
5-AUTOMOBILE CIRCULATION & PARKING

Parking and automobile circulation are always popular topics for downtowns. Citizen concerns in Georgetown have to do with high traffic volumes and speeds, specifically along Austin and University Avenues, and proper designation of and access to public parking. Many community members were unaware that so many public parking lots exist downtown, as they are not properly designated as such with signage. The community also thought that pedestrian safety and comfort should not be compromised for traffic flow.

In many ways, auto traffic and some level of congestion is a good sign that downtowns are thriving. There needs to be a balance between healthy levels of automobile traffic and the ability and appeal to walk along it at the same time. Automobile access should focus on being efficient and convenient to bring people into downtown. A hierarchy for streets should be established, just as it was for sidewalks, in order to direct automobile traffic most efficiently.

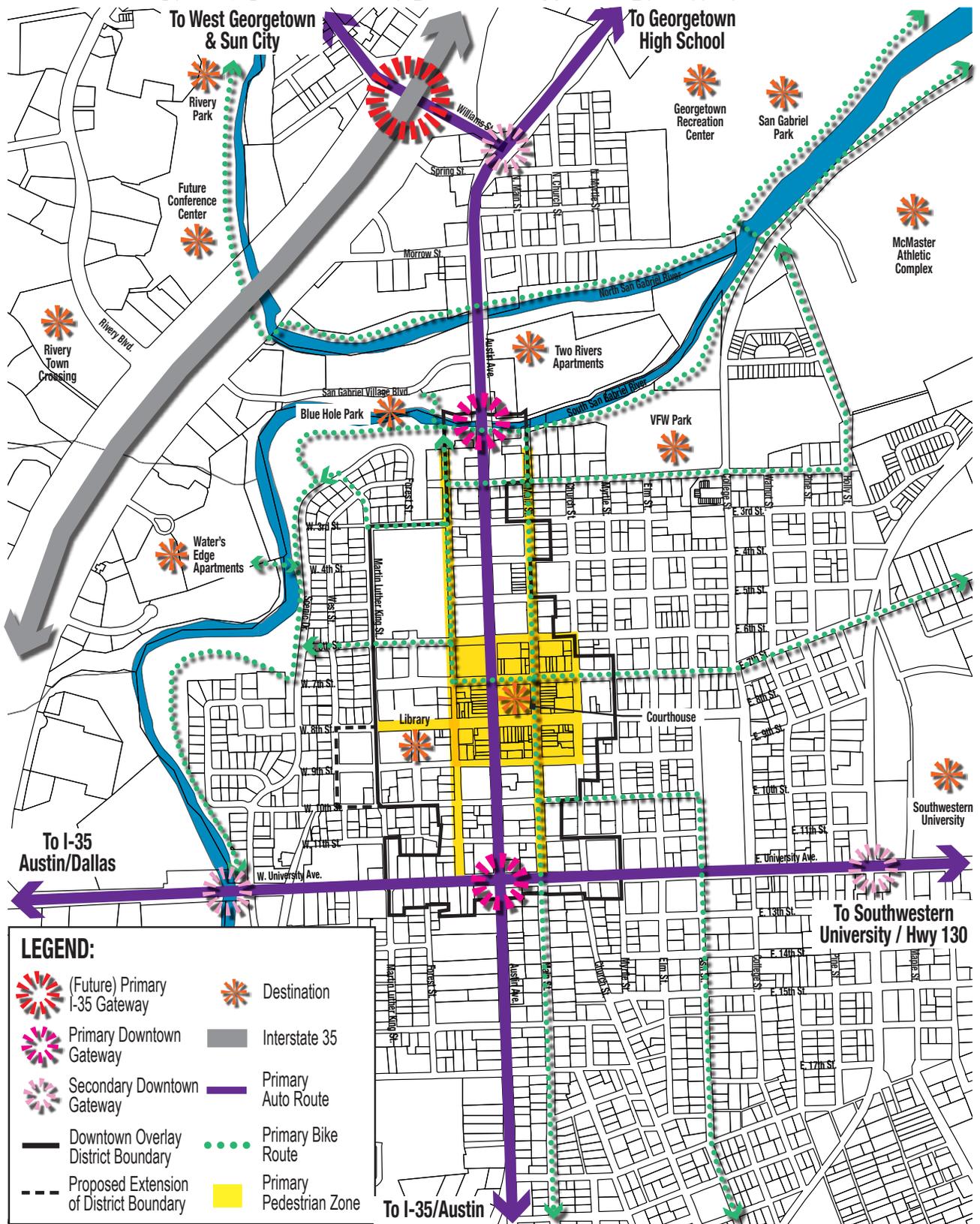
Parking should also be convenient, as congestion is often caused by people driving around looking for places to park. While several locations are shown for potential parking structures (see Map #12,) it is important to remember that it is not necessary that they all get built. This study provides several possible locations for structures as they relate to the overall proposed urban design framework so that the city has options to consider. Any parking structure should happen in conjunction with other future development.

AUTO CIRCULATION

The network of streets should be well organized and hierarchical. On-street parking configurations, curbs and sidewalks should be consistent to help organize the street system and therefore help the flow of auto circulation. A few street designs and layouts are proposed on the following pages for the most common street right-of-ways in downtown. In general, improvements should follow the same prioritization as sidewalks from Chapter 4.

AUSTIN AVENUE

Downtown Georgetown is bisected by Austin Avenue. While much effort has been put into turning it from a state highway to a local street, it still is seen as a barrier. Traffic flow has improved, especially because interstate business route traffic is diverted, including large trucks. However, the character along the corridor is still auto-dominated along some portions and does not lend itself to foot traffic. Instead, pedestrians use other routes or hop in their cars to cross it.



MAP 13 | OVERALL CIRCULATION

Georgetown Master Plan Update

Georgetown, TX

March, 2014



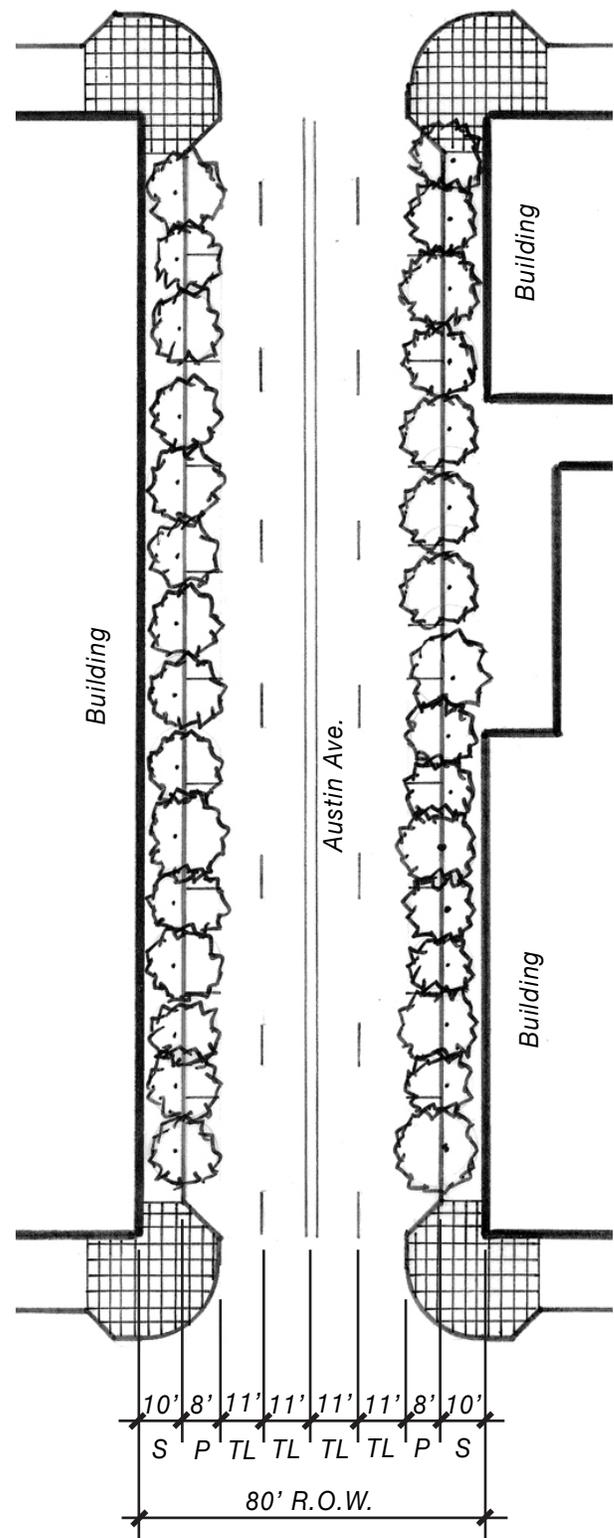
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The historic bridges crossing the North and South San Gabriel Rivers should be modified to accommodate pedestrians better. These bridges are assets that fit into an overall heritage tourism opportunity that would have positive benefits to the city's economy if properly promoted as part of a historic tour experience.

The primary role of Austin Avenue should be to serve downtown circulation. This includes pedestrians as well as motorists. First and foremost, Austin Avenue should be engineered to support the vision for development of the downtown as outlined in this plan. This includes wide sidewalks, streetscape designs, on-street parking and pedestrian crossings. As an initial action, pedestrian crossing problems should be minimized by providing better signs, installing pedestrian-controlled crossing signals and constructing "textured" crosswalks in prominent locations that encourage slower speeds.

Recommendations for Austin Avenue (80' ROW):

- Two narrow (11') travel lanes in each direction
- Parallel on-street parking (8') on either side of the street (except between 7th and 8th streets where the existing condition - diagonal parking along the courthouse side - should be kept.)
- 10' sidewalks on either side of the street
- Consistent placement of street trees in grates, decorative lighting, streetscape clusters and signage.
- New buildings should be built to the property line, as the UDC suggests.
- Textured crosswalks at key intersections
- Downtown-sensitive speed limits



TL = Travel Lane
 P = Parking
 S = Sidewalk

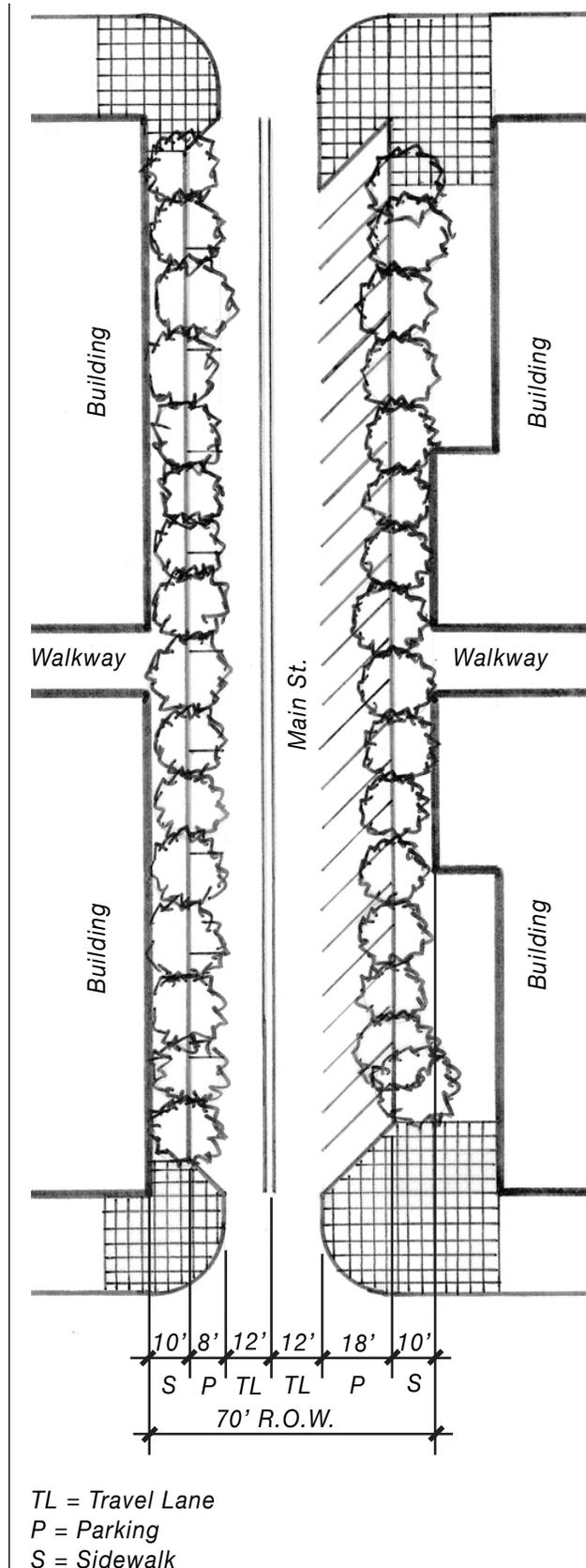
MAIN STREET

Main Street curb, gutter and sidewalk has been recently upgraded from University to 9th Street. The following design recommendations build off of the work that has already been completed. Main Street should therefore include two travel lanes (one in each direction) and an asymmetrical on-street parking configuration with one side being diagonal and the other side being parallel. The diagonal parking should be placed in the northbound direction from University Avenue to the Square and in the southbound direction from 2nd Street to the Square. If residential uses exist on both sides of Main Street, then the traditional neighborhood street configuration (parallel parking on both sides) should be used.

Street trees should be placed consistently and depending on the adjacent building form and use, could either be placed in grates, or in a tree lawn. Main Street lends itself to smaller scale buildings than Austin Avenue and therefore could include mid-block pedestrian walkways to break up the rhythm of the block and offer additional pedestrian access points.

Recommendations for Main Street (70' ROW):

- One travel lane (12') in each direction
- Parallel on-street parking on one side and diagonal parking on the other side.
- 10' sidewalks on either side of the street
- Consistent placement of street trees in grates or a tree lawn.
- Decorative lighting, streetscape clusters and signage as needed.
- Textured crosswalks at key intersections (refer to Chapter 4.)



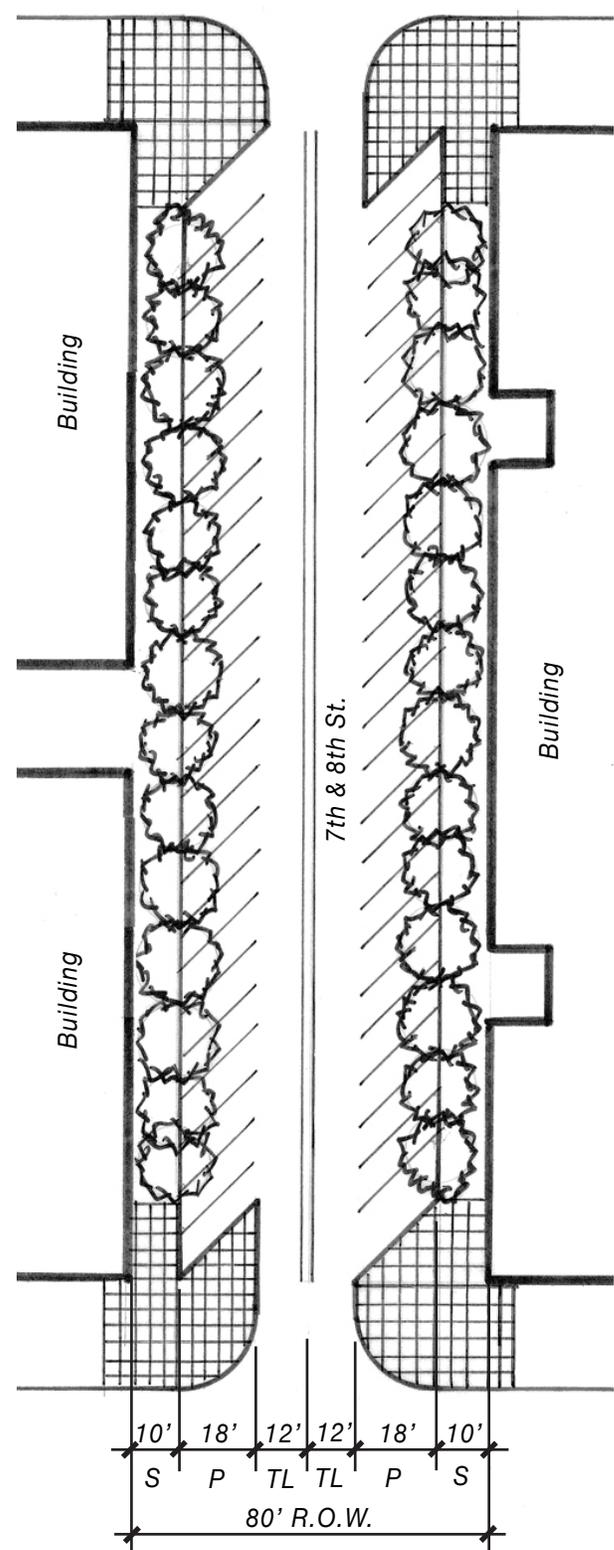
7TH & 8TH STREET (FROM CHURCH TO ROCK)

One unique street section includes diagonal parking on both sides of the street. This condition should occur on 7th and 8th Streets within the historic district from Church to Rock Streets where the right-of-way supports this configuration. This additional parking will help support the downtown retail core. This configuration already exists, for the most part, but sidewalk conditions are sub-par in this location and need upgraded.

The street should be redesigned with new curb, gutter and sidewalks. Sidewalks should be upgraded and grade issues resolved. A wide, 10-foot sidewalk should be provided and street trees should be placed consistently in grates. Refer to Map #11 for actual sidewalk design recommendations.

Recommendations for 7th & 8th Streets (80' ROW):

- One travel lane (12') in each direction.
- Diagonal parking on both sides of the street.
- 10' sidewalks on either side of the street.
- Consistent placement of street trees in grates.
- Decorative lighting, streetscape clusters and signage as needed.
- Textured crosswalks at key intersections (refer to Chapter 4.)



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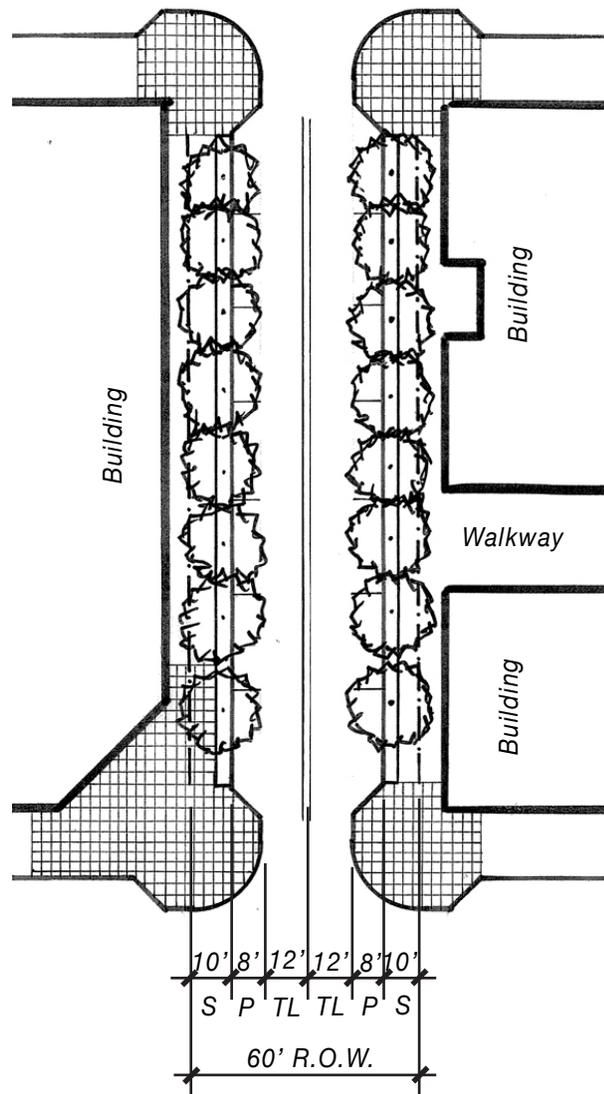
NEIGHBORHOOD STREET

Another common street configuration in downtown includes a 60-foot right-of-way. This is typical of a neighborhood street. Uses along these streets could be commercial or residential.

The configuration includes a 12-foot travel lane in each direction and parallel parking on either side of the street. Street trees should be placed consistently and mainly in a tree lawn, although if a more urban condition is desired for commercial uses, tree grates could be used as well. Refer to Chapter 4 and Map #11 for actual sidewalk design recommendations.

Recommendations for Neighborhood Streets (60' ROW):

- One travel lane (12') in each direction.
- Parallel parking on both sides of the street.
- Either a 6' sidewalk with a 4' tree lawn or a 10' sidewalk with trees in grates.
- Decorative lighting, streetscape clusters and signage as needed.



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 S = Sidewalk

PARKING

There is some perception that more parking is needed downtown. However, truly successful downtowns are ones in which parking spaces are in high demand because the activities there attract large numbers of users. That means that parking demand is related to the quality of businesses, services and amenities in the area that attract users. Parking strategies for downtown also must be carefully considered in terms of the image they convey. The “urban” experience involves walking, albeit with limitations of climatic conditions in mind. Nonetheless, if Georgetown’s downtown is to be the preferred choice in the region, parking must be subordinate to the mix of uses that is envisioned.

When considering the need for more parking, the first step is to assure that the existing parking resources are being used to their maximum efficiency. The variables to consider are:

- **current number** of spaces available,
- **convenience** of their location,
- **ability** of users **to find them** and
- **policies** used **to manage** turnover, including charging a fee for parking.

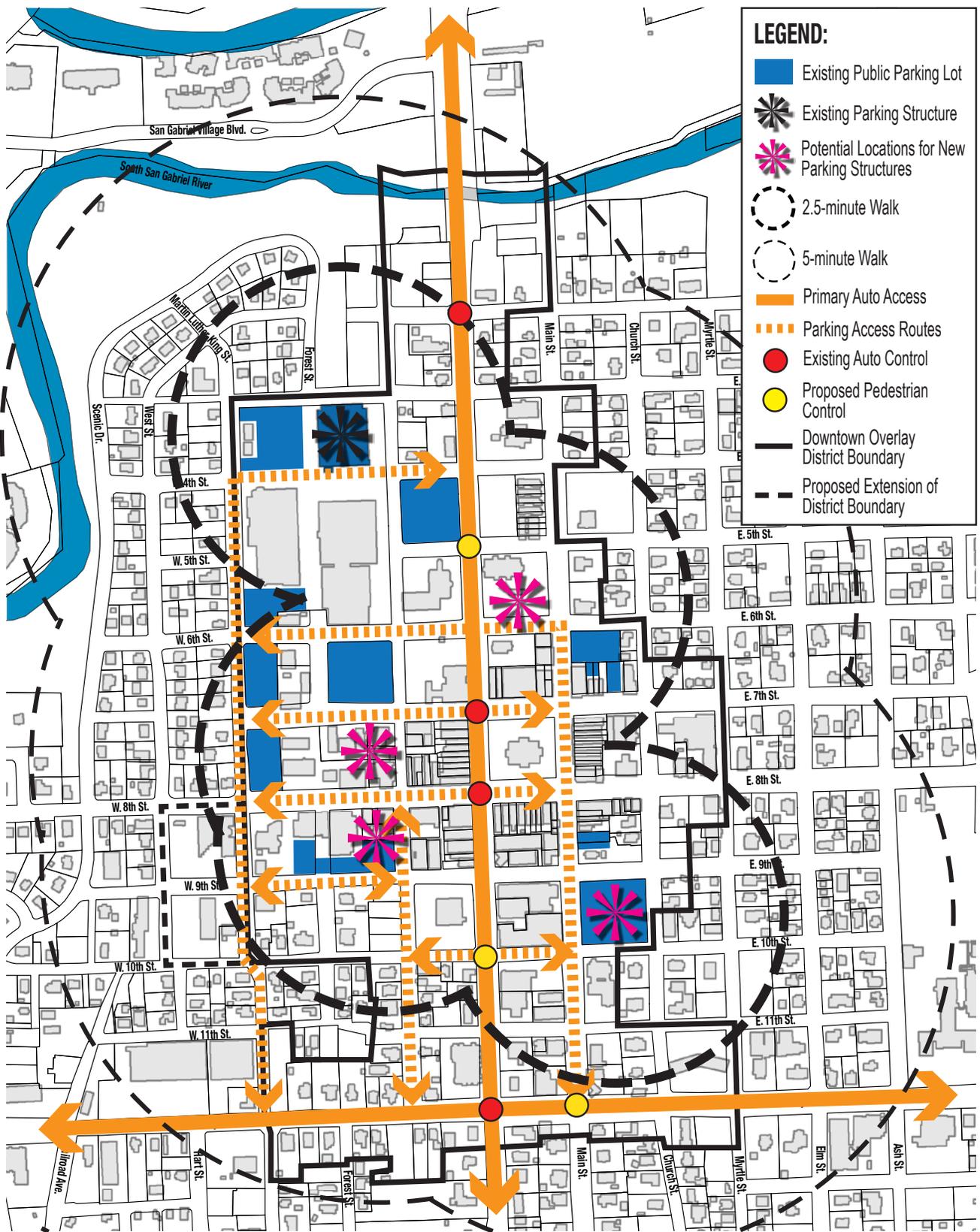
While there are a number of existing parking lots in Georgetown (see Map #5), the connections between them and points of activity are weak. In addition, little has been done to mitigate their visual impact (except for the city lots along Main Street at 9th and 6th.) They should be buffered from the public right-of-way with landscaping or other appropriate design elements, per the adopted design guidelines.

The public parking lots at 6th/9th and Main Street are examples of improved surface lot design. **Landscaping** make them more attractive, and in combination with the **streetscape improvements** that enhance the connections to them and **signage** to direct users to them, has resulted in downtown parking resources that are much more actively used.



Attractive landscaping, improved streetscapes and signage make using public parking lots more attractive.

Not having a policy for downtown employee parking is a problem. Without designated employee parking, or a charge for on-street parking, employees take prime on-street spaces which reduces spots available for patrons.



MAP 14 | PROPOSED PARKING STRATEGY

Georgetown Master Plan Update

Georgetown, TX

March 2014



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On-street parking also plays an important role. Most on-street parking in the downtown is provided in both diagonal and parallel layouts. In many places, these have generous time limits and are not monitored diligently. For example, the area bounded by 6th and 9th Streets and Rock and Church Streets includes a 3-hour maximum time limit for on-street spaces. With these permissive policies, it is difficult to shift employee parking to outlying areas.

Map #14 shows the locations of existing parking lots and the one county parking structure that is available for public use. Potential locations for a new parking structure are also illustrated. Perhaps one or two of these might get built over time in conjunction with new development; this plan does not assume a need for four or more public parking structures in downtown. A detailed parking study would be helpful to examine existing needs and ideal locations.

PARKING FACILITIES

In general, there are three basic types of parking facilities that may be considered in downtown Georgetown: surface lots, parking decks and parking structures. Each type of facility has features that are appropriate for different applications.

SURFACE LOT

Surface lots can be stand-alone parking facilities (e.g., the City block-sized, asphalt-covered lot), or parking lots attached to a specific commercial building (e.g., beside an office building). They are used when expense is a concern, visual aesthetic expectations are low, or when the dedication to parking is not long-term.

PARKING DECK

A parking deck is a simple structure of only two levels, with the lower level constructed into the grade of the site. This will frequently allow the two levels of the deck to be accessed from the street by separate access points, if the topography slopes sufficiently to do so (as is the case for many blocks in downtown.) This alleviates the added expense of constructing ramps to connect the levels. The fundamental design principle for a deck is that the street edge be designed to provide interest to pedestrians. In the simplest model, the edge of the deck would be screened with decorative railings or plantings. In more elaborate models, the perimeter of the deck is animated with commercial space.

PARKING STRUCTURE

Parking structures generally have two to four levels of parking with at least one ingress and one egress point. Also, many communities now require a parking structure, which is otherwise an unattractive addition to the streetscape, to be “wrapped” with retail spaces to activate important street edges.



Parking structures should be “wrapped” with active ground floor uses on prominent streets to activate the sidewalk and street.

PARKING MANAGEMENT

A **parking district** is a tool used by many communities to provide for an adequate supply of well-managed parking in a cost-effective manner. In a district, funds are generated by a dedicated mechanism, usually an assessment program or a tax increment financing action. (These methods are described in Appendix A.)

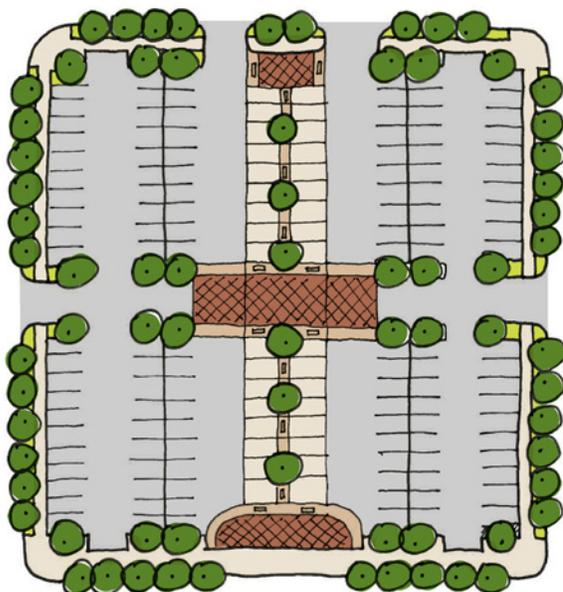
In either case, an income stream is established that can be used to finance construction, maintenance and operations of parking facilities. Parking districts are particularly useful in small cities for the financing of structured parking, which otherwise would not be cost effective to build. By voting to establish a parking district, businesses and property owners within the boundary of the district are able to create public parking facilities that make more efficient use of land, thereby facilitating redevelopment of individual parcels. Having a parking district is also a useful promotional tool, in that users understand that major public parking facilities exist and that a reasonable supply will be available. In a parking district, enforcement can be managed in a focused manner. Issues of employee parking and time limits can be addressed as well. Modern-day technology can also be used to support programs such as a parking district, where a phone application could be developed to identify parking locations and availability.

PARKING CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of considerations that should be factored into parking planning and development.

- **Think of parking as a utility, not a land use** (i.e., it provides a service that customers use.) Viewing parking from this perspective makes one ask the question of “where should parking be located to best serve demand?” This also means setting limits on its use, either through time limits or charging for this service.
- **Take a systems approach** to viewing parking decisions. This requires that all parking structures, lots and on-street spaces be viewed holistically to evaluate how well they are serving overall demand. A systems approach evaluates how well the facilities function together, and whether they are integrated so that customers know where to go to find the next lot if the first one they go to is full. Parking facilities should be located so that they form a loop within the downtown such that traffic around the courthouse square itself is avoided when accessing parking. It also should be well marked and be accessible. Signage that notes the location of additional nearby lots also should be installed.
- **Combine other uses with new public facilities** whenever possible. Multiple-use parking facilities that include parking are preferred from an urban design perspective because they are more attractive than just a single-use parking facility. They are desirable from the public’s point of view because they can often park closer to their destination.

- **Design a public parking facility to be flexible in use** so that it might serve as a temporary event space for downtown festivals or events. Designing a surface parking lot as an “event space” is an example.



Parking lots can be designed to serve as temporary event spaces for downtown.

- **Create pedestrian-friendly edges with landscaped edges and interiors** of lots to better encourages the use of these parking facilities. See also the *Design Guidelines for the Downtown Overlay District*.
- **Locate a new public parking facility where it will serve the broadest range of users** and not just one specific commercial site.
- **Ensure that new public facilities have enough spaces** not only to meet the expected demand from the commercial or civic uses the facility is expected to support but also to provide “extra” parking spaces for use by other developments in the area.

- **Encourage workers to park in less-congested areas**, to free up close-in parking in the more intensively used areas for customers. If this is too much of an inconvenience, then the City or County should consider an employee satellite lot with shuttle service.
- **Seek opportunities to share parking.** For example church parking lots sometimes lie vacant much of the time that businesses are open. Sharing these spaces is more efficient and can result in cost savings to all.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

While there are a number of significant parking projects being discussed for development in the downtown, it is not necessarily clear that three (or more) separate parking structures are currently needed for a community the size of Georgetown. When it does become clear that additional off-street parking is needed in the downtown, the following concepts should be considered.

ESTABLISH PARKING IN THE FOUR QUADRANTS

City and County planners should resist the temptation to put surface lots randomly throughout the downtown area, since they do little to enhance the urban landscape. Instead, parking facilities should be concentrated in the four quadrants of downtown to service the entire area. One way to illustrate this concept is by drawing circles around proposed parking locations that represent a distance that a pedestrian can comfortably walk - generally 2 to 5 minutes (see Map #13.)

An initial surface parking lot should be constructed as soon as possible in the lot across from the library at **8th & MLK**. This land is currently owned by the County and would need to be leased. This lot should be constructed much like the one at 9th & Main, with attractive landscaping and streetscape improvements, and should consider being designed to accommodate flexible uses such as events.

New developments around parking facilities should be comprehensive, with initiatives to revitalize the area. The strategy should be to stimulate activity with a mix of uses, including retail and office and residential functions.

COORDINATE A WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE SYSTEM

Clearly identify routes to parking with a comprehensive wayfinding and signage system that minimize potential conflicts with primary pedestrian routes. This should have a distinctive image that is unique to downtown and should be easily readable. See also Chapter 6: Wayfinding & Public Signs.

INITIATE A PARKING STUDY

Additional parking is likely to be needed in the downtown as development increases the density of uses. While this plan identifies possible locations for new parking structures, the estimates of required new parking need to be refined as the plans for new development and redevelopment downtown materialize. As an initial step, the city should confirm the current quantity and distribution of parking in order to determine projected parking needs and whether a parking structure is feasible, as well as its location.

ESTABLISH A PARKING DISTRICT

A district would help manage parking as a “utility” that is provided by the City and County, as well as some private sources. It should be regularly inventoried and its use should be managed and monitored. This includes the use of metered or time-limited parking spaces. It will also help fund construction of a parking structure.

TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

Currently there are no public transit facilities in Georgetown. Community members are interested in a number of different transit opportunities. These range from a shuttle or trolley that circulates through the downtown, to the possibility of a passenger rail line being established between Georgetown and Austin.

These opportunities should be kept in consideration during the development of the plan recommendations. Potential transit stops are not located on the framework map, but could be integrated into the plan on an as-needed basis. Future stops should be located by activity centers and at key sites. New street designs, especially along Austin Avenue, should take into consideration the long-term possibility of incorporating bus stops. If a rail line were to be developed, links between the depot or end point of the train and the downtown would need to be investigated further.