Neighborhood Reserve Parking

Pilot Program, North Willard Neighborhood

Update August 1, 2007

from Sharon Hudson

To Whom It May Concern:

I regret to announce that I will not be able to continue to take the leadership role on the north Willard pilot parking (currently dubbed: "Neighborhood Reserve Parking") program. Our neighborhood and the livability of the entire city is currently under attack from all sides, and the amount of time I spend on those issues, as well as my need to lead my own life, precludes my shepherding the pilot parking project to completion. I apologize for not having time to work on this program as I intended. If the city and the university were not causing us so many other problems, I would have had time to devote to this.

However, it is the job of City Hall (council members and staff), and not neighborhood residents, to implement programs to improve our city. In this case, fortunately, I think (or hope) that the city council, faced with parking problems in many parts of town, are gradually becoming committed to this test project, as a possible solution to residential parking problems in neighborhoods near commuter destinations.

Recently the city council revised the resolution creating the pilot parking program to expand the potential boundaries and provide more flexibility in the project. I believe this was the last step required before (1) getting some specific input on the unresolved issues from the Transportation Director, and then (2) calling a neighborhood meeting (with transportation officials present) to discuss implementation of the program, including the unresolved issues listed below. A recent development is that Peter Hillier has resigned as Transportation Director; I do not know how this will impact the implementation of the pilot project.

Since “top-down” planning without neighborhood input is generally a formula for disaster, Kriss Worthington and I agreed that we should not move forward on this program without a thoroughly noticed meeting to receive input of the residents of the affected area. However, it will be up to someone besides me to decide if that will happen. Kriss has said that his office will help with the outreach effort (noticing, etc.)

I anticipate that the program will definitely be implemented in the 2500 blocks, and that the 2600 blocks might decide for themselves whether they want to be included. If they don’t anticipate much spillover, they might want to remain as they are for now, with the option of being included later.

My original idea was to do an on-the-ground “before” study of parking capacity and use in the Fall of 2006, and to implement the program in spring of 2007. At one point Gordon Wozniak offered to help with such a study, but it was short notice and did not happen. I hope that with more time this year, Gordon will be able to follow through on this idea. That would be very helpful. The reason for the capacity study is not so much because we need data on the areas of the program (qualitative data will probably be

adequate and perhaps more accurately indicate if the program is successful or not). My idea is that the before and after data will help analyze the spillover impacts for areas immediately surrounding the pilot area. Then that data can be used to anticipate parking impacts when the program is implemented in other parts of town, and will help determine their boundaries, etc. However, lack of a capacity study should not prevent the implementation of the program. Again, it is just something I think might be helpful for expansion of the program into other neighborhoods.

At this point, a Fall 2007 implementation would have the advantage of helping us this Fall with our worst parking period; a Spring implementation has the advantage of implementing the program during a relatively lax parking period, so any bugs could be worked out (such as potential spillover into the 2600 blocks if they choose not to be part of the program) before the next critical Fall period.

Below is a revised version of the summary document I gave to the Willard Neighborhood Association Steering Committee in March 2007.

Background: New university buildings on southside, expansion of UC summer sessions, increased use of university recreational facilities, and expansion of other evening activities have permanently worsened an already difficult parking situation for residents of north Willard. On the 2500 blocks of Willard Neighborhood, about 50% of all vehicles parked on the street are without permit (except at night), the streets are parked to capacity at almost all hours, and residents often have difficulty parking within 500 feet of their homes. Efforts to enforce the 2-hour limit on visitor parking have historically been unsuccessful, and now university students and staff are using new strategies to evade enforcement and park all day in our neighborhood. These facts violate the intent and provisions of the Preferential Parking Program ordinance, whose stated goals are a 25% parking vacancy rate, and preservation of healthy neighborhoods with good quality of life for residents.

In response, several residents have worked with Council members Worthington and Wozniak and Transportation Director Peter Hillier, with the support of the Willard Neighborhood Association, on a test or "pilot" parking program to improve residential parking in north Willard. On July 25, 2006, the Berkeley City Council approved pursuing the pilot program.

Proposed Program: Under this pilot program, parking on one side of certain streets would be reserved for residents only (those without RPP stickers cannot park on this side of the street), while the other areas would remain the same as it is now: that is, available to residents at all times, and with the current 2-hour parking limit for non-permit-holders. The pilot program would be in the area bounded by Dwight Way, Parker Street, College Avenue, and Telegraph Avenue, with final boundaries, hours and days of enforcement, and other specifics to be determined. If successful in north Willard, the program would be expanded to other Berkeley neighborhoods impacted by new and expanding institutions, facilities, and developments. Thus north Willard has the opportunity to help other Berkeley neighborhoods.

***Benefits**:*

Neighborhood livability: The program should bring residential parking relief to north Willard, and to other neighborhoods if expanded (other neighborhoods across town are already clamoring for such a program, and the ZAB has even included it in the permit conditions for the 1885 University project). One-side-of-the-street restrictions on visitor parking are not unusual in cities around the US; in fact, some cities prohibit *all* visitor parking under similar institutional parking pressure. Of course, we hope not to have to do anything so draconian.

City revenue/efficient enforcement: The program will increase parking fine revenues per officer/time spent, because non-resident cars on one side of the street will be ticketed during a single pass by an enforcement officer, rather than requiring two passes. Unlike most tickets and taxes, increased revenues will not come from Berkeley residents, but mostly from (university) commuters.

Disadvantages:

Visitor parking: Visitor parking will be more difficult. 2-hour guests of area residents will be limited to parking on one side of the street. Whether guests with one-day or 14-day temporary permits should be allowed to park on one side or both sides is yet to be determined. Current RPP enforcement is Mon-Sat 9-5; staff has proposed one-side-of-the-street enforcement to be 24/7, while enforcement hours for the other side remain the same as they are now. If residents would like more or longer guest parking at certain times, we might modify these proposed enforcement hours. However, possibilities may be limited by enforcement and signage limitations.

Street sweeping: Guest parking will be more difficult on street-sweeping days. I believe that Transportation Director Peter Hillier has proposed no particular allowance for street sweeping days; guests of residents will just have to "tough it out" by parking farther away for three hours per month.

***Unresolved issues*:**

Data on parking availability: In Fall 2006 I spoke with Gordon about doing a "before" study of the 2500 and 2600 blocks and Dwight and Parker, so we could assess the program after a year. Such a study would have to be done when UC and ABSW classes are in session during the Fall sememster. However, it was somewhat late notice, and that study never occurred. Therefore, we have no data on which to analyze the success of the program and the spillover effects on nearby blocks. Although unfortunate, this need not prevent implementation of the pilot program. It is probably more of a loss for other parts of town, who will not be able to predict spillover effects using data from our pilot.

Public opinion: User surveys of residents (asking whether they wanted the program or not) on the 2500 blocks and Parker are statistically useless, because they had only a 7% return rate (among other reasons). The respondents favored the program slightly, but comments by opponents showed that some misunderstood both the current and proposed program. Based on this survey, it appears that further surveys would not be useful as a decision-making tool. But this survey did provide some useful qualitative feedback, to wit:

The most obvious objection was that legitimate visitor parking would be more difficult. This objection involves a decision on the relative importance of visitor and resident parking.

Another interesting objection was that parkers will expand to fill the space available, and if parking becomes easy for residents, more residents will buy cars, and more will opt for street parking rather than paying for garage parking, thus resulting in no net gain for resident parking. (Personally, I don't find this argument convincing, because I think people have multiple complex reasons for owning or not owning cars. But even if I believed it, I would hesitate to adopt a philosophy that it is bad to make an activity that is vital to long-term residency more pleasant, because if it is pleasant, more people will do it.)

One person wanted to be sure handicapped people could still park anywhere, which I think is guaranteed, but we could verify that.

Several people wanted visitor parking permits to be reduced in price or free; I believe most residents would agree with this, since most of us are outraged by the current system. But I do not know whether it is possible to combine a change in fee structure with this program. A related unresolved issue is whether visitors with stickers should be able to park on both sides of the street.

Some people worried that Telegraph businesses would be damaged because shoppers would have more trouble finding places to park.

Dwight Way: Including Dwight Way would probably mean putting resident-only parking on the south side of Dwight Way above Bowditch. How the north side of Dwight (currently metered) would be handled would have to be decided. (I personally believe it is vital to include the south side of Dwight Way above Bowditch as resident-only parking, because of the number of apartment buildings near that corner that were permitted to be built with inadequate parking for their inhabitants, and overuse of these spaces by UC employees.)

2600 blocks: The 2600 blocks could either be included in the pilot program or not. How shall this decision be made? If they are not included, should there be a mechanism by which they can quickly be added if they receive unacceptable spillover effects?

Traffic flow: In my opinion, which sides of the streets would be reserved for residents only would probably be a decision based on efficient parking search patterns for both residents and visitors, rather than on some kind of "vote."

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