

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

OPINION

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Plea for permit parking

Editor:

The City of Santa Monica is discriminating against a group of residents and treating them differently than they treat all other Santa Monicans. Apparently because of our racial and economic diversity, i.e. we're not rich, we are being systematically and repeatedly disenfranchised by the transportation management department.

I live on the only street in the entire area that has not been granted permit parking, despite petitioning and meeting every single criteria necessary to have permit parking implemented. Three years since petitioning, our requests continue to be stalled and ignored. Our street is a textbook case of one in need of the relief permit parking would give. Since all other surrounding streets have permit restrictions, we can draw only one conclusion: There is discrimination at City Hall. The demographics on our street represent contrasting social and financial backgrounds that have made us a target for unfair practices that the city would not dare impose on any other street or more affluent neighborhood. We are being sacrificed so that those outside our neighborhood can park for free on our block.

With the east side of Ninth Street routinely 100 percent full with cars often double-parked and waiting for spaces to open up, we assumed we were subject to the same permit parking relief as 10th Street. It seemed simple enough: Submit the petition, demonstrate we met the criteria and be granted permit parking. Instead, staff recommended granting permit parking to all other adjacent streets, even extending to streets such as Bay and Grant, which had not petitioned. But the staff left the east side of Ninth unregulated: "Free parking for all except the residents." Instead of solving our problem, it was concentrated onto the east side of Ninth. We now have to pay for permits, so those who want to park for free can use our street. We must park a block or two away because non-residents are using our street as their free parking lot, often blocking traffic and dropping trash as they do so.

By leaving the east side of Ninth Street unregulated and surrounded by permit parking zones, Ninth Street residents have been disenfranchised by the City of Santa Monica. The residents of Ninth Street are being forced to subsidize nearby businesses and Santa Monica High School by acting as their parking lot. Free parking for the entire neighborhood can be found on only one street: Ninth. All visitors, employees, customers, high school students and residents compete for these 62 free spaces. It is a free-for-all, stimulating much bad behavior and pollution. If you can imagine living at the mall during Christmas, you will have some notion of what it's like to live on Ninth Street every day. The resulting traffic hazards, air pollution, noise, trash, inconvenience and lack of nearby

parking for residents are unfair and have adversely impacted the quality of life for residents of this block and further degraded their environment.

The denial of the permits for Ninth has much to do with accommodating students who choose to drive. This unfair arrangement was intended to contain high school student spill-over parking to the coastal zone (Bay and Grant streets west of Lincoln Boulevard). This wealthier Ocean Park area is not subject to the deadly pollution generated by the Santa Monica Freeway and is west of Lincoln Boulevard. The City of Santa Monica cites the proximity to the coastal zone as being the reason why they refuse to grant permit parking on Ninth Street, yet even the Coastal Commission has been willing to grant preferential parking programs under certain circumstances. Additionally, there are other ways to protect these coastal zone areas from student parkers without imposing an inequitable denial of permit parking on the disadvantaged Ninth and Michigan neighborhood.

For three years we have worked within the system to no avail. We have been patient and cooperative. We've demonstrated the necessity of permit parking through the required petitions, follow-up letters, multiple surveys, e-mails, phone calls, meetings with transportation management staff and Samohi and multiple neighborhood meetings. My neighbors and I have sent hundreds of e-mails to Ruth Harper, Beth Rolandson and Lucy Dyke of transportation management. We have contacted individual council members and asked to be put on the agenda. We've taken dozens of car counts and more than 2,000 photographs documenting our need for permit parking. In short, we have continually worked within the guidelines the city has laid out. Yet even after proving we meet all the criteria, we continue to be treated unfairly.

The city guidelines state: "If the proposed preferential parking zone meets the criteria...the City Council must adopt a resolution to establish a preferential parking zone." We're not asking for special treatment, only the same treatment. The disadvantaged residents of Ninth Street deserve the same remedies that are available to residents of adjacent streets.

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