

CHAPTER 12

Offstreet Parking Facilities *

A. NATURE AND COMPOSITION

1. DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES

Offstreet parking is a service that is provided by both the private and public sectors of our urban communities. In the public area it is planned, financed and operated by a variety of municipal agencies. These are city departments, parking agencies, parking boards and autonomous parking authorities. In all cases there is legislative action which usually defines the limits these bodies possess. These official groups have a keen interest in assuring that the motoring public is provided with a coordinated system of terminal facilities.

In the post-World War II years the crushing impact of demand for parking space in urban areas, large and small, became apparent to most American cities and as a result many legislative proposals were introduced and enacted into law by the various State legislatures and in city councils throughout the land. Many reasons were behind this governmental movement into a field that had been one primarily of private enterprise. Among these reasons were that private industry could not meet the challenge alone, either due to difficulty in financing parking developments on a broad basis or lack of ability in acquiring properly located sites which would relate to the overall transportation plans of the urban area.

The general physical characteristics of the plant and equipment involved in such installations are the surface parking lot which may be operated by automatic gates, attendants, parking meters or in a variety of other methods. This is the most elementary of the methods for storing the vehicle. Next in the order of complexity would be the open ramp garage, followed by the underground garage which is usually only found in the largest urban areas and almost without exception beneath publicly owned land providing a multipurpose use of the land for a park and vehicle storage area. In both of these types of garages very sophisticated equipment is utilized to maintain complete control of occupancy levels and to provide very rigid financial controls on the operations. In addition there have been limited numbers of mechanical parking garages developed and installed throughout the country. Usually these are found on very high priced land in areas where there is a very high demand for short-term parking with a resultant high turnover. The latest trend in some areas of the country is the

*Prepared by William D. Heath, Executive Director, District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Parking Agency and Secretary of the International Municipal Parking Congress, with minor editing by committee staff.