Downtown Parking Myths, Realities, and Solutions

Presenters:

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Common Myths About Downtown Parking
Myth – *People do not like to walk.*

Reality – Most motorists do not mind parking a block or two away from their destination if there is a dedicated and inviting parking area for them *AND A REASON TO STOP.*

- When a downtown is clean and well maintained with occupied storefronts, people enjoy the walking experience
  - Cooperstown.
  - Saratoga Springs.
- Walkable downtowns have become trendy.
- People WALK IN MALLS!
Myth – People do not like to walk.
Myth – *If we build it they will come.* “Field of Dreams” approach.

Reality – Parking is not a downtown attraction.

- Physical improvements must be undertaken in conjunction with economic and quality of life improvements for revitalization efforts to succeed.
- Parking is a component to the overall approach.
  - promote downtown retail/services
  - relieve traffic congestion
  - maintain integrity of urban design
Myth – All parking must be in front.

Reality – People will park where parking is provided.

- Traditional downtowns have a grid pattern that often allows for rear lot parking behind the main street businesses.
  - Market Street, Corning, NY
  - Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY
  - Front Street, Port Jervis, NY
- Communities must use proper design:
  - Signage
  - Lighting
  - Access
Myth – *All parking must be in front.*
Myth – *Everyone is entitled to free parking.*

**Reality** – Every space entails a cost for developers, owners, tenants and tax payers.

- Parking fees are actually factored into rents, lease fees, sale prices, and taxes.
- There is nothing wrong with charging for parking:
  - Time limits
  - Permit Parking
  - Meters
Myth – *It’s difficult to find parking in downtown.*

Reality - Rather than focusing on how many spaces you have, think about how they relate to the downtown.

- **Signage** - Can people find them?
- **Connectivity** - Are they easily accessible?
- **Location** - Are they located in a safe place?
- **Walkability and Accessibility** - How direct is the pedestrian path to get to them?
- **Design and Aesthetics** - Is it a pleasant experience?
Myth – Parking should be equally available everyone.

Reality – It is essential to segment parking motorists into different groups and prioritize them accordingly.

- Customers and shoppers are the highest priority. They generate the greatest benefit with the highest turnover and the lowest costs.
- Other visitors, residents, employees, and park-and-ride commuters follow in importance.
- Employees and owners should park the furthest (i.e. Macy’s).
Myth – A Parking problem is a BAD thing!

Reality – A parking problem may be indicative of GOOD things.

- Flourishing businesses.
- Customers/Visitors/Tourists.
- Well used or needed services.
- Vibrant and active downtown.
Myth – *Parking ratios must be provided according to the ITE Manual.*

Reality – These manuals often create a larger than needed supply of private parking.

- Professional manuals base demand on single-use suburban sites, where ample free parking exists and few or no alternatives to driving are provided. The highest peak demand observed is then used to set the minimum.
- Technical Parking exercises can use the manuals as a guide but must make adjustments based on the unique character of the community (i.e. snow, shared parking, mass transit, government employees).
So you think you have a parking problem…

…what's next?
Downtown Parking Study to Address:

- Is there enough available parking?
- Is the parking being used efficiently?
- What will be the future need for parking based on the build-out potential?
- What parking management strategies should the municipality pursue?
Four Components of a Downtown Parking Study:

1. Inventory of existing conditions within the study area.
2. Examination of downtown parking requirements.
4. Formulation of conclusions & recommendations.
Inventory of Downtown Parking

Inventory includes:
• Parcel identification number.
• Owner & address information.
• Type of Use.
• Floor area/Floor Area Ratio.
• Parking counts.

Tools for the Inventory include:
• Assessment Records.
• Property Maps (GIS).
• Field Survey.
• Zoning Code.
### Inventory of Existing Land Use and Floor Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Floor Area in Square Feet</th>
<th>Dwelling Unit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>76+ units</td>
<td>303,180</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>41,817</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>32,247</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>184,973</td>
<td></td>
<td>61.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>16,093</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>16,588</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>6,330</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>5,132</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Residential unit number are approximate and not a part of the floor area ratio.*
## Examine Downtown Parking Requirements

To assess Surplus or Deficiencies, compare to zoning requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>2 spaces per dwelling unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Business</td>
<td>1 space per 200 square feet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Offices</td>
<td>1 space per 100 square feet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1 space per 75 square feet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>1 space per 100 square feet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>1 space per 1,700 square feet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Assessing Existing Conditions

### Study Area – Northern Gateway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Floor Area Dwelling Unit</th>
<th>Parking Required</th>
<th>Parking Avail.</th>
<th>Surplus / Deficit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>21 Units</td>
<td>42.00</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office-Gen.</td>
<td>12,514’</td>
<td>38.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office-Med.</td>
<td>959’</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>8,740’</td>
<td>124.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>55,740’</td>
<td>159.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>368.46</strong></td>
<td><strong>331</strong></td>
<td><strong>-38</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Develop a Realistic Build-out Scenario

A. Assessing Future Parking Needs
   • Evaluate Economic Development Trends.
   • Inventory of Vacancy Rates.
   • Parking Requirements of vacancy space if occupied by highest and best use permitted by the zoning requirements.
   • ITE Parking Generation Manual (adjust for demographics and weather)

B. Recommendations for future Parking Needs
Formation of Conclusions

- Study Results.
- Short Term & Long Term Goals.
- Goal Strategies.
- Cost Estimates.
- Funding Assistance.
Houston….we have a problem!

Potential Downtown Parking Solutions
Potential Downtown Parking Solutions

Seven Principles for Parking Solutions
Kent Robinson Ph. D., St. Cloud State University, Minn.

1. Understand the proper role of parking in downtowns.
2. Strategically Locate Parking Facilities.
3. Value the utility of on-street parking.
4. Emphasize quality design.
5. Make better use of existing spaces.
6. Control the total volume of downtown parking spaces.
7. Plan for parking comprehensively.
Principle One - Understand the Proper Role of Parking in Downtown.

Develop solutions that focus on creating a downtown setting that is compact, walkable, and interesting.

- In-fill development with safe, clean sidewalks and curbing.
- Parking accessibility has the potential to set the tone for the rest of the downtown experience for visitors.

**Seven Principles for Parking Solutions**
Kent Robinson Ph. D., St. Cloud State University, Minn.
Principle Two - Strategically Locate Parking Facilities

- Back lot parking behind the main street buildings.
- Clearly mark parking so people can find it through good directional signage and/or way finding system.
- Avoid locating parking facilities in heavy pedestrian corridors.
Potential Downtown Parking Solutions

Principle Three - Value the Utility of On-Street Parking.

- Maintain on-street parking as much as possible.
- On-street parallel & angled parking provide perceived advantages of visibility, accessibility, and safety.
- Regulate on-street parking to prevent parking nesters (e.g. 2-hours to 90 minutes).
Potential Downtown Parking Solutions

Principle Four - Emphasize Quality Design.

• Parking Areas should be generously landscaped and well-maintained.
• Landscaping should be designed to include a visual buffer between the parking area and adjacent sidewalk.
• Include visual amenities to help make the transition from driver to pedestrian a positive experience.
Potential Downtown Parking Solutions

Principle Five - Make Better Use of Existing Spaces.

- Develop a parking educational campaign to inform the public of the whereabouts of typically unused parking spaces.
- Encourage shared parking facilities for users that experience peak parking demands at different times.
Potential Downtown Parking Solutions

Principle Five - Make Better Use of Existing Spaces.

- Ways to get the message out include directional signs, publicizing parking locations on websites, brochures, newspaper advertisements, and through individual downtown businesses to distribute information to employees and customers.
Potential Downtown Parking Solutions

Principle Six - Control the Total Volume of Downtown Parking Spaces.

- Establish Parking Maximums Rather Than Parking Minimums (too much parking discourages people from walking downtown).
- Self-contained parking should be avoided for a traditional downtown because it discourages visitors from passing by other downtown businesses.
Potential Downtown Parking Solutions

Principle Seven - Plan for Parking Comprehensively

Any Parking Solution Should Be Evaluated For Its Impacts On:

- Traffic Patterns & Flow.
- Pedestrian Experience.
- Density Levels.
- Parking Coverage Rates.
- Activity Patterns.
- Aesthetic & Historical Qualities.
- Sense of Place.
Case Studies - City of Port Jervis
Case Studies - Village of Hoosick Falls
Case Studies - Village of Hoosick Falls

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Case Studies - Village of Fort Edward
Case Studies - Town of Fort Edward

Downtown Parking Myths, Realities, and Solutions
Case Studies - Village of Manchester

VILLAGE OF MANCHESTER, NEW YORK
Community Development Strategic Plan
October 2006

Recommended Downtown Improvements

- MIXED USE INFILL
  - Ground Floor Retail
  - Residential Above
  - Parking Behind

- STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS
  - Bulk Outs
    - Textured Crosswalks
    - Street Trees and Landscaping
    - Benches & Historic Luminaries
    - Enhanced Park and Band Stand
    - Wayfinding Signage

- MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT
  - Repaved & Reconfigured
  - Direct Access to Municipal Park
  - Outdoor Dining Patio & Viewing Area
  - Bicycle Lockers

- VILLAGE GREENWAY
  - Linear Park with Walking/Biking Trail
  - Adjacent to Canandaigua Outlet
  - Connection to Shortville

LEGEND

- Concentrations of improvement
  - Parking Lot
  - Textured Crosswalk
  - Proposed in RFR
  - Existing Building (CBD

NEW MUNICIPAL PARK
- Connected to Greenway
- Linked to Village Sandand
- Multiple Boat Docking Areas
- Canoe - Local Boats

IMPROVE TRAIL HEAD ENTRANCE
Case Studies - Village of Manchester
The goals for many of our downtowns include high density, to be compact & pedestrian friendly, to have a strong sense of place, to take advantage of historic and cultural features - all these elements need to be supported by the planning for parking.

“There should be a comprehensive plan for the downtown, where parking is one of the key ingredients.” - Kent Robinson
Conclusion

Questions & Answers
Thank You!