

Questions for Candidates

Tess Albin-Smith – Fort Bragg City Council

1. Bicycling/walking and safe bike/pedestrian infrastructure enhances quality of life and addresses issues such as affordability, equity, access, health, and the safety of our streets.

In your view, what can the City/County do to actively encourage more people to bike and walk?

Before the Albins moved from Sacramento to Fort Bragg in 1990, we were biking to work and everywhere. We previously lived in Davis, California which is home to 10,000 bikes. But here in Fort Bragg, we were disappointed to find our favorite neighborhood access (the Haul Road) from the GP Mill to Pudding and MacKerricher State Beaches was open to logging trucks and cars. Our family, including 3 young children (at the time), would cautiously walk from our home on that road toward the beaches. In the early 1990's Mother Nature made the road unusable for trucks north of Fort Bragg, so only cars were using it. By 1996 the trestle was declared unstable for traffic and the haul road was closed to motorized vehicles. Suddenly the road was permanently available for pedestrians and bikes, which flocked to use it daily. Haul Road use for bikes and people has only increased since the 90's, and I am excited when that road is used for all kinds of events as well.

For Fort Bragg I would like to see more bike stations for parking, free indoor bike parking near businesses, and bike lanes that are 2-way double yellow permanent bike-only passage. Huge penalties for cars entering over the double yellow. And I'd like to see plenty of bike lanes at the Mill site trails with passing areas and separate pedestrians lanes as well.

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2. Studies from Portland and other US cities show people on bicycles spend more per month in local business districts than those arriving by other modes. Bicycling and walking also promote a "shop local" mindset (it's difficult to get to a faraway store to shop if you are walking or biking).

What steps would you take to ensure that local businesses in your shopping district are able to benefit from better access by bicyclists?

We moved to our neighborhood on North Harrison, north of downtown Fort Bragg, purposely to be close enough to walk or bike to businesses downtown. We are not alone—I see neighbors walking and biking all the time. So businesses will not suffer from having BETTER access for bikes and pedestrians! If anything, tourists, bicyclists, and pedestrians thoroughly enjoy being able to walk and bike with their families and shop without fear of traffic hazards. There are ways to make it safer by incorporating bike-only lanes and roads. We can show the local businesses that other communities with bike/walk-only access roads and trails are doing better than being in high-traffic routes. I would like to see more small bus shuttles to and from downtown, and start a discussion of closures to car traffic between Franklin and Highway one. Would it work?

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3. Childhood obesity and chronic weight related health issues are a major problem.

As an elected official how would you use your position to foster an active living agenda that will make measurable improvements in these chronic but often preventable diseases?

This is like preaching to the choir if you know me. Healthy lifestyles have always been my priority. I walked for a living as a forester, and walked or biked to work my entire 32-year career with the State of California. My three children grew up playing sports their whole lives and still do as adults. They all walk or bike to work and play whenever possible. My eldest daughter majored in Food Science in college and is now a family and sports physician. I have been putting on sporting events for adults and youth almost my entire adult life, with proceeds returned to support local sports and exercise programs, as well as nonprofits that improve quality of life in our community.

4. Forty percent of vehicle trips are less than two miles and many of us trip-hop with our cars rather than walking when we have a number of closely located errands to do.

Will you commit to using your leadership position in the community to “walk the walk” by personally walking and biking whenever possible during your tenure in office?

Did I mention we moved to our neighborhood so we could be close enough to walk to downtown businesses? It’s not a question of me walking or biking locally. I would also want the safety of riding or biking OUT of town as well. I am committed to working for this goal.

5. We are at the point now where increasing on-street infrastructure like bike lanes will require some difficult decisions, which will not please everyone. A classic example is the struggle between installing bike lanes, sometimes at the expense of on-street parking.

Give us some insight into your decision-making process and how you plan to balance the opinions of residents who may be at odds.

I am a female who has always worked in fields that are considered non-traditional for women. I was a young athlete when women were not allowed to participate in sports. I was one of the first female foresters for the state of California. I was a fire fighter and a law enforcement officer. I am a percussionist. I am a leader. I am taller than many men. Lots of things make me different.

Doing non-traditional things means being harassed for being different. A person like me learns how to negotiate, blend, mediate, compromise, and work with others for the common good. This community cannot be divided and argue about petty things, when we ALL want a good quality of life.

Do you have a biking or walking related story you’d like to tell?

I mentioned above that I walked or bicycled to work my entire adult career. I loved the Davis, California lifestyle of biking everywhere, and we purposely always bought homes near our employment there and here. Not many people can say that they were so lucky.

Moving to Fort Bragg presented a unique transportation challenge, because it is remote from other schools and businesses, and even our closest neighboring town is 10 miles away. I cannot say I bike or walk to these locations, but I CAN say we always carpoled our kids and their friends to sporting events, we even carpool to Mendocino and any meetings out of town, and out of pocket I paid for school busses to transport my high school soccer teams, rather than use multiple cars. Now in my retirement I drive school busses and camping tour busses part time, which I find is a terrific form of mass transportation helping save the planet.