

'Bunk-bed' system gives parking a boost

By Stephanie Roberts
staff writer

LAFAYETTE — Lack of parking spaces has led to a number of business applications in this city.

Heimat Brudigan of Lafayette may have something to help get them off the ground.

Brudigan markets KLALIS Park Lift, a hydraulically operated parking system that allows two or three cars to park in a single-car space by using a "bunk-bed" concept.

"Many projects are considered financially not feasible due to the parking requirements of the various city or county planning codes," said Brudigan, a general contractor who's lived in Lafayette for 37 years. "Also, customers may need additional parking, but can't add on or expand."

The ParkLift system was developed by the German-based KLALIS Parking Systems about 30 years ago and has been used worldwide, especially in Europe, he said. About 10,000 units are manufactured each year.

Cars are stacked on platforms that quietly move up or down in less than a minute at the turn of a key.

The system can lower one car to the upper car drive off, or move both cars above grade so the bottom car can be driven. This way, all cars are independently accessible — which means that no car must be moved prior to parking or leaving — a feature which satisfies many off-street parking requirements.

In the San Francisco area, Berkeley has approved the system for off-street parking in their planning regulations. The Shattuck Avenue Lift on Mount Assisi in the valley is the first development in the county to use the system, said Brudigan, who about a month ago installed the first United States ParkLift at his own Brook Street home.

"When it first positions, I get a lot of strange looks," said the German-born Brudigan. "Even now cars stop to look. When they look I just hand them



Heimat Brudigan shows off the first PLALIS-ParkLift system to be installed in the United States — in his Brook Street garage.

"When I first put it in, I got a lot of strange looks. Even now cars stop to look. When they look I just hand them a brochure right away."

— Heimat Brudigan

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Brudigan installed ParkLift at his home to get his car off the street, he said, pointing to the narrow and curving street. His driveway is ideal for the system as it saves wasted space under the house.

The system requires a minimum of 5-foot-4 inches above the garage floor, and just more than 8 feet under-roof. He obtained a city permit to remodel, cleared out the area under the garage and installed support beams, a cost of about \$4,000.

The cost could be much less if the system is incorporated into a building's original design, he added.

The ParkLift system consists of six

steel vertical supports in price from about \$24,000 to \$125,000, Brudigan said. They come with a one-year warranty and require little maintenance, he said. For \$120 a year, a technician checks the system manually.

Most homes have two-car garages, but most families have more than two cars, said Brudigan. Also, many street garage spaces are used for storage.

By installing ParkLift and getting the cars inside a garage may prevent vandalism and theft, protect vehicles from weather damage, and exclude the noise of emergency vehicles like fire trucks, said Brudigan. Cars off the street allow the neighborhood to

look better, he said.

The extra garage space may be used to store antique cars, boats, and all special cars, motorcycles.

Customers of buildings also benefit with the system, he said.

Benefits include maximizing road space by providing extra legal parking spaces, increasing parking in existing garages where sufficient height is available, bringing the building into compliance with new handicapped parking requirements without losing space, and lowering construction costs and increasing development potential by eliminating restrictions caused by limited parking space, Brudigan said.

ParkLift also fits a built-in accessibility system, he added.

The operator must put a key in a compartment while facing the system and hold it until the platform is in place. Releasing the key immediately stops the 5,000-watt electric motor, he said. Models are available with emergency lights that stop the ParkLift if something gets in the way.