

Chapter 2

Parking Management Recommendations

The Los Altos Downtown Parking Study touches on many different aspects of the downtown parking system. Ultimately, the focus of this study has been to provide a detailed picture of how parking currently functions in the downtown, to provide insight into how parking needs may change in the future, and to discuss policy and program options the City could pursue to ensure that parking continues to support the growth and success of the downtown. The following recommendations are targeted towards helping the City develop a parking management strategy for the downtown that aligns goals, policies, and specific programs.

At this time, the City has a well developed parking management program. The strategies developed in this document draw upon data, stakeholder outreach and best practices and are designed to help Los Altos systematically and thoughtfully respond to both the issues identified in this report and to future challenges that are as yet unknown.

2.1 Parking Management Strategies

2.1.1 Goals

The City has identified the following goals to be addressed in the development of parking management strategies for the downtown.

- To provide access to convenient parking for downtown customers, employees and visitors
 - To prioritize and preserve on-street parking and Central Plaza parking (Plazas 4, 5, and 6) for downtown customers
 - To shift long term parkers (employees) to North and South Plazas (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- To support and encourage continued investment in the downtown core
- To manage supply efficiently to avoid unnecessary investment
- To identify, plan or establish potential reserve of parking supply to facilitate future development
- To mitigate spillover parking in residential neighborhoods

2.1.2 Issues

The following significant issues were uncovered during the study through stakeholder meetings and during analysis of parking conditions and in Downtown Los Altos and merit further consideration for the development of future management strategies:

- Downtown parkers observed established time limits. This compliance and stakeholder feedback indicates that current time limits are generally meeting needs of downtown users. As expected,

the parking plazas with the significant number of spaces marked with white dots had longer average durations than those with none, since permit parkers are not time-limited. However, there have been some comments regarding a need for more short term parking near the US Post office, which may be accommodated in Plaza 2.

- The highest sustained demand for permit parking was observed in Plazas 7 and 10. Permit demand was also generally high during the midday peak for Plazas 1, 2 and 3.
- Employee parking was observed on-street and in Central Plazas 5 and 6, based on the reparking analysis and permit observations.
- Despite high permit usage in Plazas 7 and 10 and the other plazas during the midday peak, there was still permit capacity in most plazas throughout the day. There was also significant general public parking available in Plaza 3 and Plaza 8 all day and at most other plazas outside of the midday peak.
- Based on stakeholder feedback, there appears to be limited interest by some employees (beyond the current permit holders) to purchase permits and/or greater interest in parking in more convenient Central Plazas despite the low price and ease of access for permit holders today.
- While permit spaces in permit plazas are utilized above practical capacity for several hours throughout the day, this is due to demand from both visitors and employees. During enforcement hours, between 50 and 60 percent of likely employees were parking in permit spaces, and up to 10 percent without permits. Up to 5 percent of permit users were observed parking in non-permit spaces during enforcement hours.
- Analysis of permit/white dot space usage indicated significant usage with heaviest utilization in north plazas. However, we found that 154 permit holders engaged in reparking one or more times, either because they were unable to find a permit space or because they needed to leave for whatever reason and come back later. We believe that some of these employees would be able to avoid reparking if more permit spaces were created in the existing plazas.
- We also found there were a number of employees (parking 5 hours or more) that didn't hold permits (206) that were reparking during the day. We believe these employees can be served by more permit spaces.
- Currently, based on parking observation and stakeholder feedback, many employees choose to take their chances with enforcement by parking in the central plazas or on-street and reparking every two to three hours rather than pay for an annual permit. While this practice may not be violating the letter of the law, it undermines the City's desire to reserve the most convenient parking for downtown visitors/customers.
- Parking occupancy increased in the parking district plazas in December vs. September by more than six percent. The midday parking peak shifted slightly from noon to 1PM. The most significant demand increases were exhibited in plazas with the most available parking supply (Plazas 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9). Central Plazas 4, 5 and 6 exhibited occupancies of over 90 percent between noon and 1PM.

- There was very limited use of the all day customer parking permits observed. It is possible this program is underused due to limited marketing of the program. This is a low cost program with potential customer service benefits. It could be worth trying an additional marketing effort to see if utilization improves. If this effort fails, then the program in its current form should probably be discontinued. However, based on stakeholder feedback, there may be some visitors that would benefit from the ability to park longer than three hours in the plazas. In particular, those customers that make multiple stops in the downtown and would not be inconvenienced with a trip back to their vehicle on the way to their subsequent destinations.
- Reparking data indicates there may be a market for a more convenient on-line all-day parking permit option since there were many non-permit holders observed parking 5 hours or more on and off street in the downtown (355 off-street and 126 on-street).
- Downtown parking activity was observed to be confined primarily within the district block faces and plazas. There appears to be no near term or short term risk for spillover into residential areas.
- The City of Los Altos is in the process of developing a wayfinding and signage program. It is important that the parking program be integrated into this plan to help customers find parking quickly and orient themselves in the downtown. The parking plazas are threaded throughout the downtown at key locations. Visitors arriving by vehicle should be quickly provided their destination options at key entry points and parking plazas at key turning points. In addition to directional signage, patrons will need parking information and location maps in each plaza to help them understand parking rules and to further guide them to their destination.
- Bicycle parking observations revealed a significant amount of users unable to find bicycle parking near their desired destination. Existing bicycle racks were either unused, due to an inconvenient location for users, or at full capacity due to a limited supply of racks at a specified location. High demand locations were identified along State Street between First and Second Streets and the corner of Main and Second Street.
- Enforcement of the current construction vehicle parking policy has been difficult because there are often several concurrent projects going on making it difficult to pinpoint which vehicles belong to which projects.
- Community stakeholders have requested access to electric vehicle charging stations in the Downtown. They are concerned that Los Altos is currently being bypassed by other communities in the Peninsula and believe it will attract visitors to the community.

2.1.3 Strategy Recommendations

There are a number of ways to address and protect the downtown parking supply while ensuring adequate parking for employees.

- For employees that insist on parking in central plazas due to convenience – modify enforcement policies to impose graduated violation fees, which increase with the number of offences for the central plazas and on-street parking to discourage this practice.

- Violation to Permit program incentive to convert employees into permit holders (employees that have received a parking overtime violation are given the ability to obtain a free annual employee permit)
- Distribute parking permits as part of a parking assessment district or BID.
- Increase permit parking supply in north and south plazas retaining some existing preferred (front row) customer parking in each plaza.
- On-line all day visitor parking permits.
- Enhanced enforcement with technology –mobile license plate recognition (LPR)/vehicle recognition (VR) or in ground sensors in the downtown parking district (to regularly identify spaces that have overstays and directly message PCO. Eliminates need for manual chalking and predictable enforcement rounds.
- Seasonal Valet Program.

These strategies are discussed in greater detail in the following subsections.

2.1.3.1 Graduated Fines

The City of Los Altos currently charges \$54.50 for parking over the posted time limit on- or off-street. The fine is doubled if a violator is observed removing chalk marks from their vehicle. Merchants have complained that the worst offenders (employees) often anticipate enforcement and move their vehicles prior to their arrival.

Table 1-1 in Section 1.2.1.4 showed that 88 percent of vehicles issued tickets by the Los Altos Police Department (LAPD) were first-time offenders for the year from June 2012 to June 2013, suggesting that these are primarily visitors unaccustomed to Los Altos parking regulations and enforcement patterns. However, there are also a substantial amount of repeat offenders. In particular, 3 percent of the overall number of cited vehicles ultimately received 13.2 percent of the issued tickets for the year, indicating that there is a small subset of parkers that habitually overstay posted time limits. These users are most likely employees within downtown Los Altos who are willing to risk not moving their vehicles due to their knowledge of LAPD parking enforcement patterns.

Graduated fines would allow the City to provide warnings to first time offenders while escalating fine amounts for repeat offenders. Since customers are less familiar with the City's parking rules, it would be helpful to be more lenient to these visitors. A customer will appreciate a warning ticket after having chosen to spend money in Downtown Los Altos instead of receiving an actual ticket, which could deter these customers from visiting the area again. The provision of first-time warning tickets could allow for businesses downtown to continue gaining customers, since parking enforcement would not be perceived as targeting visitors to the area. While these warnings would probably decrease the City's parking enforcement revenue, it would enhance the City's image to visitors as a business and customer-friendly downtown.

For employees who are ticketed more than once using the graduated fine system, they will be incentivized to park off street or purchase parking permits as a result of the continued increase in parking fines they would be required to pay. In order to be most effective, the steps between each

offense must be noticeable and significant enough such that violators will be motivated to change their behavior.⁷ Overtime parking violation fee scales are provided in Table 2-1 for several cities that currently use graduated fines.⁸ In the increase between the first and second violation, the rate is increased 67 percent to 100 percent. From the second to third violation the rate is increased between 40 percent to 67 percent. A proposed graduated fine scale is suggested for Los Altos based on these ranges.

Table 2-1 Violation of Parking Time Limits

Offense #	Claremont, CA	Fredericksburg, VA	Williamsburg, VA	Los Altos, CA (Proposed)
First Offense	\$35	\$0	\$10	\$0
Second Offense	\$75	\$15	\$30	\$54.50
Third Offense	\$105	\$25	\$50	\$90.80 (67%)
Fourth and Subsequent Offense	\$105	\$35/\$45	\$50	\$151.40 (67%)
Violation Period	12 months	6 months	60 days	12 months

The parking enforcement equipment vendor that the City contracts with (Clancy Systems International) would need to be modified to incorporate this system but it may be possible to implement. Most cities that have graduated fines reset the clock every twelve months. Cities that have instituted escalating fines such as Claremont, CA, and Fredericksburg, VA have seen a marked decrease in repeat offenses.

2.1.3.2 Increase Employee Permit Adoption

Despite the low cost and ease of use of the annual employee permits,⁹ there still remain a number of employers and employees that decline to participate in the white dot program. Reasons have included that some employers have too many short term employees with irregular schedules to justify the expense¹⁰ and/or when employees arrive, permit spaces are no longer available. Finally, many employees/employers continue to prefer to park where it is most convenient for them, although this parking should be prioritized for customers. The following policies should be considered to help the City increase permit adoption.

2.1.3.2.1 Violation to Permit Incentive

One approach to increasing permit adoption is to allow employees that have received a parking overtime violation the ability to obtain a free annual employee permit. The employee would be required to show proof of citation payment and parking district employment at City Hall to obtain the permit. The option can be advertised by flier issued alongside the ticket, issued by the parking control officer (PCO). A free permit in combination with proposed graduated fines should begin to encourage employees to shift their vehicles to white dot spaces.

⁷ According to the Parking Control Officer, one vehicle that parks regularly in Plaza 3 has not been deterred from the standard fine having been cited over 35 times.

⁸ It should be noted that the Santa Clara County and the State of California assess additional fees for every paid parking violation to cover several state and county court facility costs. The current fee is \$12.50 but will be reduced to \$9.50 on July 1st, 2013 per SB 857.

⁹ Neighboring cities Mountain View, Palo Alto, charge \$240, and \$420 respectively for employee permits annually. Sunnyvale rolls permit costs into business assessment fees. Refer to Appendix 2A Parking Comparables.

¹⁰ Los Altos employee parking permits are transferrable, so an employer would only need the number of permits to cover employees that are on site. As an example, if an employer had twenty part time employees, but only 5 were on site at one time, only five parking permits would be needed.

2.1.3.2.2 Parking Assessment District

Another approach that may lead to greater employee participation in the permit program is to provide permits as a special benefit through a parking assessment district. The City of Los Altos formed an Assessment District in 1955 to develop the ten parking plazas. An assessment was agreed upon to fund the purchase and development of the plazas, but a formal assessment was not continued to fund improvements or on-going maintenance for the parking district. Since this time Proposition 218 “the Right to Vote on Taxes Act” was passed that had a major impact on how assessment districts could be formed and what they could fund. As long as the City follows the Proposition 218 guidelines and garners 50% support of the property owners, this could be a viable option. More detailed information regarding this process is provided in Chapter 5.

2.1.3.2.3 Business Improvement District (BID)

Similar to a Parking Assessment District, a Business Improvement District (BID) enables a city to levy annual assessments on businesses within its boundaries. The implementation of a BID has a specific law: the Parking and Business Improvement Area Law of 1989 (Streets and Highway Code 36500 et seq) that authorizes the formation of a district.¹¹ Improvements may include parking fees and other district amenities. More detailed information regarding this process is provided in Chapter 5. Review of the current law by the City Attorney would be required to determine the most viable approach for the district.

2.1.3.3 Employee Permit Program Expansion

The City should consider converting the remaining unpermitted spaces in the South Plazas (1, 2, and 3) and North Plazas (7, 8, 9, and 10) plazas to “white-dot” permit spaces to help accommodate employees that need long term parking and reduce/eliminate the need for reparking in the downtown. The total number of employees observed parking in the downtown during the peak hour (12PM) was 664. The total permit spaces available are 533. The total permit spaces needed based on September observations was 131. There are just over 300 unpermitted spaces in all of the north and south plazas which if converted could provide a comfortable supply buffer.

Another option would be to retain the most of the first row as preferred customer parking (approximately 196 spaces) and direct employee parking to the rear. Under the existing configuration, this would create 110 additional white dot spaces. This approach is shy of the total employee permit usage by 20 spaces. To maintain the buffer for employee/long-term parking, the City may consider marking an additional three to four spaces in the front row of each permit plaza with white dots.

All parking would continue to have the same three-hour time limit and be accessible to all patrons. In the event that a visitor is unable to find a preferred customer parking space and parks in the further white-dot spaces, the patron will still be within a five-minute walk to the central downtown as shown in Figure 2-1. In addition, employees parking in the white-dot spaces will also still be within a five-minute walk to their destination.

The City of Los Altos painted approximately 110 additional white spot spaces in August 2013, maintaining the first row of parking as preferred customer parking spaces. The City plans to continue monitoring employee parking demand to determine if additional spaces are needed.

¹¹ <http://www.californiataxdata.com/pdf/BusinessImprovement.pdf>

2.1.3.4 On-Line All Day Permits

Another option the City of Los Altos may consider to serve the needs of visitors that need long term parking and reduce reparking and is to sell daily visitor permits. Clancy Systems International was the original vendor for BART's parking reservations program and currently manages on-line permits for the Hercules Transit center.¹² A sample permit is shown in Figure 2-2 below. A similar on-line program could be developed to sell daily visitor permits. The BART program allows customers to purchase a parking pass for a designated date and station if space is available. The customer prints out a permit, parks in the designated parking spaces and displays the permit on their dashboard. The system could be designed and adjusted such that all day permit reservations are directed to the plazas with the most available parking.¹³





¹² <http://www.herculestransitcenter.com/>

¹³ A customer may buy multiple daily permits, but their credit card will only be charged once per month based on total permits purchased. Clancy adds a small processing fee (est. 10%) on top of the daily permit cost based upon the percentage of the permit cost. This minimizes processing costs.

DOWNTOWN LOS ALTOS PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN



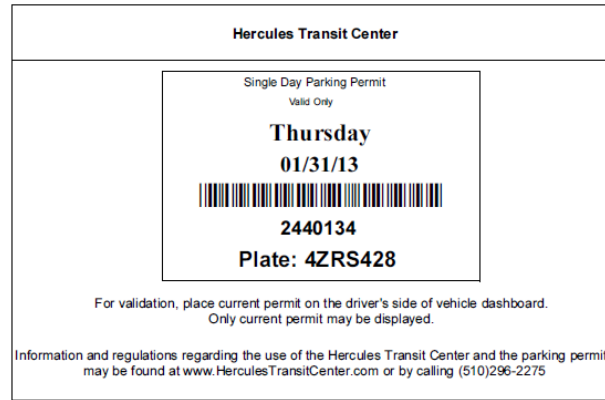
Legend

-  Five Minute Walkshed (1/4 mile)
-  Off-Street Parking with Plaza ID
-  Downtown Parking District
-  Study Area Boundary



NORTH

0 250 500 Feet

Figure 2-2 Sample All Day Parking Permit, Hercules Transit Center

2.1.3.5 Parking Enforcement Technology

The City of Los Altos currently relies on a single parking compliance officer (PCO) that conducts manual chalking from a Segway and follows up with regular enforcement rounds, issuing parking citations with a handheld device.¹⁴ Other Santa Clara County cities such as Sunnyvale and Campbell still conduct enforcement using manual chalk and handwritten tickets.

Downtown merchants have indicated that many employees are able to anticipate enforcement rounds and move their vehicles. Technology applications would be able to help make enforcement less predictable and more targeted, leading to greater compliance. Employees would not be able to simply move their vehicles every two or three hours to avoid fines.

The technologies discussed below would be paired with the proposed graduated fine program and integrated hotlist to discourage repeat offenders. Ultimately, this could make the downtown shopping and dining experience more friendly and convenient parking more accessible. A comparison of technology costs (capital and operation) are summarized in Appendix 2B. Based on the analysis presented in Appendix 2B, Mobile License Plate Recognition technologies are presently the most cost-effective option for the City of Los Altos.

2.1.3.5.1 Sensors

There are two major types of in-ground parking sensors that are currently being used for parking enforcement, magnetometer-based sensors and radar-based sensors. The City of San Francisco has implemented magnetometer-based sensors to limited success and is currently piloting radar-based sensors. Standard magnetometer-based sensors have proven less effective for parking applications than for general traffic applications. Magnetometer-based sensors are most effective at measuring movement of large magnetic objects (i.e. traffic flow). They have been less effective in detecting the presence or absence of objects (i.e. parked vehicles) and can be hampered by interference and communications signals and overhead lines. A field test would be necessary to determine if Los Altos could anticipate the same issues that plagued the SFPark program with the Streetline sensor installation.^{15, 16}

¹⁴ Neighboring cities, Los Gatos, Mountain View, and Palo Alto also use handheld ticketing devices. Refer to Appendix 2A Parking Comparables.

¹⁵ <http://www.examiner.com/article/critical-vendor-replaced-before-sfpark-launch>

Modified Magnetometer Sensors

Since their initial roll-out with the SF Park program, Streetline Technologies has retooled their sensors, adding a light sensor to enhance the vehicle detection capability. When a parking event is detected the information is sent to a gateway (one gateway per 150 spaces) via cellular communication. The gateway communicates to the data center via wireless communication. Streetline offers a service called assisted chalking. With the first pass, sensors identify vehicles and provide a baseline map. As time limits are exceeded, the map is highlighted with spaces in violation. Streetline claims a 150 percent increase in enforcement effectiveness. In addition to assisted chalking, 'Parker' is included as a free consumer application which shows consumers where available parking is located.

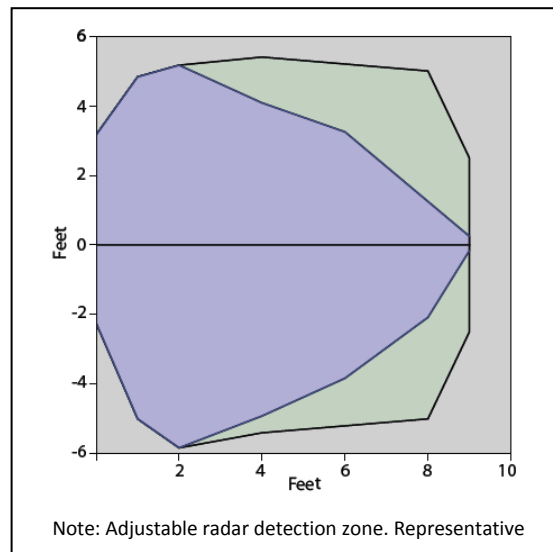
The Park Sight portal provides real-time situational awareness and historical analytics.

Streetline is currently operating pilots in Los Angeles, San Carlos, San Mateo and Redwood City.

MicroRadar Sensors

Radar-based sensors are a newer application for the parking field. MicroRadar sensors developed by Sensys Technologies are designed to send out targeted signals which bounce off large objects (i.e. vehicles). This technology is capable of easily distinguishing stationary objects from those in motion and large objects from small objects. At this time based on the issues that magnetometer-based sensors have experienced and the promise of radar-based sensors, the City could consider a pilot test of the radar sensor system. Sensys is currently partnering with several existing application developers for data storage and reporting and interface with handheld enforcement devices. Figure 2-3 illustrates the MicroRadar detection zone.

Figure 2-3 Sensys MicroRadar Sensor Detection Zone¹⁷



¹⁶ It should be noted that Streetline will be piloting their Parker System in San Mateo and Redwood City in the upcoming months, so there may be field new data to evaluate soon.

¹⁷ Radar Image provided by Sensys Networks. www.sensysnetworks.com

2.1.3.5.2 Mobile License Plate Recognition (LPR) and Digital Chalking

Mobile license plate recognition (LPR) (e.g. Genetec AutoVu) uses two fixed cameras on a City enforcement vehicle¹⁸ as shown in Figure 2-4 to record license plates and affixes a time stamp. In following passes, when a plate is registered, it is flagged for an overstay penalty alerting the PCO to stop and issue a ticket. This method allows the PCO to drive at the normal speed of traffic and stop only when alerted to a violation. Supplemental rear facing cameras allow photos to be taken of the vehicle's tire valve stem to confirm the vehicle (before and after) has not moved. This is also known as digital chalking. This system is also compatible with permit systems. The LPR goes by license plates of permitted vehicles. Registered vehicle must be parked in permitted zones, otherwise ticketing will apply. According to Genetec, it is possible to run an entire parking lot with the LPR system, flag violations, pull over in an open parking space or loading zone and then generate the citations. It is not necessary to stop at each violation, especially if there is limited space to maneuver.

Figure 2-4 Mobile License Plate Recognition on Enforcement Vehicle¹⁹



Source: Genetec AutoVu LPR, City of Aspen, CO

The Cities of Aspen, CO and Monterey, CA both use this technology but had different goals from the outset. The City of Monterey was hoping to reduce the incidents of repetitive stress injuries (RSI) of their PCO's from manual chalking. The City of Aspen was hoping to use LPR to increase the efficiency of their parking enforcement program. The City of Aspen reports that their LPR system has enabled a 900 percent increase in coverage with less staff and has reduced their scofflaw list to nearly zero.

The City of Napa, CA also adopted this technology with the hope to increase compliance. They do not charge for parking in their downtown, only enforcing time limits. According to their enforcement officer Aaron Medina, they were able to double their citations in the first six months of using the system since PCO's moved more quickly and had less predictable routes.

2.1.3.5.3 Mobile Vehicle Recognition and SmartTrack

Mobile Vehicle Recognition (VR) is similar to LPR and digital chalking in that it uses cameras to recognize vehicles and vehicle movement, but it does not rely upon matching license plates. Instead it performs image matching. The before and after images are also used as evidence to determine if a vehicle has moved. Tannery Creek Systems' VR platform is called AutoChalk. They also provide a

¹⁸ LPR Cameras/System can be installed on any city vehicle.

¹⁹ City of Aspen, CO.

supplemental software called SmartTrack that tracks reparking. Similar to LPR, the VR system drives at full speed lays down the digital chalk (i.e. records GPS location and photographs of parked vehicles) During the following runs previous cars are checked and new ones are added to the check list (i.e. chalked). Several cities have adopted this technology including: Santa Rosa, CA, Santa Barbara, CA, Madison, WI, and Calgary, Canada.

The City of Fredericksburg, VA similar to Los Altos, has one PCO, who chalked the downtown three times per day. The downtown had two hour time limits and did not charge for parking. Fredericksburg adopted this technology with the hope to increase compliance and avoid the need to hire three additional parking enforcement staff. With the adoption of this program one PCO is able to complete the entire City's enforcement in 30 minutes per run and chalking and issuing citations takes a total of three to four hours per day.

Vehicle recognition was adopted in addition to program of graduated fines. They found that about 92 percent of people never reoffended once receiving a warning ticket, six percent received typically two or three citations. The last two percent received numerous tickets. Other system benefits included:

- Increase in enforcement revenue by 40 percent
- A 20 percent increase in downtown parking availability due to enforcement based turnover
- Permits integrated via LPR

2.1.3.6 Clancy Systems International Services

The City of Los Altos currently contracts with Clancy Systems International for unlimited use of its citation processing system as well as wireless support a handheld enforcement-ticketing device.²⁰ Clancy makes all custom reports requested by any municipality (now numbering over 300) available to current customers. In addition to the front end enforcement service, Clancy provides back end support, including ticket issuance, notice letters and interface with the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

However, based on discussions with Los Altos police staff, the City has been experiencing difficulties in their contracting relationship and service provided by Clancy Systems. They are able to generate citations, and the costs of tickets are generated automatically, but they report contrary to what Clancy has stated that they do not actually have full access to all of Clancy's Systems. The handheld is unreliable and has poor camera quality, despite being replaced in 2011, connectivity to the cloud is not provided and a custom report for DMV holds that Clancy developed for the City that has not worked properly.

Since the Los Altos enforcement team is not confident in the services of the current vendor, it would make sense to consider other back office vendors for enforcement ticketing and processing systems. The final vendor selection may rely heavily upon the final technology that the City ultimately selects for enforcement. For example, both Autochalk VR and the Genetec LPR are fully integrated with T2 Systems.

²⁰ This service does not include payment processing. Manual payment processing would cost \$2/ticket for data entry. On-line payments would be processed for no additional fee. Access would be provided to a payment website and transactions would be cleared through the third party vendor "1st Data".

For any potential vendor, it would be important to specify the need to generate a hotlist/scofflaw list to support the graduated fine program and if the City was interested in developing a more detailed violation by payment by location report additional data such as block face IDs and Plaza numbers would need to be recorded during the development of citations.

The City would need to provide the specification for this report including the data the PCO is expected to record in the field.

2.1.3.7 Seasonal Valet Parking

Based on past experience with parking demand during the holiday season, downtown merchants requested that the City explore implementing a holiday valet parking program similar to the one that is run by the Town of Los Gatos in order to alleviate customer concerns about finding parking.²¹ In response to this request, the City initiated a trial holiday valet parking program.

Holiday valet parking service was provided between December 14 and 24 in Central Parking Plaza 5 (excluding Sundays). The hours of operation were from 10 AM until late afternoon. The exact end time varied from day to day based on customer demand. For the first two days of the program, the entire 55-space plaza was reserved for valet use. In response to limited initial demand, only the northern-most drive aisle was reserved (a total of 35 spaces) on subsequent days. The reserved parking area was barricaded off every morning at 7:30 AM to ensure availability for the valet operators. In the late afternoon, after the valet was through with its operations, the parking was made available for general use.

During the first few days of the program (December 14 through 18), demand for the valet program was limited. Demand for the valet service significantly picked up on December 20th and 21st, the Thursday and Friday prior to Christmas, when 60 to 65 cars per day used the valet service. Demand was very light on Christmas Eve day. The peak demand period was from 11AM to 2PM. At the absolute peak, between 12:30PM and 1PM on December 20th and 21st, there were periods when the lot was filled above regular capacity. Demand declined significantly after 3PM, even on the busiest days.

The program was advertised widely via City press release, fliers and LAVA newspapers and radio advertisements. Signs and banners were placed throughout the downtown to direct customers to the valet lot. All signs noted the program was free. The final cost of the valet program, including fees to the valet operator and printing expenses for flyers and banners was \$4,900.

The Town of Los Gatos has operated a holiday valet program for over ten years which has been well received by residents and visitors. The service is free and open to everyone, both employees and visitors. One parking lot is used for valet and typically doubles that lot's capacity. On average, the City will valet park 1,500 cars during one season. Valet service provision is annually put to bid and the contract is often established to not exceed \$18,000. The 2011 shopping season cost approximately \$16,000. The Town of Los Gatos, stated that demand was slow to build for the first few years of their program. If the City of Los Altos repeats the valet experiment next year, they will consider increasing advertising and running the program for a shorter timeframe, maybe just the week immediately prior to Christmas, and reducing the hours of the program from 10AM to 4PM.

²¹ Refer to Appendix 2A Parking Comparables.

2.1.3.8 Strategies Considered but Rejected

2.1.3.8.1 Time Limit Reduction

As part of the parking utilization analysis it was determined that the average stay of on-street parkers in the district was approximately 1.75 hours. Throughout the ten hour observation period over 1600 individual vehicles or parking events were observed. These parking events were accommodated by 245 on-street parking spaces. Approximately 88 percent of these parkers were determined to be customers based upon their parking behavior. Customers were identified as parking three contiguous hours or less, and employees were identified as parking five hours or more, with less than a three hour gap between events.

The data indicates the current system is well balanced and stakeholder outreach further indicated that the two-hour time limit was sufficient to meet customer needs. Of the almost 1,650 parking events, 86 percent (1,417) were observed at two hours in duration, the remaining 14 percent (264) of events were observed at three hours or more.

The “abusers” of the system are those that frequently re-park their vehicles and will not be influenced with a shorter time limit, merely slightly inconvenienced. Other recommended management tools detailed in Sections 2.1.3.1 through 2.1.3.4 may be more effective in modifying the behavior of these parkers without also inconveniencing most customers. These include:

- Expansion of the employee permit program to allow more long-term parking
- On-line day pass – to make all day parking more convenient for customers that need it.
- Graduated fines – escalate fines to motivate a change in parking location/behavior.

2.1.3.8.2 Pricing

As discussed in section 2.1.2, the current system is well balanced and the majority of patrons are obeying enforced time limits.

Paid parking may shift remaining employees out of on-street parking to the permit program (or all day permit), but it may also create a secondary spillover problem into residential streets, by those that absolutely refuse to pay. The same will happen with visitors who prefer not to pay. The City may then need to consider measures to protect residential parking.

It is clear that a paid parking program would not supported by the downtown community, based on results from the recent community surveys. Furthermore, paid parking would require significant capital outlay that would require at least \$1/hour rate to bring in steady operating revenue.²²

Many of Los Altos’ neighboring downtown communities do not charge for parking at this time. These include Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Mountain View, and Sunnyvale, and Los Gatos. These communities continue to rely on time limits, employee permits, and all-day permits to meet their community’s needs.

²² This estimate requires further detailed analysis based on equipment selection and specification for the parking district. At this time multi space parking meters cost from \$10,000 to \$12,000 and one meter would be required every 7 to 10 spaces. Depending upon how the equipment is acquired/ financed, there may be more affordable/favorable options for the city (e.g. leasing vs. owning, or payments vs. lump sum) to make on-street metering more viable.

2.1.3.8.3 Permit Purchase Requirement with Business License

This management strategy would require all businesses within the downtown parking district to purchase parking permits for all of their employees when they obtain or renew their business license. The City Attorney determined that the purchase of parking permits could not be made a condition of a business license unless it is approved by the voters as a special tax.

The City of Sunnyvale provides employee parking passes as benefit of their Downtown Parking Assessment District which is an alternate approach that may be considered (See Appendix 2A).²³

2.1.4 Other Parking Recommendations

As part of developing a comprehensive parking management strategy for downtown Los Altos the following section covers various other parking recommendations outside from what has been discussed previously.

2.1.4.1 Bicycle Parking

The City of Los Altos currently provides bicycle parking facilities throughout the downtown area. Bicycle parking observations have shown that majority of parking take place along Main and State Street. Distributing bicycle racks where demand is at its highest would increase the use of bicycle racks throughout the Downtown. Figure 2-6 on the following page illustrates the locations of proposed U-shaped bicycle racks within the study area that would best serve the existing demand. Increasing the capacity of on-street bicycle parking along Main and State Street will assist in serving bicycle users arriving in the downtown area; which would reduce the amount of informal bicycle parking taking place.

A bicycle corral, which replaces a single 22-foot parking space, can provide enough space for seven U-shaped racks; approximately 14 bicycle parking spaces. Figure 2-5 shows an example of U-shaped bicycle racks occupying a parking space in the City of Palo Alto.

In addition, two potential locations for bicycle corrals have been identified in the central core of the downtown. The first location is along State Street, which could replace an existing parking space between First and Second Street, and the second could be incorporated into parking Plaza 4. These corrals would primarily serve the observed



Figure 2-5 On-Street Bicycle Parking

²³ Employee permits are distributed to employers based on the number of employees listed on their business license. Employers eligible for this program are located within the downtown parking assessment districts.

high demand for bicycle parking in this area. While one corral would be sufficient to address the existing demand of the area, a second corral could address potential future increase in demand. Locating a corral in a parking space along State Street, where the bicycle enthusiasts tend to congregate, would be the preferred location as it would provide the most convenient parking for visitors and free up sidewalk space. Providing convenient bicycle parking for these users, while they may not lock their bicycles, would allow them to utilize the parking facilities more effectively.

DOWNTOWN LOS ALTOS PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN



Legend

- Number of Existing Bicycle Racks
- X Proposed 'U' Shaped Bicycle Rack
- Proposed Bicycle Corral
- Off-Street Parking Plaza
- Downtown Parking District
- Study Area Boundary



0 250 500 Feet

An alternative option from the U-shaped bicycle racks is the use of the Bike Arc products. Several stakeholders have expressed concern of U-shaped racks having the potential to damage the frame of their bicycles. Bike Arc offers modular bike parking in a unique design for parking and organizing bicycles, shown in Figure 2-7. The Rac Arc provides parking for a single bicycle and in a 22-foot parking space the Rac Arc can provide parking for up to twelve bicycles (three rows of four Arcs). Other Rac Arc products include the Half Arc, which provides weather coverage for Rac Arcs, and Umbrella Arcs, which provides covering for eight Rac Arcs in a circular design.

Figure 2-7 Bike Arc's Rac Arc²⁶



²⁶ www.bikearc.com/homepage.html

2.1.4.2 Electric Vehicle Parking

The City of Los Altos was granted three double electric vehicle charging stations from ChargePoint America encompassing a total of six charging stations.²⁷ The program is sponsored by Coulomb Technologies and funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The charging stations are part of on the ChargePoint network which allows drivers to find and reserve unoccupied stations. One dual-headed charging station was installed at the Civic Center lot and two were installed in Plaza 3. Plaza 3 was selected because it had the lowest occupancy levels based on September parking observations; it has a large inventory of spaces, and also is close to San Antonio so is easiest to navigate to for visitors arriving from out of town. In order to encourage turnover, the City is enforcing the current time limit in Plaza 3. No time limits are being applied to the chargers in the Civic Center area. The City is charging \$1.00/hour fee for parking at the charging stations to recover electricity and annual service fees. The fee is collected by ChargePoint and remitted back to the City.



Figure 2-8 ChargePoint America Charging Station

2.1.4.3 Construction Parking Management

The City currently experiences problems with overflow construction vehicle parking in the downtown parking plazas. Simply enforcing existing code with respect to development projects with a few additional enforcement tools should help to minimize this issue.

Construction vehicles are subject to the same time limits as all vehicles that park in the downtown and are not eligible for the employee permit program. The City of Los Altos currently requires all construction projects to submit a parking plan with their permit application. The parking plan requires an off-site parking area such as private property or Lincoln Park removed from the downtown. Each project should require an overall parking mitigation plan, which includes provision of an employee parking shuttle and carpool plan. The curb space in front of the construction site may also be used for employee carpool parking and drop off space if there is no other appropriate space on the construction site to facilitate these activities. The project curb space may also be appropriate for regular construction vehicle parking if appropriately included in the plan.

In order to improve compliance with construction parking rules, the City should consider requiring all vehicles related to a construction project be registered to that project. With the current Clancy enforcement technology, a construction vehicle list can be developed and a hangtag can be issued with the project's permits. When the parking control officer (PCO) is running an overtime violation during normal rounds, the plate will be compared against a construction vehicle list and if a match is made an extra fine will be assessed.²⁸ The current construction parking fee may be used to defray the administrative costs of issuing hangtags. All active construction project parking management plans should be assigned to and administered by one staff person in the City to ensure compliance.

²⁷ <http://www.chargepoint.com/home.php>

²⁸ Advanced technology such as mobile LPR or mobile vehicle recognition would be needed to run an automatic query to flag violators otherwise obeying parking rules during normal rounds.

2.1.4.4 Parking Enforcement Time Inconsistencies

In several places throughout the Downtown, enforcement hours on-street are 9AM to 6PM and off-street are 9AM to 6PM. However, several on-street signs show enforcement hours of 8AM to 6PM. The signs also indicated parking is enforced Monday through Saturday, but it is not actively enforced every day of the week. The time of day and day of week enforcement inconsistencies can be points of confusion for visitors and residents.

The City of Los Altos conducted a complete inventory of parking regulation signage in the Downtown Parking District and replaced all the signs that were inconsistent with the current enforcement times:

- A two-hour time limit is enforced for all on-street parking between 9AM to 6PM.
- A three-hour time limit is enforced for all parking plazas between 8AM to 6PM.