

TRANSPORTATION

MOTION PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

The Atwater Village area of Los Angeles is an older community with pedestrian - scaled commercial businesses located along Glendale Boulevard. These businesses are often located in buildings that were built before the establishment of current City parking requirements. Efforts to retain and enhance the pedestrian oriented character of the commercial area has been difficult, in part because small businesses on typical parcels often find it difficult or impossible to meet current parking requirements, which are applied site-by-site and project-by-project, without variances and other discretionary actions outside the purview of local planning.

In order to attract the types of businesses desired by the Atwater Village business and residential communities that also retain and enhance the pedestrian-oriented character of the commercial area, the City should explore the possibility of implementing a Community Parking Project that will plan for parking on a neighborhood-wide level. The pilot project should be designed to create an alternative means of providing parking for commercial and mixed use projects in the Atwater Village Pedestrian Oriented District Area, to preserve and enhance the pedestrian character of the District's commercial streets, and to protect the character of the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council direct the Department of Transportation, in coordination with the Department of City Planning, to develop a Community Parking Project consistent with the Atwater Village Pedestrian Oriented District that will provide parking options to enhance the pedestrian-oriented businesses and projects seeking to locate in that area.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council direct the Department of Transportation and the Department of City Planning to utilize the attached parking utilization study in drafting the necessary amendments to the Atwater Village Pedestrian Oriented District.

Presented by: E. Garcetti

Eric Garcetti
Councilmember, 13th District

Seconded by: E. P. Reyes

January 6, 2009

EG

09-0035

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Civic Enterprise Associates LLC

January 2, 2009

The Honorable Eric Garcetti
President, Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring Street, Room 470
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Atwater Village Zoning Parking Credit Program

Dear Councilman Garcetti:

Attached please find a summary of our recommendation to create a Zoning Parking Credit program in Atwater Village. The program we recommend is modeled both on a pilot program already in place in Eagle Rock and on a longer-established program in Pasadena, both of which have been credited with improving neighborhood parking management and reducing costs and uncertainty for small businesses seeking entitlements.

The Atwater Village Neighborhood Council (AVNC) retained Civic Enterprise Associates LLC (CEA) to explore the potential of a Zoning Parking Credit program to advance economic development in the Pedestrian Oriented District along Glendale Boulevard between the Los Angeles River and the Los Angeles-Glendale border (the Plan Area), which spans approximately 0.65 miles. The AVNC and other community stakeholders expressed two broad objectives: (1) to see more vacant storefronts enlivened with pedestrian-oriented commercial uses (notably restaurants) and (2) to better manage parking in the area on a comprehensive, rather than case-by-case, basis.

We understand there has been increasing interest in recent years among property owners, business owners and community members to see more restaurants and other pedestrian-oriented uses locate in the Plan Area, which is characterized by diverse ownership, typical parcels of less than 10,000 sq. ft., and older buildings with little or no onsite parking. As with many similar areas of the City, actual investment is limited, by the City's onerous process for change-of-use applications.

In short, when a property or business owner applies for a change-of-use permit (transitioning, say, from retail to restaurant use), or seeks to make a substantial change to an existing property or use, the City requires onsite parking at the rate of four spaces per thousand square feet of retail and ten spaces per thousand square feet of restaurant. Many applicants find these requirements difficult or impossible to fulfill, however, given the constraints of the standard commercial parcel size in the area, the large number of existing structures with little or no onsite parking, and the desire to limit disruption of the area's pedestrian-oriented character with additional curb-cuts, driveways or strip-mall-style parking in front of stores.

As a result, many applicants face the unenviable choice of pursuing costly and risky discretionary actions (such as zone variances) on the one hand or not pursuing their projects at all on the other. And when they do pursue discretionary actions, the City, ironically, must often stray from plan specifics (i.e., onsite parking requirements) in order to fulfill broader planning objectives (i.e., maintaining a lively, viable pedestrian environment). This reliance on discretionary actions creates an open-endedness to our planning process that could be seen as making our plans less relevant than would be the case if they provided for by-right approvals of desired projects.

The Zoning Parking Credit program would address simultaneously both of the AVNC's objectives described above: (1) it would encourage economic development by reducing the costs, risks and time associated with opening a business with a new use in the Plan Area and (2) it would empower our City plans

to better regulate growth by providing a by-right mechanism to approve desired projects that are consistent with the plan rather than requiring them to move outside the plan and into a discretionary process.

Specifically, the Zoning Parking Credit program we recommend will establish a finite number of Zoning Parking Credits (based on a survey conducted to L.A. Department of Transportation specifications) that applicants can lease to satisfy parking requirements for new or modified uses; it will allow that credit pool to be expanded if a City-approved means of increasing the actual parking capacity of the neighborhood is implemented (such as building new facilities or providing a neighborhood valet); and it will provide small businesses and property owners with an affordable, predictable means of securing approvals for projects that enhance the pedestrian-oriented character of the neighborhood. Importantly, it will also provide planners with a tool to move from ad hoc, project-by-project management of parking issues to comprehensive management that treats the neighborhood as a whole.

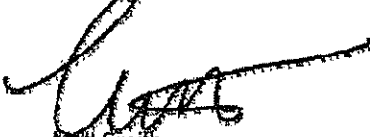
We conducted the parking utilization survey to establish the initial number of available Zoning Parking Credits on Saturday, June 7, 2008 from 10 am to midnight, and Tuesday, June 10, 2008, from 8 am to 10 pm. Each hour, we surveyed each on-street parking space adjacent to commercially-zoned lots, as well as two nearby City-owned lots, and we recorded whether or not the parking space was occupied. The results of the survey are summarized in Attachment 2. In brief, occupancy during weekday daytime and evening hours was approximately 50 percent. On weekends, daytime occupancy was approximately 50 percent and evening occupancy was less than 40 percent.

LADOT has suggested that the ideal occupancy rate for public parking spaces in the area is 85 percent. The resulting availability of 15 percent of the public parking spaces would help ensure that most visitors arriving by car would have access to parking at most times. We thus recommend creating a pool of Zoning Parking Credits equal to the ideal occupancy rate (85 percent) minus the actual occupancy rate determined by the survey. With this approach, even if all Zoning Parking Credits are eventually eased by new uses, there should be an average of approximately 50 vacant on-street and city-owned off-street parking spaces adjacent to the commercially-zoned properties along Glendale Boulevard at most times of day. Thus, we can provide opportunities for new businesses while helping ensure that sufficient parking remains available for customers of existing businesses and other visitors to the neighborhood.

In conclusion, the City's implementation of a Zoning Parking Credits program in Atwater Village will provide immediate relief to small businesses ready to invest in the area, and it will provide local planners with a tool to address parking comprehensively by City plan rather than relying on case-by-case discretionary actions.

These recommendations were approved by the Atwater Village Neighborhood Council's Planning and Land Use Committee at its December 16, 2008 meeting, and will be brought to the full neighborhood council board in January 2009. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Best regards,



Mott Smith
Principal

Attachments:

1. Summary of Recommendations
2. Parking Utilization Study

cc: Luis Lopez, Atwater Village Neighborhood Council

**ATWATER VILLAGE ZONING PARKING CREDIT PROGRAM
SUMMARY OF DRAFT ORDINANCE AND GUIDELINES**

DRAFT ORDINANCE:

- Amendment to Atwater Village Pedestrian Oriented District (POD)
- Applies to “projects” in Glendale Boulevard portion of POD
 - “Project” - construction, addition to or alteration to a building that triggers requirement to provide off-street parking under Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC)
 - Commercially-zoned lots on or near Glendale Boulevard between Los Angeles River and LA-Glendale border
- Qualifying projects can satisfy all or part of off-street parking requirements by leasing “zoning parking credits” from City of Los Angeles.
- Leasing Credits:
 - Must lease credits for all periods during which business will be open
 - Four time periods: Weekday-Day; Weekday-Night; Weekend-Day; Weekend-Night
 - Number of credits required for each time period
 - Based on ULI shared parking requirements
 - Maximum size of project that can lease credits: in guidelines
- Zoning Parking Credit Pool: How many credits?

| | Percentage of Spaces Occupied During Survey | Total Number of On-Street Parking Spaces | Total Available Spaces at 85% Occupancy | NUMBER OF PARKING CREDITS |
|---------------|---|--|---|---------------------------|
| Weekday-Day | 48.0% | 324 | 275 | 120 |
| Weekday-Night | 51.1% | 324 | 275 | 110 |
| Weekend-Day | 51.2% | 324 | 275 | 110 |
| Weekend-Night | 39.0% | 324 | 275 | 150 |

- Based on underutilized on-street spaces and spaces in city-owned lots
- Determined by initial survey, updated every 2 years
- Planning Department maintains inventory of zoning parking credits
 - Initial credits

- Tracks credits leased
- Fees:
 - Approx. \$75 per credit per year
 - Adjusted each year for inflation
 - Most businesses need to lease credits for all four time periods.
 - Deposited into special Parking Credits Fund
 - Administered by Planning and Transportation
 - Used for costs of program and parking, transit and pedestrian improvements in Parking Project Area.

DRAFT GUIDELINES

- Zoning parking credits may be leased by property owner or business owner.
- Lease period for zoning parking credits: calendar year
 - Initial lease: runs to end of current calendar year
 - Automatic right of renewal
 - Fees must be paid by January 10
- Change in ownership
 - New owner has right to maintain and renew zoning parking credits
- Abandonment of zoning credits
 - Failure to pay by January 10
 - Credits shall revert to pool
 - City shall initiate proceedings to revoke certificate of occupancy
 - Change of use requiring fewer credits
 - Excess credits shall be returned to pool
 - Project or use is discontinued:
 - Lessee may either return credits to pool or transfer to owner of site or owner of new use on the site
 - If lessee takes no action, property owner may lease through June 31 of subsequent year while seeking new occupant for site
 - Lease may be transferred to new occupant
 - If any portion remains vacant for more than 6 months, the portion of credits attributable to vacant portion is returned to pool.
- Businesses that may use zoning parking credits:
 - Business type:
 - Commercial
 - Retail
 - Restaurant
 - Business must be 3,000 sq. ft. or less to use credits by-right
 - Larger businesses: Planning Director approval required

- Property size
 - Properties housing the businesses must be 10,500 square feet or less to use credits by right
 - More than 10,500 square feet: Planning Director approval required
- Calculating parking credit requirements
 - 1) Determine square footage of use, and type of use
 - 2) If applicant will satisfy portion of requirement with actual parking spaces, calculate square footage for which that parking satisfies parking requirements
 - E.g., for a restaurant over 1000 sq. ft., 6 parking spaces satisfy parking requirement for 600 sq. ft.
 - 3) Deduct square footage from Step 2 from the total square footage in Step 1
 - 4) Using formula in ordinance, determine the number of parking credits required
 - 5) Deduct the number of parking credits leased from Pool.

**Atwater Village Zoning Parking Credit Program:
 Summary of Parking Occupancy Survey and Recommendation re Initial Number of Credits**

| | Total Spaces Occupied During Survey Period | | | Total Parking Spaces x Hours in Survey Period | | | Percentage Occupancy | Number of Parking Spaces | 85% Occupancy | NUMBER OF PARKING CREDITS | | |
|---------------|--|-----|-----------|---|-----------|-------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-----|---------------|
| | East Side | | TOTAL | West Side | | TOTAL | | | | | | |
| | City Lots | | City Lots | | City Lots | TOTAL | | | | | | |
| Weekday-Day | 538 | 408 | 1556 | 1340 | 1180 | 720 | 3240 | 48.0% | 324 | 275 | 120 | Weekday-Day |
| Weekday-Night | 222 | 79 | 662 | 536 | 472 | 288 | 1286 | 51.1% | 324 | 275 | 110 | Weekday-Night |
| Weekend-Day | 423 | 329 | 1328 | 1072 | 944 | 576 | 2592 | 51.2% | 324 | 275 | 110 | Weekend-Day |
| Weekend-Night | 282 | 68 | 758 | 804 | 708 | 432 | 1944 | 39.0% | 324 | 275 | 150 | Weekend-Night |