

DOWNTOWN
St. Joseph, MO

PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

2011

Downtown Parking Committee
Recommendation

PROPOSAL



Downtown St. Joseph Parking Plan

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Appendix A – Council Streets & Infrastructure Committee July 15, 2009: Building Blocks for Downtown Revitalization: Parking

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SECTION I. BACKGROUND DATA

The primary goal of this parking plan is to support the revitalization and growth of downtown St. Joseph by complementing the efforts of downtown property owners and business owners. An effective downtown parking plan should help provide better service to the customers of downtown businesses and the residents of the area.

Downtown St. Joseph is on the verge of becoming an entertainment destination. This is the place where people will want to be. The sheer number of people will enliven our sidewalks, making them much more interesting and will give the pedestrian a much safer feel. The whole downtown will take on a much more festive mood, and will be a wonderful destination for residents and visitors alike. There will be much more “to do” in St. Joseph. Most of the new visitors to Downtown will arrive by automobile, and they will need a place to park that automobile while they are enjoying themselves. Since the parking space is the place where most will first set foot in the area, it acts as an arrival point and sets the mood for their Downtown experience. Will there be a convenient space available? Will there be an inexpensive space available? If they have to walk, will the walk be pleasant? Will they have to carry a pocketful of quarters, or will there be another way to pay? Will they have to move their car every hour or so to avoid a ticket?

There are about as many approaches to downtown parking as there are downtowns. And while many downtown parking programs have positive features, most have very negative features, too — and it is very difficult to get it just right. If there is enough parking, then it is often too much, cluttering the landscape with lifeless asphalt expanses and bunker-like garages. If it is free, then it usually comes at the risk of an expensive ticket or the hassle of moving your car around to comply with time limits. If you pay, how much do you charge?

Current parking conditions in Downtown St. Joseph

In order to better understand where or if parking problems exist, City Staff thoroughly researched the parking patterns in Downtown and analyzed downtown parking conditions. In addition, the anticipated parking needs for the future were examined. The existing Downtown Precise Plan was reviewed for the potential additional development that it would allow Downtown and the parking impact this would have. See Appendix A.

The Focus of the Parking Management Plan

There are many important aspects of parking. Public parking management refers to how we regulate City-owned parking in order to ensure that it is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. There are approximately 4,700 parking spaces in lots, garages and on the streets in the Downtown area. Ensuring that they are well managed is a critical piece of the Downtown Building Block puzzle. Public parking management consists primarily of prices charged for parking and time limits on parking spaces.

Who is Responsible for Providing Parking?

Many people look to their local government to provide ample downtown parking. Technically, however, the responsibility to provide parking in all areas of the City falls on the private property owner whose business generates the need for the parking in the first place. In most areas of a city, this works. However, Downtowns are more challenging. Downtowns work and are appealing because there is so much to do in such a small area. By definition, there just is not a lot of room for parking in a downtown. Downtowns provide extra appeal because they are oriented to the pedestrian while most other areas of our cities are oriented to the automobile. Keeping our downtowns pedestrian-friendly requires us to devote less space to parking than we might in other environments. Having such an area which is compact, walkable, and lively is highly desirable to much of the population and is an important part of any city's land use "portfolio," just as industrial zones, regional retail and residential areas are important. So, it is in the City's best interest to work with merchants and property owners to find a solution to the Downtown parking issue, rather than just telling property owners to deal with parking themselves.

Conventional Approaches to Creating Parking Are Not Good Enough

While we must work with merchants and property owners to ensure that Downtown's parking supply is adequate, we must develop creative ways to address parking. The conventional approach used in most cities in the United States is adequate and appropriate for downtowns, but has been deemed unsuitable for Downtown St Joseph. The conventional approach includes charging for on-street parking. To relieve congested on-street parking, cities create on-site parking requirements in their zoning ordinance. This means that when houses, shops, or offices are built, parking must be built along with them. Historically, this requirement forced developers in downtown to demolish adjacent buildings to meet this requirement. That's an approach that causes yet more problems. How much parking? Usually, the amount of parking needed is based on the City Zoning Ordinance. Our ordinance requires 4-1/2 parking spaces for every 1,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area, the goal being to accommodate all parking needs on the site of the project. Customers typically assume that parking will be free (in areas outside of a downtown) and will not be shared with neighboring properties, meaning efficiency is minimized and demand is maximized. This approach does not create attractive, walkable environments, but it can work if land is plentiful and inexpensive to develop. However, this approach does not work for downtowns. Downtowns work precisely because they have so many uses in such a compact area.

Do we need to have enough parking? Absolutely! But we must be sure to have "just enough" and not "more than enough." And with that "just enough" amount, we must be very shrewd and efficient in order to make it work as well as possible.

The Unique Nature of Parking in Downtowns

It is very clear that the parking challenge before us is significant. However, by their very nature, downtowns possess certain parking advantages as well. Identifying and taking advantage of these assets is one of the keys to our parking destiny.

Downtown: A Park Once Environment

There are three main characteristics of a good downtown that make it possible to have a “park once environment”. First, downtowns are compact. This means that a given number of uses take up less space. This is because buildings are usually taller and cover more of their site. By bringing everything closer together, the need to drive from one place to another is reduced. Second, downtowns are mixed-use in nature. This means that offices, shops, restaurants, services, and residences can all be found very close together, sometimes in the same building. Non-downtown areas typically segregate these functions from each other, which causes them to be farther from each other than they are in downtown areas. This distance is usually beyond a comfortable walk, which most people consider to be one-quarter of a mile or less.

Good downtowns are walkable. What does “walkable” mean? Technically, you can walk just about anywhere. However to be truly walkable, a place must be inviting to walkers and must provide them with comfort, security, and interest. Sidewalks must not only be present, but they must be sufficiently wide to support the activities typical of downtowns. Street trees and awnings should protect them from the sun and rain. Parked cars should protect them from traffic. Storefronts and architecture should offer visual interest. The street pattern should be fine grained and interconnected so that pedestrians can take direct routes to their destination. When all of these factors are in place, a downtown is truly walkable.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by encouraging people to park once and walk to all subsequent destinations, we add activity and potential customers to the sidewalk. This is important for several reasons. First, it gives merchants an opportunity for “customer sharing.” If people walk by a business on their way to somewhere else, that business has the opportunity to attract the customer in and sell them something, too. If the customer parks at each destination and never walks the sidewalk, that opportunity doesn’t exist.

Second, it adds safety to the area. A busy sidewalk is a safe sidewalk. Danger or the perception of danger lurks when a street is deserted, but in the company of your fellow citizens you can be assured of a good level of security. Criminals hate witnesses. People love to be in the presence of other people, and by creating a park once environment, we create busy sidewalks which are an attraction in themselves and will encourage more people to visit Downtown. A busy, active place actually attracts more activity.

Current Status of Downtown Parking

- The seven public parking lots in the St. Joseph downtown area have a total of 1,377 parking spaces.
- In addition, there are approximately 1,200 free on-street parking spaces in the downtown area.
- There are approximately 38 private parking facilities located in the downtown area that provide another 2,100 parking spaces.
- This makes a total of approximately 4,700 total parking spaces available downtown. Approximately 55% of these spaces are owned and operated by the City of St. Joseph. (The total number of parking spaces available at East Hills Shopping Center is 3,525.)
- All public parking is free on weekends and holidays and after 6:00 p.m. on weekdays.

- There is currently sufficient parking available in the downtown area on a typical weekday.
- There are parking deficiencies in specific areas during peak hours and for special events. However, most of the areas where there are parking deficiencies are adjacent to blocks or parking facilities that have a significant surplus of parking spaces.
- All on-street public parking and most private parking is free.
- There are currently 21 businesses paying for their employees to park in paid public garages and lots.
- The availability of free parking, both public and private, is limiting the utilization of the pay public parking facilities.
- The cost of parking in public parking facilities in the downtown area is less than many other similar cities.
- There is too much signage associated with parking restrictions and not enough signs for assisting motorists to find available parking. More pedestrian and vehicular way finding signage is needed, not regulatory signs.
- Some of the walking surface needs to be replaced between available parking and the destinations they serve.
- In some areas, confusion is created by parking regulations that seem to be inconsistent. The variety of local parking regulations include: special permit spaces, customer parking zones, 2-hour limit parking, 2-hour handicap, 4-hour handicap, passenger loading zones, and bus loading zones.
- Many people are unhappy with parking enforcement. They believe it is selective and unfriendly.

People receiving a parking ticket have five days to pay it at the minimum fee. Between 5-10 days, the fee doubles and a letter is sent to the violator reminding him or her of the ticket and the increase in the fine. After the 10-day violation is assessed, the offender has 15 days to respond. If they don't respond in that time frame, the ticket is submitted to the City Prosecuting Attorney who sends another letter trying to get payment of the ticket. If this fails, the Prosecuting Attorney issues a summons to appear in court. If the violator fails to appear, a warrant is issued.

Parking Management

Parking management refers to how public parking is controlled through pricing, time limits, and other regulations. The number one reason we manage parking is to create "turnover" of spaces, meaning people leave the spaces after a time, then someone else uses them. If there were always spaces available when and where people needed them, then parking management wouldn't be necessary. In compact downtown situations where there is competition for space, management is needed. Another reason management is necessary is to generate sufficient revenue to operate and maintain parking facilities and provide for future enhancements or improvements to the facilities.

There are two primary tools that are available to cities to manage public parking, and the City Council must set policy on both of them in order for Downtown St. Joseph to attract new visitors and satisfy existing business owners. They are:

- 1) Pricing
- 2) Time Limits

Why charge for parking? People love free parking, right? Why not give it to them? When the supply of any commodity is limited and demand for it is near or above that limited supply, the price goes up. If a commodity is free, then it will be quickly exhausted by the first people who get to it. There can be no rational distribution to those who might need it or want it more after that. This is the main reason to charge for parking in a downtown. The alternative of flooding the market with parking spaces is cost-prohibitive and is damaging to the features which make downtowns attractive, namely beauty, walkability, and compactness. Thus, the supply is limited.

The fact is that nothing is free. “Free” parking is paid by someone — a business, a district, or a unit of government. Parking for a fee is simply a user fee aimed at receiving revenue from the user utilizing the parking. So the central question is who should pay for parking and how?

If a municipality wants to subsidize and encouragement development in downtown, it may direct available funding from other programs to create free parking. If a business wants to create a free parking environment, it could join with others to fund a parking measure or validate (pay for its customer’s parking).

In larger areas, multiple property owners could band together and create a parking authority or district that would pay for the costs of parking maintenance and management. The point is that somebody, somewhere is paying for parking. The question is “who”.

Struggling downtowns often have an overabundance of parking and almost always have spaces available when and where they are needed. Such places do not need to charge for parking and probably shouldn’t. Suburban strip malls sometimes have greater supplies of parking than is needed and do not charge for parking either. However, do we want Downtown St Joseph to be a struggling downtown or a strip mall?

Obviously, the answer is “no.” Downtown is already a major employment center and the City has made several wise investments that will solidify it as a strong shopping, dining, residential, and entertainment venue in the future. We will have a lively downtown and to support this, we will have to manage parking in a creative way. Therefore, the main reason to charge for parking is to ration a limited supply of the coveted on-street parking. By charging for parking, people will be encouraged to move out of their parking spaces as quickly as possible in order to pay as little as possible, and spaces will be made available to others. Thus, charging for parking makes fewer spaces feel like more. Without parking management in general, and fees in particular, employees and merchants tend to park in the best spaces all day, depriving paying customers of the most convenient spots. Obviously, merchants and employees “shouldn’t” park in prime spaces, but they do.

The secondary reason to charge for parking is that it generates revenue. This shouldn’t be the main reason to do it, although for some cities it is. The revenue generated is necessary to operate the parking system and to pay for parking facilities. Price indexing can be a powerful incentive to charge for parking in lively downtowns or to charge more in targeted areas to encourage parking utilization in others.

Market-Rate Pricing

The ideal occupancy rate for a block of downtown parking is considered to be 85%, which means that 1 out of every 8 spaces is always available, even on a community's main street, and even during the busiest hours. This way, a precious public resource is not fully consumed, while at the same time, there is always a space or two for those who really want them. This is achieved not through time limits, but by a strategic pricing structure. The most desirable spaces (on-street spaces in the core) should be the most expensive, while side streets are less, and off-street parking is even less. The least desirable and least used spaces may even be free. Such a system lures bargain hunters and employees out of prime areas, freeing up a few prime spaces for customers who really want them and are willing to pay for them. If a block or lot has an average occupancy of greater than 85%, then the parking is congested and the price must go up. If a block or lot has an average occupancy of *less* than 85%, then the parking is underused and the price must go down, or go away altogether.

What Motivates Parkers?

In order to effectively use market-rate prices to create available spaces when and where they are needed, we must first understand what motivates parkers. Parkers are comprised of the categories of employees, shoppers, tourists, clients and residents. Each category has different needs for its parking and each category impacts parking differently.

The overwhelming impact on parking, both in terms of public perception and behavior, is line-of-site views. Essentially, this means that the distance between the parking location and the destination is not as important as whether or not the destination can be viewed from the parking location. For example, a person may park at a Wal-Mart and walk 100 yards to the front door. If questioned about their experience, most would say that parking was fine.

Take that same person in any downtown and ask them to park around the corner from their destination, whether the distance is 100 yards or less, and most would say that their experience was not positive. This only underscores what everyone knows: people like to park close enough that they can see where they are going. Fundamentally, this affects each and every parking scenario and is the measure by which success will be measured.

Some feel that people will park where they "should." Merchants "should" park on side streets. Employees "should" park in the garage outside of the shopping area. Residents "should" park off-street or be able to park on-street after normal retail hours, which may conflict with the night-life activities on those parking impacts. Unfortunately, people don't always do what they should. People tend to act in their individual self-interest when making decisions, including when making decisions as to where to park. Most models of parking choice assume drivers act for their own convenience rather than for the moral reason of deciding whether to obey the law. The essence of parking enforcement is thus economic, and it is futile to rely on rules absent economic incentives. One has to "assume that parkers are rational and will behave honestly if the effect (on the person) is positive." Basically, carrots (rewards) and sticks (punishments) can influence people's decision on where to park, but appeals or concern for the common good will not. Market-rate pricing takes parker needs into account and appeals to those needs, enticing them to

park where the downtown needs them to park. In order to understand the various needs of parkers, they can be divided into four groups.

The Unpleasables

The unpleasables are a small but vocal group of downtown parkers. They want to park right in front of their destination, for free, all day. Sadly, nothing can be done to please them. Free parking will be jammed up and unavailable to them when they want it, thus angering them. Enforcement of time limits may free up a space or two for them, but then they may get a ticket, which of course will not please them. Charging them is, of course, upsetting, as is asking them to walk.

The Dream Parkers

The dream parkers are called such because they are a dream from the parking manager's point of view. They are easy-going folks who just want to get out of their car and hit the sidewalks. They'll walk, they'll pay — they really don't mind what they have to do as long as it is reasonable. Unfortunately, they are also a small group.

The vast majority of parkers fit into one of the next two categories.

The Convenience Hunters

Convenience hunters want to be close to their destination. That is their primary concern. Usually they are coming to the area for a relatively short period of time to shop, eat, or run errands. They are often in a hurry and this adds to their desire for close-in parking spots. Like everyone else they enjoy free parking, but they want a convenient space badly enough that they are willing to pay for it.

The Bargain Hunters

As the name implies, bargain hunters are looking for a great deal. They are typically people who will be Downtown for a while and don't want to rack up a large tab for parking. These people are often employees, merchants, or people on all-day Downtown visits. Typically, they are willing to do what it takes to get parking in front of where they want to visit or shop, whether it be circling around the block or walking a few blocks. They just want that bargain. It is useful to note that while the Bargain Hunters are willing to walk, they are not martyrs. They are only willing to walk if it saves them some money.

Setting Prices to Meet People's Needs

When prices are "correct," the needs of the Bargain Hunters and the Convenience Hunters are met by *different* parking spaces. These differences cause them to spread out and ration the parking supply. When the prices are wrong, the Bargain Hunters and Convenience Hunters compete for the same parking spaces, congesting them, even though other spaces may sit empty. Oddly, it seems that most cities get it wrong. If a city's downtown is lively and vibrant and there is a lot of competition for parking, it makes no sense to make all parking free. Yet that is just what many cities insist on doing. Naturally, the on-street parking in front of the shops and restaurants gets completely congested, because it is both a *bargain* and *convenient*! Both groups are competing for these same spots. To compensate, rigid time limits are aggressively enforced in an attempt to decongest the prime spaces, but this often results in customers getting

inconvenienced by having to frequently move their car or, worse yet, being burdened with an expensive parking ticket for being just a few minutes late. Ironically, employees (the main focus of the time limits and ticket-writing) often develop very sophisticated systems to rotate cars and avoid tickets while still congesting the prime customer parking spaces.

Some cities accept that they must charge for parking in their lively downtowns, but they get the prices backwards. With all commodities, rarer and more coveted products cost more, while less desirable and more plentiful products cost less. This is the basic law of supply and demand. Why would parking not be subject to these same forces? Actually, it is. In downtowns, the most desirable parking spaces are the on-street spaces right in front of the businesses that are major attractors. On-street spaces on side streets are usually a little less desirable but still pretty good. Surface lots are a little less desirable, and garages seems to be even less desirable to most parkers (although weather conditions can make garages more desirable than surface lots at times). Spaces located beyond a 3 to 5 minute walk from the parker's destination (whether on the street, in a garage or in a lot) are the very least desirable spaces. Yet how many cities price their on-street parking spaces cheaply, while charging more for garage spaces? This is even worse than making all spaces free! Why would someone want to pay to park in a garage when they can park on the street for free directly in front of their destination? A downtown with this sort of pricing system often builds expensive new garages expecting to relieve their parking problems, only to find the new garages underused while the main street remains congested.

Our Downtown's current pricing system is not perfect. In addition, there are oddities to the current system that create problems. Parking on a majority of the streets where restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues are located is free. Predictably, on-street spaces are usually congested all day long, even though the Downtown as a whole has plenty of available parking. At slow times, it is often possible to find Felix Street completely full while parking garages are half empty a short distance away. Free parking detracts from the use of paid parking, so why would people be willing to pay for something they get for free and at a better location?

If the free spaces are overcrowded and unavailable, have we really done anyone a favor? All of this leads to inconvenient, inefficient, and confusing parking patterns. Certainly the people who get the coveted free/underpriced parking space right in front of their destination are pleased. What a great deal! But there are not enough of those magical spaces for everyone. So the majority of people can't get what they want and are upset by it. What Bargain Hunter will be happy about paying a lot of money to park in an undesirable space? What Convenience Hunter will be happy about being forced to walk because there wasn't a space available on the main street? Pleasing a few lucky people while upsetting the majority is not a good way to do business.

Will Charging for Parking Drive Away Business?

Frankly, not too many people decide where to go for a night out on the town based on free parking. People typically are seeking a fun, unique experience when they are going out to dinner or to see entertainment. They want to go to a place that is exciting and lively. What about shoppers? Granted, discount shoppers want a deal on everything, including parking. But no downtown can ever compete with big box "power centers" to attract discount shoppers. Thankfully, they don't need to. People who shop in downtowns are not usually looking for

bargain basement prices on jumbo packages of paper towels. Rather, they are seeking unique products and unique environments. Niche shoppers have been the saviors of downtown retail in the era of mega discount chains. In addition, shoppers and diners are typically less sensitive to parking charges because they are there for relatively short periods of time, meaning they accumulate less of a fee than an employee or someone else who will be in Downtown all day. Thus, shoppers and diners (priority customers for prime parking spaces) have a competitive advantage over long-term parkers.

There are a few things that DO seem to stand out to visitors of downtowns, though. One is a lack of available spaces and the second is improved “way-finding” and “interactive” parking availability systems. This causes people to cruise around until they can find a parking space, and it is frustrating. Why spend 15 minutes circling around blocks looking for a space? Who wants to do that? Under-pricing curb parking cannot relieve this problem, because it cannot create more spaces. Charging the market price CAN create open spaces, however, and allow anyone to find a prime space if they want it badly enough.

Resulting cruising causes many problems in itself. First of all, the people who are forced to cruise are justifiably upset. Secondly, all of these cars circling around for a parking spot can cause traffic congestion on downtown streets. Not only is this frustrating to people who are wasting their time by cruising, but this causes problems for others, too. Proper parking pricing can reduce or eliminate cruising. If a space that meets the parker’s needs is available as soon as they enter the neighborhood, then why would anyone cruise? Nevertheless, some will cruise because they cannot locate preferred parking.

When all parking is free or pricing is backwards (garages and lots cost more than curbside spaces), long-term parkers are NOT motivated to park in less desirable off-street parking facilities. People tend to feel swindled when they don’t get a better deal for using a less desirable product. This is exacerbated when off-street parking is MORE EXPENSIVE than the prime curbside spaces. Then people are *really* motivated to seek the curbside spaces, even if they don’t necessarily need curbside convenience. The obvious outcome is that curbside parking becomes unbearably congested.

Time Limits

Another tactic that cities use to create turnover of prime parking spaces is to limit the time that one may park in a given space. Violators of the time limit are issued a citation.

It seems like this would be a simple and effective system, but it often is not. For one thing, it is very difficult to set the time limits. Do we arbitrarily pick time limits? That doesn’t sound like a good idea, but it seems to be the method used by almost all cities. Do we try to anticipate how much time each business’s customers need to park? This seems more rational, but how do we do it? To illustrate the difficulties in doing this, let us consider a hypothetical downtown block which has a coffee house, a sandwich shop, and a day spa. Let’s say that the coffee house’s customers only stay for an average of 15 minutes, the sandwich shop’s clientele almost always leave within an hour, and the day spa’s customers stay for average of two hours. What is the appropriate time limit for this block? Do we set the time limit at two hours, which would theoretically allow everyone’s customers to stay for the time that they need? This would be very

likely to attract employees, who would only need to rotate their cars four times during the day to avoid a ticket. So then we might pick a shorter time limit, say an hour, which might eliminate some of that—but now the day spa’s customers will be forced to face tickets or walk farther than they want. Most cities deal with this problem by allowing the parker to make this decision by paying for the length of the parking at a meter. The rate would go higher the longer the parker wanted to stay on-street.

Another approach might be to mix it up — perhaps three spaces at 15 minutes, three spaces at one hour, and three spaces at two hours. This seems reasonable, right? Unfortunately, it isn’t. We must remember three things: First, downtowns are a host to a widely diverse range of businesses, each with their own peculiar fluctuations in activity. Second, curbside parking spaces are highly convenient and desirable and are impossible to add once maximized, so we need to use these resources as efficiently as possible. Lastly, multiple time limits require additional signage and are very confusing for users.

Together, these realities mean that one parking space must fulfill several needs throughout the day. For example, our coffee house may be very busy during the early morning (meaning perhaps it needs all nine spaces at that time) but business slows significantly during the lunch hour (during which time it may only need one space). The sandwich shop will be closed during the morning, when it would need no parking spaces, but during lunchtime it may need every space on the block. Unfortunately, three of them would be unavailable to sandwich shop customers, because the time limits are too short. They are short for the coffee house’s sake, but the coffee house doesn’t need all three 15-minute spaces during lunchtime — so they sit empty. In the afternoon when both the sandwich shop and the coffee house aren’t very busy, the day spa is very active and needs parking, but the empty spaces on their block can’t be used by their customers because the time limits are too short. Frankly, it is exhausting to think of all of the different time limit needs for all of the different businesses and how you might accommodate them.

Another issue with time limits is that enforcement of them is very labor intensive. First, the car’s license plate must be entered into a computer; then that block must be revisited after the time limit has passed ... two hours later, one hour later, maybe only 15 minutes later. Any car which has not moved is issued a citation. If time limits are very short, then the officer must return very frequently. If multiple time limits are involved, then it is even more complex.

Such a system can be effective and require customers to leave quickly. However, employees often figure out ways of avoiding a ticket by moving their car to another space before the time limit is up, by erasing the chalk before the enforcement officer returns, or by swapping spaces with a co-worker several times during the workday. To thwart such behavior, some cities divide their downtown into zones, and one must leave that entire zone before the end of the time limit or face a ticket. This is only slightly more effective at discouraging employees, and is much more inconvenient for customers. Parking boxes would allow a parker to purchase portable time to be used anywhere within the downtown. This eliminates issues of zones, sides of the block, etc.

No matter how strict the time limits are, if prices are free or out of line, then employees will probably still park in prime spaces. For example, until 1995, all curbside parking in Aspen was free. Predictably, it was congested — primarily by employees. Time limits were fairly tight (90 minutes) and yet this didn’t stop employees from using the prime spaces. City staff called the

ticket-avoiding technique used by employees the “90 Minute Shuffle.” In 1991, a 340-space parking garage was built to relieve the problem. According to Aspen’s city manager, “Despite its convenient location and \$1.50 a day rate, only during special occasions did it ever fill. On most days the garage remained over half empty, while tremendous congestion and competition raged for free on-street parking a block away.”

Absent appropriate prices, the only way for time limits to create turnover in a busy downtown is to back them up with aggressive enforcement. If the enforcement isn’t aggressive, people will figure it out quickly and flagrantly violate the time limits — especially employees, who have the advantage of being downtown all day every day and can easily figure out patterns and rhythms to parking enforcement patrols. For the purposes of this discussion, “aggressive enforcement” shall mean that tickets are issued *immediately* upon the expiration of the time limit, with no grace period, and enough officers are on duty to ensure that all violators are cited at all times. But aggressive enforcement leads to customers getting tickets too, often for just being a few minutes late. Who wants to find a parking ticket sitting on their windshield at the end of a visit for being two minutes late back to their car? Moreover, who wants their customers to conclude their Downtown experience that way?

Even if a visitor is quick enough to avoid a ticket, they don’t want to spend their evening watching the clock and moving their car around. If a customer is having a good time in a restaurant, and they are happy to pay the market price for their parking spot, do we want them to wrap up their evening early because their time limit wasn’t long enough? Do we want them to skip dessert or that last cappuccino in order to avoid a ticket?

In a survey conducted through the DREAM Initiative, those surveyed were asked which factor made their most recent parking experience less pleasant. The number one response was “difficulty in finding a space” followed by “chance of getting a ticket.”

The ticket anxiety that results from time limits and reversed pricing is a very real problem. When time limits and aggressive enforcement are implemented in an attempt to rectify the problems caused by bad prices (rather than fixing the bad prices), things can get ugly. St. Joseph’s parking prices are notoriously backwards, with curbside parking free while off street parking is assigned a cost. Market-rate prices are the only known way to consistently create available parking spaces in popular areas. If we institute market-rate prices and adequate spaces are made available, then what purpose do time limits serve? None, other than to inconvenience customers. If there is a space or two available on all blocks, then who cares how long each individual car is there? The reality is that it doesn’t matter.

SECTION II. DOWNTOWN PARKING COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

On July 27, 2009, City Council approved Resolution #35784 to form a “Downtown Parking Committee” consisting of downtown property owners, residents, business owners, and other citizens interested in downtown. The function of the committee is to formulate a Plan to improve parking conditions in Downtown St. Joseph.

Synopsis of Individual Committee Meetings

Discussion that occurred at each of the Downtown Parking Committee meetings follows:

- July 30, 2009
 - 1) Staff gave a presentation discussing the factors and laid out the perceived parking problems downtown.

- August 13, 2009
 - 1) Received additional information from staff: general background information, the 10-building blocks for revitalizing downtown, including parking which is crucial, a parking in storage study and an engineering report.
 - 2) Determined the top ten needs for downtown parking:
 - a) Security – garages, lots, streets – vandal, theft, skateboards; perceived safety, sanitation.
 - b) Infringement on private parking.
 - c) Selective enforcement – excessive, aggressive.
 - d) Lack of curbside parking for customers. Employees vs. customers.
 - e) Marketing of parking availability. Encourage people to come downtown.
 - f) Funding issues for parking. Fines, fees, tickets for events. Consistent fees?
 - g) Flexibility for long term users.
 - h) Lack of loading zones/construction worker parking. Special permits/policies.
 - i) Aesthetics of garages/lots.
 - j) Special event parking.

- August 27, 2009
 - 1) Combined top ten needs into four categories:
 - a) Security and aesthetics.
 - b) Marketing and lack of curbside parking for customers, loading zones and special permits.
 - c) Funding, selective enforcement and flexibility for long term parkers.
 - d) Infringement on private parking and special event parking.
 - 2) Determined their vision for downtown parking: The vision for downtown parking is that it is customer friendly, meets customer needs (readily available, safe, user friendly) and supports downtown events/business needs.
 - 3) Determined the following top security needs:
 - a) Painting
 - b) Cameras
 - c) Lighting
 - d) Security on foot

- September 9, 2009 Public Hearing, Holiday Inn, 5:15 p.m.
- September 10, 2009
 - 1) Items discussed during public hearing of 9/09/2009:
 - a) Employee parking on the street;
 - b) Parking availability for downtown residents;
 - c) Customer friendly enforcement/possible forgiveness of first ticket;
 - d) Marketing of parking availability/validated parking;
 - e) Security in garages;
 - f) Variable free parking on streets, lots and garages/need consistency;
 - g) Funding for downtown parking;
 - h) Special events parking (not a big concern but possibly paid parking needed for events at Civic Arena);
 - i) Selective placement of parking meters.
- September 24, 2009
 - 1) Downtown crime statistics discussed by Sgt. Ron Gordon.
 - 2) Community survey done during DREAM was distributed.
 - 3) Staff discussed the parking budget with the committee.
 - 4) Funding, selective enforcement and flexibility for long term parkers sub-committee report: the \$1.00 special event parking charge should be expanded to include activities at the Missouri Theater. Also may need a special tax district because of the bond debt still in place as well as to aid in the purchase of parking meters.
- October 8, 2009
 - 1) Report from Security Committee: Parking lots need to be cleaner and have increased lighting. Will possibly recommend a neighborhood watch program of downtown residents and removing the 8th & Felix garage completely and replacing it with a Gateway.
 - 2) Funding, Enforcement & Time Limits Committee: This committee believes what their sub-committee does will be based upon the other committees.
 - 3) Special Parking and Private Parking Committee: Recommends the City institute a standard parking fee for special events at city owned facilities. Recommend a flat \$5.00 fee per event; a two-day event should have a flat fee of \$8.00.
- October 22, 2009
 - 1) Report from Special Parking and Private Parking Concerns: The committee comes out strongly in favor of “pay as you go” parking. We should push the City hard on parking costs for trade shows, commercial events, concerts etc.
 - 2) Report from Security and Aesthetics Committee:
 - a) Short term: Clean the parking lots and the stairwells; lighting improvements are needed.
 - b) Mid term: include 8th & Felix external panel removal and architectural improvements, improve stairwells.
 - c) Long term: Removal of 8th & Felix garage and re-construct or scrap. Exterior panel removal and architectural improvement at 4th & Felix. Improve stairwells. If the panels are going to stay they need to be improved.

- 3) Report from Marketing and lack of curbside parking for customers, loading zones and special permits: tentative catch phrase of “Park it Downtown”; Council meeting on Monday, October 19, they changed on-street parking to four hours for about two blocks in a downtown location. All members were somewhat surprised that the Council had not consulted this committee prior to making that change.
- 4) Review and recommendation of parking lot plans for the lot at 5th & Edmond St.: Everyone was in agreement that the parking lot needs to be improved and the conceptual drawings are a great place to begin.

- November 12, 2009

- 1) Funding Committee report: Fines should be incremental for repeat offenders; collection of fines needs to be improved; need to increase fees for parking permits; recommend automated collection (voucher) for each garage/lot.
- 2) Marketing Committee report: Communication via public relations, internet, advertising, printed materials, public forums, downtown business owners; need to educate via website, brochures and inserts for/with tickets; need small, medium and large signs for street, lots and garages.
- 3) Aesthetics and Security Committee report: No update since last meeting.
- 4) Need to develop a plan for motorcycle parking; need to consider posting loading zones; need to consider one parking permit giving permission to park in any downtown garage.

- December 17, 2009

- 1) Special Event Parking Committee report: Want to provide “anytime” parking passes that would enable you to park anywhere for any amount of time; business to be provided with store front passes to allow regular patrons privileged parking.
- 2) Aesthetics & Security Committee report: Their final report: Allocate more resources to allow more frequent cleaning of the parking garages; improve lighting in garages; provide security cameras at entrances and exits of existing parking structures; conduct design studies to “redress” existing garages as part of CIP or CID projects to modernize the look of garages. Efforts should be made to minimize the negative impact of the garages as structures that detract from the pedestrian experience downtown. *People will see parking as less of a problem if they enjoy the experience of walking a little farther than they might at suburban establishments;* remove the 8th and Felix garage in favor of constructing a landscaped surface lot in the same location, per the latest Downtown Master Plan, which would allow better vision and pedestrian access to the heart of Downtown. Prepare updated cost estimates for work and approach as a CIP project.
- 3) Funding Committee report: No report was given but it was agreed that the cost needs to be based on the expenses of the equipment needed.
- 4) Marketing Committee report: No report was given but a vote was taken and approved to have the marketing committee meet with City staff to determine the cost of parking.
- 5) May need public relations training for the parking attendants.

- January 14, 2010
- 1) Marketing Committee report: Want to provide free parking — two hours on-street and four hours in the parking garages. Also recommend a variety of parking passes, automated machines for the parking garages, ability to pay and request dismissal of parking citations on line, landscaping for open public parking lots.
- 2) Funding Committee report: This committee will compile their report after the Parking Plan document has been submitted.
- 3) Staff will have two months to combine discussions and reports into a draft Parking Plan to present to the Downtown Parking Committee. That will be done at a meeting to be held on March 25, 2010 at 3:30 p.m. at the Commerce Bank.

- January 13, 2011
- 1) Funding Committee report: Recommends putting parking meters back in downtown. The high tech meters are not financially feasible, so they recommend using the meters that serve two parking spaces each. Propose 50¢ per hour during the day and free nights and weekends.

Also propose making city parking lots automated 24/7 with an incentive of lower rates or a certain amount of free parking would be used to encourage use of the parking lots.

- 2) Discussion on Security and Aesthetics:
 - a) Clint Thompson stated that the cost to rehabilitate the parking garage at 8th and Felix would be about the same as the cost to demolish the structure; staff recommends repairing the structure. The committee highly disagreed with this recommendation. It was the consensus of the group to demolish the top layer of this garage and create a surface lot.
 - b) Regarding the parking garage at 5th & Edmond, Andy Clements stated that the lot would be re-bid in the spring and that the city would charge for parking in this lot as well.
- 3) The committee voted to move forward with this plan and schedule a work session with the City Council.

Recommendations of Parking Committee

The Committee met from July, 2009 to January, 2011 and was divided into four sub-committees: 1) Security and Aesthetics, 2) Marketing, 3) Funding and Enforcement, and 4) Special Events Parking. The committee met on a regular basis and formulated the following information and recommendations.

Special Event Parking Committee Report

- Anytime parking passes would enable you to park anywhere for any amount of time.
- Businesses would have store front passes and they would have control of these passes. These would be given to their patrons to be able to park in front of their business. It would be the responsibility of the business to get the passes back from their patrons.

Aesthetics and Security Committee Report

- Need cleaner and safer facilities

Recommendations:

- 1) Allocate more resources to allow more frequent cleaning of the parking garages.
- 2) Improve lighting in garages.
- 3) Provide security cameras at entrances and exits of existing parking structures.

- “Redressing” Ourselves: Improve pedestrian experiences from car to destination.

Recommendations:

- 1) Conduct design studies to “redress” (restore) existing garages as part of CIP or CID projects to modernize the look of garages. Efforts should be made to minimize the existing negative impact the garages have as structures that detract from the pedestrian experience downtown. *People will see parking as less of a problem if they enjoy the experience of walking a little farther than they might at suburban establishments.*

- Stepping out to greet our public: Removal of the 8th and Felix Street garage.

Recommendations

- 1) Remove the 8th and Felix garage in favor of constructing a landscaped surface lot in the same location, per the latest Downtown Master Plan. This would allow better vision and pedestrian access to the heart of Downtown. Prepare updated cost estimates for work and approach as a CIP project.

Marketing Committee Report

- The main thrust behind downtown parking will be “free, safe and convenient”.
- On-street parking will be free for two hours throughout downtown; it should be for customers only and not for employees working downtown.
- Equip the parking garages with automated machines instead of personnel; four hours of free parking will be allowed in each of the parking garages. The automated machines will be designed to take cash or debit/credit cards for payment of anything over four hours. They should pay for themselves in a matter of a few years.
- Even with automated machines, at least one attendant will need to be available in case the automated machines break down; they could do maintenance/clean up work in the garage the rest of the time.
- Various types of parking passes will be available for purchase. These include an all day-pass into any of the downtown garages for \$5.00/day; a monthly garage parking pass for a specific downtown garage for \$30.00/month; an all access parking pass for on-street parking or garage parking for \$475/year; an all access parking pass for on-street parking or garage parking for one week for \$40; an all access parking pass for businesses to purchase for their customers at a cost of \$625/year; a reserved all access pass for unlimited curbside parking for \$100/month or \$1,000/year.
- The carstops/parking blocks in all parking garages located in the most prime positions will be painted in order to indicate they are for visitor parking only.

- The upper level of the parking garages will be available to rent/lease to people who generally store their vehicles on the street.
- All overtime parking tickets will include a brochure designed to explain the various parking types and locations available in downtown.
- A method of paying parking tickets and obtaining and submitting Requests for Dismissal of Parking Citations will be made available on-line.
- An aggressive advertising campaign is needed to educate citizens on the types of parking and costs for parking in downtown; can also advertise on city busses and on the city's tv channel.
- Signs need to be updated, consolidated and/or removed to make it easier to understand the on-street parking regulations; also, large signs need to be placed in prominent places to point out the city parking lots; those lots also need clear signs indicating which openings are entrances and which are exits.
- Landscaping will be required on all open parking garages to make them more attractive.

In addition to analyzing the current and projected parking needs in Downtown and researching the breadth of approaches (good and bad) used in other cities, the Downtown Parking Committee held a public meeting and a series of committee meetings. The purpose was to help members of the committee understand the challenges that lie ahead and the options for dealing with those challenges, as well as for staff to learn from those "in the trenches" what the problems are, what the strengths of our parking system are, and what they feel is needed to make it better.

Finance Committee Report

- Downtown Parking fund becomes a self sufficient fund with dedicated revenue.
- Re-introduce parking meters at a rate of \$0.50 an hour, 50% occupancy rate.
- Automated garages – allow garage facility to generate revenue 24/7.
- Discount parking garage fees compared to street parking rates.
- Parking revenue generated from "special events" from automated ticket takers.
- Fund large one time expenditures through Capital Improvement Sales Tax.
- Implement a Community Improvement District concept at a later time after downtown has had "success" with parking meter/automated garage implementation.
- Use bonding capacity of parking garages to pay for meters/automated ticket machines.

SECTION III. DOWNTOWN PARKING SYSTEM GOALS AND STRATEGY

Based on experience, research, and current local statistics, parking does not bring people downtown and lack of desirable parking does not keep people from coming downtown. It does not matter what we do with parking rates, parking regulation enforcement, customer convenience, or the availability of parking. The attractions dictate the parking attitude in an area. The popularity of the new shopping developments like Zona Rosa where people have little or no objection to parking in “parking garages” or contributing to parking meters to park on the street and walk several blocks to shop in an outdoor environment makes this obvious. The use of economic development tools to enhance the businesses, attractions, and quality of life in the downtown area should be our ultimate goal.

Goals

- Use the parking system as a tool for economic growth downtown.
- Operate the system in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Seek alternative funding sources to help balance the parking fund deficit and reduce the reliance on funds being shifted from other resources.
- Assess the current parking system to determine areas for expansion, reduction, or to shift specific parking needs (accessible parking, passenger loading and unloading zones, delivery zones, etc.).
- Develop a strategy for continued long-range maintenance. This will be presented to the CIP Steering Committee at the next CIP board session.
- Improve customer convenience and safety.
- Reduce and simplify the existing parking signage.
- Develop and maintain a high level of positive interaction with the parking patrons.
- Establish new policies that address the changing environment and customer needs.

Strategy

- Implement a parking plan for Downtown St. Joseph that serves as a resource for economic development and enhances the downtown experience, but achieves this in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Coordinate downtown parking solutions with recommendations from the Downtown Parking Committee.
- Maintain and improve the current parking system facilities.
- Increase and improve customer service and awareness.
- Create a plan that offers new strategies and policies to allow the system to operate more efficiently.
- The plan will be designed to serve as a comprehensive, working document that provides direction, but allows flexibility to adapt to changing needs in the downtown area.

SECTION IV. Cost Associated with Parking Committee Recommendations for Changes to Downtown Parking

Through the series of meetings, the Parking Committee looked into what current deficiencies exist with current downtown parking and asked City Staff to look into the cost of fixing such deficiencies. In addition, they determined what changes they believe need to be made to the existing parking conditions to enhance and improve the overall effectiveness of downtown parking.

Expenses to Improve Downtown Parking:

5 th Street Parking Lot Renovation		
Parking Lot (6,061.40/parking stall)	\$277,193.00	
Alley	\$124,622.00	
Streetscape	\$146,570.00	
Trash Enclosures	\$ 38,000.00	\$586,385
Provide new lighting to garages:		\$204,000
Provide security cameras in garages and surface parking lot:		\$72,458
Take off panels on garages and improve appearance:		\$300,000
Demo of 8 th & Felix garage:		\$500,085
Improve appearance of Parking Garages:		\$1,500,000
Capital repairs to 6 th & Jules/ 5 th & Felix Parking Garage:		\$450,000
Establish an annual parking garage maintenance fund:		\$50,000
Automated Parking in Parking Facilities:		\$366,150
Additional security downtown: (per year):		\$100,000
Advertising and Marketing: (per year):		\$50,000
Improved signage on garages and directional signage:		\$37,305
Way finding signs		\$30,000
Initial Cost of 384 Duplex Parking Meters		\$377,052

SECTION V. FINANCING PLAN/REVENUE PROJECTIONS

Each year, the City is met with a deficit in the parking fund due to long-term debt service and the expense of maintaining and staffing the parking facilities. In the past, decisions have been made that have created this deficit to the parking fund. Some of the current strategies designed to better serve the customers include free on-street parking which was a by-product of the elimination of all parking meters, discount parking rates in the parking facilities, and below market rate parking fees. These strategies have had a negative effect on City parking revenue resulting in a current system that does not generate enough annual funds to cover the expenses it takes to operate downtown parking. For the past several years, the City has had to balance the parking fund budget with subsidies from other sources. To accomplish the goals established by the Parking Committee and to improve the overall effectiveness of downtown parking, the Committee asked City Staff to identify options for additional revenue tools to help accomplish goals identified in this Plan.

Revenue Options

Community Improvement District (CID)

Best used when there are multiple improvements needed over a large area. It is an economic development tool that allows an entity within a defined area to plan business services and public improvements considered important to their economic vitality, and to share costs through an assessment/tax paid by all in the defined area. With the revenues captured from the assessment/tax, a CID can finance many targeted services, such as general maintenance, marketing, and promotion of downtown.

- **Formation of a CID:** Requested by a petition of property owners within the proposed district (more than 50% by both assessed value and by number of owners). City Council has a public hearing. The District must be approved by ordinance.
- **Management:** The CID can be a political subdivision or a not-for-profit corporation. Both political subdivision CIDs and not-for-profit CIDs must be governed by a board of directors. While the initial petition determines the length of a CID, it can be terminated or extended at any time by vote of the property owners. The board of directors for CIDs will usually decide to hire an executive director and possibly a few staff members to manage the operations of the district. In turn, it is also common to create a business office to provide maximum public exposure to most efficiently carry out the purpose of the CID.
- **Financing:** If a not-for-profit corporation is created, funds are raised through special assessments. If a political subdivision is created, the CID can also levy real property taxes after approval by a majority of property owners in the district.
- **Advantages:**
 - 1) No need to go to Circuit Court to form the district.
 - 2) The district has the ability to construct, reconstruct, maintain, and equip a variety of public improvements.
 - 3) The district has several funding sources available.

4) As a homes/merchants association, CIDs can provide revenue and management services on a flexible basis for residential or commercial areas. Each CID can be custom designed to meet the needs of each district.

- Disadvantages:

- 1) Creating a separate entity can cause problems unless a Redevelopment Agreement is used to stipulate exactly what projects are to be done, how long the district will exist, etc.

How to Establish a CID:

- Establish geographical boundaries for a Community Improvement District (CID). The boundaries for this plan are the Missouri River to 12th Street, Robidoux to Messanie.
- Determine what parking regulations will be designated and what other revenue gathering tools will be used to balance the parking fund.
- Leave most aspects of downtown parking as is except for the creation of CID and impose a sales tax, property tax, or special assessment to create revenue to subsidize the deficit in the parking fund and create revenue for other transportation related improvements. Most people seem to be satisfied with the state of parking in the downtown district. An additional benefit to this plan is that it would create a situation where all businesses, including the ones that do the majority of their business at night and do not typically provide financial support to downtown parking, would be contributing.

CID Revenue Projections:

SALES TAX:

For the current Fiscal Year, the following increments of sales tax based on the estimated current gross sales of \$17,837,000.00 in the Downtown Precise Plan area, would create the associated revenues per year.

.0025	\$39,593
.0050	\$79,185
.0075	\$188,778
.0100	\$158,370

PROPERTY TAX:

For the current Fiscal Year, property tax would generate the following based on a total of \$13,487,720.00 in assessed value for the Downtown Precise Plan area:

.0025	\$24,370
.0050	\$49,740
.0075	\$75,110
.0100	\$98,480

Costs for Downtown Parking Management Plan

Current BID Revenue & Expenses (Business Improvement District)				
Revenue Sources		Expenses	One-Time Expenses	Annual Expense
BID	\$51,935.00	Downtown Partnership Operating		\$22,500.00
		Downtown Clean-up		\$9,700.00
		Maintenance of "Gateway"		\$4,500.00
		Streetscape Improvements	\$8,511.00	
		Christmas lights/Dec.		\$4,717.00
TOTAL	\$51,935.00	TOTAL		\$49,928.00

Proposed CID Revenue & Expenses (Community Improvement District)				
Revenue Sources		Expenses	One-Time Expenses	Annual Expense
CID (sales tax & property tax)	\$130,000.00	Downtown Partnership Operating		\$60,000.00
		Downtown: Marketing Promotion/ Special Events		\$15,000.00
		Landscaping/Trash removal		\$25,000.00
		Capital Improvements		\$30,000.00
TOTAL	\$130,000.00	TOTAL	\$	\$130,000.00

One Time Capital Improvements			
Revenue Sources		Expenses	Cost
CIP	\$3,404,000.00	Demo of 8 th & Felix Garage	\$500,085.00
		Capital Repairs 6 th & Jules 5 th & Felix	\$450,000.00
Cell phone money: Meters	\$339,100.00	New lighting in garages	\$204,000.00
Cell phone – Auto Garages	\$244,100.00	Remove panels from garages	\$300,000.00
Cell phone – Signage	\$20,000.00	Initial Cost of 384 Duplex Meters	\$377,052.00
Cell phone – Cameras	\$72,458.00	Automated Garage Expenses:	\$366,150.00
		Improve signage	\$37,305.00
		Security Cameras - Garage	\$72,458.00
		Way Find Signs	\$30,000.00
		Exterior aesthetics (\$500K/ea)	\$1,500,000.00
		Inflation index	\$200,000.00
CID	\$586,385	Expenses for 5th Street	

		Parking Lot Renovation:	
		Parking Lot @ 6061.40/parking stall	\$277,193.00
		Alley	\$125,622.00
		Streetscape	\$146,570.00
		Trash Enclosures	\$ 38,000.00
TOTAL REVENUE	\$4,666,043.00	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,666,043.00

Costs for Downtown Parking Management Plan

Current Actual Expenses					
Revenue Sources		Current Expenses	One-Time Expenses	Annual Expense	End of Year Balance
City sticker/penalty	\$95,000.00	Operating Costs: Garage Mntnce		\$21,750.00	
Parking violations/fines	\$194,000.00	Fuel/Snow-ice control		\$21,200.00	
Parking Garage Fee's	\$140,500.00	Utilities		\$25,000.00	
Civic Arena surcharge	\$17,000.00	Office/mntnce/billing supplies		\$13,500.00	
Interest on investments	\$3,000.00	Insurance		\$7,000.00	
Trnsfr from Gaming	\$13,000.00	Debt Service (until FY14)		\$76,220.00	
		6 employee salary + benefits		\$242,750.00	
		Transfer to Gen Fund		\$51,000.00	
		Transfer to computer		\$3,700.00	
TOTAL	\$462,500.00	TOTAL		\$462,120.00	\$380.00
Meters + Automated Garages					
Revenue Sources		Expenses	One-Time Expenses	Annual Expense	End of Year Balance
Annual revenue projections		Operating costs		\$510,000.00	
Meters (.50 cents one hour)	\$470,400.00	Annual Meter/Auto Mated Ticket Machine Maintenance		\$25,000.00	
Automated Garages (24/7)	\$175,000.00	Annual Garage Maintenance		\$75,000.00	
Parking violations/fines	\$175,000.00	Additional Security Downtown		\$100,000.00	
		Replacement Expense – meters/ticket takers machines		\$52,307.00	
		One time expenses	\$50,000.00		
TOTAL	\$820,400.00	TOTAL		\$812,307.00	\$8,093.00

Parking Meter Option

One way to gain uniformity with downtown parking is to re-introduce parking meters. Parking meters are effective control devices and sources of needed revenue to subsidize parking expenses. It would be recommended not to re-install the old metal single space parking meters, but to purchase and install a more modern parking meter. The use of parking meters in general has many advantages. Those advantages include:

- Meters produce a higher turnover rate of the on-street parking spaces, which are typically considered convenience spaces for short term customers.
- They can reduce overtime parking.
- They encourage compliance with parking regulations.
- They simplify the enforcement process. The enforcement officers simply have to note if the time purchased for a particular meter or a particular area has expired.
- The parking regulations for regular parking spaces are more uniform.
- Parking rates for the parking lots and structures could be made more attractive for longer term parkers.

Considering there are approximately 768 on-street parking spaces in the Central Business District (3rd – 12th, Robidoux – Angelique), the projected annual income from parking meter fees with an average annual income from the addition of meters could generate \$470,400.00.

Automated Garages

The City currently employs a parking attendant to collect parking fees from downtown customers who use the parking garages. Most communities no longer rely on a person to collect revenue in these types of facilities. Instead, an automated machine prints a ticket to those who enter and the customer pays the ticket upon exit at an automated ticket taker that accepts cash or credit cards. This format allows communities to collect revenue 24/7. Employees who are currently employed as parking attendants are then utilized in other downtown activities.

Once we begin charging parking fees 24 hours a day within the parking garages, the City's largest parking area will become a greater asset to downtown. The concept of automated garages and parking meters goes hand and hand. The intent of parking meters is to charge for premier parking and to increase the opportunity a parking customer will utilize a parking garage. The revenue received from parking meters will help to drive down the cost of parking in parking garages.

Costs Summary for Various Options to Restore Parking Meters in CBD

General Information	
Display =	Digital
Batteries =	9 Volt
Replace Battery =	Fall & Spring

Approximate Number of Spaces =	768
Collection Hours/Day =	10
Collection Days/Yr =	245
Average Usage in Similar Cities =	70%
Current Hourly Rate in Similar Cities =	\$ 0.50

Potential Revenue

Hourly Rates	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.50
Percent of Usage	25	50	70	100	25	50	70	100
Collection Days/Year	245	245	245	245	245	245	245	245
Yearly Revenue	\$117,600	\$235,200	\$329,280	\$470,400	\$235,200	\$470,400	\$658,560	\$940,800

Potential Pay Back

Type of Meters	Costs	Years to Recover Purchase Costs							
		\$0.25/Hr 25%	\$0.25/Hr 50%	\$0.25/Hr 70%	\$0.25/Hr 100%	\$0.5/Hr 25%	\$0.5/Hr 50%	\$0.5/Hr 70%	\$0.5/Hr 100%
Single	\$359,818	\$ 3.06	\$ 1.53	\$ 1.09	\$ 0.76	\$ 1.53	\$ 0.76	\$ 0.55	\$ 0.38
Duplex	\$324,874	\$ 2.76	\$ 1.38	\$ 0.99	\$ 0.69	\$ 1.38	\$ 0.69	\$ 0.49	\$ 0.35

SECTION VI. PARKING PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

The downtown St. Joseph Parking Committee discussed the following options for consideration:

- Re-introduce parking meters downtown and automated ticket machines in the parking garages.
- Establish a Community Improvement District to replace existing Business Improvement District.
- Develop new strategies for educating the public about the parking system. Create a downtown parking map to assist residents and visitors in finding the most convenient available parking for their destination. This map should be available in marketing material and on relevant websites.
- Eliminate the unnecessary signage and only identify special parking restrictions, such as accessible spaces, delivery spaces, and no parking areas.
- Re-assign personnel so that the supervisor takes a more active role in customer assistance and the enforcement personnel also become more visible and active from a security aspect.
- Upgrade lighting and paint the garages to improve the appearance of property.

Additional Recommendations

- Proposed demolition of existing Parking Garage at 8th & Felix. The Parking Committee endorses the appearance of an “open gateway” into downtown as more valuable than a parking garage at this location. The Committee also believes a surface lot would not reduce the number of parking spaces significantly over a garage style parking structure. City Staff would need to further research the cost of demolition to allow the site to be leveled and the ability to construct landscaping as recommended.
- Allow downtown residents a discounted rate for use of parking garages.
- Place security (cameras, videos, motion detectors, personnel) in parking garages.
- Construct exterior improvements onto each parking facility downtown to improve aesthetics.
- Use buses or trolleys to shuttle people from parking locations to work or shopping places.
- Charge for parking in the parking garage for special events at the Civic Arena.
- Using signs, brochures, maps, and websites provide information on parking availability and price. Also, incorporate parking information into general marketing materials.
- Require that any new commercial or multi-resident residential structures being built provide underground parking garages.
- Allow parking garage fees to be discounted to encourage use.
- Encourage the use of remote parking. Longer time limit parking (2 hours and more) should only be placed at locations where parking utilization is low. There may even need to be areas where there are unlimited parking time limits to encourage residents and employees to utilize that parking.
- Make parking regulations more consistent in the downtown area to reduce the patron’s confusion and increase the proper utilization of these spaces.

- Make walking in the downtown area more enjoyable. Continue to improve pedestrian ways and sidewalks. Provide shade and cover. Create shortcuts where possible. Such improvements increase the range of parking facilities that can serve a destination.
- Place Kiosk identification signs in various locations (minimum of one per intersection in higher traffic areas). They should contain information on tourism, available parking, directions to restaurants and entertainment establishments and also have space for public notices. These signs should reflect the Streetscape sign style to maintain consistency. May want to sell advertising on these signs. This might be something we want to partner with the Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Address security concerns. Ensure merchants, vendors, patrons, and tourists *feel* safe and *are* safe in the downtown area. This creates a more pleasant experience for users.
- Parking enforcement needs to be frequent, fair, friendly, and consistent. One idea is to implement a system wherein first time offenders would be given one warning ticket that serves as a friendly reminder of parking regulations. A parking brochure would be attached that identifies available parking information and parking fine information.
- Current parking facilities need to be made more aesthetically attractive with appropriate landscaping and signage indicating parking or “parking availability signs”. The facing of the current parking structures can be changed to something more modern, and they need to be maintained, including graffiti removal and general cleanliness. Improved lighting should make the facilities more inviting and make the users feel more secure. The interior of the garages could also be painted white to help lighten and brighten them. The upgrade of the facilities will probably have to be included in the next CIP.
- Possibly promote locating retail in or next to parking garages. The current parking office seems to be a prime location for this type of opportunity.
- Change the way we identify parking regulations. Use less signage, more aesthetically pleasing signage, or remove most signage by color coding parking spaces or curbs. Try to create some uniformity from block to block on where accessible parking spaces, customer service zones, delivery zones, and other special parking spaces are located so people know where to expect to find those. Parking regulations could be identified by different colored pavers or color coded signs.
- Re-evaluate parking regulations in regards to location. Are all handicap accessible spaces, loading zones, passenger zones, customer service zones, etc. located according to current parking needs? Can some of these special needs spaces be restricted to those needs for a specific time period?

Enforcement and Assistance

The primary change in enforcement needs to be a culture change in how we approach this from a customer service aspect. St. Joseph has always approached enforcement as a police activity, but with the changing environment in the downtown area, the attitude of enforcement needs to change from the “issue a ticket and ask questions later” to one of educating motorists, visitors, and shoppers about the reasons for parking restrictions, helping people find available parking, providing information about the area, and finally enforcing the parking regulations of the area. The parking situation in the downtown area should not be a deterrent for citizens, visitors, and shoppers to visit that area of St. Joseph and it should not be the main topic of discussion of the people who work, visit, shop, and find entertainment downtown. Some changes that will improve parking in the downtown area are:

- Change the main focus of the enforcement personnel into one of assistance first and enforcement second.
- Ensure enforcement personnel understand the parking regulations, interpret them properly, and use discretion and good judgment in issuing parking citations.
- The enforcement and other parking personnel can also take an active role in security at the parking facilities to reduce the vandalism and theft that occur regularly.
- Develop detailed parking information and maps (see illustration below) that can be distributed as informational brochures and be displayed on the City website. The information should include parking regulations in detail.
- Issue a warning ticket for first time offenders. The warning ticket should include a thank you for patronizing downtown businesses and explain parking rules and options.
- Issue annual parking permits to citizens who can prove residency in the downtown area. There would be a cost associated with the permit and it would accommodate individuals who have limited parking options near their residence.
- Allow downtown merchants the option to validate customer parking in garages at a cost of 50% of the parking fee.
- If the enforcement person in the act of writing a ticket is approached by the offending parker, the ticket should be voided and the enforcement personnel should give the offender a warning ticket and parking brochure.

*sample downtown parking map



Improving Signage Issues Downtown

There is a need in downtown St. Joseph to lessen the confusion that signs create — in particular, the signs publicizing the parking restrictions. There are single blocks downtown where there are as many as four different parking restrictions. One block has eight available parking spaces with four different restrictions. The amount of signage seems to have been precipitated through the years for two reasons.

- 1) There was a high rate of parking tickets being dismissed by the judicial system. Basically, the city was told that these tickets were being dismissed due to insufficient signage, so the natural reaction was to put up more signs. The information coming from the judicial system currently is that we can remove some of the signage and they will still enforce the parking regulations as long as it is clear where different parking restrictions begin and end.
- 2) When a downtown merchant requests that the restrictions in a parking area be modified for a specific reason, the City has responded to those requests. This practice has led to the problem of having several different parking restrictions in a one block area. There is also a desire from downtown merchants to either use a different type of pole and sign that is more aesthetically pleasing, or eliminate the traditional signs altogether and use a curb or street indicator to identify different parking restrictions.



A variety of parking signs and restrictions in the 600 block of Edmond Street.

SECTION VII. Parking Committee Recommendations

The Committee Meetings were a great success. The attendees were very supportive and offered great suggestions to help develop a workable plan to address downtown parking. The Committee worked hard to understand the difficulty of managing parking in a walkable downtown and they were very receptive to changing the system in order to make it work well under the new circumstances. In addition, staff learned an incredible amount from those with first-hand knowledge about Downtown's needs and that knowledge has benefited this plan tremendously.

After considering all available strategies, current and projected parking patterns and the needs of the community, a Downtown parking strategy has been developed. In order to meet the new demands that will be placed on the Downtown parking system, the following actions have been recommended as part of the Downtown St Joseph's Parking Management Plan:

Action #1: Institute Market-Rate Pricing

Of all of the options available, only market-rate pricing can guarantee the availability of on-street spaces, convenience, and positive experiences for Downtown visitors. Some people may argue that market-rate prices are too high and will discourage people from coming to Downtown. If parking is under used due to overpricing, then the market-rate approach dictates that we must lower the price (down to free if necessary) to attain an 85% occupancy rate. If the parking is well used, then obviously we haven't run anyone off. Initially, parking charges have to be designated by the City before we can track the occupancy levels and determine accurately what the true market price is. While market-rate prices make sense in theory and have worked well in reality, they create a few challenges for the cities that implement them. The market-rate price isn't likely to be excessive, but it isn't going to be dirt cheap, either. Another issue deals with the desirability of parking spaces. The desirability, and therefore the market-price, will vary from block to block depending on the proximity to popular destinations. In order to get the prices right, we would have to make our best educated guess and set initial prices, and City Staff would then monitor the use to see if our pricing is correct. If the use is too low, we would need to lower the price, and if it the use is too high, we would need to raise the price. Finally, depending on the activity levels throughout the day, the market-price for the evenings may be too expensive for lunchtime, or vice versa. If we overcharge or undercharge during parts of the day, we will not have an optimal system.

I - Automated ticket taker- Garages

Providing automated machines to issue tickets and take revenue will allow the City to have greater control of how to charge for parking in each garage. Automated machines will increase revenue and allow for current employees to provide other services to downtown.

II - Install Pay by Space Parking Meters

The Parking Committee has recommended, "pay-by-space" meters. Each parking space has a meter. The parker then enters the designated area, pays for the desired amount of time, and

is on their way. Meters would be “double headed” to cut down on the number of meters on each block and save initial purchase cost.

Easier enforcement. Enforcement officers do not need to check license plates on each car to see who hasn't paid. They can easily find out who is in violation at the meter itself. Meters are not partial, if the time has expired, the car is in violation.

Action #2: Create a Community Improvement District

Currently, downtown has a Business Improvement District (BID) in place that generates approximately, \$60,000.00 annual to fund the Downtown Partnership and a variety of downtown activities. This special tax assessment is set to expire in 2011. The Parking Committee proposes to discontinue the Business Improvement District upon expiration and to create a Community Improvement District (CID) to provide funding to support the Downtown Partnership and raise funding to use to market and promote downtown and funding to pay for cost associated with enhanced landscaping and trash removal. Parking funds cannot be used to fund these proposed activities, as such; another revenue stream would need to be utilized to fund non-parking activities. A CID is proposed to capture a 0.50¢ sales and property tax that would generate approximately \$130,000 annually. The proposed CID boundary would be the same as the Downtown Precise Plan boundary. CID Board would oversee funds and appropriate as directed with no City oversight.

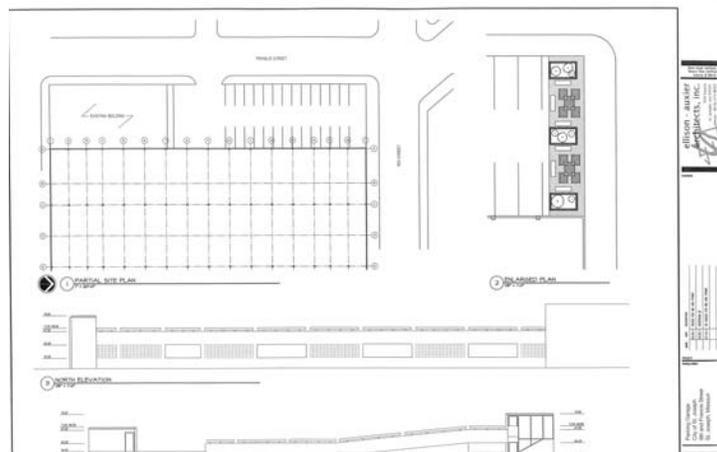
Action #3: Improvements to Parking Garages/Surface Parking Lot

As noted by the Parking Committee, the parking garages have had minimal maintenance and improvements. It is the recommendation of the Committee that a maintenance account be established to fund on-going costs associated with the upkeep of the parking garages. Currently, the City does not have funding to pay for annual maintenance and needed upgrades to these facilities. In addition, it is recommended that each parking garage be updated for aesthetics and structural integrity through the City's Capital Improvement Program.

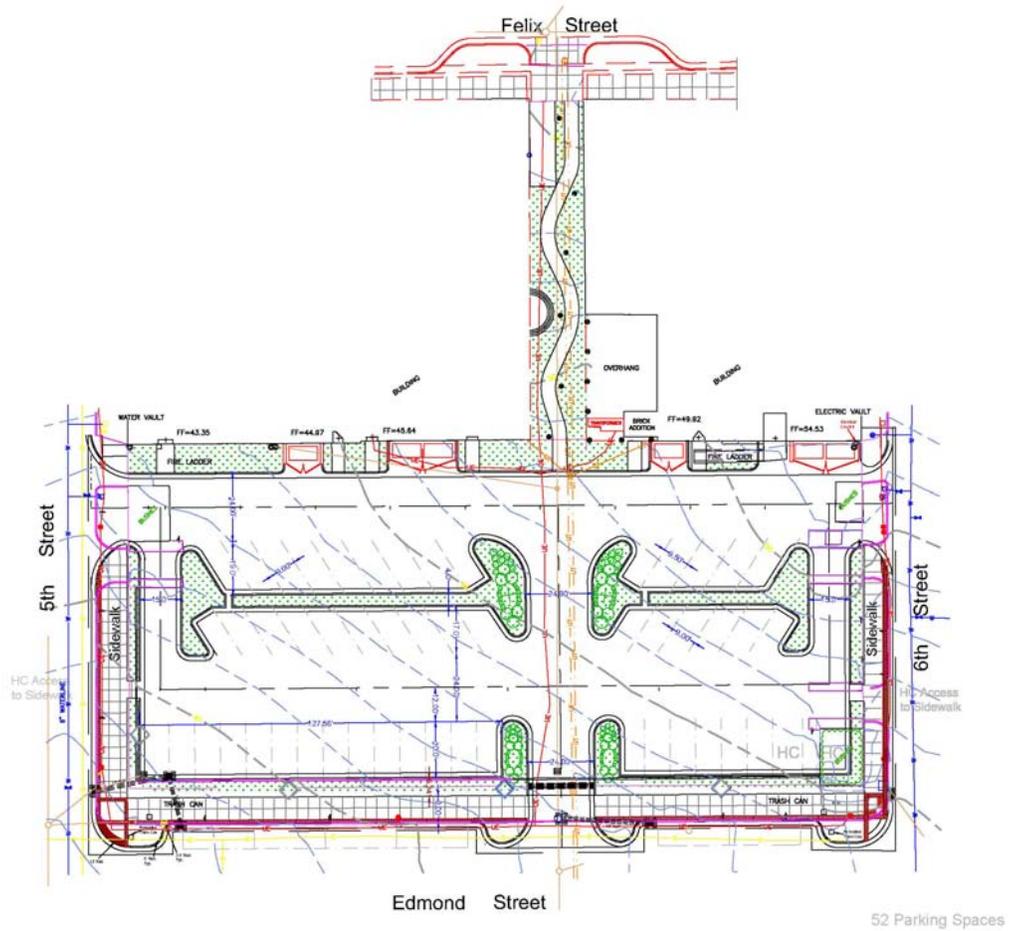
Artist's Rendition of an update to the garage located at 9th & Francis Street.



Possible lay-out for 9th & Francis Parking Lot



In addition to existing parking garage upgrades, the Committee has also recommended the City follow through with plans for improving the surface parking lot located at 5th & Edmond. This parking lot is owned by the City. It is the recommendation of the Committee that we provide automated gating in order to control this parking lot for use at nights and weekends.



Action #4: Provide Security and Establish a Maintenance Fund

The Parking Committee has recognized the need for enhance security downtown, especially at night. It is the recommendation of the Committee to provide for security downtown to patrol the area to make downtown residents, businesses, and customers feel safe and to become a liaison to downtown visitors to answer questions and provide directions when necessary. In addition, establish a maintenance fund for improvement to landscape and trash removal.

SECTION VIII. CONCLUSION

By using all of the tools available to us, we can ensure that parking in the Downtown is a pleasant experience. Our current parking standards and the increasing activity downtown is experiencing are making it necessary to charge market-rate prices for parking. This means that there will no longer be free curbside parking in the core. In return for paying the fair market-price, however, we are able to give much back to the parker:

1. Curbside parking availability will increase.
2. No ticket anxiety for those who pay.
3. No “90 minute shuffle”.
4. Dedicated revenue source to pay for downtown parking expenses.
5. Funding for street cleaning, security, lighting, and other Downtown needs will be made available.

Staff believes that this is a fair trade. Our workshops with Downtown merchants, property owners, and other stakeholders indicate that many in the community also agree that this is a fair trade. Implementing this plan will be much more difficult to do than leaving the system as it is or only making minor modifications, but staff believes that it is necessary to undertake these actions in order to meet the challenges ahead.