

CITY OF CALISTOGA

STAFF REPORT

**TO: CHAIRMAN MANFREDI AND MEMBERS OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION**

FROM: ERIK V. LUNDQUIST, ASSOCIATE PLANNER

MEETING DATE: APRIL 28, 2010

**SUBJECT: PALMER HOUSE RESTORATION AND ADDITION
1300 CEDAR STREET – APN 011-223-002**

1 **REQUEST**

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3 Consideration of a Design Review (DR 2010-01) application, requested by Robert
4 Fiddaman and Susan Hoffman, to allow restoration/renovations to an existing structure
5 currently listed on the National Register; including, but not limited to, new perimeter
6 foundation, re-roof, porch repairs and a 72 square foot addition, all on the property
7 located at 1300 Cedar Street within the “DC-DD”, Downtown Commercial - Design
8 District (APN 011-223-002).

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10 **BACKGROUND & SETTING**

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12 The Palmer house (also known in recent years as “The Elms” when it operated as a 7 unit
13 bed & breakfast inn from about 1988 to 2007) has long been considered one of the finest
14 examples of Victorian architecture in Napa County. As one of the few remaining
15 examples in the area of French Second Empire design (and one of only two in Calistoga),
16 it was recognized in 1979 as having local significance, and was placed on the National
17 Register of historic buildings. The house also has local significance since it was built in
18 1871 by Judge A. C. Palmer, a former leading citizen of Calistoga.

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20 Judge Palmer was the first Justice of the Peace in the upper Napa Valley, and owned a
21 lumber yard, stables, and an insurance business in Calistoga. He is mentioned frequently
22 in newspaper accounts from the late 1800’s, and is known to have conducted business
23 with Sam Brannan. It is also believed he knew Robert Louis Stevenson, and that it is
24 likely Stevenson dined at the Palmer house on occasion.

25
26 The property is bordered by the Napa River to the north, the Downtown Zoning District
27 to the east, Pioneer Park to the west and frontage along Cedar Street to the South. The
28 property is about 18,000 square feet +/- and is developed with the historic Palmer house
29 and a detached carriage house (formerly used as a “manager’s unit and two guest units).

30 The landscaping is relatively subdued with much of the east side and rear yard comprised
31 of aging asphalt parking areas.

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33 **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

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35 Upon the discontinuation of the Elms, property ownership transferred and the property
36 was returned to residential use. Most recently, Mr. Fiddaman and Ms. Hoffman
37 purchased the Palmer house in mid-2009 with the idea of preserving this important
38 building for future generations to enjoy. They consider themselves caretakers of an
39 important piece of Calistoga history. As such, it is their intent to restore/renovate the
40 Palmer house to its former status as a high quality residence. Although the house is in
41 relatively good condition for its age, it has been neglected for the past several years and
42 needs extensive repairs and maintenance.

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44 In pursuing the preservation of Palmer house, they have been guided by the advice of
45 Juliana Inman, AIA, who has an extensive background in the preservation of historical
46 buildings and is President of Napa County Landmarks. In addition, they have consulted
47 other local experts, read extensively about preservation techniques, and have researched
48 historical archives to learn as much about the Palmer house's history as possible.

49

50 Mr. Fiddaman and Ms. Hoffman have obtained sketches and photographs of the house
51 from earlier times that provide information about its original appearance and various
52 changes that have been made over the years. Sanborn maps have also provided a clue
53 about additions that were made around the turn of the century. Several additions have
54 been made in the last 139 years, including the bay windows in the living/dining rooms, a
55 bay window extension in the kitchen, and a second story addition at the rear, most of
56 which were completed prior to 1910. A more recent one-story addition at the rear was
57 completed in 1995.

58

59 From an appearance standpoint, evidence suggests that the house originally had shutters
60 on the front elevation, and had wrought iron "cresting" at the roof. We believe the house
61 has always been white, with dark trim at the windows and doors. In general, the
62 appearance today very closely resembles what the house probably looked like in the early
63 1900's.

64

65 Preservation efforts will be guided by the Secretary of interior's standards for historical
66 buildings. While some nominal changes (almost all to the interior) will be made to the
67 house to accomplish usability in today's living context, these changes will only be to the
68 rear part of the exterior of the building and affect only previous updates that have
69 occurred in the last fifteen years. It is the overall intent to preserve the house (and its
70 earliest "turn of the century" additions) in its original form to the greatest extent possible.

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72 The following is a preliminary list of improvements proposed, subject to costs and
73 funding availability.

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75 **2. Proposed Improvements**

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77 A. General Improvements

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- 79 • Restoring the house to its original use as a single family residence from a
80 commercial use as a bed & breakfast inn

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82 B. Exterior Improvements

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- 84 • New perimeter foundation to improve earthquake resistance
85 • New roofing (likely to be phased)
86 • Repair front porch roof and railing
87 • Improved roof-mounted HVAC installation
88 • Exterior trim repairs
89 • Restore shutters previously removed from front elevation
90 • Repaint exterior (colors per samples submitted)
91 • Add solar panels to flat roof, subject to feasibility (not visible) & cost
92 • Underground electric service, subject to cost
93 • Replace original roof “cresting,” subject to feasibility and cost
94 • Add exterior deck at rear (near garage)
95 • Small addition at rear (approximately 72 SF of new space)
96 • New fencing adjacent to Pioneer Park
97 • New fencing at front, subject to cost
98 • New driveway, subject to cost
99 • Landscaping improvements
100 • Extensive elm tree pruning, cabling, and disease control

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102 C. Interior Improvements

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- 104 • Update electrical as needed
105 • Update plumbing as needed
106 • New HVAC on ground floor
107 • Improve HVAC systems on 2nd and 3rd floors
108 • Remove four bathrooms (three in garage, one in house)
109 • Remodel three bathrooms
110 • Remodel kitchen
111 • Remodel bath/closet configuration at Master Bedroom (MBR)
112 • Restore fireplaces/chimney to working order
113 • Install alarm system
114 • Repaint/wallpaper interior
115 • Repair, weather-strip windows (original windows will be retained, except in the
116 family room, as noted)

- 117 • New carpets/ floor refinishing
- 118 • New window coverings
- 119 • New light fixtures

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121 **3. Phasing Plan**

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123 Mr. Fiddaman and Ms. Hoffman are expected to complete these improvements in phases
124 over the next 2-4 years. While some flexibility and discretion will be needed, in general,
125 the phases will occur in the following order:

126

- 127 1. Foundation replacement
- 128 2. Interior bath remodels (3) and removal of one bath
- 129 3. Kitchen/MBR remodel, including new master bath, guest half bath
- 130 4. New main roof/mansard roof (other roofing to be phased as needed)
- 131 5. Landscaping/Fencing

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133 Generally, Design Review approvals are effective for a one-year period from the date of
134 approval or shall remain valid as long as there is a valid building permit for construction
135 of the approved project. Although it is foreseeable that this project will be phased over
136 the next few years, it is also anticipated that the property owners will maintain a valid
137 building permit for the various components until the project is complete.

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139 **STAFF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

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141 **A. Land Use & Design Review**

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143 The property is within the Downtown Commercial “DC” Zoning District and the “DD”,
144 Design Combination District. The historic residential use is a “grandfathered” use in the
145 “DC” District and may continue to exist without further entitlements from the Planning
146 and Building Department. However, since the project is located in the “DD” Design
147 District; Chapter 17.06.020 of the Zoning Ordinance requires design review because the
148 project involves alterations to a federally listed structure. A complete assessment of the
149 project’s findings pursuant to the Design Review Ordinance can be found in the Draft
150 Design Review Resolution, Attachment No. 2.

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152 In short, the 2003 General Plan Update identifies this property as being a primary
153 resource (Category “A”) and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the
154 Napa County Historic Resources Inventory Master List, which identifies properties
155 locally that contain historical resources. The General Plan policies encourage the
156 preservation of these historic resources as means to sustain the City’s ongoing quality of
157 life and embody its rich and varied heritage. Specifically, Objective CI-3.3, Policy P4 on
158 Page CI-30 of the General Plan states:

159

160 *“New development shall ensure that it does not disfigure or demolish*
161 *Category A properties, identified as primary resources in the May 2000*
162 *historic resource survey.”*
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164 The project was reviewed by City Staff and the Preservation Action Committee of Napa
165 County Landmarks on January 27, 2010 and has been found to be compatible and
166 consistent with the General Plan and the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for the
167 treatment of historic properties. Staff finds that the proposal is of high quality and
168 promotes the preservation of the historic structure. Additionally, the Preservation
169 Committee found that the project as designed by Juliana Inman AIA, the property
170 owner’s architect is appropriately designed without need for revision to satisfy the
171 Federal and State standards.

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173 **B. Floodplain Management**

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175 Due to the property’s proximity to the Napa River, the historic structure is located within
176 a special flood hazard area. Specifically, the Palmer House is located within the floodway
177 fringe. Pursuant to the City’s Floodplain Management Ordinance, Chapter 18 CMC,
178 residential structures located in the floodway fringe must maintain a lowest floor
179 elevation two feet above the base flood elevation. Currently, the structures lowest floor
180 elevation is 349.2 feet of above sea level and the base flood elevation is 349 feet above
181 sea level.

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183 Generally projects such as this, substantial improvements to a structure in the floodplain
184 would warrant compliance with the provisions of the Floodplain Management Ordinance.
185 However, since this alteration is occurring to an historic structure the structure’s lowest
186 floor elevation will not be required to be elevated to 2 feet above the base flood elevation
187 but will be limited to no less than the existing condition. An Elevation Certificate will be
188 required as part of the building permit process to demonstrate that the lowest floor
189 elevation remains at or above the base flood elevation.

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191 **FINDINGS:**

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193 To reduce repetition all of the appropriate, Findings are contained in each of the
194 appropriate Resolutions.

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196 **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

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198 In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City of
199 Calistoga, Planning and Building Department prepared an Initial Study/CEQA Checklist
200 for the project. Potentially significant impacts to aesthetics, air quality, biological
201 resources, cultural resources and noise were identified. The applicant has agreed to
202 incorporate the mitigation measures; therefore, the Planning and Building Department
203 determined that the proposed project as amended by mitigation measures would not have

204 a significant adverse impact on the environment. As previously stated, an Initial
205 Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was sent to the State Clearinghouse for distribution
206 to state agencies. The comment period for the environmental document was March 26 to
207 April 28, 2010. Both a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and a
208 Notice of Public Hearing were sent to all property owners within 300 feet of the subject
209 site. The notice advised of the public comment period and also advised that additional
210 comments would be taken leading up to and during the public hearing. Prior to any
211 project approvals, the Planning Commission will need to recommend adoption of the
212 Mitigated Negative Declaration. CEQA requires the lead agency to consider the
213 environmental document in conjunction with the comments received. If the comments
214 contain substantial evidence supporting a fair argument that the project may actually
215 produce significant environmental impacts, the lead agency must find a way to mitigate
216 the impacts to a level of insignificance, and then recirculate a revised draft negative
217 declaration or prepare an EIR.

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219 As a result of sending the CEQA notice to the State Office of Planning and Research
220 (OPR) Clearinghouse, the City has received no written comments at the time of drafting
221 this report.

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223 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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225 To date, staff has only received one verbal comment regarding the project. Specifically,
226 the comment was directed at the unsafe condition of the carriage house along the Napa
227 River. The City also recognizes the unsafe condition and the Building Official has issued
228 a "Notice and Order" to the Property Owner requiring the situation be reasonably
229 corrected, see attached letter dated April 23, 2010.

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231 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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233 Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the project, consider staff's
234 analysis of the project and suggested findings for necessary project actions and take public
235 comment on the project. Following the public hearing, staff recommends the Planning
236 Commission approve the project based on the findings in the staff report and including all
237 recommended mitigation measures and conditions of approval.

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239 **SUGGESTED MOTIONS**

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241 **Mitigated Negative Declaration**

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243 I move that the Planning Commission adopt Planning Commission Resolution PC 2010-06
244 adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration based on an Initial Study prepared for the
245 Palmer House Restoration and Addition Project incorporating the findings and mitigation
246 measures as provided in the Resolution.

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248 Design Review

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250 I move that the Planning Commission, adopt Resolution 2010-07 approving Design
251 Review (DR 2010-01), to allow restoration/renovations to an existing structure currently
252 listed on the National Register; including, but not limited to, new perimeter foundation,
253 re-roof, porch repairs and a 72 square foot addition, all on the property located at 1300
254 Cedar Street within the "DC-DD", Downtown Commercial - Design District (APN 011-
255 223-002) based on the above findings and conditions of approval as provided in the
256 Resolution.

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258 NOTE: The applicant or any interested person is reminded that the Calistoga Municipal
259 Code provides for a ten (10) calendar day appeal period. If there is a disagreement with the
260 Planning Commission, an appeal to the City Council may be filed. The appropriate forms
261 and applicable fee must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on or before the tenth calendar day
262 following the Commission's final determination.

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264 ATTACHMENTS

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- 266 1. Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting
267 Program Resolution 2010-06
- 268 2. Draft Design Review Resolution PC 2010-07
- 269 3. Arial Vicinity Map
- 270 4. Napa County Landmarks letter dated February 3, 2010
- 271 5. Palmer House Photographs
- 272 6. Project Plans dated December 14, 2009

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274 *The Initial Study is available at the Planning and Building Department upon request.*