

Joint Neighborhood Parking Task Force Recommendations Report

A Joint Neighborhood Parking Task Force of the College Station City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission was created through City Council Resolution on February 9, 2012. The scope of the Task Force was to gather and evaluate data related to neighborhood parking issues, solicit input from stakeholders, formulate recommendations, and forward final recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council for final action. The Task Force consisted of the following appointed Council Members and Planning and Zoning Commissioners:

Council Member Blanche Brick (Chair)
Council Member Julie Schultz
Council Member David Ruesink

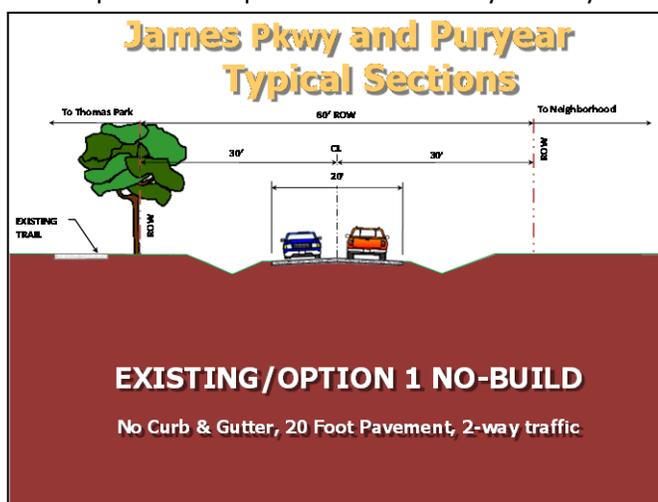
Commissioner Jerome Rektorik
Commissioner Jim Ross
Commissioner Jodi Warner

The Issue

The City Council's Strategic Plan, updated in 2012, identified neighborhood parking issues as a problem affecting the City's Neighborhood Integrity. It is important to protect the unique character of neighborhoods because they contribute greatly to a unique sense of place and community identity. Neighborhood parking has an impact on the quality and stability of neighborhoods. One way to maintain neighborhood integrity is through solutions aimed at decreasing on-street parking problems. In order to identify effective solutions, it is important to first understand what factors and situations cause failing on-street parking conditions.

College Station's older neighborhoods – neighborhoods located primarily within Eastgate, Southside, and South Knoll areas – were developed as early as the 1930's when automobiles were less prevalent.

Many of these established residential neighborhoods in the City include streets designed as "yield streets", consisting of narrow pavement, at times with no curb and gutter. These streets allow for two-way traffic and limited on-street parking. These neighborhoods were created at a time when vehicles were not as abundant; with narrow streets, small lots, and limited off-street parking. Yield streets contribute greatly to neighborhood character when working as intended. However, many of these streets are in neighborhoods that have converted to high percentages of renter-occupancy. Houses originally intended for single-family occupancy are being utilized as investment property or being demolished and replaced by larger houses with more bedrooms, which are rented. An increase in the number of people per residence has resulted in a higher density of on-street parking. These conditions have caused the yield street design to fail in many instances. Parking problems on these streets are increasing with the rapidly increasing population. The Task Force has restrained itself to the development of a set of tools to address emergency access issues.



As on-street parking increases on yield streets it also causes associated impacts on emergency service delivery. When vehicles fill both sides of streets built to yield design standards, fire trucks cannot pass through the street to reach citizens in need of assistance. A number of neighborhoods have experienced overcrowding and emergency access concerns due to an increase in on-street parking.

Current Approach

The City currently uses a limited number of options to alleviate on-street parking problems. **These options include land use planning, development regulations, neighborhood plans, code enforcement, and parking removal.** Additional solutions are necessary to prevent further emergency access concerns. The first recommendation of the Task Force is to continue current practices. **Additionally, the Task Force recommends existing options be expanded.**



Land Use Planning

When different land uses are separated far from one another they require greater distances of travel. This creates an environment where homes, jobs, and shopping are segregated and often require vehicles to travel from one use to the next. College Station is dominated by suburban style land uses that encourage the use of vehicles and require intensive amounts of parking. Land Use Planning allows the City to prepare for a compatible mix of uses, within one development or as separate developments, where shared parking and other forms of transportation may be incorporated.

Later, at the site planning stage, larger scale single-use developments can be designed to encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use to minimize the amount of parking that may be required within the site.

Development Regulations

Development regulations are city ordinances created to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens. More specifically, development regulations are the mechanism for implementing the goals of the City's comprehensive plan. Currently, College Station limits single-family residences to four unrelated people and requires a minimum of two off-street parking spaces for each single-family dwelling unit. This guarantees that each single-family residence will have available parking and may reduce congestion of on-street parking. **The Task Force recommends an increase of the current minimum requirements for off-street parking, increasing the standard to one parking space required for each bedroom in a single-family dwelling.**

Neighborhood planning and special studies

The City's current Neighborhood Planning Process includes a multi-step process. Through the Neighborhood Plan community members identify issues that should be addressed. Next, City staff compiles data and works with neighborhood members to analyze key issues and develop each plan. Once a plan is completed public notifications are sent out for a public hearing and Council action.

Neighborhood plans assist neighborhoods in developing area-specific approaches to implementing parking goals. At this level, plans can focus on identifying parking issues specific to small defined areas. These plans are a helpful tool in identifying known parking and emergency access problems. Staff and citizens propose solutions for these problems to be implemented in neighborhood plans.

Enforcement

Parking enforcement is a reactive tool used by the city to prevent vehicles from parking illegally. Both the Planning and Development Services Department and the Police Department are responsible for ensuring compliance with City codes and ordinances. Citations may be issued by both departments when a parking violation occurs.

Planning and Development Services has four full-time employees and eight part-time employees who work in the Northgate District that, in addition to other duties, are responsible for providing parking enforcement with the Northgate area. The Northgate District employees monitor 103 on-street parking meters, a 117-space surface parking lot, and look for violations such as parking in a fire lane, parking in a bike lane, and parking too close to a fire hydrant. In 2012, the City issued 6,425 parking citations in the Northgate area.

Parking Removal Program

Currently, parking is permitted on all city streets unless prohibited by ordinance and where prohibited by state law. **The Task Force recommends the City consider removing parking on one or both sides of a street per a recommendation from the City's Traffic Management Team only if there is a safety concern verified by the City.** The City would continue to receive parking removal requests from neighborhoods or citizens and evaluate the impact on-street parking has on public safety in the area. The following is the City's process that must be followed in order to remove parking from public streets:

1. Concern Initiation –A citizen informs the City of a potential problem resulting from on-street parking (Citizen Initiated) or the City observes the need to remove on-street parking from a street(s) (City Initiated).
2. Concern Evaluation – The City's Traffic Management Team (TMT) will evaluate the citizen initiated request or city initiated concern and analyze the impact existing on-street parking has on public safety. If the existing on-street parking is determined to impact public safety, the TMT will approve a recommendation which will be included on a future City Council Agenda as a public hearing.
3. Public Notice – Per the recommendation from the TMT to remove on-street parking on a specific street(s), notices will be mailed to property owners and residents on both sides of the street(s) where parking is proposed to be removed. These notices will provide the date of the City Council meeting when the public hearing for the proposed ordinance will occur.
4. Public Hearing – The proposal to remove on-street parking from a specified street(s) will be presented to council, followed by a public hearing where citizens can voice their opinions. Then the City Council can discuss and vote on the proposed parking removal ordinance.

The Task Force recommends the City only pursue neighborhood initiated parking removal when it is related to public safety. In all other cases, the individual neighborhood would need to address parking issues through a private process, such as deed restrictions and covenants. The Task Force reviewed the current Parking Removal Program during its meetings and recommends the process be continued and enforced with the noted refinements.

Recommended Solutions

The Task Force held six meetings to discuss and develop a set of solutions to address parking problems. In addition, stakeholder meetings were held on September 26, 2012 and November 14, 2012 to present new parking solutions to community members and gain feedback on the proposals.

The Task Force identified neighborhood parking issues within three neighborhood contexts:

- established neighborhoods with existing problems,
- established neighborhoods with emerging problems, and
- future neighborhoods with potential problems.

After discussion, Task Force members chose to limit the focus of their efforts to community concerns of neighborhood parking issues related to emergency access. They developed their recommendations based on how solutions would be applied, either at a city-wide level or in new neighborhoods. **The Task Force further defined existing city practices that warrant expansion or adjustment. Based on meeting discussions and stakeholder feedback, the Task Force recommends the following to Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council:**

City-wide Recommendations

The Task Force recommends a set of solutions to aid in the reduction of neighborhood parking problems city-wide. These recommendations should be required for redevelopment and new development.

Increased Off-Street Parking Requirements

Currently, College Station requires a minimum of two off-street parking spaces for each single-family dwelling unit. **The Task Force recommends an increase of the current minimum requirements for off-street parking, increasing the standard to one parking space required for each bedroom in a single-family dwelling, up to four required parking spaces.**

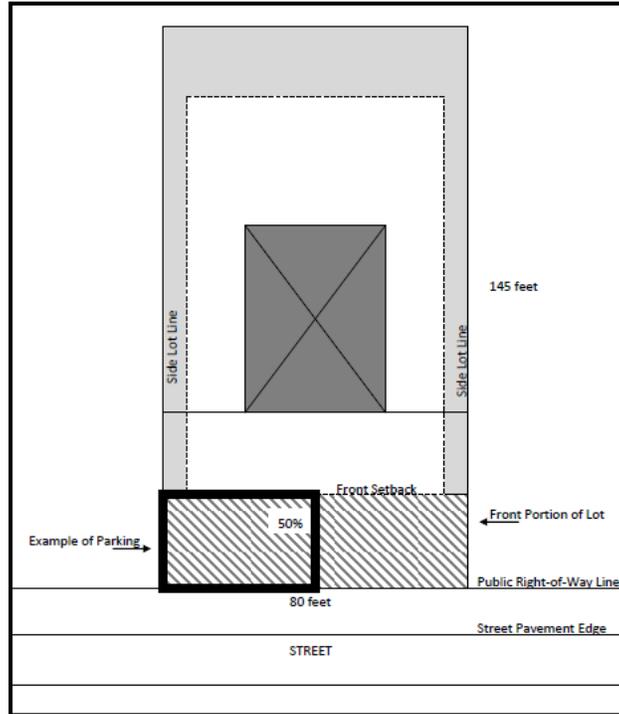
Increasing the number of required off-street parking spaces for every single-family residential use would increase the availability of off-street parking for residences. If utilized, this would alleviate congestion caused by on-street parking and would ensure off-street parking is available if action to remove on-street parking was required.

Maximum Front Yard Coverage

This recommendation is that no more than 50% of the front portion of the property be used for parking or be impervious. This recommendation is currently being implemented in "Area 5" as a result of the Southside Area Neighborhood Plan. It requires all parking be located within the areas described below:

1. Anywhere on the lot behind the structure with no limit on the size of the area;
2. Anywhere in the side yards of the lot with no limit on the size of the area; and,

3. An area located in front of the structure not to exceed a size equivalent to 50% of the front portion of the property. The front portion of the property is the area of the lot within the side lot lines, the front setback, and the public right-of-way line (see graphic). The square footage of parking allowed by this calculation may be located within or outside the boundary of the area used for calculations (see graphic). The portion of the driveway located between the front property line and structure shall be included in the maximum parking area square footage.



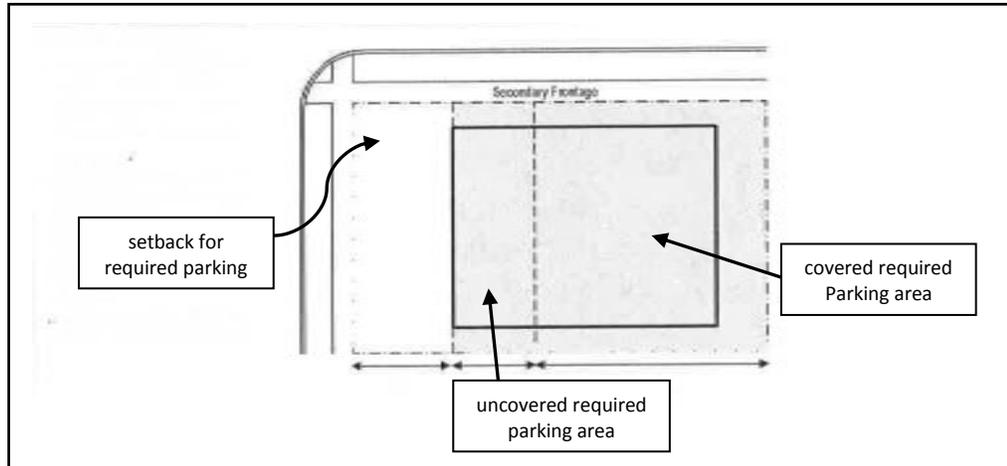
Context Specific Recommendations

The Task Force has developed a set of recommendations for use in new development and other context specific settings to aid in reducing neighborhood parking problems. These recommendations are proactive approaches to parking problems that may arise. These recommendations are intended to maintain the certainty of access for emergency vehicles in neighborhoods while also providing sufficient parking opportunities for residents and additional traffic calming measures for pedestrians. The Task Force understands these recommendations provide benefits but may also introduce new challenges. Some of the recommendations will increase construction costs and some may decrease development yield of neighborhoods.

The Task Force recommends minimum garage/required parking setbacks for new development and an additional solution, chosen from six recommended options described below. Some solutions, such as narrow streets and parking removal with platting, require the provision of additional off-street parking measures to ensure adequate parking is available.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS - Minimum Garage/Required Parking Setback (Mandatory)

This practice requires garage and off-street parking areas intended to meet parking requirements, occur behind a specific point on the lot increasing the driveway length on each lot thereby providing additional off-street parking and avoiding blockage of sidewalks.



Wide Streets (Option 1)

Current local subdivision street standards generally include slower design speeds and a 27-foot wide pavement consisting of one 20-foot yield lane and varying 7-foot parking on both sides. Wider streets function similar to current collector street standards, which generally include higher design speeds and a 34-foot or wider pavement consisting of two 12-foot lanes and a 7-foot parking lane on both sides. If the street includes bike lanes then no parking is allowed on the street.

Wide streets allow for access through a street, even when high volumes of parked vehicles are present on both sides of the street. This also ensures that emergency access is maintained. Wide streets often induce higher travel speeds requiring traffic calming measures to improve safety and these roads are more costly to construct.

Narrow Streets (Option 2)

Current local subdivision street standards generally include slower design speeds and a 27-foot wide pavement consisting of one 20-foot yield lane and varying 7-foot parking on both sides. Streets may narrow to a 20-foot street width. In situations where a building is greater than 30-feet, a street adjacent to the structure must be at least 26-feet in width to allow access for aerial fire apparatus.

Narrow streets increase pedestrian and vehicular safety because they encourage slower traveling speeds. Narrow streets do not accommodate on-street parking, ensuring that emergency access is maintained. Narrow streets must be accompanied by alley fed off-street parking and/or overflow parking areas. Construction costs are lower for narrower streets but the savings is likely offset by the costs associated with required construction of alleys and overflow parking.

Parking Removal with Platting (Option 3)

This recommendation consists of parking removal on one or both sides of the street at the time of platting through Council action. Parking removal can be used in response to parking problems on existing streets to maintain certainty of emergency access. This option must be accompanied by other measures, such as overflow parking and minimum garage setbacks to provide adequate off-street parking.

Alley-Fed Off-Street Parking (Option 4)

Alleys are designed to provide access to the rear or side of a property and are generally 20-feet in width. They also may be used for public vehicular or utility access. Residential lots served by an alley should only have driveway access via the alley and provide ample off-street parking. Alley-fed parking areas help ensure adequate off-street parking exists, even if parking removal must occur on the streets in a development.

Wide Lot Frontages (Option 5)

Currently, R-1 Single-Family Residential zoning permits lots as narrow as 50-feet in width. This recommendation would require a minimum lot frontage of 70-feet decreasing the density within neighborhoods and increasing more on-street parking area in front of every lot. This option would decrease development yields.

Overflow Parking Areas (Option 6)

Overflow parking consists of remote parking facilities that are privately maintained and located outside of the right-of-way on private property, such as HOA common areas. These parking areas are provided in addition to minimum lot-based off-street parking requirements to increase off-street parking within a neighborhood. Overflow parking areas should be designed as part of a site’s overall design and may have multiple uses or be part of a larger community gathering area. To minimize the environmental impact of overflow parking, alternative paving may be used in these areas.

In summary, The Task Force recommends three solutions to aid in the reduction of neighborhood parking problems city-wide. These recommendations include:

- refine the current parking removal process to allow parking removal on one or both sides of a street per a recommendation from the City’s Traffic Management Team only if there is a verified safety concern,
- increase the off-street parking requirements based on the number of bedrooms provided, and
- require no more than 50% of the front portion of the property be used for parking or be impervious.

The Task Force also recommends for new developments:

- minimum garage/required parking setbacks.

In addition, new development would also be required to provide an additional solution, chosen from the following six recommended options:

- wide streets,
- narrow streets,
- parking removal with platting,
- alley-fed of-street parking,
- wide lot frontages, or
- overflow parking areas

Some solutions, such as narrow streets and parking removal with platting, would require the provision of additional off-street parking measures to ensure adequate parking is available.

Additional Issues

The Task Force scope only addresses the emergency assess portion of on-street parking concerns. The recommendations provided by the Task Force do not solve other neighborhood problems stemming from increased densities in single-family neighborhoods. At some point, it may be necessary to discuss solutions aimed at decreasing the population density in these areas. This may include considering options to reduce rental conversions through revised subdivision regulations and city ordinances reducing the number of unrelated persons in single-family residences.

Next Steps

If the City Council approves the recommendations given by the Task Force, City Staff would begin to create ordinances to address the concerns outlined above. Public hearings would be held beginning in the spring, to gather additional input from the community regarding the ordinance language. It is anticipated that ordinance amendments may be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission for recommendation and then to City Council for final action in the summer.