



Armando Bencomo <armando.bencomo@lacity.org>

Public Comments Not Uploaded Council File 21-0119

1 message

Nora Wright <nomaja@gmail.com>
Reply-To: clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org
To: clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org

Sat, Dec 4, 2021 at 6:07 PM

Please include this letter in the record for Council File 21-0119.

Please confirm receipt and inclusion in record completed.

**TALKING POINT 1:
THE CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION (CHC)
RECOMMENDED THE TAIX BUILDING BE
DESIGNATED**

Members of the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) are appointed by the City and widely respected as experts in their field. Their job is to review and consider (determine?) the merits of our City's historic resources. On January 26, 2021 the CHC unanimously voted to designate the TAIX building under criteria 1, which recognized the restaurant's significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic and social history of this community. Taix provides an extraordinary example of the Continental Dining experience, a popular trend from the 1960's. Taix is rare, one of the few surviving examples of this style remaining in Los Angeles; even recent modifications were made with meticulous effort to keep these interiors intact. For more than 60 years at this location, Taix has been a destination, a gathering spot, a neighborhood refuge and a place of celebration for locals and visitors alike. Taix is more than a building, it is more than a bar and a couple of signs. Taix has been recognized as an irreplaceable and invaluable asset to our community.

**TALKING POINT 2:
ABUSE AND MISUSE OF THE CULTURAL
HERITAGE ORDINANCE & SPIRIT OF
PRESERVATION**

Normally, PLUM takes an up-or-down vote, and an HCM nomination is either supported or rejected. Yet here, against the Cultural Heritage Commissioners' recommendation and findings, Mitch O'Farrell has proposed a dangerous and far-reaching "amendment" which aims to designate three salvage items (a wooden bar top and two exterior signs) from the existing building as a Historic Cultural Monument, claiming he is preserving a historic resource. This unprecedented and outrageous "amendment" requests that this

Committee eviscerate our HCM nomination and destroy the very resource it seeks to preserve. This subversive concept manipulates the Cultural Heritage Ordinance in a way that claims the historic resource is being preserved, when in fact this "amendment" will demolish Taix. This is clearly deviant from the intent of the law, reducing the designation to the salvaging of remnants in a recycling yard. If approved, Mitch's "amendment" sets a destructive new standard; it will send a message to developers that they can expect our City Council to expedite their project, avoid environmental review and more easily gain approval to demolish our historic resources. Mitch's "amendment" weakens the law which governs the conservation of our City's historic resources; it is an attack against every preservation effort in the City of LA.

**TALKING POINT 3:
MITCH O'FARRELL'S "AMENDMENT" IS
DESIGNED TO ASSIST THE DEVELOPERS IN
AVOIDING ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Taix is identified in Survey LA (the City's survey of historically significant sites) and was twice honored by the City of Los Angeles with special recognition for its contributions to the community. These designations maintain the status of Taix as an historic resource. Additionally, Holland Partner Group, LLC has made substantial contributions to Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, and has worked with him on their plans to develop the Taix site with a 6-story mixed use project that spans every available inch of land. By claiming to "save" Taix, Mitch O'Farrell's "amendment" is intentionally and specifically designed to allow developers Holland Partner Group, LLC, to avoid the environmental review required by CEQA when destroying a historic resource and upzoning the land. Not only does Mitch's "amendment" allow for the demolition of this beloved historic resource with a drastically reduced environmental review, but it also paves the way for other developers to follow suit, facilitating a major shift in preservation policy which will further streamline demolition of other potentially historic sites.

**TALKING POINT 4:
THERE IS NO ORDINANCE OR CRITERIA TO
ESTABLISH A "LEGACY BUSINESS" IN LOS
ANGELES**

This "amendment" alleges to preserve Mitch O'Farrell's self-proclaimed "Legacy Business status" for Taix. However, the City of Los Angeles has no existing process or program in place where a "legacy business" could be nominated, let alone designated. The City does not have an ordinance, a commission, or any other criteria that would provide for a "legacy business" designation, as acknowledged by the Cultural Heritage Commissioners themselves at the

12/7/2020 hearing. Therefore, Councilmember O'Farrell's amendment, which seeks a legacy business designation, has no foundation within the laws of the City.

TALKING POINT 5:
MITCH O'FARRELL'S INTERPRETATION OF
"HISTORIC PRESERVATION" IS IN MAJOR
CONFLICT WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE
INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation play a crucial role in the historic preservation process; they are nationally accepted standards for how historic buildings should be rehabilitated, and are meant to assist in the long-term preservation of the property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features. These standards include retaining and preserving a property's character defining features.

THE REMOVAL OF HISTORIC MATERIALS SHALL BE AVOIDED. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, shall not be undertaken. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved. Exterior alterations, or related new construction shall **not destroy historic materials that characterize the property.** New work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features **to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.** Essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment must be unimpaired. Mitch's "amendment" ignores these standards altogether.

TALKING POINT 6:
MITCH O'FARRELL'S MODIFIED
"FINDINGS" ARE IN CONFLICT WITH THE
CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE:

Mitch O'Farrell's "amendment" is based on findings which are invalid, as he has misinterpreted and distorted the Cultural Heritage Ordinance Sec. 22.171.10.(f). *Procedures For Designation Of Monuments.* Specifically, O'Farrell's **modified** findings ask:

that the City Council identifies the following physical features of the Taix Restaurant that should be preserved in order to convey the restaurant's historic significance and justify its designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument, as well as its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources: (i) The red and white

east-facing Taix billboard sign along Reservoir Street; (ii) the vertical red and white 'Cocktails' sign along Sunset Boulevard; and (iii) the restaurant's original cherry wood bar top.

O'Farrell's "amendment" calls for three salvaged items to be nominated as the "monument", in lieu of the historic building which was originally recommended for designation by the CHC.

TALKING POINT 7:

THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE AN "EITHER/OR" SITUATION

Through creative design and compromise, there is a way to preserve Taix and still develop the property. Viable and vibrant options have been presented to the developers, who have experience with adaptive reuse and were receptive to our ideas. Mitch O'Farrell's "amendment" gives them the easy way out, but with cooperation and a few open minds, it's highly feasible that the Taix building can be incorporated through meaningful preservation and continued use, where the old and new work together in a thoughtful, compatible design that can be celebrated by all.

TALKING POINT 8:

THE CITY HAS ACKNOWLEDGED TAIK AS A HISTORIC RESOURCE

Taix French Restaurant is significant as one of the oldest and most enduring businesses in Los Angeles, tracing its roots to the former French Quarter Downtown and well-known for the distinctive building it has occupied in Echo Park for six decades. The business and its colorful history were recognized in a lengthy and lavish resolution by the Los Angeles City Council on August 14, 1987. Then again in 2012, long before Mitch O'Farrell was a Councilmember, the intersection in front of Taix was officially designated "Taix Square" by the City Council, to honor the restaurant's significant contributions to the community. Even more importantly, Taix has been noted as being eligible for HCM listing by Survey LA, the groundbreaking citywide historic resources survey which serves as the Planning Department's primary tool for identifying, recording, and evaluating historic properties in Los Angeles. This survey provides the foundation for the City's historic preservation program; it notes that Taix has retained the required aspects of integrity and its character defining features and is eligible for historic designation. Two years ago, the Los Angeles

Conservancy commissioned a report on the Taix building by Historic Resources Group which concurs with the Survey LA recommendation. The importance of Taix cannot be overstated, it is an undeniable fixture in the community and one of the oldest and most unique restaurants in Los Angeles. A Councilmember's election into office is **not** an authorization to destroy decades of collaborative preservation efforts that have taken place between the public and the Councilmembers who previously represented their communities. Approval of O'Farrell's "amendment" does exactly that! Considering its value and significance, any attempt at demolition is irresponsible and disrespectful to the culture of the Echo Park community and the history of this City. Councilmember O'Farrell and our other elected officials have an opportunity to preserve and adapt this treasured historic resource as it stands today.

Nora Chilcott
nomaja@gmail.com

Please include this letter in the record for Council File 21-0119

Andrew Sears
2308 Duane Street
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Re: Council File 21-0119

To whom this may concern,

I am extremely dismayed at the way the city monument ordinance is being manipulated on behalf of the prospective developers of the Taix Restaurant property. The restaurant has been designated a monument for various reasons, and yet the council-member's office has cherry picking items on their behalf that don't actually preserve the monument, and arguably violate the designation. The recommended manipulations would completely and irreversibly disgorge the true heart of the monument itself.

For decades, our community has benefited from the unique character of the Taix building. This includes the culture of continental dining that came to Los Angeles after WWII. Taix is a rare example of a restaurant that has maintained a commitment to this style of dining. I understand that there will be challenges to keeping the restaurant open, but there are other uses for such a space while still being able to protect it as a city historical monument.

The building itself is a rare remaining vestige of the diversity of styles that once graced the streets of Los Angeles. These kitschy structures have been celebrated in books, and their destruction has been lamented over and over again. I read that the some on the committee berated the structure as nothing but kitsch, like Disneyland; and that the building itself is fake construction. I find this comment goes against the past precedents of the committee. The vast majority of this city is a fake facade that recreates culture from all over the world, yet many of those buildings have been designated as monuments. Monument 949, Bank of America Building in Echo Park is no more authentic in its construction materials than the Taix building, and yet it has qualified for protection. The designation document uses language including "decorative" and "ornamentation", and also that the building itself is just painted concrete. It is not actual stone. Why would one fake building material be considered any more or less valid than another?

Like the Bank of America facade, the Taix facade is a gem along the charm bracelet that is Sunset Blvd, and there are very few left.

The council-member's office exists to serve the community. The act of finding loopholes (saving only a few elements of the monument) to help outside developers destroy a local landmark makes me question who's interest they are serving. In that light, it would faulty of the commission to consider any recommendations from that office.



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Public Comments Not Uploaded Council File 21-0119, historic preservation of TAIX Building

1 message

'Steph Mueller' via Clerk-PLUM-Committee <clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org>

Sat, Dec 4, 2021 at 10:28 PM

Reply-To: clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org

To: "clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org" <clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org>, "gilbert.cedillo@lacity.org" <gilbert.cedillo@lacity.org>, "debby.kim@lacity.org" <debby.kim@lacity.org>, "councilmember.blumenfield@lacity.org" <councilmember.blumenfield@lacity.org>, "lisa.hansen@lacity.org" <lisa.hansen@lacity.org>, "councilmember.rodriquez@lacity.org" <councilmember.rodriquez@lacity.org>, "christine.jerian@lacity.org" <christine.jerian@lacity.org>, "councilmember.harris-dawson@lacity.org" <councilmember.harris-dawson@lacity.org>, "solomon.rivera@lacity.org" <solomon.rivera@lacity.org>, "councilmember.lee@lacity.org" <councilmember.lee@lacity.org>, "hannah.lee@lacity.org" <hannah.lee@lacity.org>

Dear Council Members,

Pursuant to Council File 21-0119, LA is in serious need to historic preservation. TAIX building is important because of significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic and social history of this community. It is an asset to this community. Furthermore, through creative design and compromise, there is a way to preserve Taix and still develop the property.

Thank you,

Stephanie Mueller