



**CITY OF LODI  
COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

**AGENDA TITLE:** Report to City Council Regarding Elm Street Merchants' and Residents' Concerns on Elm Street (School Street to Sacramento Street)

**MEETING DATE:** June 16, 2010

**PREPARED BY:** Public Works Director

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Report to City Council regarding Elm Street merchants' and residents' concerns on Elm Street (School Street to Sacramento Street).

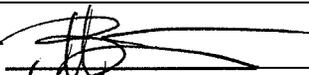
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** In March 2001, City Council approved the plans and specifications for the Elm Street Reconstruction Project. The project included removal of existing street improvements and the installation of street pavers, street trees, decorative street lighting, street benches and trash receptacles. The intent was to create a pedestrian-friendly corridor between Sacramento Street and School Street.

At the April 7, 2010 City Council meeting, several business owners and residents presented their concerns during the public comment period regarding student loitering and transient vagrancy on Elm Street. On April 19, 2010, a neighborhood meeting was held at The Merlot (21 West Elm Street) with the merchants, residents, Lodi Police and Public Works Departments, students and concerned citizens. A respectful exchange of concerns was shared, including discussions of public consumption of alcohol, inappropriate language, property damage, loitering, panhandling and soiled benches. The merchants requested that some of the benches be removed as one alternative for improving Elm Street. Staff is suggesting other alternatives, which are described below.

1. Leave the benches as they are in place (do nothing).
2. Clean the benches and leave them in place.
3. Remove four benches, two located on the north side, east of the driveway to the City parking lot located at 11 West Elm Street, and two located on the south side of Elm Street, east of the alley (see Exhibit A).
4. Remove all eight benches on Elm Street between School Street and Sacramento Street (see Exhibit B).

Options 3 and 4 include the alternative of relocating the benches possibly on or closer to School Street.

The Lodi Police Department is concerned that the removal of the benches on Elm Street could exacerbate the problem or move the problem to another area of the downtown. Police staff feels that while there will be some effect if we remove the benches, it is difficult to predict what that effect will be. The transients could move out of the area, which would solve the problem on Elm Street. However, they

APPROVED:   
Konrad Bartlam, Interim City Manager

could begin sitting on the sidewalk against one of the store fronts or they might simply move to other benches in the area. Of course, the latter two scenarios might result in additional complaints. The Police Department does not believe removing or relocating the benches will solve the problem and that the City would be dealing with the same problem either here or at another location.

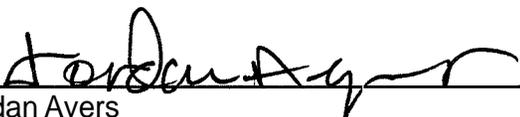
Staff has evaluated the cost to remove and relocate the street benches. The cost to remove or replace a bench is approximately \$150 of staff time per bench. Staff time to clean the benches would be approximately \$150 per bench.

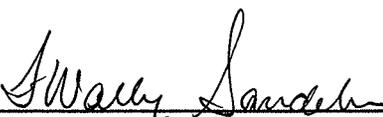
Cost per option:

1. There would be no cost to leave the benches as they are.
2. Cost to clean eight benches: Approximately \$1,200
3. Cost to remove four benches: Approximately \$600
4. Cost to remove eight benches: Approximately \$1,200

**FISCAL IMPACT:** As an unbudgeted expenditure, funding for other street maintenance work will not be available.

**FUNDING AVAILABLE:** Street Maintenance funds (3215031)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jordan Ayers  
Deputy City Manager/Internal Services Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
F. Wally Sandelin  
Public Works Director

Prepared by Denise Wiman, Senior Engineering Technician - Development Services

FWS/DW/pmf

Attachments

cc: Curt Juran, Streets and Drainage Superintendent  
Greg and Carole Soligan



# CITY OF LODI

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

## EXHIBIT A - ELM STREET BETWEEN SCHOOL AND SACRAMENTO STS RECOMMENDED 4 BENCHES FOR REMOVAL



Four (4) Benches east side of alley.



Four (4) Benches; Two on north side and two on south side.



# CITY OF LODI

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

## EXHIBIT B - ELM STREET SCHOOL AND SACRAMENTO STS EIGHT (8) BENCHES

Four on North side of Elm Street.



Four on  
South Side

Studio 20 Fine Art Gallery  
20 W. Elm Street  
Lodi, CA

6/15/10

To:  
City Council  
City of Lodi  
P.O. Box 3006  
Lodi, CA 95241-1910

Re: The creation of a “pedestrian –friendly corridor” on downtown West Elm Street

To whom this may concern,

I, along with my wife, Suzanne Houck, own the Studio 20 Fine Art Gallery at 20 W. Elm Street. We were one of several merchants at the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of this year, discussing what could be done to improve the Elm Street corridor between School Street and Sacramento Street, in order for there to be a more pleasing environment for pedestrians, patrons and merchants in this downtown location. Since the Sentinel wrote a two page article featuring the concerns and comments of myself and other merchants in the area in early April, there have been some positive developments with respect to the unruly and boisterous teenagers that were loitering in the area, as most of this group have moved out of this area and some have even acquired new jobs. However, the problems concerning the vagrants, transients, drunks, and migrant workers in the area, continue to persist.

I realize the beautification of this downtown Elm Street corridor began in 2001, along with the completion of a multimillion-dollar parking garage between Elm St. and Pine Street, along Sacramento Street. Nine years after the start of this project, I can see that some of the problems with vagrants and transients in the area continue to persist, as an article from 2006 in the Sentinel pointed out, as well.

I believe the city will need to be more proactive in the eradication of transients and vagrants from this Elm Street corridor if the beautification project is ever going to do what it was intended to do in this area. The vagrants, transients, and drunks, continue to live and hang out on the benches along the Elm Street corridor from sun up to long after sun down, at times—literally living, drinking, and even sleeping on the benches. They are often noisy and boisterous, yielding profanities, begging for money from people leaving the restaurants and parking areas, and they continue to litter and urinate on the buildings at the alley entrance, including the Saigon Grill. My wife and I have witnessed this multiple times, and I even have some pictures to verify some of this activity. All in all, this is an ongoing problem in this area for pedestrians, patrons and merchants alike.

With the growth of Lodi in the wine industry, there are great possibilities for growth in tourism in the future for the downtown area. Nevertheless, if the city ever expects to develop into an inviting and positive environment for townfolk, visitors, and merchants,

it will need to become more proactive in eradicating some of the nuisances from Elm Street.

The suggestions that my wife and I we gave at the meeting in April to create a positive and inviting environment along this corridor of Elm Street still stand, and are as follows:

- 1) First and foremost, immediately remove all the benches between Sacramento Street and School Street along the Elm Street corridor (7 benches total).
  - Take some or all of the removed benches and place them in other strategic locations, such as the park by the Grape Festival fairgrounds. As the police department have told me that this is an area somewhat designated to transients and vagrants.
  - Place a few of the removed benches near the Salvation Army, where some transients sleep and receive meals on a regular basis.
  - Pass a city ordinance, limiting the amount of time that people can remain on any single downtown bench to one or two hours, after which they could receive a citation. (I'm only referring to downtown **city** benches here)
- 2) Pass another city ordinance for loitering in front of or around liquor stores, limiting the time to no more than 20 minutes, or so. Other cities that depend on tourism also have liquor stores, such as Carmel, Danville and San Ramon, but they also don't allow loitering around them beyond a certain time frame.
- 3) Place a single information kiosk at the entrance to the parking lot **next** to the Saigon Grill, where merchant volunteers could also pass out brochures and information on downtown and area businesses and attractions. This is something my wife and I experienced in Vancouver upon entering the downtown area. This could be placed where two benches could be removed.
- 4) **Fix** the lights, above the light posts and on the light posts directly. Since moving into our gallery in January, we've witnessed two more lights go out, for a total of 4 broken lights on the light posts.
- 5) Place flower baskets along the custom light posts along this corridor.
- 6) Mount speakers in the light posts, which Wally Sandelin of public works, said are already wired for sound, Play some soft jazz or classical music along the corridor on the weekends or Friday-Sunday.
- 7) Lastly, mount a couple strategic web cams or video cams overlooking the parking lot entrance, the alley entrance and behind the studio and shops, and also in the parking garage. I've had numerous students and patrons claim that they won't park in the multi-million dollar garage or even across the street, because they're afraid to.

This is not rocket science here and I believe the city has the right idea in terms of beautifying this Elm Street corridor in order to make it a more inviting environment for all. However, in order for this to happen, the city will need to become more proactive in activating some or all of the changes that my wife and I, as well as other merchants, are proposing. In my opinion, the city started something nice, but then fell asleep on the project, failing to properly monitor what was actually happening along this corridor, and instead becoming complacent with small successes. For instance, the police department has stated that it would be a mistake to remove the benches, because this might create a problem somewhere else in the city when the vagrants settle in there. In other words, the police are happy to contain the vagrants to the Elm Street corridor. As a merchant along this corridor, I find this attitude deplorable and inexcusable. If we had known this was the attitude of the police department concerning vagrants along the Elm Street corridor, we would never have opened the Studio 20 art gallery in this location and it would have saved my wife and I a lot of grief.

We believe it is time for the city to finish the job on the beautification project and make this corridor on Elm Street a true welcome mat into the downtown for locals and visitors alike, instead of letting it remain a doormat to the skid-row portion of the downtown area.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ron and Suzanne Houck

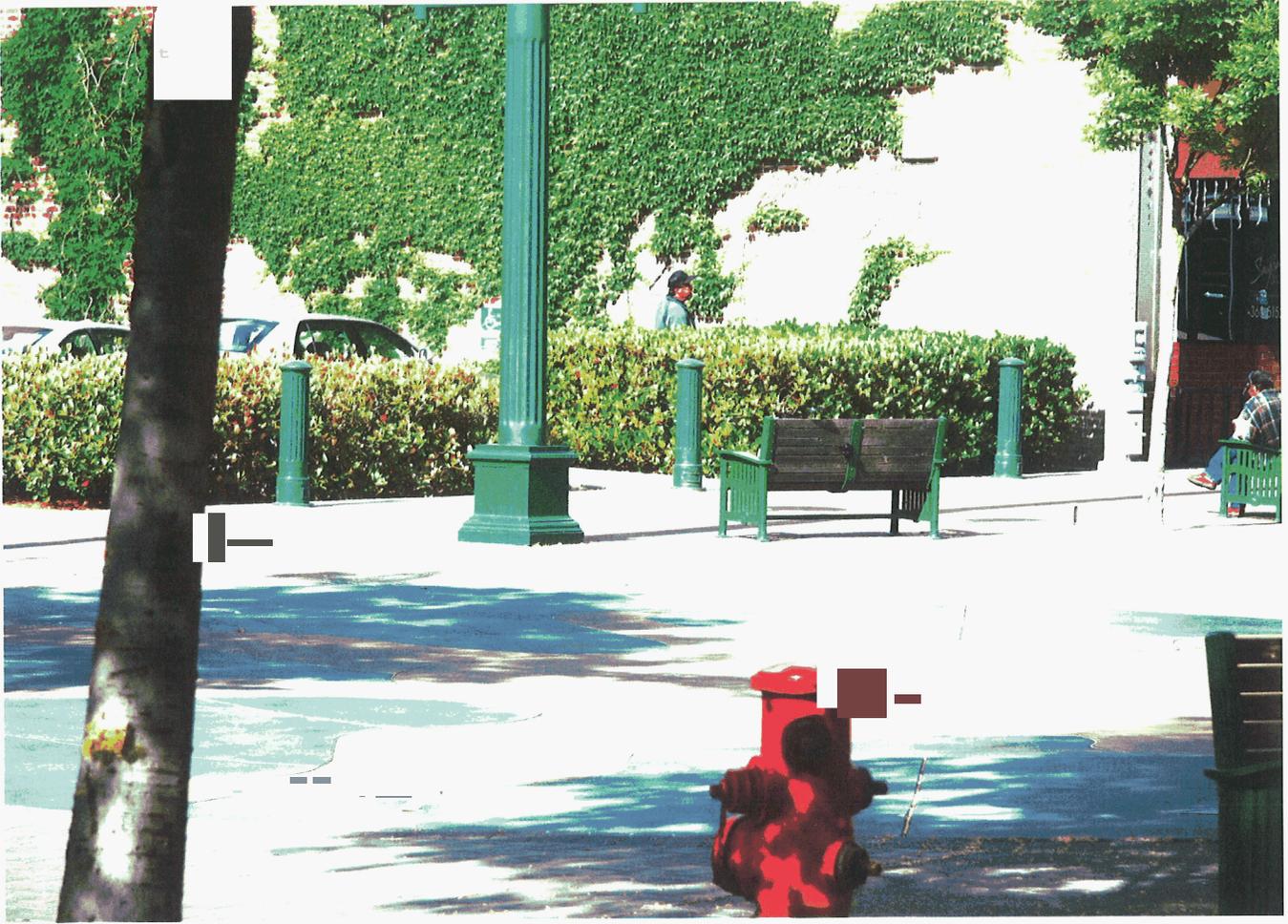












CITY COUNCIL

PHIL KATZAKIAN, Mayor  
SUSAN HITCHCOCK,  
Mayor Pro Tempore  
LARRY D. HANSEN  
BOB JOHNSON  
JOANNE L. MOUNCE

# CITY OF LODI

## PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

CITY HALL, 221 WEST PINE STREET  
P.O. BOX 3006  
LODI, CALIFORNIA 95241-1910  
(209) 333-6706  
FAX (209) 333-6710  
EMAIL [pwdept@lodi.gov](mailto:pwdept@lodi.gov)  
<http://www.lodi.gov>

KONRADT BARTLAM  
Interim City Manager  
RANDI JOHL  
City Clerk  
D. STEVEN SCHWABAUER  
City Attorney  
F. WALLY SANDELIN  
Public Works Director

June 10, 2010

Greg and Carole Soligan  
12 Evergreen Drive  
Lodi, CA 95242-8307

SUBJECT: Report to City Council Regarding Elm Street Merchants' and Residents'  
Concerns on Elm Street (School Street to Sacramento Street)

Enclosed is a copy of background information on an item on the City Council agenda of Wednesday, June 16, 2010. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. in the City Council Chamber, Carnegie Forum, 305 West Pine Street.

This item is on the regular calendar for Council discussion. You are welcome to attend.

If you wish to write to the City Council, please address your letter to City Council, City of Lodi, P. O. Box 3006, Lodi, California, 95241-1910. Be sure to allow time for the mail. Or, you may hand-deliver the letter to City Hall, 221 West Pine Street.

If you wish to address the Council at the Council Meeting, be sure to fill out a speaker's card (available at the Carnegie Forum immediately prior to the start of the meeting) and give it to the City Clerk. If you have any questions about communicating with the Council, please contact Randi Johl, City Clerk, at 333-6702.

If you have any questions about the item itself, please call Denise Wiman, Senior Engineering Technician - Development Services, at 333-6800, extension 6773.



for: F. Wally Sandelin  
Public Works Director

FWS/pmf

Enclosure

cc: City Clerk