



CITY OF KIRKLAND

Department of Public Works

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To: Dave Ramsay, City Manager

From: Parking Advisory Board, Jack Wherry, Chair

Date: March 26, 2009

Subject: STUDY SESSION WITH PARKING ADVISORY BOARD

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council discuss parking issues with the PAB, and give direction on 1) preparation of a financing plan requiring on-street pay parking and formation of a local improvement district that would allow the City to partner with developers to build public parking, and 2) changes to ParkSmart regulations that would require employees working at new buildings that have adequate employee parking, to park at their worksites.

BACKGROUND

The Downtown Kirkland Parking Study and Plan (October 2003) recommended the establishment of a Parking Advisory Board (p. 61) " .. made up of a representative cross section of downtown interests...(to) a) assist the Parking Coordinator/Manager in the implementation of the parking management plan, b) review parking issues over time , and c) advise City Council on strategy implementation based on the Guiding Principles for parking management." This memo addresses all three of these charges. First, we discuss measuring the need for parking that led to the implementation of pay parking in evening hours. Second, we discuss issues related to possible amendments to ParkSmart and funding for new parking supply. Third, we offer advice for building new parking supply. Our role is evolving as parking is seen as a solution to the decline of downtown retail, and our advice for building new supply needs to be weighed by the Council along with the advice of others, such as the Downtown Advisory Committee.

The need for more parking

Although it is widely perceived that more parking is needed at all times in downtown Kirkland, the quarterly occupancy studies show parking deficiencies occur primarily at noon times, the evening hours, and throughout the days in good weather. Another measure of parking need is to apply parking requirements as called for in the zoning code to downtown blocks containing legacy buildings. This is reported in the memo from stakeholders on financing new parking supply (Attachment 1). While this does not yield an exact estimate of parking that is needed, it does provide evidence to support the position that several hundred more parking stalls are needed downtown.

Priced parking in the evening

Attachment 2 describes the roll out of priced parking in evenings (5 to 9 PM) in city lots that was implemented on March 16. Making parking free during the daytime mitigated much of the opposition to pay parking in the evening hours. Interviews with 97 affected businesses in the downtown turned up only one business that felt they were not consulted or that the pay parking would affect their business negatively. Some of the ideas we heard will be implemented now such as a central place on the City website for receiving complaints and ideas, such as validation will be studied further.

<ADD MATERIAL HERE BASED ON EXPERIENCE WITH ROLLOUT >

Funding new parking supply

Attachment 1 reports on input from stakeholders on how to secure new parking supply. Following Council direction given at the Council/PAB study session in December of 2007 and in February of 2008, the PAB convened a group of downtown stakeholders¹ to help us move forward in the area of pay parking and in securing new parking supply.

The process of engaging stakeholders to enlarge the perspective of the PAB resulted in two recommendations: 1) do not price on-street parking until there is a firm commitment to construct new supply, and 2) partner with a developer rather than build a stand-alone garage. *This second recommendation calls for a commitment on the part of the city to be ready to partner by preparing a financing plan so that a developer is not delayed by the City.* Such a financing plan will likely involve a mix of: 1) expanding pay parking, 2) Assessing fees to nearby property owners through a Local Improvement District, and 3) general revenue. Although the stakeholders are not ready to price on-street parking now, they realize financing and building new supply will require pricing of on-street parking.

This approach to securing new parking supply differs somewhat from the retail study recommendations of the Downtown Advisory Committee, who call for building new parking supply as a necessary first step (a “build it and shoppers will come” approach).

ParkSmart

Although we are moving to market-based pricing of off street parking, we still rely on regulations to manage on-street parking, by a two-hour time limit and prohibition of employee parking in the downtown core (ParkSmart). Attachment 3 is a draft ordinance that proposes two changes to ParkSmart. One prohibits free employee parking in the Library garage for employees of new buildings that meet parking requirements. These employees still cannot park on downtown streets, they are expected to park in the

¹ Stakeholders included representatives from Downtown Commercial Property owners, KDA, Chamber, Restaurant operators, Gallery owners, Park Board, Downtown Condo Owners and Moss Bay Neighborhood Association

facilities that are provided for them at their worksite. The second allows a penalty to be assessed to employers who do not keep their ParkSmart records up-to-date.

We considered an additional penalty of fining employers for employees who are chronic violators of ParkSmart, but we do not propose it at this time. Nevertheless, we are concerned that ParkSmart regulations do not work well. Employees do not have an incentive to register with ParkSmart unless they want to park in the Library garage. Many prefer not to be registered and hide on the street. It is difficult to regulate unregistered. Now that business license fees increase with increasing numbers of employees, employers tend to under report their employees. Getting employers to update the data on employees and their autos is even more problematic. High employee and auto turnover makes it difficult to update the City's data on employees and their autos. Increasingly, it is difficult to find parking in the employee section of the library garage so the incentive of a permit is of less value. For these reasons there are an increasing number of unregistered employees and unregistered cars hiding on street. If in the long term, we were to price parking on street there would be less need for ParkSmart to manage employee parking by regulation.

A Stated Preference Parking Survey

Attachment 4 is a report of results of a parking survey that employed a methodology called Stated Preference (SP).² Respondents were asked to make a choice among parking options (on street, off-street lots, a new parking garage, and a free but distant on-street location). Characteristics of parking (price, walk distance, search time, time limit, and parking fine) were systematically varied. Forcing respondents to make a choice yields better data than the more traditional "importance" ratings. The results of the SP parking survey show the extent to which pricing parking on street will result in spillover to neighborhood/distant but free parking. The SP parking survey results indicate who will oppose pricing and who will support it. Younger, working persons are less receptive to pricing and will walk to avoid paying, whereas older retired persons are willing to pay for parking if it makes it more available. The parking survey also indicated how usage of a new garage varies by location. The analysis shows why people are more inclined to drive and search for parking than they are to park farther and walk. On average, a respondent felt that a 1200-foot walk is equal to a parking cost of \$0.95 while a search time of five minutes is equal to a parking cost of \$0.45. Although walking 1200 feet takes nearly five minutes, it is perceived as twice as costly as a search time of 5 minutes.

SUMMARY

Implementation of pay parking in City lots in the evening hours is underway. Evaluation will be done.

Amendments to ParkSmart are proposed for your consideration. We do not want to allow employees of new buildings that meet parking requirements to park in the Library garage.

² Ken Dueker enlisted the assistance, at a very low cost, of a leading group of researchers in Stated Preference methods at the University of Technology in Sydney Australia.

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The City needs to exhibit a readiness to partner with developers to build new supply. This readiness includes a plan for pricing of on-street parking.