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MEMORANDUM

TO: Dana Brown, City of Tacoma

FROM: Rick Williams, RWC

DATE: March 14, 2013 [2]

RE: **Technical Memorandum: Framework for a Residential Parking Permit Program**

I. BACKGROUND

The City of Tacoma is interested in learning more about Residential and/or Neighborhood Parking Permit Programs (RPP or NPP). As the downtown redevelops and grows, there is concern that constraints in the downtown supply of parking will lead to spillover of parking into residential areas abutting the downtown; particularly downtown employees who would park and leave their car in a neighborhood all day. This could lead to congestion and parking constraints in the residential area; creating a conflict between residents and employees. This may also become an issue in other areas of Tacoma, where commercial business districts abut neighborhoods.

This memorandum is intended to define RPP and NPP programs for Tacoma and explore options and opportunities that could be implemented to prevent and/or mitigate spillover issues that could occur in the future.

II. WHAT IS A RESIDENTIAL/NEIGHBORHOOD PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM?

One dynamic of growing downtowns or business districts are the impact such growth can have on neighborhood residential areas that abut these commercial districts. Residential parking permit programs were first created in response to the recognition that traffic generation resulting from growth in adjacent commercial business districts caused high levels of parking congestion associated with commuters or visitors who would spillover into residential enclaves as a result of parking constraints within the business district or as means to escape parking pricing.

Residential and neighborhood parking permit programs are intended to ensure that on-street parking spaces remain available for local residents within a specific "permit district boundary" and may restrict parking for visitors, employees or "non-residents" during certain or all hours of the day and night. The programs generally contain standard elements and are "hunting licenses" that aid, but do not guarantee, finding street parking for residents. In other words, residential permits do not guarantee an

on-street space in front of a specific residential address, but the entitlement to park within the permit district boundary.

Some cities limit/restrict the number of permits by address and/or whether the residential address has parking of its own (a driveway or garage) or a parking lot (in the case of multifamily residential). Most sell (or allot) daily guest permits, or graduate the cost of permits by number requested. Prices could also be tied to actual local supply or utilization.

In short, residential/neighborhood permit programs have proven effective in mitigating spillover and managing who uses parking in a specific area (i.e., “getting the right person in the right space.”).

III. CURRENT PRACTICES IN SAMPLE CITIES

The consultant conducted an environmental scan of eleven cities with residential/neighborhood permit programs.¹ Cities examined included Corvallis, Hood River and Portland, OR as well as Aspen, CO, Boise, ID and Vancouver, WA. The following key themes emerge from the scans that are common to most programs:

1. The residential program limits permits to areas that are zoned residential and are subject to on-street parking space competition from non-resident commuters (employees) or visitors to adjacent area attractions; parking generators like adjacent commercial business/retail districts, hospitals or universities.
2. Most of the permit programs have minimum size or number of block faces required for consideration. In other words, the programs create a permit *district* rather than a block by block system of management.
3. None reserve specific parking spaces for specific residences, while some require that a vehicle be parked within a specific number of blocks of the registered address.
4. The majority of cities scanned require a resident petition process and Council concurrence. Some require occupancy data and parking surveys/studies to initiate.
5. The majority charge an annual fee for the permits (usually established at a level of City cost recovery).
6. The majority limit the number of permits per residence.
7. Enforcement is generally by complaint and random patrols combined with signage.



¹ Cities surveyed were Aspen, Boulder and Denver, CO, Boise, ID, Corvallis, Hood River, and Portland, OR, Sacramento, CA, Kirkland, Seattle and Vancouver, WA.

IV. OUTLINE OF COMPARABLE CITIES²

The scan of cities included both large and small jurisdictions, though the program parameters of the cities did not change markedly due to the size of the city. Find below a summary of five of the cities sampled. These “comparables” are presented to give Tacoma a sense of how such a program could be established.

A. Boise, Idaho

Purpose of Residential Parking Permit (RPP) Program: The Boise program is established as part of the City Code. The program is “designated for those residential areas with a high percentage of “all day non-resident parkers”.

Zoning Limitations Associated with RPP Zone Areas: Limited to areas zoned residential.

Process to Establish or Modify an RPP Area: Boise requires a neighborhood petition process to initiate a request to form or modify a RPP area. Once the boundaries and parking control recommendations of the zone are established by the Public Works Department, City Council approval is necessary to create the zone.

Eligibility and Limitations associated with RPP Areas: Currently there are no established limits on the number of permits issued per residential address. The City ordinance governing the program reserves the authority for Council to establish limits in the future. A permitted vehicle must park within two blocks of the registered address.

Permit Cost: Permits are issued free of charge, with proof of identity, residential address and vehicle registration.

B. Boulder, Colorado

Purpose of RPP Program: In Boulder, an RPP is known as a Neighborhood Permit Parking Program (NPP). A NPP is a residential area where parking is restricted. It is a tool developed to balance the needs of all who park on Boulder streets, including residents, commuters and visitors. The plan was adopted as part of the City of Boulder Transportation Master Plan.

Zoning Limitations Associated with RPP Areas: Limited to residential areas.

² Special thanks to William Timmer, Bluewater Project Management Services, LLC who has done extensive research on residential and neighborhood parking permit programs. This section is extensively informed by Mr. Timmer’s work.

Process to Establish or Modify an RPP Area: The process to start the establishment or modification of an RPP area requires a neighborhood petition from at least 25 residents. Following receipt of the petition, the City conducts a parking survey, develops a draft proposal with proposed boundaries and recommended parking restrictions. These recommendations include time limit restrictions for non-permit vehicles as well as hours of permit enforcement.

A neighborhood meeting is conducted to review and modify the draft proposal. This is followed by a Public Hearing before the Boulder Transportation Advisory Board. The Board recommendations and hearing comments are forwarded to the City Manager for the final zone creation decision.

Eligibility and Limitations associated with RPP Areas: Boulder issues up to 2 permits per residence plus two free guest passes. Businesses located in NPP Zones may purchase up to 3 employee parking passes. Only one of the zones permits purchase of a limited number of commuter parking passes. Permit parking is limited to the zone of issue.

Permit Cost: Residential passes cost \$17 per pass per year. Business employee passes cost \$75 per pass per year. Limited commuter passes cost \$78 per quarter.

C. Corvallis, OR

Purpose of RPP Program: It is a tool developed to manage the priority for parking on residential streets to ensure on-going access for residents of an area and their guests.

Zoning Limitations Associated with RPP Areas: Limited to residential areas.

Process to Establish or Modify an RPP Area: There are already three residential parking districts in Corvallis and the consultant could not find additional information on how new districts are established. As currently formatted, there are signs in each block indicating district "A", "B", or "C". The district establishes a zone where nonresidents are restricted in the amount of time they can park on the street. The time limit for parking in these districts without a permit is a maximum of two hours, one time per day. This is detailed in Corvallis' Municipal Code 6.15: Residential Parking Permit Districts.



Eligibility and Limitations associated with RPP Areas: Each resident address is allowed a maximum of three permits. Permits issued for one district are not valid in the other two. For example, District A permits are not valid in either District B or C.

Permit Cost: Permits are \$15 each and are valid for one year, from September 1st through August 31st. New permits must be purchased each year. Daily Temporary Parking permits are available for guests visiting residences in any of the districts for more than two hours.

D. Portland, Oregon

Purpose of RPP Program: The purpose of the Portland RPP program is to limit non-resident parking in high parking occupancy residential neighborhoods adjacent to parking generators (e.g., business district, institution, hospital, etc.).

Zoning Limitations Associated with RPP Zone Areas: Limited to residential areas.

Process to Establish or Modify an RPP Permit Area: Portland has strict occupancy data-based criteria for establishing an RPP area. To start the process, a local neighborhood group, representing a minimum area for 40 block-faces or 8,000 linear feet of curb, needs to attest that peak parking occupancy exceeds 75% for at least 4 days per week, 9 months of the year. Additionally, 25% of the parked vehicles must be from outside of the proposed zone area.

Once City staff verifies the parking conditions, and the boundaries and parking controls are identified, approval of the formal RPP requires a resident petition process, a formal public meeting process and a resident vote with at least 60% approval. With successful neighborhood support, Council approval is needed to officially approve the zone.

Eligibility and Limitations associated with RPP Areas: There are currently no limits on the number of permits issued to a specific residential address. Permit parking is limited to the zone of issue.

Permit Cost: The annual permit fees are set as a function of the annual City budget process, with the objective to be cost neutral. The current fee is \$67.50 per year. Guest pass “booklets” can be purchased, with 10 Guest Passes per booklet.

E. Hood River, OR

Purpose of RPP Program: The purpose of the Hood River RPP program is to limit non-resident parking in high parking occupancy residential neighborhoods adjacent to parking generators.

Zoning Limitations Associated with RPP Zone Areas: All of the property in the proposed district is zoned R-1, R-2, or R-3.

Process to Establish or Modify an RPP Area: During the proposed hours of restricted parking, the number of vehicles of *non-residents parked legally or illegally* on a street in the district is equal to thirty percent (30%) or more of the legal on-street parking capacity of the street. The percentage of non-residential parking is determined by averaging the results of at least two surveys conducted on different

days and at different times of the day but within the hours of restricted parking. The district boundary and the survey may be established and conducted by the proponents of the district, or by a person designated by the City Manager. The ultimate boundary is determined by the City Manager and City Council.

Once the survey is completed, the City Council holds a public hearing on any proposed designation, revision, or repeal of a residential parking district. The public hearing will be held only after the City Manager has determined that the proposed district could satisfy the criteria for designation and notice has been sent to the residents in the proposed district and within one hundred feet (100 ft.) of the proposed district. Once the district is approved, the City Manager is responsible for administration of the district and permits.

Eligibility and Limitations associated with RPP Areas: Residential parking district permits are only issued to residents of the parking district. Each valid “dwelling unit” in the parking district is eligible up to 2 permits. In addition, each dwell unit receives 2 short-term visitor passes. Also, the applicant must demonstrate that there is little or no off-street parking and/or is unable to develop the property to provide for legal off-street parking.

Permit Cost: The annual permit fees are set as a function of the annual City budget process.

V. APPLICABILITY TO TACOMA

The issue of commercial parking spillover into residential neighborhoods is both an issue of access/congestion and livability. It is prudent for Tacoma to, at minimum, develop a policy and process for establishing residential parking permit programs in Tacoma. With a policy “on the books” residents are given the opportunity to work with the City to initiate a program to respond to their perception of need. Also, to develop a policy and process now places the City in the position of not “forcing” a program on residents, rather residents are asking the City to increase parking management in their neighborhood. To get a policy and process in place ahead of anticipated downtown growth is strategic and sends a message that the City will be responsive rather than reactive to the potential impacts of development in the downtown.

Based on review of other cities, the following are recommend for development in Tacoma.

- a. Establish a policy goal that clarifies the purpose intent and priority for parking in areas zoned residential and adjacent to the downtown commercial business district. The priority for parking in these areas should be for residents and their guests. Other uses are viewed as secondary priorities and are to be discouraged, especially if they create constraints that would limit access to parking by residents and their guests.
- b. Attempting to numerically define “constraint” (as do Boulder and Hood River) may place an undue burden on a residential community or city to fund a study. Cities like Boise, Corvallis and

Portland base the determination for measuring the severity of the parking problem on a residential petition. In other words, if parking access is enough of an issue for residents, then the act of conducting a successful petition (under defined criteria) is enough to substantiate the need for a program.

- c. Establish criteria for a petition process. This could include:
 - Minimum boundary requirement (e.g., 20 block faces or 4,000 linear feet). It is important to ensure that an RPP is viewed as a “district” program and not micro management of individual residential block faces.
 - Percentage in favor (e.g., 51% of all residential addresses in the “district” petition in favor of the district.
- d. Establish a cost (or not). Most cities assess an annual fee that is based on City cost recovery. Of the cities surveyed only Boise, Sacramento and Vancouver provided their programs free of charge. This may be due to the fact that the adjacent commercial districts have paid parking (i.e., parking meters) and the cost of the residential program is absorbed within the paid parking program.

Given that the process to establish an RPP district would be by petition (i.e., residents asking for a program) it would be reasonable to assume that a cost recovery fee to cover City processing and management would be acceptable.
- e. Eligibility. The City should determine whether residents in an approved district that have off-site parking should be (1) allowed a permit or (2) pay a higher permit fee.
- f. Management and enforcement. Most cities manage their programs by requiring the display of valid permits and signage that limits/restricts use by non-residents combined with fairly stiff fees for violation. This allows for enforcement to be (1) by complaint, (2) random or infrequent and (3) low cost. This seems to be the model in most cities evaluated and input from residents (as to effectiveness in controlling spillover) is positive.

VI. SUMMARY

A residential parking permit policy and process is a useful strategy for a City to have within its parking management tool box. A program that is “resident driven” and district based puts the City and City Council in a position to respond to a neighborhood request in a proactive and responsive manner. Creating a policy and process in advance of new development in the commercial district is also strategic and will reduce time and costs in the long run.