



**Downtown Vision, Inc. Position Paper
Ordinance 2010-901
Downtown Surface Parking and Vacant Parcel Uses
January, 2011**

Background

Downtown Vision's March 2010 white paper, *Turning the Corner: Rethinking and Remaking Downtown*, referenced the fact that more than 50% of the Northbank core is composed of dead space, consisting of poorly maintained surface parking lots, vacant lots and vacant buildings. The paper also referenced the need to take a holistic approach to Downtown revitalization, which includes making modest improvements that have a significant impact on Downtown's pedestrian environment and working to reduce the number of blighted blocks in the Downtown core. Downtown Vision's recommendations included stronger zoning, landscaping and maintenance codes for surface parking lots and vacant lots, which this proposed legislation seeks to address.

The current state of many of Downtown's surface parking lots and vacant lots is deplorable. A significant number of existing surface parking lots are unpaved, unevenly graded and poorly-lit with inadequate signage. These lots create a barren wasteland in our Downtown, contribute to the perception that Downtown is unsafe, and contribute to the further neglect of Downtown as a whole. The status quo is not acceptable, devalues property, and is not desirable for private investment or attracting businesses looking at relocation options Downtown.

While the Downtown Zoning Overlay in 2003 addressed many issues related to maintenance and upkeep of new Downtown surface parking lots, the existing lots have failed to voluntarily invest in their properties to provide basic aesthetic and safety improvements. Very few cities in the country allow parking lot operators to operate without any minimal standards. The lack of proper regulation and enforcement yields what we see today.

Downtown Vision Position

Downtown Vision, Inc. supports the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission's plan to require parking lot owners to comply with design standards outlined in Section 656.361.16 of the Jacksonville Ordinance Code. We believe this one small step will begin to generate pride of ownership by Downtown property owners, and will help change the perception of Downtown as unattractive and unkempt.

Furthermore, we support the requirements for adequate signage of the parking lots to include the hours of operation, schedule of charges and fines, and clarification of whether or not the lot is served by an attendant. Currently, customers are confused and often ticketed because lot signage is not clear. This creates an unfriendly environment and negatively impacts both Downtown visitors and businesses.

We believe the need to make Downtown more attractive is critical to improving Downtown. While there is a possibility that the cost of parking may increase at affected surface lots as a result of this legislation, there are a number of competitively-priced parking options Downtown.

Inexpensive Peripheral Parking Options

Currently, there are a number of inexpensive parking options encompassing several thousand parking spaces for Downtown employees:

1. JTA Peripheral Lots/Garages – The Jacksonville Transportation Authority operates a number of lots and garages with more than 3,000 spaces at the Sports Complex, the Convention Center and on the Southbank where parkers may park monthly for approximately \$35 per month with free transit rides on the trolleys or the Skyway.

2. Sports Complex Garage – The Sports Complex Garage offers parking for \$20 per month, with bulk discounts offered for employers. This includes free service on the Bay Street Trolley.

3. First Baptist Lighthouse Garage – First Baptist Church offers parking in the Lighthouse Garage for \$37.45 per month.

4. Federal Reimbursement Program – The Federal Reimbursement Program can result in no-cost parking solutions for peripheral and satellite parking facilities and park and ride options.

Ongoing Parking Advocacy

Downtown Vision continues to work with the city to address the larger parking needs of Downtown and advocate for changes that will improve management of public and private parking resources in Downtown.