



December 15, 2017

City Council
City of Arcata

via email: spereira@cityofarcata.org; ppitino@cityofarcata.org; mwinkler@cityofarcata.org;
bwatson@cityofarcata.org; sornelas@cityofarcata.org
cc: kdiemer@cityofarcata.org

Mayor and Councilmembers:

The Arcata Plaza is the cultural, civic, and historic heart of our city. The Plaza is bordered by local businesses and regularly hosts well-attended events, important for the local economy and a thriving community. But most of the time, the Plaza functions as a parking lot and is otherwise little used by local residents, families and businesspeople. This creates a social vacuum often filled by anti-social and even illegal activities. Unfortunate recent events have highlighted this problem even more starkly.

We're happy to see a growing consensus in the community that it is time to address the Plaza's problems head-on and help it live up to its enormous potential. We believe that two important types of changes to the Plaza can help accomplish this goal: (1) redesign the Plaza as a place for people rather than for cars; (2) make more positive activities available on the Plaza at all times. These two types of changes are in line with established principles of place-making. In other words, they will help create a self-sustaining, healthy, thriving, pro-social public space. They will also stimulate economic activity and create a symbol of support for more sustainable forms of transportation.

Therefore we ask the Council, through an appropriate public process, to create and implement a plan to revitalize life on the Arcata Plaza which includes the following ideas and proposals.

Phase 1: Low-Cost, High-Impact Plaza Redesign for People

We propose a series of near-term regulatory changes and minor infrastructure improvements that can be enacted by the Council to revitalize downtown business and make the Plaza a more social, inclusive place, including:

- A. Closure of 8th and 9th Streets between G and H Streets to automobiles, with the exception of emergency vehicles and delivery vehicles
- B. Amending the City Code to further encourage outdoor food/drink consumption at permitted restaurants and food carts on the Plaza, and to allow businesses to construct "parklets" for seating, eating, dining, art display, and similar activities
- C. Reclassifying G and H Streets through the Plaza as 5 mph "Pedestrian Priority" roadways
- D. Working with the North Coast Growers Association to create a car-free Plaza during farmers markets
- E. Working with downtown businesses to create a plan for addressing safety concerns on the Plaza in a community-friendly and cost-effective manner

Further infrastructure improvements to support these changes can occur over time as needed and as funding allows.

Phase 2: Adding More Activities for People

Over the medium and long term, additional infrastructure changes should take place to support positive daily use of the Plaza by a diversity of people. Such infrastructure changes could include: a permanent map of the downtown and better wayfinding signs for bikes and pedestrians; a playground; a permanent performance venue; art stalls to showcase the work of local artisans; better weatherization of social spaces on the Plaza.

In implementing these or any other proposals, we encourage the City to take reasonable precautions to minimize the impacts of any construction on the Plaza on successful, established businesses and events such as the Saturday farmers markets.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ryan Campbell, Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities
Coco Maki, Pasta Luego
Steve Gieder, Northcoast Horticulture Supply & Humboldt Green
Ken Hamik, Community Pride & Peace
Steve Lovett, People's Records
Martha Jain, MJA
Tom Wheeler, EPIC
Portia Bramble, North Coast Growers Association
Chris Smith, Tuck's Inc.
Sarah Anderson, North Country Fair
Erica Grey, MotherWoman Support
Greg King, Siskiyou Land Conservancy
North Coast People's Alliance
Christine Champe, Stillwater Sciences
Robert Shearer, Executive Board Member, California Democratic Party
Tibora Girczyc-Blum
Jennifer Chierici
Kathleen Marshall
Deborah Waxman
Tom Sokolowski
Kim Tays
Stan Binnie
Claire Roth
Vincent Peloso
Joe James
Diane Ryerson
Mary Sanger
Aidas Worthington
Walt Paniak