

METER PLAN SCRAPPED

# Eastside Santa Cruz parking to stay free

Business owners,  
residents: Idea no good

*EASTSIDE*

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SANTA CRUZ — Free parking will remain on the Eastside, as about 100 residents and business owners told city leaders Tuesday afternoon that proposed parking meters would look ugly, kill business and push drivers to leave cars in nearby neighborhoods.

"You're just placing undue burden on businesses who are providing jobs in our community," said Angela Henderson of Santa Cruz, echoing the comments of many in attendance.

The issue was under consideration as city leaders grapple with a growing \$8 million deficit. The meters would have raised about \$235,000 each year, after the initial cost of \$215,000 is paid.

But the meters would have forced drivers to pay for parking on Water Street, Soquel Avenue and their side streets east of Ocean Street, among others. Those neighborhoods are filled with a number of small businesses that, audience members emphatically reminded city leaders, are taking a big hit in the recession. Many said the meters would discourage shoppers who pop in for a few minutes when they see an open parking spot.

Jim Beauregard, owner of Shopper's Corner at Soquel and Branciforte avenues, said meters would create bad blood as drivers park in free store parking lots, like his own, to do business somewhere else. That could force him and others to tow more often, he said.

No one spoke in favor of the meters, and city leaders unanimously voted against the idea.

The decision from City Council was apparent before public comment started, as members said they had heard from hundreds of outraged Eastsiders since the council approved the first reading of the parking meter proposal at its last meeting.

"I don't think the plan for parking meters is viable right now," said Councilman Mike Rotkin. "I would be amazed if I or anyone else on council votes for this."

However, council members did vote in favor of maintaining summertime parking rates year round at meters near the beach. Previously, those \$1.50 per hour rates dropped to \$1 per hour in the off-season.