

July 5, 2023
Greggory Essig
Property Owner 432 W. Main St.
Owner / Manager - The Partisan
Merced, CA

Re: Opposition to item# E.1, [CUP#1272] "Liquor Store 429 W. Main St."

Planning Commission,

I am writing today to express my opposition to item# E.1, "a liquor store at 429 W. Main St.". To make my position clear, first let me state that I begrudge no one the opportunity to open a small business. In addition, despite my ownership of a bar directly across the street, I am not overly concerned with competition - although the sale of "mini bottles" and single beers and customers sneaking them in is a real concern for all establishments downtown. My opposition lies in the detrimental impact this C.U.P. will have on a neighborhood and retail district already suffering and impacted daily by the effects of vagrancy (i.e. loitering, littering, panhandling, "bench camping", public urination/deification, public intoxication/drinking/drug use). The approval of this C.U.P. will contribute to and increase these issues not only on the 400 block, but the surrounding blocks and Downtown in general.

One need only look to most liquor/convenience stores in town to see examples of the vagrancy issues listed above (a visit to the 7-11 on R or G St. after dark will make it clear). However, perhaps the most glaring difference between other liquor/convenience stores and the one being proposed here is that the others exist on private property lots. Here, the store in question will be located on a public sidewalk replete with public benches in a well shaded area and public street parking - all of which contribute to and invite the likelihood of increased vagrancy.

A short conversation with a downtown business owner, or a slightly longer conversation with law enforcement will make clear the point that very little can, and is currently, done about these vagrancy issues on public property - unless directly witnessed by an officer - which is increasingly rare. The Planning Commission has an opportunity here to stop these eventualities or at the minimum not contribute to their expansion and impact.

The Planning Commission has an obligation to consider the impact of the projects before it on the safety, aesthetic, and economic health of the neighborhoods surrounding the project. In this case, a liquor store at 429 W. Main St. will negatively impact Downtown and the customer experience of those who visit. I urge the Planning Commission to consider the implications of putting a liquor store at this location and reject this C.U.P.

Thank You,
Greggory Essig
Downtown Property and Business Owner since 2007