

Gualala Streetscape Update: Alternatives, Community Response, Options

Defining the look of Downtown Gualala for the next half-century.

Background
Community Comments, New Info
Design Alternatives

Discussion – Community & Council
Possible Action by Council

February 3, 2022

Gualala MAC Streetscape Committee

Robert Juengling, Chair, GMAC
Tom Murphy, Vice Chair, GMAC



Key Mile Markers of Streetscape Project: Late 1980s to 2022

Late 1980s: Gualala Area Coalition first IDs need for Safety and Aesthetic Needs of Downtown Gualala - **30+ years ago**

1995: Hundreds of residents and officials aid GMAC effort to draft Town Plan with Streetscape as a centerpiece.

2002: County/Coastal Commission Adopt Gualala Town Plan. **Hwy 1 required by law to become a “scenic element” of town. – 20 years ago**

2012: MCOG-Surf Market agree on “interim constrained plan” for Surf parking, but MCOG says it’s “not ideal solution.”

2018: CALTRANS TOWN HALL #1 finds near unanimous support to eliminate on-highway parking per legal requirements in Town Plan/LCP

2019: - Caltrans releases Alts 1 and 2. Both are fully compliant with Town Plan. **GMAC recommends Alt 2.**

- Surf launches petition asking for new option, and **Caltrans drops Alts 1 and 2.** Forms “Working Group” with no clear outcome.

CALTRANS TOWN HALL #2: No sound system, poor handouts. Rowdy crowd. Audience blocked from hearing options.

- **Alt 3 emerges** from Town Hall. Violates Town Plan on many levels. **Caltrans drops Alt 3** after engineering/design issues and protest.

2020: - Caltrans declares downtown “too congested” for on-highway parking. Releases Alts 4A and 4B, with “interim” parking.

- **GMAC recommends Caltrans Alt 4A,** with interim parking on East. (Save Gualala also endorses 4A).

- Caltrans circulates Alt 4A & Alt 4B through online video, Conducts Extensive Survey **CALTRANS TOWN HALL #3**

2021 CALTRANS TOWN HALL #3. Caltrans survey finds residents “very supportive” of Alt 4 (61%). Parking on East preferred (Alt 4A).

- Surf Market protests again. Caltrans starts working 4C with interim parking at Surf, truck parking, LT lane at Ocean.

- GMAC makes recommendations on draft of 4C to Caltrans/MCOG. Caltrans drops truck parking and LT lane.

2022 Caltrans shows Draft 4C ideas, with “interim parking for the Surf Market.” **BUT it’s at Hotel Breakers, eliminates landscaping**

- GMAC Streetscape Committee seeks public comments through ICO, Facebook. Meets with Julia Acker Krog and Caltrans team.

- Caltrans now amending Draft 4C and (tentatively) planning another round of comments and **Caltrans Town Hall #4.**

Community Reaction to Draft Alternative 4C

Jan. 6: Caltrans at GMAC Meeting. Council to asks community for guidance on design alternatives

Jan. 14: Independent Coast Observer reports *“More Chatter, Little Progress on Streetscape.”*

- Story says: *“...Caltrans appears to be at about the same stage on the project where it has been for the past three years...”*
- Juengling/Murphy follow with letter to paper asking Community for their opinions. Also reached out on Facebook and on YouTube.
- GMAC Meeting videos on YouTube draw 120-plus viewers, included calls for comments.

Feb. 3: Community Reaction (All comments will be shared with Caltrans, MCOG)

Comments Support 4A over 4C by a 21:1 margin (Total of 44 comments received)

- 42 comments support Alt 4A
- 2 comments support Alt 4C

Other: 1 for Alt 2, 1 with varied suggestions

10 Letters (and Longer Emails) supporting 4A include:

- Hotel Breakers Owner states **“very strong opposition”** to 4C, call for **return to Alt 4A**. Cites **safety, “curb appeal,”** and **“ugly debates.”**
- Pt. Arena School Superintendent says **not interested in bus stop**. Asks Caltrans to **“move forward with 4A”** and **“do away”** with 4C.
- Friends of Gualala River (FoGR) Board asks Caltrans to **adopt and implement Alt 4A**. Says 4C bad for river and watershed.
- Save Gualala: **“We are against Alt 4C.”** Asks Caltrans to adopt Alt 4A **“out of respect for the clear wishes of the majority.”**
- Cypress Village HOA Board (15 residents): **“Fully supports Alternative 4A”**
- **Two others:** One for **Alt 2** (with no parking). One says there is **“ample parking”** and asks for misc, changes to plan.

Julia Acker Krog: Risks of delays in the Town Plan/LCP Amendment Process

Committee conclusions after meeting with Chief Mendocino County Planner Julia Acker Krog (JAK)

NO MEANS NO: JAK says the Town Plan is absolutely clear that on-highway parking is prohibited. **“Interim Parking” is still parking and is illegal.**

FOCUSED AMENDMENT: A tightly focused amendment **COULD** be done in two years. BUT a more complex proposal could take years.

COASTAL COMMISSION UNPREDICTABLE: Possible the commission will adhere to LCP or amendment. Could add more restrictions. Cause delays.

4A vs 4C: Either may require an LCP Amendment. However, Alt 4A supports, while 4C goes against it (more pavement, less landscaping).

DEFINE “INTERIM”: JAK felt the Coastal Commission was very likely to insist on a specific length of any “interim,” whether 4A or 4C.

“AMENDMENT CREEP”: Once an amendment is sought, private parties try to expand it into other areas. *(We feel this is VERY likely.)*

LITIGATION IS POSSIBLE: Private parties (from *either* side) could sue or take other actions that cause years of delays. This has happened before.

OUR BOTTOM LINE On 4C: A complex amendment for Alt 4C is far more likely to lead to process delays and lengthy lawsuits.
Would be much better to avoid an LCP amendment for the sake of minimal transitional parking.

Afterward, the Streetscape Committee shared this information with the Project Team is moving forward with its “process.”

May 2021: GMAC Conditionally Approves Interim Parking -- *at the Surf Center*

*While maintaining support of Alts 2, 4A, GMAC added Support for 4C With 9 Conditions. (Caltrans hasn't met **seven**.)*

1. Caltrans would have to reverse its former finding and **affirm that current congestion level can tolerate interim parking by Surf Center.**
2. **Set interim at 4 years from the time of MCOG approval**, or ending with completion of Surf Center project, whichever comes first
3. Require **25-foot “red curb” view clearance from all driveways**, both North and South, to enhance safety during interim.
4. **Position bike lanes inside parking lane to enhance safety and minimize re-striping needs**
5. **Set parking Time Limit of 45 min** for any interim on-highway spaces
6. Allow use of interim spaces by **large trucks/vehicles**.
7. **Eliminate interim parking proposed in 4A/B** to add NB/SB turn lane from Church St. to Ocean Dr., including SB Hwy 1 at Ocean.
8. **Complete negative declaration process** begun in June 2019 **without recirculation** per CEQA section 15073.5c, parts 3 and 4.
9. Caltrans **return completed concept to MCOG for action ASAP**, per direction of MCOG on April 5, 2021.

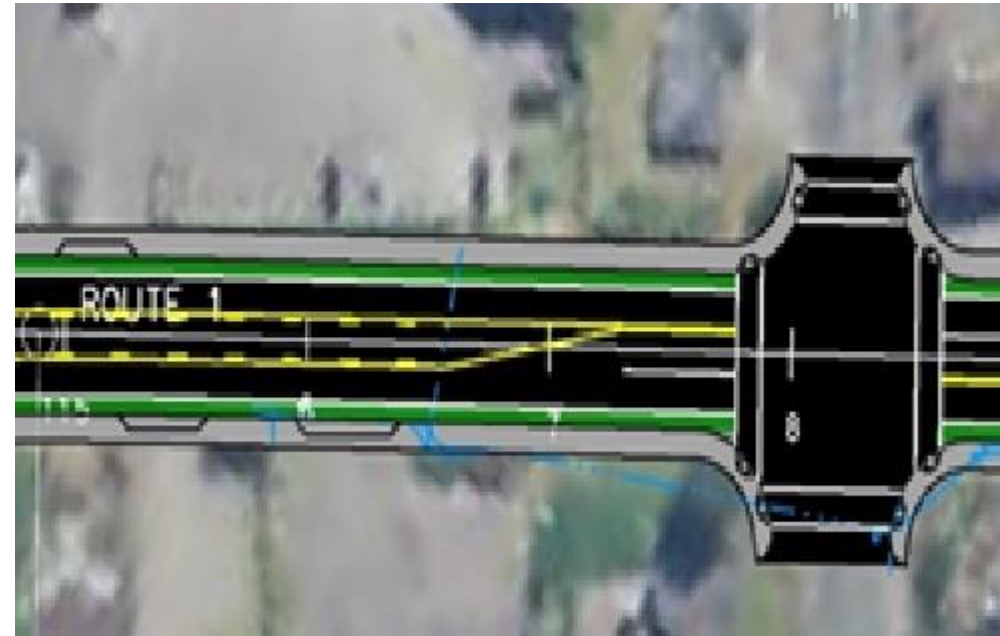
Alt 2 – Fully Compliant with Town Plan/LCP (Released June 2019, Approved by GMAC)

Supported in Town Hall #1: Landscaping, center turn lane, no parallel parking



Alt 2: Downtown

Alt 2: Uptown



Caltrans image

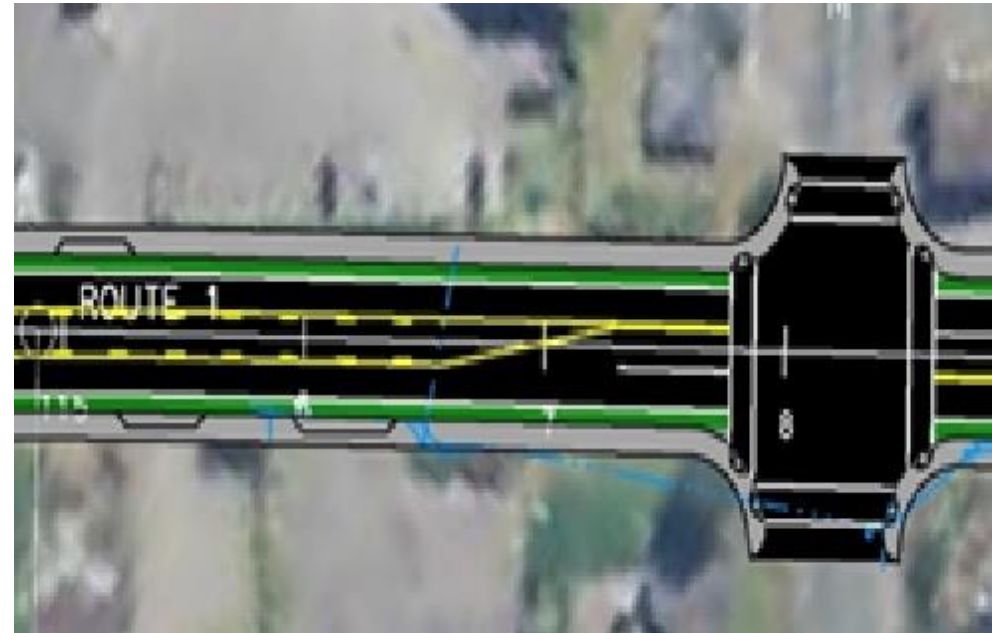
Alt 3: Non-compliant (2020 - Withdrawn due to retaining walls, excessive fill, width, community protests)

No landscaping, Wider, with Five lanes entire length, Center Turn lane entire length.



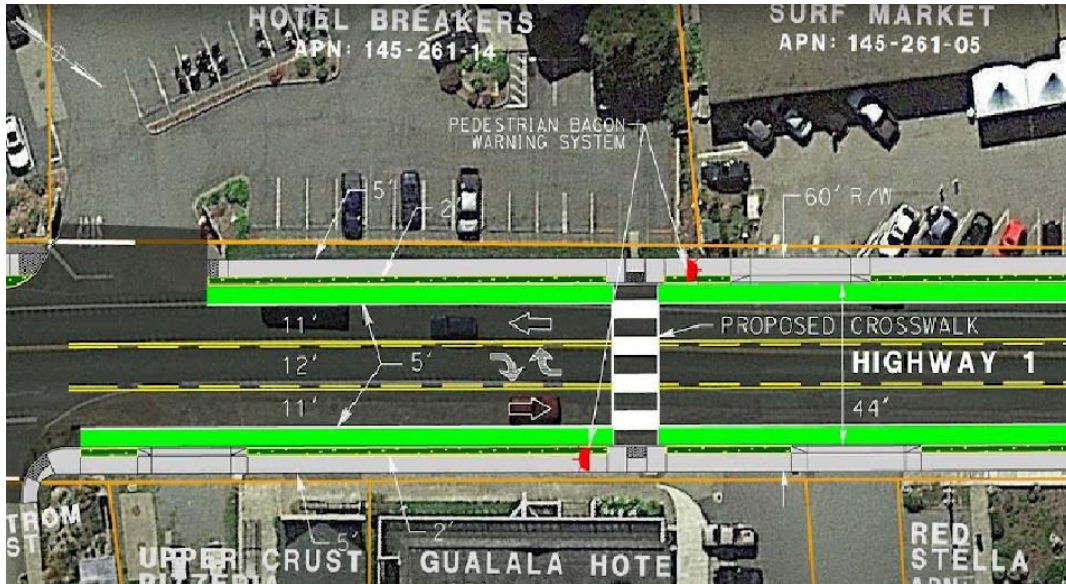
Alt 3: Downtown

Alt 3: Uptown (76' width at Ocean)



Alt 4A – Step toward compliance with LCP. (2020 Compromise, supported by community and GMAC)

Similar to Alt 2, but with transitional Uptown parking. Would be compliant after Caltrans adds a turn lane.



Alt 4A: Downtown

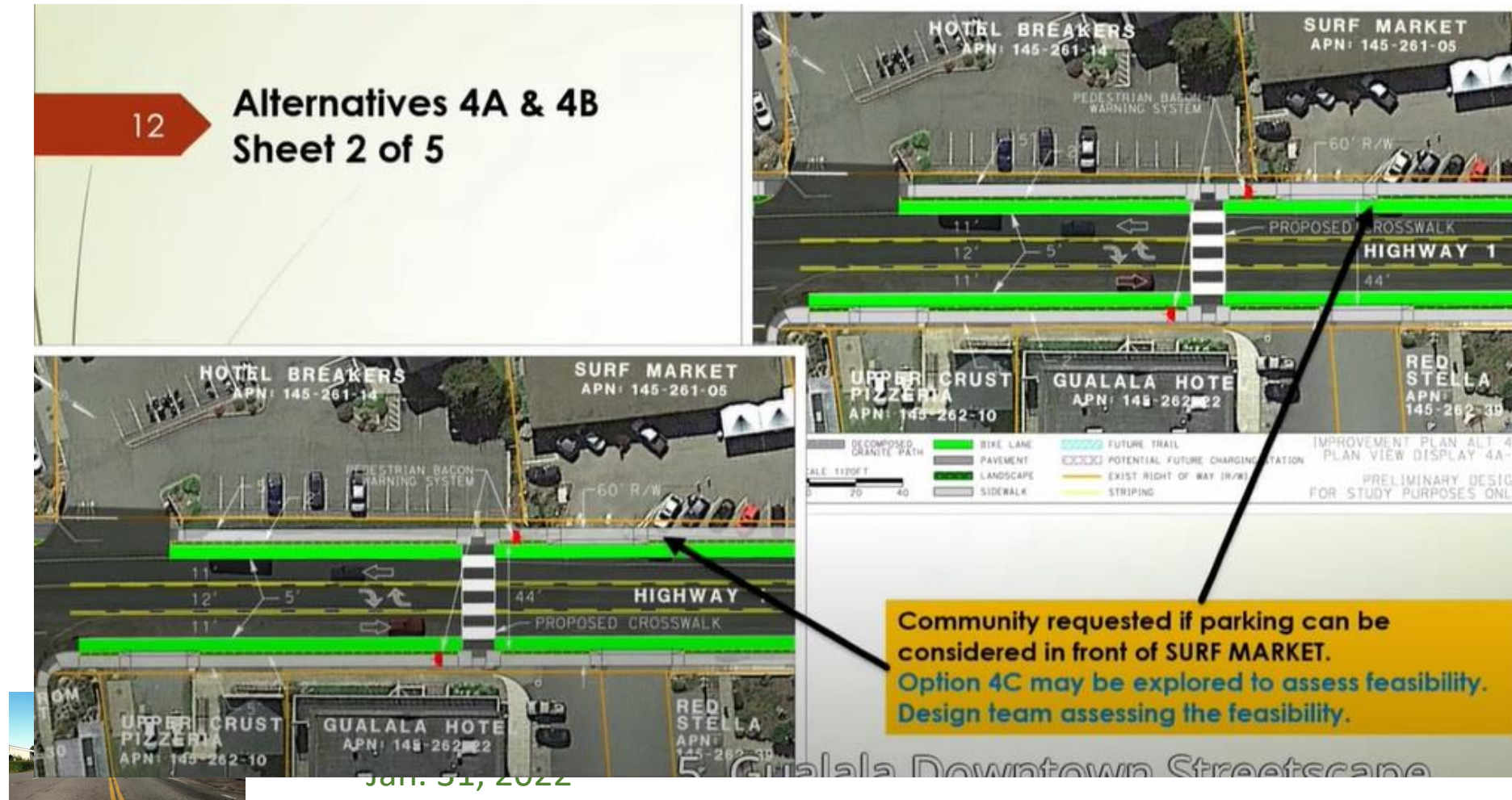


Alt 4A: Uptown

Caltrans images

April 2021: Caltrans considers parking “in front of the Surf Market”

Caltrans initial concept did NOT widen the pavement, remove landscaping, or position parking at Hotel Breakers. GMAC approved with 9 conditions. Caltrans appears unable to meet at least 7 of the 9.



JANUARY 2022: Draft Alt 4C Non-compliant (GMAC approved conceptually with 9 conditions)

*Scraps planned and existing landscaping downtown, No defined interim, Community strongly opposed (20:1 margin).
Would allow 4 Spaces 70 yds from Surf entrance in fourth paved lane in heart of historic downtown area.*



Alt 4C: Downtown

Alt 4C: Uptown (?)

NOTE: Caltrans showed with parking on west (4B), but survey favored Parking on East (4A) (Photo here shows 4A design)



Caltrans images

May 2021: GMAC Unanimously Recommends Interim Parking Solution for 4C

GMAC Proposal for Interim Parking at Surf Market, allowing for Continuous Sidewalk without Major Rework

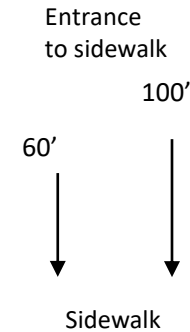


Potential Impacts of 4C

Parking: 70'-150' down sidewalk



GMAC-Google/ image



Distance to spaces:

- 130'-210' from Current Surf Entrance
- 170'-250' from New Surf Entrance

Impact on Hotel Breakers:

- Loss of 'Curb Appeal'
- Safety risks heightened for guests

Impacts on Safety:

- Even with 20' setback, parking blocks sightlines
- Risk of shopping carts drifting into traffic
- Increases congestion rather than reducing it

Impacts on Aesthetics:

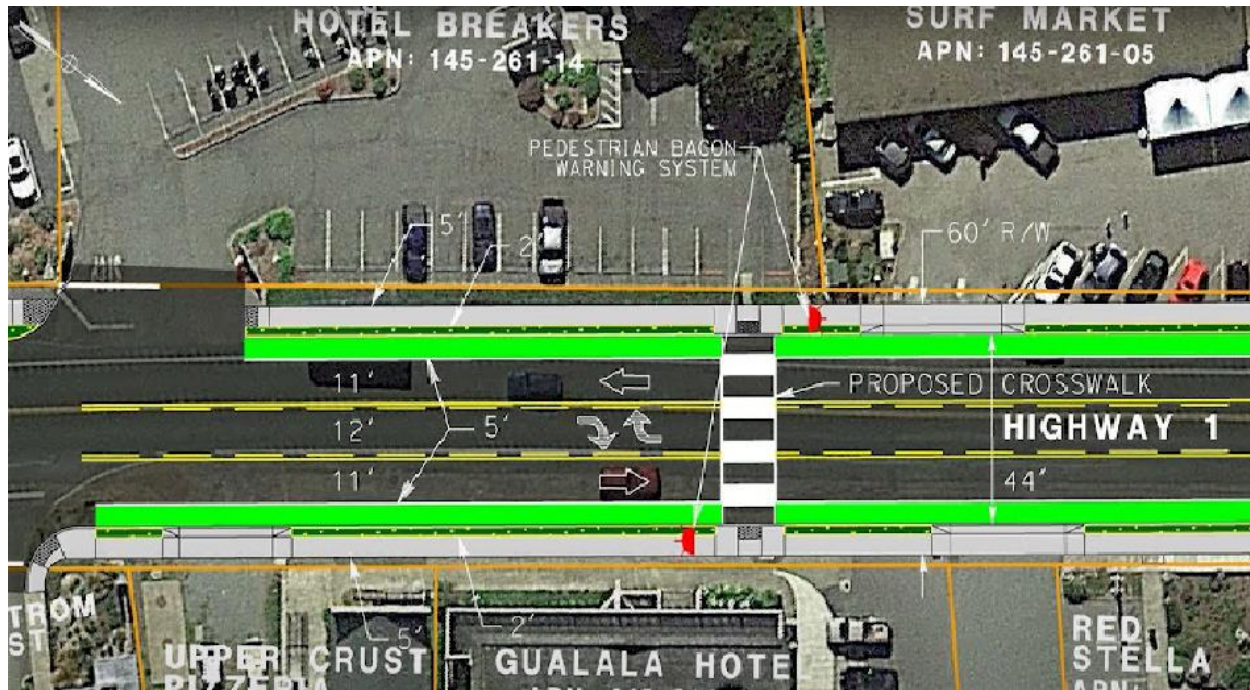
- Town Plan calls for more landscaping, not less
- Would remove existing, planned greenery
- *IF* interim ends, still no landscaping at Gualala Hotel

Social/Legal Impacts:

- Would re-open divisive town debate
- Requires changes in Town Plan
- Gives Private Party Control Over Project Timing

Alternatives Available:

- Businesses have options to provide more parking
- GMAC interim solution would provide parking

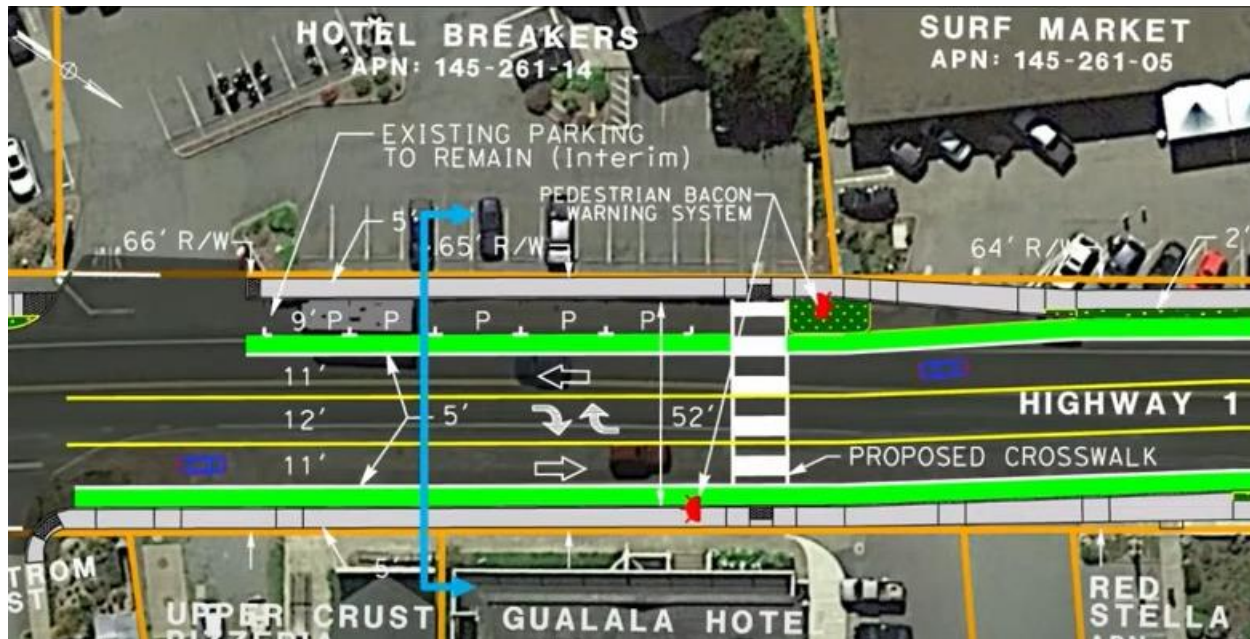


Alt 4A vs Alt 4C in Historic Downtown

*Landscaping with no on-highway parking
or
4 'interim' spaces with no landscaping.*

ALT 4A:

4' Hedge at Breakers
2' Landscaping on East
2' Landscaping on West



Draft ALT 4C:

No Hedge at Breakers
No Landscaping East of Hwy
No Landscaping West of Hwy

4 "Interim" Parking Spaces

SAFETY/CONGESTION ISSUES WITH 4C

Sightlines, Drifting shopping carts, vendors, abandoned cars, parallel parking delays all raise red flags.



"My customers and employees often complain it is dangerous to pull onto the highway when cars and trucks are parked anywhere near my entrance."

*David Shahriari, Owner,
Hotel Breakers / Vue Restaurant*



Gualala MAC - Caltrans
Jan. 31, 2022

Committee's View of The Best Path Forward

1. Drop Plan 4C for Interim Parking at Hotel Breakers due to:

Outcome of 2021 Town Hall and Survey clear, beyond dispute

Very Strong Community Pushback against 4C

Assumptions made during past year were faulty (Location of parking, GMAC and community didn't ask for this)

Removing Landscaping goes DIRECTLY against Town Plan requirements and goals

Would have negative impacts on already struggling Gualala's Tourist Based economy

Motives for those demanding parking are suspect: Is this an abuse of process here?

Potential Litigation from either side if Caltrans pushes on; Investigations Possible

Potential for years of delay at Coastal Commission during Amendment process

Loss of Control: Private Parties could effectively control fate of the streetscape project

2. Fall back to Alternative 4A due to:

It's already been extensively circulated, explained, surveyed, and approved by community.

Community demands Caltrans honor the community's will as expressed in the Caltrans Town Hall

It will lead to phased adoption of current Town Plan goals; Might not require an amendment

Will keep Streetscape on schedule

Will avoid any further abuse of process by private parties seeking to derail the project

GMAC and MCOG very likely to affirm the plan

Will bring peace to Gualala and speed delivery of a safe and aesthetically pleasing streetscape

Streetscape Committee Recommendations to GMAC. (It's the council's call.)

Streetscape Committee to write letter to Caltrans/MCOG from GMAC with these key points:

1. Based on community comments and additional research, GMAC recommends Caltrans/MCOG withdraw Alt 4C,

- Caltrans proposed "interim parking at the Surf Market," but Alt 4C concepts show parking at Hotel Breakers.
- Community is strongly against it. 20:1 in favor of Alt 4A over Alt 4C.
- Plan would add congestion and safety risks while eliminating existing and planned landscaping during interim.
- Caltrans says it cannot specify length of interim, effectively relinquishing project timing to private parties.
- Plan would violate several parts of LCP/Town Plan, requiring complex Town Plan/LCP amendment
- Creates the very safety and aesthetic problems the LCP/Town Plan seeks to eliminate. It would require complex LCP Amendment
- There's no need for a new bus stop needed for MTA or Schools. This would further add to congestion.
- 4 interim spaces provide negligible benefits in town with 600+ off-highway spaces. Spaces too far from market to be functional.
- Hotel owner is "strongly" opposed on aesthetic and safety issues.
- Surf Center, other properties have better options in hand to add more parking.
- Likely to spark lawsuits (from either side), adding delay to needed safety improvements. Investigations also possible.

2. GMAC recommend that, with no further delay, Caltrans and MCOG adopt 4A based on strong support from residents in 2021 Town Hall/Survey, recent comments, and very strong opposition to parking at Hotel Breakers -- the only key element of Alt 4C.

- GMAC previously approved 4A in belief it will fulfill the Town Plan/LCP requirements when Caltrans determines need for turn lane.
- Community was "very supportive" of Alt 4A in Caltrans' 2021 Survey (61%, with strong preference for parking on East side of highway)
- The solution has already been circulated, studied in an extensive Caltrans survey, and discussed in detail at a Caltrans Town Hall.
- We continue to recommend further circulation be waived under CEQA section 15073.5c.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

COUNCIL DISCUSSION (POSSIBLE ACTION)