



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
December 8, 2015**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Agenda Item # 11

SUBJECT: Receive a Downtown Parking Management Plan Short-Term Parking Strategies and Implementation Schedule update

BACKGROUND

The City initiated the Downtown Parking Management Plan (DPMP) project in July 2012 and contracted with transportation consultants CDM Smith to prepare the Plan. The primary DPMP goals were to ensure:

- Continued availability of adequate and convenient parking for Downtown customers, employees and visitors
- Continued investment in the downtown to promote and strengthen the retail and pedestrian-serving vitality of the Downtown core
- Efficient use of existing public parking facilities before constructing new parking
- Establishment of a potential reserve of parking spaces to allow future growth opportunities

The final draft of the DPMP was completed in May 2013 and then presented at several public meetings to directly affected groups, including the Chamber of Commerce and the Los Altos Village Association, a property owners group, a business owners group and an area residents group.

In May 2013, the Downtown Parking Management Plan (DPMP) was presented to the City Council. The Council approved exploring the short-term parking management strategies presented in the DPMP including the estimated implementation costs.

In October 2014, Council received an update regarding implementation of the DPMP and provided direction on next steps regarding enhanced enforcement technology, graduated parking fines and a downtown parking structure.

DISCUSSION

This report provides a further update on the implementation measures recommended in the adopted 2013 Downtown Parking Management Plan. The complete Plan can be viewed on the City's website under Community/City Projects/Master Plans and Studies.

The additional activities and actions since October 14, 2014 are presented below:

Increase the Employee Permit Parking supply

The Downtown employee parking permit program provides all-day parking in spaces designated with a white dot in the south (Plazas 1, 2, and 3) and north (Plazas 7, 8, 9, and 10) parking plazas. All business owners and employees within the Downtown parking district are eligible to purchase permits; however, the permit does not guarantee a parking space. The Downtown parking district includes the ten public parking plazas, the on-street spaces along Main and State Street, and the on-street spaces on the numbered side streets between the north and south parking plaza boundaries. The white dot parking spaces are not exclusively for the use of business owners and employees, as

non-permit holders can park in the spaces pursuant to the posted parking time restrictions. The City Council established the Parking Permit Program for downtown in October 2003 with 533 white dot parking spaces. An additional 110 spaces were added in August 2013, creating a total of 643 white dot parking spaces.

Each year, the Police Department supplies 1,000 annual permits at \$36 per permit and 100 quarterly permits (400 total) at \$12 per permit to eligible downtown business owners to purchase for themselves and their employees if they so choose. The number of permits available for sale is based on the industry standard of providing roughly two permits for every one parking space and has remained the same since the program began. All revenue from this program has been deposited into the Downtown Parking Fund, and ranges from \$33,500 to \$41,000 per year. The City provides parking funds to the Los Altos Village Association (LAVA) for beautification of the downtown through maintaining the landscape planters.

Annual parking permits are renewed on October 1 of each year, and public outreach begins over a month prior. As of November 30, 2015, all 1,000 annual permits have been sold, and 20 sets of quarterly permits have been sold as annual permits. The number of annual parking permits sold this year is equivalent to 2014, and is the second consecutive year the annual permits completely sold out, demonstrating that demand for parking permits has increased steadily since the program began. The rate of sales was significantly faster than in previous years, when the supply of permits remained available for purchase throughout the year. This is the first time annual permits sold out within the first 30 days of availability.

The City is conducting a carrying capacity analysis to determine how to manage the increase of demand for parking permits relative to the existing supply of eligible spaces in order to optimize the number of permits issued in 2016. A carrying capacity analysis evaluates the number of available spaces (supply) versus permits issued (demand) and incorporates a number of variables to determine the optimal number of permits that should be sold to the public in a given year.

Enhanced Enforcement Technologies

In June 2014 during the FY 2014/15 budget process, Council approved \$80,000 for LPR parking enforcement technology and \$30,000 for a new parking enforcement vehicle to support the LPR system. However, Council directed staff to hold off on the purchase of the LPR and vehicle to allow further discussion on whether the LPR technology is necessary.

On October 28, 2014, Council approved the purchase of LPR technology for parking enforcement and the supporting vehicle. To correspond with the LPR technology, Council also provided direction concerning modification of the Municipal Code parking statues. Per Council direction the new parking statues would not allow a vehicle to be re-parked in the same parking plaza or street block during enforcement hours of a given day.

On December 9, 2014, Council directed staff to bring the issue of LPR technology for parking enforcement back to Council for discussion. As a result of Council direction, staff did not proceed with the purchase of LPR technology for parking enforcement or the supporting vehicle.

Receive a Downtown Parking Management Plan Short-Term Parking Strategies and Implementation Schedule update

Consequently, due to the outdated and limited capabilities of the current parking enforcement system, the enforcement of the re-parking restrictions and graduated parking fines were also put on hold.

Graduated Parking Fines

The recommendation regarding graduated parking fines had two intended goals: to reduce the number of violations going to customers so as to not discourage them from patronizing downtown; and to discourage employees from making repeat offenses all during a rolling 12-month period.

Council approved graduated fines in June 2015 as part of the City's Fee Schedule. Given the revenue neutral stipulation and previous Council discussion on this topic, the Council approved graduated parking fines as follows: first citation \$54.50 (current fine), second citation \$90.80, third and subsequent citations \$151.40. These are assessed on a rolling 12-month period. The desired outcome of this strategy is greater compliance by repeat offenders, not additional revenue.

Implementing graduated parking fines without LPR technology is feasible; however; it would just require contracting with a new vendor that has this capability. Staff is aware of vendors with the ability to include graduated fines into a non LPR system.

Online All-day permits

Currently, All-day Customer permits are issued by business owners to distribute to their customers on an as needed basis via Customer Parking Permit books that cost \$25 for 25 permits. All-day Customer permits allow the user to park in any space, in any of the parking plazas. Staff is evaluating an online parking permit purchasing system, which would allow business owners to purchase annual, quarterly and potentially daily parking permits online. With the new online parking permit purchasing system, the City would have the capability to expand the All-day permits program to residents or visitors to accommodate demand for longer-term parking.

Increasing Downtown parking enforcement

In FY 2014/15, Council allocated \$30,000 for the hiring of a part-time parking enforcement officer to supplement existing staff, which allows parking enforcement to align with the posted downtown parking restriction days and hours.

Continuation of the Holiday Valet Parking Program

The City Council supported funding of this program for the 2013 and 2014 holiday season and requested that the Chamber of Commerce and Los Altos Village Association share in the cost of implementation. However, the program was underutilized and will not be implemented in 2015.

Additional community input

In March 2015, an ad hoc City-wide Parking Committee was established to evaluate policies and methods to effectively provide adequate parking downtown. Recommendations of this ad hoc committee will be considered by the City Council in early 2016.

EXISTING POLICY

Downtown Parking Management Plan

Receive a Downtown Parking Management Plan Short-Term Parking Strategies and Implementation Schedule update

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

May 28, 2013; September 10, 2013; September 17 2013 and October 28, 2014

PUBLIC CONTACT

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

The various recommendations have associated costs which have been accounted for in the City's 2015-2017 operating budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION

Receive a Downtown Parking Management Plan Short-Term Parking Strategies and Implementation Schedule update

ALTERNATIVES

None

Prepared by: Jennifer Quinn, Economic Development Manager

Approved by: Marcia Somers, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Downtown Parking Management Plan for the City of Los Altos, Appendix 1A: Council Review of Downtown Parking Management Recommendations
2. October 28, 2014 Council Report entitled Downtown Parking Management Plan

Receive a Downtown Parking Management Plan Short-Term Parking Strategies and Implementation Schedule update

Appendix 1A

Council Review of Downtown Parking Management Recommendations

City Council Review of Downtown Parking Management Plan Recommendations, September 17, 2013

The Los Altos City Council reviewed and adopted the Downtown Parking Management Plan for the City of Los Altos at its September 17, 2013 meeting. The following is a summary of their review of each of the parking management strategies presented in Chapter 2 of the Plan and related strategies that came out of the discussion at the City Council meeting:

- **Graduated parking fines** – the City Council recommended implementation of this strategy as a high priority with the caveat that it be revenue neutral. A possible way to implement this would be to not waive the initial ticket and increase fines starting with the second infraction.
- **Violation to permit incentive program** – The City Council members recommended exploring this strategy further with the caveat that the permit could be provided at a reduced cost instead of at no cost. The City Council indicated this strategy was a low priority for implementation.
- **Permits through an assessment district or BID** – The City Council supported this strategy only if an assessment district is formed for other reasons, such as increasing supply.
- **Increase in employee permit parking supply** – The City Council approved the addition of approximately 110 employee permit spaces in April 2013. These spaces were added in August 2013. The City Council supported ongoing monitoring of the supply to ensure adequacy of available spaces into the future.
- **On-line all day permits** – The City Council deferred implementation of this recommendation until such as time as there is demonstrated demand.
- **Enhanced enforcement technologies** – The City Council directed staff to bring back a recommendation for a License Plate Recognition system as part of the next mid-point review of the two-year budget.
- **Seasonal valet program** – The City Council supported funding this program for the 2013 holiday season and requested that the Chamber of Commerce and Los Altos Village Association share in the cost of implementation.
- **Increase in short-term parking adjacent to Post Office** – The City Council stated that additional short-term spaces could be added if staff determines they are needed.
- **Construction parking mitigation** – The City Council directed staff to explore the recommendations presented in the Plan and report back to Council on what additional measures could be implemented.
- **Bicycle corrals in the plazas or on-street** – The City Council directed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission to further review the recommendations in the Plan.

- **Enforcement staffing** – City Council directed the City Manager to explore options for better alignment of enforcement staffing hours with the posted enforcement hours in the downtown.
- **Financing options for additions to the parking supply** – City Council directed staff to initiate discussions with property owners in the downtown parking district to gauge interest in forming a parking assessment district or to identify other feasible financing mechanisms.
- **Design work for additional parking supply** – The City Council did not support moving forward with initial design work on parking supply options until a financing mechanism is identified.
- **Policy for plaza reconfiguration by private developers** – The City Council directed staff to develop a policy for review that addressed public parking plaza reconfiguration by private developers in lieu of meeting their parking demand on-site.



DATE: October 28, 2014

AGENDA ITEM # 11

TO: City Council
FROM: James Walgren, Assistant City Manager
SUBJECT: Downtown Parking Management Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Receive an update on implementation of the Downtown Parking Management Plan
- B. Provide direction on next steps regarding enhanced enforcement technology, graduated parking fines and a downtown parking structure

SUMMARY:

Estimated Fiscal Impact:

Amount: \$110,000 capital equipment
\$30,000 annual operating costs

Budgeted: Yes, however funding related to the construction of a parking garage has not yet been allocated

Public Hearing Notice: Not applicable

Previous Council Consideration: May 28, 2013, September 10, 2013 and September 17, 2013

CEQA Status: Not applicable

Attachment:

1. Downtown Parking Management Plan recommendations dated September 17, 2013

BACKGROUND

The following information is provided as an update on the implementation measures recommended in the adopted 2013 Downtown Parking Management Plan. The complete Plan can be viewed on the City's website under Community/City Projects/Master Plans and Studies.

The City initiated the Downtown Parking Management Plan in 2012 and contracted with transportation consultants CDM Smith to prepare the Plan. The primary Plan goals were to ensure:

- Continued availability of adequate and convenient parking for Downtown customers, employees and visitors
- Continued investment in the downtown to promote and strengthen the retail and pedestrian-serving vitality of the Downtown core
- Efficient use of existing public facilities before constructing new parking
- Establishment of a potential reserve of parking spaces to allow future growth opportunities

The final draft of the Plan was completed in May 2013 and then presented at several public meetings to directly affected groups, including the Chamber of Commerce and the Los Altos Village Association, a property owners group, a business owners group and an area residents group.

DISCUSSION

The Plan focused on managing the City's existing downtown public parking both in the short and long-term, and recognized that the Downtown area is busier and more active than it has been in the past, causing a greater parking demand. This demand is expected to increase as Downtown continues to be more successful, particularly with the opening of the new Safeway, and completion of the First and Main Street mixed-use project and the 100 First Street residential condominiums. The Plan also acknowledged the reduction in Downtown parking spaces as a result of streetscape improvements and infrastructure investment.

Results of the parking supply analysis in the Plan represented conditions in September and December 2012. At that point in time, the City was just below, or at, the defined practical capacity of 85% occupancy. An 85% occupancy is a maximum that parking consultants recommend based on a user's perception that above 85% a parking lot or structure is experienced to be full. The mid and long-term future demand analysis in the Plan presents scenarios where the tenant mix in the downtown changes over time to include uses with a higher parking demand such as additional restaurants and national retailers. Under these scenarios, typical mid-week peak occupancy levels may increase to 90% in the mid-term and 95% in the long term.

To accommodate these demands, it is projected that the Downtown area will need additional parking within the near to long-term future in order to maintain the desirable 85% mid-day peak parking capacity. The Plan looks at two ways to achieve this additional parking:

- Restriping of the existing public parking plazas; and
- Construction of a parking structure

The Plan concluded that a parking structure is the more cost-effective approach, and developing a long-term parking solution plan of action is a 2014 City Council priority. The City Council also discussed allowing public parking plazas to be restriped by private developers. Based on a framework outlined at the March 25, 2014 City Council meeting, a restriping policy was drafted and presented to the City Council on August 26, 2014. After reviewing the policy, the Council determined that allowing restriping of the public plazas by private developers would not be in the best interest of the City as a whole and voted to not adopt the policy.

Increasing the number of long-term parking stalls

The Downtown employee parking permit program provides all-day parking in spaces designated with a white dot in the north and south parking plazas. All business owners and employees within the Downtown parking district are eligible to purchase permits; however, the permit does not guarantee a parking space. The white dot parking spaces are not exclusively for the use of business owners and employees, as non-permit holders can park in the spaces pursuant to the posted parking time restrictions.

The parking program was implemented in October 2003 with 533 white dot parking spaces. An additional 110 spaces were added in August 2013. Annual parking permits are renewed in October of each year, and last year 968 parking permits were purchased. As of Monday, October 21, 2014, 897 annual and 28 first quarter permits have been sold. The number of parking permits sold this year is comparable to previous years, indicating that there should now be a greater supply of available long-term spaces for employees. In addition to the long-term employee parking permit program, businesses can purchase books of all day parking permits to distribute to customers on an as-needed basis. All Day Customer permits allow the user to park in any space, in any of the parking plazas.

Increasing Downtown parking enforcement

Parking enforcement strategies have been modified by varying marking times and locations resulting in an increase of parking citations issued. For calendar year 2013, the total number of parking citations issued was 2,354, which is a 4.5% increase from calendar year 2012. The most recent fiscal year totals are also showing an upward trend with 2,559 citations being issued in FY 2013/14, which is a 31% increase over the previous fiscal year.

The current budget adopted by Council also allocates \$30,000 for the hiring of a part-time parking enforcement officer to supplement existing staff. This will allow parking enforcement to align with the posted downtown parking restriction days and hours. The recruitment for this position is expected to begin in December 2014 with staff being fully trained and in place within the first quarter of the new year.

Acquiring enhanced enforcement technology

The Plan recommended the City explore mobile License Plate Recognition (LPR) technologies that are enforcement vehicles with mounted cameras that can digitally “chalk” tires. The City Council directed staff to bring back a recommendation for the LPR system as part of the mid-point review of the two-year budget.

During the FY 2014/15 budget process, Council approved \$80,000 for LPR parking enforcement technology and \$30,000 for a new parking enforcement vehicle. Additionally, Council directed staff to hold off on the purchase of the LPR and vehicle to allow further discussion on whether the LPR technology is necessary. In an effort to gain additional information on the parking enforcement LPR, City staff contacted two current users, the City of Carmel and the Town of Los Gatos, for their experience with the system.

The City of Carmel has been using parking enforcement LPR technology for several years. They are currently using a dated product and will soon be upgrading to the next generation system. While they do not have any quantifiable data to support their experience, they do state that the system allows for more efficient enforcement which translates to additional citations being issued. They also believe that the system has made the residents, business owners and employees more compliant with the parking rules.

The Town of Los Gatos parking enforcement LPR has been fully operational for only a few months, but so far their overall impression of the system has been positive. Parking citations and revenue have increased substantially since the system has been installed. They were unable to provide the exact percentage of increase in citations written because they recently hired a new parking enforcement person and it is not clear how much of the increase can be attributed to the new system or the recent personnel change.

Prior to its new LPR system, Los Gatos hand-chalked tires for parking enforcement in the same manner as Los Altos. Experience with the new system has allowed for greater efficiency by allowing “multiple laps” through downtown with the LPR. To date, it is estimated that they have doubled their productivity and efficiency over hand-chalking.

One of the main benefits the system affords Los Gatos is there is no chalk for drivers to rub off in an attempt to defeat the parking regulations. An additional advantage to the system is that citations are more defensible if there is a dispute, since every citation will include two photos of a violator’s vehicle with a geolocation tag and a timestamp. While they admit the system is not perfect because it sometimes misses plates and occasionally signals violations when there is none, Los Gatos believes it has led to greater parking compliance with employees and frequent visitors to its downtown. It should be noted that, in the cases where the system signals a false violation, the required verification process ensures no citation is issued.

In reviewing the Los Gatos LPR experience, City staff conducted an on-site visit to observe first-hand how the system might work in downtown Los Altos. While the overall experience was favorable, there is concern on how, and if, the new parking enforcement vehicle might negatively impact traffic in the downtown parking plazas and on the streets when a violation is observed and enforcement is taken.

The current parking enforcement vehicle is a small electric three-wheel vehicle which is capable of pulling to the side of the roadway and in between cars so it does not block traffic when enforcement action is taken. Due to the wider width of the new vehicle and the narrow roadways in both the parking plazas and downtown streets, the vehicle would need to pull past a violator and into an open area down the road so traffic flow would not be obstructed while the citation is being written. This is the process currently being used in similar cities with narrow roads.

If Council directs staff to move forward with the purchase of an LPR system, a change in the Municipal Code parking statutes would also be necessary. It would require a vehicle be moved and not allowed it to be re-parked in the same space during enforcement hours on any given day. Previous discussions by Council on this topic have ranged from not allowing re-parking in the same parking space to requiring the vehicle move to another block, parking plaza or as far away as 300 feet away.

Adopting graduated parking fines

The Plan recommended a system of graduated parking fines where the first parking ticket would be a warning, the second ticket at the standard fine, and then fines would double after the third violation. This recommendation had two intended goals: to reduce the number of violations going to customers so as to not discourage them from patronizing downtown; and to discourage employees from making repeat offenses.

Based on the number of one-time tickets that are issued within a year, the fiscal impact of waiving first time tickets would be significant – approximately \$65,000 annually and would unlikely be offset by the increased fines for repeat offenders.

Council recommended implementation of this strategy as a high priority with the caveat that it be revenue neutral. Given the revenue neutral stipulation and previous Council discussion on this topic, the recommendations for graduated parking fines are as follows: first citation \$54.50 (current fine), second citation \$90.80, third and subsequent citations \$151.40. The desired outcome of this strategy is greater compliance by repeat offenders, not additional revenue.

Summary

In order to continue with implementation of the Downtown Parking Management Plan strategies, Council direction is requested on the following items:

1. Purchase of LPR technology for parking enforcement and the supporting vehicle
2. If Council approves the purchase of LPR technology for parking enforcement, identify the re-parking distance to be used to modify the Municipal Code parking statutes
3. Implementation of the recommended graduated parking fines
4. Next steps related to planning for a downtown parking structure

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for the following three items are included in the 2014/15 budget:

1. Part-time parking enforcement officer - \$30,000 (on-going annual cost)
2. Parking enforcement LPR technology - \$80,000 (5-year agreement)
3. Parking enforcement vehicle - \$30,000 (one-time cost)

According to the Chamber of Commerce, the estimated cost of a downtown parking structure is \$12 to \$14 million. This cost is anticipated to be shared with Los Altos downtown property owners.

PUBLIC CONTACT

The Chamber of Commerce, the Los Altos Village Association and other interested parties will receive copies of the staff report.

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

Appendix 1A

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- **Graduated parking fines** – the City Council recommended implementation of this strategy as a high priority with the caveat that it be revenue neutral. A possible way to implement this would be to not waive the initial ticket and increase fines starting with the second infraction.
- **Violation to permit incentive program** – The City Council members recommended exploring this strategy further with the caveat that the permit could be provided at a reduced cost instead of at no cost. The City Council indicated this strategy was a low priority for implementation.
- **Permits through an assessment district or BID** – The City Council supported this strategy only if an assessment district is formed for other reasons, such as increasing supply.
- **Increase in employee permit parking supply** – The City Council approved the addition of approximately 110 employee permit spaces in April 2013. These spaces were added in August 2013. The City Council supported ongoing monitoring of the supply to ensure adequacy of available spaces into the future.
- **On-line all day permits** – The City Council deferred implementation of this recommendation until such as time as there is demonstrated demand.
- **Enhanced enforcement technologies** – The City Council directed staff to bring back a recommendation for a License Plate Recognition system as part of the next mid-point review of the two-year budget.
- **Seasonal valet program** – The City Council supported funding this program for the 2013 holiday season and requested that the Chamber of Commerce and Los Altos Village Association share in the cost of implementation.
- **Increase in short-term parking adjacent to Post Office** – The City Council stated that additional short-term spaces could be added if staff determines they are needed.
- **Construction parking mitigation** – The City Council directed staff to explore the recommendations presented in the Plan and report back to Council on what additional measures could be implemented.
- **Bicycle corrals in the plazas or on-street** – The City Council directed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission to further review the recommendations in the Plan.

- **Enforcement staffing** – City Council directed the City Manager to explore options for better alignment of enforcement staffing hours with the posted enforcement hours in the downtown.
- **Financing options for additions to the parking supply** – City Council directed staff to initiate discussions with property owners in the downtown parking district to gauge interest in forming a parking assessment district or to identify other feasible financing mechanisms.
- **Design work for additional parking supply** – The City Council did not support moving forward with initial design work on parking supply options until a financing mechanism is identified.
- **Policy for plaza reconfiguration by private developers** – The City Council directed staff to develop a policy for review that addressed public parking plaza reconfiguration by private developers in lieu of meeting their parking demand on-site.