

Other Community Parking Experiences

Old Pasadena, California

(Pasadena Population: 142,017)

One pioneering example of a parking benefit district is Old Pasadena. In the 1990s, the city and downtown merchants reached “one of the smartest political and parking solutions of the last 25 years,” according to one consultant. The solution shifted the consensus from “charging for parking will scare away our customers” to “meter revenues will dramatically improve the retail and pedestrian streetscape.” Old Pasadena added meters, raised street parking prices high enough that short-term customers could always find a space, allowed businesses to make modest cash payments in lieu and provided off-street parking in city-owned garages. Pasadena manages the parking benefit district by means of agreements among the city, the BID and a Parking Management Zone advisory committee.

Revenue from the meters helps fund sidewalk improvements, façade restorations, trees and tree grates, traditional light fixtures, public safety and downtown promotion efforts. Retail sales in Old Pasadena increased 900 percent in nine years. Schreiber says that “for the first-time customer, being able to feel comfortable in a streetscape, see an attractive storefront and park close to it is everything. This is especially true for restaurants – parking has to be priced at a level that ensures there will be a short-term space [nearby]. Once the customers come in and become fans, the next time they’ll happily park in the garage and stay longer.”

