



December 16, 2015

Mr. Sean McGlynn
City Manager, City of Santa Rosa
100 Santa Rosa Ave., Room 10
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Re: Courthouse Square Reunification Project

Dear Mr. McGlynn;

We want to thank you for taking the time last week to meet with representatives of the design community and listening to our concerns regarding the current reunification process for Courthouse Square. As you have requested we have reviewed those items we mentioned during our meeting with you and are putting them in letter form to you.

The following points are issues that the AIARE and others in the local design community feel are critical to be considered during the design process. We understand your need for speed in proceeding, but feel that if the following issues are not considered carefully, the completed project will not be successful.

1. In the process of design, the fundamental question that needs to be answered is what purpose does this square serve? It is the future activities, events and uses of the space that should be driving any design solution. In the design process how is that being addressed? The public needs ample opportunity to speak to both the process and the resulting design.
2. The design of the Square should be respectful of the past, and the historical elements present in the square, but the design itself should be contemporary and reflect our time. This space and its appearance will be a guidepost for the future development and revitalization of our downtown.
3. The existing vegetation in the square should be carefully considered before its removal. The trees, particularly at the perimeter help to give scale to the space. When laying out the parking, care should be given to preserving important



groupings of trees. The loss of this existing tree canopy will take 20 years to recreate, and the square will appear quite barren for a long while without them.

4. The emphasis of the design process should be for the design of the entire space, from building face to building face on all four sides. The emphasis should be on the square and not the parking and vehicle circulation. Two travel lanes is excessive and seems to be guided more by the need to keep vehicles moving than creating a pleasant public space. Also, we question the need for 47 parking spaces. Double loading the parking creates a significant visual and physical barrier to the free movement of pedestrians in the space. If the justification is that the parked cars provide a buffer to pedestrians, we reject that. There are many other creative solutions to creating a buffer for moving vehicles other than creating a barrier of parked cars.
5. We cannot believe that the need for parking in our downtown is so critical that if half the spaces shown in the illustrative plan (23 spaces) were removed it would make a difference.
6. Designing the square with an automobile oriented focus is detrimental to creating a vibrant public space.
7. We would recommend that the design team carefully consider placement and amount of parking as a critical part of the process, and not be limited by a prescriptive requirement to maximize parking spaces.
8. It is also critical that the technical design and widths of the travel lanes, curbs, gutters and parking not be restricted by existing City Engineering Standards. Strict adherence to these standards could end up creating space that will be extremely difficult to activate at times when the streets may want to be closed for larger events.

The design community believes the issues identified above are critical to the success of the project, and we appreciate the opportunity to present them to you for your and the design team's consideration. Please give these issues careful consideration, and again thank you for the opportunity to present them to you.



We plan to remain engaged in this process through successful completion of it, and look forward to every opportunity to comment and have input into the final design.

Please feel free to reach out to the AIARE if there is any additional input you would like to have.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Servais". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "C".

Carl Servais, AIA
President, American Institute of Architects Redwood Empire Chapter