

Turners Falls Parking Study

Town of Montague



June 2022





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Introduction

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The Town of Montague used funding from a “Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Program” from the State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to prepare the Turners Falls Parking Study. Town staff provided oversight and review of the plan process, final report, and final presentation. In addition, Town businesses, residents and visitors provided insight and input into this study through stakeholder and public meetings held in Spring 2022.

On behalf of DHCD and the Town of Montague, the study team would like to thank all stakeholders for their constructive input.



Your Village: Turners Falls

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Turners Falls is one of five villages comprising the Town of Montague. It is located in the Town's northwest corner, tucked in a wedge of the Connecticut River and bordered to the north by Gill (accessible by the Gill-Montague Bridge) and to the west by Greenfield (accessible via Turners Falls Road). Municipal services for the Town of Montague are operated out of Town Hall at the intersection of Avenue A and First Street.

Turners Falls is a regional tourism destination with its eclectic mix of shops and restaurants along Avenue A and Third Street, recreational opportunities along the Canalside Rail Trail, the Great Falls Discovery Center, and the Connecticut River, and a residential community. Most retail activity is centered along Avenue A between First and Sixth Streets, with accessory retail along side streets, including Third Street. Key retail attractions include the Shea Theater, a 330-seat performing arts center. Avenue A itself features a wide right-of-way with extensive pedestrian accommodations, along with angled parking. Side streets feature on-street parking, and alleys running parallel to side streets east of Avenue A provide additional residential access.

Turners Falls' population as of the 2020 Census is 4,512 people. As the 2021 Rapid Recovery Plan for Turners Falls notes, Downtown Turners Falls is an Environmental Justice Census tract and is one of the most diverse communities in Franklin County. Downtown Turners Falls hosts a considerable proportion supply of multi-family housing units in Franklin County. There are over 220 units of deed restricted housing in Turners Falls.





What is the Turners Falls Parking Study trying to achieve?

The village seeks a parking management plan to recommend policies and strategies that maximize the use of existing downtown parking assets. Turners Falls currently offers free, unrestricted parking on Town streets and municipal lots and has limited capacity to manage/enforce parking regulations. A blanket winter on-street overnight parking ban creates tension for residents competing for a limited number of parking spaces. The successful revitalization of downtown has put the town at tipping point for parking policy reform. A proper analysis and parking policy should accommodate both business and residential needs and allow the town to overcome a barrier to downtown infill development.

Primary objectives of the study are outlined to the right.

1. Document **existing parking supply, management & enforcement practices, and daily demand to determine areas in need**
2. Revisit **parking regulations to unlock supply, relieve parking tension, and better manage parking demands across downtown**
3. Prepare for **future development and business expansion by updating parking-related zoning and requirements**
4. Understand how the **parking system can be improved to better serve visitors, residents, and employees of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds**



This study aims to build upon past planning efforts to support the economic development and livability of Downtown Turners Falls. Recommendations profiled later in this report seek to be consistent with goals and project concepts stemming from these planning efforts.

Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan (2013)

- Increase livability and mobility in Downtown Turners Falls and overcome obstacles to achieving a more livable downtown
- Identify practical and economically feasible recommendations for streetscape improvements that will attract tourists and visitors, increase pedestrian activity in the downtown, and address parking issues.
- Prioritize projects and police changes to improve downtown livability and foster a unique sense of place.

Complete Streets Policy (2017)

- Accommodate all transportation users by creating a road network that meets the needs of individuals utilizing a variety of transportation modes.
- Formalize the planning, design, maintenance, and operation of streets to ensure safety for routing users of all ages, all abilities, and all income levels.

Community Development Strategy (2018)

- Support revitalization of Turners Falls and Millers Falls village centers.
- Implement streetscape improvements in Turners Falls to improve the pedestrian environment, including pedestrian scale lighting, ADA accessibility, and Complete Streets compatibility.
- Improve network connectivity for all modes of transportation.

Downtown Turners Falls Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)

- Develop installation plans for multimodal wayfinding and branding signage in Downtown Turners Falls
- Implement policies and practices to optimize the use and availability of Downtown Parking
- Accelerate Downtown streetscape improvements
- Advance infill and redevelopment opportunities for municipally-owned property.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Study Area

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To effectively measure parking usage across the Turners Falls, the study team and Town of Montague defined a study area that generally includes areas of highest parking demand and activity, as well as residential neighborhoods and other key destinations in the community. Some of these are highlighted on the map to the right. Key considerations included:

- Primary commercial corridors, such as Avenue A and Third Street
- Major recreational assets, such as the Canalside Trail
- Open space, such as Peskeomskut Park and Unity Park
- Visitor attractions, such as the Great Falls Discovery Center
- Adjacent residential areas

This study area is consistent with boundaries used for other planning efforts, such as the Rapid Recovery Program Plan in 2021.



Parking Inventory



Within the Downtown study area, there is a **total of 1,650 parking spaces***. Of this inventory, 970 spaces (58%) are off-street and 680 spaces (42%) are on-street.

In order to gather the most accurate understanding of existing parking in Turners Falls, the team recorded regulations within the study area as they would be viewed by a first-time “visitor” or Turners Falls “guest”.

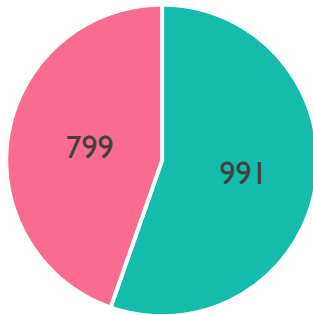
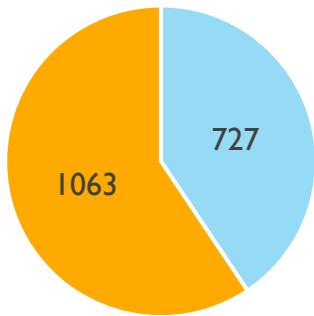
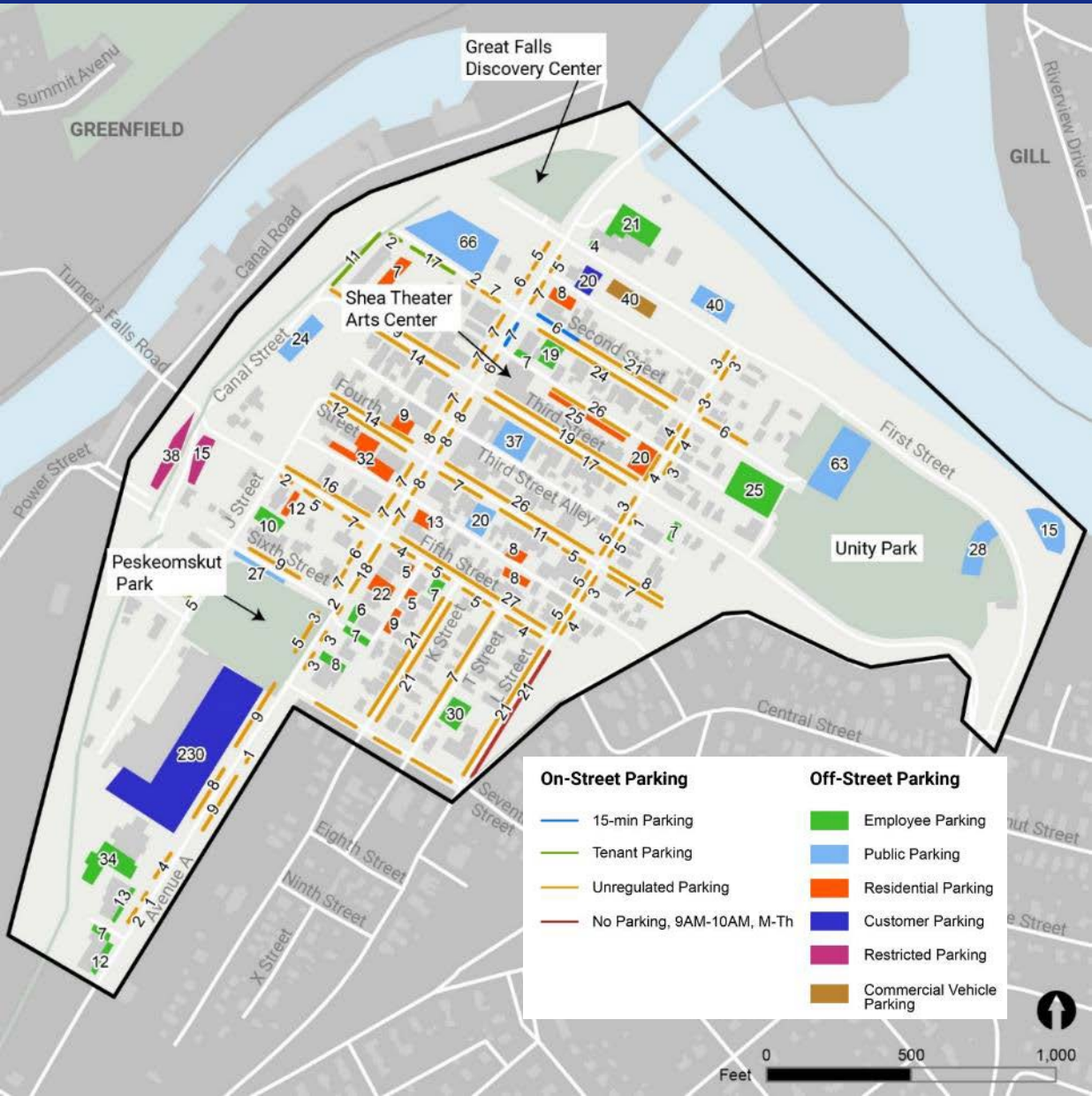
Generally speaking, all on-street parking (with the exception of “Tenant Parking”) and all off-street parking designated as “Public” are considered to be available to all users regardless of their destination. This comprises 1,022 spaces, or 62% of the study area. Off-street public parking can be found at the Unity Park, the Great Falls Discovery Center, fishladder parking along First Street, Third Street, and Canal Street.

In contrast, “Employee”, “Residential”, “Customer” and other types of private parking would be viewed as being for specific uses by a first-time visitor. These make up 628 spaces, or 38% of the study area. This includes the large customer lot at the corner of Avenue A and Seventh Street as well as several residential lots throughout the community.

***Note:** Typically, parking lots with less than 5 spaces or those which belong to residences, are not included for this study.

Parking Inventory

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Off-Street Parking On-Street Parking Private Parking Public Parking

Parking Type	Space Count	% of On-Street Spaces
Unregulated	658	90%
Tenant	35	5%
No Parking, 9A-10A, M-Thu	21	3%
15-minute	13	2%

Parking Type	Space Count	% of Off-Street Spaces
Public	320	30%
Customer	250	24%
Employee	217	20%
Residential	183	17%
Restricted	53	5%
Commercial Vehicle	40	4%

Parking Inventory

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Most on-street parking downtown is unregulated. There are 13 short-term spaces at the Avenue A/Second Street intersection; otherwise, no provisions are in place for curbside uses such as short-term parking or loading zones.



Many residents park in alleys or in lots accessed from alleys. Some of this parking is not reflected in the inventory given their small sizes; with alley widths being narrow, most visitors to Downtown likely do not search for parking in alleys.

Parking Inventory

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Town lots, such as at the corner of Canal Street and Third Street, are available for general use. Most lots feature signage indicating when snow removal is scheduled to occur in the winter.



Some off-street lots are shared between two or more uses. All public lots can operate in this manner; the Colle-Shea lot between Second Street and Third Street is an exception.

Parking Inventory

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Overnight parking is generally not allowed during the winter. Residents must park in alleys, driveways, or in Town lots, sometimes creating a walk of several minutes between their home and vehicle.

The Town recently allowed for permit purchases for approximately 30 spaces along L Street to allow for overnight parking.



Regulations are not always clear, such as in the case of the surface lot at the corner of Third Street and L Street. Particularly in residential areas, off-street lots are valuable to accommodate overnight parking in the winter.

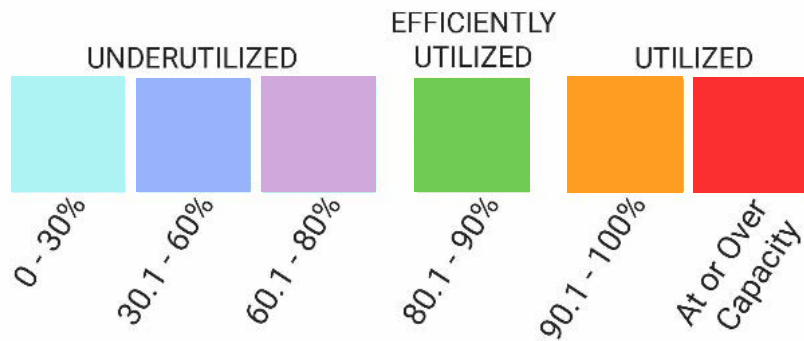
Parking Utilization

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Counts of parking occupancy can provide data for a time series during a typical day. Mapping parking utilization data helps to identify clear patterns of both high and low usage, including the impact of regulations. Land uses, regulations, and signage can drastically impact how neighboring parking assets are utilized.

To ensure efficient parking management operations, it is ideal to maintain at least one empty space on each block of street parking to ensure easy customer access to businesses. This typically equates to about 1 out of 8 spaces free, or a target of 10% vacant per block. Similarly, a goal of at least 15% vacancy is considered ideal in off-street lots. If any facility has less availability, it is effectively at its functional capacity (and drivers perceive a lack of availability). Facilities with lower utilization have excess capacity and can accommodate additional parked cars.



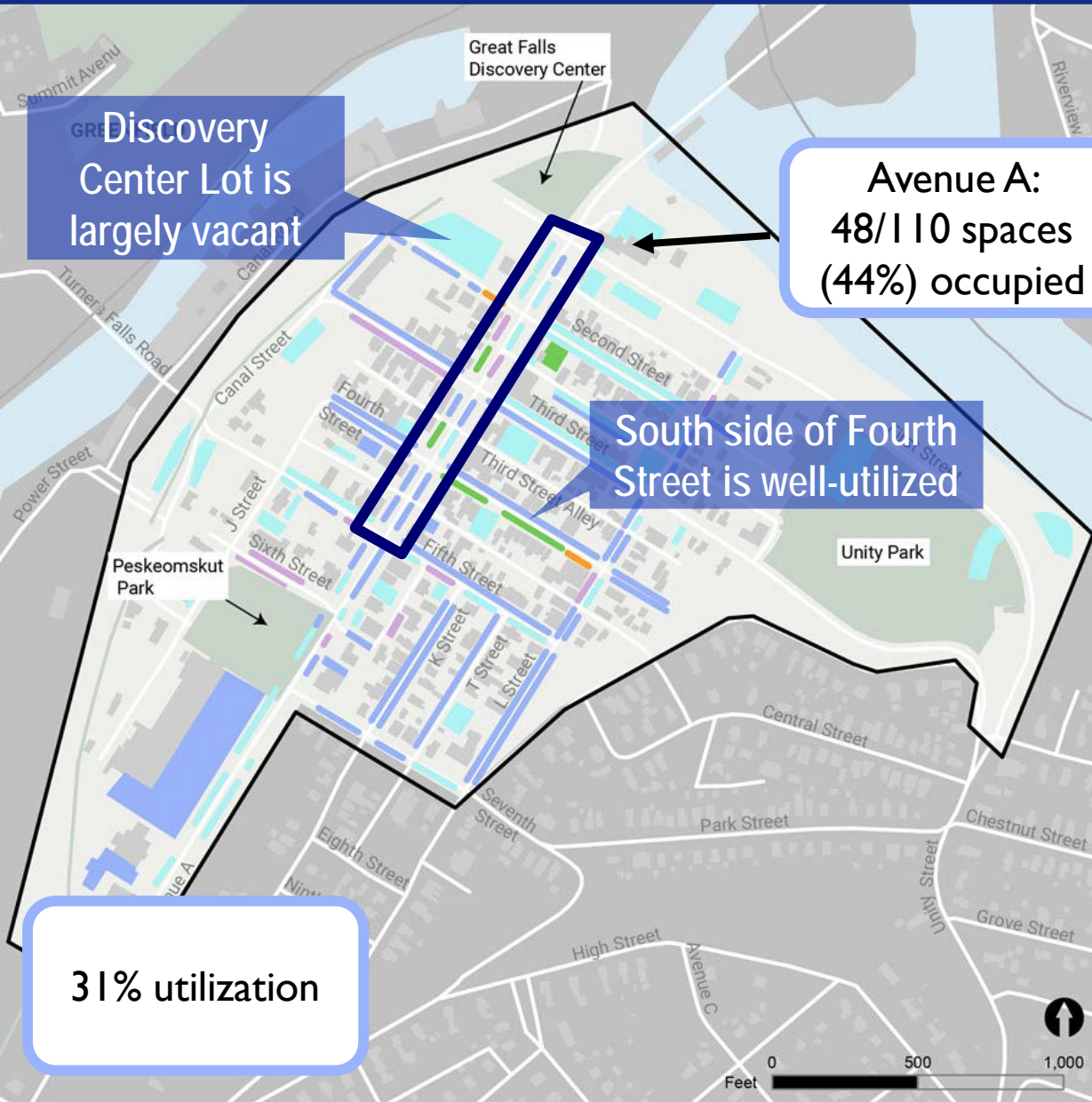
Typically, most commercial centers will observe peak parking utilization during a weekday midday; this is when office workers are present in the community, retail and restaurant uses are encountering lunchtime activity, and some amount of residential parking remains for those typically home at this time. In Turners Falls, feedback indicated that parking utilization is at its highest on weeknights or weekends when an event at the Shea Theater is happening. This occurs with some regularity given the Shea's event schedule, providing a snapshot that the Town can plan towards rather than looking to accommodate demand during an infrequent special event such as a festival.

Data collection in Turners Falls was conducted on **Friday, April 1, 2022** and **Saturday, April 23, 2022**. On April 1 the Shea hosted an event at 8:00 PM, with doors opening at 7:00. Additionally, Google Earth satellite imagery provided utilization data for **Thursday, October 4, 2018** to provide a pre-COVID comparison with the April 2022 counts.

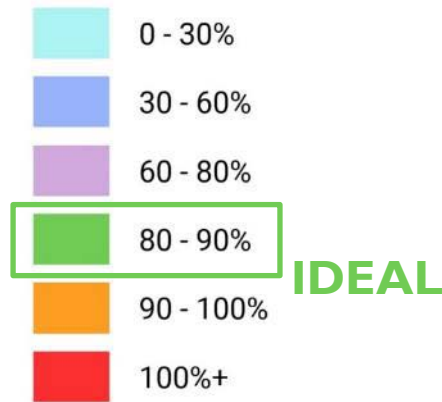
The utilization exercise discovered:

- Utilization is consistent throughout the weekday, throughout the study area
- Utilization along Avenue A and in the Downtown "Core" (centered around Avenue A and Third Street) increases over the course of Friday but remains fairly consistent throughout Saturday
- Counts collected in 2022 were consistent with observations from October 2018, although 2018 counts were likely from a morning period
- There is considerable capacity throughout the study area at all time periods, with utilization never exceeding 31% at any time period
- Even during the Friday evening peak, excess capacity exists along Avenue A and in the Downtown "Core"; side streets and off-street lots are less utilized.

Utilization – Thursday, October 4, 2018



Parking Demand



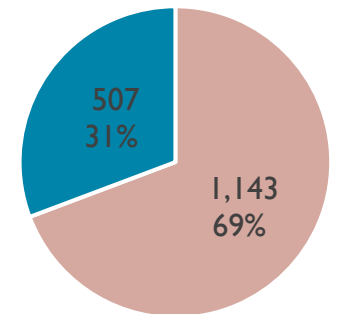
Core Area:
127/325 spaces
(39%) occupied



This pre-COVID snapshot of parking utilization in Turners Falls showed utilization of 31 percent throughout this study area, with core parts of Downtown falling below 50 percent utilization.

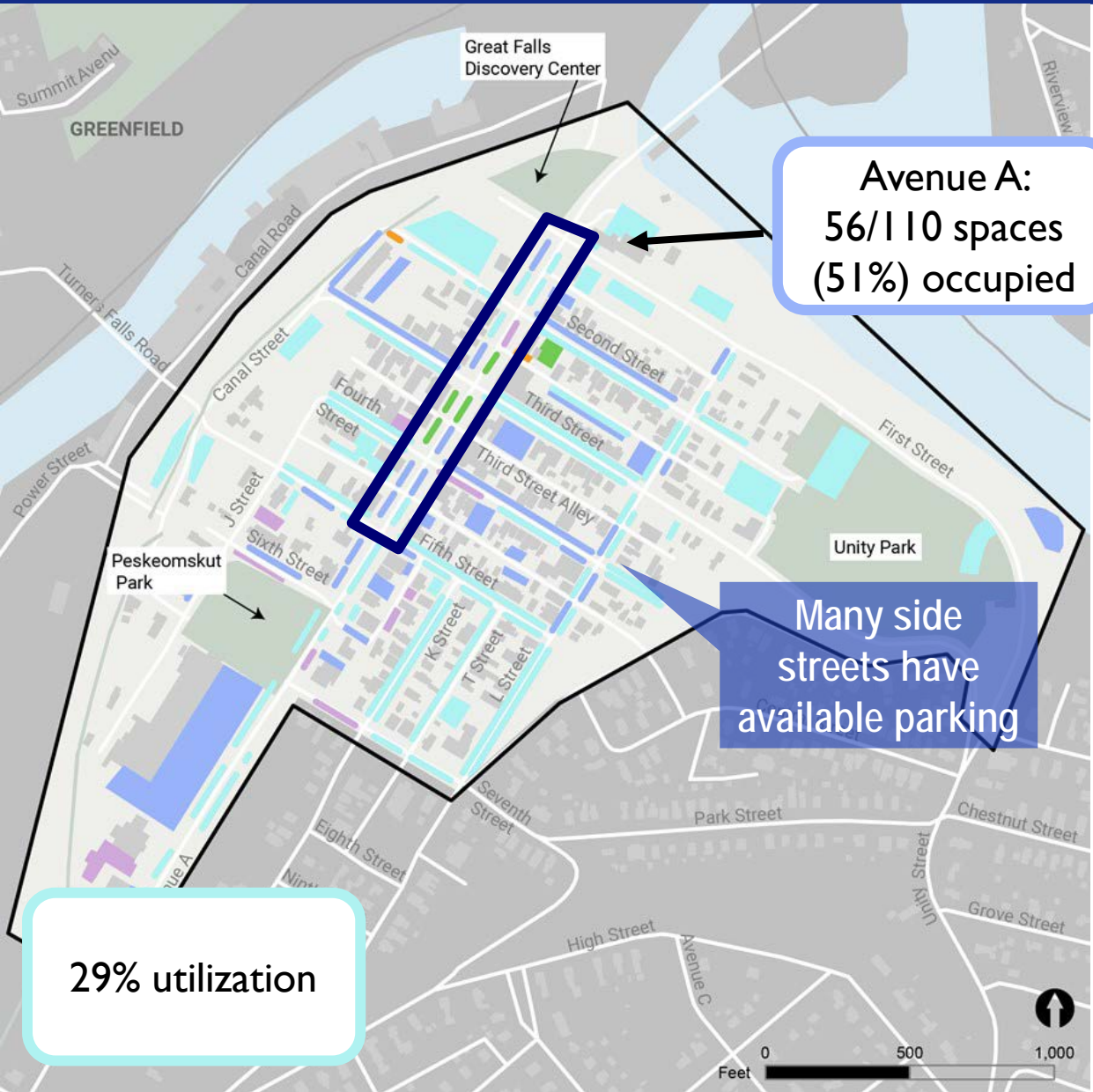
Data was collected via Google Earth imagery from Thursday, October 4, 2018. Given shadows observed in the imagery, data is likely from the **morning**.

The following pages detail utilization collected in Spring 2022.

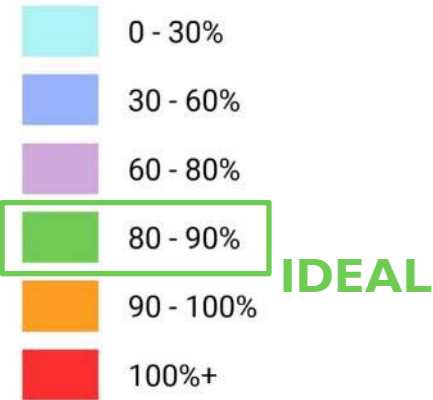


■ Vacant Spaces ■ Occupied Spaces

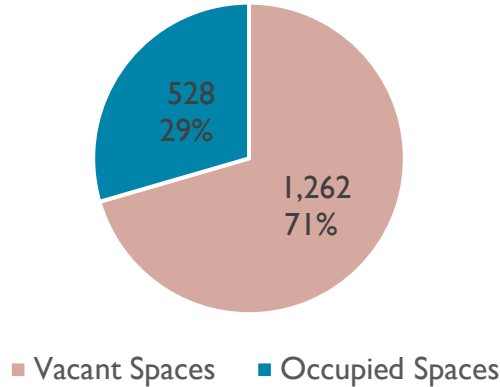
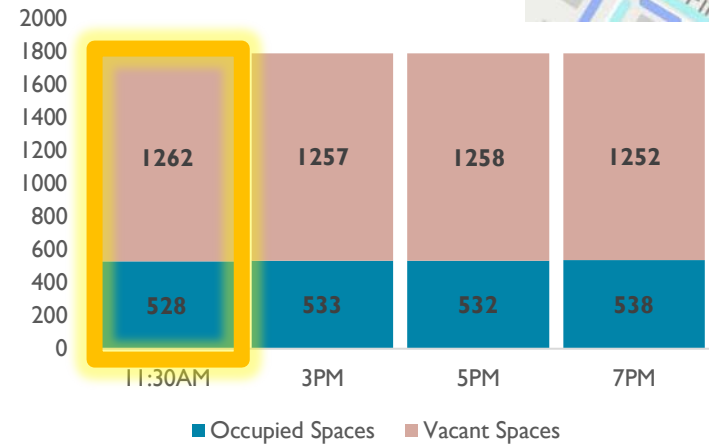
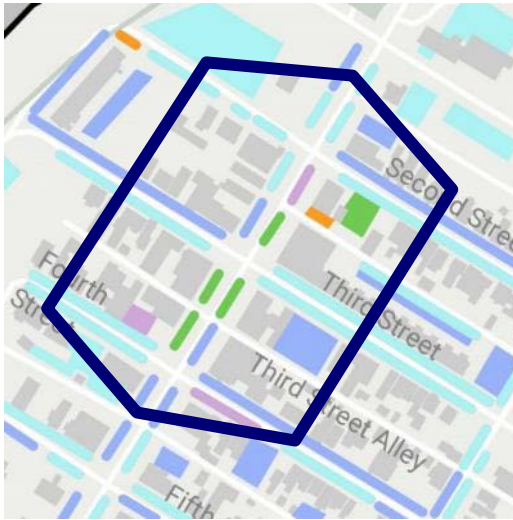
Utilization – Friday, April 1 – 11:30 AM



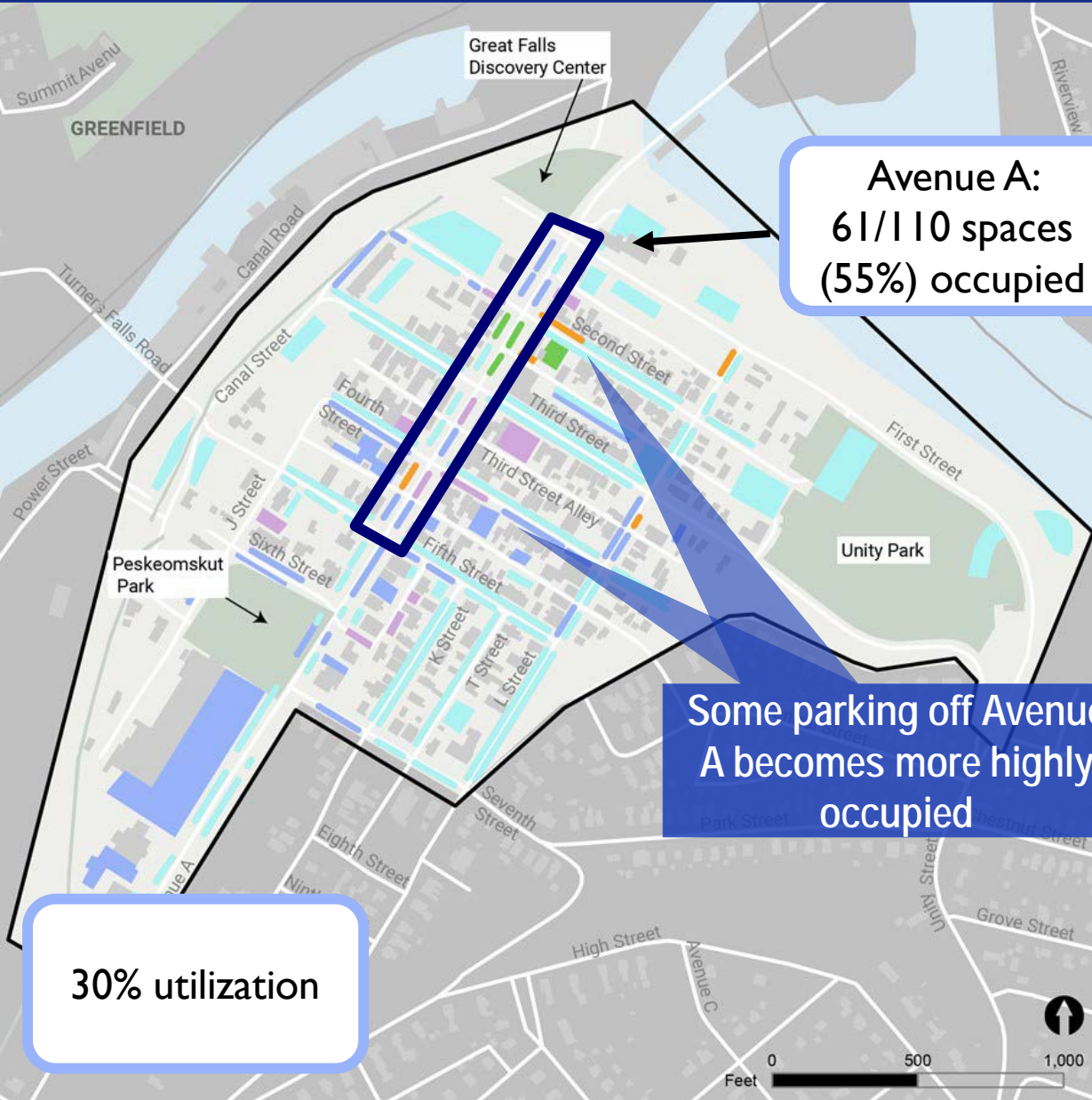
Parking Demand



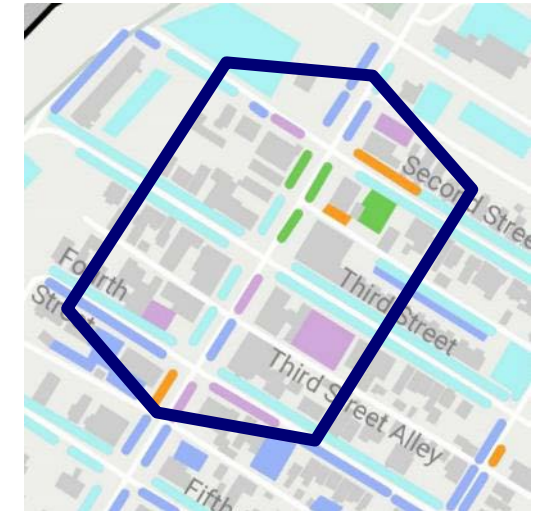
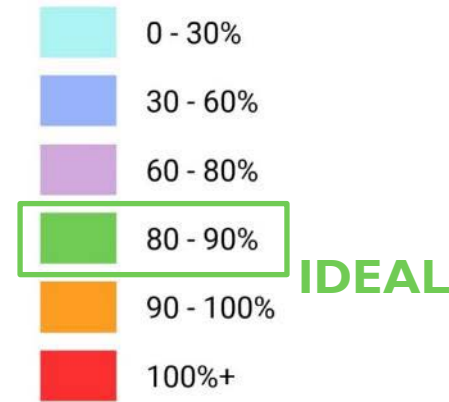
Core Area:
136/325 spaces
(42%) occupied



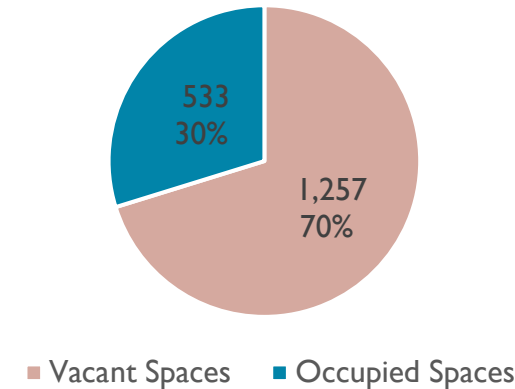
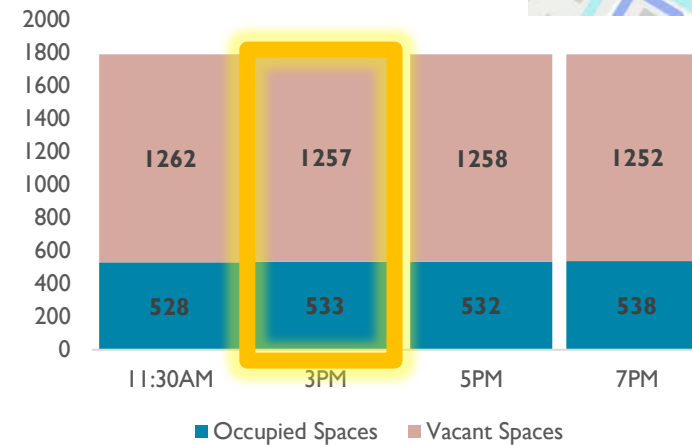
Utilization – Friday, April 1 – 3:00 PM



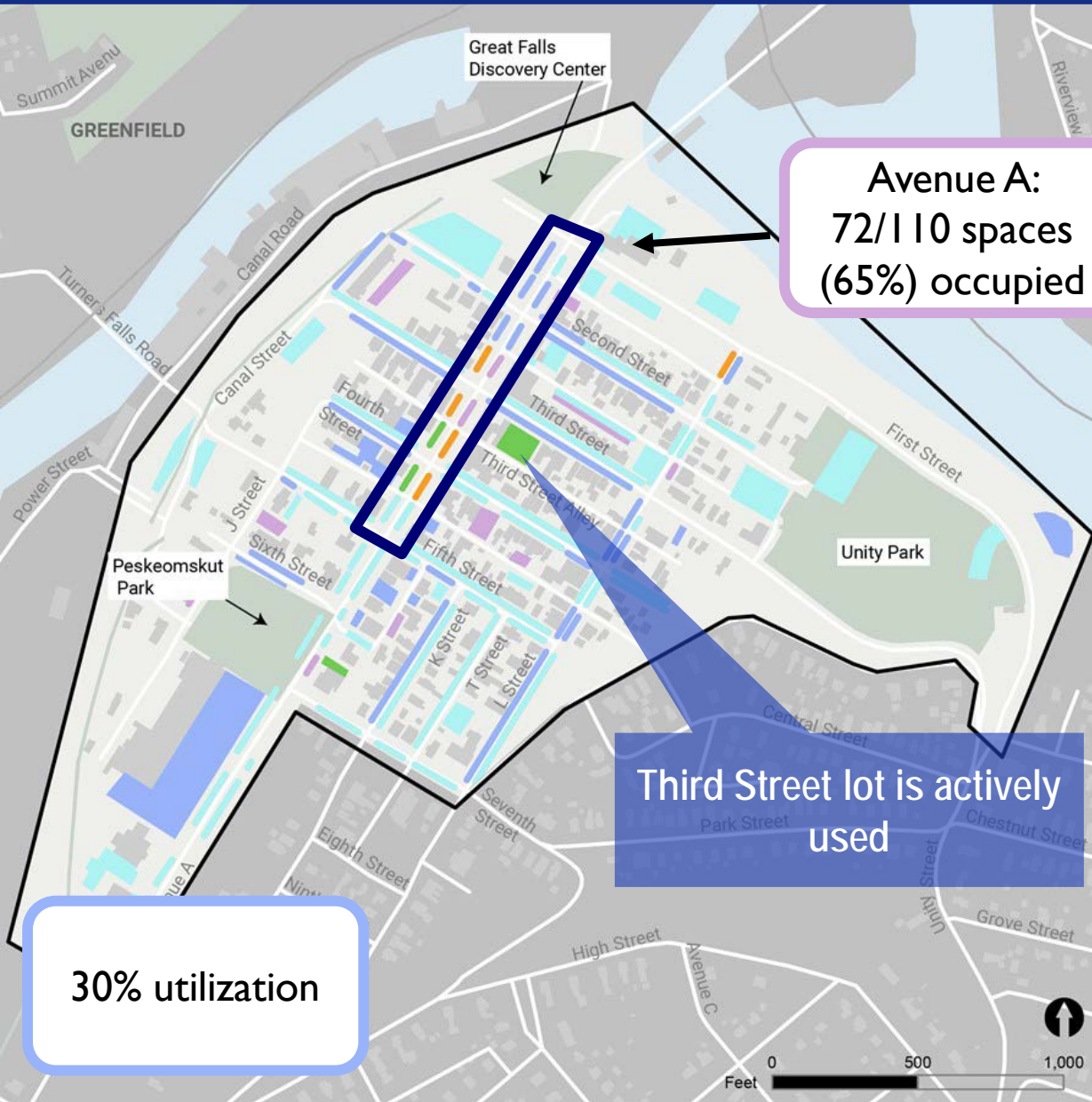
Parking Demand



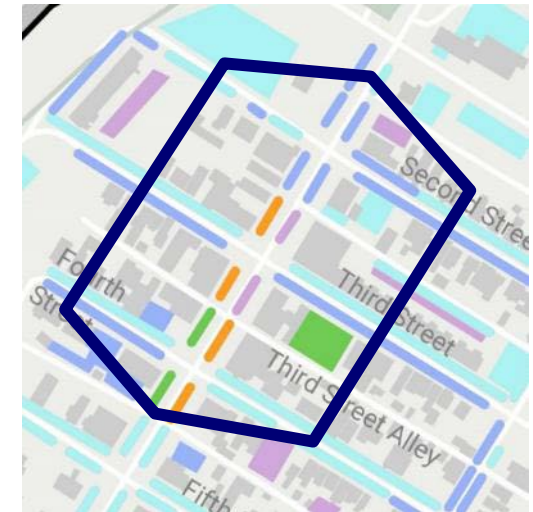
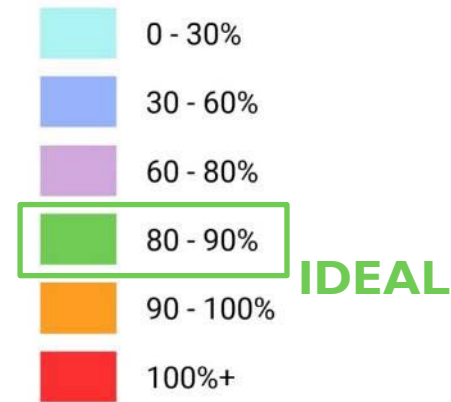
Core Area:
166/325 spaces
(51%) occupied



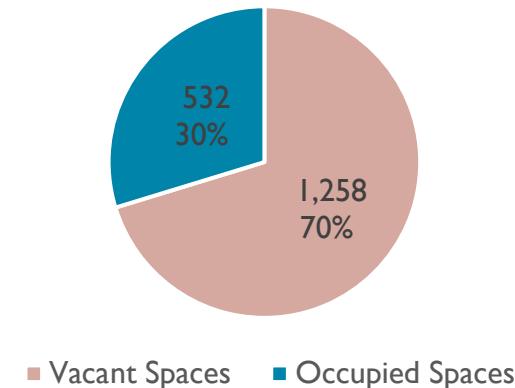
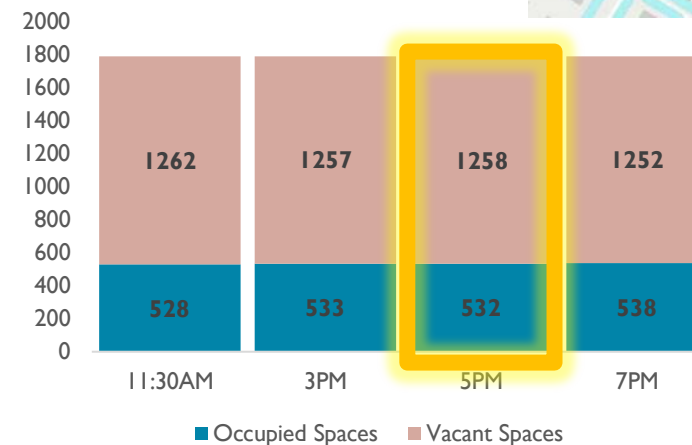
Utilization – Friday, April 1 – 5:00 PM



Parking Demand

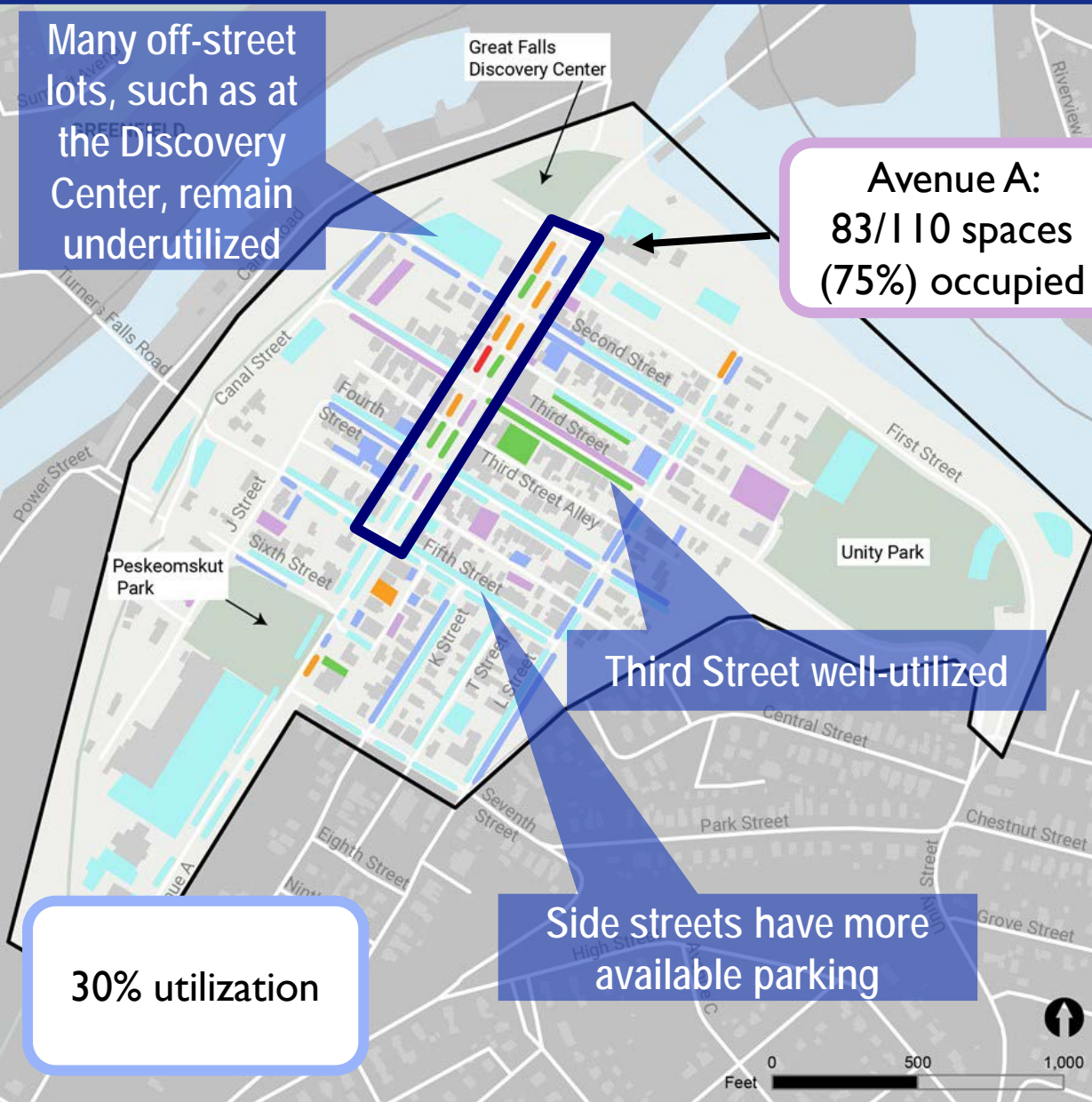


Core Area:
170/325 spaces
(52%) occupied

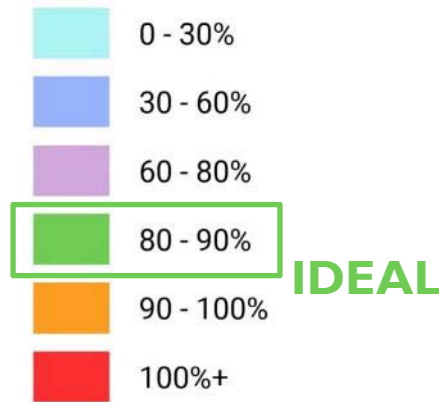




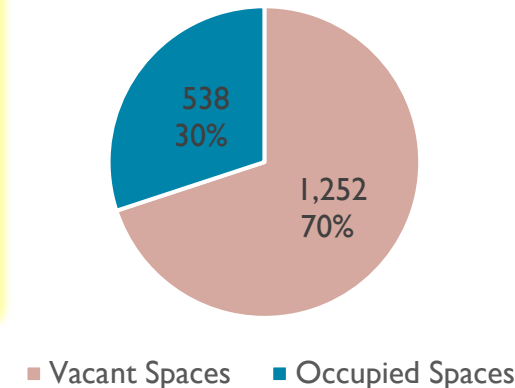
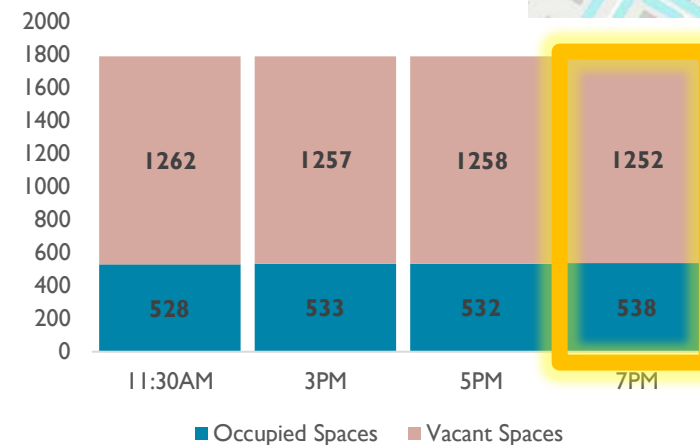
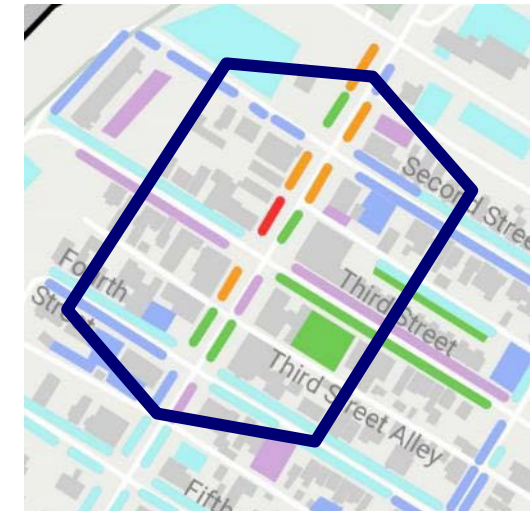
Utilization – Friday, April 1 – 7:00 PM



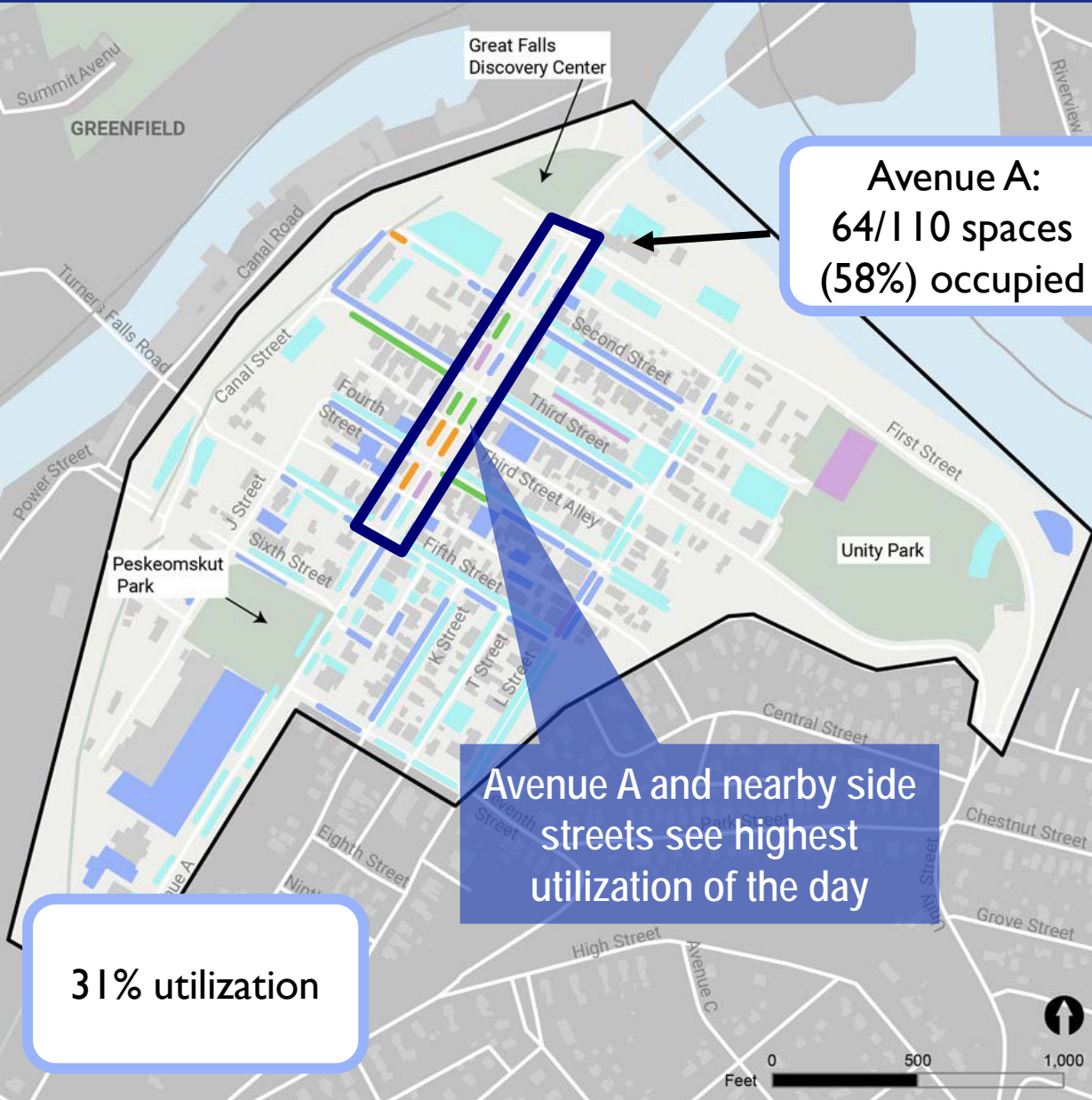
Parking Demand



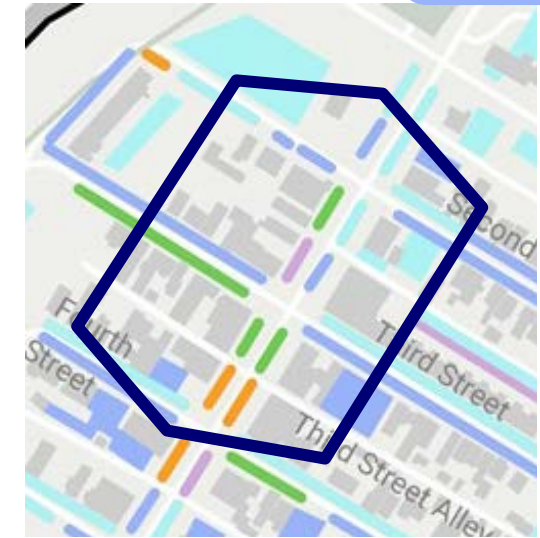
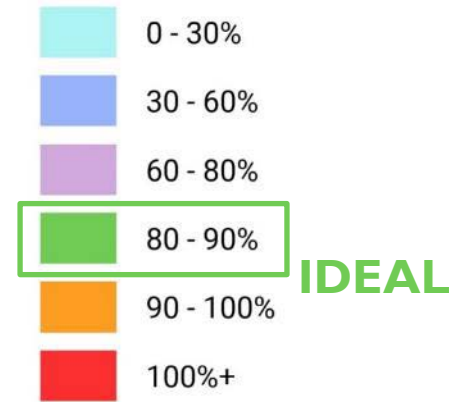
Core Area:
193/325 spaces
(59%) occupied



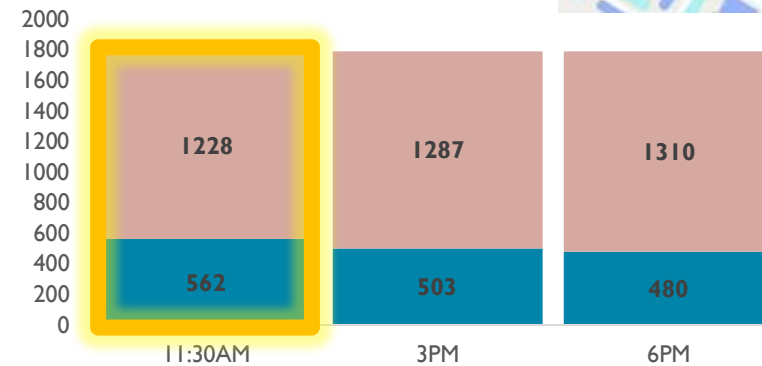
Utilization – Saturday, April 23 – 11:30 AM



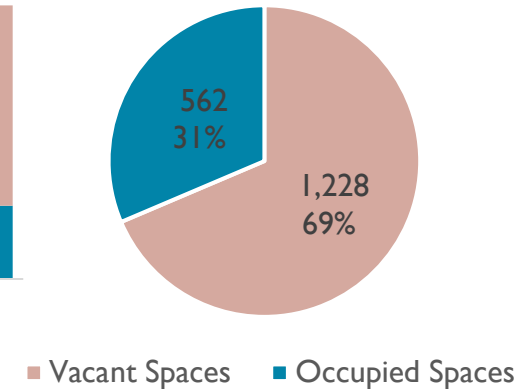
Parking Demand



Core Area:
153/325 spaces
(47%) occupied

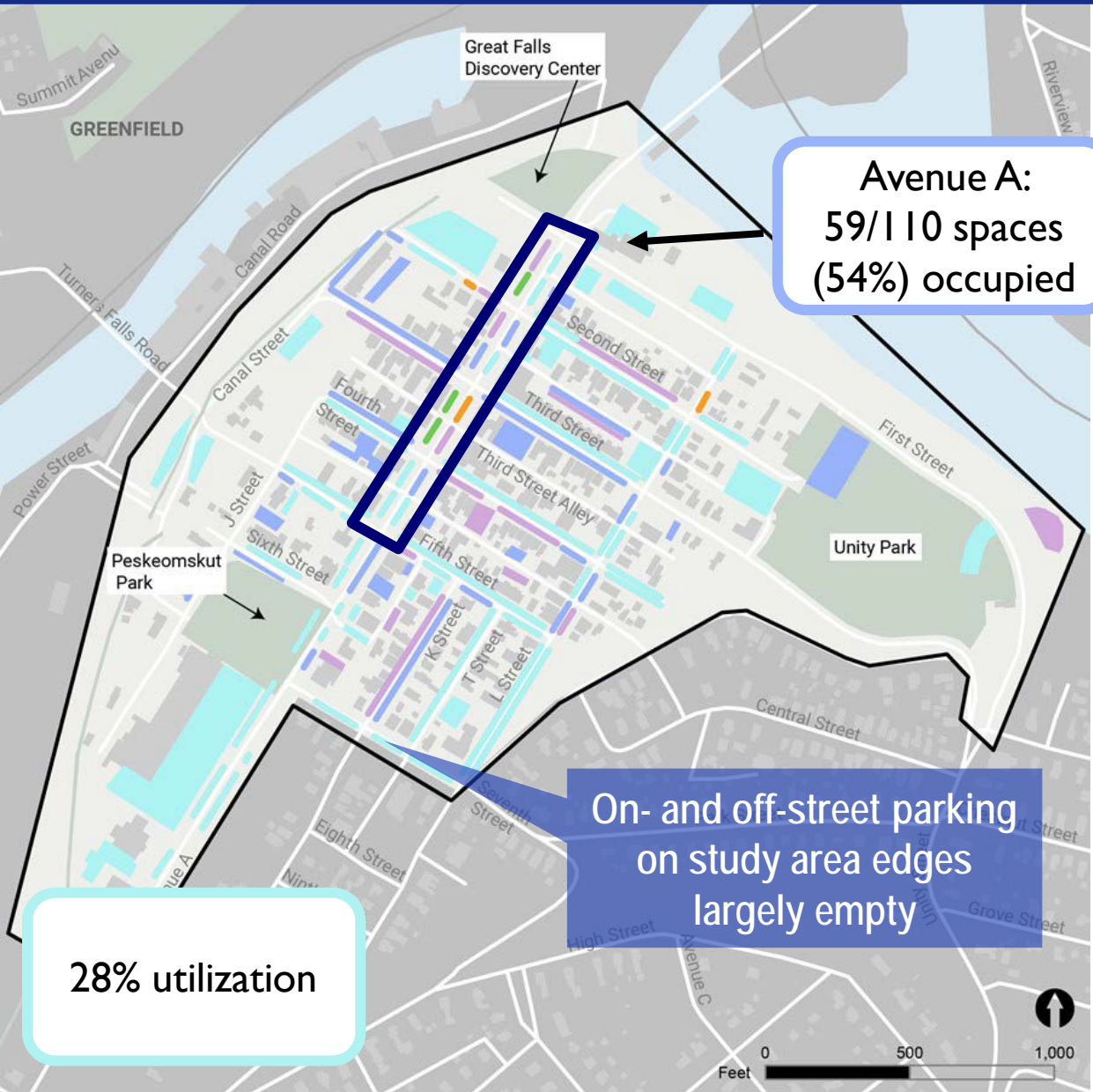


Occupied Spaces Vacant Spaces

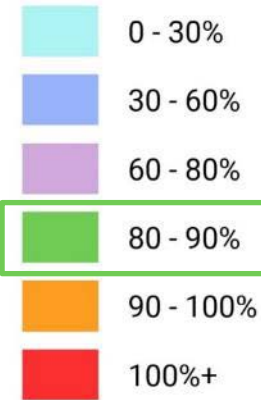


Vacant Spaces Occupied Spaces

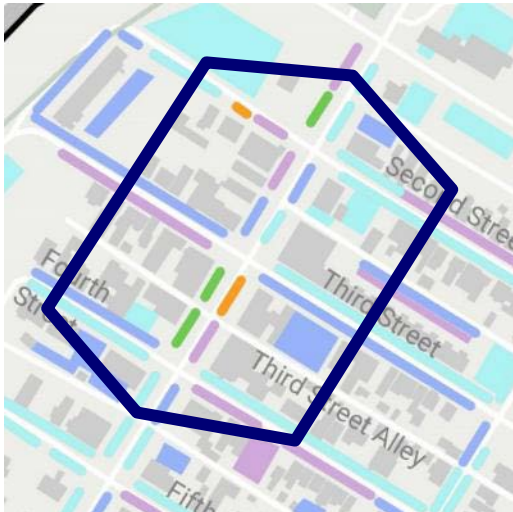
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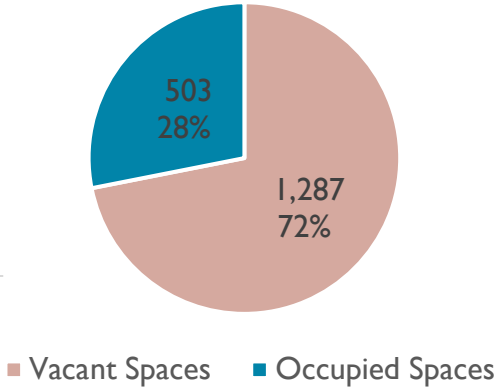
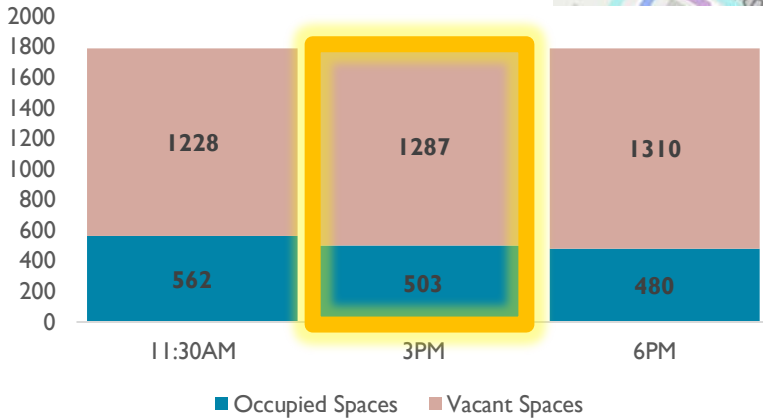
Parking Demand



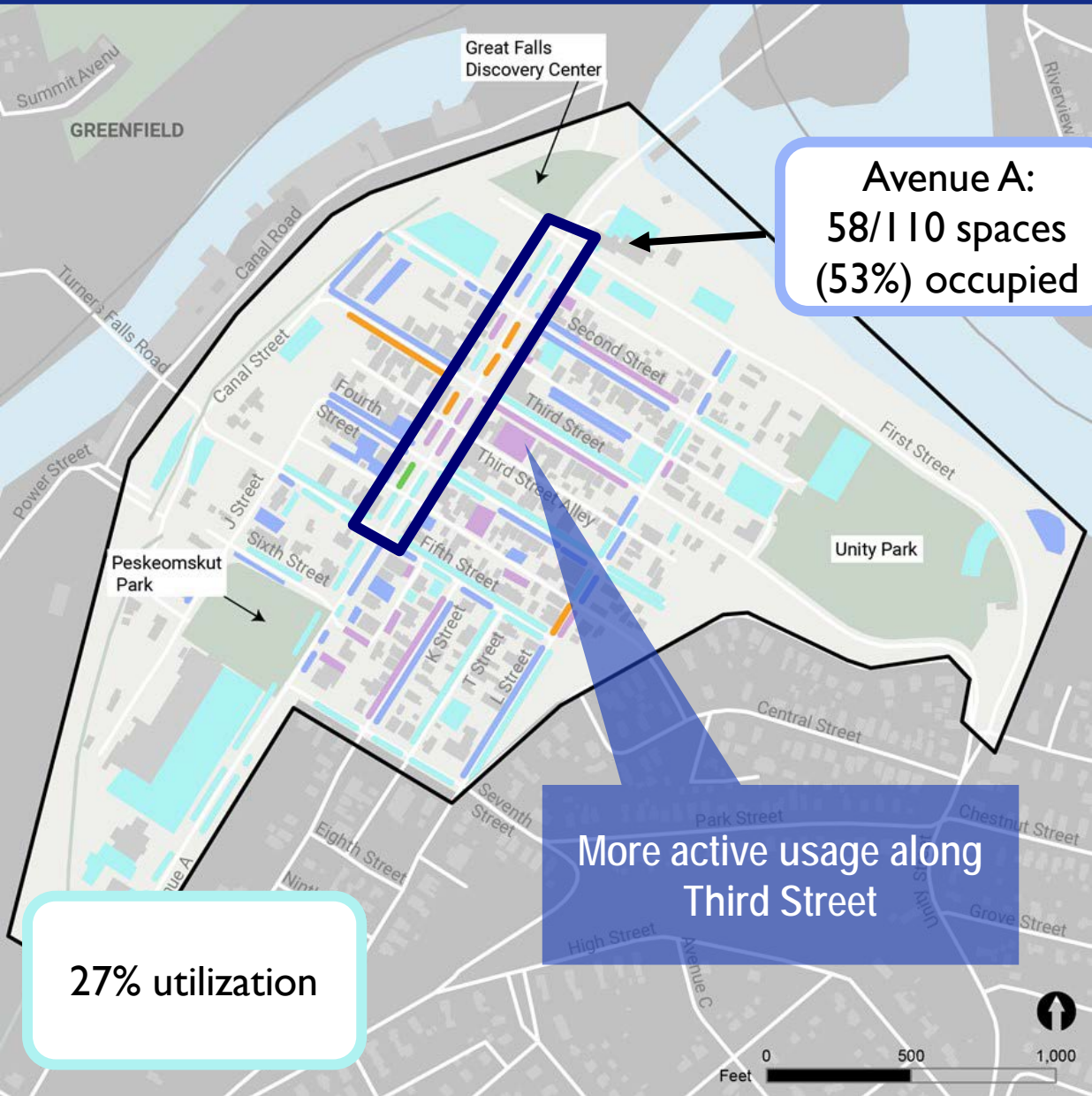
IDEAL



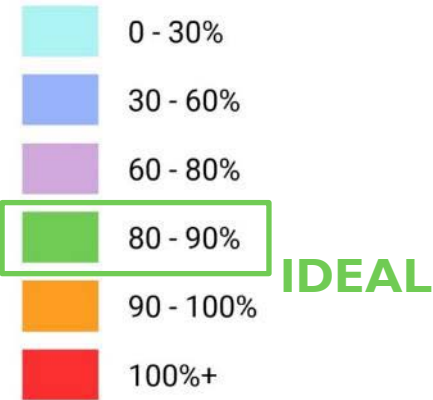
Core Area:
138/325 spaces
(42%) occupied



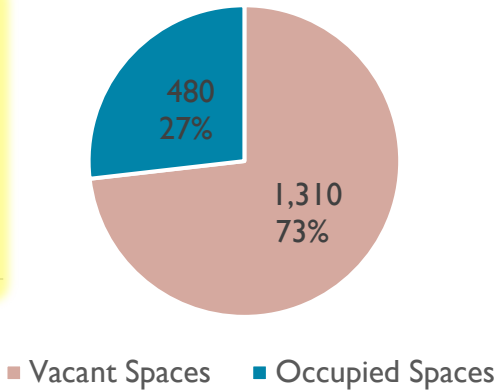
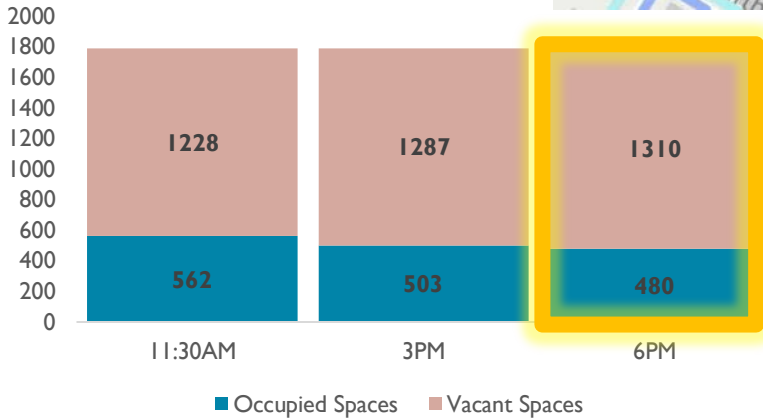
Utilization – Saturday, April 23 – 6:00 PM



Parking Demand



Core Area:
163/325 spaces
(50%) occupied



Multimodal Conditions

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Walking conditions are strongly linked to a community's parking system by supporting the connection from where vehicles are parked and the destination of a user. When sidewalk conditions are poor, lighting is missing, and the pedestrian environment is unwelcome, downtown users will be more tempted to drive between destinations or unwilling to park at select locations.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) conducted a sidewalk inventory for Turners Falls in September 2016, as shown on the right. The inventory found that sidewalks were in relatively good condition, meaning that they were less than 25% cracked, do not contain major frost or root heaves, and are ADA accessible. Deficiencies in the study area were found along:

- The east side of Avenue A between Second and Third Street
- The south side of Second Street between Avenue A and L Street
- Portions of L Street, particularly north of Third Street
- Portions of First Street, including segments with no sidewalk
- Portions of Fourth Street, Sixth Street, Seventh Street, and J Street west of Avenue A

More recently, the Town adopted a Complete Streets Policy in December 2017 and completed a Completed Streets Prioritization Plan in August 2018 in order to become eligible for state funding. Complete Streets Project Grants generated by these plans resulted in the installation of pedestrian and bicycle improvements at the Avenue A and First Street intersection. The Town has identified several projects for completion in the study area including:

- Upgrading the traffic signal at Avenue A and Third Street to better accommodate bicycle and pedestrian crossings

- Several improvements to slow vehicle speeds and increase pedestrian visibility at the Avenue A/First Street intersection
- Sidewalk improvements, crosswalk installations, and new pedestrian accommodations at several locations along Canal Street

The Town has also been active in capturing MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces grants, using fundings awards to improvement pedestrian accommodations and calm traffic at the Third Street/L Street intersection and Unity Park.

Turners Falls is served by three Franklin Regional Transit Authority bus routes, with service along Avenue A and L Street connecting throughout Montague as well as to Greenfield and Orange.



Sidewalk Condition

- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR
- POOR

Zoning

DRAFT

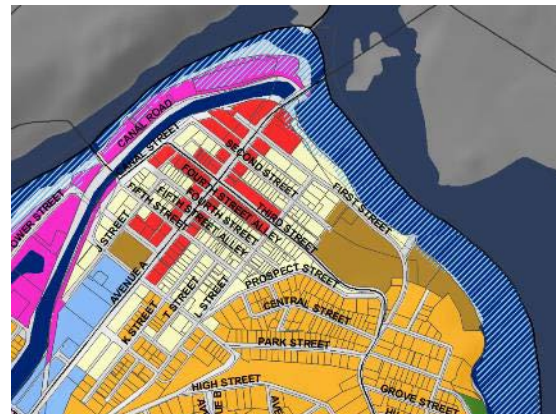


The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) publishes the Parking Generation Manual that serves as a national standard for evaluating parking demand, although it is not perfectly applicable to downtown environments. The report collates data from parking studies nationwide completed by consultants, public agencies, and developers. Most of these studies consider single-use environments in more suburban contexts than Downtown Turners Falls' commercial environment.

Both zoning requirements and ITE standards provide parking ratios based on a unit of development, either per 1,000 square feet, per dwelling unit, or per seat in a restaurant or theater.

Montague employs lenient off-street parking requirements in its Central Business District zones (red in the map to the right), which encompasses much of the commercial area of Downtown Turners Falls. In this zone no off-street parking is required of non-residential uses. In the Neighborhood Business District (off-white in the map), residential requirements are lower than national precedent but commercial requirements are higher.

Montague Zoning Category	Montague Zoning Requirement	Equivalent ITE Category	ITE Observed Parking Use Rate	Comparison to ITE's Observed Use Rates
Dwelling Unit (Central Business or Neighborhood Business)	1 space per unit	Multifamily Housing (Mid-Rise)	1.31 spaces per unit	Lower
Non-Residential (Central Business)	Not required to provide off-street parking			Lower
Retail (Neighborhood Business)	1 space per 200 square feet of gross floor area	Shopping Center	1 space per 500 square feet of gross land area	Higher
Office (Neighborhood Business)	1 space per 200 square feet of gross floor area	General Office Building	1 space per 400 square feet of gross floor area	Higher



Special permits are granted to allow for the use of non-municipal, off-site parking areas to satisfy minimum parking requirements. These require off-site parking to be within a reasonable walking distance with safe pedestrian passage.

PUBLIC OUTREACH



Stantec



Outreach Process

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Public outreach is integral to the parking study, helping to reveal how the parking system is used, perceived, and areas for potential improvement. The study team facilitated stakeholder discussions, a public survey in April and May 2022, and a public open house. These events provided valuable feedback from local residents and business owners.

Why stakeholder meetings?

Stakeholder meetings are an integral part in the planning process. Only through local knowledge can a full understanding of issues specific to the town be investigated. As a result, appropriate and feasible recommendations can be developed.



Turners Falls Parking Study

PUBLIC SURVEY

Whether you live, work, or play in Downtown Turners Falls, we want to hear about your parking experience!

The Town of Montague is conducting a parking study in Downtown Turners Falls to better understand:

- Do we need more parking?
- Can we better use what we have?
- How should seasonal demand affect parking operations?
- Is the parking system meeting other Town goals?
- Can improved walking help parking?
- Can finding parking become easier?

The study involves an in-depth process of data collection and analysis. **This is your chance to be heard about parking-related concerns.** Your survey input will be used to develop recommendations to help the Town improve Turners Falls' current parking system and prepare for the future.

WHEN?

The survey will be open between April 21- May 20, 2022

HOW?

- Visit this website link: <https://tinyurl.com/TurnersFallsParking>
- Scan the QR code to the right
- Paper copies of the survey are also available at Town Hall



QUESTIONS?

Contact Walter Ramsey, Town Planner – planner@montague-ma.gov



Stakeholder Outreach

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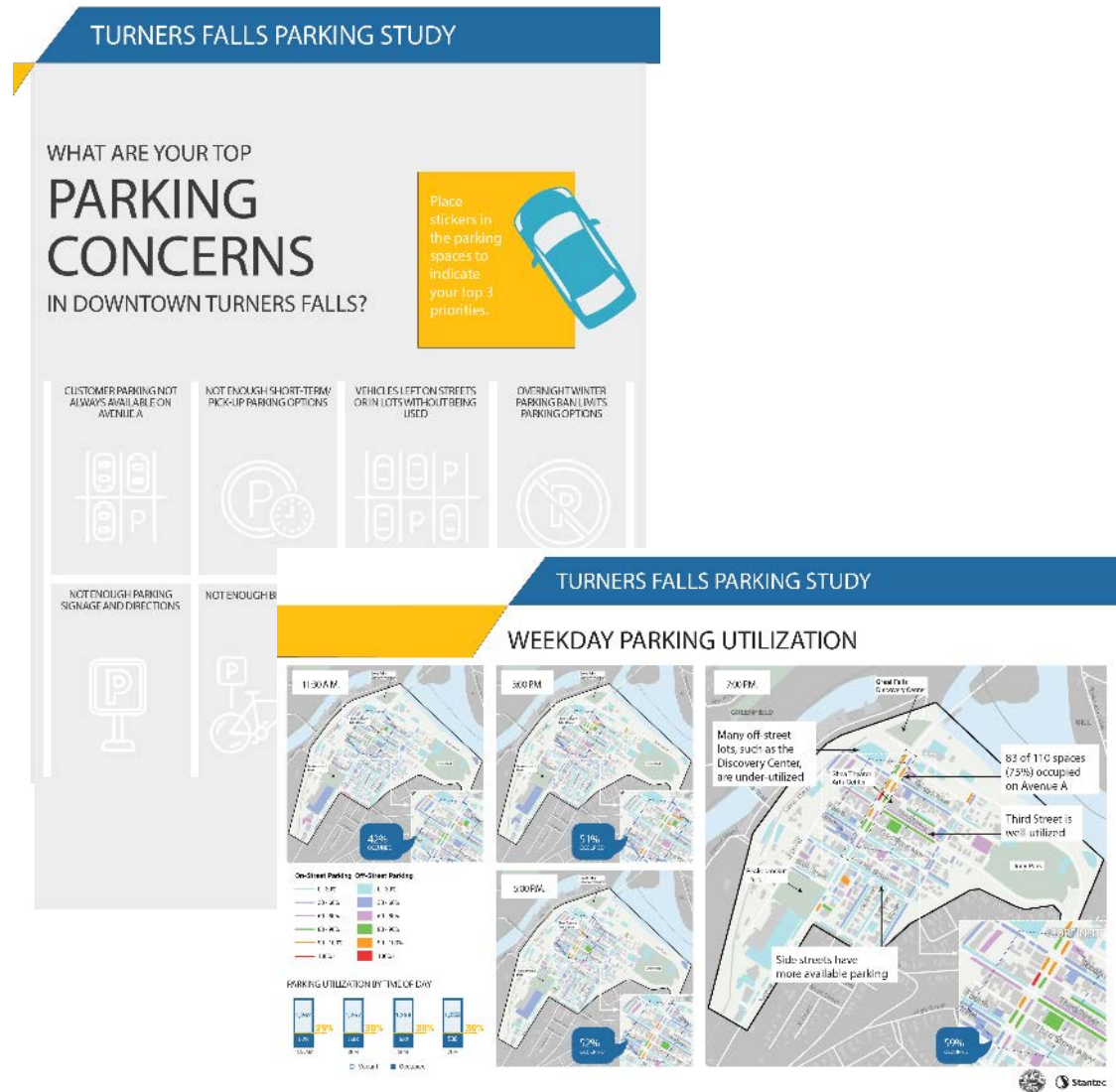


Two stakeholder meetings for the Turners Falls Parking Study were held on the afternoon of **Thursday, March 24** at Montague Town Hall. The first stakeholder meeting involved Town staff members with the second meeting involving business stakeholders and other community members.

Among Town staff, activity along Avenue A and overnight parking management practices were highlighted. Staff expressed that parking is only difficult to find during peak event days, such as when the Shea Theater is active. There is discontent when employees and residents take up parking that could be occupied by customers and visitors. Finally, the importance of having cars off streets during snow events was emphasized, and there were concerns raised about vehicles being abandoned on streets, in Town lots, or for lots to be used for commercial vehicle fleets.

Town stakeholders also emphasized the challenges of parking during peak periods. Requests for short-term parking spaces, better signage, and more accessible parking spaces were raised. The overnight winter parking permit program for L Street and nearby streets was hailed, but landlords in attendance noted that their residents had become accustomed to the idea of not having dedicated parking available. Clearing up the ownership status and prioritizing use of the L Street/Third Street lot was emphasized.

A public meeting was held on the evening of **Tuesday, May 10** at Montague Town Hall. The meeting was sparsely attended; comments during the meeting primarily concerned the overnight winter parking ban.





A public survey was conducted in April and May 2022 to gather feedback from Town residents and stakeholders. In total 86 responses were received.

Key findings are summarized below, with data from the survey profiled by different user groups profiled on the following pages.

Key Survey Findings

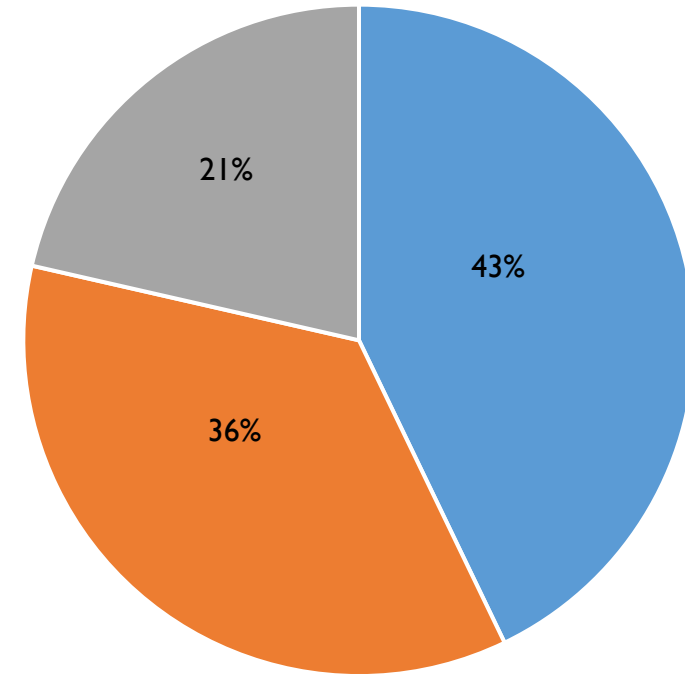
- Respondents did not feel there was an issue with finding available parking in Downtown Turners Falls.
- Respondents represented a variety of stakeholder groups, including residents, daytime and evening visitors, workers, business owners, and landlords.
- Most respondents reported being able to find a space at their destination and in little time on a typical day.
- A third of residents with vehicles reported being negatively impacted by the winter overnight parking ban.
- Respondents preferred investments to the multimodal environment, improved lighting, more wayfinding, policies restricting long-term vehicle storage on streets, and regulations encouraging customer parking along Avenue A as preferred ideas.
- Respondents felt that pricing would not be a good idea in Downtown Turners Falls.

Public Survey- Business Owners



- Fourteen respondents were business owners or landlords requiring parking of some sort; only five of these provided parking for their employees or residents on-site.

If you own a business or are a landlord in Downtown Turners Falls, how do you provide parking for employees, residents, and/or vehicle fleets?



- I direct my employees and/or residents to (or keep my vehicle fleet at) nearby, available parking
- I provide parking for my employees, residents, and/or vehicles on-site
- I don't direct my employees and/or residents to park in a specific location

"The lots fill up early, and people can't park on the streets during the snow removal months"
-Business owner

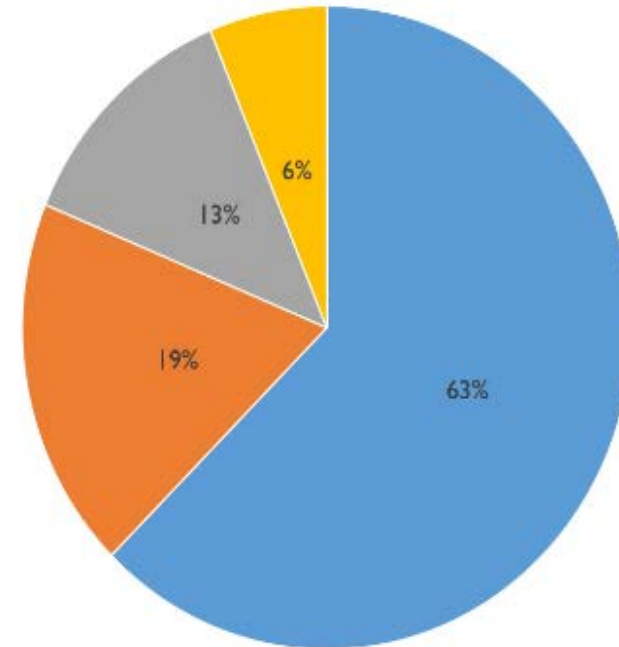
"The winter parking ban is difficult for my tenants."
-Landlord

Public Survey - Winter Overnight Parking Ban



- Forty-eight respondents lived in Turners Falls and required parking for their vehicle; of these respondents, **32%** reported being impacted in some degree by the **overnight winter parking ban**.
 - Three respondents had **obtained permits from the Town for on-street overnight winter parking**.
- 40% of business owners** say that the overnight parking ban impacts them on some or most nights
- 11% of visitors** say that the overnight parking ban impacts them on some nights by not allowing them to park at their preferred location

How does the overnight parking ban in Turners Falls between December 1 and April 1 impact you?



- It does not impact me because I have a reserved, off-street space (e.g. driveway, space behind residence)
- It impacts me on some nights but not others by sometimes preventing me from parking at my preferred location
- It impacts me on most nights by preventing me from parking at my preferred location
- It does not impact me because I have a parking permit which allows for on-street overnight winter parking along portions of L Street, Prospect Street, and North Street



Public Survey by Public Responder Recommendations

- Of ideas to improve the parking experience in Downtown Turners Falls, results indicated:

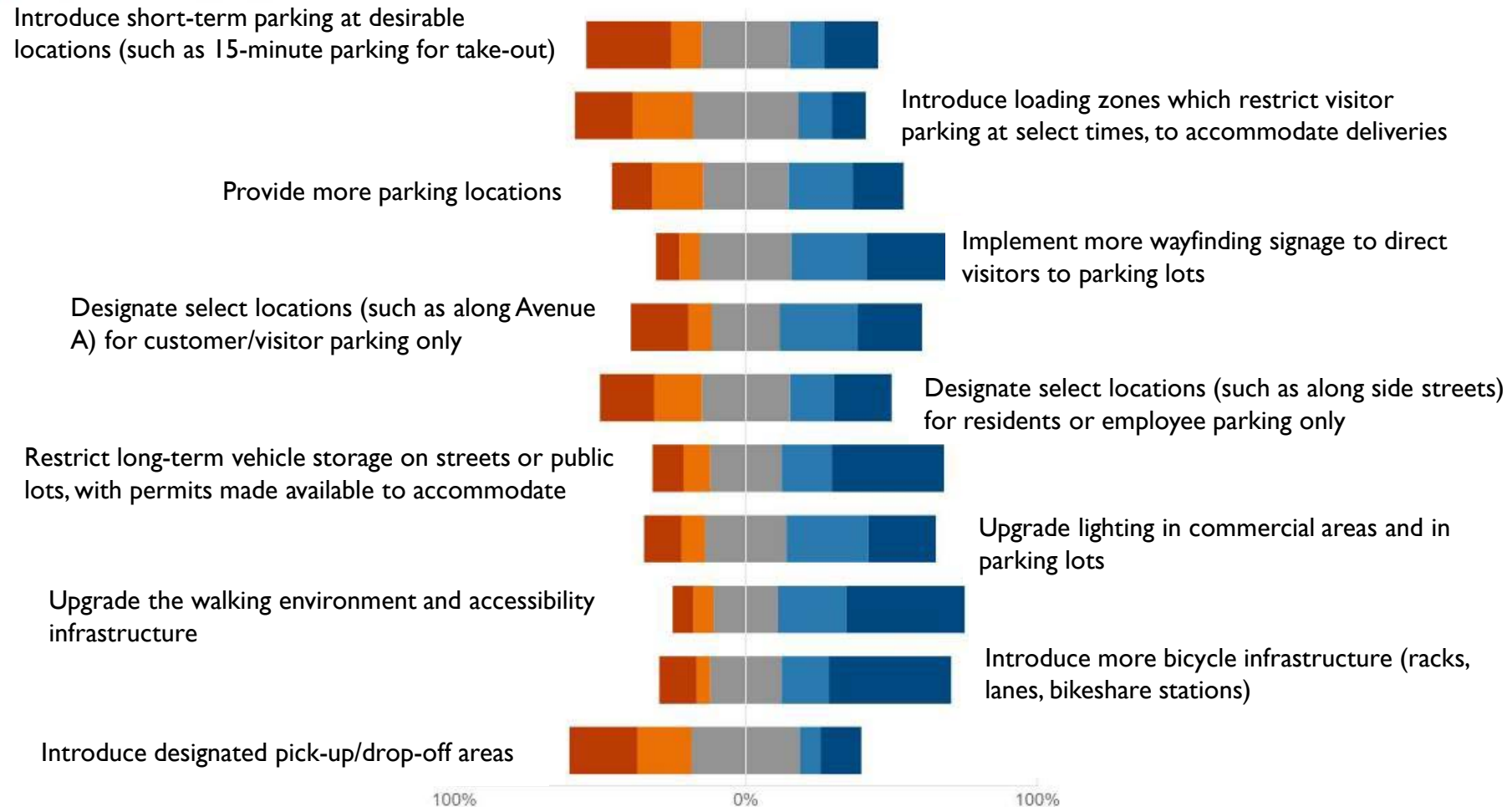
Idea	Would Be Effective (Responded 4 or 5)	Would Not Be Effective (Responded 1 or 2)
Upgrade the walking environment and accessibility infrastructure	64%	14%
Introduce more bicycle infrastructure (racks, lanes, bikeshare stations)	58%	18%
Restrict long-term vehicle storage on streets or public lots, with permits made available to accommodate select circumstances	54%	19%
Implement more wayfinding signage to direct visitors to parking lots	53%	16%
Upgrade lighting in commercial areas and in parking lots	52%	21%
Designate select locations (such as along Avenue A) for customer/visitor parking only	48%	28%
Provide more parking locations	39%	32%
Designate select locations (such as along side streets) for customer/visitor parking only	35%	34%
Introduce short-term parking at desirable locations (such as 15-minute parking for take-out)	31%	40%
Introduce loading zones which restrict visitor parking at select times, to accommodate deliveries	24%	40%
Introduce designated pick-up/drop-off areas	21%	41%



Public Survey- Approval of Recommendations

Please indicate your approval of the ideas below to improve the parking experience in Downtown Turners Falls
(1 – I don't think this would be effective; 5 – I think this would be highly effective)

1 2 3 4 5



DEMAND MODELING



Shared Parking Demand Model

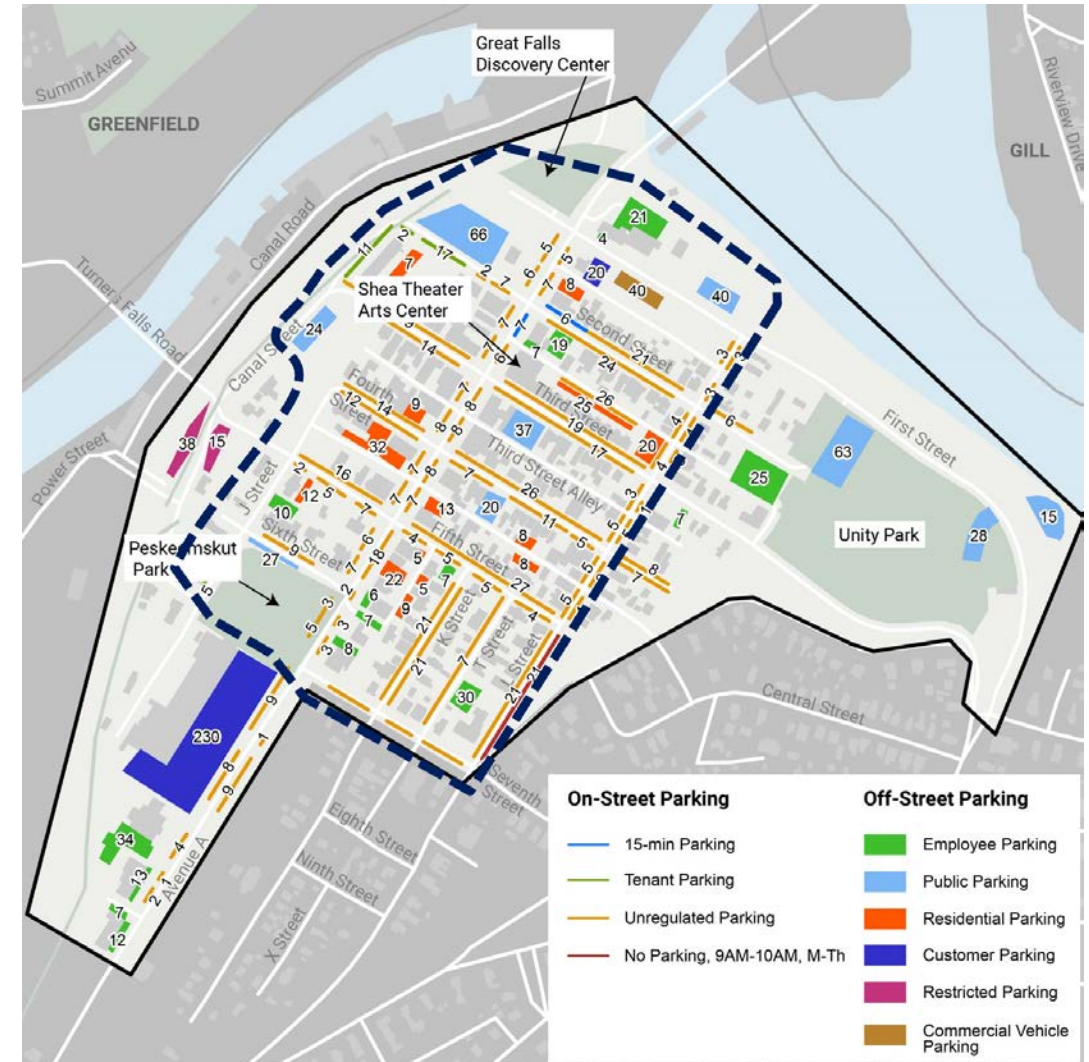
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An analysis of the existing parking supply's ability to accommodate future development for Downtown Turners Falls was carried out using a customized shared parking demand model. This section covers the inputs to this model and its findings when new development is projected for Downtown. The focus area of this exercise is shown to the right and is meant to encompass a five-minute walk from available parking to businesses, retail, and restaurant along Avenue A.

A core component of this analysis is an understanding of the land uses present in the community. Parcel-level land use data from the Town of Montague was shared with the project team and verified through a combination of staff feedback, online research, and “windshield” surveys on Google Maps.

Land Use	Size	Units
Office	48,000	Square Feet
Retail (inc. services such as hair salons)	55,000	Square Feet
Restaurant	28,000	Square Feet
Institution (Church, Museum, Theater)	59,500	Square Feet
Apartments	400	Units
Warehouse	2,000	Square Feet
Bank	5,000	Square Feet



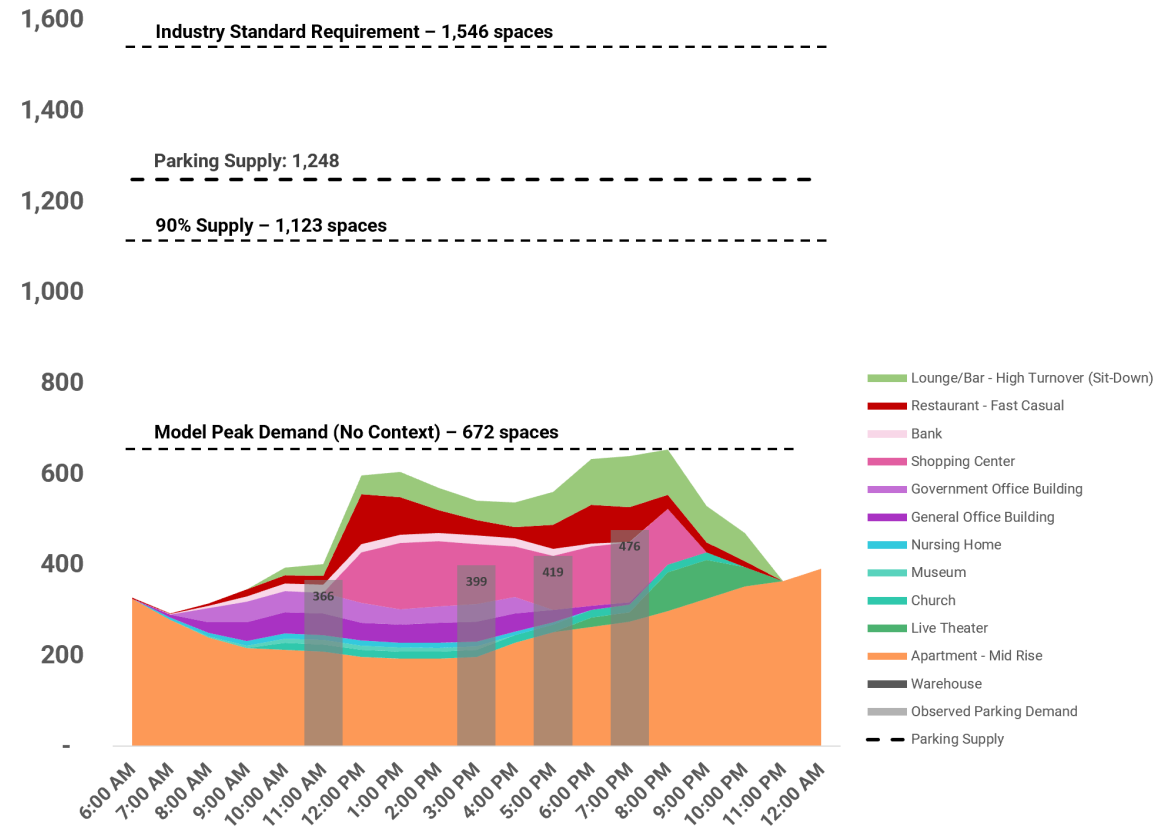
Estimating Parking Demand



A typical approach to estimating parking demand assumes that each land use in a downtown needs its own supply of parking and thus simply adds together the amount of parking demand “required” for each use to estimate demand. This level of analysis assumes that demand for each land use is constant throughout the day and that the parking supply for each parcel is at a quantity needed to accommodate its highest demand. Whereas the total parking supply in the focus area is 1,248 spaces, this industry standard approach would yield 1,546 spaces given the study area’s land uses.

An analysis based on “real demand” more accurately reflects demand patterns that vary by use throughout the day. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) publishes the Shared Parking Manual, which provides analysts with a methodology to estimate real parking demand over time in mixed-use areas like Downtown Turners Falls. The Shared Parking Manual was referenced to create a model of demand if parking supply were to be shared across the entire study area.

For example, demand at an office is low in the middle of the night, hits its peak in the middle of the day, and drops off again in the early evening. Conversely, a restaurant may have little to no demand during the day but peak around the dinner hour. Modeling parking demand of these land uses applies a time-of-day percentage to the peak parking demand rates to create a more realistic estimate of demand in mixed-use environments like Downtown Turners Falls, as demonstrated to the right. However, this approach lacks further adjustments to account for local context.



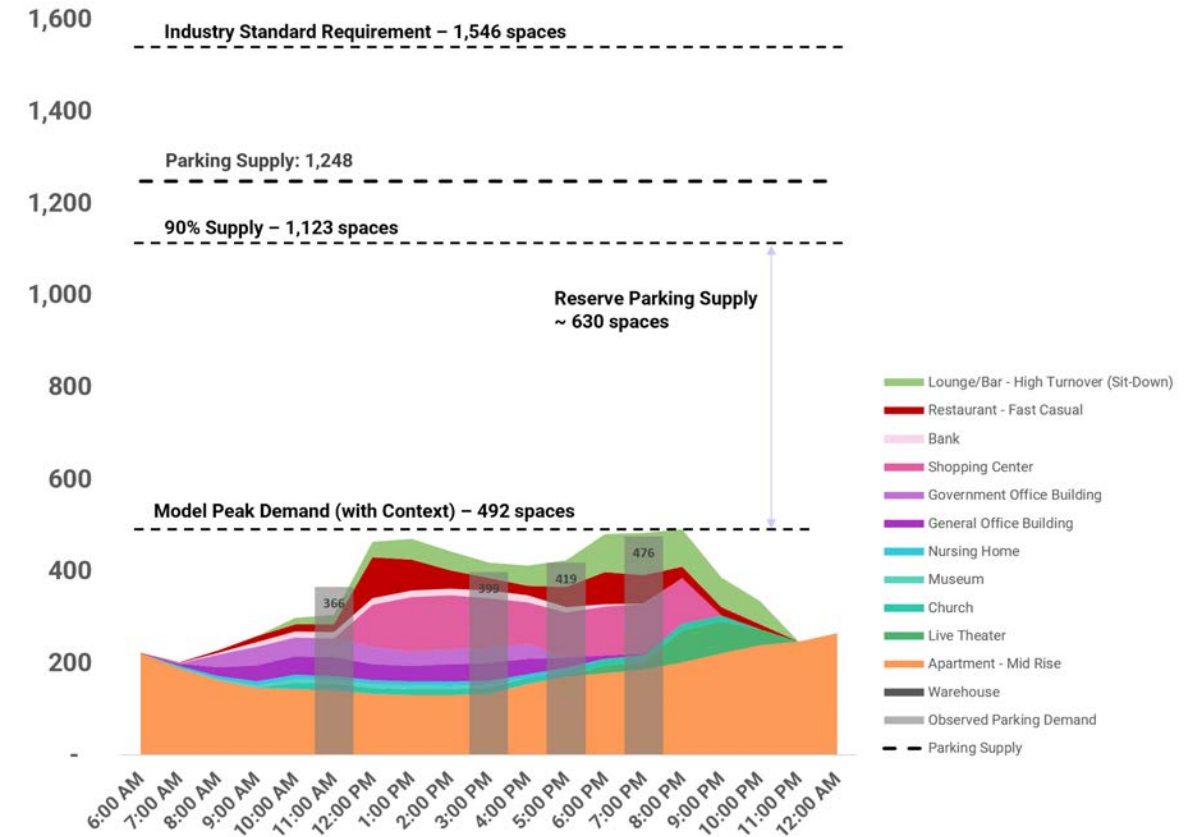


Real Parking Demand in Turners Falls

Parking demand is further reduced in downtown environments because retail, commercial, office, and residential uses are closer together and more walkable. Users that opt to walk within the focus area to get from one destination to another (without parking their vehicle) are considered “internally captured.” Depending on the use, this can reduce total parking demand from stand-alone uses an average of 15%. In addition, the walkable focus area may have trips from outside that don’t need a car at all, so additional reductions can be taken for some users. Finally, certain vacancy assumptions for housing, office, retail, and restaurant uses were also incorporated into the model.

Using the ULI methodology together with these local context reductions applied to parking demand rates from Institute of Transportation Engineers, parking demand was modeled in the study area. Parking utilization counts captured for the study were used to calibrate the model, resulting in a model that is based off of observed demand. The modeled peak demand falls above the study’s observations to provide a conservative estimate of the amount of parking needed for existing land uses in the study area.

The results of this exercise point to the existing parking supply in the focus area being approximately 630 spaces larger than the need at the Friday evening peak, although approximately 10% of this supply should be held in reserve. It is important to note that not all this parking is in the exact right location or currently regulated appropriately to support additional development. However, strategies discussed in this report involve use of some of this excess parking to support new development would save significant financial and land costs compared to building new parking.





Scenario #1: Anticipated Development

Two development scenarios in the focus area were studied to evaluate the impact of new development on the downtown parking supply.

The first scenario involved the addition of two anticipated development projects on Avenue A and First Street. It is anticipated these projects will place very modest growth for downtown parking demand, adding approximately 25 spaces to the peak, which shifts to earlier in the day.

Scenario #1

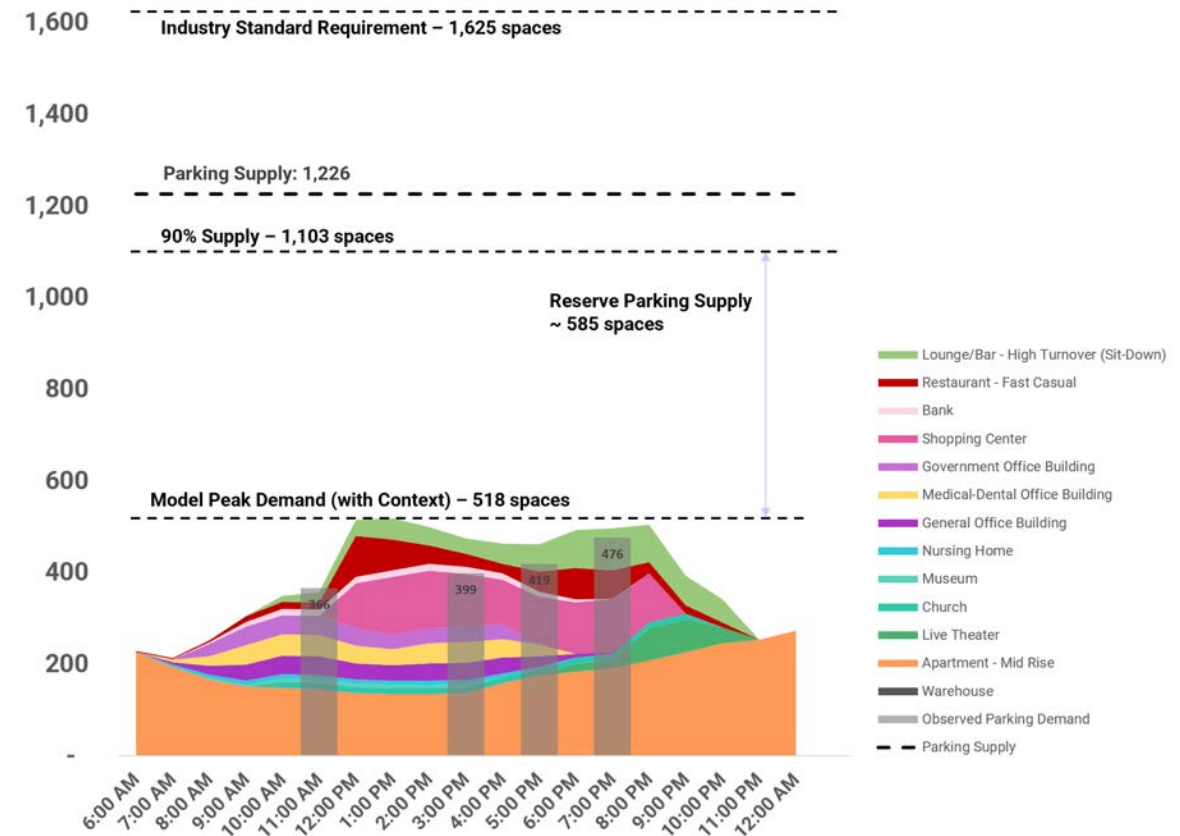
Incorporate Anticipated Development

38 Avenue A

8,000 square feet of retail and 16,000 square feet of medical office with no new parking

First Street

12 apartments units with a net loss of 22 spaces, as 18 spaces replace an existing 40-space lot.



Scenario #2: Development Build-Out



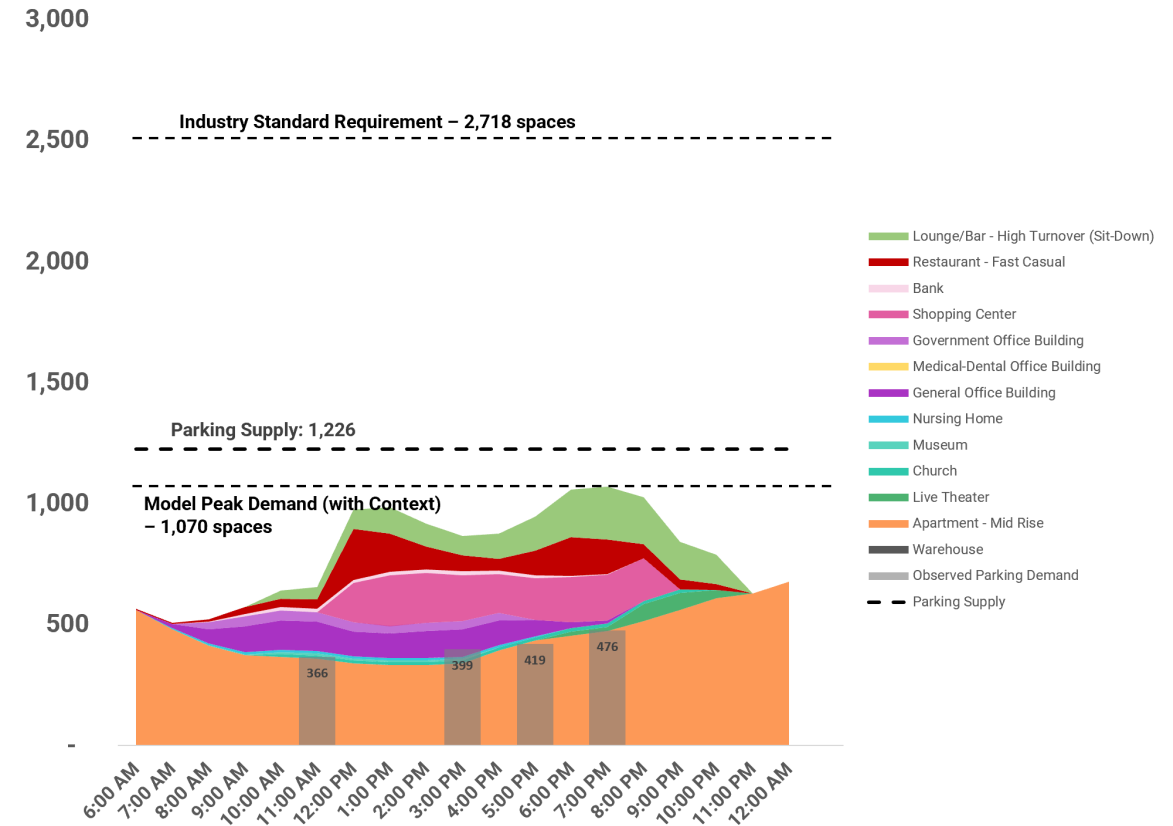
The second scenario sought to exhaust the Downtown parking supply. This involved a 125% increase in the number of apartment units and square footage of non-governmental office, restaurant, and retail uses in the focus area.

Buildout to this level approaches the 90% threshold in which 10% of the parking supply continues to be held in reserve. This exercise also assumes no growth in the parking supply associated with this new development.

Scenario #2 Exhaust Downtown Parking Supply

125% increase for the following land uses:

- **Apartments:** 496 units
- **Non-Gov't Office:** 40,700 square feet
- **Restaurant:** 35,150 square feet
- **Retail:** 68,850 square feet



FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



Findings

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As presently constituted, the parking system in Turners Falls is able to accommodate demand at peak conditions. This study notes:

- Parking occupancy, at peak periods, falls well below industry standards for availability.
- The parking system can accommodate anticipated future growth.
- Regulations in the community are generally straightforward.

However, spare capacity in the parking supply is not an indication that the parking system is working as well as intended, or as it should be.

Several instances of feedback gained through the public outreach process found concerns related to residential, employee, and customer use of parking:

- The importance of Avenue A for retail spending means that availability along the corridor is particularly important for customer parking.
- Overnight winter parking policies are a matter of frustration for residents.
- The system should evolve to meet growing needs over time.



The Importance of Avenue A and Third Street



Avenue A's prominence in generating retail spending and tax revenue for the Village speaks to the need for parking in and around the corridor to accommodate user needs.

Several unique factors of Turners Falls' street layout and the Village's larger geographic context play into the importance of ensuring parking availability along Avenue A:

- The street serves as the primary northern and southern entry point into the Village; should a motorist travel the length of the corridor without parking they will need to drive past the Gill-Montague Bridge (northbound travel) or towards Eleventh Street (southbound travel) before they can turn around and re-enter the retail district.
- Competing retail options in Millers Falls, Greenfield, and Montague Center are less than 10 minutes away, providing a ready alternative if visitors feel they cannot find a parking space.
- Larger blocks limit the total amount of curbside space which can be used for parking along side streets within walking distance from Avenue A.

The following recommendations recognize the configuration of retail, residential, and office uses in Turners Falls and seek to resolve community concerns brought up through this study to most effectively manage parking supply in the community.



Designate Avenue A and Third Street for Customer Parking



Oftentimes, a simple nudge to remind parking users of where they should and shouldn't park is helpful to better manage demand. Although parking is plentiful in Downtown Turners Falls, residential and employee parking can oftentimes be observed along Avenue A and Third Street despite these corridors best serving customers of downtown retail and restaurants. This recommendation would deploy signage to demarcate on-street parking for customers at these locations. Signs can be deployed on each block face, at a rate of one sign for every four or five spaces, to reinforce the request without creating sign clutter.

The purpose of the signage isn't to restrict parking along these areas to customers only at all times; as the utilization exercise showed, even at peak periods there is still available parking along these corridors. The purpose of the recommendation is rather to:

- Assist with visitor wayfinding in order to quickly find an available space
- Better ensure capacity at parking locations closest to retail uses and restaurants
- Create a soft "regulation" which allows for non-customer use of spaces during off-peak periods

The visitor parking signage should not be treated as a regulation to be enforced by the Police Department. It is impractical to expect vehicles to be tracked based on the purpose for parking. If the visitor parking regulation along Avenue A and Third Street is not being observed by motorists, particularly during peak periods, the Town could place flyers on vehicles or evaluate whether the regulation and the associated resident/employee regulation is best serving Village needs.



Incentivize Local Parking Along Side Streets and Alleys



Concurrent with the customer parking recommendation, select side streets such as Second Street, Fourth Street, and Fifth Street can be designated as resident and employee only.

Given the existing capacity in Downtown to accommodate all types of parking users, this designation is meant as a failsafe for particularly busy periods, as well as to ensure residents and employees on Avenue A and Third Street are ensured of designated parking in short distance.

Signs can be positioned with less frequency than the customer parking designation along Avenue A and Third Street given the reduced utilization observed on these corridors.



Designate Specific Spaces for Short-Term Parking and Loading

Feedback from this study found that certain businesses along Avenue A, such as Turners Falls Pizza House and Connecticut River Liquors, desire short-term parking for takeout and other short visits. Presently, short-term parking is accommodated in the vicinity of the Avenue A/Second Street intersection; the Town should revisit at a regular basis where short-term parking is accommodated and encourage an open line of communication with businesses to allow for the designation of short-term parking spaces as demand allows.

Angled parking along Avenue A is not ideal for loading activities; the Town should designate spaces at intersections with Avenue A and side streets for loading activities; these spaces can be designated for loading for a short time period of the day or throughout the day.





Modeling Anticipated Customer, Resident, and Employee Parking Demand

Two additional scenarios of the shared parking demand model were carried out to assess the impact of designated customer, resident, and employee parking areas along Avenue A, Third Street, and associated side streets. These scenarios are in line with the recommendations just described.

Scenario #3

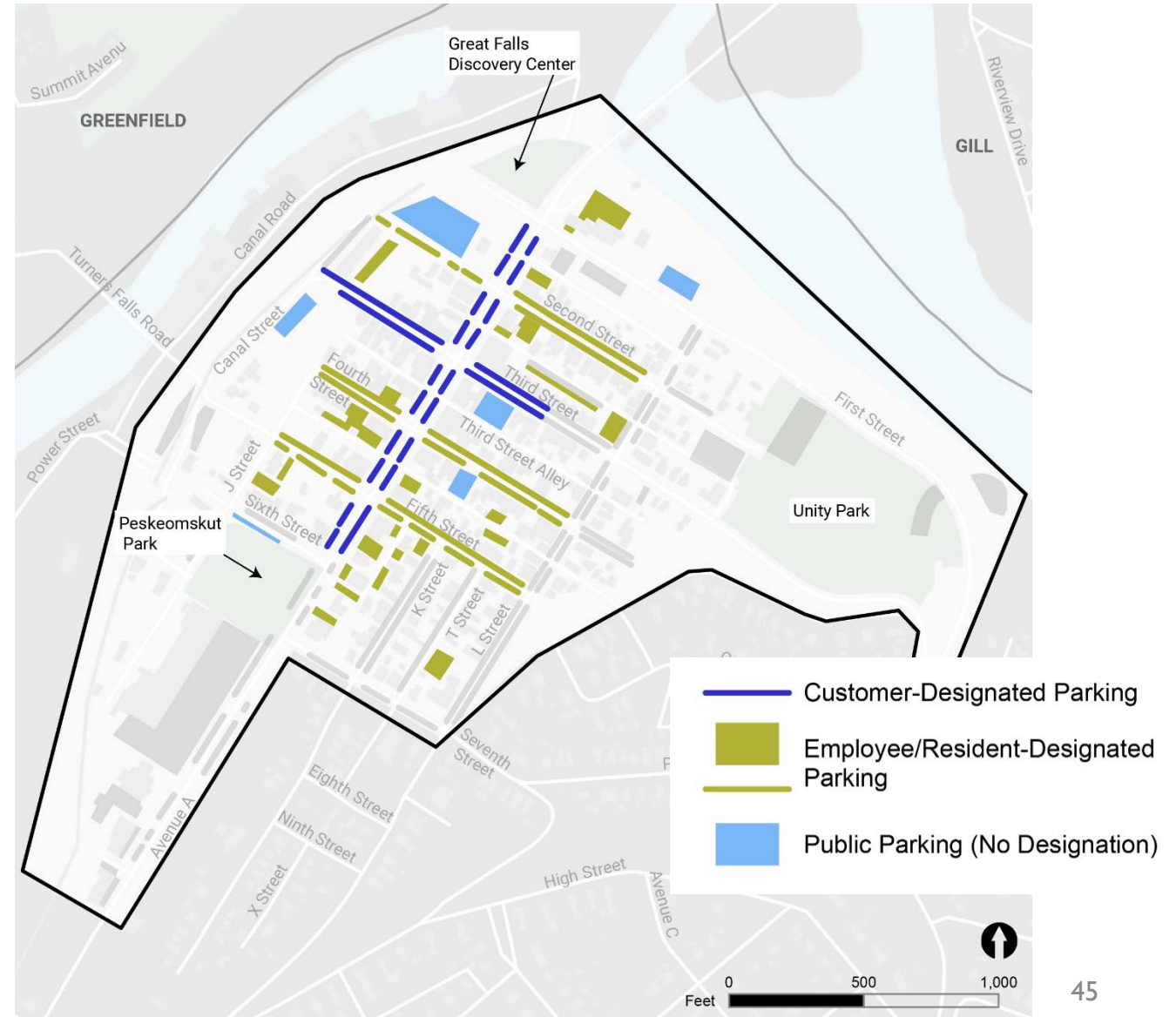
Customer Parking Designation

- Avenue A between First and Sixth Streets
- Third Street between J Street and halfway between Avenue A and L Street
- All off-street customer parking in focus area
- Half of off-street public parking in focus area

Scenario #4

Resident and Employee Parking Designation

- Second Street between Canal Street and L Street
- Fourth Street between J Street and L Street
- Fifth Street between J Street and L Street
- All off-street residential parking in focus area
- All off-street employee parking in focus area
- Half of off-street public parking in focus area



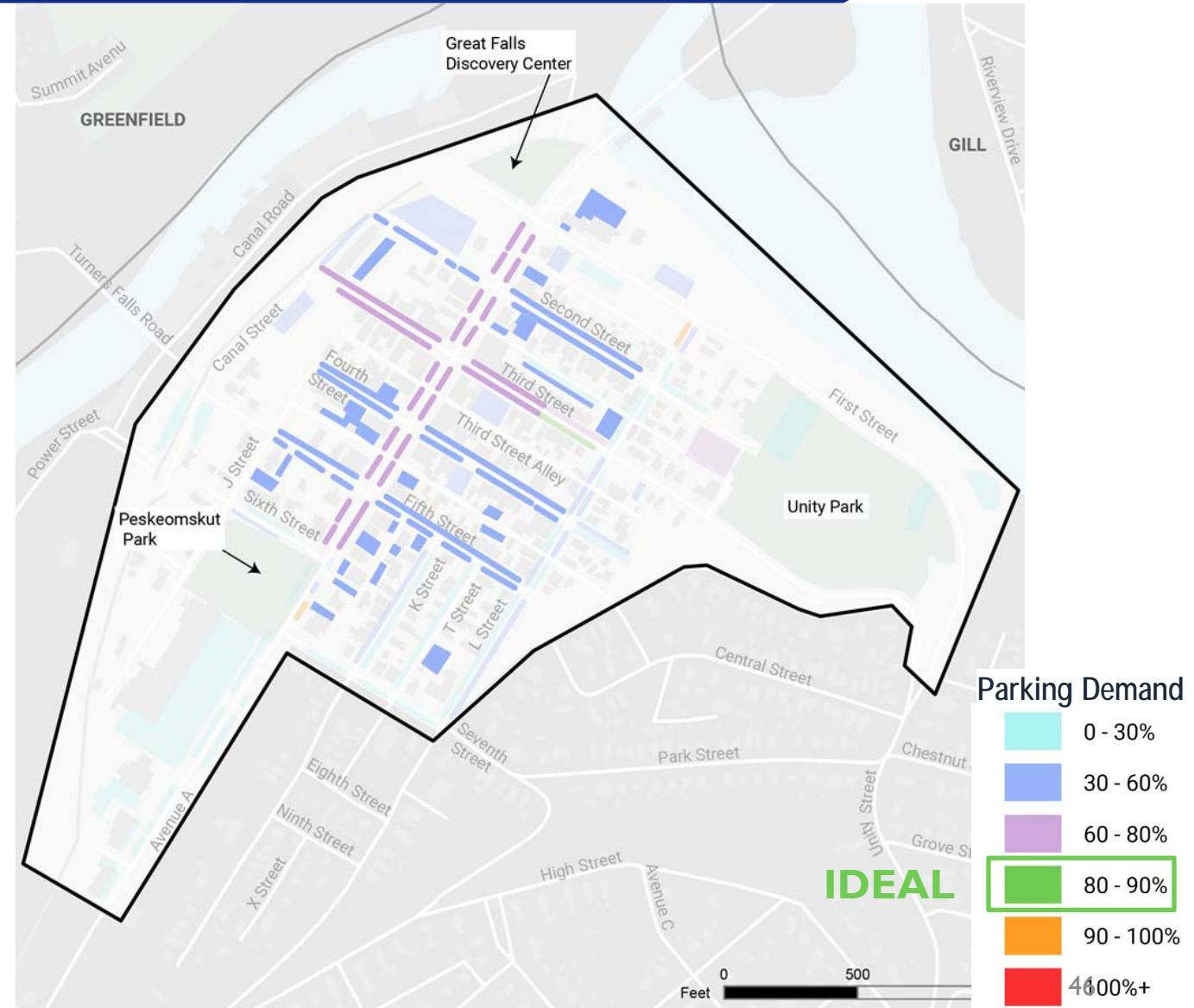


Modeling Anticipated Customer, Resident, and Employee Parking Demand

Customer, resident, and employee utilizations by designation are shown to the left for the early evening observed peak utilization in the focus area.

Customer designated parking is approximately 75% utilized, approaching ideal utilization for a downtown. When residents and employees are parked in these areas, availability can be harder to come by.

Resident and employee designated parking is more available, with about 40% utilized, ensuring that these user groups are unlikely to have trouble finding parking even in peak periods.



Improve Downtown Wayfinding



The 2021 Rapid Recovery Plan for Turners Falls noted that many project participants raised a lack of signage as a significant issue for the Village. The Plan writes “it can be hard to find and navigate where to park, how to access the theater and shops, and many people don’t know Turners Falls is a destination”.

As it relates to parking, some municipal lots feature signage with common branding (Unity Park, Canal/Third Street lots) but others are unsigned or signed differently. No common wayfinding system directs motorists from corridors like Avenue A to these lots. For instance, signage as one enters the community from the Gill-Montague Bridge notes the small lot for the Shea Theater but lacks information for larger, more publicly-available lots; with several signs present, even this information can get lost.

A larger community branding scheme can be integrated into the design, manufacture, and installation of parking wayfinding signs at key locations, as recognized by the Rapid Recovery Plan.



Improve the Downtown Multimodal Environment

The Town has prioritized investments in multimodal infrastructure in recent years, as described in the Existing Conditions section. Gaps in the sidewalk network persist from off-street parking resources, such as the north side of First Street between the Fishladder parking area and Avenue A and the north side of Second Street between the Great Falls Discovery Center and Avenue A. Additionally, signs of wear are apparent on some sidewalk surfaces as well as with pavement materials. Lighting is absent in most municipal lots.

Given the importance of the Canalside Rail Trail and the plethora of recreational travel options in the area, Turners Falls is well-positioned to continue attracting recreational tourists. Bicycle lane and bicycle parking options for the visitors can generate retail spending, such as for bicyclists at the end of rides, while keeping prime vehicle parking spaces along Avenue A and Third Street open for other customers. It also ensures parking options like those in the vicinity of Unity Park are well-utilized.





Wayfinding and Multimodal Environment



Opportunities exist along the length of Avenue A to strategically add bicycle racks; owing to the street's extensive width



Enhancing lighting and introducing loading zones improves the utility of the parking system



Overnight Parking Policies

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This study's utilization and shared parking demand modeling exercises found significant capacity for introducing new housing in Downtown Turners Falls. However, the effective parking capacity in the winter is reduced by the 680 on-street spaces where parking is prohibited between 1:00 AM and 5:00 AM between December 1 and April 1, as well as additional spaces in the Colle-Shea lot.

As the 2021 Rapid Recovery Plan notes, the vast majority of downtown housing units pre-date zoning and do not have adequate off-street parking and thus rely on public parking. At the time the Planning Department observed downtown multi-family housing units converting yard areas to parking and increased curb cuts for parking spaces, which harms Turners Falls' urban fabric.

Confusion also persists relating to the listed policies on Town signage in municipal lots regarding snow clearance, and whether parking is prohibited at set times throughout the winter or just during snow events.





Modify Overnight Winter Parking Ban

Between December 1 and April 1 no on-street parking is allowed between 1:00 AM and 5:00 AM, requiring those who typically park on-street to find parking in a public lot. This can create daily walks of a block or more for many residents, made worse when sidewalks are icy or not cleared of snow or when fulfilling errands such as grocery store visits. Vehicles left in public lots during the day also occupy parking spaces which could be used by visitors and employees of nearby retail establishments.

The justification for prohibiting vehicles from streets during a snow event is well-founded; plows struggle to clear streets when cars are present. However, a “one size fits all” approach create difficulty for residents. Recently, the Town has implemented a permitting system along parts of L Street, Prospect Street, and Ninth Street, allowing up to 35 residents to pay \$25 for on-street parking at locations where street widths are wider. The system has been successful, with the understanding that permit holders must deal with the potential of being plowed in and also must clear the parking area at a specified time following a snow event.

The graphic to the right shows how the winter overnight parking ban could evolve to better fit the desires of residents while accommodating the needs of the Department of Public Works.

Enable same side parking for streets throughout the winter

Introduce snow emergency alert system; allow on-street parking outside of snow events

Designate priority corridors to prohibit overnight parking, whether on a nightly basis or during snow emergencies



Modify Overnight Winter Parking Ban

Enable same side parking for streets throughout the winter

The Department of Public Works notes that street widths often prevent plows from effectively clearing streets of snow when vehicles are parked.

By limiting on-street parking to one side of streets, alternating on an annual basis, plows should be able to clear streets while limiting the inconvenience caused for residents.

This strategy could be paired with a new snow emergency protocol rather than as a blanket prohibition of parking throughout the winter.

Introduce snow emergency alert system; allow on-street parking outside of snow events

A successful snow emergency alert system should be multi-pronged; the least technologically-savvy resident must be notified. In a community of Turners Falls size, even a method of direct outreach to the hardest-to-reach residents could be employed. Other strategies include:

- Reverse 911
- Social media posting
- Flashing beacon systems

Designate priority corridors to prohibit overnight parking, whether on a nightly basis or during snow emergencies

Some communities will designate major thoroughfares to be cleared of vehicles for snow events given the importance of facilitating vehicle access for the community at large. A prohibition of parking along Avenue A or Third Street, for instance, could ensure that these streets will be effectively cleaned by DPW staff.

This strategy could be paired with a new snow emergency protocol rather than as a blanket prohibition of parking throughout the winter.

Modify Overnight Winter Parking Ban



Communities have implemented these kinds of winter notification policies across the country. Appropriate signage and emergency lighting indicators can be installed to alert the public of the new policies and/or presence of a snow emergency.





Introduce Regulations to Limit Long-Term Vehicle Storage on Streets

An additional finding from the public feedback process concerned vehicle abandonment on streets and in Town lots.

Sufficient supply on streets and in off-street lots indicates that abandoned vehicles are not placing a strain on the parking system. However, these vehicles can create blight on streets and in off-street lots, as well as cause frustration when vehicles are left long-term in front of residences. For commercial vehicles, fleet storage in public lots represents an abuse of a public resource for private gain.

Policy can be introduced into the Town's bylaws which limits vehicle storage on streets and in public lots to 72 hours for personal vehicles and 48 hours for commercial vehicles. This bylaw should be passively enforced; vehicles can be reported by residents with less punitive measures of enforcement such as direct outreach or vehicle flouting before vehicles are towed. Additionally, the Police Department should log notifications from residents who will be leaving vehicles on streets beyond the timeframe for vacations and other reasons.





Additional Recommendations

Even without a constrained parking system at present, the Town can introduce best practice parking management principles to create flexibility and options for private lot owners to open excess capacity to other users as well as keep ahead of potential future demand pinch points.

Formalize shared parking arrangements

Montague allows for the use of off-site parking to satisfy parking minimums, but the legwork for identifying an opportunity falls on the developer. The Town could serve as an agent by connecting private parties desiring parking to lot owners with excess capacity, whether for a development project or not.

Alternatively, the Town could enter into a formal agreement with private lot owners to provide in-kind services in exchange for parking lots being opened for more general usage, while preserving zoning entitlements and the right to revert. This usage could be unrestricted (open to the public at all times for any purpose) or limited to selected parking spaces, certain times of the day or days of the week, or for certain users such as residents or employees of downtown businesses. In-kind services provided by the City could include plowing or provision or maintenance of lighting, signage, or pavement, among other options. An arrangement like this may be appropriate at the corner lot at Third Street and L Street

Conduct regular utilization counts

Moving forward, should the Town experience increased demand for parking, a strategy should be in place which allows the Town to first count space occupancy and then consider whether changes to use regulations, time regulations, or even pricing in specific locations are appropriate.

A typical threshold used by communities is 85 percent occupancy along a block face or in a public lot. As a key goal for any parking system is planning for space availability, utilization above this rate makes use of the parking system challenging. At this level, incentivizing use of remote parking (such as through more formally regulating longer-term parking in one or more Town lots or along additional side streets) becomes appropriate.



Additional Recommendations

Other recommendations involve planning for a high-activity events and being mindful of best practice design principles for any future streetscape project, particularly in response to concerns raised during the stakeholder outreach process.

Special Events

Cities around the world have demonstrated through practice the positive economic impacts associated with pedestrian-only events, such as attracting new visitors. The Town would be well-served to develop an event parking management plan for circumstances which involve the closing of village streets, mainly Avenue A or Third Street. A management plan like this would encourage use of other travel modes as well as push motorists to off-street parking lots which this study has demonstrated typically have capacity. Additionally, use of private lots could serve as a harbinger for more regular sharing of parking as part of a shared parking district.

To achieve this outcome, an event management plan should address traffic circulation throughout the downtown area and direct visitors to available parking. For satellite parking further from the Avenue A corridor, such as parking associated with Unity Park, facilitating pedestrian wayfinding to the Downtown area should be a focus of a plan.

Design Improvements

A notable feature of parking along Avenue A is the angled spaces encountered by motorists, in contrast to the parallel parking present in many other communities. Avenue A's wide right-of-way makes angled parking the most appropriate design option in the absence of an extensive streetscape reconstruction which is able to obligate more space for multimodal uses, such as wider sidewalks or a landscaped median. Otherwise, conversion to parallel parking will leave too much street width for vehicle travel, encouraging faster driving and diminishing the street's walkability.

Other pieces of feedback raised during the outreach process found the desire to:

- Extend STOP lines on side streets to better meet the sightlines needed to observe Avenue A traffic; this should only be undertaken where extension of STOP lines does not conflict with pedestrian crossings.
- Ensure that accessible parking is brought in line with state standards along Avenue A