



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP
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To:
Mayor and Council Members
City of Santa Cruz

Subject: Proposed Parking Garage is incompatible with Climate Action Plan

Dear Mayor and City Council members,

The Sierra Club urges you to rethink the plan to create a five-story, parking garage above a new library. **Is a towering, parking garage the 70 million dollar monument that our community wants to address the Climate emergency or beautify our downtown?** This plan is not compatible with the recent Santa Cruz City Active Transportation Plan and the long-standing goals of the City Master Transportation Plan which aim to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips.

Responding to our climate crisis, California has taken the lead passing Senate Bill 32 in September of 2016 which requires a 40% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Santa Cruz can join forward-thinking cities around California and the world that are designing their city centers for people and closing areas off to cars. These cities discovered that business sales actually increased when streets were dedicated to pleasant, beautifully landscaped areas for shoppers to stroll, for outdoor cafes as well as bike and pedestrian space.

We agree that a livable and sustainable city design includes “mixed-use structures” and in-fill rather than encouraging sprawl. However, providing more **parking infrastructure absolutely does not “support Climate Action principles”** as is stated in this plan. The City’s 2020 Climate Action Plan (Oct. 2012, page 41) calls for a 10% reduction in within-town car trips by 2020. It will clearly encourage more people who work downtown, more visitors and residents to drive by providing more car-storage space. As the report states, car storage is the most “inefficient use of land”. Yet this site currently has many important uses: an outdoor community center, a farmer’s market and antique fair. It is the central plaza or park Santa Cruzans wish we had.

Please listen to the recommendations from the consultants hired by the City last year and implement Transportation Demand Management Programs first, incentives for downtown employers to get employees to work without a single-occupant car, before building new parking capacity. The cost of the garage divided by each space equates \$75,000 per parking space- a huge waste of funds!

Especially now, with years of drought, consequent fires in our region and **in the midst of a Climate Crisis, we need to invest in effective active transportation, which encourages everyone to walk, bike and use mass transit.** Transportation Demand Management or Commuter Benefit Programs nearby in Bay Area cities and Boulder Colorado's Eco-pass Bus Program have proven to dramatically reduce car trips and greenhouse gas emissions. By offering free and reduced bus fares and cash incentives for employees to not drive to work, these programs support the climate and the environment while alleviating congestion. .

The existing library is part of the "heart" of Santa Cruz, is of human scale with much greenery, all of which would be lost under the proposed relocation. **Placing a massive, concrete, climate inaction tombstone on top of a house of knowledge seems like the worst possible symbolism for a supposedly eco-friendly community.** The Sierra Club does not support the relocation of the central library to a noisier, more congested location at a cost of \$23-27M. This would consume all of the \$25 million provided in Measure S, approved June 2016. This single-item structure relocation is not how Measure S was promoted to voters.

City design will determine how people get around, let's design a vibrant community center that supports our global climate, our environment and the much-needed, Active Transportation paradigm.

Sincerely,

Greg McPheeters
Chair, Santa Cruz Group, Sierra Club