



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 18, 2024

TO: City Center Redevelopment Authority

FROM: Gabe Montez, Parking District Manager
Anne Stedler, Parking Demand Manager

RE: **Parking Management Area Study and Downtown Parking Plan**

CC: Patrick Quinton, Chris Harder

Introduction

Over the past several years, the City of Vancouver has completed multiple strategic plans and guiding documents, including the 2023-2029 Strategic Plan, Transportation System Plan (TSP), Climate Action Framework, Housing Action Plan, and Equity Framework. These updates mandate a change in the role, objectives, and functions of parking, with a particular focus on downtown. In response, the Parking Services staff embarked on a project to replace the Downtown Strategic Parking Plan with the subject Parking Study and Plan developed by Walker Consultants (the “Plan”). The Plan focuses on an expanded definition of mobility beyond car trips within the Parking Management Area shown below.¹ This memo provides an update on work accomplished on this project, a preview of future work, and an introduction to several parking management, shared parking, and mobility strategies that the Plan will develop.

¹ The Parking Management Area currently matches the Vancouver City Center Vision (VCCV) area. The Plan will revisit the definition of the Parking Management Area and recommend any necessary changes to reflect changes in downtown Vancouver.

Figure 1 The Downtown Parking Study and Plan study area



Background

The current Downtown Strategic Parking Plan was adopted in 2006. While that plan included actions to promote alternative commute options and improve access for pedestrians and non-motorized forms of transportation, the plan expected to increase parking supply as the primary response to growing needs. The City has undergone significant changes since adoption of that plan, and now faces both external pressures and City-adopted policy mandates to improve and encourage a range of mobility and access options to get to and around downtown.

The new Plan is a critical component of downtown Vancouver's transition to a dense urban environment resulting from major housing production and job growth, and will have a direct impact on downtown development, the built environment and the quality of experience and life for downtown stakeholders.

The new Plan should:

- Provide a blueprint for supporting new development activity, anticipated job and population growth, and increased visitors to downtown without new public parking;
- Encourage the sharing of private parking to maximize use of all existing parking in the City Center;
- Align our parking and mobility practices with the City's commitment to climate action, equity, and affordable housing, including the TSP guidance; and,
- Offer best practices in parking management, addressing the City's parking and curb assets, and helping reach City mandates and policies.

Plan Deliverables

The Plan will be completed by the end of 2024, will align with the opportunities identified in the Downtown Redevelopment Study and the implementation priorities identified in the Transportation System Plan. The scope of the Plan includes:

- 1) Updated plan objectives in alignment with City goals and objectives, including Climate Action Framework, Transportation System Plan, and stated equity goals.
- 2) Updated downtown public and private parking inventory.
- 3) Assessment of current mobility options within Downtown Vancouver.
- 4) Estimates of the expected demand for parking and mobility options due to new downtown development and population growth.
- 5) A review of best practices and recommended strategies for maximizing access and mobility to and within Downtown Vancouver, with the primary focus on increasing the availability and use of alternative transportation options.
- 6) A review of best practices and recommendations for the best use of City assets, including downtown rights of way, to achieve City policy goals and vision for the downtown neighborhood.
- 7) An assessment of ADA compliance and best practices and guidance for corrective action.
- 8) Recommendations for data collection and analysis to facilitate effective and ongoing management of the parking system after implementation.
- 9) Prioritized implementation plan, including recommended programs, initiatives, and technologies, as well as potential zoning changes to implement the Plan.

Themes from Public Participation

Much of the work to date on the Plan has focused on public participation through an online survey, public meetings and presentation to public bodies and committees. Attachment B provides a full summary of the extensive engagement of public and private stakeholders to date. The themes the team has heard from Plan public participation include:

- Vancouver must move away from automobile primacy and viewing personal vehicles as the default means of travel.
- Improvement of infrastructure and services and creation of more urban environments where quick and close trips are possible must support the transition to more transit, walking, rolling, and bicycling.
- Parking and curb assets should be managed to provide access and choice of access for many users. That access should be fairly priced, consistently enforced, and equitably provided.
- Parking is not the destination and does not make vibrant communities. People, places, activities, housing, businesses, and opportunities for livelihoods are the goal. Driving and parking are just one option for getting to around downtown and Vancouver seeks to reduce the impact and dominance of driving and parking.

Analysis of Parking Assets: Supply and Occupancy

One of the primary deliverables of the Plan is an existing conditions assessment that includes an up-to-date inventory and utilization analysis of the public and private parking supply. The project team collected and analyzed both on-street and off-street parking occupancy to assess the congestion or availability of parking supply around the downtown/VCCV area.

The project team used the on-street parking occupancy regularly collected by the City's Parking Services team. The aggregated data from January-March 2024 shows these average occupancies of the approximately 2,500 on-street spaces:

- Wednesdays: 62%
- Saturdays: 61%
- Sundays: 51%

These figures are downtown-wide averages. As expected, occupancy varies widely throughout downtown, with hot spots such as at the Waterfront and near Esther Short Park often exceeding 85% use, and areas near the Clark County government buildings often recorded well below 50% occupancy. Hot and cold spots also vary significantly from weekdays to weekends.

The project team collected off-street occupancy data for non-City (mostly private) parking locations on two days during spring 2024. These counts comprised over 220² parking lots and nearly 8,000 parking spaces. The counts occurred from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on both days. Average occupancy in downtown was measured as:

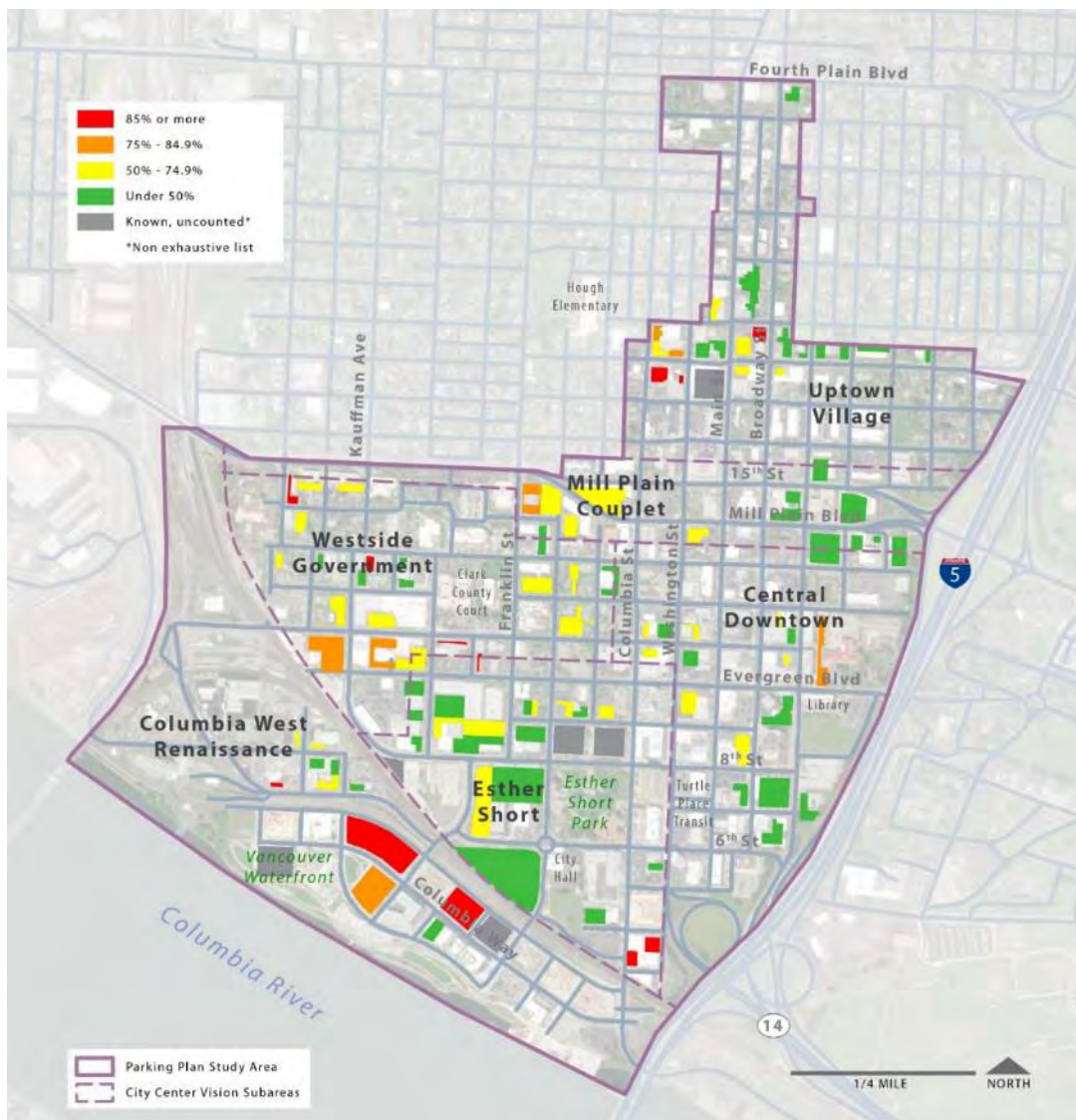
- Thursday, April 18, 2024: 49-54%
- Saturday, April 20, 2024: 25-29%

² The off-street parking counts included only publicly viewable locations and did not include private parking in access-controlled, gated garages or parking structures. Thus, several newer buildings, including hotels and multi-dwelling residential around downtown and especially in the Waterfront, were not counted.

The project team recognizes that parking occupancy can vary significantly seasonally and with weather conditions. The weather on both count days was sunny and in the low 70s. The outdoor farmers market was fully active on Saturday the 20th, creating a spike in occupancy during the morning and early afternoon.

The map shown in Figure 2 below shows the occupancy during one period, Thursday, April 18, 2024, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Many lots are below 50% use, and most are below 75%. From 75-85% occupancy lots start to feel busy. Above 85% occupancy parking lots begin to feel congested and may require users to circulate in search of a space. Only a few lots measured above 85% at any point during the counts. The busiest lots on the map shown on Figure 2 include privately supplied public parking in the Waterfront, several parking lots for restaurants, and parking lots used by construction workers.

Figure 2 Off-street parking occupancy, Thursday, April 18, 2024, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.



Initial Parking Supply Observations

These occupancy averages are below 65% at the highest and much lower at times, presenting opportunities for downtown. If viewed as underutilization of parking, it's an opportunity to distribute parking demand more evenly throughout downtown, seeking to alleviate parking congestion in some areas and shift it to low-use zones. Parking wayfinding and more sophisticated and responsive parking pricing are tools available to help manage demand.

If viewed as an oversupply of parking, it's an opportunity to eliminate some off-street parking supply in favor of redevelopment as housing, businesses, parks, civic spaces, and other people-serving uses. Similarly, on-street parking in some locations could be repurposed in favor of bicycle and bus lanes, outdoor dining parklets, curb extensions, street landscaping, loading zones, and other amenities. These are intended to serve people, enliven the public realm, and bring value of attracting patronage and activity to adjacent private real estate. The City could even consider part-time or full-time car-free street configurations where neither driving nor parking is permitted, such as the existing successful farmers market.

Potential Recommendations

As the project team wraps up the initial public participation and existing conditions assessment, high level strategies and initiatives have emerged for inclusion in the final Plan. These potential strategies fall within three overlapping program areas: 1) Parking Management and Operations, 2) Shared Parking, and 3) Enhanced Access and Mobility. These three program areas are summarized below.

- **Parking Management and Operations** – The Plan should propose updates to the City's management of existing parking assets, including the on-street parking supply. One potential concept for influencing both the location and duration of on-street parking is progressive or tiered pricing based on both geography (high-demand "core" locations vs lower-demand "edge" locations) and time (i.e., pricing longer parking durations at gradually increasing hourly rates).
- **Shared Parking** – Unlocking private parking for public use will be a priority recommendation of the Plan. Implementation of shared parking can take different forms, including sharing between private entities, City or third-party management of public use of private parking, and limited use of private parking for events and other activities that place unusual demands on downtown parking.
- **Enhanced Access and Mobility** – To improve access to downtown for all forms of transportation and mobility, the City must rethink how its existing assets and resources are utilized. The City's primary asset in promoting enhanced mobility downtown is the public right of way, including curbs and sidewalks. The Plan will encourage more flexible uses of the street curb to provide space for social and

business activity, quick passenger and delivery loading, active mobility infrastructure, and other uses that de-emphasize pure car storage. In addition, the City should examine how to utilize the funds collected from parking operations to support a broad range of mobility options, including transit, bikes, and pedestrians.

Next Steps

The project team has transitioned into formulating the recommendations that will be included in the final Plan and will continue that work through September. As part of the strategy development, the project team will brief City Council on initial strategies and recommendations in a workshop on August 12, 2024. Additional stakeholder feedback will be solicited after the final Plan is drafted prior to presenting to CCRA and the Parking Advisory Committee for review and referral to Council for review and adoption in Q4 2024.

Attachments

Attachment A

Transportation System Plan (TSP) Priorities Affecting Parking and Access Downtown

TSP Parking Policies: Make Growth a Benefit for All	
TSP Policy No.	Topic & Objective
G2.1	Parking Requirements: reduce them (*separate City process)
G2.3	Parking Capacity: promote shared parking
G3	Parking Management: effective resource use
G3.1	Parking Operations: efficiency, influence behavior
G3.2	Parking Experience: wayfinding, payment
G4	Downtown Parking: welcoming, “park once”
G4.1	Update the Downtown Parking Plan in 2024
Influential TSP Policies: Embrace the Future	
F2.1	Mode Targets: “drastically reduce drive-alone trips”
F2.2	Congestion Pricing: explore options
F4	EVs and Avs: link use to emissions goals
F5	Emerging Mobility: vendor policies
F5.1	Mobility Hubs: identify feasible deployment
F5.2	Small mobility / Shared: pilot scooter program
F6	Curb Management: flexible, dynamic management

Attachment B

The Parking Study and Plan relies on extensive engagement of public and private stakeholders throughout the Project Schedule.

Schedule for Parking Study and Plan

The Study and Plan are expected to be completed by the end of 2024. The graphic below highlights the timing of the major milestones in the work.



Stakeholder Engagement

The project will engage property owners, business owners and employees, residents and other stakeholders throughout the process. Engagement will utilize existing public bodies as well as project specific groups and activities.

1. A Project Steering Committee comprising a combination of internal and external stakeholders and subject matter experts has been established and will meet throughout the process and provide recommendations on the final plan.
2. Parking Advisory Committee (PAC) – The PAC will be consulted four times during the project and will provide a recommendation on the final plan.
3. Transportation Mobility Commission (TMC) – The TMC will be consulted twice during the project.
4. City Center Redevelopment Authority (CCRA) - the CCRA will be consulted three times during the project and will provide a recommendation on the final plan.
5. Small Group Discussions – The project team will convene up to four small group discussions comprising targeted stakeholder groups during Q2 2024.
6. Public Event – The project team will host an in-person or virtual community conversation open to the public in Q3 2024.
7. Community Surveys – The project team will send out two surveys using the City’s existing community engagement channels. The first survey ran from May to early June and the second is tentatively scheduled for August-September.

Work to Date

- Parking Services entered a contract with Walker Consultants, a nationally recognized planning and design firm with deep experience working with local governments to develop best practice parking and mobility plans. The Walker team includes Alta Planning + Design to provide expertise on mobility options and Enviroissues to assist with public engagement.
- The Steering Committee convened three times (January 25, April 8, and June 13) and provided feedback on the project scope, goals, existing conditions analysis, and initial strategies.
- The project team met with the Parking Advisory Committee (PAC) twice (March 13 and May 8) to receive feedback on parking operations, existing conditions and priorities. The PAC will meet on the morning of July 18 to discuss parking and mobility strategy development.
- On April 2, the Transportation and Mobility Commission (TMC) provided feedback to the project team about mobility priorities and how the new Plan should carry forward parking and mobility strategies identified in the Transportation System Plan, including parking management, parking minimums updates, curb management, and mobility hubs.
- The project team is currently preparing an existing conditions report, which will describe overall mobility and parking conditions, district pricing, and the operations and management of the system. The project team is analyzing City-provided on-street parking data to document use trends. The consultant team visited Vancouver on April 18 and 20 to collect off-street private parking inventory and utilization data.
- The project team recently concluded public survey #1, which has been broadcast widely to seek input about travel and parking behavior and gather initial impressions about opportunities to improve parking and curb management downtown.
- The project team conducted three small group discussions on June 17 and 18, one each with the disability community, hospitality and tourism stakeholders, and the Downtown Stakeholders Forum. A public participation report in the Plan will summarize input from survey #1 and the small group discussions.