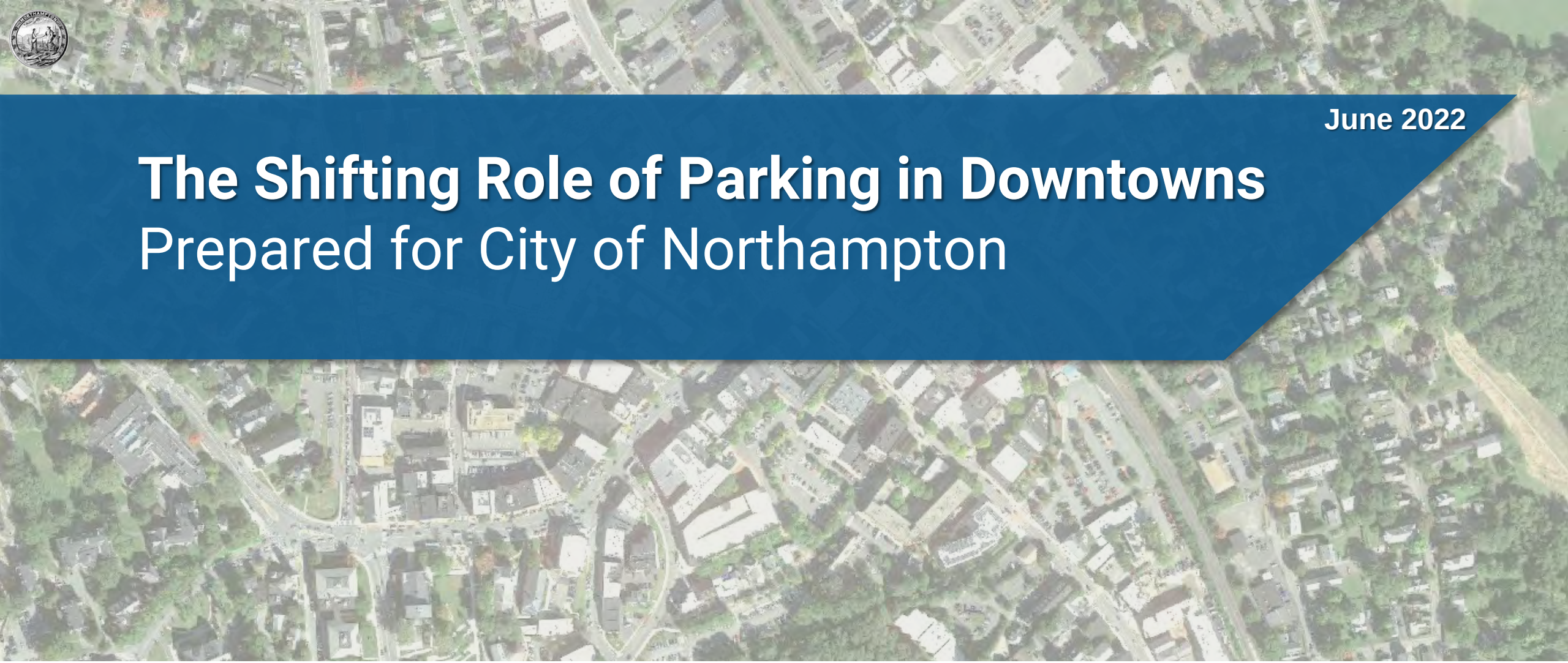

June 2022

The Shifting Role of Parking in Downtowns

Prepared for City of Northampton

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Integrated Mobility Services

Stantec

Contents

Introduction

In Spring 2022, the City of Northampton asked Stantec's Urban Mobility Group to review the parking price structure of the downtown parking supply, share best practices, and make recommendations for a better parking management and pricing system. This study precedes an effort to redesign Main Street and identify new curbside uses, which may remove several on-street parking spaces.

On June 13 and 14, Stantec met with community members and business owners to understand the concerns and parking needs in Downtown Northampton. The virtual meetings were a forum for discussion about accessible parking on and around Main Street, time restrictions and parking fees, and the potential future for parking in Northampton.

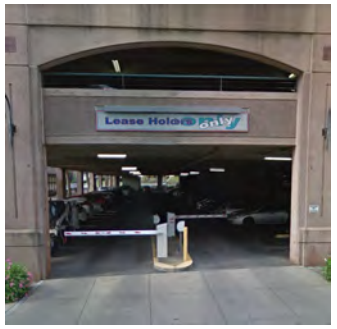
Evident in the data and public perception, the parking system (inventory, utilization, appropriate regulations and pricing) in Downtown Northampton is changing – as are best practices in parking management. Stantec considered these changes, along with an expressed need for accessible parking along Main Street, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, post-pandemic activity patterns in Downtown Northampton, and changing future parking demands. This report summarizes the findings, best practices, and recommendations for the parking system in Downtown Northampton.

Downtown Northampton Parking Findings

Inventory
Downtown Parking Options

E. John Gare Parking Garage

430 Spaces | Open 24 hours
- Short Term
  - $0.75/hour (1st hour free)
- Long Term
  - $90/month parking permit (~20% of supply or 90 permits sold in 2019; waitlist for additional sales)



Gothic Street Parking Structure*

43 Spaces | Open 5 pm to 6 am
- $0.75/hour
- Only accessible on weekends and after 5 pm on weekdays (designated City and Courthouse parking only 6 am to 5 pm)

Downtown Parking*

538 Metered On-Street Spaces | Enforced 8 am to 6 pm
- Main Street and Craft Ave | $1/hour (2-hour max)
- All other streets | $0.75/hour (2-hour max)

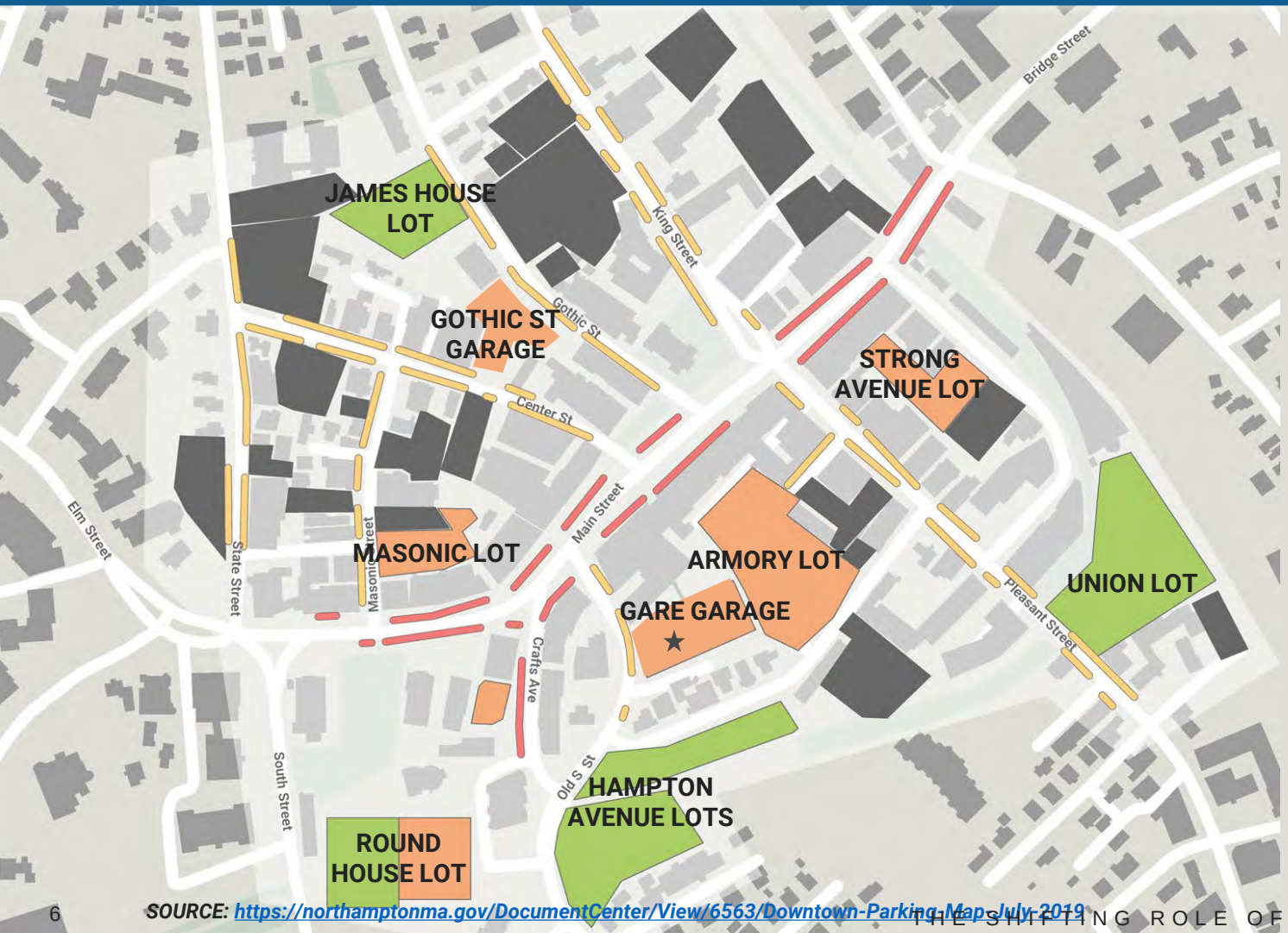
~1,000 Spaces in Municipal Lots | Enforced 8 am to 6 pm

- Short Term | $0.75/hour (3-hour max)
  - *Armory Lot, Masonic Lot, Strong Lot*
- Long Term | $0.25/hour (no max)
  - *Round House Lot**, Old South Lot**, Hampton Lot**, James House Lot**, West Street Lot**, Strong Lot, Union Station Lot*

***$45/month parking permit parking allowed in select long-term lots; additional long-term parking at 10-hr. red meters in various places*

**Pay using Pay-By-Plate Kiosks OR parkMobile*

Inventory
Downtown Parking Price Structure, 2019-2022

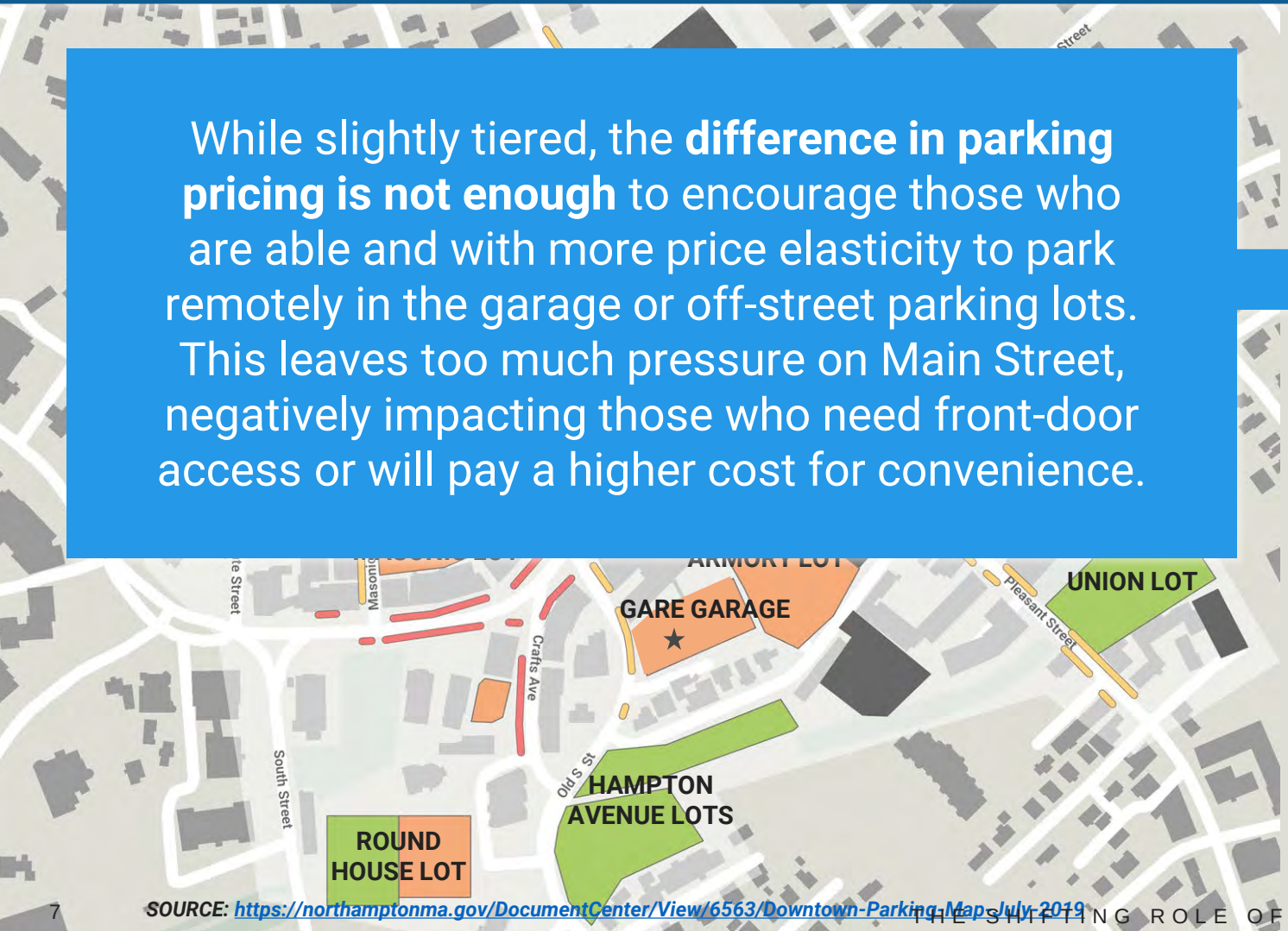


Facility Type	Inventory	Price Per Hour
Main Street / Craft Avenue	164	$1.00
Other Streets	355	$0.75
EJ Gare Garage ★ *1st hour free*	430	$0.75
Gothic Street Structure	43	$0.75
Short-Term Lots	225	$0.75
Long-Term Lots	~600	$0.25

SOURCE: *https://northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6563/Downtown-Parking-Map-July-2019*

Findings
Downtown Parking Price Structure, 2019-2022

While slightly tiered, the **difference in parking pricing is not enough** to encourage those who are able and with more price elasticity to park remotely in the garage or off-street parking lots. This leaves too much pressure on Main Street, negatively impacting those who need front-door access or will pay a higher cost for convenience.



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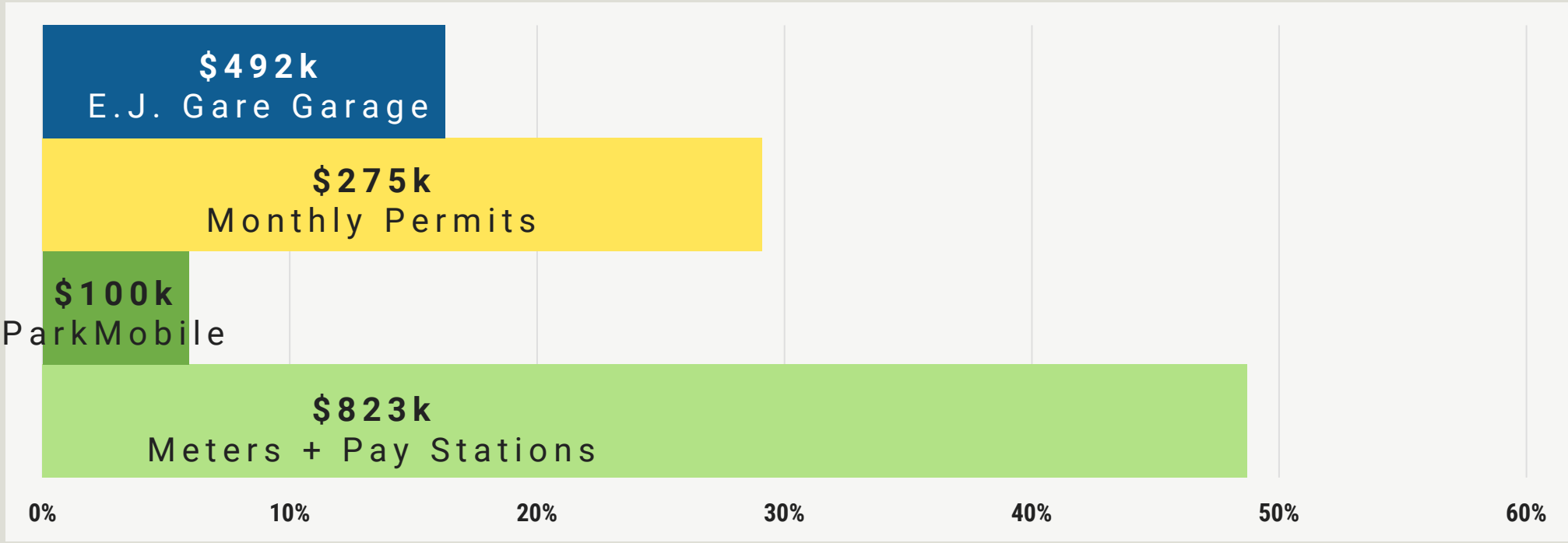
Short-Term Lots	225	$0.75
Long-Term Lots	~600	$0.25

SOURCE: *https://northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6563/Downtown-Parking-Map-July-2019*

Findings

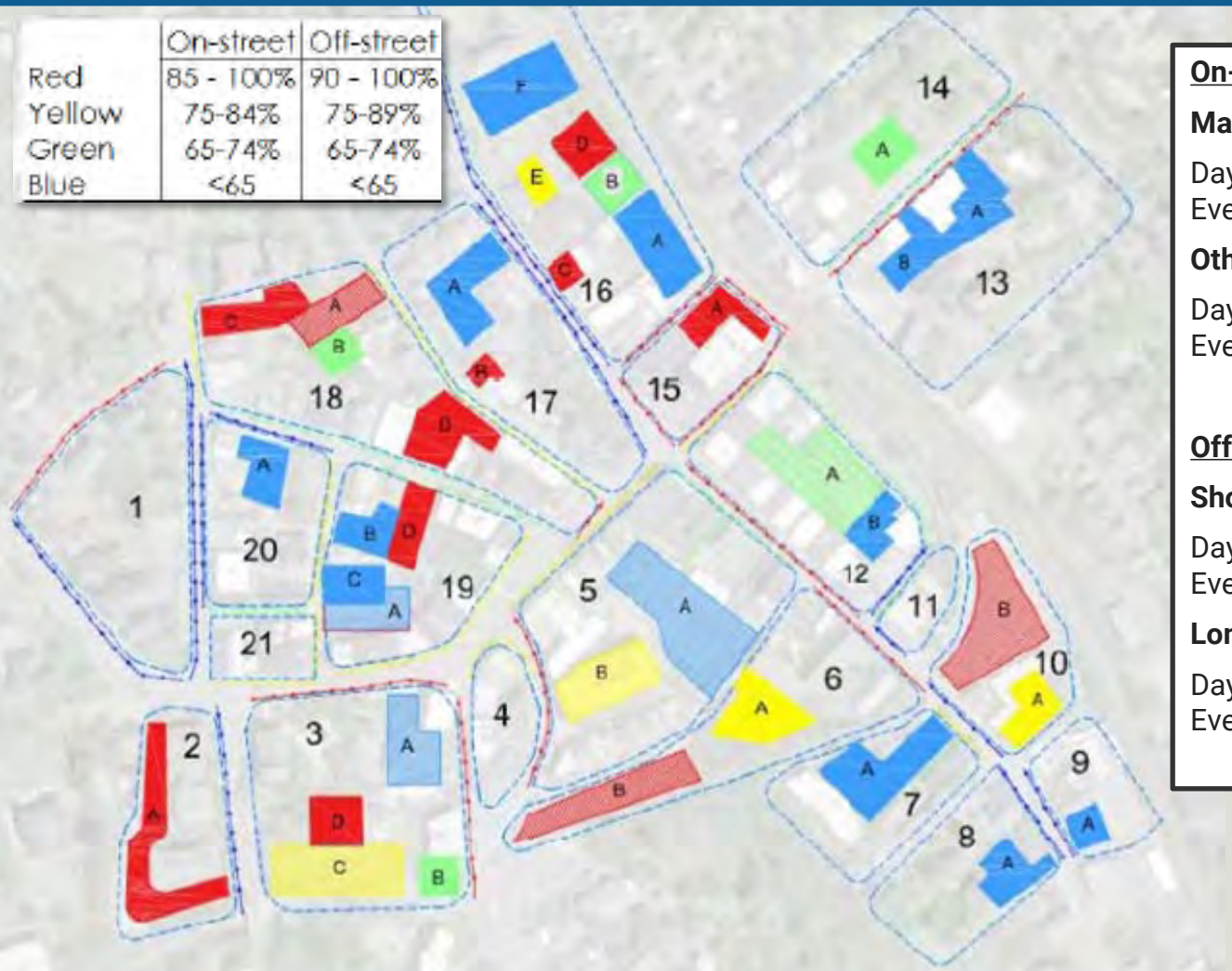
Downtown Northampton's parking revenue is short-term, customer focused.

~83% of parking revenue comes from hourly parking fees, collected in garage or at kiosks, meters, and the ParkMobile application. Therefore, parking management should be focused most on customer parking.



Utilization
Wednesday Parking Occupancy, 2014

	On-street	Off-street
Red	85 - 100%	90 - 100%
Yellow	75-84%	75-89%
Green	65-74%	65-74%
Blue	<65	<65



On-Street Public Parking

Main Street | 164 spaces counted

Daytime: 78% (128 occupied)
Evening: 70% (114 occupied)

Other | 355 spaces counted

Daytime: 69% (244 occupied)
Evening: 77% (276 occupied)

Off-Street Public

Short-Term | 225 spaces counted

Daytime: 61% (137 occupied)
Evening: 79% (178 occupied)

Long-Term | 816/938 spaces counted

Daytime: 81% (661 occupied)
Evening: 45% (429 occupied)

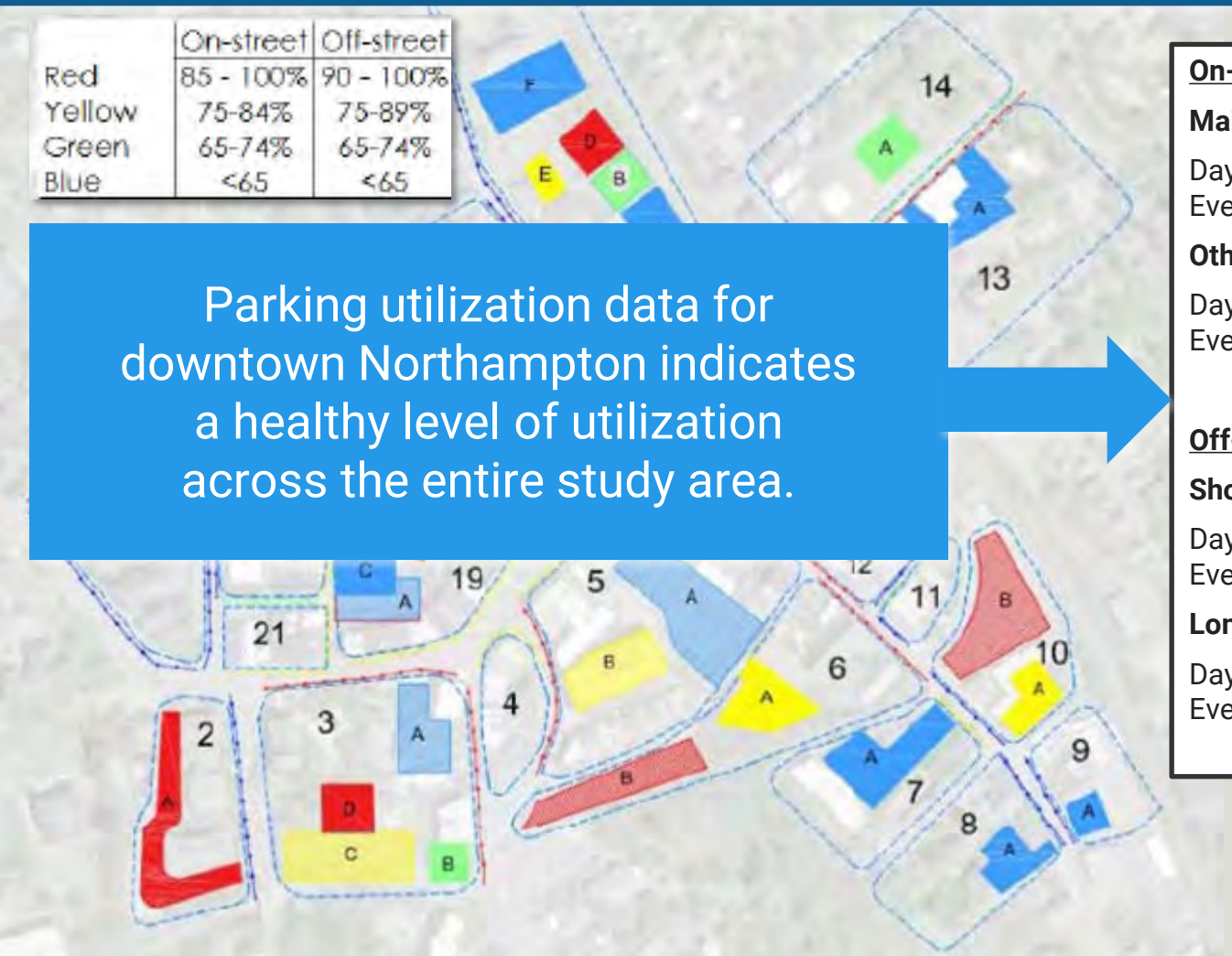
Off-Street (Private) | 1,239/1117 counted

Daytime: 64% (797 occupied)
Evening: 42% (469 occupied)

SOURCE: Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study (Walker), April 2015, pp. 8-12

Findings
Weekday Demand is Healthy

	On-street	Off-street
Red	85 - 100%	90 - 100%
Yellow	75-84%	75-89%
Green	65-74%	65-74%
Blue	<65	<65



Parking utilization data for downtown Northampton indicates a healthy level of utilization across the entire study area.

On-Street Public Parking

Main Street | 164 spaces counted

Daytime: 78% (128 occupied)
Evening: 70% (114 occupied)

Other | 355 spaces counted

Daytime: 69% (244 occupied)
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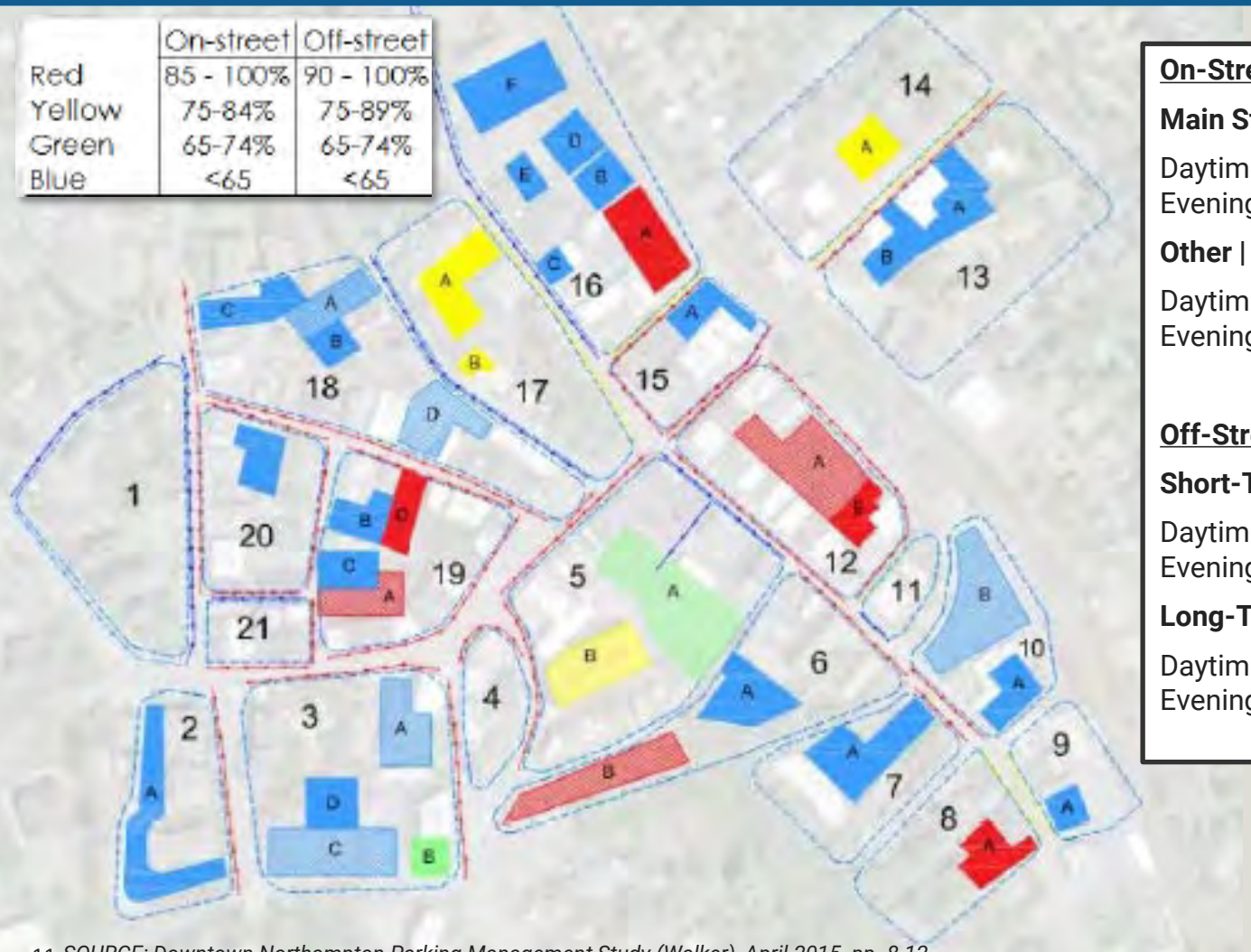
Off-Street (Private) | 1,239/1117 counted

Daytime: 64% (797 occupied)
Evening: 42% (469 occupied)

SOURCE: Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study (Walker), April 2015, pp. 8-12

Utilization
Saturday Parking Occupancy, 2014

	On-street	Off-street
Red	85 - 100%	90 - 100%
Yellow	75-84%	75-89%
Green	65-74%	65-74%
Blue	<65	<65



On-Street Public Parking

Main Street | 164 spaces counted

Daytime: 75% (124 occupied)
Evening: 90% (147 occupied)

Other | 355 spaces counted

Daytime: 76% (268 occupied)
Evening: 78% (278 occupied)

Off-Street Public

Short-Term | 164 spaces counted

Daytime: 74% (167 occupied)
Evening: 84% (188 occupied)

Long-Term | 938 spaces counted

Daytime: 76% (624 occupied)
Evening: 69% (647 occupied)

Off-Street (Private) | 1,239/1117 counted

Daytime: 44% (554 occupied)
Evening: 50% (554 occupied)

**Evening was selected when there were two events at the Iron Horse and Academy of Music.*

SOURCE: Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study (Walker), April 2015, pp. 8-12

Findings: Public Parking
Peak Period Demand is High, but Capacity Remains

Public parking on Friday and Saturday midday and evening peaks is on average nearly ¾ full, leaving under 400 spaces empty. Prime parking areas especially along Main St. are frequently 100% full; yet spaces located more remotely in surface lots or the top level of the garage are empty.

This disparity in demand immediately suggests that current pricing is not encouraging the use of these remote spaces adequately, suggesting that higher prices on Main Street and lower prices in remote areas are appropriate.

On-Street Public Parking

Main Street | 164 spaces counted

Daytime: 75% (124 occupied)
Evening: 90% (147 occupied)

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**Evening was selected when there were two events at the Iron Horse and Academy of Music.*

SOURCE: Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study (Walker), April 2015, pp. 8-12

Findings: Private Parking
Underutilized Private Parking is a Significant Reserve

During these same peak Friday & Saturday periods, **private parking is far less utilized**.

When daytime employees have gone home, there are well over 600 empty private parking spaces within a short walk of Main Street that are currently not accessible to paying customers of downtown.

This only increases **perceptions that more parking needs to be built when in fact available spaces are a simple regulation or legal agreement away.**

On-Street Public Parking

Main Street | 164 spaces counted

Daytime: 75% (124 occupied)
Evening: 90% (147 occupied)

Other | 355 spaces counted

Daytime: 76% (268 occupied)
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Off-Street Public

Short-Term | 164 spaces counted

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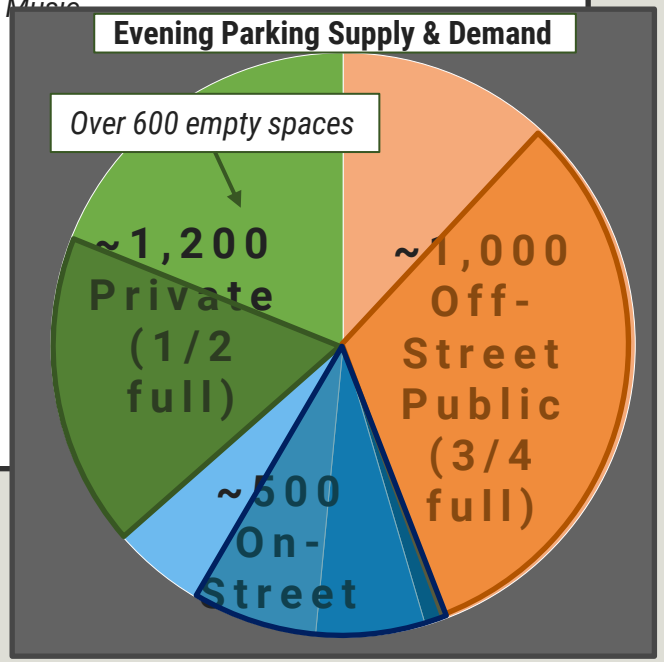
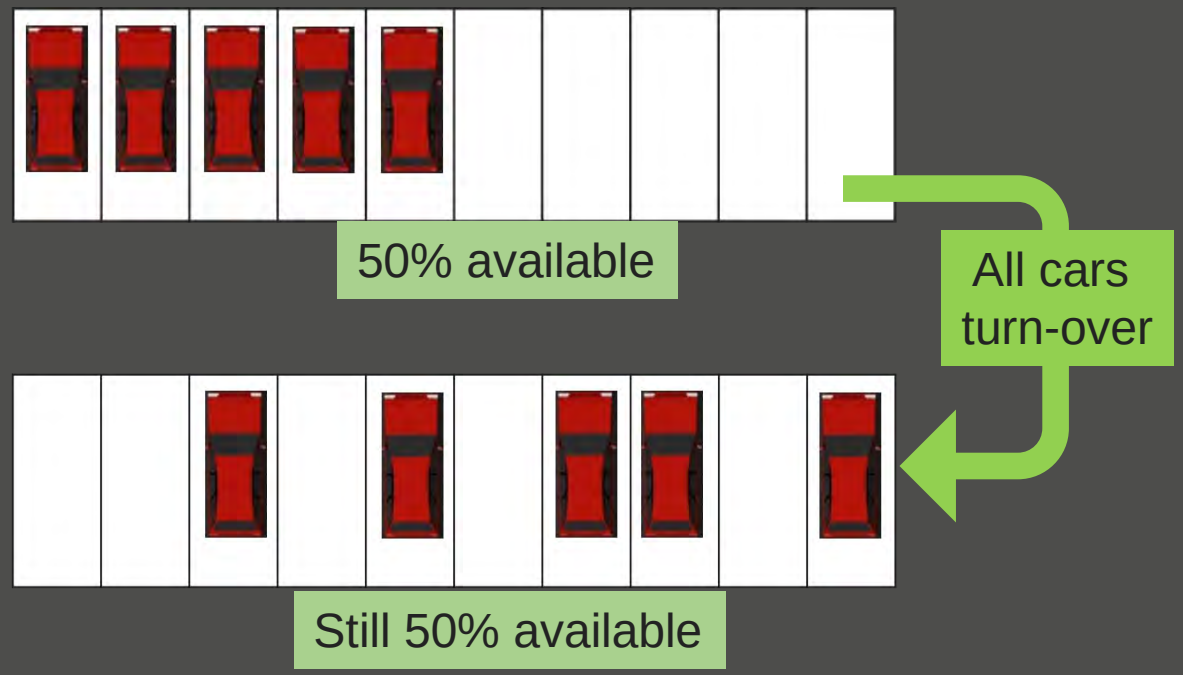


 SOURCE: Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study (Walker), April 2015, pp. 8-12

Findings: Over-Reliance on Time-Limits

Downtown users are focused on turnover, rather than availability



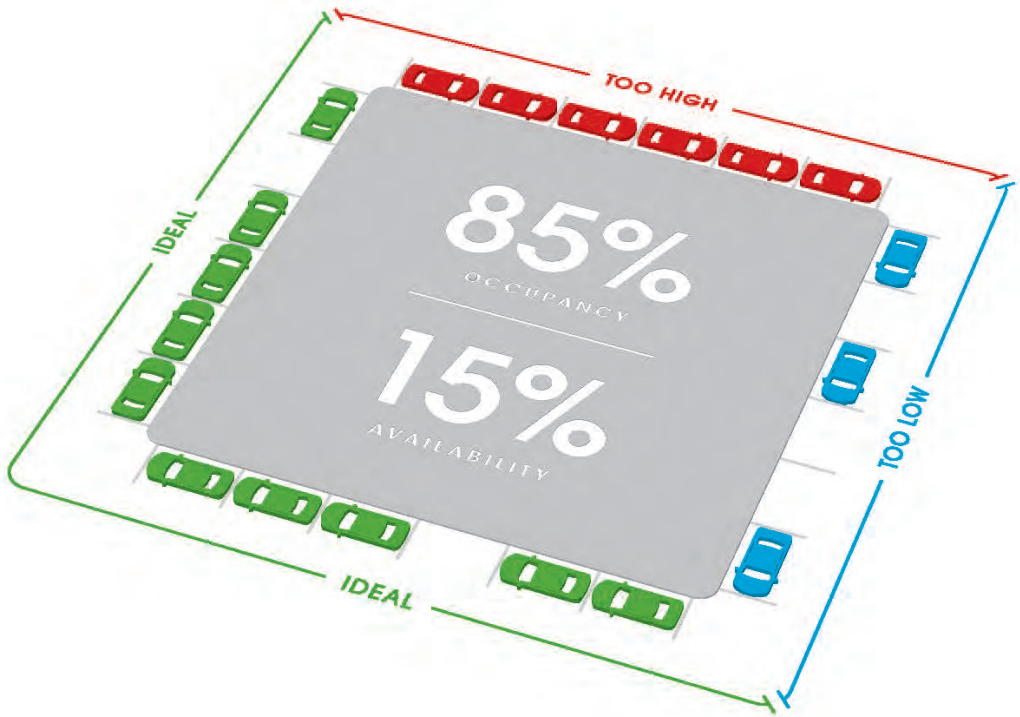
Turnover does not ensure availability

Parking turnover is more of a catch phrase then a valuable parking management goal. Cars may turn-over frequently, but if they simply park again somewhere else to avoid a time-limit or parking ticket, they are still occupying available parking.

Merchants and customers alike want the same thing: to find available parking near the point of transaction.

Findings: Pricing Is Not Being Used Correctly
Downtown users are focused on turnover, rather than availability

Price adjustments to match demand



"Demand-Responsive" Pricing

When convenient parking is free or very low cost, people will do what they can to park there, including move their car every hour or two to avoid a ticket. Curbs become hunting grounds with low or zero availability.

However, if there is a fee high enough to make a price-sensitive driver consider a cheaper, more remote alternative, sufficient availability can be created for those who need front-door access.

Findings
2015 Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study

Parking Management Recommendations, Implemented Since 2015

Implemented Recommendations

- **Increase rate on Main Street** to $1 per hour (from $0.75)
- **Increase time-limit on Main Street** to 2-hours (from 1-hour)
- Increase **time-limit in the Armory Lot and Masonic Lots** to 3-hours (from 2-hours)
- **Pay stations** make change and take credit cards at all surface lots
- Sponsor a university contest to develop a **downtown parking app** (now use pay-by-plate with ParkMobile)
- Upgrading to **pay-by-plate meters** (allowing off-street parking to be controlled by price more than time limits)

Other upgrades

- Refreshed parking wayfinding signs and added three smart signs for garage availability (2 on Main street , 1 on Pleasant street)
- Increased the number of free 15-minute parking spaces
- Expanded Roundhouse parking lot, adding 20 spaces to parking inventory (replacing 22 spaces lost in Pulaski Park expansion)
- Removed five parking spaces on Main Street to improve crosswalk safety

Findings
2015 Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study

Parking Management Recommendations, Not Yet Adopted

Short-Term

- **Increase rate on Main Street** from $0.75 to $1 per hour, **and increase by $0.25 annually to get to $1.50**
- Enforce Main Street **parking restrictions from 9 am to 8 pm** (not 8 am to 6 pm)
- Consider **joining lots on Masonic Lot** block to increase supply
- Work with businesses to **explore options to make more efficient use of underutilized lots**
- Retain a **signage and graphics consultant to improve wayfinding** (some parking signs updated in-house)
- Perform site studies to understand options and costs for potential garage sites
- Work with businesses for a **Downtown Valet**
- **Consider cheap permit in peripheral lots for students** in downtown trade schools (limit permit span to school hours)
- **Increase parking fines** and ensure adequate enforcement

Long-Term

- **Phase out the free hour** in the garage

Findings
2015 Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study

Parking Management Recommendations, Not Yet Adopted

Short-Term

- **Increase rate on Main Street** from $0.75 to
- Enforce Main Street **parking restrictions fr**
- Consider **joining lots on Masonic Lot** block
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- Work with businesses for a **Downtown Vale**
- **Consider cheap permit in peripheral lots fo** (limit permit span to school hours)
- **Increase parking fines** and ensure adequat

Long-Term

- **Phase out the free hour** in the garage

The 2015 Downtown Northampton Parking Management Study by Walker Parking Consultants made recommendations that are aligned with industry best practices.

These recommendations should continue to be implemented, alongside recommendations from this study (presented later in document).

Best Practices

Parking Pricing
Shared Parking Supply
Wayfinding
Transportation Demand Management

Best Practices
Parking Pricing

Parking Pricing
Remove Time Limits + Use Pricing to Manage Availability

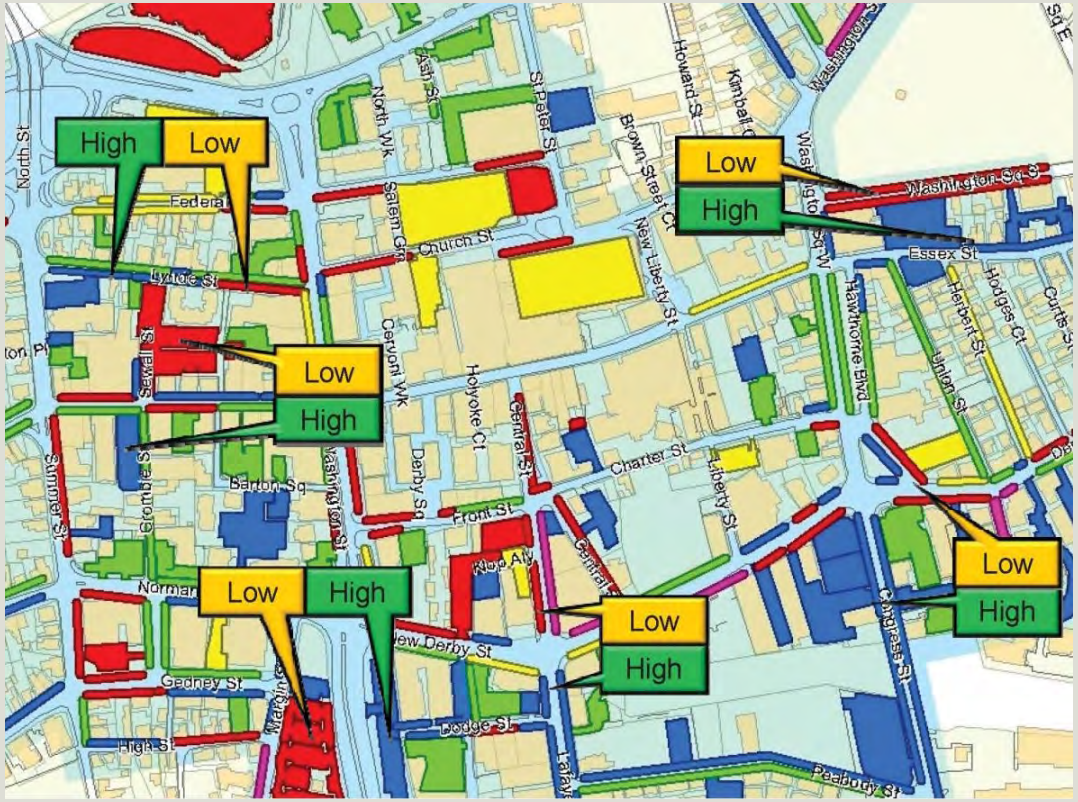
Time limits are not customer-friendly, as it does not encourage long stays. If parking availability is consistent, time limits are unnecessary if a parking system focuses on availability – not turnover. **The most effective parking management systems manage demand in the high-demand areas by pricing parking higher**, and do not price where the demand does not exist.

Local places that have removed or lengthened time-limits and use tiered pricing:

- Salem
- Haverhill
- Pittsfield
- Concord
- Watertown
- Lawrence
- Nashua
- Boston

Parking Pricing
Case Study: Salem, MA

When **on-street parking cost $0.50 per hour, the streets were full** – giving the perception of not enough parking, despite nearby lots and garages being empty.



Parking Availability

In 2010, it was $0.50 on-street and $1.50 in garages. Streets were jammed and garages empty.

Parking Pricing
Case Study: Salem, MA

By **increasing the cost to $1.50 per hour**, people who wanted to park longer used lots and garages and the **street was available for quick trips and people who needed the near access.**

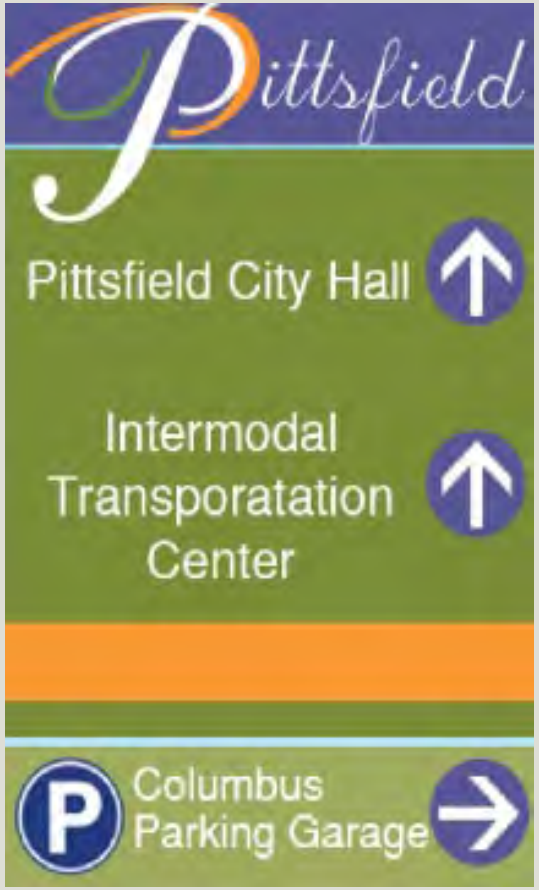
After 2012, street meters were tiered by distance, from $0.50 to $1.50. Garages dropped to $0.75 and $1.00. Demand balanced out, while the perception of no parking went away.

Parking Pricing
Case Studies: Pittsfield, MA and Nashua, NH

Pittsfield, MA

Implemented tiered pricing, higher on Main and lower off Main.

New signage made navigating Downtown from cheaper off-street lots and garages easier.



Nashua, NH

Implemented tiered pricing to promote use of remote spaces and support downtown improvements

RED ZONE $1.00/hr

BLUE ZONE $0.75/hr

GREEN ZONE $0.50/hr

Parking Pricing
Case Study: Haverhill, MA

Pittsfield, MA

Implemented paid parking for first time in 50 years. Tailored hours to demand and removed time limits during pricing period.

"What has taken so long, to **implement what seems to be common sense**!!"

"For once in 26 years I **have FINALLY been able to consistently find a space to park** for the time I need to conduct business, shop, eat, or go to an appointment. and now without having to walk a few blocks."

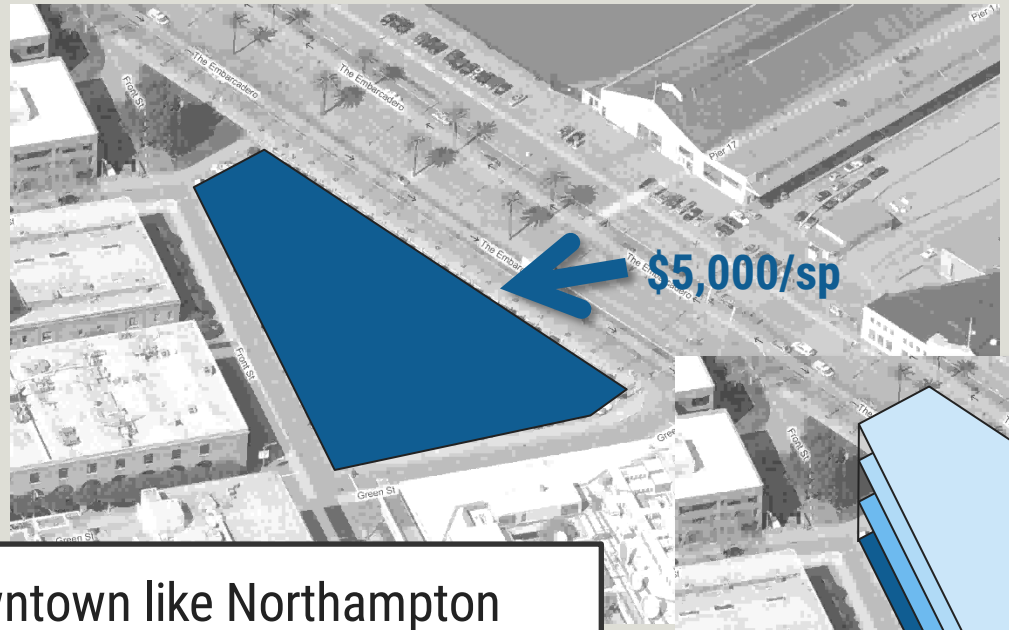
"**I have been downtown more often, with paid parking**, than I had been before, when every available space was taken all day, every day by commuters."

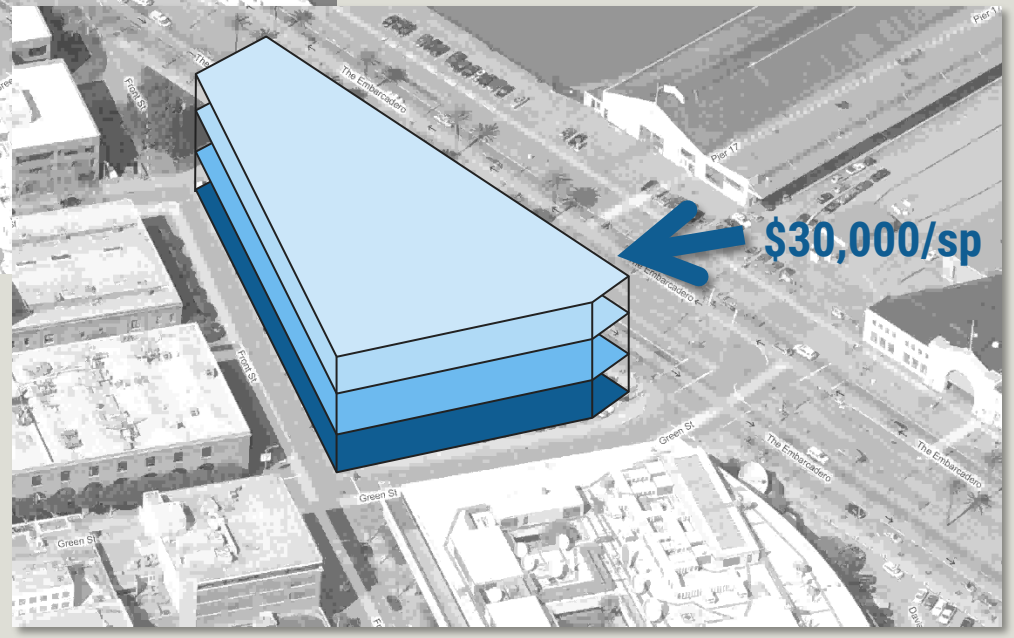
"Actual **Customers are finding it better and buying more**!"

Best Practices
Shared Parking Supplies

The application of **best practice shared parking management** tools within Downtown Northampton can help unlock the glut of private parking spaces that go unutilized during peak demand periods. Practices such as the **public leasing of private parking, public maintenance** of private parking **in return for shared access, revenue sharing agreements,** and **lot consolidation** opportunities can make Downtown Northampton's public parking supply increase without building any new parking.

Why Shared Parking?
Leverage Existing Supply to Avoid Significant Expense

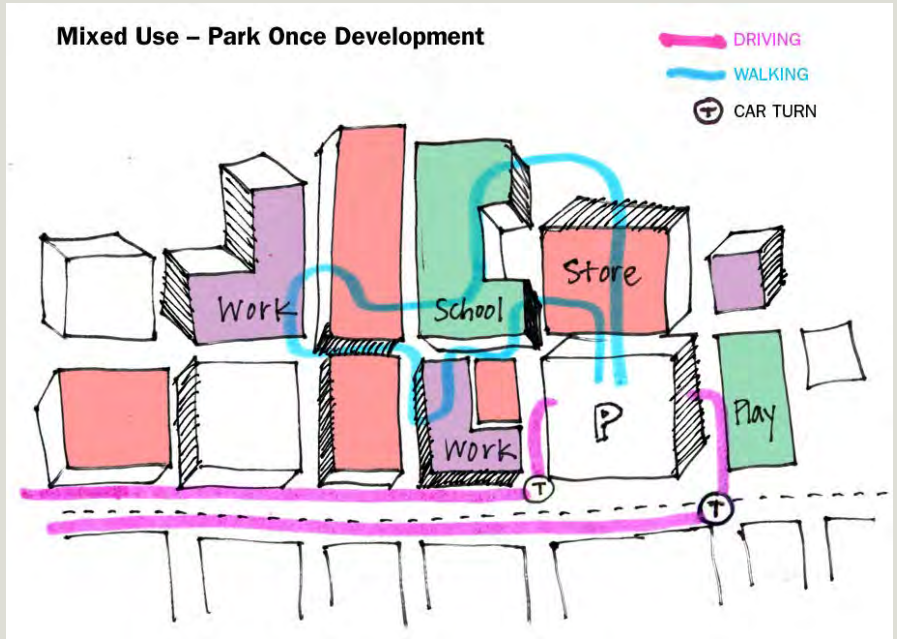




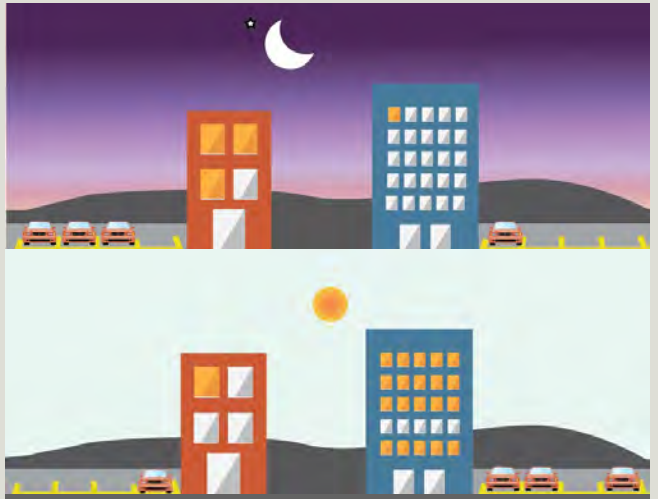
Building a parking space in a Downtown like Northampton can cost between $5,000 and $30,000. With nearly 1,000 empty public and private spaces at peak, limited resources are better allocated towards efforts that improve downtown and reduce parking demand in the future.

Why Shared Parking?
Good for Downtown Residents, Businesses, and Visitors

Shared parking is good for business and the Downtown character, as it creates a larger general parking supply and does not require distinct parking for each use – fewer parking spaces can operate more efficiently, by encouraging a park-once mentality. In doing so, shared parking reduces concentrated parking pressure by using existing parking more efficiently.

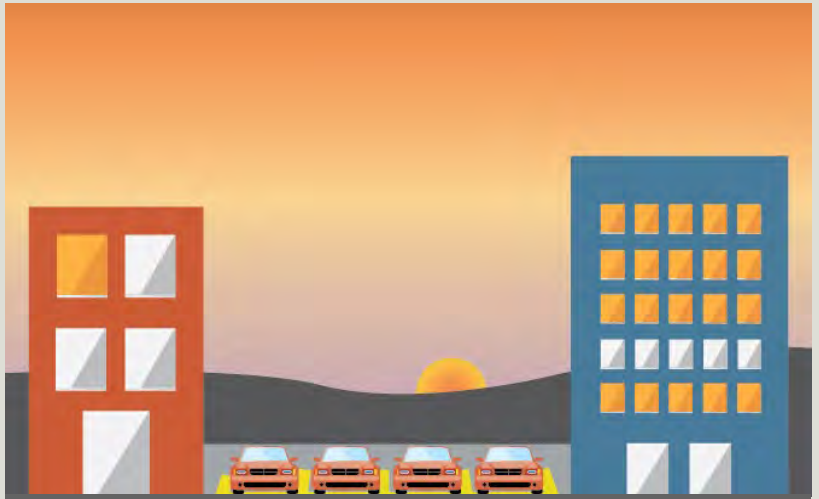


The benefits of "internal capture" and using one parking space for many purposes



Typical parking requirements – exclusive by land use

Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Shared parking allows a smaller footprint by recognizing different peaks in demand

The benefits of the "staggered peaks" of different land uses' parking demand

Why Shared Parking?
Maximize Parking Supply

Land uses have unique periods of demand, meaning their peak parking demand occurs different points throughout the day. Sharing parking supplies allows for the most efficient use of a parking supply, distributing these “staggered peaks” of demand across the entire day.

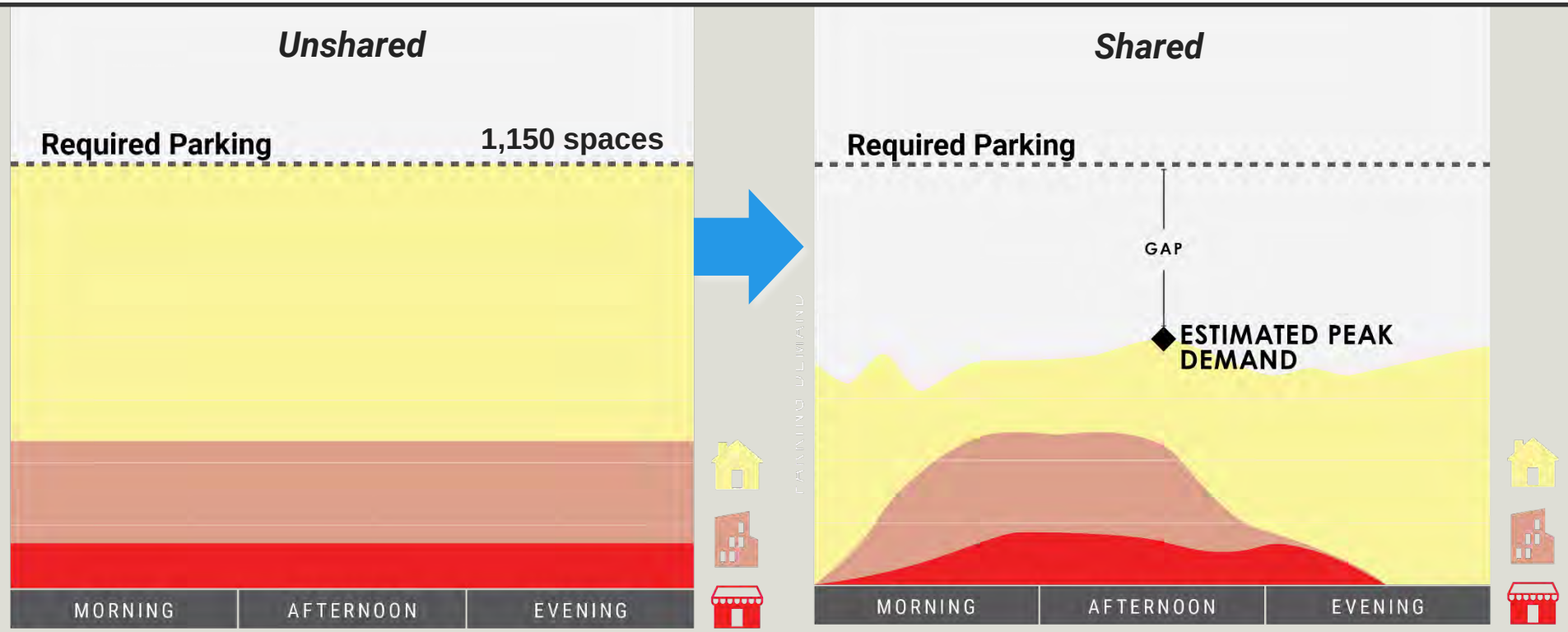
60,000 sf retail

+

10,000 sf office

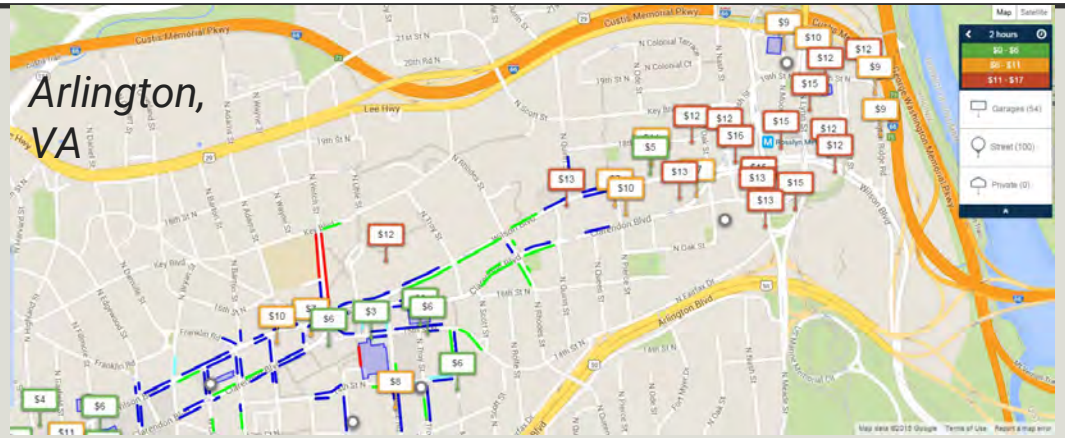
+

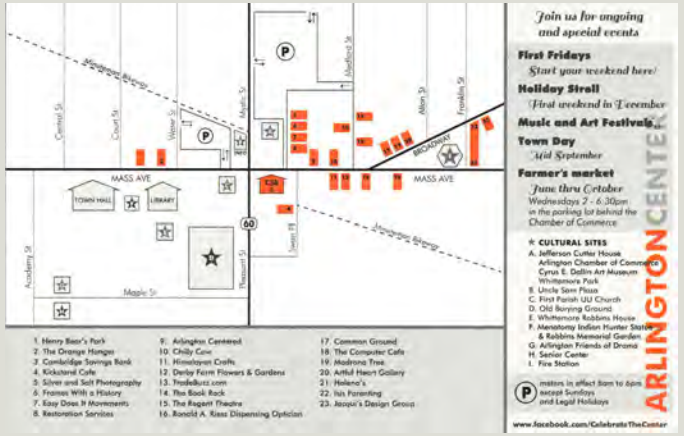
700 residential units



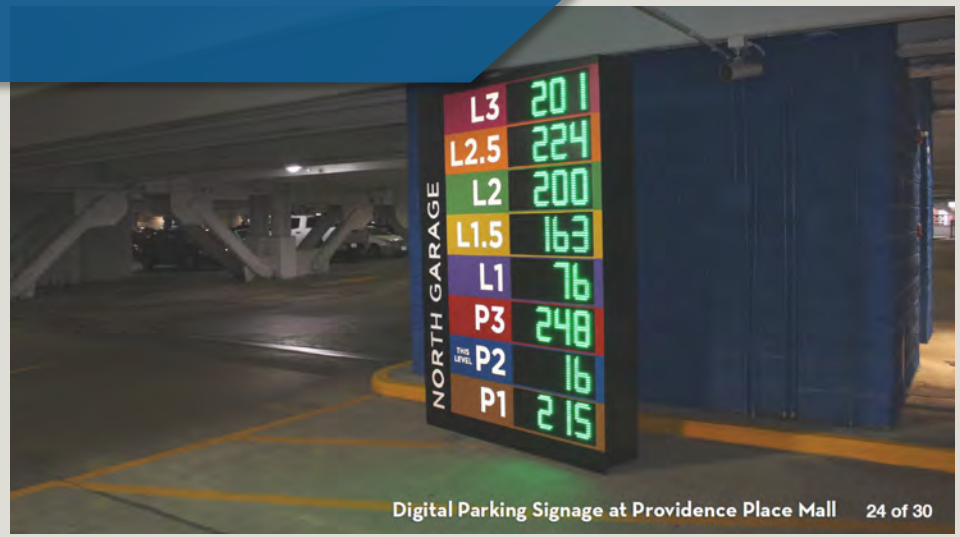
Why Shared Parking?
Massachusetts Case Studies

Shared parking systems are found across Massachusetts and the United States.





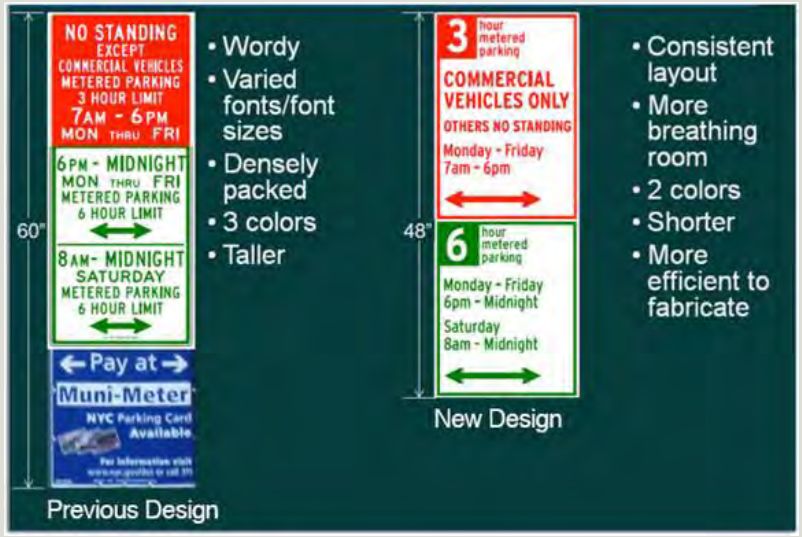
Best Practices
Wayfinding



Wayfinding
Parking Signage

Signage should **define clear rules**, identify free and **long-term parking**, identify **major points of interests**, and **guide pedestrians back to their car**.

Writing should be brief (140 characters or less) and **large enough** for a driver to read.



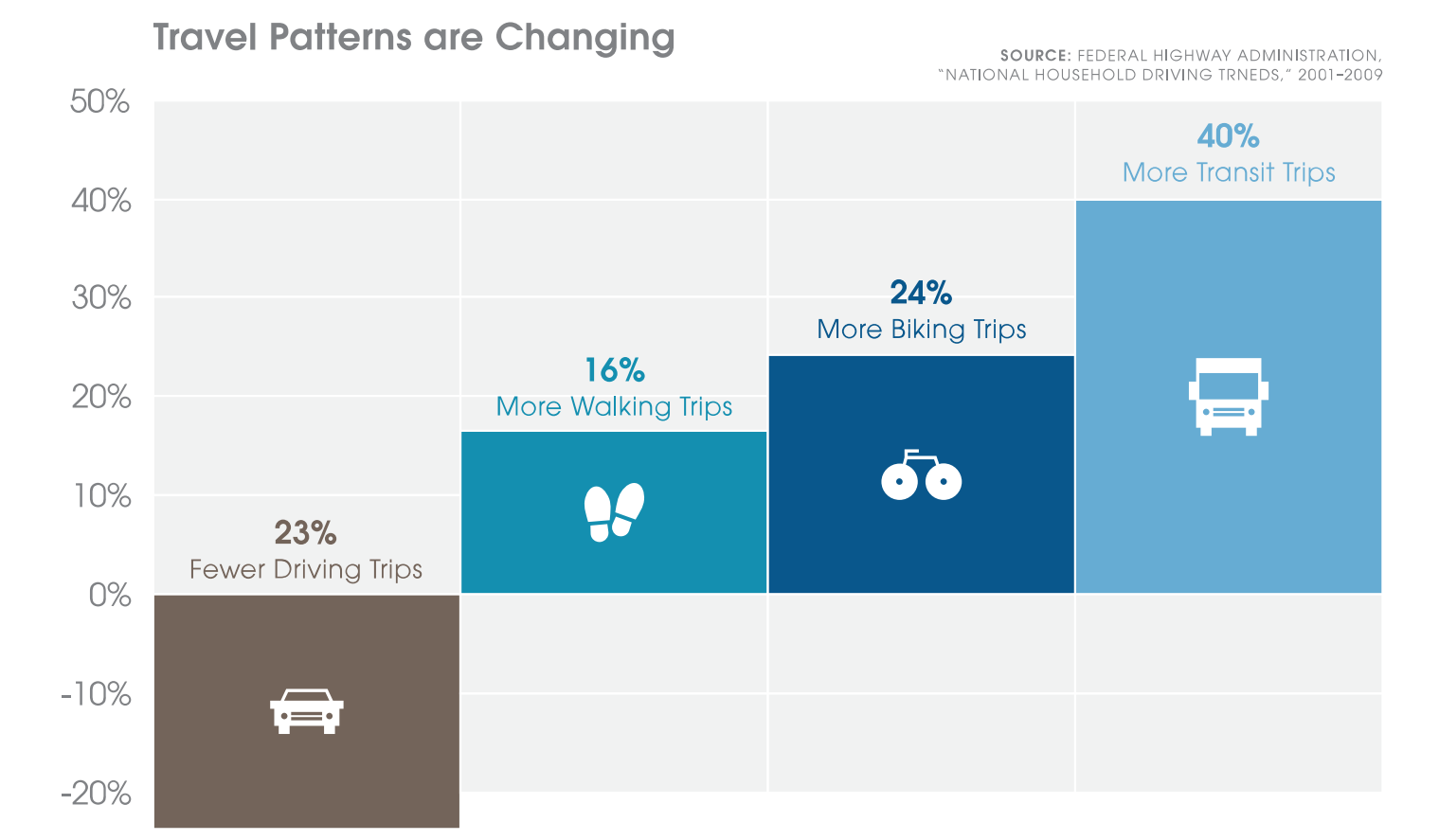
Best Practices
Transportation Demand Management

National trends are showing a decline in car ownership, indicating cities and towns need to plan for other modes. In Northampton alone, 11% of households do not have a vehicle.

Adopting Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policies can help prepare Northampton to **better accommodate people** who don't use a car, **improve traffic**, and **reduce parking demand** in the Downtown.

Why Plan for Other Modes?
Travel Patterns are Changing

As travel patterns change, the demand for vehicle space in Downtowns is changing too.



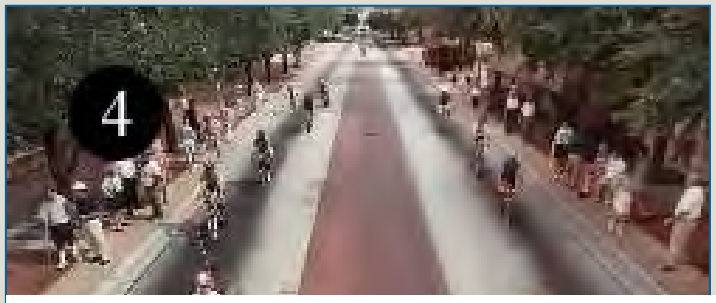
Why Plan for Other Modes?
So *you* can drive

Downtown Northampton needs to accommodate people – not cars.

Cars on Street

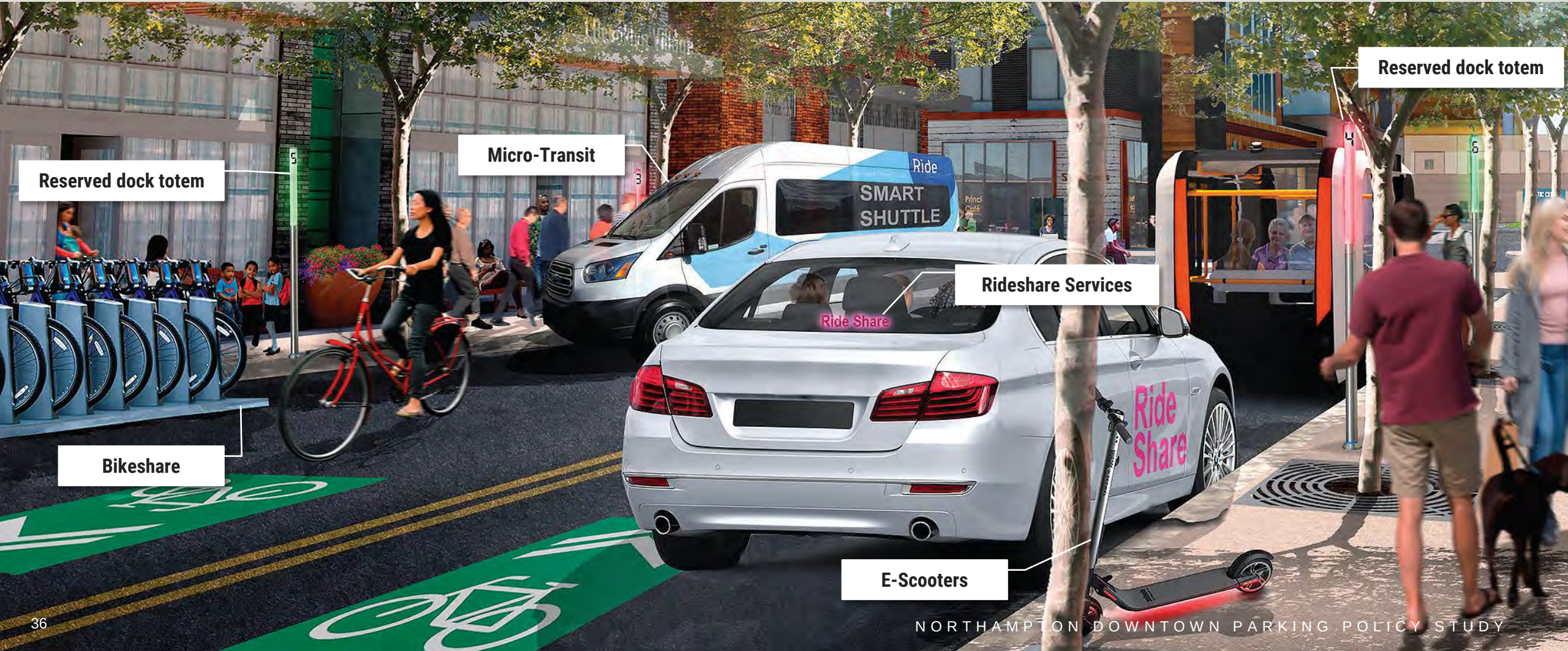
People in Cars

People on a bus



People on bikes

Why Plan for Other Modes?
Main Street can be a terminal for more than parking.



Recommendations

To maximize availability and customer access, the following best practices apply:

1. Price parking on a block-by-block basis to achieve an optimal utilization
2. Lengthen or remove time limits
3. Parking spans and durations should be as flexible as possible
4. Main Street will never have enough parking in an active downtown like Northampton – focus on incentivizing people to park elsewhere through pricing
5. Rethink parking enforcement
6. Remember the other uses of our curbs
7. Do not forgo necessary front door access for those with different abilities

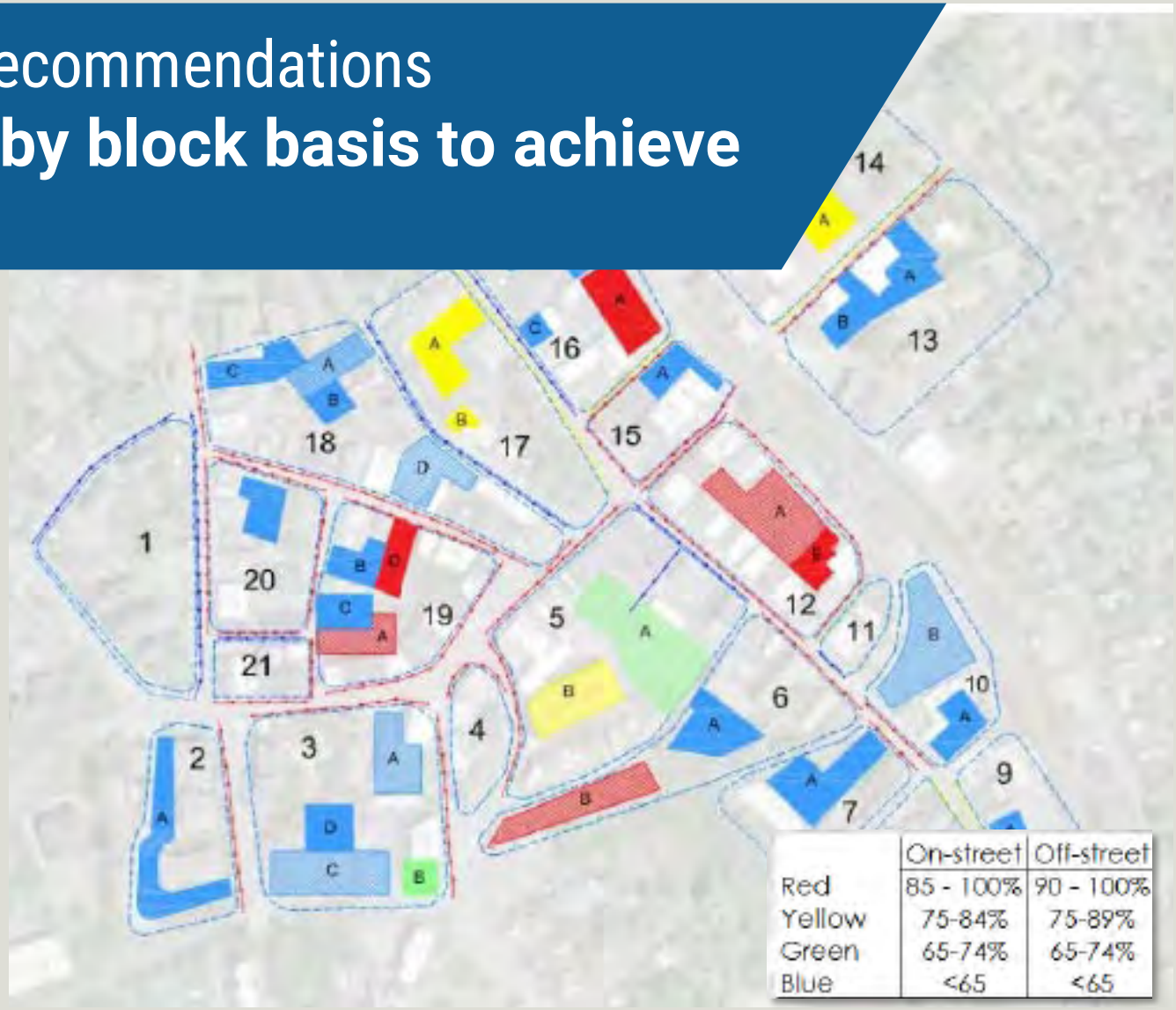
Remember: parking pricing should not be a tax; it is a mechanism for helping customers get what they want in places where demand exceeds the available supply.

Parking Pricing Best Practices | Recommendations

01. Price Parking on a block-by block basis to achieve optimal utilization

Price parking on a block-by-block or facility-by facility-basis to achieve an **optimal utilization of approximately 85%,** or one out of every eight spaces available.

In peak hours, Main Street is at full capacity and off-street lots are significantly below 85%. This observation can be reversed by adjusting pricing, rather than supply. When front door "Main Street" spaces are priced higher, more remote and less utilized spaces can be priced cheaper, or in times of low-demand, free.



Parking Pricing Best Practices | Recommendations
02. Lengthen or Remove Time Limits

Time limits do not produce availability but do discourage customers from coming back to a downtown. When customers get a ticket or simply fear getting a ticket (unaware of the low parking violation fines), they are unlikely to stay Downtown for long periods of time.

Time limits cannot satisfy everyone's different parking demands at the same time. However, everyone is sensitive to pricing. **By pricing off-streets lots lower than Main Street, people looking for parking are more likely to use Main Street only for short-term trips.**

Parking Pricing Best Practices | Recommendations
03. Parking Spans and Durations Should be Flexible

People who are seeking parking when demand is high should be allowed to pay for prime spaces, especially along Main Street on a busy Friday or Saturday night. Conversely, if morning demand is low, meters should not turn on until times when demand warrants.

Customers should only pay for the time that they park. This means that at a $2 per hour meter, a stay of only 15 minutes should only cost $0.50.

A long stay that spans into a time of lower demand should not be charged for the hours of lower demand.

Parking Pricing Best Practices | Recommendations

04. Main Street will never have enough parking in an active downtown like Northampton's

Main Street will never have enough parking in an active downtown like Northampton's. Main Street is less than 10% of the total downtown supply, yet it is home to over 75% of the customer demand.

Main Street's parking supply challenges are unlikely to be solved in a foreseeable future by automation, such as self-parking cars or robotic garages. **For that reason, a more management-based approach is compatible with user expectations typical of today.**

Main Street businesses function successfully because the vast majority of customers walk from other locations besides the spaces directly in front. One out of 10 might be lucky enough to park on Main, but everyone else parks on side streets, lots and the garage. Recognizing this simple reality can help change the conversation from one about adding supply (and its impact on better street functions) to one about efficiently managing what you have (which has hundreds of vacant spaces today).

Parking Pricing Best Practices | Recommendations
05. Rethink Parking Enforcement

A vital customer asset like parking should not be subject to heavy penalties and enforcement. Best practice communities use **parking ambassadors** instead of officers to educate and help parkers find available parking easily, as opposed to giving them tickets.

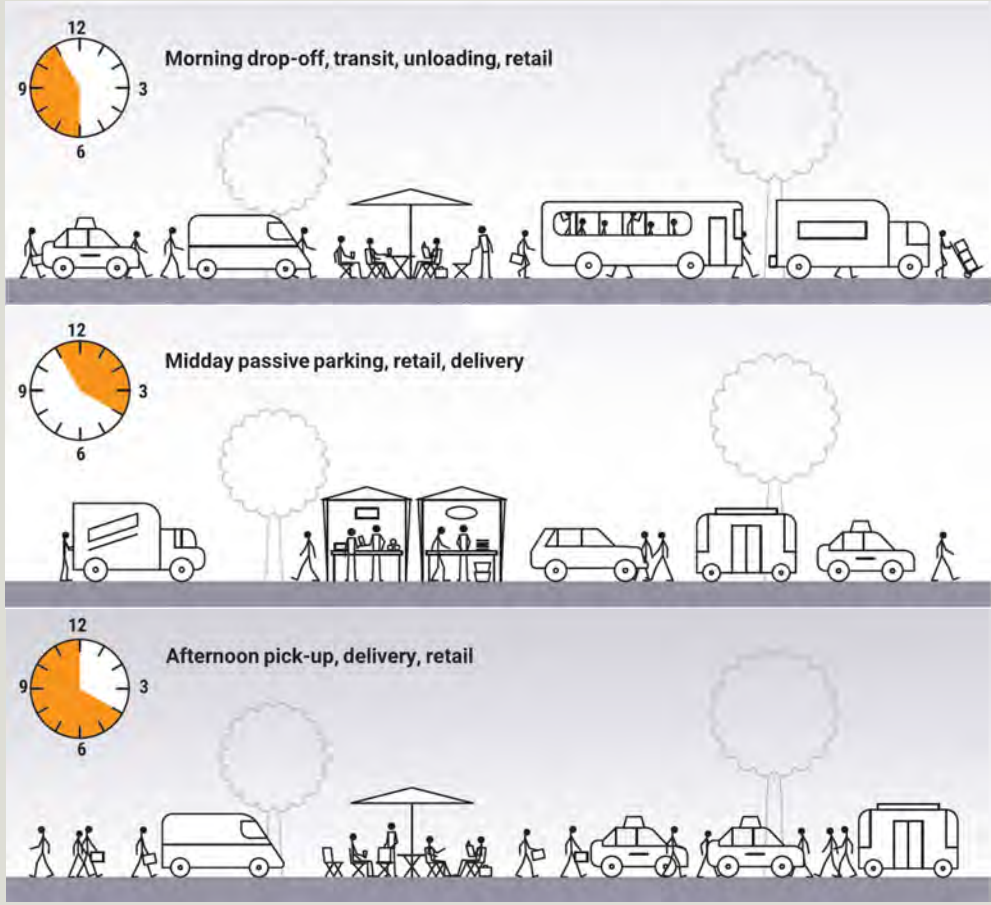
If a penalty is being used to encourage better behavior, consider the best practice of demand-responsive parking pricing rather than parking fines.

Parking Pricing Best Practices | Recommendations

06. Remember the other uses of our curbs

Main Street is about so much more than parking cars, which remain empty and stored motionless 90% of the time, while the life and vitality of Main Street navigates around them. **Dining, shopping, loading, bicycling, transit rides, taxi trips, rideshare activity, food delivery, dog-walking, relaxing and conversing, and even just watching are just the tip of the iceberg for any Main Street's function.**

Good parking management programs accommodate all of these other, more vital, functions, knowing that most cars are parked in off-street lots. **When a single parking space can serve dozens of daily deliveries, thousand of dollars of restaurant sales, hundreds of parking cyclists, or a healthy and planted open space, the value of storing an idle car in a prime location is easy to weigh**.



Parking Pricing Best Practices | Recommendations

07. Do Not Forgo Necessary Front Door Access

For those with different abilities, having a level and nearby parking space can be the difference between visiting Main Street or forgoing essential services. **Proximate parking for handicap or other specially-permitted parking is fair and often essential**. With newer parking payment technologies, those with difficulty paying using the ParkMobile application or pay-by-plate kiosks can work with merchants to secure needed front-door parking.

Additionally, front-door access needs to be provided for anyone who feels they need close parking, whether they have a visible or invisible, temporary or long-term disability, or are accompanied by small children.

Thank you!