CITY OF FERNDALE
Michigan

DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY
Phase 1 - Final Draft Report

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this analysis is to provide the City of Ferndale with a Master Plan for parking; concentrating on the economics of parking and looking into the future for how parking can become a marketing tool for the downtown. The analysis is divided into two phases.

Phase 1 is an assessment of the current parking operations, including both allocation and control of parking. The results of Phase 1 include recommendations for enhancing the Auto Parking Fund to make it a self-sufficient operation and to project changes to the parking system that would then be financed through this enterprise fund. Short-term and long-term recommendations are provided, including where applicable as the cost for these and a phasing for the recommendations.

Phase 2 of the project provides an assessment of the current and future parking needs and makes recommendations on how parking can be provided to meet those needs. In Ferndale, it is important to look at parking as being a marketing tool both to encourage occupancy or re-occupancy of buildings and also to encourage people to use the shops and services located in the study area. Parking must be properly marketed to accomplish this.

BACKGROUND

The City of Ferndale is located north of Detroit and south of Royal Oak. The general area could be described as a "bedroom community" with a downtown that provides services and goods to residents of Ferndale and surrounding communities.

The current central business district occurs along an axes centered on Nine Mile and Woodward, extending several blocks in each direction. Ferndale has experienced variations in the occupancy of commercial buildings within this area. Currently there is a renaissance beginning in Ferndale that is anchored to the east by the announcement of a new building for Credit Union One and on the west by the revitalization of Troy Street.

There are several significant under-utilized buildings within the study area that provide an opportunity for redevelopment and revitalization.

In years past, the parking system (operated as an enterprise fund called the Auto Parking Fund) and has been self sufficient. However, since fiscal 1992, expenditures began to exceed revenues. In fiscal 1992 the deficit in the Auto Parking Fund was $40,821.00, in fiscal 1993 the deficit was $ 51,268.00 and in fiscal 1994 the deficit was $34,005. In 1995 the deficit was estimated to increase to $54,160.00.

As a result of these deficits, it has been impossible to put into place a capital improvement program for upgrades to the parking system and to plan for future needs. Since 1994, the City has been unable to transfer to the police department 15% of the gross revenue to cover their enforcement activities for parking. This is mandated by code.

FIELDWORK AND DATA COLLECTION

Rich and Associates' staff completed field reconnaissance in the study area and the parking in that area during the late fall of 1995. As a part of this analysis four key work tasks were completed, they were;

1. Interviews with businesses within the study area to discuss perceptions of parking and development of Ferndale, and thoughts on redevelopment in the downtown and how parking may play a role.

2. A turnover and occupancy study was completed on all municipal on-street and off-street parking spaces within the study area on Thursday, December 7th.

3. Submittal of a questionnaire concerning the operation and finances for the parking system and a review of the response from the City.

4. A visual observation of pedestrian and vehicle movements in and around the study area; concentrating on vehicle movement, signage identification and wayfinding for pedestrians once they leave their vehicle.

The study area used in this analysis is defined as Cambridge Street on the north, Paxton on the east, Albany/Ardmore on the south and Pinecrest on the west.

In addition to these four tasks, meetings were held with the Downtown Development Authority's Manager to discuss the overall direction of the downtown and plans for changes in the area.

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

1. Interviews With Area Businesses: During mid-November and early December interviews were held with downtown businesses. These businesses included retail establishments, real-estate companies, and commercial businesses. In all eight of the fifteen people identified were interviewed.

The following is a synopsis of the results of those meetings.

- Accessibility to parking areas, wayfinding, and accessibility to the destination needs to be improved in the downtown.

- The lots need to be improved both from a physical standpoint and from an aesthetic standpoint to better market them. Specifically, Lot B and Lot E (reference study map) are our prime concern.

- Enforcement of parking in the downtown is both a positive and negative. If enforcement is too diligent, a customer who stays perhaps five minutes past the meter time, may be ticketed. Without enforcement its acknowledged that employees will park on the street and that there will be a disruption to parking allocation.

- Many businesses question parking enforcement after 6:00 p.m. and enforcement of paid parking on Saturday, which they perceive as hurting businesses.

- Parking was removed from west 9 Mile Road some time ago. Many businesses felt that parking on west 9 Mile Road would be beneficial. However, it was noted during our interviews that many of the businesses who have storefront doors located on west 9 Mile Road also have entries to the south facing the parking lots. For the most part the entries on west 9 Mile Road may not be

open and only the entries to the parking lots at the back of the buildings are open. Many businesses discussed the problems of having both entries open from a security standpoint.

- Several businesses talked about free parking as an option and that possibly a parking assessment district could be set up to accomplish this. Many people used Royal Oak as a successful example of a parking system which helps the downtown (it should be noted that Royal Oak does not have free parking). In terms of parking allocation, several business thought the City should lease spaces to businesses for customer parking (however the enforcement of these spaces would be a problem). These leased spaces would have a reserved sign on it for customers to that building.

- Several businesses thought that people may be parking long-term in the municipal parking lots to go into downtown Detroit. They use these lots for "park and ride" (there may be a market that could be captured from a revenue standpoint for "park and ride" for the short-term that would have an overall positive effect on revenue). These "park and ride" can may or may not be a problem. Motorama property?

- The most frequent comment was that the parking supply is not the problem, but that the problem is the location and the perception of the parking areas. There is an overall perception that there is a shortage of parking downtown because of the inability to readily find it or that people feel insecure in the parking areas.

2. Turnover and Occupancy Study: A summary of the turnover and occupancy study is reported in the Parking Lot Reviews and in the Exhibit on the following page (Exhibit 1). This chart shows on and off-street occupancies by hour. Peak occupancy for all of the on-street parking spaces occurred between 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. with 66% occupancy. For the off-street parking lots the peak occurred at the same time with 52.1% of all municipal off-street parking spaces occupied.

   The peak occupancy for both on-street and off-street occurred between 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. was 52.2%. It should be noted that individual parking lots showed very different results; some parking lots had occupancies greater than the average and some significantly lower.

3. Results of Analysis of Operations and Finances: Rich and Associates reviewed the parking operations from a revenue and expense standpoint. The operating expenses for the parking system are very straight forward. The two

EXHIBIT 1

CITY OF FERNDALE
SUMMARY OF ON AND OFF STREET OCCUPANCY
BY HOUR

	(1) On-Street	(2) Off-Street	(3) Total
9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	26 (31.7%)	282 (28.7%)	308 (28.5%)
10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	28 (34.1%)	385 (39.2%)	413 (38.2%)
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	22 (26.8%)	383 (39.0%)	405 (37.4%)
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	46 (56.1%)	416 (42.4%)	462 (42.7%)
1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	54 (65.9%)	511 (52.1%)	565 (52.2%)
2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	45 (54.9%)	446 (45.5%)	491 (45.4%)
3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	48 (58.5%)	457 (46.6%)	505 (46.7%)

(1) % occupancy based on 82 metered spaces

(2) % occupancy based on 981 metered and non-metered off-street spaces

(3) % occupancy based on 1082 metered and non-metered on + off-street spaces.

Source: Rich and Associates Fieldwork, Fall 1995

items that were of concern was the make-up of contract services and maintenance expense. Contract services for parking include cleaning, landscape services, flower planting, etc. The maintenance expense includes sweeping, snow removal, meter repair and maintenance. We also reviewed the personnel and staffing for the parking operations. Because the parking system is very basic (meters), staff is cross-trained to do many tasks including meter maintenance, collection, etc. This is an efficient way to operate the parking system.

We also obtained a representative sample of parking areas. This sample is shown on Exhibit 2. This chart shows the total revenue for the lots and on-street by week, with the average calculated by Rich and Associates.

4. Visual Observations: Visual observations of the parking area are contained in a review of each of the parking lots, and in the Results and Recommendation section of this report. In order to complete this tasks staff drove through the study area noting all signs, both for vehicles and pedestrians, leading into the parking areas, pedestrian movements and general appearance of the lots.

PARKING LOT OBSERVATIONS

Visual observations were made for all surface lots in the study area. There are several observations that are common to most of the lots.

- The painting of meter poles is inconsistent - in some lots 10 hour meters are painted green, in some they aren't.

- Most lots are not signed for parking - its not obvious that these lots are for public parking.

- In general, maintenance of the parking area is good and the use of low brick walls in several lots brings definition and a positive aesthetic appearance to the lots. Several lots though, need upgrading.

- Entrance and exits for vehicles is good though in some lots pedestrian pathways are not clear.

- Overall signage directing people to municipal parking areas and then identifying municipal lots is poor.

The following is a specific review of each lot and the allocation of spaces. Specific information is contained in Exhibits 3 and 4.

Lot A This lot contains only three hour meters and handicapped accessible spaces (2). During the turnover and occupancy study this lot averaged 42.6% occupancy. Peak occupancy occurred at 12:30 p.m. (60.8%). Sixty Eight percent (68%) of the cars parking in this lot stayed one hour or less and 13% stayed five hours or more.

The approach to this parking lot from 9 Mile or Planavon is not well signed. There are no distinctive signs that alert drivers that this is a municipal-customer lot. The meter poles do not appear to be color coded.

EXHIBIT 3

CITY OF FERNDALE
PARKING SUPPLY ANALYSIS

Lot	1HR	3HR	10HR	Reserved Visitors	Reserved City Staff	Reserved Police	Misc.	Handicap Accessible	Total
A		50						2	52
B		73	54				14	3	144
C			38				2	1	41
D		30						1	31
E		218	55					7	280
F		40	70					3	114
G		9	42					3	54
H	11	18	15					2	46
I	6	22	41					2	71
J		12	15	9	58	5			99
K			47					2	49
On-Street	82						19		101
Total	99	472	377	9	58	5	35	27	1082
Off-Street Allocation	1.7%	48.1%	38.4%	.9%	5.9%	.5%	1.6%	2.8%	

Source: Rich and Associates, Inc Fall 1995

EXHIBIT 4

OFF & ON-STREET TURNOVER ANALYSIS
COMPOSITE REVIEW

	# Space	Peak Occupancy & Time	Average Occupancy	Cars Stayed 1 Hour or less	Cars Stayed 3 Hours or less	Cars Stayed 5 or More Hours	Average Turnover
Lot A	52	60.8% (12:30 p.m.)	42.6%	68.4%	82.9%	13.2%	1.49
Lot B	144	22.4% (11:30 a.m)	19.0%	50.0%	65.7%	27.1%	0.46
Lot C	41	82.5% (2:30 p.m.)	71.1%	20.4%	46.9%	40.8%	1.23
Lot D	31	94.7% (1:30 p.m.)	61.5%	48.4%	68.8%	15.6%	1.68
Lot E	280	48.9% (1:30 p.m.)	38.7%	78.2%	89.0%	9.2%	1.61
Lot F	114	65.6% (11:30 a.m.)	59.6%	18.9%	36.0%	62.2%	0.87
Lot G	54	59.3% (1:30 p.m.)	31.2%	12.5%	85.0%	5.0%	0.74
Lot H	46	87.0% (12:30 p.m.)	51.2%	58.0%	85.2%	30.0%	1.76
Lot I	71	77.6% (1:30 p.m.)	64.8%	46.0%	66.0%	30.0%	1.49
Lot J	99	86% (10:30 a.m.)	74.6%	(1) 73.3%	(1) 93.3%	(1) 0.0%	N/A
Lot K	49	24.9% (1:30 p.m.)	12.5%	58.3%	91.7%	4.2%	0.49

(1) Meters Only

EXHIBIT 4 (continued)

ON-STREET

	# Space	Peak Occupancy & Time	Average Occupancy	Cars Stayed 1 Hour or less	Cars Stayed 3 Hours or less	Cars Stayed 5 or More Hours	Average Turnover
Woodward (North of 9 Mile East side)	16	100.0% (12:30 p.m.)	72.3%	75.4%	96.7%	0.0%	3.81
Woodward (North of 9 Mile West side)	13	69.2% (11:30 a.m.)	49.4%	75.0%	96.9%	3.1%	2.46
Woodward (South of 9 Mile East side)	16	87.5% (12:30 p.m.)	64.3%	87.3%	100.0%	0.0%	3.94
Withington	5	100.0% (10:30 a.m - 1:30 p.m.)	91.4%	87.5%	95.8%	4.2%	4.80
Nine Mile (West of Woodward, South side)	7	85.7% (1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.)	51.0%	91.3%	100.0%	0.0%	3.29
Troy Street (East)	4	100.0% (12:30 p.m.)	50.0%	92.3%	100.0%	0.0%	3.25
Troy Street (West)	9	100.0% (1:30 p.m.)	66.7%	83.9%	93.5%	3.2%	3.44

Source: Rich and Associates, Fieldwork Fall 1995

Lot B Of the 144 spaces in this lot, 51% are three hour meters, 38% are ten hour meters, 10% are hooded and three spaces are handicapped accessible. This lot reached peak occupancy at 11:30 a.m., with 22.4% occupancy. The average occupancy in this lot was 19%. Fifty percent (50%) of the of the cars in this lot stayed one hour or less and 27% stayed five hours or more.

Currently this lot has several garbage dumpsters in parking stalls, which does not help to create an inviting customer parking environment. The signage for this lot is poor because it does not identify the lot as a short-term or long-term municipal lot. There is an old parking directional sign on 9 Mile, but it is hard to see from a moving car (note: there is a newer parking directional sign on the north side of 9 Mile almost directly across from the older sign that points to municipal parking, yet there is no vehicle access point to Lot E anywhere nearby).

Lot C This lot contains 38 ten hour meters, two miscellaneous spaces and one handicapped accessible space. This lot reached peak occupancy (83%) between 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.. The average occupancy for this lot was 71%. About 20% of the cars stayed one hour or less but 41% stayed five hours or more. This lot is not signed as municipal or long term. Aesthetically, this lot is a poor example.

Lot D This lot contains 30 three hour meters and one handicapped accessible space.. Peak occupancy (95%) for this lot occurred at 1:30 p.m. The average occupancy of this lot was 62%. About 48% of the cars in this lot stayed one hour or less and about 16% stayed five hours or more.

This lot is not well signed. The entry from Troy Street is sometimes blocked with post office patrons dropping mail off at mail boxes.

Lot E This lot represents the largest single parking supply in Ferndale. Of the 280 spaces in this lot, 218 (78%) are three hour meters, 55 (20%) are ten hour meters and seven (12%) are handicapped accessible spaces. Peak occupancy for this lot occurred at 1:30 p.m. (49%) and the average occupancy was about 39%. About 78% of the cars stayed one hour or less and about 9% stayed five hours or more.

While this lot has some directional signs and a lot location signs, they need to be upgraded. For example, if your miss the entrance on Withington Street, there is no sign directing you to the Planavon Street entrance. The brickwall

that encloses much of this lot makes it hard to identify from the street and may seem imposing.

Lot F This lot contains 40 (35%) three hour meters, 70 (61%) ten hour meters and four (4%) handicapped accessible spaces. This lot had a peak occupancy of about 66% at 11:30 a.m. and an average occupancy of 60%. This lot had one of the most consistent occupancies all day.

Signagage leading to this lot is better than most lots and most ten hour meter poles are painted. The wall around this lot is an appropriate height and gives the driver a positive feeling about the lot.

Lot G Of the 54 spaces in this lot, nine spaces are three hour meters (17%), 42 spaces are ten hour meters (78%) and three spaces are handicap accessible (6%). This lot is well designed and maintained. Directional and locational signage for this lot is not good.

Peak occupancy for this lot was between 1:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. with 59% of the spaces occupied. The average occupancy for this lot was 31%. Twelve percent (12%) of the cars stayed one hour or less, 85.0% stayed three hours or less and 5% stayed five hours or more.

Lot H This lot contains 11 one hour meters (24%), 18 three hour meters (39%), 15 ten hour meters (33%) and two handicapped accessible spaces (4%). Peak occupancy occurred at 12:30 p.m. with 87% occupancy. The average occupancy was 51%. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the cars stayed one hour or less and 10% stayed five hours or more.

This lot is a prime location for all parking types, however there is no signage to alert a driver to the fact that this is a municipal lot. There are no walls around this lot and the aesthetics are not appealing.

Lot I Lot I contains six one hour meters (8%), 22 three hour meters (31%), 41 ten hour meters (58%), and two handicapped accessible spaces (3%). Peak occupancy occurred at 1:30 p.m. (78%) and the average occupancy was 65%. Forty six percent (46%) of the cars stayed one hour or less and 30% stayed five hours or more. This lot is not signed adequately but is well perceived by a driver because of its location.

Lot I This lot contains 12 three hour meters (12%), 15 ten hour meters (15%), and 72 reserved spaces (73%). Based on all of the spaces, peak occupancy occurred at 10:30 a.m. with an occupancy of 86%. The average occupancy of all spaces was 75%.

For the meters, 73% of the cars were staying one hour or less and no cars stayed more than four hours. This lot is not well signed.

Lot K Lot K contains 47 ten hour meters (96%), and two handicapped accessible spaces (4%). The peak occupancy for this lot was 24% and the average occupancy of this lot was only 12%. Surprisingly, 58% of the cars stayed one hour or less while only 4% stayed five hour or more. This lot has a good wall system but is poorly signed.

ON-STREET OBSERVATIONS

Seven (7) on-street parking areas were surveyed. Generally the peak for the on-street parallels the off-street peak. As was expected, the on-street spaces has a larger percentage of the cars staying one our or less, while only a small amount all day parking was found.

AVERAGE TURNOVER

For off and on-street parking areas an average turnover was shown. Turnover is defined as the number of times a space turns over. A turnover of one or less implies that there is very low turnover, and a higher percentage of the cars stay all day. For the off-street lots the turnover varied from .46 (Lot B) to 1.76 (Lot H). All of the on-street locations had average turnover of 2.5 of greater with the highest turnover on Withington Street (4.8)

The turnover rates are usually dependant on the space types (meters or time restrictions) and location of the spaces. Normally you would expect on-street spaces to have the highest turnover (usually 3-4 times) and off-street to vary from .5 to 2 times (again depending on the types of spaces in the lot). Finally, the turnover rate can be influenced by the relative occupancy. A lot with a lower average occupancy will also show a lower turnover rate.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATION

The following groups the results and recommendations by issues. The issues addressed are:

1. management and oversight of parking,
2. enforcement of parking,
3. signage, graphics and wayfinding,
4. parking lot improvements,
5. parking allocation and control,
6. parking economics, and
7. parking marketing.

PARKING MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

Currently the parking operations is managed by different people within the City. Enforcement is under the authority of the Police Department while the management and operation of the parking is divided between the City Treasurers Office, City Engineer and the City Manager.

From our review of the parking system there is a need to include a users perspective. Based upon the findings the following is recommended:

1. A parking committee should be formed. This parking committee could be a subcommittee of the DDA even though the parking extends beyond the DDA boundaries. This parking committee should ideally have members of City staff who are involved with the parking including the individuals mentioned above, members of the DDA and where there is an overlap with the DDA, members of the Ferndale Merchants Association.

2. The responsibilities of the parking committee would be similar to those in Royal Oak and would include:

    a) assessing the need for parking downtown and reviewing proposals by landowners for additional parking or changes to municipal parking,

b) a review of the financial conditions of the parking system including expenditures and revenues,

c) a review of policies including enforcement, allocation and location of parking, and

d) capital improvements.

3. The role of the parking committee would be to advise City Council on issues concerning parking and help build consensus for recommendations.

4. The parking committee in association with the Ferndale Merchants Association should be responsible for marketing the parking: pamphlets, advertisements or radio spots.

ENFORCEMENT OF PARKING

Parking enforcement in downtown Ferndale is currently done by one full-time person. In 1994 there were approximately 2,500 parking tickets written and for the first five months in 1995 there were 1,344 written. If this is projected for a full year there could be a total of 3,225 tickets for 1995 which represents a 30% increase over 1994. It was also interesting to note that the ticket average (fee collected per ticket) in 1995 has increased over 1994 by approximately 60%.

From the analysis of the turnover and occupancy studies it appears that enforcement of the parking regulations is adequate in the study area. However, there were comments from business people and land owners that parking enforcement may be too diligent. It is important to understand that there is a balance created by enforcement especially on street for short term parkers. This balance is between accommodating the need for quick in and out turnover spaces for customers and visitors and the need to provide adequate employee parking.

When employees park in short-term parking spaces that are more convenient, they take up a space for a customer or visitor and force that individual into a space that's either further away or that can be non-existent. Therefore it is important to maintain parking enforcement under any scenario of parking control.

SIGNAGE GRAPHICS AND WAYFINDING

As identified in a review of the various parking areas, a major concern with the parking in Ferndale is signage, graphics and wayfinding. In general there are three types of signs we consider for parking areas and these are:

1) Parking Directional Signs - which are defined as signs that are located on the street that direct by means of wording and arrows the location of available off-street parking.

2) Parking Location Signs - which are defined as signs located at the entrances to the off-street parking areas, identify the parking as municipal and may also further define the parking lot as customer/visitor parking, long-term parking, meter types and parking rates.

3) Parking Identification Signs - which are defined as signs for specific parking spaces that may be used for either on-street or off-street parking could identify a specific space as short-term or long-term or as required for handicap parking.

In general, the directional signs in Ferndale are inconsistently placed and includes green and white signs and older white signs that appear to have been backlit. These signs do not lead people in a consistent manner to all available municipal parking lots. Parking locational signs also are difficult to find and in most parking lots do not exist, there are no names of identification for specific lots. The parking identification signs in many of the parking lots are adequate.

Another issue that is of concern in these parking areas is the wayfinding ability of a parker once they have parked their vehicle. The wayfinding from ones' parking space to their destination and from their destination back to their parking space is not adequately addressed in most of the parking areas in Ferndale. This observation was made also by many of the businesses that were interviewed.

Many of the parking lots can also be confusing to a parker because they are not well signed. In some cases the wayfinding is affected by pedestrians having to walk between cars to get to a sidewalk to arrive at their destination. There is a lack of defined pathways in the larger lots. This is generally not an issue for the smaller parking lots but it is an issue specifically for Lots B and E that back the buildings fronting 9 Mile Road.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parking directional signs need to be added on Woodward Avenue, 9 Mile Road and Troy Street in particular, to lead drivers who are coming downtown to specific off-street areas. There is coordination that must occur because of the restrictions that may be on Woodward because it is a state route. However a sign design, including a logo and color should be established by the parking committee and then those signs placed on these streets to direct parkers to off-street parking areas. cost estimated $5,000.

2. Parking location signs must be placed at every municipal off-street parking lot regardless of the size of the parking area. These signs should state clearly that the parking area is for municipal parking and should contain a name, letter or number identifying each of these parking lots. Ideally, time restriction or meter types should be included on this sign.

   On parking areas that have more than one major entrance (such as Lot E) two parking locations signs may be required. cost estimated $10,000

3. In the parking areas that contain a high number of short-term parking spaces (one hour meters) wayfinding signs should be included. These signs would include a map of the downtown area, a location of each of the municipal parking areas, and the names of streets and key buildings so that people are able to identify where they have parked in relationship to where they are going. Lots that this may be applicable to are Lots A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I. Lot G was included because there seems to be a significant amount of turnover traffic in this lot despite the fact that it contains long-term meters. cost estimated $10,000

4. In general the actual parking signs in the lots are adequate where they occur. We would however recommend that the practice of painting the poles based upon the meter types be consistently done in each of the lots. Therefore all of the ten hour meter poles would be painted green, all the three hour meter poles should be painted a color other than silver and the one hour meters poles where they occur should be painted orange. cost estimated $3,000

PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS

In general the parking lots are well maintained and well laid-out. In lots where low walls have been built and landscaped, they provide a positive visual reinforcement for the parking lot. In some lots this type of improvement is not practical. However for Lot B we would recommend that this be considered since this is a prime parking area for potentially new visitor/customer parking.

1. A real concern is the wall height around Lot E. As previously discussed, this wall creates a visual and physical barrier to both people driving to the parking lot and to a pedestrian once they are in the parking area. This wall also hides the back of the businesses that this lot fronts and further reinforces the barrier between the street and these businesses. It is too expensive to consider demolishing this wall and there maybe neighborhood requirements to keep the wall. There are two possible ways to improve this situation; soften the facade with landscaping or to cut breaks in the wall at various intervals. This would allow visual and pedestrian access to the lot along Withington.

   cost estimated $2,500 to $8,000

2. The only other parking improvement that should be made would be to upgrade all the parking stalls identified as handicapped accessible to meet the new ADA Code. Spaces in Lot E as an example and other locations do not meet the code and should be upgraded.

   cost estimated $750

PARKING ALLOCATION/CONTROL

Each of the municipal parking lots in the study area were reviewed. Overall there are 1,082 municipal on-street and off-street parking spaces within the study area. For off-street spaces, about 2% of those are one hour meters, 48% three hour meters, 38% ten hour meters, 7% reserved spaces, about 2% miscellaneous and approximately 3% handicap accessible.

Allocation of long-term and short-term meters in the parking lot is critically important. Currently the two largest parking lots (Lot B and Lot E) appear to have appropriate allocation of short-term and long-term meters. In the future however, the number of ten hour meters in Lot B may be reduced as the demand for customer

visitor parking increases in Lot B.

Parking Lot F has both a combination of short-term and long-term meters and in general these appear to be adequate for the level of retail and commercial businesses surrounding this parking lot. Lot G's parking activity varied the most from its meter allocation. Almost all of Lot G's parking is ten hour meters, yet only 5% of the cars parking in that lot stayed more than five hours.

Lot I which is adjacent to the library had approximately two thirds of its spaces allocated to ten hour parking yet only 30% of the cars stayed five hours or more. Of all of the parking areas, Lot I appears to be out of balance with too many ten hour meters. From a perceptual standpoint the ten hour meters makes Lot I appear to be more of a long-term parking area.

Therefore, the only change in parking allocation would be to consider providing more one hour and three hour meters in the Library Lot (Lot J). A more extensive plan for parking allocation will be completed as a part of the next phase which will analyze the current and future demand for parking. There are, however, other issues in this section that concern parking control.

There are three types of parking control that can be used. These are passive, active and metered.

1. Passive Parking Control general consists of the use of only signs to designate certain parking areas.

2. Active Control utilizes a parking attendant and a gate, ticket dispenser and cash register.

3. Passive/Active meters which are extensively used in Ferndale, is a cross between an active and a passive system. Paying for parking makes the parking control active yet there is no human intervention at any point other than to collect the meters. Enforcement of any active or passive system can be the same.

During our analysis a questions was asked on whether a charge for parking should be totally eliminated in the downtown. The financial implications of this decision are discussed in Parking Economics however the decision to charge or not charge also

effects the control of parking.

We have looked at two options in this regard. The first is meters vs signing parking spaces. In general parking meters are easier to enforce than using timed parking spaces. By time parking spaces we mean designating certain parking areas for one or two hour parking such as on Withington Street just north of Lot E.

The meters tend to make long-term parkers think twice about parking in these spots especially if they are forced to feed the meter. A parking meter however does give the impression that parking is not free. Free parking can and is many times used as a marketing tool. Parking meters for customers and visitors may also represent an inconvenience in terms of having correct change to put in the meter and if their stay is beyond the time limit on the meter, going back and putting more money in it.

On the other hand, time parking spaces eliminate the need for change and may help with the marketing aspect of parking. This system is also less costly from operational and capital cost standpoint. Signage alone however, creates a significant problem for enforcement and may impact the goal of reserving on-street and close spaces in parking lots for short-term in and out visitor and customer use.

Another option, (especially in the larger parking lots i.e Lot E or Lot B) would be to go to a attendant system. The attendant would either take a payment in advance of parking or the parking lot could operate using a gate ticket and cash register type system. The use of a attendant has several positive aspects such as providing a person to act as a pair of eyes and ears increasing the perception of security in the parking area. It also provides a good public relation/marketing tool because that person can act as a point of contact for information. This system also makes validation possible.

Probably the biggest downside is the cost for an attendant. Not including the current expenses on the parking lots a preliminary estimate for the increase in operational cost in a lot if an attendant was used would be approximately $134.00 per space, depending on the size of the lot.

One option would be to try a pilot program with an attendant in Lot E. There are upfront capital costs that are involved for gates, ticket dispenses a card reader and a booth. A preliminary estimate of capital costs of all equipment including

installation is $38,000. Removing the meters from the lot including the poles may cost $8,000.

The overall operating cost for this lot, assuming that it is attended from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. six days per week would be $49,900. This does not include amortization of the equipment. The hourly charge for parking would be the same as other lots. Monthly parkers could be handled with a card reader, or if that is eliminated, the monthly parker could sign the back of the ticket.

Based upon the review of the overall operations it is our recommendations that the City maintain this current system of parking meters. This represents the most economical way of controlling parking while also generating needed revenue for further capital improvement to the parking system. In the next phase of this project we will investigate implementing the attendant system in Lot E.

PARKING ECONOMICS

One of the critical tasks in Phase 1 is to review the parking finances and to recommend a means of bringing the system into a balance in terms of revenue and expenses. This also includes looking at capital improvements to the parking system and setting up a capital improvement fund from available net revenues.

The first point is to review charging or not charging in Ferndale. Whether or not parking is charged for, there are still expenses incurred in the enforcement, snow plowing, and maintenance of the parking areas. Not charging for parking results in a savings in maintenance and collection of the meters. Furthermore, Ferndale would be one of the few communities in the area that does not charge for parking.

It is also important to establish a means to generate funds to put into a capital improvement program so that the needed improvements and upgrades in parking areas could be completed and that additional parking areas can be created in the future as the demand increases. The ability to charge for parking is an important element in being able to get certain types of financing.

Many parking area improvements (surface parking lot development or structure development) are financed through revenue bonds. Bond underwriters or financial consultants look to the ability of the parking system to charge an appropriate rate and generate revenue sufficient to meet all the expenses. There are obviously other

means of financing changes, but they generally involve general obligation or other type of funding that does not treat the parking system as a stand alone entity.

A means of eliminating a parking charge in Ferndale or reducing the impact of a needed increase in parking rates would be to create a special assessment district for parking. The assessment district would pro rate any projected deficit in the parking system over businesses that do not have adequate parking as determined by an analysis of parking needs. The assessment would be based on a per space basis and would only be made for the projected deficit in revenue in a given year for the parking system. Therefore, if a rate increase of 50% was to be proposed, it would be possible to reduce this rate increase and then apply the projected deficit over a pro-rated basis.

There is no firm recommendation concerning charging or not charging for parking. Our recommendation though is to increase the parking rates to allow the parking system to stand on its own and to generate a sufficient net income to put money into a parking capital improvement program. The base recommendation is a follows:

1. A primary recommendation is that the parking system create a capital improvement fund, funded from net revenues. The parking rates should be set such that they meet the revenue operating expenses and set aside for the capital improvement program. Operating expenses in this case should also include the amount paid to the police department for the enforcement of the parking.

2. Increase meter rates from approximately 25¢ per hour to 40¢ per hour for all one and three hour meters. This represents approximately a 60% increase in the rates. For the ten hour meters, hourly charges would increase from 10¢ to 20¢ per hour. This represent a 100% increase in the rate. There are approximately 100 monthly permits sold for spaces in the municipal parking lots. The monthly rates is currently $20 per month. We would recommend that this increase to $25 per month.

   Based upon these projected rate increases we would project a first year gross revenue from the parking system of $202,240. This would still result in a projected net loss in the parking system because expenses for 1996 are expected to be $215,900. However in the second year of the rate increase we would project the gross revenue to increase to $215,00 and operating expenses to only

increase to $252,00 which would result in approximately a $25,000 profit to the parking system

This does not provide enough net revenue to fund the improvements as outlined in this phase report. We feel however, that a larger rate increase may hurt businesses in the downtown. It is important that a marketing campaign be implemented to help soften the blow of a rate increase.

3. The third recommendation for the parking system is to move parking fine revenue from the general fund to the Auto Parking Fund. If this is not politically possible, we would then propose the general fund payment from the parking fines be kept at the 1995 dollar amount. Any increase above that level in future years would go into the Auto Parking Fund.

PARKING MARKETING

The use of parking as a marketing tool for the downtown requires that the parking be actively marketed. Ferndale has produced tri-fold documents that show locations of businesses and to some extent, municipal parking areas. In conjunction with the recommendation to form a Parking Committee, the following elements may be included in their possible responsibilities.

1. Prepare a tri-fold pamphlet that specifically identifies municipal parking lots, the name of the parking lots, the hours of operation, the parking rates and key landmarks to make identification of the parking lots easier. Also, prepare a simpler map to be included in local newspapers or other advertisements of events.

2. Consider using radio spots promoting available parking in Ferndale. This could also be done in conjunction with events planned in the downtown.

3. Consider a parking validation system if attendant parking is implemented in Lots E or B. This would give the patron up to two hours free parking if their ticket is validated by a participating merchant.

4. The signage recommendations are critical to marketing the parking in Ferndale. Without proper signage the above recommendations can not be implemented effectively.

5. An estimated budget without the radio spots for the promotion of the parking areas from $5,000 to $8,000.