

Current Status of the Downtown Parking Issue:

The County of Albemarle, with help from the Crozet community, has begun looking at existing and future parking needs in the Downtown area. Some important guidance for this project came from the Crozet Master Plan and a jointly-sponsored study from Institute of Transportation Engineers and the National Main Street Center®, in the report The Parking Handbook for Small Communities, summarized below.

Downtowns

What makes Downtowns special?

1. Downtowns predate the automobile
2. Downtowns are compact
3. Downtowns are visual, most have a variety of architectural styles
4. Downtowns encourage interaction and community. They provide places to gather

Parking strategies for downtown, therefore, should be designed to support, not supplant, preservation-based revitalization activity. The County of Albemarle is looking at solutions for addressing future parking needs. Recommendations from the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the National Main Street Center® for the “parking problem” in the older commercial districts require endorsement of some basic concepts:

1. Know the existing supply of and demand for parking, and accurately predict future parking demand, based on a comprehensive revitalization strategy;
2. Manage the future demand for parking to fit the structure, design and performance of downtown—both now and in the future; and
3. Adopt common sense and efficiency in devising the solutions to parking problems.

While evaluating and predicting demand and constructing new parking can seem technical, 9 out of 10 good, appropriate solutions to small-town parking issues are sensible, practical ideas, backed with facts.

Next Steps:

The following outlines the County’s plan for improving downtown parking in Crozet.

Highlights

Parking is critical to the success of a revitalized Crozet Downtown

Parking solutions will support the Downtown’s role as a major business and activity center

The County’s plan to address parking will incorporate citizen and merchant input

- Step One:** Getting organized – coming up with a plan
- 1) Bring in merchants to help
 - 2) Build on previous studies, including the Crozet Downtown Sidewalk and Parking Study by Anhold & Associates
 - 3) Commit to gathering data on existing supply, identifying demand and developing a public-private partnership to share costs of building new public parking
- Step Two:** Gathering data and analyzing demand
- 1) Identify time frame for study
 - 2) Obtain merchant assistance in counting cars/spaces
 - 3) Obtain help from students to count cars/spaces
 - 4) Interview shoppers, w/ merchant approval and assistance
- Step Three:** Increasing the effectiveness of existing parking. This may include re-stripping parking lots, moving employees to the satellite parking, move the Train Depot library to an area with more parking for library patrons, introduction of signage, time limits, and loading zones. Parking regulation enforcement will be another area to address when needed.
- Step Four:** Planning and developing new parking facilities, which could include on-street parking, angled parking, new parking lots and planning for a parking structure to accommodate the growth of the Downtown
- Step Five:** Promoting the parking program
- Step Six:** Managing the parking system
- Step Seven:** Update the program periodically.

Community Involvement Opportunities:

The County has begun its Needs Study; any interested local business-owners are encouraged to complete a short survey describing their business' parking needs or conditions. Also, the County is asking interested local business-owners to hand out self-addressed, pre-stamped surveys to their patrons, in a public-private effort to identify the needs of Downtown business patrons.

Who to Contact:

The Albemarle County staff contact for downtown parking is Juandiego Wade, Transportation Planner, who can be reached at (434)296-5832 or by email at jwade@albemarle.org.