



Memorandum

TO: RULES COMMITTEE

**FROM: Councilmember
Pierluigi Oliverio**

**SUBJECT: PRESERVING RESIDENTIAL
NEIGHBORHOODS**

DATE: April 23, 2008

Approved

Date

4-23-08

RECOMMENDATION

I respectfully ask the City Council to direct the Administration to prepare a work load assessment and report back to the Council in June 2008 with this information to determine if the Planning Department has the resources available to research a concept that would provide further protection to distinctive homes and residential neighborhoods in San Jose.

PURPOSE

The purpose of my memo is to find out if the Planning Department's workload would allow for staff to research a new concept that would provide another level of oversight to help preserve residential neighborhood character.

BACKGROUND

San Jose is home to distinctive architecture which has made many neighborhoods in San Jose have a unique character. Some of those neighborhoods/areas include; Eichlers in Willow Glen, Victorians in the Downtown, ranch homes in the Almaden Valley, as well as various different housing throughout the city.

At a time where San Jose is growing and many people are remodeling homes and/or adding homes to existing residential neighborhoods by subdividing lots; the unique character of our neighborhoods is disappearing. In an attempt to balance private property rights and to preserve the unique and/or historical character of our neighborhoods; I would like the council to direct the Administration to add to the Department Work Plan, (to work on) a concept that will provide an extra level of protection to homes and/or neighborhoods that are distinctive in San Jose.

In an attempt to measure support for such a concept, I held a Preservation Forum last June with the Planning Department, for District 6 residents. The forum was held on a Saturday morning (10:00 AM to 12:00 PM) where Sally Zarnowitz, the Historic Preservation Officer for the City of San Jose presented the current historic resources available to the community to add historic protection to their homes and/or residential neighborhoods. Over 50 residents attended.

Although current options are available for the community to utilize in preserving their homes and/or neighborhoods, residents shared at the forum that these options are not readily accessible because of high costs that are involved, the requirement of work from an outside paid professional and that the entire process requires a great deal of time. These hurdles create obstacles that limit members of the community to partake in preservation.

After the community meeting in June, I met internally with Planning Staff (John Poindexter, Akoni Danielson and Sally Zarnowitz) where I shared that I would like to pursue having another concept available to residents titled "Neighborhoods of Distinction." Planning staff was helpful and formulated a powerpoint presentation discussing a few possible outcomes that they felt could benefit the community interested in preserving their neighborhoods that would not be as cumbersome as the current policies.

In December 2007, I held a second community meeting regarding this topic. Over sixty residents attended this meeting as well. The Planning Staff presented the powerpoint regarding their ideas and concepts which was well received by the community.

As a result of these two community meetings/forums regarding preservation of homes and neighborhoods, members in the community formed an "ad-hoc" group titled "Neighborhoods of Distinction" (NOD) committee. This group has started researching various concepts that they feel would be helpful for planning staff. In addition, this group is growing with new members who live throughout San Jose.

In an attempt to gather additional feedback regarding this concept; I put together an on-line preservation survey to see if this subject was of interest to others who did not attend the forums. The survey consisted of 20 questions and could only be completed by one computer in an effort to limit duplication. I also made sure that the questions were approved by Planning Staff before the survey went public.

On April 2, 2008 I held my third public meeting regarding this topic where residents from District 3 and 9 joined in the discussion. At this meeting, I shared the feedback from the survey and the next steps I was going to take regarding this process. As of April 9, 2008, over 500 people have completed the survey. Although the survey was targeted to District 6 residents; residents in district 3, 9 and 10 also completed the survey and have shown an interest in this topic.

I have made a diligent effort to move slowly and thoughtfully regarding this topic. I tend to believe that preserving our historic and/or unique homes and residential neighborhoods is a concept that is shared with many people in San Jose. As we know, San Jose is home to History San Jose Park, has a Historic Landmark Commissions Committee and currently has conservation areas like Naglee Park and Palm Haven; evidence of the City of San Jose's dedication to preservation and attention to history. The precise idea or details regarding what a "Neighborhood of Distinction" could or would be is what the Planning Department would be charged in researching if their workload allowed.

Historic Preservation should not be limited to just certain areas of San Jose. Every area in San Jose, including the Eastside, Westside and other areas should not be overlooked regarding preservation. My proposal today would direct staff to continue investigating the "Neighborhoods of Distinction" model concept that they have started to develop with their powerpoint presentation. In order for the Planning Department to add this project to their work plan and reset existing work priorities; they must have direction from council. Thank you for your consideration.