City of Springfield, OR
Downtown Parking Study
Parking Advisory Committee Summary Document
(as of November 2009)

This document is a summary of stakeholder work sessions now underway in the *Downtown Springfield Parking Study*. The purpose of this document is to capture stakeholder discussion about the parking plan, community priorities about downtown development and parking and to serve as a foundation document for developing policies, programs and strategies for parking management. At this time, the document is incomplete in that it reflects only Committee discussions to date. As subsequent work sessions are held and finalized, additional information will be incorporated herein.

A. OUTCOMES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

To develop a parking and access plan for the downtown, it is first necessary to understand the dynamics of land use, access and growth that are unique to Springfield. Community perceptions and realities regarding constraints that limit existing businesses from expanding and those that limit downtown's ability to attract new business and residential growth to the area need to be fully considered. Similarly, opportunities and successful programs/strategies that currently contribute to area's health need to be understood in order to ensure they are supported and enhanced by any new parking and access strategies developed.

To this end, work sessions with the Parking Advisory Committee (PAC) are being held to establish a consensus view of these challenges and opportunities.

1. Desired Outcomes

Committee members were asked to take a moment and state what they would like to see as an outcome of this process. For example, if a new parking management program were developed, what beneficial outcomes would be derived? A bulleted list of those desired outcomes are provided below.

As the study moves forward, the Consultant Team will endeavor to develop a plan and strategy that can best meet these outcomes.

- Create a realistic roadmap for improvement and change.
- Convenient parking that is easy to find, use and understand.
- Make parking more predictable.
- 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.
- A parking system that serves and attracts customers.
- Parking should contribute to a positive image of the downtown.
- Parking that is well located to support the downtown vision and managed to be "always available."
- A parking system that is safe and secure.

- A parking system that has well designed facilities. Garages should be required to have ground level active use.
- Parking provided by the public should be able to cover its costs for operation, maintenance and security.
- Rates and fees (if necessary) that are easy to understand, affordable, cost effective and supportive of businesses.
- Revenues or fees from parking in the downtown should go back to the downtown (e.g., parking enterprise fund).
- 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.
- Parking information that is well communicated (e.g., integrated roadway directional signage).
- The plan should produce the best mix of parking to strategically serve all types of users (i.e., employees, visitors and residents.
- 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.
- A system that is coordinated and timed to new development.

It was clear from the listing of desired outcomes that Committee members feel the current system of parking management may, at this time, lack the integration and consistency necessary to achieve the larger vision of a growing, vibrant and "friendly" business district. Similarly, the theme of the need to better "understand" parking runs through many of the stated outcomes as does the need to communicate a "system" of parking that results in a parking strategy that supports more retail and visitor activity in the downtown. The strategy itself will need to be timed to new development growth. In short, to get to the desired outcome of a usable and friendly parking system, requires more clarity and coherency in how parking is, and will be, managed.

2.   Opportunities – Consensus Themes

PAC members discussed programs, strategies or elements that are currently in place and "working for Springfield" by contributing to its success and supporting its unique business and economic growth. Opportunities expressed ranged from Springfield's unique business environment to its strong sense of community and small town feel. As one stakeholder explained, "Springfield has the atmosphere of a *real* downtown; we need to build on that." The parking management program being developed should strive to leverage these positive opportunities.

Three opportunity themes were clearly distinguished. They are briefly detailed here, with clarifying bullet points taken from the Committee discussion following each theme: [1]

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[1] The themes are not listed in any rank order. Each theme has an important impact on Springfield's ability to achieve its strategic vision and should be considered equally in the context of multiple challenges.

✓ *While parking is an issue, Springfield has a solid foundation to build upon*. PAC members felt that there are positive aspects of the current parking system and the downtown area that will strengthen and be compatible with a more refined parking management program.

- The downtown is pleasant and walkable.
- Small town feel – a real downtown; an authentic downtown.
- The river and downtown's historic legacy.
- Unique architecture (40 historic buildings).
- Unique retail that is not "big box."
- A small town with potential.
- Lane Transit (LTD) is right in the downtown.
- A good base of jobs, where businesses can co-locate next to government services.

✓ *A sense that the near term parking supply may be adequate, just inefficiently managed.*

Though all Committee members agreed that parking (and new parking supply) is a key issue for the future, in the near term simple "fixes" can be made to reap immediate benefits to the downtown.

- Directional signage could quickly guide people where we want them to go.
- Enforcement could create immediate changes within the parking supply.
- There are lots of opportunities to "add back" parking in areas that appear to unnecessary limit parking (e.g., many on-street locations).

✓ *A positive sense about downtown Springfield's potential.* The PAC noted that the work being undertaken by Crandall Arambula, the parking study and other "small steps in the right direction" create a sense that success, growth and vitality are possible for the downtown. These efforts can establish a foundation for growth, investment and revitalization. As one committee member noted, for many in the downtown "there is a passion for the downtown and a true sense of community" that is based on a core belief in Springfield's potential.

- A unique mix of "business" that can attract customer trips (i.e., museum, the Wildish, two high schools, antique stores, a Farmers Market and the Library – to name a few).
- A base of commercial and government jobs.
- Downtown has a wonderful human scale.
- With a few improvements, downtown could be very walkable.
- Downtown is quirky, friendly and historic.
- Downtown has unique qualities that include the river, murals, history and architecture.

Overall, programs and strategies that continue to support and enhance the opportunity themes developed by the Committee can serve as a framework through which the consensus challenges are best addressed.

3.   Challenges to Access - Consensus Themes

Committee members discussed their insights into the major challenges (parking and development) facing downtown Springfield today. They were asked to consider these challenges as they influence Springfield's ability to remain vital and to attract and retain business.

Challenges ranged from general perceptions of parking to actual physical infrastructure that limits access and creates negative perceptions. For purposes of this report, the stated challenges have been condensed into four "consensus themes." These themes are presented below, with clarifying bullet points taken from the SAC discussion following each theme.

✓ *Springfield needs to work on its front door "curb appeal" and perceptions of downtown.* There is a sense that the downtown area is a hidden gem, limited because of issues related to image and access barriers exacerbated by high through traffic volumes. Though not specifically a parking problem, the issue of helping visitors find the downtown easily and conveniently will be essential to support the attractiveness of new business (and downtown residential) growth.

- Through traffic and high speeds are very negative.
- Deteriorating infrastructure (buildings, roadways).
- Downtown is too noisy from truck traffic and vehicle speeds.
- The 300 and 400 blocks have real safety and security problems (high arrests).
- North A has safety problems as well.
- There is a perception that there is a lack of business diversity.
- There is an overall negative perception of public safety in downtown.
- Poor street lighting.

✓ *The parking system is not yet formatted in a way that best serves the area.* The issue of how parking is provided in Springfield to meet economic goals and objectives is critical to the success of a parking management plan. Issues of who the priority "customer " is and how to accommodate other, secondary priorities will be a key to establishing a balanced and workable plan for the business district.

- 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.
- 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.

✓ *The system is not easy to use, particularly for newcomers to the district.* Several Committee members noted the current parking format is difficult to use and understand. This can have an adverse impact on district business viability. Compounding this is the sense that directional and information systems for patrons are inadequate. The need for aggressive and sustained marketing and communications will be important.

- 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.).

✓ *While starting with a good foundation, Springfield needs to attract a more diverse mix of "business" that includes retail, office and residential.* The parking plan needs to be structured to assure that (a) existing businesses benefit and (b) new businesses are attracted to Springfield because access systems are effective and business supportive.

- Need better eating establishments and bars/pubs.

- Need evening activities/businesses that keep and attract people downtown after regular business hours.
- Need "fixed budget" stores and gerontology uses.
- Improve the mix of all businesses.
- Need for housing downtown.
- Need bicycle and walking options and infrastructure as well as good parking.
- Downtown needs a marketing strategy and implementation of that strategy.

B. BECOMING AN "IDEAL DOWNTOWN"

As a precursor to a future discussion for developing Guiding Principles for parking, the PAC was led through a discussion on the elements or building blocks that make up "ideal" downtowns. Committee members were asked to list elements that make up their perception of a memorable or ideal downtown, in Oregon and generally. The PAC members were also asked to mention cities they had been to that contained elements that uniquely distinguished a *downtown* area as interesting, user friendly, successful or "ideal."

Cities mentioned are included in Table 1:

Table 1
Ideal Downtowns

• Austin, TX	• Hood River, OR
• Ashland, OR	• Los Gatos, CA
• Bend, OR	• Salem, OR
• Boston, MA	• San Antonio, TX
• Boulder, CO	• San Francisco, CA
• Copenhagen, Denmark	• Santa Fe, NM
• Corvallis, OR	• Sisters, OR
• Glendale, AZ	• Vancouver, BC
• Hillsboro, OR	

After creating a list of cities, the Committee developed a list of those elements they believed need to be in place in "ideal cities," assuming that such elements are key ingredients to a downtown's success. This list could serve as a verbal picture of what it takes to become "ideal." The PAC summarized twenty-one (21) elements of an ideal downtown. These elements are summarized in Table 2, below and categorized as they relate to land uses, visual quality/usability and access/parking.

Elements in bold are those that the PAC felt were strongly in place in the downtown. Those not in bold are elements the PAC believes need attention, action and or improvement.

Table 2
Elements of Ideal Downtowns

	Elements Related to Land Use	Elements Related to Visual Quality and Usability	Elements Related to Access and/or Parking
In Place in DT Springfield	• **Small retail** • **Unique, locally owned, independent businesses** • **History, architecture, old buildings**	• **Parks** • **Walkability** • **Friendly people** • **Connections to water**	• **A variety of access options that are easy to use (transit, bike, walk)** • **Convenient visitor parking facilities** • **Available parking** • **Low cost / economical parking**
Not in Place in DT Springfield	• A diversity of retail, small to large • Street level variety, stores and visual diversity (architecture) • Hotels • Interesting windows / quality retail and window shopping opportunities	• Identity / marketing – you remember the City • "Legible" wayfinding to downtown destinations • High volume of people using the downtown and visible on sidewalks • Safe or sense of security – well lit at night • Events and activities (mix of day, night and weekend)	• "Legible" wayfinding to parking • Busy but "calm" traffic • Safe or sense of security – well lit at night • Well designed parking

C.   ACCESS PRIORITIES

1.   Key Elements of a Successful Parking Program

PAC members were asked to list elements they would use to describe a successful <u>parking</u> program that, if in place in Springfield, would facilitate solving the transportation challenges and support/enhance the priority opportunities described above. Stakeholder input is outlined below.

A successful parking program for Springfield would be…

- The parking program meets the needs of the downtown vision.
- Easy to find parking and a good "parking experience."
- Simple and intuitive – easy to use.
- Parking is well located, well-signed and understood.
- Safe, secure and pedestrian friendly.
- Is well coordinated with other access modes (i.e., transit, bike and bike parking, walk, etc.).
- Appropriate time stays.
- Financially sound and self supporting.

It is clear that the stakeholders on the Committee would envision a parking program that is innovative and flexible to meet the changing demands of an evolving downtown. They would

also stress the need for an affordable, safe and secure parking system. The parking program should contribute to the overall viability of Springfield and its goals and vision. At root, a successful parking system is convenient and user friendly. The charge of the consultant team and the Parking Advisory Committee will be to develop a parking strategy that achieves and supports these elements to the highest degree possible. It is also important that the parking plan support those other elements of downtown's "quality" and appeal as described in Table 2 above.

2.   Definition of "Priority Customer"

The Downtown Springfield parking system currently services a broad mix of "customers" that include employees of the district, users of the City and County offices, students, residents, tourists and retail patrons/visitors. Most significantly, stakeholders indicated that current use and management of the downtown parking system may favor those with longer-term stay needs (e.g., employees).

In the future, increasing growth in business and residential development will add to the existing demand on the parking supply. As such, it is important to recognize that a balanced system of access needs to be developed and managed to assure the overall vision of a vital, active and mixed use business district is achieved.

On-street

While all customer groups are important to the downtown, stakeholders indicate that the _on-street_ system, in particular, needs to be made available to the more traditional customer, shopper and business visitor. As such, those with longer term parking needs should be transitioned into off-street facilities. This would assure that the on-street system supports existing retail and serves to attract new business growth to the downtown in a manner that supports the downtown vision.

Off-street

The off-street system should recognize that a mix of customer groups will be using this supply, to meet both long and short-term stay needs. Adequate parking should be provided by for employees (but coordinated with alternative mode options) and patrons needing longer term stay opportunities. 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.

Priority Customer

To this end, the majority agreement of the committee was that 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. The general profile of this type of visitor is short-term stays of less than two hours. These trips are destined for a variety of downtown businesses and result in a high turnover of parking in the district.

The fact that the committee has prioritized the patron as the focal point of parking management is not to downplay the importance of other users of downtown parking

resources. The committee has simply defined a standard that allows reasoned decision making to occur when constraints in the supply of parking occur. The committee recognizes that constraints and conflict for demand within the supply will occur and that decisions and strategies will have to be implemented that guarantee access to the priority customer, with additional options developed for all users.

3.   "Is" Versus "Should"

The stakeholder committee discussed its access priorities for the Downtown. Stakeholders were asked to consider a number of questions regarding the realities of access and use within the current transportation system (i.e., the _is_ of today). They were then asked to consider how the transportation system _should_ be accessed and used in the future within the context of the challenges/opportunities discussed above, and incorporate their goals and objectives for developing a vibrant business district.

A.   Priority Land Uses

When asked, *"What is the priority land use(s) in downtown Springfield today?"* the committee responded:

- Municipal government offices
- Retail

In the future, the committee agreed the priority for land uses _should_ be "a more highly developed mixed-use core" that incorporates vital retail at the ground level with commercial and/or residential above. The downtown should also strive to provide more hospitality uses (e.g., hotels) and entertainment opportunities. Downtown should strive for a more balanced mix of uses.

B.   Priority Modes of Access

When asked to define the priority mode of access to downtown by both patrons and employees, the committee responded as follows:

Patron Trips

Today, a patron's priority mode of access to downtown _is_ by the single-occupant vehicle.

In the future, these trips _should_ be in a greater mix of access options that include transit, bike, and walk as well as car. The PAC stressed the need for convenient options that would be available to customers, providing a mix of choices that would underscore the ease, attractiveness and convenience of the downtown. Because the auto will remain a primary patron mode, the parking system needs to be managed to assure that patron parking demand is accommodated.

Employee Trips

Today, an employee's priority mode of access to downtown _is_ by the single-occupant vehicle.

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. Recognizing this dynamic increases the importance of creating "convenient" and "reasonable" alternatives for employee trips.

Transit in particular *should* bring an increased percentage of total employee trips to the downtown over time.

C.   Priority Use of Parking

On-Street

When asked, *"who is the on-street parking system currently prioritized for?"* the committee felt that existing on-street parking is overly committed to long-term parking uses. Several stated that the system "is really a first-come-first-served" supply, which means those here first are typically employees.

As stated earlier, the committee felt that downtown on-street parking *should* be better managed to prioritize the *patron* (short term trip) in all areas where short-term demand is most prevalent. In the future, strong efforts should be made to assure that on-street parking is consistently available to patron demand. Creative, innovative options should be created off-street for users that need long-term stay opportunities.

Off-Street

When asked, *who is the off-street parking system currently prioritized for?"* the majority opinion was for employees, even in some lots designated as visitor supply.

In the future, the committee felt that the off-street parking system (public and private) *should* be managed to accommodate a high mix of employees, patrons/visitors needing a longer term stay option. Within any off-street supply managed or owned by the City, the majority view indicated that employees *should* be managed into satellite areas and lots or alternative modes if constraints jeopardize patron visits in the core of downtown.

Role of City

When asked, *"should the City have a role in supplying parking in future developments?"* the committee indicated that the City should be looking at (a) means to partner with existing private owners of parking to "share" supply and (b) plan now for means and resources to provide future parking supply necessary to support the downtown vision (particularly patron growth).

In the near term, stakeholders felt there were significant opportunities to find parking within surpluses in existing private lots and on-street. As such, the City's "role" would be in more rigorous management of its own supply (i.e., on-street) and serving as a facilitator with the private sector for shared use opportunities. Longer-term, stakeholders see a clear role for the City in the provision of new parking supply if demand for parking begins to exceed current capacity.

D.   Priorities for Alternative Modes of Access

The committee considered the role of alternative modes for users of the downtown (compelled/uncompelled visitors and employees). When asked what the on-going role of transit/bike/rideshare and walking was for customers and employees, the committee stated the following:

- Transit, bicycling, ridesharing _should_ become an "*option* that <u>patrons</u> **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 <u>employees</u> **will** choose" as a means of accessing downtown.

- Alternative modes for employees _should_ be strongly encouraged, as success in alternative modes will lead to better efficiencies for the supply of patron parking.

It was clear form the work of the Parking Advisory Committee there is a strong majority view on the challenges and opportunities that exist for Springfield's downtown and parking system. There is also a clear sense that Springfield is has the building blocks upon which to attract economic activity and amenities that support vibrant and attractive business districts. There is strong support for the downtown and meaningful optimism about Springfield's future success.

Most importantly, the committee was strong in its understanding of access priorities and unified in support of developing programs and strategies necessary to make certain those access priorities are met and desired economic uses are supported. In the area of parking, it is clear the priority of stakeholders is to assure continued and growing accessibility for patrons to downtown while providing multiple options for all users and customer groups.