



SEG 8 – Recommendation Number One Primary Parking Structure

Background

Information provided by the Village indicates that there are approximately 550,000 square feet of commercial spaces in the area south of the railroad tracks, with a mix of retail, service commercial and office space. The existing Village zoning requirements are 5 spaces per 1,000 gross square feet for retail and 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet for office uses.

A year 2000 study of parking supply and demand in downtown Lake Forest, a city with a train station similar to Hinsdale, indicated that the city provided a total of 3.1 spaces per 1,000 square feet of combined office and commercial development (including commuter parking), but that current parking supply was “insufficient.” The consultant report made a recommendation of 4 spaces per 1,000 of combined retail and office space based on Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) requirements.

The 1980 Hinsdale parking study undertaken by Harland Bartholomew & Assoc. Inc. recommended an overall average of 3.75 spaces per 1,000 in consideration of the mix of uses found at that time. Utilizing the conservative 3.75 ratio, the peak demand for parking spaces in downtown Hinsdale (south of the tracks) is conservatively estimated at 2050 spaces. However, typical parking ratios are intended to document peak parking demand. To better understand the relationship between Hinsdale supply and non-peak demand, we should take the 2050 at seventy five percent (75%) to resemble *typical parking demand* and then subtract supply. Using the same conservative figure, the theoretical demand in Hinsdale is now a much lower 1537 spaces. The current supply is approximately 792 spaces leaving a deficiency of 745 spaces.

The Village has conducted several different parking studies over the years, both in house and with consultants. In addition, the Village maintains a waiting list of approximately 800 residents waiting for parking passes. These 800 plus residents are polled biannually to determine their continued interest in a parking space. It should also be noted that spaces are available at the Hinsdale West lot and the Highlands lot, but METRA does not service those two stations as well as it does the Brush Hill station.

Key Findings

A high percentage of respondents to the second survey (75%) believe the Village should create an appropriate amount of parking in the downtown area. They are comfortable with it being done with tax dollars. Sixty two percent (62%) of residents believe that businesses should be required to pay into a parking fund to finance the creation of additional parking. This sixty two percent (62%) also believes that businesses in the downtown should not be forced to provide parking spaces in the downtown area.

Anecdotal information received by the SEG throughout the process has also suggested that a parking solution is necessary. Comments obtained in survey number one also support a parking structure and some sort of permanent solution to the “parking problem.”

The SEG believes there is a hierarchy of downtown parking needs. The highest priority should be given to those visiting to conduct business, to shop or to see the sights. If their visit is pleasant and convenient, they will return. The next highest priority should be given to those who work downtown, providing the goods and services. The next contingency are the commuters, most of whom arrive and leave their vehicles all day. The spaces adjacent to the offices and shops should be available to the visitors. Workers, merchants and their employees should be nearby, but should not compete with the visitors. Commuters should park within a reasonable distance of the train stations. Obviously, encouraging the use of other modes of transportation such as busses, bicycles or walking would reduce parking needs. SEG 8 defers to the Bicycle Task Force for recommendations for two wheeled forms of travel. The group did not consider mass transit except internal routes discussed in Recommendation 2.

Recommendation

8-1 The Village should construct a multilevel parking structure providing 400+/- additional spaces at the site of the current municipal lot between Washington and Lincoln Avenues

Definition The structure should include retail on the east and west sides. It will be an attractive structure in keeping with the charm and character of Hinsdale, established on the south side of the tracks. The incorporation of green technology, landscaping and attractive detailing is a requirement for this municipal parking structure.

Critical Success Factors: There is documented demand for additional commuter parking. Repeated surveys show the demand for additional in-close shopper parking. If a new structure is created north of the tracks, it should be considered a place for commuters and downtown workers. Existing merchant permit holders should be relocated to this facility to open up additional visitor parking close to shops south of the tracks. Important factors to consider are as follows:

1. Doing it Right – Given the high profile location of this of the project and the site and the need for a parking solution, the program and design must be accomplished with grace and beauty. The design process will be as important as the product.
2. Permit Fee Escalation – The Village should increase permit charges to reflect the attractiveness of these spaces. Recommendation 2 has a fuller discussion.

3. Earmark Parking Funds – In order to gain the support of the commuting and merchant community, increased fee revenue should be earmarked for parking related costs such as design costs and the downpayment on the structure.
4. Minimal Impact on tax bill – Given the revenue opportunities at the site, the Village should strive to make the creation of the parking structure as revenue positive as possible. The Village can sell off or serve as a landlord of the first floor retail on Washington and Lincoln. The presence of the retail will allow the architect to provide attractive detailing.
5. Attractive Architecture – The design must be timeless, classic and in keeping with the architectural traditions of well known and respected Village structures. The structure must solve a problem and add to the inventory of attractive Hinsdale buildings.
6. Parcel Consolidation – The Village should strive to incorporate contiguous land north of the tracks west of Washington, east of Lincoln and south of Chicago Avenue.
7. Infrastructure – The presence of utilities (several types) and Flagg Creek make the site complicated. Flagg Creek should be relocated below grade construction.
8. Cooperation with BNSF – BNSF owns a strip of land on the south boundary of the municipal lot.
9. Operation and maintenance costs should be accommodated in the plans.

Funding and Cost Considerations: On a project of this magnitude, funding and cost considerations are complex. Major issues include the provision of retail on the Lincoln and Washington facades. Too much additional use on the site will require too many additional spaces and will limit opportunities to increase net totals. A revenue bond may be a promising alternative using monthly commuter and merchant permit fees to pay the bonds. Rents from the retail will also contribute to the bond payments. The financial component of an alternate revenue bond should be vetted with legal counsel and a bond firm well before the need is urgent.

Implementation Considerations: The Village should study successes and failures in other communities in order to understand best practices and to avoid repeating mistakes made by others. The Village should work with an experienced architect and parking engineering firm to develop schematics that can be presented to the community and massaged. From these plans, an estimate of construction and operational expenses should be determined.



SEG 8 – Recommendation Number Two Parking Strategy

Background

The peak demand for parking spaces in downtown Hinsdale (south of the tracks) is conservatively estimated at 2050 spaces. However, typical parking ratios are intended to document peak parking demand. To better understand the relationship between Hinsdale supply and non-peak demand (rather than peak demand), we should take the 2050 at seventy five percent (75%) to resemble typical parking demand and then subtract supply. The adjusted demand is therefore 1537 spaces. Hinsdale’s current supply is approximately 792 spaces. Using this conservative analysis, the downtown area is deficient by approximately 745 spaces.

Key Findings

A high percentage of respondents (75%) to the second survey believe the Village should create more parking in the downtown using tax dollars. Parking can be added by creating new spaces as described in Recommendation 1, and by using education, enforcement and efficiency measures outlined in this recommendation.

It is recommended by the group that the on street and off street spaces located closest to the downtown stores and businesses should be used by visitors conducting business. There should be adequate parking for downtown workers, but they can be located further away. Visitor parking should be concentrated south of the tracks. Commuter parking is and should remain north of the railroad tracks.

In the development of solutions and the management of the implementation process of the various parking solutions it must be understood that incremental change will occur, but the change should be met with reevaluation of the supply/demand characteristics. It may well be that the building with about 400 new vehicle spaces, additional enforcement and better permit management will provide the relief the downtown needs.

In each of the surveys, residents have spoken that they believe the Village should address parking deficiencies in the downtown area. These recommendations, compiled as recommendation number two, will subtly refine the parking program in downtown Hinsdale.

Recommendation

8-2a Permit Revisions – Merchant and Commuter: The Village should increase parking fees for commuters with permits

Definition: The Village will increase parking fees for commuters with permits by \$1 per day in January of 2007. In the fall of 2007, another dollar per day should be added to the commuter permit fee. Commuter fees should then be increased annually over the next three years so that the parking permit fee amount more closely resembles its value to the commuter.

Critical Success Factors: Ultimately, when a structure is imminent, the fee differential between the surface permit lots and the structure will be marginal and the public’s argument against a structure on ‘cost per day’ grounds will be de minimus. The Village will also see degradation of the commuter backlog as the parking cost increases.

Funding and Cost Considerations: All incremental fee increases should be earmarked to fund parking related improvements throughout the Village.

Implementation Considerations Today all downtown parking permits last six months. There should be a month duration merchant-parking permit to allow part time or seasonal workers an opportunity to buy a space. Many of these workers have low wages.

8-2b Establish a new ‘Shopper Only’ Zone

Definition: A downtown zone in which merchant permit holders cannot park

Critical Success Factors: In order to open for on street parking spaces for visitors, the Village should consider a downtown “Shopper Only” zone. In this concept, merchants will be required to register their employee vehicles with the Police Department. Penalties for avoidance of the vehicle registration program should be established or reinforced

Implementation Considerations: The zone could include the angled, two hours spaces on Washington between Hinsdale and First. The 30 minute spaces may be used for loading by nearby businesses.

8-2c Fines and Enforcement: Chronic abuse of the parking system should be dealt with through fines

Definition: As is in place now, a fine system that demonstrates lack of Village tolerance for parking violations and generates fees for the parking fund.

Critical Success Factors: Based upon past data, approximately fifteen percent (15%) of the cars parked in the metered spaces at any one time are merchant employees. They park in ‘shopper intended’ spaces for a variety of reasons not the least of which is the fact that there is a shortage of spaces in downtown Hinsdale.

Implementation Considerations: Some of the merchant employees regularly abuse the system and utilize spaces intended for residents and shoppers.

8-2d Ordinance and Policy Changes: The Village should establish a system to provide relief for shopper and resident who received a disputed parking fee for overtime use

Definition: A group that recommends fines for the first parking ticket in a calendar year be waived.

Critical Success Factors: First time visitors would learn about Hinsdale’s strict parking enforcement at no cost.

Implementation Considerations: Steps should be taken to eliminate violators who may try to take advantage of the system.

8-2e Public Relations and Communications: Earmark parking revenues

Definition: Special funds set aside for the use of future parking improvements

Critical Success Factors: Earmarking parking revenues will signal to the community that the Village is setting the stage for future improvements. Residents and merchants may feel more compelled to tolerate increased parking charges if they see their fees are being set aside for the solution which will provide dramatic relief to peak parking shortages.

Implementation Considerations: The Village should begin calling the *parking ticket* an *overtime parking fee* in order to play down the punitive nature of its use. It may take a couple of years for local criticism to die down on this change, but the positive effect on the out of town shopper will be immediate. The Village should communicate its intentions regarding parking policy to residents via Village Views and the website to keep them informed of policy and fee changes.

8-2f Commuter Shuttle: The Village should experiment with shuttles bringing commuters to stations from remote locations in the Village

Definition: A shuttle service that brings commuters from remote parking locations to the more congested station

Critical Success Factors: One suggested location for a remote lot is Veeck Park. In this scenario, waiting list residents are encouraged to drive to Veeck Park and take a shuttle to the Brush Hill station. The bus would depart for the train station from the lot seven minutes before each train. A second strategy suggested is that shuttle buses could run routes throughout the community picking up commuters on street corners throughout Hinsdale.

Implementation Considerations: Although this option is supported by forty two percent (42%) of the survey respondents, it is a concept worth considering. The first step is to poll those on the existing commuter waiting list to poll the level of interest and to gauge if a shuttle can be made revenue neutral.

8-2g Reassign Permit and Metered Spaces

Definition The permits for the westerly two rows of the south Washington Lot are relocated to the metered spaces on Second Street west of Washington Street. The meters should be moved to this part of the lot.

Critical Success Factors: This opens parking spaces for all downtown visitors and relocates permit holders to spaces not fully embraced by shoppers.



SEG 8 – Recommendation Number Three Highlands Station Structure

Background

The Highlands station is not used heavily by Hinsdale residents. Commuter Parking demand remains strong for downtown spots.

Key Findings

In each of the surveys, residents have spoken that they believe the Village should address parking deficiencies in the downtown area. These recommendations address commuter parking.

During SEG deliberations, it became apparent that the SEG felt that the Village should explore working with Metra to expand service at the Highlands station by moving some of the downtown trains to Highlands. Fully sixty three percent (63%) of survey respondents expressed approval to add commuter parking at the Highlands stop. It is understood by the SEG that Metra may not be interested, there may be switching issues and the station platform may have limitations.

If Metra is willing to work with the Village, perhaps a multilevel deck could be constructed in place of the Highlands surface lot. Also, existing Veeck Park spaces could be used to supplement the new spaces. Given grade issues and the generous setback from 47th, a multilevel deck could blend in well with the landscape and the backdrop of the elevated rail line.

Village Manager Dave Cook has been in contact with Metra and they are willing to discuss the issue although no commitments or significant negotiations have taken place.

Recommendation

8-3 Highlands Feasibility: The Village consider moving multiple trains to the Highlands station

Definition: The Village would work with Metra to determine the feasibility of moving trains to the Highlands station.

Implementation Considerations: If Metra is willing to consider relocation, the Village/Metra should conduct a study to determine improvement costs necessary to upgrade the Highlands station.