

FAQ 2 Parking Structure:

Should the City consider building a parking structure rather than looking at underground parking beneath buildings?

Below-grade parking

Pros:

- Zero or minimal visible impact
- Preserves streetscape
- Better integration with walkable urban design

Cons:

- 2–3x cost per stall
- Complex engineering (especially in high water table areas)
- Slower to build
- Less adaptable for future re-use

At-grade structure

Pros:

- Far cheaper than underground
- Faster to build
- Easier to design for future conversion (e.g., to office, retail)
- Easier maintenance

Cons:

- Visual impact: needs good design standards
- May require more land for ramps and footprint
- Potential community opposition over aesthetics

Rough Estimated Costs Based on Industry Standard

At-grade surface parking: \$5-10K per stall

Standalone above-grade parking structure: \$25-40K per stall

Below-grade parking: \$45-90K per stall

Design: The City’s Comprehensive Plan includes a strategy to “Reform Middleton’s parking regulations by eliminating minimum quantity requirements, adopting parking demand management policies and programs, enhancing facility design, and establishing on-street accessible parking solutions and loading zones in congested areas.” The language supporting this goal includes requiring above-grade parking structures to be designed with active uses along the street walls and to allow for adaptive reuse of at least some of the structure for residential or office space. Key design issues include structural capacity, floor-to-floor heights, and maximizing the use of flat floors. If the City moves forward with a parking structure, design will be especially important in our pedestrian-oriented Downtown.

Parking System: If the City decides to proceed with a parking structure, another consideration is how to most effectively integrate a parking ramp with the current parking system. At present, the parking system is fee-neutral, and parking is managed through regulations and enforcement. Under a fee-

neutral system, the addition of supply may not alleviate parking congestion during peak periods since on-street parking will remain the most convenient and first choice for many downtown visitors and employees. Simply adding supply without economic incentives that help redistribute parking demand may result in an underutilized ramp.

Operating Costs: Due to the maintenance costs associated with a parking structure (trash removal, sweeping, repairs, snow removal, etc.), municipal parking structures are typically financed and operated as part of a larger parking system. Insolvent parking ramps are often subsidized by more profitable on-street parking within a system.

Attachments: Walker Parking Consultants, Downtown Parking Needs Assessment, 2013. (See FAQ 1 supplemental)