

**MEMO**

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**TO:** Vince Sandersfeld, City of Mount Dora, Planning Director  
**CC:** Adam Sumner, City of Mount Dora, CRA Administrator; file  
**FROM:** David S. Nelson, Renaissance Planning  
**DATE:** February 25, 2022 – **UPDATED DRAFT**  
**RE:** Downtown Parking Studies Update

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## **I. Introduction**

This work task and memorandum provide a cursory review and update of the parking studies Renaissance Planning previously completed for the City, consisting of the following documents:

- Downtown Parking Study (September 2016)
- Downtown Parking Study Implementation (December 2016)
- Parking Time Limit Fees Memorandum (November 2017)
- Downtown Freight Logistics (September 2018)

We believe these documents continue to provide valid and appropriate direction, options, and strategic recommendations for the City; however, we recognize that due to the passage of time and change in existing conditions, an updated look at parking in downtown Mount Dora is warranted.

## **II. Study Area**

The prior parking studies focused on the downtown core – 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 – as well as immediate fringe areas outside this core.

## **III. Supply**

The previous studies used parking numbers provided to the City by BESH Engineering, who mapped 230 spaces in the core area and 490 spaces in fringe areas for a total parking count of 720 spaces.

Using the BESH map as a base, Renaissance walked the downtown to verify and update parking counts, a summary of which is provided below:



Parking Spaces	Core Area	Fringe Area	Total
On-Street	137	260	397
Parking Lot	62	305	367
Handicap	11	22	33
Other*	1	4	5
Total	211	591	802

\*Other spaces include electric vehicle (2), combat veteran (1), and trolley parking (2).

While there were some counting errors in the BESH map that were updated, the additional parking spaces come primarily from a difference in count in the Methodist Church lot (116 vs. 95) and the new parking lot at the southeast corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and N. Baker Street (49 spaces).

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that 2% of the total spaces be designated as handicap parking; this equates to 17 spaces for the 802 parking spaces counted. The City has provided 33 handicap spaces, which meets the applicable ADA requirements.

#### IV. Field Observations

The Downtown Parking Study contains the following text regarding 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 Methodist Church parking lot, and Edgerton court south of Charles Avenue.”*

Renaissance Planning performed site reconnaissance on two dates within these peak windows – late morning and early afternoon on December 9, 2021 and February 16, 2022 - to count spaces and note parking activity. We observed conditions like those described above on both occasions – parking in the core area was generally full, but there was ample parking available in fringe areas within one block of the core, including along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There was a lot of vehicle circulation around the core blocks and backups at the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/N. Donnelly Street intersection in multiple directions.

As was stated in the Downtown Parking Study “However, high occupancy in one area combined with lower occupancy nearby indicates parking management problems. This is where Mount Dora is today.” We believe that five years later, this is still an accurate assessment.

#### VI. Strategies

The strategies below respond to the need to enhance the City’s parking management program, with a goal of creating a “park once” environment where possible, so people can get out of their vehicles, walk, and experience all the unique assets that Mount Dora’s downtown and lakefront offer.

One of the questions posed by the City for this exercise was whether there is a need to consider a new parking deck. We believe that at a cost of approximately \$25,000/space (or \$8,000/space for surface parking), plus land value and the lost opportunity to provide new uses for the parcel(s), there are other options that should be considered and explored first, and that make better use of Mount Dora's existing parking supply:

- **Ensure convenient short-term parking.** On-street spaces are the most valuable asset in Mount Dora's parking system and critical for the success of downtown businesses. They should be reserved for shorter-term visitors and business customers. The goal in managing on-street spaces in downtown is to provide convenient parking for the greatest number of people. The City has created a parking hierarchy by time limiting on-street spaces in the downtown core to 4-hours, with off-street spaces in the core, as well as all fringe parking spaces, having no time limits.

There are several considerations here. First, does a 4-hour time limit provide the turnover of parking spaces needed to support downtown businesses? Second, is there turnover or are vehicles parking for longer than the allotted time periods? Third, what level of parking enforcement does the City provide or want to provide related to the 4-hour time limit? These questions may be most relevant regarding business owners and/or employees using these spaces.

While creating 4-hour parking has been an incremental step for the City, we don't believe it has fundamentally changed parking patterns in downtown. Part of that may be due to lack of enforcement. If so, stepped up enforcement, to some degree, may be a first step to test. Beyond that, we recommend the following changes:

- **2-hour time limit for on-street parking in the downtown core:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Baker Street and Alexander Street; Donnelly Street between 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- **4-hour time limit for off-street parking in the downtown core:** Donnelly Street & 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue lot; Alexander Street & 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue lot; Baker Street & 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue lot.

All other parking (on-street and lots) will remain untimed.

For this transition of policy and priority to work, clear parking enforcement efforts and education will be needed. While we understand the City's hesitance for a strict parking enforcement/fines policy, from both staffing and public relations perspectives, some enforcement will be needed to legitimize the efforts and transition, especially among local residents, business owners, and employees. The Downtown Parking Study outlines several methods for helping implement parking enforcement and the Parking Time Limit Fees Memorandum offers enforcement steps and a potential fee structure for violations – both give the City options to consider.

- **Offer enhancements for long-term parking.** Short-term parking restrictions should be complemented with enhancements to long-term parking areas. These lots need to not only be convenient, secure, landscaped, and well-maintained, but visitors need to be confident that they are in proximity of the downtown core. Lots also need to feel and be safe to encourage use by employees, especially those working evening shifts.

We recommend adding pedestrian-scale lighting – this not only increases visibility for people in the lots but helps people on the street see into lots, creating a safer environment. A call box should be added for emergencies and general security and information kiosks/maps should be provided to orient visitors to downtown and its destinations. The City is installing Wi-Fi and cameras in parking areas; this monitoring will increase the sense of security, especially if there are signs announcing use of the cameras.

- **Provide good wayfinding signage.** To better direct visitors to available parking resources, reduce recirculation of vehicles around core blocks, ease backups at traffic signals, and get people out of their cars as soon as possible, clear directional signage needs to be provided for visitors.

As new tiers of parking time limits are implemented, we recommend adding those appropriate designations to existing and/or new wayfinding signage. The distinction of parking designations within the signs will alert visitors to the different parking choices available around Mount Dora's downtown and direct them according to their needs, hopefully reducing driver indecision and recirculation through the core area.

Wayfinding needs to start as visitors are entering Mount Dora. Gateway and directional signage need to clearly guide vehicles from US 441 and SR 46 towards Donnelly Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and Old 441/Highland Street and to parking facilities.

We believe that these strategies help balance the needs of different users, helping create a more effective transportation network within the downtown that accommodates greater multimodal accessibility.



If you have any questions on this memorandum, please feel free to contact us for discussion and/or clarification. We are available at your convenience for additional work on this topic as needed. As always, we appreciate the opportunity to be of service to the City. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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