

City of Albany
Planning and Zoning Commission
Staff Report

Meeting Date: June 24, 2008

Prepared by: _____

Agenda Item: 6e

Reviewed by: _____

Subject: City Council request for comments and recommendations on establishing Paid Parking Program(s).

Recommendation

Provide initial comments and recommendations to assist the City Council in its discussion regarding the potential of establishing a paid parking program in the City of Albany.

Background

As stated in the April 12, 2008 memorandum from the City Administrator to the Planning and Zoning Commission (Attachment 1), the City Council has expressed interest in exploring paid parking program(s) in Albany. The Council has requested comments and/or recommendations be received by June 30, 2008.

This staff report is structured to provide a brief discussion of specific parking topics, followed by a preliminary list of comments/recommendations that staff has identified. In addition to the topic of "Paid Parking in Commercial Districts", staff has also included two other parking topics, "Residential Permit Parking Zones" and "Residential Parking Space Requirement Adjustment" that are related to the discussion of paid parking within the city. Staff is requesting that the Commission give initial feedback and provide further comments/recommendations for each of the topics. These comments/recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council in a memorandum.

Paid Parking in Commercial Districts

Background Information

Currently, all commercial parking spaces within the city are free for a specified amount of time, primarily 90 minutes, from 9am to 6pm. If a vehicle is parked in a space for longer than the specified time, the vehicle may receive a parking violation ticket, which includes a \$32 fine.

Studies have shown that implementing a paid parking program can be beneficial in terms of creating adequate parking availability in a commercial area and providing revenue to the commercial area. The most publicized example is the City of Pasadena, which installed parking meters in the Old Pasadena neighborhood. The meters are priced so that the occupancy rate is approximately 85% at all times. All of the revenue from the parking meters is returned to the neighborhood; the only money that the city receives is from overtime fines. To gain support for the project, the city created a marketing campaign (including signs on the parking meters) that informed the public what the meter money was funding.

Many cities, including Pasadena as discussed above, consider an 85% occupancy rate as preferred for on-street parking. The 85% rate is considered the “effective capacity” for street parking, resulting in at least 1 parking space being available on a block at any given time. If the parking in an area is free and exceeds the effective capacity, drivers are more likely to drive around the block waiting for a vacant space. Paid parking that is set at a sufficient price discourages drivers from circling around. This has been shown to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

The Community Development Department completed a Solano Ave Parking Study in July 2000, and the findings of that study show that certain areas of Solano Ave frequently exceed the effective capacity threshold. Subsequent parking counts completed in recent months have shown that parking usage rates have not changed significantly. A sample of the findings that were made as part of that survey include:

- Two peak occupancy time-periods. During the time-period around 1:00pm, 50% of the blocks were filled to effective capacity. During the 8:00pm time-period, 58% of the blocks were filled to effective capacity.
- On-street parking reaches “effective capacity” on most days for about 3-5 hours in two general locations along Solano – San Pablo to Cornell and Ramona to Tulare.
- In the two peak congestion zones, there are a higher number of restaurants and retail shops. Areas with medical offices and residential buildings had the least parking demand.

Questions

- Should parking meters be installed on both Solano and San Pablo Avenues?
- Should parking enforcement hours be expanded to include evenings and Sundays?
- Should paid parking be implemented along side streets in areas directly in front of commercial uses?
- Should parking meters have variable rates, so that high use areas cost more per hour?
- Should parking meters have a time limit or allow unlimited time?
- Should funding go back to paid parking area only, or to general fund?
- Should the process to allow for an adjustment for shared off-street parking be revised?
- Should specific locations be reserved for low emission vehicles or city car share members?

Comments/ Recommendations

- Review the effect parking meters will have on neighborhood cross streets. If the effect is negative, would implementing a permit parking zone be a mitigation?
- Obtain revenue figures from the City of Berkeley regarding paid-parking on Solano Ave.

Residential Permit Parking Zones

Background Information

The City of Albany currently has regulations regarding Residential Permit Parking under Section 9, “Motor Vehicle and Traffic”. Permit parking zones may be established by two separate processes; the City Council may designate certain residential streets as permit parking zones by resolution, or any resident of Albany may request consideration of a permit parking zone by submitting an application to the City Council.

The ordinance also stipulates evaluation criteria to be used when approving/ denying a permit parking zone. Their basic criteria are as follows:

1. The extent of the desire and need of the residents for permit parking and their willingness to bear the costs associated therewith. (One of the requirements for a resident to submit an application is that they have a petition signed by residents of 50% or more of the dwelling units in the proposed zone.)
2. The extent to which legal on-street parking spaces are occupied by motor vehicles during the period(s) proposed for parking restrictions. (The occupancy rate during the "peak parking period" must be at least 75% to be considered further.)
3. The extent to which vehicles parking in the area during the period(s) proposed for parking restriction are vehicles belonging to nonresidents rather than residents.
4. The extent to which motor vehicles registered to residents in the area cannot be accommodated by the number of available off-street parking spaces.
5. The location and number of spaces available as alternative parking locations for vehicles or nonresidents which are to be displaced in the proposed permit parking area.

The approval process includes staff evaluation, then a public hearing before the Traffic and Safety Commission, who gives a recommendation to the City Council for their consideration at a subsequent public hearing.

One other interesting aspect of the ordinance is that only one parking zone can be created per year. This could impact implementation of paid parking programs within the city.

Questions

- In commercial areas, should residential permit parking zones have a mixture of residential and paid parking?
- Is the requirement that the occupancy rate be at least 75% during the peak parking period adequate or too high?
- To ensure that there is adequate street parking in residential zones, should the city contemplate code enforcement of existing private parking (e.g. illegally converted garages)?

Comments / Recommendations

- If a permit parking zone includes a school, how would parking be impacted, as many of the schools do not have adequate student or employee parking?
- Automobile repair uses often use residential streets to park cars. What impacts would a Residential Parking Permit have on these uses?
- If only one permit parking zone is allowed to be created per year, determine a prioritization system.

Residential Parking Space Requirement (Measure D)

Background Information

Measure D was passed in 1978, and one of its most important aspects was that all new housing units are required to provide 2 off-street parking spaces.

Questions

- Would an adjustment to the requirements of Measure D be beneficial (e.g. alter parking requirements so that studio- and 1-bedroom units are only required to provide 1 off-street parking space and 2+ bedroom units are required to provide 2 off-street parking spaces)?
- Should parking requirements stay to ensure adequate off-street spaces for residents?
- If an adjustment is recommended, should it apply only to specific projects such as Senior Housing?

Comments/Recommendations

- Review program

Attachments:

1. April 12, 2008 memo from City Administrator