



*Parking Authority of the Borough of Metuchen*

# **Downtown Parking Study**

**FINAL Parking Management Plan**

*March 2014*



## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Parking Management Plan Recommendations.....	1
Transformative Strategies.....	1
Supportive Strategies.....	11

## Table of Figures

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1 Availability Should Be Primary Performance Measure .....	1
Figure 2 On-Street Parking Occupancy - Friday Evening.....	2
Figure 3 Promoting a Parking Benefit District Approach .....	4
Figure 4 No Signs Announce Nature of Alley-Accessible Parking .....	6
Figure 5 Typical Signage at Off-Street Lots .....	6
Figure 6 Parking Map - including info on tiered parking rates - Downtown Redwood City .....	7
Figure 7 New Standards Should Encourage More Transit-Oriented-Development.....	9
Figure 8 Sample Incremental Fee Table.....	10
Figure 4 Private Driveways Absorb Public Parking on Pearl St. ....	11
Figure 10 Significant Daytime Capacity on Several Blocks.....	11
Figure 11 Significant Evening Capacity in Most Lots.....	11
Figure 9 Latent Bike Parking Demand at Metuchen Station .....	12
Figure 13 No WALK Signal at Main/ New Street (Hillside Avenue) .....	13
Figure 12 Traffic Calming Project From Circulation Element.....	13
Figure 14 KMM.org Home Page.....	15

## **PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

The strategies described below represent a final set of recommendations, based on the findings summarized in the preceding technical memoranda. The strategies are organized into the following sections:

- **Transformative Strategies** – This is a package of highly complementary strategies that, alone, would transform both the MPA's approach to parking management, and the Downtown parking experience.
- **Supportive Strategies** – These strategies are designed to expand upon and complement the effects of the Transformative strategies.

## **TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES**

### **REDEFINE THE MPA'S MISSION**

The MPA is facing a significant change in how it serves its three , unofficial, primary objectives:

1. To support the train station/ provide commuter parking
2. To generate a fair return to the citizens of Metuchen for the use of public property
3. To support the downtown economy/ community

The likely sale of the Pearl Street Lot property and its development into a TOD, mixed-use complex will significantly reduce the MPA's park-and-ride inventory. In turn, this will change the nature of the revenue the Borough receives from this property – beginning with a significant, one-time gain from the property sale, and continuing as the benefits of the increased tax base accrue. While this should be a long-term gain for Borough coffers, it will greatly reduce the significance of the parking revenue passing through the MPA.

This combination of challenges to the first two objectives, however, is offset by several significant opportunities to refocus on the third. The strategies outlined below address many of these opportunities to redefine the MPA's role as both a manager of Borough parking resources and a champion of strategic parking, transportation, and Downtown access solutions.

Such a transformation could also address a pair of needs identified during discussions with Borough policy makers and MPA administrators.

### **FOCUS MANAGEMENT ON AVAILABILITY**

Figure 1 Availability Should Be Primary Performance Measure



The primary performance measure for any parking resource should be consistent availability. It should be rare that a space cannot be found on any given block, or within even the most popular off-street facility. This is the most important factor in providing effective, attractive customer service, and pricing is the most effective and intuitive management tool for achieving it.

## Availability as Key Performance Measure

Industry standards for “optimal” availability levels are 15% for on-street, and 5- 10% for off-street. Both measures should be adopted as official parking-management targets. Maintaining consistent availability at these levels will address several issues that currently reduce the quality of the Downtown parking experience.

- Business owners and employees parking in storefront spaces — If a desirable share of parking spaces is available, it doesn’t matter who is parking where; this helps avoid the need to “micro-manage” demand through targeting specific groups for parking restrictions or enforcement efforts.
- Time limits — If a desirable share of parking spaces is available, it doesn’t matter how long anyone parks; this helps avoid the need to “micro-manage” time limits which tends to be ineffective anyway, and counter-productive when and where customers need longer parking options.
- Search traffic — Consistent availability will virtually eliminate driving around waiting for a space to open up.
- Providing ADA-accessible parking near destinations — Maintaining consistent space-availability on a block-by-block basis is the best means for providing ADA-accessible parking near any given Downtown destination. Designated ADA spots, by contrast, limits options for the disabled to a few spaces that may or may not be near where they want to be. This also eliminates the need to anticipate how many ADA-reserved spaces are needed to meet demand, which frequently leads to either under- or over-reserving spaces for these drivers.<sup>1</sup>

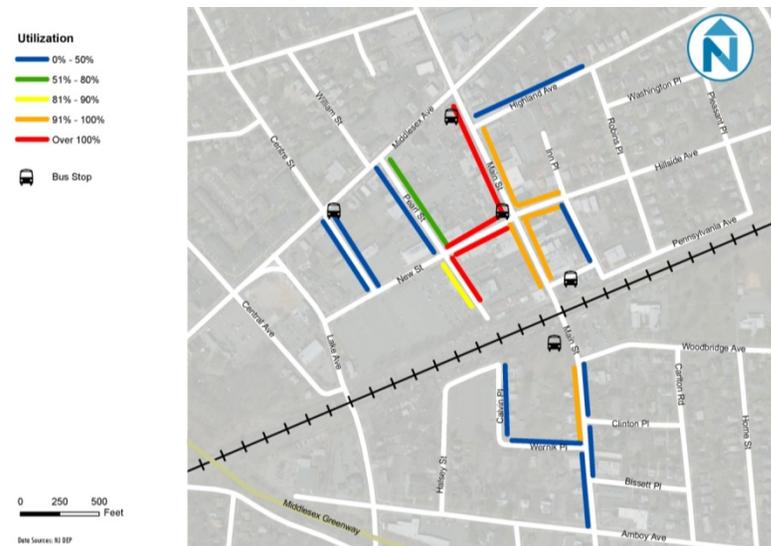
<sup>1</sup> The Borough or MPA may want to consider making an expansion of ADA parking an explicit consequence of not meeting availability targets through pricing-based management. This can help build support for potential rate increases, if it is part of reducing the need to set aside more ADA spaces.

- Defensible rate changes — Basing parking rates on demonstrated demand/ availability patterns establishes a clear rationale for parking rates, and rate adjustments, reducing the lost time and frustration of political and public debates about what the “right” price should be; while also increasing decision-making transparency.

## Create Tiered On-Street Parking Rates

Creating a tiered-rate system can help spread parking demand more evenly among Downtown streets, freeing up spaces on the most popular blocks. The map below presents utilization patterns that reveal a clear, core area of high demand (orange and red lines) surrounded by fairly consistent availability (blue, green and yellow lines).

Figure 2 On-Street Parking Occupancy - Friday Evening



The idea of a tiered-rate system is to create a rational market for curb parking spaces by charging a higher rate in the high-demand center, creating a reduced-rate zone around that. Without some incentive (reduced rates, longer time limits) there is no reason to expect drivers to accept secondary alternatives, without first exhausting all Main Street and New Street options. This, however, leads to congestion and frustration.

To support the transition to this demand-based pricing model, we recommend initiating a tiered-rate pricing structure as follows.

- Main Street and the first block of New Street/ Hillside Avenue off of Main Street would be priced at \$1/ hour.
- All other currently metered spaces would remain at \$0.50/ hour.
- Short-term, off-street parking would remain at \$0.50/ hour, but should also offer longer parking durations (4 hours) relative to on-street, to help attract more customers to these options.

## **Monitor Performance**

The suggested rates are recommended as the first step toward ensuring that parking rates become and remain relatively commensurate with demand. Keeping pricing and demand relatively in balance, however, will require ongoing oversight, regular monitoring, and the political will to continue to adjust rates when demand patterns warrant. This can simply take the form of noting how consistently one finds a lack of parking on any given Downtown block, and the times of day/ price of parking when this occurs, but a more formal, performance-monitoring program offers several advantages.

The following monitoring program is recommended as an optimal complement to demand-based parking rates.

- Weekly visual assessment of Main Street (and New Street, as warranted by expanding activity/ demand along this street).
  - Weekday midday - at least one recorded count of empty spaces on each block with premium meter rates on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday around 1PM.
  - Friday night - count of empty spaces on each block of Main Street on Friday, around 7 PM.
- Monthly system-wide counts (also during weekday and Friday night peaks)
  - Count empty spaces on all blocks surveyed for this study + all MPA and NJ Transit off-street facilities.
  - This will help address any concerns that increases in on-street parking are "chasing customers away".

## **Adjust Rates to Attain/ Maintain Target Performance**

Ideal utilization levels for on-street parking leave one or two spaces open on each block — just enough so that the empty spaces are apparent to drivers seeking a space. If the proposed tiered-rate system fails to consistently keep utilization at around this level, rates should be adjusted upwards. If, by contrast, the proposed rates overshoot the target, and result in consistently low utilization rates (below 70%) during weekday midday and Friday evening periods, rates should be adjusted downward.

To allow the driving public to adjust to rate changes, rate adjustments should only occur when too little or too much availability is observed to be consistent over a period of multiple weeks, and should probably not occur more than annually.

## **Adjust Meter Schedules to Match Demand**

Meters currently begin charging at 8 AM, although demand is modest until about midday. Conversely, free parking returns

beginning at 6 PM, precisely when activity among the fast-expanding set of dining and drinking establishments begins to build. Shifting the same, ten-hour schedule forward three hours (11 AM - 9 PM) on weekdays, and adding an extra evening hour on Fridays and Saturdays (11 AM - 10 PM) would provide several important, curb-performance benefits.

1. This would provide a significant period of free parking in the mornings, a time particularly attractive to seniors and others with schedule flexibility.
2. This would allow pricing to continue to incentivize turnover and create more on-street availability when the tendency for customers to prioritize convenience over cost tends to be strongest.
3. By more explicitly aligning meter schedules with demand patterns, this approach underscores the primary purpose of parking meters and pricing— to make it easier to access all Downtown parking options, at all times.

### **Pricing + Permits at High-Demand Lots**

Demand-based pricing will be most important for managing on-street parking. Pricing, however, should also be the primary means of distributing off-street demand more optimally across the full Downtown inventory (including MPA and NJ Transit spaces). Permits present a unique option to complement pricing redistribute demand and ease traffic congestion in and around high-demand lots.

Current parking rates, plus the use of meters rather than permits, at the two NJ Transit lots, creates a uniquely disruptive concentration of parking demand that degrades all modes of Downtown access, right in the core of the district. Not only are these spaces priced similarly to other lots much further from the station, the use of meters rather than permits creates a "first-come,

first-served" market that brings many more drivers than are likely to find a space each morning.

The best means of mitigating this situation is to price these station-adjacent spaces high enough to bring demand roughly in line with supply. This, however, might necessitate parking rates that are significantly higher than NJ Transit and the MPA are accustomed to charging. Converting from meters to permits, in conjunction with more modest rate increases, would allow MPA or NJ Transit to limit the number of permitted drivers vying for these spaces each morning.

This would require the development of a specific permit that, while also allowing its holders to park in any MPA facility, would be required to park in either of the NJ Transit lots.

### **ADOPT PARKING BENEFIT DISTRICT MODEL**

Figure 3 Promoting a Parking Benefit District Approach



Demand-based pricing alone, while likely sufficient to achieve availability-based performance targets, will be an unpopular strategy, the benefits of which will be undermined by a natural resentment of a direct cost increase without an obvious

commensurate benefit. Packaging demand-based, availability-focused pricing with complementary strategies that offset cost increases with direct, customer-experience improvements is often referred to as the Parking Benefit District model of parking management — particularly when increased parking revenue is used to fund those improvements. The following components of a Parking Benefit District are, therefore, recommended as a model for easing the transition to demand-based pricing in Downtown.

## **Use Parking Revenue to Fund Improvements**

A key complementary strategy for demand-based pricing is returning some or all resulting revenue to fund local improvements. Combined with performance-based parking rates, setting aside the resulting revenue to fund conspicuous, public improvements can help address resistance to pricing. Merchants, in particular, are much more likely to embrace pricing-based management when they can share in the revenue benefits, in terms of improved physical surroundings.

## **Remove Time Limits**

Eliminate time limits once consistent availability has been achieved through the proposed demand-based pricing approach. The goal of space-turnover is consistent availability, thus making time limits redundant if availability can be achieved through price alone. This will be particularly important during evenings, when dining and more leisurely pursuits replace lunches and errand running as primary customer activities.

## **Shift to Customer-Friendly Enforcement**

Based on stakeholder input, enforcement is sorely lacking in Downtown. This is something that few towns do well, but is absolutely critical if pricing is to serve its primary purpose of making Main Street more accessible. The biggest challenge

involved with enforcement is finding the right balance between being too lax — which would undermine any pricing strategy by reducing the effective price of parking (the official price, times the compliance rate) close to zero.

One of the most common and counter-productive enforcement shortcomings is inconsistency. Periods of laxity encourage drivers to violate regulations, who naturally resent being ticketed and fined for something that seemed to have been given tacit approval. Efforts to improve enforcement by increasing ticketing invariably frustrate businesses and their customers — those whose interests should be most aligned with effective enforcement. The proposed pricing strategy will help this situation primarily by relying more on price, and less on the threat of tickets, to create turnover and availability.

To build upon these improvements, the MPA and the Borough should coordinate to restructure its approach to fines and penalties to be more customer-friendly as well.

## **Introduce Incremental Fines**

Stakeholder feedback suggests the current fine for parking violations is not a deterrent to illegal on-street parking, particularly if people perceive a low probability of getting a ticket. At the same time, trying to find the right balance between fines that are too low to be effective, and so high that they unnecessarily scare off customers, can be an impossible task. And, frequently, the same fine will be both depending on who is paying the ticket.

A dynamic fine structure can address this by starting very low, and rising with each subsequent violation. This approach targets repeat offenders, while taking the sting out of innocent mistakes (and encouraging a first-time customer to return).

## **Start Increments at \$0**

This system, ideally should start with a "courtesy" ticket (no fine), that includes detailed information on parking options, pricing, and

regulations, as well as information on the escalating fine schedule for repeat violations.

Combining these two components would look something like this:

- The first ticket in any 12-month period is delivered in the form of a courtesy ticket;
- The second ticket should be a modest charge (\$25?); and
- Subsequent tickets should go up substantially (doubling?).

### **MAKE OPTIONS APPARENT + ACCESSIBLE**

Figure 4 No Signs Announce Nature of Alley-Accessible Parking



Availability can often be advanced by simply making it easier for drivers to access empty spaces; making it clear which spaces are available and making it easy to pay for them.

### **Develop Clear Messaging for Regulatory Signage**

Some immediate improvements can be made to better mark off-street parking locations, and provide clearer information on the cost and regulations in effect at each. The signage at current lots is confusingly inconsistent (different treatment of "24 Hours" in the top two images above), while individual signs alternately provide too little information (bottom, right image above), or unnecessarily complicated information (bottom, left image above). The MPA should begin developing, standardized, simplified, and clear signage messaging that can be applied in both MPA and NJ Transit lots.

Figure 5 Typical Signage at Off-Street Lots



Signs should consistently include the following three pieces of information, which should vary as minimally as possible, and little to nothing else.

1. Price: "\$0.50/ hour"
  - which is close enough to what "2.4 hours/ dollar" or "\$5/ 12 Hours" equates to, and is the suggested short-term parking rate for all off-street spaces
2. Schedule of Enforcement: "X:XX AM to X:XX PM"
  - There currently is little need for this to go past 4PM, which would help attract more evening customers, and might be particularly appealing to evening employees (who might otherwise be tempted to feed a meter).
3. Time Limit: "24 Hours" or "72 Hours", depending on location.
  - Make it clear that this is not indicating 24-hour pricing or "sticker" enforcement, but simply how long one can park at one time.

## Invest in New Technology

Modern, "smart" meters can help ease the adjustment to demand-based parking rates by providing customers with a wide range of convenient payment options, including credit cards and smart cards — which eliminate the need to carry change or return to the meter to add time. Invariably, complaints about parking rates have more to do with frustration with the need to have enough change on hand to buy enough parking than the price itself. Its' the nuisance, more than the actual cost.

## Add a Pay by Phone Option

Paying for parking with a cell phone allows parkers to pay without cash or even having to bother with a credit card. This eliminates the need for coins, provides text message notifications when paid

time is near expiration, and facilitates remote-payment to add more time. Additionally, depending on the Pay by Phone system in place, drivers can be credited for unused, paid time when they leave. A phone-based-payment option can be added to all metered spaces, regardless of what type of physical meter is in use; and can even be used where no physical meters are present.

The MPA should therefore coordinate with Nexus and NJ Transit to anticipate having one provider that can be used to pay for all hourly parking options in Downtown.

## Create a Downtown Parking Map

Figure 6 Parking Map - including info on tiered parking rates - Downtown Redwood City



[www.redwoodcity.org/bit/transportation/parking/pdf/DowntownParkingMap\\_rev3-22-13.pdf](http://www.redwoodcity.org/bit/transportation/parking/pdf/DowntownParkingMap_rev3-22-13.pdf)

For tiered pricing to be effective in influencing drivers' parking choices, those drivers will need to know where the most-expensive,

least-expensive, and free parking options are. This awareness will not only improve the impact of the pricing strategy on availability, it can be a powerful tool for moderating parking-generated traffic. When all options are essentially priced the same, most drivers will head straight into the Downtown core, look for parking, and widen their search until they find an empty space. This brings all traffic into the core, regardless of where cars end up parked. Tiered pricing, and public awareness of where the cheapest options are located, will result in many drivers heading straight to more peripheral parking options.

See an example from Redwood City, CA above.<sup>2</sup>

## **Make New Street Lot All Short-Term Parking**

As customer-parking demand grows, and expands westward along New Street, the New Street Lot should become solely focused on customer parking, with the exception of a limited number of designated spaces that may be necessary to attract upper-floor housing development along Main Street. This will provide a convenient, reduced-cost parking option for customers, many of whom may prefer a surface parking option to the relative complexity of structured parking, such as planned for the Pearl Street Lot.

## **Develop a Branding, Information and Wayfinding Strategy**

There is currently very little directional (wayfinding) or on-site signage to promote existing lots. On-site signage is an opportunity, not only to mark parking opportunities, but to brand them and increase their market appeal. Branding parking facilities can be a

low-cost means of communicating several things about these valuable parking assets, including:

- Certainty - MPA-branded lots can ease towing fears among drivers unfamiliar with urban parking environments, who might otherwise fear spaces are privately controlled by, and reserve for, adjacent businesses;
- Reliability – Matching MPA branding with consistent MPA parking rates, regulations, schedules, and customer-friendly enforcement will make off-street parking experiences comfortably predictable; and
- Allowed duration – Relaxing time limits in off-street facilities will be key to attracting some longer parking stays away from on-street options, but only if drivers know about it.

There have been several, incomplete efforts to develop new and consistent Downtown signage and wayfinding in the recent past. This indicates that investing in a consultant-led effort may be necessary to appropriately address this long-standing need. A set of examples of effective RFP documents for such an engagement is appended to this report. Key scope items that should be included are listed below.

- Develop attractive, on-site signs to mark MPA lots that accommodate public, non-permit parking.
- Coordinate signage with wayfinding to shift some parking traffic off of Main Street.
- Complement rebranding with on-site enhancements.
  - Clear, distinctive, consistent markings/appearance at MPA lots — a marking that can quickly communicate, "public, low cost, long-term, no-tow parking " to drivers.
  - Consistent surfacing, striping, lighting, pedestrian facilities, and maintenance levels will also go along way to increasing customer confidence in MPA lots.

---

<sup>2</sup> For an East Coast example, see:  
<http://parkingsale.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/General-Parking-Map5A.pdf>

- Formalized pedestrian connections to nearby streets. Three opportunities exist for this at the New Street Lot alone, connecting to Main Street, New Street, and Route 27.

## CREATE A TOD/ DOWNTOWN ZONING DISTRICT

Figure 7 New Standards Should Encourage More Transit-Oriented-Development



## Reduce Requirements, Set Maximums, Incentivize Sharing

Several factors combine within Downtown to merit a distinct set of development standards and parking requirements.

1. Adjacency to Metuchen Station - nearly all Metuchen residents live within walking distance of this station, and all of Downtown should be considered within the station's immediate zone of influence.
2. Downtown location - the combination of higher densities and more diverse land uses typical of downtown districts is often enough to merit distinct parking requirements.

3. The MPA - Downtown Metuchen also benefits from having a parking authority that can use the abundance of commuter-oriented parking supply<sup>3</sup> under its management to accommodate demand from uses that cannot or prefer not to meet their own parking needs on site.

There are two primary opportunities that can be met through a revised set of Downtown-specific parking requirements.

1. Reducing the parking requirements for Downtown development projects
  - This will reduce significant barriers to reinvestment in the small development parcels common throughout the area
  - This will also help support and encourage transit-oriented development, which consistently generates more local "foot traffic", in Downtown
2. Discouraging over-supplying on-site parking
  - This helps preserve more Downtown real estate for higher and better uses, which in turn make the area more active and appealing.
3. Encouraging on-site parking to be shared.
  - Something that very few current land uses do.
4. Encouraging investments in shared parking in lieu of on-site parking
  - In a setting like Downtown Metuchen, small projects that meet their own parking needs creates redundant and poorly accessible parking, as well as a degraded walking environment (as sidewalks become consumed by driveways) compared to meeting the same parking demand in consolidated, efficient, shared facilities.

---

<sup>3</sup> About one space for every 10 Metuchen residents

A very simple approach to setting a more appropriate schedule of parking standards for Downtown development is recommended, as follows.

- Halve the current parking requirements;
- Allow all requirements to be met through an In Lieu Fee, or comparable alternative;
- Convert the current minimum requirements to maximums;
- Apply those maximums only to reserved parking (spaces that are only accessible to on-site tenants and guests); and
- Allow developers to pay a fee, similar to the In Lieu Fee, for each reserved space provided above the maximum.

### Set a Strategic In Lieu Fee Rate

An In-Lieu Fee option is an excellent strategy for communities to rationally address parking requirements in mixed-use downtowns where great parking efficiencies are achievable through shared parking. Under this option, fees are paid in lieu of providing on-site parking, the revenue from which is used to build/ maintain efficient, shared, public parking structures.

Planners can choose a fee level that is attractively lower than what it would cost a developer to build on-site, or set a higher fee rate to ensure that revenue will be sufficient to build the amount of public parking needed to offset the private parking waiver. A significant advantage that allows In Lieu Fees to be attractively low, while still producing meaningful revenue, are that the efficiencies inherent in public parking, which allow fewer spaces to accommodate the same demand.

Another tack to take in setting In Lieu Fee rates is to combine a low base fee with a per-space fee increment that will keep the fee option affordable for small-parcel/ small project developers, while incentivizing those with larger parcels to provide more on-site

parking. This would make it feasible for smaller projects to be built with no on-site parking, preserving their full lot for higher-value uses and avoiding inefficient, sidewalk-disrupting driveways along Downtown streets. At the same time, the fee increments would make it less likely that larger project that have a more suitable footprint for parking would waive all of their requirement.

The figure below shows how this might translate for projects of various sizes/ parking requirements, using a base fee of \$5,000, and an incremental fee of \$1,000.

Figure 8 Sample Incremental Fee Table

Number of Spaces	Per Space Fee -@ \$5,000 + (\$1,000 X the Number of Spaces)	Total Fee
1	\$6,000	\$6,000
2	\$7,000	\$14,000
3	\$8,000	\$24,000
4	\$9,000	\$36,000
5	\$10,000	\$50,000
6	\$11,000	\$66,000
7	\$12,000	\$84,000
8	\$13,000	\$104,000
9	\$14,000	\$126,000
10	\$15,000	\$150,000

## SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

### CAPACITY EXPANSION

Figure 9 Private Driveways Absorb Public Parking on Pearl St.



### Expand Options for Employee Parking

There are several blocks of on-street parking, west of Main Street and between New Street and Route 27, that are consistently under-utilized. These spaces could be used to provide a free/ cheap parking option for Downtown employees. One option to explore for this is to develop a discounted, Downtown Employee parking permit that would:

- Allow for meter- and time-limit-exempt parking on specified streets until 5 PM;
- Allow for unlimited parking in all MPA lots after 4 PM; and
- Allow for non-time-restricted parking in low-demand MPA lots.

Offering these permits at a significant discount, and expanding their applicability to several on-street blocks during daytime hours, should reduce employee utilization of prime on-street blocks.

Figure 10 Significant Daytime Capacity on Several Blocks

Street	From	To	Side	Spaces	Week Day
Center St	Rt. 27	New St	E	10	10.0%
Center St	Rt. 27	New St	W	10	10.0%
Wernik Pl	Calvin Pl	Main St	N	8	0.0%
Pearl St	Rt. 27	New St	E	13	46.2%
Pearl St	Rt. 27	New St	W	14	42.9%

Figure 11 Significant Evening Capacity in Most Lots

Parking Facilities	Spaces	Evening	Friday Night
Pearl Street Lot	709	38.7%	26.8%
Halsey Street Lot	273	22.7%	32.2%
Penn Plaza North	51	49.0%	68.6%
Penn Avenue	78	19.2%	33.3%
Penn Plaza South	56	35.7%	76.8%
Station Place	51	27.5%	43.1%
New Street Lot	45	41.2%	58.8%
South Main Street Lot	23	34.8%	47.8%
A & P	60	21.7%	18.3%
Senior Center	36	19.4%	11.1%

### Recapture Capacity from Driveways

There are several blocks within the Study Area, including multiple blocks within the retail core, where poorly designed accessory parking lots create excessive driveway space. These driveways

consume on-street parking capacity, limiting parking options along Pearl Street and Station Place.

The long-term strategy for reversing this loss is more proactive urban design standards that:

- Require parking to be placed behind buildings;
- Standardize driveway widths and locations, particularly on key pedestrian streets; and
- Discourage inappropriate land uses in these areas.

Until redevelopment has a chance to take effect, it may be possible to work with property owners to reduce driveway widths, or consolidate multiple driveways, in order to regain curbside capacity on these customer-critical blocks.

## Explore Public Valet Options

Providing a centrally located public valet stand is an increasingly popular strategy for expanding curbside parking access in high-demand areas, or during high-demand events. This can maximize customer parking convenience and by expanding the virtual capacity of on-street parking in the heart Downtown. Setting aside a few on-street spaces during high-peak periods (Friday and Saturday nights, promotions, events, etc.) could greatly expand the capacity of these high-convenience spaces, and make the parking experience much more pleasant for many visitors. New Street and Pearl Street offer significant potential as a public valet site, offering immediate access to under-utilized lots, including the A&P and the Senior Center.

## DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Figure 12 Latent Bike Parking Demand at Metuchen Station



## Complete Downtown Streets

In 2013, the Borough of Metuchen adopted a Complete Streets policy<sup>4</sup> to improve safety for users of all modes, provide connections between key destinations, reduce traffic congestion, and to reduce long-term roadway maintenance costs. The policy states that all publicly owned rights-of-way in the Borough must be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in a way that users of all ages can move “safely and independently.” This is identified as particularly important in areas near schools, public transit, downtown, and public facilities.

This Complete Streets policy should be used to guide and support strategic improvements to Downtown streets, intersections, crosswalks, streetscapes, and bike/ bus amenities. These improvements will help many of the concerns expressed by stakeholders during the study regarding the safety and comfort of

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.metuchennj.org/bc-agendas/2013/bc\\_20131021/R2013-210.pdf](http://www.metuchennj.org/bc-agendas/2013/bc_20131021/R2013-210.pdf)

walking in and around Downtown, and help encourage more Downtown patronage by local residents, about 40% of whom prefer to walk to Downtown.

### **Add WALK Signal at New/ Main Street**

Figure 13 No WALK Signal at Main/ New Street (Hillside Avenue)



This is Downtown's pedestrian epicenter. The lack of pedestrian-crossing signals to support any one of its four crosswalks is a rather surprising oversight that the MPA should lobby to be amended.

### **Convert Pearl/ New Street to 4-Way Stop**

As Downtown's commercial core expands westward along New Street, this intersection is becoming a center of pedestrian activity. Converting the current 2-Way stop control at this intersection to 4-Way will make pedestrian crossings safer and more efficient. Such improvements expand the "park-once" viability of off-street parking options like the Pearl Street Lot.

### **Implement More Circulation Element Recommendations**

Figure 14 Traffic Calming Project From Circulation Element



Several locations that remain in need of improvement were identified in the 2009 Circulation Element, including the following.

- Upgrade, and re-signalize:
  - Main St. & Amboy Ave.
  - Main St. & New St./ Hillside Ave.
  - Route 27 & Main St.
- Redesign Woodbridge and Main Street
  - Improve sidewalks, street crossings, and sidewalk/ driveway interfaces surrounding the Post Office, bus shelters and the station.
  - Add a bump-out on the west side of the intersection.
- Redesign Route 27
  - Reconfigure the traffic signalization and pedestrian crossings at Lake Avenue and New Street

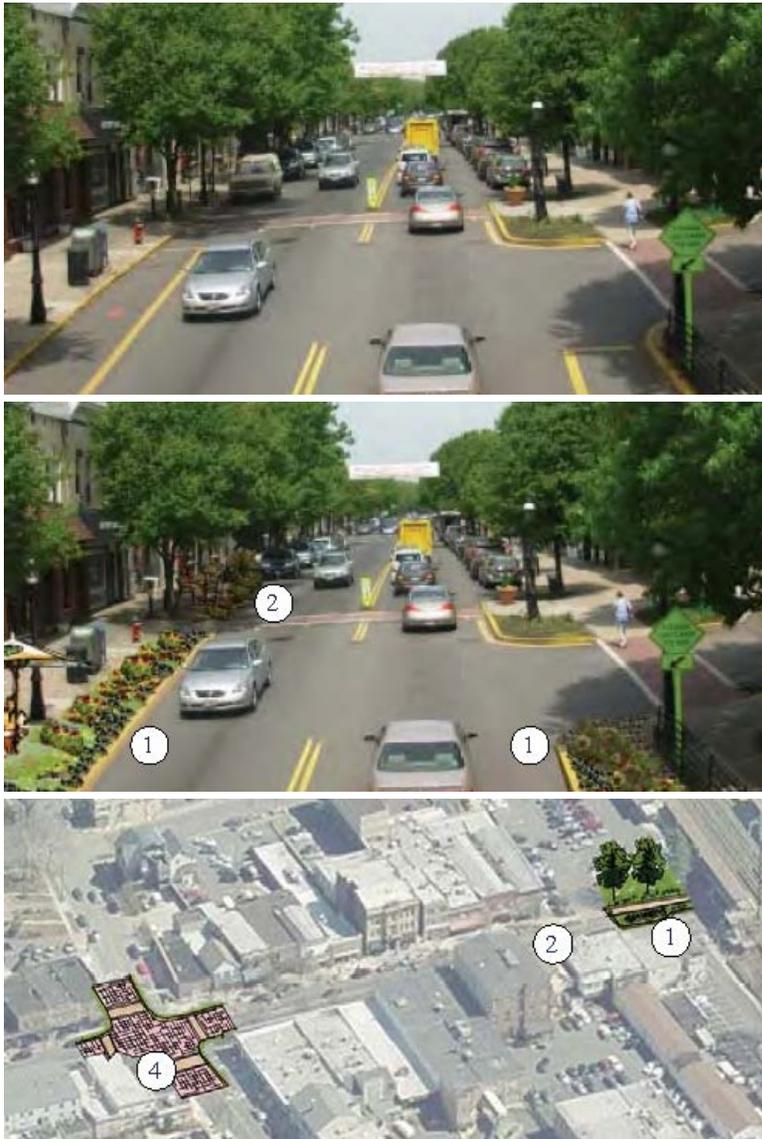
**METUCHEN DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY: FINAL Parking Management Plan**  
Parking Authority of the Borough of Metuchen

- Add a planted median between Main Street and Pearl Street to limit some left turns and define left turn lanes for Main Street and Pearl Street.
- Add a small pedestrian refuge between Pearl Street and William Street.
- Add on-street parking on the south side, between Pearl and Center Streets
- Add a pedestrian refuge at the southern side of the Center Street intersection to assist in pedestrian crossings and eliminate speeding to make Lake Avenue left turns.
- Adopt a new streetscape/sidewalk standard.
- Redesign Main Street
  - Add curb bump-outs on both sides
  - Relocate the bus shelter near Middlesex Avenue
  - Replace walk signals & add textured crosswalks at New Street and Hillside Avenue
- Create a consistent streetscape standard for the downtown area of Metuchen
- Improve Bicycle Mobility
  - Additional racks should be considered as part of streetscape improvements.

Figure 15 Rt. 27 Improvements from Circulation Element



Figure 16 Main Street Improvements from Circulation Element



## Develop a Bike Valet Program for Events

Consider developing a Bike Valet program to encourage people to ride (instead of drive) to Downtown events. Staffed bike valet stations provide easy, convenient, and secure bike parking that can accommodate very high levels of demand. Particularly for fair-weather events, and in a bike-supportive community like Metuchen, bike valet can significantly reduce driving trips and directly add to the active, vibrant, and healthy environment that helps outdoor events thrive.

## Develop a Partnership with Keep Middlesex Moving

Figure 17 KMM.org Home Page



Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM) is a Transportation Management Association operating in Middlesex County. Its mission is to create transportation solutions and support alternatives such as carpooling, vanpooling, mass transit, compressed work week, telecommuting and much more to its member communities, including Metuchen. Services offered that might be particularly helpful in reducing parking needs among Downtown employees include:

- **Ridematching services** - Technology is making it increasingly easy to match commuters by commute routes and schedules. KMM offers online ridematching services that take advantage of these advances. <sup>5</sup>
- **Transit information** - Including routes, schedules, fares options, etc.
- **Guaranteed Ride Home** - A fixed number of free taxi rides home for non-driving commuters who need to leave work earlier or later than normal, and when their normal ride home options are unavailable.
- **Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs**
- **Bike Locker Programs**

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.kmm.org/reg\\_rideshare.php](http://www.kmm.org/reg_rideshare.php)