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A weekly Q&A
with local
law enforcement

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Downtown parking: Parking regulation and necessity

The City of Owatonna has a city code that pertains to general parking regulations.

General parking regulations can be found on the City of Owatonna Web site under the government section looking under city code and selecting section 700:00. The direct Web site can be found at www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/code/index.php.

The parking in the downtown area is coordinated by the Downtown Parking Committee. The Downtown Parking Committee membership is comprised of downtown business owners, city planning and zoning, city police department, and the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism. This committee is tasked by the Owatonna City Council to maximize the use of all existing parking spaces for downtown customers, businesses and residents.

The main strategy with having parking restrictions is to encourage long-term parking on the fringes of downtown so that short-term parking may be available at the core of downtown for consumers. Most of the long-term parking spaces (21-hour and 24-hour) are located on the fringe of downtown so that all employees working downtown and residents that live downtown would use these spaces. Most of the short-term parking spaces (2-hour and 4-hour) are located more towards the center of downtown so that they are convenient for the shoppers and customers of downtown businesses.

The chamber of commerce also supplies a map of the downtown area on its Web site that depicts parking areas and their time regulations. The map can be found at the chamber Web site www.owatonna.org/pdf/2006DowntownParkingMap.pdf.

Research by the Downtown Parking Committee in conjunction with the police department has shown that in the downtown area if parking regulations weren't enforced, a considerable problem would exist with area businesses accessing and compromising most, if not all, of the downtown parking spaces. Currently, most of the parking citations issued in the downtown area are to employees parked in these short-term areas so that they do not have to walk as far to work.

The parking regulations that have been enacted by the Owatonna City Council, based on recommendations from the Downtown Parking Committee, are therefore enforced by the police department solely to promote and create a healthy downtown economy and environment.

SHAUN LADUE

Owatonna Chief of Police