2014

Town of North Topsail Beach

Beach Access
Parking Study

Eastern Carolina Council

Town of North Topsail Beach Access Parking Study

Parking is a problem for many beach communities across the United States and across the world. The town of North Topsail Beach is no exception with a seasonal influx of visitors and part-time residents that doubles the population. Additionally there is a considerable amount of vacant lots and land that leave room for the future growth and development of the town which will further complicate the current parking problems.

Parking Inventory

Currently there are 49 beach access points in the town of North Topsail Beach, 16 of which are owned by the town and the remainder by Onslow County. The majority of these points are breaks in the dunes improved with a set of stairs and a boardwalk, and are located along the ocean side of narrow portions of New River Inlet Rd. There is very little parking close to a majority of these access points with the exception of a few areas where there are large parking lots, both formal and informal. The number of parking spaces in the informal (unmarked) parking area is difficult to determine and visitors tend to create their own patterns of parking aisles and spaces. Below is a table with the estimated number of parking spaces at each of the beach access points:

Beach Access Number	Location	Number of Spaces
1	Scotch Bonnet	0
2	Seashore	0
3	Utopia	0
4	Reeves	12
5	Ocean City	Proposed
6	Green Street	6
7	Ocean Drive	Proposed
8	Gray Street	6
9	Chestnut Street	6
10	Thomson Street	0
10A	Onslow County #2	400
11	23rd Ave.	0
12	21st Ave.	12
13	18th Ave.	10
14	Topsail Road	Proposed
15	15th Ave.	10
16	14th Ave.	5
17	13th Ave.	5
18	12th Ave.	5
19	11th Ave.	10
20	10th Ave.	5

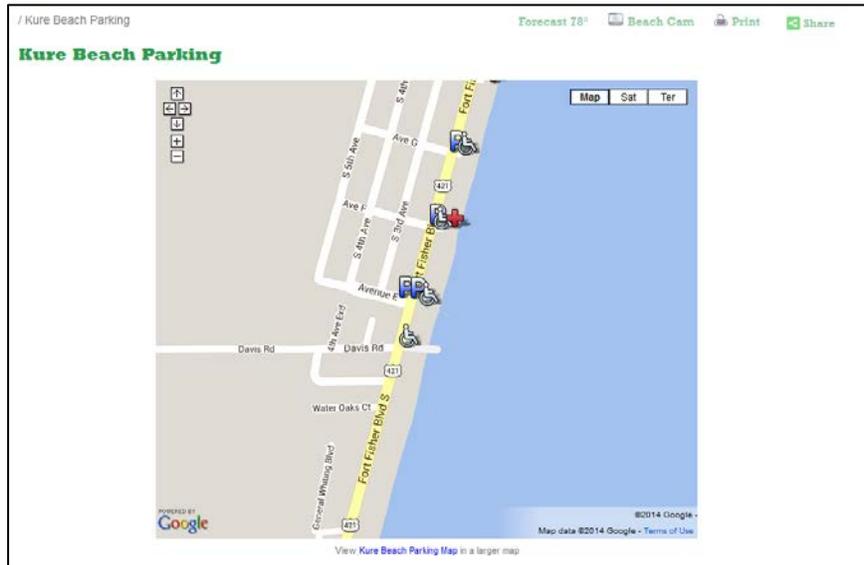| 21	9th Ave.	5
22	8th Ave.	5
23	7th Ave.	5
24	6th Ave.	5
25	5th Ave.	5
26	4th Ave.	5
27	3rd Ave.	10
28	2nd Ave.	10
28A	Island Dr.	10
29	Myrtle Dr.	32
30	St. Moritz	0
31	Jeffries	100
32	Crystal Shores	0
32A	Onslow County #4	220
33	Ocean Club	0
34	Sea Dunes	0
35	Across 685 NRIR	0
36	Emerald Dune	0
37	Wyndy Dunes	0
38	Ocean Wynds III	0
39	Jenkins Way	20
40	Ocean Bay Village	0
41	Bay Court	10
42	Marina Way	10
43	Onslow County #1	25
44	Jefferson Shores	0
45	Dolphin Shores	0
46	Topsail Reef	0
47	Oyster Lane	0
48	Port Drive	0
49	Onslow County #3	30
	Total	999

Pay-To-Park Solutions

With any of the pay-to-park solutions, it should be made clear that the profits will be used to develop, pave and maintain parking areas and public access sites. The idea of paid parking is more palatable if it's used for a specific purpose that people can really understand and will see a difference. The following are recommendations for the Town to consider if it would like to institute pay-to-park solutions.

1. For lots that are paved and where spaces are delineated, install solar-powered parking meters that offer multiple payment options. Meters are available in both single and multiple-space models. For an example see: http://www.ipsgroupinc.com/products/index.htm or http://www.carolinabeach.org/site_new/pages/documents/SPPlusMunicipalInstallsNewNCMeters032714.pdf.

2. Similar to above, provide a service to allow visitors to pay to park by phone with a specific application or a phone number. This solution is by credit/debit card only and requires a cellular phone. For an example see https://paybyphone.com/how-it-works2/.

3. Parking permits that allow for multiple parking options. There could be a tiered structure that would take into account the various needs of day visitors, visitors of residents, vacation rental users, active duty military and veterans etc. This system could also include resident parking permits that could be discounted and included in a utility bill or free of charge.

Non Pay-to-Park Solutions

1. Improve information on the town's website.
    a. Develop an interactive parking map on town website such as the example below:

Existing information on the website is not comprehensive and does not correctly direct the user to information on public access and parking.
    b. Provide more detailed information about parking do's and don'ts. Currently the language is very permissive rather than prescriptive (i.e. "If you must park in these areas, ensure that your vehicle is sufficiently located away from the traveled portion of the highway…" instead of more direct, stronger language.
    c. Provide details on every beach park and beach access. For example see: http://www.scarboroughmaine.org/departments/community-services/beaches Provide a printable parking map (possibly in zones given that the island is long and thin and putting everything on one 8.5x11 would be difficult to read). These maps could also be available as handouts in Town Hall and businesses.
    d. If enforcement of the parking ordinances is in place, provide information on fines, penalties and other related information such as where to pay a ticket, how to appeal etc.
    e. Place a noticeable link to all parking related information on the town's home page so it is not difficult to find.

2. Clearly identify legal parking areas with large, but not intrusive, signs to assist visitors as to where they are permitted to park. Use directional signs to inform drivers where to turn for

parking locations. Create a town-wide wayfinding system so that visitors will know where they can park coming onto the island and when they are on NC 210 and New River Inlet Rd.

3.   Contact the North Carolina Department of Transportation to discuss the possibility of installing signage and/or crosswalks where pedestrians will cross either NC 210 or New River Inlet Road from designated parking areas to beach access points.

4.   Update the inventory of all vacant lots that are both buildable and non-buildable. Determine which ones are within a 5 minute walking distance from access points and that could be combined to make a designated parking area. Create a plan that would outline action steps to develop parking for future use. An example would be at the corner of Carver St. and Ocean Dr. or on Reeves St. where the right-of-way is wider than other streets.

5.   Parking signage and designation areas cannot be effective without the proper town ordinances to permit enforcement. The town parking regulations should be reviewed and updated to support any new parking developments.

6.   Join a service such as Parkmobile that provides parking information in the form of a mobile phone application: http://us.parkmobile.com/members/why-park-mobile/

7.   Employ the use of mobile electronic signs during peak periods when parking is at a premium. Provide information on where parking is still available. These are similar to the traffic information signs that the NCDOT uses to indicate a change of traffic pattern.

8.   Use "lot full" signs at major beach parking areas. Something relatively simple and portable such as a sandwich board: http://www.signazon.com/a-frame-signs/sandwich-board-signs/

9.   To improve number of vehicles that park in a given location, mark the spaces on three sides preferably with a parking stop in the front. Typical parking spaces are 18 feet long by 9 feet wide at a 90 degree angle. For gravel lots spray paint may be used, although it may have to be reapplied after a certain period of time because of wear from traffic. Special parking spray paints may be found here: http://stop-painting.com/paint.html

10. Encourage individuals who are renting or visiting to use their bicycles to access the beach once they are on the island. Install bike racks at suitable beach access locations to indicate that biking is encouraged. Extend the existing bike and pedestrian path to accommodate the entire northern portion of the town, where feasible.

11. During peak season, arrange for parking off the island and have Onslow United Transit System or another transportation provider run a shuttle service from parking areas to beach sites.

Resources from other Communities

Kure Beach, NC
http://www.townofkurebeach.org/parking.aspx

Wrightsville Beach, NC
http://www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com/Parking/ParkingLocations/tabid/73/Default.aspx

Redondo Beach, CA
http://www.redondo.org/depts/police/divisions_and_personnel/parking_enforcement.asp

Town of Wells, ME
http://www.wellstown.org/index.asp?SEC=1DE3291A-ACAA-41BE-ADA6-0B452B5B1628&Type=B_BASIC

Town of Seal Beach, CA
http://www.sealbeachca.gov/safety/traffic/parking/

Palm Beach, FL
http://townofpalmbeach.com/index.aspx?nid=206

Bethany Beach, DE
http://www.townofbethanybeach.com/index.aspx?nid=219

Fort Myers Beach, FL
http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov/index.aspx?NID=142

New London, NH
http://www.nl-nh.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7B26EAB3F4-68F1-41BE-B310-A0543EDA4740%7D