

A Parking Study -- Let's Define the Problem, Then Address it!

By Sandra Wick Mulvany

Recently, the LoDo District started a series of articles regarding the parking problems facing LoDo and possible solutions. This article discusses why a parking study is such an important first step in understanding and addressing parking issues in LoDo.

Generally speaking, most people do not think much about parking, that is until a parking spot cannot be found. At that point, it is too late. That is why we need to start working on the parking issues facing LoDo now, before it is too late. It is time to act and the first step is a parking study!

Many who live, work, shop and play in LoDo know that parking has become increasingly challenging. With more parking lots being eliminated in LoDo as lots are redeveloped, parking spaces are disappearing before our eyes. And, there are many unknowns about how the redevelopment of Denver Union Station will affect the parking situation in LoDo -- no parking plans have been finalized for that redevelopment. Likewise, we have yet to see how the new light rail into LoDo will impact parking. But, according to Fabby Hillyard, the LoDo District's Executive Director, until LoDo has a better understanding of exactly the problem we face, we cannot appropriately determine the best solution. That is why a parking study is crucial.

What will a parking study provide to the LoDo District? Among other things, a parking study will explore the peak parking patterns, inventory existing parking (including on-street vs. off-street and public vs. private), determine parking surpluses and deficits, assess parking supply and demand related to parking needs for employees, residents, tourists and locals, consider development projects and plans and provide an overall assessment of the parking situation with the goal of coming up with possible solutions. Ultimately, a parking study will provide empirical evidence of the most acute parking problems, so that potential solutions will have focus and direction. The LoDo District is hopeful that, once begun, a study can be completed in six to nine months.

What has already been done and what needs to happen to make a parking study a reality? According to Joe Dolan, co-chair of the LoDo District Transportation Committee, the LoDo District is well on its way to a parking study. The District has obtained a proposal for the project and approximately \$20,000 from various sources has been committed to date. But that is not enough. The District needs another \$15,000 to \$20,000 to fund the study.

Can't the City of Denver address LoDo's parking problems? Recognizing that parking in Denver is a priority, Mayor Hickenlooper established a Parking Commission to assess parking in the Denver metro area. The Commission is not currently addressing or even considering the parking problems in LoDo. Being a strong neighborhood organization, the LoDo District has the drive and energy to move forward with initial steps to evaluate the parking issue. Once the scope of LoDo's parking situation is defined through a study, the LoDo District looks forward to partnering with the City of Denver, and the Commission, to develop practical solutions to address parking in LoDo. In the meantime, the LoDo District cannot wait -- the time for action is now.

What will happen once the parking study is completed? Next steps will be largely dependant on what the study reveals. Undoubtedly, there is a parking problem developing in LoDo; the comprehensive study will provide an analysis of the extent and scope of the parking problem. This will allow the LoDo District to move towards developing a solution, most likely in conjunction with the City of Denver, and taking solid steps towards addressing the problem.

The LoDo District needs your help! If you are interested in providing funding for the parking study for the LoDo District, or if you have ideas or comments on the LoDo parking issue, please email us at info@lodo.org.