

DOWNTOWN PARKING STAKEHOLDER UPDATE

Date: April 19, 2016

City Council Hears Results of Downtown Parking Study

On Wednesday March 31st, Everett City Council received an hour-long presentation on downtown parking. The bottom line message: the current parking crunch on downtown streets is similar to 2007. Utilization of on-street and off-street parking spaces is nearly back to pre-recession levels.

The City is studying ways to improve parking in the downtown. An update to the Everett Downtown Parking Management Plan is underway to examine current parking conditions and explore future solutions.

A consultant team led by Barney & Worth, Inc. and Rick Williams Consulting conducted a comprehensive assessment of parking behavior across the downtown. On a typical weekday in October 2015, the consultants counted cars parked in every on-street space (1,800 total spaces), hourly, over a 12-hour day. They also monitored parking in over half of the 6,400 off-street stalls in the downtown during this same period. This methodology repeats a similar study conducted in 2007.

A key question is whether now is the right time for Everett to switch to paid on-street parking, using pay stations to promote faster turnover and free up more spaces for customers. The consultants say that is not yet necessary. Instead, they recommended increasing staffing for parking enforcement, and appointing a citizen-led Parking Advisory Task Force to oversee further adjustments in the downtown parking system.

The study involved much more than parking counts. The City surveyed downtown business owners and other employers in the central business district, as well as their employees and customers, to get their assessment of the current situation, and their ideas about effective parking strategies for the future. Two surveys were conducted by the City of Everett in partnership with Downtown Everett Association and the Economic Alliance of Snohomish County. A total of 704 people responded to the surveys. There were also two Downtown Parking Forums in August and December 2015 that attracted downtown employers and other interested persons.

The survey responses revealed that up to one-third of all business owners and their employees say they park mainly on-street in customer spaces. The goal is to reclaim these spaces for downtown's customers and visitors.

City Engineer Ryan Sass emphasizes the City's interest in attracting broad participation in the parking review: "We wanted to hear everyone's views before making major adjustments to the parking system. We know downtown parking affects every business, every shopper and every visitor."

Everett Police and Public Works staff will be preparing to implement key recommendations from the study including increased enforcement and establishing a Parking Advisory Task Force.

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