

Los Altos, California

RV owners in Los Altos, California know what it's like to nearly lose their parking rights. In 2002, city officials quietly rewrote the city's Property Blight and Nuisance Ordinance to prohibit RV parking. But fortunately for local RV owners, Good Sam Club members Rich and Penny Jonke happened to visit city hall and caught sight of a notice indicating that a final reading had been scheduled of new RV parking restrictions that could become law within a matter of days. Alarmed at the prospect of losing their RV parking rights, the Jonkes printed up fliers notifying local RV owners of the proposed ordinance change and of the need for local RV owners to fight for their rights.

They soon met up with Good Sam Club members Ken and Teresa Baer, and together they contacted the Good Sam Club and obtained address labels for RV owners throughout the city. The Johnkes and the Baers divided in the city into 10 sections and recruited additional volunteers from the Good Sam Club to walk the streets and pass out fliers urging local recreational vehicle owners to voice their opposition to the proposed ordinance through phone calls, letters and e-mails in addition to showing up in person at city hall when the final reading of the ordinance was scheduled to take place. The two couples also worked with volunteers to circulate a petition opposing the RV parking restrictions and they submitted copies of the petition to each member of the city council prior to the final hearing of the proposed ordinance.

When the hearing took place, more than 400 RV owners were in attendance. City officials immediately recognized the fact that RV owners were not going to stand by and have their parking rights revoked. City officials ultimately back off the proposed ordinance entirely and left Los Altos' existing parking and storage ordinances intact. Part of the city's existing ordinance governing RVs is provided below:

Title 12 Buildings and Construction Chapter 12.56 House Trailers and Motor Courts

12.56.020. Placing of Automobile House Trailers

A. *It shall be unlawful for any person to place, keep, or maintain any automobile house trailer on any land within the city without the express permission of the owner of such land. No person shall allow, suffer, or permit any trailer to be placed, kept, or maintained on any land owned or controlled by him; provided, however, the occupant of any single-family dwelling may permit not more than one automobile house trailer of a non-paying guest to be placed, kept, or maintained on the premises of such dwelling for a total of not more than thirty (30) days in each calendar year by complying with all of the applicable ordinances of the city and securing a permit from the county health department.*

B. *Nothing in this chapter shall be deemed to prohibit the storage of an automobile house trailer on the home premises of its owner when located to the rear of the front setback line of the property, or in the case of a corner lot, when located five feet to the*

rear of any front setback line of any street, and not nearer than ten (10) feet from the sideline of any adjoining property, or twenty-five (25) feet from any public thoroughfare, dedicated or otherwise, in the case of a corner lot, and so long as said automobile house trailer is not used for living or sleeping purposes. Nothing, however, in this chapter shall conflict with Title 14 of this code with regard to side yard setback for any building site shown as one entire lot of record in the office of the Santa Clara County recorder prior to December 1, 1952.

C. Upon written application to the office of building inspector, a variance from the requirements of this chapter may be given on a yearly basis for the storage of an unoccupied automobile house trailer at least five feet to the rear of the front or secondary setback line but closer than ten (10) feet from the side property line when the planning commission, after thorough investigation, has determined:

- 1. That it would involve an economic hardship to comply with the provisions of this chapter in the storage of an automobile house trailer because of existing buildings or landscaping.*
- 2. That said variance from the provisions of this chapter will not be harmful to the surrounding neighborhood in appearance, and that it will be properly screened so as not to detract from orderly community planning and development; and*
- 3. That there has been no substantial objection made by the surrounding and adjacent property owners within three hundred (300) feet from the property on which the variance is to be granted after posted notice that a hearing will be held upon the application for the variance from the provisions of this chapter, or by such other method of notice of hearing as the planning commission made prescribe. (Prior code section 5-9.02)*