

FAIRHAVEN NEIGHBORHOOD AND URBAN VILLAGE PLAN

CHAPTER 3: PARKING

Background

Parking in dense, older commercial districts is challenging for many communities, and Fairhaven is no exception. Especially on small (25 - 50' wide by 100' deep) lots, it is difficult to provide both parking and commercial development. In 1994 the City approved the formation of the Fairhaven Parking District, helping to spur the most significant changes in Fairhaven since the railroad speculation of the 1880's. Within the District, the city waived parking requirements for new development except residential of greater than 2,500 square feet/unit density. Developers were also allowed to count on-street parking spaces to meet their on-site parking requirements. Since its inception, 32 new buildings have been constructed, there has been adaptive reuse of many of the historic buildings and the District paid for the construction of approximately 100 off-site parking spaces. A second Parking District was later approved for the SW corner of 10th and Harris. This small-scale District does not allow any use that would increase parking demand, which is very different than the larger Fairhaven Parking District.

The advantage of waiving parking requirements is that it facilitates construction on many small lots that could not realistically host both buildings and parking. That activity has spread; development pressure has increased leading to additional development outside of the Parking District.

In 2011 as part of the urban village master planning process, a study was completed by the Transpo Group. The study analyzed the existing conditions, forecasted future demand, and provided a series of potential strategies that could be used to address future parking demand and supply issues in Fairhaven.

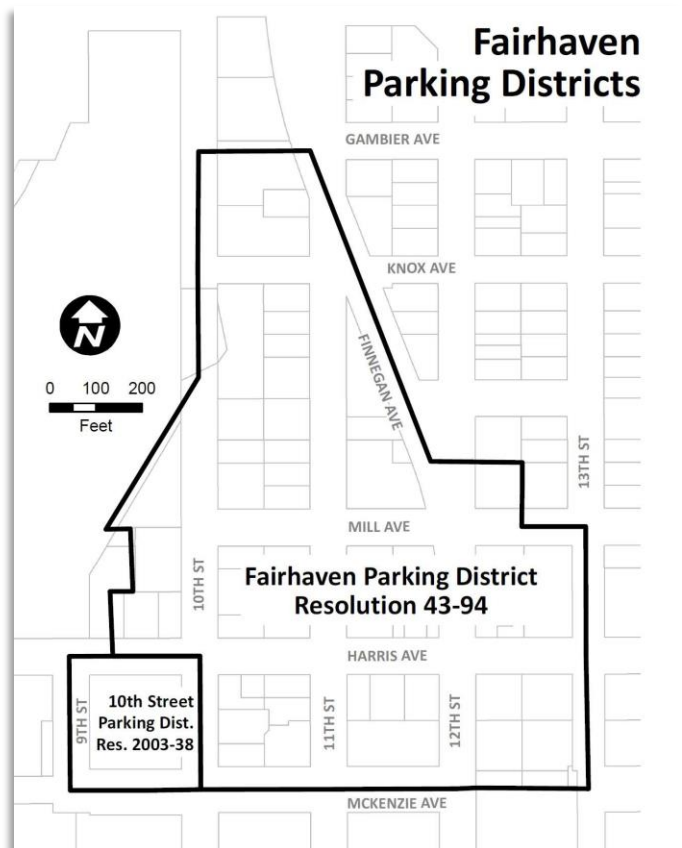
Existing Parking Conditions

Supply. The Transpo study found that there are approximately 1,000 on-street parking spaces and approximately 730 off-street parking spaces within the study area. Additional private spaces exist in underground garages, and were not included in this study.

Demand/Utilization. Parking utilization in the area studied by Transpo is not at capacity as the utilization overall is less than 85 percent. However, the Commercial Core is at capacity with utilization consistently between 94 and 97 percent throughout the day. On-street parking two to three blocks from the core has excess capacity, utilized at 50 to 60 percent while off-street utilization is 30 to 50 percent.

Parking Management. There is currently no charge for on- or off-street parking. Time-limited parking requirements are also not used.

Duration of Stay. The study found that most vehicles stay less than one to two hours in both on- and off-street parking.



Parking Goals and Policies

Goal 3.1 Address traffic, pedestrian safety and parking challenges.

The following policies, drawn from the Comprehensive Plan, apply to Fairhaven and other urban villages:

Policy 3.1 Address the needs for future parking supply improvements and demand management through creation of a "Fairhaven Parking Task Force". The task force could be staffed by the City's Public Works Department and include representatives from the Transportation Commission, the Old Fairhaven Association, the Fairhaven Village Association and Fairhaven Neighbors. The task force should be charged with developing a unified parking plan, implementing strategies and funding alternatives for consideration by the Transportation Commission and City Council. The task force's work should be completed within two years of the date of adoption of this plan.

Policy 3.2 Encourage development in Fairhaven by reducing parking requirements, thereby reducing the cost burden that parking places on new development.

Policy 3.3 Consider reductions in required parking standards for purposes of:

- Achieving a compact urban form that is attractive, inviting and walkable.
- Furthering City infill and affordable housing goals and policies.
- Encouraging use of transit and other transportation alternatives.
- Reducing impacts on the environment.
- Encouraging the redesign of existing auto oriented strip commercial development.

Policy 3.4 Consider counting on-street parking toward meeting commercial use parking requirements where appropriate.

Policy 3.5 On-street parking should be primarily dedicated to serving the short term parking needs of street level retail and service customers. Peripheral lots and parking structures should be primarily dedicated to employee, resident, and other long term parking uses.

Policy 3.6 Encourage the "unbundling" (separate pricing) of parking spaces associated with residential development in Urban Villages to promote reduction in ownership of multiple automobiles.

Policy 3.7 Encourage the provision of car-sharing with new residential development to reduce the residential parking demand.

Policy 3.8 Establish parking reduction allowances for residential units and within ¼ mile of the WTA Primary Transit Network that require each unit to receive WTA bus passes in perpetuity.

Policy 3.9 Encourage the use of common parking facilities among compatible, adjacent land uses where feasible, i.e. shared parking.

Maintaining the Status Quo



Photo 3.1 Parking along Mill Avenue.

Currently the parking in Fairhaven works adequately although there are increasing reports of employees and/or residents occupying on-street spaces long-term, limiting access to on-street parking for customers. Though frequently discussed, time-limited parking is not currently an option. Monitoring time-limited parking is highly staff intensive and generates correspondingly high staff costs but no revenue to cover the expenditure of resources. Current parking

conditions could be improved and the status quo extended if the following optional measures were adopted:

By the City:

- Provide incentives for developers to create infrastructure supportive of alternatives by granting parking reductions *only* in exchange for alternative amenities, i.e., bus passes, secured bicycle parking, pedestrian improvements, etc.
- Create bicycle parking requirements for all new development. Require changing and locker facilities for larger, mixed use developments.
- Charge developers fees in-lieu-of creating required parking spaces. Reserve funds to improve alternative infrastructure or increase shared parking supply.
- Designate pedestrian zones and assign transit priorities to curb space throughout the neighborhood.
- Prioritize and improve bicycle infrastructure throughout the neighborhood including installing on-street bike “corrals” in close proximity to bike routes.*
- Protect remaining on-street parking spaces. Evaluate development plans and reject those that limit or reduce existing on-street parking by installing driveways, fire hydrants or other items that reduce on-street parking.
- Adopt a “zero sum” approach that requires that the existing area parking inventory be maintained. If a new development would reduce the number of spaces available, those spaces must be replaced so the total number of spaces available is not further reduced by the development.
- Require developers to “unbundle” parking spaces from developments. Do not provide parking spaces in conjunction with any retail or residential unit so that users must pay directly for the parking spaces they use.
- Establish new residential parking permit zones to limit spillover into adjacent neighborhoods.*



Photo 3.2 Parking Improvements on McKenzie Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets.

By the business associations or owners:

- Create a transit information hub in the neighborhood.
- Expand participation in the "Smart Trips" program.
- Prioritize and upgrade pedestrian and bicycle, and motorcycle infrastructure so there is room for these alternatives to replace some vehicle trips.*
- Require employers/property owners to subsidize provision of free transit passes for employees/residents.
- Consolidate area residents/employees and negotiate reduced rate bus passes through WTA.
- Provide a cash subsidy to area employees that choose not to drive.*
- Provide late shuttle or taxi service to support off-shift employees.*
- Identify and acquire fringe-area parking to support area employees and other long-term parkers.*
- Identify opportunities for and create shared parking assets throughout the neighborhood.
- Create and maintain area-wide transportation and parking information, i.e. brochures, posters, and web information. Create corresponding directional signs.*
- Establish car-share for area residents – require developers to subsidize membership.*
- Work with the City to evaluate the feasibility of improving/increasing on-street parking, such as:
 - Add curb stops on Mill St. east of 12th
 - Create angled parking on 13th Street between Harris and McKenzie to angled
 - Create angled parking on Larrabee between 10th and 12th
 - Create angled parking on 11th south of McKenzie

Two things should be noted: First, no strategy will support the status quo indefinitely unless development ceases – an unlikely scenario. There are already discussions about development of the one of the last remaining surface parking areas in the neighborhood, the “pit.” As consumer confidence increases, more development will follow further reducing parking options. Full saturation will be reached and by that time, all options will have been precluded as there will be neither available land or funding to address the situation.

Second, implementing several of the options listed above (shown with an asterisk *) will require funding, funding that does not exist under current conditions and cannot equitably be redirected from downtown, where the City instituted parking management strategies decades ago. As parking in Fairhaven currently generates no revenue, and there is no other funding mechanism in place. Resources currently do not exist to monitor the parking situation as the neighborhood develops, or for capital improvement projects such as improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, or to purchase land and develop structured parking.

Parking Management

Parking is an essential element of a transportation program; wherever a vehicle travels there must be storage for it on the other end. Thirty-five percent of American households have three or more vehicles and a typical vehicle is parked 23 hours of each day. Indeed, many of the aspects of the landscape that are largely reviled, such as shopping centers and strip malls, exist in part because of past parking policies - policies that we now realize are unsustainable.

“Parking management” simply means instituting policies and programs that result in more efficient use of parking resources. Especially where resources are scarce and demand exceeds supply, an effective parking management program can reduce parking demand by 20 – 40%. Parking management strategies can also help achieve a community’s transportation goals by providing motorists with economic incentives for choosing other options to single occupant vehicle (SOV) travel. At the same time, these strategies can provide funding to improve conditions such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and resources to expand parking capacity.

Parking Pricing

Parking pricing means that motorists pay directly for the parking spaces they require. Parking pricing has been shown to be successful in other areas in achieving several goals:

- **Manage demand** – pricing parking reduces demand. Adjusting price levels, with the highest rates charged for the most convenient short-term parking, moves long-term parkers to other, less expensive areas or to less costly alternatives to driving.
- **Facilitate turnover** – assigning a cost to parking reduces and in many cases eliminates the problem of residents or employees occupying a parking space all day - spaces that might otherwise have hosted customers.



Photo 3.3 The 'Pit' parking lot at 11th and Mill

- **Provide funding** – revenue from paid parking can be used to improve streetscapes, increase security, enhance pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure or resources can be banked to increase parking capacity (develop structured parking) in the future.
- **Facilitate enforcement** – paid parking provides resources for enforcement officers with the means to efficiently enforce area-wide parking restrictions using methods that are not easily subverted by motorists.

- **Provide occupancy data** – modern parking management equipment tracks and reports occupancy data without the need to periodically launch expensive “studies” to gather information.
- **Provide consistent city-wide development guidelines** – parking policy is an integral part of a community-wide transportation policy and should not advantage one developer over another anymore than it should advantage one neighborhood over another. An effective transportation system does not change the rules when crossing imaginary neighborhood boundaries or census tracts. Supporting a system that provides confusion for both developers and motorists, unfairly advantages one area over another and can lead to conflict between neighborhoods.
- **Support equity** - providing parking comes at a cost that has historically been buried or “bundled” into construction costs or rents. Often governments subsidize the cost of parking so it is spread among all the members of the community – even those that do not drive.

There is already a need to implement parking management, including parking pricing, in Fairhaven. Indeed, demand studies already show activity levels far above those that exist in many areas downtown where management policies are already in place. Establishing paid parking would allow the City to maximize the use of existing parking spaces, fund increased enforcement, accurately gauge demand for market rate parking and generate funding for the range of management options listed above.

Effective parking management is an active strategy that reacts and adjusts to changing market conditions. Implementing management strategies may have ripple effects in the neighborhood that will require monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the proper balance has been achieved once conditions normalize. Additional development will also have impacts that will need to be monitored. Setting arbitrary thresholds or timelines does not provide the flexibility needed to customize the management approach to changing neighborhood conditions.

Future Parking Conditions

Demand. Future parking demand is anticipated to be approximately 2,300 to 2,800 vehicles depending on the strategy for accommodating resident parking and without the implementation of parking management strategies.

Escalating pressure. Additional development will undoubtedly exacerbate pressure on the existing parking supply including:

- Loss of on-street parking due to future roadway improvements.
- Displacement of off-street parking with future development (e.g., development of “The Pit” on the NW corner of 11th and Mill and/or the old Fairhaven Hotel site at 12th and Harris).
- Occupancy of 85 percent or more means it becomes increasingly difficult to find a space, cruising increases and congestion often overflows into residential neighborhoods.
- Residents and employees occupy on-street spaces intended to serve customer needs.
- Potential modifications to existing Fairhaven and Tenth Street Parking Districts and/or additional development that does not require parking (e.g., historical buildings)

Projected parking deficit. The current supply is approximately 1,700 parking spaces, a deficit of up to 1,100 parking spaces and that figure may be understated. Without implementing parking management strategies in the near term, funding for additional parking will not be available and future parking demand will not be accommodated.