



August 14, 2024

Mayor Teague and City Council
Attn: Geoff Fruin, City Manager
City of Iowa City
410 E. Washington Street,
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Dear Mayor Teague and City Council members,

The Iowa City Downtown District (ICDD) acknowledges the City's need to readdress transportation options and parking in downtown Iowa City. Our members and leadership understand the importance of aligning changes with the City's Climate Action Plan while ensuring that parking downtown is accessible, equitable, and functional for a multitude of users.

Major progress over the last year has been made to develop and support key City services including the fare-free transit, the Downtown Ambassadors program, and the improvement of the parking facilities. These efforts are vital for accomplishing the City's Climate goals and creating a vibrant, accessible, and welcoming downtown environment. However, we believe that additional collaboration and discussion are necessary to ensure that the proposed changes are aligned with the needs of our businesses and the broader community. City Council has identified four points paraphrased below that are important to them, and similarly, to our Downtown and community stakeholders:

- to support the Fare Free bus program after the pilot program concludes
- to ensure that the parking facilities are well maintained
- to provide the enhanced support for the Downtown Ambassador Program
- to encourage alternative modes of transportation to access downtown

In light of these shared interests, the ICDD urges the Council to consider the following that we, as an organization believe, will allow those areas to be prioritized while encouraging visitation to our downtown area:

1. Set On-Street Parking Meter Rates to the Proposed \$2/hr Rate

We understand that after 11 years of unchanged rates, an increase in parking fees is necessary to address the evolving priorities and needs of our community. The Iowa City Downtown District supports the original recommendation brought to the City Council to raise on-street parking rates from \$1.50/hr to \$2/hr. While the Council intended to promote alternative transportation modes by increasing the rate to \$3/hr, our members are concerned that such a significant jump—setting rates among the highest in the state—will have unintended consequences in changing traffic patterns rather than influence parking behaviors. The \$2/hr rate offers a more balanced approach, aligning

with the Council's objectives while also encouraging the use of parking ramps, which provide a more affordable alternative through the First Hour Free program and longer parking durations.

2. Match Designated Accessible On-Street Parking Rates with Parking Ramp Prices

The ICDD's mission is to always work towards equal accessibility for all visitors to downtown, we advocate to the City Council to consider aligning the rates for designated accessibility spots for on-street parking with those of parking ramps. This parity will ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to affordable parking options, whether they have the ability to park on the street or in parking ramps.

3. Establish a New Night/Weekend Parking Permit

To better serve those who work downtown during non-traditional hours, our members support the establishment of a new night/weekend parking permit for downtown employees. This permit would provide more flexible and affordable options for employees who cannot take alternative transportation to the downtown area outside of standard business hours, supporting the nighttime and weekend economy. Additionally, encouraging more employees to park in the ramps, aligns with the goals to open additional on-street parking for visitors and customers of downtown.

4. Ensure Street Meter Technology Works with Multiple Payment Types

It is crucial to the downtown experience for visitors, customers, and businesses that the street meters are in constant working order and compatible with as many multiple payment methods as possible. Currently, issues regarding credit card processing, jammed coin slots, software malfunctions, and lack of signage have been highlighted as a concern from ICDD members. Ensuring this infrastructure is in working order and accommodating to users we believe will enhance the overall user experience, making it easier for everyone to park and enjoy the downtown area.

In addition to these advocacy areas, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the City Council for your continued investment in our downtown. We believe that these proposed changes will further enhance downtown Iowa City, making it an even more inviting and accessible area for both residents and visitors.

As always, thank you to each member of the City Council members and staff for taking the time to consider input from the ICDD as a partner in the stewardship of downtown Iowa City.

Sincerely,



Betsy Potter
Iowa City Downtown District

CC: ICDD Executive Committee
ICDD Legislative Committee