

# Report of the Montpelier Parking Committee to the City Council

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## **Summary**

### **Just do it!**

At least eight parking studies have been conducted in Montpelier in the past 20 years. They are remarkably consistent in their strategies and recommendations for improving parking in downtown Montpelier. While some components of these plans have been implemented, there has been a lack of sustained effort to address parking in the downtown. As a result parking continues to be a cause of complaint. This report suggests that in a worst case scenario the City will need over 600 parking spaces in the next five years; twice as much off street public parking as the City currently controls. This projection highlights the necessity of tackling parking issues now. The committee is convinced we will eliminate parking as an issue **if** we adopt and doggedly follow a strategy for systematically addressing parking concerns in Montpelier.

One or two steps creating parking in the downtown will not satisfy Montpelier's parking needs. A consistent, integrated effort aimed at creating more spaces, improving the spaces we have, changing use patterns, and positive promotion of the parking assets will, over time, solve the community's need.

Parking administration should consist of a system which manages acquisition and control, utilization, infrastructure development and improvement, and enforcement of issues associated with parking. This report establishes principals and goals for managing parking and a series of interdependent steps for eliminating issues associated with parking. It provides information on the current status of parking as well as past views of its management.

This report does not offer dramatically new ideas. It does create a plan for annually addressing parking needs. If it is followed, we will have created, or eliminated the need for, 250 parking spaces in five years.

## **Recommendations of the Parking Committee**

### **FY 2001**

1. Establish a permanent parking committee with authority to implement this plan. The parking committee should consist of: a member of the City Council, the Planning Commission, and the Montpelier Downtown Community Association; a retailer; a non-retail employer; and a resident of downtown. This committee shall have dedicated staff support of .2FTE.

This parking committee shall be charged with implementing the recommendations of this report. This committee shall be responsible for all policy decisions affecting parking in the downtown. The committee will follow the principals and goals articulated in the report. City management decisions regarding the allocation of long term permits, pricing, use of lots, the permanent creation or elimination of spaces, etc., shall be done in conjunction with the parking committee.

The City's traffic committee will work with this committee to assure that the committee's policies are carried out.

2. The Jacobs Lot shall be improved. A design consultant shall be selected by April 2001, with a deadline of completing the study by August.
3. Develop and distribute a request for proposals for the development of a garage in the area located behind City Hall. Select consultant.
4. All meters in the downtown area should be priced at \$.50/hour. If any meters are changed notice shall be provided to users.
5. All on-street meters shall be limited to 2 hour parking. 1 hour meters on State Street should be converted to 2 hours. The only meters for less than two hour parking should be in front of the post office. These meters should be limited to 30 minutes (increased from 12 minutes).

### **FY02**

**Goal for the year: create, or reduce the demand for, 25 parking spaces.**

1. Begin annual review and update of parking pricing policies. All monthly permit rates for the Blanchard and Jacob's Lots should be \$60. The monthly rates for the remaining lots should be lower to encourage permit holders to use the more distant lots.
2. Begin annual review of permit policies.

3. The City should own or have long term control over downtown parking. All leases should be reviewed and consideration given to the purchase of property.
4. Continue work with City Hall garage consultant. Public comment should be solicited during the development of the proposal and a series of meetings held on proposed solutions. A broad consensus on the need for and the location of the garage should be reached before design work is begun. This work should be completed by November 2001 so authorization may be sought for the funding of design work on the March 2002 ballot.
5. First phase of the Jacobs Lot reconfiguration completed by November 2001.
6. Meet two times a year with the state to assure that parking issues are appropriately being addressed. Develop a plan with the state for a year round shuttle.
7. Move day long parkers out of the downtown.
  - A. Issue no more permits, including City employees in Blanchard Block, Pitkin Court or Jacob's Lot.
  - B. Enter into agreements with private property owners for alternative use of parking spaces.
  - C. Continue work to create financial incentives to move parkers to the peripheral lots.
  - D. Develop public relations campaign.
9. Raise parking replacement fee following research and public input.
10. Meter portions of School, Main and East State Street.
11. Review metering Court Street and Stone Cutters Way.

### **FY03**

#### **Goal for the year: Create, or reduce the demand for, 50 parking spaces.**

1. Annual review and update of parking pricing policies, with year round shuttle service increase the cost of downtown parking lots.
2. Annual review of permit policies.
3. Review any expiring leases. Consider the purchase of lots.
4. Continue City Hall garage development work. Garage should be designed, cost of construction should be on March ballot.

5. Continue the phased improvement of the Jacob's Lot. Construct pedestrian bridge across the North Branch. Coordinate with Carr Lot and Bike Path committees.
6. Begin year round shuttle service.
7. Meet two times a year with the state to assure that parking issues are appropriately being addressed
8. Continue with public relations work regarding parking.
9. Develop partnership with private property owners for the construction of a parking garage.
10. Implement recommendations developed in 2002 for metering additional streets.

#### **FY04**

#### **Goal for the year: Create, or reduce the demand for, 25 parking spaces.**

1. Annual review and update of parking pricing policies.
2. Annual review of permit policies.
3. Review any expiring leases. Consider the purchase of lots.
4. Continue garage development work. Construction should be begun in July 2003.
5. Create a pedestrian and motorist way finding system.
6. Continue year round shuttle service. Increase ridership by 15%.
7. Meet two times a year with the state to assure that parking issues are appropriately being addressed.
8. Continue with public relations work regarding parking.

## **FY05**

**Goal for the year: Annually create, or reduce the demand for, 125 parking spaces.**

1. Annual review and update of parking pricing policies.
2. Annual review of permit policies.
3. Review any expiring leases. Consider the purchase of lots.
4. Garage should be completed by November 2005.
5. Continue year round shuttle service. Increase ridership by 10%
6. Meet two times a year with the state to assure that parking issues are appropriately being addressed
7. Continue with public relations work regarding parking.

## **FY06**

**Goal for the year: Annually create, or reduce the demand for, 25 parking spaces.**

1. Annual review and update of parking pricing policies.
2. Annual review of permit policies.
3. Review any expiring leases. Consider the purchase of lots.
4. Begin the process for building another garage. Completion goal: FY11
5. Continue year round shuttle service. Increase ridership by 10%.
6. Meet two times a year with the state to assure that parking issues are appropriately being addressed.
7. Continue with public relations work regarding parking.
8. Consider the use of ticket dispensers, similar to those used in lots, for the street and eliminate conventional stall lengths. This would allow more vehicles to park on the street.
9. Create better on street parking for people with disabilities.

## Introduction

Parking in downtown Montpelier is variously seen as an unacceptable problem and detriment to downtown business; an inconvenience; or, adequate and appropriate to the scale of the community. Some retailers report loss of business due to inadequate parking, other retailers find the current parking situation does not affect their business. Users report they never can find a parking place when they want one—or they have never failed to find a parking place.

There is consensus on the need to stop talking about parking and to start solving problems that do exist. In the past twenty years at least eight studies have been conducted on parking in downtown Montpelier. The studies are remarkably consistent in their recommendations which focus on utilization, space acquisition, enforcement, pricing and infrastructure improvement. (See Appendix One for a summary of the recommendations of the studies).

The Montpelier Downtown Community Association's economic restructuring committee has a goal of "ensuring parking and transportation policies, programs, and projects are multi-modal, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and compatible with our vision". In the winter of 2000 the committee began systematically reviewing the recommendations of the past twenty years to determine what work should be done. It was apparent that there was a need for a strategy which implemented parking management. At this time it approached the City Council and recommended that a parking committee be formed and charged with developing a plan for addressing parking issues.

The City council created the committee and asked it to:

1. Define the goals of downtown parking management. Define downtown parking.
2. Recommend to the City Council a structure for managing downtown parking through
  - A. Pricing policies
  2. Enforcement of private and public (city, state, county and federal) parking.
  3. Infrastructure improvements (paving, lighting, and other safety and aesthetic amenities).
3. Create a structure for the management process which assures responsiveness and accountability to the city council and to consumers and which provides for periodic review.
4. Recommend members of a permanent management entity.
5. Create an initial work plan for the permanent management entity.
6. Assess and initiate short term tasks which can be immediately implemented, subject to appropriate approvals, consistent with long term goals.

Following public notice soliciting participation in the process the Council appointed the following individuals to the committee.

Ray Blow, a downtown resident

Valerie Capels, Planning Director

Mary Hooper, Montpelier Downtown Community Association

Doug Hoyt, Police Chief

Otto Kinzel, downtown business owner

Lori Miller, downtown business owner

Jim Sheridan, downtown resident, District 3 City Counselor

Chuck Storrow, downtown worker

Meredith Sumner, State worker, downtown resident

Nancy Wasserman, Chair Planning Commission

Michael Woodfield, downtown business owner

Doug Zorzi, District 3 City Counselor

## **The Principals and Goals of Downtown Parking Management.**

### **The principals driving parking decisions are:**

1. There should be sufficient short term parking to meet existing and projected in-fill demands.
2. There should be sufficient long term parking to support existing and projected in-fill demands. It should not take more than 10 minutes to access this space.
3. New development must provide sufficient parking or a viable strategy for meeting its parking demand.
4. Parking must be accessible, i.e., either physically close enough to walk to within a reasonable amount of time or accessible via a transit system (bus).
5. Parking should be most expensive in the core of the downtown and least expensive in the periphery of the downtown.
6. The City should own all of the downtown parking used by the public.

In addition to the general principals articulated above all parking should meet basic goals. **The goals are:**

### **Parking should feel and be safe and attractive.**

Lighting of parking lots and of access to parking lots must give the users a feeling of safety and it must not impinge on the quality of life of residents in the area. If parking areas are not safe (or are perceived as unsafe) and attractive, they will be underutilized. Every parking lot the city owns or leases has deficiencies in lighting. None of the parking areas, except Stone Cutters Way, have trash cans. Only Stone Cutters Way has plantings or other amenities which make it attractive. Several of them have rough surface conditions which make walking through them in inclement weather difficult. Appendix Two lists parking lot deficiencies and lists the order in which they should be improved.

Making parking lots safe and attractive requires a continual investment in them. The City should budget \$10,000 annually for lot improvements.

**Parking should be responsive to users.** Our parking lots are hidden, how to use them can be confusing, and paying for their use is difficult. These are disincentives for their use and increases the perception of a lack of parking.

- A “way finding” signage system needs to be developed for the City. The system must include clear marking of the location of all parking lots. A map indicating the location of parking should be displayed in key locations in the community (visitor’s center, core of the downtown) and should be available paper format for easy distribution to retailers and visitors.
- Pricing must be consistent and information needs to be clearly displayed. Time

allotments on meters need to be consistent and easily discernable from a distance (e.g., all meters in one area should be two hour meters; all two hour meters should be one color, all hour meters another color, etc.). Most meters should have two hour limits. It should be easy to put money in the meters. They should be accessible. A system for paying for meters without having to always have the proper change should be investigated.

- Pricing should be used as a tool for encouraging long term parkers to use peripheral areas for day long parking. Employers should encourage their employees to park in the peripheral areas. The penalty for abusing short term parking should be sufficient and enforced so long term parkers have an incentive to move to peripheral areas. As paths, amenities and a transit system are developed the price of downtown parking should be increased to move more people into the peripheral area.
- Parking for people with disabilities needs to be located closer to public and retail areas. There is no public parking for people with disabilities adjacent to the Post Office or the Court House. There is no on street parking for people with disabilities. There are a number of parking spots for people with disabilities in the Pitkin Court lot that are frequently unused.
- Traffic flow through parking lots should be adequate, cul-de-sacs and narrow alleys should be eliminated and traffic flow patterns which facilitate ease of movement created.

**Parking should be adequate.**

- Short term parking should be located near retail areas.
- Long term parking should be on the periphery of the downtown with good paths and sidewalks and a year round transit system to move people into and through the downtown. Peripheral parking lots need to be developed on all sides of the community. (The concept of commuter lots south of town, near the intersection of routes 12 and 2 and east of town on Main Street or the County road should be investigated.)
- Busses and recreational vehicles need to be accommodated.
- The special needs of the state and legislature need to be factored into the city's parking management.

## **What is Downtown Parking?**

The committee focused on the core downtown and the state complex where parking concerns are most critical. Of concern to the committee was the impact of downtown parking on adjacent areas, and in particular, on neighborhoods. All downtown parking decisions must be tempered by an understanding of the collateral affects on adjacent areas. However, the committee choose to focus its preliminary recommendations on the core downtown with the plan that a parking management committee would incorporate neighborhood issues in its management strategy over time.

The committee defined downtown parking as the parking areas within the core of the downtown. A map of this area in shown in Appendix Three.

## **Montpelier Parking Today**

In November of 2000 there were 756 spaces in the seven lots owned or managed by the City of Montpelier, there are approximately 1,000 spaces in lots owned or managed by the State of Vermont. There are 275 on street parking spaces owned by the City of Montpelier. The number of parking spaces in privately owned lots or on private property is unknown, but we estimate it to be 850.

In 1992 the bus company, Central Vermont Wheels, estimated that there were 505 public off street lots (excluding the City Center Garage with 107 spaces). In 2000 the committee counted 756 spaces for off street parking, this included some spaces reserved for private use and excluded the City Center Garage.) The 1992 count did not include the 215 spaces in the Capital Plaza/Christ Church parking areas. Adjusting for spaces provided in the Capital Plaza/Christ Church area, this implies that there is a net increase of 26 spaces in public off street parking in the downtown area in eight years.

### **Ownership**

The majority of parking in the downtown is owned by private property owners, many downtown properties have one or two or five or six parking spaces associated with the property, a handful of downtown properties (churches, some businesses) have larger parking lots which are reserved for the use of their employees or patrons. Four downtown property owners rent their parking lots to the city. The next largest owner of downtown parking is the state of Vermont. The City of Montpelier owns two parking areas and all of the on-street parking in the downtown.

Multiple use of private parking offers opportunities for quickly “creating” more parking. Some private parking areas have very little use during peak parking time. Private property owners could be encouraged to enter into private lease arrangements with businesses to use the parking during certain periods of time.

**Management**

Private parking is managed the property owner. The City has no jurisdiction over this parking, unless the property owner is changing the use of the property, at which time the city’s zoning ordinance may have parking requirements associated with the proposed use of the property.

The City has no jurisdiction over state parking. Unlike property owners outside of the Capital Complex, the State, within the Capital Complex may change uses of property or add employees without complying with the City’s standards for parking.

The City’s management of its own property is fragmented. No one department or individual is charged with implementing, or is held accountable for managing, a comprehensive parking strategy. A committee of staff from the police, planning and public works departments makes decisions about changes to parking lots, on street parking, and traffic. They respond to emerging issues around safety and traffic. The police department issues temporary parking restrictions and permits on an as needed basis. The police department also issues parking permits for the parking lots controlled by the city and provides assistance and enforcement through its community service personnel. The public works department is responsible for maintaining parking lots.

The City does a good job of responding to parking users, and several individuals have developed expertise in parking issues. However, Montpelier’s downtown parking has not evolved to meet community needs. Failure to have one person or a body charged with managing parking creates a situation where decisions are reactive and a long term strategy for long term solutions is not implemented. Decisions about parking should be made based on basic principals and should be made strategically to meet goals.

**Parking Ownership and Associated Costs and Revenues**

A summary of the leases is in Appendix Four.

Following is a table showing the lifetime cost of leases for each lot, lost taxes and current assessed value of the lots. Taxes are assumed to increase at a rate of 4% annually.

	Lifetime lease cost	taxes	2001 assessed value of lot
Jacobs			\$ 91,400
Carr			\$385,500
60 State St.			\$214,500
VLTC			\$ 27,776

In FY 2002 the City will pay \$61,500 in rent for these lots and will not receive \$23,971 in taxes for a total cost of \$85,471 to lease the four areas. The City paid \_\_\_\_\_ in insurance and \_\_\_\_\_ in maintenance on the lots it owns and leases, for a total annual cost of \_\_\_\_\_. These parking lots will generate \$50,000 in permit fee revenue in FY 2002. In

FY2002 it is projected that \_\_\_\_% in meter revenue and \_\_\_\_% in ticket revenue will come from these lots. The total revenue generated in these lots will be \_\_\_\_\_ in FY2002.

On street parking is managed to assure it is used only by short term users. The majority of meters are for two hours, some meters are for less than two hours and are located in areas where there should be a high turnover rate (e.g., in front of the Post Office). This creates some confusion and frustration, as motorists use any available space, regardless of the time limit.

### **Use patterns**

The committee conducted an inventory of parking usage during a two week period in November 2000 in the seven lots owned or managed by the City. Committee members canvassed each lot at 9 am, noon and 4:30 to determine usage patterns. The first week the canvass was conducted on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (November 6, 8 and 10 respectively) and during the second week on Tuesday and Thursday (November 14 and 16). The number and type of parking spaces was counted in each parking area and then a survey of use conducted. The weather conditions and any factors potentially affecting parking (delivery trucks blocking entrances, large gathering at the Capital Plaza, etc.). The number of parking spaces counted by committee members may vary from the number of spaces the police department considers to be in each lot.

Committee members counted spaces that were actually used, as opposed to just those officially designated as spaces and noted that people are very creative in using spaces when given the opportunity. This highlights the fact that parking lots and on street parking could be more densely occupied than traditional design standards allow. (A significant amount of parking could be gained on streets, if the stall length were reduced.)

Five of the seven areas surveyed had peak use at noon. The Pitkin Lot and the metered portion of the Jacob's Lot saw their highest use as 4:30. The time of peak use implies that the lots are being used by people running errands or eating lunch and indicates that if the City had a frequent, reliable bus serving the downtown, the demand for noon parking could be reduced.

Reducing the demand for short term parking during the noon hour will significantly reduce the perception of a parking shortage in the downtown. A reliable, attractive, easy to use bus which (ideally) comes every ten minutes would, with proper promotion, be used by employees in peripheral areas and some residents.

The committee's survey was not conducted during peak use times of the year (holiday shopping and the Legislative session). Given that this period covers approximately six months of the year, the results of the survey may be overly optimistic regarding the availability of parking. Observations of the parking lot usage during legislative sessions have found the two parking lots used the least during the period of the survey, Stone Cutters Way and the Carr Parking lot, to be fully occupied at least two days a week.

Two lots, Pitkin and 60 State Street have more than 85% capacity during their peak times. The Capital Plaza and Blanchard lots have 94% or higher usage during their peak times. The lots with the lowest peak time usage are the Jacobs Permit area/Savoy and Christ Church lots which are about 70% during their peak times. This means there are about 24 spaces available in these downtown parking areas during the noon time.

Parking analysts report that when short term parking lots have 85% occupancy the perception is that they are full and users look for parking elsewhere. Similarly when long term lots have greater than 90% usage users look elsewhere for parking.

Survey results are attached in Appendix Five.

### **Land Use**

Surface parking is the least efficient use of land. Montpelier has one parking structure in the downtown; it has 107 parking spaces and is fully used. The committee urges that the City immediately investigate the construction of a garage in the Pitkin or Blanchard Lots. The committee also recommends that other locations for garages appropriate to the scale of the neighboring structures be considered on or near major roads adjacent to the downtown. While smaller garages are more expensive to construct, they are more appropriate to the scale of buildings in Montpelier and will be more quickly accepted.

Whenever possible, the City should locate garages in areas where near major roads and avoid routing traffic through the downtown. The committee discussed locating garages in hillsides and felt that developers must be encouraged to be creative in looking for solutions for parking.

### **Current parking demands**

Assuming that during peak capacity parking lots should never be more than 85% occupied (because of the perception that they are fully occupied) the city needs 39 more parking spaces now.

The committee projects that in-fill development (rental of space in existing buildings) in the downtown will create a demand for an additional 150 parking spaces.

With a successful business growth strategy additional demands will be created for parking. The committee believes that in addition to meeting the current demands for parking, the City must have a strategy for increasing its parking by 25% or reducing the demand for parking by a similar amount over the next five years.

### **Projections for loss of parking**

There is a high likelihood that the Taylor Street lot will not be available within three years for parking. In the view of the committee there is a high likelihood the Carr and Heney Lots will no longer be available for parking within the next five years. These three lots account

for a total of 285 parking spaces. In addition to losing these spaces, the new use of the space will create an additional demand for parking.

The state projects losing 200 parking spaces through greenway development (Parking, page 36, Capital District Master Plan 2000). No information is available on the parking demand created by new construction of offices for the Legislature or employees being moved into the State complex.

If all of these predictions came to fruition a total of 674 new parking spaces will be required in the downtown area, including the state complex, in the next five years.

### **State and legislative parking needs**

State government and the legislature are very valued downtown presences. The City should work collaboratively with these entities to assist them in meeting their needs and in mitigating their impact on the downtown.

If state employees are moved from rented space in central Vermont back into the state complex in Montpelier, new parking will need to be created for them. During the legislative session parking becomes very tight throughout the City. State employees report a high degree of frustration with their parking needs during this time of the year (see the information prepared by Resource Systems Group for the Vermont Agency of Transportation January 4, 2001). As noted in this report, downtown parking lots with reasonable vacancy rates are at capacity during the legislative session.

The City should support the State's efforts to develop parking garages in the state complex. In particular the City should urge State officials to develop a parking structure at 133 State Street, a location which has the advantage of being adjacent to a significant portion of the state workforce and very close to a major highway and the interstate. Development of small parking structures where the state currently has surface parking should be actively considered. The committee believes that attractive small parking structures will enhance the attractiveness of State Street by completing the "street wall" as well as providing additional parking. Parking structures at the Bailey Avenue end of State Street would not add to congestion in downtown Montpelier.

In addition, the committee urges the state to consider the development of a parking structure in the vicinity of the Department of Employment and Training lot and linking it to the downtown with year round shuttle service.

The Parking Committee should meet two times a year with state officials to pro-actively address parking issues.

**Retail, employer, and other demands**

Merchants report a need to have or to have the perception of parking within 100 feet of stores. Businesses report the need to have parking within 500 feet of the office for employees. Despite this the committee decided that office workers should have parking within a 10 minute walk of offices.

Retailers and restaurants present special problems with their need for delivery trucks to provide service in tight quarters and during inconvenient times. Delivery trucks maneuvering in tight quarters is the price the community pays for having a vibrant 200 year old downtown.

Elderly people and people with disabilities generally report that the City's parking does not meet their needs. At a minimum public places (City Hall, the Post Office, the Court House, State Office buildings) should have easily accessible parking for people with disabilities. City Hall and the Police Department are the only public buildings in Montpelier with sufficient parking for people with disabilities. In addition, a strategy should be implemented for providing easily accessible parking for people with disabilities in the vicinity of drug stores and grocery stores.

The committee did not research residential parking issues. Anecdotally residential parking is reported to be a problem. While there are spaces for parking over night, the winter night time parking ban creates difficulty in finding convenient places to park overnight. Snow removal is complicated by the cars that are left in parking lots. Given the goal of encouraging residential use of the downtown night time parking needs to be addressed.

Parking spaces reserved specifically for a business (e.g., City Hall employees) or a group of people (e.g., people with disabilities) are not efficiently used. In the committee's survey of parking lots, they found that when all spaces were occupied, the specifically reserved spaces were not necessarily occupied. There are 78 reserved parking spaces in the public parking lots. 21 of these are for people with disabilities. While these spaces may be occupied during peak times, they frequently are not occupied by cars with placards or licenses permitting the vehicle to use the space. The committee concluded that reserved designated use is the least efficient use and should be discouraged whenever possible, with the important exception of parking for people with disabilities, which needs to be relocated to where it is most likely to be used.

In addition, despite the reported need of employers to have parking within 500 feet of the place of employment the committee felt that day long parkers should be encouraged to use peripheral lots. This encouragement would come in various forms including pricing, safety and amenity enhancements, and provision of mass transit.

**Zoning Issues**

Appendix Six.

**Parking Budget**

The City will spend \$511,805 on parking management and enforcement, maintenance, snow removal and cleaning in FY2002. The City projects receiving \$340,000 in revenue from the sale of permits (\$50,000) and parking meter revenue (\$290,000) in FY2002. Parking tickets are expected to generate an additional \$131,000 in revenue. \$40,305 is used from the parking reserve, in order to balance the budget.

**Parking Pricing**

Most on-street parking in downtown Montpelier is metered, the only significant exception to this is the parking on Court Street. The committee considered Stone Cutters Way as a parking lot, this area is free.

Interestingly a January 2001 document prepared by Resource Systems Group, Inc. for the Agency of Transportation indicated that a survey conducted by RSG of 1,044 state, city and private sector employees found that of the 235 private sector employees responding 51.9% did not pay for parking. 86.8% of the state employees responding indicated that they did not pay for parking. There will be an understandable reluctance to exchange what is perceived as a free, convenient commodity (free parking adjacent to work) for an inconvenient commodity (parking that requires walking or riding a bus).

The committee agreed with economists and many parking studies which suggest that pricing policies are the most effective way to encourage people to change their behavior and encourages that parking in the core be significantly more expensive than on the periphery.

The committee considered providing free parking in the downtown for shoppers. The Police Department staff report that their experience is that day long parkers immediately occupy free parking spaces and it is difficult to adequately enforce time limits. Barre, Burlington and St. Albans are experimenting with free parking. The committee decided to observe the effectiveness of these experiments before considering this option in Montpelier.

**The Cost of Parking**

The parking lots the city owns or leases cost \_\_\_\_\_ annually or \_\_\_\_\_ per space. This is the least efficient use of land and this cost estimate does not look at the lost opportunity costs of not developing this land.

In 1998 the Department of Buildings and General Services estimated that it would cost \$15,000/space to build a 400 car parking garage on Court Street, for an annual cost per space of \$2,088.

Urban parking garages are now estimated to cost \$20,000 per space. The cost per net new space of the garage being considered by the State on Court Street could be in excess of \$30,000 per net new space. Generally speaking, the larger the parking garage, the lower the per space cost. Cost estimates should consider gross and nets spaces gained, secondary impacts and costs (loss of on-street parking, changed traffic patterns, enforcement costs, crime).

In 1998 the Department of Buildings and General Services estimated that the a space in the garage would cost \$240 a month to own, operate and maintain. It estimated that it would cost \$114 a month per space to maintain and operate the parking lot by the Department of Employment and Training and to operate a year round shuttle to serve the lot. (See Appendix Seven)

### **Enforcement.**

Four individuals work as community service officers, providing a range of services associated to parking including ticket writing, meter maintenance, money collection. Three of the individuals are part time and the total amount of time devoted to parking by this group of individuals is less than the equivalent of two full time employees. Complaints about tickets are typically handled by the Chief or a Sargent. Processing and collection of tickets is handled by other individuals.

It takes approximately 1 minute a space to enter and retrieve information about a vehicle. One person can service the entire downtown area two to three times a day.

The Police Department staff report a good balance between issuing tickets and people feeling harassed by the number of tickets issued. 80% of the people pay their ticket within 10 days of receipt of the ticket.

The Police Chief reports that not issuing tickets to “first time” offenders we would result in a loss of \$100,000 in revenue. Waiving the fee for first time offenders would be difficulty to manage. The community service officers can not tell which of the out of town cars are operated by visitors and which are operated by short term residents of the community (college and culinary school students, for example). While the idea of waiving the fine for visitors is very appealing, the committee could not determine a way to make it work.

### **Public Perception**

As noted at the beginning of this report, there are many different perceptions of Montpelier’s parking. Successful management will require an aggressive campaign to inform the public about the facts of Montpelier’s parking situation, the plan for addressing it, and the public’s role in addressing parking needs. Deeply felt views need to be addressed. The public needs to know of and buy into a successful parking plan. Without public acceptance of components of the parking plan (increased pricing and the use of a bus, for example), the plan will fail.

**Appendix One**

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**SUMMARY OF PARKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**1980 - 2000**

**UTILIZATION**

Improve perception that parking is adequate.

Initiate public education program.

Improve use of private and reserve parking.

Involve employers with public education, incentives, and Parking Marketing!

Integrate transit services and develop multi-modal transfers linked to other shuttle , rail, and park-and-ride services.

Implement a downtown parking management area to coincide with a proposed Downtown Improvement District for regulated and paying parking (only). No free parking in this area. Parking should be preserved for short term and there should be enforcement of the short term time limits.

Institute a Downtown Improvement District to finance infrastructure development with a special tax assessment district which could receive revenues from a variety of sources including excess revenues from on street parking and property tax levies on commercial properties downtown.

The city council should adopt a policy of no free parking downtown. Parking should not subsidized downtown—applies to long and short term parking and public and private lots.

Designate additional spaces for DMV customers.

**SPACE ACQUISITION**

The state should provide improved parking capability for employees and the legislature, without reducing the tax rolls.

Evaluate growth/parking demands annually to coordinate with surface parking development and assess feasibility of parking structure.

Provide 175 to 350 additional spaces during the legislative session.

Improve circulation and use of land: downtown shuttle route, pedestrian and bike trails, and future uses along the rivers; provide for replacement parking when existing parking is displaced by green ways and other uses.

Expand park-and-ride lots at the old Grossman Property.

### **GARAGE (S)**

New parking garages are to primarily replace existing spaces lost due to development. Parking garages should only be built after other parking policies are implemented, especially those related to pricing. Two sites are contemplated: adjacent to 133 State Street for state employees and legislators only; and, behind the Thrush Tavern to cover the entire existing parking area with three levels.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

Increase enforcement of short term meters.

### **METERS**

Reduce two hour meters to one hour. (Some as appropriate)  
Fine-tune the meter time limits, to be consistent with likely usage patterns.

Convert 24 hour meters to 10 hour limits.

Meters should be placed on adjacent downtown streets which currently have free parking. (e.g. School, Court, Main, etc.)  
Install long term parking meters on School, Court, Barre, Upper Main Streets.

Meter boxes for on street parking

## **OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT**

Must consider river bank development, pedestrian access, and merchants access issues.

Make improvements to specific lots.

Improved traffic flow:

- a.** Langdon Street/Main Street. intersection;
- b.** upgrade state and main signal;
- c.** prohibit left turns on East State street;
- d.** prohibit east bound state street right turn lane as truck loading zone;
- e.** control Main/Langdon Streets pedestrian crossing;
- f.** shorten pedestrian crossing distances by “bubbling out” sidewalk,
- g.** make pedestrian crossings safer;
- h.** improve vehicle flow through State and Main;
- i.** Improve truck loading.

Pedestrian and bike improvements:

- install sidewalk on east side of Taylor Street.
- provide additional bike racks.
- continue construction of riverfront bike path from rail road bridge to Main Street bridge.
- pave and light Taylor, 60 State, and Jacobs parking lots.
- change fees at Taylor Lot and provide free parking for employer merchants.

Parking facilities development should be in three phases: 1.) increase meter rates to raise revenues, limit meter parking to one hour to increase productivity of meters; 2.) acquire the Jacobs Lot for 50 spaces, 2 hour meters; and, 3). acquire property Lot between Jacobs’ Lot and the railroad.

Residential streets adjacent to downtown area should be monitored for parking impact and residential parking permits issued, if required.

Create a comfortable pedestrian environment (benches, lighting, sidewalks).

Pedestrian/bike connections through the downtown and to the area immediately adjacent to it should be established or completed.

## **Listing of Parking Recommendations**

### **I. Parking Study, Central Business District, by Wilbur Smith and Associates June 1980**

#### **Recommendations**

1. Reduce two hour meters to one hour.
2. Double meter rates (from 10 cents/hour to 20 cents hour)
3. Double off street, municipal lot rates (from 5 cents/hour to 10 cents/hour with max of 80 cents).
4. Convert 24 hour meters to 10 hour limits
5. Raise fines from \$1 to \$5.
6. Evaluate alternative parking sites.
7. Acquire site for multi level parking structure. Should accommodate at 300 to 500 spaces within 500 feet of State and Main Streets. (Possible locations are: a. behind City Hall; b. what is now the City Center Lot; c. behind Episcopal Church; d. over the North Branch between Jacobs Lot and Garage; e. Jacobs' Lot; f. Lot between Jacobs' Lot and the railroad.
8. Must consider river bank development, pedestrian access, and merchants access issues.
9. Evaluate growth/parking demands annually to coordinate with surface parking development and assess feasibility of parking structure.
10. Parking facilities development should be in three phases: 1.) increase meter rates to raise revenues, limit meter parking to one hour to increase productivity of meters; 2.) acquire the Jacobs Lot for 50 spaces, 2 hour meters; and, 3). acquire property Lot between Jacobs' Lot and the railroad.

### **II: Montpelier Parking Survey and Preliminary Analysis by Charles P. Kerin Jr. March 17, 1992**

#### **Recommendations**

1. Central Parking capability to replace parking for Parking Fund spaces, except City Center and Carr Lot.
2. The state should provide improved parking capability for employees and the legislature, without reducing the tax rolls.
3. Create multi-level parking facility for the state and the city. In the absence of a probable joint agreement, the city must take responsibility for its own best interest and devise a solution.

**III: Montpelier Parking and Shuttle Study,  
by T. Y. Lin International, Falmouth Maine  
July 16, 1993**

Recommendations

4. Improve perception that parking is adequate.
  - Reduce meter feeding.
  - Shift demand for long term spaces to Taylor Street Lot and free shuttle bus lots (DET).
  - Provide 175 to 350 additional spaces during the legislative session.
  - Better utilize reserved or private parking downtown.
  - Initiate public education program.
  - Increase enforcement of short term meters.
  - Change parking fees.
  - Provide preferential parking for persons who car-pool.
  - Improve use of private and reserve parking.
  - Install one hour meters at City Center.
  - Make improvements to specific lots.
  - Provide parking on the periphery of downtown at remote lots served by shuttle.
    - (See pages 65-74 for details of above recommendations.)
  - Improved traffic flow:
    - a. Langdon Street/Main Street. intersection;
    - b. upgrade state and main signal;
    - c. prohibit left turns on East State street;
    - d. prohibit east bound state street right turn lane as truck loading zone;
    - e. control Main/Langdon Streets pedestrian crossing;
    - f. shorten pedestrian crossing distances by “bubbling out” sidewalk,
    - g. make pedestrian crossings safer;
    - h. improve vehicle flow through State and Main;
    - i. Improve truck loading.
5. Integrate transit services and develop multi-modal transfers linked to other shuttle , rail, and park-and-ride services.
6. Pedestrian and bike improvements:
  7. -install sidewalk on east side of Taylor Street.
  8. -provide additional bike racks.
  9. -continue construction of riverfront bike path from rail road bridge to Main Street bridge.
  10. -pave and light Taylor, 60 State, and Jacobs parking lots.
  11. -change fees at Taylor Lot and provide free parking for employer merchants.
  12. -involve employers with public education, incentives, and Parking Marketing!

**IV: Montpelier Parking and Circulation Study,  
by Community Planning and Design,  
Draft 1996**

Recommendations

- Implement a downtown parking management area to coincide with a proposed Downtown Improvement District for regulated and paying parking (only). No free parking in this area. Parking should be preserved for short term and there should be enforcement of the short term time limits.
13. Improve circulation and use of land: downtown shuttle route, pedestrian and bike trails, and future uses along the rivers; provide for replacement parking when existing parking is displaced by green ways and other uses.
  14. Land in downtown Montpelier is scarce and the amount dedicated to parking should be minimized.
  15. The city council should adopt a policy of no free parking downtown. Parking should not be subsidized downtown—applies to long and short term parking and public and private lots.
  16. The state should institute a parking permit system and employees charge at least \$50/quarter (more during the legislative session). This assumes free parking at DET and a shuttle service.
  17. Private owners should institute a similar fee system for their employees and short term shoppers should park at meters.
  18. Meters should be placed on adjacent downtown streets which currently have free parking. (e.g. School, Court, Main, etc.)
  19. Meter boxes for on street parking.
  20. Residential streets adjacent to downtown area should be monitored for parking impact and residential parking permits issued, if required.
  21. Improve the DET lot.
  22. Provide shuttle service from DET lot.
  23. Develop riverfront trail and recreation areas.
  24. Expand park-and-ride lots at the old Grossman Property.
  25. Enhance Ride Share.
  26. New parking garages are to primarily replace existing spaces lost due to development. Parking garages should only be built after other parking policies are implemented, especially those related to pricing. Two sites are contemplated: adjacent to 133 State Street for state employees and legislators only; and, behind the Thrush Tavern to cover the entire existing parking area with three levels.
  27. Institute a Downtown Improvement District to finance infrastructure development with a special tax assessment district which could receive revenues from a variety of sources including excess revenues from on street parking and property tax levies on commercial properties downtown.

**V. Interim Report of the City State Commission  
January 1997**

**Recommendations**

28. City council should prohibit meter feeding.
29. Upgrade DET parking.
30. Implement downtown shuttle.
31. Install long term parking meters on School, Court, Barre, Upper Main Streets.
32. Implement permit fee incentive plan in state parking lots.
33. Designate additional spaces for DMV customers.
34. Enforce ride share and handicap parking.
35. The state should fund the bike path from dog river to Taylor street
36. Support construction of two parking structures: 133 State Street and behind the Thrush Tavern.
37. Create authority to enforce regulations of parking in state lots.

**VI: Market Study for Montpelier's Downtown  
Prepared by Douglas J. Kennedy and Associates  
January 2000**

38. Fine-tune the meter time limits, to be consistent with likely usage patterns.
39. Crack down on "meter-feeders".
40. Provide incentives for downtown workers to park in remote lots which opens up more spaces for shoppers.
41. Create a comfortable pedestrian environment (benches, lighting, sidewalks).
42. Pedestrian/bike connections through the downtown and to the area immediately adjacent to it should be established or completed.

Prepared by Charly Dickerson and Mary Hooper, January 25, 2000

**Appendix Two****PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS**

Following is a list of the lots, their lighting and attractiveness deficits. The lots are listed in the order that improvements should be made.

- Jacobs has some dark spots and is sufficiently isolated that it can feel unsafe late at night. Access to the lot is problematic. Surface drainage is poor. The lot is too cramped and it feels as if there is a high likelihood of cars being damaged (even if they are not). Maintenance of the riverbanks could turn an eyesore into an asset.
- Blanchard Court has some dark spots. Lighting at the entrance to the parking area between City Hall and Rite Aid is very poor. A trash can should be placed near the meter box. Simple plantings, e.g., flower boxes near the meter box, would add a great deal to the lot.
- Pitkin Court has some dark spots. A trash can near the alley way would help reduce litter.
- 60 State Street is too dark in the back half of the lot and feels unsafe.
- Capitol Plaza is generally acceptable. Pedestrian access into the lot is poor, there are no sidewalks into the lot and pedestrians have to walk where vehicles travel. The edges of the lot need to have mulch and/or plantings. Weeds need to be routinely eliminated.
- Carr Lot lighting is acceptable, access is very poor. Pedestrians have to climb over the rail road tracks on poorly marked paths and walk through the Capital Plaza parking lot or walk on Taylor Street where it is difficult to find the sidewalk. Many people use the railroad bridge to access the downtown. The timing on any improvements should depend on the timing of the conversion of this area into a park, road, and developed area.
- Stonecutters Way is well lit and feels comfortable. The quality of lighting is good. Access to this area is problematic. Pedestrian access from Main Street is through a congested area. Pedestrian access from Barre Street next to the recreation center is well lit, but the path adjacent to the Catholic Church—which is a common short cut—is very poorly lit.

**Appendix Three**

(MAP)

**Appendix Four**

**Lease Agreements**

Following is a summary of lease agreements found in the Montpelier City Managers files. This is not a review of property records or any other sources of information.

Prepared by Mary S. Hooper, January 26, 2001

**“Jacobs Lot”, 60 Main Street, rear**

.59 acres, assessed value: \$91,400; current taxes: \$2,943

Lessees: Marc Jacobs, Jeffrey Jacobs, William Shouldice

Term: 99 years commencing 2-1-89

Rent: \$19,200 x CPI, commencing 1-31-89  
City pays taxes, water and sewer benefit charge and the cost of electricity

Maintenance: City

Insurance: City

Termination: 1. City may terminate with 9 months written notice if Council does not approve rent payment.  
2. City has right of first refusal for offers lessees may receive.  
3. Montpelier could have forced a sale on August 1, 1999  
4. If lessees offer to seel, the city has 30 days to accept offer.

Right of Ways: City may negotiate what it needs

Misc: 1. No structures except meters and “the proposed community improvement adjacent to the North Branch, commonly referred to as the River Walk”  
2. 8 spaces reserved; 4 for Shouldice, 4 for Jacobs  
3. All spaces currently rented to individual business continue until released by failure to “rent” at which time they may be converted to public parking.  
4. City has the right to remove the propane tank on river bank in order to construct River Walk.

**Carr Lot; Taylor Street**

1.1 acre; assessed value: \$385,500; current taxes: \$12,413

Lessees: Allan Carr Revocable Trust

Term: 4 years; expires 12-31-03

Rent: base: \$10,000 adjusted annually by Boston CPI  
City pays taxes and water and sewer assessment

Maintenance: no statement

Insurance: City  
Owner retains liability for compliance with environmental laws

Termination: 1. Either party may terminate with 90 days written notice..  
2. City has right of first refusal for offers lessees may receive.

Right of Ways: City may negotiate what it needs

**Vermont League of Cities and Towns Lot, 12.5 Main Street**

18% of .47 acres; assessed value of 18% of the land: \$27,776; current taxes: \$894.

This is a "public thoroughfare agreement," not a lease.

Terms: effective through June 30, 2004

Rent: Owner pays annually \$1,250 for certain maintenance  
City pays a pro-rated portion of the property tax.

Maintenance: City, includes paving

Misc: Owner maintains 10 spaces  
Agrees to bargain in good faith re creation of the River Walk

This is all that was in the file, note that the property now has a different owner.

**Blanchard Court/ Pitkin Court**

No relevant info

Note the City owns these properties

**“Heney” Lot, 60 State Street**

.50 acres; assessed value: \$214,500; current taxes: \$6,906

Lessees: Lawrence P. Heney Family Trust  
Mary M. Heney Family Trust

Term: 5 years ending July 1, 2003

Rent: fy02: \$18,904  
fy03: \$19,471  
City pays taxes

Insurance: City

Termination: 1. Either party may terminate lease with 6 months written notice  
1. City has 60 days to enter into an agreement with lessee upon lessee receipt of purchase offer; City must close agreement within 10 months of executing a purchase and sales agreement.  
2. City may make a purchase offer at any time.

Right of Ways: Temporary rights of way are granted.

Misc: No statements re maintenance or allocation of spaces or permits.

Capital Plaza, 100 State Street  
approximately 1.2 acres, assessed value ?, current taxes?

Lessees: Capital Plaza Corporation

Term: 9 years, expires 12-31-03

Rent: Minimum annual fee of \$3,000 plus meter and ticket revenue, minus City’s maintenance expenses and annual fee. If the result is less than \$3,000, then the fee is \$3,000.

**Appendix Five**

**Survey Results**

Summary of census of parking lots conducted by the parking committee November 13, 15, 17, 28, and 30, 2000. The census was conducted three times a day at approximately 9 am, noon, and 4:30 pm.

	Total spaces	peak time	ave # spaces / peak time	yr 2000 % of peak use	yr 1992 % of peak use
60 State	73	noon	65	89	38
Savoy/VLCT	63	noon	45	71	
Cap Plaza	122	noon	126	100	77
ChristChurch	93	noon	69	74	
Pitkin	79	4:30	72	91	73
Blanchard	97	noon	91	94	79
Jacobs: meter permit	23 52	4:30 noon	17 39	73 75	75
Taylor	95	noon	68	72	13
Stone Cutters	71	noon	58	81	
TOTAL	756		642	85	

**Appendix Six****Zoning & Other Regs – Pertaining to Parking & Loading**

1. New or expanded use requires additional parking except as follows:
  - When City Council or other authority responsible for parking allows public off-street parking to satisfy requirements. (1501.A)
  - When Planning Commission has found that parking cannot be reasonably accommodated due to physical constraints or create adverse landscaping or Design characteristic...in which case, parking replacement fee (currently \$1,000) is required. (1501.B2)
  - Grand-fathered existing uses....
  - Changes of uses in CB-1 District (1501D – **see map**)
  - State properties in Capital Complex are not technically subject to review by City.
6. Parking spaces are 8.5 x 19 feet; if provided off-site must be within 300 feet walking distance to entrance
7. Parking Standards determined by use – see **Table 1501.A1 & A2**
  - May want to look at dwelling requirements.
  - May want to encourage more shared parking arrangements – churches, theaters, etc. (1503.B)
  - May want to chat with George
4. Where non-residential abuts residential no parking within 15 feet of property line (1503.c)
5. No parking in front yards of CB-2 or residential districts (1503.D)
6. Off-street loading space required for new or changed use – 1 per 10,000 square feet...can be waived in Design Control District

**Appendix Seven**