



DOWNTOWN BOISE

Parking Strategic Plan

Appendix K-2

20 Characteristics of Effective
Parking Programs –
A White Paper

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Expect More. Experience Better.



“Best in Class” Parking Operations

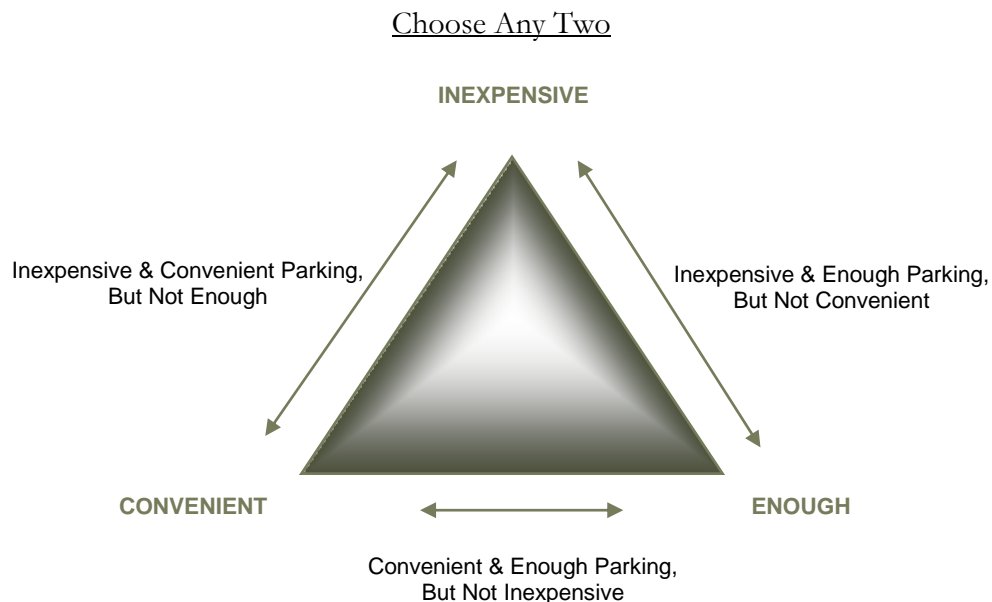
Introduction

Parking is an essential element of a downtown’s infrastructure and, when well managed, it can contribute greatly to efforts to develop and sustain healthy and vibrant downtowns. Convenient, safe, clean and affordable parking is critical to attracting and retaining retailers, restaurants, office buildings/tenants and all other types of development. In this essay, we will explore the characteristics of “Best in Class” parking operations and how they can contribute to the success of your downtown and the skill sets needed by parking professionals whose job it is to “tame the parking beast”.

Parking 101 - Choose Any Two

As the Director of Studies and Operations Consulting for Carl Walker, Inc., I have had the opportunity evaluate dozens of municipal parking operations in great depth. There is one element common to every study and every downtown -parking is always a source of frustration and contention. It is amazing how emotional an issue parking can be. I believe this is because it affects people so directly. Think about it – how many other areas involve issues of personal safety/security, finance, convenience, wayfinding, accessibility and customer service? Because parking creates the first and last impression of your downtown, one question we will address is: How can that “parking experience” best be managed? We’ll get back to that question.

An interesting truism about parking is illustrated in the graphic below.



Everyone wants three things when it comes to parking: 1.) They want there to be plenty of it 2.) They want it to be very convenient and 3.) They want it to be inexpensive (and preferably free).

Unfortunately, you can have any two, but not all three. This ushers in the need for a policy decision.

- If you choose to have inexpensive and convenient parking you will likely not have enough. This option may be acceptable if you want to use the lack of spaces as part of a demand management strategy to encourage the use of transportation alternatives.
- If you choose to have inexpensive and enough parking it will not be very convenient. With this choice you may be adopting a strategy that utilizes less expensive remote parking supported with shuttle operations.
- If you choose to have convenient and enough parking, it will not be cheap. This often preferred approach typically means you have chosen to develop structured parking. The average cost to construct a surface lot parking ranges from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per space. Above grade parking structures average between \$8,000 - \$12,000 per space. Below grade parking can range between 1.5 to 2 times the cost of above grade structures. Another consideration that is often overlooked, is that operating, utility, maintenance and security costs are significantly higher with structured parking.

In downtown environments the choice is most often made to have “convenient and enough” parking. This strategic decision and the significant capital investment it requires, creates the need to assure that these investments are well managed and responsive to the communities they serve.

Characteristics of Effective Parking Programs

Based on evaluating numerous parking systems of various sizes and complexity, I have identified a set of twenty characteristics, that when combined into an integrated programmatic approach can provide the basis for a sound and well managed parking system. The twenty characteristics include:

1. Clear Vision and Mission
2. Parking Philosophy
3. Strong Planning
4. Community Involvement
5. Organization
6. Staff Development
7. Safety, Security and Risk Management
8. Effective Communications
9. Consolidated Parking Programs
10. Strong Financial Planning
11. Creative, Flexible and Accountable Parking Management
12. Operational Efficiency
13. Comprehensive Facilities Maintenance Programs
14. Effective Use of Technology
15. Parking System Marketing and Promotion
16. Positive Customer Service Programs
17. Special Events Parking Programs
18. Effective Enforcement

19. Parking and Transportation Demand Management
20. Awareness of Competitive Environment

A parking system that has all twenty of these characteristics is well on its way to being in a class apart from the majority of parking systems. The ultimate goals are a system that provides professional management, understands the role it plays in contributing to the larger objectives of the downtown and is responsive to the community to which it serves.

In the following sections we will briefly explore each of these characteristics. This is not intended to be an exhaustive review of each area, but rather just enough of a treatment to give the reader an idea of the how each characteristic contributes to an effective parking system.

Characteristic # 1 Clear Vision and Mission

Truly effective parking systems have a clear vision and well-defined mission for the parking system. The development or periodic reassessment of the parking system vision/mission statements should be undertaken as an open and inclusive process involving a wide range of downtown stakeholders. Typically, it is recommended that the following groups be included in the public input process:

- City Officials (including elected officials, planning staff, transit agencies, etc.)
- Downtown Development Agencies
- Downtown Business Associations
- Downtown Property Owners
- Downtown Merchants
- Downtown Employees

The development of a parking system's vision and mission statements should have one overriding goal; to see that the parking system's purpose and direction are tied to and supportive of the larger community's strategic development plan. There are a variety of ways that parking can support the health, vitality and development of a downtown. Having a professionally managed parking program that presents clean, safe, attractive and well-maintained facilities is perhaps the most visible dimension. Other attributes include providing an adequate supply of parking overall and the appropriate allocation and management of those resources to best support the various businesses that depend on these resources for their success. Successfully meeting these goals promotes downtown business retention and attraction.

The parking system administrator should play a key role in providing educational support to community leaders about the importance of parking and the role(s) parking can play (and cannot play) in meeting community objectives. Staying abreast of the latest technological developments related to parking systems can broaden the options available to improve parking system management effectiveness and efficiency. Common problems for downtowns, such as promoting turnover of short-term on-street spaces without being perceived as "unfriendly or heavy-handed", or providing more convenient customer payment options are good examples. The use of new technology to support the mission and vision can have a profound impact on the perception of the parking system and how it contributes to achieving the goals of the downtown it serves.

In effective systems, Parking’s financial responsibilities are well defined and understood. This is a critical component of the vision/mission, as it directly impacts the perception of whether the parking system is meeting its financial obligations and expectations. Part of this important discussion relates to whether the parking system is expected to be subsidized by the City’s General Fund, or other revenue sources such as Tax Increment Financing, contributions from Business Improvement Districts, Special Assessment Districts, etc. or whether parking is expected to cover its own operating and maintenance costs, but not debt service. Or, is parking expected to cover all costs and generate additional revenue. Which of these options is feasible for your community depends on a number of variables.

Characteristic # 2

Parking Philosophy

A succinct statement or statements reflecting your philosophical approach to parking can provide valuable tools for communicating to your patrons, stakeholders and staff. Some examples of “parking philosophy” are noted below along with a brief commentary.

a. Parking Isn’t About Cars . . . It’s About People

This statement reflects an understanding that parking is not simply the act of temporarily storing cars, but it is in fact more about addressing “people” needs at the transition from the vehicular to the pedestrian experience. Under this philosophy, issues such as facility cleanliness, safety, lighting, wayfinding and customer service move to the forefront. Functional design elements that directly impact user comfort such as stall widths, turn radii, walking distances, etc. also take on special importance.

b. People Don’t Come Downtown To Park

This concept reinforces the reality that parking, while an important support function and critical infrastructure element, is not the reason people visit your downtown. For the downtown to be successful there must be good restaurants, interesting retail and other special attractions. Even the best run parking system with well designed facilities will not “attract” people to come downtown, however, poorly run operations or dysfunctional facilities can definitely be excuses for people NOT to come downtown. The fundamental principle behind this philosophy is three-fold: 1.) The role of parking is to support other downtown activities. 2.) Eliminate parking as a “reason not to come downtown” and 3.) Recognize what parking is not, i.e., an attraction.

c. Parking Should Be A Positive Experience

For years Carl Walker, Inc. has had a slogan: “Parking should be a non-event”. This notion has undergone a qualitative evolution to make parking not just a “non-event”, but actually a “positive experience”. In their book “The Experience Economy”, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore address the concept that, especially in America, what customers are actually purchasing are “positive experiences”. One expression of this transition can be seen in the healthcare arena. Have you noticed that the lobbies of newer health care facilities have taken on the feel of grand hotel lobbies? At the hospital where I used to work, we extended the look and feel of the new bed tower lobby (marble, glass, air conditioning, etc.) into the parking structure elevator lobbies to extend that welcoming experience out into the parking environment. Similarly, the more extensive customer service training provided for hospital reception desk staff was also required for parking attendant and valet parking staff.

d. Parking Is The First And Last Experience

Building on the concept above is an appreciation of the fact that most of our customer’s first and last impressions of any venue really begins and ends with their parking experience. You might enjoy the best meal followed by a fabulous evening of entertainment, while downtown, but if you have to circle and circle to find a parking space or are accosted walking from your car to your destination, this will taint your whole experience. Follow this up by an encounter with a surly, gum-chewing attendant upon exiting the parking facility and guess what you will be talking about the next day (It probably won’t be the delicious meal you had at Gino’s.)

e. Parking Should Be Friendly, Not Free.

There is no such thing as “free parking”. One of the ongoing challenges that downtown’s face when it comes to parking is cost. Because of land values, densities and walking distance issues, parking structures are here to stay in the downtown environment and with them is the need to charge for parking in one form or fashion. The perception that parking at the mall is “free” doesn’t help (even though it is not true). Even if you promote “free parking” as a marketing concept, someone is paying for that parking. Either through increased taxes or an increased cost of goods or services, the cost of providing parking is still there. This philosophy recognizes this reality and focuses instead on providing a friendly, well managed parking experience.

f. Parking Is A Component Of The Larger Transportation System.

It is surprising how often parking gets divorced in people’s minds from being a component of the larger transportation system. Structured parking, because of its cost, is often the reason that development projects “don’t pencil” to use developer lingo. By considering parking in the larger context of a broad range of transit and transportation alternatives, demand management strategies (including shared parking

policies) can be developed that help reduce the amount of parking required, especially in urban areas where good bus transit, light rail, taxi service and increasingly in-town residential developments can be found. Developing programs that integrate complementary parking and transportation strategies is a hallmark of this philosophy.

Characteristic # 3 **Strong Planning**

One consistent characteristic of well-managed and forward thinking parking programs is strong planning. The first step in developing a well-managed parking planning function is to have a solid understanding of existing parking resources. Documenting the basics is fundamental. Below are some basic planning tenants that should be considered:

- Parking inventory is complete and up-to-date (includes both public and private parking).
- Parking inventories are sub-divided by type and use of space.
- Parking utilization, by type of spaces is known and trends tracked.
- Changes in supply are documented.
- Changes in utilization are tracked and understood.
- Periodic Parking Supply-Demand Studies are completed.
- Quality parking maps are available and up-to-date.

One of the key planning tools that parking departments often overlook or don't understand is land-use data. Successful parking systems develop relationships with city or regional planning agencies so that valuable land-use data, information on proposed developments, downtown planning maps, etc. can be obtained and used in crafting parking planning strategies. When reviewing a strategic parking plan I look for the following items:

- Is land use data readily available and up-to-date?
- Is historical parking development well documented?
- Is planning for the next parking development “on-the-drawing board”?
- Is Parking represented and participating in other types of community studies e.g., downtown strategic plans, marketing studies, retail studies, economic development studies, transportation studies, traffic studies, etc.?
- Have strategically located potential parking development sites been identified?
- Are future parking development sites “land banked”?
- Are potential sites assembled to achieve an adequate footprint size to develop efficient parking structures (300-325 sq. ft. per stall)?
- Have parking lot and structure design guidelines been developed?

Characteristic # 4 **Community Involvement**

One common problem I often find with struggling parking programs is that they are operated only to satisfy a narrowly defined set of internal objectives (typically focused on revenue generation). Successful parking programs understand that their larger purpose is to support the downtown and the businesses that create and sustain downtown vitality. Parking systems should

develop close and cooperative working relationships with other community groups such as economic development agencies and downtown business associations.

This does not mean that the parking system exists simply as a tool to be manipulated by these organizations. The parking operation has its own goals and objectives. For example, if the parking system is operating under a mandate to be self-supporting, it may not be able to subsidize a downtown validation program, even though the local downtown business associations might desire this. However, acting as partners, a mutually beneficial solution can be devised to meet the overall objectives of both organizations whereby costs are shared or alternative funding sources are obtained.

Another significant area of potential partnership is downtown and parking system marketing. In the many successful downtowns, Parking co-sponsors or shares in downtown marketing and promotional initiatives. The Downtown Business Association, the Chamber of Commerce and other groups promoting the downtown should include parking information in their publications and parking publications should promote the current programs of the other agencies. This cooperative relationship creates an impression of a well managed downtown and positively advances the image of the downtown.

Successful parking operations actively solicit public input from a variety of sources including: promotion of public forums, use of parking task force groups, development of a group of “parking advisors” – people who have demonstrated an interest in parking issues (sometimes characterized as “complainers”) and who are recruited to provide input on an occasional basis. The key to success is to listen to the concerns of your customers, act promptly to resolve the issues (or engage and educate them on the “real issues”) and then follow-up to make sure their issue has been satisfactorily resolved. By doing this, you short-circuit that stream of negativity, which too often circulates among downtown customer groups, and you can begin to build a network of parking system supporters.

Characteristic # 5 Organization

Whether a City department, a quasi-independent parking authority, an arm of an urban renewal agency or the responsibility of a Downtown Business Association, an important question is whether the parking organization is structured and staffed to best achieve it’s stated goals?

Some basic questions to ask related to the issue of organizational structure include:

- Are all parking operations to be managed through a centralized operation or can other departments or agencies get involved in limited parking operations?
- Is parking to be managed in-house?
- Should certain functions be out-sourced?
- Are there advantages to a hybrid approach?
- Does the current organization / staffing plan provide the right mix of skills, talents and abilities?
- Is staffing as efficient as possible? Are there tools in place to evaluate staffing adequacy? Efficiency? Program effectiveness?

When evaluating which organizational option is most appropriate for your particular downtown, consider the following criteria to evaluate the relative advantages and disadvantages of each model.

- Best supports economic development
- Is most efficient
- Is the most customer-friendly
- Is most politically feasible
- Is most focused on the vision
- Is easiest to achieve
- Is most responsive to business and stakeholders
- Is most financially viable
- Provides the most effective coordination

Another component of the evaluation process is to identify the program elements for which the parking system will be responsible. The table below provides a list of potential program elements.

Possible Scope of Operations	
Overall Leadership and Management	ADA Compliance
Program Definition and Development	Parking Facility Maintenance Programs
Parking System Revenue Control and Accounting	Develop Consolidated Financial Reporting System
Manage Parking Facilities	Special Events Parking Management
Contract Management	Parking Resource Allocation
Marketing/Promotion/Information	Rate Setting
Parking Planning and Coordination	Residential Parking Permit Programs
Parking Facility Development and Construction	Special Program Development
Community Outreach & Education	Service and Information Center (Parking Hotline)
Equipment and Technology Specifications	Wayfinding and Signage
Equipment and Technology Maintenance	Customer Service Programs
Parking Enforcement	Validation Programs
On-Street Parking Management	Valet Parking Programs
Meter Collections and Maintenance	Parking and Transportation Demand Management
Employee Parking	Facility Safety / Security / Risk Management

Characteristic # 6 Staff Development

Another interesting thing about parking is that, unlike property management, public administration, etc., there are no formal educational programs for parking management. You cannot go out and hire someone from the latest crop of college parking graduates. However, this is beginning to change. The International Parking Institute (IPI) has a highly regarded and reputable educational/certification program called the Certified Public Parking Administrator (CAPP) program that is administered by the University of Virginia. The National Parking Association offers the Certified Parking Facility Manager (CPFMM) certification program. For the most part, parking professionals still are learning as they go and bringing with them numerous skills and perspectives imported from a variety of previous work experiences.

One characteristic of the most successful parking programs is recognition of the unique knowledge, complexity and broad skill sets required to be successful in parking. These programs invest in the parking specific training and educational opportunities to develop their staff into parking professionals. The following is a list of options to consider to actively promote parking staff development within your parking operation:

- Support participation in the International Parking Institute and National Parking Association’s certification programs.
- Support participation in local, state, regional and national parking associations to create networking and peer-to-peer communications. These associations also provide the best access to parking specific training opportunities for various staff levels from front-line to administrative.
- A recommended best practice is to have an “Operational Peer Review” performed on your operation. An “Operational Peer Review” involves having a representative from a similar municipal program visit and critique your downtown

parking program with a “fresh set of eyes”. Typically this service is reciprocated. This is generally a low cost initiative that can be set up directly or through the national, regional or local parking association and is an effective way to gain and share parking knowledge.

- Build a parking resource library – The following is a basic bibliography of good parking texts that can increase your staff’s knowledge of the parking industry:
 - i. Parking 101, A Parking Primer – International Parking Institute Fredericksburg, VA, 2002
 - ii. Parking - Robert A. Weant and Herbert S. Levinson, Copyright - Eno Foundation for Transportation, Washington, DC, 1990
 - iii. Parking Structures, Planning Design, Construction, Maintenance and Repair – Anthony Chrest, Mary S. Smith, Sam Bhuyan, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Third Edition, Boston, MA, 2001
 - iv. The Dimensions of Parking - Various Authors, Copyright – The Urban Land Institute and National Parking Association, Fourth Edition, Washington, DC, 2000
 - v. Parking Generation – Institute of Transportation Engineers, ITE Publ. No. IR-034A, 2nd Edition, Washington, DC, 1987
 - vi. Shared Parking – Study coordinated by the ULI in association with Barton-Aschman Assoc., Inc, Copyright – The Urban Land Institute, Washington, DC, 1983 (Currently being updated)
 - vii. Lighting for Parking Facilities – Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) Publ. No. RP-20-98, 2nd Edition, New York, NY, 1998

Characteristic # 7

Safety, Security and Risk Management

The importance of providing a safe environment in your parking facilities cannot be over estimated. The actual and perceived security within your facilities impacts the success, not only of the parking operation, but also the businesses supported by those facilities.

Planning for security in your parking facilities should begin during the design of new facilities. If you are inheriting existing facilities, a security audit of all facilities is highly recommended.

The concept of “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” (CPTED) provides useful tenets for architects, facility planners, designers, and law enforcement/security and parking professionals. Utilizing CPTED concepts helps create a climate of safety in a parking facility, on a campus or throughout a downtown, by designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior. These concepts can also be used to retrofit environments to address specific security issues as they develop or to address emerging concerns as conditions change.

CPTED builds on four key strategies: territoriality, natural surveillance, activity support, and access control.

- Territoriality: People protect territory that they feel is their own and have a certain respect for the territory of others. Fences, pavement treatments, art, signs, good maintenance, and landscaping are some physical ways to express ownership. Identifying intruders is much easier in a well-defined space.
- Natural Surveillance: Criminals don't want to be seen. Placing physical features, activities, and people in ways that maximize the ability to see what's going on discourages crime. Barriers, such as low ceilings, solid walls, or shadows, make it difficult to observe activity. Landscaping and lighting can be planned to promote natural surveillance from inside a building and from the outside by neighbors or people passing by. Maximizing the natural surveillance capability of such "gatekeepers" as parking lot attendants, maintenance personnel, etc. is also important.
- Activity support: Encouraging legitimate activity in public spaces helps discourage crime.
- Access control: Properly located entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, and lighting can direct both foot and automobile traffic in ways that discourage crime.

These principles can be blended in the planning or remodeling of parking facilities and other public areas. In parking environments, the following specific strategies are recommended:

- Incorporate the following features into the design of new parking facilities:
 - Higher floor-to-floor heights to improve openness.
 - Glass backed elevators and glass enclosed or open elevator lobbies.
 - Glass enclosed stairwells, perhaps open to the interior.
 - "Blue Light" security phones.
 - Security screening on the ground level.
 - Limit access at the parking facility perimeter to locations where patrons pass by the office or cashier booths.
 - Eliminate potential hiding places (for example under stairs, within storage areas, etc.)
 - Maintain low level landscaping.
- Insure that all your facilities are well lighted and meet or exceed the recommended minimums for parking facility lighting as established by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA). Develop facility lighting standards. Provide consistent lighting levels in all facilities.
- Integrate security offices, parking offices, retail shops, etc. into parking facilities to provide increased activity levels.
- Consider CCTV, alarms, motion detectors and security patrols.
- Integrate parking attendants, cleaning and maintenance staff, shuttle drivers, etc. into your parking security program.
- Incorporate safety and risk management issues into a weekly facility walk-through checklist.

Characteristic # 8

Effective Communications

Best in Class parking operations actively engage other community groups to help define how the parking system can best support the objectives of the businesses and the community at large that depend on a "parking system that works". As an outside consultant coming into a downtown to

evaluate some aspect of a downtown parking program, it is not uncommon to find the parking system at odds with the downtown association. Although there may be as many reasons for this “disconnect” as there are personalities involved, there appears to be at least two primary underlying reasons:

- Downtown associations are driven by efforts to revitalize downtown areas and see parking costs as one element that places them at a competitive disadvantage (compared to the perception of “free parking” at the malls/suburbs). At the same time parking system managers are being pushed, usually by municipal governments, to generate revenues. The bottom line is they lack a shared vision and therefore are pulling in opposite directions.
- The second major issue typically has to do with service level expectations. Downtown associations tend to have higher expectations in the areas of customer service, facility cleanliness, security, etc. It is not that the parking system administrators do not value these same qualities, but there is a cost associated with providing these programs and limited budgets to support them. The irony is that revenues are often reduced by not providing these higher levels of service.

The first step towards resolving this problem is improved communications and the definition of a shared vision/mission. A clear understanding of the issues and potential solutions is the kick-off point for developing the needed mutually beneficial approach. Developing a set of “Guiding Principles” for the parking system is good starting point for crafting a successful collaborative relationship.

Successful programs also have well-defined relationships between various departments, especially other support departments such as: Maintenance, Enforcement, Security/Police, Communications, Facilities Management, Planning, etc.

Finally, successful parking programs are in touch with their customers and actively solicit input through meetings with major downtown employers, customer surveys, websites, parking “hot-lines” and public forums.

Characteristic # 9 Consolidated Parking Programs

Taking a systems approach to parking is an important dimension to creating a comprehensive and effective parking program. Having control of all or most aspects of parking can contribute to a more effective operation, because of the interactive nature of parking as a system.

For example – having control of off-street, but not on-street parking can lead to problems if the rates for the various types of parking are not kept in the proper balance or relationship. Or, not having control over parking enforcement practices can hamper efforts to promote or improve turnover to support downtown retail or to support special downtown events.

Ideally, the parking system should control off-street, on-street and parking enforcement operations. All parking related revenues should first go to fund parking programs, including preventative maintenance, maintenance reserves, parking system/downtown marketing, planning and new parking resource development. If additional revenues, in excess of operational needs are

available, they should be banked as reserve funds for future parking development projects or returned to the general fund for discretionary spending.

Characteristic # 10 **Strong Financial Planning**

The Parking System's financial expectations should be well-defined and understood. For example, is the parking system expected to be:

- A self-supporting entity?
- A profit/revenue center?
- A support service sustained by other primary revenue sources?

With the exception of airports, some university systems and some very large municipalities, parking programs are rarely capable of being totally self supporting. Many factors including market rates for parking, parking mix (percentage of transient vs. monthly parkers), availability of on-street parking revenues, availability of parking enforcement revenues, politics, economic development policies, etc. have an impact on whether parking can be self-supporting. For systems that cannot achieve true financial self sufficiency, a common goal is for the parking system to cover all operational costs, but not debt service costs. Debt service costs are typically subsidized by the general fund, tax increment financing revenues, in-lieu parking fees, or other sources.

An important principal in developing a successful parking program is that parking system revenues should be tied to the larger vision and mission of the downtown it is intended to serve. Development of a downtown strategic plan which incorporates not only market and land-use strategies, but also critical support infrastructure such as parking, transit, pedestrian access, freight mobility, loading and unloading, etc. is an excellent means for defining the relationships of all these components and establishing clear goals and direction. Once the vision and mission have been set, investigation of other possible sources of parking revenues may be desired. Alternative parking revenue sources might include:

- On-street pay parking (if that does not already exist)
- Parking Enforcement
- Tax Increment Financing Districts
- In-lieu-of Parking fees
- Special Parking Assessment Districts
- Etc.

Other important financial planning elements that are recommended for all parking systems include:

- Having a consolidated parking financial statement that tracks all sources of parking revenues and expenses.
- Parking's revenues and expenses are well managed and its books are regularly audited.
- Annual operating statements are published in an annual report and available for public review. (For an excellent example of this, check out the annual parking report posted on-

- line by the Calgary Parking Authority. A simple Internet search for Calgary Parking Authority should get you to the annual report link.)
- If a private parking operator is contracted to manage day-to-day operations, an annual parking operations and financial audit is recommended.

Characteristic # 11

Creative, Flexible and Accountable Parking Management

This section encompasses so many potential topics it could easily be a whole book in itself. Therefore, we will only attempt to touch on some key issues and principles.

One key principle is that different land uses, environments and user-groups require different parking management approaches. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. A variety of parking management strategies should be employed to address different needs, such as:

- Visitor Parking
- Employee Parking
- On-Street Parking
- Reserved Parking
- Residential Parking
- Special Use Permits
- Event Parking
- Accessible Parking (ADA)
- Shared Parking
- Parking Allocation Plans
- Loading/Unloading Zone Parking

Another key management principal is the need for strong and accountable parking revenue control systems. This begins with the purchase and installation of a parking access and revenue control system specified to meet your system's needs.

It is important to understand all the components of the parking access and revenue control system and utilize them to their full potential. Many parking systems purchase expensive systems and use less than 10% of the system's capabilities. Using standard parking access and revenue control system reports and creating customized reports can provide enhanced management information, improved understanding of operational dynamics and ultimately increased system utilization and efficiency.

Another characteristic of effective parking programs is that they have mapped out audit trails and developed processes to provide acceptable levels of control and accountability. Because of the large revenues generated, revenue control and accountability are key parking management issues.

Developing policies and procedures for anticipating and managing losses of parking supply (both temporary and long term) is another basic parking management responsibility. Some key elements in this area include:

- Planning for and communicating losses of parking supply
- Insuring adequate capacity to handle short-term parking supply losses

- Having effective plans to manage routine maintenance projects, including customer communications and contingency plans
- Having a full understanding of the financial impacts of these projects on revenue streams
- Having defined parking replacement cost policies is another recommended best practice.

Development of an “Annual Parking Report” can have a number of positive impacts for a parking system. It identifies key departmental issues and challenges, promotes departmental achievements, documents the “state of parking” to the stakeholders, creates a record of “system history”, and builds credibility and confidence in the department.

Other parking management elements include:

- Well defined parking policies and procedures
- Development and maintenance of parking facility operations manuals
- Well defined and implemented facility maintenance programs
- Parking system marketing programs
- Effective parking and wayfinding signage programs.

Characteristic # 12 **Operational Efficiency**

Another area I like to investigate when assessing a parking program is the overall efficiency of the parking operation. Parking system efficiency has several dimensions, depending on how the system is managed. The first area to be scrutinized is the management responsibilities of the system, i.e, what programs is the department or organization responsible for implementing. Once this has been defined, organizational structure and staffing plans are analyzed.

Development of some form of benchmarking or comparative analysis to measure costs and performance to similar operations is highly recommended. Understanding that benchmarking can be a tricky business – making sure you are comparing apples to apples, there are some basic benchmarks that make sense for downtown parking operations. For illustrative purposes, a few basic benchmarks include:

- Parking revenue per space
- Total operating cost per space
- Administrative cost per space
- Maintenance cost per space
- Citations issued per enforcement staff (FTE)
- Parking citation collection ratio

Other operational areas can also yield significant savings in terms of reducing costs. Take, for example, facility lighting. Utility costs are integral budget elements in managing a parking structure, but by placing the exterior bay and roof top lights on separate circuits with photo-cells, 25 – 35% of the facility’s lights can be turned off during the day, saving significant amounts of electricity.

Another area worthy of investigation is staffing costs in the late evening hours when the income generated is less than the staffing costs incurred. In these situations, the use of “Auto-Cashier Units” can be an effective alternative.

Characteristic # 13

Comprehensive Facilities Maintenance Programs

Few things make a greater impression on first time visitors than the cleanliness and maintenance of your parking facilities. Beyond first impressions, however, few areas provide a greater potential return on investment than a comprehensive parking system maintenance program.

A few best practices related to parking facility appearance and maintenance are noted below.

- Paint interior surfaces white to enhance the perception of cleanliness and safety and improve lighting levels.
- Develop a comprehensive preventative maintenance program for all essential systems.
 - Parking Access and Revenue Control System
 - Elevators
 - Lighting and Energy Management Systems
- Organize and track parking facility warranties in a binder. Schedule warranty inspections six months prior to warranty expiration. Document inspections with digital photos (ideally with time/date stamps) and written reports.
- Regularly schedule facility condition appraisals by an experienced parking consultant and develop a prioritized program of facility maintenance repairs.
- Set aside adequate maintenance reserve funds based on a prioritized facility maintenance action plan

There are four general categories of parking facility maintenance:

- 1.) Housekeeping – This work is typically conducted by in-house staff and consists of basic cleaning, sweeping, slab wash downs, etc. “Housekeeping” includes items such as:
 - Sweeping of the stairs, elevator lobbies and floors on a regular basis.
 - Trash collection on a periodic basis.
 - Slab wash downs on a semi-annual basis.
 - Floor drain cleanout (including sediment basket cleanout)
 - Cleaning of stair enclosures (stair, elevator, and storefront glass)
 - Cleaning of doors, doorframes and glass on a periodic basis.
 - Cleaning of signage, light fixture lenses, elevator floors, doors, walls, parking equipment, etc. on a periodic basis.
 - Cleaning of restrooms, cashiers booths, offices, etc on a regular basis.
 - Daily walkthrough of the facilities by operator to confirm that housekeeping is being performed.
- 2.) System Maintenance – This includes tasks necessary to ensure proper operations of systems and components. “System Maintenance” includes items such as:

- Landscaping
 - Maintenance – leaves, lawn, trees.
 - Plantings (annual)
 - Fencing – posts, chains, etc
 - Planters
 - Irrigation Systems
- Painting – spot or seasonal painting.
- Parking Equipment Maintenance
 - Spitters, card readers, computers, booths, gates, etc
 - Annual maintenance contract with equipment supplier.
 - It is anticipated that parking equipment will be replaced every 7 to 10 years.
- Fire Protection
 - Maintenance Contract is anticipated
 - Drain periodically
 - Testing (twice per year)
- Lighting – It is anticipated that the lamps should be replaced every 2 to 3 years.
 - Fixture repair and isolated replacement included in operations
 - Fixture replacement every 20 years (included in Capital Expenditures)
 - Lens Replacement every 6 years (with lamps, included in operations)
 - Lamp replacement on an as need basis – Operator should schedule lamp replacement by level to maximize light effectiveness, and to maintain economy (Note: Lamp intensity depreciates significantly, well before burnout)
- Elevators - Elevator service contract and maintenance / repairs are generally provided by an outside maintenance firm.
 - Periodic cleaning of equipment will be reviewed.
 - Important to provide maintenance to reduce breakdowns.
- Electrical / Mechanical / Plumbing Maintenance
 - Offices / Restrooms / Cashiers Booths
 - HVAC
 - Exhaust Fans
 - Plumbing fixtures
 - Hot water heaters
 - Lighting
- Electrical Equipment - General and emergency cleaning / maintenance.
- HVAC Equipment – General and emergency cleaning / maintenance
 - Mechanical ventilation
 - Elevator tower ventilation system
- Emergency Power / Lighting Testing and Maintenance Contract.
 - Generator: Maintenance contract.
 - UPS System: Maintenance Contract
- Plumbing - General cleanout

- Domestic Water Maintenance
 - Drain wash down lines annually
 - Sump pump inspection
- Doors and Hardware – Periodic inspection and lubrication (Malfunction, sticking, etc).
- Signage
 - Illuminated Signs – Replace lamps
 - Replace damaged signage periodically as required.
- Snow Removal / Deicing

- 3.) Annual General Maintenance and Repairs – Annual general maintenance would usually be performed by outside contractors, although in some cases the operator’s staff may perform the work. This work is not typically included in a capital cost budget, and may be combined with the System Maintenance category. “General Maintenance” would include items such as:
- Concrete Repairs - Isolated concrete slab, beam, joist, tee, topping, etc repairs. In some cases, periodic concrete repairs (every 5 years) are included; however, isolated repairs between this interval should be anticipated.
 - Masonry Repair – Isolated masonry repair should be anticipated (spot tuck pointing, damaged masonry unit replacement, resetting cap stone, etc).
 - Sealants/Expansion Joint – Repair/replacement of isolated sealant (floor and façade) or expansion joint failure (not included under 5 year warranty). Leaking at slab cracks may also require sealant installation. Leaking joints should be repaired as soon as possible after discovery, and evidence of leaking should be removed.
 - Deck Coating - Isolated deck coating repairs (not included under the 5 year warranty). Wear of the topcoat should be repaired prior to damage to the underlying base membrane.
 - Painting – Painting touchup (spot / seasonal painting) should generally be performed as damage is observed. It is anticipated that repainting of exposed steel and concrete surfaces would be performed every 10 to 15 years, and parking stripes reapplied every 2 to 3 years.
 - Graffiti Removal – Graffiti removal should be completed as soon as possible after the application.
 - General Electrical Repairs & Maintenance - Isolated corrosion damage, switchgear maintenance, panel maintenance.
 - Light Fixture Repair / Replacement – Individual light fixture repair or replacement will require immediate attention.
 - HVAC – Office, Restroom & Elevator HVAC repairs.
 - Plumbing – Isolated replacement of drain lines and floor drain grates; Isolated cleanout of drains / lines; Periodic sump pump repairs.
- 4.) Periodic Repairs, Protection, and Improvements (Capital Expenditures) This work is generally performed by outside contractors under the direction of parking consultants experienced in restoration and will consist of replacing/repairing damage to waterproofing or structural elements.

Annual Maintenance Costs by Category

Housekeeping, Operations & Operator Maintenance, will vary based on specific operations requirements, but will approximate \$350 to \$450 per space per year.

Annual General Maintenance and Repairs costs will approximate \$0.10 to \$.15/sf per year (\$35 to \$50 per space per year), depending on condition and type of structural system.

Periodic Repairs, Protection, and Improvements (Capital Expenditures) - The maintenance reserve fund can likely be lower during the first 10 years of life, and increased to accommodate improvement planning budgets. For a new structure, this item may range from \$75 to \$100 per space per year for the first 10 years.

Characteristic # 14 Effective Use of Technology

Best in Class parking operations almost always have a comprehensive, and integrated parking access and revenue control system that offers the following benefits:

- Consistent operations and features for customers
- Simplified/consistent training for staff and auditors
- Similar equipment and models provides for simplified maintenance and less costly parts stocking
- Consolidated system-wide reporting and management information

Staying informed of new technologies can help provide the parking department with the best tools available to achieve its goals. New technologies can help you, and your staff, work smarter, not harder. Customer service levels can be enhanced through the use of Automatic Vehicle Identification (AVI) systems, web-based permit renewal programs, pay-on-foot payment stations, etc.

Other benefits of incorporating new technologies are improved overall efficiency and effectiveness, reductions in operating expenses, improved management controls and the ability to implement seamless, customer friendly payment system options such as Internet payment options.

Characteristic # 15 Parking System Marketing and Promotion

This is one of the most over looked aspects of parking system management. An effective parking system marketing and promotions program is one way to quickly set your parking operation apart from the ordinary. The following is a list of action items that can help launch a new or enhance an existing program.

- Develop a consistent Parking System Brand
 - The brand should promote the image you want people to have of the system

- It should reinforce the positive aspects of the system – “Free and Easy Parking”, “Visit Downtown and Parking Is On Us”, etc.
- Use consistent signage to “tie the system together”
- Have a parking tie-in to all downtown promotional materials.
- Expand and improve parking system website
- Develop new employee/tenant parking brochures or info packets
- Develop parking “E-Bulletins”
- Designate a parking spokesperson
- Regular personal contact with customers
- Develop parking deck floor identification (Themed graphics, music, etc. could be considered an extension of a local public arts program)
- Develop cooperative relationships between public and private parking operations to promote efficient use of resources for large public events.
- Develop a parking information database
- Use billing system to distribute system info and promotional materials
- Utilize “Guerilla Marketing” (creative/low cost concepts) techniques.

Characteristic # 16

Positive Customer Service Programs

Downtown businesses depend on a parking system that works and contributes to a positive experience of the downtown. Because parking is the first and last impression customers visiting the downtown will have, providing a high level of customer service is critical. When weighing the importance of customer service, consider these statistics:

- An average business never hears from 96% of its unsatisfied customers.
- On average, for every complaint received there are 26 customers with problems.
- The average unsatisfied customer tells 9-10 people about their problem.
- Customers who have had the problems solved tell, on average, 5 people.

A strong customer service program can provide the following benefits:

- Helps create a more “friendly” atmosphere
- Improves the image of the Parking Department and the Downtown
- Contributes to increased facility utilization (and therefore revenue)
- Contributes to increased acceptance of, and adherence to, parking regulations

What are some characteristics of bad customer service?

- Indifference
- Unfriendliness
- Runaround
- “Joe Rule-Book”
- Not listening
- Getting the Brush-off
- Just going through the motions
- No follow-up

What are characteristics of good customer service?

- Always be friendly and respectful
- Allow customers to fully explain their situation, without interruption (let them vent)
- “Actively listen” to what your customers say
- Ask questions seeking clarification
- Maintain eye contact
- If the customer is making a complaint, always apologize for the situation (and mean it!)
- Explain what you can do for the customer, not what you can’t
- Always remember that tone of voice and physical movements convey meaning
- Walk through the service process with the customer, explain the options
- Help the customer understand the options and achieve a level of buy-in
- Make sure they know you are there to help
- Always conclude a service opportunity with a thank you
- If possible, follow-up with the customer to see if the solution worked and if they are satisfied

Other recommended strategies to improve customer service include:

- Focus on employee training and good hiring practices
 - Hire friendly, attentive, outgoing knowledgeable attendants
- Increase personal contact between the parking system manager, stake holders and customers
- Institute performance measurements and utilize for company and employee incentives
- Create and implement a parking services program (battery jumps, lock-outs, flat-tires, escorts, audio book check-out, etc.)
- Implement a “Parking Hot Line” – (immediate response, centralized, easy to remember [555-PARK], follow-up)
- Improve website and links (use as a customer service tool, pay fines, order info, such as downloadable maps, rate schedules, special event info, etc.)
- Measure program effectiveness (customer surveys, etc.)
- Implement a secret shopper program to evaluate customer service
- Implement customer friendly systems such as AVI
- Develop a “New Employee Parking Brochure/Information Packet” to make it easier for larger organizations to get their employees into the system.

Characteristic # 17

Special Events Parking Programs

Coordinating parking for special events, almost more than any other parking management activity, requires a coordinated and cooperative effort with the larger community. Some of the keys to success in this area include the development of a well-defined special events policy and detailed system for coordination of special events.

Another important dimension is the development of strong relationships with the key stakeholder groups that are active in the downtown. Providing practical incentives for other groups to

communicate with and include the Parking Department in their planning processes early on is critical. Examples of the incentives parking can provide includes special services such as: coordination services, parking validations, waiving of parking enforcement, etc. for those who participate in the special event planning process.

Finally, be consistent in providing those that work with the parking system a high level of service. Conversely, provide disincentives for those that ignore the special events parking policy or chose to not include parking in their planning.

Characteristic # 18

Effective Enforcement

Having an effective parking management program requires that the rules and regulations be enforced. The key to an effective parking enforcement program is attitude, consistency and fairness. Best in Class operations have adopted the philosophy of being customer focused not revenue or violator focused.

The following are enforcement program elements that help assure that your program avoids some common pitfalls.

- Define who is responsible for day-to-day parking enforcement. Have a central number that everyone knows to call for info regarding parking enforcement (eliminate the run around).
- Assure that parking rules, regulations and consequences are clearly posted.
- Assure that if towing or booting is a possibility, that the number to call for towed/booted vehicles is clearly posted.
- Define how enforcement revenues are to be collected and used.
- Define who sets enforcement policies.
- Have a clearly stated process for adjudicating parking citations.
- Define who has the authority for towing, booting or other enforcement practices.
- Make paying for parking citations as easy as possible.
- Provide incentives for early citation payment and disincentives for late or non-payment.

Characteristic # 19

Parking and Transportation Demand Management

Because the cost of providing parking can be so high, strategies to manage parking demand is an important consideration in parking system planning. Incorporating parking and transportation demand management also ties into environmental goals and objectives such as the desire to reduce pollution, decrease traffic congestion, reduce reliance on single occupant vehicles, etc.

When evaluating options to reduce parking demand, integrate transportation demand management strategies into your parking program philosophy. A few best practices include:

- Use parking rates as a tool to promote desired behaviors
- Take advantage of employer-paid and employee-paid pre-tax benefit options
- Promote carpool/vanpool programs
- Provide preferred parking for carpools/vanpools
- Subsidize transit passes for downtown employees
- Provide a “Guaranteed Ride Home” program for those who participate in transportation alternative programs.
- Integrate bicycle racks and storage lockers in parking facilities.
- Show transit stops on parking maps
- Provide remote parking options and promote park and ride options on the parking web site

Characteristic # 20
Awareness of Competitive Environment

Another characteristic of effective parking programs is that they are keenly aware of their competitive environment. They actively monitor private sector parking operators for changes in rates, new services offered, new technologies being used, etc. One of the most fundamental practices that all parking programs should engage in is a formalized process for evaluating parking market rates. It is recommended that parking market rate surveys be conducted bi-annually to help maintain an awareness of the competitive climate. This information can also be valuable during annual budget planning.

Another dimension to staying competitive is being aware of what parking systems in other municipalities are doing. What has been tried? What has worked? What hasn't? Participating in national, regional and state parking associations, sending key staff to parking conferences and implementing the peer-review process discussed under the Staff Development section earlier are good ways of developing a network of contacts to help you stay up-to-date on the latest technologies and management practices.

In Summary...

The importance of Parking as one of the most visible and often controversial elements of a downtown's infrastructure is often underestimated. Parking, when well managed, can be a key component in attracting and supporting new development and is essential to sustaining healthy and vibrant downtowns.