

From: **Mary Sue Ittner** <[msittner@mcn.org](mailto:msittner@mcn.org)>

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Subject: parking in Gualala

To: [webmaster@gualalamac.org](mailto:webmaster@gualalamac.org)

Cc: Dan Hamburg <[vote@pacific.net](mailto:vote@pacific.net)>

To GMAC members:

I was very puzzled after reading the article in the February 13, 2015, ICO entitled *Parking Issues Revive Complaints, but Little Action Taken at GMAC*. The implication from the article is that the GMAC is avoiding finding a solution for this "problem". It is my understanding that the GMAC is a group that advises the county on planning issues, but has no authority to solve issues such as parking for the community. Besides advising the county the GMAC does provide a public forum to air problems and in this capacity has over the years I have lived in Gualala (since 1989) provided many opportunities to discuss parking.

I confess to like walking which might color my reaction. But in the years I have lived in Gualala I have never found it difficult to find a parking space. On weekends when there is a Farmer's Market and the Pay & Take, I have not been able to park immediately in front of either of those places, but have never had more than a couple minutes walk from wherever I parked. One of the benefits of living here is the ease of finding a place to park. I contrast this with the town of Mendocino where I have often had to search for a parking place and walk quite a few blocks to get to my destination and with other places in California where I have lived or visited.

I have attended many sessions over the years as citizens of our community met to plan for the future, sometimes with grant funding and assistance from experts. I recall a traffic expert explaining at one of those meetings that by traffic standards Gualala did not have a parking problem. In the worst case scenario he estimated it would be a five minute walk. Documents refer to a "perceived" parking problem. In one meeting I recall hearing that people in our town would not cross the street to shop and therefore if a business did not have enough parking immediately in front of the building they would lose customers to a business across the street. Observation of the many people crossing the highway would indicate this conclusion is not accurate.

Table One in the CAP II Downtown Design Plan lists the Approximate # of Existing Parking Spaces along with the Estimate Parking Spaces Required per Coastal Zoning Code. A quick review of this table illustrates that many of the identified parking zones and/or individual uses have adequate parking supplies to meet their existing demand on a daily basis. There are two exceptions. The Surf Market complex has only 40 places (including spaces on Highway One) with 69 needed according to the Zoning Code. As the Market has developed and because of inefficient layout there are insufficient parking spaces immediately in front of the store. The Community Center has 55 spaces with 105 needed. Looking at the totals for all of the parking listed, there was still an excess of 70 parking spaces since many of the other businesses had more parking spaces than required. The remodeling of the Gualala Hotel that occurred after the report has increased the number of excess parking spaces and has helped relieve the lack of adequate parking of the Gualala Community Center and the Surf Market. People often walk a few minutes from the new parking areas to both of those locations. The CAP II offered a number of solutions for solving the "perceived" parking problem.

Parking was again discussed as a committee met to plan the downtown design plan with the goal of

obtaining funding to begin to implement the CAP. The idea of a public parking entity able to acquire, improve, operate, or maintain parking facilities was raised. The committee did not pursue this as it seemed unlikely to be approved by voters if they did not feel there was a parking problem or if their business had sufficient parking. The logical solution would be for those businesses who needed parking to create and pay for it, not the entire community. Shared parking was listed as a potential solution and this already exists as those businesses with excess parking allow everyone to use their parking spaces. The only area in town with no parking signs is the area behind the Surf Center.

The final plan coming out of that committee was a constrained design plan that did not include the southern part of town so that parking would remain on Highway One in front of the Surf Center and the Community Center and give the owners time to find solutions while allowing the streetscaping to move forward in other areas.

At one point in the past John J. Bower discussed ideas for the lot that is across from Tom's Plumbing and next to Mary Star of the Sea church. That lot has never been developed, but I would assume still belongs to the Bower Limited Partnership. Turning that lot into parking would relieve parking for the two churches that are on that street. Perhaps Surf Market employees could park there as well. If there was a community event that brought more people than usual downtown, there would probably be people willing to walk from there.

Mary Sue Ittner