



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
MEMBERS OF THE CITY
COUNCIL

FROM: Vice Mayor Kamei

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 10.3 - PDC21-
035, PT22-003, PD22-002 &
ER21-284 – Planned
Development Rezoning, a
Vesting Tentative Map, and a
Planned Development Permit
on Certain Real Property
Located at 0 Seely Avenue.

DATE: August 13, 2024

Approved:

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept the recommendations in the Memo of Mayor Mahan and Councilmembers Candelas, Cohen, and Ortiz, with the following modification amending recommendation 2.c. to direct city staff through the City Manager to:
 1. Engage in a robust public discussion of the design of the on-site park to explicitly retain or move the Sakauye farmhouse within the footprint of the park as part of a historical exhibit to pay tribute to Eiichi Sakauye, the history of Japanese-American internment, and the Asian-American and Pacific Islander experience in the Bay Area;
 2. Employ best efforts to secure ongoing funding—including in partnership with community organizations—to support ongoing use of the Sakauye farmhouse as a historical exhibit.

BACKGROUND

Harmonizing our need for new development with our desire to hold onto the past represents a persistent challenge for cities across California. Today's proposed development at the Sakauye farmstead, however, presents a unique opportunity to reconcile those two impulses. Among the numerous benefits that approval of Item 10.3 would bring is a new, 2.5-acre, city-owned public

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Page 2

park. That park is a public benefit, and it is fitting that a city would choose its best purpose to suit community needs. I believe that the creation of a physical memorial within the footprint of the new park that utilizes the Sakauye farmhouse as the focal point to underscore the significance of the site and its place in the sad history of Japanese-American internment is part of that best purpose.

The Sakauye farmstead is unique in the retelling of Japanese-American internment in California. The site is the only known location where a family displaced during internment managed to subsequently reclaim its own land. As such, the significance of the site rests in *where* it is, and in what happened *there*. Maintaining a clear, abiding, and thought-provoking connection to the history of this place is a valuable public exercise in its own right.

Absent the new direction in this memo, the Sakauye farmhouse would either be demolished or moved to History Park. Neither circumstance would provide the clear, abiding, and thought-provoking connection to the *history of the place* that featuring the farmhouse as part of a historical exhibit within the new city park would create.

At their best, historical sites provoke us to think about our past, cause us to remember what we've done or failed to do, allow us to celebrate human triumph, and push us to prevent us from repeating mistakes. The history of Japanese-American internment is of such relief in California and San Jose that it deserves a clear reminder. At a time when historical reminders of past errors are being erased through redevelopment, or as with the Dresden Frauenkirche, rebuilt, we should ensure that we make space for the history that calls us to be better. Retaining the Sakauye farmhouse within the public park *on the site of the Sakauye farmstead* will maintain the historicity of the site and provoke parkgoers, neighbors, visitors, and passers-by to reckon with the history of Japanese-American internment, the Asian-American experience more broadly, and how we treat our neighbors in general.

To the extent that the major impediment to achieving the goal of retaining the Sakauye farmhouse within this new public park is a matter of funding, then this is an eminently solvable issue. In addition to asking the City Manager to explore funding partnerships and opportunities, I would commit myself to fundraising appropriate funds and invite my colleagues to do the same.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to adopt the recommendation above.

For questions, please contact J.R. Fruen, District 1, at joseph.fruen@sanjoseca.gov.