

Greater Downtown Savannah Parking and Mobility Study Executive Summary

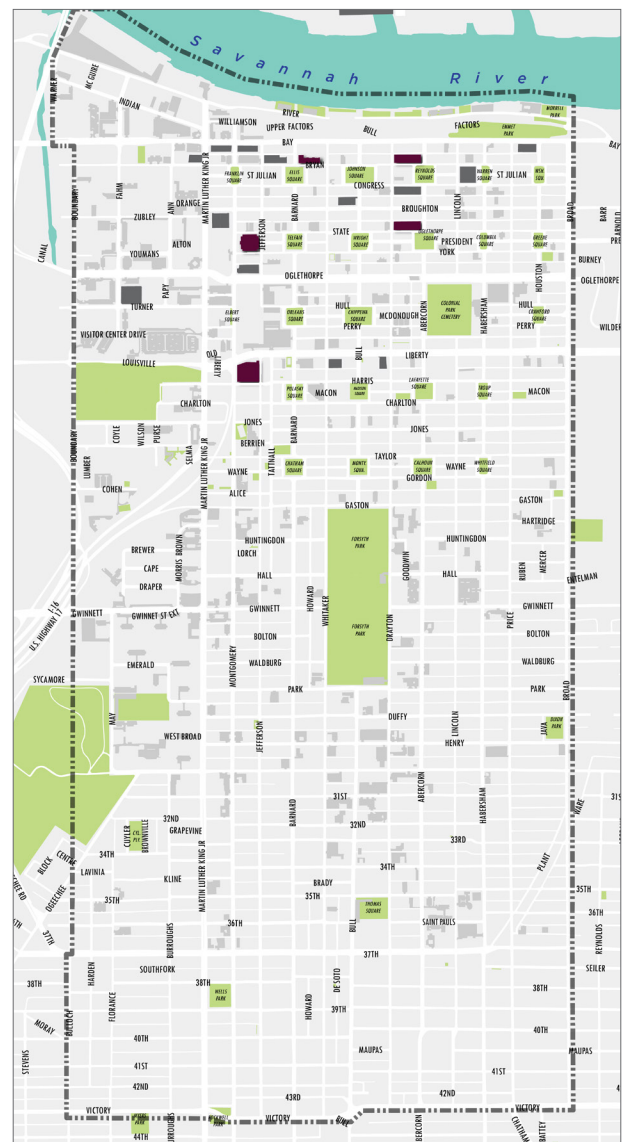
The Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and City of Savannah Department of Mobility and Parking Services (MPS) led a study of downtown Savannah's parking and transportation systems in 2015 and 2016. The study was intended primarily to understand current conditions in the parking system, to develop new strategic approaches to address current and forthcoming challenges, and to continue to enhance downtown mobility options for the greater downtown Savannah community.

Why perform the study?

Greater downtown Savannah is an increasingly vibrant, dynamic place. The growth of its tourist and visitor economy over the last 20 years, the increased interest in downtown living, and the expansion of major institutions such as the Savannah College of Art and Design have all brought more and more people downtown. With this has come increased demand for access and parking downtown. This has also been accompanied by an increase in new downtown development, with hotels and residential uses dominant in this development activity, reflecting the patterns mentioned previously.

All of these constituents share a relatively small area that is protected with historic district status. Physical space downtown is limited, and for this reason the district relies heavily on its streets and existing facilities for parking. This has led to concerns among downtown stakeholders about the impacts of this growth in downtown activity on parking, access and mobility options.

The Parking and Mobility Study area, generally extending from the Savannah River on the north to Victory Drive to the south, and from Boundary and Bulloch Streets on the west to East Broad Street on the east.



What were the study's goals?

The study sought to address this public perception of parking difficulty by developing a strategic plan for parking management and future decision-making. This included four primary goals:

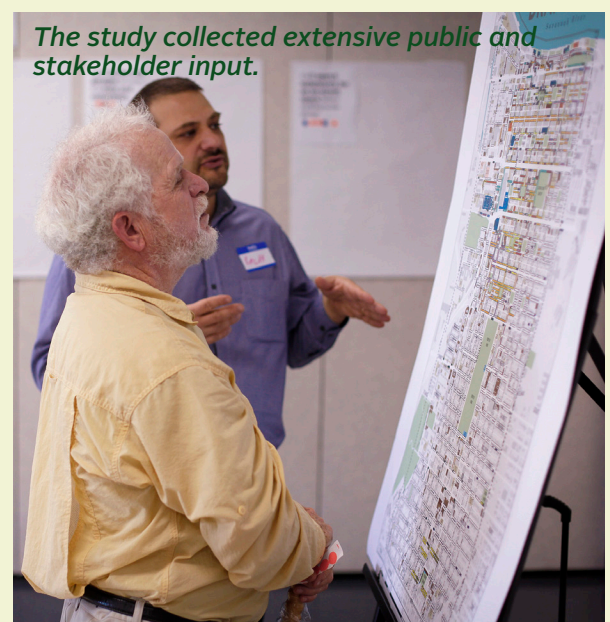
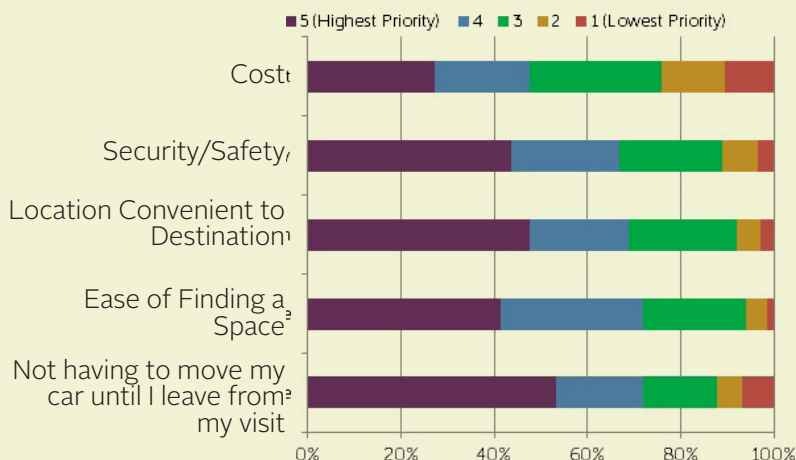
- **To support both public and private parking uses.** Although the City of Savannah manages nearly 18,000 spaces throughout the greater downtown area covered in this study, private businesses, homes and civic institutions also own a nearly equal number, not all of which are publicly accessible.
- **Promotes the safe and efficient use of all legal parking.** MPS has maintained a high standard for safety, security, and facility maintenance and cleanliness.
- **Provides reliable mobility options and strategies for infrastructure enhancement.** Although parking is a requirement for the majority of Savannahians and visitors coming to downtown, it is not the only component of overall downtown transportation. Every parking customer becomes a pedestrian
- Balances business development, quality of life and appropriate additions to community character.

THE STUDY PROCESS

This study involved three principal components:

1. Collection of current parking data, including an unprecedented inventory of central Savannah's on-street and off-street parking spaces, including those in privately-owned garages and lots. This also included a survey of utilization of these spaces on a typical weekday and Saturday, measuring the number of spaces occupied at regular time intervals throughout the day.
2. Solicitation of public and stakeholder input, helping the study team to better understand the broad community perception of parking and mobility issues and enriching the study with local insight and knowledge of transportation and development issues. This was also a key element in presenting draft recommendations and concepts, as many of these were modified based on public concerns over impacts of proposed parking management policies.
3. Strategic recommendations and plan that synthesize this knowledge; identify trends, needs and opportunities; and provide

What are the community's highest priorities for parking?



suggested steps for addressing them. This plan includes not only details on each step, but also desired outcomes from recommended actions and a proposed timeframe. These actions are organized in an implementation matrix that illustrates timing and sequencing of actions, intended to allow the City sufficient time and organizational capacity to make progress in bringing plan recommendations to fruition.

THE STUDY'S FINDINGS

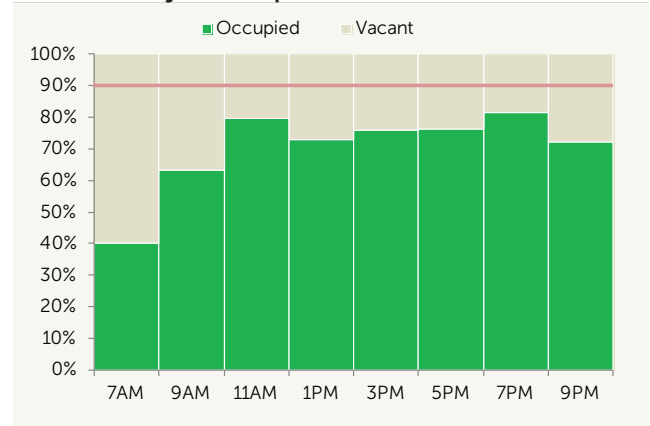
This analysis showed that ***on the whole, greater downtown Savannah does not suffer from a shortage of parking.***

However, the study covered a large geographic area, and smaller, more focused areas around major attractions – such as River Street, City Market, and Broughton Street – do experience tension between supply and demand. Even in these areas, however, there is often available parking in close proximity, and it is not always used to its potential for several reasons:

- **Users of the parking system face a complex set of regulations,** sometimes with no apparent rhyme or reason. Downtown has over 30 combinations of prices, time limits, and other restrictions on its on-street parking spaces, with different regulations sometimes occurring on the same block. As practically all parking users wish to find a convenient and intuitive place to park that aligns with the purpose of their trip, knowing how time limits, price and other regulated factors work is highly important.
- **These regulations do not always match the nature of parking demand.** For instance, many downtown visitors who want to take advantage of shopping and restaurants wish to park once and stay for periods of at least three hours, although the majority of downtown on-street spaces limit parking stays to two hours or less.
- **On-street and off-street parking (or parking in garages or lots) have different pricing structures –** while on-street parking is currently regulated only through the conventional business day, off-street parking is always priced. Even though most parking customers prefer to use on-street parking for reasons of convenience, parking in a lot or garage generally has no time limit and would allow customers wishing to park once to be able to do so. There is presently little incentive to do this outside of times when on-street meters are in effect.

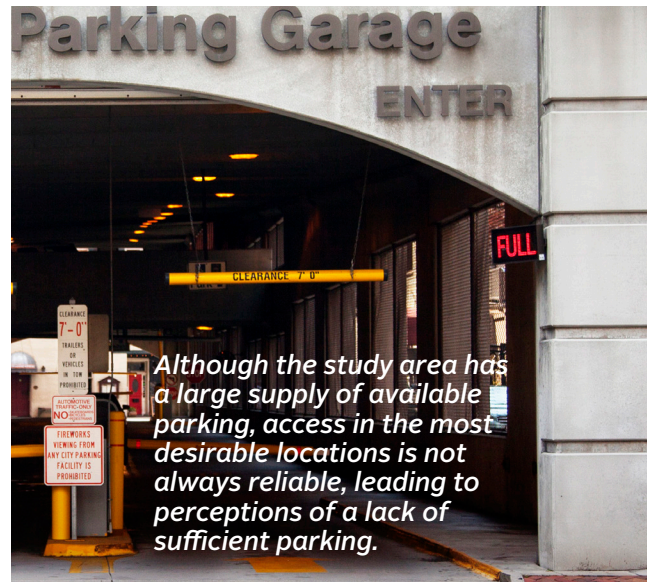
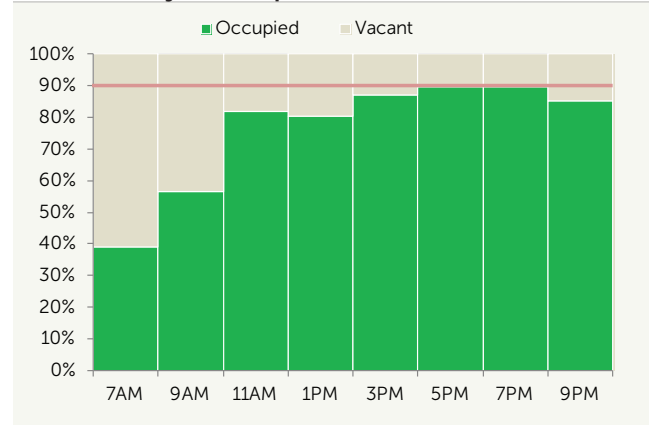
**Thursday: On-Street Spaces
Controlled by Multi-Space Meters**

710 spaces

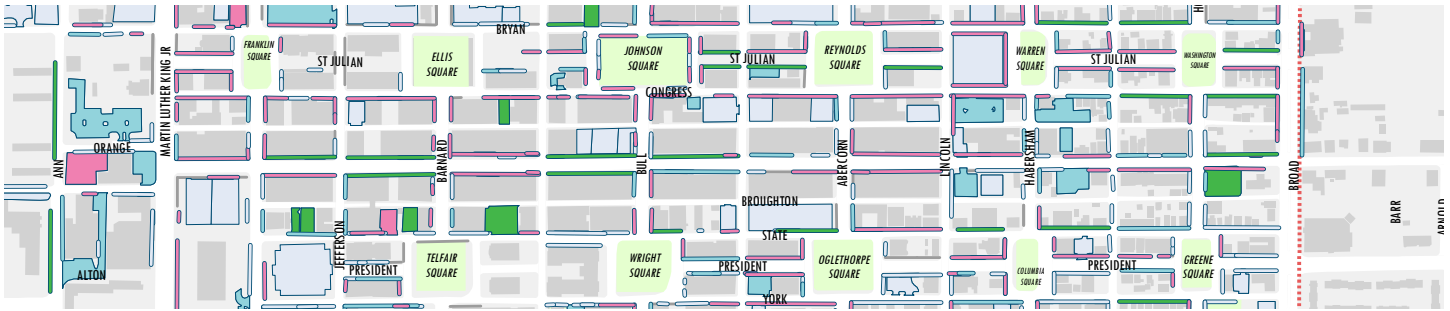


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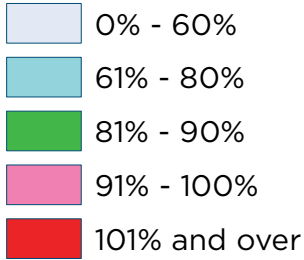
710 spaces



Although the study area has a large supply of available parking, access in the most desirable locations is not always reliable, leading to perceptions of a lack of sufficient parking.



- Even when meters are in effect, **access to some downtown garages is not always reliable for occasional users.** The garages are currently managed to give monthly permit-holders priority in access, and in order to preserve this access the garages may be temporarily closed to occasional customers (display signs at the garage entrances indicate that the garage is full). There may be available space in the garage.



Aside from parking, there are other options for downtown mobility that may further help with overall parking management in the area. Different organizations in Savannah operate a variety of transportation services, each designed primarily for a single base of users. Together, these options, such as downtown circulator shuttles, a recently-inaugurated bicycle sharing system, and the ferries crossing the Savannah River, offer a rich network of transportation services. However, it is not immediately apparent how these services fit together into a coherent system, or how they may serve as ways to connect users to parking locations not experiencing high levels of demand.

At peak times, such as Saturday afternoons, desirable locations in the downtown core experience high rates of parking use - with many over 90 percent full during these times. At the same time, nearby locations may be underutilized, pointing to opportunities to rethink parking management.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS MOVING FORWARD

These findings point to several different opportunities for rethinking parking and mobility management downtown, drawing largely off of resources that the City already has. First and foremost, the study does not recommend that a new garage needs to be constructed downtown at present. There are different strategic approaches that Savannah can take to maximize the life of current structures and better balance use of current parking resources. These are summarized as follows:

- **Take short-term action to streamline the user experience.** For downtown's parking to work effectively, it must be intuitive and user-friendly. The City can begin taking action now to improve the downtown visitor's parking and transportation experience, building largely on programs and endeavors already underway: replacing coin-only parking meters with 'smart' meters that accept credit cards and work with mobile payment systems; continuing to expand downtown's wayfinding system, and providing real-time information on availability of space in garages.
- **Adjust the balance of pricing and regulation between on-street and off-street spaces.** Currently all of downtown's on-street parking supply is free for over 120 hours each week, though downtown's garages always carry a cost. In addition, more remote off-street parking facilities such as the Liberty Street Garage do not see consistently high levels of use, even if more centrally located garages (such as Bryan Street and State Street) are functionally full at certain times of the day and do not allow occasional-use customers to access garages when this is the case. To allow parking users to make choices that better reflect the purpose of their trip downtown, garages should be better



Before major changes can be implemented, Savannah will need to increase user-friendliness of its system, such as by replacing older parking meters with new equipment more responsive to emerging technologies.



A key parking strategy is to integrate downtown's parking system within a broader set of transportation options, and to think of all of these services as a combined mobility system. MPS would take a leadership role in bringing these services together with a designated mobility coordinator staff position.

utilized as a place for longer-term stays, allowing valuable on-street parking to serve shorter stays and offer more frequent availability.

- **Treat the most valuable spaces as just that, and price them accordingly.** Most downtown on-street spaces that have high levels of use become free after 5 pm and are free throughout the weekends. These are spaces where availability is key to business success and to parking customer satisfaction, and they should feature prices that reflect their demand. This
- **Integrate parking into an overall mobility system,** so that the concepts of parking once, parking farther away from destinations, or not driving at all to get downtown not only appeal to users, but also have an easily-understood system of options for those who make this choice.
- In a similar manner, **think of parking as a public resource that supports downtown's ongoing development.** Although there is not a present need for Savannah to construct new parking downtown, ongoing growth and development around the historic district's periphery will undoubtedly increase parking demand. This points to an important dynamic that will be key in how the City of Savannah addresses future development: the historic core of downtown has virtually no space left for a major facility to be constructed, but it is also not the location of major new development—this is occurring on the edges of the historic district, especially west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and east of East Broad Street

The tables on the following pages lay out an implementation framework for the Parking Study's strategic plan recommendations, which are described in more detail in the summary report for the plan available with both the City of Savannah and MPC. Contact the City's Department of Mobility and Parking Service or visit the study website at www.savannahparkingmatters.com for access to study documents and more detailed information.

TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Recommended actions are organized in this table according to priority, with short-term items first and long-term items last. Items already in progress are listed first, as are items already presented to City staff and that received favorable reactions.

Rec. Num	Time-frame	Recommendation	Cost	COS-MPS Agency Partners
5.1	S	Replace all coin-only parking meters with credit card-ready equipment	\$1.5M - \$2M	None
5.2	S	Expand enforcement officers' roles and responsibilities to include 'ambassador' functions	\$25,000	Tourism Management and Ambassadorship Services
5.3	S	Establish a warning policy for first-time citations in lieu of issuing tickets with fees	\$50,000 up-front	SCMPD (updated enforcement); IT Services (if needed) for database administration
5.7	S	Revise street sweeping schedule	\$100,000	Streets Maintenance Department
1.1	S	Give MPS the administrative authority to manage parking and streamline current approaches, including pricing	\$50,000	City Attorney's office for Ordinance Drafting
1.2	S	Use parking revenue to fund overall mobility improvements		City Attorney's office for consultation on EF updates; CAT, SaMMI for long-term implementation and funding partnership
2.1	S	Align parking regulations to demonstrated demand	\$50,000 - \$100,000	SCMPD (updated enforcement)
4.1	S-L	Engage non-automobile transportation modes and options more directly as part of downtown's transportation system	\$75,000 up-front; \$750K - 1.3M annual	MPC/CORE MPO; CAT; SaMMI; Downtown Stakeholder Organizations
2.2	S-M	Streamline parking pricing into a series of tiers with geographic zones	\$100,000 - \$150,000	None
2.3	S-M	Expand use of the residential permit program to protect important street parking for residents	\$20,000 - \$25,000	SCMPD (updated enforcement); Religious Institutions and other special-permit organizations
4.2	M	Designate a mobility coordinator staff position within MPS	\$100,000/year	MPC/CORE MPO; CAT; SaMMI; Downtown Stakeholder Organizations



Action is independent of others and may be carried out separately; recommended time-frames recommend an overall balance of priorities



Action is dependent on other actions, noted with leader bars or with reference to prerequisite recommendations (in parentheses)

Rec. Num	Short-Term (Year 1 of Implementation)	Medium-Term (Year 2 of Implementation)	Long-Term (Years 3-5 of Implementation)
5.1	Continue/expand procurement process; install new meters		
5.2	Begin training program; update SOPs for new hires		
5.3	Advertise policy; develop database; print warning handouts	Ongoing implementation	
	Develop new schedules with SMD		
1.1	Draft and adopt ordinance giving MPS administrative authority		
1.2	Draft any necessary Council legislation for updating Authority or Enterprise Fund definitions		
2.1	Advertise changes and begin price increase rollout (1.1, 5.1)		
		Evaluate effectiveness and adjust pricing-regulation	Ongoing adjustment
4.1	TMA Feasibility		
		Transfer bikeshare program to MPS (4.2)	
2.2	Evaluate zones, develop maps and begin advertisement (1.1, 5.1)		
		Rollout of price and regulation adjustments (5.1)	Ongoing adjustment
2.3	Evaluate zones, develop maps and begin advertisement (1.1, 5.1)		
		Rollout of zones/price adjustments (5.1)	Ongoing adjustment
4.2	Approval for and advertisement of position	Fill staff position	

TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION (continued)

Rec. Num	Time-frame	Recommendation	Cost	COS-MPS Agency Partners
2.4	M	Integrate pricing between on-street and off-street supply	None	None
2.5	M	Reconfigure how garages are managed, internally organized and how different subscription-based access is provided	\$50,000 - \$100,000	None
2.6	M	Extend public safety enforcement to Sundays	\$20,000/year	None
5.4	M	Expand Wayfinding Plan to integrate downtown branding into more parking and mobility facilities and services	\$25,000 up front; \$20,000/yr	Tourism Management and Ambassadorship Services
5.5	M	Invest in real-time information displays for off-street garages	\$400K - 800K up front	None
5.6	M	Simplify loading/unloading zone designations and purposes	\$25,000 up-front	Tourism Management and Ambassadorship Services
4.3	M-L	Revise transit service options and use MPS funding to support operations	\$100K up-front; \$1.5-2M annual	CAT and SaMMI for coordination of service delivery; CORE MPO and FTA for potential funding partnerships; Downtown Stakeholder Organizations
3.1	L	Plan for future parking garages and expansions to supply through coordination with development and land use planning	None	MPC for development review and forecasting
3.2	L	Revise zoning to better equip the City and MPC to address parking needs in a way that does not create community impact	None	MPC for zoning ordinance revisions
3.3	L	Reduce base requirements in zoning where appropriate	None	MPC for zoning ordinance revisions
3.4	S	Establish bicycle parking requirements for downtown districts	None	MPC for zoning ordinance revisions
3.5	L	Establish a system of payment in lieu of providing parking per zoning requirements	None	MPC for zoning ordinance revisions
4.4	L	Complete bicycle network gaps with low-stress, onstreet routes and protected lanes	\$250K - 500K up-front; \$100K/annual	MPC and CORE MPO
4.5	L	Expand current lanes with buffer protection	\$300K/mile up-front	MPC and CORE MPO



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Rec. Num	Short-Term (Year 1 of Implementation)	Medium-Term (Year 2 of Implementation)	Long-Term (Years 3-5 of Implementation)
2.4		Rollout signage and rate changes for time span, time limits, Saturdays, free areas; extend enforcement (5.1)	Ongoing adjustment
2.5	Determine technology needs; begin/expand procurement process		
		Install technology; begin changes to subscription product sales	
2.6	Begin outreach and planning programs		
		Begin enforcement	
5.4		Identify needed changes to Wayfinding Plan	
5.5	Determine technology needs; begin/expand procurement process		
		Install technology	
5.6	Plan for consolidation/identify locations; contact lease holders	Install signage for consolidated locations	
	Convene operators; review contracts		
4.3		Develop Operations Plan; pilot service	
3.1			
3.2	Ordinance updates in progress; coordinate changes with NEWZO development		
3.3	Ordinance updates in progress; coordinate changes with NEWZO development		
3.4	Add text to ordinance		
3.5			Institute payment in-lieu system once parking supply has been identified (3.1)
4.4		Planning and Facility Design	Project construction
4.5		Planning and Facility Design	Project construction



GREATER DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH PARKING AND MOBILITY STUDY



a joint effort of the

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

and the

City of Savannah Department of Mobility and Parking Services

July 2016