

From: [REDACTED]
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: In Support of Parklets
Date: Monday, September 19, 2022 2:32:43 PM

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing in support of all the downtown parklets. The time is long overdue for the City to take a strong position in support of making downtown a more pedestrian friendly environment. For last last 75 years, cars have been considered more important than people. Long ago we ceded the use of the majority of our City's public owned lands, our streets, to cars. The result is tons of space for vehicles, but cramped sidewalks. Five traffic lanes, but no space for sidewalk cafes. We need to begin the process of correcting that, and parklets are a great first step. To assist in this effort, below you will find responses to the questions that City staff provided to the Council that will put the City on the right path to making downtown a more wonderful asset to this community.

1. [Should staff apply for a Caltrans encroachment permit for installing and maintaining a permanent parklet at the South Main Street location?](#)

Yes, the City should apply for a CalTrans encroachment permits for all parklets, BUT should push back against any "lease" payment. This is public land. The idea of being able to use public land to park cars for free, but having to pay for public parklet use of the same space is ludicrous. Furthermore, the parklet space should be made permanent, preferably by designing and implementing bulb-outs in those locations. It's time for Sebastopol to get serious about making decisions that benefit pedestrians, not cars. Our sidewalks are too narrow for any real public use. The businesses that have thrived in recent years are the ones who made use of outdoor public spaces. Just look at Retrograde, Sunshine Cafe, Portico, Screamin Mimi's and the Barlow. People want to be outside and in nice spaces.

2. [Should staff apply for a Caltrans encroachment permit for installing and maintaining a permanent parklet at the Depot Street location?](#)

Yes. I think that little strip of street should be abandoned by CalTrans, deeded to the City and that whole triangular space be made into a micro park. There is no reason for that pavement to be there. Again, the City should get serious about improving our downtown for pedestrians, not cars. We need to stop wringing our hands about parking. If we focus on making downtown a wonderful walking environment with thriving shops, people will be happy to park a few blocks away and walk. The Barlow is proof of that.

Reading the comments from the neighboring businesses to Mimi's, I suspect personal grievances or perhaps envy is playing a part in their complaints. I have not seen any of those businesses make an attempt to use the space, and Mimi's success has only served to deliver thousands of people to their doorsteps. My 30+ years as a branding consultant have been spent trying to entice people to visit businesses. Being close to a successful business is typically viewed as incredibly valuable. That's why the most expensive lease space in a retail center is

next to a successful anchor business. I have never heard of business owners complaining about having too many people in front of their shops. If Mimi's or the City has to step up trash service, that's a small price to pay for having a really successful business in town. Although I understand being sensitive to struggling businesses, the City also needs to make sure they are not hindering the success of others. I personally know that, to survive, Mimi's had to totally rethink their entire business model, reconfigure their workspace and retrain staff. Have the complaining businesses made that kind of investment in their businesses or applied that level of ingenuity? Let's stop holding up progress that the majority of the community wants because of one or two complaints.

3. Should staff move forward with a parklets design guidelines for parklets on Caltrans ROW; and/or on local streets?

Both. Parklets should be one piece in the larger effort of improving the entire downtown pedestrian environment. All businesses and residents will benefit from a more pedestrian friendly downtown.

4. In addition to the elements generally described below and in Resolution 6033, what other elements should be included?

1. Design features for parklets on Caltrans ROW and local streets; Yes to both. Make them beautiful and well crafted. Include seating, shade, lighting, planters etc.
2. Maintenance requirements and responsibilities; This should be part of a larger downtown enhancement program.
3. Encroachment and building permit process and requirements and restrictions for parklets on local streets; Yes, of course.
4. Business restrictions on parklet use for parklets on local streets. Yes, but encourage businesses to participate in the development of all standards.

I hope you find these responses helpful and look forward to seeing this City Council take bold action to improve downtown.

Best Regards,

Ted Luthin