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Potentially More Parking Downtown

By Cathy Tyson



Potential parking lot on Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Photo Cathy Tyson

city's parking problem? Although it seems like they're everywhere, you'll find meters exclusively in the downtown area. The 230 meters collected \$123,000 last year, with parking tickets bringing in roughly twice that amount. Last year Parking Enforcement Officers wrote just shy of 8,000 parking tickets, according Cathy Surges-Moscato, Community Services Officer.

In looking at possible parcels, contenders had to not be too small or too big - over .45 acres, not too narrow, or too difficult to access. "Sufficiently large to get at least a double row of parking, maybe a structure" said City Manager Steven Falk. Some possible locations are already vacant, for example at the corner of Mt. Diablo and Dewing, pictured above. One broker for the former Links appliance location already expressed an interest in selling to the City.

Now it's clear where potential locations are, and what the overall budget is, the only thing needed are some takers of the City's offer. For parties willing to make a deal, the City is required by law to pay the fair market value of a property determined by an independent appraiser. Those interested have until September 30, 2009 to make contact with city staff. This could be a way out for struggling land owners and a huge relief down the road for drivers.

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Those quarters deposited in parking meters can really add up. In the years since meters were installed in the early 1990's, all of the revenue generated from their use and other parking related sources has gone into a special fund to acquire off-street parking. Lockboxes near BART, the sale of parking permits at city lots, and dreaded parking tickets all contribute to this fund, now at \$2.5 million. The expectation is that this substantial sum could really add to the number of off-street parking spots available in the downtown core, a long term goal of the city.

The City Council recently directed staff to send a letter to seventeen specially selected land owners inviting them, if interested, to call the City Manager for further discussion of negotiating a sale of their land to be used for parking. The City is interested in land not only to build a parking lot, but potentially a parking structure, or possibly a public/private parking situation - over or under retail or office development.

How do all those coins total enough to put a dent in the