

# inside OAKLAND

SPECIAL EDITION

A newsletter for Oakland University colleagues

March 2001

## The drive for better parking

### A look at the preliminary report on space conditions and needs

Oakland University is progressing in its quest to deal with an issue on the minds of faculty, staff and students – the university's current and future parking needs.

Common perceptions in the OU community are that there is not enough parking and that spaces are too far from popular destinations.

Last fall, Oakland conducted a survey to consider faculty, staff and student opinions on parking. The university also hired Walker Parking Consultants to study the issue. Walker has completed its preliminary report, which is being shared with campus groups by Lynne Schaefer, vice president, Finance and Administration, and the parking committee (see other side). Walker presented it to the President's Cabinet and to the Board of Trustees in February. The board will base its decisions about parking on enrollment projections and information provided by the community and Walker.

In response to past and projected enrollment growth, Oakland retained Walker to perform a comprehensive study of parking on campus, including space requirements, locations, operational models, financing and recommendations for improvement through 2020. The parking review was part of a new campus master planning process, led by Schaefer and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Lou Esposito. The master plan, to be completed in March, will guide the provision of facilities and infrastructure through the year 2020.

Walker and an ad-hoc parking committee designed an online parking survey, conducted from Sept. 20 to Nov. 3, 2000, for OU community members. The committee advertised the survey and two

November forums by way of e-mail, memos, ads in *The Oakland Post* and flyer distribution. Committee members also stood in parking lots to speak to students about the forums. Three hundred responses were required for a representative sample; Walker recorded 570 responses, which provided significant information on trends and opinions. The parking committee, comprised of 16 OU faculty, staff and student representatives, also hosted the November forums at the end of its 11-month study. A total of 40 people attended the forums.

### Highlights of the survey results:

Respondent groups by user type, according to those who identified the group to which they belong:

1. Undergraduate students (293)
2. Staff (200)
3. Faculty (15)

### Top issues affecting parking:

- Not enough parking spaces
- Available spaces too far from popular destinations
- Hard to find available spaces

### Top concerns:

- Lack of short-term parking near popular destinations
- Reserving parking spaces for attendees of special events, such as Meadow Brook Theatre performances
- Deteriorating condition of lots (potholes, cracks, faded striping)

### Most important factors in choosing a parking space:

- Closeness to destination
- Likely availability of spaces
- Safety of lot and surrounding area

### Percent in favor of

- Adding more parking spaces: 61%
- Current "open" parking system (any user can park in almost any space): 55%
- Dedicated parking system

(designating lots for different users – that is, faculty, staff, students and visitors): 40%

### Closeness factor

- Eighty-six percent of the respondents say that they typically walk 400 feet or less from parking to a destination on a regular basis. Walker says that users form expectations for parking facilities according to the parking conditions at their homes. Sixty-eight percent of respondents either own a home or live with parents.

"If these users typically park in driveways no more than 30 feet from the door of their home, then 400 feet might seem very far for these users to walk between parking and a destination," the report says. "If these users are parking in garages, then uncovered parking might seem like a hardship during inclement weather. These are contributing factors to the perceived parking problem on campus."

Walker observed that users tended to park as close to their destination as possible. Consultants observed that many drivers would rather wait for a prime space to become vacant than park right away in a space farther from their destination.

### Supply vs. demand

- Walker found that Oakland has enough parking spaces to meet current demands. According to its survey of west campus, the parking system never reached capacity during the four survey days of Tuesday, Sept. 5; Tuesday, Sept. 19; Wednesday, Sept. 20; and Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2000. Sept. 5 was chosen because, as the first day of classes, it is historically the day of peak demand during the year. Sept. 19 and 20 were chosen to record parking occupancy after the deadline for late registration and no-grade course drops, but



### Police patrols, lighting keep lots safe

The Oakland University Police Department is committed to ensuring the safety of staff, faculty, students and visitors, especially in the parking lots, says Lieutenant Mel Gilroy. In the evenings, officers and cadets increase patrols in the lots, particularly during class break times, when the potential for incidents may increase. Escort service, provided by the cadets, is also available in the evening by calling extension 3331, Gilroy says.

"Given the number of people who utilize our lots, the incidence of crime is extremely low," Gilroy says. "In 1999 and 2000, only two minor assaults occurred in the lots. There were no sexual assaults or robberies reported during that period."

Property crime is the most frequent parking lot offense, but even those statistics are low, he says. Two cars were stolen during each of the last two years. In 1999, 20 thefts of property from vehicles were reported, but only 13 in 2000.

In addition to the efforts of the police department, the university has upgraded lighting in the lots and added closed circuit surveillance cameras. In 2000, OU spent \$320,000 to install 113 brighter lighting fixtures along various walkways.

before the deadline for first-half class drops. Traditionally, enrollment has stabilized by these dates and most students have established their final class schedules. Oct. 24 was selected to capture demand after the deadline for first-half course drops and before the deadline for official withdrawal.

According to enrollment projections and plans for construction of buildings such as student apartments and the Education and Human Services building, Walker predicts that OU will need 635 more spaces by 2005; 1,490 by 2010; and 2,317 more by 2020.

### Recommendations

To address the projected parking deficit, Walker identified six potential building sites and developed con-

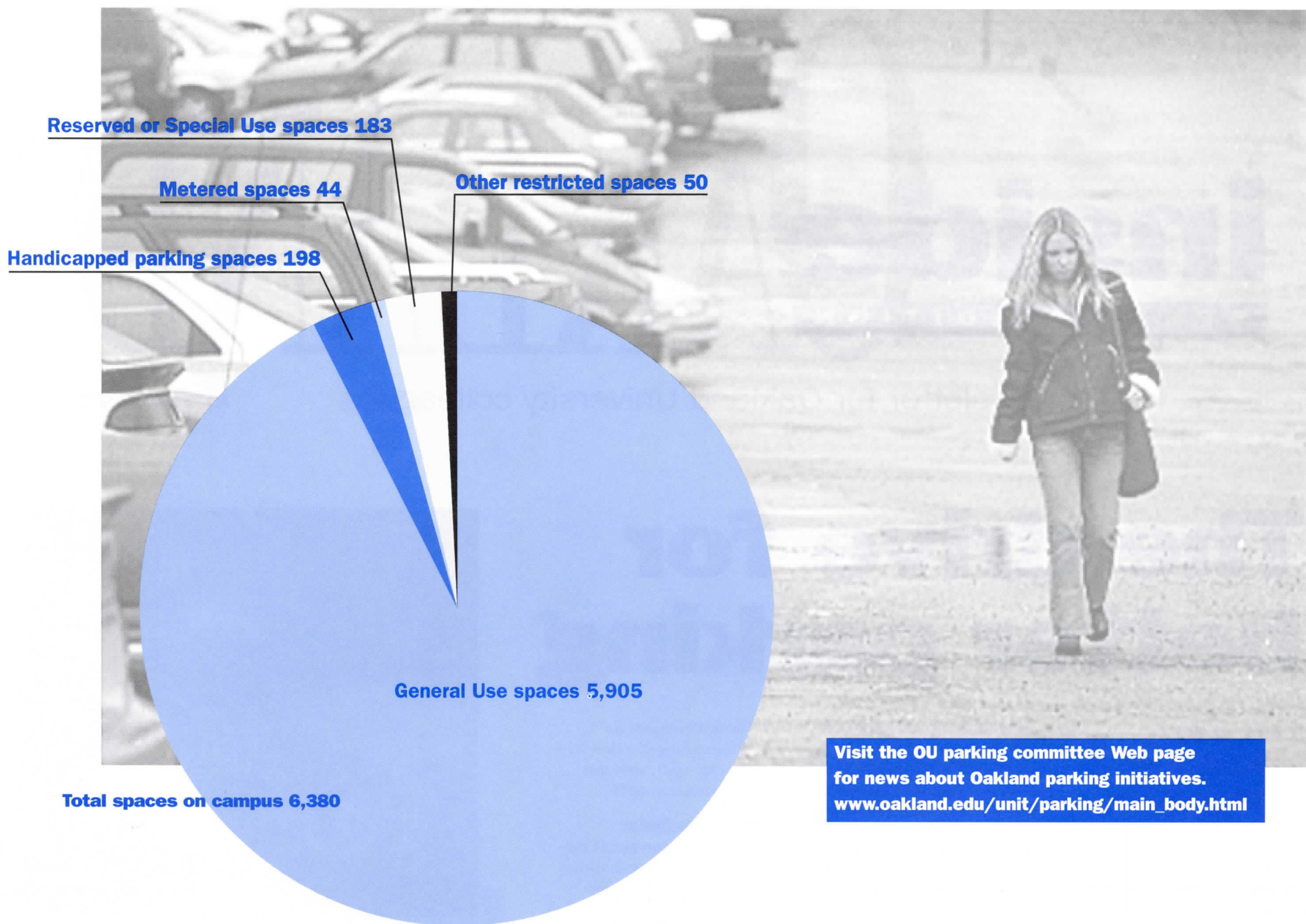
ceptual designs for parking structures on each. Walker also evaluated potential space gains from resurfacing and restriping existing parking lots, expanding existing parking lots, building new parking lots and establishing a shuttle between west campus and parking lots in east campus. In making its recommendations, Walker considered values such as aesthetics, price, proximity to popular destinations and major roadways, safety and the preservation of open spaces.

### Garages and lots

Walker recommends construction of a \$6-million, 175,000-square-foot, two-story garage just south of the Athletics Center. The project would add 554 spaces, supporting the opening of the Education and Human Services building in fall 2002, Athletics Center events, and

(continued on back)





normal student, staff and faculty activity.

Walker also recommends construction of a \$5-million, 131,000-square-foot, five-story garage just south of the Science and Engineering Building starting in 2004. This garage would provide 406 spaces for normal student, staff, faculty and visitor activity.

To support the opening of student apartments in fall 2002 and 2005, Walker recommends construction of parking lots to supply 736 spaces at a cost of \$1.1 million.

OU would gain 1,696 new parking spaces from these four projects. This gain exceeds the projected 2010 parking deficit of 1,490 by 206 spaces. Walker suggests

that further parking additions to west campus be evaluated in 2010.

#### Other remedies

Walker recommends:

- Keeping the current open parking system, in which any user can park in almost any space. This system is the cheapest and easiest to administer and enforce. It also offers the potential of an equal level of service to all users.
- Installing 10-minute meters near each classroom or office building for pick-ups and deliveries.
- Requiring faculty, staff and students to register their vehicles at the start of each semester and identify their vehicle as registered by using window stickers. This practice would prevent people who do not have business on campus from occupying parking spaces.
- Directing visitors for special events at Meadow Brook Theatre to park in Lot 2 (P2), east of Wilson Hall, instead of reserving spaces in Lot 1 in front of the theatre. P2 should be sectioned off the night before an event and visitors should be admitted only after showing a valid performance ticket or similar identification. In the future, as parking supply increases, Oakland should consider converting this lot for full-time use by visitors and guests.
- Resurfacing and restriping all lots at the rate of about 300 spaces per year to distribute the cost of the procedures.
- Identifying areas at the periphery of each parking

lot for snow storage. This practice would conserve parking spaces that would otherwise be occupied by plowed snow.

#### Financing

Walker recommends funding the construction of additional parking through a \$30 per student, per semester general service fee. According to Walker, this funding method offers the greatest utilization of campus parking by the largest number of users for the lowest price. As an alternative, Walker also proposed a \$10 per credit hour rate to ensure that fees reflect actual parking usage.

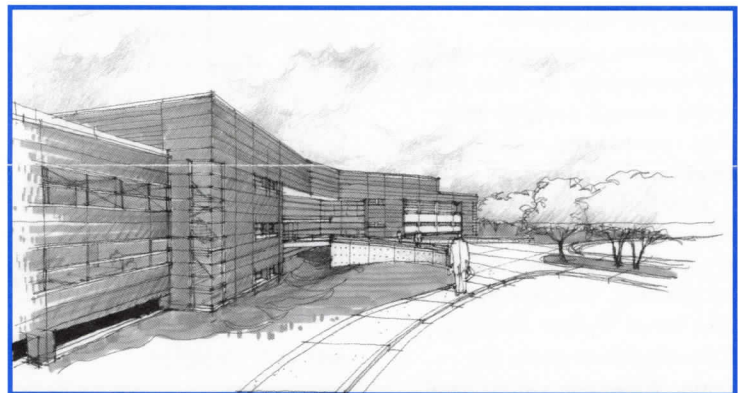
Survey results show tremendous resistance to a "direct" or pay-when-you-park system.

The proposed increase in the general service fee reflects, in part, responses to a survey question asking respondents about a reasonable per-semester charge. The top responses:

- 30 percent say any fee is unacceptable
- 17 percent say \$20-35 per semester would be acceptable
- 9 percent say \$50-75 per semester would be acceptable
- 20 percent chose not to answer the question.

Remaining respondents were divided between other cost ranges.

The report recommends increasing the semester fee rate by \$2.50 per semester every three years or .50 cents per credit hour every five years to counter inflation and debt service requirements.



#### Parking structure alternatives

- Athletics Center Garage, a 175,030-square-foot, two-story parking deck located just south of the Athletics Center. Yield: 554 new parking spaces
- SEB Garage, a 131,417-square-foot, five-story parking structure located on the south side of the Science and Engineering Building. Yield: 406 spaces
- Foundation Garage, a 759,750-square-foot, two-and-a-half story parking structure located on the west side of

North and South Foundation Halls. Yield: 2,517 spaces

- Ravine Garage, a 175,450-square-foot, two-story deck located between Hamlin Hall and the Mathews Apartments. Yield: 565 spaces
- Pioneer Garage, a 152,254-square-foot, two-story deck located on the current site of P32. 495 new spaces.
- Varner Garage, a 127,244-square-foot, two-story deck located on the south side of Varner Drive. Yield: 415 spaces

#### About Walker Parking Consultants

Walker Parking Consultants is a worldwide consulting firm of more than 275 engineers, architects, planners, economists, technicians and support personnel. Walker has designed thousands of parking facilities, conducted consultative studies and restored parking structures. The organization's clients include some of the world's most respected corporations, hospitals and educational institutions, major airports, government agencies and municipalities.

#### Parking committee

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Submit items for publication no later than the 10th of the month before publication.