

Dynamics of Downtown Fargo Parking

(On-street & Off-street)



General Overview: In 1948 North Dakota voters approved a ban on parking meters as part of a statewide initiative. This law restricts municipalities from operating on-street parking meters (N.D.C.C. 39-01-09). As such, the City has utilized time zones to establish an environment in the downtown core where there is adequate turn-over of parking spaces to support a healthy retail and business environment.

On-Street Parking: As shown in the attached exhibit, there are a number of time zones in the downtown core – with a large percentage of the corridors at 90 minutes. On-street time zones are enforced between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Parking studies completed by the City strongly suggest that on-street parking in the core needs to be simplified (too many time zones) and that there is a significant amount of on-street parking that is underutilized in ‘fringe’ blocks. Outlined below are a few additional factors that apply to on-street parking in the core:

Overnight Restrictions: By City code and within the Central Business District (CBD) it is unlawful to park between the hours of 2 a.m. and 7 a.m. on streets and avenues, dependent upon the day. This is a year-around restriction to accommodate snow removal and street sweeping; unlike other ‘core’ areas of the city that have restrictions from 1 a.m. to 7 a.m. between November and April.

North/South Streets – restricted between 2 a.m. and 7 a.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

East/West Avenues – restricted between 2 a.m. and 7 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

Downtown Residential Parking Pass Program (DRP3): This permit program allows downtown residents the ability to park ‘on-street’ and not be subject to time zone restrictions. Permits are not valid on Broadway or critical retail corridors – and residents are still subject to overnight restrictions per above. These permits are \$25 per month and require proof of residency in the downtown core.

Re-Park Ordinance: The City of Fargo has had language in the municipal code addressing “re-parking” or “short moves” since the early 1960’s. In short, the city does not allow drivers to move their car from one parking space to another space on the same block to avoid receiving a parking ticket. The re-park ordinance and signage state that a vehicle must move off the block face and not return for a minimum of 4 hours. Enforcement of the re-park ordinances was problematic until the city transitioned to digital handheld units about 10 years ago. The City currently uses Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) software which has further improved the efficiency of enforcement in the downtown core.

4HOUR CONCEPT: The Parking Commission has been working over the last year (+) to develop an on-street time zone concept for the downtown core that would simplify the system and also make better use of underutilized on-street capacity in ‘fringe’ blocks. In general, the concept suggests making a majority of the on-street parking 4 hour time zones other than Broadway, Roberts Street and 5th Street which would remain as 90 minute time zones. The Parking Commission and City Commission decided to implement an initial phase between 5th Street and the Red River which was completed in November (2014).

To note, the re-park ordinance would continue to apply and in regards to the 4-hour time zones a vehicle would still need to move at minimum once per day.

The rationale for this rather aggressive change includes a number of considerations:

1. A majority of the ‘fringe’ blocks have an on-street utilization number at or well below 50%.
2. A majority of city owned parking facilities are at or over capacity – and there is limited hourly or transient parking available in these off-street locations.
3. Complexity of the existing time zone system (see exhibit).
4. Consistency and efficiency from an enforcement perspective.
5. Supplemental ‘longer term’ parking that is proximal to the downtown core.

Off-Street Parking: The City owns and operates seven (7) surface parking lots and three (3) structured parking facilities which equates to approximately 1,600 off-street spaces. NP Avenue (surface lot), the Civic Center Ramp and both 2nd Avenue North surface lots accommodate limited hourly/transient parking with rates ranging between \$1.00 to \$1.50 per hour and daily rates between \$5.00 to \$7.00. Parking is free in all city off-street surface lots between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. (other than during special events).

“Plenty of Parking” POP Program: The current POP program is intended to provide convenient and affordable hourly/transient parking to downtown customers. The program provides a downtown customer with a FREE hour of parking and the city invoices the corresponding business at a reduced rate (\$0.75) for each ticket collected. This program will be changing as the city transitions in the next year to digital pay stations (kiosks) at parking facilities that accommodate hourly/transient parking.