

Arena South

Development and Parking Transition Strategies

Executive Summary

As the pace of economic development Downtown quickens, new and creative strategies to accommodate this growth must be developed, especially as it relates to transportation and mobility.

With development pending on Areas 4 and 5, as well as an influx of new employees expected in the next 2 to 6 months, it is critical that all affected stakeholders participate in crafting solutions. The current supply in the City's Downtown parking system has sufficient capacity to accommodate all customers in Areas 4 and 5, as well as the expected number of new employees. In addition, completed development on Areas 4 and 5 will result in a net increase in current parking supply of approximately 275 spaces, with the potential of additional on-street spaces, as well. Potential disruption created by the re-location of current customers can be mitigated with a comprehensive set of solutions. The following transition recommendations are proposed:

- Free park and ride options
- Transitional pricing and relocation options
- Pilot Downtown Employee Transit Pass program
- Downtown Circulator configuration
- Reconfiguration of some on-street parking to accommodate specific needs of Arena South businesses (i.e. specialized business loading zone use)
- Potential conversion of visitor spaces to monthly spaces within the Downtown system
- Car-Share implementation
- Continuation of DGRI mobility management efforts for employers and organizations
 - Parking Cash-Out education and implementation
 - Organization-specific planning/education/consultation

Free park and ride options:

By building on an existing practice at the Burton Heights lot, additional, free commuter spaces could be provided. Currently, these lots (north and south) are metered parking, with eight spots dedicated for SilverLine riders. This option could be extended to both lots, potentially opening up 200+ commuter spaces, with a BRT commute to Downtown of approximately 6 minutes to Wealthy, 9 minutes to Fulton, 11 minutes to GRCC, 16 minutes to Monroe and Louis, and 20 minutes to Rapid Central Station.

Transitional pricing and relocation:

For parking customers that elect to relocate from Areas 4 and 5 to other locations within the Downtown system, the following price structure is proposed:

- Offer existing monthly rate (\$56/monthly) at more expensive structures for the first year
- Offer the average rate of existing monthly rate on Areas 4 and 5 and the market rate at the more expensive structure for the second year
- In year three, offer first right of refusal for monthly permits in the new structure on the Area 4 and 5 development

Other relocation options will result in a decrease in the existing monthly rate:

- Ionia/Mason: \$45/month
- Scribner: \$45/month
- Areas 7 and 9: \$30/month

Pilot Downtown Employee Transit Pass program:

Via collaboration between The Rapid, Parking Services, DGRI, and Downtown employers, a Downtown Employee Transit Pass program could be created to offer an annual transit pass to any Downtown employee at no cost to the individual, with the expense funded via parking revenue, employer contribution, and discounted rates from The Rapid. This program can be easily tracked by monthly use to serve as a pilot for potential continuation after two years.

Downtown Circulator configuration

Based off of recommendations in the GRForward plan, input from stakeholders, and collaboration with The Rapid, re-routing and reconfiguring existing DASH resources can provide an improved mobility connection from parking assets located outside of Arena South. Routing and timing can be improved for efficiency and effectiveness to accommodate re-located parkers and existing parking customers.

Reconfiguration of On-Street Parking / Conversion of Visitor Spaces

For Arena South businesses that have unique, short-term parking needs, certain loading zones could be adjusted for specialized business use, to be determined by location and demand. In addition, due to considerable daytime occupancy in various Downtown parking structures, the amount of dedicated visitor spaces could be reduced to accommodate daytime employees (currently, 1,876 parking spots in the Downtown system are reserved for visitors).

Car-Share Implementation

Many Downtown employers have expressed a desire to provide programs and incentives that allow for more mobility choice for their employees, but have concern about the need for individual travel during the course of the business day. By implementing the recommended pilot 10-car system with Enterprise CarShare, less Downtown employees will need to rely on their own personal vehicle for transportation during the day.

DGRI Mobility Management

DGRI will continue consultation, education, and other outreach efforts with all stakeholders in Arena South to assist with implantation of Parking Cash-Out programs, individual and organizational commute planning, resource education, and any other tailored services to assist employers, employees, and organizations with this transition.

Business and Community Benefits

Implementation of a comprehensive strategy to address mobility needs during this transition provides multiple benefits to businesses and their employees:

- Businesses are given priority access to information to participate in the changes coming to the area
- More certainty is provided through transition – financial outlay and staff needs can be accommodated
- Solutions can be tailored for employer priorities as supply permits
- Businesses that adopt a parking cash-out approach can relieve tasks, costs, and headaches associated with managing this challenge while providing more \$ for their employees
- Branding and reputational benefits for businesses that adopt mobility-friendly approaches can have PR and recruitment advantages
- DGRI can provide free HR-assistance to implementing change
- Employees that choose a cash-out option will make more money
- They are allowed greater freedom to choose their mobility preference, rather than being forced into a one employee / one space paradigm
- The delivery of the catalytic movie theater mixed-use development project will provide numerous new amenities to the Downtown work environment
- Health and wellness benefits connected to a more active commute

In addition to the direct benefits to businesses and employees, the City and the Grand Rapids community will realize significant benefits from the economic growth that will accompany development on Areas 4 and 5:

- +\$100 M infill development
- +500 high wage jobs
- Fill large vacant office property
- Provide sought-after amenities for community (movie theater)
- New housing advances critical mass to build support for sustainable retail market
- +275 parking spaces (840 new spaces to replace existing 565 spaces on 4/5)
- Transition current low-paying parkers into high paying parkers, which could amount to \$975,000 annually in additional revenue to the City parking system
- Added revenue could be used to improve existing parking assets, reduce debt, or build new ramps
- An urban core that is more contributory to talent attraction and retention efforts
- Relief of the political pressure associated with these challenges
- Current tax exempt land could generate 100s of \$1,000s in new general fund tax revenue to pay for police, parks, rivers, roads, etc.
- Support improvements to struggling Burton Heights business district
- Drive vibrancy and regeneration of Downtown
- Increased sales receipts for local retailers and restaurateurs
- More transparency, collaboration, and engagement of local business stakeholders and key partners
- Stronger alignment of parking and transportation policy and spending with community plans

Arena South – Existing Conditions

Monthly parking availability in potential development (w/in 3-5 years) sites in Arena South (as of 8/30/15):

- Areas 4, 5: zero monthly cards available (565 total spaces)

Monthly parking available in Downtown parking structures:

- Ottawa/Fulton: 141 cards available
- Louis Campau: 132 cards available
- Monroe Center: 0 cards available
- Pearl/Ionia: 128 cards available
- DeVos Place: 14 cards available
- Government Center: 221 cards available
 - 636 total cards available in structures south of Michigan Street

Monthly parking available near Downtown:

- Area 7: 96 cards available
- Area 9: 7 cards available
- Scribner: 72 cards available
- Ionia/Mason: 79 cards available
- Market Street: 0 cards available
- Ionia North: 0 cards available
- Monroe North: 0 cards available
 - 254 total cards available on the Westside and in Monroe North

<http://grcity.us/enterprise-services/Parking-Services/Pages/Monthly-Cards-Available.aspx>