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Local News - Wednesday, February 16, 2005

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Officials worry about parking

By **RYAN WERBECK**

Times Herald

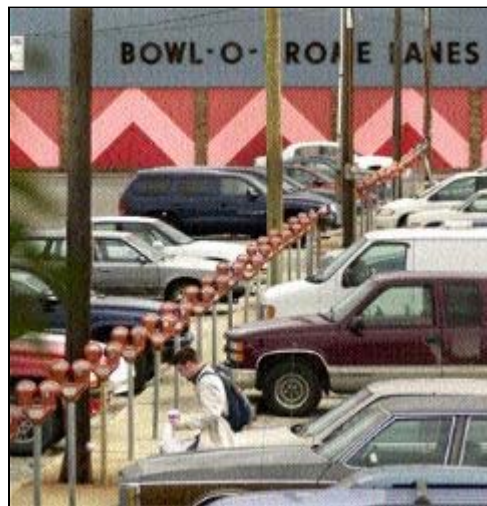
Port Huron officials remain committed to making sure parking needs are addressed when the developer that has expressed interest in building downtown begins creating designs.

City officials met Monday with Terra Land Group, the Novi company that has been the first to publicly express interest in developing various city parking lots with the goal of increasing the amount of businesses and residents in the downtown area.

In 2003, city officials began soliciting ideas from developers on how to turn some downtown parking lots into mixed-use retail, residential and hospitality areas. The goal is to weave various components of downtown life together to increase the potential for success.

Terra Land Group presented an overview Monday of the company along with examples of projects it has completed, such as Town Commons in Howell. The development features a mix of housing, retail businesses and an assisted-living center.

"The experience for the city has



Times Herald file photo by TONY PITTS

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT: The West Quay Street parking lot, between the Bowl-O-Drome and the Seventh Street Bridge in Port Huron, is one area where developers are interested in creating more businesses.

been very positive," Howell City Manager Shea Charles said Tuesday. He also described the working relationship with the company as positive.

City Manager Tom Hutka said the company will meet with more community and business leaders next week, then will work on developing plans for downtown.

"It will only proceed if it's the right project with the right company," Hutka said. "And we'll likely make sure all parking is replaced."

Parking is a top concern for Melissa Maes, who works at Ben's Fine Furniture.

"I think if it'll help, it'll be nice," she said. "Parking is a big factor though."

Maes has worked at the furniture store for 12 years and knows parking can be a problem. Any changes to existing parking could create headaches, although she hopes that's not the case.

City Councilman David Haynes said his top concern is the parking.

"It has to be addressed," he said. "You have to replace the parking you're removing."

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Tom Hutka

ONLINE

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