

# Executive Summary

## PURPOSE

The City of Peekskill continues to experience growth in its downtown population, art, dining and entertainment uses, and overall activity base. This sustained interest and attraction in Peekskill's music, art, entertainment, and recreational venues necessitated the opportunity to re-evaluate and reallocate parking resources among existing facilities to better accommodate residents, visitors, workers, and patrons to downtown establishments particularly during peak activity periods.

As such, the City of Peekskill engaged in professional services with Nelson\Nygaard, a specialized transportation planning firm, to conduct a data-intensive investigation to establish accurate baseline parking counts, utilization and turnover rates, and a complete signage inventory to ultimately produce recommendations for both parking and signage in the Downtown users (the "Project").

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Project began with a detailed review of the existing conditions of Peekskill's Downtown municipal parking facilities, on-street parking, and downtown parking signage to create an accurate inventory. From here, site visits and parking counts further confirmed turnover rates and facility usage rates. Together, these data inputs captured the primary issues and preliminary opportunities. Also included as a major component was input from key downtown stakeholders.

The Project is an 'inventory-to-recommendation' program that includes permits, metered spaces, surface lots, on-street parking, parking garage facilities, and signage that results in a comprehensive parking utilization, circulation, and navigation program for Downtown residents, visitors, employees, and other patrons.

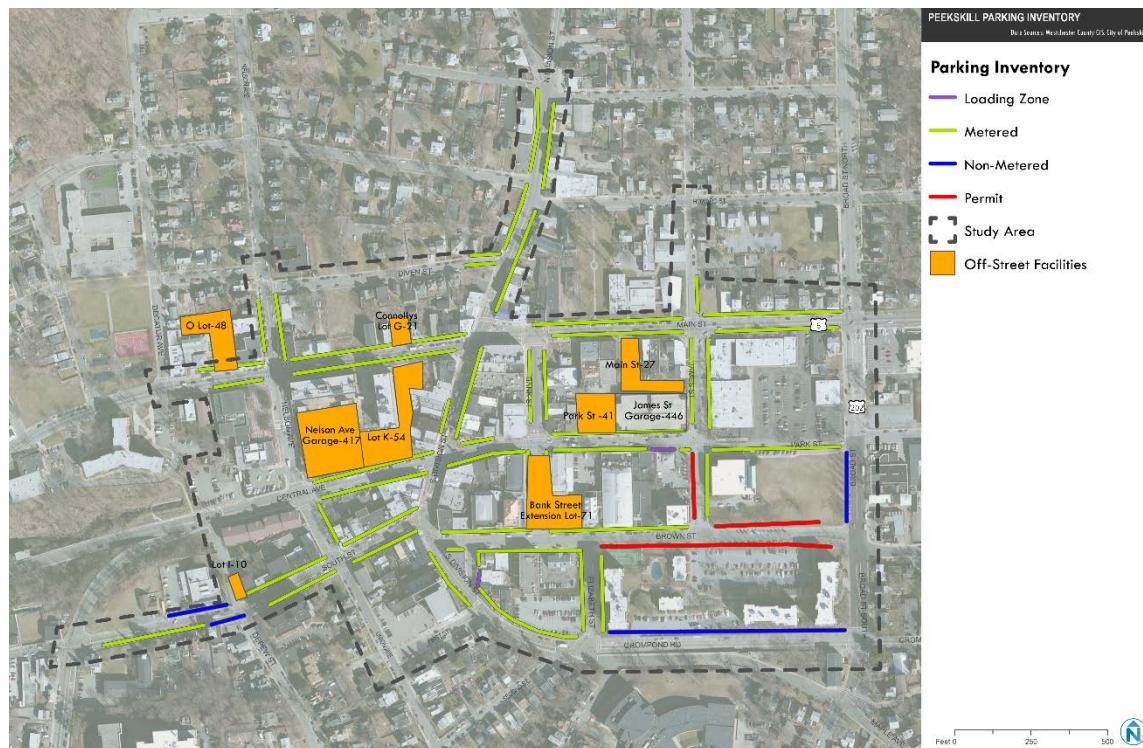
The Project concluded in the development of short- and long-term implementation recommendations to guide strategic changes of parking resource allocation and develop a comprehensive communications plan for directional and wayfinding signage over the next several years.

## Study Area

The Study Area is a defined area of Downtown Peekskill, in which the inventory and occupancy of parking assets were counted and assessed (Figure 1). The Study Area includes all City-owned/public parking garages and lots and metered streets as well as the major transportation corridors as demarcated on all maps displaying parking facilities in this report. Through close correspondence

with the City and stakeholders, and after consideration of past parking material review<sup>1</sup>, the Study Area is considered to include all critical public parking assets and expressed parking issues in Downtown Peekskill.

Figure 1      Downtown Peekskill Parking Study Area and Parking Inventory



## KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Parking Supply

There are a total of **1,628 parking spaces** in the Study Area.

- Total off-street parking spaces: 1,132
  - 391 of these spaces (35%) are metered.
  - A majority (55%) of off-street spaces require a permit or are reserved for tenants/visitors of specific destinations.
- Total on-street parking spaces: 496
  - 404 (81%) of these spaces are metered.
  - 47 (9%) require a permit.

<sup>1</sup> This Project is a comprehensive and technically-derived analysis completed by a professional transportation planning firm to develop accurate baseline counts, turnover rates, facility inventories, permit allocations, and directional signage in the greater Downtown. The data findings serve as the foundation to an implementable recommendation program. The Project extends far beyond the activity described in the 2008 parking survey of the Business Improvement District (BID) by a community committee only during typical weekday periods and while the James Street Garage was partially closed for repair and Route 9 was under initial construction.

- 45 (9%) are un-regulated and available for public use

## On-Street Availability

- On-street parking demand peaks at 11 AM, with an average utilization of just over 75% among all on-street spaces for both weekdays and Saturdays. Utilization typically exceeds 70% from 10 AM to 6 PM on both weekdays and Saturdays.
- On-street segments near the intersection of Division Street, Central Avenue, and Park Street were observed at 90+% utilized during these periods. This high utilization rate reveals that parking patrons exhibit a greater preference for on-street locations compared to nearby off-street locations.
  - However, on-street parking along segments east of James Street and south of Brown Street are commonly underutilized, especially on weekends.

## Off-Street Capacity

- In aggregate, the City's off-street parking inventory has capacity to accommodate an additional 410 off-street spaces, during the weekday peak period (1 PM to 2 PM). The available additional off-street capacity varies between 410 and 626 spaces throughout the periods observed. On average, during weekdays the off-street parking inventory has capacity to accommodate about 507 spaces.
  - These additional cars would still leave 10% of the aggregate supply available<sup>2</sup>.
- During the weekday peak period, only Lots O, G, and K saw utilization over 70%.
- Saturday demand peaks are influenced by weekly shows and events at the Paramount Theater, Elks Lodge, Assumption Church, and City-sponsored ones.
  - Nearby surface lots, including the Bank Street Extension Lot and Park Street Lot, experience *occupancy at 100% or greater capacity during evenings* – 5 PM to 9 PM data.
  - Utilization of the James Street Garage peak at 27%, with over 325 spaces vacant. This reveals a disparity between garages and surface lot usage.

Parking constraints in Downtown Peekskill are not a result of insufficient supply. During periods of peak congestion and occupancy, there are parking facilities with ample supply.

## Signage

- There is limited parking directional signage in the study area which could lead to confusion in finding off-street parking facilities and the perception that parking is not available.
  - Within the study area there are only eight parking directional signs, three of which are located at one intersection for the James Street garage.

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<sup>2</sup> Ten percent is a common availability benchmark measure indicating a highly efficient shared parking system.

- Key gateway points did not provide parking directions signage: traveling east on Main Street, traveling east on Central Avenue, traveling south on Division Street, and traveling west on Route 202/Crompond Road.
- There is an inconsistency with the look of the parking directional signage. Some of the signs have a white background with green lettering while some are the inverse with green background and white lettering.
- There were also locations where the orientation of the arrow on the direction signage was misleading.
- There are limited cultural/wayfinding civic signs within the study area.
  - There are no signs directing visitors to City Hall, the court house, Downtown, etc.
  - There is one sign for the Paramount Theater, one sign for the library, and two signs for the seasonal Farmer's Market.
  - There is limited signage at the Route 9 off-ramps directing visitors to Downtown.
- While there is limited direction and wayfinding signage, there are significant opportunities to improve signage with additional and consistent looking signage at strategic locations.

## ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### Issues

- Curbside availability is limited during peak demand periods. This is due to the location of popular destinations amidst the tight, historic street grid.
  - Downtown's primary commercial activity, as well as its curbside parking demand, is concentrated along two corridors: Division Street and Main Street. While on-street parking is typically available on blocks peripheral to these two most-popular corridors, the *absence of driver-oriented directional and wayfinding signage* makes finding available parking spaces a challenge for infrequent visitors and patrons.
- Parking activity is not distributed evenly or efficiently among all Downtown parking options.
  - This creates a *perception of supply scarcity*, despite available parking options in close proximity to constrained locations.
- Awareness and preference towards various parking options adds to the imbalanced use of Downtown parking facilities. These conditions may reduce these facilities' effective capacity to accommodate demand.
  - Some parking facilities are perceived as less desirable to patrons than others, such as the James Street or Nelson Avenue Garage, due to the perception that they are poorly lit, unattractive, and unsafe which causes some visitors to cluster on lower floors even when ample parking is available on upper floors
  - Others, like the Valley Brook Lot (on Main Street) or the Bank Street Extension Lot, lack adequate directional and wayfinding signage to indicate to drivers that these facilities offer public parking.
  - Some parking options are not clear, such as after-hour public access to permit lots.
- The most visible and prominent parking options are the most constrained (Lot K, the Park Street Lot, and the Bank Street Extension Lot).

- A lack of awareness of other options and possible resistance of those options may aid in driver frustration and reduce the value provided by Downtown's sufficient parking infrastructure.
- Downtown has an excellent supply of parking and user-friendly parking regulations, but these are not together communicated effectively to the public.
  - Dilapidated signage, inconsistent branding, low-level lighting for motorists and pedestrians alike, and few maps or directions to popular destinations collectively reinforce perceptions of municipal parking facilities as a “last resort” and not a “first choice” for people visiting Downtown Peekskill.
- Constructing brand-new parking facilities without significant management changes would likely perpetuate current shortcomings of Peekskill's Downtown parking system.
  - Given the sufficient supply and recommendations provided herein, building new parking facilities would increase the long-term capital commitments of the City, remove valuable land from tax generation, and require additional management and operations/maintenance obligations to sustain.

## Opportunities

- Parking constraints in Downtown Peekskill are not a result of insufficient supply. During periods of peak congestion and occupancy, there are parking facilities sitting relatively empty.
  - During peak demand conditions, there are *hundreds of available public parking spaces*, including some located in single facilities such as the James Street and Nelson Avenue Garages.
    - This supply-demand imbalance leaves ample underutilized capacity often adjacent to constrained locations/facilities, such as prominent and visible surface lots near Park Street, James Street, and Bank Street.
- To effectively distribute parking demand, simple management tools can help ease constraints and improve the parking experience.
  - Off-street parking facilities should provide overflow parking capacity when more prominent locations are constrained, but many people are either unaware of them or do not feel comfortable enough to use. The effective placement and design of parking and informational signage will allocate parking demand in facilities with abundant supply and effectively convey a parking system focused on customer satisfaction.
  - Reducing the cost to use less popular parking facilities can improve the efficiency of the parking system by spreading demand more evenly across all available options. This approach ensures that permit holders still have access to long-term parking Downtown while enabling visitors and short-term parkers to find available spaces more quickly at the highest demanded facilities.
  - Facilitating shared parking opportunities between properties where parking demand is complementary can maximize the utilization of the existing parking supply. Shared parking agreements (private transactions) negotiated with key private lot owners could unlock significant under-utilized private parking supplies that could be pooled into the public supply during the owners' off-peak hours. For example, the Paramount Theater could partner with nearby business with parking capacity to share parking infrastructure during off-hours.

- Depending upon the time of day, there are additional opportunities to increase parking utilization:
  - Permitted and reserved areas of off-street facilities outside of weekdays from 9 AM to 5 PM.
  - All levels of both Downtown parking garages during weekend hours.
  - Remote on-street segments, including along Cromptond Road.
- Improve the aesthetics and perceived safety of the public garages through targeted upgrades to lighting and landscaping, and consider staffing with parking attendants, especially in partnership with high activity-generating uses, like the Paramount Theater.
- Effectively manage Downtown's parking supply with a comprehensive signage system that clearly messages parking facility locations, types of available spaces, and hours of enforcement.
  - This type of communications plan will aid visitors or patrons prior to entering Downtown and upon return to their vehicle.

## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

### James Street Garage

Promote usage of upper levels (upper levels are generally observed to be empty at all hours of the day).

- Expand the metered parking area to the second floor and incentivize permit holders to use upper floors in order to free up additional ground level spaces for public parking.
- Create a reduced-rate permit tailored for Downtown employees, Westchester Community College students/staff, and residents valid only on upper floor/s or roof levels.

### Improve aesthetics and perceived safety

- Replace low-level lighting with higher wattage LED bulbs to create a more welcoming environment to parking patrons.
- Place a parking attendant or greeter at public entrances to both provide direction and answer any questions patrons may have during evening hours and on special event nights.
  - The Paramount Theater should explore this recommendation further given the James Street Garage's 2.5 block proximity.
- Improving the exterior aesthetic of the garage may increase its appeal. This can be accomplished with an artwork contest or painting all/select portions of the exterior. New landscaping can also increase the curb appeal, but selected plants or trees need to be suitable to the environment.

### Improve Signage

- Add new *exterior signage* as part of overall branding and wayfinding scheme. New exterior signage should be consistent in color, shape, and size to all signs for public parking. Further, the exterior signage should clearly identify space allocation for permitted spots versus metered spots.
- Exterior wall signage signifying the garage as a public parking facility will be hugely beneficial to visitors.

- Add new *interior signage* system as part of overall branding and wayfinding scheme. New interior signage should be consistent in color, shape, and size to indicate metered parking, permit parking, and handicapped parking. Interior signage should specify when payment is required and when weekday permit spaces are available for public use.

#### Improve Operations

- Remove usage of rearview mirror placards and replace with a decal window sticker system to ensure proper usage of permits. Field observations showed painted guardrails which did not match the rearview- mirror permit placards. Remove the mismatched color scheme and replace with new colors that correspond with new permit categories. This effort should be coordinated with the City Clerk's Office.

### **Nelson Avenue Garage**

#### Simplify permit nomenclature to help the City categorize and track permits on Levels B and C

- Presently, there are three categories for permits on Level C: NCR, YEAR, and YR/SN. Because NCR and YEAR are identical in purpose, creating one (1) new category that includes both permits will help reduce confusion.

#### Increase Space Availability during High Demand Periods

- Make daytime permit spaces – especially those reserved for weekday/daytime purposes - available for public use during evenings and weekends.
- Make nighttime permit spaces available during the day (6AM to 6PM) for public use.
- Resign dedicated library staff spaces for public use when closed and after 6PM.

#### Improve Signage

- Add new exterior and interior signage as part of overall branding and wayfinding scheme. New exterior signage should clearly indicate which entrances are available to permit holders and which entrances are available to the public. New interior signage should be consistent in color, shape, size, and messaging to indicate metered parking, permit parking, and handicapped parking.
- New interior signage should specify when payment is required and when permit spaces are available for public use.
  - Parking spaces that can become public during off-hour and weekend periods include reserved library parking, senior club parking, and 'Block' permits (6AM to 6PM).
  - At minimum, two (2) new signs should be placed with this information at public entrances.

#### Improve Aesthetics

- Replace low-level lighting with higher wattage LED bulbs to create a more welcoming environment to parking patrons.
- Color code garage columns to clearly message the type of parking spaces available (public, reserved, handicapped, etc.). This effort should be coordinated with the City Clerk's Office.

## Increase Off-Hour Use of Permit Lots

Municipal parking lots with permitted spaces are available for public parking during evenings and weekends, but low utilization suggests that too few visitors realize this.

- Refine signage at permit facilities to identify times of public access (without a permit). This will help reduce pressure from on-street resources while allowing the James Street Garage to primarily serve long-term parkers.
- Lot O (City Hall) serves library patrons and City employees during the workday. After 6PM, however, the lot is available for public use without required payment.
- Connolly's/Birdsall/Lot G is the parking facility in closest proximity to Downtown's "Restaurant Row" but is entirely allocated to permit parking. This facility is ideal for public parking due to its high-demand location.
- Half of the Valley Brook Lot supply is permit parking. Moving these permitted spaces into the James Street Garage will increase public parking availability. As an interim measure, proper signage indicating public parking after 6PM is acceptable.

## Optimize the value of off-street parking resources.

Structured parking in established, walkable downtowns is very expensive, with construction costs starting at around \$30,000 per space for a stand-alone facility of modest design. Structured facilities also consume highly valuable downtown real estate. Therefore, capturing the full capacity/value of existing off-street parking resources is essential before supply expansion investments should be considered. Not only will this save money, it will facilitate the development of higher and better land uses, and support walkability by avoiding new driveways, turning movements, and traffic associated with a new parking facility.

### Remove License Plate Signage in Downtown Lots

- The existing signage denoting reserved spaces by license plate is not only confusing but is off-putting to public parkers seeking available space. Drivers tend to search elsewhere when they see license plate reserved spaces. This is a concern for the Downtown given a majority of these types of spaces are available during the evening hours and on weekends. Appropriately signing these spaces will optimize the value of centrally located off-street parking facilities.
- This opportunity was a strong recommendation from the Stakeholder Meeting.
- This effort must be coordinated with the City Clerk's Office.

### Limit 24/7 parking permits to residents

- The "24-hour" permits sold at Nelson and James Garages allow access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; however, a large percentage of these permits are primarily for workday usage.
  - This change would enable greater opportunities for public parking in permit spaces during off-hours and allow more efficient utilization of existing parking resources.

### Make it clear when and where permit parking can be used as hourly parking

- There is far more parking available to visitors than realized during the evenings and weekends. This scarcity perception is a problem. One of the most prominent solutions to promoting available capacity is *proper signage* and *coordinated information* directed

towards visiting parkers. Signage should make clear when permit facilities and spaces are available for public parking.

**Promote locations and times offering longer-term parking.**

- Within the past six month, the James Street Garage and Nelson Avenue Garage meter limits were extended to 12 hours (6 AM to 6 PM).
  - This is particularly important for students at Westchester Community College who park at Nelson Garage.

## **Create a Comprehensive Signage Program**

A comprehensive signage program will provide the City with a clear action plan for replacing, repositioning, and installing new directional and wayfinding signage. The Recommendations Report provides a detailed summary of signage recommendations. A summary of the signage program is provided below.

### **Parking Directional Signs**

- Parking directional signage should be consistent throughout the Downtown. The parking direction signage should follow the MUTCD<sup>3</sup> D4-1 30"x24" signage specification with proper directional arrow orientation.
- Gateways - Parking directional signage should be provided at each of the Downtown gateways to direct visitors to public parking as they enter the downtown area.
  - Main Street (eastbound into City) – Install new parking directional signage
  - Central Avenue (eastbound into City) – Install new parking directional signage
  - South Street (eastbound into City) – Replace parking directional signage
  - Division Street (southbound into City) – Install new parking directional signage
  - Main Street (westbound into City) – Replace parking directional signage
  - Crompond Road (westbound into the City) – Install new parking directional signage
- Internal downtown signage – once vehicles have entered the Downtown area, additional, clear, and consistent parking directional signage should be provided to assist visitors in navigating to public parking lots.
  - Main Street / Nelson Avenue – Replace parking directional signage in northwest corner with correct directional arrow
  - Nelson Street Garage – Install new Public Parking sign at southern entrance
  - Valley Lot entrance – Install new parking directional signage
  - James Street / Park Avenue intersection – replace parking directional signage with correct arrow orientation.
  - James Street Garage – Install Public Parking sign at Park Street entrance. Replace parking directional signage on Park Street.
  - Bank Street Lot – install new parking directional signage on Park Street and on Brown Street

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<sup>3</sup> MUTCD is the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

### **Civic and Cultural Wayfinding Signage**

- Downtown signage – to prevent driver confusion, wayfinding signage to civic and cultural land uses should be provided.
  - Paramount Theater – the existing wayfinding sign is faded and vandalized with stickers, thus should be replaced. In addition, additional signage should be provided at Main Street and Nelson Avenue to direct visitors entering from Main Street to the Paramount Theater.
  - Library – there is only one sign for the library located at the Main Street/Broad Street intersection. An additional sign should be provided for vehicles arriving from the west on Main Street.
- Outside downtown signage – signage should be provided outside the Downtown area to direct visitors to the downtown area and key civic and cultural land uses.
  - Install Civic/Cultural wayfinding signage at the Route 9 ramps on Main Street
  - Install Civic/Cultural wayfinding signage at the Route 9 ramps on Hudson Street
  - Replace the Paramount Theater sign at the Route 9 Ramps at Hudson Street.
  - A wayfinding sign with estimated walking distances/times to civic and cultural land uses should be provided at the Peekskill MetroNorth train station for visitors arriving by train. This will help reinforce Central Avenue and South Street as the primary connectors between the train station and the Downtown.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PHASING OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Figure 2     Recommendations Implementation Phasing

Facility	Recommendation	Implementation Actions
James Street Garage	Promote usage of upper levels	<p>Create a reduced-rate permit tailored for Downtown employees and WCC students valid only on upper floor/s or roof levels.</p> <p>Expand metered parking area to the second floor to incentivize permit holders use upper floors, to free up additional spaces on the ground level for metered spaces.</p>
	Improve aesthetics and perceived safety	<p>Replace low-level lighting with higher wattage LED bulbs to create a more welcoming environment to parking patrons.</p> <p>Improve exterior aesthetics/features through landscaping or public art elements.</p>
		Place a parking attendant or greeter at public entrances to both provide direction and answer any questions patrons may have during evening hours and on special event nights.
	Improve signage	Add new exterior signage as part of overall branding and wayfinding scheme.

Facility	Recommendation	Implementation Actions
		Add new interior signage as part of overall branding and wayfinding scheme.
	Improve operations	Install a permanent tag system (placards), and ensure tag system and signage are aligned.
		Remove painted guiderails
Nelson Avenue Garage	Simplify permit nomenclature.	Consolidate permit categories and subcategories.
	Increase space availability during high-demand periods	Make daytime permit spaces – especially those reserved for weekday/daytime purposes - available for public use during evenings and weekends.
		Make nighttime permit spaces available during the day (6AM to 6PM) for public use.
	Improve signage	Reallocate the number of dedicated library staff spaces based on observed demand, and provide new spaces available to the public after 6PM.
Municipal Lots	Increase off-hour use of permit lots	Add interior signage specifying when payment is required and which permit spaces are available for public parking during off-hours.
Off-Street Resources	Optimize the value of off-street parking resources.	Provide signage that indicates when lots are open to the public and when/if meters are enforced.
		Remove license-plate signage in Downtown lots.
		Discontinue 24/7 parking permits.
		Make it clear when and where permit parking can be used as hourly parking.

## CONCLUSION

Peekskill is a thriving hub of historic, cultural, artistic, and economic activity. Given the City's continued successes, creating a comprehensive and technically-derived analysis to determine existing parking resources, available capacity, and recommendations for signage and optimization will be an important planning tool for the City as it continues to grow and develop. Because the recommendations are divided into short- and long-term categories, the City can select a phased approach for implementation. The Peekskill Downtown Parking Improvement Study includes an Existing Conditions Report and a Recommendations Report in addition to this Executive Summary. The Existing Conditions Report highlights key conditions of the parking system analyzed as part of the study, including parking utilization and turnover patterns, Downtown stakeholder feedback, facility access conditions, and wayfinding and signage conditions. This information forms the foundation for issues, opportunities, and recommendations discussed in the Recommendations

Report. The Recommendations Report includes a brief summary of existing conditions, followed by discussions of proposed measures to improve parking management, upgrade the Downtown wayfinding/signage system, and enhance the visitor experience in Downtown Peekskill.