WEST MAIN STREET PARKING OPPORTUNITIES AND ANALYSIS

October 2014
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INTRODUCTION

The City of Charlottesville retained Nelson\Nygaard to conduct a parking analysis along the West Main Street corridor. The work was performed in conjunction with the West Main Street Streetscape study being conducted at the same time and is intended to help inform the City of Charlottesville’s assessment of the parking demand along the corridor, the potential and opportunities for change, parking alternatives and the need to provide additional off-street parking to accommodate existing development and future growth.

The parking opportunities and analysis study is a continuation of the work that the City of Charlottesville has completed to date in evaluating its parking supply. In 2008, the City conducted a Downtown Parking Study to assess existing conditions and project future parking requirements. The report concluded that the creation of a parking management plan would enable a proactive relationship with parking as compared to the current reactive approach. This included the recommendation of creating a Parking Department or Division where parking could be managed on a full-time basis.

The following report is a review of the City’s existing and projected parking supply and demand, along the West Main Street corridor and whether or not its supply is adequate for its current and projected land use under existing conditions and proposed modifications.

PROJECT APPROACH

This consultant’s approach focused on collecting as much existing use information as possible to develop a profile of parking activity along West Main Street. Key questions the data was intended to answer included:

- Identify existing issues.
- Estimate the existing private and public parking supply in the West Main Street corridor
- Collect and analyze parking demand and utilization data in the corridor.
- Identify parking demand management alternatives based on proposed land-use development and best practices.
- Identify off-street parking options to explore.

To answer these questions, the consultant collected and reviewed all existing studies related to parking as well as all zoning code and regulatory language influencing the operation and provision of parking in the corridor.

Several data collection tasks were conducted, including:

- **Parking Inventory.** In September, 2014, the consultant conducted a field inventory of all public and private spaces within the West Main Street study area, creating a detailed map and database of all regulations, time-limits, hours of operation, ownership, etc.

- **Parking Utilization.** During the late September, 2014 timeframe, the consultant conducted field surveys of select off-street lots and all on-street spaces in the inventory to establish their daily parking utilization. Observations were conducted every two hours for 12-hour periods on average weekdays and weekends.
• **Stakeholder Meeting.** In October, 2014, the consultant attended a Midtown Business Association meeting to record input on problems in the parking system, as well as recommended changes.

• **Parking User Surveys.** The consultant prepared two on-line surveys that sought basic parking preference information from both the business community and visitors/users of West Main Street. It was distributed and advertised among stakeholders by City staff and local businesses. Over 300 responses were recorded.

• **Parking Opportunities.** The consultant assessed the applicable parking technologies, policies and management procedures that could be initiated along West Main Street to manage on- and off-street parking.

**SUMMARY FINDINGS**

The findings below are highlights of the findings from the parking supply and demand data collection and analysis effort. Detailed findings and methodologies can be found in the sections that follow these summary findings.

**STUDY AREA**

The parking analysis focused on the West Main Street corridor as shown in Figure 1 West Main Street Study Area.
PARKING SUPPLY

The parking inventory identified West Main Street’s parking supply as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West Main Street Parking Overview</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>1098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>1135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>762</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA Health System</td>
<td>2059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Street Spaces</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most parking spaces within the West Main Corridor are off-street (98% of spaces, or 5,802 spaces). These spaces are controlled by a variety of off-street regulations, categorized as public/not time-limited, customer only, customers/employees, employee only, permit only, residential, and residents/employees. Almost all of the off-street spaces, or 5,327 spaces, are dedicated to employee/permit and customer parking with only 8% of off-street spaces being publicly-available.

The 85 on-street spaces along the West Main corridor are categorized by two distinct on-street regulatory categories (15-minutes and 2-hours), plus unregulated spaces (e.g. those without regulatory signs governing them). All of these on-street spaces are publicly available and nearly all on-street spaces are time-limited; most are for two hours or less.

Based on interviews with both merchants and staff, enforcement of time limits on the corridor is fairly lax and sporadic. At present on-street parking is not metered at any time of the day, week or year.

PARKING DEMAND

On-and off-street demand was observed during week days and weekends on an average week in September 2014. Field observations counted 88 on-street spaces and 18 loading spaces. Based on observed demand, peak periods in the study area occur during weekday midday (11am to 3pm); weekday evenings (5pm to 9pm), Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings – although there is relatively constant demand throughout the day.

Due to the small block size, the study area was segmented into three parts:

- Ridge McIntire to 6th Street
- 6th Street to 8th Street/rail bridge
- 8th Street to 10th Street
Generally speaking, demand for on-street parking was highest in the segment from 6th Street to the rail overpass while off-street occupancy was highest in the segment from Ridge McIntire to 6th Street.

On-street parking was at or above 90% on Friday and Saturday for most hours of the day in the 6th Street to 8th Street segment. This is over the 85% threshold for optimum parking occupancy. At the same time, publicly available parking in the same segment (available at the Old Albermarle Hotel and Amtrak parking facilities) was underutilized with occupancies hovering between forty and sixty percent – a clear sign that better public parking management is needed.

Public off-street parking is not presently available in the Ridge McIntire to 6th Street segment. Although private off-street facilities exist that are capable of absorbing demand should any on street spaces be repurposed, off-street occupancy presently is routinely at or above 75%, which is under the typical 85% threshold for optimum occupancy.

The segment west of the rail overpass had the lowest demand for both on-and off-street spaces and abundant capacity to absorb demand during all hours of the day on both weekdays and weekends (typically less than 50% for off-street parking and less than 70% on average for on-street spaces).

**PARKING AND TRAVEL SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS**

Two surveys were conducted as well as interviews with key agency and corridor stakeholders.

Over 275 people responded to a survey geared toward parking consumers. The majority of respondents patronize West Main Street establishments at least occasionally (over 75%), however only 31% indicated that their primary purpose in coming to West Main Street was to support the commercial enterprises. The balance of respondents were bicycle or vehicle commuters, parishioners of corridor churches, employees of local offices, or local neighborhood residents.

The survey indicated that a large proportion (70%) of business patrons typically drive and park on the corridor with smaller percentages accessing businesses primarily through walk, bike, or transit.

Interestingly, a roughly equal proportion of respondents indicated that parking can easily be found on the corridor as did the proportion of people who stated that they had turned around or avoided West Main Street due to a lack of parking (about 1/3 of each). A large majority of respondents stated that they are willing to walk a block or more from a parking space to their destination (74% of retail consumers and 63% of the general populace). While parking is currently free on the corridor, just under half the respondents (and a greater proportion of commercial consumers) indicated a willingness to pay $1 or more per hour to park on the corridor. Roughly a quarter were unwilling to pay any amount for parking; however, of these, two-thirds did not identify themselves as primarily coming to the corridor to shop or dine.

Fewer than a third of respondents felt that, as it is today, West Main Street is a nice street to walk along. Only one third of respondents indicated that they are generally satisfied with the corridor as it is today.

Two dozen business owners responded to a survey targeted at their interests. Respondents comprised a good representation of the diverse mix of commercial enterprises on the corridor. Business owners highlighted a serious perceived need for additional patron and employee parking, better enforcement of on-street parking, and potentially the extension of the duration of permitted parking.
Meetings and interviews with corridor businesses and stakeholders found similar concerns and perceptions. Specific issues raised during these conversations related to accommodating church patron needs, deterring university-related consumption of on-street parking, the need for short-term transactional parking and loading, the lack of enforcement, and the need to protect residential streets from parking encroachment.

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Designated public parking – both on-street and off-street – is constrained on the West Main Street corridor at present but generally sufficient to meet existing demands. The highest demand occurs during weekday mid-day hours when off-street parking is generally occupied by university or hospital-associated employees, students or visitors while, at the same time, general daytime consumers come to the corridor to shop and dine. Sunday mid-morning through mid-afternoon also poses a challenge as church and commercial parking demands converge. Although retail and dining demands are high on weekends and during evening hours, employment or university associated demands have abated providing some parking relief.

Reducing the on-street parking supply on the corridor, while modest in total numbers, could have significant negative impacts on corridor’s commercial enterprises unless it is concurrently mitigated with better on-street management, better information on available parking resources, and more off-street opportunities for workers and patrons. These parking policy and management recommendations are addressed later in the report.

Parking on the corridor is currently unmanaged or poorly managed. On-street or public off-street parking is routinely occupied for long periods of time by employees of both the small commercial establishments as well as university patrons. There is a substantial quantity of underutilized off-street parking, however, this parking is generally not publically available. All of these provide an opportunity for mitigation for any potential reduction in on-street parking.

Initial recommendations are to:

- Meter both on-and off-street public parking, accommodating free very short term parking (15 minutes or less). Metering parking can more than triple parking turn-over rates effectively increasing parking access even with a decrease in parking supply.
- Prioritize on-street parking for short duration, transactional parking and loading activities. Through pricing strategies, encourage longer period parkers (greater than 1 hour) to utilize off-street facilities.
- Maintain parking time limits during the week, but relax time limits during non-workday days and hours. Four-hour parking limits in off-street lots should be reduced to 2 hours during the work day to deter employee parking.
- Promote trolley and Route 7 service, especially for lunch hour trips. Although data is not specifically available, observational indications are that a significant share of mid-day, weekday patrons are traveling short distances that may be effectively accommodated by transit service if barriers to transit use can be overcome.
- Negotiate agreements for employee parking. Underutilized existing private lots can accommodate employee needs well on weekends and after 4pm. This would open up on-street parking for higher value patron use.
- Improve wayfinding and guidance for visitors to indicate where public off-street parking is available. Adopt and encourage the use of “smart” meters and off-street lot/garage control devices to provide patrons with real time parking availability information via apps and other techniques.
WEST MAIN STREET PARKING OPPORTUNITIES AND ANALYSIS
City of Charlottesville

- Encourage or require new developments along the corridor to provide publically available off street parking as a component of their project. Enable shared parking to maximize the use of any spaces constructed. Developments may charge prevailing hourly rates for parking spaces; however, off-street parking fees must be priced below on-street rates.

- Improve access to the corridor via non-driving modes including additional bicycle parking, bicycle accommodation, transit enhancements, and a significantly improved walk environment.

The need for construction of an off-street municipal garage is not supported by this data. Parking needs can adequately, and more evenly, be met through the above enumerated strategies. This conclusion is based on the following:

- Parking demand is spread across the corridor. West of 6th Street on-street parking demand is lower, but off-street demand is higher and the segment lacks any off-street public parking accommodations. 6th Street to the rail overpass has higher on-street occupancy, but unused publically available off-street capacity.

- Retail patrons generally prefer to walk 600 feet or less between parking and their destination. A parking garage would be proximate to only one segment of the corridor while parking demand is spread along the length of the corridor.

- Supply can be increased and met through partnership with private development or existing underutilized lots.

- Structured parking is expensive. Small and awkwardly shaped sites result in inefficient parking layouts and even greater cost. The tight configuration of available sites on the corridor would result in construction costs of roughly $15,000 per parking space. Amortized over a 20 year financing period, this equates to nearly $30,000 or $6 million for a 200 space garage. A smaller facility would not be economical.

- Supportable parking rates need to be low. The estimated tolerable price point for parking on the corridor is between $1.00 and $1.50 per hour for on-street parking. Off-street parking would need to be lower to preserve the availability of on-street spaces.

- The city should focus first on regulating and enforcing existing on-street parking.
ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents to a public survey conducted as a component of this study were asked their perceptions about West Main Street. Although patrons of the corridor, over two-thirds of respondents did not feel that West Main Street was a very nice place to walk along nor were they satisfied with the current state of parking along the corridor.

The West Main Street Streetscape plans proposes to improve the environment, experience and opportunity of West Main Street. It does so through enhancements to the public realm – wider sidewalks, safer bicycle accommodations, greater efficiencies in public transit, and expanded street tree canopy and environmental features. While vehicle travel to and along the corridor is, and remains, a significant and viable alternative, the largest share of the roadway is presently allocated to auto movement and parking. This allocation compromises the viability and enjoyment of other modes.

The plan proposes to repurpose some of this right of way to improve the walkability of the corridor, enhance the visual image of it, and improve safety for all users. The proposed design would result in a net reduction of roughly 30 of the existing 88 on-street parking spaces (roughly one-third).

This opportunity for enhancement introduces a potential issue for business access as the majority of patrons, at present, use driving as their dominant travel mode to the corridor.

Merchants voiced strong concerns about parking on West Main Street. While many businesses do provide or have access to modest amounts of off street parking, several rely on on-street parking. Business concerns ranged from the need for short term, transactional patron parking, to loading issues, to providing adequate access for their employees. The cited parking pressures from the nearby university and hospital. Weekday daytime constraints are the highest for both on and off-street parking resources.

Merchants recognized an opportunity for better management and enforcement of existing on-street spaces. Surveys of the corridor further identified opportunities to utilize off-street parking resources that are generally unused during evening and weekend peak demand hours.

In order to gain a true assessment of the parking issues that face both retailers and patrons of the West Main Street corridor an online parking and travel survey was distributed to business owners, customers and publicized to City residents and visitors. The survey focused on gathering information on how people utilized the West Main Street corridor in terms of use (shopping, work, dining etc.), how they access the corridor, when they frequent the corridor and their parking preferences. In addition meetings were held with the business community to discuss their opinions and issues regarding parking along the corridor.

PARKING AND TRAVEL SURVEY – BUSINESS OWNERS

23 business owners responded to a survey targeted at gaining insight of their observations and operations. Respondents represented the diverse range of establishments in the corridor. All operate Monday thru Friday, three quarters are open on Saturdays and two thirds open on Sundays. Overall the busiest time for the corridor is on weekdays between 11:00am and 4:00pm.
Fifty-seven percent of businesses offer their customers dedicated spaces in private lots. Forty-three percent indicated that parking was available to patrons either in a public parking lot or garage.¹

Despite being in an urbanized location, the majority of business owners (over 80%) did not feel that parking was adequate and of an expected amount. Business owners generally felt that existing time limits (maximum 2 hours) were sufficient for their patrons to comfortably do business on the corridor. More than two-thirds felt parking enforcement was inadequate. Owners were divided as to whether “park once” strategies – where patrons can leave their car at one location and visit many places on the corridor – were good for business.

Business owners reported that the majority of their employees – over 50%, or about 1,100 workers - get to work by car. Roughly equal portions (around 10%) arrive on foot or via public transit, and about 5% come by bike. Employees who drive are reported to primarily (68%) park in dedicated off-street spaces provided by the establishment, although over 40% may also occasionally or routinely park on-street and 15% in a public lot. Roughly a third of the businesses reported employees utilizing remote parking options.²

Owners were asked to provide their top 3 recommendations to improve patron access to West Main Street. Their responses are included in full within Appendix A, but the three primary responses were:

- Building a paid public parking lot/garage
- Enforcement of the existing on-street parking and public lots
- Provision of extended duration parking (>2hr)

**PARKING AND TRAVEL SURVEY – VISITORS/RESIDENTS**

Two hundred and seventy-eight (278) individuals responded to an online survey primarily oriented toward retail and dining patrons of the corridor. Although 76% occasionally dine on the corridor and 54% have shopped there, less than one-third of the respondents identified their primary association with the corridor as being a retail or dining customer (31%). Large portions of survey respondents were employees or students (29%), residents of nearby neighborhoods (23%), or members of one of the local churches (12%). The remaining few (5%) used the corridor for commuting by bike or car, or for exercise.

Over 88% of respondents were regular or frequent visitors coming to the corridor either daily or a few times a month. Over half typically visit two or more places when they come. Walking is overwhelmingly the mode of choice to move between destinations on the corridor (over 60%), however roughly 18% typically drive between locations, with the balance opting for bicycles, transit or varying their modes. The Main Street Market, Blue Moon Diner, Continental Divide, and Albemarle Bakery were the most commonly cited destinations.

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¹ Business owners were able to select more than one option thus the responses are not cumulative.
² Owners could select more than one option for locations utilized for employee parking.
Among commercial patrons, weekday evenings and weekend days and evenings were the most popular times to visit. The general populace tended to favor daytime hours during both the week and on weekends.

Driving and parking is the most often cited mode for accessing the corridor (86% of commercial consumers and 72% of general respondents). This was followed by walking, bicycling and transit use (in order of frequency of use).

Drivers did not indicate any strong preference for parking on street versus off street locations. Few currently do, and fewer yet wish to, park on nearby residential streets.

Consumer perceptions of the corridor closely mirrored that of general respondents. Interestingly roughly comparable numbers of people (roughly one-third of respondents) feel it is easy to find parking near West Main Street as the number of people who have avoided West Main Street due to a perceived lack of parking. Two-thirds indicated that current parking time limits may be insufficient to do all they would like to do on the corridor. Less than a third of respondents think West Main Street is a nice walking street and fewer still are satisfied with the current parking situation on the corridor.

Encouragingly, a significant majority of respondents are willing to walk up to a block from their parking space to their destination. While parking is currently free on the corridor, just under half the respondents (and a greater proportion of commercial consumers) indicated a willingness to pay $1 or more per hour to park on the corridor. Roughly a quarter were unwilling to pay any amount for parking, however of these, two-thirds did not come to the corridor primarily to shop or dine.

Comments from respondents highlighted two consistent themes – parking is important to the success of the corridor, but so too is the character of the corridor. Most comments expressed support to enhance the corridor to improve the retail environment and safety provided parking remained available and affordable.

The full survey responses are included as Appendix B.
CURBSIDE ASSETS AND DEMANDS

CURBSIDE AND RIGHT-OF-WAY

West Main Street is a vital urban street, a locally designated historic district, and an important connection between the University of Virginia and Downtown Charlottesville, and to its surrounding neighborhoods. In recent years West Main Street has become a vibrant, mixed-use corridor that has a number of competing demands for its curbside space. These demands all need to be met, but should also be prioritized and accommodated accordingly.

Transit Access

West Main Street is one of the busiest transit corridors in Charlottesville. At present, it carries just two CAT (Charlottesville Area Transit) routes – Route 7 and the Trolley. However, these lines form the backbone of the entire Charlottesville transit system. They connect the two primary transit hubs – one located at the east end of the Pedestrian Mall and the other located at the UVA Hospital, a primary employment center and destination. Additional transit service and increased frequencies are anticipated on the corridor to respond to rising demand.

Pedestrian Access

Despite the high amount of foot traffic along West Main Street between the University of Virginia and downtown Charlottesville the pedestrian environment on West Main Street is lacking. The sidewalks are narrow, and many intersections lack crosswalks on all approaches. All traffic signals in the study area require pedestrians to push a button to activate the walk signal, allowing them to legally cross the street. Street lighting is poor, which leads to a perceived unsafe environment at night. The notable elements of the current West Main Street Streetscape plan that address the quality of the pedestrian environment include:

- Raised crosswalks
- Sidewalk widening
- Highlighted crosswalks (different materials)

Bicycle Access

West Main Street is also one of the busiest bicycling corridors in Charlottesville, with the highest bike traffic counts at Ridge McIntire Road, closer to the Downtown Mall. An estimated 237,000 bicycle trips occur here each year. The second highest traffic counts are at Jefferson Park Avenue next to the University of Virginia, where there are an estimated 219,000 bike trips annually. Counts fall in the central portion of the study area; the intersection of West Main and 4th Street NW has 197,000 bike trips each year, suggesting that bike traffic, like pedestrian traffic, is oriented to destinations at the ends of the study area.

However, there are limited bicycle facilities on West Main Street. There are 12 bike racks within a 600 foot walk of the corridor.
**Loading and Short-term Parking**

Through discussions with the local business community as well as the field observations, there is a substantial demand for curbside loading and short-term parking. The demand for loading comes primarily from commercial uses along the corridor and occurs during the morning period when deliveries are a key element of business activity. Additionally curbside space is a required aspect for the food and beverage industry that need curbside space for trash collection in the early morning.

Parking for customer utilization is also in demand to enable the short-term exchange of goods (i.e., collection or drop-off of goods). The combination of curbside space demands to focus on loading zones in the morning period and the transfer to short-term parking spaces later in the day are elements under consideration in the streetscape plan.

**OFF-STREET PARKING RESOURCES**

At present there are approximately 88 public on-street parking spaces on the corridor itself and several more on adjoining and nearby streets. These parking spaces are largely unmarked and unmetered. Turnover is encouraged through a posted two-hour maximum time limit, although it is acknowledged that enforcement is spotty and ineffective at achieving the desired parking availability.

In addition to these limited on-street resources, a handful of 2- or 4-hour public parking spaces are available in an off street lot adjacent to the Albermarle Hotel on the 600 block of West Main Street.

Despite the limited availability of publically held and maintained parking spaces, there are a vast number of parking spaces within a block of the main corridor – over 5,000 in fact! However, nearly all are privately held and dedicated to a single user. Only 648 spaces are publicly available.

The parking inventory identified as West Main Street’s parking supply is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West Main Street Parking Overview</th>
<th>Total Spaces</th>
<th>Publicly Available</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>Amtrak Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>Carver Recreation Center Old Albermarle Hotel</td>
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<td>UVA Health System</td>
<td>2059</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>On Street Spaces</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5887</td>
<td>648</td>
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PARKING UTILIZATION

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing parking supply, parking trends, regulations, rates and management practices, the West Main Street study area was divided into three zones, by geographic location and facility type, which were then subdivided into individual block codes.

Zone A: West Main Street between Ridge McIntire Road to 7th Street (On-street parking)
- Main Street Market Lot
- Old Albemarle Hotel Lot
- Lot next to Old Albemarle Hotel (Private)

Zone B: West Main Street between 7th Street and 10th Street (On-street parking)
- House & Hound Lot
- Starr Hill Lot
- Sweethaus Lot

Zone C: Staple Lot (243 Ridge McIntire Road)
- Amtrak Lot
- Hampton Inn Lot
- Republic Plaza (839 West Main Street)

These zones and locations were prioritized for on-street and off-street surveys as they included commercial blocks with a significant presence of street-fronting retail, as well as the most immediately relevant off-street parking within the West Main Street corridor.

Parking Zone Overview

On-street surveying of each zone was conducted over a five day period in September 2014, prioritizing commercial blocks with significant presence of street-fronting retail, residential streets with high-density housing developments or commercial-spillover demand, and off-street parking lots catering to mixed, commercial, and civic uses.

This parking survey includes all on-street spaces and select off-street lots. Overall, the survey included a total of 1,084 spaces, of which 401 are publicly-available and 683 are use-restricted.
REGULATIONS AND GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The use category and applicable regulations were recorded for all spaces within the study area. Multiple regulatory approaches co-exist along the West Main Street corridor, including free on-street public parking, paid off-street public parking, free off-street private parking (for customers), paid off-street private parking, and paid off-street permit parking.

The 70 free on-street public parking spaces and the 51 free off-street public parking spaces have varying time restrictions and regulatory periods. Between Ridge Street and 9th Street, and in the Old Albemarle Hotel parking lot, public parking is granted in two-hour limits, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The parking limit between 9th and 10th Streets is 15 minutes, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Public on-street parking is unmonitored on Sundays.

In addition to standard on-street public parking spaces, there are at least nine loading zone spaces and six handicapped spaces (the three spaces fronting First Baptist Church between 6th and 7th Streets are only active on Sundays). Many loading zone spaces are not clearly demarcated, which encourage and lead to non-uniform and illegal parking practices. Included in the supply are 28 total handicapped spaces available in the study area.
The largest parking facility along the West Main Street corridor, public or private, is the Amtrak station lot, which features 280 total spaces subdivided into three lots. Hourly rates are $2 per hour (paying with cash) and $2.50 per hour (paying with credit); the daily rate is $12; the weekly rate is $50. Wild Wing Café, located above the Amtrak station, offers parking validation for up to two hours.

Monthly permit parking is available at three private lots in the study area. The most centrally located permit lot – between Ridge Street and 4th Street (north of the private Staples parking lot) – is managed by CB Richard Ellis, and costs $78 per month; 14 additional, uncounted spaces in the northern section of this lot are presently occupied by construction trucks and trailers working on the Residence Inn on West Main, located at the corner of Ridge Street and West Main Street. The monthly rate for the Starr Hill lot (835 W. Main Street) is $55; the monthly rate for the 84 permit-only spaces in the Sweethaus lot (843 W. Main Street) is $60.

Illegal on-street parking is a recurring issue on multiple blocks within the study area. While surveying the parking utilization rates, taxi cabs were repeatedly observed parking illegally on-street outside the Greyhound Station (310 West Main Street) between Ridge Street and 4th Street. Multiple cars were also consistently observed parking illegally on-street on the northern side of West Main Street between 6th Street and 7th Street, fronting the 601/603 West Main Street parking lot, where signage is missing and no spaces exist.

In several instances private companies located near public lots (Safelite Auto Glass at Amtrak) and reserved/permit only facilities (Century Link at CB Richard Ellis) were observed parking work vehicles in these facilities; whether this practice is illegal or permitted is not clear.

Additionally, numerous blocks within the study area are missing regulatory signage, or do not feature explicitly marked parking spaces. This is most notably an issue on the south side of West Main Street between 4th and 5th Streets, on the north side between 5th and 6th Streets, and on the north side between 9th and 10th Streets, where the total number of legal parking spaces is unclear. Clearly marking existing on-street spaces can provide greater clarity for infrequent or one-time visitors.

**RESTRICTED USE VS. PUBLIC-ACCESS PARKING**

A total of 1,084 parking spaces in the study area were surveyed, split between public-access, private, and reserved/permit only use. Thirty-seven percent of spaces are public-access, 29% are private parking, and 33% are reserved/permit-only parking. There are 121 free public parking spaces (both on-and off-street), and 280 paid off-street public spaces. The largest private and reserved/permit-only lots are located on the east and west ends of the study area.

### Figure 4 Monthly Parking Facilities and Regulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parking Lot</th>
<th>Number of Spaces</th>
<th>Monthly Charge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CB Richard Ellis</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>$78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starr Hill</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>$55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweethaus</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amtrak</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>$200 ($50 weekly)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARKING UTILIZATION PATTERNS

To determine availability of parking in the West Main Street study area, parking utilization counts were conducted in September 2014. On a midweek day (Wednesday) and Sunday, all parked cars within the study area were counted every two hours between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. On Friday and Saturday, all parked cars in the study area were counted every two hours between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.

In order to eliminate the perception that parking is not available, it is ideal to have at least one empty space per block face in a commercial district, ensuring easy customer access to businesses. This typically equates to about 1 out of 8 on-street spaces free, or a target of 15-percent vacant spaces per block face. Similarly, a goal of at least 10-percent vacancy in off-street lots is optimal. If any facility has less availability, it is effectively at its functional capacity.

Utilization patterns include all inventoried spaces – both restricted-use and publicly available spaces. The utilization pattern analysis for West Main Street indicates that, for the majority of the time the study area has more than adequate parking supply to satisfy its demand, most notably in off-street private and reserved/permit only lots during non-business hours.

Public on-street parking in the study area is generally well utilized, but not yet overcapacity. The lowest demand was observed during the morning midweek periods (9 and 11 a.m.), with utilization rates hovering between 25 and 70%. Utilization rates for midday periods (1 and 3 p.m.) is more robust, generally clustering around 75%.

On-street parking utilization predictably approaches capacity on Friday and Saturday nights (7 p.m.), when demand peaks at 86% and 90%, respectively.

Figure 5  West Main Street On-Street Parking Utilization Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total Cars</th>
<th>Utilization Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday (9/17)</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>--*</td>
<td>--*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>--*</td>
<td>--*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday (9/19)</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday (9/20)</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday (9/21)</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday (10/26)</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>106%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Insufficient data; **On-street parking prohibited due to Midtown Street Fair
The Midtown Street Fair was held on Sunday September 21st from 1-6 p.m., closing West Main Street from 4th Street to 7th Street; on-street parking was also prohibited during this time, resulting in the loss of 27 on-street public parking spaces. The street fair, and its attendant parking restrictions, provided the opportunity to observe how parking patterns fluctuate during a special event, and the impact of increased demand for off-street parking. Additional surveys were undertaken on Sunday October 26th, which was a typical Sunday (i.e., no special events). During this time on-street parking peaked at 106% of capacity at 11am due to the parking of vehicles in illegal spaces. Throughout the rest of the day, on-street parking utilization rates ranged from 43% to 80%.

At the Amtrak Station – the nearest public off-street parking facility – near capacity utilization rates were recorded for the 1-3 p.m. (93%) and 3-5 p.m. (93%) periods during the Midtown Street Fair. In the 43 on-street public parking spaces that remained open during the street fair (Ridge to 4th, 7th to 8th, 8th to 9th, and 9th to 10th), utilization rates nearly met or exceeded capacity from 1-3 p.m. (98%), 3-5 p.m. (95%), and 5-7 p.m. (105%).

Demand for reserved/permit only facilities is evident during the work week, with utilization rates for the CBRE facility steady at 58%, an average of 64% utilization at the Starr Hill facility, and 50% utilization for the Sweethaus lot. However, during the weekend periods utilization rates for these facilities were lower than 10%. Implementing shared parking policies in select private and reserved/permit, where private spaces are opened for public use during non-business hours, could help relieve the demand for on-street public parking and reduce the time visitors spend circling for parking, especially during special events that result in the loss of publicly-accessible on-street parking.

The utilization maps for each day and time period are included as Appendix C.

**Land Use development**

To determine the future potential for West Main Street’s parking supply the most recent project information was gathered from the City of Charlottesville. Five major development projects have been completed or are expected to completed in the near future, as shown in Figure 6.

The West Main Street parking supply will increase by a net of 2,266 spaces and over 780 residential units and 235,000 square feet of commercial land uses if all six developments are built as proposed. The growth of West Main Street as a mixed-use corridor with significant proposed development creates multiple opportunities for viable alternatives to the existing parking system.
PARKING POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Parking is best managed pro-actively as a critical component of a corridor management plan. The best practice is to move away from the approach of constantly reacting. Many cities are now adopting parking management elements in concert with marketing and development efforts. Along the West Main Street corridor as well as throughout the City of Charlottesville, the following alternatives are recommended for further exploration and would formulate a considered parking management approach.

Department of Parking

Creating a City Parking Department, or a Parking Division within an existing City department, to provide full-time management of the parking system. This would include oversight of the parking enforcement, dynamic rate management, maintenance and stakeholder liaison.

Benefits
- Would provide central oversight of the City parking system and facilities.

Limitations
- Additional staff cost and management, Dept. annual budget and initial set-up.

Enforcement of Time limits

Currently on-street parking along West Main Street is time limited to 2 hours but these limits are rarely enforced. This results in overuse of parking spaces thus reducing the available supply of parking for visitors particularly those in need of short-term spaces. Implementing an enforcement program through the time limit with the strengthening of enforcement activities would increase turnover and ensure an occupancy level where there are some available parking spaces at any given time. This strategy reduces the perception of a lack of available parking and provides valuable short-term spaces for local businesses.

Benefits
- Would increase turnover and ensure availability of on-street spaces.
- Would force employee and long-term parkers to lots/garages.

Limitations
- Would be a big change to the existing system and may be seen as a revenue generator.
- Would require the capital outlay of parking enforcement equipment, software and collections contract. Most collections contracts will include enforcement equipment and be based on a per citation cost.
- A parking enforcement officer salary and benefits is approximately $50,000/year (with potential revenue within a City-wide system at approx. $150,000)

Challenges
- Proper parking enforcement is not possible unless regulatory signs are in place to notify people of the intended purpose of a parking area and the rules that apply.
- Fines should be set merely as a deterrent to illegal parking and should not be viewed as a revenue source. Fines also should escalate depending on the severity of the infraction. If fines are set too low, they will not discourage people from parking illegally.
- Would require the implementation of an enforcement division with the City (or the new parking dept.).
**Metered parking**

There is currently no metered on-street parking along West Main Street, though the City does operate one public parking lot with meters at 100 East Water Street, a few blocks outside the study area near the Downtown Mall. The Downtown Parking Study did recommend establishing the West Main Street corridor as an “Outer Zone” to the Downtown Mall, where on-street parking was free and with a two-hour time limit only on specific spaces in certain areas\(^3\). Meanwhile, City Planning Commissioners have expressed interest in expanding on-street meters to free up more parking spaces in congested commercial corridors such as West Main Street\(^4\).

**Benefits**

- Manage occupancy levels to ensure that most spaces are used but some spaces are always available for arriving shoppers and visitors. The usual target occupancy level for on-street parking is 85%.
- Make it cost-effective and easy for commuters to buy monthly garage permits, rather than utilizing on-street spaces that are needed for short-stay shoppers and visitors.
- Reinvest the parking revenue to pay for the parking meters and associated costs, as well as enforcement costs. City code should also be altered to enable any net revenue to fund transit improvements or enhancements to the West Main Street district.
- Fees would apply to all on-street parking spaces and further study would be required to determine the desired hourly rate, hour of use and/or the use of dynamic rates. The objective would be to provide a rate that is cost-effective for those long-term parkers to utilize the off-street garages/lots.

**Limitations**

- Would be a big change to the existing system and may be seen purely as a revenue generator.
- Would require capital outlay for parking meter equipment. Typical costs for “smart meters” enabling credit card payment and pay-by-cell is $250/meter with associated fees per transaction.

**Challenges**

- Proper parking enforcement is not possible unless regulatory signs are in place to notify people of the intended purpose of a parking area and the rules that apply.
- Fines should be set merely as a deterrent to illegal parking and should not be viewed as a revenue source. Fines also should escalate depending on the severity of the infraction. If fines are set too low, they will not discourage people from parking illegally.
- Would require the implementation of an enforcement division with the City (or the new parking department).

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Shared parking

Despite the number of parking spaces on or near West Main Street, residents and business owners state that parking can still be difficult to find. Shared parking, or allowing businesses and institutions to pool their resources, is one potential solution. It is effective in mixed use environments, either when there is a mix of uses on a single site or when sites with different uses are located suitably close together. One example of this is an office building sharing parking with a restaurant or movie theater, since most of the office workers (and their cars) will be gone in the evenings when there is the most demand for parking from the restaurant or theater.

Benefits

- This would maximize the amount of available parking for all users along the corridor.
- Not only would this better utilize the corridor’s parking amenities, but it would improve access and encourage customers and businesses to the area.
- Regulations and restrictions for parking in private lots, which are currently confusing at best, would be reviewed and codified into an understandable, consumer friendly form.
- By allowing for and encouraging shared parking, the City could implement minimum parking requirements and reduce the required number of parking spaces for mixed use developments or single-use developments in mixed-use areas.

Limitations

- There are over 70 different parking facilities along the West Main corridor. Some of them have as few as 7 parking spaces, and several lots are completely unmarked. All of the facilities have different and potentially competing owners.

Challenges

- One challenge with shared parking is working out an agreement between land owners or developers if the uses are not all on the same property.
- Any shared parking scheme would require extensive cooperation among owners and standardization of parking rates and restrictions. Many local jurisdictions have utilized Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), parking authorities or parking management partnerships to formulate and organize private resources.

Public (or District) Valet Parking

A growing practice to expand the efficiency of available parking resources is the use of valet parking in public and private parking areas. The available off-street parking lots along West Main Street could be utilized during peak periods (such as Friday evenings, seasonal weekends, and special events) as public valet parking at no additional charge.

Benefits

- In many cases parking supply can increase by 40% as attendants can utilize drive aisles and other available space. The City of Annapolis successfully provided valet parking in its downtown garage during the summer season of 2013 and noted increased usage, revenue and customer satisfaction.
- For the City of Charlottesville to pursue public valet parking as a viable option there would be a few obstacles relating to regulation and implementation.

Limitations

- The primary concern would be the insurance and liability concerns related to valet parking and ensuring that all private operators met the City’s demands.

Challenges
Enforcement of parking fees may be required to provide a “level playing field” and to ensure that price gouging is deterred. As previously stated this could be collectively managed through a BID or Parking Authority.

Overcoming the initial public hesitancy of valet parking as shown through the parking and travel survey where 78% of respondents stated they would be unlikely to utilize public valet. A marketing campaign would be needed to make people aware and comfortable with this option.

Remote Employee Parking

Remote parking for employees would utilize available parking at the outskirts of the West Main Street corridor where demand is lower. The location of the remote parking would be tied into the existing trolley service or provided with a separate shuttle service to the corridor.

Benefits

- Would remove employees from the in-demand spaces along West Main Street.
- Would provide employees with either free or low cost all-day parking.

Limitations

- The availability of a remote parking facility.
- Cost to provide a remote facility. As previously stated this could be collectively managed through a BID or parking authority.

Challenges

- Encouraging employees to utilize a remote location.
- Ensuring the safety of employees especially restaurant/bar staff that leave work past midnight.

Municipal Parking Development

With the implementation of the recommended policies and strategies described above to manage parking along the West Main Street corridor, the need for a newly constructed municipal parking resource (off-street) would not be needed, certainly not in the near future. However, with such a large portion of the existing parking spaces being privately owned in and near the corridor the land could be redeveloped or simply remain as private parking. As such, the potential in the future for a public parking garage to accommodate the parking demand could be feasible.

Benefits

- Would provide a significant increase in publicly available parking.
- Would alleviate the need for corridor-wide collaboration of the individual parking lot owners/operators.

Limitations

- The availability of a property for a new parking facility.
- Cost to provide a new facility. Recent studies by the VTPI show the national average for constructing an off-street parking space at $15,552 with additional “soft” costs at 30-40% (design, permits and financing) of the total construction cost.

Challenges

- Using the above cost estimates a 200-space facility would require over $6million for construction and an annual operating budget of $250,000.
• Given the unknown development potential along West Main Street, would a new municipal parking facility be competing against private garage owners in the future?

**Off-street parking options**

The feasibility of constructing a new parking facility requires additional review and study, but the observations and data provided within this report as well as discussions with City staff and local stakeholders indicates that such a facility is an option within the West Main Street corridor.

The critical element of constructing a new parking facility would be the availability and suitability of locations within the corridor as many existing properties are privately owned and are not under the City’s control. A list of potential locations along West Main Street with an initial assessment of their merits, deficiencies and challenges are shown below.

Figure 7  Potential Municipal Garage Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 7  Potential Municipal Garage Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. 843 West Main Street (Current use = private parking and retail)
   Property Size = 0.85 acres
   Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq.ft/space) = 105 spaces/level
   **Merits**
   - Access from West Main Street
   - Shape and size of lot
   **Deficiencies**
   - Not centrally located
   - Privately owned property
   - Greater potential for mixed-use development

2. 810 West Main Street (Current use = private parking and retail)
   Property Size = 0.91 acres
   Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq.ft/space) = 113 spaces/level
   **Merits**
   - Close to railway line with lower commercial development potential
WEST MAIN STREET PARKING OPPORTUNITIES AND ANALYSIS
City of Charlottesville

3. 154 8th Street (Current use = private parking)
   Property Size = 0.53 acres
   Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq. ft./space) = 65 spaces/level
   **Merits**
   - Close to railway line with lower commercial development potential
   - Can utilize elevation change under bridge
   **Deficiencies**
   - Not directly accessed from West Main Street
   - Privately owned property
   - Elongated parcel

4. 810 West Main Street (Current use = Amtrak parking)
   Property Size = 0.91 acres
   Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq. ft./space) = 113 spaces/level
   **Merits**
   - Rectangular parcel
   - Utilized for existing Amtrak parking
   - Can utilize elevation change under bridge
   - Good access from 7th Street to West Main Street
   - Centrally located property
   **Deficiencies**
   - Privately owned property
   - Greater potential for mixed-use development

5. Elsom Street (Current use = commercial and private parking)
   Property Size = 0.31 acres
   Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq. ft./space) = 37 spaces/level
   **Merits**
   - Rectangular parcel
   - Lower commercial development potential
   **Deficiencies**
   - Two privately owned parcels
   - Limited access from West Main Street
   - Limited yield potential
6. Starr Hill Park/Old Albermarle Hotel (Current use = public parking)
   Property Size = 0.60 acres
   Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq. ft./space) = 74 spaces/level
   **Merits**
   - Centrally located
   - Existing public parking location
   - Lower commercial development potential
   - One parcel is owned by the City of Charlottesville
   **Deficiencies**
   - Two separately owned parcels
   - Limited yield potential
   - L-shaped parcel with limited width

7. 616 West Main Street (Current use = commercial)
   Property Size = 0.44 acres
   Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq. ft./space) = 54 spaces/level
   **Merits**
   - Centrally located
   - Single rectangular parcel
   - Access from West Main Street
   **Deficiencies**
   - Limited yield potential
   - Existing commercial use
   - Located opposite existing surface public parking lot

8. 421 West Main Street (Current use = commercial)
    Property Size = 0.68 acres
    Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq. ft./space) = 84 spaces/level
    **Merits**
    - Centrally located
    - Combined parcels would create an efficient shape
    - Access from West Main Street or Commerce Street
    **Deficiencies**
    - Four parcels with two separate owners
    - Limited yield potential
    - Existing commercial uses

9. 324 West Main Street (Current use = private parking lot)
    Property Size = 0.18 acres
    Potential Parking Yield (at 350 sq. ft./space) = 22 spaces/level
    **Merits**
Access from West Main Street or 4th Street (south approach)
Existing surface parking lot

**Deficiencies**
- Two privately owned parcels
- Very limited yield potential
- Existing commercial uses
- Eastern location

As previously stated the cost to provide a new facility can vary with the type of construction. Recent construction costs have however, shown that show the national average for constructing an off-street parking space at approximately $15,000 per space in a multi-level facility. A single level facility would bear lower costs in the region of approximately $10,000/space. In addition “soft” costs throughout the process such as design, financing and permitting can add as much as 30-40% to the total construction costs.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow were developed to prioritize the parking needs and demands of West Main Street as well as informing the planning process as future development is proposed in conjunction with the West Main Street Master Plan. The recommended actions provide for the short-term and then several additional recommendations for consideration.

Summary

Short-Term Recommendations

- Creation of a City Parking Department to oversee the on-street and off-street parking system City-wide.
- Implementation of a robust parking enforcement strategy to help create availability and to better balance parking demand in the West Main Street corridor.
- Implementation of a metered parking district along West Main Street to include smart-meters, allowing multiple payment methods (i.e., credit card, pay-by-cell).
- Consideration of the use of Smart parking technologies should be considered to enhance customer convenience, information, revenue collection, enforcement, and overall efficiency (e.g., pay-by-phone, credit card meters, parking app).
- Creation of metered on-street parking to enable demand-responsive pricing in order to help create availability and manage occupancy within the corridor.
- Implementation of Shared Parking Policies and Management Regulations for private property owners and existing parking facilities through the City Parking Department and Planning Office.
- Designation of employee parking areas that are price and convenience competitive with customer spaces to help ease user conflicts at prime front-door spaces.
- On-going monitoring of parking utilization in order to adjust programs in response to performance on the ground.
- Development of an implementation program for pricing, regulatory, signing, and technology changes, including a robust outreach and education program.

Additional Recommendations

- The City should establish a parking & transportation fund that reinvests parking revenues generated on the corridor on West Main Street improvements and connections to remote parking.
- Decisions should be made in close coordination with West Main Street’s business community with the creation of a Business Improvement District.
- The City should consider creating and offering a municipal management program for private parking facilities to improve utilization of these assets and generate new public and private revenues.
• Several low-cost supply increases in existing lots should be considered after better management practices have been operating successfully and before additional parking lots or garages are contemplated.

• Continue the feasibility and exploration of new parking resources as development opportunities arise.