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Bend Citywide Parking Study
Sounding Board Interviews Summary
Fall 2017

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Prepared for the City of Bend

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Contents

Introduction	1
Methodology	1
Parking Conditions and Requirements: Key Themes	1
Residential Parking.....	1
Residential Areas Adjacent to Commercial Areas	2
Mutli-family and Accessory Dwelling Unit Parking	2
Restrictions on On-Street Residential Parking	3
Commercial Parking	3
National Commercial Tenants	3
Smaller Parking Minimums May Help Some Small Business	3
Infill and Redevelopment.....	4
Multiple Uses in Commercial Spaces	4
Industrial Parking.....	5
Parking Codes - Part of the Puzzle	5
Modes of Transportation	6
Parking Strategies for Consideration.....	7
Parking Districts	7
Residential Parking Districts	7
Commercial Parking Management Districts.....	8
On-Street Parking Prioritization	8
Eliminating Parking Minimums and Maximums	9
Other Considerations	9
Working with City of Bend.....	9
Communication	9
Conclusion	10
Attachment	i
Interview Protocol.....	i

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Introduction

The City of Bend is conducting a parking study to review parking conditions and needs citywide. Because of the diverse land uses and population densities that exist in Bend, the study team has conducted data collection and analysis on residential, commercial, and industrial parking areas across the city. The goal of the study is to better understand parking conditions and help Bend develop parking strategies and parking requirements that are “right-sized” for the community’s needs both now and in the future.

The Bend City Council asked City staff to conduct this study. The City contracted with Rick Williams Consulting (RWC), a parking management firm to assist the City. In addition to RWC, Kittelson & Associates, Inc., a transportation engineering firm, and Anne E. George Facilitation, Mediation + Public Involvement (AGFMPI), a local public engagement consultancy, are part of the project team. The study began in January 2017, and is scheduled to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Methodology

In an effort to seek community input on the Citywide Parking Study the project team conducted individual interviews with 10 representative stakeholders, who served as a sounding board for the study. Interviews were conducted in August and September 2017. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain sounding board members’ input on their experiences and ideas around current parking conditions and codes, as well as future community needs. Interviewees were selected for their diverse experiences and engagement in residential, commercial, and industrial land use and included developers, architects, neighborhood association representatives, commercial and industrial business owners and managers, transit experts, commercial brokers, and engineers. Interviews were conducted by Anne E. George, (AGFMPI), and Karen Swirsky, City of Bend. Interviews were held in-person or over the telephone.

Parking Conditions and Requirements: Key Themes

Interviewees were asked for their thoughts on current parking conditions and requirements, as well as their views on parking management tools. A number of themes were identified in the discussions.

Residential Parking

Interviewees generally said they felt parking in residential areas was right-sized, meaning parking for motor vehicles and other modes of transportation was neither too scarce nor excessive and that city parking requirements in residential areas were satisfactory, with a few exceptions.

Residential Areas Adjacent to Commercial Areas

Some interviewees said they had concerns about parking conditions in areas where a residential area was directly adjacent to a commercial district. In some of these areas, interviewees said, there seemed to be insufficient on-street parking on residential streets to accommodate both residential and commercial needs. Interviewees said the City should consider either providing additional off-street parking in commercial areas or require commercial establishments to provide more off-street parking to limit customer and employee parking on residential streets in these areas.

Multi-family and Accessory Dwelling Unit Parking

The vast majority of residential development in Bend is single-family housing. However, multi-family units are increasingly in demand in Bend due to rising housing costs. Some interviewees said they had concerns about parking requirements for multi-family housing units, as well as secondary structures called accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on residential lots.

Interviewees said the current off-street parking requirements for multi-family housing did not meet the needs of its residents and often resulted in residential streets becoming heavily parked. Interviewees said they felt narrow public streets with vehicles parked on both sides of the street often created unsafe conditions for pedestrians, limited the sight lines of drivers, and narrowed the driving lane with only one motor vehicle able to pass. As a result, some interviewees supported increasing the minimum off-street parking requirements for multi-family housing developments and ADUs to reduce the number of vehicles parked on-street at or near these locations.

In some areas multi-family development may occur adjacent to existing neighborhoods or commercial areas. In some cases, existing residents or commercial tenants have expressed concerns that a new multi-family housing development will negatively impact them by increasing demand for on-street parking in their area. When asked about development of multi-family housing in these areas some interviewees said they felt developers tried to be sensitive to the concerns of existing residents. Interviewees said that often developers would provide up to 150 percent of the parking requirement (as allowed by the City) in multi-family housing developments to address existing residents' concerns, despite the additional cost to the developer. Interviewees said they felt developers made this accommodation so their projects would not be delayed because of vocal opposition from nearby neighbors or businesses. Others said they felt developers simply built parking to the required parking amount regardless of community input.

However, some interviewees expressed concern that existing parking requirements for multi-family and ADU units already restricted the number of units a developer could build. They said multi-family and affordable housing was in high demand in Bend, but development was costly.

Because of high land and building costs, a developer will try to maximize the number of units she can build on a property while providing the required off-street vehicle parking and other requirements, such as green space or bicycle parking on the parcel. Thus, the number of off-street parking stalls required directly affects how many units can be built on a parcel. The number of units available for rent also directly affects the rental rates of units on a parcel, interviewees said. Some said that the lack of affordable or work force housing in Bend was so great that the City should consider reducing the minimum off-street parking requirement for such developments or allow more on-street parking to be counted toward the parking minimums, or both, in order to make these developments economically viable.

Restrictions on On-Street Residential Parking

Some interviewees commented that Home Owners Associations (HOAs) or neighborhood Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions (CC&Rs) might unnecessarily restrict the on-street parking supply in residential areas. These interviewees said they felt HOA or CC&R rules left residents and visitors unable to utilize available on-street parking, and did not account for the needs of different residents, including families with a third vehicle for an older child or relative, overnight visitors, or multi-family units.

Commercial Parking

Interviewees had mixed responses on the commercial parking requirements in Bend. Some interviewees said they felt parking requirements did not meet current needs and that some commercial areas were under parked, while others said they felt the requirements matched current needs and conditions.

National Commercial Tenants

Commercial tenants, particularly larger national or regional chains, and institutional investors often require a substantially higher number of off-street parking stalls at a location than is required by city code. Some interviewees said that in larger commercial developments parking minimums were virtually unnecessary because developers needed to maximize the amount of off-street parking they could develop on a parcel to attract these tenants. Interviewees said that commercial developers and brokers would often forgo building larger buildings so they could develop off-street parking that would meet the demands of these potential tenants and investors. One interviewee said that parking, accessibility, and signage were often more important to a developer than maximizing the square footage of the building space they would lease because of tenant and other demands.

Smaller Parking Minimums May Help Some Small Business

However, interviewees said that commercial developments with relatively smaller off-street parking areas would often attract small or emerging businesses because of their comparatively

lower lease costs. While large, national or regional tenants might require off-street parking substantially above the minimum commercial parking requirements in Bend, small businesses or emerging enterprises may be more flexible and accepting of more limited off-street parking availability, interviewees said. Other tenants may simply have lower parking demands because of the nature of their businesses. Some interviewees said that commercial developments or redevelopments that allowed investors to maximize the building square footage on a parcel over creating off-street parking could result in investors able to put more tenants on a location, and in turn make a smaller parcel more profitable and still attractive to some small businesses.

Infill and Redevelopment

Infill development and redevelopment introduces other challenges to right-sizing parking in Bend. Some interviewees said that it would be difficult for Bend to have more neighborhood mixed use areas with restaurants and retail a walkable distance to neighborhoods because current parking code requirements mandate off-street parking and other access requirements that cannot be accommodated on existing smaller parcels.

However, some interviewees said they felt the City should require additional off-street parking in commercial areas adjacent to residential areas. Noting the Galveston Avenue Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods, some interviewees said they felt the City needed to do more to manage the parking system in the area, with some stakeholders saying they felt the City or local businesses should be required to build more off-street parking to accommodate commercial parking needs there. Others said they felt some areas in the central core of the city could be integrated more smoothly without the need for increased off-street parking through the use of buffering and other tools.

Multiple Uses in Commercial Spaces

Commercial areas accommodate multiple types of users with varying parking needs. A medical office building with multiple practitioners in a commercial area may have higher parking demands than that of a small engineering firm or retail store. Interviewees suggested the City consider whether there should be more categories of commercial uses and accompanying parking requirements. Some said they felt a number of commercial buildings with multiple tenants have resulted in substantial on-street parking demands for customers and employees. For some, interviewees said, the existing commercial on-street parking demand can be substantial enough in some areas that undeveloped parcels nearby or adjacent to an existing commercial development may not be attractive to developers or potential tenants.

However, others said that additional categories of uses in commercial areas were not needed because developers and brokers better understood how to attract and retain tenants, and it was in their interest to do so. Additionally, uses change over time in commercial areas and requiring additional parking requirements to accommodate for a specific commercial user could result in

both raising development costs and requiring off-street parking that would not be needed by most commercial users over time. Others said commercial developers should simply be allowed to build the amount of parking they feel is necessary to support their investments.

Some interviewees said they felt addressing building requirements that affected the location of parking were more important to address than commercial parking minimums. For example, building setback requirements in Bend that required new commercial buildings to locate parking behind a building was a concern for some interviewees. These interviewees said tenants were less likely to lease a building where off-street parking was not immediately visible to potential customers from the front of a building.

Industrial Parking

A number of interviewees said they were concerned with the availability of industrial land and facilities in Bend. Interviewees said that parking minimum requirements, and other City requirements, restricted the size of buildings on industrial land, contributing to the limited supply of industrial space in the city. However, interviewees also said they were concerned that industrial areas sometimes lacked sufficient parking for employees, customers, and in some cases forklifts and semi-trucks.

In addition, right-sizing parking in industrial areas is complicated by the many uses permitted in industrial zones. Entities such as workout facilities or dog training centers, allowed in industrial areas, might require substantial customer parking, while a manufacturing company may only have a few employees with two or three delivery trucks. Interviewees said that tenants changed over time in industrial buildings and as a result so did parking needs. As such, some interviewees said they felt developers in industrial lands were able to best understand the market needs and additional parking requirements would only limit any new industrial development.

Parking Codes - Part of the Puzzle

As the City considers parking codes and requirements some interviewees suggested policy makers consider the full suite of code and rule requirements in residential, commercial, and industrial development that require a developer or architect to dedicate a percentage of a parcel to uses other than the square footage of a building. Requirements such as setbacks, swales, parking stalls, green spaces, walkways, and other items may result in a building that covers less than a third of the total land parcel. These requirements add up, interviewees said, and may not achieve the goals the City set in introducing them. For example, a developer may be required to build a set of covered bicycle parking areas in a multi-family residential development. These covered bicycle areas, by regulation must also be spaced a specific distance apart and thus take up additional land square footage than one large covered bicycle area, but the rules require spacing between the areas.

Others, believe these requirements contribute to a more aesthetically pleasing Bend that financially benefits developers and land owners in the long run, as they will be able to sell or lease their properties at a higher cost because of the pleasant aesthetics in Bend. These interviewees said that efforts to reduce these types of requirements would lessen the livability of Bend.

Still some interviewees suggested the City needed to consider the specifics of a parcel and be open to adjusting requirements if the changes provided benefits. For example, a developer may be required to provide a specific amount of green or open space at a multi-unit apartment development. The developer will want to maximize the number of units she can have on her parcel of land while accommodating for parking and other development requirements. Because the City may require the total green space on the development to be in one large aggregated area rather than a set of small green areas around the property, in this example, the developer may feel she has little choice on how to provide the green space on the property. While the developer would have liked to provide a grassy buffer area between the parking lot and each apartment's balcony or porch, the developer instead chooses to put the parking immediately adjacent to the apartments to meet the City requirement, despite her feeling that residents would prefer a grassy buffer between the parking stalls and their front porches. While the City's goal to have a green or open space on a multi-unit residential area may be a positive, the developer may feel the way the code is written is too restrictive and results in a negative for her tenants.

Modes of Transportation

Some interviewees said City parking requirements and planning are too focused on accommodating personal vehicles at the expense of other modes of transportation. Interviewees said that policy makers and staff should consider and plan for the full gamut of transportation options when considering parking in the city. Creating a system that prioritizes and accommodates personal motor vehicles, over transit users, pedestrians, and cyclists results in a city that is scaled predominantly for the motor vehicle driver, some said. For example, if the distance a user must travel from a transit stop to the front door of a business matches the distance a motor vehicle user must move from his automobile to the front door of the same business, then all modes are given equal access and priority.

However, others said they felt the City showed a bias against personal motor vehicle use. These interviewees said they felt the City, through code and regulation changes, was trying to make it more difficult for users to find motor vehicle parking in residential and commercial areas in an effort to disincentivize driving. Interviewees said because of weather conditions in the winter and other factors people would continue to rely on personal vehicles for transportation and the city would need to accommodate these vehicles.

Other said they felt it was important for the City to plan for a multitude of transportation forms as the city continues to grow. And some interviewees said it was not realistic for people to expect free and available parking within a few steps of their destinations. If Bend continues to grow, some interviewees said, infrastructure would not likely be able to meet demands and Bend would experience highly congested roads and parking areas, if personal vehicles continue to be prioritized in policy and regulation.

Parking Strategies for Consideration

Parking Districts

Residential Parking Districts

A residential parking districts creates a managed parking area in a residential setting. Traditionally in these types of districts residents receive or apply for unrestricted parking permits for on-street vehicle parking in the district, while commuters or other visitors are subject to signed time limitations on identified streets. To qualify to create a district residents or others in a potential parking district area would need to demonstrate the need, based on a set of guidelines or policies developed by the City.

Interviewees were generally supportive of the notion of residential parking districts where residential areas are located near or adjacent to commercial areas. One participant said that while it may not be a perfect solution for some, a parking district would provide a framework for managing parking outside of the downtown core. Most interviewed said they did not feel residents should have to pay a fee for a residential parking permit in their neighborhood, indicating they did not think it was fair to have residents pay for the impacts commercial businesses were having on residential streets. However, some participants said they felt a residential parking district would put too high a burden on residents who would presumably have to go through a set of steps to acquire a residential parking permit(s).

For those supportive of the concept it was also important that efforts be made to accommodate commercial parking in areas that abutted residential areas where residential parking districts might be implemented. Some said they felt plans for commercial parking, such as a commercial parking management district for example, should be created in tandem with a residential parking district to accommodate a variety of parking needs in such areas.

In setting the guidelines for a parking district it is common for policy makers to require a minimum parking district size, for example an eight- or ten-block area that is identified to have limited on-street parking availability on public residential streets. However, some interviewees cautioned against making the district size too large or strict in Bend, citing the area around the Oregon State University-Cascades campus as an example. Those interviewees said they felt

that area would benefit from a managed system of on-street parking, though it may not meet the size threshold in some cities. Those interviewed said while the university was working toward limiting vehicle trips to its campus, easy and accessible on-street parking that is not time limited and located immediately adjacent to their campus made it difficult for the university to encourage students, faculty, and visitors to use alternative modes of transportation to reach campus.

Commercial Parking Management Districts

Interviewees were curious about the concept of commercial parking management districts, particularly in commercial areas that abutted residential neighborhoods. Commercial parking management districts could be used alone or in tandem with residential parking districts as a means for the City and stakeholders to provide formal management of parking areas to support economic vitality and quality of life, optimize existing parking supplies, and complement transportation demand management goals. Currently, the only parking management district in effect in Bend is in the downtown.

Some interviewees said they felt commercial parking districts might contribute to the success of areas by providing a managed parking experience for users, in particular areas immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods to ensure that different users were considered and accommodated in an area. In some areas businesses already organize as associations to pool resources and plan for items such as snow and garbage removal, as well as beautification efforts. These same associations, some interviewees said, could be tapped to manage a commercial parking district that utilized shared parking opportunities to accommodate employees and customers.

While interviewees said they were amenable to the concept, they did say they would want more information on potential benefits as well as management methods.

On-Street Parking Prioritization

Interviewees were asked if they thought on-street parking should be prioritized for a specific use, for example for residents on a residential street or customers in a commercial area. Responses were mixed. Some interviewees said they felt on-street parking stalls on public streets should be available to any member of the public and not prioritized for a specific use. Others said they could see value in prioritizing on-street parking for residents in a neighborhood that might be impacted by nearby commercial areas and thus limit conflict between residents and commercial owners. While some interviewees said it could be important to accommodate customers in or near commercial areas on public residential streets to support businesses and the local economy.

Eliminating Parking Minimums and Maximums

Interviewees were asked if they had an opinion on a concept to eliminate minimum and maximum parking occupancy requirements in residential, commercial, and industrial areas. In such a scenario the City would establish a parking requirement for a building or area by particular use (restaurant, retail, single-family home, multi-family housing, industrial, etc.), rather than a minimum and maximum parking requirement range by building by use. Developers would have the option of applying to reduce the number of parking stalls they provide at a location if they make accommodations for other transportation uses. Developers would also have the option of applying for permission to build a larger number of parking stalls than required at a location, but would need to pay a fee to the City to do so.

Interviewees were, again curious, about the concept, but said they would need to think more about the concept before they could fully comment. However, initial reactions were still mixed. Some participants said they felt the option might simplify the code requirements, while still allowing for different needs at a location. Others said they thought a fee to allow increased parking stalls at a location above the parking requirement might be acceptable to some developers, but for others the costs may be too high. Others said they were concerned because they felt commercial parking requirements were already too low and that developers generally built to the minimum required, and as a result, areas had insufficient parking supplies.

Other Considerations

Working with City of Bend

Some interviewees said they felt the process of working with the City on a development was simple and City code and requirements were easy to understand. Others said they felt some City staff could be better informed so as to provide more complete information during initial or preliminary planning meetings with developers or architects. Some interviewees said they felt City staff would often identify issues that needed to be addressed late in a process when construction or other efforts had already begun, making changes costly. Others said they felt City staff might, perhaps inadvertently, come across as negative toward development or eager to catch code infractions or mistakes made in the planning of a development.

Communication

Some interviewees said they felt the community and City would benefit from more proactive outreach from the City. These interviewees said they thought a high percentage of planning applications were probably filed by a small group of developers, brokers, or architects. Possible City changes to codes or regulations could be “ground-truthed,” they suggested, with regular builders or developers. These efforts might help the City better understand whether a new or existing rule or regulation is helping the City meet its objective before changes are made.

In addition, interviewees said that while neighborhood associations members might not take positions on parking or other regulations, it would be beneficial to include the associations in discussions when a regulation or code is being considered or a land use change is imminent in their area.

Conclusion

Interviewees were generally pleased that the City was undertaking this study and that the City was welcoming input. Interviewees also appreciated that the study would collect and utilize new and current data. The study will result in an evaluation of the existing parking conditions in residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and will conclude with the results of the analysis and a possible framework for parking policies for the City and community later this year.

Attachment

Interview Protocol

City of Bend Citywide Parking Study

Sounding Board Interview Questions

Sounding Board Interviews

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. While I have a set of questions I would like to ask you, the interviews are designed to be a conversation.

The City Council asked staff to study parking citywide. The City contracted with Rick Williams Consulting (RWC), a parking management firm, Kittelson & Associates, Inc., a transportation engineering firm, and Anne E. George Facilitation, Mediation + Public Involvement to conduct an analysis of the parking conditions in the study area.

A brief written summary will be created based on these interview discussions and will highlight the major themes shared by interviewees. Your comments will not be attributed to you. You may also ask the interviewer to keep something you said confidential; if you do so it will not be mentioned in the summary. The summary will help focus the project team in the study.

Thank you!

Commercial Parking

1. What should the City consider when planning for parking in commercial areas of Bend?
2. Commercial parking districts – proposed management objectives: *What are your thoughts about the proposed management objectives listed below - is anything missing, not needed, could be changed?*

The on-street parking system in commercial districts is managed to:

- *Support the economic vitality of the district by encouraging parking turnover,*
- *Improve circulation,*
- *Encourage the use of off-street parking,*
- *Minimize vehicle miles travelled,*
- *Promote the use of alternative modes by managing the supply, use and price of on-street parking, and*

- Give priority to short-term parking, followed by carpools, with the remaining supply for long-term use.
3. Commercial parking districts – proposed parking objectives: *What are your thoughts about the proposed objectives below - is anything missing, not needed, could be changed?*

The management of on-street parking in commercial areas will:

- Support the economic vitality of the area.
- Be strategic, calibrated to the unique development and access characteristics of an area and consistent with the development vision for the area.
- Efficiently use existing supplies of parking.
- Complement public and private efforts to increase the overall capacity for trips into an area by the provision and promotion of multiple mode options (i.e., transit, rideshare, bicycling and walking – TDM).
- Minimize the impacts of commercial activity in areas adjacent to residential areas.
- Minimize conflicts between users by directing (incenting) users to the right stall or mode.
- Create regulation and enforcement that is consistent with the available supply of on-street parking, the need for parking and the availability of alternative modes.
- Cover the on-going maintenance and operating costs of the parking district, recognizing that some start-up costs may need to be covered by other sources.

Residential Parking

4. What is important to you around parking in residential areas in Bend?
5. What should the City consider when planning for parking in residential areas?
6. How do you feel about the statement? “On-street parking on public streets in areas zoned and built as residential should be primarily for residential purposes.” Is there anything the City should consider in an area comprising a mix of residential and commercial properties?
7. Often when a residential parking district is created the momentum for the creation of a district originates with the residential neighborhood. Do you think Bend neighborhoods would be open to the creation of residential parking districts – parking by permit areas?
8. Residential Parking Permit Zones may need a source of revenue in order to be properly managed (i.e. signage, enforcement). Revenue can be raised through a permit fee sufficient to cover these costs. How do you feel about that?

Additional Questions

9. Should on-street parking be managed to prioritize it for a certain type of user in a commercial, residential, or mixed-use area?
10. The City wants to aim to establish parking requirements for developers that are the “right size” for the projects. The City has mechanisms to allow projects to reduce the amount of parking needed to below the required amount. Should the City also have ways to allow a developer/owner to provide more than the required amount of parking?
11. Are there other considerations regarding City parking requirements you want the study team to review?

12. Is there anyone else we should be speaking to about this study?
13. Do you have any questions or additional comments?

Thank you!

For more information please see the City of Bend website: <http://bendoregon.gov/parkingstudy>.
Please click on "[CITYWIDE TECHNICAL REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT](#)" on the home page.