

Verona-Cedar Grove Times

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1997

VCRC Seeks To Improve Parking

BY PAULVIGNA

VERONA—The Verona Commercial Revitalization Committee has developed a report on the parking situation in the central business district. Bill Brunner presented the report to the council two weeks ago. The report outlines the present situation and offers suggestions on improvements.

Councilman Bob Detore suggested the governing body move quickly to implement several of the report's proposals, especially since most of the ideas would take little or no township financing, he explained.

Some of the longer term goals, such as improvements to the municipal lots, would require township financing.

The Circumstances

The survey, prepared by Donald Smartt and Francis Regan, concentrates on parking on Bloomfield Avenue between Lakeside and Forest avenues, including the municipal lots and side street parking.

There are 87 spaces in lot one; 33 in Lot two. There are 136 spaces along Bloomfield Avenue, including metered and unmetered spaces along Bloomfield Avenue, metered spaces on side streets and 22 unmetered spaces in the civic center. Additionally, there are 180 spaces in five private lots.

The survey is based on visual data collected Sept. 20 and 27, 1996.

Only eight percent of the cars stayed past the two hour meter limit. Over 80 percent stayed less than a half hour.

The spots on adjacent streets, such as Lakeside Avenue, Rockland Terrace and Grove Avenue weren't heavily used by customers of the central business district (CRD), but rather by visitors of businesses along those side streets.

The survey found that from 79-84 percent of the metered spaces were in use during peak hours, about 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. However, the unmetered spaces brought peak utilization down to 69 percent.

"Clearly the unmetered, illegal parking helps meet parking demand in the CBD," the survey slates.

"Most of the visitors to the CBD," the survey states, "are utilizing the services offered in the area, which primarily caters to the convenience shopping needs of the area's residents. The large number and frequent utilization of all parking spaces, but in particular the unmetered ones, indicates a need for more short term parking along Bloomfield Avenue."

Municipal lot one, located on Park Place, showed

only about 54 percent capacity. The survey surmises this could be due the lack of signs indicating the lot, the use of unmetered spaces and private lots, "the general unattractiveness of the lot, and poor pedestrian access to Bloomfield Avenue.



DARK ALLEY. The alleys leading to the municipal parking lots must be cleaned and clearly marked to improve access. (Staff photo—Paul Vigna)

Recommendations

The survey takes a hard line with the public lots.

Zoning ordinances for private lots require they be paved, have drainage, be landscaped, adequately lit and have clearly marked spaces.

"If these standards were applied to the municipal



FREE PARKING. The Verona Commercial Revitalization Committee wants to put meters in front of parking spaces like this one on Bloomfield Avenue (Staff photo—Paul Vigna)

lots, they would not be met," the authors write. "If the township is requiring application of these standards for private property owners, then they should be adhered to by the township for its own parking facilities."

A series of measures are proposed in regard to the

metered spaces. The first is to reduce the maximum time on meters along Bloomfield Avenue from two hours to one and a half, to encourage higher turnover and discourage meter feeding by local business employees.

Unmetered spaces along Bloomfield Avenue total 28 spaces. The survey recommends contacting the township engineer and police department in an attempt to put meters in front of those spaces.

Another recommendation is to increase the meter rates, currently 25 cents per hour in long-term spaces and 20 cents per hour in short-term.

One of the more creative suggestions is a suggested agreement with Our Lady of the Lake church to allow employees of First Union Bank to use OLL's lot to free spaces in the bank's lot.

The committee recommends putting up more signs directing customers to the two municipal lots.

To make the lots more attractive, the committee proposes a number of measures. The first is to clearly mark the two alleys on Bloomfield Avenue leading to the lots. Lot one, the report states, "is very unattractive to users." The committee recommends repaving, landscaping, improved lighting, new curbing and new sidewalks.

Another creative idea the committee suggests is to make stores' backs as attractive as the fronts. The report includes pictures of lots in Madison and Cranford where this has been done.

The committee suggests the township's property



UNSAFELY. Improvements to the municipal lots in Verona, like the one above, would make shopping a more pleasant experience. (Staff photo—Paul Vigna)

maintenance code could be invoked. Building improvements, the report states, could be funded through a county development program.



Don Smartt and The Community Advocates

