

Potential Implementation Steps – Parking
Moorhead Neighborhood Planning – 6/21/2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3
Central Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District..... 4
Neighborhood Off-Campus Permit Parking 5
Off-Street Parking Requirements for Rental Properties 8
Screening of Off-Street Parking..... 9
Tie Code Requirements to Rental Registration..... 10
Support Programs for Reduced Auto Use..... 11

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Proposed Permit Parking Coverage Area 7

Introduction

An important aspect of the Moorhead Neighborhood Planning process is addressing solutions to parking problems raised by participants during the process. While many potential solutions have been discussed during the process, the intention of this document is to propose specific implementation steps that are most easily implemented and directly address the existing problems while creating a minimum of external negative consequences.

Current Issues

A number of parking issues have been identified during this process. They deal with the amount and location of parking, as well as the appearance and maintenance of parking stalls. The key issues include:

- Congestion of on-street spaces in residential neighborhoods that may include rental properties
- Inappropriate parking on residential lots (on lawns or other unpaved surfaces)
- Lack of paved parking areas on residential lots
- Negative visual and auditory impacts of off-street parking areas in residential neighborhoods
- Congestion of on-street parking spaces in residential neighborhoods near the College and University at peak times
- Inadequate parking requirements for single-family properties, which may need more than two parking spaces per unit

Concordia College and MSUM maintain a number of parking lots surrounding the two campuses. Representatives of the parking offices at both schools report that there is often unused capacity in the parking lots. Concordia provides parking permits to all its students free of charge, while MSUM charges between \$50 and \$95 per year for permits.

Current Policies

Currently there are some restrictions on on-street parking around the two campuses. There are some limited meter spaces for short term parking near campus buildings. With the availability of unrestricted on-street parking that is in some cases closer to campus buildings than parking lots, students and faculty often choose on-street parking because it is more convenient, even at Concordia where parking is free. According to the MSUM parking office, their lots are required to be self-supporting by state law. This means that it is unlikely that the price of a parking permit at MSUM can be reduced, because all revenue from tickets and permit fees goes to pay for maintenance, snow removal, equipment, and salaries.

The current policies on parking requirements and screening for off-street parking are listed in the sections below.

Central Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District

Description:

A Central Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District can be used to address a number of issues that are specific to a certain geographic location, generally in close proximity to higher education campuses, and therefore containing a large student population.

Amendments to the City's Zoning Code would provide a geographic boundary distinction within which unique ordinance requirements apply:

- Off-street parking requirements for rental units (see page 8)
- Screening of off-street parking (see page 9)
- Reduced parking requirements for new multi-family developments along transit routes
- Requirements for covered bicycle parking (1 space per 2 automobile spaces) in new multi-family developments
- Allowing accessory dwelling units on single-family lots
- Reduced parking requirements for multi-family developments that include a car-sharing service

Potential Implementation:

To implement this special overlay zone, the zoning code would have to be amended to add additional zoning classification. The boundaries of the zone would be the study area defined for the Neighborhood Planning process. Figure 1 on page 7 shows the study boundary.

The exact requirements of the overlay zone should be modified to fit the best interests of the city, students and the two institutions, but it is recommended that they include specific requirements on off-street parking for single-family residences, screening of off-street parking, and travel demand management techniques such as increased bicycle parking, promotion of development along transit routes, and mixing land uses to enhance walkability.

Potential Impacts:

The specific impacts of the overlay zone would be based on the specific requirements attached to that zone. See "potential impacts" section of parking and screening requirements for information on those impacts.

Neighborhood Off-Campus Permit Parking

Description:

Permit parking is a system by which parking is limited in certain geographic areas to those displaying a permit issued by the City or other permitting authority. The area is regularly monitored by parking enforcement officials. Residents and others allowed to obtain permits are generally charged a small annual or one-time fee to cover administrative and enforcement costs.

Permit parking is used effectively in other cities that include high-traffic uses such as shopping districts, high schools and colleges and universities. The permit system can be particularly effective because it allows property-owners in the area to have access to on-street parking in front of their property, while restricting the parking available to those coming from outside the area. By limiting the number of spaces near these high-traffic uses, it can also encourage alternative modes of transportation. The following cities all use some form of permit parking to restrict or manage on-street parking near high-traffic uses:

- Saint Cloud
- Minneapolis
- Saint Paul
- Mankato
- Bloomington, Indiana
- Boulder, Colorado

In Moorhead's case, the greatest conflict between students and others traveling to the College and University was reported on the residential streets immediately surrounding the two institutions. It was also reported that the largest demand for parking occurred during the daytime hours, and more specifically between 10 am and 2 pm.

Potential Implementation:

A suggested implementation strategy would include establishing permit parking zones that restricted on-street parking to one hour for parkers who do not hold permits between 9 am and 4:30 pm. The permit parking zones are shown in orange in Figure 1. These permit zones are in addition to the "no parking" restrictions already in place on some streets around the campuses. Where parking is currently restricted on only one side of a street, permit requirements could be put in place on the unrestricted side of the street. Another option is to replace the "no parking" areas with permit parking to allow more flexibility for neighborhood residents.

Other cities, including those listed above, charge between \$10 and \$20 annually for residential permit fees. We propose a \$10 annual fee for permits in Moorhead, with each single-family residential structure allowed up to 2 transferable permits. Fines for violations should be high enough to discourage repeat offenses, and could be set in coordination with the Moorhead Police Department. We suggest \$40.

Once the initial permit zones are set, particular blocks could opt-out of the parking permit zone by petitioning the city. 75% of the property owners on that block must agree to remove the block from the zone.

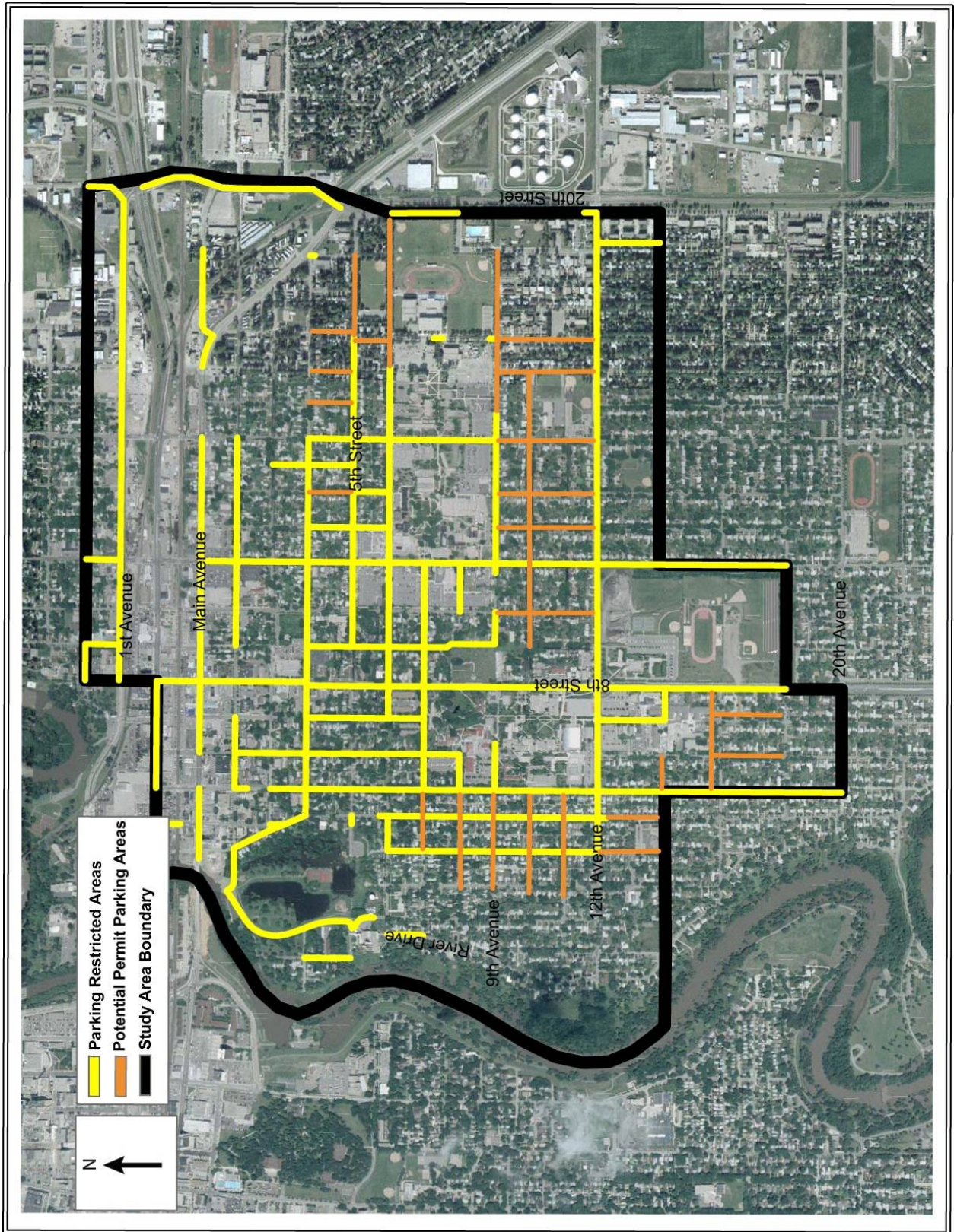
Potential Impacts:

The goal of the permit parking system is to move parkers from on-street spaces to College and University lots, or to alternative modes of transportation. Because on-street parking is currently free around the two-campus, parkers have little incentive to use lots that they must pay to use (MSUM) or may be located further from their desired location than an on-street space (Concordia). A permit system will effectively raise the price of on-street parking, and therefore make lots, busing and other alternatives more attractive to parkers.

However, if school lots are full or prices too high, students, faculty and staff who need to drive may be forced to park outside of the permit parking area and walk several blocks. This will simply move the parking problem from the few blocks surrounding the campuses to residential areas further from the campuses. Guests of those property owners and residents living near the campuses may also be negatively affected, although it may be more typical for guests to visit in the evening, when restrictions are not in place. Other communities have addressed this issue by allowing residential property owners to apply for a guest permit as well as the standard residential permit.

- Complementary Strategies:*
1. Change permit zone boundaries
 2. Replace "No Parking" areas with permit parking for residents
 3. Combine with parking improvement district (metered parking)
 4. Identify off-campus park-and-ride served by MAT Bus
 5. Assess the need for additional parking enforcement official to police permit zones

Figure 1 – Proposed Permit Parking Coverage Area



Off-Street Parking Requirements for Rental Properties

Description:

Currently, Moorhead City Code has a requirement of two parking spaces per unit for single-family units. When single-family units are converted to rental properties, up to four renters may share the property, and in some cases, all four may own a car. This can exacerbate parking problems in residential areas by consuming more on-street parking, as well as encouraging residents who park off-street to use nonconforming parking spaces (such as on lawns, or other unpaved areas). Many participants in the neighborhood planning process have reported seeing cars parked off-street inappropriately (generally meaning on unpaved surfaces) or experiencing significant congestion of on-street spaces around their property.

Amending the zoning code to require one parking space per renter or bedroom, whichever is greater for single-family rental property, would ensure that for every potential resident, there is a place to park. With the changes to parking screening requirements below, and the existing paving requirements, it would also mean that every off-street space is adequately screened and paved.

The amended code should be clear that any additional off-street parking provided should conform to existing code requirements.

Potential Implementation:

Implementation of this requirement would require an amendment to Title 10, Chapter 20 – 9 of the city’s zoning code to stipulate that the number of spaces required for a single-family unit that is being rented is one space per bedroom or renter, whichever is greater.

The amendment will also stipulate that no additional paving should be allowed in the front yard, except where a property already has a garage that faces the public right of way. Parking would be allowed on driveways in front yards as long as the driveway is no wider than the total width of the garage. If the property has no garage, or a single stall, or the garage does not face the public right of way, the pavement width shall be no greater than twenty feet in width.

Potential Impacts

This amendment (along with the change below to tie rental registration to code requirements) would have the effect of restricting the legal renting of single-family units unless they had enough off-street parking to meet the requirement. It is likely that many units that are currently rented do not have enough existing off-street parking to meet this requirement, and therefore owners of that property could lose their right to rent the property upon next renewal of rental registration, unless they added the necessary parking.

If enforced, this amendment should help to alleviate congestion of on-street parking in areas that have a large number of rental units. In addition, it would no longer be necessary for residents to park on lawns or other unpaved surfaces.

Complementary Strategies:

1. A Central Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District would limit these requirements to the current study area.

Screening Off-Street Parking for Single-Family Rental Units

Description:

The City of Moorhead already has a requirement in its zoning code to require screening between parking lots for new multi-family, industrial and commercial adjacent and adjacent residential properties (10-19-17 C3b and 10-19-18). However, these screening requirements do not apply to single-family properties. Requiring screening for single-family rental properties of un-covered, off-street parking areas with more than three (3) spaces could reduce the negative effects of properties that have large numbers of off-street parkers. This includes headlight glare, automobile noise, and the simple appearance of a large number of automobiles. Driveways may count as required parking spaces, as long as they meet the requirements for size and location stipulated in the requirements in “Off-Street Parking Requirements for Rental Properties” above.

Screening requirements are used in a large number of cities with a variety of specific requirements. Many participants in the neighborhood planning process identified the issue of unsightly or poorly maintained parking areas in single-family neighborhoods as an area of concern. While it is necessary to have off-street spaces for residents to park, the impacts of those spaces on surrounding properties can be mitigated to some extent. This proposed implementation strategy addresses the screening of off-street parking areas for rental properties in single-family neighborhoods.

Potential Implementation:

Implementation requires amending section 10-20-4 to require all open off-street parking areas of more than three (3) spaces to be screened and landscaped from abutting residential lots and right of way if the property is a single-family rental unit. The code currently requires screening when off-street parking areas exceed four spaces.

Additionally, section 10-19-18 A would need to be amended to add single-family rental properties with more than three off-street parking spaces to the list of property types requiring screening. Single-family rental properties with more than three off-street parking spaces would also have to be given the value of “1” in the list of land uses and their corresponding values in terms of buffer requirements. According to existing code, buffer points are satisfied through a combination of the following points (requirements can not be met by choosing from only one point category):

- One point for each twenty five feet (25') of separation between buildings
- One point for a single row of conifers, six feet (6') height, fifteen feet (15') on center
- One point for a solid fence or wall at least six feet (6') in height, provided landscaping is installed between said fence or wall and the adjacent property line(s)
- One point for a berm at least three feet (3') in height
- One-half (1/2) point for overstory trees, thirty feet (30') on center
- One-half (1/2) point for hedge of shrubs at least four feet (4') in height and seventy five percent (75%) opaque

Staff will review these buffer requirements to determine whether they are effective and would appreciate guidance from the Neighborhood Planning Study Committees. These are the requirements already in place in Moorhead’s code for lots with five or more spaces. With this implementation step, they would be applied to single-family rental properties with more than three off-street spaces.

Potential Impact:

If properly enforced, this amendment would require that some single-family rental properties with off-street parking in the study area be screened from surrounding properties. This would help to reduce the impacts of off-street parking include noise and light, on surrounding properties.

Complementary Strategies:

1. A Central Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District would limit these requirements to the current study area.

Tie Code Requirements to Rental Registration

Description: The intention of this implementation step is to ensure that before the owner of a rental property is granted a rental registration or a renewal of a registration, all Parking and Screening requirements are in conformance with city code.

Potential Implementation: Implementation of this step could require the following:

- An additional item (item J) under section 9-7-3 of the code that requires the property owner to submit an assurance that all aspects of the property meet the current Parking and Screening requirements of the city code. If the property does not meet Parking and Screening requirements, the owner will submit a plan outlining the steps that will be taken before the date of occupation by renters.
- An additional item (item C) under section 9-7-5 of the code that stipulates that rental registration shall not be renewed unless the property meets all Parking and Screening requirements of the City Code.

Potential Impacts: Under section 9-7-13 A of the code, the City asserts its right not to register a rental unit unless the unit complies with the requirement of the chapter. By adding explicit reference to code requirements, the City can exercise its right to deny rental registrations to properties that do not meet code requirements for Parking and Screening (including any of those amendments from earlier in this document that are enacted).

Support Programs for Reduced Auto Use

Description:

There are a number of potential implementation steps that could reduce the demand for automobile use for students traveling to and from school, their jobs and housing. If steps are taken to reduce the supply of free parking (such as permit parking in central neighborhoods), students and others may begin to look for alternatives to the single-occupancy vehicle. Programs that could be implemented in Moorhead include:

1. Establish a web-based carpool matching system for students, faculty and staff. Many universities use web-based systems to match drivers with riders in order to save money on gas and parking, reduce pollution and reduce parking demand near campus. The University of Minnesota, University of Wisconsin, the University of Iowa, and Oklahoma State University are just a few examples of schools which have a ride-sharing program.
2. Distribute "Emergency Ride Home" vouchers to students who use a transit pass. In cooperation with local taxi companies, the University of Minnesota provides two vouchers to students who buy transit passes good for a free cab ride. These vouchers allow students to ride transit to school without fearing that they will not have a quick way to get home if an emergency arises.
3. Establish a car-sharing program on campus or in student neighborhoods. The University of Minnesota and other schools have partnered with car-sharing companies such as ZipCar or FlexCar to provide access to cars to students, faculty and staff that may not need a car every day, but need it for weekly errands or weekend trips. Cars can be reserved online on short notice and are parked at convenient locations, such as university or college lots.

Potential Implementation:

These programs could be implemented as follows:

1. MSUM and Concordia could develop a joint-campus carpool registration system that allows students to enter their departure point and destination, and then matches that person with other commuters on a similar schedule and route.
2. MSUM and Concordia would have to work with local cab providers to negotiate pricing for ride vouchers. This cost could be borne either through tuition, fees or other general school funds.
3. It is likely that most car-sharing companies determine what cities they can be profitable in independently of any action by a particular city. However, the City of Moorhead and the two schools could communicate with companies and identify what specific needs they might have in order to bring their service to Moorhead. Smaller, non-profit car sharing companies are also becoming increasingly common, and may be more effective at serving the Fargo-Moorhead Market.

Potential Impacts:

All of these programs, if implemented, could have the effect of reducing the demand for parking around the campuses, as well as in residential neighborhoods. The "Emergency Ride Home" voucher system could have a small impact on fees or tuition, since the cost of the program would likely come out of school budgets.