

Request for Proposals

Borough of Aspinwall, Allegheny County

Comprehensive Parking Management Study

April 15, 2024

The Borough of Aspinwall is seeking proposals for a comprehensive parking study to address the challenges and opportunities related to parking within the borough. The study aims to provide recommendations for optimizing parking resources for residents and businesses, while considering physical space constraints, effective enforcement, and incentives to encourage efficient parking practices. The plan should include data collection and recommendations for workable action plans, which fall within the financial means and capacity of the borough.

Project Description

The Borough of Aspinwall is in need of a parking management strategy to address the long-standing issue of parking demand exceeding supply in the borough, which has been particularly exacerbated over time from increased vehicle ownership and a growing number of multi-family homes. Borough officials recognize the need to better understand parking utilization in the borough and develop a management plan with strategies that reflect current realities and better balance occupancy and availability in residential and business areas.

A parking steering committee made up of borough residents has been established by Borough Council to offer recommendations on potential focus areas for data collection and parking management recommendations based on experiences with parking issues. The Consultant will work with Borough Council and the steering committee in collecting data and crafting the plan.

To better understand the problem and inform parking management strategies, Borough Council and the steering committee would like to collect data on the following items:

- The number of spots available in the borough, particularly from a representative cross-section of streets and areas to include business districts and both upper and lower areas of the borough's residential areas.
- The number of spots needed by businesses for their staff at various time periods and days of the week.
- The average and range of sizes of parking spots in residential areas across a representative cross-section of residential streets.
- Specific areas where physical terrain or barriers impede parking, i.e. difficult to get in and out of a car due to trees, curbs, etc.
- The number of garages and parking pads currently available to residents.

As resident, business, and other property owner usage of available parking spaces is a key factor in balancing supply and demand, identified areas for potential strategies relate to resident parking permits and the related ordinance, business usage related to how many spaces are needed for business staff and areas where they can park, and other property owner usage and practices such as leasing parking spaces to non-residents. Residents are currently able to obtain parking permits

free of charge for the number of vehicles they own and resident parking is not zone restricted. Residents are also provided with visitor parking passes with little to no usage restrictions. Therefore, potential areas for resident usage recommendations should address:

- The number of vehicles for which each household should be able to receive parking permits for, and recommended costs for additional permits above that number or other thresholds.
- Requirements for receiving a resident vehicle parking permit, such as valid vehicle inspection, registration, etc.
- Potential zoning restrictions for resident parking passes based on where the household is located.
- Additional tracking and restrictions of visitor parking passes issued to residents such as processes for requesting and obtaining visitor parking passes and the amount of time a visitor can remain parked in the borough using a visitor parking pass.
- Proper and adequate signage to make residential parking areas clear.

Additional areas that have been identified as areas for recommendations would be:

- Potential changes to the zoning ordinance to prohibit the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family dwellings, in order to mitigate the growing demand for parking.
- The number of spaces available for rental properties.
- Prohibiting the leasing of parking spaces by property owners to non-residents of the borough.
- The ideal size and uniformity of available parking spaces including the length of yellow, non-parking areas in designated areas.
- Understanding of potential parking-related impacts from planned and potential renovations to borough Recreation Area.
- Considerations of the Aspinwall River Trail Park within the overall borough parking management strategy.

It is also vital to the study that recommendations also include potential methods of effective enforcement and incentives to residents for increasing parking supply. Recommendations on enforcement should address staffing, technology, and fine amounts. Potential incentives could be related to residents who build garages or parking pads to reduce the demand for street parking or convert multi-family units back to single family homes.

Background Information

The Borough of Aspinwall is a .5 square mile community located in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania with a population of approximately 2,900 people. The borough recently adopted a new comprehensive plan in 2023. As part of this process, resident input was collected on all aspects of the borough with over 400 comments related to parking, making this one of the most commented on areas during the comprehensive plan creation process. The completion of a parking management study was a key recommendation from the recently adopted comprehensive plan and the Appendix includes relevant sections from the comprehensive plan addressing these issues.

Borough parking issues are in both commercial areas, where there are 128 metered street spaces and 70 metered spaces in the borough municipal lot, and residential areas, where some areas are designated as resident parking only. There are also two borough parks, the Aspinwall Recreation

Area in the lower part of the borough and Firemen’s Memorial Park in the upper part of the borough, which have parking areas. Notably, the Aspinwall Recreation Area is expected to undergo renovations as part of the comprehensive plan implementation, which may impact parking usage and needs. Parking fines for resident-only areas were recently increased from \$10 to \$50 in 2022 while parking fines in metered areas remain at \$10. The sections from the comprehensive plan in the Appendix include additional background information about the current state of parking in the borough. Further, a resident volunteer also previously compiled a detailed inventory of parking supply and this information can be provided to the selected contractor upon request. Finally, the Allegheny River Trail Park, which is privately-owned and currently over ten acres and continues to expand, is also within the borough and has its own parking spaces. The continued growth of this park may have impact on parking and traffic in the borough moving forward.

Services to be provided

The consultant to be hired will provide direction of data collection and recommendations for clear workable solutions for parking management. Interested consultants are asked to submit a scope of work describing their approach, methods, etc. for carrying out the prescribed work. The Borough would be open to an approach where a portion of data collection efforts on the current borough parking supply is conducted by borough staff and resident volunteers at the overall direction and discretion of the selected consultant.

The two main areas of the parking study will be data collection and analysis and recommended strategies. The consultant should provide a detailed plan for collecting the desired and necessary data and will be responsible for either collecting the data or offering clear direction to the borough for collection methods. Regardless of how data is collected, the selected consultant will be responsible for analyzing and summarizing the data in a report. The data analysis and summary should directly inform the recommended strategies provided, which should at minimum consider and address the suggested areas outlined in the Project Description section. Recommended strategies should be workable and implementable within the financial and capacity constraints of the borough.

The selected consultant will provide a final report summarizing the methodology, findings, analysis, and recommendations and deliver a presentation of findings and recommendations at a public meeting. The consultant will deliver the final study document ready for adoption, including 20 paper copies and 10 Flash Drives.

Budget

The project will have a fixed budget for consultant costs, which will come from funds allocated for comprehensive plan related initiatives in the 2024 budget.

Completion Schedule

It is expected that the consultant will complete the requested study within 4 months of execution of a contract.

Contractual Requirements

The project may be partially funded by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the consultant must comply with grant-mandated requirements to be included in the consultant contract.

Project Management

The project will be managed by the borough manager and borough council. Councilman, Mark Chimel, the Parking and Zoning committee chairman will be the borough's primary contact for communications with the consultant.

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated and a consultant will be selected based on the following criteria listed in order of importance:

- The relevant qualifications, skills, and experience of the consultant(s) in performing work requested herein and working with communities similar in size and character to Aspinwall.
- The qualifications, skills, and experience of personnel to be assigned by the consultant(s) to the project.
- The ability of the consultant to meet the expected project completion schedule.

Proposal Content

Consultant proposals must include:

- Brief description of the consultant(s).
- Description of relevant work experience, capabilities, skills, and expertise which qualify the consultant(s) to undertake the project. Please include relevant, recent client references.
- Personnel assignments with resumes showing individual work experience, skills, and expertise.
- A proposed scope of work and approach, methods, etc. to carry out the project.
- Confirmation that the scope of work will be performed for the fixed not-to-exceed amount
- Proposed work schedule.

Selection Procedures

Two (2) paper hard copies and two (2) electronic copies of the proposal must be submitted to:
Borough of Aspinwall
Attention: Melissa Lang O'Malley, 217 Commercial Ave, Aspinwall, PA 15215

Proposals must be received no later than 12:00pm, Friday, May 17, 2024 to be eligible for consideration. Any questions on the request should be directed to Melissa Lang O'Malley at 412-781-0213.

The committee is open to consider consultant suggestions for alterations to the work scope that would be in the borough's interest and not vary from the essential goals and objectives outlined in the RFP. Alterations could be considered in developing a final scope of work for contract with the selected consultant.

A short list of consultants will be asked to schedule and make presentations to the committee. It is anticipated that consultant selection will occur within 45-60 days of the RFP deadline. A notice to proceed will be issued as soon as possible thereafter.

Strategy 02:

Establish a parking management program

As the adage goes: Anywhere really worth visiting has a parking problem. High-quality, dense walkable environments achieve an exciting concentration of desirable destinations *due to*, not in spite of, a lack of free surface parking. In this sense, the long-standing issue of limited parking supply in Aspinwall's business districts represents an ironically good problem to have.

Drivers cruising Brilliant Avenue and Commercial Avenue in search of a space may not see it that way. Merchants in these locations have expressed frustration to Borough Council – in a discussion that has spanned decades – that a lack of available, convenient parking deters would-be visitors.

A separate but related problem exists in the Borough's residential neighborhoods, where competition for curb space has risen along with the number and size of vehicles parked on-street overnight.

This section recognizes that parking is an economics problem, one within the power of the market to solve: Where does demand for parking exceed supply? How can regulating parking change the way drivers use it? The Borough can implement a targeted parking management strategy to help balance the use of space without compromising the quality of its built environment.

Overview:

Reforming the way parking is managed in Aspinwall can serve a number of aims, including:

- supporting prosperity in the business districts by increasing turnover
- reducing the traffic congestion and emissions caused by people circling in search of parking
- incentivizing alternative modes, and
- promoting the most beneficial use of space and facilities.

The Borough should use an inventory analysis generated as part of this planning process to select blocks for primary data collection, then modernize meters, adjust pricing and roll out targeted strategies to address supply/demand mismatch where it exists.

I don't know where the parking lots and decks are in the French Quarter. I looked around last time I visited and I just couldn't find 'em. News flash: They aren't there. The best districts in the country and around the world don't offer abundant parking. That is why they are the best districts. This is the attraction factor at work. Good urbanism is the hook, good businesses are the pull.

– Jeff Siegler,
Revitalize or Die

Supply side

In commercial areas, the Borough has 128 metered street spaces with two-hour limits, enforced between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. all days except Sundays and legal holidays. The municipal lot has 70 spaces and, while it is occasionally full, there are often spaces available in the evening, perhaps because visitors may be unaware that parking in the lot is free after 5 p.m. The Borough also leases a set of separate spaces (restricted parking permits) along Field Avenue and Freeport Road.

The Borough reserves some areas, such as the western side of Delafield Avenue, for resident parking only. The Borough issues free resident parking permits for this purpose.

The Borough upgraded its parking management software and equipment and raised fines in 2022. Fines for an expired meter are \$10. Fines for violations at a no parking sign, in a one-hour area, in a resident-only area, in a merchant lot or in the leased areas along Freeport Road are \$50, as are fines for obstructing traffic, a fire lane or hydrant or a driveway.

As a part of this planning process, a volunteer compiled a detailed inventory of parking supply (both on- and off-street) in comparison with adjacent land uses – housing units, square feet of office, retail and restaurants/bar, auto-oriented uses and recreation facility capacity. This table appears in the Appendix and represents a highly useful starting point for understanding what's happening at a granular level.

Applying the existing requirements for off-street parking in the Zoning Ordinance, the analysis identifies blocks where the gap is greatest between the number of off-street spaces that would be required if the uses were built today (as a proxy for relative demand) and the supply of existing parking of all types. The gap is largest for the 00 and 100 block of Brilliant Avenue and in the vicinity of the 200 and 300 block of Freeport Road and Commercial Avenue.

Residential blocks tend to be relatively close to parity, with smaller gaps or surpluses. Supply on residential blocks is most constrained where multi-family housing does not include off-street parking. Across the entire Borough, the 2020 Census estimated that 16% of all housing units were in multi-family buildings.



Municipal lot between Commercial Avenue and Freeport Road

Demand factors

The supply/demand mismatch in commercial areas takes the form of visitors being unable to find optimal parking and 1) circling around in search of it, 2) parking illegally, 3) parking farther away and walking, or 4) giving up. The use information available at this point is anecdotal: Observations about when spaces seem to be consistently full, frustrations about business parking spilling over into residential areas, theories about employees occupying meter spaces all day.

In commercial areas, visitors generate parking demand. There is some elasticity in mode choice – for instance, a person visiting an area known to have limited free parking might choose instead to walk, bike or take a bus there. By contrast, parking demand in residential areas is related primarily to car ownership. Peak demand is the middle of the night, and everyone who owns a vehicle will need to store it somewhere.

The problem of adequate on-street parking in residential areas has grown along with the propensity of households to own more and larger vehicles than they once did. This is a national trend. Census data shows that the number of households with two or more vehicles climbed from 22% in 1960 to 59% in 2020. In 2019, three large American auto manufacturers exited the sedan market as demand surged for trucks and SUVs – and vehicles are getting larger across all categories. A Toyota Camry is now 21% larger than it was in the early 1980s, and a Ford F-Series truck is now 25% larger than the first generation.¹

In Aspinwall, the Census estimated that there were 1.48 vehicles per household in 2020, compared to 1.23 in 2010. Renters tend to own fewer vehicles per household than homeowners, though the percentage of renters who didn't have access to a vehicle decreased from 22% in 2010 to only 5% in 2020.² All of this translates to increased demand for on-street overnight parking.

Other factors behind constrained on-street parking supply in Aspinwall:

- The off-street parking minimums specified in the Zoning Ordinance do not apply to uses that existed prior to the adoption of the regulations. Older multi-family buildings don't necessarily provide off-street parking to accommodate all of the vehicles their residents and visitors own, which increases competition for street parking.
- Some property owners with garages use those structures for storage and park on the street.
- While the number of total households in the Borough has decreased overall since 2010, households are added when large single-family homes are converted to multi-unit rentals.
- The Borough's neighborhoods are generally historic, dense and stable, which means that land to develop additional off-street parking is both scarce and expensive, even if asphaltting more space for private car storage proved to be worth detracting from a neighborhood's visual quality.

The Borough is largely built-out and is unlikely to experience major land-use change during the next 10 years. Considerations for future parking demand include the continued enhancement of Allegheny River Trail Park and its trail connections and improvements as suggested in this plan for the Borough's parks. For instance, the vision for the overlook at Fireman's Park is a community-scale facility, not a regional attraction that would draw a large volume of visitors.

¹ "Study: Average car size is increasing – will roads still be safe for small cars and pedestrians?" May 2021, *The Zebra*. thezebra.com/resources/driving/average-car-size/

² 2020 American Community Survey, Table B25044, Tenure by Vehicles Available

what we heard

These are some of the more than 400 comments Aspinwall residents shared about parking in the community questionnaire.

Business districts

- "@#\$\$%&^!!"
- "Driving down from upper Aspinwall to events down in lower. Parking in upper is fine."
- "Frankly, it seems it'll always be a balancing act: if we have successful businesses and a lot of visitors, parking will always be a bit tight."
- "The meters are outdated and clunky."
- "I don't carry cash and they require quarters."
- "It is a relative problem. i.e. relative to Pittsburgh city, it is peanuts. Higher ticket prices/parking fees around businesses might be good. It is rather cheap."
- "Business owners should be careful where they and employees park."
- "Employees park at meters and many times customers wonder why they can't park."

Residential streets

- "Homes should have assigned parking spaces."
- "Business owners and ballfield users park in residential areas"
- "We often see people working at the hospital parking outside of our house just because it's free and nobody enforces the residents' rule."
- "Renters not using their provided parking lots and taking up spaces on the street for homeowners."
- "People parking on streets to avoid paying for the hospital parking."
- "There are no longer any streets without street cleaning regulations - if I have to be out of town for a week, there is nowhere I can park my car and not get a ticket."
- "You can give everyone 5 spaces in front of their house and they would still be complaining about parking."
- "I live on 2nd and Brilliant and have to street park and often people park on second who work on Brilliant. There is often no place to park, especially on street sweeping day."
- Aspinwall is car-heavy "and on street parking is a crowded affair. We cleared out garages to have places to park."
- "There is no parking."
- "I can always find parking."
- "I don't have a driveway or garage and am forced to move my cars CONSTANTLY from April to November due to street cleaning. This is a huge issue and one reason I'd leave Aspinwall."
- "Nothing is being done to enforce non resident parking violators."
- "Difficult parking for guests."

Strategies to consider

Best practices in parking management for vibrant business districts focus on both reducing parking demand and managing supply. Doing so not only supports an optimal balance of parking occupancy and availability, but also encourages active transportation (walking, biking, transit), reinforces the beauty and safety of the business district's street scene and improves environmental quality by reducing vehicle miles traveled.

Some strategies to consider include:

- Adding limited short-term parking and loading at the curb in areas with significant take-out business. A five-minute “quick stop” parking stall in the right location could accommodate increased demand for pick-ups that has outlasted the pandemic, increasing turnover and reducing illegal parking.
- Adjusting the pricing and time limits, as relevant, of parking in the business districts to achieve an average occupancy rate of 85%. A new parking meter policy could specify prices for a given district or set of blocks, or dynamic pricing could adjust according to demand or time of day.
- Continue to promote creative solutions such as shared parking to match supply needs with any underused lot space. In particular, private lot space in the vicinity of the business districts could potentially accommodate employee parking that currently competes with customers for relatively inexpensive metered space.
- Ensuring that signage clearly directs visitors to parking of the appropriate type and encourages visitors to use the municipal lot in the evenings.
- Prohibiting the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family, in certain districts or overall. Other Pennsylvania communities have enacted such regulations with the intent of preserving historic residential neighborhoods and easing parking demand. Further, the Borough could incentivize the *deconversion* of such structures back to single-family through offering grants, streamlining the process, reducing fees and/or offering tax incentives.
- Reforming the residential parking permit program to manage street parking, particularly to disincentivize storing multiple vehicles on the street and to promote off-street parking on the part of those who own access to that space (garages, spaces in multi-family lots). The Borough could establish specific street/block zones within which only residents of *that area* may park, as regulated by Borough-issued passes. Because curb space is a public good that has value, it would be reasonable for the Borough to charge for permits. This could look like annual permitting that is free or nominal for the first vehicle per household, higher (\$25-\$50) for the second vehicle and higher still (\$100-\$250) for the third or fourth vehicle. Annual costs are an effective tool for ensuring available parking for all permit holders in areas where scarcity is an ongoing problem.

- Install and program electronic parking meters that work in conjunction with parking apps, either by replacing meters where they are now installed or by installing multi-space kiosks. Smart meters can deploy dynamic pricing, which is a good strategy for keeping occupancy around the target of 85% at different times of day. They can also track and report parking utilization data, which would provide information to keep the parking management program well calibrated in future years.
- Exploring transportation demand management options, such as landing bikeshare facilities, improving pedestrian infrastructure and working with Pittsburgh Regional Transit to improve bus stops and encourage transit ridership. As trail connections to Aspinwall develop, ensure that safe and appealing routes connect users to the business districts and hospital.



Mobile parking is one high-tech approach to managing public parking spaces. Aspinwall Borough now includes the ParkMobile app (also used by the City of Pittsburgh) as an option for paying for parking. The app is integrated with parking enforcement, opening up some new options for parking data management.

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Action Steps:

- A. Appoint a working group (potentially an ad hoc advisory committee to Council) to lead a detailed parking study and implementation of its recommendations.
- B. Ensure that resident-only parking areas are clearly signed and ensure regular enforcement.
- C. Budget and/or otherwise assemble funding to undertake a detailed Parking Management Study that will include collection and analysis of primary parking utilization data. Depending on scope, a parking management study can range generally from \$10,000 to \$40,000. Consider involving UPMC, the Riverfront Trail and other local partners in funding and scoping the effort.
- D. Create and issue a Request for Proposals for a Parking Management Study. This should build upon existing data, particularly the inventory of parking supply and land use classifications compiled in the appendix of this report. Review RFPs for similar projects elsewhere to inform what is included.

Further research must include parking utilization counts in a targeted study area, including specified extents of Brilliant and Commercial Avenues and Freeport Road. It may also include utilization counts in targeted residential areas. Recommendations should address all aspects of Aspinwall’s parking system, including the pricing and time restrictions set for publicly owned street and lot spaces; the residential permit program; shared parking scenarios and preferred solutions for addressing a mismatch between supply and demand where it exists. The end result should be clear and simple steps forward for the Borough in optimally managing parking supply.

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Timeline:

**Years
1-2**

- E. Report the results of the parking utilization study to Council and the public and discuss what specific interventions would address the problems it reveals. Consider whether and how to incorporate the strategies contained in this section to reduce parking demand and manage supply.

- G. Begin budgeting to implement the program, including such costs as modern electronic parking meters, new signage and distributing information about new policies and/or permitting requirements.

- H. Continue to provide signage and information that clearly communicate parking rules and consistently enforce them.

Timeline:



**Years
2-3**



Ongoing

Understanding parking utilization

Collecting local data to learn how parking is being used is a critical step in deciding what to do about it. Community staff and volunteers can work with specialists to select a methodology and identify:

- Who is using parking and for how long (i.e. are employees spending eight hours in retail-adjacent spaces where high turnover is needed?)
- Where are there empty spaces that could be better used?
- Where do people tend to park illegally?
- Are there infrastructure or other problems that prevent use of designated spaces?

Such studies are useful in providing real-life demand data that can precisely inform how to effectively address real and perceived shortages.