

Tommy Proposes Curbside Parking Pilot Program

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Faced with the crush of ballpark visitors driving on game days into Ward 6 neighborhoods, Councilmember Tommy Wells introduced legislation today creating a pilot zone around the Nationals ballpark and Capitol Hill retail corridors to manage curbside parking — protecting residential parking and increasing access to retail storefronts.

“Some of the best thinking in the country has gone into this proposal,” commented Mr. Wells. He added, “Parking is already at a premium in our neighborhoods, but giving free curbside parking to ballpark visitors isn’t managing the problem, it’s only inviting more congestion and traffic.”

The legislation creates a pilot zone around the new Nationals’ ballpark and throughout the residential neighborhoods that surround the stadium and the retail businesses near it. The pilot authorizes the Department of Transportation to work with the Ward 6 Councilmember to use performance pricing of curbside parking spots to better manage when, where, and how long vehicles can park.

Performance pricing will mean decreasing the time spent in hunting for parking, reducing the need for double parking, prioritizing residents in the residential streets, and ensuring reliable parking options for patrons on the retail streets. As with any other commodity, under-priced or free parking inflates demand leading to shortages and congestion. By setting parking rates based on demand, drivers may pay a little bit more to park, but they will be assured a spot when they arrive at their destination.

“For Ward 6 residents, their Zone 6 parking sticker means they’ll see little difference in how they park their cars, but with better management, they should find that visitors stick to the retail streets and the residents become the priority for residential streets,” stated Councilmember Wells.

The pilot program will place solar-powered multi-space meters (similar to the ones already in existence on K Street and M Street, NW) throughout the ballpark impact area including retail and residential streets. On retail streets such as 8th Street, SE, all cars will be required to pay to park as they currently do, and the goal will be to ensure regular turnover of parking spaces. This not only supports retail activities, but ensures that patrons who come by car will be more likely to find a parking spot on the main retail street quickly and without circling the blocks or spilling into residential areas.

On residential streets, residents with a Zone 6 parking permit will not pay to park. However, visitors would be required to pay for the 2-hour block of parking — which is currently free and overused by nonresidents. The goal is to prioritize residential curbside parking for the residents and to remind visitors that they only have two hours by requiring a small fee. Experience in other cities has shown that even a minimal fee can help alter parking behavior, and it will work to discourage “squatting” of residential spaces by nonresidents. Based on initial community feedback, the program will also develop a guest pass system to accommodate guests who are coming to the neighborhood to visit a resident.

Replacing old meter posts with multi-space “pay and display” meters creates an average of 2 to 3 additional parking spots per block and also allows payment with coins or credit cards (and in the future, also via cell phone). This system will make enforcement of residential parking rules easier by allowing parking enforcement officers to simply check the remaining time on the receipt displayed on the car dashboard. Collection and maintenance will also be more efficient as one meter can serve many spaces up to a couple of blocks, unlike traditional coin meters which each serve only one parking space.

Revenues generated by the meters will go to pay for the cost of the meters (which should pay for themselves in less than two years) and investments in non-auto transportation infrastructure (e.g., repairing sidewalks, improving transit stations, adding bike racks).

The proposal will be the subject of a public hearing which to be scheduled by Councilmember Jim Graham who chairs the Committee on Public Works and the Environment. Councilmember Wells consulted ANC Commissioners and business and community leaders in December while developing this pilot proposal. He will host two open community meetings in the affected neighborhoods for residents to ask more questions and get additional details about the proposal. These meetings are set for:

- Tuesday, January 22nd, 6:30-8:00 pm, Westminster Presbyterian Church, 400 I Street, SW
- Wednesday, January 23rd, 6:30-8:00 pm, Brent Elementary School, 301 North Carolina Ave, SE

[Click Here to read the legislation that creates the pilot parking zone.](#)

