

5 Access and Parking Analysis

A parking supply shortage and the limited availability of parking spaces have long been considered issues in Coolidge Corner, yet these concerns appear to be anecdotal, with few detailed and in-depth parking studies having been undertaken. Of those studies undertaken, the focus tends to have been on the demand for parking rather than a more detailed study of the parking supply and parking utilization rates.

A 1999 Brookline Business Parking Survey stopped short of making recommendations regarding the supply and demand for parking within commercial areas. The survey did indicate that the business community believed there was a need for additional parking as well as better parking space management, especially in terms of the employee sticker program and the duration of parking meters. The "State of Brookline Businesses 2002" also referred to inadequate parking supply as affecting the continued viability of commercial areas such as Coolidge Corner, while the shortage of commercial parking areas has also been documented in the 2001 Commercial Areas Parking Study, which found the municipal parking lots to be well used with limited space availability.

An employee parking survey was conducted as recently as December 2006 by the Coolidge Corner Merchants Association in cooperation with the Coolidge Corner Hub. Responses to the survey were received from 111 companies, representing a total of 1,248 employees, of which seven 744 were found to arrive to work by car. Only 17 of these car trips were shared by fellow employees, meaning seven 727 employees required parking in the area at various times of the day and week. The survey also found that 77 of the employees used privately owned parking facilities, while a further 41 employees used the Town's Commercial Permit Parking Program. Employees also indicated that they frequently used residential streets in the Coolidge Corner area for parking, as well as the 10 hour meters located on Beacon Street.

5.1 Parking and the Comprehensive Plan

The Town's Comprehensive Plan refers to the need to explore opportunities to improve parking conditions in existing commercial areas and to examine options for expanding parking in Coolidge Corner. The Plan states, "The shortage of commercial area parking, especially in Coolidge Corner, has been identified in numerous studies as a barrier to enhancing the vitality of Brookline's commercial areas (Page 136)."

Within the Comprehensive Plan a number of strategies have been suggested as to how the accessibility and availability of parking within commercial areas such as Coolidge Corner need to be improved. Establishing a Parking District in Coolidge Corner is one such strategy. "Parking Districts would be zoning overlays in primarily commercial districts in which required parking could be reduced or waived in exchange for payment-in-lieu-of parking provision. Payments would be placed in a fund and used to fund parking improvements. In order for such a Parking District to work, a viable location and plan for such parking improvements must already be in place (Page 139)." Other strategies put forth in the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Adjust parking resources and policies in commercial areas to support both business and residential needs.
- Review parking standards for commercial areas to evaluate possible changes for mixed-use buildings, shared parking arrangements, and transit-oriented development.
- Seek opportunities for additional off-street parking and shared parking, primarily in Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village/Route Nine, and Washington Square.

- Design and implement a consistent town-wide signage program for parking in conjunction with streetscape improvements.
- Continue providing public parking spaces for car-share companies (such as Zipcar) and encourage the same in private parking lots.
- As part of district and neighborhood plans, evaluate the need for and seek appropriate opportunities for additional off-street parking and shared parking in Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village/Route Nine, Washington Square, and Chestnut Hill. (Page 37, 38 & 131)

Although increasing and/or relocating the parking supply within Coolidge Corner is referenced within the Comprehensive Plan, the Plan also points out that the potential impacts of additional parking must also be explored, especially as to how parking patterns might impact residential neighborhoods (Page 137).

5.2 Parking Space Inventory and Survey

An inventory of all metered on-street and off-street parking spaces in the Coolidge Corner District was undertaken, as was a survey of parking occupancy levels for all these metered spaces. Park Street and Naples Road were also inventoried for parking demand, with these two streets essentially serving as a sample of un-metered residential streets close to the heart of the District. All of this inventory and survey work was undertaken between the beginning of September 2006 and the beginning of January 2007. In addition, for the Centre Street East lot, which was deemed to require a greater level of study, a license plate survey was also undertaken over the period of a day.

On-Street Metered Parking

A parking occupancy survey of all on-street metered parking spaces in the District was undertaken on eight different days, with different times of the day selected. Thursday, Friday and Saturday were the days when the survey work was primarily undertaken, with the assumption being that these were the days when the demand for on-street parking would be the greatest. For ease of use, all of the data collected has been broken down into a series of graphs and figures to more clearly represent the findings.

On-Street Metered Parking - Harvard Street

The average percentage of occupied on-street parking spaces within the District as one travels north to south along Harvard Street (approximately Verndale Street to School Street) was calculated (Figure 18). As would be expected, the closer to the intersection of Beacon Street, the greater the average occupancy rate of on-street parking spaces. For that section of Harvard Street between Babcock Street and Marion Street, average occupancy levels were consistently above 90%.

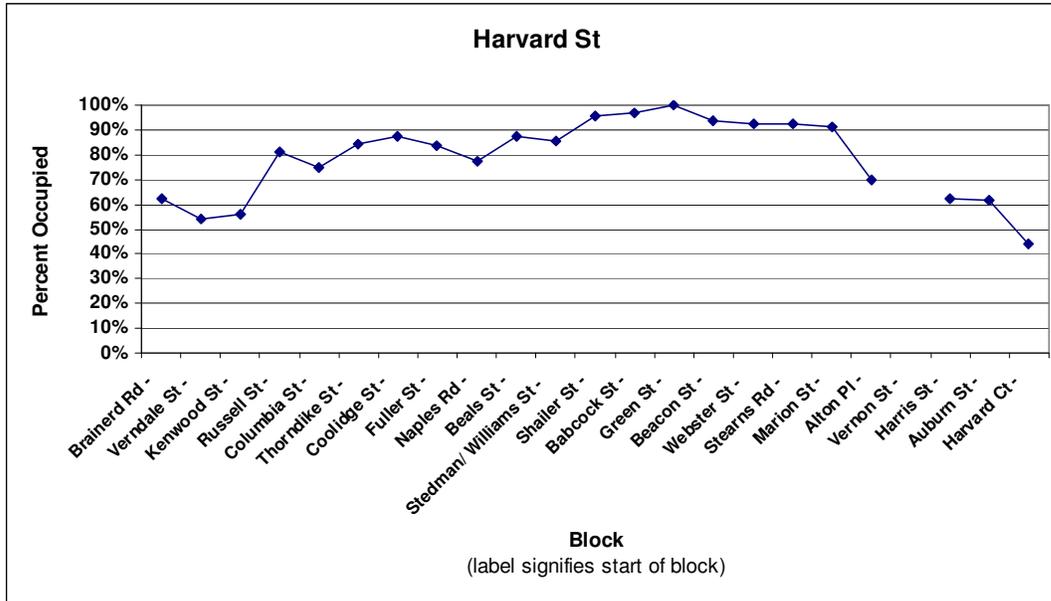


Figure 18 – Harvard Street - Average Percentage of Occupied Metered Spaces

On-Street Metered Parking - Beacon Street

A similar scenario to Harvard Street plays out along Beacon Street. The average percentage of occupied metered on-street parking spaces within the District as one travels west to east along Beacon Street (approximately Lancaster Terrace/Fairbanks Street to Powell Street/Marshall Street) was calculated (Figure 19). Again, the closer to the intersection of Harvard Street and the core of the District, the greater the average occupancy rate of the on-street parking spaces. For that section of Beacon Street between Marion Street and Pleasant Street, average occupancy levels were above 90%.

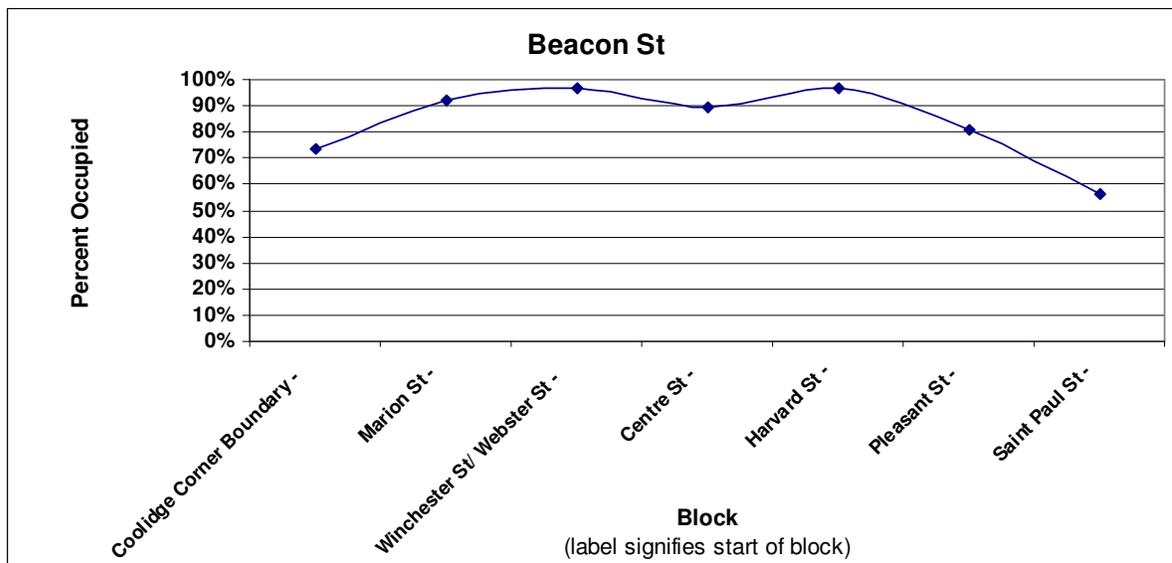


Figure 19 – Beacon Street – Average Percentage of Occupied Metered Spaces

Metered Street Parking

In addition to Harvard Street and Beacon Street there are a significant number of other streets within the District which also have metered parking. Each of these streets with metered parking were also surveyed to determine parking space occupancy rates (Figure 20). As can be seen, average occupancy rates were consistently high, ranging from seventy three percent (73%) on Pleasant Street to ninety six percent (96%) on Longwood Avenue.

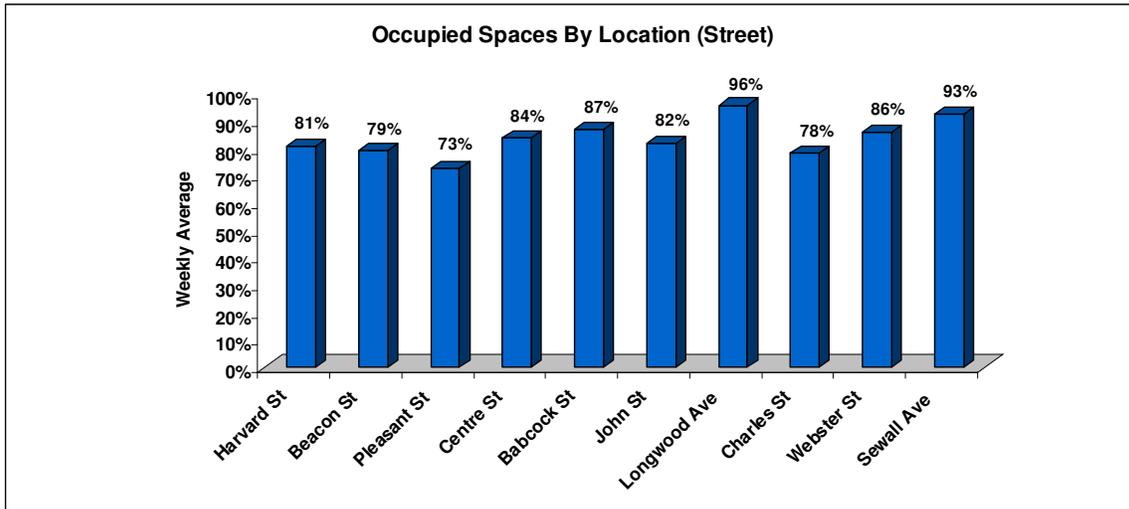


Figure 20– Average Occupancy of On-Street Spaces by Street

To further illustrate the high levels of on-street parking experienced within the District, the average occupancy of metered on-street spaces for each of the days that counts were taken in the District were calculated (Figure 21). As would be expected occupancy rates are consistently high, ranging from seventy three (73%) to eighty five (85%). It should be noted however that the seventy three (73%) occupancy rate for the second Saturday of the survey was collected on an extremely wet and windy day. This may explain why at 73% the parking occupancy levels are lower than would otherwise be expected for a Saturday.

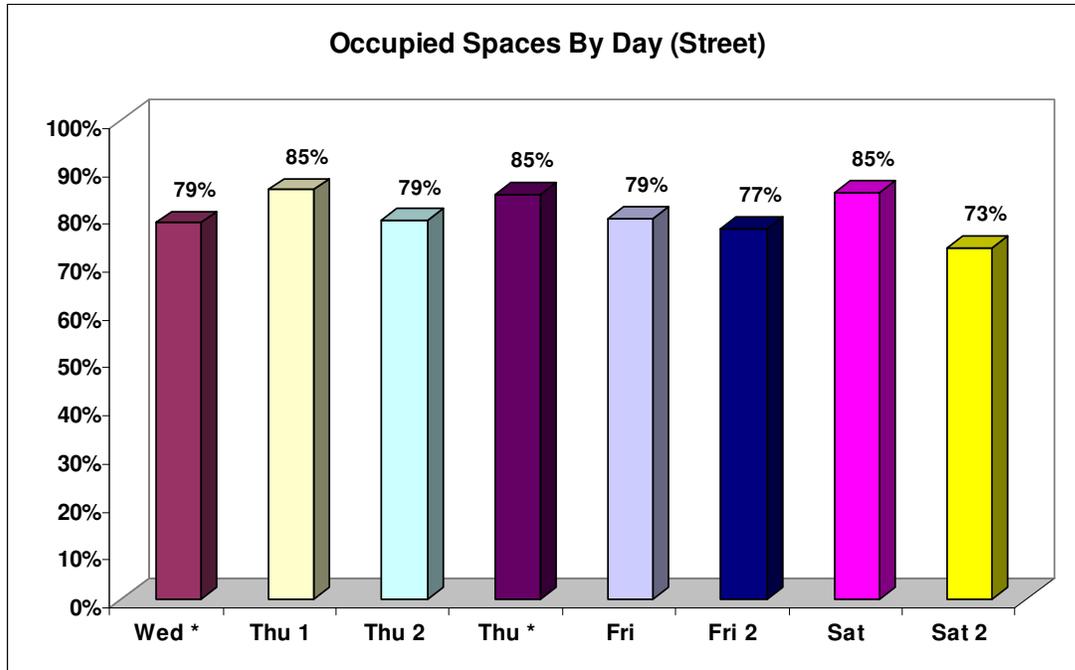


Figure 21 – Average Occupancy of On-Street Spaces by Day

Municipal Parking Lots

Similar to the data collected for metered on-street parking spaces, the data collected for occupancy levels within the municipal parking lots has also been broken down into a series of graphs and figures for ease of use. Surveying for the occupancy rates of the municipal off-street parking facilities was also undertaken on different days at different times, though the tendency again was to do most of the survey work on either a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday, the days assumed to be busiest and with the greatest occupancy rates.

The average occupancy based on the occupancy counts that were taken for each of the municipal lots was calculated (Figure 22). A few of the overall percentages shown in Figure 22 appear low, such as for the Centre Street West lot and the John Street lot. However, the Centre Street West lot is used exclusively for commercial parking and varies dramatically by time of day and shift schedules, while with the John Street lot, which only has 14 spaces, as little as three or four more vehicles using this lot would result in a significant increase in the overall occupancy percentage.

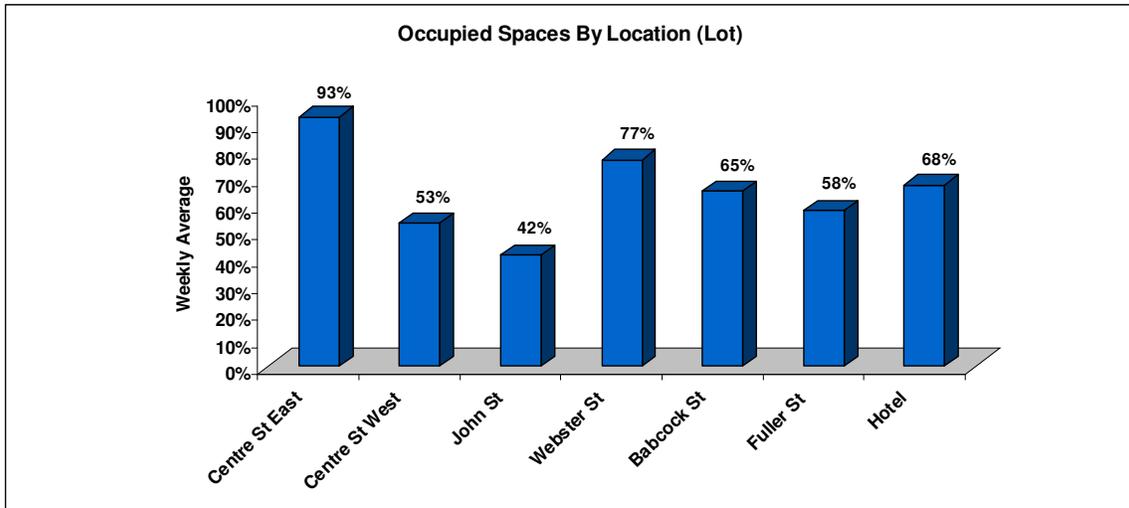


Figure 22 – Average Occupancy Within Municipal Lots

To further illustrate the high levels of parking occupancy experienced within all the municipal lots, the average occupancy for each of the days that counts were taken in the District were calculated (Figure 23). Occupancy rates are generally high, ranging from fifty three percent (53%) to ninety percent (90%). Again, it should be noted that the occupancy rate data for the second Saturday of the survey were collected on an extremely wet and windy day. This may explain why, at 72%, the parking occupancy levels are lower than would otherwise be expected for a Saturday.

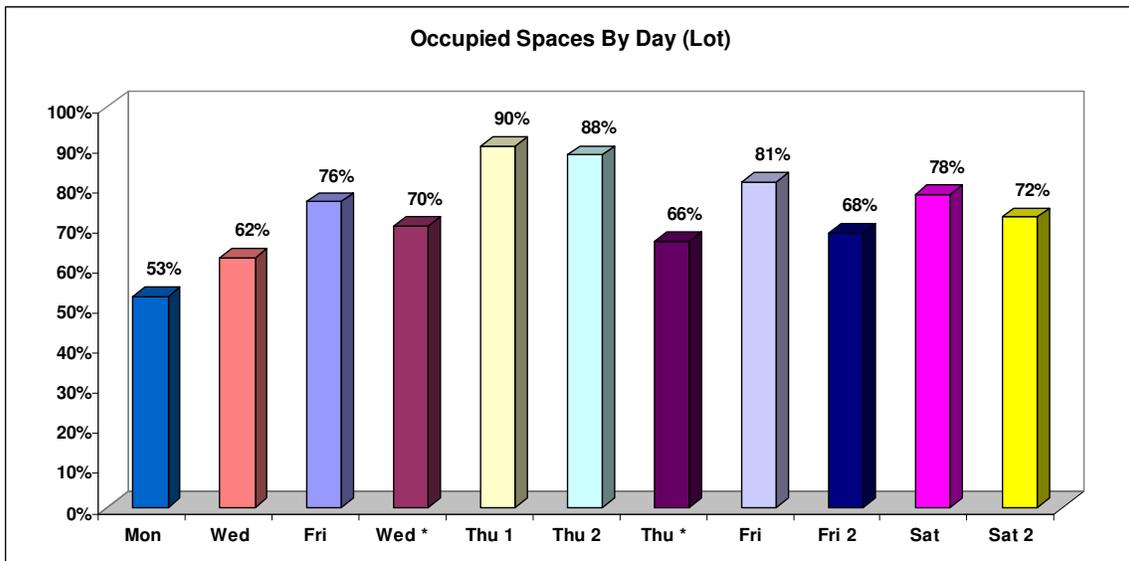


Figure 23 – Average Occupancy Within Municipal Lots by Day

Metered Parking

Combining both on-street and off-street parking occupancy levels for those days when both were surveyed shows average parking occupancy levels within the heart of the Coolidge Corner District to be well over 70% (Figure 24).

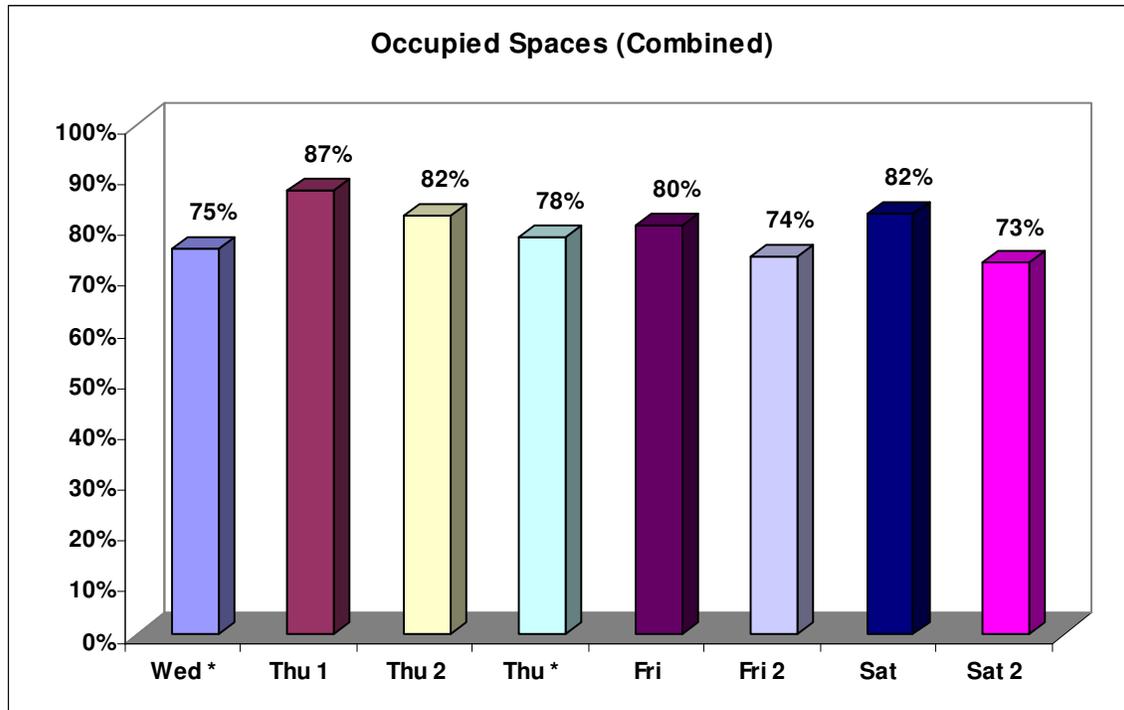


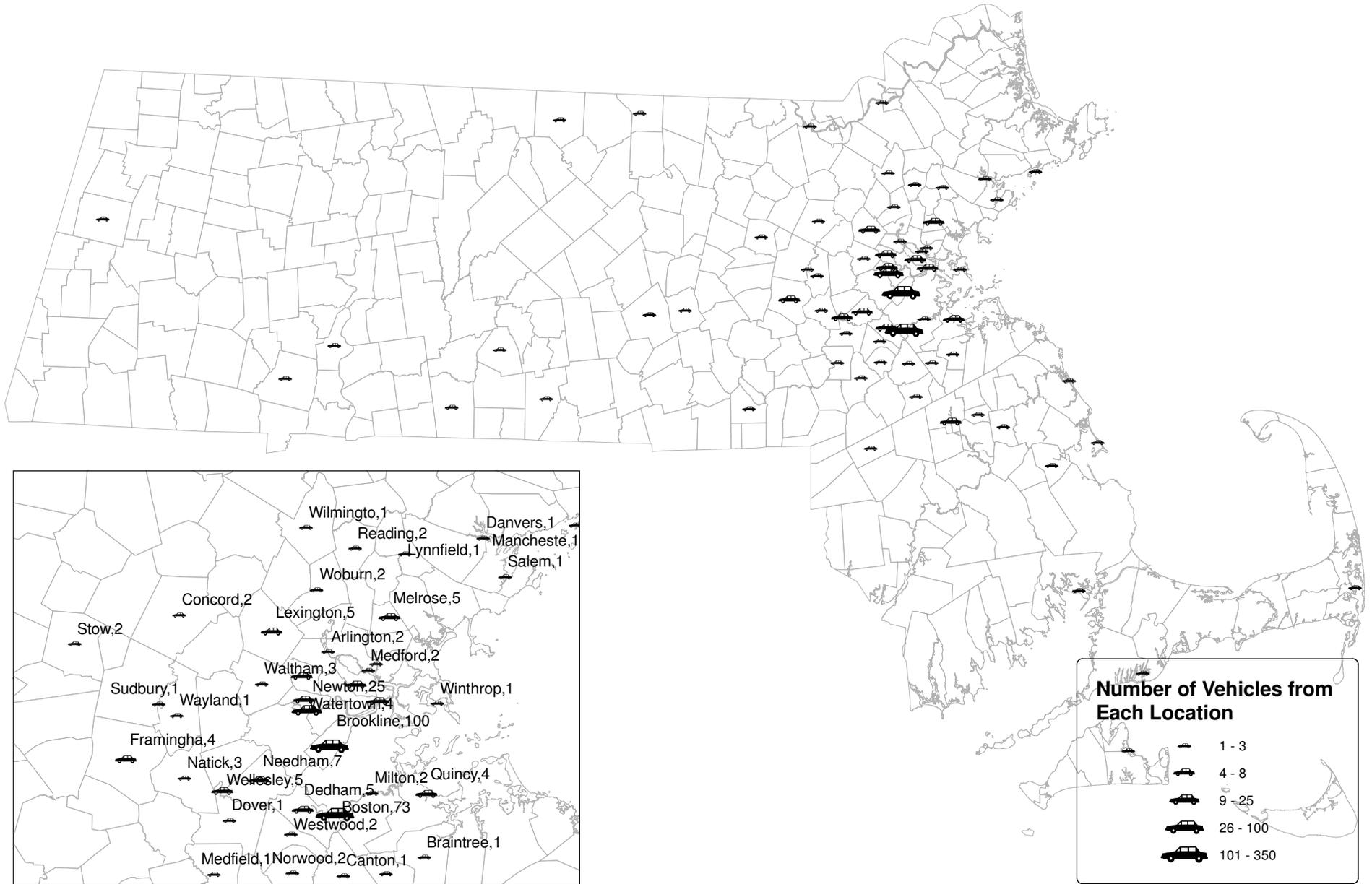
Figure 24 – Average of On-Street and Off-Street Parking Occupancy Levels

Centre Street East Lot

An additional level of review was performed for the Centre Street East lot. The Centre Street East municipal parking lot is the largest and busiest lot within the District. This parking lot, including the out cove to the rear of Walgreens, has 143 parking spaces. The lot is a three hour lot – vehicles cannot occupy a metered space for longer than three hours. In addition to the manual counts that were undertaken for this lot, a license plate survey was undertaken on Thursday, December 7, 2006.

The license plates collected during the survey of the Centre Street East Lot were geo-coded to find the vehicles place of origin. Data was limited to vehicles originating in Massachusetts state borders. Vehicles originated from the far reaches of the state including Cape Cod and the far West. Most vehicles, however, originated in either Brookline or Boston (Figure 25).

A parking utilization study was also performed at the Center Street East lot on Thursday, December 7, 2006 from 11 am until 7 pm. Every hour, on the hour, the license plate of each vehicle was recorded as well as the space that the vehicle was parked in. The purpose of the survey was to identify parking turnover rates. Throughout the eight hour survey period, a total of only 79 spaces were available on the hour. The largest number of spaces was available at 6 pm, seventeen 17 spaces (Figure 26).



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ORIGIN OF PARKERS IN THE
CENTRE STREET EAST LOT

Figure 25

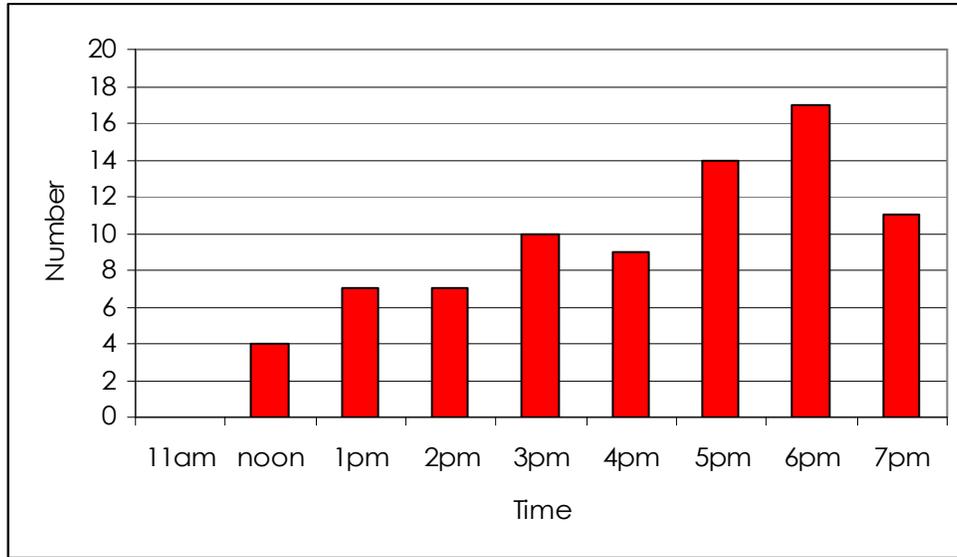


Figure 26 - Number of Parking Spaces Available - Center Street East Parking Lot - Thursday, December 7, 2006

During the day, the average occupancy in the parking lot was 94 percent; at 11 am, the parking lot was completely full (Figure 27).

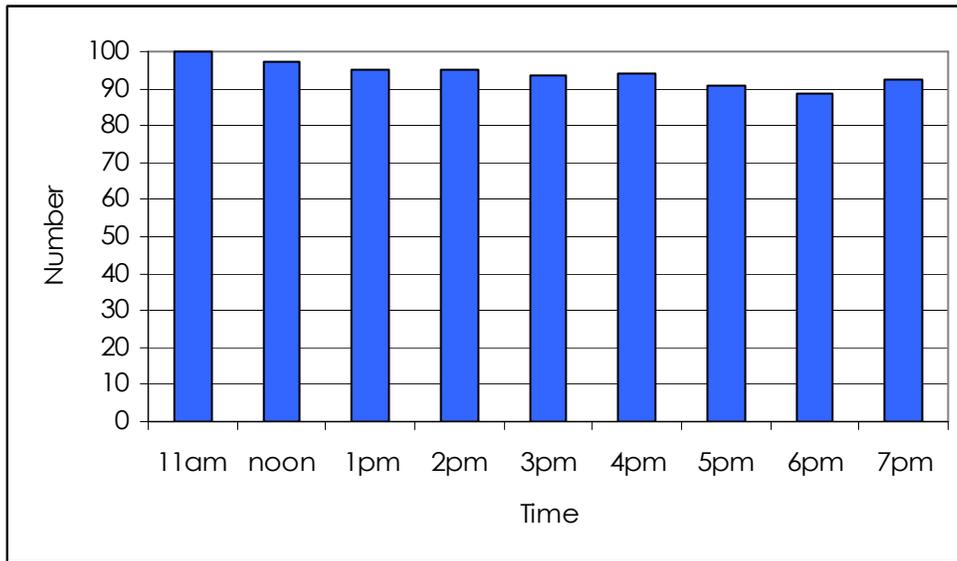


Figure 27 - Duration of Parked Vehicles - Center Street East Parking Lot - Thursday, December 7, 2006

On Thursday, December 7, 2006 it was found that 280 different vehicles were parked for at least an hour or more (Figure 28). Of these 280 vehicles, 25 vehicles, or close to nine percent (8.93%) of the spaces were illegally parked. Illegally parked can be defined as those vehicles that are left in the same space for at least 3 hours. Of the 280 vehicles which parked for an hour or more, five vehicles (1.79%) were parked in the parking space during the entire eight hour study period, six vehicles (2.14%) were parked for five or more hours, 14 vehicles (5%) were parked for four or more hours. Based on the data collection technique, namely collecting the data on the hour every hour, the vehicles that were

parked for three hours were in all likelihood going to be illegally parked also, which represents approximately 30 additional vehicles (10.71%).

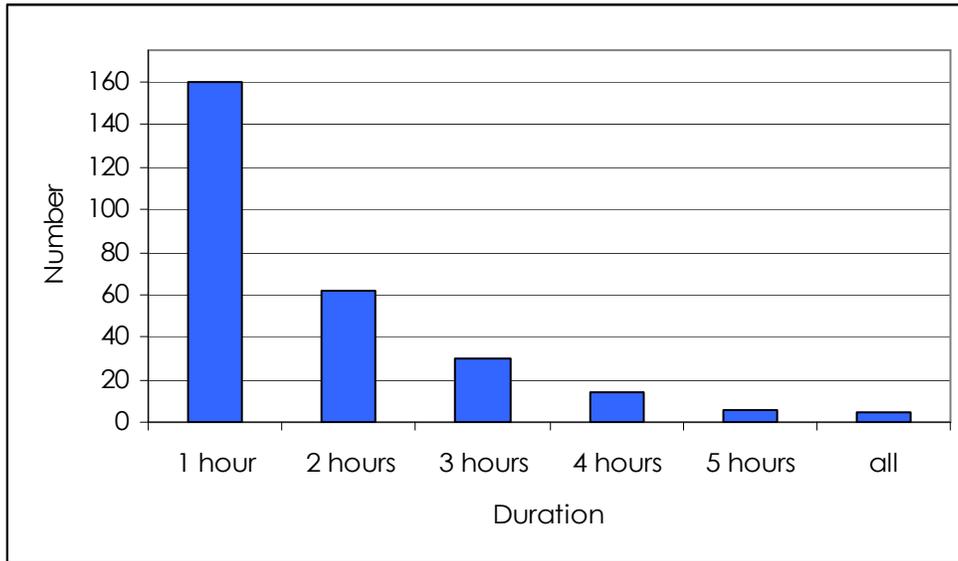


Figure 28 – Duration of Parked Vehicles - Center Street East Parking Lot – Thursday, December 7, 2006

Park Street and Naples Road

In an attempt to determine the effects of spillover parking on residential streets surrounding the heart of the Coolidge Corner District, two residential streets, Park Street and Naples Road, were selected by the Planning and Community Development Department for a closer observation of on-street parking practices. Both streets are only a short walk from the intersection of Beacon Street and Harvard Street.

Naples Road

Naples Road runs from Harvard Street in Brookline to Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. The street is exclusively residential and is comprised primarily of one-, two- and three-family homes. Naples Road is a two lane roadway and has a posted speed limit of 25mph. Parking, which is presently permitted for up to two hours, is allowed on one side of Naples Road only, with approximately 83 on-street parking spaces available. On the approach to Commonwealth Avenue no parking is permitted between 8:00a.m. and 10:00a.m.

A license plate survey for Naples Road was undertaken on both Wednesday, January 3rd and Thursday, January 4th 2007, between the hours of 8:30a.m. and 4:30p.m. It was found that a total of 82 different vehicles parked on Naples Road at various times on Wednesday, January 3rd. Of these 82 vehicles at least 33 were found to be parked in excess of the two hour maximum. No tickets were observed issued for these violations. On Thursday January 4th 2007 88 different vehicles were observed parked on Naples Road at various times of the day. 39 of these vehicles were found to be parked in excess of the two hour maximum. Again, no tickets were observed issued for these violations.

Park Street

Park Street runs from Washington Street to Beacon Street in Brookline. The street is exclusively residential and is comprised primarily of apartment and condominium