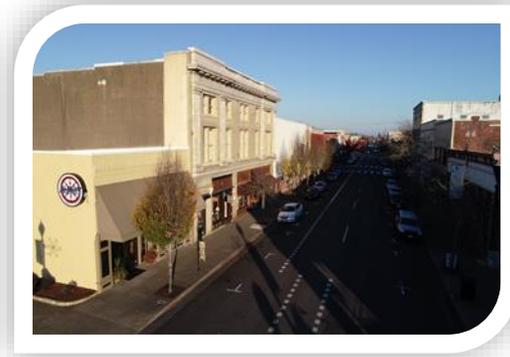




Proposed Guiding Principles for Downtown Parking

1.0 Introduction

This memorandum outlines a draft set of Guiding Principles for the management of parking in downtown Albany. This preliminary draft was developed based on the input received from the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC)¹ and is intended to illicit comments, discussion, and additional input from the Committee. The goal is to ensure that these proposed Guiding Principles are reflective of the intent, purpose, and priorities of the SAC for managing parking in the downtown.



Input received at upcoming Committee meetings and scheduled public forums will be used to further revise and refine this draft prior to presenting a draft set of Guiding Principles to the Albany City Council. A final set of Guiding Principles will be established following input and refinement from Council.

2.0 Stakeholder Committee Input

A successful downtown has a clear sense of place and offers an enticing mix of uses and amenities. The role of parking is to support the pursuit of this vision. *People do not come downtown to park*; they come to experience an environment that is unique, active, and diverse. A well-organized and effective parking system makes it safe, easy, and convenient for them to do so. Getting the right parker to the right stall – making a place for each user of downtown – defines a successful parking program.

2.1. Desired Outcomes

If parking is to be successful, the parking management plan will need to make the parking system:

- **Convenient and welcoming**
 - Create a parking system that lets users find a convenient space and take advantage of downtown's walkable environment to connect to stores, restaurant, business, and recreational destinations.

- **Well signed and safe**
 - Clearly communicate how and where to find appropriate and available parking; make parking understandable and quickly recognizable
 - Make it easy for users to park and get to their destination.

¹ May 15, 2019 Committee Meeting; specific comments that informed the development of each Guiding Principle are shown in blue boxes.

- **Fair and equitable**
 - Parking management should entail reasonable options for users; strategies should be affordable for all users.
 - Ensure that the community understands and recognizes that all users are beneficiaries of parking.

- **Forward thinking and responsive**
 - Anticipate and respond to increasing demands for access to a growing downtown (downtown is a work in progress).
 - Continue to monitor on and off-street parking levels to adjust to community changes and needs.

- **Viable**
 - Maximize the use of existing parking resources and, if necessary, construct additional parking in ways that are financially viable and maintain downtown’s character and appeal.
 - Ensure parking decisions are supportive of the downtown community.

- **Consensus based**
 - Provide for an integrated on- and off-street system that works for all users and supports and encourages successful public/private partnerships.
 - Ultimately, the plan will need to have community buy-in and support.

2.2. Supporting Albany’s Unique Character

Downtown Albany is a special place. It is the heart of the City and provides a high quality of life to its employees, residents and visitors. Management of the parking system should reinforce and enhance Albany’s unique qualities and character. These qualities include:

- *A family friendly, small town feel.*
- *An amenity-rich community with an attractive mix of businesses, great attraction, green spaces and significant potential for future development/redevelopment.*
- *A compact historic downtown that is walkable, safe and clean.*
- *A customer friendly destination that is both connected to nature (e.g., Willamette Valley) but still conveniently proximate to “big city” amenities just a 90-minute car drive away (Portland).*



3.0 Guiding Principles – Elements of Parking Management

The Guiding Principles outlined here are summarized under theme categories. The categories reflect input from the desired outcomes while being mindful of Albany’s unique character. The intent is to establish a basis for consensus and provide both near- and long-term direction for parking management in downtown. The principles are presented in no particular order or priority. [NOTE: Blue call out bubbles to the right of each page paraphrase statements made by the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.]

A. Priority Users

- a.1) **On-Street System (Downtown):** *The most convenient on-street parking will be preserved for the priority user: the customer trip.²*

The on-street parking system in the downtown must continue to be formatted in a manner that supports turnover and minimizes conflicts between the priority user and other users. For the most part, employees and residents should not park on-street in downtown, particularly when demand for customer parking is high at the adjacent, street level land use.

“On-street parking should be available for customers first.”

- a.2) **Off-Street System:** *Coordinate off-street parking resources (public and private) to meet employee demand; while balancing the need in public off-street facilities to also accommodate longer time needs of visitors.*

All parking strategies, particularly for employees, should be coordinated with the City’s broader transportation demand management goals and objectives to ensure that users have reasonable options available for access (which includes auto, transit, bike, walk, and ridesharing). The parking system, both on and off-street, should be managed holistically for optimal use. This effort should be pursued as a partnership between the City and private sector businesses.

“There is competition between customer and employees in some areas.”

“Employees are important to the downtown. We need to provide them parking options, and minimize conflicts with customers.”

² Customer is defined here as anyone using businesses downtown by a transient trip – this includes shopping, eating, entertainment, recreating, and visiting downtown amenities. As such, a customer can be a shopper, tourist or local resident visiting the downtown.

B. Active Capacity Management

- b.1) **Optimize Utilization:** *Manage the public parking system using the 85% Occupancy Standard to inform and guide decision-making.*

The 85% Rule is an operating principle for coordinating parking supply. When occupancies routinely reach 85% during peak periods, more intensive and targeted parking management strategies are called for to assist priority users in finding available parking. The 85% Rule will facilitate reasonable and data-driven decisions regarding time stays, enforcement, and other practices related to capacity management. Changes to the status quo can be difficult, but continued constraints in parking and access will adversely impact the downtown's success and ability to attract and absorb growth.

“At present, cars move and circulate fairly well. With growth, congestion will increase. We need to know when and how to respond.”

- b.2) **Shared Off-Street Parking:** *Encourage shared parking in areas where parking is underutilized (within the downtown and remotely in facilities linked by other modes). This will require an active partnership with owners of private parking supplies.*

If the 2019 parking study shows that areas of the downtown are underutilized, the plan should consider strategies to capture that parking capacity for shared use. Efforts should be made to facilitate shared use agreements between different users (public and private) to direct parking demand into these areas or facilities in order to optimize the utilization of existing parking resources. This may require linking more remote locations via shuttles or transit.

“There are areas of the downtown where parking is underutilized.”

C. Information Systems

- c.1) **Branding & Wayfinding:** *Build upon Albany's wayfinding system for the downtown to link parking assets and provide directional guidance, preferably under a common brand or logo.*

The City's new wayfinding system is of a very high quality and provides directional guidance to parking lots. What may need to be considered is how directly the public parking “P” on the signage system links to the messaging at (and within) “public” lots. This will increase awareness and understanding of how to access on- and off-street parking resources. A common brand unifies marketing materials, signage systems, and other communications. The purposes is to simplify customer recognition and use of the system. All systems should be reliable and easy to use and understand.

“There are still some mixed messages in some of the leased lots, confusing to a customer.”

- c.2) **Monitor & Report Utilization:** *Implement performance measurements and reporting to facilitate decision-making.*

Committing to a routine and objective system of measurement and reporting ensures that decision-making will be informed by data. Key metrics include occupancy, turnover, average duration of stay, rate of violation, and customer input. Performance monitoring also provides a basis for routine evaluation of program effectiveness. Accurate and reliable information about parking system performance supports good decision-making and provides transparency for the community.

“Anticipate and respond to increasing demand for access to the downtown.”

D. Integration with Other Modes³

- d.1) **Travel Demand Management:** *Encourage and facilitate increasing percentages of use, particularly by employees, of alternative travel modes to free up parking capacity.*

Vehicle parking should not be the only access option, particularly for employees. Every parking stall occupied by an employee means a lower rate of turnover and less access for visitors and customers. Employees should be given reasonable access to parking, but encouraged to use alternative modes that include walking, biking, transit, and ridesharing.

“As a downtown resident, I wouldn’t need a car if there were more transit and bike options.”

Nearby residents should be encouraged to use Albany’s sidewalk system to access downtown. Community members from greater distances should be encouraged to bicycle and ride transit for downtown access. Providing safe and reliable non-auto modes of access to downtown (walking, biking, transit) relieves pressure on the parking system, enhances the attractiveness of downtown, and accommodates a variety of types of users. This Guiding Principle should complement and integrate with Active Capacity Management goals (b.1 and b.2.).

E. Planning and Funding for Future Supply

- d.1) **Planning & Funding.** **Planning for future supply growth will be strategic and routinely evaluated to ensure the City is ready to respond to growth, recognizing that funding for new growth will require a varied package of funding resources (and partnerships).**

The City must plan for its supply growth needs and initiate long-term planning efforts to assemble funding and partnerships necessary to that growth. As the City of Albany

³ This suggested Guiding Principle did not come directly out of the SAC work session and discussion. It is provided here at the recommendation of the consultant team.

implements changes to parking and as the City develops and redevelops, identifying supportive, proactive funding options should be recognized. Objective data derived from Monitor & Report Utilization (c.2) can be used as a measurable indication of change. Locations of any future supply should be strategic with local partnerships and integrated within a larger parking and transportation framework.

F. Financial Viability⁴

- f.1) **Fiscal Stewardship:** *All parking operations must be financially sustainable.*

Parking revenues should cover the cost of operations while providing reasonable surpluses to ensure the highest quality access product, customer convenience, system maintenance, safety, and service delivery. This will require multiple funding sources for parking operations, maintenance, and system growth. Sources can include leases, enforcement fees, hourly rates and other user fees, and/or partnerships with the private sector.

“All users are beneficiaries of parking.”

G. Roles and Coordination

- g.1) **Primary Role (City of Albany):** *The City’s role in providing public parking is listed in priority order and includes:*

- *Accommodating customer/visitor access downtown;*
- *Providing (in partnership with the private sector) reasonable access for downtown employees;*
- *Facilitating residential and/or guest access in neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the downtown.*

“There is pressure on the City to be responsible for all parking.”

The cost for providing parking, especially off-street, is very high. The City cannot be fully responsible for providing parking to all users. The City’s role must prioritize downtown’s public system for customers and visitors.

- g.2) **Primary Role (Private Sector):** *Employee parking should be led by the private sector and through partnerships where the City can reasonably participate (financially or programmatically).*

⁴As with Guiding Principle D, this suggested Guiding Principle did not come directly out of the SAC work session and discussion. It is provided here at the recommendation of the consultant team.

The private sector must take a lead role in providing parking for downtown employees. The City can complement the private sector role with surpluses in its supply and by providing safe, reliable, and effective non-auto access to downtown.

“There are older buildings in the downtown that do not have parking.”

- g.3) **Stakeholder Support:** *Ensure that a representative body of affected private and public constituents routinely informs decision-making.*

Active participation by those affected by parking strategies helps to build an understanding of the inherent tradeoffs in all parking management decisions. This will be best accomplished through an established parking advisory committee that reviews performance metrics, serves as a sounding board for issues, and acts as a liaison to the broader stakeholder community.

DRAFT