

November 6st, 2023

Driggs Downtown Core Framework Plan Update: NE and NW Blocks

Introduction

In 2007 the City of Driggs and Driggs Urban Renewal Agency undertook a planning process to create a master plan for the downtown core, specifically for the four blocks at the intersection of Main Street and Little Avenue: the NW, NE, SW and SE Blocks. The purposes of the plan are to:

1. Estimate development capacity within the downtown core
2. Establish an overall framework for the physical development and design character of the core
3. Propose an action plan for implementation

This plan helps achieve coordinated and efficient infrastructure design that maximizes opportunities for desirable retail, commercial, and residential uses. The plan provides a guide to create a more activated, vibrant downtown based on property owners' shared interests. Similarly, installation of coordinated public improvements can incentivize development and activation of underused lots.

The Downtown Core Framework Plan was updated in 2016 to refresh plan maps for the SW and NW Blocks and to provide additional analyses and implementation steps. In 2023, Driggs Urban Renewal Agency and the City updated plan maps for the NE and NW Blocks.

To update the NE Block plan map, 11 property owners and managers were interviewed in a multi-day on-site workshop to understand any development plans, concerns, or existing issues, and their thoughts on parking, best and highest uses, and ideal access points. This feedback and site analysis served as the basis for the updated NE Block plan map.

The NW Block plan map from 2016 has been partially realized through public and private efforts and partnerships. The NW block's plan map was updated in 2023 to reflect current conditions, including constructed and approved buildings, as well as to show the potential for further build out and long-term redevelopment opportunities.

The draft 2023 Downtown Core Framework Plan was developed through review and comments by property and business owners, Driggs Urban Renewal Agency, and Driggs staff. The Driggs Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and recommended adoption of the final draft on November 8, 2023. Once adopted by the City Council, the plan will be used for budgeting public improvements, reviewing new site development applications, and informing review of parking requirements.

NORTHEAST BLOCK

The draft plan for Driggs' NE block reflects feedback from our stakeholder/property owner interviews, current conditions, and input from City staff and the Downtown Urban Renewal Agency (DURA). Both 'existing' and 'future' buildings are shown, based on plans we heard from stakeholders. The design of the block is oriented around the plans of the current property owners, maximizing shared use of access, parking, and utilities.

The plan assumes that Wallace and First Streets will be improved by the City to contain sidewalks, street trees, and on street parking. The Wallace Street project is scheduled for Summer 2024. Parking in front of the American Legion building is shown as five parallel spaces to remove them from a roof slide hazard. The First Street project is anticipated to follow in a later year and is subject to recommendations from the Transportation Plan. Existing on-street parking on Main Street and Little is shown with no anticipated changes. Off-street parking is provided in a combination of private and public surface lots. The main objective of the master plan is to create a publicly owned and maintained, shared surface parking lot near the center of the block. These spaces are shown in yellow on the drawing. This activates the street frontage to create better visibility and access for businesses by both pedestrians and vehicles. It also allows the most efficient use of space to create the greatest number of parking spaces, combining vehicular access and consolidating drive aisles and required landscaping.

The central lot contains 114 spaces, and has vehicle access from Wallace, Little, and First Streets. The Little access will be right in, right out only. Each vehicular access is accompanied by a sidewalk, and two additional pedestrian malls will connect the central lot to Main Street. These pedestrian alleyways could contain amenities to make vibrant inviting spaces, such as benches, public art, and other features. Each of the driveways is on an existing utility easement. Privately owned and maintained parking areas are allocated throughout the block, shown in a configuration to maximize the number of spaces for the potential build out on that parcel. These private spaces could be reserved for overnight parking if residences are installed, or reserved for patrons and employees. The plan shows 98 total private spaces, 29 more than exist currently. Private accesses are also preserved through out the block. The Key-Bank drive thru access is unchanged, while the configuration of parking and queuing has been adjusted to increase parking spaces. Four potential parking spaces are shown on the adjacent lot to the north where there is currently no development. On the opposite corner where the Old Courthouse is located, an existing access is shown to the interior private parking spaces. Ideally, this access would be closed in the future, making the parking area and rear access to the building from the mid-block public driveway. Any future development application could be conditioned on vacating this access.

Parking Count Table

Different uses, such as restaurants, offices, and residences, have different numbers of required spaces per square foot. Some uses can share allocated spaces, for example residential overnight and commercial during the day. As the NE Quad develops, the mix of square footage allocated to different uses could change. Creating a large number of residences could require more parking spaces than office space. Therefore, it is not possible to create a completely accurate prediction of required parking spaces. The following projected parking demands are based on a ratio of 2 spaces per 1000 square feet of building area. This is a blended rate based on the City's established parking ratios for restaurants and other commercial spaces, and residences. The current parking demand is based on existing uses and square footage. For a detailed table outlining high, medium, and low intensity build-out scenarios, see Appendix A.

	CURRENT	FUTURE-HIGH BUILD-OUT
BUILDING SQ FT	55,000	137,500
PUBLIC PARKING SPACES	64	204
PRIVATE PARKING SPACES	69	98
PARKING DEMAND	82	285
SURPLUS	51	17

Findings

The projected square footage shown on the plan reflects the potential build out for each parcel, based on feedback from the workshop. This would require creation of an additional 182 parking spaces. Build-out potential could increase if redevelopment becomes an option for more properties, requiring more parking spaces.

While it is possible to fit more parking on individual lots than currently exists, It is not possible to fit enough spaces for maximum potential build-out without shared public parking and combined access

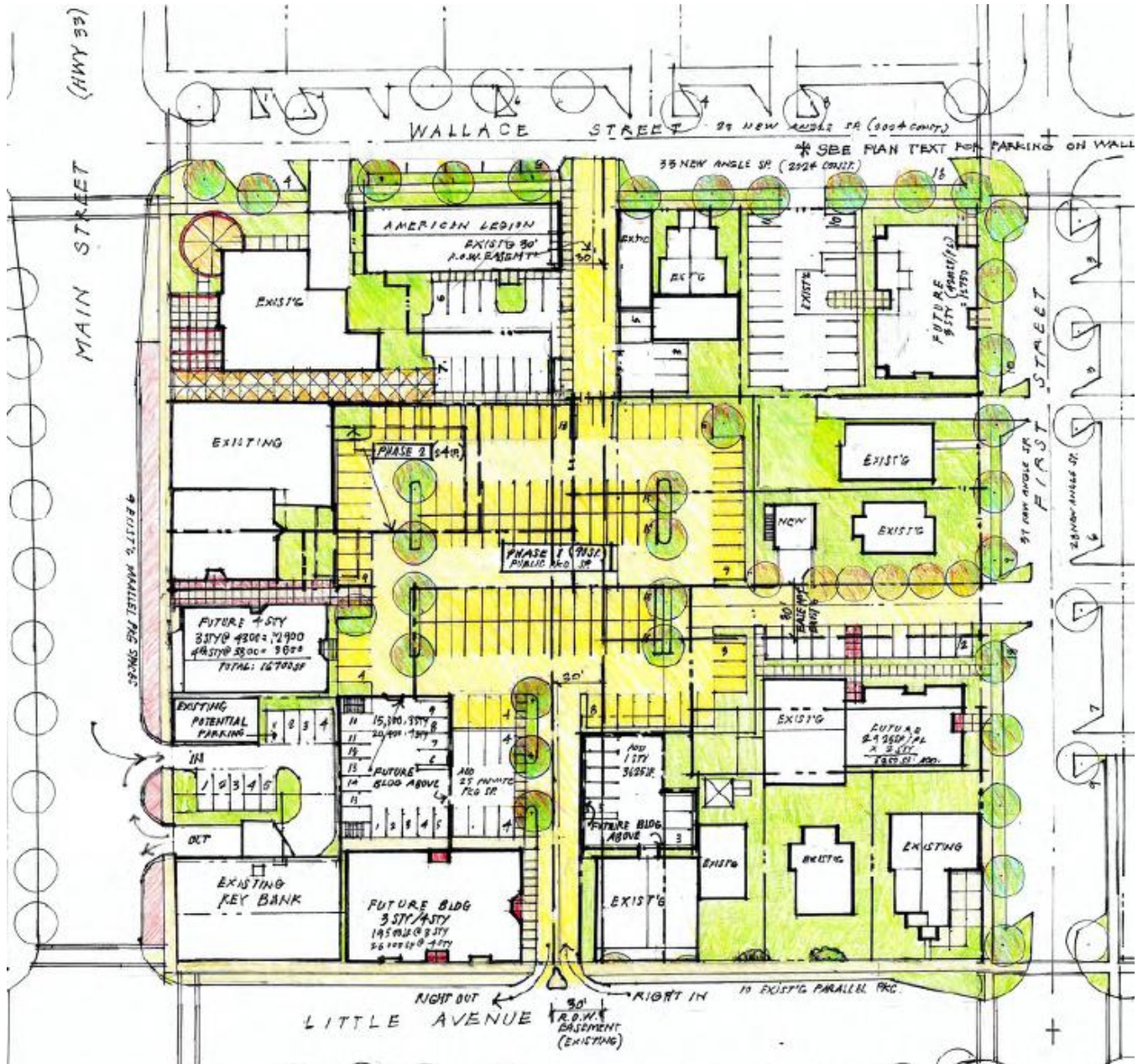
Implementation

Reality almost never unfolds according to plan, however, creating a framework can help guide projects towards common goals. Development and redevelopment on the NE Block will happen piecemeal, over a potentially lengthy timeline, depending on market demands, economic trends, and owner enthusiasm. The intent of this plan is to assist and foster development by providing a mechanism for cooperation between owners, the City, and Driggs Urban Renewal Agency.

Tools that the City has at its disposal to aggregate land for the central parking lot include purchase with cash and/or development impact fee credits, and land exchanges. Interested property owners would not be asked to ‘give up’ their property without compensation, and all participation is voluntary. A typically compelling incentive is that improvements would be funded by the City and maintained and plowed by the City once completed.

The City would like to divide the project into phases in order to take advantage of funding currently available through the Driggs Urban Renewal Agency, completing the first phase by the end of 2028. Implementation phases are noted on the central parking area of the plan. Phase I includes the southern portion of the central lot, the accesses to First and Little, and the mid-block pedestrian walkway to Main Street. This reserves the existing building behind the Old Livery and the rear yards of three existing single family homes on First Street. It will also create a welcoming and attractive public space drawing pedestrians from Main Street to activate the block. When warranted, Phase II would complete the northern portion of the parking lot and the access to Wallace Street.

Northeast Block Master Plan



NORTHWEST BLOCK

Development of the NW Quad has proceeded largely according to the 2016 Master Plan, with the realignment of Front St allowing development of the western portion of the block and creation of a large central public surface parking lot. The 2022-2023 installation of the Depot Square and Front St Lofts buildings has added building mass and commercial activation of street level elevations, in addition to creating over 60 residential units with dedicated parking. The central parking lot contains 88 public spaces with 27 additional public spaces between the Colter Building and the Burnside Building. Improvements on Depot Street and Front Street have created 58 and 46 on-street spaces, respectively. A new mixed use building on E Little is underway as well, shown on the plan with adjacent off-street parking. Existing buildings and parking spaces, including those currently under construction, total a parking ratio of roughly 2 spaces per 1000 square feet of building space. This includes residential units and dedicated spaces.

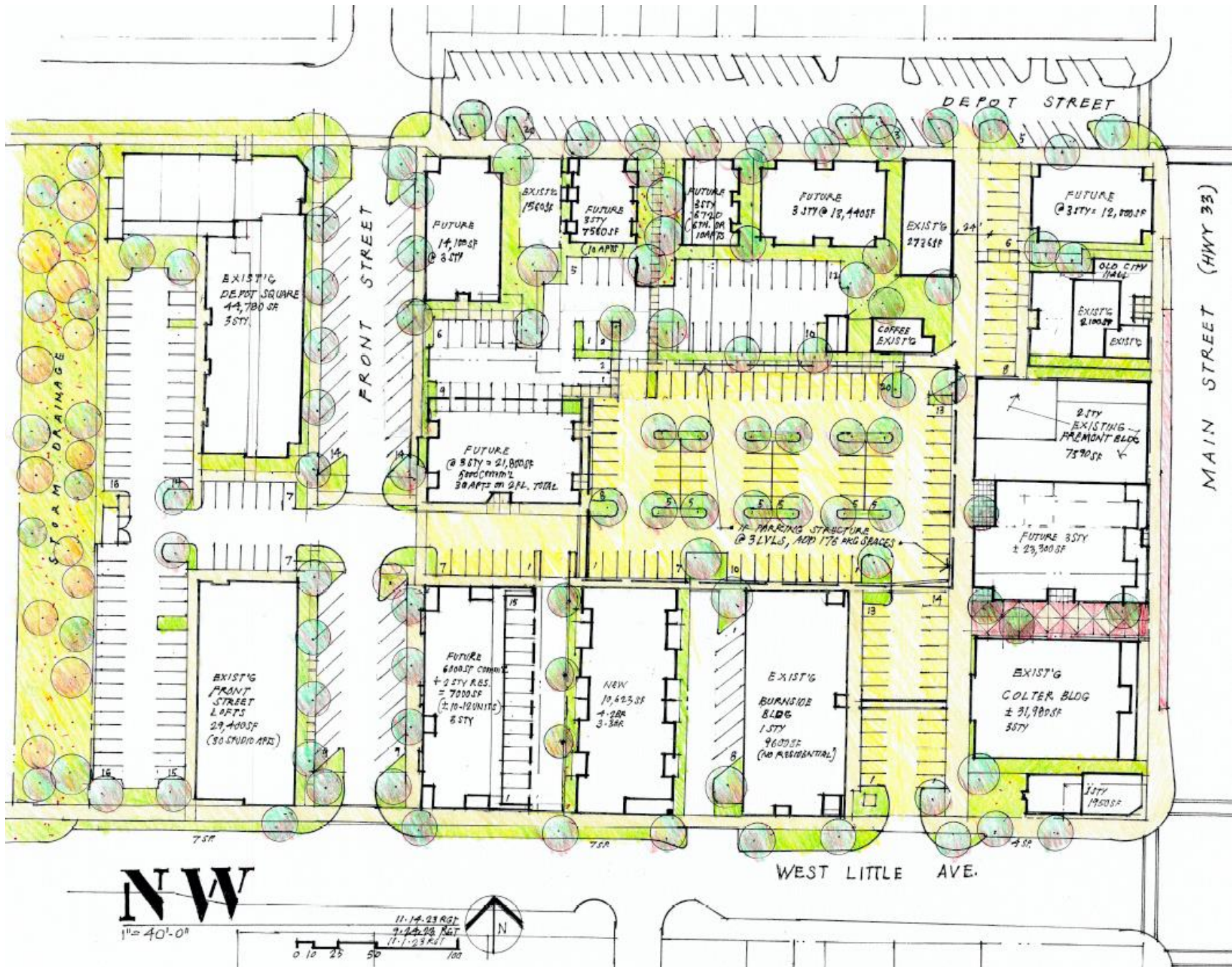
The Master Plan shows infill of the remaining vacant parcels with additional surface parking. Buildings may be added fronting Depot St, with the creation of an additional surface lot containing 37 spaces. There is also a vacant lot facing Front St with the possibility for 9 parking spaces, and room to add a 14 space row of parking along the drive aisle to Depot St on the east side of the block. This creates an additional 60 spaces total. Future buildings shown on the Master Plan would add 17,700 square feet on the ground level with the possibility to create roughly 53,000 total square feet with full three story build out. With parking configured as shown, this equals 3.4 spaces to 1.1 spaces per 1000 square feet, depending on the build-out. Without the actual distribution of square footage by use, an accurate parking load requirement cannot be calculated, but generally 2 spaces per 1000 square feet complies with Driggs' parking requirements.

However these vacant spaces are utilized, a midblock pedestrian connection to both Depot Street and Front Street should be maintained. The Mugler Plaza is an ideal location for a pedestrian mall or alleyway with amenities mirroring that planned for the opposite block, in the NE Quad Master Plan. This opportunity should be incorporated into future development plans for Main Street if this parcel is redeveloped. With the new street improvements bounding all sides of the block and future pedestrian connections to the interior lot, the NW Quad is an example for pedestrian activation, efficient parking, and the effective implementation of the Framework Plan.

Findings

The NW Quad has developed until now with ample parking to meet requirements for the businesses and residences within the block. Future build-out options are possible with enough parking to meet requirements for multi-story development and more residences. Anecdotally however, Driggs' residents report that the central lot is under pressure and near full on many days. Additionally, snow storage has been a concern in this lot. Piles of snow have claimed some spaces and decreased sight distances and turn radii during winter months. Without the option to store snow off-site, this issue will likely continue during heavy winters. Both of these concerns highlight the need for public parking in the downtown area as a whole.

NE & NW Block Master Plan



Recommendations

Downtown Parking Master Plan and Parking District

The 2016 Downtown Framework Plan recommends a parking district fee to “cover a portion of the cost of developing shared parking facilities for each block.” While the master plans for the NW and NE blocks demonstrate that sufficient parking can be provided on site for the uses within each block, parking demand for the entire downtown area may be higher as the City sees more commuters and increasing tourism. Ample parking may be created with the space available in downtown, if it is planned collectively and provided as a shared benefit. Rather than increasing the parking space requirement per unit that individual buildings must provide, the burden can be shifted to shared public space with an overall downtown parking master plan. As with the individual blocks, benefits to the entire downtown would be realized:

“more of each parcel’s street frontage may be developed because the need for individual driveways is eliminated; the pedestrian environment is enhanced because there are fewer driveway openings at the sidewalk; the cost of parking can be distributed equitably among property owners while leveraging urban renewal funds for public-private improvements; and economies of scale occur where parking is consolidated, as opposed to property owners having to meet parking requirements individually on each site.” – *2016 Downtown Core Framework Plan*

Businesses located in Driggs provide retail, services, and employment to many people who arrive from outside the City. Funding for land acquisition and facilities could be provided through impact fees or fee credits, grants, or the creation of a parking district with a tax or levy. Because Driggs is the largest economic hub in Teton County, it makes sense that the sole responsibility of providing parking should not be on the City’s budget.

Covered Parking Structure

Both the NE and NW block master plans contain a central surface parking lot with access to surrounding streets. Each of these lots is designed to accommodate a multilevel parking structure if future demand ever warrants, without demolishing buildings or changing access locations. The NE and NW blocks, however, are not ideally suited to host a parking structure because of view sheds and neighborhood character. A parking structure would have less esthetic impact if located in the Southwest block, adjacent to the Driggs Transit Center. There is more vacant space remaining at this location and it is already used for commuter parking. One benefit of covered parking structures, no matter the location, is the lack of a need for snow removal. Aggregating downtown parking in a facility that requires less daily maintenance could lower costs and personnel requirements while providing a large number of parking spaces.

Adopt Specific Snow Storage Standards

Currently the City of Driggs requires that snow storage be reviewed for site development applications, however, the code includes no specific dimensions or location for snow storage. As surface parking lots develop throughout the downtown, they should be designed to safely accommodate large piles of snow without

compromising sight distance or turning radius. Layouts should take into account access by large machines and the potential for snow removal to off-site locations. If off-site snow storage is not possible, a trade-off between development potential and safe winter conditions should be considered.

Expand Public Works

Redevelopment of the downtown area will accompany public improvements including sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, stormwater facilities, and of course public parking. As the number and area of facilities increase, so will the need for maintenance capacity. Shared parking lots in particular will require snow removal and storage, which is time consuming and requires large equipment. A plan to expand public works personnel should be developed, and funding options explored, at pace with development of the downtown area.

Consider Public Transit for Workers to Rexburg and Idaho Falls

Anecdotal observations describe the increase in employees commuting from neighboring counties to work in Driggs. Commuting increases traffic, pollution, and parking demands. One strategy to mitigate these impacts is public transit. Regional service to Rexburg and Idaho Falls could assist those traveling to work in Driggs, as well as link to the public transit options in Teton County, WY. This could reduce over all parking demand and traffic congestion.

Appendix A

NE Block Parking Forecast

NE Block Parking Forecast

Owner	Use	Existing			FA		FA		FA	
		Existing FA (sq ft)	Parking Potential	Parking Load (without code exemption)	Buildout High	Parking Load-High	Buildout Med	Parking Load-Med	Buildout Low	Parking Load-Low
Old Teton County Courthouse LLC	Furniture	4000	3.5	8	4000	11	4000	8	4000	4
Old Teton County Courthouse LLC	Offices/Personal Services	4000	3.5	8	4000	8	4000	8	4000	8
American Legion	American Legion & Church	4000	6	4	4000	4	4000	4	4000	4
Law Day G Leasing LLC	Kearsley Accountant	1500	3	3	1500	3	1500	3	1500	3
Law Day G Leasing LLC	Moulton Law Office	2000	3	4	2000	4	2000	4	2000	4
Cyr (Ivan Sosa)	Single Family Res	1500	0	2	12750	26	6000	12	1500	2
Freeze Family Trust	Single Family Res	1500	2	2	1500	2	1500	2	1500	2
William Marshall Tate	Single Family Res (assume ADU)	1500	0	2	2000	3	2000	3	1500	2
Red Hawk Investments LLC (over proper	Vacant	0	12	0	5800	12	2900	6	2900	6
Sunray Enterprises LLC (over property lin	Personal Services/Healing (Dr Jim)	2800	3	6	2800	6	2800	6	2800	6
Sunray Enterprises LLC	Nonprofit Offices (DDA)	2600	4	5	2600	5	2600	5	2600	3
Sunray Enterprises LLC	Single Family Re/Short-Term Rental	1600	2	2	1600	2	1600	2	1600	2
Silver Star Communications	Utility/Storage	600	0	0	600	3	600	1	600	1
Silver Star Communications	Utility	900	1	1	900	1	900	1	900	1
Mike and Lindsey Certo	Offices/Salon	2000	10	4	5625	11	5625	11	2000	4
JPL Investments LLC	Vacant	0	40	0	46400	93	34800	70	23400	35
Valley Bank (Key Bank) - Ground	Bank	5000	9	10	5000	25	5000	10	5000	5
Valley Bank (Key Bank) - Upper	Vacant	5000	0	0	5000	10	2500	5	0	0
Valley Bank (Key Bank) Surface	Drivethrough	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Valley Bank (Key Bank) Surface	Drivethrough	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Valley Bank (Key Bank) Surface	Drivethrough	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Valley Bank (Key Bank) Surface	Drivethrough/Vacant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
John Block Trust	Restaurant - Take-out (Get Baked Pizza)	1000	1	2	1000	2	1000	2	1000	2
TRG Realty LLC	HVAC Contractor (Fox Creek Heating)	2000	4	4	16700	33	12900	26	8600	17
APG Real Estate Inv LLC	Office/Publishing (Teton Valley Press)	1800	0	4	1800	4	1800	4	1800	4
Ellsworth Coker Family Trust	Public/Library Maker Space	800	0	1	800	2	800	1	800	1
Ellsworth Coker Family Trust	Public/Library	3300	4	3	3300	7	3300	3	3300	3
Ellsworth Coker Family Trust	Title Company	2200	4	4	2200	4	2200	4	2200	4
Ellsworth Coker Family Trust	Warehouse/Storage (Linen Service)	2430	0	2	2430	2	2430	2	0	0
Ellsworth Coker Family Trust	Personal Services/Tattoo	600	2	1	600	1	600	1	600	1
Ellsworth Coker Family Trust	Personal Services/Interior Designer	650	2	1	650	1	650	1	650	1
Private Dev and Parking Totals		55280	119	84	137555	285	110005	205	80750	124
On-Street Parking Supply										
NE Block Interior Public Parking	Public Lot/Structure		0							
Public ROW - Little to Wallace	Onstreet Parking - Parallel		9			9		9		9
Public ROW - Main to First	Onstreet Parking - Angle		25			33		33		33
Public ROW - Main to First	Onstreet Parking - Parallel		10			11		10		10
Public ROW - Little to Wallace	On-Street Parking - Parallel		20			37		37		37
Public Parking Totals (Existing, High, Medium, Low)			64			90		89		89
Grand Totals Parking		55280	183	84	137555	209	110005	208	80750	208
			Existing FA			High FA		Med FA		Low FA
Parking Surplus/Deficit (Deficit = Public Parkng Needed)			64			(76)		3		84