



**Date of Council Meeting:** December 7, 2015

**TOWN OF LEESBURG  
TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

**Subject:** Downtown Parking Task Force Recommendations

**Staff Contact:** Keith Markel, Deputy Town Manager

**Council Action Requested:** Direction on how to proceed with the recommendations of the June 2015 Downtown Parking Task Force Report on which Council did not reach consensus.

**Staff Recommendation:** At this time, staff requests Council direction on how the Town Parking Garage should function inclusive of fees and possible automation. These Task Force Recommendations are highlighted on pages six through eight of the attached report and are listed in the August 11 resolution as:

9. Payment Kiosks for First Floor Parking in Town Garage.
10. Free Parking on Second and Third Floors in Town Garage.
11. Implement a Parking Rate for First Floor Parking in Town Garage.
12. Remove Gates and Payment Booths in Town Garage.
13. Reallocate Town Parking Attendants to Parking Enforcement.
18. Eliminate the Town's Parking Validation Program.
19. Eliminate "First Hour Free" Parking in Town Garage.

**Commission Recommendation:** The Downtown Parking Task Force recommends implementation of the action items listed in their June 8, 2015 report.

**Fiscal Impact:** Varies depending on each recommendation.

**Work Plan Impact:** Varies depending on what recommendations are implemented.

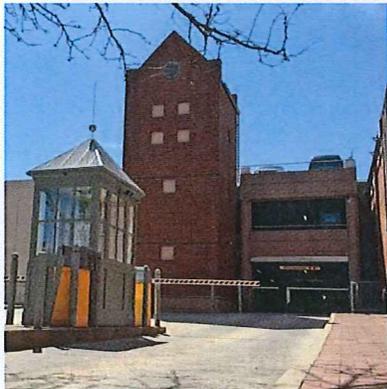
**Executive Summary:** The Town Council established the Downtown Parking Task Force to develop recommendations that would help create the availability of more short term parking in the downtown. The Task Force met this past spring, and developed a report that was presented on June 8, 2015 to Town Council with recommendations for consideration. The Town Council discussed these recommendations in greater detail at their work session on July 27, 2015 and approved a resolution providing direction on each one of the recommendations at their meeting on August 11, 2015.

**Background:** The Downtown Parking Task Force looked at a wide range of enhancements and policy changes that may work to increase the amount of available parking in the downtown for short term users rather than all-day parkers. The Town Council discussed these recommendations at their work session on July 27, 2015. The Council was able to reach consensus on several of the recommendations while other recommendations will need to be discussed further. The approved Council resolution of August 11, 2015 lists all of the recommendations that were developed by the Downtown Parking Task Force along with the direction provided by Council to Town staff. The Task Force has been invited to attend the Town Council work session on December 7, 2015 to discuss those recommendations where consensus has not yet been reached.

**Attachment:** Adopted Resolution (08-11-15)  
Downtown Parking Task Force Report

# DOWNTOWN PARKING TASK FORCE

## REPORT OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



JUNE 8, 2015

**TOWN OF LEESBURG**  
**DOWNTOWN PARKING TASK FORCE**  
**REPORT OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*June 8, 2015*

**INTRODUCTION:**

For many years, the Town of Leesburg has been focused on providing relief to the demand for downtown parking. As the downtown continues to experience growth through the redevelopment of properties and the continued success of restaurants, retail, and business enterprises, the demand for public parking increases. Recognizing the need to address these demands the Town Council initiated the creation of a Downtown Parking Task Force and directed the group to focus on one, critical, overarching question:

***“What can be done to incentivize all-day parkers in the downtown to relocate to alternative parking areas that are less convenient so more convenient parking spaces are available for short-term parkers?”***

The Council asked that the Task Force explore this issue and provide recommendations for their consideration. The group was asked to report back to the Town Council in early June of 2015.

**Task Force Members:**

The Task Force was composed of eight Town residents and downtown business owners. The objective was to get a mixture of citizens that would be able to provide different perspectives on the perceptions and realities of parking in the downtown. Four members were selected to represent citizens from each of the Town’s four residential quadrants; two members were selected to represent downtown businesses; one member was selected to represent the Town Planning Commission; and the final representative was selected to represent the Economic Development Commission:

***Task Force Membership:***

<b>Member:</b>	<b>Representing:</b>
Alicia McFadden	North East Quadrant
Jerry Hill	North West Quadrant
Alexis Felton	South West Quadrant
Richard Smith	South East Quadrant
Paige Buscema	Economic Development Commission
Gigi Robinson	Planning Commission

Kate Armfield	Downtown Business
Carrie Whitmer	Downtown Business

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **Meetings of the Task Force:**

The Task Force held four meetings starting on April 23, 2015.

During their first meeting, the Task Force participated in a walking tour of the downtown parking facilities to experience firsthand the pedestrian environment. The group observed sidewalk conditions, traffic impacts, and distances from parking facilities to destinations.

At their second meeting, the Task Force heard from two guest speakers. Brian Boucher, the Town’s Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning presented the historical context of the current zoning ordinances that pertain to downtown parking. The second speaker was Peter Burnett, who is a local attorney, downtown business owner, and landowner. Mr. Burnett shared downtown parking needs from his perspective.

The third meeting of the Task Force was devoted to discussing parking issues and developing recommendations.

The fourth and final meeting was spent finalizing the recommendations and report to be presented to the Town Council on June 8, 2015.

### **Existing Conditions:**

Parking in the downtown is provided through a combination of on-street parking, public structured parking, public surface parking, and private off-street parking. To better understand the public parking demands of the downtown, Town Staff undertook a major parking data collection program for the month of March 2015. Staff collected data each day of the month, including weekends. The purpose was to gather parking demand and various times throughout the day. For example, occupancy in the Town parking garage was counted four times each day, every week day, and three times a day on the weekend. Each public surface lot and on-street space was counted in the morning and afternoon each week day. An additional two weeks of data was collected in the month of April 2015 for the parking garage and on-street spaces. The results are attached to this report.

The data shows that at no time did parking demand exceed capacity in the Town garage or surface lots for the entire month. On average, the Town’s parking garage was at 56 percent capacity during the workday. The highest demand recorded in the month was at 7pm on Friday, March 13, which was a “First Friday” evening (several hours after Town staff had left for the day). These figures show that parking limitations in the garage are more perception than

reality. Because of this, the Task Force looked closely at how the garage could be made more welcoming to the public.

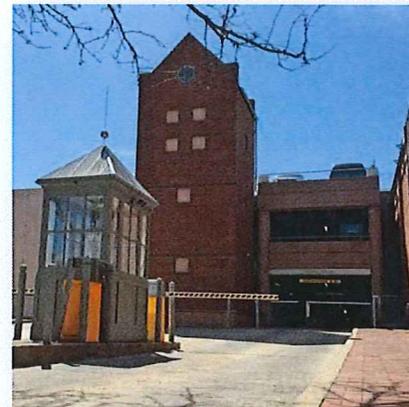
The highest demand for surface parking was in the County-owned Semones Lot. Which is a 68 space lot located near the County Court Complex off of North Street. This lot had an average of 79 percent occupancy during the workday. The County also owns the Pennington Lot which is a 202 space surface lot located off of North Street. This parking lot is used primarily for Court parking, along with some satellite parking for County motor pool vehicles, and had 37 percent weekday occupancy. The Town owns the 106 space Liberty parking lot. This lot had 40 percent weekday occupancy for the month of March.

For several months beginning last fall, the County ran a shuttle bus between the Pennington Parking Lot, the Liberty Street Lot, and the County Government Center. Because of extremely low ridership, the shuttle was eventually discontinued.

### **Current Parking Facilities:**

#### **Town Hall Parking Garage:**

- 372 Spaces
- Town Owned
- Open to the public at all times
- Fees- First hour free, second hour free with validation. Hourly rate is \$1.00 from 7am to 7pm. Free to all on nights and weekends. Monthly reserved space (\$60) and unreserved (\$40) permit parking.
- Town staff required to park on top level



#### **County Government Center Parking Garage:**

- 290 spaces
- County Owned
- Levels 2-4 are for County staff only from 8am to 5:30pm. First floor of garage reserved for visitors of the Government Center during workday. Open to the public nights and weeknights
- Fees- no charge



**Liberty Street Surface Lot:**

- 106 Spaces
- Town Owned
- Open to the public at all times
- Fee- no charge



**Semones Surface Lot:**

- 68 Spaces
- County Owned
- Used for courts during weekdays, open to public on nights and weekends
- Fee- no charge



**Pennington Surface Lot:**

- 202 Spaces
- County Owned
- Used by courts and county staff on weekdays. Open to the public at all times
- Fee- no charge



### On-Street Spaces:

- 148 Spaces
- Two hour maximum parking in all spaces
- Fee-\$1.50 per hour from 8am to 5pm.  
Free nights and weekends



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Task Force understands that solutions to downtown parking issues are complex. Modifications to regulations in one area can have far reaching impacts in other areas. Some changes are simple in nature with limited resources needed to make adjustments while other recommendations may involve significant funding and years of planning. With this in mind, the Task Force developed a wide range of recommendations that are identified for short term and long term implementation.

### **Short Term Recommendations:**

**Signage** – Being able to efficiently inform visitors of public parking options should be a top priority of any improvement plan. Pursuant to Council direction, the Town is currently in the process of updating the existing way-finding signs to more clearly indicate the locations of free public parking. The Town should evaluate how motorists are directed to public parking options.

**Pedestrian Experience** – Being able to provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian experience from the public parking facilities to points of interest is a critical component of increasing the use of the surface lots. For example, currently, there is no continuous sidewalk between the Liberty Street Parking Lot and the Town Hall. The sidewalk starts and stops in several locations, handicap ramps are missing or in poor condition, and in several locations where there is sidewalk it is too narrow for two pedestrians to safely pass one another without stepping off the curb.



No sidewalks along Royal Street

**Traffic Calming** – Ways to lower speed and increase driver awareness should be considered. Options such as speed tables and lowering the 25 mile per hour speed limit should be explored.

**Ordinance Modifications** – The Town currently has several ordinances that impact downtown parking requirements. Two major ordinances are:

**Payment in Lieu** – 11.4.3 of the Town Code allows owners/developers of land in the H-1 Overlay District to make a payment to the Town’s parking fund in lieu of providing on-site parking. The current rate charged by the Town per space is \$6,270. This money is to be used for the future creation of off-street parking facilities in the H-1 Overlay District. The Task Force would only recommend keeping the Payment in Lieu program if the Town Council commits to a Capital Improvement Plan project that will increase parking capacity in the downtown. This will allow those paying into the Payment in Lieu program to know how their contribution will be used, and when new parking may be created. It is also recommended that the Payment in Lieu fee structure accurately reflect the true cost of creating parking spaces. The Town should consider increasing the current rate, and to show the Town’s commitment to future parking, the Town government should consider partnering with private developers in the total expense. The Task Force’s recommendation is to increase the payment in lieu fee to the fair market value of creating a new structured parking space. The Town should pay a percentage of this fee, as its commitment to the partnership. This percentage rate would need to be determined by the Town Council. Town staff should provide an annual report to the Town Council showing the balance in the fund.

**500 foot Proximity to Public Parking** – Any existing building in the B-1 District is not required to provide off-site parking if the property is located within 500 feet of an entrance to a public parking facility. The current ordinance counts all public parking facilities owned by the Town or County, but the County parking garage does not currently allow public parking during business hours. For this reason, the Task Force recommends that the Town eliminate the 500 foot waiver for future properties that may want to count the County garage as meeting their off-street parking requirement. If the County changes their public parking policy, the Town can revisit this modification.

**Increase Parking Violation Fees** – The current fees for parking at an expired meter is \$10. The cost to pay the meter for the full day is \$12. A higher meter penalty fee would encourage greater compliance. If possible, a graduated fee scale for repeat offenders should also be considered. For example, the third ticket on the same car in a month would be three times the fee paid by a first time violation.

**Town Parking Garage** – Much of the Task Force discussion centered on the operation of the Town Parking Garage. It was the consensus of the group that significant changes to the garage, both physical and administrative, need to be made to increase the public’s interest in using this facility. The Task Force shared anecdotal comments that the current configuration of the garage feels claustrophobic, poorly lit, uninviting, and poorly signed. It is believed that these

deficiencies deter out of town guests from using this facility to its full potential. To that end, the Task Force offers the following recommendations:

- a) **Make the second and third level of the deck free for all users** – It was the opinion of the Task Force that free parking on the second and third floor would be seen as a very pro-business approach to bringing more customers downtown and into the businesses and restaurants. It was cited that the large shopping centers located outside of the downtown offer abundant free parking. For the downtown to remain competitive with other areas such as the Villages at Leesburg, free, convenient parking must be a component of the downtown.
- b) **Charge for all spaces on the first (street) level** – Because the first floor spaces (level 1A & 1B) are the most convenient, there should be a charge for parking in these spaces. It is recommended that each space have a three hour parking limit to support space turn-over throughout the day. It is further recommended that the price per hour should be the same fee structure as is currently in place in the garage. Each hour would be \$1.00 or users could pay a fraction thereof.
- c) **Eliminate the parking validation program and remove the “first hour free” policy** – by going to a first floor payment system, there is no need for the validation program or free parking. If users of the deck want free parking they can park on the second or third level.
- d) **Remove the ticket booths, gate arms, and ticket machines** – By simplifying the garage’s fee collection system, the parking attendant booths, and related equipment will no longer be needed. This will provide a more welcoming approach to the garage and visitors would then be able to exit onto both Market and Loudoun Streets. Currently, only those with a pass can activate the exit gate arms on the Loudoun side of the garage. The staff who currently collect payments in the booths should be reallocated to provide enhanced parking space enforcement throughout the downtown. The Town may also want to consider reducing the hours of this staff to provide additional cost savings. Consideration should be given



to reusing the parking attendant booths for other uses in Town such as mobile information booths for special events, or visitor information booths in the Town parks.

- e) **Allow for alternative payment systems** – This would include the installation of payment kiosk machines, two on level 1A and two on level 1B. The machines could accept cash, credit, or other payment options. Payment apps such as “Park Mobile” or “Pango” could also be utilized. These declining balance parking fund apps would allow visitors with mobile devices to pay for parking through third party vendors electronically and eliminates the need for cash or credit cards.



Payment App Sign in Alexandria



- f) **Continue to rent personal spaces in the lower level on a monthly basis** – there is a consistent demand for these reserved spaces. Approximately one hundred spaces are currently reserved at a rate of \$60 per space.
- g) **Town staff should be asked to park in the Liberty Street Lot** – Approximately 70 Town employees work in Town Hall. On any given day approximately 60 Town staff vehicles are parked in the garage. Currently, Town staff is required to park on the top level of the garage. The Task Force recommends that staff be relocated to the Liberty Lot to free up space on the top level of the deck that is anticipated to be needed should the Town make the top two levels of the garage free.
- h) **Re-stripe the existing spaces** – A major concern of the current garage is the cramped feel of the spaces. Larger vehicles have an especially hard time parking in the current spaces. Restriping the garage to allow for wider spaces will reduce the total number of parking spaces, but will make the spaces that remain more user friendly and safe.

Several Task Force members remarked that they do not like to bring their cars into the deck for fear getting “dinged” by the opening of car doors.

- i) **Improve lighting** – To encourage more evening use of the garage it is recommended that lighting be increased to provide a safer feel.
- j) **Improve signage** – With the removal of the parking attendant booths and ticket dispensing equipment, there is space to install signage in the center drive lane that could welcome visitors and explain that the top two levels of the garage are free of charge and the most convenient parking is metered on the first floor. Large, easy to read, exterior wall mounted signs should be installed over the entrances to the garage on both the Market Street and Loudoun Street entrances that welcomes visitors to the “Public” and “Free on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Levels” parking garage. Additional signage should also be near the exits to the garage that direct drivers to alternative parking facilities if the garage is full.

**County Government Center Parking Garage to Allow Public Parking** – When opportunities present themselves, especially during County development proposals, the Town should explore ways to get the County to free up space in their garage for public use. Currently County staff fully occupies the County parking garage on Loudoun Street, except for the first floor that is reserved for visitors of the Government Center. If some of their staff parking was relocated to the Pennington Lot, spaces could be provided to the general public.

**Drop-off /Pick-up Zones** – Similar to what is found at metro stations and airports, the Town should consider people “loading zones” to allow friends and family to drop off and pick up visitors to the downtown. These zones should be located throughout the downtown and be improved with park benches to allow those waiting to be picked up a place to rest. These areas would be especially helpful for those who may not have handicap parking privileges but would benefit from friends or family retrieving a car from a more remote parking area and then coming back to pick up the rest of the party.

### **Long Term Recommendations:**

After looking at parking demands throughout the downtown, the Task Force felt that the long term plan for addressing the ever-growing need for additional parking capacity requires that additional capacity be created. The area of the downtown that is experiencing the greatest demand on parking is in the South East Quadrant, the area south of East Loudoun Street and east of South King Street. Redevelopment and new construction has led to significant parking shortages near the areas of Market Station, South Street, and Church Street. The on-going growth and redevelopment in this area requires additional parking capacity. Currently the inadequate parking has led to visitors improperly using the County garage or illegally parking in spaces that are reserved for private businesses.

The Task Force recommends that the Town develop a long range plan to construct a parking garage in this general area. Additional demand forecasting would be needed to predict what capacity the future garage should accommodate, but at the very least, several hundred spaces would be needed. The Town should look at creative funding opportunities such as working with Loudoun County and private developers to partner in the garage's construction.

The Task Force also feels that there should be a long term strategy for on-street parking space payment collection. Currently the Town only has coin meters in place. New parking payment apps may allow the Town to allow collect payment using that tool. Consideration should also be given to locating payment kiosks throughout the downtown to allow visitors to pay with credit or debit cards. The Task Force understands that such kiosks are not economically viable at the current on-street parking rate structure.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Town has struggled with parking in the downtown for many years and no single recommendation will solve all the current issues. The recommendations found in this report are provided for the consideration of Town Council with the understanding that in some cases additional research from both a financial and logistical perspective will be needed before determining if a specific recommendation is truly viable. These recommendations represent the Task Force's best attempt at providing fresh and forward thinking solutions to Leesburg's downtown parking limitations. The Task Force feels strongly that Action is Required to address the downtown parking challenges.

The Task Force thanks the Mayor and Town Council for the opportunity to explore these issues and provide recommendations. Once Council members have time to fully review this report, the Task Force would request that a follow up meeting be scheduled where Council and Task Force members can further discuss these recommendations along with implementation strategies. The suggested date for this meeting would be the September 21, 2015 Council Work Session.

The Town of  
**Leesburg,  
Virginia**

PRESENTED August 11, 2015

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-092

ADOPTED August 11, 2015

A RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZATION TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF  
THE JUNE 8, 2015 DOWNTOWN PARKING TASK FORCE REPORT

WHEREAS, the Town Council has recognized that providing sufficient short term parking  
in the downtown is important to sustain and enhance the downtown economy; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council directed the Town Manager to organize a Downtown  
Parking Task Force to develop recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Parking Task Force presented their official findings and  
recommendations to the Town Council on June 8, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council discussed the recommendations of the Downtown Parking  
Task Force at the July 27, 2015 work session, and reached consensus on several items.

THEREFORE, RESOLVED, by the Council of the Town of Leesburg in Virginia:

SECTION I. The Town Council authorizes the implementation of the following changes  
related to downtown parking:

1. **Waive Off-site Parking Requirements for Proposed Development within 500 feet of Public Parking.** Town staff is directed to proceed with a Zoning Ordinance modification to eliminate the County of Loudoun garage as a qualifying facility since public parking is not allowed during work business hours.
2. **Sidewalk and Accessibility Improvements along Liberty Street and Royal Street to encourage public use of the Liberty Street parking lot.** Town staff is directed to develop a capital improvement project for Council consideration as part of the Fiscal Year 2017 budget.
3. **Passenger Pick-Up and Drop Off Zones.** Town staff is directed to provide passenger pick-up and drop zones where feasible.
4. **Increase Fee for Parking Meter Bags.** Town staff is authorized to increase the fee from \$3 to \$10.

A RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZATION TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUNE 8, 2015 DOWNTOWN PARKING TASK FORCE REPORT

5. **Increase Fee for Parking Violations.** Town staff is directed to investigate options to implement a graduated parking violation fee for habitual offenders, and report back to Council.
6. **Payment in Lieu Increase.** This item is deferred.
7. **Contribution to Payment in Lieu.** This item is deferred.
8. **Mobile Payment Apps for Parking.** Town staff is directed to investigate the use of mobile payment apps and report back to Town Council.
9. **Payment Kiosks for First Floor Parking in Town Garage.** This item is deferred.
10. **Free Parking on Second and Third Floors in Town Garage.** This item is deferred.
11. **Implement a Parking Rate for First Floor Parking in Town Garage.** This item is deferred.
12. **Remove Gates and Payment Booths in Town Garage.** This item is deferred.
13. **Reallocate Town Parking Attendants to Parking Enforcement.** This item is deferred.
14. **Widen Parking Spaces in Town Garage.** Town staff is directed to reconfigure parking spaces where feasible in order to increase the user friendliness of the parking garage.
15. **Paint Interior Walls of Town Garage.** Town staff is authorized to paint the garage walls in a bright white color in Fiscal Year 2016 if funds are available or to request an appropriation in the proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budget.
16. **Install Exterior Signage on Town Garage Wall.** Staff is directed to develop design options and cost for Council consideration.
17. **Welcome and Informational Kiosk.** Town staff is directed to develop a plan to install welcome and /informational kiosks for Council consideration.
18. **Eliminate the Town's Parking Validation Program.** This item is deferred.
19. **Eliminate "First Hour Free" Parking in Town Garage.** This item is deferred.
20. **Continue to Rent Basement Level of Garage.** Town staff is directed to continue this program.

A RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZATION TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF  
THE JUNE 8, 2015 DOWNTOWN PARKING TASK FORCE REPORT

21. **Update Signage in Town Garage that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Floors are free to the public.** This item is deferred.
22. **Add Signage that Alerts the Public to Other Parking Areas.** Town staff is directed to develop and install additional signage using Fiscal Year 2016 funds.
23. **Additional Town Garage Safety Measures.** Town staff is directed to develop a list of improvements that can be considered by Council during Fiscal Year 2017 budget discussions.
24. **Relocate Town Staff Parking from the Town Garage to the Liberty Street Parking Lot.** The Town Manager is directed to delay relocation at this time. If changes to Town garage operations create parking shortages in the garage, the Town Manager may need to relocate Town employee parking in whole or in part, to the Liberty Parking Lot.

SECTION II. The Downtown Parking Task Force is requested to attend the Town Council Work Session of September 21, 2015 to further discuss those recommendations that the Town Council has not yet reached consensus.

PASSED this 11<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015.

  
Kristen C. Umstatt, Mayor  
Town of Leesburg

ATTEST:

  
Clerk of Council