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Mr. Jay Paul  
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Sent via email

Subject: Comments on the Historic Paxton Adobe Home Demolition

Dear Mr. Paul:

When I saw the green tarp around the old Paxton adobe home my heart sank. I had a feeling then that you were planning on tearing the building down. I called the city and was told that was not part of the plan. It's hard to believe that your planning department would be considering this move during a time of a massive world crisis. But what perfect time to get an unpopular thing passed when most people are more worried about staying alive than preserving the city's history.

I grew up in Escondido and my father, Larry Weir, and uncle, Jack Weir, started building adobe homes in 1952 under the company name of Weir Brothers. I am very honored that the city chose to preserve one of my family's adobe homes just up the street from this proposed demolition. What is hard to believe is that the house on the chopping block is older and may be one of the oldest adobe homes in the City of Escondido among those which are from the era of mid-century adobe construction revival. I didn't see that addressed in the study and it would seem an important part of this "assessment."

. The *Historic Structure Assessment* did mention that the Paxton home was built as a model home for adobe homes in the area. The house was an inspiration to builders and architects and the beginning of the adobe building era. That was one of the reasons my family came to Escondido. How can the authors justify that there is no historical significance when its existence produced a modified Spanish revival building style that spread throughout the city and into the surrounding areas including Poway, Encinitas, Rancho Santa Fe, Pala Mesa and beyond.

I spent time last Fall in Escondido researching a book on my father's work in adobe construction. Initially, I was going to write a book on adobe construction in general but found so much history in just my father and uncle's work that I had to narrow the focus on their work. Adobe construction is a specialized trade and very few people are left to keep the legacy alive. That alone should make you take a second look at this project. That home or parts of it should be kept intact to preserve the history that is slipping away.

After reading through the report used to substantiate your plans, it became obvious to me that the authors have no adobe building expertise. The closest thing to adobe knowledge is a 2013 study for the Los Peñasquitos Adobe Drainage Project. Did that project include an assessment of the condition of its structure?

In addressing the conclusion that due to the lack of rebar the building is unstable, then every building built before the 1950's in the State of California (and beyond) would need to be torn down because they are unstable. In those days it is my understanding that the builders did use horizontal rebar every four courses or so when building adobe walls. They also used a twelve inch or more concrete bond beam across the top of the walls for added stability. The issue is vertical steel which didn't come into law until the 1970's. Have you ever tried remodeling an adobe home with sixteen-inch-thick walls? These buildings can take an enormous amount of shaking and have done quite well in earthquakes.

In the 1952 Tehachapi Earthquake, Portland Concrete presented a fraudulent study to the State of California. They claimed that every adobe failed in that earthquake. They thought adobe was going to take over as a building medium and attempted to get it outlawed even back then. My father and uncle flew up to Tehachapi to determine the extent of the damage and found the buildings that failed were the downtown red brick facades. The adobe buildings were in good condition, with little damage. The brothers presented their findings to the State and Portland Concrete did not show up to defend their unsubstantiated claims.

Your study showed that the Paxton home met 4 out of 7 Criterion and yet summarize with a mention about how expensive it would be to preserve the City's history. I wish to repeat the question: did the authors consult an adobe expert? Adobe is not comparable to other traditional building methods. Was an adobe architect or contractor consulted? In my many contacts and research of adobes, the oldest to the more recent adobes dating through California history have been stabilized or restored with the guidance of licensed and professional adobe constructions experts.

Escondido should embrace its adobe history instead of wanting to demolish one of the oldest adobe buildings in the city. It may be the oldest from the adobe revival era during the middle of the last century. Has that been determined?

Escondido could be known as a destination weekend getaway that would welcome people who are interested in adobe architecture. A driving tour of adobe homes should be made available for those interested in this work. Due to the changes in building codes, adobe homes are no longer built. There may be no adobe manufacturing brickyards left in California. You would have to travel to another state or country to see anyone building with adobe.

I urge you not to tear down Escondido's historical home. Adobe homes are so precious and no longer built. They are beautiful and significant. The adobe in an amazingly well insulated structure. They have an insulation factor that surpasses most building materials. The homes are warm in the winter and cool in the summer. If you ever lived in an adobe home like I have or spent time inside of one, you would have a change of heart.

Yours truly,

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