

## Reform the Approach to Parking

As in many urban centers, parking in Downtown Dallas has historically been a challenging issue. Having grown from a transit-oriented urban core to a large, multi-district auto-oriented city center, Downtown has experienced tremendous changes. This evolution into a globally-competitive urban center has placed strains on the transportation system and on the ability to meet parking demands and expectations, literally driving away investment and development to outlying suburban areas. **For Downtown Dallas to further evolve and truly move forward as a premier 21st-century city, the current parking paradigm must be reformed.**

The impacts of parking in a city center go far beyond merely warehousing vehicles for a temporary period of time. Parking is the interface between the vehicular and pedestrian experience. For those Downtown visitors who drive, their entire experience begins and ends with parking.



The parking experience for many is often unwelcoming, outdated and desolate, fueling perceptions about the desirability and safety of parking in Downtown.

### KEY ISSUES

The parking study for Downtown Dallas was conducted concurrently with the 360 plan process. A Parking Steering Committee and other focus groups and individual interviews provided guidance and feedback about issues and opportunities with respect to parking in Downtown. Stakeholder groups represented office building owners and managers, parking operators, retailers, restaurateurs, developers, property owners, city and Downtown Dallas Inc. staff, and others.

The following is a summary of key issues:

- Like several other large American cities, Dallas has largely relied upon the private sector to build parking supply in compliance with minimum parking requirements; as a result, with the exception of on-street parking, the City does not own or control any significant parking assets. This limits the City's ability to provide retail support parking, influence the parking market, or promote adaptive in-fill and reuse of existing buildings through the strategic investment in public parking.
- Dallas suffers from another common municipal parking problem; the public parking program is organizationally fragmented and does not address parking in a comprehensive manner. Two key problems stem from this fragmentation: 1) parking policies and programs are not developed or aligned with larger community strategic goals, and 2) the individual program elements (on-street, off-street, enforcement and planning) are being managed as separate elements and not as a coordinated system.
- Stakeholders characterized parking management as “operating in a silo”. It is viewed as an isolated function rather than an integrated component of a larger transportation system. The result can be programs and policies that are out of sync with related programs and in some cases can work at cross purposes.
- Dallas is behind the curve on leveraging new parking technologies as a tool to improve customer service, provide a greater range of payment options, and improve operational efficiency. This was a frequently cited issue from all groups.

- Using parking as an effective component of community and economic development strategies is an opportunity that is not being leveraged in Dallas to the degree it is in other communities.
- Parking consists of many thousands of customer interactions or “touches” everyday. As such, it is real opportunity to affect people's perceptions of Downtown. In communities where parking is managed as a tool to help create and support downtown vitality it can be extremely effective.
- Strategic reinvestment of parking revenues to enhance the parking experience or contribute to other community desired goals (public art, support of transportation alternatives, specific district enhancements, bike share programs) is another missing element.
- A greater focus on parking planning was identified by several groups as an area for improvement. Specifically, the following issues were identified: the need for better tools to understand parking supply/demand dynamics, a reassessment of parking zoning codes and parking requirements, promotion of shared parking, a greater focus on employee and residential parking needs, and the development of parking design guidelines that are integrated with downtown urban design criteria.
- A reassessment of parking rates, fine structures and enforcement practices was highlighted as an area needing attention.
- There is recognition that a centralization of overall parking management policy development with specific and customized parking management strategies for distinct districts and neighborhoods is needed.

In several issues listed above, work is already in process to evaluate a variety of potential solutions. However, the discussion and recommendations here and in the detailed Parking Strategic Plan set forth specific steps to overcome the systemic parking problems in Downtown Dallas.

**PARKING SUPPLY/DEMAND ASSESSMENT**

For the purposes of this study, the Downtown was split into seven distinct Parking Analysis Zones, which generally correspond to the boundaries identified for the seven Core Districts in the 360 plan.

- A. Arts District** – the primary performing and visual arts district in Downtown containing numerous existing and proposed performing arts complexes, including AT&T Performing Arts Center, Wyly Theater, Winspear Opera House, Dallas Museum of Art, Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, and the Nasher Sculpture Center.
- B. Financial District (Thanksgiving Commercial Center)** – located between the Arts District and the Main Street district, this area contains large amounts of office and commercial space and is home to many of the larger office towers throughout Downtown.
- C. West End District** – historic and cultural district with a vibrant nightlife and a large amount of retail, residential and historic sites throughout.
- D. Main Street District** – the heart of Downtown Dallas, this area has experienced great resurgence in the past decade. This area has much of Downtown’s retail, nightlife, hotel and residential life.
- E. Union Station/Reunion** – site of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Union Station and the now demolished Reunion Arena.
- F. Civic Center** – contains many of the government office complexes in the area, including Dallas City Hall, the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library and the US District Court. Also includes the Omni Convention Center hotel, and the Downtown Dallas Convention Center with over 1,000,000 square feet of exhibit space.
- G. Farmers Market** – home to the Dallas Farmers Market and numerous townhome and condominium style residential units.

**Parking as a Land Use**

The total land area within the Downtown freeway loop is approximately 955 acres. The total amount of that land currently dedicated to parking is approximately 257 acres or 27%. Of the total land area dedicated to parking, approximately 125 acres (13%) is currently utilized by surface parking. Structured parking accounts for approximately 132 acres (14%).

**Parking Supply**

There are nearly 69,000 parking spaces in Downtown. Of this total, approximately 50,000 spaces are in parking structures, either above or below ground.

Approximately 17,000 of the total spaces are available in the numerous surface parking lots found throughout the CBD. There are also approximately 2,000 on-street spaces throughout the study area.

**Parking Utilization**

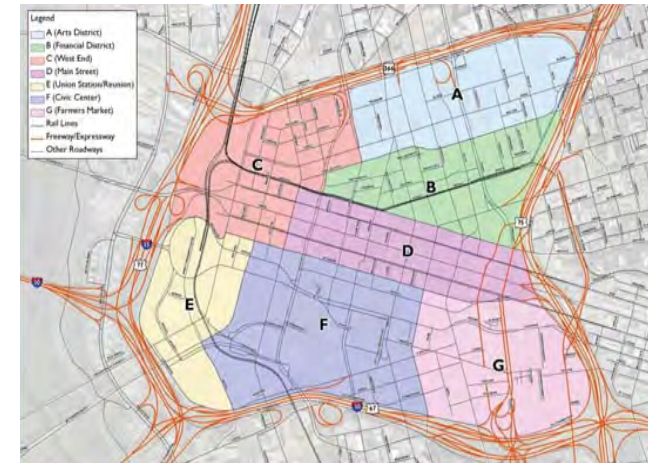
Parking demand (occupancy) was measured on a parking analysis zone basis to better understand localized utilization, but was also combined to reflect the parking needs of the entire Downtown area. Parking demand projections were also developed for multiple parking scenarios including typical weekday conditions, a major convention scenario and a scenario that involved a combination of multiple arts district venue performances. The parking supply/demand analysis revealed that overall the Downtown supply well exceeds demand.

Under the typical weekday scenario, the parking supply exceeded demand overall by 7,146 spaces at the peak demand period. Of the seven defined study area “parking analysis zones”, the Main Street District is the only area to have localized deficiencies, which is a function of the high demands placed on that district by its mixture of residential, retail, restaurant and office uses. Most of the deficiency is offset by available parking in adjacent zones, but there is still a consistent deficit of a little more than 100 spaces after all “zonal balancing” takes place.

Under the major convention scenario there was still an overall surplus of 2,249 spaces, but there were significant parking deficiencies projected for the Main Street District.



Several large surface parking lots currently provide inexpensive parking for Arts District visitors, employees and performers, yet are slated for development, potentially reducing supply.



Seven distinct Parking Analysis Zones generally corresponding with the boundaries of the Core Districts in the 360 plan form the foundation of the parking supply and demand assessment.



On-street parking is vital to the success of retail and entertainment areas, yet existing hours of operation, issuance of citations, and a limited overall supply do not support a customer-friendly experience.



Many Downtown parking structures do not successfully communicate their availability to the general public, furthering a perception of a lack of parking.

### The Parking Demand Model

The parking demand model is a robust and dynamic supply-demand tool that can be used to monitor ongoing changes to Downtown parking demand by maintaining a database of parking supply, land use inventory and multi-modal trip characteristics. With periodic parking occupancy surveys and updates to parking inventory, land use data and alternative mode usage, this tool will allow the City to keep up with parking supply and demand changes going forward.

### Parking Supply/Demand Conclusions

Through the analysis of existing parking and the development of the parking demand model, several themes emerged from both the data and from stakeholder input that shaped understanding and assessment of the parking problem (or perception of parking problems) in the Downtown Dallas area. The true problem with the parking system is not an issue of availability or demand. Rather, the parking problem is one of communication/access to information, identification of public parking assets and limited public parking in key demand areas.

These problems create the real perception of a parking deficiency, especially in areas like the Main Street District, where demand for parking (caused by a large presence of high volume destinations, or trip generators) exceeds the actual “available” supply. While there may be parking near the destination, it may not be visible or in the most desirable parking location. This speaks to the need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to parking management overall.

### ENSURING A POSITIVE DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE: THE PARKING MANAGEMENT COLLABORATIVE

Historically, Dallas has not developed a municipal parking program of consequence, managing only on-street assets with no significant investment in structured parking facilities. This, coupled with most of the structured parking assets being developed and owned by the private sector in response to minimum parking requirements, limits the City’s ability to be more proactive and responsive to solving both perceived and real parking problems. To effect a fundamental change in parking operations that will change perceptions about Downtown and better align parking policies and program development with the overall goals of the Downtown 360 plan, a radical restructuring of parking management is recommended.

For cities such as Dallas, a concept called a “Parking Management Collaborative” provides in cooperation with private sector parking owners a centralized parking coordination function that focuses on creating a unified parking brand; a shared validation program; common parking signage for participating facilities; standards for maintenance, lighting and security; a central information clearinghouse; and special events coordination at a minimum. Investment in the development of such a comprehensive parking management strategy will put a defined focus on a system that literally touches hundreds of thousands of customers per day and therefore can have a substantial impact on how the Downtown is perceived. This approach provides the organizational foundation to provide the vision, leadership and focus needed to create and advance a more comprehensive approach to parking management and ultimately the creation of an integrated access management strategy for the Downtown.

Successful and progressive parking programs in the U.S. today are those where parking is managed by organizations that have, as their primary mission, downtown development, downtown district management or urban revitalization.



Because of this broader community development perspective, these agencies manage parking not as an end unto itself, but as one mechanism to achieve their larger strategic goals and thus they make different decisions relative to parking policies compared to traditional parking programs that are often guided by revenue, enforcement or regulatory objectives. What will be needed to take on this aggressive program is the right leadership and staffing to lead the change.

By adopting an unwavering commitment to exceptional customer service, promoting strong urban design and progressive planning principles, and developing high quality facilities, the new Parking Management Collaborative can ensure success. Investing in and overseeing these high quality service and management techniques will greatly improve the overall Downtown experience, resulting in a more successful and economically vibrant Downtown.

### THE ROAD FORWARD: A PARKING STRATEGIC PLAN

Around the country, parking management programs are being elevated to new levels of success and performance. These programs are guided by a new strategic approach to parking management. While an overview and discussion of core strategies is presented in the 360 plan, the larger Parking Strategic Plan for Downtown Dallas (a separate document) provides greater detail with respect to guiding principles, actions, tools and other features. The defining characteristics of parking management strategic plans include:

- Investing in strong program leadership
- Creating community partnerships
- Improving customer service and creating new standards of parking facility safety, maintenance and ease of use
- Developing a comprehensive approach to both parking and transportation issues
- Aligning and integrating with larger community strategic goals
- Leveraging new technological advances

- Creating a defined parking investment strategy
- Promoting the new generation of parking facility designs and integrated mixed-use facilities
- Applying sustainable design and management principles

The development of a well-defined and comprehensive parking management program has several important impacts. Parking can fully realize its potential as a critical component of Downtown infrastructure. Similarly, it can be more effectively leveraged as an economic development strategy, as a customer service agency, and as an important element in a larger, multi-faceted community access system. Seeing parking in this light will help Downtown Dallas achieve its goals of emerging as a world-class urban environment.

### Overview

The comprehensive parking strategic plan begins with restated Vision, Mission and Objectives Statements. These statements clearly present a move away from “parking as usual”. In addition to a series of well defined guiding principles, a major organizational element of the parking strategic plan is a set of core strategies, described below. This organizational structure is important, especially in the parking arena, where it is very easy to fall into “tactical mode” dealing with a multitude of operational issues, which are important, but often detract from larger strategic goals. Because of the large number of action items, several key action items will be identified as “Priority Action Items”, identified in Chapter VI. These critical action elements will create the foundation upon which the remaining action items can be built.

### Draft Vision Statement

*A Downtown parking district management organization will be developed to be responsive to the needs of customers and stakeholders and to effectively leverage parking and related access management strategies as tools for economic development.*

The new parking management entity will create proactive and effective public parking policies and provide a vertically integrated parking management function that will oversee, at a minimum, on-street parking, public off-street parking, parking enforcement and parking planning functions. The new parking entity may also oversee the development of new, strategically positioned public parking assets or alternative transportation programs as needed to support the goals of the 360 plan.

### Draft Mission Statement

*The Downtown Parking Management District will provide exemplary customer service for the Downtown Dallas community. The Downtown public parking management programs and policies will be aligned with the overarching goals of the 360 plan.*

### Draft Objective Statement

*To implement strategic parking action plan recommendations based on community developed guiding principles for the Downtown Dallas Parking Management District that support the development of a vibrant, healthy and accessible city center.*

The plan will meet the parking and access needs of commercial, retail, entertainment and residential uses of Downtown Dallas. The plan will also be integrated with the larger economic development, neighborhood redevelopment plans and larger transportation system development efforts.



Universal valet parking systems, where one operator offers car drop-off and pick-up at numerous locations throughout Downtown, are effective in enhancing customer access and supporting a “park once” strategy.



Economic development is at the heart of the new organization's responsibilities.

### CORE STRATEGY ELEMENTS

The Parking Strategic Plan emphasizes the following core strategy elements. There are other guiding principles identified in the larger Parking Strategic Plan, but the five core strategy elements noted below form the primary focus of the plan.

#### Organization and Leadership

1. Consider housing the oversight management of the public parking program under DDI. This move is designed to provide two major advantages: it will provide the full-time focus required to advance the parking system; and it will align parking policy development with Downtown vitality enhancement strategies. The transfer of management responsibilities for City-owned assets is typically done using a parking management agreement.
2. Hire a parking professional to provide the needed expertise and focus to bring the envisioned parking management program to fruition. This individual should be an “executive” capable of providing vision, leadership and communications to a wide range of community leaders and groups.

#### Economic Development

1. Develop policy directives that are the result of collaborative work between DDI, City Council and City staff, involved district stakeholders and other Downtown agencies to guide the parking program.
2. Assign the Downtown Dallas Parking Management District (PMD) a leadership role in parking management oversight and public parking policy development that will leverage parking as a key element of the Downtown's economic development strategy.
3. Use PMD resources to promote mixed-use and shared parking strategies as well as development incentives to spur investment in Downtown. Other investments, may include the development of a parking retail support strategy, parking validations or “First Hour Free” programs. Other forms of

parking revenue reinvestment back into the districts in which they are generated will be encouraged.

4. Embark on a limited and strategic parking facility investment program with three primary goals to:
  - 1.) Create a core of strategically located public parking assets;
  - 2.) Stimulate targeted economic development opportunities; and
  - 3.) Address specifically identified parking deficiencies.
5. Create a specific parking policy linking parking and economic development (a draft policy will be provided in the Parking Strategic Plan document). Within that policy a “five-to-one return on investment criteria” is recommended.

#### Leveraging Technology

1. Become an early adopter of technology solutions to enhance customer parking information and service options. One major goal is to make parking less of an impediment and more of an amenity to visiting Downtown.
2. Streamline and simplify access to Downtown Dallas. One early initiative is to convert to single space meters to multi-space meters in the Downtown core.
3. Reduce costs through improved operational efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Downtown Dallas will be known as a leader in the implementation and effective utilization of “Smart Parking Technologies”.

#### Customer Service / Downtown Experience Enhancement

1. Make parking a customer friendly element of the overall Downtown Dallas experience to support Downtown as a desirable destination for businesses, shopping, dining and recreation.
2. Develop and operate parking facilities that are convenient, safe and friendly for businesses and their patrons.

3. Set the community standard for parking facility cleanliness, customer amenities and security through regularly scheduled operational and safety audits of parking facilities.
4. Develop community partnerships to encourage parking facility interior environment enhancements to improve parking experience of customers and enhance the Downtown experience in general.

### Effective Parking Management

1. Support the development of a forward thinking, “best in class,” parking management program.
2. Anticipate future patron needs in the context of the 360 plan and seek to integrate supportive parking and multi-modal access strategies as appropriate.
3. Evaluate other parking management best practices and new technologies on an on-going basis.
4. Routinely address effective facility maintenance, infrastructure reinvestment and other system management fundamentals.

### Urban Design/Planning

1. Use parking garage design to support and emphasize good mixed-use development.
2. Identify potential parking development locations with the greatest benefit to existing and future demands.
3. Develop new parking facility design guidelines.
4. Develop a recommended parking development policy and program (linked to the Downtown economic development plan).
5. Use good urban design principles to maximize the “value” of parking.
6. Adopt and promote “Green Parking Design” principles.

### SYNERGISTIC OPPORTUNITIES

An important element of the Parking Strategic Plan approach is a focus on “synergistic opportunities”. The new parking management entity should identify and prioritize strategies that can solve multiple problems. For example, the shift from single space parking meters to multi-space meters with a pay-by-cell phone option can aid in accomplishing all of the following goals:

#### Enhanced Customer Experience

- Multiple payment options (customers are no longer complaining because they don’t have change for the meter)
- The option to get a receipt (important to Downtown business people)
- Customers can receive a text message notifying them that their meter is about to expire, giving them the option to add more time via cell phone from their current location and allowing them to enjoy Downtown Dallas longer (which generally leads to more spending in Downtown)
- If all the meters are networked, a patron can add time to any meter if needed, not just the one by their car (pay-by-space option)
- The implementation of these new technologies can enhance the overall image of Downtown

#### Improved Urban Streetscape

- Reduced streetscape clutter (one meter per block vs. eight meters)
- Reduced signage and clutter

#### Improved Operating Efficiency

- Enforcement officers go to one machine or receive text messages about over-time stays (rather than having to physically check each meter)
- Meters hold more coins, and up to 60% of transactions will shift to credit card payment, equating to less frequent visits to empty the meters
- Wireless notification of when a meter is approaching “full” allows for “Just in Time” collections and thus improved efficiency

#### Enhanced Revenue

- Generally speaking, multi-space meters (primarily due to credit card acceptance) can generate between 15% & 30% in increased revenues on the same number of spaces (without a rate increase)

### Sustainability

- Solar powered meters
- Reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from “parking cruising”



Multi-space meters remove sidewalk clutter and increase payment options for visitors.