Improving Amherst’s Downtown Parking

2018 Massachusetts Municipal Association Annual Meeting
Jan. 20, 2018

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Nate Malloy, Senior Planner
About Amherst

- 2017 Est. Population: 39,000
- Daytime Population: 50,000
- 28 sq. miles
- Town Meeting with Select Board

- Business Improvement District
- 115 business with 45 restaurants
- UMass, Amherst & Hampshire Colleges
- Transportation fund: $1M
  - 20,000+ tickets/year
  - 750+ on-street permits
- 2015 Transportation Plan: $50K and 1 Yr
- 2014-15 Community Forums
- 2016 Parking Inventory: $40K
- 2016-18 Downtown Parking Working Group
History of Downtown Parking

• 2008 Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Parking Study
  • Areas of high demand, but adequate supply of public parking
  • Data did not support planning for a new garage

• 2015 Transportation Plan
  • Pedestrian, Transit, Roads, Parking
  • Current supply of downtown parking adequate but needs better management
  • Recommended improvement—signs, pricing, shared parking

• 2014-15 Community Forums
  • Many businesses and visitors think parking is a problem
  • Parking demand from college students
  • Businesses hear that customers cannot find parking
  • An assumption that downtown needs another garage
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regain planning process for new parking facility now</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
<td>13.64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve signs for public lots</td>
<td>65.91%</td>
<td>29.55%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
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<td>Make payment simpler and more predictable</td>
<td>65.91%</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review smart technologies/app’s</td>
<td>56.02%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider different fees for metered parking</td>
<td>18.66%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Update parking data</td>
<td>31.82%</td>
<td>34.09%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate regulations for streets near downtown</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>43.91%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore ways to expand Town Center Permit system</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>34.09%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote use of Town Center Permit parking after 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>43.43%</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
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<td>Re-establish Parking Commission or similar</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>31.82%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
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<td>Review/revise Municipal Parking District requirements</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop pilot program for overnight winter parking</td>
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<td>47.73%</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
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<td>Review snow removal policy for downtown parking</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>36.30%</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
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2016 Parking Inventory by Nelson Nygaard

- Public metered spaces: 650
- On-street permit: 400
- Unregulated on-street: 280
- Private: 2,000
- **TOTAL SPACES:** 3,400

- Peak demand (use) is lunch time (1 PM) and evenings (7 PM)
- Short term actions: maximize current system
- Long term strategies: shared/leased parking agreements, increase supply of public parking (including a possible parking garage)
Current Issues Identified

• Perception is reality when it comes to parking
• High demand for visible spots
• Low cost—students use downtown as a parking lot; employees meter feed
• Time limits not enforced
• Current system is confusing
• Zoning—Municipal Parking District = no parking requirements
Downtown Parking Working Group (DPWG)

• Broad community representation with 7 members—
  • commercial property owner,
  • downtown resident, downtown business owner/manager,
  • Planning Board representative,
  • Select Board representative,
  • at-large members,
  • staff support from Planning, Public Works, Treasurer/Collector

• Term limited (2 yrs.) committee

• Identify short, medium and long range strategies

• Refine and present prioritized parking recommendations to the Select Board for action

• Identify baseline information required prior to further consideration of a parking facility and other changes
DPWG Goals and Recommendations—Phase 1

• Demand-based parking
• Turnover of prime spots
• Consistent regulations
• Increase visibility of parking
• Community input—June 2017 forum and 3+ meeting with Select Board (televised)
Demand-based parking (or tiered pricing)

- Goal is to have 10-15% vacancy of prime spots at any given time
- Price of parking is proportionate to demand
- Encourage use of all parking (i.e. peripheral spaces cost less for longer term parking)
Recommendations: For Clarity, Consistency and to Encourage Turnover – Phase I

- Identify parking core
- Increase rates in core: 50 cents to $1/hr.
- Consistent time limits: 2 hr and 4 hr
- Consistent hours of enforcement: 8 am- 8 pm
- Use enforcement to discourage meter feeding
- Increase parking ticket fines: $10 to $15
- New signs, webpages, outreach
- Allow overnight winter parking with weather emergency
- Mobile Payment option-Parking App
Recent Changes Implemented

• New maps and webpage
• More parking available in the core
• Parking machines are easy to use
• Mobile App is used by many
• Few complaints
• Anecdotally, more town center permits (on street parking) are used