2017 Parking Study

In 2016 the City of Courtenay requested McElhanney to conduct a parking review within a defined commercial centre of the downtown core, as illustrated by Figure 1. This review was intended to summarize the relationship between private and public parking, the time of peak utilisation, and identify the relative areas of highest occupancy.

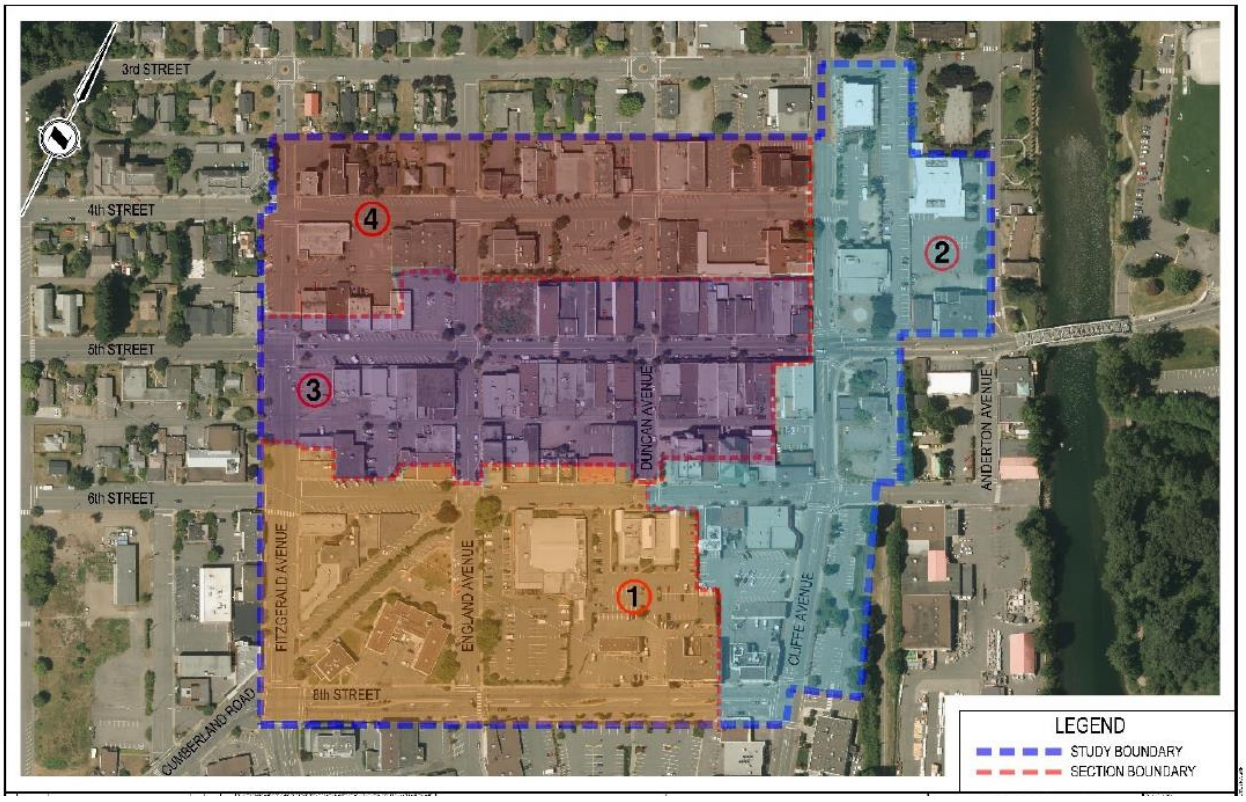


Figure 1: The Downtown Core Divided into 4 Sections

Public Parking Data Highlights, 2017

PUBLIC	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Total
Number of Stalls	300	299	149	141	889
Weekday					
Peak Occupancy %	91%	69%	84%	75%	77%
Peak Time	11:00am	12:30pm	12:30pm 1:30pm	1:30pm	12:30pm
Weekend					
Peak Occupancy %	57%	70%	91%	99%	73%
Peak Time	1:30pm	1:00pm	1:00pm	1:30pm	1:30pm

Private Parking Data Highlights, 2017

PRIVATE	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Total
Number of Stalls	154	71	45	104	374
Weekday					
Peak Occupancy %	68%	51%	58%	62%	58%
Peak Time	10:00am 11:30am	12:00pm	12:00pm	1:30pm	12:00pm
Weekend					
Peak Occupancy %	42%	34%	44%	61%	45%
Peak Time	1:30pm	12:00pm	1:30pm	1:30pm	1:30pm

Results

Public Parking

1. Peak parking occurred at noon throughout the core,
2. Section 1 (6th and 8th Street) had the highest occupancy (91%) on the weekday,
3. Section 3 (5th Street) had the highest occupancy (91%) on the weekend,
4. Occupancy was higher on the weekend for sections 3 and 4 (91% and 99% respectively)

Private Parking

1. Peak occupancy was significantly lower (51% - 68%), but peaked at similar times, and
2. Occupancy was lower in all sections on the weekend

Overall

1. The relative pattern of location and time of highest occupancy is the same for public and private parking areas.

2023 Parking Study

McElhanney was retained to update the 2017 parking assessment with the same objectives, however, the study area was expanded, and the methodology updated with new technology to allow for future analysis. This new methodology would also allow for insight into parking behaviours.

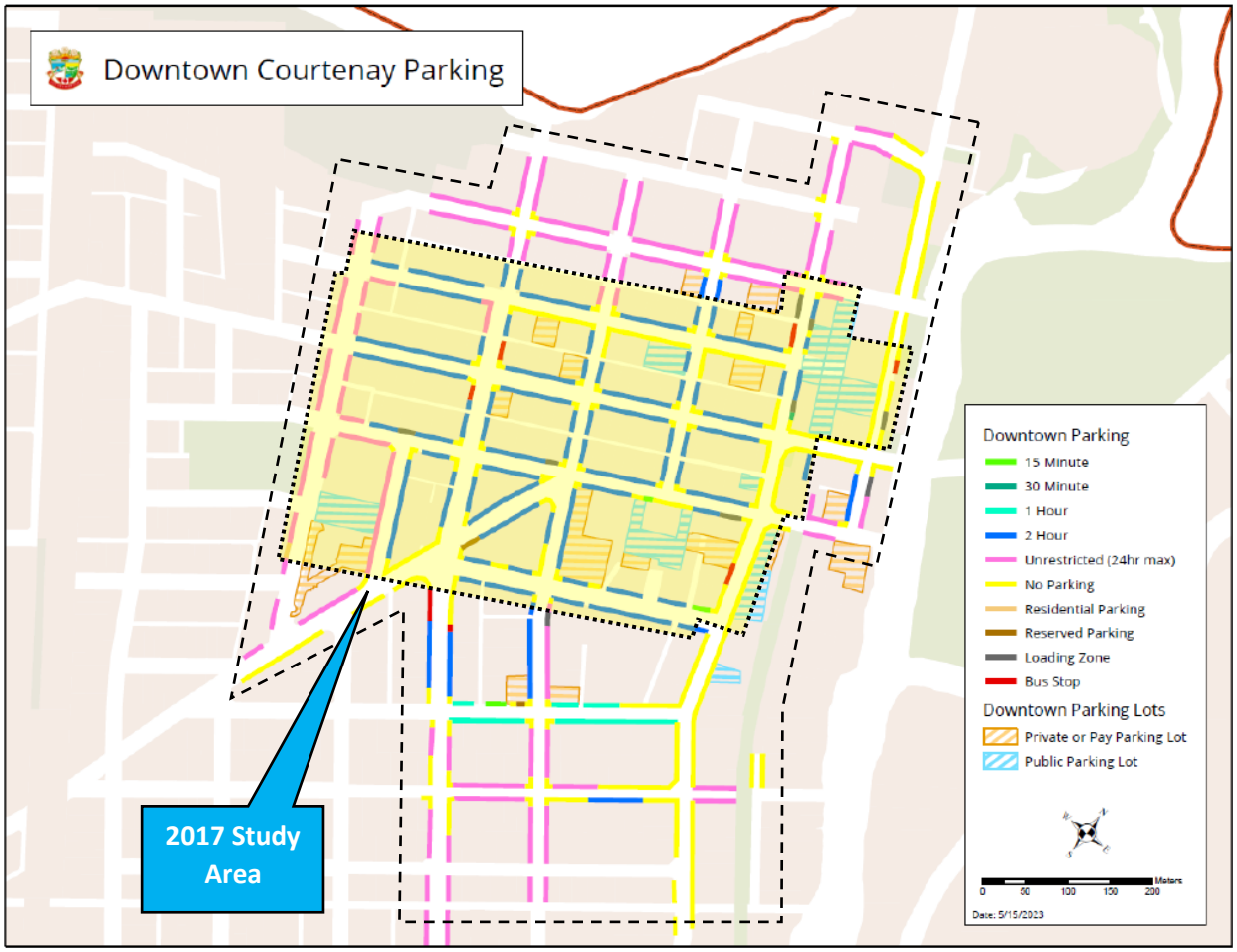


Figure 2: 2023 Expanded Parking Study Area

While the area had expended, a comparison between the new and previous data was still possible by conforming the data and area to the same as 2017 with the four sections.

Public Parking Data Highlights, 2023

PUBLIC	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Total
Number of Stalls	300	299	149	141	889
Weekday					
Peak Occupancy %	85%	80%	97%	95%	--
Peak Time	10:30am	1:00pm	11:30pm 1:00pm	1:00pm	--
Weekend					
Peak Occupancy %	38%	~62%	89%	~64%	--
Peak Time	12:30pm	12:00pm	12:00pm	12:00pm	--

~ interpolated from graph

Private Parking Data Highlights, 2023

PRIVATE	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Total
Number of Stalls	154	71	45	104	374
Weekday					
Peak Occupancy %	85%	55%	93%	88%	--
Peak Time	12:30pm	11:00am	1:00pm	12:00pm 1:00pm	--
Weekend					
Peak Occupancy %	~49%	37%	~51%	59%	--
Peak Time	12:00pm	1:00pm	1:00pm	12:30pm 1:30pm	--

~ interpolated from graph

Results with Comparison to 2017 study

Public Parking

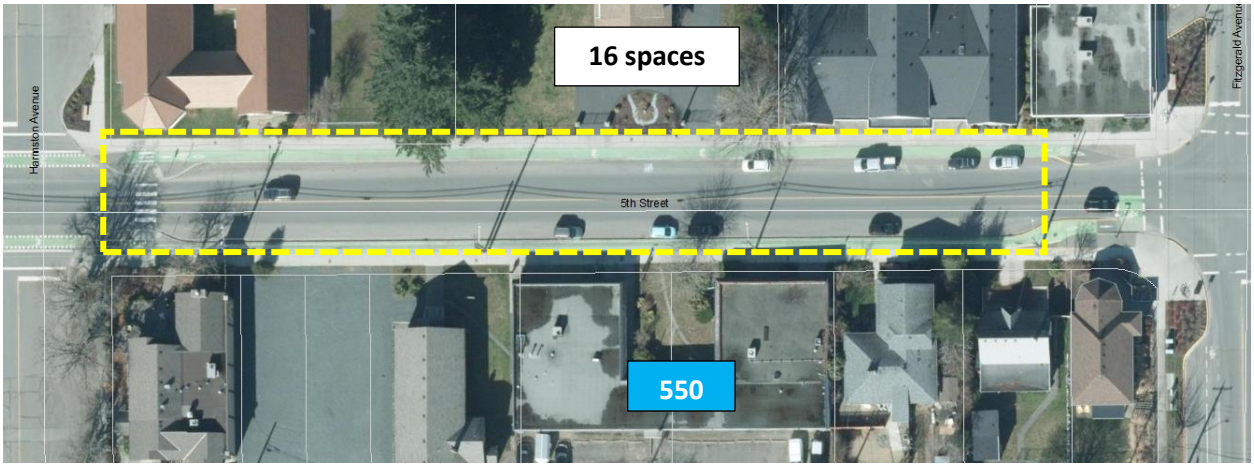
1. Section 3 and 4 (5th and 4th Street) had the highest occupancy (97% and 95% respectively) on the weekday, [new – was Section 1 in 2017]
2. Section 2 weekday occupancy jumps to from 50% to 80% during 1:00pm - 2:00pm [new – was steady and low in 2017]
3. Weekend occupancy peaks at 12:00pm [new – one hour sooner]

Private Parking

1. Section3 (5th Street) had the highest occupancy (93%) on the weekday, [new – was section 1 in 2017]
2. Peak occupancy now the same as public parking [new – was substantially lower in 2017]

Site Specific Questions

550 5th Street Frontage



Question 1: Are the timed parking restrictions at 550 5th Street appropriate?

Of the 16 available parallel spaces, occupancy reached between 60-80% on a weekday, and 60% on a weekend.

Answer: Implementation of a time restriction, while not required, would formalise the existing parking behaviour.

445 10th Street Frontage

Question 2: Are the timed parking restrictions at 445 10th Street appropriate?

Of the 4 available parallel spaces, occupancy reached 100% twice (12:00pm and 5:30pm) on a weekday, and 50% on a weekend.

Answer: Implementation of a time restriction that better suits the needs of the current occupant is recommended. The existing 15minute restriction was previously set up for the bakery that no longer exists. This change can be met through the Operational Services Department as part of their core services.

5th Street Corridor

Angled Parking (Fitzgerald Ave to England Ave) North Side Only - Weekday

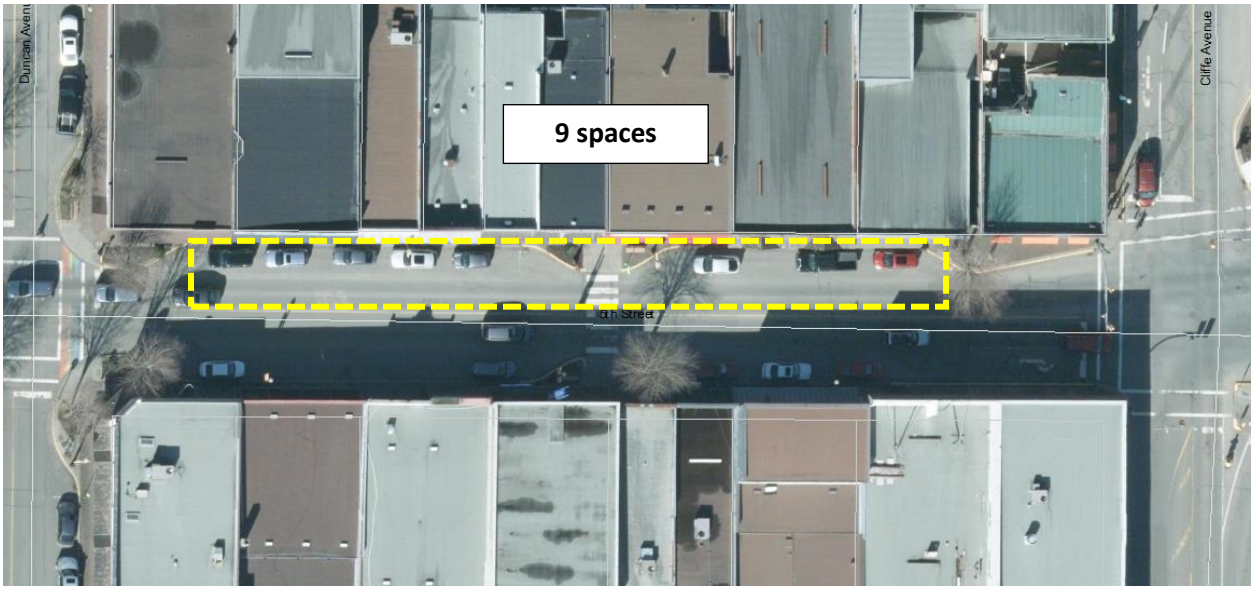
Question 3: What is parking like on the 5th Street corridor, between Fitzgerald Avenue and England Avenue during a weekday?

This area is within section 3, which had the highest occupancy (97%) for 2023. Being densely populated with small commercial shops it has 24 angled parking spaces with a two-hour time restriction and one accessible parking space. During the weekday, 142 parking movements occurred with the majority of vehicles (89 of 142) parking for 30 minutes or less.

The single accessible parking spot was occupied by two vehicles for a total of one hour.

Answer: This parking behaviour is considered healthy and vibrant with significant spare capacity for accessible vehicles.

Parallel Parking (Duncan Ave to Cliffe Ave) – North Side Only – Weekend



Question 4: What is parking like on the 5th Street corridor, between Duncan Avenue and Cliffe Avenue during a weekend?

5th Street east of Duncan Avenue has parallel parking. The nine parking spaces monitored had a total of 49 parking movements. The occupancy was never below six vehicles (67%) and most vehicles (22 of 49) stayed for 30 minutes or less.

One vehicle stayed for 6.5 hours which is an indication that not all drivers are obeying the time restriction.

Result: enforcement of the time restriction could assist compliance of driver behaviour; however, the vast majority of drivers are compliant, making the parking behaviour relatively healthy and vibrant.

<u>6th Street Corridor</u>

Question 5: What is the parking demand along 6th Street?

The angled parking area (one block north and south) has 17 parking spaces on the north side and 23 on the south, comprising 42% of the total parking (40 of 96). The remainder of 6th Street (three blocks north and south) has 56 parallel parking spaces.

For the entire corridor, weekday occupancy peaks at 12:00pm (~83%) and is steady between 10:00am and 2:00pm, whereas on a weekend the peak occupancy is at 12:30pm (~67%).

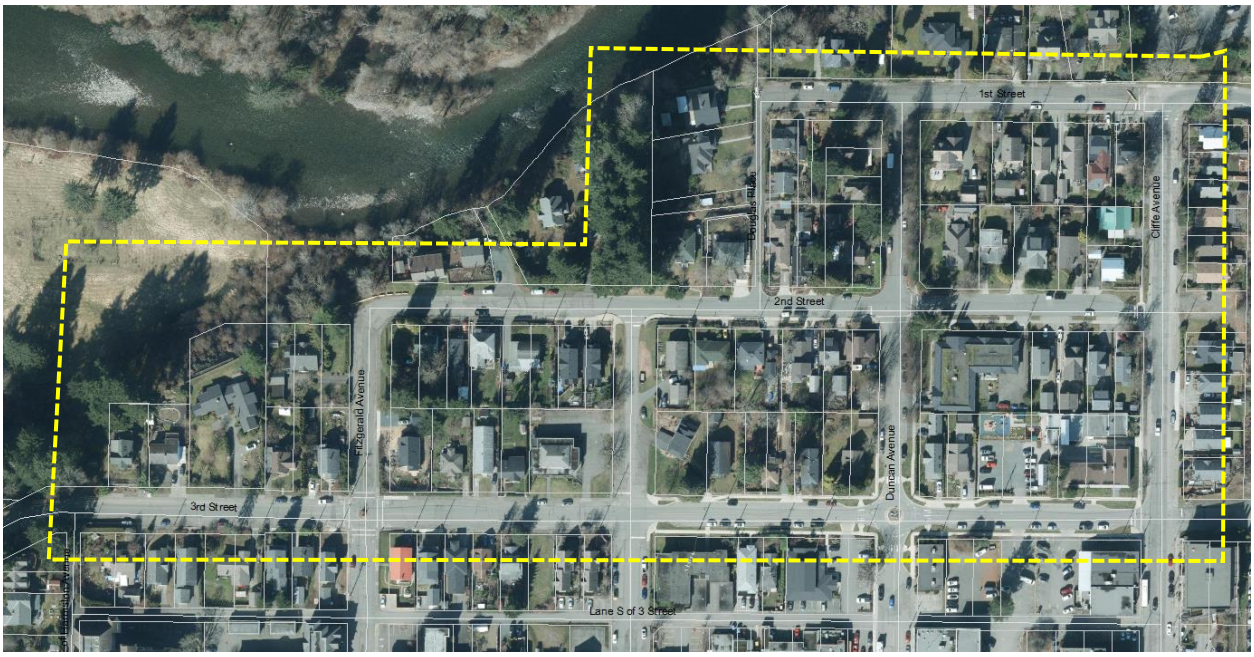
Answer: This street is considered at capacity. Occupancy greater than 80% generally indicates de facto capacity, as spaces become available, it takes time for other vehicles to spot it, and sometimes circle the block in order to park in it.

Question 6: Can the angled parking be converted to parallel parking given the current demand?

Answer: Conversion of angled parking to parallel parking would need to be reviewed in the context of the ability of the surrounding area to shoulder an increase in parking demand, as parallel parking will remove some parking capacity. The trade-off would make 6th Street more viable for Active Transportation modes, which would enhance the corridor's attraction for multiple modes of travel, especially given the 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge project that recently was given the green light to proceed.

There are significant sections of parallel parking that may be able to be converted to angle parking on 5th Street, for example. An assessment of this area to determine the feasibility would confirm this possibility for additional capacity in the future.

<u>Old Orchard Area</u>



Question 7: Is there overflow parking from the commercial core into this residential neighbourhood?

This area comprises 207 parking spaces and has a relatively consistent weekday occupancy starting at or before 10:00am until 2:00pm. The peak occupancy (137 of 207) was at 1:00pm (66%).

After 2:00pm, the weekday occupancy drops to approximately 28%, at the end of the work day (5:30pm). An assumption could be made that parking related to the commercial centre is occurring prior to 10:00am when the analysis started, and they gradually left the area after 2:00pm.

Weekend occupancy (50 of 207) was found to be less than half (24%) of that of the weekday at all times. This may indicate the number of residential related parking on the streets.

Answer: Almost half of the parked vehicles could be attributed to longer term external parking; typical of employee parking. 42% of the parking within this area could be attributed to the commercial centre ([137-50]87 of 207) while 58% could be attributed to the residents (50 of 207). Feedback from the neighbourhood could help assess if this is the case.

Overall Questions:

These questions are directed at the expanded parking area of the 2023 assessment.

Question 8: Is the overall parking supply sufficient and what is the turnover rate?

Public Parking occupancy is 71% at 1pm, which is considered near capacity, however there are several streets surrounding the downtown core that have occupancy rates of 56% or less. This may indicate that these streets are considered too far for many of the drivers to walk to their destination.

Although the overall turnover rate was not given in the report, all indications from the downtown parking areas suggest that turnover is quick and most vehicles that are parked in time restricted areas (2hr parking limit) do so for 30 minutes.

Private Parking occupancy is 76% at 1pm, which is considered near capacity, however, five areas with private lots had occupancy rates of 50% or less. This may suggest that private lots are catering to those customers only, or the private lots are not well known to the general public.

Although an overall turnover rate was not given, the indications from several of the private lots show longer stays than public street parking, which may indicate employee parking. Management strategies in private lots could constrain employee parking to a specific area of the lot, or require employees to park elsewhere during times of heavy demand like Christmas. Understanding how each private lot operates would require interviews with each lot owner.

Parking Structure

Although the core area of downtown, generally identified as the 2017 study limits, are considered at capacity for public and private parking, there is a substantial amount of parking surrounding this area to supply the existing demand that is within walking distance to the core.

It may not be used because the turnover rate in the core is high, so drivers seeking a parking space can generally find one in the area they want, with some wait time. This may translate into a significant amount of circulating traffic seeking parking spots as the occupancy reaches the peak period (noon to 1pm).

A parking structure is not required at present, but should be considered when the surrounding streets and parking lots around the core reach near capacity. A trigger for this consideration could be 80% of all public and private parking spaces are occupied in the 2023 assessment area that are outside of the 2017 study area (ie. All the surrounding parking that has a low occupancy rate at present.

A parking structure could decrease the circulating traffic significantly, based on several factors, like:

- if the occupancy of the structure is available to the public,
- if the cost for parking was priced appropriately,
- if the location was within the demand area, and
- if the structure was clean, vibrant and had 'eyes on' from several perspectives for a feeling of safety.

Question 9: Is it possible to provide insight into the City's current bike parking supply?

Answer: Yes. Although not explored in the overall study area within the report, the web-based tool created by McElhanney has the ability to analyse this. One example given states the Vancouver Island Regional Library - Courtenay bike parking had 22 bicycles use the facility across the four survey days.

Another example shows the bike facility outside the Art gallery was used by seven bicycles on a typical weekday with an average stay of one hour. City staff have access to this tool for ongoing assessments, pending access to the tool.

Question 10: How well-used are the accessible parking spots?

Answer: Although not explored for the overall area of the 2023 report, this can be analysed with the web-based tool. One example given is the south side accessible parking on 5th Street by Fitzgerald Avenue. It was used by at least 11 vehicles across the four survey days.

Another example indicated the north side accessible parking space on 5th Street at England Avenue showed two vehicles used it on a typical weekday. These examples seem to indicate a significant spare capacity that can be confirmed through an area-wide assessment by City staff, pending access to the tool.

Private Parking Assessments

A summary of the key findings from the Assessment of private parking lots is given below.

A. Shopper's Drug Mart – Weekday (107 spots)

This lot has 62% occupancy at 9:30am which remains for most of the day, showing approximately 50% of the parking is long-term, assumed to be employee parking.

B. Vancouver Island Regional Library – Courtenay (76 spots)

The parking was found to be quite variable on the two weekday study dates, ranging from 55% occupancy to 93% occupancy at 10:00am. In each case the parking demand diminished significantly by 2:30pm.

Weekend occupancy peaked at 32%.

C. 4th Street/Duncan Ave Surface Parking Lot – Weekday (47 spots)

Occupancy rose significantly after 10:30am to 100%, which decreased only slightly by 3:00pm (80% occupancy). This parking lot is heavily used.

D. 4th Street/Fitzgerald Ave Surface Parking Lot – Weekday (19 spots)

This location shows a steady 60% occupancy until 2:30pm, and by 5:30pm is almost empty. Most vehicles are parked long term, indicating employee parking.

E. Lower Filberg Surface Parking Lot – Weekday (40 spots)

Serving the Filberg Centre, the peak occupancy at this location is 60% between 11:00am and 2:30pm.

F. Upper Filberg Surface Parking Lot – Weekday (80 spots)

Serving the Sid Williams Theatre and surrounding amenities, this parking lot peaks between 12:30pm to 2:30pm at 70% occupancy with a significantly lower occupancy before and after.

G. Sid Williams Theatre/Native sons Hall Surface Parking Lot – (30 spots)

Serving the theatre, the Native Sons Hall, and local amenities, the lot is well used with occupancy varying throughout the day between 60-90% the entire study time period.

Weekend use may be influenced by events as the parking lot varied between 18 and almost no vehicles.