



W i c k e r P a r k T r a n s p

Wicker Park Parking Ideas Include Shuttle, Ending Loading Zone Abuses

By **Mike Brockway** on June 27, 2013 2:51pm | Updated on June 27, 2013 2:52pm

WICKER PARK — A number of ways to solve parking problems in Wicker Park were offered Wednesday at a community meeting, including fluctuating meter prices, shuttles from outlying lots and ending loading zone abuse.

About 30 area residents, local business owners, community activists and urban planners gathered at the Bucktown-Wicker Park Library to participate in the meeting to address the neighborhood parking issues.

The event was organized by the [Wicker Park-Bucktown Chamber of Commerce](#), which is working with the [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#) on what is being called an [Innovation in Parking Management Plan](#) to address the parking headaches, which plague one of the most congested neighborhoods in the city.

Lindsay Bayley, a senior planner for CMAP who is heading up the project, said the goal was to get neighborhood input but warned that "people want a lot of parking, but don't like it when they get it."

Bayley, who moved to Wicker Park about seven years ago, said that after reading the influential book "[The High Cost of Free Parking](#)" by UCLA professor Donald Shoup, she became convinced parking is the most important issue to the health of vibrant urban neighborhoods.

She shared several parking management strategies based on Shoup's research that might work in Wicker Park, including demand-based pricing, which would allow metered parking prices to rise or fall based on demand.

Other ideas included increasing alternative transportation options like biking, walking and public transit or increasing car-sharing options like I-GO or Zipcar.

Narrowing streets with back-in angled parking or constructing a centralized neighborhood parking structure to increase the supply of parking to the neighborhood were also suggested.

"It's a big juggling match," said Bayley. "There's no breakthrough solution that will make everyone happy. There's no way Wicker Park can compete with suburban parking malls that offer all sorts of free parking."

One of the biggest problems many people identified was the overwhelming traffic and parking congestion, which centers around the intersection of Milwaukee, North and Damen.

Kyle Smith, an urban planner from the Center for Neighborhood Technologies, said his group thought increasing metered parking prices could help relieve the parking pressures on weekends.

"We'd like to see demand-based pricing for Friday and Saturday nights in particular," said Smith.

Local resident Nora Beck, who also volunteers as a member of the 1st Ward Transportation Committee, agreed, saying, "Our main problem is the cruising problem on Friday and Saturday nights of drivers looking for parking. Demand pricing might solve this."

Rachel Bierma, a real estate agent for @Properties, wondered if working with larger retailers with big, underutilized parking lots might help. The lots could provide remote parking for people visiting the neighborhood on weekends, with a free or low-fee trolley shuttling people between the lots and the neighborhood.

Bierma cited Aldi's huge parking lot a few blocks north on Milwaukee Avenue. "Revenue from the parking goes back to the big box stores and investors," she said. "I think it's extremely viable."

Bayley also pointed out loading zone abuse: many of those spots are underused or are being used as reserved parking for business owners instead of used for active loading. These spots could either be added to the area's metered parking inventory or perhaps consolidated into fewer, shared loading zones.

CMAP is currently finishing up a survey of the neighborhood that documents parking occupancy on area streets by time of day to shed

light on where parking congestion issues are centered.

The group is also seeking input from residents and visitors to Wicker Park **via an interactive, online survey**.

The data being collecting and input from individuals will be used to construct a comprehensive report with suggestions to address Wicker Park's parking woes. Bayley hopes to release the report by spring 2014.