

Case Study Example #2 – Walnut Creek

Impetus for Parking Program

There is a perceived parking shortage in Downtown Walnut Creek, particularly for prime on-street spaces and at a few off-street lots and garages. Available on-street parking is of great importance for a continued vibrant and accessible downtown.

Goals & Guiding Principles:

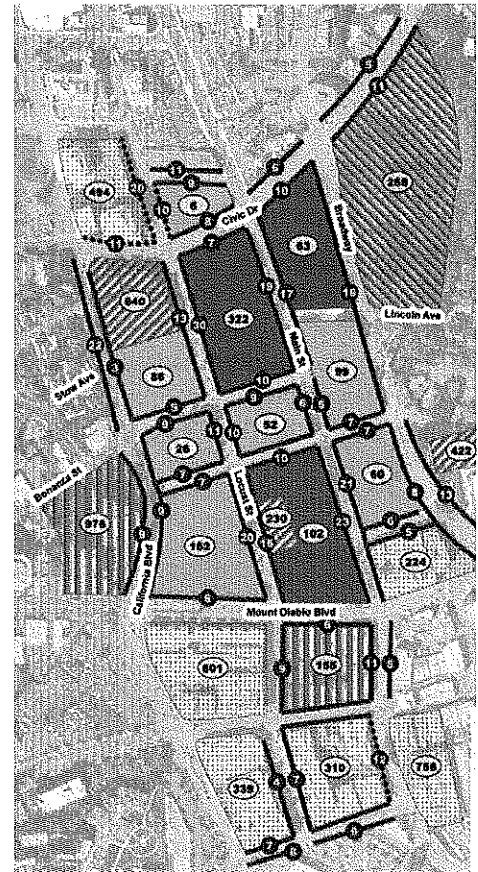
City Visions and Downtown Parking Goals

- The City will support a vital and diverse economy
- The City will create and sustain a highly livable built environment
- The City is committed to reducing negative impacts on the environment

Parking Management Goals

The goals of the Integrated Parking Management Plan are as follows:

- To enable enjoyment of the many amenities in the downtown
- To promote business and commerce
- To improve the residents' & visitor's experience
 - Give people clear, attractive, convenient choices on where to park
 - Give people ability to enjoy all that the downtown has to offer without frustration of finding parking
- To support a sustainable downtown
- Maintain a sales tax economic vision driven by an excellent customer experience.



Process/Approach

The City of Walnut Creek conducted a Downtown Parking and Transportation Study in 2006 with Nelson/Nygaard. Some recommendations included:

- Revised Trolley Routes
- The establishment of a Downtown Parking Meter Zone; and
- A trial of Parking Pay stations

The City Council appointed a Downtown Parking Task Force (DTPTF) in 2009 to follow up on the recommendations made in the 2006 Study.

The DTPTF developed six major parking strategies, developed and conducted three surveys focused on customers, employees and inventory management ideas and conducted four focus group meetings. These efforts were folded into an integrated comprehensive parking management plan.

Solutions/Strategies

#1: Effective use of Garages (public/private) & Improvement of Garage Experience

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public garages underutilized • On-Street parking is used for long term parking • Garage are not perceived as friendly • No Transit options near the garages • Garages are not marketed enough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess new technologies for improving garage user's experience • Improve perception of safety in parking garages • Explore shade structures on the top levels • Establish collaborative relationships with private garage owners to increase available parking inventory • Re-evaluate Special Event parking program

#2: Successful Employee Parking Management

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees park in prime spaces in front of businesses limiting access to customers • Most employees don't have clear parking direction from their employers • Need to offer the 1000's of employees downtown parking options that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe ○ Convenient ○ Affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a policy to encourage "parking nests" to provide employee parking in under-utilized on-street parking areas and/or public and private garages. • Require developers to provide an employee parking management plan when seeking project approvals • Improve and increase promotion of employee parking program so employees don't use customer on-street parking spaces

#3: Effective Inventory Management

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception – no parking downtown • Reality – many empty parking spaces block or two away from core downtown (in garages and on street) • Need to realign supply to meet demand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make lower demand spaces more attractive so people will park there ○ Encourage turnover in prime parking spots, during prime hours, so more people have chance to use them • Isn't one or other approach but integrated approach that gives people options on where to park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create three clearly defined and identifiable downtown parking zones • Give consumers better, clearer choices on where to park based upon they are going downtown to do • Create more turnover and make it easier to find a spot in all areas

Zone One
High Demand Area
707 Spaces

Zone Two
Lower Demand Area
1343 Spaces

Zone Three
Public Garages
1292 Spaces

#4: Effective Communication about Downtown Parking Options through Outreach, Marketing and Signage

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't chose a parking option if you don't know what they are • Need clear and consistent signage, marketing and outreach 	<p>Implement a highly visible, consistent signage program that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directional signs at entrances to City as well as other key places showing where parking is located and the number of spaces available • "Real time" information about number of available spaces at the garages and other important details • Special event signage visible before turning into garage • "Pedestrian" oriented signage promoting garages, and giving distances to key destinations(e.g. downtown library, 2 blocks) to encourage walking • Visible signage promoting trolley routes • Unified sign system that explains time limits, costs and zones, and is highly visible and consistent (perhaps color coded by zone) • A creative, integrated marketing plan on the various parking options and how to access them • Continued assessment of new technologies for improving communications about parking options • Establish a single point of contact in the City for all parking concerns • Enhance communication about downtown improvements accomplished through revenues from parking funds

#5: A Plan for Residents

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve resident experience • Give residents a reason to come downtown and take advantage of all the amenities • Better connect local residents with our local businesses • Residents may begin to understand the advantages of using parking garages thereby filling up an underutilized resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to research options such as a discount card for residents or a "frequent parker" card that: • Promote and market a positive parking experience for our residents. • Avoids the appearance of pitting residents against non-residents • Doesn't carry substantial administrative costs

#6: Effective Alternative Modes of Getting Around Downtown

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need simpler ways to get downtown without needing to drive and park• Need to connect alternative modes of transit with parking options (especially the underutilized options)• Encourages walking and greener forms of transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote bicycle access and improve bicycle facilities.• Continue to promote "Park Once" strategies• Promote and improve pedestrian connections between the downtown and residential neighborhoods• Investigate car share programs• Identify projects that will improve pedestrian experience from the garages as well as throughout the downtown• Test street closures to enhance pedestrian amenities and customer experience downtown• Assess trolley route; look at ways to integrate trolley with employee parking destination• Improve promotion of the trolleys – including more visible maps to better connect garages with downtown trolley.

Results & Next Steps

In February 2011, the Downtown Parking Task Force advanced recommendations to the City Council and the Transportation Commission in a joint study session. The Council heard public testimonies from diverse users groups. Both the Council and the Commission agreed on key policy elements of the plan such as maintaining 85% occupancy. City staff is preparing an implementation plan that includes the public participations tracks for each task. The tools are being designed to allow the Council to be able to give specific direction and the level of public participation on every element of the plan.

Lessons Learned

The biggest challenges reported by staff for the Downtown parking management plan have been with implementation and building consensus among stakeholders. The selection of the right mix of stakeholders to serve on the Task Force was key.

Involving the task force members in preparing and presenting the findings brought deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexity of parking issues. Building active partnerships with major stakeholders such as retailers allowed the task force to realize the business side of parking decision making.

Flexibility to allow the task force to conclude the study was essential. The original vision to accomplish this over a couple of meetings was not a reasonable expectation.

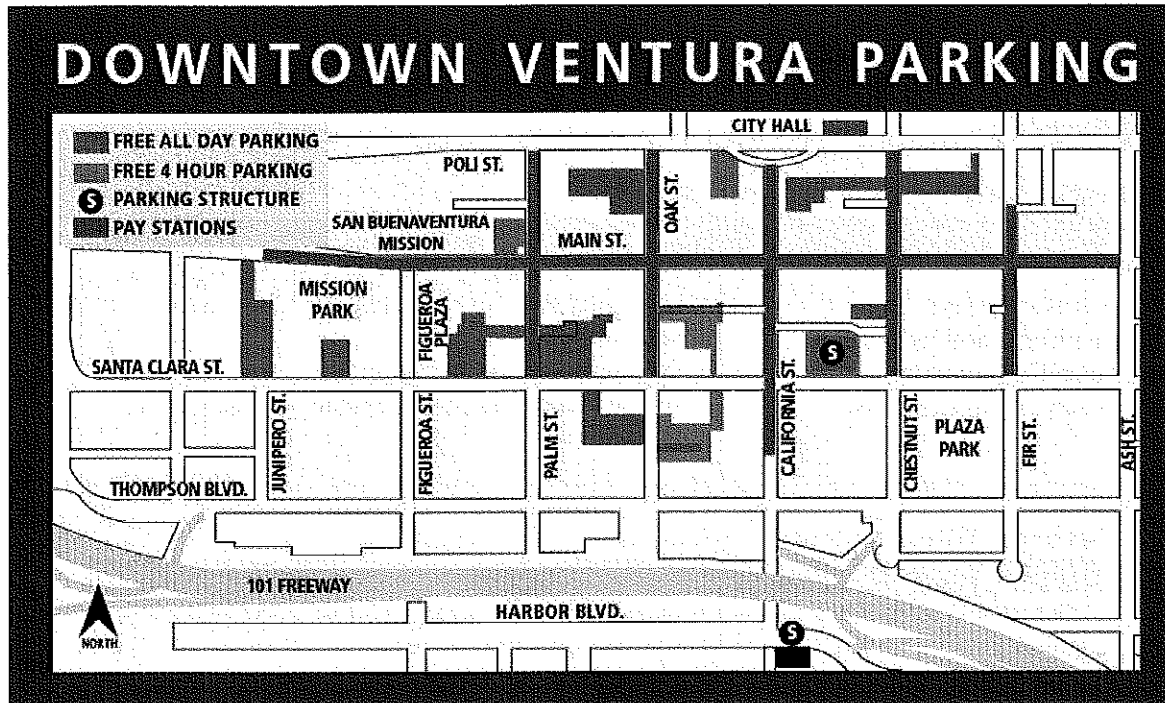
The downtown parking plan introduces several complex policies that require buy off from several internal and external groups. The implementation plan requires the same collaborative approach to build consensus.

Case Study Example #3- Ventura

Impetus for Parking Program

The parking program is designed to complement and support the Vision of the Ventura Downtown Specific Plan. It supports the form-based code approved in 2007 and its emphasis on livability and vitality.

There is a perceived parking shortage for Downtown Ventura. The actual on-street parking shortage is in the Downtown Core (274 spaces that are full 8 of 11 hours per day).



Goals & Guiding Principles:

Downtown Parking Management Goals

- Parking is a means to achieve broader community goals by leveraging existing assets
- Manage parking supply and demand

Process/Approach

The City of Ventura developed a transportation and parking management plan (Nelson/Nygaard 2007) and then implemented recommendations from the plan.

The plan included near term and long term recommendations that were incorporated into the Long Range Plan.

Based upon this plan, the City of Ventura conducted an in-depth parking data survey of existing off-street and on-street parking in the Downtown area to determine the feasibility of paid parking, residential parking permits and restructuring of

time limits. The City of Ventura also examined land uses and vacancy rates, using this information to validate new parking requirements recommended for the downtown area.

The City developed goals and guiding principles based upon:

- Customer First
- Business & city partnership
- Increase % of employees commuting by alternative modes to increase available customer parking
- Improve all modes of access
- Comprehensive on and off-street system
- Share on-street parking revenue and reinvest in the project area
- Begin analysis of the feasibility of a parking structure

Solutions/Strategies

#1: Demand Based Parking Requirements

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of parking inventory • Perceived lack of on-Street parking • Misuse of on-street parking spaces by employees • Create a data base of parking information to establish baseline for both the City and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted a comprehensive parking inventory and occupancy study to understand on-street and off-street parking • Develop a land use and vacancy data base to provide square footage and validate recommended parking requirements.

#2: Employee Parking Management

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees park in prime spaces in front of businesses limiting access to customers • Many employers direct employees to park in front of other businesses. • Inability to create an incentive for employees to move out of prime on-street parking spaces. • Enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking pay stations for the prime on-street parking spaces • Free off-street parking for long term visitors and employee • Additional enforcement and police supervision

#3: Time Limits/Residential Parking Permits/Location Strategy

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception – no parking downtown • Reality – many empty parking spaces block or two away • A variety of time limits and loading zone issues • Develop comprehensive on-street and off-street system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create core zone for retail customers • Create area for employees • Use time limits in outer area • Analyze use of loading zones and short term parking spaces • Create a residential parking permit program

#4: Effective Communication and Marketing

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inability to find parking space• Need clear and consistent signage, marketing and outreach• Message development for paid and free parking	<p>Implement a highly visible, consistent signage program that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directional signs at entrances to City as well as other key places showing where parking is located.• Signage and information helping people to find free parking outside of core• "Pedestrian" oriented signage• Develop localized message to meet need of community• Simplify parking pay process• Work closely with merchants, business organizations and residents.• Assess new technologies for improving communications and payment features• Reinvest parking revenues into downtown• Link parking enforcement and downtown security issues

Results & Next Steps

In 2010, the City of Ventura revised the parking code and purchased and installed pay stations in Downtown Ventura (originally looking at 411 on-street paid spaces and now down to 318 paid parking spaces). The program was implemented in September 2010.

The City of Ventura continues to work with stakeholders and businesses to refine the program. The City eliminated variable pricing (\$1.00 for first two hours and \$1.50 for every additional hour) because it was too complex and slowed down the payment process. The City also reduced revenue hours and has noticed a reduction in the average stay of vehicles (now at 1.04 hours). While the program is not generating the amount of revenue anticipated (50% to 55% of estimated revenue), it seems that there are now parking spaces available for patrons, a significant reduction in amount of cruising for parking, improvement in traffic flow on Main Street and a movement of employees into appropriate off-street spaces.

Lessons Learned

The biggest challenge is the complexity of implementation. Each situation is unique and requires an understanding of local conditions. It is also a time consuming process to build a partnership with the local stakeholders.

The importance of communication and messaging cannot be underestimated. It is critical to develop an approach and to use tools that cater to the user.

Technology is improving but still not at a level that creates a seamless easy-to-understand payment process. Adding features can slow down the process and create user frustration.

Involving stakeholders throughout the process is critical. The City of Ventura worked with community stakeholders in a seven year process to develop and implement the program.