

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **1. Considering the impending development of the Durkee St. Lot, the City needs to administer the City Parking System.**

The City parking assets (on-street and off-street parking spaces) are free to patrons and lightly regulated even for the time limited on-street spaces. When the Durkee St. development comes to fruition, the City will no longer have the option to let the parking system operate with little planning or active management and oversight. For the Durkee St. development and the existing businesses and other organizations to be successful, the City needs to manage the parking assets to promote high levels of customer service and efficient use of parking spaces. High levels of customer service include having open parking spaces when arriving downtown, and options for parking based on cost and proximity.

Administering a public parking system can include charging for parking, but it is not a requirement. Fees are an important tool for managing parking supply, as they allow patrons to choose where to park based on their own price sensitivity. Effective downtown parking systems can exist without fees. However, the main management tool is parking enforcement, and too much enforcement creates an adversarial relationship between parking management and patrons / customers.

#### DISCUSSION NOTE

Options to Accommodate Parking Needs in support of DRI and Durkee St. Development

1. Don't change much and require people to park in the Harbor Lots
2. Create necessary downtown parking and administer FREE parking system that does not charge patrons for use. City bears all costs for creating and managing parking.
3. Create necessary downtown parking and administer PAID parking system that charges fees for use.

Option 1 provides low levels of customer service. Option 2 is not financially feasible for the City. Option 3 provides high levels of customer service and has revenue to help cover costs.

Administration of the Parking System would require overhead; staff, supplies, equipment, etc. Our understanding from City staff is that implementation of a Parking System would have to pay for itself out of fees. The City is unable to absorb the overhead of a managed parking system that does not generate revenue. For the remainder of these recommendations, we are going to assume the City Parking System will charge user fees for hourly on-street parking and daily and monthly off-street parking to support the administrative overhead required. Paid parking accomplishes two objectives:

- 1.) Creates a high level of customer service by offering options to patrons based on price, not on enforcement.
- 2.) Provides funding necessary to adequately administer a public parking program.

Recommendation

Create a Parking Office that is responsible for day to day parking operations as well as short and long-term parking planning as part of the overall economic development of the City. Some of the items that need to be considered for more robust management and administration of parking include:

A. Staffing for:

- a. Issuance and administrations of monthly parking permits
- b. Issuance and administration of residential parking permits
- c. Civilian parking enforcement
- d. Administration of accounts payable / receivable
- e. Maintenance of meters
- f. Cash collection of meters
- g. Reconciliation of mobile and credit card payments
- h. Daily administration – answering phone calls / taking questions
- i. Parking ticket payments / adjudication
- j. Policy input from Community Development
- k. Coordination with zoning and land use
- l. Liaison with Mayor / Common Council

(There should be a lead person responsible for parking operations, but also leadership for future planning, land use and zoning issues related to parking. The leader needs to represent how parking and transportation can support the overall economic development of Plattsburgh.)

B. Administrative:

- a. A Parking Violations Bureau has already been established by ordinance, but there may be other legal requirements to establish a Parking System.
- b. Updated website with maps and payment option
- c. Cooperation with NYDOT regarding placing meters on State roads / highways
- d. Communication among Community Development / Finance / Police / Public Works and other City entities
- e. Communication with public about parking policies / needs / availability

C. Capital Expenditures:

- a. Office / meter shop / signage space
- b. Signage and wayfinding
- c. Purchase and installation of parking meters / necessary technology

- d. Implementation of mobile payment option (can be implemented with little out of pocket costs to the City)
- e. Purchase and implementation of electronic permitting and parking enforcement technology

The creation of a parking system will change the existing parking patterns and dynamics. Numerous decisions large and small will be required throughout the process, and adjustments will need to be made after implementation. Considerations include but are not limited to:

- D. All parking related revenue should fund the Parking System; on-street fees, citations and late fees, off-street permits, daily parking and special event fees.
- E. Having an administered Parking System provides the City with the opportunity to plan development, adjust to changing conditions and provide high levels of customer service.
- F. Develop a Standard Operating Procedures Policy Manual
- G. On-street parking:
  - a. Rates
  - b. Time limits or escalating rates
  - c. Late fees and adjudication. The current citation price and late fees are part of City code. *(This type of detail should not be part of ordinance, it provides little flexibility and necessary changes may become political decisions instead of practical operational considerations.)*
  - d. Type of meters (single space / multi space / mobile only)
- H. Off-street parking rates
- I. A certain percentage of parkers will vacate the downtown parking areas because the spaces are no longer free and without restriction.
- J. Secondary parking supplies may emerge as private land owners open their parking areas for paid parking. Does the City want to regulate these businesses?
- K. What policies are in place to maintain the downtown buildings and avoid demolition to create private parking lots?
- L. The Harbor parking lots should remain free for cost sensitive parkers. This will require attention from the Police department to monitor the area and the walking routes.
- M. Implementation time will likely be 6-12 months. Set a schedule so the parking system is running effectively before the Durkee St. development dramatically changes the downtown landscape.

DISCUSSION NOTE

Can the parking system be financially independent? Some of the factors to consider:

- Does the parking system retain all parking related revenue?
- Debt service
- Rates and fees
- How are expenses allocated? Utilities, snow plowing, capital maintenance?

**2. The Durkee St. development RFP should include a requirement to meet parking demand for the new development and replace some parking spaces from the removed parking lot.**

The current Durkee St. Lot provides 65% of the off-street public parking supply downtown. Eliminating these parking spaces without replacing them would result in hundreds of parkers being displaced during and after development.

A. The chosen development team should include on-site parking for the parking demand created on the site. This can be a combination of structured and surface parking, but would require some structured parking to provide the spaces necessary. Shared parking scenarios should be considered when determining the total parking required. Pertinent language from City code regarding shared parking:

- *If the parking demand is determined to be greater than the required minimum number of spaces, the Building Inspector, or the Zoning Board of Appeals, may permit the property to be used or occupied for the owner's intended purpose if it is determined there are sufficient public parking spaces to meet such demand, and the property owner agrees to pay an additional parking assessment for such excess parking.*
- *The Building Inspector or Zoning Board of Appeals may require the lot owner to provide a parking survey, in such form as he/it determines is appropriate, to assist him/it in making the determinations required by this section.*

B. In addition to including parking to meet the needs of the new development, the City should seek to add public parking as part of the development. Public parking in the core area of downtown is over 85% occupied at peak times (noon on a weekday) and therefore the current off-street parking needs to be replaced. Some of the opportunities to provide the replacement parking include:

- a. On-street angled parking along Durkee St. and Bridge St.
- b. Surface parking on Durkee development site as part of the development design.
- c. Structured parking at the Durkee development site. This would not likely include a separate parking structure, but additional spaces within a structure integral to the development.
- d. Surface parking lots in other areas of downtown to balance parking supply geographically. We developed options for Court and Couch Streets west of Margaret St.
- e. Combination of the above options to create 275 parking spaces.
- f. Utilize the Harbor parking lots.

DISCUSSION NOTE

Creating 275 new parking spaces to replace the Durkee St lot will result in a parking situation roughly similar to the current conditions. Undoubtedly the City hopes the Durkee St. development will lead to additional economic development and potentially more parking demand. We have not modeled other development scenarios, as Durkee St. is the focus of the City and there are no other development plans at this time.

The main downtown parking lots are over 85% occupied, or effectively full considering snow, misparked vehicles, unused ADA spaces and the difficulty finding the final few spaces. There is no room for additional parking demand. If the proposed Durkee St. development provides enough parking to support itself, and the City provides an additional 275 parking spaces either on-site or around the City, there is little parking supply for increased parking demand.

It is a difficult decision for a City to build parking in hopes of increasing economic activity. While it is true that a restricted parking supply can dampen economic development, overbuilding parking rarely results in increased parking demand without specific development projects. We don't recommend overbuilding the parking supply beyond what is currently needed plus the Durkee St. development. However, planning for future parking needs is the type of benefit derived from a managed parking system with effective leadership.

**3. Add parking capacity on the north and west side of downtown through co-operative agreements.**

Plattsburgh should be commended for keeping many of the historic building and street fronts intact, especially along Margaret, Clinton and Durkee Streets, as well as City Hall Place. This creates a nice cityscape, but limits the opportunity to add surface parking lots. To add parking near downtown will take some creativity.

The attached options show opportunities to create;

- Angled pull in parking along Durkee St. and Bridge St. as part of the redevelopment of that site.
- An expanded shared lot with the County by closing Court St.
- Combining multiple private parking lots and closing Division St.
- Creating a parking lot in Trinity Park.

**DISCUSSION NOTE**

**Costs for Long Range Planning Purposes**

Structured Parking - \$22,000 to \$25,000 per space depending on various factors – 30 – 50-year lifespan

Surface Parking - \$5,500 - \$7,500 per space depending on various factors – 20-year lifespan

Cooperative parking agreements with private land owners are difficult to obtain. The owners of private parking lots are protective of the access the parking areas provide for their staff and patrons. However, if the City can provide assurance of access and financial incentive (through the parking user fees), then mutually beneficial agreements could potentially be reached to bring private parking areas into public parking supply.

**4. Eliminate the Parking Special Assessment District in favor of parking fees as part of Recommendation #1).**

With the implementation of parking fees, the Parking Assessment District should be eliminated and funding of parking should be through user fees. The Parking Assessment District provides funding for basic maintenance, snow and ice control and utilities for the City owned parking lots. The Assessment is based on building square footage and does not consider building use and intensity. The District also exempts certain entities, such as local, state and federal governments and churches. A Parking District supported by user fees provides equitable distribution of costs to the people utilizing the parking system. Organizations could redirect Assessment District money toward paying staff or patron parking.

**DISCUSSION NOTE**

Without being able to find the exact history, the general assumption is that the Parking Assessment District was implemented in 1985 as a result of the lost revenue when the old parking meters were removed. Eliminating the district if meters are re-installed seems to be a fair trade. There is also some goodwill generated by eliminating a fee.



**5. Conduct parking enforcement with civilian enforcement staff.**

The Police admittedly don't have the staffing to conduct consistent parking enforcement. While this has not caused major problems for the downtown, it is a reminder that the priority of the Police Department is public safety. While parking is an important issue, parking violations rarely rise to the level of being a public safety concern.

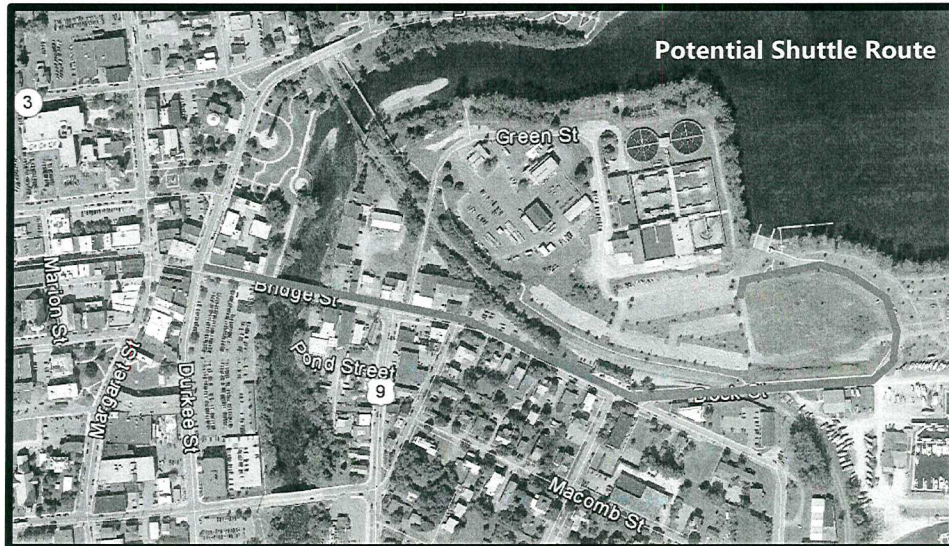
Parking enforcement conducted by civilian parking enforcement can be focused on providing high levels of customer service and a regular presence that is not called away for more important public safety issues elsewhere in the community. Dedicated parking enforcement would provide the following services and considerations:

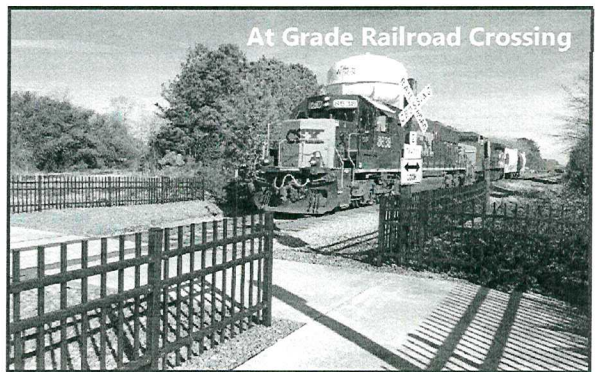
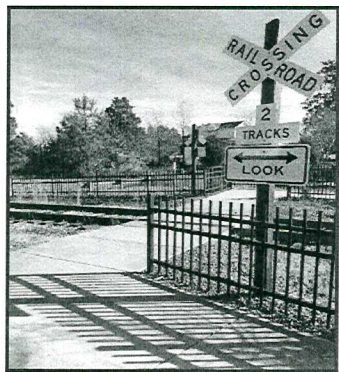
- A consistent downtown presence.
- Provide parking enforcement for all non-moving violations; ADA, loading zones, No Parking zones, etc.
- Serve as liaison between merchants, land owners, downtown employees and the Parking Department.
- Provide directions, customer service and education on parking costs and policies for patrons and visitors. This could include referrals for jump starts, lockouts, or stranded motorists.
- Conduct regular permit violation checks in the parking lots to assure a minimum number of unauthorized parkers.
- Coordinate sign issues, meter malfunctions and other maintenance issues.
- Serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for downtown security.
- Promote the Downtown Vision of the City Community Development Department, and serve as an ambassador for the downtown.
- Coordinate with Police for identification of stolen and abandoned vehicles.

**6. Develop a plan to utilize the Harbor parking lots during the Durkee St. Lot construction.**

The Durkee St. development will change the function and activity of downtown. The disruption will peak during construction, when the existing parking has been removed, but the new parking is not in service yet. The City has available parking at the Harbor that can be used in the interim. To take advantage of this available parking, the City will have to provide enhancements to better connect the lots to downtown.

- Consider a temporary shuttle service from the Harbor lots to Margaret St.
- Upgrade the pedestrian connections at Dock St. and Green St. (Long-Term Improvement)
- Explore the opportunity to construct at grade pedestrian crossing and switchback pedestrian ramp at Pike St. extended. (Long-Term Improvement)

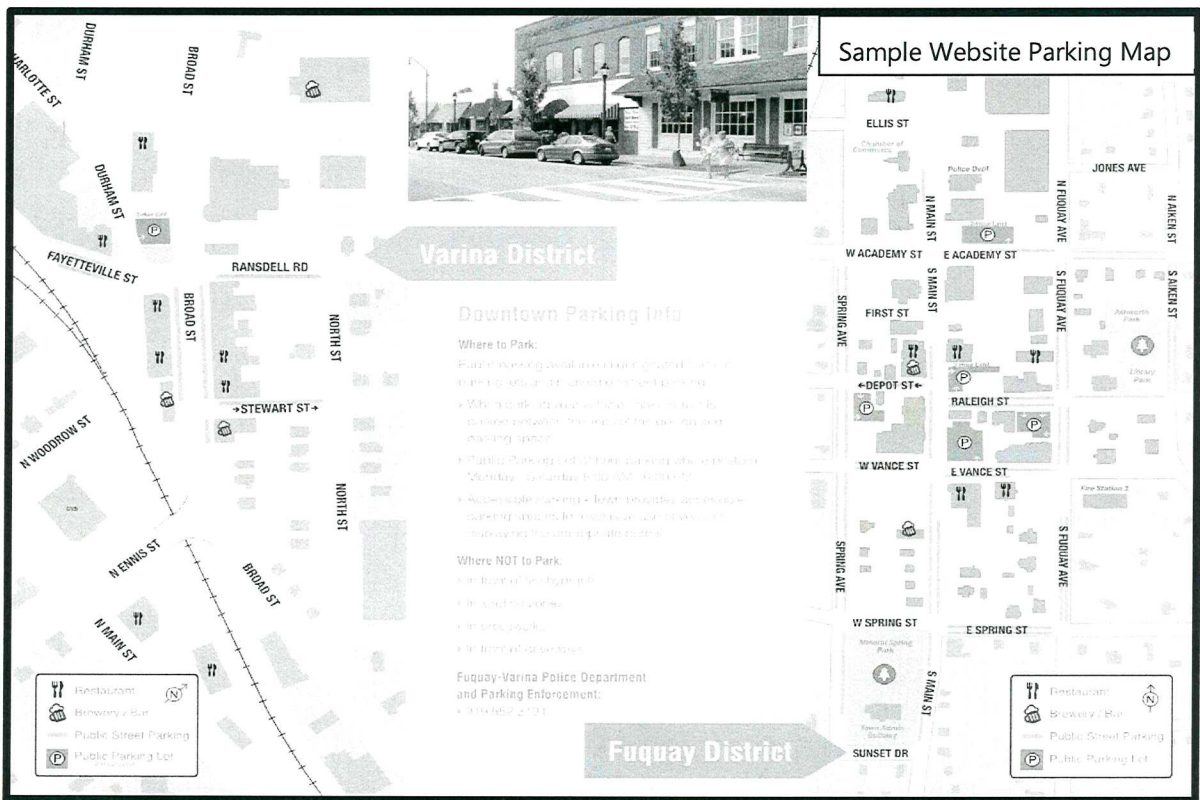




**7. Create a parking website as part of Recommendation #1.**

In coordination with parking branding and wayfinding, the City should develop a parking page on the City website. The webpage should inform guests and visitors of availability and policy and provide payment and convenience for patrons. The page should include:

- Parking Maps
- Policy and Regulations
- Online Payments
  - Parking tickets
  - Monthly Permits
  - Residential Permits
- Special Event Parking Policies
- Contact Information



**8. Improve Green St. for vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access from the Harbor area to downtown.**

The short-term need to utilize the Harbor parking lots for the Durkee St. development may provide the opportunity for longer term capital improvements connecting those lots to downtown. Green St. provides the opportunity to improve vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian connections from downtown to the Harbor lots and lakefront. Improved sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting and emergency call boxes would enhance the area and improve the perception of safety. A Complete Streets approach would greatly enhance this connection for all users.

**9. Develop parking branding and wayfinding program for downtown, but that can also be used citywide.**

Existing location and wayfinding signage for the public parking lots is lacking. We were only able to find one standard "P" for parking symbol. Most residents and regular downtown visitors will find available parking, but with a managed system including enforcement, rates and fees, it is important to be clear regarding which areas are set aside for public parking. For out-of-town visitors and infrequent resident patrons, the public parking identification is necessary for even basic use of the parking system without confusion and worry of receiving parking tickets or being towed.



Margaret and Court Lot



Lexington, KY



Burlington, VT



Albany, NY

The above three parking systems adopted branding utilizing the universal Parking "P" and a location specific logo. The Public Parking sign in the Margaret and Court lot has the beginnings of a branding campaign with the parking "P" and a logo at the top. The branding needs to be carried throughout the downtown parking system, including on-street parking where appropriate. *NOTE: We understand the City is undertaking a signage and wayfinding program currently. This recommendation is intended to reinforce that parking should not be left out of the design and implementation.*

**10. Develop a special events parking plan for the Strand Center and Theater.**

The Strand Arts Center and Theater brings people downtown on a regular basis, especially at night and on weekends when other parking demand is low. Develop specific directions for Strand patrons so they are confident of the areas they are allowed to park. On-street parking should accommodate a large portion of the visitors for most events. For larger events patrons could use the City public parking lots and potentially private lots with some of the following provisions:

- A cooperative agreement for patrons to use the private parking lots after 5 pm and on weekends.
- Improve the pedestrian link along Marion St. with new sidewalks and increased lighting. (County Lot)
- Clearly identify the pedestrian link with the Durkee St. lot and the Strand Center.
- Potentially close Division St. and open public parking lot behind Strand Center.



**11. Add bicycle racks throughout downtown.**

There is a demand for bicycle access to downtown. We noted bicycles on city sidewalks and locked to signs and light poles. The City should add bicycle racks at convenient locations and consider adding street bicycle lanes as the city and downtown continue to develop.



**12. Work with NYDOT to re-route Route 9 off of Bridge St. and City Hall Place.**

The corner of Bridge St. and Durkee St. / City Hall Place is busy with traffic either turning north off Bridge St. or turning left onto Bridge St. heading south. The traffic includes numerous semi-trailers and other large vehicles as this a main north / south route for the area. Route 9 (through Route 314) connects the Burlington, VT ferry with the New York side of the lake. Re-routing Route 9 traffic along Catherine St. would provide traffic relief for downtown.

Traffic relief would result in a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly downtown and potentially increase safety. Decreased traffic would also make the Durkee St. development site more appealing for greenspace and pedestrian related activity. This would make the potential walk from the Harbor parking lots more appealing and safer.

**13. Work with railroad to avoid simultaneous blockage of BOTH Dock St. and Green St. when a train needs to stop downtown.**

Railroad interfaces with roads, motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians are generally complicated. There are simply too many competing access interests for simple shared use. As cities across the country have become more densely populated, the need for co-operative policies have been recognized and implemented by many rail companies.

The City needs to reach an agreement with the rail company to maintain open circulation paths at either Dock St. or Green St. at all times. It is understandable when one of the outlets is blocked by parked train cars, but having both blocked is a public safety issue. Additionally, the prime lake frontage property will be more difficult to develop if access is an ongoing issue.

**14. Implement a residential parking permit program for downtown residents.**

There are a growing number of downtown residents, and new City and State programs are aimed at continuing to increase the number of people living in downtown Plattsburgh. The Durkee St. development is expected to have residential units. As part of the parking system reorganization, a Residential Parking Permit Program should be established to provide parking for those who do not have a parking space as part of their lease.

From a zoning standpoint, landlords should still be required to provide adequate parking for their residents, without encouraging the demolition of a building to do so. If a residential property does not have parking spaces available, residents should be able to get a space from the City. The landlord or the resident may be responsible for the cost. As new residential units are opened, the parking demand and needs should be addressed prior to issuing occupancy permits.