



PARKING MANAGEMENT

City of Newton, MA

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INTRODUCTION

Historical Perspective

In the early 1900s, Newton's villages were the hubs of commercial and social interactions. Visitors to village centers could pull up next to their destinations in horse-drawn carriages and later in cars, and would walk from shop to shop on uninterrupted pedestrian ways. As cars proliferated, merchants, in an effort to be "good neighbors" began providing places for their patrons to park. Like other cities, Newton soon saw this as a way to free the streets of congestion and promote civic courtesy, so it mandated on-site parking in its zoning regulations.

While providing convenient vehicle access for customers and employees and reducing spillover onto adjacent parties were well-intended goals, a new set of problems emerged. Parking lots and sidewalks were placed in front of, behind, and between buildings. The resulting dispersion of buildings and the intrusion of driveways crossing over sidewalks damaged pedestrian access and comfort and encouraged driving at the expense of walking. With the greater range of mobility that cars provided, people could travel farther and it was no longer essential for all civic activities to be centered in a single location; thus, businesses could locate outside village centers and visitors could still reach them, resulting in the phenomenon we know as "sprawl." Clearly the impacts of national development trends are visible in Newton's village centers and corridors today, where driveways and parking lots break up the pedestrian landscape and residents travel from village to village and beyond for amenities no longer found closer to home, and where low-scale structures generally predominate.

Parking Conditions in Newton Today

When asked about quality of life issues today, many of Newton's residents list parking as a major concern, as evidenced by the number of requests for consideration of parking changes before the City's Traffic Council where residents frequently advocate for reducing or eliminating commuter and employee parking on residential streets. In response, a variety of time limits have been imposed near MBTA stops and village centers. Residents also have complained about parking spilling over into their neighborhoods from schools, colleges, religious institutions, and other activity centers. So, again, time restrictions have been used to protect the residential character of abutting neighborhoods. At the very same time, business owners advocate for more parking spaces near their shops for easy access and profitability for their commercial enterprises and are quick to point out that land for parking is limited in our traditional villages. Finally, commuters, including both those who live in Newton and some who live afar seek inexpensive and convenient parking near Newton's rail and commuter bus routes.

The inherent parking conflicts of interests among residents, commuters, and business owners in the City's villages and along commercial corridors necessitates a thoughtful examination of parking policies and practices in Newton. It is apparent that in certain sections of the City, there is real competition for limited on-street parking within existing rights-of-way. The current City requirement that parking for each business be located on-site results in less dense development and fewer opportunities for expansion in our village centers where greater density and centralized shared parking would create a desirable vibrancy. It also may

encourage customers to drive from place to place rather than walk. Narrow streets in residential areas pose additional limitations on the number and location of on-street parking spaces, yet their relative scale complements the Garden's City's historic buildings and mature trees and creates the sense of place its residents enjoy, which the *Comprehensive Plan* aims to protect, and which are the envy of other communities that are trying to create cohesive neighborhoods.

Planning for the Future

Consistent with the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, the efforts to manage parking are aimed at making the best use of available land and space for parking, both public and private, as land is a valuable and limited resource. Managing parking in a way that satisfies the varying needs of the community can enhance the quality of life in the community. Additionally, mixed-use centers where people can live, work and shop help people to rely less on vehicular travel, which reduces demand for parking. Reductions in pollution and related health concerns will be lowered, as well. Yet, the car will likely be needed for a variety of purposes for the foreseeable future and parking will be needed to accommodate those trips. The challenge is one of seeking a balance among a variety of interests.

When considering site-specific and regional parking matters, the Board's Traffic Council and its Public Safety and Transportation Committee strive to consider remedies for parking challenges that are consistent and fair; they also take a broader view of problems wherever possible. Yet, what is lacking is an overall plan for realizing parking improvements in the City and its villages in a coordinated and proactive way. To create such a framework requires recognition of the qualities that the City wishes to maintain that are common to all its neighborhoods and village centers. It also requires an understanding of the root causes of problems, some of which may be unique to villages. Finally, it is important to identify available resources and applying the best "tools" to address parking problems that will enliven our commercial centers while protecting and enhancing the residential districts.

PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

Well-managed parking can be a complement to the vitality of our commercial centers. Since many people will choose the car as their primary means of travel in and around the City, it is important to make sure there is enough parking for those who must drive without taking up land for parking that would otherwise enliven the streetscapes and support the economic prosperity of the City's commercial centers. Good management of parking can reduce traffic and congestion by ensuring that people are able to find spaces easily so they spend less time searching for spaces. This, in turn, reduces negative impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, as well as unhealthy emissions and air pollution.

In 2011 Mayor Warren appointed a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to develop transportation/parking policies aimed at creating more mobility options for those who live in, work in and visit the City. This group of residents was led by Stephanie Pollack, Associate

Director for Research at the Dukakis Center with assistance from City Planning staff. The policies it crafted were then passed along to a Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) tasked with implementing them; the TAG includes residents with interests in promoting all modes of transportation for all ages and abilities, as well as professional staff from the School, Planning, Public Works, and Police Departments. The TAG's Subcommittee on Parking also includes members of the Board of Aldermen's Committees on Zoning and Planning, and Public Safety and Transportation. Among their recommendations is to create a Parking Management Plan.

This Parking Management Plan is a policy-based document that will complement the *Comprehensive Plan*, particularly the Transportation and Mobility Element, by offering guidance for promoting safe, accessible, and economically viable means of getting to and around the City. It makes explicit citywide policies, objectives and strategies for making positive changes. Both the TAC and TAG members agreed that it is critically important that administration of parking provide consistent and equitable treatment of similar situations throughout the City to best serve as a resource to business owners, residents, City staff, and the Board of Aldermen in their reviews of projects and in consideration of a variety of parking matters.

Because land for parking is limited, it is important to make efficient and effective use of our resources. This can be done in a number of ways, such as by improving use of existing parking, reducing parking demand by promoting transportation alternatives, and adding to the parking supply when needed without straining the system. It also means examining current practices, policies, and parking laws, as well as how we administer and finance parking operations.

STRATEGIES

A key objective of good parking management is to administer parking in a way that is fair, consistent, transparent, customer-friendly, enforceable, and, above all, safe. Yet, there is no one-size-fits-all means of addressing parking problems. Each situation must be looked at independently and the root causes of problems identified to make sure the tools used to fix a problem are appropriate. This requires assessments of activity centers in the City, including villages, regional centers, colleges, and various other points of interest. Such assessments should generally include collection of information about parking supply, demand, availability of alternative modes of travel, and other influences on parking (see Action Plan for more details).

Reducing Demand for Parking

As demand for parking is reduced, there will be fewer cars and associated problems, such as traffic and the use of valuable land for parking spaces. Employers can play an important role by encouraging their employees to use alternative means of transportation and reduce the overall demand for parking. It is in their interest to make sure their employees, who arrive earlier than their patrons, do not use the limited number of parking spaces nearest the businesses and make it more difficult for patrons to park near their destinations during peak businesses hours.

- Transportation Demand Management. Participation in Transportation Demand Management programs (TDMs) is one way to reduce parking demand. Employers

provide perks to their employees, such as by providing transit passes, bicycles and bike facilities, walking shoes, ride matching, alternative work scheduling, shuttles to remote parking areas and transit stops, guaranteed rides in emergencies, and priority parking for carpoolers. To be most useful, TDMs should identify specific goals and actions that can be verified upon request. For example, a business should be required to document that a given percentage of its employees use alternative transportation. It also may be necessary to include a consequence for failure to maintain identifiable standard, such as payment of a fine or fee.

- Transportation Management Associations. Employers also can participate in broader-based Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) with other employers to enhance employee options, especially for ridesharing. Government offices could lead the way by introducing such plans, since they have larger employee bases.
- Promoting “shared’ auto use. Zipcars and other ride-sharing operations offer short-term rental of vehicles for those who occasionally need a car, but not the cost or burdens of maintenance or ownership and can help people transition from auto-dependence. Employees can save money and reduce parking demand by using Zipcars instead of investing in work vehicles and/or can leave their own cars at home. Cities can encourage their use by reserving convenient parking spots for them in central locations.
- Facilitating all modes of transportation. As there are more ways for people to travel in and around the City, cars can be used less and parking demand will decline. Providing bike lanes, bike cages, bike corrals, and sheltered bike racks can encourage biking, particularly in good weather. Giving priority to installation of bike lanes and/or cycle tracks where on-street parking demand is low, especially where they connect major activity centers, will foster bike travel in such locations. Sidewalks that are well lit, in good repair, and are cleared of snow in the winter will make it more inviting for people to travel on foot. This is important for drivers, as well, since they become pedestrians as soon as they park. Good bus and transit service with frequent headways and arrival time information will encourage the use of these modes. Shelters and connections between the modes, will further their use.

Increasing Parking Supply

If parking demand exceeds that which can be accommodated by other means, adding more spaces can help balance a village’s needs. Public facilities can provide easy access to stores and reduce the traffic generated by cars circling the blocks in search of spaces. However, once available land is developed, parking options will be fewer and those remaining may be more costly. So, if there are uncertainties as to whether additional parking may be needed, setting aside land for future possible use can preserve options. Parking supply can be increased in a number of ways, such as by:

- Revise existing parking configurations. Revising the layout of existing parking spaces can result in additional spaces. The efficiency of existing parking lots and curbside parking should be reviewed and fine-tuned as needed to improve accessibility and utilization. Revisions to parking configurations may be done most economically when these spaces

are scheduled for repaving or repainting. The manner in which loading zones are managed, in particular, could free up some parking spaces. For example, instead of providing exclusive loading zones, loading in existing parking spaces could be permitted during low-demand times (such as before stores open or after they close) so as to share the same spaces and at different times of day for different purposes, but in a manner that supports the shops, the shoppers, and vitality of the area. Whether on public or private property, consideration should be given to the ways parking lots interface with their surroundings and complement the streetscape and pedestrian experience, such as through landscaping and site orientation consistent with the design guidelines reference in the *Comprehensive Plan*. In addition, consideration of pavement treatments, particularly the use of pervious surfaces and use of sustainable practices for stormwater management, also should be encouraged to facilitate infiltration into the soil where it could provide benefits, and reduce runoff into water sources where it could be detrimental to the local ecology.

- **Build parking structures.** When demand exceeds supply and parking management tools have been exhausted, parking structures can be used to improve conditions. Parking Structures are a compact approach to providing parking that is often suited to urbanized areas and allows for available land that might otherwise be taken up by surface parking, to be put to a better use that would enhance village vitality. Structures can be stand-alone facilities or integrated in buildings that include other uses. When structures incorporate housing, retail and/or office space on their street frontages, they can provide continuous pedestrian-friendly exteriors, add revenue that helps pay for their construction and maintenance costs, and reduce parking charges to consumers. With context-sensitive designs, materials, and architecture, parking structures can be attractive architectural complements to their surroundings.

As with all assessments of parking, consideration of parking structures should be preceded by an evaluation of existing parking supply and demand to determine the need, since construction, staffing, and maintenance of structures can be costly; present day costs for parking in structures can vary from \$20,000 per parking space above grade to \$75,000 or more per space for underground designs, depending on the complexity of design and the depth of the structure. When setting parking rates, as well as funding mechanisms for parking structures, pricing of parking in the immediate vicinity should be taken into consideration, since pricing in one area will influence usage of parking in another. Appropriate pricing of on- and off-street parking will ensure it is well used once built. Parking structures should be self-funded whenever possible, but may be subsidized in order to achieve urban design goals. Technological advances also can reduce costs and increase efficiencies, and should be used whenever possible to achieve these ends.

Best Practices and Tools for Better Managing Parking

There are a wide variety of ways to address parking problems. As previously noted, the decisions about which to use depend on the problem(s) to be solved. The following is a summary of a variety of tools and best practices that could be used at different times in different plans to best meet the goals of this Plan:

- Pricing, supply, time limits and location. As a general rule, parking behavior can be managed through careful allocation of parking spaces around key destinations, with consideration given to their pricing and time limits. For example, in Newton Centre there are two-hour time limits on the streets nearest the retail stores (\$.75/hour) and 12-hour spaces in the parking lots on Cypress, Pelham, and Pleasant Streets (\$.50/hour). Employees gravitate to the long-term spaces early in the morning because they cost less than the curbside spaces and allow for all-day payment for parking. However, recent studies reveal that many long-term parkers feed the short-term meters, either because there is not enough long-term parking for them and/or because they are willing to pay more for the convenience of parking near their destinations. Adjusting the number of spaces, their location, and their pricing can influence parking behavior and can be manipulated to achieve the desired results. As demonstrated in Newton Centre, it may be most useful to provide short-term parking for priority users at higher rates nearest key destinations, and long-term parking at a lower cost farther away in order to free curbside spaces for the customers, and making sure there is a good balance between short- and long- term spaces is important.

As part of this conversation, the variety of time limits could be reevaluated. There are currently seven different time limits for parking meters: half-hour, one-, two-,three-, four-,ten-, and twelve-hour meters. There have been complaints, generally, that one-hour limits aren't long enough to do most business, but longer than needed for a quick stop for dry cleaning drop-off or a stop for stamps at the post office. Simplifying the meters for short-, medium-, and long-term limits would likely address most situations. A half-hour limit at the ends of streets or wherever needed for quick and easy access, two-hour limits in village centers where turnover of spaces to accommodate customer parking is desired, and 12-hour meters where long-term parking is needed for commuters and employees would cover most types of trips. Thus, elimination of three-, four-hour, and ten-hour zones is recommended.

- Market-based meter pricing. This approach sets meter prices according to demand; instead of setting rates and time limits, pricing alone is used to alter parking behaviors, noting again that the cheaper the parking the farther people may be willing to walk for it. This is another way of balancing supply and demand for parking and to more efficiently allocate our limited resources. This could be piloted in a high-demand area and monitored by the Transportation Division/Department to seek turnover of prime spaces to support village vitality. It is expected that once established, the cost of initiating such a program should pay for itself.

- Coordination of parking with infrastructure improvements. The City’s roadways are routinely reconstructed and such times present opportunities to reconsider the curb lines and street configurations. Whenever reconstructions or parking-related infrastructure improvements are contemplated, parking layouts should be reconsidered for safety, efficiency and optimal use of existing space. For example, bump-outs at crosswalks provided, parking should be kept away from crosswalks and corners for visibility, so when redefining the streets, these features should be addressed concurrently wherever possible.
- Parking restrictions for protecting public safety. On-street parking must allow adequate space for fire engines and other emergency vehicles to navigate. Whenever parking demand is high or where erratic parking behaviors makes access difficult on streets, parking shall be restricted to one side. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the restricted side shall be the side of the street where fire hydrants are located.
- Parking meters in residential areas. Historically, the City’s policy has been not to install parking meters in residential areas on either side of the street of residential neighborhoods regardless of whether residences abut the metered spaces, as it has been generally accepted that residents should not have to pay to park in front of their homes. Furthermore, most agree that the look of parking meters is unattractive in residential districts. However, there are circumstances in which residents and others may benefit by managing parking on residential streets by requiring some form of payment, as discussed elsewhere in this document. Consideration of paid parking in residential zones should not be ruled out, but the needs of all affected should be well considered in advance of making such decisions through a community engagement process. Where residences are located in nonresidential zones, consideration should be given to:
 - whether available parking closest to an activity center has been maximized
 - availability of on-site parking for residences nearby
 - how proposed metered curbside parking spaces would best be used
 - proximity to public transportation
 - whether parking demand is created by nonresident commuters
 - whether charging will further the city’s parking and housing goals
 - the best means of payment to for encouraging desired parking behavior

Permit Programs

There are an equally wide variety of potential permit parking programs that could be employed to address parking challenges. The program that is best suited for a situation depends on the nature of the problem(s) to be solved, but an underlying principles that City streets belong to everyone and should be shared in a way that makes the best use of this limited resource while respecting the needs of all affected in a way that is fair and consistent and, preferably, is self-funded. Not all the following are recommended, as some fail to make the best use of existing resources.

- Multi-user parking program. The Newtonville Neighborhood Parking Plan (NNPP) is a type of multi-user parking program that ensures residential streets near village centers or other activity centers (in this case, Newton North High School) accommodate all

types of users without overburdening residents. This was accomplished by restricting parking on the streets and then providing a limited number of passes to override the time limits to residents and nonresidents. The program requires administration, including creation, marketing and distribution of passes, collection of fees, and enforcement following implementation. The costs of administering the program are to be covered by the sale of permits. If successful this multi-user program may be a model for other areas of the City with similar issues.

- Resident-only parking districts. When streets are restricted for use by residents only, those who might be able to park on the streets when spaces are not in demand cannot do so. For this reason, the Traffic Council has generally viewed this as a tool of last resort, when all other means have failed. Yet, residential streets in some areas are currently overwhelmed with nonresident parking. The TAC recommended reevaluation of resident-only parking districts, including a moratorium during the evaluation period. Some existing resident-only zones in Newtonville have recently been reconsidered, a moratorium was not deemed necessary; in particular, some districts around Newton North High School were removed after taking a comprehensive look at parking problems and solutions to create more equity, consistency, and appropriateness to the goals they intend to achieve. Review of “Resident-Only” parking areas in other parts of the City also should be reconsidered as area-specific parking management plans are created. In the meantime, no new “Resident-Only” districts should be introduced.
- Time restrictions. Residential streets near village centers have a patchwork of different parking restrictions designed to prevent them from being overwhelmed by commuters, workers and other long-term parkers. The result is that some on-street parking spaces remain vacant even where parking demand is high, because of poorly designed restrictions. It is possible to accommodate all users with more careful management and reassessment of the time limits and their locations.
- Community Parking Program. A Community Parking Program was piloted and some public parking spaces were reserved for long-term parkers due to complaints about lack of available parking for merchants and their employees; this program was particularly popular in Newton Centre and Newton Corner. However, the program failed to demonstrate good use of the parking spaces, as some were left unused at time, while unrestricted spaces were oversubscribed. The program was viewed as unfair and inconsistent with good parking management practices and was terminated. Permit programs should ensure that spaces are used to their fullest potential by at different times of the day and reserved parking is discouraged for this reason.
- Holiday parking promotions. Some merchants and aldermen have expressed interest in free parking at the holidays for the City’s village centers to encourage shoppers to visit these areas; however, turnover of parking spaces is critical to the success of such programs or they could have the opposite effect. Employees and other long-term parkers who arrive before shops open could find these spaces and park in them for the day, thus defeating the purpose. Also, ticketing of those who violate the time limits isn’t the holiday-friendly welcome that is being sought. Current regulations do not provide for waivers of time limits without compensation for lost revenues, and changes to the regulations would be needed to create such programs. Although generation of revenue

is not the primary purpose of parking meters, a significant amount of revenue is a by-product of metering and is used for other transportation-related benefits and improvements. Finally, manual enforcement of time limits is labor intense and, use of license plate readers or chalking of tires may be needed. Given all these drawbacks and the potential for other means to incentivize local shopping, free parking is not recommended. However, the TAG should continue to explore ways to create successful holiday promotions that overcome these obstacles.

- **Parking Benefit Districts.** In some cities, parking permit programs have been instituted in which neighborhoods opt for permitted parking to accommodate parking by commuters and/or employees on residential streets. In return, the program can be devised such that the affected neighborhoods receive the benefit of public improvements that are funded through the issuance of fees paid by those who park on these streets; these improvements may include planting of street trees, adding or repairing sidewalks, improving lighting or other public amenities that can benefit the neighborhood. These types of programs have been found by other communities to be a win/win strategy for residents, businesses and other nonresidents. The City will explore how benefit district programs may be implemented within existing laws in designated neighborhoods after a comprehensive study of parking supply and demand has been conducted.

Parking Standards

Most of Newton's village are accessible by public transit and have many of the attributes that define traditional cities, such as compact development and amenities within walking distance. The intent of Newton's codes regarding parking is in keeping with these principles and the vision for its future as described in the *Comprehensive Plan*:

"Section 30-19(a) intent and purpose. It is the intent of these provisions that any use of land involving the storage or entry upon the land of vehicles be so designed and operated as to reduce hazards to pedestrians upon public sidewalks, to protect the use of adjacent property from nuisance caused by noise, fumes and glare of headlights which may result from the operation of cars parking off the streets, to enhance and protect the visual quality of the city, to reduce congestion on the streets and contribute to traffic safety by assuring adequate and well-designed areas for the off-street parking, loading, unloading, and maneuvering of vehicles associated with any use of land."

However, the supporting codes that are intended to carry out these mandates encourage sprawl and mediocre pedestrian experiences and counter to parking management goals. They discourage expansion of uses by requiring additional on-site parking where land is scarce and do not allow by right, off-site parking or sharing of spaces between businesses that occupy them at different time of the day, week or year. Specifically:

"Section 30-1(c)(1) No reduction in the number of off-street parking stalls which are required by this section shall be allowed and no existing off-street parking stalls shall be

eliminated unless replaced by an equal number of off-street parking stalls designed in accordance with the requirements of this section.”

Section 30-19(f)(1) requires off-street parking facilities shall be provided on the same lot or premises with the principal use served.

Together, these last two referenced parking laws challenge the notion that our villages can be true models of “smart growth.” However, these laws could be revised to encourage more options while addressing a need and providing business and property owners more flexibility in which to grow their businesses and support the vitality of our commercial centers. Below is a list of options that should be considered when reassessing the parking regulations:

- Shared Parking. The single most significant way to improve parking in the City of Newton is to encourage shared parking. Shared parking can occur when two or more users occupy a single space at different times (day, week, and season). For example, the use of office parking during the daytime could be shared with cinema or restaurant patrons in the evening. If driveways to common parking lots also are shared, then there will be fewer interruptions to the sidewalk and safer pedestrian paths. Shared parking also occurs when a single space is used by a parker who visits more than one destination, such as in a public parking facility or a shopping center, which provides spaces for those who may visit several destinations on a visit. Thus, fewer parking spaces are needed when parking is shared. In village centers, common parking within walking distance of multiple destinations encourages people to park once for all their visits, again eliminating the redundancy of providing so many parking spaces at each destination. Along these lines, opportunities for public/private partnerships also should be explored.
- Off-site parking. In some cases, off-site parking within walking distance may be an appropriate option. Currently, off-site parking is allowed only by special permit. An administrative process to allow off-site parking to satisfy a requirement can incentivize shared parking.
- Rationalize parking standards. In some circumstances, the City’s parking standards appear to be high, as evidenced by prior parking studies. In others, they may be inadequate. In addition to setting appropriate requirements, parking requirements could take into consideration actual demand, potential for shared parking and ease of access to alternative modes of transportation. Traditionally, cities and towns have applied minimum parking requirements; however, some are experimenting with removing such requirements and leaving it to the marketplace to determine the need. Yet other cities have established maximum parking space requirements so as not to have an oversupply of land dedicated for parking, such as where pedestrian- and/or transit-oriented development is being promoted. Some cities have both. A close look at the City’s standards and their appropriateness to each setting should be undertaken and current standards are reevaluated.

College campuses have their own unique set of circumstances when it comes to parking standards and the City’s current regulations are not fitting. For example, City standards require parking spaces for each use on a campus, including dorms, cafeteria, classrooms, etc., when in fact, a student wouldn’t need a parking space for each of these facilities

because they would typically park and walk or bike between buildings. Furthermore, each of the four campuses in Newton, provides different ratios of parking per square foot of building area for existing spaces, has different rules regarding which students are permitted to drive, and has varying access to alternative modes of travel. In other words, what is appropriate in one context may not be so fitting in another, given their circumstances. As parking standards are reassessed, campus standards should be further developed, which could simply mean requiring parking studies as suggested in this document to assess what is the correct balance for a given campus, with or without requiring a special permit. In the meantime, where campus parking spills over onto City Streets and adversely affects neighborhoods, efforts should be undertaken to work collaboratively to address such concerns between the City and the schools and balance the needs of both. Because local residents must abide by restrictions that are put in place, the least restrictive yet effective means of altering parking behavior shall be employed. Review of such matters should not be looked at in isolation, but as recommended elsewhere in this document, shall be part of a management plan for a specific area, so as not to foster restrictions that may vary street by street.

- Overlays. Another way to adjust parking requirements is specific areas where the requirements are not fitting the context, is to create an overlay district that adjusts the parking requirement, often based on access to public transportation options. This is somewhat easier than adjusting parking requirements by zone or type of use and may better take into consideration the context. Village centers might be good places to establish overlay districts that allow for a reduction in required parking based on proximity to an MBTA station or an express bus stop, for example.
- Unbundling. When an individual buys or rents housing, parking usually is included in the purchase price. By separating the cost of housing from the cost of parking, only those who use spaces pay for them and residents without a car pay only for housing. In essence, those without cars are rewarded with lower expenses when not being charged for parking spaces they do not use or want. Unbundling these costs may dissuade tenants from buying a second car, encourage them to own a single higher-quality vehicle, or to be car-free, especially when car-sharing options and other modes of travel are readily available. Parking experts believe that if parking availability is capped, it also should be unbundled because residents will be far more likely to move into housing with limited parking if they know they can rent a space at fair market value if they need it.
- Parking-in-lieu fees. The Board of Aldermen frequently gives waivers for required parking where parking is unavailable or when the number of parking spaces required for a business cannot be met on-site. Payments of fees in lieu of providing parking are yet another way for property and business owners to offset the cost of common spaces in public facilities. Compensation for such waivers could be used to fund parking elsewhere or other transportation improvements to address long-term needs. In-lieu fees also have the potential to increase funds for transportation-related improvements to village centers and mixed-use sites and allow greater flexibility in meeting parking requirements, particularly where parking is constrained. Established fees also provide predictability and certainty to developers, and enable them to make informed decisions about prospective developments.

Complete Streets

The City of Newton is committed to a “Complete Streets” policy, with the goal of improving the safety and meeting the needs of all travelers. As such, the perspectives of motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and abutters shall be taken into consideration when designing and redesigning the City’s street network. When determining where to place bike lanes, consideration shall be given to selecting routes with connectivity between key destinations, availability of alternative parking locations in the event that on-street parking must be removed, in addition to street widths, volume, safety and other concerns.

Wayfinding

To foster orderly use of existing parking spaces, directional signing is helpful. When drivers can easily identify available parking, circulating traffic also goes down. A simple, clear and coordinated means of directing drivers to parking would achieve these ends without creating sign clutter, which in itself can be an unfortunate byproduct if not thoughtfully conceived. Such signage could be coordinated with directional signs for other points of interest in the City, such as village center identification, directions to civic buildings, hospitals, schools, the Jackson Homestead, and other modes of transportation.

Current Technology

Although parking meters have been a mainstay of successful parking management since the 1940s, parking technology continues to evolve. Today, meters can accept credit cards and cell phones can be used to identify available spaces and make payments to meters from a distance. Pay stations are often used to minimize installations of individual meters and/or to limit the staffing needs in parking facilities. What is most important is that the best technology available should be considered that is appropriate to address current needs. City staff should maintain a watch on technology and pilot new technologies, as well as consult with other communities to employ the best options for managing parking, as well as wayfinding.

GOVERNANCE

Centralized Oversight

At the present time, administration of parking-related matters is divided among several City Departments. The Police Department supervises parking enforcement officers that issue parking citations; receipt of parking fines is one of several duties handled by the Treasury Department; the Transportation Engineer reviews parking requests and administers changes in the field; and meter collections and repairs are supervised by the Transportation Division. Without a master plan for parking goals, objectives or policies, each administrator operates within his or her own set of priorities. To facilitate creation of a comprehensive parking program, implementation of its goals and objectives, and coordinated oversight, the City would benefit from consolidating the various functions that are now performed by several departments. This would ensure that provision of parking and all aspects of its management are viewed as a whole system by an individual who makes sure all the parts are working in concert. Consolidation of parking planning and management under the purview of one division

or individual will free the Transportation Engineer and others who currently oversee various aspects of parking administration and allow them focus more fully on their primary duties. As such, the following structural changes are recommended:

- Create a Transportation Department. To promote cross-departmental coordination on transportation issues, a “Transportation Team” has been meeting weekly, bringing together representatives from various departments to address common issues and streamline the process of planning, design, construction, and enforcement of transportation and parking infrastructure and policies. Subsequently in 2012, a Transportation Division was created within the Department of Public Works Department to further engage those involved with parking and transportation-related matters. Establishment of a Transportation Department would provide oversight for all issues relating to transportation, including traffic and parking. The creation of a Transportation Department would parallel the structure used successfully in other Massachusetts cities, such as Cambridge (which has Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department as well as an Environmental and Transportation Division within the Department of Community Development) and Somerville. Further consideration should be given to where parking planning and management should reside.
- Hire a Parking Manager. As funding allows, a technical expert to manage parking would enhance the ability of the Transportation Department by designating a point person to carry out parking initiatives and create the efficiencies of centralized oversight. Creation of new position and/or shifting of responsibilities of existing personnel to focus on parking administration will have many other benefits, such as improved management of parking placement and pricing to enhance village vitality, save money, and produce additional revenue. Specifically, parking management responsibilities are currently divided among several individuals and committees for: collections, ticketing, deposits, planning, signage, zoning, parking waivers and meter repairs. Bringing the duties into the realm of responsibility of an individual in one department will provide better oversight, coordination and outcomes

Streamline Processes

- Administrative review of common parking matters. In many cities, transportation staffs make decisions about parking matters; in Newton, the Traffic Council and sometimes the Board of Aldermen make them. While this approach has the important benefit of involving the public in such decisions, it often can be a slow process. As the Council’s web page currently notes, *“Due to the volume of petitions received, there is approximately a three- to six-month wait for requests to be heard.”* The development of this Management Plan will assist the decision makers by providing guidance through written policies rather than requiring evaluation of like-type requests on a case-by-case basis. The Council itself has begun to implement such an approach through the adoption of policies, such as for handicap parking spaces. As such policies are further developed, they should be added to this document for general reference. A periodic review should be conducted to see if routine and consistent actions of the Traffic Council could be transferred to professional staff.

- Traffic Council. As more matters are determined based on established policies it may be possible to reduce the number of items that must be determined by the Traffic Council. Over time, the role of the Council should be reevaluated to determine which items could be managed administratively, thus reducing the backlog of routine requests with predictable outcomes, and allocating the Council's time to more substantive discussions around controversial and/or unique situations that will benefit from the members training and experience. It also may be worth reassessing the membership of the Council to include more citizen representatives and have the City staff serve in more of an advisory role. The downside to this option is that it may make the process more political; the upside is that staff would no longer be in the awkward position of advocating for determinations that may be at odds with aldermen with whom they work.

Marketing

If the public understands and supports the City's goals and objectives, it is more likely they will be achieved. To assure parking management efforts are successful, all affected parties should be informed of programs and transportation options and how all can benefit them. Maps that identify parking locations need to be created for the village centers and distributed to merchants and their customers. A consistent signage program that identifies public parking and links other transportation connects including bike, bus and train routes also could help people find available spaces quickly and minimize circulating traffic. Flyers with information about changes in parking prices or locations and/or communications through village business associations can facilitate information sharing and should be developed and distributed widely to local businesses, as well as being available at various points in City Hall. Utilization of current technology, such as cell phone apps should be used where efficient and cost effective. Periodic promotions can bring attention to the transportation network, such as Bike/Walk Week and corporate competitions to incentivize use of alternatives. Again, staff will be needed to oversee such efforts and act as a liaison to village business associations, local schools and colleges, and other institutions to maximize communications.

Enforcement

Safety is considered paramount with regards to traffic and parking matters and enforcement that addresses safety issues (e.g., parked cars that block line of sight, curb cuts or crosswalks) should be first priority. However, all parking-related laws should be actively enforced to ensure that parking management is working as intended to balance the needs of all users. In village centers, enforcement of short-term parking especially is needed to ensure turnover so spaces are readily available for new visitors and to support the vitality of our villages by making it easy for customers to get to the shops. The Police Department and the Transportation Division of the Department of Public Works will continue to work together on this effort until such time as Parking Management is overseen by one department or individual.

Customer Service

Enforcement of parking violations should be performed in the spirit of protecting and helping the public. Every effort should be made to explain the basis for the rules and practices, and to

educate citizens about the benefits of upholding the law, particularly for merchants and their customers.

Role of a Citizens' Advisory Group

The work of the TAC and the TAG has demonstrated the breadth, complexity and importance of parking and transportation issues facing the City of Newton, and the wealth of citizen knowledge and energy towards realizing positive change in these areas. The feedback and input will continue to be a valuable asset going forward. The TAG would help ensure broad-based citizen input into the ongoing process of setting public policy around transportation policy, including parking matters. Along with City staff, they can be advisors to the mayor until such time that a Transportation Department is created. It will likely be useful to continue to have a sounding board for future transportation efforts, but the nature of their role will be reassessed as policies are in place and structural changes are made to streamline operations.

ACTION PLAN

There are many areas of the City where parking management could be improved. In keeping with the *Comprehensive Plan*, parking studies should be performed in the villages and other activity centers to assess needs and solve problems. These areas should be identified and prioritized based on objective criteria for fairness and predictability, and to address the most challenged areas first. The process for creating the Newton North Neighborhood Parking Permit Program has produced a possible template for development of future parking plans, including data collection to assess existing conditions; identification of problems and root causes; matching appropriate technologies and strategies to solve the problem(s); and public engagement in the process. Consistent with the principles and best practices of this citywide Parking Management document, area-specific management plans should be developed, such as for village centers or around schools, with the understanding that periodic reviews of changing conditions will need to take place. The steps for creating management plans are described in greater detail below:

Identify and Prioritize Study Areas

Studies in Newtonville and Newton Centre recently were completed and have resulted in some new strategies for managing parking there. Problems have been identified in Nonantum and some sidewalk and accessibility improvements are currently being developed that could be coordinated with revisions to parking management. Merchants and residents in Auburndale and West Newton have expressed interest in making changes to current parking management there, as well, and studies are now underway. Neighbors and merchants in Newton Highlands have undertaken studies to assess the potential for creating a shared parking district in order to address the peaks and valleys of parking demand in their village through a community engagement process, including local businesses, and is also a candidate for a possible pilot program to test some new approaches to management. As changes take place around reconstruction of some of our schools, immediate neighborhoods may be affected and parking in those areas merit a comprehensive look. With 13 villages with a variety of needs, parking

assessments cannot all be done at once, given available resources. In order to prioritize the work needed to assess the nature of problems and match the solutions with the causes, and to engage the public in consideration of changes, this Management Plan recommends the Transportation Team use the following criteria to establish a work program, for which timelines can then be attached:

- Urgency based on current conditions and needs. For example, changes to traffic and parking patterns that may accompany changes to our schools are likely to be time-sensitive relative to the start of the school year. The coordination of assessment, plan development and implementation may drive the schedule for such work. In other instances, a high number of complaints or increase in the number of citations issued in a specific area can be an indicator that existing accommodations may not be functioning well or out of balance and may need immediate attention. Certainly, situations identified as dangerous should take priority.
- Neighborhood support for change. Public engagement and reconnaissance with residents who recognize problems and request help in improving existing conditions can be excellent partners in the process.
- Complexity of the parking issues and magnitude of impacts. Circumstances vary in terms of the number of businesses and individuals affected by parking changes. Wholesale parking revisions to the larger, more densely populated and villages will take considerably more time to assess and for appropriate changes to be made, and will likely affect merchants, residents, visitors, employees, and possibly other local institutions. Thus, along with other factors the complexity of a situation should also be taken into consideration with other factors.
- Size of the area to be considered. Similarly, the geographical area to be considered will factor into the need for resources.
- Resources. Resources include availability of staff time to dedicate to data collection and analysis, existing information or other recent studies, as well as the need for funding to follow through on implementation.
- Opportunities for change. Impending roadway construction or the development of a new project in an area may provide an opportunity to reevaluate parking patterns and make changes concurrently.

Data Collection

To avoid a trial and error approach to parking management, the gathering of the following information in the City's villages or other activity centers can provide a good snapshot of the existing conditions and can be used to identify village-specific as well as citywide management strategies and/or improvements. Once information is gathered, problems identified, and insights of enforcement staff, neighbors and others affected by parking circumstances are considered, then the appropriate strategies can be used to address the problems, including but not limited to those listed in this document. Data collection could be the following:

- Supply. The supply is the number of parking spaces that are available for public use, noting locations, types, rates and restrictions of spaces.
- Demand. An evaluation of the occupancy and frequency of turnover of spaces will provide key information about travel habits and patterns and inform decisions about

how many spaces are needed for long- and short-term parking needs, and whether there is abuse of the existing time limits, which is helpful in determining whether revisions are needed to accommodate the users of a given area. Influence of major employers should be taken into consideration.

- Availability of alternative modes. Where more options are available, less parking may be needed; the modal shift should be taken into consideration when looking at how to best manage parking.
- Origins and destinations. In some cases, where travelers are coming from and going to is helpful to understanding parking needs and use. For example, there have been concerns that parking near local MBTA stations attracts drivers from other communities; however, intercept studies near a couple of MBTA stations fail to bear that out to any significant extent. That knowledge is helpful to either accommodating or limiting parking for all potential MBTA users, depending of the policy direction of the City on this matter in specific locations.
- Other influences on parking. Sometimes circumstances unique to given areas may influence the parking demands. For example, there is a high demand for parking around the City's MBTA stations on Red Sox game days. Although these are occasional events, they occur more than 80 times a year, which is often enough to merit special attention when making decisions about overall parking management for those areas.

Community Engagement

Those who live and work in areas where parking is difficult can offer valuable observations that inform future actions. As plans are developed for individual areas, community meetings should be scheduled so there is a forum for all voices to be heard. Not only are residents the eyes and ears of their neighborhood, but the cross education between observers of ongoing activities and sources of problems, and the professionals that bring to the table many new tools and technology can enable creative solutions to old problems. The number of community meetings to be held in each area will depend on the geographical area to be considered and the magnitude of problems, but not less than two community meetings should be held in which all stakeholders have an opportunity to help identify issues and to provide feedback on proposed solutions prior to their adoption. These meetings must be well advertised through City media, as well through neighborhood email lists and mailings to those affected.

CONCLUSION

During the past few years, the Traffic Council, Public Safety and Transportation Committee of the Board of Aldermen, and other ad hoc citizen groups concerned with transportation have discussed the need to look at parking matters comprehensively to improve existing conditions; however, remedies generally have been focused on individual streets or sites. While these groups are trying to view parking and traffic problems more broadly, they are not only limited by the lack of citywide or village-specific visions, but also by the scattered approach to oversight of parking. Parking management plans for various areas of the City should be coordinated with other beautification, mobility, wayfinding, and access improvements. Together they can have a transformative effect by making it easier for people to get to and from our many active centers, thus enlivening them further and ensuring their long-term sustainability.