

WORK SESSION AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

Eric Keselburg, Sr Parking Services Manager
Monica Martinez, Sr FP&A Manager
Drew Brooks, Deputy Transportation Services Director

SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION

Downtown Parking Optimization Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to provide background and information regarding the downtown parking system, identified concerns, and to present options moving forward. The parking system is intended to support and maintain a vibrant downtown, provide a customer-focused system for all users, and ensure financial sustainability.

GENERAL DIRECTION SOUGHT AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. What questions or feedback do Councilmembers have on the proposed approach?
2. Do Councilmembers have additional considerations or next steps to pursue?

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

The City has managed a complex parking system in the downtown area for decades. The downtown system includes on-street parking, garage parking, and surface lot parking; including permit programs in neighborhoods surrounding Colorado State University.

The current system has long been identified as an “upside-down” model; with the most convenient on-street parking being free, whereas garage and surface lot parking has a fee. Parking Services lacks the tools to effectively manage distribution across the parking system.

In 2023, Parking Services hosted a visioning session with downtown stakeholders; from those series of meetings the following problem statement was identified:

The current parking system model is **not providing the parking choices needed** for the people who come Downtown to shop, dine, play and work. It is **incapable of addressing the demand distribution challenges** that frustrate users because of its reliance on enforcement and the use of low-dollar paid parking in less desirable facilities. Finally, it is **unable to fulfill its required goals to fund its maintenance priorities** because it can't achieve cost neutrality.

The 2023 problem statement can be separated into two (2) main issues:

1. System Utilization, Capacity & Distribution

- Lack of Choices: The current model fails to provide adequate parking options for customers (local and out-of-town visitors) and employees.
- Demand Imbalances: Free on-street parking fails to incentivize systemwide distribution, leaving low-cost options underutilized.

2. Financial Sustainability

- Cost Neutrality Failure: The system generates insufficient revenue to fund regular system upgrades/replacement or to meet its ongoing financial goals.
- Major Maintenance: The system struggles to adequately cover long-term maintenance priorities.

Stakeholders agree that increased garage use and having the financial capability to maintain infrastructure is a good thing. There is also agreement that parking turnover is good and that employee parking is an issue needing better solutions. When on-street occupancy gets to the 80-85% threshold, unhealthy by industry standards, the customer may not have space availability or options to park, leading to frustration and a perception of lack of available parking supply. The current parking system does not provide the right parking choices needed, and it does not address the various demand challenges. Users are often frustrated due to reliance on enforcement and the use of paid parking, albeit low dollar in less desirable facilities.

The desired outcomes are a downtown parking system that preserves a vibrant and active downtown economy, a customer-focused system that provides choice for all parkers and modes, and a system that is financially sustainable. The goal is to improve parking availability by increasing turnover within customer serving curbside spaces while directing longer-duration users to existing off-street facilities where capacity is available. The result would be a more balanced parking system that improves customer access, better utilizes public parking assets, and reduces the need for drivers to circulate through downtown searching for convenient curbside parking.

There have been several parking-related studies performed on the downtown parking system; each identifying a need to better manage the system.

1. 2004 Downtown Strategic Plan – coined the term “upside-down” model

- [2004 Downtown Strategic Plan](#)

2. 2013 Parking Plan

- [2013 Parking Plan](#)

3. **2014 Transit-Oriented Development Parking Study - Parking Services proposed an on-street paid parking pilot program.**
 - [2014 Transit-Oriented Development Parking Study](#)
4. **2017 Downtown Plan - The Parking Advisory Board supported an on-street paid parking pilot program.**
 - [2017 Downtown Plan](#)
5. **2025 DRAFT Parking Study: Implementation & Action plan**
 - [2025 Implementation and Action Plan](#)
6. **2026 Fort Collins Pro Forma Analysis**
 - [2026 Pro Forma Analysis](#)
7. **2026 DRAFT Downtown Parking Study: Demand & Capacity**
 - [2026 Demand and Capacity Study](#)

Common Parking Study/Plan themes:

Upside-down pricing model	Need to maintain/increase enforcement
Drivers of change: • Occupancy • Increased citations	Create revenue for increased capacity/infrastructure
Manage demand and distribution across system	Employee parking considerations
Public/private parking partnerships	Payment options to stay longer than 2-hours
On-street parking priority for customers	Hesitancy for paid parking; implement in a controlled way as to not shock the system

The issue of demand distribution and management of the downtown system has long been identified, and Parking Services has done well to manage the parking demand of a scarce resource, however, additional tools are necessary to effectively manage demand distribution and to plan for long-term asset maintenance.

The parking system is experiencing challenges in both infrastructure maintenance and best practice/most efficient use to achieve financial sustainability, parking efficiency, and economic retail benefit. While “free” parking is a strong desire from a portion of our community, when no one pays everyone pays.

Changes to the parking system will be significant to stakeholders and will be met with mixed feedback. Knowing this, and taking study findings and public feedback into account, staff is recommending a roadmap that allows for full and transparent transition of the parking system to accommodate all downtown users.

Public feedback from the 2017 Downtown Study:

Parking was identified as one of the biggest challenges to continued economic health and vibrancy in Downtown. Though lack of parking was a common complaint among residents, the City lacks the tools to

collect data that would verify that perception. Feedback about potential solutions to the perceived lack of parking Downtown revealed divergent opinions. Some agreed that on-street paid parking would effectively manage parking demand and also create a revenue source for future investment, while others thought paid parking would change the welcoming character of Downtown. Others were concerned that paid parking could negatively affect businesses in the retail sector, especially considering the 2016 redevelopment of the Foothills Mall. Many people thought that demand for parking could be reduced by increasing transit ridership and bike commuting.

Management of employee parking, as identified in past plans, is a continuing concern. Stakeholders shared that employees often park in the most convenient on-street spaces and “game the system” by moving their cars every two hours to avoid receiving a ticket. Because parking structures charge a fee and are typically less convenient, employees and visitors alike avoid them and will “troll” around for free on street parking. The 2013 Parking Plan identified this phenomenon as “parking structure avoidance” due to “upside down pricing.”

Participants agreed that on-street parking spaces should be available for those visiting Downtown for shorter trips, while the parking garages are appropriate for those staying longer.

There was an eagerness for change to the Downtown parking system, but agreement that change should not “shock the system”. The 2017 plan stated that employees should be required to park in the parking garages and demand for parking should be reduced by increasing transit ridership and bike commuting. Alternatives should be exhausted before implementing an on-street paid parking program. Some alternatives to investigate include adjusting enforcement so people can no longer “game the system,” creating a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to reduce employee parking demand, and continuing to study when and where parking demand is highest.

The formally identified indicators/triggers for review and implementation of an on-street paid parking system are somewhat ill-defined and difficult to measure. Parking Services recommends creating a community dashboard to monitor and maintain key indicators to showcase current challenges, which may allow for more robust dialogue with community partners.

Immediate Action Items

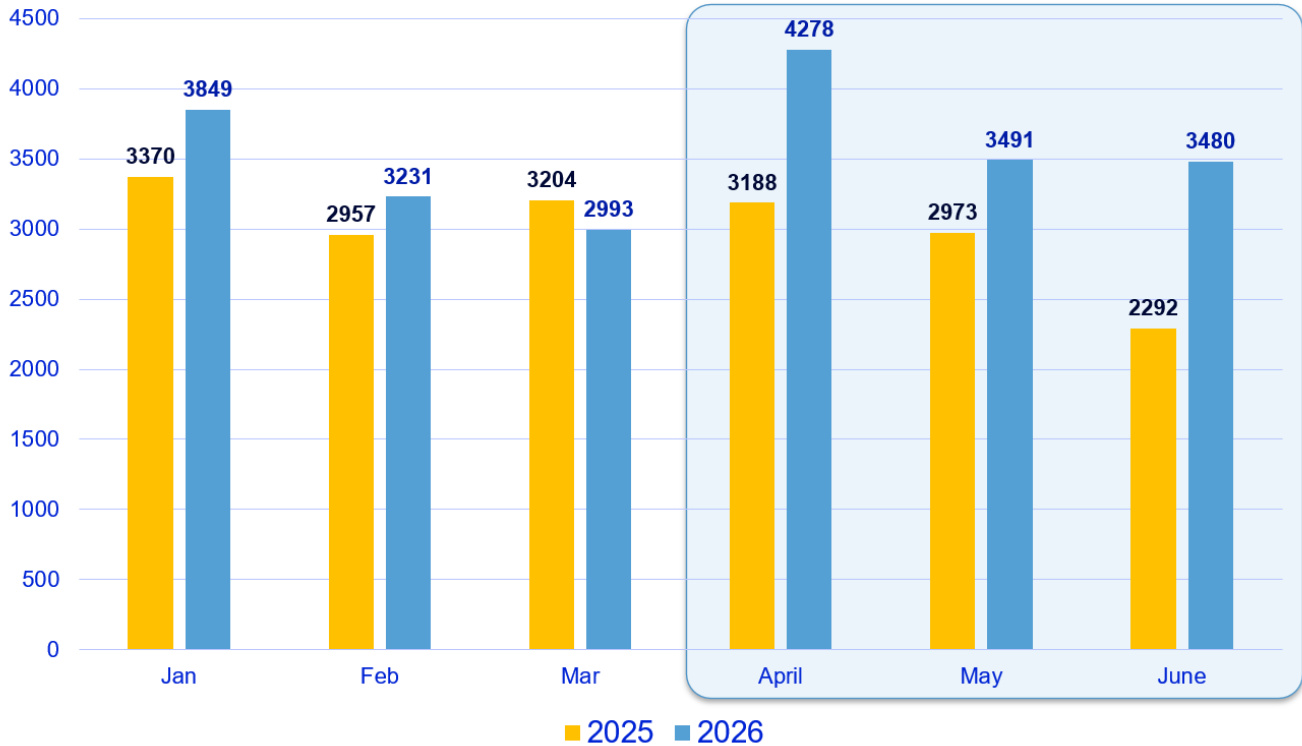
Parking Services has begun and/or has implemented a series of immediate operational items to assist with managing the parking system, either aligned with or parallel to a downtown parking system update.

Hours of Operation-

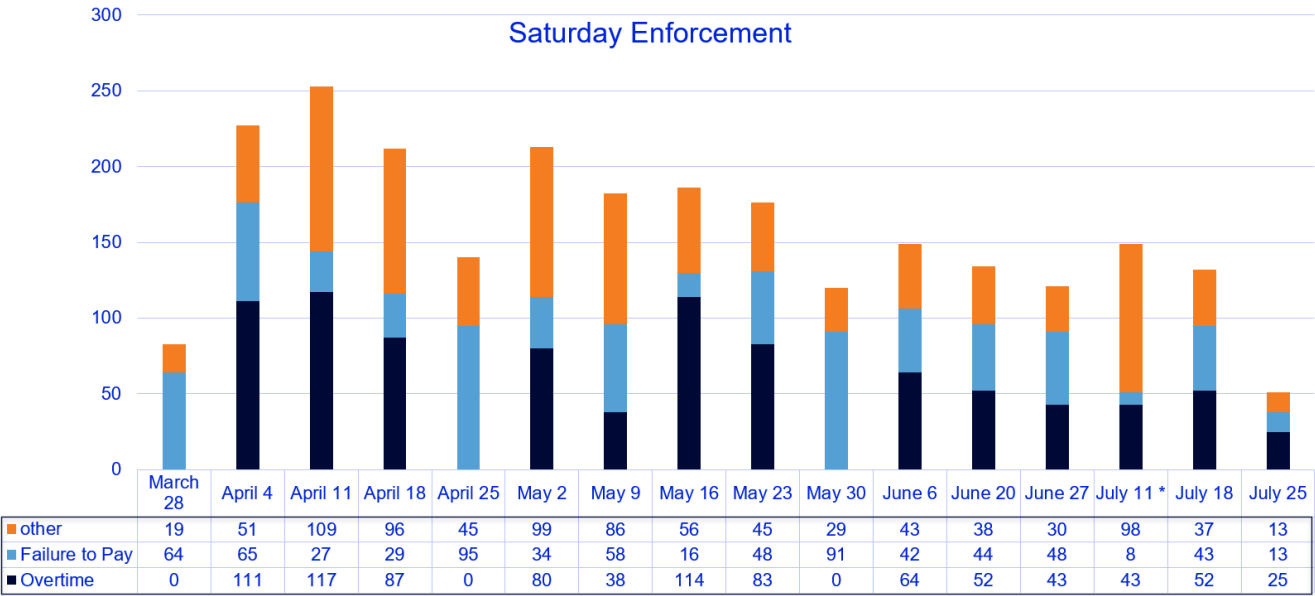
Hours of management/enforcement of the downtown parking system have been extended, starting in March 2026, to include regular time-regulation management until 6:00pm weekdays and Saturdays. While semi-frequent off-hour enforcement efforts occurred downtown, efforts were isolated to parking garage and egregious restricted violations.

Monthly citation differential, year-over-year; Saturday and evening enforcement reflective of schedule change, beginning April 2026.

Total Citations by Month



Saturday specific enforcement, with first week disrupted by downtown events, along with other variables.



* July 11th – PBR; CSU Stadium event

Parking Fees-

Parking fee updates have been approved and are in process of being updated within the Parking Services system. Public messaging has been drafted and will be shared ahead of the planned September 2026 go-live. Updated fees will take effect in September and will be implemented upon renewal or purchase of a permit.

The applicable fee review and updates include:

- Parking garage and surface lot – continuing with the pre-purchase discount.
- Residential Parking Permit Program (RP3) – adjust the permit fee to be more equitable for residents/property owners.
- Mason Lot – hourly rate during non-permit times, to align with proposed surface lot paid-parking rate.
- City Obstruction Permits –marked or metered parking spaces.
- Parking citation collection fees.
- Credit Card processing fees – associated credit card fee be passed onto the customer.

Parking Traffic Code Fines-

Parking Services has requested a review and assessment of the parking-related Traffic Code fines. Once the Judge makes a determination of appropriate fine schedule, Parking Services will work to get any changes updated within the Parking Services system and will develop a communication plan to message to the community. Target launch date- October 2026.

The applicable fees being recommended for review and update:

- * Time-regulated parking, remove 1st time offense \$0 fine, shift graduated fine schedule.
- * Align Failure to Pay, pay station/kiosk and mobile payment, with time-regulated fine schedule.
- * Adjust restricted type violations to align with industry average, with additional increase specific to Vision Zero related violations.
- * Adjust ADA and abandoned vehicle violations to align with industry average.
- * Correct timeframe to either pay or contest/appeal a citation to 20-days.
- * Non-payment of fine, escalation amount, adjust all to double, for consistent understanding.

Parking Access and Revenue Control System-

A request for proposal will be issued in early August 2026. Vendors will be identified and systems evaluated to ensure system integration. Target implementation and launch is estimated to be Q1 2027, including testing.

Financial Condition

Parking system revenue is currently comprised of three main revenue collection points: permits fees, hourly fees, and citations. Garage and surface lot permits and hourly fees together totaled \$1.61M in 2026 and represented just under 50% of total revenue collection. Within this category, hourly fee collection in 2025 was slightly higher than permit collection. Citation collection in 2025 totaled \$1.4M. The remaining \$227k or revenue from 2025 was sourced from a variety of items including investment gains/losses and sale of capital assets.

The revenue assumptions made to provide a financial model for the parking system discussion are outlined in the table below.

Permits: assumes \$10/permit increase as approved mid-2026

- Approved - target roll-out, September 1st. This is anticipated to increase revenue by around \$180k.
- Permit increase will be effective on new purchases or renewals after September 1st.

Hourly Fee : assumes current fee amount & the introduction of LPR effective in 2028

- The introduction of a control system, LPR or a gated option, is assumed to increase revenue by approximately 10%. This is in line with the drop in revenue recorded when gates were removed in 2019. This is anticipated to increase revenue by around \$78k.

Citations: assumes new citation amounts

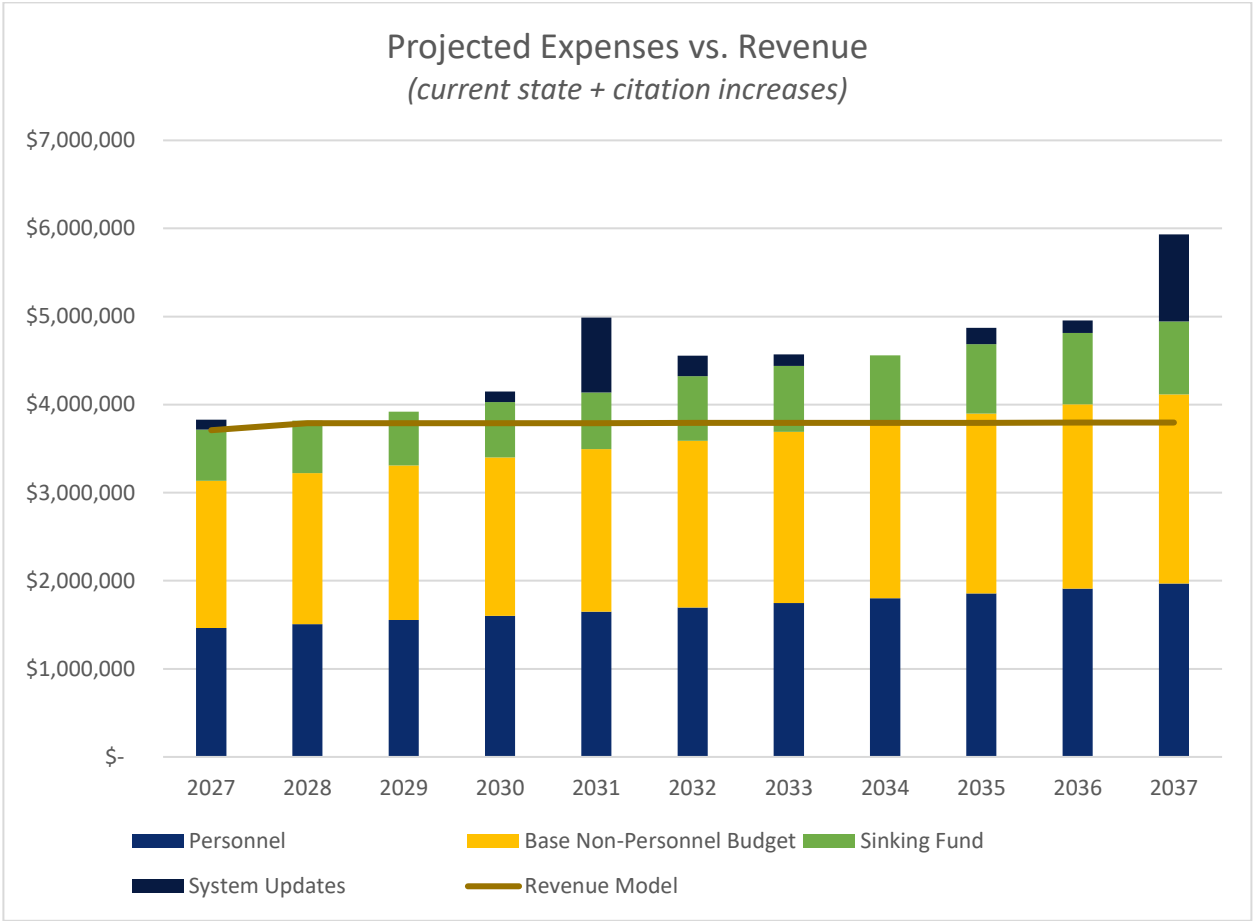
- A review of citation amounts is currently in process with the judge. If approved as submitted, this is anticipated to increase revenue by around \$300k. The anticipated increase is incorporated.

Enforcement: assumes current enforcement schedule and hours

- As of mid-2026, enforcement staff increased by an FTE to include Saturdays. Revenue assumptions reflect the anticipated gain from this change, around \$200k.

The graph below, provides a model of assumed financial stability using current inputs. The revenue inputs follow the assumptions listed above. The operational expense inputs assume the following structure:

- Operational expenses: a growth rate of 2.54% for non-personnel items and a growth rate of 3% for personnel items.
- Sinking Fund: this amount references anticipated capital costs based on the age and spaces of each parking structure. While the graph shows this amount as a smooth expense track, it should be noted that these expenses are typically experienced in clusters. The model assumes the smooth expenses track as a means to indicate the need to budget for capital maintenance on a yearly basis. If one year does not use the full capital maintenance amount, these funds would fall to a reserve and be used to cover significant capital needs as they arise
- System Updates: these are the amounts anticipated for other, non-yearly needs such as vehicle replacement and software updates. Software updates including billing systems as well as License Plate Recognition and Park Guidance systems. These expenses are modeled as spikes as replacement cadence varies from every 2-3 years to every 7-10 years depending on the item.

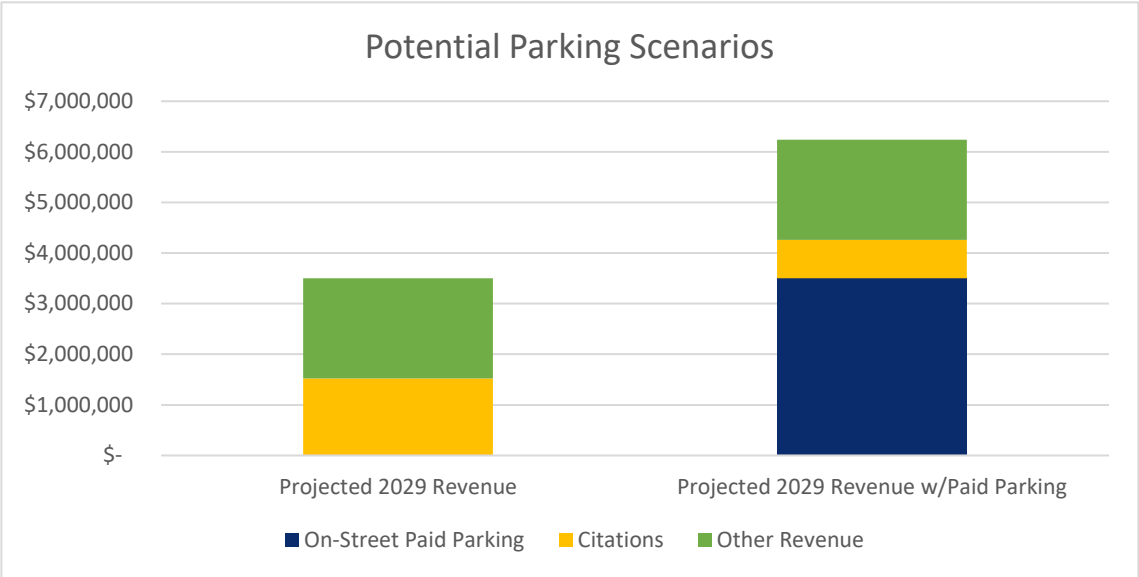


As demonstrated by the graph, if all assumptions hold, the financial sustainability of the parking systems is as follows. This suggests that additional mid to long-term revenue generating mechanisms will be required but that the next one to three years may be used to carefully review and vet options. It is worth noting that an unexpectedly large capital maintenance need or a sudden change in customer usage could impact near term sustainability.

Year 1- 3	•Operational needs met •Sinking fund & system updates met
Year 4-9	•Operational needs met •Sinking fund & system updates not met
Year 9+	•Operational needs not met •Sinking fund & system updates not met

One option that has been considered for additional revenue generation is on-street paid parking. Per the Pro Forma completed by Walker Consultants paid parking revenue is estimated to collect \$3.5M annually.

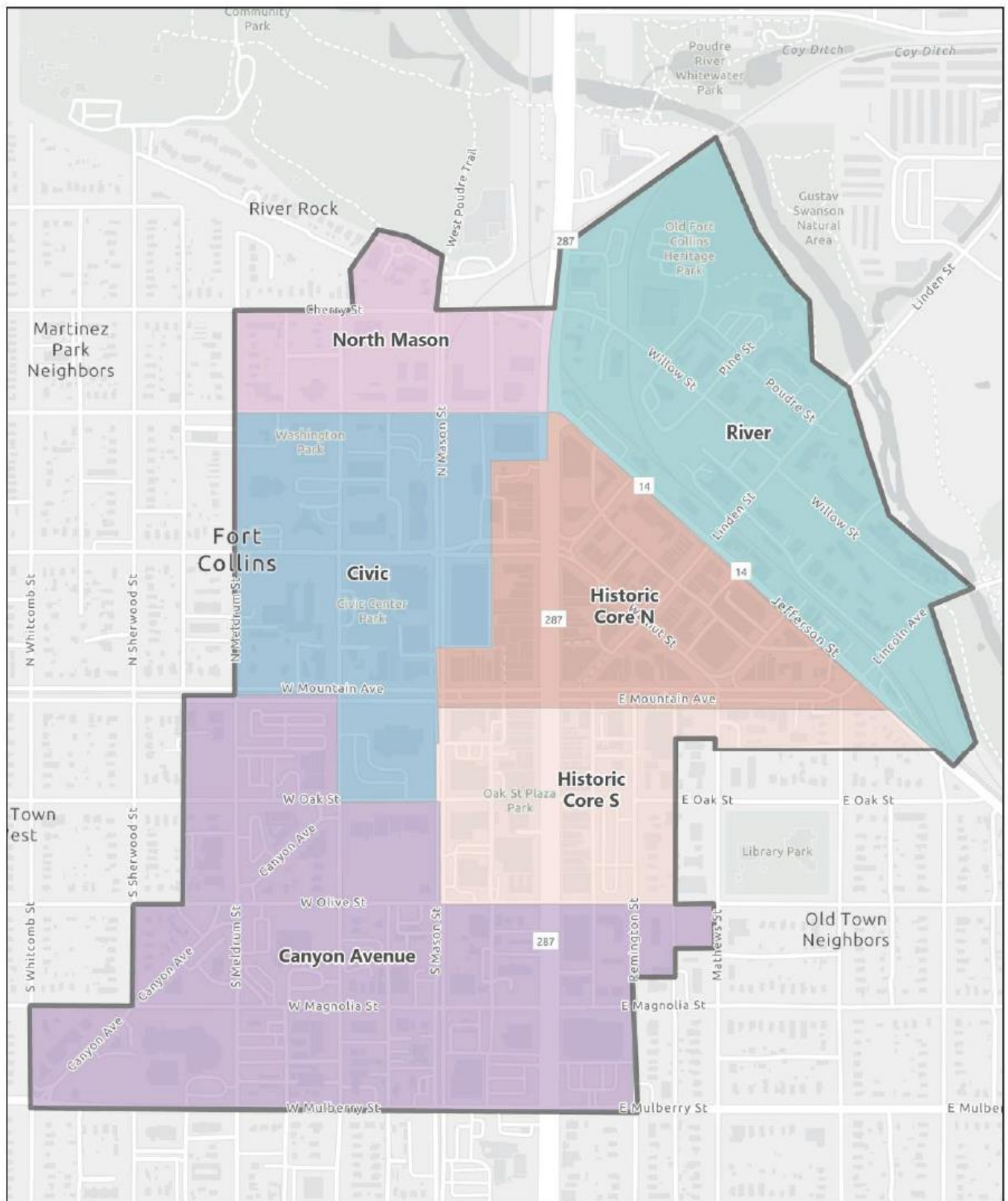
This level of revenue generation provides multiple opportunities including a downtown reinvestment zone and long-term capacity planning. One opportunity identified by staff is the reallocation of funding pressure away from citations as on-street paid parking revenues increase. An example of this model is pictured below.



Demand & Capacity Study

The 2026 Parking Study; Demand & Capacity has been finalized. The findings indicate that current parking challenges are primarily related to the distribution, management, and convenience of parking rather than an overall shortage of public parking supply. In short, it is less of a capacity issue as it is a distribution issue.

The Demand & Capacity study used the districts identified in the 2017 Downtown Plan, understanding that there are unique districts that make up the parking system, and each district has characteristics that should be managed accordingly.



Total Parking Inventory- 4369

On-Street Parking Inventory - the study area includes a total of **2,443** on-street parking spaces distributed across 78 block faces.

Off-Street Parking Inventory - the study area includes a total of **1,926** * off-street public parking spaces distributed across 12 facilities, consisting of 9 surface lots and 3 parking structures.

	Surface Lots	Structured Parking	On-Street Spaces	Total Spaces
Historic Core N		215	546	761
Historic Core S	194	312	345	851
Canyon Ave	174		813	987
North Mason			238	238
Civic	143	835	285	1,263
River	53		216	269
Total	564	1,362	2,443	4,369

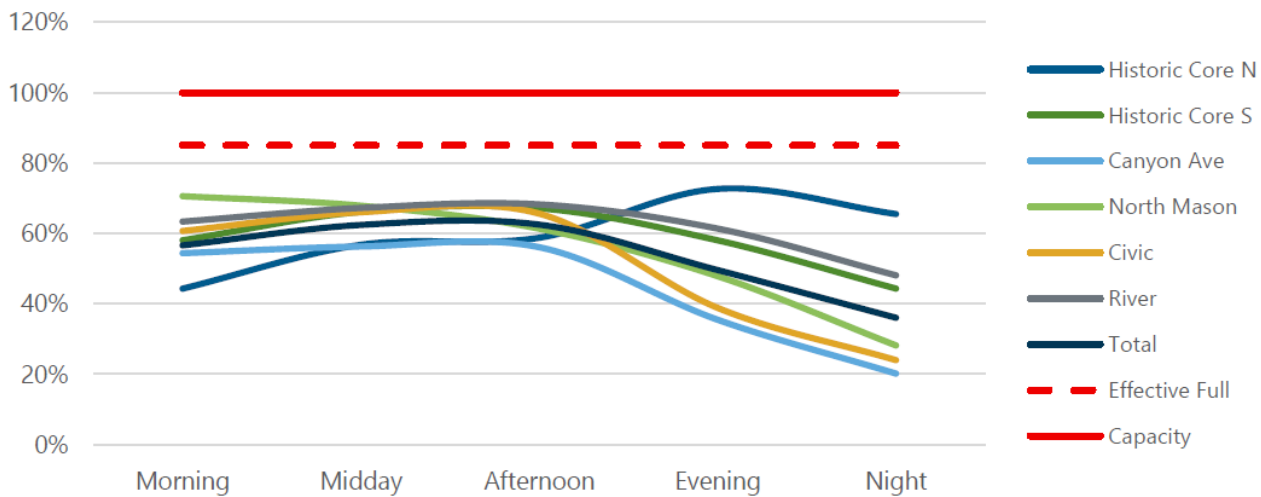
* At time of Demand & Capacity study Civic Center Parking Structure had reduced number of parking spaces due to egress requirements of the southeast stairway project.

Combined Public Parking System-

Considering both on-street and off-street parking together, the analysis reflects the total parking resources available within each district rather than focusing only on the most desirable curbside spaces. If combined occupancy remains below the 85% effective-capacity threshold, the parking system generally has sufficient capacity to accommodate demand through improved utilization, wayfinding, pricing, or management strategies. Parking expansion is typically considered only when the overall public parking supply approaches or exceeds effective capacity on a consistent basis.

In individual districts there is strain noted in on-street parking occupancies during peak times; however, the combined parking system demonstrates substantial available capacity across all districts and time periods. Occupancy levels remain well below the 85% effective-capacity threshold throughout the day, with district peak occupancies generally ranging between 55% and 72%. It is important to note that no individual district experiences a parking shortfall when the full public parking system is evaluated highlighting that the perceived parking challenges are primarily related to the distribution and convenience of parking rather than an overall shortage of public parking supply.

All Public Parking

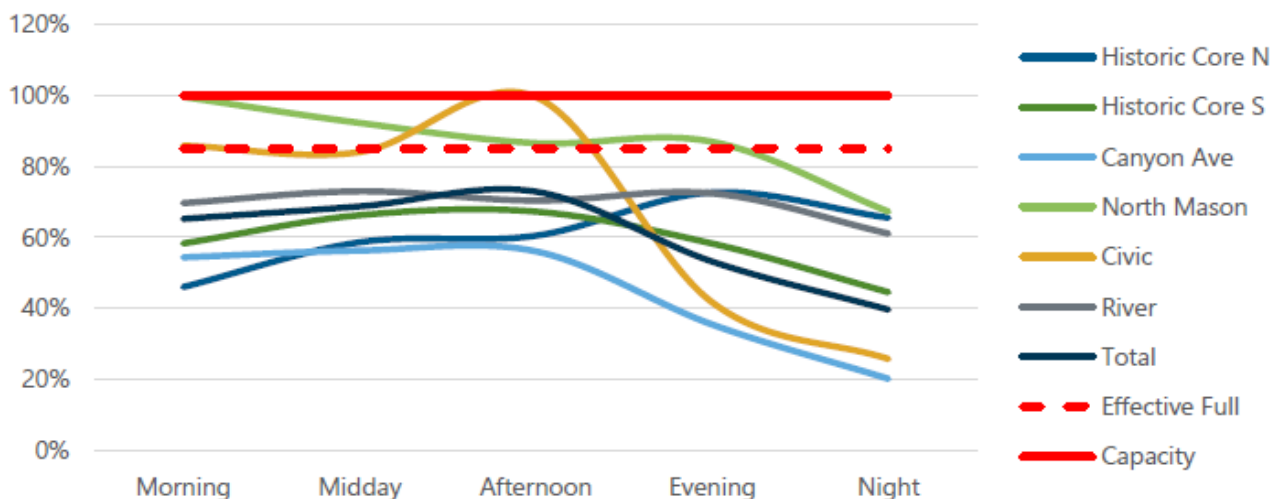


Capacity Shortfalls-

Near-Term Demand:

This scenario reflects the addition of planned and proposed downtown development activity to the existing public parking system, including residential, restaurant, office, and civic demand expected to place some portion of new activity into the public parking capacity.

Near-Term Demand



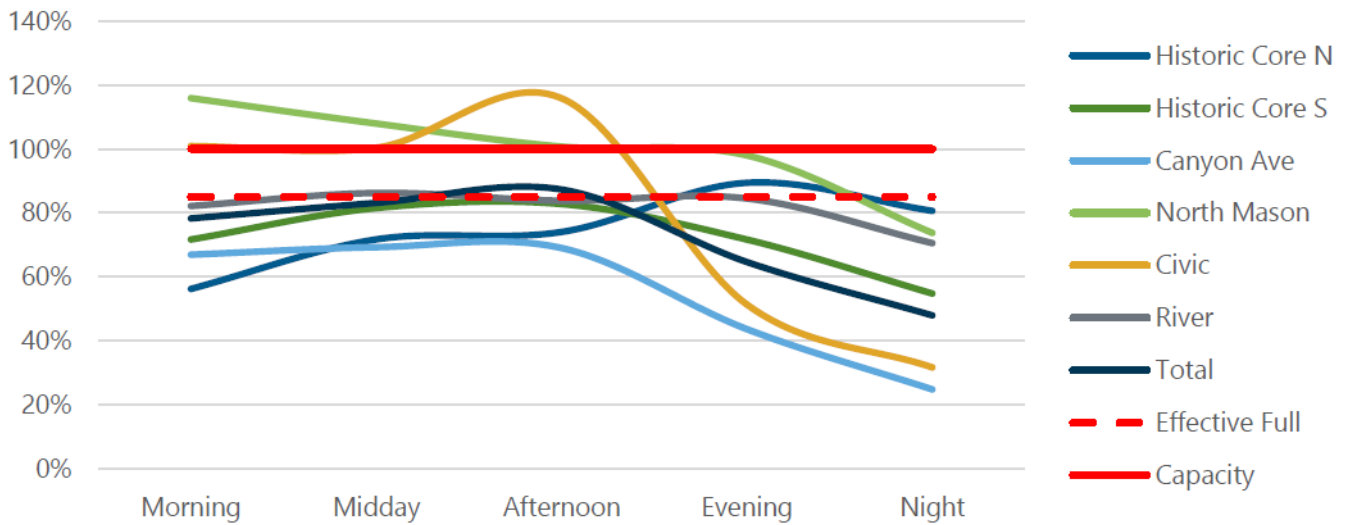
Potential Space Need:

- North Mason District – Up to 35 spaces needed
- Civic District – Up to 171 spaces needed at peak times, pending final parking plan for Justice Center Expansion

Long-Term Demand with existing Supply:

This long-term scenario also retains the long-term (10-year) growth and programming assumptions while retaining the Old Town Parking Structure and Oak/Remington Lot as a surface lot.

Long-Term Demand with Existing Supply



Potential Space Need:

- Historic Core N – 34 spaces needed in the evening, could use neighboring districts as shared parking
- North Mason – Up to 73 spaces needed throughout the day
- Civic District – Up to 362 spaces needed during business hours

Future Capacity Forecasting-

Two (2) districts have been identified as possible areas for added capacity, i.e.- parking garage(s).

The Oak & Remington surface parking lot in the Historic Core South area, is viewed as a long-term parking capacity opportunity rather than an immediate need. Parking Services will continue monitoring occupancy, utilization, development activity, and district-specific demand conditions to determine when additional structured parking capacity may be warranted.

The conceptual idea for future use of the lot includes replacing the 144-space surface lot with a 504-stall parking garage, with approximately 10,050 street-level retail space to enhance the pedestrian environment, activate the streetscape, and support downtown economic activity.

Additionally, in the River District, current projections indicate that parking conditions generally remain manageable, the area is expected to experience increasing demand as planned development occurs and additional growth is realized. In the future, the Pine Street (United Way) Lot or the Atzlan Lot could be considered for a future parking structure to support River District activity while maintaining access to adjacent downtown destinations.

Parking Innovation Zone

Parking Services recognizes that a vibrant downtown economy is the foundation of a successful parking system. Downtown is already unique and vibrant and Parking Services plays a part in maintaining this environment.

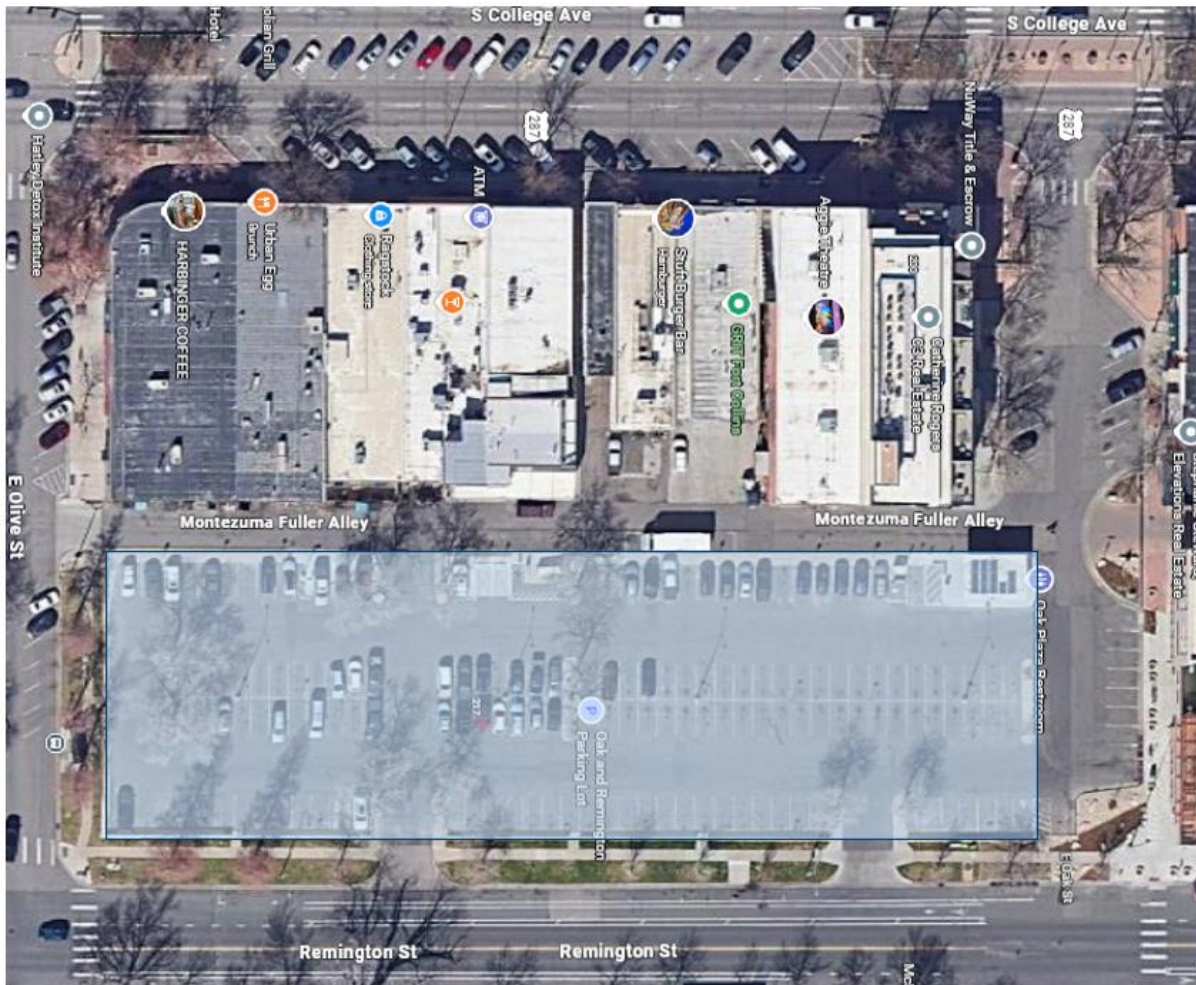
Throughout community engagement, concerns and feedback have been framed into a customer-focused system that is financially sustainable.

The City understands that former recommendations have been more rigid in implementation, and modified based on feedback received from the community, business owners, and visitors. Due to this and the short-term moves already in process and the delay of College Avenue watermain project the current recommendation is to focus on creating a dashboard to review system health and to test pilot locations in an innovative pilot approach.

Staff proposes a small-scale paid-parking pilot for the Oak & Remington surface parking lot. This would allow a test of system effect to showcase real world data as we continue to engage with the business community. Information gained would assist with future recommendations based on feedback gathered from real time results, the community dashboard, and ongoing outreach efforts. Informed considerations would be provided to City Council in Q3 2028.

Location: Oak & Remington surface lot

- 154 total parking spaces.
- Managed 10:00am – 8:00pm
- Mix of permit and hourly use
- Kiosk and mobile app payment options
- Free (grace) period
- Day rate



Employee Parking Options

As parking permit fees are being updated, Parking Services is also introducing discounted Employer Provided Parking Permits in the parking garages and surface lots.

Structure /Surface Lot	Discount Amount	Monthly Pre-Paid Rate	Monthly Rate
CCPS, OTPS, FAPS	\$10 per permit	\$40 per permit	\$50 per permit
Oak/Remington Lot	\$5 per permit	\$32 per permit	\$42 per permit
Jefferson Lot	\$5 per permit	\$26 per permit	\$36 per permit

Additionally, Parking Services is researching an income-qualified parking permit option. These permits would have an additional discounted rate, aligned with criteria established by Get FoCo.

Systemwide considerations

Additional considerations to assist with a performance-based management framework include;

- Introduce a parking garage day rate
- Update the current block face rule (requirement to move past an intersection or around a corner) to a broader district approach, which should help manage employee on-street parking behavior

- Update the current time-regulation parking signs to align with district occupancy and demand observations, to better manage parking availability across the individual districts versus a one-size system-wide model
- Review additional off-street pilot location options.

Downtown Employer Parking Survey

The Economic Health office conducted a brief survey of downtown employers regarding their parking practices. Key take-a-ways are that businesses are asking first for permit access and flexibility, not primarily for paid on-street parking.

1. Employee parking is seen as a workforce issue, not just a transportation issue.
• Businesses are concerned that parking costs, tickets, and the need to move vehicles during shifts create stress for employees and make downtown jobs less attractive.
2. The two-hour parking system creates operational disruption.
• Employees and managers described car-moving as a daily workaround rather than a sustainable parking strategy.
3. Employers are open to garage and lot use, but cost and reliability matter.
• Permits should be affordable, available, easy to administer, and practical for part-time and shift-based workers.
4. Shared or flexible permits are one of the strongest ideas.
• A shared or flexible employee permit model may address staggered shifts, short shifts, and overlapping schedules.
5. Paid on-street parking is the flashpoint.
• Paid on-street would need careful messaging, clear employee protections, customer-access analysis, and a transparent explanation of how revenue would be used.
6. Safety and proximity matter for some employees.
• Employee parking solutions should consider proximity, lighting, perceived safety, and after-dark access.
7. Customer parking remains a separate but related concern.
• Businesses want employee parking addressed in a way that protects customer convenience.

Timeline

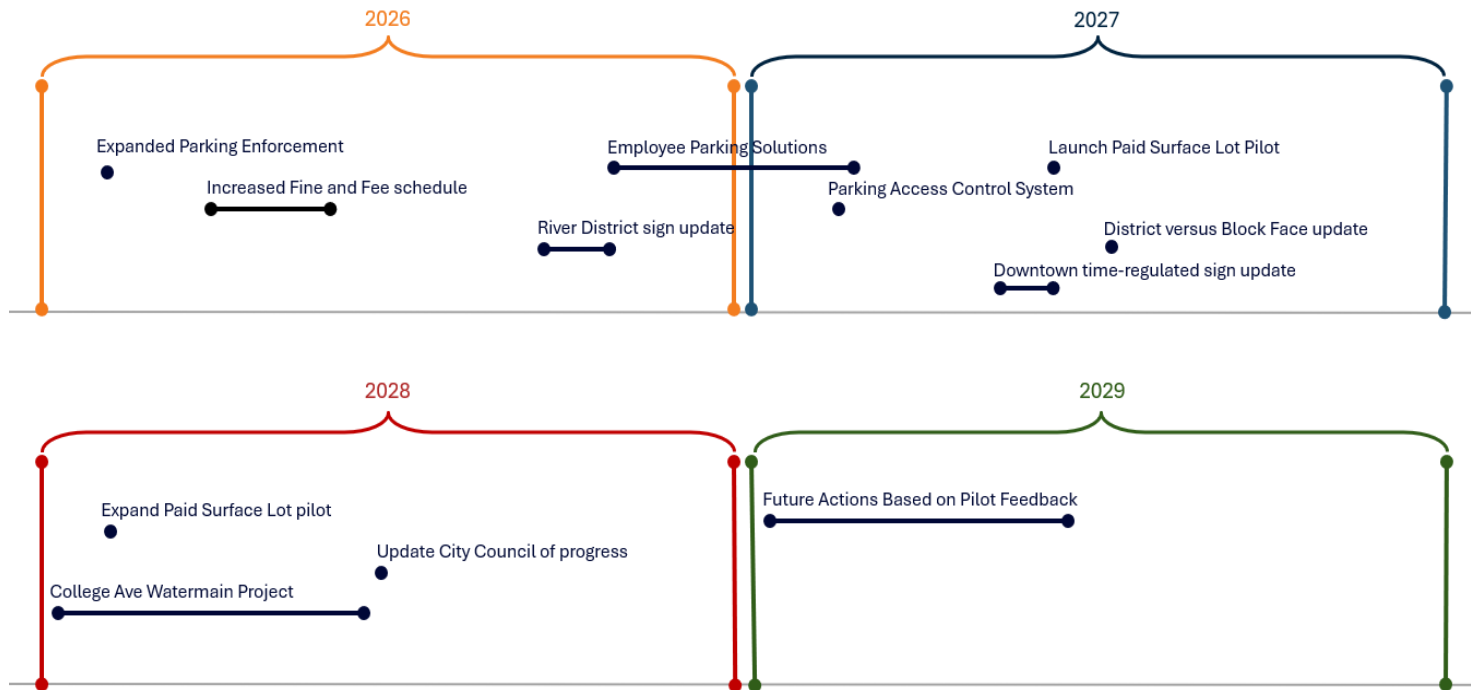
The delay of the College Avenue watermain project has provided an opportunity to identify alternative considerations.

Fines and fees updates, expanded enforcement, parking access control systems, audit of time-regulations in the River District, and downtown employee parking options are 2026 or early 2027 projects.

The proposed surface lot paid parking pilot, downtown time-restricted parking sign update, and district versus block face review are all 2027 projects.

The College Avenue watermain project will have great impact to the downtown core, and Parking Services will take this opportunity to review possible pilot expansion locations, and to provide Council an update of real-time data collection from the 2027 pilot launch, along with community dashboard results.

A surface lot paid parking pilot will provide Parking Services with additional time to ensure that the transition may be made smoothly, help us to better understand and make sure impacts to downtown vitality are avoided, and to better align with downtown business. The information gathered will help navigate a series of considerations around paid on street parking into 2029.



ATTACHMENTS / LINKS

1. Previous Parking Plans & Studies
2. Presentation