



## Legislation Text

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### **TITLE:**

Discussion of Downtown Parking Strategies

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this item is to continue the discussion from May 7, 2019 related to parking management in the Downtown.

**DEPARTMENT:** Planning and Economic and Community Development

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**INFORMATION:** This is continuation of agenda item that the Board heard on May 7, 2019. Staff was asked to analyze several different scenarios for structured parking and the possible cost/revenues that could be realized from a paid public parking system. Staff will present that analysis during the June 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

In April 2017, the Board of Aldermen officially adopted the parking study and the associated recommendations that came out of the planning process as the town's Parking Plan. By resolution, the Board directed staff to begin to develop a strategy and timeline for the implementation of the plan, including prioritization of the recommended management strategies and the rationale for the prioritization. Section 6 of the plan includes implementation strategies laid out in near-term and long term initiatives. Page 61 Table 15 (Attachment 1) details the recommended parking management strategies by category and implementation year.

The parking plan recommendations include twenty specific management strategies for implementation spread over five categories: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Engineering. Of these specific strategies, five have been advanced in the time since the Parking Plan was adopted: Wayfinding and Regulatory Signage, Alternative Transportation (through the TDM program), Lighting & Sidewalk Improvements (Sidewalk Assessment and S. Greensboro Sidewalk Project), Shared Parking Arrangements (facilitated by the ECD Director), and Structured Parking Options (as part of the 203 S Greensboro project). Staff is preparing an implementation timeline of these action items for review at the meeting Tuesday evening.

A priority is creation of a wayfinding plan and standardization of the town's regulatory signage. The study found during various peak times of use there was still available parking. Directing users to existing spaces is an effective strategy for managing the existing parking available. The Town engaged AXIA Creative in January of 2018 to assist with development of a wayfinding system that could be implemented town-wide. That project is nearing the end of the design phase and the town is awaiting approval by NCDOT. Preliminary estimates indicate the cost of these signs to be \$450,000. A wayfinding system has been identified as a need in the CIP. The CTDA has begun to earmark funds to assist the town in funding a system.

Another high priority of the Parking Plan has been to reach out to coordinate shared parking arrangements among property owners. The ECD Director reached out to businesses who expressed an interest in sharing, i.e.

Furniture Lab, did not want their lot opened to the public because they have tenants that use the building afterhours and wanted to ensure ample parking for their tenants' customers. But they were interested in leasing to other businesses, in a controlled way, so they knew who was parking in their lot during evening hours.

When staff reached out to businesses that might be in need of parking during evening hours for their employees, which were restaurants that had expressed parking concerns, there was no interest in a paid lease. Essentially, while there is free parking for employees in the downtown, there is no motivation to pay for parking otherwise. Others simply do not want to obligate parking through formal parking agreements. There is sharing that is occurring between businesses informally, for example, Chapel Hill Tire and Aka Hani. Another example is Pizzeria Mercato and Country Kitchen, initial interaction between these two businesses drove Country Kitchen to rope off their parking during the nighttime. They refused to enter into any type of formal agreement for parking, but over time have relaxed the "roping off" and there is sharing occurring without formal agreements in place. Most businesses that are not sharing simply do not want others to park on their property due to perceived liabilities and simple the desire to have the parking available when needed, even if it is not fully utilized.

The biggest barrier appears to be free parking with unenforced time limits provides no motivation for sharing or a change in parking habits in the downtown. Other factors include convenience and access to public parking from some downtown businesses is a barrier. And finally, due to the perceived inequities of baring the cost of providing parking, there is a reluctance to sharing.

Most of staff efforts in 2018 have been directed at accomplishing a short-term solution to parking during construction of the 203 project. Some businesses are willing to open their lots to the public after-hours, i.e. Fitch, but would require a financial investment from the Town to upgrade the lot suitable for public parking. At this point staff's efforts have been directed toward finding the longer term solution to parking for the 203 Project.

The development of the Parking Plan also included an evaluation of the Town's parking requirements as defined in the Land Use Ordinance. This evaluation indicated that the Town's requirements are similar to those seen in municipalities across North Carolina. Staff has received questions related to other aspects of the study and plan, as well as questions about employee parking and will provide information in response in the presentation.

**FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT:** CTDA funds are expected to help off-set some of the cost of the wayfinding system.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the Board hear the report