

City of Woodland

REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: July 15, 2008

SUBJECT: Woodland Opera House Expansion: Design Approval and adoption of a Notice of Exemption.

Report in Brief

Based on the request of the State of California Parks and Recreation Department and the Community Development Department, the City Council is being asked to review and approve the proposed elevations and support the approval of a Notice of Exemption as the proper form of environmental review for the Woodland Opera House Expansion project at 340 Second Street. Due to the allocation of public tax payer dollars to be utilized on the future expansion of the Opera House through Measure E funds, the State of California Parks and Recreation Department believes it to be in the City's best interest to provide the maximum level of public review prior to final approval of the project.

Staff recommends that the City Council review and approve the proposed elevations (attachment 1) for the Woodland Opera House Expansion and support the approval of a Categorical Exemption as the proper form of environmental review under the provision of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Background

On June 6, 2006, the Woodland voters approved Measure E (MSE), which extended the ½ cent supplement sales tax collected within the boundaries of and for the benefit of the City of Woodland. Additionally, the voters approved three advisory measures outlining the types of projects for which proceeds from MSE would be spent. One such advisory measure, Measure D, approved by 53.4% of voters, approved funding for expansions of the Library, City Hall and the Opera House.

The Opera House Board is proposing to infill the existing Rotary Court in front of the 1980's Opera House annex with an additional annex project. The proposed addition will house a black box children's theater on the ground floor. Second floor improvements included an expansion of the existing intermission lounge as well as new administrative offices that are currently located in the second floor of the 1980's annex. The project will also include an expansion of the existing restrooms and a new street level ticket window along Main Street.

After the proposed expansion has been completed, the new annex will become part of the Woodland Opera House State Historic Park. The expansion plans have been designed to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. These standards are also supported by the City of Woodland Downtown Specific Plan with regards to rehabilitating and adding-on to historic structures within the historic district. The proposed design is conceived to be a contemporary design with forms and details evocative of those which are present on the original Opera House Building, its annex, and other historic Main Street architecture. The Expansion's sand stone exterior finish was selected as a reference to the building, which previously occupied the site – the 1894 Farmers & Merchants bank building.

After numerous meetings between City staff and the State of California Parks and Recreation Department, regarding the internal City review process, both entities agreed that the proposed addition should reviewed by the City of Woodland Historic Preservation and Planning Commissions as well as the City Council prior to final approval. This decision was based on the use of taxpayer monies which are being used to help fund the proposed addition through the approval of Measure E.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed the proposed expansion plan on March 12, 2008 for consistency with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for additions to Historic Structures. The HPC found the project to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards and recommended approval of the proposed elevations to both the Planning Commission and City Council. No public comments were received prior to or during the public hearing process.

The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed expansion plan on April 17, 2008 for consistency with the Downtown Specific Plan, Secretary of the Interior Standards for additions to historic structures and the Design Guidelines. The Planning Commission found the project to meet the intent of all three sets of standards and unanimously recommended approval of the project to the City Council. No public comments were received prior to or during the public hearing process.

The State of California Parks and Recreation Department has conducted a preliminary review of the proposed addition for constancy with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for additions to historic structures. Pati Brown, Director of Marketing and Planning indicated that the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) finds the project to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards and the 1980 Woodland Opera House General Plan. Mrs. Brown indicated that while the project meets the intent of the standards, the Office of Historic Preservation must complete a more formal review of the proposed project through their own Project Evaluation Form (PEF) process, only after the City Council has approved the final design and staff has filed the Notice of Exemption with the Yolo County Recorders Office and State Clearinghouse.

Discussion

The following list of bullet points details the proposed changes which will be completed as part of the Woodland Opera House Expansion project.

- First floor black box children's theater.
- First floor ticket window and office.
- First floor restrooms to be expanded to meet ADA requirements and the needs of the existing facility.
- Second floor intermission area to be expanded.
- Second floor offices to be relocated into new addition.
- Sandstone exterior finish to reference the building which previously occupied the site.
- Decorative banding at elevations matching the decorative brick banding found on the historic structure.
- Decorative cap above the sandstone serves as a stylized cornice.
- Recessed storefronts of spandrel glass with arches continuing the theme found on the existing annex.
- Main Street display windows to be used to display theatrical art.

BUILDING HISTORY

The original Opera House was built in 1885 and designed by a prominent San Francisco architect, Mr. Thomas J. Welsh. The building was destroyed in the great fire of 1892, which also consumed other structures west of the Opera House before it stopped at the Capital Hotel at the corner of First and Main Streets. After some uncertainty and anxiety about the fate of the building, a local syndicate was formed to fund the reconstruction of the Opera House. Mr. David N. Hershey purchased the site and the syndicate comprised of Richard H. Beamer, Louis Dietz, Marshall Diggs, Adam M. Elston, Dr. George H. Jackson, Peter Krelenburg & son, Edward E. Leake, John Leithold, and J. McGriff all of whom backed the project. Using some of the partially standing walls from the burned structure, the Opera House was rebuilt between 1895 and 1896 by local contractor William H. Winne at the cost of \$8,990. In the wake of the fire, the Farmers & Merchants Bank Building was built in 1894 (location of the proposed annex), with the Opera House structure following closely behind. While the three story Farmers & Merchants Bank building was designed in the decorative Richardsonian Romanesque style, the Opera House was built almost void of decoration, not adhering to any clearly definable architectural style. The Farmers & Merchants building was later demolished in 1970 after numerous attempts failed to find a buyer who was willing to renovate the decaying building.

The Opera House quickly became the cultural hub of the region and by 1913 over 300 touring companies had appeared on stage. Adam M. Elston (former president of Hesperian College) was the first manager and was later succeeded by E.C. Webber in 1898. In 1912 a patron mistaking a backstage loading door for an exit fell three feet to the sidewalk breaking her arm. The lawsuit that followed combined with the growing popularity of movie theaters hastened the Opera House's closure in 1913.

The Opera House remained dark and boarded up until it was purchased by the Yolo County Historical Society nearly sixty years later in 1971. Declared a State Historical Park in 1976, the

property was deeded to the State of California in 1980. Reopening in 1989, the complete restoration of the building took nearly nine years to complete over several phases. Woodland architect, Gary Wirth, handled all but the last phase of the interior design, including the addition of a three story annex to enlarge the facility. Brocchini & Associates of Oakland were responsible for the elegant interior restoration of the theater, which includes antique lighting, historic paint colors, and Arts and Crafts wallpapers.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The exterior of the Opera House is architecturally plain. Its interior is an example of 19th century American Playhouses. It combines the parterre and horseshoe balcony with an uninterrupted semi-circular seating arrangement and large orchestra seating area is a common theme in Italian Renaissance-Revival Theaters.

Today's Opera House is a rare example of a functioning, small town Victorian performing arts center, complete with a horseshoe balcony. Funding for the restoration came from State and Federal historical preservation grants, local businesses and individuals. The Intermission Garden, adjacent to the Opera House annex, was completed in 1990 through the efforts of the Rotary Club and local donors. Today the Opera House stands as California's State Historic Landmark #851.

Fiscal Impact

Total MSE revenues are projected to be approximately \$60.6 million, which has been reduced by \$6.6 million from the original projection of \$67.2 million. The Opera House Board has been informed of the revised budget. The original and maximum allocation of \$3 million has been reduced to \$2.8 million.

Public Contact

Posting of the City Council Agenda. Public hearing notices were mailed out to all property owners within 300' of the subject site 10 days prior to the meeting date. Public notices were also sent out 10 days prior to the previous hearing dates before the Historic Preservation and Planning Commission meetings.

Recommendation

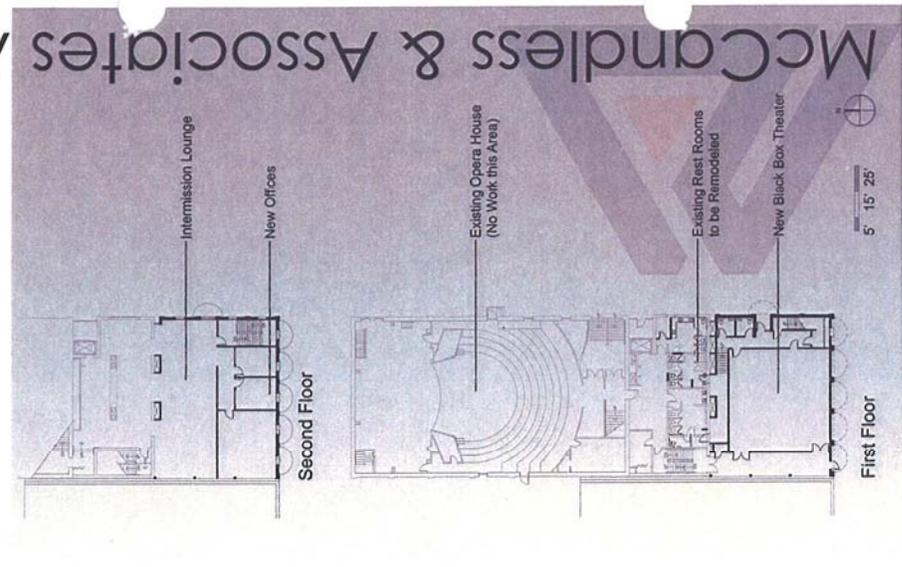
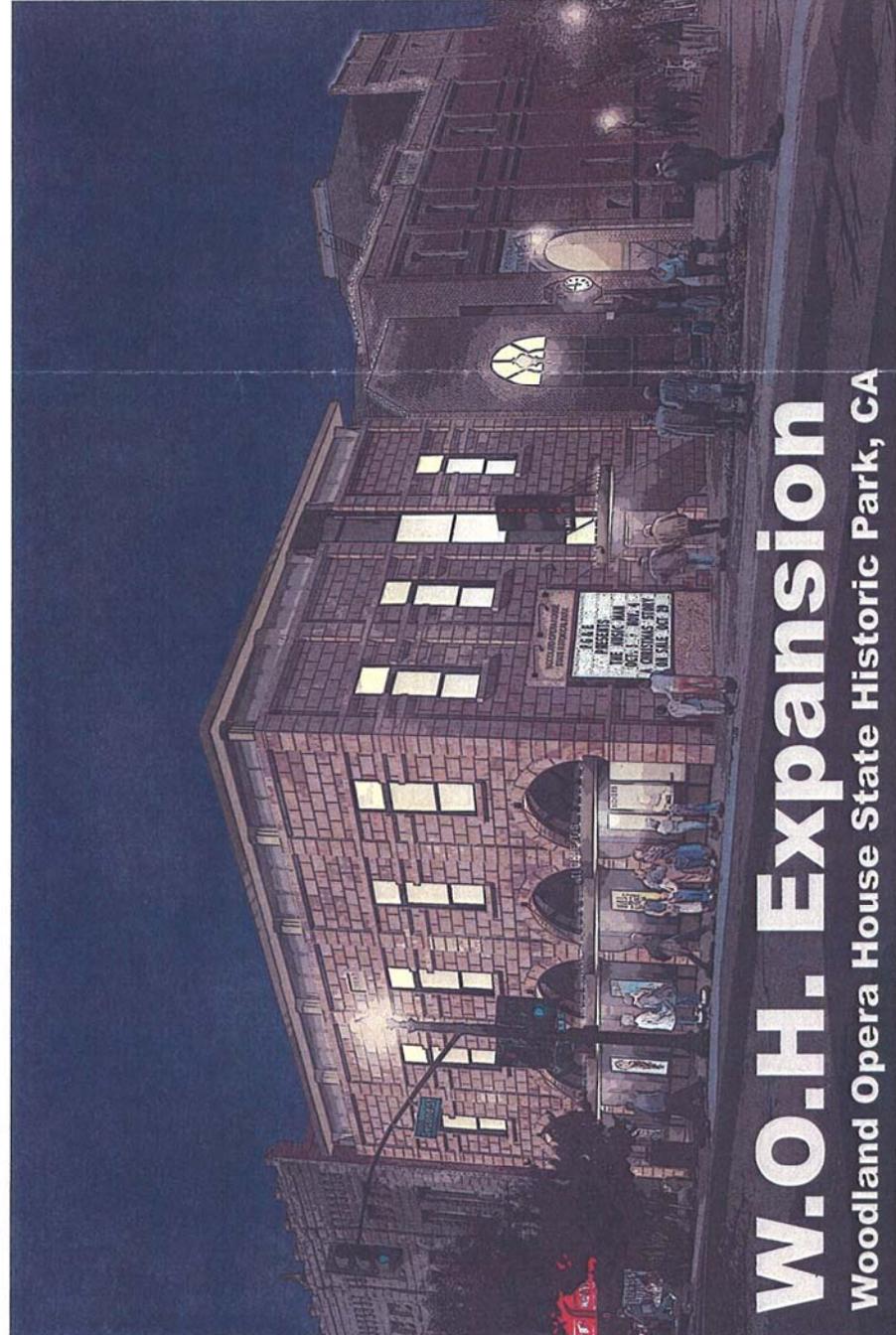
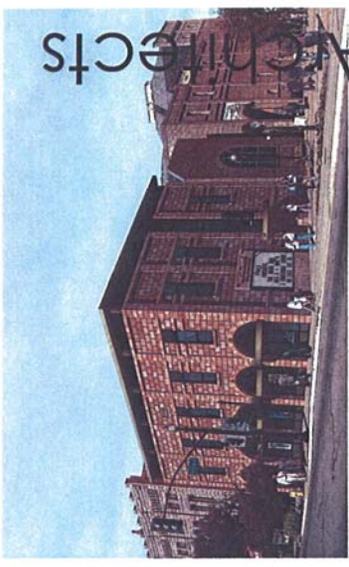
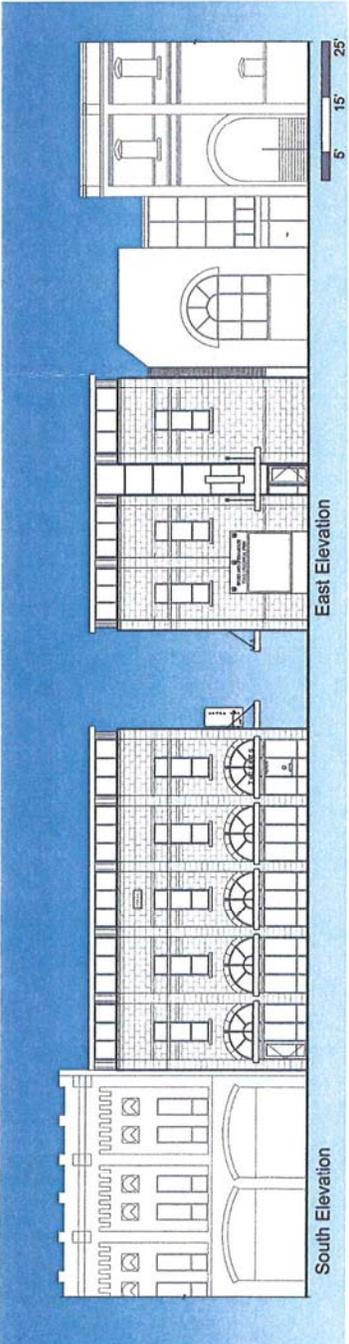
Staff recommends that the City Council review and approve the proposed elevations (attachment 1) for the Woodland Opera House Expansion and support the approval of a Categorical Exemption as the proper form of environmental review under the provision of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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Reviewed by: Robert MacNicholl
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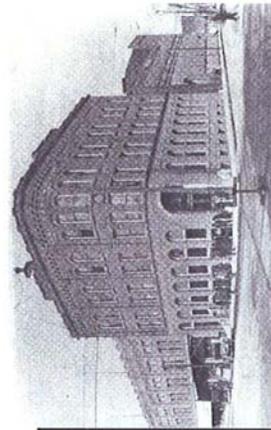
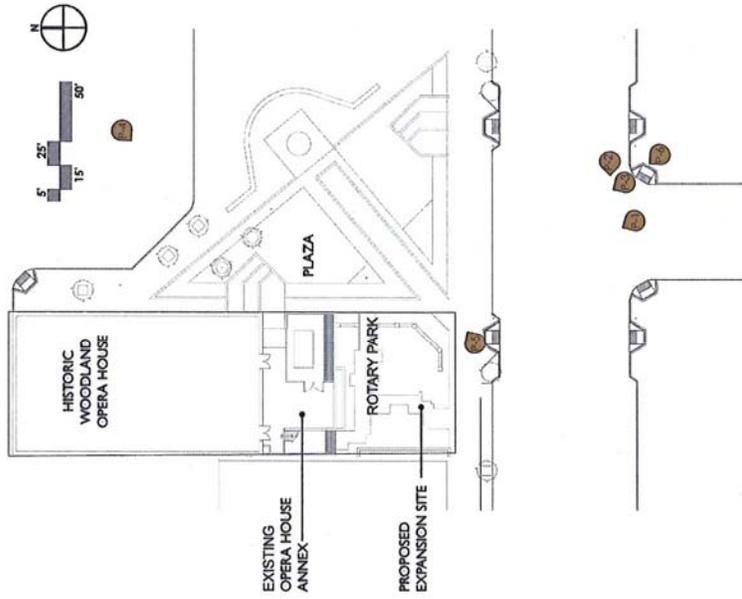
Mark G. Deven
City Manager

Attachments: Elevations and Site Plan



Historic Woodland Opera House Expansion

SITE PLAN



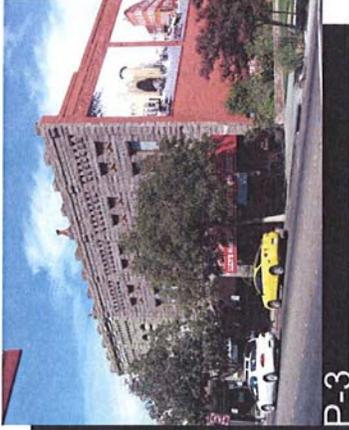
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HISTORIC PHOTO OF FARMERS AND MERCHANTS BANK FROM SOUTH EASTERN CORNER OF 2ND AND MAIN STREETS (WOODLAND OPERA HOUSE IS TO THE NORTH ON 2ND ST.)



P-2

VIEW OF NORTH VALLEY BANK FROM SOUTH EASTERN CORNER OF 2ND AND MAIN STREETS



P-3

VIEW OF ADJACENT PROPERTY, LUDY'S BARBEQUE, FROM SOUTH EASTERN CORNER OF 2ND AND MAIN STREETS



P-4

VIEW OF WOODLAND OPERA HOUSE FROM THE EAST



P-5

VIEW OF PLAZA FROM SIDEWALK AT MAIN STREET



P-6

VIEW OF WOODLAND OPERA HOUSE FROM SOUTH EASTERN CORNER OF 2ND AND MAIN STREETS

CONTEXT IMAGERY



McCANDLESS & ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS
666 DEAD CAT ALLEY ▲ WOODLAND, CA