Manchester-bythe-Sea Downtown Parking Analysis

Final Report

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Prepared for:

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Introduction

Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea is home to many small businesses, residents of multifamily housing, and several civic and recreational assets, including Town Hall, a public library, and the waterfront Masconomo Park. Route 127 (Bridge Street/Central Street/Union Street), Beach Street and Summer Street are the primary retail areas and are served by on-street parking spaces, as well as several off-street parking lots. The popular Singing Beach is located half a mile southeast of the downtown off Beach Street and has its own dedicated parking lot for Town residents.

Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea also hosts a commuter rail station on the MBTA's Rockport line. Under the state's new multifamily zoning requirement for MBTA communities, areas in or around downtown within half a mile of the station may be rezoned for multifamily housing. Future multifamily developments in these areas may create additional demand for parking in or around downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea.

The purpose of this parking study is to determine how existing parking spaces are currently being utilized, and for what period of time. This effort will help determine if the existing parking supply is adequate and whether regulations and/or the location of parking should be adjusted. It will also make recommendations for managing the parking supply in the context of future redevelopment.

Several **parking management best practices** helped guide MAPC's analysis and recommendations for Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea:

- Parking regulations should be visible, clear and consistent.
- Parking policies and regulations should encourage people to park once and visit multiple destinations in one trip.
- Short-term parking should be prioritized for on-street spaces close to businesses, with longterm parking in parking lots and/or the periphery of the downtown.
- Parking policies should aim for 85% parking occupancy¹ for on-street parking, meaning parking is generally close to being fully utilized but there are always a few spaces available. Occupancy greater than 85% may be appropriate for off-street parking, depending on the size and configuration of the lot.

MAPC collected and analyzed existing parking capacity, occupancy, and duration data in the downtown. The scope for this parking study included identification and analysis of the following:

- 1. Existing parking capacity and regulations within the study area
- 2. Hourly on-street parking occupancy and duration on both a weekday and a Saturday
- 3. Average duration and patterns of short- and long-term on-street parking
- 4. Times and locations of peak parking demand
- 5. Occupancy observations of public and private off-street lots

^{1 –} Target parking occupancy level identified in *The High Cost of Free Parking*, by Donald Shoup. An 85% parking occupancy is generally considered the sign of a "healthy" parking district – one with strong demand but enough available supply to avoid the negative consequences of drivers circling around looking for parking.

Study Area

The focus area for this Downtown Manchester-by-the Sea parking study is primarily on-street and offstreet parking on and around Route 127 (Bridge Street/Central Street/Union Street), Beach Street and Summer Street. All the on-street parking spaces studied were public parking spaces, while the off-street lots studied included a mix of public and private parking with varying restrictions. From end to end, the study area is just under half a mile long, or approximately a ten-minute walk. The core of the small business retail area is about a five-minute walk from end to end. The study area includes the following parking locations (as shown in **Figure 1**, which also shows the on-street parking regulations):

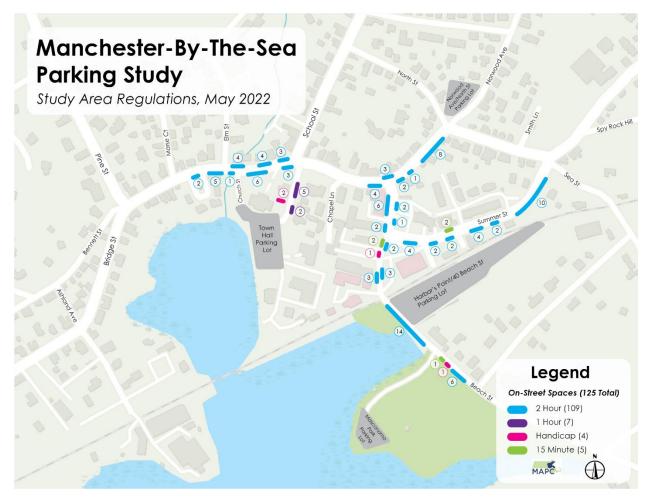
On-street public parking (owned and maintained by the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea):

- Route 127/Bridge Street/Central Street/Union Street (from Pine Street to Beach Street)
- o Church Street
- Route 127/Union Street/Washington Street (from Beach Street to Norwood Avenue)
- Summer Street (from Beach Street to Route 127/Washington Street)
- Beach Street (from Route 127/Union Street to Tappan Street)

Off-street surface parking lots (mix of public and private parking):

- Municipal lot at Town Hall/Church Street
- Municipal lot at Norwood Avenue/North Street
- Private lot at Beach Street/MBTA commuter rail station (partially leased to MBTA by 40 Beach Street Condo Association)
- Municipal lot at Masconomo Park
- Municipal lot at Singing Beach (not shown in Figure 1; summer data collection only)

Figure 1.Study Area and On-street Parking Regulations



Existing Parking Analysis

To determine the existing parking conditions within Downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea, MAPC worked with Town staff and members of Town boards and committees (including the Planning Board, the Downtown Improvement Committee, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee) to conduct a parking study on Tuesday, May 24, 2022 from 8:00am – 8:00pm and Saturday, July 16, 2022 from 8:00am – 10:00pm. The data collection and expanded hours for July 16 were done to understand how summer weekend demand for parking at Singing Beach might impact broader parking issues in the downtown. Prior to the data collection effort, the number, type, and location of parking spaces within the study area were documented.

Parking Capacity and Regulations

The study area includes a total of 485 parking spaces, 125 of which are on-street. **Figure 1** shows the on-street parking regulations. **Table 1** provides a summary of parking capacity and type (both onand off-street) within the study area. The 405 public parking spaces observed include all 125 onstreet spaces, as well as all the off-street spaces in the municipal lots at Town Hall (105 spaces), Norwood Avenue (33 spaces) and Masconomo Park (59 spaces).

The private off-street lot at 40 Beach Street, which is owned by the 40 Beach Street Condo Association, appears to have 83 parking spaces that are accessible to the public. This figure includes 34 spaces at the far end of the lot that the Association leases to the MBTA for commuter rail parking, as well as all the spaces in the main area of the lot that are not explicitly labeled as "Reserved." (For the purposes of this study, spaces in the 40 Beach Street lot labeled as "1-Hour Reserved" are presumed to be publicly available for customers at small businesses abutting the lot.)

Type of Parking	Capacity	Percent			
Public Parking					
Public On-Street Parking	125	31%			
Public Parking in Off-street Surface Lots	280	69%			
Public Parking Subtotal	405	100%			
Private Parking					
Private Parking in Off-street Surface Lots	80	100%			
Private Parking Subtotal	80	100%			
Parking Total	485				

Table 1.Study Area Parking Capacity

A full summary of the public parking regulations for on- and off-street locations is shown in **Table 2.** While there are no parking meters in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea, 87% of the on-street spaces have a two-hour parking limit from 8am-6pm. The off-street parking lots have a high number of public parking spaces (including additional two-hour spaces as well as some three-hour spaces), but they also contain a broad range of restrictions on some of those spaces (including dedicated spaces for people with resident stickers, business placards and boater placards). As such, not all the public parking spaces in these lots are available or accessible for all residents or visitors who may seek to park downtown. Table 2 details which off-street parking lots contain regulations where applicable.

Type of Parking Regulations and Location	Capacity	Percent			
On-street Public Parking					
2 Hour, 8am-6pm	109	87%			
1 Hour, 8am-6pm	7	6%			
15 Minute	5	4%			
Handicapped	4	3%			
On-street Public Parking Subtotal	125	100%			
Off-street Po	ublic Parking				
2 Hour, 8am-6pm (Town Hall lot)	52	18.5%			
Resident Sticker (Masconomo Park lot, Town Hall lot)	52 (30 at Masconomo Park lot, 22 at Town Hall lot)	18.5%			
MBTA commuter rail (40 Beach Street lot)	34	12%			
3 Hour (Masconomo Park lot)	26	9%			
Resident Sticker/Business Placard (Norwood Avenue lot)	25	9%			
Handicapped (all lots)	18 (7 at 40 Beach Street lot, 6 at Town Hall lot, 3 at Masconomo Park lot, 2 at Norwood Avenue lot)	6.5%			
Boater Placard (Town Hall lot)	13	5%			
1-Hour Reserved (40 Beach Street lot)	13	5%			
Harbor's Point Customers (40 Beach Street lot)	12	4%			
Long-Term (Norwood Avenue lot)	6	2%			
Electric Vehicle (Town Hall lot)	4	1.5%			
Council on Aging Van (Town Hall lot)	3	1%			
15 Minute (Town Hall lot)	3	1%			
Police (Town Hall lot)	2	1%			
Other (40 Beach Street lot)	17	6%			
Off-street Public Parking Subtotal	280	100%			
Public Parking Total	405				

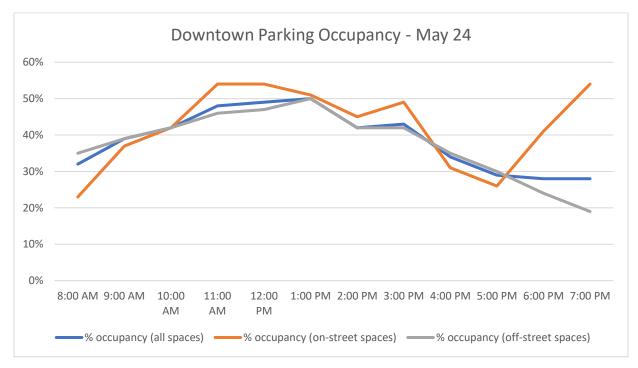
Table 2.Public Parking Regulations

Parking Occupancy

During the parking observation hours, MAPC detailed the parking occupancy and duration by time of day to gain an in-depth understanding of how parking is utilized in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea. This parking data helps to identify peak demand times, average parking durations, and areas with the highest parking demand.

During the weekday observation on May 24, peak parking occupancy in the downtown occurred at 1:00pm, 2:00pm and 7:00pm for on-street parking (54% occupancy at all three times) and at 1:00pm for off-street parking lots (50% occupancy). The peak period for the entire study area was 1:00pm with 50% of all parking spaces utilized. The total parking occupancy rate increased steadily

until about 1:00pm, then it began to decline throughout the rest of the afternoon and evening (except for a slight increase between 2:00pm and 3:00pm). The occupancy rates for on-street parking and off-street parking largely mirrored this overall trend, except for an increase in the on-street occupancy from 26% at 5:00pm to 54% at 7:00pm. A summary of the weekday parking occupancy is shown in **Figure 2**.





During the summer Saturday observation on July 16, peak parking occupancy in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea occurred at 1:00pm for on-street parking (73% occupancy) and at 2:00pm for off-street parking lots (72% occupancy). The peak period for the entire study area was 1:00pm with 71% of all parking spaces utilized. The total parking occupancy rate increased steadily until about 1:00pm, then it began to decline throughout the rest of the afternoon and evening (except for a slight increase between 5:00pm and 6:00pm). The occupancy rates for on-street parking and offstreet parking largely mirrored this overall trend, except for an increase in the on-street occupancy from 56% at 5:00pm to 66% at 7:00pm. A summary of the summer Saturday parking occupancy is shown in **Figure 3**.

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, both the weekday and summer Saturday occupancy levels fall below the target occupancy level of 85%. This holds true for the study area as a whole, as well as for both the on-street and off-street parking areas when examined separately from each other. This shows that potential vacant spaces in off-street parking lots are not significantly affecting the overall occupancy numbers. The early evening increases in on-street occupancy on both days may be due to patrons at local restaurants during dinnertime.

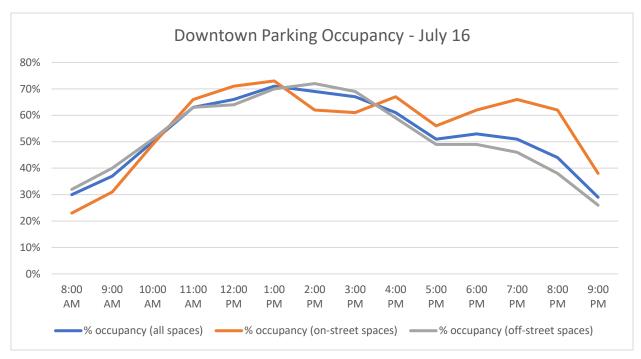


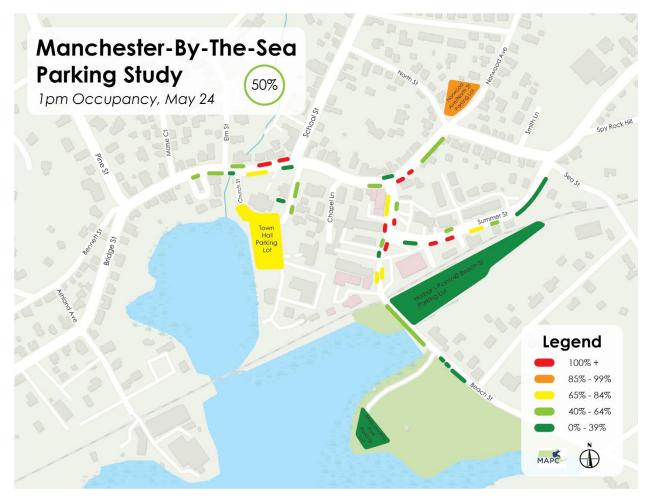
Figure 3.Summer Saturday Parking Occupancy

Figures 4 and 5 on the following pages illustrate on- and off-street parking utilization in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea during the peak hour for both the weekday observations on May 24 and the summer Saturday observations on July 16. Areas in red were at or above 100% occupancy during the busiest hour of the observation day. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, much of the parking available was below the recommended 85% occupancy level. The areas that experienced the highest occupancy rates during the peak weekday hour of 1:00pm on May 24 include several on-street spaces at Route 127/School Street, Beach Street, and Summer Street, as well as the off-street lot at Norwood Avenue. For more detailed information about the hourly occupancy observed during data collection, see Appendix A.

The areas that experienced the highest occupancy rates during the peak summer Saturday hour of 1:00 pm on July 16 include almost all of Beach Street (including the areas next to Masconomo Park) and areas of Summer Street near Beach Street, as well as the off-street lot at Masconomo Park. It is possible that in addition to higher rates of commercial activity during the weekend, the substantially increased parking utilization along Beach Street and at Masconomo Park may also be due to weekend beachgoers who are unable to park at the Singing Beach parking lot farther down Beach Street.

The Singing Beach parking lot has 124 parking spaces (which fill up quickly on busy summer days) and is only open to Manchester-by-the-Sea residents. **Figure 6** shows parking occupancy data at Singing Beach, which were provided to MAPC by Town Recreation staff. The total parking occupancy rate steadily increased to 100% at 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm, then began to decline throughout the rest of the afternoon and evening. Although these data are taken from Sunday, July 17 (the day after MAPC conducted the summer parking study in the downtown study area), Town Recreation staff indicated that "both days were pretty close to typical" with respect to beach parking.

Figure 4.Weekday Peak Parking Occupancy



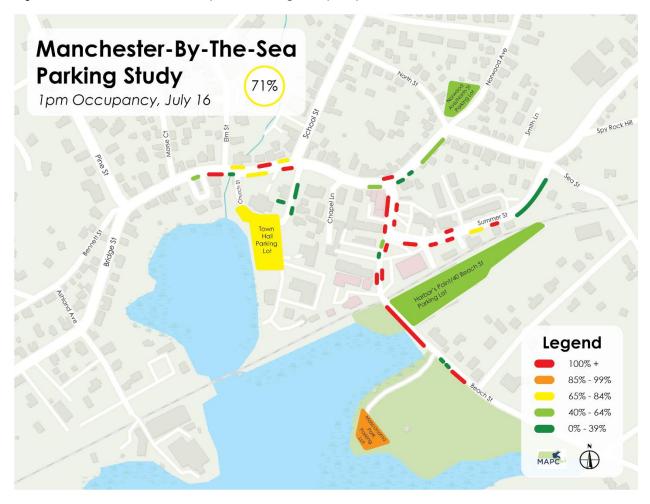


Figure 5.Summer Saturday Peak Parking Occupancy

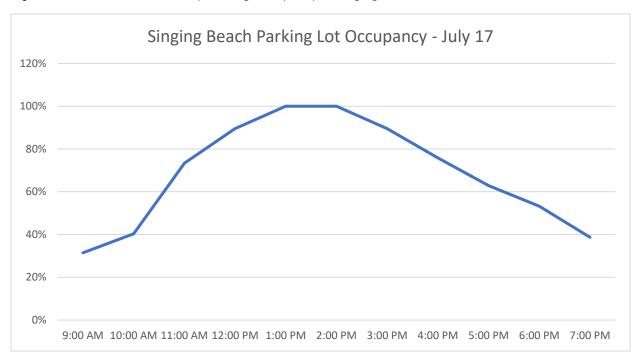


Figure 6. Summer Sunday Parking Occupancy at Singing Beach

Parking Duration

Parking turnover is critical to the success of a business district because nearly all business patrons want to find a parking space in front of their destination. However, if vehicles are parking in on-street spaces for an extended period of time, parking spaces will not open up for new business. Observing duration trends helps identify whether spaces are turning over and provides important insight into the effectiveness of current parking enforcement techniques.

During MAPC's observations, the overall average parking duration for on-street parking spaces was 1.25 hours (75 minutes) during the weekday and 1.2 hours (72 minutes) on the summer Saturday. Duration data was not captured for the off-street parking lots. **Table 3** shows the proportions of on-street vehicles parked for particular durations on both parking study dates. Average parking duration by on-street location is shown in **Figures 7 and 8** for both the weekday observations on May 24 and the summer Saturday observations on July 16. These tables and figures show that most vehicles that park in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea adhere to the widely posted two-hour on-street parking limits.

Date of data collection	<1	1-2	2-4	4+
	hour	hours	hours	hours
Tuesday, May 24	67%	22%	8%	4%
Saturday, July 16	59%	26%	12%	3%

 Table 3.
 Proportions of Vehicles Parked by Duration

Figure 7. Weekday Average Parking Duration

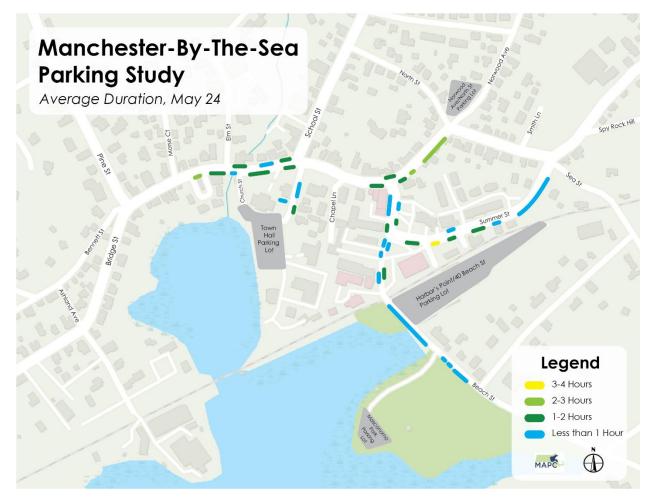
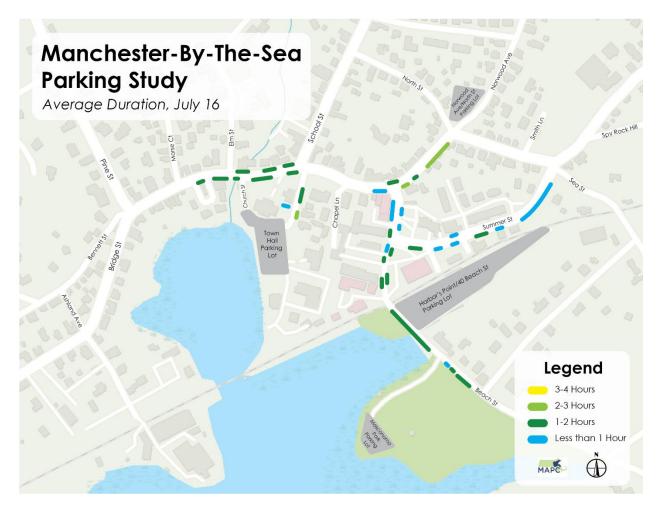


Figure 8. Summer Saturday Average Parking Duration



Findings and Recommendations

As MAPC conducted the downtown parking study, the Manchester-by-the-Sea Downtown Improvement Committee also conducted a parking survey from May 11 to June 1, 2022. The survey was intended to solicit information and feedback from residents, businesses, residential and commercial property owners, and government and non-profit stakeholders about parking challenges and opportunities in the downtown. The Committee received 36 survey responses, compiled the survey data, and created a set of parking recommendations. The MAPC report sections that follow reference the Committee's findings where relevant.

On-Street Parking

On-street parking spaces are clearly delineated with pavement markings in parts of the study area, including Beach Street and parts of Summer Street. Other parts of the study area lack these pavement markings, including Route 127 (Bridge Street/Central Street/Union Street) and the portion of Summer Street east of Nor'East Cleaners just before Route 127/Washington Street. The lack of clear parking space delineation in these areas may lead to less efficient utilization of the on-street parking spaces (for example, three parked vehicles may spread across an on-street parking area that

actually has the space to accommodate four parked vehicles) and thus contribute to a perception that there is a lack of available parking spaces.

Along the eastern portion of Summer Street in particular, the lack of pavement markings may lead visitors to think that the area is not available for public parking, despite the presence of a sign indicating the two-hour parking limit there. This on-street parking area is large enough to accommodate 10 parked vehicles, but had almost no utilization during the parking study. Enhancing the visibility of this parking area with pavement markings and additional signage can help increase parking utilization there.

There are four on-street handicapped parking spaces in the study area – two off of Church Street next to Town Hall, one on Beach Street in the core of the business district, and one on Beach Street next to Masconomo Park. This is one space short of the five handicapped parking spaces that the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) recommends for a parking area with 101-150 spaces total. (There are 125 on-street parking spaces in the study area.) The Town therefore should look into opportunities to create another on-street handicapped parking space, potentially on Summer Street or Union Street to create another option in the business district.

Throughout the study area, most people parking on-street adhered to the posted time limits. Average on-street parking duration was rarely above two hours except for the portion of Route 127/Union Street between Beach Street and Washington Street, where the average parking duration was between two and three hours on both parking study data collection days. This area has several signs indicating the two-hour parking limit, so it is unclear why people park for longer there compared to other parts of the study area that have the same two-hour limit. If this area is not currently prioritized for parking enforcement, increased enforcement can help lead to faster parking turnover.

Parking study staff and volunteers did observe several instances of vehicles that would be parked in an on-street space for two hours, then move to another nearby on-street space for the subsequent two hours. This reflects people moving their cars to get around the posted two-hour parking limits and highlights the need for long-term parking solutions for people who need to park for longer than two hours. The Downtown Improvement Committee survey reflects these issues as well, as 40% of survey respondents indicated that downtown residents and employees park on the street if they do not have assigned off-street parking. Relatedly, only 30% of the survey respondents indicated that they use Town-issued parking placards, with 54% of respondents indicating that they do not. These findings suggest that improved management of on-street parking in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea is directly related to improved utilization and management of municipal parking placard programs and corresponding spaces in off-street lots.

<u>Recommendations to improve on-street parking management in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea</u> <u>include the following:</u>

- Add pavement markings on Route 127 (Bridge St/Central St/Union St) to delineate on-street parking spaces
- Add pavement markings and signage east of Nor'East Cleaners on Summer Street to delineate on-street parking spaces and improve visibility of the parking area
- Assess on-street parking signage throughout the downtown and enhance signage if necessary
- Add a handicapped parking space on Summer Street or Union Street to bring the total number of on-street handicapped parking spaces in line with MAAB recommendations

- Consider additional parking enforcement on Route 127/Union Street between Beach Street and Washington Street to increase turnover
- Assess opportunities to designate more spaces for long-term resident and employee parking in off-street parking lots, thus freeing up on-street spaces for short-term parking

Off-Street Parking

The off-street parking lots studied contain a broad and complicated variety of parking regulations that may be confusing to downtown residents and visitors alike. Table 2 shows that 15 different types of parking regulations exist across the four lots (Town Hall, Norwood Avenue, 40 Beach Street, Masconomo Park), and that the presence of different regulations varies greatly from lot to lot. Exploring opportunities to simplify and consolidate different types of parking regulations can improve the individual parking experience and make the overall parking system easier to manage as well.

Better understanding the current utilization of resident sticker and business placard programs will provide insight into how these programs might be better managed and consolidated. As noted earlier, the Downtown Improvement Committee's parking survey indicated that these programs are underutilized, but more specific data is lacking. MAPC's parking study did not examine whether vehicles parked in off-street resident sticker, business placard and boater placard spaces were using the correct sticker or placard in question. Anecdotal information from the Town's parking enforcement officer suggests that there is a high number of parking violations from non-residents parking in resident spaces, and that non-resident vehicles are ticketed the most.

Parking enforcement staff further suggested that the Town Hall parking lot is most confusing and that most parking violations there are for parking in the wrong spaces. The Downtown Improvement Committee recognized these issues in their parking survey, recommending designing a new map of the Town Hall lot and improving signage in all areas to clearly designate resident and visitor spaces.

While specific areas of the Town Hall lot may present parking management challenges, the utilization of the Town Hall lot overall can potentially be increased. The Town Hall lot did not experience greater than 85% occupancy at any point during the parking study, in contrast to the other municipal lots at Norwood Avenue and Masconomo Park. There is a functional pedestrian walkway between the Town Hall lot and Beach Street, but the Downtown Improvement Committee notes that its appeal can be increased for visitors with effective signage and lighting. Making this pedestrian connection more attractive can help increase the Town Hall lot's usage.

All the off-street parking lots studied had adequate numbers of handicapped parking spaces in line with MAAB recommendations for parking areas of their size. The private parking lot at 40 Beach Street did not experience greater than 60% occupancy at any point during the parking study. Through cooperative arrangements with the 40 Beach Street Condo Association, the Town can utilize portions of this lot to manage parking during rare peak events like summer concerts. There is already precedent for this, as a local Boy Scouts group coordinates additional weekend beach parking in parts of the lot and the Association leases the far end of the lot for MBTA commuter rail parking. Additional areas that were not included in the parking study, but that can also potentially help absorb excess parking demand during peak events, include off-street parking lots at the American Legion, the First Parish Church, and Santander Bank.

Considering multimodal transportation options and connections is another component of improving parking management in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea. There is a lack of bicycle parking

throughout the downtown, which impacts people's ability to use non-car modes of travel and in turn can contribute to increased automobile and parking utilization. In addition, the 34 spaces set aside for MBTA commuter rail parking at the far end of the 40 Beach Street lot are in poor condition, with a lack of signage and pavement markings, uneven and cracked pavement, and haphazardly placed concrete curbs. While commuter rail usage patterns have changed significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, improving the condition of the MBTA parking spaces can encourage increased usage of this transit asset and help prepare the Town for potential long-term redevelopment. Improving these spaces also gives the Town another potential option for peak event parking, as noted above.

<u>Recommendations to improve off-street parking management in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea</u> <u>include the following:</u>

- Consider simplifying/consolidating regulations in off-street parking lots
- Assess parking signage in all off-street parking lots and enhance signage if necessary
- Assess utilization of resident sticker program, and consider designating additional resident spaces in municipal lots or leasing spaces from 40 Beach Street Condo Association
- Assess utilization of business placard program, and consider designating additional business spaces in municipal lots or leasing spaces from 40 Beach Street Condo Association
- Explore opportunities for education with downtown residents and businesses to increase usage of existing sticker and placard programs
- Enhance wayfinding and pedestrian connections to and from off-street parking lots (especially between Town Hall lot and Beach Street)
- Create an updated map of the Town Hall parking lot, and potentially other parking areas in the downtown, to share with local residents and business and to post on the Town website
- Explore opportunities for shared parking agreements with local institutions and businesses (e.g. American Legion, First Parish Church, Santander Bank) to manage parking demand during peak events
- Explore opportunities to add bicycle parking in the downtown.
- Work with the 40 Beach Street Condo Association and the MBTA to improve the quality of the MBTA commuter rail parking spaces in the 40 Beach Street parking lot and wayfinding connections to the commuter rail station.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings from this analysis conclude that downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea has enough parking available to meet demand. Parking occupancy is consistently below the 85% benchmark cited earlier in this report, indicating adequate parking supply. This does not mean that people driving will always find a readily available parking space immediately outside their destination. (Local businesses defined parking as "out in front" of their establishments in the Downtown Improvement Committee survey.) However, it does mean that in most instances, people driving should be able to find a parking space within a short walk (five minutes or less) from their destination.

The recommendations detailed in the previous section of this report will help the Town ensure it is making the best use of the parking assets available. Over the long-term, it will be important to monitor changes in downtown residential and commercial occupancy to stay aware of potential changes to parking demand. The Town should continue to work with the Planning Board, the Downtown Improvement Committee, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, and other stakeholders to implement the recommendations in this report.

It will also be important to monitor potential long-term redevelopment and how it might impact parking demand downtown. As noted earlier, the state's multifamily zoning requirement for MBTA communities may eventually lead to the production of new multifamily housing in and around the downtown, as well as increased demand for commuter rail parking at the MBTA station. Depending on site location and development characteristics, new multifamily housing may generate additional demand for short-term vehicle trips downtown and/or long-term downtown parking needs. The parking data collected during this study can help determine whether the existing parking supply in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea can absorb future parking demand, or whether additional parking management measures may be necessary.

While good parking management is a key component of a vibrant downtown district, it is important to consider the many benefits of a walkable and bikeable downtown. Ensuring that the downtown is accessible to all visitors, whether they arrive by car, foot, train, or bicycle, should be a key component of any parking decisions moving forward. The Town should also consider pushing future developers to incorporate Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures that invest in potential shuttle services and other modes of transit to ensure that new residents can safely and comfortably travel to and from the downtown. These strategies combined will help ensure that the Town continues to use the available public parking assets efficiently and effectively.

Appendix A: Hourly Parking Occupancy Maps for May 24, 2022 and July 16, 2022

