

## TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** *Wednesday, January 22, 2020*

**TO:** *Robert Malley; Paula Tsitsopoulos – Brockton Parking Authority*

**CC:** *Andrew S. Hill - DESMAN*

**FROM:** *Maxime Devilliers - DESMAN*

**PROJECT:** *Brockton Parking Authority* **PROJECT #:** *20-19158.00-3*

**RE:** *Parking Meter Program Assessment*

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### Introduction

The Brockton Parking Authority (the Authority) was established by the Massachusetts State Legislature in 1982. The Authority manages the free and paid public parking spaces in downtown Brockton. The Authority has a Board of Directors which sets policy for the Authority and whose members are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. All Board members are Brockton residents, have backgrounds in planning, business management, law, local government, finance, and/or real estate, and all are concerned with downtown's economic development in support of the residents and businesses of Brockton. The Authority is funded entirely by revenue generated from the parking program. No funding for the Authority comes from taxes collected by the City of Brockton.

As a result of the reinvestment in downtown Brockton in recent years, the Authority hired transportation planning firm, Nelson\Nygaard, to conduct a parking study of downtown in 2017. The Authority has begun implementing solutions recommended by Nelson\Nygaard on page 2-3 in the completed report which can be found [on the City's webpage](#). Some of the recommendations include making short- and long-term parking improvements, enabling payment by credit card at meters, updating the parking technology system-wide, and building a new parking structure downtown.

Currently, on-street parking meters only exist on Cottage Street, Maple Avenue, Belmont Street, Clinton Avenue, Crescent Street, West Elm Street, Frederick Douglass Avenue, Centre Street, Petronelli Way, Green Street, Franklin Street, and a short section of Commercial Street, as shown on page 2-2 in the Nelson\Nygaard report. The remaining on-street parking spaces downtown are free to use, including those on Legion Parkway and Main Street, except for the 12 metered spaces adjacent to the Old Colony YMCA. As a result, long-term parkers (many of which are downtown employees with existing parking accommodations) store their vehicles on Main Street and Legion Parkway thus reducing the number of convenient spaces available to patrons of existing and future businesses downtown.

There are few residential units in downtown Brockton today so the existing and future businesses need convenient parking availability to attract customers from outside the area who arrive by car. For this reason, the unavailability of convenient on-street parking spaces in the area is likely contributing to the prevalence of vacant storefronts downtown. Free parking on the two busiest, well-known streets in

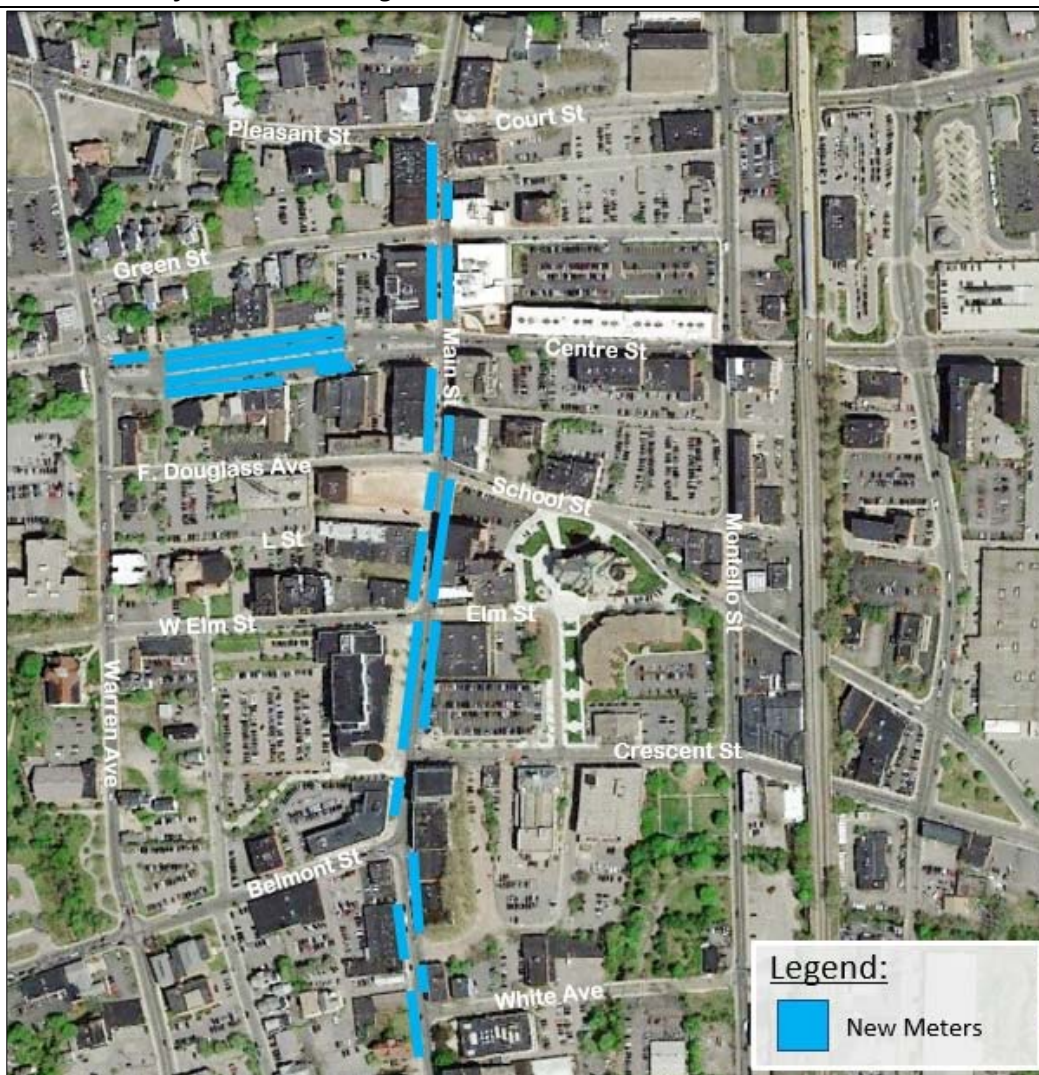
downtown Brockton also translates into a significant loss of revenue, which could be used to fund infrastructural projects downtown.

In short, downtown Brockton has a parking network that does not support street-level retailers and restaurateurs effectively by creating critical availability in curbside parking spaces to support these businesses. The result of this failure is translated in a lack of goods and services to downtown residents, workers, and visitors, high grade-level commercial space vacancy rates which makes for a less inviting walking environment and streetscape, and lost potential tax revenues the Authority could be using to fund more improvements to downtown.

### Why Add More Meters?

Through their downtown parking study, Nelson\Nygaard recommended that parking meters be added to both Main Street and Legion Parkway given that they are two of the most valuable commercial streets in Brockton yet the only ones in the area that allow drivers to park for free. The new meters will be installed in the areas indicated on in **Figure 1** below.

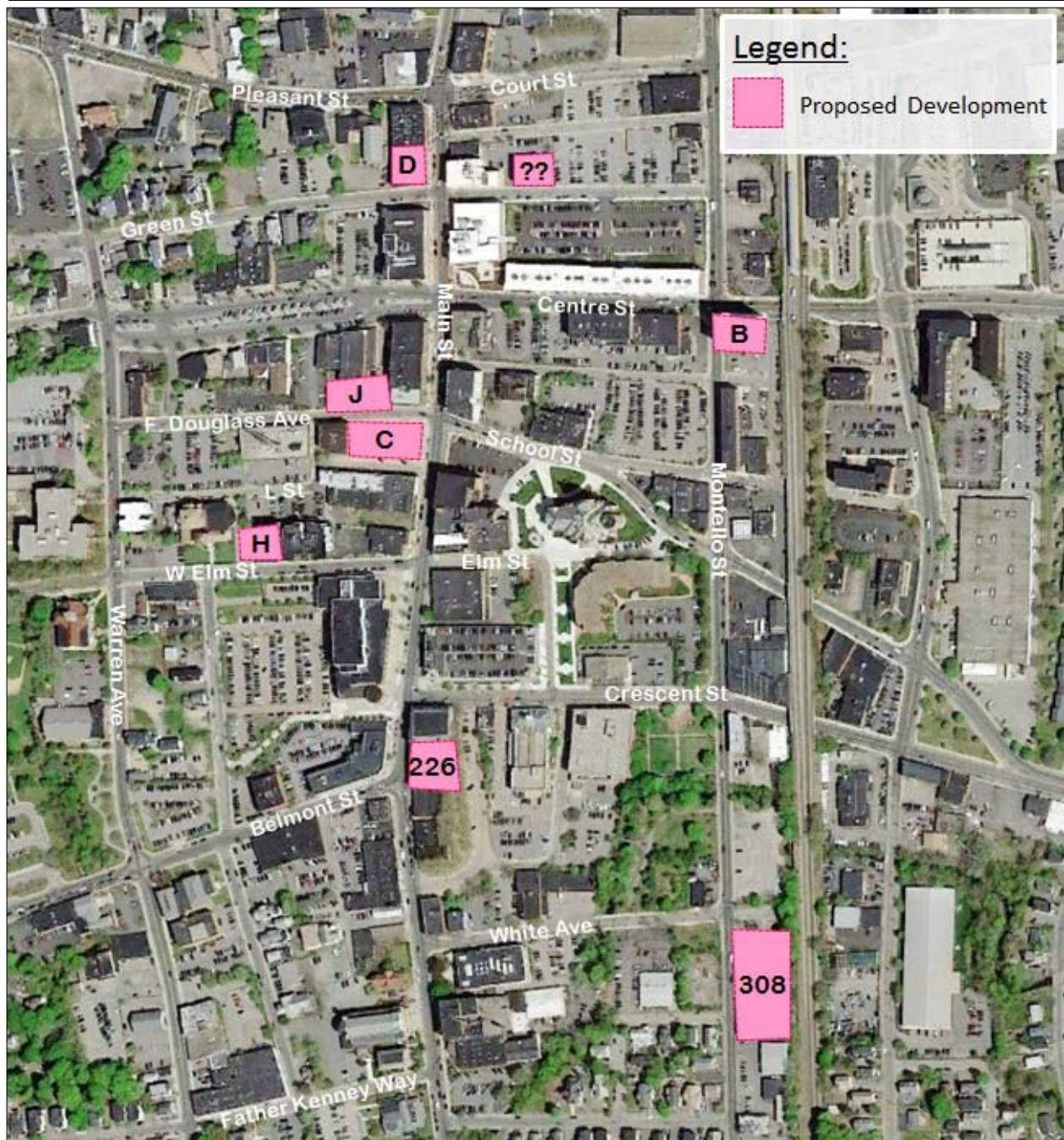
**Figure 1 – Locations of the New Parking Meters**





In the near future, new mixed-use buildings, such as 121 Main Street (the former Kresge Building), will bring additional ground-floor commercial space to downtown, which will require convenient, short-term parking to succeed. Freeing up curbside parking spaces on Main Street and Legion Parkway and compelling parking turnover will help to ensure future retail stores and restaurants downtown succeed. Supporting the ground-floor businesses will help to make Brockton feel safer, more walkable, and more livable by while also helping to support the redevelopment across downtown overall.

**Figure 2 – Locations of Confirmed Proposed Developments**



The parking meters will not only generate revenue that can be used to improve the public realm but the improved on-street turnover coupled with these infrastructural improvements will help to support the continued redevelopment of downtown Brockton. There are currently eight developments proposed and confirmed for downtown Brockton which can be found in **Figure 2**, prior page.

To create the availability of curbside parking that ground-floor businesses need, the length of stay in these spaces must be limited and turnover must be encouraged. Free parking accompanied by strict enforcement and costly citations only sends a message to the driver after they have returned to their car, returns to the area, which is the worst of both worlds. Metered parking provides drivers with a decision to make up front: either pay now for a convenient space or find a less convenient space that is free.

For those existing downtown employees and/or long-term parkers without existing off-street parking accommodations, a new public parking garage is being built on Petronelli Way to serve them once the Main Street and Legion Parkway meters are installed. According to best practices, these long-term parkers (business owners as well as small- and large-scale employers) should be parking in the least convenient spaces to provide more convenient parking for their patrons to improve the customer experience and retain their patronage as a result.

### **Addressing Common Concerns with Paid Parking**

Residents and visitors who are concerned that the parking meter revenue will be just another funding source for the City's coffers can rest assured that the parking-generated revenue in Brockton can only be collected by and used by the Authority for public parking improvements and other enhancements to the public right of way<sup>1</sup>.

Residents, visitors, and business owners who believe that metered parking repels potential customers and patrons are likely to be shocked that 80-90% of the cars<sup>2</sup> parked in downtown Brockton are owned by area employees rather than customers. The metered parking will discourage *employees* from parking on the street each day and compel them to park in off-street facilities that have been or are being made available to them, thus freeing up convenient spaces for customers who are intent on making purchases and then departing after one or two hours.

There are those that would argue that fees that discourage employees from parking in curbside spaces may also drive away potential customers, but this logic ignores the total fee being paid and the regularity at which these costs are being incurred per user type. Employees typically park for six to eight hours each day, five days a week, for fifty or more weeks per year. At a cost of \$1.00 per hour, that means an employee would be paying \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year to park on the street. In comparison, a typical shopper or diner may only come into the area once every two weeks for an hour or so, incurring an annual cost of \$26 per year to park in the same curbside space. So, while both users are paying the same rate (\$1.00 per hour), the employee is paying a total of 36 to 38 times the cost incurred by the visitor and can expect to incur these costs every working day of every working week. Given that scale of impact, it is easy to see how that small fee can provide no barrier to a visitor or patron, who simply factors it into the cost of the total experience, but provides a powerful incentive for the employee to seek cheaper off-street parking nearby.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Brockton Code of Ordinances Section [12-118](#), Chapter [40](#) of the General Laws, Section [22A](#)

<sup>2</sup> Results of the survey on downtown Brockton parking patrons conducted by Nelson\Nygaard in 2016

Parking meters once existed on Main Street and Legion Parkway but were removed during a streetscape project in the 1990s as a way to attract more shoppers and patrons. However, the plan backfired and the on-street parking is now used primarily by employees instead. There are also fewer occupied storefronts downtown today than there were prior to the meters being removed at the same time that other similar commercial districts<sup>3</sup> have continued to thrive despite charging for parking. A prime example of this kind of success story is Old Pasadena in Southern California<sup>4</sup>.

Residents, visitors, and employees who feel as though it is unsafe to park a certain distance from their destination will be happy to know that the City has already undergone an intensive program to install new street lamps and improve sidewalks throughout the area. Better occupancy of grade-level commercial space through the area, supported in part by the availability of curbside parking, will also improve both the perceived and actual security for pedestrians in the area. New upper story residential units in downtown Brockton will also increase the number of people walking around the neighborhood at all times of day and looking out on the sidewalks below, thus increasing the number of eyes on the street even at night.

Those concerned about low-income earners being able to afford to pay for parking should be aware that free parking will still exist in downtown Brockton. However, to ensure that Brockton continues to attract reinvestment, turnover on the downtown's two highest-volume commercial corridors must be frequent to support ground-floor retailers. More shops will also benefit existing downtown residents who currently do not have as many local retail or employment options available to them and are likely required to spend additional money on transportation to and from out-of-town shopping centers. All new meters will accept credit/debit cards and the pay-by-phone app, Passport, as well as cash for those without access to banking. Contrary to popular opinion, meters do not exclude certain shoppers but rather prompt each individual to choose how important it is to drive and park near their destination relative to other options available to them. The meter rate will be \$1.00 per hour which is comparable to other nearby communities, such as Plymouth.

Nearby residents who are concerned with drivers parking in their neighborhood as a result of the metered parking are unlikely to be affected by these changes. To start, the displaced drivers will likely not seek out parking that is even more distant than the off-street parking that is available to them because longer walking distances are currently the driving force behind this on-street parking issue. However, when downtown Brockton does grow to a certain point where on-street parking begins spilling into the abutting residential neighborhoods, the Authority has stated that they will work with the City to implement a parking permit system that prohibits long-term parkers from storing their vehicles on residential streets.

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<sup>3</sup> Davis Square in Somerville, Main Street in Gloucester, and Middle Street in Lowell, for example.

<sup>4</sup> In 1993, the City of Pasadena installed parking meters in the decrepit and largely vacant Old Pasadena neighborhood for the first time. The City did this because customers had difficulty finding parking spaces due to area employees who would park in the free on-street spaces and simply move their cars every two hours to avoid being ticketed. The merchants and property owners opposed the meters fervently because they worried that customers would simply drive to shopping malls instead where the parking was free. Despite conventional parking practices, the new Pasadena meters even operated in the evening and on Sundays because parking occupancy was still high at those times. Almost instantly, the meters successfully spurred turnover and repelled employees from parking on the main streets. A 2001 study found that the average on-street utilization rate in Old Pasadena was 83%, which is the ideal rate to ensure that a few easily identifiable curbside spaces remain available for incoming shoppers. In 1989, Old Pasadena businesses sold just enough products to generate \$200,000 in sales tax revenue. In 1999, six years after the installation of the parking meters, Old Pasadena generated over \$2,000,000 in sales tax revenue. Meanwhile, the nearby shopping mall with abundant free parking, Plaza Pasadena, actually induced less sales tax revenue over that same period: from \$600,000 to \$400,000. The enclosed and air-conditioned Plaza Pasadena was demolished in 2001. Old Pasadena continues to be one of Southern California's most popular shopping and entertainment districts today.



With regards to accessibility concerns, crews hired by the Authority will be shoveling the new meters and kiosks out of snow banks and other obstacles and drivers with disability plates or placard will not be required to pay to park.

Until the on-street meters generate enough revenue, it is not feasible for the City or the Authority to purchase any privately-owned off-street facilities given existing property values. However, as previously mentioned, the revenue from the parking meters will help pay for new infrastructure including future structured parking facilities which will provide more secure parking for long-term parkers downtown.

### **Conclusions**

Meters do create initial discomfort but they help downtown in the long-term. The revenue generated by metered parking will be reinvested into the immediate community. Better infrastructural conditions will lead to increased vibrancy and commerce.