

# Downtown Parking Study

**City of Meriden**  
Meriden, CT

April, 2015



146 Hartford Road  
Manchester, CT 06040

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## Downtown Parking Study City of Meriden

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### End of Report



# 1 Introduction

The City of Meriden has been actively promoting economic development and related infrastructure improvements in the Downtown area. Recent transit oriented development (TOD) opportunities as well as ongoing projects to improve storm water handling and street conversion to two way traffic flow have put pressure on available parking assets.

In 2006, Fuss & O'Neill provided the City with a Traffic and Parking Study which provided an overview of existing Downtown parking conditions, projected additional future parking demand from proposed developments and recommended a series of short and long term parking improvement strategies and concept plans. The following is provided as an update to that study in the context of current TOD opportunities, zoning changes, and economic development conditions.

The report is separated into short term and long term recommendations. Many of the short term recommendations could be implemented immediately, others are goals to be set for completion within a year or so. The long term recommendations may take longer to implement, but goals for completion can still be set and plans phased in as soon as practicable. A key component to implementing any of these recommendations is determining who will be responsible for them. The first step would be to establish regular meetings for the Parking Commission to move forward with short term and long term goals. A step further is to create a Parking Department which would report directly to the City Manager. Designated staff with specific responsibilities for providing and maintaining parking throughout the City would need to be provided to the Department.

## 2 Short Term Recommendations

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### 2.1 Infrastructure

#### 2.1.1 Parking Lots

There are two municipal parking lots in the downtown area that would benefit from minor geometric improvements which would increase the number of available parking spaces. First there is the parking lot on the south side of Hanover Street opposite the Senior Center and Police Station. There are currently 172 parking spaces. This lot is scheduled for a flood relief project which may take place during the summer of 2015 and will result in a loss of available parking spaces. Restriping and removing/revising existing islands after the project is complete would minimize the loss of parking spaces. Currently, the Police Department utilizes this lot for commuting and vehicle storage. It is recommended that all non-essential police parking and storage of other non-essential vehicles be relocated by the Police Department. The presence of so many police vehicles plus lack of signing at this lot make it unclear that it is a free municipal lot.

The second parking lot is located on the north side of Church Street. There are currently 65 available parking spaces (see Figure 1). Based on discussions between the City and Middlesex Community College (MXCC), the students of MXCC have concerns regarding available parking. The City has

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previously informed MXCC that their students should utilize this parking lot; however, it is recommended that this parking lot be formally designated as MXCC parking. The college should pay the City to lease the lot, or a certain number of parking spaces, and provide students with parking tags. Enforcement of the parking tags will be necessary. Clear and concise signing indicating that a parking tag is required should be installed at the driveway or at each designated parking space. Along with the pavement marking changes, the lighting should be upgraded and emergency call boxes should be installed.

## 2.1.2 Signing

For each of the municipally-owned parking lots throughout the downtown area, including the above-mentioned parking lots, a consistent plan for signing needs to be developed. Signs should be provided at each municipal lot in a consistent format and should be clear and concise to specify parking fees or indicate free parking. The wayfinding signs in the downtown area directing motorists to the municipal parking lots must be clear and consistent to avoid confusion to visitors.

On-street parking spaces also need a signing plan. Existing signs for parking time restrictions should be replaced in a comprehensive fashion to provide consistent time limits. The existing signs vary from 1-2 hrs. It is recommended that all spaces be given a 2 hour limit except where the City has identified loading zones, which should have a 15 minute limit. Establishing loading zones wherever possible will discourage trucks from blocking on-street parking spaces. The loading zones should be located off primary streets wherever possible.

All of the above-mentioned infrastructure improvements to the parking lots and signing can be undertaken by the Parks Department and Parking Commission with assistance from the Public Works Department provided adequate funding is made available.

## 2.1.3 Additional Considerations

The City has undertaken Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects to remove bump-outs along downtown roadways, resulting in additional on-street parking spaces. This design standard should be applied to all downtown roadway projects as needed to continue to provide uniformity to the downtown area and provide as much on-street parking as possible. The TOD projects have also revised traffic operations on several downtown roadways from one-way to two-way operation. The Public Works Department has indicated that they have completed an investigation of Church Street also being revised from one-way to two-way operation. It is recommended that this continue to be pursued in order to improve access and circulation to and from the Church Street parking garage.

The Parking Commission should consider pursuing property acquisitions of available properties in the downtown to add public parking as an interim use. Properties that are utilized as interim parking could be made available for future development by private owners should opportunities arise. The Commission should also consider setting up short term parking agreements of under-utilized sites. Short term agreements may be desirable to owners who could benefit from the revenue while being able to maintain the ability to grow as opportunities arise.

It is recommended that the Parking Commission pursue a study of the Church Street garage conditions, with technical assistance from the Public Works Department. The study would likely result in short-term improvements, including adding several needed handicap parking spaces, in addition to possible long-term improvements, such as adding another parking level to the garage or demolishing the existing garage and building a larger one. Another study that is recommended is a possible city-owned parking garage at the lot bordered by West Main, Butler, Hanover and South Grove Streets.

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## 2.2 Policy

### 2.2.1 Shuttle Bus

In February 2015, the City initiated a three month trial of a downtown shuttle bus in cooperation with MXCC, the YMCA and the Housing Authority. The bus will run in a 15 minute loop around satellite parking lots surrounding the downtown area with stops at several key locations (see Figure 2). The plan is to utilize the YMCA's 14 seat van that they have indicated they are willing to provide. The shuttle bus will initially operate under a 3-month trial period. The City has identified a mobile app that is available for a \$400 set up fee and a monthly cost of \$99. The key demographics for the trial period include MXCC students, and residents from the Mill Street, State Street and Pratt Street. It is recommended that the college provide information directly to their students. The City is planning to restripe 83 parking spaces on a Meriden Housing Authority parking lot bounded by State and Mill Streets and incorporate the lot into the shuttle bus route. Success of the shuttle bus may warrant investigation of additional parking lots outside of the downtown area.

### 2.2.2 Middlesex Community College

In addition to the infrastructure recommendations to the parking lot on Church Street, other measures should be taken by the City to assist MXCC in addressing the students' concerns about available parking that the college has expressed to the City. As a short-term measure, the City needs to determine where and how many spaces have been or will be designated as MXCC parking. Once this is determined, revenue should be collected by the City for any parking that is designated for the college. A nominal fee for parking will provide the necessary funding to upgrade the Church Street parking lot and will generate revenue for the City to maintain the parking spaces, while concurrently promoting alternative modes and trip reduction. Along those lines, providing safe, secure facilities for bike parking adjacent to the Church Street garage and/or at the West Main Street frontage would encourage alternate transportation modes.

### 2.2.3 On-line Information

Information detailing where public parking is available throughout the downtown area should be made available on the City's website. The information must be easily accessed from the City's homepage and be clear and concise. This will encourage visitors and provide valuable information to residents, business owners, employees and students. The website should also include information about the shuttle bus, including a map of the shuttle bus loop, a schedule of when it operates and a link to the mobile app.

## 2.2.4 Shared Parking and Access Management

Current city zoning regulations allow for joint use of parking areas for establishments on the same lot or on contiguous lots. An integral part of the overall parking strategy needed for the City is to take the idea of shared parking further by incorporating land use considerations and needs, which would allow downtown businesses, schools, civic buildings, and residences to use the same parking spaces at different times of day (e.g. courthouse parking during business hours could be used for evening visitor parking). For shared parking to succeed, education of the users is critical. An outreach/public relations campaign along with advertising would likely be required. This could all be accomplished as part of a City website update.

Another component of shared parking should include a bicycle program. A successful bicycle program can benefit the downtown area by decreasing the demand for vehicular parking spaces. In terms of City policies, an increase of bicycle parking requirements to a minimum of two per land use and one additional bicycle parking space per five required vehicular parking spaces should be considered. There can be incentives for owners to provide bicycle parking, such as a reduction in vehicular parking requirements. To assist with the success of a bicycle program, the City should work with downtown businesses to create and promote a “share the street” educational campaign to raise awareness of bicycles. It is also recommended that a pilot location for sharrows (bicycle lane pavement markings) be pursued on a pedestrian-oriented street in the downtown area. Success of the pilot location could lead to additional sharrows in the downtown area.

## 2.2.5 Validation Program

Currently, the City allows over two dozen businesses in the downtown area to validate the first two hours of parking in the Church Street garage and in the city-owned lot bordered by West Main, Butler, Hanover and South Grove Streets. There are advantages and disadvantages to any validation program. The advantages in downtown Meriden include encouraging patrons to visit the establishments that validate and possibly others while they are in the area. The disadvantages include a significant loss of revenue for the City, which should be going toward maintenance of existing parking spaces and future growth of available public parking. A way to balance these issues is to charge a nominal fee to businesses that participate in the validation program (e.g. businesses pay \$0.25 per validation). That way, business owners can feel that patrons are still being encouraged to visit by the potential for free parking and the City is still assisting in drawing in visitors by offering the validation program. However, the revenue that is necessary in order to provide and maintain municipal parking that is vital for the downtown area to succeed is now aided by the validation program rather than impeded. It is recommended that the amount of time validated be reviewed and adjusted as deemed appropriate.

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## 2.3 Management

### 2.3.1 Parking Department

As stated in the Introduction, in order to manage municipal parking, a Parking Department should be established. It is recommended that the Parking Department report directly to the City Manager and have designated staff with specific responsibilities for providing and maintaining parking throughout the City. By establishing the department under the City Manager, other existing departments could be utilized for support and assistance.

### 2.3.2 Parking Fees and Leases

The current maximum fee to park in municipal off-street parking lots in the downtown area is \$10.00 per day. In order to encourage visitors and to be more consistent with surrounding, thriving downtown districts, it is recommended that the Parking Commission move to reduce the maximum fee to \$7.00 per day. The current structure for monthly parking fees also needs revising, both in the amount charged and in how the leases are organized and administered. Right now the fees vary depending on the location of the parking spaces and the tenants. It appears that fees recently collected vary from \$30.00 per month to \$168.00 per year for a parking space. In order to establish a consistent management system, all municipal off-street parking spaces should be leased for the same price. Based on surrounding areas, it is recommended that each space be leased for \$120.00 per month. New leases and renewed existing leases should be standardized to the same lease period in order to synchronize the renewal deadlines. A city standard should be established for the agreements including terms, durations, and fees. This will assist in developing an organized, efficient lease renewal process and make it easier on City Staff to renew the leases.

### 2.3.3 Maintenance and Capital Improvement Budget

In order to pursue the recommendations in this report and establish and maintain the parking necessary to support the anticipated growth of downtown Meriden, it is recommended that a Maintenance and Capital Improvement Budget for City Parking be established. This budget should be administered by the Parking Commission and be partially funded directly by parking revenues. Currently parking revenues go into the general fund and not often enough find their way toward maintaining the parking infrastructure. The Public Works Department is currently most familiar with the existing and future needs of the downtown parking system. Therefore, they should be made part of the approval process for the parking budget. Specific line items such as signs, striping, gates, etc. must be included in the budget in order to have the funds available for maintaining the municipal lots and on-street parking spaces. In addition to this, a future needs item should be budgeted in order to allow for expansion or development of new parking lots as demand increases.

## 2.3.4 Enforcement

Directly related to establishing a budget for parking is enforcement of parking violations. The revenue collected from parking violations, or at least a portion thereof, should be directed toward the maintenance budget. There is a need to start consistent ticketing, both in municipal parking lots and for on-street parking spaces. In order to establish a system for consistent ticketing, it is recommended that one to two full time ticketing personnel be hired to enforce on-street and off-street parking regulations, fees and time restrictions. It is also recommended that the fees for violations be increased to be consistent with other Connecticut cities. A table of recommended fees can be found in Figure 3.

An important component to consistent ticketing is the system for paying fees. An upgrade of the current system should include online payment of parking tickets similar to other Connecticut cities. The easier it is to pay, the more likely violators will do so. In addition to the ease of payment, there must be consequences for delinquent ticket payment. As demonstrated by other Connecticut cities, these consequences should include doubling of fees after 30 days and tripling of fees after 60 days without payment.

## 2.3.5 CT DOT Parking Garage

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) parking garage for the Hartford–New Haven–Springfield high speed rail station that is planned to be built on the corner of Colony Street and Church Street will eliminate an existing municipal surface parking lot that currently provides 93 parking spaces. The current agreement with CTDOT is for 25 City spaces in the garage. It is recommended that the City negotiate a shared parking agreement to increase the number of City spaces. The garage will not have full occupancy initially as ridership starts low and increases. CTDOT should be interested in the revenue potential for designating many additional spaces as available for public (city) use. The public fees in this garage should be made consistent with the recommended fee structure for other municipal lots. City officials have indicated there have been discussions with CTDOT relative to these recommendations.

# 3 Long Term Recommendations

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## 3.1 Infrastructure

### 3.1.1 Parking Meters

It is recommended that the on-street parking spaces throughout the downtown area that currently operate under time restrictions become metered parking if enforcement of timed parking is an issue and demand exceeds capacity. Metered parking has been very successful in other Connecticut cities. If the meters are easy to operate, clearly signed and only restrict parking during business hours, they should not discourage visitors to the area. Meters can actually enhance the visiting experience by encouraging turn-over, thus providing adequate amounts of available parking throughout the day.



### 3.1.2 Parking Structures

There are two studies under short term infrastructure recommendations that should be pursued by the Parking Commission, one of the Church Street garage and the other of a possible city-owned parking garage at the lot bordered by West Main, Butler, Hanover and South Grove Streets. For the Church Street garage, it is recommended that this investigation lead to the construction of an additional deck on the garage or to the demolition of the existing structure and the building of a larger one. Each garage could have the potential of providing an additional 300+ parking spaces in the downtown area.

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## 3.2 Policy

### 3.2.1 Middlesex Community College

Work with MXCC to introduce a transportation demand management program including ride share applications, promotion of alternate modes, tracking, incentives for alternate modes and disincentives such as fees and penalties for parking. Identify possible municipally owned lots outside the downtown area that could be utilized by MXCC as satellite lots. The lot(s) would need to be on a bus loop (or depending on its success, the shuttle bus route) that also includes the campus and be clean and well-lit.

The above recommendations have been made for MXCC because of concerns about parking that the college has communicated to the City. The results of these efforts can be geared toward any other stake holders in the downtown area.

### 3.2.2 Other Considerations

Consider instituting “fee-in-lieu” policies that allow developers to pay into a fund rather than providing full parking requirements on-site. This fund could be directed toward the Maintenance and Capital Improvement Budget for City Parking or toward the General Fund.

Create new or expand upon existing district-wide shared parking regulations, either over the entire TOD District or defined by sub-area. These regulations could provide incentives for business owners in the form of reduced parking requirements for infill, mixed-use, or redevelopment projects. Implement access management strategies to support these shared parking regulations by requiring, rather than encouraging, that drive aisles connect between adjacent parcels. An added benefit to this is it also provides better access to the rear of buildings for emergency services.

Adopt “live where you work” policies for businesses and city employees. These could provide home purchase incentives such as one-time closing cost contributions for those who forgo parking spaces by agreeing to walk or cycle to work.

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## 3.3 Management

### 3.3.1 GIS Tools

With the implementation of the recommended Parking Department, an organized structure of how the parking in the downtown area is managed should be implemented. Existing GIS tools currently utilized by the Public Works Department should be expanded upon for data storage, map interface, management of capital investments, organization of legal agreements and other inventory and management functions. This will help promote continued success for the overall parking program throughout the City.

### 3.3.2 Parking Commission

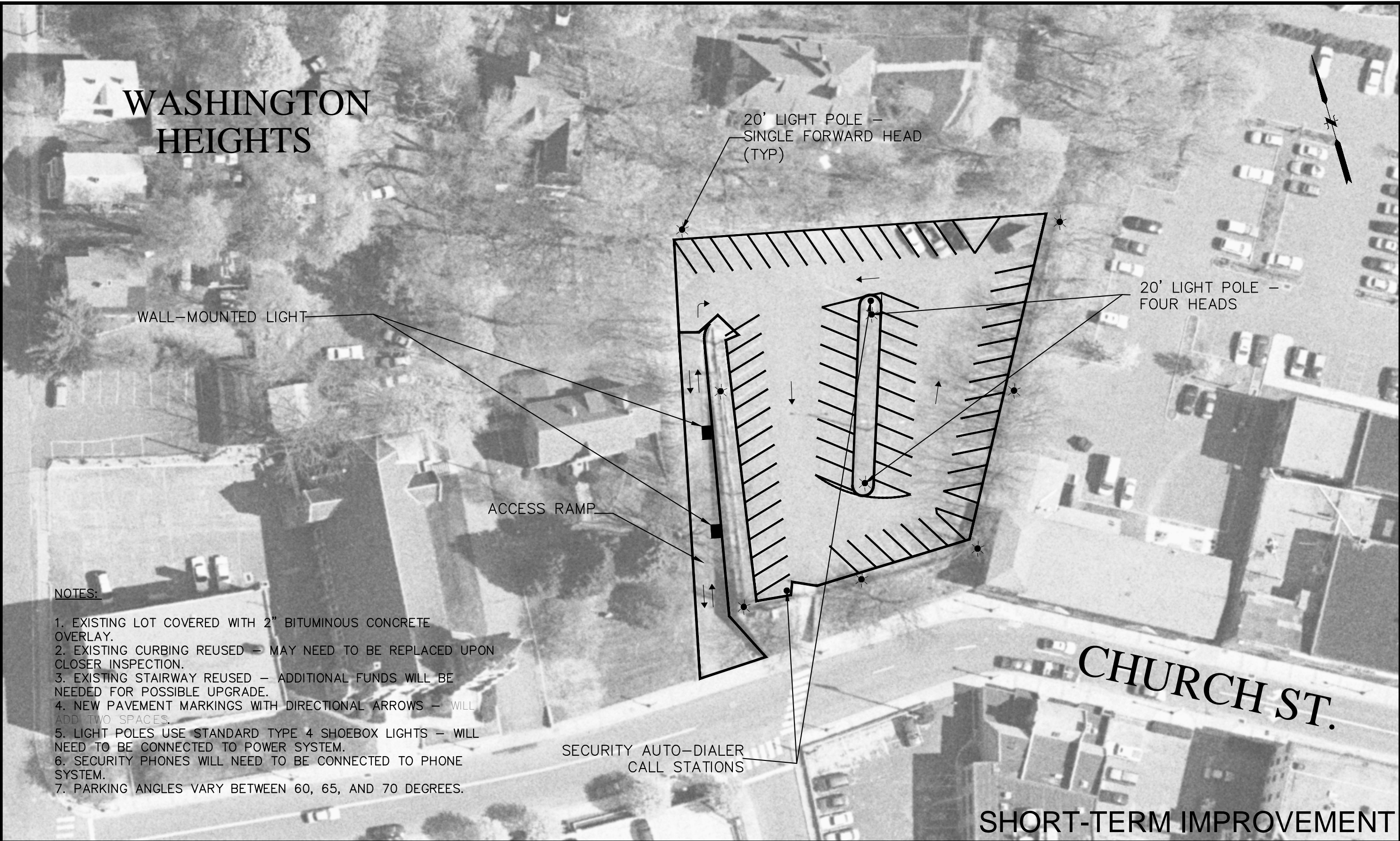
The Parking Commission should be provided with the tools to operate as an Authority. This will give the Commission the ability to secure grants for larger scale projects, such as building a municipal garage.

## 4 Conclusion

The recommendations presented in this report will serve as a basis for meeting the parking demands that will result from the City of Meriden's continued efforts to promote economic growth in the downtown area. Providing a sufficient amount of parking in safe, well-maintained facilities can be accomplished through the described short and long term mitigation alternatives. It is essential that planning for future growth while maintaining the existing available parking be a priority of City leaders in order to develop and sustain a thriving downtown district.



# WASHINGTON HEIGHTS



WALL-MOUNTED LIGHT

20' LIGHT POLE —  
SINGLE FORWARD HEAD  
(TYP)

20' LIGHT POLE —  
FOUR HEADS

ACCESS RAMP

SECURITY AUTO-DIALER  
CALL STATIONS

CHURCH ST.

SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENT

**NOTES:**

1. EXISTING LOT COVERED WITH 2" BITUMINOUS CONCRETE OVERLAY.
2. EXISTING CURBING REUSED — MAY NEED TO BE REPLACED UPON CLOSER INSPECTION.
3. EXISTING STAIRWAY REUSED — ADDITIONAL FUNDS WILL BE NEEDED FOR POSSIBLE UPGRADE.
4. NEW PAVEMENT MARKINGS WITH DIRECTIONAL ARROWS — WILL ADD TWO SPACES.
5. LIGHT POLES USE STANDARD TYPE 4 SHOEBOX LIGHTS — WILL NEED TO BE CONNECTED TO POWER SYSTEM.
6. SECURITY PHONES WILL NEED TO BE CONNECTED TO PHONE SYSTEM.
7. PARKING ANGLES VARY BETWEEN 60, 65, AND 70 DEGREES.

File Path: J:\DWG\2004\0588A\10\Presentation\040588A10PRE007a.dwg Layout: FIG 2 Plotted: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 - 2:59 PM User: JIMZEK Plotter: NONE CTB File: FC 2008 MOND.CTB

PROJ. MANAGER:		SEAL	SEAL
CHIEF DESIGNER:			
REVIEWED BY:	DATE		
No.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY
		REVISIONS	

SCALE:	HORIZ.: 1" = 20'
	VERT.:
DATUM:	
	HORIZ.:
	VERT.:
GRAPHIC SCALE	

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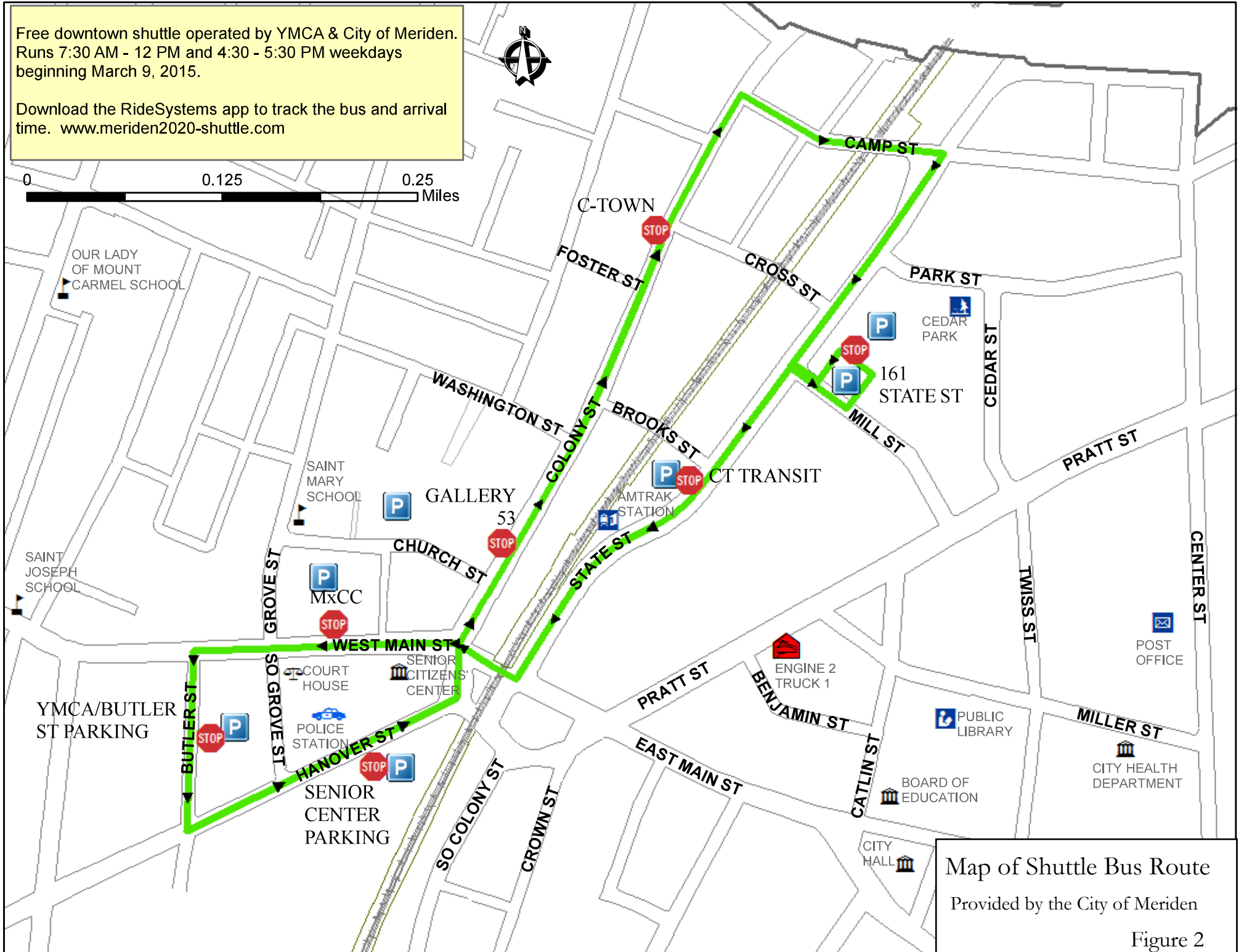
CITY OF MERIDEN  
DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY  
CONCEPT PARKING LOT REVISIONS  
MERIDEN CONNECTICUT

PROJ. No.: 2004.0588.A10  
DATE: FEBRUARY, 2015  
**Fig. 1**

Free downtown shuttle operated by YMCA & City of Meriden.  
Runs 7:30 AM - 12 PM and 4:30 - 5:30 PM weekdays  
beginning March 9, 2015.

Download the RideSystems app to track the bus and arrival  
time. [www.meriden2020-shuttle.com](http://www.meriden2020-shuttle.com)

0 0.125 0.25 Miles



Map of Shuttle Bus Route  
Provided by the City of Meriden  
Figure 2

**Figure 3  
Fee Schedule Recommendations**

	<b>Meriden current charge</b>	<b>Suggested charge</b>
Overtime Parking	\$15	\$30
25 feet from Corner/Intersection	\$15	\$60
Obstructing Driveway	\$15	\$60
Loading Zone	\$15	\$60
Blocking Crosswalk	\$15	\$60
Double Parking	\$15	\$90
No Parking Zone	\$15	\$60
Bus Stop	\$15	\$90
Emergency Parking Ban	\$50	\$90
Obstructing the sidewalk	\$15	\$60
Wrong side of street	\$15	\$30
Snow Bound	\$15	\$60
Street Sweeping	\$15	\$60
Fire Hydrant	\$25	\$90
Fire Zone	\$25	\$90
Hospital Zone	\$25	\$60
Handicapped	\$131	\$131

