

Town of Carrboro Parking Study

November 2022 Off-Street Public Parking Count Update

Background

On April 20th 2022, the Town Council received the parking study and a presentation from Walker Consulting. The study showed that, generally, there is ample existing parking space availability across downtown, and that 81 percent of the total inventory of parking is privately held off street parking. The study reported a series of parking tables, graphics, and maps to help illustrate which lots are maximizing their occupancy and where parking problems exist throughout downtown. Ending this study, the consultant provided a series of recommendations for the Town Council to consider.

These included, in short:

- Dedicated downtown parking enforcement;
- Paid parking should be considered;
- Enhance public parking communications;
- Creation of a Parking Advisory Committee;
- Provide uniform parking wayfinding/signage;
- Explore public-private shared parking agreements; and
- Creation of a parking auxiliary fund.

After receiving the study and a presentation by the consultant, Council requested staff to take these key recommendations to the advisory boards for comments and suggestions. In addition to comments from advisory boards, Walker Consulting recommended to staff that parking counts be updated at least on an annual basis in order to best track and monitor demand for parking and capacity limits for public parking facilities. This report updates public parking counts and levels-of-service to provide additional data to the original report.

Methodology and Differences

In order to quickly and efficiently update the public parking occupancy counts this past year, Town Staff utilized existing resources to analyze public parking lots. The Economic Development Department with great assistance from the IT Department we're able to conduct occupancy counts by utilizing drone photography and on-the-ground counts for the garage locations and verifying drone photos. This differs from the consultants counts which were completed entirely by on-the-ground counts.

Additionally, Town Staff only included off-street, public parking lots and did not include on-street parking options or private parking lots for this analysis. Therefore, this update may not fully represent the parking demand or supply within the downtown area as represented in the study but should serve as an indicator for various regions within downtown as public parking lots are more likely to be used and occupied at a greater or equal rate to private parking locations. It should also be noted that these counts were taken in early November approximately 6-weeks after these September counts

that were taken in the original study, so variation may exist, but the overall representation is what should be considered. New parking locations such as those at Fitch Lumber, the Fitch Warehouse, and CommunityWorx have been added to these counts and were not included in the original study's counts.

Findings

The updated results illustrated slightly lower and a shift in demand for public parking in Downtown as compared to the original study counts. Table 1 presents the results of the recent parking counts. Thursday public parking demands appear to match that of the original parking study with peak demand during the 11:00am hour and continuing through the late afternoon. Saturday public parking demands, however, differ slightly from the original study showing a stronger average demand during the 11:00am hour rather than the 9:00pm hour. It should be noted, that if newly acquired parking locations were removed, the 9:00pm hour average would be much more comparative with the original study. This shift could also be due to it being later in the year and, thus, cooler outside leading to less people interested in visiting/walking downtown later in the evening.

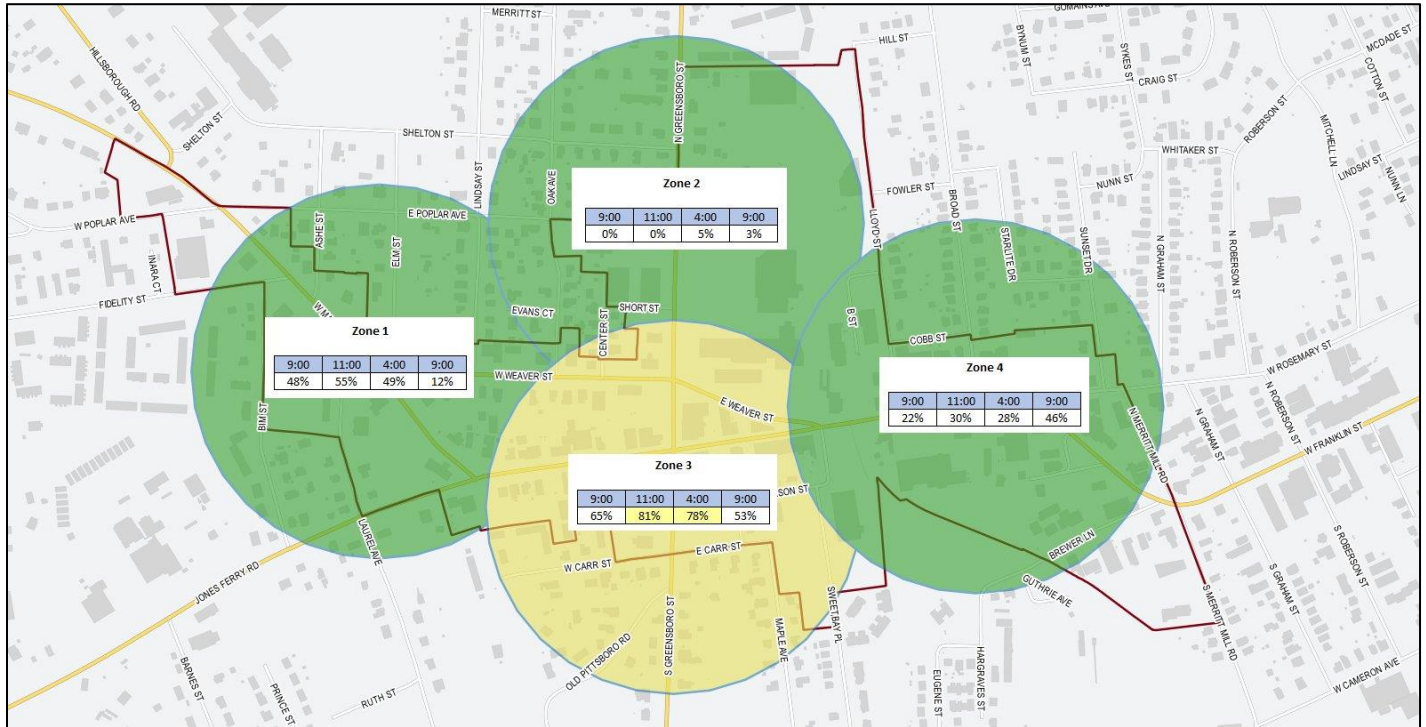
TABLE 1 – PUBLIC PARKING LOT OCCUPANCY RATES

LOCATION	THURSDAY				SATURDAY			
	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	4:00 PM	9:00 PM	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	4:00 PM	9:00 PM
300 E. Main Deck	19%	28%	26%	46%	14%	20%	40%	81%
Town Hall	42%	46%	44%	12%	100%	95%	28%	12%
Laurel Ave	18%	29%	29%	12%	100%	76%	6%	18%
CommunityWorx	--	--	--	17%	--	--	--	2%
Weaver Street	78%	91%	72%	3%	50%	41%	16%	19%
Century Center	74%	74%	74%	31%	51%	74%	56%	72%
Fitch Lumber	--	--	--	4%	14%	18%	10%	8%
Fitch Warehouse	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Merritt Mill	82%	91%	73%	45%	64%	82%	36%	45%
Roberson & Main Lot	67%	83%	75%	69%	58%	56%	92%	61%
Roberson/Acme	54%	86%	86%	60%	40%	60%	69%	51%

Like the study, in order to provide some functional context which to better understand how parking works within the downtown commercial district, an analysis has been added by utilizing an 800-foot level-of-service. This analysis will also differ slightly, because we do not take into consideration on-street and private off-street parking – only off-street public parking demand. Graphic 1 and Graphic 2 illustrate the 800-foot A and B level-of-service for four different regions covering the majority of downtown. In the study, none of the zones would have been yellow or red (above a 75 percent occupancy) during their peak time during the weekdays but, during the Saturday count however, zones 1, 3, and 4 would have been yellow (between 75 and 85 percent occupancy). The updated count suggests a shift in Thursday parking getting to a

warning level (yellow color between 75 percent and 85 percent occupancy) for zone 3 with peaks at 11:00am and 4:00pm. The updated counts also suggest a shift in Saturday parking with zone 1 moving into a warning level and zone 3 and 4 moving to an acceptable level from the original study (although the 9:00pm count for zone 4 does reach warning level).

GRAPHIC 1 – THURSDAY A AND B LEVEL-OF-SERVICE



Length of time parked was also something measured as a part of this count update. With limited existing resources, a sampling approach was used to help provide some insight as to how long average cars were occupying various parking spaces. 51 spaces in 3 different public parking lots were monitored at 2-hour intervals. On Thursday, approximately 48 cars rotated through these 51 spaces, and on Saturday approximately 61 cars rotated through these same spaces.

During the observation period, 69 percent of the cars were in violation of the Town's 2-hour parking limit on Thursday while 51 percent of the cars were in violation of the 2-hour limit on Saturday. There was a much higher turnover rate on Saturday than on Thursday and a much higher rate of cars parking for more than 4-hours on Thursday than Saturday. It is important to note that there is a direct correlation to the turn-over rate and the number of cars that can be parked. In this case, the higher turn-over rate for Saturday allowed for 61 cars to use the 51 spaces, while on Thursday only 48 cars were able to use the 51 spaces. These findings very closely match the findings in the original report of 50 percent of those utilizing public parking are doing so in violation of the 2-hour parking limit.

GRAPHIC 2 – SATURDAY A AND B LEVEL-OF-SERVICE

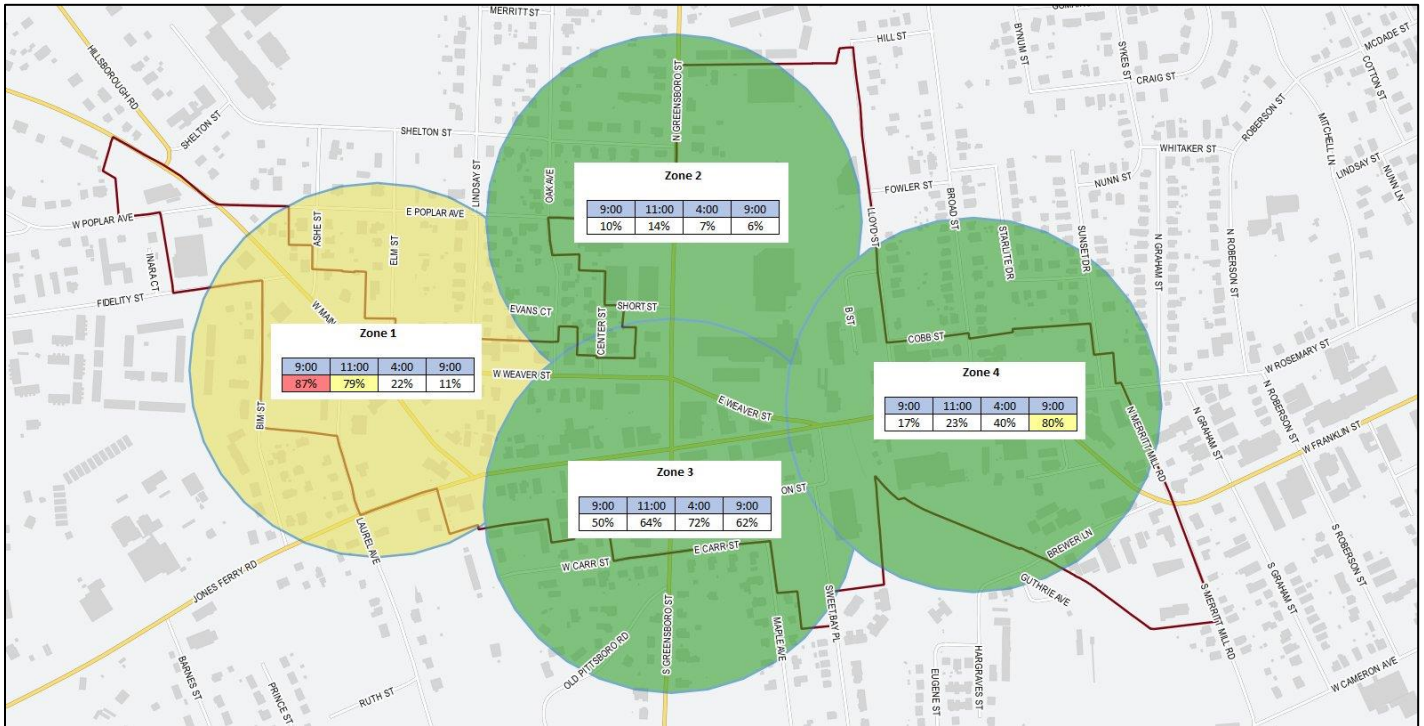


TABLE 2 – PERCENT OF CARS BY LENGTH OF TIME PARKED

	THURSDAY	SATURDAY
2-hour or less	31%	49%
2-4 hours	29%	23%
4-6 hours	19%	3%
At end of observation	21%	25%
<i>Known to be 6+ hours</i>	19%	13%
Cars parked 2+ hours	69%	51%

Conclusions and Recommendations

While there has been some shift in location of public parking and the time of year in which these counts took place, there is very little change in the general outlook and recommendations from the original study. Portions of the downtown district that were strained by public parking previously continue to generally be strained. Mid-term parking solutions should be developed to address warning zones and lots and short-term solutions should be developed to alleviate unacceptable zones and lots.