



2447 Santa Clara Ave, Suite #302
Alameda CA 94501

Phone: (510) 523-1392

Fax: (510) 747-9579

office@downtownalameda.com

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November 2, 2021

Honorable Mayor, City Councilmembers and City Staff,

The realignment of Park Street and the implementation of the varied aspects of the Commercial Streets Program has provided significant and impactful benefits to our business district that we hope will continue.

The resulting expanded space has enabled businesses to activate areas and create parklets that not only support commerce but build community.

We believe that your support of this program is *not* about *27 individual parklets*...rather, it is about the vitality and vibrancy of our entire business districts. While these activated areas have enabled businesses to expand their footprint and welcome socially-distanced, outdoor alternatives, they have also given us the opportunity to re-engage as a community. They have created the space for us to enjoy a more walkable, lively and pleasant experience.

Without a doubt, safety is a shared priority. We support the installation of the decorative concrete barricades. Not only will they offer an added level of safety; they will also create an aesthetically unifying element.

With the enhanced safety that the concrete barricades provide, paired with DABA's district-wide umbrella policy, we would like to ask you to reconsider the increased insurance coverage, or create a fund to offset these increased insurance expenses. The proposed liability increase will be at least doubling and in some special cases increasing 30-fold the cost of coverage- this requirement will be onerous if not prohibitive to the businesses involved. In one instance it will cost a business \$7,500 over the two years for insurance alone. To streamline the process of such a fund, we are willing to assist the City in the administration of the program and work 1:1 with the businesses to make sure their paperwork is in order.

As we continue to evaluate parking needs, usage and directional signage we hope to reinstate a desperately needed compliance program that will incentivise adequate turnover and address violations. We are available to help with noticing businesses, visitors and vehicles when this new program starts up.

With your continued support of the partial closure of Alameda Avenue, we will be able to build on the successful activation of a space that is safe, inviting and beneficial to our district. And it provides us time to reimagine the space. Inviting our community, businesses, residents and property owners into conversation to ask those "How might we..." questions and time to discover the possibilities of what the area can and should be in the future.

It has been said that you invest in what you value; and vibrant, lively business districts are vital to our entire community. Our business districts are a barometer of the health of our City and your investment will pay dividends far into the future.

During the next two years we look forward to continuing to collaborate with you, City staff and the business community to engage more deeply to create a sustainable Commercial Streets Program that includes a long term parklet program with design, safety and fee guidelines that we can rely on moving forward.

Together, we can continue to offer much needed support to our local businesses at this critical time in our recovery. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kathy Weber,
Executive Director

September 18, 2021

Alameda City Council Members
City Hall
2263 Santa Clara Ave
Alameda, CA 94501

Dear Alameda City Council Members,

I am writing to you to voice my opposition to continuing the Slow Streets closures beyond your initial stated date of October 31, 2021. The program does not provide the benefit originally intended, but instead creates unsafe and inequitable conditions.

Although the initial closures were a novel idea to give people more space while parks and schools were closed, the streets are no longer being used by the public as initially intended. I have closely monitored both Versailles and San Jose Avenues and I rarely see anyone using the streets for bicycling and never see anyone walking or rolling in the streets. The only people benefitting from the Slow Streets are the residents who now enjoy no car traffic while the adjacent streets pick up the load.

I'd like to specifically address the unsafe situation around Franklin School, Park, and Pool. The road closure beginning at Morton Street and San Antonio Avenue pushes all of the traffic on the 9th and Grand Street corridor onto San Antonio Ave. Prior to the closure, drivers could make safe choices during heavy impact times (like school drop-off and pick-up) to use either San Jose or San Antonio to get to/from Grand Street. The unintended consequence of the closure is that all the traffic is now flowing past the main entrances to Franklin School and Franklin Park, creating crowded and unsafe conditions for students and pedestrians. Furthermore, Franklin Park draws many people to the neighborhood. The street closure reduces the car parking on the Franklin Park block by 50%, pushing cars out into the surrounding streets with inequitable impact for the neighborhood.

Slow Streets is not functioning as a public good for all as originally intended. Instead, it has turned public streets into private streets and created an inequitable and arbitrary policy that benefits few and burdens many.

Please keep your word and bring the Slow Streets program to an end on October 31, 2021.

Respectfully,

Sharon LaCroix
510-522-7696



(510) 516-0497
P.O. BOX 2732
ALAMEDA, CA 94501
www.bikewalkalameda.org

**Board of
Directors**

November 1, 2021

Denyse Trepanier
President

RE: Item 7D, Commercial Streets Program Recommendation

Brian Fowler
Treasurer

Dear Mayor Ashcraft and Council Members,

Cameron Holland
Secretary

Bike Walk Alameda is writing in support of staff recommendations regarding the Commercial Streets Program.

Pat Potter
Board Member

We see how the street reconfigurations and parklets, even as a quick-build response to COVID-19, have been popular for reasons beyond social distancing. They're helping these districts blossom into dynamic and inviting destinations that focus more on people and social interaction than on the convenience of driving and parking. Fortunately, not only is this reallocation of space popular with the public, but by deprioritizing driving and parking, it aligns with many of our city's stated goals around climate and resiliency.

Cyndy Johnsen
Board Member

Tim Beloney
Board Member

There are very valid concerns around program aesthetics and parking enforcement, and we're glad to see staff recommending that those get addressed as we go forward.

Lucy Gigli
*Founder,
non-voting*

One item that we'd like added, however, is consideration for long-needed safe access for bicyclists. Currently, our key commercial streets are high-injury corridors, where only a small percentage of experienced bicyclists feel comfortable riding. These streets should be safe, 'complete' streets that welcome users of all modes of transportation, including bicyclists of all ages and abilities. That they are not is unfortunate from a safety and equity standpoint, and it's a missed opportunity for businesses to attract more customers. It also creates collateral issues, like increased sidewalk riding, because sidewalks are the only place many bicyclists feel safe in our commercial corridors. Accommodating bicyclists with safe infrastructure will also fix gaps in the bike network, which lacks north-south connectivity, most acutely in the Webster Street corridor.

Though the Transportation Commission unanimously supported staff's recommendation, they did not see the need to accommodate bicycle travel on these main streets. They felt that parallel side streets would suffice for bicyclists. While that may be true for Park Street, which has Oak as a potential parallel street, there is no parallel street for Webster Street.

The Active Transportation Plan has been delayed, but will soon be under way, and its draft recognizes all of this in calling for low stress bicycling facilities within both of these corridors. Also, Street Design Resolution #15648 states that "when designing, redesigning or resurfacing streets...improvements and right-of-way space shall be allocated based upon the following principles and priorities...Provide safe and convenient access for vulnerable users including children, seniors, and people bicycling and walking..., and **Safety for people walking and bicycling shall be the highest priority.**" Although it's a 2-year proposition, the extended Commercial Streets program represents a more measured and semi-permanent evolution to a potential future state, and it should align with our vision.

Given that only a subset of businesses want parklets, and only very limited on-street parking is needed along each street, there should be room to meet all needs, including protected bike facilities, but it will take careful planning. We see these next two years as a great opportunity for that in the form of design, pilots, and even potentially implementation of protected bike lanes, and we ask that the extended Commercial Streets Program explicitly acknowledge this important objective.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Bike Walk Alameda Board