

General Design Details and Planning Principles

There are a few general principles utilized in this parking study to attempt to create more parking with as little intrusion or disruption to the existing urban context. There is a conscious strategy to show ways to create more parking while minimizing building demolitions that may be required in the area over the long-term. The parking solutions should be implemented incrementally, and the Business District should track the affects of added parking. With this approach, there should be a gradual lowering of the parking problems identified by business owners. It is hoped that with the gradual introduction of new parking shown in these solutions that the need for building demolition will be less. Some of the general principles employed in this study include:

Alleys as Drive Aisles

Urban neighborhoods like these should take advantage of the existing alleys as parking drive aisles when ever possible. The “T” intersecting alleys allow parking along two edges of a parcel. The smaller scale parking lots shown in the drawings implement this technique to create more parking behind existing residential buildings fronting the side streets. Many of these residential properties already pave the entire back of the parcel, so this is adding very little additional pavement to get additional parking spaces immediately behind businesses. See City Block 2100, where 3619 Connecticut and 3618 Juniata where adding a little additional pavement allows for 13 parking spaces on one parcel. See photos on pages 24-25 for the extent of existing pavement.

For larger parking lots, using the alleys as drive aisles can allow for a double stacked row of parking as is shown for the parking lot just north of Jay’s International (City Block 1484, Short-Term Solutions). This technique allowed for nearly doubling the parking on this existing parking lot.

Create Urban Parking Standards

Alleys are narrow, and cause traffic to drive slower, yet 2 cars can pass. The typical alley right-of-way is 15 feet wide. Even with this narrow width, two cars can pass and cars can park along the edges of the alley. This factor brings into question the fundamental necessity of drive aisle standards that typically require 22 feet widths. A narrower urban standard for parking lot drive aisles may be possible.

Create Parking Lot Synergy for Small Parking Lots

Interlink many small parking lots to make finding a parking space easier. For this Business District, looping back out on to Grand Boulevard can be a frustrating experience if the side streets are full at a peak demand period. Creating parking synergy makes small parking lots more customer friendly. The existing alley behind the western businesses fronting Grand is the beginning of a good system that could be replicated over time to the east of Grand.

Layout Parking Spaces Along the Long Dimension of the Lot

For parking lot layout, always orient the drive aisles along the longest dimension of the parcel to maximize the amount of parking spaces on that parcel. This principle is shown in the St. Pius Church parking lot where a small increase is possible simply by repainting the parking place stripes.

Locate ADA Loading Areas in Non-Parking Space

Plan ADA parking spaces in parking lots so that the required 5’ wide loading area overlaps with an area that would otherwise be sidewalk or other non-parking space. This fine-grain detail is visible in the new Commerce Bank parking lot and the new parking lot in City Block 2100 on Drawing Sheet A6.

Tree Planters as Wheel Stops

For trees planted in parking lots, allow the 5' by 9' planter box to extend under the bumper of the standard parking space. The planter edge or curb can act as a wheel stop, and valuable parking spaces are not lost for landscape islands. Plant trees that can be limbed up to create a canopy above the pedestrian's head so customers can pass between parked cars and increase visibility of the lot.

Review & Adjust Parking Standards and Land Use Policies

Approach the parking options with open mindedness. This includes property ownership issues and property use issues. Question the premise behind standards or other policies that affect the possible parking solutions that can be implemented. People created the original standards, but there is often no reason that standards cannot be modified. The parking spreadsheets illustrate this principle best in showing the City and Suburban parking standards as the low and high extremes. The parking study suggests that a more appropriate "Town Center" standard for off-street parking may be the most appropriate for this Business District.

Simplify Traffic Patterns, Ease Access

Simplify the traffic patterns in the Business District so that visitors unfamiliar with the exact layout of the area can easily adapt and find their way around. Changing all streets to be two ways will make it easier to access the large parking lot behind Commerce Bank. The district should also consider the many "No Left Turns" that exist in the area. This concept speeds traffic through the district, but can often make a visitor take a couple laps around some blocks to get close to their destination. Left turning vehicles will help slow traffic in the Business District. Part of this simplification/standardization approach is suggested for parking lot signage and area street lighting. Surface parking lots should also be required to use the standard lighting, whether they are public or privately owned.

Another aspect of simplification is to make the business district more inviting for customers to park and walk. Maximizing pedestrian cross walks will make it easier and safer to walk around the district. Increase the acceptable distance customers are willing to walk in the district by increasing visibility. Improve lighting with more fixtures and better tree trimming, especially on the side streets, can increase the perceived acceptability of more remote street parking places.

Implementation

In summary, the solutions should be gradually implemented over time. The Short-Term Solutions will be the quickest and easiest to implement. These will cost less, and with the conversion of the Commerce Bank parking lot to a clearly marked as a public parking lot, will introduce a large quantity of parking for customers driving to the Business District.

As the Medium-Term and Long-Term Solutions are implemented, these should always introduce new parking directly adjacent to the back of the Business District. No "leap-frog" development of parking should be allowed. The City, neighborhood resident groups, and the Business District should decide on appropriate transitional uses that will be acceptable fronting side streets, and then incorporate this list as an amendment to the South Grand Business District Redevelopment Plan. Designating these uses in a written zoning district will give more assurance to property owners, but approval of these in a conditional use process seems to be favored by the Steering Committee and will work with less assurance to the property owner.

The City, neighborhood resident groups, and the Business District should also decide on a precise location of the "line of demarcation," which will mark the maximum extent that parking changes can ever encroach into the surrounding neighborhood. The study draws this line at junctures between building types (1 fam. vs. 4 fam.) or absentee ownership, and with some consideration as to the potential parking volume that is required.