

**GREATER HILLTOP AREA COMMISSION**

**WEST BROAD STREET  
PARKING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**MARCH 2000**

In February 1999, the Greater Hilltop Area Commission initiated a review of the availability, condition, and other issues affecting parking for customers of Hilltop businesses operating along the portion of West Broad Street located east of Hague Avenue. An ad-hoc committee, consisting of members of the Commission and community, was established to review the various commercial parking issues affecting the designated area and asked to report back to the Commission with its findings and recommendations. This report contains a summary of the Committee's process, and overview of its findings, and a set of recommendations aimed at increasing the number of parking opportunities for customers doing business with the affected commercial property owners and promoting the economic revitalization of this commercial district in a manner consistent with the pedestrian-oriented zoning requirements recently approved for much of this area.

In recent years, the economic development work of the Commission has been focused primarily on developing and supporting zoning requirements and neighborhood design guidelines that encourage pedestrian-friendly development of the commercial portion of West Broad Street located east of Hague Avenue. By this, the Commission has encouraged economic development projects that are similar in scale, mass, and density to existing structures located throughout the designated commercial business district. All the while recognizing, however, that some of the existing structures may not be functional for today's business development. Thus, allowing, where appropriate, the replacement of an existing structure with a more modern structure to suit the particular needs of the business owner but encouraging the placement and size of the new structure to blend with that of the remaining structures.

As a result of the Commission's recent economic development focus, customer parking has generally been restricted to the rear of most businesses with access limited to the use of the existing alleyway infrastructure. Support for this approach to economic development in the region bounded by Hague Avenue on the west and Highland Avenue on the east was supported by the City of Columbus when it designated the area a Commercial Overlay District in 1999. Included in the overlay district designation is a requirement that new structures be built at zero set-back from the street and that parking be restricted to the rear of all buildings. While the limitation of parking to the rear of buildings is consistent with the Commission's recent efforts to develop a more pedestrian-oriented commercial district, it does result in some difficulties for property owners of this commercial district that are subject to additional limitations concerning on-street parking in front of their businesses during peak travel periods. It is the Commission's intention and this report's purpose to identify alternatives for increasing the number of parking

opportunities for patrons frequenting businesses in this area of the Hilltop. Having successfully received commercial overlay designation for much of the commercial area east of Hague Avenue, it is now time for the Commission to focus its economic development attention on promoting parking solutions that encourage patronage of the Hilltop's central business district establishments within the context of the established pedestrian-oriented development approach.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The West Broad Street Parking Committee was established by the Chair of the Greater Hilltop Area Commission in February 1999. It included members of the Commission and invitations were extended to the Greater Hilltop Community Development Corporation, other community organizations, and interested residents to participate in the Committee's work. Staff from the city traffic and parking and planning offices were asked and agreed to participate as advisors to the Committee.

The Committee held two meetings in 1999 to identify and examine current parking issues, discuss the availability and condition of existing parking, and develop a set of preliminary recommendations to enhance the economic vitality of the affected commercial business district. In the course of developing its preliminary recommendations, the Committee conducted its own research on the availability of existing parking and the condition of the current alleyway infrastructure to better determine the need. The Committee also reviewed the work previously done by the Neighborhood Design Assistance Center which identified key parking needs within the affected commercial district. Both documents are available for further review by contacting the Greater Hilltop Area Commission.

The preliminary recommendations were shared with members of the Greater Hilltop Area Commission in September 1999 and distributed to each of the affected commercial and residential property owners (i.e. those residing in homes at least three lots north or south of the alleyways running parallel to West Broad Street and located behind the affected commercial properties) in December 1999. Finally, the preliminary recommendations were also presented to members of the Hilltop Business Association at a luncheon meeting in January 2000 and the Hilltop Kiwanis at a regular meeting in February 2000 to solicit their feedback. As a result of this process, this version of the report has been drafted to reflect their suggested changes.

Although the Committee believes it has taken sufficient steps to ensure feedback from the appropriate people and organizations, it firmly believes the Commission should take a leadership

role in gathering additional community support for the proposed recommendations and seek their implementation with appropriate city officials.

### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations contained in this report are listed in order of priority. It is the Committee's belief that adopting the items in the order listed will have the most immediate and significant impact on securing the economic vitality of the affected commercial district and will encourage the revitalization of the remainder of the region. Having said this, the Committee believes the adoption of all recommendations must be vigorously pursued to ensure a comprehensive parking plan is developed for the region that will increase the likelihood for economic success.

**Recommendation #1 - Restore On-Street Parking Between Highland and Clarendon Avenues.** On-street parking for businesses located between Highland and Clarendon Avenues was restricted when the new state buildings for Public Safety and Transportation were opened on West Broad Street. At the time the buildings were completed, the portion of West Broad Street located between Highland and Clarendon Avenues was restriped to eliminate one eastbound lane and was replaced with a left turn lane into the new facilities. The change in traffic pattern was not fully discussed with the affected property owners and has created a hardship for existing businesses that relied upon on-street parking to provide easy day time access to its operations from patrons that are elderly or have physical disabilities. Although parking in the rear of the business operations provides some relief, access to the sites is limited by the automotive congestion caused by parents dropping and picking-up children who attend Highland Elementary School located immediately behind the subject property owners.

Restoration of on-street parking for established businesses operating between Highland and Clarendon Avenues is critical to maintaining the viability of these office-oriented operations.

**Recommendation #2 - Permit On-Street Parking Along West Broad Street at All Times.** Aside from the portions of West Broad Street where a parking lane does not exist (see recommendation #1), the hours of on-street parking are currently limited. The restricted hours currently include 7:00 am to 9:00 am traveling eastbound and 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm traveling westbound. The effect of the restricted parking hour policy is to limit access to the community's primary central business district operations during peak traffic periods. As a result, business owners are not able to capture this potential business market, which limits their growth opportunities and is a deterrent to other business owners establishing operations in the central business district.

The Committee recommends expanding the hours of on-street parking between Hague and Clarendon Avenues to all hours of the day, including peak traffic periods in the morning and evening. In order for this recommendation to be effective, business owners must restrict the use of parking in front of their establishments to patrons only. Without active enforcement of a patron-only on-street parking policy, employees of the business and tenants residing on the second level of many of the mixed-use commercial buildings in the district will limit the effectiveness of this recommendation.

For those concerned about traffic flow through the Hilltop during peak traffic hours, the Committee believes the availability of an alternative route (I-70) immediately north of West Broad Street provides a sufficient substitute to alleviate such concerns. The redirection of drive through traffic will likely increase the percentage of vehicles traveling West Broad Street that are occupied by residents of the neighborhood and are most likely to purchase the goods of services of affected business owners.

**Recommendation #3 - Allow Parking Two Lots North or South of the Existing Alleyways for Developments that Strictly Adhere to the Commercial Overlay District Requirements.**

A primary concern of the Hilltop business community during the development and approval of the commercial overlay standards and neighborhood design guidelines was the overall availability of on-site parking for developments in the central business district. The group argued that the size of the community's existing commercial lots, even with parking in the rear, would not allow for the construction of a functional facility while simultaneously providing the appropriate amount of parking for patrons.

In response to this concern, the Committee believes it may be appropriate for proposed developments to secure two lots deep (i.e. north or south ) of the existing alleyways running parallel with West Broad Street behind the existing commercial buildings to be used for parking. The Committee recommends that this provision only be permitted when the proposed development adheres strictly to the approved commercial overlay district standards and when absolutely necessary to encourage the development in the portion of the Hilltop covered by this report. When used for parking, the Committee recommends that at least twenty-five feet of landscaping and fencing be used immediately adjacent to the affected residential properties to screen the parking from the neighbors. Moreover, the Committee does not recommend that the alleyway be vacated to allow for such developments. The existing alleyways are an important feature of the neighborhood's traffic pattern and are an integral part of community's vision for

accessing other businesses in the central business districts. The alleyways should remain open to general public use.

Finally, to link parking at the rear of facilities with commercial activity along West Broad Street, the Committee recommends that "pass-through walkways" be included in such development plans. A pass-through is a walkway leading from the parking area to the sidewalk. The pass-through need not be an elaborate addition to the proposed development but should provide, at a minimum, a paved surface that leads directly to the West Broad Street sidewalk. Adjustments to fencing and landscaping along West Broad Street must be made to accommodate the pass-through.

**Recommendation #4 - Support Continued Access to Parking Lots Improved with Public Funds.** Nearly a decade ago, public funds were used to improve parking lots located behind the buildings on the south side of the street between Oakley and Wayne Avenues and the lot immediately east of the Hilltop Lutheran Church. In exchange for the public funds, the property owners were required to use the lots for general public parking. The lease agreements outlining the conditions for use are scheduled to expire soon and the requirement to maintain the lots for public use are likely to expire.

The Committee recommends the City of Columbus reestablish agreements that continue to allow the lots to be used for general parking. Once this is established, signs prominently noting the lots are for general use should be installed.

**Recommendation #5 - Ensure the Placement of Commercial Trash Receptacles are Clear of Public Right-of-Way.** The primary finding of the Committee's research on the condition and access to parking using the neighborhood's existing alleyways was that many commercial trash receptacles were improperly placed in the public right-of-way. Placement of the receptacles in the alleyways is restricting the movement of vehicles through the alleys and limiting access to existing parking facilities located at the rear of buildings. The Committee also found the alleyways are extremely dirty, which produces an impression of neglect for the potential patron.

The Committee recommends that the affected business owners and appropriate City officials actively pursue the proper placement of trash receptacles in the alleyways and undertake routine community clean-up campaigns, with neighbors, to clear litter from the alleys. Pursuit of these recommendations will improve access to existing parking facilities, beautify the alleys and

neighborhood, and create a safer environment for patrons who can be certain the area is no longer being neglected.

**Recommendation #6 - Seek Financial Assistance to Promote Improvement of Existing Parking Facilities.** Noticeable along the eastern edge of the central business district is the absence of improved parking facilities that are visible from the street. Although it is not the Committee's intention to encourage the use of parking on all vacant sites along the affected portion of West Broad Street, the Committee agrees with the findings of the Neighborhood Design Center that the block of businesses located between Wheatland and Oakley Avenues (south side of West Broad Street) do not appear to have adequate off-street parking.

The Committee recommends the use of public funds to improve the vacant lot on the southwest corner of Wheatland Avenue and West Broad Street to serve all the businesses in that area. In exchange for the use of public funds, the Committee recommends a long term lease agreement with the property owner to ensure its use for general public parking. Access to the parking lot should be made from the existing alley. Sufficient signage should be installed to alert the general public of its availability.

**Recommendation #7 - Consider the Use of Parking Meters Only After Demand Increases.** At this early stage of redevelopment, the installation of parking meters along the recommended on-street parking spaces on West Broad Street and the off-street parking lots available to the general public would not appear to be warranted. As previously mentioned, however, the active enforcement of parking space use by patrons and not employees or residents is critical to ensuring the maximum benefit of providing such additional spaces. In the event the individual business owners or the City cannot effectively enforce this policy, the Committee recommends the use of parking meters be considered.

Regardless of the enforcement of the patron-only parking policy, it is the Committee's expectation that parking meters will eventually be needed in the revitalized commercial district. Leaders from the business community and neighborhood organizations should reconvene within the next five years to consider the need for installation of parking meters.

In closing, the Committee recognizes that some of its recommendations may lead to more congestion along West Broad Street than currently exists. If this is the result of the recommendations, it is because our primary policy objective was to increase opportunities for parking for patrons who choose to do business in our neighborhood with owners that have

invested their time and money in the Hilltop. The Committee believes the proposed recommendations provide the best opportunity for increasing the number of parking spaces in the commercial business district without compromising the approved pedestrian-oriented development standards that give our neighborhood the greatest chance for economic revitalization.

**GREATER HILLTOP AREA COMMISSION  
MOTION**

**GHAC Review Date:** March 14, 2000

**Sponsor:** Daryl Hennessy

**Subject Matter:** Approve the West Broad Street Parking Committee's recommendation to improve access and increase parking options for customers doing business with commercial establishments located along West Broad Street east of Hague Avenue.

**Motion Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Final Vote:** APPROVED 12-0

The following motion is presented for consideration by the Greater Hilltop Area Commission:

WHEREAS, the Greater Hilltop Area Commission Chair created an ad-hoc committee in early 1999 to explore the condition and availability of parking for customers of commercial establishments operating throughout the West Broad Street Urban Commercial Overlay district;

WHEREAS, the committee was charged with the responsibility of examining proposals for increasing the number of commercial parking options in the district and preparing recommendations to improve the economic viability of the district;

WHEREAS, the members of the committee have conducted a survey of the condition of the alleyways serving the targeted commercial district, reviewed the findings of a parking study completed by the Neighborhood Design Center affecting essentially the same district, researched expiring lease agreements with property owners of existing public parking lots, and met with city traffic, engineering, parking, and planning staff to examine and review potential parking options;

WHEREAS, the committee has shared drafts of its preliminary recommendations with affected commercial property owners, members of the Hilltop Business Association, and members of the Hilltop Kiwanis, and made available copies of its preliminary recommendations to persons occupying the residential properties located three lots south and north of the alleyways adjacent to the West Broad Street commercial buildings in the district;

WHEREAS, the committee believes the proposed recommendations reflect a comprehensive plan for parking that increases the number of parking options for customers conducting business with property owners in the affected commercial business district; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary recommendations reflect a consensus view on parking of key Hilltop organizations and persons directly affected by the proposals;

NOW, THEREFORE, the West Broad Street Parking Committee requests the Greater Hilltop Area Commission's endorsement of the entire set of recommendations contained in the committee's report and actively pursue the implementation of each recommendation with appropriate city officials and other persons.