CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Agenda Date:	February 2, 2009
Action Required:	Public Hearing and Adoption of Changes by Ordinance/Resolution
Presenter:	James E. Tolbert, AICP, Director
Staff Contacts:	James E. Tolbert; Donovan Branche
Title:	**Downtown Parking Study**

Background: In the early spring of this year we began a study of parking in the Downtown area. The intent of the study was to address four basic issues:

- Whether adequate parking is provided currently and for the future.
- Whether the current designation of spaces in the core area is meeting community needs.
- Whether the existing parking exempt zone is still appropriate.
- Whether and how transit can help to reduce downtown parking demand.

This study was informed by a study several years ago by the Economic Development Office and by a small stakeholder group. In addition the team performed surveys of the use of both on-street, parking garage and surface lot parking. Additionally, they looked at development potential in the downtown area.

Basic findings of the study are:

- There are problems associated with the current designation of spaces in the study area related to an increase in business and a change in business mix on the Mall. Because of these changes, loading and delivery is extremely difficult. Systematic changes in the core zone will greatly improve traffic flow and safety.

- The parking exempt zone has outlived its usefulness and should be changed.
- Increased transit ridership can reduce the demand for parking but these increases need to be substantial if we are to see significant impact.

- Parking should be managed and enforced in a coordinated and planned manner. There is no current coordinated plan for how on-street spaces are designated nor is there coordination with enforcement.
- While there may not be a need for an additional parking structure at this moment, there will be in the very near future, and the City should identify a location and begin planning for construction now.

Discussion: Downtown Charlottesville has approximately 6,000 parking spaces; of which about 5,000 are off-street and about 1,000 are on-street. While there are generally available spaces off-street, on-street spaces are occupied at levels that exceed recommended thresholds. The problem is most likely caused by loading/delivery impacts and the two hour spaces that lead to the "two hour shuffle."

The parking exempt zone seems to be less effective at this time than when it was created. Many cities adopted parking exempt zones years ago in order to maximize the use of their most valuable properties in the Downtown. The intent was to allow developers to build as much density as possible and have parking provided on-street or in public lots or garages. Banks were willing to lend to projects without parking. Now, the reality is that banks are reluctant to lend if a project has no parking and on-street spaces are over-used as demand has grown. While the needs created by a downtown project are not as large as those by an equal project in the suburbs, there is still a significant parking demand. The appropriate action to deal with this issue is to adopt a requirement for parking for all new projects at a lesser rate than in the suburbs and to provide optional methods for the developer to meet the requirements.

Both the earlier parking study and this work point out the need for additional garaged parking in the very near future. The Water Street and Market Street garages are reaching their capacity at certain times. While the Water Street garage does not appear to be near capacity, the reality is that with the addition of the hotel spaces and its number of monthly permits it very soon could find itself displaying the "full" sign. When the two surface lots are developed, this problem will become critical. The proper course of action is to find a location for a new garage, secure the site, and begin plans for its financing and construction.

Regardless of the changes made to address parking concerns, no improvements will be effective without a renewed commitment to enforcement. Parking enforcement currently resides in the Police Department where it is not a high priority due to other demands. The study suggests that it be moved to a City Department or privatized in an effort to focus enforcement. There are concerns with placing enforcement with a private company due to their goal to make money. Unless crafted very carefully, transfer to a for-profit company could lead to aggressive profit driven enforcement that does not provide customer service

and produces a negative impression of our City. There are other concerns with regards to transfer to another department that need resolution.

Public Process – Since our last appearance before Council, staff has conducted two meetings with the public. Over 100 of our downtown residents and business owners were in attendance and provided good information which has informed this report.

Alternatives: City Council could choose to do any one of these recommendations, all of them, or none of them.

Budget Impact: The primary cost to implement these changes will be the cost of new parking signage.

Recommendations: The following are decision points needed to implement the changes recommended.

- Change the on-street parking system to the recommendations outlined in the study. This recommendation proposes to:
    - Restrict delivery by tractor trailers to Water Street, Market Street and both mall crossings at 2nd and 4th Streets. After 11:00 a.m. these vehicles will be restricted to Water and Market Streets.
    - Create a temporary delivery placard to be given to each business to allow them or their customers to use spaces on the numbered side streets for delivery. Charge $10 per placard with a maximum per business of two.
    - Maintain the same number of handicap spaces as currently exist.
    - Where 15, 30 minute and 2 hour spaces exist intended for short term parkers, convert those to one hour within the core zone.
    - Convert the spaces on the south side of Garrett Street (between Gleason St. and 2nd St.) and on the north side of Emmet St. (between 1st St. and 2nd St.) to two hour parking. Allow unrestricted parking on the north side of Garrett St. from Gleason to 1st Street. These changes yield 40 two-hour spaces and 18 unrestricted spaces. After further study we propose to one way this section of Garrett Street in the west bound direction and create "back in" angle parking on one side. These changes will be implemented immediately.
    - Create 12 Vespa/Motorcycle spaces where all day parking is allowed.

- Initiate a zoning text amendment for Planning Commission action that would eliminate the parking exempt zone for downtown projects and require parking at a suggested rate of one space per residential unit and fifty percent of the currently required non-residential use requirement. The developer would have the option to meet the requirement either on-site, within 1,000 feet of the site, or by paying "x" dollars into a fund to build or pay for the next public garage. They would then receive spaces in that garage. The "x" dollar fee would be set by the Economic Development Office annually.

- Ask the City Manager to continue to explore ways to improve the efficiency of parking enforcement.

- Ask the staff to evaluate and choose a location for the next parking garage and develop a financing plan to present to Council.

- Adopt an ordinance to require that any parking lot that charges for use in periods of less than one month require an attendant or be gated.

- Determine whether a parking meter system for management of on-street parking in the downtown area is desired. An analysis is in the attached memo.

Attachment: Downtown Parking Study
Meter Memo
Garrett Street Drawing

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, that the following actions, based on recommendations in the Downtown Parking Study dated October 27, 2008, as presented to City Council on February 2, 2009, are hereby approved:

- Restrict delivery by tractor trailers to Water Street, Market Street and both mall crossings at 2nd and 4th Streets. After 11:00 a.m. these vehicles will be restricted to Water and Market Streets.
- Create a temporary delivery placard to be given to each business to allow them or their customers to use spaces on the numbered side streets for delivery. Charge $10 per placard with a maximum per business of two.
- Maintain the same number of handicap spaces as currently exist.
- Where 15, 30 minute and 2 hour spaces exist intended for short term parkers, convert those to one hour within the core zone.
- Convert the spaces on the south side of Garrett Street (between Gleason St. and 2nd St.) and on the north side of Garrett St. (between 1st St. and 2nd St.) to two hour parking. Allow unrestricted parking on the north side of Garrett St. from Gleason to 1st Street. These changes yield 40 two-hour spaces and 18 unrestricted spaces. After further study we propose to one way this section of Garrett Street in the west bound direction and create "back in" angle parking on one side. These changes will be implemented immediately.
- Create 12 Vespa/Motorcycle spaces where all day parking is allowed.
- Ask the City Manager to continue to explore ways to improve the efficiency of parking enforcement.
- Ask the staff to evaluate and choose a location for the next parking garage and develop a financing plan to present to Council.
- Prepare an ordinance to require that any parking lot that charges for use in periods of less than one month require an attendant or be gated.
- Continue to study the implementation of a parking meter system for management of on-street parking in the downtown area.