

CAR PARKING

Northern Grampians Shire Council commissioned SALT to undertake an assessment of car parking within the Village Centre to ensure that the Action Plan was underpinned by an evidence based understanding of existing conditions relating to car parking. Car parking occupancy, duration of stay surveys and user intercepts were undertaken on a typical weekday, a typical Saturday and an anticipated peak period (during an event) in May / June 2017. On all three survey days, the car parking surveys were undertaken hourly from 9am to 5pm.

The survey captured all publicly accessible car parking spaces within the survey area, including an informal car park located on the corner of Valley Drive and Grampians Road (private land used for overflow car parking during events). Weather conditions on all survey days were generally considered fine. In addition to the parking surveys above, user intercept surveys were also undertaken on the same days. These were conducted in order to gain an understanding of the parking experience for motorists, and whether or not there are differences in the experience between traders and visitors. An occupancy of 85% was adopted as a common point at which parking occupancy should be targeted at typical peak times.

A review of the survey data indicates that there are currently 599 car parking spaces available for public use within the survey area. These spaces are comprised of the following:

- Unrestricted x 286 spaces;
- Approximately 300 spaces in the overflow parking area;
- Disabled spaces x 8 spaces;
- P 30min x 4 spaces; and
- Mail Zone x 1 space.



Key findings from an analysis of the above are as follows:

The surveys found that in general, there was sufficient supply of car parking within the survey area to meet the demands generated on all of the survey days. However, parking along Grampians Road and adjacent to the Halls Gap Pool tended to have high occupancy rates during peak periods, which may cause drivers to circulate these areas or park elsewhere.

On an event day, the peak car parking demand (including the overflow car park) occurred at 3pm, where 153 car parking spaces were occupied of a total 599, equivalent to a car parking occupancy rate of 26%.

However, based on anecdotal information and on-site observations, it is understood that car parking along Grampians Road and adjacent to the Halls Gap Pool tend to be the most popular locations for car parking. As such, a targeted survey of these areas on the peak day was also undertaken. The peak parking demand within this area occurred at 1pm, where 100 of the 117 available spaces were occupied. This is equivalent to a car parking rate of 85%, which suggests that drivers may feel some frustration when searching for a parking space in these areas. On a weekday, the peak car parking demand (excluding the overflow car park) occurred at 2pm, with 154 of 299 car parking spaces occupied. This is equivalent to a rate of 52%. On a Saturday, the peak car parking demand (excluding the overflow car park) occurred at 12pm, where 189 of 299 car parking spaces were occupied. This equates to a car parking rate of 63%.

Although the majority of car parking spaces within the area are unrestricted, duration of stay surveys were also undertaken. These surveys found that generally, over half of all drivers tended to park for up to 2 hours. On the 'peak' day, over 50% of vehicles were observed to have parked for 2 hours or less. On the weekday exactly half of all vehicles stayed for no longer than 2 hours, while on the weekend only 40% were less than 2 hours, indicating that on the weekend people tended to stay for longer.

The visitor intercept surveys found the majority of vehicles parked in the area are private cars, with caravans being the next most popular vehicle. Most visitors parked along Grampians Road or next to the Halls Gap Pool, consistent with findings of the occupancy surveys.

The time required to find a space varied across survey days. On the 'peak' day respondents took between 5 and 10 minutes to find a park. However, the majority of respondents considered the convenience of parking in Halls Gap comparable to parking in similar town centres, with the remainder indicating they thought parking was better in Halls Gap. On weekdays, most respondents took less than 2 minutes to find a car parking spot and parked in the reserve. On the weekend the majority of respondents were from out of town and found a car park in less than 2 minutes. As with weekdays, the majority parked within the reserve. The average intended duration of stay in Halls Gap was 3 hours, with the highest indicated being 10 hours. Visitors unanimously considered the convenience of parking in Halls Gap to be similar or better than other town centres.

The employee intercept surveys found that most staff felt that there was sufficient parking in the area to cater for both staff and customers. All staff generally park for at least 3 hours at a time. The findings of the Destination Survey undertaken by SALT, were confirmed in consultation with local traders as employees utilised parking in the Village Centre.

Matters to consider in relation to car parking include the following:

- In considering how the delivery of a 'walkable town' can occur, the relationship with and location of car parking need to be evaluated. Understanding how people are likely to access the trailhead, as well as the number of car parks required is critical, particularly given the current dominance of car parking areas within the landscape setting of the Village Centre. The Action Plan will need to ensure that this balance between car parking and the pedestrian environment is addressed. The area of car parking in the reserve is clearly the most popular area for car parking across visitors, shoppers, local residents using facilities and employees.
- There is some evidence of excessive demand on car parking within the Reserve during peak periods, leading to circulation by cars as people try to find a space.
- However, the parking in this area is by far the most obvious and is clearly accessed by visitors entering the Village Centre along Grampians Road.
- There is no signage or direct pedestrian connections to any other car parking areas which may be contributing to lower levels of usage compared to the reserve spaces (i.e. most visitors may not be aware that parking is available on Health Street).
- Given the use of the reserve spaces by employees, potential may exist to place time restrictions on these spaces to encourage employees to use alternative spaces, freeing up additional spaces for visitors.

PLEASE NOTE: It is acknowledged that car parking numbers may be higher over the summer / school holidays and that additional actions to manage car parking at these times may be required. This will need to be addressed in the following stage of this project to ensure an appropriate balance between meeting this overflow demand and delivering objectives around pedestrian priority and amenity in the Village Centre is achieved.

