

Downtown Parking the #1 customer complaint...

At a recent Shop Talk meeting of downtown merchants, Officer Mike Wilcox of the Dixon Police Department talked about the parking strategy downtown. This meeting was well attended by many downtown business owners. Officer Wilcox is responsible for regulating parking downtown and as many of you know, there is a two-hour parking limit. This is important for many reasons.

Dixon is fortunate enough to have unique shops and wonderful restaurants, so it's no surprise that even under the best circumstances, parking is a little tight.

City officials have indicated that, as a whole, we have enough parking. The key lies in the way that we perceive and utilize our parking spaces. That means, in part, we have to ask ourselves if we, downtown business owners, employees and residents are part of the problem.

A 2015 Main Street study found that if a downtown customer parked for 30 minutes and spent \$5, each parking space could generate \$20,800 per year in gross sales!

In addition, 35% of the sales tax in Dixon is generated by visitors to our area which benefits everyone in our community.

Perhaps your business does not rely on walk-in traffic. So why do you maintain your business in the downtown area? It may be because you like the central location, being part of the downtown network, and close to your favorite lunch spot.

The ideal downtown business mix includes a variety of retail stores, restaurants, office spaces, entertainment venues, and residential spaces. If we are unable to maintain the restaurant and retail trade, the professional office and service sectors will suffer as well. This can only lead to an overall decline in reinvestment downtown. We are asking that all of you who work downtown be aware and care about your downtown business community, your neighbors, and friends.

If you or your employees are parking near your door, you are taking money out of someone's pocket and reducing the "shop local" experience for patrons of all ages. During the winter months or bad weather, no one wants to walk a block to their store or office and neither do customers. Take a moment before you pull into that "convenient" parking spot and think about its real value. Then, show you care about the downtown business community by parking in one of the many city lots available for all day parking. These parking opportunities can be found in the Bean Blossom parking lot on River Street, the corner of South Hennepin and Second Street, and the corner of West First Street and Peoria Ave.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation with this community concern.

