

Chapter 5. Public Involvement

Public Workshop

Following the conclusion of the Existing Conditions review for the Downtown Parking Study, the Project Team organized an Open House-format public workshop to present and discuss the review's findings, and to offer a forum for local stakeholders to present their own parking-related experiences and perspectives.

The workshop was held on the evening of December 6th, 2006 at the Detroit Edison building on Main Street in Downtown. Following a brief presentation of summary findings by the Project Team, attendees gathered around four tables for the purposes of discussing specific Downtown areas or experiences. Due to a large attendance of residents and merchants from the Main Street area and surrounding neighborhoods, two tables focused on issues related to this area. A third table focused on the Kerrytown area, while the fourth table discussed the State Street area. Due to a lack of attendees interested specifically in South Campus issues, no table was devoted to discussing this area.

The following is a summary of stakeholder discussions and comments from each table.

Main Street

General Perceptions:

- Spaces are usually available at Kline's lot and 4th & William structure during the day.
- Parking is difficult, and events exacerbate this.
- On-streets spots normally fill up, but structures still have spaces available at night.
- My employer is expanding, and few parking passes are left.
- Evening parking is perceived as difficult.
- Local businesses hear complaints from customers about the cost and availability of spaces.
- Special events make the wait longer and the lots more full.
- Meters only until 6PM; possibly extend to 10?
- It's nice that parking is free after 6.
- Structures feel non-secure.
- Improvements needed to the existing mass transit system (AATA isn't adequate for seniors) especially in the evenings. Should be higher priority than parking.
- Better mass transit serves employees rather than customers.

- Employee groups didn't like remote parking, feared access problems for flexibility/emergencies.
- Evening mass transit needs improvement.
- Carpoolers should get a reserved space, to change the pattern of single occupancy vehicles waiting in line at structures.
- Perception is that parking is bad, but this doesn't seem to be the case.
- Need to better integrate the systems; we don't want parking to overwhelm the appeal of the place. Value-shifting and a more responsive system are necessary.
- Need better design, promotion of alternatives, and efficient use of existing parking.
- Going to higher levels in structures isn't convenient for short-term parkers.

How far is too far away to park?

- For customers: 5 minutes or two blocks.
- Personally, within fifty feet.
- Tolerances vary, and lenders prefer certain relationships.
- Parking should serve the experience (i.e. "we don't go downtown to park") not be the experience.
- Don't barter away the experience, reference to the new on-street garage doors on Liberty. The journey is important.
- The market existed for on-street garage doors. Packaging is important.
- Conflicting cultural messages are sent: people adapt to the activities with parking services and consider their needs (short, multi-purpose).
- Encourage employees to park distantly or carpool.

Questions and Comments on the Data or Graphics from the handouts

- Were permit spaces counted as filled only if a car was actually there, or were they counted as filled automatically, since they are reserved for permits only?
- Could attending parking meters or making structures free improve balance of evening demand?
- Ann & Ashley is better used following a summer free parking program.
- Are customers being turned-off because of parking problems?
- Structures are always full, crowded out by permits, mid-day is difficult
- Are permits ever sub-leased?
- There's a lack of information for parkers; the signage at Tally Hall is especially bad.
- Environments near the structures are important, note Ann & Ashley.

Additional Comments

- New parking demand from residential growth is a concern.
- Lack of parking requirements for new development is a concern.
- How are permits allocated?
- Pay attention to:
 - Permitting process;
 - Efficiency of use;
 - Shared parking;
 - Innovative technology and management techniques;
 - Better transit and coordination of systems/schedules; and
 - Balance of parking utilities with quality of experience.

Main Street Residents/Merchants

Of the six attendees at this table, all were Old West Side or Downtown residents, and five worked in Downtown. Two were merchants along Main Street.

Top Concerns, Comments, Questions:

- Accessibility for customers (disabled in particular).
- City thinks more broadly for the downtown area.
- Don't want parking to be frustrating.
- Ecological concerns.
- Livability- parking is part of a transportation system.
- Maintain and develop more "green spaces" downtown.
 - Green space from Downtown to River and Gallop Park.
- We have enough parking.
- Maybe we don't have enough direction.
- Tension between wanting to be city and wanting to be a suburb.
- Above-ground parking is a waste of real estate. And unsightly!
- Hope for a denser town- green space is important for the quality of life.
- Developer leases permit space and citizens must deal with developer to lease a parking space.
- Developers must provide their own parking- it should not be the people of the city paying for the infrastructure.
- Parking enforcement:
 - Not people friendly;

- o Extend meters until 10 pm;
- Customers want to park closely when the weather is bad.
- Too many restaurants; not enough retail.
- Locals know the parking system; they know that meters are free after 6 pm.
- Needs of 3 groups are most important: workers, locals, visitors.
- Disney-fication of Main Street is disservice to local shopping needs - putting trees or services for people who do not live here.
- Focus should be on regional transportation system.
- Create carpool lanes.
- “Covered” parking.
- Use marketing to improve image of covered parking.
- Promote walking downtown.
- Occupancy Main Street- Information is missing about permits, which vehicles have permits and which don’t.
- William & 4th Structure: are all the new spaces going to be for permit holders?
- Parking = Neighborhood blight.
- The City doesn’t care about spillover parking from new residential developments built without enough parking - “They can park in the neighborhood”.
- Need to know justification for increasing the parking supply.
- Concerned about the increasing height of structures.
- No garage entries facing Main Street.
- What we like about 4th & Washington: art, façade, pedestrian walkway.
- What we do not like about 4th & William: not pleasing to look at, 1st floor dead zone, not nice to walk past, traffic influx and outflow.
- Extend meters to 10:00 PM.

Development Issues

- Residential density is good as long as it doesn’t negatively impact the quality of life.
- Development increases land speculation.
- There is a lot of vacant office space.
- Homeowners need things that can’t be found downtown.
- It is a privilege to work and live downtown.
- Free overnight passes should be provided for restaurant employees.

- All new parking should be underground.
- Structures should be retrofitted for retail on the ground floor.
- Do not add more parking.
- Do not turn lots into structures.
- Why is good real estate used for parking?
- Better marketing of alternative ways to get downtown is needed.

Conclusions

- Meters should be enforced to 10 pm.
- Employers should provide overnight passes for evening employees.
- Garages should be wrapped with street uses.
- Do not build more parking.
- Surface lots shouldn't become parking structures only; they should be part of mixed development.
- Promote alternate modes.
- Protect the Riverwalk.

Kerry Town

- Would have liked for Saturday and Sunday conditions to have been included in the study.
- Off-street parking is a broad category - lots vs. garages are an important distinction.
- Too many parking structures:
 - o Drive out business;
 - o Create dead zones;
 - o Cost too much money.
- Move parking away from downtown.
- Parking policy should focus on supporting a Park-Once environment.
- Improve distribution of information to people:
 - o Information should be studied and reworked.
- Parking is part of accessibility, including ADA.
- Time on meters should be longer.
- Install wireless detection in structures.
- Parking should be part of building, not new structures.

State Street

What works well?

- Existing residents have parking spaces.
- People who come downtown aren't overly concerned about the cost to park.
- Parking 'problem' is a good thing- it means people want to come here.
- It is always possible to find a spot in a structure.
- Surface lots work well; you can count on finding spaces.
- Art at Fourth & Washington structure is nice.
- Having short-term meters works
- In newly-approved projects, average one parking space per new residential unit.
- Plenty of parking is available for guests, but they feel uncomfortable using structures.
- Structures are much better than they were 15-20 years ago.

What doesn't work?

- Some people confuse trouble driving with lack of parking.
- Customers drive in from all over the region.
- Design of structures doesn't have to be off-putting. Could be inspirational.
- Haven't seen signs directing people to structures.
- Never find metered parking for quick errands.
- Would have liked retail at First & Washington.
- Not enough ADA parking spaces on-street or off-street.
- People aren't comfortable with structures- gender is an issue.
- Spillover parking in neighborhoods around Downtown. For example, Old Fourth Ward.
- I never come downtown at lunch because not enough ADA spaces available- have to walk too far.
- In structures, there are always the same cars on lower level- should be on top if they're being stored.
- State Street area is more difficult to find available spaces (someone noted that it isn't as bad during the day).
- North Quad is being built with no additional parking.
- Liked to park in the TCF Bank lots, which are now gone. Don't like to use structures late at night.

- State and Liberty Street have two-way traffic, which is less convenient for on-street parking, especially in the evening. Parallel parkers block lane, and a very zig-zag traffic pattern emerges.
- Division/Fifth- there are concerns about increasing the on-street parking. It will negatively impact traffic on both streets.
- Parking needs are different in the evening for entertainment activities (theaters, etc.).
- “Fining” customers of downtown businesses is horrendous for growth.

What would you do?

- There shouldn't be parking built unless it is integrated into a project or underground- no free standing parking structures.
- Make best use of space and add to the tax base when considering new projects or parking structures.
- Underground parking with parks on top.
- Satellite parking around downtown
- Wherever there is an existing on-street parking shortage, raise the rate, use the card technology to pay for only what is used- extend a refund for unused time; instead of issuing tickets.
- Extend the meter hours into the evenings.
- Reinvest meter revenues into system.
- Build another, well-designed, expensive garage that anticipates needs going forward.
- Valet parking to divert parking to structures.
- Provide way-finding signage.
- Raise rates; charge more for on-street parking during evenings, lower in structures.
- Card payments!
- Better lighting in structures.
- Open stairs/elevators in structures.
- Liberty Square- requires money to get in (\$2) on evening and weekends- some drivers get stuck and back up traffic! Doesn't feel very secure- no one there, spooky. Should be attended; including walking around the structure and attended elevators.
- Market parking options at restaurants, shops, and in water bill mailings.
- Parking is a revenue generator in Pasadena.
- For on-street parking, the market should decide prices.
- What is the projected need for daytime parking?

- General concern with downtown parking is primarily security, safety, comfort, and the desirability of parking spaces.
- Extend meter hours at night.
- Technology needs to be incorporated particularly at street meters.
- Need wayfinding directing to structures.
- New parking should be incorporated into projects or some provision for below grade.
- Increased attention to structures design, including stairways and lighting.
- ADA street parking is inadequate.

Additional Comments Received

In addition to the comments heard at the Workshop, a number of stakeholders offered their comments on parking issues by sending correspondence directly to the DDA office. It should be noted that these comments were received directly from individual stakeholders who did not attend at the Workshop. They are not, therefore, offered in response to any of the Existing Conditions findings, or other stakeholder comments.

E-mail Letter

I respectfully offer my input on downtown parking, as I am unable to attend the meeting tonight. Please consider retaining the surface lots located in the downtown area. I do realize how bad they are for the environment. I am not suggesting building new surface parking lots, only retaining the current ones. I always use the surface lot near the Farmer's Market or the lot next to the Library, depending on what I plan to do downtown. I would not come downtown if my only option was a parking garage. I do like the city adding garages for those that can and do use them. I only ask for continued choice for those of us that do not use them.

Telephone Call

Received the morning of the meeting from local resident not able to participate.

Summary of comments:

- Parking is at a premium.
- Does not agree with the Planning Commission's approval of developments without requiring adequate parking;
- Disagrees with the Planning Commission's attitude that people don't need parking;
- Concerned about the impact of Google on the available parking downtown;
- This is not the time to decrease parking.
- Doesn't view parking as extremely difficult to find, however, votes is to keep adequate parking in Downtown.

Letter

From Paul M. Ganz, DTE Energy Regional Relations

In support of additional parking at the Fourth and William Structure -

Good Afternoon! My name is Paul Ganz, and I am regional relations manager for DTE Energy here in Ann Arbor – my office works on local governmental issues in a three county region comprising Washtenaw, Livingston and Ingham counties. My office is at 841 Broadway, and I am here today on behalf of my company and my colleagues who work at 425 and 414 South Main Street.

I would like to begin my remarks by thanking the DDA for their thorough and painstaking efforts on behalf of the business district. We were very enthusiastic and supportive of the former ‘three site plan.’ Balancing the needs of the current business climate, looking into the foreseeable future, while handling the unique political challenges here in Ann Arbor can be a daunting mission.

DTE Energy Resources, the holding company for our utility and non-regulated companies, is somewhat of a ‘quiet giant’ occupying two corners of Main and William: 425 South Main, the Edison Plaza building; and 414 South Main, the Ashley Mews building.

While many other downtown office buildings have lost tenants to relocations out of the city – DTE Energy has been growing. Currently we have 425 full time employees and are projected to grow over the next two years to over 700 employees.

Our six non-regulated companies are; Energy Services, Energy Marketing and Trading, Coal Services and Biomass, Distributed Generation, and Gas Production-Storage-Pipelines and Processing. These are well-paying white collar jobs, and they in turn support the downtown restaurants and shopping. We also estimate that approximately 300 visitors/guests travel downtown to meet with our business units every month, an additional multiplying factor for local commerce.

DTE Energy Services has embraced the Go!Pass program offered by the AATA, utilizing the bus from our park and ride lots. Many employees also utilize ride-sharing. However, many of the employees are unable to take advantage of the bus or carpooling because the nature of their job description necessitates having to come and go throughout the day for meetings.

As the DDA today takes up a measure to consider an additional floor to the Fourth and William structure, I am here on behalf of DTE Energy to urge your support and offer our continued interest in working with you. We would be willing to negotiate a long-term parking contract, or other means, to ensure the efficiency and success of your parking plans.

In summation, please consider the long standing relationship between the DTE Energy companies and the city of Ann Arbor. From our executives to our employees, the company has a rich history of community involvement. We have given back through our

philanthropic Foundation, our involvement in local boards, and support of popular programs.

We were among the founders of the Ann Arbor Community Foundation. We donated about half of the greenspace in Riverside park, adjacent to our Ann Arbor Service Center and the Kellogg Eye Center. We provided the local matching funds (\$150,000) which in turn qualified the city to receive a Natural Resources Trust Fund grant of \$400,000 to build the wonderful MichCon Nature House at Leslie Park. Most recently, we dedicated a new \$150,000 Light and Optics Gallery at the Ann Arbor Hands On Museum, where we also are a founding member. Of course, there are many more examples: Michigan Theater, the Delonis Center, the new YMCA, this Historic Marker program, the Performance Network, the Ark – all have benefited from our corporate giving programs.

As we read the papers and listen to the news, more and more frequently the evidence of a business downturn in Michigan is quite apparent. For many companies, and the cities where they are located, these are tough times. I am here today to bring you some good news, and ask for a little bit of consideration. DTE Energy is a growing, dynamic company already here in Ann Arbor. With our current staffing levels and significant growth projections, we need to consider developing additional space. This of course would not only help accommodate our 700 downtown employees, it would generate TIF revenue as well for the DDA

Thank you for this opportunity, we appreciate the efforts of the Downtown Development Authority.

Sincerely,

Paul M. Ganz, Manager

DTE Regional Relations

Real Estate Brokers Focus Group

On the afternoon of December 7th, 2006, the Project Team met with a number of local real estate professionals to assess their perspective on the current state of Downtown development and the role which parking has played historically, and could play in the future, in its support. Figure 5-1 presents a list of attendees.

Attendance

Figure 5-1 Real Estate Brokers Focus Group Attendance

Name	Affiliation
Susan Pollay	DDA
Susan Moore	McKinley RE
Ron Dambert	
Michael Caud	Colliers hc
Sandi Smith	Trillium RE
Newcombe Clark	Bluestone Realty
Peter Allen	Peter Allen and Associates

Discussion Summary

One developer cited that he has a residential project in the process of development for which 13 of 15 units are to have no parking. He is provided most with monthly parking permits at the nearby Ann & Ashley parking structure, but expects that once residents begin to pay for the permits themselves, many will decide that they do not need as many cars as they thought.

This developer stated that he believed that the growth in residential demand would come from those 25-35 years old who are seeking an active, local lifestyle and a reduced dependence upon driving. They want to live where they can walk to a wide range of dining and entertainment destinations and can reach work by walking or short bus rides or biking on most days. These residents have less need for parking than current tenants.

One real estate agent stated that he believed that a lack of parking permits is the biggest barrier to filling vacant office space. He stated that cost was not so much of an issue as the availability of the permits, that his clients would gladly pay a premium for rents to move downtown, but not having parking permits is a deal breaker. This tenant market is attracted to Downtown for the level of convenient shops and services nearby, having a parking permit is going to be an essential amenity for this market.

This agent proposed that increasing the price of permits could reduce or eliminate the wait list, and make vacant space much more marketable. He suspected that the current price was less than the debt and maintenance costs for the spaces, and that just raising the price to a level equal to these costs could reduce demand dramatically, while allowing a politically sound rationale for the price level.

It was generally noted that many landlords retain passes for which they have no tenants, that when tenants vacate space, and return their permit options to the landlord, the landlord cannot afford to return these to the DDA because it would lower the value of the office space too much. The landlords are glad to continue to pay for the permits month after month, for years sometimes, just to hold onto them and be able to offer them with the space.

Another real estate agent stated that many of her clients need to access their car throughout the day; this makes having a permit at a nearby facility a necessity. They need short walks between work and their car, and quick parking entry and exit. She estimated that half of her clients access their cars during the work day.

Another agent said that the most common reason for tenants leaving, or looking to leave Downtown is that parking is too complicated.

All generally agreed that three blocks is about the limit of reasonable walking distance to parking opportunities for their clients.

All those in attendance were asked about their understanding of rates charged for “backyard” parking spaces, where local homeowners sell parking space on their property to commuters. Most agreed that rates range between \$80 and \$120 per month, with some locations offering extraordinary levels of convenience or security go as high as \$150 per month.

One developer, who is also a professor of real estate development, stated that he believed that parking needed a private sector solution, that it is currently under-priced thereby elevating demand.

It was generally agreed that parking ticket fines are too low to effectively discourage many parkers whose top priority is convenience. One agent cited himself as an example, that when he is running late and cannot find an open street space quickly, he will gladly take a ticket and pay the fine in return for the time-savings.

A number of agents felt that the Downtown office market was shifting away from larger “marquee” companies toward smaller, start-up businesses.

A number of agents felt that the Downtown employment/ economy mix leaned too heavily toward office.

It was agreed by all that a good amount of Downtown’s struggles are the result of the more chronic and acute struggles of the state, and the automotive economy in Detroit.

Most felt that retail was not struggling due to parking. One agent noted that many of the smaller, older shops simply had not really tried to keep up with the changes. Most agreed that the retail that is succeeding is focused on a regional market, or is very innovative and unique. The garden supply store on Ashley was cited as a prime example of the type of local retail that is going to do well in the current economic climate.