

## 2.3 MOBILITY PLAN

## 2.3.5 PARK-ONCE

Fundamental to the successful development and operation of the various neighborhoods and corridors is the utilization of a parking strategy distinct from current, conventional practice. This plan identifies the following approach for mixed-use areas such as Downtown and the Performing Arts Neighborhood as well as one for the residential neighborhoods as described below:

**Residential Development** - All parking for dwellings is provided on-site [or accommodated through on-street parking. Park-Once garages could provide for residential overflow guest parking.](#)

**Non-Residential Development** - All parking for commercial, office or civic uses is to be strategically dispersed in a way that maximizes its use, throughout the day and evening, allowing it to be shared by a variety of businesses and uses. Through a combination of public off-street and on-street parking, the district-wide parking needs are satisfied. This approach to non-residential parking results in significant savings in daily trips and required parking spaces, for three reasons:

**Park-Once** - Those arriving by car generate just two vehicle movements, parking just once, and completing multiple daily tasks on foot.

**Shared Parking Among Uses with Differing Peak Times** - Spaces are efficiently shared between uses with differing peak hours, peak days, and peak seasons of parking demand (such as office, restaurant, retail, and entertainment uses), lowering the total space needed.

**Shared Parking To Spread Peak Loads** - Parking supply is sized to meet average parking loads instead of the worst-case parking ratios needed for isolated buildings because the common supply allows shops and offices with above-average demand to be balanced by shops and offices that have below-average demand or are temporarily vacant.

To reduce non-residential parking demand, its need for land, and to spark redevelopment, the following measures are proposed. These measures proceed in ascending order from low cost, readily implementable measures to much higher-cost measures (specifically parking garages) that will take more time and money to finance, design and realize. If revitalization proceeds rapidly, however, many of the following steps should be pursued simultaneously. This active approach to the issue of parking is at the core of successful district and neighborhood revitalization across the country. The following policies support the parking plan:

## Parking Policies

1. Put customers first. Always available, convenient, on-street customer parking is of primary importance for retail to succeed. Short-term parking that is strictly enforced creates rapid turnover and gives the motorist a reason to stop on a whim, adding to the retailers' potential profits. Business owners and their employees must therefore relinquish the best spaces to customers, and park instead in upper garage floors or in all-day spots at the periphery, where spaces can be less expensively provided. As the area thrives and transitions from partially free (first 2 hours free) to paid parking, parking prices and validated parking programs must be set to reward short-term, sales-tax generating customer trips, discouraging long-term employee parking in the best spots.

2. Make better use of existing parking areas and vacant lots. Existing surface parking areas and vacant lots should be seen as able to address two fundamental needs: in the short-term, these lots will provide additional parking for the district that may be unrealized due to the lots being private and vacant; and in the long term, these parking areas can be transformed into parking garages and/or mixed-use or civic buildings. In addition, converting private parking areas and vacant lots to public parking allows the existing parking to be shared and used much more efficiently, contributing to the vitality of the place.

[3. Community Parking Arrangements: Consider allowing smaller property owners with some adjacency to create community parking agreements for shared parking arrangements and encourage development code to accommodate such policy.](#)

~~3~~4. Form a Parking Improvement District. Parking must be managed as a public utility, just like streets and sewers, with public parking provided in strategically placed municipal lots and garages. Parking should not be dedicated to a single building or use but rather shared between nearby uses. The District should be able to allocate parking revenues for such improvements in the plan area as parking construction and operations, streetscape improvements, transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, transportation demand management programs, security, street cleaning, and marketing. Such programs would provide a menu of benefits for employees who voluntarily choose not to drive, rather than being, like some programs, a mandatory ordinance imposed upon employers.

To help support a Parking Improvement District, the required parking for individual buildings and/or projects in the Downtown and Performing Arts District is identified with the applicant(s) depositing the in-lieu amount with the Parking

Improvement District for each required parking space. This revenue goes directly toward funding the corresponding non-residential parking for the district(s). To this end, parking rates need to be calibrated for considerations such as time of day, weekday or weekend, etc.

~~4~~5. Public Parking Garages. Downtown San Antonio already has a substantial amount of public parking. However, the appeal and in turn, the use of this public parking is not maximized due to a variety of factors ranging from weak way-finding signage to various operational issues. As a result, many spaces are 'unseen', going unused and creating the perception that there is not enough parking.

The projected parking need for River North may be met in part by utilizing those existing spaces, by visitors who are walking or taking the River Bus or Street Trolley into River North. New garages will need to be constructed with public funds, or by private entrepreneurs, or by public/private partnerships.

In the parking plan (pages 2:63-64), the proposed distribution of public parking garages is identified. This reflects the strategic dispersal of public parking along with the anticipated development potential.

~~5~~6. Unbundling the Cost of Parking. Perhaps the most important concept of all with regard to parking is that it is not free. The land on which parking is sited - particularly in an urban setting such as River North - is expensive. Paving, landscaping, maintaining and managing surface parking lots is expensive, not just in its cost, but also in the lost return on the latent, dormant value of such underutilized property. And constructing, maintaining, managing and operating structured parking facilities is obviously very costly.

In almost all suburban settings, and in a surprisingly large number of urban settings as well, the cost of the parking facilities is embedded in - bundled with - the cost of the associated facilities and uses. The cost of a condo automatically includes the cost of two, enclosed parking spaces, which in structured parking will cost tens of thousands of dollars. If the parking must be purchased with the condo, the cost of the housing is inflated by the parking cost.

A person who actually wanted to live a transit-oriented urban lifestyle would be stuck subsidizing a parking structure they do not want or need. This would make the cost of the urban housing uncompetitive with suburban housing built more cheaply on less expensive suburban land on the fringe of the City, incentivizing sprawl rather than compact urban form. The same is true of other land uses as well.

The solution to this problem is simple. The true cost of parking must be visible to the user, so that the user can make a choice. Such a plan must be phased in over time. The apparent value of parking in River North is not high at the moment, but it is not zero. It is vitally important to charge for both on-street (meters) and off-street parking from the outset. Initially the price will be low, and as the amenity of living, working and shopping in River North becomes well established, the rates can be raised by the Park Once Authority to the point that the full cost of parking is being recovered.



Off-streetsurfacelotparkinggarage