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## Mary Alexander changes protested

### Business owners don't want to lose current parking spaces

*By Pam Fleming*  
STAFF WRITER

Parking spaces are golden to downtown business owners, and they are not in favor of any plan that would reduce the number.

A few merchants attended Tuesday morning's Downtown Development Authority meeting after receiving a letter that the city is considering making Mary Alexander Court a two-way street and eliminating eight of the 14 parking spaces.

Several were quite vocal about their displeasure about the changes being discussed by the DDA board.

The landscape architectural firm JJR of Ann Arbor has suggested several designs for the street as part of a \$2-million sidewalk and landscape improvement project recently approved by city council.

The project is still in the planning stages, however, with no final design drawings approved yet.

#### COMMENTS FROM MERCHANTS

Business owners from Utopia Salon & Spa, Uptown Body Fitness, the Moon and Me, Pear-aphernalia and local chiropractor Bill Abbott came to protest the loss of parking.

"My patients say parking is already an issue," Abbott said.

"There is no parking already," said Pat Finnegan of Pear-aphernalia. "And, it's not just the stores and restaurants that use the parking spaces. The church uses them, too."

Lori Stempien from Pear-aphernalia said, "Why take parking spaces away from customers?" She also has concerns about safety if the court was made two-way, especially with children running around the Town Square area during the Tunes on Tuesday concerts in the summer. "It's a congested area," she said.

Board member Jim Long made a motion to maintain Mary Alexander Court as a one-way street in the design so that the current number of parking spaces could remain. The motion was seconded by Lou LaChance and passed by the board.

City council will have the final say on the project, and sidewalk and landscape improvements can still be made on Mary Alexander Court.

JJR also believes it is important to modify the entrance to the parking lot off of Mary Alexander Court to improve the safety of entering and exiting the lot.

## SAFETY CONCERNS NOTED

Much discussion revolved around the fact that making Mary Alexander Court a two-way street would present a safety concern with the number of large trucks that make deliveries to the various businesses on the court.

Chuck Lapham, former downtown business owner and downtown property owner, said he believes trucks should still only be able to enter Mary Alexander Court from the east off of Hutton Street because the turning radius is too dangerous from the west off of Center Street. However, Bob Doyle from JJR said the turning radius is about the same at each end of the court.

Jim Gallogly, public works director, said he is concerned about trash removal if the street is made into a two-way street with the possibility of trucks backing into vehicles.

“Thank you for your input,” DDA chair Greg Presley said to audience members after their comments. “We do value your input.”

The DDA is proposing having a special meeting about Mary Alexander Court before the next board meeting in February.

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