

## Davis Historical Society



Davis, California

davisvilletoday.

### Special points of interest:

- Public comment on the scope of the EIR may be made through Feb. 6
- Become informed—"The Project" will have significant impact on the area's historical character
- Four visions—# 4 recommended
- The vision for 3rd between B and University is for a "distinctive urban village."
- The EIR will focus on the cumulative impact on cultural resources, traffic conditions, parking supply, and aesthetics.

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## B Street/3rd Street Up Again by Editor Jim Becket

As it was almost a year ago, "The B Street Visioning Process," or what is now the "B and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets Project," is before the public. The project was presented at the Resources Management Commission (HRMC) meeting January 23, 2006, to solicit comments on the scope of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which will be prepared. **Commissioners and the public have through February 6, 2006, to comment.** Staff anticipates that the EIR will be released in late February for a 45 day public comment period. There will be an EIR hearing and opportunity to comment on draft amendments to the Core Area Specific Plan and Design Guidelines prior to a City Council Hearing.

What is reported here is relatively brief, but much detail is available on the City's web site at [www.cityofdavis.org](http://www.cityofdavis.org). John Lofland also has a related article posted on the DHRG website, [www.davishistoryresearch.org](http://www.davishistoryresearch.org). DHS members are encouraged to become well informed, as the Project will have considerable impact on the historic character of the area. The overhead view of

the area, complete with house numbers, is shown on page 5. It is important to note that the geographic area now included in "the project" is much smaller than that discussed as the potential project area a year ago.

The area includes two Designated Historical Resources, 337 B (The McDonald House) and 232 3<sup>rd</sup> (The Eggleston House). Contract consultant Circa: Historic Property Development, San Francisco, indicates two others are eligible for designation: 301 B (The Scott home/Ciocolat) and 311 B Street. In all, 17 of the 22 properties have structures built before 1945.

**Background and Visions:** City Staff have developed and/or clarified four Visions, one of which is being recommended. In the brief descriptions which follow, all items in quotes are from the staff report.

**Vision One – Maintain Traditional Pattern.** This vision maintains the existing zoning and Guidelines on B Street, with modest increases in housing coming through development of cottages on the alley. Minor modifications in zoning and Guidelines would be required to "enhance 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

as a mixed use 'commercial village'."

**Vision Two - Modify Traditional Pattern.** B Street remains primarily residential, but with "new attached two and three story town homes and two story accessory dwellings in 'carriage house' addresses over garages along the alley." Vision Two is similar to Vision One re: 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

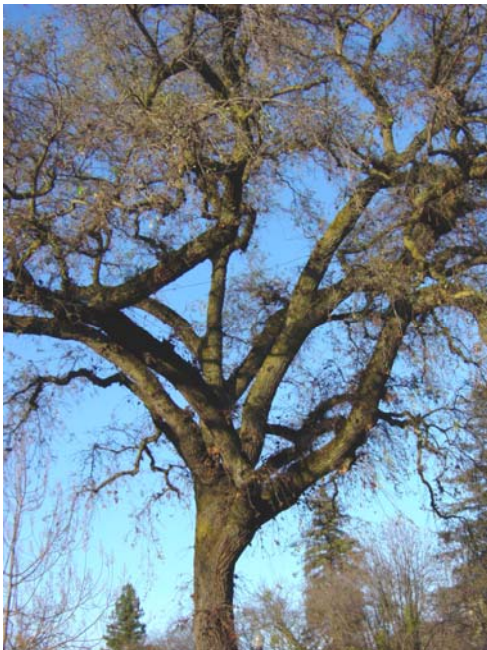
**Vision Three – New Development Pattern.** This is the most drastic vision. It would require extensive modification of existing zoning and guidelines and would require a district approach to be effective. The advantages, according to the Staff report, are numerous: "a measurable increase in housing supporting infill policies" "3<sup>rd</sup> Street becomes a mixed-use address and a livelier pedestrian connection between the campus and downtown." "It provides ample added motivation for redevelopment of existing single-family lots on B Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street."

**Vision Four – Special Character District—The Recommended Vision:** Even though not as drastic as Vision Three, Vision Four still requires extensive modifications of existing zoning

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## The Downtown Davis Treewalk, by Ruth Williams, Executive Director of TREE Davis

Davis' sizable tree canopy is no accident. Our urban forest is the product of over one hundred years of planting, maintenance, and replanting. The City of Davis boasts an extensive tree canopy because of careful management, preservation, and when necessary, tree replacement. We can thank city



*“Gazing up at the branches of the stately Valley Oak at Fourth and C Streets, one cannot help but appreciate the beauty and value of our city’s tree canopy.”*

planners, landscape architects, and city councils over the years for incorporating trees into the planning and building process.

For many people, the most loved trees are the oldest, stateliest trees in town. As apparent from the amount of publicity following the loss of the jagged tree at Covell and Pole Line, Davis residents feel very connected to our older trees. Many of our largest speci-

men trees are located in downtown Davis, but often we walk right under them without appreciating their age, stature, and beauty. In an effort to raise awareness, and celebrate these specimen downtown trees, TREE Davis will be republishing the popular Downtown Treewalk Self-Guided Tour. Originally published in 1994, the Treewalk features beautiful landmark trees of several species, and contains interesting historical and scientific information about our local trees. The Treewalk is a fun, free activity for visitors and residents, and will encourage people to explore downtown Davis' many retail shops and restaurants along the way. In addition, the Treewalk will provide a refresher on some of the downtown's interesting history.

The mission of TREE Davis is to inspire the people of our community to understand the importance of our urban forest. Gazing up at the branches of the stately Valley Oak at Fourth and C Streets, one cannot help but appreciate the beauty and value of our city's tree canopy. After visiting twelve specimens of this magnitude, residents are some times awe struck at how little we look around and truly appreciate our landmark Heritage trees. The Treewalk reminds us to stop and smell the Carob (at Third and D Streets).

If beauty and seasonal interest aren't enough, trees benefit Davis in many ways. Trees shade us in the summer, and offer wind breaks in the winter. Trees placed strategically near buildings can reduce electricity costs by up to 30 percent. As well as being a carbon sink, trees reduce particulates in

the air and hydrocarbon emissions from parked vehicles. Interestingly, recent research suggests that shoppers in well-treed retail districts will stay, on average, 2 hours longer, and pay 11% more for goods and services than in areas devoid of a tree canopy. The City of Davis recently renewed its commitment to our urban forest by adopting the regional Greenprint: a plan to double our region's tree canopy.

There are many reasons to celebrate trees. This year TREE Davis invites you to join the celebration by picking up a copy of the Tree walk at the Naturalist, and getting to know our Downtown Heritage trees. The Treewalk will be available March 7<sup>th</sup>, which is also California Arbor Day.

*Visiting this towering (and leaning) Foothill Pine gives the opportunity to visit the Dresbach-Hunt-Boyer Mansion as well.*



## Water Water Everywhere: Flooding in 19th Century Yolo County, edited by Lyn Lofland

Between December 4 of 1969 and May 10, 1973, Joann Leach Larkey (author of *Davisville '68: The History and Heritage of the City of Davis, Yolo County*, Davis, CA: The Davis Historical and Landmarks Commission, 1969) published 164 columns in a *Davis Enterprise* series titled "Portraits of the Past." This is the third of the DHS newsletters' samplings from this wonderful historic resource.

**Editorial Introduction:** Recent regional newspaper discussions of flood dangers and levee weaknesses in the Valley remind us all that we live in an engineered landscape that, in its pre-engineered state, was, during every wet winter, an "Inland Sea" (e.g., Robert Lloyd Kelley, *Battling the Inland Sea*. UC Press, 1998). As the following extracts from three Larkey columns (February 12, 1970; December 30, 1971; January 6, 1972) make clear, 19th century residents of our area did not require newspapers to "remind" them of flood dangers--they lived with flood dangers.

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The graphic to the right is a stark reminder. (Additional pictures of high water in the area may be seen at the Hattie Weber )

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There are many historical references which make one grateful for present day highway improvements and flood control projects. As early as 1849, Lt. George H. Derby of the U.S. Army corps of engineers found it impossible to cross the tule basin from Sacramento to Putah creek during a heavy rain storm. Ignoring advice to the contrary, he and his topographical survey team narrowly escaped with their lives when Putah creek suddenly overflowed its banks. During the great floods of 1862, there were numerous accounts recorded of tragedy, heroism and unbelievable feats of navigation--such as the sailing of a sloop from Washington (Broderick)

to Yolo City (Woodland), an event described by George H. Swingle whose ranch was four miles east of Davisville. (*Davis Enterprise*, January 6, 1972)

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...[During] the years 1868, 1869, 1871, and 1872. . . annual rainfalls averaged 25 inches and major flooding caused widespread damage.

Twelve inches of rain fell in the final month of 1867 and excerpts from the *Yolo Democrat*, reprinted in the *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County* (DePue, 1879), noted, "On Sunday, December 22, 1867, Putah Creek was very high, one foot of water being noted resting on the floor of Jerome C. Davis' barn [near first and A streets], a higher point than it was

ever known to attain before." On January 4, 1868, the *Democrat* also noted, "We learn that one day this week the water stood within four inches of the counter in the Tule House [then located about six miles due west of the town of Washington on the Sacramento River]." William Dresbach [merchant and Davisville's first postmaster] and five other men were reportedly returning from Sacramento during this flood when their boat capsized. Their lives were miraculously saved by an unnamed young boy in a small duck boat who came to their rescue. (*Davis Enterprise*, February 12, 1970)

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[From a late December, 1871 issue of the *Yolo Democrat*]: "Woodland is

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**THE FLOOD NEAR DAVISVILLE**, circa 1900. This photograph shows the raging current that washed out the railroad tracks east of Davisville during one of the recurring floods which eliminated all but nautical modes of transportation between that place and Sacramento. Silhouetted against the flood waters are a group of local gentlemen who fearlessly ventured beyond the bulwark of sandbags, lower right. Although this pictorial record does not exactly portray the advantages of living in

the Davis area, it is believed to have been taken by Albert J. Plant, charter secretary of the Davisville chamber of commerce in 1905. His collection of glass negatives, it was recently learned, was given by Mrs. Forrest A. Plant to the late Flora McDonald, who served as chamber secretary and local historian in the 1930's and 1940's. The above photo was reproduced for the Davis Historical collection by W. A. Westgate.



## Information From Other Groups

### Davis Historical Society Upcoming Events By Wendy and Merrily

March 9, 2006 is the date set for the next member-wide meeting of the Davis Historical Society. The meeting will be held at the Hattie Weber Museum on Thursday from 7 PM until 9 PM. We are anticipating a very short business meeting and are allowing time for a guest speaker followed by a light dessert. The meeting is open to the public and will be noticed in the Enterprise. For more information please email Wendy Nelson [wen-jnel@aol.com](mailto:wen-jnel@aol.com) or Merrily Dupree [mmdupree@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mmdupree@sbcglobal.net).

May 2006 is National Preservation Month. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, "National Preservation Month serves as a showcase for our country's diverse and unique heritage. Thousands of state and local community groups will honor their distinct histories through various activities and bring historic preservation to the forefront of Americans' daily lives by emphasizing the vital importance of protecting our nation's past." This year's theme is *Sustain America – Vision, Economics & Preservation*. A variety of events are being planned nation-wide.

In an effort to join the celebration, the

Preservation Committee of the Davis Historical Society is planning an historic tour in Davis during the month of May. Although still in the planning stages, we are considering a tour of "Backyard Abodes." Backyard additions, such as home offices, studios, Mother's in law apartments, or rental units in the Downtown area add to the economic value of the property while preserving the front façade and character of our historic bungalows and other small houses. These small backyard additions provide much needed space for a family to grow and in some cases provide additional income as a rental; issues that we feel address the preservation month theme.

Co-chairs of the Preservation Committee, Wendy Nelson and Merrily Dupree, are looking for volunteers to help plan the event (recruit homes), serve as tour guides, and serve tea and cookies at the tour reception. For more information please email Wendy Nelson or Merrily Dupree (email addresses as above), or feel free to call Wendy at 756-4606.

### Davis History Research Group Forms By John Lofland

Davis now has five Davis history-minded organizations. Following on the Library Club, the Yolo County

Historical Society, the Davis Historical Society, and the Friends of the Hattie Weber, there is now the Davis History Research Group.

The first four focus primarily on education or preservation. In contrast, the new group focuses only on advancing research on the history of Davis.

The forming members of the Group are Jim Becket, Merrily DuPree, Michael Harrington, Sharla Harrington, Lyn H. Lofland, John Lofland (Coordinator), Mel Russell, Ann Scheuring, John Skarstad, Valerie Vann, David Vaught, and Bruce Winterhalder.

The Group's initial project is compiling a series of bibliographic chapters on aspects of Davis history. These chapters are published and free to the public on the Group's web site at [www.davishistoryresearch.org](http://www.davishistoryresearch.org).

The titles of the initial chapters are shown in the accompanying "screen shot" from the Group's web site.

The Group invites anyone who thinks there is a topic in Davis history not covered that should be to compile a chapter on that topic for publication on the web site.

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isolated so far as railroad and mail facilities are concerned. We have had no mails since Monday. The sudden rise in Putah Creek, which came up to eighteen feet in a few hours, has played havoc with the railroad in several places. The approaches to Willow Slough bridge, between this place and Davisville, gave way so that trains cannot cross; though we learn the bridge itself remains uninjured. Portions of the road between Davisville and Sacramento were washed away, so that where before there was an embankment of several feet now is a deep gorge, washed out by the force of the current. The Railroad Company has over a hundred men at work repairing, and if no more breaks occur it is hoped the connection between those points will be made good by Saturday. Between Davisville and Dixon the railroad has also been considerably damaged by the overflow from Putah Creek; and we learn that about Bridgeport considerable damage was done. . ." (*Davis Enterprise*, December 30, 1971)

On February 24, 1872, the *Yolo Democrat* reported. . . that "The storm of Wednesday night threw such a volume of water into Putah Creek that it again overflowed its banks and submerged the railroad a short distance below Davisville, which prevented the train from coming up Thursday night." (*Davis Enterprise*, January 6, 1972)

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and guidelines and would require a district approach to be effective.

**Staff acknowledges the “change in the neighborhood context of the historic buildings.” in both Visions 3 and 4.**

The Vision for 3<sup>rd</sup> between B and University is to enhance the area as a “distinctive ‘urban village’ that goes beyond simply improving the connection between downtown and campus to create a unique character district. This mixed use concept emphasizes new development that blends the *intellectual capacity at the university with entrepreneurial spirit of the downtown in a high quality urban village environment* that establishes a focal point for the neighborhood.” (emphasis added)

The Vision for B Street across from Central Park is to enhance the street “with a built form that establishes a stronger visual edge (for) the park while providing land uses that support the community’s desires for compact development in a manner compatible with the existing neighborhood.” For B Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Vision is to enhance the street “with a built form that establishes a prominent visual presence to the street while providing a variety of housing types and uses . . .”

Features of the Special Character District include the following:

- On 3<sup>rd</sup>: mixed-use “creative live-work village” which would be predominately 2 stories at street level and up to 4 stories.
- On B: townhouses/condos on B and alley (2 – 3 stories) south of 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Row/townhouses on B and alley (2 – 3 stories) north of 3<sup>rd</sup>.

It appears that the “built form that establishes a stronger visual edge for the park” referred to above means up to 3 stories of medium

density housing facing the park. Although it is not clearly stated, it may be that the difference between the “built form” referred to on B north of 3<sup>rd</sup> and the “built form” on B south of 3<sup>rd</sup> is that there will be at least minimal set back and landscaping north of 3<sup>rd</sup>; but that the “prominent visual presence to the street” south of 3<sup>rd</sup> basically means there will be sidewalks and buildings, with virtually no set back.

**The Scope of the Environmental Impact Report**—Another hefty attachment to the Staff Report is the “Environmental Checklist and Initial Study” completed by the Community Development Department. The contact person is Sarah Worley, AICP (530-757-5610). It is detailed and includes a checklist where aspects of the project, such as Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources are determined to have either Potentially Significant Impact, Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporation, Less Than Significant Impact, or No Impact.

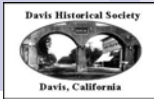
Although the majority of project impacts are deemed to be less than significant or can be made less than significant through the City of Davis’ standard conditions of approval for new developments, it has been determined that there could be significant cumulative impacts on area **cultural resources, traffic conditions, parking supply, and aesthetics**. Therefore, these four impact areas will be analyzed in a Focused Program EIR.

**Historic Research and Cultural Resources Evaluation:** The final attachment is an evaluation of each property in the Study area conducted for the City by Sheila McElroy of Circa: Historic Property Development, One Sutter St. #910,

San Francisco, CA 94104. It provides supplemental information to previous inventories that have been done, but is specific to the project area. Most of the area was in two farms originally owned by Mary McDonald and Lucy Eggleston, whose homes are both Designated Historic Resources at 337 B Street and 232 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. McElroy provides a detailed account of each house in terms of when it was purchased from McDonald or Eggleston, when the house was built, and by whom.

In addition to finding 301 B and 232 3<sup>rd</sup> eligible for designation, McElroy concludes her findings by stating that even though most of the properties in the area do not meet the City of Davis criteria for designation, they **“should be carefully considered in the planning process. Extensive removal or inappropriate alterations of these properties will diminish the integrity of the project area as they contribute to the setting of the identified Landmarks and Merit Resources. In addition, they contribute to the understanding of the historical development from Eggleston and McDonald farm tracts to University influenced housing development.”**

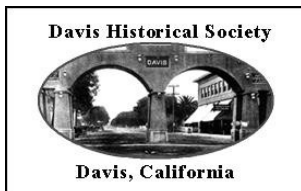




*Davisvilletoday.*

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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

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For help and suggestions on how to proceed in compiling a chapter, email the Group at: [dhrg-members@mailman.dcn.org](mailto:dhrg-members@mailman.dcn.org).

### **News From the Hattie Weber** **By Jim Becket**

Although the initial attempt to form a "Friends of the Hattie Weber" organization did not get off the ground, "Friends of the Hattie Weber" still exist as a group of volunteers under Jim Becket, Volunteer Coordinator at the Hattie Weber Museum. Interest Forms are available on the Bulletin Board at the Hattie Weber. Categories for which prospective volunteers might check are: "Friend on Call" (Occasional Misc'l Help), Museum Docent, Archive Assistant, Student Tour Guide, Scanning and Digitizing Files, Cataloging Data and Photos, Researching Files, Exhibit Design Assistant, Power Point Exhibit Designer. If you are interested but cannot get to a form, email Jim at [jimbecket@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jimbecket@sbcglobal.net).

The new exhibits, Causeway to the Carquinez, Putting Davis on the Roadmap and Early Hotels of Davis; plus the continuing 1905 exhibit, continue to draw visitors each Saturday. An addition to the "Road" exhibit, featuring a framed 1862 map on silk from the Chiles family will be completed in the near future.

Curator/Historian Phyllis Haig is available at the museum during regular Wednesday hours to answer general questions about Davis history, as well as to assist individuals interested in tracing their Davis ancestors.

### **Yolo County Culture, History and Art Center** **By Jim Becket**

The Yolo County Historical Society and the Yolo County Arts Council have joined together to submit an application

for a planning grant to the California Cultural Historic Endowment. The purpose of the grant is to develop a Yolo County Center to exhibit Yolo County's cultural and historical heritage. A sub-committee had been meeting since learning of the availability of the funds, but exciting developments occurred recently to allow the group to focus on real potential just in time to meet the January 31 deadline for the application.

First, the group became aware of the availability of a Victorian house in Woodland which must be moved in order for downtown development to take place. The house, pictured below, has been recently restored and is in very good condition. It could provide an excellent initial "home"



for the Center. Next, the group secured the promise from Yolo County of an unused property at 6th and Oak in Woodland to which the house could be moved. With these two tangibles in hand, the group

was able to move forward and the application is in the mail.

The goal is to create a working center with a museum of 16,000 square feet offering three aspects of service to the community. There will be permanent and rotating historical displays and permanent and rotating art exhibitions. Classrooms and lecture space are also planned. The cooperation of the County of Yolo and the City of Woodland has been outstanding.