

INTRODUCTION

Public streets are primarily intended for travel, emergency and property access. Parking may be allowed provided it does not interfere with the primary intent; however, the Town has no obligation to provide parking. The Town does control a substantial parking inventory (both on and off street) and should manage that inventory in a way that best serves residents and businesses, while not interfering with safe travel.

This document has the following sections:

- Goals for a Parking Policy
- Policy Tools
- Choosing the Tools
 - Avoiding Unintended Consequences
 - Process for Implementation

GOALS FOR A PARKING POLICY

According to TAC's decision criteria, decisions should be based on safety, mobility, equity, environment, public health and priority (feasibility). These criteria may apply to parking in the following manner:

SAFETY

Parking should not:

- Substantially interfere with traffic visibility at intersections and crosswalks
- Impede the movement of emergency vehicles and access to hydrants.

MOBILITY

Parking should not interfere with access to driveways and streets.

However, at the same time, those who need parking (residents, guests of residents, business customers and employees) should be able to find a safe, legal and reasonably convenient space.

EQUITY

The desire for equity has three implications for a parking policy:

- An adjustment in parking policy should not simply move the problem to another street.
- Parking policy should reflect measurable conditions and should be applied uniformly for a given set of conditions.
- Most residents provide their own long-term parking on their own property. Given the high value of land in Arlington, the opportunity cost of doing this is substantial.

Therefore, equity demands that if the Town makes a town-owned space (either on or off street) available for long term (especially overnight) parking, a fair market rent should be charged.

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Parking should be controlled to:

- Minimize the water runoff created by large impermeable surfaces
- Discourage high vehicle ownership, which leads to more vehicle usage and traffic
- Encourage the use of other modes (walking, cycling, public transit) for short trips around town.

PRIORITY

Objectivity is important. Parking can be an extremely controversial and emotional topic. It will require a substantial effort, and political courage, to implement an effective and comprehensive policy.

POLICY TOOLS

The following is a list of tools that might be used:

PARKING RESTRICTIONS NEAR INTERSECTIONS AND DRIVEWAYS

Town bylaws (Article V, Section 1) currently prohibit parking

“(g) In front of any private road or driveway or within three (3) feet on either side thereof, moreover on the opposite side of any driveway in such a manner as to inhibit the entry or departure from same....and (o) Upon any street or highway within twenty (20) feet of any intersecting way, except alleys.”

These restrictions are intended to ensure that there is:

- Sufficient room to maneuver in and out of driveways.
- Sufficient visibility for drivers at intersections.
- Sufficient room to turn at intersections (especially for larger vehicles such as fire, oil or garbage trucks).

These existing bylaws are often disregarded by motorists. Furthermore, the 3-foot clearance may not be sufficient if the driveway is narrow, and the opposite side restriction is vague, and is thus likely to be violated.

PARKING RESTRICTIONS NEAR MARKED CROSSWALKS

In many jurisdictions, there are significant restrictions on parking (up to 50 feet) on the approach to a marked crosswalk. This is designed to ensure pedestrian/motorist visibility. These restrictions do not currently exist in Arlington. In the absence of curb extensions, we would recommend a ban on parking for a minimum of 20 feet on the side of approaching traffic in heavily traveled areas.

OVERNIGHT PARKING BAN

The town currently prohibits overnight parking on public streets. This provides the following benefits:

- Provides a time when streets can be cleared of snow at night, making it less necessary to impose a daytime snow emergency, and enabling snow to be removed more thoroughly.

- Discourages residents from owning (and having to find parking for) a larger number of vehicles than can be accommodated on their properties.
- Discourages use of the streets for long term storage of vehicles.
- Allows emergency vehicles easier access and better visibility in the dark.
- Allows better visibility for policing the streets at night.

The overnight parking ban has the disadvantage of forcing many residents to park their vehicles in situations that block other vehicles in narrow private driveways overnight.

PARKING ON ONE-SIDE OF THE STREET

Ten feet of clear pavement is typically required for a vehicle to pass on a straightaway (more on a curve). Many residential streets are only 25' wide. Where cars and/or trucks are parked on both sides, this often leaves barely enough room for vehicles to pass. One-side parking provides the following benefits:

- Ensures that ten feet of clear pavement is made available for vehicles to pass.
- Provides additional maneuvering room for driveway entry and exit.

One-side parking has the following disadvantages:

- Reduces the available parking supply
- By leaving a wider through lane, may encourage speeding on the street.
- Creates uneven parking privileges between different sides of the street.

Considerations in determining the side where parking should be allowed include the following:

- Prefer the side with fewer intersections, driveways and fire hydrants
- On a one-way street, prefer the right side (eases driver egress in snow)
- Prefer the side opposite the overhead wires (eases fire operations)

TIME LIMITS ON PARKING

The imposition and enforcement of time limits reflects the view that short term parking should take priority over long term parking. Time limits are typically 1 to 2 hours. The benefits are that:

- Short term parking serves a greater number of people with the same parking space.
- An enforced time-limit discourages all-day commuter parking, thus leaving spaces open for short-term (business customer) parking.

A disadvantage is that time limits require some effort (two passes) for enforcement.

NO PARKING AT A PARTICULAR TIME OF DAY

Another policy intended to discourage all day parking is a short-duration ban on all parking at some time during the day (for example, 10 – 11 AM). The advantage of this approach over a time limit is that it only requires one pass for enforcement. Although not seen in Arlington, this technique is used to discourage commuter parking in parts of Winchester.

A disadvantage is that there is no parking allowed for the designated short-duration.

PARKING METERS

Parking meters provide the following benefits:

- They can be used to support either short term or all-day parking.
- Rates can be set to ensure that a few spaces generally remain available for business customers.
- With a short time limit, they provide for short term parking with only one pass required for enforcement.
- Revenue.

They have the following disadvantages:

- Capital and maintenance cost.
- Inconvenience to users of payment (although, today, this can be minimized through the use of payment stations and smart cards).

DEMAND MANAGEMENT: BUSINESSES AND SCHOOLS

Currently, the Town is subsidizing business employee parking by allowing them to park at no charge on residential streets. However, shifting the cost of parking to employees can result in a significant reduction in solo driving to work. Therefore, there is potential for reducing the demand for student and employee parking among businesses and schools. The following steps should be considered:

a. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that employers are doing what they can to encourage travel by means other than solo auto. For example, in a community meeting for the East Arlington parking study, it appeared that many of the businesses were not aware that they could provide transit passes to their employees with pre-tax dollars.

b. Impose a charge on parking permits that reflects the true cost of the parking space.

Examples of actual charges include:

- Lexington: \$225 - \$250 per year for business parking, (~\$20/month)
- Arlington Center: \$40 per month, recently raised from \$25
- Cambridge: \$200 - \$300 per month at commercial garages near Harvard and Kendall

c. Offer discounts on permits to businesses that are (a) taking demand management actions, such as offering transit passes pre-tax or (b) making their on-site spaces available to others during evening hours, to relieve the pressure on residential streets in the evening.

DEMAND MANAGEMENT: RESIDENTS

A number of steps can be taken to discourage long-term parking demand among residents:

a. Continue enforcement of the overnight parking ban. Any exemptions to the overnight ban should be accompanied by a fee at least as high as that charged for parking in a municipal lot.

b. Work with a car-sharing organization, such as ZipCar, to bring car sharing into the neighborhood. This provides residents with an alternative to car ownership.

CHOOSING THE TOOLS

The choice of the appropriate tool involves two elements:

- Ensuring that the new policy does not do more harm than good via unintended consequences
- Providing a fair and transparent public process for tool selection and implementation.

AVOIDING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

If a parking policy change is contemplated, it is best to think through who the users are, and how they might react to the new policy. In Arlington, users may be:

- Local residents, seeking short term, all-day or overnight parking for their own vehicles.
- Guests of residents, including people doing business with residents (e.g., contractors), seeking short term, all-day or overnight parking.
- Local business/school employees or students, seeking all-day parking.
- Visitors (customers) to businesses, schools, or public buildings, seeking short term parking.
- Commuters, parking in Arlington in order to take public transit or carpool to another destination, seeking all-day parking.

Reactions by these users to a new parking restriction might include:

1. Choosing not to make the trip to this part of Arlington. If the user is a commuter, this outcome is probably desirable; however, if the user is a business customer, the outcome is not desirable.
2. Choosing a different mode (walk, bike, MBTA) for the trip. For some users, this may not be feasible; for others, particularly those traveling from Arlington, Somerville, Cambridge or Boston, it may be feasible.
3. For residents, reducing the number of cars that they own.
4. Parking in a location where the restriction or fee does not apply (the next street over). Note that in the absence of a comprehensive policy that covers a wide area, experience indicates that many motorists will choose this option. For example, if a time limit or other restriction is applied to a side street, but not to a nearby arterial, parking will shift to the arterial, thus exacerbating visibility issues at driveways and side streets on that arterial.
5. Continuing to park either by paying the fee (if that is an option), or violating the restriction (with lax enforcement, this may be a rational response).

PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A change in parking policy on a particular street should come from one of several sources:

1. The Town, as part of a comprehensive plan for parking which includes that street.
2. Public safety officials, through a finding that the current parking situation does not permit safe travel on the street, especially for emergency responders such as fire trucks. Since the first obligation of the Town is the safety of residents, such a finding can and should result in the appropriate restriction (such as one-side parking), whether or not the abutters request it. However, it would still be desirable to obtain abutter support.

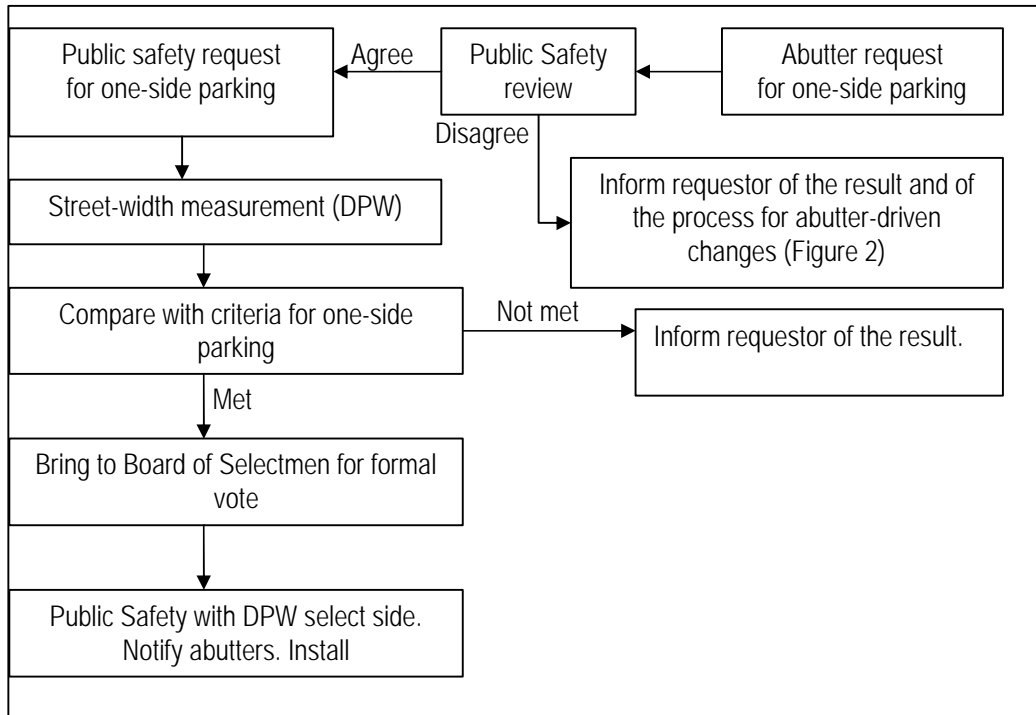


Figure 1 Process for Public Safety Driven Changes

3. Abutters. Although they don't "own" the public street, they are aware of the parking issues and would be most affected by a change in policy. Abutter-driven policy changes should conform to the following guidelines designed, first, to ensure strong neighborhood and/or business support and second, to minimize spillover effects.
 - a. The area affected will cover at least 20 households or business addresses, and preferably at least an entire block. (The Town does not have time to deal with house-by-house policy changes, where the problem is simply moved to a neighbor.)
 - b. There must be at least 2/3 support for the proposed change from those surveyed.(Abutter-driven changes often provide a benefit primarily for the abutters, at some cost to others. Therefore, they should have strong neighborhood support to even be considered.)

- c. Options available for abutter-driven changes include:
 - One-side parking (which may be proposed for only part of a block, if physical conditions warrant)
 - Time limits
 - Prohibition on parking at a certain time of day
- d. In a neighborhood where parking restrictions (such as time limits) already exist, a new time limit or time-of-day prohibition should adjoin an area where such a restriction already exists.
- e. Given the higher speeds and heavier traffic volumes of collector and arterial roadways, if a restriction designed to prevent all-day parking is applied to a local residential street, the same restriction should also be applied to any connecting collector or arterial located within a block of that residential street.

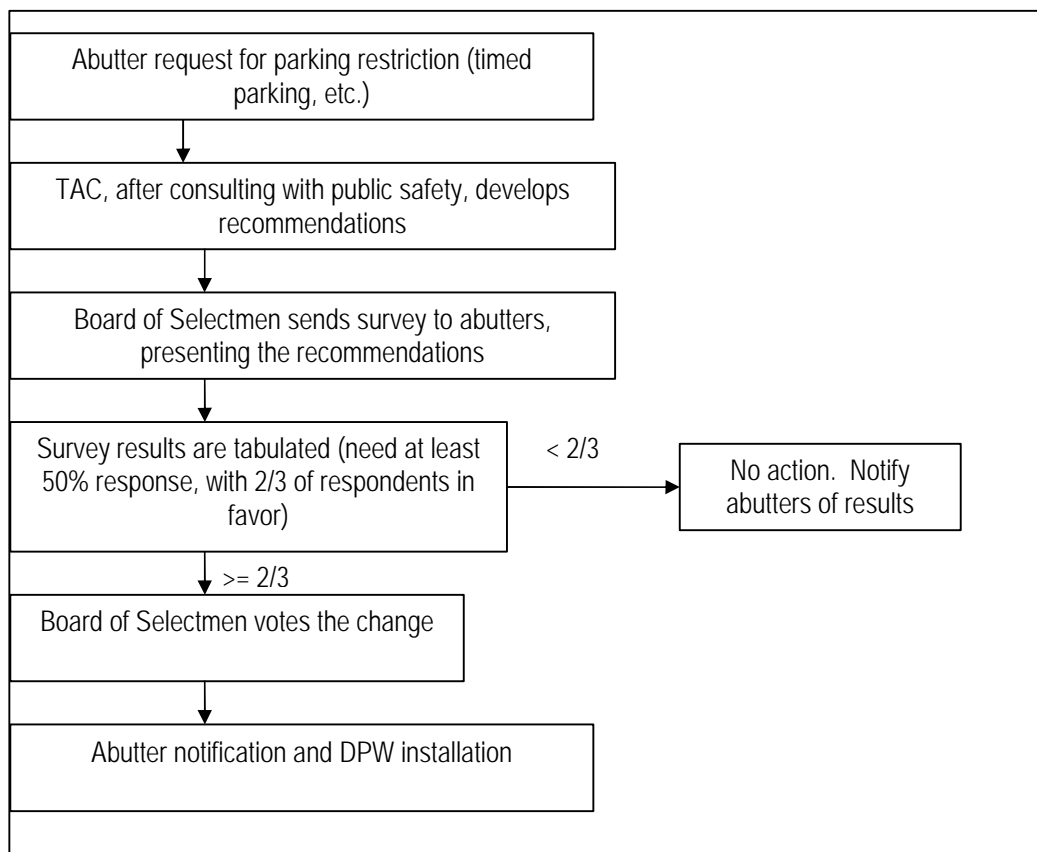


Figure 2 Process for Abutter-Driven Changes