

NOTES from PUNDITALIA

Parking in the Piazza del Mercato Vecchio

For many years and several administrations the problem of parking in the town center has been a major issue. Years ago the center-left administration made a major effort to alleviate the problem and ease access to the center by installing an inclined elevator from the paid parking lot next to the tennis courts up to the Giardini Oberdan in central Todi. It was a good idea but flawed in the details. An escalator providing continuous service would have been more practical, especially for the large numbers of children who come to school in Todi every day. The elevator has only one car, rather than two counterbalanced cars, which would have increased capacity and more importantly, might have reduced maintenance problems. While the elevator is a useful amenity, the amount of downtime due to mechanical failures is unacceptable. This necessitates costly shuttle bus service which many people just don't want to bother with.

Parking in the center is very limited by the nature of hill town topography, for both visitors and residents. Besides Piazza Garibaldi, which provides paid parking for about thirty cars, the main central parking area is the piazza of the Old (Roman) Market, behind the Liceo Scientifico. There have been studies made on ways to expand the parking in this area by building underground parking. One plan calls for deep excavation and a multi-floor parking garage for 480 cars. It was rejected as being too expensive and taking too long to realize. Mayor Ruggiani preferred a more modest plan for a one level garage for 100 cars with the piazza above to be restored for pedestrian use, where the Roman niches could be admired in peace. Both schemes were criticized for being expensive. I might add that extensive excavation on the sloping side of a hill town full of medieval treasures would be risky as well as expensive. The preferred scheme might be aesthetically appealing but it would provide a net gain of 60 parking spaces or less at an enormous cost and its construction would severely limit access to the center for a minimum of two years, during which time it can be reasonably anticipated that all the remaining commercial establishments would go out of business. This may or may not explain why Mayor Ruggiani's bid for reelection failed, but it was certainly a good reason to vote against him, regardless of any ideological preferences.