

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED] [com](#); [Mary Gourley](#); [Kari Svanstrom](#); [Patrick Slayter](#); [Sarah Glade Gurney](#); [Una Glass](#); [Diana Rich](#); [Neysa Hinton](#); [Neysa Hinton](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] [Paul Fritz](#); [Lawrence McLaughlin](#); [Mario Landeros](#); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Letter FROM KURT OLSON in Support of making the park on depot street permanent  
**Date:** Monday, September 19, 2022 6:39:31 PM  
**Attachments:**

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Date: September 19, 2022

To: Mayor Slater, Sebastopol City Council Members, and City Manager

Kurt Olson, Ph.D. Co-owner of Screamin' Mimi's.

This letter refers to the current temporary public space on Depot street adjacent to Screamin' Mimi's and Create It.

## **Easily Collected Recent Support: Let's ask residents and vistors... again.**

An employee of Screamin' Mimi's created an opinion signature page and over the course of 9 hours this past weekend, in front of Screamin' Mimi's 88 people were chosen randomly out of approximately 600 and were given the opportunity to sign a survey that stated

**"I am signing because I want to keep the publice space on the intersection in front of Screamin' Mimi's and Create it".**

No they were not offered free ice cream...

**88 people sampled randomly out of approximately 600,**

**RESULT 88/88 people immediatly gave their signatures *NOT ONE DECLINED TO SIGN***

These confirm the overwhelming community support shown in the previous web based survey last spring. The signature pages are attached below

## **For The Record**

27 years ago in 1995 when we moved in the whole corner was more than 50% vacant for quite a while, pretty much void of any visible signs of life. It hasn't been like that for quite a while now. 300-1000 people per day can change things.

We believe downtown is in danger of losing a critical element of social infrastructure if current city management allows the public space on depot street to revert back to an essentially

useless, dangerous patch of asphalt. Instead it should retain and develop this effective and much appreciated public gathering space which is crucial for maintaining and improving the competitiveness and viability of Sebastopol.

We were doing fine before COVID and the park. In COVID times we adjusted and provided a highly appreciated safe comforting social activity when those were really difficult to come by. We also realized hey! Those people look happy out there, and other people are coming to hang out with them! (PAUL FRITZ YOU ARE STILL RIGHT!) We have not yet recovered the customer counts for our cup and cone business that we had pre covid and pre kiosk operation. The people you see are not additional customers, they just used to be hidden from view. Thanks to 10's of thousands of loyal customers we are still here and preparing to allow people inside again in a few weeks.

## **Negative Bias Public Meeting Notice**

While the irrational antipathy of the opinions published in the meeting notice are not surprising considering the sources as I've addressed in my letter, It is disappointing and depressing that the solicitation for and presentation in the meeting notice was performed excluding supporters and known major supporters were also not contacted for the informal(anonymous) survey. That is the negative message we are getting from current city management.

## **Social Infrastructure in Sebastopol**

Do you believe that happy people of all ages, Visibly enjoying themselves is effective and beneficial for the marketing of downtown Sebastopol? You've noticed this is working very well in the Barlow. ..where the number of visible people per business dwarfs that of downtown. Displaying people is SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE and it works. It is effective because humans GRAVITATE towards it, It is important because Humans CRAVE it... WE NEED it. When the plaza is empty are you drawn to it? NO. The Sunday farmers market is one continuous stage filled with actors and spectators touching every stall. There is no argument here, visible people draw people. The Barlow is made up of multiple connected stages putting on Plays every day.

Public spaces work when they are STAGES filled with HAPPY ACTORS where YOU can SEE and JOIN in the PLAY.

## **GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR DOWNTOWN**

Downtown has lots of visibility, but no stages, and it's people are hidden. Where is the best Opportunity for ensuring a social infrastructure Foothold in downtown Sebastopol?

***STAGE: already proven location on the remnant of depot street,***

***2) Visibility: Seen by 10's of thousands, nearly every person that passes through Sebastopol every day***

***3) Happy Actors: Guaranteed supply of 300-1000 Actors every day. Nearly ½ million people since June of 2020, all types... who stay for a while to gather, socialize, to see and be seen.***

COVID taught us about the need for Social Infrastructure It's actually nice to be gathered outside especially in Sonoma County. Why would we give up convenient desirable outdoor gathering places. The cat is out of the bag.

## **MOVE FORWARD, SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE**

The mayor, council and city manager must seize this critical opportunity and actively pursue the retention and development of this space into, well designed, attractive, safe and supported social infrastructure while sending a clear message supporting Sebastopol's future.

Failure to do this would send the message that you are OK with downtown contracting and losing patrons and businesses to competing locations which have committed to and invest in social infrastructure. It would be a monumental mistake to allow this location to revert back to a useless patch of asphalt.

## **Questions for the mayor, council members, and city manager**

1) Do you support retaining and developing this depot street location as public space?

2) WHAT WILL IT TAKE to move forward? We are willing to help.

-Petitions? How many thousand signatures, it won't take long.

-Public rally/demonstrations? We have thousands of people on our flavor call list and thousands of followers on

-Volunteer Manpower to Help navigate CalTrans acquisition or lease?

-Public private partnership?

-Rental Sharing?

3) Is there a marketing opportunity for Sebastopol that has better bang for the buck. If so please name it.

Addressing Support, Opposition, and Bias

## Addressing Concerns , Safety, Trash, Parking

Rational concerns such as attractively designed effective traffic barriers and sufficient trash cans and pickup have common well known easily implementable solutions common in every civilized city in the world.

This location is actually safer for pedestrians closed off than when cars were allowed. Cars used to dart across 116 and shortcut through it or tried to make unexpected stops on 116 and unorthodox fake partial turning moves while trying to verify that parking spots were still not available, still occupied by the same cars.

The lost parking spaces actually only represent a few cars a day as the spaces rarely ever changed over presumably due to difficulty of access or insufficient time limit enforcement. This is glaringly apparent with Gregory Odle's private parking spot in front of Retrospect, where he keeps his private billboard, white ford van, parked all day, 5 days a week, easily avoiding the almost non-existent enforcement and very often when he is not open or even present. Jen Balletto's (Create It) parking concerns were satisfied with the 2 short term spots provided at the southeast end of the adjacent bank parking lot.

## Amazing Opposition

What is it about happy people with money outside their shopfronts that outweighs the obvious social and commercial benefits enough to make a few business owner opponents to this public space cranky? Is it linked to the fact that those business owners do not pay for trash removal and instead regularly put or attempt to put their trash in cans that 2 other businesses pay for? And were recently locked out of access to trash cans? Just sayin'.. I don't understand business owners who apparently seem to have an aversion to visible happy people with disposable income near their shopfronts. It strikes me as greedy to keep them hidden inside or force them to disperse, not utilizing them to attract a larger audience for the town. Would you prefer a neighbor that did not share any customers with you?

Please Don't let this opportunity for critical Social Infrastructure slip away. Move forward now. We are offering to help.

Sincerely,

Kurt Olson