



City of Saugatuck, Michigan Parking Study and Solutions Report



September 2026



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About

This document presents the consolidated materials for the final parking study deliverable. It is intended to serve as both a comprehensive executive summary and a digital binder that brings together the key findings, recommended actions, white papers, meeting materials, and supporting documentation developed throughout the Parking Improvement Task Force process. The consolidated report summarizes the study purpose and background, existing conditions, alternatives considered, and recommended next steps, while also organizing the more detailed technical resources and reference materials in an appendix for ease of review. The contents outline below identifies the proposed structure and content within this final deliverable.

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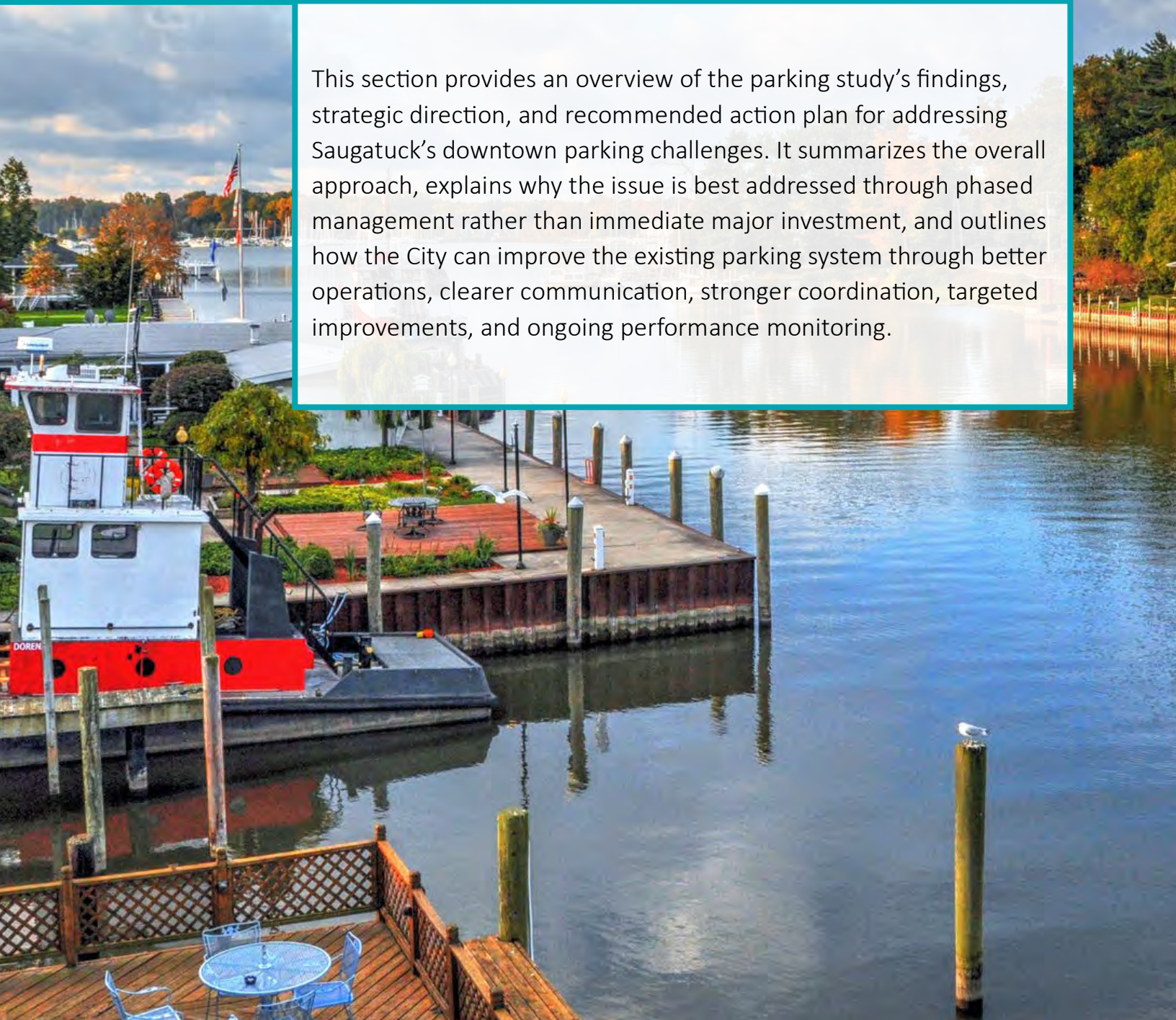
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01 | Executive Summary and Recommended Actions

This section provides an overview of the parking study's findings, strategic direction, and recommended action plan for addressing Saugatuck's downtown parking challenges. It summarizes the overall approach, explains why the issue is best addressed through phased management rather than immediate major investment, and outlines how the City can improve the existing parking system through better operations, clearer communication, stronger coordination, targeted improvements, and ongoing performance monitoring.





City of Saugatuck Parking Study: Executive Summary and Action Plan

Saugatuck's downtown parking challenge is real, visible, and concentrated during peak visitor periods. The study does not support immediately advancing the most expensive or disruptive options, such as a new parking structure or broad paid parking. Instead, Walker recommends a phased management strategy that uses existing assets more effectively, improves enforcement and turnover, expands remote and shared parking, strengthens the Interurban connection, manages high-value curb space, improves accessibility, and communicates parking options more clearly to residents, employees, businesses, and visitors.

Downtown parking demand is most severe from Memorial Day through Labor Day, with July and August representing the most constrained period. Stakeholders and survey respondents consistently described peak-season parking as difficult because of congestion, long search times, limited enforcement, employee use of prime spaces, inadequate accessible parking, inconsistent signage, and limited awareness of remote parking and shuttle options. Outside peak periods, the system generally functions more effectively. This seasonal pattern supports the recommended policy direction: avoid overbuilding for a limited number of annual peak conditions and instead manage demand, turnover, information, and remote capacity more aggressively.

This executive summary synthesizes the study's data, public input, stakeholder feedback, guiding principles, recommendations, implementation priorities, performance measures, and monitoring approach into a practical action plan for phased parking management.

Study Methodology and Discovery Process

The parking study began in late summer 2025 and is scheduled to conclude in summer 2026. It was designed to evaluate Saugatuck's parking system during off-season and peak-season conditions, identify the causes of user frustration, and develop practical recommendations aligned with the City's scale, character, fiscal capacity, and seasonal demand patterns.

The study area included the City of Saugatuck north of the Kalamazoo River, with inventory and mapping of public and private parking east of the river. Occupancy observations focused on the area generally bounded by the Kalamazoo River, Lucy Street, Holland Street, Francis Street, and Elizabeth Street, including the Saugatuck High School parking lots. A focused turnover and duration-of-stay review covered selected on-street spaces along Water, Butler, and Culver Streets in the downtown core.

Field work included inventory and mapping of public and private parking, posted restrictions, transit stops, bicycle facilities, loading areas, curbside conditions, ADA spaces, and occupancy patterns by zone. The study also included focused turnover and duration observations for approximately 30 on-street spaces along Water, Butler, and Culver Streets.



Summary of Core Data Points

Topic	Data Point	Planning Implication
Citywide parking supply	1,868 total publicly available spaces, including 1,502 on-street spaces and 366 off-street spaces.	Saugatuck has a meaningful existing supply, but peak-period constraints are concentrated in the most convenient downtown locations.
CBD time-limited supply	561 time-limited on-street spaces in the Central Business District.	Consistent enforcement of existing time limits can materially improve turnover before new supply is built.
Accessible parking	10 accessible on-street CBD spaces out of 761 on-street CBD spaces, or approximately 1.3 percent.	The City should increase the number of accessible on-street CBD parking spaces to approximately 30 over time, using PROWAG as guidance. <i>Note: PROWAG refers to the Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines, federal accessibility guidelines issued by the U.S. Access Board for pedestrian facilities and other elements located within the public right-of-way, including sidewalks, curb ramps, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, transit stops, and on-street parking.</i>
Peak-season CBD occupancy	July 2026 counts show Zone 1/CBD reaching 97 percent occupancy on Wednesday, July 15, and 100 percent occupancy on Saturday, July 18, with no available CBD spaces at 6:00 p.m. on July 18.	Peak-season constraints are concentrated in the CBD, while surrounding zones retain substantial unused capacity, supporting enforcement, turnover, remote parking, shuttle, and wayfinding strategies before major new supply.
Restaurant use of curb space	About 13 high-value on-street spaces are occupied by restaurant outdoor dining under a conditional, revocable approval and license framework.	Use the City's existing approval and license process as the administrative framework, while evaluating whether the spaces should be restored to parking or repriced and managed to better reflect the public value of high-turnover curb access.
Survey response volume	618 survey responses were received, including 24 pages of open-ended comments.	The study has substantial public input documenting recurring peak-season concerns.
Visitor search time	More than 70 percent of survey takers reported spending more than five minutes finding parking during peak conditions.	Wayfinding, remote parking visibility, and turnover improvements should be prioritized.

Topic	Data Point	Planning Implication
Remote parking	The Saugatuck High School remote lot provides 116 advertised summer-weekend spaces.	Remote parking is already part of the system and was expanded during the summer of 2026. Additional remote and shared parking agreements can further increase effective capacity without constructing new downtown supply.
Interurban service and operations	The Interurban provides low-cost demand-response service and a summer parking shuttle, with expanded 2026 hours, additional stops, and added operating capacity.	The Interurban is already a meaningful mobility asset, and parking-related service improvements should be pursued through coordination with the Interurban Transit Authority and other partners.
Employee parking pressure	The employee parking data show that many businesses lack dedicated employee parking and that employees commonly park in public, semi-public, and peripheral locations. Several businesses report substantial peak-season staffing levels, and recurring comments identify demand for a dedicated employee option, concerns about the high school lot, and safety issues for late-night workers.	Employees occupy a meaningful portion of the public parking system during peak periods. A coordinated employee parking strategy is essential to free prime customer spaces, reduce visitor search time, and address employee safety and reliability concerns.
Additional remote parking candidates	Potential remote or shared parking locations include Dykstra Funeral Home, Riverside Church of Saugatuck, the Saugatuck DPW property, Douglas Elementary School, St. Peter's Catholic Church, and other willing institutional, municipal, church, school, or private properties.	These locations could support visitor, employee, or event parking if shared parking agreements, owner conditions, signage, liability, maintenance, and shuttle coordination are resolved.
Wayfinding and parking communications	The wayfinding review identified limited gateway and arrival signage, a lack of vehicular and pedestrian directional signage downtown, unclear public parking identification signage, cluttered on-street parking signs, limited map kiosks, and no dedicated downtown parking webpage on the City website.	Better signage and communications can reduce visitor confusion, improve use of existing parking, support remote parking and Interurban use, and improve voluntary compliance before new supply is added.
Parking structure cost	Planning-level estimates place a parking structure at approximately \$42,000 per space before land and unusual site costs, or roughly \$8.4 million for 200 spaces and \$12.6 million for 300 spaces. Including capital, operating, and maintenance costs,	A structure would require substantial public investment. A 300-space facility could represent roughly 15 to 20 percent of the City's annual operating budget, depending on the budget basis used, and would concentrate many spaces in one location



Topic	Data Point	Planning Implication
	the facility would require a substantial annual public commitment and could consume a meaningful share of the City's operating budget.	that may not be convenient or useful for all destinations or users.
Enforcement program cost	A seasonal ambassador program is estimated at 2,352 staff hours and approximately \$94,080 annually.	Dedicated seasonal enforcement is a comparatively low-cost strategy to improve turnover and customer experience.
Street conversion capacity	Concept-level one-way and angled-parking changes could add approximately 63 spaces on Butler Street, 22 on Water Street, 6 on Lucy Street, and 20 near Elizabeth Street.	Targeted geometric changes could add a meaningful but limited supply if confirmed through engineering review.
Future demand	Long-term demand growth is estimated at approximately 100 to 150 spaces, with the lower end considered most realistic.	Incremental demand can likely be managed through phased operations, shared parking, remote parking, and targeted capacity improvements.

May 2, 2026 Parking Occupancy Snapshot

The May 2, 2026 counts show that downtown parking was already functionally constrained before the height of summer. Zone 1, the Central Business District, reached 794 occupied spaces out of 914, or approximately 87 percent occupancy, while Zone 2, Zone 3, and Zone 4 remained substantially underused. The result points to a concentrated downtown management problem rather than a systemwide supply shortage.

In Zone 1, total occupancy increased from 516 occupied spaces at 10:00 a.m. to a peak of 794 at 5:00 p.m., out of a 914-space supply, for approximately 87 percent occupancy. On-street parking in the CBD reached 653 occupied spaces out of 761, or approximately 86 percent occupancy, while off-street parking reached 141 occupied spaces out of 153, or approximately 92 percent occupancy. At the peak, approximately 120 spaces remained available in the CBD, indicating that convenient downtown parking was functionally constrained even before the height of the summer season.

By contrast, nearby zones showed very low occupancy. Zone 2, the Hill, peaked at approximately 65 occupied spaces out of 718 spaces, or about 9 percent occupancy. Zone 3, North Residential, had only 3 occupied spaces out of 128, or about 2 percent occupancy. Zone 4, South Residential, had approximately 7 occupied spaces out of 123, or about 6 percent occupancy. These results indicate that the parking issue is not a systemwide shortage on this observation date, but a strong concentration of demand in the CBD.

The May 2 data support the broader recommendations in this executive summary. First, the CBD operates at or above the 85 percent threshold commonly used to indicate practical capacity, reinforcing the need for turnover management, enforcement, employee parking strategies, and better wayfinding. Second, nearby underused areas may support remote, peripheral, or shared parking strategies if they are clearly signed, communicated, and



connected to downtown. Third, the sharp difference between CBD and surrounding-zone occupancy underscores the importance of directing demand, not simply adding new supply.

July 2026 Parking Occupancy Snapshot

July 2026 counts confirm severe peak-season constraints in the CBD. Zone 1 reached 97 percent occupancy on Wednesday, July 15, leaving 30 spaces available at 6:00 p.m., and 100 percent occupancy on Saturday, July 18, with no available spaces at 6:00 p.m.

The shortage was concentrated rather than systemwide. On July 18, Zone 2 peaked at 47 percent occupancy, Zone 3 at 5 percent, and Zone 4 at 11 percent, indicating substantial unused capacity outside the CBD.

These results reinforce the recommendation to improve turnover, remote parking, Interurban connections, wayfinding, enforcement, and curb management before advancing major capital solutions.

Summary of Survey Results

The survey received 618 responses and confirms a sharp seasonal difference in the parking experience. More than 80 percent of respondents reported using a personal vehicle to travel downtown, and nearly 79 percent reported using street parking. During peak season, approximately 72 percent reported spending more than five minutes finding parking, while off-season parking was generally easier. Respondents prioritized ease of finding parking and distance to destination, and 56 percent reported willingness to walk three or more blocks during peak season if remote or peripheral options are clear, safe, and convenient.

More than 80 percent of respondents reported using a personal vehicle to travel downtown, and nearly 79 percent reported using street parking. During peak season, approximately 72 percent reported that finding parking takes more than five minutes, while only about 4 percent reported finding parking immediately. By contrast, during the off-season, approximately 53 percent reported finding parking immediately, and approximately 43 percent reported finding parking within one to five minutes. This confirms a sharp seasonal difference in the parking experience.

The survey also shows that parking availability and location matter more than parking-space type. Respondents ranked ease of finding parking and distance from destination as the most important factors influencing parking decisions. During peak season, 56 percent reported being willing to walk three or more blocks to reach a destination, suggesting that remote and peripheral parking can be viable if it is clearly communicated, perceived as safe and convenient, and connected to downtown through signage, maps, and shuttle service.

Opinions on paid parking were mixed and often unfavorable. Approximately 54 percent of respondents said they would not pay to park in Saugatuck, including those who would rather park farther away and walk and those who would never pay to park. Approximately 23 percent said they would pay if the price were reasonable, while others indicated they might pay occasionally but not consistently. These results support keeping paid parking as a future policy option rather than making it the first implementation step.



Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder interviews reinforce the same central conclusion as the survey and technical analyses: Saugatuck's parking problem is most acute during the peak visitor season, but stakeholders did not coalesce around a single large infrastructure solution. The 10 interviews included representatives of downtown businesses, short-term rental interests, event and arts organizations, marina operations, schools, and other community-serving organizations. These stakeholders identified broad concerns about summer congestion, limited turnover, weak enforcement, confusing information, employee use of prime spaces, and insufficient accessible parking. At the same time, they repeatedly emphasized that the system generally functions better outside peak periods, making year-round or high-cost solutions less compelling.

Several areas of consensus emerged. Most stakeholders agreed that enforcement is minimal or inconsistent and that posted time limits lose effectiveness when users know they are unlikely to receive a citation. Many stakeholders also supported better signage, maps, website information, and active communication about where visitors should park. Remote parking and the Interurban were generally viewed as important assets, but stakeholders noted that the shuttle system needs clearer promotion, more predictable service, better pickup and drop-off information, and stronger coordination with additional remote lots.

Employee parking was another recurring theme. Several stakeholders believed employees and business owners should not occupy the most convenient downtown spaces during peak periods, while others cautioned that remote employee parking could create fairness, safety, commute, and workforce-retention concerns if poorly designed. The most practical approach is not a punitive mandate, but a coordinated program that combines employer outreach, designated remote options, reliable shuttle service, clear expectations, and reasonable enforcement.

Stakeholders also raised broader mobility and curb-management issues, including bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian safety, multimodal access, low-speed vehicle rules, informal parking, restaurant-occupied curb spaces, and inadequate ADA parking. Collectively, the interviews support a layered strategy: enforce existing rules, improve communications, expand remote and shared parking, strengthen the Interurban connection, manage employee parking, address ADA needs, and manage curb space more deliberately.

Key Findings

Parking supply is constrained in the downtown core during peak periods, but the system-wide issue is primarily one of management, distribution, turnover, and communication. The public parking inventory identifies 1,868 total spaces citywide, including 1,502 on-street spaces and 366 off-street spaces. Within the CBD, 561 on-street spaces are time-limited, giving the City a substantial existing management tool if rules are consistently communicated and enforced. The most valuable spaces are those closest to the commercial core, where turnover is essential for customer access. However, time limits are not consistently enforced, employees and business owners can occupy prime spaces for long durations, and visitors often lack clear information about where to park or how to use remote options. These conditions make the system feel more constrained than the raw supply numbers alone suggest.



Public input confirms that parking is a peak-season frustration and affects downtown behavior. The survey record includes 618 respondents and 24 pages of open-ended comments. More than 80 percent of respondents reported using a personal vehicle to travel downtown, and nearly 79 percent reported using street parking. During peak season, approximately 72 percent reported that it takes more than five minutes to find parking, and 72 percent reported rarely or never finding parking where they prefer to park. At the same time, 56 percent reported willingness to walk three or more blocks during peak season, suggesting that remote and peripheral parking can be effective if well communicated and connected. Respondents cited outdoor dining in parking spaces, limited public lots, lack of enforcement, employee use of preferred spaces, confusing signage, accessibility limitations, and inadequate visibility of remote parking and shuttle options as recurring concerns. Stakeholders similarly reported that parking reaches or approaches capacity on many summer days and increasingly during shoulder-season weekends.

Employee parking is a significant contributor to peak-period parking pressure and requires a dedicated strategy. The employee parking data indicate that many businesses do not have sufficient private or dedicated employee parking and that employees commonly park wherever space is available, including on Butler Street, Water Street, side streets, the hill, church lots, the SCA area, the high school lot, and other public or semi-public locations. Several businesses report large peak-season staffing levels, including shifts of 10 to 15, 15 to 20, 25 to 35, and as many as 50 daytime and 75 nighttime employees. Even allowing for carpooling, walking, biking, private spaces, or possible double-counting across multiple jobs, the data indicate that employee parking consumes a meaningful share of public parking during the busiest periods. This reduces availability for customers and visitors in the most convenient areas, underscoring the need for a coordinated employee parking program.

The same data show why the employee parking strategy must be practical rather than punitive. While there is strong demand for a designated employee lot, the high school lot is not a complete solution for all workers. The employee parking summary identifies 44 references indicating that the high school lot is not feasible or not used, 42 conditional references to its use, and recurring concerns about the lot being full, shuttle wait times, shuttle hours ending too early, lighting, sidewalk conditions, and late-night safety for workers leaving with cash or after bar and restaurant shifts. These findings support a strategy that combines designated employee parking, reliable shuttle service, improved lighting and walking conditions, employer participation, clear rules, and reasonable enforcement.

Enforcement is the most immediate and cost-effective lever available to the City. The City currently relies heavily on complaint-based or ad hoc enforcement, undermining the credibility of posted time limits and allowing all-day parking in short-term spaces. A seasonal parking ambassador program would improve turnover, provide customer service, educate visitors, support voluntary compliance, and reduce reliance on sworn law enforcement. Planning-level assumptions indicate that a Memorial Day-to-Labor Day program with two staff on duty for 12 hours per day would cost approximately \$94,080 annually and could generate approximately \$41,650 in gross seasonal citation revenue during initial implementation, with citation volumes expected to decline as compliance improves.

A parking structure is not recommended at this time. Planning-level estimates indicate a substantial capital cost, ongoing operating and maintenance obligations, and a large annual public commitment relative to Saugatuck's seasonal demand pattern. A structure would also concentrate many spaces in one location that may not align with user destinations, mobility needs, or preferred walking distances. Structured parking should remain a long-term option only if future demand, funding, location, community support, and public value change materially.



Paid parking should remain a future option, but it should not be the City's first major implementation step. Peer resort-community comparisons show that many Michigan lakefront and resort communities rely on posted time limits, targeted enforcement, signage, permits, remote parking, and peripheral long-term options rather than paid on-street parking. Paid parking can improve turnover, generate revenue, provide better data, and reduce reliance on punitive enforcement, but it also raises political, customer service, equity, technology, maintenance, and streetscape concerns. If implemented, paid parking should be seasonal, targeted to the highest-demand areas, paired with clear reinvestment commitments, and preceded by improved enforcement and communications.

Wayfinding, signage, and communications are foundational tools for parking management. The wayfinding evaluation found that Saugatuck lacks a complete, coordinated parking and downtown wayfinding system. Key issues include limited arrival and directional signage at City entry points, no clear directional guidance into downtown at important decision points, limited vehicular and pedestrian directional signage within downtown, unclear or undersized public parking identification signs, cluttered on-street regulatory signs, limited map kiosks, and no dedicated downtown parking webpage on the City website. These gaps increase confusion for first-time and infrequent visitors, reduce the effectiveness of the existing parking supply, and make remote parking and shuttle options harder to use. Signage and communication improvements should therefore be treated as near-term implementation priorities rather than aesthetic enhancements.

Recommended wayfinding improvements should connect physical signs, parking facility identification, pedestrian information, and online communication. The wayfinding evaluation recommends a coordinated parking and downtown information system: updated gateway and directional signage, clear public parking identification, simplified on-street regulatory signs, map kiosks at key pedestrian exits, consistent facility names, permanent shared-parking signage where appropriate, and a dedicated downtown parking webpage with an interactive map.

Remote parking, shared parking, and the Interurban provide the strongest near-term capacity strategy. The Saugatuck High School lot has functioned as the primary advertised remote parking resource, providing 116 spaces during summer weekends. During summer 2026, amid this study, the Interurban expanded the remote parking and shuttle program to include the Saugatuck Drug Store/pharmacy stop, Beery Field, and Douglas Elementary School lots, along with additional buses and service hours. Other candidate remote or shared parking locations include Dykstra Funeral Home, Riverside Church of Saugatuck, the Saugatuck DPW property, Douglas Elementary School, St. Peter's Catholic Church, and other institutional, municipal, church, school, and private properties. Several of these locations could add dozens of spaces each if agreements are reached and shuttle service is coordinated. Formal shared parking agreements would allow the City to make underutilized private or institutional lots available during defined days and hours while addressing insurance, liability, owner priority, blackout periods, maintenance, signage, compensation, and termination. The same approach could also support designated employee parking lots, helping move long-duration employee parking out of prime customer spaces while providing safer and more reliable options for workers.

The Interurban is a major asset, but it must be easier to understand and more predictable during peak periods. The system already provides low-cost demand-response service and a summer parking shuttle. Recent service expansion and added stops create a strong platform for a more visible parking-support role, especially if shuttle information, remote-lot signs, maps, app instructions, lodging materials, and ambassador scripts are coordinated.



Accessibility is a priority and should be addressed proactively. The CBD currently has 10 accessible on-street spaces out of 761, or approximately 1.3 percent. Using PROWAG as a practical planning benchmark, approximately 4 percent of the CBD on-street supply would equal about 30 accessible spaces. The recommendation is reinforced by Saugatuck's older resident and visitor profile, including a resident population in which 36.9 percent are age 65 or older, and a visitor survey profile in which approximately 40 percent of respondents are age 60 or older. Survey comments and stakeholder interviews also identified concerns about the number, location, enforcement, and usability of accessible spaces.

Curb space should be managed as a flexible public asset. Approximately 13 high-value on-street spaces are currently used for restaurant outdoor dining, reducing public access to scarce curbside parking in the downtown core. The City already administers this use through a defined process that includes special land use approval, Historic District Commission approval, and a revocable license agreement. Because the use is conditional and revocable, the policy question is not whether an administrative framework exists, but whether the City should continue, discontinue, or reprice the use to better reflect the public value of high-turnover curb access.

Walker recommends that the City evaluate the existing restaurant outdoor dining approval and license process against current parking-management goals. The City may choose to restore the spaces to public parking, continue the existing process, or revise the fee structure and operating conditions. If continued, the use should remain seasonal where appropriate, consistently administered, supported by design, safety, ADA, insurance, inspection, and operating standards, priced to reflect the public value of occupied curb space, and expressly revocable when the City needs the space for parking, utilities, infrastructure, or other public purposes.

Targeted geometric and curbside changes can add meaningful but limited capacity. Concept-level analyses indicate that converting Butler Street to one-way traffic with angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other could add approximately 63 spaces between Lucy and Culver Streets. Water Street one-way conversion and selected parallel-to-angled conversions could add approximately 22 spaces. Lucy Street could add approximately 6 spaces, and Elizabeth Street near the school campus could add approximately 20 remote-support spaces. These concepts require field measurements, traffic and public safety reviews, striping plans, and stakeholder coordination before implementation.

Future growth does not appear to justify a large new parking facility. The future-growth analysis concludes that Saugatuck's development pattern is expected to remain incremental, focused on infill, redevelopment, preservation, walkability, and small-scale reinvestment. The city's permanent resident population peaked at 1,079 in 1980 and was 865 in 2020, with a reasonable 2030 planning range of approximately 850 to 950 residents. Long-term parking demand may increase by approximately 100 to 150 spaces, with the lower end considered the more realistic planning scenario. Much of this demand is expected to be seasonal and manageable through shared parking, remote parking, operational changes, improved turnover, and targeted adjustments rather than major new supply.

Recommended Strategic Direction

The recommended strategy is layered, phased, and fiscally disciplined. The City should improve the existing system first, expand effective capacity through partnerships and remote parking, and revisit pricing or structured parking only if measured conditions show that lower-cost strategies are insufficient.



1. **Do not advance a parking structure at this time.** Stakeholder feedback showed broad skepticism toward a garage because of cost, seasonal utilization, aesthetics, site availability, access distribution, and potential effects on Saugatuck's small-town character. A structure would require a large capital commitment, carry substantial annual all-in ownership costs, and concentrate many spaces in a single location that may not meet the needs of all users or destinations. The City should continue to treat structured parking as a long-term option only if future demand, funding, location, community support, and public-value considerations change materially.
2. **Do not implement broad paid parking as the first step.** Stakeholders were divided on paid parking, with some supporting seasonal or limited paid areas and others opposing it due to resident, employee, visitor experience, and character concerns. The City should preserve paid parking as a future tool, but first focus on actions with broader stakeholder alignment: enforcement, turnover, communications, shared parking, remote parking, and shuttle service.
3. **Implement a seasonal parking ambassador and enforcement program.** Stakeholders repeatedly stated that enforcement is minimal, inconsistent, or not visible. A seasonal ambassador model should address this concern directly by pairing enforcement with education, warnings, wayfinding assistance, and customer service. This approach improves compliance without making the program feel overly punitive.
4. **Formalize employee parking management through a partnership rather than a mandate alone.** Stakeholders and employee parking data frequently identified employee and business-owner use of prime spaces as a problem. The employee parking data show that many employees park wherever they can, including in public and semi-public spaces near downtown, and that several businesses have substantial peak-season staffing levels. At the same time, the data also identify fairness, safety, shuttle reliability, lighting, and late-night employee concerns. The City should work with employers to direct long-duration employee parking to designated remote or peripheral locations during peak periods, supported by reliable shuttle access, clear expectations, employer outreach, safe walking conditions, lighting improvements, and reasonable enforcement.
5. **Expand remote and shared parking in response to stakeholder support for lower-cost capacity.** Many stakeholders favored remote lots, school and institutional partnerships, church lots, municipal sites, and private shared-use opportunities over a new garage. The Interurban's summer 2026 expansion to the pharmacy/Drug Store stop, Beery Field, and Douglas Elementary School lots demonstrates that remote parking can be expanded incrementally. The City should secure written shared parking agreements with schools, churches, institutions, municipal properties, and private owners where appropriate, including candidate locations such as Dykstra Funeral Home, Riverside Church of Saugatuck, the DPW property, Douglas Elementary School, and St. Peter's Catholic Church. Agreements should identify whether spaces are intended for visitors, employees, events, or mixed public use, then promote those locations through consistent signage, maps, online tools, and shuttle coordination.
6. **Strengthen coordination with the Interurban and make shuttle information more predictable.** Stakeholders generally viewed the Interurban as a valuable asset but said it needs clearer promotion, more predictable service information, better pickup/drop-off information, later hours, and stronger connections to remote lots. The current flyer already provides useful customer information, including regular summer hours, extended event dates, fares, the free parking shuttle operating window, remote parking stops, the call-to-ride number, and the Interurban Transit App. The City should work with the Interurban Transit Authority to align this information with parking maps, signs, website content, lodging materials, event communications, ambassador scripts, and remote-lot signage. Expansion options should



be evaluated as partnership opportunities, beginning with a predictable peak-season parking loop, increased weekend and event frequency, added remote-lot stops, extended evening service on high-demand nights, employee shift-change service, and formal coordination between shared parking agreements and shuttle operations.

7. **Improve signage, wayfinding, and public information.** Stakeholders repeatedly described the parking system as confusing or under-communicated, and the wayfinding evaluation confirms that the City lacks a complete, coordinated sign and communication system. The City should create a simple visitor-facing parking system with updated gateway signs, downtown vehicular and pedestrian directional signs, named public parking facilities, clear parking identification signs, simplified on-street regulatory signs, map kiosks at pedestrian exits from parking facilities, shared parking signage at the high school, a dedicated downtown parking webpage, and an interactive parking map. These improvements should be coordinated so physical signs, maps, website content, and remote parking messaging use the same names, symbols, and visitor instructions.
8. **Increase accessible parking over time.** Stakeholders and survey respondents identified insufficient ADA parking as a recurring concern. The City should use PROWAG as a guiding framework and expand accessible on-street parking in the CBD toward approximately 30 spaces, distributed near key destinations and supported by enforcement to prevent misuse.
9. **Manage the curb deliberately and transparently.** The City should treat curb space as a flexible public asset serving parking, loading, accessibility, safety, and limited seasonal uses. Restaurant outdoor dining already operates through the City's special land use, Historic District Commission, and revocable license process. The City should use that existing framework to decide whether to restore the affected spaces to public parking, continue the use under current terms, or revise fees and conditions so the program better reflects the public value of scarce curb space.
10. **Advance targeted street and striping concepts only after technical and public review.** Some stakeholders supported angled parking and one-way street concepts, while others raised concerns about safety, circulation, and character. The City should conduct field measurements, traffic reviews, emergency-access reviews, pedestrian-safety analyses, concept striping, and public communication before implementing one-way or angled-parking conversions.
11. **Include broader mobility options as part of the parking strategy.** Stakeholders encouraged bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian safety improvements, multimodal access, and evaluation of low-speed vehicle regulations. These options should be treated as complementary demand-management strategies that reduce short vehicle trips, support park-once behavior, and reinforce Saugatuck's visitor-oriented character.

Guiding Principles Applied to the Recommendations

The recommendations are grounded in the guiding principles developed for Saugatuck's parking system. Those principles emphasize practical, fiscally responsible, character-sensitive actions that improve the existing parking and mobility system before the City considers major capital investment or broad paid parking.



Guiding Principle	How It Is Applied in the Action Plan
Optimize existing assets before expanding supply.	The recommended approach focuses first on enforcement, turnover, remote parking, shared parking, signage, communications, Interurban coordination, curb management, and targeted restriping before considering a parking structure.
Reserve convenient spaces for priority users through managed time limits.	The action plan emphasizes consistent time-limit enforcement, parking ambassadors, employee parking management, ADA improvements, and selective 15-minute spaces so the most convenient spaces serve customers, visitors, accessible users, and quick-turnover activity.
Maintain clear and enforceable rules.	The recommendations call for simplified on-street parking signs, better public information, an ambassador program, warning and citation procedures, and a formal approach to restaurant use of on-street parking.
Partner with employers on employee parking.	The strategy recommends employer outreach, designated remote or peripheral parking, shuttle coordination, clear expectations, and reasonable enforcement rather than a punitive employee-parking mandate.
Support a balanced access system.	The action plan combines parking management with Interurban service, remote parking, shared parking, walking, biking, pedestrian improvements, low-speed vehicle evaluation, and wayfinding improvements.
Protect accessibility and equitable access.	The recommendations call for expanding accessible on-street parking toward approximately 30 CBD spaces over time, improving distribution near key destinations, and enforcing against misuse.
Manage the curb as flexible public space.	The plan recognizes the City's existing approval and license process for restaurant outdoor dining in curb spaces, recommends evaluating whether those spaces should be restored to public parking or continued under revised fees and conditions, and balances parking, loading, accessibility, safety, and seasonal uses.
Balance downtown vitality and livability.	The recommendations support visitor and customer access while avoiding overbuilding, minimizing neighborhood spillover, improving communication, and preserving downtown character.
Avoid overbuilding for occasional peaks.	The action plan defers structured parking and broad paid parking while testing lower-cost, seasonal, and operational strategies targeted to peak conditions.
Manage parking as a data-informed system.	The document establishes KPIs, a monitoring plan, post-season reporting, and decision points to guide future action based on measured occupancy, turnover, shuttle use, enforcement activity, ADA use, and public feedback.
Commit to continuous improvement.	The phased timeline treats the first peak season as a pilot, followed by post-season evaluation, program refinement, and future policy decisions based on performance.
Emphasize customer service.	The ambassador program, improved signage, website updates, interactive maps, Interurban information, and visitor-facing communications are designed to improve compliance through assistance and education, not only enforcement.



Guiding Principle

How It Is Applied in the Action Plan

Align solutions with fiscal capacity.

The recommendations prioritize lower-cost management, shared parking, remote parking, and Interurban coordination before major capital investment, recognizing that a garage would carry significant all-in ownership costs.

Communicate clearly and consistently.

The plan calls for coordinated gateway signs, directional signage, parking identification signs, facility naming, map kiosks, a dedicated parking webpage, an interactive map, and partner-distributed parking information.

Preserve Saugatuck's character.

The strategy avoids premature large-scale infrastructure, emphasizes context-sensitive signage and operations, and prioritizes solutions that fit Saugatuck's seasonal, walkable, visitor-oriented downtown environment.

Implementation Priorities

Near-term priorities should focus on management, communication, enforcement, and employee parking preparation. The City should establish the ambassador framework, clarify time-limit rules, update visitor-facing parking materials, improve key signage, begin employer outreach, and identify candidate locations for additional accessible spaces and short-term loading zones.

Mid-term priorities should expand effective capacity without major construction. Over multiple seasons, the City should negotiate shared parking agreements, expand remote lot availability, coordinate with the Interurban Transit Authority on parking-related service, pilot employee parking with willing employers, and test selected curb-management changes. These efforts should proceed as staff capacity, partner agreements, funding, and operational readiness allow.

Longer-term priorities should be driven by measured performance. After implementing lower-cost actions, the City should monitor occupancy, turnover, citation activity, shuttle use, remote lot utilization, accessible-space use, stakeholder feedback, and business impacts. If peak-period constraints remain severe after these actions, the City can revisit more intensive strategies, including targeted seasonal paid parking, additional one-way street conversions, permanent remote parking improvements, or, only if strongly justified, structured parking.

Implementation Next Steps

The following next steps translate the recommended strategic direction into an implementation sequence that City leadership, staff, the Parking Improvements Task Force, and partner organizations can use to move from policy direction to action.

1. **Confirm policy direction with City leadership.** Present the executive summary and recommended strategic direction to the Parking Improvements Task Force and City Council. Seek agreement that the initial implementation program should prioritize enforcement, communication, remote and shared parking, Interurban coordination, ADA improvements, and curb management before advancing paid parking or a parking structure.



2. **Create a peak-season implementation work plan.** Convert the recommendations into a task list with responsible parties, target dates, estimated costs, required approvals, and key decision points. Organize the work plan around near-term, mid-term, and longer-term actions so the City can distinguish immediate operational improvements from items requiring additional study or funding.
3. **Develop the seasonal parking ambassador program.** Define ambassador duties, staffing levels, hours of operation, training, uniforms, customer-service expectations, warning procedures, citation authority, data collection responsibilities, and escalation protocols. Determine whether the program should be City-operated, contracted, or coordinated through another entity.
4. **Prepare a parking communications and wayfinding package.** Update the City website and public-facing materials with parking maps, time limits, remote lot information, Interurban instructions, ADA parking locations, short-term loading areas, and employee parking guidance. Create or update a dedicated downtown parking webpage, add a prominent parking link or icon on the City homepage, develop an interactive parking map, establish consistent public parking facility names, and prepare simplified materials for hotels, short-term rental hosts, businesses, event organizers, the visitor bureau, and other partners who communicate with visitors. Interurban information should include the free parking shuttle operating period, shuttle days and hours, remote parking stops, fares, the call-to-ride number, and app-download instructions.
5. **Implement the signage improvement program.** Develop a coordinated signage package that includes updated gateway and directional signs at City entrances, downtown vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding signs, standardized public parking facility names, parking identification signs at publicly accessible lots, simplified on-street regulatory signs, additional map kiosks at pedestrian exits from parking facilities, updated Social District signs, and permanent shared parking signage at the high school. Confirm sign locations, messaging, design standards, branding, installation responsibilities, and maintenance responsibilities before fabrication.
6. **Begin remote and shared parking outreach.** Prioritize the most feasible candidate lots, beginning with existing or previously discussed school, church, municipal, institutional, and private properties. Candidate locations should include Dykstra Funeral Home, Riverside Church of Saugatuck, the Saugatuck DPW property, Douglas Elementary School, St. Peter's Catholic Church, and other willing owners. Use a standard shared parking agreement framework that addresses days and hours of public use, whether the lot is intended for visitors, employees, events, or mixed use, owner priority, blackout periods, insurance, maintenance, signage, compensation, liability, and termination.
7. **Develop and pilot an employee parking strategy.** Work with downtown employers to identify peak-season staffing levels, current employee parking locations, shift times, late-night safety concerns, loading needs, and willingness to participate in remote or peripheral parking. Identify one or more designated employee parking locations, including shared lots or remote facilities that can be reserved or prioritized for employee use during defined days and hours. Establish a voluntary or permit-based participation framework, coordinate safe walking routes and lighting needs, and determine whether employee-oriented shuttle trips can be coordinated with the Interurban Transit Authority or other partners. Begin with a pilot program involving willing employers, clear expectations, employee communication materials, and monitoring the number of employee vehicles shifting out of prime customer spaces.
8. **Coordinate with the Interurban Transit Authority.** Coordinate with the Interurban Transit Authority to confirm feasible peak-season service options, remote-lot connections, pickup and drop-off information, app and phone instructions, operating hours, staffing, fleet availability, and funding needs. Any service



expansion should align with shared parking agreements, realistic operating capacity, and visitor-facing communications.

9. **Identify ADA and short-term curb improvements.** Map existing accessible spaces and identify candidate locations for additional ADA spaces near key destinations. Identify locations where 15-minute parking may be warranted based on business type, observed activity, loading needs, turnover patterns, and safety considerations.
10. **Evaluate restaurant curb-space use through the existing process.** The City already administers restaurant outdoor dining in on-street spaces through special land use approval, Historic District Commission approval, and revocable license agreements. The next step should be to decide whether to restore the affected spaces to public parking, continue the current approach, or revise the fee schedule and operating conditions so the use better reflects the public value of high-demand curb space. Any continued use should remain conditional, revocable, consistently administered, and subject to applicable design, traffic protection, insurance, ADA, inspection, fee, and compliance requirements.
11. **Scope technical review of street conversion concepts.** Prepare field-measurement and concept-striping reviews for opportunities on Butler Street, Water Street, Lucy Street, and Elizabeth Street. Include traffic circulation, emergency access, pedestrian visibility, loading, driveway access, snow operations, streetscape impacts, and public input before implementation.
12. **Establish performance metrics and reporting.** Track occupancy, turnover, warnings, citations, unpaid citations, citation collections, remote lot use, shuttle ridership, ADA-space utilization, employee participation, customer-service interactions, business feedback, and public comments. Use these metrics to determine whether additional strategies, including targeted seasonal paid parking, are warranted after lower-cost actions have been tested.

Suggested Implementation Timeline

The following timeline intentionally provides a more relaxed implementation schedule. It assumes policy direction is confirmed in late 2026, with 2027 used for planning, agreements, communications, and limited early actions; 2028 used for the first broader operational pilot; and later seasons used for refinement. Dates may be adjusted based on City Council action, staff capacity, partner availability, budget approvals, public engagement, and Interurban Transit Authority operating constraints.

Phase	Target Timing	Primary Actions	Expected Outcome
Phase 1: Policy Direction and Program Setup	Late 2026– Spring 2027	Confirm policy direction, assign responsibilities, prepare the implementation work plan, begin legal and administrative review, define priorities, and initiate outreach on shared parking, employee parking, signage, Interurban coordination, ADA needs, and restaurant curb-space policy.	The City establishes direction and administrative capacity before committing to full implementation.

Phase	Target Timing	Primary Actions	Expected Outcome
Phase 2: Pre-Season Planning and Agreements	Summer–Fall 2027	Advance program design and partner negotiations; prepare draft shared parking and employee parking concepts; coordinate with the Interurban on feasible service options; develop parking communications, website content, maps, and signage concepts; identify candidate ADA, loading, and curb-management improvements; and scope technical review for street conversion concepts.	Major program elements are designed, vetted, and budgeted without requiring a compressed launch schedule.
Phase 3: Final Pre-Season Implementation	Winter–Spring 2028	Finalize initial agreements, staffing approach, training plan, communications materials, signage priorities, employee parking pilot details, Interurban coordination, ADA improvements, curb-management actions, and restaurant curb-space policy decisions needed for the first broader operational pilot.	The City has the operating tools, agreements, communications, and staffing needed to launch the peak-season pilot.
Phase 4: Peak-Season Pilot and Monitoring	Memorial Day–Labor Day 2028	Launch the parking ambassador program; begin with a warning and education period before full citation activity; promote remote parking and Interurban options; monitor occupancy, turnover, citations, warnings, remote lot use, shuttle ridership, ADA-space use, employee parking behavior, and public feedback; make minor operating adjustments as needed.	The City tests the recommended lower-cost strategies under real peak-season conditions and collects performance data.
Phase 5: Post-Season Evaluation	September–November 2028	Prepare a post-season performance report; compare results to baseline conditions and implementation goals; evaluate remote lots, shuttle coordination, enforcement practices, communications, ADA changes, and curb-management actions; identify adjustments for the following season.	The City uses data and stakeholder feedback to refine the program and determine whether additional measures are needed.
Phase 6: Longer-Term Refinement	2028 and Beyond	Continue refining the enforcement, ambassador, communications, remote parking, shared parking, and Interurban programs; advance technical design only for street conversion concepts with strong feasibility and public support; expand ADA parking over time; revisit paid parking or structured parking only if measured demand	The parking program evolves into a data-informed management system rather than a one-time capital response.



Phase	Target Timing	Primary Actions	Expected Outcome
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		remains severe after lower-cost strategies are tested.	
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Implementation emphasis. The first year should be treated as a pilot period focused on learning, communications, voluntary compliance, and operational refinement. The City should avoid treating early citation volume as the main measure of success. More important indicators include improved turnover in prime spaces, increased use of remote lots, greater awareness of Interurban options, more reliable ADA access, clearer curb rules, and reduced visitor confusion.

Decision point after the 2027 season. After the first peak-season pilot, the City should decide whether to continue, expand, or adjust the lower-cost strategies before considering more intensive measures. Targeted seasonal paid parking, additional one-way street conversions, permanent remote parking investments, or structured parking should be evaluated only after the City has measured how well the lower-cost management actions perform under peak conditions.

Timeline conclusion. This phased schedule gives Saugatuck time to confirm policy direction, build administrative capacity, negotiate partnerships, prepare communications, and launch a broader peak-season pilot when the City and its partners are ready. By treating implementation as a multi-season program rather than a compressed rollout, the City can make visible early progress while preserving flexibility for later decisions about paid parking, permanent remote parking investments, major street changes, or structured parking.

Key Performance Indicators for Monitoring

The City should track a concise set of performance measures during peak seasons to determine whether lower-cost strategies are improving access, turnover, remote parking use, accessibility, customer service, and overall system performance.

Category	Core Measures	Use
Occupancy and turnover	Peak occupancy by zone and core blocks; duration of stay; overstay; visitor search time.	Confirm whether prime spaces are turning over and whether demand remains concentrated above practical capacity.
Enforcement and ambassadors	Warnings, citations, repeat violations, collections, customer-service contacts, and complaints.	Evaluate compliance, education, and customer-service performance.
Remote, shared, and employee parking	Remote lot use, shared parking spaces under agreement, employee participation, Interurban ridership, shuttle wait time, and user feedback.	Measure whether peripheral capacity and shuttle service are reducing pressure on downtown spaces.



Category	Core Measures	Use
Accessibility and curb management	Accessible-space supply and use, misuse, short-term space use, loading conflicts, and restaurant curb-space status.	Track progress on ADA access, quick-turnover needs, and curbside conflicts.
Communications and finances	Website and map use, parking-related complaints, partner distribution of materials, program cost, revenue, and staff time.	Determine whether information is reaching users and whether the program is cost-effective.
Future policy triggers	Persistent occupancy above 85 percent, continued long-duration use of prime spaces, poor remote/shuttle use, or unresolved ADA and curbside issues.	Identify whether targeted paid parking, street changes, permanent remote parking, or structured parking merit further study.

KPI Monitoring Plan

Monitoring should be simple, repeatable, and focused on peak conditions. The City should collect enough information to compare seasons and guide decisions without creating an overly complex research program.

Monitoring Element	Approach	Frequency
Baseline and seasonal counts	Track occupancy, turnover, remote lot use, ADA-space use, and enforcement activity during representative peak periods.	Pre-season baseline and twice monthly during peak season.
Ambassador and enforcement logs	Record warnings, citations, repeat violations, customer-service contacts, common questions, and conflict locations.	Daily during active periods; summarize weekly.
Partner and shuttle data	Coordinate with shared-lot owners, employers, and the Interurban to track use, participation, ridership, wait times, and operating issues.	Weekly during peak season and after major events.
Communications, finance, and feedback	Review website/map use, complaints, partner feedback, program costs, revenue, and staff time.	Monthly during peak season and at seasonal closeout.
Post-season report	Prepare a short annual report summarizing results, lessons learned, budget implications, and recommended adjustments.	Annually, ideally each fall.

Reporting and decision use. Each fall, the City should prepare a short post-season report comparing results to baseline conditions, identifying adjustments for the next season, and stating whether additional tools—such as targeted seasonal paid parking, street conversions, permanent remote parking, or structured parking—merit further study.



Data management. One staff lead should maintain the KPI dashboard, coordinate data requests, and keep field forms simple and consistent.

Conclusion

Saugatuck does not need to choose between doing nothing and making a major capital commitment. The strongest path forward is to manage the existing system more intentionally: improve turnover and compliance, expand remote and shared parking, coordinate with the Interurban Transit Authority, improve signage and online parking information, add accessible parking over time, evaluate restaurant-occupied curb spaces through the City's existing approval and license process, and use performance data to decide whether more intensive strategies are warranted.

By proceeding in phases, the City can address the most visible parking frustrations quickly, avoid overbuilding for occasional peaks, preserve flexibility, and build public confidence through visible improvements. This strategy aligns with the guiding principles developed for the parking study: optimize existing assets first, manage convenient spaces for priority users, maintain clear and enforceable rules, support a balanced access system, protect accessibility, communicate clearly, preserve Saugatuck's character, and align solutions with fiscal capacity.

02 | Study Purpose and Background

This section summarizes the project understanding and proposed scope for the City of Saugatuck Parking Study and Solutions. It explains the community's seasonal parking and mobility challenges, outlines the study's data-driven and stakeholder-informed approach, and identifies the key services, deliverables, and outcomes intended to support practical near- and long-term improvements.



Project Understanding and Scope of Services Narrative

City of Saugatuck Parking Study and Solutions

Project Understanding

Saugatuck is a highly attractive lakeshore community that functions as both a seasonal tourism destination and a year-round center for dining, arts, entertainment, outdoor recreation, events, and local commerce. These strengths create sustained and concentrated demand for access to downtown and waterfront destinations, especially during peak visitor periods. As a result, the City faces both actual and perceived parking constraints, including periods of high occupancy, potential uneven distribution of available spaces, conflicts among visitors, employees, residents, and business patrons, and challenges related to wayfinding, circulation, accessibility, enforcement, and communication.

The study recognized that Saugatuck's parking issues could not be addressed through space counts alone. The completed plan combined quantitative parking data, GIS-based inventory and mapping, seasonal demand analysis, stakeholder input, policy review, multimodal access considerations, and implementation-focused recommendations. The work supported the City, its Parking Improvements Task Force, City Council, staff, local businesses, residents, and visitors with a clear understanding of observed conditions and a practical path toward near- and long-term parking and mobility improvements.

The consultant team's approach was grounded in listening, observing, analyzing, and adapting. The process emphasized close coordination with City staff and the Task Force, direct observation of how people moved through and used the downtown, and engagement with community stakeholders to define the core problems before developing solutions. The resulting recommendations were tailored to Saugatuck's character, seasonal conditions, limited downtown space, and long-term community goals.

Scope of Services Summary

The scope of services began with project coordination and problem identification. This included kickoff meetings with City staff and the Parking Improvements Task Force, establishment of communication protocols, review of existing data, eight Task Force meetings, and a community engagement program. Engagement activities included a web-based questionnaire, one public open house, and up to five virtual stakeholder meetings with business owners, cultural institutions, residents, and other interest groups.

The team completed a parking inventory and mapping effort for public and private parking locations east of the Kalamazoo River, documenting supply, posted restrictions, user limitations, ownership where available, and relevant nearby parking resources that influenced Saugatuck's transportation dynamics. The inventory was developed in a GIS-compatible format and also documented supporting transportation infrastructure, including transit stops and routes, bike lanes, rideshare pick-up/drop-off areas, and commercial loading zones.



A parking needs analysis assessed current and future conditions by comparing observed parking demand to available supply on a block-by-block basis. Occupancy counts were conducted for a summer weekday, a summer Saturday, and an off-season Saturday, with counts taken at least every two hours from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The analysis also documented ADA space use, turnover and duration of stay for selected on-street spaces, future demand impacts from planned or anticipated development, and up to two future-demand planning scenarios.

The scope also included a review of policies, practices, technology, and organizational structure. This review evaluated parking ordinances, on-street time limits, enforcement days and hours, citation and enforcement practices, staffing responsibilities, existing technology, and the relationship between parking requirements, land use, economic development, and sustainability objectives.

Wayfinding, signage, and communications were evaluated to improve how residents, visitors, employees, and other users located parking and transportation options. This work included an on-site review of existing signage, identification of user groups and major destinations, mapping of key decision points, and assessment of the City's current parking and transportation information, including website content and other public-facing materials.

The final phase involved developing and evaluating potential solutions and costs. Alternatives included changes to time limits and enforcement practices, technology improvements, zoning and regulatory updates, staff role refinements, shared parking arrangements, parking lot reconfiguration, new or expanded parking facilities, surface or structured parking options, wayfinding and communication improvements, transit enhancements, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements, rideshare and loading-zone management, and potential paid parking implementation. For each major recommendation, the study identified likely financial implications, phasing considerations, and implementation steps.

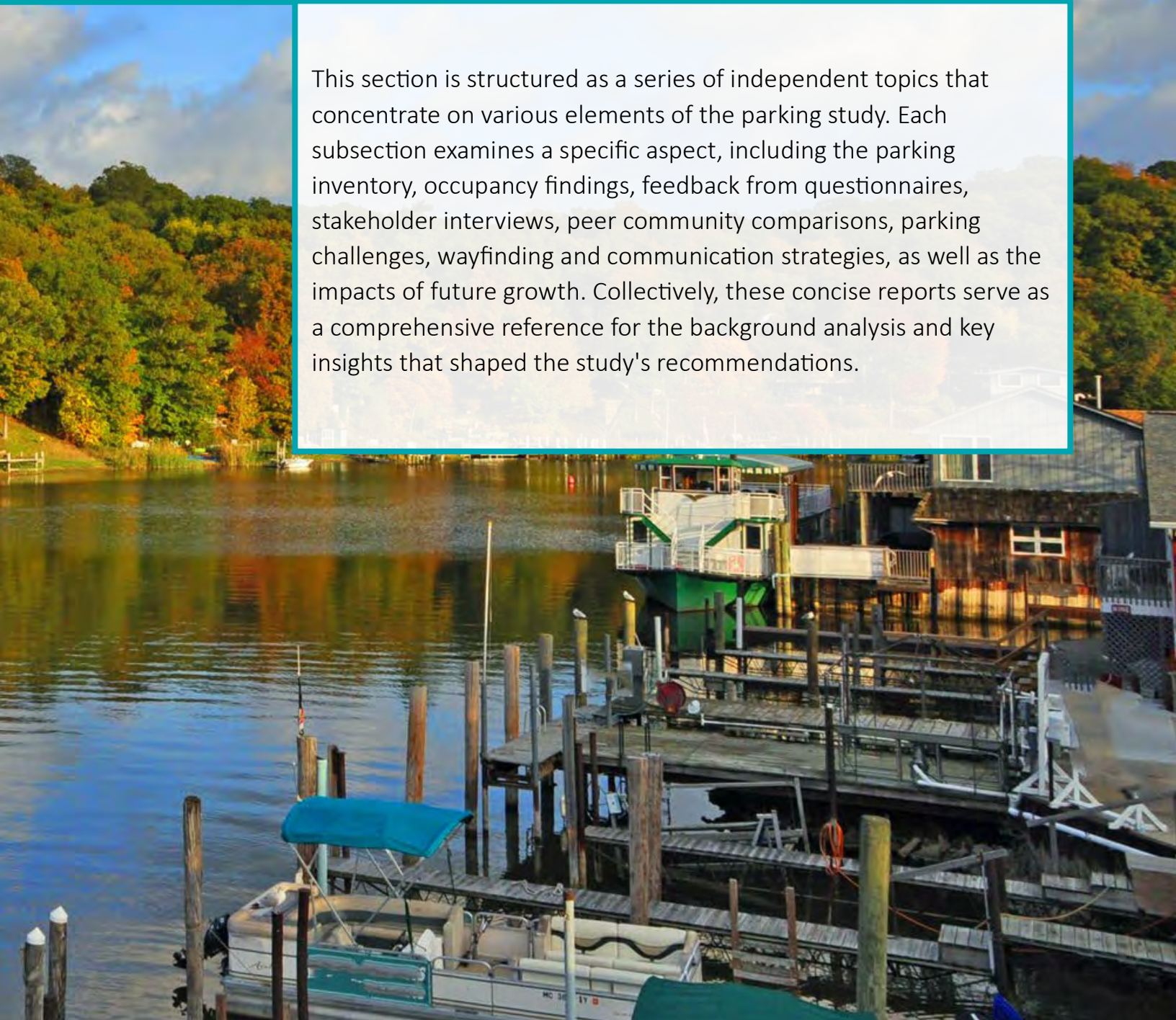
Expected Deliverables and Outcomes

Key deliverables included a problem definition and community feedback summary, GIS-compatible parking inventory and mapping, parking inventory maps and summary data, a parking needs analysis with seasonal and ADA components, turnover and duration-of-stay analysis, recommendations related to policy, practices, technology, staffing, signage, wayfinding, and communications, a draft report, a summary presentation for staff, the Task Force, and City Council, and a final action plan with recommended sequencing and implementation timing.

Overall, the study provided Saugatuck with a data-driven, community-informed, and implementable parking and mobility strategy. The recommended scope balanced immediate operational improvements with longer-term planning considerations so the City could improve access, reduce confusion, better manage limited downtown space, and support the continued vitality of the community.

03 | Existing Conditions and Key Findings

This section is structured as a series of independent topics that concentrate on various elements of the parking study. Each subsection examines a specific aspect, including the parking inventory, occupancy findings, feedback from questionnaires, stakeholder interviews, peer community comparisons, parking challenges, wayfinding and communication strategies, as well as the impacts of future growth. Collectively, these concise reports serve as a comprehensive reference for the background analysis and key insights that shaped the study's recommendations.



MEMO

To: **City of Saugatuck**

From: **Fleis & VandenBrink**

Date: **March 13, 2026**

Re: **City of Saugatuck – Parking Study
Parking Supply Summary**

1 INTRODUCTION

This memorandum presents the results of the parking supply data collection performed by Fleis and VandenBrink (F&V) for the City of Saugatuck, Michigan. F&V collected information regarding the existing parking supply throughout the City within the limits identified for this project. The study limits of the project are shown on the attached exhibits.

The initial data collection and field reviews were performed on November 19-20, 2025. Data reviews and refinements were performed between December 2025-February 2026, including input from the City staff, the Parking Improvements Task Force, and other project team members. The resulting parking supply data is summarized herein.

2 PARKING SUPPLY

The parking supply information included numerous details regarding the type, location, and operations of various other characteristics regarding the parking spaces provided. The project limits were separated into zones to further define the areas evaluated in the study, in addition to providing a summary of the overall parking available. The parking supply is summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1: City of Saugatuck Parking Supply Summary (Spaces)

	Off-Street	On-Street	Total
Zone 1: CBD	145	761	906
Outdoor Dining		13	13
Timed Parking Restrictions		561	561
Unrestricted Parking		187	187
Pay Parking	25		25
Public Lot	120		120
Zone 2: The Hill	197	514	711
School Parking Restrictions		37	37
Unrestricted Parking		477	477
High School	61		61
Pay Parking	24		24
Public Lot	112		112
Zone 3: North Residential		128	128
Unrestricted Parking		128	128
Zone 4: South Residential	24	99	123
Private	24		24
Unrestricted Parking		99	99
Total	366	1502	1868

The accessible parking was further reviewed and showed that there are 28 dedicated accessible parking spaces for public use. These spaces are only located in Zones 1 and 2.

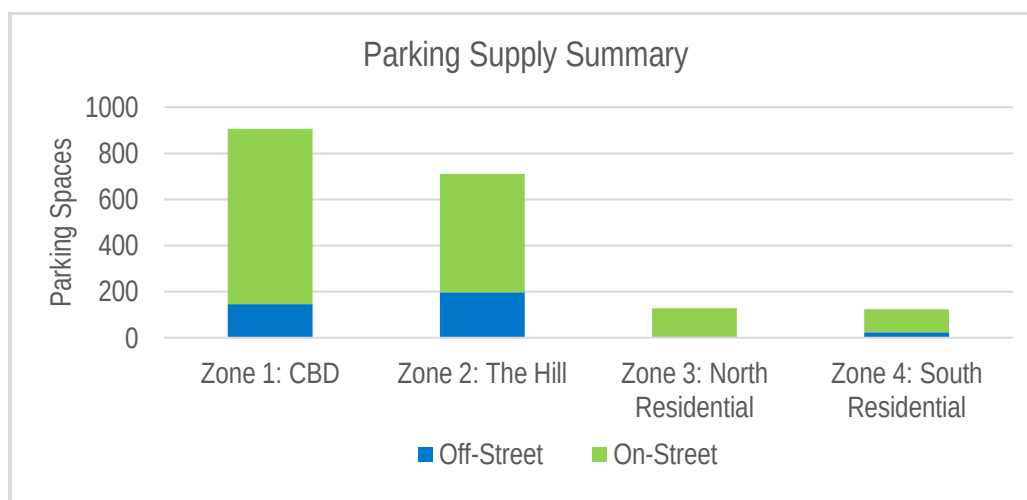
Table 2: City of Saugatuck Accessible Parking Supply Summary (Spaces)

Accessible Spaces	Off-Street	On-Street	Total
Zone 1: CBD	8	13	21
Private	3		3
Timed Parking Restrictions		13	13
Pay Parking	2		2
Public Lot	3		3
Zone 2: The Hill	7		7
High School	3		3
Public Lot	4		4
Total	15	13	28

3 PARKING SUPPLY SUMMARY

Key findings of the parking occupancy analysis are summarized below.

- The majority of the parking supply is located within Zone 1, which is 84% on-street parking, with the second highest in Zone 2 with 72% on-street parking.



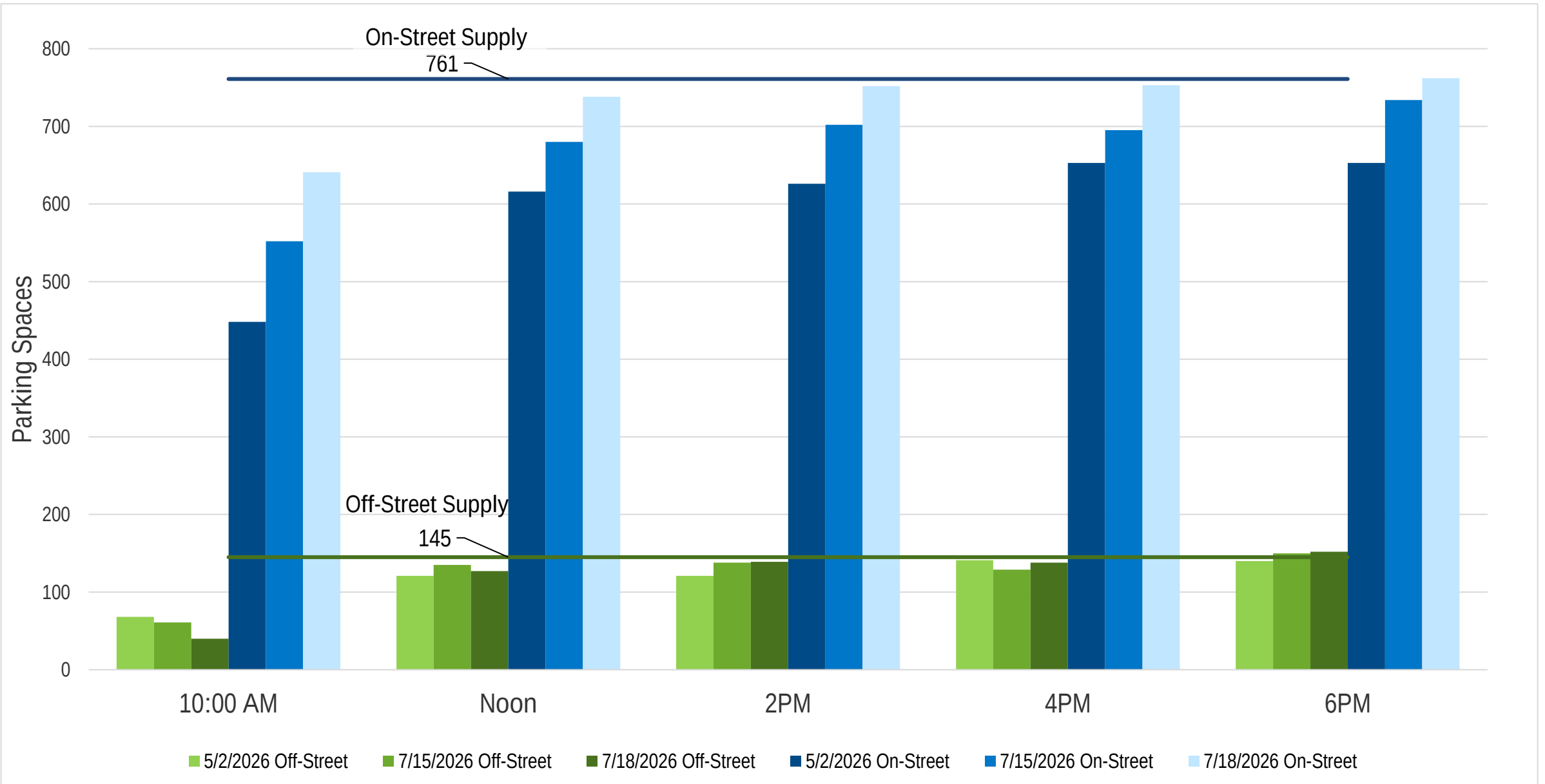
- There are 28 accessible parking spaces available to the public in the entire City; with 21 spaces available (2.3%) in Zone 1 and 7 spaces available (0.9%) in Zone 2. Overall, only 1.5% of the available parking includes accessible parking spaces.

Any questions related to this memorandum, study, analyses, and results should be addressed to Fleis & VandenBrink.

Attached: Parking Data Summaries

JMK:jmk

Zone 1: CBD Parking Occupancy Summary



Zone 1: CBD Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, May 2, 2026

Zone 1: CBD	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	68	121	121	141	140	141	145	97%
On-Street	448	616	626	653	653	653	761	86%
Total	516	737	747	794	793	794	906	88%
Available Spaces	390	169	159	112	113	112		
Occupancy %	57%	81%	82%	88%	88%	88%		

Zone 1: CBD Parking Occupancy Summary

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

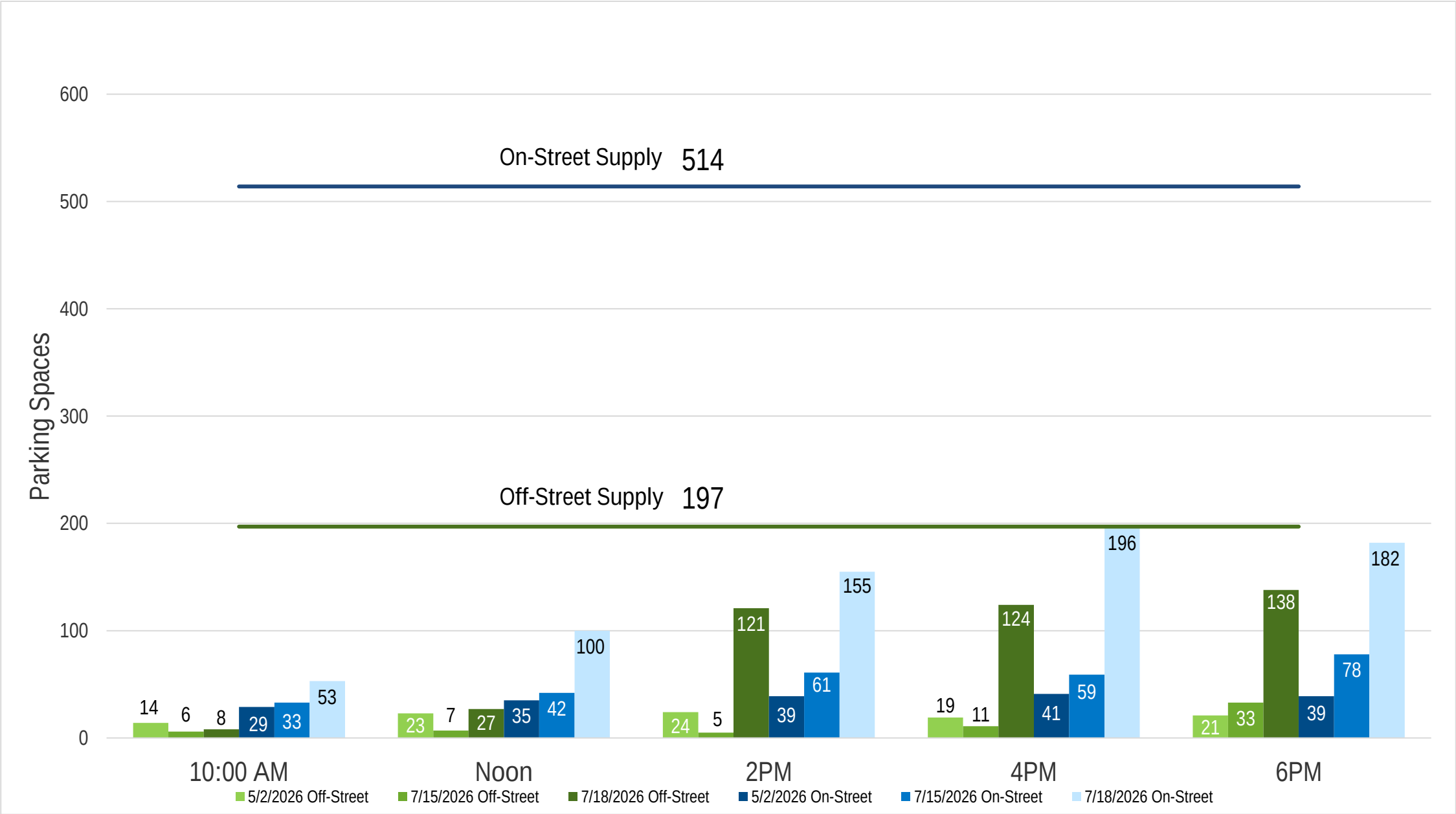
Zone 1: CBD	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	61	135	138	129	150	150	145	103%
On-Street	552	680	702	695	734	734	761	96%
Total	613	815	840	824	884	884	906	98%
Available Spaces	293	91	66	82	22	22		
Occupancy %	68%	90%	93%	91%	98%	98%		

Zone 1: CBD Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, July 18, 2026

Zone 1: CBD	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	40	127	139	138	152	152	145	105%
On-Street	641	738	752	753	762	762	761	100%
Total	681	865	891	891	914	914	906	101%
Available Spaces	225	41	15	15	-8	-8		
Occupancy %	75%	95%	98%	98%	101%	101%		

Zone 2: The Hill Parking Occupancy Summary



Zone 2: The Hill Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, May 2, 2026

Zone 2: The Hill	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	14	23	24	19	21	24	197	12%
On-Street	29	35	39	41	39	41	514	8%
Total	43	58	63	60	60	65	711	9%
Available Spaces	668	653	648	651	651	646		
Occupancy %	6%	8%	9%	8%	8%	9%		

Zone 2: The Hill Parking Occupancy Summary

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

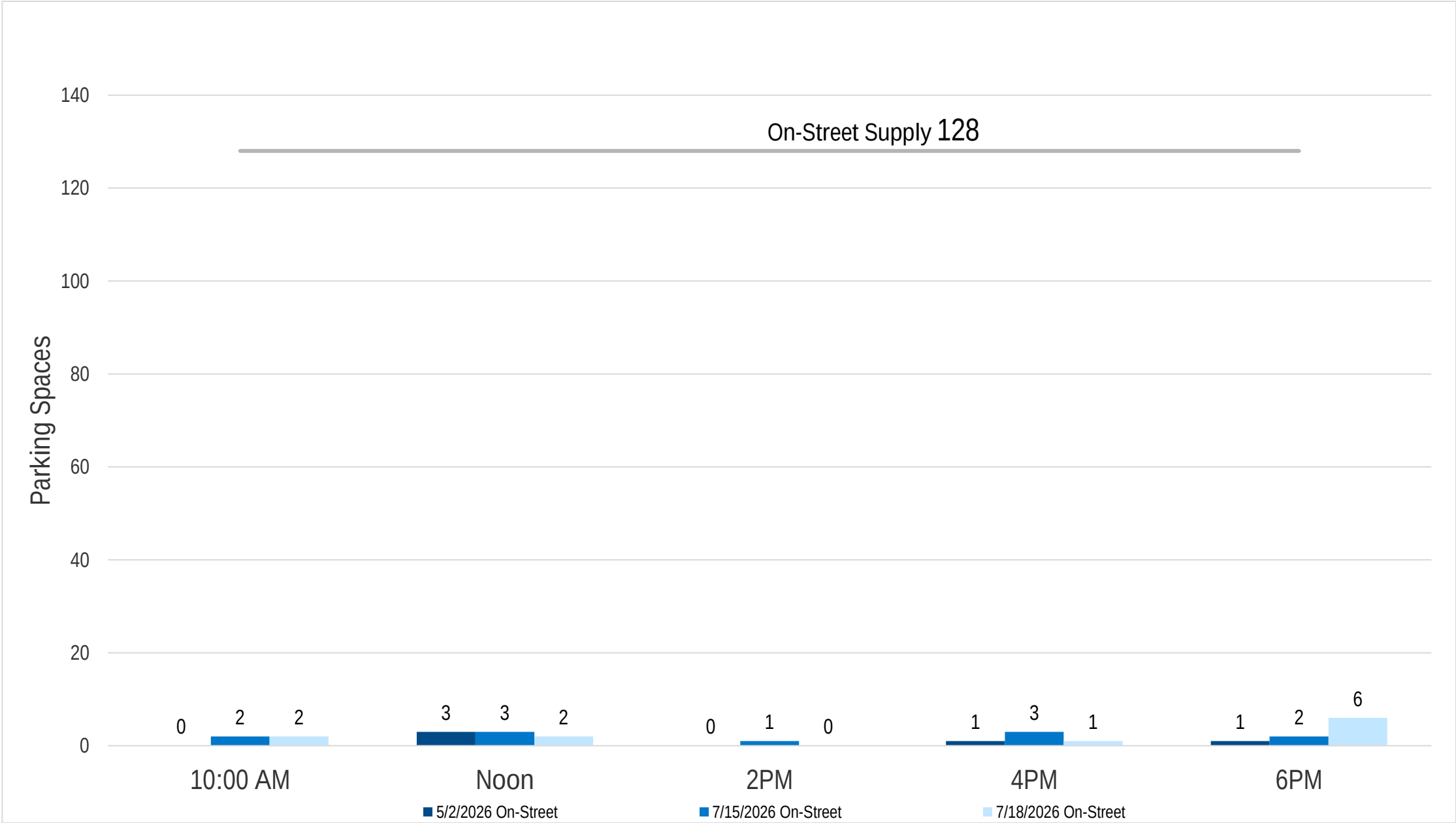
Zone 2: The Hill	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	6	7	5	11	33	33	197	17%
On-Street	33	42	61	59	78	78	514	15%
Total	39	49	66	70	111	111	711	16%
Available Spaces	672	662	645	641	600	600		
Occupancy %	5%	7%	9%	10%	16%	16%		

Zone 2: The Hill Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, July 18, 2026

Zone 2: The Hill	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	8	27	121	124	138	138	197	70%
On-Street	53	100	155	196	182	196	514	38%
Total	61	127	276	320	320	334	711	47%
Available Spaces	650	584	435	391	391	377		
Occupancy %	9%	18%	39%	45%	45%	47%		

Zone 3: North Residential Parking Occupancy Summary



Zone 3: North Residential Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday May 2, 2026

Zone 3: North Residential	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
On-Street	0	3	0	1	1	3	128	2%
Available Spaces	128	125	128	127	127	125		
Occupancy %	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%		

Zone 3: North Residential Parking Occupancy Summary

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

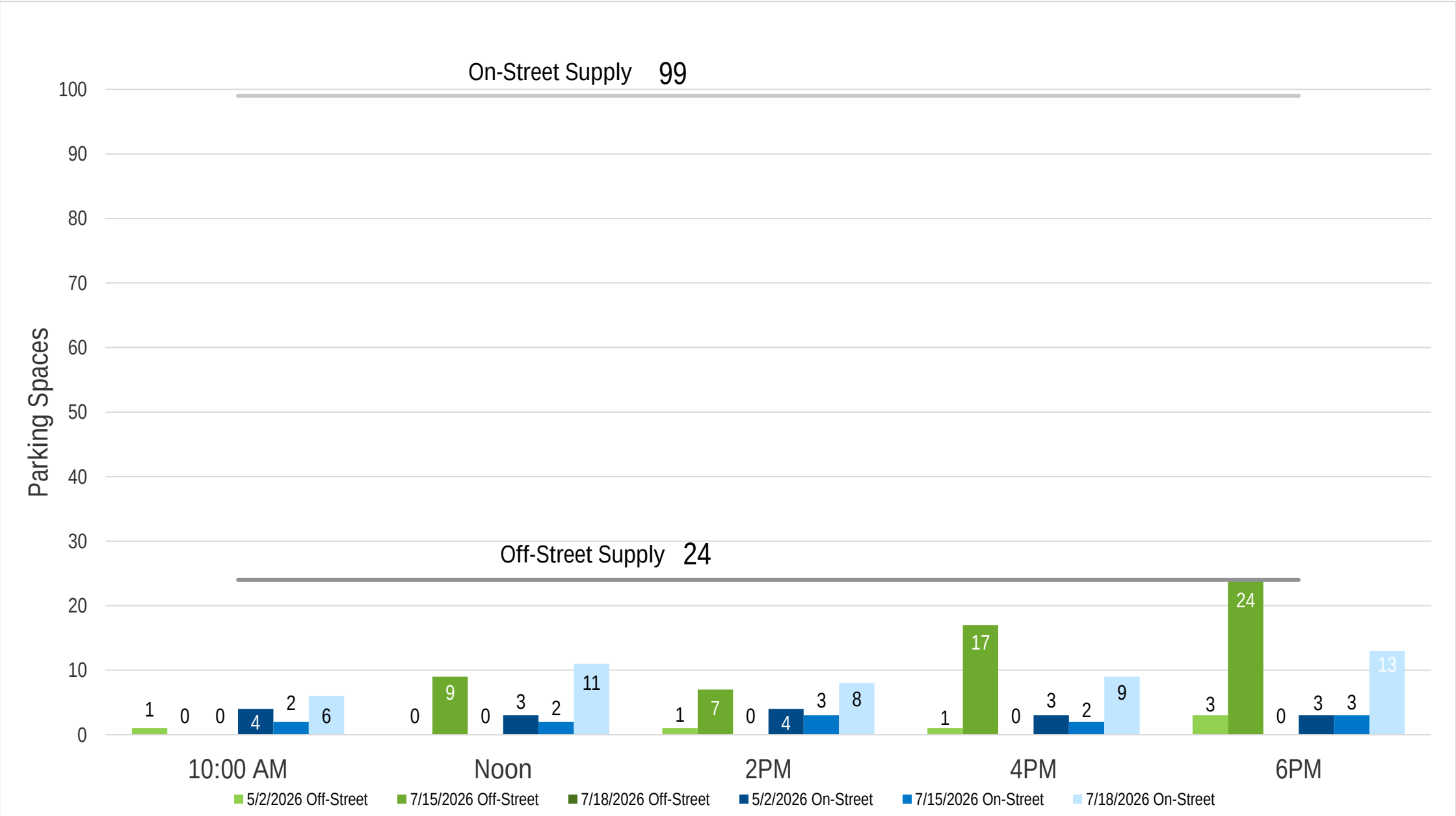
Zone 3: North Residential	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
On-Street	2	3	1	3	2	3	128	2%
Available Spaces	126	125	127	125	126	125		
Occupancy %	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%		

Zone 3: North Residential Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, July 18, 2026

Zone 3: North Residential	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
On-Street	2	2	0	1	6	6	128	5%
Available Spaces	126	126	128	127	122	122		
Occupancy %	2%	2%	0%	1%	5%	5%		

Zone 4: South Residential Parking Occupancy Summary



Zone 4: South Residential Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, May 2, 2026

Zone 4: South Residential	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	1	0	1	1	3	3	24	13%
On-Street	4	3	4	3	3	4	99	4%
Total	5	3	5	4	6	7	123	6%
Available Spaces	118	120	118	119	117	116		
Occupancy %	4%	2%	4%	3%	5%	6%		

Zone 4: South Residential Parking Occupancy Summary

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Zone 4: South Residential	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	0	9	7	17	24	24	24	100%
On-Street	2	2	3	2	3	3	99	3%
Total	2	11	10	19	27	27	123	22%
Available Spaces	121	112	112	104	96	96		
Occupancy %	2%	9%	8%	15%	22%	22%		

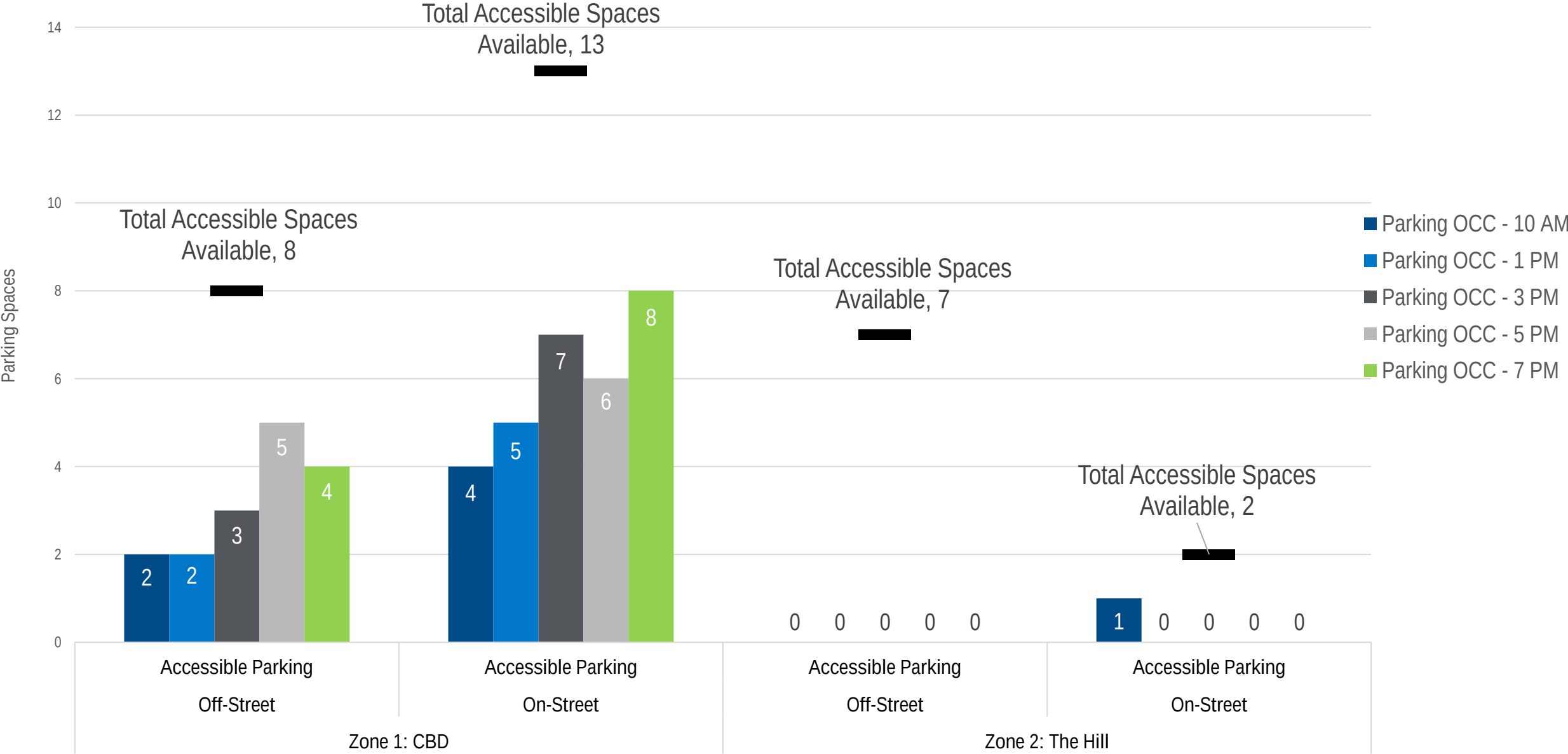
Zone 4: South Residential Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, July 18, 2026

Zone 4: South Residential	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	6:00 PM	Max OCC	Supply	OCC %
Off-Street	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	0%
On-Street	6	11	8	9	13	13	99	13%
Total	6	11	8	9	13	13	123	11%
Available Spaces	117	112	115	114	110	110		
Occupancy %	5%	9%	7%	7%	11%	11%		

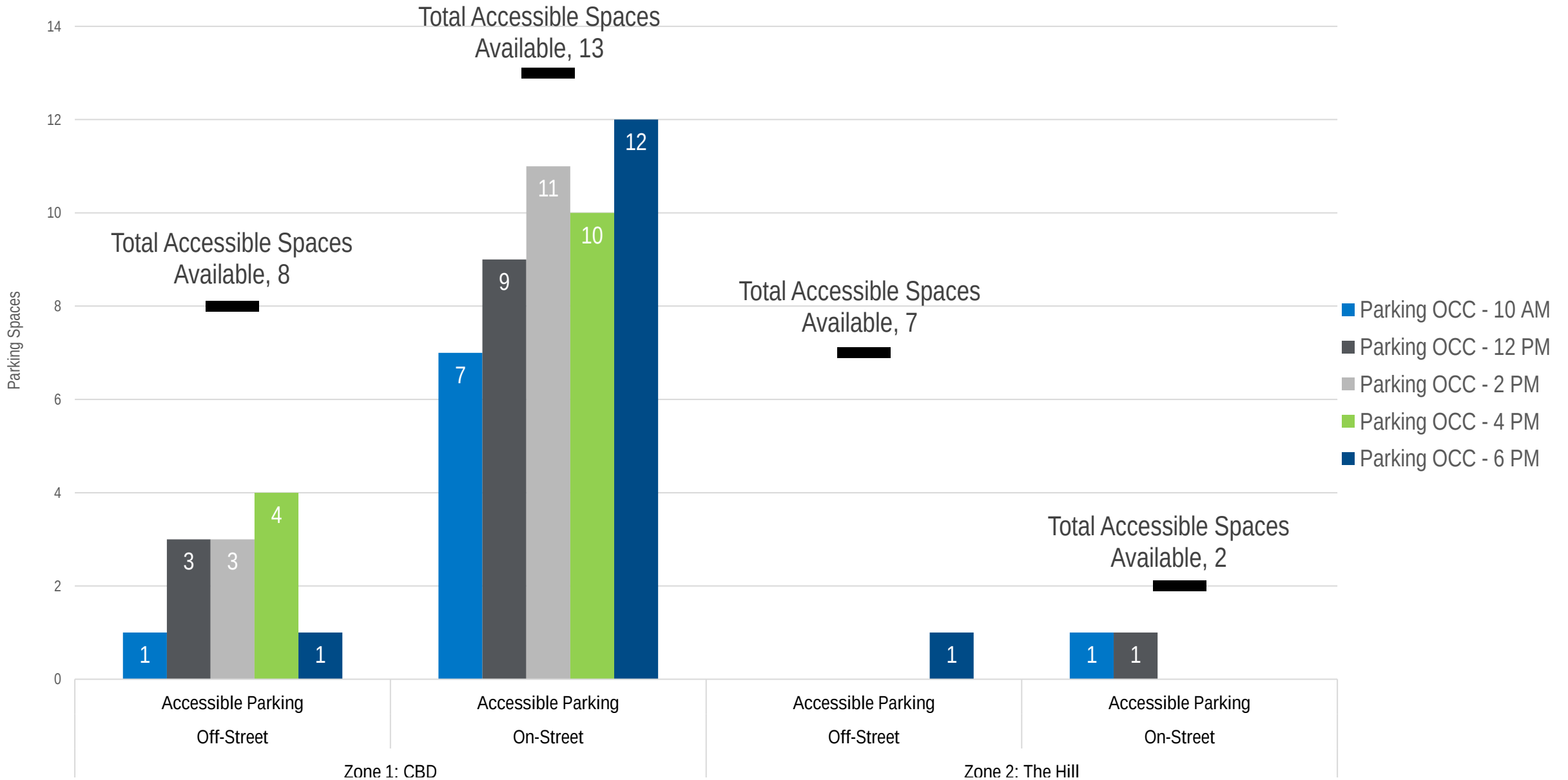
Accessible Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday May 2, 2026



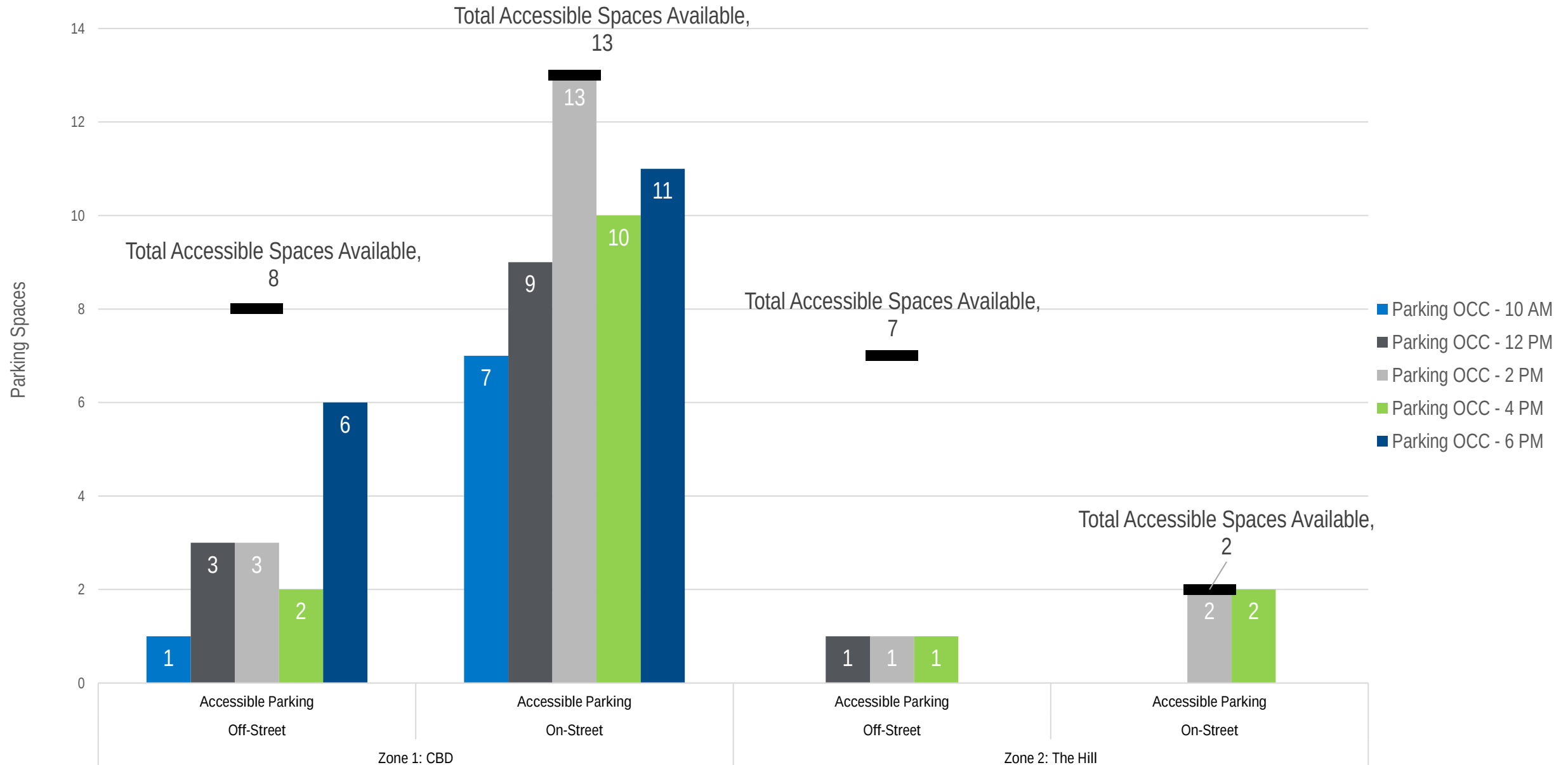
Accessible Parking Occupancy Summary

Wednesday, July 15, 2026



Accessible Parking Occupancy Summary

Saturday, July 18, 2026



Turnover Rate Along Butler Street Between Hoffman and Culver May 2, 2026

	10am - 1pm	1pm - 3pm	3pm - 5pm	5pm - 7pm	Daily Average
Number of Departing Vehicles on West Side of Butler	7	6	10	12	9
Number of Departing Vehicles on East Side of Butler	11	10	13	12	12
Total Number of Departing Vehicles	18	16	23	24	21
Available Parking Spaces	38				38
Turnover Rate	47.37%	42.11%	60.53%	63.16%	55.26%

Turnover Rate Along Butler Street Between Hoffman and Culver July 15, 2026

	10am - 1pm	1pm - 3pm	3pm - 5pm	5pm - 7pm	Daily Average
Number of Departing Vehicles on West Side of Butler	3	4	7	11	7
Number of Departing Vehicles on East Side of Butler	11	10	11	11	11
Total Number of Departing Vehicles	14	14	18	22	17
Available Parking Spaces	38				38
Turnover Rate	36.84%	36.84%	47.37%	57.89%	44.74%

Turnover Rate Along Butler Street Between Hoffman and Culver July 18, 2026

	10am - 1pm	1pm - 3pm	3pm - 5pm	5pm - 7pm	Daily Average
Number of Departing Vehicles on West Side of Butler	7	7	11	8	9
Number of Departing Vehicles on East Side of Butler	10	9	9	11	10
Total Number of Departing Vehicles	17	16	20	19	18
Available Parking Spaces	38				38
Turnover Rate	44.74%	42.11%	52.63%	50.00%	47.37%

3-Day Combined Summary

48.5%

3-Day Overall
Average Turnover Rate

63.2%

Highest Single-Period
Rate Observed

36.8%

Lowest Single-Period
Rate Observed

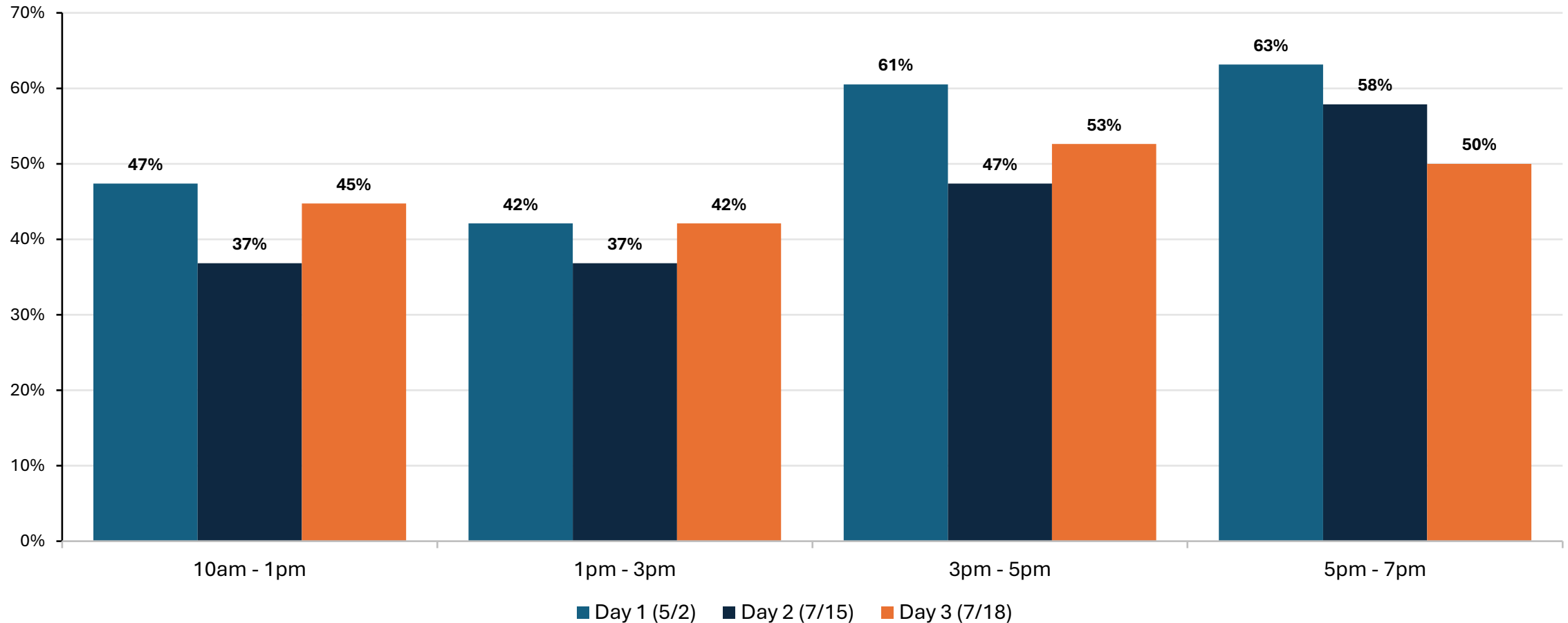
38

Available On-Street
Spaces (Constant)

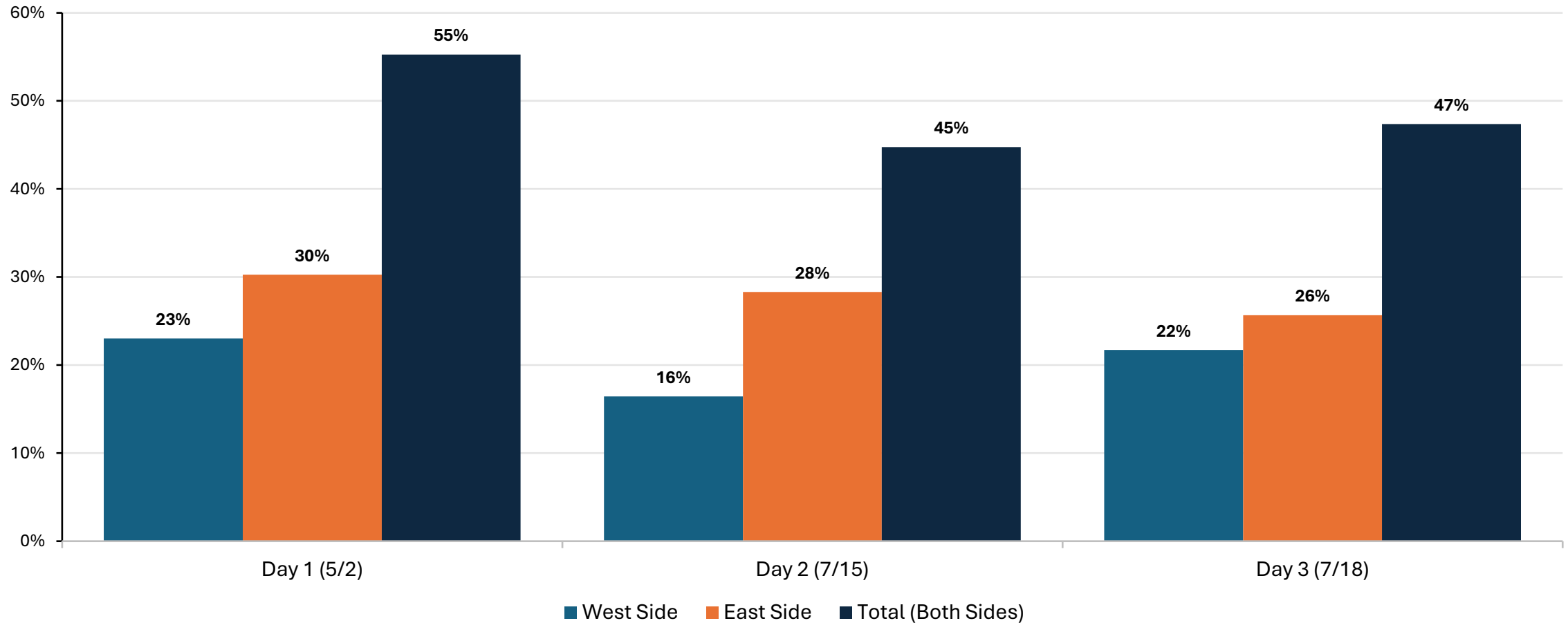
Observations

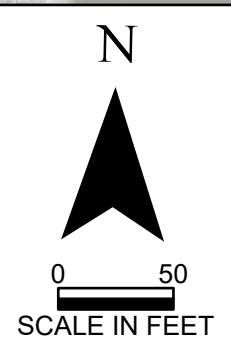
- The East side of Butler consistently turned over more spaces than the West side on all three survey days, suggesting East-side spaces are used by shorter-duration visitors while West-side spaces see longer-duration or repeat parkers.
- Turnover peaked in the 5:00–7:00 PM period on 5/2 and 7/15; the 7/18 count peaked slightly earlier, in the 3:00–5:00 PM window. The single highest observed rate in the study occurred on 5/2, in the 5:00–7:00 PM period.
- The two Saturday counts (5/2 and 7/18) averaged a higher turnover rate (51.3%) than the single weekday count (7/15, 44.7%). With only one weekday data point, this comparison is suggestive rather than conclusive.
- Available on-street supply was constant at 38 spaces across all three counts, so the differences reflect demand and duration of stay, not a change in supply.
- An illegally parked vehicle was logged at 7:00 PM on the East side on each of the three survey days — a recurring pattern worth flagging for enforcement, not a one-off event.

Total Turnover Rate by Time Period



Daily Average Turnover Rate by Side of Street





Sources: F&V, Walker Consultants,
City of Saugatuck, and Allegan County
Map Date: 03.06.2026



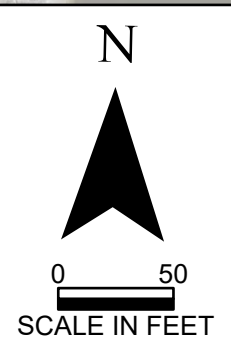
Parking Description

- Unrestricted Parking
- Accessible Parking
- Timed Parking Restrictions
- School Parking Restrictions
- Outdoor Dining
- No Parking
- Parking Lot

= Parking count based on painted markings, posted signage, or estimated using 22' per open parking space
[#/#] = Standard Spaces/Accessible Spaces

PARKING INVENTORY

CITY OF SAUGATUCK
ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN



Sources: F&V, Walker Consultants,
City of Saugatuck, and Allegan County
Map Date: 03.06.2026



Parking Description

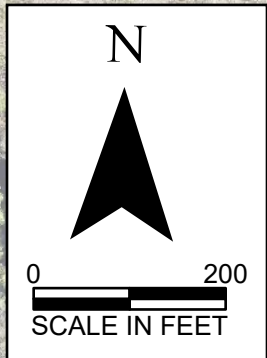
- Unrestricted Parking
- Accessible Parking
- Timed Parking Restrictions
- School Parking Restrictions
- Outdoor Dining
- No Parking
- Parking Lot

= Parking count based on painted markings, posted signage, or estimated using 22' per open parking space
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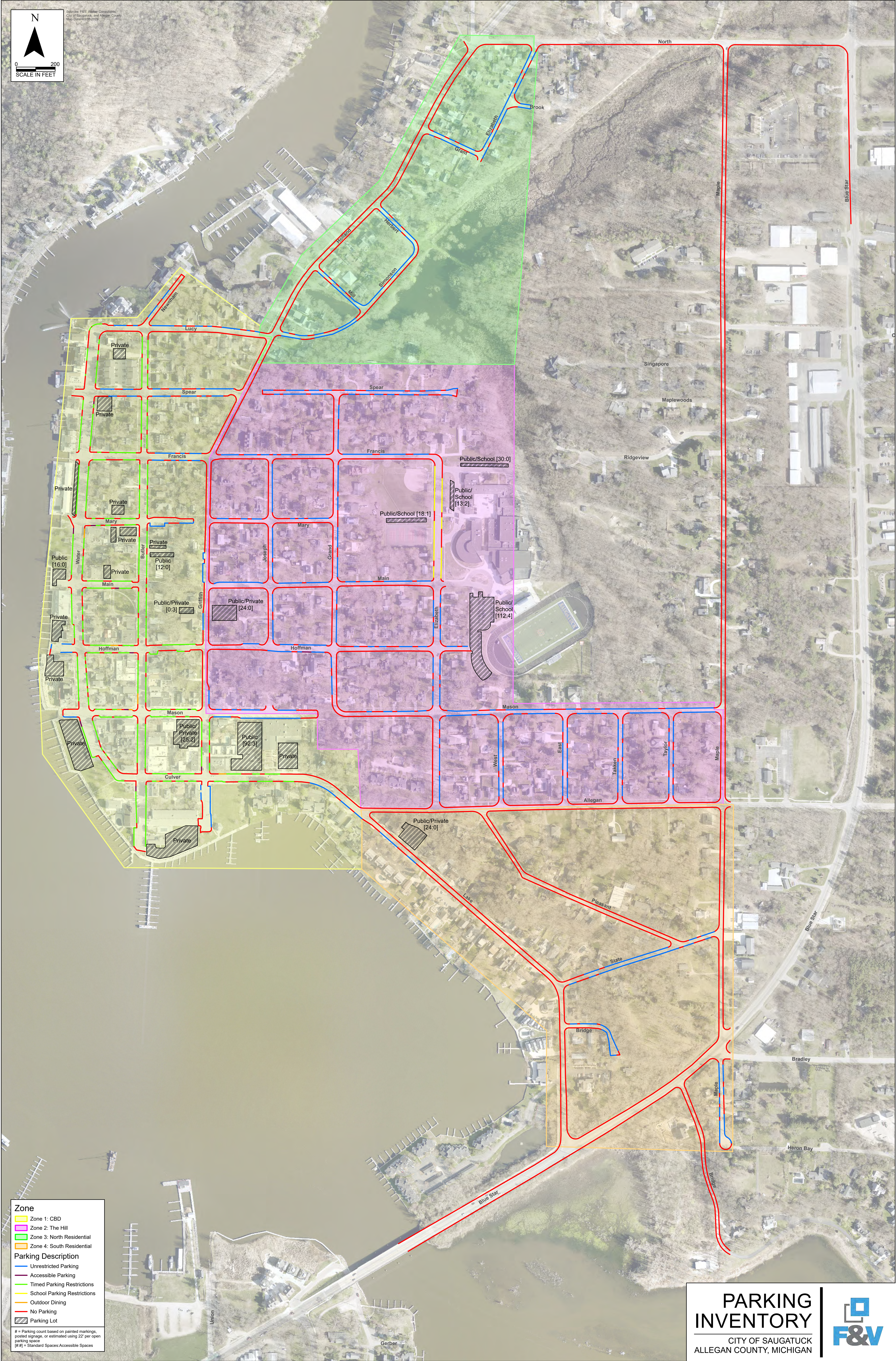
PARKING INVENTORY

CITY OF SAUGATUCK
ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN





Sources: F&V, Walker Consultants
City of Saugatuck and Allegan County
Map Date: 03.09.2025



Zone

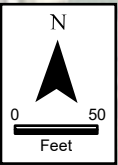
- Zone 1: CBD
- Zone 2: The Hill
- Zone 3: North Residential
- Zone 4: South Residential

Parking Description

- Unrestricted Parking
- Accessible Parking
- Timed Parking Restrictions
- School Parking Restrictions
- Outdoor Dining
- No Parking
- Parking Lot

= Parking count based on painted markings, posted signage, or estimated using 22' per open parking space
[#/#] = Standard Spaces/Accessible Spaces





Francis

No Parking
Loading Zone

Mary

Water

Butler

Main

-  Curbside Facility
-  Curbline
-  Parking Lot

CITY OF SAUGATUCK
ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION
MODES AND CURBSIDE FACILITIES

874720
07.20.26
F&V PROJECT NO.
LAST UPDATED:



Survey Response Summary

The City of Saugatuck Parking Study 2026

3/3/26



WALKER
CONSULTANTS



Survey Results

Survey Window: 1/28/26 – 2/27/26

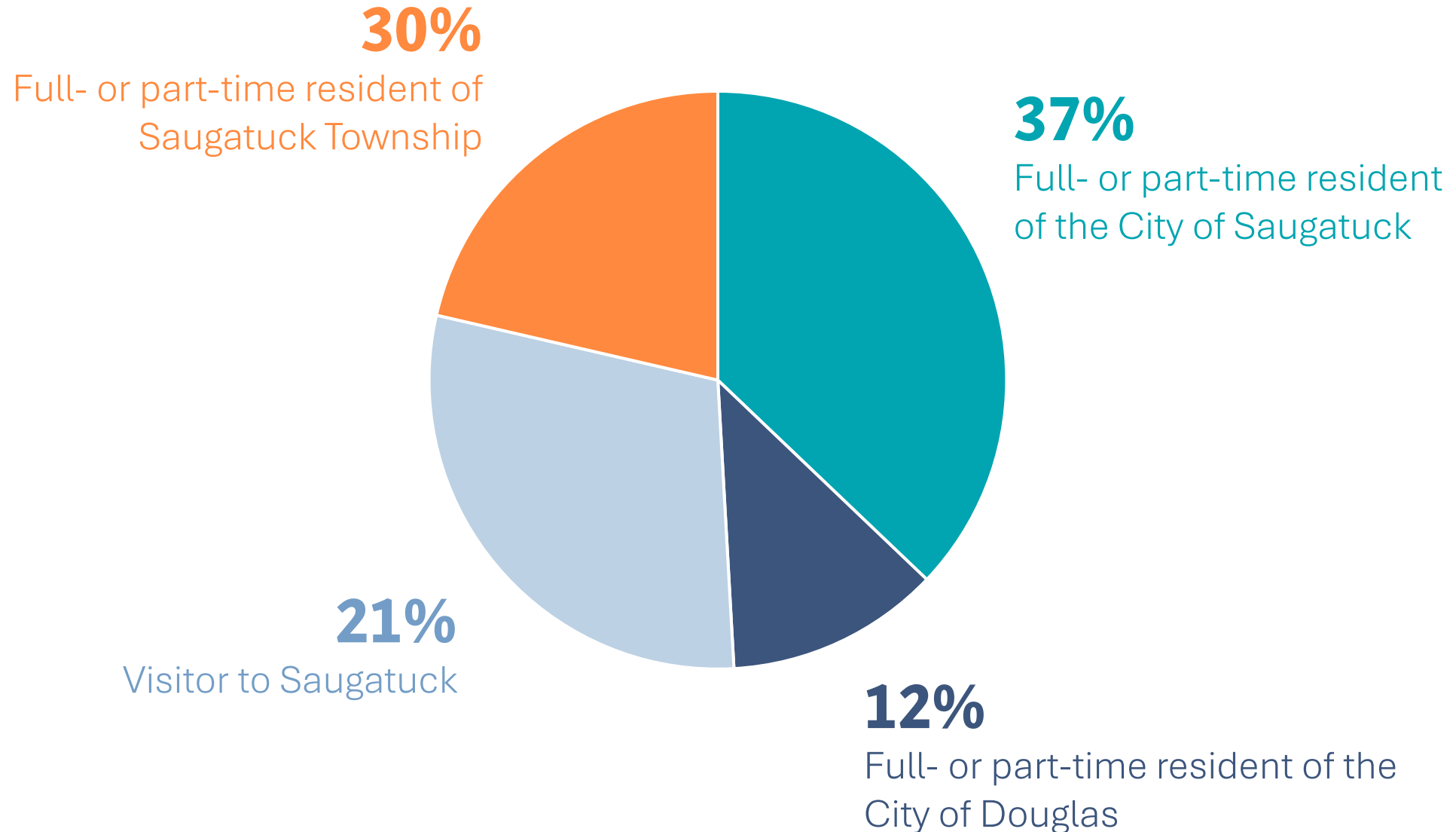
Total Responses: 618



Key Takeaways

1. Most survey respondents visit downtown Saugatuck up to multiple times per week and report dining and shopping as their primary reason for visiting downtown.
2. Over 80% of respondents use their personal vehicle and about the same amount report using on-street parking.
3. Over 70% of respondents report it taking over 5 minutes, some stating over 20 min, to find parking during peak season.
4. 56% of respondents report they are willing to walk 3+ blocks to reach their destination during peak season.
5. 54% of respondents report they would not pay to park in Saugatuck.
6. Ease of finding parking and distance from destination are reported as the most important factors.

Q1: Which of the following best describes you? Please select only one option.

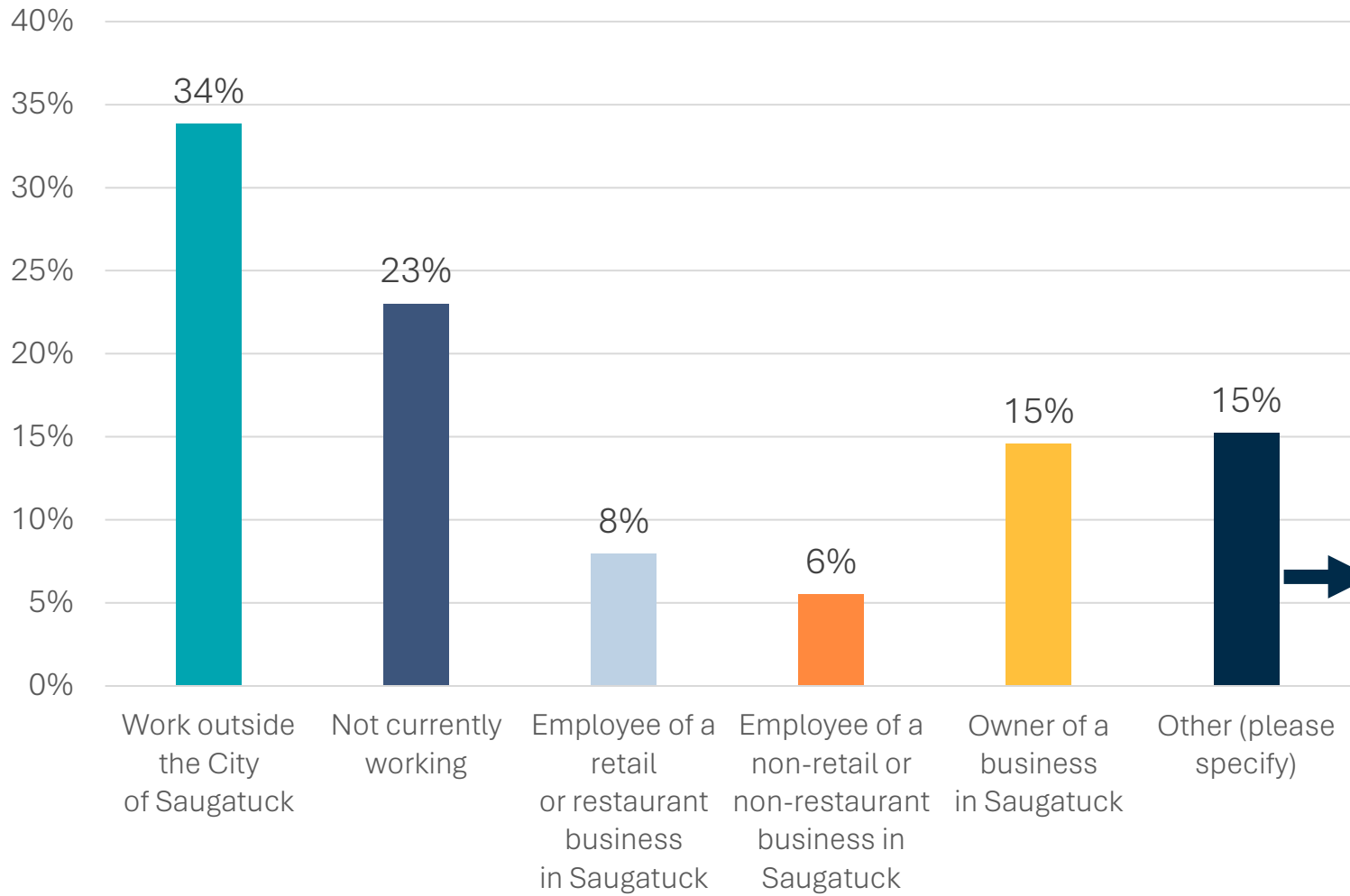


Q2: Which of the following best describes where you work? Please select only 1 option.

34%
Work outside
City of Saugatuck

30%
Not Currently
Working / Retired

15%
Owner of a business
in Saugatuck



WFH	5%
Retired	7.4%
Douglas/Saugatuck Township Business Owner	1.6%
Visitor	.8%
Other	.3%

Q3: What is your age?

46%

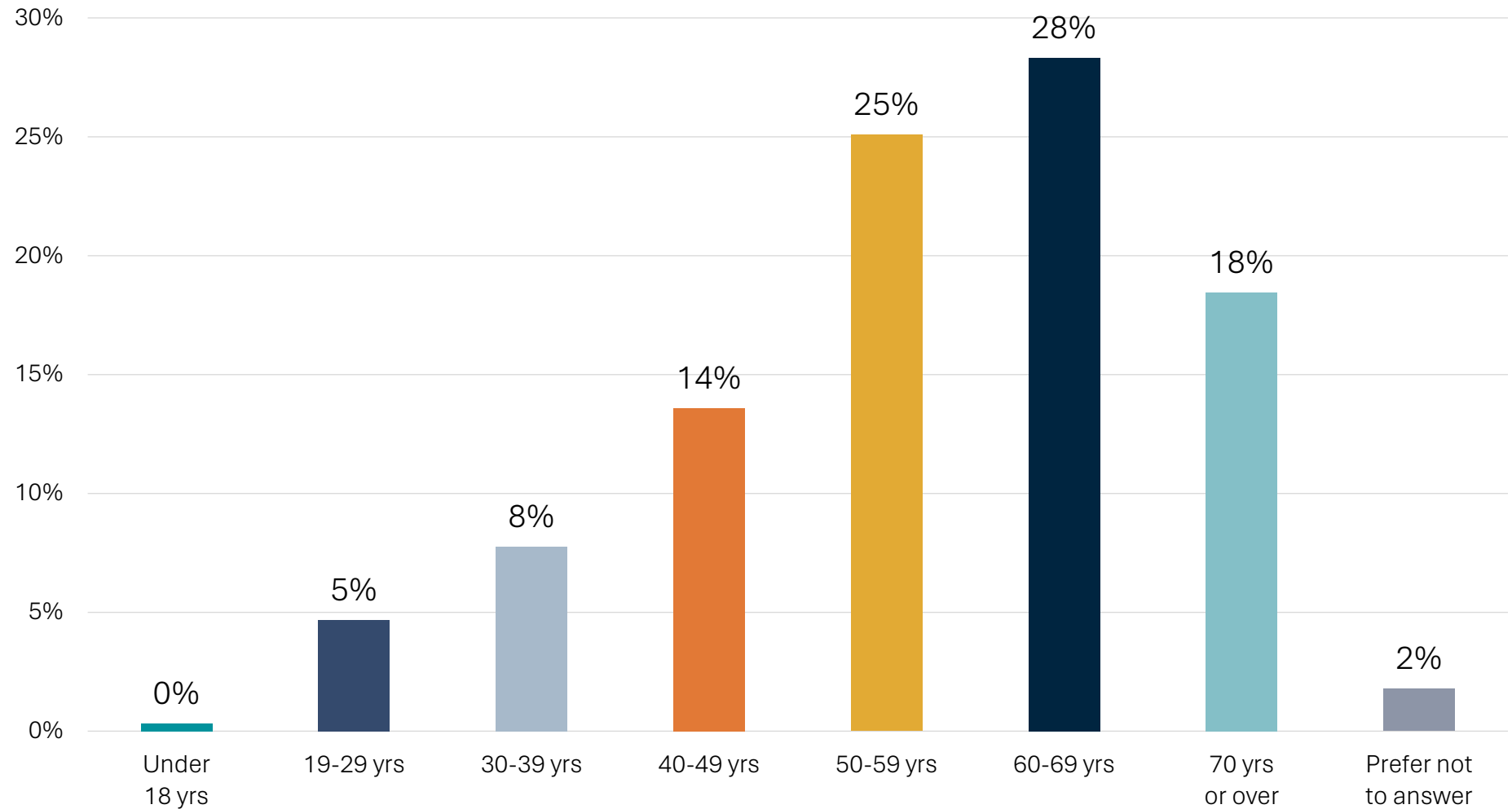
> 60 Years

25%

50 – 59 years

14%

40 – 49 years



Q4: How often do you visit downtown Saugatuck?

26%

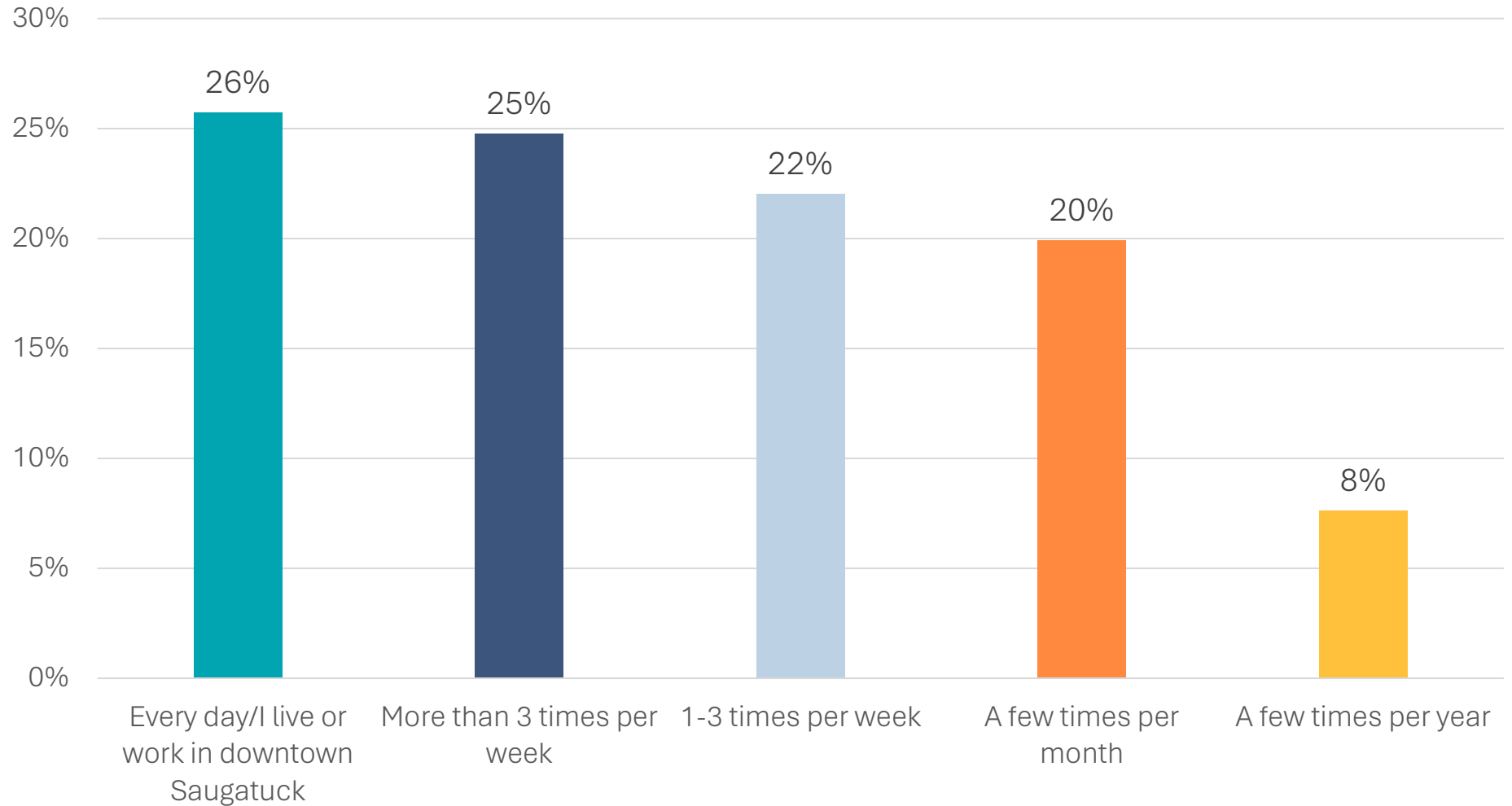
Every day/I live or work in downtown Saugatuck

47%

1+ / Multiple times per week

20%

A few times per month



Q5: When do you typically come to downtown Saugatuck?

83%

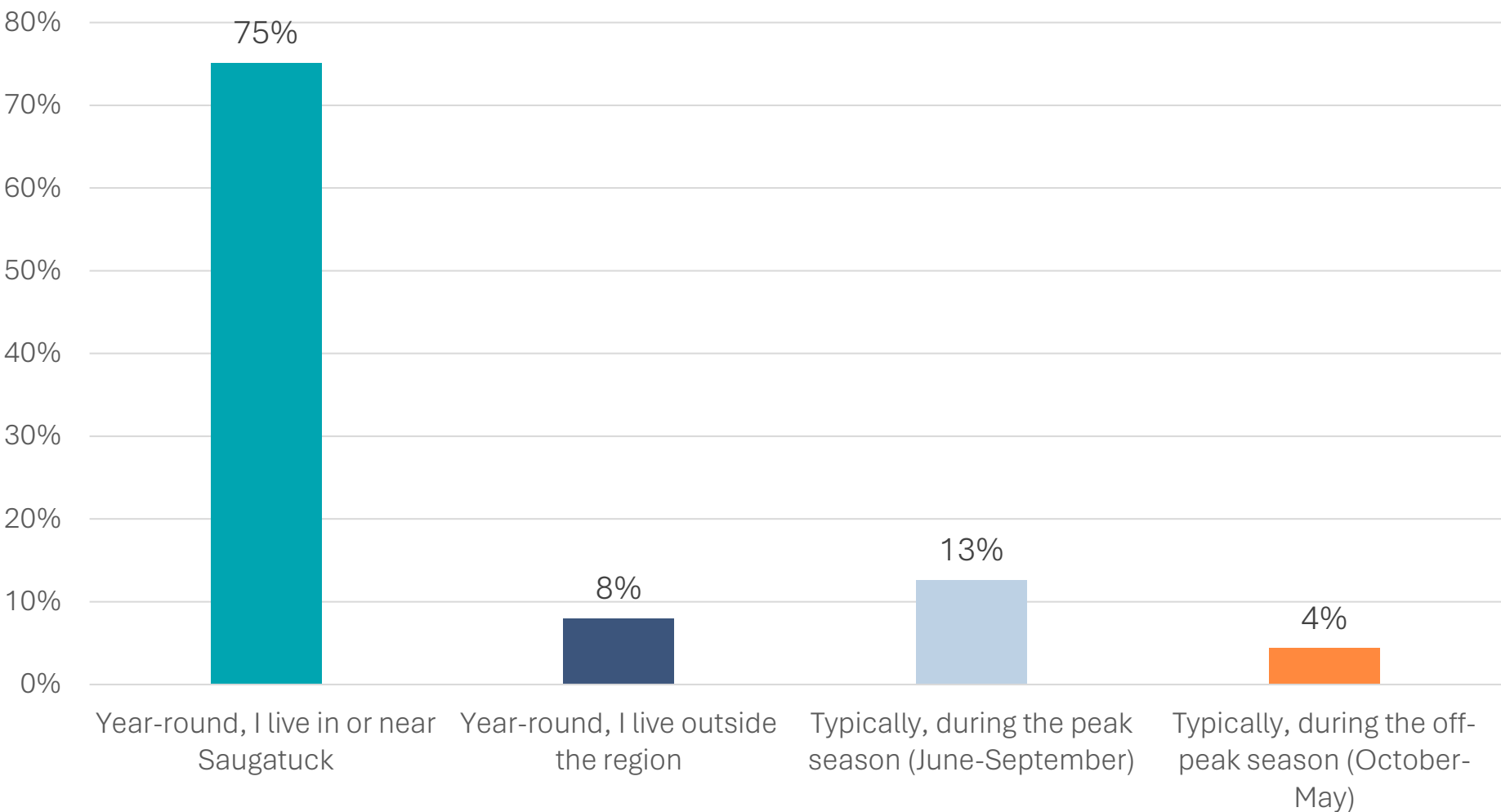
Year-round

13%

Peak Season
(June – Sept.)

4%

Off-Peak Season
(Oct.-May)

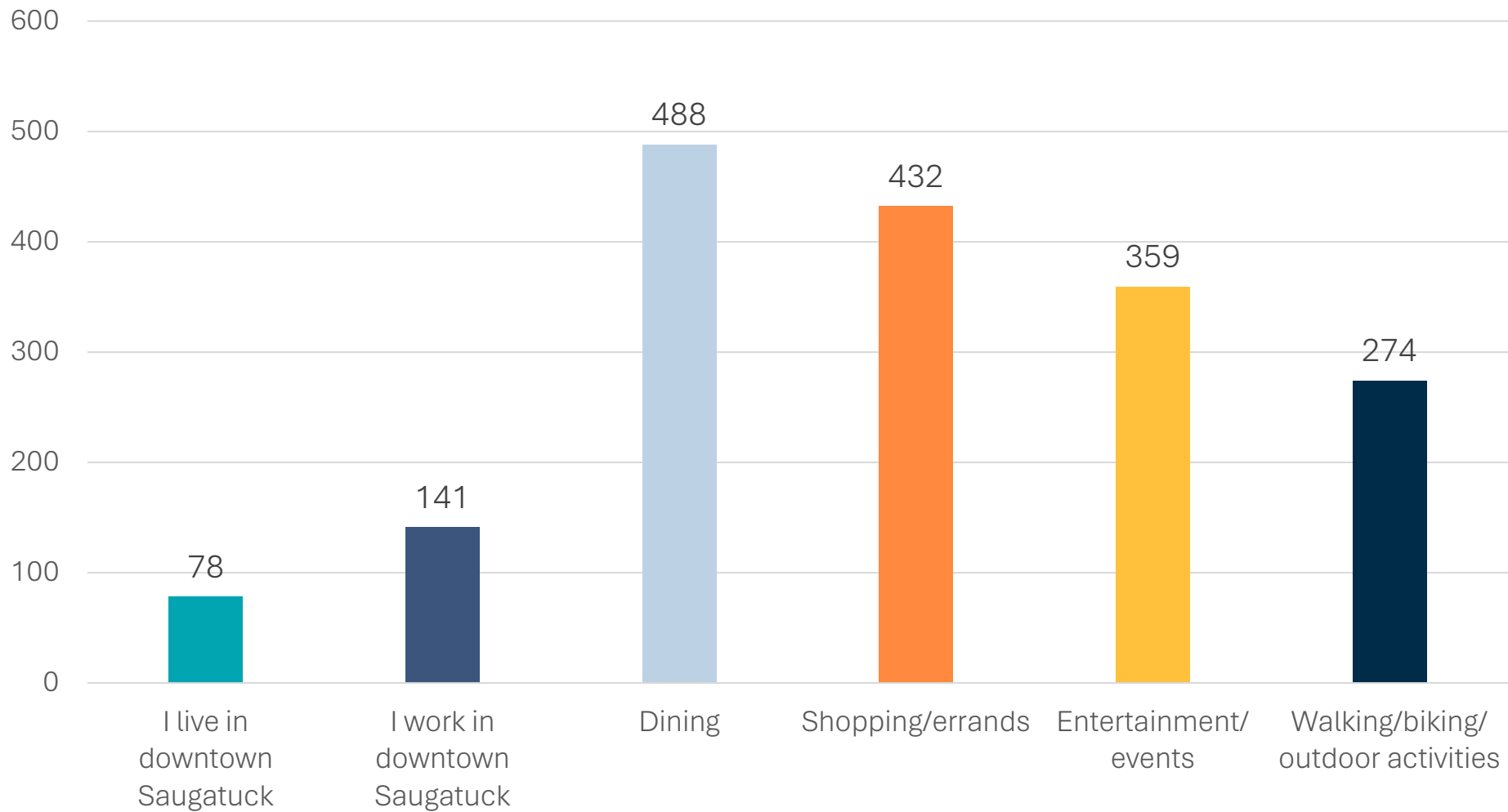


Q6: What is your primary reason for visiting downtown Saugatuck? Select all that apply.

488
Dining

432
Shopping/Errands

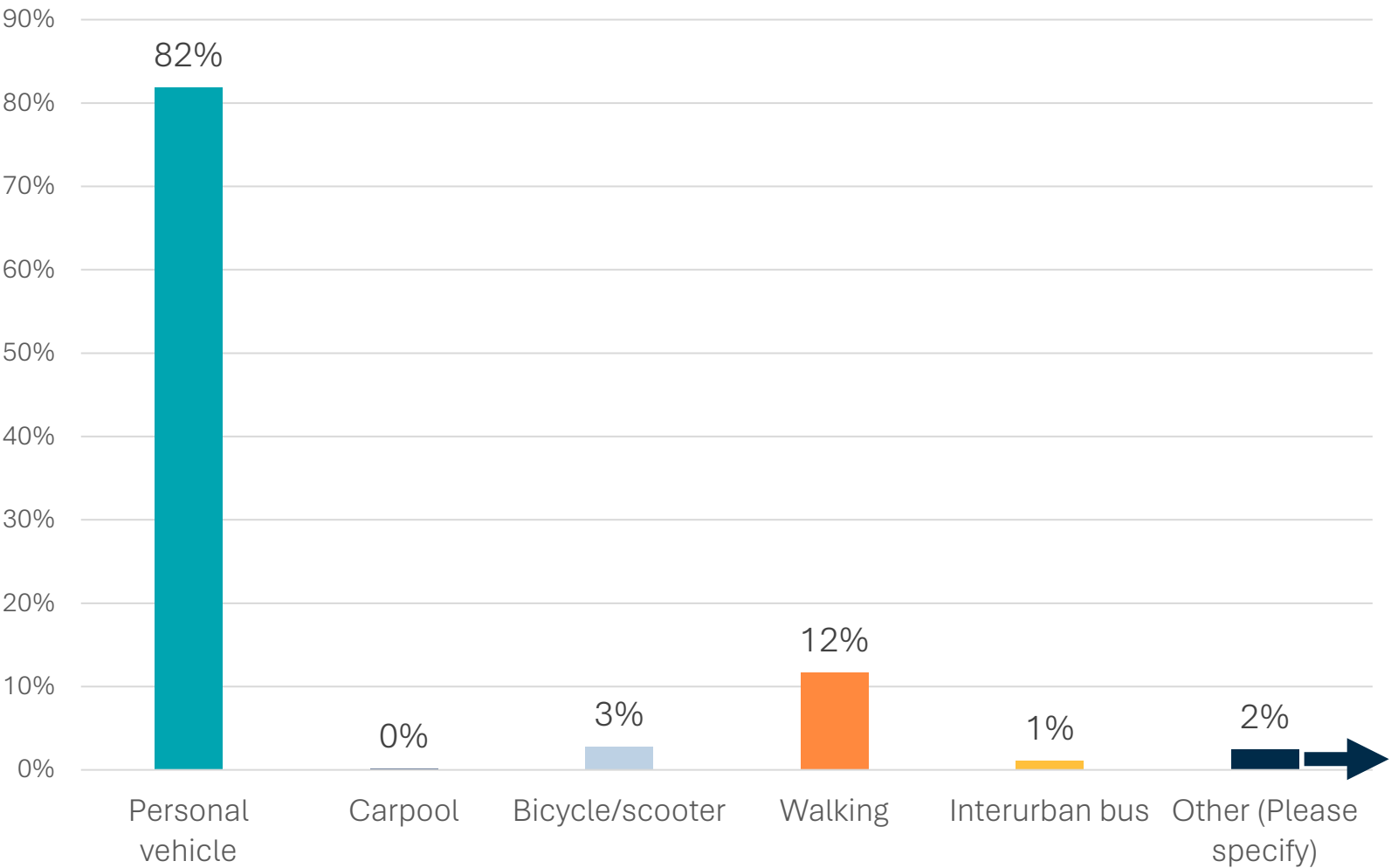
359
Entertainment
/events



Q7: What form of transportation do you typically use to go downtown?

82% +
Personal Vehicle

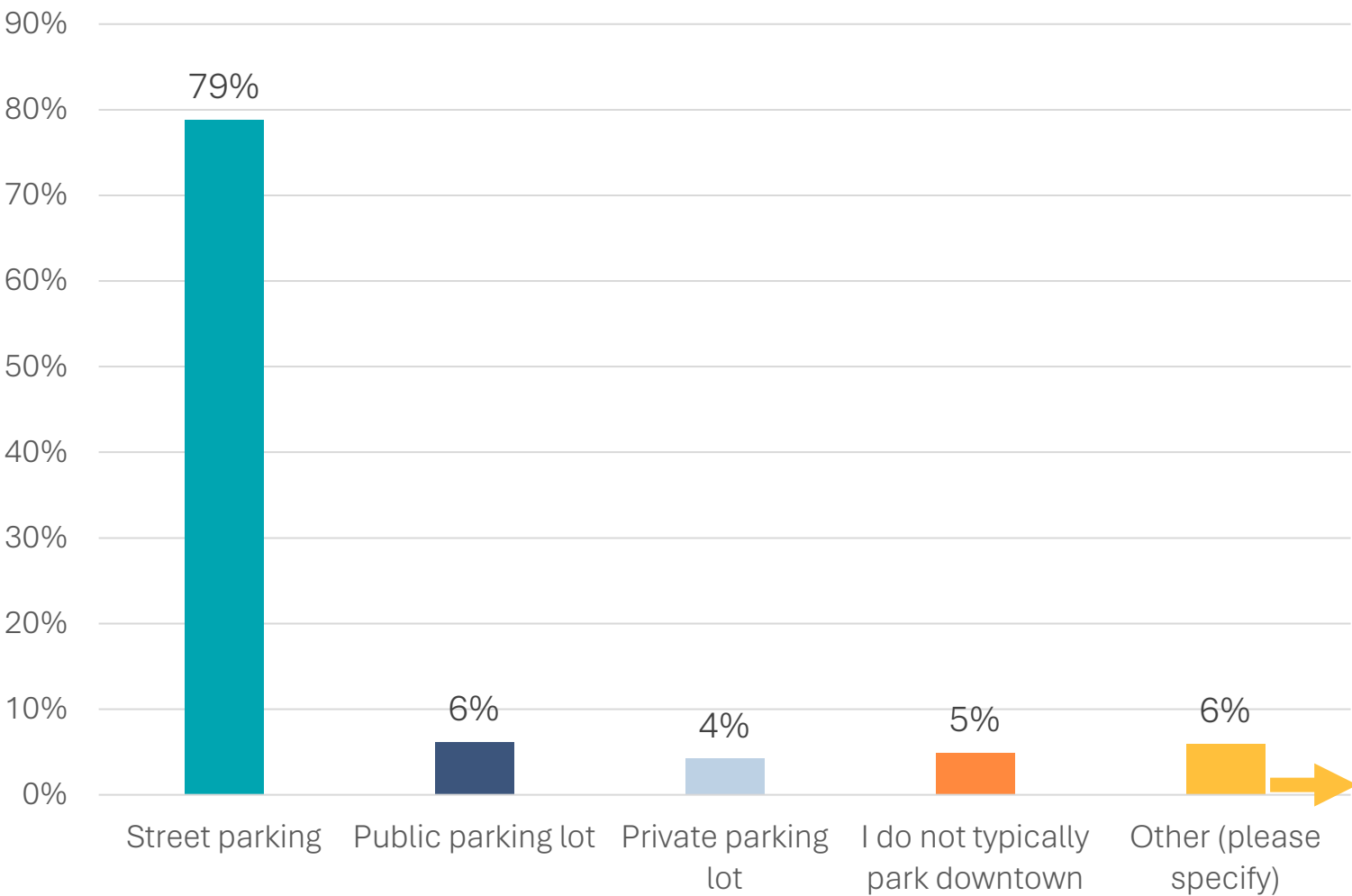
12% +
Walking



	Count
Boat/Chain Ferry	8
Multiple: Personal, Walk, Bike	5
Interurban	2

Q8: What form of transportation do you typically use to go downtown?

79% +
Street Parking



Anywhere available	1.8%
High School Lot	1.3%
Personal Private Parking	1.1%
Marina/Dock	.6%
On the hill	.5%
ADA Parking	.3%
Season Dependent	.3%

Q9: Typically, approximately how long does it take you to find parking downtown?

Peak Season Responses: 609
Offseason Responses: 603
Other Responses: 31
Total: 618

Off Season

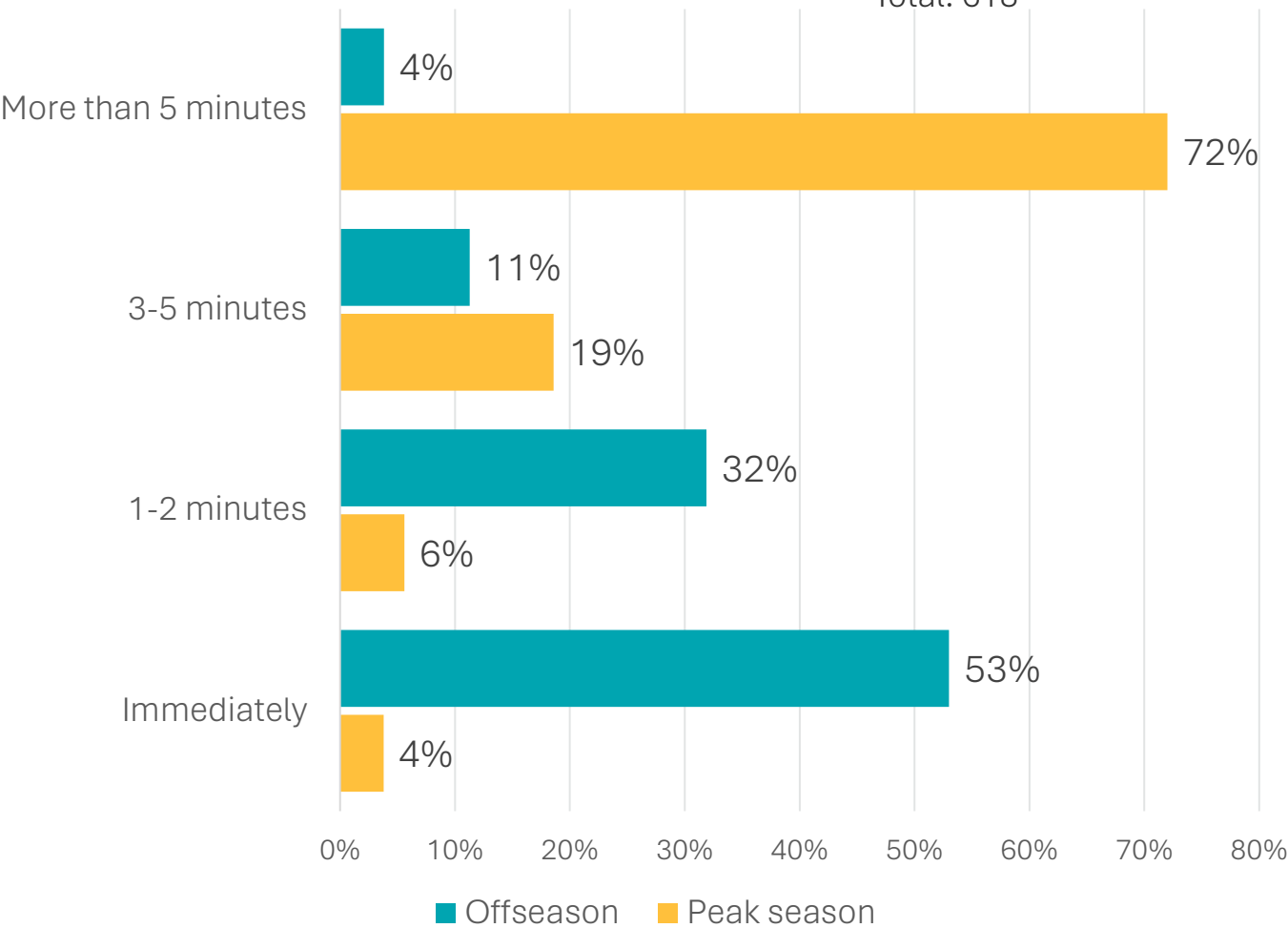
53% report finding parking immediately.
43% report finding parking in 1-5 minutes.

Peak Season

72% report finding parking in > 5 minutes.
25% report finding parking in 1 – 5 minutes.

Other:

Most comments expressed the question does not apply to them.
Some comments report it takes over 20 minutes to find parking during Peak Season.



Q10: How often are you able to find a parking space where you prefer to park downtown?

Peak Season Responses: 613
Offseason Responses: 594
Other Responses: 16
Total: 618

Off Season

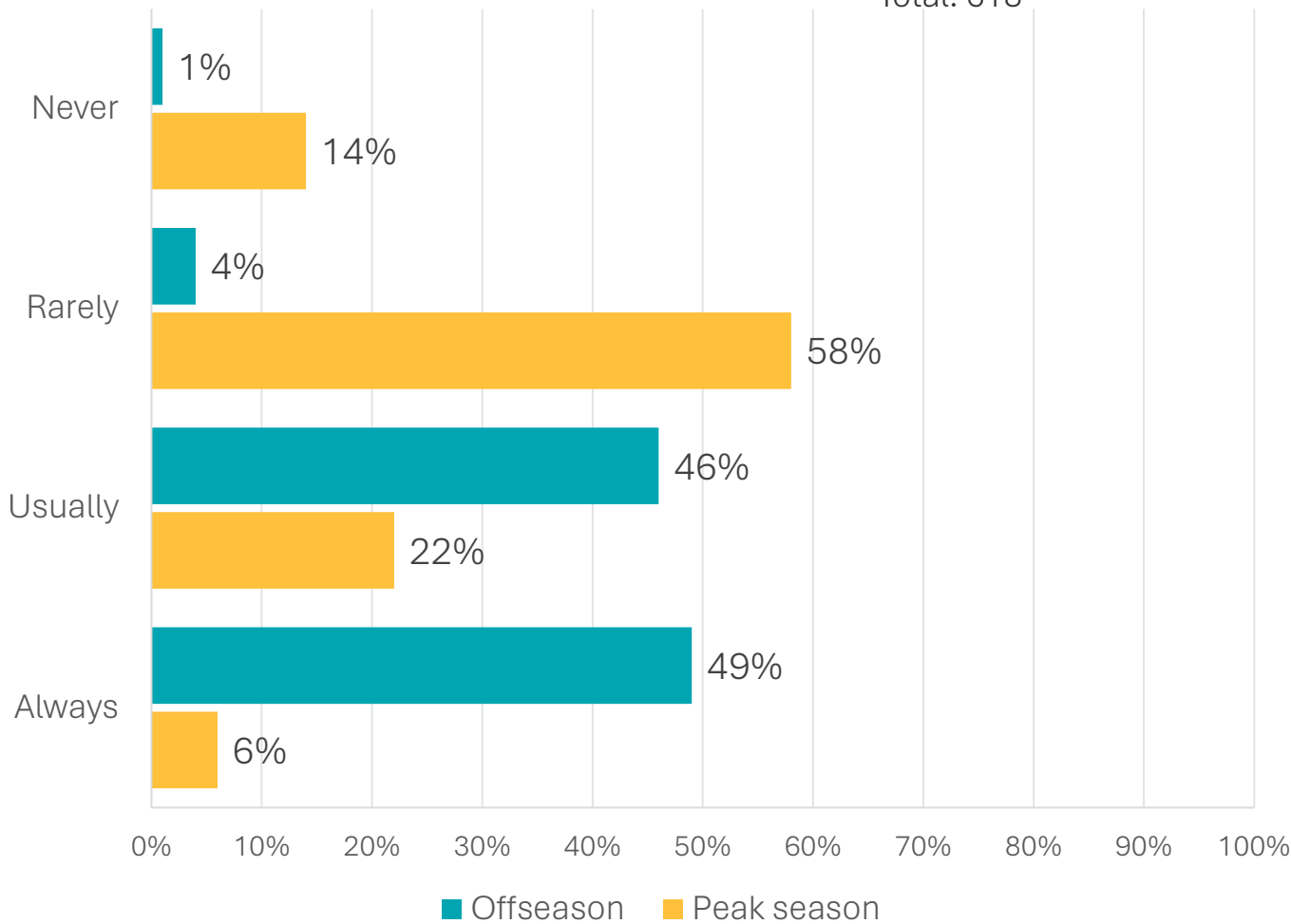
95% report always or usually find their preferred parking.

Peak Season

28% report always or usually finding their preferred parking.
72% report rarely or never finding their preferred parking.

Other:

Most comments expressed the question does not apply to them because they do not park or have private parking available to them.



Q11: How far are you willing/able to walk from your parking location to your final destination in downtown?

Peak Season Responses: 547
Offseason Responses: 503
Other Responses: 34
Total: 618

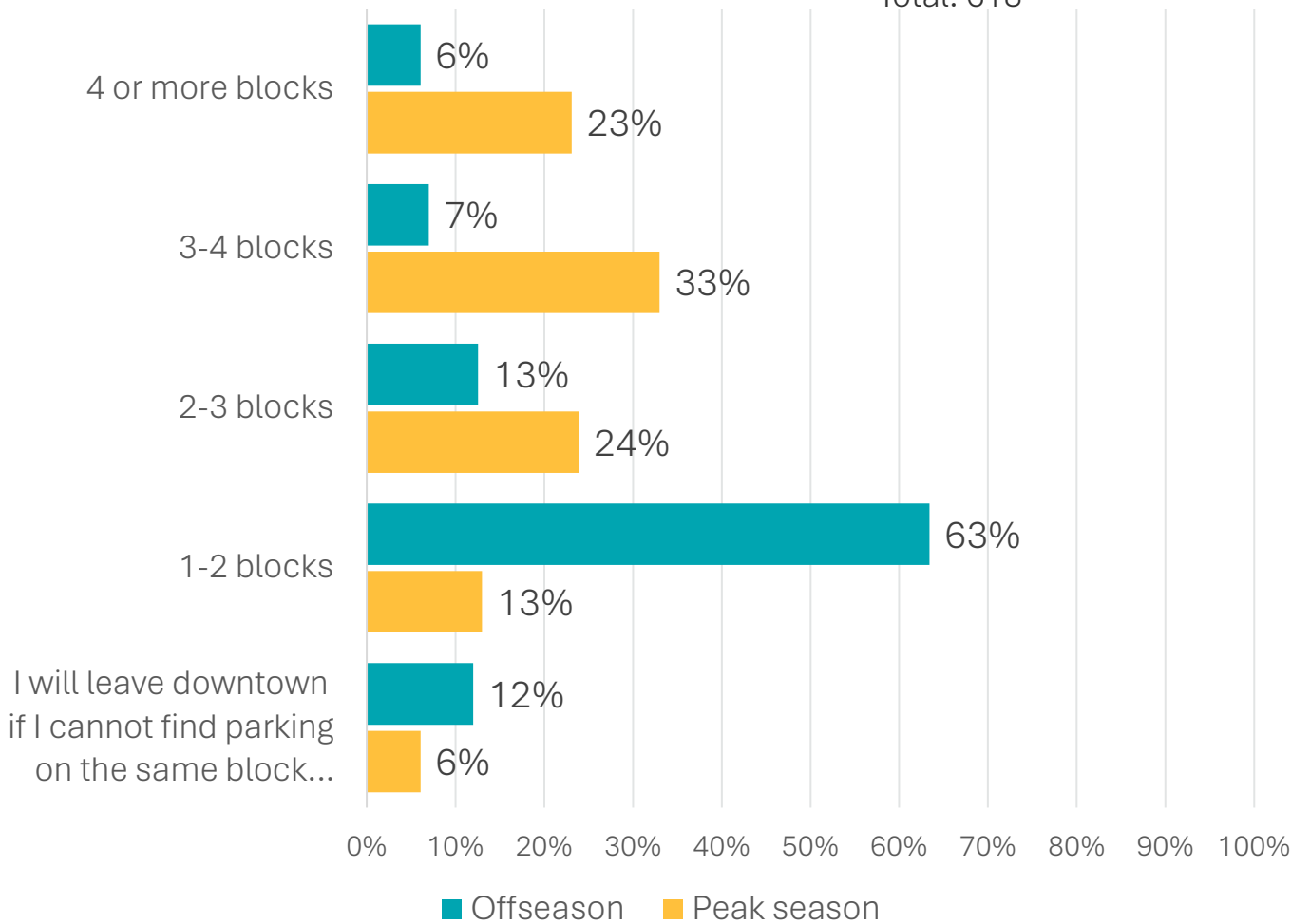
Off Season

76% report they are willing to walk 1 – 3 blocks.
12% report they would leave if they could not find their preferred parking

Peak Season

56% report they are willing to walk 3+ blocks.
6% report they would leave if they could not find their preferred parking.

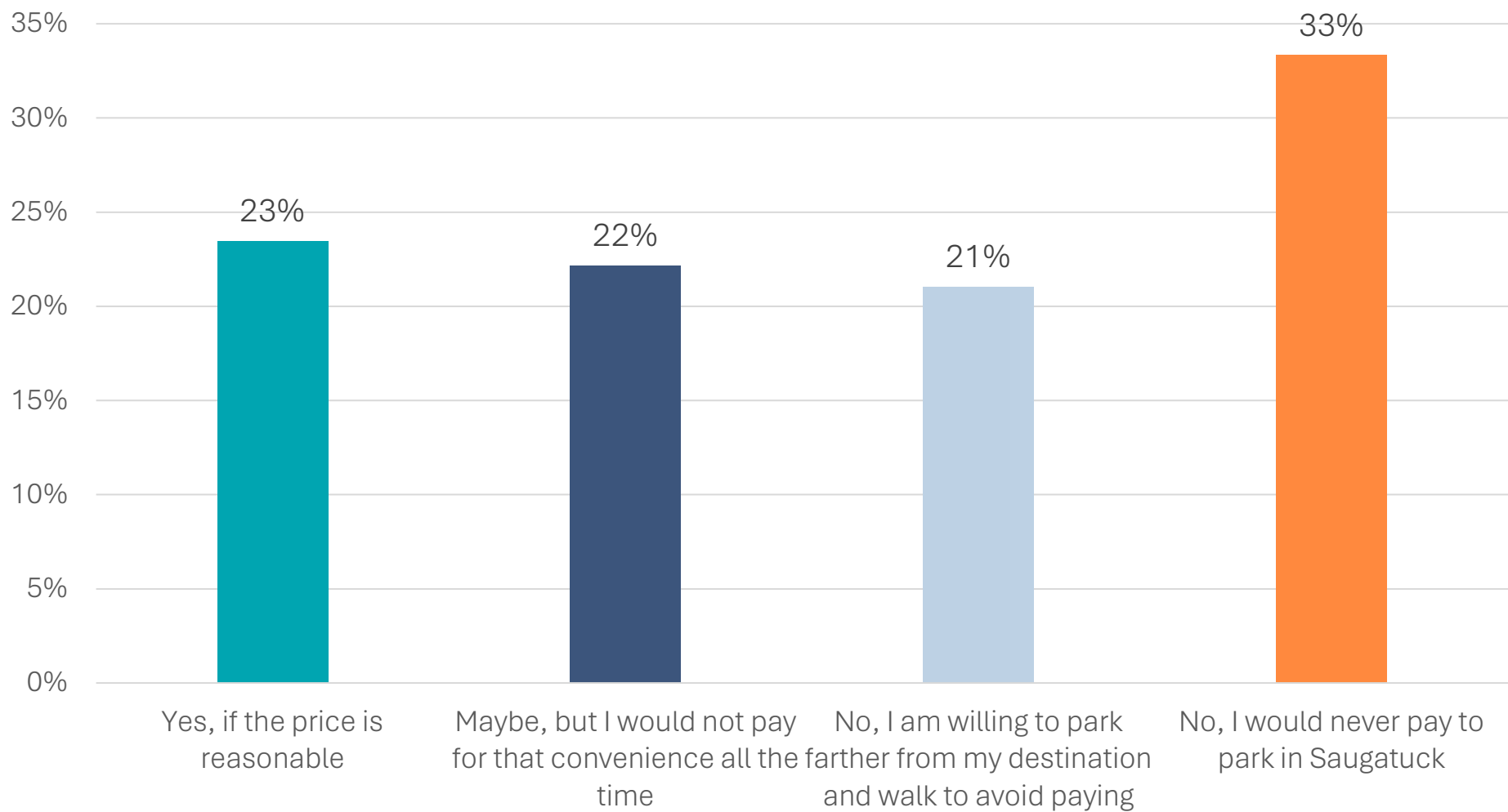
Other:
Most comments expressed the answer depends on many factors, including who they are walking with, weather conditions, etc.



Q12: During the peak summer season, would you be willing to pay to park on street if you could park closer to your destination?

54%
Report they would not pay to park in Saugatuck.

23%
Report they would pay for parking if it was priced reasonably.



Q13: If you primarily use a personal vehicle or carpool to downtown, please rank the following factors by how much they influence your parking decisions.

Most Important

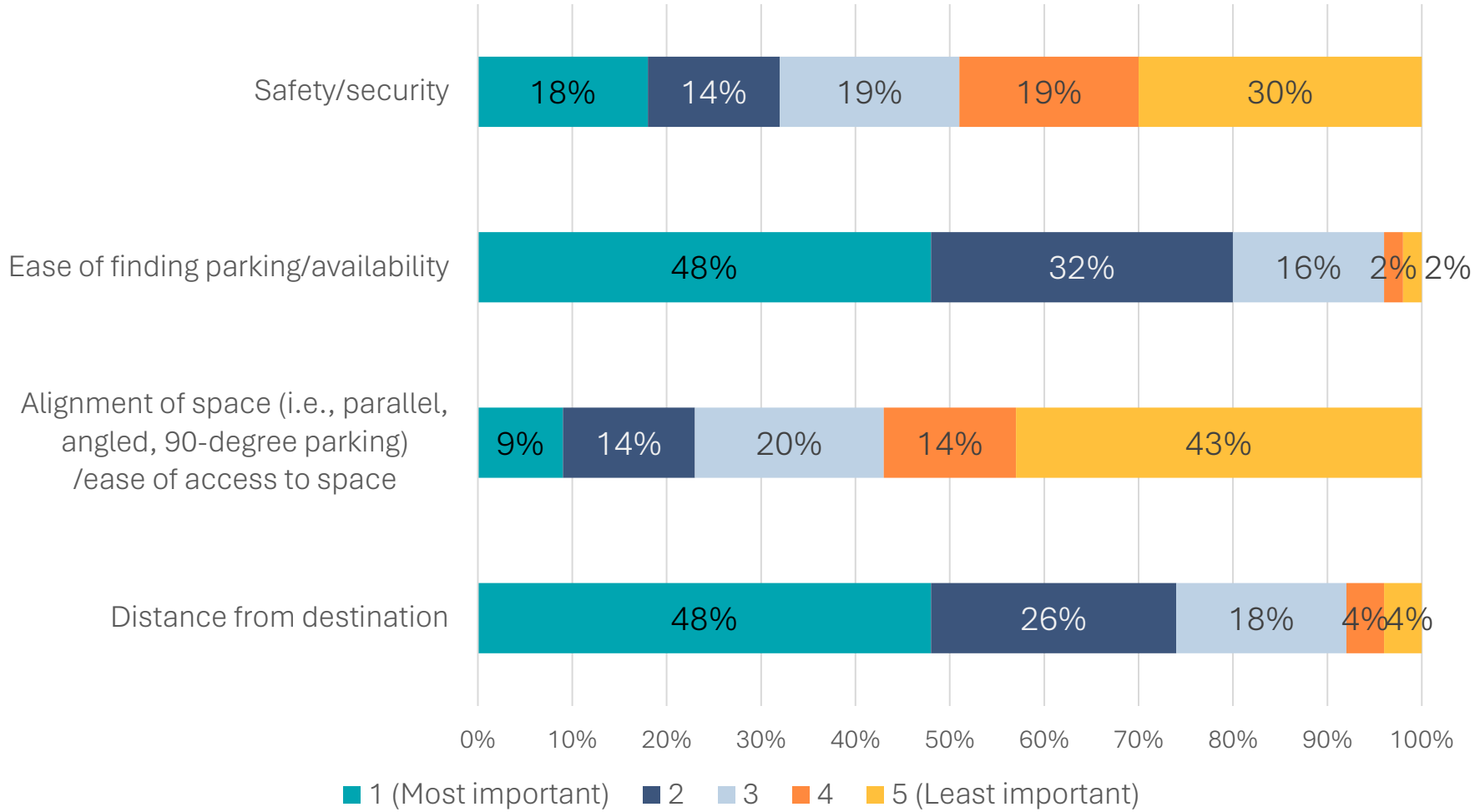
Ease of finding parking and distance from destination are reported as the most important factors.

Least Important

Alignment on space and safety are reported as the least important factors.

Other:

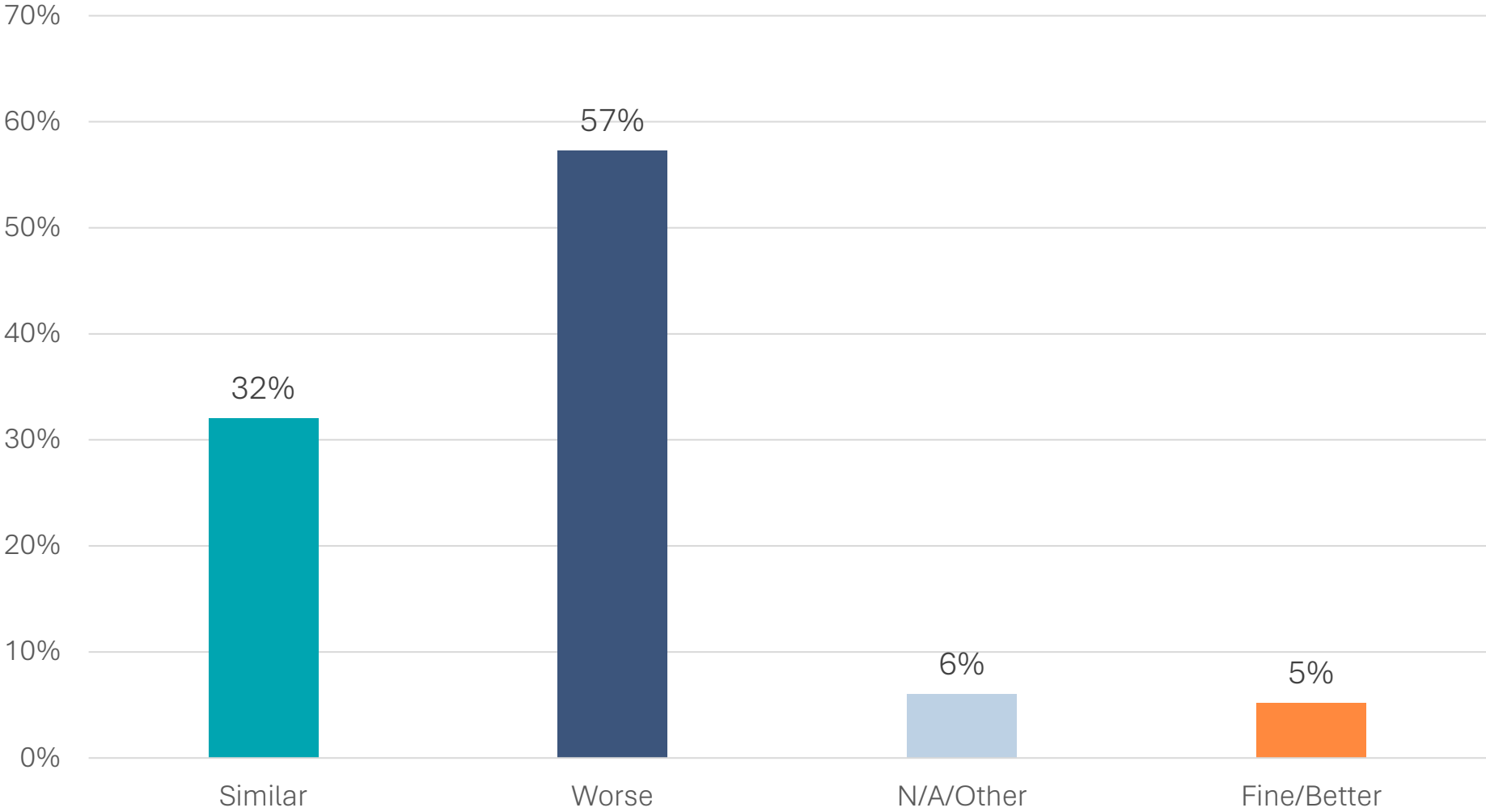
Most comments expressed Saugatuck is a safe place, so safety is not a concern



Q14: How does parking in downtown Saugatuck compare to parking in other similar areas you have visited?

32%
Report it is similar to other areas.

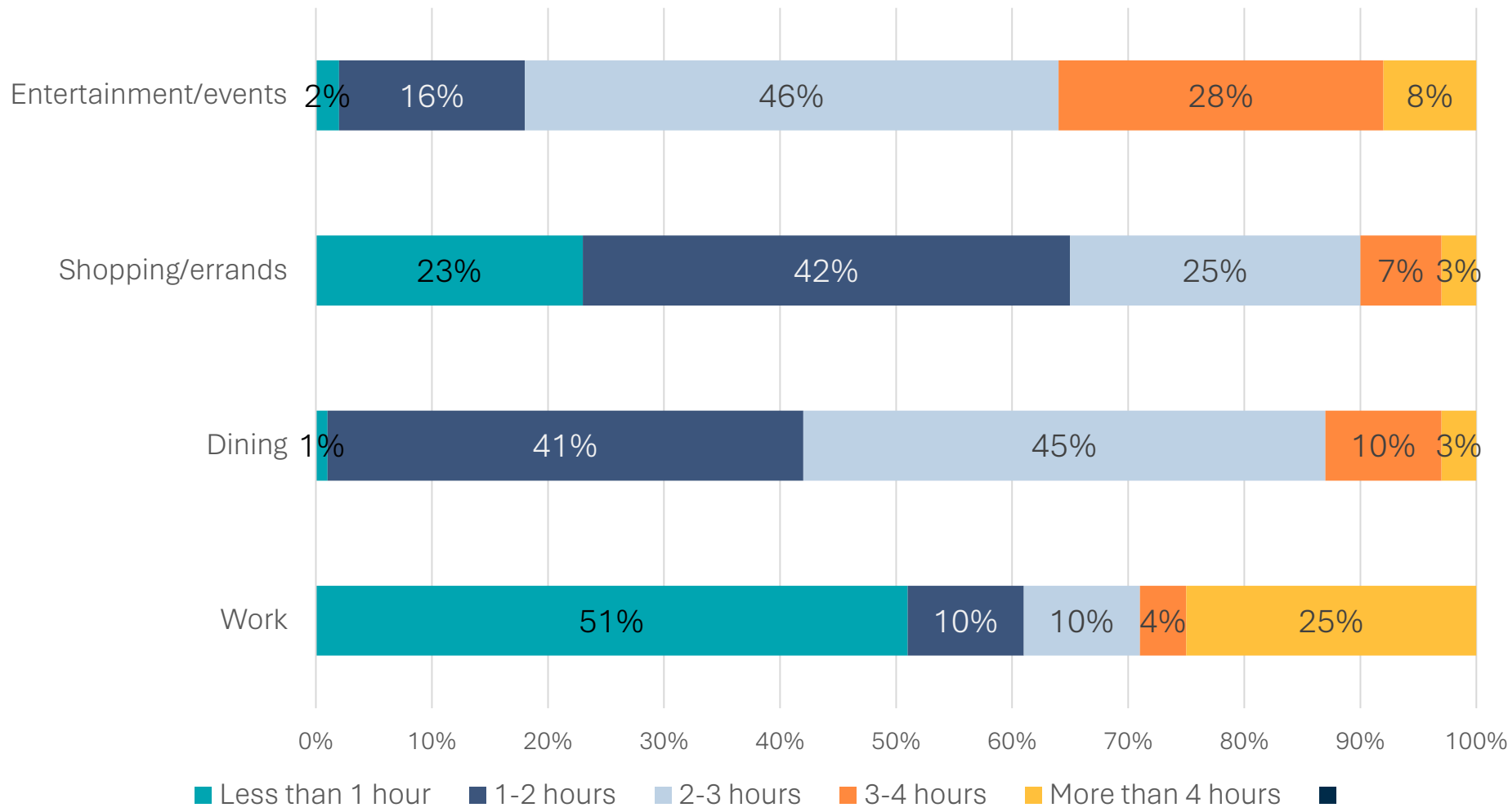
57%
Report it's worse – particularly during peak season



Q15: How long do you typically remain parked in downtown when you come to visit for the purposes listed below?

Most Report

staying parked for less than 3 hours across all purposes



Q16: What, if anything, would increase the frequency with which you use the Interurban to travel to downtown?

For those that provided an improvement, the main themes were:

- Extended Service Hours and Availability – Operate later into the evening/night year-round
- Schedule Reliability and Consistency
- Service Area and Route Expansion
- More Park & Ride Parking Availability
- Short Wait Time
- Education on current options – Some comments mentioned not knowing it existed

Q17: What, if anything, would increase the frequency with which you use the Interurban to travel to downtown?

For those that bike, the main themes were:

- Increased Bike Rack Availability/Capacity – Most people who mentioned this mentioned having to secure their bikes to trees and poles or using a bike rack by a public restroom.
- Traffic and Safety Concerns - Lack of bike lanes discourages biking in the area.
- Better/More Bike Rack Placement & Design - Not enough close to businesses.

Q18: Please share any ideas you may have about improving the parking experience in downtown Saugatuck. Page 85 of 199

For those that provided an improvement, the main themes were:

- Parking Structure Development
- Parking Space Allocation and Optimization
- Restaurant Parking and Outdoor Dining – The main sentiment was to remove outdoor dining taking up spaces. At least one response was in favor of outdoor dining
- No Paid Parking Implementation
- Employee Parking Management
- Shuttle Service Operations – More options for tourists to come into the area.
- Parking Lot Expansion and Parking Structure Development
- Parking Enforcement and Restrictions – More enforcement of current project regulations.
- Resident Parking Permits
- Better Interurban and Transit Marketing
- Time-Limited Parking – Add shorter time limits to certain areas.

Saugatuck Stakeholder Interview Summary (Anonymous)

The City of Saugatuck Parking Improvements Task Force identified organizations for Walker to contact for stakeholder interviews. These organizations represent short-term rental owners and managers, including individual hosts and larger property managers, event planners, arts organizations such as the Saugatuck Center for the Arts and the Chamber Music Society, and marina operators. Saugatuck's city manager sent email inquiries to numerous community representatives; 10 inquiries were received and responded to, with expressions of interest in participating in a stakeholder survey. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted by telephone on March 9, 10, and 12. Questions were emailed to participants before the calls. Each respondent was contacted separately. Below is a compilation of the questions and responses.

Opinions on Current Parking System

Most stakeholders agree parking functions adequately during off-peak seasons but becomes highly constrained from June through September. Common concerns include lack of enforcement, illegal parking, insufficient accessible spaces, and employees parking in prime spots. Some believe there is no real parking problem outside summer, while others highlight visitor frustration and safety issues.

Annual Days Reaching Capacity

Consensus indicates that parking reaches or nears capacity most days between Memorial Day and Labor Day, especially July–August. Many noted a growing shoulder season and increased demand on fall weekends.

Views on a Parking Structure

Most stakeholders oppose a parking garage due to cost, seasonal usefulness, and concerns over aesthetics and community character. A minority believes it could support long-term growth or reduce congestion, though funding remains a major concern.

Support for Paid Parking

Opinions are split. Some support seasonal paid parking or limited paid areas to encourage turnover. Others strongly oppose it, believing it would harm the small-town feel or burden residents and workers.

Support for Paid On-Street Parking to Fund a Garage

Nearly all oppose using paid on-street parking to subsidize a garage. Even those open to paid parking generally do not support linking it to a structure they believe is unnecessary.

City's Role in Managing Parking

Many believe the city should focus on enforcement, communication, signage, and partnerships with schools, Douglas, and Interurban. Some support city management

through contracted operators. Others believe the city should explore remote lots and multi-modal transportation.

Private Sector Role

Most felt the private sector should play a limited role, though some support employers encouraging employees to park remotely or private partnerships for remote lots or garage development. Many believe parking is ultimately a municipal responsibility.

Effective Aspects of Current System

Interviewees cited the high school lot, Interurban system, fundraising lots, and the availability of on-street parking as functioning reasonably well. Some noted the informal flexibility allowed by lenient enforcement.

Ineffective Aspects of Current System

Common themes include lack of enforcement, insufficient peak-season capacity, confusing or inadequate communication, limited shuttle options, and safety concerns caused by angled parking in narrow areas.

Perceptions of Enforcement

Nearly all agreed enforcement is minimal to nonexistent. Many had never seen a parking ticket issued. This contributes to overstaying in limited-time spaces and illegal parking.

Remote Parking for Employees

Opinions vary. Some support it as a way to keep prime spaces open for visitors, but many question feasibility, fairness, and enforceability. Some believe employee participation would require reliable shuttles.

Best Practices from Other Cities

Suggestions included seasonal paid parking, improved transit frequency, angled parking in select corridors, tram-style shuttles, multi-modal planning with bike infrastructure, and exploring low-speed vehicle (golf cart) regulations used in other resort communities.

Framing Saugatuck's Parking Challenges and Potential Remedies

Parking Conditions and Challenges

- Peak-season congestion from June through September leads to difficulty finding parking, with many days operating at or near capacity.
- Enforcement is widely viewed as inconsistent or non-existent, resulting in overstays, illegal parking, and reduced turnover.
- Employees often occupy prime parking spaces, reducing availability for visitors.
- Safety concerns include angled parking encroaching into travel lanes and insufficient accessible spaces.
- Shuttle services and Interurban transit are perceived as limited in schedule, reach, and reliability.
- Survey results show that over 70% of respondents require more than 5 minutes to find parking in peak season, and most rely on personal vehicles.

Options Under Consideration

- Paid on-street parking (seasonal or year-round).
- Construction of a parking structure.
- Remote parking lots with shuttle service.
- Improved or expanded Interurban service.
- Enhanced enforcement of existing time limits.
- Employee parking management (remote lots or restrictions).
- Bicycle and multi-modal infrastructure upgrades.
- Low-speed vehicle (golf cart) system.

Pros and Cons of Options

- Paid Parking – Pros: Improves turnover, generates revenue, reduces reliance on strict enforcement.
- Paid Parking – Cons: Unpopular with many residents; may burden workers; could impact small-town character.
- Parking Structure – Pros: Adds supply; may support long-term growth; reduces circulation from drivers searching for spaces.
- Parking Structure – Cons: Very high capital and operating cost; limited seasonal usefulness; aesthetic concerns.
- Remote Parking/Shuttles – Pros: Low cost; scalable; reduces congestion downtown.
- Remote Parking/Shuttles – Cons: Requires reliable frequency; may inconvenience employees; needs strong communication.
- Improved Enforcement – Pros: Increases turnover without infrastructure costs; clarifies expectations.
- Improved Enforcement – Cons: Could be perceived as punitive; requires staffing resources.
- Bike & Multi-Modal Enhancements – Pros: Reduces vehicle demand; improves safety and community character.
- Bike & Multi-Modal Enhancements – Cons: Requires capital investment; adoption may be gradual.

- Low-Speed Vehicle System – Pros: Reduces short car trips and demand for downtown parking.
- Low-Speed Vehicle System – Cons: Requires regulation, designated areas, and multi-jurisdictional coordination.

Additional Findings from Recent Studies

- Parking supply totals 1,868 spaces citywide, with 1,502 on-street and 366 off-street. Zones 1 and 2 account for the majority of the supply. (Inventory Summary)
- Accessible spaces total 28 citywide—only 1.5% of supply, indicating a shortage. (Inventory Summary)
- Wayfinding evaluation identifies a lack of arrival signage, inconsistent pedestrian/vehicular direction signs, and cluttered on-street signs. (Wayfinding Report)
- City website lacks clear parking information; visitors rely on third-party sites. (Wayfinding Report)
- Recommended improvements include new gateway signage, facility naming conventions, simplified parking signage, added kiosks, and better online resources. (Wayfinding Report)

Additional Findings: Parking Structure Cost and Feasibility

- Parking structure costs estimated at \$35,000 per space to construct; 200-space cost ~\$7M, 300-space >\$10M. (Cost Summary)
- Soft costs add ~20%, raising per-space cost to ~\$42,000; total project likely near \$10M. (Cost Summary)
- Annual operating costs estimated at \$156k–\$235k for a 200–300 space structure. (Cost Summary)
- Lifecycle costs are high; need a reserve fund of at least 1% of the construction cost annually. (Cost Summary)
- Saugatuck's seasonal demand means a structure would be underutilized much of the year; unlikely to be revenue-sustaining. (Cost Summary)
- Break-even monthly cost per space ~\$309 at \$42k/space and \$1k annual O&M—higher than typical Michigan parking rates. (Cost Summary)

Summary of Paid Parking Considerations

- Peer Michigan resort communities often rely on 2–3 hour time limits with enforcement rather than paid parking. (Paid Parking Considerations)
- Paid parking can increase compliance, generate revenue, improve turnover, promote alternative transportation, and reduce punitive enforcement. (Paid Parking Considerations)
- Cons include resistance to changing free parking norms, potential burden on residents and workers, negative public perception, enforcement costs, and concerns about clutter from meters. (Paid Parking Considerations)
- Implementation costs include meter equipment (\$1,200–\$10,000 per unit), data fees, credit card fees, maintenance, and labor. Estimated annual cost ~ \$300,000, including enforcement. (Paid Parking Considerations)
- Potential revenue: \$450k–\$600k annually at \$2/hr for ~300 spaces during peak season; half at \$1/hr. (Paid Parking Considerations)
- Paid parking improves compliance and turnover but may not address all design issues. Works best with signage, communication, and multimodal improvements. (Paid Parking Considerations)



City of Saugatuck, MI

Wayfinding, Signage, and Communication Evaluation

April 2026



1. Introduction

Effective wayfinding, signage, and communication are essential for enhancing visitors' experiences in any downtown area. Clear and informative signage not only guides individuals to their desired destinations but also promotes a sense of safety and comfort. Well-designed wayfinding systems can significantly reduce confusion and frustration, helping visitors find available parking and navigate the area easily.

Saugatuck attracts many visitors during the summer months. By prioritizing clear communication through effective signage, Saugatuck can enhance the overall visitor experience, promote local businesses, and create a welcoming environment for everyone.

The following evaluation assesses the current state of wayfinding and signage in Saugatuck, identifying opportunities for improvement that will contribute to a more cohesive and enjoyable experience for both visitors and residents alike.

2. Current Conditions Assessment

Existing Sign System

Observation 1: A Limited Amount of Arrival and Directional Signage at the Entry Points into the City.

The current arrival signage does not effectively create a welcoming atmosphere and does not enhance the character or sense of place for visitors entering the City. Additionally, while the sign at Blue Star Highway serves as a noticeable gateway, there is no directional sign indicating a left turn into downtown.



Top left: The current gateway sign at the intersection of Blue Star Highway and Lake Street is an important decision point for entering downtown, but it lacks any directional messaging. Top right: As visitors enter the City on Lake Street, this is the only sign indicating that they are entering downtown, and it lacks a sense of arrival. Bottom: The current entry sign on Holland Street is a typical street sign and lacks any aesthetic qualities or character representative of Saugatuck.

Observation 2: Lack of Vehicular and Pedestrian Directional Signage in Downtown.

The only vehicular directional signage in downtown pertains to shuttle parking at the high school; there is no additional signage to guide drivers to other destinations. This lack of guidance can create a negative experience for infrequent or first-time visitors. Without clear signage, drivers must rely on navigation on their mobile phones or vehicle systems to reach their destinations, which could lead to conflicts with pedestrians, especially during peak times. While there are some pedestrian-oriented directional signs, such as map kiosks, they are limited to the south side of the city. There are no signs at parking locations or downtown, making it challenging for visitors to navigate the area after parking.



Top Left: There is no vehicular directional sign at the key decision point located at the intersection of Culver Street and Butler Street downtown. Top Right: There is no pedestrian directional sign at the decision point at the intersection of Butler Street and Hoffman Street. Bottom Left: This shows the current directional sign for the park-and-ride. Bottom Right: These are the existing map kiosks located at the southern end of downtown.

Observation 3: No Clear Parking Identification Signage at Public Parking Facilities

Currently, some public parking facilities have identification signs, but these signs often lack facility names or parking-related information and are too small to determine whether the facilities are available for public use when searching for parking. Providing clearer, larger information can enhance the overall visitor experience and reassure drivers that where they are parking is available for public parking.



Top Left: This is the only documented parking identification sign downtown indicating public parking. However, it is too small to read easily and lacks information about facility identification and time restrictions. Top Right: There are no signs at the facility's entrance indicating that this lot is available for public parking. Bottom: This area is part of the on-street parking inventory downtown, but because of its location and layout, it could easily be mistaken for private parking. Currently, there are no signs indicating that these spaces are designated for public parking, not even on-street signage.

Observation 4: Excessive Clutter of On-Street Parking Signs

The on-street parking signage has too many signs and too much information, making it difficult for visitors to find what they need.

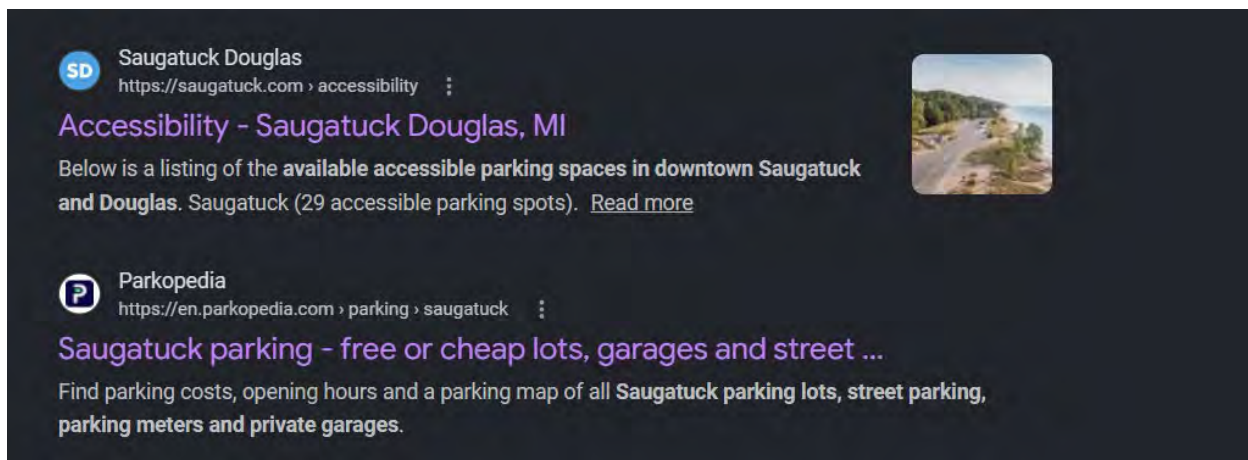


The images above show examples of on-street parking signs and the information they provide. The numerous signs and information can make it hard to understand, which may discourage people from parking or lead to negative perceptions during their visit to Saugatuck.

Parking and Transportation Communications

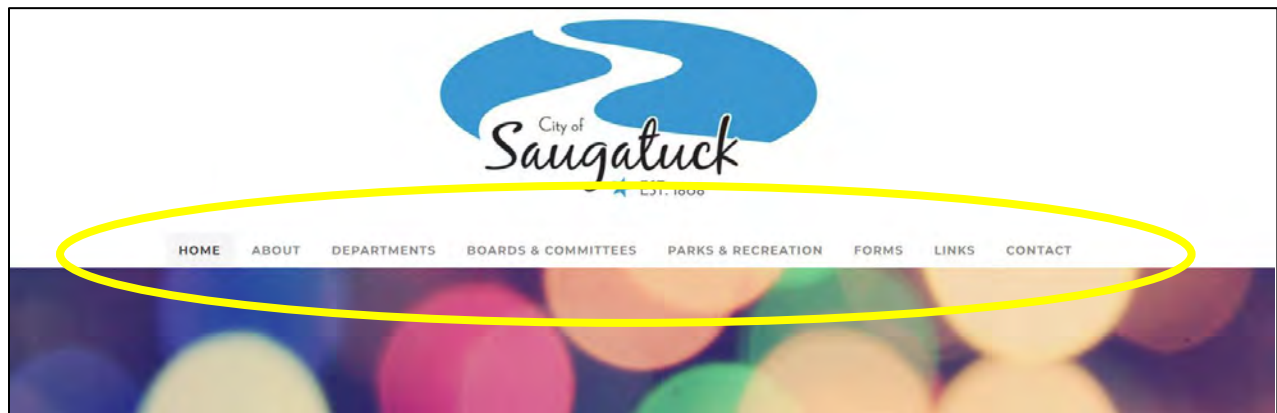
When people visit a city for the first time, they often look for online recommendations regarding restaurants, attractions, and parking options. By providing clear, easily accessible parking information on their websites, cities can significantly reduce the stress newcomers or infrequent visitors may experience.

Currently, the City of Saugatuck's website does not provide any information about public parking. In fact, when searching online for parking, the City of Saugatuck does not appear among the top results. Instead, websites like Parkopedia, Saugatuck Douglas Accessibility Parking, Yelp, and Tripadvisor dominate the search results for parking-related information.



Above: An example screenshot of the top results when searching for parking information in Saugatuck.

As noted earlier, parking information is not easily accessible on the City's website. Below is a screenshot of the current homepage. The homepage lacks any information or messaging about parking. Only after conducting a search can one find the Parking Improvements Task Force, which still does not provide any parking-related information for viewing.



3. Recommended Improvements

Signage and Wayfinding Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Install Updated Gateway and Directional Signage at City's Entrances

To improve visibility at key decision points and city entrances, Walker recommends installing updated gateway and directional signage at the intersections of Blue Star Highway and Lake Street, and of Holland Street, North Street, and Riverside Drive. These locations serve as the primary entry points into downtown Saugatuck.

Blue Star Highway and Lake Street Entry Point



The city should consider the following updates:

- A. Update the existing Saugatuck Gateway Sign to be consistent with the existing City branding and improve overall visibility by providing more modern materials for better readability and to include more welcoming messaging.
- B. Install directional signage with arrows to guide drivers left into downtown.

Below are examples of Gateway Signs and Directional Signage at downtown entrances.



Top Left: This is an example of a gateway sign for Douglas, MI. It features messaging for downtown and includes a directional arrow at a key decision point on Blue Star Highway. Top Right: This example shows a vehicular directional sign that provides arrows and downtown messaging, indicating that drivers should turn right to enter downtown.



Top Left: This is an example of a gateway sign in Holland, MI. The sign features welcoming messages and design elements that reflect the city's history. It is also highly visible. Image Source: <https://guidestudio.com> Top Right: This is an example of directional signage located at a key decision point in Holland, MI.

Recommendation 2: Develop a Sign System that includes Vehicular and Pedestrian Directional Signage within the Downtown

In any downtown area, an effective signage system is essential for improving navigation and enhancing the overall experience for both pedestrians and drivers. Walker recommends creating a comprehensive signage system that addresses the needs of both vehicles and pedestrians, ensuring safety, clarity, and ease of movement. Below is an example of various sign types from Winter Haven, FL. These sign types include gateway signs, vehicular directional signs, pedestrian directional signs, parking directional signs, and parking identification signs.



The images below provide other examples of how vehicular and pedestrian directional signage could look.



Recommendation 3: Establish a Standardized Naming Convention for all Publicly Accessible Off-Street Parking Facilities

Establishing a uniform naming system would create consistency and continuity in marketing and communicating the available parking options to visitors and residents. For instance, all publicly available parking facilities could be labeled as A, B, C, 1, 2, or 3, or have some directional or geographical connections. This would enhance wayfinding to these facilities on the City's website and through physical signage in and around downtown. Below are examples of how other municipalities have applied a naming convention to their parking facilities.



The example above shows a parking map and a list of parking facilities in Lynchburg, VA. The city has assigned names for the facilities based on their locations and designated use.



The example to the left shows a parking map and a list of parking facilities in Lake Orion, MI. The village has designated names for each facility based on its geographic location. Additionally, parking lots are labeled using the naming convention P# and shared lots as S#. The P# and S# designations can also be included on the signage at the entrances of these facilities.

Recommendation 4: Design and Install Parking Identification Signs at the Entrances of all Publicly Available Parking Facilities

As mentioned in Recommendation 2, which would include parking identification signs, there needs to be greater emphasis on parking signage overall. Currently, there are no signs indicating the names of parking facilities or their availability for public use. Walker recommends that clear parking identification signs be designed and installed at all publicly accessible parking facilities.

Each sign should feature the facility's name, be consistent with the City's naming convention as discussed in Recommendation 3 and clearly indicate whether the facility is available for public parking. Additionally, the signs should outline any specific parking restrictions for that facility. Below are examples of best practices for implementing effective parking identification signs throughout the City.

Parking identification sign examples



Recommendation 5: Simplify and Consolidate Messaging for On-Street Parking Signage

It's important to keep messaging clear and concise while providing necessary directions and information. Overloading signs with too much information can confuse visitors who may not be parking experts, leading to frustration and compliance issues. Walker recommends consolidating on-street parking signs to a maximum of two: one sign for parking-related time limits and another for additional restrictions, such as prohibiting trailers.

Existing On-Street Signage



Below are examples of on-street signs with simple and clear messaging.



Left: An example of a parking sign displaying time restrictions and the parking symbol "P." Right: An example of on-street parking signage that includes permitted information, which could apply to the restrictions of trailers in Saugatuck.

Recommendation 6: Install Additional Map Kiosks at Every Pedestrian Exit Point of Each Parking Facility

Currently, map kiosks are located in the southern part of downtown, as shown below. Walker recommends installing similar kiosks at other locations throughout downtown, particularly at pedestrian exit points of public parking facilities.



Recommendation 7: Update and Add More Social District Signs Downtown.

Currently, there are only a few social district signs, especially at the entry and exit points, as shown below. Walker recommends adding more of these signs to improve communication for visitors exploring downtown, particularly at district entrances and exits. In addition, Walker recommends enhancing the maps on the social district signs by including more context and reference points to aid in wayfinding. Furthermore, Walker recommends providing additional messaging options, such as vinyl sidewalk stickers.

Existing Social District Signs in Saugatuck



Below are examples of how other municipalities have implemented Signage and Messaging for Social Districts.



Recommendation 8: Install Shared Parking Signage at The High School.

Currently, the high school offers parking during peak times to accommodate the shuttle service to and from downtown. This service is available only during specific times of the year. Walker recommends installing permanent shared parking signage, which clearly indicates the designated parking areas and the months during which parking is allowed. This will eliminate confusion about when and where visitors can park and prevent them from parking in restricted areas or during non-peak times.

Below are examples of how other municipalities have implemented Shared Parking Signage.



Parking and Transportation Communication Recommendations

Recommendation 9: Improve Visibility and Enhance Usability of Online Parking Resources on the City's Website

Improving the visibility of online parking resources involves making parking information easier to find and more accessible. This can be achieved through clearer navigation and more prominent placement on relevant platforms. Enhancing usability is crucial to ensure that users can easily navigate these resources, quickly locate parking options, and obtain the necessary information. The overall goal is to create a user-friendly experience that helps individuals efficiently find and utilize parking services online.

Signage alone is not enough. The City would also benefit from a continuous public relations program to effectively communicate parking opportunities and regulations.

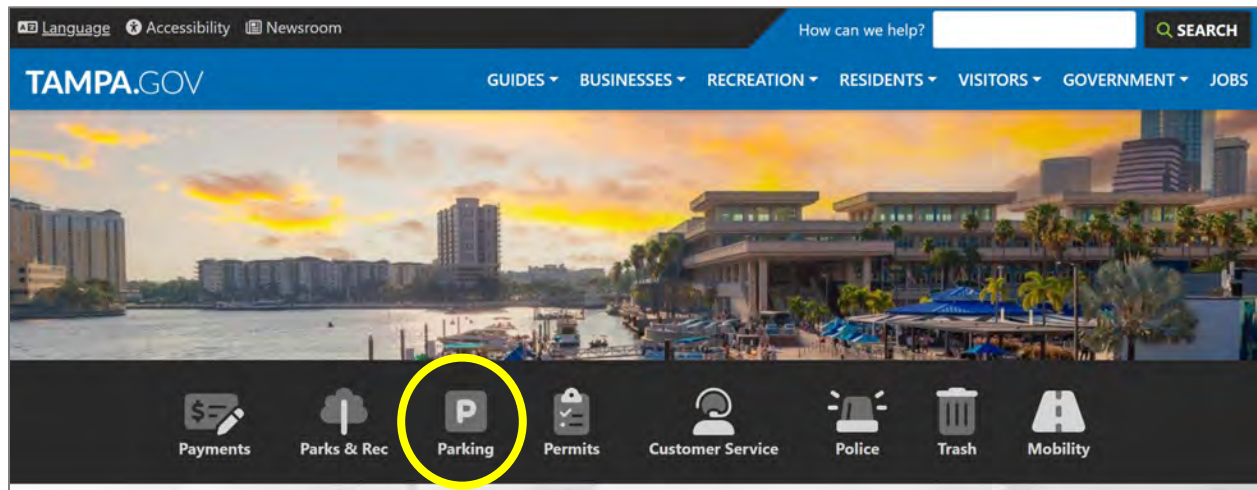
As mentioned earlier, the City currently lacks a dedicated website or webpage for downtown parking. To address this, the City should not only create a dedicated downtown parking website but also develop public parking brochures, maps, and other relevant information. This content should be made available on a dedicated parking webpage that aligns with the physical signage recommended for the downtown area.

In addition, Walker recommends the following strategies related to parking and transportation communication:

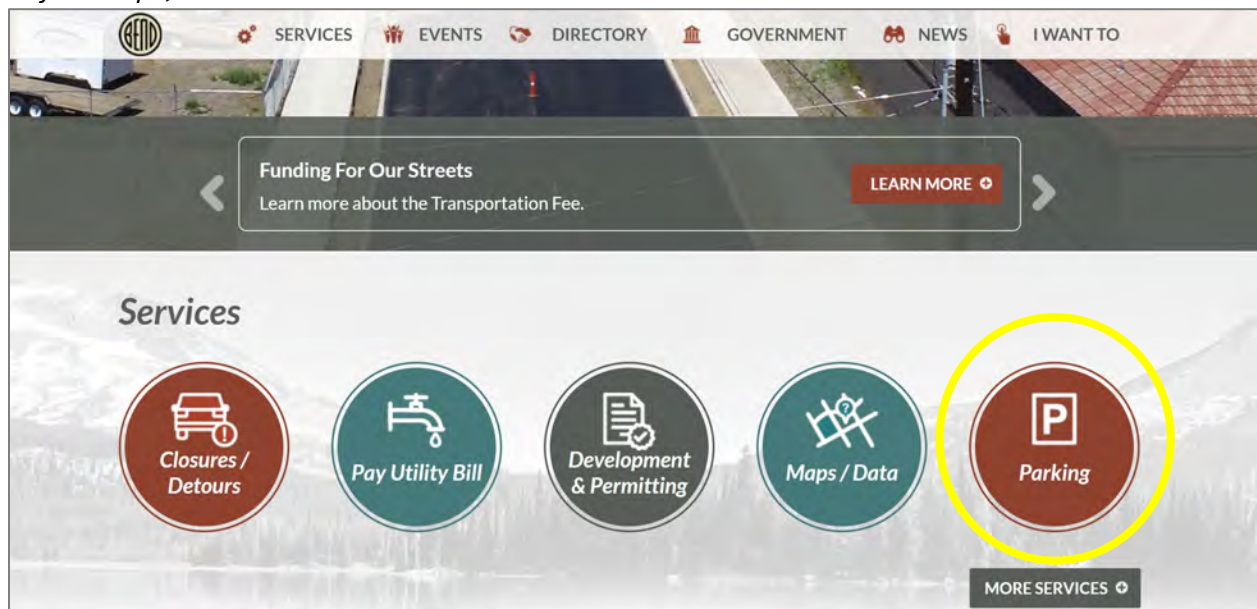
- Create a dedicated parking page on the city's website and add a parking icon or link on the city's homepage.
- Feature an interactive parking map directly on the parking page to ensure clear and accurate communication of all parking information, eliminating reliance on third-party websites.
- Include descriptions of each parking facility and on-street parking spaces on the interactive map. This information should include:
 - The facility's address
 - A picture of the entrance or street
 - The number of ADA spaces available
 - Details about EV charging stations, if applicable
 - Provide descriptions for each parking facility to highlight the most convenient parking options for specific destinations or events.
- Regularly share information related to public parking and its availability, including options for remote parking and shuttle services, through various platforms such as popular websites and social media.

The following are still images of home pages, dedicated parking pages, and interactive parking maps from other cities.

Website Home Landing Page Examples

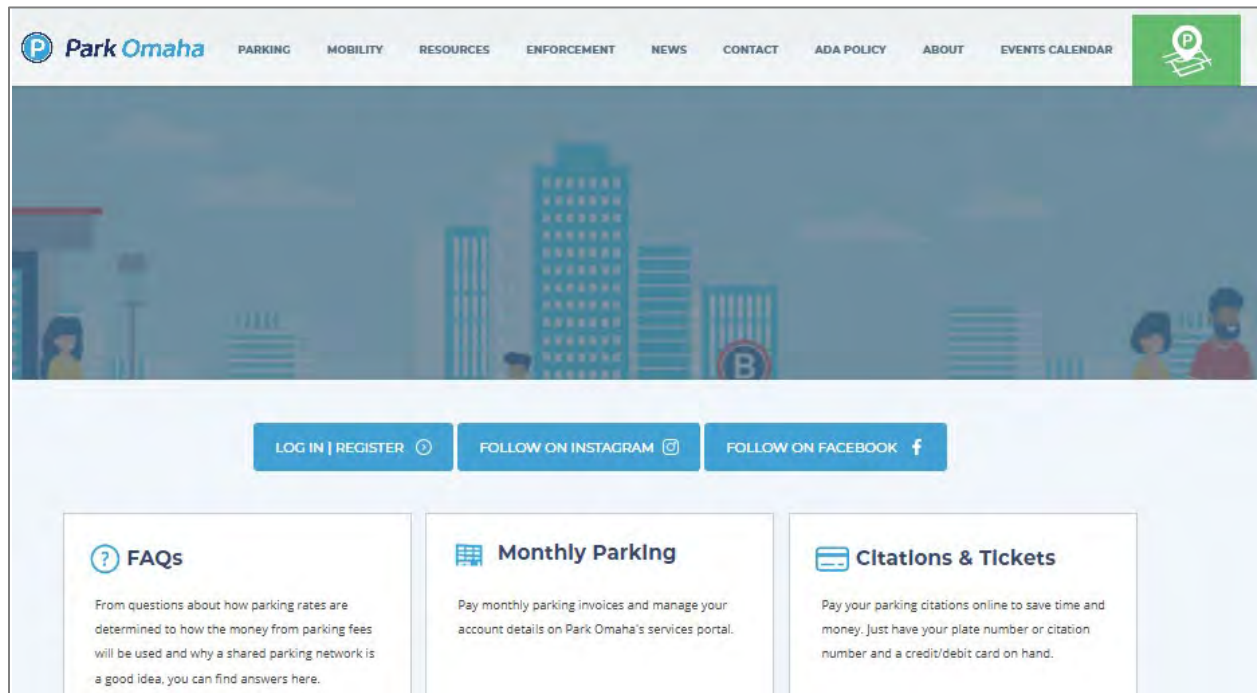


City of Tampa, FL

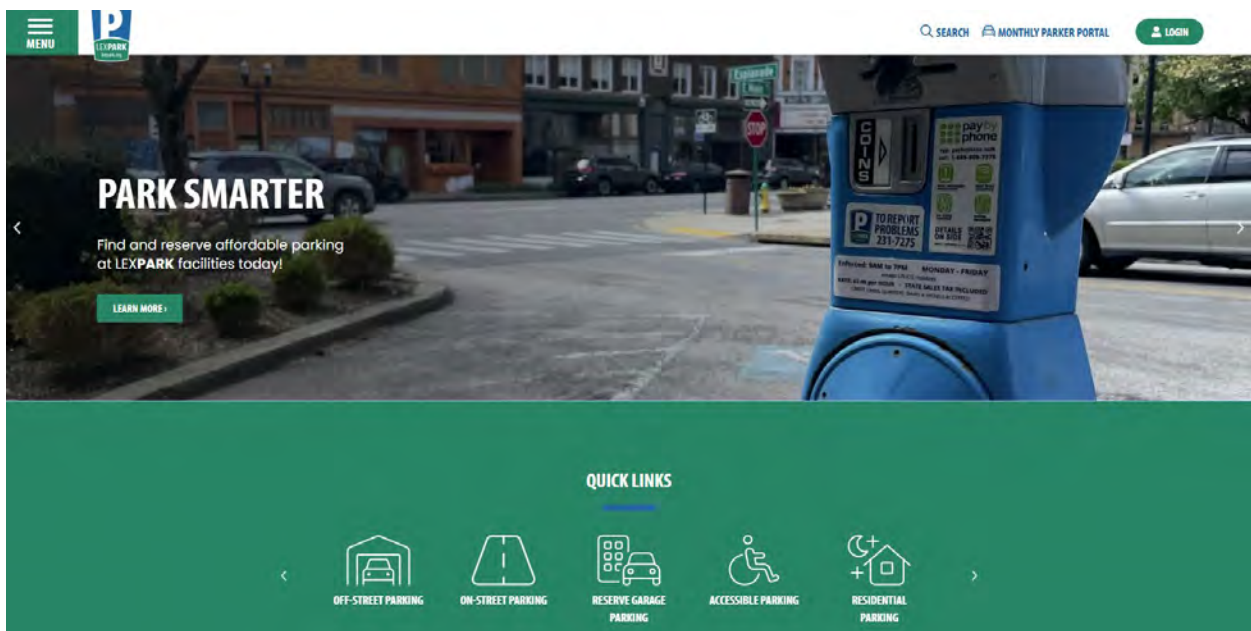


City of Bend, OR

Dedicated Parking Page Examples



City of Omaha, NE

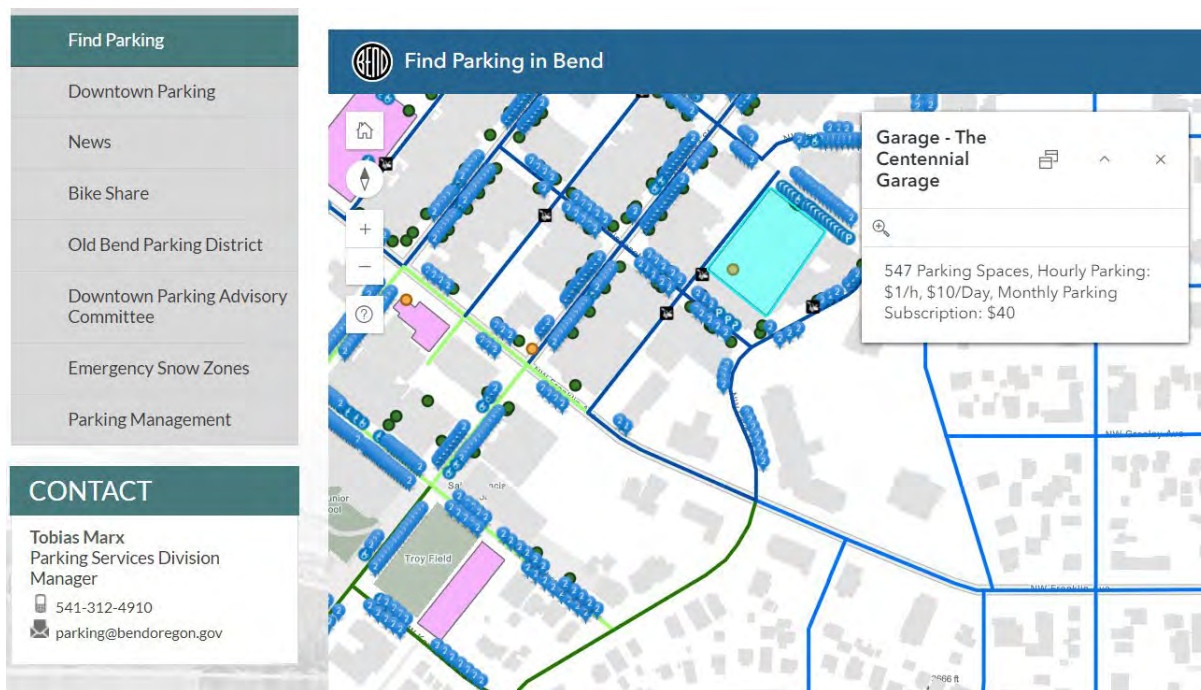


City of Lexington, KY

Interactive Map Examples



City of Minneapolis, MN



City of Bend, OR



Downtown Saugatuck Planned Development and Future Parking Impacts

This narrative provides context and analysis of future parking demand in downtown Saugatuck. Included is a review of Saugatuck's population, its master plan, and planned development projects. As reported herein, Saugatuck's future growth and development strategy is centered on balancing preservation, tourism, housing needs, and environmental stewardship. Rather than pursuing rapid expansion, the city is intentionally guiding incremental growth that protects its historic character, natural assets, and small-town coastal identity while responding to evolving economic and residential needs.

Context: Historical Population

Table 1: Historical Saugatuck Population

Census	Pop.	%±
1870	1,026	—
1880	794	-22.6%
1890	799	0.6%
1900	707	-11.5%
1910	621	-12.2%
1920	526	-15.3%
1930	696	32.3%
1940	628	-9.8%
1950	770	22.6%
1960	927	20.4%
1970	1,022	10.2%
1980	1,079	5.6%
1990	954	-11.6%
2000	1,065	11.6%
2010	925	-13.1%
2020	865	-6.5%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census

Population can serve as a proxy for parking demand, particularly for trend analysis. It is reasoned that a community with a steady population, neither increasing nor decreasing in a measurable way, is unlikely to see significant changes in its parking demand.

As shown in the table to the left, Saugatuck's permanent resident population peaked in 1980 at 1,079, decreased in 1990 to 954, and then increased to 1,065. In 2010, the resident count decreased to 925, and by 2020, it had decreased to 865.

Although no official projections are available, it is reasonable to expect that the 2030 population will fall in the 850-950 range.

The takeaway here is that the steady population suggests stable parking demand and modest or no growth.

The Master Plan as the Primary Policy Framework

The City of Saugatuck is updating its Master Plan, which serves as the primary long-range policy document guiding land-use, transportation, housing, infrastructure, and economic development decisions. Building upon the 2016 Tri-Community Master Plan shared with Douglas and Saugatuck Township, the updated plan provides more city-specific direction. Key objectives include preserving historic neighborhoods, focusing development in already-serviced areas, strengthening year-round residency, and ensuring new development aligns with community character.



Growth Approach: Infill and Redevelopment

Future growth in Saugatuck is expected to occur primarily through infill development and redevelopment rather than outward expansion. The city discourages sprawl into surrounding rural and agricultural lands, instead prioritizing underutilized parcels, adaptive reuse of existing structures, and modest increases in density in targeted areas. This approach allows the community to accommodate growth while maintaining its physical footprint and scenic setting.

Housing and Workforce Challenges

Housing availability and affordability are among the most pressing issues shaping future development policy. The area's strong tourism economy and second-home market have contributed to limited year-round and workforce housing options. In response, planning policies support a broader mix of housing types, including smaller units, duplexes, and low-scale multifamily housing. Regional partnerships and private initiatives are also being pursued to expand workforce housing opportunities without altering neighborhood character.

Downtown and Economic Development

Saugatuck's downtown is envisioned as a vibrant, walkable mixed-use center that supports local businesses, arts, and cultural activities. Economic development efforts emphasize reinvestment, building preservation, and small-scale improvements rather than large new commercial projects. Tourism will remain a cornerstone of the local economy, but future strategies seek to balance visitor activity with resident quality of life and encourage more consistent, year-round economic vitality.

Transportation and Infrastructure Improvements

Planned infrastructure investments focus on enhancing pedestrian safety, improving streetscapes, expanding bicycle and trail connectivity, and maintaining efficient local circulation. Emphasis is placed on traffic calming and multimodal access rather than road widening. These improvements support infill development, reduce congestion, and reinforce Saugatuck's pedestrian-oriented character.

Environmental Protection and Open Space

Environmental conservation is a foundational element of Saugatuck's growth strategy. Policies strongly protect dunes, wetlands, river corridors, and wooded areas while integrating stormwater management and resilience planning into development standards. Coordination with regional parks and recreation planning ensures public access to natural areas while safeguarding sensitive landscapes.

Overall Outlook

Over the next several decades, Saugatuck's development pattern is expected to remain cautious, deliberate, and community-focused. Growth will likely manifest as small-scale projects, housing diversification, infrastructure upgrades, and continued reinvestment in existing areas. Large-scale commercial development and dramatic changes to the city's form are unlikely. The guiding vision is to accommodate thoughtful changes while preserving the qualities that make Saugatuck distinctive and desirable.



Will Future Plans Increase Parking Demand?

Future plans are expected to modestly increase parking demand; however, the increase is expected to be incremental, seasonal, and manageable. The City's growth strategy emphasizes infill development, redevelopment of existing sites, and small-scale housing diversification rather than large-scale expansion. As a result, parking impacts are expected to be limited compared to communities experiencing rapid growth.

Key Drivers of Parking Demand

1. Residential Infill and Housing Diversification

Future residential growth is expected to occur primarily through infill and redevelopment, including smaller housing units, duplexes, and low-scale multifamily development. Based on comparable planning benchmarks, this level of growth could result in approximately 20–40 new housing units over the next 10–20 years.

Using an average parking demand of 1.0–1.5 spaces per unit, this translates to an estimated increase of approximately 25–60 parking spaces. Most of this demand would be accommodated through on-site parking, shared driveways, or on-street parking within residential neighborhoods, with limited impact on municipal parking lots.

2. Downtown Reinvestment and Mixed-Use Activity

Downtown development is expected to focus on reinvesting in existing buildings, fostering small-scale business growth, and promoting mixed-use activity within a walkable setting. This type of development typically increases parking turnover rather than overall demand, with modest increases during peak employee hours and during peak dining or event hours.

Overall, under the most optimistic scenario, downtown reinvestment is estimated to generate additional demand for up to a few dozen additional spaces, concentrated during evenings, weekends, and special events.

3. Tourism and Seasonal Peak Demand

Tourism will remain the primary driver of parking demand in Saugatuck. Annual visitation has evolved over decades and is reported to exceed one million. The planning framework does not anticipate a significant increase in total visitor volume, but rather continued seasonal peaks during summer weekends, festivals, and special events.

Any increase in parking demand related to tourism is expected to be modest—generally single digits and likely less than a 10 percent increase on peak days. This equates to an estimated need for 50–100 additional parking spaces during the busiest periods, with little to no change in off-season demand.

4. Planned Development

As part of the parking study effort, Walker asked the city to identify known planned development projects. The city identified the following two projects:



Table 2: Planned Saugatuck Development Projects

Address	Parcel	Zoning	Description
250 MASON ST	57-300-152-00	CER R-4 TRANS, ICE & SNOW	Change of use to Bed & Breakfast. Proposing 12 private parking spaces.
640 WATER ST	57-300-030-00	DWP DTN WATR PRV	PUD - new build - 2 story building - 2 STR units on 2nd floor - retail/kitchen space on ground floor - 3 parking spaces proposed.

Source: City of Saugatuck

Both planned developments are expected to provide their own parking. As shown, the 250 Mason Street project is a proposed change of use to a bed-and-breakfast with 12 private parking spaces. The 640 Water Street project is a planned unit development with two storage units, retail and kitchen space on the ground floor, and three parking spaces.

Overall Parking Impact Estimate

When combining residential, downtown, and tourism-related factors, the total long-term increase in parking demand is estimated to be approximately 100–150 spaces. Based on the conservative growth assumptions in the Master Plan, the lower end of this range is considered the most realistic planning scenario.

Why the Impact Is Manageable

Several planned policy initiatives help moderate parking demand, including improvements to walkability and pedestrian safety, expanded bicycle and trail connectivity, traffic calming measures, and an emphasis on compact, mixed-use development. Together, these strategies reduce short vehicle trips, increase parking turnover, and lessen the need for new large-scale parking facilities.

Conclusion

In summary, Saugatuck's future growth plans will result in a gradual and modest increase in parking demand, primarily during peak tourism periods. The scale of anticipated growth does not suggest the need for significant additional parking capacity. Instead, targeted management of peak-day demand, shared parking strategies, and incremental adjustments to existing parking supply are likely to be sufficient.



Saugatuck Loading Zone and ADA Parking

This narrative addresses two related curb-management priorities in downtown Saugatuck: providing very short-term on-street parking in the CBD for unloading, quick pickups, and short visits, and improving accessible parking for residents and visitors with mobility limitations. A limited number of designated very short-term spaces is needed for deliveries, on-demand pickups, and quick transactions. The downtown parking study identified 1,868 total spaces, including 761 on-street spaces in the CBD, of which 561 are time-restricted, most for 3 hours. In that context, a small number of very short-term spaces can meet specific operational needs without materially reducing the overall public parking supply.

Very Short-Term Loading and Pick-Up Parking

This section outlines a framework for determining when and where very short-term parking is warranted, identifies business uses most likely to generate that demand, and concludes with a recommendation for implementation.

Decision Framework

Very short-term on-street parking should be used selectively to accommodate brief, operationally necessary activity such as pickups, carry-out transactions, and short service stops. When appropriately located, these spaces can reduce double parking and curbside conflicts while improving turnover and usability along active commercial frontages.

In most cases, 15 minutes should be sufficient for a customer to enter a food, beverage, or service establishment, complete a transaction, and return to the vehicle. Because Saugatuck is a tourist-oriented destination where many visitors park once and stay for several hours, the city may need fewer very short-term spaces than a more conventional downtown business district. Table 1 provides a practical screening process for determining where those spaces are warranted.

Table 1: Very Short-Term Parking Decision Process

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Is the location adjacent to a high-demand use, such as a restaurant, retail corridor, grocery store, library, event space, or dense housing? If yes, move to Step 2. If no, a short-term zone is not recommended.	Are adjacent businesses requesting a short-term space? If yes, move to Step 3. If no, a short-term zone is not recommended.	Collect peak-season utilization, vehicle type, and dwell time data. A short-term space is warranted when: • Utilization exceeds 85 percent during peak periods • At least 60 percent of uses are under 15 minutes, including 20 percent under 5 minutes

Source: Walker Consultants.



Business Uses Most Likely to Require Very Short-Term Parking

This inventory identifies downtown businesses whose operating models are most likely to generate recurring demand for very short-term curb access, including customer pick-up, quick transactions, and limited-service loading. It is intended to inform parking and curb-management planning and should be reviewed periodically by the Parking Improvements Task Force as conditions evolve.

Table 2 identifies the downtown businesses most likely to generate recurring demand for very short-term curb access and helps illustrate where additional 15-minute spaces may be justified. Other locations may also warrant consideration as conditions evolve.

Table 1: Downtown Businesses with Very Short-Term Parking Needs

Business Name	Address	Business Type
Uncommon Coffee Roasters	127 Hoffman St	Coffee shop/bakery
The Annex Coffee Shop	104 Hoffman St	Coffee shop / light food
Saugatuck Tea Company	360 Water St	Beverage shop
Il Forno Cafe	220 Water St	Coffee & quick food
Fresh Basil Cafe	313 Water St	Carry-out restaurant
Scooter's Cafe & Pizzeria	322 Culver St	Pizza / carry-out
Pumpernickels	202 Butler St	Sandwich & take-out restaurant
Boardwalk Deli	311 Water St	Quick-service deli
Butler Pantry	439 Butler St	Specialty grocery/convenience retail
American Spoon Foods	308 Butler St	Specialty food retail
Kilwins	152 Butler St	Confectionery/impulse retail

Source: Walker Consultants.

Recommendation

Walker recommends that the city retain authority to designate 15-minute parking where the evaluation process outlined in Table 1 demonstrates a clear operational need. This approach preserves flexibility to respond to business demand while avoiding unnecessary conversion of longer-term public parking. The city should also periodically review the location and performance of these spaces and adjust signage when conditions change, or a very short-term designation is no longer warranted.

In addition to managing short-term curb access for loading and quick-turnover activity, the city must ensure that on-street parking remains accessible to residents and visitors with mobility limitations. The following section addresses whether the existing supply and distribution of accessible on-street parking in downtown Saugatuck is adequate.



Accessible On-Street Parking

Local Need and Existing Supply

Saugatuck's permanent resident and tourist populations are older than those in Michigan and the United States, and older populations are more likely to require accessible parking. At present, only 10 of the city's 761 on-street parking spaces in the CBD, or 1.3 percent, are accessible. This falls below both the long-established 2 percent off-street benchmark and the 4 percent on-street guidance reflected in the Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG). Survey responses and stakeholder interviews also indicate that accessible parking is perceived as insufficient in both quantity and location.

Demographic and Stakeholder Evidence

The demographic and stakeholder record supports the conclusion that accessible parking demand in Saugatuck is likely higher than in many comparable communities. Both resident and visitor age profiles skew older than state and national benchmarks, and survey respondents and interview participants raised concerns about the number, location, enforcement, and usability of accessible spaces in the CBD.

Demographic Evidence

The following table compares the age distribution of the resident population in Saugatuck, Michigan, the State of Michigan, and the United States. Data are based on the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (2019–2023), which are commonly used for planning-level analysis in small communities.

Table 3 illustrates why accessible parking demand in Saugatuck is likely to exceed that of many comparable communities by comparing the city's older resident age profile with state and national norms.

Table 3: Resident Age Distribution — Saugatuck, Michigan, and the U.S.

Age Group	Saugatuck (%)	Michigan (%)	United States (%)
Under 18 years	11.9	20.8	21.5
18–34 years	8.8	22.1	20.5
35–54 years	23.4	25.2	25.0
55–64 years	19.0	17.6	15.0
65 years and over	36.9	19.6	18.0

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2019–2023).

Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding. Age groupings were structured to highlight differences between Saugatuck's older population and state and national norms.

The next table compares the age distribution of Saugatuck visitors with that of the general populations of Michigan and the United States. Visitor age data are based on responses to the City of Saugatuck Master Plan and parking survey and reflect the demographic profile of people actively visiting or engaging with the community. State and national comparison data are drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates.



Table 4 reinforces the same conclusion from a visitor perspective, showing that Saugatuck's tourist population also skews older than broader state and national populations.

Table 4: Visitor Age Distribution — Saugatuck, Michigan, and the U.S.

Age Group	Saugatuck Visitors (%)	Michigan Population (%)	U.S. Population (%)
Under 18 years	—	20.8	21.5
19–39 years	22	22.1	20.5
40–59 years	38	25.2	25.0
60 years and over	40	19.6	18.0

Source: City of Saugatuck Master Plan and American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2019–2023).

Key observation: Saugatuck's visitor population skews significantly older than both the Michigan and national populations. Visitors age 60 and over account for roughly two-fifths of survey respondents, more than double the statewide and national shares. This older visitor profile has important implications for accessibility, walk-distance tolerance, ADA parking demand, and curbside management in the CBD.

Survey and Stakeholder Findings

The online parking questionnaire administered for this study supports the conclusion that accessible parking is insufficient in downtown Saugatuck. Among 618 responses reviewed, 17 respondents, or about 2.8 percent, explicitly mentioned accessible, ADA, or handicap parking as a challenge or concern. This is notable because the survey did not include a specific question about accessible parking.

Respondents raised concerns related to the availability, location, enforcement, and usability of accessible parking. Common themes included insufficient ADA spaces, difficulty finding handicap parking during peak periods, the need for closer parking for individuals with mobility limitations, and a lack of enforcement when ADA spaces are blocked or misused.

Illustrative ADA-related comments included the following:

- More accessible.
- More accessible alternate ways, bike lanes, or larger shoulders for bikes or walking.
- Handicapped.
- I am disabled. Not enough handicapped parking. I always find them in Holland, but not in Saugatuck.
- Outdoor patios in the street need to go away. Enforce timed parking. We also need more handicaps.
- Need for more handicap spaces.
- Fine for me, but harder with a stroller or my kids and my mother with a cane.
- I have considered using the interurban, but I am disabled. Not sure I can get on.
- I use a walker, so a short distance or handicap spot is essential, or I leave and have to go elsewhere.
- More handicapped less restaurants using up parking spots.
- More handicap parking.
- Handicap if available.
- More handicap parking. Elderly ppl spend money too, but can't walk blocks to and from a parking.



- So little handicap parking is available.
- One thing lacking in this survey is asking about handicap parking.
- Designated free public parking lots that are easily accessible.
- Mobility issues.
- More handicap parking.
- Handicap if able to find. Would be nice if businesses didn't put picnic tables in the handicap spot.
- One should never have to pay for Handicapped parking (or be in a position to ask if there is a post which isn't ideal if it's a handicapped parking sign, for example.
- About parking in the handicap spots many times, and their reply is "well, there's nowhere else to.
- Charge for handicapped parking.)
- Handicap parking is ideal.
- Handicapped and require handicapped parking, and it is basically nonexistent in downtown.
- Better enforcement of the handicap parking spots is needed. I have confronted tourists.
- More considerate of out-of-towners and the elderly & disabled, families with small children, etc.

Additionally, 2 of the 10 stakeholders interviewed for this study stated, without prompting, that accessible, ADA, or handicap parking in downtown Saugatuck was insufficient.

- Insufficient accessible spaces.
- I also do not believe there are enough accessible/handicap spaces.

Taken together, these comments reinforce concerns about the adequacy, location, enforcement, and usability of accessible parking in the downtown area.

Regulatory Context and Practical Application

Accessible on-street parking in Saugatuck should be evaluated within a practical regulatory framework that combines ADA program-access obligations with the more detailed technical guidance now available through PROWAG. While the 2010 ADA Standards do not establish explicit technical design standards for on-street parking, Title II of the ADA applies to on-street parking programs operated by state and local governments. In other words, on-street parking is a public program and must be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities as part of overall program accessibility.

The Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), issued as a final rule by the U.S. Access Board in 2023, now provide the primary federal technical guidance for accessible on-street parking and curbside facilities. They are increasingly used by federal and state agencies as the baseline for ADA compliance in the public right-of-way. For Saugatuck, PROWAG should be understood as both a design reference and a policy benchmark for determining whether the current number and distribution of accessible spaces is adequate.

- Number of spaces: Generally, at least one accessible space is required for every 25 on-street parking spaces on a block face up to 100 spaces, with additional spaces required as the total supply increases. Where more than 200 spaces are provided, approximately 4 percent must be accessible. Walker understands that this requirement applies to new projects under construction and restorations or reconfigurations of existing block perimeters or block faces. Therefore, until Saugatuck falls into one of these two categories, this 4 percent rule is not mandated. However, Saugatuck may elect to use this as



guidance. Based on 761 on-street parking spaces in the CBD, 4 percent would be 30 ADA spaces. At present, 10 accessible on-street parking spaces were identified as follows in the CBD:

- o 100 Block of Hoffman Street (1)
- o 100 Block of Mary Street (1)
- o 100 Block of Main Street (1)
- o 100 Block of Mason Street (1)
- o 200 Block of Mason Street (1)
- o 100 Block of Griffith Street (1)
- o 100 Block of Water Street (2)
- o 00 Block of Butler Street (2)
- Design and access: Accessible on-street spaces should be reasonably level and connected to the sidewalk network by a continuous accessible pedestrian route. Where sidewalk width allows (typically 14 feet or more), a street-level access aisle at least 5 feet wide should be provided.
- Signage and markings: Accessible spaces should be clearly designated using the International Symbol of Accessibility and appropriate pavement markings to discourage encroachment and ensure visibility.

In Michigan, accessible on-street parking is generally implemented through Title II obligations interpreted in conjunction with PROWAG. MDOT and local jurisdictions commonly use PROWAG to guide curbside design while allowing flexibility in older downtowns, historic districts, and resort communities where physical constraints may complicate full retrofit. Even where those constraints exist, the governing principle remains that accessible parking should be provided to the maximum extent feasible and distributed in a way that preserves meaningful access to key destinations.

Recommendation

Walker recommends that the city use PROWAG as the guiding framework for expanding accessible on-street parking in the CBD and increase the current supply from 10 spaces to approximately 30 spaces over time. Additional spaces should be distributed across the core business district, including Water, Butler, Main, Hoffman, Mason, and Culver Streets, to improve access to key destinations. This expansion should be paired with regular enforcement, utilization monitoring, and periodic reassessment so the city can refine the program as demand patterns and physical conditions evolve.



Restaurant Use of On-Street Parking

Purpose

This discussion evaluates the City of Saugatuck's practice of allowing restaurants to convert on-street public parking spaces into outdoor dining areas and outlines policy considerations for either discontinuing the practice or continuing it under a formal program that better reflects the public value of scarce curbside parking.

Summary of Key Points

- Thirteen on-street public parking spaces are currently used for restaurant outdoor dining, removing high-value curbside spaces from general public use.
- The spaces are governed by a conditional, revocable public-space framework that includes zoning approval, Historic District Commission approval, and a revocable license agreement.
- The current fee should be evaluated against the broader public value of high-turnover curb access, not only the cost of providing parking.
- The City's policy choice is whether to discontinue the practice, continue it under the existing framework, or reprice it to better reflect the value of public curb space.

History

The use of on-street parking spaces for outdoor dining became more common during the COVID-19 pandemic as restaurants sought additional open-air seating capacity. In Saugatuck, the City reportedly authorized restaurants to use portions of the public street for outdoor dining for up to five years while retaining discretion to reclaim the affected curbside spaces. That structure indicates a temporary, revocable use of the public right-of-way—not a permanent transfer of curbside parking rights to adjacent businesses.

Ordinance Review and Revocation Authority

City staff has confirmed that expanded outdoor dining in the right-of-way is governed by [§ 154.092\(O\)\(2\)](#), which treats this use as a special land use requiring Planning Commission review and approval. Historic District Commission approval and a revocable license agreement are also required.

City staff has further indicated that restaurants currently using street space for dining have received the required zoning approval, Historic District Commission approval, and revocable license agreement. Accordingly, the use should be understood as conditional and revocable, rather than as a permanent allocation of curbside parking to adjacent private businesses.

Revocation authority. The City may revoke an approved special use permit for an expanded outdoor dining area if no revocable license agreement is in effect, required fees are not paid, applicable requirements are not met, or the City needs or desires to use the space for parking infrastructure, utilities, or other public purposes. This authority confirms that the use remains conditional and revocable rather than a permanent allocation of curbside parking to adjacent private businesses.

Relevant City Ordinance References

The following provisions and related City records are most relevant to evaluating restaurant use of on-street parking spaces for outdoor dining:



Reference	Subject	Relevance to On-Street Dining
Chapter 154, §§ 154.080–154.092	Special land uses	Establishes the review framework and standards for selected special land uses.
§ 154.092(O)(2)	Expanded outdoor dining areas	Primary zoning reference for outdoor dining in the right-of-way, including review and operating conditions.
§ 154.092(P)	Related outdoor dining and service standards	Cited by the Planning Commission in connection with expanded outdoor dining with alcohol service and should be reviewed with § 154.092(O)(2).
Chapter 152, §§ 152.01–152.07	Historic District regulations and HDC review	Establishes the Historic District regulatory framework, including Commission review authority and procedures for work in the Historic District.
Chapter 154 site plan review provisions	Site plan review standards	Relevant where outdoor dining is reviewed as part of a site plan or site plan amendment.
City forms and permit records	Right-of-way permitting and license documentation	Relevant for license agreements, fees, insurance, and operational requirements; confirm against executed agreements and the current fee schedule.

In larger cities with robust multimodal networks, removing on-street parking for outdoor dining or parklets is often defended as a strategy to reduce reliance on automobiles and encourage transit, walking, bicycling, ridesharing, and other non-single-occupancy modes. That rationale is less persuasive in Saugatuck, where access to the community and its commercial district is more automobile-dependent, particularly for regional visitors, seasonal patrons, employees, and customers traveling from outside the immediate downtown area.

Pros and Cons

Potential benefits. Restaurant use of on-street parking can expand seating capacity, add street activity, support peak-season restaurant revenues, and reinforce Saugatuck’s identity as a walkable, visitor-oriented community. Where well designed, these spaces can also function as seasonal parklets that add vibrancy and a stronger sense of place.

Potential drawbacks. The practice removes high-demand curbside parking from public use, benefits some businesses more than others, and may create the perception that private operators receive an economic advantage through use of the public right-of-way. Street-based dining areas can also raise safety and liability concerns and complicate loading, accessible parking, drainage, maintenance, enforcement, and streetscape management. Because the original pandemic-related rationale has largely passed, continuing the practice without a clear policy framework may appear ad hoc rather than purposefully managed.

Parking-Space Value

A practical way to illustrate the economic value of a public parking space is to divide the estimated annual value of downtown goods and services by the public parking supply serving the downtown parking zones. This calculation does not represent what users pay for parking, since public parking is commonly subsidized. Rather, it demonstrates that the cost of providing parking establishes a floor, not necessarily the full public value of the space.



Using an illustrative \$200 million annual downtown goods-and-services value and 1,883 public parking spaces, the gross annual value per space is approximately \$106,000. Applying a 10% to 15% business margin results in an illustrative margin-adjusted value of approximately \$10,600 to \$15,900 per space per year.

Metric	Calculation	Illustrative Value
Annual downtown goods/services value	Illustrative assumption	\$200,000,000
Public spaces in four zones	Actual public capacity	1,883 spaces
Gross annual value per space	$\$200,000,000 \div 1,883$	Approx. \$106,000
Margin-adjusted annual value	$\$106,000 \times 10\% \text{ to } 15\%$	Approx. \$10,600–\$15,900

Conclusion

Restaurant use of on-street parking can support outdoor dining, reinforce peak-season economic activity, and contribute to downtown vibrancy. However, it also removes approximately 13 high-demand curbside spaces from general public use and may create equity, safety, liability, loading, accessibility, maintenance, enforcement, and streetscape-management concerns.

Walker recommends that the City discontinue restaurant use of on-street parking for outdoor dining unless participating restaurants reimburse the City at a level that reasonably reflects the economic value of the occupied public parking spaces. The current fee structure does not appear to reflect the broader public value of high-turnover curb access in a constrained downtown parking environment.

If the City elects to continue the practice, participating restaurants should remain subject to special land use approval, Historic District Commission approval, and a revocable license agreement. Any continued use should remain revocable at the City's discretion and subject to all applicable approval, fee, and compliance requirements. The City should also increase the amount restaurants pay for these spaces so the fee more closely aligns with the economic value of occupying public curbside parking.

Sources: City of Saugatuck zoning ordinance § 154.092(O)(2) and Chapter 154 special land use provisions, American Legal Publishing; City of Saugatuck Chapter 152 Historic District Regulations, American Legal Publishing; City of Saugatuck Planning Commission June 19, 2025 meeting minutes; City of Saugatuck Historic District Commission February 1, 2024 and April 4, 2024 meeting minutes; City-provided information regarding Historic District Commission approval, revocable license agreement requirements, fee schedule, and revocation language supplied by the user; user-provided illustrative economic-value assumptions for \$200 million in annual downtown goods and services and 1,883 public parking spaces in the four zones; and user-provided/prior working document reference to approximately 13 on-street spaces currently used by restaurants.

04 | Alternatives Considered

This section provides an overview of the alternatives evaluated as part of the parking study, including paid parking, structured parking, remote/shared parking strategies, expanded Interurban service, enforcement and ambassador approaches, employee parking management, and potential circulation changes such as a Butler Street one-way conversion. It summarizes how each option was considered in relation to Saugatuck's downtown parking challenges, implementation feasibility, cost, community fit, and potential role in a phased parking management strategy.

Paid Parking Considerations for Saugatuck

Purpose

The City of Saugatuck and its Parking Improvements Task Force have identified the possible introduction of paid parking as a consideration for future implementation to improve downtown parking conditions. This discussion provides context and information to help educate decision-makers on what other Michigan resort communities are doing, understand the costs of paid on-street parking, and weigh the pros and cons of paid parking and parking meters.

Peer Michigan Cities Survey (Expanded)

The following table summarizes Michigan resort communities and their approaches to on-street parking management, expanded to include Traverse City, Petoskey, and Harbor Springs.

Community	Core Time Limit	Paid On-Street	Enforcement	Technology	Notes / Effectiveness
Boyne City	2 hr or unlimited; some 15 min	No	City	Signage	Free, low-friction
Charlevoix	2 hr core; 3 hr lot	Yes (seasonal)	Police + seasonal	ParkMobile, text-to-pay	Strong summer turnover
Frankfort	No time limits	No	City	Maps, signage	Simple & effective
Grand Haven	3 hr downtown	No	Public Safety	Permits, kiosks (off-street)	Manages overnights and residents
Ludington	15-min, 2, 3, 8 hr	No	Police	Maps, posted limits	Clear tiering reduces conflict
Mackinaw City	3 hr	No (pay lots)	City	Lot systems	Curb rules less clear
Manistee	2 hr by ordinance	No	City	Ordinance + signage	Clear block rules

Marquette	3 hr core, 10 hr fringe	Yes	Police + Treasurer	Pay stations, Passport	Tech-driven compliance
Petoskey	Short-term core limits	Generally no (some seasonal pay)	City / DDA	Signage; limited pay tech	Tourist-focused core management
Saugatuck	3 hr typical	No	County sheriff (ad hoc)	Manual tickets	Time limits encourage turnover
South Haven	3 hr zones	No (pay beach lots)	Police	Passport, kiosks	Paid where demand peaks
St. Ignace	2–3 hr downtown	No (pay lots)	City / DDA	HONK app	Good curb/lot split
Traverse City	Varies by zone	Yes	City	Meters, pay-by-app	High-demand downtown pricing
Harbor Springs	Time limits in core	No	City	Signage	Small-scale, visitor-oriented

With the addition of Traverse City, Petoskey, and Harbor Springs, the peer comparison reinforces several themes relevant to Saugatuck. Larger regional draws such as Traverse City rely on paid parking systems and apps to manage intense, sustained demand. Smaller resort towns such as Harbor Springs emphasize simplicity, free parking, and posted time limits consistent with historic character and seasonal visitation. Petoskey sits between these models, relying primarily on time limits with selective seasonal or area-specific paid strategies.

Key Takeaways

There is no single correct parking management model. Communities with higher density and year-round demand are more likely to adopt paid systems, while smaller or more seasonal resort towns successfully rely on posted limits and targeted enforcement. The expanded peer set suggests Saugatuck has viable precedents on both sides, allowing policy choice to be guided by local goals, political tolerance, and desired visitor experience.



Estimated Cost to Build and Operate a Parking Structure in Saugatuck

Purpose

This document summarizes the likely capital and operating costs associated with constructing and maintaining a self-park, public parking structure in Saugatuck, Michigan. The estimates are based on current U.S. and Midwest parking-industry benchmarks and scaled to the size and seasonal nature of a small resort community.

Likely Scale of a Saugatuck Parking Structure

If pursued, a parking structure in Saugatuck would most realistically consist of 100 to 400 spaces in a two- to four-level, above-grade, open-air configuration. This type of structure represents the lowest-cost form of structured parking and is typical of small cities that choose to build garages.

Construction Cost Estimates

Above-grade concrete parking structures in the Midwest currently cost around \$35,000 per parking space to construct. Based on this estimate, a 200-space structure would likely cost about \$7 million, while a 300-space structure would likely cost more than \$10 million. These figures exclude land acquisition and assume the structure is built above grade on a geometrically friendly site that allows for a minimum footprint of 120' x 135', allowing for an efficiency of 335 square feet per space or better, and includes modest architectural treatments. These costs are intended to provide an idea of probable costs; actual costs will vary and depend on site characteristics, the details of final design, and the selected contractor's guaranteed maximum price.

Soft Costs and Total Project Cost

In addition to construction costs, parking structures typically incur soft costs equal to 20 percent of construction value. These costs include engineering, architectural design, soils and materials testing, permitting, inspections, construction management, and legal and financing expenses. When soft costs are added to construction costs, the total per-space project cost is expected to be \$42,000 in 2026 dollars. Escalation can be expected in the coming years and has been exceeding general inflation.

Annual Operating Expenses

Walker maintains a database of parking garage revenues and expenses, and based on the 303 multi-level above-grade parking structures in the database, the median annual operating cost is \$783. For a 200-to-300-space garage, this equates to approximately \$156,000 to \$235,000 per year. These costs cover lighting, electricity, cleaning, minor concrete repairs, striping, insurance, and routine maintenance, but exclude debt service and major capital rehabilitation.

Long-Term Lifecycle Considerations and Structural Maintenance Costs

Over its lifespan, parking structures require periodic major reinvestment, including concrete and structural repairs, joint replacement or traffic topping membrane replacement, waterproofing, lighting upgrades, and code compliance updates. Regular investments in repairs and maintenance can significantly extend the life of a parking structure. Neglecting a new precast parking structure means it might only have a useful service life of 30-40 years before demolition is prudent; however, a well-designed, built, and maintained cast-in-place, post-tensioned concrete parking structure could last the better part of a century. To ensure sufficient funds for a well-maintained facility, we recommend that owners set aside at least 1% of initial construction costs in a sinking fund and increase this amount annually to cover inflationary construction costs.



Revenue Considerations in a Seasonal Community

Because Saugatuck experiences highly seasonal parking demand, a parking structure would likely be heavily used during peak summer weekends but underutilized for much of the year. As a result, parking revenue alone would likely not fully cover construction, operating, and long-term maintenance costs. Most small resort communities treat parking structures as subsidized public infrastructure rather than revenue-generating assets.

Revenue Required to Break Even

Putting it all together, total ownership costs for building, owning, operating, and maintaining a parking structure are significant. To provide a point of reference, it can be helpful to parse out the true cost of parking, including upfront capital costs, operating expenses, and capital expenses for repairs, replacements, and maintenance.

The following table presents the monthly total cost per parking space or the monthly revenue needed to break even (assuming amortization over 30 years at 5.0 percent interest), given all costs.

Table 1: Total Per-Space Monthly Cost to Own, Operate, and Maintain (2026 Dollars)

		Annual Operating and Capital Maintenance Cost Per Space					
		\$600	\$800	\$1000	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600
Project Cost Per Space (2026 Dollars)	\$32,000	\$222	\$238	\$255	\$272	\$288	\$305
	34,000	\$233	\$249	\$266	\$283	\$299	\$316
	36,000	\$243	\$260	\$277	\$293	\$310	\$327
	38,000	\$254	\$271	\$287	\$304	\$321	\$337
	40,000	\$265	\$281	\$298	\$315	\$331	\$348
	42,000	\$275	\$292	\$309	\$325	\$342	\$359
	44,000	\$286	\$303	\$320	\$336	\$353	\$370
	46,000	\$297	\$314	\$330	\$347	\$364	\$380
	48,000	\$308	\$324	\$341	\$358	\$374	\$391
	50,000	\$318	\$335	\$352	\$368	\$385	\$402
	52,000	\$329	\$346	\$362	\$379	\$396	\$412

*Note: Facility financing is assumed across an amortization period of 30 years at an interest rate of 5.0 percent.

Source: Walker Consultants, 2026

Assuming a project cost of \$42,000 per space and annual operating and capital maintenance costs of \$1,000, the monthly total cost of ownership is \$309 per space, rising further when land acquisition costs are included. This exceeds almost all parking rates charged in Michigan, including Detroit, the state's largest city, suggesting that a garage would require significant subsidies beyond user fees to cover costs. Note that actual costs will vary from those shown; Walker provides this conceptual cost statement for informational purposes only.

Overall Assessment

For Saugatuck, a parking structure would represent a significant public investment, likely requiring close to \$10 million in upfront capital and several hundred thousand dollars annually to fund operating and ongoing capital expenses, including repairs and replacements. Such a facility would need to be justified primarily on access, economic vitality, and land-use efficiency grounds rather than on the expectation of full cost recovery through parking fees. It's a difficult sell given the need is only for a few days annually.



Saugatuck Remote Parking, The Interurban, and Shared Parking Agreements

Introduction

This narrative provides an accounting of remote parking efforts in downtown Saugatuck and the Interurban, which provides on-demand service and connects the Saugatuck High School parking lot to various downtown points.

The Interurban

The Interurban Transit Authority (ITA) operates the Interurban, a demand-response public bus system serving Saugatuck Township, including the cities of Saugatuck and Douglas, Laketown Township, and limited downtown Fennville locations. The Interurban's mission is to provide safe, reliable, efficient, and affordable transportation that connects the community, promotes sustainability, and enhances quality of life.

Rides may be scheduled on demand as early as 15 minutes, or reservations may be made for a specific date and time in the future. Curb-to-curb service means that the Interurban may be summoned to pick up and drop off passengers anywhere in its service area.

Operating hours for 2026 are as follows:

Table 1: Interurban 2026 Operating Hours

Season	Days	Hours	Notes / Special Conditions
September – June 5	Monday–Friday	7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.	—
September – June 5	Saturday–Sunday	9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.	—
June 6 – August 31	Monday–Thursday	7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.	—
June 6 – August 31	Friday	7:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Late-night rides from 7:00–11:00 p.m. cost \$3
June 6 – August 31	Saturday	9:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Late-night rides from 7:00–11:00 p.m. cost \$3
June 6 – August 31	Sunday	9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Select Sundays extended to 9:00 p.m.

Source: <https://www.saugatuckinterurban.org/>

Holiday and Special Event Notes:

- Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day
- Closed at 2:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve
- New Year's Eve: Free rides from 6:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m.
- Independence Day, Venetian Festival, and Halloween Parade feature extended hours

Ridership fares are \$1 for adults and children 12 and older, and \$0.50 for senior citizens 62 and older, children under 12, or persons with disabilities.

The table below summarizes remote parking and shuttle services available offered by the ITA for downtown Saugatuck, including seasonal operations, pickup and drop-off locations, and fare information.



Table 2: Interurban Service Summary for Downtown Saugatuck

Service	Months in Service	Days / Hours of Operation	Pickup Locations	Drop-off Locations	Fare / How to Ride
Weekend Downtown Shuttle (Remote Parking ⇄ Downtown)	Peak season (summer); weekends	Weekends; aligns with Interurban seasonal hours (late evening service Fri/Sat during peak months)	Saugatuck High School (designated remote park-and-ride lot)	Downtown Saugatuck (multiple central drop-offs as directed by driver)	Free shuttle; operated through the Interurban system via phone (269-857-1418) or mobile app
Interurban Demand-Response (Curb-to-Curb)	Year-round (seasonal hours)	Variable by season; typical service operates daily with extended hours during the summer months	Curb-to-curb pickup anywhere within the service area (advance request required)	Any address within the service area	\$1 adult fare; discounted fares for seniors, children, and persons with disabilities

Source: <https://www.saugatuckinterurban.org/>

Figure 1: Photograph of an Interurban Bus in Use



The ITA owns eight buses, seven of which provide consistent service, and one that serves as a spare or maintenance backup. The vehicle shown to the left is a typical vehicle, a cutaway shuttle bus, a small transit vehicle commonly used for demand-response and paratransit service. Based on its size and ADA ramp configuration, this type of bus typically seats approximately 12 to 14 passengers, with seating capacity reduced when wheelchair positions are in use. The exact capacity depends on the interior layout selected by the operator.

Federal Transit Authority records show that the ITA system provided about 75,000 annual passenger trips in 2024, spread over 191,191 vehicle revenue miles and 14,489 vehicle revenue hours. Operating expenses in 2024 were reported to be \$1,184,664. Fare revenues in 2024 were reported to be \$61,657. The sources of 2024 operating funds expended are as follows: \$109,025 from direct generation, \$216,406 from the federal government, \$383,378 from local government, and \$475,855 from state government. Capital funds expended in 2024 include \$134,181 by the federal government and \$33,545 by the state government.



Enhanced shuttle service is planned for the summer. The interurban has been run as a hop-on/hop-off, demand-based service. Over the last couple of years, ridership has reportedly been declining.

ITA Operational Notes

1. Currently, the ITA does not have a written parking agreement with Saugatuck Public Schools; however, discussions are underway to create one.
2. ITA can increase remote parking options. It recently added three used transit vans to its fleet, and these will be in service by June 1st, 2026.
3. ITA would need additional funds to increase parking options and the fleet size for the parking shuttle service.
4. ITA can provide a standard route with specific stops and times (hop-on, hop-off). For example, ITA would need additional funding to add the following serviceable route: 200 Blue Star to DES to Berry Field (Douglas), crossing the bridge to Saugatuck, stopping at Riverside Church of Saugatuck (6591 Old Allegan), continuing to SPS High School, then onto Saugatuck Drug Store at the corner of Mason and Butler. Returning to 200 Blue Star to start the loop again. (Adding remote parking for Oval Beach access may also be beneficial.)
5. Operating cost (March 2026): \$142.39 per vehicle-hour (with FY25/26 average cost of \$105.39 per vehicle-hour).

Table 3: ITA Non-Financial Operations Summary (March 2026 and FY25/26 Average)

Metric	March 2026	FY25/26 Average
Vehicle hours	1,365	1,227
Vehicle miles	20,190	44,144
Total passengers	4,842	5,086
Days operated	31	30
System vehicles operated	9	9
Fuel gallons consumed	3,077	2,241
Revenue vehicle operators	15	15
Number of accidents	0	0
Number of road calls	0	1
Farebox revenue	\$3,813	\$8,976
Eligible operating expenses	\$194,362	\$129,333
Farebox recovery (farebox revenue/expenses)	1.96%	6.94%

Notes:

- Cost and revenue: March 2026 cost was \$142.39 per vehicle-hour versus \$2.79 revenue per vehicle-hour (farebox recovery of 1.96%).
- Service productivity: March 2026 carried 4,842 passengers, averaging 3.55 passengers per vehicle-hour (and 0.24 passengers per vehicle-mile).
- Scale of service: March 2026 operations totaled 1,365 vehicle-hours and 20,190 vehicle-miles over 31 operating days, using 9 vehicles and 15 operators.

Source: ITA



Remote Parking – Saugatuck High School

The ITA has an agreement with the Saugatuck School District to use the 116-space high school parking lot during summer weekends¹. Motorists may park their vehicles in this lot at no charge and then walk or ride the Interurban to downtown Saugatuck. At present, this is the sole remote parking option that is formally advertised and serviced by the Interurban.

Alternative Remote Parking Locations

The Saugatuck Parking Improvements Task Force is exploring expanding the number and capacity of remote parking locations for employee and visitor usage. The following are some options with a brief discussion of each:

- Dykstra Funeral Home. This property is located at 520 Lake Street in Saugatuck. It offers cremation services and burials, with visitation rooms and an on-site chapel. A parking lot is located on the premises, with an estimated capacity of 30 spaces. The funeral home has allowed its lot to be used for public parking in the past. However, there is no active agreement or practice to make this lot available for public use.
- Riverside Church of Saugatuck. This church is located at 6591 Old Allegan Road in Saugatuck and has about 72 spaces.
- Saugatuck Department of Public Works (DPW) – Located at 3338 Blue Star Highway, the DPW occupies an estimated three-acre site that includes an open area that may be partially available for parking about 30 cars. DPW is performing additional analysis.
- Douglas Elementary School. Located at 261 West Randolph in Douglas, this property has about 75 parking spaces.
- St. Peter's Catholic Church. Located at 100 St. Peters Drive in Douglas, this church has about 100 spaces.

Shared Parking Agreements

The remote parking options identified above are regularly available and are candidates for remote parking that could be coupled with a shuttle service, such as the one offered by the ITA. As a result, we encourage the city to consider opportunities for shared parking between public and private lot owners. This collaborative approach could substantially increase downtown Saugatuck's parking capacity without the cost of building additional spaces, help address parking challenges, improve walkability, and distribute parking demand more effectively across the area.

Shared parking is a cost-effective solution that allows the city to lease or acquire access to additional spaces while providing owners with a steady monthly income for surplus spaces (if a financial arrangement is established). There are several benefits to this approach:

1. From a land use and environmental standpoint, utilizing existing parking resources is preferable to constructing new ones.

¹ There are 180 parking spaces at the high school. These 116 spaces constitute the largest parking lot at the high school.



2. Financially, owners may reduce insurance and operating costs while the city gains parking access without incurring upfront capital expenses for new resources.

Many municipalities nationwide utilize shared parking. Lease agreements can address concerns about ensuring tenants have access to spaces and the liability associated with public parking on private lots. In such agreements, the leaseholder assumes liability, carries insurance for public parking, and covers expenses like lighting and maintenance. A limitation of liability is crucial.

The city can negotiate with private property owners to make their parking available to the public. While this will incur costs, it is substantially more economical than building new parking lots or a multi-level parking structure. The city would manage liability and compensate owners for any wear and tear on their property. To make the offer attractive to owners, the agreements should specify when parking will be unavailable to the public. Owners should also have the right to limit public usage during specified times, such as special events, funerals, weddings, or other occasions.

Once agreements with private property owners are in place and the owner consents, public parking signage could be erected, and a parking communications program advertising the public availability of these spaces through parking maps and websites can help identify shared-use parking as available to the public.

Attached is a sample shared parking application used by the City of Ferndale, Michigan. Although this agreement form addresses assisting a private owner in gaining access to another private owner's parking spaces to meet its parking minimums (which do not apply in downtown Saugatuck), the principals of this agreement could be amended to apply to Saugatuck. The value of this application is that it provides evidence that shared parking agreements have precedent in the State of Michigan.

Following the Ferndale shared parking application is a suggested contract outline for a shared parking agreement between the City of Saugatuck and a private property owner. The city attorney could amend and finalize.

Summary

This narrative describes existing and potential strategies to address parking demand in downtown Saugatuck through a combination of remote parking and shuttle service provided by the Interurban Transit Authority (ITA). The Interurban is a demand-response, curb-to-curb public transit system serving Saugatuck, Douglas, and surrounding townships, with service hours that vary by season and expand during peak summer months. Riders may schedule trips on demand or in advance, with generally low fares and occasional free or extended service during special events and holidays.

The Interurban currently serves as the primary link between remote parking and downtown. The most established remote parking facility is the Saugatuck High School parking lot, which provides 116 spaces available for public use during summer weekends at no cost. Patrons may walk or ride the Interurban from this lot to downtown destinations. At present, this is the only formally advertised and Interurban-served remote parking location in Saugatuck.

The narrative identifies several additional properties that could potentially function as remote parking locations if agreements are reached, including churches, schools, municipal properties, and a large vacant



parcel along Blue Star Highway. These sites vary in size and could substantially expand parking capacity without the need to construct new downtown facilities.

In addition to remote parking, the narrative emphasizes the value of shared parking agreements between the City and private property owners. Shared parking allows underutilized private lots to be made available to the public during defined days and hours, offering a cost-effective alternative to building new parking infrastructure while addressing liability and insurance considerations through formal agreements.

Overall, the narrative concludes that a coordinated approach combining expanded remote parking, enhanced shuttle service, and shared parking agreements could increase parking availability, reduce congestion, support walkability, and avoid significant capital expenditures, while maintaining flexibility for private property owners.



Community & Economic Development
300 East Nine Mile Road
Ferndale MI 48220
248-546-2525
www.ferndalemi.gov

Shared Parking Agreement Application

Private parking facilities may be shared by multiple users whose activities are not normally conducted during the same hours, or when hours of peak use vary. No reduction in the number of spaces reserved for persons with disabilities is permitted. A waiver of the maximum allowable distance between the user and associated shared parking may be approved by the CED Director (up to 500-feet), with written justification and supporting information provided by the applicant. Users sharing a parking facility must provide for safe, convenient walking between land uses and parking, including safe, well-marked pedestrian crossings, signage, and adequate lighting. Pedestrian paths must be as direct and short as possible, without compromising safety. A pedestrian circulation plan that shows connections and walkways between the parking facilities and subject uses must be provided.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name:
Address:
City/State/Zip:
Email:
Phone:

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Name:
Address:
City/State/Zip:
Email:
Phone:

A. Proof from Applicant. Evidence must be submitted that demonstrates shared parking will not result in inadequate parking. Below is a list of required application information:

1. Please provide an analysis of available and used parking spaces based on parking counts taken at certain time intervals and days to verify parking usage patterns. (May be included as an attachment)

2. The type and hours of operation and parking demand for each land use:



Community & Economic Development
300 East Nine Mile Road
Ferndale MI 48220
248-546-2525
www.ferndalemi.gov

A. Proof from Applicant. Evidence must be submitted that demonstrates shared parking will not result in inadequate parking. Below is a list of required application information:

3. A description of the character of land use and parking patterns of adjacent land uses

4. An estimate of anticipated turnover in parking space use over the course of 12 - 24 hours at the site.

Please attach the following information in separate attachments along with this application:

1. A sketch or site plan displaying shared use spaces in the lot and walking distance to the uses sharing the lot, indicating the area of the parking lot, pedestrian and drive circulation.
2. Provide a legal description of the land upon which the parking area(s) and building(s) appurtenant to the parking areas are located.
3. Provide details regarding the maintenance of the shared parking areas, including snow removal.

NOTE: Should any of the shared parking uses be changed or should the CED Department find that any of the conditions described in the approved shared parking study or agreement no longer exist, or if insufficient parking is an issue due to complaints, the owner can submit a revised shared parking study and an amended shared parking agreement or provide the number of spaces required for each use as if computed separately. If the CED Department determines that the revised shared parking study or agreement does not satisfy the parking needs of the uses, the shared parking request will be denied.



PROPOSED SHARED PARKING AGREEMENT FRAMEWORK

(City of Saugatuck Use of Privately Owned Parking)

This Shared Parking Agreement (“Agreement”) is entered into as of [Effective Date], by and between:

City: The City of Saugatuck, a Michigan municipal corporation organized under the laws of the State of Michigan, with offices at [City Address] (“City”), and

Owner: [Owner Name], the fee simple owner of certain real property located at [Property Address], [City/Village], Michigan (“Owner”).

The City and Owner are sometimes referred to individually as a “Party” and collectively as the “Parties.”

1. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

This Agreement is entered into pursuant to the City’s authority under Michigan law to regulate parking, manage transportation facilities, and enter into contracts for public purposes. The purpose of this Agreement is to expand the supply of publicly available parking by allowing the City to utilize privately owned parking spaces during specified days and hours while preserving the Owner’s primary use of the property.

2. PROPERTY AND PARKING SPACES

Property Address: [Full Address]

Parking Spaces: [Number] existing, legally conforming parking spaces

Exhibit A: Site plan identifying approved parking spaces

3. DAYS, HOURS, AND CONDITIONS OF PUBLIC USE

The Owner grants the City a revocable, non-exclusive license to allow public parking in the designated spaces during the following periods:

Days: [Days]

Hours: [Hours]



Seasonal Limits (if any): [Dates]

4. CITY MANAGEMENT, REGULATION, AND ADVERTISING

During authorized public-use periods, the City may advertise the spaces as public parking, regulate parking use and duration, enforce parking rules, and install signage subject to Owner approval of placement.

5. COMPENSATION

The City shall pay the Owner \$[Amount] per [Month/Season/Year] as compensation for shared use of the parking spaces.

6. LIABILITY, INDEMNIFICATION, AND IMMUNITY

During authorized public-use periods, the City assumes responsibility for public use of the parking spaces, subject to the Michigan Governmental Tort Liability Act (MCL 691.1401 et seq.). The City shall indemnify and hold the Owner harmless from claims arising from public use, except for claims caused by the Owner's gross negligence or willful misconduct.

7. INSURANCE

The City shall maintain commercial general liability insurance with limits of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate, naming the Owner as an additional insured during public-use periods.

8. MAINTENANCE

The Owner shall maintain pavement, lighting, and structural integrity. The City shall be responsible for cleanliness and damage attributable to public use during City-controlled periods.

9. OWNER PRIORITY AND BLACKOUT PERIODS

The Owner may restrict parking availability for special events or operational needs with reasonable notice to the City.

10. TERM AND TERMINATION



Initial Term: [Term]

Termination: Either Party may terminate with [30–60] days written notice. Immediate termination is permitted for safety or insurance lapses.

11. NO PROPERTY INTEREST CREATED

This Agreement grants a license only and does not create a lease, easement, or dedication of property.

12. GOVERNING LAW AND VENUE

This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Michigan, with venue in the Circuit Court of Allegan County.

13. ENTIRE AGREEMENT

This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the Parties and may be amended only in writing signed by both Parties.

SIGNATURES

CITY OF SAUGATUCK

By: _____

Name/Title: _____

Date: _____

[PROPERTY OWNER NAME]

By: _____

Name/Title: _____

Date: _____



Parking Enforcement, Ambassador Program, and Revenue Options

Parking Enforcement Rationale

Downtown parking in the City of Saugatuck experiences its highest demand during the summer season, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, when visitor activity peaks and parking occupancy approaches capacity. Of the 906 on-street parking spaces in the Central Business District (CBD), 561 are governed by posted time limits intended to promote turnover and ensure short-term parking availability for customers, visitors, and service trips. However, the City currently relies on complaint-based enforcement rather than routine patrols, which significantly limits the effectiveness of these time limits. Without consistent enforcement, extended and all-day parking occurs in prime downtown locations, reducing access for short-term users and diminishing the credibility of posted parking regulations. Routine, visible enforcement is necessary to ensure that time-limited parking functions as intended and supports downtown economic activity.

Without enforcement, there is no effective mechanism to prevent business owners and employees from using time-limited spaces. They know that enforcement is not taking place, and so, in many cases, time limits are ignored. The consequence is that many time-limited spaces are occupied for eight or ten hours by a single vehicle, which defeats the purpose of the time limits, blocks visitor and customer access, and reduces the turnover and use of these spaces.

Enforcement Period and Operational Assumptions

This assessment assumes a seasonal parking enforcement program operating daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day, an estimated 98-day period. Enforcement is assumed to occur seven days a week between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., for a total of 12 hours per day. The analysis focuses exclusively on the 561 time-limited on-street parking spaces within the CBD. All cost and revenue estimates represent planning-level assumptions intended to support policy discussion and should be refined during implementation planning.

Estimated Annual Cost of Parking Enforcement

Rather than relying on sworn law enforcement, the City could implement a dedicated parking enforcement or parking ambassador model similar to those used in peer seasonal and resort communities. For effective downtown coverage, two staff members would be required on duty at any given time to circulate through time-limited areas, provide visibility, and monitor compliance.

Based on this approach, total seasonal staffing would equal approximately 2,352 hours (two staff multiplied by 12 hours per day over 98 days). Assuming a fully loaded hourly cost of \$40 per hour, inclusive of wages, benefits, payroll taxes, uniforms, supervision, and basic equipment, the estimated annual seasonal cost of parking enforcement would be approximately \$94,080.

Estimated Citation Revenue

In recent years, the City has issued relatively few parking citations due to limited enforcement. With the introduction of consistent daily enforcement, citation volumes would be expected to increase initially. A conservative planning assumption is that 2-4% of time-limited spaces generate 1 citation per day. Using a



midpoint assumption of 3 percent, approximately 17 citations per day would be anticipated across the 561 regulated spaces, resulting in an estimated 1,666 citations during the 98-day enforcement season.

At an average citation value of \$25, this level of enforcement would generate approximately \$41,650 in gross seasonal citation revenue. Over time, citation volumes would likely decline as compliance improves, which represents a desired operational outcome rather than a performance shortfall.

Parking Ambassador Program

A parking ambassador program would combine enforcement, customer service, and public education. Ambassadors would be uniformed, highly visible staff who patrol downtown on foot or bicycle, monitor time limits, issue warnings and citations, answer parking-related questions, assist with wayfinding, and serve as a visible point of contact for visitors. This approach emphasizes compliance and visitor experience rather than punitive enforcement alone and supports downtown businesses by maintaining turnover while preserving a welcoming atmosphere.

The benefits of a Parking Ambassador Program are as follows:

1. Improves Parking Turnover Without Over-Policing. Parking ambassadors provide consistent and visible enforcement of time-limited parking. This discourages all-day parking in short-term spaces and helps ensure turnover, making spaces available for customers, visitors, and service trips without relying on sworn officers.
2. Enhances Visitor Experience and Downtown Image. Ambassadors serve as a friendly, approachable point of contact. In addition to monitoring parking, they assist with wayfinding, answer questions, explain parking rules or technology, and provide information about local businesses and attractions.
3. Increases Voluntary Compliance and Reduces Conflict. Because ambassadors emphasize education and communication first, drivers are more likely to comply voluntarily. This approach reduces confrontational interactions and helps build public understanding and acceptance of parking management.
4. Frees Police Resources and Controls Costs. Using non-sworn ambassadors for parking management allows police departments to focus on higher-priority public safety needs. Ambassador programs are also less costly and can be scaled seasonally to match demand.
5. Supports Economic Vitality of Downtown Businesses. By keeping prime spaces available for short-term use, ambassador programs support downtown merchants and restaurants by improving customer access and encouraging repeat visits.
6. Provides a Platform for Education and Phased Implementation. Ambassadors are especially effective during the rollout of new parking programs. Warning periods, education campaigns, and on-street assistance can be used to ease the transition and build goodwill while reinforcing long-term expectations.

The following Michigan cities use a parking or downtown ambassador program:

- St. Joseph. Operates a seasonal Downtown Ambassador Program to support its paid parking system. Ambassadors explain parking rules, assist with pay stations and mobile apps, and provide visitor information during peak tourism months.



- Kalamazoo. Downtown Kalamazoo employs ambassadors who provide wayfinding, visitor assistance, and on-street presence seven days a week, supporting parking and general downtown functionality.
- Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids operates one of Michigan's most established downtown ambassador programs. Ambassadors assist with wayfinding, answer visitor questions, provide event support, and coordinate with parking facilities and parking rules.
- Petoskey. Petoskey uses downtown ambassadors focused on customer service, education, and greeting visitors in managed parking and commercial areas, particularly during peak seasons.
- East Lansing. East Lansing employs parking ambassadors to oversee city parking lots, garages, and meters while assisting customers and supporting compliance.
- Ann Arbor. Parking ambassadors combine enforcement, wayfinding, and customer service in high-demand visitor environments, demonstrating the effectiveness of the ambassador model outside of traditional policing.

Warning and Amnesty Program Options

To ease implementation and build public support, the City could establish a structured warning-and-amnesty policy. First-time violations during a defined introductory period, such as the first 30 days of the enforcement season, may result in written warnings rather than citations. In addition, the City could offer a limited amnesty period during which outstanding parking citations may be reduced or dismissed if paid within a specified timeframe. Such programs encourage compliance, improve the collection of older citations, and foster goodwill without permanently weakening enforcement effectiveness.

Improving Citation Collection and Compliance

Currently, the City lacks a formal citation-tracking and collection process, and there is no mechanism to pursue out-of-state violators. To improve outcomes, the City should adopt a structured citation management system that tracks unpaid citations, issues reminder notices, applies late fees, and escalates delinquent accounts where legally permitted.

For out-of-state visitors, the City could contract with a third-party parking citation processing and collections firm capable of interstate follow-up and mailed notice programs. Implementing basic citation management software or outsourced collections would significantly improve compliance rates, reduce administrative burden, and ensure that enforcement efforts result in actual payment and behavior change.

Summary

This assessment notes that downtown Saugatuck's peak summer parking demand is undermined by complaint-based enforcement, which allows all-day parking in prime spots and reduces turnover for visitors. It suggests a seasonal program from Memorial Day to Labor Day, employing visible, non-sworn staff to enforce limits, educate the public, and assist visitors. Estimated costs are \$94,080, with projected citation revenue of \$41,650, expecting citations to decline as compliance improves. The ambassador program aims to enhance customer service, support local businesses, and free police resources. The plan emphasizes warning and amnesty options during rollout, along with better citation tracking and collections, especially from out-of-state visitors, to ensure long-term success.

# OF EMPLOYEES/SHIFT (SUMMER)	WHERE DO EMPLOYEES PARK?	HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT USE?	SUGGESTIONS/COMMENTS
7	They park on side streets, not on water street	no	
3	Some parking on hill, one takes the Interurban from Douglas. They encourage employees to park far away from store front	no	Need more advertising and promotion for Interurban. Maybe cards for businesses and rentals.
3-5	They park on butler or on hill.	no	
2-3	They have private parking		Our guests struggle to find parking. Make one way streets with diagonal parking and have more satellite lots.
1-2	1 gets dropped off, 1 parks where they can	no	
1	They either get dropped off, park where they can , or park on hill and walk	no	
1-2	1 gets dropped off, others park where they can way down on butler	no	
2	They park on hill, street parking where they can find it	no	
5-10	They have policy to not park in front. park on sidestreets church when they don't charge or wherever they can.	No, they don't use the HS lot. It needs to be a free, easy and a quick shuttle.	
2	They have private parking	no	

1	They park anywhere he can	no	
1	They park up the hill, they tell employees not to park on Butler, they do tag-team parking	no	They need designated lot for employees with shuttle. Don't enforce parking with tickets.
10-15	They park anywhere they can, park on water street a lot	no	They need designated lot for employees
8 on weekends, 6 weekdays	1 bikes, 1 walks, the rest park on hill or in church lot	The HS lot can get full and it adds time to a shift to wait for the shuttle	Consider creating an employee parking lot, the Star of Saugatuck used to do a raffle for to encourage employees to park in in the HS lot, down on pay lot for employees, the parking issue is really only a 55-day problem, we need more bike racks, Air B and B's are adding to the problem with one house having a large number of cars present, consider e-bikes at lots so don't have to wait for shuttle
2-3	Anywhere they can, sometimes HS	Some use it when they have to, but there are women walking late to the lot after they close at 9.	
3	private spots	no	
5-10	They park where they can.	no	
1	some walk, some park where they can find spots	no	

1	They park where they can.	no	Build a small garage and make ceratin spaces for employees only. Do like Holland does and have lots dedicated to customer only and public where anyone can park, including employees. Maybe charge for parking on main streets, but the town may lose its charm.
12-13	Some bike, others park where they can.	some do and use electric scooters/walk	
4	Some walk, some park on hill	no	3 hour parking needs to be enforced
7	There are a few spots out back if you get there early enough. They park anywhere they can.	no	They need a spot so people can do a quick run in for pick up. Not all phones work with the pay-to-park lot.
5	They park in SCA lot	HS lot needs to be better lit for the walk. There are young employees. The shuttle stops too early. Some people don't know about it - only one sign advertising. Extend shuttle hours for pick up.	As a parent, she has concerns about the interurban using the DES lot because the Boys and Girls club is at DES all summer. The kids do activities up front. Strangers would be waiting for the shuttle with kids around.
6-8	They park anywhere they can.	no	Build a parking garage. Repaint the spaces on the street too - some like the DUCK parking doesn't need to be there anymore.
10-12	They do have a private lot.	no	They do have customers who miss the boat due to parking issues. The shuttle has helped for customers.

3	They park where they can	Not well lit for safety and sidewalks have trip hazards. At the end of a shift, you're tired and want to get home, not wait 15-20 minutes for shuttle.	Do not penalize employees with solutions.
15-20	They park close where they can. Sometimes they park at the HS and walk.	Yes	Make employee parking available.
1-2	They park out front since they get there early.	no	
50 daytime, 75 night time	They park where they can, also use HS and shuttle. Sometimes the HS is full midday and they panic because they're afraid they'll be late to work.	Yes	Create underground parking. Use the Vista Mar area for a garage and boat people over. Make a walking bridge from Douglas. Families with young kids get mad that there's no parking because it's tough to walk with young kids. Don't have metered parking for employees, but it's okay to have it for non-employees.
2	They park on side street or use HS lot and walk.	Yes	Build a parking ramp by the SCA. Off-season, rent it out for boat storage to make income for the city. Put an ice skating rink on the top floor with a concession stand to generate income in the off season. Remove the restaurant parking. It was done to help during COVID and it's no longer needed.
2	1 on hill, 1 parks closer due to mobility issues	the lot is full a lot	

6	Anywhere they can. Some use the HS lot.	sometimes	
15-17	They park up on the hill mostly to leave spots for customers, but if that's full, they	sometimes	
1	Anywhere they can. They come early on Sat .	They use the lot in the summer when it's not full.	In a FL town, they have a parking ramp outside of town and bus people in.
3-4	Park in 1/2 city lot, 1/2 private lot	no	
2	Owner has a private spot. Owner pays for Interurban to pick up employees at their houses. Not happy about Laketown decision since many of the employees live there.	no	This is a good problem to have and it's only a few months out of the year. It's not a big deal.
3	They either park at the church or HS, walk or get dropped off.	Yes	
1	They tag-team parking, park where they can, bike, scooter	they often have inventory to load, so it's not feasible	They need employee lot, need parking time limits with enforcement, need metered parking but not charge employees
1	tag-team parking, park where they can, bike, scooter	they often have inventory to load, so it's not feasible	They need employee lot, need parking time limits with enforcement, need metered parking but not charge employees
1	They walk	HS lot is full a lot	They're not sure where to park on hill on certain streets, not marked

1	They use the 1/2 city lot, some park on hill at church.	no	The yellow curbs are an issue with sight. Need to look at safety factor on some curbs. Trucks can also hang past the parking spot and create dangerous issues.
1	They either use a private spot or walk	no	3 hour parking needs to be enforced, need parking meters. Where does the restaurant patio money go? It should go towards enforcement. Restaurant seating should be limited to May-Sept since it goes unused much of the time during April and Oct due to weather. Those shoulder months are the months when older tourists who may have mobility issues come and they could benefit from parking closer to downtown.
2-3	They don't park on main streets, either park on hill or in church lot	no	
3-4	They park where they can.	no, there are no lights along the way and the sidewalks aren't even so it's not safe.	Make one way streets with diagonal parking. And do it in conjunction with the streetscape.
1	They open early so they park out front.	no	
25-35	some get there early and park out front, others park where they can	some may use it	Shuttle people in from another lot, maybe DSV back lot or weathervane mall. Have
1	They park out front		Make Butler one way.
4	They park out front if they get there early enough. The owner encourages them to use HS lot and walk down.	Yes	Stop weekend fundraising at SCA, so employees can park there without paying.

1	Owner lives upstairs, other parks where they can, another gets dropped off.	no	
9-10	They park where they can.	No, because we get out very late at night and have tip money on us. Some of them have been followed and harassed before while walking even a few blocks to their car.	
2	They have private parking	no	There is no enforcement, people park in front of their driveway and block it, needs clear signage
2-4	They park where they can.		
1	They park on butler	no	
2	Owner has a private spot. Owner pays for Interurban to pick up employees at their houses. Not happy about Laketown decision since many of the employees live there.	no	
1-2	They park farther down on Butler in residential area, walk.	no	Don't charge for parking, the town will lose its charm.
4	One walks, others use the 1/2 city lot, 1/2 private lot out back.	no	
2	Some park where they can, some walk, sonetimes when they need to load, they park out front.	HS lot is full a lot.	Don't put in parking meters, they need to enforce parking though. Remove restaurant street seating. Provide a free shuttle.
3-4	Some use HS lot, most park anywhere they can	HS lot is full a lot and you have to wait a bit for the shuttle.	It would be nice to have employee parking in the bank lot.

1	They park in front of store because of loading and unloading frequently	no	Eliminate restaurant parking at Charlie's, it gets used 1/2 the time because there is other seating around it, it takes up prime spots. Businesses are hurting, need to plan activities especially in off season to draw people, they lose money on air fair days, bring back the scavenger hunt.
2	They sometimes carpool, park on side streets mostly, sometimes hill	no	Eliminate restaurant parking, look into one way for butler and water streets to see if more parking can be gained
1-2	1 has a private spot, the other parks where they can.	no	
6	They park as close to shop as possible where they can	no	Use metered parking in high season only and only during certain hours. Enforce parking.
1	1 gets dropped off, 1 lives in town, when they do park, they park where they can except on butler.	no	
2-3	They park at the HS or behind SCA.	Yes	Give parking passes for employees to park in the SCA lot. Charge maybe \$10/season.

15	They park wherever they can find a spot or in church lot (owner rule, no park in front)	It's a safety issue for the employees who leave late at night between 2-3 and are carrying cash.	Cost of parking study is too much, who is driving this study? Owner has no complaints about parking just that stores aren't open. Any city you visit, you have to walk. Don't have meters or enforcement. Supports restaurant taking parking spots - would not be opposed to cutting April due to weather.
1	1 bike in summer mostly except on delivery days, 1 parks on hill or bikes	no	
5	2 spots in private lot, 3 on street	no	
2	They park anywhere they can	no	
10-12	They park anywhere they can or use HS lot and walk.	Yes	
2-3	They have one spot in back, they park by Wick's Park, high school, and church lot	If they use it, they walk because waiting for the shuttle can add 15-20 minutes, it's a safety issue at night	There are not enough handicapped parking spots. Remove restaurant street seating to open up spots.
4-5	They park where they can	You have to wait for the shuttle	Need employee lot downtown

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION
* Some employees work 2 jobs, so they park once, but may be counted twice in the employee tally.
* Merchants park as close to their place as possible when they have to load or unload.
* HS not feasible option for young employees or employees who carry cash. Some bar shifts end in the early hours of the morning. Shuttle ends too early, need better lit streets. Lot is often full, have to wait.
* There aren't enough handicapped spots.
* Most are parking where they can.
* Big demand for employee lot
*Mixed views on enforcement, meters, time limits, restaurant street parking
*Question if emergency vehicles can get through if the streets are moved to one-way.
*Dedicated employee shuttle - open 8am to 3:30am, school buses?
*Is Dykstra lot available this year? Will the new building on Water Street have dedicated parking?

*The yellow curbs are an issue with sight. Need to look at safety factor on some curbs. Trucks can also hang past the parking spot and create dangerous issues.



Downtown Saugatuck Employee Parking Narrative

Purpose and Context

Downtown Saugatuck's parking challenge is not simply a question of whether enough parking exists; it is a question of whether the most convenient parking spaces are used in ways that support downtown businesses, customers, employees, and the broader visitor experience. The employee parking data show that most employees currently park wherever they can find a space, including side streets, Butler Street, Water Street, church lots, private lots, the hill, and occasionally the High School lot. Several businesses already encourage employees not to park directly in front of storefronts, but practices vary widely, and there is no consistently communicated downtown-wide approach.

The result is a system that relies on informal habits, individual business practices, and employee choice. During peak summer periods, that informal system can place employees in the same high-demand spaces that customers need for short visits, shopping, dining, pickups, appointments, and waterfront activities. Downtown Saugatuck would benefit from a coordinated employee parking plan that makes it easier, safer, and more attractive for employees to park remotely while keeping the most convenient spaces available for customer turnover.

Peak-Season Employee Parking Planning Estimate

For planning purposes, Downtown Saugatuck likely has on the order of 400 to 600 employees working during peak summer periods. That estimate is not a documented employment census; rather, it is an order-of-magnitude planning assumption based on the mix of downtown land uses, including approximately 40 to 60 retail shops, 20 to 30 restaurants, bars, and cafes, several lodging properties, marinas, boat rentals, and other tourism-related operators.

Using typical seasonal staffing levels, a busy summer Saturday could reasonably include approximately 500 employees working in or near the downtown core. If 70 to 80 percent of those employees arrive by car, employee parking demand could be on the order of 350 to 400 parked vehicles during peak periods. Stated another way, employee parking may consume roughly one-fifth to one-quarter of the community's total parking supply during the periods when customer demand is also highest.

This estimate should be communicated carefully as a planning-level benchmark rather than a sourced count. Even so, it is useful because it illustrates the scale of the issue: employee parking is large enough to materially affect customer access, but also manageable enough that a voluntary, well-communicated employee parking plan could meaningfully improve the downtown parking experience without requiring major new construction as the first response.



The Implications of Not Enforcing Three-Hour Time Limits

The posted three-hour limits are intended to encourage turnover in the spaces closest to downtown businesses. When those limits are not enforced, they become advisory rather than operational. Long-duration parkers, including employees, can occupy customer-oriented spaces for an entire shift, reducing the availability of convenient parking for the very customers those spaces are intended to serve.

Without consistent enforcement, the downtown parking supply appears more constrained than it may actually be. A single employee vehicle parked in a prime space for six to eight hours may displace multiple customer visits over the same period. In a retail and hospitality environment, the lost turnover can translate into fewer walk-in customers, missed reservations or scheduled activities, lower impulse spending, and frustration that discourages repeat visits. The data include examples of customers struggling to find parking and even missing scheduled activities due to unavailable parking. This reinforces the importance of preserving convenient spaces for short-duration customer use.

Enforcement should therefore be understood less as punishment and more as a management tool. The objective is not to penalize employees or visitors; it is to make the posted time limits meaningful, support turnover, and create predictable access for customers. A thoughtful employee parking plan can reduce the need for punitive enforcement by providing employees with a practical alternative before enforcement becomes the primary means of changing behavior.

Employees in Customer Spaces: Business and Customer-Service Impacts

When employees park in the most convenient spaces, they unintentionally compete with customers for the front-door access that helps downtown businesses succeed. This is especially important in a seasonal downtown where visitors may be unfamiliar with local parking options, be traveling with children, have limited mobility, or make a quick stop. Convenient parking is part of the customer experience. When it is unavailable, the trip begins with friction rather than welcome.

For business owners, this is a direct economic issue. The most visible and convenient spaces should generate customer access and sales throughout the day. If those spaces are occupied by employee vehicles for full shifts, they are not serving their highest-value function. Based on the planning estimate above, employee vehicles could represent a substantial share of the total parking supply on a peak summer day. Preserving nearby spaces for customers supports sales, customer satisfaction, and repeat visitation. It also helps reinforce the perception that downtown Saugatuck is accessible, welcoming, and easy to patronize during its busiest periods.

An employee parking plan should recognize legitimate employee needs, including loading and unloading, late-night safety, mobility limitations, weather, post-shift fatigue, and the practicality of reaching remote lots. However, those needs should be addressed through program design rather than by allowing the most convenient customer spaces to function as default employee parking. The most effective approach is to make the preferred behavior easy, safe, communicated, and worthwhile.



The Case for a Voluntary Employee Parking Plan

The recommended strategy is not a mandate. It is a coordinated plan that invites employees and business owners to participate because the benefits are clear. A voluntary employee parking plan can protect customer access while respecting the operational realities of downtown businesses. Its success depends on education, convenience, regular communication, and a shared understanding that the program is good for business.

The core message should be simple: when employees park slightly farther away or use remote parking, the most convenient spaces remain available for customers. Customers are more likely to stop, shop, dine, return, and recommend downtown Saugatuck when access is easy. Every employee who chooses a remote space helps create additional opportunities for customer visits throughout the day. This is a practical way for employees to support their own workplace, their employer, and the downtown economy.

Business owners also benefit from a plan that establishes consistent expectations across downtown. Without a common approach, responsible businesses that ask employees to park remotely may feel disadvantaged if neighboring employees continue to occupy prime spaces. A downtown-wide plan creates a shared standard, reduces confusion, and reinforces the idea that customer access is a collective business priority.

A rising tide lifts all boats, and the success of an employee parking plan depends on visible support from downtown leadership, including city administration, business owners, and managers. Employees are more likely to embrace remote parking when they see leaders consistently reinforce the same message and model the behavior they ask others to follow. Walking the talk is important: if managers, owners, and civic leaders treat customer access as a shared priority, the program becomes less about individual inconvenience and more about collective downtown success.

The plan also advances two important collective goals: avoiding reliance on an expensive parking structure that would be costly to build and still unable to solve every parking-related problem, and maintaining free public parking access as a defining part of the downtown experience. Surveys have shown significant resistance to both major new parking construction and paid parking. A well-supported employee parking plan could go a long way toward reducing pressure on these less desirable solutions by making better use of the existing parking supply and preserving convenient public spaces for customers.

Addressing Real and Perceived Obstacles

The employee feedback identifies several perceived and real barriers to remote parking: lack of awareness, uncertainty about where employees are allowed to park, concerns about shuttle wait times, poor lighting, late-night safety, sidewalk conditions, weather, loading and unloading needs, and the feeling that remote parking adds time to a shift. Some of these concerns are real and must be addressed directly, particularly late-night safety, lighting, shuttle hours, and mobility limitations. Others are likely to be perceived or solved through better information, clearer signage, incentives, and consistent employer communication.

A successful plan should remove both real and perceived obstacles. If employees are unsure where to park, provide a clear map. If the shuttle is underused because employees do not know about it, promote it consistently through employers, signs, onboarding materials, and seasonal reminders. If employees believe remote parking always takes too long, publish realistic walking times, identify the closest remote options by business area, and consider incentives for participation. If late-night safety is a barrier, focus remote-parking expectations on



daytime and early-evening shifts first while separately improving lighting, shuttle span, and safe walking routes for late-night workers.

The plan should be flexible enough to recognize exceptions. Loading and unloading, employees with mobility limitations, very late shifts, young employees, and employees carrying cash may require different arrangements. Flexibility will make the program more credible. The goal is not to eliminate every employee vehicle from downtown; it is to reduce avoidable long-duration use of the most convenient spaces and build a culture in which remote employee parking is the normal, preferred practice when feasible.

Identifying specific employee parking locations is also important because it helps convert parking from a daily search into a regular peak-season habit. When employees know where they are expected and encouraged to park, they can go directly to those locations rather than circulating through downtown as motorists searching for available spaces. Reducing that cruising activity helps keep the street grid moving, lowers congestion near the most active customer areas, and makes the downtown experience feel less clogged during peak periods. In practical terms, the time an employee might otherwise spend driving block to block in search of parking can be replaced with more predictable walking, shuttle, biking, or riding time between a remote parking location and the workplace destination.

Recommended Program Elements

- **Designate preferred employee parking areas.** Identify remote or peripheral lots that can reliably accommodate employee parking during peak periods, potentially including shared, seasonal, or pass-based arrangements.
- **Develop a simple employee parking map.** Show recommended lots, walking routes, shuttle stops, bike parking, and estimated walking times to major downtown blocks.
- **Improve communication with employers.** Provide business owners with a seasonal toolkit they can share during hiring, onboarding, staff meetings, and pre-shift reminders.
- **Promote customer-access message.** Emphasize that remote employee parking helps customers reach businesses, supports sales, and improves the downtown experience.
- **Pair expectations with incentives.** Consider raffles, recognition, employee passes, merchant participation goals, or other positive reinforcement for employees who use recommended parking areas.
- **Address safety and convenience.** Improve lighting, signage, shuttle information, sidewalk conditions, and late-night transportation options where barriers are real.
- **Use enforcement strategically.** Enforce posted time limits in customer-oriented areas consistently, while communicating that enforcement supports turnover and customer access rather than punishment.
- **Monitor and refine the program.** Review participation, customer feedback, business feedback, and peak-season conditions to adjust the program over time.

Communication Strategy

Communication should be regular, positive, and repeated throughout the season. A single sign or one-time announcement will not change parking habits. The program should be introduced before peak season, reinforced during employee onboarding, reminded at the start of busy weekends, and supported with simple materials that business owners can easily distribute. Messaging should avoid blame and focus on shared benefits: convenient customer parking is good for business, customer satisfaction, and the long-term vitality of downtown Saugatuck.



The tone matters. Employees should not be told they are the problem. They should be shown how their parking choices can be part of the solution. Business owners should not be asked to enforce a vague concept; they should be given clear tools, consistent expectations, and a compelling business rationale. The most persuasive message is that every convenient space preserved for customers can serve multiple customer visits, strengthen sales opportunities, and encourage visitors to return. Yes, public parking is public, and the city does not want to get into the business of managing private businesses' employees. However, in the absence of an employee parking plan and an ongoing and regular communications strategy, many employees will compete with customers for parking.

Conclusion

Downtown Saugatuck's employee parking challenge can be addressed most effectively through a coordinated, voluntary plan that aligns employee convenience with customer access. Planning-level estimates suggest that peak-season employee vehicles could consume roughly one-fifth to one-quarter of the community's parking supply, making employee parking behavior a meaningful factor in customer access and downtown turnover. Enforcing posted three-hour limits, encouraging employees to use remote or peripheral parking, improving communication, and removing real and perceived obstacles will help the downtown parking system function more efficiently. This approach does not require treating employees as the problem or imposing a rigid mandate. Instead, it creates a shared program that helps employees, business owners, customers, and the downtown district succeed together.



Parking Yield Analysis: Converting Butler Street to One-Way Traffic from Lucy Street to Culver Street

Purpose

This analysis evaluates the on-street parking impacts of converting Butler Street from two-way traffic with parallel parking on both sides to one-way traffic, with 60-degree angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other. The analysis covers the seven blocks of Butler Street between Lucy Street and Culver Street.

Key Design Assumptions

The curb-to-curb width along Butler Street is approximately 40 feet. Butler is presently used as a two-way street with parallel parking on both sides where permitted. As an alternative to increasing parking capacity in the Saugatuck Central Business District, this analysis considers a proposed condition featuring one-way traffic with angled parking at 60 degrees on one side and parallel parking on the other. Average usable curb length per block is approximately 300 feet. A parallel parking stall is approximately 22 feet long. All parking estimates reflect whole stalls only; fractional spaces are not counted. Intersection clearances, crosswalks, and curb ramps are assumed to be consistent between existing and proposed conditions.

Existing Parking Yield – Two-Way Traffic with Parallel Parking on Both Sides

Rounding down, parallel parking yields approximately 4 parking spaces per 100 feet on each side. With parallel parking on both sides, the effective yield is 8 spaces per 100 feet. Over a 300-foot block, this results in approximately 24 on-street parking spaces.

Proposed Parking Yield – One-Way Traffic with Angled Parking on One Side

60-degree angled parking on one side yields approximately 7 spaces per 100 feet. Parallel parking on the opposite side yields approximately 4 spaces per 100 feet. The combined yield is approximately 11 spaces per 100 feet, or approximately 33 on-street parking spaces per 300-foot block.

Block-by-Block Parking Impact

Existing conditions provide approximately 24 spaces per block. The proposed condition provides approximately 33 spaces per block, representing a net increase of approximately 9.

Total Parking Impact

Across the seven blocks between Lucy Street and Culver Street, existing conditions provide approximately 168 on-street parking spaces. The proposed one-way configuration would provide approximately 231 on-street parking spaces, representing a net increase of approximately 63 spaces¹.

¹ Math includes some conservative rounding to account for fire hydrants, driveways, no parking zones, loading zones, etc. Each 100 feet of curb space is enough to allow for 9, 60-degree angled spaces. However, with curb cuts and no parking areas, we are intentionally aiming low to manage expectations for this idea. A more detailed and accurate study is recommended if the city is interested in implementing this idea. What is presented here is at the conceptual level, not the design level.



Conclusion

Converting Butler Street to one-way traffic with 60-degree angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the opposite side would meaningfully expand on-street parking within the existing curb-to-curb width. The proposed configuration increases parking supply while maintaining safe and efficient vehicular circulation appropriate for a downtown environment.

Butler Street One-Way Conversion and Parking Analysis: Opportunity, Pros, Cons, Precedent, and Policy Rationale

The following summarizes the advantages, disadvantages, precedent, and policy rationale for converting Butler Street in downtown Saugatuck from two-way to one-way traffic to create room for additional on-street parking. The analysis is intended to support decision-making by City staff, elected officials, and advisory bodies in evaluating potential circulation and parking changes along one of Saugatuck's primary commercial corridors.

Advantages of Converting Butler Street to One-Way Traffic

1. Significant Increase in On-Street Parking

One-way traffic operations allow angled parking on both sides of Butler Street. However, in this case, Butler Street is only 40 feet wide, which is not wide enough to accommodate a through lane and angled parking on both sides. Therefore, this analysis considers parallel parking on one side of the street and 60-degree parking on the opposite side.

2. Improved Access to Downtown Businesses

Angled parking improves the visibility of available spaces and makes it easier for visitors to identify parking opportunities while driving through downtown. This supports business access, increases parking turnover, and benefits retail, restaurant, and gallery uses that depend on short-term parking convenience in a resort-oriented downtown.

3. Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Comfort

When properly designed, one-way streets with angled parking visually narrow the roadway and introduce frequent roadside activity, helping reduce vehicle speeds. These conditions improve pedestrian comfort and safety in a walkable downtown environment that experiences high seasonal foot traffic.

4. Operational and Maintenance Efficiency

One-way traffic reduces vehicle conflict points, simplifies turning movements, and can improve snow removal and street maintenance operations. Clear circulation patterns also enhance driver predictability during peak tourist periods.

Potential Disadvantages and Risks

1. Reduced Route Flexibility

One-way streets require drivers to follow a defined circulation pattern, which may initially feel less convenient to users accustomed to two-way travel. Some travel paths may require additional turns or slightly longer routes, particularly during early implementation.

2. Risk of Higher Speeds if Poorly Designed



If travel lanes are overly wide or lack visual constraints, one-way streets may encourage faster vehicle speeds. This risk can be mitigated through appropriate lane narrowing, angled parking geometry, marked crossings, and streetscape features.

3. Backing Movements from Angled Parking

Angled parking introduces vehicle backing movements into the travel lane. Proper stall angles, adequate buffer space, low design speeds, and clear striping are essential to managing visibility and safety. Some communities address this issue by using back-in angled parking.

Michigan Precedent in Similar Resort Communities

Other Michigan resort communities, including Harbor Springs, Holland, Petoskey, and Traverse City, have successfully implemented downtown circulation and parking strategies that feature some one-way streets and angled parking, as well as a combination of angled and parallel parking on the same block faces.

Policy Rationale for Butler Street

Butler Street serves local businesses rather than as a regional through route. Its land-use context favors convenient access, high parking turnover, and pedestrian activity over travel speed. Downtown traffic volumes are generally compatible with one-way operation, and multiple alternative routes exist within the downtown grid. Reallocating street space to increase on-street parking aligns with economic development objectives and visitor expectations.

Conclusion

Converting Butler Street from two-way to one-way traffic with angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other is a defensible, precedent-based strategy for downtown Saugatuck. While the change involves tradeoffs, these can be addressed through careful design and communication. The substantial parking gains, improved business access, and alignment with practices used in comparable Michigan resort communities provide a strong rationale for further study and potential implementation.



Parking Yield Analysis: Converting Lucy Street from Two-Way to One-Way Traffic

Purpose

This analysis estimates the potential parking impact of converting Lucy Street in downtown Saugatuck from two-way traffic with north-side parallel parking to one-way traffic with 60-degree angled parking along the same curb frontage. The evaluated segment extends more than 800 feet from Water Street to Holland Street.

Key Assumptions and Available Curb Frontage

For this planning-level analysis, Lucy Street is assumed to be approximately 30 feet wide, with parallel parking on the north side and two-way traffic operating as one eastbound lane and one westbound lane. One-way operation is assumed to allow the north-side parking area to be restriped for 60-degree angled parking. All estimates are rounded down to the nearest whole stall.

The existing conditions inventory identifies 20 parallel parking spaces, 11 driveways, one intersecting street, fire hydrants, and other curbside constraints. The curb-frontage segments identified as potentially available for conversion total 440 feet, consisting of segments measuring 66 feet, 66 feet, 22 feet, 66 feet, 22 feet, 22 feet, 44 feet, 22 feet, 88 feet, and 22 feet.

Existing and Proposed Parking Yield

The proposed yield was calculated by evaluating each available curb-frontage segment separately and rounding each result down before summing the totals. At approximately 7 angled spaces per 100 feet, the available segments yield 4 spaces, 4 spaces, 1 space, 4 spaces, 1 space, 1 space, 3 spaces, 1 space, 6 spaces, and 1 space, respectively, for a total of 26 angled spaces. Compared with the 20-space baseline, the conversion would add approximately 6 net spaces. A detailed design effort may identify opportunities to capture additional spaces beyond this conservative estimate.

Implementation Considerations

Before advancing, the concept should be confirmed through field measurement and traffic review, with specific attention to circulation, pedestrian visibility, emergency access, loading, driveway access, wayfinding, and curbside operations.

Conclusion

The segment-by-segment estimate indicates that converting Lucy Street to one-way operation with angled parking could add approximately 6 net parking spaces. Final yield should be confirmed through field measurement and detailed design.



Parking Yield Analysis: Adding Angled Parking to Elizabeth Street in Front of Saugatuck Public Schools

Purpose

This analysis estimates the potential to add angled parking spaces along Elizabeth Street in front of the Saugatuck Public Schools campus, which includes the Middle School and High School. The segment currently supports remote parking for the Interurban shuttle. Adding parking in this location could strengthen that shuttle-supported remote parking option for downtown visitors while making more efficient use of available frontage near the school campus.

Key Assumptions and Available Curb Frontage

This segment of Elizabeth Street measures more than 530 feet in length. The school's main entrance occupies approximately 75 feet of that frontage, and additional setbacks would be required at the Elizabeth and Francis Street intersection, the Elizabeth and Main Street intersection, nearby driveways, and other circulation points. An existing landscaped island with off-street parking lies to the east and includes three mature trees. Two trees appear to have setbacks that exceed the 18- to 20-foot depth typically required for 60-degree angled parking, while one may fall within the potential parking envelope and require additional field verification. After accounting for the entrance, intersection and driveway setbacks, and preservation of the existing mature trees to the extent practical, approximately 225 feet of frontage appears available for 60-degree angled parking.

Proposed Parking Yield

Using approximately 225 feet of available frontage, the concept could yield roughly 20 60-degree angled parking spaces in the green space abutting Elizabeth Street. This preliminary estimate assumes a typical angled-stall layout with sufficient depth, maneuvering space, and setbacks confirmed through a subsequent field layout.

Implementation Considerations

Before advancing, the concept should be confirmed through field measurement, site layout, and traffic review, with specific attention to circulation, pedestrian visibility, emergency access, loading, driveway access, wayfinding, curbside operations, and compatibility with school arrival and dismissal activity. The review should also confirm whether tree preservation, drainage, utility, pavement, or right-of-way constraints would affect the final number of spaces that can be constructed. School district, City, and public safety officials should also be consulted before the option advances beyond planning-level review.

Conclusion

Based on the preliminary frontage review, Elizabeth Street appears to provide an opportunity to add approximately 20 angled parking spaces while preserving key site constraints, including intersection setbacks, driveway access, the school entrance, and existing mature trees to the extent practical. The concept should be treated as a planning-level estimate until confirmed through field measurements, detailed layout review, and coordination with the school district, City, and applicable transportation or public safety stakeholders. If feasible, the improvement could provide a modest but meaningful increase in remote parking capacity to support the Interurban shuttle and downtown parking management strategy.



Parking Yield Analysis: Converting Water Street from Two-Way to One-Way Traffic and Converting Selected Parallel Parking Spaces to Angled Parking

Purpose

This analysis estimates the parking impact of converting Water Street in downtown Saugatuck from two-way to one-way traffic and converting selected parallel-parking segments to 60-degree angled parking. Although the evaluated corridor extends almost 2,400 feet between Lucy and Culver Streets, the parking-gain calculation is limited to curb segments where existing parallel parking could potentially be converted after accounting for street width, driveways, intersections, hydrants, and other curbside constraints.

Geometry Assumptions

This review uses planning-level street-section geometry and should be confirmed through field survey and a scaled striping plan. A two-way section generally requires 20 to 22 feet of through-lane width, assuming two 10- to 11-foot lanes; a one-way section generally requires 11 to 12 feet. Parallel parking typically requires 7 to 8 feet. For 60-degree angled parking, the roadway feasibility test uses the perpendicular curb-to-stripe projection, not stall length measured along the angled stripe. Based on standard 9-foot-by-18-foot stall geometry, that projection is generally 18 to 20 feet, depending on striping, curb, and overhang assumptions.

Table 1: Geometry Assumptions

Street-Section Element	Planning-Level Width Assumption	Application to Water Street Analysis
Two-way through movement	20–22 ft.	Reflects two 10- to 11-foot travel lanes under the existing two-way condition.
One-way through movement	11–12 ft.	Represents the reduced travel-way requirement created by converting Water Street to one-way operation.
Parallel parking lane	7–8 ft.	Used to determine whether existing or retained parallel parking can remain on one or both sides of the street.
60-degree angled parking	18–20 ft. perpendicular curb-to-stripe projection	Used to test whether angled parking can be introduced on one side without encroaching on the required one-way travel lane; this measures the 90-degree projection from curb to stripe, not stall length.

Key Assumptions and Available Curb Frontage

Water Street is one of the most variable streets in downtown Saugatuck, ranging from approximately 35 to 54 feet in width. It currently operates as a two-way street with parking on both sides, but the parking configuration changes by segment based on available pavement width. Some segments have angled parking on both sides; others have parallel parking on both sides; and others combine angled parking on one side with parallel parking on the other. In some locations, the configuration changes within the same block face.

For this planning-level analysis, Walker assumed Water Street would be converted to one-way traffic, identified existing parallel-parking strings, and estimated the added spaces that could result from converting those strings to 60-degree angled parking where street width appears to support the change.

Table 2 identifies Water Street segments where existing parallel-parking strings may be converted to 60-degree angled parking under a one-way traffic concept. It compares the existing parallel spaces in each applicable segment with the estimated yield from angled parking on the same curb length and reports the resulting net gain.

Table 2: Water Street Potential Parking Gains Analysis, Assuming Conversion to One-Way Traffic Flow and Selected Parallel-to-Angled Parking Conversions

Water Street Segment	Est. Street Width	Existing Angled Spaces	Existing Parallel Spaces	Length of Parallel Parking Avail. For Conversion	Future Parking: 1 vs. 2 Street Sides	Net Gain
Lucy to Spear	53'	19	2	44'	2	+2
Spear to Francis	54'	40	0	0'	2	0
Francis to Mary	48'	22	12	275'	2	+13
Mary to Main	54'	36	0	0'	2	0
Main to Hoffman	45' (at parallel spaces)	21	7	88'	1	+1
Hoffman to Mason	41'	0	18	242'	1	+4
Mason to Culver	35' (at parallel spaces)	14	12	154'	1	+2
Total						+22

Note: Proposed angled-space yield is calculated at approximately 11 feet of curb length per 60-degree angled stall. Existing parallel-space yield is based on 22 feet per space. The angled-space column reflects existing angled spaces in each segment. Net gain reflects the estimated angled yield from converting the applicable parallel-parking string minus the existing parallel spaces affected by the conversion, including any opposite-side spaces removed where the street is too constrained to retain parking on both sides.

Existing and Proposed Parking Yield

The net gain was calculated by testing each segment against the planning-level geometry assumptions outlined above. A one-way concept with angled parking on one side and no opposite-side parking generally requires 29 to 32 feet: an 18- to 20-foot perpendicular curb-to-stripe projection plus an 11- to 12-foot one-way travel lane. Retaining parallel parking on the opposite side increases the required section to approximately 36-40 feet. Providing 60-degree angled parking on both sides increases it to approximately 47 to 52 feet. Where conversion appears feasible, the proposed angled supply was estimated at 11 feet per stall; the existing parallel supply was

based on 22 feet per space. Based on the current table assumptions, the total potential gain is approximately 22 spaces.

Implementation Considerations

Before advancing this concept, the City should confirm the assumptions through field measurement, traffic review, and a preliminary striping plan. Key items to verify include one-way circulation direction, street width, driveway and intersection maneuvering, pedestrian visibility, emergency access, loading needs, fire hydrant clearances, snow storage, wayfinding, and curbside operating requirements. The final design should confirm that the proposed 60-degree spaces fit without encroaching on the required travel lane or compromising sight lines.

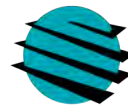
Conclusion

Based on the available Water Street table data, converting feasible parallel-parking strings to 60-degree angled parking under a one-way traffic concept could add approximately 22 on-street spaces. The largest opportunity is Francis-to-Mary, with an estimated gain of 13 spaces. Other gains include 4 for Hoffman-to-Mason, 2 for Lucy-to-Spear, 2 for Mason-to-Culver, and 1 for Main-to-Hoffman. These estimates should be confirmed through field measurement and a concept striping plan before implementation.

Appendix

This section includes the Parking Improvements Task Force meeting minutes, which document the discussions, feedback, and key decision points that informed the parking study process. These materials provide a record of the Task Force's review of study findings, alternatives, community considerations, and overall direction for the recommended parking improvement strategy.





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PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Meeting Minutes

October 28, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

Saugatuck City Hall

Participants

Name	Company	Email Address
Eric Haggett	Walker Consultants	ehaggett@walkerconsultants.com
Andrew Baglini	Walker Consultants	abaglini@walkerconsultants.com
Julie Kroll	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jkroll@fveng.com
Gregory Muncey	Saugatuck City Council	gregory@saugatuckcity.com
Auston Marineau	Saugatuck Planning Commission	auston.j.marineau@gmail.com
Cathy Brockington	Saugatuck Resident	cabrocking68@gmail.com
Wendy Colsen	Saugatuck Resident	wendycolsen@gmail.com
Alec Payleitner	Saugatuck Restaurant Owner	alec@saugataco.com
Michael Gustaitis (<i>absent</i>)	Saugatuck Retail Business Owner	winesellersofsaugatuck@gmail.com
Gary Kott	Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention and Visitors Bureau	indakott@aol.com
Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

1. Call to Order & Introductions

- Meeting called to order by Gregory Muncie.
- Parking Improvements Task Force members introduced themselves.

2. Agenda Review

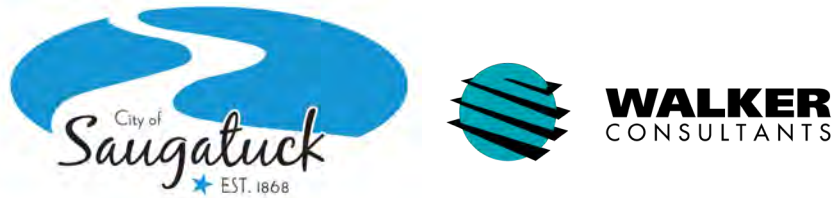
- No changes or additions to the agenda.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

- No public comments received.

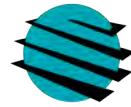
4. Approval of Minutes

- No prior meeting minutes to approve.



5. Topics for Discussion

- A. Welcome and introductions
 - Consultant team members introduced themselves and gave a brief background.
 - Consultants outlined the project's goals: a data-driven analysis of parking inventory, occupancy, turnover, and policy.
- B. Project scope and work plan review
 - Consultant team provided a high-level overview of the study methodology.
 - Project timeline was discussed with recommendations expected by the end of summer 2026.
- C. Project study area review
 - Overall study area boundary was confirmed to include the city limits north of the Kalamazoo River.
 - General discussion of off-season and peak-season data collection.
- D. Identification of parking turnover data collection subarea
 - Consultant team noted that their proposal included more detailed data collection of approximately 30 on-street parking spaces.
 - After discussion, the Parking Improvements Task Force and the consultant team agreed to parking turnover data collection at the on-street parking spaces in the following blocks: Water Street from Main Street to Hoffman Street, Butler Street from Hoffman Street to Water Street, and Culver Street from Butler Street to Griffith Street.
- E. Discussion of parking issues and concerns for business owners/employees, residents, and visitors
 - Discussion focused on both general and specific issues for each user group.
 - Participants generally agreed that there is a tension between the parking needs of the various user groups.
 - Event periods were highlighted as a concern with insufficient parking capacity in downtown to serve the volume of vehicles coming to the city.
- F. Discussion of alternative transportation options, issues, and areas for improvement
 - The Task Force highlighted the success of the Interurban.
 - Several Task Force members highlighted the desire to make Saugatuck even more walkable, while noting the ongoing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.
 - Several "pinch points" were identified where Interurban buses have difficulty navigating the streets due to parked vehicles, pedestrian activity, and/or traffic.
- G. Online survey discussion
 - Consultant team highlighted the goal of the online survey to gather feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders.
 - The Task Force and the consultant team agreed to make the online survey available for several weeks during the 2025-2026 off-season, and for an additional several weeks during the 2026 peak summer season.
 - Consultant team to develop a draft online survey to be submitted to the Task Force for review and approval.
- H. Additional stakeholder engagement discussion



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- Discussed possible avenues for in-person public engagement such as Music in the Park, the Farmer's Market, or other community events.
 - No decision was made regarding the preferred engagement forum or timing.
- Discussed other stakeholders or groups of stakeholders for the consultant team to engage, including lodging property managers, event planners, law enforcement, and other stakeholders.
 - The final list of additional stakeholders is to be determined.
- I. Tentative field work dates
 - Consultant team indicated its intention to complete the parking inventory data collection in November.
 - Task Force members agreed that off-season parking occupancy data collection should take place in March or April 2026, avoiding the week or weeks of school Spring Break.
 - Final dates to be determined in coordination with the Task Force.
 - Task Force members agreed that in-season parking occupancy data collection should take place in July 2026, in the weeks between the Fourth of July and the Venetian Festival.
 - Final dates to be determined in coordination with the Task Force.
- J. Tentative dates for future Parking Improvements Task Force meetings
 - Next Task Force meeting tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. EST.
- K. Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, and communications protocol.
 - City Manager Ryan Cummins reviewed the Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, and communications protocol.

7. Public Comments

- Patrick Murphy spoke about their excitement that the project was being undertaken after many years of discussions about parking.

8. Adjournment



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PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Meeting Minutes

December 9, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

Saugatuck City Hall

Participants

Name	Company	Email Address
Eric Haggett	Walker Consultants	ehaggett@walkerconsultants.com
Julie Kroll	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jkroll@fveng.com
Gregory Muncey	Saugatuck City Council	gregory@saugatuckcity.com
Auston Marineau	Saugatuck Planning Commission	auston.j.marineau@gmail.com
Cathy Brockington	Saugatuck Resident	cabrocking68@gmail.com
Wendy Colsen	Saugatuck Resident	saugatuckparkingstudy@gmail.com
Alec Payleitner	Saugatuck Restaurant Owner	alec@saugataco.com
Michael Gustaitis (<i>absent</i>)	Saugatuck Retail Business Owner	winesellersofsaugatuck@gmail.com
Gary Kott	Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention and Visitors Bureau	indakott@aol.com
Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

1. Call to Order

- Meeting called to order by Chair Gregory Muncie.

2. Agenda Review

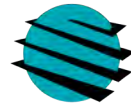
- No changes or additions to the agenda.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

- No public comments received in person or online.

4. Approval of Minutes

- A motion was made to approve the minutes of the Parking Improvements Task Force Meeting held on October 28, 2025.
- The motion was carried by a voice vote.



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5. Topics for Discussion

A. Parking Inventory – Field Work & Initial Mapping

- Consultant team members provided initial insights into the existing parking inventory in Saugatuck. Their field work identified:
 - Approximately 303 City-owned, publicly available off-street spaces.
 - Approximately 1,560 on-street parking spaces with various restrictions.
 - Approximately 50 privately owned but publicly available parking spaces.
- Consultant team noted that these numbers are preliminary and subject to verification.
- Consultant team requested that members of the Parking Improvements Task Force review the preliminary parking inventory numbers and maps and provide the team with corrections and areas to examine more closely.
 - Several areas were identified by Task Force members during the meeting, including on Mary Street, at the former Dykstra Funeral Home, and areas along the public right-of-way where parking currently occurs informally.
- Discussion was had relative to the need to “daylight” intersections, or remove parking spaces close to intersections to improve drive and pedestrian visibility and safety.
 - Consultant team committed to quantifying the potential loss of parking spaces from selective daylighting at certain intersections.
- Task Force members highlighted a general insufficiency in lighting downtown that could lead to safety issues.
- Task Force members suggested using tiers or zones of spaces in the analysis and reporting to identify total parking in the core of downtown versus the outer areas of the city.

B. Public Survey – Draft Review & Edits

- Consultant team walked through the draft online survey with the Task Force, which provided the following recommended adjustments:
 - Separate Question 1 into two separate questions, one about where respondents live and the other about where they work.
 - Modify Questions 8–10 to capture separate responses relative to peak season versus offseason parking.
 - Clarify Question 11 to focus on street parking and peak season paid parking only.
 - Allow multiple selections where appropriate in the survey.
 - Do not include a pin-drop map in the survey, to avoid overcomplicating the analysis.
 - Add a question to gauge interest in a remote parking and shuttle option.
- Consultant team and Task Force members discussed the preferred distribution channels for the survey, and identified City of Saugatuck, City of Douglas, and Saugatuck Township channels, social media, Bed & Breakfast/motel associations, and via QR codes at venues/businesses to capture visitor input.
- Task Force members and the consultant team agreed on two windows for the survey: one in the winter and the other in mid-June, with the survey open for several weeks during each window.



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- Consultant team committed to providing an updated draft survey for Task Force review and comment.
- C. Stakeholder Engagement – Groups & Format
- Task Force members identified the following groups for the consultant team to meet with to discuss parking issues in Saugatuck:
 - Short-term rental owners and managers, including individual hosts and larger property managers.
 - Event planners.
 - Arts organizations, including the Saugatuck Center for the Arts and the Chamber Music Society.
 - Marina operators.
 - Overall study area boundary was confirmed to include the city limits north of the Kalamazoo River.
 - Consultant team and Task Force members agreed that the list of groups would be narrowed to five (5) after the initial online survey window was closed.
 - Consultant team and Task Force members agreed on a “tabling session” at a Music in the Park event as the in-person engagement event for this project.
 - Consultant team members intend to staff a table or booth at one Music in the Park event where attendees can learn about the parking study, provide feedback on parking in Saugatuck, and engage in dialogue about how people arrive at and experience the city.
 - Like all stakeholder engagement, the input received during this session will be factored into the consultant team’s recommendations, and a written summary of the event will be included in a project deliverable.
 - The date of the event is TBD and will be decided in coordination with the Task Force as the summer approaches.
- D. Future Parking Demand Analysis
- Consultant team briefly discussed the process for estimating future parking demand in Saugatuck by considering existing peak demand, vacancy of existing commercial space, planned future development projects, and other factors.
 - Consultant team requested that the Task Force provide a list of vacant/transitioning commercial spaces, historical/likely replacement uses, and the sizes of these properties to be used as the basis for this analysis.
 - Consultant team noted that the City Manager had already provided one previous study of potential waterfront development.
- E. Next Steps & Other Items
- Parking Task Force requested that the consultant team provide the draft parking inventory spreadsheets and associated maps, so that Task Force members could annotate maps with corrections/observations.
 - Corrections/observations of the Task Force members to be routed via the City Manager, who will provide a consolidated document to the consultant team.



- Parking Task Force and consultant team agreed that coordination with the Saugatuck Fire Department would be necessary to determine which streets should remain or be newly designated as “No Parking” streets to allow for proper fire truck access.
 - City Manager to facilitate communications between the Fire Department and the consultant team.
- Consultant team will be on-site in January or February to conduct its field audit of signage and wayfinding.
 - City Manager to be notified in advance of site visit.

6. Public Comments

- No public comments received in person or online.

7. Adjournment


WALKER
CONSULTANTS

PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2026, 3:00 p.m.

Saugatuck City Hall

Participants

Name	Company	Email Address
John Dorsett	Walker Consultants	jdorsett@walkerconsultants.com
Julie Kroll	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jkroll@fveng.com
John Moxey	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jmoxey@fveng.com
Gregory Muncey	Saugatuck City Council	gregory@saugatuckcity.com
Auston Marineau	Saugatuck Planning Commission	auston.j.marineau@gmail.com
Cathy Brockington	Saugatuck Resident	cabrocking68@gmail.com
Wendy Colsen	Saugatuck Resident	saugatuckparkingstudy@gmail.com
Alec Payleitner	Saugatuck Restaurant Owner	alec@saugataco.com
Michael Gustaitis	Saugatuck Retail Business Owner	winesellersofsaugatuck@gmail.com
Gary Kott	Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention and Visitors Bureau	indakott@aol.com
Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

1. Call to Order

- Meeting called to order by Chair Gregory Muncey.

2. Roll Call

3. Agenda Changes

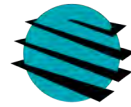
- No changes or additions to the agenda.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

- No public comments received in person or online.

5. Approval of Minutes

- A motion was made to approve the minutes of the Parking Improvements Task Force Meeting held on December 9, 2025.
- The motion was carried by a voice vote.



WALKER
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6. Topics for Discussion

6A. Project Manager Change & Reintroduction

Walker Consultants introduced John Dorsett as the new project manager, replacing Eric Haggett. John previously participated in the initial interview and now returns as senior vice president, overseeing the project. Task Force members expressed appreciation for Walker's familiarity with the downtown.

6B. Parking Inventory Field Work & Initial Mapping

Julie Kroll, a senior associate with Walker Consultants' subconsultant Fleis & Vandenbrink, presented updated parking inventory maps. All fieldwork is complete, and updates reflect city staff input, Task Force feedback, and January email submissions. Key changes include removing fractional spaces, distinguishing public vs. private lots, and updating parking designations. Remaining tasks include clarifying rules on "the hill," reviewing congestion on Mary Street, and exploring opportunities on Mill Street. Updated maps and a summary will be sent before the next meeting.

6C. Online Survey – Current Results

The online survey has received over 500 responses, primarily from residents. Major findings: strong opposition to paid parking, agreement that peak-season parking is challenging, and willingness among most respondents to walk 1–2 blocks. The survey closes February 25. The Task Force discussed running a second survey in the summer but noted concerns about duplicate participation. Final-week outreach will target renters and visitors. Full comments and results will be shared after closing.

6D. Confirmation of Field Data Collection Dates

Spring data collection is now scheduled for May 2 (with a backup on May 9) to capture higher "tulip time" activity. Tasks include block-by-block counts, lot monitoring, identifying use patterns, and generating a heat map. Summer counts will include one weekday and one weekend, paired with turnover studies on key blocks such as Butler Street.

6E. Remaining Meeting Dates

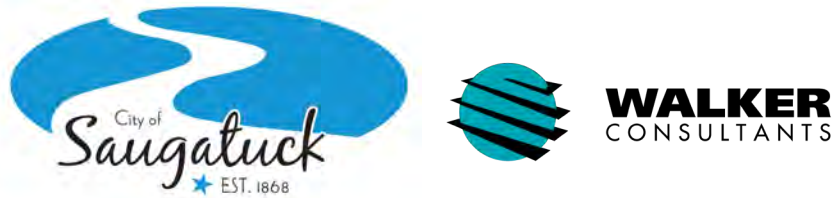
Upcoming meetings: April 7, May 12, June 30, July 28, and August 18 (planned final meeting). Most members prefer maintaining the 3 PM meeting time.

6F. Land Use, Vacancy & Future Development Planning

Walker Consultants reviewed development information received from the city. Discussion emphasized incorporating major upcoming projects in Douglas and Saugatuck Township — such as the 200-unit Auto Camp and new housing developments — due to their potential impact on downtown parking demand.

6G. Other Items – Remote & Employee Parking

The Task Force discussed long-term remote parking options, potentially along Blue Star Highway, including amenities like timed shuttles and food trucks. Employee parking challenges persist due to behavioral patterns, late-night safety concerns, and enforcement limitations. Paid parking was discussed conceptually, with considerations including equity between residents and non-residents, permit options,



enforcement costs, and the role of pricing as a management tool rather than a revenue generator. Outdoor dining was noted as a future agenda item, with approximately 10–13 spaces currently allocated.

6H. Next Steps

Walker Consultants will finalize survey results for the April 7 meeting, continue refining mapping, prepare the baseline conditions analysis, and begin modeling future parking demand.

7. Public Comments

Speaker: Sandra Randolph, former Saugatuck business owner for 35 years, and resident of Saugatuck Township. Key points raised:

- Include Business Owners in the Process. Encouraged the Task Force to more actively engage business owners, noting the value of their experience and her long service on previous parking committees.
- Visitor Experience. Emphasized the need to maintain a positive visitor experience through convenient access and user-friendly parking and expressed concern that frustration or confusion could discourage return visits.
- Concerns About Paid Parking. Noted that pay-to-park systems in other communities often cause visitor frustration and may offer limited benefits. Cited Holland as an example of a successful non-paid system supported by backlot parking, which Saugatuck lacks.
- Support for Remote Parking + Shuttle System. Highlighted the past success of remote parking with shuttle service and expressed support for a long-term solution involving a remote lot, regular shuttle operations, and visitor-friendly features.
- Large Incoming Developments. Expressed concern that new developments, including the proposed 200-unit Auto Camp, Water Street projects, and additional vacation rentals, may substantially increase parking demand.
- Downtown Capacity. Observed that last summer's visitor volumes appeared to exceed downtown capacity, placing a strain on local businesses and public spaces.
- Outdoor Dining Spaces. Noted that outdoor dining areas are typically unused during daytime hours and may displace parking needed for daytime shoppers. Suggested evaluating whether current allocations appropriately balance dining and parking needs.
- Street Use and Space Allocation. Encouraged a closer review of parking behavior and circulation on certain streets, referencing previously shared photos of Mill Street and the Mildred Peters Preserve area.

8. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, and this motion carried by a voice vote. Greg Muncey adjourned the meeting.



PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

April 7, 2026, 3:00 p.m.

This is an in-person meeting at Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453.

The meeting will also be available live, virtually on Zoom

NOTICE:

Join online by visiting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2698572603>

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(646) 518-9805**

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Please send questions or comments regarding meeting agenda items prior to meeting to:

rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

Requests for accommodations or interpretive services must be made 48 hours prior to this meeting. Please contact Saugatuck City Clerk at 269-857-2603 or jwotlers@saugatuckcity.com for further information.

Participants

Name	Company	Email Address
John Dorsett	Walker Consultants	jdorsett@walkerconsultants.com
Bobby Mordenti	Walker Consultants	rmordenti@walkerconsultants.com
Julie Kroll	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jkroll@fveng.com
Gregory Muncey	Saugatuck City Council	gregory@saugatuckcity.com
Auston Marineau	Saugatuck Planning Commission	auston.j.marineau@gmail.com
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Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

1. Call to Order

Chair Gregory Muncey called the meeting to order and welcomed Task Force members, consultants, staff, and members of the public.



2. Roll Call

Roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

3. Agenda Changes

The agenda was reviewed. No changes or additions were requested, and the agenda proceeded as published.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comment was offered on agenda items.

5. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the previous Parking Improvements Task Force meeting, prepared by Walker Consultants and included in the meeting packet, were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. The motion was carried by voice vote.

6. Topics for Discussion

A. Parking Inventory Field Work and Initial Mapping Results

John Dorsett of Walker Consultants presented findings from the recently completed parking inventory and field mapping. The inventory identified approximately 1,868 public parking spaces citywide, with roughly 80% located on-street. This percentage is unusually high for a community of Saugatuck's size and indicates that the City maintains significant control over the majority of its parking supply. The total number of spaces was noted to be large relative to the City's year-round population, though appropriate given seasonal tourism demand. Accessible (ADA) parking spaces were inventoried separately. Mr. Dorsett noted that while there may be opportunities to expand or better distribute accessible parking, care must be taken to avoid disproportionately reducing general-use parking. The Task Force discussed employee parking as a contributing factor to perceived shortages and considered potential methods to better quantify employee parking behavior during peak season, including a volunteer-led field count.

B. Online Parking Survey Results

Mr. Dorsett reviewed results from the online parking survey, which received participation from more than 600 respondents. Survey participation was primarily from year-round residents and local stakeholders. Results showed strong opposition to paid on-street parking, particularly among residents. A majority of respondents indicated they are typically able to find parking within five minutes during off season, and many reported willingness to walk one to two blocks to their destination. The survey also confirmed that parking challenges are largely seasonal. Task Force members discussed the importance of education, messaging, and better communication regarding parking options, shuttle services, and remote parking locations. Several members expressed that enforcement of existing parking regulations and improved turnover should be explored before considering paid parking.

C. Stakeholder Interviews



Mr. Dorsett summarized the findings from 10 stakeholder interviews with representatives from property management companies, arts organizations, marina operators, and event organizers. Interview responses were varied but generally aligned with survey findings, reinforcing that parking pressures are most acute during the peak season and are concentrated in the downtown core. Interviews were anonymized to encourage candid feedback.

D. Cost to Build and Operate a Parking Structure

Walker Consultants presented cost estimates for the construction and operation of a parking structure in Saugatuck. Estimated construction costs ranged from approximately \$7 million to \$10 million, with significant ongoing maintenance and operational expenses. The Task Force expressed strong consensus that a parking structure would not be cost-effective, would add relatively few new spaces compared to the cost, and would negatively impact community character. Members agreed that pursuing a parking structure should not be recommended.

E. Paid Parking Considerations

Paid parking options were discussed within the context of peer tourist communities, many of which do not charge for on-street parking. Task Force members expressed concern regarding the cost of infrastructure, enforcement, and public acceptance. The Task Force's general sentiment favored first exploring the enforcement of existing time limits, improved signage, and employee parking strategies before considering paid parking.

F. Signage and Wayfinding Assessment

Bobby Mordenti of Walker Consultants presented a signage and wayfinding assessment focused on the experience of first-time and infrequent visitors. Identified issues included sign clutter, inconsistent messaging, and insufficient gateway and directional signage to parking resources. Recommendations emphasized developing a clear signage hierarchy, increasing the use of universally recognized parking symbols, and improving online parking information on the City and CVB websites. The Task Force strongly supported pursuing signage and wayfinding improvements as a near-term solution.

G. Remote Parking Options

Potential remote parking locations were discussed, including church properties, school parking lots, City-owned property near Public Works and the Fire Department, and other privately owned sites. Expansion of shuttle service routes, including coordination with Douglas, was also discussed. Members agreed to further investigate the feasibility, capacity, and potential agreements for remote parking locations before the next meeting.

H. Framing the Parking Challenges

The Task Force discussed the importance of clearly framing Saugatuck's parking challenges, including competing needs among residents, visitors, employees, and business owners. Walker Consultants emphasized that the City's challenge is largely one of communication rather than supply. Members also requested a concept-level review of potential one-way street conversions and diagonal parking configurations on Butler Street, Water Street, and possibly Lucy Street to determine feasibility.

I. Field Data Collection Schedule



Walker Consultants reviewed upcoming field data collection dates. Off-season data collection is scheduled for the week of May 2, 2026, with a backup week of May 9, dependent on weather. Peak season data collection is scheduled for the week of July 13, 2026. While acknowledging that results may confirm existing assumptions, members agreed the data would strengthen the credibility of future recommendations.

J. Remaining Task Force Meeting Dates

There are four remaining scheduled Task Force meeting dates. The May 12 date was changed to May 13 from 3-5 p.m. ET. The last three meetings are scheduled for June 30, July 28, and August 18.

K. Other Items

Wendy Colsen volunteered to conduct a 'snapshot-in-time' count of downtown employees, provided that the city could provide a business list. The targeted timing for this is to have these results available for the June 30 meeting.

John Dorsett stressed that strong communications are essential to addressing the city's parking challenge. Complaints about parking, while acknowledged and real, can be combatted with data and information about parking resources and availability. The group agreed that clear public messaging includes what was considered, what is not recommended, what is recommended, and why, for both.

L. Next Steps

The field parking occupancy studies will proceed during the week of May 2. These results will be available at the next Task Force meeting per Julie Kroll.

Task Force members were asked to prepare 5–6 individual draft recommendations to narrow the options before final recommendations and to begin sharing them at future meetings.

7. Correspondence

Correspondence from City Council Member Lauren Stanton regarding parking strategies and experiences in other resort communities was received and acknowledged.

8. Public Comments

Denise Barrowitz, a Saugatuck resident, provided public comment. She noted that she generally does not have difficulty finding parking, acknowledged the impact of employee parking, supported creative, clear signage, and expressed strong opposition to paid parking and parking structures based on experiences in other communities.

9. Task Force Member Comments

Task Force members expressed appreciation for the thorough discussion. Members were encouraged to begin identifying draft recommendations and potential action items ahead of future meetings.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Muncey at approximately a quarter past 5 p.m. ET.



PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

May 13, 2026, 3:00 p.m.

This is an in-person meeting at Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453.

The meeting will also be available live, virtually on Zoom

NOTICE:

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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2698572603>

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Participants

Name	Company	Email Address
John Dorsett	Walker Consultants	jdorsett@walkerconsultants.com
John Moxey	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jmoxey@fveng.com
Julie Kroll	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jkroll@fveng.com
Gregory Muncey	Saugatuck City Council	gregory@saugatuckcity.com
Auston Marineau	Saugatuck Planning Commission	auston.j.marineau@gmail.com
Cathy Brockington	Saugatuck Resident	cabrocking68@gmail.com
Wendy Colsen	Saugatuck Resident	saugatuckparkingstudy@gmail.com
Alec Payleitner	Saugatuck Restaurant Owner	alec@saugataco.com
Michael Gustaitis	Saugatuck Retail Business Owner	winesellersofsaugatuck@gmail.com
Gary Kott	Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention and Visitors Bureau	indakott@aol.com
Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

1. Call to Order

Chair Gregory Muncey called the meeting to order.



2. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted, and a quorum was declared present.

3. Agenda Changes

The agenda was amended to add the following items under Topics for Discussion:

- Parking concepts submitted by Alec Payleitner for Task Force consideration, including remote parking, shuttle or trolley circulation, and related downtown traffic and parking ideas.
- Supplemental field outreach information from Wendy Colsen regarding employee counts, parking locations, and related observations from contact with downtown businesses.

The agenda, as amended, was accepted.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comments were received on agenda items.

5. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous April 7, 2026, Parking Improvements Task Force meeting, as prepared by Walker Consultants and included in the meeting packet, were presented for approval. During review, members identified corrections to the reported total number of public parking spaces and to the description of Lauren Stanton's role.

- The draft minutes indicated approximately 1,168 public parking spaces; per the field data collection, there are 1,868 spaces.
- Lauren Stanton's role should be identified as a City Council member.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved as corrected by voice vote. Walker Consultants was directed to incorporate the identified revisions into the final April 7, 2026, meeting minutes.

6. Topics for Discussion

A. Parking Occupancy Field Work and Initial Mapping – Results

Julie Kroll presented the May 2 parking occupancy findings based on counts conducted at 10:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. for publicly available on-street and off-street parking throughout the study area. The results indicated the highest occupancy levels within the central business district, with lower utilization in the Hill, North Residential, and South Residential areas.

Within the CBD, the occupancy summary reflected off-street utilization of approximately 92 percent by late afternoon and on-street utilization of approximately 86 percent. Members concurred that the findings were consistent with the weekend conditions observed and noted that, at those levels, parking in the core area is generally perceived as full.



Ms. Kroll further reported that, outside the CBD, demand was limited to isolated pockets and that parking remained available in the Hill and residential areas. Accessible parking utilization was also reviewed; existing accessible spaces were in use but were not fully occupied during the observation periods.

In response to a member inquiry, Ms. Kroll advised that the same occupancy analysis will be repeated during the July field work to compare off-peak and peak-season conditions. She further reported that a separate turnover analysis is underway for approximately two blocks of Butler Street and will be presented at a future meeting.

An additional observation was made, indicating strong turnover at a downtown business frontage, which supports the importance of short-term parking availability within the core area.

B. Updates on Land Use, Commercial Vacancy, and Future Developments – Briefing provided by Walker for review and comment.

John Dorsett reviewed Walker’s future conditions analysis and stated that it was intended to evaluate parking demand by considering baseline conditions together with likely growth factors. He noted that, while the City’s resident population appears relatively stable, parking demand is also influenced by tourism, seasonal visitation, and other nonresident activity.

Mr. Dorsett reported that Walker reviewed known and proposed development projects using information provided by the City, Saugatuck Township, Douglas, and prior planning materials. He stated that the broader future conditions review informed Walker’s conclusion that parking demand is expected to increase by approximately 100 to 150 spaces.

Mr. Dorsett also noted that many of the identified projects are expected to accommodate a substantial share of their on-site parking demand. Members nevertheless questioned whether the analysis fully captured the effect of day visitors, seasonal activity, short-term rentals, nearby development, and lodging-related traffic, and noted that such factors may be more representative of parking conditions during peak periods.

City staff clarified that development information from neighboring jurisdictions had been provided to Walker, including campground, residential, mixed-use, condominium, and workforce housing projects. Members requested that future analysis more explicitly reflect the cumulative effect of these projects and tourism-related growth.

Potential indicators of tourism growth were also discussed, including CVB lodging data, beach attendance, visitation history, and third-party mobility data. Members agreed that additional quantitative information, if available, would strengthen the future demand analysis and better reflect seasonal conditions.

Members also discussed the effects of short-term rentals on neighborhood parking and whether parking requirements should better align with occupancy and vehicle demand. Staff noted that most uses remain subject to parking requirements, while downtown commercial districts are exempt from off-street parking minimums. Potential future recommendations discussed included revisiting parking minimums, reviewing zoning treatment for short-term rental conversions, and considering seasonal overnight parking controls.

C. Parking Enforcement – Attachment provided by Walker for review and comment.



John Dorsett reviewed Walker’s parking enforcement memorandum and observed that a substantial share of public parking in Saugatuck is on-street parking under City control. He stated that the posted three-hour limits are intended to promote turnover, but that limited or inconsistent enforcement reduces their effectiveness and diminishes the value of the existing parking regulations.

Walker recommended consideration of a seasonal enforcement program during peak summer months, paired with a customer-service-oriented ambassador model to provide education, warnings, and visitor assistance. The discussion reflected general interest in an approach that would improve compliance while avoiding an unnecessarily punitive tone.

Members discussed the desirability of pairing enforcement with practical employee parking alternatives, noting that enforcement would be more workable if accompanied by convenient and reasonably proximate off-site employee parking. Potential locations discussed included the lot near the Saugatuck Center for the Arts and school-related parking areas.

Members also discussed accommodation for downtown residents if enforcement is expanded. Concepts discussed included resident stickers, employee permits, warning-based implementation, and advanced public communication.

Funding options were discussed, including whether certain parking-related revenues could be dedicated to enforcement or ambassador staffing. Staff noted that such revenues presently accrue to the general fund. Members also observed that signage would represent a significant implementation cost.

Members requested preparation of a future map identifying accessible spaces, 15-minute spaces, loading zones, and no-parking areas to assist in evaluating possible modifications.

D. Interurban, Shuttle Operations, Remote Parking, and Shared Parking Agreements – Attachment provided by Walker for review and comment.

John Dorsett reviewed Walker’s memorandum regarding Interurban service, remote parking opportunities, and shared parking agreements. He stated that these strategies appear to be among the most practical and cost-effective means of expanding usable parking capacity without construction of a parking structure and could form a meaningful part of a broader parking management approach.

Becky Carten-Crandell reported that Interurban service is expanding hours and improving routes for the current season. She also reported progress on remote parking discussions, including school parking and ongoing conversations with Riverside Church and Dykstra Funeral Home regarding shared parking opportunities, and indicated that additional coordination is underway.

Ms. Carten-Crandell further reported that Interurban has vehicle capacity to support expanded service, but that funding remains the principal constraint. Members discussed current operating costs, the CVB contribution, and the remaining funding gap, and generally agreed that expanded shuttle service would remain significantly less costly than structured parking while offering a more immediate implementation path.

Members discussed whether visitor or non-resident fares should be considered, while emphasizing the importance of preserving affordability for year-round riders who rely on the service.



The importance of clear signage, rider communication, and ease of access to shuttle service was also discussed. Mr. Dorsett advised that Walker's current scope includes general wayfinding concepts, but not a detailed community-wide signage plan, which may require additional future direction if pursued by the City.

Ms. Carten-Crandell agreed to continue pursuing shared parking agreements and to discuss employee parking options with the school district. Members reiterated that any remote employee parking strategy would likely need to be paired with downtown enforcement measures.

E. Conversion of Butler Street to One-Way Traffic – Attachment provided by Walker for review and comment.

John Dorsett summarized Walker's review of a possible one-way conversion for Butler Street. He reported that, although the street is not wide enough to support angled parking on both sides, a one-way configuration with angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other could be feasible and could yield approximately 60 additional spaces over roughly seven blocks.

Members discussed both the potential benefits and the potential drawbacks of the concept. Comments in support focused on the possible increase in parking supply at relatively low cost. Concerns raised included traffic circulation, driver confusion, deliveries, pedestrian safety, backing maneuvers, and possible effects on downtown business operations, particularly during the peak season.

Members also discussed whether a paired one-way system involving Butler and Water Streets would be more effective than a single one-way street, as well as possible traffic-control and design measures to manage speeds and enhance pedestrian safety.

By consensus, this item was continued to a future meeting for further discussion.

F. Discussion of Remaining Field Data Collection Details – Peak-Season Field Data Collection Dates – Week of July 13 (after July 4 and before Venetian Festival)

Julie Kroll confirmed that peak-season field data collection is scheduled for Wednesday, July 15, and Saturday, July 18, using the same time periods applied during the May observations. The Chair also noted that Wendy Colsen's supplemental field outreach and employee count information had been distributed on the day of the meeting and remained in progress; accordingly, that material was deferred to a future agenda for more complete review and presentation.

G. Remaining Task Force meeting dates – June 30, July 28, August 18

The remaining Task Force meeting dates were confirmed as June 30, July 28, and August 18.

H. Other Items

Chair Muncey noted that Wendy Colsen had submitted additional field outreach information regarding employee counts, parking locations, and observations from contact with downtown businesses. Because the material was distributed on the day of the meeting and additional data was still being gathered, her discussion was deferred to



a future agenda for fuller review and presentation. Members agreed that her employee data and outreach findings should be scheduled for a subsequent meeting.

Alec Payleitner then summarized the parking concepts he proposed for the Task Force's consideration. He described a broader remote parking strategy centered on an outlying lot, using the Community Church of Douglas as an example, paired with a hop-on, hop-off trolley or shuttle to move visitors and enhance the visitor experience. He also described a route from the remote lot into downtown, including circulation along Butler Street and Water Street, potentially using one-way traffic patterns.

Mr. Payleitner detailed a phased approach that included one-way configurations for Butler Street, with angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other, while maintaining sufficient width for a seasonal trolley lane between July 4 and Labor Day, as well as a similar configuration on Water Street. He also described a future trolley trial supported by wayfinding, timed arrivals, and possible private sponsorship or advertising to offset costs. The concept was presented as an integrated system rather than a series of isolated parts.

Members discussed the concept for future consideration as part of the Task Force's broader review of parking management options.

I. Next Steps

Items identified for continued review at future meetings included Butler Street one-way conversion, accessible and short-term parking locations, restricted parking areas, employee parking options, enforcement concepts, and tourism- or growth-related data sources to support the future demand analysis. Members indicated that these matters should inform the development of the Task Force's eventual recommendations to the City.

7. Correspondence

Chair Muncey referenced a letter from Brian Elmore received after the distribution of the meeting packet and requested that it be included in a future packet. Members also encouraged submission of community correspondence before final recommendations are developed so that public input may be considered as part of the Task Force's deliberations.

8. Public Comments

No public comments were received.

9. Task Force Member Comments

Members offered brief closing comments and generally indicated that the meeting generated useful discussion and ideas for continued review.

10. Adjournment

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00 p.m. ET, there being no further business to come before the Task Force.



PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

June 30, 2026 | 3:00 p.m.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler Street, Saugatuck, MI 49453

The meeting was also available virtually via Zoom.

NOTICE:

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Participants

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Gary Kott	Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention and Visitors Bureau	indakott@aol.com
Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

1. Call to Order

Chair Gregory Muncey called the Parking Improvements Task Force meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Members present included Cathy Brockington, Becky Carten-Crandell, Wendy Colsen, Michael Gustaitis, Gary Kott, Auston Marineau, Gregory Muncey, and Alec Payleitner. A quorum was present.



3. Agenda Changes

No agenda changes were requested.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comments were received on agenda items.

5. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the prior meeting were approved by voice vote.

6. Topics for Discussion

- A. **Conversion of Butler Street, Lucy Street, and Water Street to One-Way Traffic.** John Dorsett summarized Walker's conceptual review of converting Butler Street from two-way traffic with parallel parking on both sides to one-way traffic with parallel parking on one side and angled parking on the opposite side. The concept could add approximately 60 parking spaces on Butler Street, subject to further engineering review. The Task Force discussed potential impacts on downtown circulation, delivery truck operations, emergency response, vehicle speeds, and pedestrian safety. Members noted that many cities have converted one-way streets back to two-way operations to slow traffic and support downtown vitality, but several also observed that Saugatuck's downtown circulation and visitor parking patterns may differ from those in larger urban settings. The Task Force requested that public safety officials, including fire and safety personnel, be consulted regarding the concept. Walker will also prepare conceptual analyses for Water Street and Elizabeth Street, while Lucy Street was discussed as likely yielding only a limited parking gain of approximately six spaces and potentially creating circulation challenges.
- B. **Supplemental Field Outreach.** Wendy Colsen reported on outreach to approximately 72 downtown businesses regarding employee counts, parking practices, and perceptions of downtown parking. Businesses generally appreciated being asked for input, though some initially expressed concern that the outreach was enforcement-related. Key observations included the large number of employees working downtown during peak shifts, the limited practicality of remote parking for some late-night employees, and mixed views on enforcement, restaurant parklets, time limits, and paid parking. Members discussed the possibility of designated employee parking, potential use of the school/SCA lot, remote lots with Interurban service, and whether formal employee parking rules would create unintended consequences. The discussion also noted that current parking challenges may be affected by perception, turnover, and visitor expectations as much as by absolute supply.
- C. **ADA and 15-Minute Parking.** Walker reviewed a framework for evaluating additional 15-minute parking spaces, including whether the location serves a high-demand short-duration use, whether adjacent businesses have requested such a space, and whether utilization and dwell-time data support the designation. The Task Force discussed potential candidates, including the pharmacy and other short-duration businesses, while noting that restaurant requests for short-term spaces may need to be carefully managed. Walker also reviewed accessible parking considerations and noted that approximately 10 on-street accessible spaces were identified in the central business district, which is below the general target



range discussed by the Task Force. Members expressed support for increasing accessible parking, particularly near public restrooms, the pharmacy, and other high-demand locations, while ensuring that curb cuts, wheelchair loading areas, and safe transit access are considered. Members were asked to observe potential locations before the next discussion.

- D. **Walker Final Deliverables Format.** Walker outlined a proposed final deliverable organized as a digital binder, including an executive summary, study purpose and background, existing conditions, policy and strategy white papers, recommendations, and appendices containing meeting materials. Members requested that the final deliverable include enough specificity to support implementation and Council discussion while avoiding unnecessary detail. The Task Force also discussed using guiding principles to connect recommendations to broader policy objectives, such as preserving downtown character, improving accessibility, supporting wayfinding, and identifying near-, mid-, and longer-term actions.
- E. **Walker In-Person Outreach at Music in the Park.** The Task Force discussed Walker's planned in-person outreach at Music in the Park, tentatively targeted for Wednesday, July 22, pending confirmation with event organizers. The outreach is intended to provide community members with an opportunity to discuss downtown parking issues directly with Walker and Task Force members. The group discussed setup needs, including tables, chairs, easels, visual boards, downtown parking maps, shuttle information, and potential interactive engagement tools. Members also discussed having local Task Force representatives present to help draw participation and answer questions.
- F. **Remaining Field Data Collection Details.** Walker confirmed that peak-season field data collection is planned for the week of July 13, after the Independence Day holiday and before the Venetian Festival. The results are expected to be available for review at the next Task Force meeting.
- G. **Remaining Task Force Meeting Dates.** The Task Force discussed the remaining meeting schedule. The remaining Task Force meeting dates were changed to Wednesday, July 29, 2026, and Tuesday, August 25, 2026.
- H. **Other Items.** No additional items were raised.
- I. **Next Steps.** Walker will complete peak-season field data collection, prepare conceptual analyses for Water Street and Elizabeth Street, compile final field data results, and prepare materials for the Music in the Park outreach event.

7. Correspondence

Correspondence from Brian Helmer and Jeff Blandford was acknowledged and discussed as part of the Task Force's broader conversation regarding parking enforcement, restaurant spaces, and downtown parking management.

8. Public Comments

No public comments were received.



9. Task Force Member Comments

Task Force members provided closing comments. Members generally noted that the discussion was productive and that the Task Force's work has become more focused over the course of the process. Additional comments included interest in Blue Star Highway walkability improvements, potential one-way concepts for Butler and Water Streets, and the possibility of using low-power radio or similar tools to communicate parking information to visitors.

10. Adjournment

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00 p.m. ET, there being no further business to come before the Task Force.



PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

July 29, 2026 | 3:00 p.m.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler Street, Saugatuck, MI 49453

The meeting was also available virtually via Zoom.

NOTICE:

Join online by visiting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2698572603>

Join by phone by dialing:

**(312) 626-6799 -or-
(646) 518-9805**

Then enter "Meeting ID":

2698572603

Please send questions or comments regarding meeting agenda items prior to meeting to:

rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

Requests for accommodations or interpretive services must be made 48 hours prior to this meeting. Please contact Saugatuck City Clerk at 269-857-2603 or jwotlers@saugatuckcity.com for further information.

Participants

Name	Company	Email Address
John Dorsett	Walker Consultants	jdorsett@walkerconsultants.com
Gregory Muncey	Saugatuck City Council	gregory@saugatuckcity.com
Auston Marineau	Saugatuck Planning Commission	auston.j.marineau@gmail.com
Cathy Brockington	Saugatuck Resident	cabrocking68@gmail.com
Wendy Colsen	Saugatuck Resident	saugatuckparkingstudy@gmail.com
Alec Payleitner	Saugatuck Restaurant Owner	alec@saugataco.com
Gary Kott	Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention and Visitors Bureau	indakott@aol.com
Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

CC Name	Company	Email Address
Julie Kroll	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jkroll@fveng.com
Michael Gustaitis	Saugatuck Retail Business Owner	winesellersofsaugatuck@gmail.com

1. Call to Order

Chair Gregory Muncey called the Parking Improvements Task Force meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.



2. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Members present included Cathy Brockington, Becky Carten-Crandell, Wendy Colsen, Gary Kott, Auston Marineau, Gregory Muncey, and Alec Payleitner. Michael Gustaitis was absent. A quorum was present.

3. Agenda Changes

City Policy Regarding Restaurant Use of On-Street Parking was moved to the first discussion item to accommodate member availability. All remaining discussion items kept the agenda order. The change was accepted by voice vote.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comments were received on agenda items.

5. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the prior June 30 meeting were approved as presented following a motion, second, and voice vote.

Topics for Discussion

- A. **City Policy Regarding Restaurant Use of On-Street Parking.** Walker summarized the City's process for allowing restaurants to use on-street spaces for outdoor dining, including the City's ability to retract approvals. Approximately 13 on-street spaces are currently used for restaurant seating. Walker suggested returning those spaces to the public parking supply, given downtown parking constraints and the program's COVID-era origins. Members discussed the economic and placemaking value of outdoor dining, fairness to other business types, fee levels, revenue use, safety and circulation, existing outdoor dining capacity, and whether recovered spaces should become general, accessible, or short-duration parking. Options discussed included eliminating or reducing the program, limiting the number of spaces per restaurant, increasing fees, establishing a cap, using a bidding or lottery process, improving public messaging, and considering whether retail or lodging should have similar access. No consensus was reached, and members requested that the final recommendations reflect the range of views.
- B. **Parking Occupancy Field Work and Mapping.** Walker reviewed July parking data showing the CBD was effectively at capacity during peak periods: 761 on-street spaces with a peak count of 762 vehicles, and 153 off-street spaces with 152 vehicles observed. Accessible spaces were fully occupied, reinforcing the need for additional accessible parking in high-demand commercial areas. Members discussed prioritizing locations near key destinations, minimizing walking distances, providing room for lifts and mobility devices, and coordinating with curb cuts and sidewalk access. The Task Force also discussed 15-minute spaces near essential services and selected businesses, including whether business-requested short-duration spaces should be subject to fees or allocation rules. Walker noted that nearby areas outside the CBD had available capacity even during busy periods, highlighting the need for better communication



about remote, shared, shuttle-served, and non-CBD parking. The discussion concluded that the City faces a walking-distance, information, and accessible-parking challenge as much as a total supply challenge.

- C. **July 22 Music in the Park Outreach Debrief.** Members reported strong engagement at the Music in the Park outreach table, with many residents and visitors stopping to discuss parking. Feedback confirmed broad concern about downtown parking, but limited agreement on specific solutions. Members noted that practical, incremental improvements could be meaningful and that outreach themes should inform the executive summary and final recommendations.
- D. **Elizabeth Street and Water Street Analyses.** Walker reviewed concepts to gain parking spaces through one-way/restriping changes. Water Street could potentially gain about 22 spaces, though its width varies by block, so a more detailed review is required. An Elizabeth Street concept near the high school could add about 20 angled spaces, subject to coordination with the school and further analysis. Members discussed green-space impacts, school bus operations, emergency access, safety, seasonal use, cost, and alternative opportunities such as shared parking, Riverside Church, remote lots, shuttle service, and city-owned land east of the high school. Combined with the earlier Butler Street analysis, the concepts could add significant space, but members emphasized the need to balance parking gains with safety, circulation, downtown character, construction feasibility, and fire department review.
- E. **Walker Report Executive Summary Draft.** Walker reviewed the draft executive summary, which compiles the study work, occupancy data, questionnaire results, stakeholder input, and recommendations. Members were asked to provide comments on whether enough detail is included. Discussion focused on adding specificity to accessible parking locations, employee parking, enforcement, short-, mid-, and long-term priorities, and actionable Council items. Employee parking options discussed included the SCA lot, Wilkins Hardware area, Riverside Church, remote lots, shuttle connections, employer participation, and improved communication with businesses. Walker summarized three related needs: business communication, stronger enforcement or an ambassador program, and more employee parking/shuttle options. Members also identified near-term actions such as adding accessible spaces, evaluating 15-minute spaces, reviewing Mary Street near the former bank drive-through, enforcing time limits, and advancing wayfinding; longer-term items included one-way trials, additional parking supply, and green/permeable parking concepts.
- F. **Process for Communicating Study Results to Council.** The Task Force discussed presenting results to the City Council through Walker's final in-person presentation, which is included in the project scope. Members emphasized that the presentation should distinguish Walker's recommendations from areas where Task Force views are mixed, especially restaurant-space policy and employee parking. Possible Council action areas include accessible parking, 15-minute spaces, enforcement/ambassador program, wayfinding, one-way street analysis, restaurant-space policy, shuttle service, and budget needs. A tentative Council workshop presentation date of September 23, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. was discussed.
- G. **Remaining Task Force Meeting Date.** The Task Force confirmed that the remaining meeting date is Tuesday, August 25, 2026. The August meeting will be used to resolve remaining issues, align on the final direction, and prepare recommendations for Council communication.
- H. **Other Items.** No additional items were raised.



- I. **Next Steps.** Walker will follow up on turnover data. Task Force members will review the executive summary draft and provide comments, especially on needed detail, priorities, and areas of non-consensus. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 25, 2026, to finalize direction and prepare for the anticipated September 23 Council workshop presentation.

7. Correspondence

No correspondence was included in the meeting packet. One recent item related to curb or safety concerns was noted and will be included in the next packet.

8. Public Comments

Public comments were received. A restaurant owner emphasized the importance of outdoor seating to business viability and downtown vibrancy and urged the Task Force to also address employee parking across all businesses. The mayor thanked the Task Force and Walker for the data, discussion, and groundwork provided to the Council. A business manager raised concerns about late-night employee safety when parking farther away and asked whether a three-hour limit could restrict visitors who want to shop and dine downtown.

9. Task Force Member Comments

Members thanked participants, noted that the process is nearing completion, and agreed to document areas of disagreement for Council. Comments included support for continued Interurban involvement, possible use of restaurant-space fees for shuttle or parking management, potential transit assistance for employees, and appreciation for Walker's report and the fire department's one-way street assessment.

10. Adjournment

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00 p.m. ET, there being no further business to come before the Task Force.



PARKING IMPROVEMENTS TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

August 25, 2026 | 3:00 p.m.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler Street, Saugatuck, MI 49453

The meeting was also available virtually via Zoom.

NOTICE:

Join online by visiting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2698572603>

Join by phone by dialing:

**(312) 626-6799 -or-
(646) 518-9805**

Then enter "Meeting ID":

2698572603

Please send questions or comments regarding meeting agenda items prior to meeting to:

rcummins@saugatuckcity.com

Requests for accommodations or interpretive services must be made 48 hours prior to this meeting. Please contact Saugatuck City Clerk at 269-857-2603 or jwotlers@saugatuckcity.com for further information.

Participants

Name	Company	Email Address
John Dorsett	Walker Consultants	jdorsett@walkerconsultants.com
Gregory Muncey	Saugatuck City Council	gregory@saugatuckcity.com
Auston Marineau	Saugatuck Planning Commission	auston.j.marineau@gmail.com
Cathy Brockington	Saugatuck Resident	cabrocking68@gmail.com
Wendy Colsen	Saugatuck Resident	saugatuckparkingstudy@gmail.com
Gary Kott	Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention and Visitors Bureau	indakott@aol.com
Michael Gustaitis	Saugatuck Retail Business Owner	winesellersofsaugatuck@gmail.com
Ryan Cummins	City of Saugatuck	rcummins@saugatuckcity.com
Jon Moxey	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jmoxey@fveng.com

CC Name	Company	Email Address
Julie Kroll	Fleis & Vandenbrink	jkroll@fveng.com
Alec Payleitner	Saugatuck Restaurant Owner	alec@saugataco.com
Becky Carten-Crandell	Interurban Transit Authority	beckycc@saugatuckinterurban.org

1. Call to Order

Chair Gregory Muncey called the Parking Improvements Task Force meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.



2. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Members present at the call to order included Wendy Colsen, Gary Kott, Auston Marineau, Gregory Muncey, and Michael Gustaitis. Cathy Brockington joined the meeting at 3:13 p.m. Ryan Cummins and John Dorsett of Walker Consultants also participated. Jon Moxey represented Fleis & Vandenbrink. Becky Carten-Crandell and Alec Payleitner were absent. A quorum was present.

3. Agenda Changes

No agenda changes were requested.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comments were received on agenda items.

5. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the prior meeting were approved as presented, following a motion by Auston Marineau, a second by Michael Gustaitis, and a voice vote. Cathy Brockington was not present for the vote on approval of the minutes.

Topics for Discussion

- A. **Downtown Saugatuck Employee Parking Narrative.** Walker Consultants reviewed the employee parking narrative and emphasized that the proposed approach is voluntary and educational rather than a mandate or ordinance restricting employees from public on-street parking. The discussion focused on encouraging employees to avoid high-demand, three-hour spaces to keep them available for visitors and customers, while also making employees aware of other parking options. Options discussed included communication with business owners and employees; maps and informational materials; possible use of remote or shared lots; coordination with the Interurban shuttle; and identifying one or more lots for employee parking. Members noted that stronger enforcement of the existing three-hour time limit would affect current employee parking habits and should be paired with a communication strategy and practical alternatives. Members also discussed reviving a pre-season business information session, potentially coordinated through the CVB, to share parking information and gather input from the business community.
- B. **Walker Final Deliverable.** Walker Consultants reviewed the planned final deliverable, including front and back covers, a shortened executive summary, meeting handouts and informational papers, field data collection results, parking inventory and occupancy findings, and an appendix containing Task Force meeting minutes. Walker Consultants noted that the executive summary had been reduced from an earlier, longer version while still covering survey results, field observations, and key project themes. Accessible parking and short-duration parking were confirmed as topics included in the deliverable. Members expressed support for the plan and noted that it should provide Council with a comprehensive record of the Task Force's work.



- C. **City Council Presentation.** Walker Consultants discussed the planned presentation to the City Council workshop scheduled for September 23, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. The presentation is expected to summarize the study methodology, field data collection, survey results, stakeholder interviews, Task Force work, key considerations, and Walker Consultants' recommendations. Members discussed keeping the presentation concise, ideally 20-30 minutes, followed by Council questions and discussion. The final deliverable and presentation materials may be included in the Council packet, with materials requested by noon on September 21. Task Force members were encouraged to attend the workshop and receive the packet materials in advance.
- D. **Plan Ownership and Implementation.** Walker Consultants emphasized that implementation will require an owner or champion after the Task Force concludes, whether a department, committee, staff person, volunteer, or outside organization. Walker Consultants noted that plans require follow-through, repeated communication, and a consistent point person to help recommendations take hold. Chair Muncey stated he could continue carrying several items forward through November while serving on the City Council and through continued involvement with the Interurban Transit Authority. Members discussed the strong growth in Interurban ridership, possible expanded shuttle service for employees, potential employee parking lots, reduced employee shuttle rates or incentives, and the need to incorporate parking recommendations into future strategic planning.
- E. **Other Items.** Members discussed additional matters to pass along or keep in mind for Council consideration, including parking impacts from short-term rentals, whether rentals should provide sufficient on-site parking, restaurant use of public parking spaces for outdoor dining, and the need to evaluate how much private outdoor or indoor seating capacity is unused before public spaces are allocated. Members also raised safety and curb-management concerns, including Mary Street near Butler Street and the post office exit; vehicles parking too close to intersections and crosswalks; the need for clearer striping or curb markings; possible curb extensions; enforcement consistency; and opportunities to add or redesign short-duration or accessible spaces. Members suggested the City review striping and no-parking areas before the next annual restriping effort, including locations such as the alley near Puddingstone and hill-area streets where parking affects visibility and circulation.
- F. **Next Steps.** Walker Consultants will prepare a PowerPoint presentation and provide it to the City in advance of the September 23 Council workshop. Task Force members will have an opportunity to review the presentation materials and suggest amendments before the Council meeting. The final deliverable may also be included in the Council packet, and Walker Consultants will remain available for follow-up questions after the workshop.

7. Correspondence

Correspondence from the prior meeting packet was noted. Chair Muncey also thanked members of the public who submitted ideas and perspectives throughout the Task Force process and noted that community input, including the survey response, informed the final deliverables.



8. Public Comments

Public comment was received from Christine Murphy, who asked for clarification regarding what recommendations would be presented to City Council, whether the Task Force was formally endorsing Walker Consultants' recommendations, how enforcement would be handled, and what process would follow the September 23 workshop. Members and Walker Consultants clarified that the recommendations are included in the deliverable, that some items may require later review by Council, planning, zoning, or ordinance, depending on the subject, and that the Task Force is not recommending changes to outdoor dining policy because there was no consensus on that item. It was also clarified that the September 23 workshop is expected to be a presentation and discussion rather than immediate Council action, and that implementation would move to City Council and City staff after the Task Force concludes.

9. Task Force Member Comments

Members thanked Walker Consultants, City staff, and fellow Task Force members for the work completed. Comments emphasized that the report provides valuable data and answers long-standing community questions about parking capacity, underused areas, restaurant parking impacts, parking structure costs, potential street changes, enforcement, and shuttle opportunities. Members noted that implementation will likely be gradual and complex, that not all recommendations may be pursued, and that the work still provides a strong foundation for Council decision-making. Members also expressed support for expanded Interurban use, continued business community engagement, incremental improvements such as 15-minute spaces and clearer striping, and the importance of following through so the study leads to practical parking improvements.

10. Adjournment

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m. ET, there being no further business to come before the Task Force.



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