

NEWS

Neighbors to Ming's Supermarket: Sidewalks Should Be Clear For Pedestrians

Allowing cars to park on the sidewalk forces pedestrians to seek hazardous routes, some say.

By **Alix Roy** February 28, 2011

For those who drive frequently in the South End, the rules are simple: avoid Mass Ave. anytime after 4 p.m. and stay far, far away from the intersection of East Berkeley and Washington streets.

Commuters heading for the interstate provide the backup on Mass Ave., but farther east, it's the shoppers heading for **Ming's Supermarket** (<http://southend.patch.com/listings/mings-supermarket>) that bottle things up.

For neighbors and pedestrians, the situation worsens in winter. Sidewalks surrounding the lot often become storage for mountains of snow, forcing walkers to cut through the busy lot or risk walking in the bus lane. When shoveled, the sidewalks serve simply as an extension of the parking lot, one resident said, allowing more cars to fit into the space.

"I'm just kind of floored with what they're doing over there," said resident Richard Smith. "They give us two choices, either follow their path into the parking lot or [walk] through four feet of snow."

Ming's General Manager Mimy Wang sympathized with the situation and said she regularly sends an employee to keep order in the lot.

"I do understand when there is a lot of snow," she said. "What we are doing is I send people to direct traffic and direct how the cars are supposed to park."

To keep vehicles off the sidewalk, which is flush with the pavement, an employee places orange traffic cones along the boundary. Inevitably, the cones are knocked over or otherwise ignored by eager customers.

"It's a madhouse," said an employee of **Boston Auto Detailing** (<http://southend.patch.com/listings/boston-auto-exchange>), which shares a portion of the lot along its garage. "I tell them every morning, 'you've got to have handicapped access all along there but they don't listen. It's like talking to a wall.'"

Since Ming's doesn't own the lot, installing concrete barriers isn't an option, said Wang. The supermarket sub-leases the space and has few interactions with the actual owner, she said.

According to city's **online assessing database** (<http://www.cityofboston.gov/assessing/search/?pid=0306145000>), the property is owned by Robert Gottlieb, LLC, with a San Diego address. A call placed to the property-owner's listed number was not returned.

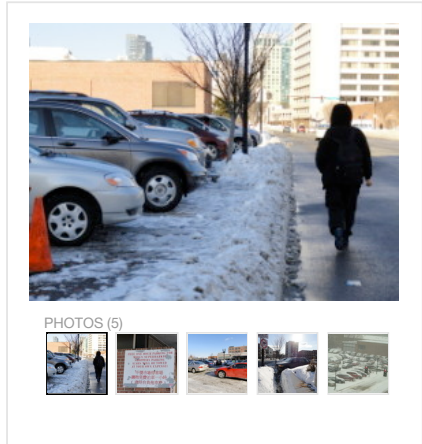
A ruling by the Supreme Judicial Court in July holds property-owners responsible for snow-related injuries. Locally, the city's Inspectional Services Department requires property-owners to clear sidewalks abutting their properties within three hours of a storm. Failure to do so could result in fines ranging from \$50-\$150.

In recent weeks, Inspectional Services employees working with City Councilor Bill Linehan's office paid a visit to the lot, which was later cleared of snow. Inspectional Services Spokeswoman Lisa Timberlake did not respond to inquiries related to liability in the parking lot, but did say that the space is not currently permitted for customer parking.

For Smith and other neighbors, being able to walk safely in the area is the main concern. Come summer, the situation isn't much better, with cars continuing to take advantage of the extra space, some said.

Ann Hershfang, a South End resident and member of the non-profit **Walk Boston** (<http://www.walkboston.org/>), called on the city to take action.

"It's not legal to have cars extending over the sidewalk," she said. "It's very important for the city to enforce it so people, able-bodied and elderly, will have a safe place to walk and those people in wheelchairs will have safe places to traverse."



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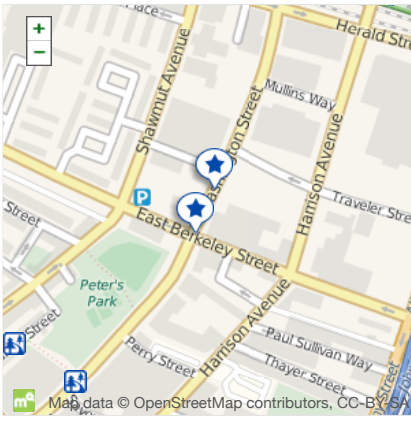
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