01

Executive Summary

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Old Town Fairfax is a charming blend of historic character, local businesses, and community spaces. At its heart, the city's parking system supports the movement of residents, visitors, and workers, but its current limitations present challenges related to accessibility and growth.

This study comprehensively examines the City of Fairfax Old Town's parking environment, evaluating today's conditions, forecasting future needs, and charting a path toward a system that offers more public parking capacity.

The City of Fairfax is at an important juncture in managing its downtown parking resources. As the area becomes more urbanized, with increased development and densification expected over the next five to ten years, there is an opportunity to promote a more mature land use pattern that maximizes the efficiency of its current parking assets.

Historically, parking development in Old Town has been largely driven by developers, resulting in a landscape dominated by private surface lots. However, many of these lots remain underutilized, leaving public parking as only a small portion of the city's total parking capacity.

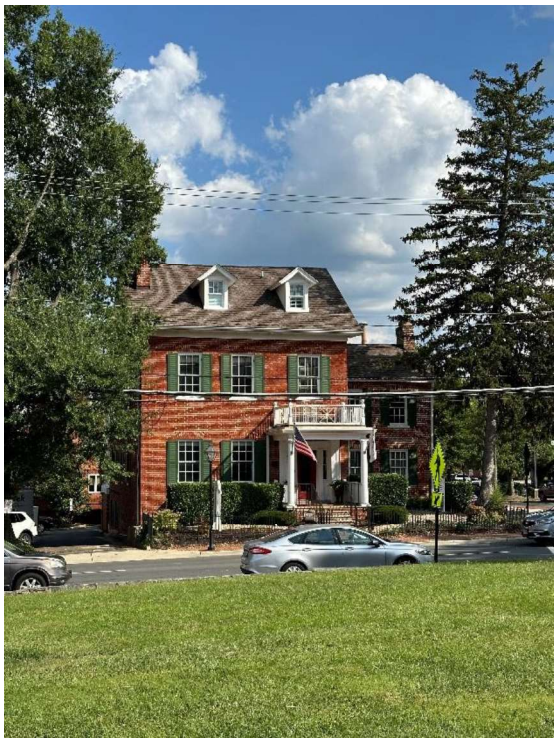
This study recommends that the City of Fairfax take a proactive role in parking management to address this imbalance and optimize the use of existing real estate. This would involve transitioning to a shared-use parking model and leveraging private parking resources through shared-use agreements to increase publicly accessible parking. Tools such as in-lieu fees, zoning code updates, and shared parking incentives are proposed to support this transition effectively.

Additionally, the report outlines a “tipping point” for when public investments, such as constructing a parking deck, may become necessary. The “tipping point” refers to the critical juncture when the combined supply of private and public parking can no longer adequately meet the future demand generated by new developments and increased activity in Old Town Fairfax. While leveraging shared-use agreements with private parking facilities can effectively expand the publicly accessible parking pool in the short term, this strategy may have limitations.

As redevelopment progresses and surface lots are replaced with higher-density uses, the availability of private parking *may* shrink. At the same time, increased demand from residents, businesses, and visitors will place additional strain on the remaining parking infrastructure. A shortage will emerge if this demand surpasses the capacity of existing public parking and the shared-use agreements. This “tipping point” would require the City to consider investing in new public parking infrastructure,

such as a parking deck, to meet the community's growing and competing land use needs.

Walker outlines a comprehensive strategy to transform Old Town's parking system to address present and future needs. Operational enhancements such as clearer signage, better enforcement, and expanded shared-use agreements can immediately improve the user experience and help the city address future conditions. Policy updates, including zoning adjustments to encourage shared parking and alternatives to traditional parking minimums, will create flexibility for new developments while preserving the area's character.



These recommendations are not simply technical fixes but part of a broader vision for Old Town Fairfax—where parking is an enabler of community and commerce, seamlessly integrating with the city's charm and functionality. By following these recommendations, the City of Fairfax can ensure its parking system evolves with its aspirations, fostering a sustainable and vibrant future for all who live, work, and visit here.

Existing Conditions

Old Town has a robust inventory on paper. Yet, public parking makes up only a tiny portion of this total, with 2% of the spaces represented by on-street parking and 7% comprised of public off-street parking (during the daytime on weekdays). The composition of the public parking inventory increases to 16% during nights and weekends with the inclusion of all spaces made available to the public across three (weekday) private parking lots (Bank of America lot, Old Town Plaza Deck, and 10427 lot), owing to existing shared parking agreements. Regarding the on-street parking inventory, the downtown core sees consistent activity, with Main Street experiencing spillover across multiple periods (average 77% occupancy). On-street parking on Layton Hall Drive and Democracy Lane also has higher occupancy rates than average.

During peak times, public parking occupancy rates hover around 33% on weekdays and 40% on weekends, with some lots underutilized due to inconsistent signage or restricted access. Key public lots close to the downtown core, like those on Main Street and Sager Avenue, are often near capacity. In

contrast, others, such as the library garage, are underutilized (average occupancy of 26% across the three days versus around 70% for other public lots). These findings reveal a mismatch between supply and demand and underscore the need for targeted interventions to balance utilization more effectively across the parking network.

Parking Supply

The study area contains 6,319 parking spaces, primarily within privately owned lots. "Weekday" public parking is limited, with only 430 off-street and 128 on-street spaces available, not including shared facilities open to the public during evenings and weekends (referred to as "Nights and Weekend Parking" in the report). The map below highlights most of the public off-street lots and the (shared) private parking lots available for public use on nights and weekends. *(See page 28 for a larger version.)*

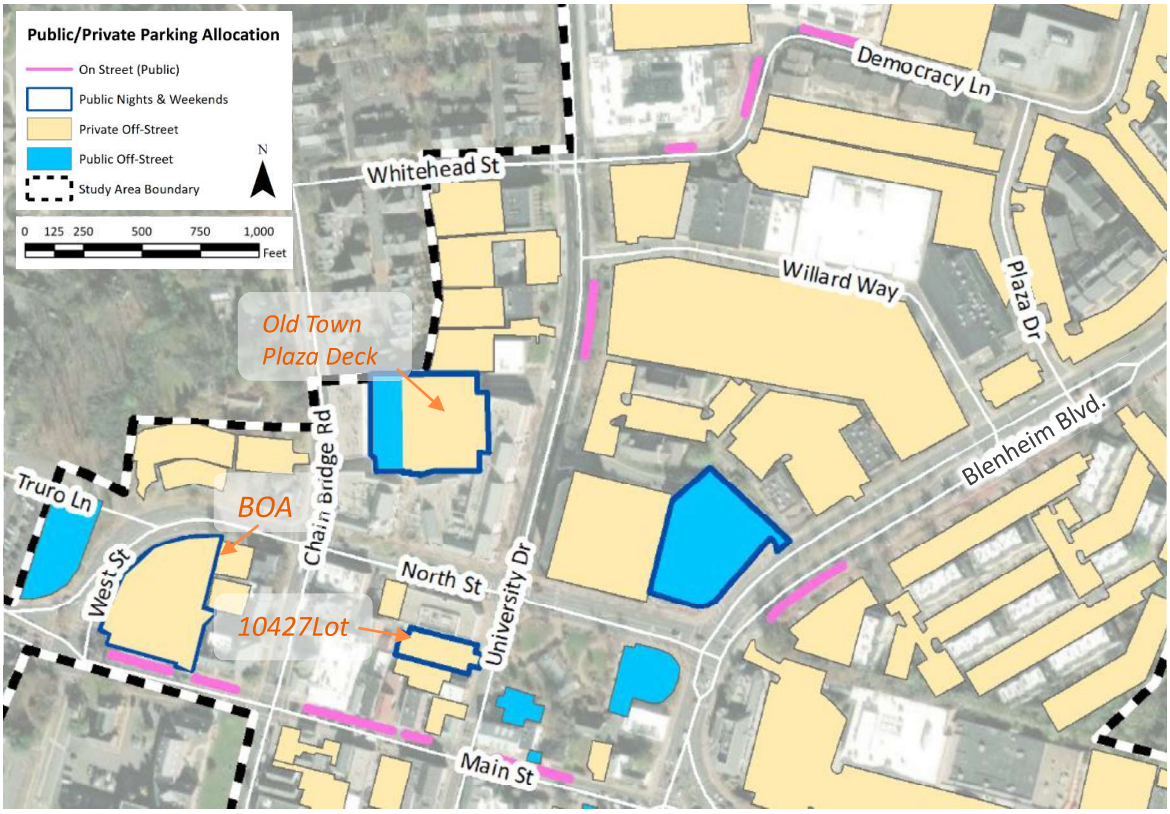
For nights and weekends, an additional 554 spaces from privately owned (off-street) lots (i.e., the private off-street lots with a blue border) are made available to the public, bringing the total off-street public parking inventory to 984.

Weekday Parking Inventory

Type	Inventory	Percentage
Public On-Street	128	2%
Public Off-Street	430	7%
Private Off-Street	5,761	91%
Totals	6,319	100%

Nights and Weekend Parking Inventory

Type	Inventory	Percentage
Public On-Street	128	2%
Public Off-Street	984	16%
Private Off-Street	5,207	82%
Totals	6,319	100%

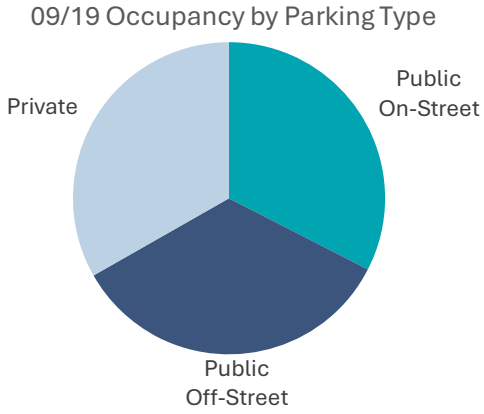


Peak Occupancy Periods

The following data represents the main field observation findings of peak occupancy across parking types.

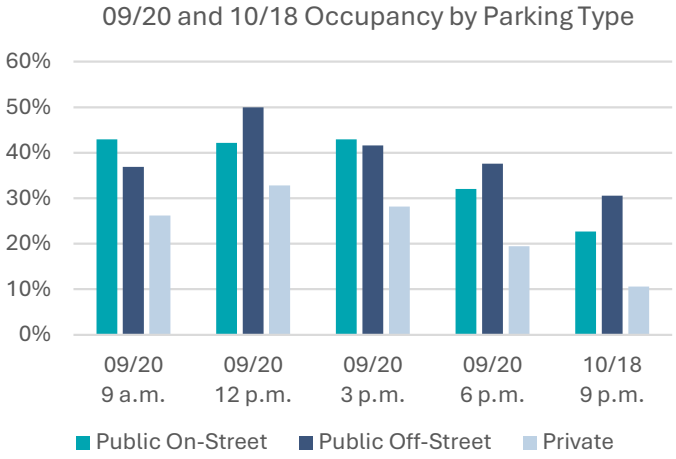
Thursday (09/19)

The Thursday (September 19) observations reflect an aggregated count over six hours (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.). During this time, the overall occupancy across all parking types in the study area was 33%. As shown in the graph, the occupancy percentages for public on-street, public off-street, and private parking were closely aligned, each hovering around the 33% mark, indicating minimal variation among parking types.



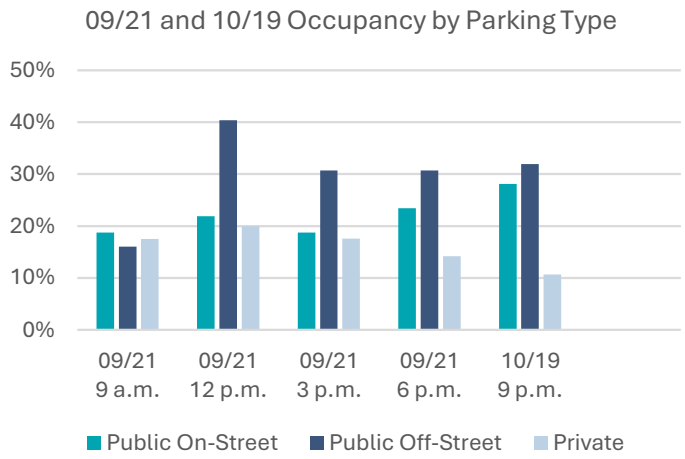
Friday (09/20 and 10/18)

Counts were conducted at five-time points—9 a.m., 12 p.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m., and 9 p.m.—revealing variations in parking demand throughout the day. Overall peak occupancy was observed at noon, with 34% of all parking spaces in use. Public off-street parking reached its peak occupancy of 50% at noon. In comparison, public on-street parking saw its highest usage at 43% at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Certain key lots, such as Main Street and Sager Avenue, experienced exceptionally high utilization rates, with Main Street reaching 93% occupancy (25 of 27 spaces). Sager Avenue reached 87% (40 of 46 spaces). These figures highlight concentrated demand in select areas during peak periods.



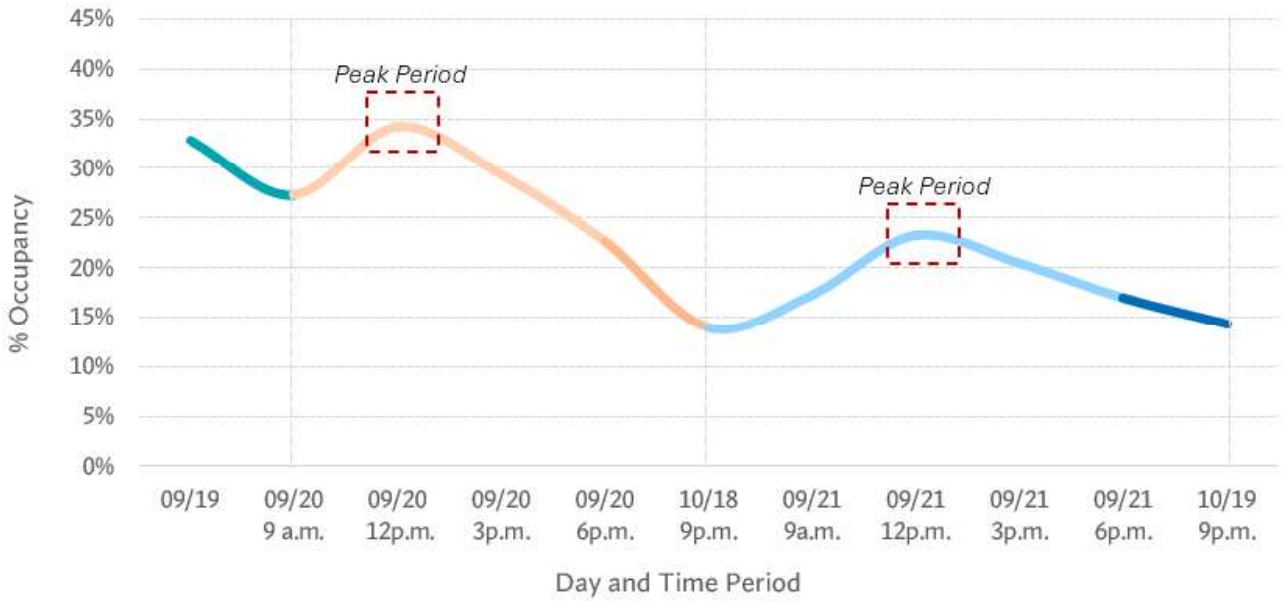
Saturday (09/21 and 10/19)

As with Friday, counts were conducted at five time points: 9 a.m., 12 p.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m., and 9 p.m. Overall, Saturday parking activity was lower than Friday, as indicated by the shorter bars (lower percentages) in the chart. The overall peak occupancy was 23%, recorded at noon.



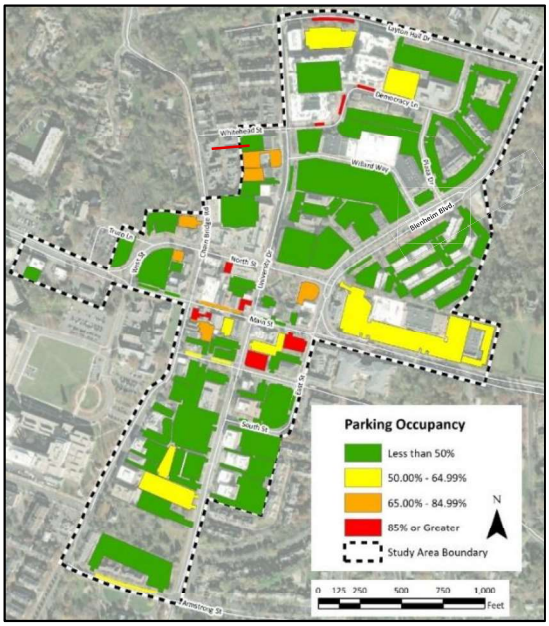
Parking Trends

The chart below illustrates the average occupancy trends across all parking lots, with distinct daily patterns marked by colored line segments—green for Thursday, peach and orange for Friday, and light and dark blue for Saturday. While Thursday's data was collected differently, its trends closely mirror those of Friday over the same period, showing similar occupancy percentages. Thursday and Friday show a sharp increase in parking demand from 9 a.m. to midday, followed by a gradual decline through the evening. Notably, Fridays experience higher activity levels, likely due to increased business operations and commuter activity. Activity levels in the evenings (6 p.m. and 9 p.m.) are comparable across Friday and Saturday. The red dashed boxes highlight the peak occupancy period at noon each day.



Peak Occupancy Example

This map of Friday showcases the parking occupancy for each parking lot at noon, represented as a percentage and color-coded according to the scale shown in the legend. Parking occupancy maps like this help to visually demonstrate activity based on demand and existing inventory within the study area. A comprehensive set of these maps appears in the second report section, Existing Conditions.



Public Parking Lots

During the weekday periods (Thursday, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.), the peak parking occupancy across public parking lots occurred at noon Friday with 50%, or 215 of 430 spaces, in use.

In the evening and weekend periods, when the three private lots are accessible to the public, the peak occurred on Saturday at noon, with 40% occupancy. However, Friday at 6 p.m. and Saturday at 3 p.m. saw similar activity, with 38% and 35% occupancy, respectively.

Public On-Street Parking

The highest on-street parking occupancy rates were observed on Friday at 9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m., ranging between 42% and 43%. The most active on-street spaces were concentrated in the downtown core along Main Street which averaged 77% across all three days. Whitehead Street averaged 78% occupancy[1] across the same period.

Underutilized Facilities

Certain lots, like the library parking facility, remain underutilized even during peak periods. This could be attributed to limited or unclear signage, perceived inconvenience due to distance, and potentially the lack of garage visibility.

[1] Whitehead on-street parking exceeded 100% occupancy during certain time periods, as shown in the map, indicating overcapacity caused by illegally parked vehicles adjacent to designated on-street spaces.

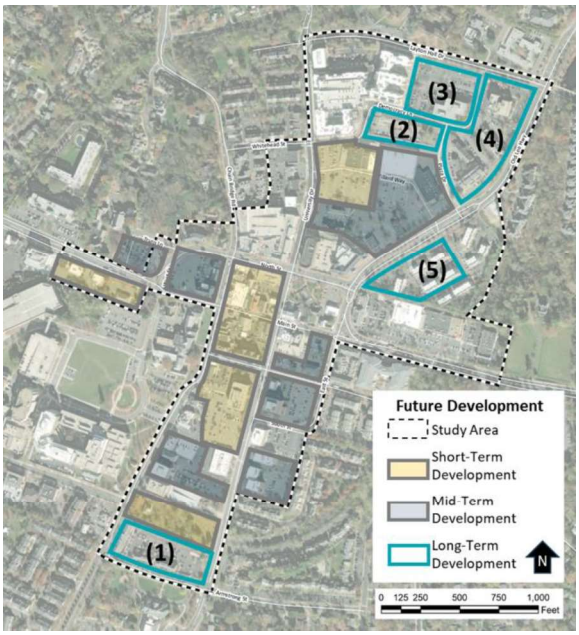
Future Conditions

Looking ahead, Old Town is poised for a significant transformation. Redevelopment aligned with the 2020 Small Area Plan envisions a denser, vibrant, mixed-use district where surface lots give way to new residential, retail, and entertainment spaces. A marquee project, a proposed 4,127-seat concert hall, exemplifies the potential and challenges of this growth. For example, the concert hall alone could create an on-site 880-space parking deficit during sold-out events.

Even without the proposed concert hall, projections suggest that 2039 peak occupancy at noon will rise to 48% on weekdays and 45% on weekends, with public parking nearing or above capacity even as the overall system can accommodate growth. The public parking system could reach 167% of capacity during a sold-out event by 2039.

Planning Horizon

Future development projects were organized into three planning horizons—short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (6-10 years), and long-term (11-15 years)—culminating in the full realization of the 2020 Old Town Small Area Plan. Known or imminent developments identified by the City of Fairfax Community Planning and Development Department were assigned to the short-term planning horizon. At the same time, the more conceptual programming from the Small Area Plan was divided between the mid-and long-term planning horizons.



For each future development, the type and quantity of land uses, expected timing of the project, and number of parking spaces that would be eliminated or added to the existing parking system were quantified. After identifying changes to the existing parking supply in Old Town Fairfax, a shared parking methodology was used to estimate the parking demand generated by the new developments.

Weekend Event Parking Occupancy

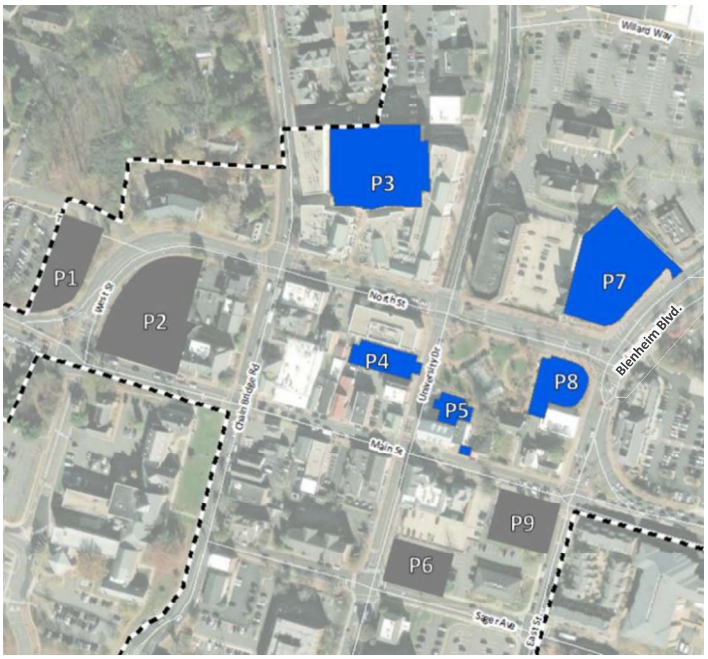
Within the next five years, a new mixed-use development featuring a 4,127-seat concert hall is proposed to be built as part of the Ox Fairfax Block A project. While sold-out events of similar size are not expected to happen often, understanding the impact of these kinds of events on the Old Town parking system is critical. Since event attendees cannot park in other private lots, overlaying parking demand associated with a large event at the concert hall does not significantly impact overall private off-street occupancy in the study area.

When just the concert hall project is considered, the impact is significant. Initial site plans show 522 parking spaces built; however, the projected demand during a sold-out event is about 1,400, resulting in a more than

880-space on-site deficit. The existing public parking system cannot accommodate overflow during a sold-out event. Additional discussion with the county and the developer on sharing the 1,900-space Judicial Garage B is recommended. This facility, located about 1,200 feet (a five-minute walk) from Ox Fairfax Block A and outside the study area, is a reasonable option for most attendees. However, improving the walking environment between these sites should be considered to enhance accessibility and encourage use.

Public Off-Street Parking

Over the long-term planning horizon, access to publicly available parking (both municipally and privately owned) is expected to change. New developments will replace existing lots, and those displaced cars will need to find alternative parking locations, presumably within the existing public parking system. Existing demand in P1, P2, P6, and P9 and new demand generated by infill development in the historic district was allocated to the Old Town Plaza Deck (P3). However, only 100 spaces in the Old Town Plaza Deck are publicly available on weekdays.



Overall Future Occupancy

There are only 430 public parking spaces during weekday conditions. The overall occupancy of the public off-street parking system during the weekday peak is expected to increase from 46% under existing conditions to 102% over the next 15 years. Demand in the Old Town Plaza Deck is projected to increase by 180 spaces. However, only 100 public parking spaces are available in the garage during the week.

Saturday Future Occupancy

Due to shared parking agreements with private owners, the public parking supply increases from 430 to 984 spaces on nights and weekends. On a typical Saturday around noon, utilization of the public parking facilities is projected to increase from the 40% observed on 9/22/24 to about 58% by 2039. Occupancy in the Old Town Plaza Deck is expected to grow by 156 spaces.

Peak Future Occupancy

Based on the existing mix of land uses, peak weekend conditions occurred at noon. Walker observed a 31% occupancy of the public parking during our survey. If the public parking system, excluding Fairfax County's Judicial B Garage, tried to accommodate overflow demand from the concert hall and infill demand over the next 15 years, the occupancy rate would increase to 167%. Occupancy rates in smaller lots are expected to be at or near capacity. While there is a significant surplus in the Old Town Plaza Deck and the library garage, it

cannot fully accommodate overflow from the concert hall. The available public parking capacity by planning horizon is shown on the next page.

Weekday Peak Future Occupancy

Future parking demand was modeled based on a noon weekday peak. Over the 15-year planning horizon, the parking supply is expected to increase by about 2,400 spaces, and parking demand is expected to increase by 2,044. As a result, overall occupancy in the study area will likely increase from about 34% today to 48% by 2039. While the overall parking supply is expected to meet the projected demand, localized "hot spots" of activity are projected.

	Existing		Short Term		Mid-Term		Long-Term	
Type	Supply	% Occ.	Supply	% Occ.	Supply	% Occ.	Supply	% Occ.
Public On-Street	128	42%	128	60%	128	75%	128	85%
Public Off-Street[1]	430	50%	430	68%	323	103%	323	103%
Private Off-Street[2]	5,761	32%	7,034	37%	8,220	40%	8,290	45%
Total	6,319	34%	7,592	39%	8,671	43%	8,741	48%

Weekend Peak Future Occupancy

Future weekend parking demand was modeled based on a noon peak. Over the 15-year planning horizon, overall occupancy in the study area is expected to increase from about 23% today to 45% by 2039. While the overall parking supply is expected to meet the projected demand, localized "hot spots" of activity are projected.

	Existing		Short Term		Mid-Term		Long-Term	
Type	Supply	% Occ.	Supply	% Occ.	Supply	% Occ.	Supply	% Occ.
Public On-Street	128	22%	128	37%	128	53%	128	59%
Public Off-Street[1]	984	40%	984	46%	817	58%	817	58%
Private Off-Street[2]	5,207	20%	6,480	30%	7,726	38%	7,796	43%
Total	6,319	23%	7,592	32%	8,671	40%	8,741	45%

Impact of Zoning Policy

Much of the proposed development in the mid- and long-term planning horizons is based on the 2020 Small Area Plan, which is conceptual. As a result, the parking requirements outlined in the zoning code were applied to each new project to quantify future parking supply. Additionally, because the city's zoning code allows for projects in Historic Overlay Parking District A to be built without parking and reduces minimum parking requirements for other projects in the larger Historic and Transitional Overlay Districts, any overflow parking demand generated by new development was allocated to the public parking system.

Applying the current parking regulations (i.e. "base scenario"), combined with known changes to the public parking system over the next 15 years, will likely result in a public parking shortage on weekdays around noon and during major special events. This deficit could increase significantly if the city elected to further reduce or eliminate parking minimums, especially without adopting policies and programs that encouraged a more multi-modal environment and lower vehicle ownership. For planning purposes, the tables below show the impact of eliminating all commercial parking requirements in the Historic and Transitional Overlay Districts (i.e. "revised scenario") around noon on a weekday. The revised scenario totals below also assume no parking in the Historic Overlay Parking District A is built, including for multi-family residential or hotel projects.

Public Parking		Supply	Mid-Term Surplus/Deficit		Long-Term Surplus/Deficit	
			Base Scenario	Revised Scenario	Base Scenario	Revised Scenario
P1	Lot 10480	0	0	0	0	0
P3	Old Town Plaza Deck	100	(131)	(441)	(131)	(561)
P5	Public Lot- Town Hall	14	11	11	11	11
P6	Public Lot - Sager	0	0	0	0	0
P7	Library	180	75	75	75	75
P8	Public Lot - North	29	6	6	6	6
P9	Public Lot - Main	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**323**	**(39)**	**(349)**	**(39)**	**(469)**

The small 39-space deficit expected by applying the current zoning requirements could balloon to nearly 470 spaces by 2039, requiring the city to take a more active role in parking or adopt a more rigorous strategy to reduce vehicle ownership and encourage multi-modal accessibility. A 39-space deficit could be mitigated in the short term through a shared parking agreement with a private owner. Walker's observation of parking demand in downtown Fairfax indicates several facilities (including office buildings) had a surplus of parking even during the noontime peak. Mitigating the larger 469-space deficit would likely require a structured parking solution.

More bold reductions would also have an overwhelmingly negative impact on the public parking system during special events, such as a sold-out event at the concert hall in the proposed Ox Fairfax Block A project. It is also essential to consider the frequency of such events when considering a structured parking solution. While the notable event shortage may be significant (up to 1,000 spaces), its frequency may not be regular enough to support a structured parking solution of that size, especially if Fairfax County's Judicial B Garage can be used for event parking. However, a more regularly occurring weekday public parking shortage of 469 spaces could warrant a structured solution.

Parking Plan Development

While the City of Fairfax has a well-functioning parking system, opportunities exist to enhance the overall parking experience and optimize the use of existing resources. By implementing these recommendations, the City can optimize its parking resources, improve the user experience, and advance its long-term vision for economic growth and sustainable urban development.

Current Challenges

The study identified several key challenges facing the City of Fairfax.

Limited Public Parking Supply

Heavy reliance on private lots restricts access and usability for residents and visitors.

Inconsistent Signage and Wayfinding

This hinders effective navigation and utilization of available parking.

Limited Parking Enforcement

Current regulations lack a cohesive framework to manage time limits and ensure compliance effectively.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and prepare for future parking demand, Walker has outlined actionable strategies within a comprehensive Parking Management Plan. These recommendations include the following:

Infrastructure Enhancements

Introduce consistent wayfinding, signage, and striping for on- and off-street parking.

Shared Parking Agreements

Prioritize expanding shared parking agreements with private businesses that own underutilized parking lots. Currently, the City maintains two such agreements: one with BOA, which has not been formally renewed since its expiration in 2008, and another with BIG LLC, which has been successfully renewed three times since its initial term ended in 2022. A more formalized, consistent, and organized approach to managing these agreements is essential to ensure effective coordination and oversight of shared and private parking facilities across the city.

To further enhance the City's parking strategy, existing shared parking agreements should be updated and/or extended, and new shared parking agreements should be reached with private property owners, which would, in effect, expand the public parking supply.

Expanding and actively managing shared parking partnerships, supported by these updated policies, would allow the City to increase its public parking inventory sustainably. This is particularly critical during peak periods and for evening and weekend activities when private lots often sit vacant, providing an opportunity to maximize available resources and reduce the need for new parking construction.

Parking In-Lieu Fee

Consider introducing a parking in-lieu fee program. This could create a funding mechanism to incentivize private lot owners to join the shared parking pool. These fees could also be used to support improvements to existing shared facilities, fund operational oversight, or invest in other parking or mobility infrastructure.

Parking Champion

Create a new requisition for a "parking champion", a new part-time position within the City Manager's office. This individual would act as the single point of contact for all parking-related issues and oversee all aspects of the parking program.

Infrastructure Development

Evaluate the feasibility and cost/benefit of constructing a new parking deck that integrates seamlessly with Old Town Fairfax's historic character to meet future demand.

Marketing and Communication

Collaborate with stakeholders to educate residents, employees, and visitors about parking options and promote sustainable practices.

Establish a formal parking management plan that includes regular enforcement practices, enhanced communication, and integration with digital platforms like Google Maps.