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BIZ BUZZ

Street changes at 50th & Xerxes anger local businesses

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NOVEMBER 4, 2019

UPDATED: NOVEMBER 4, 2019 - 9:48 AM





No-parking signs were added at 50th & Xerxes to make room for a new left-turn lane. Several local businesses fear the loss of parking will hurt their bottom lines. Photo by Andrew Hazzard

City plans to alter the intersection of 50th & Xerxes have been met with staunch opposition from local businesspeople, who are fearful removed parking could harm their stores.

Minneapolis Public Works plans to add a left-turn lane on Xerxes Avenue South for south-bound cars heading east onto West 50th Street. To create space near the intersection, new no-parking signs were added along Xerxes Avenue near 50th Street the week of Oct. 25. The new no-parking areas amount to a loss of six on-street spots, three on the east side, near Loft Antiques and Don RaÚl, and three on the west side, in front of Hunt and Gather.

Several of the merchants, who organized a meeting about the change with Ward 13 Council Member Linea Palmisano on Oct. 28, said losing those spots will be a hardship.

“There’s not going to be small businesses anymore,” Hunt and Gather owner Kristi Stratton said.

The changes, Palmisano said, have been discussed over the years. Her office has received comments saying the intersection is unsafe because there is often a line of vehicles waiting to turn left to 50th Street and other drivers attempt to move around those cars, leading to crashes and near misses with other vehicles and pedestrians.

“I do think we need to try new things at this intersection,” Palmisano said.

Gayle McMartin, office manager at Perspectives Vision Clinic, said one of their employees was hit crossing the intersection about six years ago and that she feels it’s unsafe. Perspectives owner Marcie Nichols said she thinks getting rid of the spots on the east side of Xerxes makes sense but the spaces in front of Hunt and Gather should be kept.

Most of the business representatives in the room were upset by the move and angry that they were not notified prior to the no-parking signs being implemented. Others said the timing of the changes was an issue.

Sarah Piepenburg, who owns Vinaigrette, said she wasn’t opposed to a change being made at the intersection, but losing nearby parking on the verge of the holiday shopping season is a blow for merchants like her. She said about a third of her annual sales come at holiday time.