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From: cathy <cvanmaren@protonmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2020 6:42 PM
To: ZZ Council Members; Kabat, Tim
Cc: Zabrowski, Jack; Trane, Andrea; Kuhlman, Lewis
Subject: Approve outdoor cafes please

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I just read that the city is considering allowing businesses to expand seating to street parking spots. I am emailing to strongly encourage you to approve this.

In fact, I hope that not only will you approve this for temporary COVID-19 relief but that you make plans to permanently close some streets in our downtown areas to most motor vehicle traffic during most business hours. (In many cities with car-free streets, vehicles like delivery and service trucks are allowed onto streets before and after business hours.) And, if you want people to feel comfortable sitting outside and eating and spending money and talking, the cars must go. (If you've every tried to sit outside at Dublin Square with Third Street packed full of noisy cars and trucks spewing tailpipe fumes straight into your lungs, you know that just having outdoor space is not good enough.)

This article from the Atlantic magazine, [*The Pandemic Shows What Cars Have Done to Cities*](#), talks about how, "the current crisis gives us the impetus to rethink and recalibrate, at least temporarily, the allocation of urban space. Cities including Oakland and Berlin are redrawing lines, or reclassifying through streets as public spaces." Streets are public spaces we all pay for; reimagining every few years how that valuable space is used can help us keep up with new needs, keep up with young people's changing priorities, and address issues like global heating.

A few years ago, as part of a Main Street demonstration of a protected bike lane a few years ago (alas, we don't have those yet either) I took a Google Earth shot of downtown La Crosse and colored in all the spaces that we have given over to cars - roads, parking lots, parking ramps, etc. It's kind of alarming. [Professor Donald Shoup \(The High Cost of Free Parking\)](#) says that in many cities, cars are given more than 50% of land space. Surely a few of our streets could be given over to the humans who pay for them.

These two pictures show what a difference it can make. [rethinking streets](#) and this website, [CarFreeCities](#), has many ideas and research from all over the world. Studies provided for protected bike lane advocates ([Protected Bike Lanes Mean Business](#)) show that streets where shops and restaurants are easy to see and reach on foot or by bike have increased sales volumes (and more).

There are hundreds of cities making the switch from protecting fast car travel to protecting human-scaled, people-centered public spaces. Not only will this help businesses provide more services in a time of public health restrictions but it will also increase foot and bicycle traffic, reduce air pollution, make the streets quieter, improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, and reduce our city's carbon emissions. To be honest, one reason I loved to vacation in Europe was the car-free experiences we had from Glasgow to Oslo and everywhere in between, large and small. People LOVE car-free spaces.

So, please do agree to let restaurants and other businesses use parking spaces this summer, and please study what streets (like Pearl Street - wasn't that supposed to be a pedestrian mall anyway?) in our retail areas can be car-free going forward.

Thank you.

Cathy Van Maren

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