



The following remarks were given by the two co-signers of the Initiative at the Eureka City Council Meeting on October 18, 2023. The co-signers were two of several members of the public to speak up against the city's plan to remove over 600 parking spaces in downtown. The speakers spoke on the following agenda item:

I.1. Certificate of Sufficiency - Initiative to amend the City of Eureka's General Plan as the plan affects City-owned Parking Lots and Eureka City Schools-owned Jacobs Site Recommendation: Receive and file "Certificate of Sufficiency of Initiative Petition; and Take one of the following actions, pursuant to Election Code Section 9215: Adopt the ordinance, without alteration, at this meeting, or within 10 days; or Submit the ordinance, without alteration, to the voters.

City Council voted to submit the ordinance to the voters.

Mike Munson, Co-Signer of "Eureka Housing for All and Downtown Vitality Initiative"

Madam Mayor, Council Members, Mr. Slattery, and City Staff.

My name is Mike Munson, and I reside within Eureka City Limits on Nigel Lane and am a business owner in downtown old town Eureka where I spend all day 5 days a week.

As a co-sponsor of the Eureka Housing for All and Downtown Vitality Ballot Initiative, I request the city council vote tonight to adopt the initiative and save the city the expense of placing it on the ballot. We collected over 2,000 signatures in favor of this initiative from all precincts in less than 30 days. These signatures, along with the results of a third-party survey conducted earlier this year where a majority of voters oppose the city's proposal to replace nine parking lots with housing, clearly demonstrate voters are not supporting the current downtown housing plan.

Downtown business owners have been attending public and city council meetings for many years to express our concerns about removing the parking spaces that are vital to our businesses.

For example, at the City Council meeting on July 7, 2020, approving the release of parking lots at Sunny & Myrtle, 8th & G, and 6th & M for development, several people stood before this body to explain how losing these lots would severely damage their businesses. Several of you said you understood these challenges and seemed sympathetic, but you voted it through anyway and I have not seen any alternative solutions. Mayor Bergel, in a Lost Coast Outpost article on February 10, 2022, regarding the City Council approval of the EARTH Center, you are quoted as saying: "I worked in Old Town 15 years now, and it was hard to find a parking place. And so, I hear what business owners are saying. And I want the project. So, I want us to be able to mitigate these issues together and move through so that we can have a win-win situation. So, I'm all-in on this project, with that caveat."

You have continued to ignore our requests to work on a better plan. You left us with no choice but to take this issue to Eureka voters.

We support housing downtown but not to the detriment of businesses, which are the lifeblood of our downtown economy. If you want to attract visitors, shoppers, diners, and residents to downtown, you need these businesses. We are the ones bringing people downtown and paying the taxes. There are reasons why there are residential districts and commercial districts.

To expect everyone to rely on public or active transit is far-fetched. The same survey found that 87% of people who travel downtown drive here. And just at the last city council meeting, each of you participating in the week without driving noted how difficult it was not to drive, and that was after you admittedly re-arranged your schedule to do all the things you need to drive for before or after the challenge. How can you expect no one to drive or find adequate parking?

I urge you to either adopt the initiative directly or place it on the March 5, 2024, statewide general election ballot.

Thank you.

Michelle Costantine, Co-Signer of "Eureka Housing for All and Downtown Vitality Initiative"

Madam Mayor, Council Members, Mr. Slattery, and City Staff.

My name is Michelle Costantine, and I reside within Eureka City Limits and am a business owner in downtown Eureka. I am also the co-sponsor of the Eureka Housing for All and Downtown Vitality ballot initiative.

There is significant support for this initiative among Eureka voters, with over 2,000 signing the petition in less than 30 days to place it on the March ballot.

Tonight, I want to correct the misinformation about the initiative from those in opposition, including the city manager. The Housing for All initiative is a pro-housing initiative that seeks to have the city planners work with all interested parties - business owners, residents, and special interest groups in fixing the flawed downtown housing development plan.

The initiative allows the city's voters to decide where housing developments should be built and if parking should be reduced, maintained, or increased. Our voters should make these decisions based on current and verified information, not flawed parking studies and the threat of not meeting the RHNA criteria established for Eureka.

Let's be clear. The city will not be out of compliance with the general plan and will not lose funding. Any developer can build housing developments on any property - owned by the city or not - within the city limits to count towards the RHNA numbers. This makes the former Jacobs Middle School property perfect to meet all the RHNA criteria. The city gains from development on this property rather than losing money by giving city property away to developers who will pocket the profits from building housing on the downtown lots. Adding a housing zoning layer over the Jacobs property provides a path for Eureka City Schools to sell the property to whoever they want, including someone who wants to build housing.

Other misinformation that appears to have been endorsed by members of this council was contained in an open letter to Eureka voters circulated in early August. An anonymous source wrote this, but it was not fact-checked and was signed by several people who don't even live in Eureka. It is unethical that three of you signed this letter. You are elected to represent your constituents' best interests after gathering and weighing all the facts and talking with your constituents.

Yesterday, we filed a lawsuit to end the city's continued violations of the elections code. The delay tactics city officials used to formally adopt the initiative or place it on the March ballot is unacceptable.

It is time for you, the City Council, to do what's right and begin mending relationships and working collaboratively with residents, business owners, and others for the future of our city. I urge you to either adopt the initiative directly or place it on the March 5, 2024, statewide general election ballot.

Thank you.