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# Town of Strasburg

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## Downtown Parking Analysis Technical Memorandum

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Prepared By: Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional  
Commission – May 22, 2014

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## Introduction & Project Purpose

In 2014, the Town of Strasburg sought local technical assistance from the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) to perform a parking analysis for the downtown planning area. The purpose of the technical memorandum is to document existing parking supply, demand and utilization characteristics, and to make recommendations for parking enhancement for the downtown planning area based on current and future development. Outcomes of this study will be used concurrently with other activities currently underway in Strasburg to address business district (downtown) revitalization efforts, including: the Streetscape Enhancement Project, Economic Restructuring Plan and Mixed-Use/Mixed-Income Housing Study. Parking is a contributing factor to the overall efficiency of the Town's transportation network, access to shops and businesses and the downtown's economic viability.

The Downtown Parking Analysis Technical Memorandum was completed under funding provided by the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) Fiscal Year 2014 Rural Transportation Work Program.

## Analysis of Downtown Parking

*Study Area (i.e. Downtown Planning Area)(see attached map)*

The downtown planning area serves as a hub for employment, government, and arts and cultural activities for the Town of Strasburg. Major downtown attractions include the Town Hall, Post Office, The Great Strasburg Emporium, Strasburg Museum, Hotel Strasburg and a number of commercial businesses, professional offices and service organizations.

This study focused on the downtown planning area of Strasburg bordered more or less by Washington Street to the north, the railroad to the east, Queen Street to the south and Capon Street to the west. The primary parking area is defined more or less a block or two around the King Street commercial district. The data analysis included a geographic information systems (GIS) inventory and field verification of all public and private off-street parking lots and on-street parking in the study area. Posted time limits, handicap spots and parking regulations were also documented as part of the inventory process. Summary table 1 (page 2) provides a comprehensive survey.

### *On & Off Street Parking Inventory*

Patron parking in downtown Strasburg consists primarily of public on-street parking and off-street public and private lots. Both on-street parking and off-street parking stalls were counted and recorded. For the purposes of this report, on-street parking includes both striped and un-striped stalls along Washington, King, Queen, Massanutten, Holliday and Fort Streets. Off-street parking includes both striped and un-striped surface parking lots in the downtown planning area, including public, commercial and private (residential and business) parking lots.

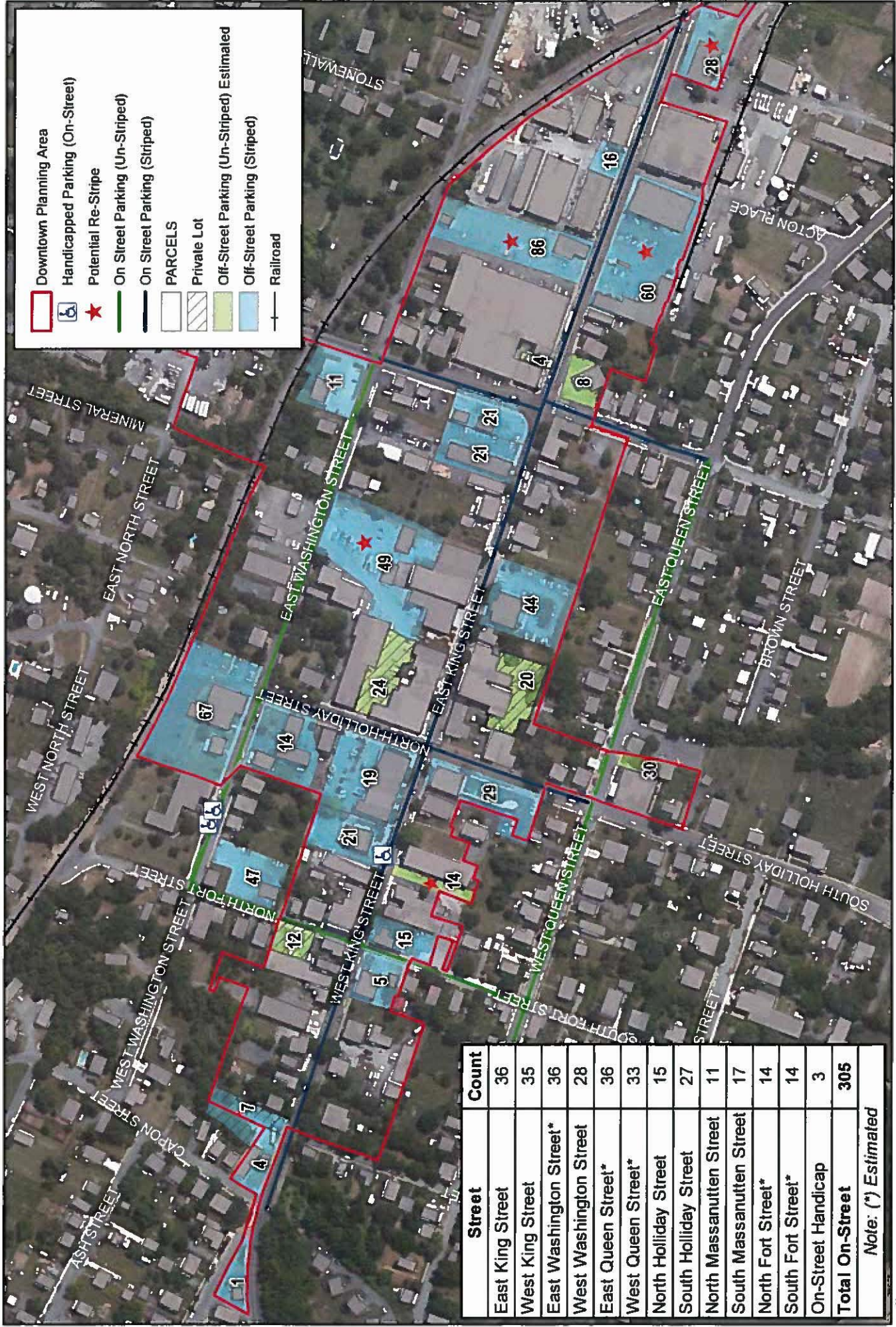
Total public parking in the downtown planning area was 1,021 (estimated prior to streetscape project) parking spaces, which includes 305 on-street parking spaces and 696 parking spaces in surface lots (see Map 1 and Table 1 for more detail). There are three on-street handicap parking

**Town of Strasburg, VA: Downtown Parking Analysis**

spots. Existing off-street “public” parking lots located at Town Hall and the Town owned Washington Street parking lot (behind the Fire Station) are relatively small and hold approximately 44 and 49 stalls respectively. For off-street parking there are 567 stalls that have designated stalls and approximately 132 stalls that are not striped (estimated assuming a 9ft by 18ft stall size). There are 17 off-street handicap spots scattered throughout downtown at major attractions. There are no metered or permitted parking spaces, and in general spots along King and Holliday Streets are 2-Hour parking only. 15-Minute parking is also available in the Town Hall lot. A detailed breakdowns of public on-street and off-street parking is included in Table 1 below.

<b>Summary Table 1: Strasburg Downtown District Parking</b>		
<b>Roadway Segment</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
<b>On-Street Parking</b>		
<i>East King Street</i>	36	Striped; 18ft long; 2 hour parking
<i>West King Street</i>	35	Striped; 18ft long; 2 hour parking
<i>East Washington Street</i>	36	Un-Striped; estimated
<i>West Washington Street</i>	28	10 Striped; 18ft long; remainder un-striped
<i>East Queen Street</i>	36	Un-Striped; estimated
<i>West Queen Street</i>	33	Un-Striped; estimated
<i>North Holliday Street</i>	15	Striped; 18ft long; 2 hour parking
<i>South Holliday Street</i>	27	Striped; 18ft long; 2 hour parking
<i>North Massanutten Street</i>	11	Striped; 18ft long
<i>South Massanutten Street</i>	17	Striped; 18ft long
<i>North Fort Street</i>	14	Un-Striped; estimated
<i>South Fort Street</i>	14	Un-Striped; estimated
<i>On-Street Handicap</i>	3	St. Paul Lutheran Church, (West Washington St)
<b>Total On-Street</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>estimated (accounting for unstriped)</b>
<b>Off-Street Parking</b>		
<i>Striped</i>	567	Commercial/Public spaces
<i>Not-Striped</i>	112	Un-striped or private lots
<i>Handicap</i>	17	Commercial/Public spaces
<b>Total Off-Street</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>estimated (accounting for unstriped)</b>
<b>Total Parking (On &amp; Off Street)</b>	<b>1001</b>	<b>estimated</b>
<p><i>Note: Parking study area defined as Downtown Planning Area (Washington, King &amp; Queen Streets); count conducted through GIS, Google Maps &amp; physical inventory survey; estimates assume 9ft by 18ft parking stall (per Town UDO-draft, 2014). On-Street parking along King Street was estimated prior to streetscape project.</i></p>		

# Strasburg Downtown Parking Study



Street	Count
East King Street	36
West King Street	35
East Washington Street*	36
West Washington Street	28
East Queen Street*	36
West Queen Street*	33
North Holliday Street	15
South Holliday Street	27
North Massanutten Street	11
South Massanutten Street	17
North Fort Street*	14
South Fort Street*	14
On-Street Handicap	3
<b>Total On-Street</b>	<b>305</b>

Note: (\*) Estimated

Note: Parking study area defined as Downtown Planning Area (Washington, King & Queen Streets); count conducted through GIS, Google Maps & physical inventory survey; estimates assume 9ft by 18ft parking stall (per Town UDO-draft). Re-striping of off-street parking is proposed in lots to accommodate additional parking stalls.

### *Utilization Rates*

The demand for convenient parking close to businesses, retail shops and restaurants is high in any downtown, particularly a revitalizing downtown like Strasburg. Surveying conducted during recent downtown revitalization activities shows that merchants and the general public perceive that “there is never enough parking.” However, this perception is often voiced by those who compete for the most valuable on-street parking spaces close to their desired destinations. Using the online tool, *Walk Score*, on average downtown Strasburg destinations (such as Town Hall, Cristina’s, Strasburg Emporium) receive an average “walk score” of 80 or “very walkable.” The majority of downtown destinations are confined with a 3 or 4 block area (5-10 minute walk), making downtown Strasburg walkable for the average customer. A windshield survey was conducted during the summer of 2013 and spring 2014 over several visits to downtown to gather information on parking utilization. It can be concluded that on an average weekday there were approximately 275 vehicles parked (both on- and off-street) during business hours (8:30am to 5pm) versus 1,021 available parking stalls (both on- and off-street). The parking utilization rate for weekdays is approximately 27%. Weekend demand for off-street parking is typically higher with customers shopping at local businesses, with The Great Strasburg Emporium being at or near capacity (86 stalls). Weekend utilization can be assumed to be higher based on merchant survey’s collected during the CDBG Downtown Planning Grant Inventory Work conducted August 2013. Weekday parking utilization is typically low on the eastern end of the downtown planning area, especially in front of the commercial strip (Subway/Radio Shack) and The Great Strasburg Emporium and in the Town-owned lot on Washington Street. Additional analysis should be conducted to determine peak and non-peak parking utilization both on weekdays and weekend.

Festivals and other large-scale events that occur in and around the downtown planning area such as Mayfest (spring) and Harvestfest (fall) present challenges to parking availability. These biannual high demand events are not included in the analysis.

In general it can be concluded that there is sufficient parking in downtown Strasburg under current and future project parking demand. At this time there are no specific plans for new development that would significantly increase the demand for parking downtown. There are few opportunities for infill and the Town has taken an active role in filling vacant store fronts with viable businesses. Due to the relative size of vacant commercial space, future parking demand will be low (estimated and additional 3-5 spots per unit). This conclusion is derived from thorough analysis of the physical number of stalls available in such a small geographic area, weekday and weekend utilization rates being low (less than 50%), best practices for parking management and anecdotal information collected from merchant surveying. The issue is rather that existing parking areas may not be clearly defined (both in reality and perception) or the most convenient to customers.

### *Parking Enforcement*

Of note from the CDBG Downtown Planning Grant Inventory Work conducted August 2013 is that on-street spots, primarily those along King Street although currently specified as 2-Hour parking

are not enforced. It was reported that many downtown business owners and their employees park their personal vehicles in front of their store fronts during the week. At this time there is no formalized system for enforcement of existing parking regulations (time limits, restrictions, etc.). While no one enjoys getting a parking ticket, dedicated parking enforcement is critical in maintaining turnover at prime on-street spaces in the downtown planning area. Strasburg should formalize a process for regulating and enforcing parking requirements, especially in public parking lots and on-street parking stalls along King and Holliday Streets.

## **Innovative Strategies in Parking Management**

### *Recommendations*

Discussed below are several short-term recommendations and best practices that can be undertaken by the Town of Strasburg to improve the availability and visibility of parking downtown. A model parking guide that should be consulted is from the Oregon Transportation & Growth Management Program entitled *Parking Made Easy: A guide to Managing Parking in Your Community* (2013). This document presents a model for parking regulation and enforcement for communities of similar size as Strasburg and is a recommended guide referenced in several parking related reports published by the American Planning Association (APA) Planners Advisory Service (PAS).

#### 1. Shared Parking Areas

Shared parking may be applied when land uses have different parking demand patterns and are able to use the same parking spaces/areas throughout the day. Shared parking is most effective when these land uses have significantly different peak parking characteristics that vary by time of day, day of week, and/or season of the year. General parking lots that are available for patrons of nearby businesses/commercial districts is one form of shared parking. Identifying potential shared parking opportunities and developing memorandum of understanding with the Town for shared parking should be undertaken. Shared parking is the most efficient and low-cost option to parking management. Town Council and staff should consider initiating a dialogue with downtown business and property owners regarding the availability of parking and shared parking opportunities that may already exist.

#### 2. Signage & Wayfinding

General observations conducted during the fieldwork and verified through previous surveying found that there were several instances where signs directing patrons to the public parking were not clearly visible or appropriately located. In order to be effective signs must be easily and quickly seen and clearly communicate their message. A consistent format (shape, coloring, logos) for various signs should be adopted and implemented so that once someone sees an initial sign for parking; they know what to look for to guide them to parking and their destination. Additionally, a parking map could be made available on the Town's and Hometown Strasburg (local Main Street office) webpages, in the downtown brochure and in the Visitor Center's office for those interested in visiting downtown. This would aid in building awareness of the availability and location of public

parking downtown. Public outreach and marketing should also be undertaken to build awareness of free public parking areas, regulated on-street parking and parking enforcement.

### 3. Improve Condition of Off-Street Parking

In order to be attractive to downtown patrons, parking areas must provide a perception that the lot or location is safe both for the patron and for their vehicle, and accessible to downtown destinations through easily identified pedestrian connections (connectivity). They must be confident that they are permitted to park there without receiving a citation and know of any time limits or other restrictions. The lots or spaces need to present a clean appearance and be free of tripping hazards or poor lighting. Additionally, re-striping of poorly utilized lots should be encouraged where feasible to increase the number of available spots. Map 1 identifies potential lots for restriping.

### 4. Restriping On-Street Parking

Strasburg should consider restriping on-street parking stalls along Washington, Queen, & Fort Streets to develop additional stalls. Designating parking stalls will encourage more efficient use of limited on street spaces by vehicles. Additionally, new on-street handicap parking along King Street should be installed as there is currently only one stall on this high-traffic corridor.

### 5. Parking Availability & Enforcement

Strasburg should formalize a process for regulating and enforcing parking requirements, especially in public parking lots and on-street parking stalls along King and Holliday Streets. This could include metered parking, dedicated enforcement personnel (such as existing Police or Zoning staff), and more visible hourly parking signage with posted fines. This will serve to deter abuses to parking regulations.

*Please Note: All recommendations are subject to approval by the Strasburg Town Council and should be consistent with industry, Town and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) design standards and policies.*

## **Conclusions & Next Steps**

The demand for convenient parking close to businesses, retail shops and restaurants is particularly high in a revitalizing downtown like Strasburg. The downtown planning area serves as a major employment, governmental, and arts/cultural center for the Town of Strasburg. Surveying conducted during recent downtown revitalization activities shows that merchants and the general public perceive that “there is never enough parking.” However, this perception is often voiced by those who compete for the most valuable on-street parking spaces close to their desired destinations. At time of writing, there are 1,001 total parking spaces downtown, which includes 305 on-street parking spaces and 696 parking spaces in surface lots (public and private).

In general it can be concluded that there is “sufficient” parking in downtown Strasburg under normal circumstances. This conclusion is derived from thorough analysis of the physical number of stalls available in such a small geographic area, weekday and weekend utilization rates being low

(less than 50%), best practices for parking management and anecdotal information collected from merchant surveying. The challenge is that existing parking areas may not be clearly defined (both in reality and perception) or be directly adjacent to the storefront.

The Town of Strasburg should consider the following recommendations when identifying next steps for parking regulation and enforcement:

- Include parking in discussions regarding downtown revitalization planning initiatives including but not limited to: CDBG Business District Revitalization Project; streetscape project; and Downtown Coordinator activities;
- Explore shared parking opportunities with downtown business and property owners to solve parking issues;
- Consider physical improvements to existing on-street and off-street lots, especially those owned/maintained by the Town through re-striping to increase the number of spots, wayfinding/signage to improve visibility of free parking areas, and improved lighting and landscaping to make parking areas more attractive and safe; and
- Initiate discussion between staff and the Town Council regarding formalizing a process for regulating and enforcing parking requirements, especially in public parking lots and on-street parking stalls along King and Holliday Streets.



**References**

2013, Oregon Transportation & Growth Management Program, *Parking Made Easy: A guide to Managing Parking in Your Community*, available from: [www.oregon.gov](http://www.oregon.gov)

2014, Strasburg *Walk Score*, available from [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)