

Main Street Parking Area Strategy



Borough of South River Middlesex County, New Jersey



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July 3, 2018

Michael Beck, Chairperson
South River Planning Board
5 Theresa Place
South River, NJ 08882

Re: Borough of South River Planning Board
Main Street Area Parking Strategy/Plan
Proposed Master Plan Amendment

Dear Sir:

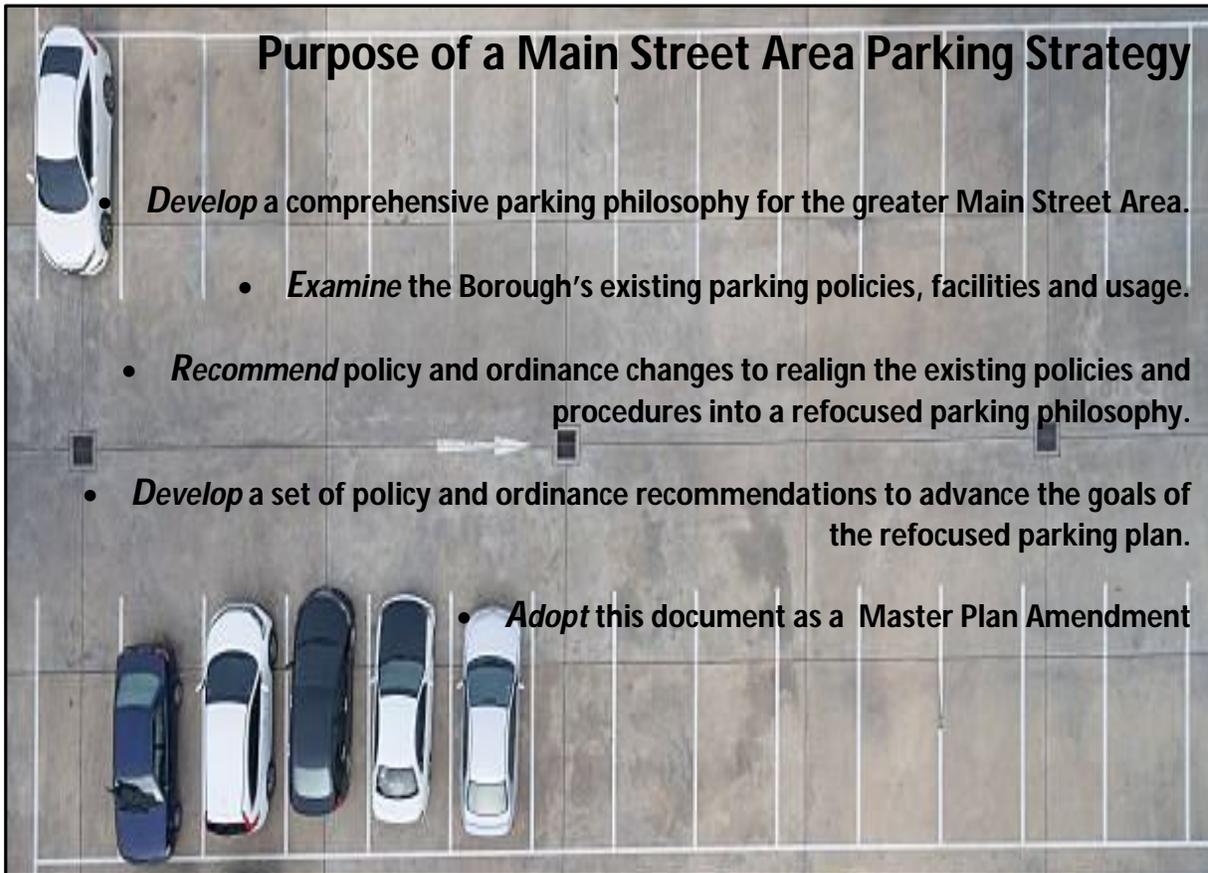
This office has been authorized to provide a Parking Strategy to be proposed as an Amendment to the Borough of South River Master Plan and offers the following planning comments for your consideration.

1. Why is a Main Street Area Parking Strategy Needed?

As of the beginning of 2018, the Borough has seen several new development applications for mixed-use housing developments in or near the Main Street area. Elected officials have observed this “building boom” in residential apartment units and want to ensure that the Borough’s parking policies will not act as an obstacle to re-development of the Borough’s stock of buildings.

Many residents and business owners believe there is a parking shortage in the Main Street area. Business owners express concern that *convenient* parking is not available for their customers. Commercial landlords believe potential tenants are reluctant to lease retail space if no convenient customer parking is perceived to be available. Residential and mixed-use developers often propose land-use applications which do not satisfy the Borough’s RSIS-based parking standards.

The physical layout of the Main Street area is over 100 years old. Development is constrained by irregular lots and a non-standard system of driveways and curb cuts. Many buildings were constructed before any parking requirements were in effect. The Borough also has unclear signage directing parkers to municipal lots and unclear signage and pathways connecting parking areas to retail/commercial uses.



Some parking capacity does exist in the Main Street Area. The Borough owns a municipal parking lot on Obert Street and operates it through its municipal parking utility. (See image of Borough Parking Lot below.) That lot contains approximately 99 spaces separated into metered and permit stalls. An additional ± 100 street parking meters existing on Main, Obert, Ferry, Washington and Stephen Streets. The Main Street area also contains several dozen irregular, unconnected, or isolated paved areas used as parking lots. Almost all of these isolated lots are privately owned.

The Borough parking utility is an uncomplicated organization which does not employ any full-time employees or collect any data beyond accounting for revenue. It does not conduct long-range facilities planning. Rather, policies are established from historical operations and facilities are refurbished on an ad-hoc basis. Based on information provided by the Borough Finance Officer and the Borough Police Chief in early 2018, the Borough parking lot on Obert Street has current capacity for additional



vehicles, however it is nearing a “maximum historical capacity” in terms of number of parking permits sold for this lot.

While some limited bus service is available for residents, the Borough has poor linkages to mass transit. Where other communities with transit connections, shared parking facilities, or sizeable transit ridership have been able to adopt alternate (lower) parking standards, this would not be a realistic option for the Borough. Local parking is still needed at this time.

A comprehensive parking strategy is needed. This Main Street Area Parking Strategy is proposed as that document. This strategy is intended to serve the Borough Council, Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Municipal Parking Utility as these entities make future policy decisions related to parking in the Borough of South River.

2. Parking demand varies throughout the day and by user, however most cars spend 95% of their lifespan parked:

Parking Need by Use:	Typical Peak Parking Need:
<i>Residents</i>	Need all day and overnight parking. Would benefit from alternatives to individual auto use
<i>Businesses</i>	Need all day and late evening parking for employees and customers. Need convenient high-turnover spots for retail customers. Need short-term loading on a shared basis.
<i>Restaurants</i>	Need evening long-term parking for employees. Need evening short-term parking for customers.
<i>Special Events</i>	Need long-term weekend and evening.
<i>Schools, Houses of Worship</i>	Need all day parking for employees. Need long-term evening and weekend parking for events.
<i>Municipal Facilities</i>	Need all day parking for employees. Need long-term evening and weekend parking for events.

3. Where is the “Main Street Parking Area?”

This area is intended to include all properties located within the Main Street Rehabilitation (MSR) Zoning and Waterfront Revitalization (WR) Districts, all properties located within any designated Area in Need of Redevelopment or Rehabilitation, and additional properties within a 5-minute walking distance to any of the above areas.



4. Inventory and Locations of Borough Parking Facilities in the Main Street Area:

Location:	Metered	Unmetered/Handicapped
Main Borough parking lot on Obert Street	30	69
Main Street meters	46	3
Stephen Street meters	9	0
Ferry Street meters	23	0
Obert Street meters	3	0
Washington St meters between Ferry and Gordon	19	3
SUB-TOTAL:	130	75
Borough Office lot on Washington St	0	23
Washington/Jackson Lot	0	21
TOTAL:	130	119



5. **Main Street Area Parking Strategy/Plan Goals: *This Master Plan addendum is intended to promote the following objectives:***

- A. To better coordinate the provision of conveniently-located public parking to serve all residents and businesses in the vicinity of the Main Street area, which should be available at some cost to the user.
- B. To ensure on-site parking requirements will not be an inhibitor to economic development or the revitalization of existing buildings and properties.
- C. To acknowledge that development proposals which do not provide on-site parking have relied on shared parking arrangements, which have created scattered parking lots throughout the area; or have relied on the purchase of a finite number of parking permits from the parking utility, which will one-day reach maximum capacity.
- D. To acknowledge the Borough has a number of municipal parking facilities which may one-day need to be expanded, and that new parking capacity will be needed.
- E. To recognize the capital costs of constructing new parking facilities, including land acquisition, will represent a substantial financial cost to the Borough in the future.
- F. To provide the basis for a municipal ordinance wherein, in lieu of requiring the construction of parking spaces on-site, both developers and the Borough could benefit from a mechanism permitting new parking spaces to be provided via contribution to a capital fund, and wherein such contributions would be combined to pay the costs of constructing or expanding municipal parking facilities under the coordination of the Borough of South River.
- G. To ensure that when parking permits are sold to a purchaser, that the parking utility has a policy in place to verify that a realistic opportunity for parking is available in a municipal lot.
- H. To provide guidelines for expansion of parking facilities and construction of new parking, so as to be available for future development applications which do not construct on-site parking.
- I. For the Borough to recapture the capital costs of constructing parking spaces that are “lost” when parking variances are granted.
- J. To provide for a policy preference to guide how and where parking should be provided in the area, as well as establishing a policy for how and where off-site parking should be provided during an Application for Development.



6. **The Main Street Parking Area Policy Recommendations: *Principals to Guide Borough Leaders when making Decisions on Parking Issues:***

A. Overall Policy Vision

1. It should be the policy of the Borough to create new parking supply which **should** be located serve new and existing residents and businesses and be available (at some cost) to future developers seeking parking variances.
2. The Borough **should** maintain a traditional, walkable, downtown streetscape in the Main Street area, even if this means some buildings will provide no on-site parking.
3. Some Main Street area parcels will be difficult to re-develop because of the layout requirements for on-site parking, including access aisles, street connections, and driveways. These properties **should** still be rehabilitated or re-developed. The Borough **should** consider alternative ways to allow for parking to be provided off these sites and into one or more central parking facilities, for some fee.

B. When Considering Parking Utility Policies

1. The Parking Utility **should** maintain a capital fund/trust fund strictly dedicated to the creation of new parking spaces, and should utilize parking revenues for regular maintenance, salaries, and operating expenses, etc.
2. The Borough **should** make future parking expansion decisions based on usage data collected from current lots, meters, permits and users.
2. The Parking Utility **should** conduct a once-a-year physical inspection of all parking facilities, lots, meters, and infrastructure and provide an annual report providing permit/user data, capacity data, and short and long-term maintenance needs and expansion goals.
3. The Parking Utility **should** adopt a permit limit policy to guide the number of parking permits sold relative to the number of parking spaces available. This should be between a 1-space-to-1.75-permit or a 1-space-to-2.0-permit ratio, depending on the composition of permit purchasers. (Resident/Shopper/Commercial user, etc.)
4. The Parking Utility **should** consider adopting a color-code system on the permit/tag/sticker, etc. to easily identify which type of user is parking in the facility (Yellow: Residential, Red: Business, etc.)
5. Borough parking facilities **should** have sufficient capacity to accept new permit customers. However, when parking facilities approach 80%-90% capacity, the Borough **should** consider measures to use capital funds to create new parking capacity.
6. If data shows that parking facilities are nearing capacity, the Borough **should** consider expanding parking supply to provide greater convenience to users. The creation of new parking should come via expansion of existing facilities on Obert Street, and/or the consideration of new parking facilities elsewhere within the Main Street area. Development opportunities on the Obert Street facility may include surface expansion, acquisition of abutting parking lots, construction of a parking structure, or construction of a mixed-use building with ground level parking and upper-level occupied space. If other locations are considered for a new municipal lot, the guidelines below should be utilized.

C. When Considering Future Municipal Parking Locations and Facilities:

1. New parking opportunity areas **should** be located in the Main Street area, designed to expand or connect to existing parking areas, alleys, access driveways, infrastructure, and pedestrian alleys.
2. No new parking lots or structures **should** be constructed to front on walkable streetscape areas including, but not limited to, Main Street or Ferry Street.
3. Parking **should** be located and/or accessed from "rear lot" locations such as from George Street, Stephen Street, Thomas Street, Obert Street or Washington Street, so as not to interrupt the retail viability and walkable tempo of Main Street/Ferry Street retail areas.
4. Parking **should** be wrapped, screened or covered by retail/ commercial or residential uses.
5. Surface or structured parking is acceptable in flood-prone areas generally east of Reid/Water Streets in combination with green infrastructure and stormwater management structures.
6. The Borough **should** consider new parking in locations where it can be developed into a Community Transportation Hub which includes car, bus, pedestrian and bicycle connections. Hubs should be located to provide access to the retail areas of Main within a ¼-mile (5 minute) walk. Available at these hubs could be: permit-based parking, shopper parking, bike sharing, car sharing, taxi services, and bus stops and shelters.
7. The Borough **should** utilize technology to modernize the parking payment systems, particularly in new facilities, to make it easier and more welcoming for residents and visitors to use and find parking when needed. Credit card payment should be available. Modern parking facilities are also becoming integrated into the smartphone user experience via several parking applications. The Borough **should** explore connecting meters to a smartphone application platform such as "Parkmoblie" or other commercially-available payment systems. This modernization should also consider keeping a number of coin-operated meters for technology-free customers.

D. When Considering Parking Ordinances or Ordinance Revisions:

1. The Borough **should** consider an ordinance establishing a capital fund/trust fund and permitting developers or property owners to provide monetary contributions to this fund in lieu of providing on-site parking.
2. The ordinance **should** specify the geographic limits of the eligibility area.
3. The ordinance **should** provide a clear procedure for how monies in the fund are to be spent on the capital costs of buying and building and creating new parking spaces.
4. The ordinance **should** prohibit the use of capital funds to pay for Parking Utility salaries, operating costs, or regular maintenance.
5. The ordinance **should** provide a clear procedure for how development applications can utilize the provisions of the ordinance.
6. The ordinance **should** require that proposed capital improvements be referred to the Planning Board for a Capital Improvement Plan review.

E. When Considering Parking Relief in Development Applications

1. Parking **should** be integrated into the ground level of development sites or new buildings whenever possible.
2. The Borough **should** have a clear priority order for developers and property owners to follow when parking cannot be provided on-site. This priority order should be:
 - Priority 1: Provide on-site parking if/and wherever possible
 - Priority 2: Provide off-site parking via contribution to a capital fund to construct new parking
 - Priority 3: Provide off-site parking in a Borough parking facility via permit in perpetuity
 - Priority 4: Provide off-site parking via contract in a private parking facility
 - Priority 5: Rely on free-market purchase of meters/permit spaces

F. When considering a Parking Capital Fund

1. The Borough **should** consider creating a capital fund dedicated to provide for, or defray the cost of, the creation of new parking facilities.
2. The Borough **should** allow developers to contribute to the capital fund in lieu of providing on-site parking. The Borough **should** spend the monies in the capital fund to create new parking facilities to support economic development.
3. The parking capital fund **should** be used solely for the capital costs of building new parking infrastructure, including parking lot engineering and design; parking and feasibility studies; land acquisition, construction or erection of parking structures; installation of parking new equipment, parking lighting, parking drainage, parking landscaping, parking utilities, parking communications or security equipment; closing costs resulting from property acquisition; and similar capital project costs directly associated with the development of new municipal parking infrastructure. The parking capital fund **should not** be used to pay operating expenses, employee salaries, or parking infrastructure maintenance costs budgeted or incurred by the Parking Utility.
4. When expenditures are proposed from the capital fund, they **should** advance this goals of the Borough Master Plan, and **should** be referred to the Planning Board using the procedures provided in N.J.S.A. §40:55D-31 for a Capital Improvement review.