

**From:** [Nancy Coupal](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Council Meeting 3/27/23 re Parklet Program  
**Date:** Monday, March 27, 2023 8:25:48 AM

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To our Honorable Mayor Kou, Vice Mayor Stone and City Council Members,

The City of Alto hired private consultants to help structure an economic development plan along with Steven Guagliardo, Assistant to the City Manager for Economic Development,

I am writing to you today to urge you to please consider the following important points for the Permanent Parklet Program that directly affect economic development, and which you will be voting on tonight.

The results of the study by the private consultants hired by the City that were presented to Council at the March 13th meeting clearly showed that Restaurants were the main generator of Sales Tax and brought City revenues back to pre pandemic levels in 2022. This is not surprising and most likely will continue to do so if the City allows restaurants to continue to thrive without hampering the possibility. Restaurants are also the biggest draw for visitors to the City and are essential in any economic development program. With the changes in consumer habits as a result of the pandemic, outdoor dining is now critical to restaurant revenue.

With this perspective, I urge Council to consider the following:

- 1) **Remove or vote against** the recently required **Neighbor Consent** for Parklets. This stipulation places the future of our restaurants and vibrancy of the City at risk, with community support for parklets being ignored and the economic vitality of the restaurants involved detrimentally affected. If the parklet **does not obstruct the visibility of the neighboring location**, there is no need for neighbor consent which is often **arbitrarily withheld**. Much time has been spent talking about fairness to neighbors, but the reality is that **most** neighbors welcome the business that restaurants bring to our City, and without them, there would be many less customers for everyone.
- 2) **Vote against arbitrary size limitations** of the Parklets, specifically a **maximum** of 2 parking spaces. In the beginning of the Parklet Program a "**minimum**" of 2 spaces was established and without logic or consideration of already existing Parklets, the new idea on the table is detrimental to economic development. It is essential that you incorporate the concept of **Grandfathering** of already built parklets and not apply new size restrictions which would negatively affect the viability of the restaurants and lower the sales tax obtained from sales. Needless to say it would also disregard the **large investments already made** for these parklets.
- 3) Vote for a coherent and **comprehensive Development Program** taking into account **Pedestrian friendly car free streets along with Parklet requirements**. The program should be all inclusive and not piecemealed. It is not that complicated to map out a complete program rather than breaking up the downtown and Cal Ave areas without an **overall plan of action** which is much more beneficial to the City and the Community at large. In the meantime, please extend the Temporary Parklet Program until the Permanent Outdoor Dining Program is ready and in this way avoid economically harming current restaurants that contribute to the vibrancy of the City and sales tax revenue. Don't damage what already works.
- 4) Vote for what the **community wants** and do not give in to the pressures by a **handful of Landlords** in the City that own the majority of buildings. Help the small business owners survive and keep doing business in Palo Alto while contributing to the economic development that the City strives for.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. I hope you choose to be leaders in the way Cities move forward to enhance the quality of life for their citizenry.

Best regards,  
Nancy Coupal

Founder and CEO, Coupa Cafe

**From:** [Michael von Loewenfeldt](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#); [Kou, Lydia](#); [Burt, Patrick](#); [Lauing, Ed](#); [Lythcott-Haims, Julie](#); [Stone, Greer](#); [Tanaka, Greg](#); [Veenker, Vicki](#); [Eggleston, Brad](#); [Shikada, Ed](#); [Clerk, City](#); [City Attorney](#)  
**Subject:** 536 Ramona  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 9:23:25 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Ltr MVL to Palo Alto Officials 032223.pdf](#)

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Please see the attached correspondence.

Michael von Loewenfeldt (he/him/his)  
Certified Specialist, Appellate Law\*

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*\*Certified by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization*



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March 22, 2023

**VIA EMAIL**

City Council Members

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Re: Follow up – continued encroachment in front of 536 Ramona

Dear City Officials:

We represent Ramona Post LP, the owner of the building at 532-536 Ramona Street. We are writing for the third time to address the City of Palo Alto's continuing violation of Ramona Post's rights by authorizing and renewing authorization for a parklet being used by a neighboring business to be placed in the street and setback directly in front of Ramona Post's property despite Ramona Post's objection.

Ramona Post's owner, Elizabeth Wong, was recently contacted by Pamela Chung from Public Works. Ms. Chung informed Ms. Wong that the City's current guidelines will allow Coupa Cafe (538 Ramona) to encroach on "one-half of a parking space over the frontage" of 536 Ramona even without the consent of the neighboring business and property owner.

The storefront at 536 Ramona is only 15 feet wide. Half of a parking space is roughly 11 feet; so it appears the City intends to allow Coupa Cafe to block 73% of the frontage of 536 Ramona. Doing so interferes with Ramona Post's rights in 536 Ramona as stated in our previous letter. There is no legal basis for the City to allow a neighboring business to block most of the frontage of another business in this manner.

It is also grossly inequitable. Why should Coupa Cafe be allowed to use all of its frontage, and also to block 11 feet of frontage from the neighbors on other side without their consent? Each business should have an equal opportunity to utilize the street in front of its own business, and the right to consent to any other business doing so. It is entirely unclear why the City and its staff are treating Coupa Cafe in such a favored manner to the detriment of its neighbors. We can conceive of no lawful reason for such disparate treatment.

Ramona Post again demands that the City require Coupa Cafe to remove the parklets in front of *all* of Ramona Post's property. There is no basis to allow Coupa Cafe to continue to block 11 of the 15 feet in front of 536 Ramona.

Sincerely,



Michael von Loewenfeldt  
Partner, WVBR

**From:** [Elizabeth Wong](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#); [Eggleston, Brad](#); [Stump, Molly](#)  
**Cc:** [Michael von Loewenfeldt](#); [Shikada, Ed](#); [Andrew Wong](#); [Guagliardo, Steven](#)  
**Subject:** WITHHOLD PARKLET CONSENT LETTER  
**Date:** Monday, March 20, 2023 4:59:53 PM  
**Attachments:** [20230320\\_132929.PDF](#)

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At last Monday's council meeting, March 13, 2023, I heard council members deliberating with much attention placed on comments from neighboring premises opposing parklets because of coercion from landlords. This is not factual with respect to my situation on Ramona Street. Attached is a letter from my tenant at 534 Ramona Street stipulating that there was no pressure from Landlord in his withholding of the Consent Letter requested by Coupa Cafe at 538 Ramona Street.

In fact, my tenant reminded me that he had opposed Coupa's parklet over 2 years ago and as stated in his letter dated July 6, 2021, also attached.

Also at last Monday's council meeting, council members commented that the landlords' consent of parklets should be ignored because landlords are in the minority. How is it correct to not consider a minority group be that a Black, Asian, or Jewish minority just because it is outnumbered?

The disagreement between neighboring establishments regarding parklets is a matter of simple business. The rights of one business end where the rights of the neighboring business begin.

Elizabeth Wong  
Landlord  
532-536 Ramona Street