



## Why Pay Parking?

There are several arguments for and against pay parking in a downtown context. The most common argument against is that some business owners feel that pay parking is inconvenient, discourages potential customers, and/or limits their ability to recruit qualified employees. These businesses may perceive competition with suburban retail centers where parking is free and plentiful.



*Downtown Boulder, Colorado – [bouldercolorado.gov](http://bouldercolorado.gov)*

To refute this argument, urbanists point to American Communities Survey (ACS) data from the U.S. Census Bureau comparing trends in the 1990's through 2010's. This data shows that most downtowns have experienced an increase in both population and economic activity since the suburban shifts experienced in the 1980's. Of the most vibrant downtowns in terms of economic activity, almost all support some form of pay and managed public parking. Pay parking is almost universal in major US cities including Salt Lake, Denver, and Phoenix. Pay parking is also frequently found in many smaller cities, towns, and tourist-friendly destinations such as Park City, Grand Junction, Fort Collins, Estes Park, Manitou Springs, Rapid City, and Flagstaff.

Planners often use the term “placemaking” to imply that downtown city centers are a unique context. Here, the density of jobs, housing, pedestrian activity, public transportation, one-of-a-kind stores, restaurants, and venues, and the overall downtown experience are more powerful economic factors

than the potential impact of charging for parking – especially if parking fees are reasonable compared to the price of goods and services.



*Historic 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Downtown Ogden – Ogden City Business Development*

So why is pay parking so important to the health and vibrancy of a developing downtown? Simply stated, pay parking allows for the equitable and efficient management of a limited resource.

By charging for parking, urban centers can help to create turn-over within the most convenient and desirable public parking supplies, generally on-street spaces, while managing off-street resources appropriately. A well-run public parking system will cover operating expenses and may generate additional income to maintain public infrastructure, build new facilities, incentivize new development, reduce traffic congestion, and subsidize other types of transit and mobility programs. Additionally, pay parking systems are generally more efficient than free parking. Over time, this efficiency allows for higher development density, more diversity of land uses, and a more walkable, bikeable, and vibrant city center. With the arrival of many new technologies for payment, wayfinding, and reservations, pay parking is often easy to use and may result in more availability of on-street spaces to serve customers and visitors.

As outlined in the City's *Make Ogden Plan* (See: "Episode 1 Catalyze – Developer Led/City Supported"), portions of the downtown area will be redeveloped to increase their productive use and positively impact the overall community. While current parking capacity in the downtown is generally adequate, the redevelopment initiatives associated with the *Make Ogden Plan* will reduce some existing surface parking, increase downtown business/residential activities, and increase parking demand and the need for related new parking structures. Proper valuation of the existing downtown public parking assets also suggests that the timing is appropriate and necessary to pro-actively manage existing supplies and add new facilities. For these reasons, implementing a pay parking system is recommended as one of the first steps to undertake to allow for catalytic redevelopment of Ogden's downtown core.