

TASK 3.1 - PARKING STUDY

**CITY OF GREAT FALLS,
MONTANA**

Prepared for:
City of Great Falls, Planning and Community
Development

JANUARY 14, 2013



WALKER
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January 14, 2013

Wendy Thomas, AICP
Deputy Director Planning & Community Development
City of Great Falls
P.O. Box 5021
Great Falls, MT 59403

Re: *Task 3.1 - Parking Study*
City of Great Falls, Montana

Dear Ms. Thomas:

Walker Parking Consultants ("Walker") is pleased to submit the following (draft) report for the City of Great Falls, *Downtown Access, Circulation, and Streetscape Plan*. The purpose of this document is to address scope items outlined under "Task 3.1 – Parking Study." We understand that this report may be included as part of the larger planning document.

Findings and recommendations included in this document are based on our assessment of the downtown parking system. Our initial site visit was conducted on Monday October 22 through Wednesday October 25, 2012. The site visit included an interview with Dave Gagnon, Senior Manager at Standard Parking, who oversees the City's parking operations. Walker also reviewed current parking occupancy conditions for the two downtown garages and made observations of the parking management procedures, physical condition of facilities and equipment, and overall usage characteristics of the parking system. Finally, Walker reviewed available documentation from the City's website, the 2011 Downtown Master Plan, on-line municipal code, and several additional reports (such as the two parking garage condition appraisals) provided by the City.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

WALKER PARKING CONSULTANTS

Jeremiah Simpson
Parking Consultant

Enclosure



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1
 Study Area 1

PARKING OCCUPANCIES 2
 On-Street Occupancies 2
 Off-Street Occupancies 5

DOWNTOWN PARKING RATES 6

LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE 7
 Parking Credits Program (Alternative Option) 10

PUBLIC FEEDBACK SURVEY 11

PARKING MANAGEMENT FINDINGS 12

PARKING OBSERVATIONS PHOTO LOG..... 15

SCOPE OF SERVICES..... 17

APPENDIX A: DOWNTOWN PARKING MAPS AND CITY PARKING DATA

APPENDIX B: PARKING SYSTEM FEEDBACK SURVEYS



JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

INTRODUCTION

According to 2011 census data, the City of Great Falls, Montana ("the City") has a population of roughly 58,950, with 81,327 total people living in the larger metropolitan region. The City is the third largest in the state behind Billings and Missoula.¹

Recently, the City issued a public request for qualifications (RFQ) for a *Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Plan*. The purpose of this plan is to provide professional evaluation of options to improve the downtown streetscape, convert some or all of the one-way streets to two-way traffic, and improve parking management (and planning) efforts within the downtown core. All three items are aimed at helping to revitalize the downtown business community by improving vehicular access to the downtown, parking availability, and pedestrian connections and interaction between downtown businesses.

Several parking-related tasks were outlined in the initial RFQ. The bulk of the parking study work is found under Task 3.1. Walker's specific scope of work for this project is included for reference in the last section of this report.

STUDY AREA

The study area for this project includes most of the commercial central business district ("CBD") of Great Falls as shown on Figure 1 on the next page. A larger format of this map is included in Appendix A along with a map from the City's website showing the location of parking meter and time-limited parking zones.² The study area boundaries include Park Drive on the west, 9th Street N on the east, 2nd Ave N on the north, and 2nd Ave S on the south. The entire study area is zoned "C-4" and referred to as the Central Business Core under the City's Land Development Code (Title 17).

The downtown CBD includes a mix of single-story and low-rise (2-4 story) commercial development with a few larger mid-rise (5-10 story) buildings. Most buildings are occupied by professional services such as banks and offices along with some government services, light industrial, and a few hotel/motels. Downtown housing options are limited. There are roughly a dozen restaurants and coffee shops available. However early morning, weekend, and nighttime parking activity appears to be relatively limited.

Most of the publicly available parking within the study area is City-owned, including the North- and South Garages, six public lots, and on-street metered spaces. The entire system (referred to as the "Parking Program Area") also includes several downtown-adjacent residential permit zones, and is managed and enforced by Standard Parking. City police officers do respond to specific complaints and also issue citations for handicapped and fire hydrant violations outside of the downtown.

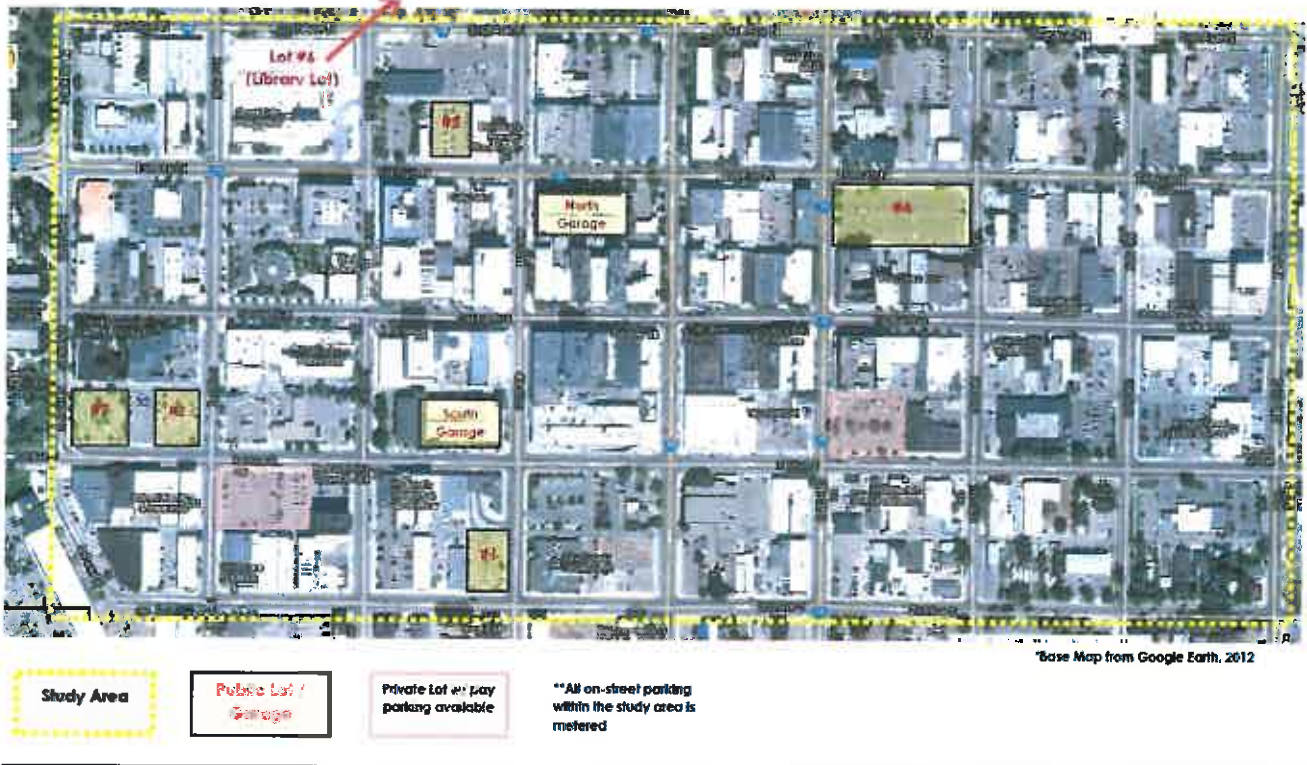
There is one private above-ground garage located at 4th Street S and 1st Ave S, though this garage is reserved for tenants of the Strain Building. The Quality Inn Ponderosa at 3rd Street N and Central Ave also has below-ground parking available for hotel guests.

¹ US Census Bureau population estimates for 2011/2012: <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/cities/totals/2011/>

² The Downtown Parking Map from the City's Website can be found at: <http://www.greatfallsmt.net/planning>

A few of the private lots within the study area are available for pay parking on a monthly basis for the general public (see Figure 1 for a few of the larger examples). All other parking facilities within the CBD are private and many have posted signage indicating that spaces are available to tenants and building visitors only.

Figure 1: Great Falls Downtown Study Area and Parking Map



Source: Google Earth (<http://maps.google.com/>)

PARKING OCCUPANCIES

At the request of the City, the *Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Plan* is primarily focused on big picture solutions for the downtown core rather than a detailed analysis of existing parking and traffic conditions. Therefore, Walker’s scope of work for Task 3.1 did not include any specific data-collection efforts to record parking occupancies or turn-over on a block-by-block basis. Instead, parking utilization has been estimated for the downtown as a whole based on data provided by Standard Parking over a handful of separate survey dates. Findings from this data are discussed in the paragraphs below.

ON-STREET OCCUPANCIES

As part of their enforcement efforts, Standard Parking typically monitors and records parking meter occupancy data on a Monday through Friday basis from 9 am to 5 pm.



For the purpose of this analysis, Walker was provided with hard copies of the meter occupancy data for the week of Monday, September 10 through Friday, September 14. Out of these dates, Wednesday (9/12) and Friday (9/14) showed the busiest overall conditions with 1,822 total vehicles and 1,853 vehicles parked in metered spaces on these days.

The Wednesday data was selected for Walker’s analysis, as this day is usually more typical of weekday conditions than on a Friday which can have some atypical usage. A summary of the occupancy data for the sample day (9/12/12) is shown below.

Figure 2: On-Street Parking Occupancy Summary

On-Street Meter Occupancies

Collected: Wednesday, Sept 12, 2012

Sub-Area	Available Meter Spaces	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	12:00 PM	1:00 PM	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM
"Core" (see Figure 3)	306	84	94	108	120	110	128	126	104
Remaining Meters	759	79	114	132	152	125	121	104	121
Totals:	1,065	163	208	240	272	235	249	230	225

Sub-Area	Available Meter Spaces	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	12:00 PM	1:00 PM	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM
"Core" (see Figure 3)	306	27%	31%	35%	39%	36%	42%	41%	34%
Remaining Meters	759	10%	15%	17%	20%	16%	16%	14%	16%
Totals:	1,065	15%	20%	23%	26%	22%	23%	22%	21%

Source: Walker Parking Consultants, 2012; from data provided by Standard Parking

System-wide parking occupancies did not show any particular shortage of available spaces. As with most systems it is likely that some block faces did exhibit busier than average conditions at various times of the day. However, based on the data provided, it is unlikely that drivers would have to circulate for very long to find an available metered parking space.

To provide some additional analysis, Walker also selected a “core” zone, to show typical parking occupancies along some of the busier block faces within the downtown. The “core” zone is highlighted on the figure below and is shown as a line item on the previous set of tables. This area includes block faces between Park Drive and 6th St and between Central Ave and 1st Ave N.

Parking occupancies within the core area, though busier, did not exceed 42% total occupancy rate on the selected survey day.



Figure 3: Downtown Great Falls "Core" Blocks (for meter activity)



*Base Map from Google Earth, 2012

Source: Walker Parking Consultants, 2012

Discussion on Walking Distances

When calculating acceptable walking distances, Walker typically applies a Level-of-Service ("LOS") approach with the following representing various levels of user convenience for an outdoor environment:

- LOS A = up to 400' = up to 1.4 min*
- LOS B = 400' to 800' = 1.4 to 2.8 min
- LOS C = 800' to 1200' = 2.8 to 4.1 min
- LOS D = 1200' to 1600' = 4.1 to 5.5 min

*(Walking times based on an average pace of 3.3 miles/hour; not including time spent waiting at intersections)

Though bad weather and health concerns can certainly impact the "acceptability" of even shorter distances, it is assumed that most downtown customers will accept a level of service A or B, while employees can be expected to tolerate up to level of service C or better.

Most blocks within the downtown core measure slightly less than 400' (traveling east-west). Therefore, finding a parking space within 1 to 2 blocks of a customer's destination would be considered acceptable under the LOS A or B standards.

From this perspective, it would appear from the block by block occupancies report by Standard Parking that on street parking is currently adequate to provide a fairly high convenience standard and service level for most

downtown visitors and customers at most times. (Pay parking may still be a disincentive for some customers though this factor will be discussed later in the report).

OFF-STREET OCCUPANCIES

In order to keep operating costs to a minimum, Standard Parking only employs a limited number of staff members to enforce meters and off-street lots. (One staff person typically covers all of the meter zones, while a second staff person covers the lots and time-limited areas.) As a result, parking occupancy data for the public lots is only collected once per month and only upon request for the two parking garages. The most recent available parking lot occupancy data for the system was collected on Wednesday, September 5, 2012.

Walker supplemented these counts with our own counts of the two garages which were collected on October 24, 2012. Both sets of occupancies are shown on the table below.

Figure 4: City Lot and Parking Garage Occupancies

Off-Street (Lot) Public Parking Occupancies

Collected: Wednesday, Sept 5, 2012

Lot	Available Public Spaces	9 00 AM	11 30 AM	1 45 PM
Lot #2	37	19	20	22
Lot #3	25	13	8	12
Lot #4	139	20	23	27
Lot #6	26	6	19	15
Lot #7	31	12	7	8
Lot #8	58	36	39	37
Totals:	316	106	116	121

Lot	Available Public Spaces	9 00 AM	11 30 AM	1 45 PM
Lot #2	37	51%	54%	59%
Lot #3	25	52%	32%	48%
Lot #4	139	14%	17%	19%
Lot #6	26	23%	73%	58%
Lot #7	31	39%	23%	26%
Lot #8	58	62%	67%	64%
Totals:	316	34%	37%	38%

1. Lot #3 has 39 total spaces, though 14 of these spaces are leased to an adjacent business and are not counted in the City's occupancy.

City Parking Garage Occupancies

Collected: Wednesday, Oct 24, 2012

Garage	Available Public Spaces	11 30 AM
North Garage	496	215
South Garage	311	246
Totals:	807	461

Garage	Available Public Spaces	11 30 AM
North Garage	496	43%
South Garage	311	79%
Totals:	807	57%

2. A slight adjustment has been made to the south garage occupancies as the roof level was unavailable due to snow at the time of our counts.

Source: Walker Parking Consultants, 2012

Overall, the parking occupancies shown above do not demonstrate that there are any significant parking shortages within the downtown parking system at this time.



JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

However, it should be noted that according to Standard Parking, occupancy rates in the summer months can be somewhat higher than the rates observed during the late fall. Also, during summer time festivals and events, parking occupancy rates can be atypically high as additional visitors are expected.

A memorandum dated August 9, 2010 from Brian Scoggins at Standard Parking stated that the North Garage was 83% full while the South Garage was 95% full. In context however, it appears that the 2010 memorandum may have been based on the number of permits assigned to each facility, plus transient demand. (Note that using this measure of demand, monthly permits can be oversold by 10% to 30% and may not accurately represent the actual utilization rates on a given day).

It is Walker's finding that under current conditions the garages appear to be sufficient to accommodate demand, though the availability of spaces in the South Garage is somewhat more limited than in the North Garage. According to Standard Parking there is no waiting list for permit spaces in any structure or downtown parking lot.

The several private lots that offer paid monthly parking help to address some of the employee demand that may not wish to park in one of the City garages.

DOWNTOWN PARKING RATES

As mentioned in the introduction, the City of Great Falls has a population of roughly 58,950 (with 81,327 in the larger metropolitan region). In many areas of the country, this population size would be considered anywhere from a mid-size town, to a suburb, to a small city, depending on the density of the region and whether the incorporated city has a defined downtown core (as Great Falls does).

Benchmarking of downtown parking rates is sometimes difficult for cities in this population range as the decision to incorporate pay parking is often dependent on if the community has a defined downtown, and if so, if that downtown has any publically available (and financed) parking garages and/or busy on-street conditions. There are many cities in the U.S. with populations between 50,000 and 100,000 that do not have any structured parking garages and therefore may not charge for parking in their downtowns. However, there are also many cities in this size range that may charge very high rates for parking if they are located in a dense region of the county, or in a coastal region, or are a major tourist destination.

The table on the next page provides some limited benchmarking data to show how Great Falls compares to other cities in Montana and a few selected examples in other mountain region states. Note that only communities that do charge for parking have been included on this chart. A few larger communities (such as Colorado Springs) are also included if these communities were judged to have similar downtown characteristics.



Figure 5: Great Falls Parking Rates as Compared to Similar Cities

City Name	State	Population	Garage Rates		Lot Rate		On Street Parking Rates	
			Monthly	Hourly	Monthly	Hourly	Monthly	Hourly
Great Falls	MT	58,505	\$40.00	\$0.50/hr: \$3/day	\$25 (avg., rates vary)	\$0.50/hr	na	\$0.50 2 hr Limit
Helena	MT	29,939	\$49-\$59	0.75 1 hr Limit*	\$22-\$45		\$35-\$38	
Bozeman	MT	37,280	\$45-\$50	First 2 hrs Free \$1.00 hr after that				
Missoula	MT	66,788	\$50-\$75	First hr \$0.50 \$1.00 after that**	\$30-\$55			First hr \$0.50 \$1.00 after that*
Billings	MT	104,170	\$25-\$100	First 1-2hrs \$0.25 \$1.00 hr after				
Cheyenne	WY	59,466	\$45 and \$20 Deposit		\$45 and \$20 Deposit			
Boise	ID	205,671	\$75-\$100	\$2.50	\$25-\$85	\$1.00		First 20 Mins Free \$1.00 hr after that
Co Springs	CO	416,427	\$50-\$80	\$0.75/hr 9hr Max First hr Free \$1.00 hr After	\$25.00	\$0.25		\$0.75-\$1.00
Fort Collins	CO	146,762	\$24-\$46		\$26-\$40	Some \$1.00 & Free 2 hr		Free
Pueblo	CO	106,595			\$20-\$40			

* Only one Garage has an hourly rate available

** One Garage or Street has first hour Free 2nd hour \$0.50 and After that \$1.00 per hour

Population Source Link: <http://www.city-data.com/>

Source: Walker Parking Consultants, 2012

Based on the data presented above, it appears that Great Falls is within a reasonable range with their parking fees but may be able to increase their monthly rates somewhat and also increase their maximum per day rate for the garages. Because the City is the largest parking operator in the downtown, it is most likely that any increase in rates for the City facilities will lead to an eventual rate increase for private lots offering monthly parking. (These facilities may choose to undercut City rates slightly in order to reach capacity; however, once this happens, private rates will likely increase along with City rates).

The decision to increase parking rates is often a difficult political decision as many merchants and community members tend to see pay parking as "punitive" rather than as a parking management tool. When presenting parking rate analysis it is sometimes useful to show how pay parking is increasing necessary in order to help maintain current parking infrastructure assets (such as the repairs needed on the two garages), and also create funding for future improvements to the system.

Contrary to popular belief, most pay parking systems do not ever come close to being entirely self-funding. Recent studies on the economic impact to develop and maintain garages, show that it takes somewhere between \$140 and \$200 per month per space in revenues in order to operate a new parking garage



completely "in the black". This is the rate that would be needed to cover both operations and debt service on the garage itself (excluding any land costs).

The following table provides some additional data that may be useful when presenting a financial argument for or against parking structures and pay parking rates.

The first table in Figure 6 shows the typical hard costs associated with new garage construction within the mountain states region over the past few years. Typical efficiencies for an above ground garage of at least 500 spaces are assumed. The portion of the chart on the right hand shows typical per year operating expenses for a garage based on Walker's database of expenses for typical garages built over the last 5 to 10 years.

Figure 6: Typical Costs to Build and Operate a New Garage (2012)

	\$/S.F.	S.F. / Space					Expense Category	Median Per Space Cost
		275	300	325	350	375		
Pkg. Lot	\$ 5.00	\$ 1,400	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,900		
	\$ 8.00	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,400	\$ 2,600	\$ 2,800	\$ 3,000		
	\$ 10.00	\$ 2,800	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,300	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,800		
Above Grade P.S.	\$ 20.00	\$ 5,500	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,500	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,500	Payroll & Benefits	\$ 267
	\$ 25.00	\$ 6,900	\$ 7,500	\$ 8,100	\$ 8,800	\$ 9,400	Security	\$ 107
	\$ 30.00	\$ 8,300	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,800	\$ 10,500	\$ 11,300	Management Fees	\$ 33
	\$ 35.00	\$ 9,600	\$ 10,500	\$ 11,400	\$ 12,300	\$ 13,100	Supplies	\$ 19
	\$ 40.00	\$ 11,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 13,000	\$ 14,000	\$ 15,000	Accounting / Banking	\$ 4
	\$ 45.00	\$ 12,400	\$ 13,500	\$ 14,600	\$ 15,800	\$ 16,900	Liability Insurance & Claims	\$ 18
	\$ 50.00	\$ 13,800	\$ 15,000	\$ 16,300	\$ 17,500	\$ 18,800	Utilities	\$ 52
	\$ 55.00	\$ 15,100	\$ 16,500	\$ 17,900	\$ 19,300	\$ 20,600	Snow Removal	\$ 6
Below Grade P.S.	\$ 60.00	\$ 16,500	\$ 18,000	\$ 19,500	\$ 21,000	\$ 22,500	Maintenance	\$ 68
	\$ 70.00	\$ 19,300	\$ 21,000	\$ 22,800	\$ 24,500	\$ 26,300	Miscellaneous / Other Exp	\$ 10
	\$ 80.00	\$ 22,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 26,000	\$ 28,000	\$ 30,000		
	\$ 90.00	\$ 24,800	\$ 27,000	\$ 29,300	\$ 31,500	\$ 33,800		
	\$ 100.00	\$ 27,500	\$ 30,000	\$ 32,500	\$ 35,000	\$ 37,500		
\$ 110.00	\$ 30,300	\$ 33,000	\$ 35,800	\$ 38,500	\$ 41,300	Total Cost Per Space	\$ 584	

Source: Walker Parking Consultants, 2012

Using the median cost per space averages from the table above, the two garages in downtown Great Falls would be expected to generate roughly \$470,000± in annual operating expenses. (This would include roughly \$290,000 per year for the North Garage and roughly \$180,000 per year for the South Garage; however, labor costs for the south garage may be lower as this garage is no longer staffed for daily parking).

Long term structural repairs on a garage can add additional expenses as a garage asset ages, as major repairs are not included in the "typical" operating expenses shown above.

LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

Increasingly, cities are finding that requiring a minimum number of parking spaces (per unit) for any new development is a rather limited way to approach parking planning. In suburban communities these "parking minimums" can often lead to unintended consequences such as urban sprawl, diminished opportunity for



JANUARY 14, 2013

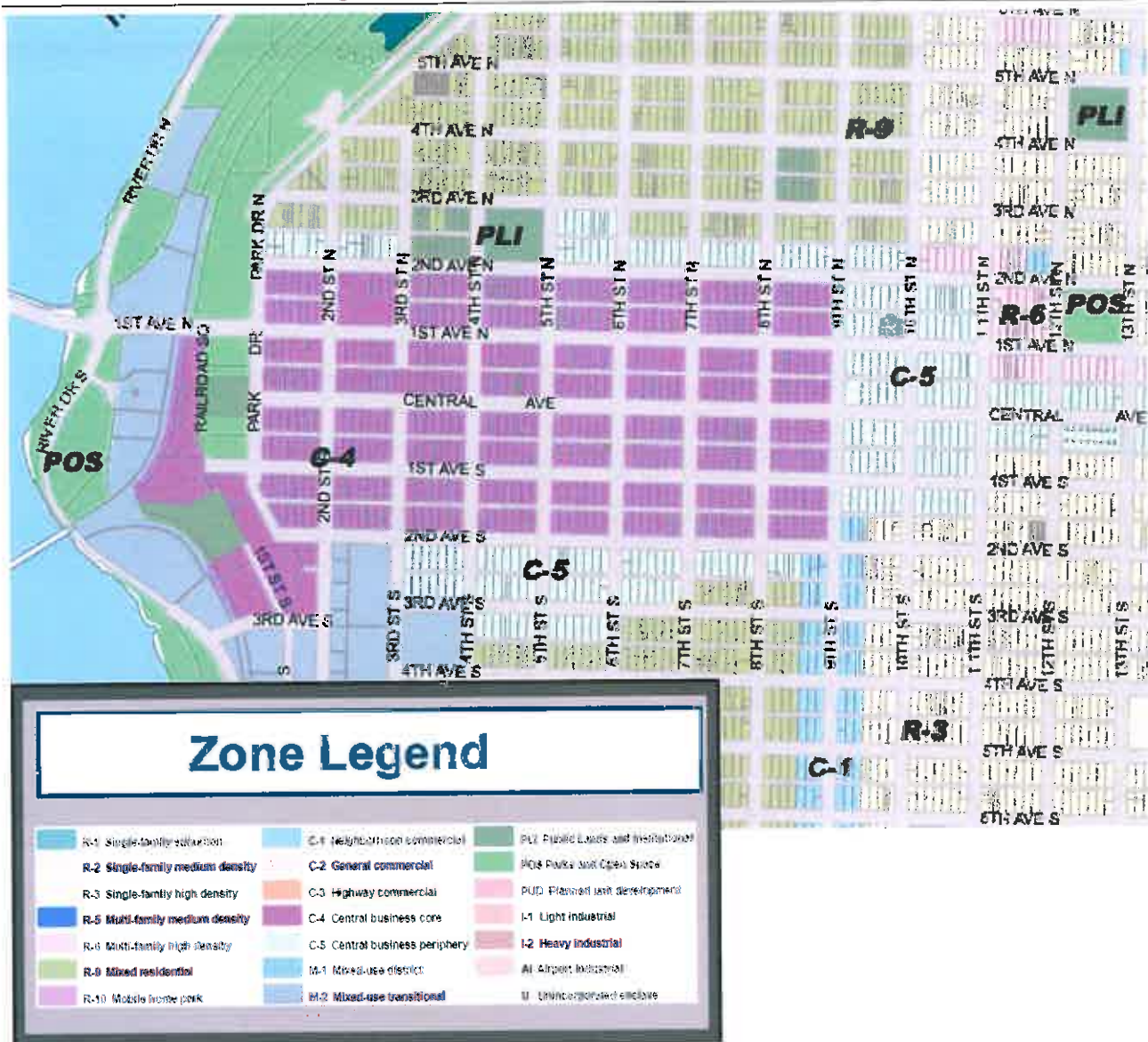
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shared parking, less overall development density, large fields of surface parking instead of more efficient structured garages, and issues impacting water runoff and detention.

In terms of benchmarking with peer cities, the City of Great Falls is already ahead of the trend by incorporating an allowance for shared parking into their Land Development Code (Title 17) and allowing for flexible standards within their downtown zone (C-4) and downtown adjacent zones.

The following zoning map is available on the City website, with specific parking requirements found at: <http://search.municode.com/html/14988/index.html>

Figure 7: Downtown and Downtown Adjacent Zones



Source: Walker Parking Consultants, 2012 from City website



JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

Recently, certain changes to the Land Development code (Title 17) were proposed to Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission. The City Commission adopted these amendments on June 19, 2012 effective as of July 19, 2012. The specific changes to the downtown parking standards are summarized in the paragraphs below:

Downtown Parking:

Existing Code

The LDC has provisions that allow the Director of Planning & Community Development to reduce the number of required parking spaces in the C-4 zoning district (Central business core) on a site-specific basis given historic development patterns and the wide availability of off-street (garage and lot) and on-street parking spaces in the city's downtown parking program. Existing code also requires that should a property owner be granted the reduction in parking, that payment in lieu be made to the city at \$1,000 per space. While this provision exists in the code, previous administrators of the parking program have not required payment in lieu for a reduction in parking spaces in the Central business core.

Specific Code Changes

Given initiatives underway to attract new businesses and promote development/redevelopment in the downtown area, and given that payment in lieu of parking has not been applied in the recent past, it is proposed to retain the Director's discretion to waive minimum parking requirements where warranted in the Central business core, but formally eliminate the payment in lieu provision. Because the Downtown Parking District generally encompasses the C-4 and C-5 zoning districts and because the C-5 district has similar development patterns and access to public parking as the C-4 district, staff recommends allowing the Director to waive minimum parking requirements in the C-5 zoning district on a site-specific basis.

Based on our review of the current Land Development code and the recently approved revisions (summarized above), Walker does not recommend any additional changes to the parking codes at this time. The flexibility to address downtown parking needs on a case-by-case basis makes sense, as the public parking supply contains sufficient spaces to allow for some redevelopment and new development to occur.

In place of a formalized in-lieu fee program (which is already removed from the code), the City may want to consider adopting a formal or informal "parking credits program" as briefly described in the following section.

PARKING CREDITS PROGRAM (ALTERNATIVE OPTION)

An alternative to the more standard In-lieu fee program may be the use of parking credits. One established example of this program is currently in use with the City of Pasadena in southern California.

Parking credits allow businesses to contractually link a certain number of existing public spaces to their private business. This relationship allows businesses to satisfy the City's parking requirements without providing any additional on-site parking for their property. The parking spaces that are purchased via the credits remain with that particular property.

In Pasadena, the City effectively implemented a parking credit system to help construct two public parking structures, and contributed to the construction of a third private structure that is open to the public. The garages in Pasadena are effective because the public spaces in the structures are shared among adjacent land uses. As a result of following shared parking concepts, fewer spaces are required to meet the total parking demand in the downtown.



JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

For the businesses that support the fees and use the structure, the City issues 1.5 parking credits per space available in the public garages (this is possible due to the efficiencies of using shared parking). According to the City, the parking credit program began in 1987, and by 2001 the City had allocated 2,350 credits.

A similar program is being evaluated in Englewood, Colorado based only on public lots and on-street spaces. Here the public parking system was first evaluated to determine the surplus of public spaces available in downtown Englewood. The parking credit program will then be established to allow developers to buy redevelopment parking "credits" until the public parking system reaches an acceptable level of utilization. At that time, the City would then have some funding available to develop new public resources.

PARKING FEEDBACK SURVEY

As part of the public outreach process for the *Downtown Access, Circulation, and Streetscape Plan*, area residents, business owners, and other interested parties were invited to take part in an online survey to collect feedback on the downtown parking system. The online survey content was developed by the planning team, was advertised by the City, and promoted through local news agencies (krtv.com for example). The survey was opened to the public at the end of October and remained open through the end of November, 2012. In total, 55 individuals completed the online survey.

Complete results from the feedback survey are included in this document as Appendix B. Findings will be discussed in more detail under the public relations section of the *Downtown Access, Circulation, and Streetscape Plan* report. However, several conclusions from the survey responses are mentioned here as they relate directly to parking management items that are being considered at this time:

- Most aspects of the downtown parking operations were rated as "adequate" by the majority of survey takers. The two items that stood out as "inadequate" were:
 - Parking for Events/Festivals (49% listed this as inadequate)
 - Public Parking Lot Signage (43% listed this as inadequate)
- Survey takers that filled in comments for this question reiterated the need for better signage and directional wayfinding to direct visitors to the public parking. Event parking was mentioned in a few of the comments as was the availability/reliability of public transit.
- Many other comments for this question listed the price of parking as the biggest concern, and/or had feedback on the parking meter program.
 - Though the majority of comments did favor the removal of parking meters there were several varied opinions listed in the survey that supported keeping the system as is, or supported replacing existing meters with more advanced technologies such as on-street kiosks.
- Public feedback on areas that have an oversupply or undersupply of parking showed a wide range of opinions with the Civic Center area mentioned most frequently as a problem spot
- Programs and management ideas that received mostly positive feedback included: branding of the public parking system, creating more visitor only parking, and moving to stricter enforcement of the 2-hr time limits

JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

- Programs and management ideas that recieved mostly negative feedback included forming any sort of parking assessment district, and increasing time limits to 3-hours
- Interestingly, the idea to replace current metgers with on-street multi-space meters (kiosks) was almost evenly split between survey takers that supported or opposed this idea.

PARKING MANAGAMENT FINDINGS

Much of the evaluation of parking management is anecdotal and based on our initial observations and conversation with Standard Parking. However, the following general items should be presented so that the City and community can offer additional input and discussion:

Garages

- Per the 2010 recommendation from Standard Parking (in the previously mentioned memorandum), the South Garage is operated for permit parking only and does not have a cashier for transient demand. This system appears to work well and likely saves on considerable labor costs. Since meter parking is readily available along the block faces nearest to the South Garage, Walker does not see any need to reopen the garage for daily use at this time.
- The general condition of the South Garage appears to be pretty good. This garage is newer and has fluorescent lighting which provides for a brighter, safer, and more energy efficient garage. Standard Parking and the City have been working to mitigate a pigeon infestation problem, though some work still remains on this item.
- The North Garage is over 30 years old (constructed in 1980). Though this garage has aged reasonably well, there is the potential that major structure repair may be needed over the next few years. At the minimum, a lighting upgrade / retrofit is needed. Also, a structural review of the garage was recommended in 2010 to look at stairwell issues and some exposed rebar. (This item was completed in 2012.)
 - Over the next 1-20 years, maintenance of the two garages may become "big ticket" items for the City. A recent condition appraisal completed by Carl Walker, estimated \$1,200,000 in repair/maintenance work would be needed for the North Garage over this timeframe. The South Parking Garage will need an estimated \$700,000 in repair/maintenance work.

City Parking Lots

- The City has recently contracted with Digital Technologies to install pay-and-display meter equipment in the Library lot on a trial program basis. Walker strongly supports this technology upgrade. The old "lock-box" style of revenue collection has numerous issues, the biggest one being that the system cannot be audited which leads to a potential for lost revenues due to:
 - Parking operator error, drivers not paying (because of lack of exact change or perceived lax enforcement), limited enforcement options, and greater potential for theft, etc.

- If successful, at the Library Lot, Walker supports the expansion of multi-space technology to other public lots. The greatest hurdle to upgrading equipment is the up-front costs which may require pay back of the investment over a multi-year period.
- With limited City resources, upgrades such as technology must be weighed against other uses for these funds (including garage repairs, surface lot maintenance and a host of other issues).

On Street Meters

- Cash-only parking meters are an obvious hassle and disincentive to downtown visitors and shoppers (especially first time visitors). Several options are available to the City with varying degrees of cost:
 - Least expensive: Encourage downtown merchants to purchase parking meter tokens from the parking operator; install meter signage instructing drivers that tokens are available upon request (purchase may be required by the merchants)
 - Middle option: Starting with the core zone begin replacing older meter technology with IPS (or similar) smart meters that accept credit card processing
 - More expensive: Replace existing meter technology with pay-and-display kiosks along each block face. There are various pros and cons with using kiosks instead of single-space meters, which can be discussed.
- Some additional analysis is needed; however, based on initial review, Walker feels that the parking meter program covers a larger geographical area than is needed for the current level of demand.
- Walker recommends possibly replacing some of the parking meter zones with time limited zones or no restrictions. The core area (as outlined on previous figures) is the most critical zone to maintain metered parking. Areas beyond this zone should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and may warrant removal of meters.
 - Based on the public feedback received, the removal of some of the parking meters may be viewed favorably by many merchants as way to encourage additional visitor traffic downtown
 - However, it should be clearly communicated that many cities that do remove their parking meters later face a different set of challenges in managing their on-street parking spaces; the 'employee shuffle' typically becomes more of an issue for cities that do not have on-street pay parking
 - This issue can be partially addressed through strict enforcement of on-street time limited zones – however, time-limited zone restrictions are typically less of a disincentive for downtown employees and are harder to actively enforce than the meters
 - Another possible impact to the system is that the removal of parking meters may decrease the amount of permit parking demand for the two garages (especially if downtown employees feel that they can risk a ticket and park for free in on-street areas)
 - Even if this is not the case, it is likely that the City parking program may experience some decrease in operating revenues that may need to be replaced from another funding source
- As with the lots and garages, Walker strongly recommends that the City look at its parking violation citation program and consider adopting graduated fines for repeat offenders. In general, the cost of

JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

citation times the probability of receiving one should not be less than the cost to purchase a monthly parking permit.

Self-Operation

- The City is considering possible self-operation of the downtown parking program once the contract with Standard Parking expires
- This option merits some additional discussion; in the past Walker has found that Cities that self-operate parking can have mixed results; though the option to retain some of the current Standard Parking staffing may help to facilitate a smooth transition with little change in actual operating policies

We understand that up-front costs may prohibit some of the available options for upgrading downtown parking technology. However, as part of a comprehensive look at improving downtown access, circulation, and streetscape this may be one area where an investment in these items may prove to be beneficial for the downtown.



JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

CITY OF GREAT FALLS – PARKING OBSERVATIONS PHOTO LOG



Electronic Meters (do not accept credit card)



Posted Meter Rates



South Garage



South Garage



Private Lot Across from Bert & Ernie's (offers monthly pay parking)



City Signage (somewhat inconsistent; "branding" recommended)



JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00



City Lot Signage Example and Monthly Rate



Private Reserved Parking Example



Private Reserved Parking Example



Angled Parking Along Central Ave.



North Garage



North Garage hours and rates



SCOPE OF SERVICES

For reference only

Based on proposal dated: September 21, 2012

Task A: Parking Demand Projections

1. Provide a checklist to the City listing any remaining items (not yet received) necessary for parking planning and parking management evaluation. If requested, also provide a document with specific guidelines for data collection so that City staff can conduct detailed parking occupancy surveys within the study area.
2. Make one visit to Great Falls to observe the current parking system in operation and generally observe parking occupancies, parking management, garage and lot physical conditions, walkability, transit usage, and level of downtown activity (captive effect) between uses.
3. Evaluate parking inventory data available via the City's website, and any supplemental data provided by City staff. Evaluate parking occupancy counts provided by the City for all on-street parking and off-street parking within the study area.
4. Discuss with the City possible seasonal adjustments and special events that may have an impact on the downtown parking system. Discuss possible changes to the parking system resulting from one-way/two-way street conversions and any new development projects being planned for the downtown.
5. Evaluate growth and development scenarios provided by the City and project their impact on downtown public and private parking utilization.
6. Using appropriate models from ULI (Urban Land Institute) and ITE (Institute of Traffic Engineers), project future short term (2-3 years) and long term (4-10 years) parking demands for the downtown.

Task B: Review Development Code

7. Evaluate existing off-street parking requirements and design guidelines as outlined under the City's development code. Compare the code standards recommended by NPA (National Parking Council) and by Walker for design guidelines.

Task C: Privatization

8. Provide a brief discussion on the pros and cons of privatizing some or all of the City's existing public parking assets. (This analysis will consist of a high-level concept review only and will not include any specific analysis of income potential, value, or condition appraisal of any lots or garages). Highlight the differences between a management or lease agreement and a full monetization (or public, private partnership), as recently adopted by several large cities such as the City of Chicago.

Task D: Future Parking Location Analysis

9. Based on findings from Task A, recommend the number of public spaces that may be needed to satisfy mid-range planning horizons. Evaluate up to three sites (as identified by the City) for future public parking lot or garage development.



JANUARY 14, 2013

23-7377.00

Task E: Visitor Parking Analysis

10. In conjunction with Task G, highlight parking management strategies that will be best suited to improve the overall experience of visitors parking downtown.

Task F: Phasing Plan

11. In conjunction with Task D, create a phasing plan showing the timetable of development for future downtown public parking assets (as required).

Task G: Parking Management Plan (final deliverable)

12. Evaluate the public feedback surveys received (work conducted by Lynda Friesz) and identify key parking issues affecting downtown merchants and visitors.
13. Based on the findings from previous tasks, our initial site visit, and the above surveys recommend a parking management plan and implementation strategy to be discussed with the City and Community.
14. Based on feedback received, recommend a final plan of action to adopt parking management strategies. Briefly discuss probable costs and implementation schedule for any action items.
15. Submit a written draft report to the planning team and the City, discussing methodology and findings from all tasks.
16. Provide a final electronic (PDF) report based on one set of consolidated comments from the City and planning team.

APPENDIX A:
DOWNTOWN PARKING
MAPS AND CITY PARKING
DATA



WALKER
PARKING CONSULTANTS

ATTACHMENT 1: City of Great Falls, Montana – Public Parking Map



*Base Map from Google Earth, 2012

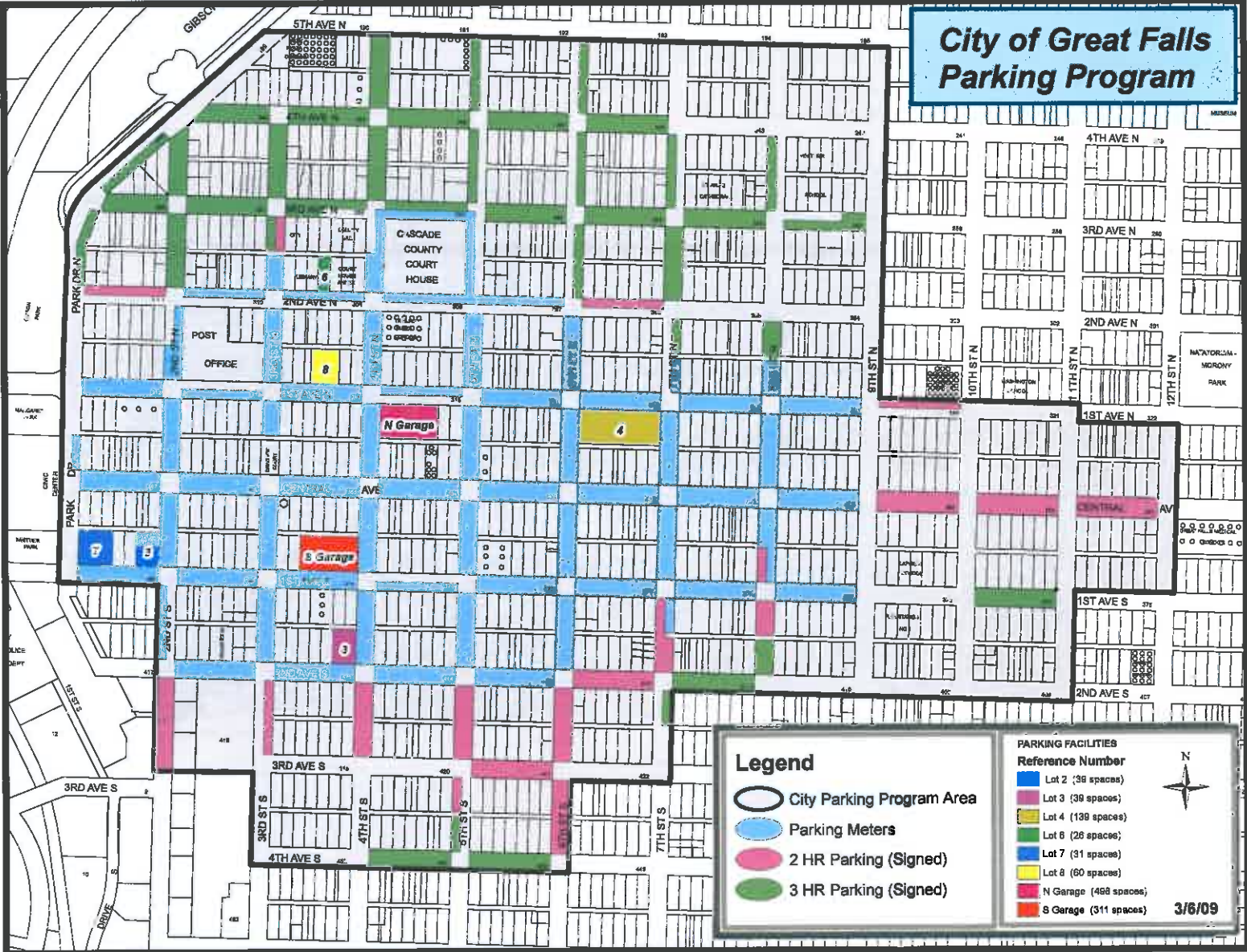
Study Area

Public Lot / Garage

Private Lot w/ pay parking available

**All on-street parking within the study area is metered

City of Great Falls Parking Program



Legend		PARKING FACILITIES		
	City Parking Program Area	Reference Number	 3/6/09	
	Parking Meters			Lot 2 (38 spaces)
	2 HR Parking (Signed)			Lot 3 (38 spaces)
	3 HR Parking (Signed)			Lot 4 (139 spaces)
				Lot 6 (26 spaces)
				Lot 7 (31 spaces)
				Lot 8 (60 spaces)
				N Garage (468 spaces)
			S Garage (311 spaces)	

Parking Data Available from the City of Great Falls website:
<http://www.greatfallsmt.net/planning/parking-division>

Parking Division

Downtown Great Falls is a unique destination. People come here to dine, shop, work and enjoy cultural and community activities. To promote vibrancy and economic health in downtown, the City of Great Falls has a diverse parking management program that is structured to meet the needs of its users and values the public parking resources. A strong connection exists between the vitality of downtown and adequate, convenient and reasonably priced parking.



Where can I park?

There are over 2,000 public parking space in Downtown Great Falls, including curbside parking, parking lots and parking garages. Check signage to be certain of time limits, parking rates and other restrictions. The color-coded map here designates locations of parking and time restrictions. Parking rules are enforced Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (for time limits only).

On-Street Meter Parking

The on-street meter district offers approximately 1000 metered parking spaces, including 25 handicapped parking stalls. All meters offer time limits from six minutes to two hours. A two-hour time limit is enforced throughout the entire meter district on all days except Sundays and City holidays. Meter enforcement is in effect from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on all days except Saturdays, Sundays, and City holidays. The time limits are posted on the meters and on signs interspersed throughout the meter district and time limits are strictly enforced. Meters accept coin denominations of nickels, dimes, quarters, and parking tokens.

On-Street Parking (Residential Zone):

The downtown residential zone expands out from the perimeter of the Parking Meter District and is bounded by the following streets and avenues: to the North by 5th Avenue North; to the South by 4th Avenue South; to the East by 9th Street; and to the West by Park Drive or 3rd Street South. Residential Zone time limits (2 hour or 3 hour) are posted on signs throughout the district and are strictly enforced. Vehicles displaying the proper residential zone permit and parked within one block of the address on the permit are exempt from the posted time limit. See [Permits and Programs](#) for more information.

Free Parking

Free Parking is available on various streets downtown. Free parking may be restricted to 2 or 3 hours, so please read and adhere to the restrictions on posted signage.

APPENDIX B:
PARKING SYSTEM FEEDBACK
SURVEYS



WALKER
PARKING CONSULTANTS

Constant Contact Survey Results

Survey Name: City of Great Falls Parking Survey_V2
 Response Status: Partial & Completed
 Filter: None
 Nov 27, 2012 10:19:37 AM

1. Please enter the information indicated below.

First Name				46
Last Name				46
Job Title				36
Company Name				36
Work Phone				40
Email Address				45
Address 1				44
Address 2				4
City				45
State/Province (US/Canada)				44
Postal Code				43
Mobile Phone				19

2. Property/Business Name and Location (if applicable)

53 Response(s)

3. Does your property/business currently provide off-street parking?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	27	49.0%
No	18	29.0%
No Responses	12	21.8%
Total	55	100%

4. If so, how many parking spaces do you provide? On-site _____ Off-site _____

24 Response(s)

We share 18 off st with 4 other business No clue. There's both but no idea how many. 150+ 20 on-site, 8 off-site 5, in lot close to building 4 onsite, a parking lot half full offsite On Site: 8 spaces Off-site: 7 spaces ~80 on-site N/A 50 on site and 10 off site 119 120 8 lot off of the street, not downtown On site 70: 2 parking lots, on N & E of building On-site approximately 70 One per employee in the parking garage. I believe 11. We have over 500 units we have several Hundred 15 on site no off-site parking available We rent one space On-site 15 45 on-site; 0 off-site			
--	--	--	--

5. Please Review the Parking PRIORITIES Triangle Below.? Please Rate the most important aspects to you as a downtown stakeholder in order of Most important to Least Important.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.

	Convenient	Inexpensive	Sufficient Quantity
For Day-To-Day Parking	27 57%	10 21%	10 21%
For Special Event Parking	10 23%	7 18%	27 61%

6. Please rate the Following based on Current Parking Operations in Downtown Great Falls?

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.

	Adequate	Inadequate	No Opinion
Availability of Spaces	35 69%	14 27%	2 4%
Convenience of Spaces	40 78%	8 16%	3 6%
Public Parking Lot Signage	18 35%	22 43%	11 22%
On-Street Signage	30 59%	13 25%	6 16%
Parking Appearance	30 59%	13 25%	8 16%
Parking Enforcement	40 80%	5 10%	5 10%
City's Responsiveness to Issues	22 44%	12 24%	18 32%
Parking Codes and Standards	24 48%	15 31%	10 20%
Parking for Events / Festivals	21 43%	24 49%	4 8%
Price	29 59%	16 33%	4 8%

7. Continued - Please rate the Following based on Current Parking Operations in Downtown Great Falls?

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.

	Adequate	Inadequate	No Opinion
Availability of Transit Alternatives	22 43%	14 27%	15 29%
Technology	15 29%	13 25%	23 45%

8. Please explain any answers in which you indicated inadequate

36 Response(s)

Having observed how other communities deal with this same issue, I was appalled with the idea that we spent EVEN more money to upgrade the meters so that people could pay even more. I think we should pull the meters entirely. Enforce a strict 2 hour limit (including not parking on same block again that day) and up the ticket fees significantly instead. This will keep the abusers in check and encourage people to SHOP DOWNTOWN!

I am not sure what you mean by technology, but I am going to assume it's something like this example. I recently visited New Jersey. One afternoon we visited Asbury Park and they have these kiosks along the street -- no meters. You go to the kiosk and you purchase what you need, e.g. parking for a variety of hours up to a day and/or a beach pass for an hour(s) or a day. All in one convenient transaction and then you take the stub back to your car. They kiosk accepts cash or credit/debit, so I thought that was handy. It appeared to me there was a kiosk in every block because we didn't have to go far to find one and pay for our parking. My son-in-law told me these are prevalent throughout NJ for on-street parking. SO, my "inadequate" in this area is based on this new thing I learned while traveling recently or I may have said "adequate".

Not readily obvious which lots are public

Difficult for visitors to know where to park.

Public parking lots are not always marked clearly enough to inform infrequent users where parking is free, tow-zone, small fee, permit only, etc. When parking downtown for parades or festivals, infrequent users such as myself don't always know where to park legally for the duration of the parade or festival.

#6 - There aren't enough convenient parking spaces for shoppers at downtown retailers.

#7 - The GF transit stops running at 6:10pm (M-F). If someone is attending a downtown event such as Alive@5 or First Friday Artwalk they have to make arrangements with someone who has a vehicle that can attend with them or pick them up. On Saturday morning the first bus doesn't run until around 10am & they only run every hour so it takes all day to shop if you need to go to more than one place.

Parking Price: I feel it is appropriate to charge for parking within a designated city lot as enforcement is viable. Many, many people complain about the parking meters and would like to see them removed.

Signage is inadequate

Technology is inadequate

N/A

Inadequate-meaning not enough or unsuitable to the needs

--	--	--

parking lots look bad - some have attendant stalls in awful shape, although it sort of fits the generally shoddy appearance of the downtown in its present state.

The street in front of our business, has had many, many, problems. Some of which have been addressed, but others are still very frustrating. Parking laws are enforced very inconsistently, and this leads to my customers getting very frustrated. I think parking (meter) rates are too high, as well as the fact that we have "NO Parking, Loading zones" in front of my store, which NO ONE uses! So There are only 2 spaces on this block available, and one across the street, and that fits a compact car only.... I have worked with Wendy to alleviate some other stressors, and that has helped, but many things still need to be looked at, here and else where downtown. As well during events, parking is not enforced at all, then when it comes time to park during the day those who have "gotten away" with parking wherever and whenever wonder why they get tickets... It's kind of a mud hole.

I wrote Inadequate:

Public Parking Lot Signage: I feel that signage in Great Falls is needed for folks to know where they can park. Many people do not know that there is a parking garage on 1st ave South by Bert and Ernles

Parking Appearance: It is getting better with the beautiful planters and banners downtown..

City's response to issues: There is always room for improvement. I was very disappointed in the City Commissions' vote against more bike lanes on congested streets. Now we only get bike lanes on streets that are deemed as needed by the commissioners, whom only one that I know of rides a bike.

Parking Events/Festivals: The lack of parking to and from the Farmers Market. I am sure that the community concerts feel much the same. Not sure how to fix this.

Price: Relates to my earlier complaint about "ownership" of the parking profits. If we the City of Great Falls, were in charge of the parking police, we could instill parking changes. As it is now, our hands are tied.

I am involved with parking in Great Falls and need to remain neutral on most of these issues.

When do we get to the option to get rid of the parking meters and enforce the two hour parking limit firmly in order to prevent those who work downtown from abusing the removal of the meters?

Pedestrians walking after dark to attend/depart from events at the Civic Center.

I've come to the conclusion that I will stop shopping downtown, because the number of tickets I receive. The ticket fee seems quite high and more than once I've had the meters eat my quarters. Do we have to have parking meters at all in downtown Great Falls?

The transit system is all we have here and it is not well used, but is very convenient to use.

Meters are completely outdated and just need to disappear, free parking will bring more shoppers to Downtown.

<p>The parking downtown is what makes it inconvenient and difficult to park downtown. FEW SPACES, EXPENSIVE, UNNECESSARY. Why charge for the parking and then expect customers to spend money when they can go to the mall or walmart and get free parking. Bozeman has a very active and accessible downtown without charging for the parking. It is the free parking that helps to get the customers there to spend money. Lets take out the parking meters and help out the shop owners to make a decent living. The money gained from the parking tols and outrageous fines goes to hire cranky and unreasonable city staff that could be employed by the city at a different capacity. The parking meters are outdated.</p>			
<p>Modern meters like the Twin Cities have where you swipe your cc would be helpful. And the parking lot box at the Library is really obsolete. I got a ticket once even though I put in 3.00 for the whole day. They had no idea whose money was in the box. I had a witness so they dismissed the ticket. i think the parking rules are confusing. i recently learned that there is a two hour parking limit at meters on Saturdays. That was a big surprise! There just are not enough parking spaces and in the 600 block of Central two meters have permanent hoods over them. This does nothing for the businesses that are open on that block.</p>			
<p>Parking is expensive. City bus system is klnD of a joke. i had a business downtown and hmoved it because the city parking is one of the worst i have ever seen. Not sure who makes decisions on this, but, to double the parking meters to increase revenue is so far out there, the elected officials should be removed from office. I have an offic ein Kallspell also and there is no meters there and the downtown is busy. Go figure. Great Falls is not out to help the small businesses at all. My vote is get rid of the contract that monitors it and we would be money ahead. I would even do it for half the cost.</p>			
<p>i do not feel additional money should be spent for a "survey". The downtown parking works well along with the one ways--THESE DO NOT NEED TO BE CHANGED. People have gotten used to this after all the MANY changes. This works so please LEAVE IT ALL ALONE!!!</p>			
<p>The availability of spaces, convenience of spaces and the signage is all lacking. The city seems unresponsive to its citizens. Parking for events and festivals seems particularly problematic. Although I would like to see the U.S. utilize more mass transit, most people won't use transit alternative in the U.S. and particularly in Montana. We are a car society and that probably won't change anytime soon.</p>			

<p>Public parking lot signs are not sufficient. Hard to figure out where the lots are if you are on Central and there is no parking.</p> <p>The price to park is ok but the meters should accept dollar bills because not everyone has change. Also if you have a receipt from shopping at a store downtown and you get a parking ticket they city should waive the fine.</p>			
<p>I am so tired of leaving meetings, (the only reason that I go downtown), to feed the meter! I would shop more downtown, but I never have change and the parking "enforcement" is overzealous! If you are shopping and enjoying yourself, the last thing that you are thingin of is feeding the meter, thus, parking tickets. Add some type of fee to everyone and eliminate the meters. We have a fantastic downtown, but the parking angers me so much, I do not utilize the services. Have a dialogue with the people that work downtown, stop penalizing those that do not utilize the services on a regular basis. There are people from outlying areas that do not shop downtown, simply because they do not want to deal with parking. They would like to park and walk the entire area, shopping and visiting. They find it cumbersome to watch the time to backtrack to feed a meter. The parking garages are a good, but underutilized. Please really take a look at becoming more user friendly.</p>			
<p>As people become used to swiping their bank cards to pay for parking we need to install kiosks to collect money in this manner.</p> <p>Current trends for parking show diagonal parking should be back in rather than backing out. This is a safety issue.</p>			
<p>Our current bus transit is great we just need to convince more people to use our system for their daily commute to work.</p>			
<p>We need to add bike lanes for those who would like to safely use alternative transportation methods for the daily commute to work AND for recreational trips to downtown for coffee and muffins on Saturday.</p>			
<p>need some way to pay for parking without having to put change in meters. Don't carry enough quarters to pay for a 2 hr meeting in my purse!</p>			
<p>Weekend and evening parking for large events is difficult to find. It would be helpful to open up the parking garages for events such as the Christmas Stroll.</p>			
<p>Very tough to find a space during special events at the civic center, Alive at Five etc.</p>			
<p>The access points to the parking garages are a mystery to me.</p>			
<p>The availability of space, especially for special events is inadequate. We are constantly driving around looking for someplace to park.</p> <p>Need free WIFI zones in the downtown.</p>			

<p>just not enough spaces downtown to handle large events, like the Taste of Great Falls and Alive @ 5.</p>			
<p>Remove the parking meters and enforce time limits.</p>			
<p>I know that funding is a problem, but the buses quit running at 6:30 p.m....so that presents a problem for people wanting to come downtown in the evening. I'm not sure what technology you are referring to, but I don't think we have any tech that addresses parking options in the downtown.</p>			
<p>Diagonal parking is dangerous to cyclists and other vehicle traveling on Central.</p> <p>Consider a walking area like Helena and other cities have done. May create a better environment for people to enjoy the downtown area. Otherwise sidewalk activities are very limited.</p> <p>If we are ever going to get people to ride bicycles we must take significant steps to make downtown accessible to cyclists. Missoula, Helena, Bozeman and countless other cities have made cycling safe for everyone. For example it is only 3 miles from Fox Farm rd but cycling to town is not safe until one gets on the rivers edge trail.</p> <p>Lots of stuff can be done to lessen parking congestion, but self-propelled transportation is one of the best. Look at Bicycling Magazines Best Cycling Cities. Minneapolis/St Paul has a harsher climate then GF but is considered one of the most bike friendly cities in America.</p> <p>There aren't enough taxis or buses in the area. You see one once in awhile, but not regularly.</p>			

9. Are there particular areas in the downtown where you feel there are parking shortages?

35 Response(s)

Not necessarily except for businesses like ours who have a parking lot and use the street for overflow. Our clients hate the idea that if they can't park in our lot because it is full that they have to plug the meter just to run inside for 5 or 10 minutes.

The civic center could certainly use some review when it comes to large events. I think that there are a lot of people who don't realize that they can use the Mitchell Pool lot as an overflow. Some better signage might be helpful in that area.

It does seem that some blocks are harder to find a spot in when you're down here trying to shop. But I am thinking that's a good thing because it means those blocks have commerce or trade going on in them and that's one of the goals we are attempting to achieve. I have been walking more lately though so I don't find the parking thing to be as irritating as I once did. I now work downtown as well as live very near which provides me with an alternative to driving.

No

No

I don't spend a lot of time downtown to have a strong opinion.

Along Central Ave

No.

100 and 500 block

No

Farmer's Market Days

No, there is plenty of parking everywhere.

The Civic Center. We need more garages, even on the "outskirts" of downtown. There are 2 possible scenarios that should possibly be looked at. One is free parking in the garages for downtown patrons, or building garages on the outskirts of downtown (by downtown committee?) then providing a more walker friendly downtown so that people can enjoy walking from their "out of the way" parking places... as well there are many other ideas I have seen in many larger, and smaller downtowns that have been implemented elsewhere. It is a problem, and it needs to be looked at, maybe from a different angle...

During special events, the streets are clogged rather quickly. It is difficult to get an elderly or dis-abled person to these special events. Consider the Farmers Market. I would appreciate if city planners to think about a "drop off and pick up area". FOlks at the community concert series would appreciate this kind of service too.

Yes in the core area.			
Civic Center area. Farmer's Market causes some congestion which is of course more short lived. Civic Center events cause more long term congestion primarily involving pedestrians vs cars.			
no			
All along central, First and second Avenues S and N on the one ways. Around the courthouse and around the DMV.			
See comment above about permanent hoods.			
The Civic Center.			
Get rid of meters and see growth. I will not shop downtown for that specific reason.			
The area near U.S. Bank is a mess for downtown parking. All of downtown is a challenge. I don't like to go down there to run errands because there are very few free parking spots designated for quick stops (15 minutes, no meter). I think some implementation of those types of parking spots would help with traffic because if you just want to pick up or drop off something, it is too much of a hassle to find a metered spot.			
No. if anything, we have too much parking! Huge parking lots where buildings ought to be.			
no			
Often, there is significant shortage of parking space, forcing one to drive far from DT area in order to park, and then haaving to walk to the destination of employment or business.			
No. We just need better signage so that people know where the public parking is. You can't assume that everyone has grown up in Great Falls and knows where the public parking lots are.			
around restaurants like Bert & Ernie's. Sometimes around civic center during big events.			
civic center			
Around the Civic Center moving up town.			
no			
Central Avenue			
Civic Center area during large events.			
No			
NO! We have way too many parking spaces in the downtown as it is. We need to turn some of the parking lots into pocket parks or public gathering spaces.... something interesting!			
central 1st to 7th			
Civic Center area			

10. Are there any areas in the downtown where you feel there is an over-supply of parking?

32 Response(s)

No			
It does seem like the lot on 1 Ave N and 6th street doesn't get very much use. There are others over in that area too, but the exact locations are not coming to mind right now. I just know that there always seems to be a lot of unused asphalt there and then down more toward the center of downtown near the civic center (especially during an event) there doesn't seem to be enough public parking. There also seems to be an issue with people using private lots because you see signs telling people that the lot is for the particular business more in the center of downtown -- say 3-5th Street between 1 Ave. South and 1 Ave. North. That says to me there are not enough convenient public spots in those locations, which may translate to "free" or "close to the door" as that seems to be what motivates parking habits. I worked for a large retail store for several years and we were always told to leave the parking closest to the doors open for the customers. I am guessing the same logic applies here.			
Peripheral metered avenues and streets			
No			
no			
No.			
Some lots are underused and could either be publicized that they have available spaces or have their use changed			
A few along the eastern end of the study area.			
Behind the Rocky Mountain Building			
I would say that almost all areas have an oversupply of parking, but that's the American way.			
The parking garage on 1st south, is actually used quite a bit. Many folks complain that the garage is not used, but I have seen it full quite often. So, I do not think there is oversupply here. People here just do not like to use parking garages to shop. If you work downtown, then parking garages are for you, not usually the shopper.			
Yes in the outskirts of the parking district			
No.			
no			
Police department and energy west parking lots			
No			
nope			
No			
Yes, on 1st Ave. S., the 100 and 200 blocks			
everywhere			
no			
I am not sure.			
No.			
no			
Not really.			
no			
What is the average fill-rate at the two parking garages by month?			
Putting a second parking garage ONE BLOCK from the first one was not the best idea.			

Yes, some of the city lots could be modified to include some landscaping.			
Everywhere.			
No			
No			

11. What do you see as the most important issues (or concerns) surrounding the downtown parking operations for the future?

44 Response(s)

The general public perception in this community that it is not worth going downtown because of the stupid parking meters.

Please look at what a difference that made for Bozeman when they removed theirs and just implemented the 2 hour limit. Bigger tickets for offenders of the 2 hour limit will offset the missing quarters from the meters. And, instead of needing 2 people to walk around emptying the meters, 2 people can walk around and enforce the 2 hour limit.

I think they need to cover costs without general fund support so that is going to mean price increases. But to take the sting out of that, they are going to need to be innovative and provide parking options that are closer to where people want to be and not just the same old status quo. It seems people get pretty limited about parking and it would have to be a balanced equation that does not harm the merchants. I know merchants have wanted free parking downtown for decades, but I am not sure how you pay for lot upkeep, staffing, and improvements if there is no way to generate revenue. Well...other than levy a special tax for the entire area or something like that and I am sure that would not go over well. I personally think parking here is a pretty good value. As I said, my daughter lives in New Jersey and works in Brooklyn. That's an eye opener in terms of costs for transportation.

Effective management of Central Avenue, on-street spaces, and full utilization of same.

Using properties for parking rather than businesses.

Parking meter fees

Remove the parking meters.

Perception needs to be changed - "Perception is based on a lot of things and most of the time they're wrong" We need to have some type of advertising campaign/publicity/marketing - something to overcome the perceptions that exist about parking (not an easy task, but a necessary one)

Potential Special Event parking around the city admin building could be expanded.

Just getting it to please most people, that's all you can do on any issue

I really like the GFDA master plan on converting downtown into a walkable area, which would probably mean reducing downtown core parking.

Making it convenient, affordable, and worthwhile for the customers who shop, dine, and stay in downtown. Bottom line. Employees that work downtown, have usually some kind of stipend, or the prices of parking are offset in some way. Also, it's convenient for them to park close, but not absolutely necessary. As they have to be there regardless. Customers, however, may not come to a business again if they spend \$30-\$40 and get a \$10 ticket... Businesses need to have the best parking for their customers, hands down. If we don't have any customers, we have no business.

<p>I would like to see the City of Great Falls have the authority to bid and receive the contract for monitoring parking meters and parking services in our own city. I feel it is tragic that a company in Washington receives the revenue of our citizens using the downtown area. If we had more local control of these issues, it would be helpful. As it is now, we can only write and ask the Washington company for changes. They say, well, we have the contract and it is too bad you don't like it. If we, the city had the contract, we would be in control of the revenue and how much to charge our citizens to shop downtown.</p> <p><u>Meters and angle vs parallel parking</u></p> <p>Remove the parking meters and make downtown inviting!</p> <p>I feel that continually researching and changing the parking format is a big waste of time and funds. I'm now a senior citizen, so you can just imagine how many times I've seen the parking formats rearranged in Great Falls during my lifetime. I would suggest that you just pick a format and stick with it. Lower Central Avenue for instance is interesting...one side of the street features parallel parking while the other side has diagonal parking for those who can't figure out how to parallel park. A little something for everyone!</p> <p><u>size of patrolled area and eliminating the meters</u></p> <p>Remove ALL parking meters from downtown. Shoppers, including me avoid downtown because of parking meters. Small towns do not need parking meters. The atmosphere downtown is "be sure you have some change to feed the meters" and "better watch your meter!" Who in a town this size cares to shop in that sort of situation. Free Parking at the mall, WalMart, Shopko, K Mart. etc.</p> <p>The city should dream up progressive ways to make money instead of punishing shoppers that want to shop downtown.</p> <p>If you look at the store fronts downtown Great Falls, a lot of them look abandoned and not welcoming. Then go to downtown Bozeman. It's ALIVE! AND, you can shop, eat and stroll in downtown Bozeman without worrying about PAYING a meter to do it!</p> <p>Great Falls has been skirting this issue for years and nothing ever comes of it, except last time they had a survey on this issue they doubled the parking rates! The ONLY solution: REMOVE PARKING METERS FROM DOWNTOWN GREAT FALLS.</p> <p>If the parking meters are there, the downtown businesses will continue to decline and leave the area.</p> <p><u>Rational rules that everyone can understand combined with more spaces available</u></p> <p><u>Cheaper. I'd like a downtown parking pass.</u></p> <p>Charging for downtown parking is unacceptable. It creates an incentive for customers to shop elsewhere.</p> <p>Get rid of meters and commissioners and get people in who care.</p> <p>When the parking became diagonal it became increasingly hard to see while backing out of. I know this was so there would be more parking but it is not convenient.</p> <p>SEE # 8</p>			
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<p>I prefer that there be no changes in down town parking in Great Falls, Montana.</p> <p>The parking spaces on Central Ave. are very adequate, for everyone.</p> <p>Angled Parking- Provides a user friendly method of parking on the street, and It is a very efficient way of parking. If this should change to all parallel parking, I would very seldom shop or do business down town.</p> <p>So I hope that with these outsiders coming in to influence parking In Great Falls, will not change the parking at all.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Arlene Blessing</p>			
<p>Eliminate the one way streets. Those make it too hard to find and get to parking on Central and the one-way streets have limited appeal for parking because you can only approach the businesses from one direction.</p>			
<p>The last thing we need to do is get rid of more buildings to provide more parking. I don't have an issue with the cost of feeding the meters.</p>			
<p>see #8</p>			
<p>Attracting visitors that do not need to interrupt their experience to "feed the meter."</p>			
<p>Growth of business and population will increase need for parking</p>			
<p>Our way finding signage downtown is almost non-existent. if we want to attract people to our downtown area we need to make it easy for them to find where they want to go. Way finding signage needs to work for walkers, bicyclists and gas/diesal powered vehicles.</p>			
<p>1.convenience of paying for parking.</p>			
<p>2.Increase time allowance to 3 hr.</p>			
<p>3.convincing property owners to assess themselves for parking enforcement if it is determined to take out meters.</p>			
<p>whether to increase diagonal parking</p>			
<p>The cost, updated meters and parking enforcement.</p>			
<p>If the program can continue operate because inadequate funding</p>			
<p>Sufficient spaces and reasonable cost.</p>			
<p>We are planning on developing the upper two floors of our building and I am concerned on where those tenants will be allowed to park as I do not know what the current or future options will be.</p>			
<p>convincing consumers that there really ARE convenient places to park downtown. Getting daily parkers into the garages and off the street. DO NOT provide free street parking, as that will make things worse for retailers, because downtown workers WILL take up all the spaces.</p>			
<p>I THINK THE FIRST THING Gt Falls should do is get rid of the parking meters</p>			
<p>Remove the parking meters.</p>			

<p>If we build the downtown infrastructure and business..and bring back two way streets, I think people will care a whole lot less about parking meters. There will be a real, urgent reason for them to park downtown...so they won't care!</p>			
<p>It runs customers off</p>			
<p>N/A</p>			
<p>Requiring remodels and new construction to incorporate part of the building as ramp parking and the rest to office or living space. Spokane, WA is a GREAT example of an old downtown that fixed its parking issues.</p>			

12. "Branding" the public parking system through use of similar on-street signage, graphics, colors, and internal parking lot signage?

41 Response(s)

Sure, it all will look neat. Almost like a big city, but unless you deal with the other underlying issues first all it does is put frosting on a cake that still doesn't taste good.

This is a fantastic idea. I remember in the very early 80's they did this with something called "Here's a Spot". It was easy to find the parking and it highlighted lot spaces usually fairly close to the block you were wanting to park in and this was a frustration reliever for many. It's hard to know what's an open public lot and what is not. I don't mind walking a short distance, even in weather, but I really don't like having to park in the 600 block when I have business in the 300 block and a tight schedule. I am sure there are options for lot spaces that I am not aware of and that I am not alone in that thought. So branding and clearly identifying the spaces is a good idea.

Good idea - though, keep it simple.

Good idea - though, keep it simple.

Good idea.

Consistent signage, graphics, colors would help inform people of where to park to suit their specific needs.

Revamping or freshening up the current signage will re-inform the designated parking lot locations as well as help define the "downtown" as discussed as a goal in the Downtown Master Plan recently adopted.

that would make sense

Yes, much needed - will assist in overcoming the perceptions that exist!

Not necessary.

Great idea!

Sounds like a good plan. Although I don't think the current system is hard to understand, it would improve the appearance of lots.

A great idea, however, unless we change the parking "scenario" it will not work. It has been done in the past (while not changing anything else) and failed to alleviate the problems...

Absolutely approve of "branding" so that the signs are similar and folks can find our great sites around town.

YES YES YES there a not suffeclant signage of any kind with our parking program. Use the ramps for advertising of our product. Our product is parking.

In favor

Waste of time and money! Those who work downtown and who should be using the parking garages know where they are.

Could work. However, once the signage reaches a saturation point there's likely to be more confusion than ever.

Our lots are marked and easy to find I don't see branding as something that needs to be done for parking

Do we need more signs that say "do not park here or you will be towed?"

good idea

;) From what I have witnessed, there is no voice, so doing the survey is a mute point if no one listens.

We spend thousands of dollars on surveys and then ignore everything.

Been to larger cities with this and rather than waste the \$ on this, why bother?

<p>Better signage would be an improvement. However, it wouldn't convince me to use internal parking. I'd much rather utilize on street parking.</p>			
<p>Good idea.</p>			
<p>good idea</p>			
<p>Why?</p>			
<p>I have no opinion.</p>			
<p>Absolutely 100% needed. But test it first! If the font is too small it won't help anyone.</p>			
<p>would be a "nice to have" but not a high priority considering cost.</p>			
<p>It is always helpful to provide consistency in signage.</p>			
<p>maybe.</p>			
<p>Needs visibility, but branding it would be great.</p>			
<p>I am not big on branding</p>			
<p>I like the idea of branding. It separates the downtown from other areas of town and makes it special.</p>			
<p>Good idea - hasn't it already been tried?</p>			
<p>That will help some. It's not that consumers can't find places to park. It's the perception of convenience.</p>			
<p>They are too damn lazy to walk a block, but they will walk six blocks to get to a mail store.</p>			
<p></p>			
<p>Not a big deal.</p>			
<p>I think that is a great idea, but as I mentioned above, we should turn some of the actual lots into public gathering spaces or pocket parks to help make the downtown a more interesting place to live, work and play.</p>			
<p>It's a great idea</p>			
<p>Yes, just like San Francisco does. Every single parking lot and facility uses universal signing inside and out.</p>			

13. Forming a downtown parking assessment district where businesses would pay annual fees to help develop and maintain additional public lots?

42 Response(s)

<p>NO! NO! NO! BAD IDEA! All this will do is give these struggling businesses one more reason to leave downtown. I will be happy to be the first if you decide to assess an annual fee. I already know my clients will not use a public lot, so why should I be assessed a fee?</p>			
<p>I think the idea has merit, but I can already hear the business owners. They are going to want to "get" something if they "give", e.g. if they have to pay an assessment to maintain the lots then they are going to expect that the street parking would be free. I assume this would be structured like the boulevard district for tree upkeep -- I live in this district. I don't mind paying the assessment, but it is frustrating to me that I end up paying a private company to trim the trees in front of my home because they are healthy and it seems the only attention the trees get is when they are dead or dying. Having worked for the City, I know the district barely pulls enough to cover the costs of picking up the leaves and caring for the dead trees and whenever they try to raise it people go nuts. I guess I would venture carefully into this discussion, but I do think this is an excellent way to keep costs for parking down and maintain the infrastructure.</p>			
<p>Good idea, though we don't need additional at this point. Would agree to form one to maintain existing...</p>			
<p>It's not done in other areas of town. Seems it would seem unfair to the downtown businesses.</p>			
<p>No opinion.</p>			
<p>I'm not in favor of any additional "taxes" or "fees" for downtown businesses because that will deter businesses from locating downtown and may cause some businesses to leave. How does Holiday Village Mall provide a huge parking lot with free parking for employees and patrons? Can that system/program be applied to downtown?</p>			
<p>This would make some sense if the parking meters are removed.</p>			
<p>No they aren't benefiting from the tickets being written to violators just going to the city to maintain lots already owned by the city.</p>			
<p>Not sure this would be well received from property or business owners - many feel they are taxed enough. Not a bad idea, just not sure how it will be received.</p>			
<p>Should NOT be a cost borne by the commercial property owners.</p>			
<p>not sure</p>			
<p>Makes sense, but you need to be wary of overcharging downtown business patrons. It's not exactly a hotbed of retail traffic right now.</p>			
<p>Yes, absolutely!</p>			
<p>I feel there are a few who would be willing to pony up the money. But there are a few who would not be interested.</p>			
<p>Opposed</p>			
<p>Are you kidding?! Are we getting close to the question that asks what we think about the removal of the parking meters?</p>			
<p>This could have some merit if assessments were applied fairly to small businesses.</p>			
<p>I feel there are a few who would be willing to pony up the money. But there are a few who would not be interested.</p>			
<p>Opposed</p>			
<p>Are you kidding?! Are we getting close to the question that asks what we think about the removal of the parking meters?</p>			

<p>This could have some merit if assessments were applied fairly to small businesses.</p> <p>No we don't need additional lots our garages are not full</p> <p>Absolutely not.</p> <p>Are you kidding, the businesses hardly have money to run the business and you expect the businesses to pay more, they will then find different space.</p> <p>I'm not sure business owners would like this.</p> <p>)</p> <p>DISTRICT WOULD "TAKE" MORE MONEY THAN IT WOULD USE PROPERLY</p> <p>Not currently a downtown business owner but have worked for downtown businesses. I wanted to open a business downtown until I saw the struggles they went through.</p> <p>Employees of downtown businesses face parking shortages as well. I know that from experience. But asking downtown business to pay additional fees when many are struggling to stay-NOT A GOOD IDEA</p> <p>Find the money somewhere else.</p> <p>No opinion on that.</p> <p>that is the decision of the merchants. It is tough enough to earn a living downtown and there are numerous city lots, but the issue is employee parking should be in the garages not in visible lots.</p> <p>That doesn't work unless employees park as they should.</p> <p>That sounds like a good solution.</p> <p>I don't think the City-County Health Department would be interested in this.</p> <p>good idea but will be difficult to sell to downtown property owners. Rather than having the district pay for developing more lots, I suggest they pay for enforcement and take out the meters.</p> <p>Will the businesses do that? Are they able to do that? We seem to ask a lot of downtown businesses that seem pretty strapped to turn a profit.</p> <p>disagree it's their responsibility</p> <p>Great idea.</p> <p>disagree it's their responsibility</p> <p>Great idea.</p> <p>Are additional lots needed with the parking garages?</p> <p>I am not in favor of any new taxes especially one that is not clearly defined as to how much it will cost and what those fees will be used for. Government is incredible inefficient as it is and the city of Great Falls is no exception.</p> <p>It's a good idea, but it depends on how high the fees are.</p> <p>I'm not sure how Bozeman does it but they haven't had meters for years and their downtown business is great.</p> <p>No</p> <p>No. Bad idea. I suspect you would get lots of push back from the businesses, who already feel over-stretched. See answer to #11, above.</p> <p>I would ask people downtown if they are willing to pay for additional parking or find ways to decrease the number of cars that need to find parking.</p> <p>No - I don't like the idea</p> <p>Yes, but I think that should be a city wide assesment the same as the transit district.</p>			
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14 Forming a downtown parking assessment district where businesses would pay annual fees to pay for enforcement in lieu of meters/paid parking.

<p>42 Response(s)</p> <p>I would be more receptive to this.</p> <p>Again, this has some merit and addresses what I said in the previous question about "give" and "get". I am not sure I would abandon the paid parking thing entirely as I am sure the businesses would balk at the true cost once they see the numbers. But perhaps this is a way to eliminate paid on-street parking which is what they have wanted.</p> <p>no opinion.</p> <p>If you are going to do that, why not discontinue parking meters and have the businesses make up the fees the City will lose. There again, it's not done elsewhere in town so I don't know how fair that would be to the downtown businesses.</p> <p>No opinion.</p> <p>This sounds like a repeat of the previous question so my answer is the same.</p> <p>Maybe this applies to the revenue lost from the parking meter removal. Still charge the users for parking lot parking.</p> <p>pointless that downtown businesses would pay the salaries of private contracted parking company employees when the city sees all the revenue from the tickets and violations.</p> <p>See above - I like both of the ideas I'm just not sure how businesses or property owners will feel about them. On the other hand many of them already pay for courtesy spaces and also pay any fines that their customers make them aware of - it would eliminate that step for them and make their customers happier.</p> <p>Not Necessary.</p> <p>I think the city should remain responsible for parking collection & enforcement, unless it's not sustainable (I don't have background info)</p> <p>I am open to this, just need more information.</p> <p>I do not own a business downtown, so I am not sure how they would approve this idea. Interesting.</p> <p>If the meters were removed there are businesses who would help pay for the hourly enforcement.</p> <p>Opposed</p> <p>Finally. Why not investigate how much the parking garages could bring in from downtown workers migrating to them?</p> <p>Would require too much owner/operator involvement. Possible conflict between owners and operators of business re. who is liable for this fee, etc.</p> <p>no, the enforcement is there already with a smaller area to patrol and no meters a two hour limit will work without extra fees</p> <p>Absolutely not.</p> <p>Why, doesn't the city make enough on taxes already?</p> <p>I don't understand this proposal.</p> <p>Unacceptable</p> <p>That would be good. Get the city out of it and let the businesses control the parking.</p> <p>Same as previous answer.</p> <p>No opinion.</p> <p>good idea</p>			
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I do not have an opinion.			
The City-County Health Department might be interested in supporting this.			
Great idea. Will be a hard sell.			
same as above			
disagree			
An option but don't think it should be left strictly up to businesses. it's hard enough now to get them downtown. That would probably make it worse.			
Will this discourage future business from relocating downtown?			
Not in favor			
Could be helpful if business owners/employees did not take up so many parking spaces for lengthy periods.			
Oh, now I get it, it sounds like the City is trying to foist off the cost of parking and enforcement onto the retailers and this survey is being used as justification.			
No. Bad idea. I suspect you would get lots of push back from the businesses, who already feel overstretched.			
See answer to #11, above.			
Parking meters is a direct and efficient means of paying for parking. Putting the burden for parking on downtown businesses is sending the wrong message to perspective business owners.			
No - I don't like this idea.			
No.			

16 Enforcing two-hour time limits on-street to help encourage turn-over of the most convenient spaces?

43 Response(s)			
Absolutely.			
I think on Central/1st Ave N & S this is a good idea. They need to turn as this is where a lot of commerce is. What about 3 hour limits on 2nd Ave. N. and doing away with them on 2nd Ave. South? As for the side streets again in the core they need to turn, but only between 1 Aves and 3-8th Streets would be my guess.			
yes.			
I thought they already were.			
The 2-hour limit is too short. If you visit a doctor/dentist, lawyer, etc. it can take more than 2 hours. I attend a meeting from 9-11am. If I arrive early and the meeting goes to 11am I either leave early or risk getting a ticket.			
This concept works well in Bozeman.			
already the "rule" but not enforced that much. doesn't really matter only a handful of people are actually going to be able to use those most popular spots anyway if they are using it the whole 2 hours so not much of a turn-over rate.			
if's necessary - and some changes need to be made to current codes, folks move one parking space or sometimes just move one inch so their tire is in a different location from where it was chalked (should be required to move at least one block) Needed to combat the 8-hour employees who park in front of their place of business every day!			
Adequate attention is being given to enforcement.			
good idea			
Yeah, sounds good (in the most convenient spaces), but isn't that already done with the meters?			
This is difficult. As even though it is enforced/enforcable, some businesses with services are having a tough time with it. As well, there are 2 bars on my block, and sometimes vehicles are left in spaces for 2 days, or all day due to someone getting a ride home and leaving their cars... Maybe there should be a tow and a fee for this...			
There is no lacking in enforcement of parking attendants. I park in these spots and I have never been given a "bye".			
Yes that is what is needed.			
In favor			
Enforce all two-hour time limits rigorously.			
I thought this was being monitored by the chalk and ticket toting meter readers...			
yes, but for enforcement to be effective we have to eliminate some of the patrol areas			
Yes I do think this would be effective.			
I thought they already did this, as an employee marked the tires of my pickup one day when I was sitting in it. He said it was because there was a 2 hour limit. I had been there for about 2 minutes.			
:			
Unacceptable. They even limit downtown parking on Sat which is unacceptable.			
If we had an issue with parking, that is fine, but when there are 20 spaces together, why ticket someone for 2 hours. They even check on Saturdays. Who ever thought of paying the contract to cover Saturdays, should be removed.			
it is already enforced and it doesn't help.			

I support this.			
good idea			
Why is turnover a concern?			
NO. not a favorable plan.			
CCHD would be supportive of this. This would also encourage shoppers, employees to use the pay parking lots.			
I thought you already enforce 2 hour limit. 2 hr. not long enough when there are meetings you need to attend. increase to 3 hrs.			
Seems to be enforced well currently.			
sounds reasonable			
I think they are enforced now.			
I think if people are willing to pay for the meters they should be able to park longer then the 2 hour limit.			
This would be a help, although I don't know how many people actually park for more than two hours. I have a lot of meetings downtown and few last more than two hours.			
I think if people are willing to pay for the meters they should be able to park longer then the 2 hour limit.			
This would be a help, although I don't know how many people actually park for more than two hours. I have a lot of meetings downtown and few last more than two hours.			
This is already being done.			
If there is to be meters, enforcement is needed with a nice "Thank You" note for shopping downtown in addition to the ticket.			
This is already happening in my area, it is only somewhat effective. My biggest problem is the picking up and dropping off of NEW employees. They take up my courtesy spaces as well as parking in front of the fire hydrant.			
Yes			
Yes, that is a good idea. Merchants should also be able to purchase parking tokens at a discount to give to patrons...but they can't be used by people who work downtown.			
I would have to know more.			
That's not a bad idea			
Yes.			

16 Increasing two-hour time limits to three- or four-hour limits?

43 Response(s)

No. Then you end up with the street filled with employees who just move at lunch.
Again, as I said above 2 hours in the core seems reasonable. I'd walk a little farther if I was going to be down there for a long time, so a 3-4 hour option makes sense. Around the courthouse on 2nd Ave N a 4 hour limit seems about right for meeting attendance, etc.
3 would be good, though not vital for most users.
Too long a limit would encourage employees to take the good spots and just feed the meter a couple of times a day.
I think it should be a 3-hr limit. We don't want shoppers to feel rushed while in a retailer's store or have to leave to drive around the block & find another parking space before they can finish their shopping.
I feel 2 hour limits are adequate.
would see the same cars everyday and not much left for anybody else.
In some areas that'd be great - but perhaps not all areas, take a detailed look at use.
Perhaps possible in under-utilized areas.
no
Not a great idea, need more turnaround. Longer stays can be in larger lots just outside major downtown core.
Yes, I think that is a very good idea. We need to look at all of our options.
Yes, this would be helpful to disabled shoppers. I would appreciate more disabled parking spots, especially near the Civic Center.
In some areas this might work NOT in the core.
No
no, two hours is the right limit. Four hour limits would encourage downtown workers to park on the street and move their cars at lunch.
Could be helpful for side streets when parking patrons are visiting an attorney or medical professional. Keep central avenue as is.
no, two hours is more than enough downtown during the day
This is probably necessary around the Civic center due to court and the events at the civic center.
good idea in many areas.
;))
Should eliminate all time limits.
When we have a parking shortage, sure.
YES. Please. I know people who are elderly and live downtown and have to move their vehicles several times a day.
No, I don't think that's the answer. I would shop more downtown if there were more free spots available for short term (1 hour or less) parking.
Yes, perhaps, just not on Central or on the busiest blocks of 1st Ave. N.
maybe not
YES
Yes, increasing 2 hour time limit would be more acceptable and convenient for the user.

I think two hours for the downtown parking spaces on the street is adequate.			
increase to 3 hours.			
Like that idea.			
at the most three			
Increasing time limits might be a good option.			
in favor			
Probably not necessary.			
This is not currently needed. We need to encourage additional business to locate downtown so that there are more reasons to come downtown before we need to increase the time limits.			
Don't think 3 or 4 hours is wise for 100% of meters but might be workable for small percentage of meters in certain areas and by displaying different colored meters.			
This would make for more problems than it would solve.			
No			
No... I don't think people shop downtown during the day for 3 to 4 hours. (Maybe I'm wrong.) A study of that issue might resolve whether that is an issue or not.			
No - it's okay the way it is.			
NO			

17. Managing on-street and public lot parking through use of multi-space meters or other pay systems?

35 Response(s)

<p>Nope!</p> <p>As I said before, I had never seen an "other" system or "multi-space" system until visiting New Jersey and I have to say it's definitely got merit.</p> <p>No need at this point. Users would complain even more if you increase the ocmplexity of the system.</p> <p>?</p> <p>Focus any metering at parking lots, not on-street.</p> <p>Yes! Bring us into the 21st century!</p> <p>Not needed.</p> <p>no comment</p> <p>If it makes fiscal sense.</p> <p>Again, all avenues needs to be looked at.</p> <p>Exactly, manage the parking meters so that the proceeds actually benefit the people of Great Falls. Perhaps if we had access to the profits of our downtown shoppers, it would pay for a new parking garage!</p> <p>If it is economically feasible then yes. If it is not going to pay for itself in time than no.</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>NO METERS! Why are public officials deaf to this. I moved my business from the 300 block because Shoppers will not come downtown because of the meters. Ask them!</p> <p>What's the problem with the system now in use?</p> <p>Something besides the box to stuff cash in is needed</p> <p>No</p> <p>NO;{</p> <p>I would need details to know how this would work</p> <p>;</p> <p>Not sure what this does.</p> <p>Not familiar with those.</p> <p>No opinion. Would be nice to be able to swipe a credit or ATM card.</p> <p>accept dollar bills - i hate meters</p> <p>No meters!</p> <p>I would prefer this system.</p> <p>Yes, especially if it incorporated the use of debit cards. A lot of people don't carry cash any more.</p> <p>fine but they need to have some way to take credit/debit cards</p> <p>ok with that</p> <p>Not sure what that means.</p> <p>Not sure what you are asking</p> <p>I have no idea what that even means.</p> <p>I like the idea, but I don't think that it is worth the cost to install.</p> <p>No - I think we have adequate systems in place</p> <p>This is widely used in other cities. An electronic point of pay. Get a ticket, put it in your window. Very easy and widely accepted.</p>			
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18. Creating "visitor only" parking spaces through use of signage at some of the key downtown buildings?

43 Response(s)

<p>Hahahah! Right. I currently have a parking space that threatens offenders will be towed and they park there anyway.</p> <p>Okay, here's where I am going to be jaded. Have you ever visited Great Falls High School? There are visitor parking spots off 20th on an old tennis court. Do you know who is parked there "most" of the time? Teachers. Why? Because they feel they are "visiting" they do not live there. And yes, enforcement would address this, but why go there?</p> <p>Fine, but not on-street. Keep those for all users.</p> <p>Good luck with knowing who is a visitor or not. A better plan may be having the downtown businesses reimburse "visitors" their parking fee.</p> <p>I could see how this might be helpful in encouraging visitors to utilize some downtown businesses.</p> <p>What's the definition of "visitor"? Anyone who isn't an employee? Out of state license plate? I think this would be confusing to downtown shoppers and employees.</p> <p>This would not be needed if the parking meters go away.</p> <p>Yes - that'd be an awesome idea, but I also foresee that folks who get them will be very happy and folks who don't have them will be unhappy, never a happy medium for all!</p> <p>Public Buildings only (like there is in front of the Post Office, but with longer time limit allowances).</p> <p>NO!</p> <p>Sure</p> <p>Great idea, however, not very enforceable.</p> <p>I do not agree, there will be people that will abuse this....</p> <p>Great idea.</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Unnecessary when you have no meters!</p> <p>That would be confusing. Isn't that what we're all doing when we park and enter a building? If some business owners want to continue sponsoring "free" spaces for pickup or ordering, etc. that would be great and much appreciated by all who utilize the spaces.</p> <p>already have that a business can buy a spot.</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>good idea</p> <p>)</p> <p>OK.</p> <p>It will be abused just like the 15 min courtesy parking is.</p> <p>yes may work</p> <p>What do you mean by visitor only? Out-of-town, out-of-county or out-of-state? What about your bread and butter, the people who live and work here everyday! I would like to "visit" my own downtown if it were only more convenient.</p> <p>No opinion. I seldom have trouble finding a space.</p> <p>good idea</p> <p>Unless employees obey the signs, this will not solve the problem.</p> <p>yes.</p>			
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I think this is a great idea!			
civic center and courthouse only. Who will enforce?			
Helpful for business customers. The current 15 minute parking for customers seems to work.			
disagree			
But how do you enforce that? By license plates?			
no strong feelings			
Not necessary.			
Not needed.			
May be helpful.			
That's a good idea.			
Yes			
Does that work? It sounds great, but I'd want to see data on that to see if it works...or if business people still park in them anyway.			
No... who decides who is a visitor or not			
NO. Good luck with this. Our MT plates are impossible now with all the vanity plates to determine this and it will leave too many spaces open for too long that could be used.			

19. What's your perception of how the City of Great Falls' parking operations may compare with parking systems in other similar communities?

<p>41 Response(s)</p> <p>I think it would be worth looking to other communities and asking them what works and what doesn't. While another community's ideas might not be an exact match, at least we could take some of the "best" ideas and try to make them work for our community.</p> <p>I think ours are fairly priced and for the most part work well as compared to Helena, Missoula and Butte where I visit most. And I haven't really paid much attention out of Montana until my recent trip to the mid Atlantic coast. In fact, my brother from Missoula tells me our parking is light years ahead of theirs.</p> <p>I have no idea.</p> <p>Don't know.</p> <p>Downtown Bozeman works well. Time limits are monitored and ticketed if violated. No parking meters encourages people to come downtown. I have heard the comments that people hate to come downtown because of the meters. With check and debit card usage becoming more and more prevalent, less people carry cash and coins, thus not able to plug meter</p> <p>I think our parking operations have come miles and miles in the past few years - we need to continue to improve and make the community aware of the progress.</p> <p>Very effective and available at a reasonable cost.</p> <p>no opinion</p> <p>There is much more parking available downtown GF than in other similar communities.</p> <p>There are many ways to improve. We just need to be open minded and not afraid to think outside the box when it comes to new ideas.</p> <p>Bozeman had no pay parking for a time and the stores and merchants were very happy, as people came and shopped.</p> <p>We are ahead of some and way behind others. With the newer city manager and parking people things are heading in the right direction. Kudos to Wendy and Mike and Greg</p> <p>Similar</p> <p>Neanderthal. Blind. Deaf. Egotistical.</p> <p>I don't travel enough to form a valid opinion.</p> <p>We hurt ourselves with the meters when many communities have free parking downtown</p> <p>See No. 11</p> <p>Poor in comparison to Bozeman and Missoula</p> <p>antiquated</p> <p>Poor</p> <p>Other communities do not charge for downtown parking</p> <p>Horrible.</p> <p>others are free parking</p> <p>I believe that the parking in Great Falls is much more convenient, efficient and satisfactory, as compared with many other cities in the state.</p> <p>I think generally worse than other communities, with the exception of Helena. Helena is awful.</p> <p>It seems to work well.</p> <p>good and tickets are cheap</p> <p>I visit other areas, parking is more friendly.</p> <p>I don't know.</p>			
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<p>It is behind the times and outdated. I think parking is fine. nobody likes plugging meters, especially when you do not have change, but its necessary to get turnover unless you can convince property owners to asses themselves. There is really no such thing as "free parking"</p>			
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20. Are you aware of any other parking systems that the City should look at as a possible model? (Which 'best practices' may be of interest?) - Responses

29 Response(s)

No			
Bozeman			
No.			
no			
not really.			
Cities who have the control over their own parking police, can change the price. can have promotion days with tokens. have the knowledge of the community it serves.....We need to get the parking services back in our command!			
For example, Bozeman and Missoula I believe, are in control of their own parking police.			
There are numerous other devices. Most of them in bigger cities. Lets keep the main thing the main thing this is a small frugal community.			
The Cherry Creek shopping district of Denver, CO. This neighborhood was resurrected from an area known for pawnshops and XXX shops to become the most desirable retail space in Colorado. No meters, no one-way streets, no traffic lights. Just four-way stop intersections that slow down traffic.			
And in turn the surrounding residential neighborhoods are the most popular in Denver. Try to find a home close to the Cherry Creek shopping area for less than a million dollars.			
No.			
none			
See No 11			
How does Bozeman do it?			
see above-meters that take credit cards			
I'm from East Coast - different can of worms. But I am a fan of parking garages.			
Everywhere else in Montana is growing.			
I haven't researched other parking systems yet.			
no			
na			
No, I am not.			
Develop the parking in a way that is healthy by design and encourages multi-modal transportation options.			
Having parallel parking slots that back in is one way to do this.			
portland Oregon has a way to use credit card and print out a sticker for your cars windshield for the amount of time you need. no meters they are ugly and need to be repaired.			
Being able to use debit card, etc. Most people have trouble finding change so they take a chance.			
No			
Do not use the model being used Bozeman.			
no			
No.			
No			

Spokane, WA			
Salt Lake City, UT			

21. If you were asked to provide a "single most important piece of advice" for this current assessment of the parking - what would it be?

42 Response(s)			
Get rid of the meters.			
Don't let the crumudgeons drive the bus!			
Maximize available central ave meters			
Keep it simple and fair.			
Eliminate parking meter fees			
Remove the parking meters			
No easy answers - nothing will make everyone happy			
It works for me.			
parking meters should be cheaper			
Improve the quality of downtown as a whole.			
accessibility			
We need to have control of our own parking police.			
Meters are they needed or not. More angle parking			
Remove the meters!			
Research previous parking modules success rates			
remove meters			
REMOVE ALL PARKING METERS FROM DOWNTOWN.			
Stop trying to make money off of the parking			
Make it understandable and easy to pay			
Good Luck!			
Eliminate meters			
Fire everyone and start over.			
restructure.			
use the money spent on survey for working parking			
Leave the parking on Central Ave. as is.			
Encourage downtown visits with more free spots.			
Creates more 15-minutes-for-free spaces.			
accept dollar bills			
Longer time			
Avoid overpricing for parking.			
Make sure any implementation is a Healthy Design			
convenience for parkers			
Go to more parallel parking, seems to slow down tr			
Change the metering and enforcement system.			
adequate			
25 cents per hour rather than 50 cents.			
DO NOT go the free street parking			
no meters			
Remove the meters			
Get rid of 2 way streets & improve downtown.			
take the the meters out			
Try to build a more vibrant downtown.			

22. What kind of parking user are you?

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I work downtown, so I use downtown parking daily	21	38.1%
I park downtown occasionally	29	52.7%
No Responses	5	9.0%
Total	55	100%

23. What is your home zip code?

51 Response(s)			
59404			
59401			
59404			
59414			
59472			
59405			
59404			
59405			
59404			
59487			
59401			
59401			
59401			
5940100%			
59405			
59401			
59401			
59404-1537			
59405			
59401			
59404			
59425			
59405			
59405			
59405			
59404			
59404			
59405			

59401			
59401			
59405			
5940100%			
59405			
59405			
59401			
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59404			
59404			
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59404			
59404			
59752			
59421			
59401			
59404			
59404			
59404			
59404			
59479			
59404			
59404			

24. Any additional comments or suggestions?

34 Response(s)

<p>Thank you for finally asking the people who use this what they think rather than just guessing. I know that there is no easy answer, but having spent several occasions trying to convince my friends to come downtown to shop, something has got to change.</p>			
<p>Change is hard. Change makes people testy. But change is needed and will happen regardless of how hard you fight over it. So, I think this needs to take an approach of listening, finding common ground and realizing that to make it better everyone – users, providers, and merchants is going to have to give something. And recognizing that it costs money to keep up and even if you change very little the current revenues do not support the rising costs of simply maintaining what you have. Thanks for asking and good luck!</p>			
<p>Remove all courtesy and unnecessary delivery spaces, eliminate meter bagging program which is abused and negatively affects adjoining businesses. Or, if not eliminate bagging program, only allow certain out-of-the-way spaces to be bagged, or require sign-off of adjoining street-level businesses. Having bagged spaces go unutilized is extremely inefficient management and affects businesses. Suggest using permit method, so spaces retain highest utilization rate, but still allow 'contractors' to park at meters for extended periods.</p>			
<p>Good Luck!</p>			
<p>Question 22 should have had more options. I work downtown and park in a private parking lot so I'm downtown daily but don't use city parking. However, I do occasionally have to park in other areas of downtown for meetings and shopping.</p>			
<p>Thank you for soliciting our input!</p>			
<p>Downtown GF is shoddy compared to other MT cities, and part of the reason is that it's not geared towards walkability. Encourage walking by reducing downtown core parking & beautifying area.</p>			
<p>I did send in and apply for a spot on the parking commission. Never heard back. Being as we have a small business downtown, and I have traveled and visited downtowns extensively, I think that a new person with fresh ideas is needed, even if that is someone else. It just needs to be a "small" business person from downtown. We have enough building owners, corporation people, and "long timers" on these kinds of boards/committees. It would be nice to have some new/fresh different ideas from some of the people doing business (store fronts and services) downtown. Thank you.</p>			

<p>I was not able to attend the Great Falls Branding community meeting. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to raise my voice. As a bartender in the early 1990's in downtown Great Falls, I had a conversation with the current mayor of that time. He stated that the Great Falls downtown may as well just 'burn down'. Why I asked? Because it is DEAD. There will never be shops downtown again and people will never come back, no matter how much urban development money we throw at it. Well, it has been many years, and we still have a downtown, vibrant as ever. Who took the challenge? All the store owners who refused to move to the Mall or 10th ave. Please consider these fine folks who stuck it out through the very tough times to still be on Central Ave. in 2012.</p> <p>Great Falls is a unique city. My friends from Bozeman and Missoula love to visit Great Falls as "the way it use to be." We can invite others to shop here, while keeping the "down home" friendly atmosphere.</p> <p>Keep up the work that is going on. We are on our way to the vibrant downtown that I remember as a kid.</p> <p>Listen to the pleas of the downtown merchants. They know downtown better than the city government does. But that may be tough to do since most have given up trying to get the city to listen.</p> <p>Every time someone comes up with a newer, better, bigger, prettier idea for downtown parking, etc. it would be good to revisit the history of these ideas. Most of been tried before - multiple times in some situations. Just because someone comes up with a "new idea", it may only be new to them but not to many others with some historical involvement.</p> <p>My only other comment would be re: one way streets into and out of downtown. Please leave them as they are. They function exactly as they were designed to. Quick access to and quick egress from the downtown area.</p> <p>Could there be a possible voucher system where businesses give customers a pass to put in their car windows when they begin shopping in their stores? It would encourage customers to shop in businesses and the businesses to bring customers in. The businesses would be paying the monthly parking fee.</p> <p>none</p> <p>There are old, dilapidated buildings downtown that house people. Many have cars and take up parking, even if they have to feed the meters. Then, to create even less appeal to an already ugly downtown area, the city went through a few years ago and created these meandering lanes swirling through downtown. Lanes don't match up and it looks silly and serves no purpose. It was also somebody's idea to have regular parking on one side and parallel on the other!?</p> <p>Stop lights are set so you cannot make it through more than one and the 1930s speed limits need to be raised.</p> <p>Hire city officials that actually listen to the downtown businesses and allow more small businesses to come in. What a bunch of fuddy duddies!</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to participate. Having a downtown business in an antique mall is a challenge because of the number of customers and vendors needing parking. Vendors are moving inventory in and out every week and need good access.</p> <p>Pay areas that take credit card instead of coins would be great!</p> <p>I can't answer #22 since I don't go downtown anymore.</p> <p>see # 8</p>			
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<p>I feel that the parking in Great Falls, Montana, especially on Central Avenue is very convenient.</p>			
<p>There should be NO changes.</p>			
<p>Thank you, hopefully our city will achieve some progress</p>			
<p>Thank you for doing something to improve DT parking conditions.</p>			
<p>I do work downtown, but I do not use downtown parking daily.</p>			
<p>I most often use the transit system to commute to work. It doesn't make sense for me to drive downtown since I have a bus stop within walking distance of my home and it drops me off right across the street from my office.</p>			
<p>It would be great to convince property owners to assess themselves for parking. Business always have a cost for parking except in downtown.</p>			
<p>We seem to have a very good parking enforcement team. I have yet to be in a spot a minute overtime without receiving a ticket.</p>			
<p>Sometimes which meter to utilize can be confusing. I just got a ticket last week when I had put money in the meter. Unfortunately, it was the wrong meter.</p>			
<p>get some signage out to steer folks to parking garages</p>			
<p>NO</p>			
<p>How much is this study costing and why could it not be performed by a local company?</p>			
<p>Thanks for attempting to resolve this challenging issue - one more time.</p>			
<p>find a way to attract new business to downtown</p>			
<p>When you present your options, show the statistics on the cost effectiveness and feasibility of removing parking meters. It is my understanding that getting rid of the meters does not significantly increase downtown traffic...so why should we do it.</p>			
<p>On the other hand, if statistics in other communities say that having meters is not that effective and is a lot of hassles for cities...then we should have them.</p>			
<p>However, I can't think of a single downtown I've EVER been in that didn't have parking meters!</p>			
<p>Good luck with this project!</p>			
<p>We should work to create a parking problem by having more activities, more restaurants, and more retail downtown.</p>			
<p>Better managed and easier to use parking will bring more people downtown, especially visitors. Right now one of the biggest problems we have downtown is a lot of one-way streets that cause people who are not from here great frustration and confusion. You sometimes have to drive three extra around the blocks to get the one place on the original block you were trying to get to.</p>			
<p>One way does not help people get to Downtown. They help people PASS through Downtown quicker.</p>			

