



April 17, 2023

Pasadena City Council
City of Pasadena
100 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, California 91101

Re: 78 N. Marengo Avenue, Support for HRI Negotiations to Continue

Dear Mayor Gordo and Members of the City Council,

Pasadena Heritage supports the continued negotiations with HRI as the developer of a proposed hotel project on the former YWCA site. We strongly urge the Council to support moving forward with this critical project.

We have been concerned and involved in the future of the former YWCA in the Civic Center for more than three decades, since the building was still owned and operated by the YWCA organization. We strongly urged and supported the City's acquisition of the noted historic building through eminent domain when a prior owner failed to bring forward a restoration project or find a new use for the building. We supported the Kimpton Hotel project in the face of some opposition by proponents of retaining all the green space east of the building, and we were distressed by the legal action by that opposition group that delayed any progress on the site for more than three years, leaving the existing building vacant and vulnerable even longer.

Pasadena Heritage supports a hotel use for this prominent site in the Civic Center as the most viable option to restore the historic YWCA building and return it to productive use while also adding a vibrant new use that will enliven the Civic Center. Please keep in mind that in all three rounds of RFPs over the past ten years, hotel uses were the predominant proposals to come forward. The market is telling us that this is the use that can successfully achieve the city's goals (and ours) for a project that can support the extensive work needed on the former YWCA as well as provide a return on investment to the City. Though a museum or community use for the historic building has been mentioned many times, and would be a fine adaptive reuse proposition, the prohibitive costs involved make it infeasible to consider it as a realistic alternative and no real such proposal has come forward in the last 20 years.

Although we have not worked with HRI, we note that their portfolio includes a number of successful hotel projects that include historic buildings in other parts of the country. This is a special niche where they have demonstrated considerable experience. We believe, as the



successful bidder for this project, they have the expertise to carry it out. We will, of course, continue to be very involved as stakeholders in this project, and remain determined that the design of any new building be appropriate for our renowned Civic Center and worthy of its place across from City Hall.

We strongly urge you to support the next steps needed to move this project forward. The former YWCA, designed by Julia Morgan and a treasure in our National Register Civic Center District, has suffered greatly as it has stood vacant for far too long. Please vote to see this building rehabilitated as it should be and bring new life and economic vitality to the City Center as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan N. Mossman
Executive Director

Andrew Salimian
Preservation Director

CC: Miguel Márquez, City Manager
David Reyes, Assistant City Manager
Dave Klug, Economic Development Director
Jennifer Paige, Director of Planning & Community Development