

Downtown parking rules debated 10-03-88 - Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) - October 3, 1988

October 3, 1988 | Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) | Steve Hinnefeld

Bloomington's downtown parking regulations are confusing, imperfect and in some people's eyes unfair.

But they're accomplishing their intended purpose of providing on-street parking for downtown shoppers, according to several city officials and downtown merchants.

"Personally, I think there are some problems with it (the city's downtown parking ordinance)," said Bloomington Public Works Director Pat Patterson. "But, on the other hand, I think it works."

The city allows free on-street parking in the downtown area for up to two hours. But a motorist can park only during one two-hour period each day on the same downtown block.

In other words, a driver who parks downtown in the morning, leaves, and returns later in the day and parks in the same block is eligible for a \$5 parking ticket even if the car wasn't parked for two hours either time.

The ordinance was adopted two years ago to discourage what merchants said had been a common practice among downtown workers: moving their cars to a different on-street parking place every two hours to avoid getting a ticket.

The two-hour limit was to encourage long-term parkers downtown workers and business owners, for example to park in a city garage or lot, leaving parking spaces on the street for shoppers.

City Councilwoman Lin Gardner, who took office this year, is one of the people who feels the system is unfair.

"The way it's set up now, I've had a lot of complaints from people," she said last week. "It's mainly older, single women who shop downtown and would have the occasion to go back more than once (in the same day). I think it's keeping people from shopping downtown."

Gardner believes the two-hour limit on parking in one space is too brief. If someone goes downtown to have lunch and do a little shopping, she said, two hours isn't long enough.

She suggested the best approach might be to return the **parking meters**, which were removed from the downtown in the 1970s.

"I'd love it if I could go downtown and park for three hours and feed the meter and shop," she said, "because there are a lot of shops downtown that I enjoy."

People who feel they receive unfair parking tickets can appeal them to the city clerk, who can void tickets that result from a reasonable misunderstanding.

Clerk Pat Williams, who has to face the often-enraged people who appeal their parking tickets, said bringing back **parking meters** would be "the fairest and most equitable way of dealing with downtown parking."

If someone gets a ticket for overstaying the time paid for in a parking meter, Williams said, the driver is likely to accept the fault.

With the current ordinance, people who appeal the tickets are often angry because they don't understand what they did wrong, according to Williams and Deputy Clerk Nan Nash. And with an unexpected \$5 fine sitting on their windshield, it's hard for them to understand the parking rules even when they're explained.

Patterson agreed it would be easier to enforce downtown parking rules if the meters were brought back. But he questioned whether meters would prevent people from parking all day on the street, tying up parking spaces and discouraging downtown shopping.

If the meter rates were cheap, he said, people would be likely to park in one spot all day, feeding the meter as required. But high rates raise merchants' fears that shoppers might drive to the College Mall or other outlying shopping centers where they can park for free.

Patterson said the city is planning to replace the signs explaining the downtown parking regulations with new signs that are clearer and easier to read.

Bloomington had **parking meters** in the downtown area until the 1970s. They were removed as a concession to downtown merchants after a controversy arose over a proposal to extend the area of downtown metered parking, Patterson said.

"Meters didn't give us the turnover," said Mark Thoma, co-owner of Williams Jewelry Inc. on the east side of the Courthouse square. "We're probably getting better turnover right now than we have in a long time."

Thoma said customers aren't comfortable parking at metered spaces they feed the meters with enough money for a quick shopping stop, then worry they're overstaying their time.

He believes the two-hour limit on downtown parking isn't a problem for shoppers. "Downtown, at least in the last few years, isn't for long-term shopping," he said. "It's more a place for specialty stores, where people come to do their business and leave."

And Thoma said he never gets complaints from people who get tickets for parking for more than two hours, although he still hears from customers who complain they can't park close enough to the store.

"I get a lot of comments that it's easier to find a place to park than before, although that's still the No. 1 complaint," he said.

"There's not a perfect system. I'm sure there are going to be a few people who get a ticket who shouldn't.

"But the system works better than it ever has before."

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

Steve Hinnefeld, 'Downtown parking rules debated 10-03-88', *Herald-Times* (online), 3 Oct 1988
<<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.monroe.lib.in.us/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/144EA1DDCCACA4E8>>

© Copyright 1988 Herald-Times. All rights reserved.