TOWN OF QUALICUM BEACH

Parking Management Strategy
Phase 1

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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the first phase of an overall parking management strategy for downtown Qualicum Beach. It is intended that the recommendations in this report be implemented on a trial basis in summer and fall 2007, with subsequent implementation of the remainder of the parking management strategy in 2008.

1.1. What is Parking Management?

In downtown Qualicum Beach — as in most communities where there is a "parking problem" — there is a perceived shortage of parking. The most commonly-cited solution to the problem is to provide more parking. To this end, the Town has acquired parcels of land within the downtown, with longer-term plans to convert these and other sites to parking.

But is a shortage of parking really the problem? The simple answer is "no." There is a sufficient supply of parking in the downtown to meet the demand for parking — provided that the demand is properly managed. The problem is that currently, there is very little management of the parking demand, with the result that parking in some areas of the downtown is over-utilized and congested.

The parking problem in downtown Qualicum Beach is a problem of *availability* — parking stalls are frequently not available for everyone who wants one, where they want one. Although this might appear to be a shortage of parking, the fact that parking stalls elsewhere in the downtown sit empty for much of the day indicates that there is plenty of parking — it's just not being used very well. The good news is that this is a relatively easy problem to solve. A simple parking management strategy can eliminate the perceived shortage of parking.

"Parking management" describes a range of regulations, operational practices and parking facilities which are intended to manage the supply and demand for parking. The objectives of a parking management strategy for downtown Qualicum Beach would include:

- Ensure the availability of parking stalls in all areas of the downtown, at all times.

- Ensure that an adequate supply of parking is provided, and at the same time ensure that there is not an over-supply of parking.

- Provide a positive experience for motorists using parking facilities in downtown Qualicum Beach, including wayfinding and other information guiding motorists to parking facilities.

1.2. Phased Implementation

Rather than implement an entire parking management strategy at once, the approach recommended in this report is to test several parking management options in a first phase, and then if these prove successful, develop and implement the remainder of the parking management

strategy based on the experience gained in the first phase. As indicated in the table below, the first phase is intended to be implemented this summer.

Implement Phase 1 recommendations	Summer 2007
Monitoring and data collection	Summer and Fall 2007
Revisions to Phase 1 parking management practices as required	Spring 2008
Develop long-range parking management strategy	2008 and later

The first phase of the parking management strategy would address existing parking problems, particularly problems related to the availability of parking in the downtown. The long-range strategy would address future issues, such as whether or not there is a need for additional parking in the downtown (and if so, where and how additional parking should be provided), development guidelines for on-site and off-site parking, and the costs and revenues associated with parking.

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section describes existing parking conditions and issues in the downtown, to provide a basis for discussion of parking management options in subsequent sections.

2.1. Parking Issues

The immediate parking issue in downtown Qualicum Beach is a perceived shortage of parking in some areas and at certain times. A survey conducted by the Chamber of Commerce in early 2007 found that 89% of merchants who responded to the survey consider that there is a shortage of parking in the downtown. Eighty percent indicated that they have received complaints from their customers regarding parking.

Other, longer-term parking issues include the amount of parking required in the long-term to support planned development in the downtown, and the optimum locations for any additional parking that is provided. The Town has purchased some properties in the downtown — and has considered acquiring others — with the intent that these could be used to provide additional parking. Some people have questioned whether parking would be the best use for these properties, and whether additional parking is needed.

2.2. Parking Supply and Demand

InterCAD Services Ltd. collected data regarding parking in downtown Qualicum Beach during summer 2006. The results of this data collection are documented in a separate report prepared by InterCAD. To provide a basis for presentation of a parking management strategy, the key results of the data collection are summarized below.

- There is a total of 1,500 parking spaces in the downtown — 1,000 in the "core area" and 500 in the "fringe area" (See Figure 1). Four hundred of the parking spaces are on Town streets, and 1,100 parking spaces are in off-street parking lots.

- The peak demand for parking in the downtown occurs around 2:00 p.m., as illustrated in Figure 2. At the peak time, there are approximately 1,000 vehicles parked in the downtown.

- At the peak time, 66% of the parking spaces in the downtown are occupied. Within the "core area", 68% of parking spaces are occupied, while 60% of spaces within the "fringe area" are occupied. Overall, one-third of parking stalls remain unused.

- Within the "core area," 82% of on-street parking stalls are occupied during the peak time. As indicated in Table 1, demand is strongest in zone 6 (which includes Qualicum Foods), where usage of on-street parking stalls reaches 95%.

Figure 1 — Downtown Parking Zones
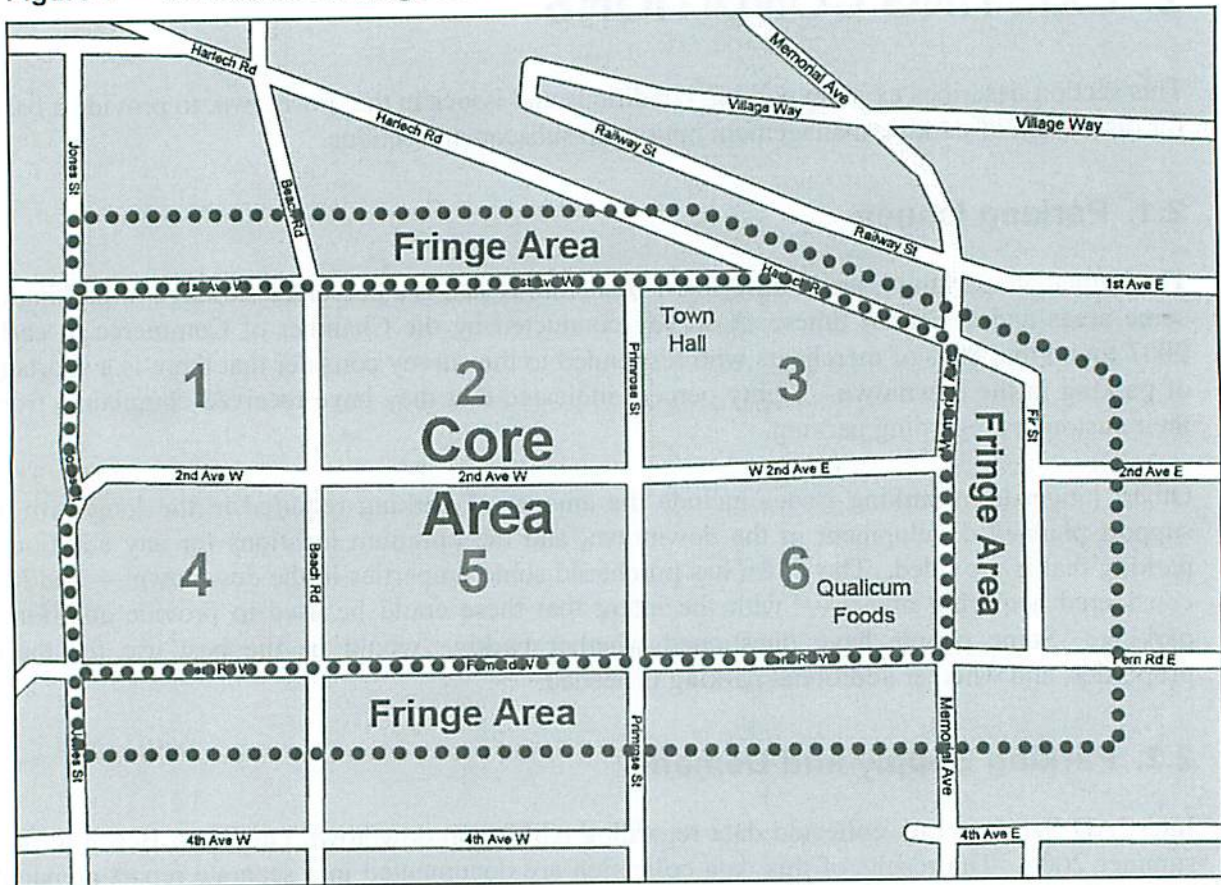
- The parking lot serving Qualicum Foods and other stores in zone 6 is 97% full during the peak time. This is the practical limit of parking utilization — it is generally not possible nor desirable to have more than 97% of parking stalls occupied.

- During the peak time, more than half the off-street parking stalls remain empty in the "core area" between Jones Street and Primrose Street.
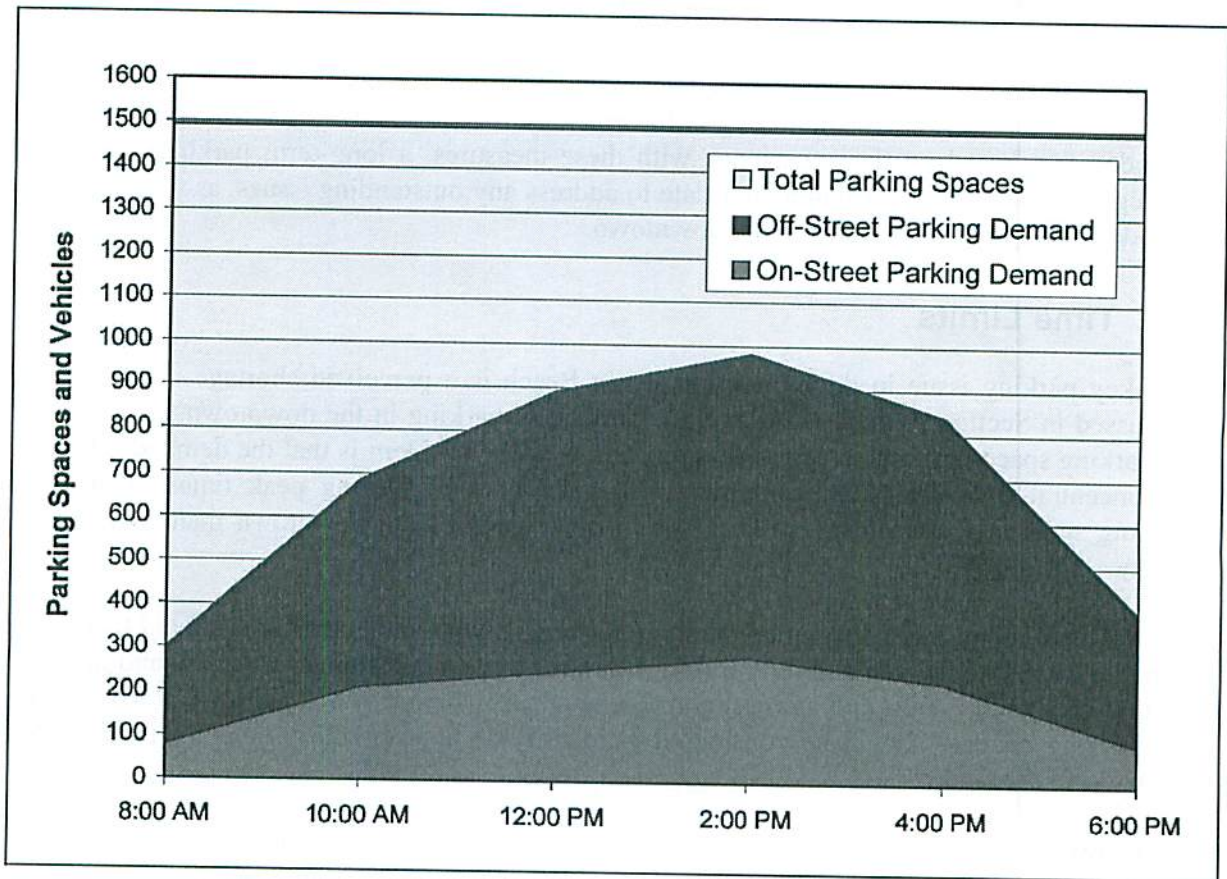
Figure 2 — Downtown Parking Demand

Table 1 — Core Area Peak Parking Demand

	Parking Supply			Peak Parking Demand (2:00 p.m.)			
Zone	On-Street Spaces	Off-Street Stalls	Total Spaces	On-Street Vehicles		Off-Street Vehicles	
1	27	95	122	19	70%	44	46%
2	57	135	192	45	79%	58	43%
3	44	155	199	32	73%	124	80%
4	32	69	101	28	88%	30	43%
5	51	142	193	44	86%	69	49%
6	40	169	209	38	95%	164	97%
Totals	251	765	1016	206	82%	489	64%

3. PARKING STRATEGY

This section describes the recommended components of the first phase of a parking management strategy for the downtown, including enforcement, education and follow-up monitoring. It is intended that based on the experience with these measures, a long-term parking management strategy would be developed at a later date to address any outstanding issues, as well as the need for additional parking facilities in the downtown.

3.1. Time Limits

The key parking issue in downtown Qualicum Beach is a perceived shortage of parking. As discussed in Section 2, there is no overall shortage of parking in the downtown, as one-third of all parking spaces remain empty during peak times. The problem is that the demand for parking is concentrated in the block containing Qualicum Foods. During peak times, there are no parking stalls available in this area, while in other parts of the downtown many stalls remain empty.

The focus of a parking management strategy for downtown Qualicum Beach should therefore be to better distribute the demand for parking within the downtown, reducing the demand in the area around Qualicum Foods, and increasing the demand elsewhere in the downtown. Two aspects of the parking demand should be considered in identifying appropriate options for re-distributing the parking demand:

- **Duration** describes the length of time a motorist parks in the downtown. Although no data are available regarding parking durations in downtown Qualicum Beach, it can be expected that there is a wide range — someone might park for only five minutes to run into a store, while an employee of a downtown business might park all day. The objective in re-distributing the parking demand is to shift longer-duration parking to areas where there is currently lower parking demand and many unused parking stalls, leaving parking spaces in high-demand areas for shorter-duration parking.

- **Location.** There are two locations for parking in the downtown — on-street parking and off-street parking lots. On-street parking is always more popular than off-street parking, because it is perceived as being more convenient. During peak times, 82% of on-street parking spaces in the downtown are occupied, whereas only 64% of off-street spaces are occupied.

One of the most effective ways to manage parking demand and achieve a more balanced distribution of parking within the downtown is time limits. The principle is to apply the shortest time limits to the highest-demand parking, apply longer time limits in areas of moderate parking demand, and not apply any time limits in areas of low parking demand. In this manner, longer-duration parking (such as employees and visitors spending several hours in the downtown) is

shifted away from high-demand areas, thereby increasing the availability of parking spaces in these areas for shorter-duration parking.

Studies in communities similar to Qualicum Beach have shown that the average duration of a shopping or business trip is an hour and a half, and that 75% of motorists park on-street for less than an hour. Consequently, time limits of one hour and two hours would be appropriate in downtown Qualicum Beach. Recommended time limits for parking are illustrated in Figure 3, and are described below.

Figure 3 — Recommended Parking Time Limits
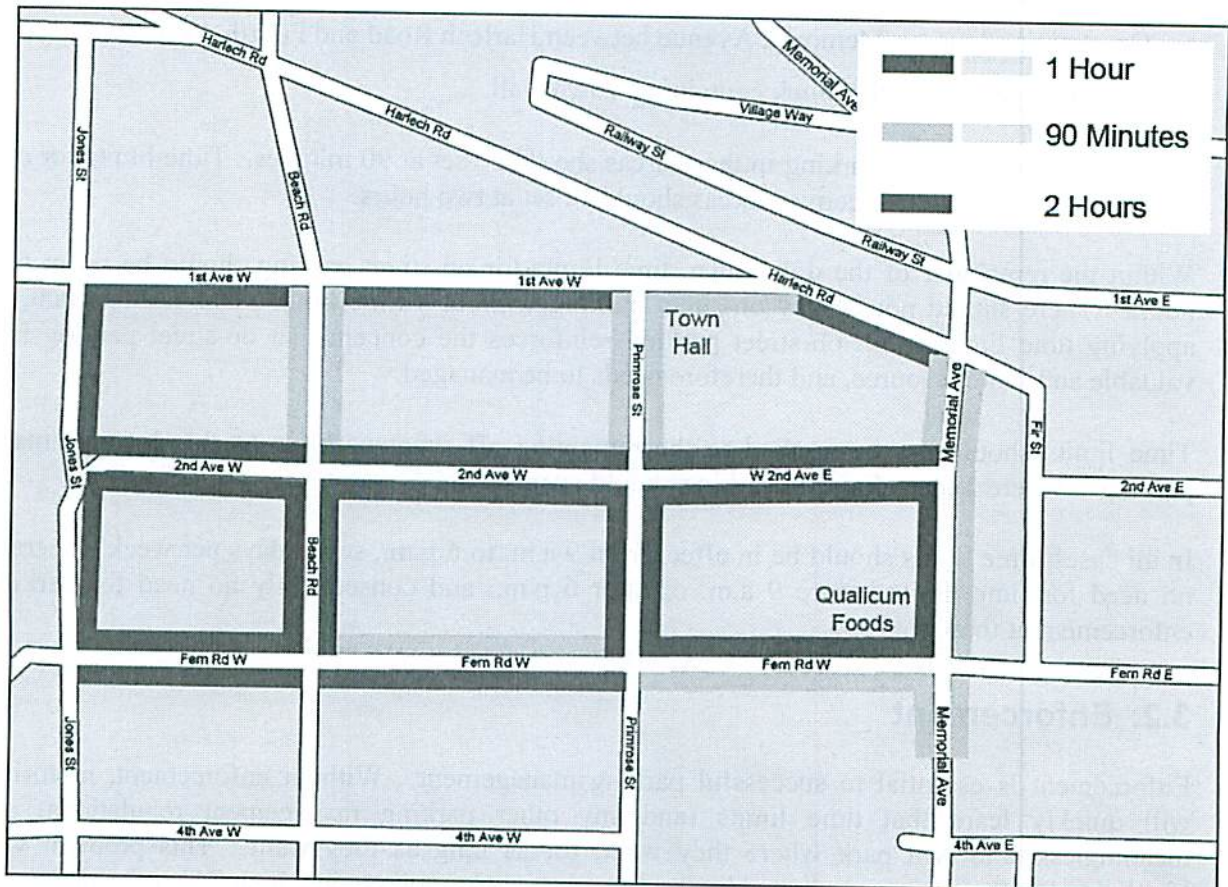
In the downtown, the areas of highest demand include:

- On-street parking on all sides of the block containing Qualicum Foods.

- On-street parking along Second Avenue between Jones Street and Memorial Avenue.

- On-street parking on Beach Road and Primrose Street, between Second Avenue and Fern Road.

- Off-street parking in the block containing Qualicum Foods.

Time limits for on-street parking in these areas should be set at one hour. The time limit for off-street parking in the Qualicum Foods block should also be set at one hour. This would provide sufficient time for people to shop at Qualicum Foods or other stores in the block, while discouraging longer-duration parking.

Areas of moderate parking demand include:

- On-street parking on Beach Road and Primrose Street, between First Avenue and Second Avenue.

- On-street parking on Fern Road between Beach Road and Memorial Avenue.

- On-street parking on Memorial Avenue between Harlech Road and Fourth Avenue.

- Off-street parking in the block containing Town Hall.

Time limits for on-street parking in these areas should be set at 90 minutes. Time limits for off-street parking in moderate demand areas should be set at two hours.

Within the remainder of the downtown, time limits for on-street parking should be set at two hours. There should not be any on-street parking without a time limit. This is important, as applying time limits to all on-street parking reinforces the concept that on-street parking is a valuable and scare resource, and therefore needs to be managed.

Time limits should not be applied to the remaining off-street parking, as this lower-demand parking is where longer-duration parking should occur.

In all cases, time limits should be in effect from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days per week. There is no need for time limits before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m., and consequently no need for parking enforcement at these times.

3.2. Enforcement

Enforcement is essential to successful parking management. Without enforcement, motorists will quickly learn that time limits (and any other parking management regulations) are meaningless, and will park where they want, for as long as they want. This problem was highlighted in the survey conducted by the Chamber of Commerce, in which 74% of respondents indicated support for parking enforcement, and 77% agreed that repeat offenders should be ticketed or towed.

Enforcement is also one of the most difficult aspects of parking management. Enforcement costs money, it may be seen as a "cash grab," and it can create opposition to parking management. The challenge is to undertake enforcement in a manner which is seen by the community to be necessary and fair.

The most important aspect of parking enforcement is that it be consistent — that parking regulations be enforced during all times, and for all motorists. Occasional or erratic enforcement is worse than no enforcement at all, as it creates the impression that parking management is unpredictable and arbitrary.

The keys to an effective enforcement program include:

- **Staff.** There should be sufficient staff to enforce parking regulations at all times (including weekends), and staff should be trained to be courteous but firm. They must also be fair and consistent in their enforcement of regulations, which means they must be willing to issue tickets to all parking violators, including people whom they know. Enforcement can be undertaken by Town staff and/or a contractor.

- **Enforcement cycles.** Typically, parking enforcement staff follow a fixed route, on a fixed schedule (passing along a street with one-hour parking every hour, for example). Although this generally works well, parkers can figure out the schedule, and may move their vehicles or take other action to avoid enforcement. If this occurs, an option is to implement a variable route and schedule, alternating routes each one-hour cycle so that staff pass along a particular block at different times during each hour.

    If the number of staff available for parking enforcement is not sufficient to cover the entire downtown during all times, enforcement can be accomplished by enforcing parking regulations in one or two blocks of the downtown at a time, and varying the times are blocks in which enforcement is undertaken. This approach will only work if the enforcement schedule is varied daily, and the sequence of blocks is not repeated. Otherwise, parkers will be able to figure out the schedule and avoid enforcement.

- **Identifying violators.** An effective means of identifying violators is necessary — one which is simple and not easy to circumvent. A common means of identifying violators is to chalk the tires of parked vehicles to identify those which remain parked for longer than the time limit. This is a simple and effective approach, and should be used in Qualicum Beach initially, as a low-cost way of implementing a parking enforcement program. Some parkers may avoid enforcement, however, by rolling their vehicles forward slightly to obscure the chalk mark, or erasing the chalk mark altogether. To avoid this problem, the Town should plan to switch to recording licence plate numbers, using hand-held computers. The use of hand-held computers would also enable enforcement staff to issue warnings rather than tickets — the warning would be entered into the system, so that if the parker commits another violation within a predetermined time period, staff would know not to issue another warning and to issue a ticket instead. An additional benefit of hand-held computers is that the system can be linked to a database of violations and fines, in order to identify repeat parking violators so that enforcement staff can arrange for a vehicle to be towed if appropriate.

- **Fines.** The sole purpose of parking fines is to encourage motorists to obey parking regulations, by punishing them for violations. Consequently, the amount of the fine must be enough to be a deterrent — if the fine is too low, some parkers will simply consider it "a cost of doing business" and will continue to violate parking regulations. Typically, a fine of at least $25 is required to deter parkers from violating parking regulations. To encourage payment of the fine, the Town could also consider an approach used in other communities, whereby the amount of the fine is doubled if it is not paid within seven days.

- **Tracking violations** is required, because the majority of parkers do not pay parking fines voluntarily, or may dispute fines. The basis for tracking parking fines is the vehicle licence plate number (and make and model), as well as the date, time and location of the parking offence. The intent is to track unpaid fines and identify habitual offenders for follow-up action. Ideally, violations and unpaid fines would be tracked through a computer database linked with hand-held computers used by enforcement staff.

3.3. Education

One of the common problems in downtown areas is that merchants and their employees park in high-demand locations, reducing the numbers of parking spaces available for others, including their customers. Although there are no data available for Qualicum Beach indicating the magnitude of the problem, several of the respondents to the Chamber of Commerce survey cited this as an issue.

Parking time limits and regular enforcement of parking regulations will encourage merchants and their employees to avoid parking in high-demand locations. The Town may wish to also undertake an education campaign targeted at merchants and downtown employees, reminding them of the benefits of parking management and encouraging them not to park where their customers would want to park. Figure 4 provides an example of a windshield flyer used to remind merchants and downtown employees not to park in customers' parking spaces — a similar approach could be used in Qualicum Beach.

The other focus of an education program should be motorists looking for parking in the downtown. The intent of all education efforts aimed at motorists is to reinforce the message that there is plenty of parking in the downtown. The Town should develop a downtown parking map — illustrating all on-street and off-street parking locations and time limits — to be distributed through downtown merchants, tourist agencies and other organizations. Signage should also be used to indicate major off-street parking lots, particularly off-street parking lots west of Primrose Street where there would be no time limits. Signs should indicate the number of parking stalls in the block, and should also indicate that there are no time limits, as illustrated in Figure 5. Signs should be installed along Second Avenue and other downtown streets at lanes and other key access locations to off-street parking lots.

Figure 4 — Example Parking Education Windshield Flyer

Figure 5 — Example Parking Sign

3.4. Monitoring

During the first phase of the parking management program, it will be important to monitor parking conditions in the downtown to determine whether changes are needed to time limits, enforcement practices and signage. Data collected through monitoring activities will also be useful in developing the remainder of the parking management program, particularly in determining the need for and locations of additional off-street parking facilities.

In addition to collecting data regarding parking accumulation, the Town should also collect data regarding parking duration and turnover, particularly for on-street parking stalls. Determining duration and turnover requires that licence plate numbers be recorded at regular intervals (every 30 minutes in one-hour parking zones and every 60 minutes in two-hour parking zones, for example), which requires a team of several persons to undertake an all-day parking survey.

3.5. Longer-Term Options

In developing the remainder of the parking management strategy, the Town should consider the following longer-term parking management options:

- **More parking.** As the downtown grows, there may be a need for additional off-street parking lots. The need for these can only be determined after parking conditions have stabilized in the downtown following introduction of the first phase of the parking management strategy. In the meantime, it is important that the Town not sell any of the properties which it has acquired for the purposes of creating additional off-street parking facilities.

- **Cash-in-lieu** is a mechanism by which developers who are required to provide parking on-site can pay a specified amount to the Town in lieu of some or all of the required parking. The Town then uses the funds to finance the creation of parking faculties elsewhere in the downtown. The advantage of a cash-in-lieu program is that it allows for a more efficient supply of parking overall, as the Town can consolidate the parking from several development sites into a single parking facility, avoiding a jumble of small on-site parking facilities. For developers, a cash-in-lieu program is attractive because they can use it to reduce or eliminate the footprint required for on-site parking, which is often problematic on small development sites.

- **Parking meters** should only be considered as a last resort, and only if a combination of time limits and effective parking enforcement is not sufficient to re-distribute parking and create adequate availability of parking spaces in high-demand areas. Parking meters attach a cost to parking, thereby encouraging some motorists to park elsewhere. Meters also support enforcement efforts by reminding parkers of time limits, and can reduce the number of staff needed for parking enforcement (one enforcement person can cover up to 150 parking meters in 30 minutes, as compared with approximately 75 un-metered parking spaces in the same

time). The downside of parking meters is that many merchants feel that parking meters discourage shoppers from coming downtown.

- **Resident parking.** As the downtown grows, the demand for parking will increase, and could even spill over into residential areas adjacent the downtown. If this occurs, the Town should consider implementing "resident parking" in these areas, to restrict on-street parking to residents of the street. The simplest way to implement resident parking is to install "No Parking" signs which exempt residents of the particular block, as in the example in Figure 6. This approach is effective in other communities in discouraging most motorists from parking on residential streets, and avoids the expense and effort associated with a parking permit system.

Figure 6 — Resident Parking Sign