

the

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FROM THE EDITOR: THE PARKING PROBLEM

This is a special issue of The Eagle Ridge News, our fourth issue. The fifth issue of TERN will appear shortly after Mutual 68's March 12th meeting.

Gilbert Doubet has done yeoman's work in gathering information regarding restricted parking on Saklan Indian Drive. He carefully examines both sides of the parking controversy; the article is about as objective as it can get. The editorial board decided that the best service we can offer at this point is a clear and exhaustive exposition of what facts are available. This should enable residents to determine in what direction the community should go.

SID residents have complained that they were not consulted about the decision by Mutual 68, GRF, and MOD to restrict parking. All three groups were within their rights to make this decision since it is their responsibility to maintain safe roads. However, the bitterness engendered by this lack of consultation merits comment.

People's behavior most often is controlled by regulations and rules. Regulations are imposed by authority figures and have meaning if they are enforceable and are in fact enforced. Rules, by contrast, are not imposed by anyone; rather, they are guides to conduct agreed upon by people who see themselves as equals and who come to a consensus after an exchange of views.

Regulations change behavior, but usually not attitudes; people who hate to pay taxes will pay them because they don't want to go to jail, but they don't wind up approving of the taxes imposed. Now if we tried to get everyone to love to pay taxes, it would take too much effort and be a waste of time. Regulations save time and are therefore an efficient way of controlling a group.

Rules also change behavior, but it is the community of equals, rather than authority figures, who determine what these rules are. They do this by defining what problem they're facing, considering solutions, and exchanging views on what choices are viable. Rules evolve as attitudes change—that is absolutely essential. We listen to one another, pool our resources, and focus on what is best for all of us. However, all of this demands a willingness to change our attitudes based upon what others tell us. In short, "I want things my way" is replaced by "Is there a better way?"

Involving everyone in making a decision takes time and perhaps even heroic patience. But in the long run things turn out better. "Let's talk about what we should do" is always preferable to "Surprise! We're taking something away from you!" Moral: Best to consult. For example, tell people there is a problem and define it. Ask them how they would solve it. In a community like Eagle Ridge there is enough sophistication and intelligence to transcend self-interest and come to a reasonable consensus. That may sound like an act of faith, but you have no community worth the name unless you can respect one another's good sense.

Finally, would that we could start all over! Given the cost of our homes, the developers should have made provisions for adequate parking in planning Eagle Ridge. They didn't, and now we need to deal with what reality we have. The important thing is to stay cool, listen to one another, and move ahead expeditiously and sensibly. This is a unique community with a host of positive features, and we should keep this positive vision in mind to help up come up with a solution that will benefit the entire community.

Saklan Indian Drive: The Parking Controversy

by Gilbert Doubet

“No Parking” signs may soon spring up on the non-sidewalk side of Saklan Indian Drive (hereafter SID). Some residents object to this parking restriction.

Background: What’s the problem?

After consulting with Mutual 68 Board members Bud Semrau and Earl Orum, Golden Rain Foundation CEO Steve Adams announced on Feb. 7 new parking restrictions for SID On Rossmoor TV Channel 11, Adams stated: “There will be parking on one side only.” Appearing on the “I’m Glad You Asked” program, Adams explained that width is the principal if not sole determinant of two-sided parking. He continued that SID is too narrow for dual-curb parking. However, wider streets like Grey Eagle do qualify for parking on both sides.

At the Feb. 28 GRF Board meeting, however, Adams seemingly reversed himself. Contradicting his Channel 11 statements, Adams announced that no decision has yet been made, that the GRF is not involved (since Shea still owns the streets), and that the solution is really up to the City’s Traffic Department, Shea and Mutual members themselves.

Who’s in charge?

Adams and the Mutual 68 Board nevertheless agree that once Shea leaves, through streets are the legal and financial responsibility of GRF, unlike less traveled Eagle Ridge roadways, which the Mutual calls ancillary streets and courts. The Mutual foots the bill for the latter.

Eagle Ridge has two GRF-controlled through streets, Grey Eagle and SID. Adams stated on Channel 11 that the real decision-making power over parking policy disputes concerning these two thoroughfares rests with the GRF, not Mutual 68, nor even with the City.

What’s the argument?

Some residents feel the facts are far from clear. They question what law applies, who has decision-making authority, wonder if other alternatives are possible, and ask if Shea can be made to pay the cost of an eventual solution.

Dave and Judy Tedesco live on SID’s lower 2800 block. That area is hardest hit by the new restrictions. It consists of a duplex and five fourplexes clustered together. Within days of the news, the couple circulated first a flyer, then a petition, and finally a letter to the editor published in the Rossmoor News. The petition requests a halt to the changeover pending further study.

At the Feb 28 GRF meeting, Mr. Tedesco raised the issue. Following him to the speaker’s platform was another SID homeowner, Curtis Wood. In addition, Tedesco appeared along with some 25 other residents at Mutual 68’s March 7 agenda meeting. The Tedescos and others intend to

speaking at the Mutual's March 12 quarterly public meeting. It begins at 3 p.m. in the Sierra Room at Del Valle Clubhouse. Adams is expected to attend in order to field questions on the parking issue.

What follows is an attempt to summarize facts and opinions about parking on SID.

Problems with two-sided parking on SID

Board member Orum asserts that SID was never intended for two-sided parking. The original 1996 developer's design anticipated only one-sided parking and accordingly provided sidewalks for that side alone.

Mutual spokesmen say parking on the non-sidewalk side of SID would create serious problems. They cite two drawbacks to parkers positioning their cars at the edge of pavement where no sidewalk exists:

- First, passengers getting in and out of the curb side of those parked vehicles would often have to slog through mud and grass wet from sprinklers or rain. This inconvenience, although bad enough, is clearly overshadowed by the liability created for the Mutual from possible injuries.
- Second, some parkers will ease their vehicle's wheels onto the landscaping, defacing costly sod and ruining sprinkler heads. One Eagle Ridge official says this is already happening and at the Mutual's expense.

Dual-sided parking makes it difficult for two vehicles approaching each other from opposite directions to navigate safely past one another if other cars are parked on both sides. Most important, officials stress, is safety in time of danger. They recall the narrow passageways created on SID during construction before Shea moved out. In a serious emergency, a fire truck or ambulance could become bogged down in such a bottleneck, risking human tragedy, financial loss and likely litigation.

Possible problems with SID's proposed parking restrictions

SID's sidewalk side is where most residences are located. If, as Adams announced, parking will be restricted to this side only, opponents say total parking space will be reduced, to unrealistic levels on many stretches. Especially hard hit are fourplexes because the preponderance of driveways and fire hydrants leaves little curb space for parking. Moreover the Tedesco flyer argues such niggardly parking accommodations will negatively impact property values. Resident Wood suggests that Shea may have violated California's stringent real estate disclosure laws by omitting mention of the parking issue in documents Shea is required to provide buyers. At the Feb. 28 GRF meeting, Wood summed up the parking plight, saying: "What you think you see may not be what you get. If anything could be a disclosure item, this is it." The unhappy Mutual member called the parking problem "a deal breaker for us."

Mr. Tedesco asserts that visibility becomes an issue if vehicles park on SID's residence side. Motorists exiting driveways may experience obstructed views due to cars parked closeby. Conversely, passing vehicles may not see autos exiting driveways because of those parked cars. Finally, many drivers parking adjacent to the sidewalk tend to edge two wheels onto the sidewalk itself. This impedes pedestrians, especially those with vision impairment, in wheelchairs or with walkers.

Possible solutions - and obstacles thereto

Mr. Tedesco requests the Board establish an ad hoc Parking Committee to research solutions. This group would then advise the Board on questions such as the following:

- Can SID be widened, in whole or part? At Shea's expense?
- Can new visitor parking areas be whittled out of the remaining SID open space? Will homeowners adjacent to those open spaces object to such alterations?
- If one-sided parking is necessary, can at least some of it be shifted to the side of SID opposite residences, especially in areas where that opposite side is unbroken curb space, all of it available for parking? In the most densely populated part of SID, the lower 2800 section, there are no structures on the opposite (non-sidewalk) side of the street.

Some area homeowners, however, object. They counter that this opposite-side parking scenario entails its own risks. Slow-moving and mobility-challenged seniors parking on the far side must then navigate on foot across heavily-traveled SID in order to reach the sidewalk and their destination residence. The same hazard would face parkers with children and dogs. Crossing seems especially chancy on foggy evenings on grades or curves. Notes one homeowner, the problem is compounded by the absence of crosswalks.

Should sidewalks be added to the no-sidewalk side of SID? Some stretches of the street have homes on both sides. Would homeowners having sidewalks added to their frontage object to substantial decrease in their lawns and driveways? Some of those driveways are hardly long enough now to accommodate a small car. Alternatively, if new sidewalks are installed only on stretches of SID where no homes exist, is it cost effective to do so, given that few strollers would use such disjointed stretches of walkway?

Mutual officials respond that adding new sidewalks or widening SID is anything but simple. They claim retaining walls make it impossible in some places. In areas where it is possible, they say the cost would be daunting - that building new sidewalks or widening the street would likely involve moving streetlights, wiring, irrigation control boxes, and water shutoff controls. It would also mandate rerouting V-ditch water runoff and relocating trees situated within five feet of any new walkway. Further, they question whether a court would impose such onerous costs on the developer.

How did this happen?

There may be no satisfactory solution to Eagle Ridge's parking predicament. In large part, it is systemic. Our developer proposed and the City and GRF approved a comprehensive building plan that has proven less than ideal.

Future issues of the Eagle Ridge News will continue reporting on this and other Mutual 68 parking questions.

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