

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following section details work done to update the original Parking Principles adopted by the City of Portsmouth in 2013, an overall assessment of the state of the public parking system, quantification of the current parking supply, and documentation of baseline parking occupancy and utilization.

Parking Principles

The City of Portsmouth's original "Guiding Parking Principles for Central Business Districts" were adopted as part of the 2013 Blue Ribbon Committee on Transportation Policy report. The original principles were made up of two general framing remarks regarding the role of parking in the larger vision for downtown Portsmouth and twenty-one guiding statements reflecting the community's objectives and priorities for the public parking system as of 2013.

In collaboration with the Parking Utilization Advisory Group (PUAG), the consulting team reviewed the original principles statement by statement against current conditions and the most up-to-date best practices in municipal parking management. The result of this process was an updated document which encompasses the majority of the original principles into sixteen consolidated statements which reflect Portsmouth's commitments to commerce, growth, sustainability, and fiscal stability. Those changes can be seen here in the updated 2023 Parking Principals that the consulting team and the PUAG structured:

Statement #1: The City of Portsmouth will ensure an adequate supply of parking for both short-term and long-term parkers downtown associated with commercial land uses and institutions through the development of policy, programs, and infrastructure as needed.

Statement #2: Parking for long-term overnight uses such as downtown residences or hotels is primarily a private responsibility.

Statement #3: Parking management plans should consider impacts from future reuse, redevelopment, and full occupancy of buildings in the Downtown Districts (the urban core). When implementing these plans, the city should be guided by all of the principals of this document and take reasonable steps to ensure that a lack of parking is not a barrier to entry for new businesses, tenants, institutions, or developers seeking to locate in downtown Portsmouth.

Statement #4: The city should strive to play the lead role in developing and managing parking facilities in the urban core:

- Parking management and supply decisions should incorporate a holistic approach which considers impacts on the downtown parking, development, mobility, and walking environments as well as municipal development and fiscal policy in addition to addressing issues specific to a particular area or development.
- The value of private parking facilities should be recognized as a resource wherever possible and private parking property owners should be encouraged to make their facilities available to the general public where it benefits public interests. These resources are not part of the public parking supply under the City's long-term control and opportunities to manage private lots are limited.



Statement #5: The City should design policies and programs that address regular peak parking demand needs in order to avoid regular times when residents/customers cannot find parking. These programs and policies should include, but not be limited to:

- Managing peak parking demand to balance parking supply and demand across the downtown.
- As needed, increasing the supply of publicly available, convenient parking.
- Mitigating peak hour demand through the promotion of alternative modes of transportation.

Statement #6: Parking should support economic development of commercial land uses (including but not limited to office, retail, and restaurant) and accommodate institutional employees, customers, residential visitors, and tourists.

Statement #7: Parking policies and programs should recognize the differences in needs between long-term and short-term parkers and include incentives which encourage use of off-street public parking facilities for long-term parkers seeking less expensive accommodation and promote availability for short-term parkers seeking proximity for quick errands.

Statement #8: Any parking plan should recognize that the primary reason for collecting parking revenues is to provide city-wide benefits through an adequate supply of secure and attractive public parking assets; a diverse transportation network; and vibrant and welcoming walking environment. Parking fee and fine structures should be transparent, logical, and easy to understand.

Statement #9: Information on parking and transportation options should be easily accessible to citizens, businesses, and visitors, using both traditional media and new technologies.

Statement #10: Parking planning, policy and program development should adopt a comprehensive approach that considers environmental and financial sustainability; the range of costs and benefits of all decisions; and places a premium on aesthetics, security, user information, accessibility to users of all abilities, and ease of navigation and use.

Statement #11: All public parking assets should be designed and maintained to be aesthetically pleasing and integrated to the surrounding streetscape, well-lit, clean, in good repair, accessible to users of all abilities, and easy to navigate and use.

Statement #12: Parking planning and policy development should promote the use of sustainable, multimodal transportation options whenever feasible. The includes remote parking as necessary and needed.

Statement #13: Parking management policy and programs should take into consideration the downtown workforce and the full range of needs for different kinds of workers.

Statement #14: Parking planning, policies, and programs should prioritize curb management techniques to address loading, commercial, and parking needs equitably, and incorporate “Complete Streets” principles which include but are not limited to:

- Enhancing downtown walkability and local aesthetics.



- Parking facility design which includes elements to support sustainable and multimodal transportation.
- The needs of individuals with ambulatory challenges.

Statement #15: The public parking system, and the policies or programs influencing its operation, should be self-supporting and able to cover operating costs and debt service obligations without subsidy from the City's General Fund or other municipal sources.

Statement #16: Parking plans, programs, and policies should seek to encourage the use of public transit, walking, and bicycling, but recognize the limited infrastructure and preference for personal transportation options.

These revised principles were presented to City Council and formally adopted in early 2024.

