



# Village of Hinsdale Innovative Parking Management Plan

September 2014



### **Funding Acknowledgement**

This project was supported through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, which is funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and the Chicago Community Trust. The Village of Hinsdale and CMAP would like to thank these funders for their support for this project.



## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	4	<b>Chapter 3: Parking Management Strategies</b>	28
Community Involvement	6	Pricing	30
Plan Purpose	8	Will charging more for parking drive away business?	32
<b>Chapter 2: Background Data</b>	10	Time limits, other regulations, and enforcement	34
Why a conventional parking approach won't work	12	<b>Chapter 4: Goals and Strategies</b>	35
Comparison case studies	14	<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion</b>	54
Current parking conditions	18	<b>Appendix</b>	58
The unique nature of parking in downtowns	22		
What motivates parkers?	26		





# Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION







The Village of Hinsdale is known for its quaint neighborhoods, reputable school districts, and well-situated location in northeastern Illinois. These assets make Hinsdale a desirable community in which to live and work, along with a major lure—its historic and charming downtown. The downtown is a vital center where residents, visitors, and commuters alike can enjoy upscale boutiques, fine dining, and purchase home goods all within a compact, pedestrian-friendly area.

The downtown hosts a series of events and festivities year round such as Uniquely Thursdays, Hinsdale Farmer’s Market, and the Annual Christmas Walk, which bring out many residents and attract numerous visitors from surrounding communities.

These amenities contribute to the prosperity of Hinsdale, leaving the Village with the challenge of accommodating the influx of people who travel to Hinsdale to shop, dine, visit downtown, attend special events, and ride Metra’s commuter rail. The current parking system is proving to be outdated and insufficient, no longer meeting the needs of residents, visitors, employees, rail commuters, local businesses, and restaurants.

The limited parking spots available, parking restrictions and fees, and constant congestion caused by those searching for convenient parking add to the frustrations experienced by patrons of downtown Hinsdale.

To alleviate the problems that come with the imbalance of parking demands and supply, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), in collaboration with the Village of Hinsdale, thoroughly researched the parking patterns of downtown Hinsdale and examined successful parking plans implemented locally and throughout the country. The analyses aided in developing the Innovative Parking Strategies Plan for Hinsdale, which addresses the identified needs and opportunities through strategic parking recommendations.

One of the GO TO 2040 plan’s central goals is to create livable communities. Livability is primarily created at the local level through planning and development decisions made by communities, developers, and individuals. While CMAP can help local governments address issues of livability in their communities, development decisions will continue to be made locally.

## Community Involvement

To introduce the project to the community of Hinsdale and get a detailed understanding of their perspective on parking, a series of public outreach and engagement opportunities were designed to gather stakeholder input. This plan provides a snapshot of outreach strategies employed—a more comprehensive overview of this process can be found in the Existing Conditions Report.<sup>1</sup>

During the first phase of the project, CMAP staff conducted key-person interviews with 11 stakeholders who represent distinct groups in the community, including residents, business owners, developers, Village staff, and elected officials. The purpose of these confidential interviews was to gather the challenges and strengths that each stakeholder group faces in relation to the existing parking system.

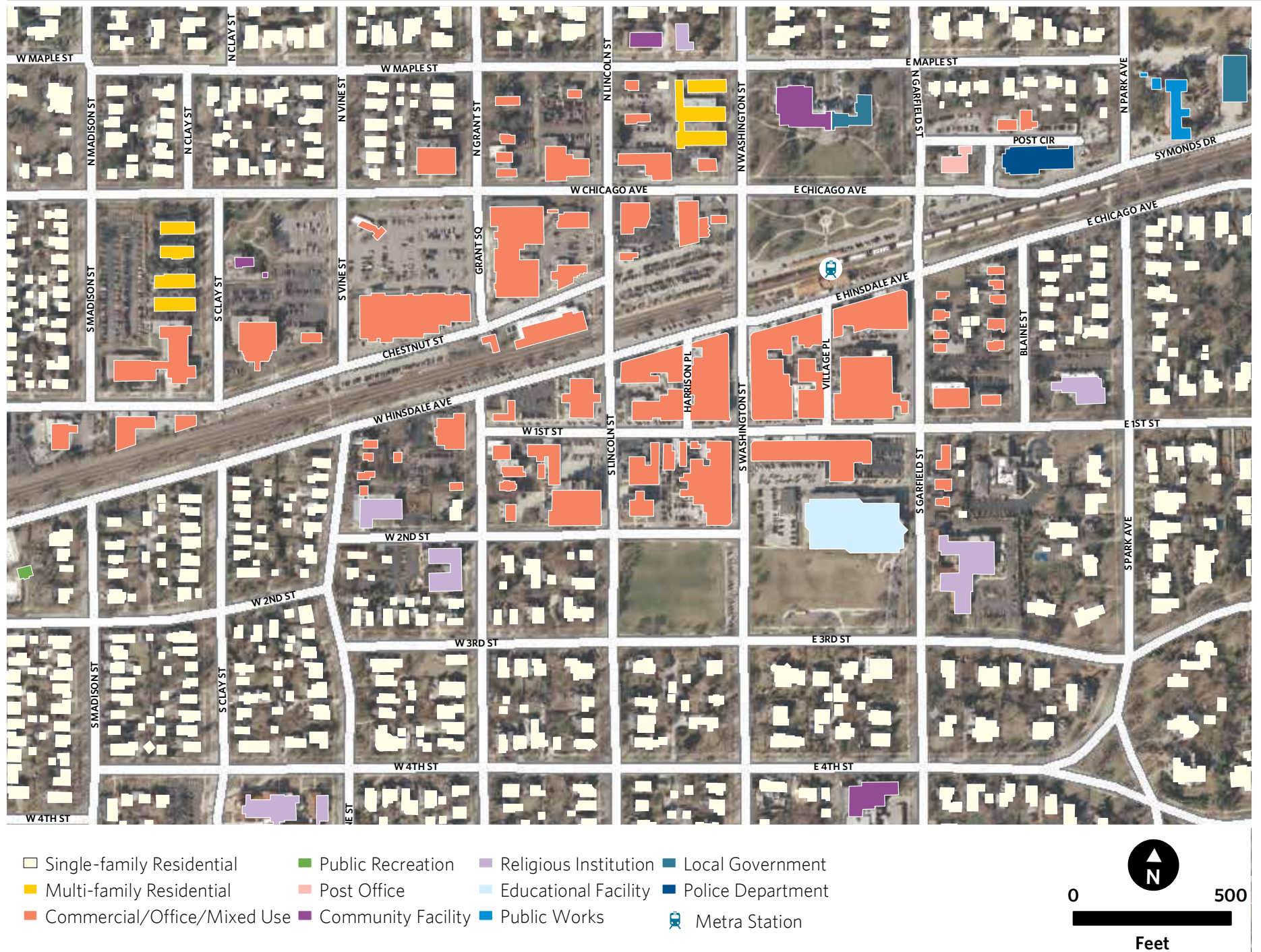
A public workshop targeted to local business owners was held on April 3, 2013, to connect with the large business sector that contributes to the vibrancy of downtown Hinsdale. At the workshop, participants learned about the project and heard from an Oak Park business owner about his experience with the Village's adjustments to parking rates to manage downtown parking demand. The goal of this workshop was to better understand parking issues specific to the downtown businesses, including their priorities, customer needs, and the needs of their employees.

To reach a broader audience, an interactive online survey was created and available for three months, from February 19 to May 19, 2013. The survey was publicized through fliers delivered to businesses in downtown Hinsdale, posted in public locations, and promoted in local newspapers and newsletters. During this time, over 140 people provided detailed feedback on parking priorities and possible strategies to address identified issues. The goal of the survey was to introduce the project to the wider Hinsdale community, initiate conversations surrounding the topic of parking, learn about parking priorities, and gather input to develop the strategic recommendations ultimately included in this plan.

Finally, a presentation was made to Village Trustees and broadcast on local television to discuss the parking recommendations for the Innovative Parking Strategies Plan that have been developed over the course of the past year's research, analyses and public input.

<sup>1</sup> Additional background information, including outreach activities, transportation analyses, parking occupancy, and turnover surveys, is available in the Existing Conditions Report on the project website: <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/Ita/hinsdale>.

Figure 1. Downtown Hinsdale study area



Source: DuPage County, 2013 and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.





## Plan Purpose

A central goal of this plan is to ensure that the existing parking spaces are used as efficiently as possible, while managing parking resources with a view for long-term provision of parking amenities. A variety of significant challenges, priorities, and ideas were raised throughout the planning process. Staff received input that ranged from small frustrations, like having to dig for quarters to pay the meters, to confusion about the existing permit system, and the need for more parking. Every aspect of the public input and data collected plays an important role in developing a comprehensive and strategic parking plan. Without understanding the complexities of parking, its role in the transportation system, or the astronomical costs of building structured parking, people often say, “Just build more parking!”

By taking a closer look at what type of parking opportunities and possibilities already exist in Hinsdale, cost-efficient strategies can be put forth and easily implemented. There are currently over 2,000 public parking spots downtown available to residents, visitors, rail commuters, and other community members. This number of parking spots could meet the parking demands of the community if managed properly and effectively with little burden on the general public.

The management of these existing parking spaces consists of rebalancing the supply of employee parking geographically, providing improved user information and maps, removing time limits, installing smart meters, and adjusting meter prices to reflect the amount of time parked and desirability of the location of parking spot.

This plan details numerous short-, mid-, and long-term strategies that can be implemented to address parking management in the Village of Hinsdale based on research and information gathered from the community.

Business owner and developer, Mike Fox, sharing his experience with parking frustrations in Oak Park. Watch his presentation online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQPj4UvtjKY>.



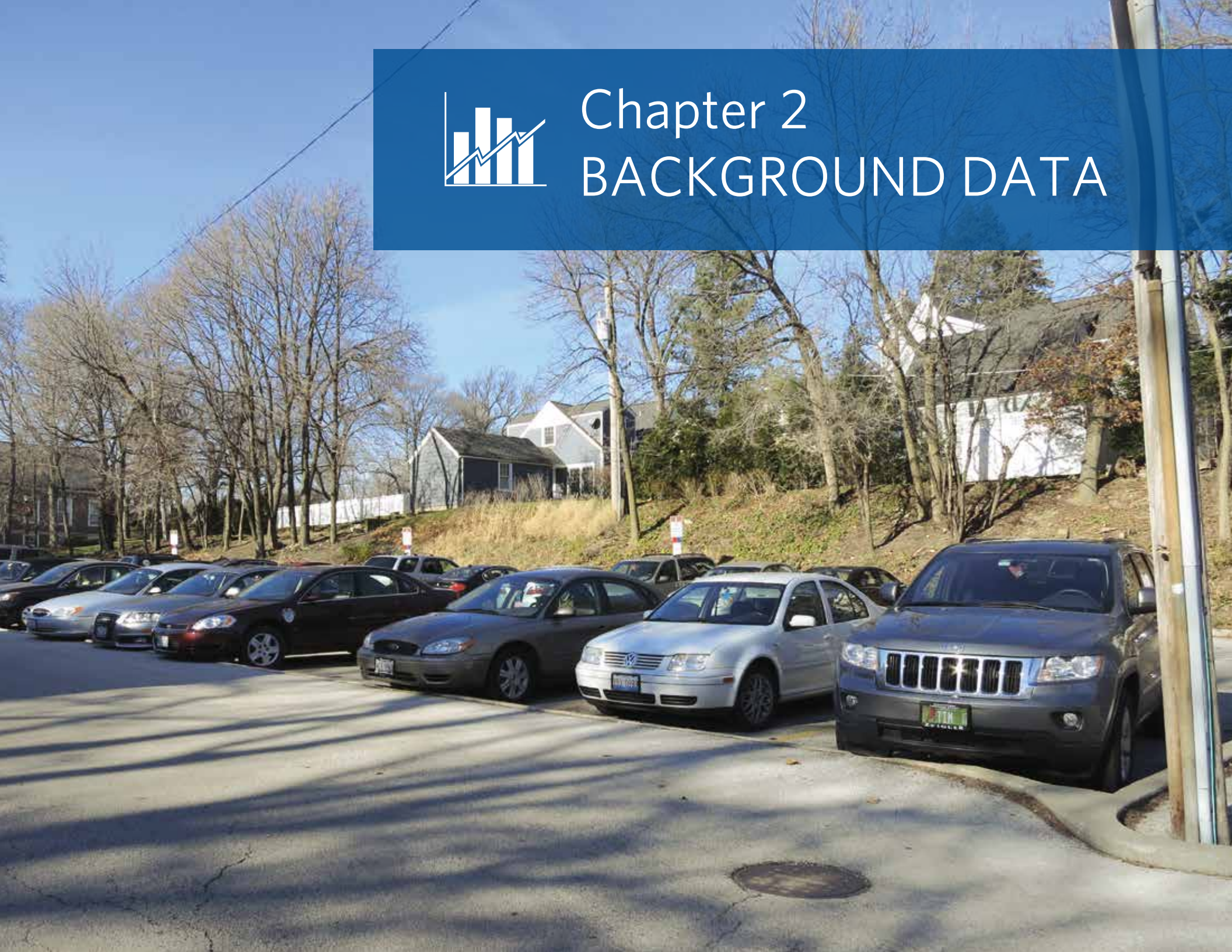






## Chapter 2

# BACKGROUND DATA







As communities grow, parking needs and demands also undergo transformations, requiring different types of parking management. Over the last several decades, the types of businesses in Hinsdale have changed along with the habits of customers. More people are driving, and shopping trips may take longer than they did in the past. Additionally, many employees are arriving from locations outside of Hinsdale, mostly by car.

According to municipal code, private property owners and developers are required to provide parking according to use and intensity of use. This is, however, unrealistic in a compact, walkable downtown like Hinsdale, and it places excessive burden on the private sector. There is not sufficient land area for large parking lots, and parking garages cost approximately \$30,000 per space—more than most small businesses could afford. Additionally, much of downtown Hinsdale was developed prior to this code, and therefore the existing parking in the downtown was put in place at a time when the demand for parking was different.

The management of parking supply affects the livability and walkability of the downtown. Building additional parking without properly managing the existing supply can induce more driving and increase parking demand and traffic congestion, leading to parking shortages even after having built a garage. For example, the frequency of Metra trains to Chicago makes downtown Hinsdale a desirable commuter station; additional parking would attract more commuters from other communities to the downtown station. Conversely, managing the existing supply can be a cost-effective way to reduce demand or increase attractiveness of underutilized spaces.

Having a walkable downtown is one of the features that makes Hinsdale a unique and desirable place to live; the downtown is important to supporting the vitality of the entire municipality. The historic downtown was originally designed when most people walked to amenities like stores, schools, and parks. Having retained the historic building density in its core, Hinsdale has maintained a high concentration of businesses and offices in a small area. The concentration of amenities and attractions is what is appealing to customers.

From day spas to restaurants to coffee shops, the variety of businesses in the downtown area means that addressing parking demand is varied and complex. Balancing the needs of local businesses, restaurants, rail commuters, residents, and visitors is no small feat. In addition to customer parking needs, there are many employees arriving by car. When everyone is trying to go to the same part of town, finding a parking spot for each automobile can be a challenge. People are often forced to drive in circles searching for a convenient space.

Driving and parking make up just one facet of a community's transportation infrastructure, and addressing the parking problems should be part of a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system plan. While cars will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for many, small increases in the mode share of more active forms of transportation—like walking, bicycling, and transit—can help alleviate parking problems while helping residents lead healthier lives.

## Why a conventional parking approach won't work

The conventional approach to parking is to make it free in order to attract customers. This free parking entices customers, employees, and Metra commuters to drive and leave their car parked for long amounts of time. This strategy can work in communities without a significant amount of commercial activity or in areas where land is plentiful and cheap, allowing surface parking to expand outward. But this approach does not work in traditional downtowns where a large number of amenities and activities occupy a small area. The expansive parking in conventional development spreads things out to a point where a walkable urban downtown isn't possible. Needless to say, downtown Hinsdale doesn't have much vacant land available to build an expansive surface parking lot.

Parking is not usually a primary land use in historic, walkable downtowns, which inevitably leads to a lack of available parking. A strategy that has evolved to combat this problem has been to impose time limits, but time limits are costly to enforce and end up penalizing customers for wanting to spend time in the downtown. If time limits aren't enforced regularly, some people will continuously feed the meter. On the other hand, if they are strictly enforced, they will end up angering customers and shoppers who overstay the limit. It may be local employees causing parking woes as they seek out the cheapest, closest parking spaces and leave their car while they work. Many of these employees know how to avoid the time limit penalties by moving their cars before the enforcement officer passes by; this is called the "two-hour shuffle."

Given a shortage of land, some downtowns are building their parking up rather than out by using municipal tax dollars to fund parking garages—a strategy that was much more affordable ten years ago. The average cost today for each space in a parking garage is approximately \$30,000. An addition to the Naperville Van Buren parking garage in 2008, for example, cost the City of Naperville nearly \$48,000 per net new space.

Neighboring communities are often compared to Hinsdale when looking for ideas and solutions to local parking problems. The communities in these examples all have parking garages, which is something that is frequently cited in public comments. Interestingly, even with parking garages, many communities have, or have dealt with, many of the same problems that Hinsdale has: congested on-street parking in the core and lower parking utilization for remote areas or in garages.









## Comparison case Study: La Grange

La Grange, to the east, frequently comes up in reference to parking. In 2004, the Village of La Grange constructed an \$8 million parking garage. The garage was funded by a public transportation grant for \$3.2 million, a \$4.5 million Tax Increment Financing (TIF) note, and \$300,000 of available TIF reserve funds. The TIF note was paid off in four years utilizing the annual property tax increment. A 0.25 percent non-home rule sales tax increase was approved by referendum to cover \$35,000 in annual operating and maintenance costs, including funds for long-term maintenance. If Hinsdale chooses to pursue a parking garage, Village leaders may want to consider a financing arrangement that ensures that the drivers who use the facility bear the financial burden of its construction and maintenance, rather than the community at large.

La Grange has also chosen to make the parking garage available to downtown shoppers and visitors, rather than Metra riders, by instituting time limits. The main benefit of having the garage is that a driver knows that he or she can go to the garage and find a parking spot, if he or she is unable to find an on-street space. For most, it is not the first-choice parking spot but a guaranteed back-up. It is appealing to a downtown to have that back-up, but the costs are so high that it is not a financially prudent decision if the Village has to pay for the construction and maintenance of the garage in the absence of grants or outside funding.

La Grange, IL  
Wikipedia, shared on a Creative  
Commons license, photo by user  
Lpangelrob.



## Comparison case Study: Naperville

Similar to Hinsdale, parking in downtown Naperville is at a premium. In an effort to compete with other retail centers with free parking, the City has built several parking garages at no cost to drivers. By the time they had completed construction of their second parking garage, the need for parking had already been negatively impacting the downtown and the City set out to develop a system to review parking conditions and prepare for increased demand before it created more problems for the community. Business owners prioritized customer satisfaction and engineers analyzed occupancy statistics, and out of these priorities the City developed a “Continuous Improvement Model.”

In the 1970s, the City removed parking meters from the downtown to compete with the nearby Fox Valley shopping mall. They replaced the meters with a Special Service Area (SSA). The SSA levies a tax on local businesses, and new businesses are required to pay the taxes of the prior year in addition to the current tax before they open. Their first parking garage, with funding from the SSA tax, was completed in 1987. In this Continuous Improvement Model, businesses are able to offer their patrons free parking, but no matter who is shopping or how they got there, everyone is taxed at a higher rate to pay for parking. Someone who walks, rides a bike, or takes transit will also pay more to shop in Naperville.

This model has satisfied the City of Naperville and its downtown business owners but is not seen as a feasible formula for the Village of Hinsdale, due to the increasing cost of providing structured parking, the seemingly insatiable demand for free parking, and the funding of garages through taxes that impact all shoppers, rather than just those that drive. In addition, the Naperville Metra station is not adjacent to the downtown like it is in Hinsdale. Naperville has a waiting list that is between nine and 12 years long for parking at their Metra station.



## Comparison case study: Oak Park

While larger and more dense than Hinsdale's, Oak Park's downtown shares a similar historic character and mix of uses, providing its residents and commuters with a series of compact blocks filled with a variety of shopping and entertainment options. Like Naperville, Oak Park has parking garages, but they charge for parking. Even with metered parking in the mid-2000s, Oak Park's downtown retail district parking spaces were full during business hours, while spaces in their parking garage remained underutilized. This was frustrating to business owners who were losing customers and to drivers circling in search of convenient, on-street parking.

In 2008, the Village decided to conduct an in-depth analysis of their parking supply and demand to develop a strategy to improve the conditions for parking in the downtown area and create a vibrant, safe, and walkable environment. The Village hired consultants who discovered that employees of local businesses were occupying prime parking spaces all day long while feeding the meters, which turned out to be cheaper than going to an off-street parking garage. They encouraged pricing increases in prime on-street spaces and suggested making remote parking and off-street parking garages cheaper. By allowing people to purchase quarterly permits for the garage at a reduced rate while raising the cost of the metered spaces, the employees changed their habits and began to park in the garage, leaving on-street spaces for retail customers. A parking management program eliminated hourly limits, priced spaces by desirability, lowered garage prices, and made it easier to pay for parking in lots with the use of pay boxes.

Parking is always a contentious issue, especially when undertaking the difficult task of raising prices, but the strategy used in downtown Oak Park has worked. In the downtown retail area, the majority of residents seem pleased with the results. Many businesses have come to see the positive impacts that pricing can have on turnover and changed their opinions. A local business owner in Oak Park went from being one of the most outspoken opponents of parking price increases in 2008 to saying at a public meeting in 2011 that the parking price increase was "the best thing the municipality had ever done" (interview with Cara Pavlicek, Oak Park Parking Manager, 2012).

After ironing out some early issues, turnover has increased and it is easier to find a place to park. Business owners have seen the positive effects and issued a statement of support for the changes proposed by the consultants, acknowledging that shoppers and customers are drawn to vibrant downtowns, not areas with free parking. Oak Park has realized that most people want quick, easy, and cheap parking. The process of balancing those three will always involve sacrifices. Not everything will turn out perfect the first time, but it's always possible to make adjustments to get it right.



## Implications for Hinsdale

Hinsdale needs to have enough parking to support the local businesses. To accomplish this, it is critical to first ensure that the Village is using its existing spaces efficiently. This must be balanced with residents' and business owners' concern that preserving the Village's uniqueness and local assets is important. This can be accomplished by looking holistically at the downtown transportation system and supporting all modes of transportation, which includes creating a comfortable walking and bicycling environment, offering a variety of transportation options, and adding parking spaces in a judicious and fiscally-responsible manner.





## Current parking conditions

While some newer developments in the downtown have large surface parking lots, the majority of the public parking spaces in the downtown area are found on local streets. This presents challenges when everyone wants to park in the closest space. The demand for parking is concentrated on Washington Street from Chicago Avenue to Third Street, Hinsdale Avenue between Lincoln Street and Garfield Street, and First Street between Lincoln Street and Garfield Street. These streets are often at or above capacity from mid-morning until mid-afternoon. See the Existing Conditions Report for occupancy maps.

The public parking lots in Hinsdale are regulated through a permit system, and some of the on-street spaces are also regulated by permits. The primary types of parking areas in the downtown core are permit parking (including on-street permit parking and permit parking lots), on-street parking (non-permit), and off-street parking lots (non-permit)





## Permit parking

The goal of issuing parking permits is to manage parking by designating the places where various users can park. Hinsdale has five different types of permits commuter, merchant, overnight, and municipal employee-each with varying costs. The parking permits are priced per six months: Blue Commuter (\$310), Red Merchant (\$180), Yellow Merchant/Overnight (\$180), Orange Merchant (\$240 - discontinued), Free Green Municipal Employee and Free Purple Merchant parking.

The off-street permit parking lots include the Village Lot (Blue), the Post Office lot (Red / Blue), the Water Plant lot (Green), Symonds Lot (Red / Blue), Lincoln Lot (Yellow), the Washington Shopper's Lot (Orange), and the back-in angled parking along the Metra tracks (Red). The on-street permit parking is mostly concentrated around the field bordered by Washington Street, 3rd Street, Lincoln Street, and 2nd Street. There is also permit parking on the north side of Hinsdale Avenue, along the Metra train tracks between Lincoln and Vine (Red), and between Vine and Madison (Purple); on the east side of Grant Street between 2nd Street and 3rd Street (Red); on the south side of Chicago Avenue between Washington and Garfield (Red/Blue); the west side of Lincoln Street between Chicago Avenue and Maple Street (Red/Blue shared with meters); and Symonds Drive between the police station and Park Avenue (Green).

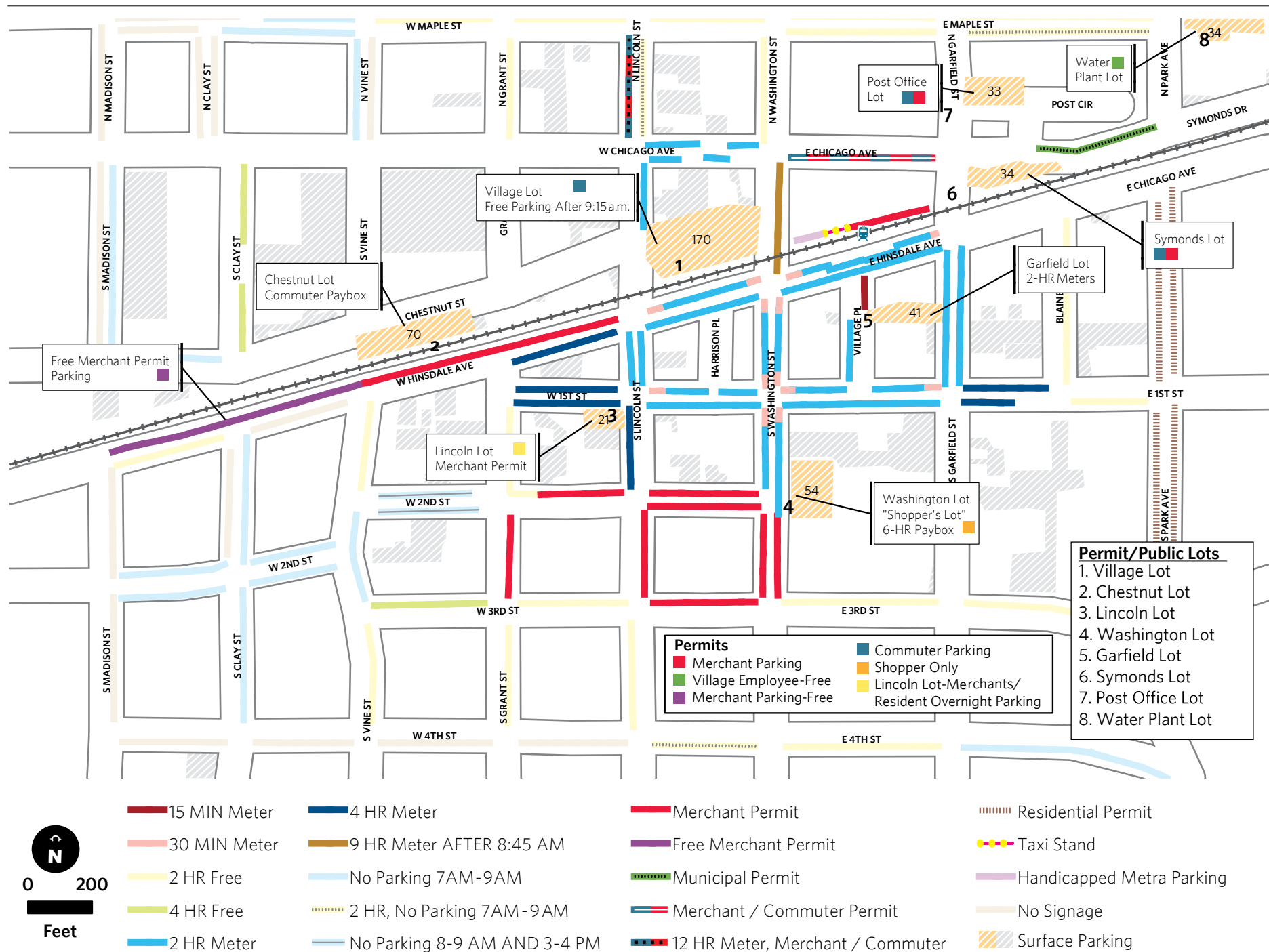
Red merchant permit passes are sold to anyone who works in downtown Hinsdale. Some orange merchant permits are still in circulation, but the Village is no longer issuing new ones because the orange permit lot is shared with the "Shopper Parking Lot." The Shopper Lot is often fully occupied during business hours, and the Village is hoping to free up more spaces for customers. While some employees use the Free Purple Merchant permit area, many find the distance to be too far, especially if their place of work is on the eastern side of downtown. At \$180 for a six month permit, the monthly cost of the red merchant permit amounts to \$30.

For employees whose hours fall slightly outside of the 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. meter hours, it can be cheaper to feed the meter than pay for a merchant permit. Meters are enforced on Saturdays, but the commuter lots and school parking areas are free, and employees know that they can park there on the weekends. Many employees are willing to pay during the week if they can park closer to their final destination and they can park nearby for free on the weekends, making it cheaper than purchasing an employee parking permit.

**"I haven't shopped in Hinsdale for months...not worth the hassle of finding somewhere to park. The various color 'zones' for parking are so complicated that I don't even try to understand/remember what each one means..."**

*One early online survey respondent commented*

Figure 2. Parking restrictions and regulations







### On-street parking (non-permit)

With over three-fourths of Hinsdale’s supply of public parking on local streets, rather than in off-street parking lots, balancing the utilization of the on-street parking is essential to addressing the supply and demand challenges. Not surprisingly, the blocks with the highest retail density have a very high demand for parking. Any successful downtown with underpriced parking, and especially towns along commuter rail lines, will have on-street parking occupancy rates above 85 percent—the level which is considered ideal for parking occupancy. Stakeholders identified the constant challenge of preventing employees from using these prime parking spaces and feeding the meter, which keeps occupancy above 90 percent during business hours. Occupancy levels exceeding 90 percent suggest that there is “parking congestion,” where drivers circle the block in search of parking or queue up to take available spots. Meanwhile, many streets just a couple blocks away have less than 60 percent occupancy.

The majority of metered parking is directly adjacent to local businesses and intended for use as customer parking. Finding metered spaces occupied, visitors and customers drive in circles searching for a space, often unaware that they can park for free just a couple blocks away. This is damaging to the local businesses whose customers cannot find a space, waste their time driving in circles hoping for someone to vacate a metered space, and leave frustrated. The employees who park in these desirable spaces would rather feed the meter than buy an employee permit, do not want to walk more than two blocks, or are not aware of the options available for long-term parking, such as the free merchant permit parking area.

### Off-street parking (non-permit)

The public parking lots in downtown Hinsdale include the Garfield lot (with meters), the “Shoppers Only” lot (a six-hour paybox-controlled lot shared with orange permit holders), and the pay-by-space Chestnut parking lot. In addition, there are various private parking lots at schools, churches, and retail locations. The public off-street parking lots consistently have occupancy rates above 90 percent during business hours. The private parking lots (especially churches) typically do not have occupancy rates above 60 percent during business hours.



## The unique nature of parking in downtowns

One of the main reasons people are attracted to downtowns is because of their unique character and urban design. When visitors enter a vibrant downtown, it is hard not to notice the large number of shops, salons, and destinations all within a small area, as well as the number of people walking and interacting with one another. In comparison, the first impression of a big-box store or strip mall is a stroll through the parking lot. Despite the unique layout of downtowns, users still expect to have parking available right in front of each destination, and many don't expect to pay for it. Since that is rarely the case in downtown Hinsdale, there is a large gap between parking perception and reality, often leading to confusion, congestion, and frustration when parking downtown.





## Park once

One of the most valuable aspects of a downtown is that drivers are able to complete a variety of tasks within a single area. For example, a shopper might come downtown to grab lunch with a friend at Giuliano's Pizza, go to a hair appointment at Zazu, pick up a birthday present at Stockholm Objects, and grab a coffee on the way out—all within the same block.

Ideally, a driver would be able to do all those things while only using one parking space. With the current meters and time limits, this person would have to move his or her car multiple times or park very far from these destinations. A downtown functions best when drivers arrive, park once to complete all errands and tasks on foot, and leave. It is also more convenient to the patrons if they don't have to run out of the salon mid-appointment to move the car, feed the meter, or skip dessert for fear of getting a ticket.

The park once strategy allows people to complete tasks quickly, conveniently, and in a lively, safe environment. It encourages walking and social interaction. The particular characteristics that enable people to do a lot of different things in a small area are distinctly what makes downtowns attractive places to visit—density, mix of uses, and walkability.

## Density

Density can be related to the number of people or amenities/destinations in the area. Human-scale density does not have to include high-rises or giant apartment complexes. In Hinsdale, the large number of retail, housing, and amenities within a small area make it easy for shoppers to walk from one shop to the next, eliminating the need to drive to each destination. A lower density development pattern, with large parking lots between each building, would make walking between stores a burdensome chore, if not a dangerous task.

## Mix of uses

Density alone does not make a great downtown. Downtowns are also mixed-use in nature, creating a variety of uses in proximity to one another. A downtown might have an ice cream store, real estate office, bank, boutique, salon, and wine shop all in the same block. Non-downtown areas have uses segregated and located further from each other, making it more difficult to walk between them.

## Walkability

Dense and mixed-use downtowns provide users with activities that entice them to these areas. The third characteristic—walkability—creates an environment that is inviting to users, luring them from one activity to the next. Downtowns are walkable when there are a variety of elements catering to pedestrians at a human scale, creating a comfortable, safe, and interesting environment. This can include amenities such as wide sidewalks, short blocks, street trees, benches, consistent building façades, retail window displays, and good pedestrian-level lighting. This creates a microenvironment for the pedestrian, where they are protected from fast moving cars and able to enjoy the varied streetscape.

Hinsdale’s downtown serves as an excellent example of how these characteristics create a thriving downtown that lures a variety of users. When these components are combined, they enable a “park once” environment. When a customer is able to park once and visit many locations, life is added to the sidewalks. People on the sidewalks are important for a number of reasons: walking customers are more likely to visit a shop on a whim, more people on the street adds a sense of safety, and people like to be surrounded by other people. This adds to the overall appeal of the downtown.

Unfortunately, the time limits at metered spaces (intended to keep commuters and employees from parking for an extended amount of time) mean that customers have to move their car every two hours or risk getting a ticket. Today’s downtown visits, shopping, and dining experiences will often take longer than two hours. Through improved parking management strategies and initiatives, Hinsdale could further enhance its downtown and leverage the many advantages a park-once downtown enjoys.

These include:

- Decreased need to build more parking spaces. Clustering a variety of shops and uses together allows drivers to park in just one space, versus the non-downtown environments that scatter tenants and their individual parking lots, where it is necessary to drive between stores with large parking lots.
- Saving money. The more parking that is built, the more money the Village, business owners, and property owners spend on its construction and maintenance. When the Village does not need to construct additional parking, money is saved and land can be used for more productive, tax-generating activities.
- Helping small, local businesses. When tenants are located in proximity to one another, customers are more likely to stop by and shop in a neighboring store while walking back to their vehicle, such as the customer that grabs an afternoon coffee after a hair appointment.
- Creating a more attractive and walkable environment. By having less parking, users are able to park within a reasonable distance of their destination and lots of other stores or restaurants.
- Creating a sense of community. Increasing the number of people on the sidewalk cultivates a sense of place and makes for a safer neighborhood. The more often you walk in your neighborhoods downtown, the more likely you are to run into someone you know. Cumulative interactions such as these allow people within the neighborhood to form connections with one another and form a community, creating more interest and enthusiasm in the area as a whole.







## What motivates parkers?

Many drivers think that they should be able to find parking that is convenient for their final destination and the Village of Hinsdale agrees. However, without effective parking regulations, some people may choose to occupy the most convenient spaces all day long, while parking that is just outside of the most popular area is underutilized.

This is where market reality—or carrots and sticks such as pricing, time limits, and permitting—comes into play. Have you ever experienced not being able to find convenient parking when you needed it? How one answers this question might, in some part, have to do with one's individual approach to parking. When looking for a parking spot, it is often in the driver's best interest to find the closest spot to their destination. Whether the individual is looking to spend five minutes running an errand or a full day at the spa, people tend to look for the spot that is in their own best interest.

Parkers are motivated by a variety of reasons. Therefore, in order to price parking effectively, we must consider the needs and the different motivations of parkers. Based on similar categories from the Redwood City Parking Plan<sup>2</sup> we have identified four categories of parkers.

<sup>2</sup> City of Redwood City. "The Downtown Redwood City Parking Management Plan." See <http://www.redwoodcity.org/bit/transportation/parking/pdf/DowntownRedwoodCityParkingPlan.pdf> (Accessed December 13, 2013).





### The demanding parker

There is no winning with the demanding parker. This parker believes that there should be a free parking spot waiting for them whenever and wherever they are going. What the demanding parker may not realize is that if there were free parking everywhere, other people would have the same idea and park all day long right in the most convenient spots. If and when the demanding parker happens to find the perfect spot, it will probably still not be good enough because of time limits or parking enforcement. Paying for parking is a nuisance, as is walking.

### The reasonable parker

People who account for the time and effort necessary to find a reasonable parking spot are a busy downtown's dream parker. The reasonable parker understands that they may not be able to park right in front of their destination; they may have to walk for a few minutes from a parking spot. This type of parker also knows that parking closer may come at a higher cost.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, the demanding parkers and the reasonable parkers describe only a small number of parkers. The vast majority fall into one of the following two categories.

### The time-is-money parker

For some people, time is money and finding the closest spot to their destination is a priority. If the parker needs to get in and out, drop something off or pick something up, or perhaps is running late, they are willing pay for the most convenient spot. This doesn't mean that they don't like free parking; they simply would prefer to have a more convenient spot even if it means paying for it.

### The thrifty parker

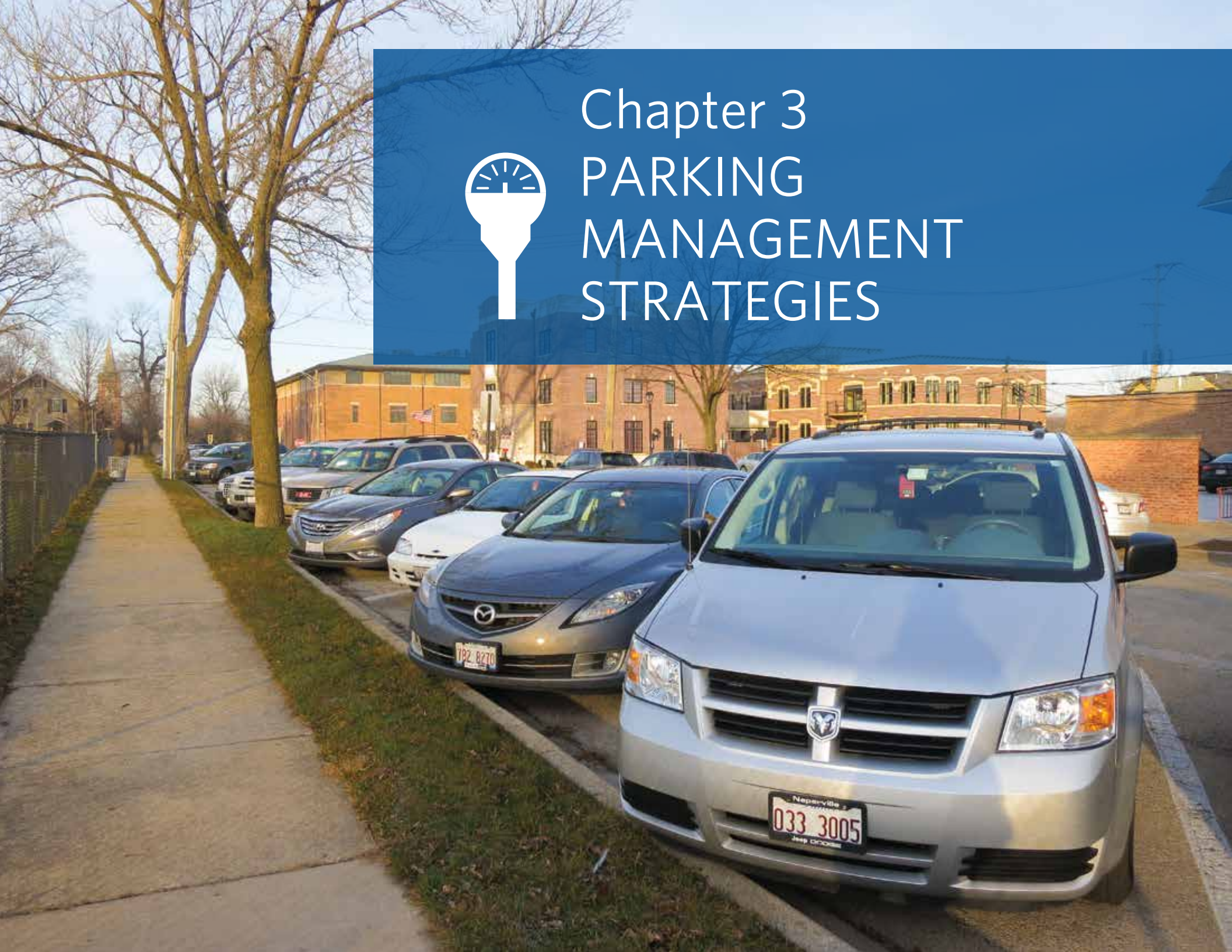
The thrifty parker would like to avoid paying for parking at all costs. This parker will search out free parking. This may not come at a financial cost but will probably mean driving a few blocks away from the final destination and walking or driving around in circles until she or he finds a space. This person may need to park in the neighborhood for several hours, and it isn't worth the cost of paying for parking for a number of hours. Some thrifty parkers may decide to walk or bike instead of paying for parking, or they may decide to shop somewhere else altogether if they can't find free parking.

If the price of parking is adjusted according to demand, the parking demands of the thrifty parkers and the time-is-money parkers are met with different parking spaces so that the overall demand is spread more evenly around the core downtown shopping area.



# Chapter 3

## PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES







Parking management is the oversight of a community's parking resources, with the goal of balancing supply and demand through pricing, time limits, and other regulations. Why manage parking in the first place? Well-designed parking policies will ensure the continued health and vibrancy of a downtown. If all the prime parking spaces are full all the time, this is frustrating to potential customers and visitors and will cause many to give up on their trip downtown, ultimately hurting businesses. If most of the spaces are full, yet there is always a space or two available per block, most people will be happy and they won't even have to think about parking. Unfortunately for a parking manager, the job is only noticed when things aren't going well.

## Pricing

To solve a community's parking problems, it is important to think more like an economist (supply and demand) and less like an engineer (how can we build more parking). When the supply of any commodity is limited and the demand for it is high, the price goes up. If the commodity is free, it will be quickly used up by the first people who get to it, regardless of who might need it or want it more. Imagine a gas station offering free gasoline for one day or a high school handing out free pizza. In these situations, supply is the only thing dictating how much will be consumed. The same economic principles apply to parking, and that is why pricing is important—the alternative of continuing to supply the highly-demanded good of parking without improving management of the existing supply is extremely expensive and would threaten those very features that make downtown Hinsdale attractive, namely its compactness, walkability, and historic character.

Struggling downtowns often have an overabundance of parking and almost always have spaces available. Such places do not need to charge for parking, and they shouldn't. Malls have a greater supply of parking than is needed and don't need to charge for parking either. Some local communities have invested millions of dollars in building downtown parking garages, only to find the same problems that Hinsdale has: people want to park on-street in front of the businesses, so their garages sit underutilized. Others have built parking garages that fill up with commuters. The true test is whether or not the garages' monthly parking payments cover maintenance costs and debt service. In some cases, like downtown Chicago where demand and prices are high, structured parking may be making a profit. However, if demand is high because the price is low or free, the community may be back to where they started in addition to being out tens of millions of dollars.

Hundreds of people work in downtown Hinsdale, and the Village is making improvements to solidify it as a strong shopping and dining destination as well. A parking problem is a good problem to have—it means that people want to come to the community. The main reason to charge for parking is to ration a limited supply of a coveted good. By charging the right price for parking (less desirable spaces are cheapest, more desirable spaces are more expensive, but not too expensive), people are encouraged to park further from the high demand area or move from spaces as quickly as possible in order to pay as little as possible, and the premium spaces are made available to others. In that way, the same number of spaces can serve a greater number of visitors.

Ideally, all the streets in the downtown core would be close to 85 percent full, indicating a high level of street activity without complete parking congestion. The goal of pricing is to free up just one or two spaces per block and shift the long-term parkers from high-demand spaces. While we can agree that merchants and employees shouldn't park in prime spaces, they do, and pricing is the only proven disincentive to employees parking in customer spaces (City of Redwood's Parking Management Plan).









## Will charging more for parking drive away business?

Of course, some customers are strictly opposed to paying for parking and may cite this as a reason for avoiding Hinsdale altogether. These “thrifty parkers” should be considered; there should be options for people who don’t want to pay for parking. The existing free parking is not clearly communicated to residents and shoppers through the website or the existing parking map. Many people are unaware that they can park for free, for two hours, within a five-minute walk of the core. What the “time-is-money” driver wants is a convenient spot; if the meter spaces are full, it doesn’t matter how much the driver is willing to pay. Not charging more for parking is already driving away some “time-is-money” customers.

A parking system that is designed to manage demand and support the local businesses will not drive customers away. More likely, it will drive employees and long-term parkers out of the congested core. When it comes to customer convenience, there are two things about Hinsdale’s parking meters that are inconvenient and outdated: payment options and length of stay flexibility. It is already frustrating to many to pay for parking in the first place. Needing to carry quarters for the meters is an added frustration. The multiple layers of frustration in Hinsdale come from wasting time circling the block looking for an open space, having to pay a meter, having to use coins, not being able to extend ones stay, and the ultimate frustration: possible parking tickets.

A parking system that lets some park for free in less desirable spaces (usually short-term) and others pay for the convenience of a front-door space will open up options for drivers and create parking availability. Increased prices should not be implemented with coin-only meters. Customer-friendly meters accept credit cards and cell phone payment, as well as coins. These meters can remind customers when the meter is about to run out with a text message and allow them to add time remotely. When the price of parking keeps demand in check, there is no need for length of stay limits. If it appears that the parking is underutilized, or if occupancy rates drop significantly, the meter price is too high and should be lowered.





## Time limits, other regulations, and enforcement

Many downtowns, including Hinsdale, have relied on time limits to encourage turnover. Time limits would work if every trip or visit required the same amount of time, but that's not the case in today's eclectic downtowns. What would the ideal time limit be for a mixed-use block with a coffee shop, a day spa, and a bank? A person going to the bank may only need to park for a couple of minutes, while a spa treatment at the salon could last several hours, and coffee shop visits vary from five minutes to all day. When parking spaces are time-restricted according to the surrounding uses, they are effectively removed from the general supply of parking to a user who needs to park for longer.

The different stores and destinations also have different peak hours of demand, and the business may change from one year to the next. So if you have a few spaces limited to short-term parking and a few for long-term parking, there may be times when all of the long-term spaces are full, and other spa visitors would not be able to use the available short-term spaces. It is not an efficient use of the valuable resource of parking. It is also very costly and challenging for the Village to enforce time limits, especially varying time limits. You could have extremely rigorous enforcement to prevent abuse, but this is not customer-friendly, and it ends up punishing the patrons of downtown businesses. During CMAP's parking turnover survey in downtown Hinsdale, a 15-minute space was the only parking space that had the same car in it for the entire seven hours of the survey. If the price is right, there should be no need for short-term or long-term parking. But when parking is not appropriately priced, short-term spaces are one way to help create turnover.

In an effort to address parking challenges in the recent past, the Hinsdale police department overhauled their regulations, creating short-term spaces and allowing some permit holders to park in a variety of spaces. Some business owners said that this helped to alleviate some problems, but others expressed confusion about where and when they are allowed to park.

These many regulations and restrictions serve various objectives. The Village wants merchants to have a place to park, but without regulating the parking through permits and time limits, such spaces would most likely be used by commuters driving to the Hinsdale station. The restrictions on early morning hours are to prevent commuters from parking all day. The hourly restrictions in the core exist to encourage parking turnover and availability for shoppers. A tiered permit system was developed, with more expensive permits allowing permit-holders to park in more desirable locations. The hourly restrictions in the periphery are in place to prevent commuters and employees from parking all day long on the residential streets. There are a significant number of streets without signage to indicate any restrictions at all.



Finally, increased fines for parking violations will be necessary to ensure compliance with meter rate changes. If feeding a meter with progressive prices could potentially cost more than \$10, the cost of a parking ticket needs to be more than five dollars. This revenue should also go into the parking reserve fund. While the repeat offender \$250 fine has been successful, it is recommended that the Village evaluate the fine structure and consider changing them to start with a warning, then start higher (because \$5 is not a strong deterrent) and increase cost with the number of tickets, similar to the following:

- 1st violation: *Warning*
- Violations 2-5: *\$25 if paid within 96 hours, \$40 after*
- Violations 6-10: *\$50 if paid within 96 hours, \$75 after*
- Violation 11+: *\$75 if paid within 96 hours, \$100 after*

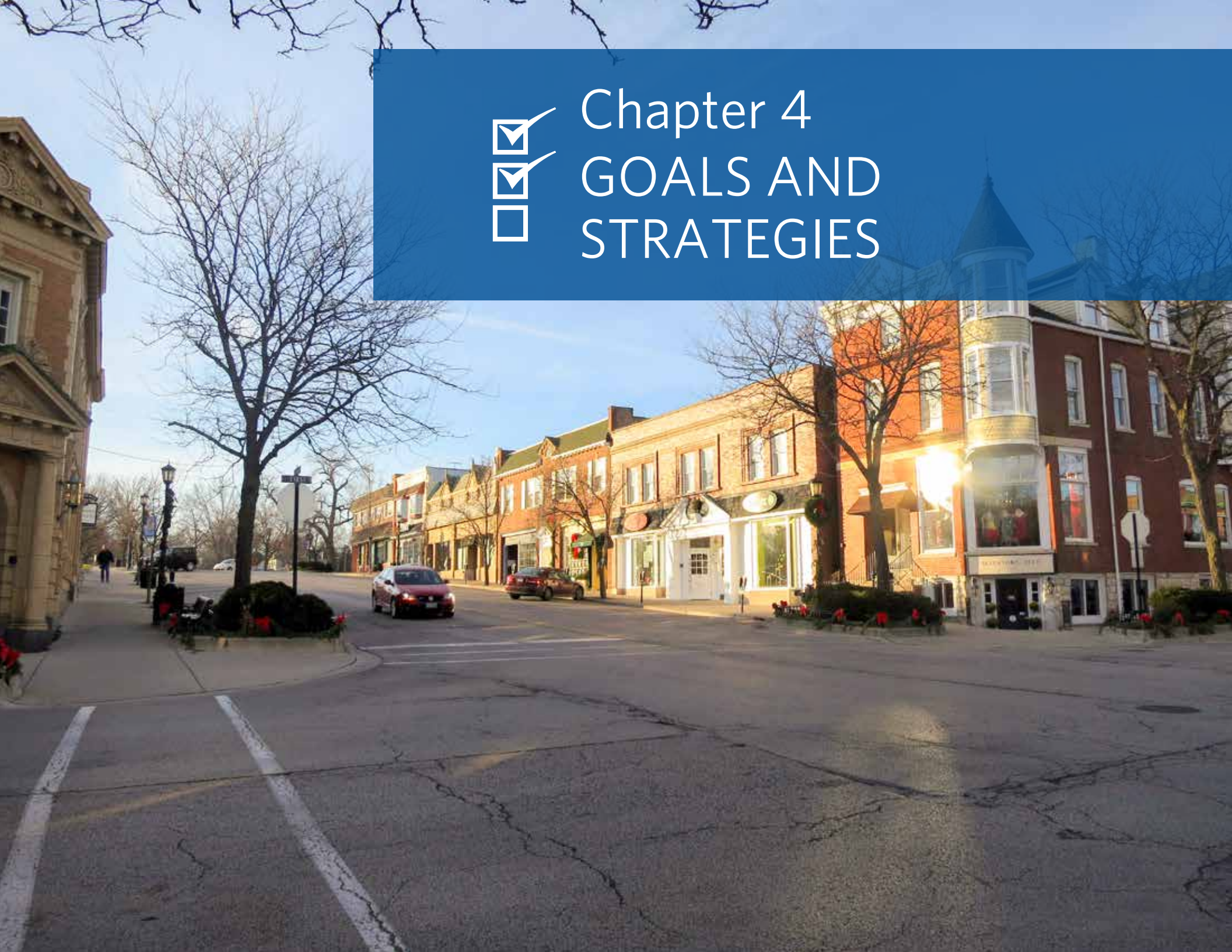
The number of violations can be “reset” to zero at the end of the year, if desired. Typically, repeat offenders get the majority of parking tickets and the escalating scale is effective at deterring abuse. Each ticket should have a clear explanation of the violation, how to avoid it in the future, and a description of the potential fees faced for the next ticket. Sample parking tickets are in the Appendix.







# Chapter 4 GOALS AND STRATEGIES





The following section describes the five main goals of the Innovative in Parking Management Plan, the issues surrounding each topic, and potential implementation action items. A detailed table with these action items is also found in the Appendix.

The priority goals to be addressed by the Village of Hinsdale through this parking plan are:

- Goal #1: Improve the parking experience for visitors and shoppers.
- Goal #2: Improve parking options for downtown employees, and encourage parking outside the core.
- Goal #3: Plan for the long-term management and provision of parking resources.
- Goal #4: Promote active transportation for residents and employees.
- Goal #5: Improve the management of commuter parking.



## Goal #1: Improve the parking experience for visitors and shoppers

There is limited and confusing information about where people can park. When a customer cannot find a metered parking space available, he or she might be willing to park on a side street and walk a couple of blocks, but some of the side streets are reserved for permit parking, others are time-restricted, and there is not clear signage to direct driver to underutilized parking. The information for each type of parking permit is not available on-line. There is a printable map of parking restrictions, but it has red and orange lines that look to be the same color on some print-outs, the parking lots are not sized to scale, and the free merchant parking is not shown on this map. This map is not very helpful to a visitor who is otherwise unfamiliar with Hinsdale, especially if all of the areas shown on the map are full when he or she arrives. There is also confusion about when the meters are enforced.

Improved parking information can help visitors, employees, and residents in their search for parking and in their understanding of available options. For drivers who don't want to pay for short-term parking, it is important to inform them where they can park for free; customer-focused parking maps and information would help direct them to various parking options.

### Implementation Strategies

- Create new parking maps with clear information; this could entail a map designed for customers and visitors and another map designed for employees.
- Improve parking information on the website (add PDFs of new maps).
- Encourage the use of new technology for sharing parking (like [www.parkatmyhouse.com](http://www.parkatmyhouse.com)).
- Update the Hinsdale webpage on parking; include a section on upcoming changes, focusing on the efficiency of parking spaces, improving customer friendliness and options, and the benefits that it will bring. Develop informational flyers that business owners can share with their customers.



The spaces most desirable to customers are full during business hours. The most important factor for drivers is—first and foremost—to find a parking spot. When a customer arrives at his or her destination, he or she wants to be able to park and do errands as quickly and as painlessly as possible. Arriving in downtown Hinsdale to shop, a driver will find most metered spaces occupied. He or she may drive in circles searching for a space, waiting for someone to leave a spot. When the driver finally does find a spot, he or she better hope to have coins in order to feed the meter! If not, there is a risk of getting a ticket. On top of this, he or she must be wary of the two-hour time limit and leave before it's up. This whole process is frustrating to the driver and the business owner, who may see business decline as a result.

On a typical weekday at noon, most metered spaces in Hinsdale are between 90 and 100 percent full, along with the commuter parking lots, the Garfield parking lot, the public lot at First Street and Garfield, the middle school lot, and the “Shopper Only” lot. Meanwhile, employee parking on Hinsdale Avenue, between Lincoln and Vine, is only 36 percent occupied, and nearby residential streets are empty. Enforcement officers and local business owners have confirmed that a significant number of employees are parking in prime spaces and feeding meters or shuffling their cars to avoid tickets. This is an indication that the meter price is too low. However, the price should not be raised with the current coin-based meters—which would be an added inconvenience to shoppers and visitors—but with meters that offer payment options. There is an opportunity to shift the employee parking behavior to better utilize the employee parking spaces, freeing up the prime spots for shoppers.

Balancing supply and demand is most easily achieved through market-rate pricing, where the most desirable spaces (like those along Washington Street between Hinsdale Avenue and First Street) are the most expensive, while side streets and remote parking are the cheapest. The least desirable spaces should be free, with restrictions on morning hours to prevent Metra commuters from using them. This system provides a financial motivator for employees and those looking for cheap parking, while making the prime spaces less appealing to long-term parkers. This results in more parking available for customers who are willing to pay for a convenient space. The price change does not need to be drastic, as the goal is only to change the habits and behaviors of a small percentage of drivers. The price change is dependent upon observed levels of occupancy and should be monitored and adjusted as necessary. If the occupancy rate consistently falls below 80 percent, then the price is too high and should be lowered. If it remains above 90 percent occupied, the price is too low.

Occupancy levels exceeding 90 percent suggest that there is “parking congestion,” where drivers circle the block in search of parking or queue up to take available spots.



### Implementation Strategies:

- **Convert the Garfield lot to a gate-controlled lot with progressive pricing or use a pay box, allow for longer stays, and raise the current price.** Currently, all the spaces in the Garfield lot are two-hour metered spaces. A gate-controlled lot would remove all meters in the Garfield parking lot and install a gate that opens when a driver takes a time-stamped ticket. Upon exiting, the driver pays for the time used, with the price varying depending on length of stay. This system should allow for payment with credit card and coins, eliminates time limits, and uses progressive pricing (cost per hour increases with each additional hour). Time limits discourage customers from spending time downtown for fear of getting a ticket and are also difficult and costly to enforce. A progressive pricing scheme would discourage employees and commuters from using the spaces for longer-term parking. If a gate is not feasible, a digital paybox allowing for extended stays can be used with a higher rate.
- **Replace existing meters with credit card-accepting meters.** Identify vendors who specialize in on-street parking solutions and request bids on a system to convert coin-based meters to meters that accept multiple forms of payment and allow drivers to add time time remotely. Undergo customer testing and/or surveying for thoughts on different types of meters (pay-by-space, pay-and-display, pay-by-phone, multi-space payboxes, virtual permits, etc.), and determine a payment plan for the investment and maintenance of the system.
- **Convert the existing 30-minute parking spaces to 15-minute parking spaces.** There is some concern that removal of time limits could lead to people parking for an extended time at the metered spaces, and the current 30-minute spaces were popular when the Village overhauled the parking system. These 15-minute spaces would not allow the user to add time, and they would only be able to pay for 15-minutes. After six months, these spaces should be analyzed for utilization, abuse, and turnover. At that point, the Village should decide if they want to continue using time-limit spaces or if they would prefer to switch the spaces to the same system as the rest of the meters.









## Goal #2: Improve parking options for downtown employees and encourage parking outside of the core.

The employee permit parking is concentrated on the southwestern side of downtown, and free employee parking is presently underutilized.

Many employees and business owners expressed that there is not enough employee parking, but what they really mean is that there is not enough employee parking within a five-minute walk of where they're going (generally concentrated around Washington and 1st Street). Employee parking is more heavily concentrated in the southwestern quadrant of downtown; there is not much employee permit parking in the eastern part of downtown, south of the tracks. The free parking for employees is not highly utilized; there is a reluctance of some employees to walk more than two blocks to park. Some have expressed concerns for safety late at night when most businesses are closed (no "eyes on the street").

### Implementation Strategies

- **Promote free employee parking.** Overall outreach to businesses about the purple permit parking area is needed. In addition to issuing more permits, the officer or Village staffer can find out if there is anything keeping employees from parking in the free permit area that could be fixed (lighting, crossings, sidewalks, etc.).
- **Add employee parking on the east side of downtown.** Some options to add employee parking areas would be to change the two-hour parking on Blaine to four-hour parking (to accommodate part-time workers); create parallel spaces on Chicago Avenue east of Garfield that would be reserved for purple permit holders, and/or create purple permit spaces on 1st Avenue; and remove the "residential permit parking" signs on Park Avenue (the Village does not have residential permit parking). These could be replaced with "no parking 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m." to prevent commuters from using them and allow the street space to be used by employees.
- **Pursue and encourage shared parking agreements.** For locations close to downtown with parking lots, such as local churches, it may be possible for the Village to pursue "shared use agreements" where the parking lot owner would allow use of their parking lots during their "off-peak" hours. In return, the Village could pay a pro-rated share of the maintenance costs of the parking lot and assume liability during the hours that they allow people to use the lots. These lots would be better for employee parking than for shoppers and visitors, as they will be "off the beaten path" and harder to find. They could be reserved for free purple permit holders.



### There is a price imbalance between employee permits and on-street meters.

Currently, the monthly cost of feeding the meter from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at \$0.25 / hour is approximately \$42.50. If an employee works from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. or from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., they would not have to pay for the first or last two hours of their stay (since meters are not in effect), and their monthly cost to feed the meter would be about \$30. This is the same cost as a merchant permit. With the prevalence of service-oriented businesses with evening hours and chain businesses catering to early morning commuters, there is a cost incentive for employees to park close to their place of work and feed the meters. It is weighed with the understanding that they could get caught for overstaying the two-hour limit, but for many it is a risk worth taking.

An overhauled permit system utilizing more modern technology could allow for a more efficient parking experience. License plate recognition (LPR) is a newer technology that is able to quickly read license plates from a moving vehicle and is often used by police officers for enforcing time limits, as they do in the City of Berwyn. The technology can also be used to allow permit holders to register their license plate with a “virtual permit.” When the enforcement officer scans the license plate, the scanner recognizes the location as a permit parking spot and knows whether or not the car parked has a valid permit. These permits could be set up so that drivers pay less if they don’t use their permit every day, which would be especially good for the commuter parking lot. The current system (where a driver pays for six months of parking) doesn’t reward the driver who occasionally walks, rides a bike, or gets dropped off. If you’ve already paid for parking, you might as well use it. Additionally, the virtual permit would allow the Village to reinstate the shared permit (which was popular but abused). A scan of the street would tell the officer if two cars are using the same permit number. The digitized system allows for streamlined enforcement, which would limit the amount of abuse. The virtual permit could even allow for residents to purchase single day passes to use Metra. They could park along Hinsdale Avenue, where existing permit spaces are underutilized.

## Implementation Strategies

- **Modify the permit program.** Investigate virtual permit systems that allow for discounts when the permit holder doesn't drive, allow for parking areas to be shared between user groups, allow for multiple people to use one permit (but not at the same time), and price permits lower than the on-street meters.
- **Create a transportation incentive program.** Incentivizing alternative transportation by paying employees not to drive is called “parking cashout” and has been found to reduce parking demand and driving by around 10 percent, even in areas with minimal public transit. A downtown parking management committee could use some parking revenue to create a fund that would provide downtown employees with reduced cost (or free) Metra and Pace passes or pay employees who walk or ride bicycles to work instead of driving. Employers would benefit from participating in the program if it means that more spaces would be open for their customers.









### Goal #3: Plan for the long-term management and provision of parking resources.

Any additional parking meter revenue should be reinvested in the downtown core, not diverted to the Village's general fund. The goal of parking pricing is to achieve an 85 percent occupancy level, keeping a few spaces available without driving customers away. The goal of a parking management plan is not to generate revenue, but this may happen as a result of appropriately priced parking. The best way for a community to use that additional revenue is to reinvest it directly into the streets where there is paid parking. This shows customers and business owners that their meter money is being put to use and not filling budget gaps. The funds could go to support any desirable service or repair, such as power-washing sidewalks, fixing cracked or broken sidewalks, repairing potholes, installing decorative planters or benches, helping businesses make façade improvements, or constructing additional parking.

#### Implementation Strategies

- **Create a downtown parking committee.** The downtown parking committee could be a subcommittee of the Economic Development Commission and would be responsible for managing any additional parking meter revenue collected from increased fees and fines. Rather than going to the Village's general fund, this money should be deposited into a reserve parking account to fund downtown streetscape improvements, parking supply increases as needed (parking lots or garages), and to support incentive programs to encourage the use of alternative transportation. The Village has expressed support for this reinvestment of meter revenues.
- **Prioritize parking projects and downtown streetscape spending and manage parking pricing.** The downtown parking committee will present the Village Board with their recommendations on how future parking revenue should be spent to improve the downtown area, provide incentives for alternative transportation, and plan for future parking needs. They will need to hold open and transparent meetings, prepare and approve budgets, and continue to monitor and balance the cost of parking to ensure that there is approximately 85 percent occupancy during peak parking hours. A successful parking management program will generate sufficient revenue to support the maintenance, modernization, and expansion of parking resources. These investments will need to be paid off over time, and the committee will help determine a payment plan that provides for the maintenance and operation of parking resources.







## Goal #4: Promote active transportation for residents and employees.

Small shifts in the habits of downtown visitors and employees can reduce parking needs. While cars will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for most, small increases in other modes—like walking, bicycling, and transit—could make up a greater share of trips in the future and would help to alleviate parking problems, activate the sidewalks, and improve public health.

### Implementation Strategies

- **Promote walking for health and encourage bicycling as transportation (not just recreation).** Ideally, a staff person would be assigned to promote healthy commuting options. Their role could include developing a partnership with the local hospital to host walking events and distribute informational material about the health benefits of walking and bicycling. The Village could also provide bike maps, include walking distance time on downtown maps, participate in bike-to-work week, and give employers information about biking around Hinsdale.
- **Improve the bicycling network.** On-street bike lanes leading to the Metra station from neighborhoods and to nearby existing bike lanes and paths would support additional bicycle travel. Making it safer to get around Hinsdale on a bicycle for adults and children would require commitment to a connected network of bike lanes and bike paths. Connections to the Metra station are important to offer commuters a safe alternative to driving to the station.
- **Improve bicycle facilities at the Metra station.** The Village could install covered bicycle racks for Metra commuters who ride bikes to the station. The current bicycle racks in Hinsdale are well-utilized. More bike racks would be needed to accommodate an increase in bicycle commuting. Other communities, such as Wilmette, have shown that you can make even better bicycle parking by providing a safe, sheltered area for the bikes as close to the station platform as possible.
- **Improve the pedestrian experience along Hinsdale Avenue.** Some employees have said that they don't like walking from the purple permit area late at night. Improving the pedestrian connections to the remote parking areas could increase utilization rates. Additionally, to encourage people to walk more, the Village should ensure that the experience is safe, enjoyable, and interesting. Some improvements may include benches, planters, and signage. Improved lighting along Hinsdale Avenue was mentioned as a priority.





## Goal #5: Improve the management of commuter parking lots.

The frequency of commuter trains to and from downtown Chicago makes downtown Hinsdale an attractive commuter station. Merchants have indicated that while some businesses benefit from an increase in commuters, for the most part, they are not patronizing businesses in high enough numbers to warrant additional parking. There may be opportunities for shifting some commuters to the Highlands or West Hinsdale stations, with additional parking availability, through pricing incentives. Encouraging alternative modes of travel to and from the station or rewarding commuters who drive less frequently, while modestly raising the cost of parking, can improve the use of transit without deterring transit ridership. The cost of Metra parking should increase with the increase in demand for parking, especially if structured Metra parking is desired in the long-term. The Village should coordinate with Metra on price increases and set target occupancy goals for parking lots at their three stations.

Photo Credit:  
Tony Fischer Photography,  
shared on a Creative Commons  
license on Flickr.





HINSDALE



## Implementation Strategies

- **Use pricing to make parking at West Hinsdale and Highlands more attractive than downtown Hinsdale.** There are more underutilized spaces at the West Hinsdale and Highlands stations, and there is potential to use Metra parking spaces more efficiently with pay-by-space technology. If it were cheaper to park at a different station, and more expensive to park at Hinsdale, some commuters would switch stations, freeing up valuable parking spaces in the downtown.
- **Investigate the possibility of “virtual permits” that would give a discount to commuter permit holders if they use the parking less frequently.** When a permit holder pays for parking on a monthly basis, or a six-month basis, there is little incentive to walk when there’s extra time and the weather is nice. There is little incentive to get dropped off when it’s convenient. You’ve already paid for parking, so you might as well use it. A virtual permit allows for monthly payment but gives discounts if the permit-holder doesn’t use it every day. This small incentive is enough to encourage some people to adjust their behavior and open up parking spaces.
- **Allow residents to purchase day-parking passes to ride Metra.**  
Residents who want to travel downtown have complained about the lack of parking options when the main commuter lot is full (which is just about every weekday). The Village of Downers Grove sells daily parking permits for \$3. It would be best to only allow this after 9:30 a.m. to discourage commuters from using it. This could be done with an underused area (possibly along Hinsdale Avenue between Grant and Vine), sharing with the employee permit spaces, for example.
- **Consider leasing a couple of prime parking spaces to a company that offers online reservations (ie. SpotHero, ParkWhiz, Parking Panda, ParkMe).** New companies that help drivers find parking are starting up all over metropolitan Chicago. The main features that these companies offer is usually an online app that lets users reserve parking at their destination and pre-pay with a credit card. A reserved parking space might cost more than a metered space but would be desirable for some who are willing to pay more for a space when they need it and not worry about parking tickets. Typically, when the users sign up for the program, they accept all responsibility and liability when they agree to the terms and services, so the Village does not have to cover it. This would be a good short-term action while the demand for multi-hour parking is still unmet. For example, these spaces might be desirable to salon customers whose services take longer than two hours. Spothero has a list of companies providing parking services in Chicago and nation-wide: <http://blog.spothero.com/parking-resources-companies-blogs/>.

- **Install a concrete slab for a designated scooter parking area.** Anyone arriving at the Hinsdale station on a motor scooter is taking up less space than a car, so the Village sees scooters as a good thing, but it would be helpful if there was a designated scooter area. This would help to prevent the scooters from blocking sidewalks.
- **Convert the Village Commuter lot into a pay-by-space lot.** Permit holders would still be able to park in the lot, but it would not be free after the morning rush. Since the Village lot is usually full by the time the lot becomes free, this action would not have a significant impact on parking availability. This action would require license plate recognition technology (LPR) for efficient enforcement. Note: As part of this study, the Village asked BNSF to consider increasing express trains or modifying the schedule at Highlands or West Hinsdale, but BNSF is not able to adjust their schedule at this time.







# Chapter 5 CONCLUSION





A small shift in the habits of downtown employees and customers could eliminate parking congestion in the core streets. With only 10 percent to 15 percent of drivers parking further from the core or shifting modes (to walking, biking, or transit), the parking occupancy would fall to the desired level of 85 percent to 90 percent full, meaning that most drivers could easily find a space.

The goal of a parking management plan is to make it easier for customers to find convenient parking that suits their needs. The strategies recommended in this plan begin with improving the user information, working with businesses and downtown employees to improve usage of employee parking areas, using parking pricing to manage demand, and providing increased options for parking convenience in terms of payment options and length of stay. The strategies are organized for appropriate phasing.

If a customer needs a convenient parking spot, a paid space should be available for him or her. If the driver doesn't want to pay, a free space should be easy to find within a reasonable walking distance. If a driver needs a paid space for more than two hours, she or he should be able to pay a premium for that time. For employees, there should be low-cost spaces available for them to park outside of the core, during business hours. As stated previously, the cost of parking is the only proven disincentive to employees who regularly take up prime parking spaces. Since they park every day, they quickly learn where they can find cheaper or free parking. At the current rate of \$0.25 per hour, many of them would rather pay than walk a bit further, and, for some, it is cheaper than purchasing an employee permit.





The strategy of adjusting meter rates to manage demand levels is typically not the path of least resistance for a municipality, but it makes the most economic sense and is often the last resort when employees continue to use spaces that are intended for customers. In return for paying the fair market price for parking, the Village will be able to ensure that a customer can easily find a convenient parking space, will no longer have to keep a roll of quarters in the car, will not have to worry about getting a ticket (if they pay), will not have to worry about the two hour time limit, and will not have to drive in circles waiting for someone to leave. Finally, to prove that the meter changes will be initiated with the goal of improving the customer experience, the Village has made a commitment to allow any additional revenue collected to be reserved for improvements to downtown streetscaping and parking management programs and infrastructure.

The Innovative Parking Strategies Steering Committee has agreed that the first parking price adjustments should be implemented in the Garfield parking lot, with the use of progressive pricing where the cost to park increases with the length of stay. The parking lot would be retrofitted with a credit-card gate system, with the user paying for time parked upon exit.



The existing meters in downtown Hinsdale should not be used in conjunction with a price increase, as the need for more quarters would be another inconvenience on customers. If the experience with price changes in the Garfield parking lot is viewed as successful (increased vacancy and turnover) by Village officials and business owners, the two-hour time limit should be removed and customer-friendly meters should be installed to accept various forms of payment, including credit cards and cell phone payment, as well as coins. The Village should also use progressive pricing with rates similar to, or somewhat higher than, those in the Garfield lot because on-street parking is more desirable than an off-street lot. These meters should be able to remind customers when the meter is about to run out with a text message and allow them to add time remotely. When the price of parking keeps demand in check, there is no need for length of stay limits. The Village should undergo customer testing and/or surveying for thoughts on different types and styles of meters (pay-by-space, pay-and-display, pay-by-phone, multi-space pay boxes, etc.).

The Village should continue to invest in the walkability of the downtown core, as well as improve the bicycling infrastructure. Small increases in the mode share of pedestrians and bicyclists to accomplish short trips can significantly increase public health and community vitality, as well as reduce parking needs. For short trips, most people with a choice between driving and walking will only make the choice to walk if the walk is “simultaneously useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting.”<sup>3</sup>

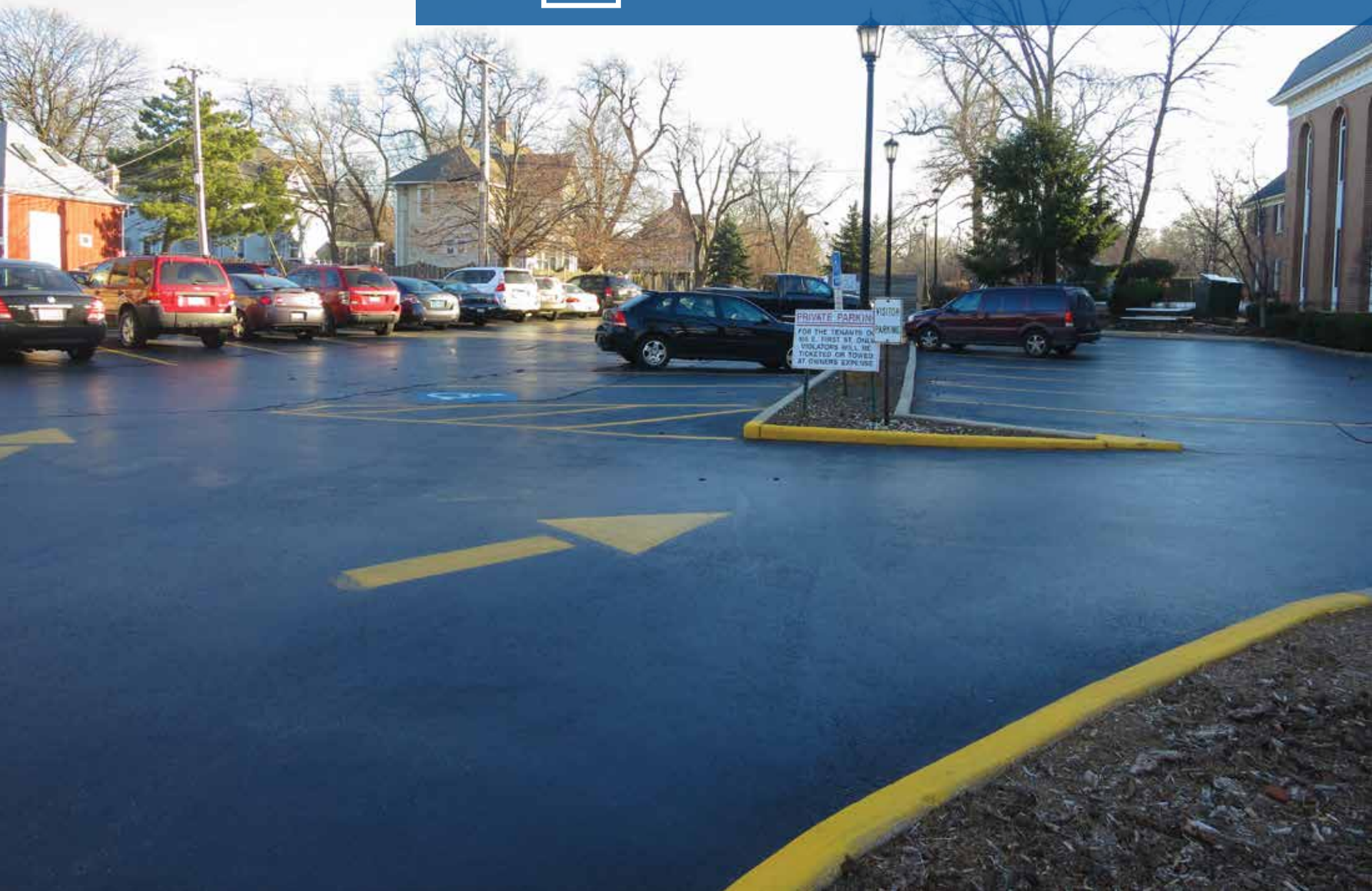
Driving will continue to be the mode of choice for most people that visit downtown Hinsdale, but it is important to plan for all modes, especially walking. Implementing changes to downtown Hinsdale’s parking system may be more challenging than leaving it as it is or spending millions of dollars on a parking garage. However, the alternatives would likely not solve the main problem, which is lack of convenient on-street parking spaces. Implementing the recommended changes would address this key problem with a customer-first approach focused on convenience and options. This would strengthen the historic downtown and ensure that it continues to be a magnet for people and unique local businesses and restaurants.

3 Speck, Jeff. “On Walkability: an Interview with Jeff Speck.” By Ash Blankenship. Parksify.com. See: <http://parksify.com/post/56508222584/on-walkability-an-interview-with-jeff-speck>. 28 Oct 2013.





# Appendix





## Implementation Actions

This section contains tables with the implementation goals and associated actions, color-coded by timeline, from “short-term/quick win” to “long-term.” These actions list the associated responsible implementers and partners, as well as some ideas for initial first steps. There is also a sample of text for parking violations with payment information, and information to prevent future violations, which would need official Hinsdale Police Department information as well. Finally, some sample maps are included to indicate shopper parking options and employee parking options.



## 1. Improve the parking experience for visitors and shoppers

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD	FIRST STEPS	EXPLANATION
Improve user information	Short-term/ quick win	CMAP/ Village of Hinsdale	Create new parking maps with clear information; improve parking information on the website (add PDFs of new maps); encourage the use of new technology such as parking apps ( <a href="http://parkatmyhouse.com">parkatmyhouse.com</a> ).	Improved parking information can help visitors, employees, and residents in their search for parking and in their understanding of available options. For drivers who don't want to pay for parking, it is important to inform them where they can park for free; customer-focused parking maps and information would help direct them to parking options that meet the needs of their trip.
Educational campaign for upcoming parking changes	Short-term/ quick win	CMAP/ Village of Hinsdale (Chamber of Commerce)	Update the Hinsdale webpage on parking; include section on planned changes, focusing on efficiency of parking spaces, improving customer friendliness and options, and the benefits that it will bring. Develop informational flyers that the business owners can share with their customers.	It will be easier to manage customer expectations and overall user experience if the knowledge of the change has been widely shared with the community and business owners. A campaign to get people's attention might say something like, "Hate fumbling for quarters? New credit card payment options coming soon!" or "Need to park for more than 2 hours? Don't worry! Soon you'll be able to extend your meter time."
Convert the Garfield Lot into a gate-controlled lot with progressive pricing or a lot with a paybox (continue to explore progressive pricing)	Early/ mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	Remove all meters in the Garfield parking lot. Install a new payment system after evaluating options. Allow for payment with credit card/coins, eliminate time limits, ideally use progressive pricing (cost per hour increases with each additional hour).	Time limits discourage customers from spending time downtown for fear of getting a ticket; tickets make the experience very unpleasant for shoppers. Time limits are also difficult and costly to enforce. A progressive pricing scheme would discourage employees and commuters from using the spaces for longer-term parking. Care must be taken to prevent abuse if a gated system is not used.
Credit-card meters to replace coin meters	Mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	Depending on feedback and experience with the payment system in the Garfield lot, plan for conversion of existing coin-based meters with meters that accept multiple forms of payment and allow drivers to add time time remotely. Undergo customer testing and/or surveying for thoughts on different types of meters (pay-by-space, pay-and-display, pay-by-phone, multi-space payboxes, virtual permits, etc.).	Since most metered spaces are full from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the downtown core, while free parking just a couple blocks away is vacant, it is an indication that the meter price is too low. However, the price should not be raised with the current coin-based meters, which would be inconvenient to shoppers and visitors. Consider a progressive pricing setup, with smart meters, if that is found to be successful in the Garfield parking lot.



## 2. Improve parking options for downtown employees, encourage parking outside of the core.

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD	FIRST STEPS	EXPLANATION
Promote free employee parking	Short-term/ quick win	Village of Hinsdale Chamber of Commerce	Overall outreach to businesses about the purple permit parking area is needed. In addition to issuing more permits, the officer or Village staffer can find out if there is anything keeping employees from parking in the free permit area that could be fixed (lighting, crossings, sidewalks, etc.).	Some employees have said that they don't like walking to the free area at night, but there may be others who simply don't know about the parking available. If the enforcement officer can visit businesses with high numbers of employees and issue permits on the spot, as well as listen to any concerns about the purple parking area, it can increase utilization of the underused free merchant parking area. Additionally, if the concerns raised by employees can be fixed, the officer can report the necessary improvements to Village staff.
Modify parking permit program	Early/ mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	Investigate a virtual permit systems that allows for discounts when the permit holder doesn't drive, allow for parking areas to be shared between user groups, allow for multiple people to use one permit (but not at the same time), and price permits lower than the on-street meters.	There is a price imbalance between employee permits and on-street meters. Currently, the monthly cost of feeding the meter from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday at \$0.25/hour is approximately \$42.50. If an employee works from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., he or she would only pay for six hours, and the monthly cost to feed the meter would be about \$30. This is the same cost as a merchant permit. With the prevalence of service-oriented businesses that have evening hours and chain businesses catering to early morning commuters, there is a cost incentive for employees to park close to their place of work and feed the meters.
Add employee parking on the east side of downtown	Mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	Some options to add employee parking areas would be to change the two-hour parking on Blaine to four-hour parking (to accommodate part-time workers); create parallel spaces on Chicago Avenue east of Garfield that would be reserved for purple permit holders, and/or create purple permit spaces on 1st Avenue, remove the "residential permit parking" signs on Park Avenue, a program which the Village says does not exist. These could be replaced with "no parking 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m." to prevent commuters from using them, allowing the street space to be used by employees.	Many employees and business owners expressed that there is not enough employee parking, but we have found that the employee parking is not geographically balanced. Employee parking is more heavily concentrated in the southwestern quadrant of downtown. There is not much employee permit parking in the eastern part of downtown, especially south of the tracks, where there are employers with high number of employees and chain businesses. The free merchant parking in the western edge of downtown is not highly utilized. There is a reluctance by some employees to walk more than two blocks to park. Some have expressed concerns for safety late at night when most businesses are closed (no "eyes on the street").
Pursue and encourage shared parking agreements	Mid/ long-term	Village of Hinsdale	Identify underutilized parking lots and contact the owner to ask about peak hours of demand and whether they would be willing to share some spaces with the Village. The Village could pay a share of maintenance costs and assume liability during hours that they allow people to use the lot. The Village would need to draft a shared parking agreement.	For locations close to downtown with parking lots, such as local churches, it may be possible for the Village to pursue "shared use agreements" where the parking lot owner would allow use of their parking lots during their "off-peak" hours. In return, the Village could pay an agreed upon amount and assume liability during the hours that they allow people to use the lots. These lots would be better for employee parking than for shoppers and visitors, as they are "off the beaten path" and harder to find. They could be reserved for free purple permit holders.
Create a transportation incentive program	Mid/ long-term	Parking Management Task Force	The Downtown Parking Task Force (DPTF) could use some parking revenue to create a fund that would provide downtown employees with reduced cost (or free) Metra and Pace passes or pay employees who walk or ride bicycles to work instead of driving.	Incentivizing alternative transportation by paying employees not to drive is called "parking cashout" and has been found to reduce parking demand and driving by around 10 percent, even in areas with minimal public transit.



### 3. Plan for the long-term management of parking resources

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD	FIRST STEPS	EXPLANATION
Create downtown parking task force	Short-term	Village of Hinsdale	The DPTF would be responsible for managing any additional parking revenue collected from increased fees and fines. Rather than going to the Village's general fund, this money should be deposited into a reserve parking account, so that as demand increases, there will be money to fund parking supply increases (parking lots or garages) and to support incentive programs to encourage use of alternative transportation or to fund downtown streetscape improvements.	The ultimate purpose of having the meters is to manage parking and prevent employees from using the prime spaces. When meter prices increase to keep up with demand, this is likely to generate additional revenue. The Village has committed to meters for parking management purposes, and not revenue generation, and has agreed to keep additional downtown meter revenue in the downtown area. A task force will need to be manage the additional funds and plan for future parking needs.
Manage funds and prioritize parking projects and downtown streetscape spending	Mid/ long-term	Parking Management Task Force	The Parking Management Task Force could meet quarterly to analyzing revenue, budgets, and potential projects.	The parking management task force will be responsible for determining how future parking revenue is spent and will need to hold open and transparent meetings, use the revenue to improve the downtown area, provide incentives for alternative transportation, and plan for future parking needs. They will also need to continue to monitor and balance the cost of parking to ensure that there is approximately 85 percent occupancy during peak parking hours.



#### 4. Promote active transportation for residents and employees

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD	FIRST STEPS	EXPLANATION
Promote walking for health and encourage bicycling as transportation (not just recreation)	Early/ mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	Ideally, a staff person would be assigned to promoting healthy commuting options. Their role could include developing a partnership with the local hospital to host walking events and provide informational material about the health benefits of walking and bicycling. The Village could also provide bike maps, participate in bike-to-work week, and give employers information about biking around Hinsdale.	While cars will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for most, small increases in other modes—like walking, bicycling, and transit—could make up a greater share of trips in the future and would help to alleviate parking problems, activate the sidewalks, and improve public health.
Improve the bicycling networks	Early/ mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	On-street bike lanes leading to the Metra station from neighborhoods and to nearby existing bike lanes would support additional bicycle travel.	Making it safer to get around Hinsdale on a bicycle for adults and children would require commitment to a connected network of bike lanes and bike paths. Connections to the Metra station are important in offering commuters a safe alternative to driving to the station.
Improve bicycle facilities at the Metra station	Early/ mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	The Village could install covered bicycle racks for Metra commuters who ride bikes to the station.	The current bicycle racks in Hinsdale are well-utilized. More bike racks would be needed to accommodate an increase in bicycle commuting. Other communities, such as Wilmette, have shown that you can create better bicycle parking by providing a safe, sheltered area for the bikes near the train station.
Improve the pedestrian experience along Hinsdale Avenue	Mid-term/ start now	Village of Hinsdale	Based on feedback received from the outreach efforts to downtown businesses regarding the purple permit parking area, the Village could work to address any safety and lighting issues.	Some employees have said that they don't like walking from the purple permit area late at night. Improving the pedestrian connections to remote parking areas could improve utilization rates. Additionally, to encourage people to walk more, the Village should ensure that the experience is safe, enjoyable, and interesting. Some improvements may include benches, planters, and signage.

Source: Forest Preserve District of Cook County.



## 5. Improve management of commuter parking lots

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD	FIRST STEPS	EXPLANATION
Allow residents to purchase day-parking passes to ride Metra	Mid-term	Village of Hinsdale Chamber of Commerce	The Village could sell day parking passes to Hinsdale residents and designate an underused area for that purpose (possibly along Hinsdale Avenue between Grant and Vine), sharing with the employee permit spaces.	Residents who want to travel downtown have complained about the lack of parking options when the main commuter lot is full (which is just about every weekday). The Village of Downer's Grove sells daily parking permits for \$3. It would be best to only allow this after 9:30 a.m. to discourage commuters from using it.
Consider leasing a couple of prime parking spaces to a company that offers online reservations (ie. SpotHero, ParkWhiz, Parking Panda, ParkMe)	Short-term/ quick win	Village of Hinsdale	This would be a good short-term action, while the demand for multi-hour parking is still unmet. For example, these spaces might be desirable to salon customers whose services take longer than two hours.	New companies that help drivers find parking are starting up all over Chicagoland. The main features that these companies typically provide include an online app that lets users reserve parking at their destination. A reserved parking space might cost more than a metered space but would be desirable for some who are willing to pay more for a space when they need it, and not worry about parking tickets. Typically, when the users sign up for the program, they accept all responsibility and liability when they agree to terms and services, so the Village does not have to cover it.
Investigate the use of "virtual permits" that would give a discount to commuter permit holders if they use the parking less frequently	Early/ mid-term	Village of Hinsdale	Investigate virtual permit systems that allow for discounts when the permit holder doesn't drive; allow for parking areas to be shared between user groups; allow for multiple people to use one permit (but not at the same time); and price permits lower than the on-street meters.	When a driver pre-pays for the commuter parking permit, she has no incentive to use an alternative travel mode if the opportunity arises. When there is a financial motivation (saving money), the driver can consider the mode each day and when he or she can be dropped off at or walk to the station, she's much more likely to do so.
Balance Metra riders between Hinsdale stations	Mid-term	Village of Hinsdale (Metra)	Use pricing to make parking at West Hinsdale and Highlands more attractive than downtown Hinsdale. Investigate the possibility of virtual permits that would give a discount to commuter permit holders if they use the parking less frequently.	Merchants have indicated that commuters are not patronizing businesses in high enough numbers to warrant additional parking. However, additional Metra parking with the existing pay-by-space technology could be considered at the Highlands station or the West Hinsdale station. The cost of Metra parking should increase with the increase in demand for parking, especially if structured Metra parking is desired in the long-term.
Install a concrete slab for a designated scooter parking area	Mid/ long-term	Parking Management Task Force	Use of motor scooters for Metra commuters has increased in recent years at the Hinsdale station, and the scooters often crowd the sidewalk.	With commuter parking demand so high, anyone arriving at the Hinsdale station on a motor scooter will be taking up less space than a car, so the Village sees scooters as a good thing, but it would be helpful if there was a designated scooter area. This will help to prevent the scooters from blocking sidewalks.



# Sample Parking Tickets

Handheld ticket printers can be programmed to print the ticket with the information relevant to the particular violation. In the absence of high-tech printouts, a link to the online resources (maps, restriction information, etc.) would be necessary.

## PARKING VIOLATION WARNING

While we appreciate your business, we need to manage our parking supply.

### YOU HAVE PARKED AT AN EXPIRED METER.

To avoid this ticket in the future, you can sign up to receive text reminders of your meter time and remotely add money to the meter, or you can park at the gated Garfield lot and pay when you leave. If you are an employee, you are eligible for a free Purple Employee Permit or a Red Employee Permit. There's free 2-HR parking within a short walk of this spot. Maps are online.

**SINCE THIS IS YOUR FIRST VIOLATION, THIS IS ONLY A WARNING.**

**THE NEXT VIOLATION FOR THIS VEHICLE WILL BE \$25.**

For more information on Hinsdale's Parking System, visit [www.HinsdaleParking.com](http://www.HinsdaleParking.com). If you believe this ticket was received in error, please contact Pat Smith: 630-555-5555.

## PARKING VIOLATION

While we appreciate your business, we need to manage our parking supply.

### YOU HAVE PARKED AT AN EXPIRED METER.

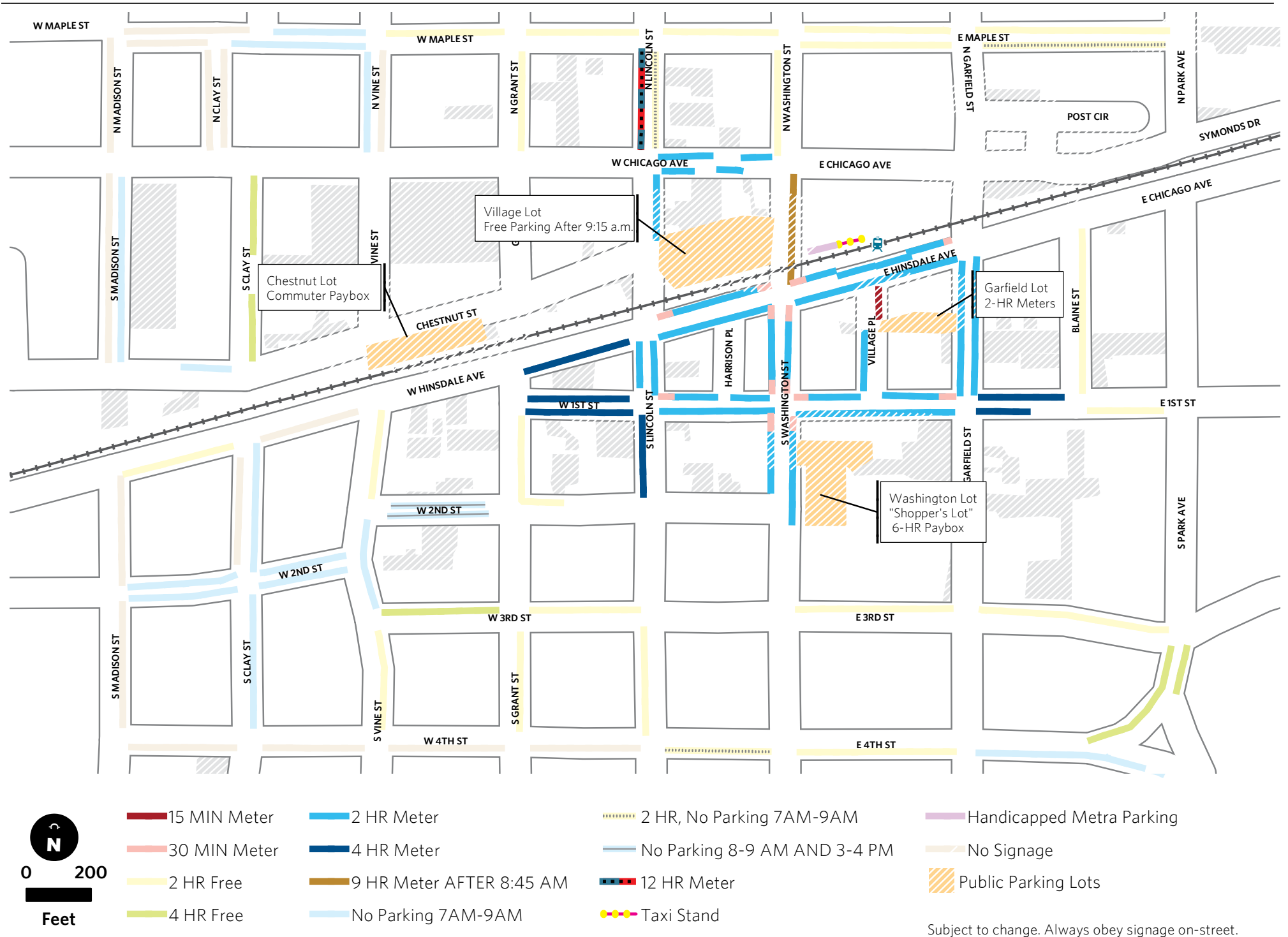
To avoid this ticket in the future, you can sign up to receive text reminders of your meter time and remotely add money to the meter, or you can park at the gated Garfield lot and pay when you leave. If you are an employee, you are eligible for a free Purple Employee permit or a Red Employee Permit. There's free 2-HR parking within a short walk of this spot. Maps are online.

**THIS IS YOUR 5TH VIOLATION; THIS TICKET IS \$25 IF PAID WITHIN 96 HOURS, \$40 AFTER.**

**THE NEXT VIOLATION FOR THIS VEHICLE WILL BE \$50.**

For more information on Hinsdale's Parking System, visit [www.HinsdaleParking.com](http://www.HinsdaleParking.com). If you believe this ticket was received in error, please contact Pat Smith: 630-555-5555.

Shopper parking options



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013



Shopper parking options

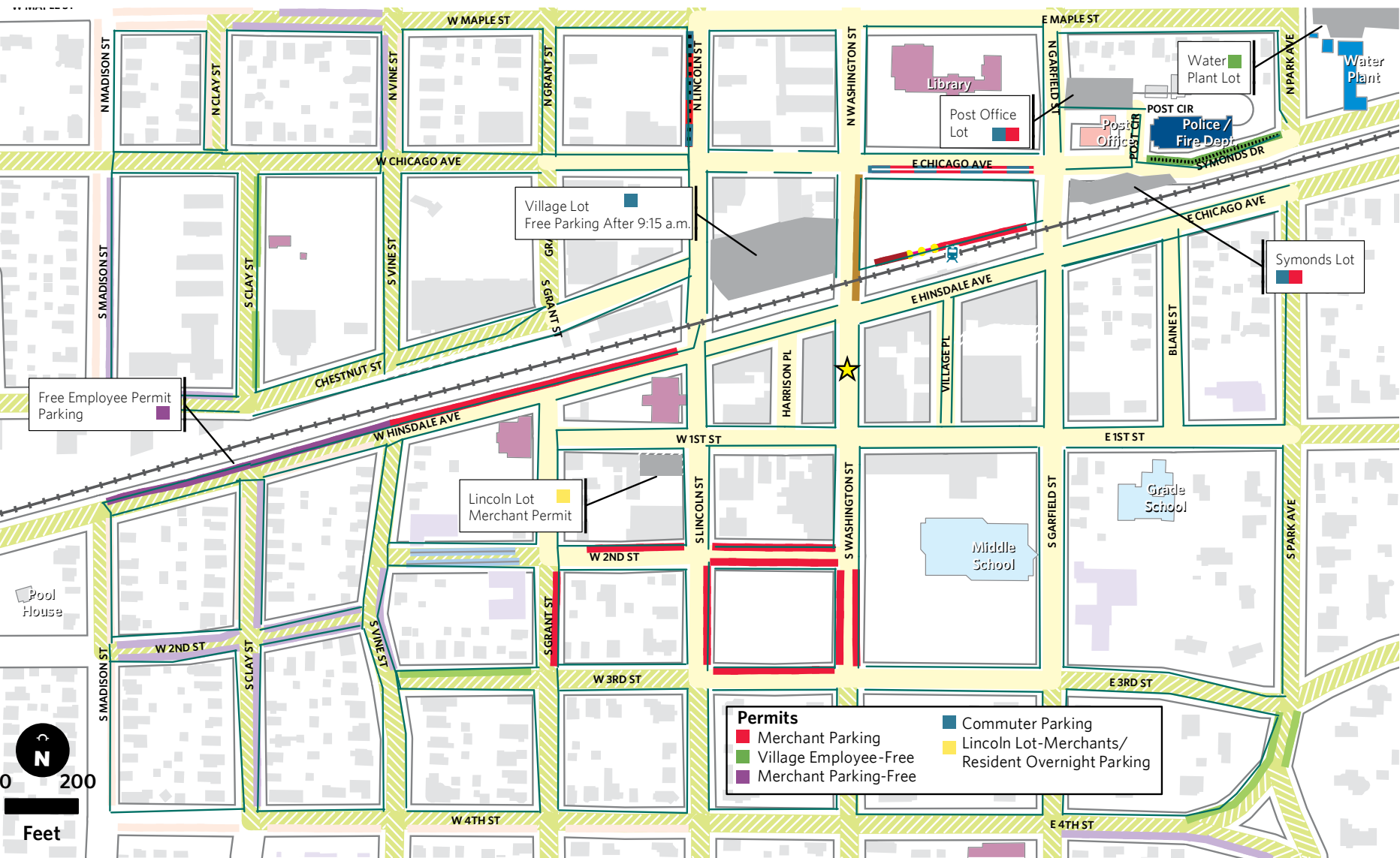


Public Parking Lots	9 HR Meter AFTER 8:45 AM	2 HR Free	Five Minute Walk From Ten Minute Walk From Village Hall Library Religious Institution
15 MIN Parking	12 HR Meter	2 HR, No Parking 7AM-9AM	
30 MIN Meter	Taxi Stand	4 HR Free	
2 HR Meter	Handicapped Parking	No Parking 8-9 AM AND 3-4 PM	
4 HR Meter	No Signage	No Parking 7AM-9AM	

Meters are enforced Monday through Saturday, 9 AM to 5 PM. Permits are enforced Monday through Friday 9 AM to 5 PM; otherwise they are free. Any street that is not color-coded is presumed to not allow parking; some exceptions with various permits.

Subject to change. Please obey signage. \*Walking time is based on an average speed of a healthy adult, about 3 mph.

Hinsdale employee parking options and walking time



- Five Minute Walk

Ten Minute Walk

Taxi Stand

4 HR Free

Merchant Permit

Free Merchant Permit

No Parking 7AM-9AM

Municipal Permit

Merchant/Commuter Permit

No Parking 8-9 AM AND 3-4 PM
- Handicapped Metra Parking

9 HR Meter AFTER 8:45 AM

12 HR Meter, Merchant/Commuter

No Signage

Employee Permit Lots

Downtown Buildings

Post Office

Community Facility

Religious Institution

School

Public Works

Public Safety

Subject to change. Always obey signage on-street.



## Employee parking options







Chicago Metropolitan  
Agency for Planning

233 South Wacker Drive, Suite 800  
Chicago, IL 60606

312-454-0400  
[info@cmap.illinois.gov](mailto:info@cmap.illinois.gov)

[www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov)

