

CITY OF FARGO

PARKING RAMP SITE EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Helenske Design Group (architect) and Carl Walker Inc (Parking Consultant) were retained by the City of Fargo to complete a downtown parking ramp feasibility study. The overarching intent of the study is to explore various sites and concepts to facilitate construction of future downtown parking structures.

Background

As part of two previous parking studies (1999 and 2003) there was preliminary analysis on a number of sites that could potentially accommodate a parking structure. Additionally, in the last few years there has been a focus on the 2nd Ave N/Roberts St location and some very conceptual sketches have been explored; although they were very limited in detail and scope.

Based on current landscape, the Parking Commission and City Commission determined the timing was appropriate to further explore ramp locations in the downtown core with the following considerations at the forefront:

1. A recognized existing parking deficit in the 'core' (Broadway/2nd Ave) sub-area of approximately 400-600 spaces pursuant to studies completed in 2003, 2007 and 2012;
2. An understanding that strategically placed parking structures will catalyze additional economic development and investment in the downtown core; and
3. Opportunities for public/private partnerships and joint ventures on mixed-use projects.

Scope of Work

In response to the recognized needs, the scope of work for the feasibility study was developed and was split into three (3) phases. Note that this presentation is only focused on findings from Part A of the overall scope of work.

Part A. (Multiple Site Evaluation) – Part A includes general site analysis for each location and focuses on opportunities, constraints, potential spin-off benefit for adjacent redevelopment or investment as well as opportunities for mixed-use. As part of this effort, the consultant team produced a series of concepts for 6 sites as determined with City input. The development sites are discussed below.

Part B (Schematic Design) – If pursued, Part B will take 1 or 2 conceptual options to further evolve the selected options into a design. This component will include analysis of structural systems, parking control systems, technology, construction timing/phasing and cost estimates.

Part C (Architectural Services) – This component is built in to the scope as an 'optional' task if the city decides to pursue plans for any of the options that may result from the analysis, research, findings and recommendations pursuant to Part A and Part B.

Development Sites

Based on current and future needs, several potential parking garage sites were assessed. A total of seven sites were identified for the development of a new or expanded parking ramp within the next few years, with each site being located near the downtown core. The seven sites are as follows:

- Site 1: Warner Site (401 Broadway and 410 5th St N)
- Site 2: St. Marks Church Site (4th Ave & 7th St)
- Site 3: 2nd Avenue North, North Lot (2nd Ave N & Roberts Street)
- Site 4: 2nd Avenue North, South Lot (2nd Ave N)
- Site 5: Civic Center Ramp (Expansion of existing structure at 411 2nd Ave N)
- Site 6: City Hall Site (200 3rd St N, south half of City Hall site)
- Site 7: NP Avenue Site (636 NP Avenue)

Based on the dimensions and configuration of each site, several potential parking development sites were developed at each location. Each of the development sites were reviewed for parking layout, potential mixed-use opportunities, potential construction costs, and other factors. These factors were summarized in the Parking Ramp Options Comparison Matrix located at the end of this report.

Property Ownership & Master Planning

It is important to note that this study and in particular Part A of the scope of work is an exercise in very high elevation "master planning" and feasibility analysis. A majority of the sites studied have a City of Fargo 'ownership' component although many of the concepts would also require coordination, partnerships or negotiations with adjacent private property owners. Although a majority of the private property owners that would be directly impacted by any of these concepts

have been involved in the discussions to-date; this study is not intended to represent agreement or support for any of the ideas or concepts – but is solely intended to determine whether a ramp could be placed in each of the locations and related factors.

Stakeholder Involvement

As part of the process to develop the concepts for each site – the consultant team held a number of individual meetings with downtown developers and stakeholders. Additionally, a design charrette was conducted with representatives from the Downtown Community Partnership (DCP). We anticipate additional input opportunities as this discussion evolves as part of future efforts.

Critical Factors for Consideration

As further detailed in the report, from a strict feasibility perspective the two (2) most critical factors in evaluating a site for development of a parking ramp is location and site dimensions. In general, walking distances exceeding 2 or 3 blocks are considered unacceptable to most parking patrons. In terms of site dimensions, the size and shape of the ramp influences the efficiency of the ramp and ultimately its cost effectiveness.

Other considerations:

Spin-off Potential – A strategically designed parking program and parking infrastructure can act as catalyst for economic development and investment. A majority of the studied sites are in locations where the construction of a ramp would produce spin-off benefit in the form of economic development on adjacent blocks.

Mixed-Use – The ability to keep sidewalk space activated on downtown corridors is critical; specifically the Goodyear/Warner, NP Avenue and 2nd Avenue/Roberts St are locations. Each site studied offers varying degrees of opportunities for a mixture of uses. The feasibility study also analyzes opportunities to vertically mix uses or in other terms the possibility of accommodating residential development on-top of a parking ramp.

Multi-Use Ramps – If a ramp can be placed and programmed to be utilized 24/7 the efficiency and revenue generating capacity of the ramp is substantially increased. For example, a ramp associated with a hotel or event venue works well as the spaces can be rented during the day to downtown workers or hourly parkers and at night the ramp is utilized as well. Additionally, a few of these sites are better suited to handle longer-term hourly parking needs within the downtown core.

Cost per Space - The feasibility study suggests that the cost per space would be in the \$20 to \$25K range. Most of these sites currently accommodate surface parking and therefore the 'net' cost per space at these locations is in the range of \$25-35K.

Sloping Floors towards the Streetscape – Depending on the concept and layout certain ramp concepts will have sloping floors that would abut the public right-of-way. Similar to the Civic Center Ramp, these sloping floors are much more difficult to treat architecturally and blend into a downtown urban environment versus flat floors.

Parking Site Evaluation Conclusion

The Fargo Parking Commission's focus is to serve the Downtown Business Community and its partnership with retail, entertainment, professional and service sector businesses. Over the past fifteen years, there have been a series of parking studies completed to assist the Commission in planning for the future of downtown Fargo. The earliest of these studies preceded the significant redevelopment in downtown Fargo, which sprang from the commitments made by North Dakota State University and the incentives presented by the Fargo Renaissance Zone to private sector development. Today the urban core of downtown is dynamic and growing. To continue to make these strides it will be important that the downtown parking resources be managed and expanded in a manner to match the quality and growth of Fargo's downtown. Downtown is ready to move to next level, building on the solid foundation of diverse investment in the fabric of Fargo's downtown, and the pending public sector investment. The near term influence of public sector projects like the new City Hall, the renovation of the Civic Center into a Arts Performance Center, and the potentials of a new Convention Center will generate significant spin off development, and with it the need to supplement the current parking inventory for downtown.

The Study presented here, illustrates the opportunity to move forward with serious consideration of parking facility development on several sites. The objective of the Study was to determine site feasibility and set the criteria around which a schematic design can be based. In addition, the study provides the background on which to promote relationships with private sector development groups to partner on the potential mixed use opportunities presented with several of the sites.

Based on discussions with City staff, downtown stake holders and the Downtown Community Partnership, the key criteria by which the sites are evaluated was prioritized and refined. The outcome defined two criteria above all others that must be achieved:

- Convenience/proximity to core demand area for both daytime business use and evening entertainment and restaurant activity with the intent to "find a 24/7 solution".
- Avoid solutions that take away infill development opportunities.

These criteria, when balanced with the priorities set out in the original scope, bring us to a slightly different position than without them. Specifically, the solutions that respond best are those that free up or leave unaffected large parcels for development, rather than limited wrap or bookend mixed use development.

A brief summary of sites that respond to these criteria:

1. Warner Site

The Warner Site can meet the immediate demands for 400-600 cars and would provide convenient access and adjacency to the core demand of downtown Fargo as well as encourage spin off development. The Warner location would serve to support added demand from the future development on the US Bank Plaza and to a lesser degree, the parking required by the presence of the new City Hall. The Warner Site also provides opportunity for larger scale development adjacent to the parking facility.

2. Saint Mark's Church Site

This site presents limited opportunity as originally conceived along 7th Street with no connection to Roberts Street, however if the available site could be expanded to include the Salvation Army property, a much more viable opportunity would be presented. While this option is not currently available for consideration, we believe that it should be pursued in the future. Growing out of conversations with stakeholders, development groups and DCP members, this alternative solution would be able to respond to the growth that North Dakota State University envisions and reinforce the western edge of downtown Fargo's retail and entertainment business. Such a solution similar to that presented in the Site 2B illustration would serve as a bridge between the NDSU downtown campus and Roberts Street. This linkage can make a very direct connection to the alley and in turn to Broadway. The result would serve to support parking demand growth on the west edge of the commercial business core and the future spin off opportunities for housing and commercial business adjoining NDSU's campus. Pursuing an east /west site solution as described would also respond to parking demand that would arise from retaining the 2nd Avenue North site for infill development.

3. 2nd Avenue North Site

The land parcel owned by the City of Fargo provides limited opportunity for development as a parking ramp without added surface area from adjoining privately owned property. It is not the most efficient configuration and would result in a higher cost per parking stall and a lower net gain in parking stalls. The study solutions illustrate that the 2nd Avenue North site can produce several good mixed use options, and would serve to expand the downtown business core to the west along 2nd Avenue, provided the added land to the north could be acquired.

Based on discussions with the DCP, current downtown developers, as well as City staff, there is a strong desire to retain the 2nd Avenue property for a future development opportunity, given the proximity to the strong business core. This approach is consistent with the belief that Fargo should have land inventory available to respond to future development needs, and recognizes the inherent value in this keystone property.

4. 2nd Avenue South Site

The 2nd Avenue South site is very small for an efficient and comfortable parking structure, so it is not recommended at this time for parking ramp development. It too could be a good infill development site.

5. **The Civic Ramp,**

Located adjacent to the Radisson Hotel, the ramp provides a fully public controlled option to expand parking. The original 238 stall ramp was constructed in 1986 and was designed to add an additional level, with a 71 net gain of stalls. We believe that this option should remain a high priority and be looked at when there is added parking supply in place to handle the displacement of stalls during the expansion construction. These added stalls could be brought on line if phased between the construction of a new ramp on the Warner site and an additional site once future development and demand evolved.

6. **City Hall Site**

Our study establishes that the land remaining after the construction of the new City Hall can support a mixed used development. This location has been studied primarily to determine site proportion feasibility and position the City staff to have confidence in seeking potential private sector developers to develop the site. The added opportunity presented by the temporary City staff parking created across 1st Avenue will compliment any future development on the City Hall land. We believe that the City Hall site has limited potential to serve the core downtown demand due to the walking distance involved. Although the site has opportunities to link into the current skyway, the distance and convenience remains a concern in the context of the core downtown demand area. Development of this site should be driven by the broader development goals of the mixed use marketplace and the future needs of the Arts Performance Center and Convention Center. Further detailed study of this site would identify these potentials and should be done only when a development team has been established. (Craig, sometimes a City issues an RFP to developers to solicit their ideas on what is viable. The RFP could establish criteria related to the type of uses, size, zoning requirements, aesthetics, parking, etc. Thus, exploring the site does not necessarily have to wait until a "development team has been established"

7. **The NP Avenue Site**

This site is likely the easiest site to develop given the public ownership position and the cooperative nature of adjoining land owners. However, evaluating the site on the key factors of adjacency and convenience to the core demand leaves this site at a lower ranking and this study would recommend that the site continue in its current use and remain in the City inventory for future development opportunity. The site presents a great opportunity to expand the residential, retail, commercial and bar restaruant business along NP Avenue as demand grows in downtown Fargo. The NP site would be a logical location for a ramp at a future date to anchor the south end of the downtown core as the demand area grows to the south and links to NDSU's presence at the Renaissance Hall.

The analysis of the seven site options presented in this study has been based on fifteen years of data gathering and observations of the rebirth of downtown Fargo. No single site will satisfy the diverse character of Fargo's downtown, nor would the resulting scale be appropriate for Fargo's urban texture. We believe a strategic approach that anchors the current edges of the demand area will result in a long term pattern of growth that produces convenient and affordable parking for the consumer.

The following graphic illustrates this strategy and a path forward:

Strategic Approach

- Recognize That Meeting the Needs Of The Downtown Parking Demand Will Require Multiple Ramp Locations & Enhanced Public On & Off Street Parking Operations.
- **Step 1**- Commit To Design of A 500+ Space Ramp @ Warner Site, To Meet Current Parking Shortfall, & to Stimulate Development of Goodyear and US Bank Site
- Encourage P3 Development of 2nd Avenue North Lot
- **Step 2**- Expand Civic Ramp, 1 Level Minimum, Upon completion of City Hall
- Facilitate Growth of Core Demand Boundary
- Seek P3 Partnership on City Hall Land
- Explore Large Scale Mixed Use Project on NP
- **Step 3**- At Such Time as Demand Exists & Economics Are Supported, Proceed With St. Mark's & S.A. Site

