

Typical Friday / Saturday night traffic and parking congestion in Wicker Park.



Creative Commons photo by Ben Husmann: <http://bit.ly/1i51Zt>

Executive Summary

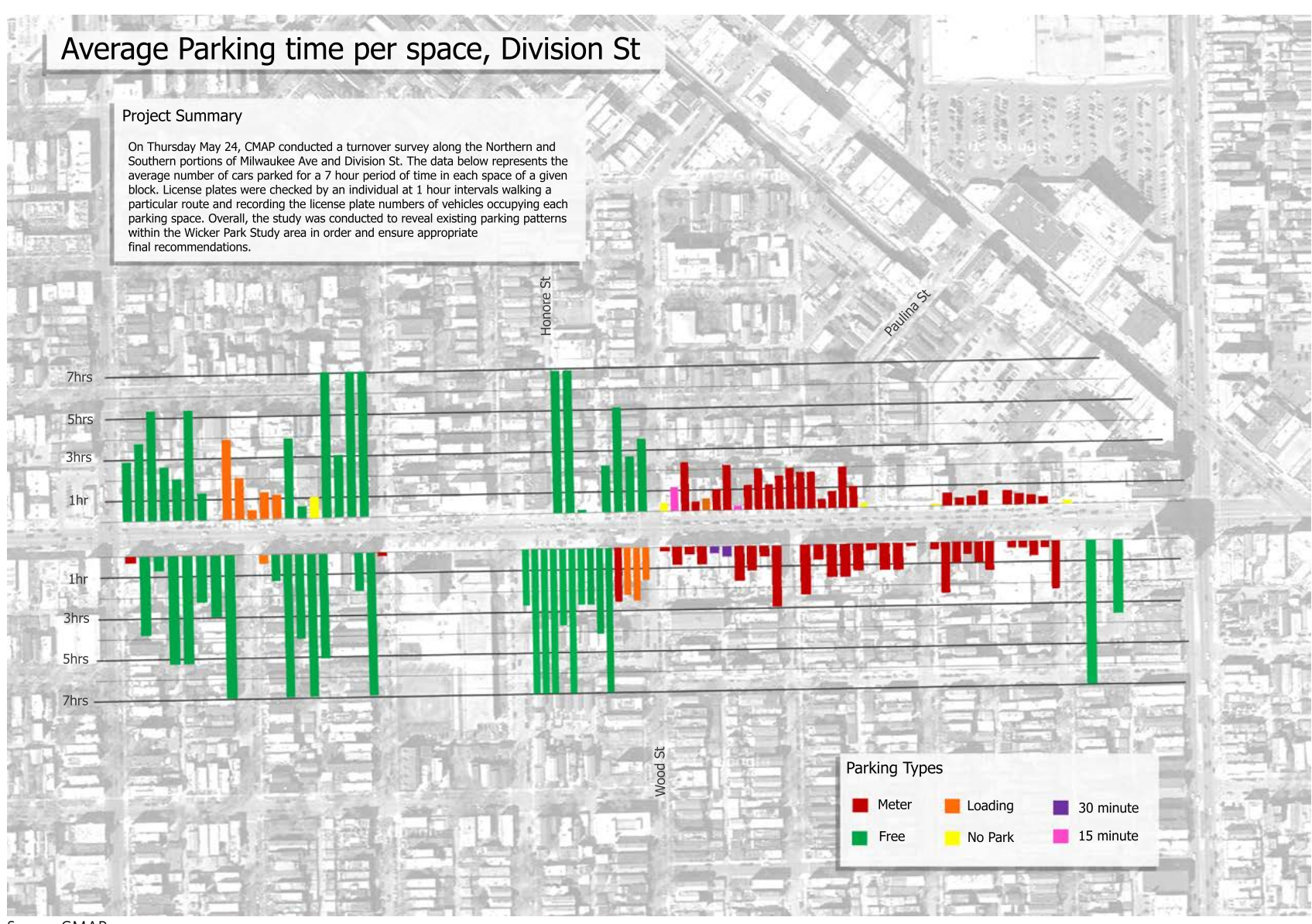
ADDRESSING PARKING CHALLENGES: Innovative Parking Solutions for a Vibrant Community

In an effort to improve the parking and transportation conditions in the area to better support local businesses and residents, the Wicker Park Bucktown Special Services Area #33 (WPB SSA) partnered with CMAP and the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) to review existing conditions and provide strategic recommendations for parking management. Parking management can benefit everyone — even people who don't drive. Good parking management balances the needs of drivers, businesses, and their customers with overall transportation efficiency and community impact. It's not an easy task; the goals of different groups can be conflicting.

In 2009, the WPB SSA adopted The WPB Master Plan to "balance that good that comes from increased prosperity...with the strong desire to preserve local attitude and diversity and reinforce local arts, ecology, heritage, affordability, and values: drive less, bike more, buy local, go green, inhabit the sidewalks, indulge in urban life candy, honor the past, welcome a progressive future, and do so as a unified community." Developed through a broad public process, the plan includes a vision for the future of Wicker Park and Bucktown and identifies recommendations for achieving that vision, with one section dedicated to parking.

In the WPB neighborhood, more than 20 percent of households do not own a car and about 45 percent are "car-lite" households, where households of two or more have no more than one car and single-person households do not have a car. Many features of the area enable a car-free or a "car-lite" lifestyle, and future planning decisions should be sure to consider this demographic. Making the conscious decision to attract more residents who are interested in living car-free or "car-lite" can increase the tax base without significantly endangering scarce parking resources, and residents who spend less on transportation can put their savings toward local businesses.

1. American Community Survey, U.S. Census 2010, Household Size by Vehicles Available.



When non-commercial, personal vehicles abuse loading zones, double-parked loading vehicles create unsafe road conditions.



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Approximate breakdown of the WPB parking supply

Parking Type	Number of spaces
Free	8,553
Permit	1,775
Metered	1,025
Loading	186
15 Minute Standing	83
30 Minute Standing	28
Total spaces	11,650

Source: CMAP.

Current parking configuration on Schiller Street.



Potential to add additional parking, with back-in angled parking.



Potential parking reconfiguration with back-in angled parking on Schiller Street using Streetmix. Source: www.streetmix.net.

Parking is a complex and often contentious issue that affects everyone, no matter how they choose to get around. Local businesses want their customers to be able to find a spot close to their store, drivers want a convenient and cheap parking space, local residents don't want their residential streets filled with parked cars from outside the area, but riders don't want to be stuck in traffic behind drivers searching for parking; people who appreciate the walkability of the area don't want to see giant parking lots or garages. When parking is managed effectively, there are always a few prime spaces available, and drivers with more urgent needs can quickly find a space without circling the block and causing congestion. When parking is not efficiently managed, there may be overcrowding in certain areas, with drivers circling the block while other spaces sit underutilized. Providing an excess of supply without appropriate pricing can entice more people to drive and harm the walkability and the character of the area.

To satisfy various parking goals, professionals recommend implementing parking strategies to achieve a parking occupancy rate of about 85 percent at any time. This means that about one of every seven spaces is available, and a customer can easily find a parking space. This is most often achieved by demand-based pricing to incentivize long-term parkers to park in less desirable parking spaces.

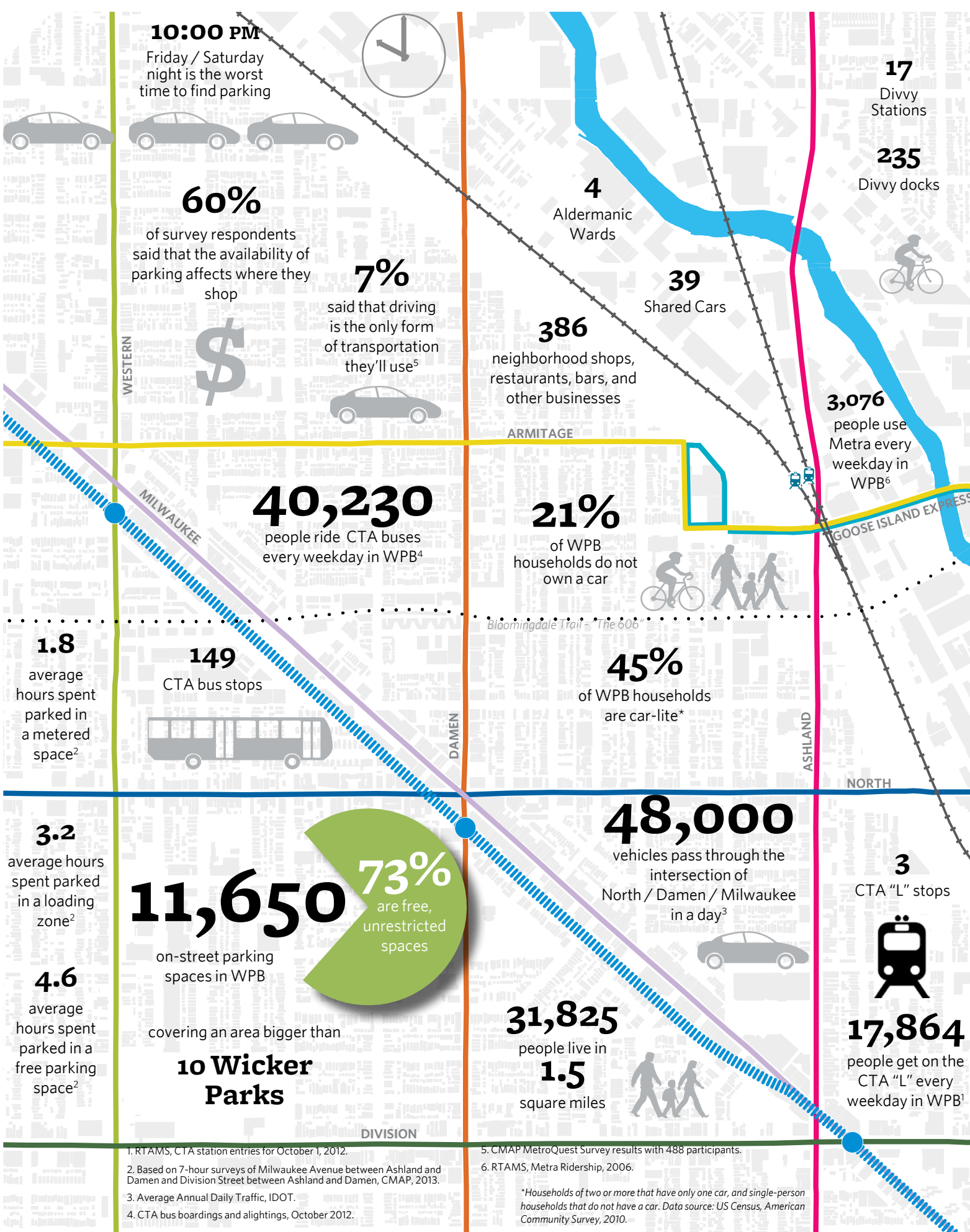
During the planning process for the WPB Master Plan, in 2008, the Chicago City Council approved a deal to lease the City's parking meters to a private company for 75 years. Shortly thereafter, the neighborhood parking meters went from an undeniably low \$0.25 /hour to \$2.00 /hour. While the meter prices needed to be raised, the 800 percent price increase was significant. The higher prices have created parking availability in congested areas during hours of enforcement, but in many areas, the pendulum has swung too far. Occupancy rates are lower than desirable in prime retail corridors, nearby streets with free parking are clogged with cars avoiding the meters, and meters are not enforced when WPB sees the most traffic — late on Friday and Saturday nights — causing complete parking congestion. Recent changes to the parking meter concession agreement made Sunday parking free, causing more congestion in WPB during prime shopping hours (although this may soon be changed).

In the report, we talk about the "success" of the neighborhood. The vision of success is based on the goals and values espoused in the WPB Master Plan. Some of the strongest attractions to WPB are the unique local businesses, high number of pedestrians and bicyclists, an active arts community, and a variety of housing options. WPB is a vibrant, yet "gritty" neighborhood whose history has a diverse and colorful background. Keeping WPB colorful, helping local businesses thrive, and getting more people on the sidewalks everyday are desirable signs of "success."

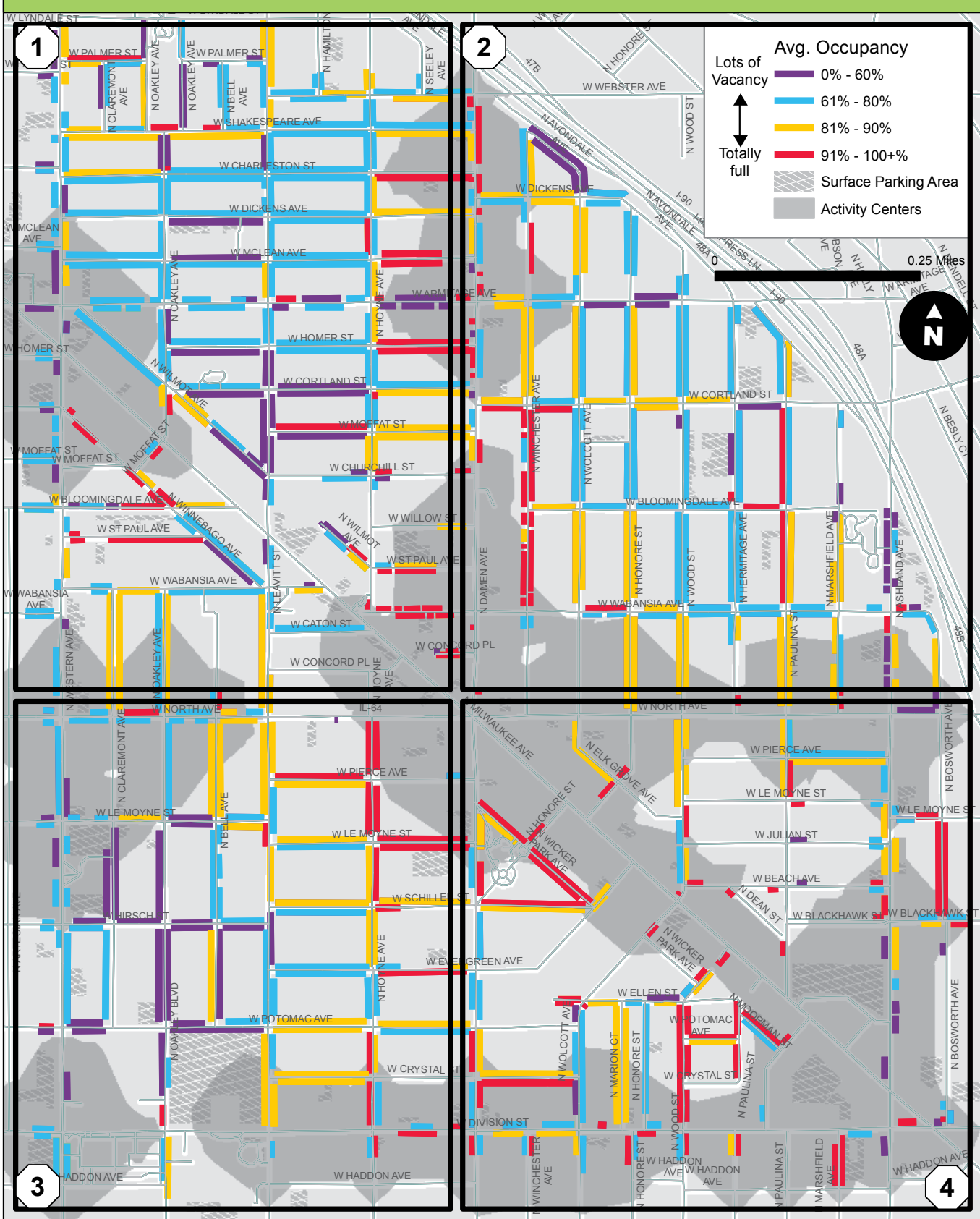
Many of the opportunities for improvement in parking that were identified in the 2009 Master Plan are echoed in this report. Below are the eight identified priority goals for improving parking in WPB:

1. Balance parking supply and demand with pricing, paying particular attention to when and where WPB is most congested.
2. Improve utilization of loading zones and valet parking spaces through education and enforcement.
3. Use technology, apps, and signage to better inform people about parking, particularly to highlight streets with underutilized parking.
4. Explore changes to the residential permit system to prevent permits from becoming merely "hunting licenses."
5. Increase shared parking arrangements to better utilize the existing parking supply, particularly with institutional uses in the study area.
6. Improve the safety of bicycling and walking, and continue to promote active transportation.
7. Make improvements to the safety and quality of public transportation, to increase the attractiveness of transit as an alternative to driving.
8. Investigate the feasibility of a taxi stand near the Milwaukee / Damen / North intersection.

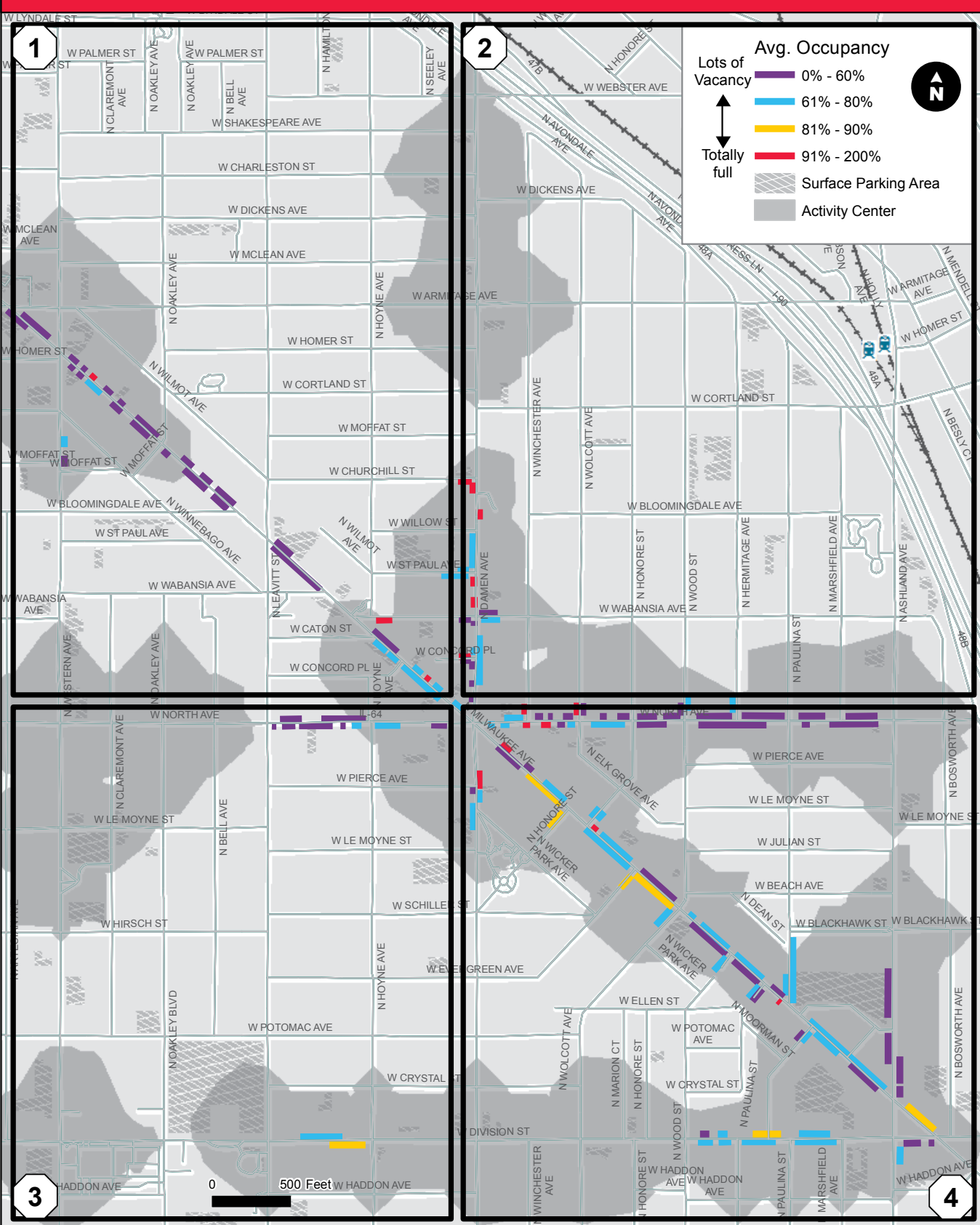
Visit http://bit.ly/WPB_Parking to download the full report.



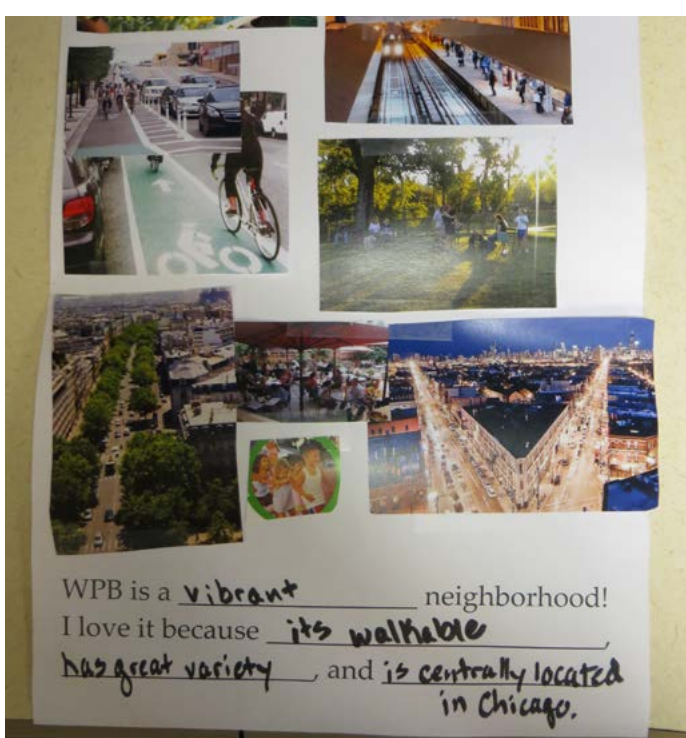
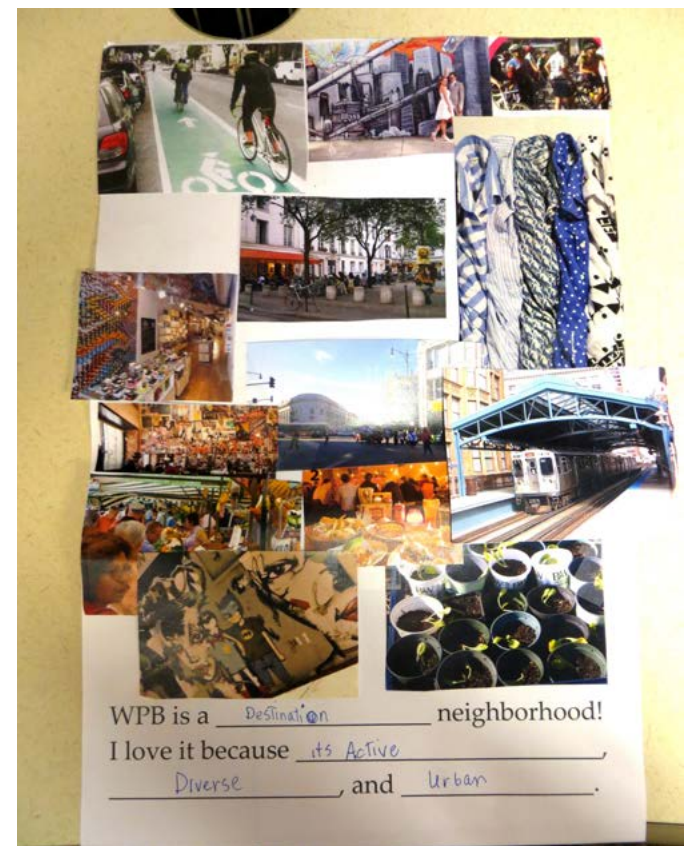
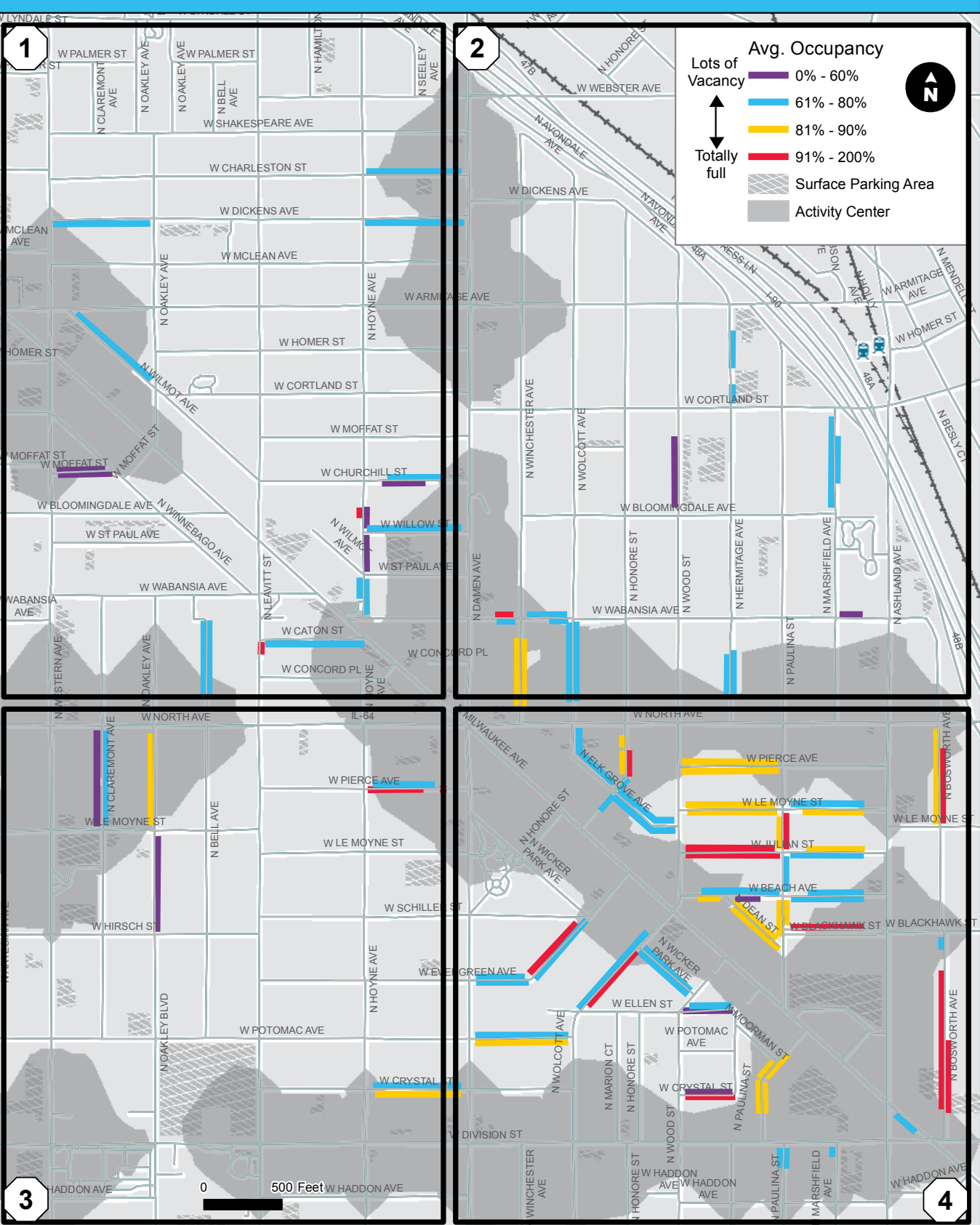
Average Parking Occupancy: Free Parking Spaces



Average Parking Occupancy: Metered Parking Spaces



Average Parking Occupancy: Permit Parking Spaces



The full report details the process used to identify these goals, more explanation as to why we need to manage parking, case studies from other cities, an examination of the current parking conditions in WPB, descriptions of various parking strategies, and the implementation strategies associated with each goal.

