



# PARKING IN DOWNTOWN MELROSE



CITY OF MELROSE, MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 2012



**DOWNTOWN INITIATIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**  
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**N NELSON**  
NYGAARD





MELROSE ARMY & NAVY STORE

Family Opticians

HEALTHY MELROSE  
Saturday, April 20th  
10:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
MELROSE MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SKATTA FAIR AT NOON!  
Family Wellness & Fitness Fair  
City of Melrose  
Melrose-Wilford Hospital

NO  
PARKING  
HERE TO  
CORNER  
→

Handicapped parking sign

## ***Acknowledgements***

This report was prepared for the City of Melrose through a “Downtown Initiative” competitive grant from the State of Massachusetts’ Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The grant application was prepared by the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) who provided oversight and review of the final presentation, parking management plan, and final report. In addition, many Melrose stakeholders were interviewed and consulted during this process in the spring of 2011, including City administration, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Parking Subcommittee, local business owners and residents, and the City’s police, public works, engineering, and planning staff. On behalf of DHCD, we would like to thank all stakeholders for their constructive input to this process.

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## ***Background***

Melrose has long been recognized for its historic downtown and Main Street success story. Local businesses have been a constant driving force behind the advancement of economic development, while simultaneously serving to strengthen the sense of community in Melrose. Like many cities and towns, the conflict between accommodating the need for patron and employee parking downtown has been a continuous challenge, which has intensified in recent years. An up to date parking management plan is an essential tool for local economic development to be successful. The technical assistance afforded by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative grant program has allowed for an assessment of the downtown parking supply, use, and demand, which has not been studied in almost two decades.

The parking needs of Melrose merchants, employees, residents, and customers are also not unlike other communities: the expectation that parking spaces are available; the desire to find convenient parking easily; and the assurance that one's car is securely parked without incurring a penalty. Recent alterations to the downtown built environment represent a special opportunity for the City to take measures to better manage parking in the central business district. These changes to the downtown landscape demonstrate that the downtown is constantly evolving and emphasize the need for periodic evaluation of the downtown parking management system to best ensure that the parking demands of all users continue to be met. This plan has offered the opportunity for stakeholders to initiate the parking discussion in Melrose and shall provide a framework for downtown parking management that looks ahead to the future.

## Parking Supply

The Planning Staff initiated the Parking Study by conducting an inventory of the existing parking supply in the designated study area. Parking spaces were physically counted and recorded to determine the total supply. Inventory results show that there are approximately 1,275 public and private spaces in downtown Melrose. The Downtown Melrose Parking Supply map on page 5 depicts the location of the off-street and on-street parking opportunities. A further breakdown of the parking inventory can be found in the Appendix.

Once the parking supply was established, parking utilization information was collected on an average weekday and an average weekend in May 2011. This was a collaborative effort involving City staff and community volunteers. Parking utilization data and analysis is presented in detail later in this report beginning on page 12.

This parking supply data for the study area is as follows:

- Much of this parking (540 spaces) is found in five centrally located and municipally-owned or controlled lots.
- Only 283 spaces are available on-street. As a result, the majority of downtown visitors park in the municipal lots.
- Although a short walk away, the Berwick, Livermore, and Library lots provide an additional 158 spaces of public parking.
- There are 294 private parking spaces. Many of these spaces are centrally located and restrict public use.<sup>1</sup>

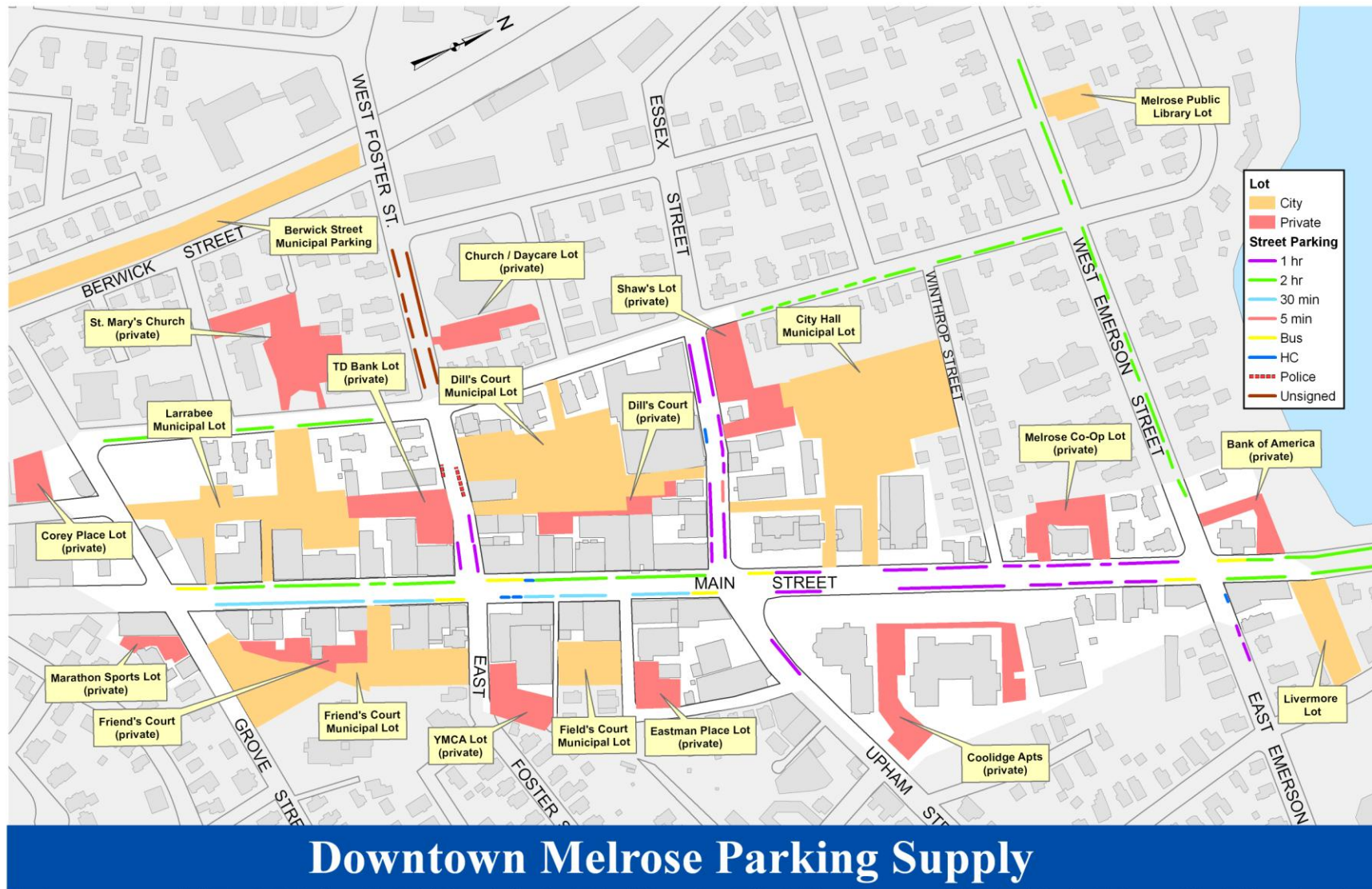
### Melrose Parking Supply

	Private	Public	Total
On Street	-	283	283
Off Street	294	698	992
Total	294	981	1,275

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<sup>1</sup> The count for private parking supply is conservative and did not include TD Bank, Melrose Cooperative Bank, and Bank of America lots as well as the areas of private parking adjacent to the Dill's Court and Friend's Court municipal lots.





## **Regulations**

Downtown Melrose does not include any on-street or off-street parking meters. Instead, parking management is regulated through time limit restrictions and a permit system.

## **Time Limits**

The parking in the downtown municipal lots is limited to two hours or less with the exception of a portion of the City Hall municipal lot that is designated for long term parking. The long term parking (up to ten hours) in the City Hall municipal lot accounts for only approximately 8% of all public parking, which may be restricting customers from spending more time and money in downtown Melrose. Parking in these long term spaces is prohibited between 6:00 AM and 8:00 AM to deter commuter use. With respect to on-street parking, Main Street parking in the central business district includes 30 minute parking on the east side of Main Street and two hour parking on the west side of Main Street. Outside of the central business district, on-street parking consists of mainly a mix of one hour and two hour areas.

## **Permits**

The Melrose City Code allows for a maximum of 70 commercial permits to be sold annually to local merchants for a fee of \$250 per year. This limit has been waived in recent years. For example, in 2011, there were approximately 125 commercial permits sold to local merchants. These permits allow merchants to park in any available spot in any of the municipal lots on weekdays from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM. An overnight parking permit is available to Melrose residents for \$80 per year. The overnight permit allows residents to park in municipal lots between 2:00 AM and 6:00 AM. No more than 300 overnight permits are authorized to be issued each year according to the City Code.



## Public Process

Community involvement was a critical component of the development of a parking strategy for downtown Melrose. In addition to discussions with key stakeholders, the City hosted two public workshops that were facilitated by the consulting team. The first workshop was oriented at gaining a better understanding of the public's issues and ideas as they relate to parking and circulation in the downtown. The final workshop was an opportunity to present the study findings and to gather input on the preliminary recommendations.

### Parking Open House

On the evening of May 17, 2011, local residents, business owners, and employees were invited to participate in a hands-on "Parking Open House" designed to gather as much quantitative input as possible through several interactive components:

- Parking priorities voting exercise
- Parking needs & opportunities map mark-ups
- Background information presentation and discussion

More than a dozen interested citizens and stakeholders participated in response to flyers and email invitations distributed by the City.



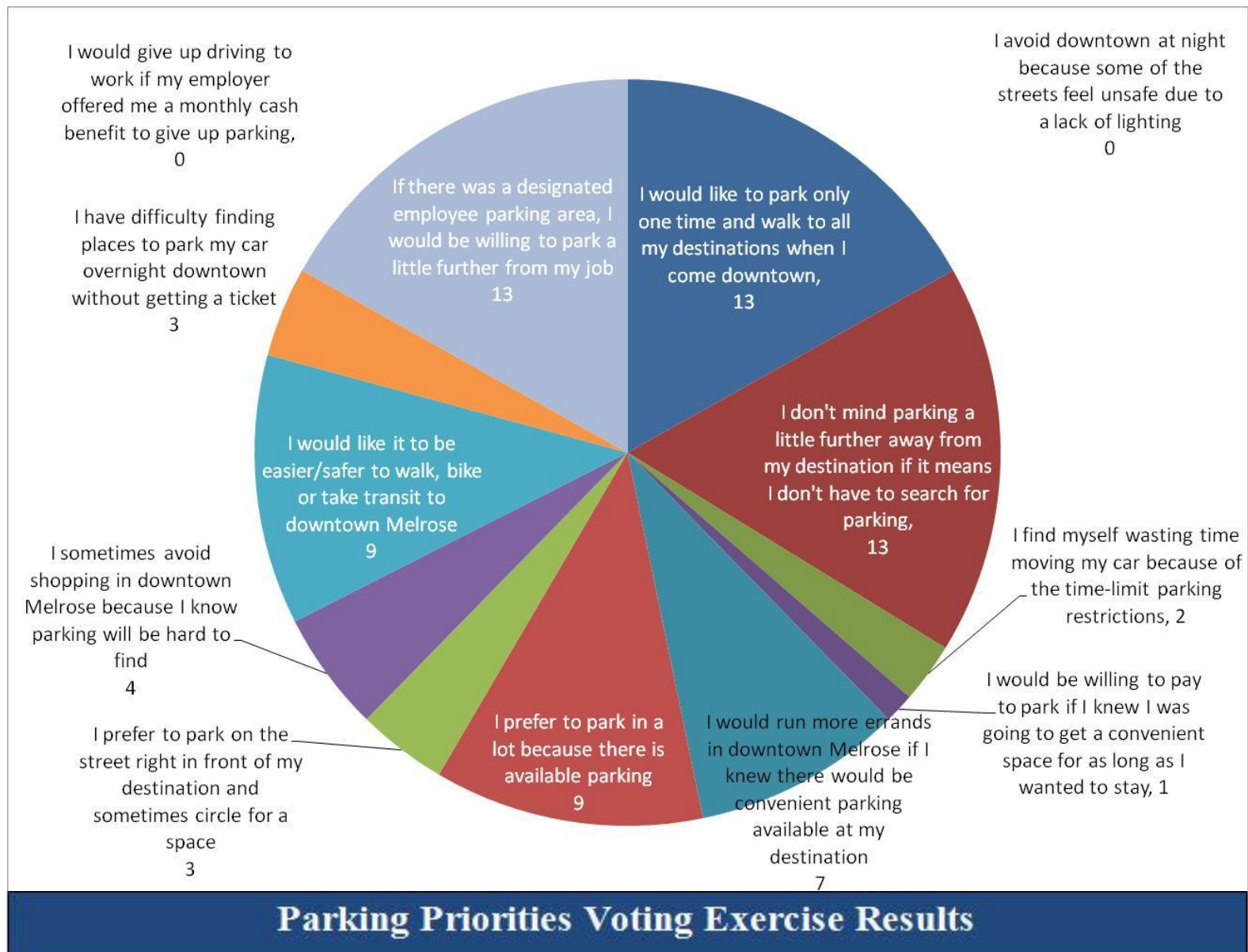
## **Parking Priorities Voting Exercise**

Open house participants were invited to “vote” for the parking-related priorities that were of greatest concern to them. Faced with over a dozen typical parking issues, participants were allotted six “votes” that could be used to prioritize one or more issues. With thirteen potential priorities and only six possible votes, the participants were encouraged to strongly consider their priorities. All six votes could be used on a single statement or one vote each on six statements or any mix in between. The following key findings were compiled from the Parking Priorities Voting Exercise Results chart on the following page:

### **Key Findings**

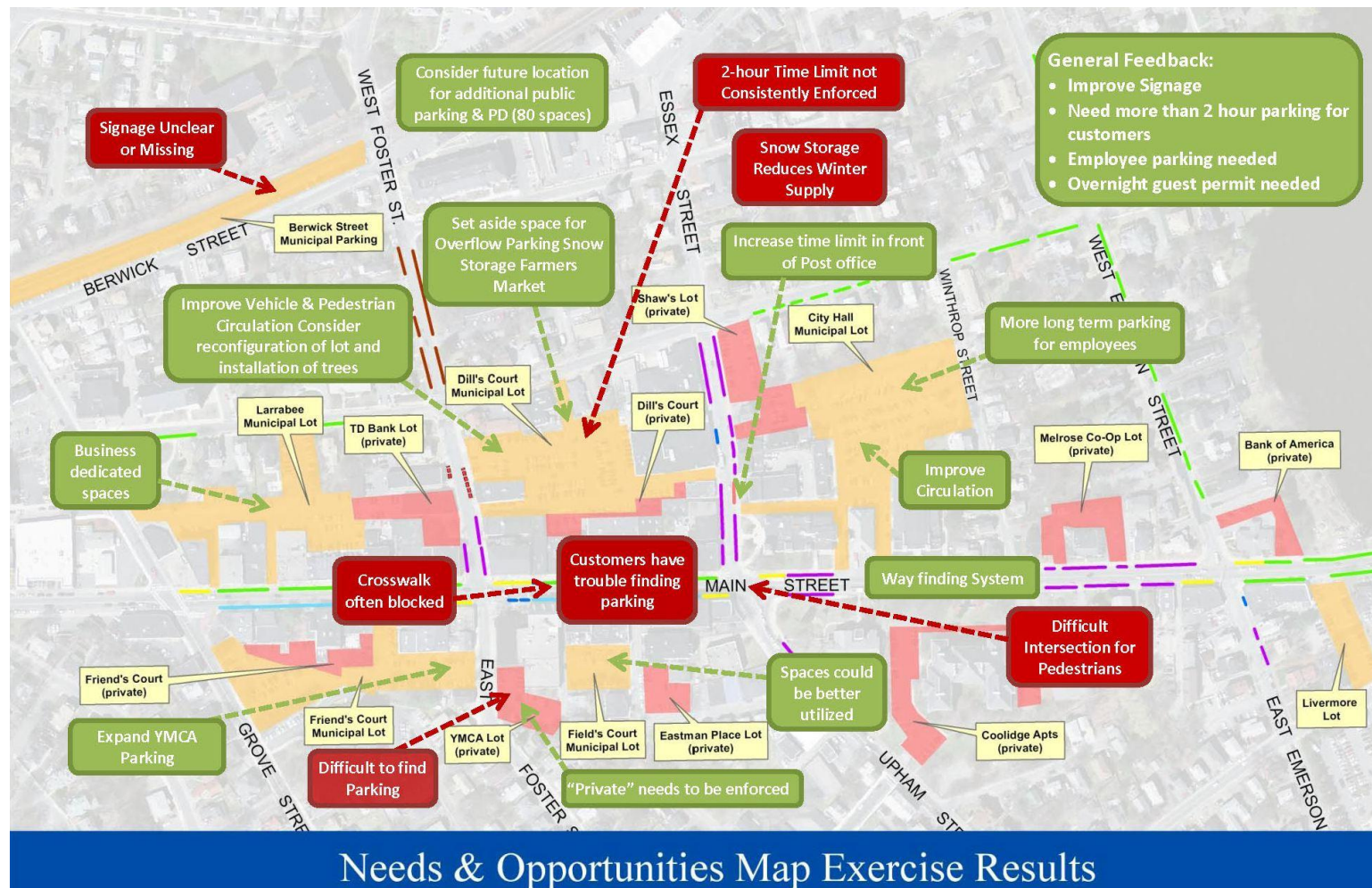
- Participants prefer not to spend time searching for parking and are willing to walk a little further if the more remote parking has easy to find spaces.
- Participants prefer to park once when visiting downtown.
- If a designated employee parking area was available, participants would be willing to park further away in order to avoid searching for a space.
- Parking issues do not discourage downtown shopping, though if parking were more convenient, even more people would shop downtown.
- Participants also prefer parking in a lot because they perceive that parking is more readily available.





## Needs & Opportunities Map Exercise

Participants were invited to share specific comments about what works and does not work with respect to parking downtown. Participants and facilitators marked up maps to indicate specific places of concern or where ideas for possible changes could occur. All maps were compiled into the master version below, which summarizes strengths and weakness as well as suggested opportunities for parking improvements.

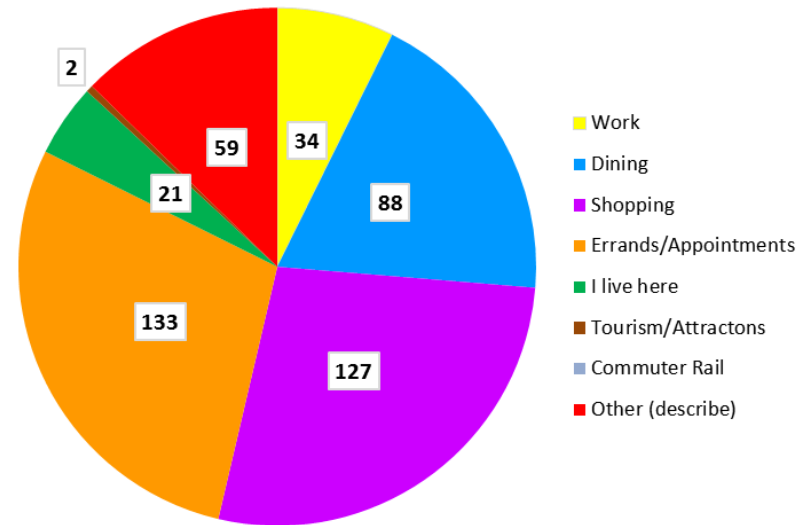


Needs & Opportunities Map Exercise Results

## Melrose Parking Survey

A Parking Survey was conducted by the City that was designed to collect general parking behavior information and preferences of Melrose visitors, employees, and residents. The survey was distributed to businesses and customers as well as posted on the City's website. A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix. The response to the survey was strong with 476 respondents participating in total. The following information was discovered through the survey process:

- The overwhelming majority of the respondents (97%) travel by automobile to get to downtown Melrose.
- Most of the respondents (75%) considered themselves to be primarily customers of downtown; only 7% of respondents come to downtown Melrose to work. (See chart.)
- Customers (people who come downtown to shop, run errands, and dine) think that **ease of finding a space** is the most important consideration in choosing where to park in downtown Melrose (50%). For employees, **location** is most important (30%).
- Both employees and customers **perceive that the search for parking in downtown Melrose takes a relatively long time**. On the normal day, customers and employees estimate it takes nearly 7 minutes to find a parking space. On the worst day it can take almost 16 minutes to find a spot.
- **Most customers (90%)** always search for parking while employees are more evenly split on whether they always search for parking or park in the same place.
- **Employees in Melrose are parking closer to their destinations than customers**. 42% of employees parked right in front of or a one minute walk away from their destination, while only 33% of customers were able to park in these choice spots. This means that employees may be taking the best spots away from customers.



**Response to Survey Question #4:  
What was your primary purpose for coming downtown on that day?**



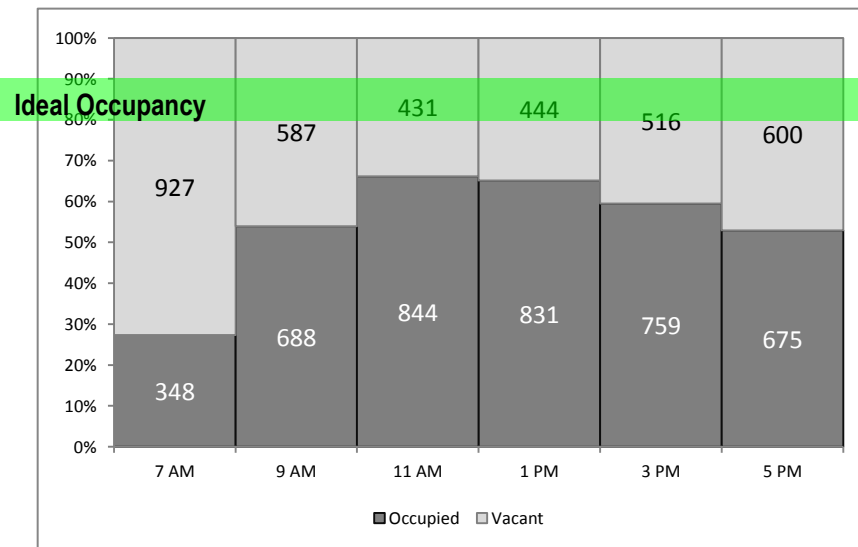
## Parking Utilization

### Parking Utilization Profiles

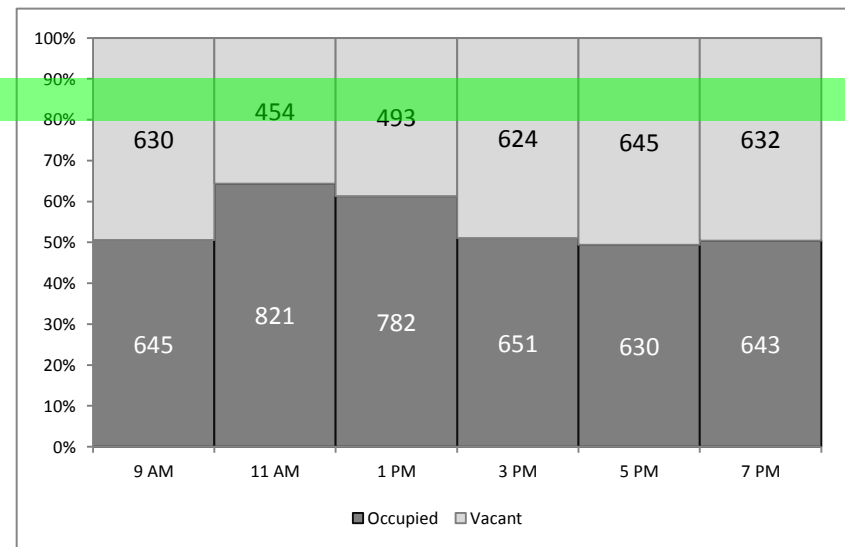
In order to ensure that parking management systems are operating efficiently, a certain level of vacancy is preferred both on- and off-street. It is ideal to have at least one empty on-street space per block face in a downtown, ensuring easy customer access to businesses. This typically equates to about 1 out of 8 spaces free, or a target of 15-percent vacant per block face. Similarly a goal of at least 10-percent vacancy is considered ideal in off-street lots. If any facility has less availability, it is effectively at its functional capacity and drivers perceive parking problems.

Melrose staff members and a team of volunteers conducted a study of the parking utilization in Melrose by observing the accumulation of cars within each regulatory zone and each parking lot over the course of both an average weekday and an average weekend in May of 2011. With 431 spaces available at the point of highest demand on the observed weekday and 454 on the weekend, it is clear that overall Melrose has adequate capacity and is not facing a problem of a lack of supply. This summary of the overall demand, while enlightening, is not sufficient for understanding the issues that may face those searching for parking in Melrose. To gain a better awareness, the following Parking Utilization Profiles break out the demand for a more detailed look.

**All Parking - Thursday May 12, 2011**



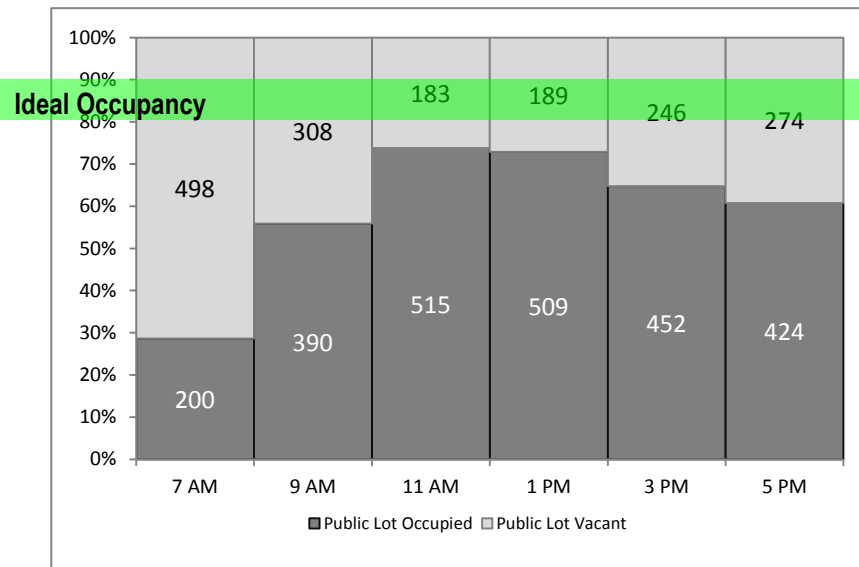
**All Parking - Saturday May 14, 2011**



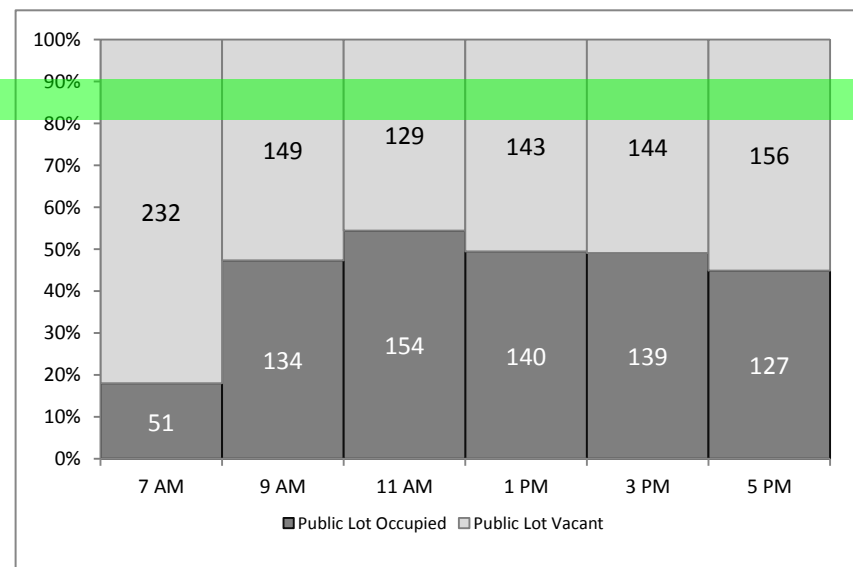
## Utilization of Public Parking – Weekdays

Looking specifically at the use of the public parking in downtown Melrose, utilization of both public lots and on-street parking does not exceed 80-percent at any point during the weekday. The period with the highest demand is during lunchtime around 11am. During this time the public lots have 74-percent utilization and the on-street parking spaces have 54-percent utilization. At 1pm, 3pm, and 5pm, utilization of both on-and-off street parking decreases. On-street parking decreases slightly during this period, from 50-percent utilization at 1pm, to 49-percent at 3pm, and 45-percent at 5pm, while public lot utilization decreases from 73-percent at 1pm to 65-percent at 3pm to 61-percent at 5pm. Parking in both on-and-off street spaces during the morning is even less of a problem with off street utilization at only 29-percent at 7am and 56-percent at 9 am and on street utilization at 18-percent at 7am and 47-percent at 9am.

**Public Lot Parking – Weekday**



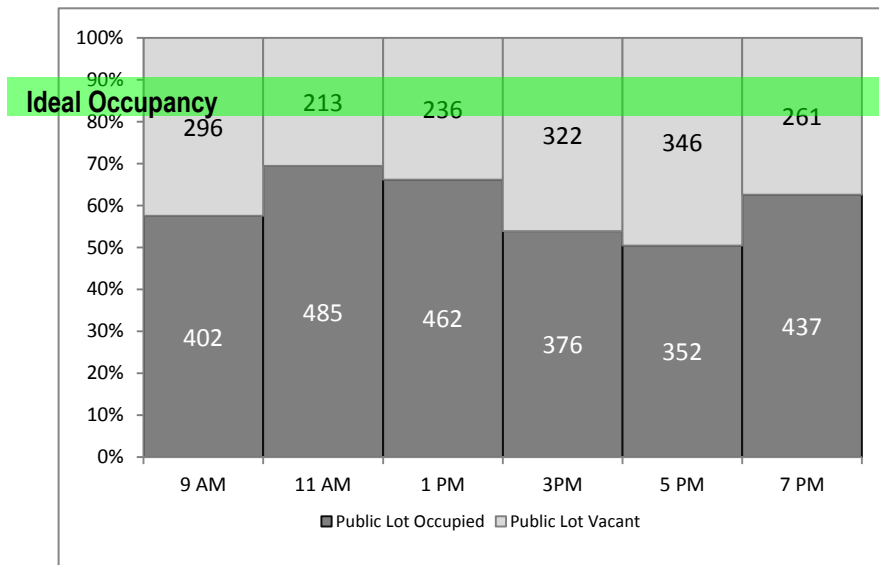
**Public On-Street Parking - Weekday**



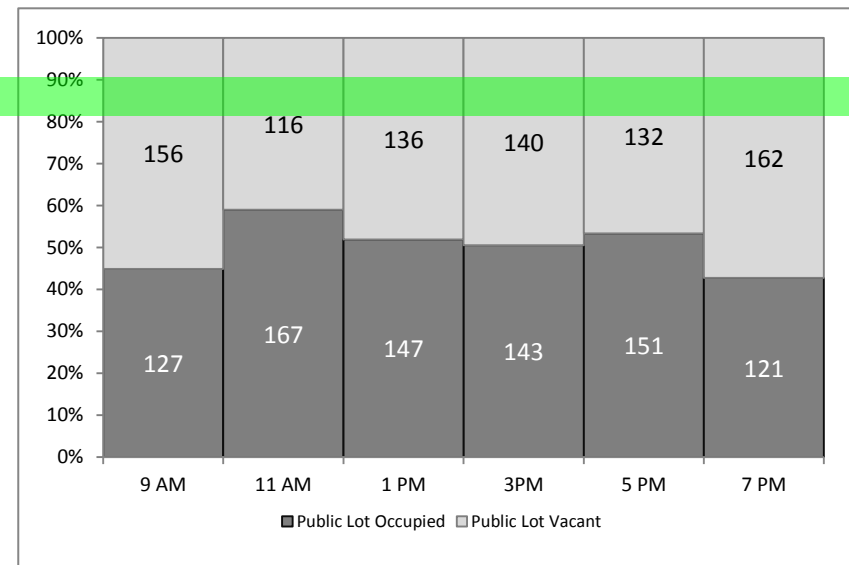
## Utilization of Public Parking – Weekend

Saturday utilization profiles in Melrose show greater overall utilization spread throughout the day. Utilization does not exceed 70-percent at any time for on-or-off street parking, which is below the thresholds for ideal utilization.

**Public Lot Parking – Weekend**



**Public On-Street Parking - Weekend**

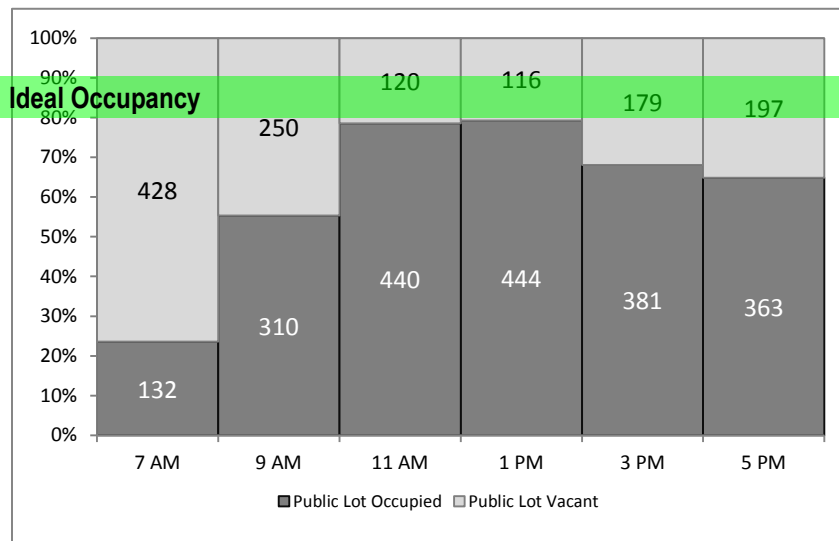




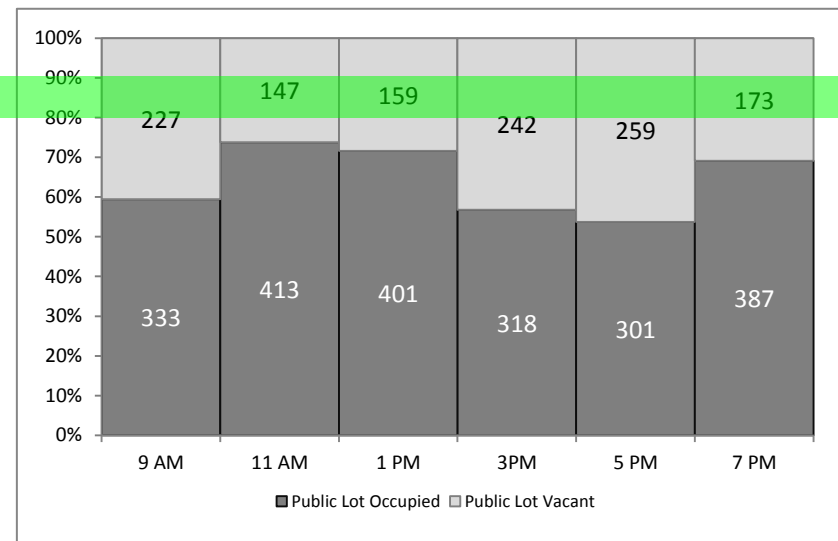
## Utilization of Central Public Parking Lots

Utilization profiles of the municipal parking lots in the central business district (excluding the Berwick Street parking area and the Livermore Lot) when compared to the corresponding utilization profiles on pages 13 - 14 for all Public Lot Parking (weekday and weekend) demonstrate that the central lots are closer to capacity during weekdays and especially on the weekend. Conversely, Berwick Street and the Livermore Lot represent available capacity a short walk from the downtown that is currently underutilized. The Berwick Street municipal parking is uniquely situated within a comfortable walking distance from Main Street in an ideal location to assist with the parking needs of downtown employees who currently occupy parking spaces in the central lots that are best suited for use by customers.

**Central Public Lot Parking – Weekday**



**Central Public Lot Parking - Weekend**

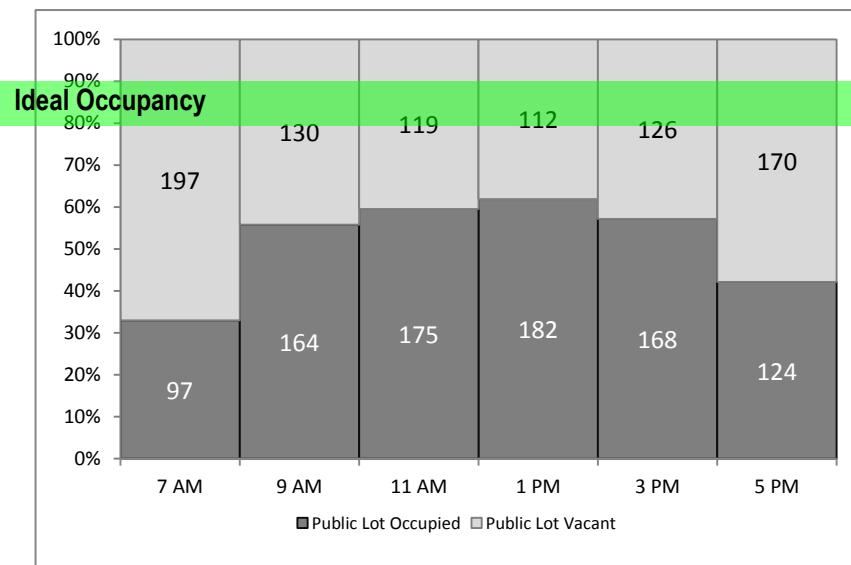


## Utilization of Private Parking

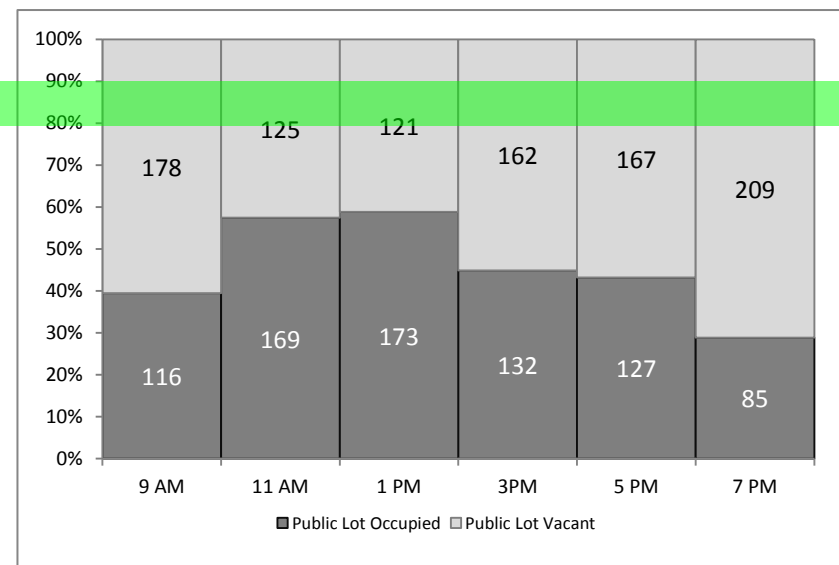
A clear distinction exists between the utilization of public and private parking in downtown Melrose. While public parking reaches up to 80-percent utilization in the central public parking lots during weekday lunch hours and is consistently used the remainder of the workday and on weekends, private parking utilization does not exceed 62-percent on weekdays and 59-percent on weekends.

This is not atypical in downtowns where private parking is coveted and thereby not shared with other users. Unfortunately, this protective stance is inefficient in many ways. First, dedicated parking is very inefficient since any given space is typically never used more than 8 hours in a day and often much less without the benefit of shared or public access. Secondly, the land area consumed by unshared private parking is much greater than what would be needed in a shared facility at higher utilization rates. Finally, this lost land efficiency is lost land value, limiting the amount of infill development potential.

**All Private Lots on a Weekday**

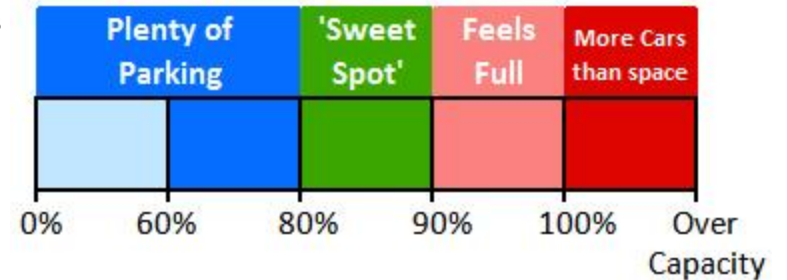


**All Private Lots on a Weekend**



## Spatial Analysis of Parking Utilization

An important part of understanding how parking is managed in any downtown is being able to describe how various parking facilities and segments of on-street parking interact with each other throughout the course of a day. A chart of hourly utilization rates for one specific location is valuable, but seeing how that location behaves in relation to others located nearby can reveal patterns and trends not evident in numbers alone. The lot which is completely full may be right around the corner from another lot that has plenty of availability at that same time.



Using the inventory information prepared by the City of Melrose, a series of spatial analysis maps were developed. Colors have been assigned for the percentage of spaces utilized at each location based on notable breaks used to evaluate the adequacy of a parking facility:

- “Cool” **light blue/blue** refers to 0-80% utilization, a point at which parking is considered underutilized
- “Ideal” **green** refers to 81-90% utilization when parking is available but well used
- “Warning” **pink** refers to over 91% utilization when parking seems full
- “Critical” **red** denotes parking beyond the marked capacity.

Below are the key findings for weekday and weekend utilization, in addition to the spatial analysis maps that show the peak utilization for Thursday 11 am to 1 pm and Saturday 1 pm to 3 pm in downtown Melrose. Refer to the Appendix for the remainder of the spatial analysis maps.



### Weekday Utilization Key Findings

- The time period 11 am to 1 pm during the week has the highest utilization and yet the Dill’s Court and Friend’s Court lots are both within the ideal occupancy range. At this point in the day, the City Hall and Larrabee lots are both underutilized. Field’s Court is full as is the private Shaw’s lot. (See map on page 19.)
- Between 1 pm and 3 pm utilization is nearly as high overall; however, Dill’s Court and the YMCA lot become full. (See Appendix, page 42.)

- From 3pm to 5pm the lots that had high utilization during the previous period are either blue showing that they are underutilized or green showing that they are at ideal capacity. Only Field's Court is in the "warning" pink from 3pm to 5pm. (See Appendix, page 43.)
- In the evening between 5pm and 7pm, Friend's Court fills up to capacity and the on-street parking along Main Street between Grove and Essex on the west side only fills up to near capacity, while the Larrabee, Dill's Court, City Hall, and Shaw's lots have plenty of parking available. (See Appendix, page 44.)
- The Berwick Street municipal parking, which is used mainly by residents overnight and into the early morning, has an abundance of parking available throughout the day as does the Livermore Lot which is only a few blocks from the main commercial area.

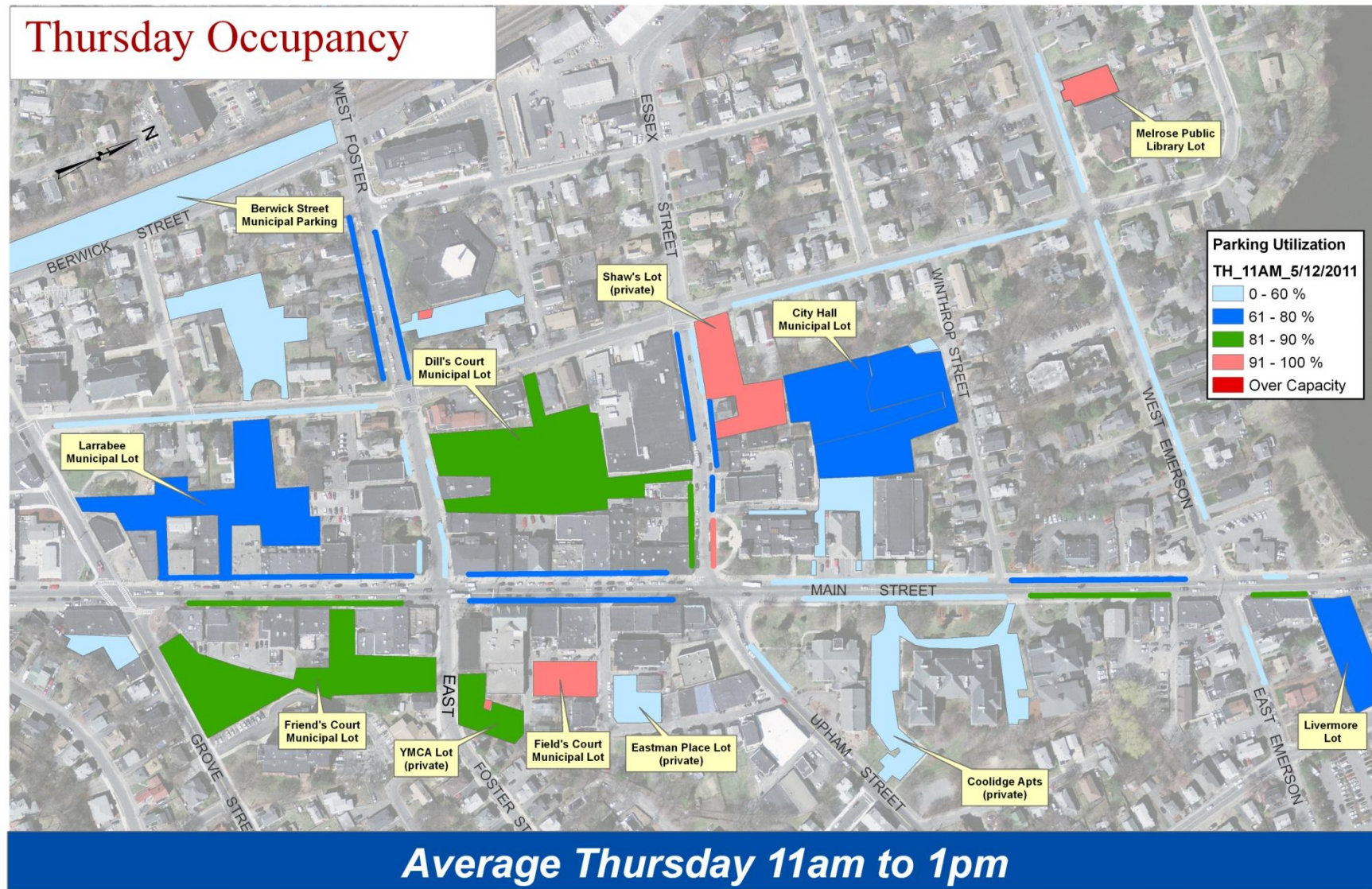
### **Weekend Utilization Key Findings**

- During the morning from 9am to 11am on the weekend the YMCA and Field's Court Lots have 91-100% utilization and Dill's Court has ideal utilization at 81-90%. (See Appendix, page 45.)
- The midday 11am to 3pm time period on the weekend has the highest utilization of parking lots; Dill's Court and Friend's Court Lots are in the "warning" pink with 91-100% utilization and Larrabee Lot<sup>2</sup> has 91-100% utilization from 11am to 1pm, as depicted on page 46, and over 100% utilization from 1pm to 3pm, as depicted on page 20. Conversely, nearby parking alternatives such as the City Hall Lot are underutilized at this time while the Field's Court Lot is at ideal utilization. The spatial analysis maps in this instance clearly demonstrate the natural instinct for customers to want to park in close proximity to the store, salon, restaurant, etc. that they are visiting, which can often result in direct competition with downtown employees who strive to park as close as possible to work. While the two-hour parking limits in the municipal lots are not in effect on weekends, frequent turnover of spaces in the Dill's Court and Friend's Court Lots is critical in order to efficiently absorb the high level of Saturday activity in the central business district. Employees and customers planning extended visits to the downtown need to be encouraged to utilize the City Hall Lot, which is virtually empty on the weekends.
- From 3pm to 7pm none of the lots are over utilized, but the on-street parking along Main Street between Grove and Upham Streets and along West Foster Street between Myrtle and Willow Streets ranges from ideal utilization to over capacity. (See Appendix, page 47 and 48.)
- At any time on the weekend, both Berwick and Livermore lots are underutilized with only 0-60% utilization.

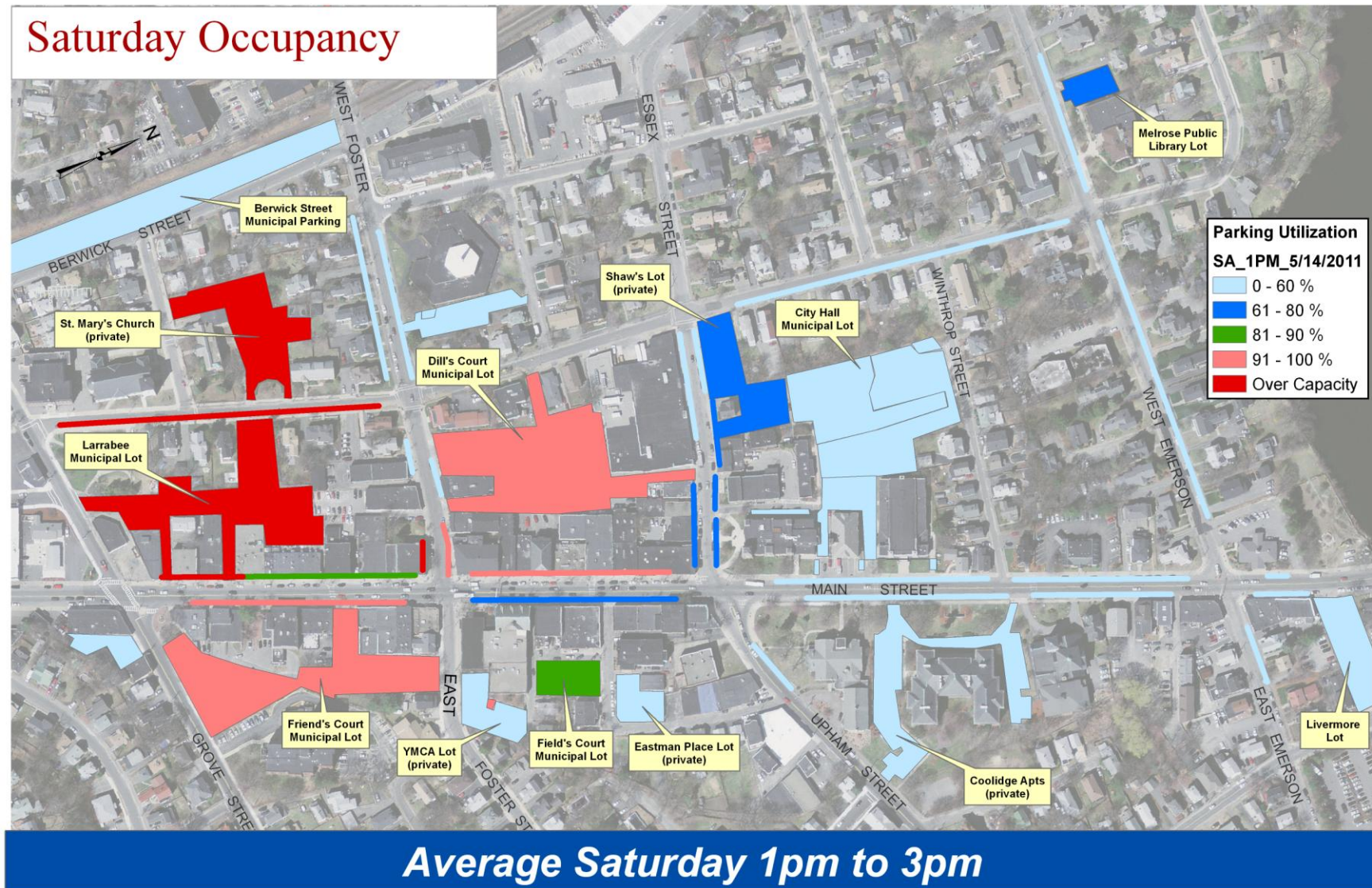
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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the Saturday that these counts were conducted a wedding was taking place at St. Mary's Church that likely had a significant impact on the utilization of the Larrabee Lot.



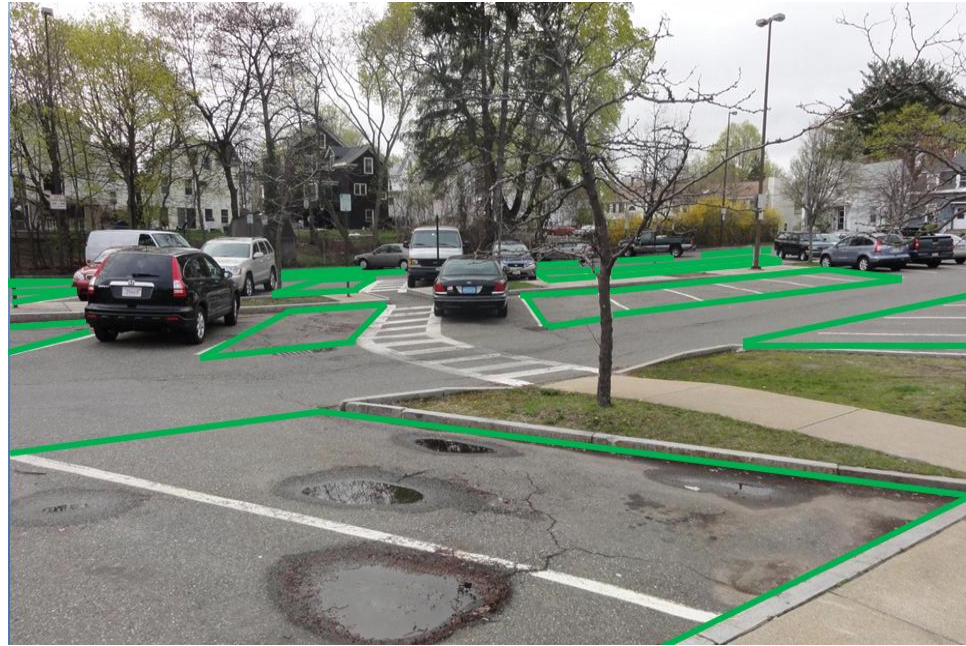






## **Recommendations**

At this stage, the downtown parking conditions do not warrant expanding the parking supply. Rather, minor adjustments to the management system to better manage demand for parking should suffice to address the issues observed in downtown. Furthermore, the general pricing of parking in downtown is certainly not warranted as the observed demand should be sufficiently manageable with minor adjustments to the parking management system. If, in the future, Melrose finds itself with significantly increased demand and is considering expanding supply, priced parking should be implemented prior to costly capital investment in garages or other additional supply measures. The following short-term recommendations are intended to serve as guidance for the implementation of changes in the downtown parking management system and reflect the conclusions of the consulting team that has visited Melrose, reviewed the data presented above, and spoken with its stakeholders. These recommendations are informed by parking management best practices as evidenced in a number of communities across America that recognize one important reality: *poorly managed parking spaces constrain economic opportunity for local merchants and business owners.*



### **Short Term Recommendations**

- Implement a Tiered Commercial Permit Program
- Improve Parking Information
- Increase Time Limits in Parking Lots
- Implement A Snow Removal Plan
- Reconfigure Parking Lot Spacing
- Identify a “Downtown Parking Champion”



## **1. Implement A Tiered Commercial Permit Program**

One of the main concerns voiced by Melrose stakeholders, as is the case in most cities, is that business owners and their employees park as close to work as possible, occupying the best parking spots forcing customers to search for parking further away from Main Street. The current permit program encourages this behavior by allowing permit holders to park anywhere in the public lots for an unlimited time period. The permit system should be revised to allow customers access to the best parking. This improved access should be granted to customers because they are generating considerably more activity downtown than the business owners or employees who are occupying these spaces all day.

One approach to this problem is the implementation of a permit program for those who work in Melrose with two permit options: one tier for those who are willing to pay more to park anywhere in the public lots and a tier to incentivize permit holders to park in less central parking areas. The number of permits issued should be determined by demand and the potential supply that can be made available to permit holders. The permit prices recommended below are guidelines for implementation, with the understanding that the pricing for both types of permits should be allowed to float in response to market demand.

Revenues from the commercial permit program could be used to maintain parking infrastructure and fund public improvements that benefit the downtown.

### **Tier One – Remote Permits**

Remote permits should be very inexpensive monthly permits that would allow permit holders to park in designated permit only spaces for an unlimited amount of time. These lots and spaces would be those that are a little further away (see Downtown Melrose Remote Permit Parking map on page 24), protecting the coveted customer spots in closest proximity to the Main Street businesses. Remote permits will solve the problem of employees parking in time limited spaces and periodically moving their cars to avoid parking tickets.

#### **Eligibility**

- Proven downtown employee, downtown business owner, or someone who regularly conducts business downtown.

#### **Recommended Price**

- To encourage high participation rates in the program, the pilot year of remote parking permits is suggested to be free. After the pilot year, remote permits are recommended to be approximately \$5 a month with an annual price adjustment based on demand. The number of permits issued and the spaces reserved will also be revisited for quarterly adjustment as needed.

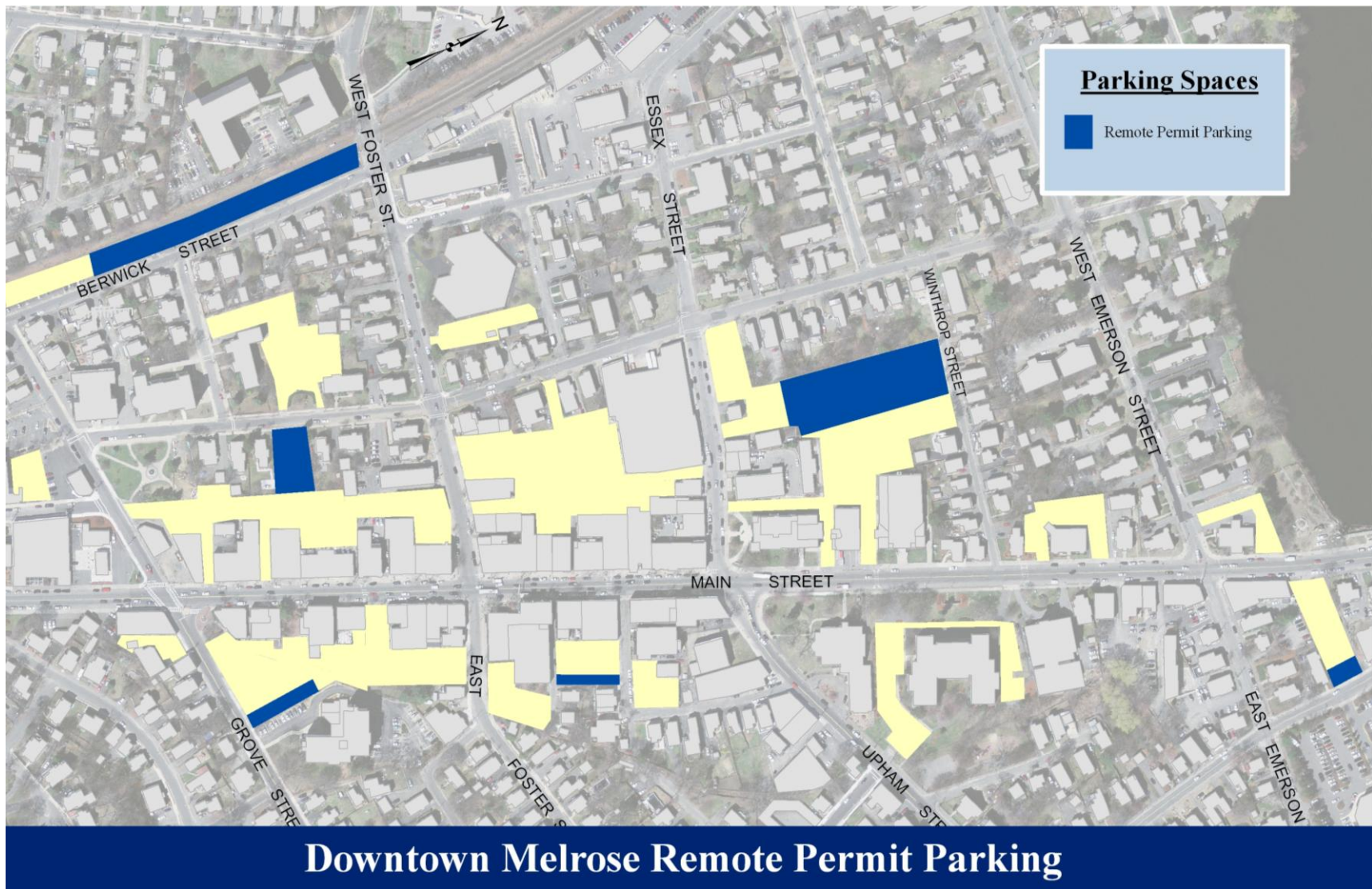


**Recommended Locations**

<b><u>Off-Street Parking</u></b>	<b><u>Available Spaces throughout the workday</u></b>	<b><u>Reserved spaces for remote permits</u></b>
Berwick Lot	Between 41 and 57	40
Livermore Lot	Between 11 and 17	10
City Hall Lot	Between 19 and 43 (back of the lot)	50
Friend's Court Lot	Between 10 and 43	16
Larrabee Lot	Between 22 and 50	31
Field's Court	Between 2 and 3	8
Total	Between 120 and 250	155

**Target Available Supply**

As stated earlier, 10 percent vacancy in off-street lots is considered ideal capacity. Upon final implementation of the proposed permit program, there should be at least 53 parking spaces available in the above lots at the peak time of day: 11 am, on a weekday. As the number of remote permit spaces is adjusted based on response to the program, attention should be directed to maintaining 10 percent vacancy in each lot during the peak period so that customers do not find themselves without spaces near their destination.



## **Tier Two – Floating Permits**

The *floating permit* should be more expensive than the remote permit and would allow permit holders to park for an unlimited amount of time in the designated permit-only spaces as well as in any of the time-limited spaces in the municipal lots. This permit would essentially replace the existing commercial permit. The floating permit option provides a flexible parking privilege for those unable to walk from the remote lots and those willing to pay a higher price for greater convenience.

### **Eligibility**

- Proven downtown employee, downtown business owner, or someone who regularly conducts business downtown.

### **Recommended Price**

- The floating permits are recommended to be priced at \$50 per month with the opportunity for a quarterly price adjustment based on demand.

### **Quantity of Permits**

- The quantity of floating permits will be limited initially to 35 issued per year and revisited periodically.

### **Recommended Locations**

- Floating permit holders will be eligible to park in all off-street parking locations, including those restricted for remote permit holders.

## **2. Improve Parking Information**

Parking information in Melrose is lacking in several areas and would greatly benefit from improvements that effectively guide visitors to the many parking options.

- **Parking Map Postcard** –The City should create a parking information postcard (see example below) that clearly depicts the different parking options, as both an online resource as well as printed versions for use by businesses to hand out to patrons/clients. The postcard should also be distributed more broadly, including display in prominent visitor locations and local bulletins. More importantly, this information should be made easily available on the City's website so that those planning a visit to the downtown will know in advance where to find parking.





- **Parking Signage** – The signage directing visitors to the downtown municipal parking lots is sporadic and insufficient. Parking lots with adequate signage are usually used more frequently than the parking lots without signage. Drivers need to know where the parking is, how to get to it, and how to find the next lot if the current lot is full. Melrose should implement a comprehensive signage program that directs visitors to each parking lot and provides time limit information. Parking lots should also be installed with directional signage to make drivers aware of alternative parking options. Below is a conceptual parking signage plan for downtown Melrose.





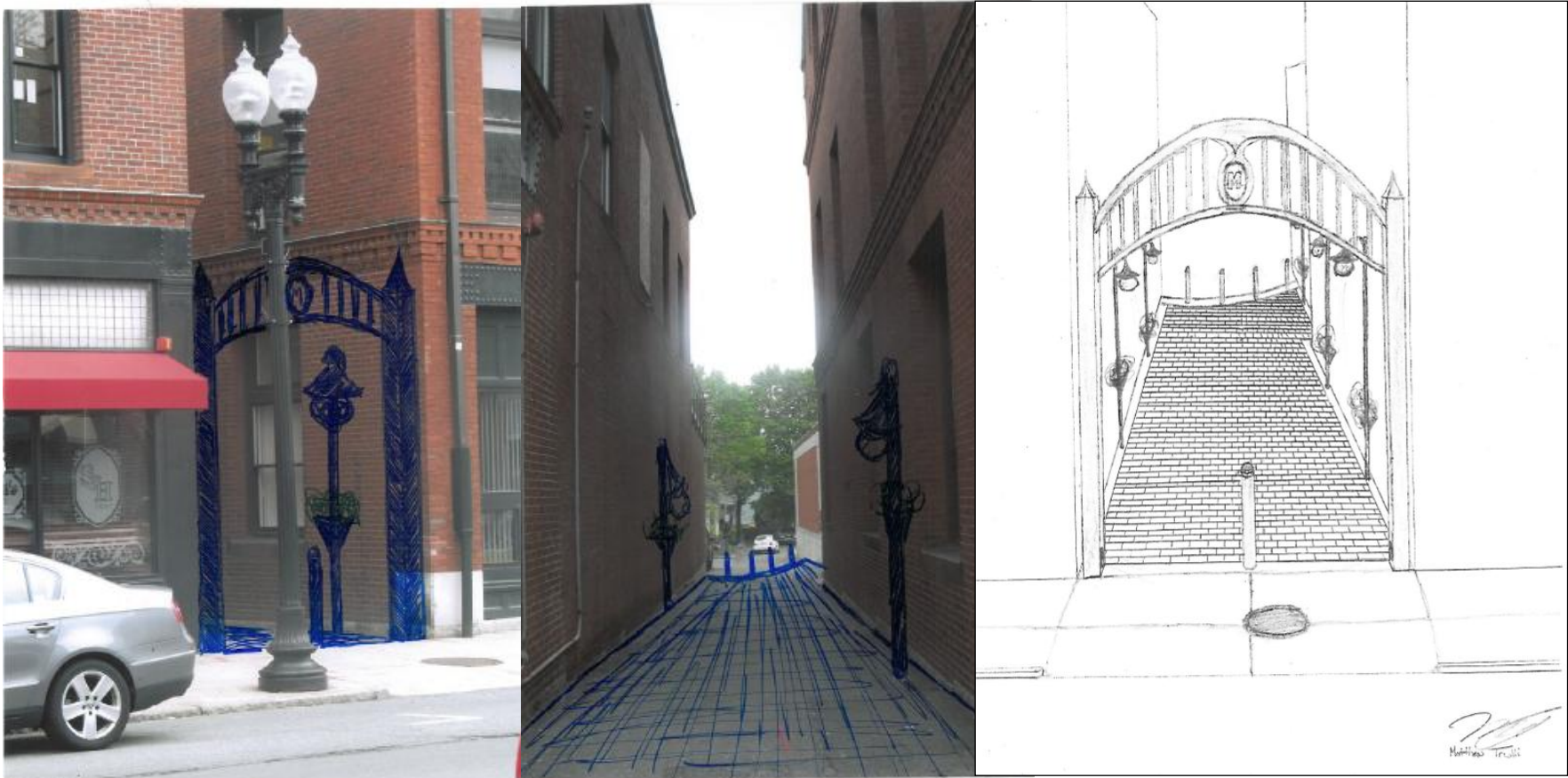
- **Pedestrian Way-Finding** – Once a visitor has parked in one of the many downtown parking lots and exited their vehicle, the pedestrian experience that follows can be a challenge. Informational kiosks that feature business directories would help enhance visitor awareness of the different downtown destination options and their locations. Many of the parking lots lack clear pedestrian-oriented signage and pathways to direct and funnel pedestrians to the wide variety of Main Street attractions, restaurants, shops, and services. Installation of way-finding signage would greatly improve the downtown pedestrian experience. Pathways created simply by striping the lots or using different paving materials or patterns, will also increase pedestrian awareness.



- **Alleyway Signage and Gateways:** – Downtown Melrose features a number of alleyways, as shown in the map below, that offer visitors time-saving shortcuts as well as a unique village-like experience. For the most part, these alleyways currently put forward little or no aesthetic value and in some instances present potential safety concerns. The City should install signage to guide and draw visitors to/from the parking lots through the alleyways to Main Street. The inclusion of a welcoming element at each alleyway entrance such as a gateway or archway (see examples depicted on the following page) should be considered to announce to visitors that the alleyway is ahead. Other inviting elements that could be added to improve the sense of security and place include flower pots, brick pavement/sidewalk paint, and lighting fixtures. Furthermore, these alleys could be ‘branded’ with unique names which could be adorned to the gateway signage to formalize their standing in the downtown landscape.







**Examples of Potential Alleyway Improvements**

Graphics provided by Matthew Trulli

### **3. Increase Time Limits in Parking Lots**

The majority of parking in Melrose is limited to two hours or less; however, as shown in the utilization section of this report, many of the lots with such limitations are underutilized. Therefore, a strict time limit of two hours or less is unnecessarily restrictive and may be preventing visitors from spending more time shopping and dining downtown. The City should consider raising the time limits from two hours or less to three hours in all of the municipal lots to allow customers more time to conduct business downtown.

### **4. Implement A Snow Removal Plan**

During the winter months snow removal from the downtown municipal lots has consistently been problematic due to the lack of on site areas specifically designed for snow storage. Without a dedicated off site location for snow storage, the City has at times been forced to monopolizing select parking spaces with high piles of snow, which has inevitably resulted in a seasonal decrease in the downtown parking supply. Implementation of a snow removal plan for the municipal parking areas is important to the success of the tiered commercial permit program recommended earlier this section. In addition to the importance of ensuring that adequate parking is consistently available to downtown customers, all designated remote commercial parking must be dependably accessible year round in order to preserve the confidence and participation of the business community in the new commercial permit program.

### **5. Reconfigure Parking Lot Spacing**

A number of parking lots would benefit from a reconfiguration to increase the number of spaces, create a better driving experience, increase pedestrian safety, and/or decrease illegal parking activities. For instance, Dill's Court Municipal Lot could easily and inexpensively be reconfigured simply by repainting the parking space striping. This markings-based reconfiguration technique is an incredibly effective and inexpensive way to improve the pedestrian experience and character of downtown parking lots.

The current configuration of the Dill's Court Municipal Lot, shown in Figure 1 on page 33, allows for 143 formal parking spaces. The lot in its current design does not provide clearly delineated pathways for pedestrians to access Main Street without fear of vehicle conflicts. Furthermore, the lack of crosswalks and vehicle directional arrow markings on the pavement can create confusion among drivers and decrease pedestrian safety.





The conceptual reconfiguration shown in Figure 2 on page 34 assumes only the public portions of the lot are redesigned and that the existing hydrant and utility poles currently situated within the interior of the lot are successfully relocated. Still, this reconfiguration would increase the number of formal parking spaces in Dill's Court by 13 to 156 total spots, while also vastly improving the pedestrian experience. In this redesign, the lot is marked with crosswalks and vehicle directional arrows to create safe access to Main Street. A plaza space has been added to improve the aesthetic experience for pedestrians and create a respite from vehicles. These improvements could be implemented in stages, initially through the application of special pavement markings that provide visual cues to pedestrians and drivers, as shown in Figure 3 on page 35, and eventually by adding new curbs, sidewalks and trees.

**Figure 1      Existing Configuration of Dill's Court Lot**





**Figure 2      Conceptual Reconfiguration of Public Portions of Dill's Court Lot**



**Figure 3      Example of Markings Only Reconfiguration**



Photos provided by Integrated Paving Concepts, Inc. 2010 ([www.integratedpaving.com/](http://www.integratedpaving.com/))

## **6. Identify a “Downtown Parking Champion”**

All public initiatives benefit from the leadership provided by a ‘champion of the cause.’ These recommendations are more likely to succeed if they are promoted by a champion that monitors the progress being made towards full implementation. A champion should believe in the plan set forth in this document and understand the issues laid out as justification for the recommended changes. Melrose should identify an interested stakeholder to be involved now, as these recommendations progress.

## **Long-Term Recommendations**

The following long-term recommendations are no less important than the short-term recommendations. However, it is expected that these typically take communities longer to implement due to procedural needs and capital funding.

- **Monitor Parking Utilization** – An important part of maintaining the success of any of these recommendations will be monitoring parking utilization on a regular basis. A recurring annual or biennial monitoring program can allow the City to modify its pricing, permitting, zoning requirements, and other key policies. Based on the detailed utilization information collected for this study, a much smaller and targeted utilization effort can be conducted (potentially in-house or with the use of students or volunteers) by focusing on areas of high demand to confirm the results of this effort. Where parking patterns appear to change, a more detailed utilization count would be warranted.
- **Uncouple Parking from Land Uses** – Revealing the cost of using land for parking is one of the most effective means of reducing overall parking demand. In places like Melrose, not only are parking demands much lower, but providing parking where land values are so high can make new, infill, and change of use developments infeasible. Through zoning or additional arrangements, other communities in the United States have implemented parking cash-out or unbundled parking programs. With parking cash-out, a building's employees are offered a payment if they choose not to park, helping to reduce the business-owner's cost of leasing or maintaining parking. With unbundled parking, new residents are offered their available parking as a separate deed, lease item, or payment, helping to reveal the cost of having one or multiple cars.
- **Bicycle Parking Program** – Automobiles are not the only mode of transportation that require parking in downtown Melrose. Bicycle racks are an extremely cost-effective means of reducing the need to drive. The City should ensure that any future bike parking installations are fully compliant with the guidelines promulgated by the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals.
- **Parking Access Improvements** – As part of any planned connectivity improvements, the City should prioritize those that advance the safety of accessing more remote spaces, which will help to reduce the perception that these spaces are far away and relieve pressure on prime spaces. Ideally, parking revenues can be used for these relatively inexpensive enhancements that improve the utilization of the more remote parking areas – before needing to invest greater funds on any shared-parking supply expansion.
- **Shared Parking Program** – Mixed-use environments offer the opportunity to share parking spaces between various uses, thereby reducing the total number of spaces required compared to the same uses in stand-alone developments. This is a primary benefit in mixed-use contexts of moderate-to-high density, as is found in downtown Melrose. Shared parking operations offer many localized benefits to the surrounding community, including a more efficient use of land resources and reduced traffic congestion. Melrose should consider creating a shared parking program between its public and private parking spaces to create additional parking opportunities for visitors and customers.



- **Electric Car Charging Stations** – As fuel prices rise and car companies increasingly offer electric cars as an alternative low- zero-emission solution, the City should consider installing charging stations to encourage and incentivize electric car use among residents and employees. For instance, employees would be more likely to purchase an electric car if charging stations were made available downtown to allow for charging their vehicles during the work day.
- **Public Space Enhancements** – While downtown Melrose already possesses a vibrant village-like feel, the area would benefit from additional public space enhancements, such as alleyway improvements, creation of pedestrian plazas and walkways, tree and flower planting, and crosswalk and bike lane painting.
- **Implement Smart Parking Technology** – If the City finds itself in the future with a significantly increased parking demand after other recommendations have been implemented, priced parking may be warranted. It is very likely that the demand for improved parking technologies that provide greater customer conveniences will also grow. Many vendors offer very advanced solutions that the City would be wise to consider as part of furthering customer convenience, increasing revenues, and attracting economic development. Most of the latest solutions include:
  - Smart meters
  - Multi-space meters
  - Cell phone payment
  - Variable daily pricing
  - MBTA pass integration
  - Debit card integration
  - Real-time space availability sensors
  - Mobile applications

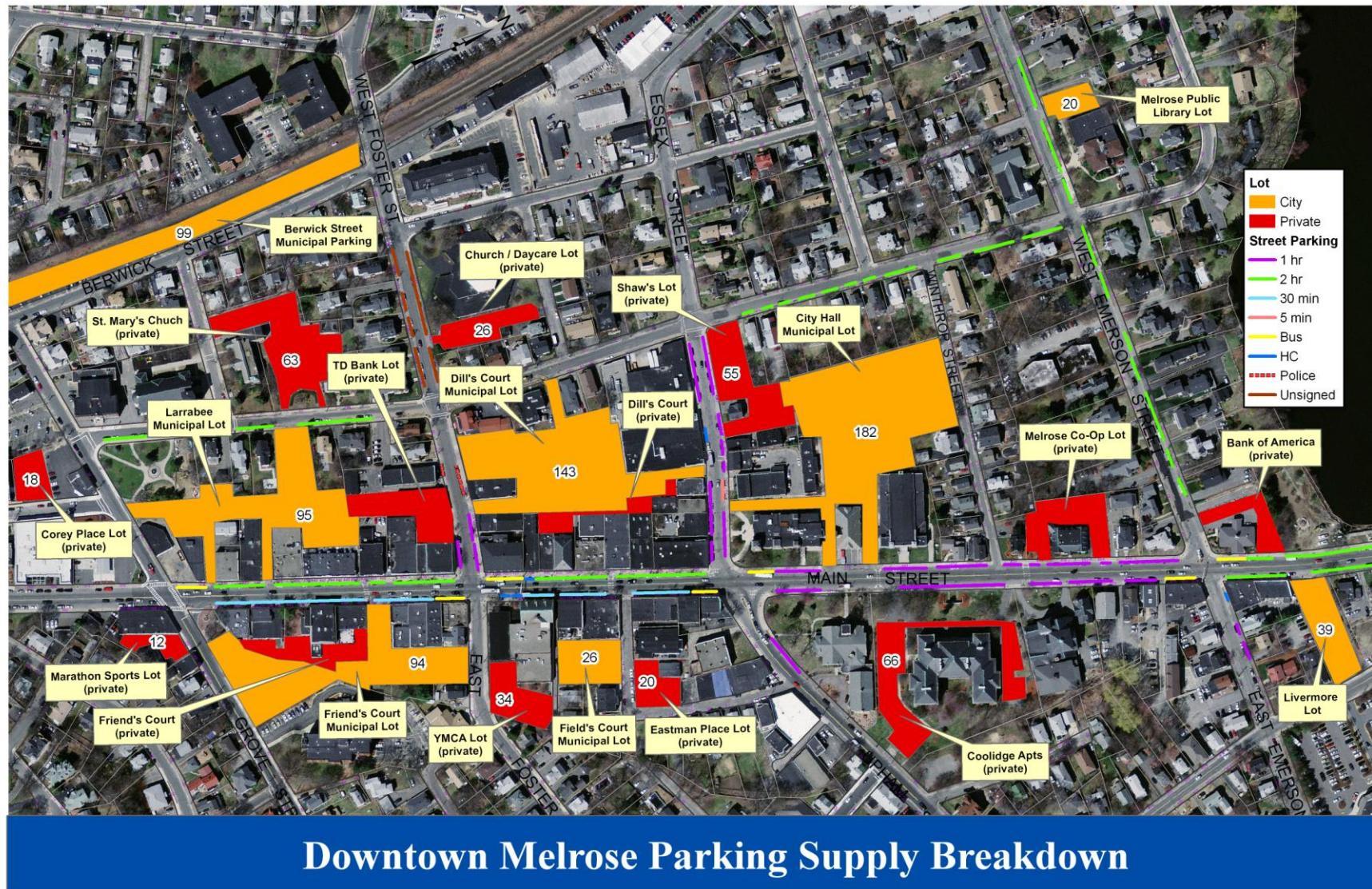


## **Next Steps**

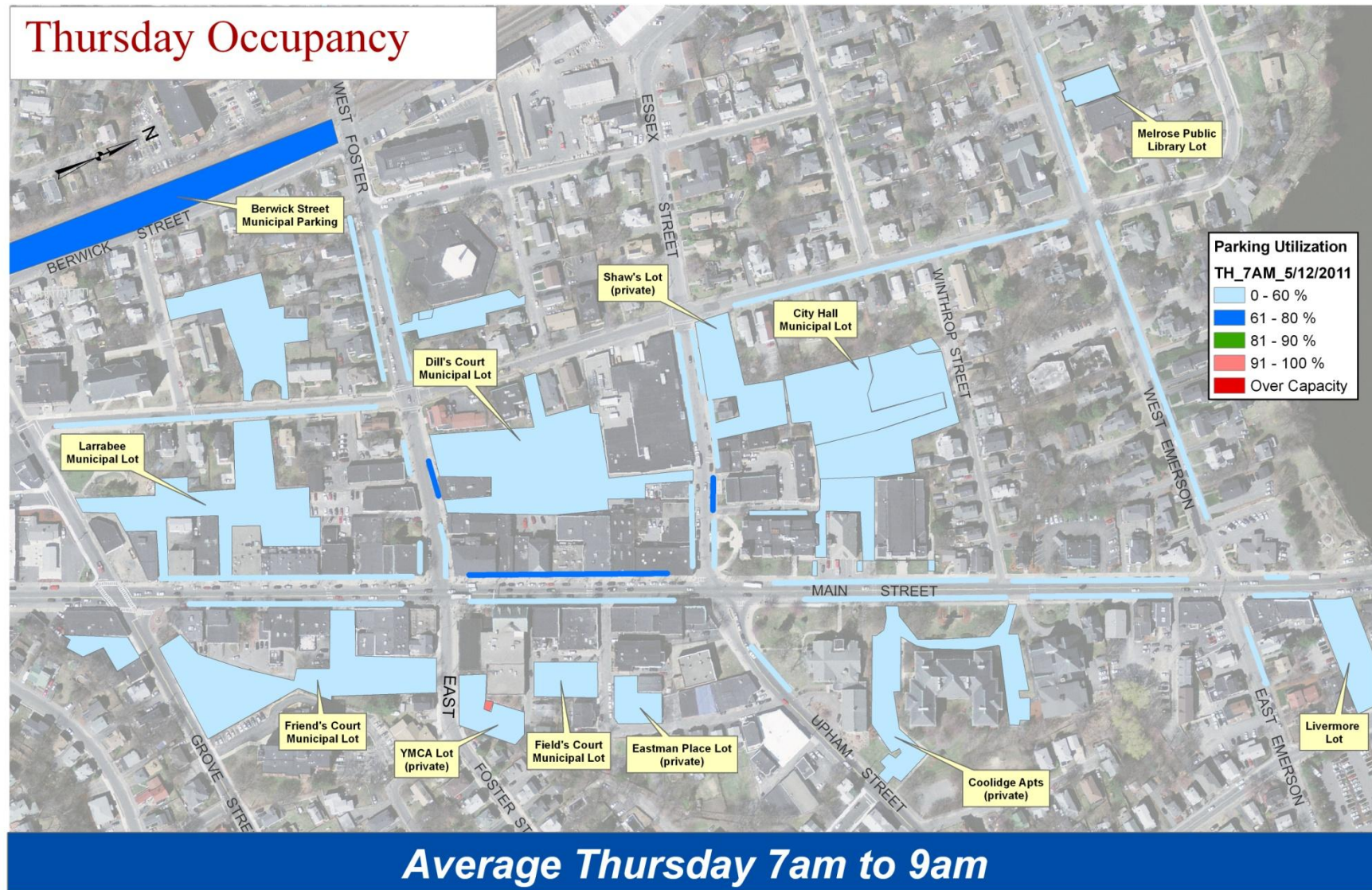
Melrose stakeholders have already taken a significant step forward in changing the history of parking operations and management in downtown Melrose. While this report summarizes several strategies for moving forward, the most important strategy will be to ensure that the dialogue continues. Constructive parking solutions are only possible by engaging all possible users with real parking data and realistic parking strategies that take into account the needs of all users.



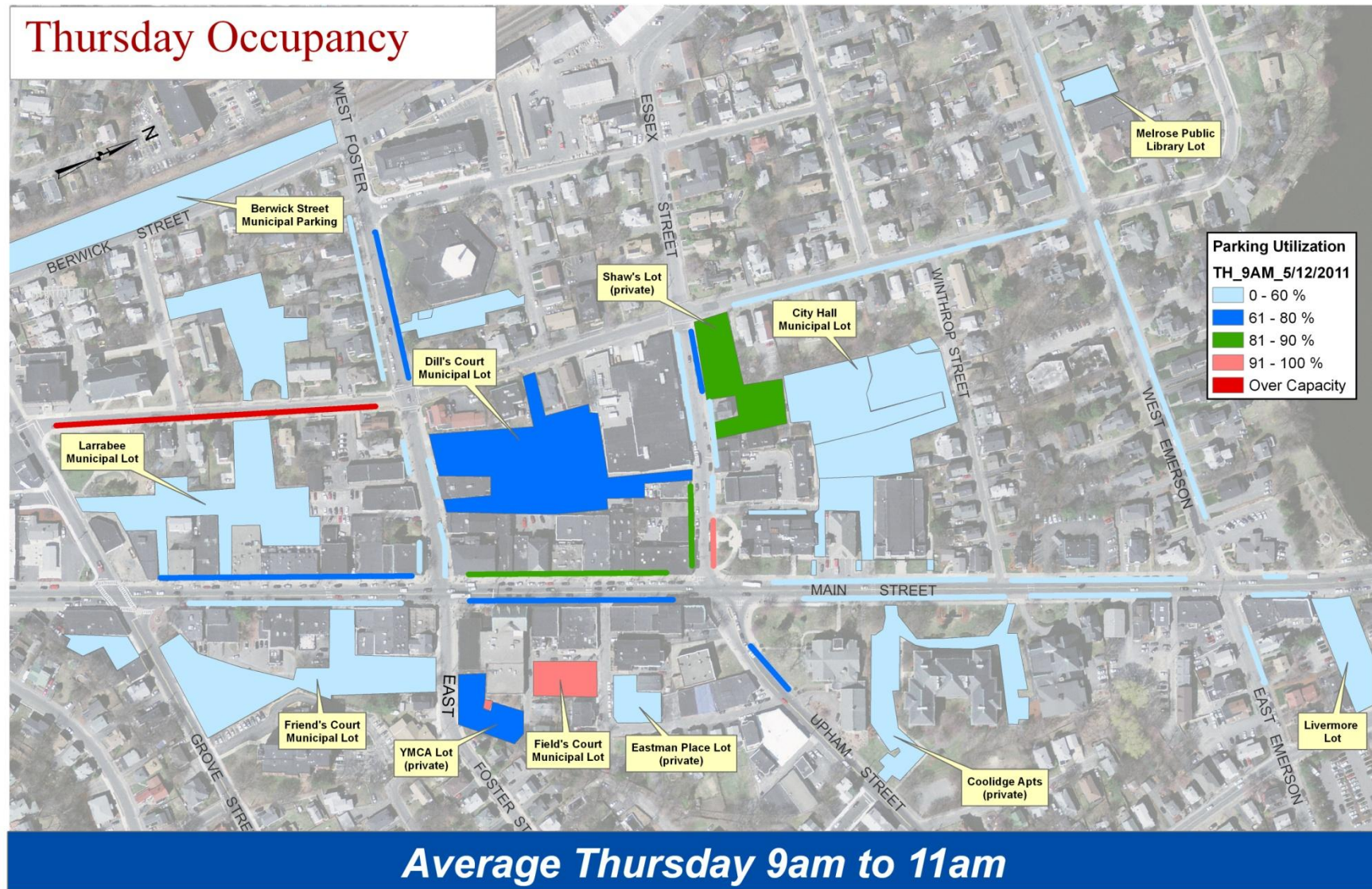
## Appendix



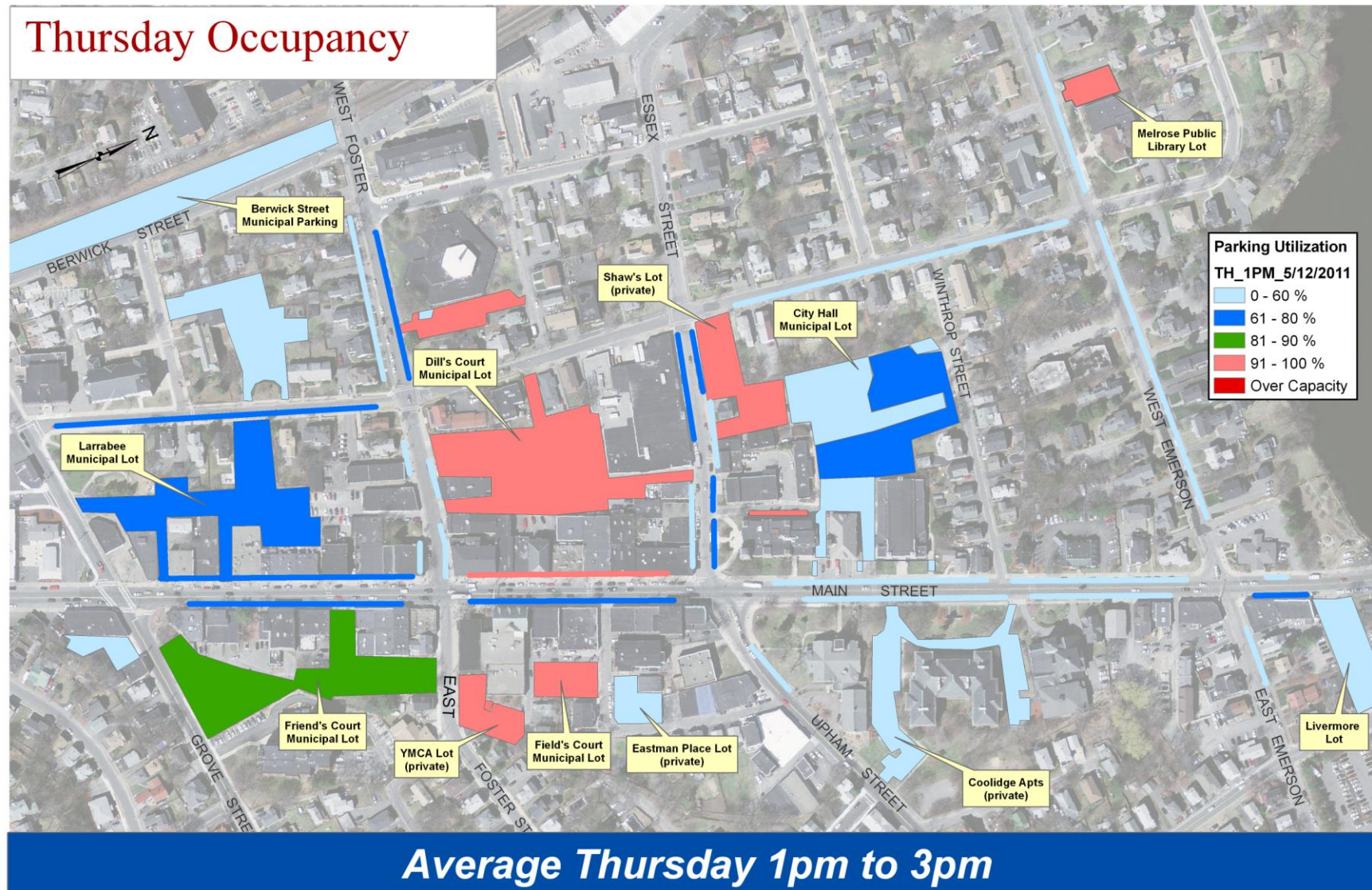




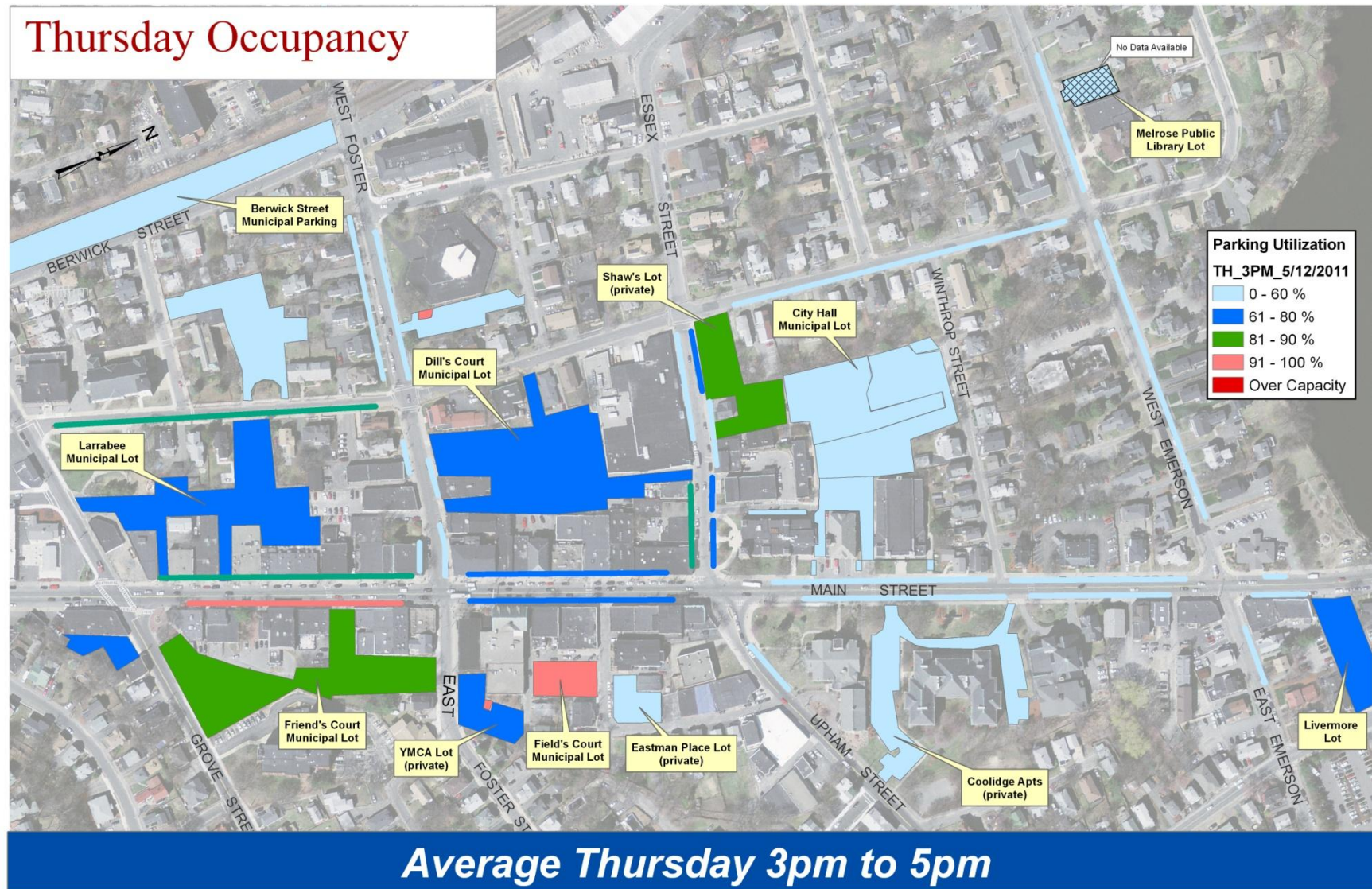




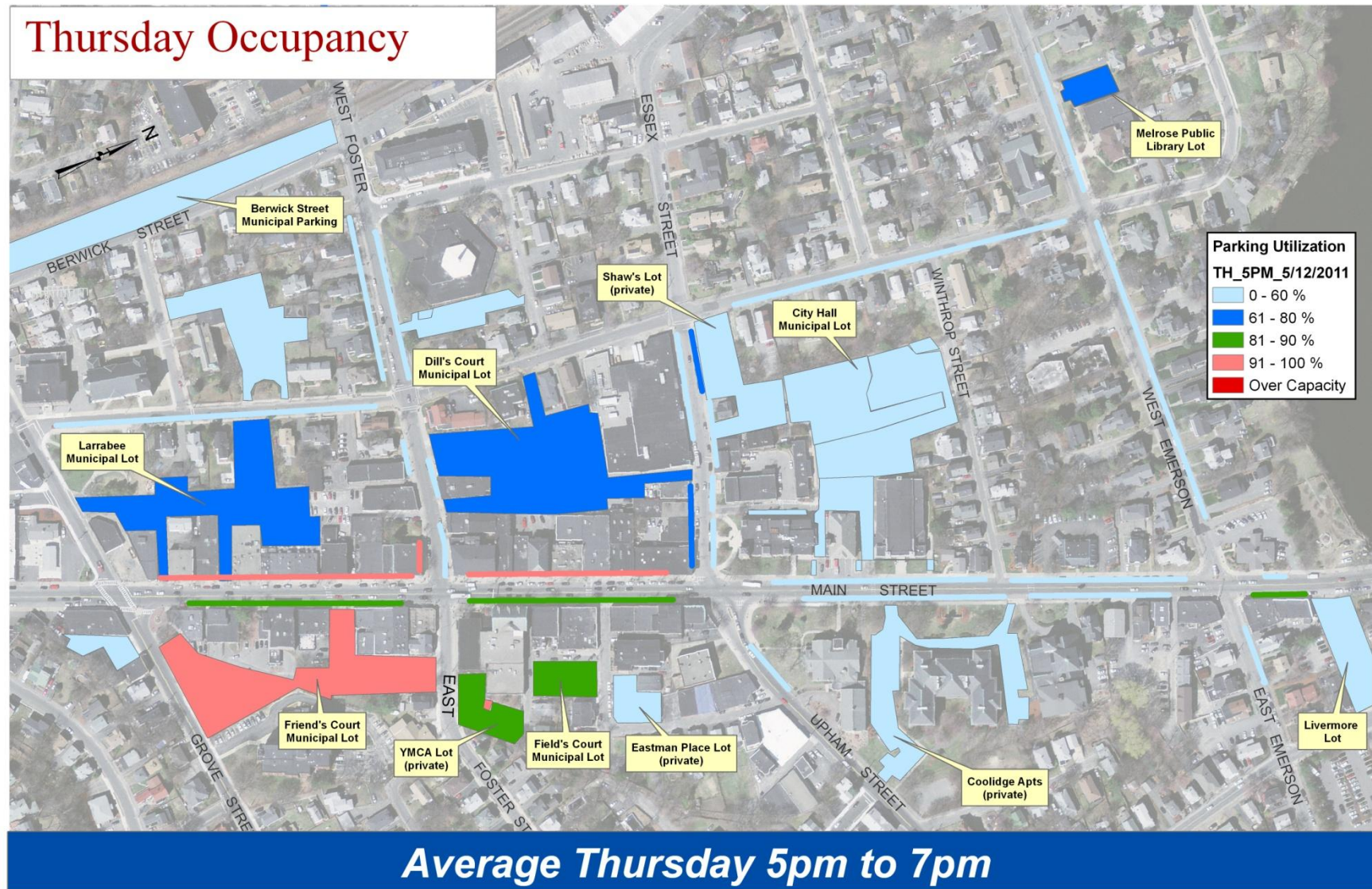




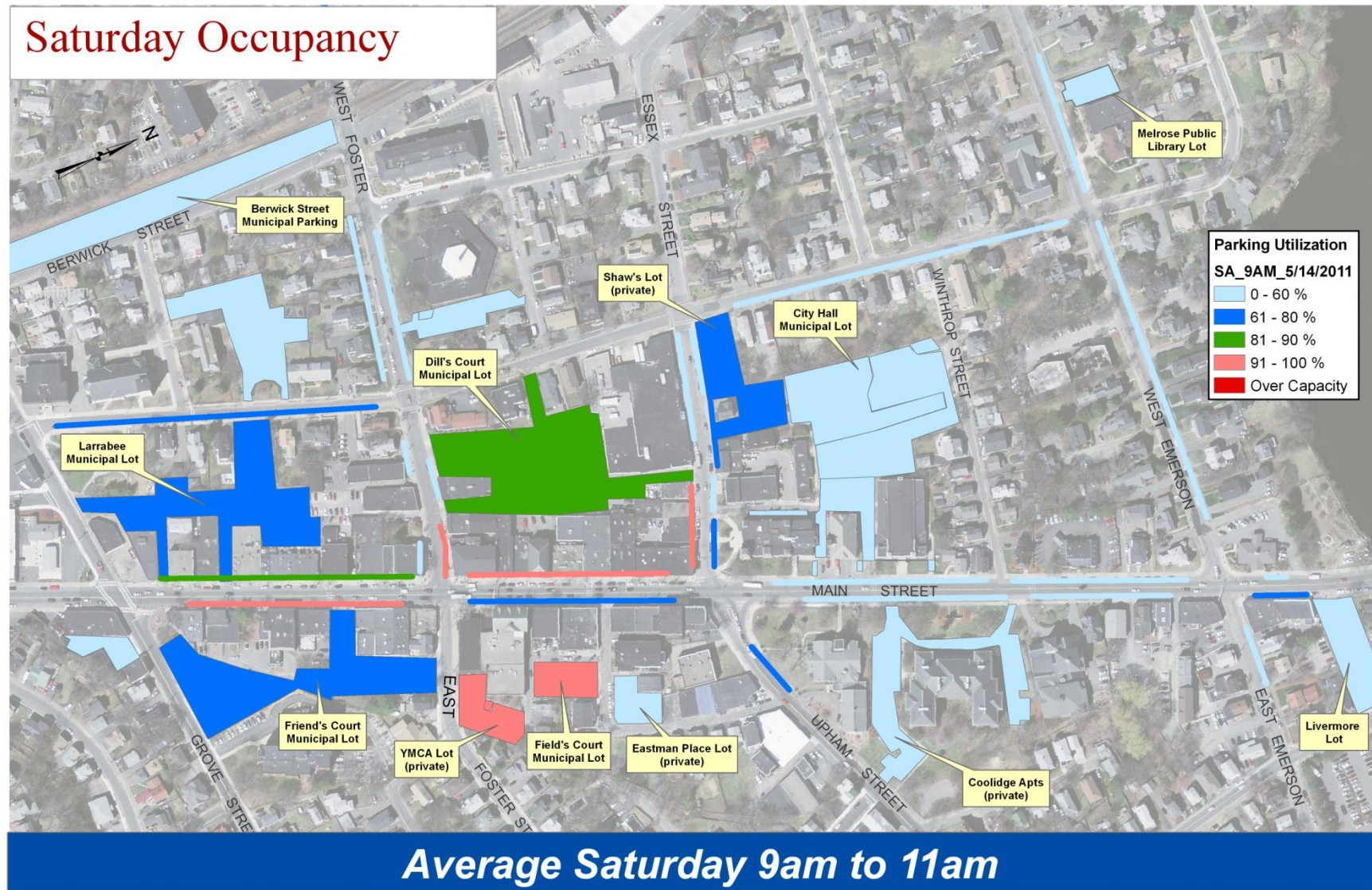




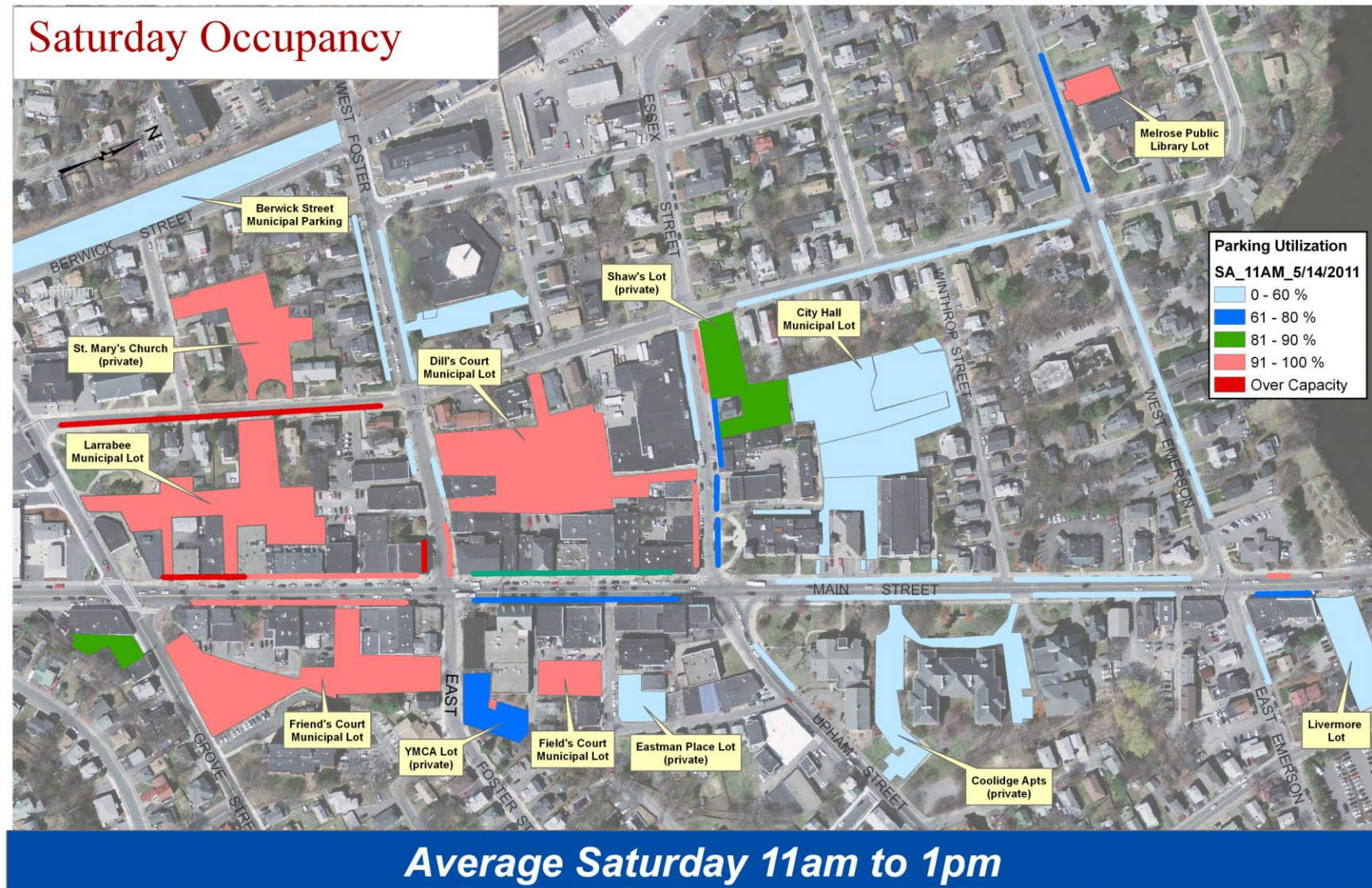




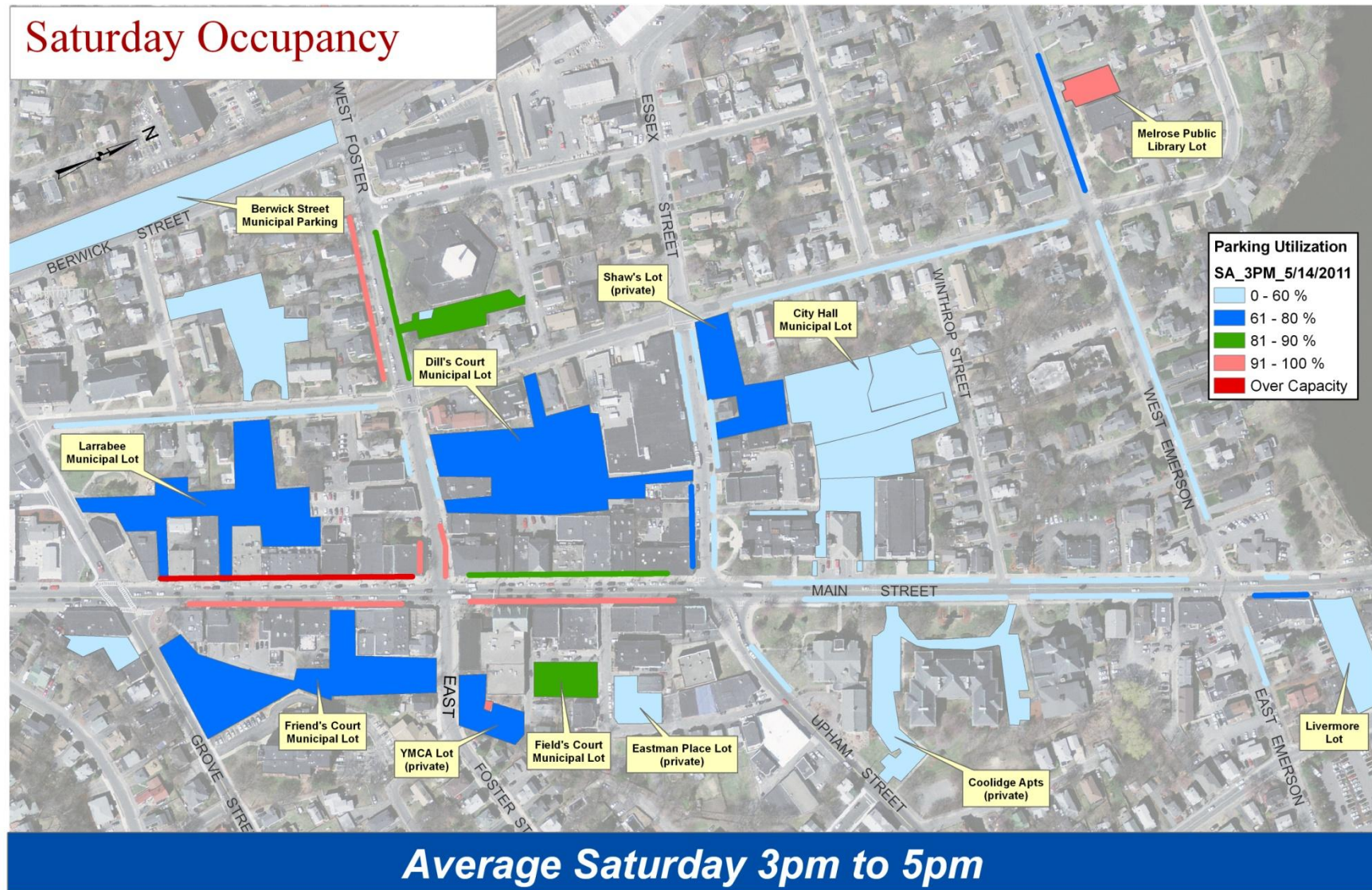






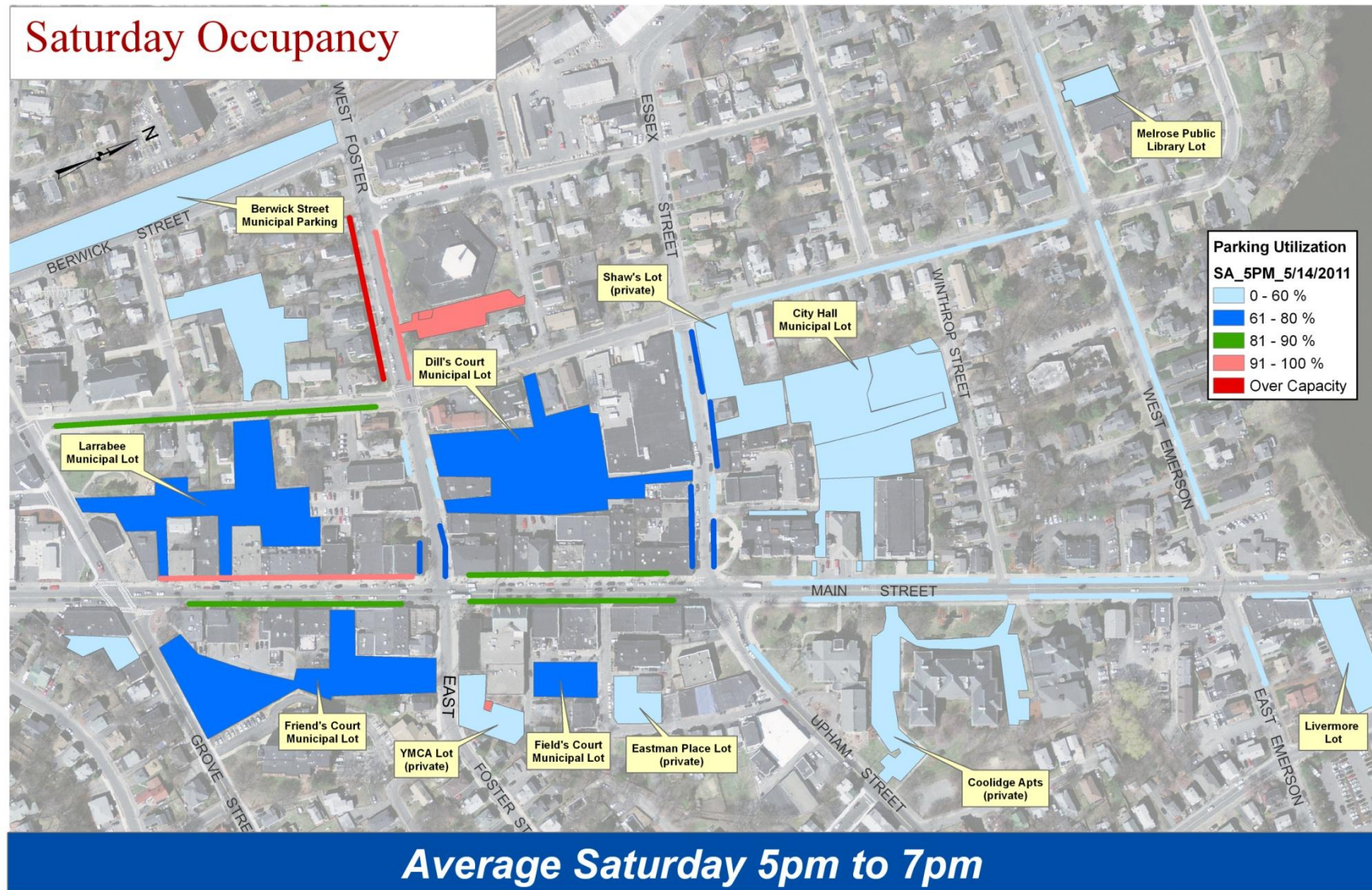




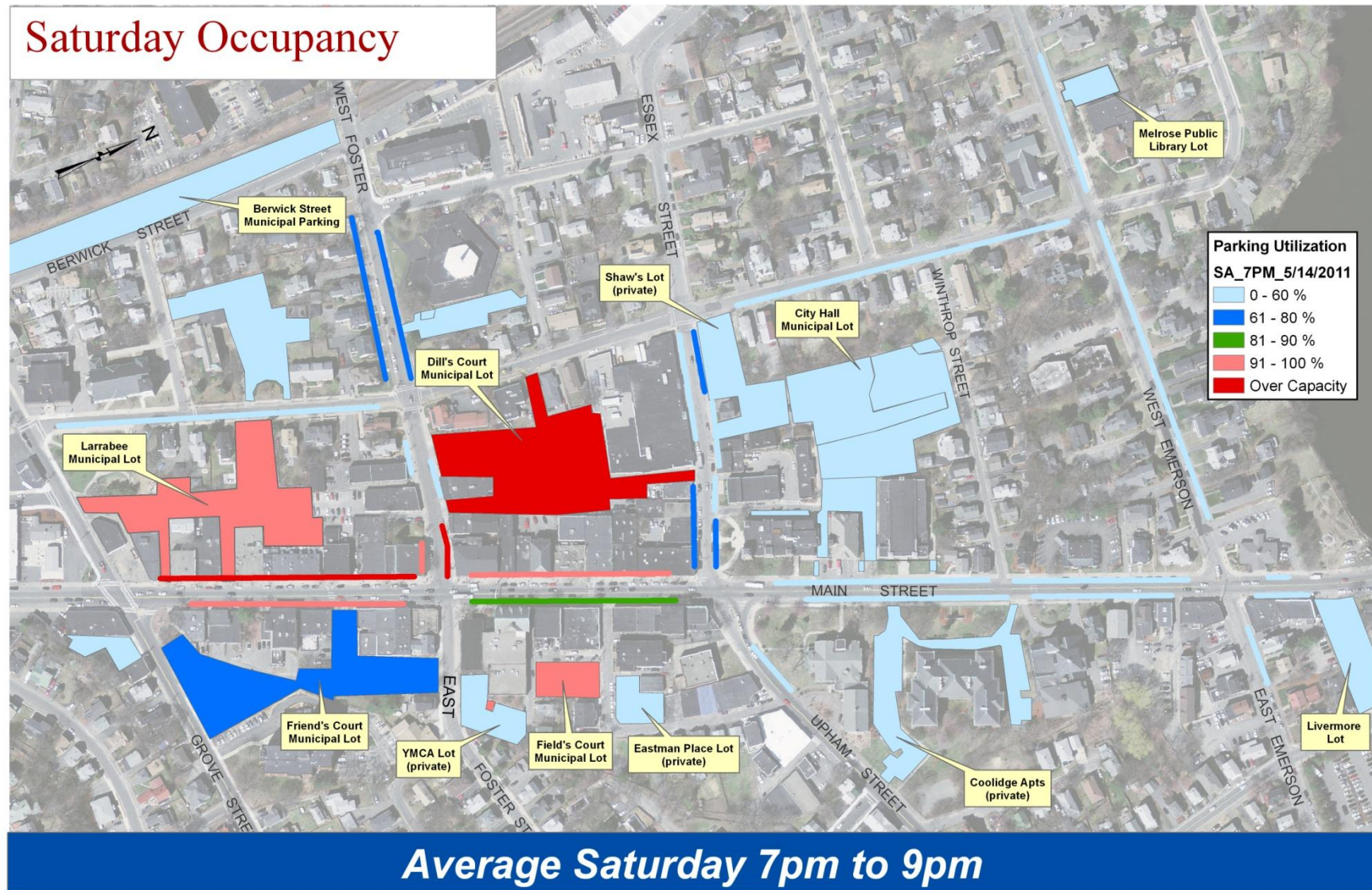




## Saturday Occupancy









The City of Melrose is conducting a survey of parking activity and preferences in the downtown area.

Fill out online at [www.cityofmelrose.org](http://www.cityofmelrose.org). Leave with the business where you picked it up;

Drop off at the Office of Planning and Community Development ; or Mail to the address provided at the bottom of the form.

**Please think back to the last day you travelled to downtown Melrose. This may be today or at some time in the past. This is intended to be a snapshot of your experience.**

1. Zip code of your residence (5 digit zip code please): \_\_\_\_\_
2. How did you get to downtown Melrose on that day?  
☐ Drove alone    ☐ Drove with others    ☐ Took MBTA (bus or rail)    ☐ Walked    ☐ Bicycled
3. Approximately, how long did you stay? \_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes
4. What was your primary purpose for coming downtown on that day?  
☐ Work    ☐ Shopping    ☐ I live here    ☐ Commuter Rail  
☐ Dining    ☐ Errands/Appointments    ☐ Tourism/Attractions    ☐ Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long did it take you to find a spot...    On that day? \_\_\_\_\_ mins    At what time of day? \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm  
Usually? \_\_\_\_\_ mins    Worst day? \_\_\_\_\_ mins
6. Do you always park in the same place or do you search?    ☐ Same Space    ☐ I Search
7. What is the most important consideration for you in choosing where to park in Melrose?  
☐ I don't choose, my employer provides parking.    ☐ Ease of finding a space    ☐ Location  
☐ Type of parking (street/stol/garage)    ☐ Safety/security    ☐ Time Limit
8. How far of a walk from your primary destination did you park on that day?  
☐ Right in front / 1 min    ☐ 2 to 4 min    ☐ 5 to 9 min    ☐ 10 to 14 min    ☐ 15+ min
9. How many times did you park in downtown Melrose on that day? ☐ Once    ☐ Two + times
10. Have you ever failed to find parking and just left downtown Melrose?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No
11. Are you ever in a rush and forced to park or stand illegally?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No  
→ If yes, where does this occur for you more often than not? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you have a permit to park in downtown Melrose?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No  
→ If yes, what type of permit? \_\_\_\_\_ (commercial or overnight)
13. Is the cost of your parking today paid for, in part or in full, by anyone else?  
☐ No cost, free parking    ☐ Employer pays partial    ☐ Parking included in lease  
☐ I pay all cost    ☐ Employer pays full    ☐ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_
14. How much might you pay to have a convenient place to park for a (complete one or more)...    ☐ Won't pay  
work day? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (per day/mo.)    overnight? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (per day/mo.)    2-hr meal? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ 15-min coffee? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ 1-hr errand? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*If you have any other thoughts on parking or parking-related experiences in downtown Melrose, please feel free to use the back of this sheet.*

**Thank you!**



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