

Real-World RESULTS

By Matt Davis and Michelle Wendler, AIA

While communities often add parking to meet existing demand, some forward-thinking areas, such as Pasadena and Baldwin Park, Calif., have flipped their thinking to see parking as a catalyst for redevelopment. Pasadena has a successful track record in its historic downtown of building parking to activate a dynamic dining, retail, entertainment, and residential district—a strategy the city continues to refine. The city of Baldwin Park, on the other hand, had a vision of creating a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly urban center.

The first step in accomplishing its vision was expanding the existing Metrolink mass transit stop into a transit hub. Because Baldwin Park's public transit users had been using an overflow parking lot located several blocks away and Metro, Foothill Transit regional bus service, and city-run buses all stopped near City Hall, the hub would create more accessible public transportation while simultaneously attracting developers to the area.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA MTA) funded the majority of the project, while the city allocated \$2.5 million of its own Proposition C funding, which provides some revenue from Los Angeles County sales tax to projects that improve transit services, reduce traffic congestion, and improve air quality. Metro contributed \$4.187 million for the parking structure and transit center improvements and another \$905,000 for a vital pedestrian bridge.

After the city selected a parcel directly across from the station and adjacent to City Hall, it hired Watry Design, Inc. to develop the structured parking solution and site improvements. The location of the hub maximizes development opportunities at the nearby corner of Ramona and Main. Watry used the firm's Transit Parking Best Practices to guide the design of the project.

BEST PRACTICE #1

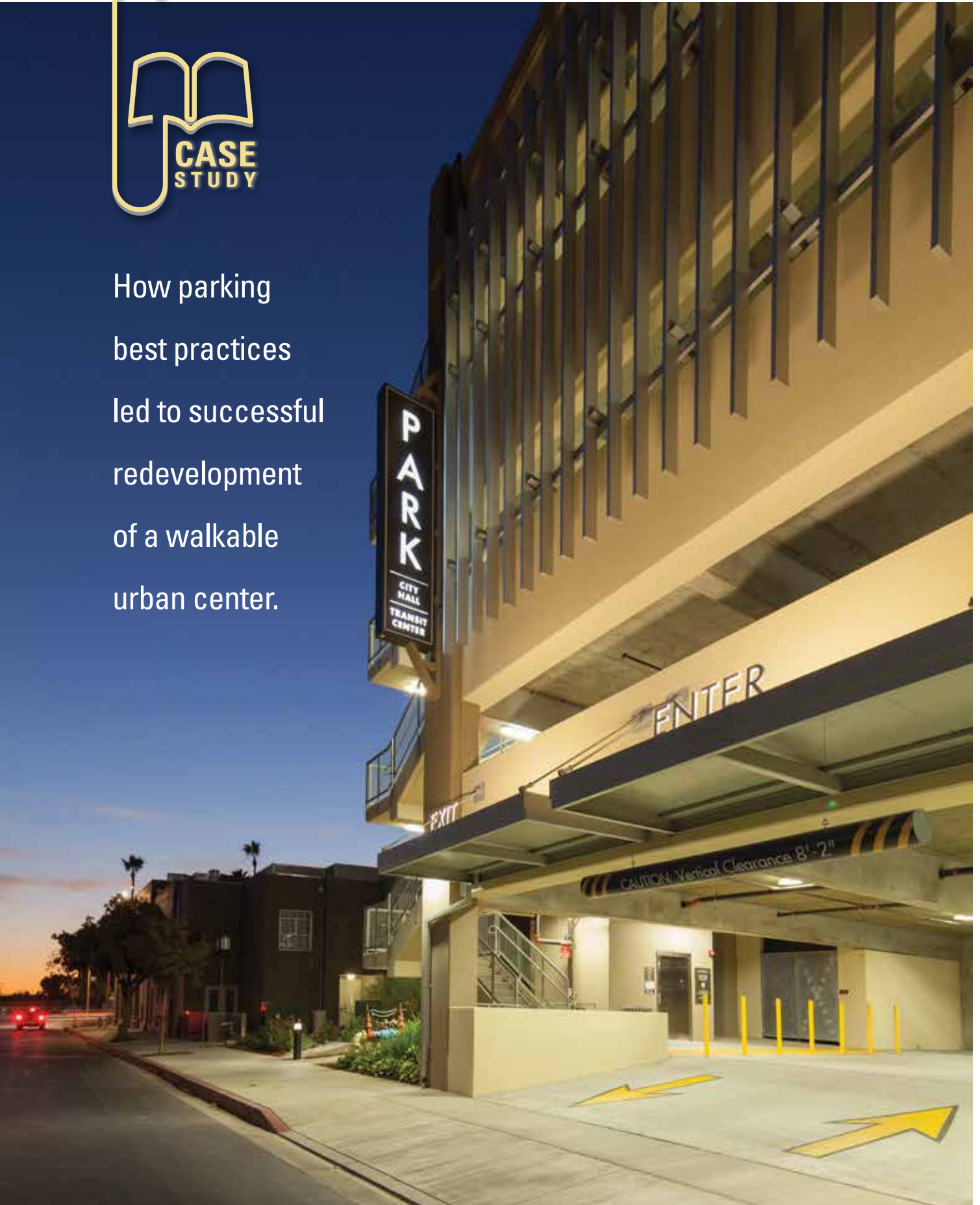
Understand Transit Context

It is important to understand the specific type of transit to be served by parking to design the best solution. In a transit village, the parking should be located to encourage transit parking patrons to walk by the commercial areas and stimulate activity. Because use patterns for each type of transit station are different depending on whether the main transit mode is bus, train, light rail, or a combination of those modes, parking solutions will vary for each individual transit station.





How parking
best practices
led to successful
redevelopment
of a walkable
urban center.





During the design process, the team worked with the City of Baldwin Park, FTA, LA MTA, and Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA)/Metrolink to develop a clear picture of the station's unique needs. The parking structure serves City Hall visitors and employees, bus patrons, and train riders. In addition, the project includes a pedestrian bridge to connect the structure across the tracks to the Metrolink Train Station, a rest area for bus drivers, and a large area for city storage.

BEST PRACTICE #2

Program Mixed Uses

Mixed uses, such as retail and residential developments, play an important role in activating transit stations and creating a more secure, lively environment around each one. Mixed uses increase train and bus ridership, encourage walkable communities near transit, reduce auto use, and enhance multi-modal access. By providing mixed uses such as retail, a destination is created that will improve the quality of the parking experience for all users. A residential mixed use is a

prerequisite for transit villages and reduces automobile congestion along with costs associated with travel to and from work. For the Baldwin Park station, careful consideration was made for the planned nearby development rather than integrating mixed use into the parking structure itself.

BEST PRACTICE #3

Access Demand Issues and Supply Solutions

The first step in planning a new transit station or village is evaluating the demand for parking in the area through demand studies. A parking management plan (PMP) should be prepared to describe how the parking supply will be managed. As part of developing the PMP, it's important to evaluate the effect charging for parking has on parking demand and ridership. During preliminary planning, the Baldwin Park team determined that a 500-stall parking structure would meet the initial needs of the transit hub and future development, and that 200 of these stalls would be dedicated to commuter use.

BEST PRACTICE #4

Integrate Walkability

For transit parking to be successful, a network of safe, direct, and attractively landscaped paths must connect the residential, retail, and transit components over a reasonably sized, walkable area. The close proximity of these elements is required to be considered walkable. At Baldwin Park, this translated into a number of design solutions.

Sited on the opposite side of busy Bogart Avenue, a safe crossing to the station needed to be created for pedestrian and cyclists. A pedestrian bridge provided the solution and created an architectural connection to the station. In addition, a public park connects the hub to City Hall on one side, and a pedestrian path provides connectivity to the future mixed-use site on the other. A pedestrian connection for the bus stops on Ramona Avenue was also included in the project.

BEST PRACTICE #5

Mitigate Modal Conflicts

Among the biggest challenges in developing a transit station or village is the list of inherent conflicts between pedestrians, autos, buses, trains, and other modes of transit. It is imperative to design to protect pedestrians and provide an atmosphere of safety. In addition, each mode is more efficient when effectively isolated and separated from the others.

A pedestrian walkway should be protected from vehicle traffic with bollards and/or landscaping. At Baldwin Park, the pedestrian paths were separated from transit and car paths by careful planning that included the use of a pedestrian bridge.

BEST PRACTICE #6

Provide Clear Wayfinding

Clear wayfinding is a requirement for all transit stations and villages. Informational kiosks and plentiful signage are a must. When a parking structure is present, stair and elevator towers work well as passive signage when they are clearly visible instead of being hidden away. Colors and symbols used to express various parking levels can be used as effective wayfinding and enhance a station's theme or character. At Baldwin Park, a transit board was incorporated that directs patrons to their transit connections.

BEST PRACTICE #7

Design for Low Maintenance

Because many transit stations are built with funding that doesn't include money for maintenance, designing for low maintenance is imperative. Durable materials, materials procured with galvanizing or powder coating, low-energy and low-maintenance lights, drought-resistant and low-maintenance landscaping, and the use of anti-graffiti coatings and materials that are naturally resistant to vandalism help lower costs over time.



Incorporating alternative energy sources such as photovoltaic (solar) systems will help reduce ongoing electric costs, which are usually the most costly part of a parking structure's maintenance budget. The Baldwin Park Transit Hub uses low-maintenance materials that include aluminum screening, anti-graffiti coatings, and low-maintenance landscaping. The project also includes a photovoltaic system that provides approximately 80 percent of the structure's energy.

BEST PRACTICE #8

Include Revenue Concepts

There are a number of options to generate revenue at transit stations. The inclusion of mixed use, such as retail, paid parking, coffee bars, snack kiosks, cell tower antennae rooms, and advertising opportunities, can be effective revenue-generation options.

Many agencies are taking innovative approaches to boost overall revenue. At this time, Baldwin Park has employed pay-on-foot stations for transit users, who are directed to park on the top level for convenient access to the station via the pedestrian bridge.

BEST PRACTICE #9

Incorporate Appropriate Security Design

Security is a prime concern in all parking structure environments, especially transit stations. Passive security or crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) such as glass-backed elevators, open stairwells, and the elimination of hiding spots behind walls can be very effective at deterring crime.

In addition, active security measures such as code blue emergency phones and video surveillance systems should be considered based on location. The Baldwin Park Parking Structure employs all of these measures.

By using a list of best practices, the team designed an effective, popular, and financially responsible transit station at Baldwin Park.



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