

Guest Opinion: A community determines its own built environment

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Throughout history communities have determined their own built environments.

Our built environment is all around us. We may not think much about it in our daily lives. Yet, it is keeping us safe from ill weather, provides us places to live, work and play.

How we create spaces to live, socialize, and conduct business and recreation impacts the economic value and quality of our lives. That's why it matters how we design our community.

These structures make it easier for us to organize our lives and values in a way that reflects and supports our lifestyle. It carries stories of the past, and holds hopes and dreams for our future.

Homes and other buildings with historical value are, in different ways, connected to past events. Thinking of our local history, it's easy to see how local buildings are connected to the tsunami of 1964. Some buildings survived and others were ruined or demolished afterwards.

For example, the St. Joseph's Catholic Church built in 1961 survived the tsunami, and is in good condition, likely due to the community of its members committed over the years to maintain and rejuvenate the building.

When there's a high level of stewardship for the built environment, the benefits ripple throughout the community. How we maintain and protect local historical buildings, of record or not, is up to us, both as a

community and in many cases as private property owners.

Besides resiliency, this place of worship, built in 1961 for \$150,000, also tells the story of abundance and craftsmanship with its use of materials and its display of design details.

Churches are built to endure. Endure in their original form, not later to be used for something else. They invite you to enter for a unique experience in their sacred spaces. When I look at, walk up to, and go inside St. Joseph Church I find that the architecture brings me to an encounter with serenity, gentleness, beauty and intrigue.

St Joseph Church incorporates several design styles, including modern, gothic and Roman. The Basilica design is a wide rectangular nave where mass is held and worshipers gather, where archways line aisles separated by columns, and where the atrium and altar draw worshipers within.

Gothic architecture is referred to as “architecture of light.” This building’s design and site location ensure there is plenty of light pouring in. The Roman Basilica design is simple and strong with its lines and forms, whereas the Gothic design allows extra height for its pointed arches.

Stained glass tells parables from the Bible, religious symbols and known figures.

In addition to natural sunlight, the interior is warmed with plenty of natural hardwoods for its ceilings and beams.

Visit St. Joseph Catholic Church at 319 E St., Crescent City, to see for yourself how this building speaks to you, both outside and inside.

In this series we invite you to look with us at local historical buildings in Del Norte County. If you own, occupy or know a story about a building that you would like to share with our readers, please contact me. I’d love to see your beautiful building. And would like to feature it in my column about local architectural interest and style. Call or email me, Jessica Robin, jessica@sustainappeal.com or (707) 954-2096.

Jessica was born and raised in California, and has been a Crescent City resident for 12 years. She works as a financial analyst for the City of Crescent City, and is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) advocate.