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Parking and Access Study

Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

Introduction

In January 2016, the Longmont Downtown Development Authority (LDDA), City of Longmont and Boulder County contracted with Kimley-Horn and Associates (Kimley-Horn) to do a Parking and Access Study for Downtown Longmont. The goal of the Study was to develop a set of strategic recommendations to assist the City and LDDA in their partnership to develop a proactive, customer-friendly and well-managed public parking system that will support the City's larger economic development and mobility goals, today and in the future.

Project Objectives

The Parking and Access Study was designed to serve as a guide for City, LDDA and County decision-makers on parking management-related topics such as governance, organizational structure, and enforcement. Another key goal was to provide an updated snapshot of how well on- and off-street parking in the downtown was being utilized. Specific project objectives include providing strategies and tools to:

- ▲ Identify governance and management structures that will work best for Downtown Longmont and will contribute both to the successful implementation of the Study's recommendations and to moving the public parking program forward.
- ▲ Analyze the use of both public and private parking facilities, including demand for parking spaces, occupancy, and turnover.
- ▲ Provide best practice solutions for leveraging public/private shared parking opportunities.
- ▲ Understand public perceptions of downtown parking, including opportunities, challenges, and key concerns from the community's perspective.
- ▲ Begin positioning parking as a contributor to continued downtown redevelopment and economic expansion.
- ▲ Provide recommendations on establishing positive and proactive customer relations.
- ▲ Explore the range of parking management strategies that can be used to encourage on-street parking turnover and promote increased downtown vitality without unduly penalizing infrequent violators.
- ▲ Position parking management within the larger "access management" context in a way that promotes a balanced system of parking and transportation alternatives.
- ▲ Identify and recommend parking management strategies that balance the needs of businesses, residents, and visitors.

Our Process

This report highlights the importance and complexity of parking as a critical element in the continued development and revitalization of Downtown Longmont. With a growing downtown restaurant and pub scene, the addition of upscale residential offerings, popularity of year-round LDDA events and the vision of a dense, urban Transit-Oriented Development area at the southern end of the downtown district near 1st Avenue and Main Street, Downtown Longmont is poised for the next chapter in its history as a welcoming, family-friendly and connected Front Range community.

In order to fully understand the unique context and shared values of the Longmont community, the Kimley-Horn team created a comprehensive and stakeholder-rich process through which the Parking and Access Study would be completed.

This process included:

- ▲ Creation of a Project Steering Committee, which served as a sounding board for Study processes, provided insight into existing community plans / goals and as a preliminary review board for project recommendations. Kimley-Horn would like to thank LDDA Executive Director Kimberlee McKee for her role in coordinating the Project Steering Committee meetings and serving as the consulting team's main point of contact throughout the study process. The Project Steering Committee included the following representatives:
 - **Kimberlee McKee**, Longmont Downtown Development Authority
 - **Barb Ratner**, City of Longmont
 - **Ron Cheyney**, Ron's Printing Center
 - **Emelie Torres**, Longmont Downtown Development Authority
 - **Brian Lindoerfer**, Boulder County
 - **Bob Ball**, City of Longmont
 - **David Starnes**, City of Longmont
 - **Phil Greenwald**, City of Longmont
 - **Scott McCarey**, Boulder County
 - **Thaxter Williams**, Longmont Downtown Development Authority Board
- ▲ Thorough review of existing / ongoing planning efforts to identify community goals related to parking and transportation (Chapter 2)
- ▲ Research into the operations, organizational structure, enforcement policies, ticketing, and customer-service posture of the existing public parking program, including an interview with key parking department staff (Chapter 3)
- ▲ Collection of parking inventory, occupancy, utilization, and turnover data for on- and off-street parking assets within the LDDA boundaries (Chapter 4)
- ▲ Development of a multi-faceted community engagement process (Chapter 5)

- ▲ Analysis of how to best structure the parking department organizationally, including where parking management should be “housed” as a critical enterprise that supports the City and downtown (Chapter 6)
- ▲ Guidance and recommendations on parking program vision, mission, guiding principles, and operating philosophy (Chapter 7)
- ▲ Development of Primary and Secondary Action Items that will help “jump start” implementation efforts for program improvement, growth, and transformation (Chapter 8)
- ▲ Creation of an extensive set of appendices that provide documentation on this study’s processes, as well as a resource-rich library of parking management resources and best practice white papers to assist staff with implementation of the study’s recommendations. (Chapter 9)

Guiding Philosophy & Core Values

The recommendations outlined in this Study were guided by the philosophy that parking management is about supporting inviting, walkable public spaces for people and not about warehousing cars. In short, effective parking and access management solutions focus on getting people where they want to go, using their preferred method of transportation – car, bicycle, public transit and/or as a pedestrian.

The following foundational elements provided the “back-drop” for evaluating the City of Longmont’s existing public parking program and it is the consulting team’s hope that the City, County and LDDA see the following core values represented in the Study’s recommendations:

- ▲ **Customer Service** – The parking management program should be rooted in providing exceptional customer service, with the program designed to support citizens, business owners, visitors, and development. Positive customer service will be the foundation for a community-centric parking management approach that supports the “quality of life” issues important to the City and its citizens.
- ▲ **Financially Self-Sustaining** – The parking management program should identify creative ways to continue supporting not only its current operations but future investment in parking and / or transportation infrastructure.
- ▲ **Environmentally Sustainable** – The parking management program should follow the sustainability goals outlined by the City, with a focus on encouraging alternative travel modes through smart growth design and transportation demand management (TDM) principles.
- ▲ **An Expanded Focus on Access Management and Mobility** – The access management program should have a scope wider than just parking. While the development of parking management strategies will be an initial focus, in the long-term the program should also develop strategies and programs to enhance overall mobility throughout the community. This focus could include strategies to integrate parking with transit, cycling, and pedestrian initiatives, as well as programmatic support for enhancing transportation and community/economic development

elements. TDM strategies will be used to reduce the reliance on single occupant vehicle usage.

- ▲ **Technology** – The parking management program should strive to implement technologies that enhance customer experience and improve parking, traffic, and community development functions.
- ▲ **Ease of Use** – The parking management program should provide a system of parking that is easy to use and understand by promoting good wayfinding, marketing, branding, and information to help the Longmont community (and visitors!) better use and understand the system.

Key Topic Areas & Recommendations

Based on our understanding of the community's overarching economic development and quality of life goals, as well as the desire to balance the welcoming "small town" feel of Downtown Longmont with the future goal of providing a more walkable and dense urban core supported by a variety of multi-modal transportation options, the following Key Recommendations outline a high-level roadmap of Key Topic Areas and Recommendations included in the Parking and Access Study:

- ▲ **Secure Formal Adoption of this Plan** – It will be important to have the Longmont City Council and LDDA Board of Directors formally adopt and/or endorse this plan as the agreed-upon guiding planning document for creating a shared vision of parking and access management in Downtown Longmont. Additionally, it is hoped that this plan will be integrated into and help inform the Downtown Master Plan process beginning in Fall 2016.
- ▲ **Define the Program Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles** – Defining a shared, strategic vision for future management of parking and access options in Downtown Longmont is an important foundational element that should not be overlooked. The goal in investment of time and resources in this exercise is an important step in developing a comprehensive approach to parking management for the City of Longmont that will provide an integrated, action-oriented, and accountable system of parking and access management strategies that supports, facilitates, and contributes to a sustainable and vibrant community. These principles should be strategic in nature, responsive to the needs of the community and aligned with the larger community's strategic and economic development goals.
- ▲ **Identify the appropriate "Organizational Home" for Parking** – Identifying the preferred location for parking management functions is an important first step. While this idea will be discussed at length in this report, the conversation about where parking "lives" is not a simple one. Traditionally, parking functions in municipal environments have tended to be "horizontally-fragmented"; in other words, the different functions of parking have been assigned to various departments that could handle a specific role. For example, revenue collection went to Finance, enforcement went to the Police Department, asset maintenance went to Facilities, etc. The challenge with this approach is that often these departments didn't talk to each other, which led to inefficiency, lack of strategic planning and ultimately customer frustration. Our recommendation is a "vertically-integrated" model that is fully "housed" in one of two places, within the current City structure or within the LDDA.

- ▲ **Focus on “Mastering the Fundamentals” of Parking Management** – While related to the training and staff development element, this focus area is really about gaining an in-depth understanding of the many complex and challenging aspects that are somewhat unique to parking. Appendix 28 of this report (“20 Characteristics” of Effective Parking Management Programs) provides a strong framework built around specific program categories that can form the basis for a comprehensive program development approach. Between this document and the wealth of tools provided in the appendices, there are numerous program elements, both short- and long-term that can guide City and LDDA leadership, and Longmont parking program staff, as they work to elevate the parking and access experience in downtown.
- ▲ **Invest Appropriately in Parking Program Staffing** – The consultant team was especially impressed with the attitude, initiative and passion displayed by City Parking Enforcement Officers Barb Ratner and Cristi Campbell. Both Barb and Cristi participated in a one-on-one interview with the consultant team and it was clear that they take great pride in their work and know their customers well. Barb and Cristi are definitely an asset to the City of Longmont and it was clear that increased investment in administrative support for them as well as their inclusion in bigger picture conversations about parking and access management would be very beneficial to the City’s parking operations. Given this situation, this report provides an extensive assortment of tools, sample manuals, white papers on various specialized parking elements and a rich collection of parking management best practices to aid in the staff education and development process.
- ▲ **Continue Building Upon the Existing Strong Customer Service Orientation** – Parking can play an active and integral role in improving the perception and the experience of downtown. While Longmont currently benefits from parking staff that are committed to going “above and beyond” to provide good service to the parking public, enforcement staff do not currently have the support they need to take the program from “good to great.” Collaboration and partnership with the Longmont Downtown Development Authority will be an important component of taking the customer service orientation to the next level, and in transition their role from solely “parking enforcement” to parking and access management.
- ▲ **Start with Enforcement of Existing Parking Regulations and Develop Targeted Programs to Help People Park Legally** – The goal of parking management is not to “get better at catching illegal parkers” or about a “money grab”; it’s about identifying strategies that help people find legal parking spaces quickly and efficiently. It’s also about effectively managing a limited public resource. Improving the parking experience in Downtown Longmont starts with managing available resources better, enforcing existing regulations judiciously and in development of programs that help alleviate / address current parking “hot spots”.
- ▲ **Maximize Existing Parking Infrastructure** – As observed during our data collection efforts, heard during our stakeholder conversations, and captured in our online questionnaire about parking in Downtown Longmont, the consulting team believes that the community doesn’t have a parking “problem” or deficit of parking spaces, but instead, a “distribution problem”. While the amount of parking available is currently sufficient to meet current needs and even to accommodate the several small development projects that are on the immediate horizon, there are hot spots of

parking demand that need to be proactively addressed. The City should make efficient use of existing parking assets before investing in potentially expensive future parking infrastructure. Effective parking management includes proactive coordination with public and private partners, thoroughly understanding the often competing needs of various user groups (i.e., employees, visitors, business owners) and managing supply to prioritize use based on adjacent needs and land uses. The concept of shared parking should be actively promoted to move towards the creation of an integrated network of parking offerings, where public and private parking assets can be both leveraged to meet peak demand. The City should take an active role in promoting and facilitating shared parking to ensure that supply is not over-built and demand is effectively managed by leveraging the existing parking supply.

- ▲ **Give Parking a “Seat at the Table”** – One consistent characteristic of well-managed and forward thinking parking programs is integration of parking and access management planning into the bigger picture of community / economic development planning. Giving parking program leadership a “seat at the table” elevates the conversation about parking and transportation into bigger picture conversations and ultimately save time, money, and duplication of work.
- ▲ **Adopt a Broader “Access Management” Focus** – As mentioned above in the Guiding Philosophy section, while development of parking management strategies will be an initial focus in elevating the parking experience in Downtown Longmont, the “big picture” focus should include strategies to integrate parking with transit, cycling, and pedestrian initiatives, as well as programmatic support for enhancing transportation and community elements. Due to the consulting team’s firm belief that the pedestrian experience can extend the reach of the pedestrian, ideally reducing the amount of downtown land use dedicated to parking (warehousing cars), Kimley-Horn will be providing the City of Longmont with a pro-bono walking audit of downtown for key City, LDDA and County staff as well as for the general public. The process and results of this walking audit exercise are detailed in the recommendations later in this report and will be highlighted in detail in the appendix.
- ▲ **Investment Appropriately in Technology that Enhances the Customer Experience** – With technology innovation moving at an increasingly rapid pace, it can be challenging for some parking programs to identify where technology can be helpful and where technology might actually get in the way of progress. While technology is an important part of the conversation, it isn’t the “answer” to every challenge and should be approached thoughtfully. Some of the ways in which technology can benefit a parking program of Longmont’s size and complexity include:
 - Enhanced customer friendly programs and services
 - Improved operational efficiency through the use of enforcement and management technologies like License Plate Recognition (LPR) software
 - Enhanced system financial performance
 - Improved system management
- ▲ **Strategic Investment in Communications, Marketing, and Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement** – Regardless of whether a parking program is budgeting for dollars, staff time and/or scarce resources, strategic investment in branding, marketing and

public education often slides to the bottom of the list. However, thinking strategically about the ways in which a parking program is (or is not) communicating with its customers can support (or detract from!) every other aspect of a parking program's operations. Additionally, consideration should be given to ongoing ways to include key downtown stakeholders (and interested members of the community) in conversation about how to continuously improve public parking and access offerings.

▲ **Be Creative in Identifying Solutions to Parking and Access Challenges –**

Providing staff and strategic partners like the LDDA with the opportunity to “get creative” when approaching parking management challenges important for a parking program like Longmont, where revenue to support new programs might be lacking due to the presence of free on-street parking. Identifying and tailoring creative solutions that fit not only Longmont's existing need but that also support the community's longer-term vision of a connected, walkable, and more multi-modal downtown core should be encouraged. Additionally, setting a course that integrates complementary downtown and parking management functions can provide staffing synergies that can play multiple roles in welcoming residents and visitors downtown, while also providing additional “eyes and ears” on the street. An example of these types of creative solutions can include:

- Encouraging / formalizing bike and/or ride share offerings
- Bike corrals / valet to support events
- Preferred car / vanpool parking
- Promotion of a downtown / parking “ambassador” role that supports parking enforcement functions, as well as downtown clean and safe activities

▲ **“Walk the Talk” with Transportation Demand Management –** A key theme running through the stakeholder feedback gathered through other ongoing or recent planning efforts is the desire to identify strategies, programs and incentives that make options beyond driving and parking in a single occupancy vehicle an attractive and viable options for those who would like to make a different choice, even if only for part of their week. Identifying policies and programs that support Longmont's desire to implement a more transportation alternatives is an important step in transitioning “big picture” planning documents into action plans.

Primary Action Items

The following provides a high-level summary outline of the Primary Action Items outlined in Chapter 8 (pg. 73) of the Longmont Parking and Access Study. Each of the items listed below are also “clickable links” that will take you directly to the section of interest.

1. Primary Action Item #1: Confirm a Shared Vision for the Future of Parking Management in Downtown Longmont. Actionable strategies include:

- a. Secure Formal Adoption of this Plan
- b. Define the Program Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles
- c. Identify the Appropriate “Organizational Home” for Parking

- 2. Primary Action Item #2: Make Strategic Investments in Staff Training and Development.** Actionable strategies include:
 - a. Investment in a Parking Professional
 - b. Administrative support
 - c. Fully fund enforcement staff
- 3. Primary Action Item #3: Leverage Parking as a Tool to Promote Economic Development and Give Parking a “Seat at the Table”.** Actionable strategies include:
 - a. The Importance of “Parking Planning”
 - b. Leveraging Public / Private Partnerships
 - c. Using Parking Development as a Platform for Achieving Other Community Goals
 - d. Parking Investment “Leading” Other Investment
- 4. Primary Action Item #4: Implement Programs to Help People Make the Right Transportation Choice for their Trip Downtown.** Actionable strategies include:
 - e. Welcoming Parking Signage and Wayfinding
 - f. Employee Parking Program
 - g. Educational Campaigns
 - h. “Park Once – Pedestrian First”: Extending the Reach of the Pedestrian
 - i. Invest in Safety and Security
- 5. Primary Action Item #5: Maximize Existing Parking Resources.** Actionable strategies include:
 - j. Adjust on-street time limits
 - k. Shared Parking Agreements
 - l. Public / Private Partnerships
 - m. Proactive Facility Maintenance
 - n. Customer-Friendly / -Focused Policies and Technology
- 6. Primary Action Item #6: Make Parking Program Branding, Communication and Continued Stakeholder Engagement a Priority.** Actionable strategies include:
 - o. Brand Development
 - p. Strategic Communication Planning
 - q. Leverage Existing Partner Resources
 - r. Maintain and Enhance a Strong Online (and Mobile) Presence
- 7. Primary Action Item #7: Adopt a Broader “Parking and Access Management” Philosophy.** Actionable strategies include:

- s. Support Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Active Transportation
- t. Identifying Investments in Sustainability
- u. Recognize the Importance of Paid Parking as a Long-Term Demand Management and Funding Strategy

8. Primary Action Item #8: Protect the Parking Enterprise Fund Approach and Identify Progressive Funding Strategies to Support the Parking Program in the Future.

Actionable strategies include:

- v. Financial Stability and Independence
- w. Progressive vs. Regressive Funding Strategies
- x. Recognize the Importance of “Paid Parking” as a Long-Term Demand Management and Funding Strategy

In addition to these eight Primary Action Items, Chapter 8 also includes several Secondary Action Items and corresponding reference material (i.e., sample handbooks, white papers and metrics) that can be found in the appendices (Chapter 9).

In Summary

The development of a strategic vision and a strong, well defined action plan is a critical first step in taking the public parking program in Downtown Longmont to the next level. Kimley-Horn applauds the City, LDDA and Boulder County’s recognition of this fact and for making this important investment.

A well-managed parking and access system can be a significant contributor to both advancing a community’s economic development goals and to improving the overall experience of accessing core neighborhoods and in Longmont’s case, a thriving downtown business district. As our team works with cities and towns, large and small, across the Front Range in Colorado and nationwide, we are confident that with the strong core team of City, LDDA and County leaders, an engaged and supportive downtown community, seasoned and passionate parking staff and a forward-thinking approach to access and mobility, that the future of downtown Longmont is bright indeed.