



Prepared for the City of Fort Bragg

Recommendations and Strategies to Consider

Downtown Comprehensive Parking Strategy

April 2024



WALKER
CONSULTANTS

March 12, 2024

Sarah Peters
Assistant Planner
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Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Re: *Report for the Downtown Comprehensive Parking Strategy*
 Fort Bragg, California
 Walker Consultants Project #33-002430

Dear Sarah Peters:

Walker Consultants is pleased to submit for your review this report for the Downtown Comprehensive Parking Strategy.

We appreciate the opportunity to be of service to you on this project. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

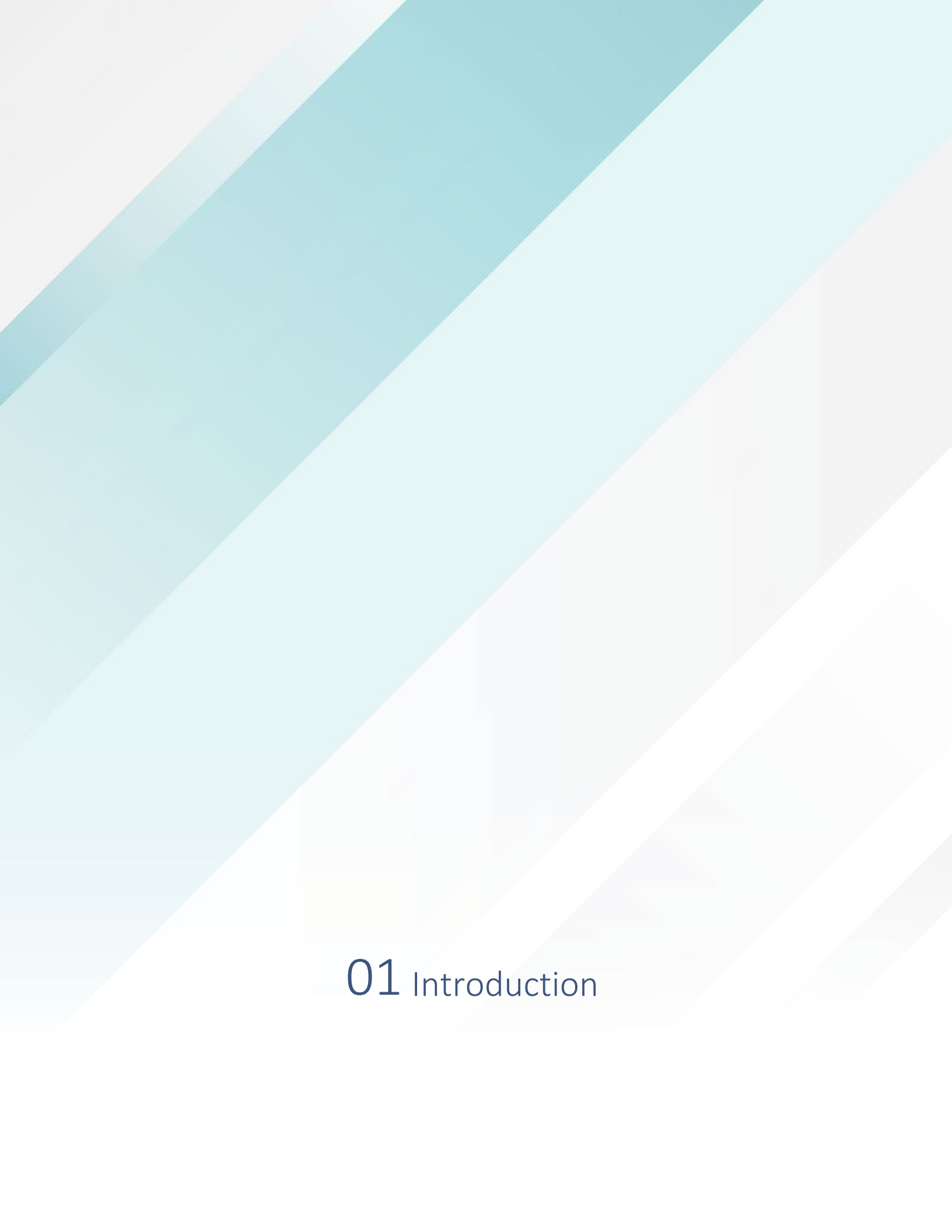
WALKER CONSULTANTS

Ben Weber
Consultant

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01 Introduction

1. Introduction

This project, the Fort Bragg Downtown Comprehensive Parking Strategy (heretofore referred to as the “Study”), describes the existing conditions of Fort Bragg and strategies to improve the parking and other related mobility systems in the Central Business District (CBD) zoning area. It looks at direct actions the City can take to modernize parking supply and management to accommodate changing development and transportation patterns. This work also identifies opportunities for partners of the City and private parties to enact parking management updates that serve immediate and long-term goals.

Fort Bragg’s existing parking is not regularly congested or hard to access, nor poorly managed. Parking operated by the City and all known private parking in the city is free and typically not strictly enforced for time limits. However, through this project the City has identified several key areas to update parking supply options and parking management methods in the Central Business District (Downtown), where this Study focuses, to ensure the flexibility and robustness of the system for the coming years.

This specific document summarizes the recommendations and supporting reasoning. Other documents, including the existing conditions review, community outreach findings, and development code markups are included as appendices. The City intends for this document to describe a vision succinctly and plainly for Fort Bragg’s downtown parking and related mobility options, the recommended steps for action to achieve those outcomes, and the people, departments, and partners who will have a role to play in seeing-through programs.

Typical On-Street and Off-Street Parking Area in Downtown Fort Bragg.



Source: Walker Consultants, 2023.

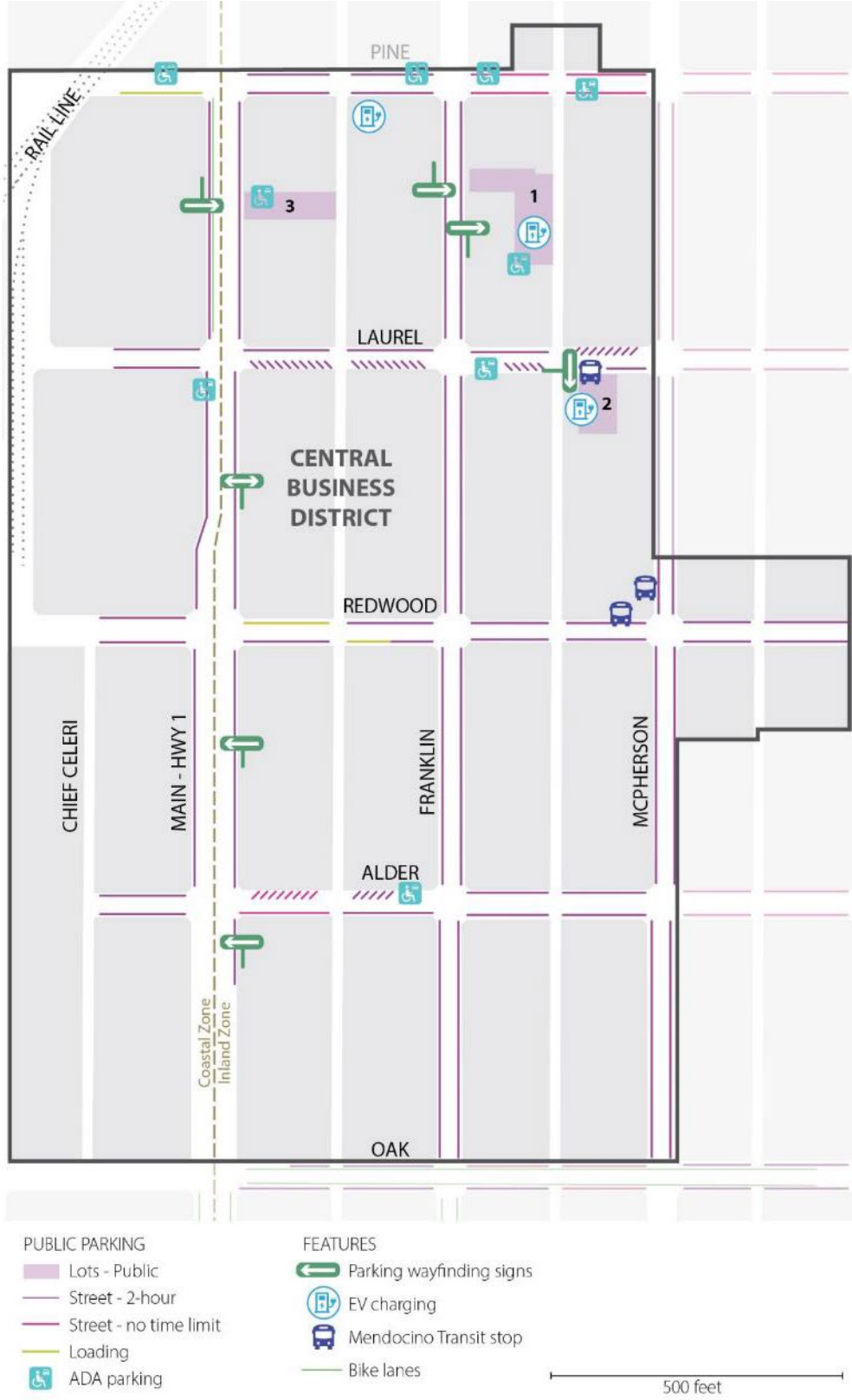
Purpose of the Study

The City of Fort Bragg launched this study to achieve several objectives. The first is to review the overall public and private parking system and make recommendations for management and operations improvements. Some of the topics addressed here include overall parking utilization rates, public parking supply and regulations, and parking requirements in the development code. Second, and of equal importance, is to contextualize the parking system within the City's broader goals for downtown vibrancy and expanding non-automobile ways of getting around. Topics here include seeking to resolve the future of the in-lieu parking fee option, alignment with alternative curb uses including mobile vending and outdoor dining, and crafting a parking system that better supports walking, bicycling, and transit accessibility.

Study Area

The Study Area for this project is the City's Central Business District land use zone, bounded by Pine Street to the north, McPherson Street to the east, Oak Street to the south, and Chief Celeri Drive to the west (with some deviations along Pine Street and McPherson Street) as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Downtown (Central Business District) Parking Strategy Study Area



Study Goals

This Study did not establish discrete goals for Fort Bragg's growth, urban form, or transportation options. Those higher-order objectives, such as for a greater blend of mixed-use developments downtown and for improving non-driving travel options, are established in the City's General Plan, Community Design Guidelines, and other plans and strategies. The Study aims to link parking strategies and their potential outcomes more explicitly to their support of the City's wider goals.

In many cases, the City's goals will be well served by modernized parking management. In a few cases though, there are tensions between some of the principles for parking management that the City has formalized through this project and the existing goals. Below are those principles, followed by a brief description of the alignment or tension between citywide goals and parking strategies.

Principles for Parking Management

The following principles were developed by the City and consultant project team to help define a foundational rationale for various strategy recommendations. Parking management is a field of practice that sometimes exposes inconsistencies in a community's goals or seemingly incompatible urban policy priorities. By focusing decisions and tradeoffs through these principles, Fort Bragg can establish and maintain a long-term focus on parking management and mobility that serves current and future needs.

People and places are the destination and appeal. Parking is just one of many ways to provide access. Parking should only be provided to give people access to their true destination, which may be businesses, homes, parks, or other attractions. There is no need to provide parking beyond what is sufficient to accommodate typical driving traffic. And over-building parking risks degrading the urban environment and encouraging unnecessary driving.

Empty parking is a wasted opportunity. Manage parking to make parking available for a broader range of users. This means that communities should seek the correct amount of parking and that many different users should be allowed to make use of the parking that exists. If parking in a city is consistently unused that is very inefficient, and the parking should be opened to more users or should be decommissioned and turned into a more productive use.

The land used for parking is very valuable. Land should be used to support downtown and community vitality. This principle builds off the previous principle to further emphasize that parking occupies lots of space, costs money to operate, and often doesn't directly generate revenue for cities. Underperforming parking may be better used for developments, bicycle lanes, street seats, and other productive and community-serving functions.

Build more parking only if the supply is truly congested. First, seek to increase functional supply through better parking management. Cities should pursue more efficient parking use by encouraging active transportation, sharing agreements, better enforcement, pricing, wayfinding, customer support, and other methods. These efforts can often yield impressive gains in parking use efficiency. Cities should only prioritize increasing the parking supply in the rare instance that severe parking congestion and public discontent remain even after taking steps to manage demand. And even then, cities need to be aware that providing more parking typically encourages more driving (at the expense of other ways of getting around), which can cause traffic congestion, safety hazards, and increased pollution.

Parking gets supplied for many reasons. Laws that require parking are often unnecessary and even harmful. Requirements to build parking mostly just place an unnecessary burden on development projects. When parking is oversupplied, it is often available for free, effectively subsidizing car ownership and use at the expense of other land uses and other, more sustainable modes of travel. Developers and designers can make decisions about how much parking to provide, if any, based on what they understand their tenants, employees, and occupants to want, and tolerate paying for. Parking degrades from quality experiences of places and makes it harder to get around by other modes of travel. Projects should not have to provide free parking just because of arbitrary minimums.

Parking should be managed granularly for different users. Different parking options, locations, and rules for parking help meet people's different needs. Increasing one-size-fits-all parking doesn't provide great parking choices. Two-hour spaces serve some users, but other people and businesses may benefit from 10-minute zones for food pickup. Some parking spaces might better serve users or serve more users if they are converted to bicycle racks, electric vehicle charging spaces, or ADA parking. It is best to match parking and curb uses to the more varied ways people want to move about.

Relationship to the Fort Bragg General Plan

This study seeks to develop strategies that align parking policy and management with Fort Bragg's broader overall goals, as defined in the General Plan. Many of the parking principles described above naturally support General Plan goals for a wider range of development types, increased mobility options, and the general upkeep and revitalization of downtown and the city where needed. However, there are several General Plan policies that imply an ongoing reliance, and possibly even growth in automobile primacy, that the City should reevaluate critically to judge if the goals and policies fit Fort Bragg's vision for an increasingly walkable downtown with increased sustainable transportation options.

Supportive Policies

First, we'll highlight General Plan goals and policies that are well aligned.

Goal Land Use LU-3 "Ensure that the Central Business District remains the historic, civic, cultural, and commercial core of the community."

LU-3.2 "Support mixed use development... in the CBD"

LU-3.3 "In the CBD...encourage residential uses, mixed residential, and commercial uses, and the preservation of historic structures"

LU-3.4 "Encourage infill development of vacant and underdeveloped land in the CBD..."

LU-3.6 "Encourage the adaptive re-use and more complete utilization of buildings in the CBD..."

This Land Use goal seeks to promote places for people, active uses, and economic vibrancy in the CBD, including new infill development and the regeneration of buildings that may be vacant or in disrepair. Overabundant

parking would not support these outcomes, and so this study and the City are seeking to find the appropriate supply of parking that supports necessary vehicle access without overburdening downtown with parking lots and vehicle congestion.

Policies in the General Plan Circulation and Community Development elements support creating strong places instead of vehicle speed and throughput at all costs.

C-5.1 “...higher priority on maintaining a sense of place...than on efficient traffic flow”

C-6.1.1 “...update...the parking in-lieu fee program”

CD-2.4.1 “Implement shared parking agreements wherever feasible”

Furthermore, Fort Bragg’s municipal code is a regulatory document that seeks to support the General Plan’s goals through aligned purposes statements. Section 18.10.010 of the code states the Purposes of the Inland Land Use and Development Code, including to “Minimize automobile congestion by promoting pedestrian-oriented development, safe and effective traffic circulation, and adequate off-street parking facilities”.

The purpose for pedestrian-oriented development is an excellent overarching objective. The purpose for safe and effective traffic circulation is also very sound, though the City should be cautious not to defer to increased roadway capacity and speeds as the default way of trying to achieve effective traffic circulation, as this could create unintended adverse impacts. Likewise, the City strives to be mindful of what constitutes adequate off-street parking; this study will describe ways that parking needs can be more efficiently met, without necessarily increasing the pure supply, and describe conditions that may trigger the acquisition of additional off-street parking.

Parking on E Laurel Street



Policies in Tension

There are several General Plan policies that present tensions with sound parking management. Four of these are listed below, with brief commentary.

C-1.1 “Balance the need to increase motor vehicle capacity with the need for complete streets that provide facilities for bicycle and pedestrian circulation and commercial viability”

The City should reevaluate if motor vehicle capacity truly needs to be increased. More efficient circulation, as well as increasing options for walking, bicycling, carpooling, transit, and other active uses, can boost mobility options without defaulting to expanding vehicle capacity.

C-6.1 “Continue to construct additional off-street parking...”

As this study will describe, there is no obvious current need for building more off-street parking. Through more efficient parking management, the parking supply in downtown appears sufficient to meet both immediate and longer-term parking needs.

C-6.1.5 “...incentives for employers and employees to park off-street...”

While ensuring convenient employee parking (as well as access by other modes) is a sound priority, there are not obvious tools available to incentivize or compel employees to park off-street. This is discussed later in the report under Consideration 2, which is about employee parking.

C-15.1.1 “Develop a City-wide Traffic Mitigation Fee”, and CD-2.4.2 “Consider establishing a parking assessment district...”

Over the past decade or more the City has sought to reduce fees and cost burdens on development. Such fees likely contradict that objective and given the lack of overall parking congestion and non-interest in imposing parking payment; an assessment district likely isn’t practical under current conditions.

Related Programs in Fort Bragg

Over the course of this study, the team explored and acknowledged several related policies and programs downtown and citywide that have a relationship to parking and mobility management. This study is not examining these topics in-depth, nor providing new recommendations in these areas. However, the City continues to execute actions in these areas and wishes for the parking study to be aligned wherever possible. The related policies and programs are summarized below.

Outdoor Dining in Parking Lots

As of February 2024, the City, via Planning Commission and City Council, was considering the extent to which it might adopt formal rules allowing some dining areas to be placed in off-street private parking locations. This parking study supports ongoing efforts to rethink the use of valuable land as business and gathering space instead of underutilized parking.

Outdoor dining tent in the Pub at North Coast Brewing parking lot



Mobile Vending

The City has been evaluating and granting certain mobile vending permits in downtown as of early 2023. These allow the use of on-street curb parking for food trucks during the day and evening. The mobile vendors must vacate the space overnight. This study considers mobile vending to be a positive commercial activity (assuming compliance with necessary regulations) and is consistent with the parking study's conclusions that the City and other parking providers should be encouraged to consider non-vehicle uses of valuable land currently used for only for automobile parking.

Electric Vehicle Charging

The City works with ChargePoint to provide electric vehicle charging in the City Hall and Laurel Street public parking lots. This arrangement works well, and the City can continue to evaluate the need for additional EV charging in public lots. Several downtown and city private businesses also have EV charging equipment available in their parking lots. The State of California has ambitious EV installation targets and regulations that both public and private parking owners need to comply with. This includes ensuring that a minimum percentage of off-street parking is EV charging equipped or ready. This study considered and does not recommend that Fort Bragg install EV charging equipment at public on-street parking spaces.

Solar Canopies over Parking Lots

The City of Fort Bragg and other regional agencies intend to gradually deploy on-site solar generation capacity at public facilities where it is practical to do so. For example, the Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District recently installed rooftop solar on the CV Starr Community Center in 2009, which is about half a mile southeast of downtown Fort Bragg. Redwood Coast Seniors also installed solar canopies over several rows of their parking lot. The date of this installation is unknown. The City may choose to consider rooftop, open field, and parking canopy solar installations. Solar canopies over parking lots are now a standard best practice in many climate regions, providing energy generation, shading, and stormwater management. In some instances, especially in places where tying a parking

A mobile vending food service trailer that often parks on N Franklin Street



ChargePoint electric vehicle charging equipment and parking stalls at the City Hall parking lot



Example of solar canopies over a parking lot (Fresno, CA)



lot to the electrical grid is complicated, solar canopies over parking can directly provide electric current to on-site battery systems and electric vehicle charging.

Recent State of California legislation provides for additional tax exemptions for solar equipment purchasing. The City may explore suitable solar installation based on a range of factors. Strictly considering locations in the Central Business District, the City would need to evaluate if the size of public parking lots (which are small by many standards) and the solar exposure of downtown (which is often covered in clouds or fog) provide viable installation options.

Temporary Car-Free Streets for Events

The City recently installed mounting points for removable bollards at several intersections in downtown. The City can now install the bollards to prevent vehicles from driving on some street segments, including N Franklin Street between E Pine Street and E Redwood Avenue and E Laurel Street between Highway 1 and N Franklin Street, during events such as the farmers market, parades, and holiday celebrations. The City most commonly installs the bollards on Wednesday afternoons to prevent vehicles from driving on N Franklin Street between E Laurel Street and E Pine Street during the year-round farmer's market. The City makes the other blocks car-free much less often.

The Wednesday farmer's market is one of the busier regular downtown events. It removes one block of street parking and much of the City Hall parking lot from service for several hours. Community members noted that parking can be harder to find during the farmer's market, but that they are typically able to still find a space within two blocks of the market. This study finds it unnecessary for the City to make significant changes to parking supply or enforcement simply to accommodate this moderate weekly surge of visitor parking. In fact, the appeal of the farmer's market being a car-free, walkable event that uses the street for local business activity instead of merely vehicle movement and storage is an indicator of the type of downtown not overwhelmed by cars that the Fort Bragg community supports.

Regional Transit

Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) operates several intra- and inter-city bus routes through Fort Bragg. MTA should continue to work with partners to expand and adjust public transportation services in the county as demand warrants. This parking study supports efforts to provide non-driving ways to travel and any

One block of N Franklin Street is made car-free for the year-round Wednesday farmer's market



Walla Walla, Washington, makes one downtown block a car-free dining plaza in the summer



improvements to parking management that can ease traffic congestion and provide curbside bus stop locations to make transit more successful.

Existing Conditions

A full Existing Conditions report is included in Appendix A, and existing conditions pertaining to the strategies are described in each Recommendation section that follows. Briefly, parking conditions in Fort Bragg's Central Business District are as follows:

- On-street public parking is free and is controlled with two-hour limits from 9am to 6pm on most CBD streets. The City does not conduct strict parking enforcement.
- The City operates three off-street public parking lots in the CBD. These do not have time limits and there are no posted restrictions on overnight parking.. Two of the lots provide electric vehicle charging for a fee using ChargePoint equipment.

Observations and public input suggest that on-street and off-street public parking is usually available near people's destination. Parking can be more congested during the Wednesday farmer's market and many summer weekends when tourist activity peaks.

Most downtown land uses are private businesses, with some government and civic uses, along with single-dwelling and a few multi-dwelling residential structures mixed in. Many private properties have their own parking lots. However, many businesses along Main Street, Laurel Street, Redwood Avenue, and Franklin Street are small storefronts that do not have dedicated parking areas. These businesses rely on public parking or people parking at other private lots and then walking to the business. Most private parking owners do not appear to strictly enforce their parking, and so this type of "walk off" behavior is common. In a non-congested and forgiving parking environment such as Fort Bragg's, it is often unnecessary to proactively manage or prevent such parking activity. Observations and public input suggest that private parking is rarely congested, and that visitors and patrons are usually able to find parking at their intended destination.

The Fort Bragg CBD also contains numerous curbside loading zones, as shown in Figure 1. Loading zones are the second most common stationary activity at the curb. The Public Works Department oversees establishing loading zones, and the Police Department is in charge of their enforcement. The City observed through this project that some loading zones are rarely used and that the time restrictions (often 24 hours a day) are unnecessarily

Mendocino Transit Authority provides bus connections around the county and as far south as Santa Rosa (image: MTA)



The Laurel Street public parking lot provides roughly 18 spaces, two of which have EV charging



restrictive. Through a separate process in the future, the City may choose to evaluate loading zone use and regulations and make adjustments to better serve current demands at the curb.

Summary of Project Process

The City of Fort Bragg secured a planning grant from the Mendocino Council of Government in 2022 to fund most of this parking study. In early 2023, the City launched a competitive request for proposals for consulting services and awarded the project to Walker Consultants in May 2023.

The study ramped up in the early summer of 2023 with the City and consultant team convening the project and beginning existing conditions analysis and initial public outreach. The consultants visited Fort Bragg in August 2023 to discuss strategy concepts with City staff members, do field work investigation and conduct community outreach, including launching an online survey, hosting a booth at the farmer's market to gather input, and conducting an in-person town hall meeting that anyone could attend and provide input through.

During fall 2023, the team analyzed community input results and began developing strategies for both near-term action and future consideration. It was at this point that the project team determined that while there were several key immediate strategies to implement (most notably the removal of parking minimums in the CBD), the City also needed documentation of parking and mobility strategies to consider in the future if certain parking congestion or transportation impediments emerged.

City staff members and Walker Consultants staff presented preliminary concepts to the Planning Commission on December 13, 2023, and received supportive guidance on the recommendations. The consultant then prepared a draft study report that was issued to the Planning Commission in February 2024 and was publicly reviewed during their February 28, 2024, meeting. At this meeting, Planning Commissioners requested further clarification of the steps involved in considering an outdoor dining parklet program, more context detail on how the City designates curbside loading zones, and documentation of an idea to survey downtown businesses about their employee headcount and parking behavior. All these points have been expanded in the March 12, 2024, version of this report. The Fort Bragg City Council is expected to consider this Study for adoption in April 2024.

Many downtown businesses, including on Hwy 1 and Laurel Street, offer no off-street parking





02 Recommendations for Immediate Action

2. Recommendations for Immediate Action

Action 1: Remove Parking Minimums and In-Lieu Fee in the CBD

Existing Conditions

- Development in the CBD is subject to both parking minimum and maximum quantity requirements depending on the use and other development factors.
- The City provides several methods for project developers to reduce parking requirements, including submitting a parking demand study or entering shared parking agreements. Developers also have the option to pay a fee to the City in-lieu of building new parking supply.
- The CBD includes several vacant storefronts.
- With the goal of promoting economic vibrancy in the CBD, the City has decided to waive the in-lieu fee (and, effectively by extension, the parking minimums) for change-of-use projects in the CBD every year since 2012.

Recommendation

- Remove parking minimums in the CBD for both new construction and change-of-use projects from the Inland and Coastal development code.
- Remove the in-lieu fee option from all code sections affecting the CBD, as it will no longer be relevant.
- Retain parking maximums per current rules in the Inland and Coastal development code.
- Revise the City's bicycle parking code requirements to include bicycle parking requirements based on the number of residential units or commercial building square footage, rather than requiring bicycle parking only as a percent share of vehicle parking.

Reasoning

The City has over a decade of history creating parking policy that acknowledges the burden of parking minimums on development project viability. The City created the in-lieu fee option in 2008 partly to provide developers an option to bypass the complexity and space requirements of providing parking on-site in favor of contributing fees to the City's in-lieu program, which could then use the funds for downtown-wide parking supply development or general mobility improvements per code chapters 17 and 18, section 36.080(C)3.b.

In reducing the in-lieu fee amount in 2011 and eliminating the fee entirely for change-of-use projects in the CBD in 2012, the City further acknowledged that parking requirements, even with the in-lieu fee option, could make desirable downtown development less likely. The City made the active choice to facilitate development and revitalization projects by reducing development costs and hurdles.

This recommendation to eliminate the parking minimums and associated in-lieu fee program is a logical next step in this progression. Eliminating the minimums does away with a barrier to development and will modernize the code to reflect the City's objectives for reducing the spatial and traffic impact of cars downtown and promoting the development of places for people including businesses, civic uses, and housing options.

This action allows developers to voluntarily provide on-site or off-site parking if they choose to. If a person developing a new construction project or change-of-use project feels that new vehicle parking supply should be provided as part of the project, they may do so up to the parking maximums that already exist and are listed in code chapters 17 and 18, sections 36.040, table 3-7. As always, an existing business, resident, or landowner may voluntarily provide new parking up to the maximum if they so choose.

Action Steps

- Through this Study process, the City will consider and possibly adopt resolutions to amend its municipal code to remove parking minimums and the in-lieu fee program in the CBD.
- Relatedly, the City will consider and possibly adopt resolutions to amend its municipal code to adjust bicycle parking requirements.
- In early 2024, the Fort Bragg Planning Commission and City Council will consider amendments to the necessary sections of the Coastal 17.36 Parking and Loading chapter and the Inland 18.36 Parking and Loading chapter.
- The City may wish to evaluate and adjust parking minimums in other zones outside the Central Business District in the future

Public parking wayfinding signs could be more visible in Fort Bragg (Bend, OR)



Action 2. Wayfinding Improvements to Public Off-Street Parking

Existing Conditions

The City operates three publicly available parking lots in and near downtown. Wayfinding and signage markings to these lots are often insufficient and the use permissions are unclear. Each public lot is described below with recommendations for signage improvements. A complete inventory of public parking wayfinding signs and deficiencies is provided in Appendix A Existing Conditions Report *Existing Parking Supply* section. The City would be the lead to install these signs. New signs on Highway 1 may require coordination with Caltrans.

Recommendations

This list is of the three existing public City lots. The City should consider adding more wayfinding signs, both directly at the parking lots and at key access points, such as turns from Highway 1, so that users can more easily find these locations.

Some existing parking wayfinding signs are outdated and no longer point to public parking



City Hall Lot: 422 N Franklin Street (north of City Hall)

- 39 parking spaces, including two accessible spaces with no time limit restrictions.
- Two electric vehicle charging spaces with four-hour time limits.
- Needed signs:
 - Directional signs on Pine in both directions to indicate public parking to the south down the alley.

Laurel Lot: 230 E Laurel Street (south of the bus stop on Laurel Street, between Franklin and McPherson Street)

- Approximately 19 spaces, including two EV charging stalls.
- Needed signs:
 - Signs indicating this parking appear sufficient, with a prominent sign on Laurel at the main entrance and several directional signs on Franklin and Main pointing users to this parking area.

Main Street Lot: (400 block of Main Street, (south of North Coast Brewing Co.)

- Approximately 19 spaces, including two ADA spaces.
- Needed signs:
 - Signs directly at the entrance to this lot along Main Street (note: this lot provides head-in angle parking facing eastbound so the driveway to the alley is an exit only)
 - Directional sign on northbound Main Street to indicate public parking to the east (right turn)

The City may wish to install parking signs specifically to point out EV charging (Astoria, OR)



Other parking area wayfinding signs

The City should also evaluate the placement and accuracy of other parking directional signs and update, relocate, or remove them as needed.

Reasoning

Better wayfinding to parking will make it easier for users to find off-street spaces (which allow longer stays than the two-hour on-street parking) without needing to circle or aimlessly drive through downtown trying to find the public lots. The nearness of all three public lots also makes it easy for visitors to park once in the lots and then walk from destination to destination, instead of driving just a block or two from point to point. Fort Bragg also recognizes that the quality of its urban form and buildings contributes to people finding downtown to be attractive and enjoyable to walk around.

Figure 2. Existing (white arrow) and Potential (green arrow) Parking Wayfinding Signs



Action 3. Public Bicycle Parking

Existing Conditions

The City has installed U-shaped staple racks in the sidewalk zone in several downtown locations, including the 300 block of N Franklin and the intersection of Laurel and Main.

The wave rack on the 100 block of E Laurel is frequently used but is a substandard design that does not provide secure locking options and is difficult to use for some larger electric and cargo bikes.

There is also one bicycle rack in the grass near the entrance to City Hall. It is a substandard design that is too close to the wall for some of the four spaces to be used, and it is placed in the grass, which can be muddy in the rainy season.

The City should install more bicycle parking on sidewalks and switch to U-shape staple racks



Recommendations

The City should install additional U-shape staple racks where space allows at intersections and mid-block. Many street segments along Main, Pine, Franklin, and Alder would be ideal locations, as they are the busiest business locations. Bicycle parking should be located to be convenient for bicycle riders to access and to not interfere with the through path of a sidewalk, business entrance, ADA access, or door swing zone of vehicle parking.

While staple-racks in the sidewalk are an excellent short-term bicycle parking option, the City may also want to consider long-term bicycle parking, such as bike lockers or a secure bicycle storage shed, potentially with charging available for e-bikes. Long-term bicycle parking can be especially appealing to downtown residents, employees, and bicycle tourists who are traveling up and down the coast. Bicycle lockers provide a secure place for people to lock not only their bicycles but also their luggage and equipment, such as helmets, camping gear, and other goods. Bicycle lockers or a shed would take up more space than staple racks, and so it may be more appropriate to locate longer-term storage areas in off-street parking lots, parks, and other locations outside the right-of-way.

Reasoning

Fort Bragg intends to promote greater bicycle use for local and long-distance trips. Bicycle riding can be a convenient way for people to make trips downtown and citywide, especially if bicycle routes are safe and abundant, and bicycle parking is easy to find. Just as people driving cars seek out parking very near their destination, people riding bikes want bicycle parking near their destinations. By making bicycle parking abundant and easy to find, the City encourages bicycle use and helps communicate that riding a bicycle is a valid and respected way of traveling. Long-term bicycle parking equipment provides a secure bike parking location for longer stay users and helps communicate that Fort Bragg welcomes bicycle tourists and recreational riders.

Action 4. Begin Considering an On-Street Parklet Dining Program

Existing Conditions

- The City currently has no program to permit the conversion of on-street parking spaces into dining and seating areas, commonly called “Parklets”.
- The City does allow mobile vending vehicles (MVV) and sidewalk vending (SV) through code section 10.20.150 Mobile Vending - Permit - Required. Several food trucks currently use MVV permits to occupy curbside parking space and sell food for limited hours of the day. The food trucks vacate the curb parking overnight and when they are not vending. Several businesses use SV permits for tables and outdoor dining in the sidewalk zone.
- In February or March 2024, the City Council is expected to adopt rules allowing the expansion of dining areas into private off-street parking for restaurants in the CBD without needing to replace the parking spaces that are taken out of service to create the food service area. This Parking Study does not address this specific code update, which the City initiated through other means. The same basic principle of reallocating parking spaces into commercial and dining uses, though, similarly applies to this strategy to allow the conversion of some on-street parking into parklets.

Recommendations

The City should consider a parklet program and, if initiated, adopt code updates to allow parklet uses of on-street curbside areas. This program could be limited to the CBD or could apply citywide.

Action Steps

The City would be the lead regulatory and review body responsible for initiating a parklet program and the associated code updates, permitting steps, and enforcement methods. Key steps would include:

- Evaluate interest in and capacity for a parklet program. These are preliminary steps that would help the City identify possible participants and define the framework of the program.
 - Continue to monitor on-street parking use to observe for locations where parklets would fit and be minimally disruptive to parking.
 - Connect with business owners, especially restaurants, to gauge their interest in launching parklet dining.
 - Evaluate the City’s capacity to be the review, approval, and enforcement authority to ensure parklets would be built properly and operated to established standards.
- Updating the municipal code to allow parklet uses.

Outdoor dining parklets provide seating areas in place of street parking (San Luis Obispo, CA)



- Establish application and approval criteria, which may include:
 - Application fees
 - Ongoing fees for the duration of a private parklet installation
 - Determining options for seasonal or year-round parklet installation
 - Design standards for the parklets
 - Safety and traffic protection standards
 - Conditions on the hours of operation of the parklet for private use
 - Rules about permitted equipment in the parklet, including lighting, heating, and combustion devices
 - Rules about vertical elements of the parklet and impacts on sightlines
 - Rules about the permitted location of parklet, often related to the quantity of allowed parklets, permitted or prohibited street locations, and proximity to intersections
- Numerous cities around California have established parklet programs that could serve as a model for Fort Bragg's implementation. Examples include Sacramento, Davis, Benicia, Healdsburg, San Luis Obispo, Santa Rosa, and others.
- Caltrans has a guidebook for parklet installation on state highways, which would include Highway 1 Main Street in Fort Bragg.



03 Recommendations for Ongoing Monitoring and Possible Future Changes

3. Recommendations for Ongoing Monitoring and Possible Future Changes

Consideration 1. Secure Additional City-Run Public Off-Street Parking

Existing Conditions

The City operates three public off-street parking lots inside or near the Central Business District (See Figure 3's numbered lots and the description of each in the previous *Wayfinding Improvements* topic). In total these three lots provide approximately 80 parking spaces, including several ADA spaces and several designated for electric vehicle charging only. City staff have observed regular usage of these lots but also have noted the lots rarely approach being full other than during the farmer's market and certain summer weekends.

Recommendation

- The City may wish to secure access to an additional off-street parking lot, either by purchasing or leasing an existing underused lot or by buying or leasing vacant land that could be built into parking.
- To be clear, the parking conditions in Fort Bragg as of 2024 do not, in Walker Consultants' judgment, warrant pursuing additional public parking. This strategy is described here for long-term consideration and execution if changing conditions indicate that new public parking supply is in Fort Bragg's interests.
- If pursued, the City has identified five possible locations that could be candidates for acquisition and transformation into public parking supply. This is not an exhaustive list of all the locations in Fort Bragg that may be suitable for public parking in the future; it is simply the list of locations identified for consideration as of early 2024. These locations are shown in Figure 3 and are described below:
 - Location A, 105 N McPherson Street: A paved 12-space lot that occupies an entire parcel and is currently chained off prohibiting use by any party. (As shown in the image above.)
 - Location B, 136 N Franklin Street: A paved 13-space lot that occupies an entire parcel, is owned by the Community First Credit Union, and is chained off prohibiting use by any party.
 - Location C, 320 N Main Street: A large, mostly vacant parcel owned by Mendocino Railway that contains some paved and unpaved parking that is informally used by the public. The existing parking could be moderately improved and made public, or the City could expand the parking surface across the dirt brownfield that covers most of the western portion of the property.

The Community First Credit Union parking lot at 105 N McPherson is mothballed and empty



- Location D, 225 N Main Street: A degrading paved lot behind several businesses that can hold perhaps 15 vehicles. The lot is currently marked with signs for Employee Use Only but it is unclear if the property owner actively enforces who uses the parking.
- Location E, 435 Franklin Street. Colloquially known as the “AT&T Lot”. A vacant downtown parcel near City Hall that is privately owned. It is currently dirt and grass and would need extensive construction improvements to make it into public parking. As of August 2023, the parcel was for sale.
- Location F, 127 N Franklin Street. Vacant, unimproved parcel owned by the Mendocino Coast Healthcare Foundation. As of January 2024, the property was not publicly listed for sale, but a representative of the Foundation has contacted the City expressing interest in making the parcel available for public parking use. It is unclear if this is an offer to lease or sell the land to the City, or if the Foundation would retain control.
- Location G, 310 N Franklin Street. Vacant, unimproved lot of approximately 4,600sf.

Reasoning

Additional off-street public parking supply may help ease parking congestion throughout the CBD. The additional parking could be targeted for downtown employees to use, or it could help shift the parking supply around downtown so that other sites and properties become more viable to develop.

Driving and parking will remain an important way to access downtown Fort Bragg. Additional public parking would expand convenience for people to come downtown to shop, dine, and recreate. This approach considers parking to be a public asset that the City helps provide to catalyze visitation and the use of other lands for business, residential, and civic development. Said differently, this is the City providing parking so that other private and public destinations don’t have to provide as much themselves but still benefit from people being able to drive and park downtown.

The City should consider this option only under the following conditions:

- Existing parking is regularly congested to the point that parking availability is imperiled.
- Other measures to distribute and reduce parking demand, such as wayfinding improvements, stronger time limit enforcement, pricing, and walking and bicycling, do not adequately reduce parking congestion.
- No other party, specifically private developers, has intentions to use these locations (or any other locations not named in this study) for development or private parking supply.
- The City is comfortable with the financial outlay and labor required to obtain the parking lot location (via purchase or lease), make improvements, execute maintenance, and provide for enforcement and security.
- New public parking replaces existing public parking that is repurposed for other uses.

Figure 3. Existing (numbers) and Potential (letters) Public Parking Areas



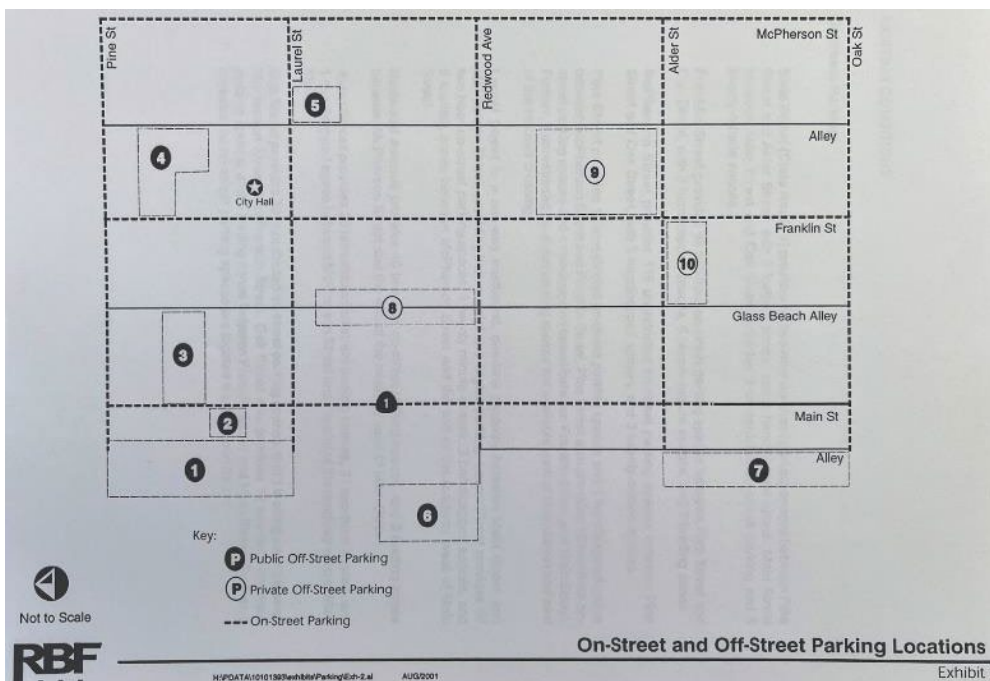
Action Steps

- The City would lead any program to secure access to an existing parking lot or build a new parking area. The City should act only if existing parking supply and updated management practices are insufficient to maintain adequate parking availability in downtown. As of 2024, the City does not see a need to deploy additional public parking but may consider it if future conditions warrant.
- The City may be able to use general funds, parking citation fees, paid parking revenue, or other dedicated revenue streams, such as bonds or a transportation fee, to purchase or lease land and make necessary improvements to turn it into usable public parking. If the City retains or reinstates an in-lieu fee, that program may generate fees that could be used to provide parking.
- The City will need to comply with all relevant code requirements for disabled parking and electric vehicle charging if they increase the supply of publicly available and managed parking.

Interesting Historical Note

- The Fort Bragg Central Business District Parking Study prepared by RBF Consulting in 2001 recommended constructing two new parking areas, one at 435 Franklin Street on the west side of Franklin between Pine and Laurel and a parking lot dedicated to RV use south of Pine and west of Main (it is unclear what property this refers to). Neither parking facility has been constructed.
- According to the same Study, as of 2001 the City operated several public off-street parking areas west of Main Street that are no longer under City control. These include locations 1, 2, 6, and 7 from the 2001 Study's Exhibit 2 (shown below). Locations 3, 4, and 5 are current City public parking as of early 2024.

Parking locations map from the 2001 Parking Study (image by RBF)



Consideration 2. Dedicated Off-Street Parking for Employees of Downtown Businesses

Existing Conditions

- Some community members said they believe downtown has a parking problem caused by employees of downtown businesses parking in on-street two-hour parking spaces for an entire day during their working shifts, making it difficult for customers to find street parking. This study includes strategies to try to differentiate parking options for short-term (customers) versus long-term users (employees / residents).
- This study did not perform a formal parking utilization count, nor a duration-of-stay count, so does not have absolute information on employee parking practices. Many of the larger downtown businesses have off-street parking lots, where many employees likely park. These include Purity Supermarket, Chase Bank, Community First Credit Union, Coast Hardware, City Hall, The Pub at North Coast Brewing, North Coast Brewing, Skunk Train, Piaci Pizza, and others.

Strategies to Consider

- Consideration 1, for the City to consider obtaining an additional off-street public parking lot, could partially alleviate long-term employee parking concerns if employees can be encouraged to use the lot.
- The City and downtown businesses should investigate if long-term on-street parking by employees is truly a detrimental issue. Given the non-strict parking enforcement approach of the City, it is plausible that people occupy on-street two-hour spaces for an entire day, but the extent of the issue isn't known. If the City begins to enforce existing regulations more strictly, it may alleviate this issue to the extent it exists, but all should be aware that customers may also get caught up in parking violations and citations.
- Because the prevalence of employee on-street parking is unknown, as are the impacts to on-street parking availability for other users, the severity of this issue isn't well understood. The City may wish to launch a downtown-wide survey of businesses and employees to seek information about hours of operation, employee headcount, commute behavior, and typical parking patterns. This may provide the City with insights about the extent, or lack thereof, of an issue and the need for formal employee parking.
- As discussed regarding removing parking minimums, property owners are still permitted to voluntarily construct parking. A business or group of businesses may choose to pool resources to obtain an existing parking lot or construct a new parking lot to serve their employees and/or customers. This puts the financial and development responsibility on the private party. Possible employee parking locations include but are not limited to, locations A-G identified in Figure 3, which were also identified as possible City-run public parking locations.
- The City and downtown businesses may wish to launch an education and awareness campaign intended to encourage employees to use off-street parking. The campaign could include email blasts, flyers in the workplaces, informational brochures placed on people's car windshields, information on the City website, social media posts, and face-to-face discussions at workplaces and community events such as the farmer's market. The campaign should emphasize the benefits of using off-street parking, including less time spent searching for street parking, potential security benefits, and the positive impacts to business access from leaving street parking available for customers.

Consideration 3. Monitoring and Adjustments to On-Street Public Parking Management

Existing Conditions

- Most local streets and Highway 1 in the Fort Bragg Central Business District provide on-street parking. Most of the street parking is parallel parking, except for one and a half blocks on the south side of Laurel and one block on the north side of Alder.
- Street parking does not require payment. Most of the street parking on the central streets of the CBD has two-hour time limits from 9 am to 6 pm and does not allow parking from 4 am to 6 am. Most of the street parking on the outer streets of the CBD has no time limit (but is subject to the City's rule that no vehicle may occupy on-street parking at the curb for longer than 72 hours).
- This Study did not conduct formal parking utilization counts, but City staff and the consultant have observed that street parking is typically not fully occupied and that users can consistently find an available space at or near their intended destination.
- The City, through the Police Department, does not prioritize strict or regular parking enforcement. The City dedicates less than one full-time equivalent staff member to parking enforcement, usually to focus on obvious time limit infractions, double-parking, ADA parking enforcement, and other outlier behavior. The City does not prioritize strict monitoring or enforcement of the two-hour limits; this is currently acceptable as the downtown parking situation is not regularly congested and there are few complaints of significant time limit violations.
- Observations and City staff input describe that several blocks of parking, typically Laurel between Main and Franklin and Franklin between Pine and Redwood, do sometimes fill with vehicles but that spaces are usually available on the next block. Downtown parking is typically most highly utilized during the Wednesday afternoon farmer's market, some summer weekends, and monthly First Friday evening events, but even then, parking is usually available within two blocks during these peak events.
- Community members who participated in the online survey, farmer's market tabling event, or the multiple workshops broadly stated that while parking is occasionally nearly full on specific blocks, parking is almost always readily available across downtown.

Strategy Options and Considerations

These recommendations and considerations comprise a sequence, in which each step would be pursued only if the outcomes of the preceding step were to warrant it. This will help the City of Fort Bragg establish more durable parking management practices and institute changes as needed and only incrementally. As discussed, the parking systems in Fort Bragg do not need a major overhaul. These recommendations are a basic maintenance and fitness plan to keep operations in good working order.

Step 1. Monitoring

Monitoring includes both empirical data collection and user sentiment observations. Empirical data includes parking utilization counts and parking violation data. User sentiment observations can mimic many of the questions asked through the community survey this study conducted in the summer of 2023 about perceived

parking availability, parking distances from destinations, and questions about attitudes towards non-driving travel options such as walking, bicycling, and transit.

Empirical data - parking utilization

The City may wish to conduct occasional parking utilization counts, especially of Laurel, Redwood, and Alder from their western ends to McPherson, and Main and Franklin from Laurel to Alder. These were observed to be the most highly utilized street parking areas. The City can also count utilization rates of the several public City-operated off-street parking lots in the CBD. The City can begin with “moment in time” counts, where it counts the number of parked vehicles at a single moment, say 11AM or 5PM, and divides the number by the supply of spaces.

If certain areas consistently exceed 85% utilization, it can indicate problematic parking congestion that may warrant stronger regulations and enforcement (described in Step 2). Conversely, if some parking areas have regularly low utilization, they could be promoted with more wayfinding information to direct users to park there instead of the busier locations, or they could be suitable locations for repurposing for mobile vending, outdoor dining, bicycle parking, bicycle lanes, sidewalk curb extensions, stormwater facilities, or other uses.

Empirical data - parking duration

A further step beyond basic utilization counts is to monitor parked vehicle duration. This can help the City understand parking behavior compared to the regulations, which are most commonly two-hour limits in the CBD. Purely as a data collection exercise, not for enforcement, the City can monitor a small stretch of road - Laurel between Main and McPherson would be a good test case - to track how many vehicles stay parked beyond two hours. If it is a large number, the City may wish to increase enforcement of the time limits.

Conversely, the City may find a significant share of vehicles that park for only a few minutes at a time. This is increasingly common in many downtowns as people pick up and drop off passengers, run short errands, grab takeout food, or even have appointments that only require half an hour. The City could convert some two-hour parking into one-hour, 15-minute, or other shorter-term parking to better match these quick turnover parking users.

Empirical data - parking violations

The City’s Police Department and Community Development Department can further share information about documented parking violations (regardless of whether violations are issued citations or simply observed by enforcement staff). If improper parking behavior becomes more common in certain locations, it could indicate a need to improve regulatory signage, change regulations to accommodate evolving user behavior, or increase enforcement strictness.

Sentiment data - community responses

Parking and mobility are as much about people’s experiences as about pure numbers and facts. The fact of street parking congestion only being regularly observed on a few blocks (Laurel between Main and McPherson; Franklin between Laurel and Redwood) with abundant available parking just a block away can still be concerning to a person hoping to find parking directly in front of their intended destination in the business core. Parking in Fort Bragg is a downtown-wide asset that is experienced very locally parking space by parking space.

Community sentiment data helps describe peoples' attitudes towards different travel options, needs for parking, and approval or dislike of parking as it exists today. This data can help the City decide where problems and opportunities truly exist and whether parking management needs a major overhaul or simply a communications adjustment.

Moreover, this information can help the City decide what parking conditions are "typical" and should be the focus of its management efforts. While some community members expressed that parking downtown during the farmer's market or a summer weekend is crazy or jammed, most survey respondents said they typically park less than one block or one to two blocks away from their destination. Occasional parking congestion may be temporarily inconvenient for some people, but it is the edge case for use and hasn't been shown to be detrimental. The City intends to manage parking for typical conditions. User sentiment information can help the City understand if occasional parking friction is becoming a consistent problem and adjust accordingly.

The City of Fort Bragg may undertake a complete parking study only every decade or so. It will be sure to collect extensive community input about parking and mobility during those processes. But there are other, more regular ways the City can hear from community members about parking and mobility topics. This could include citywide surveys about public services every few years; public testimony at the Planning Commission and City Council; ongoing interviews with stakeholders, such as business owners, downtown residents, developers, hotels, and schools; and targeted outreach when specific parking policy changes are being evaluated.

Step 2. Enforcement and Regulatory Changes

If any of the monitoring from the previous step indicated concerning parking behavior, frequent violations, or declining user approval of the parking system, the City may wish to consider enforcement and regulatory changes. These changes should be implemented not as punishment but instead to improve parking compliance, ensure better parking availability, and bring more consistency to the typical person's experience of finding and using parking.

Enforcement

Parking enforcement takes two forms. The first is to raise general awareness in the community of parking options and regulations. People have a much more positive experience with parking when they know the options and rules when they begin their trip instead of learning the rules only when they arrive at a possible parking space. The City can use its existing communication channels, such as the City Manager's email messages, social media, newspaper postings, and the like, to occasionally remind people of the on-street and off-street parking options that are either publicly or privately supplied and the rules such as time limits that may apply. Both downtown businesses and outlying establishments such as the hotels along Highway 1 can be ideal partners to help broadcast parking information to their clientele and staff.

Increased enforcement is one parking management option for future consideration



The second phase of enforcement is on-site at the parking locations. This includes ensuring the rules are clearly posted and easy to interpret, followed by measured increases in warnings and citations. Fort Bragg does not have and is unlikely to launch a detailed tracking system of license plates and vehicles. This makes it impractical to issue a formal warning for a first offense followed by a formal citation. Instead, the City could consider a targeted enforcement boost during, say, weekends and farmer's markets in the summer, preceded by an education campaign in the late spring with a message, such as:

"Welcome to downtown Fort Bragg! We know it gets busy here in the summer and we want to make it convenient and predictable for people to come downtown on foot, by bicycle, car, and any other way of getting around. If you are driving and parking, please know about the public parking lots at [LOCATION] and [LOCATION]. If you park on-street in a space with a two-hour time limit, please keep to the limit. This summer we will be issuing warnings and citations as needed to keep people to the time limit. You'll have enough time to park to enjoy downtown, and then we please ask you to move along after two hours so that someone else may use that parking space and enjoy downtown after you do."

Parking Regulations

Fort Bragg may have reasons to change or relocate certain parking regulations. This could include adding time limits to the off-street public parking; expanding time limits to on-street parking areas currently without them, such as parts of Pine and Oak in the CBD; and changing on-street parking time limits to create additional loading zones or short-term (perhaps 15- or 30-minute) street parking spaces. Fort Bragg already has several curbs marked for "No Parking Loading Zone" but with no other signs displaying time limits or hours of the day that the regulation applies. While not indicated by signs, City code section 10.22.020 dictates that loading zones are effective from 7:00 am to 6:00pm any day other than Sundays and holidays, and that passenger loading is valid for three minutes and commercial loading valid for 20 minutes. More nuanced parking regulations may require both additional education, so that users become aware of these options, and stricter enforcement, to ensure people comply with the new rules.

In large part, people operate in good faith and will self-regulate their parking behavior, but a slightly stronger hand with enforcement should remain an option for nudging people toward compliance. Stronger regulations and enforcement are often negatively seen as a "stick", but proper communication about parking rules can help people understand that these changes are made with the intent of making parking more available, predictable to use, and better matched with people's nuanced parking needs.

An example sign displaying short-term loading regulations (Seattle, WA)



Action Steps to Consider

- Establish a regular parking utilization and duration counting practice.
- Track parking violation behavior over the long term to monitor for trends, locations with high violation rates, and times of the year with increased violations.

- Conduct occasional community-wide outreach about parking, mobility, and civic topics. Many cities will issue a citywide survey every two years to ask about public services, community priorities, and other civic topics. The City could also partner with hotels and other hospitality businesses to get input from tourists and visitors, who make up a significant share of people coming downtown, especially in the summer.
- Increase parking enforcement in select locations and times of the year as needed to help promote compliance. Enforcement should focus on education and warnings first before considering much stricter citations and tickets.

Consideration 4. Downtown and Highway 1 Circulator Shuttle

Existing Conditions

- The Mendocino Transit Authority operates two bus routes with service to downtown, the 5 - BraggAbout and the 65 - CC Rider. Both begin north of downtown on Elm Street and follow a winding route through downtown and neighborhoods to the east and south, past Adventist Health Hospital, and across the harbor to the Boatyard and Mendocino College. Route 65 continues inland to Willits and beyond as far as Santa Rosa. Combined, the two routes run approximately twelve round trips per day.
- Ridership is reported to be low, and some community comments noted that the buses are neither frequent nor direct enough to be useful for certain trip types. With only about hourly frequency, users need to deliberately plan their bus journeys in advance.

Strategy Options and Considerations

Consider a partnership between the City of Fort Bragg, Visit Mendocino County, Mendocino Transit Authority, and potentially supporting businesses to launch a local circulator shuttle during the heavily-touristed summer season. It could be ideal to begin a pilot program on Fridays through Sundays from June through September. Fort Bragg may be able to use the Holiday Trolley bus that Ukiah operated between Thanksgiving and Christmas. While a route and its stop locations would need further study, the program team should look at connecting Pomo Bluffs, Noyo Harbor, Noyo Headlands, downtown Fort Bragg, Glass Beach, Sunset Cove, MacKerricher State Park, and popular business and hotel areas within those bounds.

Launching a shuttle program would require further study of routing, funding, operations responsibilities, insurance, promotion, and other factors. Local businesses and hotels may be willing to contribute to an operations fund via sponsorship and/or assurances that the trolley shuttle will stop at their location.

A trolley links downtown Monmouth and Independence, Oregon (image: mitrolley.org)



Reasoning

A shuttle circulator with regular trip frequency could help alleviate some summer season traffic by providing an alternative way for visitors and tourists to use the public shuttle and walking instead of a personal vehicle for their trips to downtown and other primary tourist destinations. Several community members noted that a shuttle may help reduce incidents of driving under the influence. In addition to being a public transportation offering, the trolley itself is a fun, mirthsome vehicle that could be novel to ride and help to promote Fort Bragg as a welcoming, accessible destination.