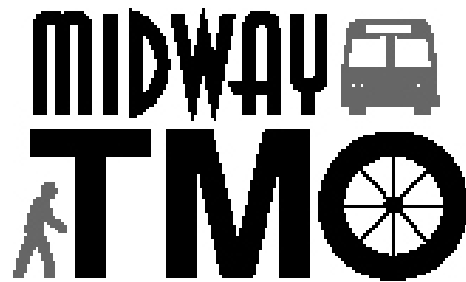


# Parking Supply, Demand, and Requirements on University Avenue in St. Paul



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June 15, 2006

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## Summary

Excess surface parking along University Avenue is a visible reality any day of the week. Over the course of 2005, the Midway Transportation Management Organization (TMO) conducted primary and secondary research to determine whether commercial parking requirements in St. Paul were reflective of real demand for parking along University Avenue. The results of this research show that during the typical weekly peak periods of demand at a variety of commercial land uses along University, only 40%-60% of the parking required by St. Paul's zoning is actually used.

Excess surface parking costs the City dearly in unrealized property taxes from additional development, creates an incentive for more automobile use than is necessary, has negative consequences for water quality and natural systems, and creates an unattractive street environment.

This report also highlights a case study of the northeast corner of Snelling and University Avenues, a streetcar-era block where business owners feel that their parking arrangement limits access and therefore business revenues. The TMO identified a series of potential parking management solutions based on the idea of sharing and better utilizing the existing parking on the block.

As a result of conducting this research and analyzing the data and policy options, the TMO recommends that the City of St. Paul revise its commercial parking requirements and implement the following changes:

1. Reduce minimum parking requirements along University Avenue by half (50%). On transit corridors, the City should err on the side of a more compact, walkable form of development.
2. Place a limit on the proportion of any given development site on University Avenue that can be dedicated to parking. This issue needs further study, but a limit of 40-50% would help the City achieve its land use and transportation goals for University Avenue.
3. Create an off-street parking maximum for University Avenue that is either the same as or 20% lower than the current minimums. Don't give developers the option of providing significantly more parking than is needed.
4. On transit corridors, give developers the option of paying either a one-time or annual fee in lieu of providing off-street parking stalls. The fees can then be used to create municipal shared-use parking lots in locations that can most benefit from such lots, including the northeast corner of Snelling/University. This will encourage re-use of older buildings that have limited off-street parking.
5. Use the fees from #4 and/or other sources to create a modest City fund to improve and buy or lease parcels for shared-use municipal parking lots. Maintenance and operations

of such lots can be paid for through special assessments, parking fees, or a combination. One option would be a corridor-wide special assessment for shared parking.

6. Parking benefit districts (PBD's) should be established in areas where parking is in high demand and pedestrian traffic is to be encouraged. Parking benefit district revenue can be used to promote pedestrian traffic with enhanced sidewalks, boulevards, and other streetscape features.

## **Background**

University Avenue is recognized as one of the most significant commercial corridors in the Twin Cities. The Avenue is also widely regarded as an area of incredible potential for redevelopment and reinvestment in the City of St. Paul. Increasing development and investment interest in University Avenue is quickly leading to much higher land prices. With an array of development goals being espoused by the City and community groups, and planning underway for a Central Corridor transitway on the Avenue, the time is right to assess whether the zoning code is compatible with City and community goals for University Avenue. One critical area in which the City's zoning code impacts development, neighborhoods, and quality of life is parking requirements.

The goal of this report is to begin to answer the following questions: What are the actual, on the ground supply and demand dynamics of off-street parking on University Avenue, and how do they compare to the City's parking requirements? What steps should the City Planning Commission, City Council, and Mayor consider taking to address these issues in a way that best fulfills City and community goals? How can the City and property owners more effectively manage existing parking supply on a block or small area scale? A related question which this report does not tackle but around which the TMO works on a daily basis, is given the City's Transportation and Land Use goals for University Avenue (including planning for the Central Corridor), what can be done to maximize the use of alternatives to driving, so that less parking is needed?

How much parking is enough? In the age of the automobile, this question has been a central concern of City Planning Departments, developers, and traffic engineers. The simplest answer to this question is "it depends." What does it depend on? A variety of factors, including the degree to which people in a given area own and use automobiles, the "drawing power" of the particular destination(s) in question, and the underlying values and goals of those creating the policies.

In most cases parking requirements have been created by municipalities primarily in order to prevent the problem of parking spillover – that is, each development should include enough parking such that people trying to access that development by car do not end up parking in spaces designated for other developments, or on neighboring (especially residential) streets. In many cases, this goal is taken to its logical conclusion by requiring that each development include enough parking to meet the peak demand period, even if the peak demand only occurs a few times each year.

In a region where only 3-5% of all trips are taken on public transit, and in a period when the growth in per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) continues to climb, retail and other businesses can struggle to succeed without an adequate supply of parking. Yet the comparative advantage that cities have over suburban and other areas is the proximity to employment, shops, services, parks, and other places of interest. On average, University Avenue carries as many transit rides each day as automobiles, and 1/3 of area residents commute to work by a means other than single-occupant automobiles. Much of what makes urban living attractive is the fact that one does not always have to get in a car to leave the house. Indeed recent trends in new suburban and ex-urban development in the Twin Cities are pointing toward “urban-style living,” including attached townhomes and housing being built above or adjacent to retail centers and in or near newly created “town centers” or main streets. Recent public health research has found a correlation between sprawling, unwalkable suburban areas and lower levels of physical activity coupled with increased levels of obesity. The rising cost of fuel, concerns about global warming, and President Bush’s plea in the fall of 2005 for people to drive less and conserve gas add considerable weight to larger trends that are moving individuals to drive less and use alternatives more.

**Automobile Ownership and Use of Alternatives**

Parking demand is, in part, a function of the rate of automobile ownership and use among the population utilizing a given area. Therefore, one factor in considering how much parking is enough is the rate of automobile ownership among households in a given area. Along University Avenue, many businesses and uses draw customers and visitors from beyond the immediate neighborhoods. Nonetheless residents of those adjacent neighborhoods do represent a significant portion of the “market” for businesses located on the Avenue.

To illustrate this point, Table 1 below compares car ownership rates in the University Avenue Corridor to the Twin Cities 7-County Metropolitan Area as a whole.

**Table 1. Household Car Ownership, University Corridor vs. the Region**

	<u>University Corridor</u>	<u>Region</u>
<b>0-1 Cars</b>	60%	26%
<b>2+ Cars</b>	40%	74%

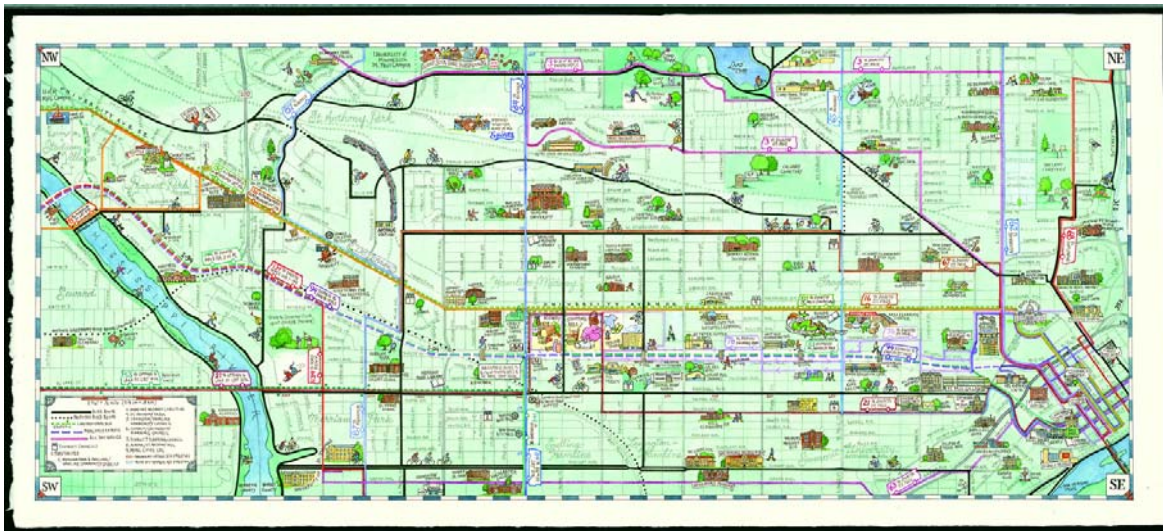
The majority (60%) of households living along University Avenue own either one car or no car at all, while a larger majority of households in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (74%) own two or more cars. Households in the communities adjacent to University Avenue clearly have significant less access to cars than the average household in the region. In addition, households in the University Avenue corridor have much better access to transit than the typical household in the region, and bicycling and walking are practical options for many local trips such as to

stores, libraries, parks, and schools. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the demand for parking for commercial uses along University Avenue is significantly lower than for the region as a whole.

A random phone survey of area residents conducted by MarketLine Research for the Midway TMO in 2002 revealed that 18% of area commuters use the bus as their primary means of getting to and from work or school (compared to 4-5% in metro-wide surveys), and 9% use carpools or vanpools as their primary mode. In total then, 27% of area commuters use Multiple-Occupant Vehicles (MOV's) to commute to work, compared to 10-14% MOV users in metro-wide surveys.

This information serves as additional support for the hypothesis that area household drive less and therefore generate less parking demand than typical households in the region. This fact is significant because as described earlier in this report, St. Paul's parking requirements were based on parking demand studies conducted at single-used suburban locations.

The "Midway in Motion" map below, developed by the Midway TMO, illustrates bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access and amenities along the University Avenue corridor.



### **Parking Requirements and Related Policies in St. Paul**

In St. Paul, parking requirements were first enshrined in the City's zoning code in 1975. Like most cities, St. Paul based its parking requirements on the data that was available regarding parking demand for a variety of land use types. For the most part, the available data has been very limited parking count analyses performed at discrete, single-use, suburban locations where most users have no option but to arrive by automobile. St. Paul updated its requirements in the early 1990's, in an attempt to better reflect the differences in parking demand for different land uses. Also of note regarding the City's parking policy, is that downtown St. Paul, which is well-served by transit, has no off-street parking requirements.

The downside of insuring that every development has adequate parking to meet peak demand is that this goal may undermine other policy goals. As Donald Shoup and others have noted for many years, ample parking that is free to users artificially induces demand by hiding the true costs of providing that parking. Recognizing the importance of alternatives to driving in city living and hoping to stem further traffic congestion, the City of St. Paul's Transportation Plan emphasizes improving infrastructure for and access to transit, bicycling, and walking. In St. Paul's Transportation Plan Overview, Strategy 1, the first bulleted item reads:

*“Travel Demand Management: Less growth in demand on the street system, through better transit service and a variety of supports for less travel and more use of alternatives to single-occupancy automobiles.”*

Similarly, in the Summary and General Policy document of the City Comprehensive Plan, dated January, 1999, General Policy #21 includes the following statement:

*“The city needs to encourage fewer and shorter trips and promote alternatives to single-occupant automobiles. Policies to accomplish this in the Transportation chapter include*

*...*

- *Management of land use to reduce trips and promote alternative modes of travel.”*

These central elements of the Transportation Plan seem to be in direct conflict with the City's generous minimum commercial parking requirements.

Finally, the City's Land Use Plan re-inforces the Transportation Plan in Strategy 2 (Neighborhoods as Urban Villages), stating:

*“Having transportation alternatives to the automobile is an important benefit of city living. Saint Paul neighborhoods should be accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. New housing and more jobs should be located along the University Avenue and West Seventh Street Corridors, which are the two highest priority public transportation corridors in the city.”*

Requiring that parking lots are developed to meet peak demand tends to reduce the density of development, as more of the site and more of the cost of development must be dedicated to parking. In this way, high parking requirements also tend to dampen property assessments and therefore property tax collections, as an 8'X16' parking stall is typically assessed at a much lower value than the equivalent amount (or in the case of multi-story buildings, an even greater amount) of office, commercial, or residential space.

One further policy goal that conflicts with meeting peak parking demand is the goal of improving water quality and reducing run-off. Parking, particularly surface parking lots, tends to increase the proportion of land in the City that is impermeable to water. Impermeable surfaces have a direct and highly negative impact on water quality and flood prevention.

So while sufficient parking for automobiles is a necessity, this fact is clearly counter-balanced by the City's interest in reducing traffic congestion and promoting alternatives to driving.

Alternatives to the automobile are more practical in some locations, and for certain kinds of trips. For example, Metro Transit's bus and rail system, which is sorely under-funded compared to similarly urban areas in the U.S., is primarily designed to transport people into the two downtowns and to other major "trip generators" or destinations, such as the University of Minnesota and the Uptown area of Minneapolis. It is much easier to get around by bus or rail if one of these places is your starting point or destination. In St. Paul, after downtown, the area best served by transit is the University Avenue Corridor. Routes 16 and 50 combined carry nearly 20,000 riders each day (about the same as the ridership that had been projected for the Hiawatha LRT line), and other major routes such as 21, 53, and 87 have a small part of their route along the Corridor.

Yet since at least the 1950's, commercial development on University Avenue has been characterized by an orientation to the automobile, designed so that even on a peak shopping day there is more than enough parking to meet demand. The problems posed by these large parking lots are fourfold:

1. They discourage people from using alternative forms of transportation. When they are located between businesses and the street, large surface parking lots discourage walking and biking, having been designed almost exclusively to move cars in and out.
2. They can be an eyesore, serving as collectors of trash and debris and reflecting poorly on the surrounding community.
3. They occupy valuable land, more of which could be put to more productive, property tax-yielding use.
4. They artificially induce demand for driving. Research has found that the supply and cost of parking is one of the most important factors in people's decisions about what transportation mode to use – in other words, an abundant supply of free parking actually encourages people to drive more, when they might otherwise walk, bike, or take transit.

Requiring that commercial developments have an abundance of parking directly conflicts with the goal of supporting alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle, particularly along transit corridors such as University Avenue. Excess parking that is available at no cost to the user creates an economic incentive for driving over the use of alternatives. While St. Paul's parking requirements are not unusually high compared to comparably sized cities, many cities have been revisiting and lowering their requirements in recent years.

It is notable that many redevelopment projects along University Avenue over the past several years have requested and been granted significant variances for the required amount of parking. These include the recently approved SuperTarget project, an expansion at Cheng Heng Restaurant, the conversion of 704-712 University to retail storefronts and office, and the conversion of the Brownstone building at 849 University at Victoria.

Developments that have met the required amount of parking include the Auto Zone store at University and Lexington, the new CVS pharmacy at Snelling and University, and the Midway Marketplace shopping center. PED staff and interns conducted a parking usage study of Midway Marketplace and other retail centers in St. Paul in 2002 and determined that all of them had

excess parking, even for peak demand periods (the lots were only 75% full on one of the peak shopping days of the year).

Recent development projects on University Avenue that include housing have moved primarily to underground and other forms of structured parking, and these projects include Emerald Gardens/808 Berry Place near University and 280, and the Rondo Branch Library/housing development at University and Dale.

While parking is abundant in certain locations on University Avenue, there are retail and other businesses in certain parts of the Avenue that rely almost exclusively on on-street parking. Many of these business owners believe that a dearth of off-street parking is hampering their revenues. This is an issue on the northeast corner of Snelling and University, the southeast corner of University and Lexington, and the intersection of University and Raymond. In these areas, there may be a need for the creation of municipal or shared use parking facilities that can serve multiple properties and businesses. This solution seems particularly feasible on the northeast corner of University and Snelling, where there is an abundance of privately owned and highly under-utilized parking behind the commercial buildings. A case study of this block can be found on page 19.

A recent survey of University Avenue businesses conducted by the City of St. Paul found parking to be the number one issue of concern to the businesses, and the number one “business need.”

Another significant factor in planning for new parking facilities along University Avenue is the impact that Light Rail Transit on University Avenue will have on local parking demand and supply. Current plans for LRT would eliminate approximately 20% of existing on-street parking supply on University Avenue. It is also reasonable to expect the demand for park-and-ride to greatly impact the overall demand for parking near LRT stations, and good planning and new infrastructure will be needed to avoid parking conflicts.

## **Research Methodology**

Parking supply is defined here as the number of parking stalls designated for use by any given property or business. Determining parking supply is not always a simple exercise. Many lots are shared by multiple users, including some which have been grandfathered into the city code without off-street parking requirements. There is also the question of how the off-street parking requirements have been calculated. The zoning code outlines off-street parking requirements for many different uses, but interpreting the code can be more of an art than a science.

The basic statistic this report uses to describe parking utilization is the peak utilization rate. This rate is obtained by ascertaining the peak periods of parking utilization from property/business owners, managers, and users, and then counting occupied and unoccupied parking stalls on a number of occasions during those periods. The peak utilization times are determined through observation, interrogation, and analysis. Supply is determined by counting the number of stalls that were approved during the city planning process. Demand is determined by counting the

number of occupied stalls during peak times and determining the maximum utilization. The formula is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Peak Parking Demand}}{\text{Parking Supply}} = \text{Peak Utilization Rate}$$

What this number represents is the maximum observed utilization of the parking dedicated to a particular development.

### Commercial Parking Supply and Demand Case Studies

These case studies were chosen because they have all been developed over the past several years, and each has had to meet the City's parking requirements.

#### Menards

2005 University Avenue

187,593 Square Feet

387 Parking Stalls

Use: Retail with Lumber Yard

In March of 2005, the first ever full two-story Menards home improvement store opened on the northwest corner of University and Prior Avenues. This store is now the largest single occupancy retail store in the Midway area.



Lumber yard, building materials center      1 space per 275 sq. ft. of indoor sales area plus 1 space per 5,000 sq. ft. of warehouse/storage.

According to the St. Paul Department of Licenses, Inspections, and Environmental Protection (LIEP), the parking requirement for Menards was based on 99,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of first floor retail space and 157,385 ft<sup>2</sup> of lumberyard space. The retail portion required 360 stalls (99,000 ft<sup>2</sup>/275 = 360) while the lumberyard required 31 stalls (157,385 ft<sup>2</sup>/5,000 = 31.48). So LIEP required Menards to have 391 stalls, and Menards constructed 387.

LIEP was not able to address the reasoning behind basing the required parking calculation on only the first floor of the 187,593 ft<sup>2</sup> retail floor space. If the City zoning code had been fully applied, and the 88,593 square feet of second floor retail space had been counted toward the parking requirement, the store would have been required to have an additional 322 parking stalls (88593/275=322), or a total of 713 stalls (391+322).

Menard’s parking lot was observed on ten different occasions with times varying throughout the week according to peak times identified by a store manager. The observed parking counts are summarized as follows:

TOTAL STALLS	387
STALLS REQUIRED BY CODE	397 (actually 713)
PEAK TIME	10-3PM, 5-8 PM daily
OCCUPIED STALLS (MAX.)	229
PEAK UTILIZATION PERCENTAGE	59%

The maximum observed occupied stalls was far less than the total stalls supplied. Informal observations suggest that the parking lot may have been at or near capacity on a couple of occasions during busy weekends in the spring of 2005. In addition, the manager of the store indicated sufficient use of the off-street parking to the point where Menards asked their employees to park on the street. The parking lot may fill up considerably during peak times seasonally, but based on the observations of this study, it is often only half or less than half full.

**Table2: Menards Parking Counts**

Day	Time	Total Stalls	Occupied Stalls	Utilization %
Monday, June 20th	1:30 PM	387	133	34
Monday, August 8th	5:30 PM	387	183	47
Tuesday, July 5th	6:30 PM	387	145	37
Tuesday, July 19th	5:30 PM	387	173	45
Wednesday, June 29th	6:00 PM	387	125	32
Thursday, June 9th	12:30 PM	387	191	49
Friday, July 8th	9:00 AM	387	145	37
Saturday, July 9th	1:00 PM	387	229	59
Sunday, July 31st	2:00 PM	387	185	48

## Western Bank

663 University Avenue

8,940 Square Feet of Bank

8,940 Square Feet of Office

61 Parking Stalls

Use: Bank and Office



Western Bank opened their new headquarters bank branch in June of 2005 on the same site as their former headquarters. The new building is two stories with an operating bank on the first floor and office space on the second floor.

Both floors have equal square footage and the bank also has three drive thru banking lanes to accommodate. Because the building has two different uses, two different parking requirements apply. The parking requirements for this building fall under bank and general office space in the city code.

Bank 1 space per 240 sq. ft. GFA plus 5 stacking spaces per lane for drive-in bank

General office 1 space per 350 sq. ft. GFA

Each usage has equal square footage in the building, thus the total parking requirement is  $(8,940/240) + (8,940/350) = 63$  parking stalls. Western Bank's site plan shows only 61 parking stalls were constructed. There are additional stalls in their east lot that belong to nearby businesses but were part of the Western Bank construction project. These stalls could be considered "shared" in a realistic sense, but for the purposes of meeting the parking requirement, they were not included. The site plan was approved with no explanation for the 2 stall shortcoming from either LIEP or Western Bank.

Western Bank's headquarters is unique in terms of banks because it includes both a regular service bank and offices. Thus, the utilization of their parking includes both regular office employees, bank employees, and patrons. Peak times for patrons vary, typically around lunch and after 4:00 p.m., but peak times for employees remain steady from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 PM. The utilization of the Western Bank parking lot observed during various times of day is summarized by the following:

TOTAL STALLS	61
STALLS REQUIRED BY CODE	63
PEAK TIME	11:00-2:00 PM, 4:00-Close daily
OCCUPIED STALLS (MAX.)	36
PEAK UTILIZATION PERCENTAGE	59%

Parking at Western Bank was typically utilized during office hours with the minor exception of lunch time. The underutilization of off-street parking at Western Bank suggests an off-street

parking requirement for banks that is greater than the real world demand. In most instances, the stalls were occupied by bank employees during regular “office” hours, indicating that bank patrons were not using off-street parking frequently if at all.

**Table 3: Western Bank Parking Counts**

Day	Time	Total Stalls	Occupied Stalls	Utilization %
Monday, June 20th	1:45 PM	61	12	20
Monday, August 8th	5:45 PM	61	34	56
Tuesday, July 5th	6:45 PM	61	3	5
Tuesday, July 19th	5:45 PM	61	36	59
Wednesday, June 29th	6:15 PM	61	8	13
Thursday, June 9th	12:45 PM	61	24	39
Friday, July 8th	9:15 AM	61	29	48
Saturday, July 9th	1:15 PM	61	21	34
Sunday, July 31st	2:15 PM	61	4	7

## Mai Village

394 University Avenue West  
9,625 Square Feet of Restaurant  
9,217 Square Feet of Office  
60 Parking Stalls on-site, 40  
Reserve Stalls off-site  
Use: Restaurant and Office



February of 2004 marked the opening of Mai Village's new two-story restaurant building at University and Western Avenues. The new building contains both a restaurant and office space that supports the selling of Vietnamese furniture and art. The

restaurant area is slightly larger than the office space and has a much more generous parking requirement under the city code. The two uses' off-street parking requirements are:

Restaurant with or without on-sale wine, strong beer, or non-intoxicating malt liquor	1 space per 125 sq. ft. GFA
General office	1 space per 350 sq. ft. GFA

According to the zoning code, Mai Village was required to have  $(9,625/125 = 77) + (9,217/350 = 26) = 103$  off-street parking stalls. The site plan indicates that 60 stalls are provided on-site while 40 stalls are leased off-site at 417 University Avenue, a business across University Avenue. Again, there is a slight discrepancy between the require stalls (103) and the actual number of stalls provided (100). With the 40 stalls leased off-site, Mai Village was able to come close to the minimum required off-street parking. The utilization of this parking indicates the relevance of this minimum requirement.

TOTAL STALLS	100
STALLS REQUIRED BY CODE	103
PEAK TIME	11:30-2:00 PM, 5:30-Close
OCCUPIED STALLS (MAX.)	53
PEAK UTILIZATION PERCENTAGE	53%

This table shows the maximum observed occupied stalls in Mai Village's on-site parking lot during the indicated times. The on-site lot was never at full capacity, although it appeared as though it were easily able to reach capacity at certain times during the week. The off-site parking was rarely utilized, except by restaurant employees. There were few indications of overflow parking in the main lot that would lead customers to park in the off-site lot. Instead, as I observed, customers would park on the street or in spots associated with other nearby business on the same block as Mai Village.

**Table 4: Mai Village Parking Counts**

Day	Time	Total Stalls	Occupied Stalls	Utilization %
Monday, June 20th	1:50 PM	100	47	47
Monday, August 8th	5:50 PM	100	51	51
Tuesday, July 5th	7:00 PM	100	51	51
Tuesday, July 19th	6:00 PM	100	53	53
Wednesday, June 29th	6:30 PM	100	42	42
Thursday, June 9th	1:00 PM	100	41	41
Friday, July 8th	9:10 AM	100	51	51
Saturday, July 9 <sup>th</sup>	1:30 PM	100	51	51
Sunday, July 31st	2:15 PM	100	36	36

## AutoZone

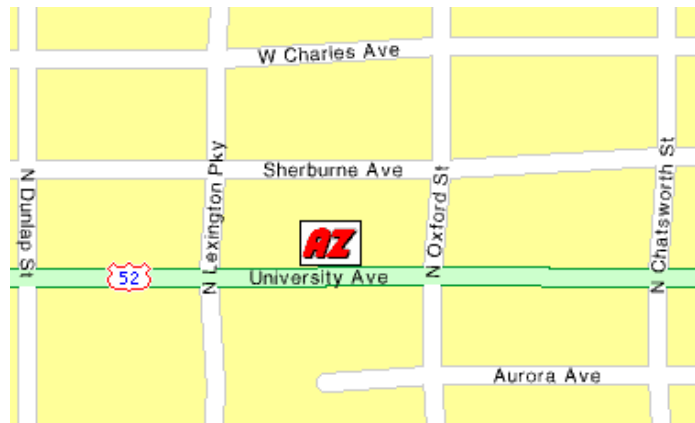
1075 University Avenue

7,166 Square Feet

34 Parking Stalls

Use: General Retail

The AutoZone store on University Avenue in Saint Paul is similar to most retail auto parts stores, several of which can be found on the Avenue.



General retail, retail stores in general

1 space per 225 sq. ft. GFA

AutoZone was required to have 32 stalls (7,166/225). AutoZone customers are also able to use the free on-street parking directly in front of the entrance to the store.

The parking demand for AutoZone is not as straight-forward as the supply. This is because AutoZone has a set of trucks they use for business purposes and often store on the premises. It is important to note this because many of the observed parking counts listed in the following table include the work trucks.

TOTAL STALLS	34
STALLS REQUIRED BY CODE	32
PEAK TIME	2:00-6:00 PM Daily
OCCUPIED STALLS (MAX.)	15
PEAK UTILIZATION PERCENTAGE	44%

What was generally observed was a combination of work trucks, customer vehicles, and employee vehicles in the parking lot. In addition to this, customers frequently utilized the on-street parking even before the lot was utilized. The maximum observed utilization was less than half the parking supply even with stalls occupied by work trucks.

**Table 5: AutoZone Parking Counts**

Day	Time	Total Stalls	Occupied Stalls	Utilization %
Monday, June 20th	1:35 PM	34	7	21
Monday, August 8th	5:40 PM	34	15	44
Tuesday, July 5th	6:15 PM	34	13	38
Tuesday, July 19th	5:30 PM	34	12	35
Wednesday, June 29th	6:15 PM	34	14	41
Thursday, June 9th	12:30 PM	34	6	18
Friday, July 8th	9:00 AM	34	10	29
Saturday, July 9 <sup>th</sup>	1:00 PM	34	9	26
Sunday, July 31 <sup>st</sup>	2:00 PM	34	11	32

## CVS Pharmacy

499 Snelling Avenue North

13,013 Square Feet

48 Parking Stalls

Use: Retail Drug store

The CVS Pharmacy on the northwest corner of Snelling and University Avenues was one of the first locations for this national chain pharmacy that is expanding in the Twin Cities. The store was built out to the corner with no setback, and has a drive-thru on the northwestern corner of the building.



Retail Drugstore	1 space per 250 square feet GFA
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CVS was required to have 52 parking stalls (13,013/250) and supplied 48. Vehicle access to the parking lot is difficult other than from southbound Snelling. On the south side of the building is one of the most heavily used bus stops along University Avenue. On-street parking is not available on either University or Snelling.

TOTAL STALLS:	48
STALL REQUIRED:	52
PEAK TIME:	2:00-3:00 and 5:00-7:00 p.m. daily
OCCUPIED STALLS (MAX.)	16
PEAK UTILIZATION PERCENTAGE	33%

The combination of poor access, a drive-thru lane, many nearby competitors, and great transit service all work to limit the parking demand for this store. Community groups including Midway TMO advocated that the store's main entrance be right at the corner of Snelling and University to best serve pedestrians and transit riders and to provide a more welcoming look at the corner. CVS preferred to keep its entrance on the north side of the building closer to the parking lot.

**Table 6: CVS Parking Counts**

Day	Time	Total Stalls	Occupied Stalls	Utilization%
Tuesday, February 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2006	5:00 pm	48	16	33%
Tuesday, February 14 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 pm	48	11	23%
Wednesday, February 15 <sup>th</sup>	5:00 pm	48	15	31%
Wednesday, February 15 <sup>th</sup>	6:40 pm	48	10	21%
Wednesday, February 15 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 pm	48	9	19%
Friday, February 17 <sup>th</sup>	6:00 pm	48	13	27%
Tuesday, February 21 <sup>st</sup>	6:00 pm	48	14	29%
Wednesday, February 22 <sup>nd</sup>	6:00 pm	48	7	15%
Wednesday, February 22 <sup>nd</sup>	7:00 pm	48	8	17%
Thursday, February 23 <sup>rd</sup>	6:00 pm	48	11	23%
Tuesday, February 28 <sup>th</sup>	5:10 pm	48	11	23%
Tuesday, February 28 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 pm	48	10	21%
Saturday, March 1 <sup>st</sup>	5:00 pm	48	12	25%
Saturday, March 1 <sup>st</sup>	7:00 pm	48	10	21%

## **Case Study of a Shared Parking Opportunity: The Northeast corner of Snelling and University Avenues**

All but one of the buildings on the block on the northeast 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.

### **Introduction**

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 7: Existing Land Uses and Peak Demand Periods**

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	-
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈ 89 Spaces</b>

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.

**Table 8. Zoning Code Parking Requirement for Existing Land Uses**

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>437</b>

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.

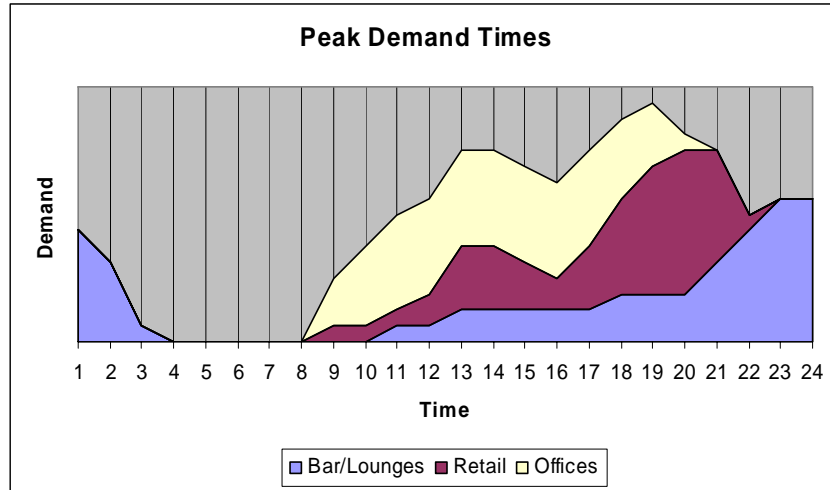
**Table 9. Parking Counts on the Snelling/University Block**

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 <sub>2</sub>	13:30	15:30	17:30	14:00	12:30	12:30	3:00
Usage <sub>2</sub>	36	31.5	32	41	34	13	12
Street <sub>2</sub>	11	17	19	22	20	17	12
Time <sub>3</sub>	17:15	18:30	19:00	20:00	21:00	9:00	
Usage <sub>3</sub>	34	42	38	27.5	33	31	
Street <sub>3</sub>	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 5<sup>th</sup> busiest or even the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 8:00 p.m. and almost certainly after 6:00 p.m., when on-street restrictions are fully lifted. This restriction lifting opens up roughly 52 free on-street parking spaces after 6:00 p.m.

**Figure 1. Combined Peak Parking Demand of the Snelling/University Block**



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 Development and Management Strategies

Currently, 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.

Strategy 1: Parking Benefit District

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

**Table 10. Projected Revenue from New Parking Meters**

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 rate in the chart above is based on a full 24 hour period, and would be influenced by many factors.

The city of Saint Paul could lease or purchase the parking lots and decide which ones are to be included in the shared parking equation. 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 or parking restrictions would be needed in the vicinity to create an incentive for parking in the lot. Another option would be to shorten the time limit for more of the on-street parking to increase the rater of turnover.

Strategy 2: 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 or lease and improve the lots. The maintenance would be paid for by the property owners through special assessments. In the case of Snelling/Grand, the City contracts with the area District Council to manage the maintenance of the lot. 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 improving the lots through a special parking improvement fund (no longer in existence) that was created in the early 1990’s. A pay parking situation, either through meters or with an automated attendant, could help the city recoup some of the costs of improving the lot, possibly even turning into an income stream in the long-term.

Strategy 3: 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 an 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.

#### Strategy 4: Controlled Entry Lot

This option could apply to Strategies 1 and 2 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 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.

The availability of parking on this block presents a unique opportunity in St. Paul to utilize space more efficiently and could be a real win-win for the property owners and the City. 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. A degree of cooperation from all parties is a pre-requisite for success.

## Recommendations

In order to adequately achieve many of the goals in Saint Paul's comprehensive plan and reflect the dynamic nature of the City, Saint Paul should consider adopting the following policy changes with regards to minimum parking requirements:

1. Reduce minimum parking requirements along University Avenue by half (50%). On transit corridors, the City should err on the side of a more compact, walkable form of development.
2. Place a limit on the proportion of any given development site on University Avenue that can be dedicated to parking. This issue needs further study, but a limit of 40-50% would help the City achieve its land use and transportation goals for University Avenue.
3. Create an off-street parking maximum for University Avenue that is either the same as or 20% lower than the current minimums. Don't give developers the option of providing significantly more parking than is needed.
4. On transit corridors, give developers the option of paying either a one-time or annual fee in lieu of providing off-street parking stalls. The fees can then be used to create municipal shared-use parking lots in locations that can most benefit from such lots, including the northeast corner of Snelling/University. This will encourage re-use of older buildings that have limited off-street parking.
5. Use the fees from #4 and/or other sources to create a modest City fund to improve and buy or lease parcels for shared-use municipal parking lots. Maintenance and operations of such lots can be paid for through special assessments, parking fees, or a combination. One option would be a corridor-wide special assessment for shared parking.
6. Parking benefit districts (PBD's) should be established in areas where parking is in high demand and pedestrian traffic is to be encouraged. Parking benefit district revenue can be used to promote pedestrian traffic with enhanced sidewalks, boulevards, and other streetscape features.