

# Downtown Parking Demand/Supply Study

## Workshop 1 – Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2006

Hullender Room

Grass Valley City Hall

The City of Grass Valley hosted its first public workshop on the Parking Demand/Supply Study at 6:00 p.m., April 27, 2006. Approximately thirty-five (35) attendees were present. Twenty-one (21) signed in with their mail addresses and phone numbers for future notification and follow-up.

City Council Member Lisa Swarthout opened the workshop with introductions and a general explanation as to why the issue of downtown parking was under review, how the study was funded, etc.

Joe Heckel, Community Development Director, followed with discussion about the planning background behind the study and scope of investigation. Howard Levine, Executive Director of the Grass Valley Downtown Association, described the growing economic vitality of the downtown and market trends which have created a need for improved and increased parking.

Gordon Lum, Senior Associate of TJKM Transportation Consultants, gave a power point presentation of TJKM's findings concerning parking occupancy and duration during their 12/14/05 (Wednesday) and 12/17/05 (Saturday) surveys of the downtown area. Results of the study indicated that, although parking overall in the Grass Valley downtown area averaged only 65% occupancy at 1:00 p.m., the time of highest occupancy, occupancy soared to over 95% in most of the public lots, which is well above the 85% threshold for off-street parking occupancy. Results also indicated that the average duration of parking was in the 1 ½ to 2 ¼ hour range, or less than the 3-hour limit that is legally allowed through most of the downtown area.

Issues raised by workshop participants included the following.

- (1) Many “public” parking spaces are taken up by permit-holders and employees, and therefore are not available to visitors.
- (2) The question was raised as to how many parking permit holders there are, and how much revenue was generated by these permit holders – Howard estimated about 110 permit holders at a rate of \$200 per permit (\$22,000).
- (3) Participants agreed that a strong need exists for increased long-term employee parking opportunities.

- (4) Participants agreed that private parking seemed to be underutilized, while public parking was at capacity limits, suggesting the need for shared parking where feasible.
- (5) Residents from adjacent neighborhoods expressed their concerns about the increasing impacts of downtown parking on their streets.
- (6) A question was raised about the Caltrans lot; was it available for public parking?
- (7) The post office parking lot was identified as a problem.
- (8) The question was raised as to what the parking permit fees were used for, and whether a portion of these could be used to help pay the costs of increased and improved parking.
- (9) Another funding question concerned traffic mitigation fees, which are currently \$2,000 per space. Those present agreed that these need to be raised. The question was raised: what does Nevada City charge? \$5,000? \$9,000? Alternative fee increase scenarios need to be investigated.

Potential solution alternatives which were discussed included the following.

- (1) General agreement was reached that private parking areas needed to be better utilized and less restrictive. Potentially some spaces should be made available for shared parking or permit parking.
- (2) The possibility was suggested that parking time limits should be re-examined. Since a low percentage of those surveyed actually used their space for three hours, perhaps a 2 hour limit would suffice, and would encourage more rapid turnover and therefore, accommodate a greater number of parking clientele.
- (3) Parking areas with varying time limits were discussed, considering the possibility of designating some for longer term parking (i.e., 2 hours or more), and some for shorter term parking (1 hour or less). For example, a color-coded system like this is used in Palo Alto. Various varieties of this system are used in Pleasanton and other cities throughout California, as mentioned by Mr. Lum. Some workshop participants liked this idea; others felt it would be too confusing.
- (4) Should we construct a parking structure? Would it be advantageous to have it be a mixed use facility, with retail on the

bottom floor? Or what about locating it at the South Church Street site, where the lower topography works to our advantage?

- (5) What about parking meters or parking kiosks (like those used in Truckee) to help pay for parking? How high should the meter rates be? Higher than those currently used in Nevada City? Something closer to what is charged in Sacramento or San Francisco?
- (6) Should we limit employee parking so employees do not park in areas most likely to attract tourist parking?
- (7) What about shared parking in the under-utilized private lots? Perhaps the City could lease those spots, and charge for permit parking at a rate that could financially benefit both the underlying business owners and the City? While helping to solve the parking situation?
- (8) How about utilizing the Caltrans area in a manner similar to San Francisco's or Sacramento's use of under-freeway space?
- (9) Some of the lots would benefit from improved striping to achieve better efficiency.
- (10) We need better parking enforcement of existing (and/or proposed) rules.
- (11) We need better information on the number of employees parking downtown. We need to create better ways to handle employee parking, to help employers provide or find responsible parking for their employees. We need information on details like daily versus part-time shifts, day- or night-time shifts, short versus long (8-hours) shifts, etc.
- (12) We need to figure out how to pay for the needed parking improvements.
- (13) What about Bennett Street (privately owned) or the Fairgrounds or other satellite parking location, from which employees could be bused in to work?
- (14) Can bus transit routes be improved so as to better accommodate the schedule needs of downtown employees, thereby encouraging greater transit usage?
- (15) Can we add on to the sales tax to help pay for parking?

- (16) Whatever improvements are proposed, including the possibility of a parking structure, a priority is to retain the historic character of Grass Valley.
- (17) What about assessing fees (on a “per-stall” basis) to businesses that have private parking, but no fee for stalls that are made available for shared parking?
- (18) We need to develop incentives for sharing rides, sharing parking, and other measures that could reduce the demand for downtown parking.
- (19) What about the concept of allowing “trading” of permit spaces, so as to allow more flexibility for permit space users?
- (20) Perhaps the City could lease available privately owned land or parking spaces, for “pay” parking.

Generally, the consensus reached was that the downtown community needs to work together, with the City and with TJKM, to collaboratively build a solution to the downtown parking problems. Workshop attendees were supportive and enthusiastic.

The meeting ended at 8:00 p.m.

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