

The potential increase in parking demand represented by anticipated projects is large and, in the East End, dramatic. On an existing base of 455 total existing spaces, the projects above would increase demand in the East End by 304 spaces or 75%. The increase in the West End would be more modest at an increase of 39 spaces on a base of 491 for an increase of 8%. The projected increase indicates that, within certain sections of downtown, anticipated development will result in large increases of greater than 85% utilization. The challenge facing City government and stakeholders, is to accommodate this rising demand without degrading the downtown environment and curtailing continued revitalization. In order to achieve this balance, two main goals must be sought 1) efficiently utilize capacity and 2) manage demand.



Recommended Strategies

High parking utilization is an unavoidable effect of revitalization within a compact urban environment. Given that parking demand is projected to increase significantly

in the near future, the Planning Department recommends consideration of several strategies to utilize capacity more efficiently and to manage demand. Implementation involves changes to policy, parking infrastructure and modes of transport and emphasizes flexibility in response to changing conditions. Development of prime properties to their best use is an important goal and, with few exceptions, parking lots do not meet that standard. This Analysis provides a baseline of actual parking conditions. As strategies are implemented amid ever changing conditions, we recommend that the City regularly gather data to gauge strategy impacts.

Recommendation #1: Increase shared use of parking lots

Parking lots typically experience parking associated with office and retail uses during the morning and afternoon periods. Residential, restaurant and entertainment uses account for a greater share of demand in the evening. City-owned lots allow parking for 24 hours and, therefore, accommodate demand generated by many types of uses. The Towne Crier entertainment venue is adjacent to a large municipal lot which experiences high utilization during the morning and afternoon, but typically low utilization in the evening. During its evening and weekend events, Towne Crier employees and guests park in this lot. A different lot, at the corner of Verplanck and East Main contains cross-access easements that permit parking by the public and for private use associated with an adjacent apartment building.

Shared parking at private lots should particularly be encouraged and incentivized. Parking counts indicate that several private lots are poorly utilized at one or all time periods. Two adjacent private lots with high capacity but very low utilization rates all day are located on the northeast

corner of Main and Eliza Street. These lots are close-by the high utilization East End and, if they could be opened up for broader use, available capacity in that area would be significantly increased. Shared parking arrangements typically generate revenue for the property owner. The City could provide incentives for private owners to open up lots for public use by placing parking stations in them and splitting the resulting revenue.



Recommendation #2: Develop additional capacity along the Van Nydeck Street corridor

Anticipated development will likely necessitate development of additional parking capacity in the East End. The City is considering purchase of land at Churchill and Main Streets within the 1 East Main Street project site. Development of a large parking lot at this site is perhaps not the best use of this valuable Creek frontage, but including amenities such as a Greenway trail and park features could ameliorate such impact.

It appears that the Van Nydeck Street corridor between Tioranda and Teller Avenues presents a unique opportunity to significantly increase parking capacity within the East End, while also enhancing streetscape, pedestrian access, and infill development opportunities. Current parking capacity within this small corridor consists of approximately 73 off-street and 16 on-street spaces for a total of 89 spaces. Conservative estimates indicate that the corridor could be improved to accommodate a total of 177 spaces which is a net increase of 88 spaces by:

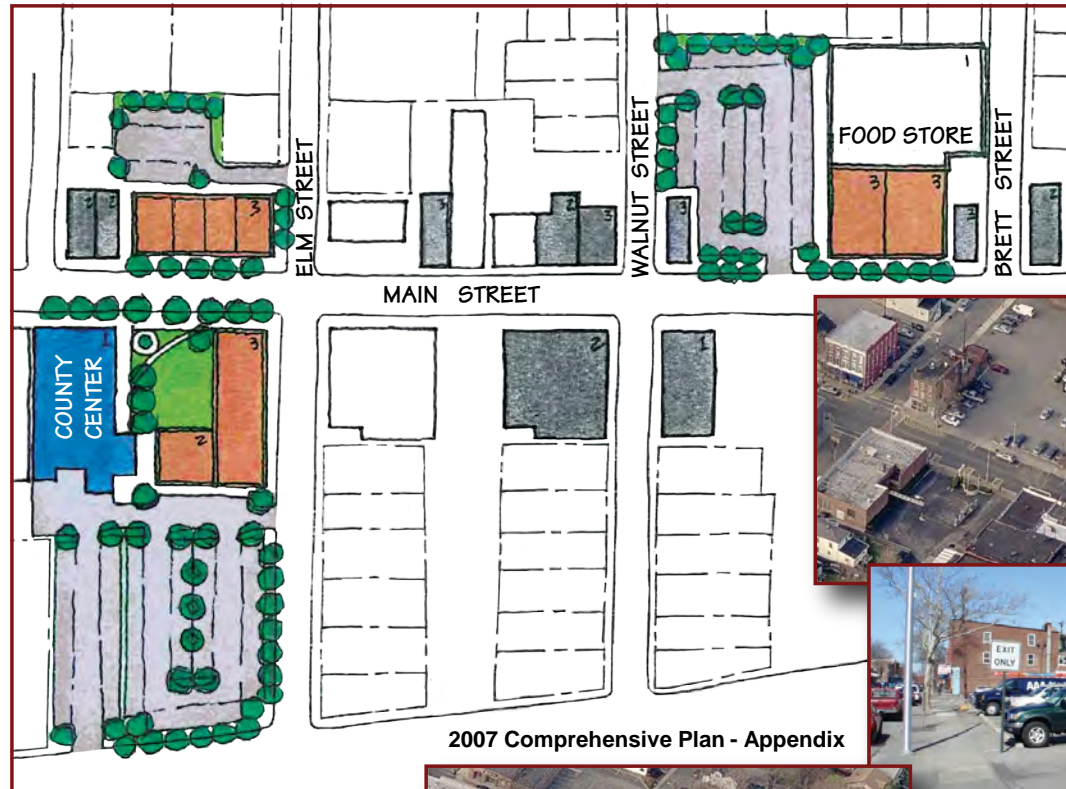
- Increasing capacity at the existing 47 space municipal lot to 52 spaces;
- Developing a parking lot on the east side of the Madam Brett House property. An attractive, well-screened and compatible lot at the site could yield 85 spaces; and
- Organizing on-street parking along the south side of Van Nydeck Street could yield a total of approximately 40 spaces.



A parking lot near the Madam Brett House, the County's oldest extant house, could generate significant revenue for its upkeep and increase visitorship by increasing local foot traffic and improving the streetscape. Infill opportunities at underutilized properties such as the firehouse would also be enhanced.

Recommendation #3: Increase functional capacity on existing lots and streets

Parking is permitted all-day on most downtown streets perpendicular and parallel to Main Street, but their current utilization is low. Many of these streets are not striped for parking. The City can encourage better parking utilization of roadways by striping parking spaces, closing defunct curb cuts, deploying way-finding and adjusting access to and from Main Street (one-way/two-way



- Expand food store to street frontage;
- Multi-story buildings face Main Street;
- Relocate parking behind storefronts;
- Add trees and landscape screening.



Main Street Infill Strategies Illustrative Sketch Plan

streets). It is recognized that a few side streets are too narrow to accommodate more parked cars. Van Nydeck Street and Tioranda Avenue are notable examples of underutilized East End streets where parking capacity could be far better utilized.

Publicly accessible parking lots should provide the maximum number of parking spaces feasible. Opportunities to increase the number of parking spaces in municipal lots should be examined. The County Government Center, for example, is currently striped for 92 parking spaces. The site layout is inefficient, and the Illustrative Sketch Design by Department staff, completed for the Beacon Comprehensive Plan, shows how parking capacity could be increased to 107 spaces while also adding Main Street liner buildings and a small public green. This site could possibly accommodate a parking garage.

Recommendation #4: Charge for parking & enforce regulations

Parking in Beacon is currently free to users, but is expensive to build and maintain. Excluding land costs, nationwide parking construction costs in 2012 averaged to \$4,000-\$8,000 per space¹. Because downtown parking is free to the user, taxpayers pay for construction and maintenance. Free parking subsidizes and, hence, encourages use of single occupancy vehicles. Where parking is free and restrictions not enforced, drivers are encouraged to park their cars in the most valuable on-street spaces and leave them there for hours. Their good fortune in securing a convenient parking space on a given day is a misfortune for others who are then unable to park. Lower turnover means foregone consumer spending. Free parking perversely discourages infill development.

The countermeasure to free parking is paid parking. Professor Donald Shoup has famously documented the beneficial changes that can accrue when communities charge for parking, increased municipal revenue being only one. The truly transformative effect is that parking demand becomes more

¹ Shoup, Donald, The High Cost of Free Parking. American Planning Association Planner's Press, page 185.

evenly distributed, creating availability in the most desirable center city locations.² Pricing drives parking behavior. Where utilization exceeds the optimal 85% utilization rate, parking prices should be raised until the utilization rate falls below that threshold. Where utilization is well below 85%, pricing is too high. Modern electronic stations facilitate discrete price toggling. Pricing has strong potential to maximize efficient use of capacity in Beacon's center. In the West and East Ends, at times when curb parking is over-utilized, pricing will cause some portion of drivers to make use of slightly more distant but "free" side streets and parking lots, thus stalling needless and expensive expansion of parking facilities. There are a range of detailed decision points to consider before implementing paid parking in the city center (payment station type, financing options, maintenance, etc.) that are best addressed by vendors. Start-up costs can be significant. Old-style meters have been supplanted by better looking and functioning electronic pay stations that collect data and facilitates management of the parking system. We suggest that in concert with charging for parking, the City seriously consider implementing a parking benefit district (see Recommendation #5 below). The City can also consider implementing paid parking in phases. Phase One, for example, could include pay stations just at on-street parking along Main Street (approximately 326 spaces). Later phases could expand to municipal lots, side streets and even private lots.

It is important to emphasize that business owners and center city residents stand to gain the most from paid parking in Beacon's center city, yet revenue generation can also be significant. An initial estimate of projected income from a

² Shoup (p. 205)

Phase One implementation (326 spaces along Main Street) could generate between \$612,000 to \$867,000 gross annual revenue. Subsequent Phases would increase gross revenue (as well as marginal costs).

Effective implementation of paid parking in Beacon will require enforcement. The City is reportedly already hiring such personnel. Enforcement will ensure that meters achieve the desired parking turnover crucial to center city business and also meet revenue potential. Enforcement will also generate revenue from issuance of violations.

Recommendation #5: Develop a Center City Benefit Fund

Maintaining, expanding or improving center city parking requires money. We recommend creation of a Center City Benefit Fund to implement parking strategies and other center city transportation improvements. Expensive structured parking could even be contemplated if the fund grows large enough and/or the garage is developed in partnership with a private development project.

This Fund would be maintained via two main sources:

The experience of other communities suggests that paid parking is more readily embraced when the resulting funds are reinvested into parking and target area needs. The City should consider reserving funds generated at parking stations for improvements within the center city. Beacon decision-makers have provided generous relief to developers seeking to build less parking than is required by Code. It can be argued that such relief is a (justifiable) public subsidy to new development, where the newly generated off-site parking impact is absorbed on-street or in municipal lots. Parking variances or waivers, however, allow development to proceed without providing the

money necessary for construction and upkeep of the actually needed parking facilities. The City should consider instituting a ‘payment-in-lieu of parking’ system that captures the costs of parking provision. Such a system facilitates infill development particularly on parcels that cannot provide required spaces on-site, pooling funds from multiple small developments to invest in facilities available to all. The City may find that spreading payments over time via quarterly billing may ease resistance from property owners and establish a larger ongoing revenue stream.

Recommendation #6: Adjust parking regulations in Zoning Code

Some parking requirements for the Central Business (CB) and Business Off Street Parking (PB) Districts resemble suburban standards. The frequency with which the Planning and Zoning Boards issue waivers and variances for parking requirements seems to indicate that the requirements are not in line with the development market or what the center city can to accommodate. We recommend that the City consider the following changes:

Apply Central Main Street (CMS) parking standards, which better serve downtown’s needs, to the CB and PB Districts. In addition, consider that the Fishkill Creek Development District established minimum and maximum parking requirements and that maximum standards may also be advantageously applied along Main Street.

Extend the Planning Board parking waiver process used in the CMS throughout downtown. This process is streamlined in comparison to a Zoning Board of Appeals variance process and is supportive of affordable infill development.

The PB Zone appears to, at least indirectly, encourage conversion of homes, businesses and vacant parcels to principal use parking lots. Consider eliminating the District. Concurrent adjustments to the Planning Board parking waiver process would be necessary.

Recommendation #7: Wayfinding

The City should facilitate use of existing parking capacity. We recommend improving municipal lot signage by ensuring that they are all of the same design and are correctly situated.



Several of the existing municipal lot signs along Main Street are pointing in the wrong direction or are absent. A sign in front of the Beacon Center is of a different design and difficult to read. The City may consider installing all new signs with a more visible dark background and white letter design. The City should create an

easily located webpage on its website. This page should include a map of municipal and (perhaps) private lots, indicate parking limits on streets and contain information on meters if and when these are installed. The map should also be placed along Main Street at lots, kiosks or other streetside gathering areas.

Recommendation #8: Improve the biking and walking environment

The goal of a balanced transportation system is to offer community residents a variety of travel choices. Beacon is already well suited to alternative transportation, exhibiting the County's highest percentage of zero car and one-car households.(p. 112) Ample opportunity exists to provide

meaningful, relatively inexpensive improvement to the City's walking and bicycling environment. The Overview Map on page 3 demonstrates the large area of the City that lies within a quarter-mile buffer of Main Street. Parking demand can be reduced by encouraging and equipping shifts from single occupancy vehicles to other travel modes.

Adopted in 2014, *Walk-Bike Dutchess* is a County-wide transportation planning tool that includes recommendations specific to Beacon:

- Install bicycle parking at key locations such as City Hall, the Beacon Welcome Center, Post Office, Library, Dutchess County Building, DIA-Beacon, Beacon High School, Riverfront Park, and along Main Street, and provide bicycle lockers at the Beacon train station;
- Mark sharrows on Beekman Street and Red Flynn Drive between Route 9D and the Beacon train station and ferry dock. Sharrows were recently added to Main Street and should be regularly painted;
- Provide a sidewalk on the northwest side of Beekman Street to complete the gap between West Main Street and the existing sidewalk south of River Street;
- Create a new sidewalk or path south of City Hall between Beekman Street and Wolcott Avenue/Route 9D to connect the train station and Main Street; and
- Consider a formal path or sidewalk connection between Ferry Street and Wolcott Avenue/Route 9D.

Very recently the City was awarded \$958,064 to construct pedestrian improvements at intersections along Main Street in the City Center.



Recommendation #9: Enhance Main Street bus service

Beacon is served by intercity and County bus service. We recommend that the City confer with County officials to develop convenient and frequent service along Main Street in order to reduce parking demand by supporting zero- or one-car households, indeed, those households most likely to choose to live in Beacon's Center City. The transit experience could be further enhanced by establishing a small number of Main Street "transit activity centers" complete with benches, route signage, shelters, retail kiosks and landscaping. These could be developed as part of scheduled projects and one potential location would be in front of the County-owned Beacon Center.