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Valet Parking - Coming Soon to Theater Square?

By Sophie Braccini



The parking spaces in front of Theater Square could become a drop-off zone for valet parking Photo Rob Lucacher

location with a surplus of off-street parking. The service may be used by anyone who wishes to do so, whether they patronize the sponsoring business or not. The City has the right to revoke the permit should the service interfere with the flow of traffic.

One possible negative aspect of the encroachment is that it will reduce the amount of available parking in the downtown area. Chamber of Commerce President Sue Breedlove addressed that issue. "Rather than having a negative effect, we think it's a very positive move," said Breedlove, "You see it all the time in areas that have limited parking - which is exactly the case in downtown Orinda. Putting cars in the garage will increase available parking, not reduce it." The Chamber enthusiastically supported the project; Breedlove cited other benefits such as making it easier for people to patronize local businesses.

"We are now working on our application," says Ivry, "it will be an amenity to anybody going to Theater Square. Douglas Parking will charge the drivers and Table 24 will offer validation." Ivry hopes to offer the same kind of service that can be found at comparable restaurants in Walnut Creek. He also believes that some patrons are a bit apprehensive about night-parking in a large structure, and the valet service will alleviate those fears.

When contacted, Chris McGougan, manager of the Orinda parking structure for Douglas Parking, said that the project was being discussed. "We already operate valet parking in other areas," said McGougan, "the flat cost can vary from \$4-\$8 depending on the situation. We've got staff that know how to operate this and will move someone into Orinda when it is finalized."

Ivry says his application will be ready by the end of the month; he plans to offer valet service in the evening, Thursday through Saturday.

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As he developed a business plan with partner Michael Karp, Table 24's Victor Ivry envisioned valet parking at the bottom of the stairs that lead to the new restaurant at Orinda's Theater Square. But the city did not have an existing policy that defined this type of amenity and a procedure had to be drafted. This text, supported by the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, opens the door for other businesses wanting to offer the same service.

The only place that provides valet parking in Orinda is Casa Orinda, using its own parking lot. What Table 24 proposed is different. Karp and Ivry approached the town with a request to use public parking spaces for drop-off and pick-up outside Theater Square. "The city didn't have a policy to regulate the use of on-street parking for valet services," explains Monica Pacheco, Assistant to the City Manager/ Public Information Officer, "the Council directed staff to draft a valet parking policy that should not impact the traffic flow in the downtown area and should not impose hardships on surroundings businesses."

The policy, drafted by staff and approved by the City Council on December 21st, allows applicants to apply for an encroachment permit to designate on-street parking to be used as loading zones for valet services. Attendants then move the vehicles to a predetermined