

This fence now blocks what was once a Capitola parking lot.

Capitola Parking Loss Irks Beachgoers

By KEITH MURAOKA

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The closing of Capitola's beach parking
lot has taken many by surprise and irked
local beachgoers, although a majority of
business owners surveyed say they have
yet to feel a detrimental affect.

The 17-space lot is located on the east end of the city's main beach behind the restrooms and adjacent to the Depot Hill

It was closed when work began on the long-proposed \$1.1 million sewage pump station, built by the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District, which is scheduled to take a year to complete.

While local beachgoers have been outspoken about their loss, only two business owners surveyed in a random Sentinel poll acknowledged they would be hurt because of the project. Both of those — Thelma Juhl of Mac's Patio Restaurant and Audrey Jacobs of Capitola Theater — are located adjacent to the area parking area and objected to the pump station project during repeated public hearings.

Parking has long been the biggest single problem in Capitola Village. Many maintain the loss of even a single parking space will burt

City officials, however, point to the fact that a 25-space parking lot will replace the old one in the finished project. A new 60-

space lot along Cliff Drive adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks has also just opened.

"We're taking a few spaces away, but are actually gaining some in the long run," said Public Works Director Craig French, who also pointed to the city's successful beach shuttle bus program as a measure to alleviate some of the parking pressure.

Despite the numerous public hearings concerning the Sanitation District's proposal, many local beach-goers were still surprised to suddenly see a cyclone fence put up around their parking haven. More than one reportedly stormed City Hall to complain.

One such person was long-time resident John Young, who complained to the Police Department.

"That lot has been there ever since I moved here in 1962," he said. "It was one of my few pleasures to park there and be able to look at the ocean and cliffs.

"If you went around to the side (of the lot) it was almost like a hideout for locals," Young added. "Now we have to fight for spaces like the tourists."

Kirk Nesset, another local beachgoer, termed the project "a sorry scene and an inconvenience to everyone." Pete Montgomery echoed his sentiments, saying it was just going to make "a bad

(parking) situation worse."

One of Capitola's more famous residents, "Krazy" George Henderson, said the only way he would be in favor of the sewage pump station "is if a multi-level parking lot" was also built in conjunction with it.

It has long been the city's position, however, not to provide additional parking downtown since demand would only increase and streets were already at their maximum use.

Mayor Ron Graves said, "You could build a 10,000-car lot down there and you're not going to alleviate congestion on the streets. We have always felt an outline parking lot and the shuttle bus would assume to cure both ills — lack of parking and congestion."

He added that it was the city's position not to encourage beach-users to drive downtown, but to use the shuttle instead.

That was one of the reasons, in fact, that the city instituted its two-hour parking restriction zone downtown. Beachusers were taking up business parking. The two-hour zone now forces turnover of spaces.

The majority of business owners surveyed said the loss of the lot shouldn't have any direct affect on them, although many pointed out it was a little too early to tell.

