

CENTER FOR CONTINUING STUDY OF THE CALIFORNIA ECONOMY

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DATE: February 7, 2014
TO: Palo Alto City Council and Staff
FROM: Stephen Levy
SUBJECT: Parking Issues

I am writing in support of the three part parking/traffic solution strategy proposed by staff—increased capacity, demand management and neighborhood parking solutions—and in support of exploring new garage capacity downtown.

I am also writing to urge expanded collection of information on who is parking downtown to supplement the efforts of Neilson Buchanan and his group and the staff.

Five Groups to Consider

I see five groups who park downtown and whose voices will be important to consider as the staff and council pursue solutions including issues related to paying for potential solutions:

- Residents who live in adjacent neighborhoods
- Customers, many of whom are also Palo Alto residents
- Employees who work in the downtown service sector, many of whom earn relatively low pay
- Employees who work in the growing office/tech sector
- CalTRain riders, many or most of whom are residents, who cannot or choose not to park in the CalTrain lots

Getting More Information as we Move Forward

I think it will be helpful both for planning and “who should pay” reasons to get better information on how many of each group park downtown and where.

Perhaps the city can collect license plate information and tabulate by zip code of where each car is registered or increase the already begun survey process to gather more information on who is parking downtown.

At the last council meeting on this issue, the council heard from residents in adjoining neighborhoods, from service sector employees and from businesses with customer parking needs. Missing at least to my memory were CalTrain riders and workers or representatives of the office/tech sector. I hope all voices can be heard as the city moves forward on this tripartite policy set.

We did hear one response that neighborhood parkers were primarily office/tech workers, which seems to me to beg the question of “is this so and if so, where do the service workers park”.

Development, Past “Mistakes” and Moving Forward

I have worked downtown for 45 years and we live downtown (for full disclosure our back wall is at the edge of lot G).

My experience is that the parking and traffic challenges are **shared challenges** both as to cause and solution.

One, many of the people who park downtown in addition to residents who live there are also residents of Palo Alto. Their/our increased use of downtown and CalTrain is part of the increase in parking demand.

Two, there is nothing to be gained by discussing past arrangements that did not provide sufficient parking for developments. To the extent this is true, there is no recourse and casting blame does not solve any of the challenges.

Three, there are residences in these neighborhoods that do/did not provide sufficient parking. It is not just recent office developments. These omissions are, also, water under the bridge but it is worth remembering that developers (who are getting a nasty rap these days in Palo Alto) also build most of our homes.