

Parking battle at SLT shopping venues escalates



Poaching parking at the Village Center will no longer be tolerated. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Yellow and red signs went up this week in the Village Center in South Lake Tahoe warning people if they leave the premises, their car will be ticketed or towed.

“What has happened is my tenants have been taken advantage of by the general public and employees of the (Heavenly) Village. In the winter we can have skiers and snowboarders parking in our lot,” Terry Hackett, owner of the center, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

All of this means less parking for people who actually want to patronize businesses in what was the old Crescent V Center.

Hackett said workers from across the street will park at his lot all day to avoid having to pay at the city-owned garage in Heavenly Village. Some employers reportedly allow their staff time to move their vehicles every two-hours to avoid a ticket.

Hackett is having the two-hour signs removed and replacing them with the brighter, more threatening signs.

"The two-hour limit will still be invoked, but the key is you will not be able to use my lot to walk across the street to the gondola or village," Hackett said.

Because this is private property he has a right to make these kinds of rules. What he or those he pays cannot do is harass or accost someone who chooses to violate those rules. People have a right to come and go as they please. But there are consequences for doing so.

The fine is \$55. Towing would be more. The signs say violators will be fined and/or towed.

This is not a new problem. The issue seems to escalate about every 18 months. (The gondola opened in 2000, the Marriott properties in 2002, and Heavenly Village just keeps getting busier – as does Hackett's center.)

"Stateline is a victim of its own success," Hackett said.

When the Heavenly Village area was redeveloped the agreement was that each side of the street would provide parking for its respective patrons. The city garage costs money, Hackett's place doesn't. People tend to go for the freebie.

The first parking agreement was signed in August 2000. At that time there was supposed to be attendant controlled access to then called Crescent V Center, with the city responsible for oversight of the 478 spots.

The agreement was amended in 2002. The 2011 revision calls for a two-hour parking limit at Crescent V, with the city getting revenue from fines and Hackett responsible for cost of enforcement. It says, "No citations shall be issued for any other reason."

Part of the 2017 agreement between the city and Hackett is for the South Lake Tahoe parking authority to subsidize the parking enforcement. The latest iteration of the contract that the City Council agreed to this month gives Hackett \$50,000 for enforcement; that money comes from the parking authority. At one time the city paid \$100,000/year out of the General Fund to enforce parking there.

These payments are ongoing until the city pays off the debt on the parking garage in about a dozen years.

The garage is bringing in about \$800,000 a year, with roughly half going to pay the debt. (The other half is set aside for maintenance, improvements and Hackett. All money collected from parking issues has to be reinvested into parking related matters in that area. The city technically does not own the garage.)

Revenue from any tickets issued by the private enforcement firm Hackett hires goes to the city's parking authority. Less than 100 tickets have been written in the last six months. If the parking gurus were to truly enforce the parking rules and based on the size of problem Hackett says there is, that many tickets could probably be written in a day.

Tires will still be chalked to mark two hours. Businesses have placards patrons can put in their vehicle if they are staying longer. This will ensure they don't get a ticket.

Paid parking is available in the same center behind Raley's. The price changes with demand. There is also the parking garage at Heavenly Village. The casinos are a possibility, but they are starting to charge on select days/nights.