CMAP

Downtown Lisle Parking Management Plan

October 2018

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Unless otherwise specified, all photos and maps are by CMAP staff.

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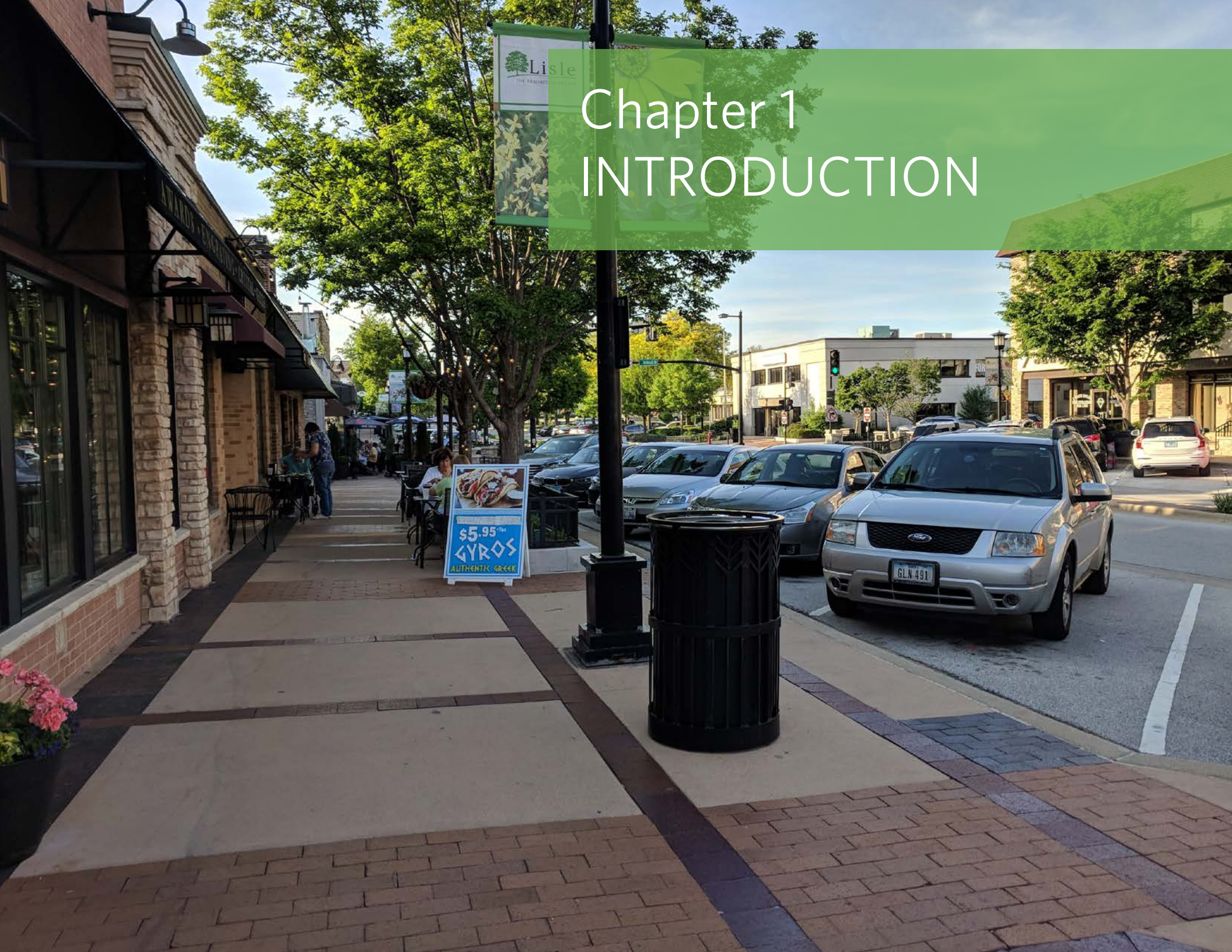


Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

The Village of Lisle is known for its friendly residents, who share and appreciate the community's small-town quality, particularly within their downtown. The Village's reputable school districts and charming downtown make it a desirable place to live, work, and raise a family. The downtown is home to local restaurants, shops, a splash park, and a museum. The Chamber of Commerce hosts a number of popular events such as the Lisle's Farmers Market, Lisle Ale Fest, the local Turkey Trot, Tune-Up 5k, and the Eyes to the Skies Festival, which bring out residents and attract numerous visitors from surrounding communities.

Lisle is well-situated in the western suburbs of Chicago, accessible via multiple nearby interstates. Metra's Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) commuter rail line provides frequent service into Chicago with Pace Bus connections from the train station. Many Lisle residents and people from neighboring communities use Metra to commute to Chicago using the Lisle station. These assets make the downtown a central point where residents, visitors and commuters alike can enjoy a nice meal and boutique shopping, all within a pedestrian-friendly area.

All of these assets that contribute to the downtown's quality of life also help with the economic success of the community. Along with success comes an increase in the demand for parking. Lisle's downtown was originally laid out when most people walked to amenities like stores, schools, and parks. Having retained the historic building density on the west side of Main Street, Lisle has a concentration of businesses and offices in a compact area. From restaurants to dentist offices to a craft space and shops, addressing parking demand in the downtown area is varied and complex. Balancing the needs of local businesses, restaurants, rail commuters, residents, and visitors is no small feat. In addition to commuter and customer parking needs, there are many employees arriving by car. When everyone is trying to go to the same part of town, it can become a challenge to find a parking spot for each automobile.

"Everyone knows everyone down here."

–Main St. business owner and Lisle resident

Purpose of the Plan

This plan seeks to develop locally-appropriate parking management strategies to balance the needs of the community – residents and businesses – with the Village's long-range goals for development, while maintaining a balanced budget. Crafted with assistance from Village staff, the planning process began in June 2016 and included input from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders throughout.

Lisle's "parking problem" is more complex than most people realize. At times, the village has high demand for parking on Main Street, which is good because it indicates that it is a popular destination. Meanwhile, spaces in the public lot behind those businesses are often vacant. Without knowing about other options, drivers will continue to search for spaces directly in front of their desired destinations, causing parking congestion.

The supply and management of parking impact how a community looks, feels, and functions. Too little supply makes the downtown unattractive to potential businesses; mismanaged supply keeps prime spaces full while spaces further from the core stay vacant. Too much parking can increase traffic congestion and the demand for parking when more people decide to drive. An oversupply of surface parking can negatively impact the built environment by creating large gaps between buildings, making walking and bicycling unpleasant and limiting other tax-generating uses.

Any place worth visiting will have a high demand for parking, so a parking problem is a good problem to have. The same traits that make a compact downtown an attractive place to be make it difficult to find parking when prime spaces are not managed with pricing. The strategies in this plan were developed to strike the right balance between parking supply and demand.

Parking Study Process

Many of Lisle's residents and business owners have expressed their observations of parking challenges, priorities, and ideas throughout the planning process within both the Downtown Master Plan and the Parking study. Staff received input that ranged from satisfaction with the parking availability to desires for a parking garage to frustrations with commuter parking options and signage issues. Every aspect of the public input and data collected plays an important role in developing a comprehensive and strategic parking plan.

In order to identify Lisle's unique parking challenges and opportunities, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), in collaboration with the Village of Lisle, researched the parking patterns and transportation options in downtown Lisle. From the conditions presented in the initial report and the priorities of stakeholders, residents, and business owners, CMAP developed recommendations for the Village to manage the downtown parking supply.

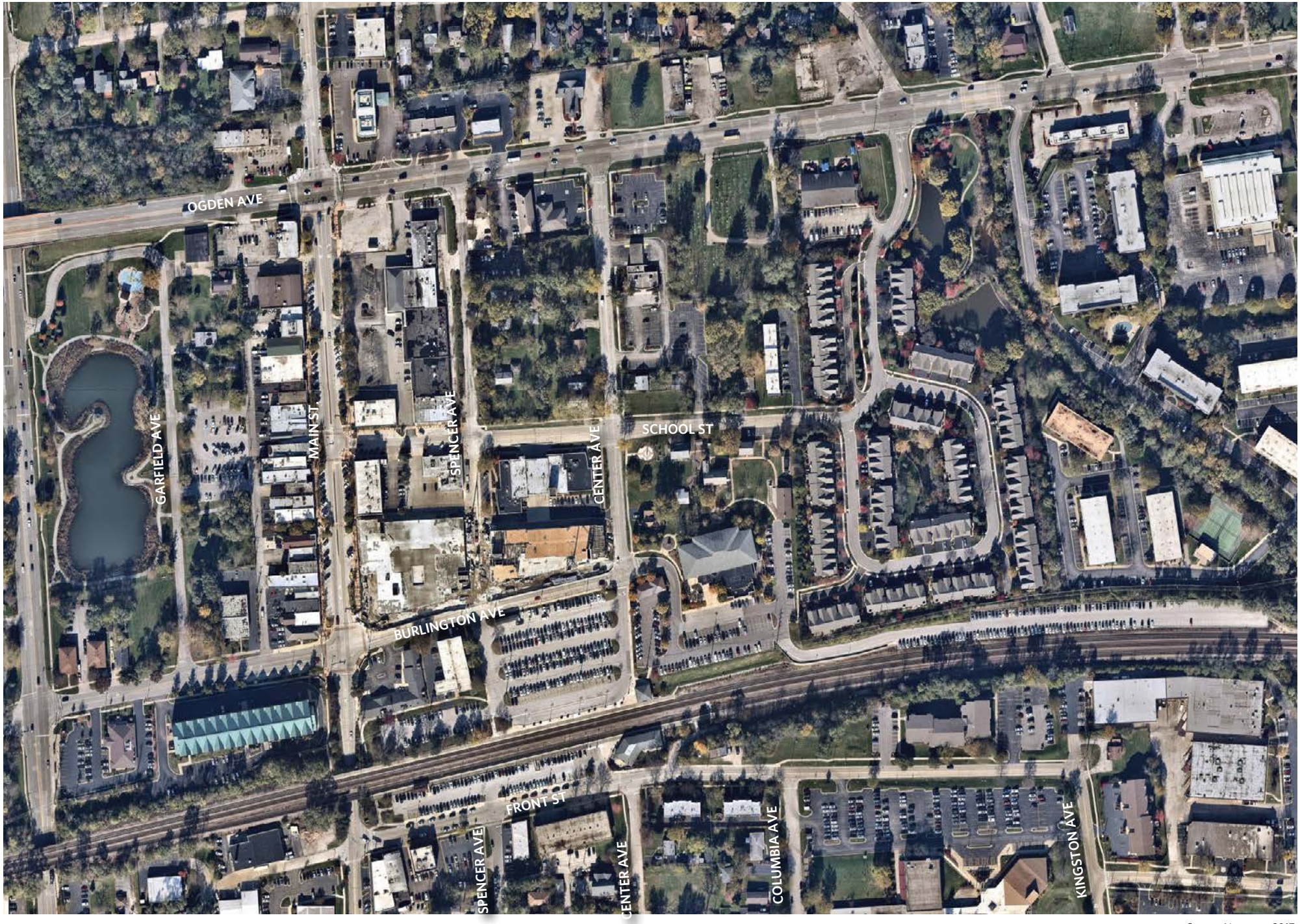
Downtown Master Plan workshop hosted by Houseal Lavigne, where residents also weighed in on parking challenges.

The Planning process, developed in collaboration with the Village of Lisle, involved a four-phase timeline.

- In the first phase, CMAP collaborated with the Village of Lisle to understand the history of parking in downtown Lisle, including commuter lots, and developed a process for data collection. During this phase, the Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC), also serving to advise planners on the ongoing Downtown Lisle Master Plan, was identified as the project's steering committee.
- During the second phase, CMAP staff conducted interviews with community stakeholders and performed parking occupancy and turnover counts in downtown Lisle. The resulting report, *Downtown Parking and Transportation Overview*[1], provides a summary of these findings.
- In phase three, potential recommendations that resulted from the existing conditions reported were tested with the public via an online survey. A Downtown Parking Recommendations Memo was prepared and circulated to Village departments, DPAC, the Village Board, and community stakeholders for input and adjustments.
- The final phase included plan development and finalization. In coordination with Village of Lisle, the team expanded and solidified project goals and implementation strategies.

1. The Downtown Parking and Transportation Overview is available on the project website: https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs/lta/lisle

Figure 1: Downtown Lisle



Source: Nearmap, 2017.

Community Involvement and Input

In order to get a detailed understanding of Lisle's perspective on parking, a series of public outreach and engagement opportunities were designed to gather input throughout the project phases. A description of outreach strategies is provided below.

One-on-One Interviews

CMAP staff conducted 12 in-person confidential interviews with stakeholders, residents, and main street business owners. Several re-occurring themes were highlighted, including the difficulty of finding a parking spot on certain streets during lunchtime and early evening hours. Some employees are unsure about where to park, or dislike the Garfield parking lot, and some are parking in spots intended for customers.

Online Community Survey

An online survey was created that collected responses for two months, between June 23, 2017 to August 21, 2017. During this time, over 430 people provided detailed feedback on parking priorities and possible strategies to address identified issues. The goal of the survey was to introduce the project to the community, initiate conversations surrounding the topic of parking, learn about community parking priorities, and gather input to develop the strategic recommendations ultimately included in this plan.

Community Meetings

A public workshop was held in conjunction with Houseal Lavigne & Associates (HLA) to understand development priorities for the downtown and to collect input on parking challenges and opportunities. At the workshop, participants learned about HLA's Downtown Master Plan and the Parking Plan.

In conjunction with HLA, a public open house was held at Village Hall for the Downtown Master Plan and to display CMAP's recommendations developed over the course of the past year's research, analyses, and public input. The open house was designed to solicit information from the community and to gather feedback on the proposed strategies to address the parking challenges.

Additionally, all steering committee meetings were televised on the local cable access station.

Residents and stakeholders reviewing the identified parking challenges and proposed recommendations.

Chapter 2
CHANGING APPROACHES TO PARKING

Parking Approaches

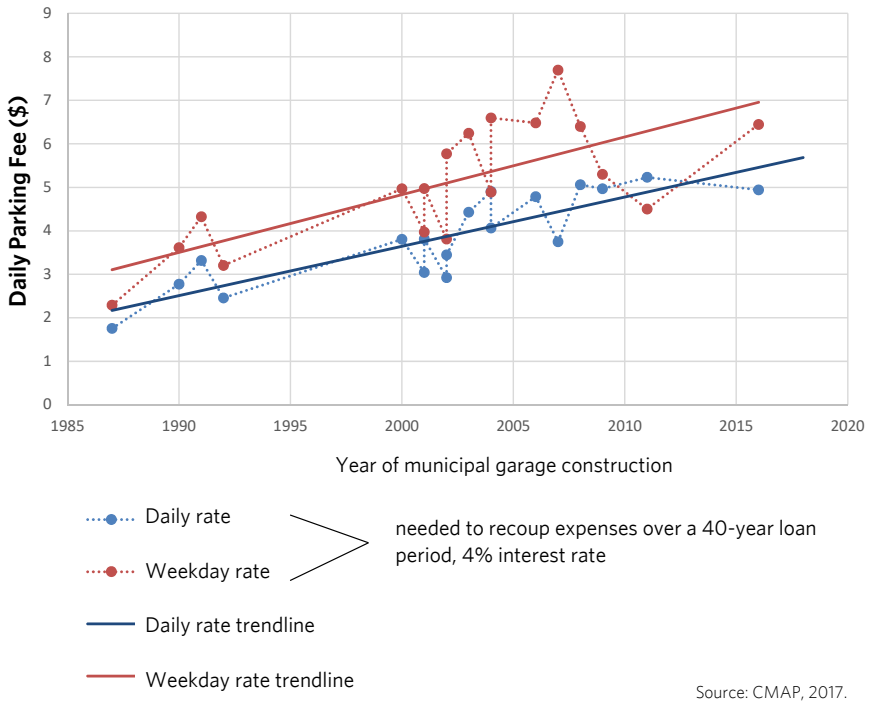
The approach to parking taken in most suburban downtowns from about the 1950s to present day has been to make parking free in order to attract customers. This free parking entices customers, employees, and Metra commuters to drive in and leave their car parked for long periods of time.

To mitigate the negative impacts of parking, strategies such as time limits, designated commuter spaces, and enforcement have been used. The approach of providing free parking to attract customers can work well in communities without a significant amount of commercial activity, or in areas where land is plentiful and cheap, and surface parking is allowed to expand outward. But this approach has limitations in traditional downtowns, where a large number of amenities and activities occupy a small area.

Many downtowns have used municipal bonds or TIF funds to construct parking garages, a strategy that was much more affordable 20 years ago. In a review of municipal garages constructed in the Chicago region between 1985 and 2016, CMAP found that the costs to construct parking garages have risen to over $30,000 per space. The daily parking fee necessary to recoup expenses for a municipality has gone from less than $2 in 1985 to over $5 in 2016. If drivers are only paying Monday-Friday, the cost increases to nearly $7 daily.

Most drivers are unwilling to spend $5 or $7 to park, and most municipalities cannot afford the millions of dollars needed for constructing garages. There are other strategies that the Village can take to better use its existing parking supply and to build a fund that can be used to increase parking supply in the future, as needed.

Figure 2: Parking fee needed to recoup garage expenses over 40 years



Source: CMAP, 2017.

This chart shows the parking fees that would be necessary to recover the expense of municipal garages over a 40-year loan period, with a 4 percent interest rate, assuming a full garage. The calculations are based on data collected from municipalities that constructed garages throughout northeastern Illinois between 1985 and 2016. The weekday rate would be the fee necessary to recoup expenses if the garage is only filled Monday through Friday.

Parking Management Strategies

"I am definitely not willing to pay for parking. I try to go to downtown as little as possible because of the lack of parking and exiting out of parking spaces is a nightmare."

-Metroquest survey respondent

Parking management strategies are intended to balance parking supply and demand through time limits, pricing, and other regulations. Well-designed parking policies will support the continued health and vibrancy of a downtown. If prime parking spaces are always full, frustrated customers and visitors may stop visiting downtown, ultimately hurting businesses. If there are always one or two parking spaces available per block, most people will be satisfied. Unfortunately for a parking manager, the job is only noticed when things aren't going well.

Supply and Demand

To address a community's parking problems, it is important to think about supply and demand. When the supply of a commodity is limited and the demand for it is high, the price goes up. If the commodity is free, it will be quickly used up by the first people who get to it, regardless of who might need it or want it more. Imagine a gas station offering free gasoline for one day, or a high school handing out free pizza. In these situations, supply and long lines are the only factors dictating how much will be consumed.

The same economic principles apply to parking, which is why pricing is important. There is a limited supply of convenient parking spaces, and they are in high demand. Most communities with "parking problems" (excess demand) will find underutilized parking in less desirable locations (excess supply) and can find ways to encourage people to utilize it (pricing).

A parking problem is a good problem to have – it means that people want to come to the community. If a community needs to charge for parking, it should be to ration a limited supply of a coveted good – a convenient parking space. By charging the right price for parking, some people are encouraged to park further from the high-demand area, others move from spaces as quickly as possible in order to pay as little as possible, and the premium spaces are made available to others. In that way, the same number of spaces can serve a greater number of visitors.

What Motivates Parkers?

Everyone wants to find parking that is convenient to their final destination. However, without effective parking regulations, some people may choose to occupy the most convenient spaces all day long, while parking that is just outside of the most popular area, is underutilized.

This is where market reality – or carrots and sticks such as pricing, time limits, and permitting – comes into play. When looking for a parking spot, it is usually the driver's goal to find the closest spot to the destination, regardless of the amount of time they plan to spend. From there, people may be motivated by time constraints, money, or their willingness to walk. Therefore, in order to manage and price parking effectively, we must consider the needs and motivations of different people. Based off of similar categories from the Redwood City Parking Plan, we have identified three categories of parkers: convenience parkers, reasonable parkers, and bargain parkers.

- **Convenience Parkers.** Convenience Parkers may be new visitors to the downtown or visit occasionally for a short meal or errand. They probably do not know where the Garfield lot is, or what the restrictions are, and they do not want to risk getting lost on residential streets. For the sake of convenience, they may be willing to pay for a parking space near their destination. If they do not find a nearby spot, this user group is the most likely to give up and shop or eat at another location.
- **Reasonable Parkers.** Reasonable Parkers are regular customers of downtown businesses or may live or work nearby. Their trips downtown are of medium length, perhaps to meet a friend for a meal or shop for the day. They may also be employees of downtown businesses, who may be willing to pay for a convenient designated parking space. Reasonable Parkers prefer the closest free parking, but they are willing to walk to free parking. In some instances, they will pay for convenient parking. Many in this user group should be parking in more remote lots, such as the Garfield lot, but will park on Main Street if they can get away with it.
- **Bargain Parkers.** Bargain Parkers are willing to circle the block, walk several blocks to park, or may decide to walk or ride a bike, rather than pay for a parking space. Alternatively, they may travel elsewhere if they think they will not find free parking in the downtown. Some bargain parkers make frequent long-term trips to the downtown, others infrequently visit.

Because each type of parker has different priorities, understanding these priorities will help Lisle to select and implement parking management policies. These priorities can be managed by implementing policies that distribute parkers throughout a system's parking network. The most sought after spaces in a parking network are usually those directly in front of businesses and retail activity, such as the spaces on Main Street. These high-demand streets are followed closely by spaces located on side streets just off of the commercial core, corresponding to School Street or Burlington Avenue. Surface lots like the Garfield Lot may be less desirable, but are frequented more if they are easy to access. Because of the perceived hassle of accessing them, structured parking facilities, or remote surface lots are typically the least popular.

If the price of parking is adjusted according to demand, the parking demands of the bargain parkers and the convenience parkers are met with different parking spaces, so that the overall demand is spread more evenly around the downtown area. A parking system that lets some drivers park for free in less desirable spaces (further from the core demand area), and allows other drivers to pay for the convenience of a front-door space will open up options for drivers and create parking availability.

Time limits and other regulations

Many downtowns, including Lisle's, have traditionally relied on time limits to encourage turnover. Time limits would work if every trip or visit required the same amount of time, but that's not the case in today's eclectic downtowns. What would the ideal time limit be for a mixed-use block with a coffee shop, a day spa, and a bank? A person going to the bank may only need to park for a couple of minutes, while a spa treatment at the salon could last several hours, and coffee shop visits vary from five minutes to all day. When parking spaces are time-restricted according to the surrounding uses, they are effectively removed from the general supply of parking to every driver who needs to park for longer, or wants to visit multiple locations.

The different stores and destinations also have different peak hours of demand, and businesses may change from one year to the next. If there are a few spaces for short-term parking and a few spaces for long-term parking, there may be times when all of the long-term spaces are full, and other spa visitors would not be able to use the available short-term spaces. It is not an efficient use of the valuable resource of parking. It is also costly and challenging to enforce time limits–especially time limits that vary by space. You could have extremely rigorous enforcement to prevent abuse, but this is not customer-friendly, and ends up punishing the patrons of downtown businesses.

The many regulations and restrictions serve various objectives. The Village wants employees to have a place to park, but without regulating the parking through permits and time limits, such spaces would be used all day by commuters driving to the Lisle station, and employees looking for a convenient space. The hourly restrictions in the core exist to encourage parking turnover and availability for shoppers.

Neighboring community strategies

Lisle can look to neighboring communities for ideas and solutions to local parking problems. Lisle residents frequently cited strategies used by neighboring communities to address parking, such as parking garages. Interestingly, even with parking garages, many communities continue to struggle with many of the same problems Lisle faces: congested on-street parking in the downtown core, high commuter parking demand, and low parking utilization for remote areas or in garages.

- **La Grange.** In 2004, the Village of La Grange constructed an $8 million parking garage with 368 spaces. The garage was funded by a public transportation grant for $3.2 million, a $4.5 million TIF note and $300,000 of available TIF reserve funds. The TIF note was paid off in four years utilizing the annual property tax increment. A 0.25 percent non-home rule sales tax increase was approved by referendum to cover $35,000 in annual operating and maintenance costs, including funds for long-term maintenance. If Lisle chooses to pursue a parking garage, Village leaders may want to consider a financing arrangement that ensures that the drivers who use the facility – rather than the community at large -- bear the financial burden of its construction and maintenance.

  La Grange has also chosen to institute time limits, which makes the parking garage available to downtown shoppers and visitors but not Metra riders. The primary benefit of having the garage is that a driver knows that they can go to the garage and find a parking spot if they are unable to find an on-street space. For most, it is not the first-choice parking spot, but a guaranteed back-up. It is appealing to a downtown to have that reserve, but the costs are so high that it is not a financially prudent decision if the Village has to pay for the construction and maintenance of the garage in the absence of grants or outside funding.

- **Naperville.** Parking in downtown Naperville is at a premium. In an effort to compete with other retail centers that provide free parking, the City has built several parking garages in which it is free to park (starting in 1985). By the time Naperville completed construction of their second parking garage, parking demand had already negatively impacted the downtown to the degree that the city set out to develop a system to review parking conditions. Business owners prioritized customer satisfaction and engineers analyzed occupancy statistics in order to develop a "Continuous Improvement Model."

  In the Continuous Improvement Model, businesses are able to offer free parking, but cannot limit it to their own customers. The free parking is paid for out of a tax on food and beverages, so everyone is taxed at a higher rate, regardless of whether they use the parking. Someone who walks, rides a bike, or takes transit will pay more to shop and dine in downtown Naperville so that shoppers who drive can park for free.

  What Naperville has done incredibly well is to create shared parking and a park-once downtown. This model has satisfied the City of Naperville and its downtown business owners, but the city pays as much as $5 million annually in order to service the debt and cover maintenance costs. As Naperville gains in popularity, it may become hard for the city to keep up with demand. A recent addition to the Naperville Van Buren parking garage in 2008 cost the City nearly $48,000 per net new space.

  This is not seen as a sustainable, long-term approach that would work in Lisle, between the increasing cost of providing structured parking, the seemingly insatiable demand for free parking, and the funding of garages through taxes that impact all shoppers, rather than just those that drive. In addition, the Naperville Metra station is not adjacent to the downtown like it is in Lisle. Naperville has a waiting list that is between 9 and 12 years long for parking at their Metra station.

- **Hinsdale.** Downtown Hinsdale has a thriving downtown, with the parking problems to match. They also have old-fashioned parking meters on their core commercial streets. Parking at the meters during business hours is at 90 percent occupancy. After a review of parking occupancy and turnover, Hinsdale discovered that many employees were parking at the metered spaces because they didn't want to walk the two blocks to the free employee permit spaces. One of the most convenient parking lots in the core had meters, but spaces were rarely available for customers. The Village decided to upgrade the payment system in that lot to allow for credit cards and raised the cost to park from $0.25 per hour to $1 per hour. On the day that the new, more expensive meters went into effect, the Village ran out of the free employee permit hangtags. Parking became available for customers who were willing to pay for the convenience of a close spot.

The Village has partnered with an elementary school to construct a shared parking garage, and continues to view the customer lot price adjustment as a model for managing demand.

Old-fashioned meters that only accept coin payments would be harmful to a downtown at a time when few people carry coins. However, the approach of creating vacancy by moving long-term parkers to the fringe through credit-card enabled meters (or an app) is something that Lisle can consider for Metra commuters and in the future on Main Street, as more developments are built and there is a higher demand for parking.

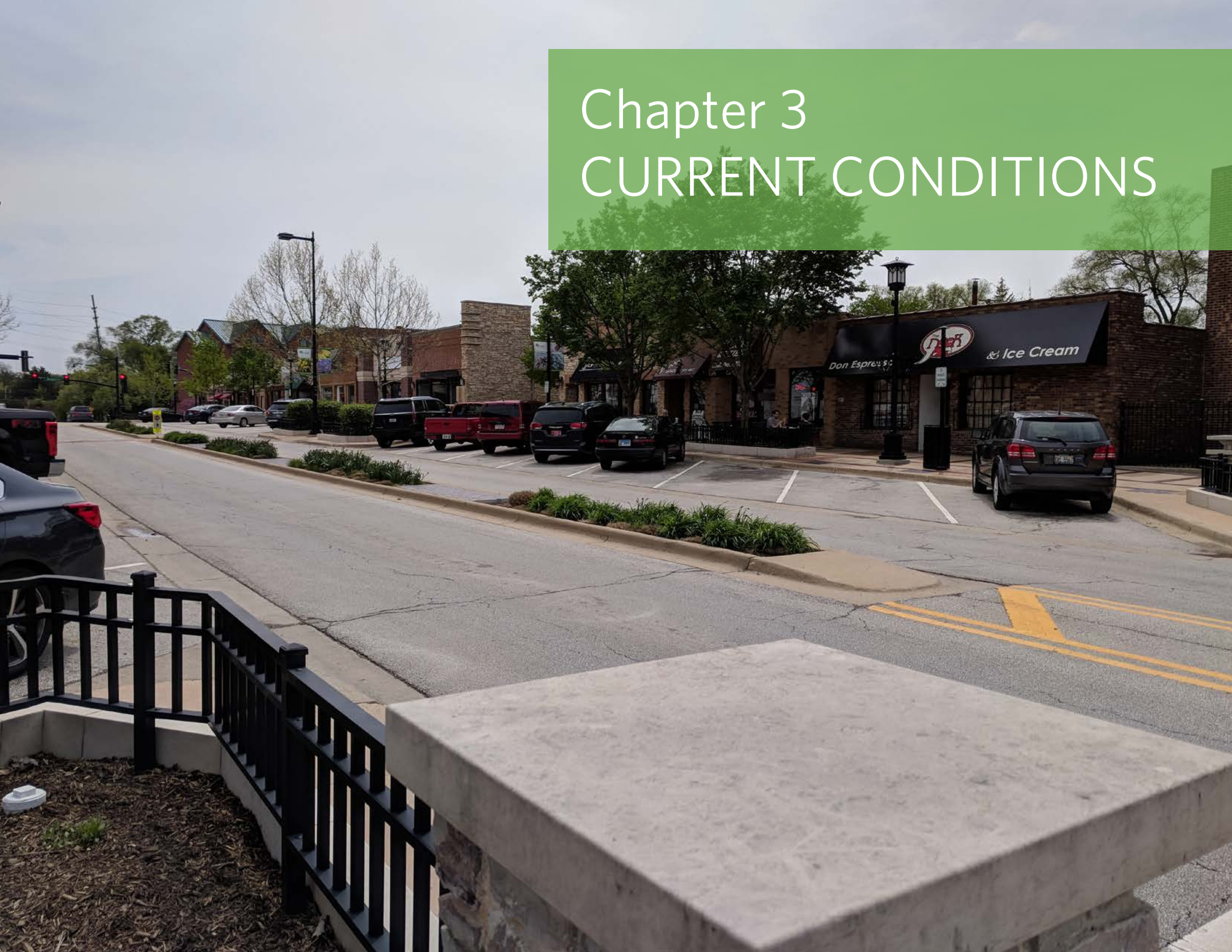
Implications for Lisle: Develop a "park-once" downtown and share parking

Lisle needs to have enough parking available to support the local businesses. To accomplish this, it is critical to first ensure that the Village is using its existing spaces efficiently. This can be accomplished by making improvements to public lots and signage, partnering with owners of private parking lots to make spaces publicly available, supporting all modes of transportation—which includes creating a comfortable walking and bicycling environment—and adding parking spaces in a judicious and fiscally-responsible manner.

"I think parking should be paid for by the people who use it and benefit from it."

-Metroquest survey respondent

Chapter 3
CURRENT CONDITIONS



Current Parking Conditions

The downtown Lisle study area contains over 2,500 parking spaces and slightly less than 1,000 are for public or commuter use (commuter parking is located in publicly owned lots and several private lots in the downtown area). The public use spaces include street parking in and around the downtown core and parking in the Garfield Lot. Private parking lots account for approximately 1,350 off-street parking spaces.

Lisle's overall peak parking occupancy was measured at just over 50 percent, with some locations heavily utilized and others underutilized. Downtown Lisle's parking supply is large enough to accommodate demand and growth, but several factors work against its overall utility. First, the vast majority of spaces are for private and commuter use. The private lots create a piecemeal supply of parking with some full lots and many more underutilized private lots. Second, many streets do not allow on-street parking. Third, there are few options for employees or long-term parking. Parking at the commuter rail station is in high demand. Additional key findings include the following:

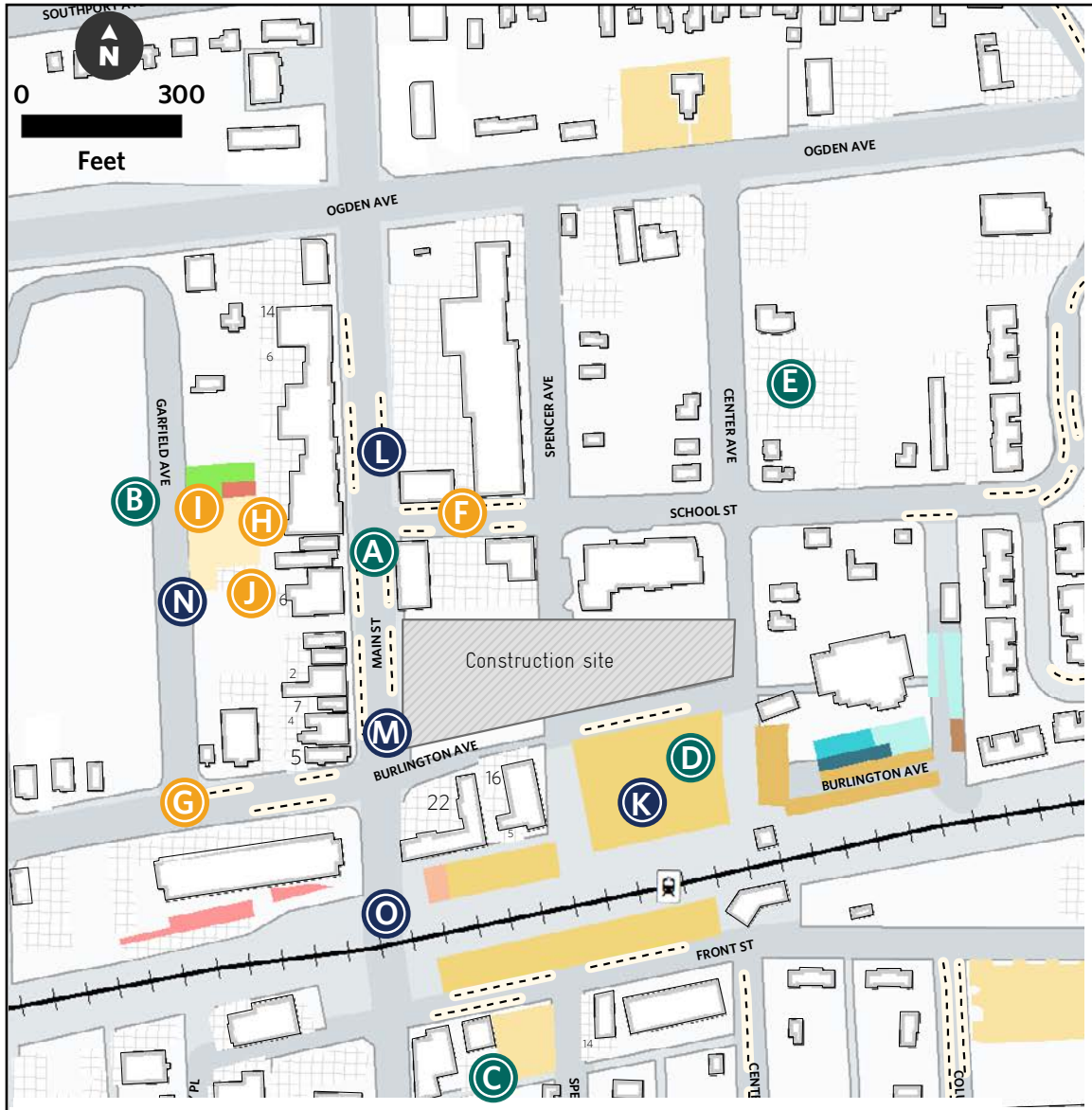
- Adding spaces with diagonal parking was a good way to increase supply in the core, but head-in diagonal spaces can reduce visibility for drivers backing out of spaces, which creates increased potential for crashes with other cars or people riding bikes
- The overall demand for parking is highest at lunch time when the commuter lots are full and on-street spaces in two locations see high occupancy, but that peak is still low compared to the overall supply
- Bicycling has not been developed to its full potential as a mode of transportation, especially regarding a lack of north-south routes across the BNSF railroad and north to the Morton Arboretum
- During the midday turnover survey between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., 20 percent of the spaces on Main Street, School Street, and Burlington Avenue were never occupied
- Even when spaces on Main Street are full, the Garfield lot remains underutilized
- Many commuters use Pace Bus to get to the Lisle Metra station, but few walk

Because less than one quarter of Lisle's supply of public parking is on-street, rather than in off-street parking lots, identifying opportunities to increase the on-street supply could be helpful to address supply and demand challenges. Additionally, with over 50 percent of the total parking supply tied up in private ownership, identifying opportunities for shared parking should be a priority.

An additional parking lot may help the village alleviate some parking pressures, but without paid parking on Main Street, the primary problem of customers not being able to find a convenient spot will not be solved. A garage would serve as a "last-resort" for drivers who can't find a spot on Main Street, but the exorbitant cost would not be made up in retail and restaurant sales to the Village.

If the village were to use paid parking on some sections of Main Street, it would compel some drivers to park in less desirable locations and walk, opening up more desirable spaces to those who are either in a rush or don't want to walk. With or without paid parking, improved signage to direct drivers to underutilized parking is needed, along with lighting improvements to get more people to park in the less desirable spaces. However, if the ultimate goal is to make it easy to park on Main Street, some form of paid parking will be necessary.

Figure 3. Public Comments on Parking in Downtown Lise



On-street parking
4-HR Free
Permit G
Private/ Commuter
Commuter Lots
Reserve Pass
Overnight
Other / Private
Commuter Lot Reverse
Business Permit (8A-6P M-Sa)
Lisle Savings & Loan Parking
Village Hall Employee
Accessible parking
2 HR Visitor

PARKING SUPPLY

- **A** Mid-day parking on Main Street is more difficult with the addition of new lunch options.
- **B** The Garfield Lot fills on summer weekends with families visiting the splash pad.
- **C** Eviva's parking lot is full during lunch hours, when the commuter lot is also full.
- **D** Occasional Metra commuters would use a daily permit option.
- **E** Investigate shared parking options.

PARKING ACCESS/LOCATION

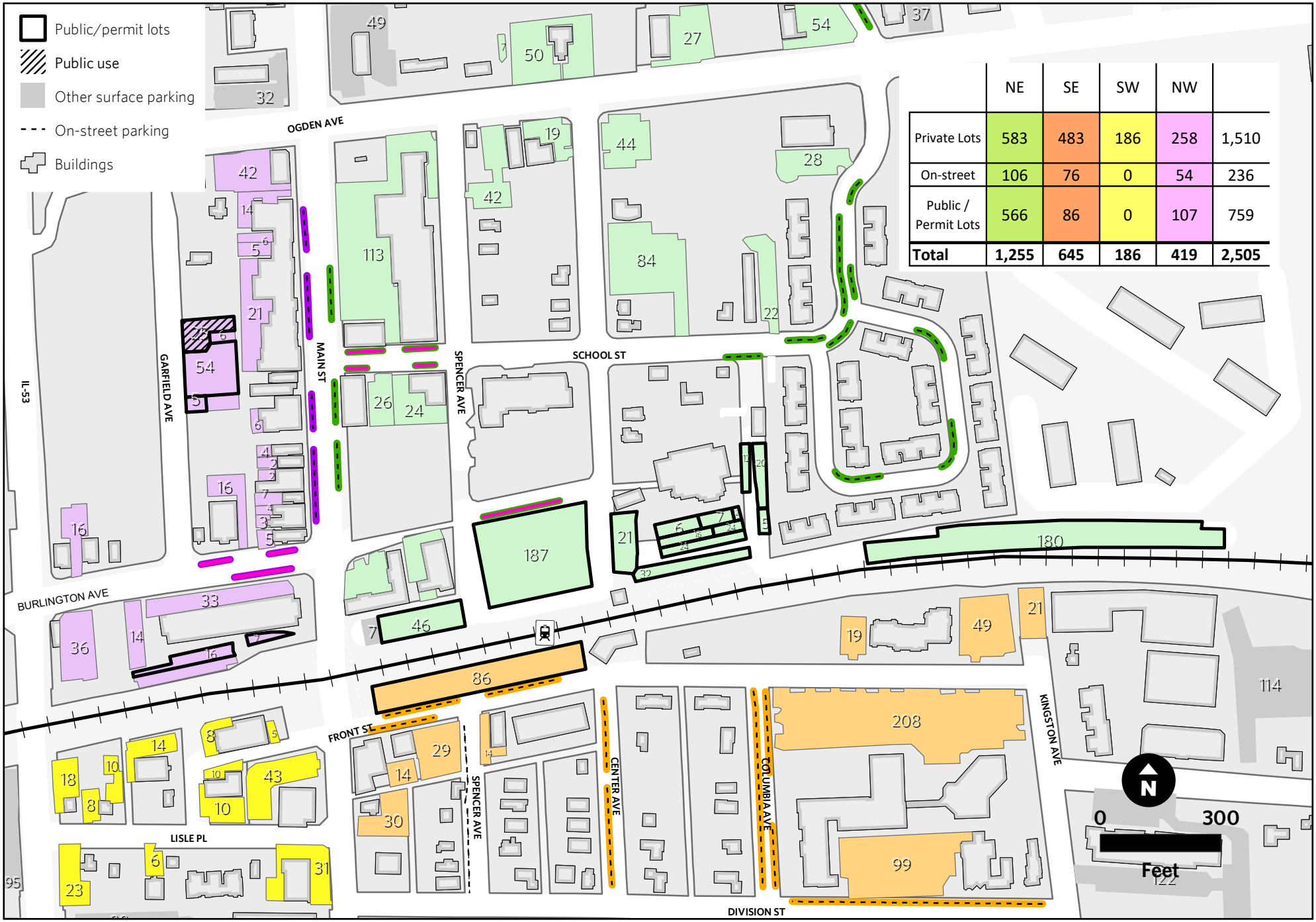
- **F** School Street as a one way makes looping around the block for parking difficult.
- **G** Parking signage is not helpful or in the best location for visitors unfamiliar with the area.
- **H** Some downton employees do not feel safe walking from Main Street to the Garfield Lot.
- **I** Downtown visitors do not know about the Garfield Lot.
- **J** Improvements to the alley west of Main Street would encourage more visitors/employees to park in the Garfield Lot.

OTHER

- **K** A digital payment option for daily permits would make payments easier.
- **L** Many drivers are not comfortable backing out of the angled spots onto Main Street.
- **M** Main Street streetscape improvements must be well-maintained.
- **N** The Garfield Lot is configured for entrance from the alley, though most enter from Garfield Avenue.
- **O** Many think biking to downtown Lisle is not safe.

Source: CMAP, 2017.

Figure 4. Parking supply by quadrant



	NE	SE	SW	NW	
Private Lots	583	483	186	258	1,510
On-street	106	76	0	54	236
Public / Permit Lots	566	86	0	107	759
Total	**1,255**	**645**	**186**	**419**	**2,505**

Source: CMAP, 2017.

Parking Occupancy Survey

To understand where people park in downtown Lisle, CMAP staff counted the number of parked cars on street segments and in parking lots over the course of a day, across various seasons. The occupancy maps (found in the Downtown Parking and Transportation Overview) show line segments and surface parking lots color-coded by the percentage of parked cars observed at that time of day.

The first count was conducted in late 2016 at 9:00 a.m. on a weekday morning, followed by hourly counts through 6:00 p.m. Additional counts were conducted in the summer of 2017, and again on Main Street after two new restaurants opened. It is understood that the main commuter parking lots are mostly full by the time the last Metra express train to Chicago arrives. Since most downtown businesses are not yet open, staff did not conduct parking counts very early in the day. While parking occupancy will vary from day to day, month to month, and seasonally, these counts help to give a better general understanding of where people want to park. The times were chosen to reflect peak demand periods and arrival and departure times of downtown employees, lunch patrons, and commuters. For follow-up analysis or new counts, if staff resources do not allow for data collection at multiple time periods, follow-up parking counts could be conducted at 11:00 a.m. on a weekday, or at times reflective of any changes in land use or business peak periods. For instance, if more restaurants open, evening demand for parking will increase and may necessitate more parking counts at 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m.

Table 1. Downtown Lisle Study Area Parking Inventory

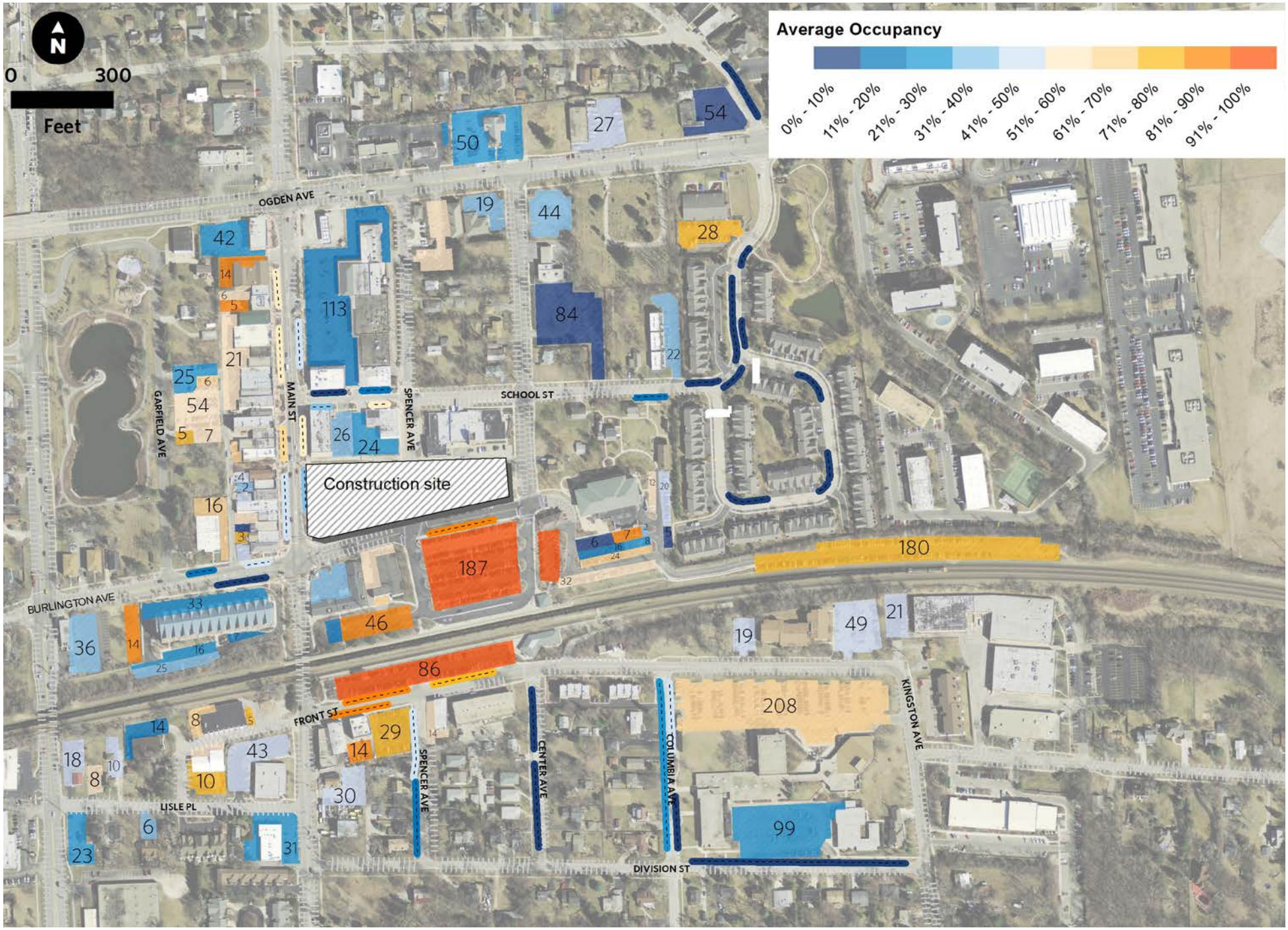
PARKING LOCATION	SPACES	% OF TOTAL SUPPLY	PUBLIC USE	COMMUTER (OFFICIAL & UNOFFICIAL)	RESTRICTED USE/ PRIVATE
Off-Street	2,276	90%	30	891	1,350
On-Street	248	10%	248	--	--
Total	**2,524**	**100%**	**283**	**891**	**1,350**

Source: CMAP, 2017.

The target occupancy rate for the downtown is 85 percent. When the street (or lot) is 85 percent full, it means there are many cars parked, but about one of every seven spaces is still available. When occupancy levels exceed 90 percent, this leads to "parking congestion," where drivers circle the block in search of parking, or queue up to take available spots. Occupancy below 80 percent could indicate that shoppers are abandoning the downtown area for other locations. Ideally, all the streets and lots in the downtown core would be 75 to 90 percent occupied, indicating a high level of activity without complete parking congestion.

Due to high demand for commuter parking on weekdays, weekend parking counts were not conducted, though some activities in the downtown, including the splash park in summer, may increase demand during this time. Similar patterns of parking on Main Street are expected on weekends, with less congestion by Evviva's, as the commuter lot is available to customers. Private parking lots were also included in the survey to compare with the Village supply. Not all parking spaces were counted at all times of the survey.

Figure 5. Average Midday Occupancy



Source: CMAP, 2017.

On-Street Parking

As stated previously, less than one quarter of Lisle's downtown parking supply is on-street. There are 66 diagonal parking spaces on Main Street between Burlington Avenue and Ogden Avenue with an additional 33 spaces on Burlington Avenue and School Street just one block off of Main Street. During the occupancy surveys conducted by CMAP staff, the on-street spaces on Main Street experienced highest occupancy during the midday lunchtime rush, and after 6:00 p.m. at dinner rush, with particularly high occupancy by Yerba Buena, Next Whiskey Bar (NWB), and Euro Crepes. Even during this period of highest use, on-street parking spaces on Main Street and the surrounding Burlington Avenue and School Street blocks were not fully occupied.

Both north and south of the railroad tracks, east of Main Street, on-street parking is available on many streets in the mostly residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown Lisle. These spaces are very lightly occupied throughout the day.

Table 2. Study Area On-Street Parking Regulations

REGULATION	# OF SPACES	% OF ON-STREET SUPPLY
2-hour parking	164	66%
4-hour parking	52	21%
2-hour with school time restrictions	17	7%
Metered	15	6%
Total	**248**	**100%**

Source: CMAP, 2017.

School Street westbound with underutilized parking spaces.

Burlington Ave westbound view with underutilized parking spaces.

Off-Street Parking (Public Lots)

Lisle provides 499 off-street spaces surrounding the train tracks for Metra commuters and an additional 308 commuter spaces are available in private lots. Of the spaces, 84 in the west section of Lot A are reserved for reverse commuters, who must vacate spaces by 10:00 a.m. Lisle has online payment and renewal options for commuter parking permits. Daily parking is available at the meters south of the tracks or for purchase in Village Hall after 7:55 a.m., allowing commuters to take the 8:09 a.m. train downtown. Daily spaces were also formerly located north of Lot B on Burlington Avenue, but have been removed during construction of the Marq on Main. The parking meters are not shown on the commuter map and require deposit of 12 quarters. The quarterly parking permit is $126, overnight parking is $6/day (free on the weekends). Commuter lots B and D were mostly full throughout the day with spots opening up as rush hour commuters returned around 6:00 p.m. Lot C had an average midday occupancy of 65%, and the furthest spaces in Lot E were usually vacant.

Downtown employees are expected to park in the Garfield Lot (Lot G), where there are 97 spaces. Seven of those spaces are reserved for residents; six are for Lisle Savings and Loan Bank; twenty-five are free, four-hour parking spaces; five have no signage (but are supposed to be employee permit spaces); and 54 are designated for employee permit parking. Employers are asked to contact the Village and notify them of new employees, to prevent commuter abuse of the lot. Employee permits are $22.50 per quarter, and the price hasn't changed in twenty years. The Village has issued 83 permits for the 54 spaces, but the permit holders are allowed to park in the four-hour parking spaces if there are no available permit spaces. Residential permits are the same price. Throughout the CMAP occupancy counts, only two portions of the lot (the spaces with no signage, and Lisle Bank parking) recorded an occupancy over 75%. On pleasant summer days, the Garfield lot will have more people parked in the 4-hour spaces to use the splash pad. In addition, some employees reported that walking to the Garfield Lot from Main Street at night feels unsafe, so they choose to park elsewhere.

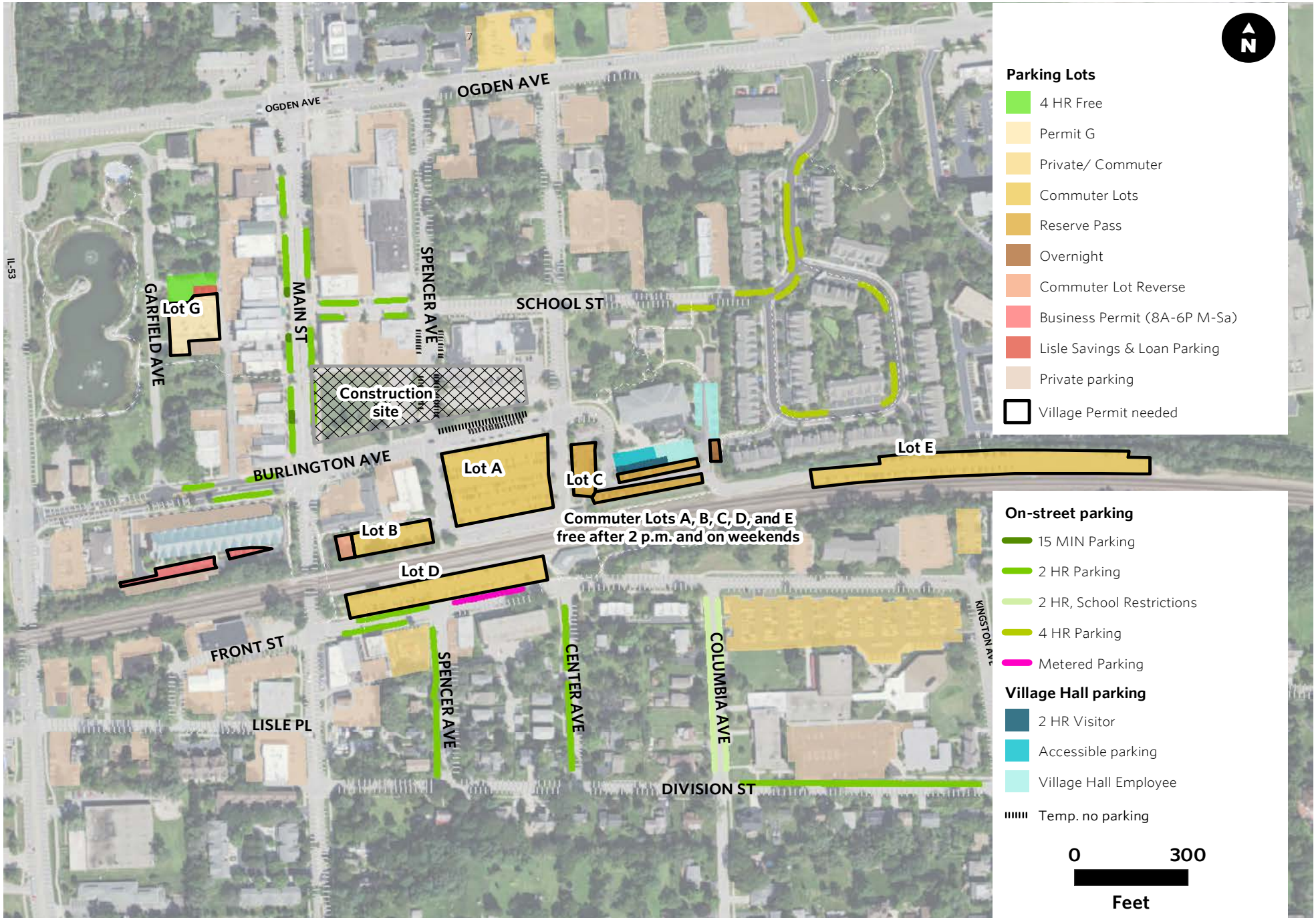
Table 3. Study area off-street parking regulations (public and private)

REGULATION	# OF SPACES	% OF OFF-STREET SUPPLY
Private Business	1,225	54%
Commuter Official	499	22%
Commuter Unofficial	308	14%
Commuter Official - Reverse	84	4%
Village Hall	71	3%
Garfield Lot Permit	54	2%
4 Hour – Garfield Lot	25	1%
No signage – Garfield Lot	5	0.2%
Overnight – Village Hall	5	0.2%
Total	**2,276**	**100%**

Source: CMAP, 2017.

Garfield Ave parking lot.

Figure 6. Parking in Downtown Lisle



Off-Street Parking (Private Lots)

Private lots in downtown Lisle account for about 1,500 of the 2,500 parking spaces in the area. These private lots are located throughout the study area and are associated with a variety of commercial, institutional and religious land uses. Throughout the occupancy study, a majority of the private lots surveyed experienced occupancy rates below 25%. The Village of Lisle allows for shared parking if the hours of operation for different uses do not overlap, but it does not allow for flexible shared parking by uses with different peak periods of demand.

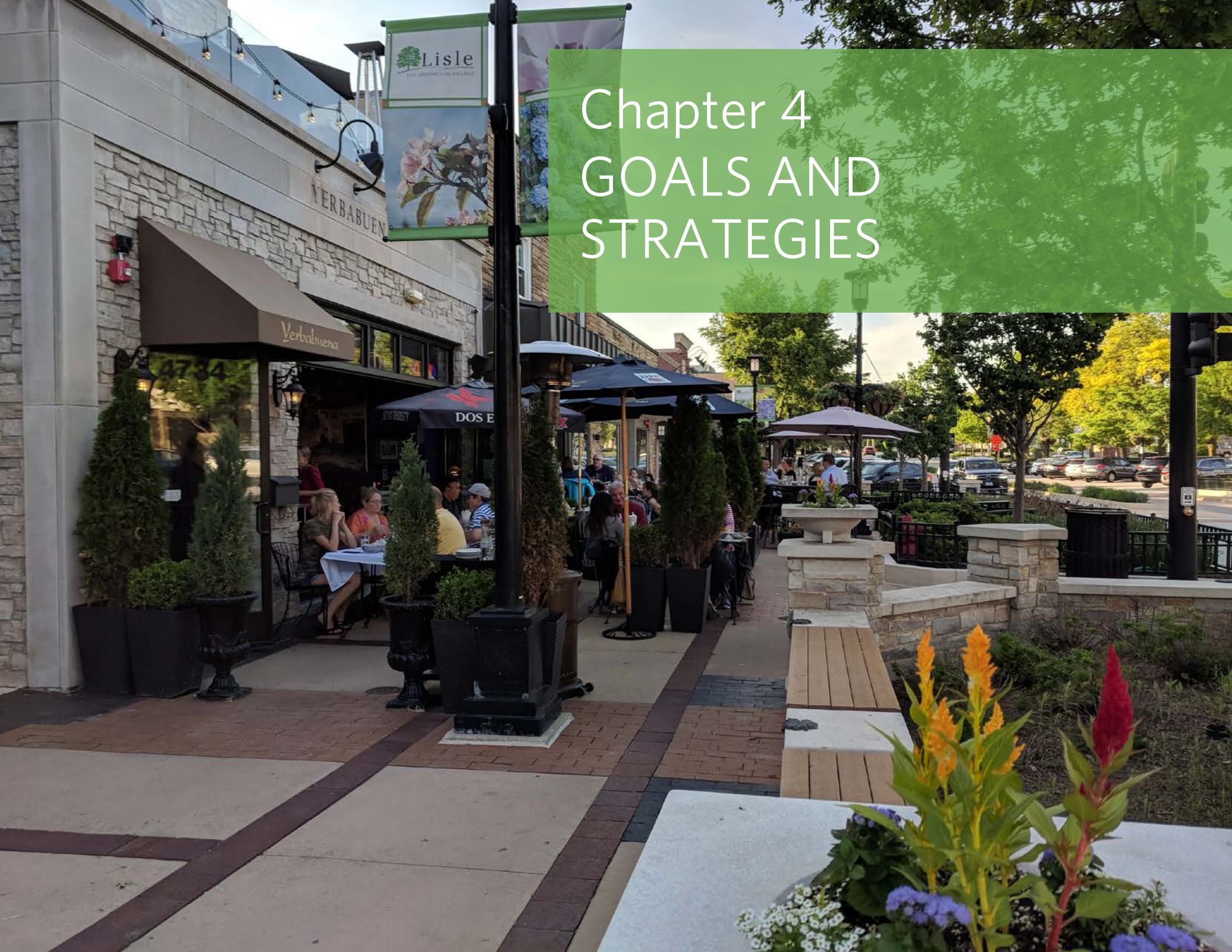
Parking at Family Square.

Parking Garage Considerations

In Lisle, many business owners and residents would like the Village to fund the construction of a parking garage. A parking garage can be a good way to consolidate surface lots and turn land over for more productive uses. At a cost of approximately $30,000 - 35,000 per space, the Village would need to spend millions of dollars for just 100 spaces. Since residents also reported that they are not interested in paying for parking, it is difficult for the Village to justify the expense of a garage unless each parking space will generate spending to balance the costs of financing and maintaining a garage.

Lisle receives a one-percent sales tax. A space in a garage costs approximately $5 per day to finance and maintain. A parking garage is worth the expense if each space generates $500 in spending 7 days a week, or if people are willing to pay $5 a day to park. Some commuters may be willing to pay $5 per day, but it is unlikely that they would fill a garage -- and definitely not on the weekends.

Having a shared supply of parking that can be used by all customers and businesses for varying lengths of time is ideal. This enables a “park-once environment.” In Lisle, there are many parking spaces within a block or two of Main Street, unoccupied throughout the day. They remain vacant while Main Street spaces are full because many people are reluctant to walk to them, don’t know they exist, or are unsure if they can use them. Building additional parking without properly managing the existing supply can induce more driving, increasing parking demand, and traffic congestion. The additional spending generated in the downtown would not be significant enough to balance out the cost and negative impacts. It may even lead to parking shortages after a garage is built.



Chapter 4
GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal #1: Improve Existing Parking and Provide Additional Public Parking

There is a need for additional public parking, as much of the downtown parking supply consists of restricted access private lots. The publicly available spaces are often the locations with the highest occupancy. The following strategies can be employed to expand the supply of public parking at little cost to the Village.

Implementation Strategies

1. Expand on-street parking where possible

On-street parking within a short walk or sightline of a driver's final destination is the most desirable parking. Parked cars also provide a barrier between moving traffic and pedestrians on the sidewalk, thereby enhancing the pedestrian experience. Lisle has many narrow streets that do not allow on-street parking. In the event of new street layouts or underground utility work, adding on-street parking where possible should be explored. The Village of Lisle also demarcates parking spaces of 26 feet in length, which is much longer than the average car. Compact parking spaces are typically between 16 and 18 feet long. Removing individual space markings could allow for more cars to park.

A prime location for new on-street parking is along Garfield Avenue. This would require a widened shoulder on the PrairieWalk Pond side of Garfield Avenue. Some limitations would be needed to prevent commuters from using the spaces. This could be restricting parking between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., using a 4-hour time limit, or allowing free employee permit parking. Restricting the early morning hours would be the easiest to enforce, requiring limited observance.

On-street parking in front of Evviva Bar & Eatery on Front Street facing west.

2. Increase the number of daily Metra parking spaces with digital payment options

The parking meters by the Metra station are outdated and inconvenient. They are hard to read and require drivers to carry a handful of quarters for a deposit. Commuters wishing to purchase a one-day permit for an open space in the trackside commuter lot currently do so within Village Hall beginning at 7:55 a.m. using cash or check only. Allowing Metra riders to park and pay for their space digitally would improve convenience. New quarterly permit spots are not recommended, but the current metered spaces should be converted to accept digital payments, and additional metered spaces should be provided for daily commuters by adding dedicated metered spaces. These spaces could be in Lot E, in the Village Hall lot, or on-street where space allows. Those spaces should be located as close to the station as possible, respecting agreements established by BNSF and the area reserved for passenger drop-offs and Pace bus access. The revenue generated from new spaces would help pay for the maintenance costs of all Metra parking.

"There are only 4 daily parking passes provided by the Village. I had to take a week-long class in Chicago, but could not get a parking pass. There should be more opportunities for daily commuter parking."

-Metroquest survey respondent

3. Develop a parking partnership with owners of underutilized parking lots for public usage

The Bank of America parking lot east and north of School Street and Center Avenue is an ideal location for employee parking and daily Metra commuters. While the lot remains underutilized, the Village could approach the bank or landowner and offer to manage parking, plow the lot in the winter, cover liability insurance, and/or share revenue in return for allowing public use of the parking lot. Other underutilized lots include the strip parking at Family Square, and parking at the Burlington building. Some spaces in these lots could be set up with signage to allow for simple digital payments. If the Village sets up a standard for digital payments for commuters, they could also offer the same signage and app payment for owners of private lots, which would turn the private parking into a shared resource.

Underutilized Bank of America parking lot.

Source: Google street view, 2017.

4. Create a surface parking lot south of the existing Garfield lot

There is a lovely walking path between Main Street and the alley to the west. Directly across the alley from the path is a vacant lot. If this lot were to be public parking, it would be more convenient than the adjacent Garfield lot, with the direct connection to Main Street. Given the current low utilization of the public spaces in the Garfield lot, a form of payment is not necessary until demand is higher and the spaces are regularly full. If a parking lot is developed here, within the flood plain, it should be paved with a permeable surface and maintain as many of the existing trees as possible.

A free, unrestricted lot would be appealing for employees and commuters, so some restrictions will be necessary to maintain the availability for downtown customers and visitors, such as a 4-hour time limit. It would be important to note that the 4-hour limit does not restart if your car leaves the lot.

If demand for parking grows and the customer lot is seeing high occupancy on a regular basis, a simple digital payment system should be added to manage supply and contribute funds to grow the parking supply. The payment may start out low - just covering the service charge that digital payment systems establish, and should be adjusted quarterly to manage demand.

Improved lighting and aesthetics for the alley is covered in Goal #4.

"We need to encourage employees to park off Main Street."

-Metroquest survey respondent

5. Create free employee parking areas

The Village currently allows employees to purchase permit parking in the Garfield Lot at a very low rate. Some employees are still unwilling to pay the fee, and provision of free employee permit parking dedicated to businesses could help to free up spaces in the core where there is a perceived parking shortage and some observed abuse of the two-hour time limits. These parking spaces would be further from the core, freeing up closer parking spots for shoppers. Employees should be able to prove their current employment status with a downtown Lisle business. These spaces should be on-street spaces that are less desirable to customers, but within a short walking distance from Main Street. The Village and police department could also do more outreach with local businesses to alert employees of the parking availability and to register employee vehicles and give out "small business" permits. Again, without paid parking on Main Street, employees will continue to park there if they feel they can get away with it.

Missouri Botanical Garden parking lot with permeable pavers and preservation of large trees.

Source: www.GardenAtoZ.com.

Goal #2: Create Flexibility in Policies to Prepare for Long-Term Needs

The Village can encourage pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive development through parking policy. Through shared parking and limited use of minimum parking requirements, the Village can make better use of the existing parking resources and remove barriers to small business development. Parking demands are shifting across the U.S. and it is difficult to know exactly what the future will hold. Nimble policies allow a community to adapt to the changes in market demand.

Outside of Metra commuter parking demand, downtown Lisle does not currently have high enough demand for parking to warrant parking meters or the construction of a parking garage. The demand for Metra parking is high, but the price has not been adjusted to reflect this (as Metra sets some limits on price increases), and the revenue collected from permit parking does not currently cover the surface lot maintenance costs, let alone generate funding to support a garage. However, as new businesses and restaurants open in Lisle and more people choose to live and shop in the downtown, additional demands for parking may create problems for the village that should be proactively addressed. Any new parking revenue should be in a fund that is used to support downtown businesses such as through provision of additional parking, fascade improvements, streetscaping and roadway maintenance, etc.

Implementation Strategies

1. Focus on creating a "park-once" downtown with more public parking

The Village should focus on building up the centralized, public parking supply. A consolidated, centralized parking area will be more useful to the Village than twice as many privately owned spaces. The supply of public parking includes conveniently located on-street spaces, off-street spaces, and employee parking options. Before a large investment in a garage is made, the Village should look to build its supply of public parking with on-street spaces and public surface lots. At a big-box shopping center, a trip to Home Depot and the grocery store requires two spaces because the destinations are typically too far to be conducive to walking. In a compact downtown like Lisle, a person arriving for lunch can also drop off clothes at the cleaner, and those tasks can be accomplished with one parking space, rather than two.

An increase in the overall supply of parking will only help alleviate parking pressure if new parking is open to the public. When one business has peak daytime usage and its parking lot is unavailable for nighttime diners, the private business spaces cannot be used to satisfy evening demand. For this reason, it is not recommended that each business or developer be required to provide parking associated with their business. When the public parking supply is located in a convenient central place, it can reduce the overall demand for parking.

2. Allow for flexible shared parking

The current zoning code does not allow for shared parking when different uses have overlapping hours of operation; a more important metric would be peak hours of demand. While the best strategy is to eliminate parking requirements in the core, a minimal first step would allow for a reduction in the total number of parking spaces required for each individual land use when peak hours of demand vary. The supply of parking would be better balanced with less land devoted to private parking, removing a barrier for a new development or a change in use.

Lisle's current downtown parking code requires private property owners and developers to provide parking according to use and intensity of use. Parking requirements cannot solve the "parking problem" because a scattered selection of private parking cannot be shared between businesses with different peak periods of demand. Different types of businesses in the downtown area have varying parking needs by time of day and day of week. Like most suburban downtowns, not enough people live in the downtown core to support businesses by walking to them, so most customers and employees are arriving by car. People want to park directly in front of where they are going, and they don't want to pay for parking. If people run the risk of getting ticketed or towed for parking at one business and later shopping at another, they will move their car, or simply not shop at multiple destinations.

Private lot on Front Street available for commuter parking.

3. Eliminate minimum parking requirements

While it is counter-intuitive, minimum parking requirements in a compact, downtown core are not recommended. A shared supply of public parking can service twice as much demand as private parking lots. Standard parking requirements were originally determined based on peak usage at isolated, auto-oriented sites. In areas with older commercial and residential buildings on small lots (like downtown Lisle), development patterns are significantly different and redevelopment of those lots requires a more nuanced approach.

Redeveloping sites in older downtowns with ill-fitting minimum parking requirements becomes financially infeasible because the parcels are not of an adequate size to accommodate the required number of off-street spaces. Abandoning parking requirements is also recommended in an era of shifting travel habits and the increasing use of ride-hailing services like Lyft and Uber. Without parking requirements, the market can respond appropriately to the needs of the community, as the demand for private vehicle ownership (and need for parking) shifts.

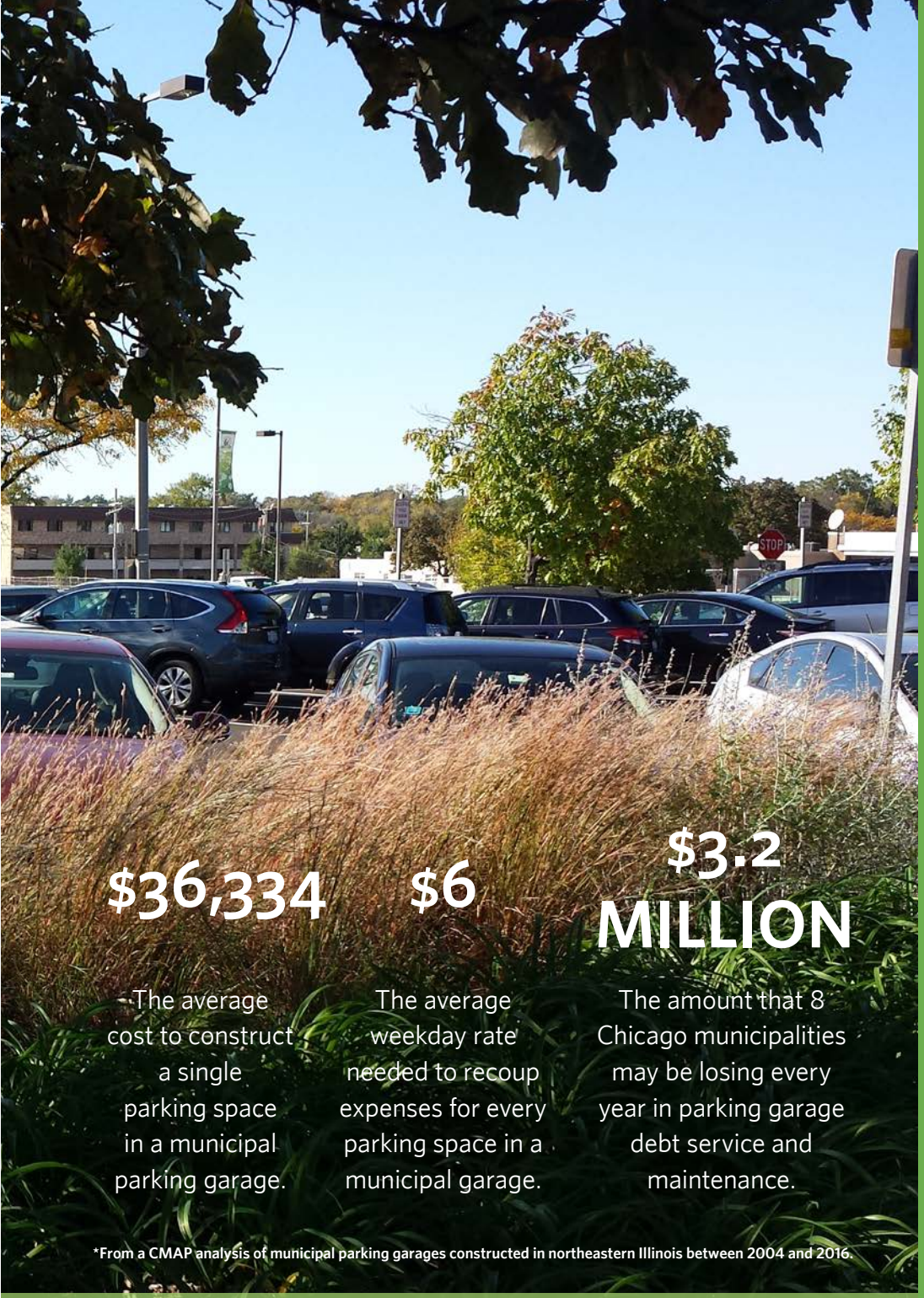
An absence of parking requirements does not eliminate off-street parking, but it will instead stimulate an active commercial market for it. This market for commercial parking means that as development increases, and business activity increases, there may be a higher demand for on-street parking and the use of metered parking and residential permits on adjacent streets may become necessary. Having a high demand for parking is a good thing because it means that people want to come to the area; managing that demand is critical to ensure the success of the neighborhood.

Having exemptions from minimum parking requirements can be appealing for potential businesses that are not able to spend a lot of time or money to figure out complicated municipal codes. Any “change in use” that may occur is also simplified; if a landowner is leasing to a tenant with one use and has a potential tenant that would like to open a different type of business, a zone without requirements would allow that transition to happen more seamlessly. Lowering the burden on potential businesses can help to spur business activity.

Different communities will have different way to address the problems with minimum parking requirements. The following three options are provided to allow Lisle to decide how to best guide development and support growth of the downtown.

Option 1: Eliminate minimum parking requirements in core zone

There are various approaches to address the challenges with small lots and older buildings. One approach is to create a zone where parking requirements are eliminated; this would be limited to specific streets in a core downtown area. This allows for a simplified process to redevelop parcels or to change the use of a parcel that would otherwise be infeasible due to cost or size limitations. Suburban communities in the Chicago area that have eliminated parking requirements in their downtown areas include Hinsdale, Glen Ellyn, and Elmhurst. Village planners could designate Main Street (between Division Street and Ogden Avenue) as a “Priority Development Zone,” where the parking requirements in the overlay district for any use (below a pre-determined size limit) are exempt from minimum parking requirements. Developers can still provide the parking they deem necessary for their clientele but they can be flexible with the amount they provide.



$36,334

The average cost to construct a single parking space in a municipal parking garage.

$6

The average weekday rate needed to recoup expenses for every parking space in a municipal garage.

$3.2 MILLION

The amount that 8 Chicago municipalities may be losing every year in parking garage debt service and maintenance.

*From a CMAP analysis of municipal parking garages constructed in northeastern Illinois between 2004 and 2016.

Parking Construction Costs

When considering the total costs of providing parking, there is the initial construction cost, land costs, maintenance costs, and the opportunity cost of the land. In the Chicago region, parking is most commonly provided in a surface parking lot or in a parking garage. A space in a surface lot costs about $5,000 to $10,000 to construct (national average). Parking garages add an additional $10,000 to $25,000 per space. A garage allows for more efficient use of land and becomes cost effective when land prices exceed about $2 million per acre (Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2018).

In a survey of municipal parking garages in the Chicago region, CMAP found that the average cost to construct a facility between 2004 and 2016 was over $36,000 per space. The average weekday rate needed to recoup expenses (assuming a low 4% interest rate over 40 years) and cover maintenance is $6.00. The Village of Lisle currently charges $132 per quarter, and the cost of a space in a garage would cost the Village approximately 4 times that amount. The $132 does not currently cover all costs associated with maintenance of the surface parking lots, according to Village officials.

"Don't the monthly fees for parking cover all, if not most, maintenance costs?"

-Metroquest survey respondent

Option 2: Convert minimum parking requirements to parking maximums for small lot development in the core

Another option is to create parking maximums to prevent auto-oriented development in pedestrian zones. The Village of Plainfield created a Downtown Parking Zone along their historic streets and converted their Village-wide minimum parking requirements into parking maximums for small residential and business land uses. Properties with more than 5,000 square feet of gross floor area still have to abide by the minimum parking requirements. This method is practical in older, built-out downtown areas because it provides developers with a general guideline as to what they are allowed to provide and what might be practical on other lots. This strategy would not prevent small businesses from opening in small parcel lots, it helps to preserve older buildings, and it is a simple process.

Option 3: Allow for reductions in parking requirements

A less effective, more complicated, but politically more palatable strategy is to allow for reductions in parking requirements when the development meets specified criteria, usually improving the pedestrian experience and encouraging walking, bicycling, and transit use. This method allows developers and businesses to get credit for certain actions or locational benefits (such as proximity to transit). In some cases, the credits can reduce the requirements to zero. A developer who leases parking independently from apartment rents will have a lower demand for parking. In lieu of some parking, a developer could provide monthly transit passes to appeal to Metra commuters ($2,349-$2,700 annual cost) and people who use Pace bus. Some communities, like Lake Forest and Oak Park, allow developers to pay a fee in lieu of required parking that would support the addition of future parking. This can work, but it does put an additional barrier to opening a business in the downtown.

Goal #3: Improve Parking Finances with a Vision for the Future

The parking management plan is intended to help make appropriate decisions about parking to support local businesses and enable a thriving, growing downtown area that is financially sustainable. A well-tuned parking management system must be supported by a solid financial rationale.

Implementation Strategies

1. Create a transparent system to help track parking revenue and expenses

Currently, all parking meter revenue in the Village goes to the Commuter Operation and Maintenance Fund, which pays for maintaining the Metra Station and Commuter parking lots. Revenue collected from permit and meter parking does not currently cover the full cost of surface lot maintenance, let alone supply expansion.

It is important for Village residents and businesses to understand that providing parking is an expensive undertaking, and a transparent, robust system for tracking revenue and expenditures can help communicate that. The parking system can document all parking-related income, needs, and expenditures to give an illustration of current parking finances. The needs should be projected into the future, considering repaving, plowing, and lot restriping.

The Village should calculate the average annual cost per space for all public spaces, and make this information widely available. This number should be used to support any future changes to pricing. Less convenient private commuter parking lots are charging slightly more for quarterly permits ($140) than the Village ($132). St. Joan of Arc's quarterly fee for a parking permit is $200, and they also have a waiting list. The Village should work with Metra to ensure that the most convenient spaces are priced competitively.

This data will help the Village coordinate and track the operating and maintenance expenses, reserves, and support planning studies and future parking expansion projects.

2. Use pricing to provide more convenient parking options for commuters

Commuter spaces are in demand and there is a desire for additional convenient paid parking options. The Village should work to identify potential parking spaces that commuters could use and establish a digital payment system that allows commuters to purchase daily parking through an app. This could include spaces in the Village Hall lot, on-street spaces, or spaces in underutilized private lots that agree to work with the Village. The Village will need to thoroughly investigate the enforcement system needed to accompany an addition to the metered spaces. Many high-tech options exist that require initial up-front investment, but can quickly increase the efficiency of collections and prevent abuse of parking spaces. The Village of Downers Grove has created V.I.P (Very Important Parker) daily commuter parking with the ParqEx mobile app. The daily rate is high; it is intended to serve a niche area where people will pay for a guaranteed convenient parking space. The spaces are reserved in advance and cost $10 per day. If Lisle creates VIP parking, there should be some spaces south of the tracks and some north of the tracks. Less convenient spaces would not be able to charge such a premium.

In selecting a digital payment platform, the Village should consider the possibility of expanding the payment system to non-commuter spaces in the future, to be sure that the system can handle other payment scenarios. This may include employee permit spaces in shared, private lots or high-demand on-street spaces for patrons of Lisle businesses and restaurants.

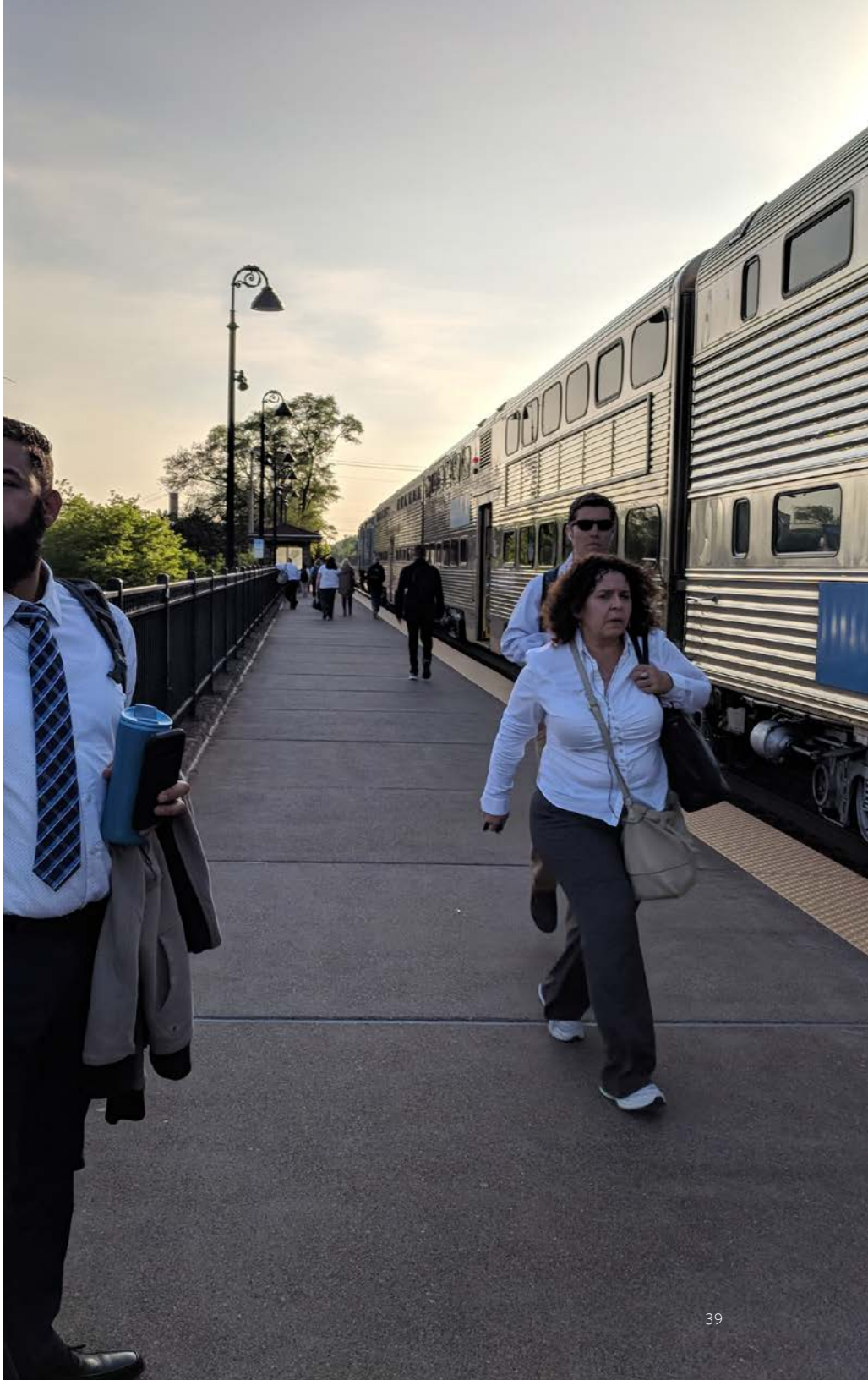
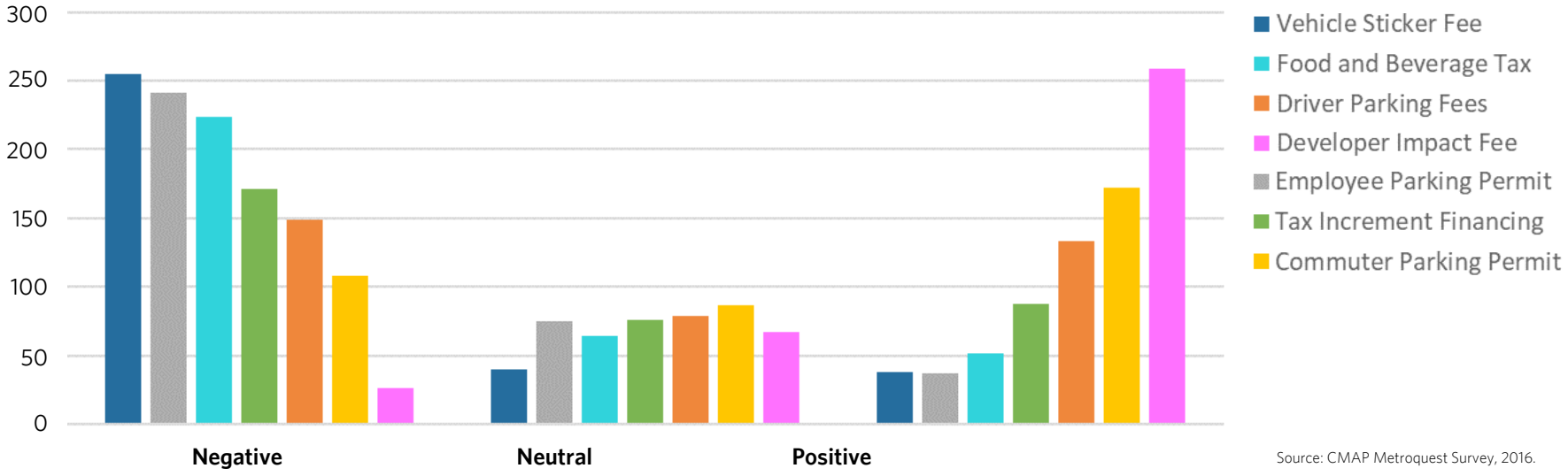


Figure 7. Public Opinion of Parking Financing Options



Source: CMAP Metroquest Survey, 2016.

3. Use revenue information to analyze funding opportunities for a future parking garage

Structured parking can complement parking management and encourage drivers to go directly to a garage rather than circle for a space. Construction of new parking garages is recommended when the price that drivers are willing to pay in the most desirable spaces on-street can cover a portion of debt service payments, as well as the daily maintenance and operational cost of a space in a structure, which is estimated to be at least five dollars. However, investments in slant-level garages are risky because they are unlikely to be paid off within their lifetime. Demand for parking is changing, and slant-level structures have very limited potential for adaptive reuse.

When structured parking is free or underpriced, the Village can lose money on a daily basis. Having a solid understanding of the costs associated with parking and the revenue generated can help the Village to make informed decisions regarding future supply increases. Using revenue collected from permits and on-street meters is one potential way to help pay for a garage. This is not feasible at the current rates, which do not fully cover the cost of maintaining the existing surface lots. Using a sales tax to finance and maintain a structure is generally not recommended because it increases the cost of goods for people who walk, bike, or take transit while subsidizing drivers. This could end up costing the Village more in the long run, as bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders are less destructive to the roads and can help reduce traffic congestion as well as associated negative environmental impacts – and they don't need parking.

The public Metroquest survey conducted for this plan asked respondents to rate various ideas for funding a parking garage. A majority favored the use of developer impact fees, and were opposed to vehicle sticker fees, employee permit fees, or food and beverage taxes (like Naperville). Having drivers and commuters pay for the parking that they use to support the construction fees was pretty evenly split between negative, positive, and neutral.

Asking developers to cover the cost of parking can be a double-edged sword, as the impositions to build extra parking will impact their bottom line and they may decide to move the project to another town. Developers of residential units can be required to lease or rent parking spaces separate from the apartment or condo rents, so that people are incentivized to use fewer spaces. This is called "unbundled parking," and tends to reduce parking demand by about ten percent. Developers can also be required to dedicate some of their spaces to public parking, or to contribute to a fund that will create centralized, shared parking.

Additional considerations for a parking garage include the aesthetic impact of a structure and its lifetime utility. There are examples in the region of low-profile parking garages, underground garages, and "retail-wrapped" structures that are more attractive than typical parking garages and it is important to consider how any structure will visually impact the downtown. With the risk of flooding in portions of downtown Lisle, an underground parking garage would be restricted to areas outside of the regulatory floodplain and would be very expensive.

Existing ride-hailing services (Uber, Lyft) and the potential for autonomous vehicles in the near future could spell a decrease in the overall parking demand and a parking garage could become obsolete within its 40-year lifespan. This has implications for paying debt service and retrofit designs. A structure can be built with flat levels and higher ceilings so that it can more easily be converted into different uses in the future, but that increases the up-front cost. Finally, new technology in robotic parking has increased efficiencies and may be investigated as an option for reduced footprint parking.

Goal #4: Improve the Parking Experience for Visitors and Shoppers

Most people will drive to downtown Lisle, and the ease of finding a parking space is an important aspect of their trip. If the parking spot is not directly in front of their destination, it should be easy to find and comfortable to walk to. Parking that is centrally located, and shared between destinations allows people to visit multiple locations while only parking in one spot, reducing the overall parking need and encouraging walking.

Implementation Strategies

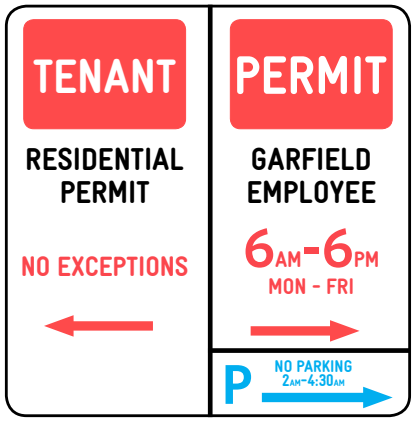
1. Improve the signage for the Garfield parking lot

Improved parking information can help visitors, employees, and residents in their search for parking, and in their understanding of available options. Directional signage to the Garfield Lot, as well as improved signage within the Lot, would be helpful to visitors. Simple "P" icons with arrows along Main Street would be sufficient; users do not care about the parking lot name. For signage placement, the village should determine if the primary access point will be the alley or Garfield Avenue, based on testing and feedback from residents and business owners.

From Garfield Avenue, the current signage does not indicate that the public can use the parking lot. Both entrances have signs that say "Lot G Garfield Permits required," which would likely scare off anyone unfamiliar with the area. There is an additional sign that says, "PrairieWalk Pond Parking," which could also confuse visitors who want to use the parking for visiting Main Street businesses. A simpler, "4-hour Free Parking" would be helpful, but it would still not be clear which spaces are permit and which are free. If the Lot G sign remains at the first entry point, the "4-Hour Free Parking" sign could replace the Lot G sign at the second entry point. If an additional public lot is created south of the Garfield Lot, to connect to Main Street, it would be more obvious that it is for the general public. Additional simplifications of the signage could result in a redesign of existing signs, to clarify that spaces can be used by non-permit holders outside of business hours.

Existing Signage

Signage Design Suggestions



2. Provide maps and information for employees and visitors

Downtown Lisle parking maps should be updated with information for visitors and employees, in addition to commuters, and be posted on the police department's webpage, the Village's webpage, at Village Hall, and at the Chamber of Commerce. The Village provides a substantial amount of information online for commuters, including an FAQ document, but not much for visitors and employees. The Village can also prepare some generic "where to park" language that downtown businesses can adapt and use on their websites to direct customers.

3. Consider Making School Street eastbound and test back-in angled parking

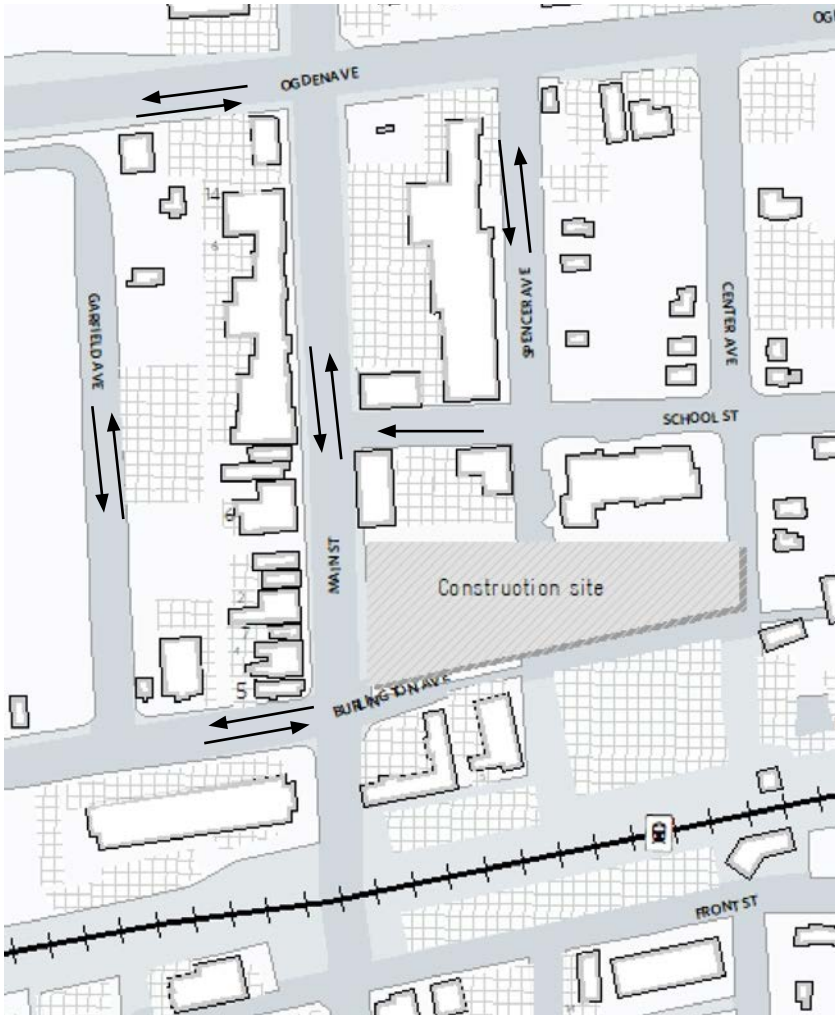
If a driver cannot find a parking space on Main Street (and they don't know about the Garfield lot), they don't have many options for turning around to continue looking for parking. Many people at the public open house expressed a desire to be able to turn eastbound onto School Street. The current westbound one-way configuration may be a result of traffic planning for rush-hour Metra commuters, but it doesn't support the downtown businesses. The location of the fire station on School Street may also have a role in the street configuration.

With the existing diagonal parking on Main Street and School Street, there

"There is no 'Circle the Block.' You have to leave downtown in order to turn around and try again. How easy is it to circle around if you're southbound on Main St. from Ogden? Or northbound on Main St. from Burlington Ave.?"

-Metroquest survey respondent

Figure 8. Downtown Circulation

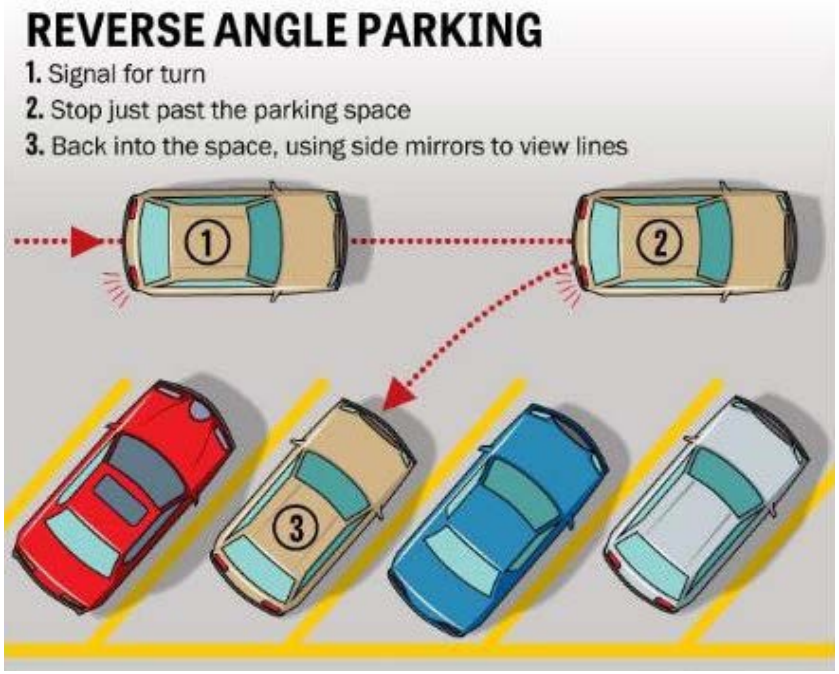


is a reasonable level of concern over the safety of backing out of a space. Drivers in standard angled spaces often find themselves unable to see oncoming traffic, and are forced to back out blindly. Between 2008 and 2014, there were ten crashes on Main Street involving drivers backing out of a parking space. To improve safety, the Village installed longer-than-required diagonal spaces to improve visibility when backing out, but with the ubiquity of large SUVs, many drivers remain uncomfortable with the configuration.

One strategy to address this problem, used in a couple of locations in the region, is back-in angled parking (also called head-out or reverse-angled parking). Compared to parallel parking, it is easier to do and creates more spaces along the curb. Compared to standard angled parking, it requires a few tries to figure it out, but it increases sightlines and is much safer.

With back-in angled parking, the driver can clearly see the road for oncoming traffic, and when loading up, they can access the trunk from the sidewalk. The increased visibility is also important for improving safety for people riding bicycles. The biggest challenge with back-in angled parking is that it is unfamiliar to many drivers. Any sort of change to regular habits is difficult. A pilot project, on one small section of School Street could be tested, with "parking ambassadors" and a robust public education campaign to help people figure out how to maneuver the new system. As a test program, it would be a good idea for Village staff to park some vehicles early in the morning to set an example for others to follow.

Figure 9. Reverse Angle Parking Instructions



Source: Edward Riojas MLive.com

"It is next to impossible to safely back out of a parking spot on Main Street during commuter hours."

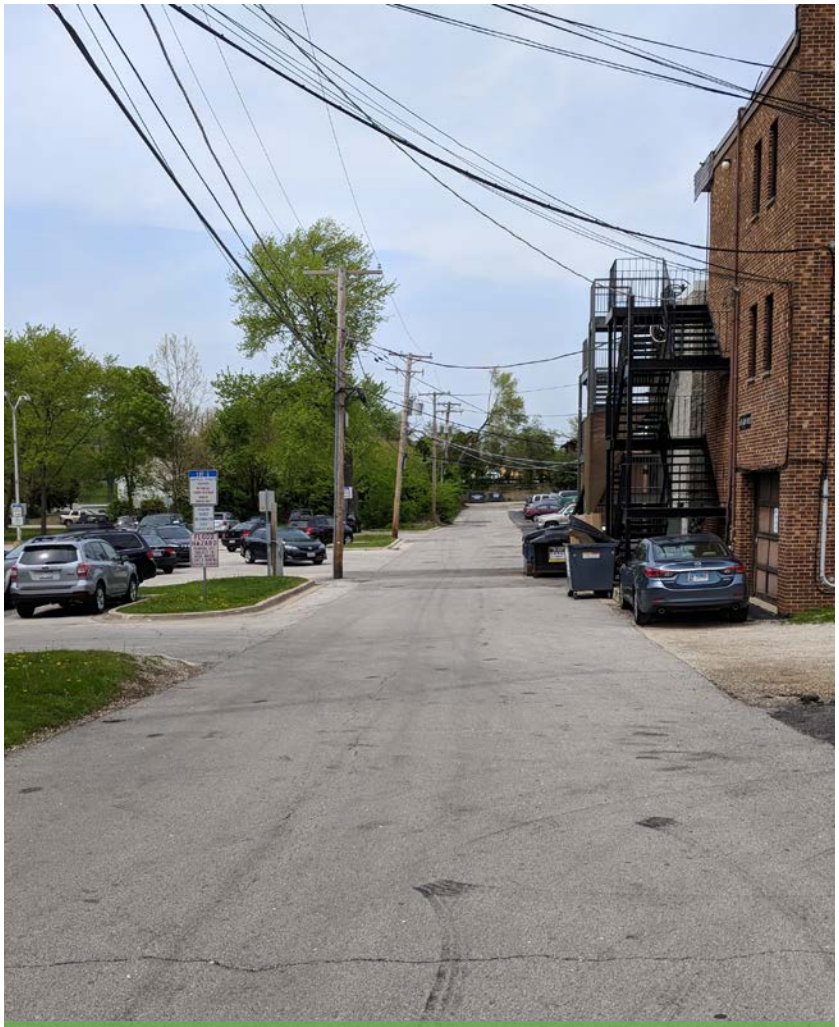
-Metroquest survey respondent

4. Improve the experience of parking in the remote lots

Employees and customers in downtown Lisle have said that the walk between the Garfield Lot using the alleyway behind Main Street and the walkway to reach Main Street is unpleasant. Better lighting in the walkway and Garfield lot as well as aesthetic improvements to the alley could convince more parkers to use the lot. Impressive examples of transformative alley redesigns come from San Francisco's Linden Alley and Detroit's Green Alley. While Detroit's alley is not open to cars and trucks, some elements of the alley improvements can still serve as inspiration for Lisle's alley. The use of permeable, porous concrete, greenery, enclosed garbage collection location, and decorative lighting should be explored.

Some survey respondents indicated confusion in the Garfield parking lot as to which spaces are for permit holders and which are for the public. If the permit spaces are opened to the general public after 6:00 p.m., a sign indicating so would help evening visitors (as shown in the signage examples). During interviews, one business owner indicated that the parking lot was designed for entrance from the alley, but that most people access it from Garfield Avenue, which makes navigating the lot cumbersome. As occupancy in the Garfield Lot grows, the Public Works department should assess access paths to determine if there is a need for restriping the lot.

Additionally, when construction of the Marq on Main is completed, the pedestrian amenities of Main Street should be extended to reach the commuter lots and the Village Hall. The commuter lots are lightly occupied during the dinner rush and on weekends, and with an uninterrupted pedestrian experience, diners and shoppers may be more willing to park in these lots and take the 5-minute walk to their destinations.



Current conditions of the alley behind Main Street.

Figure 10. Alleyway Improvements

Detroit's Green Alley project.

Source: Midtown Detroit Inc (MDI).

San Francisco Linden alley project.

Source: Google Streetview.

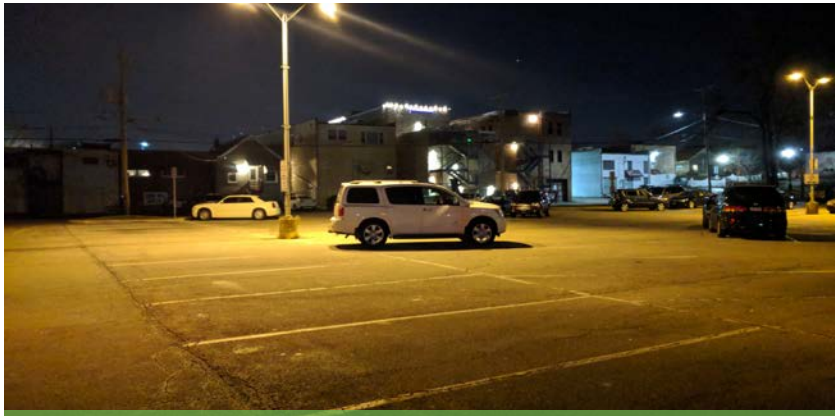
5. Pilot paid parking for some spaces on Main Street

In downtowns with more concentrated retail and restaurant activity and higher parking demand, a common approach to managing parking is to open up options for parking that consider convenience and proximity to amenities. This is done by charging a small fee for the most desirable spaces, which will compel some people to seek out free or lower-priced parking further from the core, and make it easier for others to quickly find a convenient space. This is also the only proven way to prevent downtown employees from parking in the most desirable customer spaces.

Some Main Street businesses are suffering from a lack of parking availability in front of their stores, while the Garfield lot is barely used. A pricing program on some sections of Main Street, with improved signage to the Garfield lot, would compel some drivers to use the Garfield lot, allowing others to pay for the convenience of a space in front of their destination. This could also be done in conjunction with the creation of new public parking lot adjacent to the Garfield lot. The low utilization of the Garfield lot indicates that an expansion of supply would be unlikely to solve the problem of people wanting to park on Main Street.

The purpose of a pricing structure is to approach the parking problem as an economist (supply and demand) rather than as an engineer (how can we add more supply). In a parking-congested area, it is important to provide both the option of a convenient paid space as well as clear directions to convenient, free public parking.

As development in downtown Lisle continues with expanded residential and retail uses, parking demand on Main Street will increase. Village staff should monitor the effects new development has on parking to make the decision about when paid spaces might be necessary. A payment system should be convenient for electronic transactions and the cost per transaction should be low. The price to park should be the lowest price that will open up one or two spaces per block.



When most spaces on Main Street are full, (top) the Garfield lot has plenty of spaces available, outside of major events (bottom). These photos were taken on the same evening, within minutes.

Goal #5: Enhance Transportation Options for Downtown Travel

While cars will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for most, small increases in other modes — like walking, bicycling, and transit — could make up a greater share of trips in the future, and would help to alleviate parking problems, activate the sidewalks, and improve public health. For people who choose to walk downtown, ride a bicycle, take a bus, or get a ride, the Village can make improvements that enhance their experience and encourage others to do the same.

Implementation Strategies

1. Make walking an enjoyable experience

The streetscaping along Main Street is an attractive downtown amenity, but the features that make the walkway enjoyable do not extend all the way to the remote public parking lot, the commuter parking lots, or neighboring residential areas. Not all streets should have the level of pedestrian amenities that Main Street has, but basic accommodations, such as sidewalks and walkways that feel safe, need to connect destinations.

Continued pedestrian improvements such as sidewalks, lighting, benches, planter boxes, and street trees beyond Main Street can encourage people to walk further than they are accustomed to walking, both making underutilized parking spaces more attractive and strengthening the downtown's reputation as a destination that can be reached by foot. A map of downtown that shows estimated walking distance (in minutes) can help people discover the possibility of a short walk to accomplish tasks.

2. Promote public transit

Lisle is fortunate to have a major commuter rail station in its downtown, as well as several Pace buses to connect residents to the rail station and other destinations. To encourage people to ride transit, the service provided must be frequent, reliable, and safe. A study conducted at UC Berkeley found that safety and security, along with connection and reliability, outweighed amenities. They identified a hierarchy of traveler wait/transfer needs, shown in Figure 11.

Riding the bus is not a popular mode of transit in Lisle. Besides a general stigma surrounding buses, many people are simply intimidated by the lack of information. A rider may not know where the bus is going, or when the bus will be arriving at their stop. Pace has real-time bus information available for every vehicle that a rider can access online or through a text message service. To make the information even more accessible, the use of real-time message boards at key locations is recommended. Information about text-messaging for real-time transit information or more simply, a list of destinations, should be placed on bus signs. Improved bus route maps could help individuals overcome confusion about where the bus is going. Multiple Metroquest survey respondents suggested that later "return buses" would be helpful.

Downtown pedestrian improvements can also make accessing nearby Pace Bus service, including all-day Pace Route 722 on Ogden Avenue, more enjoyable. As directional signage is updated or modified within the commuter lots and in the downtown core, clear wayfinding information for Pace Bus passengers should be considered.

"It would be nice to have earlier and later bus options to and from the Lisle Metra Station."

-Metroquest survey respondent

Figure 11. Hierarchy of Traveler Wait/Transfer Needs

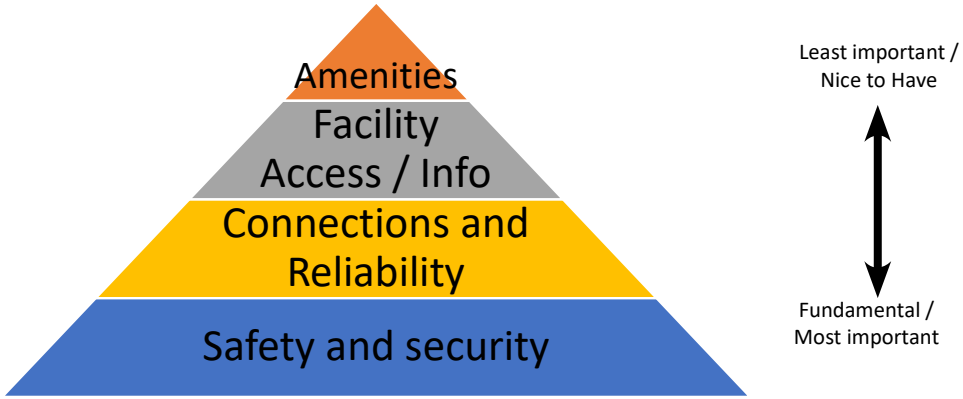
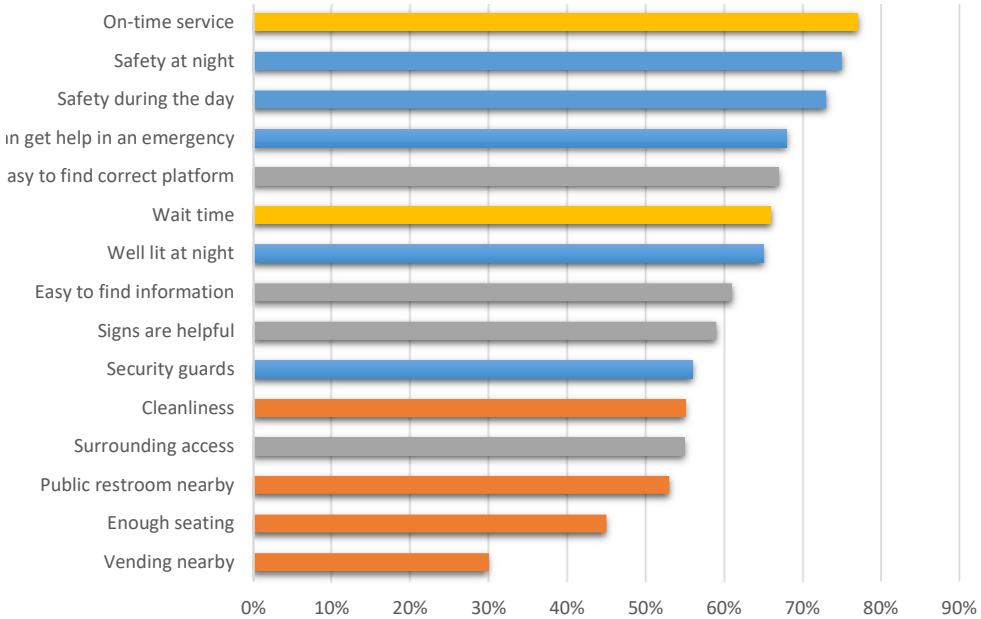


Figure 12. Factors Important to Riders



Source: Taylor, Brian D.; Iseki, Hiroyuki; Miller, Mark A.; Smart, Michael. "Thinking Outside the Bus: Understanding User Perceptions of Waiting and Transferring in Order to Increase Transit Use." California PATH Research Report. https://trid.trb.org/view.aspx?id=886713.

3. Enhance connections to downtown for people riding bicycles

Some members of the public reported that they do not feel safe biking to downtown Lisle. On-street bike lanes leading to the Metra station from neighborhoods and to nearby existing bike lanes would support additional bicycle travel, and the Village could provide bike maps, participate in bike-to-work week, and give employers information about biking around Lisle. Additional bicycle racks could be installed along Main Street to make the downtown a friendlier destination for customers who bike. A safe bicycle connection to the Morton Arboretum would increase riding from the neighborhoods to the north and make the downtown a destination for visitors. Various regional and state funding sources such as the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program or Transportation Alternatives Program, could help to pay for such a project.

The Village could also install covered bicycle racks for Metra commuters who ride bikes to the station (such as those found at Wilmette's Metra station).

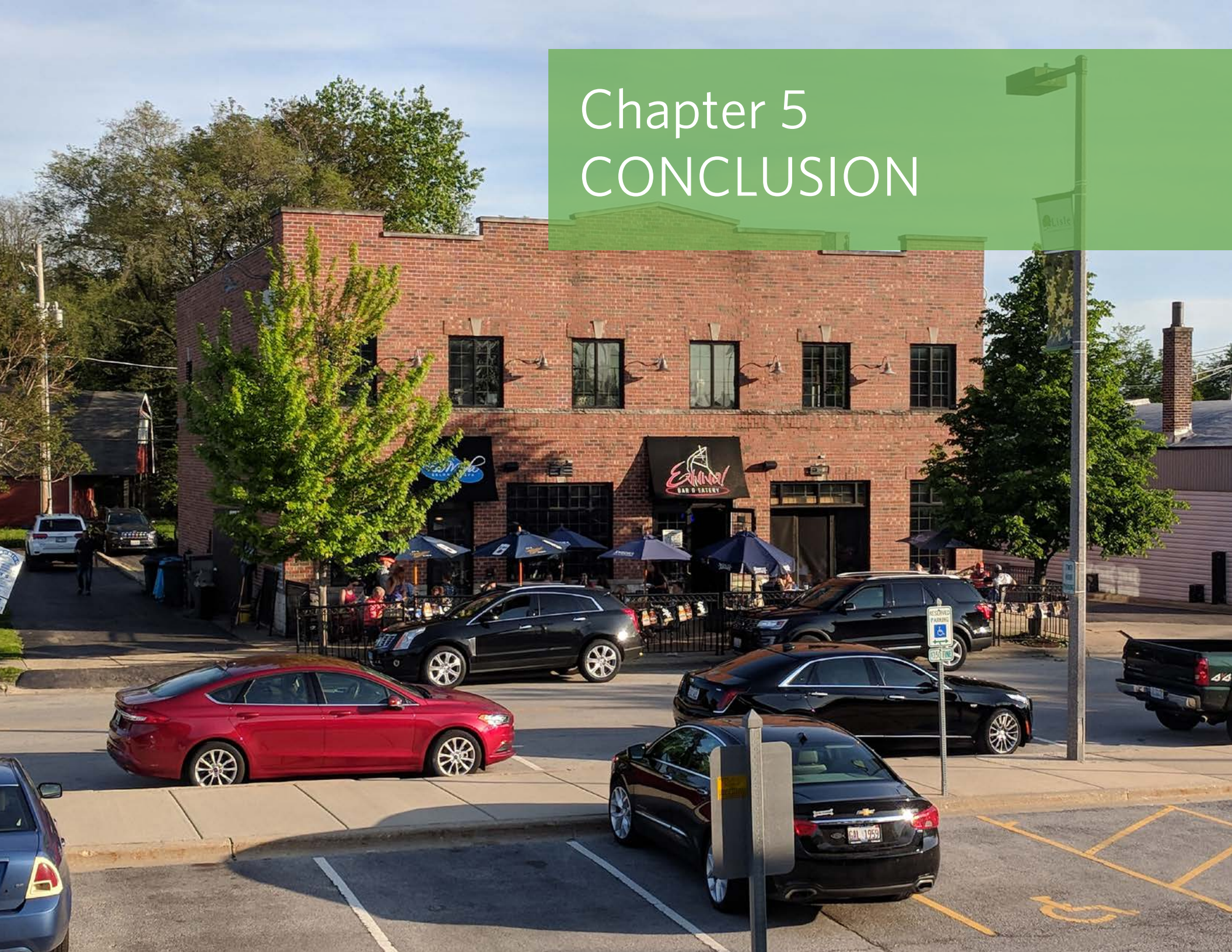
"[We need] places to safely park and lock bicycles, so they can be used for getting to downtown for shopping and dining."

-Metroquest survey respondent

"I am a downtown commuter and live about 2 miles from the Lisle train station...it would be great if instead of a new parking garage money was invested in building bike lanes so that people could bike to the station."

-Metroquest survey respondent

Chapter 5
CONCLUSION



The source of Lisle's "parking problem" is a combination of an imbalance in the number of public and private parking spaces, increasing demand as new developments are built and commercial activity increases, and burdensome parking requirements in the Village code for parking that cannot be shared.

Active downtowns are accompanied by high parking demand. If that demand is managed properly, Lisle can continue to grow and provide a positive experience and a friendly business climate.

The parking management strategies proposed for Lisle are designed to:

- Increase the supply of publicly available parking in the downtown, while making it easier for occasional Metra commuters and employees to park reliably;
- Develop a long-term plan for parking that relies on a "park-once" design and considers the construction of a parking structure and implementation of paid parking on Main Street if required by future conditions;
- Simplify Village zoning to foster downtown economic development and create a shared supply of public parking;
- Improve public parking information in advance of trips and parking signage in the downtown while creating better-quality parking experiences in Main Street spots and in remote lots;
- Increase the number of people who choose to reach downtown without a car by making the travel experience comfortable for people walking, riding bikes, or taking the bus.

"I don't commute [by train] every day, but maybe 2-3 times per week. I miss the daily fee parking that was removed a couple of years ago. I would much prefer that over more commuter permit parking."

-Lisle resident

The parking management plan is designed to make it easier for visitors to find convenient parking that suits their needs. Lisle is fortunate that the downtown has space to accommodate more cars and businesses. To accommodate the additional visitors and their vehicles, Lisle should prioritize shared public parking over required private parking for new developments and find ways to motivate parkers to use remote lots.

Parking on Main Street will continue to be congested during peak dining hours as long as the spots are free, regardless of how many additional spaces are added. If some Main Street spaces required payment, some drivers would be motivated to park in the remote lots, leaving some of the most desirable spaces open to visitors who are in a rush or do not want to walk. If the ultimate goal is to make parking on Main Street easy, some form of paid parking will be necessary. When paid parking is implemented, it does not need to be drastic or expensive; parking congestion will disappear when just ten percent of drivers park further from the core or shift to other modes.

The Village should continue to invest in the walkability of the downtown core, as well as improve the bicycling infrastructure. Small increases in the mode share of pedestrians and bicyclists to accomplish short trips can significantly increase public health and community vitality, as well as reduce parking needs. For short trips, most people with a choice between driving and walking will only make the choice to walk if the walk is “simultaneously useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting” (Speck, 2012). Driving will continue to be the mode of choice for most people that visit downtown Lisle, but it is important to plan for all modes, especially walking, since everyone is a pedestrian at the end of their trip.

Implementing changes to downtown Lisle’s parking system may be more challenging than leaving it as it is, or than spending millions of dollars on a parking garage. However, the alternatives would not solve the main problem, which is a lack of convenient parking spaces open to the public. Implementing the recommended strategies would address this key problem, with a customer-first approach focused on convenience and options. This would strengthen the historic downtown and ensure that it succeeds as new residential developments and commercial additions continue.

Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

233 South Wacker Drive, Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606

312-454-0400
info@cmap.illinois.gov

www.cmap.illinois.gov

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