

# **Parking Inventory and Policy Recommendations for the City of Decatur**

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## THE PARKING PARADOX

In suburban and heavily automobile-dependent areas, including the Atlanta metro region, many people expect to find abundant, free parking directly in front of their destinations. This way of thinking is so pervasive in American society today that office and shopping in central business districts (CBDs) where parking is priced or less plentiful are sometimes at a disadvantage compared to suburban office parks and malls with ubiquitous free parking (Voith 1998).

Yet adding parking to CBDs is often difficult and expensive. Built-out downtown areas simply may not have land available for new parking. Even if land is available, the opportunity cost (trade off) of using it for parking is that it is not being utilized for a higher value activity, such as shopping or residential space (USEPA 2001).

In downtown areas where land is scarce, parking decks may be appropriate since they store cars more efficiently than surface lots. Structured parking is extraordinarily more expensive, however. While costs vary widely according to size, height, land costs and other factors, the Decatur Community Transportation Plan (CTP) estimates that off-street parking costs **approximately \$40,000 for each underground parking space**, \$20,000 for each space in a parking deck and \$3,000 for each surface space (2007). Yet these calculations exclude the costs of maintenance, lighting insurance, financing and taxes. Underground parking also requires expensive excavation, shoring, waterproofing and ventilation (Shoup 2004). These significant expenses can easily deter infill development or redevelopment.<sup>1</sup>

But if the parking is built, who pays for it? Taxpayers, residents and consumers do. Parking costs are typically hidden and passed along to consumers by charging “slightly higher prices for everything else” (Shoup 2004, 128) such as rent, property sales prices, and the cost of goods and services.

The trouble with charging customers, residents and employees for parking indirectly is that everyone pays whether they park at the destination or not. This arrangement subsidizes motorists since they pay the same amount as people who commute via transit, walking or biking (Willson 1995). As a result, driving appears deceptively inexpensive for motorists and unfairly charges consumers using other modes. Conventional economic theory holds that the underpricing of a good leads to its overconsumption. In other words, underpricing parking induces driving.

Donald Shoup, widely accepted as the premiere academic planning authority on parking, describes in more detail how additional parking induces driving:

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<sup>1</sup> The Victoria Transportation Policy Institute’s (VTPI) website provides an excellent interactive *Parking Costs, Pricing and Revenue Calculator* in which parking managers can input construction, land, operation and maintenance costs and taxes to determine the pricing needed to generate a certain amount of revenue. Available beneath Table 2 at [http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm72.htm#\\_Parking\\_Brokerage\\_Services](http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm72.htm#_Parking_Brokerage_Services).

In the short run, the lower prices induce those who were already driving to drive even more. Some who would have stayed home begin driving. And some who would otherwise walk, cycle, or ride public transit shift to driving. In the long run, the lower price of parking leads to increased vehicle ownership and thus further increases vehicle travel. Parking spaces do not create vehicle travel, but they do enable it (2004, 194).

On the supply side, local governments compound the problem by setting excessively high parking requirements that developers must provide. Though many cities “borrow” parking standards from one another, the most common source of this information is the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). Some scholars (Shoup 2004, Litman 2006) have vigorously criticized the ITE’s methodology of analysis because most of the data is gathered from a single survey at peak demand time from auto-dependent, single use, suburban sites where parking demand is high and the cost of land is much lower. As a result, the recommended standards are usually much higher than necessary in downtown areas where more priced parking and transportation options exist, compact and mixed-use development permits shared parking, and land costs are more expensive. It also partially explains why there are at least three parking spaces for each of the 230 million vehicles in the United States, encompassing an area roughly the size of the state of Connecticut (Shoup 2005).

Excessive parking requirements undercut community development efforts in a number of ways. Additional vehicle trips contribute to traffic congestion and air pollution (Shoup 2004). Vast “seas of parking” also increase stormwater runoff, degrade urban design and limit density, discouraging pedestrian trips and reinforcing the need to drive since low density does not support walkability or transit. In older commercial districts, unnecessarily high parking requirements may deter redevelopment because either it is too expensive to buy additional land for parking or no land is available (USEPA 2001).

Moreover, accommodating parking can reduce the number of dwelling units that can feasibly be built on a site. As a result, developers raise housing prices and build larger units to recoup their investment, reducing housing affordability for low-income families (Shoup, 2004). Since developers have no choice but to follow the municipality’s minimum requirements, Nozzi concludes that planners are “forcing developers to build parking that people cannot afford...We’re letting parking drive not only our transportation policies, but jeopardize our housing policies” as well (as quoted in Millard-Ball 2002, 3).

Bundled parking costs are especially burdensome to low-income individuals and households that cannot afford a car. Not only do they pay more for groceries and other purchases, hidden parking costs the increases price of housing. Litman estimates that each parking space raises the cost of a typical affordable housing unit by 12.5%, a considerable increase for a low-income family that already spends a significant portion of their income on housing (2008). Litman concludes that parking



costs are typically “regressive and unfair to many lower-income households that own fewer than average cars” (2008, 1).

Like many other local governments, the City of Decatur is struggling to find balance the need for (1) enough parking to support downtown businesses; (2) pricing it appropriately to encourage alternative transportation options; and (3) pricing it fairly so that drivers are paying for their use of the facilities. With a centrally-located MARTA station, healthy main street and active population, downtown Decatur is in a good position to rethink its parking and requirements to ensure that it is meeting these objectives.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the existing parking facilities in downtown Decatur and recommend some strategies to maximize their usage, while still maintaining its commitment to downtown businesses and alternative transportation.

## TRANSPORTATION HISTORY OF DECATUR

Throughout its history, transportation issues have both built and threatened to destroy the walkable urban form of Decatur’s downtown area. The Georgia General Assembly incorporated the City of Decatur in 1823 along the Etowah Trail (also known as the Old Stone Mountain Wagon Road and Stone Mountain-Sand Town Trail), a primary trading route for Native Americans, and later white settlers, between present-day Five Points in downtown Atlanta to the east and Sand Town along the Chattahoochee River to the west (Price 1997). This route intersected with the northbound Shallowford Trail, a hilltop at the center of Decatur where the present courthouse is located (Clarke 1973). At the time of its incorporation, Decatur had a jail, an academy and about fifty houses and stores (Price 1997; Clarke 1973).

From these modest beginnings, Decatur continued to grow in population and size, helped mightily by the construction of the Georgia Railroad in 1842 which followed the Etowah Trail connecting Augusta to Atlanta.

Despite destruction by Federal troops that occupied the City ahead of the Battle of Atlanta, Decatur rallied during Reconstruction. By 1893, downtown Decatur was connected via streetcar with the Georgia Railroad along McDonough Street, an important development prompting the *Atlanta Constitution* to write that “it has brought the charming little suburb into prominence again in a very advantageous and conspicuous way” (as quoted in Clarke 1973, 148).

Automobiles made Decatur even more accessible, but their demands for streets and parking crowded the downtown area. Even in the 1940s, drivers “found it necessary to repeatedly circle the square to find a parking space” (DeKalb Historical Society 1985, 129). This phenomenon still occurs today, despite the construction of numerous parking decks and surface lots.

Decatur grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s as suburbanization increased in Atlanta, but its population declined 21% between 1970 and 1990. The *City of Decatur Comprehensive Plan Update 2005* notes that “this decrease was largely a reflection of Decatur as a mature community with little vacant area available for growth” (2-1). The *Plan* attributes Decatur’s population since the 1990’s to the “City’s emphasis on higher density residential redevelopment” (2-1).



Decatur’s success in downtown redevelopment is the product of ongoing planning and visioning efforts since the 1970s. The east line of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) rail service opened in 1979 with a station in downtown Decatur. The new transit line served as a springboard for the 1982 *Decatur Town Center Plan* in 1982, a blueprint that has guided Decatur’s downtown revitalization for almost two decades.

The *MARTA Plaza Redevelopment Plan* was created in 1999 and funded with a \$4.4 million grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission’s (ARC) Livable Centers Initiative (LCI). The major renovations to the Church Street station entrance were designed to improve pedestrian access and “better integrate the design into traditional character of the adjacent courthouse square” (City of Decatur, 2005b, no page).



*Decatur MARTA Station Renovations*  
Photos: City of Decatur, Flickr user robholland

## REVIEW OF EXISTING POLICIES AND PLANS

### *Decatur Zoning Ordinance*

Section 8.1 of the *City of Decatur Zoning Ordinance* establishes minimum parking requirements for various land uses in the City. As in most local jurisdictions, Decatur puts no limitations on the developers’ ability to build more parking spaces than required by the minimum standards. The CTP recaps the minimum standards for the major land uses as follows:

**Table 1: Minimum Parking Requirements for the City of Decatur**

Single-family dwellings	1 space per dwelling unit
Townhouses / high-density single-family dwellings	1.5 spaces per unit
High-rise residential / RMH district	1 space per unit
Senior housing	1 space per 2.25 units
General retail	1 space per 200 square feet
General office including government	1 space per 400 square feet
Restaurants	1 space per 100 square feet
Hotels and motels	1 space per 1.25 guestrooms

*Source: Decatur Zoning Ordinance, Decatur Community Transportation Plan*

Parking spaces for multi-family dwellings must be located on the same lot as the building served and not more than 300 feet from each dwelling unit along the nearest pedestrian way (Section 8.1.3). Parking for nonresidential dwellings must also be located on the same lot, except in cases where parking facilities are maintained jointly. In such cases, the required spaces may not be located more than 300 feet from each building served (Section 8.1.4). Restaurants, theatres, nightclubs and similar uses can share up to 50% of their required spaces with office and retail uses not normally open during the same hours (8.1.5). Places of worship can share up to 100% of their spaces with uses that have a different peak parking demand.

The City designates a Downtown Decatur Special Pedestrian Area within walking distance to the Decatur MARTA station entrance where additional parking standards apply to improve the pedestrian environment. For example, parking areas are not permitted between the front of the building and the sidewalk and buildings cannot be set back more than 30 feet from the edge of the curb (Section 10.19.3.2). The Special Pedestrian Area allows “exceptions” (variances) from these requirements in cases where the imposed standards will negatively impact public safety, traffic, transportation facilities, or the health, safety and welfare of the public (Section 10.19.4.4-5).

In April 2009, Decatur amended the Zoning Ordinance to create a floating Mixed Use (MU) Zoning District. Considering that the minimum area for this district is five acres, it is unlikely that a developer would apply for a rezoning in the downtown area. However, the parking structure requirements in this district provide some insight as to design standards that may also be appropriate for downtown as well. For example, residential, retail or office uses must “wrap” the exterior of the structure to hide the parking from public view (Section 7.11.9.6). Off-site and shared parking is also explicitly permitted as long as the relocated spaces lie within 300 of the main entrance of the principal use (Section 7.11.9.4). No reduction in the number of

spaces is permitted for shared parking, although the Planning Commission can grant the same type of variances allowed in the Special Pedestrian Area.

### ***Community Transportation Plan (2007)***

In 2007, the City of Decatur and its consultants adopted the CTP with tremendous input from residents, including 750 written comments, a public survey and series of public meetings. The collective vision in the CTP was “*to create a safe and efficient transportation system that promotes the health and mobility of Decatur citizens and visitors, creating better access to businesses and neighborhoods*” (2007, 1.3). In particular, the CTP focused on opportunities to improve non-motorized transportation systems so that driving becomes a choice, rather than a necessity.

Existing infrastructure to support automobiles, such as parking, is to be managed as efficiently as possible, but in a way that does not induce additional driving. To that end, the CTP presents the City’s parking philosophy as follows:

Decatur will provide for the parking supply needed to service the many community demands in a cost-efficient and equitable manner while increasing the walkability of the community and not creating inducements for more driving. Decatur will manage the parking supply for greater availability in commercial areas, minimal impact on residential areas, and enhanced user convenience. Decatur will use equitable, fiscally-sound, and environmentally sustainable practices (2007, 10.2).

In other words, Decatur seeks to meet the parking demand necessary to support downtown businesses and residences, while simultaneously aiming to reduce that demand by providing sufficient alternatives to driving. By creating an environment where driving is a choice, Decatur can incentivize alternatives to driving by shifting parking conditions “from free parking to priced parking, and from ‘front-door-parking outside every business to a ‘park once’ environment where most people need to walk a short distance to their final destination” (CTP 2007, 10.2).

To reconcile these seemingly-oppositional goals, the CTP suggests a variety of tools to better manage existing facilities and appropriately guide the construction of new parking lots and decks. Since the implementation strategies presented in this report follow and elaborate on the CTP’s recommendations, a summary of the key strategies are presented below (CTP 2007, 10.1-10.8).<sup>2</sup>

### **Curbside Management**

The CTP recommends that the City of Decatur:

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<sup>2</sup> For the full text of these recommendations, see the City of Decatur’s *Community Transportation Plan, Chapter 10*.

- **Prioritize curbspace** through market-based pricing time limits and other management tools to match the needs of the intended users. For example, parking conditions in front of retail stores should encourage more frequent turnover than is necessary for longer-term employee parking.
- **Adjust meters to manage fluctuating parking demands throughout the day and week.**
- **Set meter rates to achieve occupancy goals.** Specifically, the CTP recommends that meter fees be set at the lowest price necessary to achieve 85% occupancy on each block because that effectively maximizes utilization of the on-street parking facilities while still allowing drivers to find a space to park easily. The CTP notes that the City Commission will need to revisit occupancy goals and their achievement annually.
- **Use pricing, rather than time limits, to promote turnover to meet the established occupancy goals.**
- **Implement new parking meter technologies** to promote parking turnover, improve convenience for drivers, collect data about parking usage and aid parking enforcement.
- **Determine locations for new on-street parking** where travel lanes can be converted to on-street parking, either permanently or during times of peak parking demand. In some places, there may be opportunities to convert parallel parking to on-street parking.
- **Enforce parking regulations.**
- **Monitor the success of parking reforms** to identify necessary revisions to the programs.

## Off-Street Management

- **Develop criteria for establishing new and publicly-accessible garages.** While the CTP notes that new parking facilities in the downtown area may be necessary, it recommends that the City first develop consistent criteria as to when such investments are warranted.
- **Establish a parking brokerage,** such as a Business Improvement District or similar organization, to maximize use of existing public and private parking facilities throughout the day and week. This organization could identify barriers to this objective and work cooperatively to overcome them.
- **Improve parking information for drivers.**

- **Encourage ridesharing** through carpool and vanpool parking in convenient, discounted spaces.

## Development Regulations

- **Develop guidelines for site plan review**, including specific conditions that may be imposed on large developments that require traffic impact analyses (TIAs). The CTP recommends that these conditions include shared parking, market-based public pricing, transportation stipends for employees and unbundled parking costs.
- **Revised zoning requirements** for downtown development based on expected demand, taking into consideration factors such as proximity to transit, affordable housing and demand management programs like pricing and car-sharing.
- **Develop an in-lieu fee program** for off-site and shared parking, as appropriate.
- **Create bicycle parking provisions.** Note: Decatur added bicycle parking requirements in 2008 for new development.
- **Track the results** using a collection of parking utilization data that decision-makers can use to adjust the parking management policies.

## Other Recommendations

- **Consider other parking pricing methods** such as MultiSpace Meters, ParkSmart and iPark Cards.

In addition, the CTP also enumerated a number of important potential challenges to implementing the recommendations. For example, the CTP identified a disconnection between the public perception that available parking is difficult to find, while the actual number of spaces is actually quite high.

### ***Bicycle Parking Ordinance (2008)***

In 2008, the City of Decatur amended its Zoning Ordinance to require bicycle parking in all commercial districts for new development. The amendment requires one bicycle parking space for every twenty automobile spaces with a minimum of two bicycle parking spaces per site and a maximum of thirty bicycle parking spaces per site (Section 8.1.12). The Zoning Administrator has the authority to grant a reduction or waiver from the bicycle parking requirements based on (1) the availability of public bicycle parking in the immediate area, (2) existing or potential shared parking arrangements with other developments, (3) lack of on-site vehicle parking and (4) other characteristics particular to the site, use or building.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Downtown Decatur is fortunate to have access to a variety of transportation alternatives to serve its residents, employees and visitors. These alternatives allow pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders to travel to and from downtown safely without the use of a personal vehicle. Upgrading these facilities and pursuing strategies that encourage alternative transportation can therefore effectively reduce parking demand.

For pedestrians, sidewalks are available on both sides of the street and all signalized intersections include pedestrian crossing signals. Unsignalized intersections are marked with striped crosswalks and certain crossings have crosswalk markers or stamped asphalt to improve their visibility to drivers. These improvements are important because they improve safety, encourage pedestrian activity and contribute to the “park once” environment Decatur aims to create.

The City is also working diligently to expand bicycling opportunities throughout Decatur. Recent bicycle planning efforts include the City of Decatur Interim Bicycle Master Plan, a 2005 Bike Survey of residents and bicyclists and the CTP. The CTP notes that bicycle parking is currently available at all schools, libraries, transit stations, recreation centers, as well as some commercial, government, multi-family and office buildings; however, some of the racks “are dated and do not offer secure anti-theft protection for modern bicycles” (2007, II-3). The 2008 zoning amendments to require bicycle parking for new commercial developments also incorporated standards for new racks that will improve their security.

MARTA’s east-west rail line serves downtown Decatur. The Decatur station is located in convenient walking distance to downtown near shops, offices, the DeKalb County Courthouse and other government buildings. The station also serves five MARTA bus routes that connect to destinations throughout DeKalb County. At a price of \$3.50 for a round-trip ticket for either bus or rail, MARTA costs only \$0.50 more than two hours of on-street parking in Decatur, which does not take into account the cost of gas or other expenses related to car ownership. MARTA is therefore a cost-effective alternative to driving, though many people raise valid complaints that the travel headways are not frequent enough and MARTA is not accessible to many destinations.

Emory’s Cliff Shuttle route also terminates at the Decatur station. The Cliff Shuttle is operated by the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association (CCTMA) of which Decatur is a member. While primarily designed to serve students and employees commuting to Emory’s main campus, the shuttle is free and available to the public. The shuttle runs approximately every 30 minutes on weekdays between 5:30am and 8:00pm.

There are three Zipcar (formerly Flexcar) car-sharing stands within the downtown Decatur study area. Car-sharing allows people to rent cars for short periods of time instead of owning a car. Members simply find a car or reserve one online, swipe a card and return the car when finished. Gasoline and insurance included in their

membership. While a variety of plans exist, Zipcar members currently pay a \$50 annual fee plus hourly rental rates of approximately \$9.25-\$9.50. The Zipcar stands in Decatur have one car each in the following locations:

- Clairemont Avenue in front of the Holiday Inn / Conference Center
- Church Street at Sycamore Street near the Decatur Library
- Commerce Drive at W. Ponce de Leon Avenue near Taco Mac

## **DOWNTOWN DECATUR PARKING INVENTORY**

Four surveys were conducted to analyze the existing parking facilities, conditions, needs and habits in downtown Decatur. The CTP explains that “effective parking management requires comprehensive data on parking occupancy and utilization, which the City does not currently collect on a routine basis” (2007, 10.8). The purpose of this inventory is to provide baseline data for current parking demand which can be repeated at regular intervals to measure the effects of policy adjustments and travel behavior over time.

The three surveys are as follows:

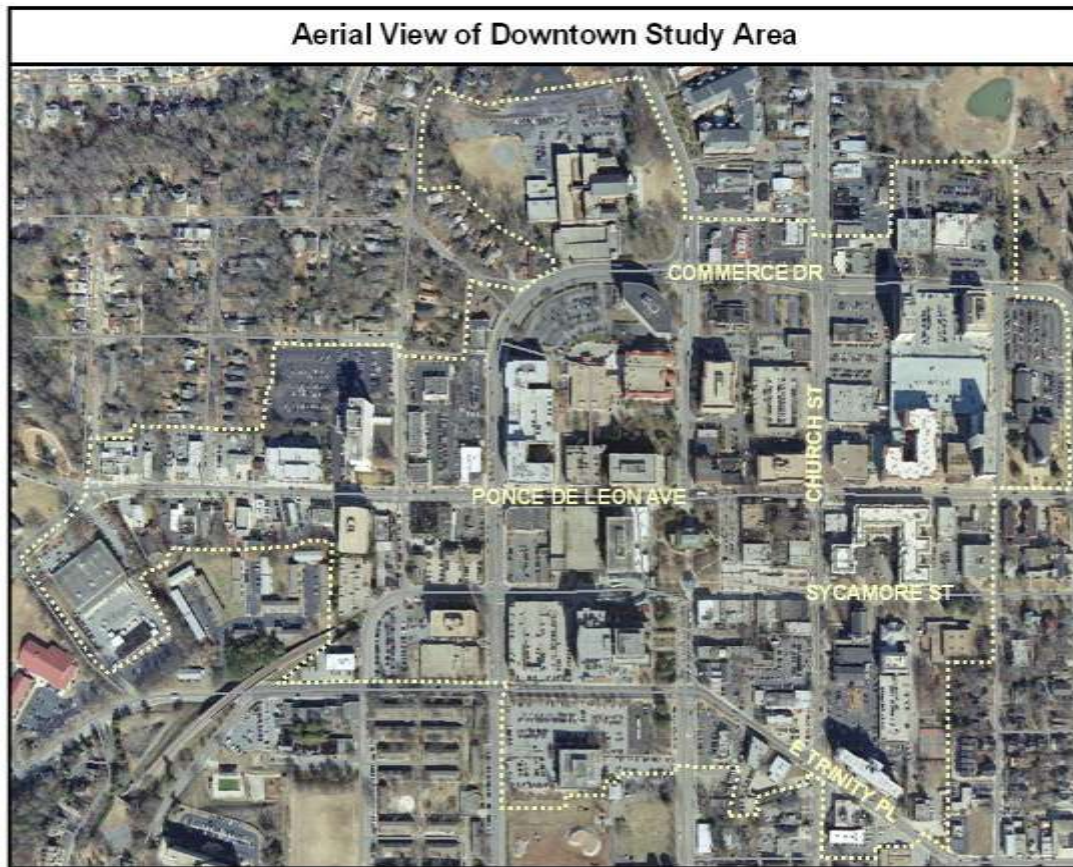
- Off-Street Parking Facility Survey
- Off-Street Parking Occupancy Survey
- Downtown Business Parking Survey
- Downtown Resident Parking Survey

### ***Study Area***

The study area contains roughly 140 acres centering along Ponce de Leon Avenue, which is the primary arterial that bisects downtown Decatur. As shown in **Map 1** the study area extends from the Post Office on the west end to Decatur United Methodist Church on the east end. To the north, the study boundary is delineated one lot north of Commerce Drive and W. Ponce de Leon Avenue. On the south side, the study area includes portions of Sycamore Street and E. Trinity Place.



## Map 1:



The boundary decisions for the study area were intended to capture the largest non-residential land uses and high-density multi-family residential buildings. Downtown Decatur has several large office employers, including DeKalb County (Callaway and Maloof Buildings), DeKalb Medical Center-Decatur, Georgia Power and Emory (the Emory Clinic). In addition to the daily vehicle traffic that these employers attract, a variety of small and medium-sized retailers and restaurants draw customers throughout the day and evening. On the other hand, there are five condominium buildings which generate traffic as well, as shown in **Table 2** below:

**Table 2: Condominium Development in Downtown Decatur**

Name of Condo Complex	Number of Units
Philips Tower <sup>3</sup>	224
Decatur Renaissance	168
Artisan	127
Town Square	105
335 W. Ponce	70

### ***On-Street Parking***

The City of Decatur operates and maintains over 300 on-street metered parking spaces in the downtown area. The CTP notes that parking controls are necessary to manage the on-street parking supply “in a manner consistent with the adjacent land use and the demand for parking which accompanies that land use” (2007, Appendix C). Specifically, on-street parking is critical for retail businesses that do not have dedicated off-street parking lots. Retailers cater to many customers throughout the day who stay for relatively short periods of time; therefore, these businesses need continual turnover of on-street parking and should not be occupied by long-time parkers. Thus, parking controls usually take the form of time limits or higher parking fees to encourage turnover.

Recognizing these needs, the Decatur City Commission raised the price of on-street parking meters from \$0.75 per hour to \$1.50 in 2007. While the City certainly could increase the fee again to encourage people to park in the available off-street parking facilities, this approach is very unpopular with many of the downtown business owners, at least according to the Downtown Business survey.

Decatur's meter fees appear to be in line with the national average of **\$1.65** (California Green Solutions 2007) and the City of Atlanta, which charges **\$2.00** per hour for curb parking, with maximum time limits ranging from one to two hours (Central Atlanta Progress 2007). Importantly, the extensive *Colliers International* annual survey notes that median hourly parking rates average **\$4.80** nationwide which is considerably higher than the curb average. This finding suggests that Decatur's imbalance between on-street and off-street fees is a problem shared by municipalities across the U.S.

Downtown Decatur is slightly more expensive than other downtown areas in Georgia and the Southeast, however. Savannah recently raised its on-street parking fees to **\$1.00** per hour in high-demand parking areas with a two-hour time limit; however, it

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<sup>3</sup>Note: Philips Tower is a retirement home and is assumed to generate less traffic than traditional multi-family housing units. However, the Philips Tower parking lot still contains 58 parking spaces.

also simultaneously lowered the hourly fees in City-owned decks to encourage long-term parkers to relocate to the garages (*Savannah Morning News* 2009). The Town of Chapel Hill (NC) also charges \$1.00 per hour with a two-hour maximum. Charlotte (NC) also charges \$1.00 per hour with no maximum; however, there is not much on-street parking available in the center of Uptown. Athens also recently raised its infamously low meter fees from \$0.25 to \$0.50 per hour, an increase hardly noticed by downtown business owners who were much more opposed to the one-hour parking limit imposed at the same time (Nelson 2009).

In light of these trends, Decatur should maintain its current on-street parking rates at the present time. Since pricing is typically the most effective behavior in modifying travel behavior, creative strategies must be utilized to ease the current parking pressures on a few parking lots and on-street areas.

As part of this project, the City of Decatur PALs (Parking, Assistance, Liaison with Merchants and Safety) staff collected parking occupancy and turnover data for the on-street parking meters in April 2009. Unfortunately, the survey results were not available at the time of printing for the Georgia Tech Option Paper requirements, but will be available to the City of Decatur for further analysis.

## OFF-STREET PARKING FACILITY SURVEY

### *Methodology*

The purpose of the Off-Street Parking Facility Survey (hereinafter “Parking Facility Survey”) is to create an inventory of the existing parking lots and decks in downtown Decatur. Analyzing the present conditions in the area helps to clarify where the highest concentrations of parking are available and may reveal opportunities for better management of existing facilities. Within the Study Area, all off-street parking lots were analyzed, with the exception of a few loading and alley areas that are informally utilized by business employees. This information was collected over a series of field surveys between September 2008 and January 2009.

The following variables were included in the Parking Facility Survey:

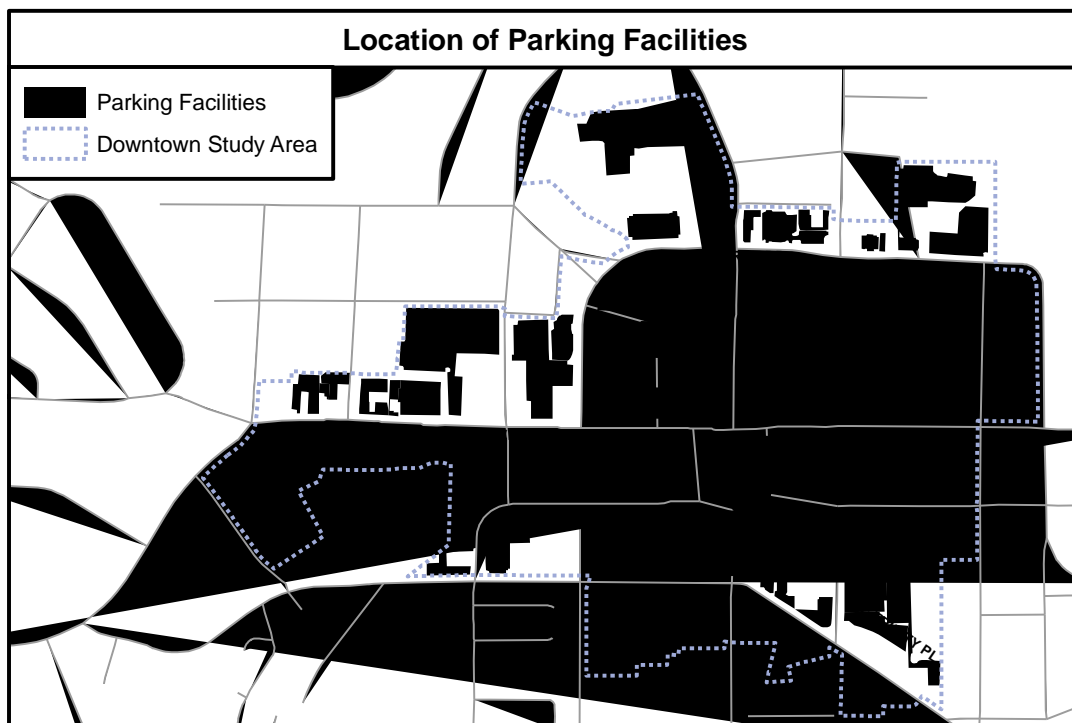
- (1) Parking lot name
- (2) Parking lot type (surface, deck or both)
- (3) Number of parking spaces
  - (a) Perpendicular
  - (b) Angle
  - (c) Parallel
  - (d) Handicapped
- (4) Is parking available for alternative vehicles? (Bicycle, Flexcar, Motorcycle, Bus, yes or no)
  - (a) If available, how many parking spaces?

- (b) Manager/operator of parking facility
- (5) Businesses sharing parking lots
- (6) Customer Restricted? (yes or no)
- (7) Parking hours permitted
- (8) Weekday parking fee (include all denominations)
- (9) Weekend parking fee (include all denominations)
- (10) Maximum parking time
- (11) Method of payment (meter, ticket dispenser, parking attendant, etc.)
- (12) Towing company
- (13) Street trees? (internal to parking lot, yes or no)

## Survey Results

In all, the Parking Facility Survey identified **8,885** parking spaces in the downtown Decatur study area, as shown in Map 2 below:

*Map 2:*

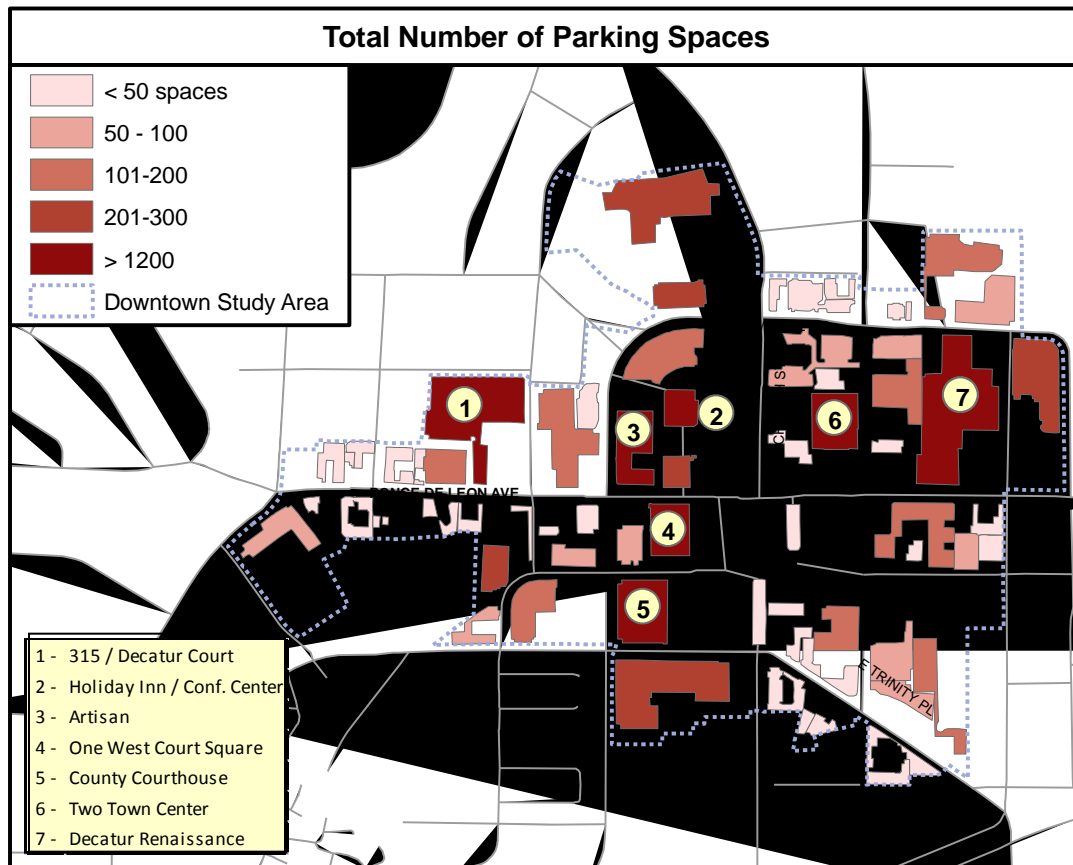


These parking spaces are located within **70 parking lots** (see Appendix A for a list), which range in size from 5 spaces (Century Cleaners Express) to 1,200 spaces (DeKalb County Courthouse).

It is important to note that not all of these facilities are exclusively used for parking. For example, most of the parking areas for the condo buildings are located in parking

decks beneath units. While parking decks afford a considerably more compact land use pattern that supports pedestrian activity.

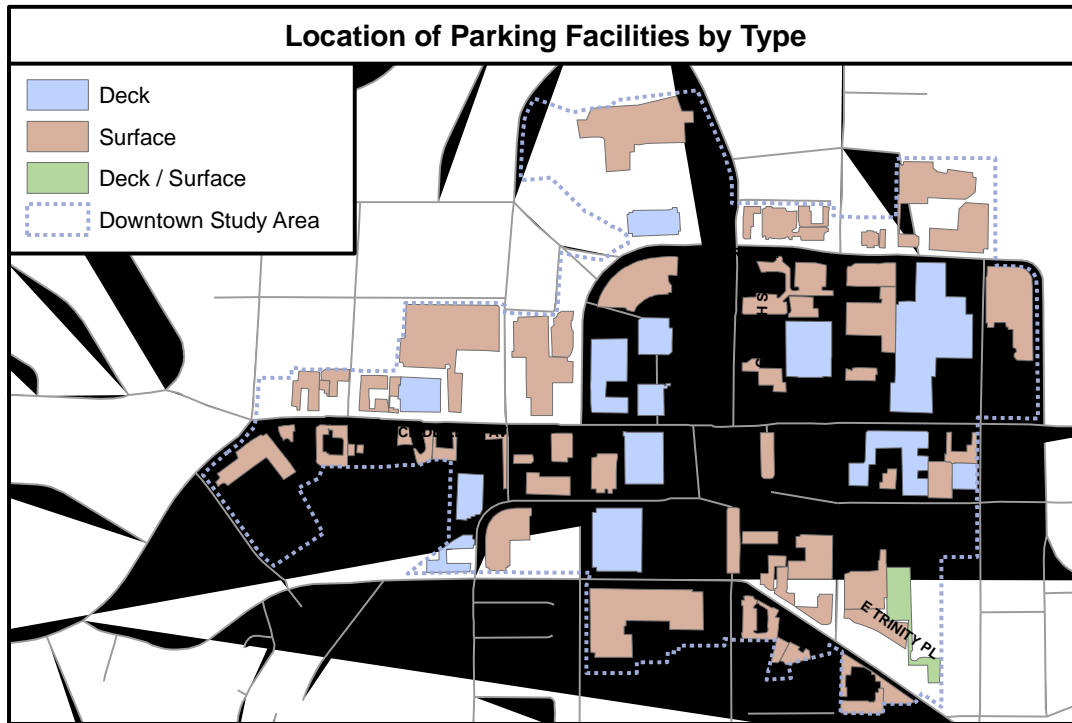
Map 3:



Map 3 above shows the total number of parking spaces in each facility. The 7 parking facilities with more than 300 spaces are labeled. Aside from 315/Decatur Court, all of these facilities are parking decks. Together, these facilities provide a total of **3,507 spaces (78%)** of the public parking spaces in downtown Decatur. Since these parking areas are spread out along Ponce de Leon Avenue, they serve a variety of retail businesses, restaurants and offices.

Another way to understand the parking concentration is by considering the location of parking decks rather than lots in the study area, as shown in Map 4 below:

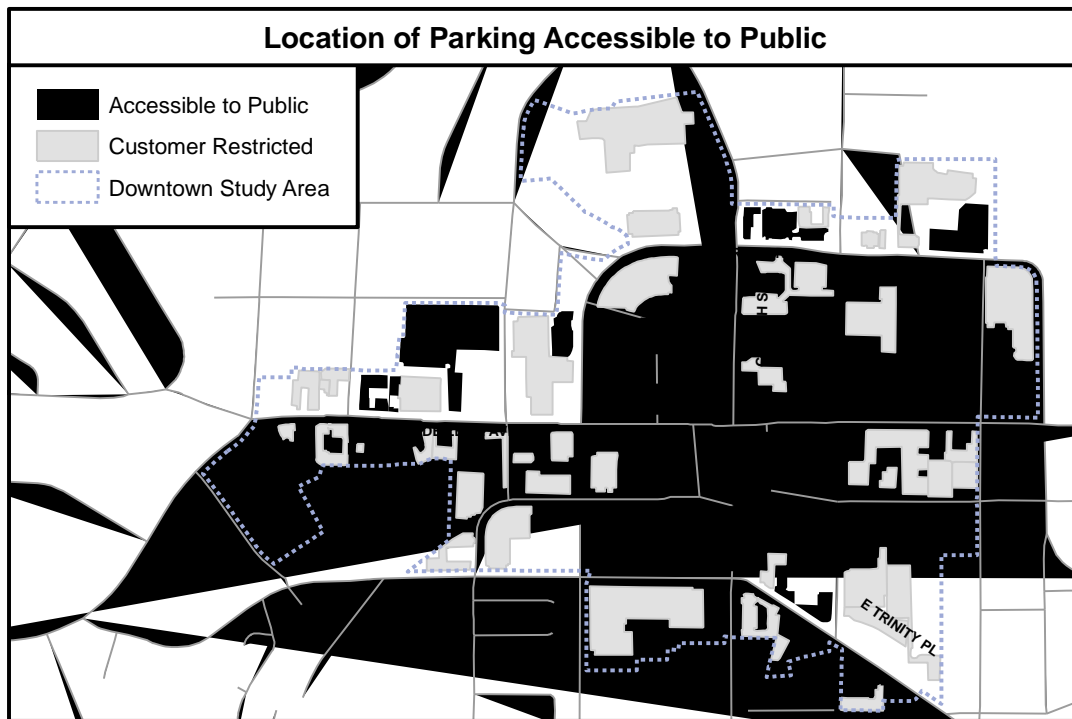
Map 4:



More land must be dedicated for parking lots than decks since - logically - a two-story deck can provide twice as many spaces as a surface lot. For that reason, most of the parking decks are located along Ponce de Leon Avenue to support the highest density development in the downtown area where land is more valuable and scarce. Surface lots become more plentiful away from the dense core.

A critical consideration is that not all these parking spaces are available for use by the general public. The parking facilities that have at least some public parking are shown in **Map 5** below:

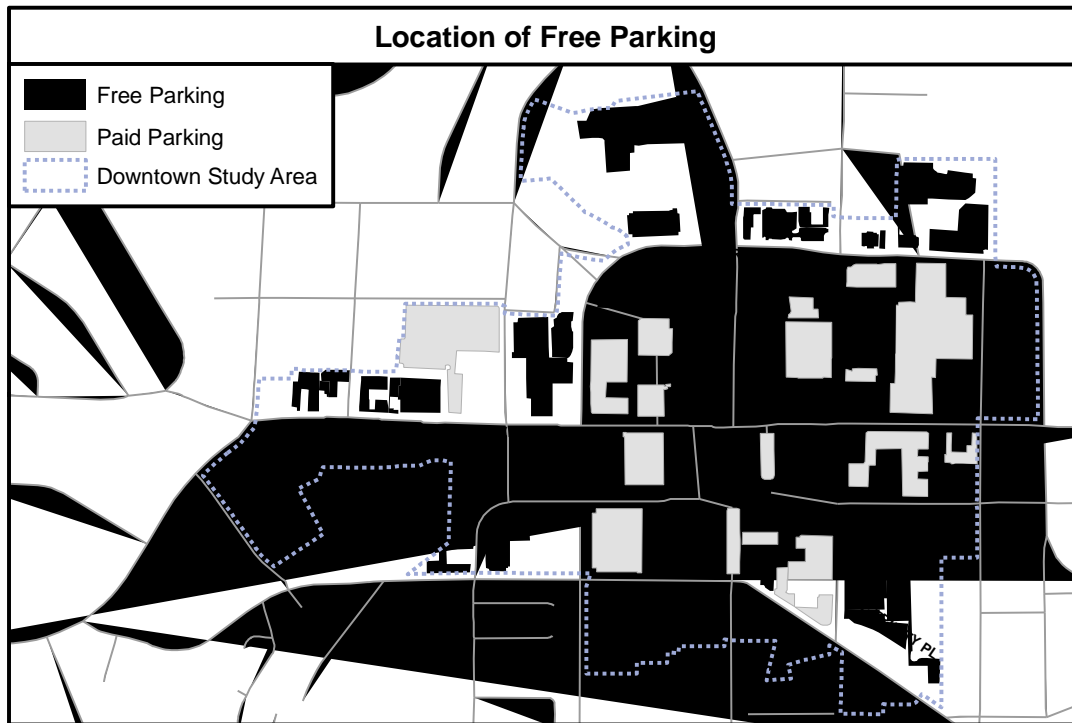
Map 5:



At least 41 parking lots (3,412 spaces) are fully customer-, employee- and/or resident-restricted, as indicated by onsite signage, card-access gates or other means of traffic control. Parking lots with no signage were designated as available to the general public although property owners may not intend them for public use. In some places, a certain portion of the parking is reserved for employees, customers or residents and the rest is available for the public. For example, while the Artisan condo building contains a total of 463 parking spaces, 344 (74%) are dedicated to residents by means of a card-access system or are numbered to suggest they are reserved for residents. In all, downtown Decatur contains approximately **4,483 off-street parking spaces available to the public (51%)**.

Public parking does not necessarily mean unpriced (free) parking. Most free parking is available for employees, customers, and residents only, as shown in **Map 6** below. In a few cases (such as Town Square and Ragin' Burrito), business owners validate parking for their customers in a public parking facility.

Map 6:



Note that some facilities do not charge for parking at all times. For example, the DeKalb County Courthouse parking deck only charges for parking from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays; on nights and weekends, the public can park for free. This arrangement has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, it allows businesses to share the existing resources at times when there is a lower demand for parking. It also may support downtown businesses at times when alternative transportation is less convenient (e.g. some visitors do not want to walk or bicycle at night, transit service is less frequent on nights and weekends). However, the free parking also encourages people to drive rather than use public transportation.

**Map 7** is a composite of Map 5 and Map 6, demonstrating that there are very few public parking facilities where parking is free:

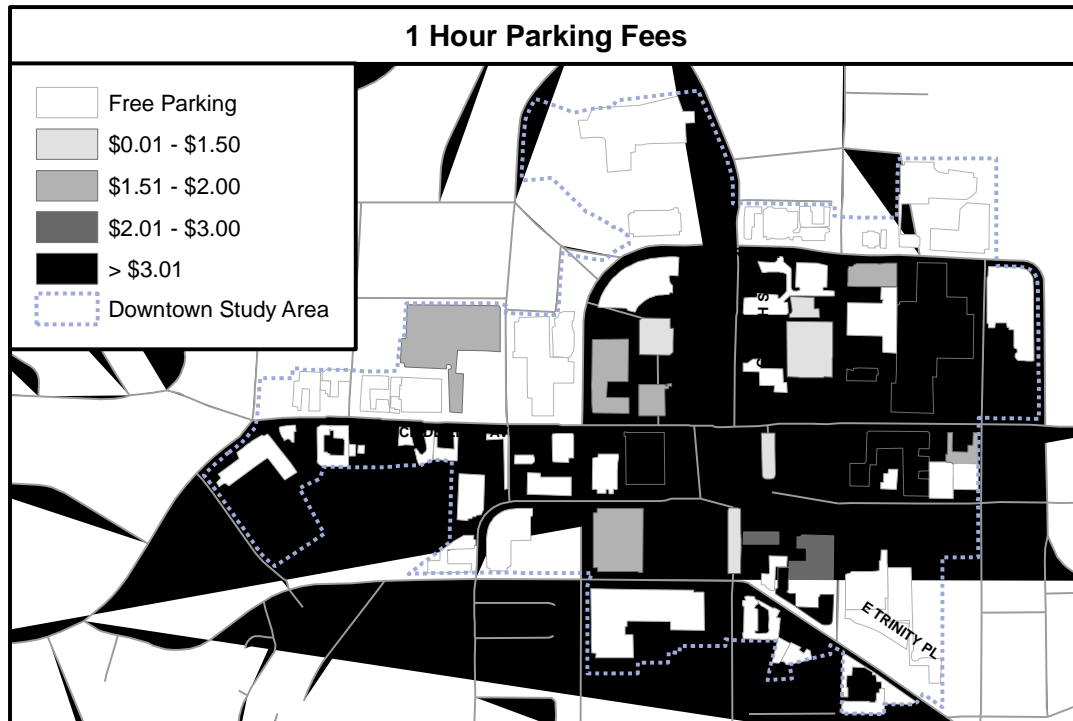


Map 7:



Parking fees vary considerably across downtown. **Map 8** below shows the various fees charged for a one-hour parking period.<sup>4</sup>

**Map 8:**



Several lots charge considerably more than \$1.50 for the first hour, the cost of on-street parking for the same amount of time. Since drivers actually save money by parking on the street rather than one of these lots or decks, the situation creates unnecessary demand for curbside parking and encourages meter-feeding. It also contradicts the *Community Transportation Plan* stated goals that on-street parking should be prioritized using “market-based pricing” to encourage more frequent turnover in front of retail stores (CTP 2007, 10.3).

These pricing discrepancies can be confusing and frustrating for drivers. A visitor who is unfamiliar with downtown Decatur parking will not discover the fee until he or she has pulled up to the ticket dispenser or booth, at which point the driver is committed to parking in the facility or must back up (into the street) to look elsewhere. This type of cruising also contributes to both traffic congestion and air pollution.

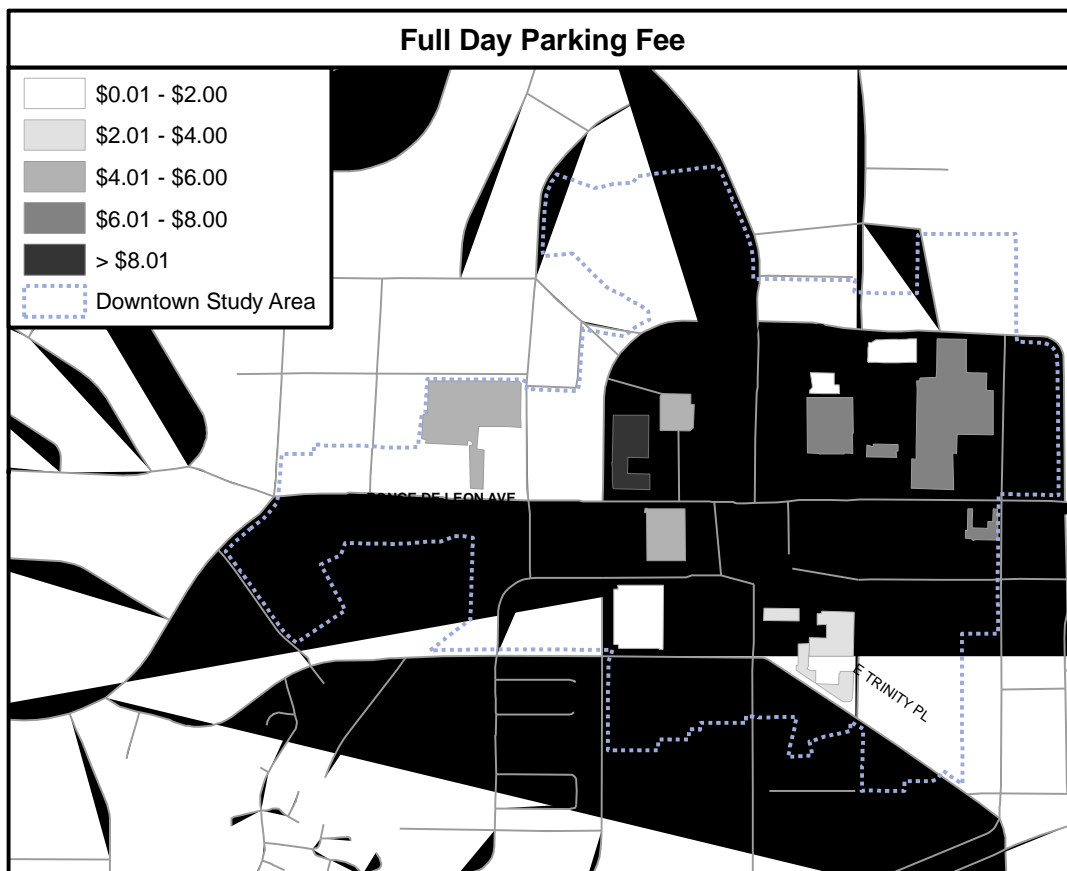
To highlight a few examples, the Artisan charges \$2.00 per hour, yet Decatur First Bank (directly across the street) is free and does not restrict parking. One casual Friday evening survey at 8:00pm identified 22 cars in the bank parking lot (50%

<sup>4</sup> Note that the County deck raised its flat fee from \$2.00 to \$6.00 on April 15, 2009 after this data was collected.

occupancy rate) while only 39 cars were parked in the Artisan's public parking area (32%).

Similarly, there is a significant range in the cost of long-term (all-day) parking amongst the paid public parking facilities, as shown in Map 9 below:

Map 9:



The two small lots on Church Street cost \$1.50 per day, while the adjacent Town Center and Decatur Renaissance charge \$8.00. Note that the County Courthouse raised its flat fee from \$2.00 to \$6.00 on April 15, 2009 after this data was collected.

## Survey Analysis

The Parking Facility Survey reveals several discernible trends in regards to downtown Decatur parking. First, individual management of the facilities creates considerable disorganization in parking arrangements, which may be both confusing and frustrating for drivers. Free and minimally-priced parking undermines the paid parking operators' profitability, which is critical for them to recoup their investment in expensive parking structures on pricey real estate. After all, the Decatur Zoning Ordinance required much of the parking as part of the development approval process.

In addition, the availability of free and low-cost parking undercuts the City's desire to shift "from free to priced parking" as stated in the CTP (2007, 10.2). Nearby residents and frequent visitors to downtown Decatur learn where the free and inexpensive parking is located, which removes the incentive to use alternative transportation.

Finally, the proliferation of free customer-restricted parking lots juxtaposed with paid public parking lots certainly defeats the CTP's goal of creating a "park-once environment" (2007, 10.2). Since customers can only park in a retailer's lot while conducting business, they must continually move their cars with every destination.



*Customer only parking requires drivers to move their vehicles between destinations within downtown Decatur.*

Businesses understandably want to ensure their customers can reach them easily; however, such restrictions may also discourage visitors from coming to downtown Decatur in favor of malls and other shopping centers where they can park once to run several errands. Clearly, many shoppers visit downtown Decatur for the "Mallternative" experience promised in the City's branding advertisements, which involves customers strolling along Main Street and visiting a variety of retailers and restaurants, not driving their cars between destinations.

## OFF-STREET PARKING OCCUPANCY SURVEY

The purpose of the Off-Street Parking Occupancy Survey (hereinafter "Occupancy Survey") is to gain a better understanding of drivers' current usage of parking in downtown Decatur at different times throughout the day and week. By gauging the typical usage for existing parking facilities, the City of Decatur can assess whether there are enough parking spaces (supply) to serve the cars that are trying to park (demand). This survey also highlights specific blocks where parking is deficient and identifies times of peak demand.

The Occupancy Survey was initially administered on three different weeks in late 2008 (November 10-15, November 17-22 and December 8-13). One of the benefits of conducting the survey at this time of the year was that there may have been higher demand than usual due to holiday shopping. If so, then it helps to identify the "upper bound" of parking demand in the downtown area, which will be useful in determining the appropriate minimum and/or maximum parking ratios in downtown Decatur.

Since the counts were conducted at least twice during each survey window of time, the counts were averaged. In a few cases, the counts were taken three times and averaged for the survey results.

Originally, the Occupancy Survey was designed to elicit assistance from downtown restaurant and retail owners in counting vehicles during the survey. The Occupancy Survey was introduced at the October meeting of the Decatur Downtown Business Association (DDBA) and paper copies were distributed to the meeting attendees. An electronic version of the survey was also sent repeatedly via email using the City of Decatur's Restaurant and Retail listserv by the Decatur Downtown Development Authority.

Participants in the Occupancy Survey were asked to count the number of vehicles in their parking lot during four specified 3-hour windows of time throughout the week. The survey also asked participants to count the number of alternative vehicles (e.g. bicycles, Flexcars, motorcycles, compact cars, etc.). The survey windows for the survey were loosely chosen based on a 2007 one- or two-day survey conducted by consultants for the CTP.

The precise survey times were as follows (see Appendix B):

- (1) Tuesday 1:30 - 4:30pm
- (2) Wednesday 9:00 - noon
- (3) Friday 6:00 - 9:00pm
- (4) Saturday 1:30 - 4:30 pm
- (5) Late night after 11:00pm (weekday)

In addition to requesting participation from downtown restaurant and retailers, City of Decatur staff counted cars during the survey for 1) public parking decks and surface lots and 2) large private off-street parking decks and surface lots. The specific decks and lots are shown in **Map 10** and described more thoroughly in **Table 3**:

Map 10:

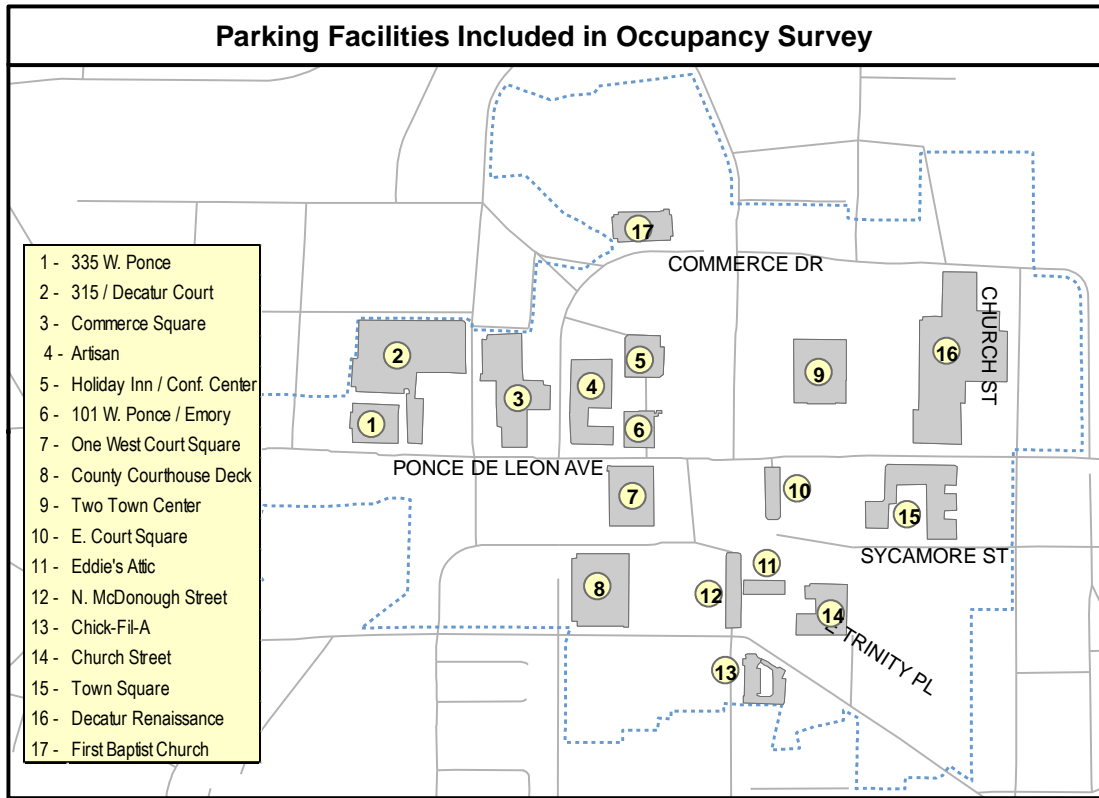


Table 3: Description of Parking Facilities and Surrounding Land Uses

Lot #	Name of Facility	Partial List of Surrounding Land Uses
1	335 West Ponce	Condos, Tastings, Alexia Gallery, eviva, Falontique, Century 21, Sheepish
2	315 / Decatur Court	Wachovia and variety of other offices, adjacent to Commerce Square
3	Commerce Square	CVS, Wolf Camera, Pastries @ Go Go, Marguerite Smith's Cleaners, Super Cuts, Jazmin Spa, 17 Steps, Thai Bowl, Mellow Mushroom
4	Artisan	Condos, Countrywide, Chocolate Bar, Ted's Montana Grill, Dresscodes, Pambili African Artworks
5	Holiday Inn / Conference Center	Holiday Inn Hotel, Fidelity Bank

6	101 W. Ponce / Emory	Emory Healthcare Clinic
7	One West Court Square	Art Institute, DeVry University, Ruby Tuesdays, Crescent Moon (now Thumbs Up Diner) Ackerman & Co. Orr & Edwards, Cooks Warehouse
8	County Courthouse	DeKalb County Courthouse
9	Two Town Center	Georgia Power, Clairemont Shoe Repair Co.
10	East Court Square	Starbucks Coffee, Brick Store, Sweet Melissa's, Zucca, Squash Blossom, Little Shop of Stories, Vivid Boutique, Worthmore Jewelers, Rutabaga
11	Eddie's Attic (Old Suntrust Lot)	Eddie's Attic
12	North McDonough Street	Decatur City Hall, Wordsmiths, Eddie's Attic
13	Chick-Fil-A	Chick-Fil-A
14	Church Street Public Parking	Johnny's Pizza, Ragin' Burrito, DeKalb Service Center, ReMax
15	Town Square	Condos, Thai Me Up, Subway, Great Clips, Wild Seed, McKinney's Apothecary, Natural Body Spa, Two Stix
16	Decatur Renaissance Center	Condos, Decatur Medical, VA Hospital, Wachovia, Got Cigars?, InTown Real Estate, oh! la-la, Sevya, Viet Traditional Nails
17	First Baptist Church	First Baptist Church

Additional parking counts were generously provided by LAZ Parking for Decatur Renaissance Center. These counts were generated from the number of tickets or parking validations “pulled” from cars leaving the parking facility compared to the number of vehicles electronically recorded as already being parked in the lot to establish the occupancy percentage. For example, on November 11, 2008 between 1:30-4:30pm, 109 tickets were paid or validated from cars leaving, yet the lot was 65% full at 4:30pm. Therefore, 747 cars were still parked in the facility. These calculations have been included the survey results.

The City of Decatur owns the Conference Center parking deck beneath the Holiday Inn, though the hotel manages its operations.

The City of Decatur also owns two parking lots on East Court Square (east of the Courthouse) and McDonough Street (west of City Hall). The 54 parking spaces between these two lots are heavily used because of their visibility and proximity to a variety of retail, office and institutional establishments. Beginning in November 2008, the company NOW! Innovations launched a three-month “Pay-by-Cell-Phone” testing of these two lots. Parkers in these lots called the phone number provided to establish their accounts and deposit a minimum of \$20.00, which was then debited every time they used the system to park. Users could park free the first time and received text messages giving them more information about how to use the system. They also received text messages when they had 15 minutes remaining in their paid time. As usual, the parking lots maintained their maximum 2-hour parking limit to promote turnover. Drivers were charged the same as on-street parking (\$3.00 for two hours or denominations thereof) with an additional \$0.25 user fee retained by the company.



*Sign advertising Cell Phone Parking Test site.*

## Survey Limitations

Unfortunately, only one business (Chick-Fil-A on E. Trinity Place) participated in the Off-Street Parking Usage Survey conducted in November-December 2008. It is unclear what kept businesses from participating in this survey. Some possibilities include the demands of the holiday season on retailers, the fact that many of the smaller retailers do not have their own parking lots, confusion about the survey and/or general disinterest in the topic.

In addition, there were some survey windows when the Decatur staff volunteers could not count vehicles because of work obligations. For these reasons, it was decided to conduct additional parking counts in February 2009 to fill in some of the “gaps” in the survey and add a few additional facilities. To make it easier for staff to complete the survey, the weekday counts were relaxed to allow surveying on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday within the same windows of time (9:00am-noon or 1:30-4:30pm).

Another limitation of the survey is the 3-hour duration of the survey window. The window was intentionally widened from the CTP’s approximately 2-hour survey to encourage business participation. However, considerable changes in travel behavior



may occur within the survey window that the survey does not capture. Averaging the parking counts aims to resolve this potential problem, as well as accounting for any unusually high periods of parking demand due to special events.

Finally, it is unfortunate that enough manpower was not available to survey some of the small free parking lots. From casual observation during the surveys, it is clear that some drivers are parking in lots with vacant businesses or those that are closed on the weekend to avoid having to pay for parking. Some examples of this phenomenon include Decatur First Bank and the former Jones PT site (immediately east of the Town Square Condominiums on East Ponce de Leon Avenue).

## DeKalb County Courthouse Deck

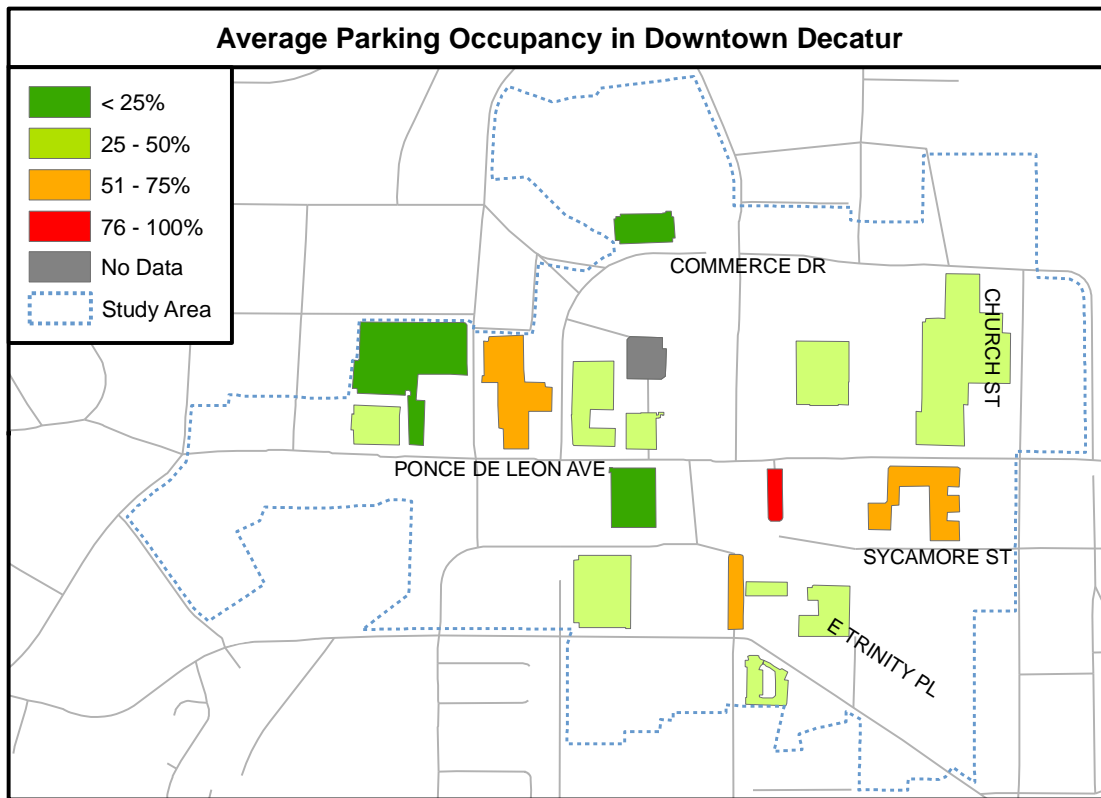
It should be noted that the DeKalb County Courthouse raised its flat fee of \$2.00 to \$6.00 per day on April 15, 2009 after the usage survey data was collected. During the survey, the \$2.00 all-day fee was the most inexpensive parking deck in downtown, and also the largest. This fee was particularly problematic for two reasons. First, the adjacent One West Court Square deck also charges a flat rate of \$6.00, so the County deck was a third of the price. In addition, the deck is located less than 300 feet from the entrance to the Decatur MARTA station. Yet, with a \$2.00 flat fee, the County deck cost *half* as much as a MARTA round-trip ticket (\$3.50 plus a \$0.50 charge for a new Breeze card). Therefore, the deck's low price may have actually discouraged MARTA ridership in favor of driving because it was cheaper.

The City should consider conducting an additional occupancy survey for the County deck once the new fees have been in place for awhile. In fact, this facility would make a good case study because the destination for many of the parkers is the DeKalb County offices and the courthouse. These trips are not likely to be discretionary travel that could be diverted to another location with unpriced parking (e.g. to a restaurant or shopping). Since the number of visitors to these destinations will remain the same, it would be interesting to know the higher parking fees change drivers' habits.

## Survey Results

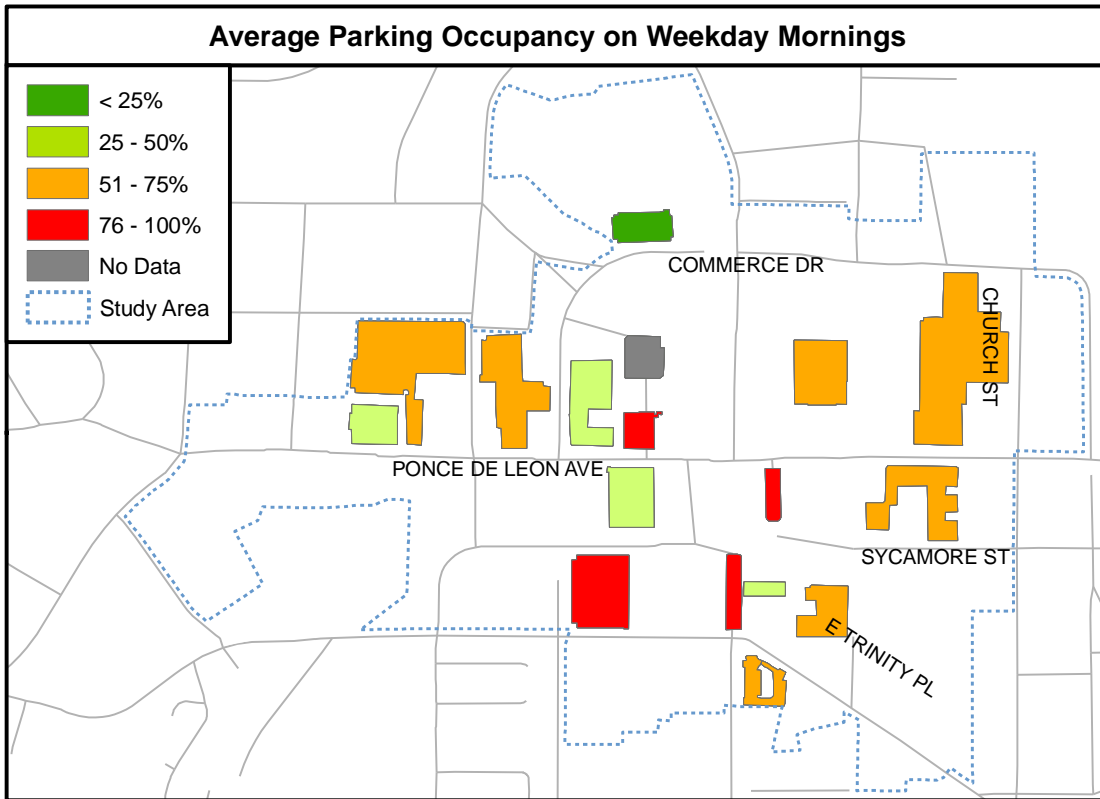
Map 11 shows the overall average parking occupancy rates for all "windows" of time in the survey. E. Court Square is consistently full, with between 76-100% of spaces regularly occupied. Other facilities with 51% average occupancy or higher include Commerce Square, N. McDonough Street and Town Square. All other facilities have less than 50% occupancy on average.

Map 11:

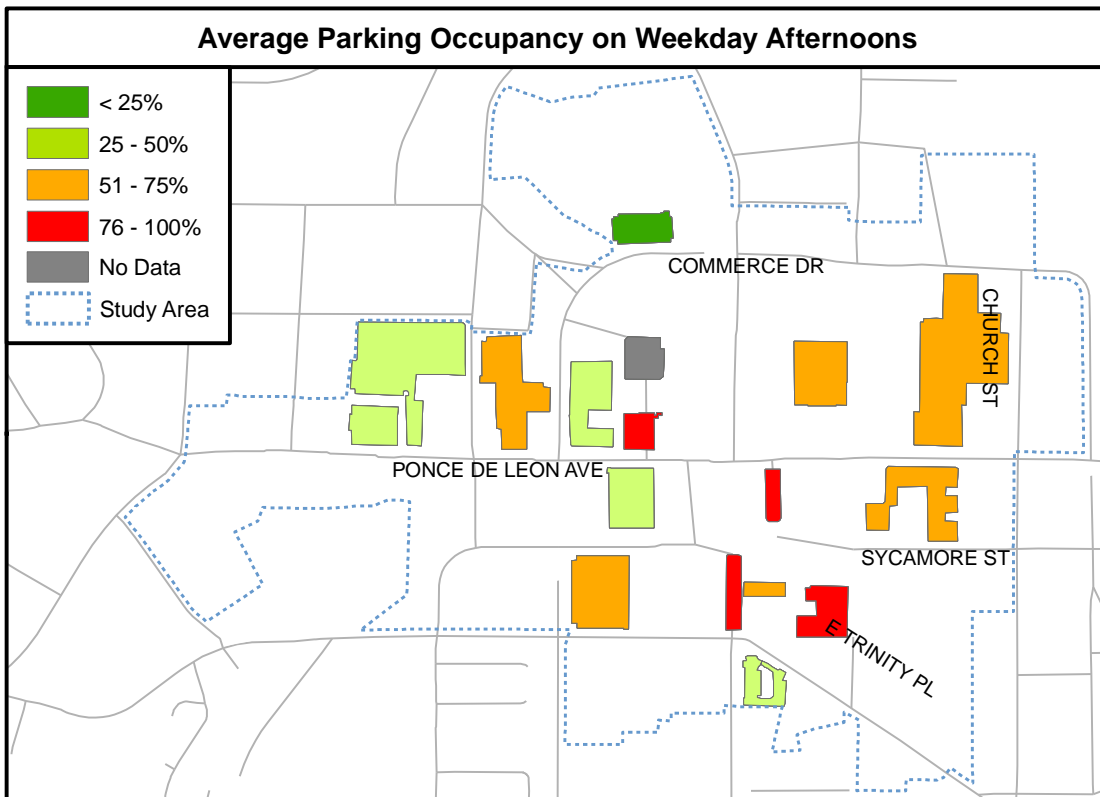


Although the average parking counts suggest that there is plenty of parking available in the CBD, parking demand fluctuates considerably throughout the day and week. **Maps 12 through 16** depict the survey results for the five windows of time.

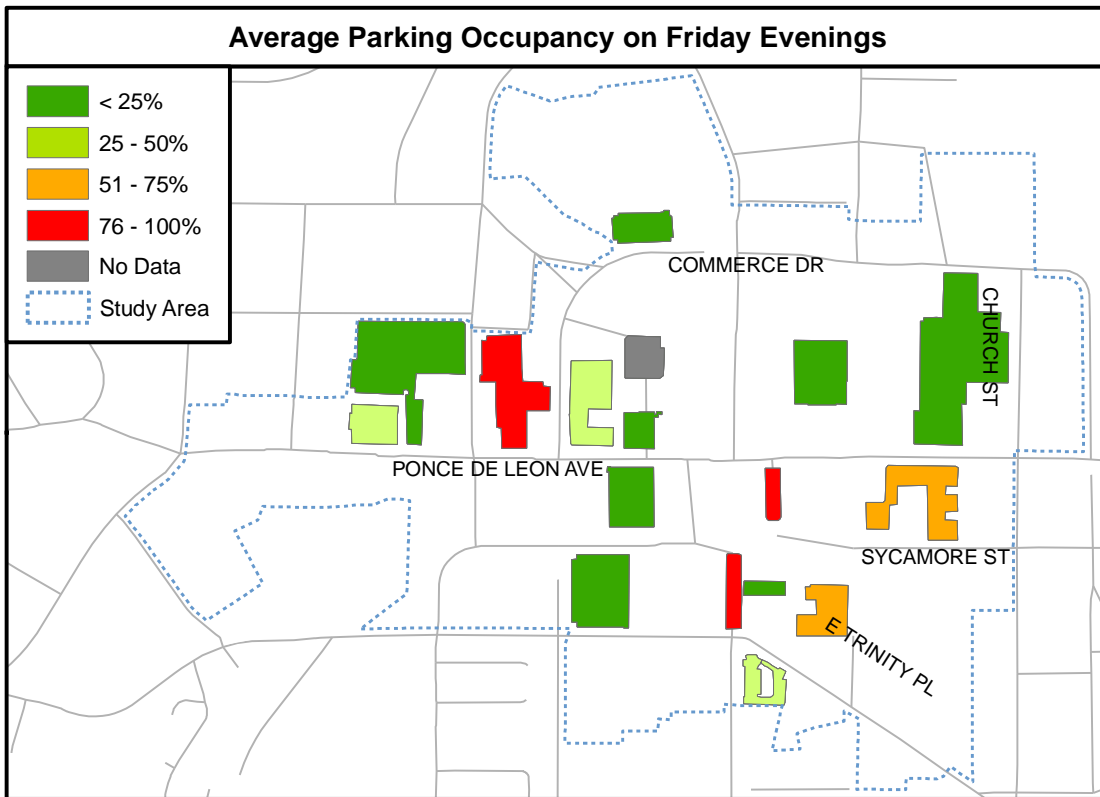
Maps 12:



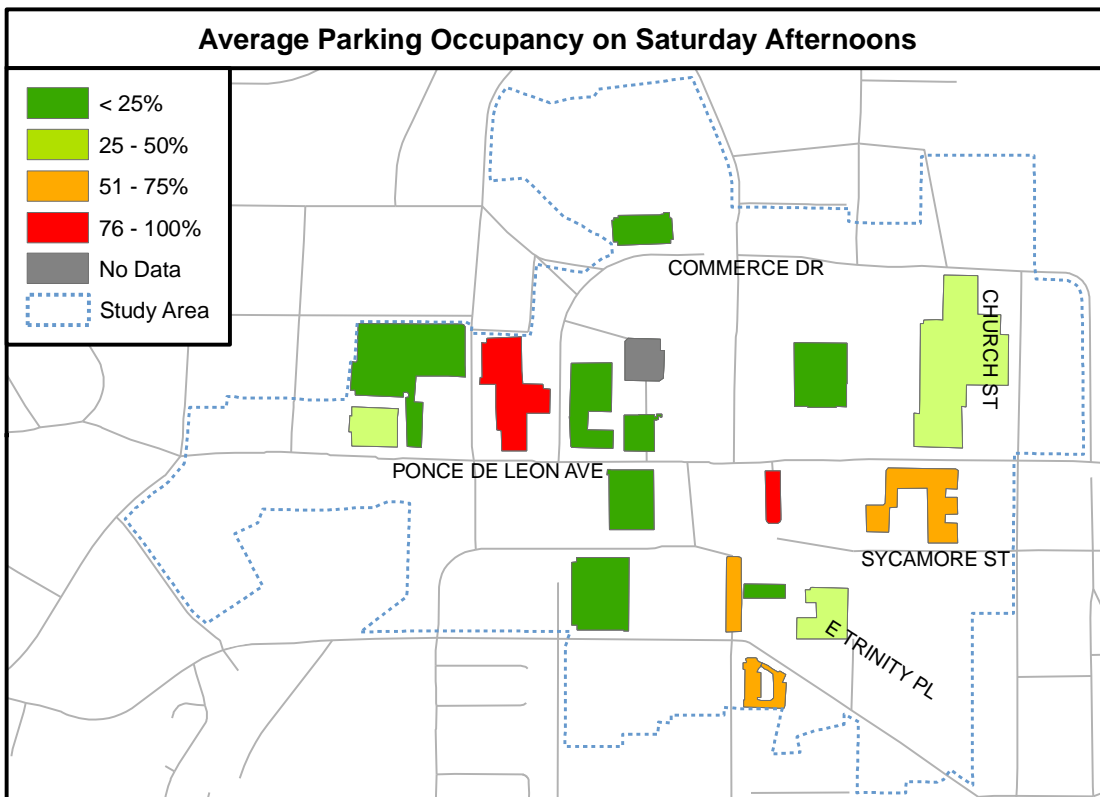
Map 13:



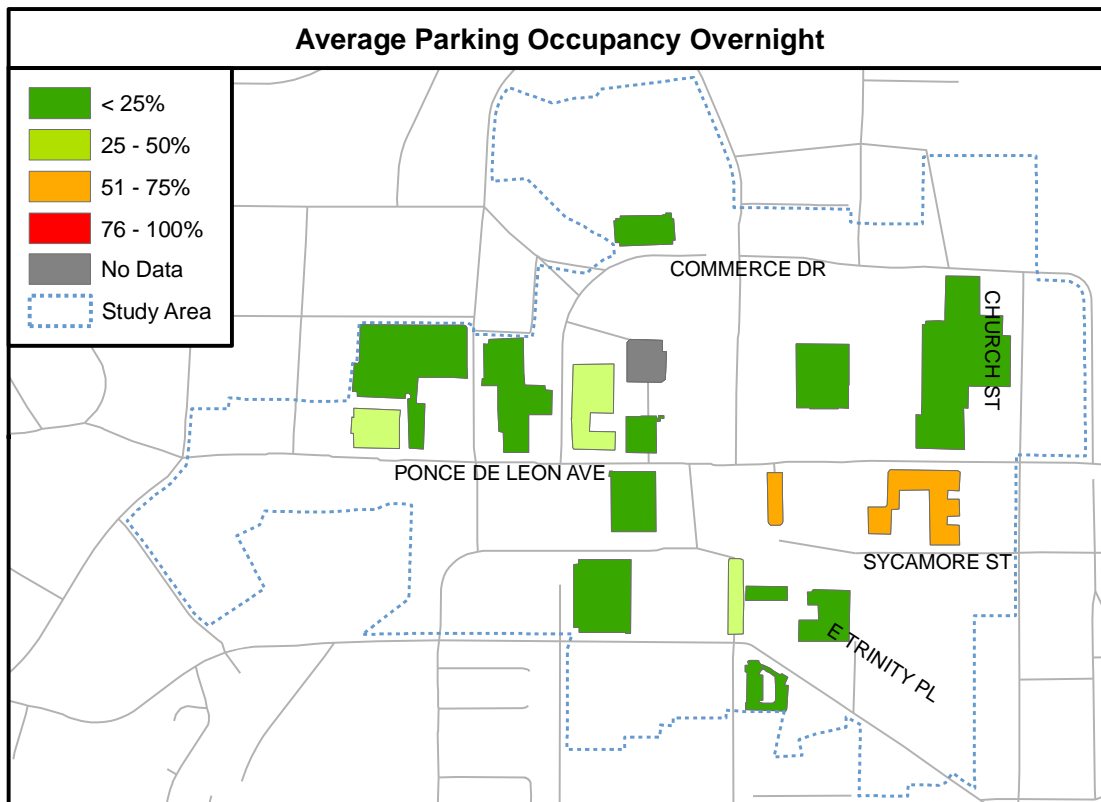
Map 14:



Map 15:



Map 16:



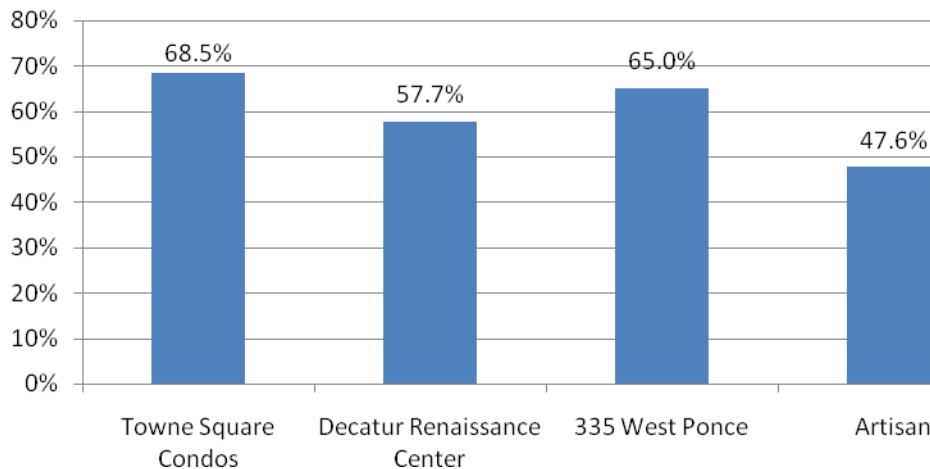
The parking usage between weekday mornings and weekday afternoons (Maps 12 and 13) are fairly consistent for each facility. Only the First Baptist Church averages less than a 25% occupancy rate, though 335, the Artisan and One West Court Square are consistently 25-25% occupied. The other parking facilities were at least half full throughout the two survey windows. E. Court Square, N. McDonough Street and 101 W. Ponce/Emory maintained parking rates above 75%. The Church Street public parking was more than 75% full in the afternoons, while the County deck was more than 76% full on weekday mornings. The County deck usage is particularly significant given that the facility has 1,200 spaces. As mentioned previously, this facility had the lowest all-day fee of \$2.00 which was raised to \$6.00 in April 2009. It will be important to determine whether the higher price has an effect on the occupancy rates.

For most facilities, parking demand eases considerably on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons, according to Maps 14 and 15. Yet during these periods, the parking facilities adjacent to shopping and dining destinations become more heavily used. Commerce Square and E. Court Square are typically at greater than 75% capacity during both time periods. Similarly, the N. McDonough Street and Town Square lots average greater than 50%.

Late night parking counts provide a better sense of how much parking is needed for residents and their guests. The survey was performed between 11:00 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. on two weeknights. While this timing may have captured some non-residents patronizing eating or drinking establishments and retail or restaurant employees who had not left for the evening, Map 16 indicates that parking is plentiful throughout downtown at these late hours.

To more clearly distinguish how much residential parking is being used at night, the chart below shows the parking occupancy rates for the residentially-restricted sections of the condominium complexes. Note that the Decatur Renaissance Center does not separate its residential parking from public parking by means of a gate or otherwise restricting access; however, there are some numbered spaces designated for residents on the top floor of the deck. For the purposes of this calculation, only these 241 spaces are included. Similarly, the Artisan has 156 numbered spaces for residents located outside the security gate on the third floor of the parking deck. Only the usage of the 178 residentially-restricted spaces inside the gate were included in the analysis below.

### Overnight Parking Occupancy for Restricted Residential Areas



The chart suggests that residential parking in these developments is oversupplied. Even Town Square, the facility with the highest residential occupancy rate, only reaches 69% capacity of its 126 available residential spaces - without even considering the 74 public spaces upstairs.

### Survey Analysis

The data produced in this survey indicates a number of trends and conclusions. First, occupancy rates for most parking facilities fluctuate significantly throughout the week, suggesting that an "average" occupancy rate does not sufficiently explain the parking conditions or needs for the downtown area.

Many of the surveyed facilities reach the 50 - 75% (e.g, Town Square, Church Street, Decatur Renaissance, Town Center and 335 W. Ponce) at their peak times, suggesting that the existing parking capacity is sufficient and opportunities for shared parking with other developments may exist for off-peak hours. After all, even at half capacity, the Decatur Renaissance Center has nearly 600 spaces.

There are a few facilities that are consistently underutilized. The First Baptist Church parking deck, for example, never exceeded 25% occupancy within the survey windows, which is logical since church activities are typically held during on Sundays and perhaps one day or evening per week. Similarly, One West Court Square and 335 W. Ponce (including both the residential-restricted and public parking) never exceeded 50% occupancy during any of the windows. Such a low occupancy rate is somewhat surprising for One West Court Square given its prime location along Ponce de Leon Avenue and close proximity to high-density uses such as the DeVry University, the Art Institute, and the County Courthouse. However, the adjacent County deck was charging a flat rate of \$2.00, one-third of One West Court Square's fee. Now that the County deck has raised its price to an equal \$6.00 per day, it will be interesting to see whether One West Court Square's occupancy rates increase. Hourly fees may attract more short-term parkers.

The impact of pricing differences can likely be observed in other locations as well, such as the adjacent Commerce Square and Artisan parking facilities. While Commerce Square has more than a 75% occupancy rate at its peak times (Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons), the Artisan remains less than half full. Since drivers will continue to choose cheaper or free parking options if they are available, Commerce Square could consider charging for parking to generate revenue, encourage turnover and ease overcrowding.

Only E. Court Square and N. McDonough Street have occupancy rates fairly consistently above 75%. These small lots (22 and 30 spaces respectively) are highly visible and centrally-located within close proximity to a variety of shopping, restaurant and civic destinations. Since retail businesses benefit from frequent parking turnover, the goal of supporting downtown businesses should divert longer-term parking to less popular locations in order to preserve the most desirable spaces for retail customers.

Easing overcrowding in these lots could be achieved in two ways: (1) raising parking fees, or (2) reducing the maximum parking time. Increasing parking fees is opposed by many downtown business owners, but it should be noted that the rates were increased from \$0.75 per hour to \$1.50 in 2007 and the lots are still consistently full. Reducing the maximum parking time from two hours to one or 1.5 hours therefore may be a more palatable option to achieve the optimal parking occupancy.

Overall, the results of the occupancy survey suggest the following conclusions:

- There is a considerable amount of parking capacity available in downtown Decatur. Of the facilities surveyed, only E. Court Square and N. McDonough Street

consistently exceed optimal occupancy rates. Focusing on parking management strategies to shift demand to other facilities could relieve the pressure on these two lots without requiring additional spaces.

- Given the existing capacity available, the City should consider reducing its minimum parking requirements for new development, particularly for residential and mixed-use. Parking reductions should be coupled with strategies and incentives to encourage the use of alternative transportation.
- Significant opportunities exist for shared parking between land uses that have different hours of operation and peak demand times. Shared parking agreements could reduce the need to construct new facilities or could even enable some existing facilities to be redeveloped for other purposes.

## Comparison to the CTP

The findings of this survey reach some of the same conclusions as that of the occupancy in the CTP, shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Parking Occupancy Data from CTP**

Number of Parking Spaces				
Parking Deck / Lot	# of Occupied Spaces	# of Unoccupied Spaces	Total # of Spaces	% Occupied
City-owned convention center (adjacent to Holiday Inn) Public pays \$1.50 per hour	131 - 174	34 - 77	208	63 - 84 %
Decatur Town Center (near Mick's restaurant) Public pays \$1.50 per hour	407 - 421	80 - 94	501	81 - 83
Renaissance / Wachovia / Commerce Plaza Public pays \$1 per hour after 1 <sup>st</sup> (free) 15 minutes	880 - 935	265 - 320	1200	73 - 78
Town Square Condos Public pays \$5 or retail token	186 - 207	2 - 7 retail and 10 - 26 residential	219	85 - 95
City Hall Public pays \$3 flat fee or \$5 flat fee weekends and after 4 pm weekdays	99 - 105	0 - 6	105	94 - 100
United Methodist Church Permit parking only	100 - 113	55 - 68	168	60 - 67
Baptist Church Permit parking only	10	390	400	3
One West Court Square (retail portion only) Requires a retail token		2 - 10		
DeKalb County Courthouse Public pays \$2 flat fee	912 - 1060	140 - 288	1200	76 - 88
Totals	2,738	1,263	4,001	68
Facilities highlighted in yellow have potential parking supply to offer in shared-parking agreement. Data collected April 2, 2007 and repeated May 2, 2007 between 10:00 a.m. and 12:40 p.m.				

Source: City of Decatur Community Transportation Plan 2007, Appendix C.



The consultants for CTP surveyed the usage of several large parking facilities between 10:00am-12:40pm on two different weekday occasions (a Monday and a Wednesday). Both surveys found an occupancy rate above 75% for the County Courthouse, 70-78% occupancy for Decatur Renaissance Center and a less than 10% occupancy rate for the Decatur Baptist Church. The CTP's findings of 81-83% occupancy for the Town Center are somewhat higher than the 61-68% weekday readings from this survey. The CTP also determined a much higher occupancy rate (85 - 95%) for the Town Square Condos than the survey in this report (51-75%); however, the number of parking spaces cited in the CTP survey suggests that only the public parking on the top floor was included. The difference is important because it indicates that there may actually be a shortage of public parking, even though parking spaces in the restricted residential area are available.

It is important to note that the CTP also surveyed City Hall and, the United Methodist Church (on the corner of East Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce Drive), which was not included in the survey for this report. These lots had occupancy rates of 94-100% and 60-67% respectively.

Despite these similarities between the survey findings, at least two major concerns arise from the CTP's analysis. First, the CTP averaged the percent occupancy rate for all the decks, which yielded 68%. However, the calculation included the First Baptist Church, which only had a 3% occupancy rate. If this parking facility is excluded, the average parking occupancy rate increases to nearly 76% of the parking lots surveyed.

A more significant problem with the CTP's findings is its analysis of the overnight parking at the Town Square Condos, as shown in **Table 5** below:

**Table 5: Overnight Occupancy Survey from CTP**

Town Square Condo Parking Deck (bounded by Ponce, Sycamore, Church)				
	Occupied	Unoccupied	Total	% Occupied
Marked for "Retail" (public) Use with token or \$5 charge	2	17	19	10.5%
Unmarked (residents)	22	31	53	41.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>33.3%</b>
Data collected January 10 and 11, 2007 prior to 6 a.m.				

*Source: City of Decatur Community Transportation Plan 2007, Appendix C.*

The CTP concludes that since only 33% of spaces were used, "only one out of every three parking spaces provided at Town Square Condos is necessary" (CTP 2007, Appendix C, 7). The problem is that the survey only used the top floor of the condominium's parking garage, which is primarily intended for public parking, not residential. While Town Square Condo owners and their guests can park there, each

condo has at least one assigned parking space on the bottom floor. This report found the overnight occupancy rate to be close to 70% when including both levels of the deck.

## **DOWNTOWN BUSINESS PARKING SURVEY**

To learn more about employee travel behavior, parking needs and the concerns of downtown businesses, a link to an electronic survey was distributed using the City of Decatur's Restaurant and Retail listserv maintained by the Decatur Downtown Development Authority. The survey was available online November 17-December 9, 2008. The survey questions are attached as Appendix C. Only 24 respondents participated in the survey despite repeated email requests and reminders.

Given the low number of respondents, the distribution of the survey to only restaurant and retail businesses and other limitations, the resulting data cannot be statistically evaluated. However, some of the results and comments are enlightening. Note that not all respondents answered all questions.

### ***Survey Respondents***

Half of the businesses (48%) participating in the survey have five employees or less. Twenty-two percent have more than 20 employees and the remaining 30% fell in between. Twenty of the 23 respondents (87%) are business owners.

### ***Survey Results***

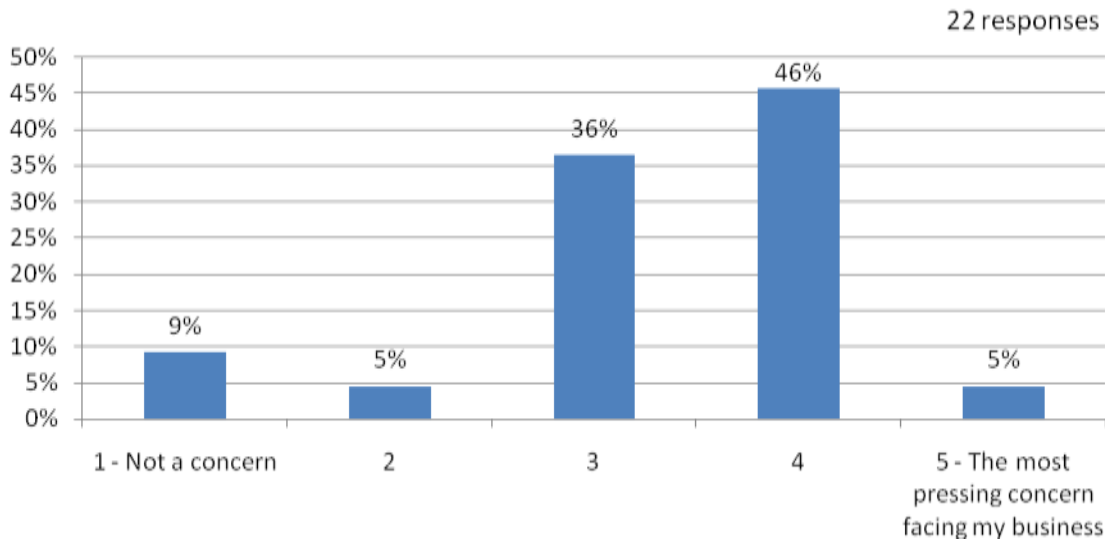
As the chart below shows, half of the respondents (10 out of 20) believe there is not enough parking available in downtown Decatur. An almost equal number (9 out of 20) responded that there is "too much parking in some places, not enough in others."

**How would you characterize the availability of parking in Downtown Decatur?**



Half of the respondents report that parking is a significant concern for their business. On a scale of 1 - 5, 11 out of 22 people considered parking to be a “4” or “5” with 5 representing “the most pressing concern facing my business.”

**On a scale of 1 - 5, how much of a concern is parking for your business?**

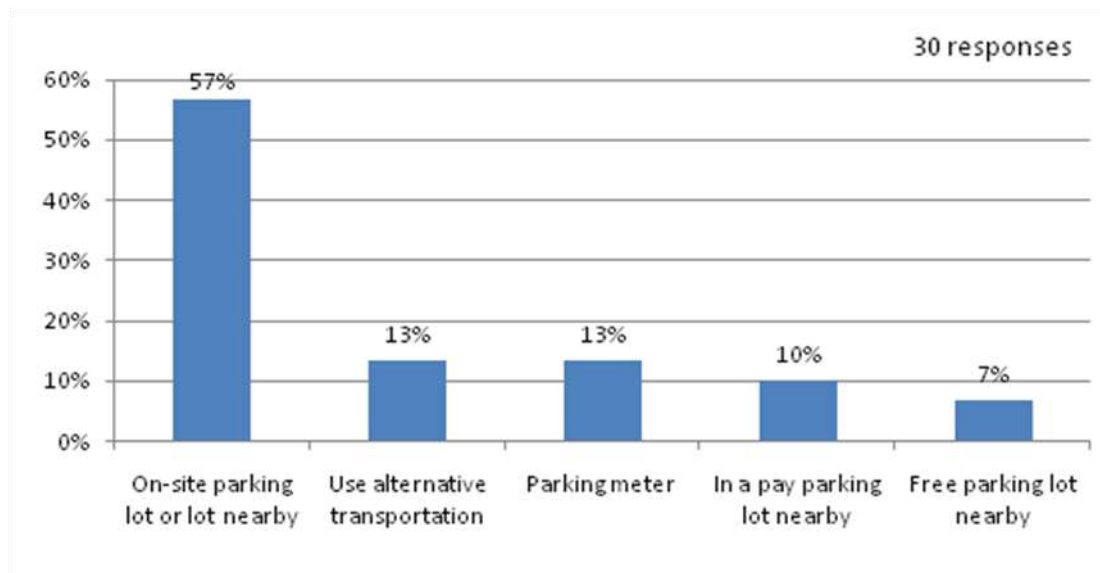


Asked more specifically when parking is a problem, six (out of 11) respondents considered parking to be “almost always difficult” or “somewhat difficult most of the time” for their customers, compared to four people who felt parking is “usually easy - except during peak hours.” Similarly, five respondents said that finding parking is usually easy for employees, except during peak demand. Predictably, weekdays during the workday were reported to have the highest parking demand (5 out of 11).

Sixty-one percent of respondents (14 out of 23) said that they have a parking lot dedicated to their business or share a parking lot with other businesses. Eleven said that the parking in these lots is free and eight said that the parking lot is reserved for customers only. All of the businesses said the purpose of the restriction is to ensure that customers have spaces to park. Other reasons cited include liability concerns, prevention of long-term parking and to guarantee parking for employees. Yet only 33% (7 out of 21) respondents were interested in purchasing tokens or smart cards for on-street parking meters to give to good customers or clients.

Survey respondents were also asked to list all the locations where their employees park. Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents (17 out of 23) said that at least one of their employees park on-site or in a nearby lot. Thirteen percent (4) responded that one or more employees use alternative transportation instead of driving to work and the same percentage park at parking meters.

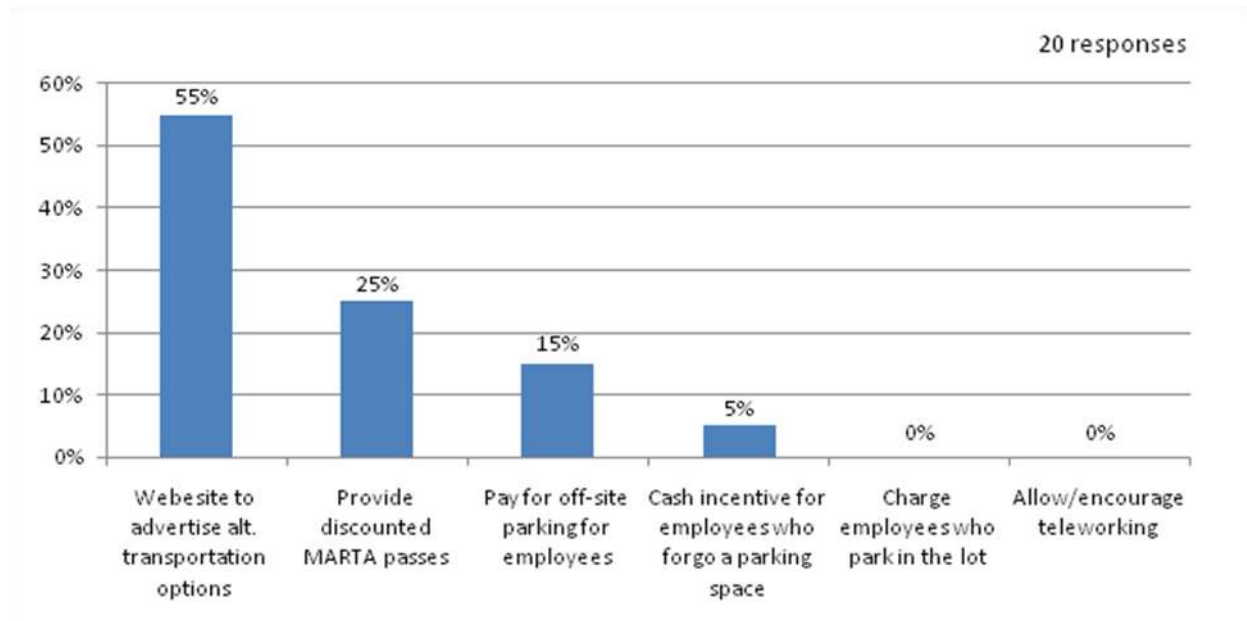
### Where do employees park?



Forty-one percent (9 out of 22) said that at least one employee walks or bicycles to work two or more times per week and 32% (7 out of 22) use transit, including MARTA bus, MARTA train or the Emory Cliff shuttle.

At present, no businesses offer incentives for employees to use alternative transportation to travel to work. Of the ideas presented, a website to advertise alternative transportation options was the most popular (11 out of 15). Five people said they would be interested in providing discounted MARTA passes to employees and three would consider contributing towards off-site parking for employees.

**Would you support any of the following incentives to encourage your employees to use alternative transportation to get to work? (check all that apply)**



Business owners were generally more favorable to the concept of a uniform management agreement where parking would be managed and marketed by a single authority. Sixty-eight percent (13 out of 19) respondents said they would support this idea.

In the open-ended questions, two themes emerged. First, businesses want accessible, free or low-cost parking nearby. Metered parking is specifically mentioned several times as too expensive. Second, respondents stressed the importance of signage to alert drivers to the location of public parking lots and decks.

The exact responses are as follows:

- People complain that metered parking is expensive.
- I don't find it a problem. You may have to walk a few blocks, or pay a small fee, but there is adequate parking. My business has its own shared lot.
- Our business is on the Square. Parking is a major issue, and the lack of it is a huge detriment to our business. Parking for employees is not a problem. The county parking deck is reasonable. However, there needs to be reasonably priced parking that our customers feel safe using. (The recent armed robbery did not help matters.) The meters are extremely expensive. I'd be happier with more 1/2 hour maximum meters for 25 cents per half-hour.
- Parking meter rates are too high, signage and publicity about lots is till inadequate; Perception is there is no parking and we lose business because of that. Even as owners we have to pay for parking.

- It would be nice to be able to offer free parking passes for all employees since we don't have a parking lot.
- I answered question 21 "yes" only because you did not provide "I don't know". What does "uniform management agreement" mean? Without that, the responses to this question cannot be validly evaluated.
- Metered parking is ok except that 2 hour min is too short. Patrons like to park in one spot and walk through shops/restaurants/spa/salon on Ponce and the Square on any given afternoon.
- The City of Decatur should provide Small downtown Decatur employees with free parking. Owners cannot afford to pay for the parking. Also how can small Decatur business owner provide parking for their customers ??? It's too expensive, too far... Decatur should provide at least ONE FREE big parking place for employees and give a chance for customers to find free parking !!!! The bad feedback we hear from customers is the too expensive parking meters or too expensive parking [lots] !!!
- We give out quarters.
- Adequate - but no signs, not well marked. Would love parking signs as people enter Decatur directing them to various parking areas. Garages are not well marked. Garages need BIG "public parking" signs with hours and rates. My customers have no idea where they are supposed to park.
- Decatur Renaissance charges way too much!
- The public needs more information about where there are parking spots, and to have more consistency in rates.
- No one knows where it is or it is too far to walk!

## ***Survey Analysis***

This survey reveals the difficulty with balancing the competing goods of supporting downtown businesses with the desire to encourage alternative transportation modes and alleviate parking demand. There is definitely a strong perception that not enough inexpensive or free parking is available for customers in appropriate locations. In response to this problem, the businesses with dedicated parking lots restrict them for their customers only and offer it for free. Businesses without parking lots have few options to improve the parking situation for their customers.

At least initially, most respondents were not favorable to any of the proposed recommendations that would actually change driving and parking behavior. It is important to note, however, that no details about these options were provided so respondents may have been wary of lending support to the ideas before learning more about the details.

## DOWNTOWN RESIDENT PARKING SURVEY

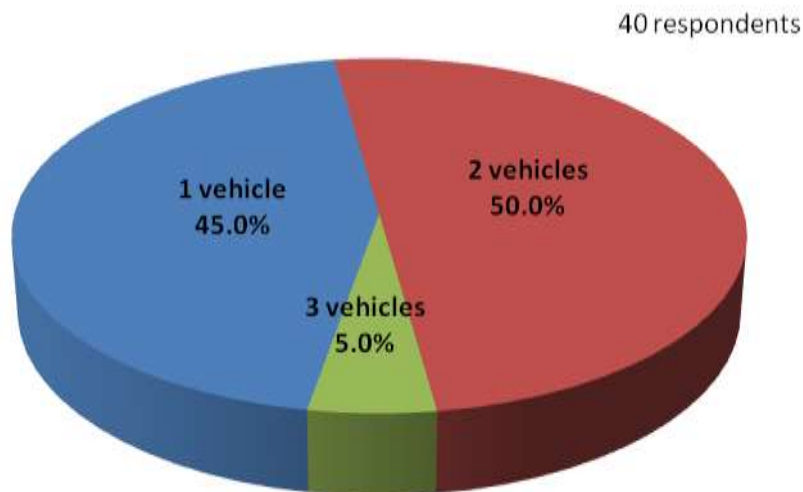
In April 2009, the City of Decatur conducted an informal survey of downtown residents in the five condominium complexes in downtown to gain more information about their commuting and parking patterns, needs and opinions. A link to the survey was sent to the condo management associations at the Artisan, 335 W. Ponce, Town Square, Decatur Renaissance and Philips Tower to be distributed to residents via email. In all, 40 surveys were completed. Although this project was not a formal, statistically-valid survey, the results may identify some trends for future consideration and study.

### *Survey Results*

Only one person responding to the survey has 3 people in his or her household; 16 (32.5%) have one person and 26 (65%) have two. Of those 26 households, 23 have two drivers, suggesting that there may not be many children or completely transit-dependent people in the downtown area. Several people mentioned that they are retired (Philips Tower is a retirement community), however, so they may not want to drive more than necessary, potentially raising the importance of alternative transportation options for them.

More telling is the finding that 45% of respondents (18) have only one vehicle. This information suggests that a significant number of dwelling units do not need more than one parking space.

#### How many vehicles does your household currently own or lease?



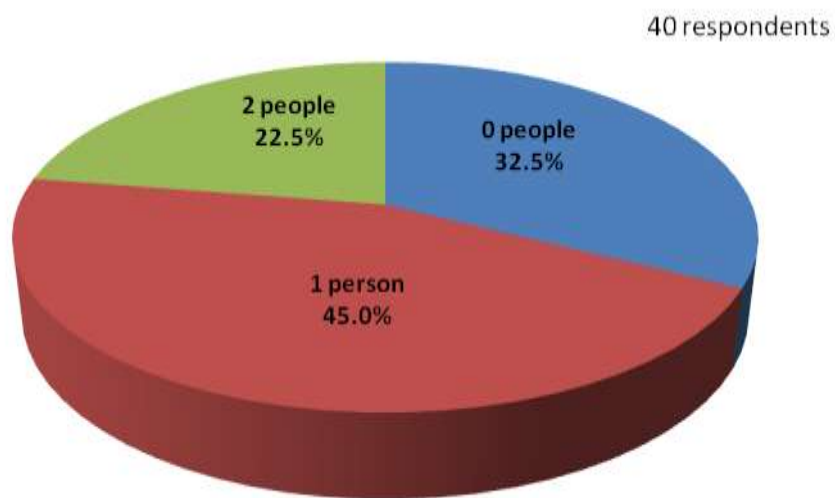
Note: 0 respondents answered "0" or "4 or more" vehicles

Almost all respondents said that at night they park their cars in a parking deck associated with their building. Most of the spaces are in areas restricted for residential parking, though ten respondents said that they park in areas that are not restricted. No respondents use on-street parking at night.

In some condo buildings (e.g. Artisan), one parking space is included in the purchase of the condo unit. Households with more than one car pay between \$25 and \$50 per month for a parking space for the additional vehicle.

Only three people (7.5%) said that at least one person in their household works in downtown Decatur. This result suggests a high number of commuters, yet only 9 respondents (22.5%) said that two people drive alone to work or school every day. On average, the respondent households drive approximately 27 miles per day in all, though the responses range from 4 miles to 150.

### How many people in your household drive an automobile **ALONE** to work or school every day?



Note: 0 people responded that more than 2 people drive alone to work

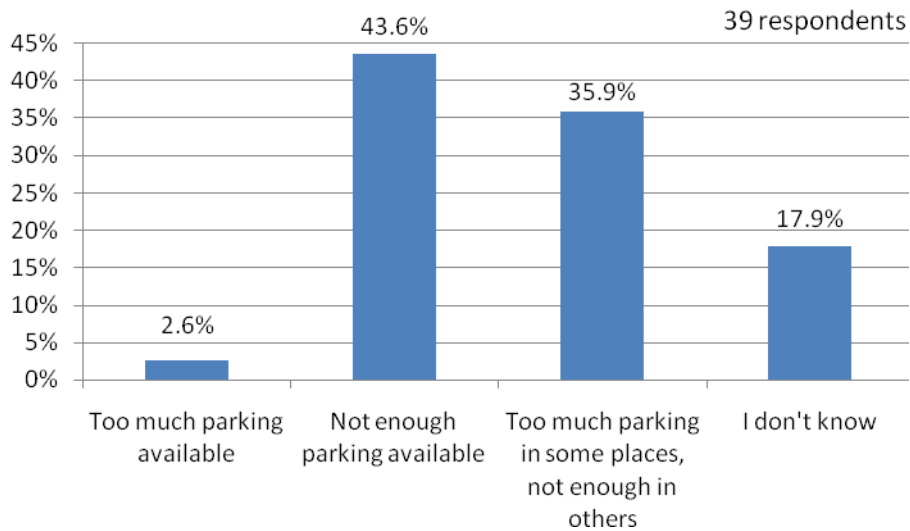
Eleven said that at least one person commutes use alternative transportation (e.g. walk, bicycle, carpool, ride a bus or the Emory Cliff shuttle or ride the MARTA train) two or more times per week. These findings can be at least partially explained by the fact that Philips Tower was included in the survey and is not likely to have many commuters.

Sixty-one percent of respondents (24) said they would be interested in purchasing discounted MARTA passes through their condo association or building manager, though several people mentioned that they already purchase senior half-price MARTA passes. For the people who said they were not interested, the most common reason cited was that their workplace is not accessible by MARTA (7 respondents).

More than 75% of respondents said they make “very few” trips to a downtown destination in Decatur. Several people said the hardest times to find parking is in the evenings (specifically Friday), which could be partially attributed to the fact that many people work during the day and may not know about the conditions during the workday.



### How would you characterize the availability of parking in downtown Decatur?



Almost 44% of respondents said there was not enough parking in downtown Decatur, compared to 50% of respondents from downtown businesses. Similarly, 36% of resident respondents said there was “Too much parking in some places, not enough in others,” compared to 45% of business respondents who answered in the same way.

The open-ended responses provided a range of interesting and important responses. There was a mix of responses between people who think that more parking is needed and others who would like to see parking eliminated on East Court Square to allow more room for retail. Some older residents pointed out that they need parking in close proximity to their destinations because they have limited mobility.

Several people praised the new on-street parking on Church Street as beneficial for traffic calming and recommended that it be added elsewhere (e.g. Commerce Drive between the Artisan and Commerce Square). A few said that there needs to be more parking on West Ponce de Leon Avenue (near the 335 West Ponce condo building). Finally, several mentioned problems dealing with building and parking managers in their condominium complexes.

The exact responses are as follows:

- I am retired. Some days I make 3 or 4 trips by car out of Decatur but many days I do not drive at all. Most of my trips are 5 miles or less. I do not use MARTA at night because of needing to change alone in Five Points, but I ride it to the airport & midtown during the day. We have adequate Visitors' parking in our condo building most of the time.
- Work p/t in Decatur store & frequently hear complaints [that there is] not enough parking available; no parking vouchers for parking decks readily available;
- there are a lot of parking decks, but street parking is an issue. sometimes you just want to drop something off or pick up something up quickly - not appropriate to spend 20 minutes dealing with a

## parking deck

- Ideas to consider: 1.) Decatur builds or buys its own parking lot for use by Decatur residents only. Charge a very reduced rate or for free. It probably wouldn't have to be that big. It could be part of the underutilized parking lot at Decatur Renaissance, for example. Or put a deck over the parking behind Cook's Warehouse and Suntrust. 2.) Nothing to do with parking, but has anyone considered blocking off Ponce between Church and Clairemont? Get rid of the parking circle on the square and add more retail facing Ponce there. 3.) The timing of the traffic lights seems horrible. Not only do people drive around endlessly looking for street parking, but then they have to contend with the lights. Besides, it wastes gas, increases pollution, etc.
- The more parking that is provided, the more cars will show up. Not a good thing.
- No affordable and safe overnight parking for condo guests.
- There are many restaurants. I would go to at the square, but go only once a month because the parking is expensive and inconvenient.
- meters too expensive
- I live in the Artisan and only have 2 spaces for me and my 2 teenage kids to share... whenever we have guests over, they have to pay dearly to park! In the evenings, street parking is difficult to find. I love living in downtown Decatur, but I wish residents had more options for their personal guests for parking.
- There are MANY problematic issues that several downtown mid-rise condos have with their provided parking areas. I would encourage you to speak with the condo managers or board presidents to understand these concerns.
- Since we live in downtown, we seldom drive to restaurants, etc. But we are aware that parking is a problem west on Ponce. It's a shame the large garage behind the old Wachovia is not open to the public in the evenings.
- Please eliminate parking on the square. Create more parking along Commerce (reduce to 2 lanes) Continue the on street parking up Church into downtown (the new parking/traffic calming on Church is a great start!) . Consider shuttles, treat parking meters as revenue & enforce 24/7. Sell "parking meter passes" to residents/downtown workers to allow residents/workers to allow 8 hour parking at designated meters.
- Our concern is handicap accessibility...which is why we drive to closer destinations than other people
- We need more downtown parking, especially on the West end of Ponce de Leon. There is only one parking deck in the center of town behind Parkers. When it is raining and we choose to drive, we get so discouraged trying to park that we leave Decatur and go elsewhere to eat. We happen to live close to the square so we walk when we can. However, for those that have to drive, I know it must be discouraging to try to find a parking place. The parking meters are expensive and inconvenient. They are usually filled and not available.
- I noticed that the City has added on-street parking on portions of Church Street, heading towards Lawrenceville Highway, near the City Park. I highly encourage the City to add more on-street parking in Downtown because:
  - A) it improves pedestrian safety by forcing drivers to slow down and creating a buffer of parked

cars between pedestrians on sidewalks and the now slower moving cars on the road; and, B) it offers parking close to, but not necessarily adjacent to main destinations (e.g., Decatur Square), which encourages people to walk to the main destination thereby creating retail opportunities for stores/restaurants that are no in Decatur Square.

Specifically, I feel that Commerce Dr. between the CVS and The Artisan is too wide and has cars that travel too fast, especially as they round the curve heading from Clairemont Ave. towards the intersection of Commerce Dr. and West Ponce de Leon Ave. I think that the center turn lane is a complete waste of space and that the City should, if it can, turn one of the southbound lanes of Commerce Drive (i.e., the lane adjacent to the CVS shopping center) into on-street parking. Turning the outside southbound lane into on-street parking will not reduce the number of total travel lanes if the center turn lane is eliminated. Adding on-street parking in this area will slow down the traffic, create a more pedestrian-friendly environment, and create more short-term parking for the remaining stores at The Artisan and next to Taco Mac (The Artisan has expensive parking rates and the CVS parking lot is reserved for shops in that shopping center).

Overall, I think that the City should discourage to the greatest extent possible the continued existence of downtown parking lots. These parking lots should be converted to office, retail, and/or residential uses.

- We live in The Artisan and generally walk anyplace in downtown Decatur unless the weather is bad.
- For neighborhoods near the square, make sure street parking has painted places. Quit allowing businesses to open without adequate parking -- quit allowing variances on this.
- I think parking in downtown should be free.
- My complaints with parking are there doesn't seem to be enough inexpensive parking for employees of the businesses in Decatur. I also think Decatur is ahead of itself in thinking it is a destination people are willing to pay to park. It will hurt business in downtown Decatur in the current economic downturn if parking continues to be all pay to park.

I would like to see the City more proactive when a developer wants to build condos in the City. There should be more consideration given to public/private parking garages and just how they are going to work for residents, retailers and public parkers. Our parking situation is unnecessarily difficult and costly in our condo. Public/private parking garages often hold the homeowners hostage to the public owners and managers. The City should be cognizant of these issues and to the best of their ability only permit when equitable solutions have been worked out and are contractually binding.

- Parking has always been a pain.

## ***Survey Analysis***

The Downtown Resident Parking Survey reveals several important issues not addressed anywhere else in the inventory. For example, Decatur must take into account the retirees who live in downtown. These residents may have to drive downtown more than others and need parking in closer proximity to their destinations. Decatur could consider issuing special stickers to these residents and designating a few spaces specifically for their use.

Another issue is the practicality of offering discounted MARTA tickets within condo buildings to encourage the use of public transportation. Philips Tower residents are already eligible for senior half-price MARTA passes. Other people explained that even though the Decatur MARTA station is nearby, their workplaces are not accessible (or conveniently accessible) by bus or train. Therefore, discounted MARTA passes may not be an effective tradeoff for reducing downtown parking requirements.

Finally, a number of people mentioned parking problems within their condominium buildings. These complaints lend credence to the need for a broader discussion of parking issues in downtown.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF CTP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The CTP has already identified parking goals and objectives for downtown (see CTP Section above). This section refines those ideas based on the parking inventory and suggests more detailed implementation strategies.

### *Curbside Management*

Curbside parking is intended to provide spaces for short-term visitors, not employees, residents or other long-term visitors. The problem is that curbside parking is currently priced cheaper than most public off-street parking lots and is more visible to traveling motorists. With the exception of the Holiday Inn / Conference Center, Two Town Center, E. Court Square and N. McDonough Street facilities, all public parking lots charge more for one hour of parking than the on-street meters.

As a result, drivers cruise around the CBD looking for available on-street parking. Not only does the cruising cause traffic congestion and frustrate drivers, they are loathe to relinquishing their spot and may decide to leave rather than relocate after they have parked for the maximum limit of two hours. Or, as downtown business owners attest, shoppers do not want to pay for more parking than they know they need so many people pay for the minimum amount of time possible, conduct their business quickly and leave rather than taking the time to browse or window shop because they are at risk of a parking ticket. Clearly, this phenomenon hurts downtown businesses and detracts from the "park-once" environment that Decatur aims to create. It also fuels

<i>Review of Goals identified in CTP:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize curbspace</li> <li>• Set meter rates to achieve occupancy goals (85%)</li> <li>• Adjust meters to manage parking demand throughout the day and week</li> <li>• Use pricing, rather than time limits, to promote turnover</li> <li>• Determine locations for new on-street parking</li> <li>• Implement new meter technology</li> <li>• Enforce parking regulations</li> <li>• Monitor the success of parking reforms</li> </ul>

the perception that there is not enough parking and contributes to drivers parking in free, off-street parking lots designated for customers only.

A number of strategies can be employed to address and remedy this problem, each of which are discussed at length below.

### **Potential Solution: Implement new meter technology**

The CTP recommends that “smart” multi-space parking meters be tested in the downtown area. Many larger cities in the U.S. have installed smart meters in their downtown or other high-traffic areas, including Washington D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, Portland, New York City, Seattle, Denver and San Francisco. Even some smaller municipalities, like Charleston, and Park , they City, Utah are now using them. Locally, Midtown Atlanta has installed them on Spring Street. Smart meters are automated and electronic so they offer numerous advantages over individual, coin-operated parking meters, such as:



1. Most meters accept credit and debit cards, coins and bills. Some also accept payments using cell phone authorization or parking “debit” cards that have been pre-loaded. As a result, parkers do not have to carry change, which is a common complaint from Decatur business owners and drivers (especially considering that parking for the maximum of two hours requires twelve quarters!).
2. Fewer coins and bills means the meters do not have to be emptied as often.
3. Since they manage several spaces at once, fewer meters must be purchased and maintained. Fewer meters also reduce street clutter.
4. Depending on the meter, the driver can deposit money remotely so that he or she can continue shopping, dining or conducting other business. This feature helps reduce “meter anxiety” and encourages patrons to stay longer. However, it is important to consider that on-street parking meters are intended for short-term parking so this amenity may not be desirable.
5. Smart meters keep complete data of parking space revenue and turnover, which helps the parking authority set appropriate prices to achieve the desired 85% occupancy.
6. Prices can be adjusted throughout the day and week to compensate for fluctuating parking demand. The city can also charge less for parking outside the downtown core area.

7. Multi-space meters can alert parking enforcement when they are being vandalized, need repair or need to be emptied. This feature is important since thieves stole or tampered with 500 traditional parking meters in 2007 in the City of Atlanta (Mahoney 2006).
8. Many meters are solar-powered.

Some municipalities have coupled the new meters with smart (also called ParkSmart) cards. Smart cards act like debit cards that are pre-loaded for repeat visits. Downtown Philadelphia and Austin use these cards. Some of the benefits include:

The cards offer several benefits, such as:

1. Drivers swipe their cards when they arrive and leave so they do not pay for more time than they need.
2. Businesses can choose to purchase cards for their customers or employees.
3. Cards can be used to pay for both on- and off-street parking in municipalities that manage both types of parking.
4. With reloadable cards, drivers can manage their parking accounts online for added convenience.



The iPark works in a similar manner. Instead of cards, the iPark is a small device placed on the car windshield automatically deducts from the driver's prepaid account while the vehicle is parked. Seattle, Aspen (Colorado) and Park City (Utah) use this system. Arlington, Virginia charges \$20 to purchase the device.

Despite the positive experiences that many municipalities have had with smart meters, there are a couple of drawbacks. First, multi-space smart meters cost upwards of \$1,000 per parking space or more. Second, the meters tend to have more technical and maintenance issues. In fact, parking meter maintenance cost so much in the first five years that Portland considered selling the system to a private firm and leasing the meters back (Budnick 2008). The costs would have been significantly higher had the parts not been under warranty. At the same time, the meters increased Portland's parking revenue \$2 million annually (McCourt, no date).

A few municipalities have actually sold or leased their on-street parking systems to private management companies. Chicago recently signed a 75-year lease to LAZ Parking to operate and manage their coin-operated parking meters. Thus far, the transition has not been very smooth with drivers complaining about broken and overstuffed meters, incorrect fees and increased enforcement (Hilkevitch 2009).

Upon installing a new meter system, municipalities should plan to implement a marketing campaign to educate drivers about the new system. On-site parking

“ambassadors” can teach motorists how to use the system and answer questions as they arrive. When Aspen, Colorado began to operate its new multi-space meters, the City provided all residents with a \$20 prepaid parking card to familiarize them with the system, allowed each motorist one free parking violation and parking control officers provided an hour of free parking to confused motorists (Litman 2006). Since most parkers in downtown Decatur are visitors and employees, distributing passes to businesses and employers may be more effective.

**Potential Solution: Create and/or incentivize on-street parking on the outskirts of downtown**

The CTP recommends that an engineering study be conducted to determine whether some of the existing travel lanes can be converted to on-street parking or angle-parking. As an example, one of the lanes on the Commerce Square side of Commerce Drive north of Ponce de Leon Avenue could be converted to on-street parking, even if the unrestricted left turn lane had to be removed. Given the width of the road, the parallel parking on Clairemont Drive could be restriped as angled parking. This retrofit may also provide important traffic calming benefits since these streets feed into the downtown area where there is a high volume of pedestrian activity.

These conversions would offer additional on-street parking away from the core parking demand area. To entice drivers to use these facilities, the spaces could be offered at a reduced rate or allow higher maximum parking times. Another option would be to grant the first hour free, which would probably require technologically-advanced meters.

**Off-Street Parking Management**

The Parking Inventory reveals a number of problems with the current management of off-street parking. The key issues are as follows:

1. Prices for off-street parking vary widely, which is confusing and frustrating for drivers. Moreover, many of the current parking rates do not seem to be set at the optimal rate to maximize their usage. There is currently no organization or public forum to discuss or resolve these issues.

<b>Review of Goals identified in CTP:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop criteria for establishing new and publicly-accessible garages</li> <li>• Establish a parking brokerage</li> <li>• Improve parking information</li> <li>• Encourage ride-sharing</li> </ul>

2. Customer-restricted parking is often free, but public parking is not. As a result, many drivers continually move their car between destinations to avoid paying for parking. Not only does this undermine the “park once” and “Mallternative” environment Decatur hopes to create, it causes traffic congestion and encourages drivers to leave once they have finished their intended errands instead of visiting other stores. Free parking also encourages employees to drive, thereby exacerbating parking shortages in off-street lots.

3. Some parking facilities continue to be underutilized even though a few lots are consistently full.

### **Possible Solution: Transportation Management Association and/or Parking Brokerage**

Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) are organizations that work with employees and residents to encourage them to commute using carpools and alternative transportation. Naturally, reducing the number commuters who drive alone reduces the number of cars that need to be parked. As a result, the municipality does not have to require as many parking spaces with new development. These programs also encourage healthy living and improve air quality.

Transportation Management Associations are formally defined as “non-profit, member-controlled organizations that provide transportation services in a particular area, such as a commercial district, mall, medical center or industrial park. They are generally public-private partnerships, consisting primarily of area businesses with local government support” (Victoria Transport Policy Institute 2005, no page). Employers are key participants in TMAs because they work directly with commuting employees to support the TMA’s programs and disseminate information about them.

TMAs generally offer a similar set of programs, benefits, incentives and benefits. Typical TMA programs include:

- Discount transit passes
- Car-sharing discounts
- Assistance finding vanpool, carpool or biking partners
- Guaranteed Ride Home programs if an unexpected event occurs
- Teleworking and Flex-Hour options
- Monetary prizes and rewards for commuters who use alternative transportation
- Bicycle safety training
- Real-time traffic information

Nationwide, there are at least 150 TMAs. There are nine in the Atlanta area, which are listed in **Table 6** below:

**Table 6: TMAs in the Atlanta Area**

Transportation Management Association	Website
Atlantic Station TMA (ASAP+)	<a href="http://asap-plus.com/">http://asap-plus.com/</a>
Buckhead Area TMA (BATMA)	<a href="http://www.midtownalliance.org">http://www.midtownalliance.org</a>
Clifton Corridor TMA (CCTMA)	<a href="http://www.cctma.com/">http://www.cctma.com/</a>
Cumberland CID Commuter Club	<a href="http://www.commuterclub.com/">http://www.commuterclub.com/</a>
Downtown TMA (DTMA)	<a href="http://www.atlantadowntown.com/get-around">http://www.atlantadowntown.com/get-around</a>



Hartsfield Area TMA (HATMA)	<a href="http://www.hatma.org/">http://www.hatma.org/</a>
Midtown Transportation Solutions (MTS)	Available at <a href="http://www.midtownalliance.org">http://www.midtownalliance.org</a>
Perimeter Transportation Coalition (PTC)	<a href="http://www.perimetergo.org/">http://www.perimetergo.org/</a>
Town Center TMA (CobbRides)	<a href="http://www.cobbrides.com/">http://www.cobbrides.com/</a>

Decatur is already part of the CCTMA, mainly because the Emory Cliff Shuttle route originates at the Decatur MARTA station. Since the shuttle currently stops running at 8:00pm on weekdays and does not run on the weekends, there may be a possibility for Decatur to procure the shuttle during these times, which could help to make remote employee parking more viable for retailers and during special events.

Funding for TMAs come from a variety of sources. In the Atlanta area, most if not all of the TMAs are located within Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), geographically-defined districts in which commercial properties owners elect to impose a special tax on themselves in order to fund infrastructure, streetscape, parks, transportation (including parking facilities) and other community improvements within the district. Public funding sources for Atlanta metro TMAs include the Atlanta Regional Commission, Congestion, Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding through the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) and the Georgia Department of Transportation. A portion of parking revenue collected by the City could also be allocated to support TMA activities.

Participation in TMAs has benefits for employers as well. The federal tax code allows employers to purchase transit passes or offer vanpool subsidies for their employees as a pre-tax payroll deduction or as a tax-free benefit. A more detailed description of these three options is as follows:

- 1. The Pre-Tax Income Benefit** allows employees to set aside up to \$230 per month (pre-taxed) for transit or vanpool expenses. This program is very similar to a medical flexible spending account in that the employee pays no income tax on the benefit and the employer saves through reduced payroll taxes. For employees who use the maximum benefit of \$230 per month, the employer will save \$1,150 per year in FICA, FUTA, state and federal taxes. Unlike the flexible spending accounts, however, there are no “use it or lose it” penalties and pre-tax programs can be started at any time of the year.
- 2. Employer-Transportation Benefits** allow employers to provide free transit passes and vanpool subsidies to employees (up to \$230 per month for each employee and \$20 for cycling). Employees enjoy the tax-free benefits while minimizing costs to employers through reduced taxes.
- 3. Employer-Provided Transportation Benefits** offer a combination of the first two options in that employers and employees split the cost of transit passes or vanpool expenses. For example, the employer can provide \$80 of direct transit

subsidy and still allow the employee to set aside up to \$150 before taxes to pay for the fare balance (CobbRides, no date).

Employers can also establish **parking cash out programs** for their employees by offering them the cash equivalent of their monthly parking space. Although this income is taxable if the employee accepts the cash (and the employer incurs payroll taxes), it is also eligible for the tax benefits if rolled into transit or vanpool expenses. Employers benefit because the parking spaces foregone by employees can be used by customers, sold or leased to other businesses or redeveloped entirely into other uses.

It is important to note that TMAs do not need to follow a strictly prescribed organizational structure, funding scheme or set of programs. The Center of Urban Transportation Research's *TMA Handbook* points out that "TMAs need not have a focus on Transportation Demand Management (TDM) . . . an organization promoting carpooling can be a TMA just as surely as a group that advocates traffic signal coordination' (2001, 1-11). In other words, TMAs are flexible enough to meet the needs and available resources of the communities they serve.

To that end, TMA partners can work together to support strategies that more efficiently use the existing parking facilities. For example, TMAs can establish a parking brokerage system for businesses to share (and possibly lease or sell) parking spaces. This service would be especially beneficial in the City of Decatur because there is currently no explicit forum for businesses to explore shared parking options.

The CTP suggests that a parking brokerage housed within a CID could work with parking facility owners to identify barriers to making the lots or decks available for public use and provide the necessary liability insurance, operational assistance and other support to overcome these challenges (2007, 10.4-10.5).

The TMA could also work with parking facility owners and managers to explore ways to simplify or standardize parking fees in the downtown area so they are less confusing for drivers and help to ease pressure on on-street spaces and parking facilities that are currently at capacity.

### **Possible Solution: Remote parking for employees**

While some downtown Decatur employees have access to free parking in their employer's off-street parking facilities, others pay for parking on the curb or in a paid parking facility nearby because their employers do not have dedicated parking. Both scenarios have the potential to exacerbate parking problems in the CBD. Free parking by employees takes up customer spaces and offers no incentive to alternative transportation. On the other hand, parking on the curb is expensive, occupies short-term spaces intended for visitors and forces employees to move their cars every two hours.

One possible solution to both of these problems is to designate remote parking facilities, at least during times of peak parking demand (e.g. weekdays or special

events). Businesses can contract with property owners on the periphery of the downtown area to use parking lots that have excess parking or different peak demand times. Some potential remote lots include the First Baptist Church, 315/Decatur Court or the Bank of America parking lot (based on observation, this location was not included in the parking occupancy survey). During special weekend events, the Emory / 101 W. Ponce deck could be used.

In some cases, a shuttle is used to transport employees from their cars to their workplaces. A shuttle would probably not be cost-effective given the size of Decatur's downtown area and the number of employees who would be likely to use it, though this option may be appropriate for special events. The Restaurant / Retail Group suggested that a security guard could be hired to monitor the remote lot at night. Some employees may still have security concerns, especially waitstaff leaving restaurants late at night with cash on hand, but options may be available to address these concerns. Perhaps taxi drivers would be willing to drive employees to the lot for an established flat fee, for example.

Remote parking does not necessarily mean that it should be free. After all, a convincing incentive for their participation is likely to be the prospect of additional revenue. However, incentives must be created to encourage employers and employees to participate as well, especially since they may need to participate financially to defray the costs of the program. Businesses without parking lots may wish to participate to benefit their employees, while others may desire to relieve overcrowding in their on-site facilities.

The City of Decatur may be able to create some additional incentives. For example, a tax on free parking spaces could be used to fund the program as it would directly benefit the businesses that do not charge for parking.

Since this possible solution would require considerable coordination amongst employers, employees, remote lot providers and others, a TMA or parking brokerage may be an appropriate organization to establish and manage the program.

#### **Possible Solution: Improve parking signage**

Decatur advertises on its website the location and current fees for the major parking decks. Most of the facilities also have on-site signage to direct drivers to available spaces. Despite these efforts, many people complain that they do not know where to find parking.

One problem is that parking is typically an afterthought for drivers who do not think to check the website before leaving home. The increasing popularity of handheld, internet-ready phones could help to overcome this problem, but it might help to give the parking website an address that is easier to remember (e.g. [www.decaturga.com/parking](http://www.decaturga.com/parking) rather than the current [www.decaturga.com/cgs\\_citysvcs\\_ced\\_parking.aspx](http://www.decaturga.com/cgs_citysvcs_ced_parking.aspx) address). Moreover, although the website lists the parking fees at the various decks, the facilities are not clearly referenced on the map on the website so they would be difficult to find for someone unfamiliar with the area.

Another issue is that the brown signs to direct drivers to the available parking facilities are designed to unobtrusively blend into the streetscape rather than clutter it. The problem is that they may achieve their objective a little too well and drivers miss them as they are cruising around looking for parking. This helps to explain why the most visible lots are also the most heavily used.

Decatur can work with its parking providers to remedy this problem with improved signage that balances visibility with aesthetic design. If neon or internally-lit signs are inappropriate, for example, backlit signs could be used. Sidewalk A-frame signs could let drivers know when parking lots are full during the day.



***Though attractive, Decatur's parking signage is sometimes not visible enough to drivers.***

One solution suggested at the Restaurant / Retail Group meeting in March is to consider hiring a flagger on Friday and Saturday evenings and during special events to direct drivers to available parking. This strategy has been used with success in Virginia Highlands and Midtown Atlanta. Not only do visitors learn where off-street parking is available, they may feel safer knowing that someone is monitoring the parking lot at night.

The City should encourage or require parking providers to post their prices clearly at a location *before* the driver must make a decision whether to park in that location, especially in cases where the facility charges only a flat rate for daily parking. Otherwise, drivers may be wary of using parking decks and choose to jockey for on-street parking.

**Possible Solution: Improve parking lighting**

Adequate parking lighting is essential for safety. Even during the day, many drivers avoid dimly-lit parking decks and opt instead for surface lot or on-street spaces closer to their destinations if they are available. At night, safety is even more of a concern and visitors are less willing to walk longer distances to remote parking.

Parking facilities should be required to provide and maintain adequate lighting at all times. Lighting should be trained inward or otherwise shielded to assure that it is not a nuisance to neighboring properties

Regular patrols by City police or private security guards can also ensure public safety.

**Possible Solution: Construct a new public parking facility**

The CTP calls for the City of Decatur to develop criteria for establishing new and publicly-accessible garages. Indeed, a new, centrally-located parking deck for employees and residents was recommended several times in the Downtown Business Survey and Downtown Residential Survey. While the City should develop criteria to evaluate when such a facility is warranted, the Parking Facility Survey and Occupancy Survey in this report demonstrate that there is considerable parking capacity still available in the downtown area. Given the extremely high cost of building a new parking deck (\$20,000 per space), it would be much more cost-effective to exhaust all of the other possible solutions in this report to better manage Decatur's existing parking supply before undertaking such a massive, expensive project.

Therefore, although this option is listed as a "possible solution," it is not recommended.

***Development Regulations***

The Occupancy Survey primarily focused on facilities with at least some public-accessible spaces. Downtown businesses were asked to survey occupancy in their own parking lots but there was little participation. Since the analysis for this section is therefore incomplete, most of the recommendations for regulating new development focus on ways to realistically assess the expected parking demand during the permitting phase.

***Review of Goals identified in CTP:***

- Develop guidelines for site plan review
- Revise zoning requirements
- Bicycle parking provisions
- Track the results

**Possible Solution: Encourage shared parking**

The *Shared Parking Handbook*, developed by Stein Engineering, notes that allowing shared parking in local development regulations is not usually sufficient to encourage developers to take advantage of it; rather, municipalities need to actively encourage and incentivize its use (1997).

While Decatur's Zoning Ordinance currently permits shared parking in some circumstances when the uses have different hours of operation, it still requires multiple-use developments with the same operating hours to provide as many parking spaces as if the lots were being developed individually. This requirement implies that all of the contributing uses will fill up their spaces at the same time, which is extremely unlikely. Moreover, this requirement removes any incentives for sharing parking because the developers have to provide the same number of spaces as they would under normal conditions. Therefore, it is recommended that the City reduce the minimum number of parking spaces required for businesses that share parking, even if they have the same operating hours.



*With different peak parking demand times, the DeKalb Medical Center and VA Hospital can share parking with the First United Methodist Church.*

The ordinance should also explicitly address shared parking requirements for mixed-use developments outside the MU District. Mixed residential-commercial or residential-office developments offer some of the best opportunities for shared parking because the non-residential uses need parking primarily during the day, while residential uses have greater parking demands in the evening and at night.

Currently, however, all of the condominiums in downtown Decatur restrict their residential parking, enforced by signage, gates, keycards and common garage-style doors. To encourage developers to combine at least some residential and non-residential parking, Decatur could regulate the number of residentially-restricted parking spaces that can be provided. Even if the City limited the number of residentially-restricted spaces to one per unit (the minimum number of required spaces), developers could still sell or lease more spaces for residents, they would just not be designated for a particular resident. Developers, residents or condo associations concerned about safety in uncaged residential parking areas can provide additional security measures like cameras or security guards.

Another way to share parking is with on-street parking. Decatur currently requires all mandated parking to be located in off-street lots. On-street parking would serve those developments as well as other nearby uses.

### **Possible Solution: Unbundle residential parking**

Unbundled parking occurs when the spaces are rented, lease or sold separately from the building space. For example, instead of paying \$1,000 per month for an apartment with two parking spaces included, renters could pay \$800 plus \$100 for each parking space. Litman estimates that unbundling reduces parking demands by 10-30% (2008).

Unbundling parking allows building users to only pay for the parking they need and incentivizes or rewards alternative transportation use. It can also reduce the cost of affordable housing, since lower-income residents are less likely to have cars. Like everyone else, low-income residents would only pay for the parking they use.

This solution might work well in Decatur, given the number of residential survey respondents who only have one car. If this trend is borne out by a larger survey population, it could provide an adequate rationale for unbundling parking.

Some of the residential parking in downtown Decatur is unbundled already, at least for the second space. According to the Downtown Resident Parking Survey, residents pay between \$30 and \$60 per month for an additional parking space. Decatur could require this unbundling as part of the development approval process.

Understandably, unbundled parking typically occurs in urban areas where land and space costs are at a premium. Arlington, Virginia allows unbundled parking as a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) option allowed for new development. The City does not have a specific ordinance for unbundling but it is permitted through the development approval process. The City of Atlanta has also allowed unbundling in some Transit Oriented Development (TOD, e.g. Lindbergh).

## CONCLUSION

As complicated and “unsexy” as parking can be, its management is vital to downtown Decatur’s continued success. Demand has reached capacity at peak times in a couple of lots (namely, East Court Square and North McDonough Street), but a contributing issue is that these parking lots are so visible and centrally-located that they fuel public perception that there is not enough parking in downtown Decatur. Yet, there are a total of 8,885 spaces in the downtown area, many of which are underutilized on a regular basis.

Where congestion currently exists, effective parking management would disperse the demand to nearby facilities. Since these lots and decks are not as desirable, the City must look for ways to increase their attractiveness to drivers. Pricing parking and/or setting time limits are the most effective ways to shift demand. These strategies are often unpopular with drivers and businesses used to free parking in other locations. Although Decatur cannot affect large-scale change outside its borders, most businesses that have their own parking lots do not charge for parking. Naturally, drivers would prefer to park for free where possible so they gravitate towards these lots, causing the businesses to restrict the lots for customers only. This cycle undermines Decatur’s vision of creating a “Mallternative” with a park-once environment.

While one solution would be to increase fees for on-street parking and the most desirable lots to push the long-term parkers and those unwilling to pay to parking decks, such a strategy runs the risk of hurting downtown businesses, especially since

Decatur's on-street rates are already so high relative to other parts of the Atlanta metro area. With rumors that Atlanta's on-street parking rates may soon be increased to \$3.00 or more per hour, it could support the prospect of raising rates.

Since there are already complaints that the City's on-street fees are too high, charging less for parking facilities that are farther away allows drivers to choose which commodity is more important: price or convenience. For this strategy to work, however, drivers must know where less expensive parking is available and trust that is safe. Improving signage and educating businesses, employees and visitors about the location and cost of these facilities is critically important. Standardizing or simplifying the rates would also help, as would better lighting or security guards.

Addressing these issues effectively requires considerable public dialogue and cooperation. A Transportation Management Association or central parking authority that works with off-street parking providers could fill this role. Such an organization could facilitate shared parking agreements between different land uses and work to find new options for employee parking so that they do not occupy spaces needed by customers and visitors. It could oversee routine collection of parking data to monitor occupancy and turnover and advocate changes that would improve existing conditions. The group should also promote healthy, clean transportation alternatives to reduce parking demand. Finally, it could work with developers to find appropriate strategies to reduce both parking demand and supply, allowing the space to be dedicated to revenue-generating, community-building uses rather than parking.

### ***Next Steps***

The most important next step that Decatur can take is to continue the parking dialogue that has begun with this project. The parking managers appear willing to work with the City to resolve some of the existing issues, especially concerning remote parking for employees, improving public parking signage and easing on-street parking demand. The Restaurant / Retail group also appears eager to discuss and resolve these issues. The next forum could bring together these two groups, who may have very different concepts of the problems and solutions. Yet there are certainly opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. If nothing else, it is important for these stakeholders (and the City) to understand the specific concerns and challenges that currently exist.

Decatur should continue to explore ways to improve on-street parking technology. The Cell Phone Lots have advantages over traditional coin-operated meters because they accept credit cards, but multi-space meters may be more convenient and popular with drivers. Decatur could allow private companies to operate and manage the meters if they provide them free of charge or at a significantly reduced rate. The City should take measures to ensure that the private company provides an acceptable level of service, however.



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Finally, Decatur should work with public parking operators to improve the visibility signage in the downtown area. While the signs are definitely attractive, they need to be more visible to drivers, especially at night.

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## APPENDIX A: OFF-STREET PARKING FACILITIES IN DOWNTOWN DECATUR

Lot #	Name	Type	Spaces	Customer Restricted?	Paid?
1	125-129 Trinity Place	Surface	14	Yes	No
2	209 Swanton Way Office Condos	Surface	61	Yes	No
3	215 Church Street	Surface	40	Yes	No
4	246 Sycamore Street	Deck	20	Yes	No
5	308 W Ponce Shops	Surface	25	Yes	No
6	315/Decatur Court	Surface	367	No	Yes
7	325 Swanton Way	Deck	87	Yes	No
8	335 West Ponce	Deck	180	Yes	No
9	431-419 West Ponce	Surface	49	Yes	No
10	523-547 Church Street	Surface	106	Yes	No
11	750 Commerce Drive	Surface	150	Yes	No
12	Artisan	Deck	463	No	Yes
13	Bank of America	Surface	89	Yes	No
14	Big Peach Running Co	Surface	13	No	Yes
15	Cakes & Ale	Surface	8	Yes	No
16	Century Cleaners Express	Surface	5	Yes	No
17	Chick-Fil-A	Surface	43	Yes	No
18	Church Street Public Parking	Surface	105	No	Yes
19	City Hall	Surface	25	Yes	No
20	Commerce Square	Surface	154	Yes	No
21	County Courthouse	Deck	1200	No	Yes
22	Decatur First Bank	Surface	44	No	No
23	Decatur First United Methodist Church	Surface	205	Yes	No
24	Decatur Lock & Key	Surface	10	Yes	No
25	Decatur Medical Plaza	Surface	26	No	Yes
26	Decatur Presbyterian Church	Surface	63	Yes	No
27	Decatur Rec Center & Library & Fire Station	Deck / Surface	161	Yes	No
28	Decatur Renaissance Center	Deck	1112	No	Yes
29	DeKalb County Employee Deck	Deck	290	Yes	No
30	East Court Square	Surface	22	No	Yes
31	Eddie's Attic (Old Suntrust Lot)	Surface	30	No	Yes
32	Emory Clinic	Deck	263	No	Yes
33	Emory Hope Clinic	Surface	13	Yes	No
34	Fairview Building	Surface	33	Yes	No
35	Fidelity Bank	Surface	192	Yes	No
36	First Baptist Church	Deck	253	Yes	No
37	First Baptist Church (Surface)	Surface	233	Yes	No
38	Franklin Printing	Surface	22	No	No
39	Gibson Chiropractic	Surface	11	Yes	No
40	Greene's	Surface	23	No	No

Lot #	Name	Type	Spaces	Customer Restricted?	Paid?
41	Hi Tech Gas Station	Surface	31	Yes	Yes
42	Holiday Inn	Deck	390	No	Yes
43	House Adjacent to Decatur Lock & Key	Surface	10	No	No
44	Jin Jin	Surface	15	Yes	No
45	Jones PT	Surface	51	Yes	No
46	Kroger	Surface	84	No	No
47	Little Azio	Surface	25	Yes	No
48	Maloof Building	Surface	122	Yes	No
49	McDonald's	Surface	43	No	No
50	McDonough Lot	Surface	30	No	Yes
51	Melrose on Ponce	Surface	23	No	No
52	One West Court Square	Deck	358	No	Yes
53	Parker's on Ponce	Surface	20	Yes	No
54	Philips Tower	Surface	58	Yes	No
55	Post Office	Surface	79	No	No
56	SE Corner of Church & Commerce	Surface	62	No	Yes
57	Sharpian Rugs	Surface	16	No	No
58	Suntrust	Surface	59	Yes	No
59	Sycamore House (Decatur Presbyterian)	Surface	10	Yes	No
60	Taco Mac	Surface	32	Yes	No
61	Taqueria del Sol	Surface	42	No	No
62	Terra Mater	Surface	13	Yes	No
63	The Callaway Building	Surface	272	Yes	No
64	The Grange	Surface	13	Yes	No
65	Towne Square Condos	Deck	200	Yes	Yes
66	Trinity Building	Surface	31	No	Yes
67	Twain's	Surface	17	No	No
68	Two Decatur Town Center	Deck	490	No	Yes
69	Up Close Parking	Surface	30	No	Yes
70	Voila Cafe	Surface	49	Yes	No

**APPENDIX B: PARKING OCCUPANCY SURVEY FORM**

**City of Decatur  
Downtown Business Parking Survey**

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name Person Completing Survey: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ How many parking spaces are in the lot? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you share the lot with other businesses? Yes No  
 If yes, what are the name(s) of the businesses? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Including yourself, how many employees work at this business (part-time and full-time)? \_\_\_\_\_  
 For the employees who drive to work, where do they park? \_\_\_\_\_

During each "window" of time below, please count the number of parked vehicles in your parking lot and fill in the appropriate blank on the survey. Only include vehicles in your off-street parking lot, **do not** include on-street parking. If you share your parking lot with other businesses, we only need one count – please work this out with your neighbors! If you offer parking for "alternative" vehicles (bicycle, motorcycle, compact car, etc.), count these vehicles and fill the number in the appropriate blanks. Be sure to also fill in the type of alternative vehicles that you are counting. If you have any questions, please call Andrea Lytle at (828) 228-1334 or email [andrea.lytle@gatech.edu](mailto:andrea.lytle@gatech.edu). Thank you for your participation!

Week 1 : November 10 – 15, 2008				
	# of Parked Vehicles	# of users of alt. parking Type A	# of users of alt. parking Type B	Additional Information
Tuesday 1:30-4:30pm				Exact Survey Time: _____
Wednesday 9:00am-noon				Type of Alternative Parking A: _____
Friday 6:00-9:00pm				Type of Alternative Parking B: _____
Saturday 1:30-4:30pm				

Week 2 : November 17 – 22, 2008				
	# of Parked Vehicles	# of users of alt. parking Type A	# of users of alt. parking Type B	Additional Information
Tuesday 1:30-4:30pm				Exact Survey Time: _____
Wednesday 9:00am-noon				Type of Alternative Parking A: _____
Friday 6:00-9:00pm				Type of Alternative Parking B: _____
Saturday 1:30-4:30pm				

Week 3 : December 8 – 13, 2008				
	# of Parked Vehicles	# of users of alt. parking Type A	# of users of alt. parking Type B	Additional Information
Tuesday 1:30-4:30pm				Exact Survey Time: _____
Wednesday 9:00am-noon				Type of Alternative Parking A: _____
Friday 6:00-9:00pm				Type of Alternative Parking B: _____
Saturday 1:30-4:30pm				

## APPENDIX C: DOWNTOWN BUSINESS PARKING SURVEY QUESTIONS

### Introduction

The City of Decatur is considering revising its parking regulations and programs to better serve the businesses and residents in the downtown area, while still maintaining the City's commitment to encouraging alternative transportation options. This survey is designed to learn more about parking needs and conditions in downtown Decatur.

Note that this is a different survey than the one distributed recently requesting that business owners count vehicles in their parking lots.

This survey is intended only for downtown businesses in the City of Decatur. If you do not have a business that meets this criteria, you do not need to fill out this survey. However, there will be opportunities in the spring of 2009 to provide your input and feedback - we welcome your participation then!

This survey should take no longer than 15 - 20 minutes to complete. Please be assured that your survey responses will remain completely anonymous. Thank you so much for your participation!

### Preliminary Questions

1. Including yourself, how many employees work at this business (part-time and full-time)?

- 1 - 5
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- More than 20

2. How would you characterize your position in this business?

- Owner
- Manager
- Employee
- Other

3. Where do employees park? (check all that apply)

- In a parking lot on our property or in an adjacent shared parking lot nearby
- In a free parking lot nearby (not affiliated with our business directly)



- In a pay parking lot nearby
- At a parking meter on the street
- Employees use alternative transportation to get to work
- I don't know

#### Alternative Transportation

4. Do any employees walk or bicycle to work 2 or more times per week?

- No
- Yes (please specify how many employees)

5. Do any employees take transit (MARTA bus, MARTA train or the Emory Cliff shuttle) to work 2 or more times per week?

- No
- Yes (please specify how many employees)

#### Parking Lot Questions

Note: if you answer "No" to this question, you will skip the next several questions.

6. Do you have a parking lot dedicated to your business OR share a parking lot with other businesses?

- Yes
- No

*(If the respondent answers No, he/she will jump to Question #16).*

Questions 7- 15 refer to the parking lot dedicated to your business or the parking lot you share with other businesses. It does NOT pertain to on-street parking.

7. Is this parking lot reserved for your customers only? Or, if you share a parking lot with other businesses, is this parking lot reserved for customers of those businesses only?

- Yes
- No

*(If the respondent answers No, he/she will jump to Question #13).*

8. Why is this parking lot reserved for customers only? (check all that apply)

- To ensure parking for our customers

- To prevent long-term parking
- Liability
- Other (please specify)

9. On average, how many cars per YEAR do you have towed from or booted in this parking lot?

- 0
- 1 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- More than 20
- I don't know

10. IF you share this parking lot with other businesses, how do you resolve issues related to the parking lot (assigning spaces, repaving, deciding how much to charge, etc.)?

Please leave this question blank if (a) you are not sure or (b) you have a parking lot solely dedicated to your business.

11. On a typical business day, does this parking lot charge for parking?

- Yes
- No

*(If the respondent answers No, he/she will jump to Question #13).*

12. Do you think the parking fee is appropriate?

- Yes
- No - too low
- No - too high

13. During a typical week, when do you think this parking lot has the most cars?

- Monday - Friday specifically during lunch (11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.)
- Monday - Friday during the workday (generally, not just lunch)
- Monday - Friday evenings
- Friday and/or Saturday evenings
- Saturday and/or Sunday during the day
- I don't know

14. On a typical business day, how easy or difficult is for your CUSTOMERS to find a place to park in this parking lot?

- Almost always easy
- Usually easy - except during peak hours
- Somewhat difficult most of the time
- Almost always difficult
- I don't know

15. On a typical business day, how easy or difficult is for your EMPLOYEES to find a place to park in this parking lot?

- Almost always easy
- Usually easy - except during peak hours
- Somewhat difficult most of the time
- Almost always difficult
- I don't know

#### **Parking Incentives**

For Questions 16 - 18, "alternative transportation" is defined as any mode of transportation other than a single-occupancy vehicle. Examples include: walking, bicycling, carpooling, MARTA bus or train, the Emory Cliff shuttle, motorcycles/scooters, etc.

16. Would you support any of the following incentives to encourage your employees to use alternative transportation to get to work? (check all that apply)

- Publicize to employees a website that advertises alternative transportation options (e.g. MARTA schedules, carpool opportunities)
- Provide discounted MARTA passes for employees
- Charge employees who park in the lot
- Give a cash incentive to employees who forgo a parking space

17. Do you currently offer any incentives to your employees to alternative transportation to get to work?

- No
- Yes (please specify what incentives you offer)

18. Would you be interested in purchasing tokens or smart cards for on-street parking meters to give to good customers or clients?

- Yes  
 No

**Your Opinions**

19. One a scale of 1 - 5, how much of a concern is parking for your business?

- 1 - Not a concern  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 - The most pressing concern facing my business

20. How would you characterize the availability of parking in downtown Decatur?

- Too much parking available  
 Not enough parking available  
 Too much parking in some places, not enough in other places

21. Would you support a uniform management agreement for all parking lots and decks to better manage and market downtown parking?

- Yes  
 No

22. Please take this opportunity to provide any feedback that you want the City of Decatur to know about parking in downtown.



Thank you so much for your participation in this survey!

If you have any questions or would like to participate in a parking focus group, please contact Amanda Thompson, Planning Director, at (404) 370-4104 or email [amanda.thompson@decaturga.com](mailto:amanda.thompson@decaturga.com).

This process will continue through the spring of 2009. More information will be forthcoming - we welcome and encourage your participation in this process!

## APPENDIX D: DOWNTOWN RESIDENT PARKING SURVEY QUESTIONS

### Introduction

The City of Decatur is looking for ways to improve parking conditions in the downtown area to better serve the residents and businesses. Decatur must balance this goal with its commitment to encouraging alternative transportation options and improving air quality. To inform this process, the City is conducting a survey to learn more about parking needs and conditions in downtown.

This survey is intended only for CONDOMINIUM or APARTMENT residents who live in downtown Decatur. If you do not fit this criteria, you should not complete this survey. This survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Please be assured that your survey responses will remain completely anonymous. Thank you so much for your participation!

### Household Information

1. Including yourself, how many people currently reside in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

2. How many people in your household work in downtown Decatur?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

3. How many personal vehicles does your household currently own or lease?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

*(If the respondent answers No, he/she will jump to Question #12).*

### Family Vehicles

4. Where do you park your vehicles at night? (check all that apply)

- In a driveway or garage

- In a parking lot or deck associated with my condo or apartment that IS restricted for residents
- In a parking lot or deck associated with my condo or apartment that IS NOT restricted for residents
- On the street

Other (please specify):

5. Does your household pay to park your vehicles at night? For example, you pay \$25 per month to lease a parking space.

- Yes\*
- No

\*Please specify how much parking costs or if it was included in your house purchase / rent:

6. If you own a bicycle, where do you park or store the bicycle?

#### Driving Habits

7. How many people in your household DRIVE an automobile at least once a week?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

8. How many people in your household drive an automobile ALONE to work or school every day (or almost every day)? This does not include children that you drop off at school or day care.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

9. On a typical day, how many trips do you and the members of your household make by automobile? (for example, leaving the house to go shopping then immediately returning home counts as 2 trips)

10. On a typical day, how many TOTAL miles do you and the members of your household drive?

11. In an average month, which of the following responses would characterize how often members of your household drive to a destination in downtown Decatur?

- Very few of our trips downtown are made by automobile
- About half of our trips downtown are made by automobile
- Almost all our trips downtown are made by automobile

### Commuting Habits

12. How many people in your household walk, bicycle, carpool, ride a bus (including the Emory Cliff Shuttle) or ride MARTA to work or school 2 or more times per week?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

13. If your condo association or building manager offered discounted MARTA passes, would you be interested in purchasing them?

- Yes
- No\*

\*If no, please explain why:

### Parking

14. When you drive downtown, how easy or difficult is it for you to find parking at or near your destination?

- Almost always easy
- Usually easy - except at certain times of the day\*
- Somewhat difficult most of the time
- Almost always difficult
- I don't drive downtown
- I don't know

\*Please specify the days/times when you have difficulty:

15. How would you characterize the availability of parking downtown Decatur?

- Too much parking available
- Not enough parking available
- Too much parking in some places, not enough in other places
- I don't know

**16. Please take this opportunity to provide any feedback that you want the City of Decatur to know about parking in downtown.**



**Thank You!**

Thank you so much for your participation in this survey! Your feedback is very important to this process as the City of Decatur considers ways to improve parking downtown. This process will continue through the spring and summer your input!

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Amanda Thompson, Planning Director, at (404) 370-4104 or email [amanda.thompson@decaturga.com](mailto:amanda.thompson@decaturga.com).