

# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



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## Work Session: Downtown Parking

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Meeting Date: October 14, 2013  
Department: Planning and Development  
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Agenda Item Number: 3  
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### ISSUE STATEMENT

The work session will review an analysis conducted by the Community Planning Workshop at the University of Oregon of the 12-block, on-street, downtown free parking program implemented in October, 2010, and explore possible next steps related to downtown parking.

### BACKGROUND

The council's discussion of downtown revitalization and parking is part of a larger conversation on local economic development actions. The overarching goal is to foster a vibrant downtown while boosting the local economy. In 2009, four strategies for downtown revitalization were developed: (1) Jobs and Redevelopment, (2) Safety, (3) Parking, and (4) Attractions and Amenities. Within the parking strategy, the specific projects identified were rebranding the City's parking system, providing easier payment options, and implementing an on-street, free parking program.

A Downtown Parking Subcommittee, comprised of councilors Clark, Ortiz, Pryor, and Taylor, reviewed options that could readily be implemented to encourage greater use, draw more people, and leverage economic opportunities in downtown Eugene. Two on-street, free parking options were piloted in different areas of downtown in 2009 and 2010. Staff conducted business surveys, measured occupancies, and gathered feedback from downtown users at public meetings.

At the February 17, 2010, work session, a five-point plan was presented to meet the downtown parking goals developed by the subcommittee. Strategies included:

1. Implementing easy payment options,
2. Increasing downtown parking garage safety,
3. Rebranding the downtown parking system,
4. Marketing the downtown parking system, and
5. Expanding the free parking program from downtown's parking structures, lots, and garages to the on-street, metered parking spaces.

At the August 11, 2010, work session on downtown parking, the council selected a 12-block area that was in the greater West Broadway Avenue area, and on October 1, 2010, 288 on-street parking meters in that area were removed and replaced with time-limited parking signs that

enable on-street, free parking. The program was scheduled to sunset in two years (September 30, 2012). The foregone meter revenue was \$210,000 annually in FY10 to the Parking Fund. That number has increased based on greater parking demand and increased hourly rates.

The administrative order for the 12-block, on-street program was extended four times (September, 2012, February 2013, May, 2013, and September 2013) to support the new retail and commercial business activity that has developed in the area. While it is currently set to expire on January 15, 2014, after the holiday shopping season, staff anticipates taking a broader look at the overall parking program before finalizing a recommendation on the current downtown free parking program.

Two formal evaluations of the free-parking program have been conducted:

1. *Free Parking? Evaluating the Impacts of the Downtown Eugene On-Street Parking Program on Retail Establishments*, Claire Ottwell, May 2011.

This report was an interim analysis of the program. It was performed in partnership with the University of Oregon to meet a requirement for the Degree of Master of Community and Regional Planning of a graduate student in the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon.

An electronic copy of the full report is available at: <http://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14129>

2. *Searching for a Space: An Analysis of Eugene's Free Parking Policy*, by Community Planning Workshop at the University of Oregon, June 2013.

This report evaluates the effects of a free, two-hour parking program in downtown Eugene. Its aim is to understand if the parking program is achieving its intended goals, what the perceptions of the business community are about its operation, and what other impacts the parking program is having on downtown. Results from a survey of businesses, a survey of downtown visitors and a series of parking counts were used to help answer these questions.

According to the report, among downtown businesses that participated in the survey, support for the program was high, but there were concerns it was not working as intended and that downtown employees were using the parking spaces intended for patrons.

Similarly, downtown parkers who were surveyed reported that they like free parking and they think it has a positive impact on downtown. While some people reported they would visit downtown less often if meters were introduced, many indicated they travel downtown by other modes.

Parking counts in the free, two-hour zone were consistently more occupied than spaces in the metered zone. Since the last parking count in 2011, parking occupancy rates in the free, two-hour zone increased by about 14 percent.

An electronic copy of the full report is available at: <http://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14130>

## **RELATED CITY POLICIES**

Improvements to downtown parking are supported by:

### *City Council Goals*

#### Sustainable Development

- Increased downtown development
- Support for small and local business
- Decision-making that weighs economic, social equity and environmental (triple bottom line) effects

#### Safe Community

- Greater sense of safety (especially downtown)

### *Envision Eugene Pillars*

- Promote compact urban development and efficient transportation options.

### *Regional Prosperity Economic Development Plan*

- Strategy 5: Identify as a Place to Thrive - Priority Next Step - Urban Vitality  
- As a creative economy is fostered, dynamic urban centers are an important asset. Eugene, Springfield and many of the smaller communities in the region recognize the importance of supporting and enhancing vitality in their city centers. Building downtowns as places to live, work and play will support the retention and expansion of the existing business community and be a significant asset to attract new investment. The Cities of Eugene and Springfield will continue to enhance their efforts to promote downtown vitality through development and redevelopment.

### *Eugene Downtown Plan*

- Facilitate dense development in the courthouse area and other sites between the core of downtown and the river.
- Downtown development shall support the urban qualities of density, vitality, livability and diversity to create a downtown, urban environment.
- Actively pursue public/private development opportunities to achieve the vision for an active, vital, growing downtown.
- Use downtown development tools and incentives to encourage development that provides character and density downtown.

### *Eugene City Code 9.6410 (4) – Downtown Parking Exempt Zone*

**COUNCIL OPTIONS**

This is a work session item for discussion; no options have been developed at this time. Staff is seeking input and feedback from the Mayor and City Council.

**CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

No recommendation is necessary.

**SUGGESTED MOTION**

No motion is necessary.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Searching for a Space: An Analysis of Eugene's Free Parking Policy, Community Planning Workshop, June 2013 Executive Summary excerpt

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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