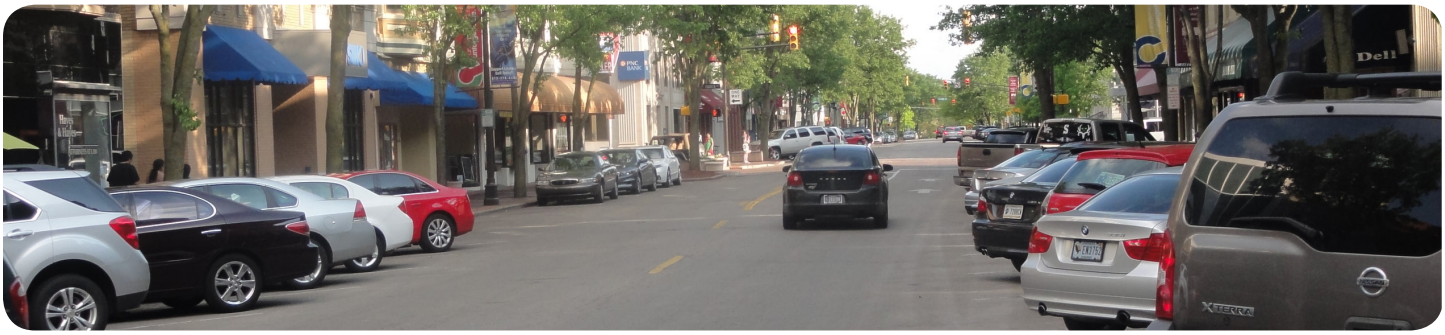
Columbus Redevelopment Commission

DOWNTOWN PARKING IN COLUMBUS



OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The City of Columbus' Comprehensive Parking Study effort is ultimately about understanding the role that parking plays in the life of Columbus' downtown. The study began with an effort to understand the confluence of parking issues among employees, customers and visitors that the City has been trying to address for a number of years.

With a vibrant downtown benefitting from progressive infrastructure developments, large employers, important visitor attractions, and unique retail, the City has prominently invested in certain values - economic development, livability, vitality, friendliness, and attractiveness. The City does not want parking to be a barrier to achieving its overall goals. By looking at the parking system comprehensively, the study demonstrated that parking supply alone is not the issue, but rather the perception and management of the parking system.

PROJECT APPROACH

The study team, working closely with a Steering Committee of downtown business owners and City staff, took a comprehensive approach to the parking analysis and recommendations to support the downtown's long-term success. The analysis includes:

- Current and future parking utilization patterns and trends
- Concerns of current downtown business owners, stakeholders, and the public
- Current and future development and land use
- Need and potential for additional parking supply

Study recommendations and findings recognize that not only are these diverse characteristics and trends equally important, they are also interrelated. Utimately, parking is about economic development, and Columbus's business, property owners, residents and visitors stand to gain by managing parking demand and supply in a manner that reinforces the unity of downtown.

PARKING PRINCIPLES FOR COLUMBUS

- **Provide convenient parking for customers/ clients/ visitors**
- **Establish clear employee parking areas**
- **Support economic development goals/growth**
- **Protect residential neighborhoods from spillover**

PARKING CHALLENGES

Employer/employee, customer, visitor and resident input at meetings and through surveys identified several major parking challenges:

- Difficulty **balancing employee and public parking**
- A **lack of clear information** related to parking in general
- **Accommodating development** in downtown
- Difficulty **finding parking** in core area
- **Perceived lack** of accessible spaces
- Enforcement and time limits **have a negative impact on customers**

KEY FINDINGS

The study outreach process and field work led to the following general findings:

- There are **6,000 parking spaces** in Columbus
- 48% of on-street spaces have 3 hour time limits, while 46% are unregulated
- Employees are the **only user group that pays** to park downtown
- There is **sufficient parking supply to accomodate demand** (there are areas of high demand and corresponding areas where parking demand is very low)

PRINCIPLES FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Utilizing all available information from the study, the team detailed many interrelated recommendations, outlined on the following pages. Generally, the recommendations are intended to do the following: A successful parking system in Columbus will:

- **Ensure availability** by establishing paid parking in core area
- Expand **employee permit program**
- Create **additional customer spaces** in Jackson Garage through consolidating/removing employee parking
- Maintain **free long-term parking**
- Use all parking assets **efficiently**
- Integrate **parking policy** into overall Columbus development, transportation management, and planning activities
- Take a comprehensive approach to parking management to address parking challenges and concerns

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

MANAGE FOR AVAILABILITY

GOAL: CONVENIENT PARKING FOR CUSTOMERS

The team recommends a strategy of pricing on-street parking in the core of downtown in the busiest, most desirable areas only. Price should be moderate, so as to influence employee behavior, but not to drive customers away. The plan includes:

- Price in small core area including Washington St, between 3rd and 7th, and on 3rd, 4th, & 5th Sts between Jackson and Franklin
- Alter span for paid parking (currently 8am - 5pm) to 9am - 6pm or 8am - 8pm
- Consider pricing at $0.50/hour, which should be more than employee permit prices and off-street rate
- First 15-minutes free period
- Pricing is balanced by several blocks of free parking surrounding the core
- Maintain the ability to adjust boundaries over time
- Minimize loading zones on Washington, Jackson Street, and 4th Street
- Eliminate restrictions on relocating downtown

Pricing parking should be as convenient for customers as possible using new meter and related technology. This includes using kiosks with pay by credit card and cell phone options and potentially utilizing license plate recognition for employee permits, which would eliminate the need for hang tags and sticker permits.

The enforcement program can similarly be upgraded, including using coordinated enforcement handheld readers, raising ticket rates (but maintain the first violation as a warning), and implementing/extending a parking ambassador program for enforcement personnel to have information available for visitors and customers.

ADD ON-STREET PARKING

Additional long-term (or short-term) parking spaces could be easily added within existing street right-of-way. A full traffic study (and in some cases, coordination with INDOT) would be needed. Suggested locations include:

- Brown Street (between 3rd and 8th)
- 3rd Street (between Franklin and Pearl)
- 2nd Street (between Washington and Lafayette)
- 1st Street (between Brown and Washington)
- Jackson Street (between 5th and 8th)

UPDATE ZONING CODE

GOAL: UPDATE ZONING

The Commercial District zoning in downtown Columbus is progressive; however, recommended improvements include:

- Requiring implementation of specific transportation demand management programs, including specific pedestrian/bicycle provisions
- Encouragement to increase downtown residential and mixed-use buildings
- In-lieu fees or assessments in tandem with no parking requirements downtown

EXPAND EMPLOYEE PARKING PROGRAM

GOAL: ACCOMMODATE LONG TERM PARKING NEEDS

The team recommends a three-tiered employee parking program. This program alters the existing employee permit program and could work as follows:

Tier 1: Reserved Spaces

- Individually dedicated spaces for specific users
- Limited number available at higher cost
- Located in the Jackson Street Garage and the City lots on Franklin Street
- Permits purchased monthly or annually

Tier 2: Permitted Spaces

- Designated for employee permits but not individually reserved by user or organization
- Rates should be reduced and lower cost per hour than the on-street
- Spaces located on the upper levels of the Jackson Street Garage and in the Franklin Street City lots
- Expansion possibilities: Second Street Garage, leases in private facilities, or remote on-street

Tier 3: Free Spaces - No Permit Required

- Free, long-term parking for employees, customers or visitors should be available
- Free spaces should be outside of the core, both on-street and off-street
- Includes current on-street locations south of 2nd Street, Jackson Street and Franklin Street north of 5th Street

REFINE GARAGE MANAGEMENT

GOAL: EFFICIENCY

Jackson Street Garage Management

- Eliminate Cummins spaces
- Use upper level(s) for employee parking permits
- Use lower level(s) for customer spaces
- Price customer spaces the same or less than on-street hourly rates
- Offer customers the first hour free
- Allow customers to park in employee spaces after hours (and post clear signage)

Second Street Garage Management

- Maintain Cummins spaces
- Reduce residential spaces as the Cole ramps up and revisit on an ongoing scheduled basis; use for downtown employees
- Explore relocation of gate arm technology
- Change circulation and streamline exits by allowing a right turn exit onto 2nd Street

CUMMINS PARKING

The team recommends that Cummins continues to encourage its employees to use Cummins reserved spaces, along with the following additional changes:

- Eliminate Cummins spaces in the Jackson Street Garage
- Complete a review of their overall transportation and parking needs
- Begin a program of Transportation Demand Management measures (incentives and programs such as parking cash out and bicycle share can have an immediate impact on employee mode share)
- Use Cummins' efforts as the basis of a Transportation Management Association with participation from other downtown employers

MULTI-MODAL ACCESS

Columbus already has robust bicylce and pedestrian infrastructure, leading several of its peers. However, there are several improvements that could expand existing resources, making them more attractive to existing and new users:

- More “C” bike racks at front door, visible locations (and consider “C” racks for larger framed bicycles)
- Add secure, protected, well marked and lit bicycle parking in the Jackson Street garage
- Work with Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan to identify and mark bicycle routes including connections with the People Trails
- Additional pedestrian amenities at intersections
- Review major crossings and pedestrian timing
- Provide more visible stops for ColumBUS
- Continue to improve lighting and pedestrian paths, including alleys/lots
- Install “HAWK” lights to access Mill Race Park remote parking

SIMPLIFY GOVERNANCE

GOAL: STREAMLINE

Parking in Columbus is regulated by several bodies, which makes it confusing to determine which party is responsible. As a result, parking changes and management are completed on an ad-hoc basis with minimal integration of on-street and off-street policy.

- The City should establish a Parking Commission that has overall policy oversight
- Members should be appointed by the Mayor and include department heads and stakeholders such as merchants, the Visitors Center, and large employers
- The Commission would be responsible for coordinating and implementing policy
- The Commission should manage a dedicated Parking Fund that takes all parking revenues (meters, garages, permits, fines/fees) and after covering costs, uses the revenue to reinvest in downtown improvements

IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY

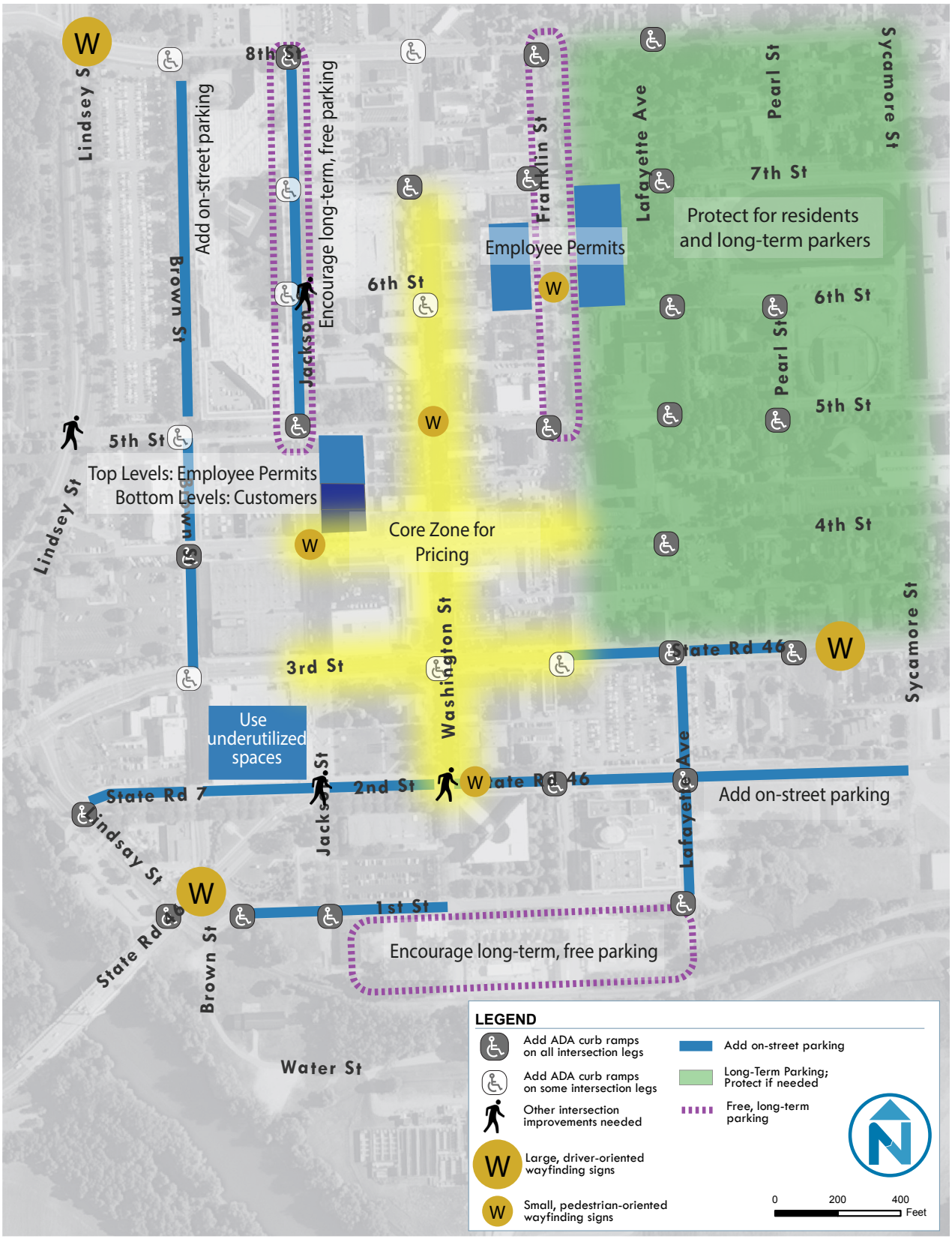
GOAL: AVAILABILITY

Implementing the programs outlined here should result in increased overall availability of parking in downtown Columbus, hopefully minimizing the need for dedicated, protected handicapped spaces. Nevertheless, improvements are needed:

- Handicapped spaces should be adjacent to ADA compliant curb ramp locations
- More spaces are needed, according to federal guidelines (there are no federal requirements)
- The team recommends the establishment of a City policy on designated handicapped parking, which would define/outline a process for requesting and evaluating new handicapped spaces. These policies/guidelines can also be used to evaluate/change some existing spaces.

WAYFINDING

The team recommends installing wayfinding signage in conjunction with visitor-oriented signage and Arts District designations. We recommend that this should include:

- Information for before you get to Columbus, which is a parking map, rates, restrictions, and other relevant information about parking locations
- Signage as you arrive in Columbus that points drivers in the right direction of how to get to parking facilities
- Pedestrian-oriented signage that includes information about parking locations plus names and distances (by block or walking minutes) of other attractions

RECOMMENDATIONS at a GLANCE