



CITY OF  
MOUNT  
D O R A

# DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY



RENAISSANCE PLANNING

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# Mount Dora Downtown Parking Study

## I. Introduction

### Project

The Mount Dora downtown is an area that has a clear sense of place and identity, with an exciting and attractive mix of uses and amenities. People do not come downtown to park. They come downtown to experience an environment that is active and diverse, and unique in central Florida. As such, the true role of parking is to assure that the community vision for downtown Mount Dora is fully supported.

The objective of this project is to develop strategies that improve parking conditions in the downtown area. As downtown Mount Dora continues to prosper and the number of visitors increases, parking will become more and more of an issue. Improvements should be made that consider the needs of all users, and potential strategies should include both shorter-term parking management programs and longer-term capital improvement projects.

### Study Area

The downtown core is defined as the area bounded by 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the north, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue on the south, Baker Street on the east, and Alexander Street on the west. Areas outside of this core will also be considered, with spaces in these areas designated as fringe parking areas.

## II. Assessment of Current Parking

### Supply

According to map information provided to the City by BESH Engineering (see Figure 1), there are 625 public spaces downtown and 95 spaces at the First Methodist Church parking lot on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue for a total of 720 public spaces easily accessible in the downtown area. Parking spaces are classified into two primary categories, on-street and off-street. On-street spaces refer to spaces located on a roadway, adjacent to a block, oriented parallel or angled to the curb. Off-street spaces refer to spaces located within a block. Parking spaces in Figure 1 are located as follows:

	Core	Fringe Areas	Total
<b>On-Street</b>	165	256	421
<b>Off-Street</b>	65	234	299
<b>Total</b>	230	490	720

Of the 720 total parking spaces, 27 are handicap accessible, meeting the ADA requirement of 2% (15 spaces). 8 of the handicap spaces are on-street and 19 are off-street.



Figure 1 - Downtown Mount Dora Parking Map

## Demand

According to previous analysis completed by the City, in the peak season (from October – March), on peak days (Thursday -Sunday), during peak hours (11a – 5p), most of the downtown spaces are used. During this period, there are usually parking spaces available in the fringe areas, the most central including the Baker/Tremain parking lot along the railroad tracks, the First United Methodist Church parking lot, and Edgerton Court south of Charles Avenue. Generally speaking, the First United Methodist Church lot is only minimally used. However, during events, this lot gets a significant amount of use and is fully used during most of the largest events.

## Key Issues

After reviewing relevant planning and stakeholder information gathered by the City, and engaging in a series of site visits, a number of key issues relating to downtown parking emerged, including:

- **Lack of convenient parking:** While this issue depends a lot on who you ask and where you want to go, there is little debate that even in the off-season, parking spaces fill up quickly in the morning (especially on weekends) and there is a lot of vehicle recirculation looking for prime spots.
- **Parking is free:** Since there are no restrictions on parking, there are no incentives for people to look anywhere else other than the downtown core for parking, which exacerbates the existing problem.
- **Connections and amenities:** Some of the fringe parking areas do not seem like they are connected to downtown, which reduces their appeal to and use by visitors.
- **Parking supply:** One difficulty in expanding the parking system is that the downtown is primarily built out and there are not many parcels that can provide an appropriate footprint for additional lot or structured parking.
- **Perceptions vs. realities:** A survey of downtown residents and customers concluded that 75% of respondents found parking challenging and/or frustrating, yet 78% would not be willing to pay for parking.
- **Length of stay:** The survey also found that 55% of respondents stay in downtown 0-3 hours, 32% stay 3-6 hours, and 13% stay longer than 6 hours.
- **Long-term parking:** Employees and business owners often use core area spaces as all-day parking, reducing the space turnover that business owners rely upon to create a steady stream of customers.
- **Parking directional signage:** The wayfinding signs directing vehicles to parking take on multiple forms and colors, and are generally confusing. (See Figure 2)
- **Lack of signage:** Some parking areas are not signed, so visitors may be confused whether parking is public or private. Additionally, some signs listing parking restrictions have not been maintained, making them easy to miss when looking for parking. (See Figure 3)
- **Time-restricted parking space signage:** Signage for time-restricted spaces (15 and/or 30 minutes) is confusing. There are varied messages, making it hard to tell whether signs refer to individual spaces or rows of spaces, creating a situation where spaces are likely misused (See Figure 4). Some spaces contain explanatory text on the pavement, which is easily missed while driving or once parked. This text is also weather-worn, which makes it hard to see as well.

- **Enforcement:** Since the majority of parking is free and has no time limits, the City has not dedicated a lot of resources towards parking enforcement.
- **Loading and deliveries:** Loading and deliveries often block lanes or take up multiple parking spaces.



Figure 2 – Different styles of parking wayfinding. Do they mean different things?



Figure 3 – Important signs are missing where drivers are looking for parking: Private parking sign on ground (left) and no sign for public parking (right)



Figure 4 – Multiple signs (left) do not clarify whether individual spaces or entire row is short term (left), while some signs (right) indicate short-term parking is for specific spaces

### III. Projection of Future Parking Conditions

#### Demand

Estimating demand and calculating the amount of parking spaces needed in downtown Mount Dora would typically be based on the square footage of the buildings or some other measurement related to the building use. In the downtown, however, there have not been many new business spaces added through new construction since 2003. The number of businesses has remained fairly constant, with the only changes being when a business building shell (square footage) is either divided or combining for a new use.

The most significant change downtown has been the number of restaurant seats and employees added. According to information provided by the City during public workshops, since 2003 an estimated 1341 seats have been added through 13 new restaurants. This has resulted in an estimated 136 new employees to the downtown core. Since restaurants are a more intense use, in terms of people per square foot of floor area, than a retail store or office, their need for parking is greater. Because of this, restaurants have been used to estimate future parking trends for the downtown.

The following information from the City has been used to estimate the number of parking spaces needed:

<b>Downtown Business Information</b>			
	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Seats</b>
Businesses	117	239	n/a
Restaurants	22	220	2189
Total	139	459	2189

The City's Land Development Code requires one parking space per four restaurant seats. This would require 547 spaces if all seats were full at the same time. Add in one parking space for each of the 459 employees and approximately 1,006 spaces should be available during the peak season and time, 286 more spaces than what is currently available. Additionally, outdoor spaces at restaurants are not included in the total floor area used for parking calculations, likely adding to the overall deficit of spaces.

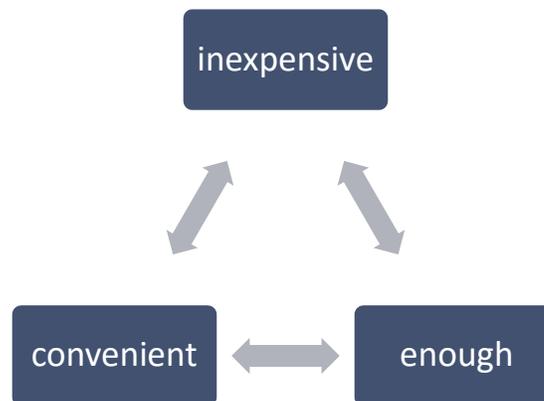
While the exact numbers (of spaces, businesses, employees, etc...) may vary depending on time and survey data variables, the context of the parking capacity issues in downtown Mount Dora remains the same, and the solutions presented in this report remain the same as well. The bigger picture problem need not get bogged down in precise minutia.

The park space numbers above do not take into account all places where shared parking is utilized. Shared parking can be applied when land uses have different parking demand patterns and are able to use the same parking spaces; it is most effective when the uses have significantly different peak parking characteristics that vary by time of day or day of week. In these situations, shared parking strategies can result in fewer total spaces needed when compared to the total number of spaces needed for each land use or business separately.

## IV. Parking Principles and Considerations

While the wealth of background information gathered during the course of this project helps set a context for considering strategic recommendations, it is also important to step back and look at “big picture” parking principles that can help serve as a foundation upon which recommendations should be based. Mount Dora is in a position encountered by many successful downtowns and can learn from the experiences of others.

When planning for parking, there is a built-in conflict to which most people can easily relate. The conflict revolves around three primary factors: cost, convenience, and supply. Unfortunately, usually you can have only two of the three, and both are needed to maintain a walkable downtown.



For example, parking can be inexpensive and convenient, but you won’t have enough. Or, you can have enough inexpensive parking, but it won’t be convenient. Lastly, you can have enough parking conveniently located, but it won’t be cheap. Given these basic tradeoffs, keeping all customers satisfied is an on-going challenge.

As much as the City would like, not everyone can park at the front door of their destination. Having well-defined parking principles is a good first step in attempting to balance this inherent conflict. Given the diverse base of customers and events that parking serves in downtown Mount Dora, defining principles, understanding concepts and behaviors, and establishing service parameters can help keep the City focused on its larger community vision and goals. Important considerations to keep in mind include:

- Parking needs to be managed as a system. A one-size fits all approach to parking rarely works. A variety of parking management strategies will be required to address different needs and users in the downtown, including:
  - Short-term parking
  - Long-term parking
  - Employee parking
  - Reserved parking
  - Residential parking
  - Event parking
  - Accessible parking (ADA)
  - Loading/unloading zone parking
  
- The general public needs access to short-term (0-2 hours) parking, but they also need long-term access to parking for dining, shopping, or business stops that last longer than 2 hours. Downtown business owners and employees need access to long-term parking as well. The downtown parking system should provide a mix of parking options for all users.
  
- The primary performance measure for any parking resource should be consistent availability. This is the most important factor in providing effective, attractive customer service, and parking is the most effective and intuitive management tool for achieving it.
  
- The 85% Rule is a measure of parking utilization that acts as a benchmark against which parking management decisions are based. Within the parking industry, it is assumed that when an inventory of parking exceeds 85-90% occupancy in the peak hour, the supply becomes constrained and may not provide full and convenient access to its intended user.

Mount Dora needs to ensure that the parking in downtown is managed in a manner that encourages visits and maximizes the utilization of available parking supplies, while providing consistent enforcement, fair parking with time limits and/or rates, sufficient parking choices, and adequate signage and wayfinding.

## V. Preliminary Stakeholder Input

Based on multiple surveys (of visitors, residents, and businesses), stakeholder discussion, and community input, an initial set of parking solutions was developed by the City. These solutions were assessed to see which were feasible and appropriate to move forward for additional consideration. General discussion of these solutions included the following information:

<b>Short-Term Stakeholder Strategies</b>			
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Pro</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Move Forward?</b>
Valet service	Available to general public; convenient; private enterprise	Needs street frontage; new Code regulations	Yes
Promote use of existing public lots	Frees prime on-street spaces for visitors	Distance for some people to walk	Yes
Replace parallel parking with angled parking	Reduces traffic back up – easier to use	Roadway constraints: cost/benefit	No*
Convert streets from 2-way to 1-way	Ability to convert parallel parking to angled parking	Traffic flow patterns; cost/benefit	No*
Create shuttle service or tram	Encourage use of fringe area lots; employee parking	Cost; operation and maintenance space	Yes
Employee parking in fringe areas	Frees prime on-street spaces for visitors	Enforcement; safety at night; shuttle service needed	Yes
Improve Methodist Church lot	Improved facilities will encourage greater use	Cost; lot not available all times	Yes
Sensors in parking spaces	Can be used to find available spaces; aids enforcement efforts	Cost; will not discourage employee parking without other measures	Yes
Meters in core area	Provides parking for visitors; encourages employees to park in fringe lots	Cost; enforcement; perception	Yes
Time limits in core area	Increases turnover; prevents all-day parking (employees and business owners)	Length of time permitted; enforcement; perception	Yes
Designate loading zones	Specifying zones and times for deliveries reduces traffic conflicts	Enforcement; burden on businesses during normal business hours	Yes
Develop parking app	Locate parking spaces; pay fees; extend time	Pay parking; cost of system; education	Yes
Agreements with private lot owners	Use of shared parking puts new parking spaces in play	Revision to current Codes	Yes
Add bicycle parking	Promote other means of accessibility than driving	Multimodal routes and facilities are lacking	Yes
Add parking wayfinding	Reduce vehicle recirculation looking for parking	Cost to unify existing signage	Yes

<b>Long-Term Stakeholder Strategies</b>			
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Pro</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Move Forward?</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church lot lease	Additional parking spaces	Private partnership; drainage improvements; location	Yes
Expand garage at Baker and Tremain	Additional parking; near trailhead	Loss of trees; neighborhood impact	Yes
Gravel lot at 5 <sup>th</sup> and McDonald	Additional parking spaces; near core destinations	Private partnership; drainage improvements	Yes
Post Office parking lot lease	Additional parking spaces	Not a convenient location; used by 1 <sup>st</sup> National Bank employees	No
Bank of America parking lot lease	Additional parking spaces	Spaces and drive aisle do not meet current code	No
Edgerton Court structured parking	Additional parking spaces	Would block access to Pineapple Point development	No

\*at a later date, the CRA Board amended their recommendation and determined to move forward with this strategy

## VI. Implementation Strategies

People often believe that parking is its own issue and that supply just needs to be increased to solve all problems. In reality, parking is a key component of a vibrant downtown like Mount Dora and balancing multiple needs is critical in meeting the City’s vision and supporting goals. Parking strategies that support larger multimodal options focus on the efficient use of current parking resources and reducing demand for parking, before increasing supply through new parking and facilities. Well-managed parking is one of the most effective strategies to dramatically improve the nature and effective function of transportation in the downtown.

The whole of information assembled to this point indicates that the existing parking situation is not working in downtown Mount Dora. As mentioned previously, occupancies of 85-90% or just below are ideal, that demand is being met without waste. However, high occupancy in one area combined with lower occupancy nearby indicates parking management problems. This is where Mount Dora is today. The City needs to figure out how to get some of the excess demand to use the nearby available supply in the fringe areas surrounding the downtown core. Within this context, there are a number of considerations that become very important in framing final recommendations, including:

- Parking is the first and last experience. A visitor’s first and last impressions of any trip downtown really begin and end with their parking experience.

- On-street parking is the most valuable asset in the city’s parking system. It is the most convenient parking for nearly everyone doing business downtown. However, it is a finite resource and should be managed to assure maximum access for the priority customer. The availability of ample on-street parking is critical to downtown business success. In order to compete with suburban businesses, the downtown must make sure that as many potential customers as possible can find convenient on-street parking.
- On-street parking should be reserved for shorter-term visitors and business customers. Employees and longer-term visitors should find parking in fringe parking facilities. The critical issue to downtown customers and visitors is usually not the cost of on-street parking but the consistent availability of convenient on-street parking. On-street spaces should be managed with time limits and/or pricing to ensure that they are used only for shorter-term stays. The goal in managing on-street parking is to provide convenient parking for the greatest number of people.
- Parking should be friendly, but not necessarily free. There is really no such thing as free parking. One of the ongoing challenges that Mount Dora faces when it comes to parking is cost. Even if free parking is promoted as a marketing concept, someone is paying for that parking, even if it is only through potential lost income. The City (at large) needs to recognize this reality and focus on providing a friendly, well-managed parking experience.
- The private side of the market is not presently providing some essential parking needs because there is a lack of financial incentive and financial opportunity to do so. If core area parking is available for free, it is much more difficult for private paid lots to attract parkers. Because there is little financial incentive for property owners to offer off-street paid parking, it is not available.

With these considerations in mind, the parking strategies below are recommended for downtown Mount Dora. It should be noted that the order these recommendations are implemented may change based on priority, funding, and opportunity to piggy-back projects during other infrastructure improvement projects.

## VII. Short - Term Recommendations

Short-term strategies will generally occur from 0-2 years. These recommendations will involve improvement of operations in an effort to begin changing perceptions and behaviors of downtown parkers. Recommendations include strategies that:

- Clarify wayfinding for parking
- Establish time limits
- Promote shared parking
- Create valet parking
- Encourage other transportation options
- Enhance fringe area parking
- Enforce parking regulations
- Improve loading and delivery logistics
- Provide clear messaging and communication
- Improve safety

The descriptions below provide details for each of the short-term recommendations:

### Clarify Wayfinding for Parking

In order to better direct visitors to available parking resources, reduce recirculation of vehicles, and get people out of their cars as soon as possible, the City should upgrade signage to provide a unified wayfinding effort that helps locate public parking facilities. Ideally, parking signage should be incorporated into the larger downtown wayfinding system already established by the City. Parking signage should be distinctive, incorporating consistent messaging that can be clearly recognized by visitors.

A green circle surrounding a green “P” icon, within a white background, would fit within the color palette already established for the wayfinding system. The words “public parking” should also be added within the circle for additional clarification (see Figure 5). This icon should be included on wayfinding signage so that visitors will easily recognize the icon when they see it individually on specific parking lot signage. Signage should simultaneously identify and reinforce public parking so that visitors understand the conditions of their parking (see figure 6). Signage should consistently include the following pieces of information, as applicable:

- Schedule of enforcement
- Time limit
- Price (if applicable)



Figure 5 – Proposed parking icon

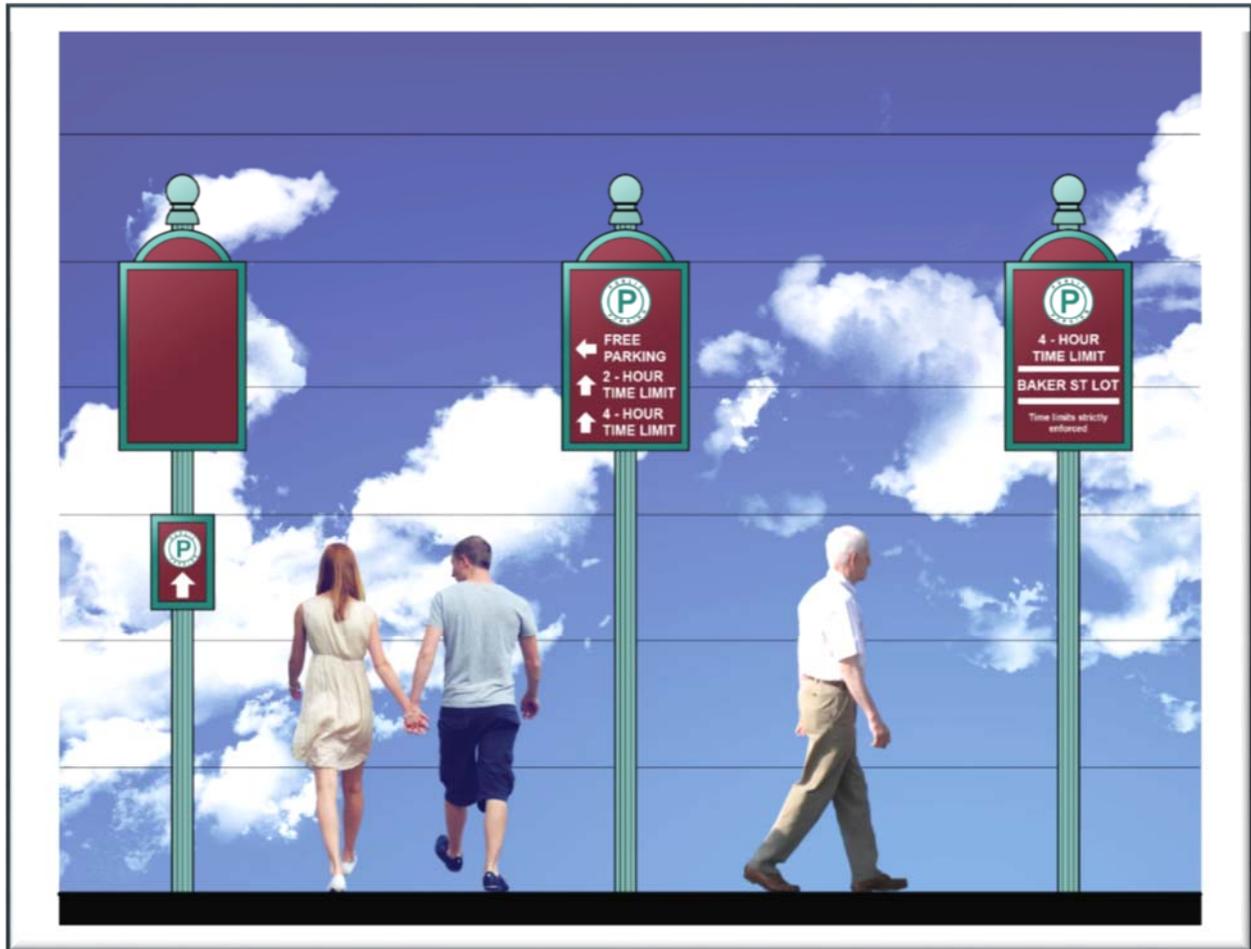


Figure 6 – Proposed parking wayfinding signage

### Establish Time Limits

Establish 2-hour time limits for on-street parking spaces in the core area. This will help increase turnover and keep prime on-street parking for business purposes. Establish 4-hour time limits for off-street parking in the core area and keep all other parking areas free (for those planning longer stays and for employee parking). Time limits should run from 8:00am to 6:00pm daily. All parking, whether with time limits or free, should be signed so that visitors can be confident they are parked appropriately and in public spaces. Spaces could also be color-coded (along the curb line) to help establish easy identification.

While specific time limits can be customized by the City based on use patterns, the creation of a tiered time-limit system will help spread parking demand more evenly among downtown streets, freeing up spaces on the most popular core blocks. For this tiered system to be effective in influencing parking choices, drivers will need to know where the most restrictive and least restrictive options are located. Public awareness of where appropriate parking options are

located will result in many drivers heading straight for fringe area lots, reducing vehicle recirculation in the core area.

Designate short stay parking spaces (15/30-minute limit) near businesses that are typically used for pickups or quick errands. These spaces should be located on each block and should be clearly indicated with signage. They could include pavement striping or colored curbs for easy identification.

### **Promote Shared Parking**

Shared parking can be utilized where land uses have different parking demand patterns and are able to use the same parking spaces. While the City has limited control over private lots, it should pursue shared parking agreements where feasible, recognizing that to fully utilize the opportunities shared parking presents, City Codes may need to be amended to accommodate both uses and needed infrastructure improvements. Consistent signage (incorporating the parking icon shown in Figure 5) should be created that encourages shared parking and spells out conditions of use. Other aesthetic enhancements may be required as well.

There may be opportunities to add parking spaces under the downtown umbrella and create hubs for fringe parking that could easily be served by shuttle service. For instance, Lake Cardiology could be added to SunTrust to form a hub on the eastern edge of downtown to capture vehicles coming into downtown on W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, while Watson Plaza, Post Office, and 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank could form a hub on the northern edge of downtown to capture vehicles coming into downtown on N. Donnelly Street. Chamber of Commerce parking adjacent to the railroad tracks also seems like a prime area for additional shared parking spaces. It is recognized there are issues with some of these lots, as described earlier in the report (Preliminary Input tables), but since City Codes may need to be amended for shared parking uses, it is worthwhile to keep this idea in play for now.

Parking areas should be consistently signed so visitors recognize opportunities and are encouraged to use shared parking facilities. Currently, private lot signage is either ambiguous or presents language that discourages visitors from parking.

Contract parking could also be explored. Regular downtown users (business owners and/or employees) may decide that a reserved space at a small price outweighs the hassle of searching for a space every day. Additionally, the opportunity for financial compensation may be a motivation that opens up new spaces for public use.

### **Create Valet Parking**

Providing a centrally located public valet stand is an increasingly popular strategy for expanding curbside parking access in high demand areas or during high demand events. Mount Dora should pursue a centralized valet parking contract to provide service during periods of heavy activity to help make parking in the downtown more convenient. This would help improve the utilization of available parking, as well as minimize customer walking distances. The cost of providing valet parking could be private and shared among downtown businesses or a contract could be negotiated directly with the City. Valet service could start as a pilot program to test success and buy-in.

Stuart, Florida, a city of similar size to Mount Dora, has similar parking issues in their downtown. They recently established a valet parking program as a public/private partnership. Parking is free to patrons of the businesses sponsoring the service; other vehicles pay a fee of \$5, with \$1 of that going to the City. The City faces no liability since the valet company has added the City to its insurance coverage.

One convenient spot to locate valet parking would be on the north side of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Alexander Street and Dora Drawdy Way. This location is central to many restaurants, meaning a short walk for patrons. There are a number of parking lots within a two-block radius of the valet that could be utilized for vehicle storage. The location is not in front of a business, so there would be no movement or congestion conflicts. The adjacent public parking lot and open area in the NE corner of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Dora Drawdy intersection could be utilized for staging and queuing on busy evenings, and a tent or shelter could be setup in case of inclement weather. There is a kiosk in this location that could be expanded to provide a downtown wayfinding directory. Another location that has been mentioned for valet parking is 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue near N. Baker Street. If valet parking becomes a popular parking option, a second location may also be considered to bookend the downtown.

### **Encourage Other Transportation Options**

Complete Streets principles should be implemented to ensure that downtown streets and sidewalks adequately serve the needs of pedestrians. Safe, attractive, shaded, well-lit, and inviting pedestrian linkages should be created that connect downtown destinations to parking facilities and nearby residential areas. Crosswalks should be upgraded to present a unified streetscape palette throughout downtown that emphasizes pedestrian-priority in all areas.

Adequate bicycle routes and bicycle racks should be provided throughout downtown, especially near the Tremain Street trailhead. Separate areas for motorcycle/scooter parking could be provided or existing parking spaces converted into an area where multiple motorcycles can park. This is an easy way to maximize parking space use.

### **Enhance Fringe Area Parking**

In addition to promoting fringe area parking by keeping it free of charge, these areas should be enhanced with amenities such as lighting, walkways, shelters, signage, and call boxes to make parking there more desirable. These enhancements will make fringe parking safer and more convenient, which will translate to more long-term users, especially employees.

The 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist Church lot and Edgerton Court lot are two areas where minor changes can yield big results. Neither area seems connected to downtown – both seem dark and isolated at night. By installing pedestrian-scale lighting that matches the fixtures used elsewhere in downtown, these areas not only become safer and more attractive to visitors, they become part of downtown through the extension of streetscape elements and continuity.

The City parking garage entrance on N. Donnelly Street has room for a wayfinding kiosk and benches where people can rest or retreat from the weather. This area should be well-lit and inviting, as should the parking garage entrance on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.

## Enforce Parking Regulations

It is important not to underestimate the importance of enforcement efforts in keeping the parking system in balance when time limits are implemented. If long-term parkers know they can get away with using short-term spaces, they will. This will perpetuate the shortage of customer spaces. Parking enforcement must be consistent to be effective, especially for short-term parking.

Many cities function without pay parking by vigorous enforcement of time limits and high parking fines. However, those cities also provide other workable parking alternatives for downtown employees and visitors who need to park for longer than would be allowed in core downtown spaces. Mount Dora should do the same. Parking areas for long-term parking should be clearly marked and parking enforcement should be prioritized in short-term parking areas.

There are several options for enforcement. First, there is the traditional manual tire chalking. This is the easiest to implement, but it is also labor intensive, inefficient, and easy to abuse. Second, there is parking enforcement that uses hand-held computers that track license plate numbers and locations. When the enforcement officer passes the same area on a subsequent pass, the plate numbers and locations are again read and compared and violations noted.

A newer and more efficient enforcement method is use of Wireless Parking Sensors (WPS). Small electronic sensors are installed within each parking space (see Figure 7). Each sensor includes a detector, battery, and radio to communicate parking events. Sensors detect when vehicles enter and exit each parking space, although they don't identify the vehicle. Receivers collect the event data from the sensors and relay it to a database server on the internet. The enforcement interface is a dedicated handheld device that allows enforcement officers to quickly identify which vehicles are violating parking regulations. Since the WPS collects each parking event, not just violations, it serves as a continual use survey and can be helpful in making future decisions on parking regulations and other management decisions that might be made by the City (planners, traffic engineers, economic development staff, etc...). Additionally, WPS is often offered as a service from a vendor, which reduces up-front costs to the City and reduces risk exposure due to evolving technology and maintenance/repair issues.

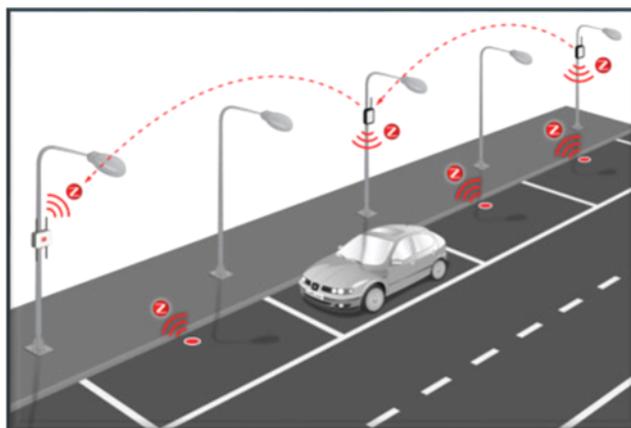


Figure 7 – Wireless parking sensors

A tiered parking ticket/fine schedule should be considered to reduce the impact of parking enforcement on downtown Mount Dora visitors. An enforceable fine structure should be developed that finds a balance between fines that are too low to be effective and so high they unnecessarily scare off parkers. A dynamic fine structure that starts low and rises with each subsequent violation should be considered. Enforcement should be focused on encouraging conformity with parking regulations, not revenue generation. While a 4-8% violation rate is considered an efficient system, fines should clearly target repeat offenders. Parking rules, regulations, and consequences should be clearly posted throughout the downtown.



Figure 8: Handheld Parking Enforcement Computers with Ticketing Capabilities

### Improve Loading and Delivery Logistics

Work with downtown businesses to determine loading and delivery needs, in terms of both times and locations. Although delivery vehicles cannot be removed from downtown, their impact can be minimized where possible by determining specific hours for delivery vehicle parking (preferably off-peak parking periods when spaces are not yet full) and encouraging use of smaller delivery vehicles whenever possible.

Although Dora Drawdy Way and Royellou Lane are narrow streets with mostly private parking spaces, there are a few places where vehicles could pull to the side out of traffic to make deliveries. The City should include these locations when discussing options with downtown businesses, as a way to get commerce operations off primary streets where there are a multitude of conflicts with pedestrians and other vehicles.

4<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Alexander Street and N. McDonald Street, which is already blocked off to regular traffic flow, could be considered as a staging area for deliveries, since it would not interfere with existing parking or circulation patterns.

### Provide Clear Messaging and Communication

The City-issued parking pamphlet should be updated to reflect new regulations. It should clearly show the different types of parking, both areas with time limits and areas with free parking.

Fines should be described, as well as multiple options for paying fines. The pamphlet should be readily available throughout the downtown and should be displayed at pedestrian kiosks along with the downtown map and list of businesses.

Kiosks should be present in every parking area so visitors can orient themselves in the downtown and feel comfortable knowing that wayfinding information will be available throughout the downtown. People venture further on foot if they are confident within their surroundings. In addition to wayfinding information, parking regulations should be posted.

The City should also consider adding distances to either general wayfinding signs or parking signs, indicating “2 blocks to downtown” or similar directional text that would give visitors a level of comfort parking in fringe lots, instead of venturing into the heart of the downtown in search of an elusive core area space (see Figure 9). By adding this information, these lots become more a part of the downtown instead of something disconnected and separate and visitors can park knowing they are close to downtown destinations.



Figure 9 – Wayfinding with pedestrian distances

### Improve Safety

The importance of providing a safe environment in parking facilities, especially in fringe areas, cannot be stressed enough. The actual and perceived security within parking areas impacts the success not only of the parking operation, but also the businesses supported by those facilities. Each lot should be adequately maintained so it doesn't deter potential users based on poor design, lot pavement quality or security issues.

As a general rule, most of the public parking areas in downtown are poorly-lit and need pedestrian-scale lighting. Additionally, there are issues with existing streetlights that need to be addressed. Many lights are not working. There are varying levels of streetlight brightness throughout downtown. Often times, there are different levels of light within the same block. This

does not present an organized image of downtown for visitors. The lighting in the City parking garage is very dim on the lower level. The lights along the stairway to the second level were not working during multiple filed visits for this project.

Alexander Street, north of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue is particularly dark, with more streetlights on one side of the road than the other. If this area becomes the location for valet service, it should be consistently well-lit to provide a safe pedestrian environment.

## VIII. Mid - Term Recommendations

Mid-term strategies will generally occur from 2-5 years. Recommendations will continue to involve improvement of operations, but will also consider multimodal accessibility and parking supply. Recommendations include:

- Add shuttle service
- Pursue private partnerships near the downtown core
- Incorporate parking technologies
- Revisit pay parking in the downtown core

The descriptions below provide details for each of the mid-term recommendations:

### Add Shuttle Service

Implement a downtown shuttle or tram service between fringe areas and downtown to encourage use of all parking resources. This could bring some of the furthest removed from downtown lots into play and add spaces convenient from a number of entryways into the downtown. Short headways (5-10 minutes) should be provided to ensure convenient connections for a variety of users. Vehicles should be ADA accessible so that this service would be available to all potential users. Shuttles could be either City-owned and operated or established as a public/private partnership. Grants could also be pursued.

Shuttle stops should be well-marked with wayfinding signage that fits the theme and branding already established for downtown - it could be separate or included as part of parking signs. A route schedule should be posted so that visitors can plan for their return trip.

The City of Stuart has been operating a downtown tram service for almost ten years. They have two routes with a common transfer point and run on 10 minute headways. The vehicles hold approximately 12 people, are ADA compliant, and are electric. The vehicles are quiet-running and utilize solar panels to help extend the battery charge. A tram can run approximately 10-hours on one charge.

Figure 10 shows what a typical shuttle vehicle for Mount Dora might look like. Notice that there are plastic roll-down panels on each side that can be used during cool or inclement weather.



Figure 10 – Typical shuttle bus

### **Pursue Private Partnerships Near the Downtown Core**

Explore the feasibility of parking agreements with private lots for parking. Key properties to pursue first include land near the downtown core such as the gravel lot on the SE corner of the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/McDonald intersection and the private parking and adjacent underutilized lot on the NW corner of the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Alexander intersection.

### **Incorporate Parking Technologies**

Incorporate parking technologies to improve the downtown parking experience, as well as City operations and management. Smart phone apps (paired with parking sensors) could be used to direct visitors to available parking spaces. Smart phone apps could also store a vehicle's parking location and monitor time left at a parking space. Digital messaging signs could be controlled through the comprehensive parking management system to display parking space counts (available spaces) and/or other directional information.



Figure 10 – Smartphone parking app to locate spaces



Figure 11 – Smartphone parking app to manage parking functions

### Revisit Pay Parking in the Downtown Core

Based on behavioral changes in parking from implementation of short- and mid-term recommendations, it may be appropriate to revisit the need for pay parking. In order to

generate the funds necessary to effectively operate the downtown parking system and plan for new parking supply, sufficient revenue will need to be generated through some combination of fees and assessments. Pay parking may be needed to make an impact on funds available to the parking system for expansion of parking resources. Instituting pay parking in the downtown core may also help improve parking turnover and encourage use of other modes of transportation.

A properly balanced parking system that includes both paid on-street and paid/timed off-street options should be characterized by rates for the core area on-street parking that are higher than those available at the off-street or fringe area alternatives. This relationship provides greater incentives for vehicles to seek appropriate parking options depending on the purpose and length of their visit.

## IX. Long - Term Recommendations

Long-term strategies will generally occur from 5+ years. The bulk of the work will involve increasing parking supply. Recommendations include:

- Expand city parking garage and Baker/Tremain parking lot
- Pursue private partnerships outside the downtown core

The descriptions below provide details for each of the long-term recommendations:

### **Expand City Parking Garage and Baker/Tremain Parking Lot**

The City has looked at several concepts for expanding this parking resource and it is a forgone conclusion that some form of improvement will eventually take place here. When funds are earmarked for this work, the City/CRA should re-assess the conceptual layouts, update costs and funding, evaluate land purchase tradeoffs, and vet feasible options through the public.

The Envision Mount Dora project proposed residential development in this portion of the downtown. The conceptual layouts should consider whether parking expansion can be done as part of a mixed-use development (or with liner retail) that extends the downtown core closer to the lake.

### **Pursue Private Partnerships Outside the Downtown Core**

With shuttle service established in the downtown area, parking agreements can now be explored with lots outside the core area. Key properties include the First National Bank lot and the Presbyterian Church gravel parking lot. The church lot would require several upgrades – the grass lot cannot be used for daily use, the configuration of spaces may need to be revised to meet City codes, and storm drainage improvements would be needed.

## X. Costs

The following matrix identifies projects and planning level costs associated with each recommendation:

No.	Project	Cost	Notes
<b>Short-Term Recommendations</b>			
<b>Clarify wayfinding for parking</b>			
S-1a	New wayfinding signs	\$2500 ea	
S-1b	Retrofit existing wayfinding signs	\$500 ea	
<b>Establish time limits</b>			
S-2a	New parking signs	\$500 ea	
S-2b	Curb painting/stripping	\$50 ea	For 15-30 minute spaces
<b>Promote shared parking</b>			
S-3a	Code revisions	Staff time	
S-3b	Pursue agreements with private lots	TBD	
S-3c	New signs	\$500 ea	Shared parking regulations
<b>Create valet parking</b>			
S-4a	Code revisions	Staff time	
S-4b	Coordination with business owners	TBD	
S-4c	Area for staging pick-up/drop-off	No cost	
<b>Encourage other transportation options</b>			
S-5a	Bike racks	\$500 ea	
S-5b	Crosswalks	\$3000 ea	Match textured pavement
S-5c	Curb ramps	\$1500 ea	
S-5d	Tactile warning strips	\$400 ea	
S-5e	Scooter/motorcycle parking areas	No cost	
<b>Enhance fringe area parking</b>			
S-6a	Lighting	\$2500 ea	Pedestrian-scale, match existing
S-6b	Kiosk	\$7500 ea	
S-6c	Shelter	\$7500 ea	
S-6d	Signage	\$2500 ea	
S-6e	Call box	\$1000 ea	
<b>Enforce parking regulations</b>			
S-7a	Parking enforcement officer	TBD	
S-7b	Handheld computer	\$2000 ea	
S-7c	Parking sensor technology	TBD	Contract service to reduce costs
<b>Improve loading and delivery logistics</b>			
S-8a	Coordination with business owners	Staff time	
S-8b	New loading signs	\$500 ea	
<b>Clear messaging and communication</b>			
S-9a	Kiosk	\$7500 ea	
S-9b	Internet presence	Staff time	

S-9c	Pamphlet	Staff time	
S-9d	Pedestrian signs (with distances)	\$2500 ea	
<b>Improve safety</b>			
S-10a	New streetlights	\$2500 ea	Pedestrian-scale, match existing
S-10b	Streetlight calibration	Staff time	Color rendition, illumination
S-10c	Streetlight maintenance	Staff time	
<b>Mid-Term Recommendations</b>			
<b>Add shuttle service</b>			
M-1a	Vehicles	\$35k ea	
M-1b	Signage	\$500 ea	
M-1c	Operations & Maintenance	\$85k yr	
M-1d	Storage & Service area	TBD	
<b>Pursue private partnerships near core</b>			
M-2a	Lease costs	TBD	
M-2b	Infrastructure costs	TBD	
<b>Incorporate parking technology</b>			
M-3a	Smartphone app	\$3000	
M-3b	Digital messaging signs	\$2500 ea	
<b>Revisit pay parking</b>			
M-4a	City evaluation/location criteria	Staff time	
M-4b	Interactive metering kiosk	\$10k ea	
M-4c	Signs	\$500 ea	
<b>Long-Term Recommendations</b>			
<b>Expand city parking garage</b>			
L-1a	Engineering and permitting	\$50k	
L-1b	Construction	\$2.5m	
<b>Pursue private partnerships outside core</b>			
L-2a	Lease costs	TBD	
L-2b	Infrastructure costs	TBD	

## XI. CRA Project Priorities

Mount Dora is working hard to promote growth that fits into its vision for the community and the future of downtown. This report provides context for further discussion among the City and CRA Board about which recommendations should be earmarked as priority strategies moving forward as funding is put in place to help promote sustainable economic vitality through sound parking system operations targeted to both customers and visitors to downtown, while also providing a framework that is supportive of multimodal transportation options.

After review and discussion of this report, the CRA Board listed the following strategies as top priorities to pursue in greater depth:

- Increased amenities such as lighting, wayfinding signage, information kiosks, and smart phone-based technologies
- Time-restricted parking
- Angled parking (in conjunction with one-way streets)
- Shared parking and valet service

## XII. Additional Discussion

There are two strategies listed above as CRA Board priorities that have not been discussed with the recommendations provided in this report: one-way streets and angled parking. This section will provide background information regarding each to help the City understand the design considerations and tradeoffs for these options.

### One-Way Streets

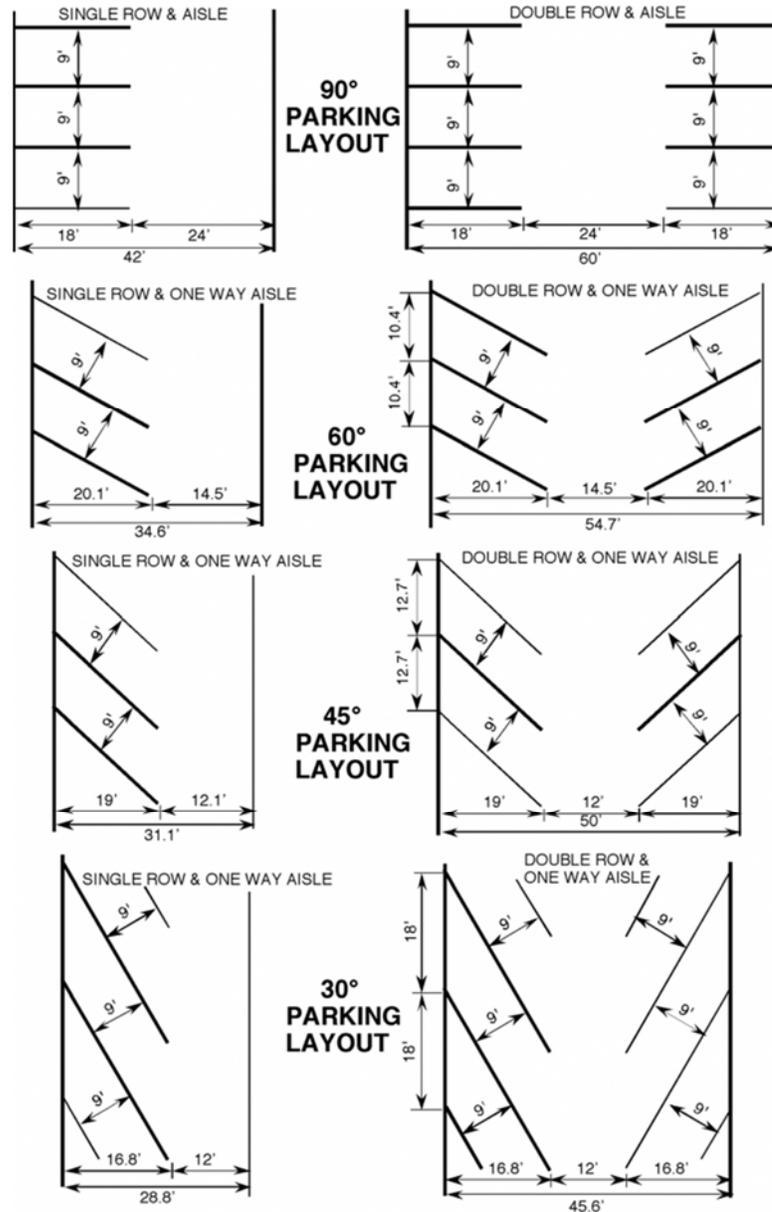
The general concept of this strategy is that streets surrounding the downtown core – the loop of W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, N. Baker Street, W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, and Alexander Street – would be converted to one-way traffic to facilitate the conversion of parallel parking to angled parking. Because a portion of W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue is already one-way, the general discussion has been that the traffic flow would be in a clockwise direction. There are several design considerations that one-way streets bring into play, including:

- One-way streets may put greater traffic volume pressures on N. Donnelly Street because of new recirculation patterns. For example, a visitor coming into downtown from the east on W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue will be able to turn south onto N. Baker Street to park in the public lots. When they go to leave, however, because of the one-way street, they will have to loop the block using W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and N. Donnelly Street to get back to the main roadway.
- In some cases, the alternative to looping the block at N. Donnelly Street (in the above example) will be to use the residential streets to the east as exit ways. This will add traffic in areas where higher volumes and/or speeds are not intended or welcome.
- Wayfinding signage will need to be relocated and destinations redirected to account for new traffic patterns. Regulatory signage will need to be relocated as well.

### Angled Parking

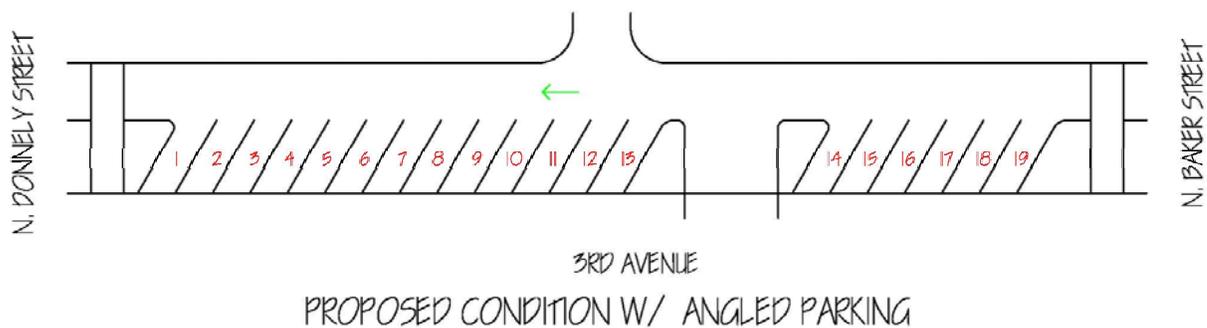
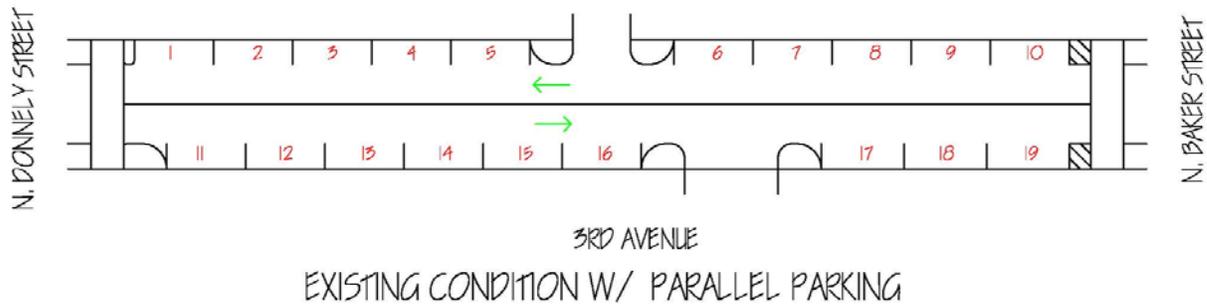
The general concept of this strategy is that when streets have been converted from two-way to one-way traffic, the extra room within the roadway itself will allow for the conversion of parallel parking to angled parking. The thinking is that angled parking is an easier task than parallel parking and that there will be less back-up of on-street through traffic during parking maneuvers. Additionally, since angled parking takes up less curb space than parallel parking, additional parking spaces can be added in the downtown area. There are several design elements that need to be considered, including:

- The streets most often mentioned for conversion to angled parking are N. Baker Street (approximately 25' wide), W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (approximately 36' wide), and Alexander Street (approximately 33-38' wide). The charts below show typical roadway widths necessary to accommodate angled parking:



As the charts show, the widths of the above-listed streets provide only enough room to place angled parking on one side of the street, and N. Baker Street is not wide enough to accommodate any angled parking.

- With angled parking available on only one side of the street, there is not a significant increase in the number of parking spaces that can be accommodated. The example below shows the W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue block between N. Donnelly Street and N. Baker Street – as it exists now with parallel parking and as reconfigured using angled parking:



### Assessment

Most people would agree that angled parking is preferred over parallel parking, even with newer model vehicles that parallel park automatically. Angled parking is more effective for handicap parking ingress and egress from vehicles as well. For these reasons, these two strategies may be implemented as part of the overall parking improvement plan.

However, in terms of the larger goals for downtown Mount Dora – improving parking availability, efficiency, and system operations, it should be noted that the benefit gained by converting to one-way streets and angled parking is likely minimal versus the cost of conversion and establishing new traffic patterns.

### XIII. Summary

It is clear that as Mount Dora grows, so too will the demand for parking. This Study recognizes the importance of parking and accessibility in the success of downtown's future. The recommendations herein provide a context from which coordinated and strategic parking management can begin. They are intended to:

- Define the use and purpose of parking - manage the supply, enforce parking policies, monitor the use and respond to changes in demand, and maintain the intended function of the overall system
- Serve as a guide to maximize the City's existing parking resources and assure cost effective solutions for access, which includes new parking supply and transportation demand management program improvements
- Promote sustainable economic vitality through sound parking strategies for customers and visitors to downtown, while also providing a framework that is supportive of other alternative modes of transportation

This Study provides a blueprint for a clear, flexible, and consensus-based parking management system to support and facilitate the larger community vision and goals.