

Fresno City Council March 2, 2017

I am here today to express opposition to the construction of basketball courts on Eaton Plaza. I oppose the construction of basketball courts at this location for the following reasons: 1973 Seattle Parks. The **1983 Coalinga earthquake** occurred on May 2 at exactly 3:42 p.m. in Coalinga, California.

- 1) constructing basketball courts is a violation of the Eaton Plaza Master Plan unanimously adopted by the City Council on August 31, 2004;
- 2) there is precious little open, green space in Fresno as it is, especially downtown;
- 3) basketball courts can be erected on another location downtown, where there are many blighted areas that would benefit from recreational improvements;
- 4) Fresno does not need additional asphalt, it needs more green space;
- 5) The City Council has not voted to change the Eaton Plaza Master Plan, and therefore the construction of the proposed basketball courts appears to be on shaky legal ground at best.

1 When did the Council approve the construction of basketball courts on Eaton Plaza, thereby violating the Eaton Plaza Master Plan unanimously adopted by the City Council on August 31, 2004?

2. If the Council did not approve the construction, what is the basis for the City Manager to use taxpayer funding for such a project?

3. At the February 16 council meeting the City Manager spoke of "one or two" basketball courts. What will be the dimensions and costs for one court and for two courts?

4. How is it appropriate to create a vast expanse of asphalt for this location in the midst of the governmental and cultural center of the city and county? That is offensive and crude in every sense of social-psychological aesthetics.

In conclusion, I urge all Council Members to stop this violation of the Eaton Plaza Master Plan by opposing the construction of basketball courts on that site and refusing to allocate funds for that purpose. I further urge Council Members to implement the Eaton Plaza Master Plan, and to recognize the need to expand, not decrease access to open, green space for all of Fresno's residents. Thank you.

* **"How Cities Use Parks To Improve Public Health"**

Howard Frumkin, et al

<https://www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/physicalactivity.htm>

* **"The Beneficial Impact of Parks and Recreation on Public Health"**

This video was made for Seattle Parks and Recreation staff and supporters. It details the many ways that research has connected improvements in public health with access to green spaces, parks, and recreation. This video features Dr. Howard Frumkin, former Dean of the University of Washington, School of Public Health.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1Rrr1vBhFs>

* **"The 2016 ParkScore Index,"** published by the Trust for Public Land in Washington, D.C., shows that Fort Wayne, Ind., crept into the bottom spot below **Fresno at 98th out of 100.** <http://parkscore.tpl.org/city.php?city=Fresno>

* **"The Health Benefits of Parks" © 2006 The Trust for Public Land**

http://cloud.tpl.org/pubs/benefits_HealthBenefitsReport.pdf

There are plans coming from CARB to reduce pollution in Fresno and meet the state's mandates- seems like taking out green space and adding concrete would not fit with their recommendations.

* **"5 Science-Backed Ways Taking a Break Boosts Our Productivity,"** Nov 16, 2016, Huffington Post, By Kate Bartolotta

1. For seventy years the citizens of Fresno have repeatedly made it clear that they want to have a park, a public green space in Eaton Plaza.

April 14, 1947: the citizens of Fresno by a yes vote of 71% approved a bond issue to purchase the Eaton Plaza property to make it a public park.

1994: a Fresno County Grand Jury report strongly condemned a proposal to create a farmer's market on the Eaton Plaza site, declaring that the city "should take necessary steps to ensure for perpetuity Eaton Plaza as public open space by recording appropriate deed restrictions."

1998: federal authorities retreated from a plan to place a proposed federal courthouse on the Eaton Plaza site because of strong opposition from the community, including threats of a law suit.

2000-2001: an effort to erect a building for the state court of appeals, initially supported by the city council by a 4 to 3 vote, was defeated by strong opposition from the community that again included the threat of a law suit.

June, 2002 : the Fresno city council voted to provide funding for an Eaton Plaza park with \$700,000 originally intended for a park near the Amtrak station.

2. By a unanimous vote on August 31, 2004 the Fresno city council adopted an Eaton Plaza master plan (EPMP) that became a part of the city's general plan.

The Eaton Plaza master plan adopted by the city council was the result of numerous meetings conducted by MPA Design attended by a number of interested citizens including members of the Downtown Fresno Coalition. The EPMP called for implementation in five phases.

3. The ground-breaking ceremony was held on November 14, 2005 for phase one of the EPMP, which was completed in the area near the corner of N and Mariposa streets.

4. In April 2008 the city council authorized a bond issue to raise \$40 million for a number of park issues that included \$1.8 million to complete phases 2-4 of Eaton Plaza. Work on the second phase was shovel ready in 2010 when newly-elected Mayor Swearingin cancelled the project.

5. Recently it has become known that there is a city plan to construct basketball courts on a large portion of the Eaton Plaza park site. These courts would ruin the EPMP and would be in violation of a plan that was adopted as part of the city's general plan in accordance with established city policy.

6. There are already many basketball courts surrounding downtown Fresno in the following parks and recreation facilities: Dickey at Divisadero and Blackstone; Ted C. Wills at San Pablo between Belmont and Olive; Fink White at Amador and Whitesbridge;

Frank H. Ball at Inyo and A; Romain at Belmont and First; Holmes at First and Tulare. Furthermore, the City and the FUSD have an agreement for the use of various school playgrounds for park use, and many of them have basketball courts.

7. A park with a pleasing array of trees, plantings, fountains, and seating areas is appropriate for this site as part of the cultural and governmental center of the city of Fresno, the county of Fresno, and the entire region known as the central San Joaquin Valley.

Eaton Plaza stands between the central branch of the Fresno county public library and the Fresno memorial auditorium and is in close proximity to other governmental buildings. A large expanse of asphalt surrounded by wire fencing would be an eyesore.