

Parking Management Program FAQ

April 8, 2019

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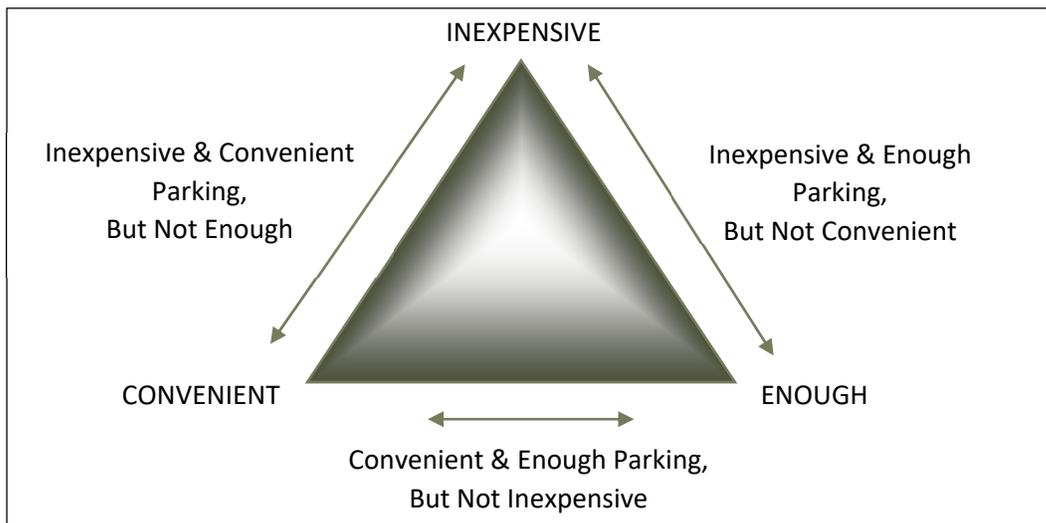
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1. Introduction: The Parking Triangle

The fact that parking is a source of frustration and contention is one element common to every vibrant downtown. There may not be another topic that draws as much public interest, and brings out as much passion, as parking. This is because it affects us directly. How many other topics involve issues of personal safety and security, convenience, accessibility, and personal financial livelihood?

We are engaged in this conversation because the demand for parking is high, and our supply of parking is limited. The demand for parking is high because we have an incredibly vibrant and growing downtown. So, what are we going to do about it?

Figure 1. Parking Triangle



Everyone wants three things when it comes to parking:

- We want there to be plenty of it;
- We want it to be very convenient; and
- We want it to be inexpensive (and preferably free).

Unfortunately, we can have any two, but not all three. This is the policy decision before the City Council at present. The responsibility of City staff is to recommend policies that advance the public interest. What policies can we put in place to manage the high demand for parking, and ensure that most people have a place to park, most of the time?

With the concurrence of our parking management consultants, staff recommends that the City Council choose CONVENIENT and ENOUGH. With this policy direction, we will create a parking management program that is customer-oriented, and responds to the current and future needs of students, visitors, employees, employers, and property owners through active planning, management, coordination, and communication.

The following pages provide an overview of common parking-related questions and topics, from the staff perspective of managing parking in the best interest of the community as a whole.

2. How we got here

- City Council approved the Downtown Master Plan in 2008. The Plan recommends creating a parking management plan and district, instating a metered parking plan, and using revenues to finance future property acquisition for surface parking lots and later construction of parking garages. [See Appendix 1.](#)
- City Council approved the Downtown Parking Initiative in 2012. The Initiative report built upon the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan, and provided greater detail regarding parking program organization and best management practices.
- City Council approved a contract with Kimley-Horn Associates in for the specific purpose of parking management consulting and the preparation of an action plan for implementation of paid on-street parking.
- City Council approved the “Parking Program Framework Plan” in June 2018. The Framework Plan provides a high-level overview of a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing parking in the downtown area. It also identifies key program objectives, recommends program vision and mission statements, a set of "guiding principles" as well as primary action items.
- The Final Draft “On-Street Paid Parking Implementation Plan” prepared for Council consideration represents the final deliverable under the Kimley-Horn contract. [See Appendix 2.](#)

3. Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

- Transportation Demand Management (TDM), sometimes referred to as Travel Demand Management, is a transportation industry standard term that refers to a body of actions that seek “to manage the demand for travel by drive-alone private car, rather than catering for that demand, or managing the road system.” [See Appendix 3.](#)
- In simple terms, TDM provides people with a variety of mobility options (other than driving alone) to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and gain environmental, conservation, and sustainability benefits – generally without large infrastructure investments.
- Kimley-Horn developed a Whitepaper on the topic of TDM, that describes a wide range of strategies, and rates the propensity of those strategies to affect behavior, as well as the relative cost to implement those strategies.
- Charging a market price for on-street parking is identified as one of the most effective TDM strategies. Kimley-Horn recommends charging for parking in high demand areas, and using a portion of the revenue to support implementation of other TDM strategies, such as Transit Subsidy and Parking Cash Out, in addition to investment in surface parking lots and future parking garages.

4. Parking as an economic development strategy

- One of the primary objectives of the Framework Plan is to position parking management as a contributor to the continued redevelopment and economic expansion of downtown.
- The parking management program will assume a leadership role in developing public policies that support parking and mobility management as a key element of the downtown economic development strategy.
- It is envisioned that the San Marcos parking management program will work in partnership with City economic development, the San Marcos Main street program and

other entities actively engaged in community and economic development work in the downtown.

5. Parking Benefit Districts and Draft Enabling Ordinance

- Parking Benefit Districts are designated areas where the City employs the principles and practices of transportation demand management, including the strategy of pricing parking in the public right-of-way, in order to more efficiently and effectively manage public parking assets and otherwise enhance conditions for property owners, businesses, employees and visitors in those areas.
- The parking ordinance provided for Council consideration creates a “Downtown Parking Benefit District” and a “River Benefit District.” [See Appendix 4.](#)
- Under the ordinance, the City Manager is authorized to manage parking within the Districts, including paid areas, times of day, days of the week, rates, fines and fees, subject to the limitations of the ordinance.
- Under the ordinance, revenue generated within the Districts, net of operations and management expenses, will be reinvested within the Districts for any of the following activities:
 - Parking system improvements;
 - Beautification;
 - Addition or enhancement of public improvements;
 - Promotion of public events;
 - Furnishing of public art; and
 - General promotion of business activities.

6. Role of the Parking Advisory Board

- City Council established the Board in Dec. 2018, and made appointments in Feb. 2019.
- The Board serves an advisory function, providing recommendations to the City Manager and City Council regarding creation and operation of the parking and transportation demand management program.
- The Board is intended to make recommendations on “operational level” decisions, such as paid parking areas, hours of operation, time limits, rates, citations, and penalties, and the manner in which parking revenues are reinvested within the Parking Benefit Districts.
- City Council retains authority over “policy level” decisions, such as authorization of parking management activities, and creation of Parking Benefit Districts by ordinance.

7. Role of the Parking & Mobility Manager

- City Council approved a budget amendment in December 2018, creating the Parking Management Fund, and authorizing the addition of one Full-Time Employee, the Parking & Mobility Manager.
- The Parking & Mobility Manager is responsible for carrying out the “Parking Program Framework Plan,” the “On-Street Paid Parking Implementation Plan,” and other adopted parking and mobility-related plans and policies.
- The Parking & Mobility Manager will develop and implement transportation demand management strategies to discourage solo driving and encourage the use of transit, shared mobility services, cycling, and walking.
- The Parking & Mobility Manager will provide administrative support to the Parking Advisory Board and administer all Parking Benefit Districts established by the City Council.

- The Parking & Mobility Manager will serve as the contract administrator for the 3rd party parking management firm.

8. Role of the 3rd party parking management firm

- The adopted “Parking Program Framework Plan” recommends that the City engage a private parking management firm, for at least an initial three-year term, to provide needed parking management expertise and help ensure that the parking program is successfully established.
- The 3rd party parking management firm will be hired under contract after a competitive process, and will be responsible for management of day-to-day parking operations, reporting to the Parking & Mobility Manager.
- This arrangement provides the City with immediate expertise and an adequate staffing level at program inception. The private firm will advise the city on the development of parking management policies and procedures, and will transition responsibilities to the City over the course of the 3-year contract term.
- The respective roles of the Parking Advisory Board, Parking & Mobility Manager, and the 3rd Party Parking Management Firm are summarized in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Roles and Responsibilities



9. Parking enforcement

- All parking enforcement and related activities, including towing company management and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) enforcement, are within the purview of the Police Department Parking Enforcement unit.
- This unit includes one Full-Time Employee, the Parking Enforcement Supervisor, and four Part-Time Parking Technicians.
- In early 2018, the City made a major change to parking enforcement, implementing the NuPark License Plate Recognition (LPR) system to improve the accuracy and efficiency of

our enforcement efforts, specifically in the areas designated for time-limited parking downtown.

- The LPR system is currently used to enforce the uniform 2-hour time limit downtown. It is understood that the uniform 2-hour time limit does not meet the needs of all stakeholders. For example, it still leaves adequate time for many University students to park on-street, attend class, and return to their vehicle within the 2-hour limit.
- Since January 1, 2018, more than 4,865 citations have been issued for violation of the 2-hour time limit downtown. [See Appendix 5.](#)
- Parked Over Time Citations for the past three months: January (219); February (197); March (689). All streets with a posted 2-hour time limit saw citation activity. March increase likely due to Parking Enforcement Division being at full staffing for the first time in several months.
- Among downtown stakeholders, there is a strong sentiment that parking enforcement effort should be increased. Specifically, that the City should employ dedicated, full-time parking enforcement personnel downtown, and that the City should use the NuPark LPR system to issue direct to mail “e-citations,” eliminating the need to issue paper tickets at the scene.
- Staff believes that these recommendations have merit, but may not be feasible in an open environment such as we have downtown. E-citations are typically used in situations where the parking authority maintains a database of registered users (e.g. a corporate office, or university campus). Staff is currently engaged in discussions with NuPark (and parent company Passport), regarding the technical challenges associated with the e-citation approach, and will provide an update regarding this specific topic at the April 16th Work Session.
- Staff does not support the position that enhanced parking enforcement will adequately address the demand for parking downtown, and that on-street paid parking is not necessary until we have achieved “100% enforcement.” Issuing citations for all parking violations is not a realistic goal for any enforcement program. Drivers who wish to circumvent the rules will always find a way to do so, which is why staff wishes to re-iterate the point that increased parking enforcement is not a transportation demand strategy. (Enforcement does not have a significant effect on drivers’ behavior. Establishing a market price for parking has a demonstrated, significant effect on driver behavior.)
- Heightened parking enforcement may contribute to the creation of a negative atmosphere downtown, where potential customers are deterred from visiting by the prospect of receiving a parking ticket. Most drivers prefer to pay a small fee for the privilege of parking downtown, rather than risk receiving a much more expensive and time-consuming citation.
- Enforcement of time-limited parking, paid parking, and residential permit parking are services that may be contracted to a 3rd party parking management firm. This approach would ensure a dedicated enforcement presence downtown, and free-up Police Department resources to address parking-related activities elsewhere in the city.

10. Employee parking

- City records indicate that more than 2,400 employees are working in downtown San Marcos, not counting the University campus. Employees are a major source of demand for parking downtown.

- Employees who work an 8- to 10-hour shift have longer-term parking needs than visitors and patrons of downtown businesses, which has a significant negative impact on the rate of turnover of on-street parking spaces downtown.
- Pricing on-street parking will expand the available supply of off-street parking by creating a market incentive for the activation of underutilized, privately-owned, off-street spaces.
- Staff proposes to create on-street permits in lower demand areas, and/or designate 10-hour zones to accommodate longer-term parking.
- Staff proposes to enter into lease/management and/or development agreements with private property owners to increase the supply of off-street parking.
- Staff proposes to implement improvements to the Old Armory lot on Hopkins, where employees can park for free and then walk, bike or take transit downtown. The City has previously offered the Old Armory lot as an option to downtown employees. To our knowledge, this option has not been used.
- Paid-parking implementation will allow the City to explore additional Transportation Demand Management strategies to benefit downtown employees, such as free or reduced transit fares.

11. Cost to construct structured parking

- Structured parking is expensive. In a recent report titled, “Assessing an Uncertain Transportation Future,” Kimley-Horn provides a current overview of parking structure development costs.
- Based on a review of several industry sources, including hundreds of completed parking structure projects of varying size, scope, and geographic location (omitting parking structures that are entirely below-grade because the cost of such structures is much higher), the national median construction cost for a new parking structure in 2017 is approximately \$19,000 - \$20,000 per space or \$56.99 - \$59.00 per square foot, increasing approximately 2.5% from 2015, when the median cost was approximately \$18,600 per space based on historical data.
- This construction cost data does not include items such as land acquisition, architectural and engineering fees, environmental evaluations, materials testing, special inspections, geotechnical borings and recommendations, financing, owner administrative and legal, or other project soft costs. Soft costs are typically 15% to 20% of construction costs.
- For example, an industry-standard sized structure (four-story building with a footprint of 302 feet x 153 feet, constructed with ground-floor retail space along the primary frontage, is estimated to cost approximately \$20.3 million, not including the cost of land. [See Appendix 6](#). An expenditure of this magnitude is not feasible without a recurring source of revenue.
- The adopted “Parking Program Framework Plan” includes Primary Action Item #5: Seek Opportunities to Expand Parking Supply, after implementation of the on-street paid parking system. Ideally, the City will acquire, or enter into agreement with the owner of, private property of sufficient size for the development of structured parking. This property could be used for surface parking in the near- to mid-term, and may be developed as structured parking as warranted by future demand, and where the City can demonstrate the ability to cover the debt service with revenue from parking management activities.

12. Stakeholder engagement efforts

- On November 20, 2018, Council held a Work Session with Kimley-Horn to review the consultants recommended draft On-Street Paid Parking Implementation Plan. Since the Work Session, staff has made extensive efforts to engage diverse stakeholders, and inform and educate the public regarding the recommended course of action.
- Specifically, staff has participated in at least 6 meetings with the Downtown Association of San Marcos (full membership as well as their Parking Sub-committee), and has regularly attended meetings of the Main Street Advisory Board to share progress and solicit feedback.
- The final draft On-Street Paid Parking Implementation Plan has been posted on the City's website, and a postcard was delivered by mail to all 1,775 known property owners, businesses and residents within the proposed boundaries of the Downtown Parking Benefit District. [See Appendix 7.](#)
- The postcard provided a link to the City's website, and invited the recipient to attend four Parking Benefit District information sessions that were held February 5th and 6th in the Main Street office at 317 N. LBJ Drive.
- An additional 225 postcards were individually distributed to downtown businesses by the Main Street program team, and our outreach efforts were amplified through both the Main Street and City of San Marcos social media channels.
- Staff produced an informational video that was posted to the City's Facebook page. This post achieved 8,862 "people reached" and scored 1,000 "engagements."
- Staff was interviewed about parking management by the San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce for their [weekly podcast](#).
- Staff also spoke at a Parking Benefit District forum, hosted by Splash Co-Working, on February 11th, and at a forum hosted by the Chamber of Commerce on February 13th.

13. Downtown Association recommendations

- The Downtown Association of San Marcos (DTA) Board issued a comprehensive set of recommendations regarding downtown parking on February 9, 2019. [See Appendix 8.](#)
- The DTA recommendations are very detailed, and a full response is beyond the scope of this FAQ. We recommend that City staff work directly with the Parking Advisory Board to fully vet the DTA recommendations. Below please find the DTA's ten summary recommendations, and the staff response to each:
 - 1. Implement direct mail ticketing so that LPR vehicles do not stop to issue citations.**
Staff believes this recommendation has merit, but may not be feasible in an open environment such as we have downtown. E-citations are typically used in situations where the parking authority maintains a database of registered users (e.g. a corporate office, or university campus). Staff is currently engaged in discussions with NuPark (and parent company Passport), regarding the technical challenges associated with the e-citation approach.
 - 2. Overhaul the ticketing and collection process for consistency & consequences.**
Staff generally supports the recommendation to modify parking fines and fees, and our collection process. There are opportunities to engage a 3rd party parking management firm in this effort.
 - 3. Refit the LPR cameras onto fixed-route Electric Cab(s) serving multiple purposes: enforcement, circulation within downtown, and a shuttle to a free employee lot.**

At present, this is not an actionable recommendation. Staff is currently engaged in discussions with NuPark/Passport regarding e-citations, and is aware of a pending pilot project in another client city that may provide a model for this type of service, but which has not yet been made public.

4. Provide a free 1st hour of parking across all of downtown.

Staff, with the concurrence of our parking consultants at Kimley-Horn, believes that there are significant practical challenges with implementing this recommendation. Specifically, in order get the 1st hour free, all parkers would still have to register their license plate number and payment information at a kiosk or on the app. 1st hour free may be recommended for City-managed off-street resources, as a strategy to reduce on-street parking demand. This is an appropriate operational topic for deliberation and recommendation by the Parking Advisory Board.

5. Install meters throughout all of downtown and charge \$1 for a 2nd hour.

Staff generally supports the recommendation to install parking meters throughout the Downtown Parking Benefit District, in order to prevent/mitigate the anticipated spillover effects. Staff recommends implementation of paid parking in a phased manner, for purely practical and logistical reasons. Installing meters, signage and striping for the ~52 meters proposed in the first phase is a significant undertaking, both in terms of financial and staff resources. This is an appropriate operational topic for deliberation and recommendation by the Parking Advisory Board.

6. To increase flexibility, but promote turnover, charge an additional \$2 for a 3rd hour.

Staff generally supports this recommendation. This is an appropriate operational topic for deliberation and recommendation by the Parking Advisory Board.

7. After 9-months, reduce free time on blocks with utilization remaining above the 85% target.

This is an appropriate operational topic for deliberation and recommendation by the Parking Advisory Board.

8. Provide a suite of options to support employees through this transition.

Staff fully supports this recommendation. This is an appropriate operational topic for deliberation and recommendation by the Parking Advisory Board.

9. Put 100% of revenues into parking management, sustainable mobility, and downtown investment.

Staff generally supports the recommendation to reinvest a significant portion of parking management revenues within the Parking Benefit Districts. Council policy decision.

10. Launch an Online Dashboard and education campaign for the Benefit District.

Staff supports this recommendation. This will be a collaborative effort between City staff, NuPark/Passport, and a 3rd party parking management firm.

- As noted elsewhere in this FAQ, the DTA is a key stakeholder for the Parking Management program, and has developed strong working relationships with City staff.
- The DTA represents many employers, employees and property owners; however, they do not speak for all downtown stakeholders.

14. Partnership with Texas State University

- The City continues to work closely with Texas State University administration regarding shared mobility programs and transit, and to keep the University up-to-date on our parking management activities. A key outcome of our efforts will be the creation of

revised transit routes that serve both students and the broader community, and create opportunities to use existing University-managed parking structures and surface parking lots to meet downtown parking demand (e.g. park near Bobcat Stadium and take the bus downtown).

- Establishing a market price for parking in the public right-of-way is the most effective strategy the City can implement to address the parking demand generated by Texas State University, and begin to create balance between the City-managed and University-managed parking supply.
- Within the guidelines authorized by Council Ordinance, staff will work with the Parking Advisory Board, and in consultation with Texas State University administration, to develop a parking rate and fee structure that encourages parking turnover in high-demand areas downtown, and accommodates the diverse needs of employees, students, and visitors to our vibrant downtown.

15. **Appendices**

[Appendix 1. Pages from 2008 Downtown Master Plan](#)

[Appendix 2. Final Draft On-Street Paid Parking Implementation Plan](#)

[Appendix 3. Kimley-Horn Whitepaper - TDM Quick Guide](#)

[Appendix 4. DRAFT Parking Benefit Districts map](#)

[Appendix 5. C. Stapp Memorandum 02.08.19](#)

[Appendix 6. Pages from Assessing an Uncertain Transportation Future](#)

[Appendix 7. Stakeholder Engagement Efforts](#)

[Appendix 8. Downtown Association recommendations](#)