





the parking will be easier to understand and therefore, easier and more appealing to use. These lots can also stimulate a side benefit by improving these sometimes unsightly areas.

In most downtowns there are a number of parking stalls that are not effectively used during all time periods. Churches, theaters and auditoriums often have large amounts of private parking that go largely unused during weekday office hours since their peak demand periods are evenings and weekends. By working with these owners, their lots can often be shared by weekday users and still be available when needed for the owner's peak parking demand.

The analysis of existing parking might turn up lots that seem to be almost totally unused. There are a number of reasons that could explain this situation, including location, condition and time limits. However, one obvious, but often overlooked factor could be directional signs. After all, if a visitor has a difficult time finding the lot, chances are it won't get used.

High quality graphics that orient all users to services and amenities and also enhance the image of the downtown should always be a goal of a downtown revitalization program. Signs for public parking areas are a key component of these systems. Be certain that all lots in your community are clearly marked along the major streets so that a first-time visitor can easily find any avail-

able parking. Also be sure that each individual lot is clearly marked with any restrictions and fees.

With a good solid understanding of your town's current parking situation a more clearly defined parking strategy can be developed that will more effectively meet the needs of downtown shoppers, workers and residents.

**“The analysis of existing parking might turn up lots that seem to be almost totally unused.”**

Most people consider parking management in one way- tickets! While fines and ticketing policies may be the most visible component of a parking management program, an overall parking strategy and plan must be outlined so that the fine and ticketing program helps reach the overall goals of the parking system.

While most people see parking tickets as a major annoyance and merchants may think strict parking enforcement discourages shoppers, a fair and balanced enforcement strategy is critical in a parking management program. Without some type of enforcement, time limits are virtually meaningless and turnover will be minimal.

Also the revenue generated from fines and parking meters (if they exist) can be quite substantial. This money can help develop and maintain new and existing parking areas and also cover the costs of the parking management program.

Parking management and enforcement does not have to be negative. A “positive reinforcement” parking strategy can be very effective. Rewarding parkers that utilize designated parking areas can greatly impact

parking use.

Drawings for gift certificates or other prizes create an incentive for people to use parking areas that are currently under utilized or to relieve pressures on other areas. Simple fliers and a consistent high quality sign directional system can also improve parking utilization.

Parking management is a complex issue that cannot be totally analyzed in such brief and simple terms. However, the key to any successful parking strategy is to analyze existing conditions, plan effectively for future needs and to be consistent and fair in management and enforcement. Always remember that complaints about parking are natural in a vibrant and active community. It is more worrisome if parking is not an issue.



#### **For More Information:**

*Design Consultant, Main Street Iowa  
Iowa Dept of Economic Development  
200 East Grand, Des Moines, IA 50309  
515-242-4762  
515-242-4792*

#### **Additional Reading:**

*The Parking Handbook for Small Communities  
John D. Edwards, National Trust for Historic Preservation and The Institute of Transportation Engineers. 1994*