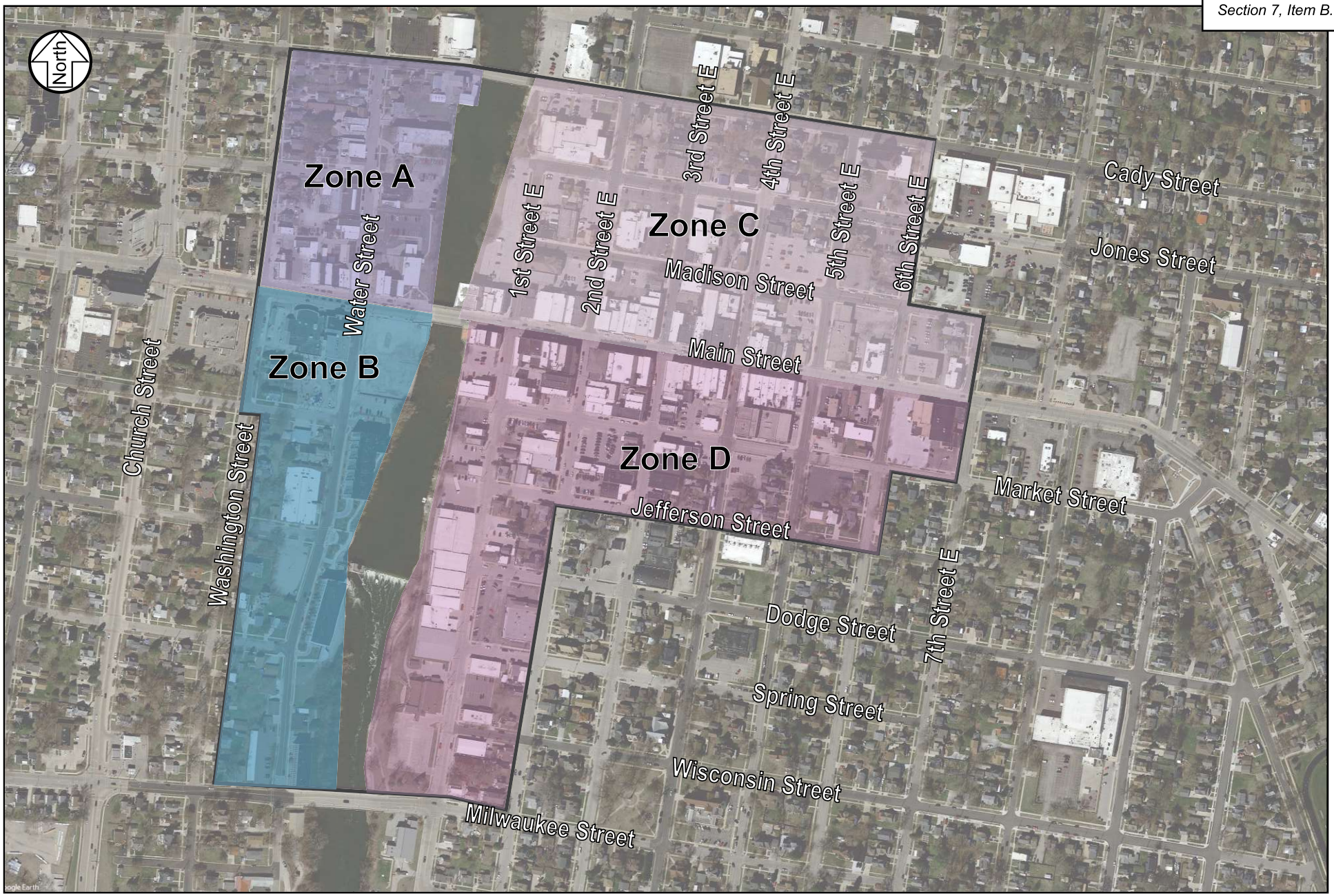

Zone Map

Watertown Downtown Parking Study

City of Watertown, WI

Figure 1

02215015
May 2022

Note that the parking data collection occurred on mild temperature summer days when both commercial and recreation activity was taking place. The bounded area of the parking utilization surveys is consistent with the area collected in 2018. Note, based on impacts from the COVID-19 Pandemic and resources available, on-street parking data and private lot parking data was utilized from the 2018 study provided by the City. The public lots within Downtown Watertown were newly collected as indicated above.

Results of the parking utilization surveys are detailed within Tables 1, 2, and 3 for the highest peak periods during the observation periods, which were the Saturday afternoon, weekday evening, and weekday afternoon, respectively. The full dataset is included within Appendix A.

As shown in Tables 1 through 3, the **peak parking period** is generally identified as the **Saturday afternoons** with a peak utilization of approximately 45 percent for all spaces in the downtown core. Reviewing just the public spaces, there is a peak parking demand of 53 percent of the public spaces available in Downtown. This leaves a public parking surplus of 597 spaces. Note, an effective surplus was not applied to these parking demand counts as to not overestimate the existing demand. While an effective surplus is an estimated five (5) to 15 percent inflation of the existing parking demand values, which has been previously used in parking studies as users found lots "effectively fully occupied" at 85 to 95 percent parked. However, as land values have increased and parking lot construction and maintenance costs of increased, overbuilding parking to accommodate the effective surplus is not as common as it used to be. While there can be added circulation for motorists, some agencies rely less on an effective surplus and focus more intently on the actual surplus as to not overbuild surface or structured parking.

A few other key observations during the peak timeframes:

- On-street parking ranges in all zones from 32 to 45 percent occupied, with the peak occurring on the Saturday afternoon timeframe.
- On-street parking in Zone A, where there are no public lots, is approximately 55 percent occupied during all peak timeframes.
- Public parking lots peaked with a 66 percent utilization on Saturday afternoon, which coincides with the peak recreational and shopping hours of Downtown. During the weekdays, the public parking lots were approximately 35 percent occupied in Downtown.
- During the weekdays, the public lots were higher utilized in Zone D, however, on Saturday, the public lots were similarly utilized in Zone C and D. Note, the public lots in Zone B were always less than 30 percent occupied.
- Private parking lots throughout Downtown were approximately 30 percent occupied during the peak hours, indicating an excess supply of private parking.

Table 1. Parking Utilization Survey – Saturday Afternoon

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D	Total
Supply					
Total Public Supply	108	198	582	383	1,271
Total Supply (Public + Private)	249	296	740	692	1,977
On-Street	108	80	334	262	784
Off-Street (Public)	0	118	248	121	487
Off-Street (Private)	141	98	158	309	706
Demand					
Public Demand	59	82	301	232	674
Total Demand	119	117	324	326	886
On-Street	59	48	116	131	354
Off-Street (Public)	0	34	185	101	320
Off-Street (Private)	60	35	23	94	212
Surplus/(Deficit)					
Public Surplus	49	116	281	151	597
Total Surplus	130	179	416	366	1,091
On-Street	49	32	218	131	430
Off-Street (Public)	0	84	63	20	167
Off-Street (Private)	81	63	135	215	494
Utilization Percent					
Public Utilization	55%	41%	52%	61%	53%
Total Utilization	48%	40%	44%	47%	45%
On-Street	55%	60%	35%	50%	45%
Off-Street (Public)	N/A	29%	75%	83%	66%
Off-Street (Private)	43%	36%	15%	30%	30%

Table 2. Parking Utilization Survey – Weekday Evening

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D	Total
Supply					
Total Public Supply	108	198	582	383	1,271
Total Supply (Public + Private)	249	296	740	692	1,977
On-Street (Public)	108	80	334	262	784
Off-Street (Public)	0	118	248	121	487
Off-Street (Private)	141	98	158	309	706
Demand					
Public Demand	58	40	219	180	497
Total Demand	122	73	236	286	717
On-Street	58	26	143	101	328
Off-Street (Public)	0	14	76	79	169
Off-Street (Private)	64	33	17	106	220
Surplus/(Deficit)					
Public Surplus	50	158	363	203	774
Total Surplus	127	223	504	406	1,260
On-Street	50	54	191	161	456
Off-Street (Public)	0	104	172	42	318
Off-Street (Private)	77	65	141	203	486
Utilization Percent					
Public Utilization	54%	20%	38%	47%	39%
Total Utilization	49%	25%	32%	41%	36%
On-Street	54%	33%	43%	39%	42%
Off-Street (Public)	N/A	12%	31%	65%	35%
Off-Street (Private)	45%	34%	11%	34%	31%

Table 3. Parking Utilization Survey – Weekday Afternoon

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D	Total
Supply					
Total Public Supply	108	198	582	383	1,271
Total Supply (Public + Private)	249	296	740	692	1,977
On-Street (Public)	108	80	334	262	784
Off-Street (Public)	0	118	248	121	487
Off-Street (Private)	141	98	158	309	706
Demand					
Public Demand	60	52	177	127	416
Total Demand	124	76	217	209	626
On-Street	60	24	102	63	249
Off-Street (Public)	0	28	75	64	167
Off-Street (Private)	64	24	40	82	210
Surplus/(Deficit)					
Public Surplus	48	146	405	256	855
Total Surplus	125	220	523	483	1,351
On-Street	48	56	232	199	535
Off-Street (Public)	0	90	173	57	320
Off-Street (Private)	77	74	118	227	496
Utilization Percent					
Public Utilization	56%	26%	30%	33%	33%
Total Utilization	50%	26%	29%	30%	32%
On-Street	56%	30%	31%	24%	32%
Off-Street (Public)	N/A	24%	30%	53%	34%
Off-Street (Private)	45%	24%	25%	27%	30%

Future Parking Demand

Although parking overall throughout Downtown indicates a significant capacity available, the majority is located east of the Rock River in Zones C and D. Currently, there are a number of partially and fully vacant buildings within the Downtown core, including upper level residential opportunities along Main Street. Using potential development assumptions and vacancy data provide by the City, an estimate of the future new development parking demand was completed. While a portion of these developments will be expected to self park (i.e. residential/hotel), there is another portion of the developments that will likely utilize the available public parking (i.e. retail). Additionally, some development is slated to replace current public surface lots, which will reduce the available supply. This includes the 66 space public lot in Zone B and approximately 40 spaces of the public lot along the river in Zone C.

Using the *ITE Parking Generation Manual 5th Edition*, a parking generation estimate was completed for the potential developments in each zone. Due to the private nature of the development information, specific land uses are not shown in the tables below, however, it includes a mix of residential, retail, institution, hotel, and a Town Square Amphitheater. The Town Square piece is located in Zone B. Note, the Town Square Amphitheater is expected to peak on Saturday evenings during the summer months with a peak demand of approximately 80 spaces. During the three (3) peak times identified, the usage of the space is expected to be less due to the expected minimal amount of programming during those time periods.

The future parking generation, and total public and overall parking surplus/deficit estimates are shown in Table 4, 5, and 6 for the Saturday afternoon, weekday evening, and weekday afternoon timeframes, respectively.

Table 4. Future Parking Utilization – Saturday Afternoon

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D
Surplus of Public Parking	+49	+116	+281	+151
On-Street	49	32	218	131
Off-Street (Public)	0	84	63	20
Increased Peak Demand	55	49	55	28
Removal of Public Parking	0	66	40	0
Forecasted Surplus of Public Parking	(-6)	+1	+186	+123
Surplus of Private Parking	+81	+63	+135	+215
Forecasted Surplus of Total Parking	+75	+64	+321	+338

Table 5. Future Parking Utilization – Weekday Evening

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D
Surplus of Public Parking	50	158	363	203
On-Street	50	54	191	161
Off-Street (Public)	0	104	172	42
Increased Peak Demand	59	33	19	34
Removal of Public Parking	0	66	40	0
Forecasted Surplus of Public Parking	(-9)	+59	+304	+169
Surplus of Private Parking	+77	+65	+141	+203
Forecasted Surplus of Total Parking	+68	+124	+445	+372

Table 6. Future Parking Utilization – Weekend Afternoon

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D
Surplus of Public Parking	48	146	405	256
On-Street	48	56	232	199
Off-Street (Public)	0	90	173	57
Increased Peak Demand	55	37	18	33
Removal of Public Parking	0	66	40	0
Forecasted Surplus of Public Parking	(-7)	+43	+347	+223
Surplus of Private Parking	+77	+74	+118	+227
Forecasted Surplus of Total Parking	+70	+117	+465	+450

The following key results were determined as part of the parking analysis:

- Zone A is expected to have a deficit of public parking between six (6) and nine (9) spaces during the time periods. Note, all available public parking in this zone is on-street parking.
- If the proposed retail developments in Zone A are able to provide off-street parking for a portion of the customers, the potential deficit could be reduced/eliminated. For purposed of this study to remain conservative, it is assumed that all parking will occur at public facilities.
- In Zone B during the Saturday afternoon peak time there is expected to be a public surplus of only one (1) parking space. This would be expected to become a deficit of approximately 60 spaces if full capacity events occurred at the Town Square Amphitheater during the Saturday afternoon timeframe. During the other timeframes, there is expected to be sufficient public parking supply.
- There are not expected to be any public parking supply issues in Zones C and D during the peak times.
- In addition to the public parking, there is an abundance of private parking spaces available during the peak times in all zones.
- Given the public parking supply issues expected in Zones A and B during the peak timeframes, parking mitigation strategies will be required to minimize impacts on visitors to Downtown.

- Strategies should focus on directing visitors to available parking lots on either side of the river while promoting multimodal opportunities to decrease vehicle circulation.

Other Considerations

The two (2) public lots located along the west side of S First Street between Jefferson Street and Main Street are potential locations of development. While not indicated by City staff at this time of any plans, if these lots were to be redeveloped they currently contain 39 public parking stalls. However, based on the peak surveys collected, they have a demand between 22 and 25 spaces. Given the peak demand of 25 stalls on the weekday evening, a review of the publicly available parking nearby was completed. Within approximately one (1) block of these lots, there are approximately 62 on-street parking stalls, of which only 28 were occupied during the peak timeframe, leaving 34 stalls available. Additionally, the public lot along Market Street had eight (8) available parking stalls. Based on these results of the parking survey, there is available capacity between on-street parking and the public lot to accommodate the development of these sites. Note, the public lots further south on S First Street have over 50 available spaces during the peak times. While they are approximately a four (4) block walk, they are within the downtown area and could accommodate excess demand from further north.

In addition to that potential development, the City may potentially acquire two (2) private parking lots in Zone C. If these lots become public parking, it is anticipated that up to 40 public parking stalls will be added. These lots are present an opportunity for the City to create additional overflow parking during upcoming Main Street construction during which on-street parking will be reduced during the construction season, potential permit spaces for businesses/landlords, and future redevelopment opportunities. By purchasing these lots, the City will control the function of the lot, which allows flexibility in future years to meet the needs of the community.

Mitigation/Implementation Plan

As a result of the expected parking deficit is Zone A and the potential deficits in Zone B, a list of parking mitigation strategies was developed. This list includes many items that are consistent with strategies identified within the 2018 parking study. Strategies were categorized into a low, medium, and high cost category. From an implementation perspective, the low cost strategies provide some of the easiest opportunities to make impacts on the potential parking deficits. The high cost strategies are likely not needed at this time or into the future unless major redevelopment plans are presented.

Low Cost

Shared Parking

Underutilized private parking lots throughout Downtown should be considered for shared parking opportunities, especially private lots that serve commercial buildings during the day. These lots could serve the proposed upper floor residential parking during the overnight and weekend timeframes to reduce reliance on on-street parking. Additionally, individual commercial businesses that have their own lot could consider sharing excess parking with new developments at a cost to both minimize cost to the new development (i.e. reduce the amount of new parking built) and receive a monetary gain for unused spaces. The sharing of parking may also be useful for employees to have a dedicated long-term parking space available while reducing employees relying on street parking. This street parking can become available for the visitors of businesses.

Shared parking opportunities have become increasingly popular in urban areas as ways to reduce building new parking are discovered. The high price of new parking lots can be discouraging to developers and the sharing of private parking lots can help new developments flourish, remove blighted properties, and provide for a well functioning downtown. Note, agreements would need to be made between private entities.

Potential locations to consider shared parking in Zone B include, but are not limited to, the following private parking locations:

- Lot located in the 300 block of S Water Street
- Lot directly north of 104 W Main Street
- Lot located at 301 W Main Street

Provide Short-Term Parking

Reduce parking time limits in front of certain businesses, as needed, to encourage high turnover for visitors and reduce employee parking on-street. Time limits could be reduced to 15 to 30 minutes to encourage short duration trips and have available parking for commercial business guests. This is especially important to small retail businesses that rely on take out ordering, quick dining, and order pick up. With the emergence of online retail for both businesses and restaurants, short-duration or pick-up zones have become popular in Downtown areas. These spaces provide guests the ability to get in/get out quickly without circulating around looking for a close parking space or stopping within a drive lane.

New Development Parking Requirements

Require off-street parking to be provided by new developments at agreed upon parking rates. This will require new developments to self park and reduce reliance on public facilities. Note, this type of requirement can increase the overall cost of new developments and reduce the amount of blighted properties that may be improved. Additionally, new developments may be able to work with private lot owners to share parking. A detailed parking study for each new development is recommended to be completed if a shared parking opportunity is desired.

Medium Cost

Communications Plan

Communications can be sent out to both residents and area businesses/chamber of commerce promoting the use of the available parking facilities. While not all visitors are residents of the City, these communications can provide helpful information to a portion of the Downtown users.

With the knowledge of the parking opportunities available to the general public, business owners can help provide guests alternative parking areas if the guests have concerns over parking availability.

This will be crucial if/when the Town Square development occurs and event parking scenarios begin to occur. Given that there is minimal public parking available near the Town Square, a detailed communications plan for guest of those events should be completed to provide them information on where to go. This can help encourage use of facilities east of the river.

Parking Surveys

Perform a business owner survey in the future for the entirety of downtown to understand current communications plans, employee parking behaviors, and opinion on the changes in work habits.

Survey results can help inform and target where improvement strategies are most important and have the highest benefit/cost. A similar survey could be sent to residents of the City. A survey can help identify current issues, how far people may walk/bike, what improvements are needed, and additional non-quantitative information that is not obtainable via parking utilization surveys.

Improved Parking Signing

Installing improved, high visibility signs at entrances to public parking facilities. Signs at the entrances can help promote and advertise the locations. This will be critical for guests who arrive and are not familiar with the area.

Potential Parking Lot Sign. Source: SRF Consulting Group

Promoting Walking/Biking Downtown

To encourage higher usage of public parking lots on the fringe of the Downtown core, the City can encourage walking through the core and encourage residents who live withing a bikeable distance (typically within 1 to 2 miles) to bike to Downtown to reduce reliance on automobiles. These strategies can improve visibility of multimodal options and help walkers/bikers feel welcome and safe in the area. Ways to encourage walking/biking include:

- Installing bike racks/bike lanes where feasible. Designate a bike route.
- Ensuring sidewalks are a proper width (minimum of 4 feet) and are in good condition (i.e. fixing broken panels and heaved panels).
- Ensure sidewalks are clear of ice/snow during winter months.
- Provide benches and landscape/streetscape enhancements to improve the visual feel and provide opportunities for visitors to rest.
- Ensure areas are well lit and safe. When visitors feel safe, they are encouraged to stay longer and visit more often.
- Install wayfinding signing with estimated walk times/distance. These signs provide helpful notes to visitors to explore the area while understanding the walk times. Public parking lots could be included or these signs can be installed near public lots.

Wayfinding Sign. Photo Courtesy of City of Northfield, MN

Example of Information Kiosk. Source: Behance

- Information kiosks, either static or interactive (higher cost) can help visitors find local establishments, find parking locations, and understand distances. Similar to wayfinding signing, these types of installations provide visitors with a greater understanding of the Downton core. These can be located near key intersections or bridges.
    - Detailed information such a restaurants, civic destinations, churches, or landmarks can be included.
    - Interactive displays provide a wealth of information but come with a high cost.
    - A static display could include a QR code which can help update with real time information.
    - Kiosks should be placed in a way that they do not impact travel paths along the sidewalk network and still maintain ADA compliance.

High Cost-

Acquiring Additional Public Lots

Find private lots that are underutilized or not utilized and purchase the blighted properties. While the cost can be high, structured parking cost is likely higher. Several lots throughout downtown with minimal private parking present opportunities. Another possibility would be a private/public agreement could be put in place to allow public parking but without the City purchasing the lot.

Note, an opportunity currently exists for the City to purchase a private lot that is available for sale in Zone C. This lot could be utilized for employee permit parking if desired. While there is not currently a parking issue, having a safe, dedicated lot for employee permit parking can free up spaces closer to businesses for guests.

Parking Structure

Although not expected to be needed now, a parking structure constructed on the site of an existing public surface lot can increase parking supply. However, structed parking is often estimated at $25,000 to $35,000 per space. Unless the structure is expected to be paid for through a paid parking program, it represents a significant cost burden to the City and is likely not feasible. Given the high amount of publicly available parking and the excess of private parking in the Downtown core, a parking structure is not recommended.

Parking Meters

Parking meters have not been specifically requested by users or business owners of Downtown, but they are a potential future option. Note, parking meters are intended to increase turnover of parking if it is determined that on-street spaces are being utilized for long periods of times. Metered parking can be divisive amongst business owners and visitors and will require a high installation and ongoing maintenance cost.

Parking Permits

Both a residential or employee parking permit program could be instituted to help reduce circulation and clearly identify who can park where. While a permit process can help clearly define who can park where, may not be received well by residents due to cost implications, guest passes, and which streets or parking lots are permitted. Additionally, the only way a program like this becomes useful is if it is enforced. Enforcement can have added cost implications and if it is not done, compliance would be expected to be ignored.

Implementation Plan

Using information provided within the study and the 2018 study, The City is recommended to prioritize the low cost improvements. As development occurs within Downtown, the medium cost improvement strategies can begin to be implemented, pending funding. Wayfinding signing provides one of the best benefit/cost of the listed strategies, as it can help both long-time residents and new visitors to their destinations. The multi-modal improvements listed can be implemented on a low cost basis or as roadway reconstruction occurs. These improvements will help facilitate alternative modes of transportation and reduce reliance on parking automobiles right outside the front door of the destination. At this time, the high cost opportunities of parking structures and parking meters are not expected to be necessary. If development assumptions change and a large influx of public parking is necessary, those strategies should be reviewed. Under the current plans, the low, medium, and remaining high cost strategies should be sufficient to help accommodate the future parking demand.