

Ellsworth Downtown Parking Study

Comments Submitted Following the Public Meeting of January 10, 2008:

Edited by Jef Fitzgerald, Ellsworth Deputy Planner

Comments from a store owner on State Street—

“I very rarely ever have a customer complaining about lack of parking and I even ask customers about their parking experience. It may just be the State Street location. When I do meet with other downtown groups, lack of parking is often mentioned. Even though we would love shoppers and diners to "make a day of it," I feel that the majority spend less than a hour and are most likely to use Main Street parking available. I seem to remember a survey of shoppers for the "Quality Main Street Study" that would support my observation.

A suggestion for consideration would be to make a core group of Main Street parking spaces One Hour or 90 Minutes and have the front row of city hall lot 2 hours. I understand the need for consistency in enforcement but would not like to see ticketing when there is an excess of vacant parking spaces. A nice friendly flier explaining how important parking flow is to the success of a downtown business district could be placed under the wiper blade during times when there is no apparent parking crunch but when a vehicle has overstayed its parking limit. This flier could also accompany a ticket for violations hoping to put a bit of a positive spin on a ticket. Ten dollars is OK as a hand slap for first time tickets but I would like to see an escalating fine for repeat offenders. Maybe the ticketer could maintain a list of plate numbers on a clipboard or Palm Pilot to be able to identify parking abusers. The Upper City Hall lot would be my suggestion for RV parking, at least 2 drive-thru spaces along with appropriate signage. It is agreed that signs be placed in key locations and perhaps some large kiosk style maps of downtown showing parking, library and other interesting downtown features.

I am sure there are lots of opinions and suggestions and I trust that you will help bring these ideas into some sort of plan.

Comments from a manager of a store on High Street—

I am sorry I was not able to attend the meeting, I was out of town. I have talked with several folks and heard many of the suggestions. I would like to just take this opportunity to advocate for a crosswalk on High Street in the Historic District area.

The High Street sidewalk ends at our business (on that side of the street). It stops any pedestrian traffic from coming or going downtown. We have parking and customers who would willingly leave their car with us and walk downtown to grab a coffee or shop- now we have to advise them to get back into their car and try to find a parking spot- or explain how to walk the tracks, cut over property and then walk down upper Main St. and then cross to get downtown (we typically- lose them 1/2 way through).

Also, our employees as well as visitors to the Ellsworth Motel would also leave cars and walk downtown, thus freeing up more spots for others to park.

When the Rails to Trails becomes a reality we are happy to have people park with us and hop on the trails- people using the trails are the type of people to also walk downtown when done on the trails.... if they could get there from our lot.

We need a way to cross the street, as there is no sidewalk on that side of the street.

Comments on the Parking Management Plan (Chapter 4)

If residential development is being encouraged within the downtown, the development should provide for their own parking places. The plan seems to think that the residents would be leaving during the day thereby freeing up parking places for merchants and shoppers. Not everyone works 9-5. The residents may very well be parking all day in the public lots as they work at night. Overnight parkers also create problems with snow removal when the plow crews are trying to clean the city lots at night.

While the plan calls for reserved parking in the city hall lot for Main Street employees, the plan would move city hall workers to the Franklin Street lot. Considering the fact that the Franklin Street lot is a lot closer for Main Street employees, why not set up Franklin Street for these employees and City Hall workers park in the front city hall lot. While moving city hall workers away from city hall would free up places for city hall visitors, we would be merely replaced by county workers who would park here all day. Later on in the study, it is recommended that 50 spaces would be reserved in the city hall lot for city employees. The authors of the plan don't seem to know what they want to recommend. I don't believe that city hall workers would need anywhere close to 50 spaces.

The only consistent parking enforcement occurs during the summer when the police department hires a parking enforcement officer. The revenue from parking fines basically pays for the enforcement. If it is desired that enforcement also take place the rest of the year, consideration should be given to hiring someone for enforcement a couple days a week. I don't believe that the fines would totally support a full time, year round enforcement officer. Consideration could also be given to trying to find a volunteer to perform the work.

I would not be in favor of increasing the fine amounts. People complain about the \$10 and \$25 fines now.

I would not recommend the use of parking meters. Ellsworth used to have parking meters on Main Street but were removed about 30 years ago. It would be very expensive to re-outfit Main Street/City Hall Lot with meters. Shoppers don't particularly like parking meters ("why should I pay for parking to shop?") even if you keep the cost low.

I don't see a rideshare program as being feasible. This would work only for hourly workers who have set schedules and there are not many of them. Department heads have a tendency to work more open hours, including nightly meetings, which would make it difficult to share a ride. Who would pay for the taxi ride home?

John DeLeo

Comments from a manager of a store on Main Street (accompanied by a sketch map) 2-01-08 —

- Add “?” 4 signs directing the way to the info kiosk described below.
- Add 7 “P” signs directing the way to the City Hall parking lot.
- Add 14 “2 hour parking 8am-5pm” signs (6 for Franklin Street/Grasshopper Shop & est.8 for center area of parking lot)
- Install info kiosk in parking area between sets of steps on the south side of City Hall & install restroom signs above handicap signs already on the light post.
- Have a small information area for the EDBA near public restroom area.
- Pave parking areas that are now unpaved.
- Paint or repaint lines to get more cars in each area.
- Paint fire lane lines along extension of Franklin Street.
- Add light to both parking areas behind John Edwards Market in grass strip between lots.
- Increase parking tickets to \$25.00 each/ no more than 3 tickets per day-per vehicle
- Money received from tickets goes into a Parking & Signage fund
- Partner with area churches to use their parking lots 8am to 6pm Mon.-Friday
- Create a handout to inform all Downtown employees of the new rules ,tickets and employee parking areas