

DOWNTOWN CHICO BUSINESS ASSOCIATION



A Walkable Downtown

A Pedestrianization Project Strategy for Parking Management

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3/31/2008

Prior efforts to plan parking resources have focused on the convenience of the motorist. This has resulted in incoherent policies and regulations, with inconsistent enforcement, and a pedestrian-hostile environment. The purpose of this planning effort is to provide an optimized experience for the pedestrian. If the pedestrian experience is enhanced, it is expected that motorists will be happy to park a few blocks from their eventual destination, and take advantage of the many features in the downtown district. These recommendations, and the proposed timeline for implementation, are but one approach to achieving the stated purpose of increasing pedestrian safety, comfort, and convenience, offered with the hope that further refinement of the model will proceed as policy makers and staff interpret it.

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Purpose and Scope

Best practices in urban design strive to increase the “walkability” of commercial, civic, and cultural centers. Specifically, measures that increase the pedestrian’s perception of safety and comfort make a district more inviting and create the presence of a “third place” destination for leisure time and recreation, and a desirable location for commercial and business practice.

Every parked car represents at least one ambulatory pedestrian, so the provision of on-street and structured parking facilities reflects a district’s commitment to pedestrian safety, comfort and convenience. When on-street parking is concentrated within a pedestrian corridor, the increased vehicular traffic diminishes the pedestrian experience, whereas parking concentrated on a district’s periphery reduces the traffic congestion and increases the pedestrian’s sense of security and tranquility.

In researching alternatives to constructing new parking facilities, the Parking Subcommittee of the Downtown Chico Business Association discovered that the problem to be solved was not, as previously supposed, simply a matter of capacity, but rather that the pedestrian experience of downtown visitors is less than ideal. The desire to park as close as possible to a destination is a barometer of a visitor’s enthusiasm for being afoot in the district.

The challenge is one of perspective. Prior efforts to plan parking resources have focused on the convenience of the motorist. This has resulted in incoherent policies and regulations, with inconsistent enforcement, and a pedestrian-hostile environment. Parking in-lieu fees, for example, were intended to make sure that new development provided for sufficient nearby parking to support the activities within the development. The result, however, has been expanses of underutilized asphalt lots and stifled investment in the downtown.

By recognizing that the purpose of this planning effort is to provide an optimized experience for the pedestrian rather than the motorist, it must be remembered that most visitors to a downtown inhabit both roles. If the pedestrian experience is enhanced, it is expected that motorists will be happy to park a few blocks from their eventual destination, and take advantage of the many features in the downtown district.

In examining the findings of the Downtown Access Planning Charrette (hereafter referred to as “the charrette”), it became clear that the recommendations, while meriting further consideration, were not adequately structured as a project implementation specification. The goal of this document is to address this shortcoming by providing a suggested project planning context. These recommendations, and the proposed timeline for implementation, are but one approach to achieving the stated purpose of increasing pedestrian safety, comfort, and convenience, offered with the hope that further refinement of the model will proceed as policy makers and staff interpret it.

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Principle One – Meter Revenue Reinvestment

Donald Shoup, the leading authority on urban parking planning, argues for three reforms: abolish parking requirements for new construction, use market pricing to manage demand, and return revenues collected from meters and permits to the district as improvements. It is with this third critical reform that our first principle is concerned.

Revenues collected from parking meters, permits and in-lieu fees in the downtown parking district are accounted for by Fund 853, which provides for investment in parking infrastructure and programs that enhance parking availability. Currently, Fund 853 is primarily committed to debt service on bonds issued to fund the construction of the existing parking structure at Third and Salem streets.

At the current repayment schedule, the structure will not be paid off until in 2024. In the meantime, the fund grows, and net of debt service, a required \$235,000 cash reserve, administrative expense, and a transit subsidy, a surplus of \$1.9 million has accrued. The remaining outstanding balance on the parking structure indebtedness is \$2.1 million.

The rate of interest paid on the remaining balance exceeds the rate of interest earned on Fund 853 deposits. Fiscal prudence argues for the swift retirement of the outstanding bonds, while making incremental investment in fixed assets, technologies, and other resources that can both modify motorist behavior and accelerate revenue collection to optimize limited parking resources.

Policy

In order to successfully reprioritize Fund 853 revenues, a suite of policies must direct staff to implement programs intended to maximize parking availability. In keeping with best practices demonstrated in numerous other similar communities, the following policy objectives are recommended to align staff efforts with desired outcomes.

Adopt 85% parking space occupancy goal

The ideal saturation level of on-street parking in a downtown is about 85%. In a typical block face, there are 7 to 9 parallel parking spaces installed. This varies depending on the presence of driveways, etc., but overall, this is a good estimate. Therefore, 85% occupancy represents the availability of 1 or 2 spaces in every block face, at any particular time. Fewer spaces means that a casual visitor to a district perceives an inadequate availability of parking, while more spaces indicates an overabundance, and an inefficient market for parking, producing suboptimum revenues. Adopted policies ideally aim to maintain parking occupancy at around 85%. *This corresponds to recommendation #1 from the charrette. The City Council approved this goal on 3/20/2007.*

Adopt two-prong parking structure decision process

At some point in the future a structure will be needed if downtown continues to grow. The following tests are recommended to determine when a new parking structure will be necessary:

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1. Occupancy test: Will downtown parking be at least 85% occupied when a garage is complete?
2. Cost-effectiveness test: Is it cheaper to add new parking than invest in alternatives to reduce parking demand, or provide peripheral parking?

If both of these tests are met, the City should proceed with a new parking structure. *This corresponds to recommendation #8 from the downtown charrette. The City Council approved this goal on 3/20/2007.*

Adopt a “Park Once” strategy

Best practices in urban parking planning provide for visitors to a district to leave their vehicle for extended periods of time, to enjoy the various benefits of visiting the district. Conveniently sited parking lots and structures located peripherally to a district enable motorists to easily access the resources in the district, and reduce the motor traffic in the core of the district, increasing pedestrian safety, comfort, and enjoyment. *This corresponds to recommendation #6 from the charrette, which encouraged the development of sharing agreements for private parking lots and converting them to public parking. The staff report indicated that up to 500 new spaces could be added through this strategy. However, no such sharing agreements are in process. Our recommendation is to introduce convenience and comfort incentives through implementation of smart meters and other technologies to encourage “park once” behavior.*

Modify parking requirements policy

This is the first reform recommended by Donald Shoup. Development in the city center has been stagnant. It may be argued that increased development in downtown is desirable to concentrate populations centrally, in keeping with emerging urban planning best practices. The current in-lieu parking impact fee of \$16,000 per space required by existing codes is stifling private investment in the downtown. An elimination of parking requirements, or a reduction of fees associated with parking impacts of new development should be scaled back to stimulate flows of private equity into the downtown. Fees may also be calibrated to specific uses as an incentive to encourage desirable uses. *This corresponds to recommendation #12 from the charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to expedite this recommendation.*

Allocate Fund 853 funds for reinvestment priorities

Currently, Fund 853 funds are dedicated to servicing the debt on the existing parking structure, plus administrative expenses, and maintaining the mandatory \$235,000 cash reserve. Additionally, the cost of meter maintenance and repair, as well as the salaries and benefits of the meter collection staff, are paid out of this fund. Transit passes provided free to downtown employees are also subsidized by the fund.

Due to the substantial surplus in Fund 853, resources might be utilized to improve parking availability. Moreover, the interest earned on the surplus deposits is less than that paid on the outstanding bonds. Fiscal prudence argues for the early retirement of the bonds, as well as

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investment in new technologies that can result in better enforcement, more frequent space turnover, and increased revenues.

The city should structure bond calls that will completely retire the outstanding debt within two years, and phase in the use of so-called “smart meters” in high demand corridors. This expenditure should be carefully planned to make the most efficient use of capital while maintaining safe levels of liquidity. *This corresponds to recommendation #3 from the charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to evaluate the use of Fund 853 as a potential funding source for current and additional enforcement costs. Fund 853 may not be used to pay for enforcement directly, which is funded by citation revenue. However, Fund 853 may be used for investment in facilities, capital improvements, and other direct costs of providing parking capacity.*

Establish residential neighborhood parking districts

Once it has been demonstrated that parking districts are an effective method for managing demand and providing funds for capital improvements, the city should work with residential neighborhoods to establish parking districts. The benefits of such a program include discouraging downtown visitors from burdening neighborhoods with transient parking demand, as well as furnishing revenues from meters or permits that can be utilized for improvements to the pedestrian environment in those districts. *This corresponds to recommendation #14 from the downtown charrette. The staff report for the 10/16/2007 Council meeting raised concerns about the cost of enforcement and maintenance. Our recommendation is that this be implemented in the latter stages of the proposed project schedule, as resources and requirements dictate.*

Reinvestment

Smart Meters

New technology makes parking easier. Multi-space meters or pay stations take credit cards and cash, avoiding the need to carry quarters. Other features include refunds for unused time, and the ability for customers to extend time remotely using a cell phone.

Only one or two pay stations are needed each side of the block, removing the need for the “picket fence” of single-space meters along the street. Multi-space meters have a streamlined revenue collection and enforcement process due to fewer meters to collect from, along with credit card payments. Smart meter kiosks are particularly well suited to foot patrol enforcement. Maintenance costs and revenue collection costs are reduced since a meter sends out an e-mail when it needs attention such as when it is broken, needs new paper or is ready to have its money collected.

Convert surface lots to Smart Meters

Because daily users of downtown surface lots are already aware of the benefits of long-term parking, this is the ideal location for the first conversion from coin-operated meters to new

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kiosks. Detailed demand and usage metrics will be compiled instantly, providing planners with substantially more valid data with which to make long-range demand projections. Because most payments will come in digital form, the cost of collection and maintenance is expected to be reduced. Proceeds from the sale of old meters should be returned to the parking fund.

Install Smart Meters for new spaces

In coordination with the surface lot conversion, new spaces created by converting parallel to diagonal parking can also be equipped with smart meter technology. Since motorists will be working through the change in the alignment of spaces, they will also be best suited to changes in the payment model.

Convert Sub-Area 1 to Smart Meters

Once motorists become familiar with the smart meter technology, it will be possible to convert the meters in Sub-Area 1 as defined by the Omni-Means study (exhibit attached). Indeed, as the surface lots become more popular (and thus more crowded), popular demand for smart metering in the core is expected to emerge.

Convert remainder of Zone A to Smart Meters

Once smart meters are familiar to most visitors to downtown, the remaining spaces in Zone A as defined in the DCBA assessment plan (exhibit attached) can be converted with little change impact. It may be that Zone B can be converted as well, although it is wise to wait and see what demand develops. *These proposed investments correspond to recommendation #5 from the charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with this and other remaining recommendations from the charrette and staff reports.*

Increase Parking Inventory

Convert curbside parking to diagonal

There is considerable potential to increase the parking supply by creating diagonal spaces on some blocks. City staff has estimated the total cost of implementing diagonal parking at \$3,000 per space (including meter replacement). *This corresponds to recommendation #10 from the downtown charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with diagonal parking, except on Salem with the bike lane to remain "as is" in that area and one side of the street to have back-in parking.*

Site new parking structure

As accurate, timely, and detailed data regarding parking demand are compiled, planners will be able to make relevant projections regarding when new parking facilities will be needed, and how many spaces will be needed. With this information, planners can identify the best suited location for a future parking structure, and complete the process of public enrollment long before it is required. Acquisition of the property (either through purchase or through a ground lease) can be

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planned as well. Inasmuch as property previously purchased for parking facilities was divested for other purposes, it is critical that the city determine and secure an appropriately sized and located parcel for future development. *This corresponds to recommendation #9 from the downtown charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with this and other remaining recommendations from the charrette and staff reports.*

Convert private parking to better land uses

So much of downtown is underutilized as private parking lots. Besides being undersubscribed, these expanses of asphalt are unsightly and act as heat concentrators during the summer. Over time, as public parking becomes increasingly available, these private lots may be expected to become even less utilized than currently. The city should work with private property holders to either acquire these parcels with RDA funds and improve them, or furnish incentives to existing owners to privately improve them for public use, in the form of plazas, alleys, courtyards, vest-pocket parks, and other green space with features such as trees, shrubs, lawns, fountains, seating, pergolas, market stalls, performance space and other amenities offering pedestrians pleasant refuge from the aggravations of the motorway. *This is recommended as an alternative to recommendation #6 from the charrette.*

Parking Structure Bond Retirement

Structure accelerated payment schedule

Given that there is sufficient surplus cash in Fund 853 to completely retire the outstanding bonds, and that increased revenues may be expected through new meter technology and effective enforcement, the city can pay down the debt over two years, by allocating approximately \$500,000 to each of four semi-annual bond calls. These payments should be planned to make certain that sufficient funds are available for infrastructure and other capital improvement projects. *This is consistent with recommendation #3 from the charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to evaluate the use of Fund 853 as a potential funding source for current and additional enforcement costs. Fund 853 may not be used to pay for enforcement directly, which is funded by citation revenue. However, Fund 853 may be used for investment in facilities, capital improvements, and other direct costs of providing parking capacity.*

Execute sequential bond calls

Once the payments have been scheduled, it is critical that these bond calls be serviced as planned.

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Principle Two – Change Management

Making substantial changes in excise and enforcement regimes requires careful planning for the successful introduction of new policies and procedures. Ideally, one new process enables the next, so that the transition from one state to the next is less pronounced. This smoothness of transition is useful in adapting staff as well as citizens to adopting the new model.

The recommendations in this section are concerned with Donald Shoup's second reform; use market pricing to manage demand.

Demand/Performance Pricing

Abolish Time Limits/ Escalating rates

Once the smart meters are in place throughout the highest demand areas, time limits should be abolished. The new meter technology will enable the city to use differential pricing (discussed below) to encourage parking space turnover. For those few motorists who are less price-sensitive and are willing to pay a premium for the convenience of near-in long-term parking, meter revenues may increase accordingly.

Meter rates may also be increased with extended occupancy. The first two hours might be priced attractively, with exponential fee increases after. This approach encourages turnover, while increasing meter and citation revenues. *This corresponds to recommendation #2 from the downtown charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with this and other remaining recommendations from the charrette and staff reports.*

Incremental pricing

Currently, the price for an hour of parking is 50 cents, regardless of the time of day or location of the space. One benefit of smart meters is that they can be calibrated to collect fees based on demand. So-called performance pricing can be used to encourage turnover, increase revenues, and distribute demand.

Specifically, in areas further from the core, lower meter rates encourage price-sensitive motorists to park a few blocks from their destination, leaving inventory available for casual visitors. Spaces beyond the core might be free during low demand periods, and spaces closest to the core and campus might charge a premium at peak demand. *This corresponds to recommendation #2 from the downtown charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with this and other remaining recommendations from the charrette and staff reports.*

Information/Marketing

Improve parking information

Perceptions of a parking shortage can drive away customers – even if spaces are available. Currently, Municipal Lot #1 has less than 70% occupancy during peaks even though it is only 1 to

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2 blocks away from Main Street and Broadway. Good information can show people where parking is available and reduce the number of people cruising for parking, driving around downtown blocks in search of a space. *This corresponds to recommendation #11 from the downtown charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with this and other remaining recommendations from the charrette and staff reports.*

Improve parking signage

Potential techniques include:

- Directional signage at gateways to downtown
- Real-time information (e.g. “Available Parking” or “Full” lights) to show where spaces are available
- Improved website information and maps

This corresponds to recommendation #11 from the downtown charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with this and other remaining recommendations from the charrette and staff reports.

Create workforce education program

The DCBA is developing an outreach program to engage workforce stakeholders in an ongoing discussion of proposed changes and how they will have a positive impact on the well-being of the downtown workforce. Workers that understand the abstract benefit should modify their behavior.

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Principle Three – Enforcement

Parking Enforcement

Establish consistent policies and procedures

Currently, enforcement of parking regulations is inconsistent, resulting in widespread abuse of the parking resources by chronic violators, and in lost meter and citation revenues. There are numerous repeat violators who either expect no enforcement, or who are not deterred by existing citation expense. It is critical that a practical and effective set of regulations and procedures is implemented, and executed consistently. *The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to explore utilization of chalking or other technologies for use in enforcement of parking regulations, and to analyze implementation of a graduated fine structure for repeat offenders.*

Privatization of metered parking enforcement

Currently, the city spends about \$275,000 annually to provide 1.5 FTE Community Service Officers (CSOs) to patrol metered parking and issue citations for violations. The city currently takes in about \$350,000 in citation revenue, from which these resources are funded. In a comparable proposal, Diamond Parking will provide 3 FTE parking enforcement personnel for an annual cost of about \$175,000. It is anticipated that more vigorous enforcement will result in both increased meter and citation revenue, but more importantly stimulate more turnover over parking, increasing availability and more efficient use of low-demand corridors, which would in turn result in increased patronage of the downtown, including increased meter and citation revenue. Moreover, parking control employees can serve as additional “eyes on the street” and can notify sworn officers of other violations. It is expected that increased citation revenue will cover the costs of adding the privatized enforcement resources, while retaining the CSOs for other enforcement and community service assignments. Privatization of parking should be revenue neutral. *The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to analyze the costs and benefits of privatization.*

Weekend and Evening Enforcement

Parking scarcity on key retail blocks is not just a daytime phenomenon. Parking is also fully occupied in the core of downtown on evenings and Saturdays, partly because there is no incentive for employees to park on side streets or adjacent blocks.

Evening and Saturday pricing can be implemented using the same 85% occupancy goal recommended for the daytime. Charges in the core area would shift employees to adjacent blocks, freeing up space for customers.

After smart meters have been installed throughout the core, it is recommended that market pricing mechanisms apply in the downtown core, with free, unrestricted parking in the rest of downtown. Evening and Saturday charges are common in many cities such as San Luis Obispo.

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This corresponds to recommendation #4 from the charrette. The City Council directed staff on 10/16/2007 to move forward with this and other remaining recommendations from the charrette and staff reports.

Goods Movement

Loading zones

A thriving downtown needs to accommodate deliveries and other loading and unloading activities. At present, most trucks simply double park and block a traffic lane, but this is not an efficient use of limited right-of-way.

It is recommended that the City designate loading zones on main thoroughfares, in order to avoid the need for trucks to double park. Creating loading zones is especially important for traffic calming on Main Street and Broadway, since it allows the street to be narrowed from three lanes to two. Trucks could also use side streets for loading and unloading.

One to two spaces should be reserved per block face for loading. The zones should be operational at all times. These regulations should be enforced by CSOs funded by citation revenues.

Double-parking enforcement

Enforcement to prevent double parking on main thoroughfares is critical to encourage use of the loading zones. These regulations should be enforced by CSOs funded by citation revenues.

Delivery times

The city should restrict the movement of large trucks in the downtown during high pedestrian activity times. Trucks exceeding size limits should be required to make deliveries prior to normal business hours in the district (typically 10 AM). Smaller delivery vehicles that can use loading zones would be permitted at any time. These regulations should be enforced by CSOs funded by citation revenues.

Pedestrian safety intervention

Bicycles

Sufficient bike parking facilities are installed throughout the downtown. Visitors to downtown traveling by bicycle should be encouraged to also follow a “park once” behavior. Bicycle paths in the downtown should be engineered to provide easy access to the downtown and parking resources. Cyclists intent on traveling through downtown without stopping should be routed around the downtown core for their own safety as well as that of pedestrians.

Cyclists who violate regulations prohibiting cycle traffic on sidewalks should be cited. These regulations should be enforced by CSOs funded by citation revenues.

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Skateboards

Skaters and skateboarders who violate regulations prohibiting skating traffic on sidewalks should be cited. These regulations should be enforced by CSOs funded by citation revenues.

Obstruction/loitering/trespassing

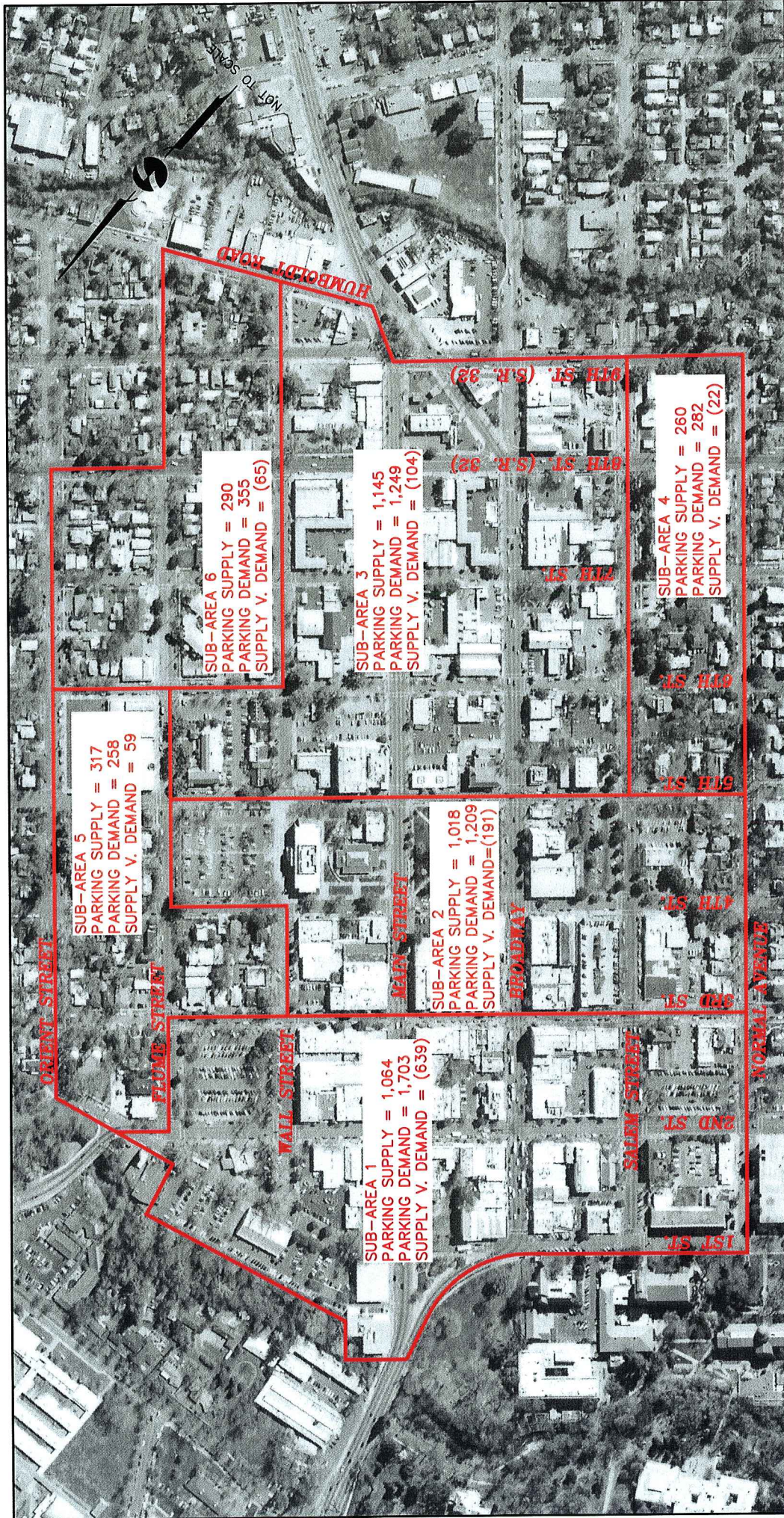
Transients obstructing the sidewalk, or violating loitering or trespassing regulations should be cited and prompted to vacate inappropriate refuges. These regulations should be enforced by CSOs funded by citation revenues.

Leash/dog litter violations

Dog owners whose pets are off leash or who create a public nuisance should be cited. These regulations should be enforced by CSOs funded by citation revenues.

Downtown Chico Business Association Pedestrianization Project

Objective	Owner	Status	D90	D180	D270	D360	D450	D540	D630	D720	D810	D900
Meter Revenue Reinvestment												
Policy												
Adopt 85% parking space occupancy goal	City Council	Completed				KEY	Plan					
Adopt two-prong parking structure decision process	City Council	Completed					Execute					
Adopt "Park Once" strategy	City Council	Completed					Maintain					
Modify parking requirements policy	City Council	Proposed					Dependency					
Allocate Fund 853 funds for reinvestment priorities	City Council	In Progress										
Establish residential neighborhood parking districts	City Council	Proposed										
Reinvestment												
Convert surface lots to smart meters	CapProj	Proposed										
Install Smart Meters for new spaces	CapProj	Proposed										
Convert Sub-Area 1 to smart meters	CapProj	Proposed										
Convert remainder of Zone A to smart meters	CapProj	Proposed										
Increase Parking Inventory												
Convert curbside parking to diagonal	CapProj	In Progress										
Site new parking structure	CapProj	Proposed										
Convert private parking to better land uses	CapProj	Proposed										
Parking Structure Bond Retirement												
Structure accelerated payment schedule	Finance	Proposed										
Execute sequential bond calls	Finance	Proposed				\$500K		\$500K		\$500K		\$500K
Change Management												
Demand/Performance Pricing												
Abolish Time Limits	City Council	Proposed										
Incremental pricing	City Council	Proposed										
Escalating rates	City Council	Proposed										
Information/Marketing												
Improve parking information	CapProj/DCBA	In Progress										
Improve parking signage	CapProj/DCBA	In Progress										
Create workforce education program	DCBA	In Progress										
Enforcement												
Parking Enforcement												
Establish consistent policies and procedures	CPD	Proposed										
Privatization of metered parking enforcement	CPD	In Progress										
Weekend enforcement	Contractor	Proposed										
Evening enforcement	Contractor	Proposed										
Goods Movement												
Loading zones	CSO	Proposed										
Double-parking enforcement	CSO	Proposed										
Delivery times	CPD	Proposed										
Pedestrian safety intervention												
Bicycles	CSO	Proposed										
Skateboards	CSO	Proposed										
Obstruction/loitering/trespassing	CSO	Proposed										
Leash/dog litter violations	CSO	Proposed										



FIGURE

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omni·means
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 2037
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Parking Management and Implementation Study

"FUTURE PARKING SUPPLY VS. DEMAND" (BY SUB-AREA)



DOWNTOWN STREET MA

SECOND

THIRD

FOURTH

FIFTH

PARKING

FIRST

WALL ST.

PARKING

PARKING

MAIN ST.

BROADWAY

ZONE A

ANGEL
PARK

PLAZA
PARK

PARKING

PARKING
STRUCTURE

PARKING

CALIF ST