DOWNTOWN PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

SAINT PAUL, MN

SRF

NELSON
NYGAARD

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Downtown Saint Paul is an historic regional center that has experienced significant regeneration over the past decade. Targeted investments in a new convention center, ballpark, regional medical center and light rail transit have helped foster additional central district-developments in business, residential and entertainment uses. As Saint Paul's traditionally stable downtown business environment evolves into a vibrant mixed use location, this economic boon also puts a strain on the existing parking supply.

The downtown area has more than 28,000 parking spaces, which serve a wide variety of users. Employees place peak daily demands on the parking supply. Even with growing transportation options, many downtown residents still maintain a vehicle. An emerging nightlife and restaurant scene, a bustling events calendar, new sporting events, and a regional farmers market all draw visitors in growing numbers at non-traditional travel peaks. Each unique user adds to downtown's vibrancy, but also presents new challenges in terms of balancing urban revitalization with the need for parking.

The Downtown Parking Management Strategy provides an accurate view of parking activity and issues in Downtown Saint Paul in order to ensure appropriate parking availability for current and future users.

This document is a summary of three technical memoranda that detail the analysis supporting the Downtown Parking Management Strategy, summarized within:

» Technical Memorandum #1: Existing Conditions

» Technical Memorandum #2: Land Use, Zoning, and Future Demand

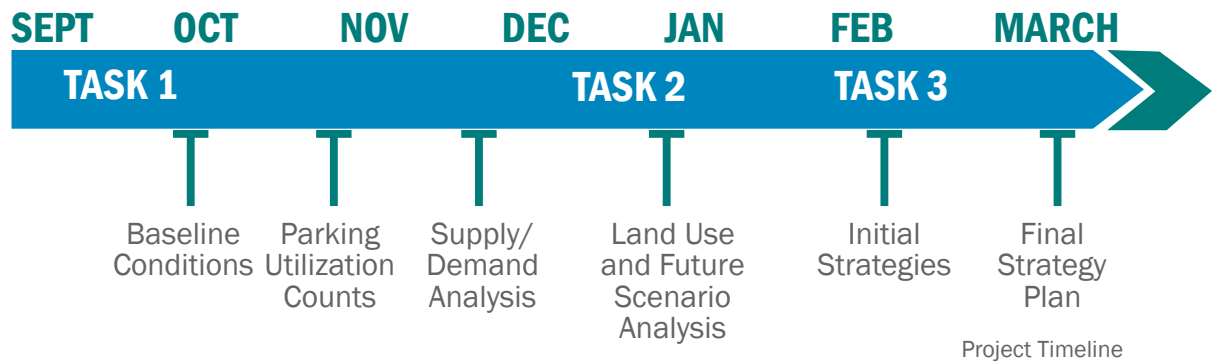» Technical Memorandum #3: Parking Management Strategies

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use information and technology to create smart policies and effectively manage parking.

- Coordinate and integrate city parking management with overall economic development and transportation goals.

- Manage on-street parking using a market-based approach to better utilize parking supply.

- Create off-street parking policies in the context of a multimodal system.

- Integrate access and transportation demand management to become a downtown with attractive travel options.

- Invest in placemaking to support downtown growth.

- Update the parking portion of the Zoning Code to support responsible economic development.

PROJECT PROCESS

PROCESS SUMMARY

The Downtown Saint Paul Parking Management Strategy is a six-month effort that documents current parking activities, examines expected future parking, and recommends a series of strategies to achieve City goals. In order to establish a baseline of the current state of on-street, off-street, public and private parking assets, the study began with a parking inventory and utilization study. After developing an inventory based on a combination of existing data and stakeholder input, the team collected parking utilization information: on-street data were collected by field visits; off-street data were collected through a combination of surveys, field visits, and traffic cameras. To understand the context of the governance and enforcement of these spaces, multiple in-person interviews were conducted with stakeholders (listed below). The team then analyzed the City's parking data in the context of growth models for future scenarios and reviewed how this growth is shaped by the parking-related elements of the Zoning Code. All of this was then taken into consideration to develop strategies to improve the downtown parking system.

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MARCH
TASK 1			TASK 2		TASK 3	
Baseline Conditions	Parking Utilization Counts	Supply/ Demand Analysis	Land Use and Future Scenario Analysis		Initial Strategies	Final Strategy Plan

Project Timeline

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP & STAKEHOLDERS

- CapitolRiver Council
- City staff/departments
- Council members
- Greater Saint Paul Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA)
- Parking Ramp Managers
- Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce (SPACC)
- St. Paul Smart Trips

PROJECT GOALS

- Develop a market-based parking system.
- Integrate parking with pedestrians, light rail, buses, and inter-city rail.
- Define existing parking utilization of all downtown stakeholders.
- Quantify anticipated future demand for parking.
- Identify national best practices.
- Suggest ways in which the City can integrate its parking management functions.

PARKING INVENTORY

PARKING INVENTORY

An inventory of existing parking spaces and regulations was developed based on City and St. Paul Smart Trips data and adjusted by stakeholder input and field observations. This inventory found that:

» There are 28,638 parking spaces in downtown Saint Paul.

» 94% of all spaces in the study area are off-street.

» Almost all on-street parking is priced and has varied rates and time limits.

» The majority of the off-street supply is privately-owned (65%).

» Although the majority of the off-street supply is privately-owned, 86% of all off-street parking spaces are publicly- accessible.

Data Source: City of Saint Paul, MN
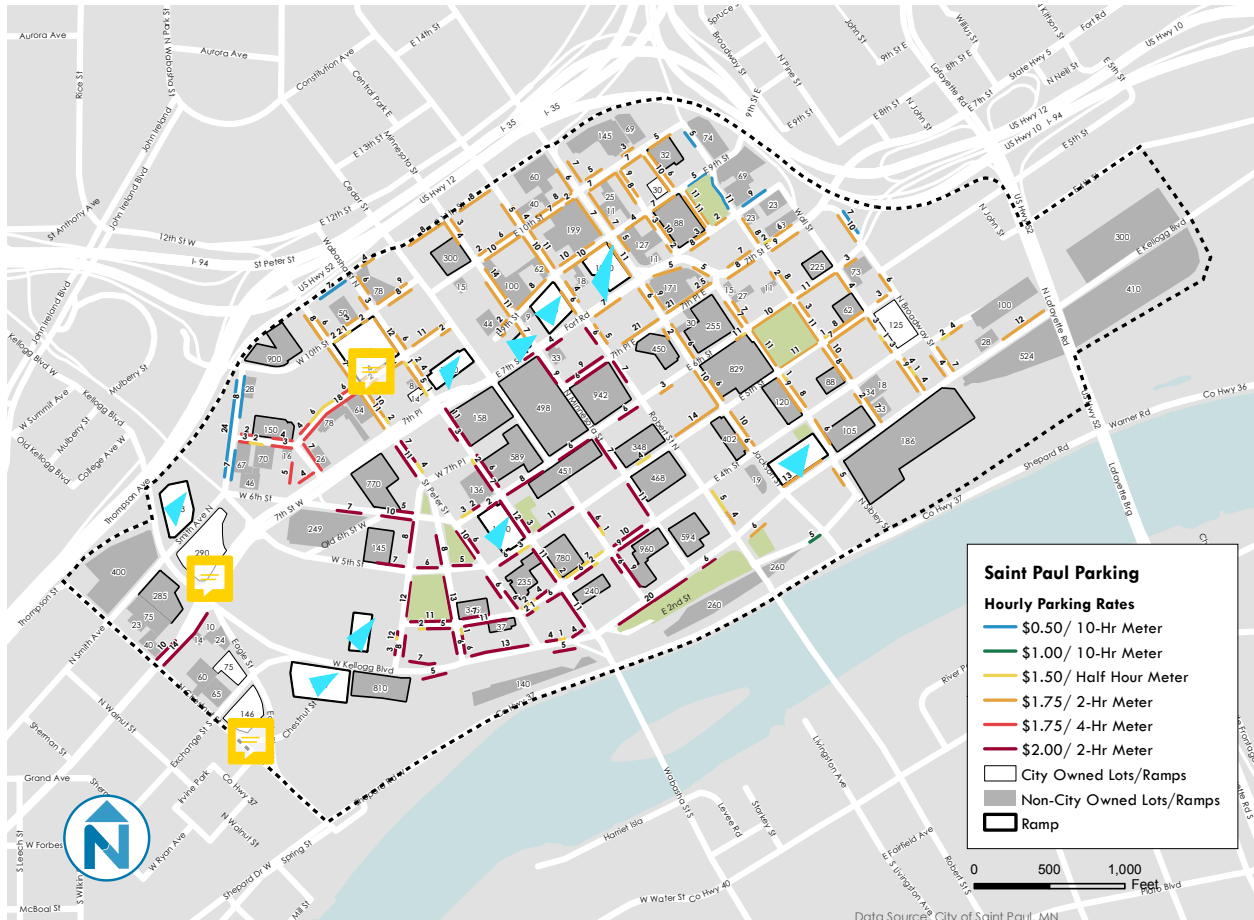
Parking Inventory & Regulations

PARKING LOCATION	NUMBER OF SPACES	PUBLICLY AVAILABLE	RESTRICTED-USE/PRIVATE	CITY-OWNED	NON-CITY OWNED
Off-Street	26,994 (94%)	23,346 (93%)	3,648 (100%)	9,507 (85%)	17,487 (100%)
On-Street	1,644 (6%)	1,644 (7%)	0 (0%)	1,644 (15%)	0 (0%)
Total	**28,638**	**24,990**	**3,648**	**11,151**	**17,487**

PARKING UTILIZATION - WEEKDAY

» Parking is never more than 73% occupied, which means that 7,000 spaces are unoccupied at peak.*

» **After 6pm, 18,000 spaces go unused; most are off-street.**

» Many garages in the area are over 80% full.

» Both City/HRA-owned and private ramps and lots have similar utilization rates.

» Monthly contract parking is popular. A sample shows that an average ramp has 56% monthly contract parkers, 17% hourly/daily, and 27% unused.

WEEKDAY MIDDAY PEAK
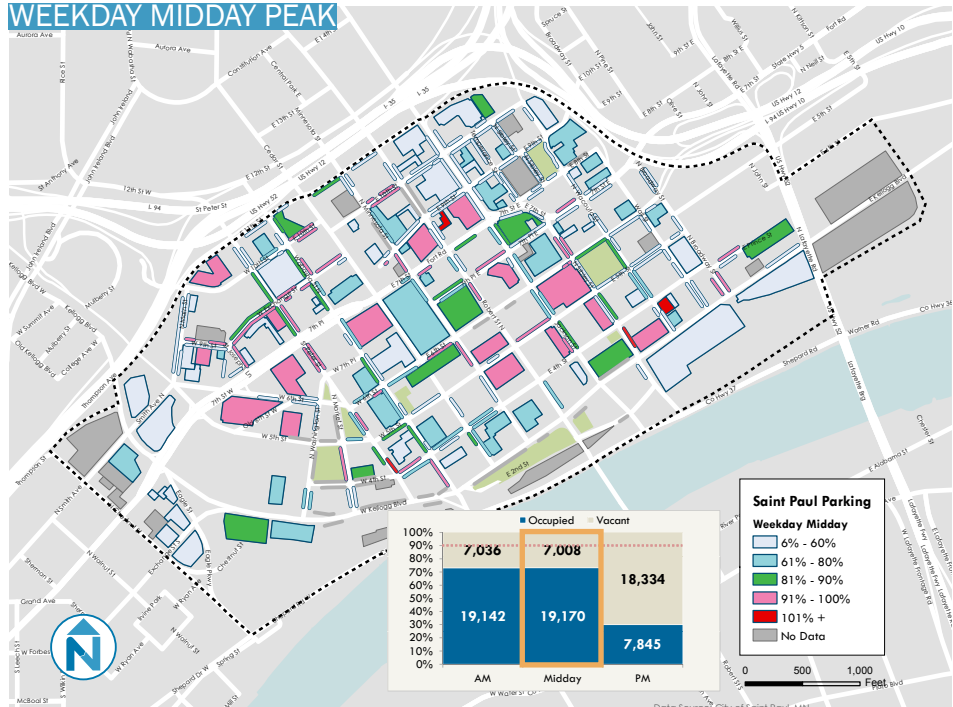
Parking Utilization - Weekday Midday (Peak)

*An unknown portion of the unoccupied supply is set aside for monthly contract parkers. Further information and analysis to quantify this set aside is essential for future parking planning.
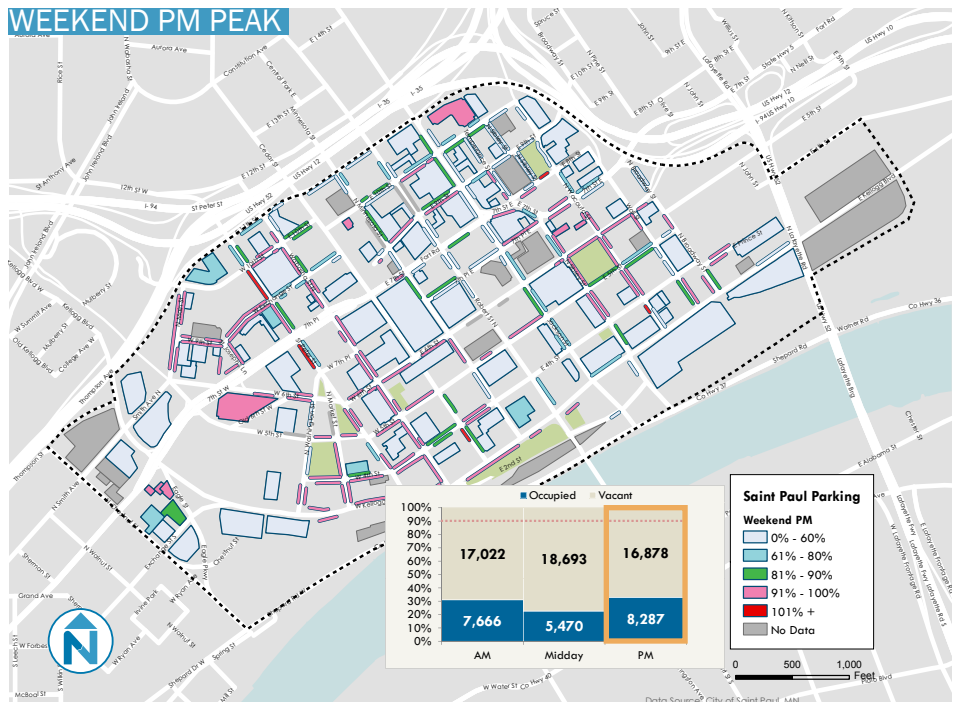
PARKING UTILIZATION - WEEKEND

» **Parking is 34% occupied at the busiest time, meaning more than 14,000 parking spaces are empty.**

» Peak parking demand for the weekend is in the evening: on-street is nearly 80% full.

» Off-street parking is never more than about 30% full, regardless of the time of day.

» On-street parking is busy, particularly in the evenings when it is nearly 80% full.

WEEKEND PM PEAK

Parking Utilization - Weekend PM (Peak)

PARKING MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

Parkers behave in response to how parking is governed and managed: whether or not a sign is readable, what the regulation is, how parking is priced, when parking rules are enforced, etc.
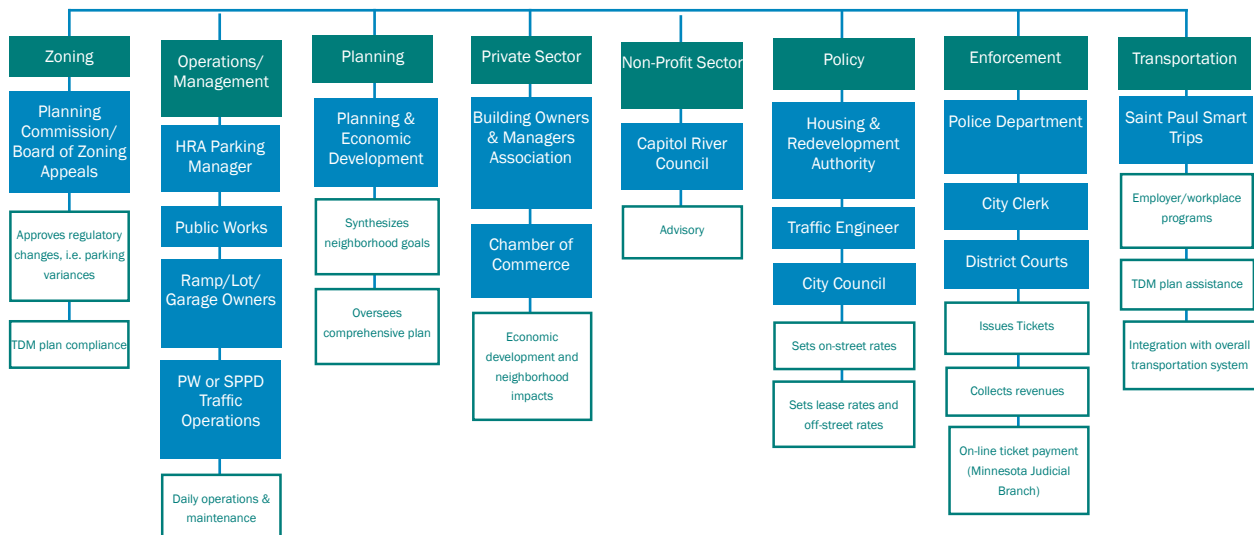
Today in Saint Paul, the responsibility for parking is split among various departments and decision-making bodies within the City and via other partners. Parking policy-making, budget planning, regulation enforcement, ticketing processing, and collections are handled by a various entities, which often makes coordination difficult. There is no central department that manages or oversees all parking management activity, and without formal communication or an overall policy, decisions affecting parking and all the aspects it touches can be made without understanding the full impacts and consequences. The lack of a centralized management body may make the parking management system confusing from the user perspective, and it allows for inefficiencies in management.

Parking functions are divided among multiple departments: for example, on-street parking is managed by Public Works/Traffic, and off-street parking is managed by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA). Meanwhile, the City Council sets on-street rates, while the HRA sets off-street rates and negotiates leases.

There is a legal distinction between the HRA and the City of Saint Paul. The HRA is a distinct public entity charged with undertaking housing, commercial, and business activities. The HRA has a separate bonding authority for development purposes. The HRA's accounting and financial reporting requirements are separate from the City's.

In terms of off-street parking management, the HRA manages its off-street facilities but contracts out operations on a facility-by-facility basis. The HRA sets the rates. For off-street parking management for privately-owned facilities, the HRA and City do not have authority to regulate private rates or operations/management. However, the City does have authority over the Zoning Code, which could impact the amount of parking that gets built and how it may be used.

Saint Paul Parking Management Organizational Chart

Zoning	Operations/ Management	Planning	Private Sector	Non-Profit Sector	Policy	Enforcement	Transportation
Planning Commission/ Board of Zoning Appeals	HRA Parking Manager	Planning & Economic Development	Building Owners & Managers Association	Capitol River Council	Housing & Redevelopment Authority	Police Department	Saint Paul Smart Trips
Approves regulatory changes, i.e. parking variances	Public Works	Synthesizes neighborhood goals	Chamber of Commerce	Advisory	Traffic Engineer	City Clerk	Employer/workplace programs
TDM plan compliance	Ramp/Lot/ Garage Owners	Oversees comprehensive plan	Economic development and neighborhood impacts		City Council	District Courts	TDM plan assistance
	PW or SPPD Traffic Operations				Sets on-street rates	Issues Tickets	Integration with overall transportation system
	Daily operations & maintenance				Sets lease rates and off-street rates	Collects revenues	
						On-line ticket payment (Minnesota Judicial Branch)	

NOTE: Not fully hierarchical

# ZONING & FUTURE GROWTH

ZONING

Saint Paul has already adopted a progressive approach to parking requirements in downtown, exempting all uses from minimum parking requirements. This is often appropriate in a downtown setting, where other transportation options exist, as well as opportunities to share parking among uses. The Zoning Code is designed to support many downtown Saint Paul goals, but there are additional opportunities for the Code to be used as a smart tool for responsible development. Key findings:

» Saint Paul has no minimum or maximum parking requirements.

» In downtown, there is still an opportunity to require shared parking when parking is provided.

» The Zoning Code includes TDM and bicycle parking requirements, but they could be stronger.

» There are no requirements for unbundling the cost of parking from residential development.

» There are no carshare or bikeshare requirements.

» There are no regulations in downtown that prevent single-use parking structures or surface lots.

FUTURE GROWTH

The City and project team identified and established six primary activity areas in downtown. These areas were identified based on their predominant character and the walking distance if one were to park and walk to the opposite end of the area. Based on these boundaries, the peak existing demand does not exceed the existing supply, even with a 10% buffer, for any of the activity areas.

Building off the existing conditions, the team used models to estimate the expected parking supply and demand when six development projects come online in downtown: Custom House, 7 Corners/Gateway, 7 Corners Hardware, Ramsey County West, Macy's, and CHS Field (ballpark). This analysis shows that, although these developments will add new parking demand into the system, overall, there is parking supply to support the new parking demand.
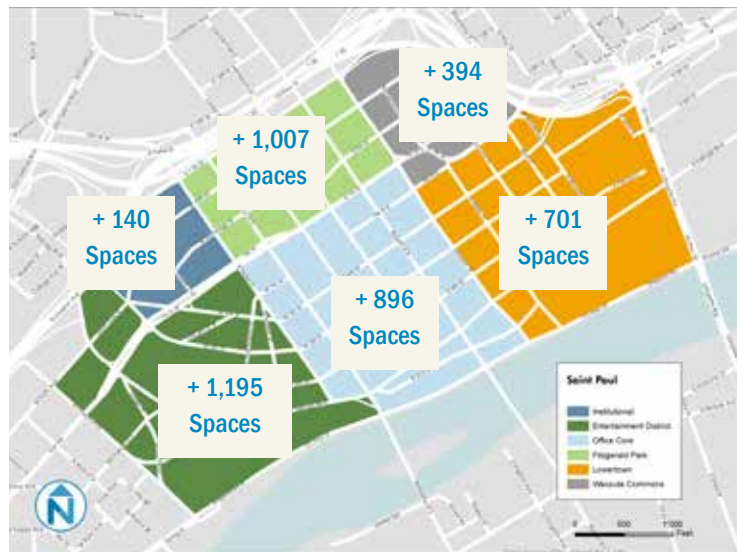
Today's Parking Supply Based on Observed Demand
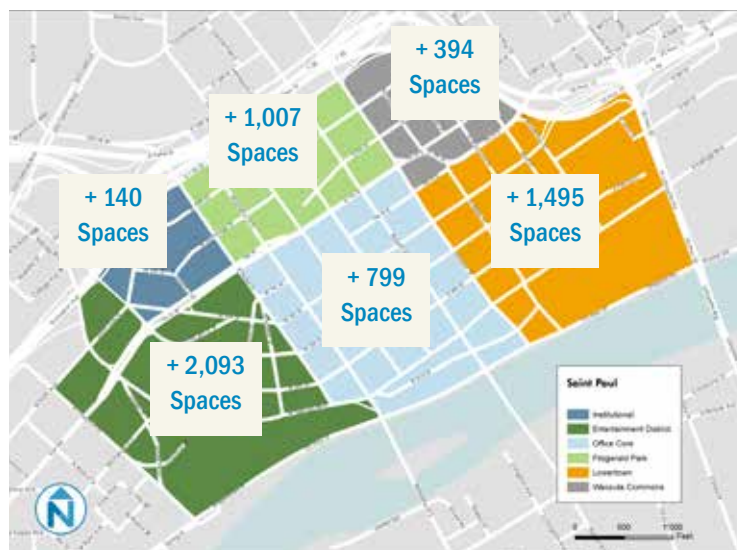
Parking Supply Surplus Based on Expected Growth Land Use Model

PARKING CHALLENGES

Parking constraints make attracting office tenants challenging.

In some cases, prospective tenants expect to lease large blocks of parking that is nearby.

Existing residents are crowded out from parking spaces.

Commercial, retail, and residential development is occurring, replacing as surface parking (and in some cases) increasing parking demand.

Neighborhood pressure may prevent some downtown growth.

Developers are reluctant to invest due to neighborhood pressure to retain parking.
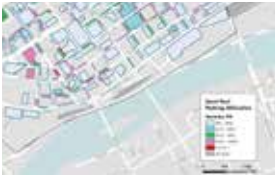
People go to on-street parking first.

DOn-street parking is cheaper and easier to access. Therefore, it fills mup quicker, leading to short-term parking frustrations.
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Directional, information, and regulatory signage is confusing.

It is hard for drivers to understand where (and where not) to park due to a variety of signage types.

Parking isn't managed as a comprehensive system.

On- and off-street cost, regulations, operations, and management are not coordinated, leading to user confusion and inconvenience.

Parking is frustrating when the system is perceived as "full."

DSometimes, parking facilities are signed as "full," but there are unused spaces in ramps and lots that are "locked up" for monthly contract parking. Vacant spaces are not truly available to daily parkers.

Complete online parking information doesn't exist.

Online parking information is not intuitive, and is scattered among multiple websites in various formats.

Zoning requirements don't fully support a livable downtown.

For example, the Zoning Code permits stand-alone, single-use parking structures, which deaden the downtown environment.

STRATEGIES

A PLAN FOR PARKING MANAGEMENT

This section outlines parking strategies based on the findings from the parking supply and demand analysis, background review, build out analysis, and stakeholder meetings. Many of the specific strategies are interrelated and should be considered in tandem. They include items not obviously parking-specific - such as pedestrian improvements - that have a important impact on behavior and parking in Saint Paul.

Strategies are organized into seven categories and are ordered from highest to lowest impact. More detail on each strategy is included in Technical Memorandum #3.

1. INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Use Information and Technology to Create Smart Policies and Effectively Manage Parking

Downtown Saint Paul would benefit from enhanced parking information and integrated technology. The parking system can be more efficiently utilized with web- and app- based platforms that provide parking and transportation access options, consistent downtown wayfinding signage that identifies major parking locations, readable and clear regulatory and rate signage on-street and at each off-street facility, and signage that links multiple modes of transportation. Supporting strategies include technology improvements that would integrate on- and off-street facilities to help with parker convenience for both daily employees and the occasional visitor, including a single pay-by-cell payment system, real-time information for off-street facilities, and more.

1.1 Have a centralized and integrated transportation website and app.

1.2 Coordinate and contract with a single vendor for pay-by-cell for on- and off-street public parking facilities.

1.3 Incentivize private ramps/lots to also use the same pay-by-cell vendor.

1.4 Coordinate real-time information for off-street public and private parking facilities and display via website and app. Consider bulk purchase of real-time information signage for facilities.

1.5 Replace coin-operated meters with smart technology.

1.6 Create branded downtown wayfinding signage program.

1.7 Incentivize ramps to offer event parking, including free/cheap at remote facilities.

7.8 Prioritize coin-operated meters to accept pay-by-cell.

1.9 Regulate information signage on all off-street facilities.

1.10 Install singage in skyway to identify multimodal access.

1.11 Integrate enforcement technology into payment technology.

1.12 Explore MnPass for off-street parking payment.

2. CITY PARKING MANAGEMENT

Coordinate and Integrate City Parking Management With Overall Economic Development and Transportation Goals

Parking is often managed by multiple departments and decision-making bodies. This makes parking difficult to consistently coordinate among various groups. This is true in Saint Paul, where there is no central staff person or department that spearheads or oversees parking management in the context of larger City goals. This set of strategies identifies opportunities to integrate parking functions in the short, medium, and long-terms. These strategies also recommend the City becomes more equipped to be responsive to parking supply and demand changes through data reporting.

2.1 Create a mobility authority that includes parking management and transportation demand management.

2.2 Require utilization reporting for City, HRA, and private lots and ramps.

2.3 Allow City/parking management staff to have authority to change rates and time limits without Council or HRA approval.

2.4 Agree on and document a single set of parking goals.

2.5 Hold quarterly management meetings with key departments.

2.6 Train enforcement officers as downtown ambassadors.

2.7 Provide educational parking information and resources on parking citations.

3. ON-STREET PARKING

Manage On-Street Parking Using a Market-Based Approach to Better Utilize Parking Supply

Curbside parking is a highly-coveted resource in downtown Saint Paul, and parking utilization counts show little availability on-street. In support of City goals of promoting local business and fostering a strong economic climate downtown, the City should adopt several strategies to open up the areas that have the highest demand. The City can make a big impact in the perception - and realities - of the most congested parking areas by updating its approach to managing parking on-street. The opportunities range from setting goals and adjusting pricing and time limits to achieve availability goals, phasing out placards, feasibility analysis to add more on-street parking supply, creating a circulation and curbside management policy, and more.

Adding more parking spaces on-street, whether using existing vehicular right-of-way, angled parking, or other design, is a cost-effective and quick strategy to substantially add to the parking supply without expensive construction. This type of effort should be considered, but engineering and traffic feasibility analysis will be needed.

3.1 Phase out placards.

3.2 Tie on-street pricing to first hour off-street rates.

3.3 Create City "optimum occupancy" or availability goal for on-street parking.

3.4 Adjust parking meter rates, time limits, and spans to achieve optimum occupancy.

3.5 Create a circulation plan and curbside management policy.

3.6 Explore the feasibility of adding off-peak on-street parking.

3.7 Establish event rates for on-street parking.

3.8 Monitor utilization data.

3.9 Pilot and evaluate progressive pricing.

3.10 Work with the state to update disabled parking laws.

3.11 Explore valet in select areas.

4. OFF-STREET PARKING

Create Off-street Parking Policies in the Context of a Multimodal System

Some municipalities try to build their way out of a parking supply problem; others work to more efficiently manage the supply that they have. As Saint Paul strives to be a more multimodal downtown while attracting new employers, residents, and destinations, the City should create strong off-street parking policies that support its larger goals. One of the most challenging, but highest impact strategies is to require that monthly contract parking permit rates not have volume discounts, bringing the rate structure closer to hourly rates.

4.1 Require monthly rates to be closer to daily and/or per hour rates.

4.2 Increase parking availability in key areas in the evenings.

4.3 Create city "optimum occupancy" or availability goal for off-street.

4.4 Mandate rate structure closer to per hour rates.

4.5 Work with all lot and parking operators to disclose actual monthly lease rates.

4.6 Prioritize short-term parking on ground or skyway floor of ramps.

4.7 Introduce a ramp rating system to incentivize green, improved lighting, and cosmetic facility improvements.

5. ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Integrate Access and Transportation Demand Management to Become a Downtown with Attractive Travel Options

Parking is not just about parking: it is about getting from your car to your destination, about not driving when there are other transportation options, and about which parking lots are used based on easy and safe access. The City should use this detailed review of its parking supply and demand as a resource to impact travel to and from St. Paul, particularly through transportation demand management (TDM) measures. Incentives and programs, for example free downtown transit and parking cash out, can have an impact on employee mode share and overall cost and parking implications for major employers and developers. Even changing the behaviors of 5-10% of employees can have a profound impact on parking demand.

5.1   Introduce a commute management benefit to downtown employers/ employees.

5.2   Explore conversion of one-way streets to two-way.

5.3   Require employers to provide parking cash-out as an employee benefit.

5.4   Parnter with City, County, and State to equalize commuter benefits for public employees.

5.5   Offer a free transit pass for downtown employees.

5.6   Incentivize remote vehicular and bike parking and shuttles with existing Metro Transit service.

5.7   Open up skyways at nights and on weekends.

5.8   Support a "park-once" district; use fewer parking spaces.

5.9   Create mobility hubs at Union Depot and Central Station.

5.10 Promote Metro Transit real-time information.

5.11 Monitor bike parking demand and identify where parking rack changes are needed.

6. PLACEMAKING

Invest in Placemaking to Support Downtown Growth

Placemaking is about creating a public realm to maximize the downtown's activity, economy, and vibrancy. Placemaking works to connect activities and spaces that connect to all types of people. This is inherently related to parking supply and demand: creating great places to walk may reduce overall parking demand because drivers may be more likely to park a little farther than they would have otherwise. Placemaking not only supports better utilization of the existing parking supply but also supports downtown's economy and activity.existing parking supply but also supports downtown's economy and activity.

6.1   Encourage an 18/7 downtown by incentivizing a mix of daytime and evening uses.

6.2   Invest in inviting walking environment (explore feasibility of adding on-street parking, minimize curb cuts, add activity on sidewalk level, re-time traffic signals, add pedestrian-scale signage, etc.)

6.3   Prioritize investment at street-level along corridors such as 4thth Street and at Central Station.

6.4   Introduce parklets in select areas to boost street-level activity.

7. PARKING-RELATED ZONING CODE

Update the Parking-Related Zoning Code to Support Responsible Economic Development

The City can strategically use its zoning code to help shape a modern parking system that matches the City's increasingly dynamic downtown. The City has the authority, through its zoning code, to shape new development in downtown. These zoning recommendations would impact both design and policy, and they build off the already progressive approach to parking requirements that exists today.

7.1 Strengthen TDM ordinance by applying a simple, annual regulation to employers (not developers.)

7.2 Prohibit new free-standing single-use parking structures (ramps must be wrapped with active uses and/or have active ground floor uses.

7.3 Prohibit surface lots, or charge a surcharge/tax for providing surface parking.

7.4 Introduce a progressive in-lieu fee.

7.5 Introduce parking maximums (and lower maximums within ¼ mile of transit stations.)

7.6 Require unbundling of residential parking from units.

7.7 Require shared use parking.

7.8 Establish design standards that encourage better ramp design, tailored to neighborhood context.

7.9 Monitor parking impacts of new development projects.

7.10 Require car share and bike share stations, based on size of development.

7.11 Require bicycle parking tied to size of development.

SHORT-TERM AND HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES

Below are the strategies that are identified as being able to be implemented in the short-term that are also high impact, meaning that they have the potential to have a substantial effect on parking in downtown Saint Paul. After each of these strategies is a performance metric, so the City and its partners can measure implementation progress.

1.1 Have a centralized and integrated transportation website and app. (METRIC: Have at least 12 major destinations link to site; have at least 5,000 app downloads)

1.2 Coordinate and contract with a single vendor for pay-by-cell for on- and off-street public parking facilities. (METRIC: Have all HRA/City ramps and all metered parking accept pay by cell)

1.3 Incentivize private ramps/lots to also use the same pay-by-cell vendor. (METRIC: Have at least five ramps sign on)

1.4 Coordinate real-time information for off-street public and private parking facilities and display via website and app. Consider bulk purchase of real-time information signage for facilities. (METRIC: Have at least ten private ramps sign on)

2.2 Require utilization reporting for City, HRA, and private lots and ramps. (METRIC: Regularly receive 70% reporting rate)

2.4 Agree on and document a single set of parking goals. (METRIC: Document and adopt goals.)

3.1 Phase out placards. (METRIC: Document locations and prevalence of card use)

3.3 Create City "optimum occupancy" or availability goal for on-street parking. (METRIC: Document and adopt goals)

3.4 Adjust parking meter rates, time limits, and spans to achieve optimum occupancy. (METRIC: Adjust time span and enforcement hours)

3.7 Establish event rates for on-street parking. (METRIC: Pilot event rates near major destinations)

4.3 Create city "optimum occupancy" or availability goal for off-street. (METRIC: Document and adopt goal)

6.1 Encourage an 18/7 downtown by incentivizing a mix of daytime and evening uses. (METRIC: Five off-peak businesses open or extend hours)

6.3 Prioritize investment at street-level along key corridors. (METRIC: Pilot and evaluate business activity on 4th Street)

7.2 Prohibit new free-standing single-use parking structures. (ramps must be wrapped with active uses and/or have active ground floor uses (METRIC: Adopt code)