

June 20, 2021

Tabatha Miller and Sara McCormick  
City of Fort Bragg

Tabatha and Sara:

In anticipation of your June 22nd scheduled Community Development Committee Meeting, please accept a few comments (ATTACHMENT) (in no particular order) for your consideration.

We are grateful to live under a City Manager form of government, as we believe it to be charged with the most action oriented ability to get things done. We also appreciate that our City has a salaried Housing and Economic Development Coordinator. Since we live in the Central Business District, we also find it encouraging that you care enough to be implementing a Central Business District Economic Development Strategy.

Though we have not actively been part of the Monthly Oral Updates or Related Discussions, we do have the following list of suggestions, some of which we know you are currently grappling with:

- 1) Storefront renovation grants. This may be the way to incentivize further investment in the CBD by building and business owners.
- 2) Either increase the \$75,000. minimum amount of renovation money which mandates fire suppression equipment; or temporarily eliminate the fire suppression equipment requirement. This too would encourage rather than deter potential CBD renovation. We believe there is compelling data to support the belief that “vacant debilitated buildings present more of a fire hazard than occupied buildings without fire suppression equipment.” Offering to ‘loan’ money for the very expensive suppression equipment is not an incentive to renovate in Fort Bragg’s CBD, at this point.
- 3) Formally designate the CBD as an “Improvement and Beautification District.” This might facilitate and accelerate the ability to strategize about items such as public restrooms, pocket parks, park benches, planters, bicycle racks, and disability features. Our opinion is that improvements such as these will draw increased foot traffic and shopping as long as the City establishes certain ‘Rules of Enjoyment’; and provided that the City enforces those rules and maintains those improvements.
- 4) New store directory signage at optimal intersections along Main Street, Laurel, Redwood, and Franklin.
- 5) Arts and Culture District. As much as possible, the demarcation boundaries should form a well-defined template over the existing CBD, possibly to include the West Side of Main Street. There has been a great deal of testimony among locals and visitors that this creative image as part of Fort Bragg’s personality is stimulating, and that it can be greatly enhanced; that subsequent to the lumber milling era – this undefined district within the district represents an essential part of the authentic look and feel of Fort Bragg. It promises to work hand and hand with the rest of the economy, while adding dollars and good sense to the tax base. This charismatic face and personality of Fort Bragg is in great peril of fading away without a formal recognition of its importance to the economy. Defining it, infusing it with money, energy, and new ideas will definitely elevate its place among destination coastal towns. Look at a sample line up: a frame

shop, (2) book stores, tattoo gallery, exodus of art galleries from Mendocino to Fort Bragg, world class stationary and art supply house, graphic art and book designer, musical instrument makers, and musical instrumental vendor, classic car restorer, recognized architects, cabinet and furniture designers, well stocked video store, exceptional muralists, and numerous cottage industry artisans. These are some of our in place stepping stones to consumer attention from local spenders and the outside world. Even the bakers are creative here. Even the butcher hangs local art on the walls! Does anyone doubt that all of the motor hotels, lodges, inns and motels and restaurants will benefit greatly if our Central Business District Arts and Culture is revitalized? The artist colony aspect of the CBD IS a major conduit to those surrounding hospitality enterprises, and we believe it should be recognized as such.

- 6) Encouragement to CBD Residences. So essential to the life blood, work force, and pedestrian spirit. To further stimulate growth of this vital part of our population, we passionately implore the City to tackle unnecessary noise levels where they are the highest - in the CBD. This is about 'quiet enjoyment' of the district. Compared to many other towns our geographic and population size – Fort Bragg suffers a noticeable and measureable negative decibel level. This originates primarily from car, motorcycle, and truck violations of our statutes regarding "Disturbing the Peace." While non-commercial engine revving, drag racing, speeding in general, muffler adulterations, etc. may be a suitable way to 'blow off steam,' – it is not the way to increase residential living in the CBD. And it does not assist the City's ongoing efforts to attract repeat overnight visitors to stay for more than two days at a time. If the City merely authorized the police department to increase enforcement along Main Street, all of Franklin Street, Oak Street, and the Alleys within the CBD – we believe this aberration would disappear almost immediately. The CBD residents become the gatekeepers and tour guides, the cheerleaders and ambassadors, echoing the inner strengths of the inner city. Let them enjoy their nightly sleep.
- 7) Trash Pick-up. Again, regarding quiet enjoyment in the CBD, we strongly urge the City to re-examine its agreement with Waste Management. If private residency is to be protected, CBD trash should be picked up no earlier than 7 A.M.
- 8) Full Time Grant Writer. Now that our country is awash in trillions of dollars in pandemic related rescue money, across numerous economic categories – this may be an advantageous moment for Fort Bragg to capture some of those monies. The City seems to have access to considerable existing grant writing talent within various departments. Why not isolate that skill as a separate paid position(s) to maximize financial assistance?
- 9) Events. The recent Car Show illustrated how much people want to stroll the CBD. Our conversations with store owners revealed that not much revenue changed hands, but that they were encouraged by the exposure which they received. At a minimum we recommend four events per year during which those parts of Laurel, Redwood, and Franklin are for pedestrians only.
- 10) Fire Season. As per climate reports, it is not only the trees and grasses, but also the BUILDINGS that become seasonal 'tinderboxes.' If ever – THIS is the time to embrace the sound reasons for a CBD campaign to replace the hazardous power poles with underground utilities. PG&E linemen, the fire department, and the 911 operators quietly acknowledge the transformers in the CBD tend to 'arc' "given certain weather conditions." By hitching the City wagon to available national, state, county, and accessible funding programs – we believe there is an exceptional window of financial opportunity to overhaul this potential disaster. Imagine winning the trifecta

of underground utilities combined with street re-surfacing, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters improvement programs. Other towns across our state – Ukiah, Arcata, Napa, Tehachapi and more are engaging these improvement district programs. And by doing so now, they are improving their economic development prospects. We can also!

- 11) Let it be known that Fort Bragg is a dynamic town searching for ways to become more economically viable, by hosting an invitational Mayors/Managers Conference on sharing ways to enhance CBD's.
- 12) Get out and about. Walk the 'hood. Make a point to sincerely meet and greet. The more you engage, the more you will see that people want to help and understand the tasks and tolerances and complexities of operating a small town.

We hope that you will receive this list of suggestions in the spirit that it is given. We believe Fort Bragg's Central Business District has all the raw materials to make the entire population proud to live here! With your present and future commitment to making the CBD a more inspiring place to live, work, and visit – we believe good morale will be the least of your accomplishments. Thank you for listening!

Highest and best regards,

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