

LA's Rush to a Theater

Dear Los Altos City Council Members,

Council seems to be in a hurry to establish an MOU with a private group that wants to build a theater downtown. The MOU would earmark a downtown parking plaza for five years while the group attempts to collect donations for construction.

Council has clearly not done its homework.

1 – The city financial system is broken, with an estimated budget shortfall of about \$25 million over 4 years. The chairman of the financial commission stated the city does not have money for capital improvement projects for two years. This is not the time to invest staff time and public money on a private, lower priority project.

2 – City priorities are being neglected. The police station floods, state-mandated housing requirements have not been allocated, city infrastructure is deteriorating, and park improvements are shelved. How does a theater rise to the top of the list?

3 – Without a business plan, Council is reacting blindly. The theater group wants the city to contribute 25% of a feasibility study, which could cost \$200 thousand or more. Theater construction could be in the \$25-\$35 million range. Operational and maintenance costs also have to be considered. How much of that will the city be on the hook for?

Good governance demands due diligence, fiscal responsibility and focus on priorities – not a rush to a long term obligation with unknown consequences.

To delay this a few months is prudent and will show that Council seeks to do this in the right order. Otherwise, this looks like a decision of favoritism, lacking in the proper background work.

Scott Spielman

From: [Cathy Lazarus](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Fwd: Agenda Item 10: MOU Between the City and Los Altos Stage-Support
Date: Monday, November 29, 2021 3:39:08 PM

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Cathy Lazarus [REDACTED]
Date: November 29, 2021 at 9:26:24 AM PST
To: council@losaltosca.gov
Cc: gengeland@losaltosca.gov
Subject: **Agenda Item 10: MOU Between the City and Los Altos Stage-Support**

Honorable Mayor and City Council,

I support the concept of the MOU with Los Altos Stage Company to enable further exploration of the feasibility of such an initiative. If proven feasible, relocation of the theater will support downtown businesses, give the Company a modern, safe facility and free-up land in the Civic Center for open space or other public use.

When I was Public Works Director of Mountain View the City entered into a similar arrangement with historical museum advocates for a location in Cuesta Park. In that case the museum advocates did not meet the fundraising target of the MOU and the MOU lapsed. In my view, the Los Altos Stage Company team is much stronger and better positioned for a successful project. Los Altos Stage should be authorized to take the next step by entering into the MOU.

Best Regards,

Cathy Lazarus
2062 Cynthia Way
Los Altos 94024

[REDACTED]

From: [carol little](#)
To: [Public Comment](#); [City Council](#)
Subject: public comment item number 10, 11/29/21 agenda
Date: Monday, November 29, 2021 5:25:13 PM

November 29, 2021

Dear City Council Members,

Please consider the following when discussing the proposed MOU for the LASC. Item number 10 on the agenda. Thank you.

I watched the theater presentation during the last City Council meeting, as presented by Ms. Reeder. An interesting fact was shared during her presentation. According to Ms. Reeder, the theater used to be housed in a storefront on Main Street in downtown. What a fantastic idea for the proposed new theater! It's a terrific idea as a way for the Los Altos Stage Company to move forward. Please do not enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Los Altos Stage Company. Instead of creating dependence on the City of Los Altos, allow the LASC to head out on its own to explore all alternatives for a potential theater in downtown. Los Altos has allowed the Bus Barn Theater space to be used by LASC for many years. If they have outgrown it, or feel it is not up to their standards, as with any tenant they should not be held back and they should be strongly encouraged to find a better space for themselves.

I am more than confident the theater folks can negotiate with one of the many property owners that have empty storefronts and create a state of the art theater. Such a solution would help fill our currently empty downtown spaces and allow the theater group to see if they can manage the costs of a theater on their own. Perhaps they can even get the space donated and then only need to cover all other costs on their own. I imagine there are many civic minded property owners who may be willing to participate in such an endeavor. Who knows, maybe the theater might even be dedicated to them. I know many property owners have already spoken up on support of the theater, as have many of the past mayors of Los Altos. With such support there ought to be plenty of energy available to make a theater happen. This could be a good litmus test regarding the viability of a potential theater. For example, if no property owner is willing to contribute the space or land, it begs the question as to why the city would risk taxpayer money (land is money).

Perhaps a few property owners could work together to make this happen. Certainly, spending less by using an existing building would save money and that saved money could be utilized in the transformation process.

Plenty of thriving businesses have managed to transform existing spaces into

marvelous new use spaces. The new Marketplace on State Street is a terrific example of just such a feat. It is a gorgeous remodel. By not tearing up a parking lot and not tearing down perfectly fine buildings, we preserve our very scarce natural resources. It is a winning proposition.

Finally, all of the theaters used as examples in the presentation, are *owned and operated* by the city, or college where they are located. They are used for many events beyond plays. They also do not make money as small theaters. For example, according to the City of Mountain View's website, in the city budget section, the theater there brought in a million less than they spent. Additionally, many small theaters are closing, and have been for the last 5 plus years. Making it in the theater business is a tough road and one that most are failing on.

By all means, allow the theater to continue using the tax payer supported Bus Barn space or encourage them to go out on their own to create the theater they desire.

Thank you for your time,

Teresa Morris

From: [Alpana Hayhoe](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT AGENDA ITEM #10 - November 30, 2021.
Date: Monday, November 29, 2021 5:32:08 PM

Dear members of the City council,

My email comes in support of the new Theatre location proposed by the Los Altos Stage Company, and a plea that the City council considers financially helping with the Feasibility study.

Local public theatre creates a sense of civic pride along with its immense benefits: raising awareness on delicate subjects, tackling social issues, creating a sense of cultural diversity, and togetherness.

I hope you agree with me that an investment in performing art is an investment in our high street. It brings vibrance and custom to our high street.

I urge you to fully support the Los Altos Stage company proposals - it's a creative legacy, from which our youth and community directly benefit.

Sincerely,
Alpana Hayhoe

Resident of Los Altos
Board member Los Altos Stage Company