

# Downtown Mystic Parking Study



May 27, 2021

John M. Burke, PE, CAPP, Consultant  
Parking, Transit & Downtown Development

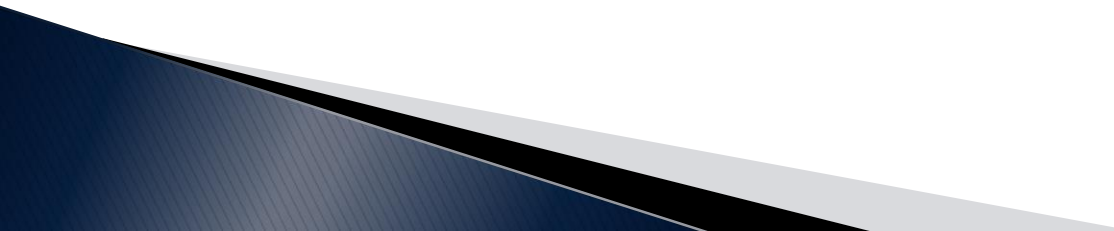
# Consultant Qualifications

- **John M. Burke, P.E., CAPP, Parking & Transit Consultant**
- **30+ years parking & transportation industry experience**
- **Former City Parking & Transportation Director**
  - Portsmouth, NH
  - Evanston, IL
- **12 years independent consulting practice in New England**
- **Select Coastal New England municipal clients:**

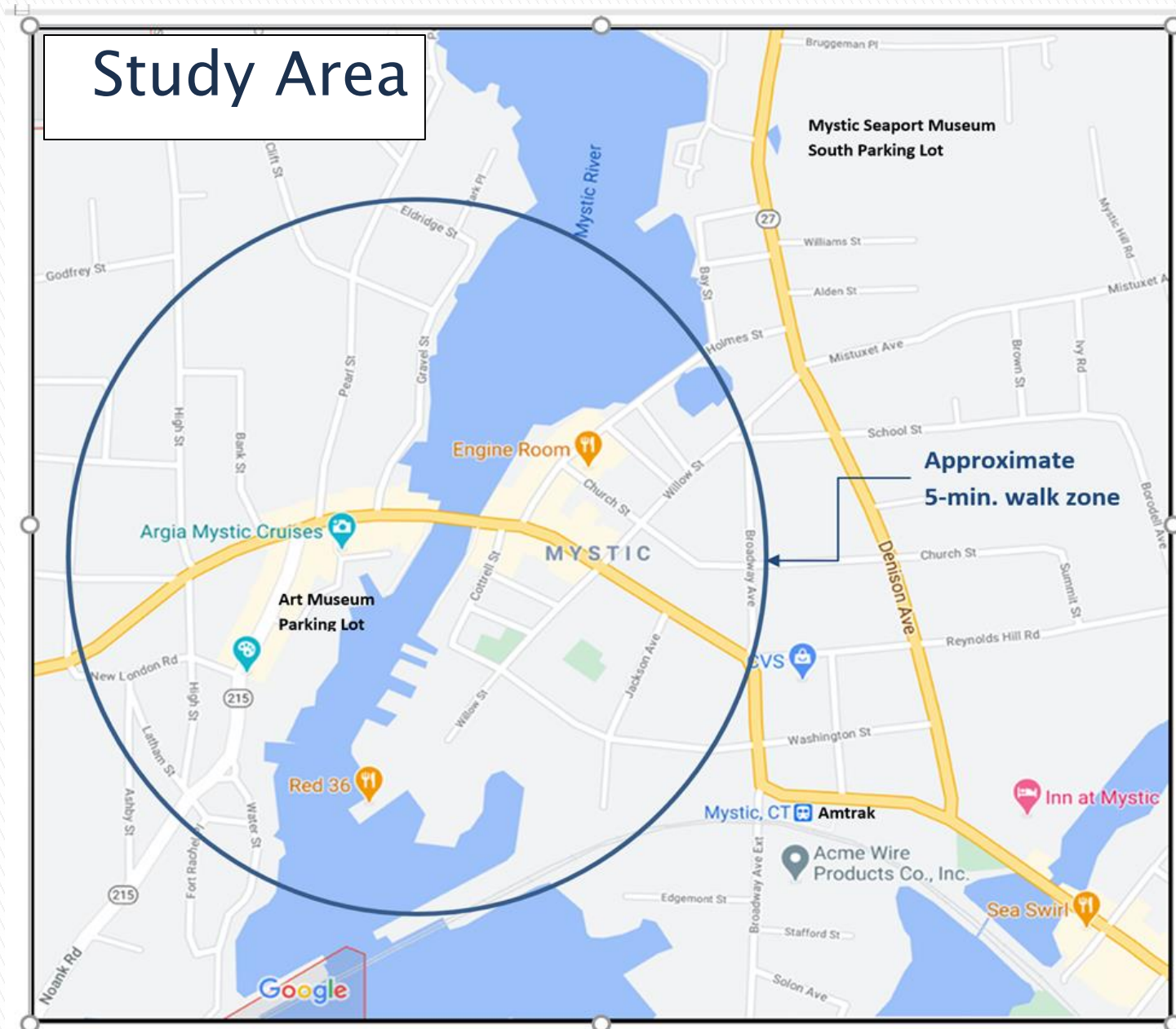
- Narragansett, RI	- Newburyport, MA
- Newport, RI	- Rye, NH
- Onset, MA	- Portsmouth, NH
- Plymouth, MA	- Bar Harbor, ME



# Scope of Service

1. Confirm the Study Area
  2. Establish Guiding Parking Principles
  3. Conduct Key Stakeholder Interviews
  4. Conduct Document Review & Parking Inventory
  5. Conduct Parking Occupancy & Time-Zone Compliance Surveys
  6. Conduct Parking Efficiency Analysis
  7. Identify Key Findings & Deficiencies
  8. Recommend Parking Improvements
  9. Conduct Public Presentation
  10. Issue Final Report
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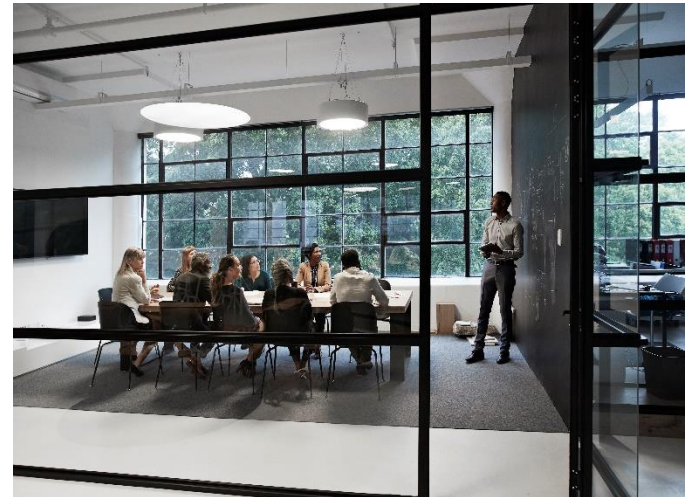
# Study Area





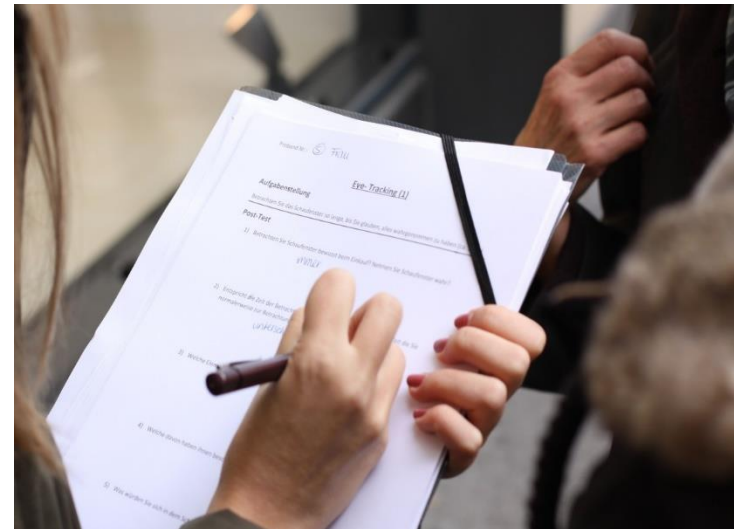
# Study Advisory Committee

- John Burt, Groton Town Manager
- Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington First Selectwoman
- Susan Cullen, Stonington Economic & Community Development Director
- Paige Bronk, Groton Economic & Community Development Manager
- Jonathan Reiner, Groton Planning & Development Services Director
- Bob O'Shaughnessy, Stonington Police Commission
- L.J. Fusaro, Groton Police Chief
- Deb Jones, Groton Asst. Director of Planning
- Greg Hanover, Groton Public Works Director
- Amanda Arling, Whalers Inn
- Bill Furgueson, Downtown Mystic Merchants
- Susan Fisher, Mystic Museum of Art
- Paul Sartor, Stonington Resident
- Todd Brady, Groton Business Owner/Resident
- Bruce Flax, Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce



# Key Stakeholder Input

- 1. Groton Downtown Resident/Planning Zoning Commission
- 2. Groton Downtown Business Owner
- 3. Groton Business Owner/Resident
- 4. Groton Developer/Business Employee
- 5. Groton Downtown Resident
- 6. Stonington Downtown Resident/Mystic Park Commission
- 7. Stonington Resident/Former Downtown Resident
- 8. Stonington Downtown Business Owner
- 9. Stonington Resident/Planning Commission
- 10. Stonington Developer/Business Employee
- 11. Stonington Police Chief
- 12. Groton Police Chief
- 13. Mystic Museum of Art
- 14. Mystic Seaport Museum
- 15. Southeast Area Transit District (SEAT)



# 12 Guiding Principles

1. Commercial core areas should be reserved for short-term customer & visitor parking to the extent possible.
2. Private parking facilities should be viewed as potential public parking assets.
3. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and non-auto transportation strategies increase downtown mobility & visitation while reducing parking need.
4. You cannot park at what you cannot find.
5. Consider impacts of employee and visitor parking spillover onto residential streets.
6. Existing and future parking within core commercial areas should be fairly priced commensurate with land value and location and paid for by users.
7. Development projects in core commercial areas should share in the cost of their own parking and/or mobility needs.
8. All public parking facilities must be safe, appealing and well maintained.
9. Parking regulations should not be posted if they are not going to be enforced.
10. Parking regulations should be consistent and easy to understand
11. Parking should be a secondary use that supports the primary economic use of land.
12. Free or affordable parking for low wage employees is desirable if available within a reasonable walking distance of the core commercial areas.

# Existing Conditions

- ▶ **Parking inventory/regulations** - on-street vs. off-street
  - public vs. private
  - regulated vs. unregulated

- ▶ **Parking utilization**
  - time of day
  - day of week (weekday vs. Sat.)
  - month of year (seasonality)
  - on-street turnover
  - time-zone compliance



- ▶ **Parking management & enforcement**
- ▶ **Development/Zoning-required parking**
- ▶ **Transit services**



# Existing Conditions – Parking Inventory/Regs.

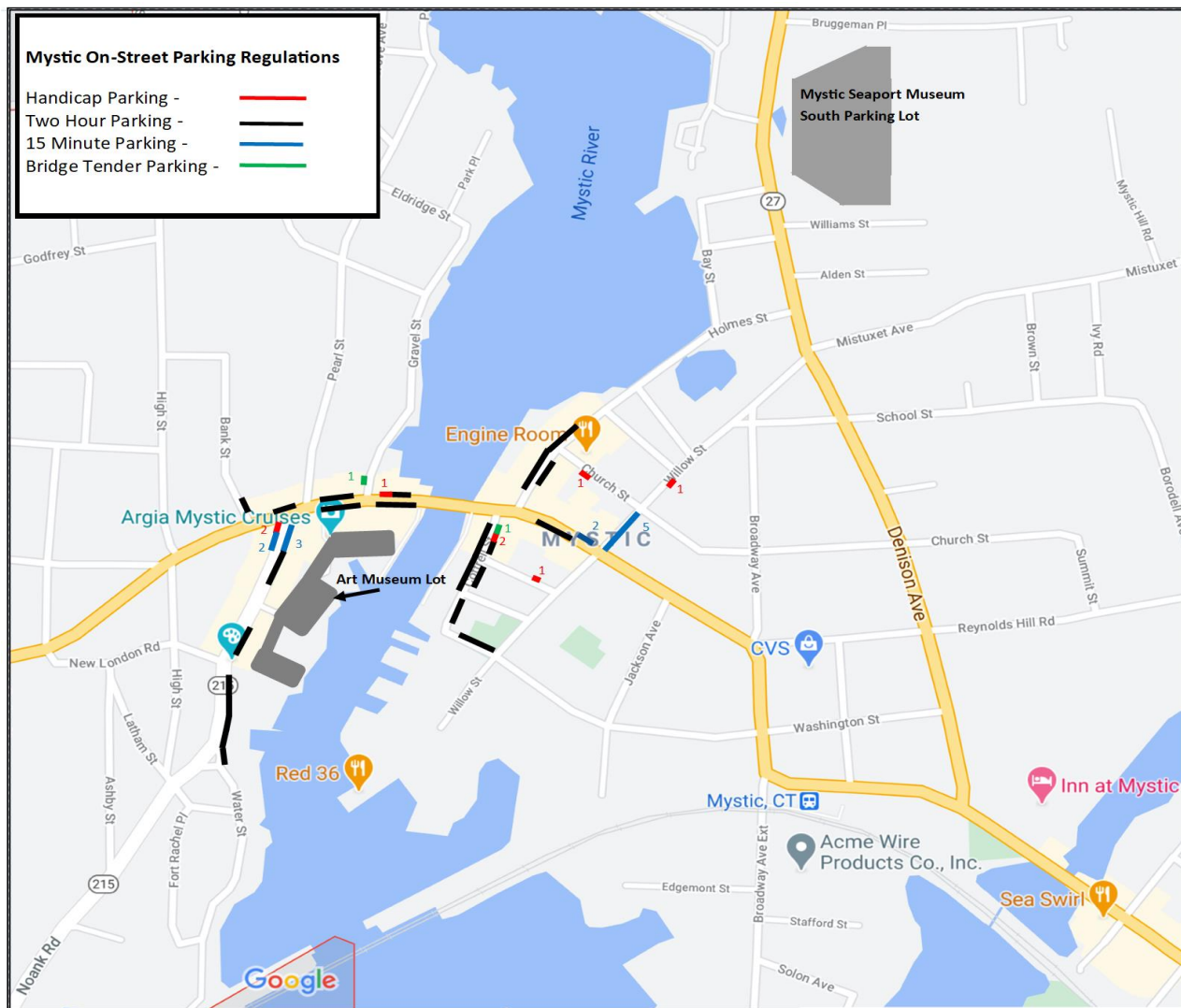
## **Inventory of Parking Spaces within approx. 5-min. walk radius of drawbridge**

	<b>Groton</b>	<b>Stonington</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Off-Street Parking Spaces</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>992</b>
<b>On-Street Parking Spaces</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>572</b>
<b>*Total</b>	<b>941</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>1,564</b>

\* Does not include residential driveway spaces or gravel lots.

- All 992 off-street parking spaces are privately owned and only 210 of those are paid public parking spaces (all in the Art Museum Lot).
- 125 of the 572 on-street parking spaces are 2-hour time restricted and all 572 on-street spaces are free.

# Existing Conditions – Parking Inventory/Regs.

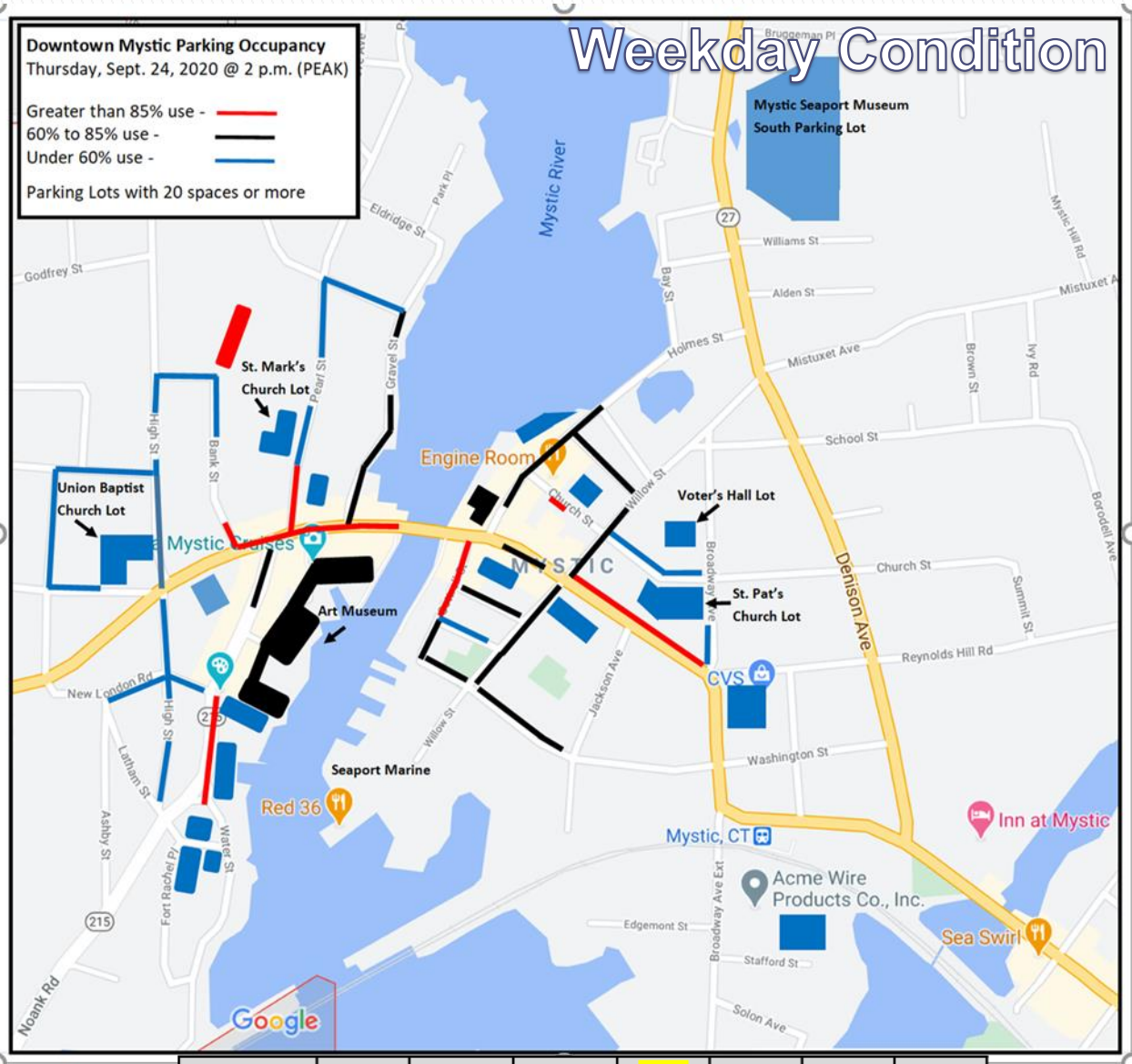


# Existing Conditions – Parking Utilization

- Conducted parking occupancy counts from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on:
  - Saturday, September 19, 2020
  - Thursday, September 24, 2020
- Conducted “spot” parking occupancy counts, and a limited on-street license plate survey between 12 noon and 4 p.m. on:
  - Thursday, November 5, 2020
  - Saturday, November 7, 2020

to assess the seasonality of demand, parking turnover, and compliance with 2-hour time limits.

- Classification of parking facility utilization rates:
  - Functional Capacity – **greater than 85% use**
  - Acceptable use – **60% to 85% use** (*Target Use: 75% to 85%*)
  - Underutilized – **less than 60%**

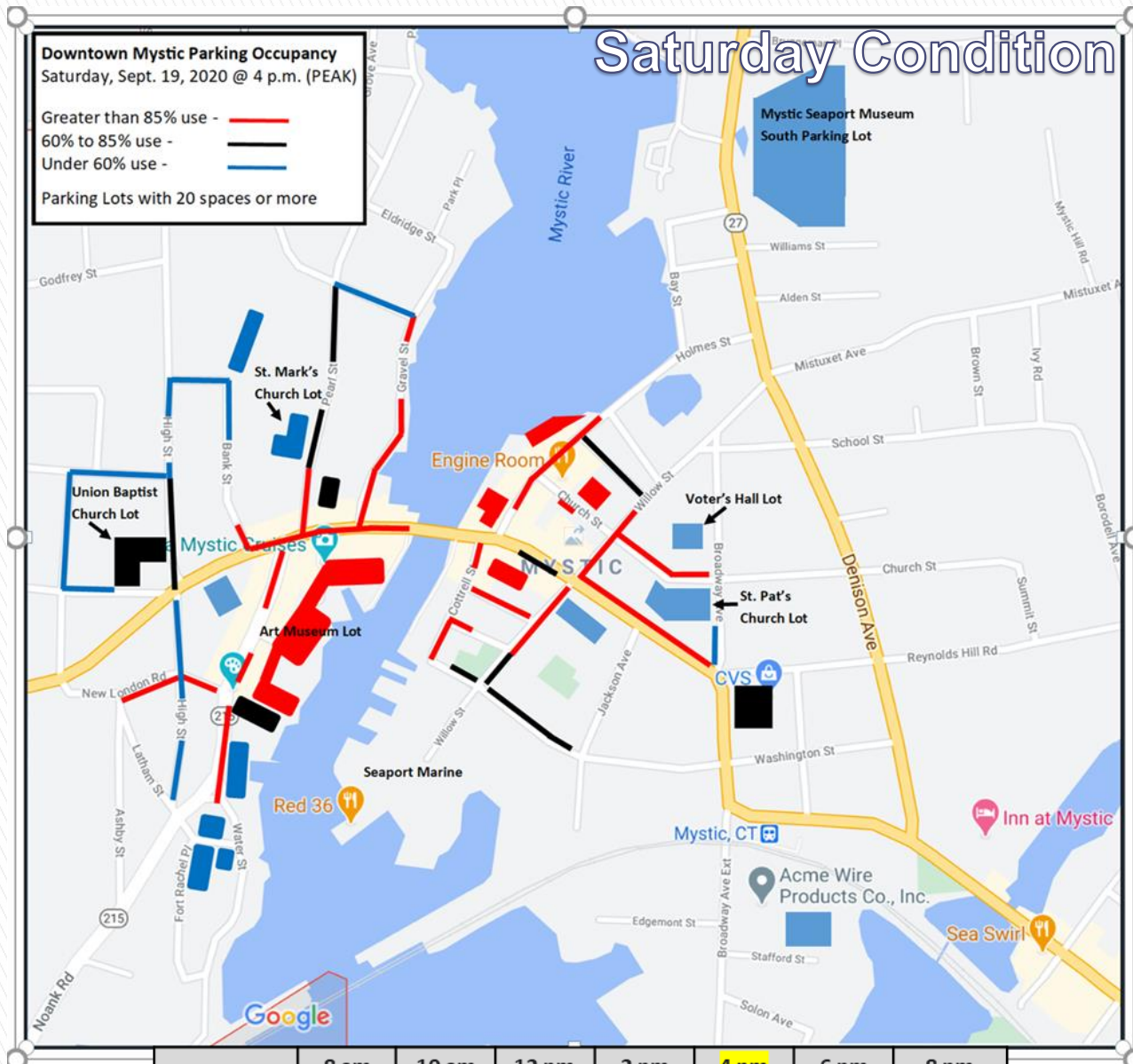


	8 am	10 am	12 pm	2 pm	4 pm	6 pm	8 pm
On-Street	23.5%	37.8%	49.2%	53.0%	52.3%	47.8%	44.2%
Off-Street	31.9%	39.2%	47.2%	49.3%	49.2%	51.5%	43.6%
Total	28.3%	38.6%	48.1%	50.9%	50.5%	49.9%	43.9%

**Downtown Mystic Parking Occupancy**  
Saturday, Sept. 19, 2020 @ 4 p.m. (PEAK)

Greater than 85% use - —  
60% to 85% use - —  
Under 60% use - —  
Parking Lots with 20 spaces or more

# Saturday Condition



	8 am	10 am	12 pm	2 pm	4 pm	6 pm	8 pm
<b>On-Street</b>	33.0%	42.0%	63.8%	71.6%	71.6%	66.8%	57.3%
<b>Off-Street</b>	34.5%	44.5%	63.1%	72.2%	75.0%	75.4%	69.9%
<b>Total</b>	33.9%	43.4%	63.4%	72.0%	73.5%	71.6%	64.5%



## 2-Hour Time Zone Parking Compliance Survey, Saturday, November 7, 2020

Street	From/To	2 Hr. Spaces Counted	Parked in Excess of 2-Hr. Limit	% Spaces in Violation (avg.)	# Parked in Excess of 4 hrs.	% of Spaces Parked 4 hrs.+
Water St.	Art Museum Lot to W. Main St.	4	1	25.0%	1	25.0%
Bank St.	Next to Mystic Pizza	2	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
W. Main St.	Bank St. to Drawbridge	24	5	20.8%	3	12.5%
Cottrell St.	E. Main St. to Washington St.	45	12	26.7%	7	15.5%
Washington St.	Cottrell St. to Willow St.	5	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
E. Main St.	Willow St. to Holmes St.	5	1	20.0%	1	20.0%
Holmes St.	E. Main St. to Forsythe St.	17	5	29.4%	3	17.6%
TOTAL		102	24	23.5%	15	14.7%

- 1 in about 4 vehicles in the 2-hour zone parked in excess of 2 hours.
- 1 in about 7 vehicles in the 2-hour zone parked in excess of 4 hours.

# Key Findings

- **Parking inventory/regulations**
- **Parking utilization**
- **Parking management & enforcement**
- **Development/Zoning-required parking**
- **TDM/Transit**



# Key Findings – Parking Inventory/Regs.



- The off-street parking supply serving downtown Mystic is almost 100% privately owned and controlled.
- The 210-space Art Museum Lot is the primary source of off-street public parking downtown.
- The Art Museum Lot charges **market rates** for hourly & daily parking while the most convenient on-street commercial district spaces are **free**.
- The number of designated 2-hour on-street parking spaces serving the downtown commercial district (125) is relatively small when compared to other small, seasonal, downtown coastal New England communities.
- Most of the on-street parking supply within a 5-minute walk of the commercial district is unrestricted parking on residential streets.
- Parking regulatory signs are generally in good condition and well located. Parking wayfinding signage to and within the Art Museum Lot is poor.

# Key Findings – Parking Utilization



## Seasonality

- Peak parking demand occurs in July and August, but the “shoulder season” and off-season parking demand remains relatively high.

## Weekday Use

- Overall peak parking use on Sept. 24th occurred at 2 p.m. (50.9%). Parking occupancy levels are within just 1% of peak rates at 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- There was sufficient parking availability in the Art Museum Lot throughout the day and most private parking lots were underutilized.
- Only one residential street (Pearl Street) exceeded functional capacity during the weekday peak period on Sept. 24th.
- The entire 2-hour on-street parking zone exceeded functional capacity on Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> (87.5%) as did most 2-hour streets on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>.

# Key Findings – Parking Utilization



## Saturday Use

- Overall peak parking use (Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>) occurred at 4 p.m. (73.5%). Parking occupancy levels are within just 2% of the peak rate at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- The Art Museum Lot exceeded **100%** capacity and was temporarily closed from 12 noon to 8 p.m. on Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The Art Museum Lot routinely exceeds capacity throughout the summer and on non-summer weekends (Fri. night, Sat. & Sun.) per the Art Museum staff.
- The entire 2-hr. zone exceeded functional capacity (**94.8%**) (Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>).
- Several residential streets in both towns exceeded functional capacity during the Saturday peak period.
- While the Art Museum Lot was full, and the on-street 2-hour parking zone exceeded functional capacity, some churches and private lots within and just outside the 5-min. walk zone were significantly underutilized, and in some cases, empty.



# Key Findings – Parking Utilization



## **On-street Time-Zone Compliance/Turnover**

- Non-compliance with posted 2-hr. time limits is high (23.5%) and turnover of 2-hr. spaces is poor, which negatively impacts retail sales.
- A significant number of employees appear to be parking in the 2-hour zone displacing retail customers and short-term visitors.
- The lack of available, convenient, short-term parking on-street contributes to traffic congestion created by parkers “circling” & “hunting” for available spaces as well as customers parking on residential streets.



# Key Findings – Parking Utilization



## **Employee/Long-term Parking**

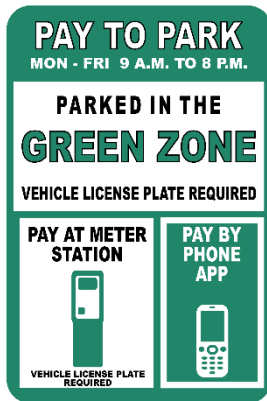
- The Mystic Art Museum has a “freeze” on monthly parking sales with an estimated 320 monthly passes in circulation and a waiting list of over 300.
- Individual employees are ineligible to purchase monthly parking passes at the Art Museum Lot.
- Unless they have employer-provided off-street parking, employees must find their own parking – with some parking in the on-street 2-hour zone, some on nearby residential streets and others in private lots - often without consent of lot owners.



# Recommendations

## ❖ **Meter and expand the 2-hour parking zone (year-round) to:**

- increase parking availability, turnover and time zone compliance;
- move employees out of the most convenient customer spaces;
- increase the number of customer/short-term visitor spaces;
- reduce the cost of time-zone parking enforcement;
- balance on-street and off-street parking pricing; and
- generate a revenue source to expand off-street parking and reinvestment in the downtown.



# Recommendations

## Expansion of 2-hour parking zone



- East Main Street, Pearl Street and Gravel Street
- Eliminate inefficient parallel parking stall markings to increase on-street parking supply by about 10%. (Continue to stripe clearances to street/driveway corners, crosswalks and fire hydrants).

# Recommendations

## ❖ Expand seasonal parking enforcement to year-round



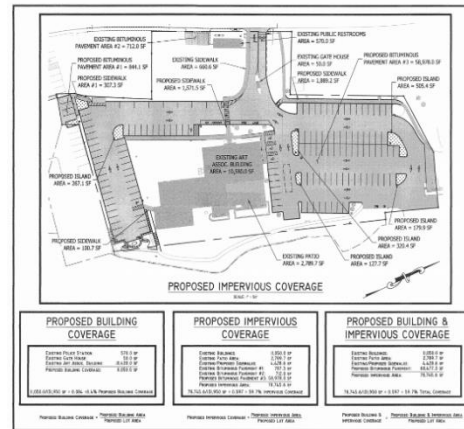
- Coordinate Community Service Officers (CSOs) on both sides of the bridge
- CSOs can provide parking enforcement, customer assistance/information, truck delivery mgt., special event parking mgt., etc.
- Replace manual time-zone enforcement and handwritten tickets with electronic, wireless chalking/ticketing devices.



## Recommendations

❖ **Expand off-street public parking**

- Reconfigure and expand the Art Museum Parking Lot  
**+/- 35 new parking spaces**



- Reconfigure and expand the 4<sup>th</sup> District Voting Hall Lot  
**+/- 23 new parking spaces**



# Recommendations

## ❖ Expand off-street public parking



Church Lots



Marina Lots



Business Office Lots  
(vacant on weekends)

- Seek to secure shared-lot parking agreements within 5 & 10-min. walk zone
- Seek to lease/purchase private parcels/lots within 5 & 10-min. walk zone

# Recommendations

❖ **Establish an Employee Permit Parking Program** in the newly secured (shared/leased/purchased) lots within the 5-min. walk zone to:

- accommodate employees currently parking in the 2-hour zone and on residential streets;
- increase parking turnover in the 2-hour zone; and
- reduce the waiting list for monthly parking at the Art Museum Lot.

Employee permits should be priced lower than the monthly pass at the centrally-located Art Museum Lot.

# Recommendations

- ❖ **Establish a Valet Parking Program** using vacant parking lots located outside of the 5-minute walk zone to:
  - free-up parking within the 5-minute walk zone – particularly on busy weekend days/evenings;
  - achieve a 50% increase in the number of vehicles parked in the valet lots through tandem parking.
  - increase customer service with front door-to-door service.

Towns would license, regulate, & promote Valet Program



# Recommendations

## ❖ **Protect residential neighborhoods from excessive downtown parking infiltration/spillover**



Each of the previous recommendations will reduce customer infiltration onto residentially-zoned streets. However, towns should monitor the residential streets to consider further regulatory action should it be needed, particularly on residential streets that:

- are located between the commercial district and employee permit lots;
- have a lot of multi-family housing and/or lack of driveways; and
- consistently exceed 85% occupancy over multiple hours of the day/week



# Recommendations

## ❖ **Implement strategies to address peak summer and special event parking demand**

- Implement a Valet Parking Program
- Expand peripheral, free off-street parking within a 10-min. (+/-) walk of downtown with improved pedestrian wayfinding signage & lighting
- Implement a Parking Guidance System (PGS) with real-time, dynamic messaging to direct drivers to available peripheral lots when the Art Museum Lot is full/closed.
- Implement a shuttle bus system to efficiently link remote parking lots, hotels, and attractions with the Mystic Train Station between I-95 and Downtown Mystic.



# QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION