



HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional Transportation Planning Agency
Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority
Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

611 I Street, Suite B
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 444-8208
www.hcaog.net

March 24, 2022

To: • McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee
 c/o Humboldt County Clerk of the Board (cob@co.humboldt.ca.us)
 • John Miller, Senior Planner, Humboldt County Planning Division

Re: Draft McKinleyville Town Center Zoning Regulations 3-18-2022

HCAOG's current and long-range planning goals are to support and integrate Humboldt's land uses and transportation networks so that we address climate change, housing and vibrant neighborhoods, safety and health, and equity.¹ HCAOG recognizes that implementing the McKinleyville Community Plan and creating the Town Center will play a role in each of these goals.

HCAOG staff have previously commented (at MMAC meetings) that we support strategies that will meaningfully promote active transportation, which has the highest likelihood of:

- Improving safety and comfort for all people as they travel on streets and roads;
- Lowering greenhouse gas emissions produced from the transportation sector;
- Expanding equitable access for people to get to their destinations;
- Supporting economic vitality; and
- Fostering people-to-people connections in the community.

HCAOG supports the "Walk Bike Alternative" as having the best tools for achieving HCAOG's regional (and the State of California's) safety, equity, access, environmental, and economic goals. The "Market Alternative" is likely to deliver the same type of development that McKinleyville has today, and maintain the status quo of car-centered community for another generation or more.

Comments on specific language of the **draft McKinleyville Town Center Q-Zone**:

(1) MU1: Mixed Use (Urban) – The risk of the draft's low residential densities (e.g. 1-3 or 2-4 story maxes) will not create a population large enough to support walkable economic vitality and viable public transit.

(2) 5.2 Parking requirements – Removing minimum requirements for on-site parking and decoupling the cost of constructing parking spaces from the cost of dwelling units could enhance economic feasibility for developers, and for homebuyers and renters when cost savings are passed on.²

(3) 5.2.3 Bicycle Parking Requirement [Walk Bike Alternative] – We advocate for bicycle parking requirements in all alternatives.

¹ Articulated in HCAOG's Regional Transportation Plan, *Variety in Rural Options of Mobility 2022-2042*.

² *Decoupling parking from housing* (<https://www.mobility-academy.eu/mod/book/tool/print/index.php?id=293>); *The hidden cost of bundled parking* (<https://www.accessmagazine.org/spring-2017/the-hidden-cost-of-bundled-parking/>)

Additionally, to augment the discussion on impacts to and of Central Avenue, I offer three examples (of many) of data-based research for the following:

- **People-oriented streets are more economically productive** – Based on research, the organization Strong Towns has concluded:

Again and again, when we look at streets oriented toward people—that is, streets where walking is safe and enjoyable, that people are drawn to visit on foot, and where fast and extensive car traffic is not the #1 priority—we find that they are more economically productive than *any other style of development*. This is particularly true when we compare people-oriented places to car-oriented places—think of that stretch of your town that effectively does everything possible to discourage walking and biking, including a street with multiple wide lanes to ensure fast car movement, acres of parking, and minimal (if any) sidewalks, bike lanes and crosswalks.

Walkable streets, on the other hand, encourage business activity, generate greater tax revenue per acre and offer a higher return on investment than auto-oriented streets.³

- **Road diets are a Proven Safety Countermeasure**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that road diets are a Proven Safety Countermeasure, meaning that road-diet countermeasures or strategies effectively reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries on highways and roadways. The FHWA states,

A Road Diet, or roadway reconfiguration, can improve safety, calm traffic, provide better mobility and access for all road users, and enhance overall quality of life. A Road Diet typically involves converting an existing four-lane undivided roadway to a three-lane roadway consisting of two through lanes and a center two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL).⁴

- **Complete streets can reduce car-traffic volumes and induce people to drive slower**

The report, *Travel impacts of a complete street project in a mixed urban corridor*⁵ evaluated a retrofit project (in Pennsylvania, PA) that involved reducing vehicle lanes from four (two lanes in each direction) to three (one lane in each direction with a center turn lane) and adding dedicated bike lanes in each direction. (The retrofit project also added traffic signals, a pedestrian crossing, and other design features.) The before- and after-evaluations observed: reduced traffic in peak times; car volumes decreased by 11-21% (in lower-volume direction) and by 31% (higher-volume direction); traffic speeds decreased; traffic speeds along a parallel corridor did not increase; bicycle counts along the corridor increased.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your committed work for the McKinleyville community.

Best regards,

Oona Smith

Senior Regional Planner

³ “We’ve got data unequivocally showing that people-oriented streets are more economically productive than auto-oriented streets — from big cities to small towns, from the heartland to the South.” See

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/1/16/why-walkable-streets-are-more-economically-productive>

⁴ *Proven Safety Countermeasures 2021 Update* <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/>

⁵ Prepared for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine by

[Grahm R., Hendrickson C., Matthews H. et al, December 15, 2020](https://trid.trb.org/view/1757940). <https://trid.trb.org/view/1757940>