



Parking Yield Analysis: Converting Butler Street to One-Way Traffic from Lucy Street to Culver Street

Purpose

This analysis evaluates the on-street parking impacts of converting Butler Street from two-way traffic with parallel parking on both sides to one-way traffic, with 60-degree angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other. The analysis covers the seven blocks of Butler Street between Lucy Street and Culver Street.

Key Design Assumptions

The curb-to-curb width along Butler Street is approximately 40 feet. Butler is presently used as a two-way street with parallel parking on both sides where permitted. As an alternative to increasing parking capacity in the Saugatuck Central Business District, this analysis considers a proposed condition featuring one-way traffic with angled parking at 60 degrees on one side and parallel parking on the other. Average usable curb length per block is approximately 300 feet. A parallel parking stall is approximately 22 feet long. All parking estimates reflect whole stalls only; fractional spaces are not counted. Intersection clearances, crosswalks, and curb ramps are assumed to be consistent between existing and proposed conditions.

Existing Parking Yield – Two-Way Traffic with Parallel Parking on Both Sides

Rounding down, parallel parking yields approximately 4 parking spaces per 100 feet on each side. With parallel parking on both sides, the effective yield is 8 spaces per 100 feet. Over a 300-foot block, this results in approximately 24 on-street parking spaces.

Proposed Parking Yield – One-Way Traffic with Angled Parking on One Side

60-degree angled parking on one side yields approximately 7 spaces per 100 feet. Parallel parking on the opposite side yields approximately 4 spaces per 100 feet. The combined yield is approximately 11 spaces per 100 feet, or approximately 33 on-street parking spaces per 300-foot block.

Block-by-Block Parking Impact

Existing conditions provide approximately 24 spaces per block. The proposed condition provides approximately 33 spaces per block, representing a net increase of approximately 9.

Total Parking Impact

Across the seven blocks between Lucy Street and Culver Street, existing conditions provide approximately 168 on-street parking spaces. The proposed one-way configuration would provide approximately 231 on-street parking spaces, representing a net increase of approximately 63 spaces¹.

¹ Math includes some conservative rounding to account for fire hydrants, driveways, no parking zones, loading zones, etc. Each 100 feet of curb space is enough to allow for 9, 60-degree angled spaces. However, with curb cuts and no parking areas, we are intentionally aiming low to manage expectations for this idea. A more detailed and accurate study is recommended if the city is interested in implementing this idea. What is presented here is at the conceptual level, not the design level.

Conclusion

Converting Butler Street to one-way traffic with 60-degree angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the opposite side would meaningfully expand on-street parking within the existing curb-to-curb width. The proposed configuration increases parking supply while maintaining safe and efficient vehicular circulation appropriate for a downtown environment.

Butler Street One-Way Conversion and Parking Analysis: Opportunity, Pros, Cons, Precedent, and Policy Rationale

The following summarizes the advantages, disadvantages, precedent, and policy rationale for converting Butler Street in downtown Saugatuck from two-way to one-way traffic to create room for additional on-street parking. The analysis is intended to support decision-making by City staff, elected officials, and advisory bodies in evaluating potential circulation and parking changes along one of Saugatuck's primary commercial corridors.

Advantages of Converting Butler Street to One-Way Traffic

1. Significant Increase in On-Street Parking

One-way traffic operations allow angled parking on both sides of Butler Street. However, in this case, Butler Street is only 40 feet wide, which is not wide enough to accommodate a through lane and angled parking on both sides. Therefore, this analysis considers parallel parking on one side of the street and 60-degree parking on the opposite side.

2. Improved Access to Downtown Businesses

Angled parking improves the visibility of available spaces and makes it easier for visitors to identify parking opportunities while driving through downtown. This supports business access, increases parking turnover, and benefits retail, restaurant, and gallery uses that depend on short-term parking convenience in a resort-oriented downtown.

3. Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Comfort

When properly designed, one-way streets with angled parking visually narrow the roadway and introduce frequent roadside activity, helping reduce vehicle speeds. These conditions improve pedestrian comfort and safety in a walkable downtown environment that experiences high seasonal foot traffic.

4. Operational and Maintenance Efficiency

One-way traffic reduces vehicle conflict points, simplifies turning movements, and can improve snow removal and street maintenance operations. Clear circulation patterns also enhance driver predictability during peak tourist periods.

Potential Disadvantages and Risks

1. Reduced Route Flexibility

One-way streets require drivers to follow a defined circulation pattern, which may initially feel less convenient to users accustomed to two-way travel. Some travel paths may require additional turns or slightly longer routes, particularly during early implementation.

2. Risk of Higher Speeds if Poorly Designed

If travel lanes are overly wide or lack visual constraints, one-way streets may encourage faster vehicle speeds. This risk can be mitigated through appropriate lane narrowing, angled parking geometry, marked crossings, and streetscape features.

3. Backing Movements from Angled Parking

Angled parking introduces vehicle backing movements into the travel lane. Proper stall angles, adequate buffer space, low design speeds, and clear striping are essential to managing visibility and safety. Some communities address this issue by using back-in angled parking.

Michigan Precedent in Similar Resort Communities

Other Michigan resort communities, including Harbor Springs, Holland, Petoskey, and Traverse City, have successfully implemented downtown circulation and parking strategies that feature some one-way streets and angled parking, as well as a combination of angled and parallel parking on the same block faces.

Policy Rationale for Butler Street

Butler Street serves local businesses rather than as a regional through route. Its land-use context favors convenient access, high parking turnover, and pedestrian activity over travel speed. Downtown traffic volumes are generally compatible with one-way operation, and multiple alternative routes exist within the downtown grid. Reallocating street space to increase on-street parking aligns with economic development objectives and visitor expectations.

Conclusion

Converting Butler Street from two-way to one-way traffic with angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other is a defensible, precedent-based strategy for downtown Saugatuck. While the change involves tradeoffs, these can be addressed through careful design and communication. The substantial parking gains, improved business access, and alignment with practices used in comparable Michigan resort communities provide a strong rationale for further study and potential implementation.