



April 21, 2020

Dear City Council and City of Alameda Staff,

We are all aware of how the future for small towns and communities hangs in the balance right now. At this moment most downtowns across the country are shuttered. Here at home, our once vibrant district is unnervingly quiet.

The Downtown Alameda Business Association recognizes how daunting it is, as Councilmembers and staff, being tasked with mapping the City's future. We are writing to begin engaging in ways to work together as we begin our new path forward. To ever so slowly, reopen and face what is going to be the uphill battle of 2020. There is a real reason to be at the forefront of this effort, and that is 2021. In January of 2020, downtown business was thriving and the vibrant energy of Park Street was alive and so very bright. We believe 2021 can be all that and more if we think out of the box and focus our financial and creative energy on the possibilities and supporting our most vulnerable businesses.

The gradual lifting of the shelter-in-place order will require some serious and creative thinking for reentry strategies that continue to provide social distancing etiquette and support for our businesses. While all cities are in the same boat, stronger, proactive cities and business districts will work together to create and restore a safe, fun atmosphere with plenty of room to walk, wave to friends and feel a part of society again.

The Downtown Association envisions a best possible scenario that includes expanded walking areas and safe passages for our customers and pedestrians. If you can picture reconfiguring the current four-lane traffic to two-lane traffic...

- Current parking lanes on Park Street are used for customers and pedestrians providing additional space to walk.
- The first traffic lanes in each direction could shift and be used for parking
- Designate parking spaces on each block to provide short-term stopping for contactless delivery/take-out vehicles.
- Identify and close some side streets to offer additional space.
- The addition of potted trees and plants along with well-kept tables and chairs would allow people to purchase food at restaurants and take it outside all summer. This would support our dining establishments who are facing a drastic loss of revenue from distance seating in-house.

Is this way out of the box for a city to consider? Why, yes it is, but this is Alameda. And we look forward to an engaging conversation as we join with an eye on what is possible, not what is easy. We certainly plan on doing our part to sustain our vibrant district including...

- Helping keep the streets cleaned during the day
- Cross promotion with other businesses and partner organizations like WABA, GABA and the Alameda Chamber of Commerce to bring visibility and vitality to Alameda.
- Create as much continuity as possible to make people feel connected and part of their community

We applaud that the City has already begun discussing a financial commitment to help local businesses. And while we value all our local merchants and services, the most vulnerable in the business community are our restaurants. They have the smallest profit margins, the most payroll and product that is the least shelf stable. Restaurants are the places where families meet up, where old friends come to gather together again. They are the backbone of any downtown. If we lose a restaurant and their doors are shuttered, the amount of time to reopen a new food service business in that space is far longer than any other type of business, thereby making the road to recovery longer. We urge you to bear in mind that when deciding how to focus your funds. We also ask that you recall our fight to get our beloved theater back and running. Perhaps the only industry that is as at risk as restaurants are theaters, and ours is a treasure. Together, we have a partnership with an exemplary citizen who could not do a better job maintaining a wonder experience and doing his part to give back and be inclusive.

Together we can come up with ways to make this work, and who knows even better, stronger and united than before.

Sincerely,

The Downtown Alameda Business Association Board of Directors