

Case Study: Shared Parking Opportunity Northwest corner Snelling and University

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All but one of the buildings on the block on the northwest corner of University and Snelling Avenues was grandfathered in before the current parking requirements were put in place. The entire block currently has less than 100 total off-street parking stalls, but under the current city code existing uses would require as many as 437 off-street parking stalls. Given this fact, one would expect that the current supply would not meet peak demand. The block was observed on 33 different occasions during various peak times and the maximum number of occupied stalls was 42. It should be noted that many of businesses on this block are engaged in shared parking agreements, but the utilization of parking demonstrates the sometimes excessive requirements of the city code.

Intro

The block that makes up the northeast corner of Snelling and University Avenues contains a diverse set of land use types that may be conducive to a shared parking arrangement. The criteria that create strong shared parking potential are:

- Mix of land uses with varying peak demand times
- Complimentary services that are both transit and pedestrian friendly
- Underutilized and poorly planned parking layouts

This block, along with a few businesses on adjacent lots, fits the criteria for a shared parking arrangement. The range of land uses includes restaurants/bars, retail establishments, offices, and non-profit social services. The off-street parking on the block is underutilized for a number of reasons including plentiful on-street parking, the proprietary nature of the parking lots, varied peak hour demands, and good public transit access. The parking lots that make up this block are privately owned and most of them are reserved for exclusive use by patrons. A few shared parking arrangements already exist on the block, which may indicate a willingness to explore further solutions.

Existing Situation

The mix of business types and their typical peak demand time are displayed in Table 1. Many of the locations listed include multiple establishments within a building or address. The split of businesses' peak demand time is fairly even, especially given the generous definition of peak demand time. Two locations peak primarily during the morning and afternoon times but their turnover is consistent. Three locations peak in the evening with high turnover again, especially Snelling Avenue Fine Wines. The two bar/lounges will typically peak in the evening and into the night, depending on the day of the week. There are no current indications that the total supply of parking would not be sufficient to serve the existing uses.

Table 1

Usage	Name	Peak Demand Time
Office	Doug Nguyen State Farm	8:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Office Building H-R	My Apple Music	5:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Bar/Lounge	Hot Rods	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM
Office Building L/R	-	-
Bar/Lounge	Christiansen's/Big V's	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM
Charitable Institution	Midway Sober House	-
Office Building L/R	Lawson Wats and Associates/ Express Shipping	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Retail Single Occupancy	Midway Books	-
Apartments	-	-
vacant land	-	-
vacant land	-	-
vacant land	-	-
retail multi occupancy	Christo's Bargain Store,Fasikas,...	5:00 PM - 9:00 PM
retail single Occupancy	Snelling Ave. Fine Wines	5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

The existing count of parking spaces is an inexact science because most of the lots do not have striped parking stalls. In some instances, double parking is utilized, but this limits the accessibility of each space. The following count was done on the basis that each space is continuously accessible regardless of other spaces and that areas designated “No Parking” were not included in the count. A map of the existing parking is included in this report.

Lot 1 (Midway Books, Fasika’s, Big V’s)	≈ 20 Shared Spaces
Lot 2 (Ashton Buiding)	≈ 30 Spaces
Lot 3 (Snelling Avenue Fine Wines)	≈ 8 Spaces
Lot 4 (506, 508, 510 N. Snelling)	≈ 7 Spaces
Lot 5 (Doug Nguyen State Farm)	≈ 14 Spaces
Misc. Spaces	≈ 10 Spaces
Total	≈ 89 Spaces

These numbers are the total off-street parking spaces located within the block bounded by University, Snelling, Sherburne, and Asbury. The on-street parking available includes roughly 52 spaces either meter controlled or time-limited (One Hour or 15 Minutes) on University, Sherburne, and Asbury.

The Saint Paul Code of Ordinances requires off-street parking based on land use. When calculated under the current requirements, the parking spaces required by code are summarized in Table 2. These requirements are based on total building square footage because existing sales floor square footage was not readily available. In some cases, the parking requirement could be as much as 50% less.

Name	Parking Requirement
Doug Nguyen State Farm	16
My Apple Music	62
Hot Rods	99
For Sale Office Space	23
Christiansen's/Big V's	83
Midway Sober House	6
Lawson Wats and Associates/ Express Shipping	16
Midway Books	78
Apartments (Non-profit)	6
Christo's Bargain Store,...	30
Snelling Ave. Fine Wines	18
Total	437

The difference between what is required by code and what exists today illustrates the sometimes unnecessary requirements in the City Code. This is further supported by parking counts that show the level of utilization in these lots along with the utilization of on-street parking.

Parking Utilization

Although it is unreasonable to predict the peak time for each establishment on any given day of the week, it is possible to establish peak demand periods and take parking counts that fall within these peak times. In doing so, with multiple repetitions, the parking utilization has broader meaning and is more representative. In the counts described here, a record was taken three times for each day (except weekends) and twice for each record. The results for each time period and day represent the highest value observed (for off-street parking) in order to portray more of a peak period usage.

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Time	11:00	9:30	8:00	9:00	10:00		11:00
Usage	22	26	20	30	24.5		10
Street	11	21	17	21.5	9		17
Time ₂	13:30	15:30	17:30	14:00	12:30	12:30	3:00
Usage ₂	36	31.5	32	41	34	13	12
Street ₂	11	17	19	22	20	17	12
Time ₃	17:15	18:30	19:00	20:00	21:00	9:00	
Usage ₃	34	42	38	27.5	33	31	
Street ₃	14	13	15	22	16	9	

The maximum observed utilization of off-street parking was 42 of 89 spots, or 47%. This occurred on a Tuesday evening, when the on-street parking was not being utilized. This may not be the 5th busiest or even the 20th busiest parking day of the year for this block. The only locations with potential for high parking demand at limited times of the year are the bar/lounges. Bar/lounges are more difficult to address because there are opportunities for heavy peak demand times, such as holidays like New Year's Eve or the Fourth of July. The demand on parking for typical businesses similar to those on the block is illustrated by Figure 1. In this graph, the demands are stacked on top of each other to show both total demand and individual demand at any given time of day. From the graph

we can show that peak demand occurs in the afternoon and evening. In these cases, peak demand time will usually occur after 8 PM and almost certainly after 6 PM, when on-street restrictions are fully lifted. This restriction lifting opens up roughly 52 free on-street parking spaces after 6 PM.

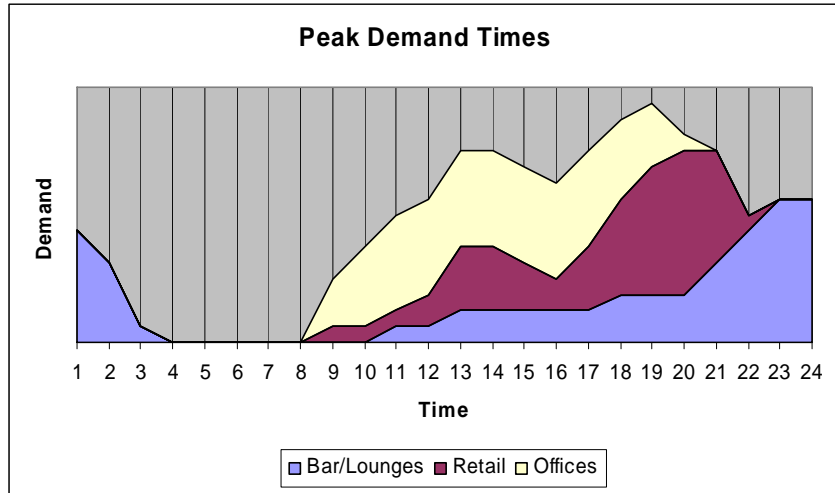


Figure 1

The current off-street parking is underutilized, especially the Ashton Building lot. Many of the uses on this block peak at different times of day and this creates high turnover rates for each space. Businesses along University Avenue, such as My Apple Music, indicated a strong utilization of on-street parking by patrons. This occurs despite the fact that on-street parking is metered and free off-street parking is available in a rear lot. These observations suggest that both on-street parking and shared parking are suitable options for patrons and businesses. High utilization of the metered spaces and low relatively low utilization of the free parking spaces in back further suggests that patrons are willing to pay for convenient parking.

High utilization of the metered spaces right in front of the businesses and low relatively low utilization of the free parking spaces in back suggests that patrons are willing to pay for convenient parking.

Shared Parking Options

The primary stipulation for a shared parking situation that does not conform to city parking requirements is that there is no reduction in the total number of spaces currently available. Recommended site improvements to the lots would include re-grading, repaving, and re-striping. The parking lots currently are at different elevations and have different points of access (Sherburne and the alley). Some of the lots are also overgrown with weeds and are often strewn with trash and debris. An agreed upon plan for maintenance and upkeep of the lots and possibly some landscaping of the Sherburne edge would be a necessary component of any shared parking arrangement. Sufficient lighting at night to provide a feeling of safety and to discourage negative activity in the lots would also be needed under any and all scenarios.

Option I – City Controlled Parking Benefit District

A parking benefit district could be created that would adapt the lot into metered spaces with the revenue going towards maintenance and site improvements. Here are examples of how the revenue stream would come in from the parking benefit district.

Metered Spots	Cost Per Hour	Average Utilization	Revenue/Day/Meter	Revenue/Year
70	\$0.50	13%	\$ 1.56	\$39,858.00
70	\$0.25	13%	\$ 0.78	\$19,929.00
70	\$0.50	17%	\$ 2.04	\$52,122.00

The average utilization would include factors such as non-used meters and peak hours because it is an average of all the meters throughout the entire day.

The city of Saint Paul could purchase the parking lots and decide which ones are to be included in the shared parking equation. Another option would be to leave the lots with their current owners and work out cross easements allowing joint access for all businesses on the block who are interested in shared parking. Site improvements would have to be made and revenue from the lot would likely not cover the cost of purchasing the land, although it should cover improvements and maintenance. The parking benefit district could also be extended to include the on-street meters, and additional meters around the entire block would be needed to create an incentive for parking in the lot. Another option would be to further expand the on-street parking limit to as low as 15 minutes to ensure on-street parking has a high turnover rate thus saving it for specific types of patrons.

The benefits of this option are potential for needed improvements to make the parking lots more efficient, safe, and attractive. Another benefit would be better utilization of parking, including providing parking for some buildings which currently have little or no off-street parking.

Option II – Cross-Easements or Other Private Agreements

This option would involve contractual agreements wherein the lot owners are remunerated for allowing patrons of other buildings/businesses to use their parking stalls. There is already some type of arrangement for use of the Christiansen's lot by Midway Books and Fasika Restaurant. The two primary lot owners, Christiansen's and the Ashton Building, would be the beneficiaries of the revenue from this arrangement, but some site improvements would also be needed.

Option III – Controlled Entry Lot

This option could apply to both the scenarios above. Again, the lots would need to be combined to provide the maximum number of spaces. There would then be a gated entry for the lot where patrons would have to pay for parking upon exiting the lot. The benefit of this method is it may be simpler than installing individual meters at each space. Current demand for parking in the area almost certainly does not justify the cost of paying an attendant to manage the lot. Payment upon exit could be done through some type of automated machine that accepts credit cards, but ongoing maintenance of the controlled entry and machine would be an issue. The benefit of having a gated lot that is managed

by an attendant is that the City Code allows it to include stacked parking spaces, which increases the overall capacity of the lots.

Option IV – Special Assessment District

This option would be similar to the two city owned lots, one on Arcade Avenue and one on Grand and Snelling Avenues, that are currently being used as shared parking. The city of St. Paul would purchase and improve the lots. The maintenance would be paid for by the business owners throughout the year but would be repaid by the city through special assessments. This option could include either a free or pay parking arrangement. The two existing examples in St. Paul have free parking, and in both cases the City paid most of the costs of constructing the lots. A pay parking situation, either through meters or with an automated attendant, could help the city recoup some of the costs of construction the lot, possibly even turning into a revenue stream long-term.

Summary

One thing that is important to keep in mind with all the options is that with any movement toward paid parking, the remaining free parking will see a spike in demand unless controls are put in place such as residential parking permit programs or “no parking” zones. Ultimately, anything not included in the shared parking agreements should be properly signed, managed, and enforced by the owner. The third option, a controlled entry lot, would be the most difficult to adapt in order to include all the potential shared parking lots. Meters would be easy to implement because they can be oriented and included wherever it is possible. The availability of parking on this block presents a unique opportunity in Saint Paul to utilize space more efficiently and be a win-win for the property owners and the City. A degree of cooperation from all parties will no doubt be a pre-requisite for success.