

From: [Andrew Eber](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: OVERLAY item--2/24
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 10:15:56 AM

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---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---
Mayor & Council members.

Because of a medical issue we're unable to attend the meeting on Feb. 24 to discuss the proposed Overlay ordinance.
Following are my comments.

I am thoroughly opposed to the creation of zoning to allow overlay districts, ostensibly to promote economic development and housing.

Overlays are not the way to achieve either of these objectives.

They will allow 8 or 9 story structures, incompatible with the rest of our downtown, with potential occupancy that will overwhelm the already-congested traffic and parking situation.

There are numerous vacant lots across the city that could be zoned for more modest-sized housing.

The concept of building affordable housing with only a single parking space for each unit (or, in the case of apartments recently constructed on PBN, with half that) contradicts common sense and reality. Affordable housing tenants are often in construction, service work and blue collar trades and many drive a considerable distance to reach their job. Most of these are not people who can use a city rental bike or Petaluma-Go. Even at a reduced rental rate, many affordable units house more than a single family or groups of several adults who rely on their own transportation, and a space to park it, for their livelihood. Ignoring these realities simply creates parking pressure on the surrounding neighborhood.

And, I respectfully suggest that the city should be focused on creating a realistic economic development plan for the downtown to bring businesses and tenants to the increasing numbers of vacant storefronts, rather than wasting precious staff time and city funds on a ploy by EKN to circumvent well-established height restrictions. The only, other beneficiaries of this ordinance would be the handful of owners who's parcels fall within the proposed zones, and who will likely see a substantial increase in their property value. On what basis were these properties selected for this windfall?

An aggressive and intentional economic development plan will require creativity, financial incentives for both tenants and landlords, and penalties for those who allow their property to sit vacant for months or years, behind chain link fences, with no intent to rent or sell.

I am not opposed to building a hotel at the proposed EKN site nor am I, necessarily opposed to bringing a luxury hotel to town. But I am opposed to the concept, currently promoted by EKN.

You are well-aware of the unresolved parking impacts resulting from this project, as well as

the height factor and the incompatible design features. Also unresolved are the groundwater and flooding issues at that location.

These negative factors can be ameliorated by either of two alternatives.

EKN could purchase the abandoned bank property and expand their footprint to the rest of the block, lower their building's height to 3 stories, increase the number of rooms, and secure the much-needed parking which is already on-site. Of course, this requires a willing seller. The city may need to encourage this, particular landowner to put their property in play.

Or, EKN could purchase the property at the transit hub for a hotel site, affording immediate access to transit away from the downtown height constraints, with ample room for parking, reduced flooding concerns, and in walking distance to shops and restaurants. A hotel as an anchor of a re-imagined fairgrounds would also provide some of these same advantages.

Let's not waste any more time on the overlay distraction, find a creative option for the proposed hotel, and launch a real plan to achieve economic development.

Thank you.

Andy Eber

[REDACTED]

Petaluma

From: [Anne Mirante](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Cc: [Anne Mirante](#)
Subject: I support the overlay
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 12:58:26 PM

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I support the overlay ordinance and support the development of the new hotel.

Anne Mirante
[REDACTED]
Petaluma

From: [ANNE POWER](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: the changes to the city overlay
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 3:28:12 PM

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i believe this city council is so out of touch. this issue belongs on the ballot for the citizens of Petaluma to decide once and for all. What are you afraid of?

I found that this group of city representatives seem to have their own agenda, and i know of several people that feel the same. Let's put this issue on a ballet and let the people of Petaluma vote!!!!

Anne Power

From: [Barry Bussewitz](#)
To: -- City Clerk; -- City Council; [Peggy Flynn](#)
Subject: Testimony for Agenda Item #8, City Council February 24, 2025
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 5:25:15 PM

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---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

re: Resolution to Certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for the Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay and EKN Appellation Hotel Project (SCH No. 2024040565)

Dear Council Members, City Manager and City Clerk:

I encourage you to certify the Final EIR for the Economic Opportunity Overlay.

I recognize that we will never have the perfect plan, but the Council in recent years has indicated your willingness to take needed action for the good of our community in the face of unavoidable uncertainties and public fear. The Overlay has been studied and debated, and you have received a good deal of community input.

This is the time to act. The Overlay offers the City the opportunity to facilitate needed economic development and housing. These needs are urgent. Instituting the Overlay allows us to get ahead of coming impositions from the State that will decrease our ability to have a voice in proposed development, with more input on design.

Forwarding the Overlay now can position our community in a positive and pragmatic manner to address the four pillars of Petaluma Urban Chat:

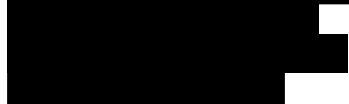
- Adequate Housing
- Reduced Car-Dependency
- Sustainable Municipal Finances
- Climate Action

Thank you very much for your dedication and your good thinking.

Sincerely yours,
barry

Barry Albert Bussewitz, member
Petaluma Urban Chat
[REDACTED]

Petaluma, California



From: [Beverly Schor](#)
To: -- City Clerk
Subject: Please postpone the Council vote on the Downtown Overlay Plan
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 9:45:19 AM

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Council, City Manager, Staff,

Please postpone the vote on the downtown overlay plan until the 2025 General Plan committee has adequate time to address the downtown as a whole. "Spot Zoning" which is what the overlay clearly is about, opens up the City to a lawsuit because "certain" areas will be awarded special benefits and variances not awarded to other property owners in the same downtown. And, the special benefits are in violation of our current General Plan regarding height limitations.

We are paying consultants to work on the 2025 General Plan which will address ALL of the downtown area.

Let them do the job we are paying them to do.

Please postpone this vote.

Beverly Schor

District 6 Resident

From: [Beverly Schor](#)
To: -- [City Council](#)
Subject: Please vote NO on the proposed overlay
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 9:34:49 AM

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There is no earthly reason to vote on the overlay at this time.

Please postpone any vote on the overlay until the General Plan committee has adequate time to address the entire downtown, not just a few isolated "spots." The City is opening itself up to a lawsuit should you choose to green light this poorly designed overlay plan.

Beverly Schor
District 6 Resident

From: [Carol Eber](#)
To: -- City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment - City Council February 24, 2025
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 4:18:46 PM

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RE: EKN AND OVERLAYS

I strongly oppose Overlay C as proposed.

- Overlay C borders the Oakhill Brewster Historic District, one of the earliest residential portions of Petaluma. Overlay C will allow buildings towering out of proportion and with no setback adjacent to this historic district. Visual consistency in the district will be destroyed if Overlay C is adopted. Although Overlay C is outside the historic district, its proximity has the potential for disrupting the cultural identity, the sense of place, and property values of Oakhill Brewster Historic District.
- There are not “numerous buildings 60 feet or taller in Overlay C” as stated in the planning document. Using common standard calculations for building height (10 feet per story) would indicate 6 or 7 story buildings. FirstCarbon Solutions is promoting falsehoods in their planning documents.
- Although planners state that Overlay C is outside the Historic Commercial District, they fail to include any mention of the bordering Oakhill Brewster Historic District and the impact of future development.
- Overlay C borders the Washington Corridor. The planning document distorts the traffic patterns on this street through downtown. Visitors to the coast traverse Washington in their RVs and cars to reach Highway 101. Milk trucks come into town from the western dairy ranches. Washington is a major street for transporting students to elementary, junior high and senior high schools. Washington Corridor is also a major artery for emergency vehicles. Adding a six story residence to this corridor will worsen the traffic flow, especially at peak hours. For the planners to say that the impact would be less than significant is absurd.
- The planners state that the purpose of the Overlay is to support mixed use development, which implies commercial as well as residential use. Considering the current number of vacancies in the downtown area it seems foolish to consider the need for more commercial options. The city should adopt penalties for property owners who fail to rent to businesses instead of building more mixed use buildings. Two former bars on

Kentucky Street have been vacant. The large building at Lakeville and Petaluma Blvd remains vacant. Chain link fencing surrounds the parcel of the former Fosters Freeze.

- The EKN hotel could expand to build on the currently vacant bank building adjacent to the proposed parcel, reducing height but offering many rooms, parking and other amenities.

I urge the council to oppose Overlay C in its entirety and allow the area to remain under the General Plan as currently in place.

Carol B. Eber

[REDACTED]

Petaluma CA

From: [Carol Castillo](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: No to the overlay
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 3:16:49 PM

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The overlay is the camel's nose under the tent. Take any proposed project on its own merits or lack thereof. DO NOT DESTROY DOWNTOWN.

Carol Castillo

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

From: [Carolyn Gonzalez](#)
To: -- City Clerk; -- City Council
Cc: [Rich Meyer](#)
Subject: Downtown Overlay and M Group influence
Date: Monday, February 17, 2025 5:15:22 PM

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Dear City Council,

I rarely take the time to try to disrupt the status quo, or otherwise try to waylay proceedings. But I have to say the decision to make some of the major changes proposed to our historic downtown are so very disappointing. A 6 story hotel? An overlay to our historic downtown? I can understand that we need to move with the times, and cede progress. But the one thing that Petaluma isn't is Modern, High-Rise, Au Courant. And therein lies its charm. The reason folks come to Petaluma is because it is not the tourist trap of Napa, Healdsburg, and so many other towns around us. If folks want hi-rise they can go to SF - right?

Petaluma's strength lies in being true to its character and origins. And while there can be ways to blend its history with new buildings and loads of parking and housing, that is a pretty tall order and hard to do well.

I can go on, but I think the bottom line is why is the City Council so committed to going against what their constituents want? I do understand there is money to be made, but that can't be all Petaluma is about. If that is the kind of town we become, many of us would be glad to leave. I moved here, not to Napa, not to Healdsburg, not to any place that has hoards of people who don't live there. If that is the plan then we might as well be Southern Calif.

I implore you to please reconsider the irreversible changes you are making and consider why there is such a drive to do this. If it is more monetary than anything else than shame will surely follow.

Respectfully,

Carolyn Gonzalez

From: [Carolyn G.](#)
To: [-- City Council](#)
Subject: I understand that this is a very unofficial/unscientific poll. — Nextdoor
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 2:35:05 PM

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I think this poll says alot. We don't want the overlay that CC seems to want. Weren't you voted in by all these folks who voted?

Please listen to our voices, your constituents. We are the reason you have your position, unless someone is filling pockets...

Carolyn G.

Check out this post on Nextdoor: https://nextdoor.com/p/TCH_Sg2RWPC4?utm_source=share&extras=MTQwNjg5ODI%3D&utm_campaign=1740004318973

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: [Claudia](#) [REDACTED]
To: [-- City Council](#)
Subject: Vote On Overlay
Date: Monday, February 17, 2025 8:38:19 PM

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As a long time Petaluma citizen I am once again asking that the City Council listen to the majority in Petaluma and deny the egregious overlay proposal. If you are so committed to the EKN proposal, then grant a variance for the site they will be using. I have been lied to by Council members, my questions to both Council and the Mayor have been ignored and unanswered time and time again.

There are many ways forward for Petaluma without destroying the Historic District.

Claudia Aron Ross

From: [Claudia](#) [REDACTED]
To: [-- City Council; citymgr; -- City Attorney](#)
Subject: Proposed Overlay, EKN Development - Your Legal Liability
Date: Monday, February 17, 2025 8:52:08 PM

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I needed to add to the e-mail I just wrote. For many years I was a Senior Paralegal doing real estate law in San Francisco. I worked on matters for Developer, and I worked on several project for the City and County of San Francisco and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. I have spoken with several high powered real estate attorney in SF who have many years of experience. You are opening yourselves to great legal liability, and it will not be too hard to to prove. Additionally, those who vote to go forward will most probably open themselves to liability as well. I will be among many making sure the citizens of Petaluma will ultimately not be the ones paying for those liabilities.

Where is the due diligence? Where are the executed letters of intent? Where are outside parties with no ties to EKN and other stakeholders doing review? Why haven't easy questions been answered? Why do answers change at each Council meeting, even for the most basic questions?

Please reconsider wha have have been pushing, for Petaluma and your reputations.

Claudia Aron Ross

From: [Dan Lyke](#)
To: -- City Clerk
Subject: Public comment for City Council meeting, agenda item 8
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 5:24:50 PM

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We are writing to support moving forward with the overlay plan.

It is well established that housing responds to supply and demand: that even high end housing increases supply that helps make housing overall more affordable.

We can see that to enhance a vibrant, but sometimes struggling, downtown, we need more people walking around downtown.

In order to meet our climate goals, we need more density, so that people can get around without using automobiles, and can live with the lower carbon emissions, and ecological impact, of multi-family dwellings.

Petaluma is in a housing crisis. Our children leave. Our low wage workers commute in from elsewhere, and our homelessness rate is staggering. Allowing more housing to be built densely, around downtown, will help alleviate that housing crunch and bring more people into our downtown.

Much has been made of second-guessing the economics of the hotel, but even if the hotel fails, hotel to condo or rental conversions have happened very successfully in other cities. And if it succeeds, the hotel brings in high end tourist dollars which will help our downtown thrive. Along with the direct TOT revenue.

A few years ago we visited Philadelphia, and as buildings from the 1700s stand along side skyscrapers, it's clear that density and height take nothing away from historic buildings.

We would also urge the Council to not put too much stock in calls for more parking. Years of accumulated evidence clearly demonstrate that if we are going to thrive in the coming decades, we need to be moving away from automobiles as our mode of transportation. We do that by building dense neighborhoods that are attractive to walking and other active transportation modes, and that can support transit. And we don't do that by continuing to make developers subsidize automobile travel.

Dan Lyke & Charlene Marie

[REDACTED], Petaluma

From: [Danielle Crockett](#)
To: -- [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Hotel Development
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 12:48:07 PM

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Dear City Council Members,

My family and I support the overlay ordinance. It could bring much needed money and revitalization to our downtown area.

Thank you!

-Danielle Crockett

From: [Dave Alden](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Comments on 2/24/25 Council Agenda Item 8
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 7:36:17 PM

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Comment to Petaluma City Council on the February 24, 2025 Agenda Item 8, "Resolutions to Certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) and to Adopt a General Plan Amendment for Downtown Housing & Economic Opportunity Overlay"

Comment by Dave Alden, 416 Webster Street, Petaluma, 707-338-8388

To the Petaluma City Council:

Apologies: I won't attend the February 24 Council meeting due to a conflict for which I apologize. I know this is a major decision for the future of Petaluma. But submitting these written comments rather than speaking might make your long evening a little shorter.

Overlay Support: I've engaged regularly with the Overlay process, including chairing a public information event. I remain less than fully satisfied with the process and current proposal but believe that allowing more development opportunities near downtown is essential for the future of Petaluma. Thus, I ask you to approve the Overlay FEIR and Ordinance this evening even as I hope that the direction can be tweaked during the General Plan update.

In addition to my support, I add these further observations.

In Defense of the Council: You may hear this evening from those who oppose the Overlay, describing themselves as protectors of downtown and questioning the motives, including possible financial gain, of the Councilmembers who are pro-Overlay. To them, I suggest that every Councilmember, having willingly assumed the often thankless task of being an elected official, likely has more love and commitment to downtown Petaluma than most people in the Chambers this evening. Also, if anyone truly has evidence of corruption, which I strongly doubt, now is the time to provide it.

That some of the Council vote pro-Overlay may indicate that they've studied the options in greater depth, researching the data and considering the opinions of experts, or perhaps that they have a different definition of what it means to preserve downtown.

Definition of Preserving Downtown: Like many, I enjoy downtown. The historic feel, the captivating architecture, the changing character as I walk about, the uncrowded sidewalks, the ability to get a table quickly. These are enough to allow me to overlook the many chain-link fences and papered over windows. But what I like as a visitor and what I know is good for the future of our shared community are different. The current version of downtown portends a worrisome future of decline.

I might like the downtown experience less if I see a residential midrise or two on the periphery of downtown, if there's more jostling in the Copperfields aisles, or if I must wait 30 minutes for a table at Mi Pueblo, but I know that Petaluma would be healthier with more folks visiting downtown.

And a healthy Petaluma trumps my personal preference every time. Plus, the urban planning experts agree.

Expert Weigh In: PBS is currently running "Walkable USA" on restoring life to moribund downtowns. In the program, renowned walkability expert Jeff Speck says, "What we've seen is that residential coming back to urban cores has been the key step in getting more business back in urban cores."

In a similar vein, when Chuck Marohn of Strong Towns visited Petaluma three years ago, he and I walked past the now-defunct Roaring Donkey. I mentioned the problem with rowdiness at closing time. Marohn's immediate response was that Petaluma needs more people living downtown because nothing discourages misbehavior more effectively than ordinary people taking their ordinary dogs on late evening walks.

Digging into the Strong Towns website finds "The best way to preserve our historical buildings is to encourage investment and development, and not by outlawing them with silly regulations."

From Grist, "We need old buildings to make great cities, but we need new ones too."

Are there urban planners who disagree and believe that historic downtowns should be preserved in amber and protected by large buffers? Perhaps, but they're hard to find.

Conclusion: I hope you listen to these experts and, while you may sympathize with those who want the downtown to always be as it is today, vote to allow a path to a stronger financial base. As we learned from the loss of the French Laundry, losing historic buildings to demolition by neglect is a real possibility in Petaluma. I hope that one lesson was enough.

Thanks for reading. Good luck reaching home by midnight. – Dave Alden

From: [EH+A](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#); [-- City Council](#)
Subject: Overlay & EKN Hotel
Date: Saturday, February 22, 2025 3:59:23 PM

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Dear Council Members,

Please register this email as 2 registered Petaluma voters who are adamantly opposed to the proposed overlay & EKN Hotel development. Neither of these proposals will enhance the architectural & historical significance of Petaluma, let alone enhance the wonderful charm & uniqueness of our town that draws visitors here every week! These represent a Pandora's box that once opened can never be contained.

On a personal note, we moved here 3 years ago from the overly planned, controlled & sterile environment of Irvine, CA. Petaluma captured us with its history, amazing architecture, friendly community spirit & natural beauty. (Oh, and the great food!) But behind our move too was the knowledge of Petaluma's historic movement to plan & limit its future growth yet preserve its natural beauty, agriculture & architecture. Intelligent growth, not just selling out to the latest developer. Knowing the developers are going to maximize the parameters of the overlay for the greatest return on their bottom line!

Our votes in the recent election were cast specifically for the candidates opposing these proposed changes. And we will work hard to overturn the changes & unseat any candidates that support them, if they are passed.
ed

Thank you for your attention.

Diane E Harvey
Richard S Harvey

Dear Mayor, Councilmembers, and City Staff,

I encourage the Council to certify the Final EIR and adopt the proposed General Plan Amendment Resolution. I also support the adoption of the Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay Ordinance.

Let's be clear. Nobody in this overlay policy debate wants to “destroy our historic downtown.” This attack has been repeated ad nauseum online and has hit a fever pitch in the past month. Advocacy groups and their leaders who repeat, amplify, or refuse to denounce this false accusation from their supporters are doing a serious disservice to our community and stewardship of our historic downtown. As reported in the Argus-Courier, it is no wonder businesses downtown “have remained publicly quiet on the issue out of fear of retribution” if they dare to say something supportive about the overlay.¹

The zoning overlay is a modest policy that invites more flexible development proposals while requiring public process and new design standards that do not exist in our current zoning.

Zoning that sets overly restrictive rules on what developers can build is a significant factor in restricting building development that provides more affordable space for small businesses and homes.

Petaluma has a well-documented history of exclusionary zoning.² Prices increase with numerous empty parcels, no new growth downtown for years, and increasing demand for new businesses and homes. The resulting high cost of living excludes people from living Petaluma.

Key examples of exclusionary zoning restrictions include prohibitions on multi-family dwellings, enforced minimum lot sizes, and overly restrictive minimum building heights.³

Exclusionary zoning increases the cost of living. This pushes people working in our restaurants and service providers to live further away, adds to congestion on the roadways, and makes it quite difficult for the children of current residents to afford to live nearby.⁴

¹ Petaluma's downtown 'overlay' is headed toward a major vote. Here's what might happen.

<https://www.petaluma360.com/article/news/petaluma-hotel-overlay-charlie-palmer/>

² The Exclusionary Effect of Petaluma's Growth Controls.

<https://petalumahistorian.com/the-exclusionary-effect-of-petalumas-growth-controls/>

³ State of Housing in Sonoma County 2024

https://generationhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2024_SOH_SoCo_for-flipbook_100724.pdf

⁴ American Planning Association "Equity in Zoning Policy Guide"

<https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9264386/>

The Strategic Economic Memorandum is an independent analysis of the economic viability of the Overlay.⁵ It indicates the:

“Downtown Overlay will provide greater long-term flexibility for housing developers and will increase the likelihood that a residential product would be built when development conditions improve.”

The memorandum also indicates that:

“additional lot coverage will enhance the financial performance of otherwise financially feasible multifamily residential development projects and potentially accelerate housing development.”

Per the memo, 3, 5, and 8-story high-density residential “rarely pencil” in Petaluma, but this changes if “transportation, placemaking, and private amenity improvements enhance the area’s desirability as a residential neighborhood” are implemented.

Petaluma is investing substantially in transportation and placemaking. We have a new micro-transit service⁶, fare-free busses,⁷ a new train station,⁸ and a huge surge in roadway repairs and improvements that make room for more people to choose less expensive options to get around town, including bicycling and walking.⁹ Placemaking is in process at both train stations, and at the Fairgrounds now under local control.

The overlay is a small but positive step toward the productive use of our long-vacant parcels, increased activation of our business district, and more affordable spaces for living and working in and near downtown. I want to live in an inclusive community that grows sustainably, and the zoning overlay is a measured, positive step in that direction.

- Eric Leland

⁵ Strategic Economics Memorandum: Downtown Overlay Market and Development Impacts Assessment and Fiscal Analysis of City Revenues Associated with the Proposed Hotel Project
<https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/petalumaca/uploads/2023/06/Strategic-Economics-Memorandum-dated-November-7-2023.pdf>

⁶ PetalumaTransit LumaGo: <https://transit.cityofpetaluma.net/lumago/>

⁷ PetalumaTransit Fare Free Busses: <https://transit.cityofpetaluma.net/fare-free/>

⁸ SMART unveils Petaluma North, the city’s 2nd train station.
<https://www.petaluma360.com/article/news/smart-petaluma-north-train-station/>

⁹ Petaluma plans to invest \$59 million in its streets over the next 5 years.
<https://www.petaluma360.com/article/news/petaluma-roads-pothole-fix/>

From: [Gary Deaver](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Completely support the Proposed Overlay District and the New Hotel in Petaluma
Date: Saturday, February 22, 2025 9:57:13 AM

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To the Mayor and City Council members of the City of Petaluma,

My wife and I believe the proposed overlay district is a good planning tool for our downtown's future success. We are devoted to supporting our local businesses and eat at downtown restaurants frequently. In our candid conversations with downtown business owners, all are completely supportive of the overlay and the proposed hotel.

Our credit card annual summary of expenses, revealed \$15,000 in restaurant expense in 2024. We have to leave town to experience the roof top, panoramic views the new hotel will provide. We love Petaluma like it is but also desire what it can be.

Thank you for your volunteer service to our community.

Warmest regards,
Gary Deaver
[REDACTED]

From: [Gary Deaver](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#)
Subject: Vote to approve the overlay district.
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 8:22:32 AM

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I spoke with seven business owners yesterday and all were supportive of the proposed overlay and the approval of the proposed hotel.

Let's make this happen.

My best
Gary Deaver
[REDACTED]

From: [Heather K](#)
To: [-- City Clerk](#); [-- City Council](#)
Subject: Public Comment - Reject the Downtown Overlay
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 9:25:59 AM

---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Petaluma City Council and Community:

Please reject the proposed downtown overlay. The overlay project has been a failure from the start and its pet project, the EKN Hotel, has no place in our historic downtown.

Petaluma mayor Kevin McDonnell and his Know Before You Grow / Urban Chat, long time consultants to the owner of that hotel lot and marketing arm for the outsourced M-Group, have been spreading misinformation about this overlay and hotel for years. Brian Barnacle insisted on changing the name of the overlay to include the words "housing" and "economic opportunity", even though the overlay offers neither. The city lied when it said the hotel developer would pay for the overlay project, only to accidentally announce the \$161k the public paid for the first failed EIR. The mayor's Know Before You Grow and M-Group insist there is plenty of parking downtown for a new hotel, while at the same time harming at least two downtown property owners by refusing permits due to insufficient off-street parking. These lies and many more have caused the vast majority of our community to lose faith in our city government.

The Argus Courier published an article on February 17 to report that five of our seven city councilmembers will vote in favor of the overlay in tonight's city council meeting. In other words, tonight's meeting is just another performative waste of time. Your meetings, "workshops", and appeals are performative with no real means of being heard. Decisions are made in advance, the public is shut out, and there are no checks and balances in a city government too busy slapping each other on the back and cheering on the corruption.

The new EIR is 1500 pages, so it seems very unlikely that anybody has had the time to read, absorb, and respond to that report yet. If it fails to address the huge impact on our infrastructure, including parking, then the report should be rejected.

With all the time, money, and energy wasted on this overlay, the city could have taken some actual positive steps toward supporting a strong economic future in Petaluma. Thank you to Karen Nau and Alex DeCarli for representing our community and considering the future needs of all instead of just the few.

Heather Kratt

From: [Howard Belove](#)
To: -- [City Council](#)
Subject: SF Chronicle article
Date: Monday, February 17, 2025 9:44:13 PM

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Dear Council Members:

I'm sure you have seen this article, which underlines what we need to protect and build on for Petaluma's future. I'm hearing that the overlay plan is predicted to pass, but I don't think that is what Petaluma needs. We have something special and it is up to all of you not to mess it up. Don't let the lure of possible, but far from certain, future tax dollars cloud your vision.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/totalsf/article/petaluma-day-trip-history-downtown-20154711.php>

Yours,

Howard Belove

Howard Belove
[REDACTED]

From: [Isabelle M Beardsworth](#)
To: -- City Council; [Kevin McDonnell](#); [Barnacle, Brian](#); [Janice Cader-Thompson](#); [John Shribbs](#); [Karen Nau](#); [Quint, Frank](#); [DeCarli, Alex](#); -- City Attorney
Subject: Downtown Area Parking Management Plan
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 5:40:29 PM

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I am glad to receive the long awaited “data collection” for the “Downtown Area Parking Management Plan,” however, I note a number of grave deficiencies. These include inadequate data, myopic and limited downtown area analysis, little consideration for local business needs, scope of downtown business vacancies, current and planned road changes which have/will eliminate existing parking, needs of all local residents, currently approved commercial and housing construction and future planned development and an ongoing desire to minimize parking and mandate public transportation and alternative transportation methods.

Further, I am appalled at the \$100,000 cost funded yet again by taxpayers and without their knowledge. Tax payers already have considerable expense to fund city employees to perform this work. In addition, there are many residents and volunteers who have volunteered to provide the parking data within the last 10 years at no expense to tax payers. It is merely a software application to infill data and present concrete alternatives.

The report purports to show there is currently adequate parking with the same limited data: 3 consecutive days and times plus 2 consecutive days 4 months later. Further, 2 of the 3 “aerial” analysis for off street parking were completed in 2023! Essentially even the two public parking locations are fast approaching the 85% occupancy. This data does not reflect the actual current experience of both residents and visitors alike.

Clearly the data was inadequately presented, questioned by a citizen and clarified by a city council member. This data “plan” did not contemplate the additional 50+ spaces lost in the downtown by

“daylighting” a project currently underway by the city. Further, staff should already be aware of other state requirements including the requirement for additional ADA parking spaces which would further reduce the number of parking spaces. Lastly, the discussion and personal observation clearly indicated an obvious fact there is insufficient temporary loading zones for commercial and personal deliveries. Assignment of additional blue “loading” zones will further limit parking downtown. It is inconceivable the city can have spent this money without a full analysis.

The DAPMP reviewed a very limited downtown area. The lack of parking is a problem outside of the analysis extending to the other commercial buildings and residential areas in the vicinity with current 2 hour parking zones. Lack of parking in the zone identified pushes the parking problem into residential neighborhoods for homeowners and tenants alike. This is a challenge for businesses that require parking for customers and building owners.

Vehicle parking spaces have already been lost to bike spaces including the pilot “Redwood Bike Share”. It is a rare sight to see any bicycles parked or rental bikes spaces vacant reflecting an underutilization of space. The creation of “parklets” increased public space but further enhances the parking challenges which continue without any sign of change. It is a marvelous expansion for some businesses but which significantly affects other businesses with parking deficiencies.

The reduction of parking spaces has also occurred on “D” street due to the “pilot” program. We are awaiting an interim report from city next month for a scheduled “Spring 2025” one year analysis. The current vehicular challenges, notable incidents, lack of cyclist and pedestrian use will hopefully reverse the change on its own merits with appropriate independent data. This will help the local residents quality of life and provide the much needed additional parking

The viability of local business is dependent on adequate parking. The analysis clearly identified an issue with employer and employees currently working around the two-hour parking limitation. It is imperative both parties utilize public parking spaces for the benefit of their customers. This will free up additional space either in the parking

garages or a paid parking alternative.

The city has consistently committed to support local businesses and the economy. It has even initiated a number of proposals to “revitalize” the downtown area. However, the proposal to add parking meters is highly unlikely to increase visitors to local businesses. It could be effective if the “alternative free parking” is available and widely publicized but the 21st Century visitor appears to value their time over money. This would be detrimental to local business in conflict with the purported purpose. The city could “assist” local business in a more meaningful way understanding the average visitor does drive to their destination. The current lack of parking is already impacting local business and running counter to the city’s “climate change” initiatives because vehicles are searching to find parking spaces in the area. Any other proposal for limiting delivery times for businesses suggested would further challenge local business and costs.

The DAPMP does not take into consideration already approved construction in the downtown area. The Adobe Creek Winery is not yet complete but as an event location will significantly impact both street and public parking. The east D Street/River View development will further impact the parking downtown as it comes online. This does not even take into consideration the EKN/Appellation Hotel which, according to the city council at the last meeting advised “when” it is approved! The pending “Overlay” districts will further exacerbate the problem and can reasonably be anticipated at this time in some form despite overriding public opposition. This future development will not be required to include on-site parking because of the “Parking Assessment Districts” and any new housing will have very limited require parking requirements according to California state law.

The assumptions by city staff and many city council members make some wide assumptions about use of alternative modes of transportation including public transportation. It is always possible to walk and bicycle given the physical ability and no time limitations. However, in the downtown area with an aging population and for others in the 21st Century this is not feasible. The sidewalks and roads are in such disrepair because the city has elected to push other agendas and not provide much needed maintenance. It is difficult for impaired individuals to utilize walking sticks, walkers and wheelchairs on these

surfaces.

There is currently no comprehensive data base to access information on all the available alternatives. Redwood Bike Share, Sonoma County Transit, Petaluma Transit, LumaGo, Golden Gate Transit, Groome Transportation, SMART. It is difficult to navigate the myriads of alternatives for an individual to come up with a personal transportation plan. Notwithstanding, many of these are no-cost or low-cost alternatives for users but there is a significant cost for tax payers. The transit analysis of LumaGo and SMART may look successful, because of the “no cost” but is this viable long term? Once the grants are completed and the city has to pay for these services can we really afford to continue this? Do we have a comprehensive analysis of: tax payer cost: income/expenditure/usage? Can we justify these costs above alternatives?

A significant element of the current parking problem is the lack of police enforcement. The analysis indicates about 3600 parking tickets are issues per year. This only equates to about 10 per day in the 2-hour zone. This does not seem to be much given the number of “meter maids” and the geographic area. Often in these zones a vehicle may be parked for 2-3 days without a violation. Minimizing the amount of time parking downtown will not be effective unless there is enforcement. Efficiency in the parking monitoring would also bring in revenue as it is probably a current financial drain with current staffing. It would also be helpful to have an online phone/text/email for citizens to alert the department of violations.

Isabelle Beardsworth