

City of Bluffton

Downtown Parking Study

November 5, 2020



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Fort Wayne, IN 46845

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INTRODUCTION

Downtown Bluffton is currently the focus of revitalization efforts influenced by the work of both the City of Bluffton and Bluffton NOW!. The expressed goal of this revitalization is to bring more businesses, pedestrians, and activity to downtown Bluffton. Understanding the availability of parking in the downtown core is critical to future planning efforts to ensure that adequate parking will be available as revitalization efforts continue and become realized. The following report reviews current parking availability, evaluates parking space utilization, and provides recommendations to improve the parking to accommodate future parking needs.

EXISTING PARKING CONDITIONS

EXISTING PARKING OBSERVATIONS

For this study, the area has been divided into two sections: West Main Street and East Main Street.

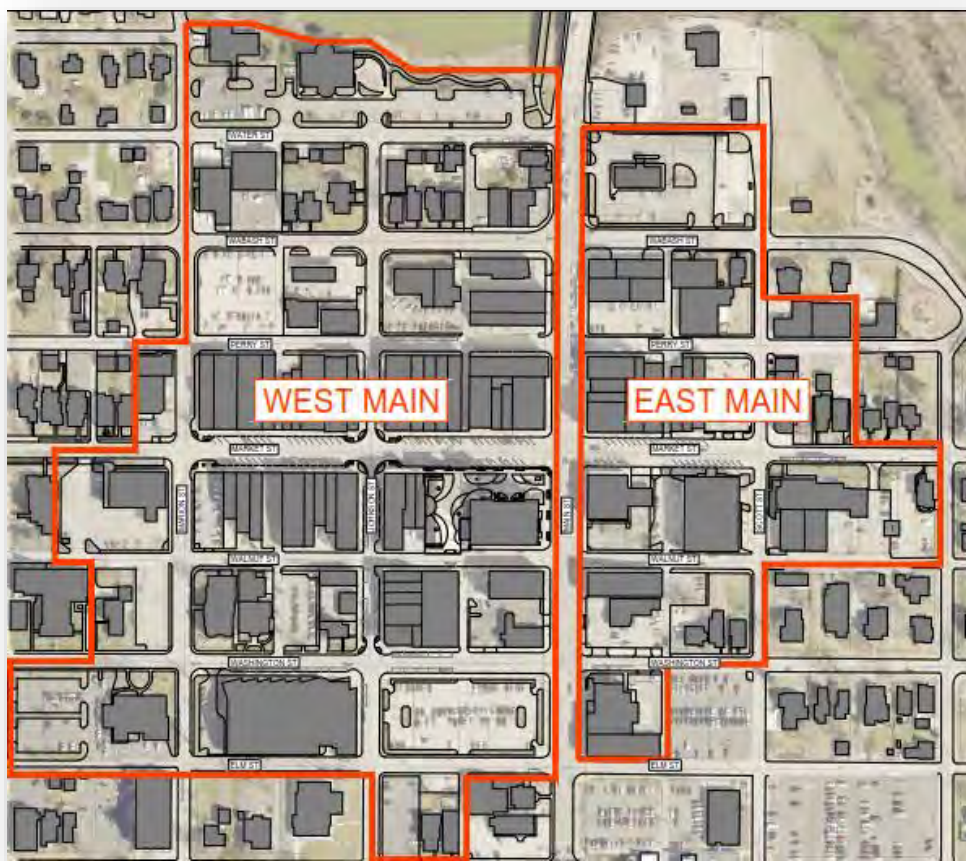


FIGURE 1: Study Area Limits

In general, the downtown core includes a variety of parking spaces. There are both public parking spaces and private parking spaces. There are both on-street parking options as well as off-street parking lots. A majority, but not all, of the on-street parking stalls have an enforced two-hour limit.

EXISTING PARKING INVENTORY

A parking inventory was taken within the study area limits. The following tables summarize this inventory.

Total Parking	
West Main	801
East Main	327
Total	1,128

Table 1: Existing Parking Spaces

West Main		East Main	
Public Parking Stalls	408	Public Parking Stalls	136
Private Parking Stalls	393	Private Parking Stalls	191
Total	801	Total	327

Table 2: Existing Parking Spaces Public & Private

Public Parking Spaces			
West Main		East Main	
Off-Street (Parking Lot)	195	Off-Street (Parking Lot)	69
On-Street (within R/W)	213	On-Street (within R/W)	67
Total	408	Total	136

Table 3: Existing Public Parking Spaces On-Street & Off-Street

EXISTING PUBLIC PARKING LOT DISTRIBUTION & WALKING DURATION

There are six public parking lots in the downtown core. Three are located on the west side of Main Street and three on the east side of Main Street. A "Parking Proximity" Exhibit is included in the Appendix showing that the center of these six parking lots are located within 400' from almost all of the front doors in the downtown core.

The only buildings not within the 400' radius are located along West Market Street. While these buildings require a longer walk from a public parking lot they are all within 450' of multiple public parking lots. The Walking Distance Map in the Appendix calculates the approximate amount of time it would take to walk throughout the downtown core. The two largest public parking lots are both less than a three minute walk to the center of West Market. The exhibit also shows the travel distance and walking time from the most removed parking lot east of Hardee's to the southernmost commercial building (the Library). The associated unobstructed travel time is 8 minutes. Assuming that there would be delays crossing SR 1 and other streets, the total walking time is likely closer to 10 minutes.

EXISTING PRIVATE PARKING LOTS

Exhibits included in the Appendix and used in Figure 2 of this report include three different colors to represent existing buildings within the study area. Buildings colored green represent residential buildings, most of which have their own detached garage or off-street parking. Buildings colored blue have private parking spaces with a limited need for public parking spaces. Buildings colored in yellow have limited, if any, private parking spaces and greatly rely on public parking spaces for both their employees and customers.

ENFORCEMENT

The City of Bluffton restricts some of the on-street parking to a 2-hour limit. Jim Mettler, the City's Parking Enforcement Officer, has observed that there is rarely a time when parking is not available downtown. The most common locations for citations are near the courthouse.

Approximately 500 parking tickets are issued annually. Since parking tickets are only issued on weekdays that equates to approximately two parking tickets per day. The parking enforcement is consistent and effective as it promotes a frequent turnover of parking stalls along the city blocks with high commercial density.

EXISTING PARKING ANALYSIS

DISCLAIMER

The following analysis was from data obtained on Thursday, September 10, 2020 and may not be fully reflective of everyday parking demand. Parking use is impacted by many variables. Events at the courthouse or library can cause an increase in parking demand on nearby parking lots. COVID-19 may have caused some employees to work remotely or reduced retail activity. While these, and other, variables can increase parking demand, the counts taken appeared to be mostly reflective of past observations and experiences.

DOWNTOWN PARKING COUNTS

Parking counts were taken on Thursday, September 10, 2020 at four different intervals throughout the day. The results of these counts are included in the Appendix. Cars were counted between 9:00-10:00, 11:00-12:00, 1:00-2:00, and 3:00-4:00.

EAST CAMPUS PARKING COUNTS

The peak hour of parking for East Main was between 9:00-10:00 in the morning with a total of 41% of the parking spaces being filled. The private lots ranged between 33% to 36% full while the public lots ranged between 38% to 47% full. The only parking lot that had more than one hour at over 75% capacity was the private parking lot of Welches All Vehicle Repair. Only six parking areas experienced at least two hours with over 50% capacity.

WEST CAMPUS PARKING COUNTS

The peak hour of parking for West Main was between 11:00-12:00 in the morning with a total of 39% of the parking spaces being filled. The private lots ranged between 26% to 31% full while the public lots ranged between 39% to 48% full. Eleven of the 66 parking areas had at least two hours at over 75% capacity. Ten of the eleven, however, were small parking areas consisting of six or less parking

stalls. The only larger parking area with over 75% capacity for two or more hours was the private parking lot that serves both the County Annex building and the Library. Eight other parking areas experienced at least two hours with over 50% capacity.

Figure 2 identifies the parking areas that experienced over 50% capacity (yellow) and over 75% capacity (red) for at least two hours.

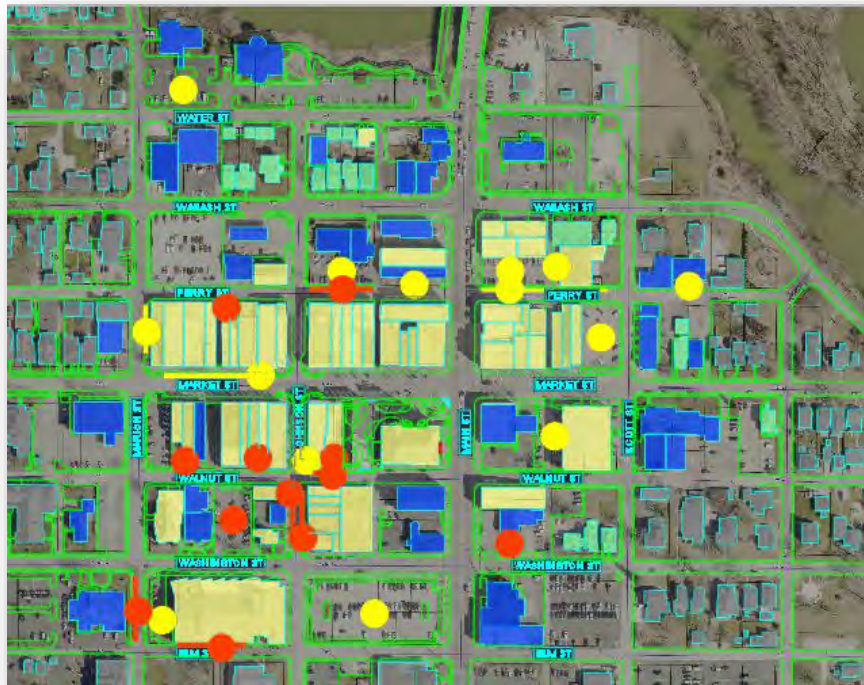


FIGURE 2: Parking Utilization Map

UNUSED PARKING STALLS

During the peak hour of parking there were 698 parking spaces that were not being utilized. Using a parking space size is 180 sf, there is over 125,000 sf of unused real estate in the downtown core at any given time due to underutilized parking spaces.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

According to information provided by Bluffton NOW!, over 90% of the first floor commercial real estate in the downtown core is currently occupied. Approximately two-thirds of the second and third floor spaces are currently occupied.

While most of the downtown commercial space is occupied, many of the spaces have limited retail traffic and low employee counts. The second and third story space is often utilized for apartments and residential use. While 100% occupancy is difficult for any community to sustain or expect, a more vibrant downtown environment is expected due to the efforts of the City and Bluffton NOW!. The existing parking demand could significantly increase if new robust retail or commercial spaces are created.

With an existing overall parking demand close to 40% there is significant available parking to sustain additional growth and development.

The total number of public parking spaces within the study limits is 544 (408 West Main and 136 East Main). The total first floor square footage per the Bluffton NOW! data is 497,461 sf. This equates to 1 public parking space per 915 sf.

While the first-floor commercial space typically requires parking during typical 8-5 business hours, the parking demand for the second and third floor is typically in the evening and overnight as it serves residential uses. With a combined total of 443,895 sf for second and third story space, the existing public parking equates to 1 space per 816 sf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing parking in downtown Bluffton is more than sufficient for the current businesses and uses. However, growth is expected and desired in the downtown core. While ample parking is available downtown, the location of the parking stalls are likely not always perceived to be convenient. The following recommendations are provided to improve existing parking as well as facilitate the future demand for additional parking.

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Striping:** Not all on-street parallel parking spaces are clearly identified. All on-street parking stalls should be clearly striped. This will increase the public's awareness of available parking spaces.
- **Signage:** Not all public parking lots have clear and consistent signage. All public parking lots should receive consistent and clear signage identifying the lot as a public parking lot.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

As the downtown area continues to experience new growth and investment, complaints should be expected. Public parking along West Market Street is not sufficient to serve multiple high-customer generated businesses. It was observed that Hugh's Coffee occupies one of the smallest footprints along West Market Street but generates the most parking demand.

- **Proactive Education:** A healthy and vibrant downtown offers an environment that is pro pedestrian. Downtown businesses should be encouraged to support periphery parking which would require customers to walk past multiple businesses since they must park a couple blocks away. Limited "convenient" parking should be considered an asset as it promotes walking, window shopping, social interaction, and an active outdoor environment. An effort should be made to promote and attract pedestrian friendly businesses to the downtown core.
- **Shared Parking:** The private parking lots in the study area are operating below a 40% occupancy rate. If the public parking lots become near capacity the City should encourage, reward, or require new businesses to form an agreement with a nearby underutilized private parking lot owner (ie: a church, hospital, etc) to allow for permit only use on weekdays.
- **1 Hour Parking:** As the public parking demand along the downtown blocks with high commercial density increases the parking limit should be reduced to 1 hour to promote a higher turnover rate and encourage parking in the peripheral public parking lots.

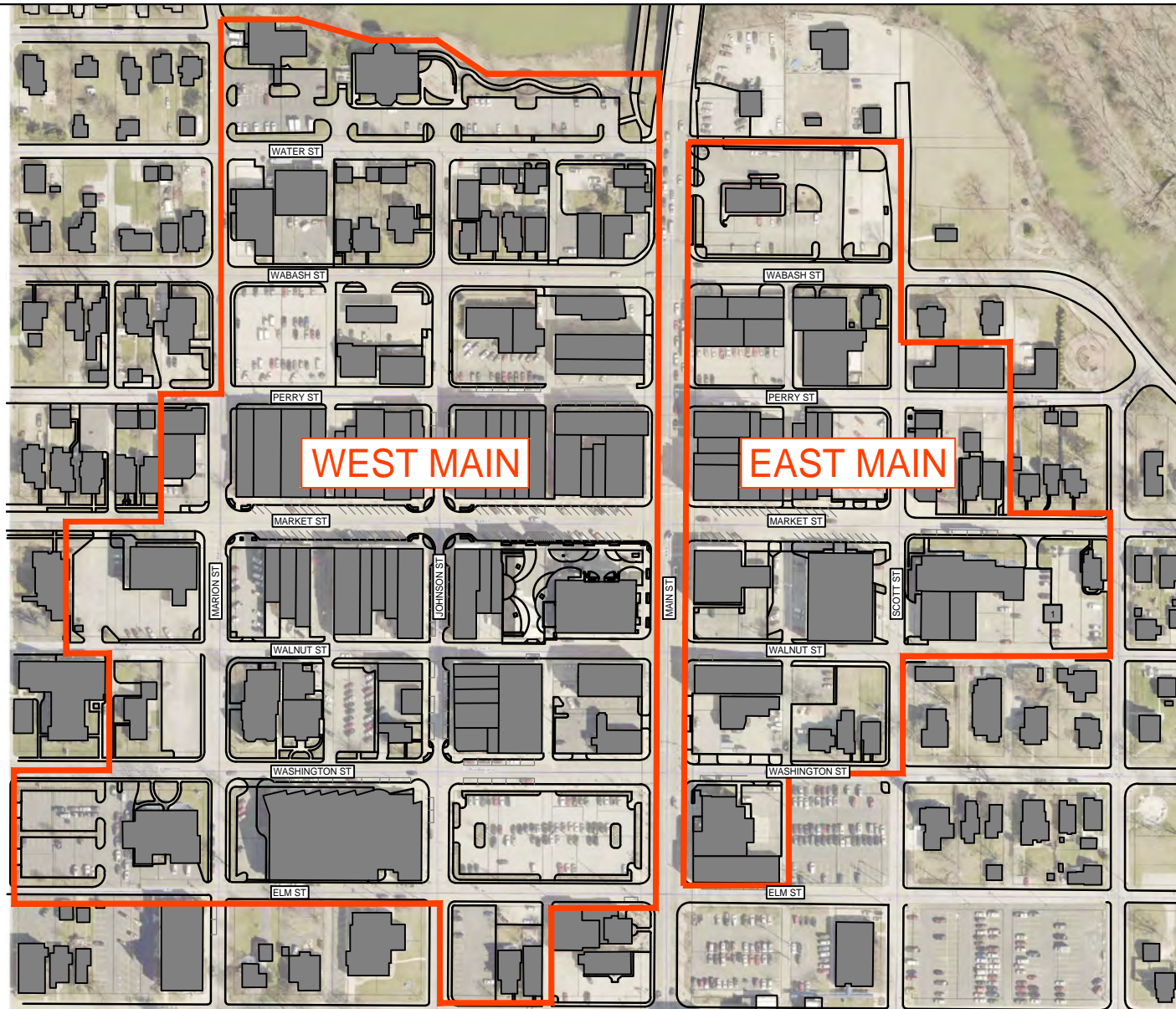
- Pedestrian Crossing: The City should work with INDOT to promote safer and more efficient pedestrian crossings from the east side of Main Street to the west. This would promote downtown walkability and provide additional connections from businesses to available parking.
- Parking Lot Aesthetics: The public parking lots should be improved and upgraded to reflect a safe place to park. This can be accomplished with landscaping, lighting, streetscape enhancements, and a focus on the pedestrian experience from the parking lot to the Market Street corridor.

SUMMARY

At any given time over half of the parking spaces in downtown Bluffton are empty. With over 90% of the first-floor commercial real estate occupied there does not appear to be a need for additional parking in the near future. However, the existing parking could be improved with better striping and signage.

Due to current revitalization efforts, it is expected that the parking demand will grow. While the parking availability will likely be sufficient it will require individuals to walk further from their parking space to their destination. The City of Bluffton NOW! should invest time and resources to educate current business owners on the benefits of a pedestrians first community. The City should also promote the sharing of private parking lots, work with INDOT on pedestrian crossings, consider the eventual limitation of hours near dense commercial districts, and improve the aesthetics of the current public parking lots.

Appendix



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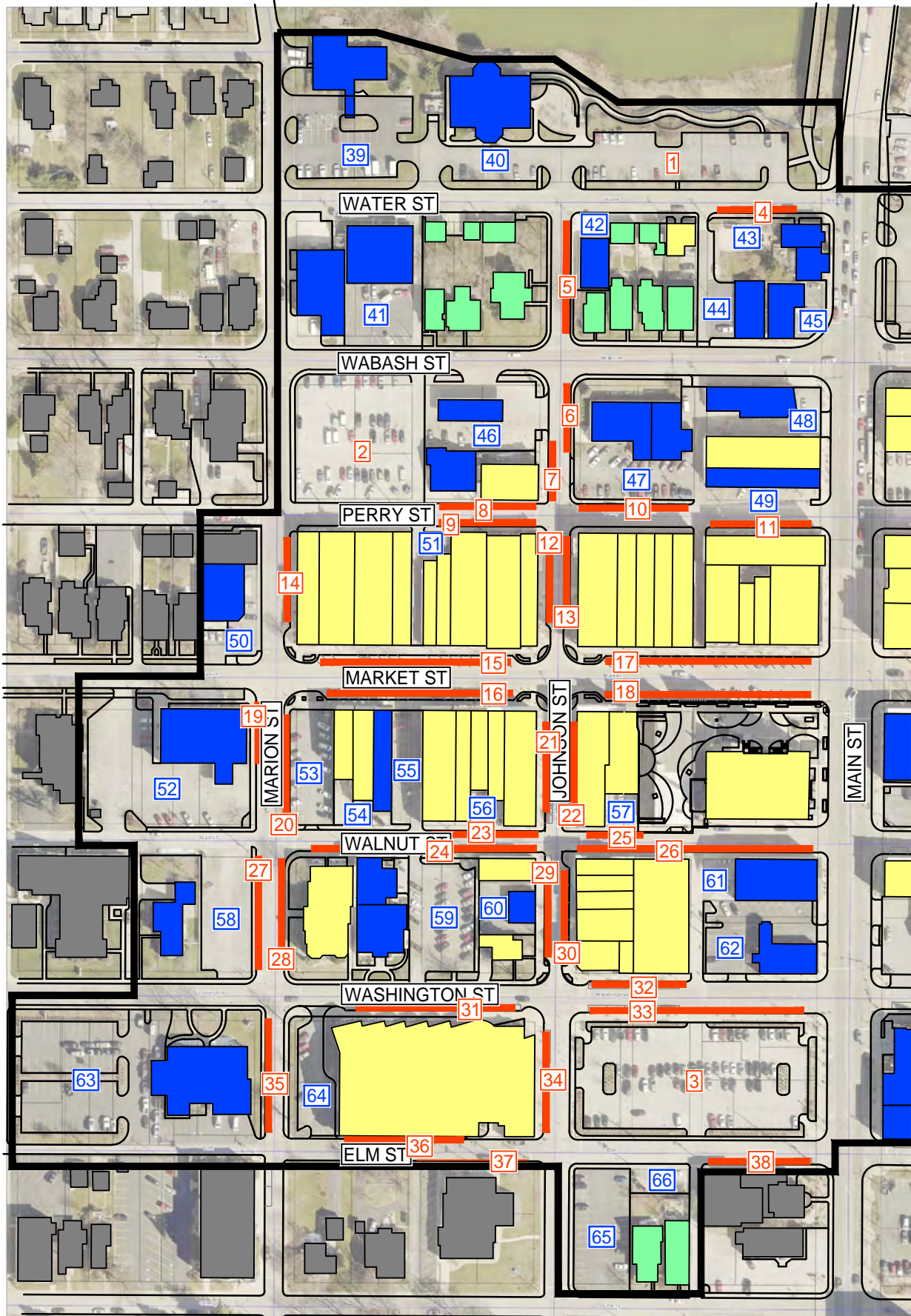
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NORTH

STUDY AREA

NOT TO SCALE



West Parking Counts - Public Parking Spaces

Lot	Capacity	9:00 - 10:00		11:00 - 12:00		1:00 - 2:00		3:00 - 4:00	
		Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity
1	44	13	30%	16	36%	11	25%	12	27%
2	67	30	45%	33	49%	29	43%	22	33%
3	84	65	77%	60	71%	60	71%	54	64%
4	4	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	1	25%
5	5	1	20%	2	40%	1	20%	2	40%
6	3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%
7	2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%
8	5	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%
9	6	1	17%	2	33%	2	33%	1	17%
10	5	1	20%	5	100%	4	80%	4	80%
11	5	1	20%	3	60%	2	40%	1	20%
12	5	0	0%	3	60%	2	40%	2	40%
13	5	1	20%	2	40%	1	20%	2	40%
14	4	3	75%	2	50%	1	25%	2	50%
15	14	8	57%	9	64%	4	29%	4	29%
16	16	8	50%	7	44%	7	44%	6	38%
17	17	5	29%	13	76%	8	47%	6	35%
18	15	3	20%	6	40%	6	40%	8	53%
19	2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
20	5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
21	5	1	20%	0	0%	2	40%	2	40%
22	4	2	50%	2	50%	0	0%	1	25%
23	3	1	33%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
24	9	4	44%	1	11%	3	33%	2	22%
25	2	2	100%	2	100%	1	50%	1	50%
26	11	1	9%	3	27%	1	9%	3	27%
27	5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%
28	5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
29	3	3	100%	3	100%	3	100%	3	100%
30	5	2	40%	5	100%	3	60%	5	100%
31	8	2	25%	2	25%	3	38%	0	0%
32	5	1	20%	2	40%	2	40%	4	80%
33	5	0	0%	1	20%	3	60%	0	0%
34	5	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
35	5	5	100%	5	100%	3	60%	3	60%
36	6	5	83%	6	100%	3	50%	3	50%
37	3	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%
38	6	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	17%
Public Total	408	172	42%	196	48%	168	41%	160	39%

75% Capacity or higher (moderate to major utilization)

50% - 75% Capacity (mild to moderate utilization)

West Parking Counts - Private Parking Spaces

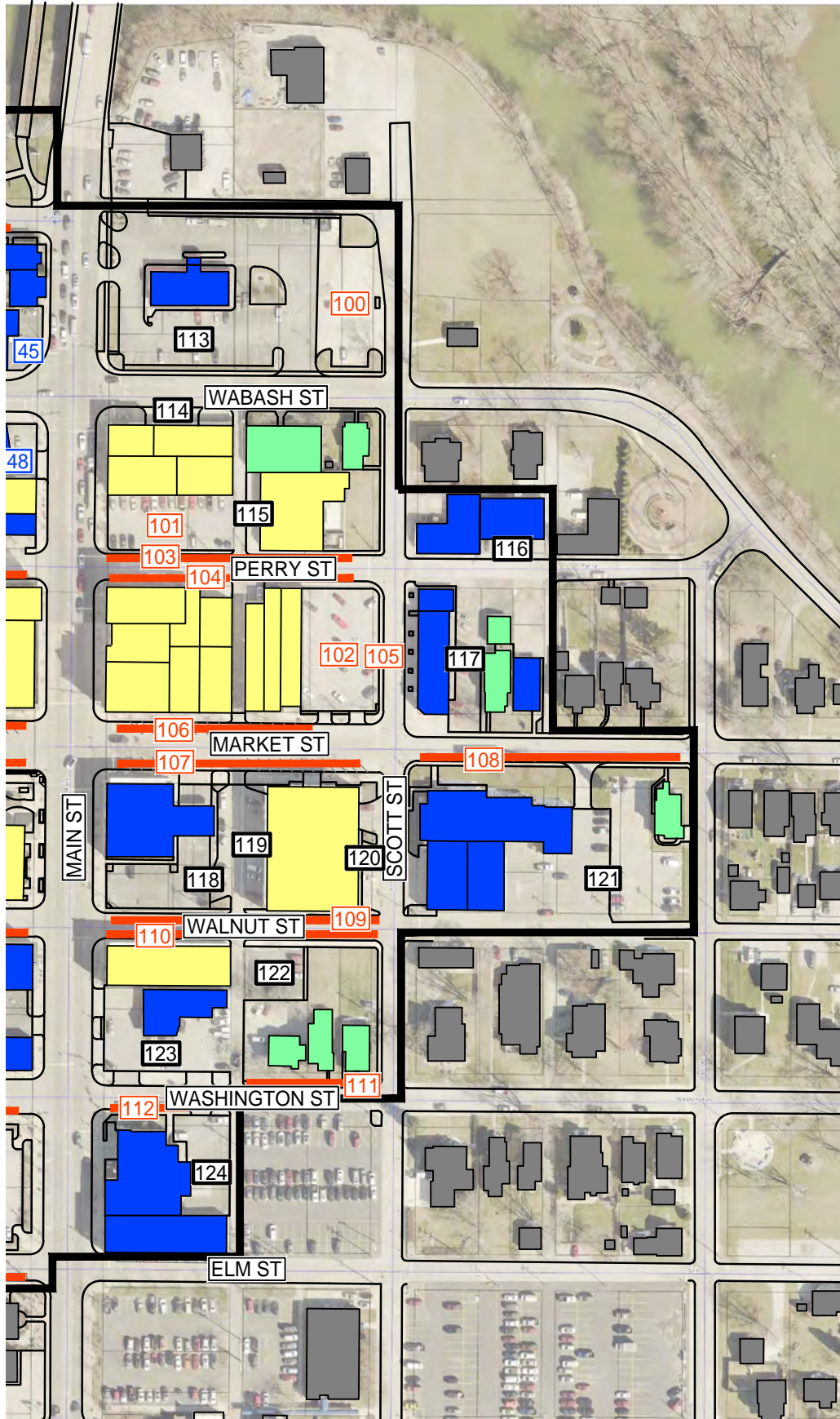
Lot	Capacity	9:00 - 10:00		11:00 - 12:00		1:00 - 2:00		3:00 - 4:00	
		Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity
39	34	17	50%	18	53%	18	53%	17	50%
40	10	4	40%	6	60%	1	10%	3	30%
41	11	2	18%	2	18%	2	18%	3	27%
42	4	1	25%	1	25%	1	25%	0	0%
43	4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
44	6	1	17%	1	17%	1	17%	2	33%
45	5	1	20%	1	20%	2	40%	2	40%
46	13	3	23%	3	23%	3	23%	2	15%
47	16	8	50%	9	56%	11	69%	16	100%
48	8	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
49	10	5	50%	5	50%	5	50%	6	60%
50	13	2	15%	3	23%	1	8%	1	8%
51	2	2	100%	2	100%	1	50%	1	50%
52	25	9	36%	7	28%	7	28%	4	16%
53	24	7	29%	7	29%	6	25%	8	33%
54	4	3	75%	3	75%	3	75%	2	50%
55	12	2	17%	1	8%	2	17%	2	17%
56	3	3	100%	2	67%	3	100%	3	100%
57	3	2	67%	3	100%	3	100%	2	67%
58	32	2	6%	1	3%	2	6%	2	6%
59	24	15	63%	17	71%	18	75%	19	79%
60	4	1	25%	1	25%	1	25%	1	25%
61	5	0	0%	2	40%	3	60%	2	40%
62	16	4	25%	4	25%	3	19%	4	25%
63	57	1	2%	1	2%	3	5%	2	4%
64	12	1	8%	6	50%	8	67%	8	67%
65	32	7	22%	8	25%	9	28%	8	25%
66	4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Private Total	393	103	26%	114	29%	117	30%	120	31%

Public Total	408	172	42%	196	48%	168	41%	160	39%
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Grand Total	801	275	34%	310	39%	285	36%	280	35%
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75% Capacity or higher (moderate to major utilization)

50% - 75% Capacity (mild to moderate utilization)



East Parking Counts - Public Parking Spaces

Lot	Capacity	9:00 - 10:00		11:00 - 12:00		1:00 - 2:00		3:00 - 4:00	
		Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity
100	18	13	72%	5	28%	6	33%	3	17%
101	23	20	87%	15	65%	14	61%	12	52%
102	28	17	61%	16	57%	16	57%	16	57%
103	6	3	50%	4	67%	4	67%	3	50%
104	5	2	40%	2	40%	2	40%	4	80%
105	4	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	1	25%
106	12	3	25%	4	33%	3	25%	6	50%
107	12	2	17%	6	50%	0	0%	5	42%
108	7	1	14%	1	14%	3	43%	2	29%
109	5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
110	8	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
111	5	2	40%	2	40%	2	40%	2	40%
112	3	1	33%	1	33%	0	0%	2	67%
Public Total	136	64	47%	56	41%	51	38%	56	41%

75% Capacity or higher (moderate to major utilization)

50% - 75% Capacity (mild to moderate utilization)

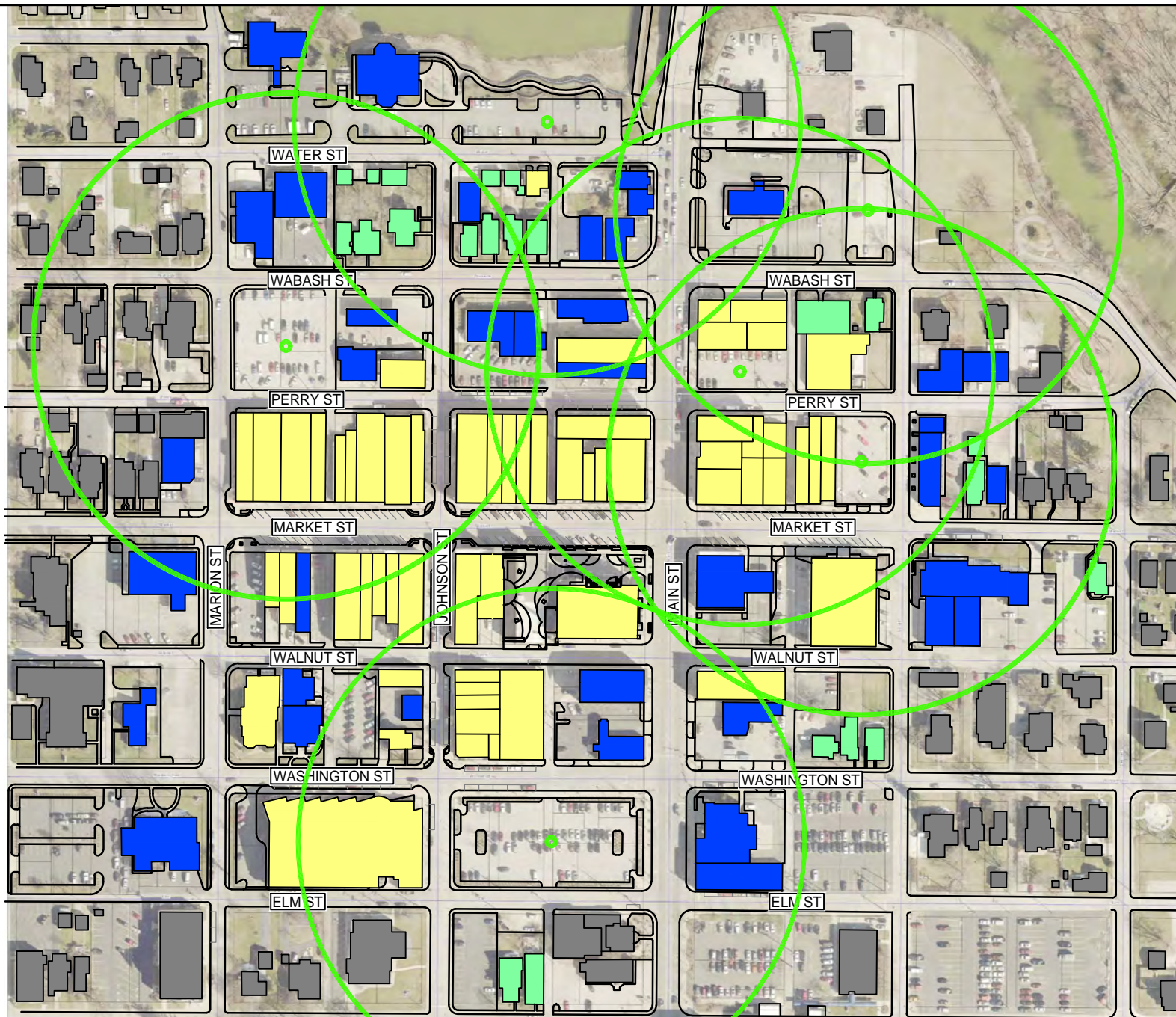
East Parking Counts - Private Parking Spaces

Lot	Capacity	9:00 - 10:00		11:00 - 12:00		1:00 - 2:00		3:00 - 4:00	
		Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity
113	43	8	19%	4	9%	7	16%	3	7%
114	4	1	25%	1	25%	1	25%	1	25%
115	4	2	50%	2	50%	2	50%	0	0%
116	7	3	43%	5	71%	4	57%	7	100%
117	19	7	37%	6	32%	6	32%	6	32%
118	15	5	33%	6	40%	4	27%	5	33%
119	12	8	67%	6	50%	5	42%	8	67%
120	10	1	10%	2	20%	1	10%	1	10%
121	42	17	40%	15	36%	16	38%	17	40%
122	12	2	17%	3	25%	3	25%	3	25%
123	10	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%
124	13	5	38%	4	31%	4	31%	4	31%
Private Total	191	69	36%	64	34%	63	33%	65	34%
Public Total	136	64	47%	56	41%	51	38%	56	41%
Grand Total	327	133	41%	120	37%	114	35%	121	37%

75% Capacity or higher (moderate to major utilization)

50% - 75% Capacity (mild to moderate utilization)

Total Parking Counts									
Lot	Capacity	9:00 - 10:00		11:00 - 12:00		1:00 - 2:00		3:00 - 4:00	
		Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity	Count	% Capacity
West Private Total	393	103	26%	114	29%	117	30%	120	31%
West Public Total	408	172	42%	196	48%	168	41%	160	39%
East Private Total	191	69	36%	64	34%	63	33%	65	34%
East Public Total	136	64	47%	56	41%	51	38%	56	41%
Grand Total	1128	408	36%	430	38%	399	35%	401	36%

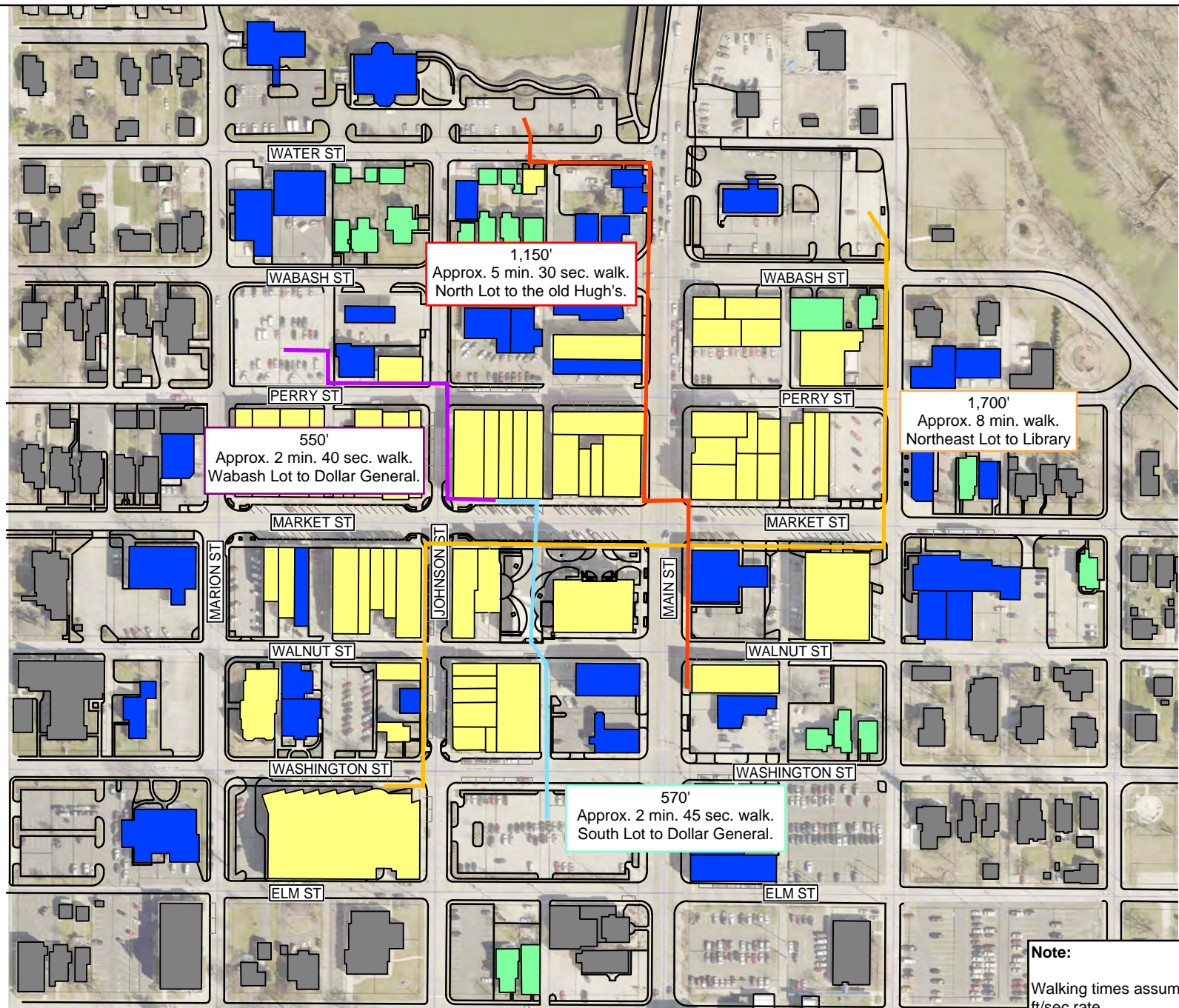


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400' PARKING PROXIMITY MAP
NOT TO SCALE



Note:

Walking times assume a 3.5 ft/sec rate.

Walking times do not include crosswalk delays.

