

City Council Approves Master Parking Plan

While no specific items were approved for implementation or funding, the city of Santa Cruz has approved a Parking District Master Plan that takes on "the thorny problem that won't go away."

The plan was presented to the council Tuesday by John Gamman, chairman of the Parking District Advisory Commission.

He said the plan had been "passed by the Mall Commission with the reservation that we not push employees out of parking stalls and exacerbate problems for shoppers."

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Lionel Stolof said the shopper/employee needs were at a "delicate balance" that had to be kept and that downtown parking remains "the thorny problem that won't go away."

The council approved in concept the 11-step plan.

It recommends:

- The item with the highest priority is the demolition of the McHugh Building for the purpose of constructing a surface parking lot. It states the lot next to the building "has the highest parking demand of all the downtown parking facilities.

- Review all downtown meter rates, time limits, deficiency charges, monthly parking permit charges, and parking ticket rates. The last rate and time limit adjustments were made in 1978, the plan notes. It states that the ticket rate of \$3 is the lowest in the entire Monterey Bay Area.

- Use pay boxes at the upper decks of the city's two parking structures to make it easier for long term visitors and workers will have a place to park. "It will open these lots to long-term customer parking (as) currently customers can park in our surface lots for a maximum of two hours for free, but many receive citations."

- Restripe and relight smaller, less visible lots to attract parking from other more congested lots and streets. Lots should be striped with a greater percentage of stalls for compacts. Also spaces for motorcycles should be included.

- Urges support for a computer system of bus passes so that business who want to support bus rides for employees can be billed later.

- Urges support for more carpooling and notes that the parking consultant had recommended increasing monthly parking fees from \$10 to \$20 to push more people into carpools.

- Redesign of some city parking lots for to beautify them and increase use. The lots in question are behind Dell Williams Jewelers, United Cigar and Fords. It notes that the Mall Plan recommends that 5 percent of the surface space be given over to beautification.

The master plan also notes that there will be deficiency of from 150 to 200 parking spaces is expected by the year 1985 and "the city must continue to actively pursue the acquisition of key parcels of land."

A couple of local merchants spoke out to caution the council against any action that would allow elimination of any more spaces and noted the plan did not make provision for bicycles.

Gamman said the master plan had been worked and re-worked over the past two years and that the arguments that came Tuesday had been considered many times over.

He said the council should get the plan in motion and told them, "The worst thing you can do is to do nothing."