



## **A Yes Vote On Measure F Would Prevent an “Old Town Ghost Town”**

### ***Local Eureka small businesses have warned city leaders for years of Downtown’s demise with the city’s high-risk housing plan***

*Eureka, CA (Oct. 30, 2024)* – A recent review of recorded testimony over several years showed that desperate Downtown Eureka small business owners, patrons, and planners went before city leaders to urge public discussion on how to meet state low-income housing requirements and prevent a future ghost town in Old Town.

Their words are haunting.

Plea after plea, members of the public warned council members that the city’s quick-fix housing plan would have a detrimental impact on the city and would harm small businesses. Yet – their minds made up in private and seemingly unwilling to do a bit more work on finding a workable solution for all Eurekaans – the city council voted publicly to ignore them and take a state grant for a short-cut housing plan that eliminates needed parking. Because the council didn’t listen or engage, it was clear to many that the only way to get public input was to take it to a vote of the people.

The pro-housing, pro-small business **Yes on Measure F** campaign compiled the testimony from various city council meetings and a planning commission meeting where then-chair Jeff Ragan lambasted the council’s haste and lack of public engagement, resigning his position during the meeting. The recording of his comments on April 12, 2021, included his impassioned remark, “I cannot in good conscience participate in a government that claims to represent those people and sidelines them with minimized processes and minimal efforts at public outreach.”

Here is a [compilation of compelling public testimony](#) at Eureka City Council meetings from community leaders, downtown merchants, property owners, and members of the public asking elected leaders for help and requesting to be part of a public discussion process:

**Joe Bonino, Former Planning Commissioner at the December 2023 City Council meeting.**

- “The Planning Commission, when we approved the building on the parking lots plan, only approved this plan with the agreement and understanding that these new buildings would be built on stilts above the parking lots.”

**Thomas Stewart at the June 2024 City Council meeting.**

- “I am here to report a death...it’s the death of common sense. Do you really want to create a ghost town in Old Town?”



**Cindy Olsen, Downtown Property owner testifying at the February 9, 2022, Special Session of City Council**

- “The citizens of Eureka support affordable housing for everyone. We want to see everyone have a place to call home and have a place to be prosperous.”
- “We are not going to roll over and let you hurt our city and businesses without a fight. Frankly, you have a lot of guts deciding that our business districts are expendable.”

**Luci Ramirez, Owner-Operator, Humboldt Bay Coffee at the February 9, 2022, Special Session of City Council**

- “I don’t think anyone argues that we need housing. But as an employer and business owner in Old Town I feel a little ignored or forgotten about...”
- “We have so many people that wander in because they stopped at Lost Coast Brewery. I can only imagine how much traffic would **not** stop if they didn’t have a place to park, which is what would happen if that parking lot goes away.”

**Bill McAuley, Partner at Demello, McAuley, McReynolds & Holland, LLP at the February 9, 2022, Special Session of City Council**

- “You’re creating a problem, and we weren’t engaged in the dialogue.”
- “You talk about engaging stakeholders, but you didn’t engage us. Shame.”

**Phil Holland, Partner at Demello, McAuley, McReynolds & Holland, LLP at the February 9, 2022, City Council Meeting**

- “We haven’t been involved in this conversation.”

**Barbara Groom, owner Lost Coast Brewery at the February 9, 2022, Special Session of City Council**

- “Let’s think about the businesses that are down there paying the taxes and putting bread on people’s tables. We need a little consideration also.”

**Greg Pierson, owner of Pierson Company at the February 1, 2022, City Council Meeting**

- “I’m concerned about the utilization of the downtown parking lots. I think they are necessary for the businesses that have invested in that area. These are long-lasting decisions, and they have big impacts. If we haven’t done the homework behind it then we do our community a disservice.”

**Kelly Martin, at the February 9, 2022, Special Session of City Council**

- “This needs to be rehashed with a lot more dialogue with the merchants and the property owners.”

**Kendal Martin at the February 9, 2022, Special Session of City Council**

- “You as a city council failed. You failed to properly inform all of these owners of your plan, and you planned it behind everyone’s backs.”



- “The business owners that are in old town every single day are the ones who told you there was a parking problem.”
- “Who knows Old Town better than the business owners who basically live there?”

**Greg Gehr, Executive Director of Northern California Indian Development Council, Inc; Managing partner for the Carson Block Building Property; Eureka Main Street Board Member at the February 1, 2022, City Council Meeting**

- “[This] will have a devastating effect on the economy, the business services, retail businesses, residents and general public in using the old town and downtown area that we worked so hard to restore.”

**Shan Gundman, Partner at Demello, McAuley, McReynolds & Holland, LLP at the February 1, 2022, City Council Meeting**

- “You need to consider the damage this is going to do to businesses that are already suffering.”

On Nov. 5, Eureka voters will decide on the two important things Measure F does for Eureka:

- Measure F rezones and opens the vacant Jacobs site for desperately needed residential housing.
- Measure F saves our Downtown shops, restaurants, and small businesses by ensuring they have the accessible parking they need to keep their doors open.

Two former Eureka mayors, Nancy Flemming (1990 – 2002) and Frank Jager (2010-2018), are among the high-profile endorsers of Measure F.

[According to a poll of Eureka voters last summer](#), 60% of respondents believe Jacobs should become housing, while just 22% favor the state building. There is also significant support – 62%- for keeping Downtown Eureka vibrant as a center of tourism, arts, and cultural events by maintaining accessible parking.

###

Contact: Gail Rymer  
865-360-2800  
[gail@gailrymerpr.com](mailto:gail@gailrymerpr.com)