

2009 Downtown Champaign Parking Plan



The public parking system in Downtown Champaign is provided for the purpose of achieving the vision of a vibrant, walkable downtown, built on its urban character, connected to surrounding neighborhoods, and easily accessible as a regional destination.

The Downtown Champaign Parking Plan has two purposes. First, it gives policy direction for managing the public parking system by establishing “guiding principles”. These **guiding principles** will be used at both an administrative and Council level for making decisions affecting the parking system. Second, the plan identifies “actions” that need to be implemented to achieve a more efficient and effective system. The **actions** are intended to be executed in the short term – meaning within the next one to two years. Some actions are ongoing from thereafter.

The **guiding principles** and **actions** are divided into four focus areas:

- Providing a **balanced** public parking system;
- Managing parking with a focus on **customer service**;
- Supporting the Champaign **Downtown Plan**; and
- Supporting **alternatives** to driving and parking downtown

PROVIDING A BALANCED PUBLIC PARKING SYSTEM

A successful downtown parking system must balance the needs of its different "customers". A mix of appropriately priced short-term and long-term parking opportunities must be provided to meet the needs of downtown residents, visitors and employees.

Guiding Principles

- The parking system should promote frequent turnover of on-street parking for customers in the core and adjacent to businesses that require turnover parking; and promote long term parking opportunities outside the core and in off-street locations.
- The parking system should systematically adapt and change as customer demand and behaviors change. Changes should be made consistent with the guiding principle of providing appropriately priced and zoned parking based on location.
- The parking meter system should be timed and priced based on "zones" whereby meters in the core should be short-term and priced higher than those on the fringe of downtown which should be more affordable and allow longer stays.
- It is a goal to have meters in the core that achieve a utilization rate of 85%. It is a goal to have meters in the fringe meet a minimum daily average utilization rate of 15%.
- Regular long term parkers should be encouraged to use permit parking. Permit parking prices should be cheaper the further the distance from the core.
- Parking revenue should fund the overall parking system, including long term infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation.

Actions for Providing a Balanced Public Parking System

Action	Issue Addressed / Opportunity Created
<p>Turnover / Occupancy Survey Conduct a system-wide turnover and occupancy survey every 12-24 months. Use the results of the survey to adjust on-street meter price and time zone allowances based on the guiding principles of this plan. Meters that demonstrate low usage should be considered for price reduction or in some cases, elimination. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>The purpose of turnover and occupancy survey is to better understand how the public parking system is being used. The results will show where meters are underutilized and where the system has too much demand pressure. To create a more efficient and effective system, adjustments should be made to those meters with very low occupancy so they become more attractive to parkers.</i></p>
<p>Downtown Employee Hang-Tag Expand the existing employee hang-tag system to allow parking at the ten hour meters with a hang-tag permit. Price the hang tags at a monthly rate that would make them cheaper than feeding a 50 or 75-cent meter on a regular basis. Market the employee hang-tag option to downtown business owners and encourage them to purchase multiple tags, using volume based pricing, to distribute to employees. (short-term)</p>	<p><i>Downtown has an abundance of parking supply. However, the on-street spaces in the core are highly desired based on their convenient location to many businesses. The goal of the parking system is to keep these spaces turning over as frequently as possible in order to increase the availability of the most desired spaces. When employees park in Core at meters for longer periods of time, it becomes difficult for the customer to find those coveted spaces. An expanded hang-tag system for 10-hour meters on the fringe will provide a more economical parking option for employees while keeping core parking spaces for customers.</i></p>
<p>“Grab and Go” Meters Create a limited number of meters in the Core that have very short durations and are designed to be “Grab and Go” spaces that are close to convenience businesses such as coffee shops. (short-term)</p>	<p><i>Downtown has a limited number of 30-minute meters which require 75-cents. Many visitors to downtown may only need 5 or 10 minutes to grab a cup of coffee, drop off paperwork at an attorneys office, or pick-up a sandwich to go. As a marketing promotion for downtown businesses, a few clustered “Grab and Go” spaces could be established for a very nominal charge and for a very short duration (up to 10 minutes).</i></p>

<p>Off-Street Permit Pricing Annually consider the price of off-street permits to make rate adjustments as necessary. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Similar to campus permit rates, the downtown off-street parking lease rate should be regularly reviewed to ensure that the appropriate fee is charged and that the difference in price based on proximity to the core is properly adjusted.</i></p>
<p>Funding for Maintenance Develop a long-term maintenance and rehabilitation plan for parking infrastructure, and budget Parking Lot Rehabilitation project funds consistent with the plan. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Maintenance and rehabilitation is an important component to a parking system that functions efficiently for the public.</i></p>
<p>Hill Street Parking Deck Maintenance Set aside recommended maintenance and rehabilitation reserve funding for the Hill Street Parking Deck. (complete)</p>	<p><i>To keep the Hill Street Parking Deck attractive to the public for use and maximize its life, maintenance and rehabilitation activities must be performed on a regular schedule.</i></p>

MANAGING PARKING WITH A FOCUS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

Users of the downtown parking system are “customers” and therefore the parking system should be designed with an emphasis on customer service and user-friendliness.

Guiding Principles

- The public parking system should support a positive business environment.
- All aspects of the Parking Programs operation should focus on customer service.
- The parking system should be easy to understand and clearly explained to the public through various methods.
- Enforcement of the parking regulations should include customer service efforts to educate the parking customer on using the system.
- The parking system should incorporate advances in technology to meet customer demands and preferences.

Actions for Managing Parking with a Focus on Customer Service

Action	Issue Addressed / Opportunity Created
<p>Increase / Improve Public Information Make available a packet of useful information to the public and downtown business owners which explains the parking system and avoids "industry standard" language or jargon not easily understood by the public. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>The public parking system is complex but needs to be explained to the public in a clear and easy to understand fashion.</i></p>
<p>Parking Programs Webpage Create a more user-friendly webpage for Parking Programs that can be directly linked from the City's website. The design should give a positive initial impression of the parking system and should place an emphasis on promoting the system while still containing quick links to rules on enforcement and methods for paying citations. (TBD – budget unknown)</p>	<p><i>The current design of the webpage for Parking Programs is very difficult to navigate and does not emphasize the positive aspects of the system. It is primarily a listing of information for the user to wade through to find what they need. A revised webpage should place a priority on being a resource for the customer rather than simply a site one goes to for paying a citation or renewing a permit. It should offer amenities that can be useful to the parking customer such as maps and graphics, real-time information on leased parking space availability, as well as information on the rules of the parking system.</i></p>
<p>Continue to implement the "getdown" marketing campaign Continue to implement the <i>getdown</i> campaign using additional components, such as widow posters, bus boards, table tents, java jackets, television, and other media to continue to convey customer friendly messages about parking and Downtown, in general. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>The "getdown" campaign was developed to communicate customer friendly, easy to understand messages about Downtown parking, and was designed to be "expandable" to communicate other messages about Downtown, as well. This includes marketing for the Hill Street Parking Deck as well as other important messages.</i></p>

<p>Easy to Understand Meters Clearly label the meters with only the essential information needed by the customer. (short-term)</p>	<p><i>Most meters currently have up to four different postings on them that explain price, permitted length of stay, hours of enforcement, and the rules for time zone enforcement. Trying to explain the complexities of the parking system on the various stickers may be contributing to customer confusion which leads to parking citations. Consideration needs to be given to giving the essential information on one easy-to-read posting. Reducing evening time zone enforcement to 7:00 P.M. will allow for easier explanation of the time zone system.</i></p>
<p>Customer Service with Enforcement Develop an easy-to-read card that explains the rules of the parking system and include them in each citation issued. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Receiving a parking ticket can be a frustrating experience for the customer. This is especially true when the parker may not have been aware that they were in violation. When this happens, there is a risk of negative perceptions about downtown being perpetuated. To help educate visitors about the parking system, a card that explains the rules in a user-friendly way can be inserted in each citation envelope for that parker to use in the future.</i></p>
<p>Citation Collection Increase the time allowance for paying citations and offer an “incentive” for paying before the deadline rather than an additional “penalty” for paying after the deadline. Explore other improvements to payment collection methods and adjustments to fine amounts. (short-term)</p>	<p><i>Currently a parking citation must be paid within 72 hours or the price increases. Consideration should be given to extending the time to pay a citation and wording the citation to indicate the higher amount due at the later date with a discount for paying prior to that date.</i></p>

<p>Transition to Pay Stations Prioritize the installation of pay stations in the core where appropriate to replace meters as funding becomes available. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Pay stations offer convenience to the parking customer because they allow for different forms of payment (cash, credit, debit) and also can offer advantages to the City with less frequent needs to collect from meters and less maintenance. Due to their cost, pay stations should be phased into the system. They should first be installed in the Core where parking demand is highest.</i></p>
<p>Parking Validation in the Parking Deck Implement a parking validation program so that Downtown business may purchase parking for their customers, if they choose to participate. (short-term)</p>	<p><i>Business have, in the past, requested this type of program. With the automated system in the parking deck, the City can now provide this service. Staff plans to begin working with Downtown business to discuss implementation options by mid-April.</i></p>
<p>Implement AVI Automatic Payment in the Parking Deck Customers in the parking deck may use an AVI tag to automatically link to a credit or debit card for hourly parking fees. (short-term)</p>	<p><i>This is a customer convenience that is likely to appeal to regular, hourly parking customers. They will be able to use the AVI tag to automatically enter and exit the Parking Deck, with charges going directly to their credit or debit card. This will make the deck an attractive option for these regular customers.</i></p>

<p>Valet Parking Explore implementation of a valet parking program on weekend evenings. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>This provides a higher level of customer service for parking customers, particularly those that are interested in a "high end" Downtown experience. If a program like this is managed by the City it can best serve all of Downtown. This service can be contracted out and use parking in the upper levels of the parking deck.</i></p>
<p>Visitor Parking Promote visitor parking in four primary locations including the Hill Street Parking Deck, the Neil and Washington surface lot, the First Street (Police) surface lot, and the University and Market (Illinois Terminal) surface lot. Place an overall preference for visitors to park in the Hill Street Parking Deck. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>Currently, signs throughout downtown direct motorists to all of the different surface parking lots. However, there are many different lots and it is not clear where the preferred visitor parking is located. By focusing on these four lots, visitors to downtown can become better accustomed to the parking system. Signage and marketing materials should emphasize these four lots with an overall preference on parking in the deck.</i></p>
<p>Special Events Use the Hill Street Parking Deck to support special events downtown and community wide, where appropriate. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>One of the biggest factors in downtown's recent success is special events. Events like Ebertfest, the Festival of the Arts and the Streetfests allow people to enjoy the downtown atmosphere and frequent downtown businesses. These events will benefit further with the opening of the Hill Street Parking Deck. Efforts should be made to market the deck in conjunction with special events. Opportunities also exist with community wide events (such as Illini football and basketball games) where the deck could be used as a park and ride facility for the CUMTD. This creates the opportunity for additional business downtown as well.</i></p>

SUPPORTING THE VISION OF THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

- *The 2006 Downtown Plan sets a vision that downtown will be a vibrant, walkable downtown, built on its urban character, connected to surrounding neighborhoods, and easily accessible as a regional destination. Parking is an important component of achieving this vision. However, too much emphasis on the accommodating the car in downtown can begin to work counter to the goals of revitalizing the downtown. The appropriate balance is critical. The management of the parking system should be consistent with the guiding principles and strategies of the 2006 Downtown Plan.*

Guiding Principles

- Existing surface parking lots in the core should be considered for redevelopment consistent with the Downtown Plan and the displaced parking from these lots will be absorbed into the existing system.
- Consistent with the Downtown Plan, new parking should be located in parking structures rather than surface parking lots.
- For large-scale mixed-use developments the City will look for opportunities to partner with developers to increase public parking supply and address increased demand through the construction of structured parking. For certain economic development prospects where parking is an issue, the City should work with prospective businesses to address parking needs.

Actions for Supporting the Vision of the Downtown Plan

Action	Issue Addressed / Opportunity Created
<p>Neil and Hill Street (Lot U) and Main Street (Lot D) Surface Lots Anticipate development of these surface lots without the replacement of existing spaces. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>The Downtown Plan identifies a goal to provide more infill development in the core of Downtown by redeveloping existing surface parking lots. These two lots offer an opportunity for new development with minimal impact to the overall parking system. With the addition of 600 spaces in the nearby Hill Street Parking Deck, there is now a reasonable parking alternative for these two surface lots.</i></p>
<p>Washington and Neil Street “Plaza” Assess impact on parking supply and demand when pursuing the creation of a public plaza (or “town square”) within the Neil and Washington surface parking lot. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Page 28-29 of the Downtown Plan illustrates the vision for a Public Plaza at the corner of Washington Street and Neil Street. Creation of a plaza will likely occur as part of a new development or redevelopment. It will take into account parking supply and demand, dual use opportunities (open space with some parking) and the needs of businesses located adjacent to the plaza for access and customer parking.</i></p>
<p>Future Parking Structures Be prepared to engage in new public/private partnerships for the construction of new parking structures that are proposed to be built in conjunction with large-scale development projects. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>With the completion of the Hill Street Parking Deck, additional public parking structures are not anticipated in the short term. However, the City should continue maintain an adequate fund balance to undertake preliminary design and planning to reach debt issuance stage for a project. Location should be consistent with the Downtown Plan and projected parking supply and demand.</i></p>

<p>Additional On-Street Meter Opportunities Seek opportunities to provide new on-street parking spaces as the redesign of downtown intersections is considered. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>A study has been completed to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety at many downtown intersections. In some cases this may result in the recommendation to eliminate unnecessary right-turn lanes in order to slow traffic down and narrow the crossing distance for pedestrians. This type of redesign can present an opportunity for adding on-street parking. On-street parking can also serve as a way to slow traffic creating a safer and more comfortable pedestrian environment.</i></p>
<p>The Role of Private Parking in the Public Parking System Assess the impact to the public parking system if large private lots are no longer available to the general public. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Private parking lots in downtown greatly impact the overall parking system. Some lots have been established for the sole purpose of selling monthly leased spaces. Others are provided as customer parking for downtown businesses and are informally available for the public during off-business hours (e.g. Busey Bank, Christie Clinic., etc.). The addition or subtraction of private lots creates an impact on the public parking system. It is important for the City to understand this impact and be prepared if/when private lots are no longer available.</i></p>

SUPPORTING ALTERNATIVES TO DRIVING AND PARKING DOWNTOWN

Similar to congestion management approaches for reducing traffic on busy roads, managing the public parking system should include strategies to reduce demand on the system in order to keep it running efficiently.

Guiding Principles

- Alternative transportation will be promoted and used and result in less vehicle parking demand and avoidance of the cost of the parking that would otherwise have to be provided. *(Council direction from Study Session 11/20/07)*
- Accessibility to downtown by transit, bicycling and walking should be increased.
- Accessing downtown by alternative means should be encouraged through incentives.

Actions for Supporting Alternatives for Driving and Parking Downtown

Action	Issue Addressed / Opportunity Created
<p>Coordination with CU-MTD Continue to work with the CU-MTD to not only strengthen downtown Champaign's role as a transit hub but to also make it more of a transit destination. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>Downtown Champaign is one of the main hubs for the CU-MTD system. However, most transit riders are transferring through downtown rather than making it their final destination. For many full and part time downtown employees, transit is a viable option but not one generally considered. More transit trips to downtown means less demand and pressure on the public parking system.</i></p>
<p>Taxi Cab Stands Create a location for a taxi cab stand system near the central core of downtown. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Downtown Champaign is popular in large part because it is an evening entertainment district. Many parking lots near the core of downtown have more demand at night than they do during the day. In an effort to promote responsible commuting to/from evening entertainment and to release some pressure on the parking system, a taxi cab stand location should be considered. Although cabs are generally available upon phone request, a more accessible and visible presence will encourage more use. Consideration should also be given to negotiating with the Cab companies to offer a flat rate for evening rides.</i></p>
<p>Car-Sharing Promote and support the <i>Zipcar</i> program by providing the revenue guarantee until the program is self-supporting. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>In January 2009 Champaign, Urbana, CUMTD and the University of Illinois partnered to bring car-sharing to C-U. Cars available in downtown offer a reasonable alternative for residents and employees to bringing a car downtown. Efforts should be made to promote car-sharing so the system can expand in the near future.</i></p>

<p>Permit Sharing / Carpooling Allow permit sharing and consider designating parking spaces for car-pooling to promote the reduction of single-occupancy vehicles in the downtown. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Offering permit sharing options and/or preferences for car pooling further reduces demand for parking and creates more availability and choice.</i></p>
<p>Bicycle Parking As new parking is developed, provide additional bicycle parking and pedestrian access. Seek opportunities to provide covered and secure bicycle parking (such as bike lockers) where feasible. (ongoing)</p>	<p><i>Downtown is very accessible by bicycle but options for storing bicycles in downtown can be somewhat limited. Forty-two new covered bicycle parking spaces in the Hill Street Parking Deck is a good start to providing more bicycle parking opportunities. What appeals to the bicycle community about these spaces most are that they are covered and protected from the weather.</i></p>
<p>Motorcycle / Scooter Parking Designate more motorcycle and scooter parking in downtown. (long-term)</p>	<p><i>Currently, parking a motorcycle or scooter in downtown requires a full vehicular parking space (except in the Hill Street Parking Deck). This means there is no incentive for a person to access downtown by a motorcycle or scooter instead of by car. Creating designated parking for motorcycle/scooters will promote their use and allow for more vehicular parking opportunities.</i></p>