

## PROGRESSIVE PARKING POLICIES: A DIFFERENT LENS

Central Library – Third and E Streets

211 E St., Santa Rosa, California

February 24, 2010

The following are prominent themes from a lively meeting at which passionately held views were expressed by the participants. The design activity was postponed for the 3/10/10 meeting to allow a full airing of concerns and additional issues that needed to be factored into our thinking.

When asked to recap important elements from the 2/3/10 meeting the following was offered:

- Parking turnover rate is as important as a turnover rate in a restaurant.
- Parking division does not have an agenda; rather we're looking to design the best possible arrangement for downtown with the help of those affected (Cheryl).
- We are attempting to engage the downtown stakeholders by thinking together what it might look like to apply progressive parking policies downtown and how additional revenue generated might then be used for downtown improvements, promotions, whatever is a priority to those affected.

The discussion quickly moved into concerns expressed about doing the above design activity when the following issues must be acknowledged:

First, it's not clear to all attending what progressive parking is (*A 5 minute video was shown along with a recap of Shoup principles*).

The public expressed that the City is once again missing what public perception is. Businesses are doing what they can to change and attract people downtown, but economic viability must be the priority in this bad economy. Focusing once again on parking is a mistake, when we should concentrate on business stimulus, then parking will follow. What is more important, sales tax revenue or parking revenue?

Public perception is a reality. We can't ignore the fact that people have been ignoring downtown. Several participants mentioned fear of parking fines as a key deterrent to people venturing downtown. Others pointed out that fines result from not following the rules. Cheryl stressed that we are attempting to design policies that make fines less likely. Pay stations also reduce incidence of violations and

finer. Danielle, from Economic Development and Housing, agreed there is a perception problem and cited attempts to address it (outreach, promotions, park and shop) and felt the response from the community has been sincere and mostly positive.

Several felt that we should take a step back and consider whether applying Shoup principles to Downtown parking is appropriate for reasons that include:

- Scale (we are not urbanized so stories from other cities don't apply here, we are unique)
- Perception: parking is already such a deterrent to people coming Downtown that any additional changes to parking risks further eroding perception.
- Misplaced focus: don't continue to focus on parking when measures more critical to economic viability are needed. (*Staff pointed out that Shoup principles are meant to make parking an ASSET to support economic vitality and remove deterrents to shopping and other DT activities*)

**Related concerns/factors to consider included:**

Costs of operating a business downtown are already very high. Businesses cannot afford experimenting with more parking changes if it threatens their existence.

- Loss of downtown parking committee that provided a vehicle for stakeholder concerns and oversight of parking operations and revenue.
- Incomplete understanding of how parking revenue and parking district finances work, leading to inadequate transparency.
- Need to remember that downtown absorbs 4,000 employees each day with a big impact on parking.
- Parking policy has changed repeatedly (*need examples*).
- Somehow create the perception of "free parking" to create incentive to come downtown.
- Knowing that parking fine revenue goes to support the general fund, already severely stressed by other revenues falling.

## Suggestions:

- What people coming Downtown are seeking is convenience and safety. We need to create a mall-like experience. Improve facades, have people movers.
- Need people paying into the Parking District being in on the decision making. Revive the parking committee that will also create more understanding/transparency of parking finances.
- Research parking policies and success rates with other competitor and like-sized local cities.
- Resume progressive parking design activity next meeting 3/10 for those who are willing to explore the possibilities, knowing that Council hears what we have reached consensus on ( even if it's at the level of principle) and what we have not.

## Additional criteria to apply to design activity:

- Must contribute to positive "perception" of downtown experience
- Must be clearly understood by users and stakeholders
- Must be linked convincingly to increased economic activity

## Participants:

Henry	Aiker	Michael	Hymad
Brian	Anderson	Patrick	Imbimbo
Lynda	Angell	Bill	Klippert
Brant	Arthor	Michael	Martin
Scott	Barthen	Mike	Mathot
Jane	Bender	Ruben	Meza
Steve	Birdlebough	Mike	Montague
Marisa	Bjork	Danielle	O'leary
Wayne	Boyer	Anne	Oliver
Peter	Brown	Paul	Pedersen
Keven	Brown	David	Poulsen
Richard	Carlile	Willard	Richards
C.	Christensen	Nacny	Richards
Don	Cobb	Dee	Richardson
Ben	Cunningham	Renee	Riggs
Marlene	Dehlinger	Jayne	Sanders
Duane	Dewitt	R.	Schmitz
Marilyn	Foster	Nina	Tepedino
Tim	Hassler	Doug	VanDyke
Gillian	Hayes	Cheryl	Woodward