Cedar Rapids, IA

Parking Strategic Action Plan
“Cedar Rapids is a vibrant urban hometown – a beacon for people and businesses that are invested in building a greater community for the next generation.”

Parking Strategic Action Plan

Draft Report

April, 2010

Prepared for:
City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa
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Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

Cedar Rapids Downtown District
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Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

Prepared by:
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Statement of Support

Mayor Corbett & City Council Members:

On behalf of the Cedar Rapids Downtown District and Self Supported Municipal Improvement District boards of directors, we express our unanimous support for the Parking Strategic Action Plan.

A fully functioning, efficient, well managed, safe, and customer focused parking system is absolutely critical to the health and recovery of downtown Cedar Rapids. Both the Downtown District and SSMID boards were vocal advocates in 2009 when the City Council decided to hire Republic Parking to manage the daily operations of the downtown parking system. Republic has made some encouraging process during the past eight months, however best in class parking systems require full time, strategic and agile management to meet the myriad needs of downtown stakeholders.

A result of collaboration between the City, Downtown District, SSMID and countless other downtown stakeholders, this plan is a specific roadmap for implementing key elements of both the JLG Downtown Vision and Central Area Reinvestment Action Plan. The boldest action step in the Parking Strategic Action Plan is the suggested transfer of parking system management from the City to the Downtown District. This move would be made with the intent to protect taxpayers and restore the system’s long-term financial and operational viability.

While there are many issues that will need to be discussed if such a transfer were to occur (ie. deferred maintenance, FEMA reimbursable capital investment), both our boards fully support moving forward with negotiation of a management agreement.

Both the Downtown District and SSMID boards appreciate the participation of City staff and the leadership of Councillor Kris Gulick throughout the development of
Statement of Support

this strategic action plan; countless hours of stakeholder meetings, public input sessions and research of community priorities went into its creation. Presentation of the Parking Strategic Action Plan is scheduled to take place at the City Council meeting next Tuesday, April 27. We strongly encourage the City Council to consider formal adoption of the Parking Strategic Plan and to consider authorizing City staff to move forward with negotiation of a management agreement with Downtown District staff.

Sincerely,

Connie Chapman, Chair
Cedar Rapids Downtown District Board

Chuck Peters, Chair
SSMID Board
Statement of Support

April, 2010

Mayor Corbett & Cedar Rapids City Council Members:

Cedar Rapids should be congratulated for its courageous efforts to recover from a devastating flood. There is so much that has been accomplished by so many – the gritty task of just “cleaning up”, the numerous planning efforts that have been forged into a “shared vision” for downtown as embodied by the JLG Vision document, the progress made on multiple fronts to begin the rebuilding of downtown – from FEMA coordination, to a new Federal Courthouse project to a new downtown library. The progress is impressive. However, it must be acknowledged that City leaders and council members still have a huge task ahead. We commend you all for your collaborative work with organizations, like the Cedar Rapids Downtown District (CRDD) and the Self Supporting Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) to get the necessary work done. As downtown stakeholders are acutely aware, restoration of downtown vitality and reactivation of street level amenities are critical to downtown Cedar Rapids’ recovery. My experience in this area, from managing downtown Kalamazoo and Des Moines (as well as my tenure as President of the International Downtown Association), has taught me not to underestimate the importance of parking as a critical element in the success of downtowns. In my judgment, it was a wise move to make a special and focused action plan in this area.

We know that parking is the top concern, or one of the top concerns, in nearly every downtown in the US. We know that parking is the first and the last experience of people visiting downtown, and that those experiences leave lasting impressions. We know that parking can be a powerful economic development tool when used appropriately, and it is an equally powerful barrier to development if it is not available or if the parking system is not convenient, well maintained, affordable and user-friendly.

I urge Cedar Rapids’ government and community leaders to give every consideration to the recommendations contained in this report, and to act expeditiously on these recommendations. The approach presented in this report is a well balanced plan that is both strategic in nature and provides a wealth of practical, implementable recommendations. The IDA Panel report from December 2008 stated that there is a need to “create a focus on downtown economic development” and leveraging parking to this end is both needed and strategic. The ULI report from the same period stated: “The success of this vision will require bold moves and dedicated leadership.” This parking plan again addresses both of these key issues.

As the world’s and the nation’s economy recovers, now is the time to redouble efforts to create the wonderful and vibrant downtown that the residents of Cedar Rapids want and deserve.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David M. Feehan
President/CEO, Civitas Consultants LLC

Civitas Consultants LLC
Cedar Rapids Parking Strategic Action Plan - “A Focus on Customer Service & Economic Development”

Introduction

In the Fall of 2009, the City of Cedar Rapids and the Cedar Rapids Downtown District contracted with Carl Walker, Inc. to create a Parking Strategic Master Plan. Carl Walker was charged with providing an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the downtown parking program within the context of Cedar Rapids’ larger community development goals.

The deliverable of this five month process, which included multiple stakeholder meetings and public town hall meetings, is a specific set of parking system guiding principles, policies and action items that support the economic development goals of downtown Cedar Rapids.

Parking will support downtown as a desirable destination for businesses, shopping, dining, and recreation by making parking a positive element of the overall downtown experience.

The parking system will strive to develop and operate parking facilities that are convenient, safe and friendly for all downtown visitors, stakeholders and future investors.
Through the public engagement process of this Strategic Parking Action Plan community leaders and downtown stakeholders were challenged to “imagine the possibilities” of what an ideal public parking system for Cedar Rapids could be.

Here is their answer...

**THE ROAD FORWARD - Our new parking system will:**

- Be responsive to the needs of the community
- Leverage parking as a significant tool and catalyst for economic development
- Be forward thinking and action oriented
- Align parking policies and programs to support the larger community’s strategic goals
• Provide facilities that are clean, safe and affordable
• Be professionally managed
• Support and promote multiple forms of transportation and downtown access.
• Be open to fresh ideas and be collaborative in its policy development and decision making
• Be a strong and engaged community partner and an advocate for positive change
• Promote progressive urban design guidelines
• Contribute to the creation and enhancement of positive pedestrian experiences
• Leverage new technology to enhance parking system efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and customer service

These goals and desired outcomes are not new. Parking has been perceived as an element needing serious attention for years. This is the time for bold action and the implementation of a well developed strategic plan.

This is also a time for creative solutions and for collaborative partnerships to help shape the future of Cedar Rapids. The City and County are actively engaged on multiple fronts to implement flood recovery plans. Significant new projects are beginning to come on line – a new federal courthouse, a new library, a new transportation center – to name a few.

Suffice it to say that government is busy and engaged, both with large projects and countless smaller issues. Parking system overhaul is just one of a multitude of concerns.

However, there is strong public interest in gaining some traction on parking. It is important for many reasons, not the least of which is parking’s prominent role in shaping and influencing impressions about downtown. Parking is often a critical issue in downtown business recruitment and retention decisions.

For all of these reasons, a combination of public and private funds was raised to fund this strategic parking action plan. The bottom-line conclusion of this assessment is that a new approach is needed related to parking system organization and oversight. We believe a public/private approach to parking management is the best way to ensure that the real and important changes to parking system management recommended in this report will be realized. The way forward is clear, the actions required are achievable and the desired outcomes are sustainable.
STRATEGIC PLAN FORMAT & OVERVIEW

This parking strategic plan is organized into five primary elements:

I. Vision/Mission/Objective Statements
II. Guiding Principles
III. Primary Action Items
IV. Additional Action Items
V. Strategic Plan Implementation
   Tools/Supplemental Materials

The creation of the Vision/Mission Statements and “Guiding Principles” is based on the community input received during the parking study public input processes. It also includes feedback received during meetings with City leadership and staff, City Council, the SSMID Board, the Cedar Rapids Downtown District Board, Downtown District staff and other community organizations. Another important element taken into consideration is the current “planning context” which includes an awareness of several other planning efforts recently completed or currently underway including:

- The JLG “Vision Cedar Rapids” Plan, April, 2007
- The International Downtown Association Downtown Response Team Report, Dec. 2008
- Cedar Rapids Zoning Ordinance, Approved (Ord 033-06), Aug. 2006
- Downtown Area Plan – Strategy # 5, Streets and Parking (Back-In Angled Parking & One-Way to Two-Way Streets Conversion)

Integration with Other Community Goals

In developing this parking and access strategic plan, we endeavored to identify common themes and community based goals from the other plans referenced above. Downtown Cedar Rapids is encouraged to continually review and look for linkages between these goals and new parking management policies fostered by this plan. Themes and overarching goals that we identified are summarized below:

1. Create a downtown for all
2. Provide more housing downtown and accommodate diverse income levels
3. Jump-start development

*Appendices are available upon request.
4. Improve connectivity
5. Activate the ground floor environment
6. Provide a clear, sensible regulatory framework
7. Leverage new public and private investment (with parking being a significant development catalyst)
8. Decrease the number of surface parking lots and enhance the condition and appearance of those that remain
9. Ensure that all new downtown development enhances the pedestrian experience
10. The theme of sustainability should be woven into all of our policy and program development activities
11. Promote active engagement with downtown stakeholders, related community groups and especially between entities engaged in downtown economic development activities.

Organized under the strategic framework of the 10 Guiding Principles are a host of specific action plan recommendations for Downtown Cedar Rapids to consider. Many of these are supported by specific tools, reference documents and industry best practices.
STRATEGIC PLAN

OVERVIEW

Vision

Mission

Objectives

*Cedar Rapids, IA
Parking Strategic Action Plan

*Appendices are available upon request.
I. STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Vision Statement

The Cedar Rapids Parking District will develop proactive and effective public parking policy and provide management oversight of City owned public parking assets. The Parking District will be responsive to downtown stakeholders and strategically leverage parking as a tool for economic development.

Mission Statement

The Cedar Rapids Parking District will provide exemplary customer service for the downtown Cedar Rapids’ community. The Downtown Public Parking System will work toward a goal of protecting and investing in public-sector assets without requiring ongoing subsidies from property taxpayers.

Strategic Plan Objective

To implement a strategic parking action plan recommendations based on community developed Guiding Principles for the Cedar Rapids parking system that supports the development of a vibrant, healthy and accessible downtown district.

The plan will meet the parking and access needs of commercial, retail, entertainment and residential uses and will be integrated with the larger downtown economic development, neighborhood redevelopment plans and community flood recovery efforts.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES
II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I. Guiding Principle for - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The parking program will be guided by policy directives that are the result of collaborative work between the Downtown District, City staff, involved district stakeholders and other downtown agencies.

The Cedar Rapids Downtown District will assume a leadership role in parking management oversight and public parking policy development that will leverage parking as a key element of downtown’s economic development strategy.

The downtown district will use its resources to promote mixed-use parking strategies and development incentives to spur investment in downtown. Other investments, including downtown programming and good urban design will be promoted.

II. Guiding Principle for - ORGANIZATION/LEADERSHIP

The parking system will be organized to be “vertically integrated” with responsibility for:

- On-street parking
- Off-street parking
- Parking enforcement
- Parking planning and
- Parking demand management managed by one department or entity.

The City of Cedar Rapids has done a good job of building a significant set of public parking assets. In fact, the public parking system comprises 78% of all parking assets in the downtown. The public parking system has over 3,200 spaces in 6 parkades – with no outstanding debt. At its peak, there were over 1,100 on-street meters. Another significant investment has been made in an extensive set of sky bridges that connects many of the major buildings and parkades in the downtown.

The importance of managing and leveraging these significant community investments to support on-going economic and community development goals will be critical to moving downtown Cedar Rapids forward.
III. Guiding Principle for - CUSTOMER SERVICE

Parking will support the downtown as a desirable destination for businesses, shopping, dining, and recreation by making parking a positive element of the overall downtown experience.

Parking will be leveraged to support the downtown district as a desirable destination for businesses, shopping, dining, and recreation by making parking a customer friendly element of the overall Cedar Rapids experience. The parking system will strive to develop and operate parking facilities that are convenient, safe and friendly for all downtown visitors, stakeholders and future investors.

Through regularly scheduled safety and security audits of parking facilities, the Cedar Rapids district parking system will strive to set the community standard for customer amenities, safety and security.

Responsiveness to community needs, openness to fresh ideas and active participation in community planning will be among the ongoing goals of the parking system.

IV. Guiding Principle for - PLANNING/URBAN DESIGN/POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The vision of an enhanced planning and policy development function will be pursued on multiple levels.

Effective parking planning will mean an improved understanding of parking supply/demand, application of advanced planning policies as well as the development of parking infrastructure that will enhance and better support the community strategic goals and urban design.

Parking management strategies and programs should support and complement other access modes as a means to better facilitate the accessibility and user-friendliness of downtown Cedar Rapids as a preferred regional destination. Primary access modes include automobile, transit, bike/motorcycle and pedestrian users. Well defined parking facility design criteria, parking related streetscape enhancements and effective integration of signage and wayfinding elements are all areas that this principle will promote.
IV. Guiding Principle for - EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

We will support the development of a forward thinking, “best in class,” parking management program.

The parking system should anticipate future patron needs in the context of the community’s plan for Downtown Cedar Rapids and seek to integrate supportive parking and multi-modal access strategies as appropriate.

Evaluation of other parking management best practices and new technologies should occur on an on-going basis.

Effective facility maintenance, infrastructure reinvestment and other system management fundamentals will be routinely addressed.

VI. Guiding Principle for - LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

The Cedar Rapids Parking District will be an early adopter of technology solutions to enhance customer parking information and service options.

One goal is to make parking less of an impediment to visiting downtown and more of an amenity.

The parking management program will leverage new technology solutions to enhance customer parking information and service options.

Technology should be leveraged to streamline and simplify access to Downtown Cedar Rapids and will be a key parking management strategy. One early initiative is to convert to multi-space meters.
VII. Guiding Principle for - MARKETING/PROMOTION

Parking/access management programs and facilities will be developed to function as a positive, marketable asset for downtown.

Parking management strategies and programs will be cross-marketed and support multiple access modes as a way to maximize total access capacity and to promote a downtown as a unique and visitor friendly regional destination.

Parking availability and program contributions shall be well publicized to enhance the perception of parking as a positive element of the downtown experience. Reinvestment of parking resources back into the downtown will be expanded and promoted.

VIII. Guiding Principle for - ACCOUNTABILITY & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The parking system will work toward a goal of protecting and investing in public-sector assets without requiring ongoing subsidies from property taxpayers.

Develop a parking management program that is responsive to community needs and that is “action oriented” and accountable to stakeholders.

Downtown Cedar Rapids will develop a parking management program that is responsive to community needs and that is “action oriented” and accountable to stakeholders.

Funding and financial management strategies will be developed to support future infrastructure needs and management programs to further the strategic and economic development goals of the district.
IX. Guiding Principle for - INTEGRATED ACCESS/ MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

The downtown parking and access management plan will promote a well-developed “walkable downtown.” As the medical district, Little Bohemia and Czech Village areas begin their resurgence, consideration of a “park once” strategy that emphasizes “linkages” to other forms of transportation is recommended.

*Progressive urban design guidelines will create and enhance positive pedestrian experiences.*

One of the strengths of Downtown Cedar Rapids is its compact and “walkable” nature. In the winter months, the community’s investment in its extensive skywalk system is another valuable asset to be strengthened.

As new parking facilities are considered in the future, the active promotion of walking and biking paths, adjacent transit stops and other opportunities to make downtown an “easy access destination” are encouraged.

X. Guiding Principle for - SUSTAINABILITY

*Initiatives to promote more sustainable and efficient operations will be actively pursued.*

“Green” strategies that can result in more efficient use of parking facilities and provide other benefits, including reduced congestion, improved transportation choices, more efficient land use, and improved streetscape aesthetics will be explored and supported.

Concepts such as “car sharing” services and “bike concierge or bike share programs such as “Bixi Bike” should be considered in terms of providing support systems to promote and complement downtown residential development.

Integrate “green design principles into new facility planning and development.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES - SUMMARY

These Guiding Principles will serve as a foundation for near and long-term decision making and implementation of parking management and access strategies in the downtown.

These strategies are intended to support the on-going economic development and vitality of downtown. This is a process not a one-time task.

The consensus nature of these Principles should provide a solid foundation from which to begin implementation of an effective program of strategies designed to support downtown.

It will be important for the Downtown leadership and the City to codify the Guiding Principles for Parking Management as part of the Downtown District’s strategic plan to ensure their on-going role in facilitating decision-making for the parking system over time.

Teamwork and collaboration between City officials, the Cedar Rapids Downtown District, and other stakeholders will be a key for success moving forward.
PRIMARY ACTION ITEMS
The following actions are necessary first steps toward the implementation of the strategic plan for the Cedar Rapids parking program. These initial steps are needed to establish the new management structure and to replace the fundamental parking control equipment and management systems lost during the flood. This required investment is needed to give Republic Parking the basic tools needed to effectively manage the system. It will also demonstrate positive progress to a public that wants to see concrete actions.

These initial steps will also support the primary goals of enhancing customer services and economic development by making downtown more appealing to businesses wishing to relocate to or remain downtown. These actions are also identified action items in the flood recovery plans and the JLG Downtown Vision Plan. All planning efforts to date agree that an effective public parking system will be an important element in the revitalization of Downtown Cedar Rapids.

**Recommended Primary Actions:**

1. Parking System Management Reorganization
2. Parking Access and Revenue Control System Replacement
3. On-Street Parking Program Adjustments & Upgrades
4. Off-Street Parking Pricing Structure Adjustments
5. Parkade Refurbishment
6. Parking Supply Additions to Support New Downtown Development

A discussion of each set of primary action items follows:
ITEM 1:

Parking System Management Reorganization

- Transfer oversight management of the municipal parking program to the Downtown District. This “bold move” is needed to provide the full-time focus required to move the parking system beyond the status quo. The City retains ownership of the assets and ultimate control of the public facilities, but leverages the willing involvement other downtown agencies and stakeholders to help move this community priority forward. The primary mechanism for accomplishing this transfer of responsibility is a “Parking Management Agreement” between the City and the Downtown District. There is successful precedent for this approach in Cedar Rapids as it is similar to the development of the SSID.

Primary Responsibility:
City Council, Cedar Rapids Downtown District, Republic Parking

Key Partners:
Downtown District and SSID Boards, City Planning and Finance Departments

Timeframe:
3rd or 4th quarter 2010

Supportive Documents/Tools Provided:
- Draft Parking Management Agreement (See Appendix A)
- Draft Resolution to Create a Parking District (See Appendix B)

PRIMARY ACTION ITEM # 1:

Make parking system enhancement a priority.

Reorganize to provide the needed “focus and a full-time dedicated effort” to move the parking program forward.

Transfer of parking management oversight to the Downtown District also facilitates leveraging parking as economic development tool.
ITEM 2:

**Parking Access and Revenue Control System Replacement**

- Invest in a Parking Access and Revenue Control System for the parkades. This element is important for several reasons. It will provide better control of facilities, enhance revenue collection, improve parking system accountability and provide the management and facility utilization data needed to more effectively manage the parking resources. One key example: by having better utilization data, Republic Parking will be able to increase facility over-sell of monthly parking, thereby maximizing the use of existing resources.

**Primary Responsibility:**
City Council, Cedar Rapids Downtown District, Republic Parking

**Key Partners:**
City Finance Department

**Timeframe:**
Complete purchase and installation by 3rd Quarter 2010

**City Budget:**
Within City’s FY2011 budget (confirm w/ Republic)

**Supportive Documents/Tools Provided:**
- Parking Access and Revenue Control System Performance Specification (See Appendix C)
ITEM 3:
On-Street Parking Program Adjustments & Upgrades

- Modify a variety of on-street parking regulations, policies and physical on-street space configurations that were enacted to aid clean up and reconstruction immediately following the flood of 2008. Also, introduce new on-street parking programs aimed at creating additional on-street customer/visitor parking.
- Transition back-in angled parking to head-in angled parking where on-street permit spaces are changed to metered parking.
- Consider managing on-street parking with a goal of achieving an average vacancy rate of 15%. This will be accomplished primarily through a program of utilization monitoring and on-street parking rate adjustments.
- Although a longer term issue, we support the ultimate transition of one-way streets to a two-way traffic configuration as an element to support downtown economic development/revitalization.
- Begin on-street meter upgrades to multi-space meters in the downtown core. Push current downtown meters to areas where the flood destroyed meters. Ultimately work to get meters replaced to the pre-flood level.
- New multi-space meters or credit card enabled single space meters will help rebuild parking system revenues and fund other recommended parking enhancements. This should be done as soon as financially feasible.

Primary Responsibility:
City Council, Cedar Rapids Downtown District, Republic Parking

Key Partners:
City Traffic Engineering

Timeframe:
Policy modifications by 3rd Qtr. 2010, Remainder by 4th Qtr. 2011

Supportive Documents/Tools Provided:
- Multi-Space Meter Key Features Summary (See Appendix D)
- Multi-Space Meter Specification & RFP (See Appendix E)
- Single Space Credit Card Enabled Meter Specification (See Appendix F)

PRIMARY ACTION ITEM # 3:
Transition some on-street permit only spaces to metered spaces in areas capable of enhanced retail support (example: in front of Smulekoff’s).

Transition other on-street permit only spaces to metered spaces, but also allow employee permit parking (Example: near Alliant Energy tower).

Implement a new “Flex Park” on-street permit that will allow on-street parking in any on-street legal space and possibly in parkades as well for individuals who frequently park in downtown. The extra convenience and level of accessibility provided by this permit will command a higher price.

Upgrade to multi-space meters and replace meters lost to the flood.
On-Street Parking Program Adjustments & Upgrades

Initial Phase – Provide More Customer Parking on First Street

- Extend Monthly Spaces
- Convert to Metered Spaces
- Convert to Monthly Spaces
- Convert to Metered Spaces

*Appendices are available upon request.*
ITEM 4: Off-Street Parking Pricing Structure Adjustments

• Modify parking rate structures. Specifically, implement a “tiered parking rate approach” that provides a range of parking cost options. Outlying spaces or spaces in lower demand areas will have lower rates and conversely, the most convenient and desirable parking spaces will have higher fees. One major goal of this strategy is to create additional parking capacity in areas of higher demand by adjusting parking rates.

• Carl Walker recommends a “First Hour Free” program in off-street facilities as an effective tool to market downtown. It is easier to implement, less subject to potential abuse and is generally more equitable as it applies to everyone, not just certain groups. Our experience in other communities is that it has the additional positive benefit of promoting longer stays and enhanced sales in downtown. In Boise, ID for example where this program was implemented, the average transient parking length of stay increased from 2.11 hours to 3.56 hours. Additionally, over a four year period downtown retail and restaurant sales doubled. Consideration of a “First Hour Free” program for downtown Cedar Rapids should be accorded high priority. Note: The cost/benefits of such a program should be carefully examined prior to implementation.

• Gradually reduce flood-recovery parking discounts. Immediately returning rates to pre-flood levels would be counter-productive to economic development at this time.

Primary Responsibility:
City Council, Cedar Rapids Downtown District, Republic Parking

Key Partners:
City Finance Department

Timeframe:
Complete by 3rd Quarter 2010

Supportive Documents/Tools Provided:
• Article on Parking Rate Assessment Strategies (See Appendix G)

PRIMARY ACTION ITEM # 4:
Provide a range of parking options with multiple price points to meet the needs of different downtown customer groups.

Implement a demand-based “tiered parking pricing strategy”.

Consider the benefits of implementing a “First Hour Free” program for off-street facilities.

Use parking rates as a tool to “balance” parking supply/demand.

Parking rates are scheduled to return to pre-flood levels as of July 1, 2010. Consider defining a gradual rate increase schedule to be sensitive to current economic conditions and
ITEM 5:

Parkade Refurbishment

- Refurbishing the parkades is a priority, but it will be expensive to do on a comprehensive basis. It is recommended that this item be approached on an incremental basis. Develop a comprehensive list of parkade repairs and enhancements.
- Prioritize them on the basis of life safety, patron security, operating system/revenue collection needs, facility identification/marketing, etc.
- Given the need to show signs of positive progress, enhancements to parking facility entrance and exit portals would be a “low cost – high impact” action item that should be considered immediately.
- Other recommended priorities include elevator repair and parking access and revenue control systems (See Primary Action Item #2).
- Interior parkade environment enhancements such as creative level theming and wayfinding graphics can make a big impact. In other communities this type of facility improvement is seen more as a “downtown enhancement” because it contributes positively to the overall “downtown experience”.
- Consider creative parkade level theming as an opportunity to engage local artists through a design competition.

Primary Responsibility:
City Council, Cedar Rapids Downtown District, Republic Parking

Key Partners:
Contracted Maintenance Service

Timeframe:
Complete Entry/Exit Portal Enhancements by 3rd or 4th Quarter 2010
Remainder as soon as Financially Feasible

Supportive Documents/Tools Provided:
- Article on Parking Facility Graphic Enhancements (See Appendix H)
- Parking Facility Inspection Checklist (See Appendix I)
ITEM 6:

**New Downtown Development and Parking Supply Additions**

- Overall parking supply is currently adequate in the downtown (largely due to high post-flood building vacancy). However, plans for new downtown development will change these conditions and the community needs to be mindful of this and develop plans to ensure parking adequacy in higher demand areas and in areas with new development.
- The primary example is the area around the new federal courthouse. Expected parking demand from the new federal courthouse, surface parking capacity displaced by construction and flood mitigation, existing business and planned economic development activity combine to necessitate new parking supply in this area of downtown as soon as possible.
- Plans for a new ramp should be combined with aggressive capacity management strategies to ensure parking solutions that encourage rather than hinder economic development.
- An assessment of future conditions should consider changes in land use and new developments that may occur as a result of synergy with the new courthouse.

**Primary Responsibility:**
City Council, Cedar Rapids Downtown District, SSMID Board

**Key Partners:**
City Planning Department, Federal Courthouse, Republic Parking

**Timeframe:**
Planning and funding efforts should begin immediately. A plan for additional capacity, including preliminary facility design should be completed by 3rd Qtr. 2010

**Supportive Documents/Tools Provided:**
- Article on Parking Criteria Documents (See Appendix J)
- Presentation of Parking Facility Planning and Functional Design (See Appendix K)
- Parking Structure Design Guidelines (See Appendix L)
The chart below depicts a suggested schedule for the implementation of the six primary action item categories.

### Preliminary Action Items Schedule

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SECONDARY ACTION ITEMS
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 1
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Action Item 1.1 Parking Requirements to Promote Targeted Economic Development Projects

Parking can be an effective tool in the promotion of economic development objectives. Develop specific guidelines for how, when and under what specific conditions parking will be used to incent economic development projects. Examples might include:

- Waiving parking requirements for priority types of development.
- Building parking in conjunction with desirable public/private mixed use development projects.
- Defining a public investment protocol for parking and other infrastructure development.

Providing parking management expertise and planning as part of the initial project development process (amount of parking needed, available parking in the area, operations/management consulting, etc.).

Intended Results:
To incentivize targeted development projects aligned with downtown master plan goals.

- Action Item 1.2 Develop a Parking Investment Strategy

Cedar Rapids has historically provided public parking to support private development downtown. However, it has never been linked to investment expectations and thus has been undervalued by developers and considered a “given” for downtown. Providing public parking to incentivize private
development/investment is excellent public policy, but it should be done with specific payback requirements. Generally, a 5-to-1 pay back ratio is desired, i.e. if a 400-space parking facility is constructed at a cost of $20,000/space ($8 million), private investment of $40 million would be expected.

**Intended Results:**

To have a well developed parking investment strategy to facilitate potential development and public/private partnership opportunities.

- **Action Item 1.3 Reinvestment of Parking Revenues**

Dedicating a portion of parking revenues for downtown reinvestment can help change the way people think about paying for parking. If parking revenues are used for projects that make downtown more attractive and enjoyable, the increased visitation generates additional parking revenues for reinvestment.

**Intended Results:**

Use a portion of parking revenues to enhance the downtown district through thoughtful reinvestment. This is another example of the recommended use of parking as an economic development tool.

- **Action Item 1.4 Promote Public/Private Partnerships Related to Future Parking Structure Development**

If a new development is proposed in an area that needs additional transient or monthly parking, work with the private developer to incorporate the needed public parking into the project. The parking system would pay for the public parking spaces, but both parties could potentially benefit from sharing the costs of foundations and other common design elements (compared to the cost of constructing two separate projects). Additional shared parking benefits might also be realized depending on the specific land-uses.

Adding public parking in this fashion has several additional benefits, including:

- A more strategic distribution of public parking assets
- Promotion of adaptive re-use and in-fill of older buildings
- Supports historic preservation efforts

**Intended Results:**

Reduced construction costs. Provides needed parking resources in strategically appropriate locations.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 2
ORGANIZATION & LEADERSHIP

- Action Item 2.1 Community Leadership and Plan Support

For the Parking program to be successful, it must have strong leadership and support from the City Council and the Downtown District. This will be especially true in the areas of supporting the JLG Downtown Vision and Central Area Action Plans and enhancing public processes and community collaboration. This Parking Strategic Plan should be presented to downtown stakeholders as well as City officials for additional review and eventual adoption as official City policy to ensure appropriate support and funding.

Intended Results:

The JLG Downtown Vision and Central Area Action Plans provide a real opportunity to align parking program policies with the larger community’s strategic goals. This Parking Strategic Action Plan is a significant step towards addressing many of these issues.

- Action Item 2.2 Plan Adoption

Once this Parking Strategic Plan is finalized by City staff and the Cedar Rapids Downtown District staff and it’s board, it should be presented to City Council for additional review and eventually approved and adopted as official City policy to ensure appropriate support and funding.

Intended Results:

By having the plan formally adopted as official City policy, additional momentum, support and funding should be available to advance the strategic plan initiatives.
● **Action Item 2.3 Collaborations/Partnerships**

For the envisioned parking program to reach its full potential, it is critical that parking management be perceived as open, collaborative and resourceful. To this end, the parking function should strive to reach out to various groups and be a positive team player. Parking should actively partner and participate with the following groups at a minimum:

- Downtown District
- Self Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID)
- Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce
- Priority One
- Cedar Rapids Transit
- City of Cedar Rapids
- Major Downtown Employers

**Intended Results:**

Position the Downtown District as an active, collaborative partner in helping to resolve downtown issues and the leader in addressing parking and downtown access related matters.

● **Action Item 2.4 Reporting**

Once the plan has been accepted by and endorsed by the community, then the Parking District should develop a proactive program for reporting progress on the plan through additional and on-going community meetings, website and email updates, annual reports and other means.

**Intended Results:**

The goal is to document progress on the wide range of plan action items and collaborative program initiatives. Keep stakeholders informed of progress and new initiatives

● **Action Item 2.5 Report Cards**

Progress reporting could also take the form of a simplified "Action Plan Report Card" for specific stakeholder groups.

**Intended Results:**

This format could also be combined with a feedback mechanism creating an ongoing conduit for community input and program improvements.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 3
CUSTOMER SERVICE

● Action Item 3.1 Training
Provide enhanced customer service training for all front-line parking system staff. Consider sharing the cost of providing customer service training through the International Parking Institute by co-hosting a training session with other local or regional entities with parking operations.

Intended Results:
Improve customer service through educating parking staff on customer service principles and practices. Clearly define expectations and monitor to insure desired results.

● Action Item 3.2 Customer Surveys
Provide feedback mechanisms for customers. Determine what your customers feel is important and continually strive to improve in those areas.

Carl Walker has provided a sample parking customer survey card in Appendix M.

Intended Results:
Provide tools to monitor, measure and address customer concerns and satisfaction levels.

● Action Item 3.3 Parker Assistance Program
Develop and implement a “Parker Assistance Program” which could include services such as: battery jump starts, vehicle lock-out assistance, tire inflation, security escort services, audio book check-out programs, etc. In the long term consider the implementation of a concierge program in the parking structures to provide for-fee services such as dry cleaner drop-off service, car washes and detailing, downtown errands, etc.
**Intended Results:**

Provide services to assist parking system patrons and improve the perception of value offered by the parking system.

- **Action Item 3.4 Parking Hotline**

Establish a “Parking Hot Line” and an “Email Feedback Mailbox” to provide a centralized and actively monitored customer feedback mechanism. Provide prompt formal responses and follow-up. It is recommended that this be monitored by Downtown District staff as opposed to the parking operator.

**Intended Results:**

Improve customer service through active monitoring of customer concerns and suggestions.

- **Action Item 3.5 Enhance Special Events Parking Planning and Coordination**

Develop partnerships and management structures that provide consistent, collaborative and effective special events management and coordination.

Work with larger planning groups to provide more effective and flexible parking information and wayfinding.

Develop specific policies for regular and special events.

**Intended Results:**

Improve the visitor experience related to special events downtown.

- **Action Item 3.6 Improve Website and Links**

Use the internet and parking website as a customer service tool. Provide mechanisms for customers to pay fees/fines, purchase monthly permits, download parking maps, rate schedules, special events information, etc.

**Intended Results:**

Use technology to make basic parking transactions quick and easy for customers and provide easy access to parking information. Provide links to other transportation options, other city and downtown agencies and have links to the parking system from their sites.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 4
PLANNING/URBAN DESIGN & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Action Item 4.1 On-going Planning

Downtown is changing rapidly in post-flood redevelopment, with plans for a new library, new Event Center and other amenities that will keep parking a dynamic and fluid element of downtown management. The parking system should develop an active planning function related to parking supply/demand studies, parking utilization analysis, planning for new parking supply, assessing parking zoning requirements and promoting transportation alternatives and demand management strategies.

Intended Results:

Parking should work closely with the City Manager, the City Planning department, the Community Development department, the Traffic Engineering department and other agencies to remain engaged in community master plans, strategic planning efforts, transportation plans, traffic studies, etc.

- Action Item 4.2 Annual Supply/Demand Assessment

Prepare an analysis of parking supply/demand for the entire downtown on an annual basis.

Intended Results:

On-going monitoring of parking supply, demand and utilization is a basic parking planning function. Assessment of employee, visitor, residential, special event and other demand categories should also be reviewed. Planning for development and funding of future parking supply is a critical parking planning function.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 5
EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Provided in Appendix N is an extensive collection of Parking Management Best Practices collected from across North America over a period of several years. This is a key deliverable and valuable tool to aid in the improvement of the Cedar Rapids parking program.

- **Action Item 5.1 Existing On-Street Regulations**

  Post flood, on-street regulations were enacted to help speed the recovery effort. Those changes should be evaluated and modified as appropriate. For example:

  - The on-street spaces reserved for permit holders are taking some of the most valuable customer parking spaces out of the available supply. At a minimum, the location of the permit spaces should be evaluated in terms of the impact on customer parking for downtown businesses.

  - In the long term evaluate eliminating on-street permit spaces and replacing with a high cost on-street permit space that allows parking at select metered spaces without additional payment but without violating the time limits.

- **Action Item 5.2 Provide Payment Options Off-Street**

  Currently an infrequent all-day parker visiting downtown must either be armed with change for the meters or use the Five Seasons Parkade, which is inconvenient to some downtown locations. Implement other payment options and/or gated revenue control system in the other parkades.
• Action Item 5.3 **Goals and Targets**

Define the critical functional elements of effective parking management programs and develop specific goals and targets aimed at building a “best in class” parking management program.

Use the *Carl Walker* “20 Characteristics of Effective Parking Programs” model as a base. (See Appendix O) Recommended specific areas for program enhancement are provided below.

**Intended Results:**

To define parking management goals, clarify expectations and provide program accountability. Strive to achieve “Best-In-Class” status.

• Action Item 5.4 **Develop an Annual Parking Report**

Major Report Sections should include:

- Annual Supply/Demand Update
- System Planning Update
- Organization/Staffing Update
- Significant Accomplishments/ New Management Initiatives
- Financial Summary
- Facility Maintenance Program Update

**Intended Results:**

Proactively keep Downtown District, SSMID Board, City administration and stakeholders informed of critical parking issues and accomplishments.

Promote parking initiatives that are in the best interest of the City, the downtown and the community as a whole.

Build support for parking operating and capital budgets and future rate increases.

Generate confidence that the parking system is being well managed.

A detailed Annual Parking Report Template has been provided to use as a base document. (See Appendix P)

• Action Item 5.5 **Parking System Benchmarking**

Identify a basic set of parking and access system benchmarks relevant to the Parking System and begin tracking. Document results/progress in an annual parking report. Examples might include; Revenue/space, maintenance cost/space, total operating costs/space, administrative costs/space, etc.
Intended Results:

Develop a baseline of parking operations measurements. Compare to peer cities. Track progress against baseline results and peer organizations.

- Action Item 5.6 Professional Staff Development

Parking Management Training - Identify specific training needs for the Parking System Staff. Take advantage of national and regional parking association conferences and trade shows. Consider a customized training program developed to meet specific needs. Customized training is available through some parking consulting firms or other professional organizations.

Intended Results:

Increase the parking manager’s understanding of parking system operations, management techniques, parking dynamics/principles and new technologies.

- Action Item 5.7 Internal Parking Resource Library

As an additional staff development strategy, build a library of primary parking management, planning and general management text books. Incorporate reading goals into individual’s annual staff performance development plans.

Carl Walker has provided a Recommended Parking Planning and Management Library listing as a place to start. (See Appendix Q)

Intended Results:

Build a specific and well-defined parking knowledge base for key departmental staff.

- Action Item 5.8 Signage and Wayfinding

Assess downtown parking signage and wayfinding. Develop a strategy with the ability to direct traffic into and around the downtown to better facilitate and coordinate parking and traffic. Integrate with an interactive, on-line parking information website.

Intended Results:

Provide both vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding assistance to improve the accessibility and ease of movement in and around downtown. Getting cars off the streets and parked more quickly and efficiently, reduces traffic congestion and pollution thus also contributing to sustainability goals.

- Action Item 5.9 Security Inspections of All System Parking Facilities

Conduct a “security audit” of all Parking System facilities to identify issues/concerns. Conduct walk-through security inspections of all public parking facilities on a quarterly basis. Document results and develop action plans to address any concerns noted. Document corrective actions taken. Note:
Following this recommendation without promptly enacting corrective actions could increase the potential for liability.

**Intended Results:**

Improve facility safety and security by actively monitoring and addressing safety and security issues. *Carl Walker* has provided a detailed white paper on Assessing Security Program Effectiveness. (See Appendix R)

- **Action Item 5.10 Parking Structure Security Systems**

Evaluate parking facility security options including, but not limited to, "blue light" security call stations, panic alarm systems, CCTV systems, parking booth silent alarms, etc.

**Intended Results:**

Be proactive in evaluating security needs within parking facilities. Provide deterrents to criminal activities within parking structures. Stress the inclusion of "passive safety" features in new parking facilities as part of parking facility design guidelines.

- **Action Item 5.11 Pedestrian Warnings at Parking Structure Exits**

Provide visual and auditory warnings to pedestrians walking on sidewalks that have vehicular exits crossing the sidewalks. These warning devices are typically activated by vehicles tripping sensor loops in the vehicle exit lane.

**Intended Results:**

Enhance pedestrian safety and reduce parking system liability.

- **Action Item 5.12 Internal Parking Operations Manual**

As an additional staff development and training tool, develop a parking operations manual. Many systems have a separate manual for each facility or one common manual with individual facilities each given a chapter.

*Carl Walker* has provided a Recommended Parking Facilities Operations Manual Outline as a place to start. (See Appendix S)

**Intended Results:**

For each facility, document specific equipment and policies as a staff training tool and as a support document to supplement operating policies/procedures.

- **Action Item 5.13 Establish Lighting Standards**

Evaluate lighting in parking facilities. Establish public facility lighting standards. Identify areas where lighting may be below standards. Identify areas where enhanced lighting might be appropriate. Specifically assess "transitional lighting"
at facility entrances and exits, pedestrian/vehicle conflict areas, etc. Use Illuminating Engineering Society of North America guidelines as a minimum base.

**Intended Results:**

Improve perception of safety and security within parking facilities. Establish community standards.

- **Action Item 5.14 Develop a Comprehensive Facility Maintenance Program and Regularly Scheduled Structural Condition Appraisals**

  A strong preventative maintenance program can save parking systems large amounts of money in the long run, by effectively addressing concrete problems early.

**Intended Results:**

Reverse the practice of deferring maintenance needs and ultimately minimize concrete deterioration and long-term facility maintenance costs.

- **Action Item 5.15 Refurbish Parking Structures**

  Define, fund, and execute a refurbishment program for the parking facilities to bring them from their current state of neglect with long-deferred maintenance up to state-of-the-art condition. If this is achieved, the standard of quality set by the municipal programs will have a positive impact on private facilities as well. Examples of projects include:

  - Paint most vertical surfaces, columns and ceilings within Public Parking System facilities white.
  - Improve parking facility level identification through the use of themed concepts. Consider engaging local arts groups and promote this program initiative as a public arts program sponsored by the Downtown District or the City.
  - Standardize Exterior Parking Facility Signage

**Intended Results:**

Parking facilities should be viewed in the larger context of the City’s overall image. Perceptions of safety, cleanliness and user-friendliness should be monitored and assessed on an on-going basis. These improvements should be seen more as “downtown enhancements” rather than just parking enhancements.

Either the Downtown District/Republic Parking will work with current City Facilities and Maintenance Departments to achieve the desired results within a reasonable timeframe or these services will be outsourced to private contractors.

*Appendices are available upon request.*
- Action Item 5.16 Parking Access and Revenue Control System Security Procedures
  Review password procedures and other computer security systems.

  **Intended Results:**
  Ensure parking computer system security and integrity.

- Action Item 5.17 Parking Access and Revenue Control System Back-up Procedures
  Review computer system data back-up procedures.

  **Intended Results:**
  Ensure parking computer system security and integrity.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 6
LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

- Action Item 6.1 Technology Assessment

As part of this study we conducted an assessment of the existing parking technology and potential for improving parking system integration, management reporting, customer service enhancements, improved operational efficiency, etc. The Technology Assessment looked at the following categories:

- Off-Street Applications
- On-Street Applications
- Enforcement Applications

Note: Carl Walker has provided an up-to-date presentation on the latest in parking technology in the Appendix T.

A summary of the Technology Assessment is provided below:

- Action Item 6.1.A Off-Street

  - The parking access and revenue control system for the parkades was destroyed by the flood and needs to be replaced with a new system. The system we recommend is a web-based platform that provides more flexibility, accessibility and features. The various components are modularized so that you can buy only those applications that you require beyond the base system.

  - Republic Parking has made specific equipment recommendations; however, we have provided a detailed system specification for review in the Appendices.
Action Item 6.1.8 On-Street

Evaluate new systems that offer the potential to improve streetscapes, provide additional customer payment options and offer reduced collection costs, improve enforcement efficiency and provide increased revenue per space. Specific systems/methodologies to evaluate include:

- Multi-space On-street Meter Systems
- Pay and Display
- Pay-By-Space
- Pay-By Cell Phone
- In-Car Meters

Carl Walker specifically recommends that the City of Cedar Rapids invest in multi-space meters supplemented with a pay-by-cell phone option. However, our experience has shown the decision to go with the “Pay-By-Space” or “Pay & Display” alternatives can generate a great deal of community interest. Both methodologies are viable and both have advantages and disadvantages.

- The “Pay & Display” methodology has the greatest market share in the US. Because you are “buying time” instead of a specific space, there is a degree of “portability” with this option (i.e., if your receipt still has time available you can park in another location without paying again) that is considered a distinct advantage. However, you also have to walk to the machine, pay and then return to your car to display the receipt. Enforcement officers must look in each car window in order to identify violations (and hope the receipt is displayed face-up).

- The “Pay-By-Space” methodology does not require the parker to return to his/her vehicle after paying, but the payment is only good for that space. Enforcement officers can go directly to the meter and get a printout of the vehicles on the block that are in violation, so enforcement is more efficient with this system. One downside with this system is that each space must be individually numbered, which adds cost and reduces the “decluttering” of the streetscape benefit of these meters.

- The choice of operating methodology can be somewhat controversial. Many communities have done “pilot programs” with both systems and invited public comment.

- Another important aspect of upgrading to these new technologies is to have a well defined and well publicized “new technology introduction program”.

*Appendices are available upon request.*
• Key elements of these programs include:
  - Advance publicity of various types
  - Newspaper articles
  - TV and Radio interviews
  - Website information
  - Emails to downtown and parking databases
  - Flyers in water bills
  - On-Street Ambassadors to assist customers during the first week or two
  - The use of warning tickets during the initial two-weeks of operation

- Action Item 6.1.C  Enforcement

The parking enforcement system seems to be meeting the immediate needs, however, when financially feasible, explore the recent advances in parking enforcement hardware, software and citation management processing systems. Specific systems/methodologies to evaluate include:

- Hand-held Citation Issuance Devices
- Mobile License Plate Recognition Systems
- Citation Management Software Programs
- Citation Collection Processes and Services

- Action Item 6.2  Develop Internet Based Payment System Options

When financially feasible investigate the customer service benefits and financial impacts of creating internet-based payment options.

Intended Results:

Provide a higher level of customer service by expanding the number of convenient payment options. Allow customers the ability to pay monthly parking, recharge smart-cards, pay parking fines, etc. via the internet.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 7
COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND PROMOTION

- Action Item 7.1  Coordinated Marketing Plan

Develop a list of marketing initiatives that will educate the community on the range and variety of parking and transportation services available. Parking/access management programs and facilities will be developed and promoted to function as positive, marketable assets for Downtown.

These parking and transportation marketing initiatives should be coordinated with other City departments, downtown agencies and special attractions/businesses to promote consistent, accurate and up to date information. See the presentation entitled Parking Program Branding and Marketing Strategies in the appendices. This document includes many examples of effective parking branding and marketing ideas from around the country.

Intended Results:

A coordinated parking marketing plan will promote downtown as a unique, easily accessible and visitor-friendly regional destination.

- Action Item 7.2  Downtown Parking/Access Website

Develop a web-site that integrates downtown activities, parking, transit and other access/mobility related options onto a single site. Promote this integrated site with an ad campaign and links from many other related web-sites. Carl Walker can provide a presentation with examples for other communities around the country upon request.
Intended Results:

Take the mystery and confusion out of downtown parking and access by providing a centralized and well-publicized site for information related to parking and transportation options.

- **Action Item 7.3  Branded Parking System Program**

Assess the existing parking system’s EZ Park logo. The EZ Park logo, or its replacement, should be used on all parking system communications, signage and in all public parking facilities (structures, surface lots, and on-street parking). This is a critical element of parking system branding.

Consider replacing the current parking facility sign faces with a refreshed parking system brand/logo.

Intended Results:

Create and promote a positive image for the parking/access system focusing its strengths (plenty of space, well located, convenient locations, clean, safe facilities, validation programs, etc.) The new focus on customer service and enhanced use of technology should also be featured.

- **Action Item 7.4  Provide Customer Service and Conflict Management Training to Parking Enforcement Staff.**

Parking enforcement is an important, challenging and under-appreciated job. Training and staff support is an important program responsibility. Some community parking programs adopt a “downtown ambassador” model for their parking enforcement program. In addition to enforcement, these ambassadors provide parking information and assistance. For example, Boulder has a “meter angels” program where ambassadors will put an extra quarter in a parking meter that is about to expire. They also leave a note on the car stating that they gave the car an extra 15 minute of time and thanks them for shopping downtown. Note: Investigate possible legal issues.

Intended Results:

The primary goal is to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of parking enforcement activities and provide needed staff support.

- **Action Item 7.5  Parking E-Bulletins to Users**

Using email addresses from monthly parkers and Downtown District members as a mechanism to communicate to parking customers via e-mail bulletins. Also use this medium as a means to promote the parking system "brand". This concept could also be used to keep customer groups informed of special events, the introduction of new programs, planned system upgrades, construction alerts, etc.

Intended Results:

E-Bulletins provide a cost effective and high quality means of providing consistent communications to the parking system customer base. They help
keep customers informed of parking, traffic, events, news, etc. They are an effective means of educating the community of new parking system programs and customer service initiatives. They also reinforce the parking system "brand".

- **Action Item 7.6  Parking Public Relations Program**

  Develop a comprehensive strategy to manage public relations, media interactions, parking system publicity, etc. Specific program elements might include: press release issuance, better use of free publicity opportunities, consistent use of parking system logos, promotional themes, etc.

  **Intended Results:**

  Better management of media coverage, public information and co-sponsored events and program related to the public parking system.

- **Action Item 7.7.  Regular Contact with Customers**

  Identify key customer groups and schedule personal meetings to promote the parking system’s commitment to customer service and to identify opportunities to improve service.

  **Intended Results:**

  Stay in touch with parking system customers and provide a high level of service and responsiveness to their needs. Monitor the perception of performance of parking system personnel.

- **Action Item 7.8  Dedicated Spokesperson**

  Identify one or two individuals to be the dedicated spokesperson(s) for the parking system. This person should be intimately involved and extremely knowledgeable about the public parking system and should manage all media contacts, issue press releases, etc. Specialized media training is highly recommended.

  **Intended Results:**

  To ensure that there is one voice and one source for official parking system information.

- **Action Item 7.9  Marketing Budget**

  Establishing a specific Parking System budget for marketing/promotion elements is recommended. The national average in the US is $7 - $10 per space per year (includes both on-street and off-street spaces).

  **Intended Results:**

  To ensure that marketing/promotion is developed as an integral component of the parking/access program.
• Action Item 7.10 Central Clearinghouse for Parking Information

Monitor, track and publish parking rates, availability, owners, operators, contact information, etc. for all parking resources (public and private sector). Coordinate and provide information relative to other transportation options.

**Intended Results:**

Become a one-stop information clearinghouse for all downtown parking and access information (both public and private).

• Action Item 7.11 New Employee Parking/Access Options Brochure / Information Packet

For new employees in Downtown, develop a new employee parking brochure and information packet as an educational and parking system marketing tool. Also use as a means of promoting downtown merchants and annual events through the use of merchant coupons, parking validations, etc.

**Intended Results:**

This initiative should also be considered a tool to assist employers with employee parking and as another mechanism to promote transportation alternatives. It should also strive to welcome new employees to downtown and make their first impressions of the parking/access systems a positive one.

• Action Item 7.12 Marketing Tie-ins for Parking for Special Events

Work closely with the Downtown District, Transit and attractions/venues to promote parking tie-ins in conjunction with special event promotions.

**Intended Results:**

This strategy leverages the shared benefits of joint marketing opportunities and promotes new parking/access system branding and marketing campaigns.

• Action Item 7.13 Develop Electronic Marketing Collateral for Distribution to Merchants, Media, etc.

This strategy protects and promotes the parking program’s branded images, maps, logos, etc. and promotes their use on other marketing materials. A parking marketing collateral CD is an easy way to achieve this action item and it promotes the use of parking branding and information by making it easier and more convenient to incorporate into other marketing materials.

**Intended Results:**

Extends the reach of parking marketing and branding efforts and supports the consistent use of “official” parking program logos, colors, fonts, etc.
Action Item 7.14 **Develop & Actively Promote Customer Input Mechanisms**

Develop tools and mechanisms to provide on-going input regarding customer satisfaction. One example might be a customer satisfaction survey card. *Carl Walker* has provided an example of such a card in the Appendices. Other examples could include a “parking hot-line” phone number or a dedicated customer input email address posted prominently on your website.

**Intended Results:**

Provide on-going opportunities for assessing customer satisfaction.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 8
ACCOUNTABILITY & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Action Item 8.1 Parking System Revenue and Expense Statement**

As part of the strategic goal of developing a “vertically integrated parking program” understanding and detailed tracking all parking revenues and expenses is a critical first step in understanding to overall financial condition of the enterprise.

**Intended Results:**

Provide improved understanding of parking system financial status. Incorporate into an Annual Parking Report.

- **Action Item 8.2 Create a Flow-Chart of Current Parking Revenues and Expenses**

In conjunction with action item 8.1 above, it is also important to understand where parking revenues are generated and where they go (parking enterprise fund, City general fund, specific departmental budgets, etc.) It is also important to track expenses and from what funds they are paid.

**Intended Results:**

Provide improved understanding of parking system financial resources, obligations and contributions.
• **Action Item 8.3  Evaluate the feasibility of Parking Becoming a Financially Self-Supporting Enterprise Fund**

If all parking related revenue streams and expenses were consolidated, would the parking program be capable of being self-sustaining? This would include paying for all off-street operating and maintenance costs (including maintenance reserves), on-street operations and enforcement costs as well as future debt service obligations (and required debt service coverage ratios).

• **Action Item 8.4  Parking Market Rate Surveys**

Conduct quarterly reviews of parking market rates for both the local area and selected peer cities. Document and track trends in parking rates and provide a context for potential parking rate changes.

**Intended Results:**

Provide an enhanced ability to compare rates when economic redevelopment prospects inquire about Downtown Cedar Rapids.

• **Action Item 8.5  Revenue Control Audits**

Develop internal systems for regular internal parking audits. This could be done by City staff or as a service provided by the contracted parking management firm. In addition, however, we recommend that biennial parking system revenue control audits utilizing an objective, outside audit firm that specializes in parking system auditing be conducted.

**Intended Results:**

Ensure compliance with revenue control policies and procedures. Provide for enhanced accountability of public program funds. Ensure that private parking management firms are meeting contract obligations (if applicable)

External bi-annual parking system revenue control audits should be budgeted in the range of $25,000 - $40,000 depending on specific scope requirements.

• **Action Item 8.6  Establish Facility Maintenance Reserve**

Establish a parking facility maintenance reserve fund, or if one already exists assess the adequacy and the funding rate relative to current and projected facility maintenance needs.

**Intended Results:**

Avoid deferring facility maintenance and the potential for increased facility restoration costs.
- Action Item 8.7 Increase the Parking Program’s Bonding Capacity

Enhance the parking program’s financial stability to leverage an increased bonding capacity to improve the agency’s ability to respond to development opportunities requiring structured parking capital investment.

**Intended Results:**

By combining the current parking revenue streams (on-street, off-street and enforcement) with other potential revenue sources such as fee-in-lieu parking options, parking district assessments, etc., bonding capacity for future parking or related transportation projects can be enhanced.
Secondary Action Items
Guiding Principle 9
INTEGRATED ACCESS AND MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

- Action Item 9.1 Embrace and Encourage an Integrated Access Management Approach

Carl Walker strongly endorses the concept of “Integrated Access Management” as a means to broaden the program scope through the creative integration of parking and transportation management and planning.

The recommended set of Access Management “Guiding Principles” is intended to develop a strategic framework that makes the concept of an “Integrated Access Management” program a more reasonable, relevant and pragmatic element of the overall parking strategic plan.

One effective way of looking at the concept of “integrated access management” is to consider it from the perspective of “supply-side strategies” and “demand-side strategies”. The specific action items under this category will be divided into these sub-categories.

Intended Results:

In the envisioned “Integrated Access Management” approach, the parking and transportation functions, agencies and departments will share a common vision of what “enhanced downtown access” means.

There should be a recognition that parking and transportation are both support services and that the goals of both functions should be subordinate to larger community or downtown strategic goals and objectives. Without this larger strategic framework clearly in place, it is hard for parking and transportation goals to make sense, except as it relates to supporting the programs for their own sake.
Action Item 9.1.A  Explore Supply-Side Strategies

1Develop a variety of “Supply-side Strategies” to provide a strong and varied parking management program. Supply-side strategies include the following areas:

**Shared Parking**

- Develop a specific shared parking model and incorporate this model into local zoning code regulations for parking.

**Parking Regulations**

- Review and assess current parking regulations for both on-street and off-street environments on at least a biennial basis. This evaluation should also incorporate residential parking policies and requirements.

**Walking and Cycling Improvements**

- Cedar Rapids is working toward being declared a “Bike Friendly Community”. The Iowa Bicycle Coalition, the Corridor MPO and other community groups have advocated for “Complete Streets and Bicycle Friendly Communities”. Walking and Cycling improvements can be aligned with parking management strategies in several ways:
  
  o Improving walkability (the quality of walking conditions) expands the range of parking facilities that serve a destination. It increases the feasibility of sharing parking facilities and use of remote parking facilities.
  
  o Improving walkability increases “park once” trips, that is, parking in one location and walking rather than driving to other destinations, which reduces vehicle trips and the amount of parking required at each destination.
  
  o Walking and cycling improvements allow these modes to substitute for some automobile trips.

**Parking Facility Design**

- Existing parking ramps in Cedar Rapids have detracted from a vibrant street level experience and have hindered downtown development. The community must change the way it has built ramps if it hopes to successfully implement its downtown

1 Note: Many of the concepts in this section were referenced from Mr. Todd Litman’s book entitled “Parking Management”.
development strategies. Enhanced parking facility design refers to physical layout, construction and land-use combinations associated with parking facilities.

- Improved design and operation can better integrate parking facilities into communities, improve the quality of service experienced by users, better support retail and provide a more homogenous urban fabric.

**Improved Parking Operations & Management**

- Examples of operational/management strategies that improve the quality of service experienced by users and help address various problems include:
  
  o **Access Management** – refers to coordination between roadway design and land use development, such as limiting the number of driveways and clustering land use activities.
  
  o **Flexibility** – designing facilities and management systems to anticipate and accommodate changing needs and temporary uses such as valet operations, special events, peak and off-peak demands.
  
  o **Facility Access and Circulation** – parking facilities should be designed to promote good internal circulation (avoid dead-ends, etc.) and provide multiple entry/exit lanes, reversible lanes, etc.
  
  o **Environmental Design** – strategies to reduce energy use, limit “heat island effect”, reduce waste water runoff, and even generate energy through solar options.
  
  o **Lighting** – adequate lighting is important for user comfort, safety and safety
  
  o **Orientation** – many planners recommend locating buildings close to the sidewalk to improve pedestrian access, with parking located behind or at the side of a building.
  
  o **Parking Structures** – parking structures require careful design to be attractive, pleasant to use and integrated into the overall urban landscape.
  
  o **Preservation and Enrichment** – parking facilities can be designed to protect and enhance historic, cultural and natural resources.
Security – parking facilities can be designed to maximize security through natural surveillance, lighting, patrols, emergency alarms and CCTV monitoring.

Size and Scale – large parking facilities can be divided into smaller units.

Overflow and Special Event Parking Plans

- Overflow parking plans describe the management strategies that will be applied when parking facilities fill, for example, during special events, peak shopping periods, or temporary reductions in parking supply. Below are some possible components of an overflow parking plan:
  - Provide signs with directions to alternative nearby parking facilities.
  - Provide adequate traffic and parking management staff during peak periods. Additional staff may be hired for special events.
  - Provide information on parking and travel options for special event participants, highlighting those that can be used to avoid parking problems. Example – Develop brochures that show both parking facility locations and transit options for major sports or cultural events.
  - Encourage travelers to shift mode or use remote parking during peak periods. Example – “Employees at 9-to-5 jobs with little need for access to their vehicles can be offered some type of financial incentive to use remote parking facilities when events at the U.S. Cellular Center are expected to consume core downtown parking capacity.”

Improved User Information and Marketing

- Enhanced parking system branding and marketing strategies are becoming more common in major downtowns around the country.

Parking Pricing

- A market-rate survey and assessment of parking pricing is highly recommended. This should include local on-street, off-street, public and private parking rates. Broader surveys of “peer cities” that Cedar Rapids sees as regional competitors should also be studied.

- Note: Parking rates are currently low compared to peer cities. Cedar Rapids should promote that fact, while also educating
the public about the benefits of strong reinvestment into the parking system.

Improved Enforcement & Controls

- Enforcement, while often perceived as negative, is essential for promoting turnover of valuable on-street parking assets. However, there are many strategies that can "take the edge off" of parking enforcement if it is managed as an integrated element of a comprehensive parking management program.

- An in-depth assessment of the existing parking enforcement program is recommended including a review of new technologies such as mobile license plate recognition to improve overall program consistency, revenue generation, citation collection ratios, etc.

- Changing public perceptions about enforcement also requires training and standards of professionalism on the part of enforcement officers. Cedar Rapids should review its expectations, standards and training programs and hold parking system employees accountable to best practice customer service behavior.

Improved Payment Methods

- Much of the resistance to parking pricing is a result of inconvenient pricing methods. As part of a larger technology assessment, the following factors should be considered:
  - Currently Cedar Rapid’s on-street parking meters accept only coins.
  - It is recommended that the Cedar Rapids invest in new multi-space or single-space credit card enabled parking meters (a relative new option) for the following reasons:
    - More customer friendly
    - Allows for multiple payment options
    - Gives receipts (some options)
    - “Declutters” the streetscape/enhances the urban environment
    - Reduces collections and improves operational efficiency
    - Can make enforcement more efficient and improve citation collection ratios
    - Provides a significant revenue enhancement due to increased credit card payment (despite the required payment to the credit card clearinghouses).
• Action Item 9.1.B **Explore Demand-Side Strategies**

Develop a variety of “Demand-side Strategies” to provide a diverse range of transportation options, alternatives and demand management programs to reduce the need for additional parking supply. Demand-side strategies potentially include the following areas:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Incentives to Shift Mode</th>
<th>Land Use Management</th>
<th>Policies and Programs</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Bicycle Improvements</td>
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<td>Bike/Transit Integration</td>
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<td>Carsharing</td>
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<td>Guaranteed Ride Home</td>
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<td>Security Improvements</td>
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<td>Traffic Calming</td>
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<td>Transit Improvements</td>
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**Intended Results:**

The major program objectives of the “integrated access management strategy” include: Increasing access options, reducing the need for additional parking, enhancing linkages/connectivity downtown, and reducing congestion/single occupant vehicle usage; thereby promoting environmental goals.

• **Action Item 9.2 Bicycle Facilities**

Continue to promote bicycling by incorporating bicycle racks in parking facilities. Consider providing bicycle lockers that can be leased to regular bicycle commuters. Consider accommodating a bicycle sharing service.

• **Action Item 9.3 Parking Cash-Out and Other Commuter Financial Incentives**

Commuter Financial Incentives include several types of incentives that encourage alternative commute modes as a mechanism to manage the “demand side” of the parking equation. Examples include:
- Parking Cash Out means that commuters who are offered subsidized parking are also offered the cash equivalent if they use alternative travel modes (Shoup, 2005).

- Travel allowances are a financial payment provided to employees instead of parking subsidies. Commuters can use this money to pay for parking or for another travel mode.

- Transit and rideshare benefits are free or discounted transit fares provided to employees (Commuter Check).

- Reduced employee parking subsidies means that commuters who drive must pay some or all of their parking costs (Parking Pricing).

- Company travel reimbursement policies that reimburse bicycle or transit mileage for business trips when these modes are comparable in speed to driving, rather than only reimbursing automobile mileage.

- Tax and other government policies that support such programs, such as tax reforms (Inland Revenue 2004; Commuter Choice Webpage).

- Commuter financial incentives can be prorated according to how much employees use alternative modes. For example, employees who drive twice a week would receive 60% of the full Parking Cash Out allowance.

- These strategies create more neutral travel incentives. Most employees who commute by car receive a free parking space with a typical value of $50-100 per month (Shoup, 1999; Litman, 1999). Employers offer employees subsidized parking because these benefits are usually untaxed. A typical employee must earn $1,500 or more in pre-tax income to pay for a parking space that costs their employer only $1,000 to provide. In the U.S., transit benefits are tax-exempt up to $100 per month (see the Commuter Choice website at www.commuterchoice.com for information on U.S. federal implementation resources and incentives). This policy has motivated an increasing number of employers to offer transit benefits as an alternative to parking benefits (Commuter Check). In Canada, transit benefits are currently taxable, so few employers offer them (employees would just as well receive cash), but there are efforts to change this policy (CUTA, 2005).
Secondary Action Items

Guiding Principle 10  
SUSTAINABILITY

- **Action Item 10.1 Parking Availability Signage**

  By providing real-time information on parking availability to motorists as part of a coordinated parking information/signage program, traffic congestion, “cruising for parking” and pollution can be reduced. Some communities have received significant grant funding for such initiatives through federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) programs.

- **Action Item 10.2 Environmentally Friendly Maintenance Programs**

  Examples include:
  - Environmentally Responsible Facility Pressure Washing
  - Fluorescent Light Recycling Programs

  **Intended Results:**

  Protect the environment and reduce City/Parking System risks associated with unlawful discharged of wastewater from parking facility pressure washing and potential exposure of employees to hazardous chemical in fluorescent fixtures.

- **Action Item 10.3 Energy Efficient Lighting**

  Evaluate options such as sealed fluorescent and LED lighting, and/or placing roof top and outer bay parking facility lighting on separate circuits so that these lights can be placed on photocells to reduce energy consumption during daylight hours. Evaluate other energy saving options.
**Intended Results:**

Utility expenses are a major parking operating expense. Evaluate options to minimize on-going expenses in this category.

- **Action Item 10.4 Sustainable Design Standards**
  
  Review the latest information on Parking Facility Design and LEED Certification
  
  - Evaluate opportunities for Facility Lighting and Energy Conservation
  
  - Evaluate strategies to monitor parking environment air quality
  
  - Evaluate opportunities for innovative parking design options
  
  - Assess permeable surfaces and "rain gardens" for new surface parking lot developments

- **Action Item 10.5 Invest in Green Technologies**

  Set an Example for the Community – Examples:
  
  - Parking system vehicles could be hybrids.
  
  - Enforcement and/or security patrols via bicycle
Parking Strategic Plan Implementation Tools & Supplementary Reference Materials

*Appendices are available upon request.*
Strategic Plan Implementation tools / Supplemental Materials

A. Draft Parking Management Agreement
B. Draft Resolution to Create a Parking District
C. Parking Access & Revenue Control System Specification
D. Multi-Space Meter Key Features Summary
E. Multi-Space Meter Specification & RFP
F. Single Space Credit Card Enabled Meter Specification
G. Article on Parking Rate Assessment Strategies
H. Article on Parking Facility Graphic Enhancements (A New Canvas)
I. Parking Facility Inspection Checklist
J. Article on Parking Criteria Documents
K. Presentation of Parking Facility Planning and Functional Design
L. Parking Structure Design Guidelines
M. Customer Satisfaction Survey Card
N. Parking Management Best Practices A-Z
O. Essay- “20 Characteristics of Effective Parking Programs”
P. Annual Parking Report Template
Q. Recommended Parking Planning and Management Library
R. White Paper - Assessing Security Program Effectiveness
S. Recommended Parking Facilities Operations Manual Outline
T. Presentation: Parking Technology Revolution

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