Town of Hillsborough Parking Study Final Report

September 2025

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RK&K

TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Hillsborough initiated a comprehensive parking study to address existing conditions and future needs of its vibrant downtown and West Hillsborough commercial areas. The town has experienced rapid population growth, growing 62% from 2010 to 2020, with 9,660 residents as of the 2020 U.S. Census. Downtown and West Hillsborough serve residents and local employees, as well as drawing in regional visitors. These areas feature many unique shops, restaurants, bars, art galleries, and a large historic district, which contains more than 100 houses, churches, and buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries. As the town continues to invest in its downtown and commercial areas to better serve residents, employees and visitors, it acknowledges that continued economic vitality relies on thoughtful parking and multi-modal accommodations. An effective parking study, designed to optimize current parking resources without compromising the character of the town, is essential for supporting long-term success and sustainability.

The town conducted an internal parking study in 2010. An update to that study is necessary to analyze current parking needs, trends, and perceptions of Hillsborough residents, business owners, employees and visitors. This planning effort aims to assess the current balance of parking supply and demand, enabling the town to manage its existing parking resources more efficiently in line with broader community needs and values.

Study Area

The study area encompasses downtown Hillsborough and West Hillsborough (Figure 1). This area includes the historic downtown area its commercial corridors. In West Hillsborough, this area includes the South Nash Street commercial shops, as well as the Eno Mill and Bellevue Mill. These areas have a high concentration of residential, commercial, employment and tourism activity. Hillsborough is also the county seat for Orange County and is home to many Orange County government services and offices including justice facilities and the county courthouse. The county facilities and services create a significant daily visitor demand, particularly associated with specific court days such as traffic court on Wednesdays.

The study area features a mix of public and private parking assets, spanning on-street parking, surface lots and a parking deck. By focusing on these areas of Hillsborough, the study aims to provide an accurate assessment of current parking conditions and future needs.

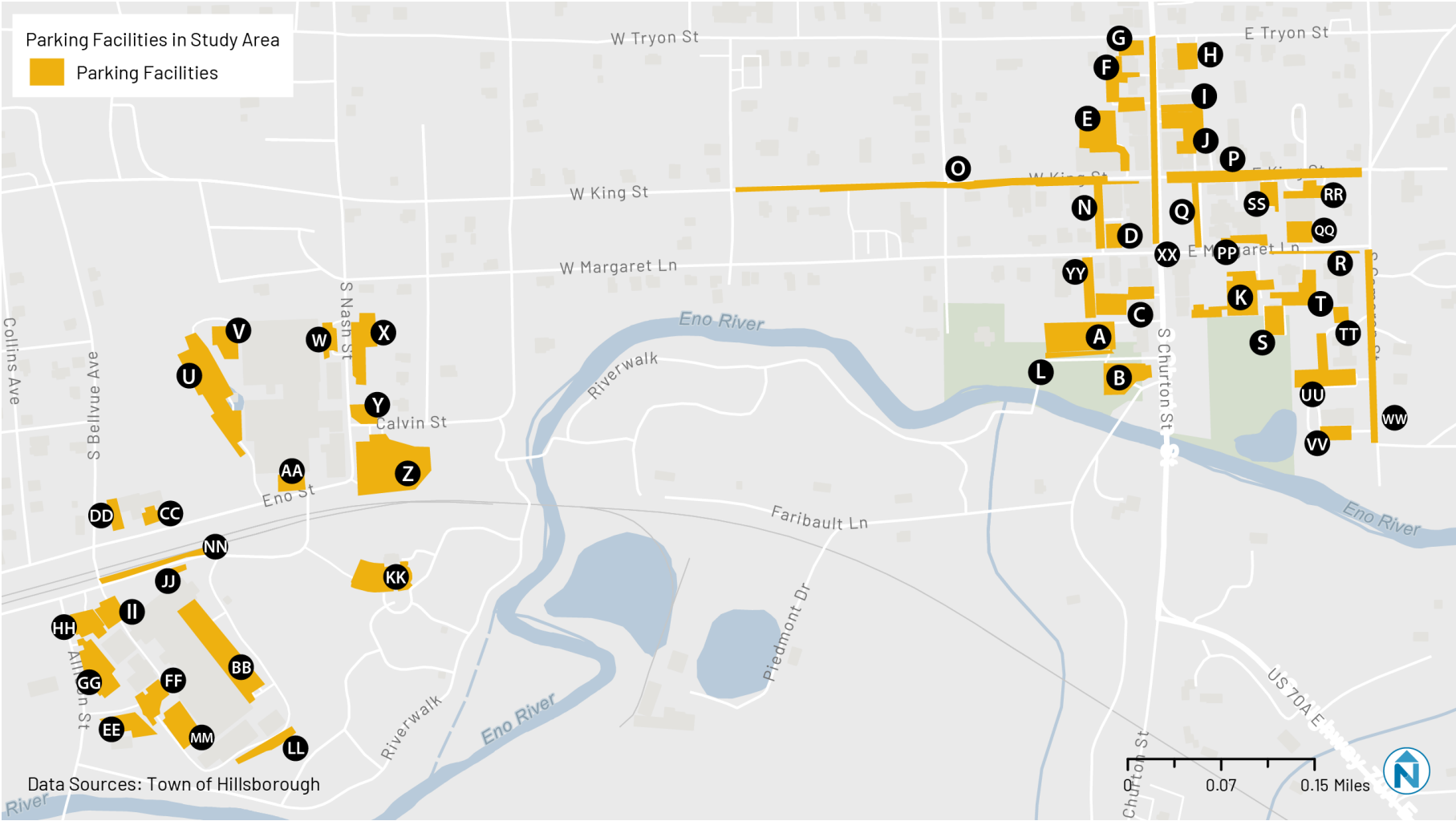# Figure 1: Map of Parking Facilities in Study Area

Parking Facilities in Study Area

Parking Facilities

Data Sources: Town of Hillsborough

Town of Hillsborough

Figure 2: Parking Facilities Key

Lot Label	Lot Name	Total Parking Spaces
A	Eno River Parking Deck	200 (publicly available) (408 total spaces)
B	Weaver Street Market	52
C	Orange Rural Fire Department	4
D	West Margaret Lane Lot	20
E	West King Street Parking Lot	56
F	Hillsborough Police Department	20
G	Police Department Annex	10
H	Clements Funeral and Cremation Services	20
I	118 N. Churton St.	7
J	112 N. Churton St.	12
K	Orange County Justice Facility	28
L	Nash and Kollock Street	12
N	West King North-South	19
O	West King East-West	46
P	East King Street	47
Q	Court Street	28
R	East Margaret Lane	19
S	Eno River Farmers Market	24
T	District Attorney's Office	44
U	Bellevue Mill	140
V	Bellevue Mill	30
W	Bellevue Mill	16
X	Bellevue Mill	66
Y	Private Lot	1
Z	South Nash Street Public Parking	75
AA	Redeye	22
BB	Gold Park	79
CC	First Community Baptist Church	11
DD	First Community Baptist Church	24
EE	Eno River Brewing	45
FF	Eno River Upper Courtyard	21
GG	Eno River Mill	67
HH	Eno River Mill	16

II	Eno River Mill	8
JJ	Eno River Mill	7
KK	Cloth Mill	75
LL	The Expedition School	26
MM	Eno River Lower Courtyard	20
NN	Dimmocks Mill Road	0
PP	Magistrate's Office	12
QQ	United States Post Office, South	24
RR	United States Post Office, North	15
SS	Century Link	14
TT	John M. Link Jr. Government Services Center	7
UU	Orange County Board of Elections	88
VV	Orange Family Medical Group	26
WW	South Cameron Street	32
XX	South Churton Street	6
YY	Orange County Public Library	14

Previous Plans

This section offers an overview of previous plans, studies and policies related to parking and transportation within the town. Reviewing these documents builds on existing knowledge and ensures the parking study aligns with past initiatives and complements long-term, ongoing efforts to enhance the town and Orange County facilities. Figure 3 summarizes the review of these plans.

Figure 3: Past Plans and Studies

Plan	Notes
Town of Hillsborough Downtown Parking Study (2010)	▪ Measured current parking demand, projected effects of future development on parking availability and accessibility, and developed recommendations to improve downtown parking. ▪ Key takeaways from previous plans: need for increased signage, improved wayfinding and increased crosswalk coverage for easier access to parking locations.

	- Inventory: 1,425 spaces. Parking supply deemed reasonable. Many impediments to accessible parking exist. - Recommendations implemented: - Public parking spaces within a block of King and Churton streets intersection designated as three-hour parking - No time limits for public parking beyond downtown radius - Redesign of curb marking and parking striping - New, consistent wayfinding signage - On-street parking spaces removed on West Margaret Lane to expand sidewalk width and add a pedestrian signal at Churton Street - Privately owned parking lots improved, including asphalt, striping and signage and loading zones were added.
Orange County Government Facilities Master Plan (2023)	- Provides guidelines for space needs and facility changes, looking at facilities within and outside of Hillsborough. Several key potential changes and options would affect parking supply in the town. - Operations housed in the Whitted Human Services Building will move to a new site with ample parking and additional transportation options. - Parking could be constructed on the site of former jail facility and the Court Street Annex for the Justice Center. The former jail would have a new parking deck, with an estimated 224 spaces, in addition to 250 existing spaces. - The District Attorney's Office could be deconstructed and replaced with a surface lot to support the Justice Center and courthouse.
Hillsborough Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (2023)	- Meets N.C. General Statute 160D-50(a1). The plan establishes a collective vision for the town's long-term social, environmental, economic and infrastructure development. - Existing travel demand is high, and traffic congestion is forecasted to continue increasing. The plan recommended a downtown parking study.

	▪ The plan suggests "Hillsborough should optimize use of existing parking spaces and seek to limit the amount of land area needed to provide sufficient parking in the future" to limit impermeable pavement and sprawl and improve walkability, safety, and stormwater management.

Town of Hillsborough Strategic Plan (2023)	▪ Town vision: "We envision Hillsborough as a prosperous town, filled with vitality, fostering a strong sense of community, celebrating its unique heritage and small-town character."
	
	 ▪ The plan includes objectives and initiatives to elevate the quality of life in Hillsborough. Specific items related to parking and transportation:
	
	  – Sustainability: Optimize the built environment in a way that aligns with smart growth principles
	
	  – Connected Community: Advance a multi-modal network that reduces single-occupancy vehicles and links Hillsborough residents to key places and each other.

2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Parking Inventory

To comprehensively understand the dynamics of parking in Hillsborough, all on- and off-street parking facilities were evaluated, including private parking. While public parking is typically the most discussed and prominent resource for town businesses and residents, a significant amount of business and entertainment activity is generated by people using privately owned parking that the town leases or partners with the county to offer public access to, as well as private parking made available to tenants and select visitors.

Inventory Overview

The study area encompasses substantial on- and off-street parking assets, including forty-three distinct public and private off-street parking structures and surface lots and six on-street parking areas. These facilities are a mix of town-owned, county-owned, privately owned, and privately owned with a lease to the town. Each offers varying levels of restricted and public access. Establishing the concept of access is crucial in any parking study, as it defines who can use a parking space at any given time. The two broad categories of access, irrespective of ownership, are:

- **Publicly Accessible Parking** — Available to any member of the public. This parking is commonly signed and clearly open so any user understands it is publicly available.
- **Restricted Parking** — Limited to certain groups, such as permit holders, employees and customers.

These terms will be revisited often, especially in the utilization analysis, to better understand effective supply and true parking availability.
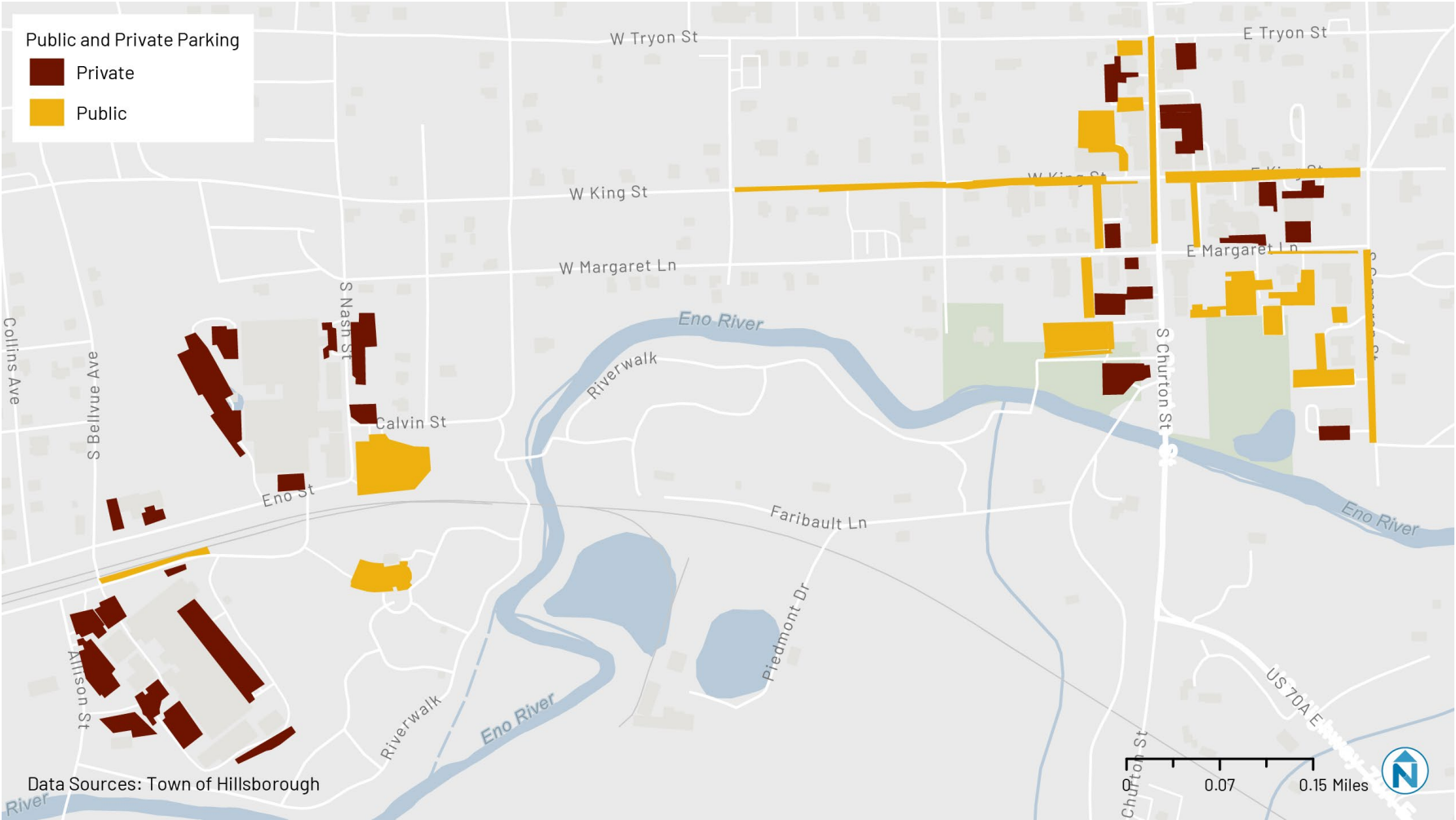
On-street parking is also available on many streets in downtown Hillsborough but not in West Hillsborough. None of this parking is metered but does have three-hour time restrictions. There is currently no enforcement of time limitations.

Downtown and West Hillsborough have 1,864 spaces across the on-street and off-street inventory, which is detailed in Figure 4. Of the total, 191 are on-street and 1,673 are off-street spaces. Of the off-street spaces, 409 are in the Eno River parking deck, owned by Orange County. Including the Eno River parking deck, 13 off-street lots are available to the public, with a total of 846 spaces. These include the 181 Orange County courthouse spaces and spaces associated with county facilities that are open to the public after hours,

on weekends and on holidays. There are 827 private parking spaces throughout the study area.

This section details the supply and regulation of parking assets in the study area. The inventory is based on data collected on site by the project team in April 2025.

Figure 4: Public and Private Parking Facilities

Public and Private Parking
- Private
- Public

W Tryon St
E Tryon St
W King St
W King St
E King St
W Margaret Ln
E Margaret Ln
Eno River
Riverwalk
Calvin St
S Nash St
S Bellvue Ave
Collins Ave
Eno St
S Churton St
Faribault Ln
Piedmont Dr
Riverwalk
Eno River
Allison St
Riverwalk
Eno River
Churton St
US 70A E
River

Data Sources: Town of Hillsborough

0.07   0.15 Miles

Town of Hillsborough

Key Inventory Findings

- There are comparable amounts of private and publicly accessible off-street parking. However, 21% of privately owned but publicly accessible parking is restricted to after-hours use (evenings and weekends).

- Compared to off-street parking, there is very little on-street parking in the study area. Off-street parking is located in both downtown and West Hillsborough.

- Many publicly accessible parking spaces are located in lots like the West Hillsborough Public Parking Lot, West King Street Public Parking Lot, and the Eno River Parking Deck. The town does not own these properties.

Parking Utilization

Utilization Findings

This section documents and analyzes parking utilization counts for the entire study area, providing a snapshot of the time and location of parked cars for typical days. Upon consultation with town staff, parking data collection was captured each day at 8 a.m. and again at noon and 2 p.m.

Parking can be defined as being at optimal capacity when at least one empty space is available per block face or along a typical row of parking, ensuring customer access to businesses but also indicating a busy commercial environment. This typically equates to a target vacancy of 15 per block face and 10% off-street. Any block or parking facility that has less availability than the target is effectively at its functional capacity.

The study team considered the following in selecting dates for utilization:

- Capturing demand from typical activity while schools are in session

- Weather

- Day of the week. Nelson\Nygaard has found that mid-weekdays — such as Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday — represent typically busier days than Mondays or Fridays.

This section analyzes weekday temporal and spatial patterns and provides a sample of parking utilization of different facilities by type, ownership and accessibility, followed by the same analysis for a weekend day. Although this data is valuable in highlighting how parking functions in the study area, it is equally valuable to understand how users perceive the system. The visitor who can't find adjacent available spaces because they are hidden around a corner still feels a crunch in prime locations regardless of overall

capacity. Utilization is just one piece of the puzzle; analysis of regulation, safety, signage, technology and more will yield valuable additional insights. Additionally, field observations from the consultant team included not only review of the parking facilities but also the town's loading zones, signage and customer behavior.

Spatial Analysis of Parking Utilization

An important part of understanding how parking is managed in any downtown is examining how various parking facilities and segments of on-street parking interact with each other throughout the day. A chart of hourly utilization rates for one specific location is valuable, but seeing how that location behaves among others located nearby can reveal patterns and trends not evident in numbers alone. A full lot may be around the corner from another lot with plenty of availability at the same time.

To develop the spatial analysis, the parking utilization data collected during the parking counts was geo-coded to be displayed on a series of maps. The maps show the use of each parking facility by color, as explained below (see Figure 5):
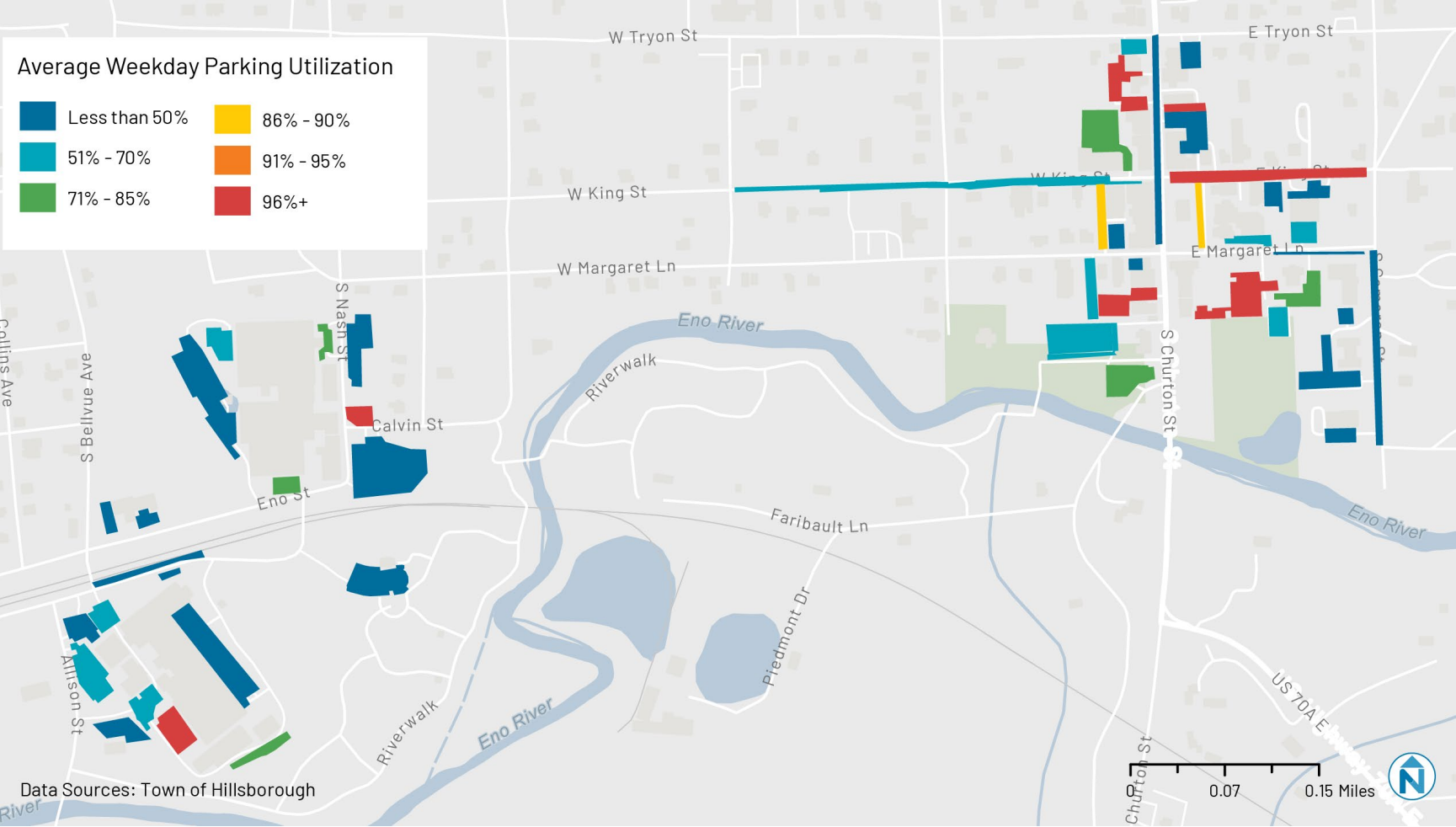
- **"Cool" teal and blue** refer to utilization under 70% occupancy. When a resource is underutilized, especially during peak periods, it should be viewed as having excess capacity. Strategies for encouraging use should be considered. Blue facilities are extremely underutilized and are good candidates for specially designated overflow parking during events and for long-term parking.

- **"Ideal" green** refers to blocks and facilities with 70 to 85% utilization and represent actively used resources. It is a functionally full sweet spot that is well used but usually a space can be found. The nearer utilization levels approach the high end of this range the more efficiently they are being utilized and nearing functional capacity. Change in regulation or pricing is not necessary.

- **"Warning" yellow** refers to utilization between 85 and 95% and is considered slightly over-demanded. While fully maximizing efficiency, the on-street parking or off-street facilities are full or near full, giving the impression of a lack of parking. Use discretion to consider deploying measures to reduce demand. Make changes if consistently in this category over many time periods or if facilities this occupied are adjacent to 95%+ occupancy facilities.

- **"Critical" red** denotes parking facilities that are overly full, meaning cars may circle to find a space, double-park, or park illegally. Resources that consistently perform at this level indicate demand exceeds capacity. Strategies to reduce demand are highly encouraged.

Figure 5: Spatial Parking Utilization Color Code

Average Weekday Utilization

Average weekday utilization is the average parking utilization across all Wednesday time periods. Across Wednesday, downtown Hillsborough has higher parking utilization than West Hillsborough. Downtown Hillsborough has an average weekday parking utilization of 65%. West Hillsborough has an average weekday parking utilization of 46%. Throughout weekdays, drivers may have trouble finding a spot in specific lots, but parking generally is available throughout the town. Lunchtime and midday hours see higher utilization, with the average peak across the town reaching 62% at noon, while 2 p.m. sees 58% utilization. Overall, on-street and publicly available parking spaces — specifically the county courthouse and associated lots and the West King Street Public Parking Lot — see consistently high parking utilization, at 95% or higher.
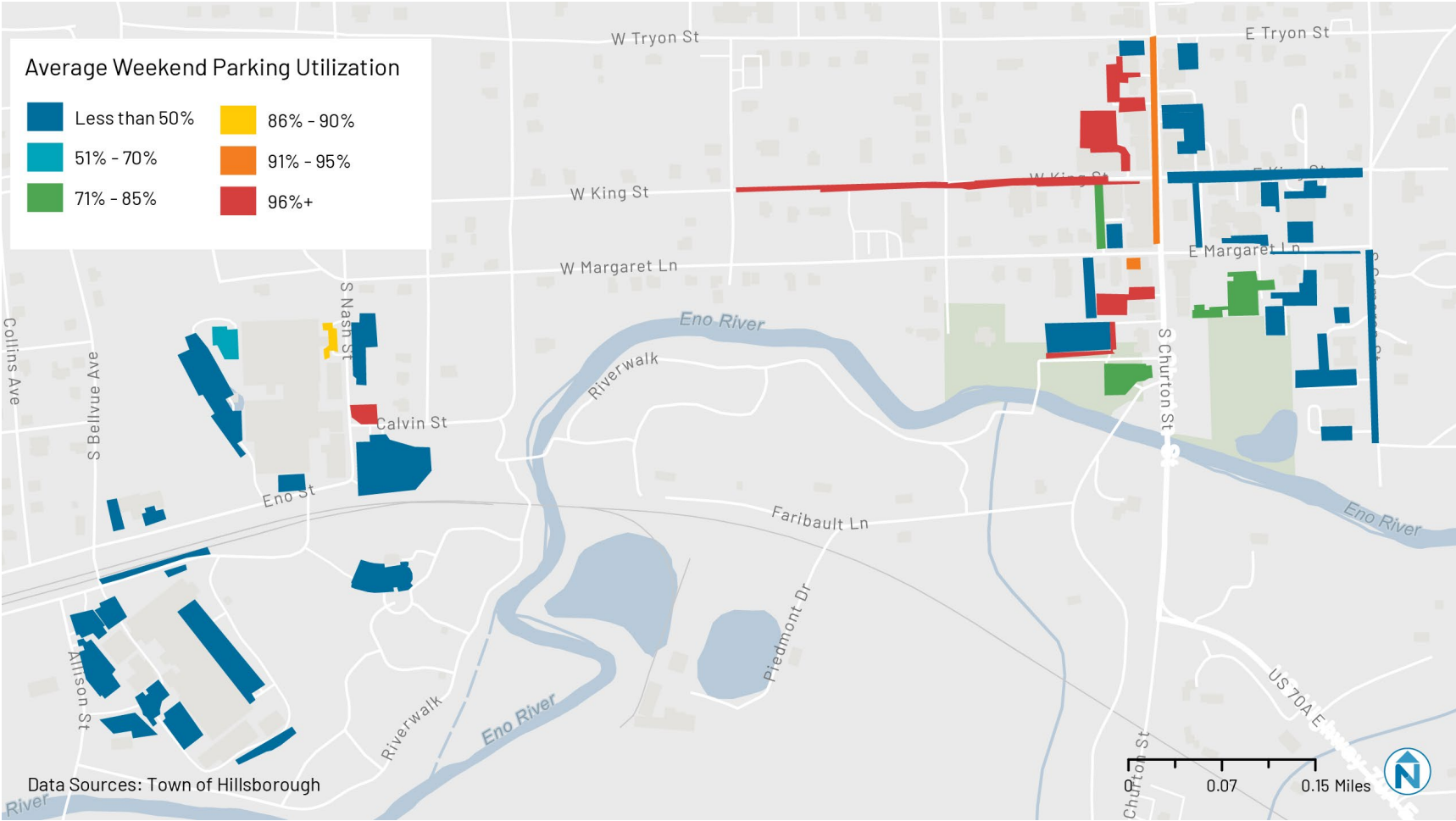
Figure 6: Average Weekday Parking Utilization

Average Weekday Parking Utilization

- Less than 50%
- 51% - 70%
- 71% - 85%
- 86% - 90%
- 91% - 95%
- 96%+

Data Sources: Town of Hillsborough

Town of Hillsborough

Average Weekend Utilization

Average weekend utilization is the average of parking utilization across all Saturday time periods. Across Saturday, downtown Hillsborough has higher parking utilization than West Hillsborough (Figure 7). Downtown Hillsborough has an average weekend parking utilization of 50%, while West Hillsborough has an average utilization of 30%. On a weekend, drivers may have trouble finding a spot in specific lots, including several in Downtown, but parking is generally available across the town. Lunchtime and midday hours see higher utilization, with the average peak across Downtown and West Hillsborough reaching 46% at noon and 45% at 2 p.m., compared to 38% at 8 a.m. Overall, off-street and on-street lots around the West King Street Public Parking Lot and Hillsborough Police Department lots see the highest utilization, averaging 95% or higher throughout the day.

Figure 7: Average Weekend Parking Utilization

Average Weekend Parking Utilization

- Less than 50%
- 51% - 70%
- 71% - 85%
- 86% - 90%
- 91% - 95%
- 96%+

Data Sources: Town of Hillsborough

Town of Hillsborough

Winter Utilization

Throughout engagement, partners repeatedly emphasized that parking is not usually a problem, except on special event days. In addition to a weekday and weekend day in April 2025, the Town of Hillsborough requested the team look at parking conditions during the annual Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting on Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024. This event brings large numbers of visitors to the town and creates demand for parking. The team undertook parking counts twice on the afternoon of the Holiday Parade, between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Parking counts were only taken for downtown parking and not West Hillsborough. Average parking utilization was 65% (see details in Figure 8). When the private lots are removed and only the publicly accessible lots are available, average parking utilization is 93%. This demonstrates that parking is in high demand for special events and visitors likely have to plan ahead and/or search to find a parking space.

Figure 8: Winter Utilization Analysis

Lot	Utilization
Eno River Parking Deck	71%
Weaver Street Market	98%
Orange Rural Fire Department	25%
West Margaret Lane Lot	55%
West King Street Public Parking Lot	98%
Hillsborough Police Department	13%
Police Department Annex	10%
Clements Funeral and Cremation Services	8%
118 N. Churton St.	0%
112 N. Churton St.	0%
Orange County Justice Facility	100%
Nash and Kollock Street	100%
West King North-South	100%
West King East-West	100%
East King Street	100%
Court Street	100%

Lot	Utilization
East Margaret Lane	100%
Eno River Farmers Market	92%

3   PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In March 2025, the town developed a comprehensive public outreach strategy for the study, which outlined the dates, methods and goals of each public touchpoint. Included in this document was guidance for the initial public engagement strategies to garner feedback. The feedback, in conjunction with parking data analysis, informed the findings and recommendations of this study.

The Spring 2025 public engagement strategy included three central parts — online feedback tools, partner interviews, and in-person pop-up events around town. The online engagement included a survey with a series of multiple-choice and open-response questions, as well as an interactive comment map. The in-person engagements resulted in five pop-up events at strategic locations around downtown and West Hillsborough, where project team members used interactive boards to discuss parking issues with passing residents and visitors.

Partner Interviews

Interviews were conducted with town-identified partners, including town commissioners, town and county staff, and business and property owners. Key themes from these interviews included:

- In general, Hillsborough has enough parking, except for special event days. Many locals know this and plan accordingly.

- West Hillsborough has sufficient off-street parking, unless the railroad ever chooses not to renew the lease on the West Hillsborough free, gravel lot. Use of the curb space on South Nash Street for pickup/drop-off and loading is common, although illegal and unsafe

- Partners had mixed opinions on whether downtown had enough parking. In general, enough parking is spread throughout town. Except for the busiest event days of the year (including traffic court days), it's possible to find parking in downtown Hillsborough. However, that parking may not be right in front of where the visitor wants to go and visitors may have to walk a couple of blocks to get to their destination.

- Employees and customers park in the same areas. Employees often get there before customers arrive and occupy parking spots closest to the building. Security in parking lots is not generally a concern.

- Both partners and the general public like Hillsborough's ample free parking and limited restrictions on parking. Partners would like to see the town maximize existing parking before building new parking.

- More on-street loading zones are desired, so delivery trucks do not block travel lanes, especially on narrow, two-lane streets. More on-street, 15-minute curbside pickup spots also are desired.

- Downtown Hillsborough has significant topography challenges. Accessible parking and additional parking meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act are a high priority for many downtown partners.

Community Pop-Up Events

The town and its project partners conducted a series of pop-up events May 29-30, 2025, around downtown and West Hillsborough to get additional public perspectives, especially from residents and visitors who may not have interacted with the web-based feedback forums. Events were held near or on site at:

- Cup-A-Joe, 112 W. King St.; 10 a.m. May 29

- Whit's Frozen Custard, 240 S. Nash St.; noon May 29

- Eno River Brewing, 329 Eno Mountain Road; 5 p.m. May 29

- Hillsborough Bake Shop, 110 S. Churton St.; 8 a.m. May 30

- Riverwalk Greenway entrance, Nash and Kollock Street; noon May 30

Figure 9: The Project Team Interacts with the Public at a Pop-Up Event

Key themes and findings from public conversations included:

- Many people said their first choice of parking when downtown is the main surface lot behind the businesses on North Churton and West King streets, followed by convenient street parking (mostly on West King Street). Failing those options, they will use the public parking deck. No one said the parking deck was their first choice to use, except employees of the library.

- Business owners and civic leaders spoke to the importance of providing "opportunity parking" for "opportunity shopping," where customers can quickly find parking close to their final destination. Business owners and customers who are likely parked for eight hours or longer can park farther from businesses to allow customers to quickly find spaces outside of their destination.

- During special events, the parking deck can become backed up when it's already full and more cars are still entering looking for parking. The parking deck only has one exit, with no good options for drivers to turn around safely.

- Many people acknowledged that the time limits for parking spaces were often not complied with, but nobody said they would like to see increased enforcement.

- One person mentioned downtown Hillsborough only has a few bike racks and more would be appreciated, though bicycle racks that are available are not well used.

- Days when the county traffic court is in session — Wednesdays — are particularly strained for parking, especially on streets and in lots around the courthouse, such as the post office and farmers market lots.

- Several first-time visitors and tourists said they had no trouble finding parking close to their destinations in town.

Survey

A feedback survey was open to the public April 4-June 13, 2025. The town advertised the survey through its website and social media channels, and a link was provided in a newsletter in customers' monthly water bill for the April billing month. Additionally, the public comment period and survey were advertised through Triangle West Transportation Planning Organization's website and newsletter. The survey received 518 responses, equivalent to roughly 5.3% of the town's estimated 2024 population of 9,773.[1] The survey featured thirteen questions about respondents' habits and preferences for vehicle parking, three questions regarding bicycle parking in downtown Hillsborough, and one question asking about the home ZIP code of the respondent. The vast majority of respondents were from Orange County, with only a handful of participants noting the surrounding area.

A summary of results is provided below. Most respondents:

- Travel to downtown Hillsborough for entertainment purposes — whether to eat, drink, shop or attend a special event or festival.

- Visit downtown or West Hillsborough several times a week.

- Drive or ride in a car to get downtown.

- Park in one of the town's free parking lots or use on-street parking.

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

- Believe bicycle parking downtown is satisfactory and do not believe more parking capacity will induce them to bike Downtown.
- State the largest factors when looking for a space in downtown Hillsborough are the location or proximity to the destination and the ease of finding a space.
- Leave their car parked between 30 minutes and 3 hours, with over 50% of respondents stating 1 to 2 hours.
- Parked on site or on the same block as their most recent destination.
- Almost three-quarters of respondents said they'd rather park once and walk, bike, share a ride or take transit between destinations downtown instead of driving and parking at each of their downtown destinations.
- Cited downtown destinations included restaurants, coffee shops and other locations on Churton and King streets, as well as the library, Riverwalk greenway, post office, and Weaver Street Market.
- Typically park their car for 1 to 2 hours when visiting downtown Hillsborough.

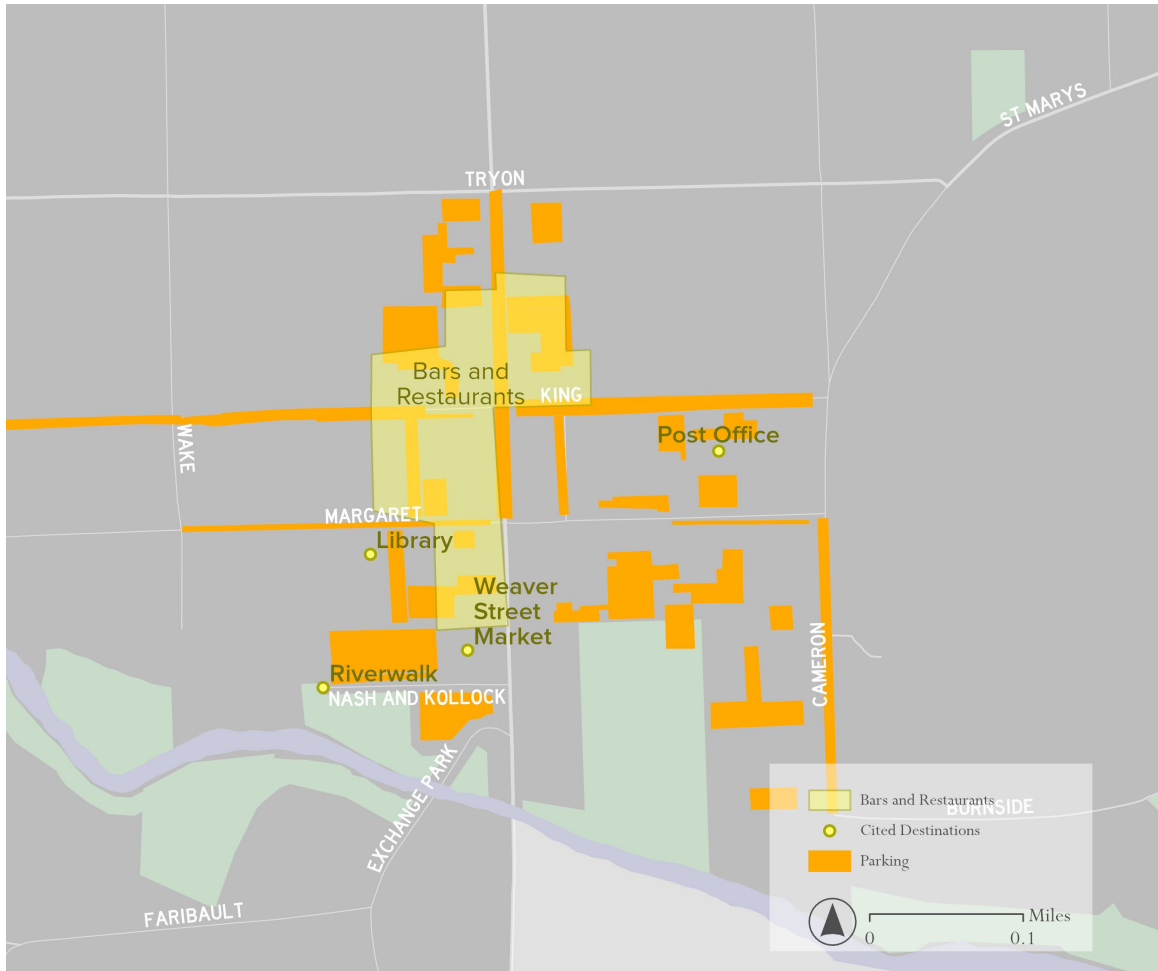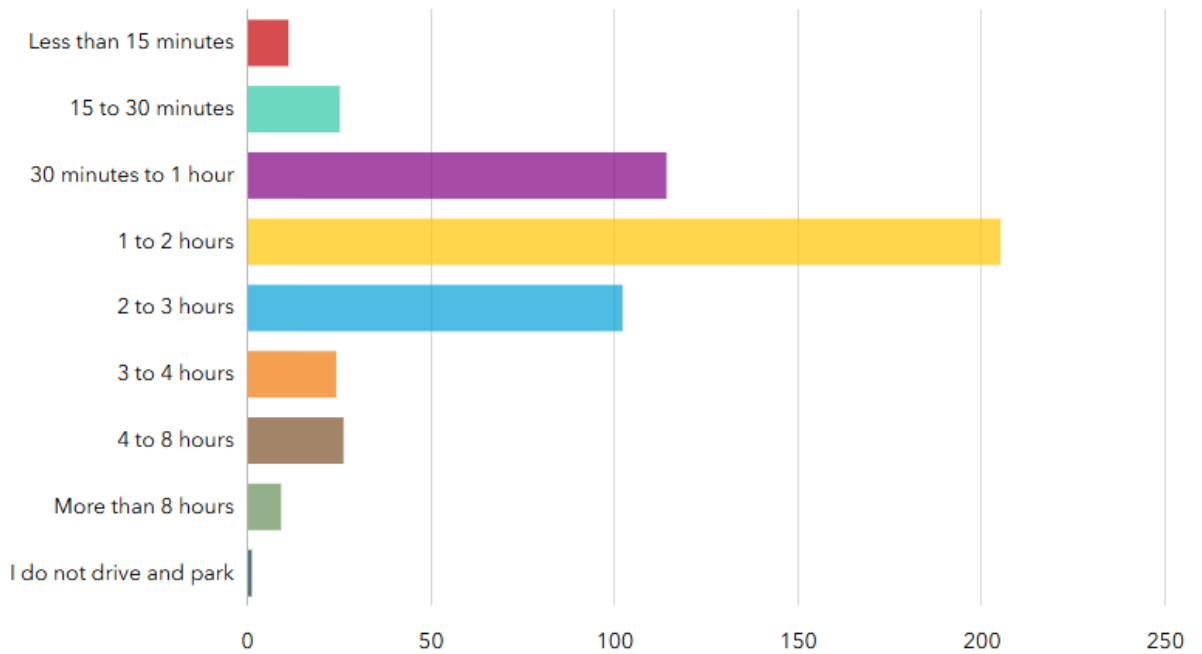**Figure 10: Most Cited Destinations in Downtown Hillsborough**

Figure 11: How long is your car typically parked when visiting Downtown Hillsborough?

Live, Work and Play Maps

Associated with the online survey was a map where respondents could share with the town where they live, work, shop, dine and play. This information helps the town and project team make informed, spatial recommendations on parking operations.

Almost all who responded lived within town limits, with a few respondents living just outside Hillsborough in unincorporated Orange County (Figure 12). The largest concentrations of responses live in downtown and West Hillsborough.
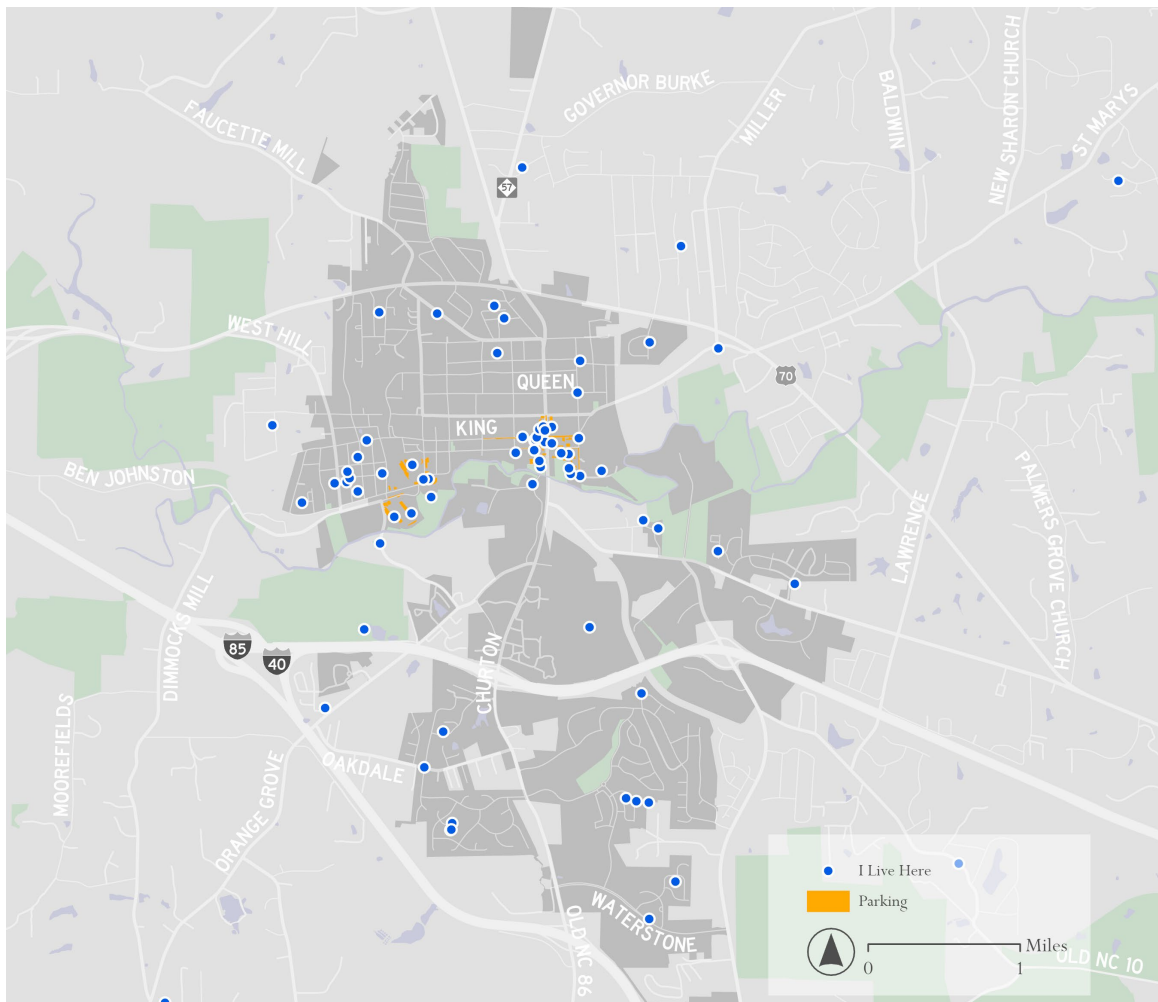
Figure 12: I Live Around Here

Figure 13 shows where respondents regularly park when they are in town. Concentrations are spread across downtown and a few locations in West Hillsborough. In downtown, the most popular off-street locations are the central surface lot between West King, North Churton and West Tryon streets, the Weaver Street Market lot, the Eno River Parking

Deck, the lot for 112 N. Churton St., and the post office lot. On-street parking was reportedly most popular on West King Street, especially between Wake and North Churton streets. In West Hillsborough, no respondents reported parking on the street, and the most popular off-street locations included the large gravel lot at the southern end of Nash Street, the parking around the Eno River Mill, and Gold Park.

Figure 13: I Regularly Park Here
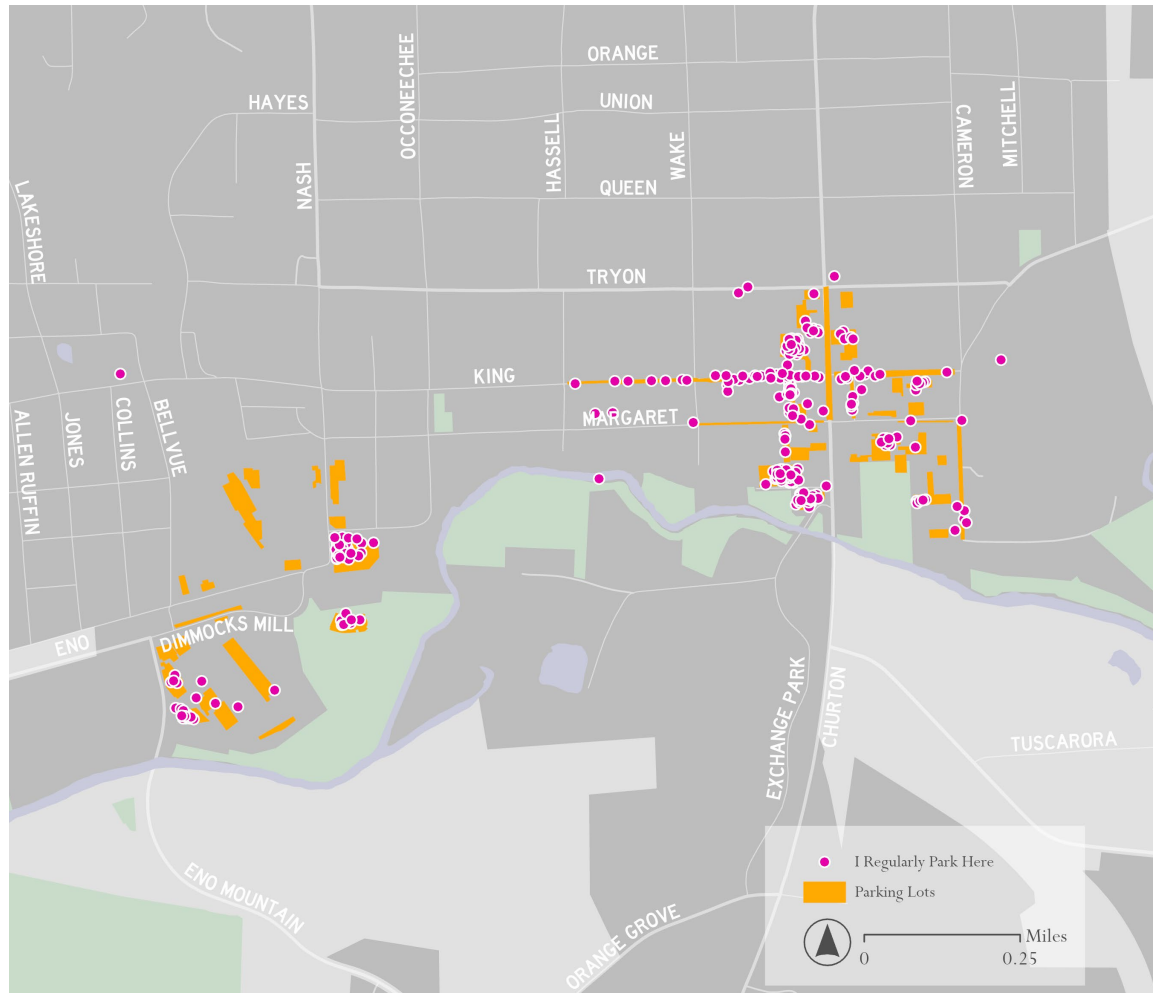
People shop, dine and drink in the same locations they park (Figure 14). This is unsurprising, given that survey respondents indicate they most often travel to downtown to eat, shop, drink or otherwise recreate.

Figure 14: I Shop, Dine or Drink Here
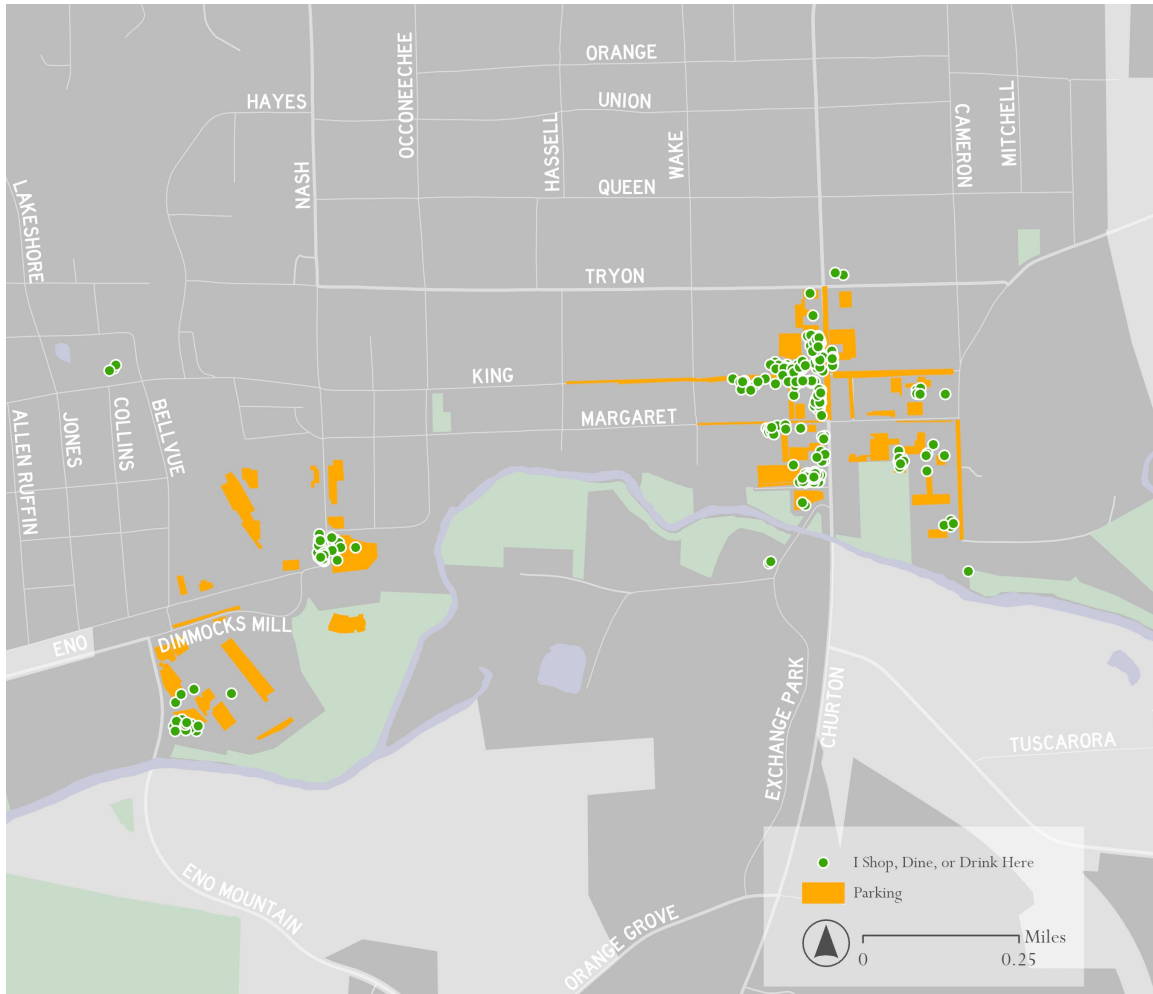
4 KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Based upon a comprehensive review of the existing conditions, parking utilization analysis, partner focus groups and the user surveys, the initial needs assessment for Hillsborough identified the following key issues and opportunities. Overall, residents and visitors are very satisfied with parking in the town and can typically find parking. Some issues exist in specific locations, such as downtown Hillsborough along West King Street; but, overall, the town has many open parking spaces throughout.

Key issues and opportunities for improvement include:

- **Operations, Administration and Management**: There are several opportunities to better manage parking across town departments and with Orange County. These can include coordination with the county, signage and wayfinding, technology, shared parking agreements, event parking, and staffing.

- **Programmatic Updates**: Beyond parking strategies, several programmatic improvements and/or opportunities can encourage other modes of transportation, alleviating some pressure on parking. This can include transportation demand management, strategies to encourage walking, biking, and taking transit, employee parking programs, valet programs and curbside management programs.

- **Meeting Future Demand:** Potential parking demand impacts from changes in Hillsborough's current parking supply are important considerations for the town. Strategies to address changes in future demand and parking availability include a review of current shared parking agreements and coordination with Orange County on its potential new parking deck.

5 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The Hillsborough Parking Study is a town-led effort to develop an efficient downtown parking system that enables continued growth and vibrancy of the town's commercial areas. To provide greater clarity and predictability across its parking supply and to better serve the downtown and West Hillsborough area, the town can leverage existing assets and informal practices already in place, while also planning with the future in mind. An efficient and flexible parking system — one that utilizes both private and public, on- and off-street facilities — will be imperative to ensure continued success.

1. Shared Parking Agreements

Shared parking is the co-location of off-street parking in one location that serves the parking demand for multiple land uses in a mixed-use context. Shared parking is particularly valuable in walkable, mixed-use centers, like downtown Hillsborough, in which private lots tend to have demand when their associated land uses are busy and tend to be significantly underutilized much of the rest of the time. Fortunately, such districts also present two distinct, cross-supportive, shared-parking opportunities that can reduce parking supply needs while providing more destinations with overflow parking resources. The Unified Development Ordinance allows required parking for multiple, separate and complementary uses located in any zoning district to be combined in one lot.

Shared parking agreements with adjacent or nearby property owners with underutilized parking or different peak demands would enable current and new land uses that have demand for more parking spaces to develop without the cost burden or land requirement for new parking. Two types of shared parking arrangements could work in downtown Hillsborough: business-to-business and public-private shared parking agreements.

Seek First Baptist Church Shared–Use Agreement

Investigate opportunity to provide shared use parking at First Baptist Church. If possible, enter into a formal sharing agreement with the First Baptist Church lot at 201 W. King St. Many Hillsborough residents know the First Baptist lot is open outside of church hours and park there to walk to downtown Hillsborough. The town coordinates parking there for event days. While not included on parking study maps, the town should enter into a

formal agreement with the church to allow town residents and visitors to park there outside of church hours. When agreed upon, the lot should be included on town parking maps and have signage indicating it is available for public parking.

Review Existing Shared Parking Agreements

Review existing shared parking agreements, such as the West King Street Public Parking Lot and the South Nash Street Parking Lot. Confirm time frame of agreements, cost, and expected town roles and responsibilities. This can give town staff more certainty around timing for potential lot changes. This is intended to help the town negotiate a long-term agreement to provide more certainty around parking.

Identify Additional Lots for Shared Parking Agreements

The Town of Hillsborough has parking capacity spread throughout the town, but downtown Hillsborough has concentrated areas where parking is consistently in demand. Additional lots for potential shared parking agreements could include the Hillsborough/Orange County Chamber of Commerce lot at the corner of North Churton and Tryon streets. The First Baptist Church Lot fits into this strategy as a lot near the West King Street Public Parking Lot, which is frequently close to capacity through most of the day.

2. Parking Coordination with Orange County

Coordinate with County on Eno River Parking Deck

Orange County reserves the top and bottom levels of the Eno River Parking Deck blocked off for county staff and the county fleet vehicles. The fleet is often out throughout the day, parking on the top level overnight or using it minimally. The county-designated levels of the parking deck are rarely fully occupied, and the consolidation of county staff and fleet vehicles would allow for greater spaces for public use. The town should coordinate with the county to:

- Consolidate all fleet parking and ensure all county fleet vehicles only park on allowed levels.
- Consolidate all county parking to one level and open the top or bottom level of the deck to the public.

▪ Offer shared parking, where the deck's bottom level (where county staff park) is open to the public after business hours, evenings, and weekends.

Coordinate on Potential New Parking Deck

Orange County has included several options for a new parking deck in its facilities master plan, including a parking deck on the former jail site. When Orange County purchased the Eno River Parking Deck, the town negotiated two levels of public parking. Coordinate with Orange County on the location of a new potential parking deck and opportunities for public spaces.

Coordinate with Traffic Court

Many residents said parking was not an issue except for special events and during traffic court days. Traffic court is every Wednesday at the Orange County Courthouse. It's unclear if the court sends parking information to court attendees. Coordinate with the county to ensure send information about parking locations for Court is sent out when sending traffic court summons. Traffic court attendees should be directed to park in public parking lots and facilities such as the Eno River Parking Deck. If the deck is constrained, one of the county levels could be opened to allow additional public parking.

3. Curbside Management

Develop Loading and Curbside Management Program

Downtown Hillsborough has four dedicated, full-time loading spaces for delivery trucks. Delivery trucks, however, often do not use the spaces and instead block a travel lane. This causes traffic congestion and safety issues in Hillsborough's historic, narrow downtown streets. Develop a loading enforcement program in coordination with town police and the Orange County Sheriff's Office to ticket trucks that load in unmarked spots or block travel lanes to unload. Consider ticketing cars that park in marked curbside loading spaces to ensure curbside spaces are open for trucks.

Develop Curbside Wayfinding and Education

In addition to a curbside management program, develop information and education materials for town residents, visitors and employees about the curbside loading spaces. These materials should provide information on the location of the spaces, usage restrictions (trucks only), and locations of nearby parking for drivers. Copies should be sent to businesses that frequently have large trucks loading and unloading deliveries. If

possible, information should also be sent to delivery companies. Businesses should be encouraged to provide this information to delivery drivers and vendors.

4. Accessible Parking

Improve Accessible Parking

A common comment throughout engagement was the lack of accessible parking throughout Hillsborough. Current on-street accessible parking spaces are not always close to a curb cut with an accessible path to a sidewalk. Some community members have asked town staff to remove the signage to allow for more on-street parking. The off-street parking supply has limited compliant spots, and the spaces in the Eno River Parking Deck may be too far for people with disabilities to walk to their destination. As funding becomes available, update and increase the number of spaces throughout town that are compliant with the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines.

5. Effective Wayfinding and Signage

Update Town of Hillsborough Public Parking Map.

Hillsborough publishes a parking map for downtown Hillsborough on its website. However, the map does not include parking for West Hillsborough or locations of amenities like the Riverwalk Greenway. Making updated parking information available for the entire town will allow visitors and residents to plan trips ahead of time and find parking with ease. Maps should include any private lots with a shared parking agreement to allows public parking. Maps also should include regulations on time of day for all public parking options. The maps should be posted online and available in hard copy in various locations throughout town, like Town Hall and the Visitors Center. Maps on kiosks throughout the town should also be updated. Where possible, parking lots should be added to Google Maps for easy navigation to parking in town.

Improve and Expand Signage

Several out-of-town visitors and residents commented about unclear parking signs. Identifying public parking locations can be challenging for someone unfamiliar with the town. Signage is an important element of parking management. Providing clear identification of public parking facilities — both on- and off-street — aids in understanding acceptable places to park. Clear guidance for visiting patrons, who may be

wary of parking in facilities they are not accustomed to, is a crucial component of their experience. Signage should align with current public parking signage and ordinances but make it easier for visitors to find lots like the Eno River Parking Deck. Any new signage should be compliant and consistent with the town's current branded wayfinding system.

Figure 15: Existing Parking Signage along West King Street

Implement Parking Technology

Some lots, like the West King Street Public Parking Lot fill quickly. At peak periods, cars may circle the lot several times to find a spot before leaving. On busy days in the parking deck, some drivers may drive to the upper levels and have to turn around, unable to find parking. Consider parking technology, such as sensors, to show the number of spaces available at the entrances to the deck and other public lots (see example in Figure 16). Parking technology uses sensors and cameras to detect vehicles in spaces and often uses color coded lights to direct drivers to vacant spots. This information also could be shared in real time on the town website, allowing people to drive right to a lot with available parking, rather than circling a parking lot at peak times, such as midweek lunchtime).

Figure 16: Example of Real Time Parking Availability Sign

Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Figure 17: Entrance to the Eno River Parking Deck

6. Employee and Business Parking

Develop Employee and Business Parking Program

Many employees arrive at work before customers and park in prime spots close to their building. Customers then complain to business owners about a lack of parking close to the business and having to walk farther to their destination. The town has attempted to address this in the past, communicating with business owners about having their employees park farther away, but this has had limited success. Develop a formal employee parking program that partners with business owners to encourage employees to park in the parking deck or in underutilized parking lots. This could include incentive programs for employees to encourage them to park farther. The Town can help develop a program, but implementation will fall primarily to business owners to encourage employees to use the employee and business parking program.

Develop Employee Security Program

Very few partners had concerns about safety. However, some employees who finish work late at night or after dark may feel uncomfortable parking farther from their place of work and having to walk. The town should coordinate with the Hillsborough Police Department to offer an employee security program, where employees can call for a police escort to walk them back to their cars late at night.

Provide Employee Transportation Support

Some employees may be able to take alternative modes of transportation but are unaware of the options. The town should coordinate with the Orange County Commuter Options Program to provide information and trip planning services to employees in Hillsborough. The program offers free, personalized trip planning for employees in Orange County, as well as services like an emergency ride home program for employees who register and commute without driving.

Provide Valet Parking

On-street valet parking can expand access to parking during high-demand times. Parking valets offer a high level of parking convenience, make effective use of underutilized off-street locations, and promote park-once ideas by allowing the service to be used as an extension of the town's public parking operations. A valet can also facilitate shared parking arrangements by controlling access to a potential shared lot and assuming any increased liability. This can open access to private parking lots that might otherwise remain significantly underutilized during evening and weekend peaks. A private valet is not intended to take space in the public right-of-way.

Public Valet

Coordinate with downtown business owners to discuss a shared parking valet program for dinner hours or peak events. Customers could drop their cars off with a free or paid valet, and the valet could park the cars at a shared parking lot, like the First Baptist Church lot. This would lessen traffic congestion, provide customer convenience and use underutilized downtown parking lots. A public valet is not intended to take space in the public right-of-way.

A short-term pilot program could be created for a few months to test a valet. A pilot program should clearly define valet parking zones, operating hours and vehicle circulation patterns to and from the final parked location. The program should formalize operator permitting and applications in the municipal code if the pilot is extended. Businesses like

the Colonial Inn, which does not have any on-site parking spaces, could participate in a valet program

Private Valet

Private businesses can utilize valet parking operations to make parking available for their private customers. Specific examples would be for the hospitality businesses, like restaurants, which could enter into agreements with adjacent private parking owners to valet park in their lots. A valet option provides convenience to customers, decreases demand for on-street parking and increases demand for currently underutilized private lots.

7. Alternative Transportation Modes

Encourage Alternative Transportation Modes Hillsborough's walkability was praised throughout engagement. As the town continues to make Hillsborough a comfortable place to walk, it should encourage other modes of transportation, such as transit and bicycling. These alternative modes can reduce traffic congestion and parking demand through the town.

Walking

Quality pedestrian environments support a decreased risk of motor vehicle collisions and an increase in physical activity and social cohesion. They have direct physical health benefits as well as stress reduction and mental health improvements that promote individual and community health. Ensure that sidewalks and pedestrian facilities, including pedestrian paths to and from parking facilities, are well-maintained and Americans with Disabilities Act accessible.

Transit

Orange County and GoTriangle operates several fixed-route transit routes that serve Hillsborough, as well as mobility-on-demand and demand-response services. The town should coordinate with Orange County to provide information on public transit services. Information should be provided to town residents and employees, as well as Orange since County employees who live elsewhere and work at county facilities in Hillsborough. This can also be coordinated through the Orange County Commuter Options Program, GoTriangle, and Chapel Hill Transit.

Bicycles

Hillsborough is home to Riverwalk, a three-mile greenway along the Eno River with a connections in West Hillsborough. The greenway is popular with cyclists, and the future

Ridewalk is expected to have more commuter cyclists. Hillsborough has limited public bicycle parking facilities to provide end-of-trip storage options for riders in Hillsborough. Complete an inventory of bicycle parking and bike racks in the town, including West Hillsborough, and identify locations for additional bicycle parking. Install bike racks as sidewalk improvement projects and other construction projects are completed.

Implement Transportation Demand Management

Transportation demand management is a set of transportation services, policies, programs, and educational and marketing campaigns that encourage people to switch to more sustainable modes of transportation compared to driving alone in their vehicle. Benefits include:

- Reduced traffic congestion, resulting in time saved driving and looking for parking.
- Multiple transportation options, enhancing overall access to and around Hillsborough.
- Improved quality of life in communities by providing more transportation options, especially walking and biking.
- More opportunities for spontaneous social interactions and connectedness within the community.
- Reduced dependence on vehicle travel, which leads to a reduced dependence on fossil fuels and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Health benefits of improved air quality with less traffic.

Two potential strategies in Hillsborough include:

- Coordinate with the Orange County Commuter Options Program, which offers transportation demand management programs for employees throughout Orange County. Provide marketing materials and information materials to businesses throughout town and introduce interested employees to program staff.
- Consider developing a formal Town of Hillsborough transportation demand management program for developments like the Colonial Inn, which was approved without parking based on ample parking available in the town. While monitoring of parking is required, it is unclear how much monitoring occurs. If this option is chosen, consider applying for TDM funds through the Triangle Transportation Choices TDM Program. Triangle West MPO, CAMPO, and NCDOT fund and oversee this TDM funding program, with funds administered by the Central Pines Regional Council.

8. Event Parking

Require Event Parking Management Plans

Parking is typically harder on event days, when many visitors come to Hillsborough. Coordination with the event managers to develop parking management plans for each event should be required, with information disseminated to attendees in advance and through the town's social media channels. Create and have a special event parking plan on file for locations where events frequently occur. Clarify and codify requirements for special events, including a public communication plan and mitigation measures. Town staff should take a lead role in parking program coordination and should act as a centralized resource that coordinates and distributes information related to parking supply, availability, planning, special programs, event activities, and other resources. Event management, particularly daytime events, should be coordinated between public and private parking owners.

Provide Event Parking in Remote Lots and Shuttles

For larger events, Hillsborough may not have parking capacity in town. In cases where sufficient parking is not available in town, event organizers should coordinate with remote lots with ample parking that may not be used on event days, such as the Orange County Department of Social Services lot. The town can initiate conversations about that option and maintain contact with the event manager, providing information. The event manager can handle coordination with any remote lot about actual use. The town or event managers should consider shuttles for remote parking in West Hillsborough and other lots. Shuttles would allow people to park farther outside the town and easily travel into Hillsborough for events, alleviating traffic congestion.

Provide Public Transit for Events

Orange County has transit that runs through Hillsborough. In coordination with Orange County, provide information about transit services to event managers and encourage them to incorporate transit marketing materials into their advertisements. Taking transit to an event in Hillsborough can help reduce traffic congestion and parking demand in the town on event days.

9. Town Parking Management

Designate Parking Manager

Currently responsibility for parking is spread across town staff. Parking administration is handled within the Community Services Department by both the Planning and Economic Development Division and the Public Space and Sustainability Division. Parking enforcement, to the extent it happens, is performed by the Police Department. This can lead to questions and confusion about which staff members can answer questions about parking. Many recommendations in this report suggest involvement of the town police, distilling responsibility further. Designate an existing staff resource as the parking manager who oversees all parking regulations and recommendations. This person should be in close coordination with the county and regional metropolitan planning organization to support regional transportation programs, such as transportation demand management, that can alleviate some of Hillsborough's parking demand. This likely does not need to be a new full-time position and can be delegated to a town employee already handling many of these current responsibilities. Enforcement should continue to be the responsibility of the Hillsborough Police Department.

Review Minimum Parking Requirements

Under the town's current unified development ordinance, development in town must provide a minimum number of off-street parking spaces, including in the Central Commercial zones. Any off-street parking shown in the downtown parking inventory (2010 Parking Study, Phase 2) should be retained by the private property owner or replaced if proposed to be built over. In the Central Commercial District, parking is to be provided at a rate of one parking space per 500 square feet of gross floor area. If a property owner proposes to build an additional area or renovate space not occupied during the 2010 inventory, the owner is to provide additional parking to reflect the demand generated by the addition of occupied square footage.

As highlighted within this study, parking in downtown Hillsborough has areas of underutilization. In general, specific developments have more parking capacity than needed. With the North Carolina House passing a bill in June 2025 to remove parking minimums for new developments, the town should be prepared to remove parking minimums townwide as well as in the downtown from the Unified Development Ordinance. Recommendations and strategies outlined in this chapter provide the actions needed to manage the parking program while limiting the burden of building new parking resources.

Provide 'Light Touch' Enforcement and Education

Hillsborough does not need a formal or punitive enforcement program. Town residents and visitors enjoy the ample free parking without enforcement. However, many cars park for longer than the three-hour allowance in public parking. Develop a "light touch" enforcement program focusing on education. This should include marketing and advertising campaigns reminding people of the three-hour regulation and clearly visible signage in public parking lots. This could also include a program where educational flyers explaining parking time regulations are placed on cars that have been in a public space longer than three hours.

6 ACTION PLAN

Many parking strategies proposed for Hillsborough cannot be implemented overnight. Nor can they all be implemented concurrently. Some strategies can be implemented quickly, and others may take longer. Some strategies will work well when implemented together. Others are dependent on a series of consecutive steps.

This study's action plan is a roadmap that supports the strategies outlined in Chapter 5. Implementation considerations, time frame, and relative cost are indicated for each action. This action plan is a living document, to be used by Hillsborough staff and partners to help inform decisions.

The action plan is organized with the following structure:

- **Strategy**
  - The nine overarching strategies, as outlined in Chapter 5, are identified for the specific action.

Within this structure, the action plan includes the following for each sub-strategy action:

- **Actions**
  - The specific steps to move toward or to implement recommendations.
- **Time Frame**
  - Short term = completed within one year
  - Medium term = completed over the course of one to three years
  - Long term = completed over the course of more than three years
- **Implementation Considerations**
  - Select factors to be evaluated and/or integrated into decision-making. These roll out of actions.
- **Relative Cost**
  - Level of investment required for implementation.
  - Actions marked with a single $ symbol represent the lowest cost actions, those that can be carried out by current staff.
  - Additional $ symbols represent increases in investment (added labor or capital improvement) required to carry out those actions. Actions with a relative cost indicated by $$$$ are the most expensive and require a high level of capital and operational investment.

Strategy 1: Shared Parking Agreements

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Coordinate a shared parking agreement with First Baptist Church	Short term	Coordinate a formal sharing agreement with the First Baptist Church lot. Town residents already use this lot as informal shared parking.	$$
Review existing shared parking agreements	Short term	Review existing shared parking agreements to confirm time frame of agreements, costs, and expected town roles and responsibilities.	$
Identify additional lots for shared parking agreements	Medium term	Identify additional lots in downtown Hillsborough for shared parking.	$$

Strategy 2: Parking Coordination with Orange County

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Coordinate with county on Eno River Parking Deck	Short term	Coordinate with county facilities staff on opening additional levels of the deck for public parking.	$
Coordinate on potential new parking deck	Long term	Coordinate with Orange County on potential new parking deck.	$-$$$$
Coordinate with traffic court	Short term	Coordinate with county to send informational material about where to park with traffic court summons.	$$

Strategy 3: Curbside Management

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Develop loading and curbside management program	Medium term	Develop a loading enforcement program to ticket delivery trucks using travel lanes for loading or unloading.	$$
Develop curbside wayfinding and education	Medium term	Develop information and education materials for town residents, visitors and employees about curbside loading spaces.	$

Strategy 4: Accessible Parking

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Improve accessible parking	Long term	Improve marked accessible spaces and ensure creation of spaces compliant with Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines and Americans with Disability Act.	$$$

Strategy 5: Effective Wayfinding and Signage

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Update Town of Hillsborough public parking map	Short term	Update Hillsborough's online public parking map to include West Hillsborough parking locations and parking regulations.	$$
Improve and expand signage	Medium term	Improve parking wayfinding signs for drivers and pedestrians to be consistent and widespread, with clearly communicated information before, upon, and after arrival.	$$$
Implement parking technology	Long term	Consider using parking technology in lots that fill quickly.	$$$$

TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Strategy 6: Employee and Business Parking

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Develop employee and business parking program	Medium term	Develop a formal employee parking program that partners with business owners to encourage employees to park in the parking deck.	$$
Develop employee security program	Long term	Coordinate with Hillsborough police to escort employees to their cars at night.	$$$
Provide employee transportation support	Medium term	Coordinate with the Orange County Commuter Options Program to offer trip planning and other transportation programs.	$
Provide valet parking: Public valet	Medium term	Consider a short-term pilot of a public valet, owned and operated by the town.	$$$
Provide valet parking: Private valet	Medium term	Coordinate with business owners for a shared parking valet program, organized and funded by businesses.	$$$

Strategy 7: Alternative Transportation Modes

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Encourage alternative transportation modes: Walking	Long term	Continue to improve sidewalks and the pedestrian environment in Hillsborough.	$$$

TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Encourage alternative transportation modes: Transit	Long term	Coordinate with Orange County to provide informational material and create marketing campaigns to encourage transit use.	$$
Encourage alternative transportation modes: Bicycles	Long term	Identify bicycle parking in town and suggest locations for additional parking to be added as construction projects occur.	$$$
Implement transportation demand management: Coordinate with Orange County Commuter Options	Short term	Coordinate with the Orange County Commuter Options Program to offer trip planning and other transportation programs.	$
Implement transportation demand management: Develop a program	Long term	Develop a transportation demand management program for the town, including code updates.	$$

Strategy 8: Event Parking

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Require event parking management plans	Short term	Require events to develop event parking management plans, in coordination with town staff.	$
Provide remote lots and shuttles for events	Long term	Identify remote lots that could be used for event parking, with shuttle service to and from the event.	$
Provide public transit for events	Short term	Coordinate with event managers and Orange County to encourage transit use for events.	$

TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Strategy 9: Town Parking Management

Action	Time Frame	Implementation Considerations	Relative Cost
Designate parking manager	Short term	Designate a town parking manager to oversee all parking regulations and programs.	$$
Review minimum parking requirements	Medium term	Prepare for statewide removal of parking minimums for new development.	$
Provide "light touch" enforcement and education	Short term	Develop a "light touch" enforcement program focusing on education about current town parking regulations.	$$

APPENDIX A

Parking Utilization by Time Period

Weekday Parking Utilization, 8 a.m.

Parking data was counted at 8 a.m. on a typical Wednesday. Like the daily average, downtown Hillsborough has a higher parking utilization rate (69%) compared to West Hillsborough (45%).
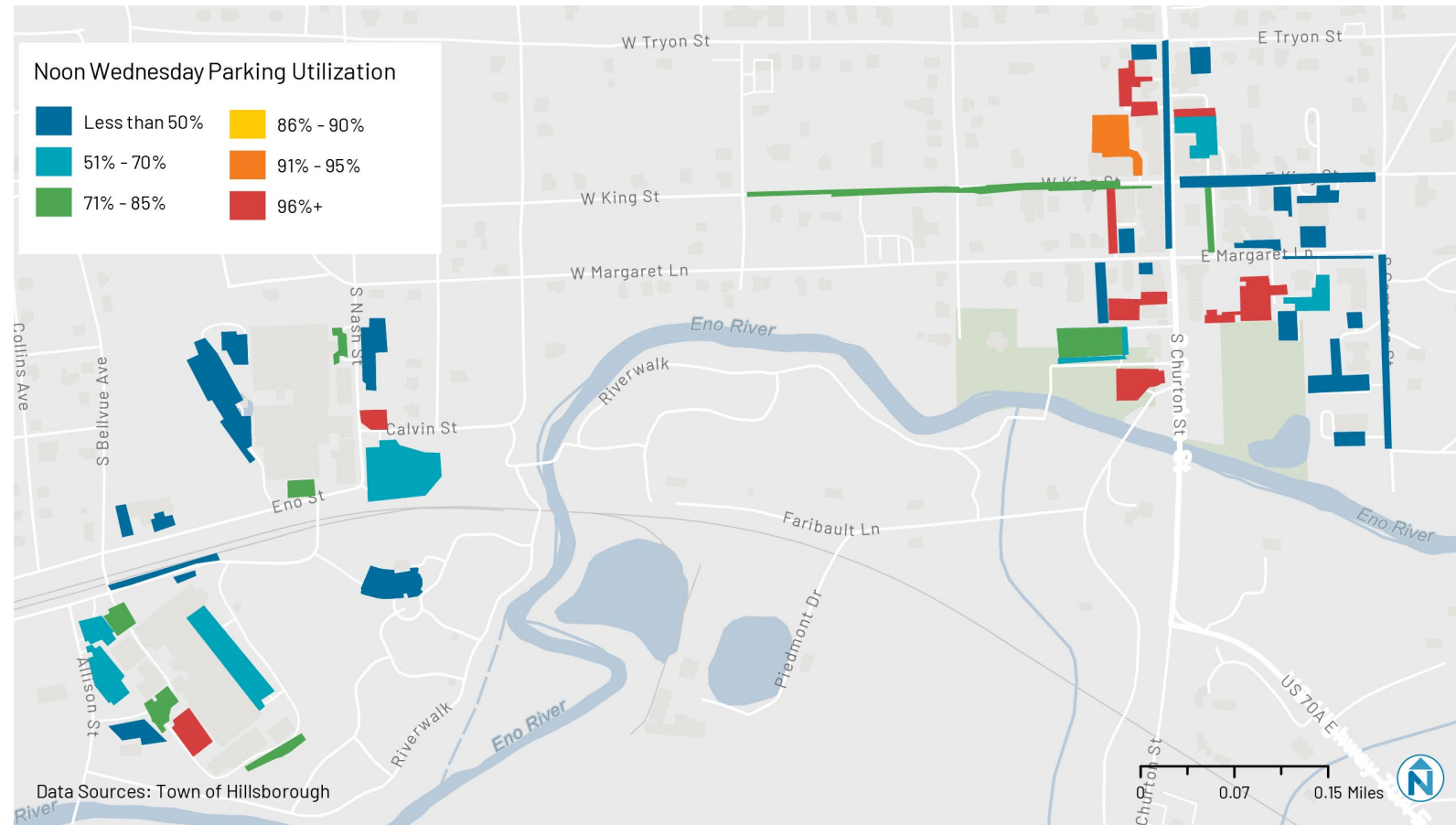
Figure 18: 8 a.m. Wednesday Parking Utilization

8 a.m. Wednesday Parking Utilization

- Less than 50%
- 51% - 70%
- 71% - 85%
- 86% - 90%
- 91% - 95%
- 96%+

Data Sources: Town of Hillsborough

Town of Hillsborough
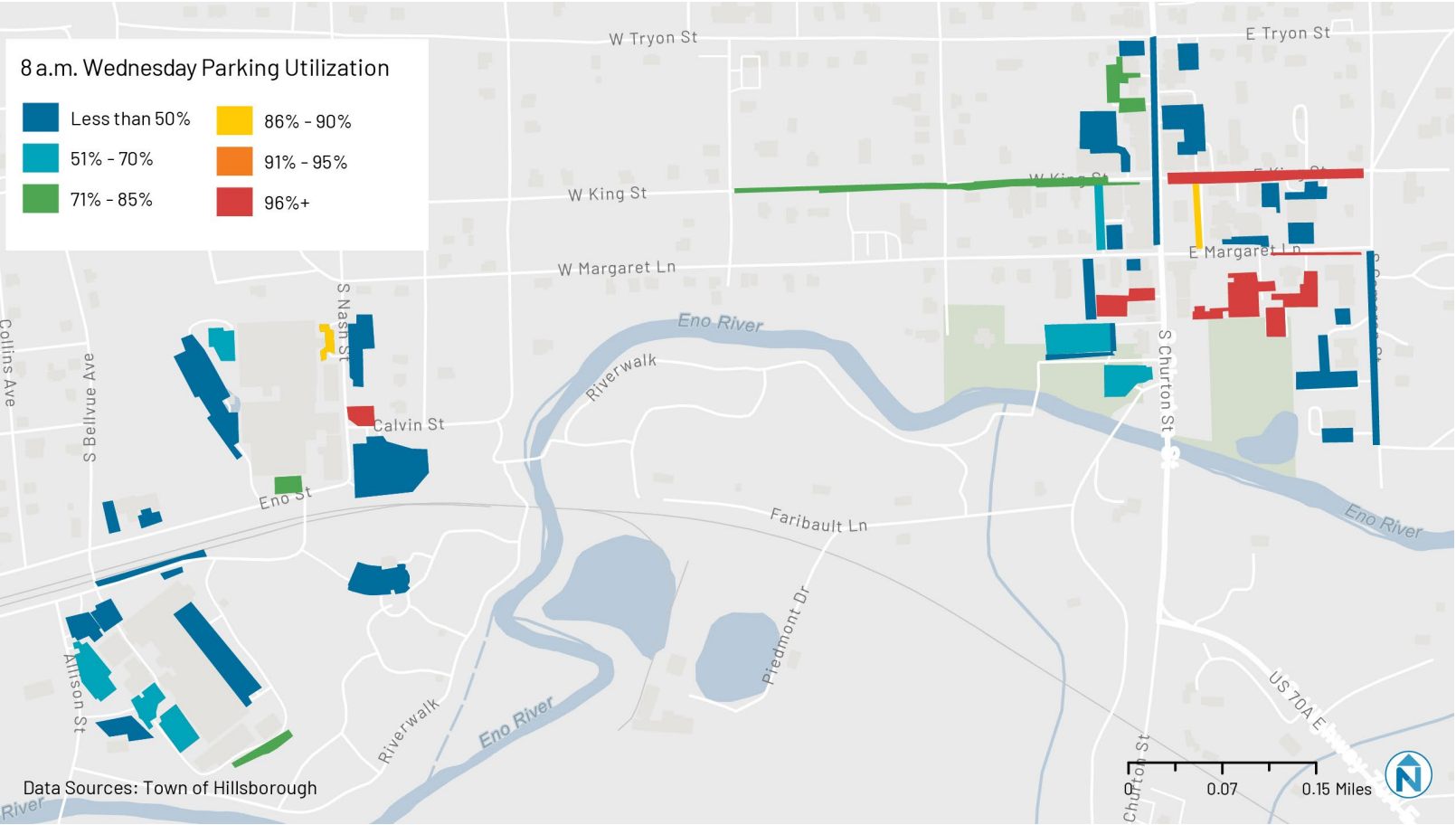
Weekday Parking Utilization, noon

Parking data was counted at noon on a typical Wednesday. This time period captures the lunch rush. Downtown Hillsborough again has a higher parking utilization rate (69%) than West Hillsborough (51%).
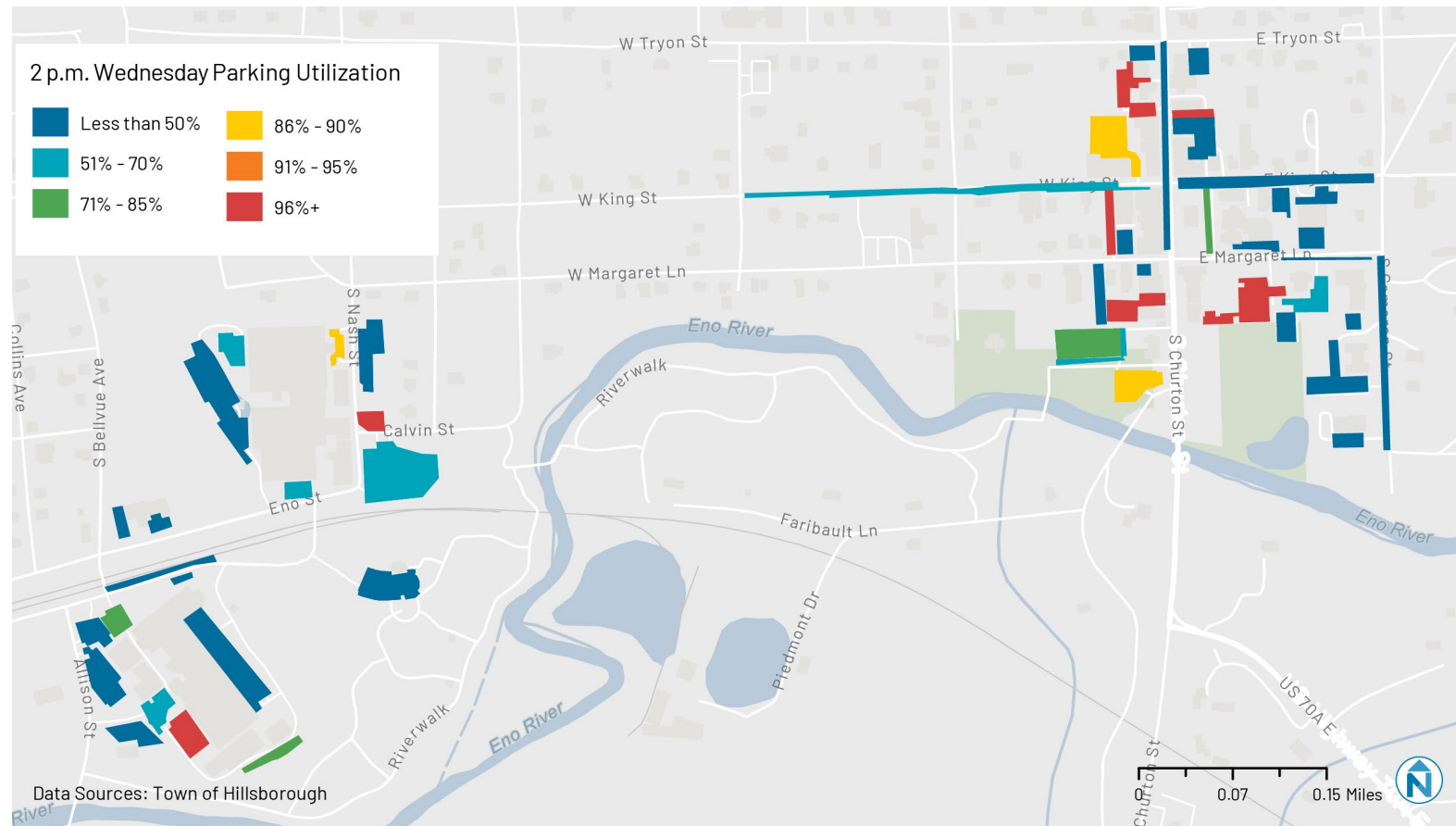
Figure 19: Noon, Wednesday Parking Utilization

Weekday Parking Utilization, 2 p.m.

Parking data was counted on a typical Wednesday at 2 p.m. Downtown Hillsborough (63%) has higher parking utilization than West Hillsborough (50%), but downtown's parking utilization at this time is lower than the other two weekday time periods.
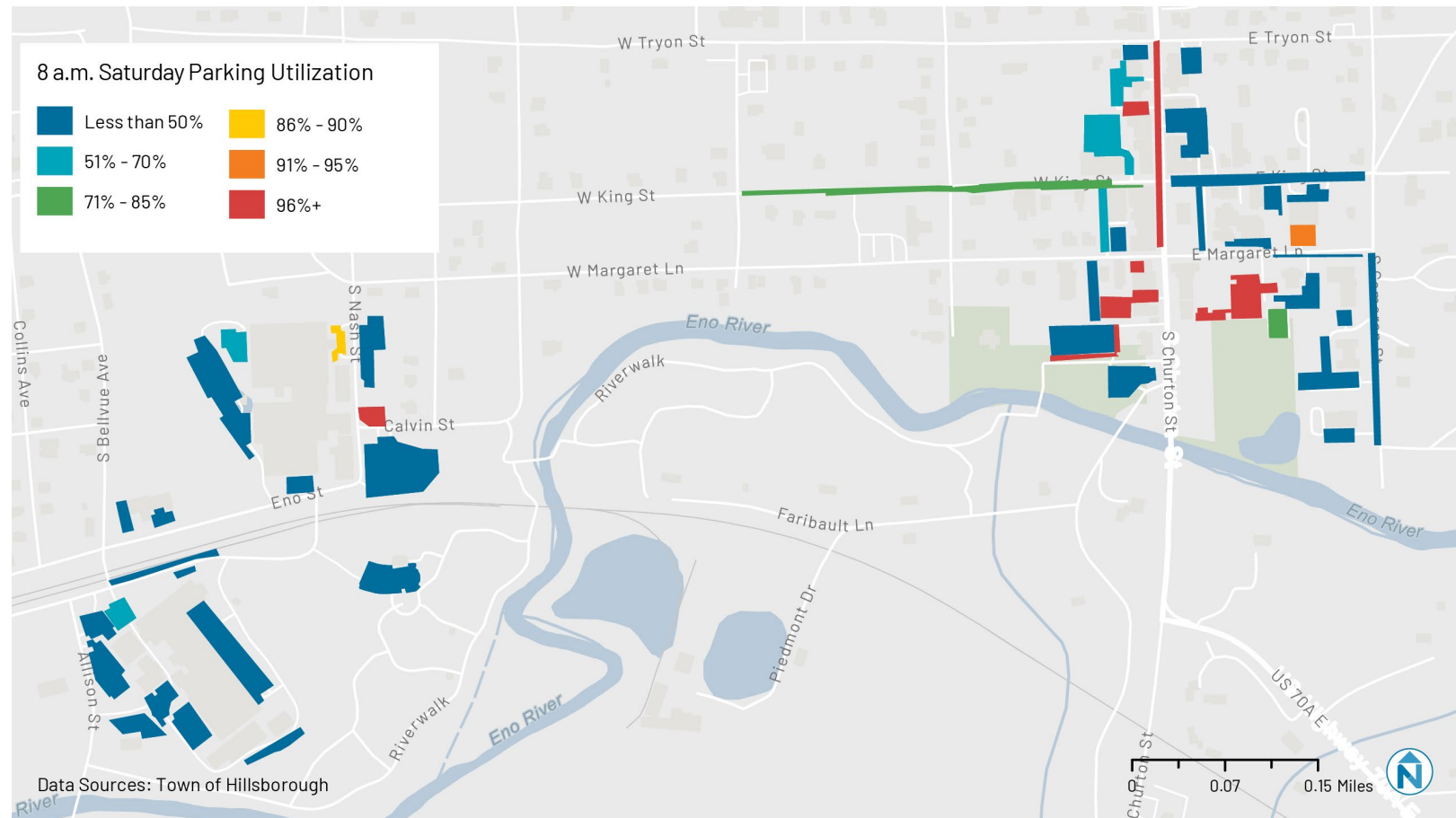
Figure 20: 2 p.m. Wednesday Parking Utilization

Weekend Parking Utilization, 8 a.m.

Parking data was counted at 8 a.m. on a typical Saturday in Hillsborough. Downtown Hillsborough has an average utilization of 43% across lots. West Hillsborough has an average utilization of 31%.
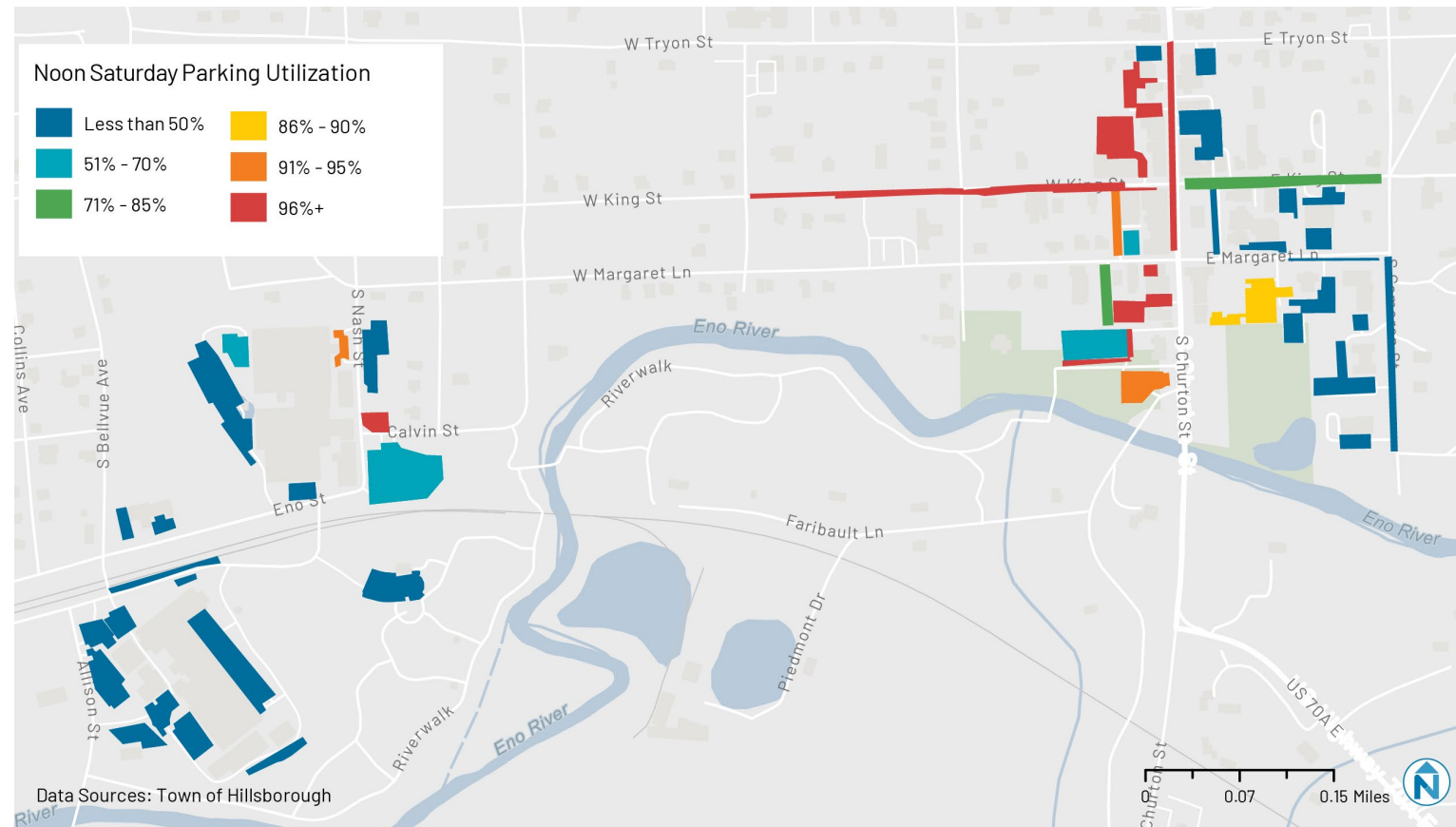
Figure 21: 8 a.m. Saturday Parking Utilization

Weekend Parking Utilization, noon

Parking data was collected at noon on a typical Saturday in Hillsborough. Downtown Hillsborough has an average utilization of 57%, while West Hillsborough has an average utilization of 29%.

Figure 22: Noon, Saturday Parking Utilization

Weekend Parking Utilization, 2 p.m.

Parking data was collected on a typical Saturday in Hillsborough at 2 p.m. Downtown Hillsborough has an average utilization of 53%, while West Hillsborough has an average utilization of 33%.

Figure 23: 2 p.m. Saturday Parking Utilization