Strategy 3: Reinvigorate Off-Street Parking

3.1: Develop a signage and wayfinding plan by character area to better identify off-street parking facilities including City-owned facilities in the Downtown Core.

Olympia's Guiding Principles for parking call for a system that is "intuitive so that users can find parking that fits their needs." Supporting this principle calls for implementation of an effective; high-quality branded communications program. To the highest degree possible, communications and signage systems should be reliable and easy to use and understand. Ideally this would be provided through a program that links parking assets and communication systems under a common brand or logo. The intent being to create a unified public parking system that is easily recognized through use of a common brand or logo, both at parking sites and, ideally, on a wayfinding system located throughout the downtown and character areas; and on maps, websites, and other communications.

It is recommended that the City engage a design firm (possibly in conjunction with a wayfinding firm) to develop a parking brand for use at all of Olympia's public off-street facilities, any shared-use facility that offers visitor access and in the public right of way.

Examples: Parking

The design/wayfinding team would:

- Work with the City to create a new parking brand for Olympia.
- Develop options and assist in developing a final recommended brand/logo.
- Assist in signage design.
- Identify key entry points into the downtown for placement of signage.
- Explore real-time communications linking multiple facilities, apps, websites, and other resources to wayfinding (as appropriate and feasible).
- Conduct a cost feasibility analysis for the creation and placement of branded signage at all City-owned off-street sites, shared use facilities and wayfinding within the public right of way.
- Establish an installation schedule.

Timeline: Mid-term

<u>Estimated Costs</u>: It is estimated that engaging a design consultant to carry out the tasks identified above would range from $20,000 to $25,000. Estimated costs associated with wayfinding signage can range from $10,000 - $30,000 per sign, depending on size, design and whether systems are dynamic or not (i.e., linked to counter systems, apps, etc.).

Examples: Wayfinding Signage (Portland, OR and San Jose, CA)

3.2: Design and manage a voluntary City-led shared parking program that has common branding, signage, and accessible information on available short and long-term parking. Pursue partnerships with community organizations such as the Olympia Downtown Association.

Much of the parking in Downtown is off-street in privately owned parking assets. The 2017 parking study indicates that the number of *empty parking stalls* during the peak hour was over 2,200 stalls in the surveyed supply of 113 off-street facilities. This unused resource presents an opportunity to manage and support future growth in parking demand, and could be used to:

- Create designated parking for permit and long-term parkers that includes downtown opportunity areas and remote satellite lots.
- Incentivize employees to park in these areas during the work week.
- Serve as resources for evening, weekend and event parking.
- Increase user awareness that free public parking is available after 5pm and on weekends in City owned lots (and future shared facilities).

Directing permit users to these facilities would have a significant impact on on-street occupancy rates. These efforts should be coupled with strategies to increase awareness and create partnerships for use of shared parking supplies during all hours of the day and days of the week.

The City should consider the following for completion within 24 months of plan adoption:

- Using data from the 2017 parking study; identify a subset of the 113 off-street facilities surveyed as potential shared-use opportunity sites. Criteria could include proximity to key downtown destinations, a meaningful supply of empty stalls, pedestrian/bike connectivity, safety and security issues, etc.
- Develop a short list of opportunity sites and identify owners.
- Establish a target goal for the number of Downtown employees to transition into opportunity sites.
- Begin outreach to owners of private lots.
- Negotiate shared-use agreements.
- Obtain agreements from downtown businesses to participate in an employee assignment program.

- Integrate the program (as appropriate and feasible) into signage, wayfinding and other information systems developed in Strategy 3.1., above.
- Update the City's website to add information about public off-street options.

Timeline: Short-Term

Estimated Costs: It is estimated that costs associated with this strategy would be mostly expended in efforts of existing staff and volunteers to identify opportunity sites and conduct outreach to potential private sector participants and to upgrade City information systems (e.g., website). Planning may determine that funds are needed to create incentives and/or improve the condition of facilities and connections.

3.3: Conduct a feasibility study to determine whether to consolidate parking resources in a City-owned parking garage(s). Pursue partnerships with the private sector to fund new parking garages for public and private parking.

A key finding from the 2017 parking study is that there is a significant amount of land currently in use as surface parking. Only 58% of that supply is occupied at the peak hour with parked cars (see Figure 16). This suggests that parking supply could be consolidated into strategically located structured parking garage(s), serving multiple parking demands (i.e., employee, visitor and resident). Such consolidation would free land up for new development and, potentially, provide parking to current and future uses more cost effectively. New supply would not be provided at each site, but shared within consolidated "district" garages.

It is also extremely expensive to build new supply. Per stall estimates for a new parking garage in Olympia can range from $25,000 to $40,000.

It is recommended that the City conduct a feasibility study to:

Figure 1. Weekday Off-Street Occupancies

- Identify existing land parcels (opportunity sites) that could effectively serve multiple parking demand types if structured parking were provided; particularly if consolidation could result in the transition of adjacent surface lots into new, more compact development (e.g., office, mixed use residential).
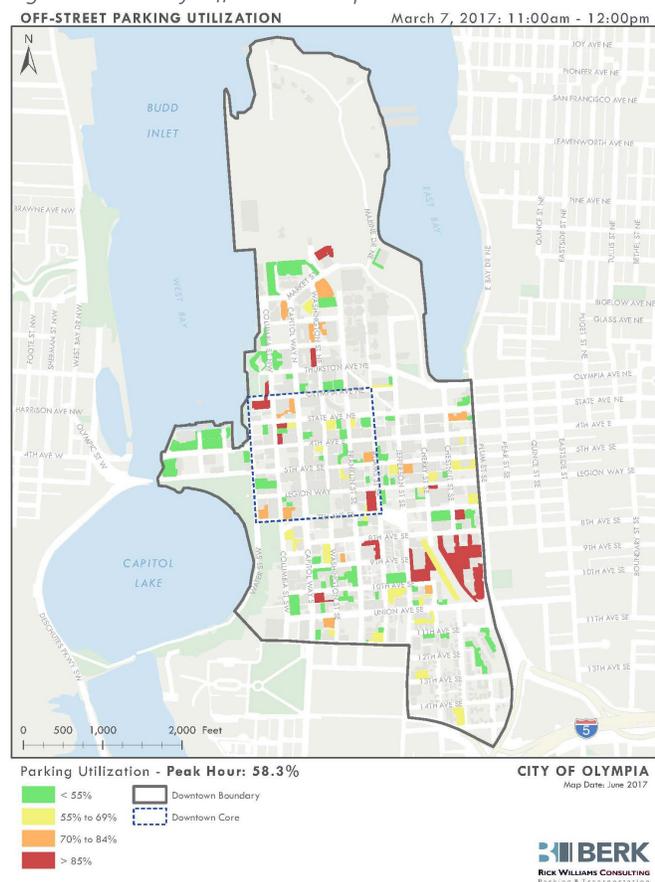
- Conduct proforma analyses for prototypical parking garages to assess cost to develop, operate and cover debt service to determine feasibilities for consolidated supply.
- Use proforma analyses to determine funding and partnership options with planned or proposed private development in areas near or adjacent to opportunity sites.
- Engage private sector land owners and developers in the process to educate on the benefits of consolidation and to serve as a resource for input and information related to feasibility and opportunity.

Timeline: Mid to Long-term

Estimated Costs: Staff time associated with coordinating the financing and development of a garage. Design, permitting, and construction of facility(s) plus ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

3.4: Consider the use of service agreements and partnerships with private developers for the use of city-owned land (existing surface parking lots). The City provides land at no cost in exchange for constructing public parking in a private development.

Given the high cost associated with building structured parking, the City can serve as a partner with the private sector through strategies that assist in buying down the front-end costs associated with development. Coupled with Strategy 3.3. above, the City can leverage the value of the land it currently owns to consolidate parking in a parking garage(s). By offering land at no cost (in return for agreements on public access and shared uses), the financing costs for new parking can be reduced within a private development. This would also support the redevelopment of surface parking lots throughout Downtown.

Timeline: Mid to Long-term

Estimated Costs: It is estimated that costs to implement this strategy would be comprised of existing staff assigned to coordinate development agreements with a potential private sector partner(s).

3.5: Revaluate parking requirements for new non-residential development to ensure the standards are appropriate for a Downtown.

At present (in the "Downtown Exempt Parking Area") there are no code requirements for parking in existing buildings (i.e. rehab, changes of use) for new buildings up to 3,000 square feet of non-residential use or for new residential. Outside of the exempt area the City requires the same amount of parking for *residential* and *non-residential* uses in the downtown as they do throughout the entire City. Figure 17 summarizes existing parking development requirements.

framework

Figure 2. Existing Parking Development Requirements

Restriction Category	Summary of Restrictions	Code
Downtown Exempt Parking Area	▪ Existing buildings built before 2002 are exempt from parking standards. A change of use in the structure must comply with bicycle parking standards ▪ New residential buildings in the exempt area are exempt from vehicle parking standards but must meet the Parking Design, Pedestrian Street and Design Review Criteria ▪ New commercial buildings or expansions over 3,000 square feet and built after 2002 must meet vehicle parking standards	18.38.160(C)
Parking Requirements	▪ New residential uses in the Downtown Exempt Parking Area do not require vehicle parking ▪ Restaurants: 10 per 1,000 square feet ▪ Office: 1 per 250-400 square feet (depending on size of building) ▪ Retail: 3.5 per 1,000 square feet ▪ Other Commercial, recreational, and institutional: varies by use ▪ Industrial: 1 for every 2 employees ▪ Residential: 1-2 per unit, varies based on type of structure/use	18.38.100

City of Olympia Municipal Code, 2017

Based on occupancy counts derived from the 2017 parking study, data suggests that parking is being oversupplied; with just 58% of the off-street supply occupied in the peak hour. This oversupply may be driven by existing parking requirements. Many of the standards in the current code are very suburban in nature (e.g., 10 stalls per 1,000 square feet restaurant, 2.5 – 4.0 stalls per 1,000 square feet of office and 3.5 stalls per 1,000 square feet of retail) and do not appear to reflect goals and objectives for transit, bike and walk modes.

Requiring more parking than is necessary increases the costs of new development and discourages new uses from being developed in the Downtown. To ensure a development friendly and efficient access environment, parking requirements should be "right-sized."

It is recommended that the City further evaluate its parking demand data on a more granular level to determine if parking standards should be recalibrated to lower minimum requirements in Downtown.

Timeline: Short-term

Estimated Costs: Costs would include consultant or staff time associated with integrating existing land use information with 2017 parking occupancy data to derive a measure of actual parking demand for the downtown. Additional costs would include staff time associated with updating the Unified Development Code.

3.6: Examine possible building or development code revisions to require or encourage EV charging infrastructure.

The percentage of electric vehicles (EV) entering the market is still small but predictions are it will grow. With the future still somewhat undetermined, many cities are struggling to determine the right approach to establishing infrastructure to support a future EV market. Similarly, there is still not a high level of understanding as to the variations and nuances involved in supporting the EV market. For instance, EV's serving commuters are well served with support infrastructure (e.g., charging stations) that provides a "slow charge" system for vehicles. Given that most commuters are parked for long-periods during the day, a slow charge system works well – and is generally a less expensive charging option. Slow charge systems are best located in off-street facilities to ensure that commuters are not dominating on-street parking intended for visitors. Costs of these systems currently range from $8,000 to $12,000 per charging unit.

Systems intended to serve short-term visitor trips need to provide a "fast charge" option (e.g., less than 2 hours). These systems can be located in on-street parking systems (for instance, limited to a 2-hour stay) or in garages in areas intended for visitor parking. Costs of these systems currently range from $25,000 to $40,000 per charging unit.

At present, most existing development codes are not structured to address these nuances, let alone anticipate a market that is not yet fully developed. To this end, it is recommended that the City:

- Make changes to the existing development code requiring new garages to be wired to support the future integration of EV charging stations.
- Require that developers indicate where such stations would be located in a garage and validate that wiring is in place at certificate of occupancy.
- Require that wiring could accommodate both slow and/or fast charge systems.

Changes to this effect would ensure that new garages are EV capable but flexible enough to be able to respond to unknown future market trends and adaptable to the user mix associated with the land use (i.e., visitor, commuter, residential or a mix of such uses). This type of requirement would not preclude a developer from moving forward with EV infrastructure in a development, but would not commit them to a technology and market that is not yet fully evolved.

Timeline: Short-term

Estimated Costs: Staff time to update the Unified Development Code.

3.7: Look for opportunities to partner with EV charging providers and introduce fast chargers in the public setting including potentially on-street parking for short-term/visitor use.

The City could lead the way in initiating EV infrastructure for short-term users of its on-street system by identifying strategic locations to place fast chargers. This puts the City in a leadership role for planning for the future increased use of electric vehicles and to help achieve the City's greenhouse gas emission goals. The City can also explore partnerships with EV charging providers, who may want opportunities to feature, promote and test their equipment as the market evolves and to explore state and federal grant funding opportunities.

Timeline: Short-term

Estimated Costs: Staff time to explore potential EV charging sites and partner/grant opportunities. Costs associated with new equipment technology are undetermined at this time.

3.8: Consider allowing parking validation through local businesses.

Parking validation allows local businesses to pay the cost of parking for customers that purchase goods or services from the businesses. Validation programs are typically focused on the off-street system. Parking validation may be integrated into the shared parking program to provide free customer parking and could be funded by local businesses or organizations.

Timeline: Short to mid-term

Estimated Costs: Funded by local businesses that are interested in participating. The businesses pay the actual cost of parking in public paid parking lots including those participating in the shared parking program.