

Local Parking Study

What is it?

The first step in determining which smart parking solutions might be best for your community is to study your local parking situation in detail. A comprehensive parking study will help you determine where parking problems exist in your community and will begin to point to possible solutions.

The typical parking study will identify where parking is located, how this parking is used, and what users are paying for this parking. The analysis will reveal where parking is adequate, where it is in short supply, and may also project future parking supply and demand. As part of the study, you should also review local government programs and policies that affect supply and demand for parking. Your local government may choose to hire a consultant to carry out the parking study, or may conduct the study using in-house resources.

How to do it

1. **Assemble stakeholders.** Identify citizens and organizations concerned with parking issues. Some likely stakeholders include area merchants, chamber of commerce officials, property owners and residents. Also include officials of the local government and state agencies that may be impacted.
2. **Determine the study area.** Using input from the stakeholder group, determine the boundaries of the area to be included in the parking study.
3. **Inventory available spaces.** Include both private and public parking spaces within the study area. Categorize the spaces by type: metered/unmetered, off-street/on-street, etc.
4. **Survey space utilization.** Visit parking areas at different times of the day and record the numbers of occupied and unoccupied parking spaces. Try to measure space turnover (i.e., average time one vehicle occupies a parking space), particularly for on-street parking spaces or off-street facilities in busy locations. If time and funding permit, include a survey of users, asking their destination, length of stay, and satisfaction with parking availability.
5. **Review local parking regulations.** Review your ordinances for parking requirements. Even in the absence of a separate local parking code, there may be provisions governing parking in the various land development regulations, such as the zoning ordinance or subdivision regulations.
6. **Analyze the information.** Review the data gathered above to identify areas where parking seems to be in short supply, oversupply, and where parking regulations may be contributing to imbalances in parking supply.

7. **Develop recommendations.** Present the results of the analysis to the stakeholder group. Discuss possible solutions. Include a review of all GQGP quality growth parking tools for their applicability to address particular local parking problems. Publicize study findings and recommendations, making them available to local officials and the public.

Things to consider before using this tool

- Due to the time and cost of conducting a parking study, it is best to keep the study area as small as possible. Focus on busy areas or areas already known to have parking problems.
- Make sure to include developments that are planned or are underway when evaluating areas where parking may be in short supply. Parking facilities in these areas may not presently be overcrowded, but that may change as soon as the new developments open for business.

Additional Information on Smart Parking Solutions

Background

- Does your community have expanses of parking lots that detract from its attractiveness?
- Do you hear frequent complaints from customers and business owners about parking availability?
- Is there a perception that parking is not convenient, safe, or customer friendly in particular parts of your community?
- Is there pressure to provide more parking in high density areas even though there are many vacant spaces during the peak hour?

If your community is typical of many others in Georgia, some sections of the community simply have too many unattractive asphalt parking lots, while other high activity areas, such as the downtown, seem to suffer from a lack of convenient, adequate, and safe parking.

The simple fact is that most people want to be able to park within a few feet of their destination. Businesses want to locate in places where parking is convenient for their customers or clients. The result is that parking can play a big role in influencing development patterns. Typical responses to the need for parking can be to:

- Tear down buildings, remove trees, and clear land to create more parking lots. This has serious environmental consequences and can substantially reduce the attractiveness of your community.
- Build parking decks. This may not be a good or even a viable idea. Garage parking is not well used in smaller communities and is quite expensive - \$10,000 per space or more.
- Relocate businesses to areas with more available parking. This is especially true for high customer use facilities with a perceived lack of parking, such as post offices or governmental offices. Moving such facilities away from central locations can work against local efforts to revitalize in-town areas.

There are a number of smart parking strategies that can be used to better match the supply of parking to actual demand throughout your community. Less land is wasted on asphalt while your citizens are better able to find parking facilities available within a convenient and reasonable walking distance of their destinations.