

From: [Bill Hough](#)
To: [City Council](#); [Public Comment](#)
Subject: public comment regarding item #20 on 11/12/2024 agenda
Date: Thursday, November 7, 2024 3:05:19 PM

I oppose the use of any public money on the project building a new theater downtown.

Previously, the Los Altos City Council signed an MOU stating that the city will not spend any money or time on the project building a new theater downtown on a public parking lot. The Los Altos Stage Company now requests two \$2.5 million requests with one as the lead gift for the project and another at the \$10 million goal mark and a campaign fundraising consultant that will cost roughly \$300,000 over 3 years.

Any funds to be spent on a new theater should be raised privately. NO city funding for this theater.

From: [Robert Mayo](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: public comment for the City Council meeting
Date: Friday, November 8, 2024 1:03:31 PM

Dear City Council,

Did you know that the City of Los Altos prohibits the use of a shared-circuit 120 volt heat pump water heater in a shared-circuit configuration? This is a primary tool for electrifying houses with small electrical panels. This prohibition will impact the city's emissions reduction goals.

As you may know, these water heaters are the result of several years of collaboration between NGOs, advocates, and manufacturers, and were specifically designed to enable retrofits of homes with smaller electrical panels. They are designed to be plugged into an existing outlet circuit, eliminating the need for electrical wiring. Or, if a new outlet is required, the wiring is minimal as the outlet can be added to an existing outlet circuit. However, the City of Los Altos building department requires a dedicated circuit and disconnect for these water heaters, effectively prohibiting their use in the intended manner, and neutralizing their benefits.

Because of this, decarbonizing Los Altos houses with small electrical panels is substantially harder than in other cities. Furthermore, for all Los Altos houses, emergency replacement of water heaters when they break is also complicated, as shared-circuit water heaters are a primary means of providing temporary hot water. They are used because they require little to no electrical wiring and can be installed quickly. Requiring a dedicated circuit and disconnect makes their use in an emergency situation difficult. In Los Altos, as long as this requirement remains in place, the best solution for temporary hot water would probably be a gas loaner water heater.

I ask that the city reconsider this decision.

Furthermore, regardless of the outcome of the review, and in the interest of transparency, I ask that the city put their decision and requirements in writing. The building department already provides clear written guidelines for the electrical requirements for kitchen remodels. I would like to request similar written guidelines be provided for heat pump water heaters, for both the shared-circuit types discussed in this email as well as for other types.

Thank you for your consideration,

--Bob
Robert "Bob" Mayo

From: [Marlon Lara](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEM #9 - NOV 12, 2024
Date: Friday, November 8, 2024 5:00:55 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[24.10.24 Los Altos OPPOSE Foodware Ordinance.pdf](#)

Dear City of Los Altos,

Please find the attached letter for public comment.

Thank you,

Marlon Lara
Legislative Director

California Restaurant Association
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 2000
Sacramento, CA 95814

C: 916.370.3386
mlara@calrest.org



While all information released by the California Restaurant Association (CRA) is intended to provide accurate information on the subject covered, the CRA does not provide legal advice and any information provided by the CRA shall not constitute legal advice. You are encouraged to consult your attorney, accountant, or other appropriate professional, as needed.

Confidentiality note:

This electronic message transmission contains information from the California Restaurant Association which may be confidential or privileged. The information is intended to be for the use of the individual or entity named above. If you are not the intended recipient, be aware that any disclosure, copying, distribution or use of the contents of this information is prohibited.

If you have received this electronic transmission in error, please immediately notify us by telephone at 800.765.4842.



November 8, 2024

Honorable Mayor Weinberg
City of Los Altos
1 North San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022

RE: OPPOSE: Single-Use Plastic Foodware and Reusable Bag Ordinances.

Dear Honorable Mayor Weinberg and City Council,

On behalf of the California Restaurant Association (CRA), we write in strong opposition to the *Single-Use Plastic Foodware and Reusable Bag Ordinance* as heard in council on October 22, 2024.

This ordinance would disproportionately affect small family-owned restaurants by increasing operational costs, circumvents existing state regulatory bodies, and expands the state's plastic bag ban law to now include neighborhood restaurants.

As an industry we share your concern with reducing plastic waste and increasing recycling efforts. The CRA has been at the forefront of most of the state's recent efforts and law changes to address unnecessary distribution of single-use products. We also work diligently with local governments to compliment those efforts- while objecting to the creation of a patchwork quilt of differing laws. We ask that you consider aligning this proposed ordinance with the spirit of these recent state law changes that were carefully crafted in collaboration with neighborhood restaurants.to avoid any unintended consequences.

Restaurant Dining Mandate: Reusable Foodware

Repealing in its Entirety the Single-use Foodware Accessories and Condiments Ordinance, Chapter 6.45 of the Los Altos Municipal Code and Adding Chapter 6.42 Titled Regulations on Disposable Foodware

We must strongly object to the proposal to force restaurants to stop the use of disposable foodware for all dine-in customers and require reusables dishware inside the restaurant space. Requiring re-usable foodware for all in-store dining increases costs and imposes additional obstacles given the physical space limitations in restaurants, increased costs of accommodating additional storage and dishwashing capacity.

More recently, on April 17, 2024, SB 1167 (Blakespear) was rejected in the state Senate as it would have undermined SB 54 by sidestepping the rigorous review process and instead proposed a one-off ban of single-use cups at restaurants. While that proposal was far more limited than the proposed ordinance before you, the example illustrates the importance of the state's robust regulatory framework set up to address these very issues you are legislating on. In that committee hearing Senator Allen, who authored SB 54, reiterated that SB 54 was a multi-year effort that brought environmentalists, industry stakeholders,

neighborhood restaurants, and local governments to the table to develop a comprehensive framework to address single-use packaging materials, instead of one-off measures like that before you. We agree that these issues are best addressed on a statewide level - and the fact that SB 54 is now law and that the regulatory process is underway- real action is occurring.

Forcing restaurants to only use reusable dishware may seem easy- but it can be incredibly difficult and expensive- and sometimes impossible. Restaurants generally occupy leased space that they have no control over in terms of the physical footprint of that space, yet the proposals here would require additional space to accommodate these new mandates. Such construction-related changes to the leased restaurant space are often not possible or allowed.

For smaller restaurants who currently do not have dishwashing machines or are unable to add additional machines or cannot physically accommodate them due to space limitations out of their control, this dramatic business operation change will force restaurants to increase their operational costs by either adding additional labor in-house or contracting with an expensive third-party vendor for the service.

Parting with the restaurant community's good work over the years on this topic on a more comprehensive level for statewide consistency, as this Ordinance proposes to do, is misguided and adds additional costs and hurdles for neighborhood restaurants. And for what gain?

Eliminating Reusable Plastic Bag Exemption for Restaurants

Amending Chapter 6.40, to Title 6 Health and Safety of the Los Altos Municipal Code for Regulations on Reusable Bags

State law currently allows restaurants to offer plastic bags. This ordinance would repeal the exemption for restaurants. However, restaurants were exempted from the state law and numerous local government Ordinances for practical and safety reasons. Neighborhood restaurants should have the freedom of choosing what type of bag works best to maintain the integrity of their products. Paper bags are not always the most practical choice for restaurants. For example, paper bags cannot protect against accidental spills because they leak as opposed to reusable plastic bags that can be tightly packaged to conform to the shape of to-go containers while preventing leaks. Preserving the reusable plastic bag exemption gives restaurants the ability to use what works best for them while protecting their customers.

Lastly, Los Altos city staff have stated that the recent passage of SB 1053 (Blakespear) is being used as the impetus for this proposed code change, but SB 1053 *only* applies to *retail* stores with space larger than 10,000 square feet. It is understandable to see why the legislature aimed this new law at retailers who can achieve the greatest reduction of reusable plastic bags. Therefore, the CRA finds that it is unreasonable to extend the application of this law to restaurants who have a negligible bag footprint and have very real needs for a variety of bag types to accommodate their guests.



Take-out Tax

Finally, the Ordinance proposes a regressive tax of 25 cents for each paper bag offered at a restaurant. Restaurants have never seen the endless escalator of cost increases underway from wages to insurance to the cost of goods across the board, and so many other forces working against neighborhood restaurants these days and since the pandemic.

Guest prices have been forced upwards due to these and other policy decisions- now is certainly not the time for the City to add costs to that guest receipt. The notion that restaurant operators should be fine with this take-out tax because they get to keep the revenue provides little comfort, as local governments have proven prone to coming back and hijacking those funds to prop up components of city budgets.

In conclusion, we have a long track-record of productive participation in some of the largest environmental discussions around single- use food ware and believe that enormous strides have been proactively taken on this front- and would ask that you align your efforts with those as well.

Thank you,

Marlon Lara
Legislative Director
CC: City of Los Altos Councilmembers



From: [Roberta Phillips](#)
To: [Public Comment](#); [City Council](#)
Subject: Council meeting Nov.12,2024 Public Comment Item #20 Theater
Date: Saturday, November 9, 2024 1:41:51 PM

Dear Council Members

I read the MOU that was agreed to between the City of losAltos and the Los Altos Stage Company . It states " not require the City to contribute any financial or staff resources ..."

I now see the Los Altos Stage Company asking for five million dollars. Please do not grant their request. Please consider our payments to CALPERS,the deferred maintenance in the City , and basic services that have priority. If the Los Altos Stage Company is responsible to raise the money to build a new theater downtown then that is what they should do, not come to the City.Please. Also consider the ongoing upkeep of a theater.The Theaters in this area are struggling or closing.

The Police Station, the roof on the fire department, and the upgrade to the Grant Park facility are projects that I support before public funds are given to a non profit private organization.

I understand that funds are kept in different buckets, but if Park-in-Lieu fees are spent it should be for a park near El Camino, where the funds are derived from at 5150 El Camino. The Bus Barn Theater already is using city land and building . There is adequate parking at that location and the city would not have to spend funds to replace lost parking spaces. If improvements are needed to upgrade that building then that is where their fundraising efforts should focus.

The Downtown Vision was and is aspirational . The goal was to get more feet on the street, which is now a reality with all the new condos downtown and the Parklet Program allowing outside dining on public land.

I have degrees in Art Education from Buffalo State University and Masters from Hunter College. I appreciate the arts,but public safety has to be a higher priority.

Remember the Woody Guthrie song " This land is your land, this land is my land..." I would like my land to be filled with trees and green space.

Sincerely
Roberta Phillips

From: [Los Altos Residents](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Cc: [City Council](#); [Gabriel Engeland](#)
Subject: [External Sender]Item #20 Theater Capital Campaign Analysis Update and Request for Funding from City
Date: Sunday, November 10, 2024 3:57:58 PM
Attachments: [Theater Survey - Blank - FINAL 10.19.2021 12pm.pdf](#)
[THEATER SURVEY RESULTS November 1, 2021.pdf](#)
[End of Cuttingball Theater.pdf](#)
[12-27-22 theater attendance down.pdf](#)
[articles about SF Theaters.pdf](#)
[CalShakes and other local theater troupes closing down October 2024.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor Weinberg, Vice Mayor Dailey, and Councilmembers Meadows, Fligor, and Lee Eng,

The Los Altos Stage Company (LASC) is coming before you on Tuesday, November 12, 2024 to ask you to vote to award them \$2.5 Million now, another \$2.5 Million in the future, an additional \$300,000 to pay for a fundraising campaign manager and to extend the term of the MOU reserving Parking Plaza II for the theater. Ms. Vicki Reeder, president of LASC, was very frank in her recent presentation to the Los Altos Community Coalition audience when she advised that LASC has been unsuccessful in its fund raising campaign to date, that no big donor has come forth with any sizable donation, and that they hope that a “big” donation from the city will serve as seed money to entice the wealthy citizens of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills to follow suit with big donations of their own. Ms. Reeder continues to emphasize that she was originally asked by Councilmember Fligor to head up this project and that she has been continually encouraged by Councilmember Fligor to pursue new requests for funds and support for the theater including this latest request before you on November 12, 2024.

Councilmember Fligor originally asked that the Council vote just to provide “encouragement” to LASC that Council was in favor of LASC’s private fundraising effort to build a new theater. However at that meeting, Councilmember Fligor assured her fellow councilmembers and the public, her constituents, that NO city money and NO city staff time would be expended on the theater project. In spite of those promises, Council voted to provide LASC with \$38,000 for a feasibility study and then voted to reserve Parking Plaza II for the new theater for a period of 5 years.

Now LASC comes before this Council and the residents of Los Altos and asks for a \$5 Million donation towards the projected \$25 Million cost of a new theater and an additional \$300,000 to hire a fundraising campaign manager because they have been unsuccessful over the past 2+ years in raising money for their new theater. Perhaps they have been unsuccessful because the residents of Los Altos do not share LASC’s desire to build a new theater building on the most heavily used parking plaza in downtown Los Altos. Perhaps their lack of success in fundraising validates the results of the LAR Survey undertaken in November 2021, the results of which are attached to this email.

The results of the LAR Survey show that 444 respondents of which 98% were residents of Los Altos:

52% disagree (12%) or strongly disagree (40%) with the city replacing a downtown parking plaza with a theater

51% disagree (11%) or strongly disagree (40%) with city funds paying for the construction of a downtown theater

53% disagree (13%) or strongly disagree (40%) with city funds paying for the ongoing maintenance and operating expenses of a downtown theater
60% strongly agree (52%) or agree (18%) that they want to vote in a citywide election on using city owned land for a downtown theater

We attach the blank survey so that you can judge for yourself if there is any bias. And we attach the results so that you can have the opinion of 444 of your constituents on the topic of a new theater in downtown Los Altos. Should you question whether the results are still valid because the survey was conducted in November of 2021, then fairness would dictate that you should have the same concerns about the results of the 2018 Downtown Vision results which are three years more "out of date" than the results of the LAR Survey. We hope you will review the survey results and, if nothing else, just accept them as the opinion of 444 of your constituents. The city sent out its own survey at the same time. We would ask you to review the results of that survey as well.

Finally, we request that Council survey the Los Altos community again and ask whether in light of all the new parklets and condominiums downtown today, do residents want a new theater built on Parking Plaza II. If the city would benefit from a new theater on Parking Plaza II and the majority of residents want this theater and would support Council voting to give LASC \$5 Million to build it and \$300,000 for a fundraising campaign manager, then there should be no reservations hiring a professional non-biased survey company to conduct such a survey.

We would also bring the numerous closings/bankruptcies of local theater groups to the attention of Council. Is LASC believe immune to these pressures? Local theater groups have been struggling for years. Are circumstances are getting worse, not better? Please consider a few of the attached articles about local theater failures.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,

Freddie Wheeler
Chair
Los Altos Residents (LAR)
www.LosAltosResidents.org

Survey of Los Altos Residents on a Theater in Downtown Los Altos

A New Theater Working Group -- members of the Los Altos Stage Company and a small group of local residents -- is seeking approval from the Los Altos City Council to build a new live performance theater replacing one of the downtown parking plazas. The cost estimate for the theater could exceed \$25 million. The value of downtown parking plaza land is at least \$12 million/acre. The proposal contemplates funding from Los Altos's city budget for construction and operating expenses.

The purpose of this anonymous survey is to solicit input from Los Altos residents on this topic so the City Council will have an understanding of residents' views. The aggregated data from this survey will be provided to the City Council when this topic is scheduled to go before them.

* 1. I am a Los Altos resident.

Yes

No

If you answered "No," please tell us your connection to Los Altos:

* 2. How long have you lived in Los Altos?

< 1 year

11-15 years

1-5 years

16-20 years

6-10 years

> 20 years

* 3. My zip code is:

94022

94024

Other (please specify)

* 4. My age group is:

18 and under

50-59 years

19-30 years

60-69 years

31-49 years

70+ years

5. I visit downtown Los Altos

- 1-2 times/week
- 3-4 times/week
- 5 or more times/week
- Rarely or never

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

6. Please rate the following in terms of where the city should spend city funds and resources:

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6	Priority 7	Priority 8
New police building	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing required by the state to meet regional mandates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refurbishing Halsey House	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performing arts theater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grant Park Community Center improvements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

7. Please rate the following in terms of land use in downtown Los Altos:

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
More parklets/outdoor eating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Theater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing required by the state to meet regional mandates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More parking spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

8. PRE-COVID, I attended live performances at Bus Barn Theater.

- 1-2 times/year
- 3-4 times/year
- 5 or more times/year
- Not at all

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

9. PRE-COVID, I attended live performances at live theaters such as Mountain View Center, Oshman Jewish Community Center, Hillbarn, Lucie Stern, etc.

- 1-2 times/year
- 3-4 times/year
- 5 or more times/year
- Never

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

10. I would attend live performances at a theater in downtown Los Altos.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never
- Unsure

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

11. I would like to have a live performance theater downtown.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

12. I want the city to allow a theater to replace a downtown parking plaza (for example, Plaza #2 behind the Main Street Post Office).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

13. I want the city to provide funding from the city budget toward the cost of construction of a downtown theater.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

14. I want the city to provide funding from the city budget toward the ongoing maintenance and operating expenses of a downtown theater.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

15. I want to vote in a citywide election on whether to use city-owned land (for example, Parking Plaza #2 behind the Main Street Post Office) for a theater.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

16. I want to vote in a citywide election on whether the city should provide any funding from the city budget toward the cost of construction of a downtown theater.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

17. I want to vote in a citywide election on whether to provide any funding from the city budget for the ongoing maintenance and operating expenses of a downtown theater.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please feel free to elaborate on your response here:

18. May we contact you for further input? If so, please provide your name and email address here:

Thank you for sharing your valuable input!

Survey of Residents of Los Altos Regarding Downtown Theater

November 1, 2021

Executive Summary

- 444 Los Altos residents responded
- 43% would like a theater downtown; 39% would not
- 52% do not want a theater to replace a parking plaza
- 51% do not want city to contribute to construction
- 53% do not want city to contribute to operations & maintenance
- 50% want to vote on whether city land is used for a theater
- 53% want to vote on whether city contributes to construction
- 53% want to vote on whether city contributes to operations & maintenance

Objective & Methodology

- Objective
 - Gather resident opinions to present to Council for consideration during discussion of downtown theatre proposal
- Methodology
 - Survey link posted on Nextdoor, emailed to approximately 1 500 fellow residents
- Duration
 - Two weeks

Survey email from Los Altos Residents

CALL TO ACTION:

PLEASE TAKE THIS DOWNTOWN THEATER SURVEY

The purpose of this anonymous survey is to solicit your thoughts about a live performance theater in downtown Los Altos. As you may have read in the Town Crier, a New Theater Working Group has been formed and will soon seek approval from the City Council to build the theater on one of the downtown parking plazas.

The aggregated data from this survey will be provided to the City Council when this topic is scheduled to go before them.

We welcome your thoughts and opinions. To make your voice heard, please [click on this link](#).

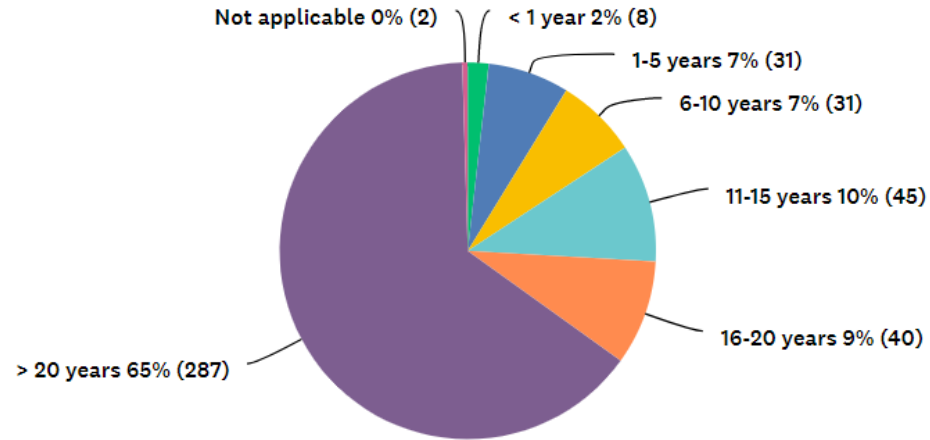
THANK YOU!

Resident Responses

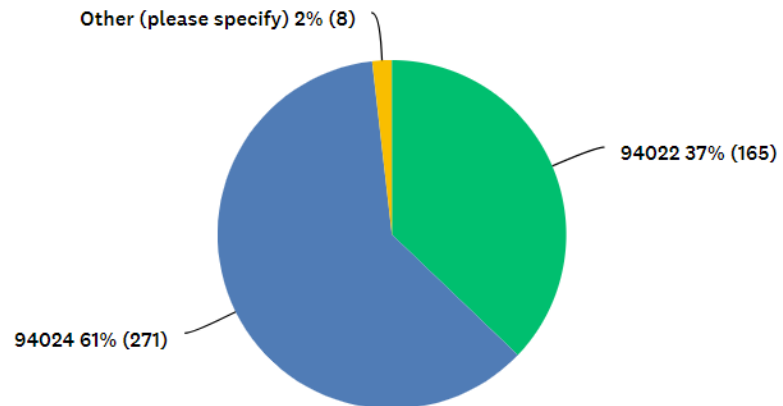
Aggregated data for respondents who identified as residents

Demographics

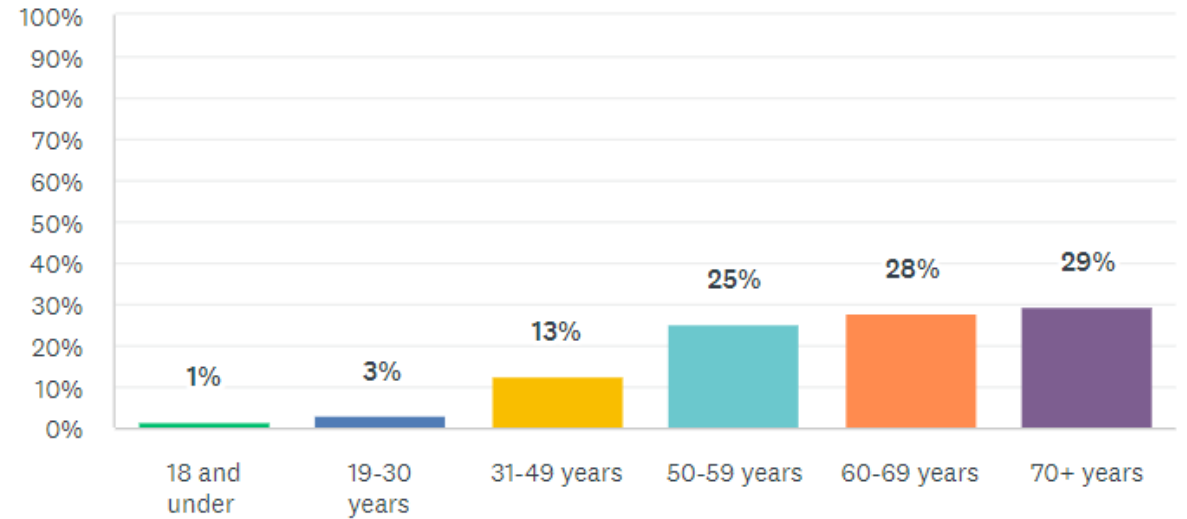
- Q2: How long have you lived in Los Altos?



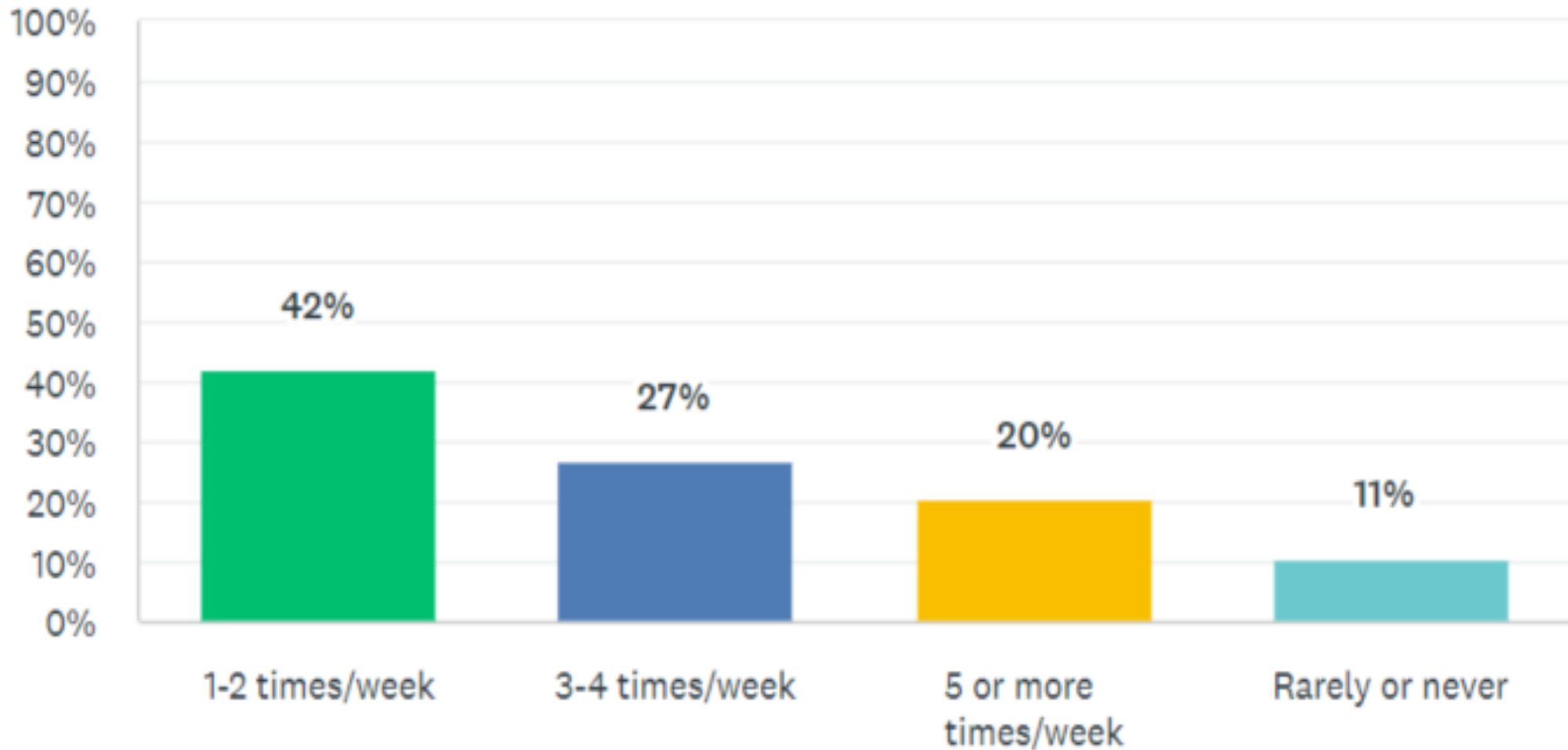
- Q3: My zip code is?



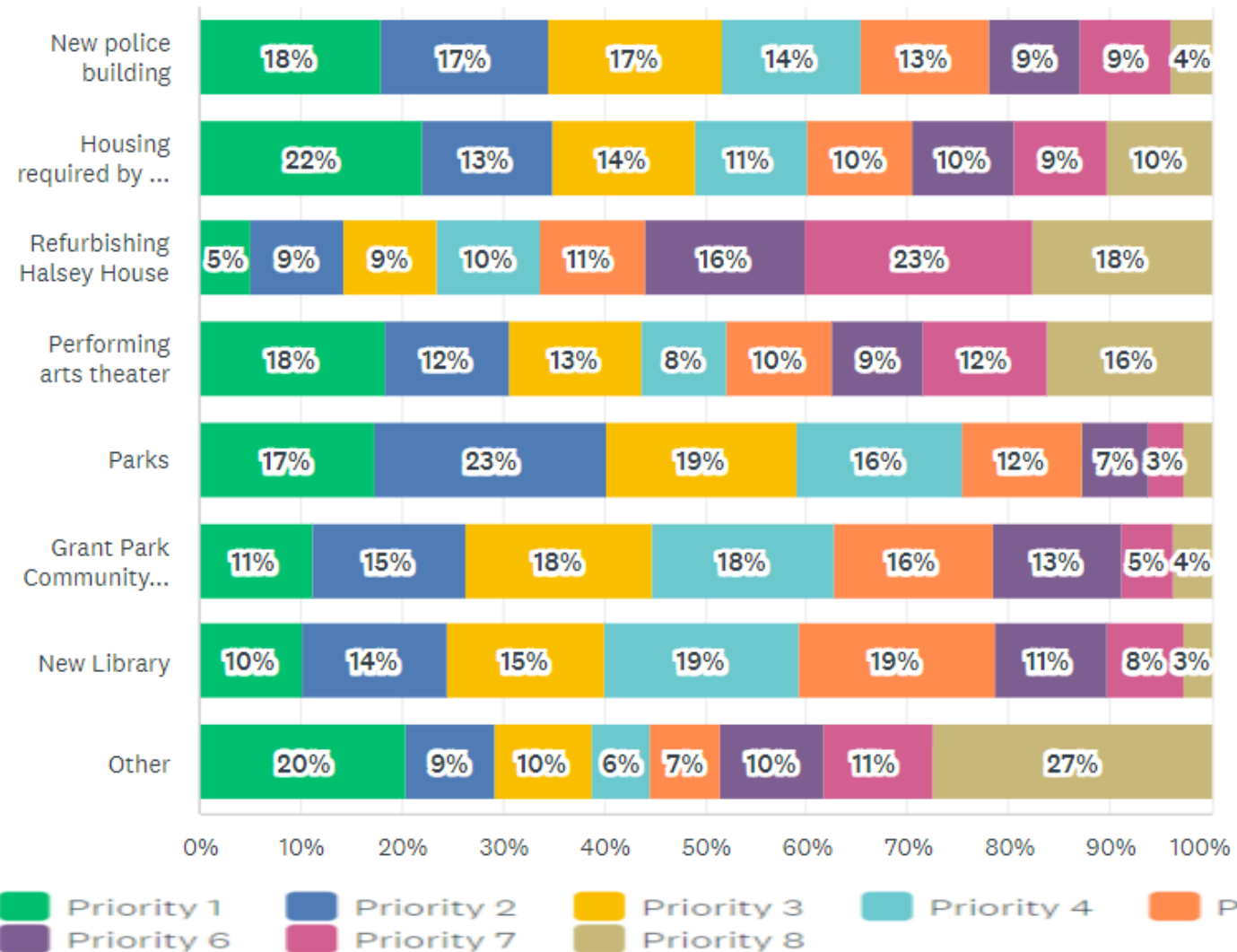
- Q4: My age group is:



Q5: I visit downtown Los Altos



Q6: Please rate the following in terms of where the city should spend city funds and resources:

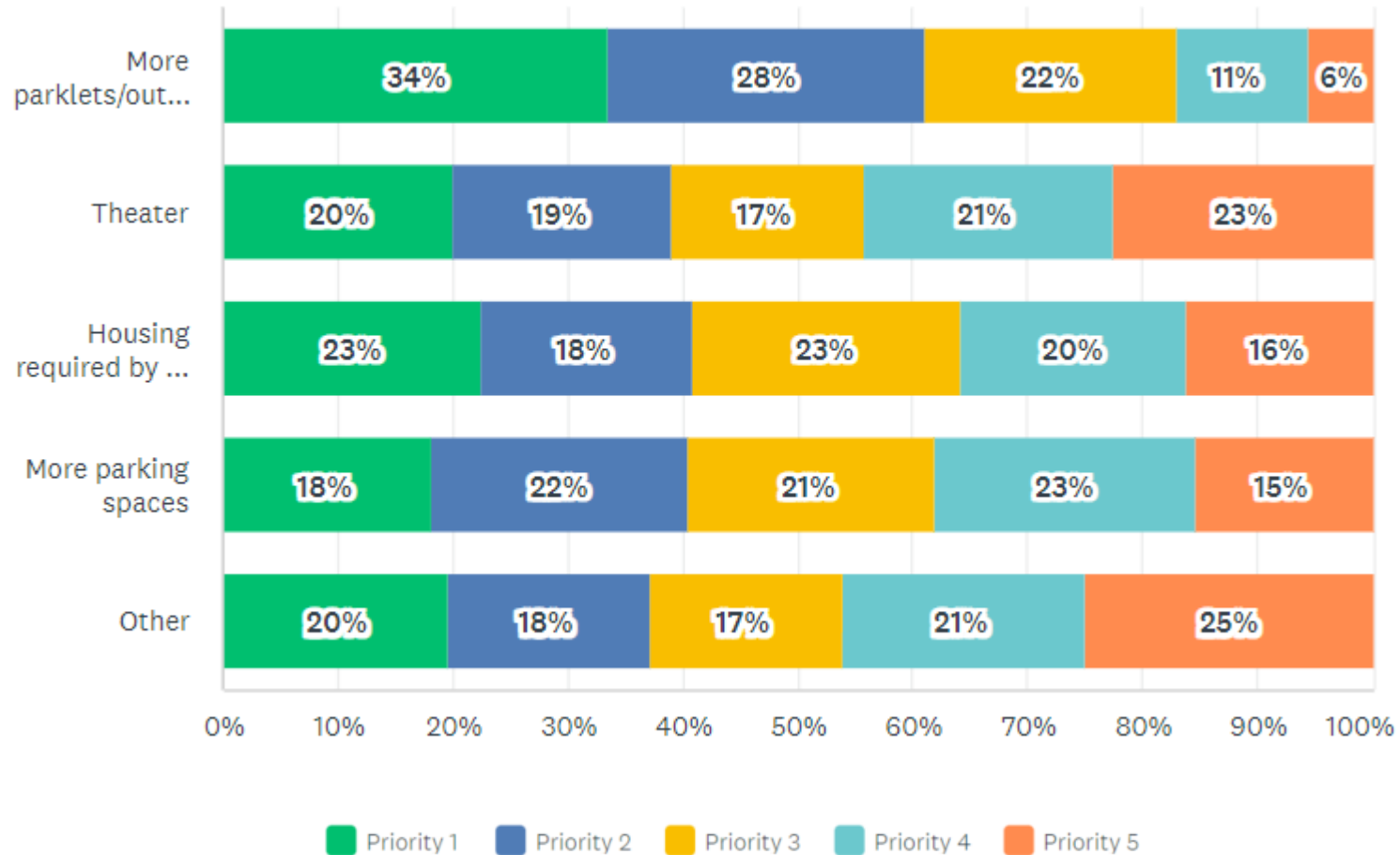


Q6: Tallying priorities 1, 2, 3 tells us residents want to spend money on

#1 Parks	59%
#2 New police building	52%
#3 Housing	49%
#4 Grant Park	44%
#5 Theater	43%
#6 Library	39%
Other*	39%
#7 Halsey House	23%

* Includes 152 random comments, e.g., pool, parks, more parking. See attachment.

Q7: Please rate the following in terms of land use in downtown Los Altos:

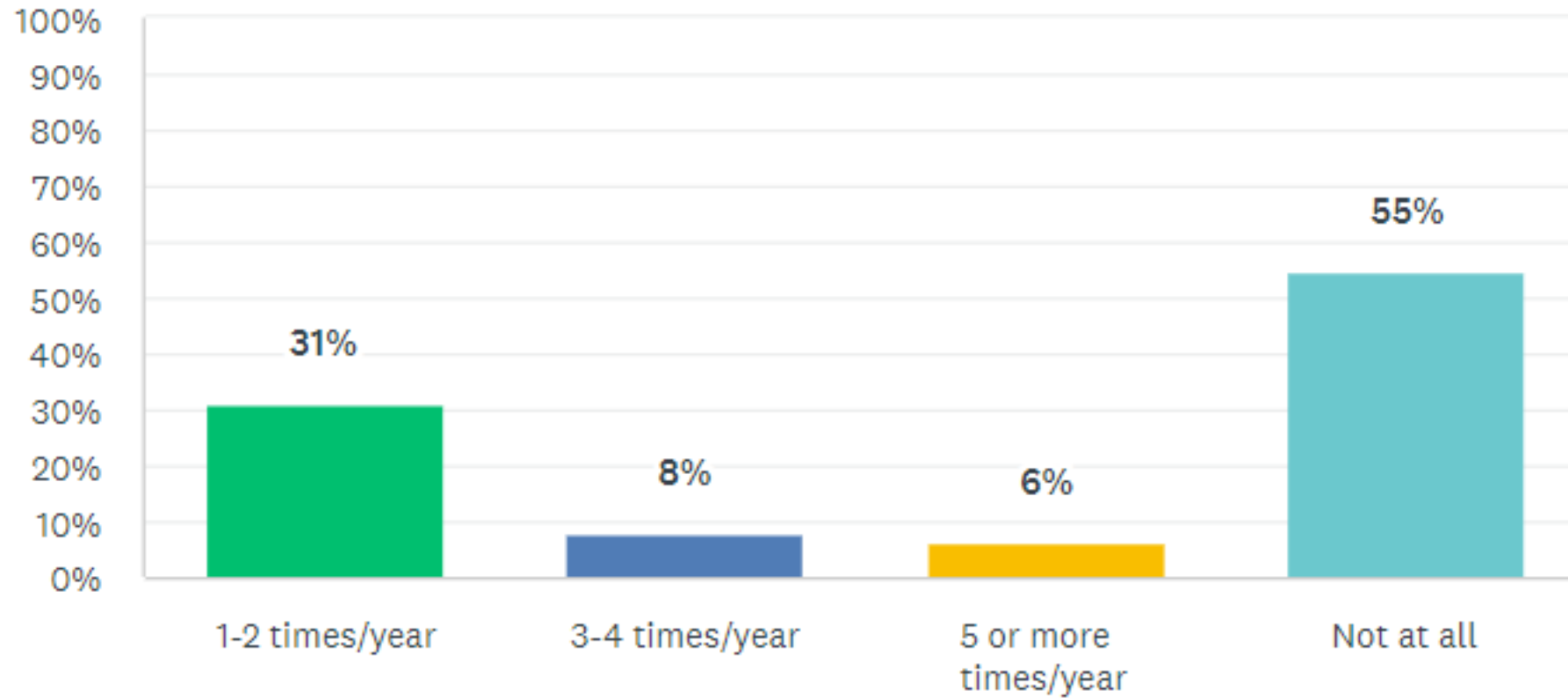


Q7: Tallying priorities 1, 2, 3 tells us residents prioritize land use as follows:

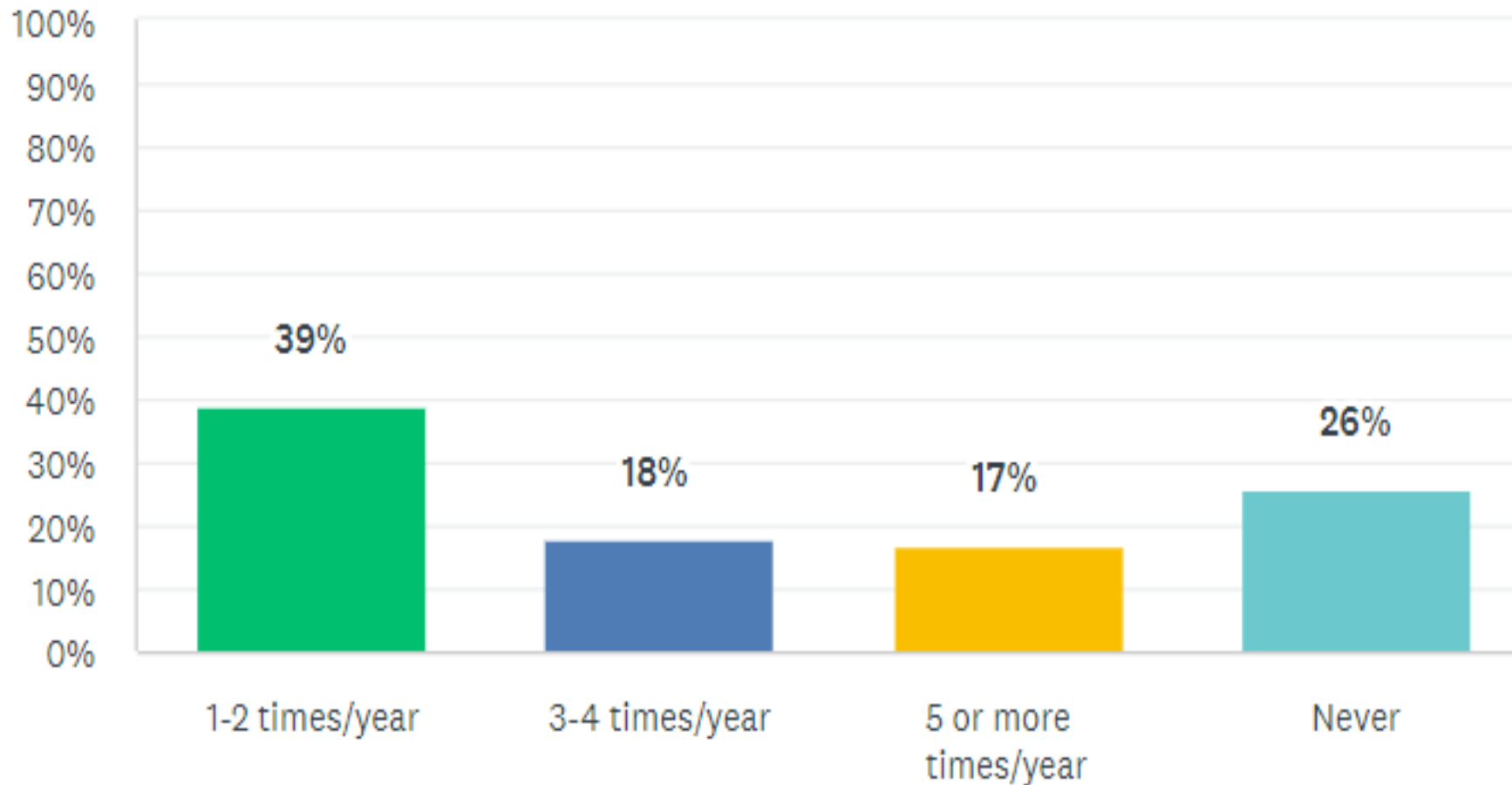
#1	More parklets	84%
#2	Housing	64%
#3	More parking	61%
#4	Theater	56%
#5	Other*	55%

* Includes 112 random comments, e.g., pool, dog parks, more parking. See attachment.

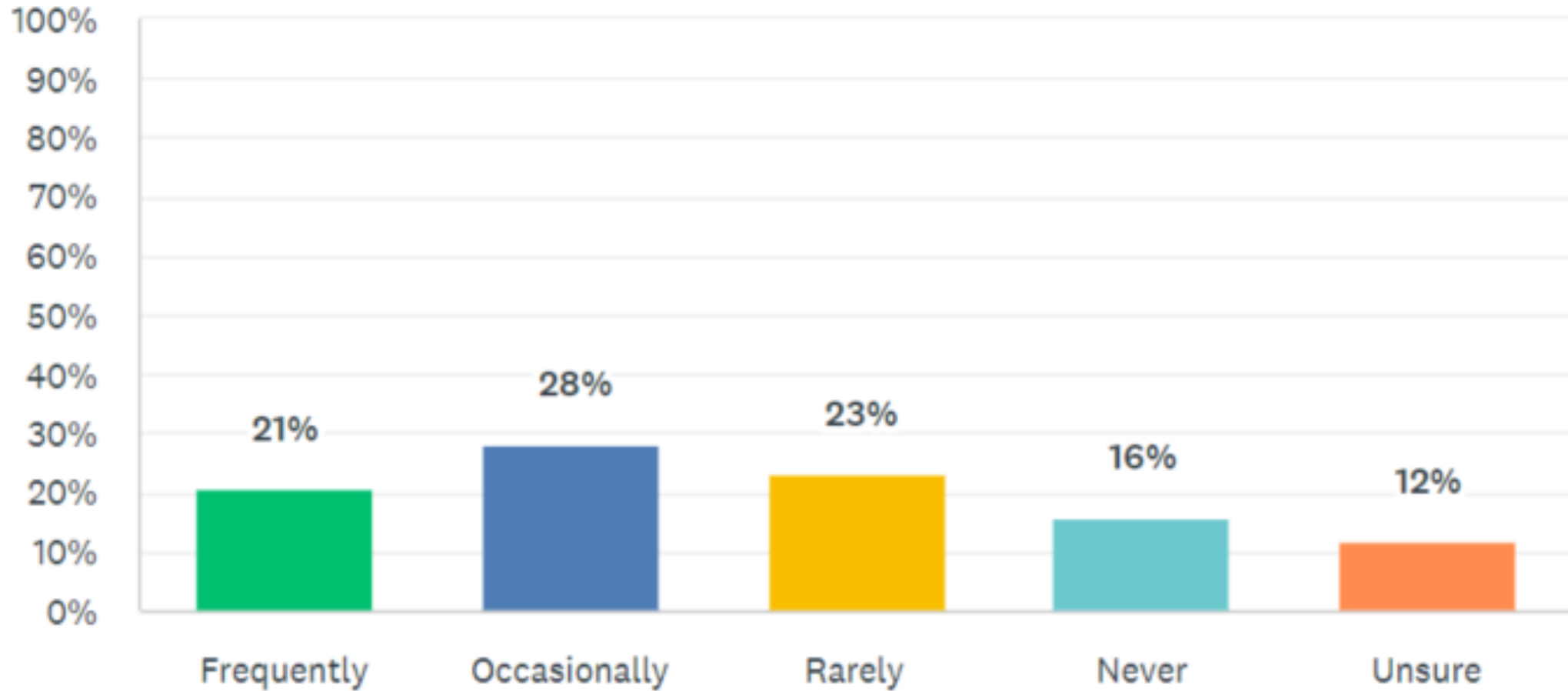
Q8: Pre-COVID, I attended live performances at Bus Barn Theater



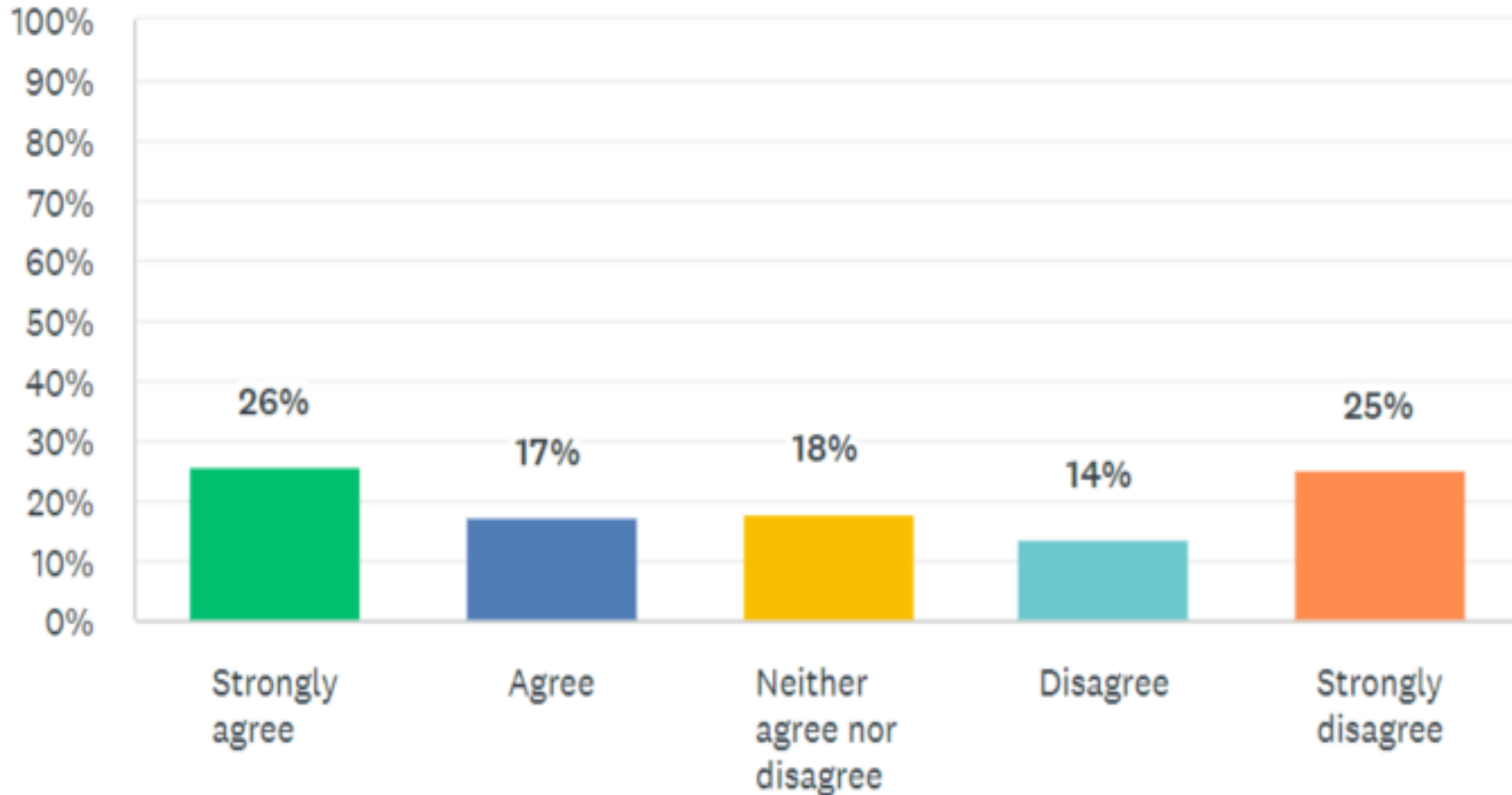
Q9. Pre-COVID, I attended live performances at live theaters such as Mt. View Center, Oshman JCC, Hillbarn, Lucie Stern, etc.



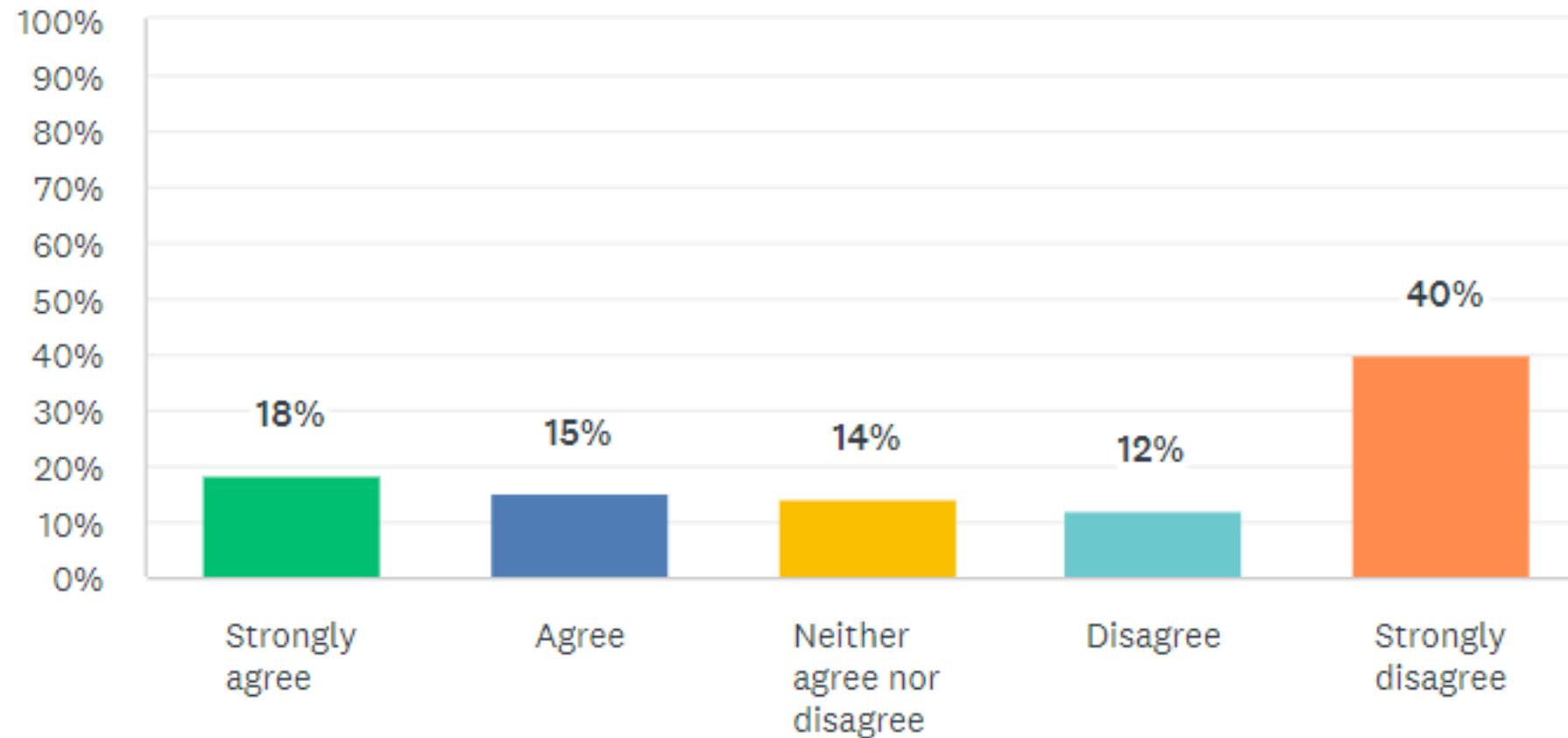
Q10: I would attend live performances at a theater in downtown Los Altos.



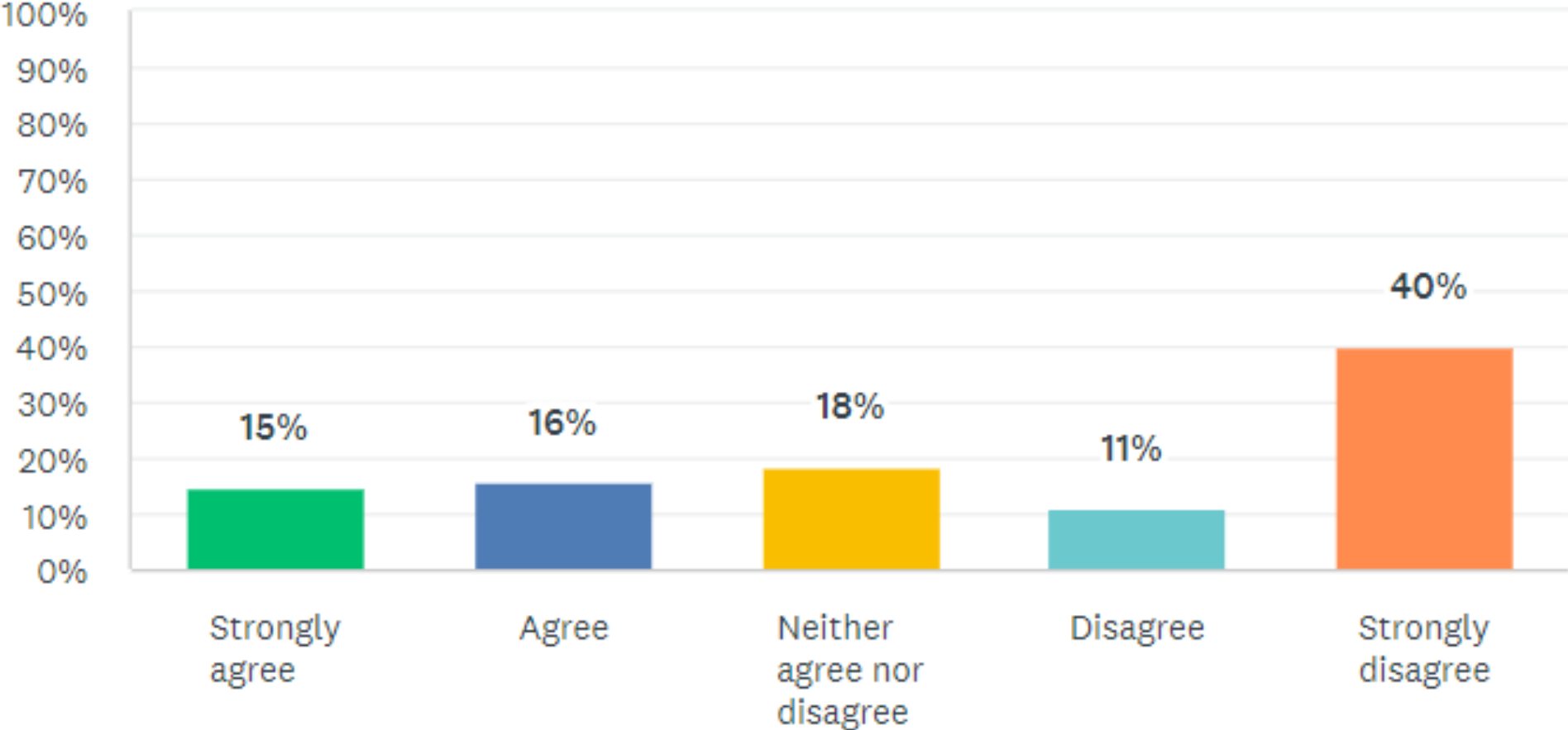
Q11: I would like to have a live performance theater downtown.



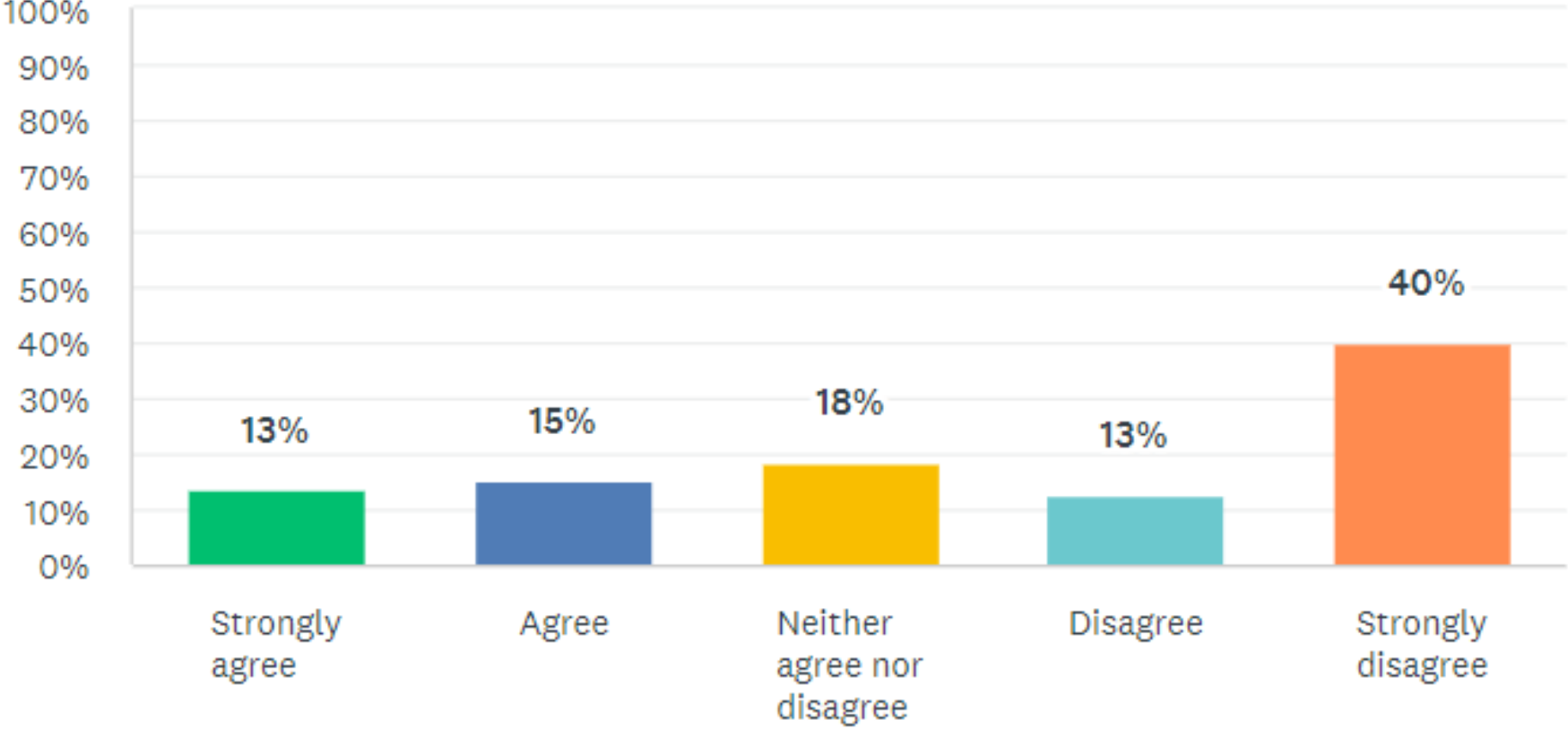
Q12: I want the city to allow a theater to replace a downtown parking plaza (for example, Plaza #2 behind the Main Street Post Office).



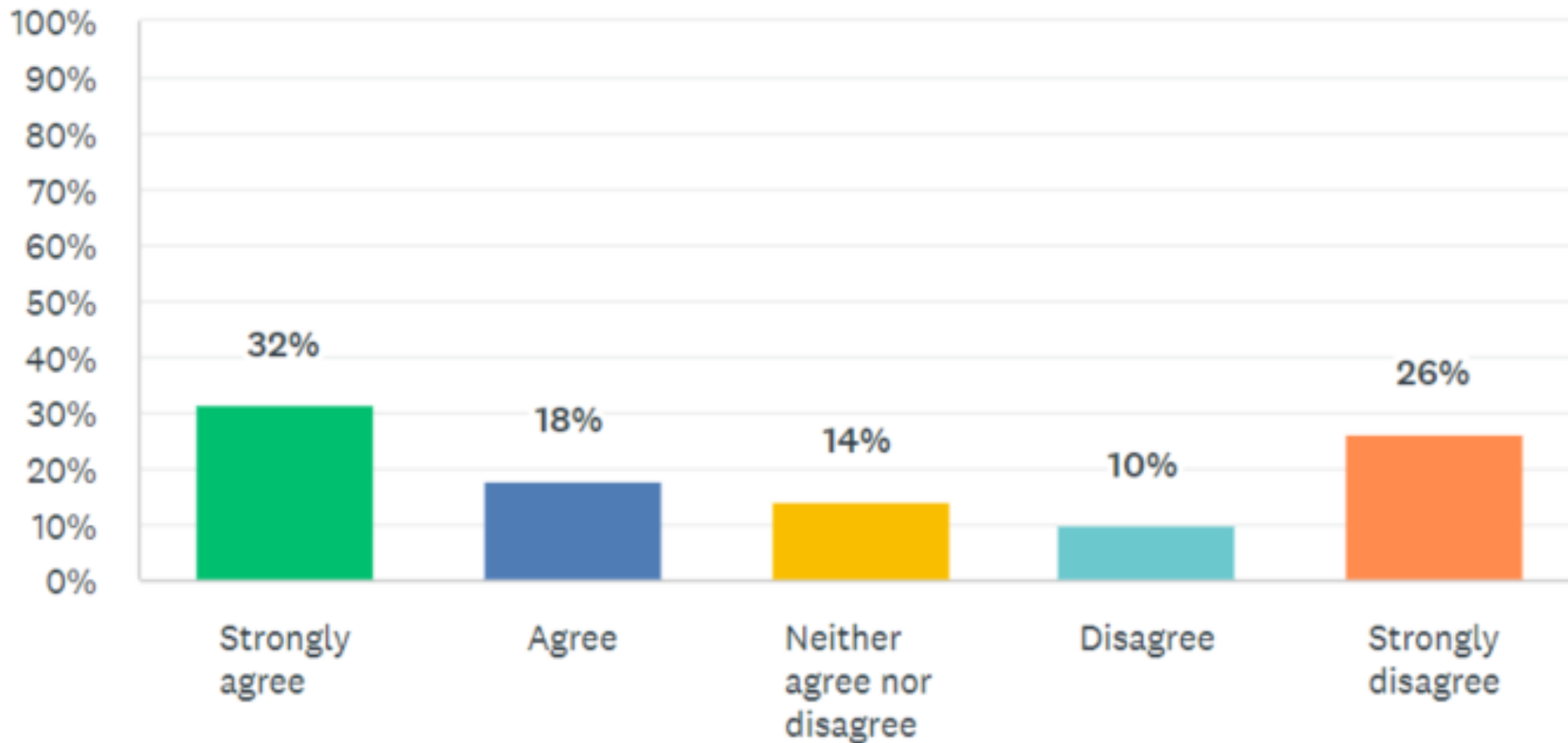
Q13: I want the city to provide funding from the city budget toward the cost of construction of a downtown theater.



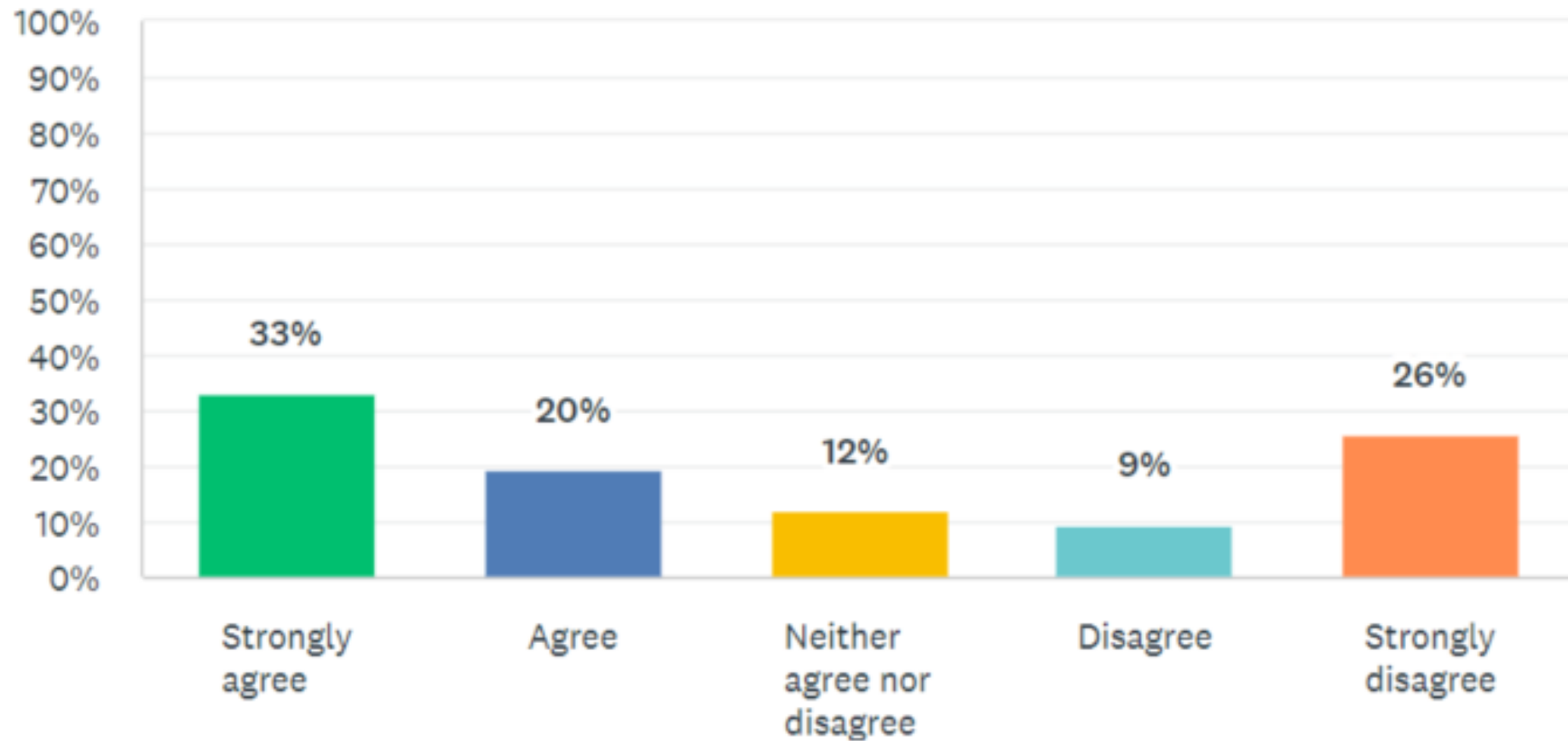
Q14: I want the city to provide funding from the city budget toward the ongoing maintenance and operating expenses of a downtown theater.



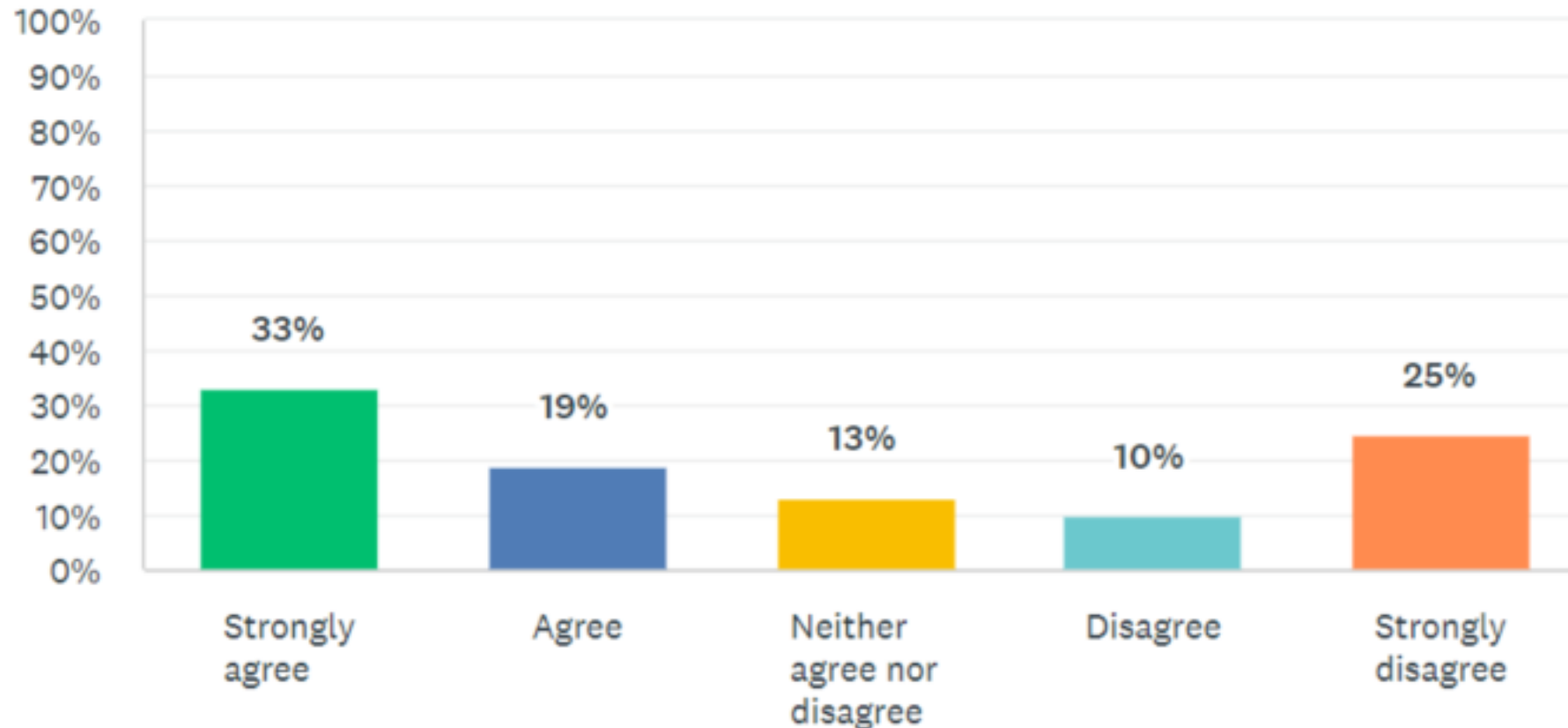
Q15: I want to vote in a citywide election on whether to use city-owned land (for example, Parking Plaza #2 behind the Main Street Post Office) for a theater.



Q16: I want to vote in a citywide election on whether the city should provide any funding from the city budget toward the cost of construction of a downtown theater.



Q17: I want to vote in a citywide election on whether to provide any funding from the city budget for the ongoing maintenance and operating expenses of a downtown theater.



[View this email in your browser](#)

CUTTINGBALLTHEATER

Dear Cutting Ball Community,

These past years have been a struggle for many and we are no different.

With the increasing costs of creating theater in San Francisco coupled with the difficulties of producing shows in a covid-sensitive world and then combined with shrinking support for the Arts overall it has been TOUGH. Through it all we have strived to prioritize artists. We always wanted our artists to have the space to create, the freedom to do so without an inordinate amount of distraction, and the safety of a livable wage.

We worked hard as I know everyone in our community has, we tried new things, and pushed ourselves. This summer though the board came to the difficult decision to wrap up our theater's operations.

On behalf of the board, I want to express our deep and profound Thank You to all of our friends, supporters, artists, collaborators, and especially the dedicated staff from over the years. This work requires an immense amount of cooperation and collaboration. We thank you all for your contributions to make our shows delight audiences for so many years.

We are finalizing our San Francisco operations right now. We will miss you all. But we treasure so many incredible memories that we all share to look back on fondly and drive us to do more, in different ways, to bring our communities together through Theater.

Finally, we want to acknowledge and thank our theater/performance home at 277 Taylor St. We love this space and we know Exit theater is seeking occupants.

With gratitude to everyone, we wish you well.

Cutting Ball Theater Board of Directors

From The Exit Theatre

EXIT Theatre's 30-year-old black box theater at 277 Taylor Street in San Francisco has been re-named the Taylor Street Theatre. EXIT Theatre will produce the 2025 SF Fringe Festival and select performances at the Taylor Street Theatre. We are seeking other indie theater companies to lease the theater throughout the year. Please contact at mail@theexit.org for more details.

Follow Us



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<https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/theater/s-f-theater-attendance-is-still-down-heres-how-bad-it-is-and-why>

S.F. theater attendance is still down. Here's how bad it is, and why

"It's not sustainable," said Rob Ready of PianoFight, where attendance and bar sales are down 65% compared to 2019.

[Lily Janiak](#) December 22, 2022 Updated: December 27, 2022, 11:13 pm

For [Rob Ready](#), one of the bleakest days at [PianoFight](#) came in September, when he'd booked Colorado jam band the Runaway Grooms.

Since reopening PianoFight's doors on a regular basis in February, he had long struggled to find enough theater, comedy and music acts to keep his three-stage Tenderloin venue open three or four nights a week, in contrast to a pre-pandemic six nights. But the Runaway Grooms were special — by Ready's estimation one of the most talented groups ever to play PianoFight, with their campfire soundscapes, comfy-blanket vocals, probing guitar solos and virtuoso fingerpicking. He also booked an opener, the Golden Plates, to sweeten the deal.

But in the end, "I don't think they sold one ticket," Ready recalled ruefully. "They were so good, and nobody came to see it."

The only people who showed up that night were staff, some audiences to another PianoFight show and the opening band.

"If I could just get somebody walking by to hear the crazy-good music that was coming out of our place, maybe they'd come in," Ready recalled thinking as the team opened the venue's front doors. "And literally nobody walked by for 90 minutes."

Throughout the country, performing arts producers are struggling to lure audiences back in pre-COVID-19 numbers. **Consulting firm TRG Arts has been surveying the attendance of more than 140 arts theaters, orchestras, performing arts centers, ballets and operas in the U.S. and Canada since the early days of the pandemic.**

Comparing July 2018 to June 2019 to the same period in 2021-22 for theater specifically, attendance was down 51% and revenue down 50%. But those figures are improving over time, TRG Client Engagement Officer Eric Nelson said. Comparing the first nine months of 2019 and 2022, TRG found that attendance at arts venues as a whole is down 26% and revenue is down 18%.

Percentage of audiences feeling "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" attending large outdoor and indoor venues

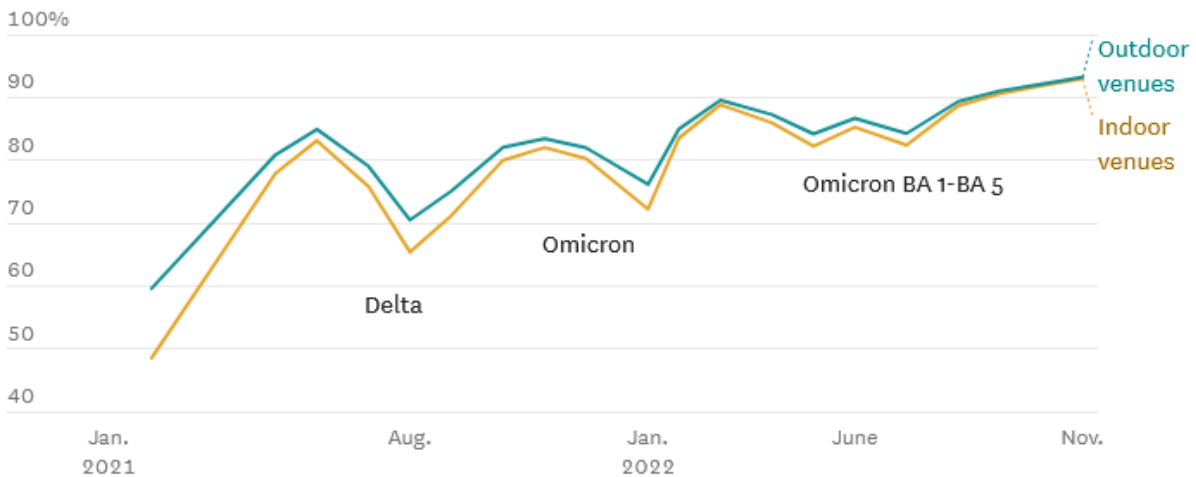


Chart: Yuri Avila / The Chronicle - Source: WolfBrown, in partnership with AMS Analytics.

"The trend is we're getting closer and closer," Nelson said, of pre-pandemic attendance levels. If numbers continue improving at the same rate, he predicts that arts attendance will fully recover in 2024.

But such a timeline might not work for Ready, who reports that PianoFight's bar and ticket sales are down 65% compared to pre-pandemic levels.

"It's not sustainable," he said.

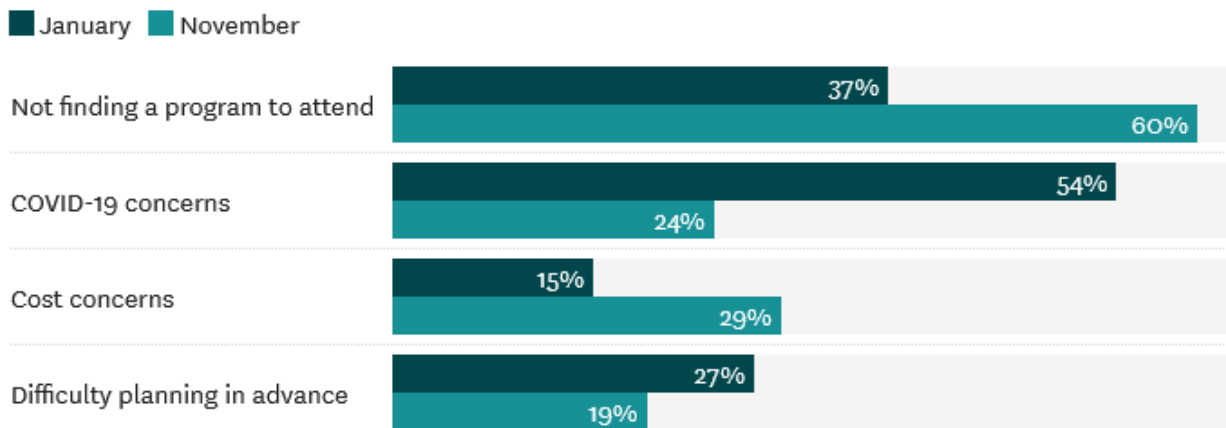
In the Bay Area, theaters report a mix of attendance numbers. American Conservatory Theater's subscriptions are down 35%, according to Executive Director Jennifer Bielstein. At TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, they are down 30%, said Executive Director [Debbie Chinn](#).

Yet some small companies report seeing stabilization or even growth. In San Francisco, Golden Thread Productions Executive Artistic Director [Sahar Assaf](#) reports that attendance has returned to pre-pandemic levels. In the East Bay, Bay Area Children's Theatre Artistic Director [Khalia Davis](#) says ticket sales have increased by 9%. Colin Mandlin, managing director of [Oakland Theater Project](#), said his company's attendance is 10% higher now than it was in 2019.

[These 2022 shows helped make the Bay Area a top U.S. destination for theater](#)

One likely reason these small companies have bucked industry-wide trends is that they each cater to an underserved niche. For instance, Assaf, of Golden Thread, which produces shows about the Middle East, said her audiences don't have many other local spaces where they can consistently find content about themselves.

Most frequent reasons why audiences haven't returned to events in 2022



Percentages don't add up to 100, because respondents selected multiple answers.

Chart: Yuri Avila / The Chronicle - Source: WolfBrown, in partnership with AMS Analytics.

In Oakland Theater Project's case, Mandlin said, "The ratio of theater companies to residents in Oakland is much lower than in Berkeley and San Francisco."

Davis pointed out that her audiences — families — were the last who could come back to theater, since children's COVID-19 vaccines were approved after adults'. She credits her organization's increased attendance partly to a summer outdoor production at [Cal Shakes'](#) Bruns Amphitheater, which helped ease families back into crowds. "They felt like, 'OK, this is fine because it's outside,' " she said.

She also acknowledged it's possible that parents see theatergoing as more of a necessity for their children but as more of a luxury for themselves.

Since May 2020, the arts research firm WolfBrown has been surveying attitudes of audiences who before the pandemic regularly attended theater, opera and other art forms about returning to venues. Among those who haven't come back as much or at all, costs are an increasing concern, especially for younger cohorts.

"COVID now is less of a concern than the economy, and much less of a concern than people not finding the programs they want to attend," [Alan Brown](#), WolfBrown's managing principal, told The Chronicle. "I don't know that the remaining people who are COVID-concerned are ever going to have this psychological epiphany that, 'OK, it's safe to go out now.' **The people who are coming back are back. The real issue is the frequency of people who have come back; it's lower than it was.**"

Audiences, he added, are more risk-averse now; they want to spend money on artists and titles they already know they'll like.

How audiences say inflation has affected their attendance of entertainment events, by age group

Data for November 2022

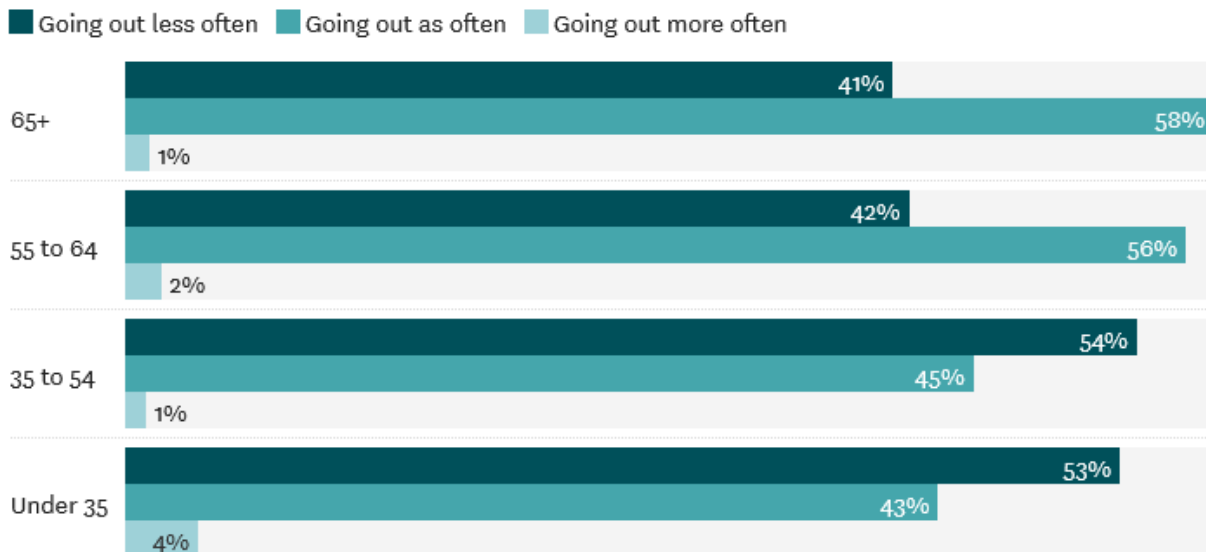


Chart: Yuri Avila / The Chronicle - Source: WolfBrown

The trend of declining subscriptions at large institutions such as ACT and TheatreWorks long predates the pandemic. [Theatre Communications Group's annual report Theatre Facts](#) shows that **from 2016 to 2020, the most recent year for which figures are available, subscription revenue at 152 theaters across the country steadily decreased as a percentage of overall expenses, from 12% to 9.1%. And in-person performance faced stiff competition before the pandemic forced theatergoers to become couch potatoes.**

Report at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/16kuqmWZ3SxiBzDYSvBgg5vub6d-1h_CR/view

How often audiences watch at-home entertainment after the pandemic, by age group

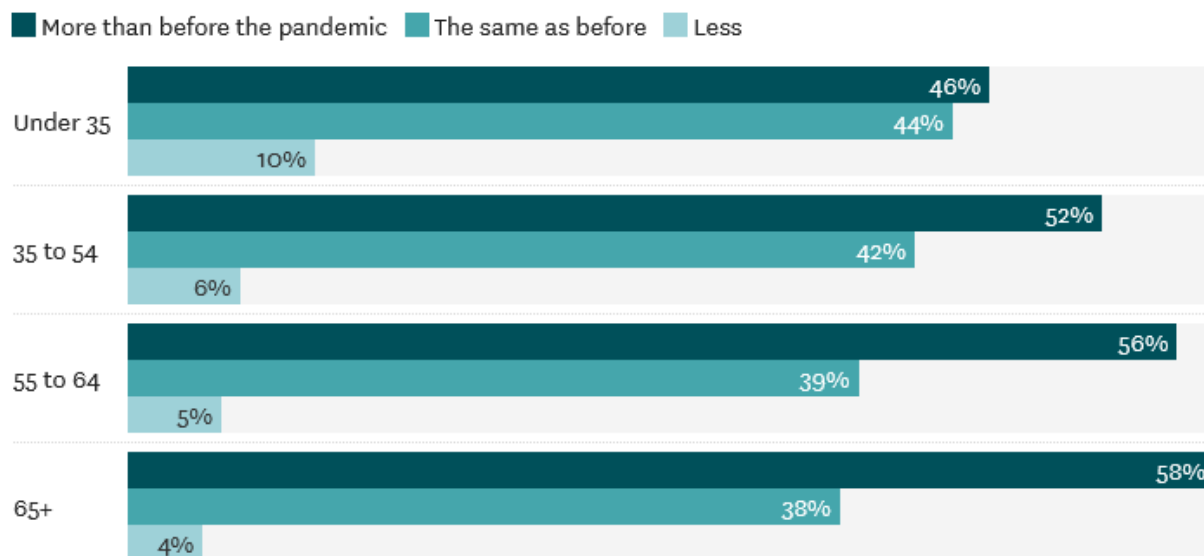


Chart: Yuri Avila / The Chronicle - Source: WolfBrown, in partnership with AMS Analytics

In 2017, the research organization [Culture Track](#) published a report showing that consumers count a range of activities under the umbrella of “culture”; food and drink are no longer just pre-entertainment sustenance but can be the entertainment itself.

Food is one of the ways PianoFight is trying to attract audiences. In early December, the company began hosting taco pop-up Mi Morena in its kitchen.

It also hopes to find government funding to support rental subsidies for small outfits hoping to use its space. In early 2023, Ready plans to start a weekly Open Wednesdays program, where musicians, improv performers and sketch comedy writers can walk in to jam or workshop material.

Brown believes the industry can make more sweeping changes to draw audiences, especially with subscriptions, which some Bay Area theaters, notably [Magic Theatre](#), have already nixed.

“Loyalty does not accrue to an organization but to the art form or to an artist or an instrument,” he said. “And we’re asking everyone to be loyal to an organization.”

He pointed out that most ticket purchases assume a “bilateral relationship” between organization and spectator, but in reality, many spectators want to consult with friends in buying tickets. “We don’t facilitate the coordination,” he said.

One other promising model is [ClassicCard](#), an app in Berlin that is marketed to audiences under 30 to help them find companions with similar arts interests. Another one is a late buyers’ club; WolfBrown’s data shows that audiences increasingly want the option to purchase seats at the last minute — which makes sense in a world of COVID symptom tracking and test taking — and not just rear-balcony seats, but good seats.

The ClassicCard idea suggests umbrella organizations and local governments could play a much larger role in incentivizing and facilitating theatergoing. Ralph Remington, director of

cultural affairs at the San Francisco Arts Commission, said, “We’re going to have to figure something out with bringing people back downtown.” In the longer term, he said, rezoning could help attract more foot traffic by encouraging more residences and grocery stores mixed in with downtown offices and commercial buildings.

Ready worries that process might take too long for PianoFight.

The venue’s location in the Tenderloin used to make it part of an arts ecosystem: Audiences to nearby venues such as the Exit Theatre, the Warfield, the Curran or Cutting Ball might pregame or postgame at PianoFight. But now [the Exit has closed](#), and many other venues are responding to reduced demand by producing fewer shows, which means fewer feeder shows for PianoFight.

Ready said he’s scraping by thanks to understaffing, including by regularly picking up bar shifts himself.

“Something that we’re wrestling with right now is: How much of your reserve money do you keep burning before you just say, ‘This is just not going to work anymore?’”

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/bayarea/heatherknight/article/4-star-theater-movie-17851717.php>

S.F. cinema lovers gambled on bringing back a neighborhood movie house. It's not going well

[Heather Knight](#) March 22, 2023 Updated: March 22, 2023 7:24 a.m.

On a recent day, the [4 Star Theater's blue marquee](#) advertised the 2005 romantic comedy-drama, "Me and You and Everyone We Know." The choice was unintentionally ironic considering how few people are frequenting the theater since its reopening three months ago.

Not me. Not you. And certainly not everyone we know.

Adam Bergeron of [CinemaSF](#), which runs the 4 Star Theater, knew committing time and money to lovingly restore the 1913 independent movie house on Clement Street in San Francisco's Outer Richmond neighborhood was a gamble in the best of times. But opening it during a pandemic that drove people to avoid cinemas in favor of watching movies on their couches was an even bigger risk.

So far, it hasn't paid off. Some screenings have been downright dismal.

"We showed 'Wonder Woman' three times last weekend to a total of six people," Bergeron said with a sigh. A recent showing of "Love and Basketball" saw one person turn up. More popular films, like a Jackie Chan festival, have seen crowds, if you can call them that, numbering in the teens.

You could look at Bergeron's predicament and shrug. Times change, and you can't force people to buy tickets to repertory theaters.

But I see it another way: We can't expect San Francisco's [quirky small businesses](#) — its movie houses, its bookstores, its galleries and bars — to survive if we don't support them. We can't lament the legions of commercial vacancies dotting our neighborhoods and not patronize the small businesses that are toughing it out. We can't revel in knowing that Green Apple Books and the 4 Star exist in our city, but spend all our cash on Amazon and Netflix.

To that end, Bergeron, who also operates the Balboa and Vogue theaters, hopes the community will rally around the 4 Star by donating to a new [GoFundMe](#) drive to help the fledgling theater survive its rocky beginning.

And I'll join The Chronicle's culture critic Peter Hartlaub and arts and culture columnist Tony Bravo to [host three screenings](#) of movies filmed in San Francisco next month, one apiece at the 4 Star, Balboa and Vogue. (With drag queens, costume contests and a bagpiper, naturally, because it doesn't get more San Francisco than that.)

The theater's woes come at a difficult time for movie theaters in general. They seem to be a big casualty of the pandemic with far fewer customers than before and Hollywood making fewer films to lure people inside. Even the iconic Castro Theater struggled to make a profit on films before the pandemic, and [its fate remains uncertain](#).

Alfonso Felder, an executive vice president for the San Francisco Giants, founded the [San Francisco Neighborhood Theater Foundation](#) to save old movie houses. The nonprofit owns the Vogue, maintains the leases on the Balboa and Opera Plaza Cinemas and was instrumental in

preserving a host of other cinemas around the city. He said theaters are facing a challenging time, but he's hopeful they'll survive.

"The public still cares," he said. "There's still a real passion for them."

Even non-movie buffs should care about the 4 Star surviving. It could be an anchor of its neighborhood that provides jobs and tax revenue for a struggling city — or it could be yet one more empty building boarded up with plywood. The outcome is up to us.

"When this goes away, it won't come back," said Kyle Griffin, a manager at the Balboa. He and other CinemaSF staff met with Bergeron at the 4 Star Monday morning to discuss the theaters' financial travails and how to fix them.

Called La Bonita when it opened 110 years ago, the 4 Star was run by Frank and Lida Lee from 1992 until they sold it to an anonymous buyer in September 2021. The new owner hired Bergeron to operate it. Bergeron said he and his wife, Jaimi Holker, who co-owns CinemaSF, sunk \$200,000 into the restoration and the building's owner spent twice that much.

"It took longer and cost way more than expected," Bergeron told me. "It's amazing how much money you can lose in a short amount of time. You know what I mean? It's incredible. It just became this free-fall."

They installed a new screen, new seats, new carpeting, new surround sound and new kitchen appliances in addition to rehabbing the bathrooms and projection booth, installing an HVAC system and restoring the ceiling and lights.

"We also fixed the neon sign, which is now broken again," Bergeron said. "Neon is a fickle mistress."

They planned to open last summer, but didn't complete the construction and inspections until early December. By the time they finally did open, the cost of popcorn had increased 50% from before the pandemic, and even the cost of the oil for popping the popcorn and the soda to wash it down had spiked.

Really, the 4 Star is far more than a place to see an old film. There's an art gallery inside that's currently showing "More is More," an exhibit featuring 259 Bay Area artists. There's bagels and espresso in the mornings and pizza on Friday nights. There's beer and wine. And there's awesome merchandise including new T-shirts with the theaters' names written in the famous Muni worm font.

Bergeron, who's always been creative in the way he runs his theaters, is **brainstorming ideas to bring people back. He's talking about renting the theater out for birthday parties, live comedy shows, music events, corporate groups' meetings with their Power Point presentations shown on the big screen and video game days in which people play their favorite games on the screen.**

Plus, he's not giving up on movies, but trying to enhance them when he can. Recent screenings of "Twilight" accompanied by live drag shows drew crowds. Tyler Butler, who moved from Bend, Ore., to manage the 4 Star, said he thinks of independent movie houses as community hubs where people can make memories.

“There’s something irreplaceable about being in a room with a group of people experiencing a movie together,” he said. “I’ll remember a movie that I watched in a packed house far better than the hundreds of movies I’ve watched in my bed or on the couch.”

Or, as Balboa manager Jody Washington put it, “Date nights still happen.”

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/bay-area-businesses-pandemic-closing-17789239.php>

Bay Area businesses are still in survival mode.

EXCERPT:

The pandemic has changed not just the ways that Bay Area residents shop and work, but also how they play.

That is evident in the planned closure of San Jose’s Tabard Theatre Company, which after mounting its final show this month will close its doors on April 2. The cause is a combination of factors, said the live theater’s Executive Artistic Director Jonathan Rhys Williams, ranging from theatergoers not fully returning, to pandemic aid programs winding down, to the persistently high cost of living in the region.

“We, as arts organizations, have survived on emergency COVID funding pretty much the last three years,” Williams said, referencing Paycheck Protection Program loans and other state and federal money. As of this year “it’s pretty much over,” he added.

And it’s not just emergency funding drying up. Community donations have slowed and with attendance only hovering around 40% of 2019 levels, the math no longer works. “We need people back in the theaters. We need butts in seats,” Williams said.

He also noted that friends and colleagues in the performing arts across the country are dealing with similar problems. “Everybody that I’m talking to is white knuckling it and going, ‘It’s going to come back, it’s going to come back, it’s going to come back,’ ” Williams said. So far, it hasn’t.

Still, he is planning to keep the space, but refocus it on music and comedy instead of full-blown theater productions, especially as COVID has made it much more difficult to put on a play with a sizable cast.

“The reality is, as soon as a single member of a cast tests positive for COVID, that person would have to isolate and can no longer be part of that cast,” Williams said. “That could mean we have to shut down a whole show for a week or 10 days,” as opposed to swapping out a single musician or rebooking a comedy act to another night.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/10/10/financially-strapped-cal-shakes-troupe-says-it-will-shut-down-for-good/>

Struggling [California Shakespeare Theater](#) announced Thursday it had hit an “insurmountable financial impasse” and would close for good.

In a brief announcement attributed to executive director Clive Worsley, the 50-year-old Orinda-based company said it had “no alternative but to suspend operations, begin layoffs, and take steps towards what will be the ultimate closure of the company.”

The news — the latest jolt in a troubled performing arts landscape — comes not quite a month after Cal Shakes staged its sole production of 2024, the Bard’s popular comedy “As You Like It,” at the Bruns Amphitheater. But the company needed [to stage an emergency \\$350,000 fund drive](#) to make that production possible, and has been teetering financially since 2020, when the pandemic shut down its entire season. Cal Shakes staged shortened seasons in 2021 and 2022, then was dark in 2023 as it geared up for its 50th anniversary season this year. [Despite the successful fund drive this year](#) — buoyed by a \$100,000 gift from Oakland native and Cal Shakes alum Zendaya and donations from some 700 people — [and a well-received production of “As You Like It,”](#) the company could not overcome its financial hardships.

Many theater troupes and other arts companies have been struggling since the pandemic, which shut down live performances across the country and exacerbated a trend toward smaller audiences, reduced subscription sales and government support, and fewer donations.

Palo Alto-based TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, which this week opened a production of the basketball-themed play “King James,” nearly closed down in late 2023 [but was rescued by a \\$3 million fund drive](#).

Other companies have not been as fortunate. Cal Shakes joins such Bay Area troupes as TheatreFIRST, Bay Area Children’s Theatre, Dragon Theater, foolsFURY, Ragged Wing Ensemble, Main Stage West, Perspective Theatre Company, Those Women Productions, Bay Area Musicals and PianoFight in succumbing to financial woes.

-

Worsley said in an interview Friday that the financial problems at Cal Shakes represented “a much bigger picture” than post-pandemic malaise, and that arts groups began experiencing a shift in the financial landscape as far back as the global economic crash of 2008-’09, which affected ticket sales, subscriptions and donations. As a result, he said, “we might be one of the canaries in the cold mine,” and that other companies could follow suit.

“When a 50-year-old venerable theater company closes, it is terribly sad for all involved,” Worsley added, noting that in addition to theater lovers, actors, artists, technicians, “even the people who take your ticket and pour your glass of wine” feel the loss. He estimated that at its peak, Cal Shakes employed some 200 or so people in a variety of jobs.

Cal Shakes’ closing was mourned on social media and other avenues on Thursday.

“Cal Shakes was an organization that brought people together in a special way,” said Marin Theatre artistic director Lance Gardner. “It felt magical to commune under the stars with good friends and strangers. ... It makes me wonder if theatre is still enough to bring people together. I worry that Marin Theatre will find itself in the non-profit graveyard if people don’t start speaking with their words and with their wallets about how important local, professional theatres are to the future of art and culture in their communities.”

Cal Shakes began in 1974 as the Emeryville Shakespeare Company, which produced free shows in Berkeley’s John Hinkel Park. The company, then known as the California Shakespeare Festival, moved to the Bruns Amphitheater in 1991. In its peak years, from the 1990s to the mid-2010s, Cal Shakes typically staged four productions during the summer and fall months, featuring a mix of Shakespeare works, as well as comedies and dramas from other classic and contemporary playwrights.

The company and its scenic amphitheater — nestled on 4½ acres of East Bay Municipal Utility District property in the Orinda hills, with a picnic area and restaurant/snack bar — were popular mainstays of the summer outdoor theater season.

Worsley, who took over leadership of Cal Shakes following the departures of artistic director Eric Ting and managing director Sarah Williams, said in his brief

announcement, "We are grateful to you for everything you have done to make Cal Shakes the venerable institution it has been for the past 50 years. More news will come in the following weeks as the process gets underway."

The company in recent years has rented out the amphitheater and its stage for occasional comedy and music shows. It was not immediately known if EBMUD is entertaining queries for other possible uses of the property and facilities.

From: [M Satterlee](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: [External Sender]Item #20
Date: Sunday, November 10, 2024 4:58:07 PM

Dear Council,

The theater is once again before you, this time with a request for \$5.3M dollars.

I was struck by the fact that the Fundraising Feasibility study sees a 60% success rate and only that with \$10M in lead donations while stating that there had been zero feedback from any of the largest donors. Where will these donors come from?

In order to respond to the request, I think the City needs to first have answers to questions raised about parking and ongoing operations and maintenance to ensure a clear understanding of all the expenses the City will bear in relation to a new theater.

1) Parking

How will parking demand for the theater be met?
Will the parking lost due the building footprint be replaced?

The fundraising proposes to build a building only so will any cost of needed parking be borne by the City?

2) Ongoing maintenance and operations

LASC has said they will fund ongoing operation and maintenance. The City helped fund a feasible study. The study opined as to the funding needs and the normal split for theaters between earned revenue and contributed revenue. The study posits that contributed revenue will need to grow from \$150k in FY19 to \$882K. The closest the study comes to addressing the source for this contributed revenue is the statement "Strong donor potential in existing nearby market with high household incomes and housing value".

A more than 4x increase in donations is needed and we are relying on the fact that we live in a wealthy area?

The executive summary, which is the only thing I had access to, provides no analysis of the breakdown of how those contributed funds would be achieved. It provides no analysis of how nearby theaters are funded. Lucile Stern has government funding. Mountain View Performing Arts has government funding. The study fails to answer the question as to why a Los Altos Theater would be unique in its ability to not need any government subsidy.

I believe the above needs to be addressed before any investment should be made. The City may need those funds to address parking and ongoing operations.

If those issues are answered to the Council's satisfaction and made clear to the public, then the questions become:

1) Does Los Altos have \$5M?

A review of the Park in Lieu fund suggests the answer is yes, but the City recently went out for RFP on a new downtown park. There does not seem to be funds for that park and this investment based on current balance, existing CIPs and revenue projections.

CIP		24-25	25-26	26-27
CD-01030	Downtown Park	500,000		
	Pathways	200,000	250,000	250,000
CF-01028	Picnic Areas	70,000		
CF-01030	Drainage and Drinking Fountains	163,000		

CF-01032	Dog Park	1,000,000		
CF-01-34	Grant Park Facility	578,000		
CF-01038	Shoup Playground	242,000	828,000	
CF-01039	Marymeade Playground		110,000	440,000
CF-01041	Hillview Fitness	145,000		
CF-01042	Garden House	285,000		
CF-01043	San Antonio Club - On Hold			
CF-01049	Caretaker House Demo	60,000	402,000	
		3,243,000	1,590,000	690,000
	Starting balance 6/30/24	7,600,219		
	Budgeted Revenue	3,585,000	1,188,000	690,000
	Available Funds	11,185,219	9,130,219	8,230,219
	Net	7,942,219	7,540,219	7,540,219

2) Is this the highest and best use for those funds?

I would have expected that question to go first before the Parks and Rec commission. My priorities for Park in Lieu Funds would be:

1) Maintenance of existing parks, eg the Grant Park pathway replaced to eliminate the severe trip hazards, the Grant Park basketball court refurbished, etc

2) Buying land for a North Los Altos Park. Los Altos has less parkland per resident than most adjacent cities and that deficit is growing as our population grows.

3) Upgrading of existing park facilities. With the dog park being installed at Hillview, it would be a great time to replace the Hillview soccer field with artificial turf to allow year round play. There is a huge demand for soccer fields, especially in the winter when grass fields are unusable.

Spending 66% of existing Park in Lieu funds for a downtown theater I do not believe is the highest and best use.

If the Council feels it needs to show continued interest in the downtown theater with funding, I would propose the investment be capped at \$2M. Any fund committed should remain in the City's possession until a building is actually approved, with interest accruing to the City. Those funds should not be used for fundraising, staff or building design, but only for actual construction.

Sincerely,

Megan Satterlee

From: [Pat Marriott](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #20 NOVEMBER 12, 2024
Date: Sunday, November 10, 2024 8:04:01 PM
Attachments: [PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #20 NOVEMBER 12, 2024.pdf](#)

Please see attached.

PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #20 NOVEMBER 12, 2024

Council Members:

When you consider the LASC request for \$5.3M funding, please think of yourselves as VCs evaluating their pitch.

ECONOMICS

The last economic analysis was done in March 2017 as part of the Downtown Visioning. That was before COVID, restaurant parklets, new housing construction, state housing laws raising height limits and reducing parking requirements, and the Housing Element Update. It's outdated. Conditions have changed dramatically.

Is a theater (with adjoining park) still the best land use option to increase economic vitality? Without a current economic analysis, how will we know?

FINANCIALS

LASC consultant: "The theater has a 60% chance of success with large gifts at the beginning and a 25% chance without."

- Those are terrible odds. Why even consider this proposal?
- GOBanking ranks Los Altos as the No. 1 city where the rich are getting richer. After three years, LASC was unable to raise even \$5M from a "prospective donor list with over 200 names." Their presentation says, "Most funders were in mid-range level of interest in donating." In other words, they didn't open their wallets.

"Council said we have the intellectual and financial resources that we can have it all." LASC Board Chair Vicki Reeder, October 18, 2024

- Then-Mayor Jean Mordo made a similar statement when Council approved a \$40M budget for the Community Center instead of the \$25M residents said they would support. A \$10M loan was required to complete the deal.

In May 2023, LASC estimated construction cost was \$23M. Now it says \$25M would be enough for construction, even in three or four years, which is the estimated time of groundbreaking.

- That ignores cost creep. Palo Alto High Center for the Performing Arts was completed in 2016 at a cost of \$29M for 25,100 sf = \$1,155/sf.

LASC admits theater won't be self-sustaining.

- "Operating budget for the building would normalize at around \$1.7 million in operating costs year 5 with revenue evenly split between earned sources, such as ticket sales, rents, tuitions and concessions and contributed support." The city would be on the hook to support the theater in perpetuity.
- LASC is unable to assess staff time required during fund-raising, construction or ongoing operations.

MARKET CONDITIONS

Bay Area live theaters that have closed their doors:

- CalShakes, Berkeley (50 years)
- Exit Theater, SF (40 years)
- San Jose Rep (34 years)
- TheaterFirst, Berkeley (30 years)
- Cutting Ball Theater, SF (25 years)
- Dragon Theater, Redwood City (24 years)
- Bay Area Children's Theater, Berkeley (19 years)
- PianoFight, SF (16 years)

"I think it's a problem across the industry with so many other things competing for people's attention. It used to be just film and TV. Now there is so much digital and online entertainment for people to choose from without having to leave the house and go somewhere." San Jose Rep Board Vice President Paul Resch.

TRACK RECORD

LASC has a track record of overpromising and underdelivering.

- January 30, 2021: Then-Mayor Fligor convinced a reluctant Council to "Support the creation of a Citizen's Group to explore possibility of developing a Los Altos Theater. The citizen's group would fund and support this process."
- November 40, 2021: MOU set aside a parking plaza for three years to "allow LASC sufficient time to raise funding for a downtown theater" and "not require the City to contribute any financial or staff resources."
- November 12, 2024: After three years, LASC Board President Vicki Reeder claims "widespread support," but has not been able to raise even \$5M seed money.

CITY PRIORITIES

"Can't really compare needs of police station. Different pot of funds that could be used." LASC Board Chair Vicki Reeder, October 18, 2024

- All pots and all funds belong to all residents.
- How much underground parking (at a cost of ~\$80,000/stall) can legally be paid for out of the park-in-lieu fund?
- Is it legal to use park-in-lieu funds for a building where people must pay to attend performances? How is that considered a recreation facility?
- Does staff time split into different pots?
- If Council spends unwisely from any pot, residents are unlikely to trust Council on big expenditures like a public safety building. Remember the defeat of Measure A in 2015.

“The truism is that great communities are looked at so by the type of cultural and civic institutions that it cultivates. The police is [sic] incredibly important but history doesn't look back on societies and measure them by the greatness of their police station. It measures them by the greatness of their civic and cultural institutions.” LASC Board Chair Vicki Reeder, October 18, 2024

- Is San Francisco a “great community”? It has theater, dance, museums, symphony (struggling for money) plus crime, homelessness, traffic problems and a drug crisis.
- Are Los Altos concerned about how history will judge their cultural institutions if their home has been robbed or they’ve been in a traffic accident or their roads need paving or they can’t find parking or e-bikes are knocking them over on downtown sidewalks – or if they’re ashamed that their police officers work in a 56-year old building that floods?

“We will place youth at the center of the building's programming and operations. With more space and a new complex, we will be able to provide expanded and improved educational programs benefiting local youth and aspiring young Artists.” LASC Executive Artistic Director Gary Landis, October 18, 2024

- Is LASC proposing a performing arts center or a youth theater? Are they putting “youth at the center” to increase the odds of getting funding?
- How many Los Altos youths are involved in theater as compared to STEM projects, clubs, sports, and other activities? We just built a community center with plenty of space for all kinds of youth programs.
- Park-in-lieu funds should be used to benefit all pursuits for residents of all ages.

As council members, you all claim to be fiscally responsible. Would you put your own money into this project?

If not, then JUST SAY NO when LASC asks for city money – from any pot – that should rightfully benefit all residents. Do you agree, Mayor Weinberg?

“You have a right to know that your elected representatives are setting priorities and making decisions through a fair process that is data-driven, tempered by empathy, respects the law, and takes into account the needs and desires of our entire community.”

~ Jonathan Weinberg in his 2024 campaign mailer

Respectfully,

Pat Marriott

From: baeric@earthlink.net
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: [External Sender]11/12 council meeting agenda item 20
Date: Monday, November 11, 2024 12:05:14 PM

I support Bus Barn's endeavor to build a new facility to meet their needs. I question the decision to site a building in downtown when the existing Bus Barn site could be used. A large enough footprint could be provided by eliminating the dozen or so parking spots that run parallel to the building. There is plenty of parking in the Community Center for performances. Attendees would have only a short walk to downtown for pre- and post-performance libations.

I do not support the changes being proposed to the original MOU. The city should NOT fund a person to raise money for this effort and should not contribute funds for the facilities construction, particularly at this point in time. As others have indicated, this is a fundraising effort that has been going for 3 years and has a low probability of success given results to date. Nor should the city pay for the parking that will be lost due to construction of the new building in one of the parking plazas. The requested changes by the group run counter to the MOU agreement and are to the detriment of the City and the community.

There is a reason that movie theaters and performing arts theaters are struggling locally; there simply isn't sufficient demand to cover the costs of these venues. The city dodged the bullet once when a downtown movie theater was proposed by many of the same advocates for this project. The City Council nixed that proposal; constructing it would have been a financial disaster. If the group who is most enthusiastic about a performing arts theater cannot raise money from its core group of supporters, isn't that telling? And turning over a white elephant to the city, to cover the cost of maintenance and operations which can only be met if there are sufficient donations, will only put further strains on the city's limited resources.

The city has a responsibility to use the park in lieu money for improving and adding to existing parks. It also needs to spend those funds in the districts where the money has been generated. Our new district maps can provide a guide for such allocation. Additionally, the City already has failed to meet its legal obligation to use PIL money for repairing and renovating existing park facilities, including Grant Park multiuse building, Halsey House, Garden House, etc. By spending park in lieu funds in inappropriate places, the City Council leaves our community open to lawsuits. It is ironic given that several on council campaigned that they would ensure the city was not subject to further lawsuits.

The supporters of the downtown theater need to do this on their own. They have already been given money by the City when they originally told Council and the community they could and would do this by themselves. Either they need to find a way to move forward or look at a different plan for achieving their goal. The city council has a responsibility to the greater community to simply say no to the group's request for money and resources.

From: [Taylor Soleno](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: FW: Agenda Item #20
Date: Monday, November 11, 2024 12:20:04 PM

Respectfully,

From: Jeannie Bruins <jbruins4511@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 11, 2024 11:04 AM
To: Public Comment <publiccomment@losaltosca.gov>
Subject: Agenda Item #20

Honorable Council Members,

While I appreciate Council's enthusiasm regarding the possibility of a theatre in downtown and the hope that it might bring a sense of vibrancy, ***I feel there is more work to be done before committing millions of dollars.***

This is a decision that should not be taken lightly. Nor is it a decision that should be taken piecemeal.

Facility Planning and Development

Capital = Construction

- Theatre Building -- is a private endeavor therefore it is imperative that there is a high degree of confidence in LASC's ability to raise the funds. The fundraising planning and a feasibility study conducted by BuildingBlox clearly indicates there is NOT a high degree of confidence. A contribution from the City may, at first blush, not seem unreasonable, however that part of the decision needs to be taken in light of the other City priorities/desires competing for the dollars. LASC and Council should take BuildingBlox recommendation to heart: **"Therefore, we strongly recommend that the initial focus of your campaign be on securing those lead gifts from individuals, foundations, local businesses, corporations, or government sources."**
- Parking – is a public endeavor (for this potential project as well as for the potential Downtown Park project). The time to understand and really get a handle on the cost of (at minimum) replacement parking is before committing dollars to the theatre. Key

questions: # of stalls, cost/stall, and source of revenue. The cost of replacing parking plus any dollars contributed to the capital campaign should be the price tag Council considers as it weighs in on Tuesday's request.

Before committing City dollars (whether it be \$5M or \$2.5M), it is critical to look beyond the capital investments the City and LASC are contemplating and into the Business and Operations Feasibility. This is not only prudent, it should be considered essential in light of the findings from the capital feasibility study presented.

Business and Operations Planning

Operation = Long-term viability

- Theatre – It is in the City's and the LASC's best interest for the Theatre to be a self-funding operation. LASC's on-going success should not hinge upon a sizable on-going subsidy from the City. It is incumbent on all parties to examine this component of the overall plan and not move forward with blinders on. A key question here is, how must LASC be positioned to achieve long-term sustainability? That, after all, is the goal, right? Business and operations feasibility needs to be understood. Sources of revenue for the productions and overhead, understanding of ongoing costs, need for on-going subsidies & the form of such subsidies, need for uses beyond LASC current scope, benchmarks of neighboring communities, etc. What are the creative ideas, partnerships, etc. that help to make this a gem in our community for years to come?
- City – Is the City willing to provide ongoing subsidies? If so, what might that look like? How would it be rationalized vs. other entities request the same. Should the on-going success of the theatre be reliant on a City subsidy, it is only fair to let LASC know the risks since this Council cannot encumber future Councils. Let's be fair to LASC (and the public) and at least size up the subsidy that could be sustained should the success hinge upon it.

As was clearly stated when City Council adopted the Downtown Vision, it is aspirational not a foregone conclusion. Every element of the vision needs to be assessed individually and in context of the greater whole. The theatre is the first opportunity to ensure we do our diligence and ensure mutual success: a theatre, that based on evidenced feasibility and a clear understanding of critical success factors, can achieve long-term sustainability.

Bottom line: I am not advocating to kill the project, I am asking for Council to broaden their lens beyond just the capital need to build a facility and gain a better understanding of the Business and Operations requirements to achieve sustainable success!

Sincerely,
Jeannie

From: [KZ](#)
To: [City Council](#); [Gabriel Engeland](#); [Melissa Thurman](#); [Nick Zornes](#); [Stephanie Williams](#); [Jon Maginot](#); [Public Comment](#)
Cc: housing@lwvlamv.org
Subject: Study Session re Downtown Parking--November 12, 2024
Date: Monday, November 11, 2024 12:41:19 PM
Attachments: [LACC 11 12 24 Downtown Parking Study Session.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor Weinberg and Members of the City Council:

Attached is a letter regarding the study session discussing the draft downtown parking strategy set for November 12, 2024.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.
Sincerely,

Katie Zoglin
President, Los Altos-Mountain View Area
League of Women Voters



November 11, 2024

Re: November 12, 2024, Study Session re Draft Downtown Parking Strategy

Dear Mayor Weinberg and Members of the City Council:

The League of Women Voters (LWV) supports policies that encourage the development of housing, particularly affordable housing.

We commend the City for including Program 1.H in the Housing Element Update to facilitate the development of affordable housing on Plaza 7 or 8. As the memo by Strategic Economics points out, it is challenging for affordable housing projects to be feasible in downtown Los Altos, particularly when considering the cost of replacement public parking. At the same time, we appreciate that parking needs in downtown need to be met.

We suggest the Council explore alternatives so that it is more feasible to build affordable housing on Plaza 7 or 8 and other housing in downtown. For example, the consultants could be asked to delve further into how many parking spaces might be gained by shared parking agreements, as there are a substantial number of spaces in private off-street lots. Perhaps an above-ground parking structure could be considered, as it is a cheaper alternative than underground parking. If the future need for parking is anticipated to be high, the City may need to consider providing funding for a structure that would accommodate future needs.

Please send any questions about this email to Sue Russell, Co-Chair of the Housing Committee, at housing@lwvlamv.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katie Zoglin".

Katie Zoglin, President
Los Altos-Mountain View Area LWV

C: Gabe Engeland
Jon Maginot
Melissa Thurman
Stephanie Williams
Nick Zornes
PublicComment@losaltosca.gov

From: [Eric Muller](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public comment - November 12, 2024 City Council Study Session
Date: Monday, November 11, 2024 4:22:43 PM

Dear City Council,

It is disconcerting that the Downtown Los Altos Parking Strategy report does not include any consideration of climate change.

Outside the transcript of written comments, the words "climate", "warming", "fossil", "carbon", "green house", "adaptation", "resilience", "flood" do not appear at all.

There is also no reference to the Los Altos Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). Yet the CAAP recommends to address climate change in City projects:

- Strategy 4 Integrate Climate Action and Adaptation into City Functions
- Action 4.6A Account for climate change in all new City projects
- Action 4.6B Incorporate climate preparedness into City programs, operations and maintenance protocols
- Action 4.6C Integrate CAAP goals into City projects as an order of business

Nor any indication that the goals and recommended actions of the CAAP have been taken into account, in particular:

- Strategy 1 : Reduce city-wide VMT by 25% by 2035
- Action 1.1C: Develop and implement a new Parking Management Plan that supports strategic VMT reduction
- Action 1.3A: Develop an electric shuttle program as an alternative to SOV travel

would presumably reduce the need for parking, and affect the parking strategy.

The report suggests that community members find parking "easy" or "somewhat easy", and the actual parking patterns collected indicate that there is indeed no problem today. I am almost tempted to conclude that it is urgent to do nothing. More precisely:

At least in first approximation, Short-Term Actions 1, 2, 4, and Mid-Term Actions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 sound like busy work.

Mid-Term Action 5 (safety improvements) becomes actionable only when underground or structured parking is contemplated.

I hope the city of aware that "maintaining and upgrading parking facilities" (Mid-Term Action 8) is a good idea.

Short-Term Actions 3 (parklet pricing) and 6 (bicycle parking improvement), and Mid-Term Action 7 (Require accessible on-street parking) are worthy of consideration.

Short-Term Action 5 (introduce in lieu fee) warrants a lot more discussion from the community. One could argue that an in-lieu fee is essentially a long term allocation of public parking spaces to private developments, and that this allocation is difficult to undo (as it is difficult to add parking spaces to existing developments).

Sincerely,

Eric Muller
Los Altos resident

From: [Monica Waldman](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public Comment Agenda Item 20 - Discuss Theater Capital Campaign Analysis Update and Request for Funding from Cit
Date: Monday, November 11, 2024 5:05:40 PM

Dear Council Members,

As a previous member of the Los Altos Public Arts Commission I enjoy many forms of art, including live theater. In my 25 years as a Los Altos resident I have attended multiple performances at the Bus Barn Theater and greatly enjoyed all of them. At all of those performances, I was surprised by the sparse attendance.

On October 10, 2024, I received emails announcing the closure of California Shakespeare Theater and Cutting Ball Theater. This year, I have received multiple emails from theater groups, pleading with patrons to help save them. Despite a strong stock market, live theater in the Bay Area is struggling due to a lack of good sponsorship and backing from wealthy patrons.

Three years ago, when entering an MOU agreement with the City of Los Altos, the Los Altos Stage Company (LASC) claimed they could raise the necessary funds through donations to build a new theater. However, after three years, it seems they have not been able to raise the estimated \$24 million (with an additional \$1 million in escalation costs) and are now asking the City to commit over \$5 million to this project

Any Council "yes" vote promising any funds from any source for the Theater is sheer insanity. Page 12 of Tuesday's packet mentions Council Priority Areas as:

- o "Business Communities
- o Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- o Environmental Sustainability
- o Housing
- o Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- o General Government"

A vanity project masquerading as a theater does not fit into any of these categories. LASC might argue that the outdated 2018 "Downtown Visioning" plan justifies this project, but that plan was created before COVID. Downtown restaurants are thriving without a theater, and the \$5 million in question belongs to the people of Los Altos for other projects.

Monica Waldman

From: [Carol Hill](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Item # 20
Date: Monday, November 11, 2024 6:09:43 PM

November 11, 2024

Re: Item Number 20

Dear Council Members,

I am writing this email as a tax paying resident, not as PARC commissioner.

Please reject the request for tax payer funds from the Los Altos Stage Company (LASC) to further their quest to find more funding for the proposed theater. A clear message is being sent, via two surveys, that residents do not have the desire for a downtown theater. This is shown in the following ways:

- Thus far, no one - not even those pushing for the theater - are stepping up to provide the needed funds.
- There have been two surveys regarding the proposed downtown theater and neither showed a majority of support. The City's Downtown Vision Survey results showed that 'Live Theatre' ranked only 10th highest out of 16 choices to entice people to go downtown more often. Additionally, a survey by LAR (Los Altos Residents) showed the majority of respondents were opposed to supporting a theater with tax payer funds.
- Additionally, according to the LASC's own consultant, if the money is not available up front, it isn't going to be there later and the theater is likely going to fail. Note: I am paraphrasing the consultant's statement.

The ongoing trend is that many live theaters are closing and many more (ACT and Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts) are begging for money in order to stay afloat. It has even been reported that the current Bus Barn Theater cannot fill the current 80 seats. If this is accurate, how will they fill almost 200 seats? The National Endowment for the Arts, published data that shows that live theatre attendance has been declining for more than 20 years. That decline accelerated during the COVID period and has not recovered (see Figure 1, <https://url.avanan.click/v2/r01/> ... <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/NASERC-Theater-Resilience-during-COVID-082024.pdf>). The idea of renting the space to other entities to make ends meet was presented to me by a staunch supporter of the proposed theater. It has been tried by many local movie theaters and failed as a way to generate significant income.

Please, do not mistake my lack of support for tax payer funding as being anti-theater. I am a huge fan of live theater and often support local theaters. I oppose providing tax payer funding simply because it is a fool hardy way to spend tax payer dollars. It is bound to be an albatross around the neck of Los Altos tax payers.

Some alternatives to the proposed theater idea:

- Spend our tax dollars on far more important things, such as the police department.
- Encourage LASC to form a collaborative alliance with a struggling theater space. Such an alliance could help keep live theater going in this area.
- Additionally, LASC could rent the Eagle Theater for any blockbuster shows they produce.

What of the need to generate more dollars in downtown?

In order to bring more foot traffic into downtown, create a collaborative relationship between the theater and restaurants in Los Altos. This can be accomplished by encouraging people to dine before attending the theater, via specials and early dinners on theater performance nights. This is a common practice in Cities all over, including those in the Bay Area.

Finally, the use of Park In-Lieu fees should not be considered as an option for a park on top of a parking lot that is proposed only because without it park in-Lieu fees cannot be spent for a parking lot that is needed for the theater. Real parks are needed elsewhere in our City, such as on El Camino Real corridor. There are parks all around downtown, including the Community Center space, with playgrounds, ball fields and more. This is not an area in need of a park, at least not when there are none for the incoming El Camino Real residents.

I hope Council will consider the above facts and ideas and deny the request for funds for the proposed theater. Let's get creative and find solutions that provide the live theater that is already supported in Los Altos, while supporting the wishes of the residents to not spend tax payer dollars on a new theater.

Kind regards,

Teresa Morris

From: [Los Altos Affordable Housing Alliance](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public Comment 11/12 - Study Session on Draft Downtown Parking Strategy
Date: Monday, November 11, 2024 10:05:31 PM
Attachments: [LAAHA Letter to CC 11.12.24.pdf](#)

Hello Mayor Weinberg and Councilmembers,

Please find our public comment attached.

Thank you,
LAAHA Steering Committee

--

Los Altos Affordable Housing Alliance

To educate and inspire the Los Altos community to build housing that is affordable for our workforce.



November 12, 2024

Dear Mayor Weinberg and Councilmembers,

If the City is aiming to fulfill Housing Element Program 1.H: Facilitate housing on City-owned sites, there will need to be concessions or compromises regarding replacement parking and land dedication.

The recent feasibility study conducted by Strategic Economics makes clear that potential developers of market-rate housing projects on downtown parking plazas have “very limited ability” to replace the parking that currently exists there. An affordable housing developer would not be able to afford replacement parking, but also “may be reluctant to pursue [any] affordable housing projects Downtown” because they cannot afford the parking required for the residents themselves. Due to high land costs, affordable housing developers would also need the land to be dedicated to them in order to build a project.

One area of particular interest in the report is the idea of shared parking agreements with private, off-street lot owners. According to the consultant, there are a significant number of parking spaces in private off-street lots that could be available during weekdays before 5pm. This presents an opportunity the city should pursue.

Given that the downtown parking occupancy is estimated at 60%, it is clear that there is *currently* plenty of parking for our existing uses. Looking ahead to the future, since the City is considering housing on parking plazas, new parks, as well as a theater, **we encourage the exploration of an above ground parking structure on one of the parking plazas.** Although we currently have sufficient parking, that may not be the case later on given new development. A parking structure would alleviate the parking anxiety that arises when discussing any new downtown project. By anticipating future growth and perhaps building more parking than what is needed now with a structure, we can turn our conversation towards how we want our downtown to function and what amenities we most like and want. In this way, resolving to build a structure will untether our minds from a discussion about parking, allowing us to unlock our creativity around other ideas for our downtown, including placemaking, quality of life, and civic engagement.

Respectfully,
Los Altos Affordable Housing Alliance

From: [Maria Bautista](#)
To: [Public Comment](#); [City Council](#)
Subject: Study Session 11.12.24 Item #1: Draft Downtown Parking Strategy
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 11:02:33 AM

Dear Councilmembers:

With respect tonight's downtown parking strategy report, please provide justification and clarification to the public for the Aug 27, 2024 deeming of Parking Plazas 7 and 8 "surplus land."

According to guidelines provided by the Housing and Community Development (HCD) together with tonight's presentation, the Downtown Parking Plazas cannot be defined as "surplus land."

Please ask staff to walk the public through the HCD report and their written justification for classifying what appears to be very necessary lands that provide a great public benefit.

Thank you,

Maria Bautista

From: [Marlene Zimmerman](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: [External Sender]Comment for Los Altos City Council Meeting Nov 12, 2024
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 1:12:52 PM

With respect to any requests by The Los Altos Stage Company for Los Altos government donations or funds to be put toward the design and/or construction of a new downtown performing arts theater:

I am strongly opposed to any government funding to the design, construction, or donation to a capital fundraising campaign for The Los Altos Stage Company. The city does not need a fine arts theater when similar options are located in neighboring communities. A far greater need for city funding is the construction of a new police department. Meeting the needs of our first responders should be the city's highest priority at this time. Please put our first responders first! If there are people of Los Altos who really desire a theater, then let them fund it through private donations.

From: baerjc@earthlink.net
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: study session 11/12 comments-updated
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 2:40:31 PM

It is unfortunate that the study, while completed end of July, was not shared with the community and City Council earlier than in November. Given the requirement to complete it by year end, it put an undue (and unnecessary burden) on everyone to read, react and revise this very important document. It is an issue given its importance and the limited time to address issues and concerns raised during a thoughtful review of the document. It is also unfortunate that there appear to be no conversations with many of the people who were involved in the prior parking studies, which might have mitigated some of the below .

This document should provide accurate information on both supply and demand so that good long term policy can be formulated and implemented. Unfortunately, the work done by the consultant is inadequate to meet that need. The result is we have a report which provides short term solutions that have long term consequences.

While the report suggests more development can be added downtown without additional parking- and meeting that need thru private parking lots, it provides no analysis of demand. We already have numerous permitted projects that will likely add to the parking burden that have not been factored in. We have rezoned numerous areas of our downtown for BMR housing, which by the consultant's own analysis, is unlikely to build much, if any, parking without major subsidy. We have rezoned the east side of San Antonio Road and those buildings have few if any good places to park overflow demand.

There are huge holes in the work, including a failure to understand why employees are parking in non- white dot areas, how on street versus parking plazas are being used and how much parking is actually being used by downtown residents. How many cars do studios, one bedroom and two bedroom residents own in the downtown? How many cars do they park onsite, where are those other cars parked. When do they need to park those cars during the week and on weekends? We have no idea. That data is essential to formulating parking policy and addressing the actual parking requirements.

If as a community we expect to see our downtown with more restaurants and housing, the need for adequate parking is critical, in the short, medium and long term. Do we even know when peak demand will happen in the future?. Resident parking and restaurants will both need and compete for parking in the evenings and on weekends. While that may fit with private lot availability, it isn't clear if we will have enough parking to meet peak demand, during the day or at night.

The report recommends giving property owners development incentives if they provide more parking onsite, but that is unlikely to reduce the parking deficit and may actually increase it because of the new units added to a project.

The consultants recommend costly, capital-intensive solutions such as meters to solve an employee parking issue which may be addressed through simpler means. It is far cheaper to just give employees parking permits for free, but institute high fines for those who don't park in the correct area, rather than put in expensive meters and the bureaucracy to run that operation. It assumes that private parking, (which is transient at best as it will go away as the property owners' needs and plans change over time) can provide an effective medium- and long-term solution. What happens when the building owners decides to terminate the agreement? The report is clear that adjacency of parking is important for residential and proximity important for commercial units. There simply may not be any when an existing contract is cancelled. Then what happens?

The report clearly states that developers can afford to pay market (or slightly below market rates) for onsite parking, yet the parking in lieu fee is 1/2 to 2/3 less than the actual cost. Why are we subsidizing these developers when there is no need? On the other hand, the report makes clear that BMR housing cannot afford to pay for parking when the building is in downtown. It raises the question as to how realistic it is to construct much, if any BMR housing (particularly all BMR housing) in downtown unless the city is willing and able to fully subsidize that need. Can we really afford to spend \$20-30M to provide this parking. Or will we simply insist that those living in BMR housing don't need to own one (or two) car(s)? Hard to tell since we don't know what the actual parking

requirements are for BMR units.

There are a range of other issues with the report as drafted. A more complete summary is included in the attached appendix.

Appendix

A. **Factual issues**

1. Large community survey-155 participated in the online survey, more than the other studies and those residents were largely (60%) against meters compare to other, much smaller sample sizes which favored meters. Yet the final recommendation still was for the use of meters to address what appears to be an employee parking issue.
2. Failed to note that Edith and 3rd street parking both have 2 spots each
3. Failed to note that on street parking greatest where no time limits-along Whitney and Lyell
4. Map on page 24 is wrong re parking West Edith, 3rd between Whitney and Main, Lyell near 1st and State Street between 1st and 2nd.

B. **Methodology issues**

1. Outreach meetings-not well publicized, never talked with residents directly surround downtown- View, Lyell, Pepper, Hawthorne, Edith and Oak, etc.
2. Problem of more than 3 hour parking is likely almost exclusively employee parking-why else would anyone, except perhaps someone getting a perm, need to spend more than 3 hours in the downtown???
3. Needed to do anonymous survey of employees to understand why not get parking permit and/or not parking in white zone areas
4. No analysis of why people park on street versus plazas to understand issues, including the usefulness of 20 minute limited parking etc.

5. If future of downtown is housing and restaurants, then need parking for the peak-also need to look at demand 5-10 pm throughout the week. This is because the downtown will need to attract more than just local residents to support the restaurants and out of towners will not take alternate transportation.
6. Study timing done when new condos under development-which likely accounted for low parking usage on First street and Lyell at First
7. Not realistic about parking demand by housing type. Reality is most downtown housing units need minimum of two spots not 1, even for bmr-should be tested against actual conditions in downtown as part of study
8. Failed to look at what current parking demand is by those who live in the downtown core
9. Did not address future need based on new housing already permitted as well as likely sites to be converted to housing
10. Did not address likely changes in supply and demand for parking from construction of downtown theater or the downtown park
11. Did not look at zoning change approved by City Council on the east side San Antonio Road that will have to be met by downtown parking-there simply will not be enough provided parking and there aren't enough other places for overflow park without seriously endangering pedestrians and bicyclists.

C. **Approach to solution issues**

1. Solutions proposed have high reliance on tech-parking meters, flashing signs etc. This approach is expensive to install, costly to maintain. We are a small town with limited number of parking spots.
2. The plan takes the approach of building a significant bureaucracy and infrastructure. As an example, for private lot owners who agree to provide parking-credit flat fee, perhaps based on business license tax, which is based on employees and presumably proportional to parking spaces available instead of trying to measure usage. There is a reliance on parking meters to solve what appears to be an employee parking issue on streets and to an extent in the parking plazas.
3. PBD-some of the proposed work already being done by city, by lava

D. **Recommendations**

1. Substituting bureaucracy for simpler solutions. As an example, would giving employees free parking passes get better compliance? The trade off would be larger fine to employee/employer if violate. This would be far cheaper than build staff, process and install meters.
2. Good that set price of parklet to market. Bad that did not do likewise for parking in lieu fee-why are we subsidizing developers who provide market rate housing?????
3. Page 47 recommendation to add more lighting in downtown and on side streets to deter crime-I believe this is a non-issue. Real issue is underground parking lots-both real and perceived fears.
4. Premise that developers would be able to provide enough parking if development granted increase FAR/height (page 3 of report). But that is false argument as likely just add to parking deficit.
5. Plan proposes shared parking at Draeger's after 5 pm-when do people go grocery shopping???
6. Walgreen proposed as shared parking possibility-already is. Furthermore likely same issue as Draeger's-peak demand likely not at noon, so providing it at 5 pm onward may not work.
7. Kicking parking can down the road-proposing short and medium term strategies with long term consequences. As an example, the Parking in Lieu does not represent cost of build parking. This means the City (and residents) will subsidize market rate housing and office construction. Also addressing long term parking needs by renting space in private lots is likely not to work longer term. Those contracts can cancel contract within a year; when there is redevelopment of those properties the parking also goes away. Then what?

From: [Marlon Lara](#)
To: [Public Comment](#); [Melissa Thurman](#); [Taylor Soleno](#)
Subject: Re: PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEM #9 - NOV 12, 2024
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 2:33:53 PM

Hi Melissa,

I'm reaching out to see if I can request a confirmation that a letter submitted by the California Restaurant Association on Agenda #9. I reviewed the agenda and materials, and I also received an immediate confirmation email on Friday as well.

Thank you,

Marlon Lara

From: Public Comment <publiccomment@losaltosca.gov>
Sent: Friday, November 8, 2024 5:00:56 PM
To: Marlon Lara <mlara@calrest.org>
Subject: Automatic reply: PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEM #9 - NOV 12, 2024

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Hello,

Thank you for submitting your public comment. The city follows a schedule for posting public comments which may be viewed on the city's website:

<https://www.losaltosca.gov/cityclerk/page/public-comments>

As a general reminder, if you have emailed your comment to the City Council, either as a group, or individually, the comment will not be included in the agenda packet but may be disclosable as part of a public records request. Emails sent to publiccomment@losaltosca.gov will be included in the appropriate agenda packet and are also disclosable as part of a public records request. Emails submitted to publiccomment@losaltosca.gov are received by the City Council, the City Manager and the City Clerk's office.

Please note: Personal information, such as telephone numbers, home addresses, and other contact information are not required to be included with your comments. If this information is included in your email, they will become part of the public record. Redactions and/or edits will not be made to public comments, and the comments will be posted as they are submitted. Please do not include any information in your communication that you do not want to be made public.

This response will be automatically sent to incoming email addresses one time only. If you have questions regarding your comment, or would like to cancel or make changes, please email the City Clerk, Melissa Thurman at mthurman@losaltosca.gov or Deputy City Clerk, Taylor Soleno at tsoleno@losaltosca.gov.

Thank you.