

DATE: November 9, 2021

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: Community Development

TITLE: **Downtown Parking Strategy Adoption**

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the Downtown Parking Strategy.

BACKGROUND

Located on Castro Street between Central Expressway and El Camino Real, downtown Mountain View is a diverse and thriving commercial district with a variety of uses, offering multi-modal transportation and civic and cultural resources for the Mountain View community and Bay Area region. Today, downtown is home to approximately 225 businesses, with 389,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space and 1.46 million square feet of office space. Downtown's success and popularity also present challenges, notably parking at peak times. While a parking "problem" is often associated as a negative thing, it actually reflects strong demand and vitality of an area. As this Council report will outline, there are several tools identified in the Downtown Parking Strategy (Strategy) that are available to manage demand and supply of parking over the next 10 years.

Over the years, the City has taken various steps to facilitate the growing popularity of downtown and manage the demand for public parking through individual and separate short- and long-term solutions. These include parking permit programs, conducting parking counts to help inform utilization and occupancy status, a valet parking pilot program at Parking Lot 11, and the installation of real-time parking occupancy signs at the two public parking structures.

Established in 1979, the Downtown Parking Maintenance and Operations Assessment District (Parking District) provides the funding for these programs as well as ongoing maintenance and operations of the 11 public parking facilities (two parking garages and nine parking lots) in the Parking District (see Figure 1 for an overview of public parking).

In 2018, Council added the Downtown Paid Parking study to the Fiscal Year 2018-19 Work Plan to address and manage peak parking demand in downtown. The study, which was conducted by Dixon Resources, a parking management consultant, analyzed parking demand and recommended an Action Plan to manage parking, including implementation of a paid parking solution. The City Council reviewed the study and recommendations at a Study Session on March 19, 2019. Council supported the development of parking policies and programs that support downtown businesses and increase parking efficiency. However, while Council supported the concept of paid parking as a solution, Council wanted to take a more measured approach and study the implementation of parking technology as a first phase toward a strategic implementation of the program.

In 2019, staff recommended a coordinated Downtown Parking Strategy to create a comprehensive and coordinated strategy as a guiding document to manage current and future parking demand and provide direction for ongoing and future policies and projects. The Downtown Parking Strategy was, therefore, included in the work plan under Council Major Goals for Fiscal Years 2019-20 and 2020-21. In August 2020, the City hired Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc. (Nelson\Nygaard), a leading transportation planning firm with experience in developing comprehensive parking strategies, to develop the Downtown Parking Strategy.



Figure 1: Overview of Public Parking within the Downtown Parking District

May 11, 2021 City Council Study Session

The City Council provided direction on the Downtown Parking Strategy framework and options to address current and future parking demand in the downtown area. Council agreed with the proposed framework principles and solutions and the recommended multi-faceted approach to address the current and near-term public parking shortfall with the following comments:

- Expand the strategy area to the other side of Central Expressway into the Willowgate neighborhood area as there are different parking demands in different subneighborhoods.
- Explore parking management items that could be done sooner rather than later.
- Encourage alternative modes of transportation as effective utilization of current public and private parking supply is an issue. Also, the Strategy should identify how to require new parking conditions/requirements for buildings already built.
- Identify projects in the pipeline to help address parking in a creative way.
- Consider the following items: parking permit programs are needed as existing Transportation Demand Management programs are not strong enough; parking enforcement is important, but study how enforcement impacts communities of color; wayfinding and parking information for education and information is key; consider parking requirements within the context of small businesses; analyze lessons learned about paid parking in other jurisdictions; and focus on bike infrastructure.

The feedback from Council was used to develop the final Strategy which focuses on a phased approach, encouraging alternative modes of transit, creating a policy framework for development projects, and building equity into the framework.

Stakeholder Input

During the development of the Strategy in fall 2020, input was also collected from key stakeholders—the Downtown Committee, Downtown Business Association, Old Mountain View Neighborhood Association, and developers. The stakeholders spoke

about the following issues: parking utilization, management, and the impacts of COVID-19.

1. Parking Utilization: There is a perception that there is not enough parking in the downtown area and that the public needs assistance finding the underutilized public parking facilities. It is difficult communicating to drivers that Parking Garage 3 at California Street and Bryant Street “always has available spaces.” In addition, people who arrive early in the day – like office and retail employees – park in parking spaces close to their business all day. Then, people who need a parking space later in the day, such as dining and retail customers, struggle to find a space. Those “nine-to-five” employees should be directed to less convenient spaces further from the front doors of businesses.
2. Parking Management: Spillover is a persistent issue. Information and wayfinding are needed to instruct and educate visitors about where to park and what the restrictions are. Residents are frustrated by spillover on residential streets from office employees and believe the Residential Parking Permit Program is too complicated. When demand is high in the downtown area, retail and dining customers spill over into the surrounding residential neighborhood or Civic Center garage, which is meant for civic business and the Center for the Performing Arts.
3. COVID-19 Impacts: The pandemic continues to affect all aspects of parking in Mountain View. People are still working from home, and retail and restaurants are not being frequented. Businesses are not sure what the “next normal” will look like. In addition, changes on Castro Street have largely been well received but also eliminated some of the most conveniently located on-street parking, and any future changes to the street should include parking considerations.

All of these parking issues, stakeholder input, and parking utilization corroborate the findings in the analysis.

Strategy Goals

The Downtown Parking Strategy is based upon four primary goals (Figure 2) that were previously identified at a City Council Study Session on the Downtown Parking Strategy on October 15, 2019.



Figure 2: Downtown Parking Strategy Primary Goals

Methodology for Developing Parking Strategy

Nelson\Nygaard embarked upon developing the Downtown Parking Strategy through a comprehensive research and analysis approach (Figure 3). The foundational basis for the Strategy relies on parking count and utilization data, permit program usage statistics, and fee information. To address future parking needs, modeling of parking demand was done based upon future development projects and capacity. Nelson\Nygaard, in collaboration with City staff, engaged in outreach efforts to collect feedback from downtown stakeholders. Best practices programs were researched and provided a basis for similar parking solutions in Mountain View. Lastly, the Downtown Parking Strategy represents a comprehensive effort to develop a coordinated approach related to parking for a range of City activities, including:

- Downtown Precise Plan;
- Land development project review;
- Transportation and mobility infrastructure plans;
- Parking management, operations, administration, and enforcement;
- Sustainability initiatives, including encouraging the use of transit, walking, and biking; and
- Residential parking permit program, and others.

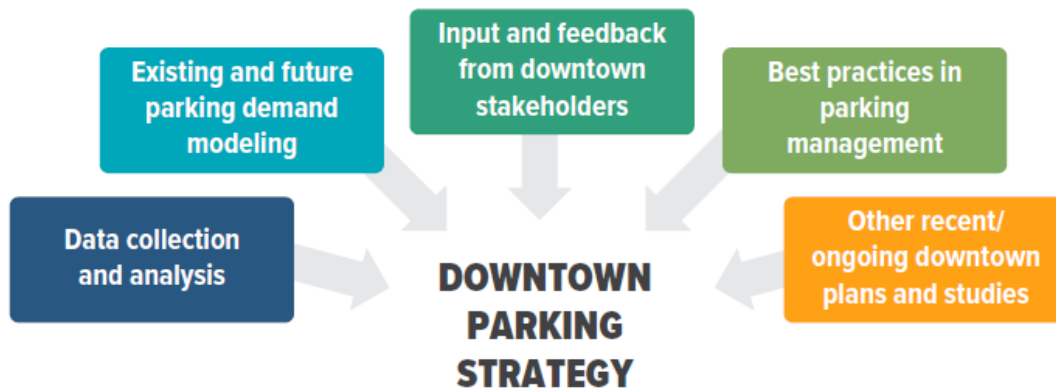


Figure 3: Approach to Parking Strategy

Study Area

The study area for the Downtown Parking Strategy includes the greater downtown area bounded by Shoreline Boulevard, Central Expressway, Calderon Avenue, and El Camino Real (Figure 4). The Parking Strategy seeks to address parking challenges in the busiest part of downtown along Castro Street and within the Downtown Precise Plan and Parking District. However, the Strategy also recognizes that parking dynamics are not confined to lines on a map – addressing downtown’s parking challenges requires a full-picture approach that includes the entire study area.



Figure 4: Study Area

ANALYSIS

The Strategy: (1) summarizes existing conditions, stakeholder feedback, and key findings; (2) includes the Strategy Toolkit, a comprehensive set of recommended policies, programs tools, and investment for the downtown; and (3) develops an Implementation

Roadmap for the City to advance the strategies in a coordinated, phased, and feasible manner. The following discussion highlights key elements of each of these three elements.

Summary of Findings

After a review of parking utilization statistics, parking permit data, parking requirements outlined in the Downtown Precise Plan, and stakeholder feedback, the following findings were identified:

- Almost all the public parking in downtown is free of charge.
- The most convenient on-street spaces are almost always full, and public parking in most parts of the Parking District is over capacity at key times.
- Despite time limits, some vehicles remain parking in prime spaces for long periods of time.
- Parking demand is unevenly distributed within downtown (see Figure 5).
- At peak times, parking demand in the near term may exceed supply in some parts of downtown.
- About half of the parking in downtown is restricted for private use (see Figure 6).
- Parking requirements are high compared with other communities and industry best practices.
- There are limited “as of right” alternatives to parking requirements for developers.
- Downtown parking permit sales, which are used primarily by office employees, have been growing steadily.
- Some parking supply could be “created” by improving management of existing spaces and improving access to existing spaces.

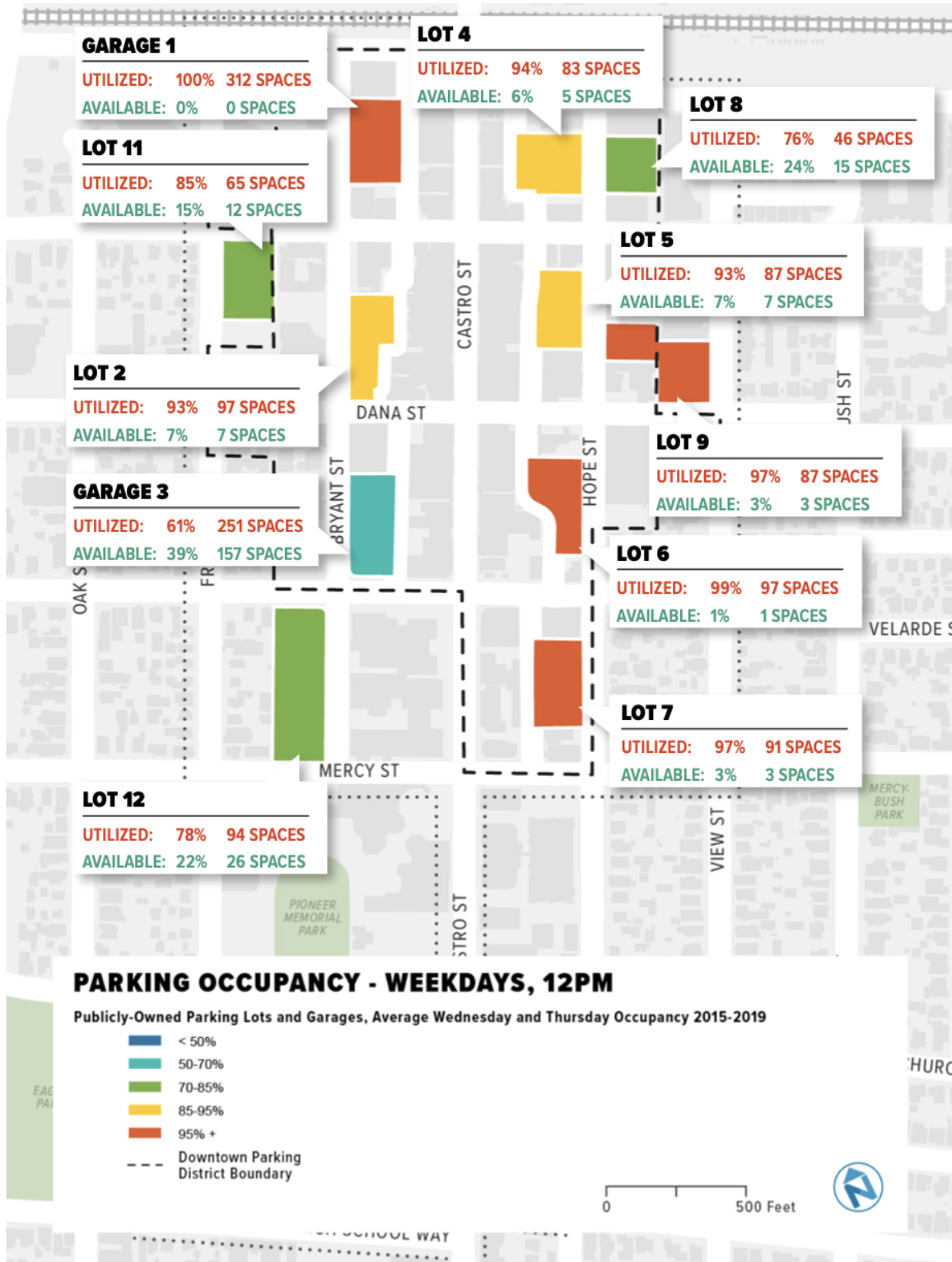


Figure 5: Public Parking Utilization – Weekday at 12:00 Noon

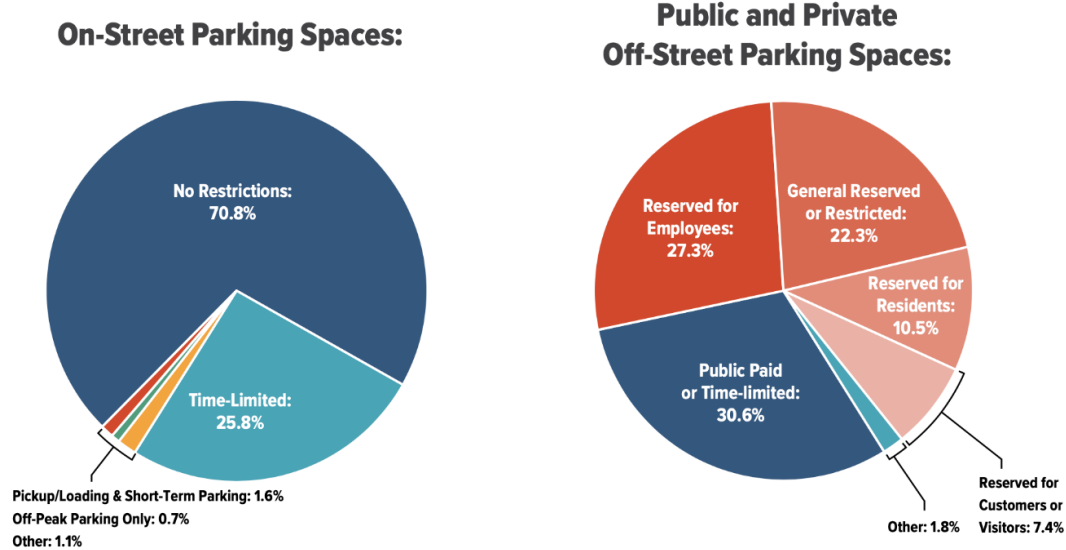


Figure 6: Percentage of Available On- and Off-Street Parking

Guiding Principles

Based on the parking demand analysis, and stakeholder outreach, the following key principles are identified to guide development of policies and programs and the deployment of Strategy Toolkit:

1. A comprehensive package of strategies and solutions is needed to address the full range of parking demands. These solutions need not be implemented all at once. Strategic phasing can help support recovery from COVID-19 in the near term and guide growth and development in the long term. Parking strategies should address the challenges facing downtown today while also providing a flexible framework that supports the needs of downtown tomorrow.
2. There is a shared vision to support a vibrant, thriving downtown. The Downtown Parking Strategy should support and align the needs and priorities of the downtown community, including residents, business owners, employees, and developers. Parking management strategies can play a role in helping local businesses build resiliency.
3. Parking and driving come at a cost to the community. The overall package of strategies should equitably balance public costs and benefits to meet the needs of everyone who lives, works, and visits downtown. The price of parking and other transportation options should reflect the goals and priorities of the community.

4. Parking strategies should be aligned with sustainability goals and should help make Mountain View a more environmentally resilient community. The strategy toolkit will play an important role in not just managing parking supply but also encouraging alternative modes of travel, including walking and biking.
5. Managing the existing public parking supply is the best way to support parking demands in the downtown core. Downtown continues to have available public parking, and the strategy should support operationally resilient parking solutions.
6. Parking strategies and solutions will need to be flexible and broad. Parking management is a “living” process with consistent data and monitoring essential components of success. Parking policies and programs must be adjusted based on results. Market flexibility and a well-calibrated City Code can work together to help right-size the amount of parking that is built in downtown.

Strategy Toolkit

The Downtown Parking Strategy identifies four strategy types, with a range of potential solutions in each of four interrelated categories:

1. Parking Management Solutions: Strategies that support more efficient use of existing and future parking supply. Management strategies will include parking regulations (such as time limits, permits, and paid parking), management structures (such as the Downtown Parking District), and supporting programs (such as valet parking service).
2. Parking Supply Solutions: Strategies that provide a framework for creating new public parking supply in downtown. Supply strategies will address shared parking opportunities, parking requirements in the City Code, and partnerships with private developers for funding and constructing new, publicly accessible parking.
3. Access and Mobility: Strategies that help inform choice or change driving behavior support both efficiency in finding parking as well as address demand. Solutions like multi-modal incentive options, informational and communication campaigns around alternative transportation options, and improved technology deployment that assists with wayfinding for available parking.
4. Zoning and Regulations: Strategies to manage parking demand by supporting and incentivizing alternatives to driving. Strategies for supporting balanced transportation options will include a TDM ordinance and changes to parking standards.

Incorporated within the four strategy types are 18 strategies to address the downtown parking needs. Within each individual strategy, a set of implementation actions is recommended. A complete breakdown of each strategy and associated implementation actions is in the Toolkit Strategy Section of the Downtown Parking Strategy (Attachment 1).

The 18 strategies are identified by strategy type and the associated goals each strategy is focused on achieving.

Management

Strategy Number	Strategy	Goal
M1	Create a parking administrator position and transition services to a staffed parking division.	Expand City capacity, resources, and skill sets to implement a coordinated and comprehensive parking management program.
M2	Revise the Downtown Parking Permit Program and provide an “affordable” permit option.	Redesign the permit program to ensure efficient use of public parking supply and better serve the needs of all downtown users.
M3	Implement demand-based pricing to support downtown parking management and mobility investments.	As parking demand returns to prepandemic levels, implement demand-based pricing to manage public parking in high-demand areas.
M4	Create a Downtown Parking Benefit Districts (PBD). Evaluate criteria of a parking enterprise fund.	Form a PBD and reinvest net parking revenue back into downtown. Evaluate the creation of an enterprise fund for parking to consolidate all financial, accounting, and business practices for parking under one umbrella.
M5	Expand Mountain View Transportation Association (MTMA) operations to downtown.	Leverage the existing MTMA to support downtown TDM program implementation.
M6	Revise and modernize the Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program.	Update the RPP program to help mitigate parking spillover and ensure efficient use of public streets and parking spaces.
M7	Enhance and expand the valet program.	Expand valet access to more parking facilities and reorient the valet program to allow for remote pick-up/drop-off.

Strategy Number	Strategy	Goal
M8	Improve parking enforcement, data collection, and communication.	Define customer-friendly enforcement practices and provide consistent enforcement. Begin shifting enforcement duties to a municipal parking division or a third-party contractor.
M9	Develop and implement a flexible curb management strategy for “core” blocks.	Create a flexible framework for managing high-demand curb spaces on Castro Street and adjacent blocks.

Supply

Strategy Number	Strategy	Goal
S1	Explore and pursue public-private partnerships to create new public parking supply.	Define City priorities and guidelines to support the creation of public-private parking partnerships.
S2	Create additional public access to existing off-street private parking.	Expand public availability and utilization of existing private off-street parking through strategic shared parking agreements and enhanced marketing.

Access and Mobility

Strategy Number	Strategy	Goal
A1	Offer multi-modal incentives for employees, residents, and customers.	Offer a formal package of passes, discounts, and other incentives to reduce parking demand and encourage more people to walk, bike, or use transit.
A2	Implement a marketing and communications campaign.	Develop a unified parking brand for City parking programs and facilities. Roll out a diverse marketing and communications campaign as people return to downtown and new management programs are implemented.
A3	Implement an integrated parking wayfinding strategy.	Create on-the-ground and digital wayfinding tools to help drivers find and utilize available parking spaces.

Zoning and Regulation

Strategy Number	Strategy	Goal
Z1	Adopt a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) ordinance.	Reduce downtown parking demand and enhance travel options by requiring and incentivizing new developments to invest in TDM.
Z2	Adopt new bicycle parking requirements.	Update bicycle parking requirements so that new developments provide adequate bicycle parking for short-term visitor trips and long-term commuter trips.
Z3	Update Precise Plan parking standards.	Right-size downtown’s off-street parking requirements to support development flexibility, minimize parking demand, create shared parking, and prioritize growth that aligns with City goals and vision.
Z4	Update the Parking District boundary and fee.	Modify the Parking District to support more comprehensive parking management.

Financial Program for Implementation

With 18 strategies and 82 implementation action items associated with the Downtown Parking Strategy, there are both costs and offsetting revenues. Nelson\Nygaard has estimated revenue and costs associated with implementing the 82 action items. It is important to emphasize that the financial program is not a formal budget, but rather a modeling exercise based on the implementation action items and the best available data to:

- Ensure that strategies recommended are realistic and within a feasible range of estimates; and
- Provide a basis for allocating and prioritizing potential net parking revenue.

Figure 7 breaks down revenues and costs. High-level financial impact findings include:

- The recommended package of strategies are expected to be revenue-positive at full implementation. This includes paid parking revenue, permit revenue, strategy capital costs, program operating costs, leasing costs for shared parking agreements, staff salaries/benefits, and expanded enforcement.
 - Projections include existing/ongoing costs and expenses per analysis of the 2016-19 parking budget.
 - Projections do not include the capital cost of a new parking structure.
- The cost of some of the recommended programs (such as the multi-modal mobility wallet or the valet program) could be adjusted as needed based on available funding.
- The only year that is projected to have a net revenue shortfall is the year in which paid parking is implemented. It is projected that the cost of this capital investment would be recouped after one year.

Summary: Estimated Costs and Revenues

Costs and Revenues		Near-Term (1-3 years)	Medium-Term (4-5 years)	Long-Term (6+ years)
Annual Gross Revenue	Proposed Strategies	\$1,354,000	\$1,437,000	\$4,750,000
	Existing Sources	\$1,383,000	\$1,467,000	\$1,701,000
Annual Costs	Proposed Strategies	\$(1,302,000)	\$(2,019,000)	\$(4,059,000)
	Existing Sources	\$(518,000)	\$(550,000)	\$(638,000)
Total Annual Net Revenue		\$917,000	\$335,000	\$1,754,000

Figure 7: Revenues and Costs Summary

Next Steps

As identified in the Downtown Parking Strategy, there are 18 strategies broken down into four areas: Management, Supply, Access and Mobility, and Zoning and Regulation. Due to the tiering effect of the strategies (those strategies that rely on other strategies), some strategies will take additional time and financial resources to implement and deploy. Strategies were also reviewed against the desire to support businesses through the

recovery of COVID-19. However, there are a few near-term strategies that have been prioritized as they lay the foundation for other strategies and are less resource-intensive to implement. As part of an implementation plan, staff will need to further refine a scope of work associated with wayfinding, communications, and technology deployment for further consideration by Council after adoption of the Downtown Parking Strategy.

FISCAL IMPACT

As noted earlier, the Downtown Parking Maintenance and Operations Assessment District (Parking District) provides the funding for these programs as well as ongoing maintenance and operations of the 11 public parking facilities in the Parking District. Staff is not requesting any funding with the adoption of the Strategy. However, as part of the next steps, staff will return to Council with a phasing, funding, and implementation plan with a focus on moving forward with the near-term strategies.

CONCLUSION

As proposed, the Downtown Parking Strategy provides a 10-year horizon and implementation plan with the specific vision to manage parking demand and supply as the needs of the downtown area evolve. There is not one solution to the problem that can be implemented – the complex and multi-faceted parking challenges are a result of a vibrant, thriving, and mixed-use downtown. The strategies outlined will need to be tested, monitored, evaluated, and recalibrated as they are implemented over time to ensure balance between parking demand and supply across the whole of downtown.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct staff to revise the near-term strategies identified in the Downtown Parking Strategy.
2. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

The meeting agenda and Council report were posted on the City's website.

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- Attachments:
1. Downtown Parking Strategy – Public Draft
 2. May 11, 2021 Study Session Memorandum
 3. Downtown Parking Strategy – Fact Sheets
 4. October 15, 2019 Study Session Memorandum