

From: [Gabriellè Suzanne Avedian](#)
To: [Collette Barrios](#); [Briana Parra](#); [Gail Pifferini](#); [Nicole DeMera](#)
Subject: Public comment text - please add to the record
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2022 9:07:37 AM
Attachments: [George Bursik; Letters stamped by City Clerk on 9-29-22 in 10:41 AM submitted to Fresno City Council for 9-29-22 Agenda Item #22-1495, FedEx Scan 2022-10-13 14-02-03.pdf](#)

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments

Good morning,

I will be Zooming in at 10:10AM this morning as planned. I am sending the text of my address here so that it may be added to the record. I appreciate your sponsoring my public comment and allowing me to voice my opinion.

Thank you.

Best,
Gabrielle Avedian
Fresno CA

Thank you. My grandparents fled the Armenian massacres and settled in Fresno, a place for which they were grateful to call home, living near the historic homes in Old Armenian Town. I had written a letter to you two weeks ago, expressing my concern to read that the homes had been, seemingly surreptitiously, sold for affordable housing. I have done a little homework since, and so instead of read to you my letter, I am now asking you to directly answer the following questions:

- Why was the Armenian community, or community at large, not notified ahead of time that the sale of the homes in the Old Armenian Town project would be placed on the agenda for approval, only six days after the contract was signed, and under the cloak of a different name?
- Why have you never responded to the Historic Preservation Commission, representatives appointed by the mayor, who wrote you five months ago, asking why you have not responded to their approved proposal written five years ago?
- Why, for seven years, has the Armenian Museum of Fresno's Varoujan Der Simonian's proposal to turn these homes, at no cost to the city, into a Five-Home-Town museum that features not only Armenian heritage but all of Fresno's heritages, sat on City Council desks and those of previous mayors, without any response whatsoever? He has communicated with the RDA, Successor Agency and mayor over 12 years.
- Why was the community around those homes never notified, as required by law, of the low-cost housing proposal so that residents could express their opinions?
- Why was community opposition to the affordable housing project withheld from the developer?
- Why has City Council claimed the Armenian community has been silent regarding this when the sale was undisclosed to the public until just before the vote, and when community members joining the meeting were never acknowledged?
- Why has the Successor Agency not permitted George Bursik, original owner of two of the homes, whose homes were seized by eminent domain, to repurchase his homes for

the market value, as per the law, under his right of first refusal? The homes were lived in, then taken for a different eminent domain purpose, and now if they are to be converted back to homes, why is he being barred from repurchasing them? He has documented communication with your Successor Agency, even on the day you approved the sale of those homes to the developer. **He** has first right of refusal. Why were the homes sold out from underneath him?

- His case highlights that the homes were to have a different purpose than residential when they were seized. The 2008 judgment makes it clear that the homes were to be kept near the Armenian church and bakery because they were “historic resources” and should be grouped together. Why should the homes be grouped together with other historic Armenian buildings if not for historic purposes? Therefore, the original CUP and site plan that Councilman Arias claimed that the Armenian community had supported was a completely different, **historic and cultural** project. The Armenian community has NOT supported this affordable housing project and it was NOT the spirit of the 2008 court opinion.
- At least 12 non-profits have been ready to begin restoration, awaiting your approval of the HPC or Museum project, but you stalled for years. Now, for some unknown reason, you have bypassed the community, stealthily moving and approving a sale for a completely different purpose.
- This district was dubbed Armenian Town because Armenians were redlined, disallowed to buy property in other areas of Fresno. These homes are a remnant of a 60-block neighborhood they built of rich culture, faith and history. To let them stand in an historic district as witness to the resilience of immigrants who overcame what was meant for ill is a monument of our humanity. It is not just Armenian or Fresno history, but immigrant history, not focused on the genocide which sought to tear down but on the dedication of thankful immigrants that helped build up the Fresno community.
- I ask you to bring this business back for reconsideration, and overturn your previous vote.
- If you still think the Armenian community is silent, please see the petition at [change.org](https://www.change.org) which has already over 5500 signatures. Thank you.