



Comments Regarding Parking in Downtown Amherst: Prepared for TOA Parking Forum #2

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- Amherst has been studying, constructing and agonizing over downtown parking over 6 decades. Unfortunately, we still seem to have a problem.
- The time has come to boldly embrace the municipal parking concept and move forward with the size, location and functionality of parking that our downtown requires.
- Defining how much parking we need and where it should be located has been the crux of the matter since we first established a Municipal Parking District in the 1950s. Over the years, the Town of Amherst has diligently been appropriating funds to construct, reconstruct and study parking lots within the town center.
- Residential uses need spaces for overnight parking. Commercial uses need spaces during the daytime hours. In many instances, these can, and should be, the same spaces. The concept of shared parking is not new and is, in fact, already in our zoning bylaw.
- We also need another parking garage. Fortunately, most of the work has already been done for the CVS location. Several parking feasibility studies since the 1960s and 70s, identified this as the best place for a new municipal parking structure.
- Beginning in the mid-1980s, the Town of Amherst started the steps necessary to build this parking structure. Town meeting approved the acquisition of land, via eminent domain, and 2/3rds of the area needed was purchased in 1989. By the early 1990s we had preliminary designs and cost estimates in hand. It remains an extremely logical and viable location.
- Between Town Hall, the institutions of higher learning, the Chamber and the BID, we have the partnerships in place to build it. There were solid arguments for establishing a Municipal Parking District and choosing to construct a large parking structure all those years ago and they still hold true.
- Relying on individual development projects for parking in downtown will never be an answer. Collectively, however, it can be built in the location, manner and amount that enhances downtown as a destination rather than detracting from it.
- We do have a parking problem in downtown Amherst but we really aren't that far from some great solutions. Now is the time to fully embrace a holistic, Town-lead approach to municipal parking.
- It is an exciting time of redevelopment and revitalization in Amherst's town center and our approach to municipal parking should match it stride for stride.