



## City Council

January 9, 2024  
Packet Addendum #1

## **Meredyth Muth**

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**From:** John Leary  
**Sent:** Monday, January 8, 2024 6:37 PM  
**To:** City Council  
**Subject:** Closing Main St  
**Attachments:** MemoClose Mains St.docx

Members of the City Council

Attached find my comments on the Closing Main Street project in the Council Work Plan up for discussion at you Jan 9th special meeting.

Thanks,

John Leary

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## MEMORADUM

Date: January 8, 2024

TO: Louisville City Council

From: John Leary, 1116 LaFarge Ave

Subject: Close Main Street Work Plan Item

I note that the 2024 City Council Work Plan is on your agenda for further discussion at tomorrow night's special meeting. I have the following comments on the Work Plan item "Main Street Closure."

There appears to be an assumption this project, albeit its listing as a "low priority," is something Louisville should be pursuing if there is time and resources to accomplish it. This is a highly controversial concept and has no place in your Work Plan. I will discuss why in the below headings of neighborhood impacts, economic impacts, and competition equities.

### Neighborhood Impacts

1. Closing Main Street would have the effect of diverting traffic onto neighborhood streets creating noise, especially from trucks and buses<sup>1</sup>, as well as creating safety issues for children in these neighborhoods. The transition of neighborhood streets to collector streets is not at all what people expected when investing in their homes<sup>2</sup>.
2. For at least 40 years, Louisville has invested taxpayer money in creating parking spaces to support downtown businesses and to ameliorate parking impacts on neighborhoods adjacent to the business district. There are estimates that each space can cost as much as \$20,000, or more, to build and maintain.
3. Removing the parking places on the closed part of Main Street, largely for the purpose of increasing the number of cars coming to downtown, would only exacerbate the parking impacts on residential areas. Most of us Old Town Residents have no problem

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<sup>1</sup> RTD has determined moving buses to Front Street is not feasible due to limited turning ratios. This issue came up at a meeting during the Covid crisis. People on LaFarge were concerned about noise and safety issues associated with buses. Participants in the discussion, favoring closing Main Street, appeared to become experts in driving buses and in the purposes of public transportation. I was deeply embarrassed by the discussion. Unconscionable statements showing an ignorance of the social and environmental issues associated with public transportation were frequent. I am not an expert on public transportation, but spent most of my career working on air quality and estimate I have ridden over 200,000 miles on RTD.

<sup>2</sup> Years ago, the issue of closing Main Street came up. City transportation staff did an analysis of expected impacts associated with changing the Old Town traffic configurations. Their conclusion was that the railroad already restricted traffic going east/west and combining this impact with a north/south restriction on Main Street would create significant impacts on neighborhoods.

with the parking impacts associated with special events such as parades and the street faire. These major events make our town special. However, having increased impacts on a regular basis is another thing.

### Economic Impacts

1. Taxpayers in Louisville have long supported the preservation and vitality of downtown businesses. As a result, the taxes collected from these businesses may not cover the total costs associated with the services they need. (These services include such things as police, street and alley maintenance, parking lots, and snow removal). This was especially true when the underpass under the railroad track was built. Whenever large capital projects are involved, net downtown revenues are at times marginal at best.
2. Along with providing services and products for residents, revenues produced by commercial areas are needed to fund city wide services. Residential units do not pay their way. Commercial revenues, in excess of the revenues needed for serving these commercial are needed to fill this gap. At the same time, it is important to note that sales tax revenues are paid by customers not retail outlets. Philosophically, sales tax spent by residents is credited to them, and sales tax from nonresidents is credited to the business collecting the tax.
3. The repeal of the Gallagher Amendment is going to reduce, albeit gradually, the property tax contributions we get from commercial properties. This means we may need to be more cautious with investments we make in support of our commercial areas.

### Equity for Competing Businesses

1. We do not make the same investments in other retail areas of the city that we make in the downtown area. For example, we require parking lots, but do not foot the bill for building or maintain them; nor do we allow them to expand their business onto public rights-of way. Again, we treat the downtown in a special way because of the character it brings to Louisville. But fairness requires us to put limits on how much we may be creating disadvantages for businesses in the rest of the city.
2. Furthermore, in our fiscal analysis for new businesses, we assume 30% of the revenue they are expected to receive will come from the cannibalization of existing competing businesses. When we help existing businesses expand the same phenomena is in place.

### Summary

I fully expect this is in the Work Plan because somebody expects closing Main Street is a good idea. I and many of my neighbors do not share this presumption.

You may be thinking “why is he worried about this since it is a low priority?” I ask you – why are you putting things in your Work Plan that are low priorities? Let me tell you why it is in your Work Plan. There has been a cabal of people who have been pushing for this closure and they have been told “we cannot take it up if it is not in our Work Plan.”

Now it is in your Work Plan, despite your having no idea how much money and staff time it would take to do the analysis needed to make decisions, one way or the other, on the project. This is a complex multifaceted issue that needs much more thought than just tossing into your work plan for purposes of making it possible.

The plan says it would take two or three council meetings. That is purely a guess. Furthermore, leaving the time of the time of the year the project unknow is being deceptive towards the public.

Please take it out.

Thank you for time and service.