



MEMORANDUM

TO: Economic Development Authority

FROM: India Adams-Jacobs, MPA, ICMA-CM, Town Manager

DATE: 4/2/26

RE: Request for Input - Downtown Parking Management Strategy

Purpose

Staff requests from the Economic Development Authority input on proposed downtown parking management strategies to balance customer access, employee parking needs, and business sustainability. Your perspective as business leaders and economic development advocates is essential to developing parking regulations that support rather than hinder downtown commercial vitality.

Background

As downtown Bowling Green experiences increased business activity and customer traffic—positive outcomes of our collective Main Street revitalization efforts—parking management has emerged as a strategic consideration. Current unregulated parking creates challenges: employees using prime customer spaces during business hours, long-term parking, reduced turnover in high-demand areas, and inconsistent parking availability, affecting the customer experience.

Staff is evaluating parking management approaches used successfully in comparable Virginia Main Street communities, including time-limited parking designations in high-traffic commercial areas.

Proposed Parking Management Strategies Under Consideration

Option 1: Two-Hour Parking Zones

- Location: Main Street and Milford Street, the primary commercial blocks
- Hours: Enforced during business hours (e.g., 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Monday-Saturday)
- Rationale: Encourages parking turnover; prioritizes customer access; supports multiple business visits during shopping/dining trips
- Employee Impact: Requires employee parking in unrestricted areas or designated employee zones

Option 2: 30-Minute Parking Zones

- Location: High-turnover business frontages (banks, professional services, quick-service businesses)
- Hours: Enforced during business hours
- Rationale: Maximizes parking availability for brief transactions; supports businesses with short customer visit durations
- Employee Impact: Prohibits employee use of premium customer spaces

Option 3: Hybrid Approach

- Two-hour parking: Majority of downtown commercial blocks
- 30-minute parking: Select high-turnover locations (4-6 spaces)
- Unrestricted parking: Side streets, Chase Street lot, peripheral areas for employee and long-term parking
- Rationale: Balances customer convenience, business type variations, and employee parking needs



Option 4: Status Quo (No Regulation)

- Current condition: No time restrictions or designated zones
- Rationale: Minimal administrative burden; no enforcement costs; maximum parking flexibility
- Challenges: Prime spaces occupied by employees/long-term parkers; reduced customer parking availability; business complaints about parking access

Questions for EDA Consideration

Customer Access and Business Impact

1. How do current parking conditions affect your business operations or the businesses you work with?
2. Would time-limited parking in front of your business/downtown businesses improve customer access and convenience?
3. What parking duration best serves typical customer visit patterns for downtown businesses (retail, dining, professional services)?
4. Does lack of available customer parking currently result in lost sales or customer frustration?

Employee Parking Considerations

1. Where do downtown employees currently park during business hours?
2. Would designated employee parking areas (Chase Street lot, side streets, peripheral spaces) adequately serve employee needs?
3. What distance from business to employee parking space is reasonable and practical?
4. Do businesses have concerns about employee parking displacement if customer-priority zones are established?

Implementation and Enforcement

1. What signage approach clearly communicates parking restrictions while maintaining downtown aesthetic character?
2. What enforcement hours balance customer access needs with administrative burden?
3. Should parking restrictions apply seven days per week or exclude Sundays when most businesses are closed?

Economic Development Implications

1. How do comparable Main Street communities manage downtown parking, and what can we learn from their approaches?
2. Would parking management enhance or complicate business recruitment and retention efforts?
3. Does parking availability affect decisions by businesses considering downtown locations?
4. What parking approach best supports long-term downtown economic vitality?

Next Steps

Staff requests EDA feedback by to inform parking management recommendations to the Town Council. Input may be provided through:

- Written comments submitted to Town Manager
- Discussion at April EDA meeting
- Individual meetings with the Town Manager for detailed business-specific concerns

Following EDA input, staff will develop a formal parking management proposal for Town Council consideration, including signage specifications, enforcement protocols, and implementation timeline.



Request

The Economic Development Authority's business perspective is critical to developing parking regulations that support downtown economic vitality. Please provide candid feedback on how parking management would affect business operations, customer experience, employee accommodation, and long-term downtown competitiveness. Staff is committed to parking solutions that enhance rather than hinder the downtown business environment we have worked collectively to strengthen.