

From: [Adrian Covert](#)
To: [_CityCouncilListPublic](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Item 4.1 Study Session for temporarily closing 4th street
Date: Tuesday, September 2, 2025 2:49:56 PM
Attachments: [09.02 Pedestrianization \(1\).pdf](#)

Greetings Mayor Stapp and Councilmembers,

Please see the attached letter from Santa Rosa YIMBY on the prospective temporary *opening* of 4th street to pedestrians. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Best,

Adrian Covert
Local Lead
Santa Rosa YIMBY



September 2, 2025

The Honorable Mark Stapp
Mayor
City of Santa Rosa
100 Santa Rosa Ave.
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Re: Item 4.1 Study Session for Temporarily “Closing” Portions of 4th Street

Dear Mayor Stapp and Councilmembers,

Cities across America are successfully revitalizing downtowns by transforming dull public spaces for cars into exciting public spaces for pedestrians to shop, dine, and mingle. Santa Rosa should do the same. The city’s recent survey of over 1,300 residents shows strong support for pedestrianizing streets downtown, including 67% who said they’d visit downtown more often if there were pedestrianized streets, and 76% who said pedestrianized streets would improve the downtown experience. As of today, 294 residents have signed Santa Rosa YIMBYs petition¹ to pedestrianize 4th street.

Santa Rosa YIMBY’s mission—to build Santa Rosa into an affordable, vibrant, and low-carbon city for all—is impossible without a healthy and thriving businesses downtown. That’s why we surveyed² business owners on recently-pedestrianized streets in Grass Valley and San José to learn their perspective. Out of the 30 responses received (representing 48% of affected businesses in the two cities):

- **70% say pedestrianization has been positive for their businesses**, with 33% saying pedestrianization has been “very positive”.
- **70% say pedestrianization has increased foot traffic on the street**, with 37% saying foot traffic has “increased significantly”.

Business owners in each city reported being at first concerned about the loss of parking, yet in both instances fears were overcome by the positive impacts of having made the pedestrianized street a more desirable space for people to visit and support. Santa Rosa is particularly fortunate to enjoy a huge parking surplus in its downtown that renders the sacrifice of parking on 4th street easy to absorb. For example, pedestrianizing 4th Street between B and E streets would cost 83 parking spots, roughly 2.3 percent of Courthouse Square’s public parking inventory, which includes 2,834 spaces in public garages, 410 in public surface lots, and 351 curbside spaces. According to the city’s own analysis, 75 percent of these spaces go unused on a typical busy day. That’s not even counting

¹ <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/pedestrianize-4th-street/>

² <https://new.santarosayimby.org/blog/santa-rosa-yimby-survey-reveals-strong-business-support-for-pedestrianization/>

private parking like the 2,908-car capacity Santa Rosa Plaza garage.

Our survey of business owners also showed that successful pedestrianization means more than just closing roads off to cars—it involves transforming a space designed for cars into a space designed for people. Businesses in Grass Valley were significantly more supportive of that city's pedestrianization project than businesses in San José, owing almost entirely to Grass Valley's bigger up-front investment in transforming Mill Street into a people-centered space with cobblestone-resembling paving, art, lighting, furniture, and programming. Santa Rosa should follow this example. We are concerned that the study session's focus on "temporarily" closing portions of fourth street will preclude the opportunity for creating the pedestrian-centered space that define successful pedestrianization projects.

Additionally, while the focus of the discussion so far appears to be around pedestrianizing 4th street in Courthouse Square, the city shouldn't overlook 4th Street between Davis and Wilson Street in Railroad Square. The north side of the street is lined almost entirely with restaurants, which fare particularly well under pedestrianization. Railroad Square is also located at the intersection of SMART, the Creek Trail, and the SMART trail, making it safe and convenient to access by rail and bike for many residents from both in the city and the region. Railroad Square is also growing quickly, with new residents at the Pullman Lofts and the Cannery project, and with more projects on the way. Railroad Square's charm also makes it an ideal canvas to maximize placemaking (let's get that water tower next to the Cannery back up).

Finally, because pedestrianization fundamentally opens public space to more people for greater enjoyment, we believe it is more accurate for the City to discuss such projects as street "openings" rather than "closures." In closing streets off to cars, cities are opening streets to a greater variety of uses.

With commitment, courage, and creativity, pedestrianized downtown streets can help put Santa Rosa on the map as Northern California's premier cultural and commercial destination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adrian Covert", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adrian Covert
Local Lead
Santa Rosa YIMBY