

2003 – 2026

A 22-Year History of Fort Collins Recommending Paid Parking and Then Not Doing It

Getting Paid Parking Right: Panel Discussion and Q&A

Mayor Pro Tem Pignataro · 6/30/26

2003

Information Paper: On-Street Pay Parking (2003)

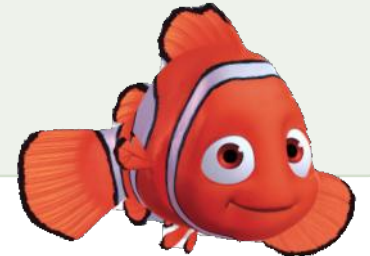
- Staff proposes on-street paid parking pilot as part of Downtown Strategic Plan process
- Calls current pricing "upside down" — most convenient spaces free, garages cost money
- College Avenue already at near 100% occupancy during peak hours
- Proposes starting small: pilot program, limited area, assess results

WHAT HAPPENED

Council said not yet.

POP CULTURE MOMENT

Finding Nemo hit the theaters.



Downtown Strategic Plan (2004, amended 2006)

- Recommendation 1.1.1: Increase on-street parking turnover to enhance commercial vitality
- Recommendation 1.3.1: Create a comprehensive parking management plan — on-street pay parking named as the primary long-term strategy
- Identified current pricing as "upside down": free on-street, paid in garages
- Business surveys showed majority of Downtown businesses favored managed parking change over status quo

WHAT HAPPENED

Council directed staff to pursue enhanced enforcement only. Pay parking deferred to "the future."

POP CULTURE MOMENT

📺 Lost premiered in 2004.



Parking Plan: Downtown & Surrounding Neighborhoods (2013)

- Pricing still "upside down" — same problem identified in 2004, now nine years later
- Expert Advisory Panel called paid on-street parking the most effective tool available
- At least 20% of prime on-street spaces still occupied by Downtown employees
- Specific "triggers" defined for when pay parking would be implemented — including 100% occupancy on additional blocks, a 20% increase in citations, and voluntary employer programs failing to move employees out of prime on-street spaces

WHAT HAPPENED

Council was told the community wasn't ready. Pay parking shelved pending triggers being met.

POP CULTURE MOMENT

 House of Cards premiered in 2013.



TOD Overlay Zone Parking Study (2014)

- Recommendation #3: On-street paid parking as primary strategy — "the most direct way to both reduce parking demand and ensure availability and turnover"
- Noted lack of parking funding strategy as a "huge unfunded liability" — same language as 2013 plan
- Parking Services already had a budget offer in for a paid parking pilot program for 2015–16
- Multiple stakeholders during outreach flagged "upside-down" pricing problem

WHAT HAPPENED

Paid parking pilot budget offer went nowhere. Same conclusion, third time.

POP CULTURE MOMENT

🎵 Pharrell Williams spent 2014 being "Happy."



The 2017 Fort Collins Downtown Plan

- Traced the full history: parking meters removed in 1973 when Foothills Mall opened, never replaced
- "Upside down pricing" named directly — employees gaming the system, trolling for free on-street spots while garages sit underutilized
- Parking Advisory Board supported an on-street paid parking pilot
- Policy TP 2f: implement paid parking when utilization data meets a defined threshold — but first collect data, then evaluate, then research vendors, then develop a communication plan

WHAT HAPPENED

Planning & Zoning Board and City Council said do other things first. Parking Advisory Board was outvoted by the process.

POP CULTURE MOMENT

🎬 Wonder Woman came out in 2017.




Fort Collins 2025 Parking Study: Implementation & Action Plan (2026)

- System described as "financially and functionally imbalanced" with "volatility, narrow margins, and limited fiscal resilience"
- Upside-down pricing named — again — as the core problem driving congestion, emissions, and underutilized garages
- Primary recommendation: implement paid on-street parking immediately at \$1.50–\$2/hour across ~940 on-street spaces
- Explicitly lists goals from 2013 and 2017 plans that were "yet to be implemented" — including paid on-street parking

WHAT HAPPENED

As of today, we don't know yet. The recommendation is on the table. Again.

POP CULTURE MOMENT

 The Bear is one of the most popular shows streaming this year.



So Here We Are

● 2003

Staff proposes paid parking pilot.

Not yet.

● 2004

Downtown Strategic Plan names it the primary long-term strategy.

Not yet.

● 2013

Expert Advisory Panel calls it the most effective tool available.

Not yet.

● 2014

Budget offer for a pilot program submitted.

Not yet.

● 2017

Parking Advisory Board supports a pilot.

Not yet.

● 2025

Walker Consultants recommend immediate implementation.

To be determined.

*The data has never changed. The recommendation has never changed.
What does it take to finally act?*