

The City of Decatur is the Wise County seat, with the Decatur Town Square home to the Wise County Courthouse, several other County functions, and the Decatur City Hall. Parking availability in and around the courthouse has been identified as an issue by Decatur officials and stakeholders.

The purpose of this deliverable is to provide Decatur and NCTCOG with an assessment of existing parking conditions in the approximately 12-block Main Street Overlay District, and to provide recommendations and best practices for managing and enforcing parking policies.

## **STUDY AREA**

The study area for this effort includes the Main Street Overlay District, an approximately 12-block area in the heart of Decatur. Figure 1 shows the study area.

The delineation of study area blocks was developed as a way to gather information on a more granular level than a full study-area wide analysis would allow. Some blocks are larger than others as Walker wanted to ensure that each block carried sufficient parking inventory to make block-by-block conclusions meaningful.

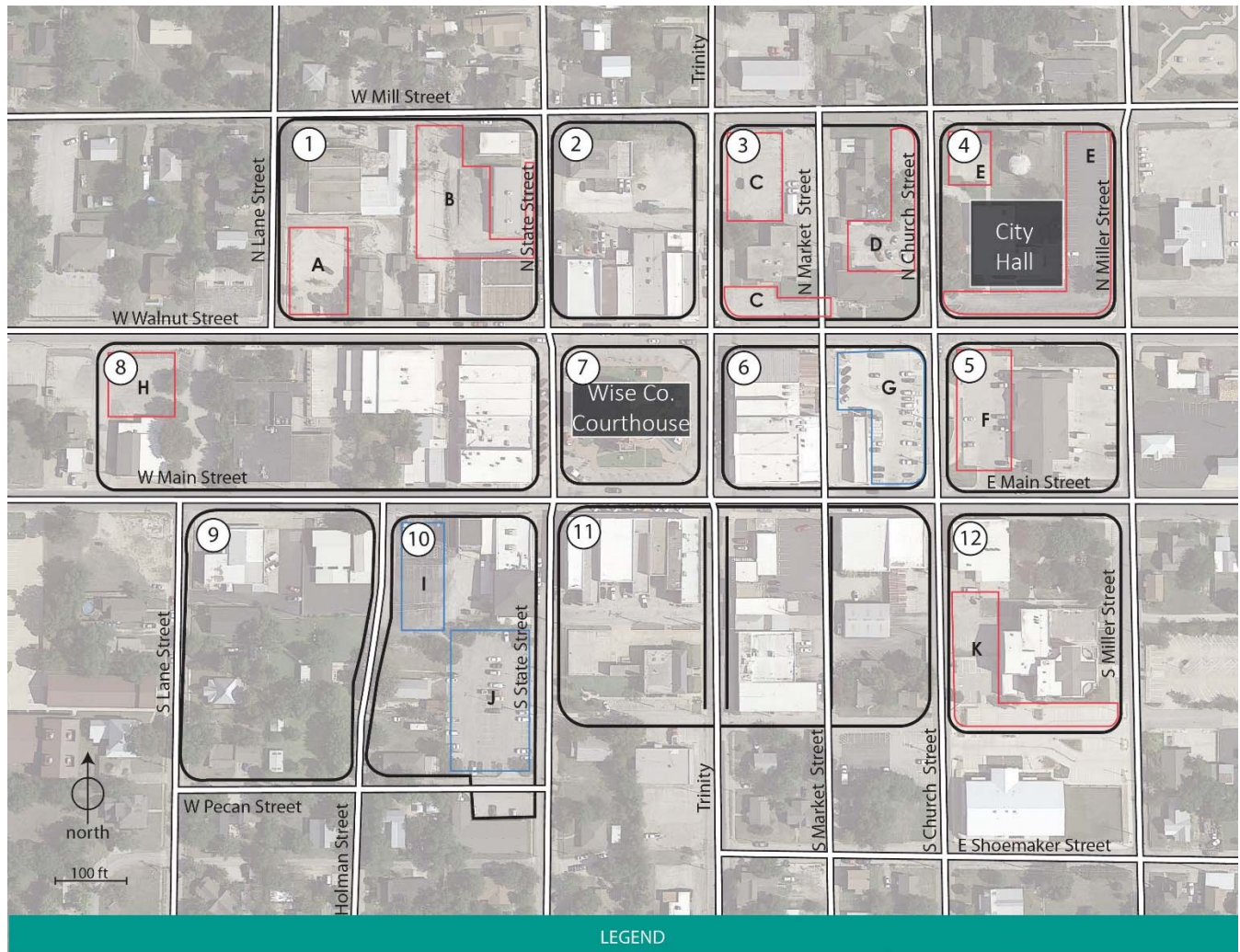
Walker staff visited the study area on Tuesday, November 13, 2018 to compile an inventory of publicly-available parking within the study area, and to collect parking occupancy counts in order to gauge the overall adequacy of the parking supply in the area to accommodate parking demand. Publicly-available parking was defined as on-street parking, as well as unmarked off-street lots and off-street lots associated with public and community entities, such as City and County government, churches, and the Chamber of Commerce.

The publicly available off-street parking was split into two categories; public parking, referring to parking lots that in Walker's opinion serve a variety of land uses/commercial entities, and private parking, referring to parking lots that in Walker's opinion serve the specific land use/entity it is associated with, such as the parking lots associated with specific County/City offices and the United States Postal Service lot.

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Figure 1: Main Street Overlay District/Parking Study Area



		Private Parking		Public Parking	
	Study Area Blocks	<b>A</b>	Walnut Plaza Parking	<b>E</b>	<b>G</b> Public (no signage)
	Block Numbers	<b>B</b>	Wise County Vet Srv Off.	<b>F</b>	<b>I</b> Holman/Main
	Landmarks	<b>C</b>	Decatur Municipal Court	<b>H</b>	<b>J</b> State Street
		<b>D</b>	Wise County Adult Probation	<b>K</b>	Church Lot
		<b>E</b>	Decatur City Hall		
		<b>F</b>	USPS Customer Parking		
		<b>G</b>	Chamber of Commerce		
		<b>H</b>	Church Lot		

**EXISTING PARKING INVENTORY**

One of the challenges identified in the kick-off meeting was that patrons may not know that certain lots are publicly available due to a lack of clear signage. Walker staff experienced this issue firsthand and has made best efforts to separate the off-street parking supply into two buckets: parking lots Walker staff believes are available

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for public parking, and private/government parking lots that could conceivably provide public parking. Parking areas that are generally inaccessible to the public were excluded from the data collection and analysis. This last category has been excluded from the figures below.

Figure 2: Study Area Parking Inventory by Space Type

Block	On-Street	Off-Street Public	Off-Street Private	Total
1	31	0	46	77
2	28	0	0	28
3	0	0	76	76
4	0	0	80	80
5	9	0	33	42
6	16	34	0	50
7	31	0	0	31
8	11	0	40	51
9	19	0	0	19
10	16	99	0	115
11	38	0	7	45
12	15	0	45	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>674</b>

Source: Walker Consultants, 2018-2019

Of the 214 on-street parking spaces, 60 are designated as 2-hour parking only on weekdays from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and one space is designated as “take-out only.” The two-hour spaces are predominately located immediately surrounding the Town Square.

It should be noted that while the City Hall parking lot is technically considered a public parking lot given its ownership, the lack of signage and usage of the lot gives it more of a ‘private’ feel and was labeled as such by the Walker data collection team, as it is unlikely that this lot is commonly used by members of the general public.

**EXISTING PARKING OCCUPANCY AND PARKING CONDITIONS**

Walker staff recorded parking occupancy in the study area at 10:00 AM, 12:30 PM and 2:00 PM on Tuesday, November 13, 2018. This weekday daytime data collection period was selected given input from Decatur staff and officials in early September, when it was shared that the busiest time for parking is during normal business hours when the County courts are in session.

Figure 3 summarizes the overall level of occupancy observed by space type, while Figures 4, 5, and 6 show observed occupancy by block/block face. Detailed counts data for both on-street and off-street parking are contained in the appendix to this memorandum.

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Figure 3: Overall Study Area Parking Occupancy by Space Type, Tuesday, November 13, 2018

Space Type	Inventory	10:00 AM		12:30 PM		2:00 PM	
		Occupancy	%	Occupancy	%	Occupancy	%
On-Street	214	94	44%	119	56%	94	44%
Off-Street Public	133	78	59%	115	86%	77	58%
Off-Street Private	327	89	27%	87	27%	95	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>39%</b>

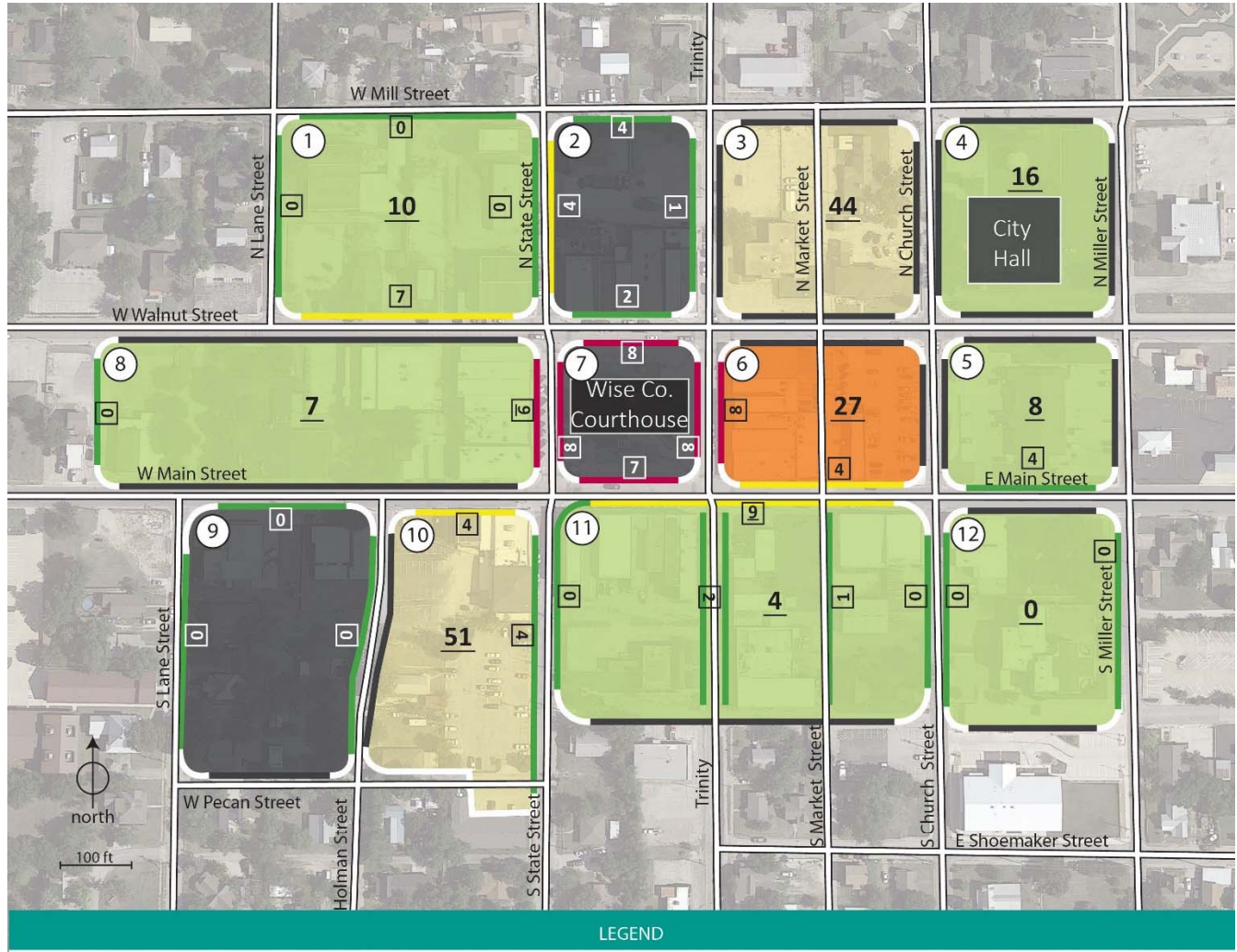
Source: Walker Consultants, 2018



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Figure 4: 10:00 AM Parking Occupancy

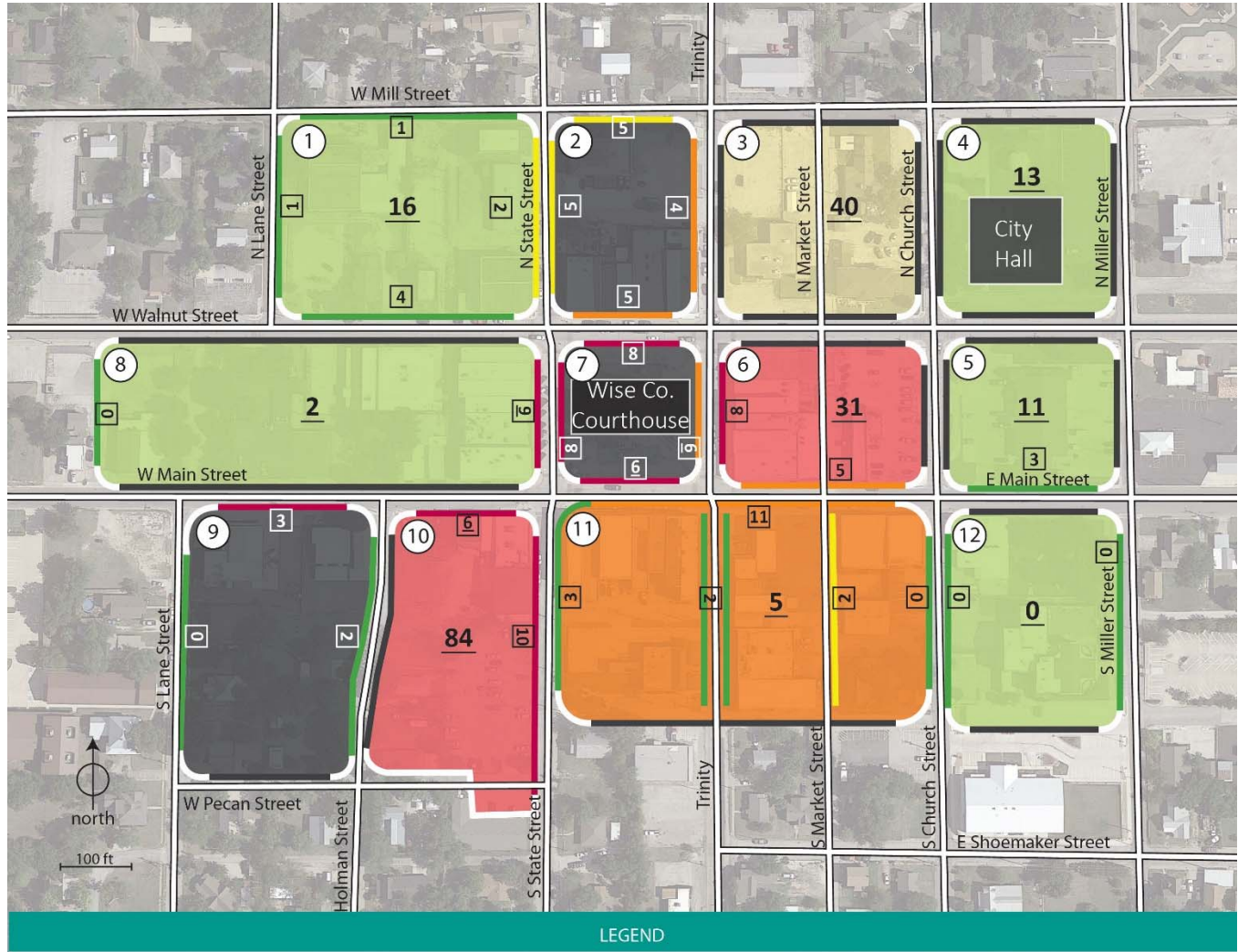


Source: Walker Consultants, 2018-2019

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Figure 5: 12:30 PM Parking Occupancy



Occupancy - 12:30 pm



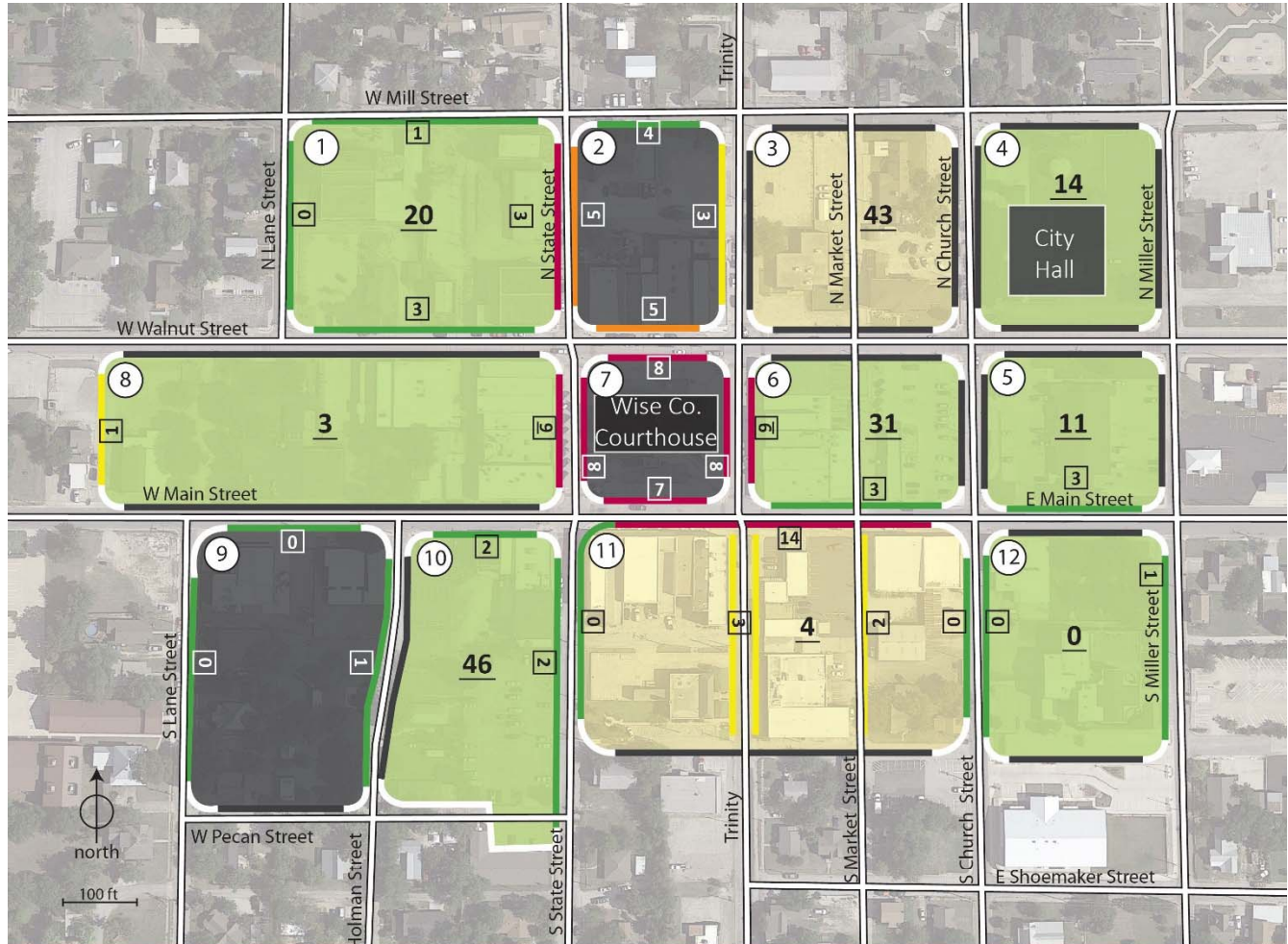
Source: Walker Consultants, 2018-2019



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Figure 6: 2:00 PM Parking Occupancy



**LEGEND**

Occupancy - 2 pm

- On-Street**
- █ 0-49% Occ
  - █ 50-69% Occ
  - █ 70-84% Occ
  - █ 85+% Occ
  - █ No Parking

**#** Total number of cars counted on-street per blockface

- Off-Street**
- █ 0-49% Occ
  - █ 50-69% Occ
  - █ 70-84% Occ
  - █ 85+% Occ
  - █ No Parking

**##** Total number of cars counted in off-street lots

Source: Walker Consultants, 2018

Parking demand in the study area peaked during lunchtime, with patrons arriving in the area to dine at the restaurants in and around the town square. The three off-street parking lots characterized as ‘public’ by Walker staff were at or approaching capacity, and on-street parking around the town square was generally full. However, several quasi-public and government office parking lots were generally empty, as was on-street parking outside of the immediate town square area.

Figure 7 highlights some of the private lots that are underutilized on a typical weekday.

**Figure 7: 12:30 PM Parking Occupancy in Select Private Lots**

Block	Off-Street Facility	Inventory	12:30 PM	
			Occupancy	%
1	Walnut Plaza	24	4	17%
4	Decatur City Hall	66	6	9%
8	Chamber of Commerce	19	2	11%
12	Church Lot	45	0	0%

Source: Walker Consultants, 2018

Appendix A contains a complete list of the off-street parking lots at which parking inventory and occupancy data was collected as part of this analysis.

In addition to the parking occupancy counts, Walker staff made the following observations related to parking:

- The two-hour time limit does not appear to be actively enforced (consistent with information shared at our team’s meeting with Decatur staff and officials in September).
- The inventory of on-street parking spaces in untimed parking areas could potentially increase their utilization by clearly denoting that parking is allowed with signage. Given the condition of the curbs in several areas, and the cross section of the adjacent roadway (e.g. inconsistent curb cuts and curb elevations), it was not always clear if parking was permitted.
- The existing parking signage for the time restricted parking is inconsistent and faded in several areas. Some signs appear to have been damaged and do not face in the proper direction.
- There is very little public parking signage denoting where public parking is allowed.
- The pedestrian environment is difficult to navigate throughout the study area; sidewalks are missing in some areas and elevated in others.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, there is adequate parking supply in the Main Street Overlay district to accommodate the existing parking demand generated by the Courthouse, County, City, retail and dining uses in the Town Center. However, the most convenient spaces – on-street parking around the Courthouse – are generally full throughout the day, while spaces a block or two away sit empty.

Walker offers the following recommendations for consideration with respect to parking enforcement, policy, outreach and technology:

- Increase enforcement of time-limited two-hour spaces
  - Since employees, business owners and other long-term parkers have become accustomed to the lack of enforcement, increased enforcement could start gradually with warnings and escalate to the allowable fines in the City’s Municipal Code. This would be a more customer friendly approach than directly issuing fines immediately.
  - Hold a downtown stakeholder meeting with downtown business owners and employers to discuss the upcoming changes in enforcement and alternative locations for long-term parking. Discuss the economic benefits of parking being readily accessible and easy for patrons and other short-term users to find during peak period, such as the lunchtime hour.
  - Walker would also recommend discussing this issue—including why enforcement is important and what benefits it provides to the community—at a public open house or Town Hall meeting, with booths at community events, and online via the Town’s social media presence.
- Improve signage at and wayfinding to public parking facilities
  - As unfamiliar users, it was unclear to the Walker team which off-street parking lots are considered public parking. Signage should be provided at each location where public parking is allowed and could even be as simple as the blue “P” parking symbol found adjacent to the public parking lot at State Street. Additionally, wayfinding signs should be placed in strategic locations approaching the Square to direct patrons to these facilities.
  - If the City Hall lot is intended for public parking, as indicated in the kickoff meeting, signage and wayfinding is needed to direct patrons to it and clearly show at entrances that the general public—not just employees and patrons of City Hall —are allowed to park in the lot.
  - Signage and wayfinding could also serve as an opportunity to further town branding efforts by integrating parking signage packages with a general wayfinding package sharing information about the town with visitors and directing them to key landmarks.
- Allow long-term parkers to park in off-street facilities such as the City Hall parking lot.
  - If the two-hour time limit is strictly enforced, employees, business owners and other long-term parkers will need to park elsewhere. Greater compliance with the time limits may be achieved by providing these users with a clearly designated, safe alternative.
  - This will also help to establish on-street parking as short-term parking and off-street parking as long-term parking, particularly if this distinction is further emphasized through effective signage.
  - After a regular enforcement program is established, a decal permit program for employees may be considered.
- Work with private entities, such as Walnut Plaza or First United Methodist Church to open their parking areas to the public on weekdays.

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- Church uses are predominately weekend uses and they may be amenable to allowing public parking or employee parking in their parking lot during the day M-F.
- At present, the Walnut Plaza lot is marked for Walnut Plaza use only, but was approximately 20% full on the survey day. This lot could potentially serve as public parking. However, this lot's low utilization could also indicate that employees are using on-street parking rather than their own lot (a common phenomenon in many communities where on-street time limits are non-existent or not enforced). As such, should time limits be enforced, utilization of this lot may increase.
- Stripe parallel parking spaces on Main Street between Trinity Street and Church Street to better delineate the available parking.
- Based on the size of the area, Walker does not recommend any technology improvements at this point, such as the use of license plate recognition for enforcement or parking guidance systems, as there would be little to no return on investment. Walker also does not recommend paid parking for the study area, given that there is currently no parking management conducted whatsoever, and metered parking would be a stark and likely politically unwelcome adjustment.
- Create a parking map, available in digital and print formats, and advertise on social media pages and through event marketing campaigns.
- Hold 1-2 meetings with City staff and downtown employees to discuss findings from inventory/occupancy study, stress the importance of maintaining on-street parking for short-term use, and share information about alternative off-street parking facilities for long-term users.

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**APPENDIX A – LIST OF OFF-STREET PARKING FACILITY INVENTORY AND OCCUPANCY COUNTS**

Block	Facility	Stall Type	Lot Type	Inventory	10:00 AM	12:30 PM	2:00 PM	Notes
1	Lot: Walnut Plaza Parking	Regular	Private	23	4	4	5	
1	Lot: Walnut Plaza Parking	ADA	Private	1	0	0	0	
1	Lot: Wise County Vet Srv Off.	Regular	Private	21	6	12	15	
1	Lot: Wise County Vet Srv Off.	ADA	Private	1	0	0	0	
3	Lot: Wise County Adult Probation	Regular	Private	45	27	25	25	
3	Lot: Wise County Adult Probation	ADA	Private	3	1	0	0	
3	Lot: Decatur Municipal Court	Regular	Private	27	16	15	18	
3	Lot: Decatur Municipal Court	ADA	Private	1	0	0	0	
4	Lot: Decatur City Hall	Regular	Private	65	7	6	8	Employee only lot not included
4	Lot: Decatur City Hall	ADA	Private	1	0	0	0	
4	Lot: Decatur City Hall Emp Lot	Employee	Private	14	9	7	6	
5	Lot: USPS Customer Parking	Regular	Private	31	7	11	11	
5	Lot: USPS Customer Parking	ADA	Private	2	1	0	0	
6	Lot: Public (no signage)	Regular	Public	32	26	30	29	
6	Lot: Public (no signage)	ADA	Public	2	1	1	2	
8	Lot: Nat'l Bank Lot	General	Private	20	0	0	0	Blocked Off
8	Lot: Nat'l Bank Lot	ADA	Private	1	0	0	0	Blocked Off
8	Lot: Chamber of Commerce	General	Private	18	6	2	3	
8	Lot: Chamber of Commerce	ADA	Private	1	1	0	0	
10	Lot: Holman/Main	General	Public	28	22	28	18	Unmarked
10	Lot: State Street	General	Public	71	29	56	28	"P" sign on State Street near lot entrance
11	County Messenger Lot	General	Private	7	4	5	4	
12	Church Lot	General	Private	40	0	0	0	
12	Church Lot	ADA	Private	5	0	0	0	

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**APPENDIX B – LIST OF ON-STREET PARKING INVENTORY AND OCCUPANCY COUNTS**

Block	Facility	Stall Type	Lot Type	Inventory	10:00 AM	12:30 PM	2:00 PM	Notes
1	On-Street: Lane	General	On-Street	8	0	1	0	
1	On-Street: Mill	General	On-Street	8	0	1	1	No striping, inventory estimated
1	On-Street: State	General	On-Street	3	0	2	3	
1	On-Street: Walnut	General	On-Street	12	7	4	3	
2	On-Street: State	General	On-Street	4	3	3	3	
2	On-Street: State	General	On-Street	4	1	2	2	
2	On-Street: Mill	General	On-Street	9	4	5	4	
2	On-Street: Trinity	General	On-Street	5	1	4	3	
2	On-Street: Walnut	General	On-Street	6	2	5	5	
3	On-Street: Trinity	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
3	On-Street: Mill	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
3	On-Street: Church	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
3	On-Street: Walnut	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
4	On-Street: Church	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
4	On-Street: Mill	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
4	On-Street: Miller	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
4	On-Street: Walnut	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
5	On-Street: Church	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
5	On-Street: Walnut	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
5	On-Street: Miller	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
5	On-Street: Main	General	On-Street	9	4	3	3	No striping-inventory estimated
6	On-Street: Trinity	General	On-Street	8	8	8	8	
6	On-Street: Trinity	ADA	On-Street	1	0	0	1	
6	On-Street: Walnut	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
6	On-Street: Church	General	On-Street	0	0	0	0	
6	On-Street: Main	General	On-Street	7	4	5	3	No striping-inventory estimated



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Block	Facility	Stall Type	Lot Type	Inventory	10:00 AM	12:30 PM	2:00 PM
7	On-Street: Trinity	General	On-Street	8	8	6	8
7	On-Street: Main	General	On-Street	5	5	5	5
7	On-Street: Main	ADA	On-Street	2	2	1	2
7	On-Street: State	General	On-Street	8	8	8	8
7	On-Street: Walnut	General	On-Street	8	8	8	8
8	On-Street: Main		On-Street	0	0	0	0
8	On-Street: State	General	On-Street	8	8	8	8
8	On-Street: State	ADA	On-Street	1	1	1	1
8	On-Street: Lane	Reserved	On-Street	2	0	0	1
8	On-Street: Walnut		On-Street	0	0	0	0
9	On-Street: Lane	General	On-Street	10	0	0	0
9	On-Street: Pecan		On-Street	0	0	0	0
9	On-Street: Holman	General	On-Street	6	0	2	1
9	On-Street: Main	General	On-Street	3	0	3	0
10	On-Street: State	General	On-Street	10	4	10	2
10	On-Street: Main	General	On-Street	5	4	5	2
10	On-Street: Main	General	On-Street	1	0	1	0
11	On-Street: State	General	On-Street	11	0	3	0
11	On-Street: Pecan		On-Street	0	0	0	0
11	On-Street: Church	General	On-Street	4	0	0	0
11	On-Street: Main	General	On-Street	9	7	9	9
11	On-Street: Main	ADA	On-Street	1	0	0	0
11	On-Street: Main	2-Hr 8A-5P	On-Street	5	2	2	5
11	On-Street: Trinity	2-Hr 8A-5P	On-Street	4	2	2	3
11	On-Street: Trinity	ADA	On-Street	1	0	0	0
11	On-Street: Market	General	On-Street	3	1	2	2
12	On-Street: Church	General	On-Street	2	0	0	0
12	On-Street: Miller	General	On-Street	11	0	0	1
12	On-Street: Miller	ADA	On-Street	2	0	0	0
12	On-Street: Pecan		On-Street	0	0	0	0