



State of the Parking System – Executive Summary FINAL

Downtown Spokane Parking Study

July 2018





CHAPTER 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

Downtown Spokane's unique history and strong link with the past have positioned it as a premier destination to live, work, and play both today and in the coming decades. Substantial citywide and regional growth is anticipated by 2040, and downtown will be a major focal point. Investment is already occurring at a rapid pace, with new transformative developments in the pipeline.

Mobility and access will play a fundamental role in helping Spokane achieve its larger goals. There is a recognition that while the automobile will continue to be front and center, the transportation system must prioritize a shift of some vehicle trips to transit, biking, walking, and shared mobility services in order to achieve long-term success.

Parking is at the nexus of these growth and mobility conversations. How Spokane manages, supplies, and designs parking will have a direct impact on its ability to create a multimodal, mixed-use place and further enhance the vitality of downtown.

What is the Downtown Parking Study?

Over the past decade and a half, Spokane has made progress on improving the downtown parking experience. With parking studies in 2005 and 2010, Spokane has done the "Parking 101," yet more work is needed. With rapid growth and change on the horizon, now is the time for a fresh look at parking.

The **Downtown Parking Study** will include a thorough evaluation of the existing parking system. At the end of the study, Spokane will have a comprehensive six-year plan and package of recommendations designed to facilitate growth and activity downtown, while making parking more

convenient and user-friendly for residents, businesses, employees, and visitors.

Over the course of 2018, the city, community, and the consultant team will seek to answer some key questions as part of this work:

- How many total parking spaces are there in downtown?
- How are they regulated and priced?
- How many people are parking in these areas? What is the busiest time of day?
- What are the biggest issues and challenges?
- Is there enough parking today? For the future?
- What is the most cost-effective mix of investments to improve the parking system and ensure parking supports downtown's long-term vision?

What is the Study Area?

The **project study area** is shown in Figure 1. It is bounded by Boone Avenue to the north, Division Street and Cowley Street to the east, Rockwood Boulevard, 9th Avenue, and 5th Avenue to the south, and Cedar Street and Maple Street to the west.

It is important to note that there is a similar, yet distinct [study](#) underway for the **University District**.

What is the Project Approach?

There are two primary phases to the study. The **first phase** includes an assessment of the current system, identifying key issues, challenges, and opportunities through data collection and analysis, as well as solicitation of community feedback.

The **second phase** will focus on strategy development, crafting a comprehensive and diverse set of recommendations to



improve parking over the short- and long-term. The project schedule is shown in Figure 2.

Throughout the study, there will be multiple opportunities for the **community and stakeholders to provide input**. The input will be used to confirm and identify key challenges, as well as provide feedback at key stages in the project to guide the development of final recommendations. The major components of the outreach plan include:

- Presentations to the Parking Advisory Committee (PAC)
- Project [website](#)
- Spokane [blog](#)
- Media advisories and press releases
- Online community survey
- Community workshops
- Stakeholder interviews with local and regional agencies, residents, businesses, and community groups
- Presentations to elected bodies

What is the State of the System Report?

The ***State of the System Report*** summarizes the existing work to date, including stakeholder interviews, community feedback, data analysis, and documentation of key issues and challenges. A primary focus is the summary of the parking inventory (number and type of parking spaces) and level of parking demand in downtown.

Ultimately, the *State of the System Report* establishes a shared understanding of what works well and what can be improved. It facilitates a robust and productive discussion of potential improvements and sets the framework for the next stages of the project.

No recommendations are proposed as part of this document.

Additional analysis is already underway, and multiple touchpoints with stakeholders and the public are still necessary to arrive at any conclusions.



Spokane Parking Studies

Parking Study Areas

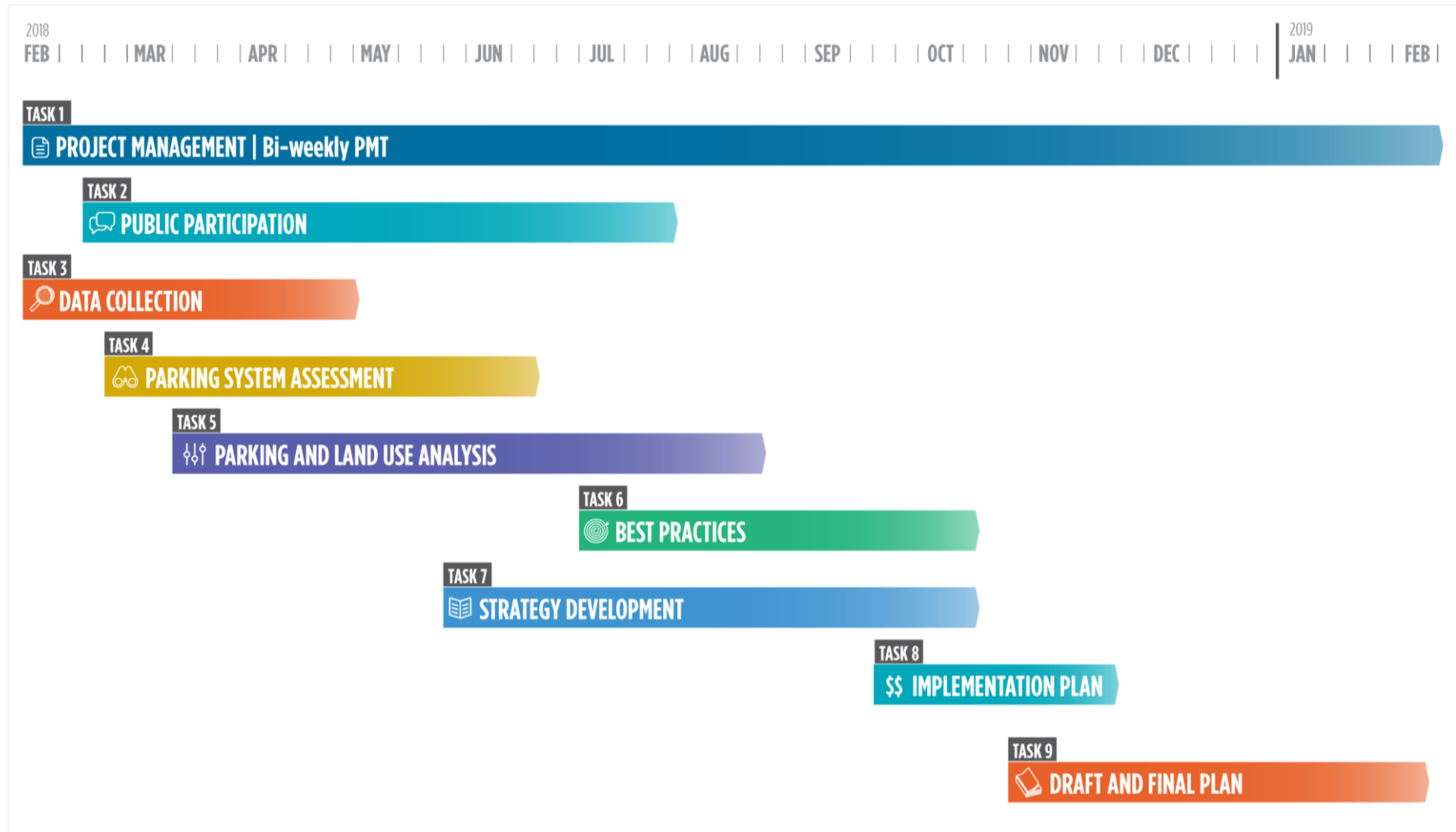
- Downtown
- University District

Map Labels:

Streets: W Northwest Blvd, N Post St, N Lincoln St, W Indiana Ave, N Atlantic St, E Indiana Ave, E Nora Ave, N Standard St, N Morton St, E Upriver Dr, N Jefferson St, W Augusta Ave, N Normandie St, W Sinto Ave, N Washington St, W Maxwell Ave, N Howard St, W Boone Ave, N Adams St, W Sharp Ave, N Cedar St, W Main Ave, N Walnut St, W Summit Pkwy, N Oak St, W Bridge Ave, W Water Ave, W Clarke Ave, W Wilson Ave, S Elm St, S Maple St, S Walnut St, S Cedar St, S Jefferson St, S Lincoln St, S Monroe St, S Wall St, S 1st Ave, S 2nd Ave, S 3rd Ave, S 4th Ave, S 5th Ave, S 6th Ave, S 7th Ave, S 8th Ave, S 9th Ave, S 10th Ave, S 11th Ave, S 12th Ave, S 13th Ave, S 14th Ave, S 15th Ave, S 16th Ave, S 17th Ave, S 18th Ave, S 19th Ave, S 20th Ave, S 21st Ave, S 22nd Ave, S 23rd Ave, S 24th Ave, S 25th Ave, S 26th Ave, S 27th Ave, S 28th Ave, S 29th Ave, S 30th Ave, S 31st Ave, S 32nd Ave, S 33rd Ave, S 34th Ave, S 35th Ave, S 36th Ave, S 37th Ave, S 38th Ave, S 39th Ave, S 40th Ave, S 41st Ave, S 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Figure 2 Project Schedule





CHAPTER 2: WHAT WE HEARD – COMMUNITY INPUT

Stakeholder Interviews and Community Event

1. Depending on the stakeholder group, the downtown parking “problem” **was defined in many different ways**. For example, there is particular concern that parking has limited certain types of employers (i.e. Class A office) from locating downtown. Other stakeholders have conversely noted that there are other employers locating in downtown to leverage downtown's mixed-use vitality and multimodal access for their employees.
2. There is **growing competition for the limited on-street parking** in downtown, especially in the core. New technologies, mobility services, and growth have exacerbated this tension.
3. The **parking “experience” can be improved** with additional investment in communication, information, payment technology, and overall pedestrian safety and comfort.
4. **A big part of the parking challenge in Spokane is about “culture,”** and how to better manage the expectation for free, on-site parking in downtown.
5. There is opportunity to address downtown parking challenges with a **coordinated approach to trip reduction** through mobility programs.



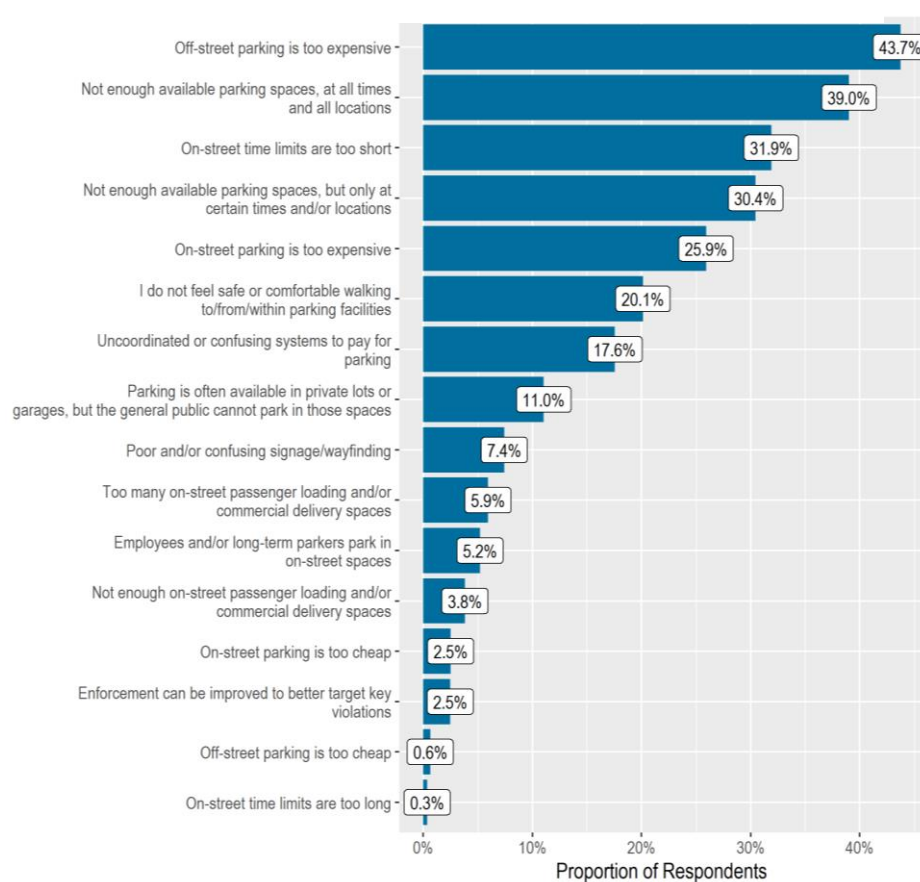
A community workshop in May allowed people to provide interactive input on several downtown efforts, including the parking study.



Online Parking Survey

1. **The top issue for respondents was that off-street parking was too expensive.** As discussed in later chapters, off-street parking costs significantly more than on-street parking, leading to increased pressure on the limited on-street parking in high demand areas.
2. **Nearly a third of respondents expressed that time limits are too short.** People would like to be able to park on street for up to three hours to eat, drink, or run errands.
3. **The majority of folks traveling to downtown do not have access to a free or discounted bus pass.** There is potential opportunity for employers to play an increased role in encouraging the use of multimodal options to travel downtown.
4. Over two-thirds of respondents **would rather walk further to their destination for free or cheaper parking** than pay more for parking closer to their destination.
5. The **top three parking system improvements** preferred by respondents were: 1) new parking facilities open to the general public (34%), 2) longer time limits at on-street spaces (33%), and 3) improved travel options and incentives for not driving alone (27%).

Figure 3 Top Three Parking Issues for Survey Respondents





CHAPTER 3: PLANNING CONTEXT

Plans and Studies

1. Planning efforts for downtown Spokane emphasize the **need for a multimodal transportation system** in which walking, bicycling, and transit are attractive options.
2. Past parking studies have found that **downtown has ample off-street parking**, but that demand is on an upward trend for on-street spaces.
3. Multiple plans recommend **shared parking**, signage and wayfinding improvements, and installation of more bike parking.
4. **Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies have been developed** and are part of downtown's toolkit for managing demand for parking facilities. TDM implementation has been limited to larger employers as part of the state's CTR program.
5. The potential for **transit service improvements**, as well as expansion of the employer-sponsored pass programs, can play a key role in managing demand for employee parking in downtown.

Projects

1. Parking impacts and parking loss mitigation around **Central City Line and future bike share** is an issue to assess further.
2. **Transit in downtown Spokane** is getting a major overhaul in the next few years – plaza operations will be reconfigured, normal bus service will increase, and the Central City Line will provide a new high-frequency, high-amenity route.
3. Spokane is pursuing a **bike share program** to launch as early as 2019 – this can be a key strategy for addressing

mobility within downtown and encouraging downtown employees and residents to bike.

4. **Riverfront Park's renovation** will be a regional draw for residents, employees, and visitors, with potential parking impacts to address.
5. **Mixed-use and residential developments** are proposed in downtown – how this affects parking supply and demand will be considered as part of a more detailed land use analysis.



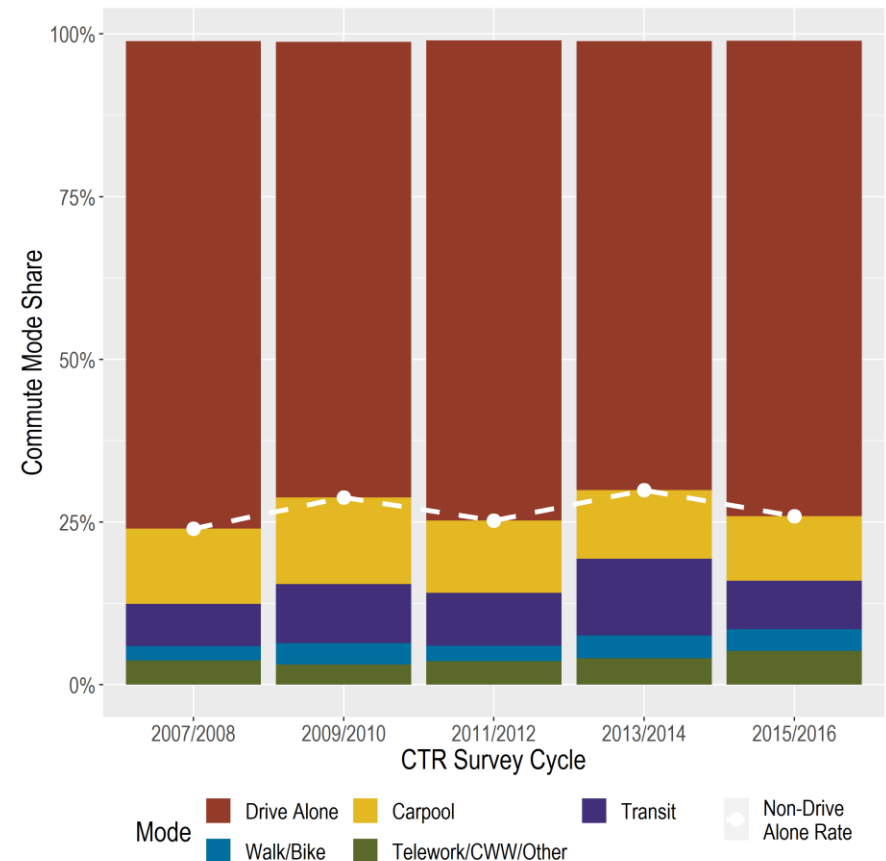
Ongoing revitalization of Riverfront Park (top) and other proposed new developments will have ongoing impacts on downtown and the parking system. Sources: my.spokanecity.org.



Demographics and Travel Patterns

1. The **resident population** in downtown Spokane had been in decline for several decades, but is experiencing a resurgence in just the last few years.
2. **Employment** in downtown Spokane is increasing – nearly 39,000 jobs were added between 2005 and 2015.
3. Many downtown residents have **lower incomes, tend to rent, and tend to own fewer cars**. These demographic groups are most likely to use other modes to get to work, but over half of them drive in downtown.
4. Approximately **70% of CTR employees commuting to downtown Spokane drive alone** accounting for nearly 8,000 drive-alone trips (and associated parking spaces) per day – this is a key source of parking demand that should be considered for increased focus in TDM programming.
5. As the number of people living and working in downtown Spokane continues to grow, increasing use of transit, carpools, and active transportation **will be key to mitigating increased demand for parking**.

Figure 4 Mode Share for CTR-Affected Employees in Downtown (2007-2016)



Source: WSDOT Statewide CTR Survey Results (2007- 2016)



CHAPTER 4: POLICY, PROGRAMS, AND MANAGEMENT

Management Structure

1. Parking policy and operations in Spokane depend on input, and affect the outcomes, of several divisions within the City of Spokane, as well as external stakeholders. **The Parking Advisory Committee (PAC) is the nexus between internal and external stakeholders.**

Policies and Programs

2. Parking rates and duration restrictions within Spokane's meter district were recently simplified to three rates/durations constant throughout the day. While this offers simplicity for parkers and enforcement, **the current structure does not support dynamic management of the system to adjust rates based on demand.**

Mobility Programs

3. The City Ticket shuttle program enables downtown employees to park at the Spokane Arena parking lot and ride a free shuttle into downtown Spokane. **This program, and other mobility programs/incentives, present an opportunity for improving mobility choice in the downtown core.**

Municipal Code

4. The current parking code includes many national best practices, namely **no off-street parking minimums within the core, as well as off-street maximums.** Parking minimums have been consistently shown to result in excess parking

capacity in downtown, increased housing costs, and reduced development feasibility, especially on small lots or with adaptive re-use. Eliminating parking minimums does not mean that no new parking will be built – current development proposals indicate that new parking will be coming to downtown.

5. However, there are **areas of the code to further evaluate that could enhance parking management, maximize downtown development, and streamline the development process.** These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Adjustments to bike parking standards to reflect best practices
 - b. Requirements or incentives for implementation of TDM or mobility programs
 - c. Policies for unbundling cost of parking from rent/lease/purchase agreements
 - d. Shared parking requirements/incentives
 - e. Changes of use and their parking burden
 - f. Management practices, especially authority of staff to adjust rates and regulations to dynamically manage the parking system
 - g. Policies for curb space management to maximize its utility for different users and shared mobility services
 - h. Design and future-proof requirements for new parking garages



The project team explored the parking system infrastructure on the ground in February 2018. Above are different meter technologies, an example of signage, and a meter bag as part of the CLZ permit program for activities and businesses who want to pre-pay for curb parking.



The City Ticket shuttle provides a cheaper option for parking near downtown destinations – people can park in the Arena lot and ride the shuttle the rest of the way. Private lots for permit holders and residential permits were common in downtown Spokane.



CHAPTER 5: PARKING INVENTORY – HOW MANY PARKING SPACES ARE IN DOWNTOWN

1. **There are almost 37,000 parking spaces in the downtown study area.** On-street parking spaces make up just less than 15% of the overall parking inventory. In the Downtown Core (Zone 4), on-street parking is less than 12% of the total supply.
2. **Nearly one-third (29%) of land in the study area is occupied by parking.** This varies from 19% in the Downtown Core to 40% in the Arena neighborhood. Areas with more structured parking had lower rates of land consumption by parking and lower average area per space.
3. **About half of all parking in the study area is publicly available at all times.** Thirty-six percent is in off-street privately owned lots, 9% is in paid on-street spaces, and 5% is in free off-street spaces. On-street spaces are maintained and operated by the City of Spokane.
4. **Half of all parking in the study area is reserved for particular uses, and not available to the general public for all or a portion of the day.** The general public can use 21% of the parking if they are customers, clients, or students at the respective business, office, or institution. The other 29% of the parking is reserved for private motorists at all times – employees, residents, deliveries, etc.
5. **Off-street parking in the Downtown Core is over twice as expensive (per hour) as priced on-street parking in the same area.** The gap between on- and off-street rates is persistent throughout the study area, with the starkest differences in rates being in areas adjacent to the Downtown Core and the Hospital District.

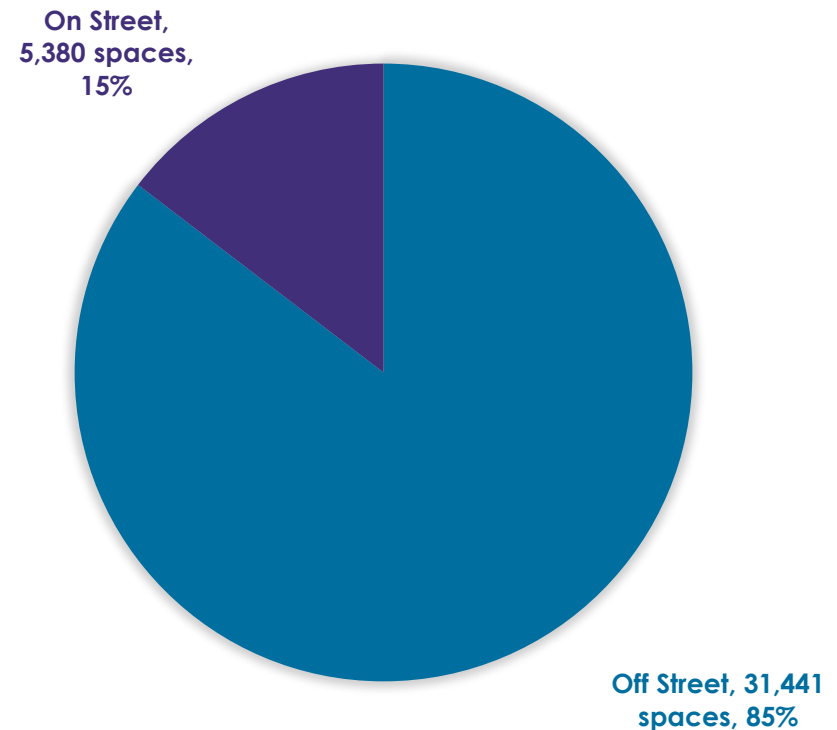
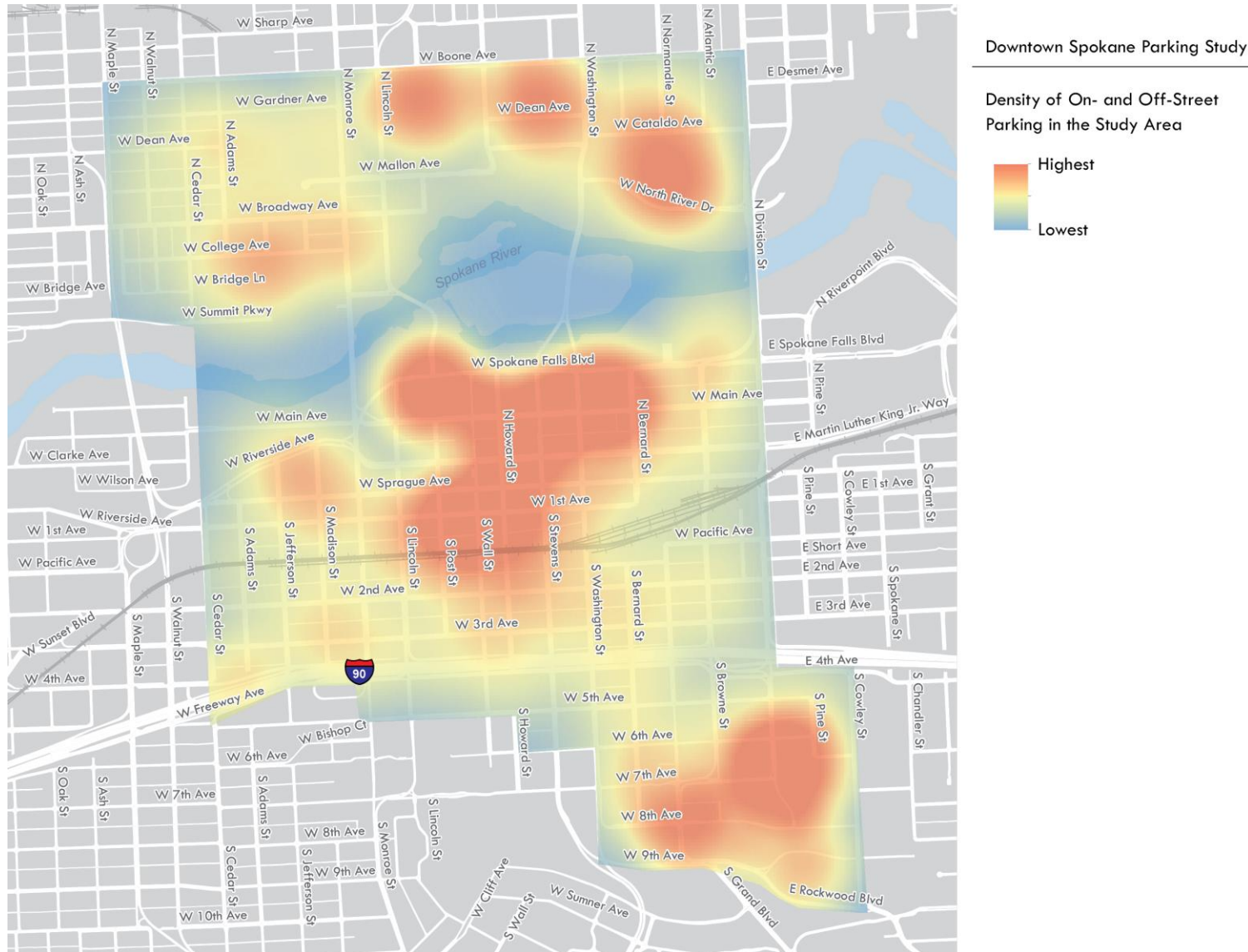




Figure 5 Downtown Parking Inventory Density





CHAPTER 6: PARKING UTILIZATION – HOW MANY VEHICLES PARK DOWNTOWN

1. In general, the **combined utilization levels indicate at least 20-25% available parking capacity** throughout the study area relative to an 85%-90% ideal occupancy level. Nevertheless, certain sub-zones, blocks, and off-street facilities **had very high demand at peak periods**. In particular, **garages and surface lots within Main Street corridor and immediate core**, such as River Park Square, the Convention Center, and Parkade Plaza, were at or near capacity at peak period. On-street spaces in higher demand areas (e.g., the Downtown Core) are also nearing capacity, but off-street parking and on-street parking within a few block walk is often underutilized.
2. A combination of **pricing signals** (i.e. on-street parking cheaper than off-street), **use restrictions** (i.e. parking reserved by user group), and **physical barriers** (e.g., Spokane River/Riverfront Park, railway/viaduct) incentivize motorists to look for on- and off-street (especially garages) parking within the Downtown Core.
3. **Free on-street spaces experience some of the highest utilization rates** in the study area. **Metered spaces in the Downtown Core, West End, and Convention Center** also have high occupancy levels.
4. The **Spokane County Campus** and the **Hospital District** experience peak demand in the morning, while the **Downtown Core** and adjacent zones experience peak demand in the late afternoon and early evening. Service-oriented land uses (e.g., government, medical) have a demand curve that peaks earlier than entertainment/shopping areas.
5. Overall peak demand in the study area on a typical weekend was low, reaching **30% at 6 p.m.** Weekend peak demand was **highest at 6 p.m. in the West End and Convention Center zones**, peaking at 56%. During the Lilac Parade, demand peaked at 83%, **with almost all on-street spaces occupied**.



Figure 6 Weekday Combined Peak Utilization Map – Overall Study Area (12 p.m.)

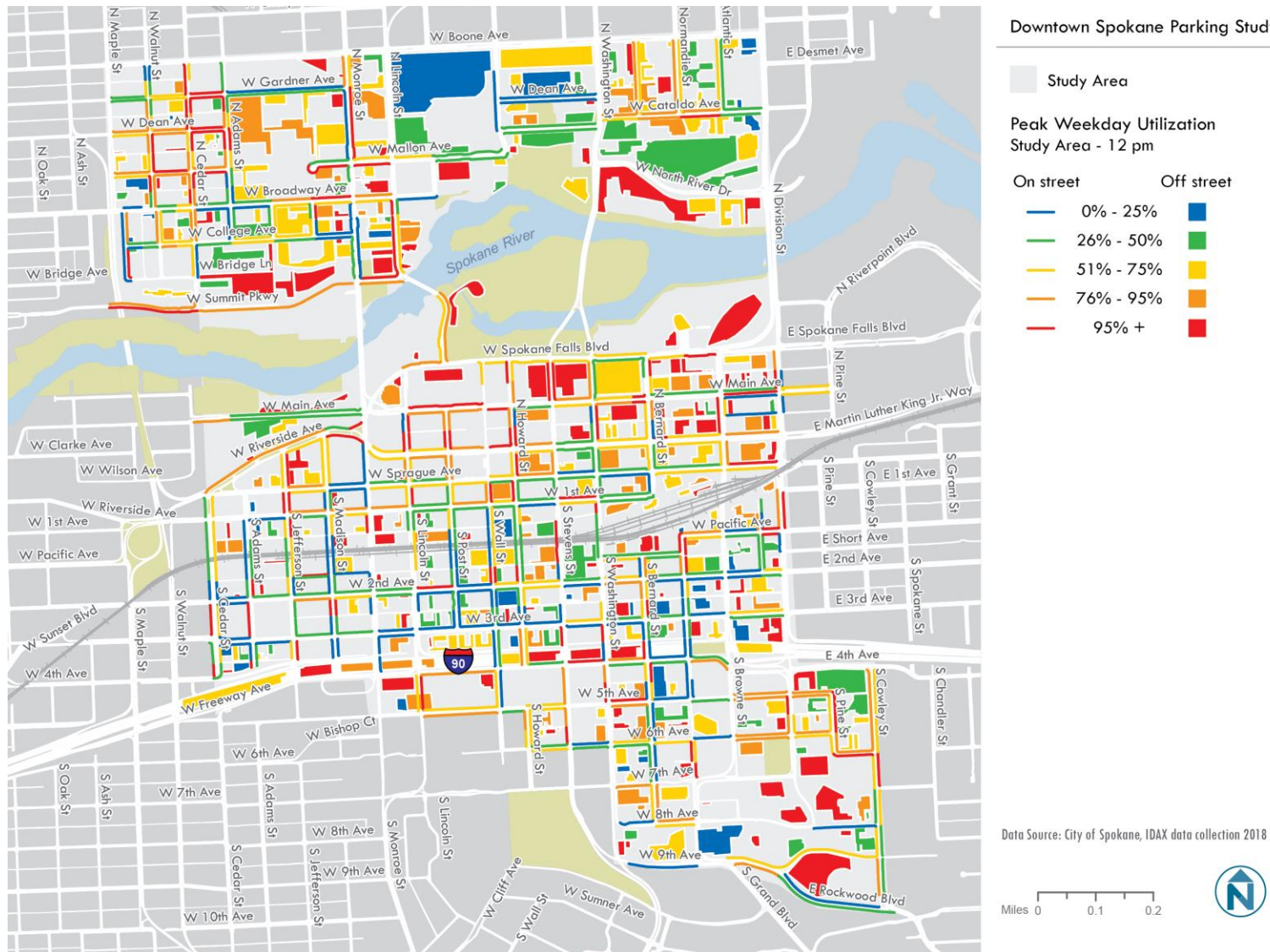
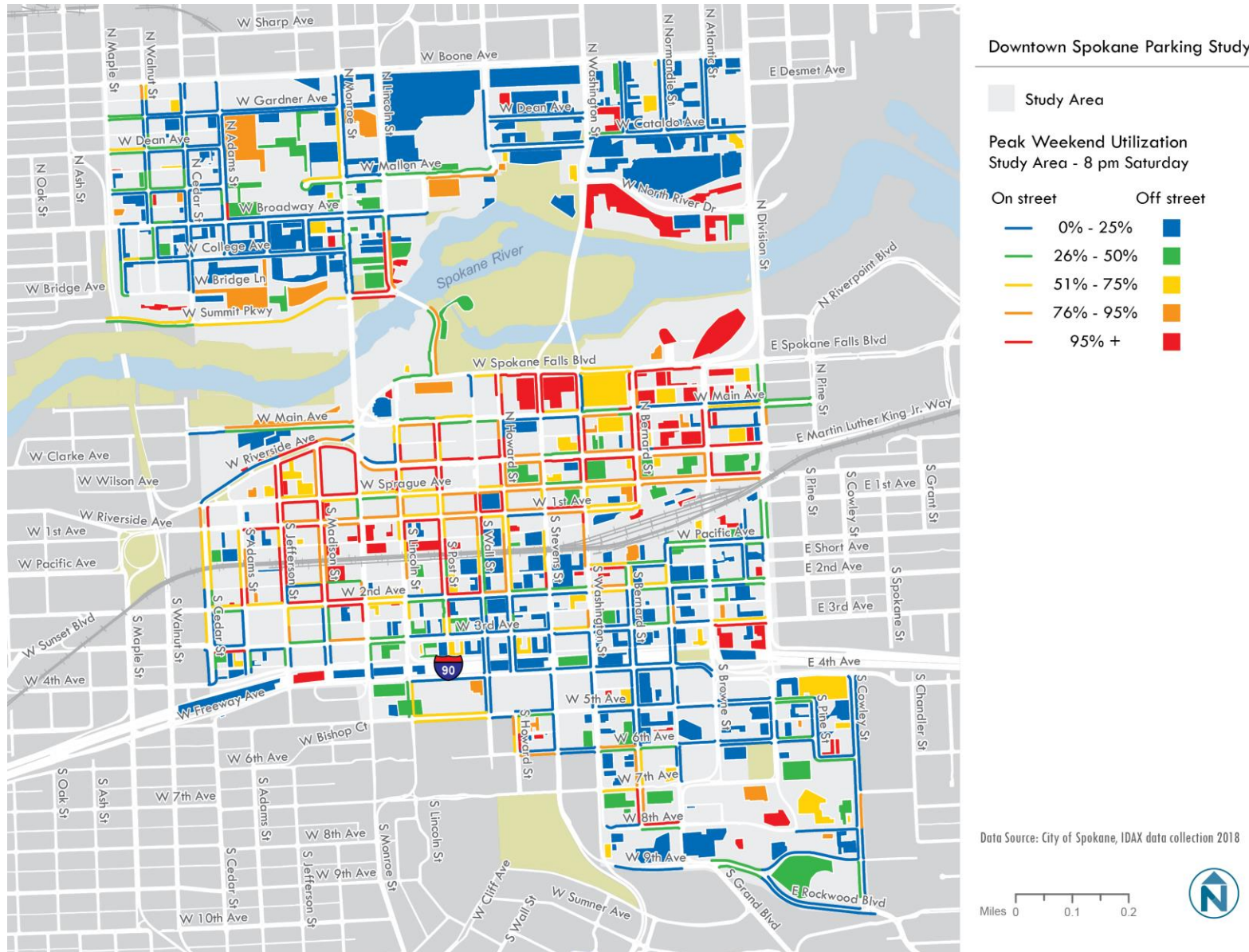




Figure 7 Saturday Combined Peak Utilization Map – Overall Study Area (12 p.m.)





CHAPTER 7: DURATION AND TURNOVER

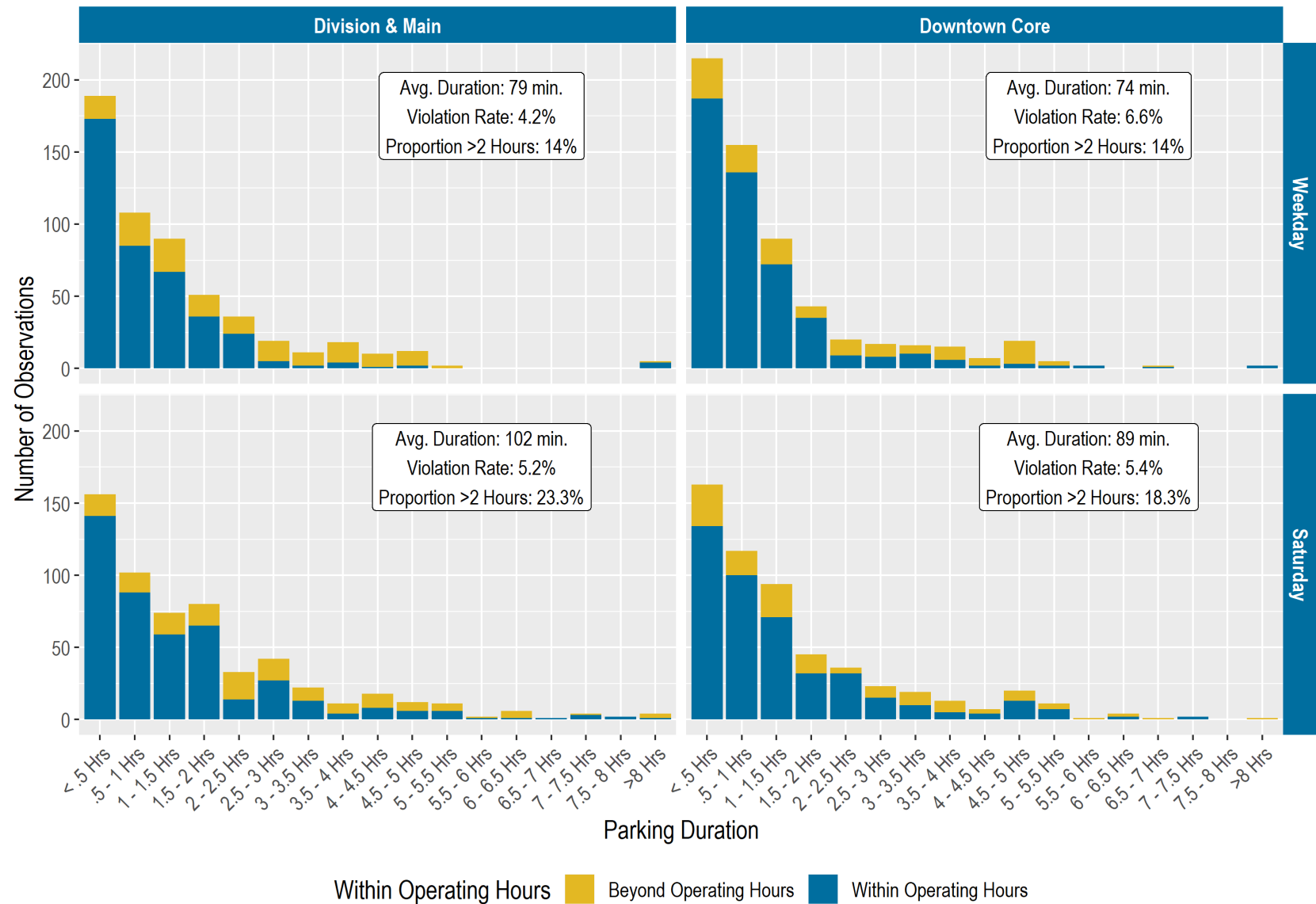
1. Considering the distributions of parking durations and violation rates, as well as the feedback received through outreach, parkers want to be able to park for longer than two hours in the Downtown Core. Nearing and after 7 p.m., **parkers are consistently staying longer than two hours.**
2. **Longer stays and lower turnover on weekends** could indicate a benefit to having longer time limits, especially since overall utilization is lower on weekends. Tradeoffs of simplicity versus appropriate time limits should be considered.
3. Overstay violation rates in commercial and 10-minute loading zones are high – **26%-32% of observations in commercial loading zones and 6-12% of observations in 10-minute loading zones were in violation.** The City should consider:
 - a. How does the City improve enforcement to decrease violation rates for loading zones?
 - b. Do loading zones need longer times?
 - c. Should (and by how much) the fine be increased for parking in a commercial or 10-minute loading zone?
4. **Roughly 6-8% of parkers are parking in more than one location during a given day.** This could be an indication that motorists parking in metered spaces are “shuffling” their vehicles during their stay around the downtown to avoid the time limits.
5. **Turnover is highest in the areas immediately adjacent to River Park Square and on Main Street between Division and Browne.** These are high turnover commercial areas where the two-hour time limit appears to work well.

Figure 8 Duration and Turnover Study Area





Figure 9 Metered Space Duration Histogram, by Zone and Day Type





CHAPTER 8: PARKING EXPERIENCE

1. While a diversity of payment options is provided, **the payment technology in downtown is fragmented**. Multiple meter types, mobile payment apps, and pay-by-plate systems create a less intuitive and user-friendly system. Frequent parkers and guests may need to utilize multiple systems or apps within one visit to downtown, while fewer people carry cash or coins, limiting the utility of many of Spokane's meters.
2. The **downtown core provides a strong and legible street grid** for motorists and pedestrians, making it relatively easy to navigate to and from key destinations. Outside the core, the pedestrian experience can be more challenging. In addition, a number of parking lots are poorly lit and maintained, creating an uncomfortable pedestrian environment and "dead" zones within the corridor or streetscape they front. Within the downtown study area, it is likely that many off-street facilities **outside the core go underutilized because the walking experience is challenging, confusing, or uncomfortable**.
3. **Weather can be a significant factor** in Spokane. During winter months, the pedestrian walk shed is more limited. Snow and snow removal can also impact sidewalk access and the overall number of available parking spaces.
4. There is no single, unified parking "brand" in downtown, and parking wayfinding varies throughout the downtown. The **variety of signage dilutes the overall downtown brand, and can create user confusion and uncertainty about what parking is publicly available** versus what is restricted to specific users. This often creates ticket "anxiety" and negative perceptions about the system. The lack of real-time signage within downtown limits a motorist's ability to find available parking.
5. The **city website provides a streamlined and user-friendly portal** for most parking issues and programs. However, most information about private off-street parking is only found on the Downtown Spokane Partnership and/or third-party websites. As a result, **parking information for the user can be difficult to find**.



The wide variety of parking wayfinding and signage in downtown can lead to confusion for motorists, making it difficult to determine where one can park. The variety of signage also dilutes the overall downtown "brand."



CHAPTER 9: OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

1. Parking Services has been under the direction of Neighborhood Services & Code Enforcement for the past two years. There has been improvement in operations following an internal technology review. The recently filled Parking Manager position **should prioritize enhanced communications** between management and front-line staff.
2. The Parking Foreperson and PEO II in charge of meter maintenance have a long history with the department. Given their long tenure and institutional knowledge, a **succession plan and training for these key positions is needed to mitigate any long-term operational deficits**.
3. Meter collections are handled by PEOs while also enforcing parking policy. Spokane's staff are hard-working and highly knowledgeable, but **breadth and depth of their duties poses a long-term risk for efficient operation of the system**. Formal training has not been provided or mandated for meter maintenance staff.
4. **The collection, maintenance, and reconciliation processes and protocols can be improved**. For example, an open-can system for meter collections poses a risk to staff and the City, while additional financial oversight would protect the City in the long term.
5. **The City should prioritize several key issues with their meter vendors**. Reporting from vendors has been inconsistent and staff has found it to be unreliable. Meters which have been sent back for repair are being returned with the issue unresolved. Problems with the vendor handhelds are ongoing. Finally, the lack of integration between the various technologies causes operational inefficiencies and requires the use of separate devices to verify status and to follow up on service requests.



Open-can collections pose a safety and security risk for collections staff. Closed-can systems and electronic locks would improve security.



CHAPTER 10: USER PROFILE SUMMARY¹

1. **Reserved employee/employer parking accounts for over one-third of available parking inventory**, and has a peak demand of 56% utilization during the middle of the day. Stakeholders indicated that employer/employee parking is very constrained, especially for office workers in the core. However, there still appears to be overall capacity in the system. Pricing, access restrictions, and distance from core of available supply contribute to frustration for certain employers and employees.
2. **Downtown visitor parking (which is shared with other uses) accounts for approximately one-quarter of the parking inventory**, with a peak occupancy of 58% during the late afternoon/early evening. Stakeholders indicated that visitor parking can be difficult to access. Again, while this is more apparent in the Downtown Core, there still appears to be reserve capacity throughout the system. These users would like to see more convenient payment systems, increased availability of on-street parking, and longer on-street time limits.
3. **Private customer parking accounts for 17% of the parking system**. These are mostly surface lots at businesses throughout the study area. Occupancy is approximately the same as the study area average. This supply represents a potential sharing opportunity, especially during off-peak hours for businesses.
4. **Reserved medical employee/patient parking accounts for approximately 7% of the parking inventory**, with a peak occupancy of 75% during the mid-day period. This is the highest peak occupancy of any user group.
5. **Off-street resident parking accounts for 4% of parking in the study area**. Residents are also allowed to park at the curb via the residential permit program. Stakeholders indicated resident parking is constrained, and resident survey respondents expressed that a key issue was lack of available parking in key locations. An increasing influx of residents in downtown bringing cars with them can be problematic for parts of the study area without dedicated residential parking.

¹ It is important to note that it is difficult to specifically define how each parking space in downtown is allocated to, and utilized by, the different users of the parking system at all times of the day. Within a mixed-use downtown much of the inventory is shared among multiple users. For example, a parking space can be used by an office worker during the day, a shopper in the evening,

and a resident at night, making it difficult to pinpoint exactly how much parking is allocated and utilized by different users. The user profile summarizes the best estimate based upon available data.



Figure 10 Estimated Inventory and Peak Utilization, by User Group

User Profile	Estimated Number of Parking Spaces	Proportion of Parking System	Estimated Peak Demand (vehicles)	Estimated Peak Occupancy	Peak Demand Period
General Employee/Employer	13,555	36.8%	7,644	56%	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Downtown Visitor	9,448	25.7%	5,522	58%	4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Private Customer	6,170	16.8%	3,442	56%	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Medical Employee/Patient	2,549	6.9%	1,908	75%	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Other	1,804	4.9%	963	53%	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Downtown Resident	1,443	3.9%	770	53%	12 a.m. - 6 a.m.
Hotel Employee/Customer	1,007	2.7%	545	54%	4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Person with Disabilities	844	2.3%	203	24%	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Total	36,821	100.0%	20,997	57%	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Figure 11 Estimated Inventory Distribution, by User Group

