

Downtown Middlebury Parking Study: Public Engagement Summary Report

Introduction

The Downtown Middlebury Parking Study aims to achieve several key goals: to create a downtown environment that fosters growth, supports existing and future businesses, serves residents, and enhances both the experience and safety for users. This study utilizes a data-driven approach to identify where people are parking, highlight parking deficiencies, and systematically document the primary challenges and needs of downtown users. The study will produce three technical reports and a final report, providing the Town with a thorough demand analysis and recommendations to guide decisions on parking management, the location of additional parking spaces, and the appropriate size for new parking facilities.

This third technical report summarizes public engagement efforts, identifies specific challenges faced by users, and presents potential solutions.

In March and April 2025, the Town conducted a public input survey to gather information on where people park downtown, how long they stay, the times they visit, their parking preferences, the challenges they encounter, and their ideas for improvement. We received responses from 222 individuals.

The survey was accessible online on the project's website (engage.macog.com/middlebury-downtown-parking), and hard copies were available at Town Hall and the Middlebury Public Library. Notices about the survey were posted at downtown businesses and promoted on the Town of Middlebury's Facebook page. It was also featured in the March edition of the inMiddlebury magazine and the community newsletter.

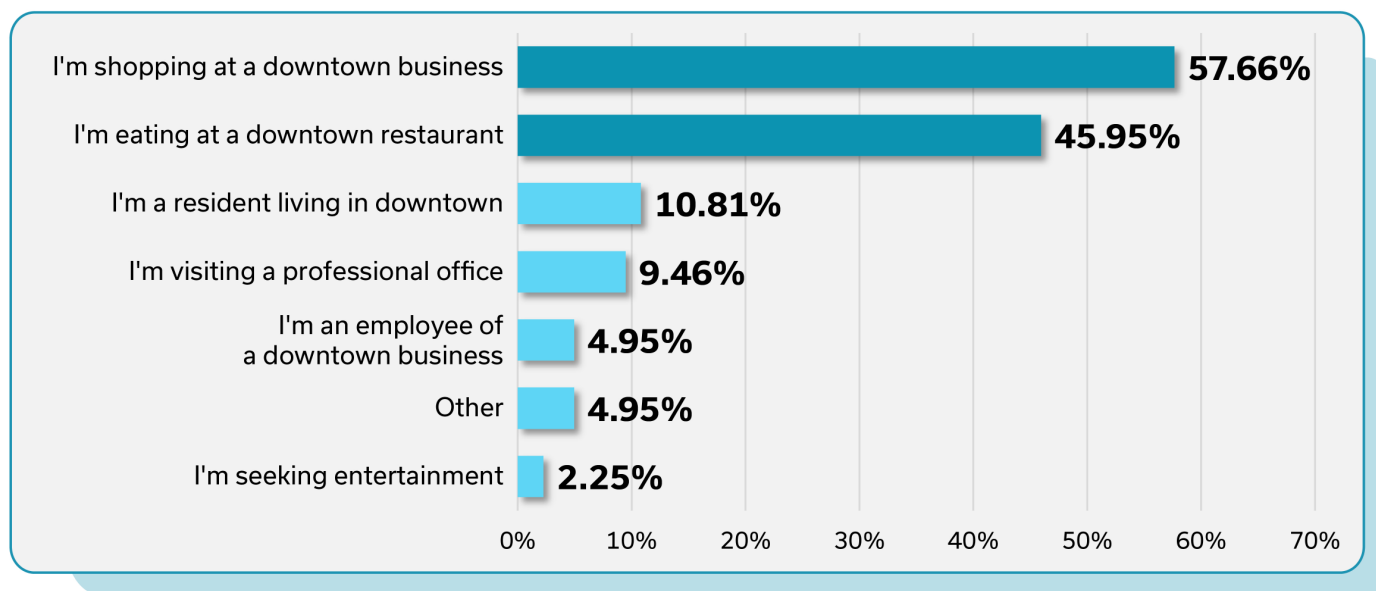
Additional engagement efforts included an online "Map Where You Park" activity and interviews with several downtown business owners to gain insight into the challenges they face and their suggestions for improvements.

The results of these engagement efforts were shared with the Steering Committee in May 2025 and informed the recommendations outlined in the final report.

Coming to Downtown

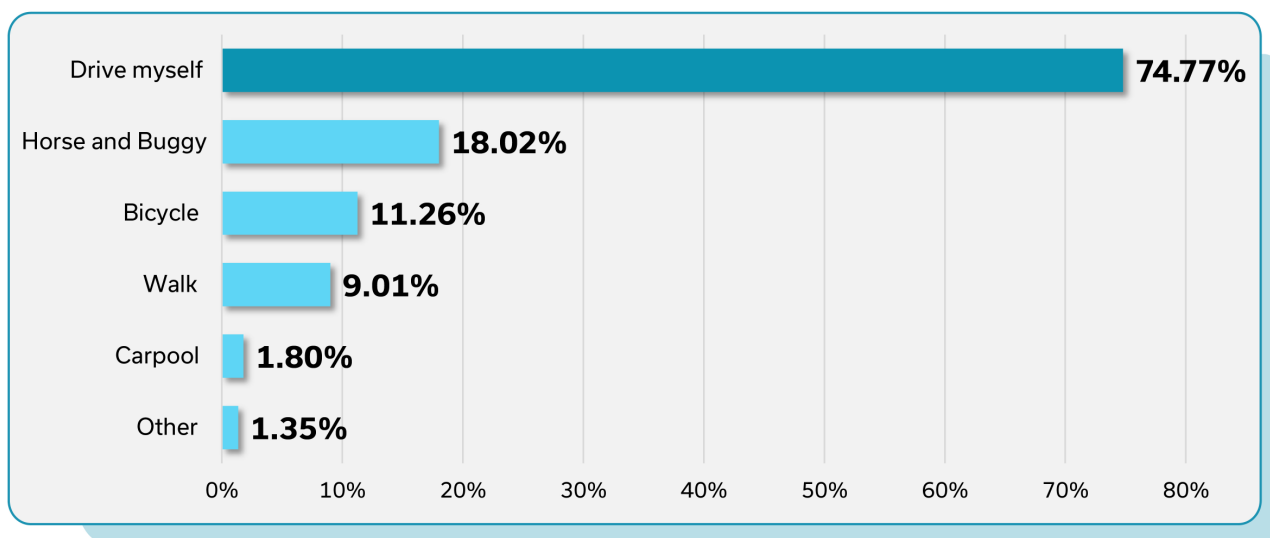
The first survey question asked respondents to indicate what brings them to downtown (see **Chart 1** below). The majority of respondents indicated they come into downtown to eat at a restaurant (45.95%) and to shop at a downtown retailer (57.66%). Other respondents indicated they are an employee of a downtown business (4.95%), visiting a professional office (9.46%), seeking entertainment (2.25%), they are a resident living downtown (10.81%), or other reasons (4.95%).

What most often brings you to downtown?



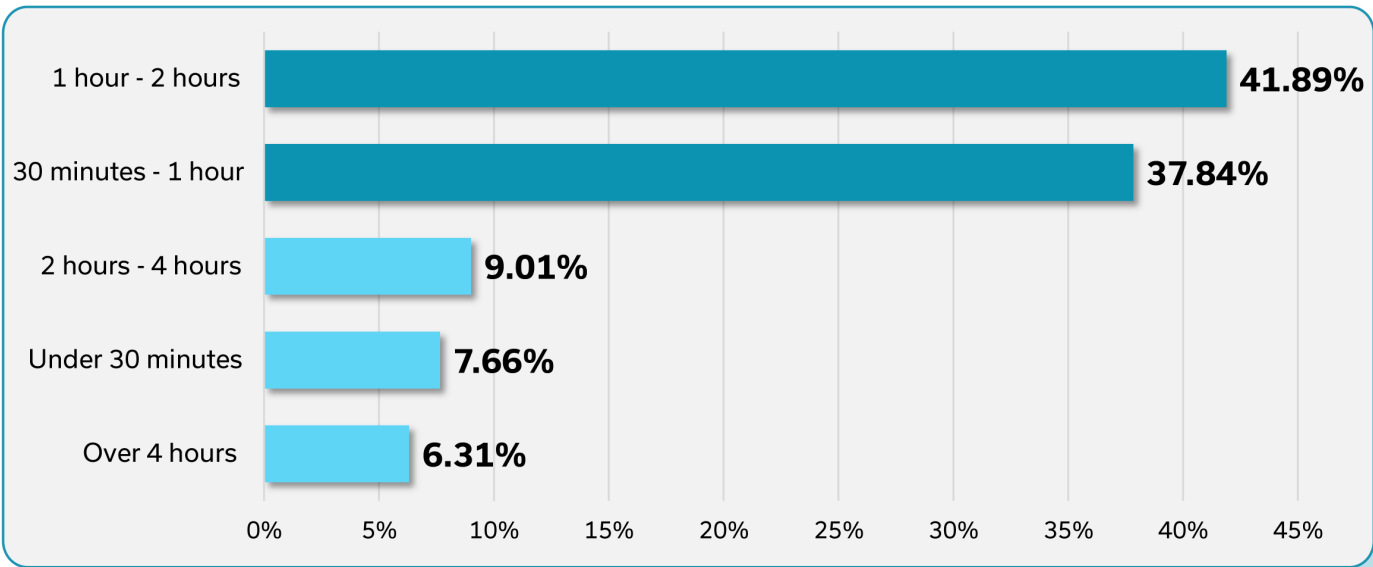
The second question asked respondents how they generally come into downtown (see **Chart 2** below). The majority of respondents, 74.77%, drove downtown themselves, with 18.02% came by a horse and buggy. Approximately 11.26% biked and 9.01% walked into downtown, and 1.8% carpooled.

How do you generally come into downtown?



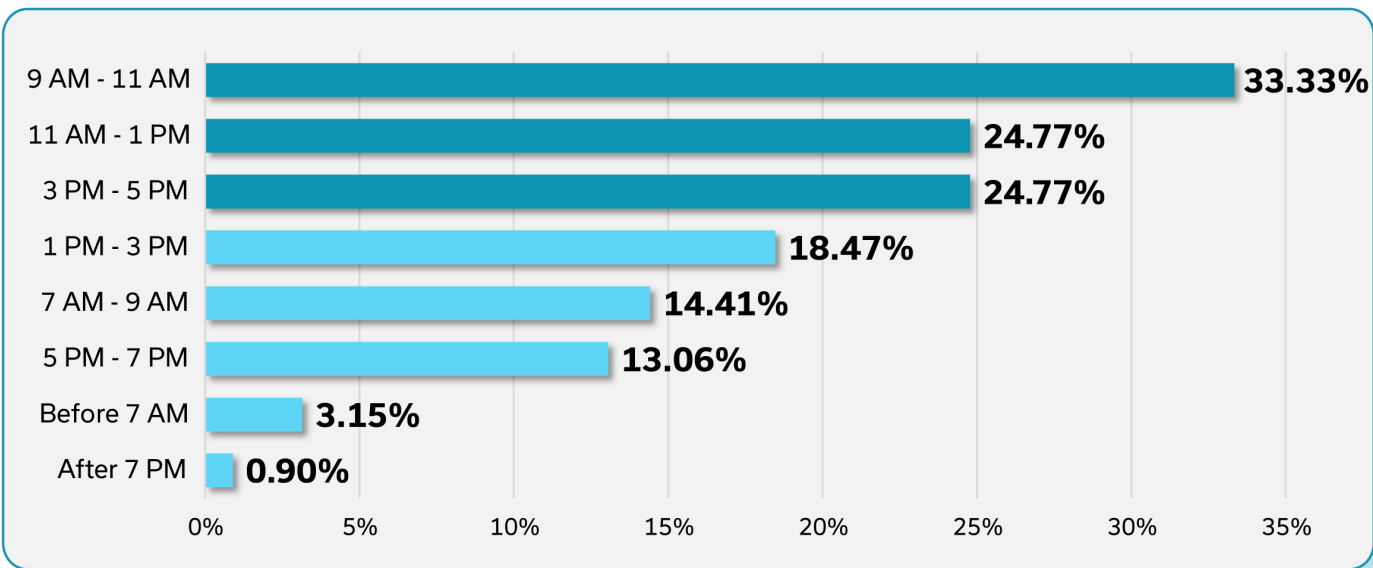
The third question asked respondents how long they stay in downtown. The majority of respondents stayed downtown for 1 hour to 2 hours (41.89%). The next highest duration was 30 minutes to 1 hour (37.84%) (see **Chart 3** below).

How long do you most often stay in downtown?



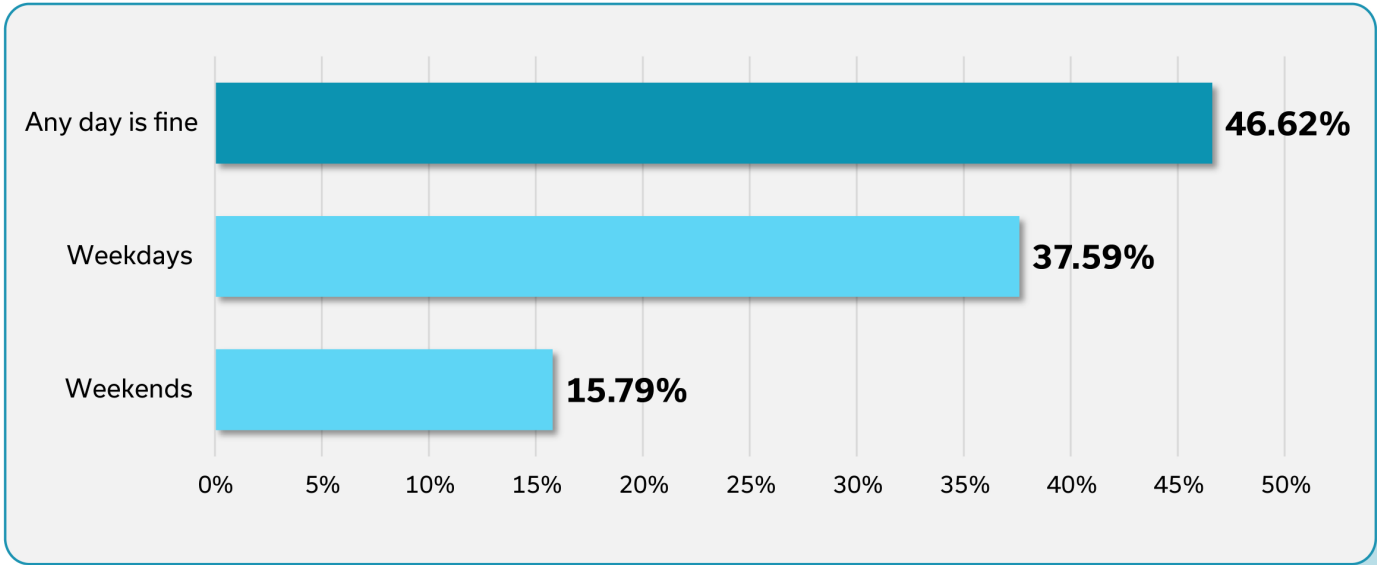
The fourth question asked respondents to indicate the time of day they most often come into downtown. As shown in **Chart 4** below, the most common times for respondents to come downtown were between 9 AM and 11 AM (33%). The next common times were between 11 AM and 1 PM (25%) and 3 PM and 5 PM (25%).

What time of day do you most often come into downtown?



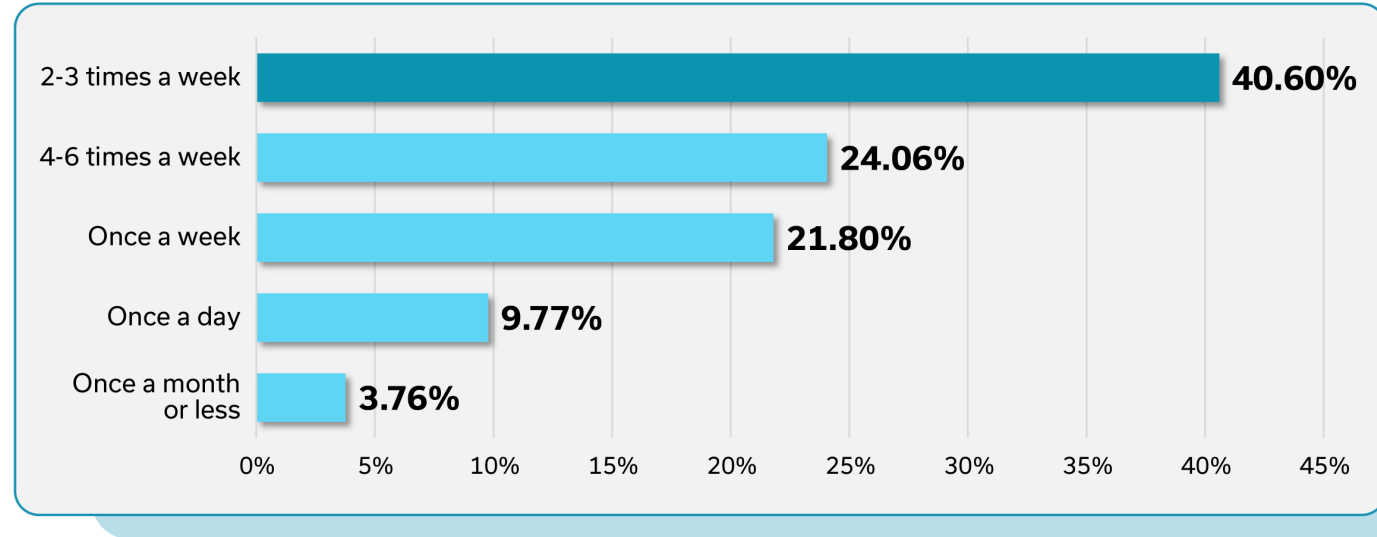
The fifth question asked respondents to select the days of the week they prefer to come into downtown. The majority of respondents said any day is fine, 47% (see **Chart 5** below). Approximately 38% said they prefer to come on a weekday and 16% said they prefer to come on the weekends.

On what days of the week do you prefer to come into downtown?



The sixth question asked how often they come into downtown, (see **Chart 6** below). Most respondents, 41%, indicated they come into downtown 2-3 times a week and 24% said they come 4-6 times a week. Approximately 22% said they come once a week, while 10% said they only come once a day, and 4% said only once a month.

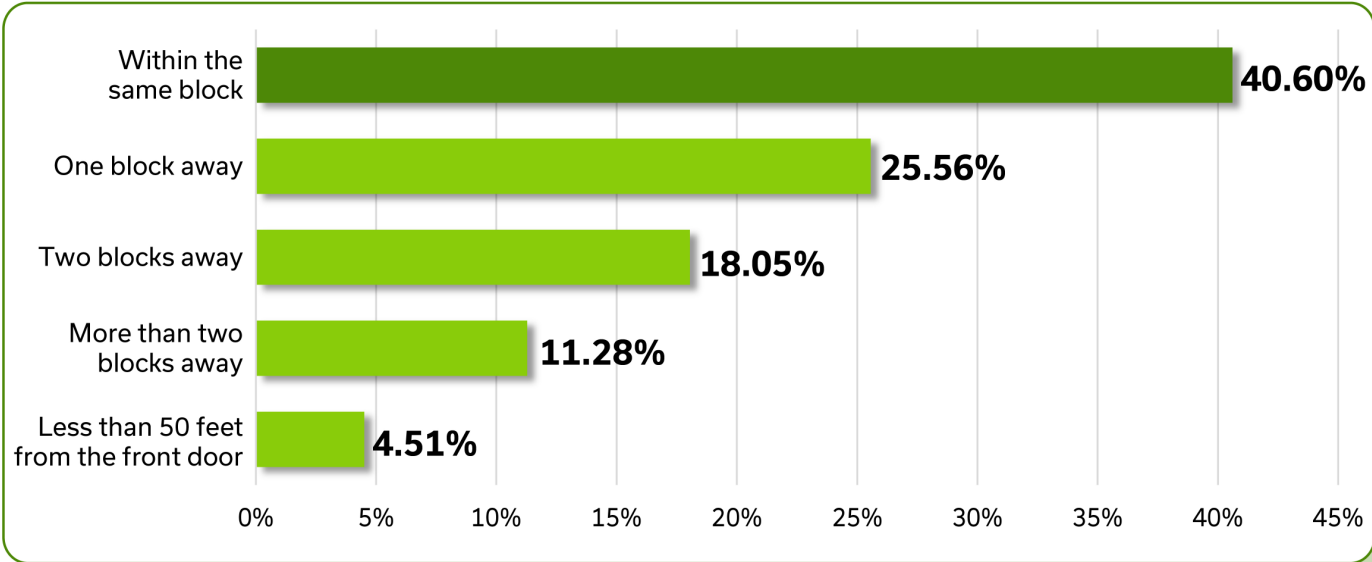
How often do you come into downtown?



Where in Downtown

The seventh question asked respondents how far from their destination are they willing to park (see **Chart 7** below). The majority, 41%, indicated they park within the same block and 26% said they are willing to park one block away. Approximately 18% said they are willing to park two blocks away, 11% said they are willing to park more than two blocks away, and 5% said they park less than 50 feet from the front door.

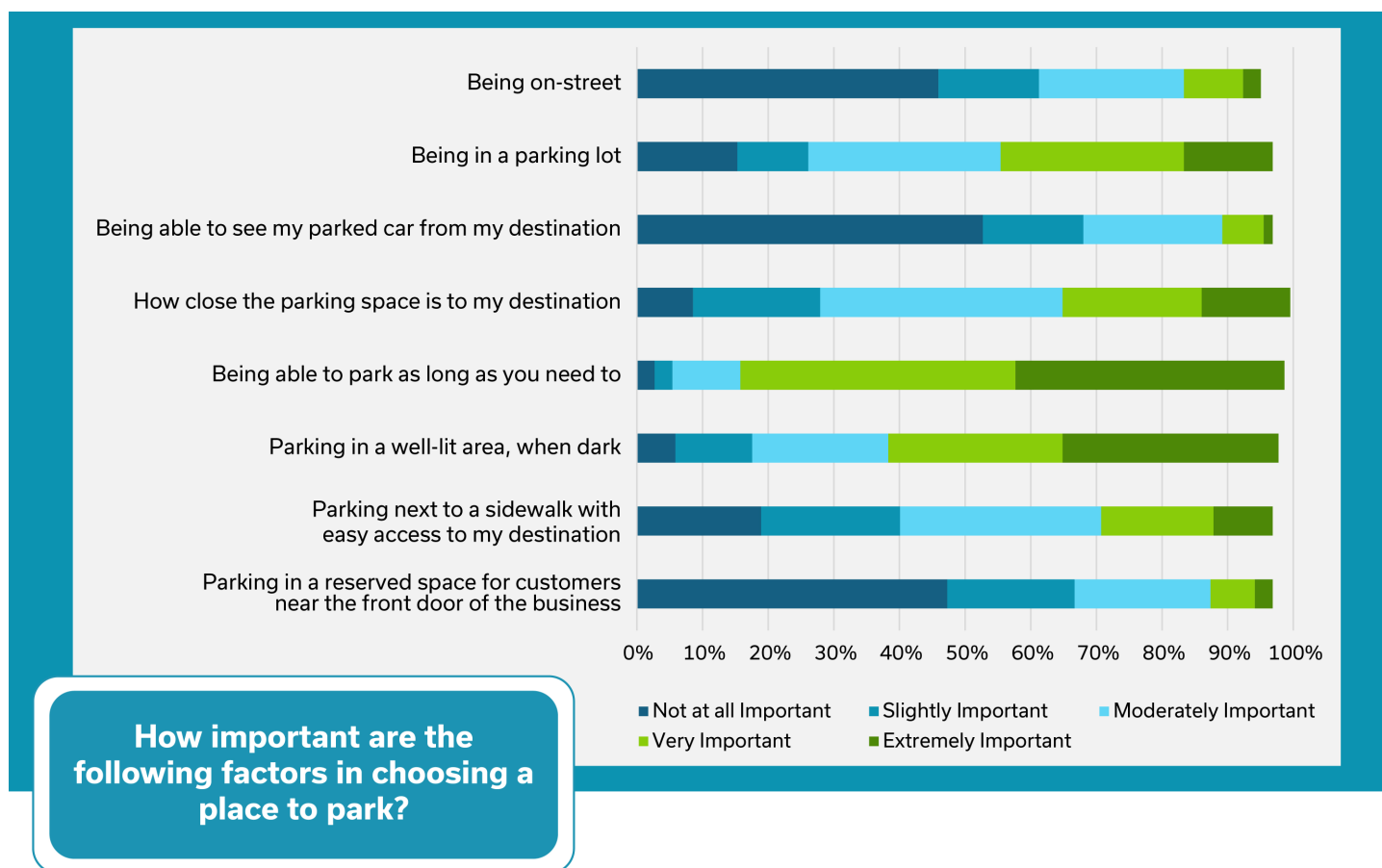
How far from your destination are you willing to park?



Parking Preferences

The eighth question asked respondents to rate how important the given factors are in choosing a place to park (see **Chart 8** below). The top three factors respondents indicated as most important were:

1. Being able to park as long as you need to;
2. Parking in a well-lit area; and,
3. Being in a parking lot.



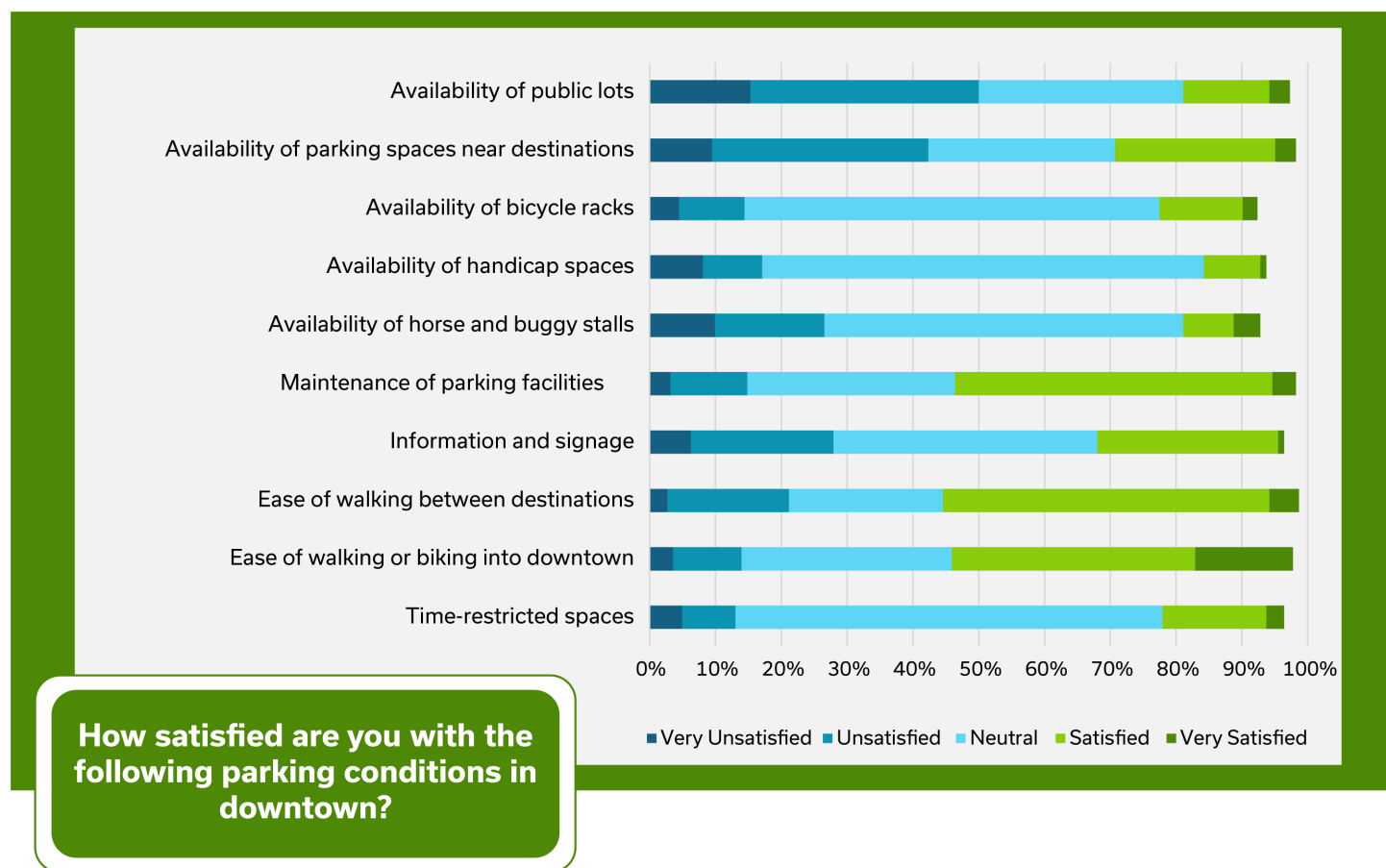
The least important factors when choosing a place to park were:

1. Being able to see their parked car from their destination,
2. Parking in a reserved space for customers near the front door of the business; and,
3. Being on-street.

The ninth question asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the given parking conditions in downtown (see **Chart 9** below).

The majority of respondents were **satisfied** with:

- The ease of walking or biking into downtown;
- The ease of walking between destinations; and,
- The maintenance of parking facilities.



The majority of respondents were **unsatisfied** with:

- The availability of public lots;
- The availability of parking space near destinations; and,
- Information and signage.

The majority of respondents were **neutral** about:

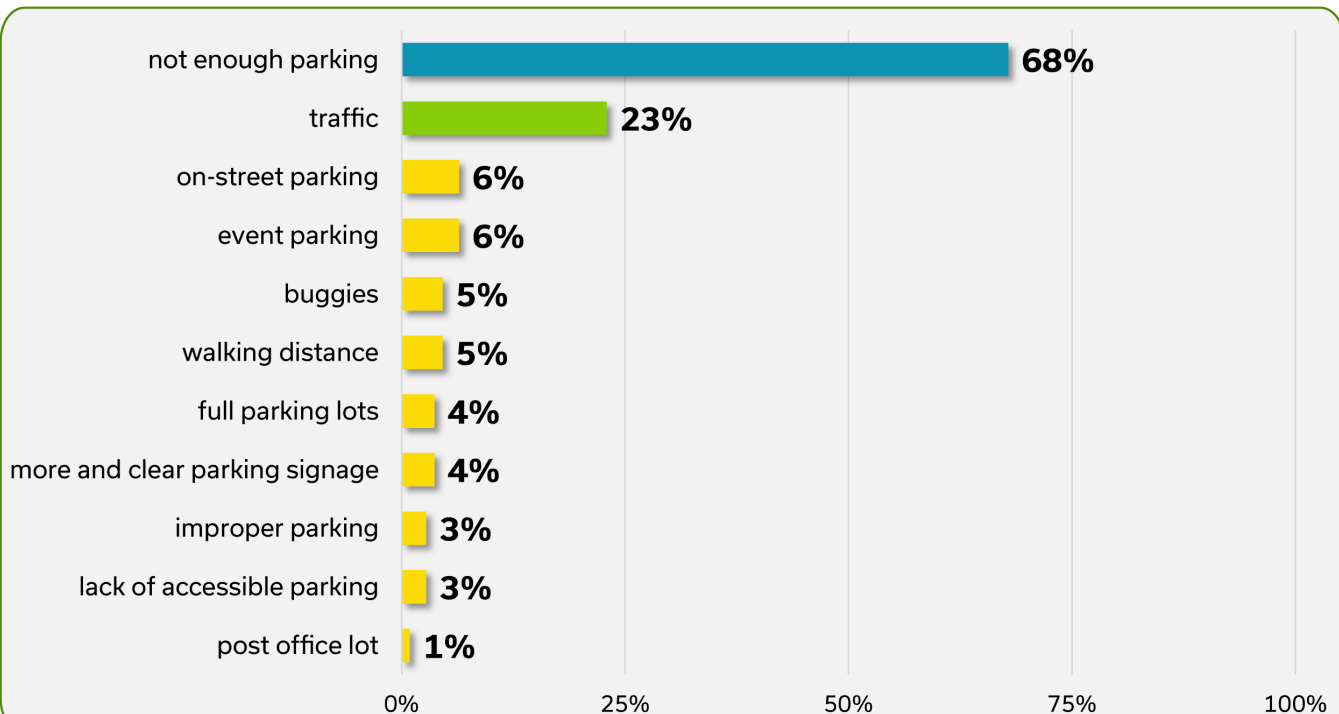
- The amount of time-restricted spaces;
- The availability of bicycle racks;
- The availability of handicap spaces; and,
- The availability of horse and buggy stalls.

Parking Issues

The tenth question asked participants to share what they thought were the major parking issues are in downtown. The common responses are displayed in the word cloud followed by a summary of what participants commonly shared (see **Chart 10** below the word cloud).



What are the major parking issues when trying to park in downtown?



Most Common Issues

- 68% of respondents said there is “**not enough parking**” in downtown.
- 23% of respondents said the “**traffic**” on Warren Street and SR 13 is a problem.

Other Common Issues

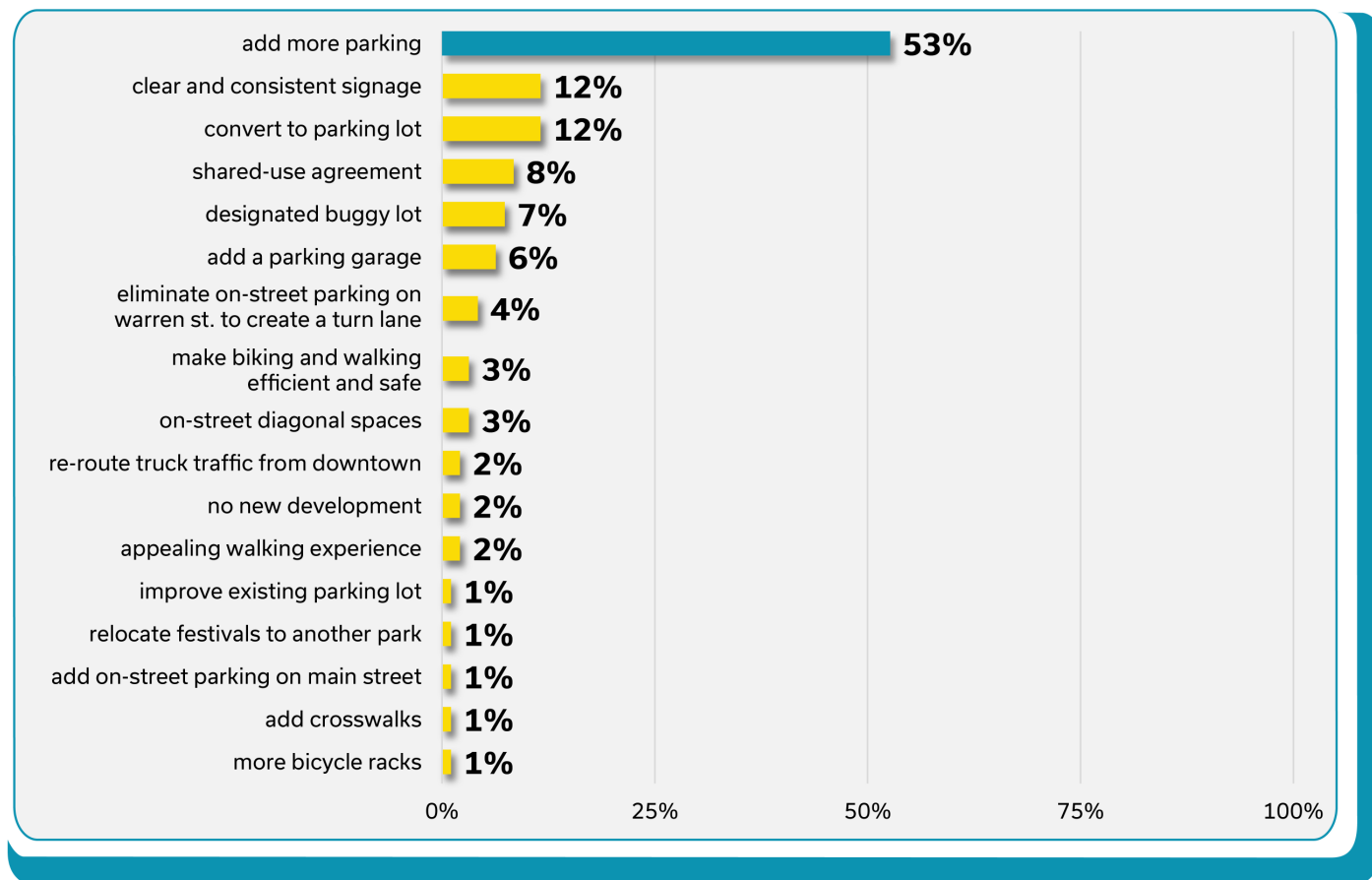
- 6% of respondents said the “**on-street parking**” is an issue because of the traffic and safety of crossing on Warren Street and SR 13.
- 6% of respondents said there is not enough “**event parking**” and have a hard time finding a place to park during festivals and special events.
- 5% of respondents said mixing with “**buggies**” in parking lots can be challenging because of the amount of space that is needed to accommodate for the horse and buggies.
- 5% of respondents said the “**walking distance**” from the parking lots to businesses on Main Street is too far away.
- 4% of respondents said the “**full parking lots**” for the public lot off Warren Street and State Street is challenging to find an open spot during midday.
- 4% of respondents said there needs to be “**more and clear parking signage**” to let people know where to park.
- 3% of respondents said the horse and buggies are “**improper parking**” by using both sides of the hitching post or are out in the street making it difficult at times to navigate around.
- 3% of respondents said there’s a “**lack of accessible parking**” close to businesses main entrances or for event parking for elderly or those with disabilities.
- 1% of respondents said the “**post office lot**” can get busy and is challenging to get in and out.

Parking Improvements

The last question asked participants to share what they thought would be a solution to improve parking in downtown. The common responses are displayed in the word cloud followed by a summary of what participants commonly shared (see **Chart 11** below the word cloud).



What is one solution to improve parking in downtown?



Most Common Solution

- 53% of respondents said the single solution to improve parking is **“add more parking”** in downtown that is public parking.

Other Common Solutions

- 12% of respondents said adding **“clear and consistent signage”** will help let people know where they are allowed to park.
- 12% of respondents said explore the feasibility to **“convert to parking lot”** as properties come available for sale.
- 8% of respondents said create a **“shared-use agreement”** with businesses to allow the public to park in their private lots during non-business hours.
- 7% of respondents said adding a **“designated buggy lot”** will increase the parking availability for the Amish.
- 6% of respondents said explore the feasibility to **“add a parking garage.”**
- 4% of respondents said explore the feasibility to **“eliminate on-street parking on Warren Street to create a turn lane”** to improve the traffic flow.
- 3% of respondents said **“make biking and walking efficient and safe.”**
- 3% of respondents said add **“on-street diagonal spaces.”**
- 2% of respondents said explore the feasibility to **“re-route truck traffic from downtown.”**
- 2% of respondents said **“no new development.”**
- 2% of respondents said add a more **“appealing walking experience.”**
- 1% of respondents said **“improve existing parking lot.”**
- 1% of respondents said explore the feasibility to **“relocate festivals to another park.”**
- 1% of respondents said **“add on-street parking on Main Street.”**
- 1% of respondents said **“add crosswalks.”**
- 1% of respondents said add **“more bicycle racks.”**

Map Where You Park

In addition to the input survey was an online mapping activity available on the project website. This activity had individuals place a marker on a map of downtown to indicate where they prefer to park and if they're parking in a lot, on-street, or in an area designated horse and buggies.

There were 32 individuals who participated in the activity. The **Chart** on the right displays the utilization breakdown of the types of parking facilities. **Figure 1** below illustrates where the 32 individuals like to first find a parking space when visiting downtown.

Then, the markers were overlaid on top of the Walk Zones, introduced in the "Parking Demand Analysis Report, to see which zone had the most activity. As shown on **Figure 1**, the SE zone had the highest activity, with 16 people parking in this area and the SW zone was the second highest activity level, with 9 people parking in this area.

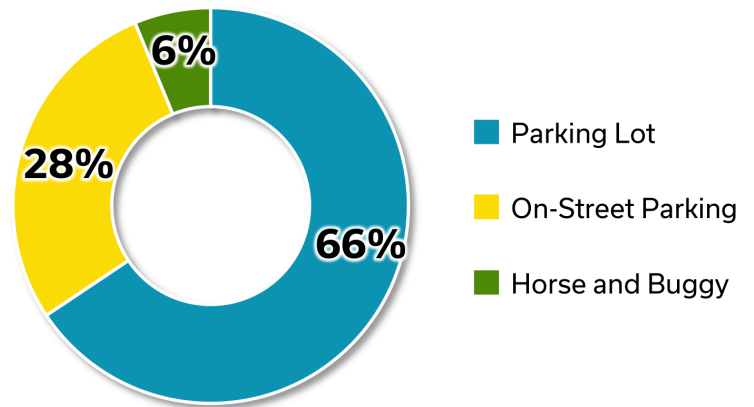
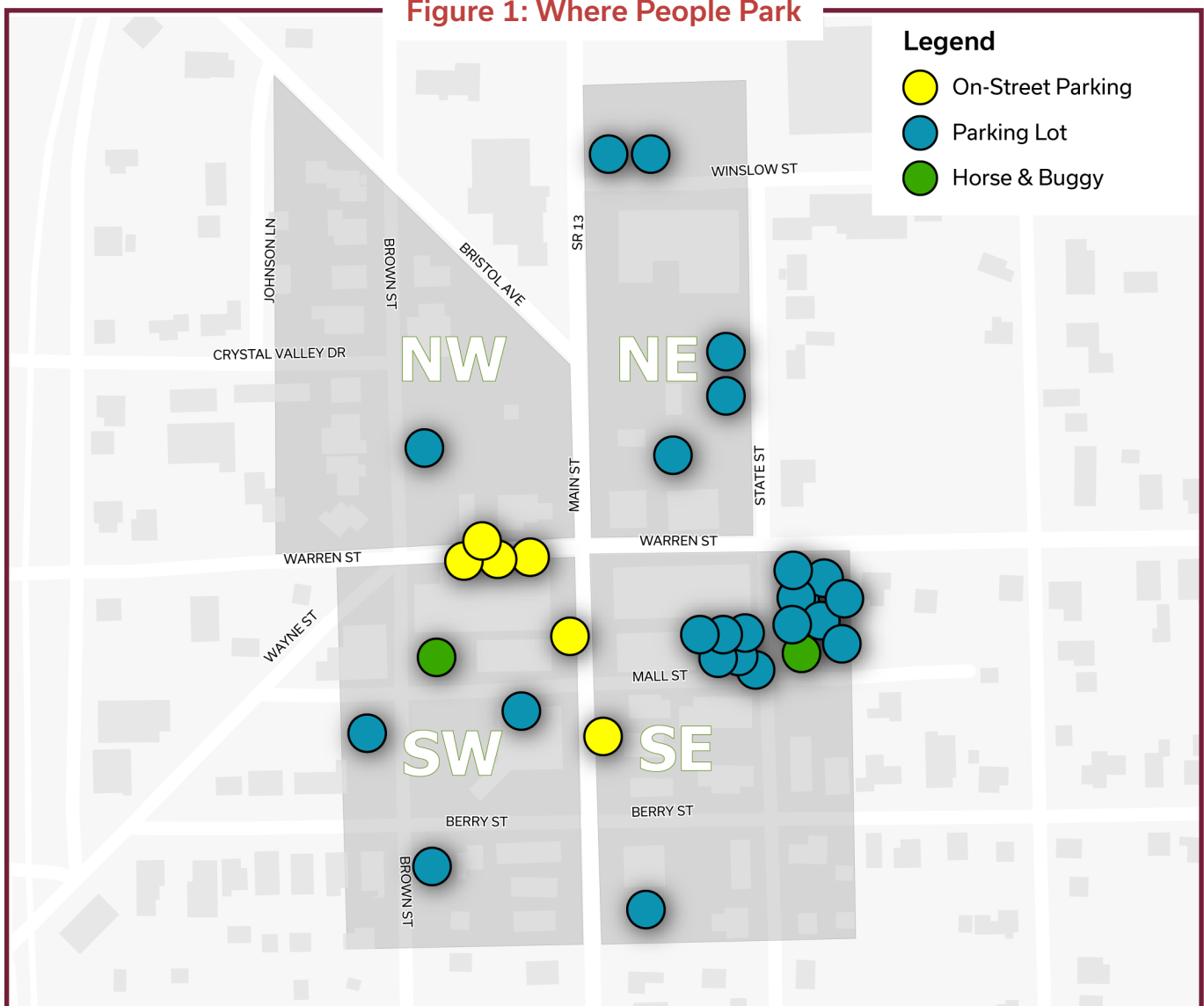


Figure 1: Where People Park



Stakeholder Interviews

During the public engagement period in March 2025, MACOG conducted interviews with four downtown business owners that included the Old Hoosier Meats, First State Bank, the Legendary Grind, and the General Store. Business owners were asked a series of questions to know how many employees they employ, the peak operation times of the day, where they have designated parking areas for their employees and customers, if applicable, and lastly, rate how important a series of factors they thought their employees and customers value in choosing where to park.

At the end of the interview, business owners were asked to share the greatest issues they or their employees experience with parking in downtown and the potential improvements to help address their issues. Below is a summary of what the business owners said are the issues they experience, and on the next page is a summary of the potential improvements to benefit the parking experience.

Parking Issues

- The removal of the on-street spaces on Main Street/SR 13 further exacerbates the limited supply of parking in downtown.
- Employees and customers having to share parking in public parking lots.
- Many of the retail businesses have the same peak operation times of the day, which causes a high concentration of multiple users competing to find a parking space.
- Need more horse and buggy parking areas as there are limited designated areas. Additionally, in the designated areas, often times the horse and buggies are parked outside of the given area.
- Speeding traffic on Winslow Street to avoid the main traffic light.
- First State Bank is the primary owner of the private lots around the bank and often times the general public will park in the private lots and stay there for the duration of their trip. This takes away parking for bank employees and its customers.
- Need better enforcement.
- Lack of clear and consistent signage causes confusion for customers to not know where they can park.
- The on-street spaces along the south side of Wayne Street, east of Main Street/SR 13, are not usable because of being close to the through-traffic and the curb is raised too high causing people to have to step up onto the sidewalk or step down onto the street.
- Need to improve the crossings at the intersections along Wayne Street between Brown Street and State Street, and the intersections along Main Street/SR 13 between Winslow Street and Berry Street.
- Improve pedestrian safety trying to cross Main Street/SR 13.
- Need more handicap accessible parking spaces.

Potential Improvements

- Add parking enforcement to ensure proper use of the parking facilities.
- Add clear and consistent signage to let people know where they can park.
- Acquire nearby residential or commercial properties that come up for sale to explore turning the property lot into a parking lot. One area is the location of the former church site off Brown Street.
- Add more buggy parking, where feasible, i.e. in the public parking lot off State Street and near the Public Library.
- Discourage traffic from using Winslow Street as a cut-thru to bypass the main traffic light. One solution could be adding a stop sign at the State Street intersection.
- Explore the feasibility of adding a Hawk Signal on SR 13.
- Create a public-private partnership to have a parking permit system.
- Add more handicap parking spaces near retail businesses.
- Explore the feasibility to create angle parking on Brown Street.