

MIKESELL HISTORICAL CONSULTING

SECTION 106 AND HISTORIC BRIDGES

February 14, 2017

Planning Department
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street, 3rd Floor
San Jose, CA 95003

I have read through the nomination for listing the Willow Glen Trestle in the California Register of Historical Resources. The nomination addresses only Criterion 1, arguing the trestle is significant under "association with events," for the development of industry in West San Jose, emphasizing the fruit canning industry, and for the impact of the trestle on the residential development of the community of Willow Glen.

As I argued in my long report to the City in December 2014, the Criterion 1 argument is weak at best and confuses mere association with events with significant association with events. It is true that the trestle was part of the Western Pacific Railroad and the WP moved canned fruit from San Jose to distant markets. The WP, however, was a late arrival to a city where fruit canning had prospered for decades before it arrived. Further, my research proved that WP was never more than a minor carrier when compared to the far more dominant Southern Pacific Railroad. Even if we concede a significant role for the WP generally, however, it is a logical reach to conclude that this small trestle across Los Gatos Creek was a significant factor, leading to the WP's role in moving canned fruit from East San Jose.

With respect to the role of the trestle in building the community of Willow Glen, the application again makes the mistake of confusing mere association with events with a significant association with events. It is clear the early twentieth century residents of Willow Glen sought to restrict non-residential uses there and opposed construction of a second railroad line through the neighborhood. It is a logical fallacy, however, to maintain that one railroad trestle was significantly associated with the neighborhood's attempt to foil construction of other railroad trestles. As I maintain in my December 2014 report, there are other resources in the Willow Glen neighborhood that may be significantly associated with the long drive to maintain residential dominance in the community. This railroad trestle is not one of them. Indeed, one could argue that this trestle is negatively associated with the theme of residential exclusivity. The trestle was most active while steam engines hauled freight through the neighborhood. It is unlikely that Willow Glen residents would agree that a trestle that carried noisy and smelly steam engines was a symbol for residential exclusivity!

I ask that you transmit this letter, along with my 2014 report, to the State Historical Resources Commission. I would be happy to speak before the Commission, when and if this nomination is scheduled for a public hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen D. Mikesell". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Stephen D. Mikesell
Owner, Mikesell Historical Consulting
1532 Eligio Lane
Davis, CA 95618
(916) 607-3723