

Published: Jan 12, 2006 12:30
Modified: Jan 12, 2006 04:18

This article was reasonably accurate; however there were two noteworthy omissions: (1) Joe Riddle had reneged on leasing the adjacent lot to The Courtyard of Chapel Hill; and (2) PH Craig reneged on various lease and sale agreements. Importantly, this presaged collusion by both Joe Riddle and PH Craig to deny the use and rental of their respective lots to The Courtyard of Chapel Hill -- to their own detriment, as neither have been able to lease spaces in their lots since chaining off the lots from ANYONE'S use -- to wit, since Jan 2006 for Joe Riddle and Aug 2007 for PH Craig

Franklin St. parking tightens

A lot owner decides to lease out spaces, so the free ride is over

LISA HOPPENJANS, Staff Writer

Business owners on Franklin Street's West End have long envied the parking their competitors down the street enjoy.

Now, they say, things are getting worse.

For about two years, West End workers and visitors had enjoyed free parking on the former University Chrysler Plymouth car lot. Owner Joe Riddle hadn't sanctioned parking there but hadn't called in the tow trucks either.

Last week the freshly striped lot was closed off with a long gray cable and No Trespassing signs. Riddle said Wednesday he needs to lease the roughly 50 spaces to help pay his property taxes.

Meanwhile, several lots leased by The Courtyard may soon get chained off if the retail and office complex's owner and the owner of the lots can't work out an agreement.

Robert Poitras, owner of the Carolina Brewery across from University Chrysler, said he understood Riddle's decision but had hoped the merchants could work something out.

"It was very nice while it was there," he said. "It's a bit frustrating to have to sit and look at it chained off and empty all day."

Julie Jennings, owner of the nearby Uniquities, a women's clothing boutique, said she might consider leasing spots for customers once the spaces are available. She sympathized with Riddle.

"You've gotta do what you've gotta do," she said.

The closure of that lot has hit Courtyard tenants as well. Employees and customers used the free spots.

Lex Alexander, owner of 3 Cups coffee shop, said that since Riddle closed his lot, he has watched out his window as customers circled the now-full Courtyard lot and left without their shot of java.

The possible chaining off of about 40 spaces in The Courtyard's main paved lot and other lots the property leases has him even more concerned.

The Courtyard has leased the lots from P.H. Craig since it was built more than 20 years ago, but new owner Spencer Young has been unable to work out an agreement with Craig.

Young says Craig reneged on an agreement to sell the lots to Young and has told him he would chain off the lots when the lease expires Jan. 26.

"The chaining off, it really doesn't just hurt the tenants of The Courtyard, it hurts all of downtown," he said. "I just know once he does this, it hurts the town."

On Wednesday night the lots were full. 3 Cups was crowded with folks attending a wine class,

and other downtown visitors grabbed spots to head to restaurants down the street.

Craig wouldn't comment specifically on the negotiations, but said he negotiated in good faith. He said he doesn't know what will happen with the lots.

While merchants say customers find parking elusive, expensive or inconvenient, Liz Parham, executive director of the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership, said the problem may be more a matter of perception or laziness.

"Every town, no matter how small or how large, will tell you they have a parking issue," Parham said. "Nine times out of 10, its not actually a lack-of-parking issue, but a parking-management issue."

Brenda Jones, the town's parking superintendent, said the town has 59 spots for short-term parking in its Lot 3 in the West End, and about 104 such spots in Lot 5 a few blocks down. There are about 80 on-street metered spaces along West Franklin, Roberson and Graham streets.

Staff writer Lisa Hoppenjans can be reached at 932-2014 or lisa.hoppenjans@newsobserver.com.

© Copyright 2007, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of [The McClatchy Company](#)