



MEMORANDUM

To: Dave Hayward, City of Columbus
From: Tom Brown and Brynn Leopold
Date: June 17, 2022
Subject: Updated Parking Study Recommendations

Updated 2013 Recommendations

The following recommendations from the original study remain viable key opportunities to improve downtown parking and access. Each is re-stated below, with updated guidance for implementation steps for 2022.

Price On-Street Parking to Improve Availability

The team recommends pricing on-street parking in the core of downtown in the **busiest, most desirable areas** only. The pricing should be moderate – just enough to alter employee behavior, without driving visitors away – and complemented with other parking options for price-sensitive visitors, as outlined below:

- **Priced Parking along the Washington Street Core**
 - Washington Street from 2nd Street to 7th Street
 - Third Street from Jackson Street to Washington Street
 - Fourth Street from Jackson Street to Franklin Street
 - Fifth Street from Jackson Street to Franklin Street
 - Enforce until 8pm, weekdays only.
 - ✓ Consider offering a free hour of parking before 10am.
- **Free Parking**
 - Several blocks of free parking surrounding this core, with visitor-focused time limits (2 hours).
 - Off-street parking options.

2022 Guidance

This remains a key recommendation for downtown, despite the continued reduction in downtown activity linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. These blocks remain the most sought after parking options among visitors, and visitors continue to prioritize convenience and easy access to parking near their destinations. Maintaining availability among these spaces, therefore is key to downtown's economic recovery.

Step 1 – Move forward with 1) procurement process for selecting and purchasing modern parking kiosk-style payment stations that offer credit-card payment and pay-by-plate or pay-by-space convenience, and complement with 2) selection of a pay-by-phone vendor, to make paying for parking even easier and to offer app-based alerts regarding time-limit and payment expiration.

Step 2 – Continue to monitor utilization to inform timing and installation of kiosks, to coincide with reduced availability along Washington.

Step 3 – Install Kiosks and Pay-by-Phone option, along with a complement of free, 2-hour parking on the first blocks adjacent to this paid-parking core – and **coordinate timing to coincide with rollout of new wayfinding campaign**, providing some cost synergies linked to physical installations of signs and kiosks and pairing this change to one that is likely to be broadly popular.

Step 4 – Initiate pricing with a rate of \$1 per hour for all “metered” spaces, and adjust over time if this price results in peak-hour utilization that is consistently below 50% (reduce by \$0.25 increments) or above 95% (increase at \$0.25 increments).

Step 5 – Including a rate escalation after the first hour, to allow parking beyond two hours at a rate of \$2 per hour.

Step 5 – Provide print and virtual informational materials on how to use the kiosks and the app, as well as the rationale for implementing paid parking (It’s not about the money, but the availability and convenience.) and link to information about other downtown improvements, such as the recommended new wayfinding campaign.

Step 6 – Monitor compliance and issue “warning” tickets for the first month, to inform drivers of the new payment requirement – include information on other parking changes and free parking locations.

Expand Employee Permit Parking

The team recommends consolidating all existing permit programs into one three-tiered employee parking program. This program builds off the existing employee permit programs and is recommended to work as follows:

- **Tier 1: Reserved Spaces:**
 - Reserved, individually dedicated spaces for specific users
 - Limited number of these should be available at higher cost
 - Located in the Jackson Street Garage and the City lots on Franklin Street
 - Permits should be able to be purchased monthly or annually
- **Tier 2: Permitted Spaces:**
 - Designated for employee permits but not individually reserved by user
 - Rates should be reduced and lower cost per hour than the on-street
 - Include USPS spaces and most of the current users of the permit program
 - Spaces located on the upper levels of the Jackson Street Garage and in the City lots on Franklin Street
 - Expansion possibilities include Second Street Garage, lease arrangements in private facilities, or use remote on-street
 - Could sell more permits than spaces available
- **Tier 3: Free Spaces (non-permit, non-metered, no time limit):**
 - Free, long-term parking for employees, customers or visitors should be available, but at a distance

- Free spaces should be outside of the core, both on-street and off-street
- Spaces do not require permits and would therefore allow any type of long-term parker to utilize these areas

2022 Guidance

Step 1: Continue to manage off-street parking options as they have been during COVID-19 conditions, adjusting as necessary as demand continues to increase.

Step 2: Maintain this recommendation as the long-term model for providing a range of employee permit options that make effective use of off-street parking resources, while reducing cost barriers to downtown employment.

Improve Wayfinding

The team recommends improving wayfinding in conjunction with visitor-oriented signage and Arts District designations. We recommend that this should include a three-part approach:

1. **Before Arrival:** Provide information on parking locations, rates, restrictions, and other relevant information, via an official parking map and/or a Parking Information web page on the City's website, which can be linked to on the websites of popular downtown destinations.
2. **Upon Arrival:** Signage that reflects information on the map and/or parking web page, and directs visitors to right-fit parking options via intuitive messaging and branding that can mark options as official, visitor-focused parking options.
3. **While Downtown:** Pedestrian-oriented signage that includes information about parking locations and distance to popular, nearby destinations and attractions, to help to promote a "park once" strategy.

2022 Guidance

This is one of the most widely supported recommendation from the 2013 study, creating an opportunity to implement in complement to the rollout of paid parking.

Step 1: Develop a schedule for designing and manufacturing/procuring new signs and other physical wayfinding elements, to ensure that these can be installed while payment kiosks are installed/activated. This should focus on both Arrival signs to guide drivers to paid, free, short-, and longer-term parking options, as well as pedestrian guidance signs/markers that help connect free parking options to key downtown destinations (making these feel less remote by marking short, direct routes to where visitors want to go).

Step 2: For pedestrian-focused wayfinding (including drivers once they have parked) emphasize non-signage wayfinding elements, including pavement markings and pedestrian-level lighting on paths between parking lots and key downtown destinations.

Step 3: Combine information on this new signage/markings campaign with Before Arrival information media (print and virtual) providing information on all parking options.

Step 4: Promote these new resources in all information provided regarding the new paid parking program.

Expand Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Infrastructure

The team recommends improvements to the transportation system to maximize existing resources, with the following suggested as priority improvements:

- Add more "C" bike racks at front door, visible locations
- Consider "C" racks that can fit larger framed bicycles
- Add secure, protected, well-marked and lit bicycle parking in the Jackson Street garage
- Work with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan to identify and mark bicycle routes into downtown (and those that connect with the People Path)
- Continue to add 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
- Improve the alleyway system, which provides for shorter walking distances, a more connected network, improved public spaces, and more convenient loading areas.

2022 Guidance

This is also area of downtown improvements that was widely supported by stakeholders during the Study Update process.

Step 1: Identify low-cost implementation options, such as using the recommended new wayfinding campaign to help mark and direct people to the bike, pedestrian, and transit connections already present in downtown, to be rolled out in complement to paid parking.

Step 2: Use signage, pavement markings, and lighting to

- Provide pedestrians with intuitive guidance toward optimal walking paths
- Improve the visibility and appeal of bus stops
- Improve the visibility of connecting bike routes to raise awareness of this downtown travel option

Step 3: Continue to add, place, relocate bike racks based on utilization

Step 4: Complete "intercept surveys" of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users to collect input on potential improvements.

Added Recommendations

The following improvement opportunities are recommended for the 2022 Parking Study Update, based on key updated findings and new innovative parking management strategies and tools, as well as new challenges and opportunities coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Offer Digital Validation

Digital payment technology provides a new means of validating customer parking costs, using a process often called "digital validation".

Businesses can work with the City and/or mobile-payment vendors to establish promotional codes to either pay for or discount parking for customers of downtown businesses. This code is controlled by the business and given to customers either before they arrive at the business, or after qualifying purchase.

Marketing this as part of the rollout of paid parking could help offset negative responses to the latter. Identify effective implementation of this option as a preferred feature of payment kiosks and mobile-payment platforms to be reviewed through an RFP process.

Post-COVID note: Reimbursing customer parking costs may be particularly important to many Downtown businesses as they seek to regain lost customer traffic. Digital validation offers a high-convenience, novel option for this that becomes a means of promoting the participating business.

Facilitate Shared Parking via Mobile Pay



Promote the use of recommended mobile pay to incentivize paid parking in lots with off-hour capacity.

Engage lot owners about the opportunity to use the City's pay-by-phone service to monetize parking assets with excess off-hour capacities. The vendor and the facility owner can work out details such as shared-parking schedules and rates. Typically, the vendor will install its standard signage consistent with those used for public parking options across downtown, and distribute revenue directly to the facility owner in accordance with their agreement.

Pilot this in Lot 10, allowing non-permit holders to park in this lot after 10am, at the same hourly rates charged for on-street parking using the mobile-payment option.

Post-COVID note: All forms of contactless/touchless payment gained significant market favor during the past few years, increasing the share of drivers who will be comfortable or familiar with such payment options.

Expand Curbside Capacity Via Variable Regulations



Vary curbside regulations across the day and week to prioritize individual functions when their accommodation provides the greatest benefit.

Loading/unloading and short-term parking tend to be the greatest and most consistent curbside parking needs in Downtown. At peak, either can consume entire block-faces of retail-parking capacity. This makes it essential for curbside regulations to respond to the variations in their demand patterns, using variable programming to give more space to each use when it is most needed. In most downtowns, this will mean more loading/unloading space in the early mornings, shifting toward more short-term parking toward midday. During evenings, consideration should be given for emerging mobility options, particularly in the form of passenger pickup/dropoff zones for ride service vehicles. Following is a general framework for considering application of variable regulations in key downtown areas.

On primary commercial streets:

- Prioritize loading/unloading during early mornings – 6am to 10am, all days.
 - This can include allowing non-commercial vehicles to load/unload for up to 15 minutes.
 - Monitor these locations to ensure that they are sufficient to accommodate the increasing demand for the delivery of people and goods (ride services, restaurant curbside pickup, grocery deliveries, package deliveries, etc.).

- Prioritize short-term/metered parking from late-morning through the evening, Monday through Saturday.

On secondary and “side” streets:

- Prioritize short-term parking during early mornings – 6am to 10am, all days.
- Provide midday loading zones, from 10am to 4pm, using no more than 20% of the parking capacity on these blocks, all days.
 - Monitor these locations to ensure that they are sufficient to accommodate the increasing demand for the delivery of people and goods (ride services, restaurant curbside pickup, grocery deliveries, package deliveries, etc.)
- Prioritize passenger loading/unloading in these loading zones.
 - 6am to 10am.
 - 4pm to 10pm.

Post-COVID note: Variable regulations have become essential for balancing increasingly variable levels of parking demand with sharply rising demand for curbside pickup, delivery, and dining uses. The popularity of many new curbside functions, particularly outdoor dining and food/retail delivery, are expected to remain well above previous norms.^{1 2}

Consider Pre-Paid Parking for Large Events

Optimize pricing and other management tools while also reducing search traffic.

To manage large-event days, such as concerts at Mill Race Park and others, develop an online pre-payment option to allow attendees to pre-purchase parking in City lots and garages, in advance of the event. This will simplify parking, particularly for those less familiar with downtown parking, and help organizers to better plan for capacity needs and changes in traffic flow. Parking options could be suggested by on arrival and/or departure routes to increase driver convenience, reduce traffic, and direct congestion away from areas of event congestion.

Post-COVID note: During the pandemic, event-goers and travelers have become increasingly accustomed to required-reservation processes linked to attending events or accessing facilities via pre-paid codes.

Offer Bike Valet on Event Days

Offer bike valet to encourage high rates of cycling to events.

Attended, secure, and high-capacity parking options can encourage mass use of cycling to events. Bike valet services provide easy, “front-door”, secure bike parking along with personal service, often provide by bike advocacy volunteers. Easing the challenge and uncertainty of finding secure bike parking during events can dramatically increase the bike mode share and reduce pressure on auto-parking resources. This option is typically most effective during events, which provide an opportunity for

¹ <https://www.retaildive.com/news/after-covid-19-is-curbside-delivery-here-to-stay/577937/>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/10/coronavirus-covid-outdoor-dining-restaurants>

promoting this added resource as part of event promotions – especially if promoted as a fun way to avoid the challenges of car parking and traffic that events bring.

Post-COVID note: This strategy was used to good effect prior to COVID, with a local bike co-op providing this service for downtown and nearby events. Meantime, the popularity of cycling as a drive-alone alternative has grown, nationally, as infection concerns led to declines in use of transit and other high-occupant vehicle options. The capacity, service, and security features of bike valet may be more appealing than ever in this context.

The City should initiate efforts to begin offering this service again, but engaging with the bike co-op on a plan for future events.

Performance-Focused Enforcement

Align all aspects of enforcement to seek compliance over any other performance metric.

Parking enforcement is not only an extension of parking management; it is parking management's most public component. As such, it can create profound distrust of the management system if it appears that rules and infractions are prioritized as ends in themselves, or means for generating fine revenue, rather than means of facilitating optimal parking conditions. To avoid this, enforcement must be closely aligned with management objectives. The best way to do this is to seek the highest possible levels of compliance with the requirements and regulations established to pursue those objectives. This means emphasizing information over citations, and ensuring that fine structures minimize the cost of infrequent mistakes while discouraging repeat violations.

Post-COVID note: As demand for Downtown parking returns, it will be important to avoid discouraging return visits through enforcement events that feel punitive or revenue focused. Moderating enforcement activity in locations where availability is ample, and emphasizing warnings or minimal fines for occasional mistakes should be part of plans to bring people back to Downtown.