

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Public Parking Count Update

Department: Economic Development

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Access to public parking is often linked to economic opportunity and accessibility for those who have vehicles. While the analysis shows that parking availability has generally improved, there may be unintended disparities in access. Historically marginalized communities, particularly low-income residents and BIPOC-owned businesses may face challenges if parking policies don't account for accessibility and alternative transportation options. Additionally, if parking availability increases only in certain zones, it might reinforce existing inequities in access to downtown BIPOC-owned businesses which may be concentrated.

Who is or will experience community burden?

- Low-income residents and workers who may not have flexible parking alternatives (or the income to rent a parking space) and rely on public parking for downtown access, employment, or essential services.
- BIPOC-owned businesses as parking scarcity makes accessing these businesses more difficult for their customers. Additional costs associated with leasing needed parking spaces may take away needed capital from the business.
- Individuals with disabilities may be impacted by having to take a longer route on foot to access a specific business.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

- Business owners who benefit from increased parking turnover and availability.
- Visitors and shoppers who access downtown with a vehicle may find parking more convenient.
- Downtown employers whose employees live further away and rely on a vehicle to commute to work.
- Those driving downtown may see improved circulation and reduced congestion due to high parking access.
- Residents who cannot or choose not to walk, bike, or have easy access to public transit, such as those with disabilities, families with young children, or residents who live more than a 10-minute walk/bike trip from downtown or who do not live near a public transit stop.

What are the root causes of inequity?

The challenges with equitable access to parking stem from multiple structural factors:



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- Urban planning decisions that historically prioritize vehicle infrastructure over multimodal access.
- Private enforcement disparities (such as towing policies) that disproportionately affect certain groups.
- Economic barriers, such as the affordability of multiple or reliable vehicles or lack of parking options near where lower-income residents may receive services.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

- Displacement of customers and workers—If certain parking policies favor short-term visitors over employees or long-term patrons, certain groups may find downtown access more challenging.
- Reduced economic inclusivity—Businesses that rely on customers from outside the immediate downtown area (especially those serving marginalized communities) may see fewer customers.
- Increased reliance on enforcement mechanisms—Towing policies or fines could disproportionately affect certain populations, reinforcing economic hardship.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

To ensure parking policies align with racial equity, staff will continue to engage business owners and BIPOC communities, advertise and promote the usage of public transit, work to improve relationships with property owners and inform the public to avoid towing on private parking lots, continue to work with business to find solutions for employee parking.