![Smart Growth America - Making Neighborhoods Great Together]

Columbia, Missouri
Parking Audit
Report and Suggested Next Steps
Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program
September 22 and 23, 2015

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Background

The City of Columbia, Missouri, applied to Smart Growth America (SGA) for a parking audit workshop in order to "further current city efforts to reduce public demand for subsidized downtown parking, and to develop a fairer transportation system that benefits both car and non-car owners." Using a tool provided by SGA and guidance from the project consultant, City staff and volunteers conducted a parking audit to evaluate current parking usage and availability in several neighborhoods in, and adjacent to, downtown. After reviewing the results with City staff, the project consultant traveled to Columbia to conduct the parking audit workshop on September 22 and 23rd, 2015.

The parking audit workshop was designed as an opportunity to further discussions on how the City might most effectively partner with other entities to manage parking to achieve community revitalization goals. Following an evening presentation open to the public, the project consultant conducted a day-long stakeholder workshop for elected officials, city staff, landlords, neighborhood association representatives, members of the downtown Community Improvement District (CID), the Downtown

Leadership Council (DLC), the Disabilities Commission, the PedNet Coalition, Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA), and University of Missouri (MU) students and staff, including a leader of the MU facilities team. The workshop provided a neutral setting where an impartial parking expert could evaluate local policies and practices and offer advice based on the state of the practice, with an emphasis on what works well and what should be avoided.

The intent of the workshop was neither for SGA to create a plan nor bind the community to any particular course of action, but rather to facilitate a discussion within the community about how best to manage parking in the Downtown Columbia area. The purpose of this memo is to the summarize SGA recommendations to support further discussion and decisions by Columbians to facilitate improved parking management.

1. Key issues addressed during the workshop

This workshop was focused on the Downtown Columbia area, including surrounding neighborhoods and taking into account the adjacent campus of the University of Missouri and the nearby campuses of Stephens College and Columbia College. Columbia is a city with a population of about 120,000 that holds the county seat of Boone County and is the only city in the Columbia Metropolitan Area.

Downtown Columbia is a thriving mixed-use downtown with healthy retail storefronts, destination restaurants, office buildings and a significant amount of multi-family residential space associated with student condo and apartment buildings. The presence of residential buildings has been a boon to the economic vitality in downtown, but also a source of growing, long-term (overnight/multi-day) parking demand.

The City has been interested in smart growth solutions and has had a number of smart growth successes. However, with a rapidly growing student and general population, and a culture of car dependency, demand for parking downtown and in adjacent

neighborhoods has outpaced available supply. The city, university and community leaders realized that smart growth principles are a necessary part of any parking solution, but the community as a whole, as well as city staff, lacked understanding of how these principles could be applied to alleviate the parking predicament. As a result, public parking discussions devolve into struggles over public parking space, and city staff has not had an appropriate tool kit with which alleviate these community conflicts.

The parking audit workshop was intended to provide two opportunities for the city. First, it would provide a platform with which to bring diverse public parking stakeholders to the table. City leaders and staff, MU, the CID, DLC, PedNet, CMCA and neighborhood associations were committed to participate in the workshop and to partner to implement tools learned from the session. Second, the workshop would provide new tools for city staff and the community to apply towards the resolution of their parking challenges.

Moreover, the workshop was intended to further city efforts to reduce public demand for subsidized downtown parking and to develop a more equitable transportation system that benefits all travelers. The City intends to use the knowledge gained from the workshop to integrate parking solutions into its ongoing development code update, improve the city's evolving residential parking permit program, create a downtown employee parking/transit program and a Parking Advisory Commission, and improve the overall usefulness of, and participation in, the public transit system.

Specific topics addressed at the public forum and stakeholder workshop included:
- Results of the parking audit conducted by the City using tools provided by SGA;
- Overall trends in travel demand in the US and in Missouri;
- Implications of technological advances for future parking demand;
- Basic principles of modern, strategic parking management;
- Strategic parking management techniques and practices, including:
  - shifting transportation mode share away from single occupant vehicles;

- shared parking and joint parking and unbundling residential parking ownership;
- fee-in-lieu payments;
- grandfathering of storefront parking arrangements;
- enforcement approaches and technologies;
- timing of new parking supply;
- parking and urban design;
- permit parking;
- time limits;
- parking pricing; and,
- parking districts and integrated parking management systems.

2. Target policies/ideas/strategies discussed during the workshops

Discussion at the well-attended evening public forum set the stage for more specific analysis and debate at the stakeholder workshop the next morning. The workshop culminated in the development of consensus goals and action items, derived from the work of break-out teams of local stakeholders, facilitated by SGA and city staff.

Stakeholder discussions centered around several key issues:
- The need for accurate, real-time metrics about parking demand and supply;
- How to integrate the programs and policies of the City and UM administration;
- How to protect and grow downtown businesses and the downtown economy;
- How to create a walkable downtown and walkable neighborhoods;
- How to increase transit service levels and transit ridership;
- How to protect residential neighborhoods from overflow university parking;
- How to implement a city-wide approach to residential parking permit districts;
- How to use leading edge technologies to improve parking management; and,
- How to equitably distribute the costs of providing parking to the end users.

Consensus goals developed by workshop attendees included:
1. People who live in neighborhoods are able to safely park near their homes.

2. Downtown parking is managed in a way that helps downtown grow and thrive.
3. Programs of the City and University affecting downtown are well integrated.
4. Long-term storage of cars (overnight and multi-day parking) does not impact business and residential short term parking needs.

3. Actions to address policies/strategies

The stakeholders developed the following list of consensus priority actions:

a. Form a city-wide parking commission.
(Lead: shared by City staff and City Council) This commission would initially focus on downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, but would later broaden its mission to include all areas of the city.

b. Use mode share and public transportation to reduce downtown parking demand. (Lead: Public Works) A consultant will complete a new transit plan for the local transit system (COMO Connect) in the coming months (procurement is almost complete). Use that project to develop metrics for mode shift away from driving and establish city-wide mode share objectives to ensure an integrated approach to parking and transportation.

C. Public information, marketing and education.
(Leads: Community Development, Public Works, Parks & Rec) Develop a transportation demand management (TDM) program similar to GO Boulder, as a collaboration between the City and University, which provides information and educational resources on travel choices, including walking, bicycling, transit and driving.   Develop outreach to ensure that people are aware of multimodal opportunities and have access to transit passes and other resources to encourage a shift in travel away from single occupant vehicles. Develop an employer TDM outreach to work with employers in Columbia (including the university and colleges) to help employees benefit from commute options and choices.

d. Prepare a downtown access and circulation plan.

(Lead: Community Development Department)

Develop a downtown access and circulation plan to address parking and transportation in downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. The ACP will result in strategies for improving the operations of each mode – pedestrian, bicycle, transit and personal vehicle – and will establish metrics to support ongoing monitoring and reporting of progress toward plan implementation. Data collection in support of performance metrics will be an early part of plan development. The project will evaluate leading edge technological solutions and tools for parking, transit and traffic management. The plan will address long-term vehicle storage needs (overnight/multi-day parking) to free up short-term parking for access to downtown businesses. The project will be coordinated with the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission and the new Parking Commission (see a above) to ensure broad awareness of the emerging plan and strong community buy-in and support for implementation.

4. Timeframe for accomplishing actions

Within 3 months following workshop
- Provide City Council with a briefing on outcomes from the parking audit and workshop and this action plan

Within 6 months following workshop
- Implement new Parking Commission

Within 9 months following workshop
- Initiate development of transit plan for COMO Connect
- Include mode share analysis and objectives in plan development

Within 1 year following workshop
- Include new TDM outreach program in 2017 budget development for consideration by City Council
- Include new downtown access and circulation plan in 2017 budget development for

consideration by City Council

Within 18 months following workshop

- Initiate development of new TDM outreach program
- Initiate development of new downtown access and circulation plan