

TECHNICAL M E M O R A N D U M #2 - PUBLIC INPUT

To: Heather Pope, Columbus Redevelopment Commission

From: Ralph DeNisco and Lisa Jacobson, Nelson\Nygaard

Date: October 14, 2013

Subject: Technical Memorandum 2 – Public Input

INTRODUCTION

The study team conducted a series of outreach efforts in order to get a sense of the community perspective of parking in downtown Columbus. These efforts included interviews with stakeholders such as local employers, a widely circulated online survey, emailed comments, and public meetings.

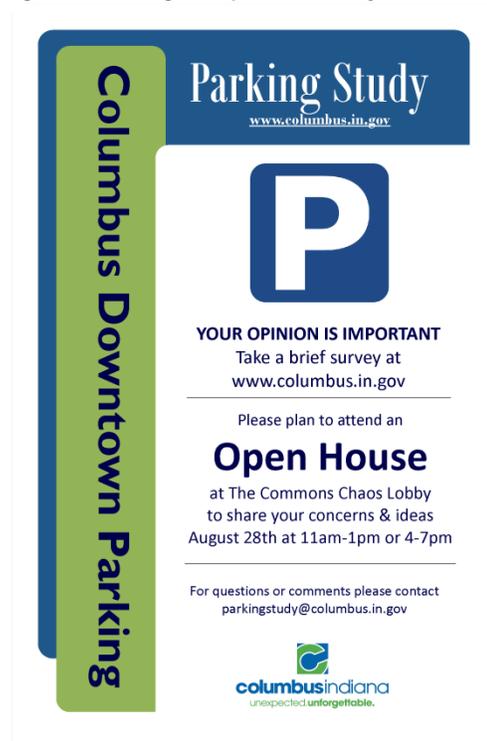
This document summarizes the findings of these analyses. Community concerns include:

- Balancing employee and public parking downtown
- The perception of parking availability, both for customers and employers
- Working to grow transportation choices, such as biking, walking and transit
- Lack of clear information related to parking in general
- Confusion related to the district-wide three hour time limit
- Management and information related to garages

The public outreach process is an integral part of the analysis. Talking with community members provides valuable insight not only into parking issues, but also opportunities for improvement. These insights into the community's mobility needs coupled with the Existing Conditions analysis will help steer the study in a direction that truly addresses parking in downtown Columbus.

This is the second of several technical memorandum that are being compiled as part of the Downtown Columbus Parking Study.

Figure 1 August Open House Flyer



ONLINE SURVEY

This section summarizes the online survey input from parkers in downtown Columbus regarding their parking activities, experiences, perceptions, and preferences. To collect this data, the City posted an electronic survey on its website, and it elicited nearly 1,100 responses. The sections below outline the responses and trends in the survey data.

Survey Responses – All

Respondents by User Group

As shown in Figure 2, most survey respondents are employees (81%). Of the respondents, about three quarters (92%) drove alone, while 2% drove with others, for a total of 94% arriving in Columbus by car. The majority of respondents (78%) reported a Columbus home zip code.

Figure 2 What was your primary purpose for coming to Downtown Columbus today?

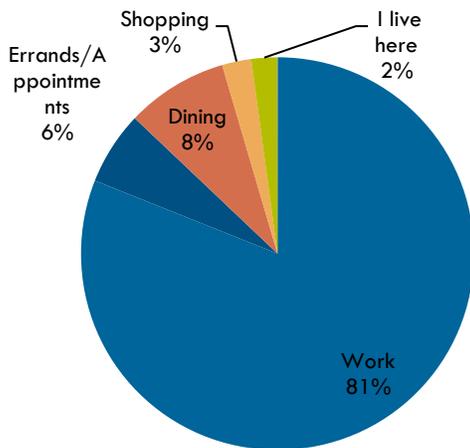
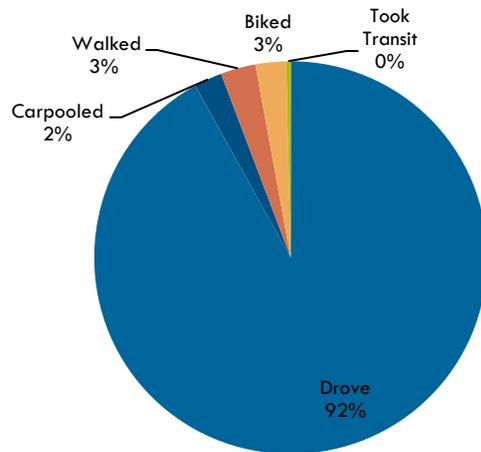


Figure 3 How did you get downtown today?

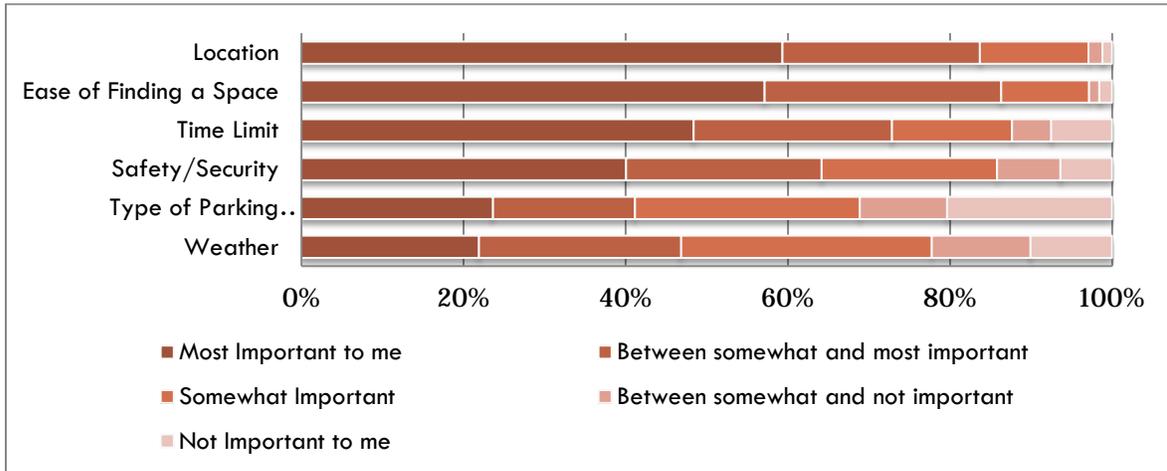


Priorities and Downtown Character

The survey asked respondents to rank their priorities when finding a space on a scale from “Not Important To Me” to “Most Important To Me.” Figure 4 shows the results of this question, with the darkest color representing those who ranked a given priority as “most important.”

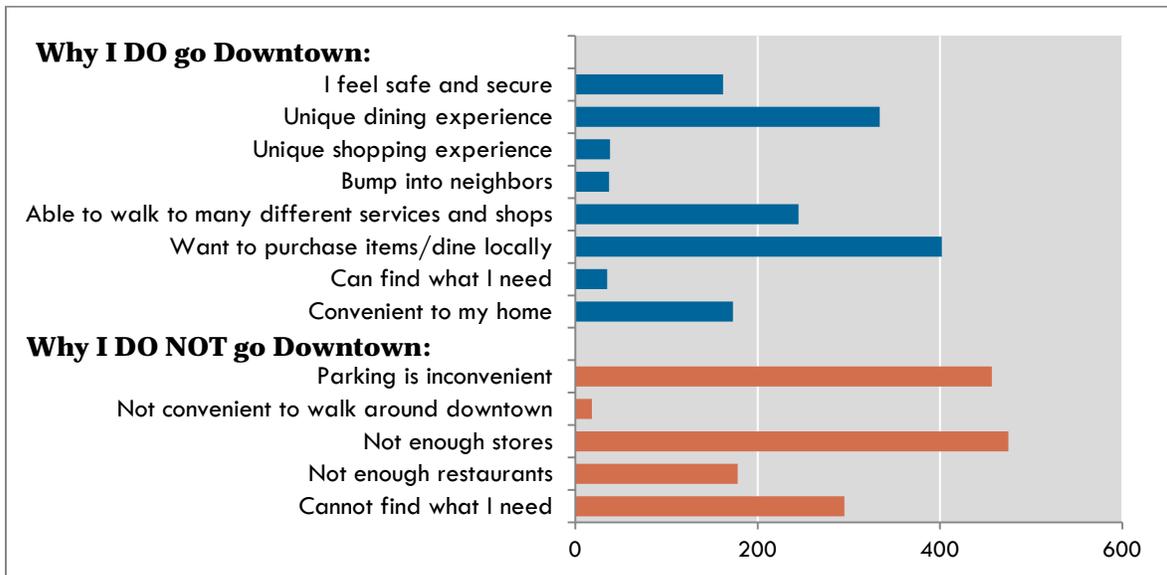
In general, location was very important to respondents, followed by the time limit in a given area. Safety and security and weather were both ranked mostly more than “somewhat important,” while the type of parking was not as important to respondents.

Figure 4 Parking Priorities



The survey also asked respondents about the character of downtown Columbus. Respondents could check up to three reasons why they do and do not go to Downtown Columbus.

Figure 5 Downtown Character



Excluding work, respondents indicate that dining and shopping are the main reasons that bring them downtown. In contrast, respondents hope for more stores and restaurants. The number one response of why people do not go downtown is that parking is inconvenient. Respondents do not perceive walking around downtown as an issue, indicating that the perception of the walking environment is positive.

Customers

Downtown customers are those running errands, going to appointments, shopping and/or dining. As Figure 2 shows, about 17% of respondents were downtown customers.

Location

Figure 6 Where did you park?

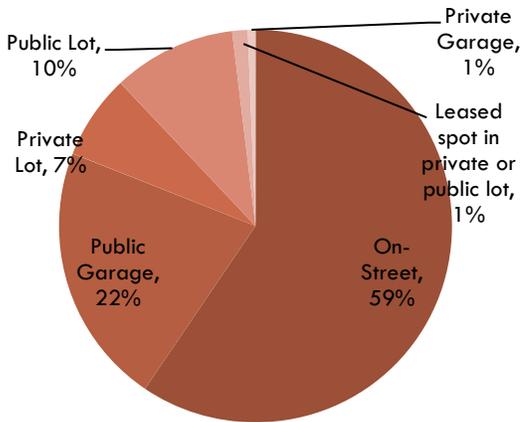


Figure 7 How far away did you park?

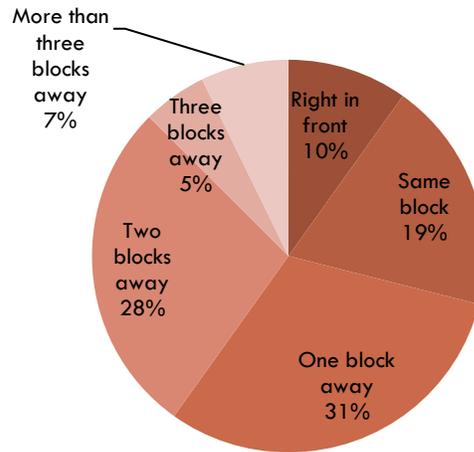
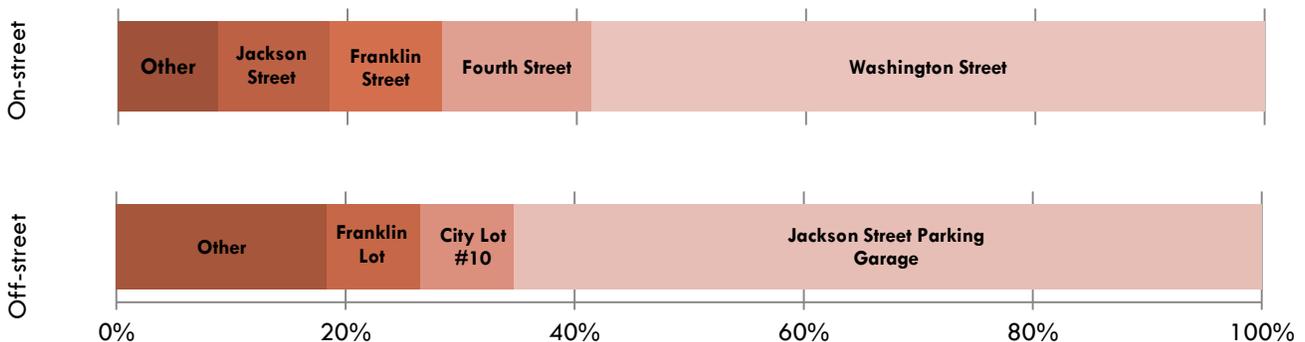


Figure 6 shows that 91% of customers park in spaces that are publically available, such as public lots, the public garage spaces, or on-street. Figure 7 shows that most of those spaces are within two blocks of a customer’s destination. A handful of customers park in leased spaces or private garages, and a few more park in private lots – likely those associated with business establishments that they are visiting. Figure 8 shows the distribution of where customers parked in downtown Columbus.

Figure 8 On- and Off-Street Parking Locations



In general, customers reported staying for an average of **2 hours and 10 minutes**. This is below the three hour time limit that is predominant in the downtown, but still an extensive period of time in a downtown location.

Perception of Parking

As Figure 9 illustrates, more than half of customers said that they had failed to find parking in downtown Columbus and simply left. However, Figure 10 paints a slightly different picture of the parking situation. As the darker orange bars show, only about half of respondents were able to find a parking space within five minutes of searching on the day they filled out the survey. The medium orange bars that represent the “average” time for respondents, which shifts slightly higher. The lightest orange shows respondents’ estimates of their “worst day” searching for parking, and are almost opposite of their actual reported parking experience. Thus, just a few bad experiences searching for parking can have a drastic impact on how users perceive parking availability.

Figure 9 Have you ever failed to find parking and left?

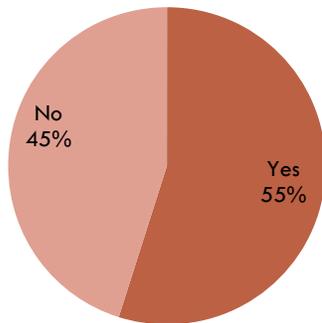
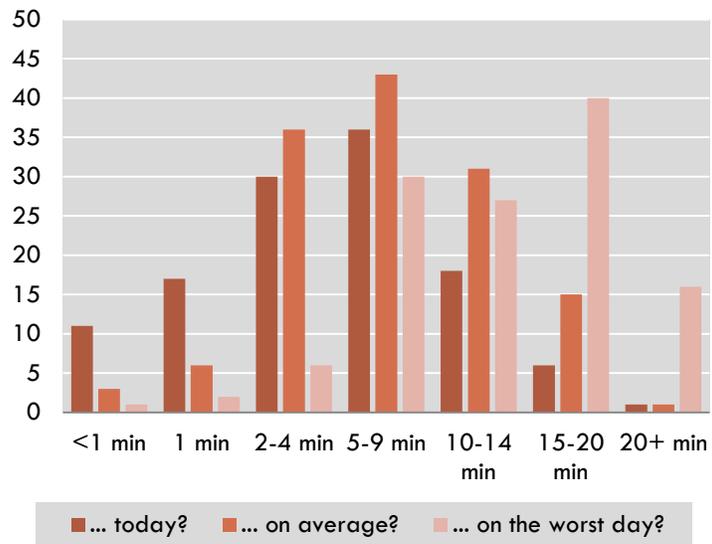


Figure 10 How long did it take you to find parking?



Employees

In contrast to customers, employee respondents park in private lots and garages downtown. However, as Figure 11 illustrates, 12% of employees park on-street. Considering this represents 80% of respondents, this is a large proportion of those parking on-street, shown by Figure 12.

Figure 11 Where did you park?

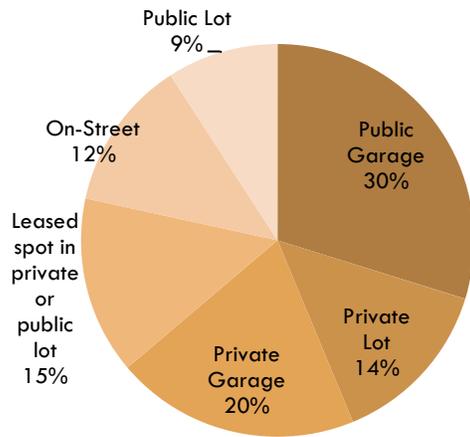
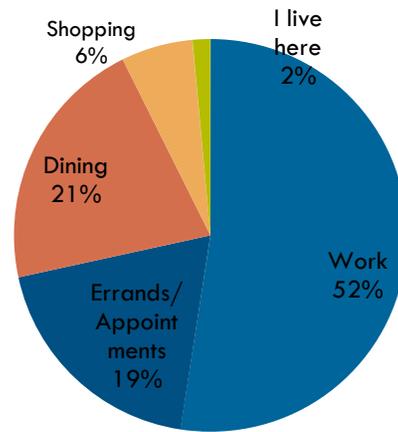


Figure 12 On-Street Parking by Trip Purpose



Most on-street parkers parked on **Jackson Street (31%)** or **Washington Street (25%)**. Main off-street parking locations for employees were **the Second Street Garage (35%)** and **Jackson Street Garage (52%)**.

Figure 13 How far away did you park?

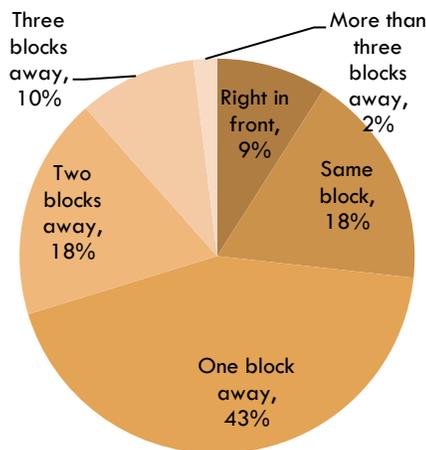


Figure 13 illustrates that most employee respondents park very close to their place of work, with over 70% parking within one block of their destination.

In addition, most employees are parking in the same space every time they come downtown. **58%** of employee respondents report parking in the same place, as compared to about **25%** of customer respondents.

Residents

In general, residential participation in the survey was low as compared to other groups, with just over 20 respondents. However, some trends did emerge from the data.

Figure 14 How far away did you park?

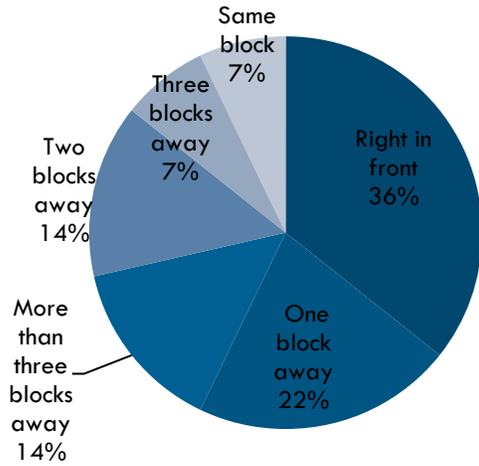
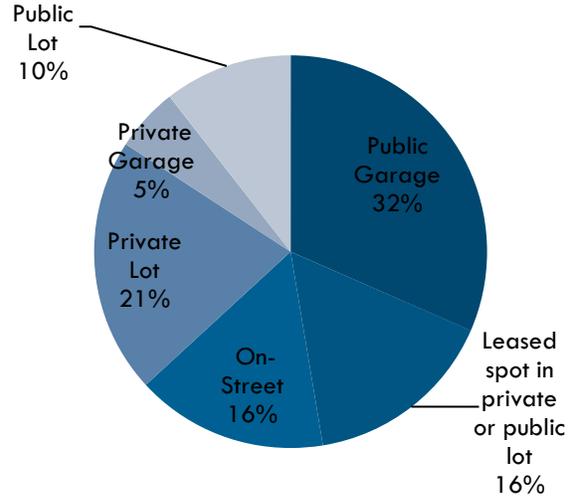


Figure 15 Where did you park?



As Figure 14 illustrates, residents of downtown find parking close to their destination, which is likely often home. Although parking locations vary widely, Figure 15 shows that 58% of residents park in publically available spaces, while the remainder lease or have access to private spaces.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The review of background information and online survey was complemented by a series of targeted stakeholder meetings and interviews to gather input on conditions from those most familiar with parking in downtown Columbus. Stakeholders were identified by the Redevelopment Commission and included business owners, major employers, City staff, and others.

Interviewers used a general template of questions as the basis for the interviews, but the primary goal was a free flowing exchange about parking and an understanding of specific experiences and perspectives in downtown Columbus. Several common themes emerged, which are summarized below into key findings.

KEY FINDINGS

Stakeholders cited a wide range of issues and opportunities related to parking in downtown Columbus. A summary of those issues is below, followed by more detailed descriptions of the topics discussed.

- Coordination of parking resource management is lacking
- There is a perceived lack of parking downtown
- Walking is currently not an appealing option in downtown Columbus
- Management of employee parking is difficult
- Columbus will soon need more bike racks
- Information about public parking, both on- and off-street (particularly in garages) is lacking
- Transit is becoming a popular option
- Three-hour time limits are confusing and unfriendly
- Shared parking could use parking resources that are currently underutilized
- Warning for first-time parking violations is appreciated

Detailed Summaries

Below are more detailed summaries of key conversation topics from these stakeholder discussions.

Coordination is Lacking

Some say that more coordination is needed, specifically administration and management of parking resources. The current administration of parking is fragmented, as demonstrated by the variety of regulations on-street, in lots, and in garages, and stakeholders say that a more coordinated management system would reduce inefficiencies in the parking system.

Perception of a Lack of Parking Downtown

Stakeholders report that it is very difficult to find a parking space between Franklin and Jackson streets between 3rd and 5th streets, particularly on Washington Street. During lunchtime, patrons

experience the biggest parking crunch. Most say that although the downtown development has been great, it has had a negative impact on parking availability.

Walking in Columbus

Although the City has invested in making the downtown more walkable, many stakeholders report that people downtown have a "walking problem not a parking problem". Many want to park directly or very close to their destination and do not want to walk, or do not have the time to walk, a block or two to their destination. Visitors at Hotel Indigo or coming from the Visitors Center are more likely to walk than downtown employees.

Employee Parking Options

Stakeholders report that many employees of downtown offices, restaurants, and other establishments do not have a designated place to park. Some employees shuffle around on-street time limited streets (taking up valuable customer spaces), others park nearby on a residential side street, and others find a space in a public or private garage or lot. Some stakeholders say that many of the off-street, long-term parking spaces are leased, which shrinks the available supply for downtown workers. Some service workers and others that may not be able to afford a leased space have few options for long-term parking. In addition, stakeholders mentioned both Washington Street and Jackson Street north of 5th Street as on-street locations where employees often park, blocking spaces for other potential users.

Bicycle Parking Locations

Most stakeholders like the bicycle parking "C" racks, and acknowledge that with more and more cyclists, Columbus will soon need to add more bicycle racks in the downtown.

Directional Signage to Parking Lots/Garages

Stakeholders report that there is a lack of information on where public parking facilities are located in town. Some noted that the Arts Coalition District group is working on a solution to this issue.

In particular, signs in the Jackson Street and Second Street Garages are unclear, with a variety of numbers and signs in spaces that appear to be scattered randomly around the garages, making it confusing for parkers to navigate.

Transit Riders

Many say that the ColumBUS is becoming a more and more popular way to get to work for all different types of downtown employees. The transit hub is becoming a busy place.

Confusion and Unfriendliness of District-wide Regulations

Stakeholders report that the three-hour on-street parking regulation being district-wide is unfriendly and confusing to customers. If a customer comes downtown for thirty minutes in the morning, and then comes back for another thirty minutes in the afternoon, they could get a parking ticket. The district-wide rule is difficult to correctly enforce and unclear on signage.

Some stakeholders describe the three-hour on-street time limits as being unfriendly to customers. For example, a parent taking children to Kidscommons and out for lunch is more than three hours. Some say that visitors should have more options to stay longer than three hours in town.

Promote Shared Parking

Some describe particular lots in town that are underutilized or empty during different periods of the day or week. For example, the county lot between 2nd and 3rd and Franklin and Lafayette is for county employees only.

First-Time Offenders

In general, stakeholders appreciate the warning (instead of a parking ticket) for first-time offenders of the time-limits. In particular, this could be due to confusion of the district-wide regulation.

Interviewed Stakeholders

- Mary Arnholt, *Smiths Row*
- Jeff Bergman, *Planning Department*
- David Boatwright and Katina Furnish, *Cummins*
- Laurence Brown, *Columbus Area Metropolitan Planning Organization*
- Elaine DeClue, *Tre Bicchieri restaurant*
- Tom Dell, *Dell Brothers*
- Cindy Frey, *Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce*
- Susan Fye, *Redevelopment Commission representative*
- Dave Hayward, *Engineering Department*
- Jeff Lucas, *Bartholomew County GIS Department*
- Lynn Lucas, *Columbus Area Visitors Center*
- Heather Pope, *Redevelopment Commission*
- Kurt Schwarze, *4th Street Bar*
- Tom Shaw, *Marvin Johnson & Associates*
- Sharon Stark and Lisa Williams, *Police Department Parking Enforcement*
- Gary Thompson, *REI Real Estate Services*
- Terry Whittaker, *Viewpoint Book Store*

PUBLIC MEETINGS

In addition to the survey and stakeholder interviews, the project team held two “open house” style meetings, plus a meeting with downtown merchants. The meetings had interactive exercises, discussions, and presentations all designed to solicit public input on parking and parking related issues in the downtown.

Open House Meetings:

On August 28, 2013, local residents, business owners, and employees were invited to The Commons participate in a hands-on "Parking Open House" designed to gather as much qualitative input as possible in downtown Columbus. For ease of access, there were two meeting times – one during lunch and one in the early evening.

The purpose of the open houses were to introduce the study to the general public. The team reviewed general study area boundaries for downtown Columbus and discussed the study efforts to date, which included an initial parking inventory and some preliminary online survey results.

A majority of the meeting time was to gather feedback from the public, including identification of issues, opportunities, and concerns. The open house included several interactive components:

- Parking priorities voting exercise
- Parking needs and opportunities map mark-ups
- Background information presentation and discussion

About 40 members of the public participated in response to newspaper articles and email invites distributed by the Redevelopment Commission.

Parking Priorities Voting Exercise

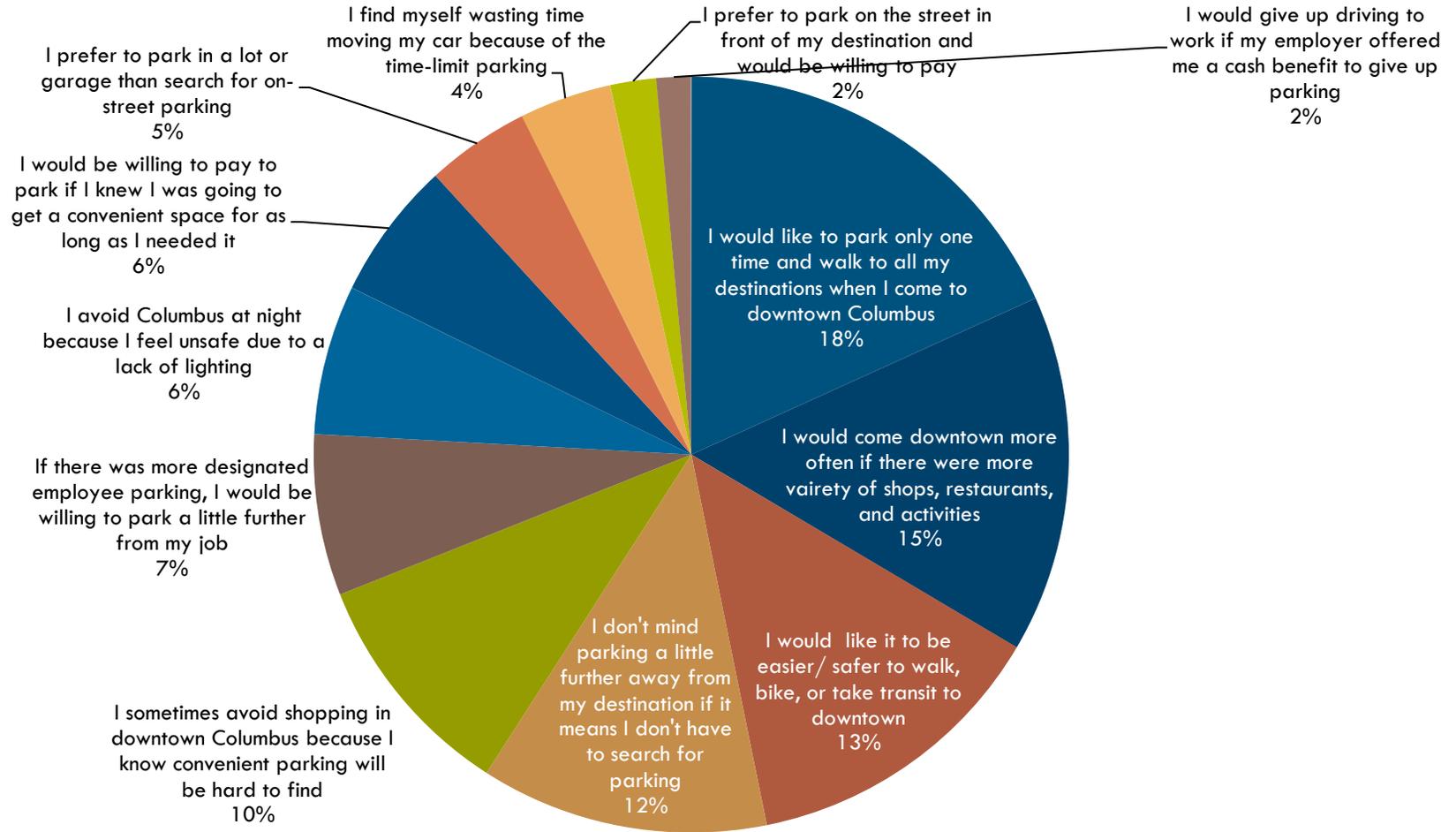
Open House participants were invited to "vote" for the parking-related priorities that were of greatest concern to them. Faced with over a dozen typical parking issues, participants were allotted six "votes" that could be used to prioritize one or more issues. Figure 16 shows the results of that voting exercise.



The voting exercise revealed public priorities related to parking in downtown Columbus

DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS PARKING ANALYSIS: TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 2
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Figure 16 Voting Exercise Results



The results of the exercise reveal a local desire to have access to a walkable downtown with a variety of activities and transportation options. Many respondents answered that they wouldn't "mind parking a little further away" if it limited the search for parking. Along the same lines, several respondents (10%) indicated that more designated employee parking would lead them to park a little further from their jobs. In contrast, only a few respondents noted that they preferred to park on the street in front of their destination if they had to pay. Respondents also expressed a for it to be "easier/safer" to be able to walk, bike or take transit downtown. This response indicates that these are types of infrastructure that could be improved in downtown.

Parking Needs and Opportunities Map

During the Open Houses, participants were offered large printed maps of the downtown Columbus study area on which to make notes of areas that need attention or have opportunities for improvement.

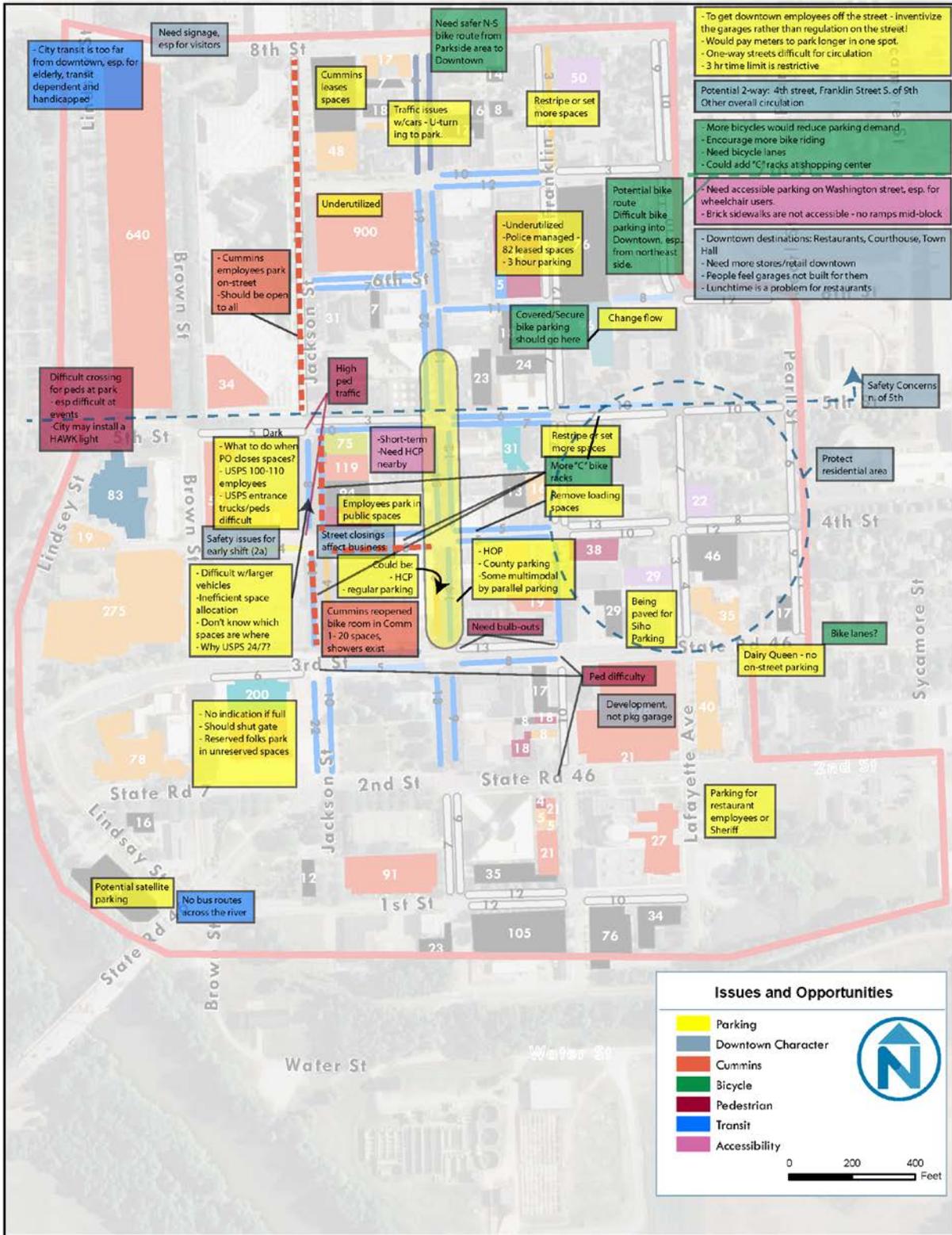
Figure 17 is consolidates the comments from the parking needs and opportunities mapping, with a map of downtown parking assets for reference:



Public meeting participants discuss parking and related transportation and land use issues.

DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS PARKING ANALYSIS: TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 2
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Figure 17 Summary of Public Comments



Merchants Meeting

The Merchants' meeting was also on August 28, held at the Yes! Cinema. The meeting was comprised of a presentation, discussion, and markup map exercise for a dozen local merchant and employer participants. Figure 17 incorporates comments from the merchant meeting.

The following summarizes key findings and points of discussion from the merchants' meeting:

- Customers feel “under the gun” to accomplish shopping/eating/appointments before they get a parking ticket
- If the 3-hour limit is extended, merchants are concerned that employees will park on-street
- However, merchants think that people want an option for parking if they want to stay longer than 3 hours; moreover, they think that people will pay for this option
- People feel like the garages are “not for them,” in particular the Jackson Street garage is not “friendly”
- It is difficult to find a parking space at lunchtime; noon on a Friday in particular is a problem time
- Concerns about pushback on paid parking
- Washington Street has good transportation and placemaking infrastructure – it is well-marked, well-lit, has a sidewalk, etc.
- Enforcement negatively impacts customer retention
- People are intimidated by parallel parking and prefer to maintain the angle parking on Washington Street
- Lots of people park on Washington Street and walk to 4th Street

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Community concerns include the balance of public and employee parking downtown
- There is a lack of clear information related to many elements of parking in Downtown Columbus in general, from regulation to policy
- Most people drive downtown, although interest in alternatives to driving exists. In particular, community members would be willing to walk to and between destinations, particularly if pedestrian amenities were improved
- Both employees and customers are generally able to park within two blocks of their destination
- There is a perception of a lack of parking, including handicapped parking, downtown