

# Downtown Mountain Home, Idaho Parking Assessment Study

Prepared for the Mountain Home Economic Development Office

by

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## Executive Summary

This study examines the current parking situation in the downtown corridor of Mountain Home, Idaho, and estimates the effect on parking availability after the proposed changes along the right-hand side of N Main Street and the left-hand side of North 2nd Street East, identified directionally while moving with traffic on each respective street.

There are currently 389 parking spots available in the downtown corridor, and 53 of these spots are targeted for removal. After removal, and without the addition of new parking, the number of spots available will be 336. This study does not include the parking spots that will be added in The Hub Parking area at the corner of North Second East and East Second North, and the planned paving of Railroad Park. Parking in these two central locations should more than replace lost parking on North Main Street and North Second East, which will substantially lessen the effects of parking changes.

- On average, 121 cars were parked in the downtown area considered each observation day. The average current occupancy rate during the four observations was 31%.
- The average occupancy rate with proposed changes, all things being equal, will be 36%.
- Of all the cars parked in the area, on average 15% were parked on the streets considered for removal.
- After changes, and not considering the new parking to be added, doubling the number of cars in the downtown area will still leave 30% of parking spots available.
- With a 2-hour average stay, and a 70% occupancy rate after the planned removal of parking and without adding new spots, we find that in an 8-hour period, almost 1000 cars could be parked.

The study finds that the projected removal of the parking spots along N Main Street and North 2nd Street East will not significantly reduce ease of access to local businesses and retail shops downtown.

## Introduction

This study examines the current usage of parking and parking availability, and the effects of potential elimination of parking along Main Street and North 2nd Street East. The study provides an estimate of the impact on parking availability for retail establishments from the proposed elimination of 53 parking spots in the downtown area. It also estimates the total potential number of cars that could park within close proximity of downtown businesses, given an average length of stay of 2 hours.

There are two competing forces in creating a pleasant shopping experience: a livable, walkable downtown, and ease of parking<sup>1,4</sup>. The solution is what is often referred to as walkable parking. Parking should be reasonably close to the shopping area, but out of the way enough so that once the car has been parked, the shopping and walking experience is pleasant and relatively traffic-free.

Studies have estimated an acceptable walking distance between parking and retail to be between 300 and 600 feet<sup>4</sup>. For this study, we consider an acceptable walking distance to be 450 feet. Therefore, the parking spots available for downtown shopping in this study are the ones located up to a maximum of 450 feet from the perimeter of the downtown area.



We can calculate the implied maximum walking time between parking and retail based on the distance of 450 feet. The walking speed of an average six-year-old child is 0.85 meters/sec, which equals to 2.8 feet/sec or 1.9 miles/hour<sup>3</sup>. At that speed, walking a distance of 450 feet would take approximately 2 minutes and 40 seconds. Therefore, that is the maximum walking time from parking to retail considered as a reasonable in this study.

Given the topography of the downtown Mountain Home area, average walking speed and reasonable walking time, the area considered for this parking study is limited by the following streets: E 5th N between N Main. and N 3rd E; N Main between E5th N and E Jackson; E Jackson between N Main and N 3rd E; N 3rd E between E Jackson and E 5th N.

Map 1-Scope of Study.jpg

## Methodology and Results

For this study, we examined all the public parking spots available in the downtown area as highlighted in the introduction. We visited downtown Mountain Home four times:

Thursday, July 26th, 2018 at 1 PM

Saturday, August 4th, 2018 at 10 AM (Farmer's Market)

Saturday, August 11th, 2018 at 11 AM (Farmer's Market)

Wednesday, August, 15th, 2018 at 3 PM

We recorded the number of cars parked on each side of each block in the downtown area, and the total number of currently available parking spaces. We then calculated occupancy rates in terms of both currently available spaces, and in terms of the number of spaces available after the proposed changes. In addition, we calculated occupancy rates for the sections of parking that are proposed to be removed. This will give us an indication of the desirability of the parking spots in areas designated for removal.

There are currently 389 available parking spaces downtown. Over the four days of observations, there were an average 121 cars parked in these spaces. The average occupancy rate over the four observations was approximately 30%. Of the 121 cars parked in these spaces, an average of 15% were parked in spaces designated for future removal.

After the proposed removal of parking spaces on North Main and North Second Street East, the total number of parking spaces will be 345. With 121 cars parked in these spaces, the average occupancy rate would be 35%. If the number of cars parked downtown doubled to 242, then about 70% of spaces would be occupied, leaving about 30% available.

This report does not account for the proposed parking areas mentioned earlier located at The Hub and the planned paving of the Railroad Park lot; both of these areas are indicated in blue in the map on page 4.

Lastly, we can estimate the maximum number of cars (and consequently potential shoppers) that can park within close proximity to downtown retail shops in specific time period, for a given occupancy rate and average length of stay. We did not calculate the actual average stay for a shopper in downtown Mountain Home, but we used studies conducted in other municipalities to estimate it. For example, in a study conducted in Portland, Oregon, average stay was found to be 2 hours and 44 minutes and the average occupancy rate between 60% and 90% in 5-hour metered zones<sup>2</sup>.

We assume an average stay of two hours per car and an average occupancy rate of 70% to estimate the number of cars that the proposed parking changes would allow. A 70% occupancy rate allows for ample ease of finding parking, as three out of ten spots are available. With an occupancy rate of 70%, about 241 of the 336 available spaces would be used at any given time. If we assume an average stay of two hours per car, then four cars can use a parking space during an 8-hour day. This would result in 966 cars per day being able to access and use downtown

parking, with 30% of the spaces remaining available. See appendix for daily parking data.



Map 2 Recorded average occupancy rates by block and number of spots currently available.jpg

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that the proposed removal of parking along N Main Street and North 2nd Street East will not significantly impact the availability of parking. Given current usage, only approximately 15% of cars are parked in the areas marked for removal. When the planned increase in parking availability at The Hub and Railroad Park are completed, the impact of the planned changes will be even less noticeable.

Based on current usage, downtown visitors appear to have a preference for parking on side streets as opposed to the two main streets in consideration. This could be due to the availability of head-in parking and the reduced traffic found on the side streets. As shown by the map on page 4, the main areas found to have occupancy rates above 50% are located on side streets.

The gain in walkability and pleasantness to the downtown experience by the addition of green spaces and trees, with the potential of attracting new visitors and customers, will most likely compensate for the loss of relatively few parking spots.

## **Sources**

1. Barter, P. Walkable Parking: How To Create Park-Once-And-Walk-Districts. Parking Australia. 2018.
2. Davis, B. Central City Parking Occupancy and Turnover Analysis. The City of Portland Department of Transportation. 2015.
3. Dederichs, A., Larusdottir, A. Evacuation Dynamics of Children. Walking Speeds, Flow Through Doors in Daycare Centers. DTU Civil Engineering, Technical University of Denmark. 2010.
4. Smith, M., Butcher, T. How Far Should Parkers Have to Go? Parking, National Parking Association. Vol 47:4. 2008.

## Appendix

Occupancy rates are calculated dividing the number of cars present at the time of observation by the number of parking spots available (capacity).

For Main Street and North 2nd Street East LHS (Left Hand Side) and RHS (Right Hand Side) are determined by the direction of traffic.

The highlighted values represent the areas marked for removal.

	Capacity			To Be Removed
	LHS	RHS	Total	
N Main	22	28	50	28
2nd Street	25	29	54	25
3rd Street	20	26	46	0
E 5th N			19	0
E 4th N			45	0
American Legion			15	0
E 2nd N			67	0
E Jackson			5	0
El Rancho			52	0
Calvary Chapel			36	0
			389	53

Table 1: Number of parking spots available before and after the proposed changes.

Table 2, 3, 4, and 5: Number of cars parked during each visit.

	July 26th 1:00 PM							
	Occ. Rate by Side			Occupancy Rate				
	LHS	RHS	Total	LHS	RHS	Total		
N Main	10	56%	8	44%	18	45%	29%	36%
2nd Street	12	50%	12	50%	24	48%	41%	44%
3rd Street	4	80%	1	20%	5	20%	4%	11%
E 5th N	3				3			16%
E 4th N	28				28			62%
American Legion	4				4			27%
E 2nd N	23				23			34%
E Jackson	4				4			80%
El Rancho	13				13			25%

Table 2

	Aug 4th 10:00 AM							
	Occ. Rate by Side				Occupancy Rate			
	LHS		RHS		Total	LHS	RHS	Total
N Main	13	45%	16	55%	29	59%	57%	58%
2nd Street	5	42%	7	58%	12	20%	24%	22%
3rd Street	2	25%	6	75%	8	10%	23%	17%
E 5th N	1				1			5%
E 4th N	18				18			40%
American Legion	5				5			33%
E 2nd N	15				15			22%
E Jackson	5				5			100%
El Rancho	24				24			46%

Table 3

	August 11th 11:00 AM							
	Occ. Rate by Side				Occupancy Rate			
	LHS		RHS		Total	LHS	RHS	Total
N Main	13	52%	12	48%	25	59%	43%	50%
2nd Street	7	33%	14	67%	21	28%	48%	39%
3rd Street	3	33%	6	67%	9	15%	23%	20%
E 5th N	6				6			32%
E 4th N	26				26			58%
American Legion	1				1			7%
E 2nd N	13				13			19%
E Jackson	5				5			100%
El Rancho	24				24			46%

Table 4

	August 15th 3:00 PM							
	Occ. Rate by Side				Occupancy Rate			
	LHS		RHS		Total	LHS	RHS	Total
N Main	5	50%	5	50%	10	23%	18%	20%
2nd Street	10	56%	8	44%	18	40%	28%	33%
3rd Street	12	67%	6	33%	18	60%	23%	39%
E 5th N	7				7			37%
E 4th N	27				27			60%
American Legion	1				1			7%
E 2nd N	30				30			45%
E Jackson	3				3			60%
El Rancho	3				3			6%

Table 5



Disclaimer: This report was prepared by Dr. Don Holley, Emeritus Professor of Economics at Boise State University; Dr. Anne Walker, Lecturer in the Economics department at Boise State University; Guido Giuntini, Lecturer in the Economics department at Boise State University; and Steve Hall, Graduate Student in the Economics department at Boise State University. The authors do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness, of any information disclosed herein or represents that its use will not infringe privately owned rights. The views and opinions of the authors expressed herein do not state or reflect those of Boise State University.

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