

CHANGING THE ANDERSON BANK BUILDING WINDOWS IS NOT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The political signs of the "*Citizens & Merchants who care about Davis*" supporting a drastic, damaging remodeling of the Davis Landmark Anderson Bank Building assert that we don't "need more banks" downtown. This is a classic red herring: Nobody is advocating that the building be used as a bank today.

What **has** been asserted for a decade by city commissions, expert consultants, and others who care about preserving our historic resources, is that to comply with the federal guidelines (The Secretary of Interior's Standards), as required by both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the City ordinances that protect our environmental quality, **any adaptive reuse of a historic building should minimally impact or damage the features of the building that convey its original use, style and period.**

The major feature of the Anderson building that does that is the arched windows with their high sills: they're what make it look like a early 20th century bank, just as it is obvious from the windows of the western part of the building that section was designed for three retail shops. (Ironically, 2/3 of that retail part of the building is not currently occupied by retail, but a restaurant.)

The 1914 Landmark Anderson Bank Building, built by Davis "Founding Father" and entrepreneur J. B. Anderson, is a classic example of a multi-story 1900's mixed use Prairie Style commercial structure, and that period's new trend in bank architecture, meant to convey that banks were secure, reliable, dignified places where important financial business could be discreetly conducted.

If the windows are altered from "bank windows" to "retail windows", they will no longer convey the original purpose and style of that section of the building. A person couldn't see that originally it was a bank, not a store. It will have lost its most important character defining architectural feature, suffered additional material damage, and possibly even impaired structural integrity.

The point of the state and local regulations governing adaptive reuse of historic structures, from CEQA at the state level down through **Davis' General Plan (the city's "constitution")** is to maintain the public's significant interest in its cultural history and in reusing the material resources they embody by finding new uses for them that are compatible with those values.

This is best done by exercising some creativity in finding a use or tenant that is most suitable to the building and location, and least damaging to the historic structure, not one that requires beating an old building into

submission to accommodate a use that is marginally suitable to the building, location and customer base.

Such an unsuitable use will inevitably shortly disappear, leaving the community with an irreparably damaged Landmark: a classic case of sacrificing the long term public interest for speculative misguided short term private gain.

Contrary to the implication of the project proponents' signs, **the general public, future generations, and the adjacent neighborhoods are all stakeholders in the vitality, character and environmental quality of our downtown.** The vision for the downtown expressed in the City's General Plan and key Core Area planning documents place a high value on the elements that determine Davis' character. Our few remaining outstanding historic resources like the unique Landmark Anderson Bank Building are major contributors to that distinct character and environmental quality.

Downtown Davis has dozens of newer buildings designed with big low "retail" windows occupied by offices, service businesses, and restaurants rather than the retail they were designed for, including two of the very newest. Yet nobody is campaigning to run all these businesses out of downtown (along with the banks?), and replace them with pure retail.

A variety of new and respectfully, sensitively adapted historic architecture, occupied by a mix of retail, service, and arts & entertainment businesses serves all the stakeholders in our downtown. No single enterprise, and certainly not any tenant of the east section of the Anderson Bank Building is going to make or break Davis retail or the vitality of the downtown, or outweigh **the long term public interest in preserving our cultural and historical identity.**

We urge the Council to reject the current proposal to drastically remodel the Anderson Bank Building. Then let's all get back to the drawing boards and cooperate to find a genuinely creative use and suitable tenant for this outstanding cultural resource, one that will respect and celebrate it as a valuable community asset for years to come.

Endorsed by:

**THE DAVIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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