

*City of Arcata Committee on Democracy and Corporations (CDC)*  
*2007 Annual Report*

**History:**

The City of Arcata Committee on Democracy and Corporations was created by the City Council in April 2000, as the final implementation phase of ‘Measure F: The Arcata Advisory Initiative on Democracy and Corporations.’ The voters of Arcata passed Measure F in November 1998.

**The Committee’s Current Mandate:**

**A.** To research and present to the City Council, Commissions or City staff as appropriate options on how our community is taking action to control “pattern restaurants” from moving into downtown areas.

**B.** To cooperate with other communities that are working on socially responsible investing and procurement policies.

**C.** To advise the City Council, Commissions or City staff as appropriate and provide educational opportunities to the citizens of Arcata on ways to promote “free and fair trade” and to oppose and provide alternatives to the World Trade Organization and any other global trade treaties that subvert democracy.

**D.** To advise the City Council, Commissions or City staff as appropriate, and provide educational opportunities to the citizens of Arcata in matters relating to ordinances and actions our community can take regarding corporations that have negative social and environmental impact.

**E.** To recommend a policy that the City Council can implement to do business with corporations that demonstrate ethical and exemplary civic practices, and which do not violate fair labor standards or have conviction for violating environmental laws.

**F.** To advise the City Council, Commissions or City staff as appropriate and provide educational opportunities to the citizens of Arcata, with prior City Council approval, regarding policies procedures and regulations which foster and sustain locally-owned businesses, publicly, or locally owned services, and worker-owned cooperatives and collectives.

**Past Work:**

In the past few years since this committee’s inception the CDC has had a few milestone accomplishments.

- We reviewed the proposed “Pre-Qualification of Contractors” ordinance (Resolution #012-09) and contributed strengthening language, decreasing the likelihood of contractors with a history of environmental or labor infractions receiving city contracts.

- We worked more than a year thoroughly researching and refining the language for a “pattern restaurant” cap which was subsequently adopted. In the past few years Arcata has received favorable press concerning the ordinance in urban planning and zoning publications. According to the owner of the 9<sup>th</sup> and G street building, Starbucks was first in line to rent the space until the ordinance was considered, at which point they approached the current tenant, Jitter Bean Coffee.
- Three and a half years ago a collaborative effort between our committee and the Arcata Main Street board started. A number of members from each group formed the "Local Economy Working Group." This collaborative group co-created a community discussion on the Future of Arcata’s Retail Economy. We left that meeting with completed surveys from over 100 participants and the data will further guide our work.
- We were able to secure funding to bring former labor secretary Robert Reich to speak at Humboldt State University. This well publicized and well-attended event was broadcast simultaneously on KHSU.
- We drafted only the second resolution on Corporate Personhood/Corporate Constitutional Rights to be adopted by a municipality. The City Council meetings about this resolution brought about public debate and dialog and even greater input and interest in the CDC’s work.

### **Current Work:**

The committee has spent the last year refining the Formula Retail cap that will be presented to the Planning Commission on November 13, 2007. This work included multiple meetings with the Governance Subcommittee of the Arcata Chamber of Commerce and a study session with the City Council to find consensus language that will preserve Arcata an incubator for entrepreneurship.

Prior to our two study sessions with the City Council we worked to create an ordinance with the same legal effect as Measure T for Arcata. We learned at the second Study Session that the Council was more supportive of an ordinance focused on the financing of initiatives; we will finalize such an ordinance and forwarded it to the City Council for adoption.

As our proposed formula retail cap goes through the City process, we are analyzing the legal definition of “person” in the City’s Land Use Code. The definition currently includes corporations as legal persons with all the rights of human beings. We are developing language for consideration by the Planning Commission and the Council that distinguishes between persons and organizations.

### **Committee Members:**

Sean Armstrong, Chair  
 Shannon Tracey, Vice Chair  
 Sly Holliday, Jay Wright, Eric Surber and Rick Greene

## **Collaborations and Community Partners:**

Our work has been augmented by our successful partnership with these organizations:

- The numerous groups who have co-sponsored our speaker and film series in the past such as Humboldt State University, Placebo, Democracy Unlimited, The Green Party, Simply Mac, The Tofu Shop, Caravan of Dreams, Northtown Books, Sacred Grounds, Los Bagels, Casa Lindra, KHSU, CCAT, Humboldt Funeral Society, & Arcata Main Street.
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's "Campaign to Challenge Corporate Power and Assert the People's Rights" ([wilpf.org/cintro.html](http://wilpf.org/cintro.html)) and its National Action to "Abolish Corporate Personhood" launched in 2001 – which continues to educate us about resolutions and ordinances for possible local action.
- Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund ([celfd.org](http://celfd.org)) which continues to offer public interest law support to communities and counties nationwide that are attempting to tackle corporate power's impact on local economies and democracies.
- New Rules Project ([newrules.org](http://newrules.org)) of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Minnesota, which has provided us continued information for possible actions in Arcata as well as significant guidance for our collaborative work with Main Street.

## **Income and Expenses:**

Our Committee was once again given \$500 for this fiscal year. As of yet we have no planned commitments for this money and we appreciate its availability.

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All of the members of the Committee on Democracy and Corporations are excited about the work we have ahead of us.

Please feel free to call on any or all of us at any time to discuss issues dealing with our work.

Sean Armstrong  
Committee Chair