

## SAVE RESPONSIBLE AUTO RECYCLING IN EAST PALO ALTO

Honorable Mayor & Respected Council Members;

Feb. 4th, 2003

My name is Mike Baker & I own Infinity Salvage located at 2091 Bay Road, East Palo Alto. I am here tonight to ask you to please reconsider the closing of my business and to renew my business license which will allow me to reopen my business in order to support my family, my employees' families, and to continue to provide the people of East Palo Alto a much needed service. That is the service of recycling their unwanted cars in a professional manner and providing them with the parts to keep their cars running at a reasonable cost. This service is not only needed by the private citizens of this City but also by the professional police and code enforcement officers employed by the City who are dedicated to keeping the streets clean and safe for all to take pride in their community. Infinity Salvage has been providing these services at this location for 28 years and this location has been in the auto recycling business for 50 years. When I purchased this business in 1974 there were over ten legal auto dismantlers operating, and many more illegally operating, in the now City of East Palo Alto. Along with many more dismantlers located in the surrounding communities of San Mateo County. I agree that there were too many dismantlers in this City and many of them were unscrupulous and did many illegal activities. The City of East Palo Alto along with the County of San Mateo managed to get these undesirable operators out of business in the City. All the rest of the dismantlers in East Palo Alto and San Mateo County have gone out of business so that now there are only two legal dismantlers operating in the County of San Mateo and the City of East Palo Alto. Those are Infinity Salvage and B & S Dismantlers who are here tonight. In total our businesses only occupy approximately 2 acres out of the whole 130 acre Ravenswood Industrial Park. It is inconceivable to think that these two acres' use are hampering development from coming to the whole Ravenswood Industrial Park. Forcing us out of existence while allowing all the other business uses to stay open is unfair and makes no sense. I realize that some of the intent behind the ordinances 150 and 209 were good ones at the time they were drafted like saying that you want a so called "higher" and "better" use such as office space, etc but what is wrong with waiting until redevelopment actually comes and then discontinuing our use so that we can support our families in the meantime by doing what we know how to do - especially when you consider the poor economy at this time with the glut of available office space and the lack of jobs available. I am not against redevelopment and have dreams of doing a project on my property. I say keep us working so that the City can enjoy the benefit of the taxes and our employees spending their money in the community. We have employed as many as 7 full time people at one time the majority of which are citizens of East Palo Alto. We have done much over the years to improve the way in which our business looks as well as the methods of handling vehicles. We have one of the best looking businesses in the city with beautiful planter boxes full of oleander bushes in front. Infinity has a bermed concrete slab with car racks on it and a roof over it for dismantling and draining the vehicles on. The majority of the dismantled parts are kept on racks with roofs over them and all the liquids are handled and stored according to best management practices designed for the dismantling industry. Infinity Salvage has gotten the "Clean Bay Business" recognition every year from the local Regional Water Quality Plant. I belong to two environmental groups including a storm water group and a group called Partners in the Solution. My property has no environmental problems and has been environmentally assessed. In 1993 I had a phase one assessment completed by the engineering firm Erler & Kalinowski and in 1996 there was a phase two assessment done by the Environmental Protection Agency. I was told by Mark Johnson of the State Water Board and Lilly Lee of the Environmental Protection Agency that my property came out clean. Therefore, there was no cleanup or remediation plan done at the end of the phase two assessment as it was unnecessary. If this has been a wrecking yard for 50 years and there is no environmental problem then what is wrong with continuing the use until redevelopment comes to the property. Also, Infinity Salvage is

located on the only two acres of industrially zoned property in the City other than the property belonging to Romic Chemical next to me. If Romic is allowed to continue operations in the same zoning than why can't Infinity Salvage? There is not a better sight in the City for such a highly needed use. We belong to the State of California Auto Dismantlers Association along with the Bay Area Auto Dismantlers Association. I was one of the founding members of IDEA in the City of East Palo Alto. Infinity Salvage has for years strived to keep East Palo Alto clean by recycling the cars that are illegally abandoned on Bay Road and cleaning up the garbage that has been dumped. Years ago I attempted to have the City of East Palo Alto or PGE clean up the lot across the street from my property belonging to PGE which looked worse than a garbage dump. Former City manager Fred Howell told me the city had no money to clean it up & PGE refused so I personally did the cleanup at my expense and then kept it clean. Infinity Salvage has recycled 1000's of cars over the years from and for the City of East Palo Alto. In the past four years alone we have recycled over 1500 cars either directly for the police through abatement or from Conley and Sunrise towing which were abandoned in the streets of East Palo Alto. That is not including the cars we have taken directly from citizens of the community. We recycle on average 6 cars per day. Infinity has been a good community citizen business over the years in other respects also by donating and helping with various causes including Christmas in April, the senior center, youth for sports with the police athletic league, and various educational and religious donations. We also have a "hot line" which locates parts for peoples' cars all over the United States and have a web site where we sell our parts. Infinity Salvage has always maintained all the necessary licenses & permits. When the City first required an auto wrecking use permit in late 1985 I filed all the necessary forms, paid \$1350, and went before the Planning Commission. I have filed and paid for this use permit on 4 separate occasions. I feel that the dismantlers are being discriminated against with ordinances 150 and 209. At first they were to require that towing companies and storage companies to have a use permit along with the auto dismantlers, and then in a matter of a few seconds the City Council voted them out of the ordinances on Dec 16, 1996. We were called to a meeting sponsored by the City of East Palo Alto Community Development Dept. Dec. 9, 1996 to explain these ordinances and their application to our businesses. We were told by David Miller (Director of Planning and Public Works) at that meeting that after Jan. 2003 if our property was in active redevelopment our businesses would either be relocated or given 5 years of our revenue according to federal and state redevelopment law. However, if our property were not in active redevelopment, we would be allowed to operate on a yearly permit basis until redevelopment came. I read what he said before the City Council on Dec. 16, 1996 and asked to get this in writing. Unfortunately, former Mayor R. B. Jones countered this by saying "you auto wreckers are in a redevelopment area and we want you gone so when redevelopment comes, we don't have to deal with you." Then, the next day, I wrote the City and reiterated what David Miller had said and asked for this to be given to us in writing. I believed and trusted what Mr. Miller had told us and therefore was surprised to be served by a police car on Chief Bowlings letterhead in Mar. of 2002 to go to a meeting Mar 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002 about shutting down my operations. I was told at that meeting that if I wanted to stay in business I had to change the City Councils' mind or hire an attorney. I am here tonight to try and change your mind and allow a good business to continue to do what we are good at and that is drastically needed by the City of East Palo Alto! We have many people from the community come to Infinity Salvage every day to do business and they want to retain this convenience. We have 3 telephone lines coming in and the phones are constantly busy with people looking to recycle their car or buy parts. We "specializ in courteous service" and treat people by the golden rule so have never been taken to small claims court. The people do not want to drive to San Jose or across the Bay to look for their parts and those distant businesses certainly will not come to East Palo Alto to pick up our junk cars, or if they do, they will charge dearly. We have over 1000 signatures on our petitions from the citizens of East Palo Alto and the surrounding communities in support for us to be allowed to continue in business or to compensate us. I am trusting you will do what is right and listen to the will of the people. Please allow us to open our business. Thank you.