



Independence **Downtown Parking Management Plan**

October 2024



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The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect views or policies of the State of Oregon.



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1

Summary

Why A Downtown Parking Management Plan?

The City of Independence is growing, especially in the downtown. As pressures compete to use the limited amount of land in downtown, this plan attempts to create a path forward that best balances new development with parking management.

Guiding Principles

The principles that guide this parking management plan are:

- Downtown's growth should build on the characteristics that have made it a great place.
- Land in downtown is valuable, scarce, and should be managed wisely.
- Parking should be understood and managed as one part of a transportation system that supports downtown's success.

Existing Conditions

Based on data collected in August 2023, the City has a concentration of highly used parking in a small area with a significant amount of underused on-street parking nearby. As growth and development occur, the City's development code lacks clarity on parking standards and has opportunities for improvement.

Strategies and Actions

Recommendations are grouped in terms of:

- Parking Management
- Parking Information and Wayfinding
- Code Reform
- Travel Options and Travel Demand Management





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Introduction

Introduction To Downtown Independence

The purpose of this Downtown Parking Management Plan is to help the City of Independence, its residents, and its visitors:

- Understand current parking conditions.
- Learn about best practices for parking management.
- Have community conversations about current and future options.
- Identify strategies to improve the parking situation.
- Refine the Independence Development Code to better achieve the community's desires for future downtown development.

This project builds on the Independence Vision 2040 and Transportation System Plans, which call for a Downtown Parking Management Plan to support the continued redevelopment and revitalization of downtown and help the City make informed decisions about how to use scarce downtown land.

The thoughtful management of parking can help strengthen the growing downtown core, use land more efficiently, and promote a more pedestrian-oriented environment. With a foundation of appropriate planning policies and development codes, Downtown Independence can continue to thrive as a great place for everyone.



Guiding Principles for Downtown Parking Management

Through discussions with City leadership, staff, downtown stakeholders, Independence community members, and visitors, the project team has determined that parking decisions in downtown should be guided by the following principles:



Downtown's growth should build on the characteristics that have made it a great place.

Downtown's historic buildings were built at a walkable scale that has contributed to the pedestrian-oriented urban form that the City benefits from today. This form allows Independence to have a highly livable downtown supported by a robust and successful calendar of events, a rich history, and beautiful natural environment.



Land in downtown is valuable, scarce, and should be managed wisely.

As the downtown has changed, leaders and community members have identified a range of land uses that they hope to attract to the area in the coming years. These include mixed-use developments; more affordable housing options; community gathering spaces; and services such as childcare and support for people with disabilities. Encouraging these uses while providing and managing parking to support the land uses will be a challenge given the scarce amount of land available.

Parking should be understood and managed as one part of a transportation system that supports downtown's success.

An accessible, walkable downtown that offers a range of transportation options best supports downtown's success. Clear wayfinding can help guide people as they navigate between downtown parking and their destinations, while supporting trips made on foot, bike, or transit. Investments in connectivity, accessibility, comfort, and service for people walking, bicycling, and using transit can also help reduce demand for parking. In Independence's walkable downtown, parking should be easy to find for visitors and occasional users, and regular users should be able to anticipate where and when they will be able to park.

Overview of Planning Process

The planning process for this Independence Downtown Parking Management Plan took place summer 2023 to fall 2024.



***Summer
2024***

**Presentation to
parking stakeholders**

**Draft plan and draft
code amendments**

**Work sessions with
Planning Commission
and City Council**

***Fall
2024***

**Public hearing on plan
and code amendments**

Adoption



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Existing Conditions

Current Downtown Parking Conditions

Downtown Has Ample Parking Capacity Today

The project team's parking inventory and utilization study (Appendix A) found that downtown Independence currently has more parking than is needed to meet overall demand, even during the peak-summer season and during many downtown events. With approximately 600 on-street and 685 off-street parking stalls, most downtown lots and street blocks offer available space on both weekdays and weekends. Approximately ten percent of the parking spaces are special use parking, including time-limited stalls, ADA parking, police vehicle parking, electric vehicle charging stalls, and covered parking. Figure 1 shows the locations of parking.

Additional information about parking capacity can be found in Appendix A.

Certain Parking Locations Experience High Demand, Contributing To User Frustration

People prefer to park in a few select locations, likely because of the design of the spaces and their proximity to certain destinations (see Figure 2).

These locations include:

- Main St. between B St and D St
- Osprey Lane between Main Street and the roundabout
- C St from Main St to S 3rd St
- The public parking lot serving the Independence Library
- The private parking lot serving Umpqua Bank
- The public lot on the west side of Osprey Lane opposite the Independence Hotel
- The public parking areas nearest to the Riverview Park Playground and the Riverview Park Beach

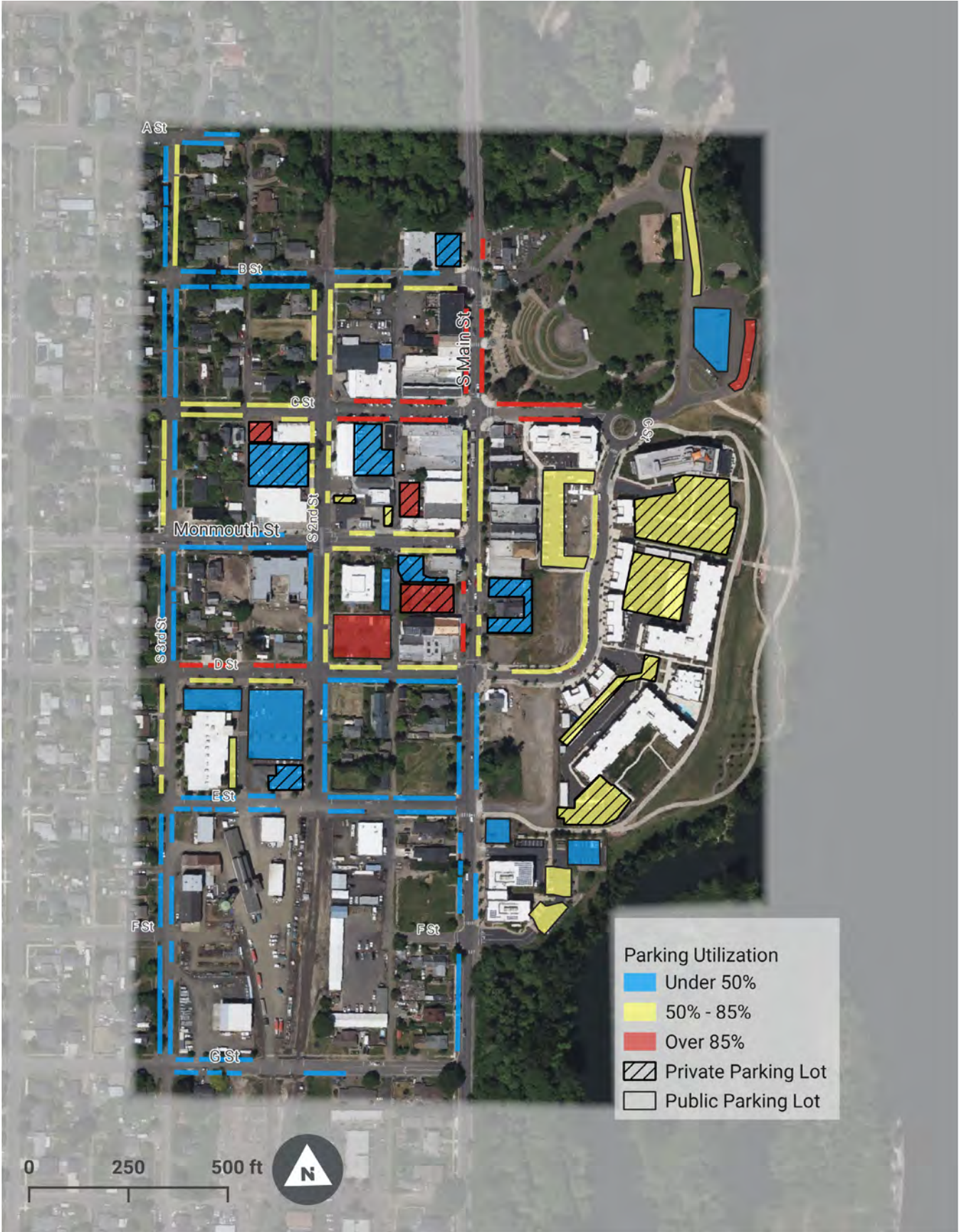
For people who need to load/unload (such as visitors to the Ash Creek Animal Clinic) or who need ADA parking, a limited supply of well-located special-use stalls are available. For people without accessibility or loading needs, additional parking is typically open within two blocks, well within walking distance for an able-bodied person.



FIGURE 1 Public on-street parking, public off-street parking, and private off-street parking



FIGURE 2 Parking locations with high demand and unused capacity





A Lack Of Parking Management Hampers The Optimization Of Downtown Parking

There is little management of downtown's on-street and off-street parking, with only two percent of on-street parking and ten percent of off-street spaces subject to time limits or reserved for special uses such as ADA access or electric vehicle charging. Where the restrictions exist, limited enforcement occurs. Because of this, high-demand parking areas may be partially occupied by employees or residents for much of the day.

A similar lack of management occurs with private and public off-street lots. Some lots place restrictions on who may park and when, while other lots are shared through formal or informal agreements. In many cases, downtown stakeholders are confused about which lots are private or public, and who can park (and the circumstances under which they may park) at a given location.

Parking Design And Wayfinding Has Implications For Traffic Safety

On busier downtown streets, high demand for parking can contribute to conflicts between users. At intersections without curb extensions, downtown currently allows parking up to the street corners. This arrangement reduces visibility at the intersections for people walking, biking, and driving. Limiting the parking near the corner (by adding no parking signage/curb striping or curb extensions) allows all people, whether driving, walking, or biking, to see each other and avoid conflicts while traveling through intersections.

One place where design impacts traffic safety is C Street, particularly the block between Main Street and 2nd Street, a high-demand area where angled parking is present. Head-in angled parking is more convenient and accessible to drivers than parallel parking, but decreases the visibility of people riding bikes on the street. Back-in angled parking improves drivers' ability to see people riding bikes and other vehicular traffic.

Additionally, the intersection of C Street and 2nd Street is unique. Since C Street is one-way westbound and there is no signage on 2nd Street to alert drivers that C Street is one way, drivers mistakenly turn eastbound onto the street. Several stakeholders shared anecdotes about times they have seen people turn the wrong way and almost cause collisions.

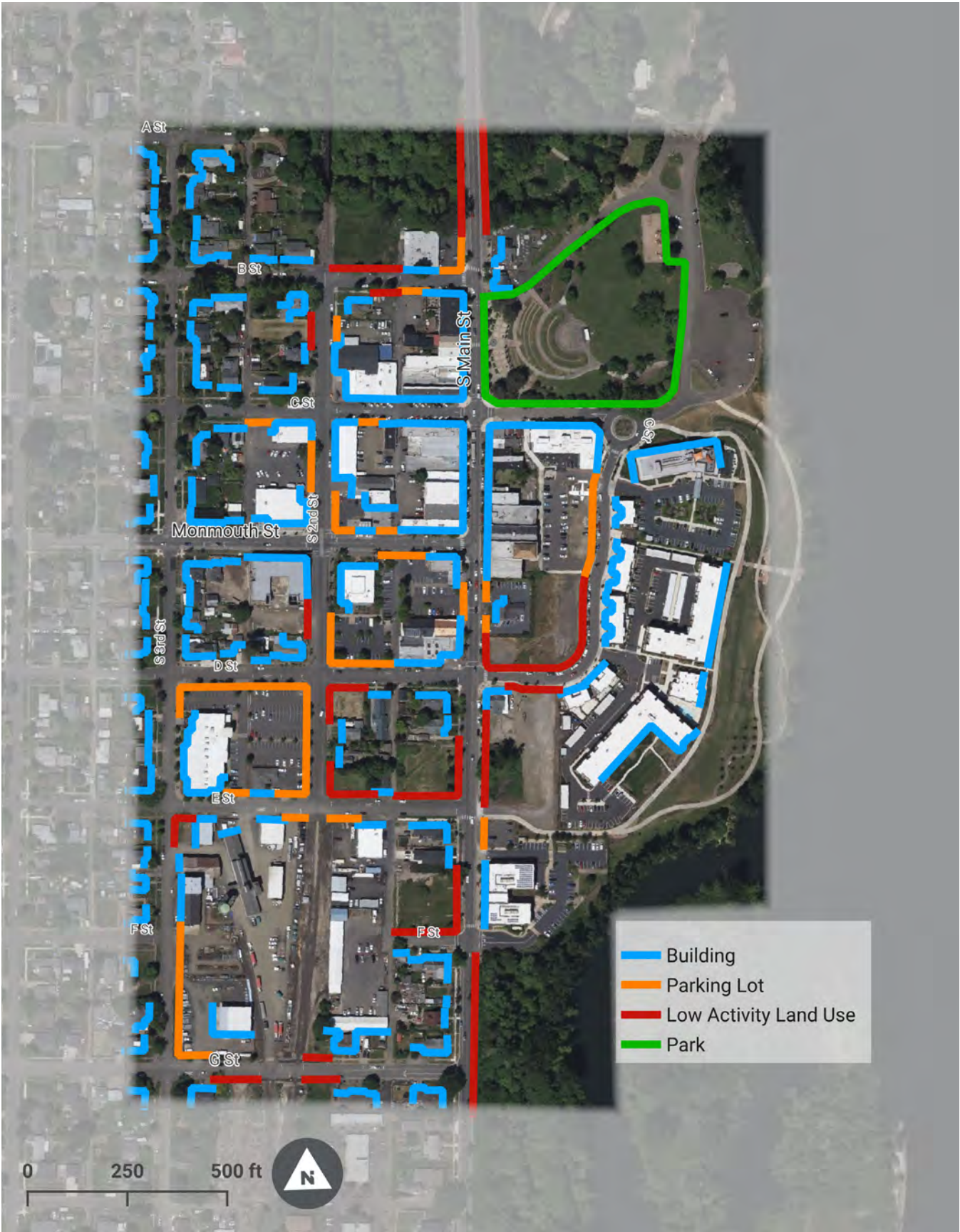
The intersection of Monmouth Street and Main Street has a single flashing traffic beacon in downtown Independence to accommodate the high number of vehicles passing through. During heavy congestion, the parking spaces closest to the intersection become effectively inaccessible because the line of queued traffic. This presents opportunities to repurpose the parking areas with curb extensions or other uses that support active transportation.

The Presence Of Parking In Certain Locations Undermines The Walkable Nature Of Downtown

Downtown's most active, inviting blocks are areas where buildings front directly onto the sidewalk, contributing to a pedestrian-oriented environment. Certain portions of downtown, however, have parking as the dominant land use type. These areas, such as the parking lots near the movie theater and between Main Street and the Willamette River, interrupt the highly walkable character of the historic portions of downtown and in some instances, cause the areas beyond the parking to feel disconnected from the rest of the downtown (see Figure 3). The parking lot along the river in particular has divided the Willamette River from downtown.

The discontinuity created by some of these lots is compounded by a lack of direct, comfortable, and well-maintained walkways through off-street lots to accommodate pedestrians.

FIGURE 3 The built environment's influence on active and inactive block faces.



Stakeholder Interviews

The project team interviewed a variety of stakeholders about parking downtown. Key takeaways include:

- The diversity of businesses and downtown events adds to the number of activities and reasons to travel downtown. Different destinations and events draw users at different times throughout the week, spreading out times of peak parking demand.
- As a popular destination close to Salem, the nearest major city, Independence needs to balance parking access for residents and visitors from out of town.
- Stakeholders recognize that increased population and foot traffic benefits downtown and its businesses.
- Off-street parking lots serve a variety of diverse uses, such as food carts, and are not just for car storage.
- Employees at downtown businesses have no formal parking guidance and park on-street for entire shifts. The use of the parking is beginning to cause tension among business owners, employees, residents, and visitors.
- Applying new time limits for parking is relatively acceptable to most stakeholders (and was even recommended unprompted by many). However, the topic of enforcement and/or paid parking to implement time limitations is more contentious.

Community Survey

Key takeaways from the survey include the following:

- Downtown is an active, attractive destination with a variety of destinations. Significantly more people visit the area for dining, recreation, and social activities than they do for work. Over a quarter of respondents go downtown more than five days a week.
- Most trips to downtown Independence are by car. Respondents indicate they are okay with walking two or more blocks from parking to their destination. Respondents slightly prefer finding a spot quickly than parking adjacent to their destination (even if it takes more time).
- To keep downtown Independence thriving in the future, residents find it vital to add more businesses and restaurants in the area. To accommodate the demand generated by the establishments, residents expressed the desire for more parking.

Public and Stakeholder Input

To engage with members of the public and key stakeholders, the project team used a variety of strategies to educate, inform, and consult the Downtown Independence community, including:

- A community survey and series of tabling events, which revealed that residents and visitors value downtown Independence's walkability and access to destinations.
- Multiple stakeholder interviews, which revealed a common understanding that adding more businesses and restaurants in the area is vital to keeping downtown thriving. Stakeholders also recognize that a diversity of businesses and events draws users at different times, reducing the concentration of demand.
- An open house and recorded presentation, which documented mixed support for strategies to improve parking management and for strategies around street design and capacity.

More information about engagement methods and input received can be found in Appendix D: Public Engagement Summary.

FIGURE 4 Project staff talking with event attendees during an event at Riverfront Park.



Tabling Events

Members of the project team hosted two tabling events in Riverview Park during public events in the summer of 2023. The events included poster boards that asked for public input via sticker dot exercises on current parking habits and a project survey. See Figure 4. Both the map and the sticker dot exercise were taken to City Hall afterwards to allow people to continue providing feedback.

People indicated they would be willing to walk over two blocks between parking and their destination, and stated that they typically parked longer than 30 minutes. To indicate where they normally park, many participants placed dots on Main Street or Osprey Lane. Others placed dots in the library parking lot, in the off-street lot behind Parallel 45, and in the Riverview Park lots. For more details on the tabling events, see Appendix D.

Fall Open House and Video

The project team hosted an open house on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, followed by a Spanish open house the next day. In addition to presenting the survey and inventory results, the open houses asked for initial public feedback on the parking strategy recommendations. Online videos in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) also accompanied the open house for individuals that were not able to attend in-person. Material presented can be found in Appendix D.

Generally, feedback was mixed. Regarding improvements to wayfinding and navigation, the public responded positively to designating parking areas and marking spaces. The public did not respond strongly to parking strategies to improve parking management, which included time-limited parking, a payment system, and enforcement. The public also had mixed responses to parking strategies around street design and capacity. Individuals did not want to add or improve the existing parking supply, but did support pedestrian improvements.

How Parking Requirements Impact Development

The parking requirements in the Independence Development Code impact the ability for new development to contribute a livable, walkable downtown. Parking requirements in the existing code require a significant amount of land to meet, and often pose barriers to the feasibility of residential and commercial development. When the various standards are taken as a whole, the requirements make it difficult – and in some cases impossible – for developers to construct the type of buildings that typify downtown Independence.

With the existing code, one parking space is required per dwelling unit. This standard is difficult to achieve through surface parking – especially on small downtown lots – while also meeting the requirement that buildings cover 50 percent or more of each lot (a standard found within the City's Mixed Use Pedestrian Friendly Commercial Zone). While structured or underground parking may help achieve the standard, structured parking is often financially infeasible for compact residential or mixed-use development. Code requirements related to parking lot siting, landscaping, and loading additionally require a significant amount of land that further impacts project feasibility.

For residential development, parking requirements end up dictating decisions about housing size and quantity with developers responding to financial feasibility and code requirements rather than the best design for a site or the community's desires and preferences for new development. Figure 5 shows a case study that illustrates the amount of land that multifamily development might need to devote to meeting downtown parking requirements.

FIGURE 5 Development scenario showing how a multifamily site on Main Street might meet parking requirements in code.



Why consider code changes?

As written today, downtown's parking requirements prompt a more suburban form of development, which is at odds with the walkable, pedestrian-oriented character that has made downtown Independence successful. In addition, some of the code requirements are overly rigid, limit the space-efficiency of off-street parking, and may not achieve the urban design and pedestrian benefits that they were written to support.

Not addressing downtown's parking code could result in a downtown that is less walkable and livable, and less enjoyable for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Demand For Parking Can Be Met And Parking Conditions Can Be Improved Without Building New Parking

The City and its downtown stakeholders can take steps to improve downtown parking conditions without dedicating any additional land to parking. Utilization and turnover analyses indicate that downtown can likely accommodate desired levels of development and activity with the existing parking supply. Public parking capacity is likely sufficient to meet demand even if the City required less parking to be built as part of new development than it has in the past.

Improvements can be achieved by restriping current on-street and off-street parking to make better use of space, enhancing landscaping and walkways within parking lots, and implementing routine maintenance. There are also opportunities to ease parking demand at high-demand locations by offering better pre-trip information about travel and parking options, incorporating better wayfinding to guide users to destinations within downtown, and utilizing other thoughtful management approaches.



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Strategies And Actions

This plan proposes several strategies and actions, based on the evaluation of existing conditions, development code, needs, and opportunities; input from the public and downtown stakeholders; and direction from City Council and the Planning Commission.

Strategy 1: Parking Management

Coordinate and manage downtown's on- and off-street parking to:

- Prioritize convenience for visitors, customers, and people with disabilities.
- Provide dedicated parking for residents who want it.
- Provide clear guidance that businesses can give employees about where to park safely without impacting downtown access for other users.
- Maintain parking in a state of good repair while maximizing its space-efficiency.

Near-Term Actions

Action 1.a: Collect annual parking occupancy data.

Engagement needs:	Low
Resource needs:	Low

On-going collection of parking occupancy data is needed to assess parking utilization and evaluate the effectiveness of any implemented parking management. Annual data collection should focus on peak-summer season while many events occur downtown. Consider off-peak winter data collection for comparison. The geography and time frame of data collection should be scaled to be more manageable and affordable for the City.

The City can use one year of data collection to focus on high-demand areas, while the next year could capture the broader downtown. The frequency and time frame can be adjusted as needed to monitor and evaluate effectiveness of implemented actions.

Action 1.b: Clarify ownership of lots and communicate to downtown stakeholders.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

This action is intended to make the public's parking experience easier by clearly identifying where individuals are allowed to park in off-street lots. Conversations should occur with lot owners about the use of their lots, and the conditions under which the use may occur. Where possible, the City should work with property owners to implement consistent signage indicating allowed use and hours.

Action 1.c: Develop and implement a public parking maintenance program.

Engagement needs:	Low
Resource needs:	Medium

This action would improve the public's parking experience by ensuring parking spaces are clearly marked and improving safety for people getting to and from spaces. The public parking maintenance should include strategies for:

- Striping parking
- Sidewalk lighting
- Smooth walking surfaces
- Walkways connecting to parking

Action 1.d: Partner with private parking lot owners to utilize their lots.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

This action is similar to Action 1.c, but would apply to private off-street parking. Actions that the City should take include:

- Clarifying any allowed usage by the general public
- Developing and offering a consistent signage for private lot owners
- Offering programs to assist property owners with private lot maintenance and/or improvement

Action 1.e: Assess short-term options for implementing parking management and enforcement, and select preferred option.

Engagement needs:	Low
Resource needs:	Low

Beginning with short-term parking management and enforcement options can create a strong foundation for pursuing long-term options. The enforcement of this action dictates the effectiveness of actions within the Safety Improvements strategy, such as actions 1.f and 4.a. Parking management and enforcement options can range in approach and need to be considered in relation to funding in Action 1.g. The City should consider the following options when assessing short-term options for management and enforcement:

- Allocating time of existing City staff
- Amending an existing service contract (such as with Western Oregon University)
- Creating a new contract with a parking management company

Action 1.f: Establish and enforce initial time limits, designated parking, and additional special use parking.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	High

Developing parking strategies designating time limits and intended users can ensure better parking is available for everyone. Some options include:

- Implementing time limits in high demand areas to encourage parking turnover, such as on Main Street between C Street and D Street, and on C Street between Main Street and 2nd Street.
- Designated and permitted employee parking areas. See “Employee Parking” callout box for more information.
- More special use public parking, such as 10-minute pickup/drop-off stalls and ADA accessible stalls on each block face. See the “What about ADA or short-term parking?” callout box for more information.

If this action is conducted, a broader strategy for management for Action 1.g. must be pursued. The preferred parking strategies need to be considered in the context of the decisions about enforcement and funding in 1.g and 1.i, respectively.

Action 1.g: Consider near-term funding for parking management.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

Secure funding is key to strategic parking management and should be implemented to sustain the program. Typical elements of a parking program that require funding are enforcement, permit administration, data collection and analysis, and public communication and outreach. See “Ways to Fund Parking Strategies” section for more information.

What about ADA or short-term parking?

One near-term recommendation is to provide more ADA and short-stay parking, both of which would increase the accessibility of downtown destinations. As shown in Figure 6, special use spaces should be placed at the end of blocks and be positioned adjacent to curb ramps at corners that have curb ramps. This siting would meet ADA requirements for on-street parking placement, and provide a consistency in short-stay parking locations that would help drivers locate the stalls. The City may also wish to designate ADA stalls in public parking lots where not already present.

Employee Parking

Another near-term step is to identify locations that can accommodate employee parking and have adequate lighting and engage with businesses to encourage employees to park in the spaces. This effort would help build a culture that leaves high demand spaces available for visitors and customers. Potential locations for employee parking include the lots at Riverview Park and adjacent to the Independence Cinema.

Actions for Long-Term Consideration

Action 1.h: Establish and enforce parking permit district.

Engagement needs:	High
Resource needs:	High

The primary purpose of a permit program is to make frequently used spaces available for business customers by directing non-customer users to park in other designated locations. Permit programs may address:

- Employees
- Residents
- Visitors
- Overnight guests

Typically, employee parking permits are the first to be introduced to encourage long-term parking away from the spaces directly outside businesses. Employee parking could be in a dedicated parking lot or on other underused blocks. For example, employees of businesses along C Street could be encouraged to park between 2nd and 3rd Streets instead of between Osprey Lane and 2nd Street. The City and/or business groups could determine appropriate incentives to encourage the parking.

As development occurs in downtown, a residential parking permit system may become valuable to balance the needs of businesses and customers with those that live in the area. If the annual occupancy data collection (Action 1.a) shows parking demand and utilization increases – for example, 3rd Street sees occupancy levels consistently above 50 percent – the City may begin to explore opportunities to manage demand that can be deployed when occupancy levels reach 85 percent. Visitor and overnight guest permit systems are not anticipated to be needed in the near or intermediate term but are additional options available to the City for the long term.

FIGURE 6 Recommended locations for various on-street parking types.



Action 1.i: Establish and enforce paid parking.

Engagement needs:	High
Resource needs:	High

Paid parking can be an effective parking management strategy, though its implementation can be contentious. Generally, parking is considered high-demand when it is consistently occupied for over 85 percent of the time, or when parking has reached its effective capacity (meaning, parking feels full to customers, and they have trouble finding parking). For paid parking in high-demand areas, a longer term discussion may be prompted by demand levels or funding needs. Paid parking is not a recommended strategy for downtown Independence in the near term but may be appropriate in the long term as overall utilization increases. See “Enforcement Keys to Success” callout for more information.

Action 1.j: Redevelop parking lots.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

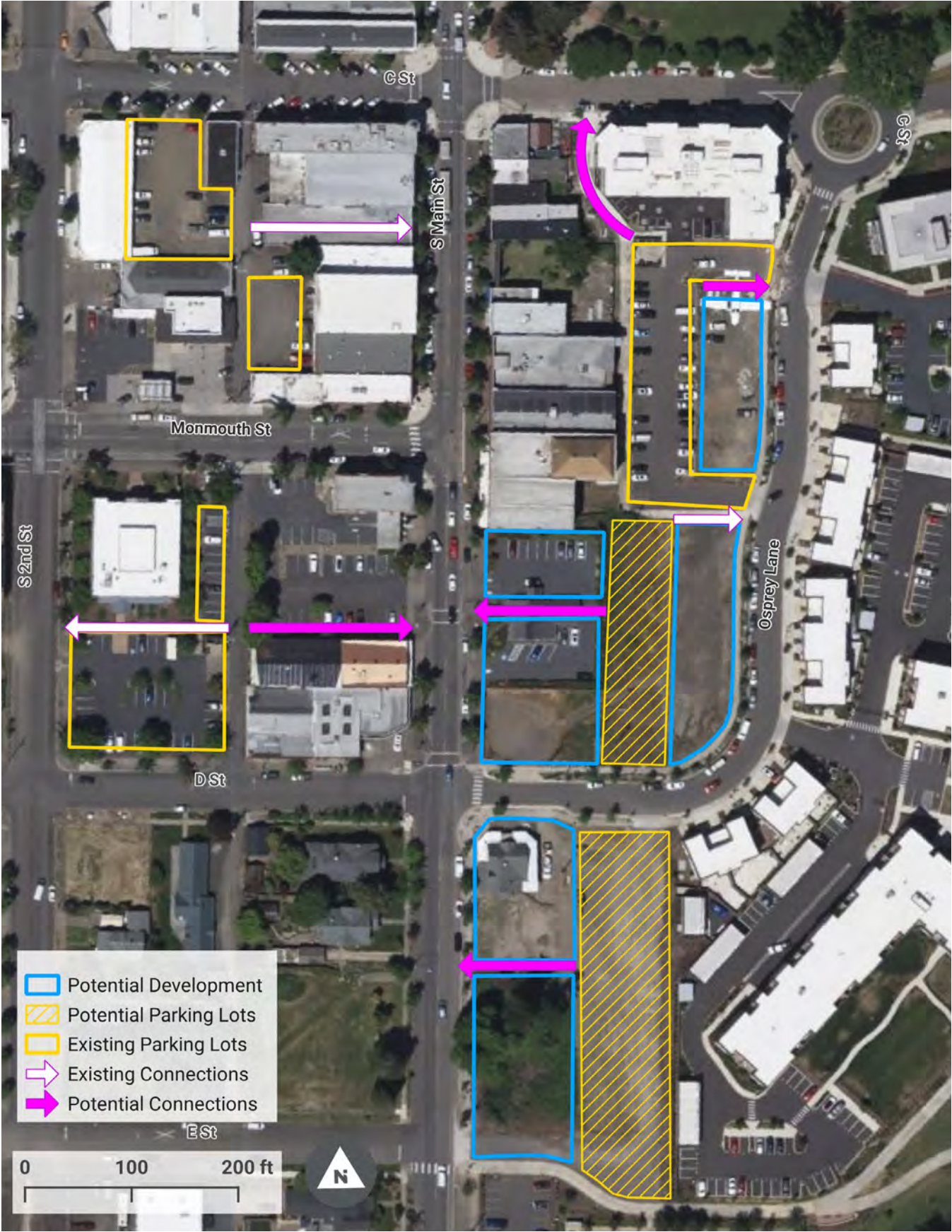
If data continues to show that sufficient parking is present in downtown, consider the redevelopment of public parking lots. Focus new parking lots behind buildings and build pedestrian connections to major streets to ensure new parking supports the urban form and walkability of downtown. See Figure 7 for a map of potential developments, parking lots, and walkable connections.

Action 1.k: Study redesign of parallel parking to angle parking for high-demand streets.

Engagement needs:	High
Resource needs:	Medium

Redesigning parallel parking to back-in angled parking can have significant impacts on a street. Impacts may include narrowing the travel lanes (thereby decreasing travel speeds), improving driver maneuverability into and out of a space, and increasing visibility of traffic for drivers while they park. While adjusting the angled parking on C Street is identified as Action 1.h, other streets to be considered as part of Action 1.i include B Street and D Street, both between Main Street and 2nd Street. The study should include considerations such as access, safety, and number of on-street spots impacted. Changes to vehicle circulation (such as making a two-way street into a one-way street) are not encouraged.

FIGURE 7 Potential redevelopment opportunity sites, public parking lot opportunity sites, and walkable connections.



Enforcement Keys to Success

Parking enforcement can be implemented in different ways. The following options are listed as initial ideas for the City to pursue based on limited City staff time available.

Option 1: Use cameras instead of enforcement staff

- Cameras at parking spaces capture violations and upload to a cloud-based system
- Citations are created and automatically mailed to owner
- Payments can be made online
- Dashboards and data analytics can improve parking and gain insight into areas that are “hotspots” requiring signage improvements, changes in time limits, etc.

Option 2: Enforcement staff needed to patrol and cite violators

- Patrol parking and use handheld enforcement devices to track violators/issue citations.

Other Enforcement Program Options:

- **Outsource Enforcement Program:** Partner with a local parking management company to provide enforcement. This company would enforce, take on all duties/expenses, and split ticket profits with the City based on percentage of gross profits minus expenses.
- **Employ student workers or city interns as enforcement staff:** Employ WOU student workers or City interns as enforcement personnel. Include training for students and staff on how to handle drivers who react negatively to enforcement.
- **If City is unable to enforce 24/7:** Key to successful enforcement is consistency, so parking spaces should be enforced 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If the City is unable to consistently enforce, it is recommended to, at minimum, enforce highly used areas and parking spaces (as noted in this study) during peak days or times and re-adjust enforcement timing based on the results.

It is important to note that enforcement staff do not need to be police officers.

Enforcement: Where to Start?

A scalable approach to enforcement is key. The City could start implementing an approach to enforcement by concentrating on the areas with the highest parking use. This approach could start with peak parking periods (based on data in Appendix A), and add other days or times as possible. When the City sees a consistent 75 percent utilization, City staff could select and begin organizing an enforcement approach to have in place when parking spots reach 80-85 percent capacity.

The City could also consider accounting for the abuse of parking limits as a trigger to begin enforcing parking. First steps, depending on the option selected, would include conducting checks of the time-limited areas during peak periods and when there are complaints received. Consistent issues, or when non-compliant behavior is more frequent than compliant behavior, could also trigger implementing enforcement.

It's important to note that paid parking and enforcement go hand-in-hand. It is not recommended to implement paid parking without enforcement. Paid parking is a strategy to increase vehicle turnover, and if it is not being tracked and enforced, it is hard to know if the strategy is effective.

Strategy 2: Parking Information and Wayfinding

Provide traveler information and wayfinding to help people traveling by car locate suitable parking and then walk or roll to their destination.

Near-Term Actions

Action 2.a: Provide traveler information on the City website, City social media, and other downtown-related websites.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

Parking information can help inform people's travel decisions. Information should include:

- Maps of available parking lots and special-use parking
- Educational information about what parking rules apply
- Links to information about travel options such as walking, bicycling, and the Monmouth Independence Trolley

Action 2.b: Add wayfinding signage and markings.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Medium

Wayfinding signage and markings can help people navigate downtown, directing them to public parking and reducing barriers for people who park a distance from their destination. Wayfinding encourages efficient use of the existing parking supply by directing users to parking that is near their destination but not as visible as on-street spaces. Existing signs can potentially be revised to improve legibility and accessibility (which could be done at a cheaper cost than replacing all existing signs). See Figure 8 for preliminary suggestions on sign locations.

Updating Existing Wayfinding Signs

Strategies for updating existing wayfinding signs include:

- Adding an additional sign or plaque at existing public parking locations. This sign should include a large blue 'P' – a symbol commonly used for public parking.
- Exploring opportunities to increase font size on existing signs by installing heavy duty vinyl stickers or other material that can be placed over the text on existing signs.

Action 2.c: Improve walking routes from parking lots to destinations.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Medium

Improving walking routes to common destinations, such as commercial areas and parks, can have a significant impact on dispersing parking in high-demand areas. Improvements may include new sidewalks, improved sidewalk conditions and crossings, traffic calming measures, landscaping, and wayfinding (see Action 2.b). This action should be pursued in tandem with Action 2.a. Improvements to 2nd St should especially be considered. Additional walking routes should be determined by the streets where the City plans to invest resources to improve parking. Additional walking routes will be determined by lot redevelopment and which streets the City will invest resources on improving parking.

FIGURE 8 Map of preliminary suggestions for wayfinding sign locations



Strategy 3: Code Reform

Streamline parking-related code requirements and amend the standards to support the development and urban character of Independence.

Near-Term Actions

Action 3.a: Consolidate downtown parking code elements into fewer chapters.

Engagement needs:	Low
Resource needs:	Low

Parking provisions are currently found in several different chapters in the code, which makes it complicated for users and complex to administer. Consolidating parking code elements can clarify and streamline the requirements.

Action 3.b: Continue to evaluate potential parking code reforms.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

Current parking requirements reduce the physical and financial viability of developing new downtown housing and impact historic character and walkability. While public engagement within this planning process began educating the community, this plan's studies and analyses should be made available so that the City and community members can explore what changes might best serve downtown. The Independence Downtown Association may provide a good opportunity to continue to engage downtown stakeholders.

Action 3.c: Make the parking requirements in the Downtown Riverfront Zone the same as those which apply to the Downtown Overlay Zone.

Engagement needs:	Low
Resource needs:	Low

The Downtown Overlay Zone and Downtown Riverfront Zone include different provisions for parking. A cohesive, uniform approach to parking in the two zones would better yield a unified and connected walkable environment and would ease the administration of the standards.

Action 3.d: Revise parking lot siting, landscaping, and loading standards.

Engagement needs:	Low
Resource needs:	Low

Many of the landscaping standards or loading requirements that apply in downtown are appropriate for suburban or employment zones but are not appropriate for a historic walkable downtown. Revisions should include practical, reasonable reductions to certain provisions and changes that enable creative shared parking solutions.

Action 3.e: Introduce a fee-in-lieu program that allows development to contribute to the cost of public parking in lieu of building parking.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

Developing a fee-in-lieu program could offer flexibility to developers while providing the City with a funding source that helps provide and manage public parking in a more holistic way.

Action 3.f: Reduce parking requirements for development near transit and downtown housing.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

Current parking requirements are suburban in nature and don't account for historic development patterns found in downtown Independence. Reducing the number of parking spaces required for downtown housing or within proximity of transit would support walkability, transit use, and more housing (especially affordable housing) in downtown.

Actions for Long-Term Consideration

Action 3.g: Eliminate downtown parking requirements.

Engagement needs:	High
Resource needs:	Low

Continued data collection under Strategy 1 will demonstrate whether the actions recommended in this plan allow downtown to meet user travel needs without adding new public or private parking. If the efforts are successful, eliminating parking requirements could be pursued to open additional development opportunities and promote an urban form that better aligns with downtown's historic character. This approach could additionally support more housing (and more affordable housing) near downtown.

Strategy 4: Safety Improvements

Creating a safer environment to park can benefit people using all modes - driving, walking, biking, or taking transit. Focusing on safer roadway design can leverage improved parking access in downtown.

Actions for Short-Term Consideration

Action 4.a: Restripe angled parking on C Street to back-in for safety.

Engagement needs:	Low
Resource needs:	Low

Switching from the current head-in angled parking design to back-in angled parking will improve drivers' abilities to see the street and anyone traveling on the street. This action may include a short public information campaign to educate drivers on how to back-in angle park.

Action 4.b: Remove parking at intersection corners.

Engagement needs:	Medium
Resource needs:	Low

Removing parking at intersections, also called “daylighting intersections”, can help improve safety for people walking and driving. On-street parking stalls at the edges of intersections can be difficult to navigate due to factors such as: moving traffic, crossing pedestrians, and congestion. Restricting parking at intersections also improves visibility for people walking, so they are better able to see approaching traffic. This also creates the opportunity for other uses to occupy the space, so long as they do not obstruct visibility. This may include elements like bike parking, planters, or other placemaking elements. Parking restrictions should be at least 10' from the corner, though 20' preferred, and be communicated via yellow painted curbs and “No Parking” signs. Pairing this with a short public information campaign can prepare the community for the change and explain why it will improve safety.

Strategy 5: Travel Options and Travel Demand Management

Seek opportunities to enhance and expand walking, bicycling, and transit networks and services to provide travel options and reduce the need to drive and park downtown. While fully developing this strategy is beyond the scope of this plan, expanded travel options would greatly benefit downtown's success and complement the other strategies described above.

Actions for Long-Term Consideration

Action 5.a: Study, fund, and implement programs or projects that expand travel options to and within downtown.

Engagement needs:	High
Resource needs:	High

Studies should focus on travel between downtown, other city neighborhoods, and nearby communities. Understanding travel patterns and user needs can support the enhancement of travel options that are tailored to community and visitor dynamics. Actions for the City to explore include:

- Continuing and expanding MI Trolley transit service
- Improving sidewalks and crossings
- Improving bicycle routes, bicycle parking, and wayfinding signage
- Making safety improvements that benefit users of all travel modes, such as protected intersections
- Providing online travel options information to help residents, employees, and visitors plan car-free trips

Ways to Fund Parking Strategies

Sustainably funding parking management is important. The City should explore strategies for modest funding when implementing a parking management program, enforcement, or maintenance. These initial strategies could generate funds to support enforcement, the start of a broader paid parking program, or infrastructure improvements. The following are options for the City to explore the feasibility/implementation:

District-based strategies

- **Create an opt-in parking permit district.** The City could provide permits for residents to purchase guaranteed parking outside their homes. This strategy differs from Action 1.i in that Action 1.i would be comprehensively applied to the district, whereas this action would be voluntary, and residents would opt in if they desire. Money from the sold permits would cover the administration of the program and expenses.
- **Provide overnight parking permits in City-owned lots off Osprey Lane to residents of nearby apartments.** If this approach was taken, the City could set permit prices at or below apartment parking prices.
- **Implement a Fee-in-Lieu program to allow eligible development projects to pay a fee in place of providing required parking.** The City could use fees generated to fund downtown parking and transportation needs.
- **Institute parking charges for event parking.** Collect fees from patrons to cover staffing and other parking expenses. Consider partnering with a parking management company who can implement event parking for a portion of net revenues.

Stall-specific strategies

- **Institute paid parking for on-street parking spaces with the highest utilization, leaving the remainder of parking spaces free.** Users may choose to pay for convenience while allowing those who do not want to pay to continue to have free parking.
- **Sell reserved parking spaces.** Some users may wish to have a guaranteed parking space and would be willing to pay for a reserved spot. The City and a user requesting the spot could decide on a space before the City issues a permit. Signage could be put up in the reserved space. The cost for the space would need to be decided based on location and what the space is worth. This strategy could start as a pilot program to gauge interest and acceptance by the community.

Additional strategies

- **Use fees from citations to fund parking and transportation needs.**
- **Investigate EV charging station grants.** Charge a fee for electricity required for EV parking spaces.
- **Investigate state/federal grants for any assistance in funding.**

Collected Parking Revenue

Any net parking revenue collected should be directed to strategies that benefit downtown and improve access to the area. These strategies could include parking improvements and management, street-scape improvements, enhanced travel options, and travel demand management. Parking revenues should not be relied upon as a general funding source for city operations.

Summary of Near-Term Actions

Strategy 1: Parking Management

- Collect annual parking occupancy data.
- Clarify ownership of lots and communicate to downtown stakeholders.
- Develop and implement a public parking maintenance program.
- Partner with private parking lot owners to utilize their lots.
- Assess short-term options for implementing parking management and enforcement, and select preferred option.
- Establish and enforce initial time limits, designated parking, and additional special use parking.
- Consider near-term funding for parking management.

Strategy 2: Parking Information and Wayfinding

- Provide traveler information on the City website, City social media, and other downtown-related websites.
- Add wayfinding signage and markings.
- Improve walking routes from parking lots to destinations.



Strategy 3: Code Reform

- Consolidate downtown parking code elements into fewer chapters.
- Continue to evaluate potential parking code reforms.
- Make the parking requirements in the Downtown Riverfront Zone the same as those which apply to the Downtown Overlay Zone.
- Revise parking lot siting, landscaping, and loading standards.
- Introduce a fee-in-lieu program that allows development to contribute to the cost of public parking in lieu of building parking.
- Reduce parking requirements for development near transit and downtown housing.



Strategy 4: Safety Improvements

- Restripe angled parking on C Street to back-in for safety.
- Remove parking at intersection corners.

Independence's Parking Future

By focusing on right-sizing parking in Downtown Independence, the City can pave the way for a future downtown that responds to growth while managing access. By taking action through low-cost, attainable actions, the City is laying the groundwork for Downtown Independence's future. Foundational guiding principles for downtown parking management, with supportive strategies and actions, will help Independence pursue a future that continues downtown's success.



Independence

Downtown Parking Management Plan

