

From: **Cassandra L**

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Subject: Rethink Pleasant Street

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Good Afternoon,

Cassandra Lockwood - Ward 1

I am writing today in support of the Rethink Pleasant Street renovation proposal. My support of this project rests primarily on two overarching principles:

1) Infrastructure needs to be repaired. Waiting to repair old water & sewer lines can often create messy inconveniences that end up being more costly. A water line break here, sewer problem here, stormwater backup there... When we're talking about old infrastructure, it doesn't make sense to wait and hope it doesn't fail in continuously big ways. The saying "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" rings true here - let's maintain proactively and logically.

So, with the need to repair critical infrastructure, we have a unique moment where digging up the street and sidewalks - and rebuilding based on what the community wants to see - is not just a dream, it could be a reality.

Why is this reality important? Well, at its very heart the project design is community-based. This is about what residents and businesses want to see, what we like to do, and how we want to spend our time. That pays off in economic gains, social capital, and well, - just happiness. It's a good feeling to enjoy your downtown. To play where you live. In this sense, we are looking at a project that will have an immediate positive impact.

There will be long-lasting benefits as well. Building a strong downtown is a critical component of a strong city - "Numerous studies have found that strong regions are built around strong central cities, and strong cities are built around strong downtowns. One great asset in many small and midsize legacy cities is a historic downtown."

(<https://www.lincolnst.edu/sites/default/files/pubfiles/revitalizing-smaller-legacy-cities-11a170702.pdf>)

It is also a critical component in attracting younger demographics and professionals. "Research shows that college-educated young adults aged 25 to 34 are twice as likely to live within three miles of a city's downtown core..." (<https://www.governing.com/topics/urban/americas-declining-cities-try-to-attract-millennials.html>) We know young people and young families help build a stable, growing city. That's why it's our Economic Development Goal 3 in Claremont's Master Plan - these demographics are the lifeline of a small city! But to attract and keep young

people and families here - we need a downtown that works, that reflects what people like to do, and one that makes sense.

2) Downtown just doesn't work - **yet**.

When my husband and I decided to buy a house in Claremont it was largely because we have fun here! We can go hike Arrowhead, bike through acres of Moody Park, and then sit down at a local restaurant and enjoy dinner. All within city borders, and sometimes even walking distance! I don't think we should ever overlook how remarkable that is - and how much young people value these experiences in our everyday lives.

When my friends and family visit from larger cities, they are always in awe of how much fun it is here. Of the richness of recreational activities and the character of our local businesses. We have a lot going for us - including a spacious, flat downtown center that links the pedestrian bridge and the Visitors Center, with the Opera House and the common. The location of Pleasant is the very definition of a "downtown core" - it is the central point that connects some of Claremont's most interesting attributes (historic mills, MakerSpace) and beautiful public spaces.

But it really doesn't work. **Yet**. Walking down Pleasant with a friend is... somewhat unPleasant. (Sorry - can't resist a little humor!) Narrow sidewalks, uneven spots, and overgrown trees mean constant navigating. Loud trucks mean a halt in conversation. No benches or places to sit... All of this means - hurry up and let's get out of here!

That's not what our downtown needs to be - at all. We are held back by the structure of our street and how wide our sidewalks are. That's it. We can build wide sidewalks, design well-placed benches & trees, and create an experience where people want to stay. To visit. To shop. To enjoy.

My husband and I love Claremont. I love my career in Claremont. My neighborhood. The parks. The people. We have potential here - let's leverage what we already have by investing in this project.

This is a special opportunity for Claremont. When else will we need to dig up this section of Pleasant Street to maintain water & sewer? When else will that coincide with expiring bonds? With low interest rates and low construction costs? With a vested business and community interest?

I strongly believe Claremont needs to seize this opportunity as a catalyst for economic and social growth - and for long-lasting enjoyment of our downtown.

Thank you for your dedication to Claremont, and for your consideration of voting yes to the "Rethink Pleasant Street" proposal.

Sincerely,
Cassandra Lockwood