



# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Introduction

The City of San Rafael's (City) Downtown area is a vibrant and sought after destination in Marin County and the Bay Area. With various types of new development continually occurring in the area, in addition to the transit center expansion, more visitors are anticipated to visit Downtown San Rafael potentially increasing the need for parking. The purpose of this study was to identify existing and future parking needs within Downtown San Rafael; recommend parking management strategies that maximize the supply and utilization of Downtown parking spaces (including those for bicyclists); and to develop viable options for a vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle wayfinding program within the Downtown area. The study also developed parking strategies that will improve parking management and operations.

This report summarizes the process for the development of these recommendations, including a summary of existing conditions and findings, a summary of stakeholder outreach, and policy recommendations. Parking and wayfinding recommendations were formulated based on existing parking demands, future parking demand projections, future parking opportunities, and best management practices. The recommendations provide guidance for the City to properly plan for and manage parking in the Downtown area to meet and mitigate future parking demands.

## 1.2 Summary of Findings

Existing parking conditions in the Downtown area were evaluated and results indicate that even during times of highest use on typical weekdays and typical Saturdays, the Downtown area, as a whole, has more than enough parking to accommodate the existing demand. While there is excess parking for the overall area, on-street parking in the most popular areas (such as 4th Street between Lincoln Avenue and E Street) is fully occupied. Some private and public parking lots also exhibit excess demand. In each of the locations where individual streets or parking lots are inadequate to accommodate the demand, other public parking is available in locations that are within typical walking distances for a downtown. Additional detail is provided in Table 1 and in Section 2 of this report.

Multiple future-year parking scenarios were also evaluated. Based on the projections, it was found that the Downtown area will continue to operate with excess parking in both the near-term and the long-term conditions. As with existing conditions, several street blocks with on-street parking, as well as more off-street facilities, are expected to be fully occupied.

The only tested scenario that was found to have a parking deficit was a maximum development scenario in which underutilized parking lots were removed from the supply and replaced by development that did not provide any replacement parking spaces—creating a situation of increased demand and decreased supply. Additional detail for each of the future year scenarios is provided in Table 1 and in Section 4 of this report.

**Table 1:** Summary of Public Parking Supply and Demand

Condition	Demand	Supply	Surplus or Deficit	Occupancy	Detail Shown in Table
Existing	5,032	7,827	2,795	64%	9
Near-Term	5,814	8,669	2,855	67%	11
Long-Term	5,991	8,715	2,724	69%	13
Maximum Development	7,182	7,097	-85	100%	14



### 1.3 Study Area and Project Process

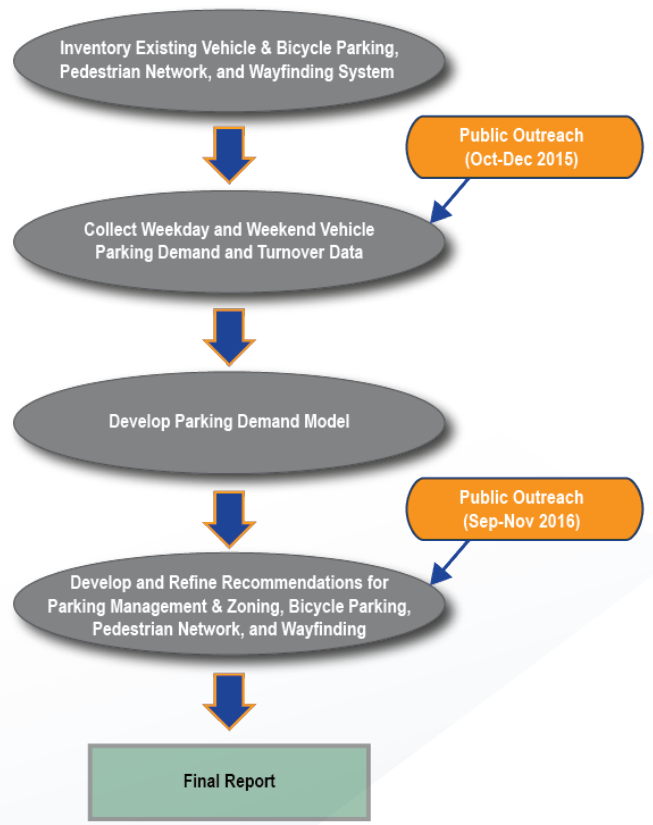
This study focuses on an area within two distinct boundaries—the Downtown Planning Study Area boundary, and the area within a half-mile radius from the future location of the Downtown San Rafael Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) station, which is anticipated to begin operations in Downtown San Rafael in 2017. These boundaries are shown in Figure 2 (Section 2). Wayfinding concepts and recommendations were focused within the Downtown Planning Study Area. Within the Downtown Planning Study Area, both on-street and off-street parking was studied. On-street parking was also studied within the half-mile radius from the SMART station. The area outside of the Downtown Planning Study Area, but within the half-mile radius of SMART, will be referred to as the “Edge of Downtown.”

The project inventoried existing vehicle and bicycle parking facilities, the existing wayfinding system, and the pedestrian network within the vicinity of major parking and transit facilities. Weekday and weekend parking demand data was collected, and members of the public were surveyed to ascertain the existing constraints and demands on the Downtown parking supply.

Community input on parking and wayfinding conditions was gathered through online and in-person surveys and through a series of pop-up workshops.

Using the collected demand data, a parking model was developed and combined with information provided by the City on future development to project future parking demand in Downtown. Existing and projected parking demand information was used as a basis to formulate recommended changes to zoning and development standards, and parking management strategies. The project process is summarized in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1: Project Process**



### 1.4 Summary of Recommendations

Even with the overall adequate supply of parking within the Downtown area, there are recommendations for improving conditions related to parking. These conditions include improvements to the pedestrian system, bicycle parking, zoning rules, parking management, and the areas that will most directly be impacted by the SRTC relocation and the arrival of the SMART train.

**Table 2** summarizes the recommendations. Details on the recommendations and their derivation are included within the report. For the purposes of this study, the phases used to align recommendations and strategies are presented with the following time horizons, recognizing that the economy can either speed up or slow down these timeline estimates:

- Short-Term
  - 0-2 Years
  - Includes implementation of SMART Phase 1
- Mid-Term: 2-5 Years
  - SMART Phase 2
  - Relocation of SRTC
- Long-Term: Year 5 to 2040



**Table 2:** Recommendations

A cost rating is also provided (\$ = low cost, \$\$ = medium cost, \$\$\$ = high cost). Cost ratings consider both the monetary and staff resources needed to implement a recommendation.

Recommendation	Timing	Report Section	Cost	Intended Outcome	Options
<b>Parking Management</b>					
<b>Time Limits</b>					
<b>Within Existing Downtown Parking District</b>					
Maintain the existing two-hour time limit for metered parking on weekdays.	Short-term	2.6	0	No change recommended for weekday: spaces are occupied and surveys showed little request for extended hours.	<p>Increase weekday time limit to three hours with a premium rate: While there was not a strong demand shown for an extension during the week, it would provide the benefits of easier communication for additional time on Saturday and it will be a benefit to some users. The potential negatives are that it will reduce turnover on the busiest streets, leading to longer walks for up to 50% of mid-day parkers. This may also entice more employees to use on-street parking; therefore, if a longer time period is used, the one-hour extension should be at a premium rate. An appropriate premium rate may be twice the standard hourly rate.</p> <p>Decrease weekday time limit to one hour. This will increase turnover and number of parkers who can park closer to their destination. This will create problems for parkers who need to park for just over one hour (e.g. those who drive Downtown for lunch).</p>
On Saturday allow for meter feeding to extend stays for an additional hour (from 2 hours to 3 hours) with the extra hour being charged at a premium rate. An appropriate premium rate may be twice the standard hourly rate.	Short-term	2.6	\$	Respond to requests for extended parking on Saturday. This will provide greater a comfort level for parkers who may like to spend approximately two hours Downtown.	<p>Provide one-hour extension at standard rate. This will decrease turnover on the busiest streets, leading to longer walks for up to 50% of parkers. This may entice more employees to use on-street parking.</p> <p>Provide two-hour extension at a increasing premium rate; this will help mitigate reduced turnover by discouraging some from choosing the extra hour or second hour.</p>
<b>Vicinity of Downtown SMART Station</b>					
Upon opening of the new SMART station, use signs and information boards to encourage drivers to use the long-term parking at the 3rd & Loutens parking garage	Short-term	4.6	\$	Direct long-term parkers to the available garage to improve their experience and maximize the use of existing, available parking	Also post information on City website.
Change the time limit of the eight, on-street metered parking spaces on Tamalpais Avenue between 4th St and Fifth Avenue from two hours to 10 hours	Short-term	4.6	\$	Accommodate some of the anticipated SMART parking demand	Alternately, using a shorter time limit will effectively remove these spaces from use by most SMART users, thereby moving more SMART parking demand farther from the station, which would be in conflict with the goal of encouraging people to use the train.
Maintain the 10-hour time limit already in place at on-street spaces on Tamalpais Avenue between Fifth Street and Mission Avenue.	Short-term	4.6	0	Accommodate some of the anticipated SMART parking demand.	Alternately, using a shorter time limit will effectively remove these spaces from use by most SMART users, thereby moving more SMART parking demand farther from the station.
After finalization and approval by City Council, implement the short-term recommendations from the 2017 SRTC/SMART station plan.	Short-term	4.6	0	Consistency with station area planning: prepare for SMART.	Draft recommendations include actions for 2017 implementation, including significant changes to operations and parking near the station.
<b>Rates</b>					
Establish a formal system within City code that provides a basis for on-street and off-street rates to be reviewed routinely and adjusted based on a specified set of performance metrics without having City Council adopt the specific rates	Short-term	4.7, 5.2	0	Provide Parking Services staff the flexibility to manage the parking system to optimum occupancy levels. Routine review and potential adjustment of rates could occur as frequently as twice per year for on-street parking and once per year for off-street parking.	<p>City code could be modified to allow rate changes at the discretion of Parking Services staff within a given hourly rate range. An example is that the rates could be allowed to be adjusted by staff up to a maximum allowable standard rate of \$4 per hour for on-street parking. This would provide staff with the flexibility to create annual or semi-annual adjustments based on an ongoing monitoring of parking usage within Downtown.</p> <p>Alternately, city code could be modified to allow rate changes at the discretion of staff without setting limits on the rates. The maximum frequency of changes (e.g. annual, semi-annual, or other) could be codified.</p>





Recommendation	Timing	Report Section	Cost	Intended Outcome	Options
Consider a pricing structure within this framework in which prices are adjusted upward or downward based on the following target metrics for the Downtown area: adjustments to reflect changes in the true cost of parking, managing the overall Downtown area to a typical peak period occupancy of 75% to 85%, and managing individual facilities to a maximum occupancy of 95%. Individual facilities consist of surface lots, garages, and aggregated blocks of on-street parking. It is recommended that off-street parking rates and enforcement rates be reviewed annually and that on-street rates be reviewed as frequently as twice per year. This recommendation requires monitoring actual parking usage on an annual or semi-annual basis. If pursued, this variable pricing approach could be started as a pilot project. (This recommendation is similar to the prior item, but is not dependent on staff having the flexibility to adjust rates without adoption of the new rates by the City Council).	Short-term	4.7, 5.2	\$\$	Use variable rates to manage the overall Downtown parking supply and the supply of individual streets and off-street facilities in a manner that meets the City's objectives.	<p>Keep existing pricing, as it will not improve turnover in high-demand locations or increase parking in underutilized areas; but is easier for the public to understand and easier to advertise.</p> <p>Increase rate from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per hour on 4th Street from Lincoln Avenue to E Street to increase turnover and increase the likelihood of available parking while leaving the off-street parking rates unchanged. Observe parking during peak times with a goal of having 10 to 20 spaces of the 144 total spaces open and available. Confirm that demand is shifting to the less-expensive parking structures and not just leaving the City.</p> <p>If \$2.50 per hour does not increase availability, consider raising rate to \$3.50 per hour on 4th Street meters.</p> <p>Extend rate increases to adjacent on-street parking, if demand warrants.</p>
<b>Other Management Activities</b>					
Monitor the free time-limited on-street parking east of Highway 101 and on Lincoln Avenue north of Fifth Avenue; consider stricter enforcement of time limits if it is observed that vehicles use those spaces for SMART parking.	Short-term	4.6	\$	Maintain availability of spaces for local use.	<p>Monitor and provide warnings prior to enhanced enforcement: provides a grace period after opening of SMART station.</p> <p>Begin aggressive enforcement in conjunction with opening of the SMART station; potentially creating an immediate change in behavior.</p>
Public outreach as the new SMART station is opening with suggested parking locations—paper and website versions. Use the same outreach to also inform about enforcement of parking regulations in time-limited zones, as well as residential areas.	Short-term	4.6	\$	Proactively manage anticipated SMART parking.	
Upon opening of new SMART station: place signs or information boards near station to alert motorists of available parking at parking garage at 3rd & Lootens.	Short-term	4.6	\$	Proactively manage anticipated SMART parking.	
Monitor free, unrestricted on-street parking in the Montecito, Lincoln/San Rafael Hill, and Dominican/Black Canyon neighborhoods. If it is observed that vehicles use those spaces for SMART parking, initiate dialogue with these neighborhoods about the City's residential permit parking program.	Short-term	4.6	\$	Maintain availability of spaces for local use and minimize automobile intrusion in residential areas.	
Seek enforcement of parking regulations at Caltrans Park & Ride lots.	Short-term	4.7	\$	Preserve the Park & Ride spaces for the intended users (motorists using ridesharing, transit, or bikes). Overnight parking for camping and parking for local land use access is not allowed.	With the opening of the new SMART service, the City may seek to have spaces leased by Caltrans to local businesses returned to public availability for commuters.
Initiate dialogue with operators and managers of privately held parking facilities in an effort to create shared parking opportunities in the future, such as the use of parking at San Rafael Corporate Center for SMART/SRTC parking.	Short-term	4.6, 4.7	\$	Begin planning for the future with an intent of having agreements that will accommodate growth in parking demand.	
<b>Zoning and Development Standards</b>					
Adopt clear and strategic Guiding Principles as formal policies for the operation and management of public parking, as stated in City code chapter 14.18.010.	Short-term	5.2	\$	Allow Parking Services staff to implement and fulfill the City's goal for parking.	
Amend 14.18.040: Add language stating that approved parking for developments may be made available to the public (and not just users of the subject land use) to encourage that all parking approved under 14.18.040 (A – F) be made available to the public.	Short-term	5.2C	\$	Increase supply available to the public by providing incentives to owners of private parking facilities.	
Modify 14.18.060 A – Downtown Parking Assessment District: Consider expanding Downtown Parking district boundaries.	Short-term	5.2D	\$	If desired, expand the boundaries to reflect current or desired land uses and parking patterns in the blocks adjacent to the current district.	<p>If there is interest, the City should consider expanding the district boundaries east toward US 101 and west toward or past E Street.</p> <p>An option is to leave the district boundaries unchanged and not provide the benefits of the Downtown district to nearby areas.</p>



Recommendation	Timing	Report Section	Cost	Intended Outcome	Options
Clarify 14.18.060 A – Downtown Parking Assessment District: Waiver of first 1.0 of FAR does not imply that City facilities are intended to accommodate the waived demand.	Short-term	5.2D	\$	Provide clarity of language reflecting that the existing waiver of a portion of demand reflects actual parking demand within the parking district.	
Clarify 14.18.080 – Parking requirement for reciprocal uses with shared parking facilities.	Short-term	5.2E	\$	Clean up language to reflect City's policy.	
Revise 14.18.220 B - On-site and remote parking: Allow remote parking to be a greater distance for uses within Downtown district.	Short-term	5.2H	\$	Allow remote parking areas for land uses within Downtown Parking district to be a greater distance, reflecting people's tolerance for walking downtown.	Eliminate 500-foot radius and allow remote parking to be located anywhere within the Downtown Parking district. An alternate to eliminating the 500-foot radius limit would be to create a larger radius that better reflects typical pedestrian tolerance for walking in a downtown setting; use a 1,300-foot or 1,500-foot radius instead of the current limit.
Revise 14.18.120 to add an additional exemption to tandem parking to allow for implementation of automated parking or other mechanical parking devices.	Short-term	5.2.1	0	Allow for innovative parking solutions.	
Simplify minimum parking requirements for the Downtown area, as now provided in Chapter 14.18.040.	Medium-term	5.2B	\$\$	Update language to make it clearer for developers, and easier to administer.	Simplify from 50 land use types to five general land use types. This action would require a specific data collection and analysis effort in order to determine appropriate replacement rates. Combine some of the land use types to simplify development and review.
Initiate a pilot program to reduce minimum parking requirements in the Downtown area by 20 percent from current levels (Option 2, as described).	Medium-term	5.3	\$	Allow new development in the Downtown area to build less parking, if desired, in order to reduce the oversupply of parking.	Option 1: the current code may be maintained, which allows for special studies to justify reduced parking. Option 2: the current minimum requirements could be reduced for a period of years. This requires monitoring of the parking supply to determine the effect on the overall availability of parking in the Downtown area. Based on observations, the reductions could be continued, discontinued, or increased (e.g. going from 10% to 20%). Option 3: eliminate minimum parking requirements in the Downtown area for a period of years, allowing developers to provide the amount of parking that they determine to be appropriate. This requires monitoring of the parking supply to determine the effect on the overall availability of parking in the Downtown area. Based on observations, the provision for market based parking could be continued or discontinued.
Establish design standards (exterior and ground floor) for parking garages.	Medium-term	5.2G	\$\$\$	Make parking garages more attractive to users and, where appropriate, more active relative to the adjacent street.	For new parking structures in areas with a high amount of pedestrian traffic or active adjacent uses, standards for design could be implemented that require appropriate ground floor design.
Consider revisions to parking dimension requirements within Downtown garages.	Medium-term	5.2F	\$	If adopted, reduced dimension requirements would allow for smaller floor plates of garages within the Downtown area, creating more affordable parking structures.	Downtown District parking structures already allow for reductions of dimensions below the standards outside of the Downtown area. Further reductions may be achievable.
City to undertake an effort to develop a shared parking arrangement with owners of private parking facilities to enter into a shared parking program that is offered to the public in a common and seamless basis. Recommendation includes the need to amend 14.18.040 to add language stating that approved parking for developments may be made available to the public and/or used to satisfy parking requirements for other developments.	Long-term	5.4	\$\$	Increase the visible and known supply of parking available to the public by creating a common awareness and advertising program.	
Provide reductions in parking requirements for developers who provide bicycle parking.	Long-term	6.4	\$	Improve conditions for cyclists by providing more convenient parking.	Allow reduction of one automobile space for every five bike spaces. Allow reduction of one automobile space for every 10 bike spaces.
Encourage bicycle parking for new, multi-unit residential developments.	Long-term	6.4	\$	Improve conditions for cyclists by providing more convenient parking.	Options include allowing for higher density in exchange for bike parking.





Recommendation	Timing	Report Section	Cost	Intended Outcome	Options
<b>Bicycle Parking</b>					
Along 4th Street, install single inverted U-shaped bike racks in feasible locations where they are currently not currently available. New bicycle parking should not block the pedestrian movement on the sidewalks.	Short-term	6.4	\$\$	Improve conditions for cyclists by providing more convenient parking. It is desirable to have smaller installations in more locations distributed throughout the Downtown area in order to get the designated bicycle parking closer to the destinations of riders.	The most suitable location for this is along the north side of 4th Street between Court Street and E Street.  Other suitable locations include the north side of the Cijos Street/4th Street intersection, and short-term uses on 4th Street east of Highway 101 (may be disrupted by SMART).
Install a bicycle corral on 4th Street adjacent to City Plaza.	Short-term	6.4	\$	Improve conditions for cyclists by providing more convenient parking.	An on-street corral replaces one on-street vehicle parking space with eight to 12 bicycle parking spaces.
Install bicycle rooms/cages near SMART/SRTC and major employment centers.	Medium-term	6.4	\$\$	Improve conditions for cyclists by providing more convenient parking and better facilities.	Preferred locations in San Rafael would be in the relocated transit center and in the Downtown garages (A Street or C Street) to encourage bicycle commuting to and from Downtown employers.  Within the Downtown garages, existing vehicle parking spaces can be converted into a bicycle cage space by utilizing fencing and an access-controlled gate.  If a bicycle cage is infeasible at the relocated transit center due to space constraints, instead consider using bicycle lockers for their smaller footprint.
Evaluate proposed bike share station locations as part of Bay Area Bike Share via TAM.	Medium-term	6.4	\$\$	Improve non-automobile movement through the City.	Station locations proposed at SRTC, City Plaza, and the West End.  An alternate that TAM may pursue is a bike share program that uses smaller footprint stations in more locations.
<b>Pedestrian Network</b>					
Stripe limit lines separately from crosswalk striping at the following intersections:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2nd Street and Lincoln Avenue</li> <li>• 2nd Street and Lindaro Street</li> <li>• 3rd Street and Lincoln Avenue</li> <li>• 3rd Street and Lindaro Street</li> <li>• 3rd Street and Hetherton Street</li> <li>• 3rd Street and Tamalpais Avenue</li> </ul>	Short-term	7.3	\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.	This recommendation is subject to revision based on a more detailed study at 3rd Street and Hetherton Street that is being undertaken by the City.
Restripe crosswalks at the following intersections to increase pedestrian visibility; priority should be given to the crossings in front of 3rd Street and 2nd Street traffic:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2nd Street and Lincoln Avenue</li> <li>• 2nd Street and Lindaro Street</li> <li>• 3rd Street and Lincoln Avenue</li> <li>• 3rd Street and Lindaro Street</li> </ul>	Short-term	7.3	\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.	Additional locations that may need restriping may be suggested by stakeholders.
Install warning signs or barriers in the vicinity of 3rd St and Lindaro Street to encourage crossing of 3rd Street only in the marked crosswalk.	Short-term	7.3	\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.	This recommendation is subject to revision based on a more detailed study that is being undertaken by the City.
Widen and repair sidewalks along West Tamalpais Avenue between 3rd Street and 4th Street.	Medium-term	7.3	\$\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.	Explore option to improve sidewalks as part of SMART station interim improvements as part of a complete review of Tamalpais Avenue.



Recommendation	Timing	Report Section	Cost	Intended Outcome	Options
Improve pedestrian access between Caltrans Park & Ride lots and SRTC.	Medium-term	7.3	\$\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.	Where feasible, widen sidewalks on the east side of Hetherton between Mission and 3rd Street. This recommendation is subject to revision based on a more detailed study at 3rd & Hetherton that is being undertaken by the City. If sidewalk improvements are not feasible, use signage or barriers to direct pedestrians to cross Hetherton Street and utilize the Puerto Suello multi-use path as a north-south connection.
Provide a pedestrian path east of the Lincoln Avenue SRCC parking garage that connects Lincoln Avenue to 2nd Street along the western bank of Mahon Creek.	Medium-term	7.3	\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.	
Implement pedestrian improvements associated with 2012 SMART station plan.	Medium-term	7.2	\$\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.	In addition to the 2012 report, updated SMART station recommendations are being developed separately from this report.
Install curb bulb-outs where feasible to reduce pedestrian crossing distances.	Medium-term	7.2	\$\$\$	Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking	Potential locations for this improvement include the northern leg of the 3rd/Tamalpais intersection and the southern leg of the 4th/Tamalpais intersection.
<b>Wayfinding &amp; Public Outreach</b>					
Consider implementing end-user technologies, such as a mobile-responsive website or text-message maps to enhance wayfinding in the Downtown, if cost-effective.	Short-term	7.3	\$\$\$	Improve information to occasional visitors to Downtown, such as whether parking is available and assisting in finding the most convenient available locations.	At a minimum, update City website to direct motorists to default locations. Confirm that commercial driving mapping programs such as Google and Inrix display the key City parking facilities.
Consider temporary marketing and promotional programs targeted at both businesses and visitors: Make more people aware of the availability of parking and the convenience and preference for the use of garages.	Short-term	8.2	\$\$	Make business owners and visitors aware of the location and availability of parking within the Downtown area.	Possible options include advertising, one month promotions of free/discounted garage parking, and providing a limited number of free one-hour vouchers to all merchants.
Implement an integrated program for outreach, information, and promotion. Plan on a multi-year campaign that will improve awareness over time.	Medium-term	8.2	\$\$	Make business owners and visitors aware of the location and availability of parking within the Downtown area.	
Implement the proposed signage improvements in the Downtown area.	Medium-term	8.4	\$\$\$	Improve physical signing and markings for occasional visitors.	All or part of the proposed package may be implemented.
Explore the feasibility of implementing a variable messaging system (VMS) based parking guidance system in the Downtown area.	Medium-term	8.7	\$\$\$	Improve physical signing and markings for occasional visitors.	





Figure 2: Study Area Boundaries

