



Is It Time For Menlo Park To Build Its First Downtown Parking Structure?

**Dana Hendrickson
Re-Imagine Menlo Park
www.reimaginemenlopark.com**

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The Opportunity

Both residents and visitors frequently complain about 2-hour time parking limits downtown and \$45 parking citations, and office workers and retail employees constantly move their cars to avoid them – or the cost of daily parking permits. Menlo Park’s Specific Plan assumes two future downtown parking structures will be needed to handle projected future growth and civic improvements downtown, and three possible locations were identified. Is it time for Menlo Park to start planning to build the first one?

A series of posts will deal with “parking downtown”. This initial one reviews current parking and the Specific Plan.

Parking Today

- There are currently about 1600 short-term public parking spaces downtown including 1200 in the parking plazas. Public Parking is free – as it is in nearby Palo Alto and the Stanford Shopping Center – and is limited to either one or two hours per parking plaza per day. Drivers are allowed to re-park in a DIFFERENT parking plaza.
- There are 685 fee-based, daily downtown parking permits sold each year (57% of the total spaces) so about 500 parking spaces (43%) are available for short term parking during normal work hours.
- The current demand for parking varies greatly by day and time of day. Midday parking Monday thru Friday can entail a long walk to one’s destination; on weekends it seems to vary by plaza. In the evening parking spaces are readily available all week in all public parking plazas.
- The demand for parking space comes largely from retail employees, residents and small office workers. Downtown Menlo Park is NOT a popular destination for visitors.

Specific Plan

The future demand for public parking spaces will depend on a few primary factors including the relative appeal of going downtown versus other places nearby, the convenience of parking options and the cost, if any, of parking and violations.

The City’s Specific Plan provides a number of informative high-level perspectives on how Menlo Park could provide additional downtown parking with either one or two parking structures. Figure 1 shows the potential sites of parking structures. Figure 2 shows the amount of additional parking that might be provided.

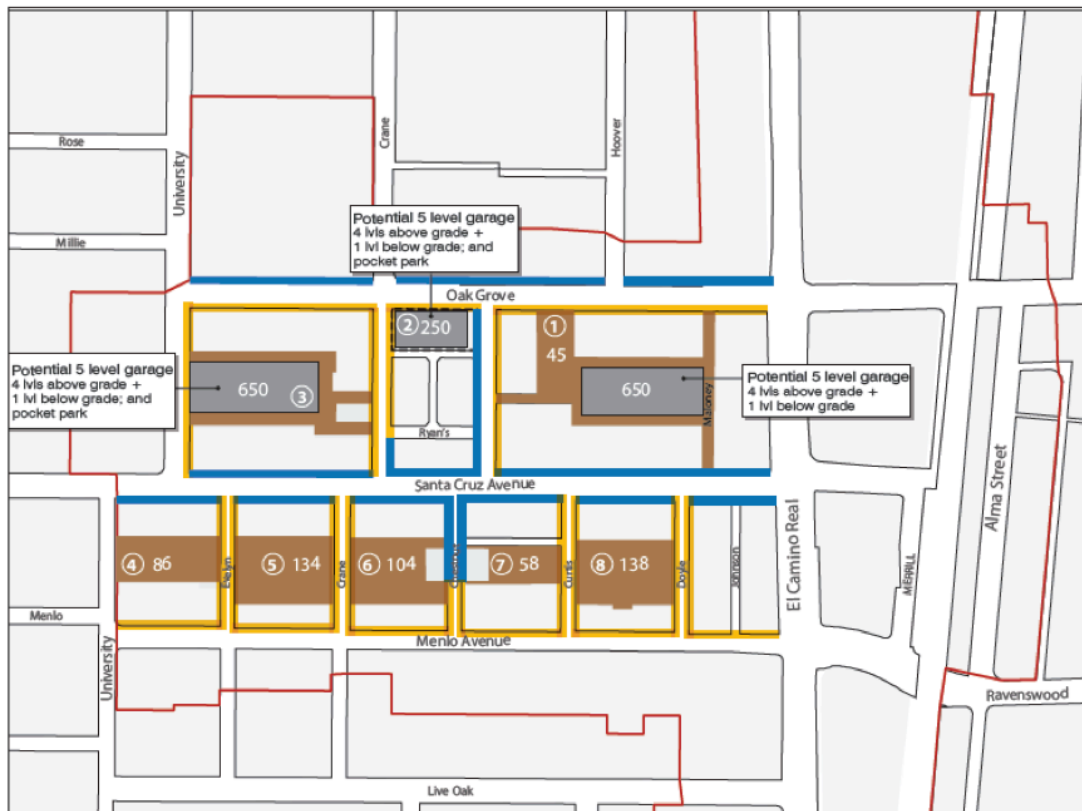
The addition of one parking structure is shown to increase downtown parking by about 440 spaces (from 1200 to 1660) or about 35%. However, if the amount of daily downtown permits were limited to say 800 – an increase of 115, the amount of short

term public parking could increase by 325 spaces (from 500 to 825) or 65%!

(Note: A smaller structure would reduce the amount of parking by about 120 space per level. Perhaps, the initial cost of the structure could be reduced with a modular design that added some levels as they were needed.)

Anyone who is interested in this issue should carefully read the Downtown Parking section of the Specific Plan. Here is a [link](#) to that section.

Figure 1 – Potential Parking Structure Sites



	Parking Spaces
Public Parking Plazas	1,669 - 1,960 ²
On-street Parking	304
Total	1,973 - 2,264

- Project Area Boundary
- Public Parking Plazas
- Parking Garages¹
- Surface Parking
- On-street Parking Spaces
- Affected by Specific Plan Improvements
- Unaffected by Specific Plan Improvements³
- ① Downtown Parking Plaza Number

Notes:

- 1 Although three parking garages are shown, the Specific Plan assumes that up to two parking garages will be built in downtown Menlo Park.
- 2 The parking total reflects the range of parking spaces that could be provided if only two garages were built, rather than three.
- 3 Additional on street parking could be affected with proposed future Class II / Minimum Class III Improvements. See Figure F3.

Figure 2 – Potential Downtown Public Parking Supply

Existing and Future Downtown Parking Supply				
Parking Location	Existing Supply ¹	Specific Plan Change	Change in Spaces	Future Supply
Parking Plazas				
Parking Plaza 1	249	Added Parking Garage ²	446	695 ³
Parking Plaza 2	95	Added Parking Garage and Pocket Park ⁴	155	250
Parking Plaza 3	212	Added Parking Garage and Pocket Park ⁵	438	650
Parking Plaza 4	105	Pedestrian Link	-19	86
Parking Plaza 5	150	Pedestrian Link	-16	134
Parking Plaza 6	136	Pedestrian Link, Market Place	-32	104
Parking Plaza 7	94	Pedestrian Link, Market Place	-36	58
Parking Plaza 8	145	Pedestrian Link	-7	138
Total	1,186		929	2,115
Total with 2 Parking Garages	1,186		483 - 774	1669 - 1960 ⁶
On-Street Spaces				
Santa Cruz Avenue	116	Sidewalk Widening	-48	68
Chestnut Street North	26	Sidewalk Widening	-11	15
Chestnut Street South	17	Chestnut Paseo	-11	6
Oak Grove Avenue	80	Added Bike Lanes	-35	45
Other Streets	170	No Change	0	170
Total	409		-105	304 ⁷
Downtown Core Area Total	1,595		824	2,419
Total with 2 Parking Garages	1,595		378 - 669	1973 - 2264 ⁶

Notes:

¹ 2009-2010 Downtown Menlo Park Parking Study, Wilbur Smith Associates.

² A new parking garage at Parking Plaza 1 would displace 204 existing spaces.

³ Future parking supply for Parking Plaza 1 includes a 650-space parking garage + 45 surface spaces remaining.

⁴ A new parking garage and pocket park at parking plaza 2 would displace 95 existing spaces.

⁵ A new parking garage and pocket park at Parking Plaza 3 would displace 212 existing spaces.

⁶ Although three parking garages are shown, the Specific Plan assumes that up to two parking garages will be built in downtown Menlo Park. The parking total reflects the range of parking spaces that could be provided if only two garages were built, rather than three.

⁷ On street parking space could be affected with proposed future Class II / Minimum Class III improvements.

Short Term Solutions

Can Menlo Park figure out how to better manage its the current supply of public parking spaces? One option is to change the current limits on maximum parking times in different locations. This will be explored in a future post.

