

Town of Carrboro Parking Task Force Report August 2002

CHARGE

On April 9, 2002, during the Downtown Economic Development Work Session, the Board of Aldermen directed staff to create a Parking Task Force. The Task Force is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Review options for the location of public parking, cooperative and shared parking, construction of public/private facilities and the provide recommendations on these topics to the Board of Alderman
- Establish the research, identification, and provision of privately owned and operated parking as a priority.
- Provide monthly status reports beginning August 5, 2002.

The Task Force was established immediately.

The Board sought representation on the Task Force from downtown business and real estate owner; local realtors, developers and architects; residential neighborhoods close to the downtown; Town of Carrboro Planning Board, Transportation Advisory Committee and Downtown Development Commission; and Town of Carrboro staff. The Board appointed the following members:

Sherman Richardson
Laura Van Sant
Jay Parker
Joseph Jones
Shirley Jones
Nathan Milian
Demeer Williford
Scott Maitland
Bill Rogers
Jack Haggerty
Bill Spang
Mariana Fiorentino
James Morgan
Scott Smith
Mitch Virchik
Stan Babiss
Dale McKeel
James Harris
Alex Zaffron (Board Liaison)

Executive Summary

Town involvement in expanding parking availability is a critical component in reaching the town's goal of doubling commercial space in the downtown area.

Carrboro has few commercial lots large enough to both increase building square footage and provide adequate on-site parking. The task force recommends the town boost the supply of short-term parking by providing more on-street parking, enforcing existing short-term limits, expanding park-and-ride opportunities and facilitating cooperation between property owners to create more efficient use of existing parking.

Long-term, the task force recommends creating a revenue stream to pay for town-developed parking lots and, eventually, parking structures. Funding would come from giving developers the option of making payments-in-lieu of providing their own parking on-site. Additional revenues could come from charges for short-term parking.

The task force also recommends an overhaul of the town's parking ordinance to allow some of the recommended changes and to make it less cumbersome for developers and town staff alike. In particular, the task force urges simplifying the calculations for determining required parking in new developments and revoking the ban on unpaved lots.

A. PROCESS

The Task Force first met on June 5, 2002 and began its work by electing Nathan Milian as chair and establishing an agenda to consider the various vehicle parking needs for the downtown area, for both now and the future. The Task Force then proceeded to assess parking problem areas, to identify both short-term and long-term opportunities to address problems and to meet needs, and to review existing Parking Ordinance. The conclusion of the Committee's work would be recommendations with specific targets where appropriate and a proposal for a monitoring process.

B. PARKING PROVISIONS & NEEDS

The Task Force identified three main types of downtown public parking provision: 1) Onsite/Adjacent Parking, defined as parking directly beside and generally exclusive to a particular business or facility; 2) Local Parking, defined as non-exclusive shared or public parking within acceptable walking distance of the user's destination; and 3) Remote Parking, defined as a public facility outside the Downtown area and requiring additional transportation to bring users to their destinations. Appendix A illustrates how different businesses, facilities, events, and users are associated with these different needs.

C. IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS AND SHORTCOMINGS

Using the parking needs analysis as a guide, the Committee was able to establish that the most critical immediate shortcoming in the central downtown area was a shortage of convenient short-term public parking in particular areas. Through an informal study and a photographic survey, the Committee concluded that while there seemed to be plenty of empty parking spaces throughout the downtown at most times of the day, there was a general perception among both shoppers and Carrboro business owners that it is difficult to park in the downtown largely because most of the empty spaces were private onsite spaces, either apparently or explicitly associated exclusively with particular businesses.

Of the town-managed public lots in the central downtown area, the lot on S. Greensboro Street (the "Old Post Office" lot) seemed least used, while the lot on Roberson and Main (the "Armadillo" lot) was more often full, especially at lunch time. Although the Old Post Office lot is extremely close to numerous businesses on Main Street (specialty retail stores particularly) which have problems staying viable due to lack of onsite parking, the inadequacy of safe sidewalks and problems

crossing Greensboro Street appear to be major obstacles to patrons of these businesses. The Century Center lot, even closer to the Main Street retail area, seems to suffer from a public perception of restricted use, perhaps because a number of the spaces are shown as reserved for police vehicles.

A particular problem stems from the fact that downtown Carrboro offers the closest free parking to UNC campus. Private lot owners report unauthorized campus commuter parking as an ongoing enforcement chore.

Looking at remote commuter parking, there was a general sense that the Carrboro Plaza facility was well used and approaching capacity. It is currently the only commuter lot in the area with a direct connection to Carrboro's downtown.

D. FUTURE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

While current parking problems are relatively minor, the town's stated goal of doubling commercial space over the next ten years will have a major impact on downtown parking issues. Clearly there will be a substantial increase in parking needs as a result of this increased density of use. Developers will find it increasingly difficult to meet the presumptive parking standards currently in place. Additionally, lots currently operated (but not owned) by the Town as surface parking may be lost as owners seek to maximize development value. The vulnerability of existing public lots to development pressure in this way is a matter of some urgency.

It is clear that the Town will need to participate more substantially in the provision and management of public parking than it has in the past. At the same time, insofar as a primary purpose of increasing available downtown commercial space is to proportionally alleviate the residential tax burden, sources of funding will need to be found outside of general town revenue.

E. MEANS & OPPORTUNITIES

The Task Force considered a number of options for improving downtown parking provision. The Task Force began by identifying low-cost measures that could be implemented within a relatively short time frame, then considered longer-term options which would require more extensive financial planning and resources. It finally considered long-term strategies which could mitigate growth in parking demand.

1. Immediate Opportunities

a. On street Parking

Most thriving downtowns seem to enjoy an abundance of on-street parking. Carrboro has virtually none. Increasing on-street parking is a significant opportunity for early action to directly address the need for more short-term public parking in the downtown without incurring major land acquisition costs. Existing town ordinances are not supportive of such provisions and would need to be revised. On-street parking affects general vehicle and traffic management issues and in many instances will require collaboration with NCDOT. The provision of on-street parking is likely to have a positive impact on walkability issues (see below). The most likely locations identified for new on-street parking are listed in Appendix B, along with comments on different on-street parking formats.

b. Consolidation of Private Lots

A second opportunity exists by consolidating private lots to promote shared parking. Specific opportunities are limited, and most businesses would require some incentive to participate. A full discussion of consolidation issues is attached as Appendix C.

c. Walkability

Increasing the walkability of the downtown as recommended in the Burden Report would

offer substantial benefit to the accessibility and use characteristics of existing and future shared and public lots and will have the additional benefit of reducing vehicle trips in the downtown area.

2. Long-term Options

a. Surface Lots

New surface lots, provided either by the Town or by private entrepreneurs, are likely to be a longer-term project because of the significant costs. The Sunrise Drive/Rosemary Street lot cost approximately \$5,000 per space, unpaved. Paving would add about \$1,000 per space. Rising land values would of course have a major inflationary effect on these costs.

b. Structured Parking

Parking decks are more expensive and more difficult to find a place to locate them. Chapel Hill's Rosemary Street deck cost about \$16,000 per space in 1993, not including the cost of the rooftop amenity area. Ideally, major parking structures would best be located by the principal gateways to the downtown so that the interior traffic volume would be reduced. At the same time, visual considerations would demand a less prominent street presence, especially as two of the four main gateway streets (N. & S. Greensboro) are predominantly residential in character.

c. Remote Parking

It is likely that much of the new commercial space will be for office use for which remote commuter parking will be acceptable. Remote parking is an important option which relieves pressure on limited downtown space. As with in-town parking, location is critical and neighborhood issues will be significant. Possible sites for additional remote lots include the existing Public Works facility, the planned future Public Works location on Old NC 86, and the Hank Anderson Park on NC 54 where adding bus service for the parking lot could have the additional benefit of providing public transportation to the park facilities. The new remote parking facility due to open soon on Jones Ferry Road is not currently planned to have direct connection to Carrboro downtown. Operational adjustments should be made to correct this deficiency.

d. Funding opportunities

The Town will need to develop a long-term financial resource for parking and related needs if it is to act as the agent of a more efficient public parking infrastructure. Potential sources to feed such a fund include payment-in-lieu options for developers and fees charged to users in addition to the debt service line item in current budgets. User fee options should include flexible alternatives like multi-bay metering (pay-and-display) as well as traditional metering and gated lots.

3. Mitigating Demand

The Town can be proactive in mitigating growth in parking demand in several ways.

a. Mixed use development

Mixed-use development can help stem the growth in parking demand. For example, commuters using remote lots or public transportation can support downtown service and retail businesses without adding to parking needs. The Town should provide a regulatory environment which is supportive of mixed-use development.

b. Public Transportation Improvements

Enhancement of public transportation, including extending the hours of shuttle service to remote lots can clearly impact the growth of parking demand in the downtown area.

c. Bicycle Support

Bicycle use has a major growth potential for users of the downtown area and the Town can do much to support it. Many commuters are resistant to biking because of the need to present a professional appearance at work. In addition to expanding its commitment to bike-friendly roads, the Town can also help by encouraging developers to include cyclist-friendly facilities such as employee showers and by considering the inclusion of a public bike station in its program of infrastructure improvements.

F. ORDINANCE REVIEW

The present Parking Ordinance is constructed on the model of each development providing for all its own parking needs. It is clear that this model is substantially incompatible with the denser pattern of downtown commercial development which the Town now seeks. Neither does it address the issue of valued older commercial structures that are unable to provide adequate on-site parking. Further review revealed many detailed inconsistencies of the present Ordinance with present and future parking needs and with other aspects of established town policy.

Dimensional standards for aisle widths and parking bays are inappropriate for today's vehicles. The 40% limit on the proportion of "compact" to "full-size" spaces is similarly out of date and forces inefficient use of valuable space. The extraordinary complexity of the current parking standard based on use is needlessly obstructive to development in general and to desirable mixed-use projects in particular (It was noted that though stated standards are presumptive, financial backers tend to perceive them as mandatory.) and it renders the Ordinance extremely time-consuming for town staff to administer and enforce.

Paving requirements are inconsistent with town objectives in mitigating runoff. It is instructive that the Town is out of compliance with its own Ordinance 15-296 (f) by having several unpaved parking lots under its management. Several of the general design requirements are inappropriate and needlessly restrictive.

Recognizing that a Parking Ordinance shapes the nature of development as much as it controls vehicle management, the Task Force considers that the time is ripe for a thorough revision of the entire Ordinance. An outline of how the new Ordinance might be structured to best achieve town goals is given below in Appendix D.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD

The Board should begin immediate implementation of the following actions:

1. **Revise Parking Ordinance**
Charge staff to draft a revised Parking Ordinance as outlined in Appendix D.
2. **On-street Parking**
Charge staff to identify and to create fifty new on-street parking spaces in the downtown area by the end of FY 2003, and a total of at least two hundred on-street parking spaces by the end of FY 2008.
3. **Walkability and Transportation**
Develop a walkability program that includes enhanced traffic calming, crosswalks and sidewalks in the downtown. Aggressively pursue the development of bike- and pedestrian-friendly roads throughout the community.
4. **Consolidations and Sharing**
Survey downtown business owners to investigate opportunities for town-facilitated parking consolidation & sharing and develop standards, protocols and incentives for such facilitation. A suggested survey is attached.
5. **Enforcement & Fees**
Establish an enforcement program for existing short-term parking. Develop parking usage fee strategies to pay for enforcement and management and to contribute to a Parking Development Trust Fund. Establish a monitored trial of multi-bay metering in the public lot at East Main and Roberson streets.
6. **Parking Development Trust Fund**
Establish a capital fund for land acquisition and development for parking and related purposes. The Fund is to be supported by payment-in-lieu fees, by any operational surplus of parking usage fees, and by a Town of Carrboro budget line item of at least \$50,000, indexed annually. In addition to strategic land acquisition, acceptable uses for the fund would include street modifications to accommodate on-street parking, provision of bike and public transportation support facilities that directly impact parking demand, and the layout, landscaping & paving of surface lots and construction of parking decks.
7. **Structured Parking**
Charge staff to identify strategic locations for major parking structures as a guide to land acquisition in accordance with long-term vehicle management policy.
8. **Monitoring**
Instruct the Town Manager to present a report to the Board on the progress toward the completion of the above goals annually following the adoption of these recommendations and submit a copy to the Downtown Development Commission.

Parking Needs

Parking needs for personal vehicles are not generic - they vary by user and facility/business served. Below are the main categories of vehicle parking users in downtown Carrboro and the type of parking provision typically needed, both now and what can be anticipated for the future in accordance with Town of Carrboro Vision 2020 document. Uses which overlap with parking needs are also noted.

Parking User	Time & Duration of Use	Acceptable Location
Customer		
Grocery (HT, WSM, CVS)	day/evening 30 - 60 min.	onsite or close local
Dining/Entertainment	day/evening 1-3 hours	local
Specialty Retail	day/ 1-3 hours	local
Service (Realty, medical/dental, legal, design etc.)	day/ 1-3 hours	On site or local
Employee		
Commuter	8 am - 8 pm	Local or remote
Mobile professional (vehicle user during day)	8 am - 8 pm	On-site or Local
Extended-hour (late-night restaurant employees, creative professionals)	24-7	local
Resident		
Townhomes & Apartments	24-7	onsite
Hotel	24-7	local or valet
Event		
Regular (WSM after hours, Farmer's Market)	1-3 hours	local
Occasional (Carrboro Day, July 4, etc.)	Times vary	Local &r remote
Delivery	day, 5 - 30 min	onsite or close local
Trash/Recycling receivers	24/7	Onsite or local

Definitions

- onsite dedicated parking per facility
- local inside CBD, within walking distance (varies by user)
- remote outside CBD, requires secondary transportation

On-street parking

The following locations are recommended for immediate consideration for new on-street parking:

- Roberson Street (especially south side)
- E. Main Street, (RR crossing to Rosemary Street, both sides; 100 block, s. side)
- E. Weaver Street (transfer parallel parking to N. side to gain spaces lost by driveways cuts on S.)
- N. Greensboro Street in front of Carr Mill lot (combine with street improvements to facilitate truck access to the Carr Mill & Annex service bay)
- W. Weaver Street;
- W. Main Street from Town Hall to Poplar Avenue (ideal for Farmer's Market parking)

All of the above cannot be considered in isolation. Most of the examples are chosen to make use of the roadway currently occupied by travel lanes, turn lanes, etc. which appear to be underutilized or redundant.

Parallel, diagonal & perpendicular parking options all to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Parallel spaces may be the only option where the right of way is limited and/or traffic density is high. Bay marking of parallel spaces reduces capacity dramatically and should be avoided. Perpendicular (90°) parking offers the highest density of any parking geometry and is very suitable for low-traffic streets where right-of-way width allows. 45° angle parking inhibits vehicle crossover and enables high-speed parks but has a much lower density. Higher incident angles of 60° - 75° offer greater density and slower park speeds than 45° angles, and permits narrower access aisles than perpendicular parking. On-street parking should be short-term only (0.5 - 2 hr) and future usage fees should be anticipated. Multi-bay metering (pay-and-display) appears to be the most flexible usage fee option for all on-street parking.

Consolidation and Time Sharing of Existing Private Parking Lots

(Time sharing refers to property owners voluntarily allowing public parking on their lots during hours of less need by the owner's tenants)

Parking may be increased through further consolidation of existing parking lots, by following lessons learned in the current consolidation and volunteer sharing on the south side of the 100 block of Main street, e.g. the successful consolidation of the parking lots involving the central section between Acme restaurant and the Bank of America, and the successful after-five voluntary sharing of the gravel lot surrounding Carolina Seafood with the customers of Armadillo and Acme restaurants.

The possible benefits of successful consolidation would be, in addition to parking spaces gained, include the reduction of the number of driveways from the street which can in turn become parking spaces or returned to planting areas. The reduction in driveways may in some cases increase the street area available for on-street parking;

Consolidation of parking lots can also include consolidation of some infrastructure, e.g. shared dumpsters, or reduce the number of dumpsters and pickup by Public Works, although sharing dumpsters or even driveways can be done between owners without consideration or sharing of parking lots. The intention is to unify and simplify and to increase the number of public parking spaces.

Major considerations are lot geometry; use of consolidated lots; lot construction and maintenance; effects on developers/owners; and whether consolidation results in a significant net gain in parking spaces. The size and/or configuration of some existing parking lots do not lend themselves to consolidation. The net result can be a loss of parking spaces in some instances, and there would be no reduction in the number of driveways required to serve the parking lot. Shared/consolidated parking lots also have the potential to create discord between owners if use is not equitable and consolidation was not fully voluntary.

Means of facilitating consolidation will need to:

- 1) include a design review which considers formalized ingress/egress easements;
- 2) develop standards for parking
- 3) develop lot construction and maintenance agreements
- 4) guarantee to lot owners that consolidation is not simply a means to transfer parking from lot owners who have purchased enough for their tenants/customers to lot owners who have not. If consolidation of parking simply borrows parking spaces from those lots which currently have enough and give them to lot owners who do not currently have enough, consolidation will be difficult to accomplish and unsuccessful, producing no additional net parking gain.

Consolidation of parking lots can be initiated by town staff when a land development application is submitted; however, if the permit process is perceived as coercive and an encroachment on property rights, cooperation may be withdrawn and the objective of doubling commercial space may be unintentionally diminished. Applicants and town staff should work together with adjoining property owners to explore the possibility of voluntary consolidation. Such planning shall attempt to anticipate future expansion of participating properties. To assess the possibility of other consolidation and voluntary time-sharing, the Task Force could instigate a parking survey to review existing properties not currently in the process of use changes and /or expansion. Town staff can assist in the design and identification of possible consolidation opportunities.

Incentives for consolidation and time-sharing could include a reduction in parking lot standards - (instead of paving lots with asphalt, consolidated lots can be gravel if the owners so choose), and help from the Town in maintaining and marking public spaces, policing reserved parking spaces and enforcing time limits on parking.

The consolidation of existing parking lots would be most beneficial in downtown areas where there are currently a number of smaller lots: the 200 block area of West Main St. and also the area between West

Weaver St. and West Main St., although any real gain may be difficult to realize. As commercial square footage increases, consolidation will not be the sole answer to downtown Carrboro's parking needs, but it is seen as one possible short-term solution to the current "perceived" increase in demand for more downtown parking, until on-street parking or other resources can be developed.

Revision to Parking Ordinance

1. **Abandon use-based calculation of parking load.**
Substitute simple calculations based on gross floor area only. *Purpose - facilitate development process, encourage mixed-use projects, and reduce administrative burden on town staff. Factor higher load for at-grade (first floor) space. Purpose - a) acknowledge that first floor is most suitable for retail use and thus attracts higher loads, and b) encourage developers to build taller. Suggested: 3 spaces per 1,000 s.f at grade, 1 space per 1,000 s.f. other floors*
2. **Provide payment-in-lieu option based on cost of town supplying parking not provided by developer.**
Allow deductions from payment-in-lieu of actual cost of facilities or programs which support bicycle commuting and other personal motor vehicle alternatives - bike racks, employee showers etc. *Purpose - Allow flexibility to developer and build public fund for parking & related development. Suggested: \$6,000 per space not provided, adjusted annually for inflation.*
3. **Simplify dimensional standards for parking bays & aisles shown on development plans.**
Allow developers to create their own mix of large/small spaces in accordance with need. Allow developers to vary from detailed parking layout shown on plan used to calculate gross compliance or payment-in-lieu. Prepare supplementary guidelines for standard parking layouts to aid developers in efficient layout. *Purpose - Allow flexibility to developer and reduce administrative burden on town staff. Use the development plan layout purely to establish a uniform baseline for the payment in lieu. Suggested values - standard parking bay 8' x 18', aisle width 18'. Delete references to subcompact spaces & motorcycle spaces.*
4. **Give consideration to establishing a maximum lot area devoted to parking.**
Purpose - Discourage low-density development
5. **Remove requirements to pave lots.**
Consider retention of requirement to pave access to lots. *Purpose - Reduce runoff. Remove inappropriate general design guidelines. Purpose - effective use of space, optimize parking in relation to all other demands.*

This Task Force's terms of reference are the downtown area only. Consideration needs to be given whether these criteria should be also applied to commercial development elsewhere in the town's jurisdiction. Village mixed use in the Northern Transitional Zone already has its own rules for parking. Townhome, apartment, single-family and other residential uses outside of the downtown area have not been considered, but it is intended that the above guidelines apply to any residential development in the downtown area.

DOWNTOWN CARRBORO PARKING SURVEY

PURPOSE: The Carrboro Board of Aldermen have appointed a Parking Task Force to examine and assess the current parking situation in downtown Carrboro. The Task Force is charged with reviewing options for public parking and exploring arrangements for cooperative and shared parking. The Task Force wants to work with private business owners to explore a parking plan whereby regulated short term private parking spaces might be made available during specific hours. Because your input is vital, please assist us in our efforts by answering the questions listed below.

BUSINESS NAME: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

YOUR NAME (optional): _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE RESPONSE TO EACH QUESTION

1	What type of business do you have and when does it operate?	Type (bank, clothing store, etc.): _____ Operating Hours & Days of the Week: _____
2	Where do you park?	<input type="checkbox"/> Private off-street lot <input type="checkbox"/> On-street (curb) <input type="checkbox"/> Public off-street lot <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
3	How many parking spaces do you provide for your customers?	_____ Private off-street lot _____ On-street (curb) _____ Public off-street lot _____ Other: _____
4	Do you provide your employees with parking in a private lot?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes, number of spaces provided: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> no, where do they park: _____
5	Is adequate parking provided?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no, additional number required: _____
6	When do you experience a parking shortage, if ever?	Day(s) of the week: _____ Time of the day: _____
7	What is the average time to make a transaction at your business?	<input type="checkbox"/> under 15 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 60 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 15 to 30 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 30-40 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> more than 2 hours
8	What are the posted time restrictions near your business?	On-street: <input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 hour <input type="checkbox"/> 2 hour <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ Off-street: <input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 hour <input type="checkbox"/> 2 hour <input type="checkbox"/> other _____
9	Do these restrictions provide your customers with enough time to complete their business?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no, please explain: _____
10	The enforcement of parking regulations is:	<input type="checkbox"/> too lenient <input type="checkbox"/> about right <input type="checkbox"/> too strict
11	Parking ticket fines should be:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$10.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$15.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____
12	Are you willing to let others use excess parking spaces on your property?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no If yes, how many spaces: _____
13	What hours would you allow public parking on your lot?	<input type="checkbox"/> after hours only from _____ to _____ <input type="checkbox"/> during regular business hours from _____ to _____

14	What type of consideration are you willing to receive for allowing public parking on your lot?	<input type="checkbox"/> Goodwill <input type="checkbox"/> Cash payment - how much per space? \$ ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Installation of multi-bay metering and parking available at a charge (for more information on this option, see below) <input type="checkbox"/> Installation of multi-bay metering and parking available at a charge (for more information on this option, see below)
15	How should public parking be managed on your lot?	<input type="checkbox"/> Free parking after hours <input type="checkbox"/> Installation of multi-bay metering and parking available at a charge (for more information on this option, see below)
16	Please provide comments or suggestions concerning parking in the downtown area.	

WHAT IS MULTI-BAY METERING?



Multi-bay metering is a parking system whereby one parking meter is used to manage the use of multiple parking spaces. Rather than having one meter at each parking space, one multi-bay meter can serve numerous parking spaces, creating a more efficient and aesthetic operation. A multi-bay meter (shown at left) is used by a motorist to acquire a parking ticket that is displayed on the vehicle dash. The parking ticket sets the time by which the motorist is to vacate the space. Parking tickets in this system can be free or paid for. Such a system regulates time restrictions and encourages parking turnover.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE — YOUR OPINION MATTERS!

Deadline for returning questionnaires is [DATE]

Please return the survey in the enclosed envelope. If no envelope is available, mail or deliver to:

Community drop-boxes for this questionnaire will be located at _____