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Chateau Lafayette Residents' Parking Dilemma Solved

By Cathy Tyson

With 66 apartments and only 22 parking spaces available on site for residents at Chateau Lafayette on Moraga Boulevard, the numbers just don't add up. Throw in two-thirds of the street spaces taken by all-day parkers who are headed to BART and employees of nearby businesses, it's easy to see why seniors are frustrated and called for permitted parking on their block.

New rules limiting parking to two hours, just on the block of Moraga Boulevard between Moraga Road and First Street, were adopted at the September 24 City Council meeting. The 2-hour limit will be enforced from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday, excluding holidays -with exemptions for residents with permits on the 3500 Block of Moraga Boulevard. While parking is definitely difficult, just a short walk down the street is a fairly new free parking lot on Moraga Road to accommodate longer term parkers. New signage will soon be installed directing drivers to the lot as part of the "Citywide Guide Sign Replacement" project.

While the seniors requested permit parking to discourage all-day parking, they weren't thrilled with the way the City originally proposed handing out parking permits - offering four permits, while there were approximately 10 Chateau residents who had cars but not parking spaces on the premises.

In a significant demonstration of solidarity, homeowners across the street from the Chateau signed a petition supporting the seniors, offering street spaces in front of their homes. Six permits were agreed upon at a recent Circulation Commission meeting after heartfelt testimony from seniors, many with mobility issues who struggle with packages. The permit concerns were especially vexing because virtually all of the nearby streets have parking time limits.

City Council members were sympathetic to the plight of seniors and reasoned that 30 years ago when the City approved the under-parked facility it must have presumed residents could use on-street parking for the overflow. By today's standards, Chateau Lafayette would be required to have 50 spaces on site. Feeling somewhat responsible, they proposed a solution that reflects the standard in other parts of the city - one permit per household, including the multi-family Chateau project.

Council Member Brandt Andersson likened a permit to a "hunting license" -it doesn't guarantee a parking space. In the end, instead of a specific number of permits for Chateau residents, those who do not have an on-site space and do have a registered vehicle will receive 1 parking permit per household. In addition, Council Member Don Tatzin suggested to Chateau management that it might be wise to have an on-site parking policy that recognizes the ability and disability of residents, giving priority to the most mobility impaired. "We are very pleased that the City Council members took the time to read the materials presented to them, to ask probing questions and in the end approve the 2-hour parking limit and parking permits on our block," said Treva Perkins, a resident of Chateau Lafayette. "We are also grateful to (everyone) who spoke on the Chateau's behalf at the City Council meeting on September 24th. And a special thanks to our neighbors on the 3500 block of Moraga Boulevard for their support."

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[back](#)

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