SECTION II. FRAMEWORK FOR A RATIONAL DOWNTOWN PARKING POLICY

The City's Transportation Master Plan (TMP), as reflected in the language of the request for proposal for the project, established a number of objectives to be attained when providing a downtown parking policy, especially: *Accommodating the increased parking demand of a revitalized Downtown while protecting and reinforcing its pedestrian orientation*, and *encourage visitors to "park once" and walk to various downtown destinations.*

The TMP went further to note that: "Meeting new demand without undermining the pedestrian environment may be more important to successful long-term revitalization of Downtown than an aggressive approach to providing parking."

To assist the Steering Committee in understanding the importance of parking as a resource for downtown revitalization, some initial efforts were spent reviewing parking concepts and information. Some key points that Steering Committee members were asked to consider included:

A. Costs and Value Associated with Parking Spaces

The existence and provision of parking spaces in a downtown have both a cost and value to the owner (see **Table 1** for costs). In considering issues such as removal of parking spaces, regulation of curb side parking spaces, or conversion of parking spaces for other uses, these costs should be incorporated into the calculations and assessments.

Table 1. Average Direct Financial Parking Facility Costs under Various Conditions*

	Land Cost Per Space	Construction Cost Per Space	Operating & Maint. Annual Cost Per Sp	Total Annual Cost Per Sp	Daily Cost Per Sp
CBD, On-Street	$ 8,000	$ 3,000	$ 300	$1,338	$ 4.46
CBD, Surface	$15,385	$ 3,000	$ 300	$2,035	$ 6.78
CBD, 4-Level Structure	$ 3,846	$20,000**	$ 400	$2,179	$ 7.26
CBD, Underground	$ 0	$35,000**	$ 500	$2,645	$ 8.82

Assumes 7% annual interest rate, amortized over 20 years.

*Source: Parking Management: Strategies, Evaluation and Planning, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, except ** which comes from Parking Matters, Designing, Operating and Financing Structured Parking in Smart Growth Communities, Bier, Giosa, Goldsmith, Johnson and Sollohub (July 2006), a reference specific to New Jersey parking issues.*

B. All Parking Spaces Are Not Created Equal

In recent years many urban communities have been finding out the hard way that exchanging a publicly accessible parking space for a privately owned space does not maintain the status quo where parking is concerned.

An on-street space can provide between 2 ½ - 3 times the amount of available parking as compared to a parking space that is limited to private use. This is primarily because a private space, when not occupied by its owner, will remain unoccupied and unable to address downtown parking need. By creating a parking garage space for a residential unit where on-street parking would otherwise be available, not only is the public space, with its higher turnover, eliminated, but often, if a development of housing units with driveways and garages replaces on-street parking, there is an actual loss of more than one space since driveways are often spaced so as to eliminate the ability to park between curb cuts. Reservation of on-street spaces for private individuals will have the same effect as a curb cut since no other vehicle can park in the space when the person for whom it has been reserved is not parking at the location.

The need for additional spaces can be an issue even in a privately owned facility if specific parking spaces are "reserved" within a garage or lot. When workers are assigned a parking space, that space is not available to others if the assignee is not using the space. As a result, each worker needs his or her own space, rather than the workers being able to sharing fewer spaces.

Therefore, when making a decision to convert a public access space to a private space, to determine a proper "rental" or ownership value, the City should be equating that space to the annual cost for providing two to three replacement spaces for each private or reserved parking space considered.

C. More Parking is Not Always the Answer

Minimum parking requirements can be excessive if they have been based on demand surveys performed in automobile-dependent locations. As a result, minimums can require more parking than is needed for an urban environment. Additionally, if this overabundance of supply is privately (or government) owned, and thereby not available to the general public, parking problems for a downtown may persist even after the private spaces are added.

D. Individual Parking Management Strategies often have Modest Impacts, but their Cumulative Effects can Be Substantial.

A cost-effective, integrated parking management program can often reduce parking requirements by 20-40%, while improving user convenience and helping to achieve other planning objectives, such as supporting more compact development, encouraging use of alternative modes of transportation, and increasing development affordability.

E. On-street Parking provides many Benefits to a Downtown Street and Should Be Eliminated Only as a Last Resort

In addition to the obvious direct access benefits to nearby land uses that on-street parking provides, there are many indirect benefits that downtown streets derive from on-street parking:

- It provides a buffer for pedestrians and sidewalk activities, like outdoor dining, from moving traffic, thereby creating a more friendly environment;
- It can lessen the need for parking lots and structures, which convert a significant amount of acreage to parking;
- It will act to calm moving traffic by slowing vehicles traveling on City streets.

F. On-street Parking should be of Limited Duration to provide Maximum Economic Benefit to a Downtown Area, with Longer "All Day" Parking located Off-street in Most Cases.

On-street parking turnover supports many of the businesses that can revitalize a downtown. People who stop into drycleaners, flower shops, coffee shops, or other retail establishments will be more inclined to do so when they can park closer to their destination. When on-street parking is overwhelmed by vehicles that do not move from a spot for extended periods, a short-term driver will at first circle the block, creating the potential for more vehicle and pedestrian conflicts and a less pleasant urban environment.

G. On-Street Parking that has over 85% Occupancy is Considered to be Fully Occupied

When parking spaces are more than 85% full, there may be latent parking demand that is not being met because drivers may choose to drive on rather than to continue to circle, looking for an available space. Where on-street parking demand is great, these spaces should be used for short term parking needs, with longer-term parkers directed to off-street lots and spaces. Failing to enforce short duration parking on-street has a detrimental affect on local businesses.

H. Structured Parking can Improve the Potential for Economic Development and a "Park-Once" Downtown.

When designed with appropriate connectivity for pedestrian access, appropriate façade frontage to promote walking, and developed with mixed use retail and public space, structured parking facilities will help generate additional pedestrian activity. In addition to the aesthetic elements, parkers in structured facilities are less inclined to take their vehicles from a garage during mid-day, and as a result are more inclined to run errands and find dining options on foot than if their vehicles are parked on an easily accessible surface lot.