



# OLD TOWN AREA *Parking Study*



Prepared for:



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**FINAL REPORT**

**OLD TOWN AREA PARKING STUDY**

*Prepared for:*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the parking study conducted in Old Town Alexandria. The study was performed to document existing public parking conditions and to develop parking-system recommendations to resolve existing issues and accommodate the continued evolution of Old Town. The study was focused on publicly-available<sup>1</sup> on- and off-street parking and does not include an evaluation of, or recommendations for private<sup>2</sup> lots and garages.

The study area consisted of approximately 85 city blocks and is bordered by Princess Street to the north, the King Street Metrorail station and railroad tracks to the west, Duke Street and Wolfe Street to the south, and the Potomac River waterfront to the east. The study also included the three blocks between N. Henry Street and N. West Street located one block north of Princess Street. The study considered the number, occupancy, and utilization of public parking spaces available on-street, in publicly-available surface parking lots, and in publicly-available parking garages within the study area.

### Data Collection

Field reviews revealed that there are 8,332 publicly accessible parking spaces in the study area. On-street parking accounts for the majority of available parking and comprises 53 percent (4,399 spaces) of the system. Publicly accessible parking garages account for 42 percent (3,527 spaces) of the inventory and surface lots contain 5 percent (406 spaces) of the parking system. Although private parking facilities were not included in this study, information provided by the City of Alexandria indicates that there are approximately 1,700 private parking spaces within the study area. The combination of publicly accessible parking and private parking totals nearly 10,000 spaces in Old Town. The addition of some or all private use parking facilities for some level of public use would dramatically increase Old Town's parking supply.

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Following field data collection to inventory public parking spaces, accumulation counts were performed to determine utilization of public on-street, surface lot, and garage parking spaces. The parking counts were conducted during the following six time periods:

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study, publicly-available parking includes garages and lots that are open to the public at all hours and privately owned garages and lots that are open to the public during some hours of operation.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this study, private garages and lots are not open to the public at any time.

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1. Weekday, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM
2. Weekday, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM
3. Friday, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM
4. Friday, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM
5. Saturday, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM
6. Saturday, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

The periods listed above represent times when peak parking demand for different types of activities in Old Town occurs. During each two-hour period, counts were conducted hourly.

## Parking Utilization Calculations

Parking utilization was determined by comparing the number of occupied spaces with the total number of spaces in each facility or along an individual block face. Calculations for the system indicated the following occupancies for publicly accessible parking in the study area:

- Weekday afternoon (12:00 PM to 2:00 PM) - 75%, or 1 in 4 parking spaces is available
- Weekday evening (6:00 PM to 8:00 PM) – 50%, or 1 in 2 parking spaces is available
- Friday afternoon (12:00 PM to 2:00 PM) – 75%, or 1 in 4 parking spaces is available
- Friday evening (6:00 PM to 8:00 PM) – 58%, or nearly 2 in 5 parking spaces are available
- Saturday afternoon (11:00 AM to 1:00 PM) – 55%, or nearly 2 in 5 parking spaces are available
- Saturday evening (7:00 PM to 9:00 PM) – 62%, or nearly 2 in 5 parking spaces are available

The evaluation of parking data revealed that the Old Town area does not have an overall supply problem; it has proximity, rate, and facility availability problems. Parking is available during all periods studied; however, the evaluation of parking data for individual areas revealed that parking demand east of Alfred Street is higher than west of Alfred Street. During peak periods, on-street parking and some publicly accessible off-street facilities were effectively full. During all periods, parking was available in areas east and west of Alfred Street. The following is a summary of individual areas that are effectively full during the periods indicated:

*The Old Town area does not have a parking supply problem; it has proximity, rate, and availability problems.*

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## *On-Street Parking*

- King Street on Friday and Saturday evenings
- St. Asaph Street on typical weekday afternoons, Friday afternoons, and Saturday evenings
- Pitt Street on Friday afternoons
- Royal Street on typical weekday and Friday afternoons
- Fairfax Street on typical weekday afternoons, Friday evenings, and Saturday evenings
- Lee Street on typical weekday evenings, Friday afternoons, Friday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and Saturday evenings
- Union Street on typical weekday afternoons, Friday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and Saturday evenings
- Strand Street during all six time periods studied
- Vicinity of King Street Metrorail station on typical weekday afternoons, Friday afternoons, Saturday afternoons, and Saturday evenings
- Vicinity of the Potomac River waterfront during all six time periods

## *Publicly Accessible Parking Lots*

- King Street Metro Lot during Saturday afternoon and evenings
- King Street Metered Lot during typical weekday afternoons and evenings, Friday evening, and Saturday afternoons
- South Henry Street Lot on Friday afternoons
- North Patrick Street Lot on Saturday afternoons
- Military Officers Association Lot on Saturday afternoons
- The Strand Lot during typical weekday afternoons, on Friday afternoons and evenings, and on Saturday evenings

## *Publicly Accessible Parking Garages*

- Solo Garage during typical weekday afternoons and evenings, Friday afternoons, and Saturday evenings
- 115 S. Union Street Garage during typical weekday afternoons
- Torpedo Plant Garage on Friday afternoons and Saturday evenings
- Thompson's Alley Garage during typical weekday evenings
- Market Square Garage during typical weekday afternoons and Saturday afternoons and evenings
- Courthouse Square Garage during typical weekday afternoons
- PNC Bank Garage on Friday evenings



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## Parking Issues and Observations

Based on the field inventory, information provided by the City, field observations, and utilization calculations the following parking issues were identified:

### *Primary Issues*

- Limited on-street metered parking availability
- Limited on-street parking availability east of Alfred Street in the neighborhood permit district
- Publicly accessible garages and lots are underutilized throughout the parking system
- Parking utilization is uneven throughout the system

### *Secondary Issues*

- Difficulty in locating available off-street parking
- Inconsistent parking rates
- Fee collection method
- Inconsistent hours of operation for parking facilities
- High auto use
- Loading, valet, taxi, and other standing spaces reducing the available on-street parking supply
- Illegal parking

## Recommendations

Recommendations were developed to address parking issues and improve parking conditions in Old Town Alexandria. Additional detail is provided in the recommendations section of the report document.

### **General Recommendations**

- Develop a task force that includes the major stakeholders in the area including representatives of retail establishments, business associations, employers, civic associations, residents, etc. to help develop consensus on parking management strategies.
- Install multi space meters that accept cash, coins, and credit/debit to replace existing coin-operated single-space meters on King Street and in side street locations with high demand. Multi space meters have been shown to accommodate more parked vehicles along a curb face than single-space meters since individual spaces are not



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designated. These meters also provide the City with flexibility to modify parking rates.<sup>3</sup>

- Review on-street and off-street parking rates. Increasing parking rates for on-street parking will increase turn-over of the spaces, making the same parking available to more people throughout the day. It also will discourage long-term parking by employees and business owners. Vary rates for off-street parking according to facility location and use—short-term, long-term, visitor, daily, and similar. Generally, longer-term parking should be less convenient and less expensive. Typically, long-term parking rate structures have a high first hour rate and then very low subsequent hour rates. Shorter-term parking should be closer to desired destinations and should employ a rate structure that encourages shorter-term parking and high turn-over. Create a public education process to communicate that all must pay for parking.
- Decrease on-street meter parking duration in locations where the adjacent land use may benefit from higher turnover. Decreasing allowable duration at meters in tandem with increased enforcement increases the likelihood of parking turnover at a higher rate, thereby making the same number of spaces available more often.
- Decrease the allowable parking duration in residential permit districts. Decreasing the duration will encourage long-term parkers to travel to Old Town by another mode or park in an appropriate facility.
- Extend on-street parking meter hours of operation into the evening. In the evenings, the free on-street parking is more attractive than paying for off-street parking. Extending the meter hours will improve off-street parking utilization. This modification also has the potential to reduce the attractiveness of curb parking in high demand areas for employees and business owners.
- Work with parking garage owners and operators with regard to the installation of pay-on-foot or pay-and-display machines in off-street facilities. This measure may eliminate the need for parking attendants and would allow facilities to remain open for longer periods of time without being constrained by attendants' work schedules. These machines are generally attractive to parkers since they offer a secure payment form and accept coins, bills, and credit/debit. The extended time also reduces

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<sup>3</sup> The City budget included \$250,000 in CIP funding in the FY2002-04 budgets for necessary replacement parts and upgrades to the traditional, single-space meters that were, at the time, more than 20 years old. Over several years, the City upgraded approximately 1,000 meters in Old Town to LED, digital display meters. The meters installed at that time predated the commercially available, solar-powered multi-space meters that now accept various forms of payment such as credit/debit cards, Smart Phone payments and more.



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- people's uncertainty about retrieving their vehicle. Pay-on-foot and pay-and-display machines also can simplify cash handling.
- Implement an area-wide parking wayfinding program to include the branding of publicly-accessible parking facilities in a consistent manner. This will improve the off-street parking utilization by making the facilities more visible and easier to find.
  - Evaluate the value and feasibility of providing real-time-parking information to parkers.
  - Reduce parking demand by improving attractiveness of transit and non-vehicular modes of travel. Reduce the headway for the King Street trolley to encourage people to travel to Old Town on Metrorail or to use the parking facilities in western portions of Old Town. Work with employers to encourage them to offer employees transit subsidies if they do not drive and park in Old Town.
  - Identify key private parking facilities that have the potential to relieve pressure on existing public facilities and work with owners to determine whether it is feasible to offer parking to the public.