

Parking Lot C

North of Mendocino County Library, Ukiah

While there are an inadequate number of parking spaces available for Mendocino County Library (Library) patrons, it is apparent that the parking lot north of the Library (Lot C) is underused. In addition, the County of Mendocino (County) pays for a number of unused spaces for use by its employees. The City of Ukiah (City) and County need to closely review and adjust the Lot C allocations.

Method of Investigation

The Grand Jury inspected and observed Lot C, examined maps, the permit fee schedule for City parking lots, the County-City parking contract, and the City of Ukiah Parking Lot C Audit Results. The Grand Jury interviewed the City Assistant Redevelopment Director, the City Customer Service Supervisor, and the Assistant County Administrative Officer.

Background

Library patrons noticed the empty parking spaces in Lot C and the lack of public parking available for Library patrons. Lot C has 126 parking spaces. Nine spaces are metered; the remaining spaces require a parking permit. Each permit costs \$7.50 per month. The County contracts with the City for approximately 60 assigned spaces and pays the monthly fee for the County employees who receive the permits. The City makes the remaining spaces available to the public on a first-come, first-serve basis at the same fee.

Findings

- 1. Each County employee with a permit for Lot C has a specific, assigned, numbered space. When the assigned person does not use the space, the space remains vacant and is unavailable for use by anyone else.**

Response (General Services): The Department agrees with this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with this response.

Response (Ukiah City Council): No legal response received by deadline.

- 2. According to the City of Ukiah Parking Lot C Audit Results dated 11/13/00, which covered weekdays between 8/7/00 and 10/4/00, Lot C was underused. With approximately 60 County employees holding parking permits, the average usage for those permit holders in Lot C was 26 spaces per day.**

Response (General Services/Library): According to the City of Ukiah Parking Lot C Audit Results dated 11/13/00, which covered weekdays between 8/7/00

and 10/4/00, Lot C was underused. With approximately 60 County employees holding parking permits, the average usage for those permit holders in Lot C was 26 spaces per day.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with this finding and the response provided by the Director of General Services.

Response (Ukiah City Council): No legal response received by deadline.

3. Most County employee parking usage is intermittent.

Response (General Services): Without additional information, the Department can neither agree nor disagree.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board neither agrees or disagrees with this finding.

Response (Ukiah City Council): No legal response received by deadline.

4. The County paid \$7.50 per month per space for all 60 spaces. The County paid for at least 22 spaces which were not used during the time period of the report. At this rate, the County is wasting approximately \$2,000 per year.

Response (General Services): The Department disagrees in part with this finding. The County's motivation for renting the parking spaces from the City was to help resolve the City's concern regarding street parking for retail businesses in the downtown area, particularly within the area defined by Stephenson and Standley Streets to the south and north, and Main and Oak Streets to the east and west. The County is aware of the apparent underutilization of the parking spaces it pays rent for, and is working with the City, County Department Heads, and the Court Administrator to ensure that the parking spaces are fully utilized. If it is ultimately determined that the County and Courts could make do with fewer spaces, the County will work with the City to identify some number of spaces for use by Library patrons. In the meantime, it is our understanding that the City is contemplating restriping Lot C in order to increase the overall parking capacity.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with the response provided by the Director of General Services.

Response (Ukiah City Council): No legal response received by deadline.

5. The Grand Jury has observed no apparent change in the usage since the 11/13/00 report.

Response (General Services): Without additional information, the Department can neither agree nor disagree with this finding.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding.

Response (Ukiah City Council): No legal response received by deadline.

6. Two street parking spaces are dedicated for Library patrons. No spaces in Lot C are dedicated for Library patrons.

Response (General Services/Library): The Department disagrees in part with this finding. Three parking spaces in front of the Library, donated by local businesses, are dedicated for Library patrons. No spaces in Lot C are dedicated for Library patrons specifically, nor are there parking spaces dedicated for the surrounding business clients, including the County Probation Department. There are, however, nine metered three-hour parking stalls available to the public in Lot C.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with the response provided by the Director of General Services.

7. The City has posted a sign on Perkins Street indicating public parking north, apparently to Lot C, but only nine public metered spaces are available.

Response (General Services/Library): The Department agrees with this finding. It should be noted that on Standley Street, directly northwest and adjacent to the Library, there are eleven metered spaces with an additional nineteen non-metered spaces available to the public.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with the response provided by the Director of General Services.

Response (Ukiah City Council): No legal response received by deadline.

Recommendations

A. The City continue a periodic review of County parking lot usage and supply the County with usage information. (Findings 1 - 5)

Response (General Services): The Department agrees with this recommendation.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with this recommendation.

Response (Ukiah City Council): The City of Ukiah does agree with the Grand Jury's finding that Parking Lot C is periodically underutilized and that, in context of the agreement between the City and the County, many County employees are not utilizing spaces reserved for them by the County. However, as Finding No.3 indicates County Employee parking is intermittent, which is due in large part to the geographic dispersion of County offices. City staff has had on-going discussions of this issue with County employees and County Administration. Those discussions have evidenced that a certain number of spaces are always going to appear vacant at various times of the day, as many County employees are required to visit or deliver items to other offices outside the downtown area. Other employees may also split the workweek between the downtown and other offices, which would leave their downtown space empty on intermittent days.

Excluding those situations, many County employees still select to park in on-street spaces closer to their particular place of employment, at least part of the time. To minimize this issue, the City of Ukiah will continue the periodic reviews already in place of the parking lot's usage and forward that information to County Administration. County and City staff have agreed to jointly review the data compiled during the periodic reviews and discuss methodologies to increase employee use of the permitted spaces in the Lot.

B. At a cost of \$7.50 per space, per month, the County re-examine the need for so many County employee parking spaces, which results in the money being spent for non-use. (Findings 2 - 5)

Response (General Services): The Department agrees in part with this recommendation. As noted above under Department Response to Finding 4, subject to further analysis and discussion with the City, the Department does not believe that the money spent on parking space rental is spent inappropriately.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with the response provided by the Director of General Services. There are many reasons a space may not be used during a certain period of time. Vacations, temporary assignments at a different location, illness, not using the assigned vehicle due to repairs or other personal circumstances, and meetings at other locations are just a few of the reasons employees may not use their assigned space. Department Heads with offices in downtown Ukiah have been advised that they need to communicate with their staff about using their assigned space when driving their private vehicle to work.

C. The County look for resources to provide Library parking, such as consolidating County employee parking in a specific block of spaces within

Lot C, but not with individual employee spaces. Each employee could display a permit and park anywhere within that block of spaces. (Findings 2 - 6)

Response (General Services): The Department agrees with this recommendation. However, it should be noted that Lot C belongs to the City and is regulated by the City. Therefore, any discussion of changing the permitting policy would have to involve the City.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with the response provided by the Director of General Services. The County will work with the City of Ukiah on changes the City may propose.

D. The County confer with its Library staff and the Friends of the Library to determine patron-parking needs and set aside an appropriate number of non-metered, time-limit spaces for Library patron use only. These spaces should be situated on the Library side of Lot C. (Finding 6)

Response (General Services/Library): The Department disagrees in part with this recommendation. The County Library has been in contact with City of Ukiah staff concerning parking needs. As noted above, the County will continue to work with the “stakeholder” parties, including the Library and its patrons, other County Departments, the Courts, and the City to identify the optimal parking configuration.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board agrees with the response provided by the Director of General Services. The County will continue to work with the City to determine the best use of parking that is paid by the County.

E. The City make additional public metered or time limit parking available in Lot C. (Finding 7)

Response (General Services): The Department neither agrees or disagrees with this recommendation.

Response (Board of Supervisors): The Board neither agrees or disagrees with this recommendation.

Response (Ukiah City Council): Finding No. 7 is correct in stating that only nine public accessible, metered spaces are available within Parking Lot C. However, there are an additional 52 on-street spaces around the perimeter of the lot, 31 of which are on Standley Street adjacent to the Library. Fourteen of the total 52 spaces are metered but the remaining 38 spaces are 2 to 5 hour time zones with no charge. It has also been City staff’s observation that the parking resources along Smith and the metered spaces on the Smith Street side of Lot C are grossly underutilized and available at virtually all hours of the Library’s operation and are within approximately 200 feet of the Library.

In response to the Grand Jury's recommendation City staff will initiate meetings with the Mendocino County Library and Administration staff to determine library parking needs and identify locations and/or methods by which the City may assist the Library to meet their parking needs. In addition, last year the City dedicated funds and received a grant to complete significant pedestrian improvements to Parking Lot C and the perimeter streets. This project shall commence in July of 2001 and will greatly enhance pedestrian safety in and around the Lot, thereby encouraging parking along Smith Street.

Response Required

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (Recommendations B, C, D)
Ukiah City Council (Recommendations A, E)