



CITY OF KIRKLAND
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Kim Scrivner, Transportation Planner
Doug McIntyre, Transportation Manager
Truc Dever, Interim Director of Public Works

Date: February 6, 2024

Subject: DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council receive a briefing about the Downtown Parking Study and provide direction to staff about further information they would like to see at the May 2024 Financial Retreat or about next steps in the parking program.

BACKGROUND:

Downtown Kirkland Parking Program

The adequacy of parking downtown, both in perception, and in reality, is important to the City as the economic vitality of downtown depends on visitors, diners and shoppers. A thriving downtown in turn contributes to the quality of life of all of Kirkland. Consumers who worry about finding parking may opt for other destinations in Redmond and Bellevue. Discussions about the adequacy of downtown parking by residents, businesses, tourists, and waterfront park visitors have been with Kirkland for decades. Perceptions of whether there is sufficient parking downtown varies by stakeholder and by season. Some say parking is plentiful if a person is willing to park a few blocks away and others say parking is non-existent, especially in the summer months. Some have called for the City to build more parking capacity, while others have proposed eliminating parking in favor of more walking and biking and transit options downtown. While there are many anecdotes from all sides about parking, there has been very little reliable information and analysis to aid the Council in decision making. To remedy this problem, the City Council funded the parking study as part of the 2023-2024 budget to generate current, reliable data to aid in setting future downtown parking strategies.

PUBLIC PARKING INVENTORY

Downtown Kirkland [City-owned public parking](#)¹ consists of both on- and off-street parking. On-street parking includes both parallel and angled parking and the off-street parking includes

¹ Downtown Kirkland's Guide to Public Parking - <https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/3/public-works/transportation/guide-to-public-parking-2023.pdf>

several city-owned surface lots including the Lakeshore Plaza Lot adjacent to Marina Park, the Lake & Central Lot, the Wester Lot near City Hall and one municipal garage. There are other city-owned lots at various parks throughout the city including in the vicinity of downtown.

All parking downtown is time restricted and includes four-hour, two-hour, 30-min and 15-min stalls as well as American with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking stalls, loading zones and electric vehicle parking stations. The on-street and municipal garage parking facilities are free of charge. In the Lakeshore Plaza and the Lake and Central lots, the City charges \$1.00 per hour between 9AM and 9PM, Monday through Saturday. Parking lot users can pay through physical pay stations or through a mobile pay parking solution through the Pay-by-Phone app.

The Municipal garage contains three different zones of parking: library only parking at the top surface level, hourly restricted public parking, and permit only parking between 9AM and 5PM, Monday through Friday in the upper and lower levels inside the garage. Kirkland currently has a contract with Diamond Parking to monitor the garage and close the garage each evening at midnight. The Wester Lot, located south of City Hall between 1st Street and 2nd Street, is reserved for permitted downtown employees between 8AM and 5PM, Monday through Friday. All permitted areas are available to the general public outside of the permit-only hours.

Employees who work within the [Downtown Central Business District¹](#) (CBD) are eligible for a parking permit that allows them to park in the permit-only areas for free and without time restrictions. There are a few additional permit-only stalls on Lake Avenue W, west of Market St.

DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY

Parking Data Collection and Sensors

For the study, the City selected parking sensors over traditional manual count methods and more modern camera methods. Manual counts are labor intensive, expensive and only capture points in time. Camera methods address some of these concerns, but studies show they do not have the desired accuracy the City is seeking. Parking sensors provide the highest benefit for the cost which includes 99% accuracy rates, 24/7 data and include a 10-year warranty, should the city choose to continue the data collection service. The City's vendor is eleven-X and their sensors use both a magnetometer and radar to collect data on the presence of a vehicle in a parking space and then gateways installed on power poles establish communication with sensors and transmit data to the cloud server. City staff can then access both real-time and historical data through the online dashboard. The sensors are placed in the pavement using an epoxy sealer and no personal data, such as license plates or images, are collected.

Parking Study

The intent of the Downtown Parking Study is to collect 6-months of quality parking usage data to communicate to decision-makers, to businesses and the general public the status of parking downtown and to report on any challenges. The use of the sensors also helps the Council and the community to go beyond competing anecdotes about parking availability by instead using real-time, 24/7 data.

The study included adding over 500 elevenX sensors in all the on-street parking stalls in the downtown CBD, in the Lake & Central and Lakeshore lots and in two park lots along Lake Washington Boulevard at Marsh Park and Houghton Beach Park. Parking sensors were not added in the Peter Kirk Municipal Garage because of the challenges with boring holes for the sensors in the concrete and with internet connection challenges in the lower levels of the garage. Diamond Parking collects twice-daily counts of the Peter Kirk Municipal Garage which are included in the study data. Figure 1 below shows the study area.

Sensors were installed in May and June, 2023 and the parking study analysis reports on the data between July 1st, 2023 and December 31st 2023. The current contract with elevenX expires on June 30th, 2024 so staff could come back to Council with one full-year of data at the end of the service agreement. The ongoing annual operations and maintenance costs would be \$32,040 with the same number of sensors, should Council decide to extend the contract. That discussion will come to Council at a later date.



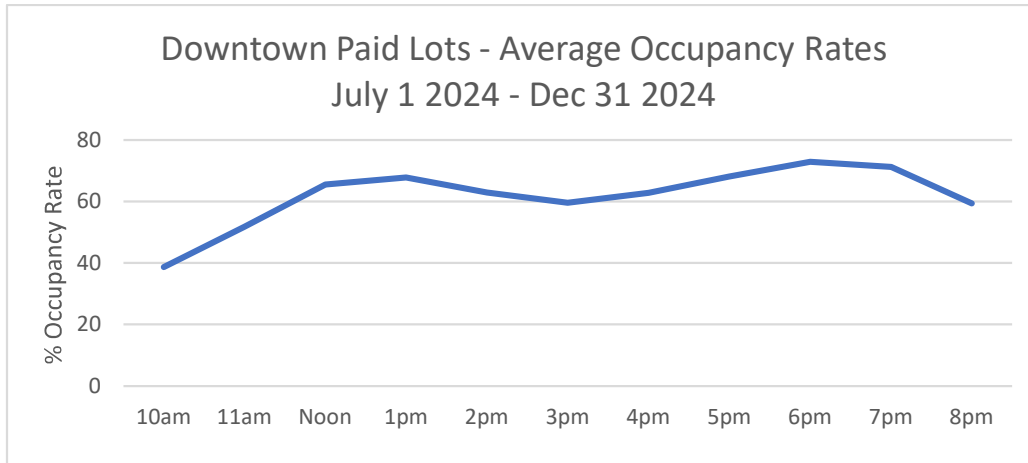
Figure 1 - Parking Management Project Area

Parking Study Preliminary Results

Once occupancy rates reach 80-85%, parking can be perceived as being congested even if there are some spaces available and parking experts recommend implementing parking management strategies at the occupancy rates.

Overall, for the duration of the 6-month study period, July 1st through December 31st 2023 between the hours of 10am-8pm:

- On-street two-hour daily parking stall occupancy rates averaged between 69% and 89% when averaging daily rates during the busiest and the least busy days during the study period.
- Paid lots were more varied where the daily averaged occupancy rates ranged between 38% and 96%. This flattened out a bit when averaging over the entire study period with ranges between 38.6% to 72.9%



- The two parks lots varied between 97% occupancy rates in the summer to 21% on the busiest and the least busy days throughout the study period.
- Park Lane’s occupancy stayed relatively high with the lowest toward 10pm at 78.3% and highest at 92.7% at around 6pm, again, when averaged over the entire study period. When viewing the average over a peak week during the summer, August 20th – 26th which was a week with no events, the ranges followed a similar pattern with the lowest occupancy being 84.2% and the highest at 94.3%.

In the Peter Kirk Municipal Garage, counts were collected at 11am and 4pm daily. During the study period, occupancy rates ranged from 53-86% during the summer months and 52-63% in the winter months. The lower level that offers permit only parking for employees ranges from 36-52% occupancy throughout the year.

The study session presentation will dive into greater detail regarding occupancy rates and dwell times based on stall types (ADA, 15 min, 30-min, load zones, electric vehicles, etc.) and will provide more detail month by month during the study period for the various parking zones (paid lots, on-street, etc.).

The preliminary conclusion from the parking study is that downtown Kirkland has reached levels of occupancy that can be perceived as congested, particularly during the summer months at certain times of day.

Parking Availability Information

Another key benefit of the parking sensors is they provide the technological foundation of parking availability information for anyone seeking parking downtown. The sensors can be connected to other software systems that can show on cell phones where parking is at capacity and where empty spaces may be found. Building out this system is described later in the memo under next steps,

Parking Management

Parking can better be managed in a variety of ways but one of the most common and impactful tools to manage parking is through pricing policy. Pricing can help induce turnover and can be dynamic based on season or areas of greater capacity challenges. This can help incentivize people to park where there is greater capacity. Other parking management solutions include

the rules for the parking stall (such as adjusting from four- to two-hour parking) or creating dedicated stalls for certain uses such as 15-min only pick-up / drop-off stalls.

The proposal for the Transportation Strategic Plan is to include, for Council consideration, a parking management study that can help Kirkland decide the best approach to better manage not only parking but curb space in general.

Next Steps

The parking data collection and study is just one component of the parking program. The city is currently working on various other parking related initiatives:

- Replacement of the existing parking pay stations (contract in review)
- Procurement of a SMART Parking vendor (contract in review) that will:
 - Provide a digital inventory of all of Kirkland's downtown parking assets such as all stalls and the rules and conditions for them
 - Integrate data from parking sensors, pay stations, pay-by-phone, garage counts, etc.
 - Provide a user-friendly interface accessible to the public and an internal dashboard to staff with real-time and historical parking data. This can help facilitate event management, parking closure information, occupancy tracking, multi-lingual support, etc.
 - One opportunity with the SMART Parking vendor Arcadis is developing the optimal occupancy rates for Kirkland.
- Replacement of the employee parking permit system
- Considerations of better count tracking and access control to the garage (unfunded)

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

Staff is scheduled to bring additional information to Council's May financial retreat. What additional information would Council like to see?