

Chateau Lafayette Residents Request Permitted Parking

By Cathy Tyson

City staff has been investigating car ownership in an effort to scope out who is parking on Moraga Boulevard between Moraga Road and First Street, to find a solution for residents of Chateau Lafayette who are forced to park some distance away from home. There is "considerable parking intrusion," noted a staff report prepared for the August 20, 2012 meeting of the Circulation Commission, mostly due to its proximity to commercial areas. Employees who work nearby or folks taking BART to work for the day are likely culprits for the lack of parking available for residents at the Chateau.

With parking available only on the south side of the street, and pressure from nearby La Fiesta Square, Lafayette Elementary and Golden Gate Way, it's easy to see why the street is full of cars parked all day long. According to City Engineer Tony Coe, the width of the road is insufficient for two way traffic and parking on both sides of the street. Single family homes on the south side of the street, opposite the Chateau, have garages and driveways to accommodate their vehicles.

Residents on the 3500 block of Moraga Boulevard expressed support for a \$12 per year parking permit, limited to one per household, that could be renewed annually. While the City can't dictate where employees of local businesses park, they can tighten the rules of the road as a way to encourage parking elsewhere. There's a free, under-utilized parking area, just down Moraga Road, in a lot recently purchased by the City of Lafayette, that has no time limits – a good alternative for shoppers and workers rather than taking parking from senior citizens who live at Chateau Lafayette.

"There have been a number of hiccups in the process, I'm thankful we can finally bring this to the Circulation Commission tonight," said Transportation Planner Leah Greenblatt.

Results of a parking survey by City staff revealed that less than 30 percent of the cars parked on the block, measured at various times over a two-day period, were registered to Moraga Boulevard homes.

With 66 apartments and only 22 parking spaces on the Chateau Lafayette premises, on average, nine residents park on the street on most days. When the Chateau was built years ago, seniors weren't living as long and a smaller percentage were driving, so the city approved the design with less than the standard required number of parking spaces.

Tenants are now living longer and receiving health care and physical therapy services at home, creating a need for parking for service providers like visiting nurses and physical therapists. Faster turnover of spaces would open up the street for health care workers and perhaps parents parking while dropping off children at the Old Firehouse Preschool, around the corner on Moraga Road.

After hearing passionate comments from many of the elderly Chateau residents, Circulation Commissioners were in agreement about creating a permit parking area with a two-hour limit on the block, but disagreed with a staff recommendation to allow just four permits for the Chateau. Part of the city's survey showed that the 4 on-site visitor's spaces were empty most of the time. Staff recommended using 2 of those spots for residents—that plus 4 permits would give Chateau residents a combined six additional parking spaces – solving most, but not all, of the problem.

Treva Perkins of the Chateau Lafayette Tenants' Association kicked off the effort with a Transportation Action Request Form last year. At the meeting she commented that "two-hour parking is warranted, but four permits are not enough, elderly residents need to be able to park close by."

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City Council Continues Public Hearings to September

Although the proposed roundabout and streetscape improvements were on the agenda at the August 13 City Council meeting, due to an abundance of resident comments and the late hour no final decisions were made. The public hearing will be continued on September 24, giving City staff an opportunity to provide alternative options for street improvements. Residents' concerns ranged from traffic implications and ease of access to the driveways of businesses that front Mt. Diablo Boulevard, to maintenance costs. The public hearing on the certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report on the Downtown Specific Plan, as well as a vote on the Plan itself, is slated for September 10 at the Community Hall of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

C. Tyson

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