



TOWN OF CARRBORO

NORTH CAROLINA

TRANSMITTAL

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

DELIVERED VIA: ☐ *HAND* ☐ *MAIL* ☐ *FAX* ☒ *EMAIL*

To: David Andrews, Town Manager
Mayor and Board of Aldermen

From: Patricia J. McGuire, Planning Director

Date: May 9, 2013

Subject: Parking Considerations

Recent discussions continue a long history of inquiries, debates, modifications and concerns about parking. Though greater attention has been drawn to parking in the downtown, many actions have addressed parking issues in areas outside the downtown – on private lots and along public streets. A search on the word ‘parking’ on the website of the Town of Carrboro locates 635 documents. These documents range from plans and regulations to development applications, grant proposals, property acquisitions, and budgets. In 2013 alone, attentions have turned to parking in relation to discussions of affordable housing, changes in park and ride lot management, and new development. The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Board of Aldermen an opportunity to examine some of these topics in greater detail and determine whether further research, ordinance modification, planning or outreach are of interest.

Parking in general

Recent discussions have focused on parking in the downtown as the Town has been undergoing changes associated with the construction and opening of a new business (Hampton Inn and Suites), replacement of a long-standing business (PTA Thrift Shop), and consideration of a third new project (Shelton Station). These projects involve significant investments and both require and result in a variety of changes – traffic patterns, long hours of construction activity, noise, and an influx of workers. The changes have something of a ripple effect, as owners of other commercial or nearby residential property reassess their interests and goals and some decide to improve their properties as well, or seek a buyer who is so inclined. When improvements to such

properties result in increased occupancy and vehicle ownership and the sites lack sufficient parking, spillover of vehicles to other areas can and does occur. The information that follows includes a summary of parking requirements, some details about parking supply and an overview of recent reports, actions, and comments related to parking.

Three issues should be noted with regard to parking requirements in the downtown. First, Article XVIII (<http://www.townofcarrboro.org/PZI/PDFs/LUO/Art-xviii.pdf>) of the Land Use Ordinance includes a table of parking requirements that specifies the number of parking spaces, stacking room, or storage spaces required by all uses in the Table of Permissible Uses. Where uses are not specified, parking requirements are determined based on an interpretation of the classification in which the use best fits. Second, the table establishes a presumptive standard, as specified in Section 15-292, which is assumed to be a sufficient amount of parking, barring other considerations. The ordinance further allows that any use may be evaluated in relation to the standard and a requirement that is greater or lesser than that specified may be established by the permit-issuing authority. The permit-issuing authority may grant that deviation from the standard, subject to a condition that, if less than that otherwise required, the applicant has on ongoing responsibility to provide additional parking if it should become a problem. Third, Section 15-299 includes special provisions for lots with existing buildings that allows those lots to provide what parking they can on-site, and to meet additional parking requirements with satellite parking areas. As with deviations from the presumptive standard, this provision is also subject to an ongoing need for an applicant to ensure adequate parking, as satellite parking becomes available. Staff requires that applicants acknowledge this responsibility whenever a permit is issued, but it must be noted that a mechanism for tracking this is not in place.

Satellite parking agreements may also be used to satisfy parking requirements. Agreements authorize use of these spaces and seem to occur between businesses that have significantly different demands (in terms of hours of operation) for parking. Payment-in-lieu of providing parking spaces is also allowed, based upon the permit-issuing authority finding that public parking facilities exist or are expected to be constructed within a reasonable time and proximity. Completion of a parking plan for the downtown is considered necessary before payments can be accepted.

Carrboro's downtown includes approximately 100 acres. Within this area, surface parking lots currently provide spaces for parking about 3,900 vehicles and 289 spaces are within lots managed for public use. The ratio of parking to land area is approximately 31 percent (see map of Downtown Parking and Zoning).

Overview of Reports and Actions that implications for parking – 2000 to present	
March 2000	Special Downtown Tax District, to provide services including parking, considered.
December 2000	Carrboro Vision 2020 adopted. Includes policy statement for doubling commercial square footage from 2000 level, based in part

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	on assessment of available surface parking in downtown.
April, 2002	Board of Aldermen establishes Parking Task Force.
October 2002	Task Force (TF) report presented to Board of Aldermen.
February 2003	Staff report on implementing TF recommendations.
February 2003	Board of Aldermen adopts a cross-section plan for Roberson Street, which includes on-street parking.
April 2003	Board amends Town Code to allow on-street parking along Sweet Bay Place.
April – May 2004	Public hearing on text amendments to downtown parking requirements. Changes adopted include reduced requirements for certain uses, shared parking.
June 2005	Downtown Circulation Study presented – includes recommendations for changes to on-street parking.
December 2006	Regional Technology Strategies 2006 report, Creating Carrboro’s Creative Economic Future, included the following recommendation related to enhancing downtown: Allow for adequate parking downtown: Carrboro is nearing the breaking point in terms of parking.
January 2008	Downtown parking supply and demand study gets underway.
April 2008	Report presented to Board of Aldermen.
November-December 2008	Economic Sustainability Commission recommends moving forward with a parking plan.
January 2009	Staff report to Board of Aldermen- follow-up to parking study.
November 2009	Town enters into lease agreement for Andrews-Riggsbee parking lot.
November 2011	Review of Downtown Traffic Circulation Issues.
March 2011	Town enters lease agreement for spaces parking deck to be built at 300 E. Main.
February- March 2012	Land Use Ordinance Text Amendments related to bike parking and compact car parking.
June 2012	Report on locating a Triangle Transit stop in Carrboro.
January 2013	Report on changes to park and ride operations – payment to be required.
February 2013	Report on traffic in downtown Carrboro.
March 2013	Public hearing on the Shelton Station mixed-use development.
April 2013	Presentation from UNC-DCRP spring workshop students on their report, “Housing and Transportation Affordability in Carrboro,” which outlined potential changes to parking and open space requirements.

Unbundling

Unbundling is a term that applies to renting or selling parking spaces separate from associated land uses. The strategy has been found to reduce vehicle use and ownership,

and thereby encourage some drivers to pursue public transit or other non-vehicular modes of transportation. When the savings from removing a parking requirement are transferred to residents, the reduction in housing costs becomes another a clear benefit. Communities that have successfully separated parking requirements from land uses, such as San Francisco, California, are often in areas with well-established public transit systems, suggesting that an unbundling strategy may be better suited to transit-rich environments.

Two examples of local governments along the east coast that allow or require unbundling include Arlington, Virginia, and Dorchester, Massachusetts. Market Commons, in Arlington, is a 300-unit apartment complex that charges separately, on a sliding scale, for residential parking spaces, which are shared in a deck with retail and restaurant parking places. (Online TDM Encyclopedia. http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm28.htm#_Toc128220507.) Dudley Village, a mixed-use affordable housing development in Dorchester, is part of a transit-oriented development with 0.7 parking spaces per unit, unbundled from the cost of renting a unit. (Metropolitan Area Planning Council. <http://www.mapc.org/resources/parking-toolkit/strategies-topic/unbundled-parking>.) The local discussion of unbundling has most recently taken place around the Shelton Station development. The approved permit for the project does not address unbundling, though car sharing, a companion strategy that has been found to increase the success of unbundling, was included.

While the term, “unbundling” may be relatively new, studies about parking are not. Staff has compiled and attached a couple of resources that seem particularly relevant to the Board’s most recent discussions. In, *Parking Evaluation, Evaluating Parking Problems, Solutions, Costs, and Benefits*, a publication from the Victoria Transport Institute, the author notes, “A problem correctly defined is a problem half solved.” As the Board continues to refine its overall parking objective—from the continuum of creating a greater number of parking spaces, to encouraging more consumers to the downtown, to reducing the number of existing parking spaces, to removing automobiles from the downtown and thereby reducing the Town’s carbon footprint—it may become easier to frame potential policy changes and LUO text amendments.

Chapel Hill Transit Park and Ride – Charges to Begin August 2013

Budgetary concerns and other program changes led the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to establish parking fees for park and ride lots that serve the local transit system. UNC will charge users of its Commuter Alternatives Program a fee based on their annual income. Those with an income less than \$25,000 — which includes most UNC students — are to be charged \$227. The Chapel Hill Town Council considered the University’s actions in March and decided that fees for its town-owned lots would be necessary to keep UNC students and employees from seeking out free lots after the UNC fee was put in place. Drivers using park-and-ride lots owned by the Town of Chapel Hill will pay \$250 a year for the privilege starting Aug. 15th. Daily and monthly payment options will also be available.

The Town Council's vote Wednesday aims to keep UNC students and employees from parking in free town lots after UNC levies a similar fee at its lots in August. The money will help pay for Chapel Hill Transit services, too. The Board of Aldermen expressed similar concerns during a discussion of the proposed changes in January 2013. With the establishment of these fees, the only free parking that remains in public parking lots and along some public streets located near Chapel Hill Transit routes in Carrboro. Though parking is time-limited in many lots and along some streets, enforcement has been minimal; the Town may wish to consider how it prioritizes this.

Attachments