



FLEIS & VANDENBRINK

DESIGN. BUILD. OPERATE.

SHARED PARKING

Have You Evaluated Your Community?



Shared parking is being encouraged by community planners now more than ever. Is your community one of them?

The main benefits of shared parking include:

- Optimizing the use of existing parking infrastructure
- Minimizing run-off with less pavement
- Eliminating the burden on developers to build more parking
- Supporting transit-oriented development

Although the concept of shared parking has been around for decades, it is gaining popularity due to an increasing demand for parking spaces that occupy precious real estate in big and small cities.

“There are just too many parking lots that are forced to be unreasonably large for no logical reason in the reality of today’s modes of shared transportation,” said Michael Powell, PE, President of Powell Engineering, who hired Fleis & VandenBrink to conduct a shared parking evaluation.

Shared parking is the use of parking spaces by businesses who want those spaces during different days and times, such as hotels and offices. It is most common in downtowns and areas of mixed-use development. Shared parking facilities reduce the number of parking spaces that each would provide on their individual properties.

STUDIES CAN REDUCE NEED FOR MORE ASPHALT

Shared parking is being used more and more in conjunction with new development, specifically for infill projects. To successfully implement shared parking, a study should be conducted that looks at local zoning ordinances, existing parking space use at varying times of the day, and the existing parking management strategy.

Powell asked F&V to conduct a shared parking evaluation for the expansion of West Bloomfield Corner in the Charter Township of West Bloomfield. Phase 1 of the development already had a shared parking agreement for a restaurant, retail store and 89-room hotel.

Because the mode of transportation at hotels – from shuttles to ridesharing services – has changed dramatically in the past decade, most planning ordinances don’t take into account that the peak use times are 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. and most vehicles are gone by 8 a.m.

F&V’s parking study on the proposed expansion also included a 90-

room hotel. The results of the shared parking evaluation showed the township’s Planning Commission and Board of Trustees that only 70 percent of the parking spaces required under the township’s ordinance were needed. A variance was approved by township officials.

“It was a very good study in that it was a combination of commercial, restaurant and hotel use, and the diversity of use and its peak use times for the site meshed together extremely well,” Powell said.

MANY ORDINANCES ALLOW PARKING VARIANCES

Municipalities don’t usually conduct shared parking evaluations, however, many require mixed-use developers to complete an analysis if they are seeking a variance in the parking ordinance.

The City of Birmingham asked F&V to study the parking in its Rail District after receiving numerous complaints that there wasn’t enough parking.

The Rail District analysis revealed there were 2,483 parking spaces and although there was heavy usage in certain areas at certain times, there was never a time when there wasn’t available parking. Shared parking agreements between property owners was recommended for the heavy use areas on weeknights and weekends.

“The planning board made a recommendation to try shared parking and provide bonus incentives if somebody did shared parking,” said Jana Ecker, planning director for the City of Birmingham.

In her 16 years with the City, Ecker said she’s aware of a handful of shared parking agreements.

“I think shared parking is used more now than 16 years ago and we encourage it,” she said. “We love it. There is less surface parking and, if you don’t need it, why provide it and waste land.”

A shared parking evaluation is just one of many studies traffic engineers can do to improve the parking situation in your community. An evaluation includes collecting data on land uses and then collecting parking occupancy data during the peak periods.

For more information on the studies, contact Julie Kroll, Fleis & VandenBrink’s senior traffic project manager. She can be reached at 800.494.5202 or jkroll@fveng.com.

IN THIS ISSUE:

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– Jana Ecker, City of Birmingham's Planning Director

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