

Katherine Rhee

From: Brandon Smith <thatbrandonsmith@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 6:19 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Public Comment

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Madame Mayor and members of the City Council,

With the benefit of time to collect my thoughts, I wanted to follow up on my comments to the Council regarding the GEBAC presentation on October 24, particularly its stated top priority of the lack of parking as being a hindrance to Gardena Boulevard, "[discouraging] potential customers, resulting in a decline in foot traffic." Simply put: a lack of foot traffic cannot be meaningfully solved by adding more automobile storage. This, even if lighting and facades are also improved, **will not** revitalize the area in the long term.

I commiserate with business owners in the area, as I myself have had the universal experience of circling for parking, finding none, and going home or to another business area. One hundred years of car usage culturally leads us to the easy conclusion: more parking. However, without building a 5-story garage, a surface lot at 1112 W Gardena, for example, cannot store more than about 91 cars, by rough estimate. With current businesses in the area, let's generously say that represents 200 people at a time. If every car is there for 30 minutes, that's only 400 people an hour. For a location to be truly pleasant as I know we all want to make Gardena Boulevard, people have to be comfortable enough to sit, meet friends or just strangers, and make connections. We want Gardena Boulevard to become a "Third Place" outside of work and home that people want to visit—therefore ideally we would have even LESS turnover of vehicles as people congregate. This also inherently, psychologically, increases the safety of an area without a dime spent in police resources.

As I stated in my comments, AAA now estimates a car costs \$12,000 a year to operate. That's \$12,000 less that our citizens have to spend at Gardena businesses. In my view, the most critical ways we can improve Gardena Boulevard is to:

- 1) Focus on safe, comfortable, alternative methods to get there, by foot, chair, or bike (see also the current rise of e-bikes). "Sharrows", painted bike lanes and shared spaces with cars are not safe infrastructure. Addition of ample bicycle racks is also key here.
- 2) Upzone the surrounding area to allow for mixed use housing-over-business type development, while removing the one-spot parking minimum in the recent housing element update.
- 3) Improving Gtrans service to this area to allow direct connection to the Metro C line.

To do these may require revisiting existing laws and codes. As another resident mentioned at the same meeting, revisiting laws is important as times change—in their case regarding how we view our pets as members of our family today vs. the 90s when Rowley Park's animal/pet rules were set.

While I have only been a Gardena resident for a year, I am here intending to stay and plant roots. I sincerely want to make Gardena an ever more enticing place to live, work and play. Please also don't mistake my comments as part of a radical fringe to ban cars in cities outright—I believe people should simply have an equal ability to truly choose how to get around their home city, while being given equally safe means to do so.

I am not affiliated with them, but I also urge you to visit www.strongtowns.org for more information on the best ways to revitalize our city.

Respectfully submitted,
Brandon Smith