

Humboldt County Planning Commission
3015 H Street
Eureka, California 95501

Dear Planning Commissioners and Staff:

My name is Joan Dunning. I am a local artist and author, and I have lived in Humboldt County since 1988. Many of my fellow artists and I have strong feelings about the benefits of Plan A, and we favor it.

There are many reasons why Humboldt County should take into account the feelings and wishes of its artist community. For instance, what is Humboldt County most famous for? Its beauty, its redwoods, its salmon (now mostly gone), its pot, its goat cheese and its art.

I have interviewed numerous artists in preparing to write this letter. Every single one of them stated, first and foremost, that he or she is in Humboldt County for the beauty and rural way of life. Around the US, when artists have moved into an area, that area gains desirability, style, spirit and prestige. In fact, when asked what artists give Humboldt County, one artist's answer was, "Prestige." He went on to say, "To have people like Morris Graves and Jim Mc Vicker attracted to live in our county says a lot to the outside world. We have many well known, college-educated artists who have lived or are still living here, even though they could be making a lot more money in the city."

In addition to art shows, which attract tourists to eat in local restaurants and stay in hotels, the beauty of Humboldt County is exported on canvas and in photographs around the nation, through artists' web sites and the display of their paintings in urban galleries. That exposure not only brings visibility and positive attention to Humboldt County, it also brings dollars back into the county when artists are paid, often in the thousands, for their work.

Artist, Terry Oats, pointed out that the fact that so many quality artists are attracted to Humboldt County for its beauty is good for our children. Our children get to see, first hand, the independence and originality of self-expression not only in work shown in galleries, but also at the Morris Graves Museum, where children have their own gallery space, and at the Humboldt County Fair, where children actually show alongside professional artists. Terry recited a quote from memory, "Art is to society what dreams are to the individual." Artists and our rural way of life give our children room to dream.

Artist, Kathy O'Leary said, simply, "I love Humboldt County. I can live at a slower pace, close to the natural world that I paint daily." She went on to say, "Artists add a level of creative energy that isn't even seen, but it is here."

Artists, Rachel and Stock Schleuter said, "Humboldt County is one of the most beautiful places in America. They said that art, here, is making history." Stock was born here and stays because of the quality of life, the beauty, which he also paints daily, and the support for the arts during events such as Arts Alive, Arts Arcata and Open Studios, which add tremendous vibrancy to our area.

Artist, Gus Aldrich was also born here. In fact, his family has been here since the early 1900's. He said he loves the natural landscape. He said, "Art comes easy here."

Artist, Steve Porter, said, "You can sell a car anywhere. You can't find this beauty just anywhere. We do not want to see it plucked off the earth because it's part of why we're here. I was in LA for a month. If I

lived there, my paintings would be more hectic and crazy."

Artist, Jim Mc Vicker said, "We have access to so much great imagery all over Humboldt County. I live here for the beauty and open space."

Artist, and College of the Redwoods professor, Becky Evans, said, "As far as what attracted me to live here It is both simple and complex..... I require access to the natural world to do my work. And my work can be described as being a witness to the natural world and translating what I "read" there."

Artist, Linda Mitchell, said, "I see this area as a mecca for artists. The ... natural beauty of the landscape is endlessly inspiring, and the support of other artists and the community as a whole is remarkable. I've been able to pursue my passion for painting here in a way that was never possible in the big city.

"The world is currently seeing destruction - of the environment, of culture, and of human life - on an unprecedented scale. Our role as artists includes counteracting the forces of destruction with more creation, more beauty, more love. If we continue to 'pave paradise and put up more parking lots,' everyone loses, but particularly artists, who require access to beauty and simplicity to remind the world of what life is really about. Preserving the quality of places like this, places enriching to artists and to creative work, is fundamental to the preservation of the human spirit."

For me, artist and author, Joan Dunning, I not only thrive on Humboldt County's beauty but also on the presence of wildlife. For me, a landscape without living creatures, is dead. In order to support our wildlife, we need open space--- agricultural land, forest land, a healthy bay. I believe that in-filling of our urban areas will make our cities and towns more vibrant and interesting while preserving the unspoiled character of our rural areas. The enjoyment of our "own back yard" will become increasingly important for Americans as climate change and peak oil force us to abandon materialism and consumerism as our primary means of pleasure. The open spaces of Humboldt County, crowned by our beautiful and priceless national and state parks, can be promoted as California's "back yard" and even that of the nation.

In areas where large concentrations of artists settle, enhanced development usually follows, but it precedes more organically, with soul and beauty, rather than simply being a laid on the landscape, a boring duplication of the sprawl which proliferates the exact same chain stores and chain restaurants and chain hotels in each city and large town, making travel boring and almost pointless. Artists have special sensitivity to nature and acutely feel its loss to suburbia---business parks, shopping malls, parking lots, freeways. The arts do not flourish in communities and landscapes where everything is "new,"--- linear, flat, sanitized, manicured, uniform, symmetrical.... and neither do people. Artists just feel it first.

So.... use us as your canaries in the coal mine. What does not sustain us will soon result in just another version of what we all came here to flee. Ask around. We are not alone. If it were put to public vote, we feel certain that Plan A would win.

Sincerely,

Joan Dunning