

100 NEW PARKING SPACES AVAILABLE IN THE WHITEAKER

Three new parking lots have opened in the Whiteaker neighborhood, courtesy of the political strategizing by the Whiteaker Community Council (WCC), which is leasing the properties with funds donated by a coalition of local businesses.

The free lots, which will remain open around-the-clock for public use, are a response to concerns that on-street parking has been overwhelmed by visitors to the Whit. “The neighborhood at large expressed a lot of concern about how bad parking had gotten just in front of their residential properties,” says WCC Board President Sam Hahn, who says the Whiteaker CarPark Project is an example of a neighborhood “controlling its own destiny.”

Formerly known by the colloquial designation “Felony Flats,” the Whiteaker in recent years has blossomed as an artsy, hip district of boutique shops, chic restaurants and homegrown micro-brewers, the most famous of which is Ninkasi. In the minds of many residents, however, such popularity has led to a massive influx of drunken chuckleheads and high-rent bourgeois tourists seeking to slum on Eugene’s wild side.

Whether this is gentrification or no, the Whit’s growth undeniably led to more cars and less available free parking in the area. The new lots — at 2nd and Van Buren, 3rd and Van Buren and 5th and Blair, located behind the 76 gas station — open up roughly 100 parking spaces.

Hahn puts the monthly cost of the combined leases in the thousands of dollars, and he notes that the WCC has the option to purchase the lot behind the gas station in April of 2017 for \$100,000 — an amount for which the WCC is currently soliciting donations from the community at large. WCC board members Cathie Kapelka and Emily West are spearheading a project to beautify the lots with art and murals, and landscaping is being done by Rising Sun Custom Landscape and Danks Tree Care.

“The first plan was basically to solicit/beg the city to fix a problem that they indirectly and incidentally created,” Hahn says of tackling the Whit’s parking problem. “I was just getting led around in circles.”

WCC treasurer Dennis Ramsey says one of the original ideas of creating permitted parking zones in the Whit proved “too cumbersome” because of the data collection required. “We realized that we were going to have to solve this problem ourselves,” he adds, noting that he is pleased with the business-community partnership that resulted.

Jeff Petry, manager of the city’s Epark Eugene division, says he’s impressed by the WCC’s solution to parking demands. “It’s kind of a unique situation, and you have a community council that’s taking it head-on and solving their own problems,” Petry notes. “It’s awesome to have neighborhood groups take the initiative and solve their problems.”

Hahn himself takes a long view of what the new lots mean for the neighborhood. “This parking project gives the residents of Whiteaker some element of control over their commercial destiny,” he says, “as well as art-related opportunities both for creating art and, down the road, affordable spaces to create art.”

For more information on the Whiteaker CarPark Project, including participating businesses and how to donate to the project, visit whiteaker-communitycouncil.org. — *Rick Levin*



KELSANG PHUNRAB WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO ARRIVE AT THE CONFEDERATE FLAG RALLY OUTSIDE OF THE OLD FEDERAL BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN EUGENE SATURDAY, MARCH 5. PHUNRAB SAYS HE SHOOK THE PROTESTERS’ HANDS, TOLD THEM HE WISHED THEY COULD CELEBRATE THEIR ANCESTRY WITHOUT HATING OTHERS, THEN WENT ACROSS THE STREET TO MEDITATE FOR PEACE. THE CONFEDERATE ACTIVISTS HAD COME AND GONE BY 9:30 AM. A COUNTERPROTEST OF AN ESTIMATED 200 PEOPLE ORGANIZED BY THE COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF LANE COUNTY (CALC) TOOK PLACE AT NOON.

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ALKHADHER



HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

JILL WINANS & KATHY FORD

After college at Jacksonville University in Florida and a four-year enlistment in the Air Force, Kathy Ford headed west in 1976 to Los Angeles where she worked for AT&T, the phone company, and where she met her partner, Jill Winans. The pair escaped the Southern California heat in 1985 when Ford took a job with US West in Seattle, and left the big-city rat race in 1992, when she transferred to US West Wireless in Eugene. Two years later, Winans opened the CatSpa, a boarding kennel for cats. In 10 years of operation, the CatSpa became increasingly involved in animal rescue. “Greenhill needed a place for victims of domestic violence to leave their cats,” she says. “I had as many as 15 at a time.” As a board member of

the Stray Cat Alliance, she organized an adopt-a-thon in 2003 and brought the Oregon Neutermobile to town for two months in 2004. “We altered 611 dogs and cats,” she notes. “And we realized that we needed a full-time, everyday low-cost spay/neuter clinic.” So Winans and Ford started their own nonprofit, the Willamette Animal Guild (WAG), and paid a visit to the Humane Alliance of North Carolina. “They mentor groups that want to open a clinic,” says Ford, who retired from her phone-business job in 2006. “We had a blueprint.” The WAG Spay/Neuter Clinic opened its doors in January 2008 at 3045 Royal Ave. in Eugene. Earlier this week, the clinic celebrated its 40,000th surgery. To learn more about WAG or to schedule an appointment, visit wagwag.org.