Parking Plan: Downtown and Surrounding Neighborhoods

Preliminary Ideas for Further Consideration

November 29, 2011

The following list of ideas is based on several sources:
- Parking Plan Expert Advisory Panel process, observations and recommendations
- questionnaire results
- field data collection
- stakeholder input
- staff observations and perspectives

The list is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion and analysis of strategies to improve parking. A few key ideas are discussed in the section titled “Key Idea Discussion, Questions, and Considerations” beginning on Page 3. These ideas are highlighted because they have generated the most interest from the community and may require the most discussion and analysis. While the ideas are presented here as distinct concepts, they are inter-related and should be considered as integral parts of a complete parking management system.

A more extensive analysis, including costs, will occur between December 2011 and March 2012. The ideas will be developed into policies, strategy options, or recommendations based on Council feedback, additional staff and consultant analysis, and extensive public outreach.

Preliminary Idea List

1. **Explore changes in parking policies and regulations related to economic health and Downtown development including:**
   - A. New tools to address parking demand generated by new development.*
   - B. Parking policies to support economic health and neighborhood livability.
   - C. Interdepartmental coordination to support parking planning and parking policy development.
   - D. Parking strategies for the Mason Corridor, transition area between commercial and residential uses, and the northern Downtown gateway and River District.

2. **Explore strategies to support travel options that reduce the demand for parking including:**
   - A. An integrated access management strategy that includes parking, transit, bikes and pedestrian modes of travel.*
   - B. More options for covered and uncovered bike parking based on demand.
   - C. Travel demand management strategies that work in conjunction with the Mason Corridor.

The asterisks indicate key ideas that are discussed in detail in the next section.
### 3. Explore ways to enhance the customer parking experience including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>A parking marketing, education, and communication strategy that provides clear messages and identity for the Downtown parking program.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Changes in time limits to better address customer needs if on-street paid parking is pursued.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Stronger marketing of the benefits of off-street parking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Changes to parking allocation within public parking lots and structures as demand for off-street parking grows.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Parking effectively integrated into a comprehensive wayfinding system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>New technology employed to enhance the customer experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Explore strategies to enhance business and community integration including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>A residential parking permit program.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Public/private partnerships for new parking infrastructure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Cooperative efforts with CSU and other large employers on neighborhood parking impacts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Explore changes in parking management including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Cooperative efforts between the City and employers to reduce on-street parking by employees in high demand areas.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Strategies to promote off-street parking options for longer-term parking.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Paid on-street parking, to include a pilot program with meters that offer some amount of free “up front” time.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Expanded enforcement into the evening and on Saturdays.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. Explore new organization and funding options including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>An enterprise fund for parking.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Existing and new funding sources for parking infrastructure and program development.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Ways to involve the business community in parking management decisions such as an ad-hoc parking committee composed of Downtown public and private stakeholders.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exhibits/Attachments to this document**

- Selected List of Issues, Problems, Comments, and Observations  Page 23
- Occupancy Map (goes with section 5C)  Page 24
- On Parking and Transportation Eco-Districts, by L. Dennis Burns, CAPP (goes with section 2A)  Page 25

* The asterisks indicate key ideas that are discussed in detail in the next section.
Key Idea Discussion, Questions, and Considerations

This section contains a description of issues related to the more complex and sensitive ideas. The consultant provided a response to staff questions about the problem that was being addressed and other potential issues.

1A. Evaluate tools to address parking demand generated by new development

Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):

- 5. Need parking-related economic development strategy
- 6. Not prepared for surge in employment
- 7. No commercial or residential parking requirements
- 8. Downtown employees and CSU students impact neighborhoods
- 14. Employees parking on-street
- 15. Many employees don’t have access to, or are unwilling to use, off-street parking

Discussion

The City’s Land Use Code has no minimum parking amounts for nearly all uses in the Transit Oriented Development Overlay (TOD). Instead, the Code provides maximum parking requirements. The idea is that the market is responsible for determining the necessary level of parking. The maximums are designed to prevent over-parking and to provide a supportive urban environment for transit, biking and walking.

In the Downtown context, it is not desirable from an urban design perspective, nor is it cost effective, for every land use to provide its own parking lot or structure. Instead, parking demand is most effectively addressed through a variety of tools including shared and consolidated parking arrangements and transportation alternatives. The City has employed some of these tools already. For example, the City makes permits available to Downtown employees in public lots and garages, provides bicycle parking, and is building the Mason Corridor Bus Rapid Transit system which will reduce some of the Downtown parking demand.

One tool missing from the City’s toolbox is a mechanism for creating shared parking infrastructure. The City is in the best position to facilitate shared parking, but lacks the authority and funding to do so. Some communities require developers to pay a “fee in lieu” of providing parking spaces, and use this revenue to finance public parking spaces to replace the private parking spaces the developers would have been required to provide. Another tool could be public-private partnerships where the City shares in the cost of constructing new parking structures in exchange for reserving a certain number of parking spaces for public use.

The development of the Otterbox headquarters was an important learning experience about how developers deal with Downtown parking in the absence of an effective strategy for addressing parking demand. The Otterbox site was not large enough to accommodate sufficient parking to meet its demand, and on-site structured parking was deemed infeasible. Instead, the company developed a lease agreement for surface parking with a nearby land...
Employees park both in the leased lot as well as on adjacent streets. This has lead to spillover impacts from employees parking on neighborhood streets.

Another related issue is the current requirement for bike parking. The amount of bike parking required is based as a percentage of vehicle parking. However, there may be projects where the vehicle parking needs are low but the bicycle parking needs are high. City staff is in the process of re-evaluating its bike parking requirements.

**Questions and Considerations for 1A.**

a. **Does this recommendation mean that the City should require minimums? Would it need to be implemented city-wide?** If the City went back to requiring parking minimums, how does this reconcile with the city's vision for market-based parking and a supportive urban environment for transit, biking and walking?

The Expert Advisory Panel raised several concerns with the current policy. These included:

i. When a community eliminates minimum parking requirements as an economic development strategy, there is an assumption that the municipality is accepting the responsibility of providing a certain level of public parking to meet community needs that are in excess of the private sector or market based parking supply that is created.

ii. Within the downtown parking study area and the “transition” areas (i.e., commercial areas bordering residential neighborhoods), there are limited public parking assets. Additional public parking will be required soon as new development opportunities are realized and the general economy picks up. There is currently no obvious funding mechanism in place for this needed infrastructure. One person referred to this as a “huge unfunded liability”.

The Parking Plan will identify needed parking infrastructure development for the near and mid-term planning horizons (balanced of course with transportation investments and a range of transportation demand management initiatives). A combination of options should be considered to create a strategy to fund future parking development needs. These strategies might include:

- A “fee-in-lieu” of parking policy. This could take a variety of forms including a 50% parking requirement to be built and 50% of the required parking to be provided as a fee-in-lieu for strategic public investment. Fee-in-lieu programs can also be integrated with parking minimum/maximum requirements as an option should developers prefer this choice.

- A structured public/private partnership arrangement whereby the City and developers share costs of foundations, stair towers, elevators, etc. and the City adds xxx number of spaces to the developer required spaces to provide some supply of public parking with a goal of promoting adaptive reuse and in-fill development.

iii. If the Otterbox experience was repeated multiple times, the pressures from resulting parking demand would create neighborhood parking problems so severe as to require intervention, which would likely fall to the City to solve under the current policy framework and for which there is no funding source currently in place. Modifying parking policies/requirements prior to this situation could preempt this potential situation.
The major transportation investment being made in the Mason Corridor was viewed by the Panel as forward thinking and an example of good transportation/urban planning. Inherent in leveraging the full potential of this investment is the realization of the envisioned transit oriented development (TOD) along the corridor. For the TOD potential to be fully realized, a certain level of development density (4 to 5 story mixed-use developments) must be achieved. The parking needed to support this level of density will require structured parking. It is very likely that the development community will maintain that adding the costs of structured parking to their development proposals will cause the development projects “not to pencil”. Developers may, therefore, propose smaller 1 – 3 story buildings that can be supported by surface parking. If this is allowed to happen, it will decrease the benefits of the TOD and dramatically reduce the potential property tax base that the transportation investment should generate for decades to come.

A strategy to refine TOD requirements combined with a structured parking investment strategy (potentially including tax increment financing resources) may be required, in combination with other tools, to incentivize the development densities needed to realize the full potential of the Mason Corridor.

b. Does the expert panel’s recommendation mean that the City would require public-private partnerships? If so, how do we do this legally, or would this be just an incentive-based regulation?

The consultant views the utilization of public/private partnerships as a selective, incentive-based option. It could be utilized when there is an opportunity to invest in some amount of strategically placed public parking in conjunction with a private development. This could reduce the need (and costs) for larger, 100% publically-funded parking structures.

The consultant also suggests that the City consider a parking investment strategy that provides a “5 to 1 return-on-investment”. This concept would be part of a comprehensive economic health program that uses shared parking to leverage private development. A parking investment by the City might be warranted if a proposed development fits into a targeted, highly valued type of development that is part of a City-driven economic health strategy.

2A. Explore development of an integrated access management strategy that includes parking, transit, bikes and pedestrian modes of travel.

Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):

9. Need to prepare for Mason Corridor impacts
10. Change in community’s culture has more people seeking to utilize alternative transportation
11. Need to provide different types/design of bike parking
Discussion

Too often parking programs are seen as separate from the larger community goals. In the worst cases, the approach can be characterized as “Cars go in. Cars go out. We collect money.”

Modern parking professionals are taught to manage both the supply and demand sides of the transportation equation. Becoming active and participative partners in all aspects of community access modes is an important shift that should be encouraged and supported.

In many communities, parking functions are horizontally fragmented (i.e., parking functions are spread across different departments or agencies). While Fort Collins’ parking program is fairly vertically integrated (i.e., enforcement, off-street parking management and on-street parking managed by a single department), there are still opportunities to better include parking planning, economic development, business representation, transportation alternatives, and demand management into a fully integrated program. This type of approach reinforces several key goals such as the “triple bottom line” criteria from a sustainability perspective and a greater focus on parking as a critical element of community infrastructure development.

Questions and Considerations for 2A.

What is an Integrated Access Management Strategy (IAMS)? Can an IAMS be achieved with a private board, such as the one in Cedar Rapids, or does it require a city department? What is the range of the powers of governance with respect to an IAMS?

The purpose is to broaden the parking program mission to embrace a more holistic approach to community access – an approach referred to as “integrated access management” or “mobility management.” One example is how the Parking Plan is linking bicycle parking planning, policy and new development requirements.

Both Missoula and Boulder are great examples of programs that have embraced the broader concepts of integrated access management as part of their core mission. Both programs have specific elements for supporting and funding transportation alternatives, and managing parking in ways that reduce or mitigate congestion and single occupant vehicle use while balancing the needs of the parking public. This has become a fairly well-adopted standard in progressive, cutting-edge parking management circles.

The most recent advance in this thinking is to place an even more explicit focus on sustainability goals by transforming parking departments into parking and transportation “eco-districts”. At its heart, an eco-district is an area with a broad commitment to accelerate large-scale sustainability. It commits to achieving a community’s sustainability goals by guiding district investments, focusing community action, and tracking the results over time. A more detailed description of eco-districts is attached at the end of this document.
3A. **Explore the creation of a parking marketing, education, and communication strategy that provides clear messages and identity for the Downtown parking program.**

**Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):**

12. People don’t know about their parking options  
13. Wayfinding improvements are needed  
14. Employees parking on-street  
17. Upside-down pricing causes trolling and “garage avoidance”  
22. Need for more collaboration between City and Downtown businesses

**Discussion**

Creating positive impressions of downtown is part of the recipe for creating a thriving and vibrant center city. Parking, which represents the first and last impression of visitors arriving by automobile, is an important element for creating positive impressions.

As with any operating unit or business, the creation of a brand identity and effective communications strategy helps promote a sense of competence and effectiveness in that program’s management.

This is especially important in the arena of parking management, which impacts so many varied customer groups and should help to contribute to the success of the businesses that rely on a well-run parking program.

Developing a consistent and professional brand image, creating a targeted communications and messaging plan, and effectively managing and cultivating the parking program brand are part of having a professional parking program. A positive parking image also reflects positively on the City overall and it benefits the business community as well.

**Questions and Considerations for 3A.**

**What are some examples of branding and communication strategies?**

Branding is more than a logo. The concept for the Fort Collins parking program would be a comprehensive program with multiple levels and objectives.

One objective would be to present a professional image that reflects positively on the program, the City and the community. This would involve not only a new logo/brand identity concept, but would tie into a whole program of print, on-line and advertising media. Perhaps the most important element for Fort Collins would be to extend the new image and design elements into the facility and wayfinding signage.
Another key element would be the development of a strategic communications plan. This plan should be updated annually as messaging needs change as the program continues to develop. For example, if paid on-street parking moves forward, there are a number of strategic communications elements that will be very prominent in the plan. A strategic communications plan process involves the following steps:

a. Goal Setting  
   What is the Right Outcome?

b. Stakeholder Identification  
   What is the Right Audience?

c. Audience Analysis  
   What is the Right Information?  
   What is the Right Channel?  
   What is the Right Timing?

d. Project Selection

e. Assessment & Evaluation

A third major element is tying all parking related programs together into an integrated programmatic structure. The consultant’s favorite example of this is Vancouver, BC’s “EasyPark” program. The following graphics illustrate both the quality graphic design and the programmatic structure.

A consulting team specialist in parking graphic design, program marketing and wayfinding signage believes parking branding and signage needs to:

* Be Memorable  
* Be Positive  
* Be Convenient  
* Be Clean and Safe  
* Be Easy
4A. Explore the creation of a residential parking permit program

Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):

6. Not prepared for surge in employment
7. No commercial or residential parking requirements
8. Downtown employees and CSU students impact neighborhoods
14. Employees parking on-street
15. Many employees don’t have access to, or are unwilling to use, off-street parking

Discussion

As businesses begin to locate in the “transition zones” between downtown and the neighborhoods, and as downtown businesses continue to create additional parking demands, parking incursion into the residential neighborhoods will increase.

If on-street paid parking is implemented, this will create even more potential for employee parking in neighborhoods as employees seek “free parking” more aggressively. If the off-street public parking supply is not increased, this too has the potential to cause more employees to park in neighborhoods in the future.

The implementation of the Mason Corridor, while primarily a parking demand reducer, could stimulate a new type of parking demand in neighborhoods near transit corridor nodes.

Having a plan (including a funding and staffing plan) to implement an effective “residential parking permit” program (RPP) is only prudent.

Questions and Considerations for 4A.

What are the advantages and issues related to a residential parking permit program?

Advantages of a residential parking permit program (RPP)

a. A permit program can decrease parking intrusion on those streets or neighborhoods that “opt-in”.
b. Once a significant majority of streets opt-in, traffic and parking intrusion would be expected to decrease to off-peak levels.
c. More parking spaces would be available for local residents during posted hours.
d. It would be easier for neighborhood guests to find nearby parking.
e. Traffic, noise and trash issues typically decrease on those streets posted with permit parking.
f. While typically these programs are geared toward ensuring parking availability for residents, these programs can also be structured to better utilize the on-street parking for employee parking during the day to maximize the overall community benefit from these public assets. Boulder’s program does this very effectively.
g. If meters are eventually used as a management strategy, revenue from meters and violations could help offset enforcement and RPP program operation expenses. Neighborhood residents could be given special parking privileges over non-residents in metered spaces that would result in better access to the neighborhoods.

h. The meter fees, operating hours, and time limits can be adjusted to address changing conditions or influence neighborhood on-street parking use.

i. The residential permit program can be modified as needed to minimize resident impacts or address specific parking conditions.

Issues related to a residential parking permit program

a. Parking demand can increase on streets that are not currently impacted. This should be anticipated during the planning and communications processes.

b. Traffic volumes could increase during initial implementation due to “hunting” for open spaces.

c. A RPP program will need to be developed and additional parking enforcement staff resources will be required, although the RPP itself could generate revenue to help offset the new expenses.

d. Some residents that don’t want a permit system would be required to obtain permits for those streets or neighborhoods that opt-in.

e. Residents will experience some added inconvenience in obtaining, using and renewing their permits.

f. Residents or guests that do not have or forget their hangtags will be subject to parking citations.

g. Residents that want to invite a large number of guests will have to make special arrangements prior to their event.

5A. Explore cooperative efforts between the City and employers to reduce on-street parking by employees in high demand areas.

5B. Explore strategies to promote off-street parking options for longer-term parking.

Issues these ideas address (see page 20)

14. Employees parking on-street

15. Many employees don’t have access to, or are unwilling to use, off-street parking

16. Very high occupancies of core on-street parking and public surface lots

18. Danger of becoming “enforcement zone”

19. Two hour time-limit not meeting customer needs

20. Some business owners very concerned about lack of Saturday/evening enforcement, but questionnaire says otherwise

21. Lack of business involvement in decisions

22. Need for more collaboration between City and Downtown businesses
Discussion

There is evidence that employees occupy approximately 20% of the on-street parking in the Downtown core based on data collected during the Downtown Strategic Plan, questionnaire results, and anecdotal evidence from Downtown business owners and parking enforcement staff. Although better enforcement has reduced the problem, it is still a major parking issue that decreases the availability of short-term, convenient customer parking. Downtown employees have found ways to relocate their vehicles to avoid parking fines, and have taken advantage of periods when there is no time-limit enforcement (such as in the evenings or on weekends).

Employees may be parking on-street because they have no access to private off-street parking or are unwilling to use the public lots and garages for a variety of reasons. These reasons may have to do with realities or perceptions of cost, safety, and convenience.

Currently, public off-street lots are, for the most part, fully utilized at all hours while the top two floors of both garages are underutilized most of the time. There appears to be available capacity to shift more employee parking into the garages. Eventually, as the garages fill up, there may be the need to explore other parking options, including new public parking infrastructure, cooperative arrangements for use of existing underutilized private lots, and additional parking demand reduction measures.

Questions and Considerations for 5A and B.

a. What are some strategies that could be used to encourage Downtown employees to park off-street and leave on-street spaces for customers and visitors?

The most commonly used tools to accomplish this objective are time-limits, which are already in place in Fort Collins, and on-street pay parking which is discussed under key idea 5C below.

Since this key idea expressly calls for cooperative efforts between the City and employers, it makes sense to investigate the feasibility of a voluntary program whereby employers require Downtown employees to park off-street. This could take the form of a permit program where the City made the permits in the garages even more affordable than they are now, and employers could split the cost with their employees. Employers have a great deal of influence on where their employees park. Some Downtown employers already either purchase permits outright for their employees, or share the cost with them. The City could work with the Downtown Business Association to help publicize such a program.

There are three obstacles that would have to be considered before this program could be successful. First, if it is voluntary, some businesses will not participate, either because of the costs or because they do not think the program is necessary. Second, it is already difficult to administer the different types of mixed parking that we accommodate in the garages (hourly, full-service permits and roof-top permits) and adding another permit type would add to the difficulty. Third, part of the reason the top levels of the garages are not currently being used is that they are not convenient. It takes almost four minutes to make the 0.6 mile trip from the LaPorte entrance of the Civic Center garage up to the fifth level. People will compare the perceived inconvenience of making that trip with the perceived convenience of parking on-street.
and it is likely the on-street option will continue to be the favored option even if an employer buys the employee a permit.

Some Downtown business owners have suggested that the City look into some kind of a law or program that would prohibit Downtown employees from parking on street. Staff currently does not know if such a program would be legally defensible. This type of program would also require some kind of enforcement effort which would require more costs and overhead, as well as a method to identify which vehicles belong to employees and which do not. Staff is not aware of any similar on-street program in other cities, although there are programs like this on various campuses around the nation.

Another option that several Downtown business people have proposed is to make the garages totally free. This would help to address the “upside down” pricing relationship we currently have between on- and off-street parking, and making the garages free would reduce a great deal of the costs of operating the garages (for example, booth attendant staff and access control equipment would no longer be needed.) However, there are other costs that would continue, and a revenue stream would be needed to continue to cover those costs (lights, cleaning, maintenance, security, etc.) The business people who like this idea have suggested that GID and DDA funds could be used to cover the continuing operating costs.

b. What are some strategies for promoting off-street parking options for longer-term parking?

One obvious and readily available source of off-street parking is private lots. The inventory data show that about half of the parking in Downtown is in private hands. The occupancy data we collected shows that much of this private parking is not used efficiently to its maximum capacity. One reason for this is that most private lot owners put up signs so that no one except for the lot owner and their employees can use the lot. Often the lot will be bigger than what is required for the lot owner’s purposes. Another reason many of these lots are not used efficiently is that they are unimproved dirt or gravel lots with no striping, lights, pedestrian access or safety features. People may feel the lots are unsafe, dirty, or inconvenient. A third reason for the inefficiency is that many of these lots are small and each lot has a different owner. Therefore, each owner feels the need to put up a fence or barricade to delineate their property. IF there are several adjoining lots that might have the potential to make a decent parking area, the fencing or barricades put up by each individual make the entire area less usable and less efficient.

During the Downtown Strategic Plan in 2003-04, an idea called the “Downtown Parking Cooperative” was floated. The idea was that the City would partner with individual lot owners to aggregate small lots into more usable spaces. The City would make improvements to the surface, lighting, stripes, signs and pedestrian amenities to make the lots more appealing, safe and convenient. In return for making these improvements, the City would get the right to sell permits and generate a revenue stream from these lots. Lot owners would receive a guarantee that their individual parking needs would continue to be met, but any additional capacity in their lots would be available for the City-run permit program. This idea ran into obstacles: initial inquiries to individual lot owners to assess their interest were met with a lackluster response, and there was no “seed money” in the City budget to get the program launched. However, with the proper effort and funding, the program may still have merit. If unused private parking could somehow be brought into the usable parking inventory, it would go a long way toward meeting the needs of Downtown parking for the near future.
Another option that could be investigated for more off-street parking would be to turn existing surface lots into parking structures. The Mason Lot, behind the Rio Grande Restaurant, and the Oak/Remington, behind the Aggie Theater, are prime examples of where this opportunity could be explored. Funding is an obvious issue. In addition, there is the question of whether additional off-street parking would really be used. Would it be free, or would there be a cost to purchase a permit like we have in our existing garages? The story of Bozeman, Montana, related under key idea 6C later in this document, tells about a city that built a new downtown garage in hopes of generating a revenue stream from permit sales. Instead, no one uses the garage because they prefer to compete for free on-street spaces. We have a similar situation here in Fort Collins with the unused capacity in our existing garages, and that situation might be exacerbated by building new off-street capacity that perpetuates the upside-down pricing arrangement we currently struggle with.

Another factor that should be considered in this discussion is that the City’s parking consultant, Kimley-Horn and Associates, will be providing the City with a dynamic parking demand projection model. We do not yet have the results from that model. Once the model is complete, it can be used to load projected development and future land uses to determine how much and where additional parking capacity might be needed.

### 5C. Evaluate paid on-street parking, to include a pilot program with meters that offer some amount of free “up front” time.

#### Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):

- 14. Employees parking on-street
- 16. Very high occupancies of core on-street parking and public surface lots
- 17. Upside-down pricing causes trolling and “garage avoidance”
- 18. Danger of becoming “enforcement zone”
- 19. Two hour time-limit not meeting customer needs
- 25. Parking is the “giant unfunded liability”

#### Discussion

There are a very limited number of tools available to parking management professionals to achieve the level of turnover required to keep a downtown business district healthy. The two primary tools are enforcement of time limits and on-street pay parking.

The City uses the enforcement of time limits to create turnover. The consultant acknowledges that the operational elements of the City’s parking program are well managed and are even advanced in their use of technologies. Many of the policies, such as the progressive fine structure for parking enforcement, the first-hour free program for garage parking, etc. are practices that are being emulated in other communities. However, as businesses continue to grow and diversify, and the downtown improves, parking demands will continue to increase. The current management practices will begin to break down and be insufficient to provide the required turnover to support local businesses. Eventually, the volume of citations required to promote the needed turnover will begin to generate a much worse public reaction than the small price required under a paid parking program.
Parking pricing is recognized in the parking industry as the most effective way to create turnover and manage on-street parking. Businesses depend on turnover and cannot exist without it, especially in a high-demand central business district where convenient on-street parking is a limited resource. Parking pricing is more flexible and less violator-based than the City’s current system.

Nevertheless, making the transition from unpaid on-street parking to paid on-street parking is not something to be taken lightly. It would require education about the benefits and drawbacks, extensive community involvement and dialogue, and assurances such as the pilot program concept or other safeguards in case something goes wrong.

Questions and Considerations for 5C.

a. Does a pilot program mean putting meters in a limited geographic area? If so, how is the area determined?

The more-likely meaning of a pilot program is that meters would be installed on a trial basis for a certain period of time. However, there are geographical considerations that should be considered, especially sensitivity to not “pushing the problem” into an adjacent area.

From a strictly objective parking management perspective, the size and boundaries of an area to be controlled by meters would be defined by the areas with documented high levels of demand (typically defined as above 85% during peak demand periods). Mapping parking demand, such as in the occupancy map at the end of this document, is the normal starting point for making these decisions (the areas in red on the map reflect demand in excess of 85%).

Generally speaking, metered areas should be consistently applied (not only on one side of the street, for example) throughout a logically defined geographic area. Caution needs to be taken in regards to thinking through potential “unintended consequences”, such as creating neighborhood parking issues in areas where neighborhoods abut a newly metered area. This can be mitigated by metering into the neighborhood area, and providing residents with permits allowing them to park in these zones without having to pay the meter.

The notion of not “pushing the problem” to an adjacent area must be considered throughout the commercial district as well. Certain areas that have occupancy levels of 100% (which is too high and causes problems) will attain occupancy levels of 85% when properly managed. Some of the vehicles that used to park in the 100% areas will move to nearby blocks where the occupancy is lower. Care must be taken to insure that the new areas where vehicles move are also metered if the occupancy levels warrant.

One of the most beneficial outcomes of proper parking pricing is that optimum occupancy and maximum turnover throughout the commercial district can be achieved. Downtown employees are incentivized to choose an appropriate long-term parking space rather than parking on-street, and businesses end up with more customers, not less.
b. What are the pros and cons of on-street pay parking?

Pros of paid on-street parking:

i. Provides a more effective and flexible set of parking management tools and options, such as allowing customers to purchase more time for extended shopping trips.

ii. The introduction of new technology meters typically improves compliance and reduces the number of citations issued. Citations create much more ill-will than paying a simple parking fee.

iii. New technologies remove many of the old frustrations with meters such as having to have a pocketful of quarters. Now there are systems that will accept different forms of payment such as credit cards, smart cards, and pay-by-cell phone.

iv. Typically paid on-street parking is capable of being self-funded and even generates positive cash flow. Paid on-street parking can generate an additional revenue stream that can be used for a variety of parking and downtown investments. The need to begin building a parking enterprise fund to build reserves for future parking infrastructure is an important example.

v. The increased parking demand in the downtown area is a sign that the downtown is healthy. Time limits are a blunt tool that is only effective up to certain point. Fort Collins has extended the effective utilization of time limits through the investment in mobile license plate recognition technology, but the effectiveness of application has been realized. Paid parking combined with the new technologies will be needed to enhance enforcement effectiveness and provide new customer and business friendly parking management strategies.

vi. The enforcement of time-limits requires an intense, expensive and confrontational effort by staff, and can create a negative image of Downtown as a “citation zone”. Properly-priced on-street pay parking is more self-enforcing, is less expensive to enforce, and once it has been in place for awhile, is viewed much less negatively by the public than receiving an overtime citation.

vii. Given the sensitivity of introducing paid on-street parking, dedicating a percentage of this new revenue stream to fund other desired downtown or community-based initiatives may be important. Example investment initiatives might include: Improving downtown signage and wayfinding, financially supporting a community bike share program, collaborating on downtown marketing and promotions, etc.

Cons of paid on-street parking:

i. Perception by businesses that paid on-street parking will be bad for business. This can happen when on-street pay parking is not applied properly. If on-street pay parking is properly priced and only implemented where it is needed, it actually increases customers for businesses.

ii. Need for an educational campaign to dispel misperceptions.

iii. It is politically sensitive.

iv. The “middle of the street” parking on College and Mountain will create challenges.

v. Need for upfront capital to implement the new program, although there are programs where installation can be done with no up-front out-of-pocket expense in return for a share of the revenue.

vi. Need for realigned program staffing, and additional staff training.

vii. Adds to streetscape clutter, although not so much with multi-space meters.

viii. Possibility that parking could be pushed out to non-metered locations, like neighborhoods.
5D. Explore expanded enforcement into the evening and on Saturdays

Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):

14. Employees parking on-street
15. Many employees don’t have access to, or are unwilling to use, off-street parking
20. Some business owners very concerned about lack of Saturday/evening enforcement, but questionnaire says otherwise

Discussion

The issue being addressed in this recommendation is the fact (according to stakeholder feedback, panel observations and parking utilization surveys) that weekend mornings and evenings all week long have high parking demands. The knowledge that there is no parking enforcement during these timeframes creates a different parking dynamic, i.e., employees get to the spaces early and stay for extended periods.

This behavior is not a positive for local businesses; however, the business response in the recent parking questionnaire was definitely opposed to the idea of expanding enforcement into the evenings and on weekends. Staff feels this idea would have more merit if an on-street pay parking system was implemented (see next question) and is probably not something we would want to pursue if two-hour time limits remain in place.

Questions and Considerations for 5D.

Does the Expert Advisory Panel recommendation for expanded enforcement of time limits stand alone, or does it have to be tied to implementation of on-street pay parking? If it is the former, then how do we reconcile with customers’ desires for longer time limits, especially for dinner?

This idea does not necessarily require paid on-street parking; however, with paid on-street parking there are additional options for addressing related issues, such as the desire to address extended lengths of stay for downtown customers.

Without paid parking, the options might include: greater promotion of the parking structures, longer posted time-limits after 5:00 PM, the development of special employee parking programs to encourage garage usage and discourage on-street employee parking.

With on-street paid parking, the option of eliminating or extending time limits becomes possible (keeping the first two-hours very affordable and adding a progressive pricing structure beyond the first two-hours whereby the hours beyond the initial two are still legal, but progressively more expensive.) The trick to this strategy is to find the best rate structure that provides a balance between flexibility and turnover. Albany, NY recently implemented this approach and is having good success.

If the pay-by-cell-phone option is implemented, this gives customers additional benefits, such as the ability to receive text messages regarding the status of their parking and the ability to
remotely add time. The ability to create parking customer loyalty programs and automatically distribute e-coupons for local businesses based on the GPS location of a cell phone when parking is paid for are examples of some of the newest strategies being rolled out across the country.

6A. Explore creating an enterprise fund and
6B. Explore existing and new funding sources for parking infrastructure and program development

Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):

23. Public/private partnerships key to future improvements
24. More parking infrastructure will be needed in the future, but no revenue streams have been identified to pay for it
25. Parking is the “giant unfunded liability”

Discussion

The management of parking can, over time and with properly structured revenue streams, become a fully self-supporting enterprise fund. This essentially takes parking “off the backs of the taxpayers” and makes it a user-funded enterprise.

The alignment of on-street parking revenues (if available), enforcement revenues, off-street revenues and potentially other parking revenues such as fee-in-lieu, parking district or other assessments, etc. into a dedicated and protected parking fund is critical to getting this process started.

The lack of a clearly defined parking infrastructure investment strategy has been identified as a critical element that needs to be addressed in Fort Collins. Ultimately, a dedicated funding mechanism is needed to support transportation demand management, integrated access management, and other programs valued by the community.

For example, in Boulder, the parking program funds a variety of initiatives including:
   a. An “Eco-Pass” program which provides free bus passes for all downtown employees ($750,000 per year)
   b. Annual contributions to the Business Improvement District to market downtown regionally ($100,000 annually)
   c. A $3.5 million parking revenue bond used to fund the renovation of the Pearl Street Mall for its 25th anniversary, public art on the mall, etc.
   d. These programs are in addition to fully funding all operational programs, parking maintenance reserves, and set asides for future facility development.

In Portland, the public parking program funds the street car initiative to the tune of $2,000,000 per year. Examples of the use of parking revenues in Missoula are included in section 1A.b.iii.
Questions and Considerations for 6A. and 6B.

a. Does “utilize existing funding sources for parking” mean that the City would re-prioritize its use of General Improvement District (GID) funding so that they would be used exclusively for parking (rather than other improvements)?

The answer to this question could be “yes”, depending on City priorities. Strategic parking investments in the near to mid-term could be very important in helping to maintain economic development momentum and leverage other investments to help ensure that they achieve their full potential (Mason Corridor, etc.).

This approach would be even more attractive if the parking program fully embraces the “integrated access management” approach. Under this scenario, GID funds might also be used to compliment a variety of alternative transportation initiatives such as car share, community bike programs, etc.

“Existing funding sources” also means parking specific revenues and general fund revenues currently used to cover parking debt service.

b. Would new sources duplicate existing assessment districts (i.e., TIF and GID)?

This would be a matter of definition and use of revenues. Some people may argue that they are essentially the same (all being special assessments).

In Charlotte, NC, where a special “Parking Management Collaborative” function was created because there was no off-street public parking program, it was decided to increase existing assessment rates rather than creating a new one. Charlotte has a three-tiered assessment structure. Imagine a target with three concentric rings where the inner most circle is the downtown core, and is the most dense. If your business or property is in the outer ring, you pay only the base assessment rate. Businesses or properties in the middle ring pay the base +X (an additional amount to pay for services not offered in the outer ring). In the core, where urban design standards and services are most extensive, businesses or property owners pay the base + X + Y.

As an alternative to a new parking assessment, existing taxing mechanisms could be incrementally increased for additional parking and transportation investments.
6C. Explore ways to involve the business community in parking management decisions such as an ad-hoc parking committee composed of Downtown public and private stakeholders.

Issues this idea addresses (see page 20):

21. Lack of business involvement in decisions
22. Need for more collaboration between City and Downtown businesses

Discussion

The mission of the Parking Services department is “To help support the economic vitality of Downtown Fort Collins by creating on-street parking space turnover and providing parking alternatives for those with long-term parking needs; and to contribute to safe and orderly traffic flow and neighborhood quality through the enforcement of parking regulations.”

A successful parking program that supports Downtown vitality requires close involvement of the business community in parking management decisions. While Parking Services makes extensive efforts to reach out to businesses, there is a lack of shared accountability and responsibility for making difficult decisions. Businesses perceive themselves as being on the outside looking in on the decision rather than a partner who should help provide a solution to parking problems.

The trend in the parking industry is toward parking management by groups like downtown business improvement districts, urban renewal agencies, downtown development authorities, parking commissions, etc. The change represents a shift in perspective away from narrowly defined management goals such as revenue or violator focused programs to programs in which parking management is a tool for collaborative, economic sustainability closely involving the business community. Incorporating both the public and private sectors in parking governance helps educate each sector and promotes more effective working relationships.

The benefits of a parking organization that includes both the public and private sector include:

- Improved relations and shared responsibility between parking management and the business community.
- A broader and more holistic management context where parking is seen both as an element of a larger access management system and a tool to address economic health, urban design, and other important community goals.
- More effective parking programs by promoting a more responsive system of services and program development mechanisms.
- Some degree of parking revenue reinvestment into the district or area where those revenues are generated, particularly when this key idea is combined with the ideas about an enterprise fund and new revenue sources such as on-street pay parking.
Questions and Considerations for 6C.

a. What is the makeup and possible levels of authority granted to a parking board?

Generally, a parking board is populated to represent specific community interests. For example, from the public sector side it might contain city representation from the city manager’s office, finance, planning, transportation, and economic health. Private sector representation might include the executive director of the downtown business association, downtown merchants, downtown property owners, neighborhood residents, large businesses, and cultural institutions, etc. There may also be specific individuals nominated by the city council or city manager.

The levels of authority granted to any parking board vary from community to community. Boards can be advisory in nature whose primary role is to review policy recommendations subject to council approval. Other boards can be a type of parking authority with more power to control the hiring and firing of staff, parking rates, district boundaries, the creation or elimination of services, new technology investments, etc.

b. What are the different organizational models of parking boards?

There are many organizational variations to consider. The first organization was identified by staff based on community feedback. The next three organizational structures were represented by members of the Expert Advisory Panel that came to Fort Collins:

i. An ad-hoc committee could be created to guide the implementation of policies and strategies of the Parking Plan. It could be made up of downtown stakeholders and City representatives. The committee would operate for a limited, set amount of time. The advantage of this approach is that an ad-hoc committee would have the newly developed Parking Plan as its only focus, and staff would be able to receive appropriate and timely feedback on implementation of parking strategies, without the care and feeding needed for an ongoing City board or authority.

ii. In Cedar Rapids, after years of frustration with the City managed parking program and with the City now dealing with the results of a catastrophic flood, a parking strategic plan for the downtown area was authorized. One of the plan’s major recommendations was for the City to outsource the management of the public parking assets to the Cedar Rapids Downtown Association. The mechanism for making this transition was a very detailed “management agreement” which spelled out the responsibilities and liabilities of parties as well as the overall goals and objectives for making this move. In this case, one of the primary goals was to provide a more focused program of parking management and reinvestment. The parking strategic plan provided a detailed road-map and action plan. The plan had been developed with significant community involvement and business sector support and included such program elements as new on-street meter technology, parking garage access and revenue control system replacement, new program development, program branding, marketing and signage, etc.

iii. Boulder has a General Improvement District appointed by City Council that also manages all aspects of parking as well as having a specific focus on transportation alternatives and economic development. The structure of their organizational chart is very
The nature of the boxes on the Boulder organizational chart above is reflective of the different perspective that a new organizational model can generate. The perspective can provide a broader focus than just parking, to include travel demand management and programs to increase transit use, biking, and walking. The term for this is “integrated access management” and is further described later in section 2A.

A Tale of Two Cities: Two cities in Montana have a parking commission. The Missoula Parking Commission (MPC) and the Bozeman Parking Commission (BPC) both were formed in 1971, and have a director and staff that report to a board of directors appointed by city council. Both are technically city departments, and the staffs are city employees. Both collect parking revenue and have a dedicated parking enterprise fund. But that is where the similarities end.

Missoula has a vibrant, active, thriving downtown. Bozeman is more subdued. Missoula’s parking program is successful and accomplishes its goals. Both on-street and off-street parking is well-utilized, customers have a choice of parking options, and can always find a space within walking distance. Bozeman has high demand for on-street parking, but its new downtown parking garage is under-used. The parking department in Bozeman has difficulty getting downtown customers to use the garage, and has even more difficulty freeing up on-street spaces for customers and visitors. Downtown employees often use those spaces.

Missoula has on-street pay parking and a permit system for off-street parking that is less expensive than on-street. The revenues all go into an enterprise fund that has been able to build two downtown parking structures, with a third in the works, all debt free. The Missoula enterprise fund has significant cash reserves. Bozeman has free on-street parking. The main source of revenue for the Bozeman parking enterprise fund has been fines from
citations and a “cash in lieu” payment required of new development that is designed to provide for new parking infrastructure. The fines are sufficient to pay the enforcement staff, but the “cash in lieu” program has not lived up to its purpose. The Bozeman enterprise fund was able to build four surface lots with the assistance of funds from a special improvement district. Recently, they were able to build a new 435 space garage in downtown with the assistance of federal funds and tax increment financing (TIF), but the city cannot get people to park there. The BPC had hoped to generate a new revenue stream by selling permits in the garage, but since people can park on-street for free, the permit program has not been successful.

The Missoula Parking Commission has engaged in partnerships with the Missoula Redevelopment Agency and a Special Improvement District (SID) over the years to develop a comprehensive, self-contained parking operation that pays for adding parking inventory, staff, equipment and other programs. The MPC is governed by a five member Board of Directors and has authority to buy and sell land, issue revenue bonds and manage the parking program as necessary to accomplish its mission statement. Being a component unit of the city, the City Council has the authority to set the boundaries of jurisdiction and approve the budget of the MPC.

The Bozeman Parking Commission has less authority than its neighbor in Missoula. The BPC has a board that primarily sets policy. They have a smaller staff, and fewer assets. The “cash in lieu” program has not been sufficient to allow the BPC to accumulate enough reserves to build parking infrastructure, and the free on-street parking has undermined the effectiveness of the new garage built with Federal and TIF funds.

There are (at least) three important lessons here.

- This story helps to illustrate that decisions about parking management can have long-term effects on a community, both positive and negative.
- If it is determined that a new governance model has merit, it is important to link that governance model to an adequate and sufficient revenue stream.
- The way a community structures its parking management program must be tailored to meet the higher-level goals of the community. Because parking can have a tremendous effect on the direction a community takes, parking management decisions should never be made casually, or in isolation.

Staff Contact Information:

Timothy Wilder
Parking Plan Project Manager
twilder@fcgov.com
(970) 221-6756

Randy Hensley
Parking Services Manager
rhensley@fcgov.com
(970) 416-2058
Selected List of Issues, Problems, Comments, and Observations

The issues listed below are referenced within the preliminary ideas described in the preceding section. The primary source for them was the Expert Advisory Panel Report, with additions from the questionnaire, field data, and stakeholder input. For a more complete list, refer to the Fort Collins Parking Plan - Parking Advisory Panel Report (October 2011), pages 13 – 16.

The Overall Parking Situation
1. Good, but room for improvement
2. Good, but not ready for the future
3. Parking is an aggravation, not yet a real “pain”
4. Unclear future parking needs

New Development and Neighborhood Impacts
5. Need parking-related economic development strategy
6. Not prepared for surge in employment
7. No commercial or residential parking requirements
8. Downtown employees and CSU students impact neighborhoods

Alternative Transportation Modes
9. Need to prepare for Mason Corridor impacts
10. Change in community’s culture has more people seeking to utilize alternative transportation
11. Need to provide different types/design of bike parking

Customer Service (Marketing, Education, Identity)
12. People don’t know about their parking options
13. Wayfinding improvements are needed

On-Street and Off-Street Parking Management
14. Employees parking on-street
15. Many employees don’t have access to, or are unwilling to use, off-street parking
16. Very high occupancies of core on-street parking and public surface lots
17. Upside-down pricing causes trolling and “garage avoidance”
18. Danger of becoming “enforcement zone”
19. Two-hour time-limit not meeting customer needs
20. Some business owners very concerned about lack of Saturday/evening enforcement, but questionnaire says otherwise

Business Involvement
21. Lack of business involvement and accountability in parking management decisions
22. Need for more collaboration between the City and Downtown businesses

Funding
23. Public/private partnerships key to future improvements
24. More parking infrastructure will be needed in the future, but no revenue streams have been identified to pay for it
25. Parking is the “giant unfunded liability”
OCCUPANCY MAP (goes with section 5C)

Legend:
- Study Area
- Blocks
- Block Number
- Overcrowd/Spots

Occupancy of More than 85%
At Least Once on Thursday

Thursday Afternoon Count
ON PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION ECO-DISTRICTS

By L. Dennis Burns, CAPP

Progressive institutions are seeking ways to reduce our collective transportation carbon footprint while enhancing the overall parking and transportation experience.

They recognize that an improved parking system is a critical element in achieving this objective. It is in this context that the newest parking program organizational model, the “parking and transportation eco-district,” is beginning to be developed and refined.

At its heart, an eco-district is an area with a broad commitment to accelerate large-scale sustainability. They commit to achieving their sustainability goals by guiding district investments, focusing community action, and tracking the results over time.

A parking and transportation eco-district approach identifies technologies and strategies that enhance overall district sustainability, such as energy and water management systems within parking developments, support for green streets, the promotion of resource conservation, the use of local materials, and the use of solar panels in shade structures.

Because parking can be a significant revenue source, district parking revenues should first be dedicated to supporting parking program debt service, operations, maintenance reserves, and technology upgrades. Once the parking program generates excess revenues, some of these resources can be invested in a variety of sustainability initiatives, including:

- Community bike programs.
- Car sharing programs that support downtown residential development.
- Pervious pavement installation and bio-swales as demonstration projects in city surface parking lots.
- Advanced solar power projects.

Generally, the eco-district approach brings together community stakeholders, property developers, utilities, and the district to solidify a shared sense of purpose and partnership through the following actions:

- Creating an engagement and governance strategy to build community support, set priorities, and act.
- Developing an assessment and management toolkit to guide project development and track ongoing performance.
- Implementing sustainability projects through technical and economic feasibility analysis, assembling project financing, and establishing public-private partnerships.
- Identifying commercialization opportunities for companies to test promising products and practices.

- Establishing municipal policy and regulatory structures to support eco-district development.
- The broad-based nature of parking and transportation, combined with an explicit focus on both sustainability goals and economic development objectives, makes this approach very appealing.

"Is This Really a New Model?"

This model is defined by an explicit emphasis on prioritizing sustainability goals. I see this as similar to shifting parking from the public works division to the economic development division of a city. From a policy level, it is likely that a different thought process will prevail and begin to change a whole series of investment and goal-setting agendas. Eventually, this change will be pushed down to all levels of the organization (how we clean our garages, the materials we purchase, the new services we implement, etc.).

Not unlike Frank Lloyd Wright’s “destroy the box” approach to conventional architecture, this type of organizational structure is intended to remove traditional conceptual boundaries and open up ideas and actions that reach beyond parking. The ultimate goal is more sustainable and holistic community programs in which parking is one piece, not an isolated entity.

This new “organizational emphasis” could be a way to:

- Improve the perception of our programs (and our industry).
- Shape our policies and refract our priorities.
- Activate parking programs as partners in community sustainability efforts.
- Educate our staff, stakeholders, and customers.
- Actually make some positive contributions to being environmentally responsible and saving the planet.

Overall, transportation accounts for about 20 percent of the nation’s carbon footprint. Organizing your parking program to have an explicit “eco-district” orientation would send a strong signal of your institution’s commitment to environmental progress.