

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Prior to the actual technical visit in Portage Park, the Consultant received a number of documents on the area. These are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Portage Park/Six Corners Business District Plan

This document, prepared by Camiros, Limited in January 1999, contained several pages on parking including an inventory of existing spaces and recommendations for adding 354 spaces which would support 142,000 S.F.³ of retail development. The plan suggested five locations for this additional off-street parking, some of which removed valuable retail building frontage.

Six Corners Parking Survey

This survey, conducted by a volunteer group with the Greater Northwest Development Corporation, provided detailed information on the district parking user characteristics. The results of the survey, which was conducted in June 1997, are described in the section that follows. The survey area is shown on Figure 1. It includes mainly the commercial uses related to the Six Corners.

Parking Supply

The survey area contains 279 metered on-street spaces and 1805 off-street spaces⁴ of which 128 are public and the remainder private. Off-street parking areas are shown in Figure 1. The total number of public parking spaces is (279 + 128) 407.

³ Ibid, p. 29

⁴ Cindy Fish, 1997 Parking Survey, June 1997, P. 3.

Parking Usage

The parking turnover survey was conducted from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. on a Thursday. From the survey we can determine high on-street use areas. Those areas with a peak occupancy of 90% or above indicate parking deficiencies and efforts should be made to meet this demand within a block or two. Two peak periods were found - from 11:00 A. M. to 2:00 P. M. and from 6:00 P.M to 8:00 P. M.⁵ Figures 2 and 3 depict those block faces where occupancy exceeded 90%. Some block faces exceeded 114% which indicates illegal parking in bus zones and no parking areas. Clearly, there are problems with parking availability especially in the early evening.

Another result of the survey was to determine average duration of parkers. For on-street spaces the average duration was 1.8 hours,⁶ well within the posted two-hour limit. However, 94 parkers stayed for four hours or more in the two-hour zone. If these spaces were available for shoppers and those doing business in “the District” there would be space for almost 300 more parkers on-street.

The turnover survey allows us to determine how many time limit violations occur and where. Figure 4 indicates the block faces where the most time limit violations occur. Based upon an estimated 25 tickets per day⁷ being written for overtime parking, there are an additional 70 parkers who are illegally parking and are not being ticketed. Looking at this from a revenue standpoint, there is a loss of \$1,050.00 per day in revenue or \$315,000 per year which could be used to support the enforcement activity.

From the parking turnover data, it is clear that:

- the two-hour limit is more than adequate for on-street shoppers;
- there is wholesale abuse of the two-hour time limit by long-term parkers;
- parking time limit enforcement is not being done; and
- there is a loss of 95 spaces that could be used for short-term shopper parking.

The 1997 parking survey did not cover all off-street areas, so it is impossible to assess the

⁵ Ibid, P.3 ⁶

Ibid, p.3

⁷ Officer Bob Van Den Busche, Chicago Police Department

total picture. Those off-street areas that were covered showed a peak occupancy of 63%.⁸ More recent surveys of all areas shows a much lower occupancy overall due to the inclusion of the Sears, Marshalls, and Jewel-Osco lots which have many vacant spaces. If these lots are eliminated - since they provide only parking for their customers - the occupancy of other off-street lots are high with the exception of the City lot (to be discussed later).

A windshield survey of on-street and off-street areas was conducted on March 30 and 31, 1999 by the Consultant. The result is presented in Figure 5. Clearly, on-street parking is overused. The LaSalle Bank-N.A. employee and customer off-street lots are heavily used but several other lots such as Sears and Marshalls are sparsely used in the survey period.

Main Street Resource Team Report

Another document which supplied information for this effort was the Main Street Resource Team Report which evaluated Six Corners from the viewpoint of the Four-Point Approach. Issue 15 stated "To demolish buildings for parking spaces should be carefully reviewed." It is also stated: "the parking problem in Six Corners is not one of capacity or lack of parking spaces. Instead the problem here is the lack of parking management." More recent observations and surveys indicate that the "parking problem" cannot be solved by management alone - rather a two pronged approach is necessary - better management and the provision of additional spaces in the western sector of the district.

⁸ Op. cit., Fish, P. 10.

⁹ National Main Street Center, Six Corners Resource Team Report, September 1998.