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Commentary

What does SDAT really say about 3 North?

There is an effort to direct interest away from 3 North St. (the Cerri Building) and the offer to fund the community pavilion/farmers market home. The disinformation being distributed in town abuses the SDAT report to abandon years of planning and support for the repurposing of the Cerri building. This attempt to derail the Foley Family Foundation's pledge of \$7 million to build the long-planned project is misguided. Healdsburg 2040, as the custodians of the SDAT process, want to correct the record. We feel supported by over 1,000 residents, who in one week only signed a petition to the city council to accept the gift, And the signatures are still coming ...

Some facts:

The SDAT report does not mention 3 North St. specifically for affordable housing. Instead, in several instances, it points out the 155 Dry Creek Rd. property as an "example of how to approach city-owned sites." In fact, the AIA team proposed a commercial/affordable housing project for 155 Dry Creek. Additionally, a city report for the recent work session on Feb. 3 included the property as an affordable housing site.

Those opposed to accepting the Foley offer are now suddenly "open to follow the SDAT team's recommendation and embark on a ... master-planning effort for the West Plaza area as a whole."

It's obvious: They are embracing SDAT when it is convenient to their objectives, otherwise, the report has been systematically ignored.

The opponents propose to "step back" to create a "master plan" for the West Plaza area. How far back? The city purchased 3 North St. in 2004. The city has since invested several hundred thousand dollars in design and preliminary environmental work. Why now, when financing is offered, would the city not go forward? Furthermore, if they want a "master plan" for affordable housing, then they would examine all city-owned and private properties throughout the city. Healdsburg 2040 strongly supports affordable housing throughout the city and will backing up all future efforts.

As far back as 2007 the city council studied the 3 North St. property and decided upon a mixed use concept that included a farmer's market, a community center and additional parking. In 2015, funds were budgeted to explore concepts. Designers and the community spent months in design. In 2017 the council unanimously approved the resulting design — the very one the Foley Foundation is offering to fund. Broad support for the project has not wavered. It will benefit the entire community and will be transformative for our city.

Over 700 community members participated in the SDAT process. The designed community center will support many SDAT recommendations: arts and culture, our agricultural heritage, parks and recreation, a place for gathering. The design was unanimously approved by the city council, the farmers market, the Planning Commission and more enthusiastically than ever by residents. Now that funding has become available, exactly why is the city not embracing the offer? The "micro" master plan they propose would delay a decision for months and might deter other potential donors in Healdsburg.

The SDAT report warned that "the choice between embracing new residents and visitors and building local opportunities is a false choice." Reject a generous offer and ignore the desire of Healdsburg's residents would be exactly that: a false choice.

Healdsburg 2040 is a group of interested citizens advising the city on the implementation of the SDAT report.