



CITY OF PACIFIC GROVE
300 Forest Avenue, Pacific Grove, California 93950

AGENDA REPORT

TO: City Council
FROM: Mark Brodeur, Director, Community and Economic Development
MEETING DATE: August 19, 2015
SUBJECT: Downtown Parking Strategy
CEQA: Does not Constitute a “Project” per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION

Receive staff presentation on the Downtown Parking Strategy and provide desired feedback and direction prior to initiating an implementing Ordinance.

DISCUSSION

In December of 2014, the City Council enacted a Downtown Three Hour Parking Pilot Program on the recommendation of the Community and Economic Development Director. The concept was to try out an extension to the parking time limits in downtown from two hours to three hours, to allow further study and input during the holiday season.

Following the Pilot Program, staff requested City Council extend the Three Hour Parking Pilot Program for six months to allow staff to further study the effectiveness of the program and to return to the Council with recommendations as needed.

The Community and Economic Development Director would like to review recommendations his Department has made based on field surveys and discuss his recommendations with the City Council prior to initiating amendments to the Parking Ordinance.

The Director met separately with the Traffic and Safety Commission, the Economic Development Commission, the Business Improvement District, and the Planning Commission. Each commission unanimously supported the recommendations of the Downtown Parking Strategy. All parties suggested minor amendments that are now reflected in the final Strategy.

Following this discussion, staff shall prepare and present for first reading at the September 2 Council meeting a draft ordinance consistent with the recommended Downtown Parking Strategy and in accord with the Council’s general direction.

The recommended action does not constitute a “Project” as that term is defined under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guideline Section 15378, as it is an organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

OPTIONS

1. Do nothing.
2. Provide alternative direction on the Downtown Parking Strategy

FISCAL IMPACT

Implementation of the Parking Strategy may increase revenues slightly through the provision for compounding multiple parking violations in a three-hour period.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Downtown Parking Strategy
2. Map of Proposed Parking Time Limits

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



Mark Brodeur, Director
Community & Economic Development Department



Thomas Frutchey, City Manager

A Parking Strategy for Downtown Pacific Grove

Generally speaking, people tend to shop at those locations most convenient for the most goods and services needed. Over the past 100 years, the role of a downtown in fulfilling a community's entire shopping needs has evolved. Suburban strip malls, enclosed malls, "big box"-anchored shopping centers, and online retailing have emerged as compelling alternatives for buying everyday goods. As shopping has evolved, so has understanding of its effect on traditional downtowns. Fortunately Pacific Grove's downtown has adapted despite increased competition from alternative shopping options locally, in neighboring communities, and online. While many downtowns were decimated by the proliferation of suburban shopping options, downtown Pacific Grove continues to thrive due to supportive community values and policies.

More importantly, downtown PG has adapted to serve a niche better aligned with its competitive strengths (food, arts, gifts, furniture, and office). A downtown parking problem is a good one to have, considering the circumstances of many downtowns, as it is a mark of success in attracting shoppers.

Parking is one of many variables influencing the downtown success equation. What downtown Pacific Grove offers that is missing in many other commercial settings is a memorable shopping experience. Downtown provides shopping variety, gathering places for social interaction, and sensory stimulation (architecture, streetscape amenities, ambience), all contributing to a difficult-to-define "sense of place"; critical factors that compel visitors and customers to visit because the experience is unique. Downtown just feels "right". Whether the ultimate destination is a coffee shop, boutique shop, independent retail chain, specialized restaurant, park, museum, music performance, library, post office, community event, or any combination thereof, downtown Pacific Grove experience cannot be replicated in a suburban shopping setting. While a legitimate question can be raised whether downtown currently has an ideal balance of uses; this topic is best left for separate consideration. Regardless, downtown's existing strengths are the foundation upon which continued prosperity can be built, and that changes in parking management and supply can support.

Research in parking psychology reveals that downtowns face real, but surmountable, challenges in attracting new customers. These challenges are a by-product of several generations of auto-centric transportation policy – including parking - resulting in a misunderstanding of the *complementary* role automobiles play in a downtown setting. Downtowns feel "right" because they are first and foremost *walking* environments. Yet, because generations of consumers (both local and tourist) are accustomed to the suburban shopping experience, downtown Pacific Grove may appear inconvenient, if not chaotic, for driving and, subsequently, parking. Thus, viewing parking through the lens of customers' *actual* parking expectations is useful. This should not imply downtown can accommodate the entirety of suburban shoppers' parking expectations, because downtowns are

configured differently and constrained by space. However, insight can be gleaned in the interest of finding solutions that can offer equivalent or superior value as a substitute for the parking variable in the downtown success equation. That is, understanding behaviors and beliefs about common expectations can help inform potential parking management and supply revisions.

What Do People Expect From Parking?

Post World War II suburbanization in America has resulted in nearly three generations of drivers conditioned to suburban parking convenience. However, traditional downtowns were not originally designed to store the volumes of automobiles that accompany ubiquitous motoring. Despite this, it is still important to understand drivers' parking expectations so that downtown parking recommendations can attempt to accommodate as many as possible and if not, return equal or greater value by other means.

In Pacific Grove, we have three separate and distinct user groups that park in our downtown. This three way distinction must be considered in the implementation of our recommendations. We have experts or local users who know where every parking space is and how long the posted duration is. We have first time visitors who tend to stay on Lighthouse and Forest and will not venture far afield to search out a parking space. And finally, we have repeat visitors who might be willing to walk a block to their final destination. These distinctions play out in our plans for signage, hours, rates and enforcement actions. Research offers further insight into parking psychology:

- Tourists or out-of-town visitors expect parking to be free.
- People want to park as close to their destination as possible.
- Drivers like to see their destination from their parked cars.
- People prefer angled to parallel parking.
- People covet surface parking.
- First time and repeat tourists are unwilling to search very hard for available spaces.
- Even when parking spaces are plentiful, drivers tend to believe there is a shortage.
- Employees and business owners tend to occupy prime on-street parking spaces.
- Parking fines will remain part of a negative downtown experience in tourist/visitor minds.

Parking Supply and Current Time Limits

There are approximately 911 on- and off-street public parking spaces in the commercial area of downtown. The time limits range from 20-minute loading zones to 3-hour parking spaces to 24-hour parking zones. A breakdown of parking time limits and types is provided here:

538	3-hour spaces
101	24-hour spaces
83	2-hour spaces
77	20-minute spaces
41	90-minute spaces
24	Loading Zone (yellow curb)
23	Handicapped
20	Reserved spaces

4 Passenger Loading (green curb)
911 TOTAL

Downtown Parking Occupancy Rates

Various metrics can assess downtown parking performance, including parking space turnover rates, average parking duration, circling time, and parking occupancy rates. Parking occupancy rates are the most useful metric as the primary indicator of available parking for downtown customers. Occupancy rate data were collected from three separate and distinct locations. Two separate blocks on Lighthouse Avenue were studied. Another studied location was the Municipal Parking Lot adjacent to Fandango restaurant. All were surveyed on a weekday from 8 am until 6 pm.

Parking researchers and practitioners have long known parking operates most efficiently when occupancy rates range between 80% and 90%. That is, when eight or nine out of ten spaces are occupied by cars. When occupancy rates consistently measure below 80%, parking availability is not considered an issue; in essence, the spaces are being underutilized. When occupancy rates consistently exceed 90%, parking management supply adjustments are needed.

Findings suggest that we do not have an occupancy problem because our average weekday occupancy rate was generally less than 70%. (This does not mean, however, that the City should reduce the number of spaces or lengthen the time limits. More on this later.)

Occupancy rates for the entire downtown assist in understanding broad parking supply /demand relationships. However, “hot spots” - high demand locations where visitors expect available parking within their willingness to walk are well utilized. Inadequate parking supply where it is most desired can affect visitors’ overall impression of the downtown parking supply and subsequently, potentially affect return visits.

Average Parking Duration

Downtown Pacific Grove currently has a variety of parking space time restrictions in place. The predominant time restriction is three hours. The 3-hour parking duration was implemented as a Pilot Program to see how the extra hour (parking duration was 2-hour) would positively or negatively affect businesses in the downtown. Several anecdotal positive comments were received at the Chamber of Commerce from downtown businesses. However, due to Police staffing shortages, the true effectiveness of the three-hour “park once” concept could not be fully determined during the pilot period since the parking spaces were not being regularly policed/enforced.

The purpose behind the 3- hour Pilot Program was to encourage a “park-once” concept among patrons. A park-once concept is a consideration of downtown as a place where people can walk to multiple destinations using a single parking space. This concept has been introduced successfully in several small- to medium-sized downtowns.

The park-once concept would also allow a reduction of zoning code based parking requirements for commercial uses, including existing downtown dining establishments wishing to expand. Such an approach may make a lot of sense for downtown PG, as it already has a concentration of visitors who come here to shop and then patronize other nearby restaurants and shops.

The three-hour concept was designed to give patrons the ability to dine at a local restaurant and still have time to stroll along downtown sidewalks and making subsequent stops and purchases. The parking surveys found, however, that our average parking duration was much shorter than expected.

On average, parking patrons stayed an average of one hour and fifteen minutes. Along with the 70% utilization, this suggests that since there are readily available spaces throughout downtown, they could easily get back into their car and find another space closer to their intended second stop rather than walking.

What Are the Key Elements for Improving Downtown Parking?

During the analysis of parking in the downtown, a set of worthy feasible improvements became apparent for improving the parking situation in Downtown:

- Use parking on Lighthouse Avenue and Forest Avenue to provide the most convenience to the unaccustomed tourist or infrequent visitor.
- Provide longer-term parking—both permit and open-space—in the Municipal Parking Lots to encourage employees and employers to , leave on-street parking supply available for patrons.
- Implement a system of parking enforcement should be in place that discourages employers and employees from parking on Lighthouse Avenue or Forest Avenue. A progressive fine structure for repeat offenders needs to be a component of this system need
- Install a signage system that directs drivers to long term public parking that is free.
- Create unique parking solutions in specific locales as needed.
- Avoid commercial parking intrusion into residential neighborhoods.

These elements need to be implemented as a package, and refined over time based on experience and changing conditions.

Recommendations

Downtown Pacific Grove finds itself in similar circumstances experienced by other communities where parking efficiencies have been effectively maximized with existing parking management techniques and parking supply. A coordinated set of management, enforcement and design considerations are needed to ensure substantive improvement in downtown parking conditions.

The proposed recommendations will significantly change how parking is managed in the downtown. These are based on a deliberate process driven by data gathering, literature review, public input,

case studies, and City staff's acquired understanding of parking principles and best management practices.

Limits

1. Re-establish 2-hour parking limits on Lighthouse Avenue and Forest Avenue; maintain the 3-hour parking on Lighthouse Avenue in front of the Theater.
2. Maintain the 3-hour parking on all other downtown streets and in the Municipal Parking Lots (Fandangos, Theater, and 15th Street) to encourage use by employees and employers.
3. Designate the four 3-hour parking spaces on the east side of Congress next to the Post Office as 90-minute spaces.
4. Increase the supply of 3-hour parking in the Theater Municipal Lot by reducing one row of 24-hour parking.
5. Maintain the 90-minute parking in Grove Market Municipal Lot and Peppers Municipal Lot.
6. Maintain the current numbers of 20-minute (77), Loading Zone (24), Handicapped (23), Passenger Loading Zones (4) and Reserve Parking. Continue to move those over time, if needed.

Permits

7. Continue to offer the Municipal Lot Parking Permits for employees and employers. Discontinue the reserved-space permits, converting those into open-space permits. Increase the available number of permits from 50 to 100 to encourage more participation.
8. With a permit, allow parking in Municipal Lots free during the day. These permits would be transferable and would be a plastic hanger attached to a vehicle's rear view mirror.
9. Reduce the price for all permits to \$250 a year, reserving the right to increase prices in the future when demand outstrips supply, etc.

Enforcement Technology and Practices

10. Enhance the parking citation's ability to discriminate among violators, by penalizing repeat offenders through a doubling of the amount of a citation within the same 30-day period of the first citation.
11. Upgrade parking enforcement technologies to leverage parking enforcement staff hours, to increase the consistency of parking enforcement, and to enable tickets to be processed within the City.

Signage

12. Install new attractive wayfinding signs on Lighthouse and Forest Avenues directing unfamiliar drivers to Municipal Lots.

MAP