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**From:** [Jon New](#)  
**To:** [City Council \(San Mateo\)](#); [Amourence Lee](#); [Adam Loraine](#); [Lisa Diaz Nash](#); [Rob Newsom](#); [Richard Hedges](#)  
**Cc:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Comment on Item 23: Outdoor Dining Standards and Permits – Amendments  
**Date:** Sunday, July 16, 2023 7:11:17 PM

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Honorable Council, my name is Jonathan New, and last year [I wrote an op-ed in the San Mateo Daily Journal about San Mateo's disappearing parklets](#). After strong enforcement, and onerous restrictions the non-B St. parklets in San Mateo dwindled from 25 to a paltry 4 today. I don't know what the success metrics were for the implementation of these rules, but I can't imagine they included an 84% reduction in parklets.

I understand that the parklet item on the docket is largely just applying the existing parklet rules so they apply to B St. But, this seems like a good opportunity to revisit the necessity of some of the restrictions.

- The guidelines include a 25ft setback near crosswalks. This is a huge setback, which effectively eliminates parklets for corner businesses. This is even more unnecessary on streets that are closed.
- Fire hydrants require a 15ft clearance. Again, this seems like a lot. Do parked cars give them a 15ft clearance?
- There's a restriction that corner businesses can only have 1 parklet. What purpose does this serve? Let corner businesses have 2 parklets if they want!
- Parklets are prohibited in red curb zones. In my experience, sometimes the curb is red just because there isn't enough room for a car to park there. If we can allow case-by-case access for parklets in loading and 20-minute zones, can we allow case-by-case for red zones?
- Roofs, trellises, and tent shade structures are not allowed. If I recall, the reason for this is for safety in case of a car collision. If that's the reason, we should consider permitting these structures on B St since there are no cars to worry about.
- I think we should reconsider if there's any way to allow heaters with roof coverings. Other cities seem to manage it ok.

It appears there's a lot of city staff review on a case-by-case basis. Since there's multiple approval steps, parklet owners have expressed frustration in how much this slows things down. It's taken businesses several months to approve the most basic of parklets. Consider a form-based approach or other ways to minimize the approval steps.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jonathan New  
San Mateo

Chris Homs  
Partner  
Lockehouse Retail Group



San Mateo City Council

July 17, 2023

Dear Honorable Mayor Lee and City of San Mateo Councilmembers:

The Street closures in downtown San Mateo are negatively impacting the ability to lease ground floor retail in the downtown core and at Brickline. In our leasing efforts at Brickline, several tenants have visited the trade area and expressed concerns over the negative impact of the closed streets. B Street is the heart of Downtown San Mateo. Closing two blocks has been a detractor. The Streets feel vacant, devoid of activity, and unwelcoming. Potential customers and patrons are overlooking these two closed streets as vehicular traffic is not allowed.

With the exception of a few restaurants that have added outdoor seating there is no visible gain in having the streets between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues. Stronger restaurant operators have been able to succeed as food is more of a destination. The smaller 'mom and pop' food operators and especially the few remaining non-food retailers are experiencing challenges and declining sales. There has been a significant amount of turnover in this area.

Non-food retailers are really the hardest hit here. San Mateo is a market that most shoppers are still driving to in their vehicles or using ride share. Not having the ability to drive these two blocks in Downtown San Mateo cuts off many of these businesses from being seen by passing cars. An even larger issue is that downtown San Mateo is effectively divided into north and south San Mateo as cars are required to around on Ellsworth to the west, and Delaware to the East. We need to unite the downtown, not separate it.

In general, street closures are known to have a negative impact on the lease-ability of the area. I personally worked on the leasing of 135 S B Street. We had several potential non-food retailers that felt the street closures were a reason NOT to proceed.

I have been told by other retail brokers who work downtown San Mateo that their tenants feel the street closures are a negative impact to their sales.

Retail Vacancy rate in the San Mateo Downtown is approximately 6.7% in the Downtown Core. There are currently approximately 18 available retail spaces in the downtown core. Vacancy is not the only factor. Having space occupied is obviously important visually. What is more important is the success of the tenants and business owners within their leased spaces. There is still real vacancy in San Mateo. I am convinced that for the long term success of Downtown San Mateo, the closed streets need to be fully reopened to vehicular traffic.

The City led survey on the pedestrian mall that was the basis of the last City Council Meeting recommended reopening 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, yet the City chose to keep 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> closed. I know I am not alone in saying both blocks should be reopened. The closures are dilutive to Downtown San Mateo.

Chris Homs  
Partner  
Lockehouse Retail Group



We believe this decision should be reconsidered per all of the information outlined above. We believe a broader survey should be conducted. The survey should include:

- N. B Street, north of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue
- B Street south of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue
- 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues
- Property owners, restaurant operators, and retailers

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,  
Chris Homs  
Partner  
Lockehouse Retail Group

