

Guiding Themes and Principles

A. INTRODUCTION

As the result of discussions with the Parking Advisory Committee in three work sessions, the consultant team has attempted to summarize the many comments, ideas and themes that emerged from these meetings into a draft set of **Guiding Principles**. The Guiding Principles are designed to guide and inform future decision-making on issues related to access and parking management. Strategically, the principles encourage the use of parking resources to support economic development goals and effectively serve the diversity of “customers” using the downtown.

The Guiding Principles outlined here are summarized under theme categories and will serve as a foundation for continuing discussions with stakeholders and the community. Ideally, these Guiding Principles will establish a basis for consensus; giving direction to near- and long-term decisions for parking management and access strategies in the downtown.

B. BACKGROUND

The development of Guiding Principles for parking in downtown Springfield supports creation of a parking system that facilitates and contributes to a vital and growing downtown. Guiding Principles are based on the premise that development of the downtown will require an integrated and comprehensive package of strategies to stimulate economic development and redevelopment. The ensuing parking plan becomes but one critical element of a larger coordinated package for economic growth.

The consultant team believes the results of stakeholder input can be summarized into seven Guiding Themes (listed below). Within the themes are fourteen (14) principles. The themes and principles are followed by some of the important consensus challenges and/or desired outcomes addressed as synthesized from direct stakeholder inputs in the PAC work sessions.¹

C. RECOMMENDED GUIDING THEMES AND PRINCIPLES

Statement of Purpose

It is the primary objective of the City of Springfield to implement a Parking Management Plan for the downtown that supports the development of a vibrant, growing and attractive destination for shopping, working, living, recreation and entertainment. The components of this plan need to be simple and intuitive for the user, providing an understandable system that is safe, secure, affordable and well integrated into other access modes (i.e., transit, bike and walk).

I. GUIDING THEME – ACCESS

- a. *Correlate parking requirements more directly to mixed-use development vision for downtown.***

¹ PAC goals, objectives and consensus themes are detailed in draft form in **Downtown Parking Study Parking Advisory Committee Summary Document (November 17, 2009)**.

Parking should not be oversupplied or required in a manner that conflicts with dense, compact and mixed-use urban design. Parking should be provided to support desired and priority economic activities in downtown.

Challenges and desired outcomes:

- Create a realistic roadmap for improvement and change.
- A plan that provides the City with credible information about the realities of parking in Springfield that separates the myths from reality, which helps the community understand changes that will result from the plan.
- Minimize parking development costs in new developments.
- Transit, bike/walk and alternative modes should result in less parking need over time.

b. *Parking should be just one of a diverse mix of access options available to users of the downtown.*

Stakeholders recognized that the parking management plan being developed and implemented provides just one means of access to the downtown. Over time, downtown's economic growth will be better served if parking management is also integrated with transit, bike, walk and rideshare options.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- The parking system is not yet formatted in a way that best serves the area.
- Need to better integrate the parking supply with other modes of access.
- Need bicycle and walking options and infrastructure as well as good parking.
- A parking plan that is well thought out and can be communicated effectively to multiple stakeholders.
- Facilitate good decision making and cost effectiveness.

II. GUIDING THEME – PRIORITY CUSTOMER

a. *Make the downtown conveniently accessible for the priority user of the public parking system – the patron of downtown.*

The first priority “customers” of Springfield for parking and parking management in public parking assets is the short-term patron trip; those who come repeatedly to shop, dine, recreate and be entertained (i.e., those who spend money). The general profile of the patron is short-term stays that result in a high turnover of parking in the district.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- The parking system is not yet formatted in a way that best serves the area.
- Convenient parking that is easy to find, use and understand.
- A parking system that serves and attracts customers.
- The plan should produce the best mix of parking to strategically serve all types of users (i.e., visitors, employees and residents).
- The parking system supports and attracts more retail to the downtown.
- Employees/owners parking in front of their businesses all day on street.
- High mix of all day parking on-street.

- Conflicts in the parking supply between customer and employee demand.
- Not enough turnover and/or appropriate time stays for parking in the district.

III. GUIDING THEME – *PRIORITY PARKING ON-STREET*

- a. **Recognize that on-street parking is a finite resource and should be managed to assure maximum access for the priority customer.**

All users of the downtown favor on-street parking. The parking management plan recognizes this premium on-street parking resource needs to be managed to provide a rate of customer/patron turnover that supports downtown vitality. With this principle comes the recognition that growth in downtown parking demand will, over the longer term, need to be accommodated in off-street locations. Longer-term patron and employee parking must be managed so as not to conflict with customer parking, particularly on-street.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- A parking system that serves and attracts customers.
- Parking should contribute to a positive image of the downtown.
- Conflicts in the parking supply between customer and employee demand.
- Not enough turnover and/or appropriate time stays for parking in the district.
- Minimize conflicts for parking space between different users.
- Assure that the on-street parking supply has the correct format of time stay designations for priority users.
- The plan should result in an on-street turnover rate that is good for downtown and adjacent uses.
- The parking system supports and attracts more retail to the downtown.

IV. GUIDING THEME – *EMPLOYEE PARKING & OFF-STREET CITY-OWNED SUPPLY*

- a. **Provide sufficient and affordable parking to meet downtown employee demand, in conjunction with an access system that provides balanced and reasonable travel mode options.**

Adequate parking to meet employee demand should be provided in conjunction with a transportation system that offers multiple travel options. Access management strategies should result in larger percentages of employees using off-street parking locations and/or alternative modes to reduce overall demand for commuter parking. Also, employee-parking strategies should be coordinated with transportation demand management goals and objectives to ensure that commuters have reasonable and affordable access options. Private sector businesses should partner with the City to provide meaningful incentives to employees to use transit, bike, walk and ridesharing options.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- The format of off-street facilities needs work to assure that employees and customers are parked where we want them and where it best serves downtown.
- There is “unused parking” throughout the downtown. This is not efficient.

- In the future, an employee's primary mode of access should be through a greater mix of access options (i.e., transit, bike, walk).
- Make parking more predictable.
- The plan should produce the best mix of parking to strategically serve all types of users (i.e., visitors, employees and residents).
- Rates and fees (if necessary) that are easy to understand, affordable, cost effective and supportive of businesses.

b. If parking in City owned supply exceeds the 85 percent full standard, employee parking should be transitioned and/or phased out to assure priority customer parking is accommodated.

How publicly owned facilities are managed will be critical to balancing the mix of short and long term stay needs off-street, particularly as the capacity of on-street space for priority patrons will be filled and, possibly, exceeded over time. To this end, the City will manage its parking to accommodate visitors and customers, with any remaining capacity to be managed for employees and long-term stays. In early phases of parking development, the mix of parkers in City owned supply may be heavily weighted to employees. As demand for parking increases, the off-street mix will likely trend to a higher percentage of patron/visitor use.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- Access management strategies should move larger numbers of employees into alternative modes over time.
- Transit in particular should bring an increased percentage of total employee trips to the downtown over time.
- The off-street parking system should be managed to accommodate a high mix of employees, patrons/visitors needing a longer term stay option.
- In the future, an employee's primary mode of access should be through a greater mix of access options (i.e., transit, bike, walk) recognizing that each employee auto trip to Springfield uses a parking space that could be used by patrons of the area.
- Within any off-street supply managed or owned by the City, employees should be managed into satellite areas and lots or alternative modes if parking constraints conflict with patron visits in the core of downtown.

V. GUIDING THEME – UNDERSTANDABILITY & QUALITY

a. *Provide a "parking product" in the downtown that is of the highest quality to create a safe and positive customer experience with parking and the downtown.*

On-street parking should be uniformly managed and enforced to assure parking is user-friendly – “easy to access and easy to understand.” Off-street facilities (surface and structured) should be of uniform quality and identity to create a clear sense of safety, convenience, understandability and coordination with the pedestrian environment. High quality communication and marketing materials should be integrated into a comprehensive package of services to inform and guide the parking public (through signage, branding and/or wayfinding) into the on- and off-street parking system.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- Easy to find parking and a good “parking experience.”
- Make parking more predictable.
- The system is not easy to use, particularly for newcomers to the district
- A parking plan that is well thought out and can be communicated effectively to multiple stakeholders.
- Access is not intuitive to “outsiders”
- Poor informational signage.
- Parking in the district is hard to understand (i.e., signage, directional systems, location of supply, etc.).
- Legible wayfinding to parking

b. Provide safe, secure and well-lit parking to allow a sense of security at all times on street and off-street.

Each public off-street lot/garage shall be adequately maintained so as to not deter potential users based on poor design, lot pavement quality or perceived security issues. Safe and well-lit links between parking areas and shopping and work sites should be planned for and provided as well.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- A parking system that is safe and secure.
- A parking system that has well designed facilities.
- Springfield needs to work on its front door “curb appeal” and perceptions of downtown
- Parking provided by the public should be able to cover its costs for operation, maintenance and security.

VI. GUIDING THEME – MULTIMODAL ACCESS

a. Transition more downtown employees into alternative modes (i.e., transit, bike, walk, rideshare) through business-based programs and incentives.

This will ensure that parking constructed by the City in the future serves customer/visitor access in the downtown at the highest level of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- Transit, bicycling, ridesharing should become an "option that patrons can choose" as a means of accessing downtown.
- Transit, bicycling and ridesharing should become a "realistic and cost-effective option that a greater percentage of employees will choose" as a means of accessing downtown.

b. Calibrate parking standards to support the City’s goals for transit, biking, walking and ridesharing.

Parking development standards should be logically correlated to the City’s goals and objectives for access, which includes not only parking access but transit,

biking, walking and ridesharing as well. Parking standards should be established that meaningfully contribute to the City's overall goals for access and commuter mode splits.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- Create a realistic roadmap for improvement and change.
- Facilitate good decision making and cost effectiveness.
- The parking program meets the needs of the downtown vision.
- Parking should be coordinated with other access modes (i.e., transit, bike and bike parking, walk, etc.).

VII. GUIDING THEME – COORDINATION

a. Centralize management of the public parking supply and assure a representative body of affected private and public constituents from within the downtown informs decision-making.

Publicly owned parking in the on- and off-street supply needs to be managed in a coordinated manner. Decision-making should be coordinated through a central management structure informed by a representative body of private and public constituents from within the downtown.

The finite nature of on-street parking necessitates strategic integration of parking decisions to facilitate a seamless, recognizable and convenient transition of future growth into off-street facilities. Also, the overall parking management system needs to be coordinated with a strategic and supportive relationship with transit and other access modes.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- A system that is coordinated and timed to new development.
- Create a realistic roadmap for improvement and change.
- A parking plan that is well thought out and can be communicated effectively to multiple stakeholders.
- A plan that provides the City with credible information about the realities of parking in Springfield that separates the myths from reality, which helps the community understand changes that will result from the plan.
- The parking management plan should provide strategies that are “timely,” assuring implementation that matches need, convenience and funding (a phased plan).
- Facilitate good decision making and cost effectiveness.

b. Implement measurements and reporting that assures Guiding Principles are supported and achieved.

Committing to a routine and objective system of measurement and reporting assures that decision-making will be informed. This also provides a basis for routine evaluation of program effectiveness.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- A plan that provides the City with credible information about the realities of parking in Springfield.
- Facilitate good decision making and cost effectiveness.

c. Manage the public parking supply using the “85% Rule” to inform and guide decision-making.

The “85% Rule” is an operating principle and industry based management tool for coordinating a parking supply. When occupancies routinely reach 85% in the peak hour, more *intensive and aggressive* parking management strategies are called for to assist patrons in finding available parking. The “85% Rule” standard will facilitate the City and the community in making reasonable and effective decisions regarding time stays, enforcement and other decisions related to capacity management.

Challenges and desired outcomes:

- Better control of parking in the area.
- Manage parking to maximize on-street parking for retail and street level businesses (i.e., reduce/eliminate employees parking on street over time).
- Parking management should encourage effective turnover on-street and support good traffic circulation.
- A plan that supports and encourages growth of healthier businesses and supports better/higher use of land.

d. Encourage and create incentives for shared parking in areas where parking is underutilized.

Public and private parking facilities in some areas have underutilized capacity. Efforts should be made to facilitate shared use agreements between different users (public and private) to direct parking demand into these facilities to both maximize existing parking resources and minimize overall parking development costs.

Challenges and desired outcomes addressed:

- The parking system is not yet formatted in a way that best serves the area.
- There is “unused parking” throughout the downtown. This is not efficient.
- The format of off-street facilities needs work to assure that employees and customers are parked where we want them and where it best serves downtown.
- The parking system supports and attracts more retail to the downtown.
- A system that is coordinated.

D. SUMMARY

The Guiding Themes & Principles derived from dialogues with stakeholders and businesses can serve as a solid foundation for coordinating parking and transportation decision-making and policy. The Guiding Principles are grounded in the long-term economic development vision of the City of Springfield and its downtown stakeholders. Their intent and purpose is to generate

parking and transportation management strategies and programs that will complement the City and community's efforts in attaining its long-term growth and development objectives.

Draft