters would not impair the Plaza provided their placement and design is appropriate to their surroundings. Generally, the layout of plantings is sympathetic to the character of the Plaza as they avoid a rigid linear design that would be out of character with this space's informal nature.
- While it would be preferable to retain the Washingtonia palm in-situ, its relocation to the Anacapa Street elevation of City Hall is supportable provided a plaque is installed noting the history of this tree.
- Relocating the flagpoles would not substantially impair the historical integrity of the Plaza.

- The sandstone boulder and its plaque should be incorporated into the renovated plaza, though it does not have to be retained at its existing location.
- The design of the restroom building in the Placita is appropriate in regard to materials, scale, massing, and materials.

City Hall's Anacapa Street frontage and East Canon Perdido Street frontage

- The Anacapa Street entrance to City Hall is currently composed of turf, specimen trees hedging and plantings, installed since the 1920s. The proposed alterations would retain the specimen trees and relocate a large aloe while removing hedging and turf. In part the existing landscaping dates to the period of significance.
- The replacement of the hedging with a sandstone block wall is supportable provided the wall is detailed to emulate existing sandstone detailing at and adjacent to City Hall. Blocks should be roughly dressed, with a capstone and they should be laid in horizontal courses.
- While turf has been a feature of the entry area since the 1920s, its removal would not appear to represent a substantial impairment of the setting of City Hall, De La Guerra Plaza or the adjacent historic adobes. The incorporation of a demonstration garden in place of the lawn is supportable provided it is designed to complement its setting in materials, design, and appearance.

De La Guerra Street

- The use of brick paving is historically appropriate.
- The use of a paving type emulating the appearance of decomposed granite is supportable as it would visually link the De La Guerra House's courtyard with the plaza.
- The design of bollards along the West Del La Guerra Street side of City Hall is supportable provided their design and number are not visually obtrusive.

Sincerely,



Pamela Post, Ph.D.
Senior Partner,
Post/Hazeltine Associates