



Downtown Carthage

Parking and Mobility Study

May 2024



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Introduction

Plan Purpose

The Downtown Carthage Parking and Mobility Study is a community-driven planning initiative aimed at addressing parking issues in Downtown Carthage. This study identifies challenges and develops recommendations that enhance accessibility within the downtown area.

The study includes technical analysis, community engagement, and coordination with key stakeholders to develop recommendations for parking and mobility improvements in Downtown Carthage.

Developed alongside the Downtown Carthage Master Plan, the Downtown Carthage Parking and Mobility Study will help create a blueprint for safe and convenient mobility for everyone who lives, works, plays, and shops Downtown.

This study focuses on providing safe and convenient mobility in Downtown Carthage so people can:



Park Smoothly



Get Around Safely

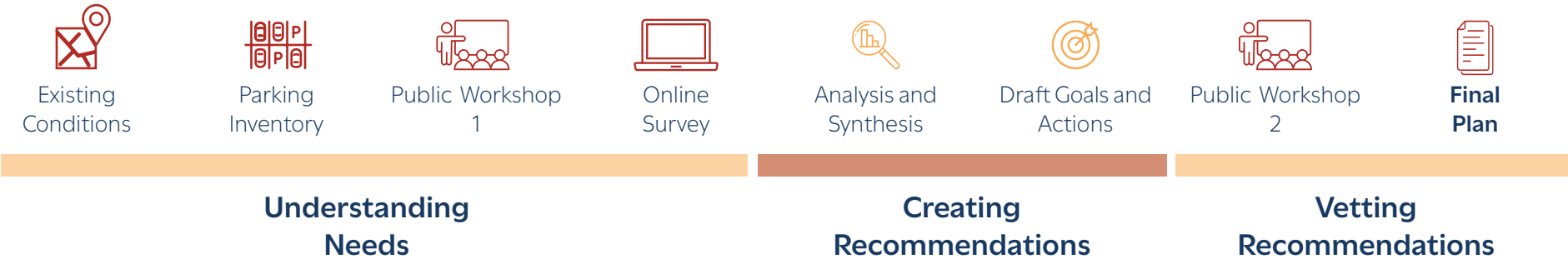


Navigate Easily



Plan Process

The Downtown Carthage Parking and Mobility Study was created through a multiple phase process. From the start, the project team completed research, analyzed data, and listened to the public’s comments and concerns to gain a better understanding of the mobility needs and challenges residents, visitors, and business owners face. That understanding shaped the overarching goals for the plan to address, which more detailed implementation actions and other recommendations were crafted around. We then took those recommendations back to the public to make sure we got them right.



Existing Conditions

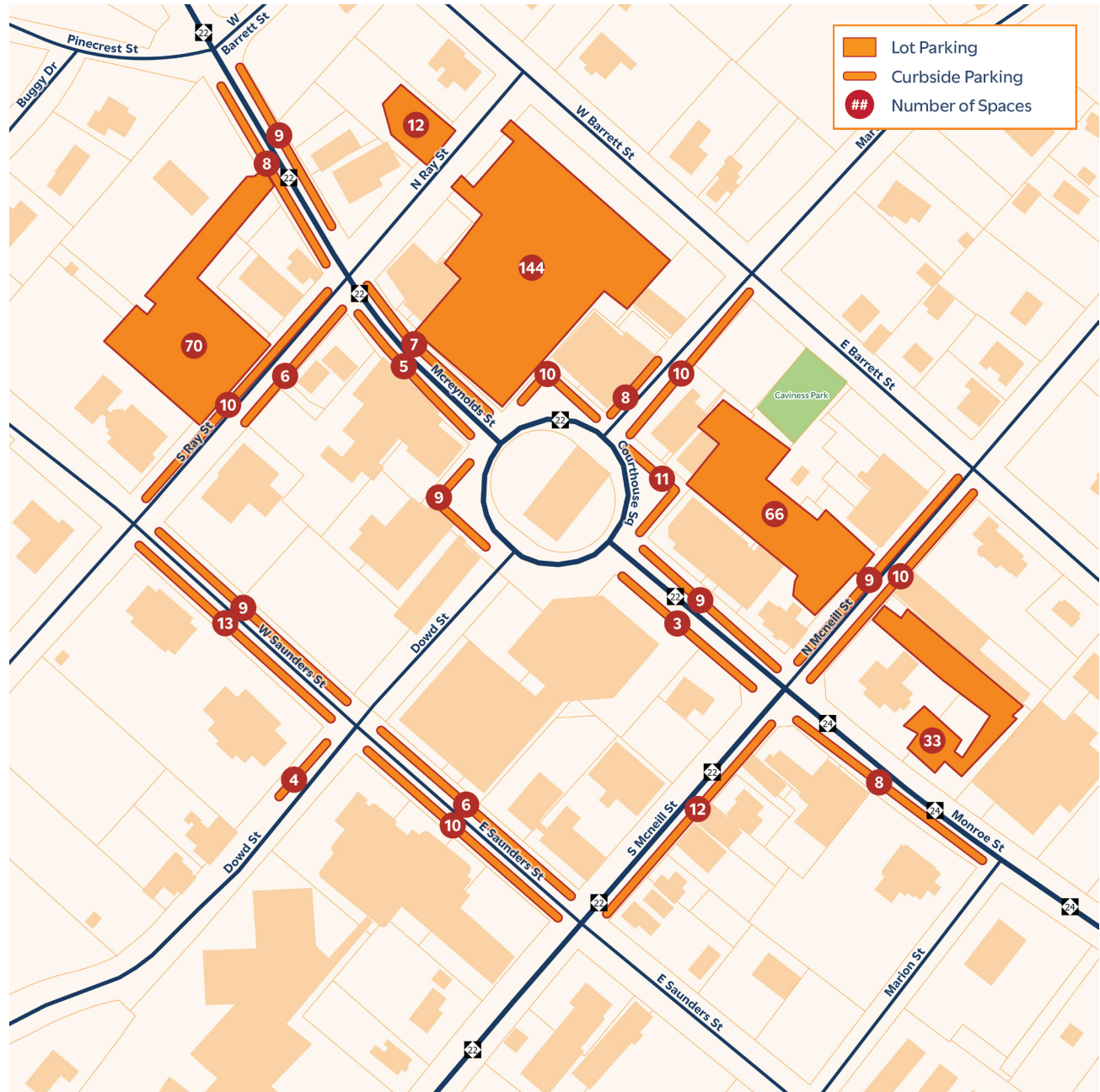
Parking Inventory

There are several large parking lots open to the public between Barrett Street and McReynolds Street, as well as one large lot off Ray Street next to the McDonald Building. Other public parking is primarily on-street parking, mostly surrounding Courthouse Square and along McReynolds Street, Monroe Street, Saunders Street, Ray Street, and McNeil Street.

In total, Downtown Carthage has about **325 public parking spaces in off-street parking lots** and **179 delineated curbside parking spaces**.

While several other large lots exist around Downtown Carthage, they are largely restricted to Moore County employees.

Cars also often park along other roadways where spaces are not clearly delineated but parking is not explicitly disallowed. Other streets like Dowd Street, located south of Courthouse Square, used to provide curbside parking. However, at the time of this study, they were closed to ongoing construction.



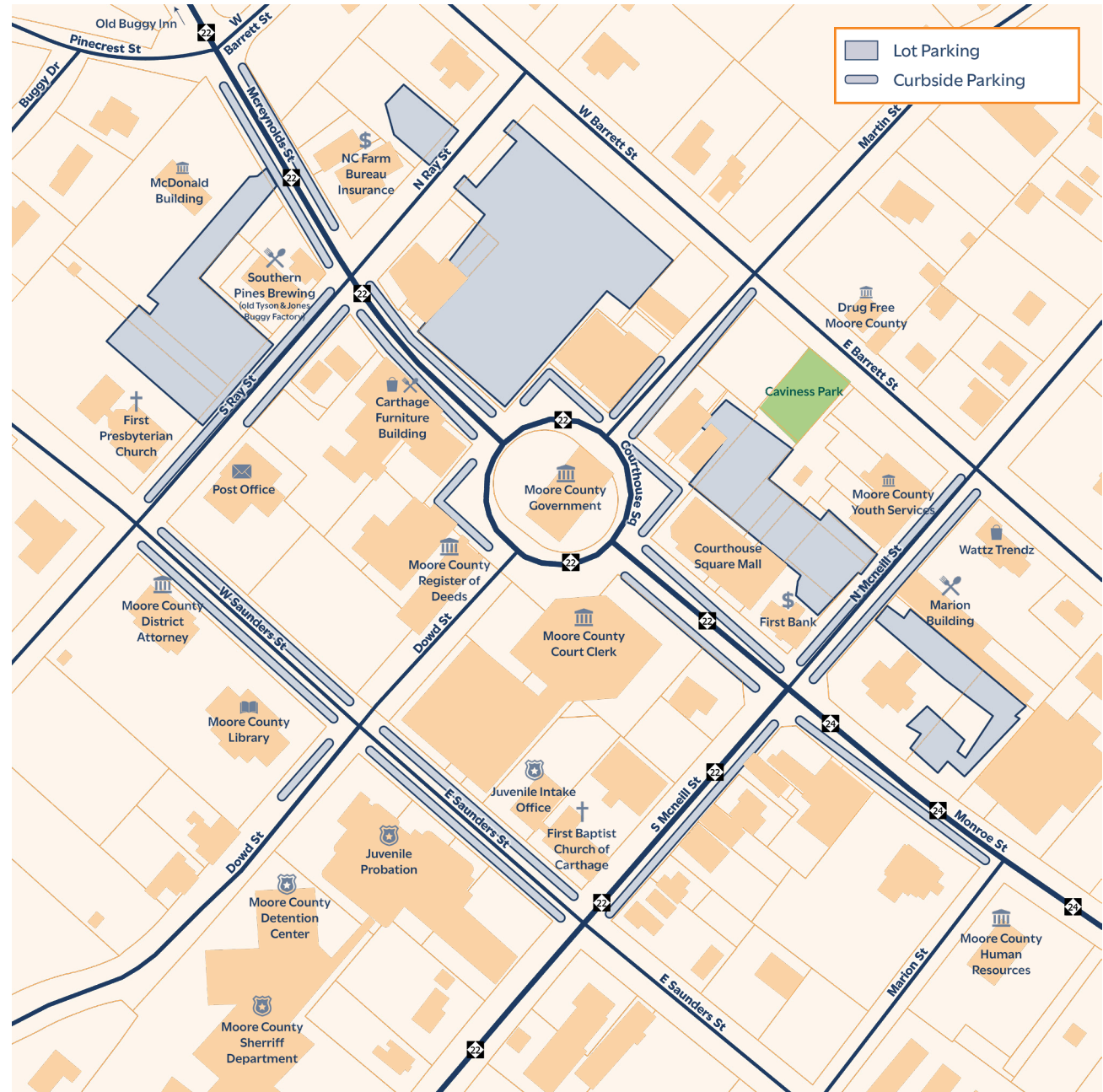
Existing Conditions

Key Destinations

As the county seat, many of the destinations in Carthage are related to Moore County government services, such as the Moore County Courts, the Register of Deeds, the District Attorney, and the county Sheriff Department.

Downtown Carthage also is home to other regional destinations for errands like the Post Office, County Library, and several area banks.

Downtown Carthage boasts a plethora of lively destinations, particularly around Courthouse Square and along McReynolds Street. Visitors can explore the Carthage Furniture Building and the newly established Southern Pines Brewing, housed in the historic Tyson and Jones Buggy Factory. Additionally, there is a cluster of shops and restaurants along McNeil Street, adding to the vibrancy of the area.



Existing Conditions

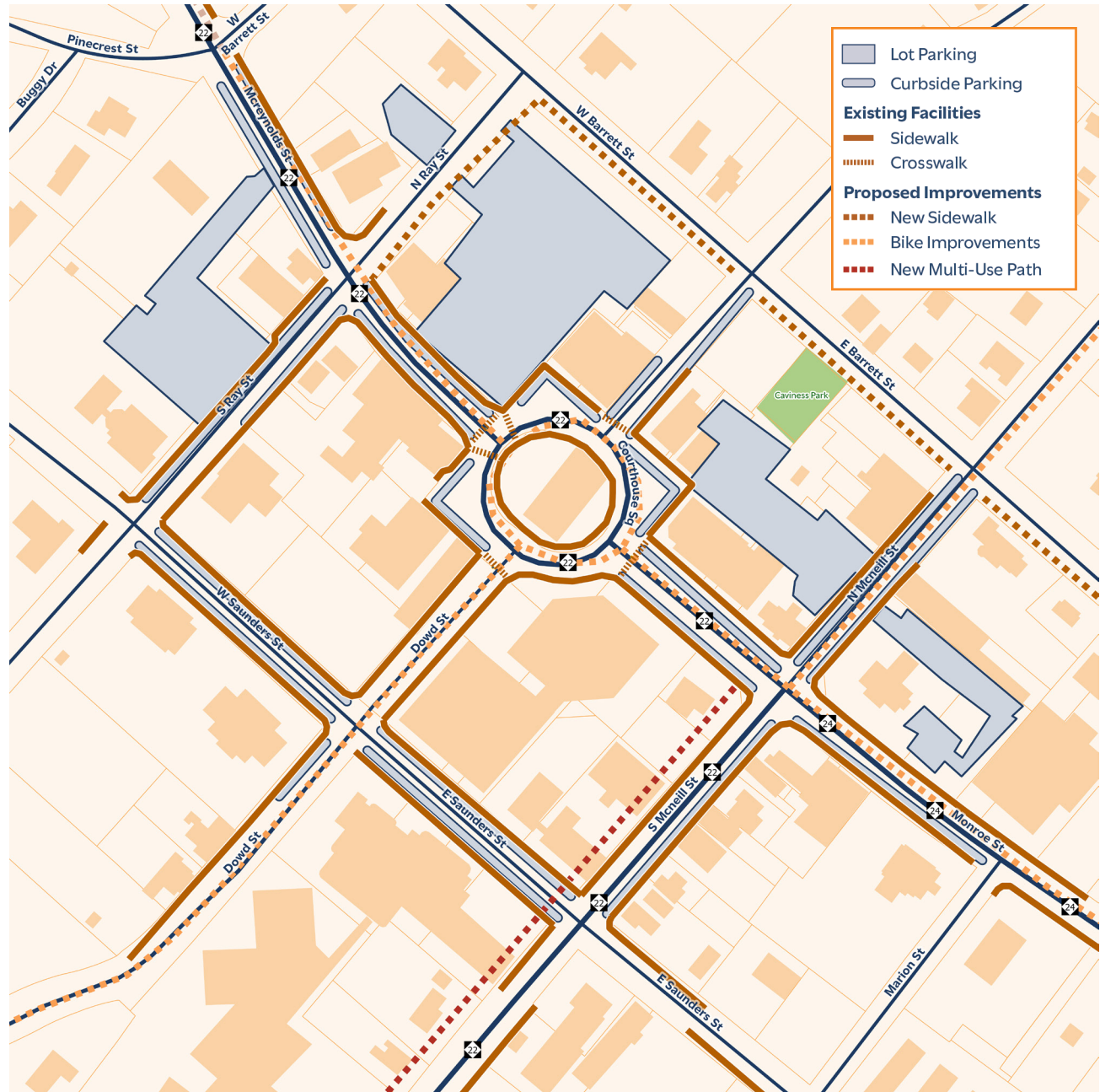
Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks and Crosswalks

The southern side of Downtown Carthage offers fairly good sidewalk coverage, with sidewalks present Courthouse Square, Monroe Street, McReynolds Street, McNeil Street, Saunders Street, and sections of Ray Street and Dowd Street. The northern side of downtown largely lacks sidewalks in comparison, likely corresponding with the lower density and more residential areas along Barrett Street. Town plans propose new sidewalks along North Ray Street and Barrett Street. Only the intersections surrounding Courthouse Square currently have marked crosswalks, all of which are unsignaled.

Bike Routes and Multi-Use Paths

Monroe Street, stretching from Courthouse Square eastward, is currently being upgraded to a 3-lane section accompanied by improvements for bike and pedestrian accessibility as part of North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) project U-3628. Additionally, Dowd Street and McReynolds Street, were identified in the Moore County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), as bike routes needing improvement. A proposed multi-use path is envisioned, alongside Mcneil Street and extending southward towards Pickney Academy.



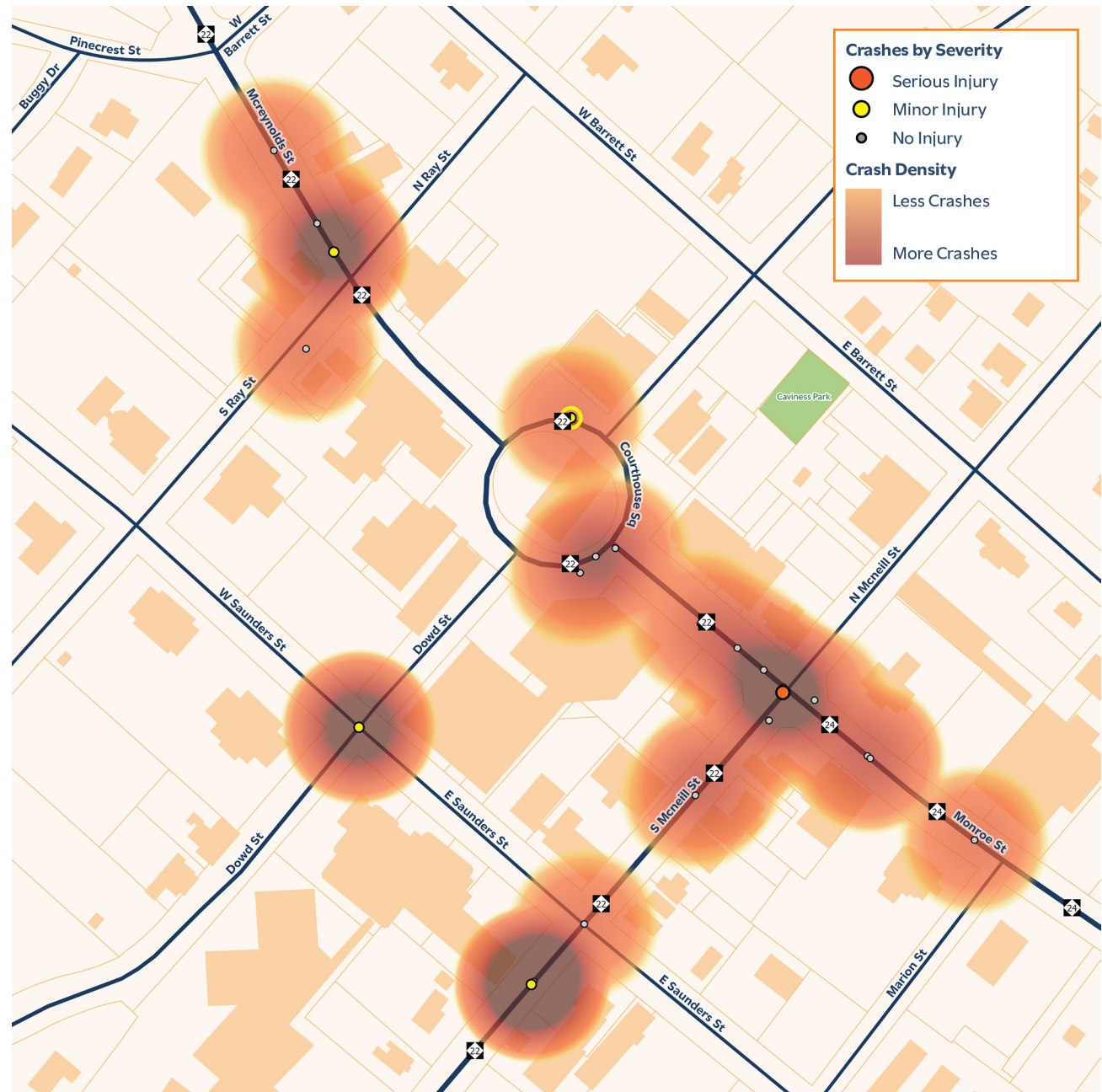
Existing Conditions

Crash Density

From 2015 to 2019, the majority of recorded crashes in Downtown Carthage occurred along NC 22 and NC 24 (McCreynolds Street and Monroe Street) mostly at or near intersections. Some additional crashes occurred along South Mcneil Street/NC 22.

While several crashes within the area caused injuries, only one recorded crash caused serious injuries and zero recorded were fatal. One crash within Downtown explicitly involved a pedestrian, in the northwest quadrant of Courthouse Square.

Although the absence of severe or fatal crashes is generally positive, it does not necessarily guarantee a safe or pleasant experience for drivers and/or pedestrians. Intersections without dedicated crosswalks or pedestrian signals pose significant risks to those crossing the street, creating fairly unsafe conditions.

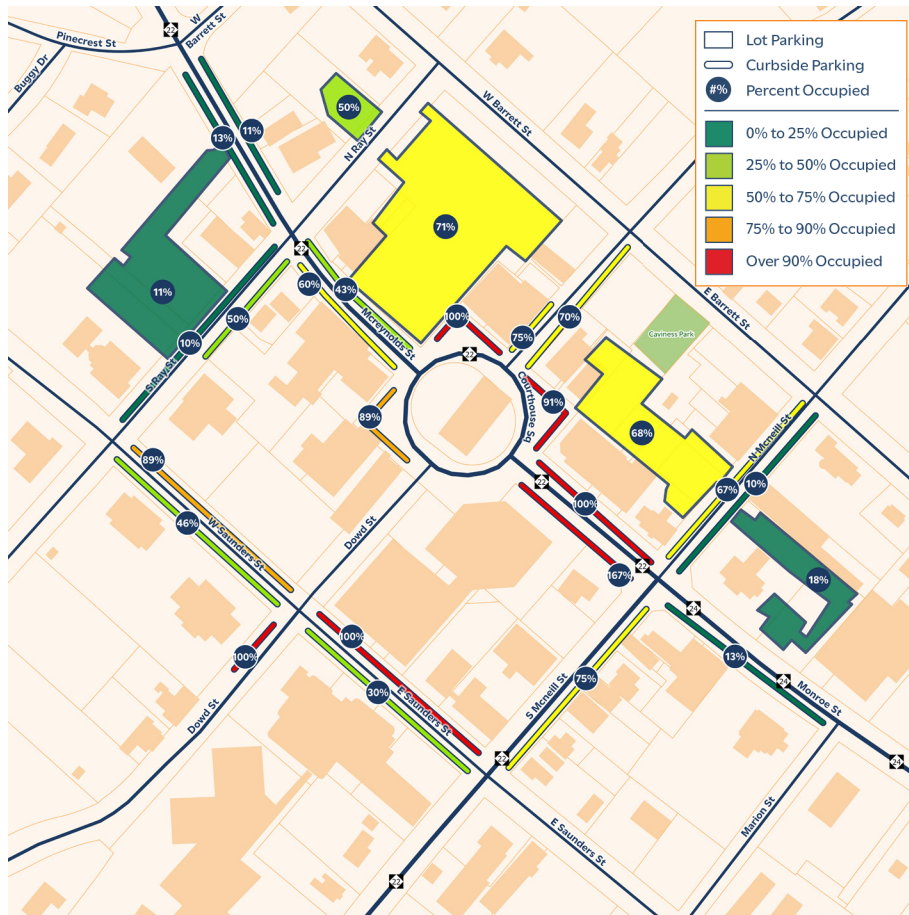


Parking Occupancy

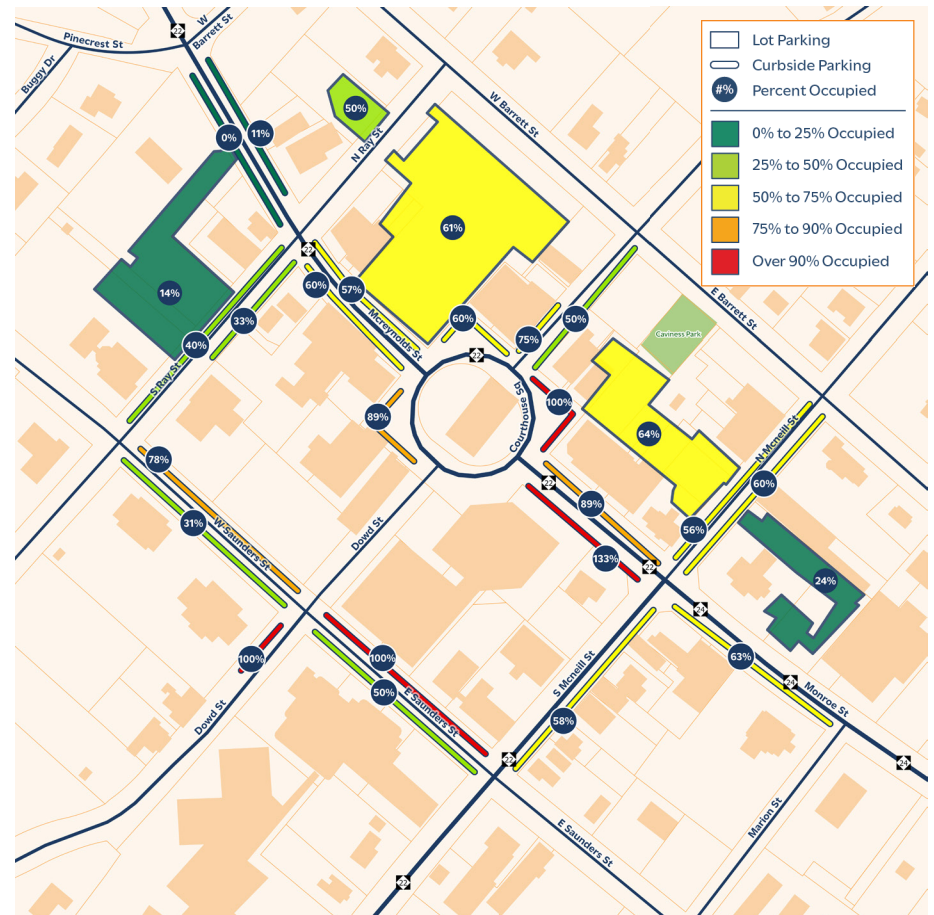
To better understand daily parking needs Downtown, we conducted an inventory of available public on-street and surface lot parking, recording how many spaces were occupied at different points throughout the day. **The below maps show what percent of parking spaces were full in each parking lot or section of street parking at the time of day indicated.**

Hourly counts were conducted on Thursday morning, mid-day, afternoon, and Saturday mid-day to assess parking availability. The percentages displayed on the maps below are based on the highest level of occupancy observed during each indicated time period in the lots or sections of curbside parking.

Weekday Morning (8am–11am)



Weekday Mid-Day (11am–2pm)

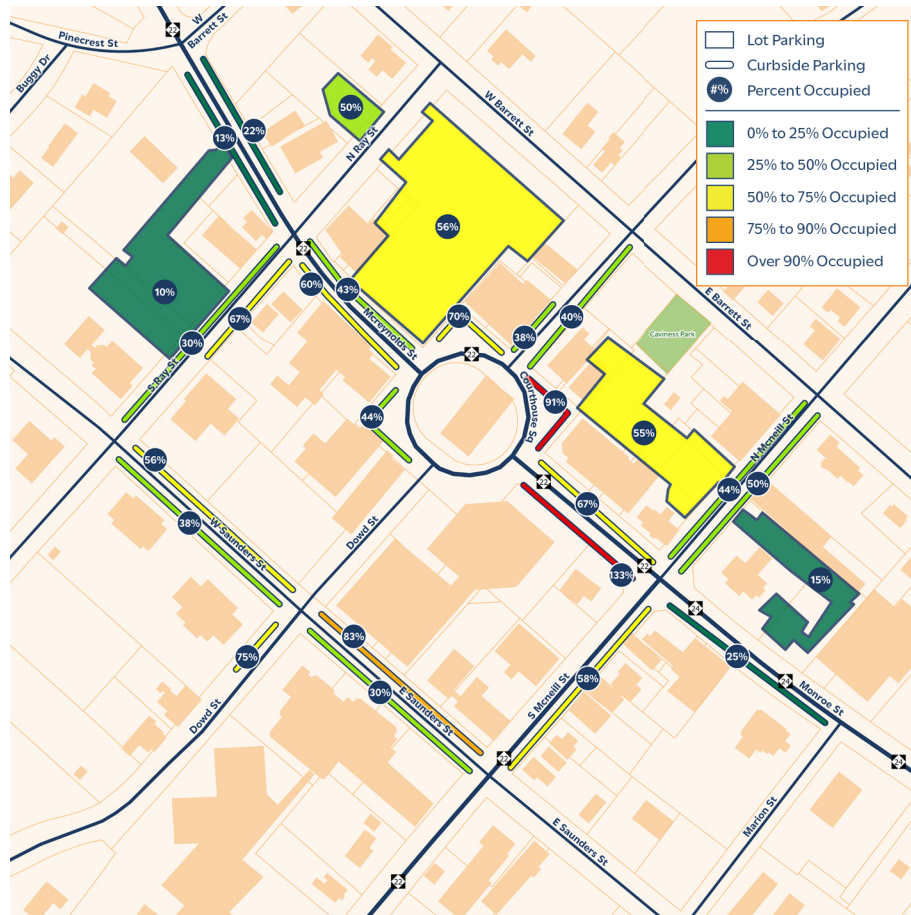


Parking Occupancy

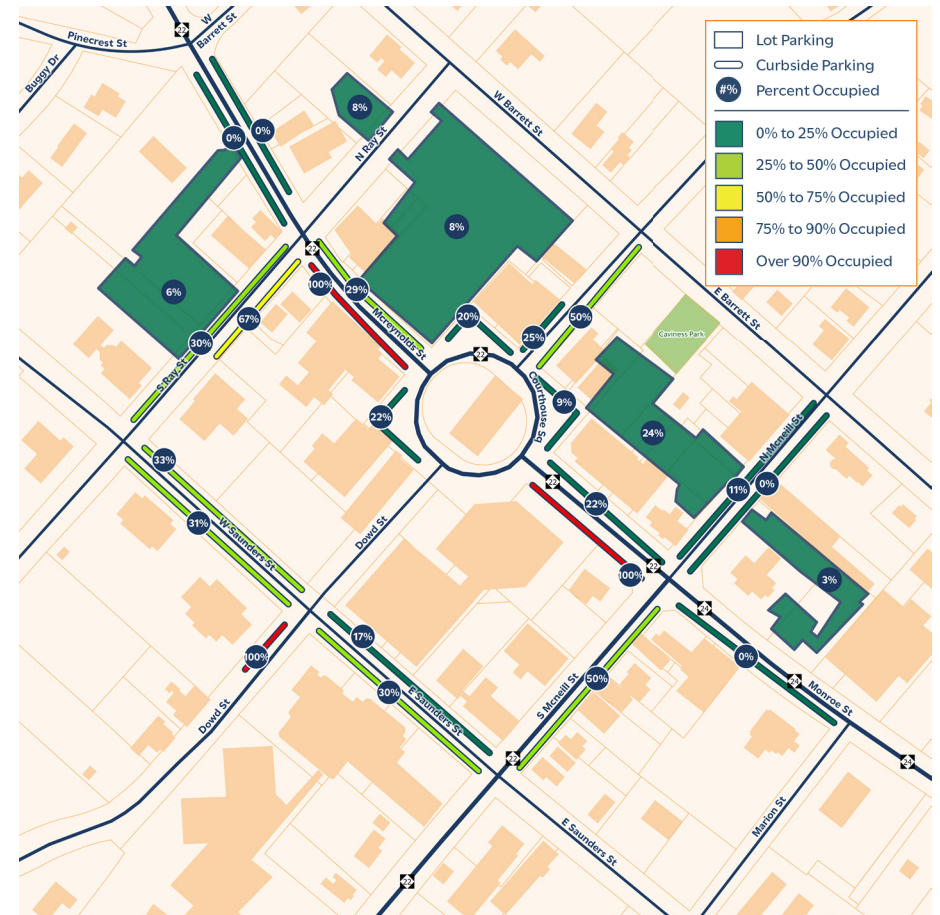
Notably, **at no point did any of the parking lots reach or exceed 75% occupancy**. This implies that there is enough parking capacity to meet needs, but that visitors may either be choosing to park closer to their destination or not know of the full amount of lot parking available.

Curbside parking was the most strained surrounding Courthouse Square along Monroe Street and McReynolds Street, with at least one section of parking above 90% capacity at all times inventoried. Parking around Courthouse Square was most occupied weekday mornings and decreased throughout the day. Parking along Saunders Street also saw high occupancy weekday mornings and mid-day.

Weekday Afternoon (2pm–5pm)



Saturday Mid-day (10am–1pm)



Public Input

Engagement



Public Workshops

11/16/23 & 3/14/24



Online Survey

11/27/23 - 12/22/23



250+ people
engaged

Two interactive public workshops took place at the McDonald Building in Downtown Carthage, to gain insights into the community's needs and vetting potential strategies. Additionally, an online survey was made available from November to December 2023, with additional questions tailored for business owners.

Between the two public workshops and the online survey, more than 250 people were engaged through the process, helping understand the current parking situation Downtown and community needs, as well what solutions residents, visitors, and business owners were open to.

Public Workshops

Workshop 1 (11/16/23): Understanding Needs

At the first public workshop, the project team presented the results of the existing conditions analysis and parking inventory.

Attendees were asked to participate in a mapping activity to show destinations and places they had challenges either with parking or with walking from their parking spots.

Attendees also were able to fill out a short interactive survey using stickers to mark the times they usually had the biggest parking challenges, where they usually park, what they saw as the overall biggest challenge, and whether they felt unsafe trying to get to their destinations.

Workshop 2 (3/14/24): Vetting Strategies

At the second public workshop, the results of the initial survey and recommendations for pedestrian safety, parking, wayfinding, and strategies to address other problems, were presented to the public for additional feedback. The survey results can be found on the next spread and the recommendations are presented later in this document.



Public Input

Mapping Activity

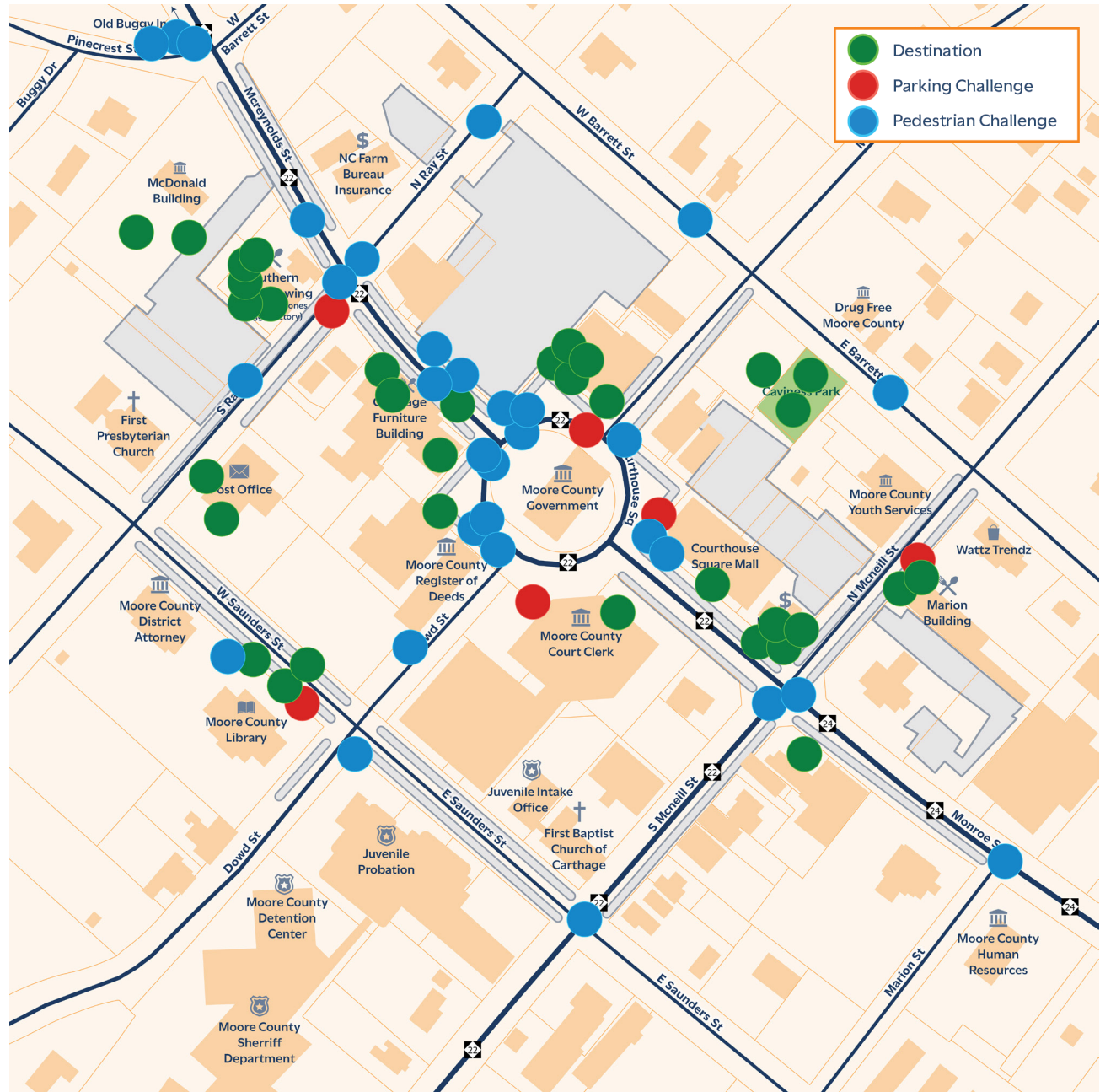
Building on initial existing conditions data, the project team wanted to get additional information from the public to better understand where people are going in Downtown Carthage and what challenges they are facing getting there.

As part of the first public workshop on November 16th, 2023, attendees were asked to place color-coded stickers on a map, marking:

- **Destinations:** Places they like or need to go in Downtown Carthage in **green**,
- **Parking Challenges:** Places in Downtown Carthage where they've experienced issues finding parking in **red**
- **Pedestrian Challenges:** Places in Downtown Carthage where they've found it hard to walk or roll in **blue**

The map to the right shows the results of the mapping activity.

There were significantly fewer dots placed for parking challenges than for pedestrian challenges or destinations.



Public Input

Public Survey

To better understand what parking and mobility challenges residents, business owners, and visitors experience in Downtown, the project team prepared an online survey. Survey respondents were asked questions about:

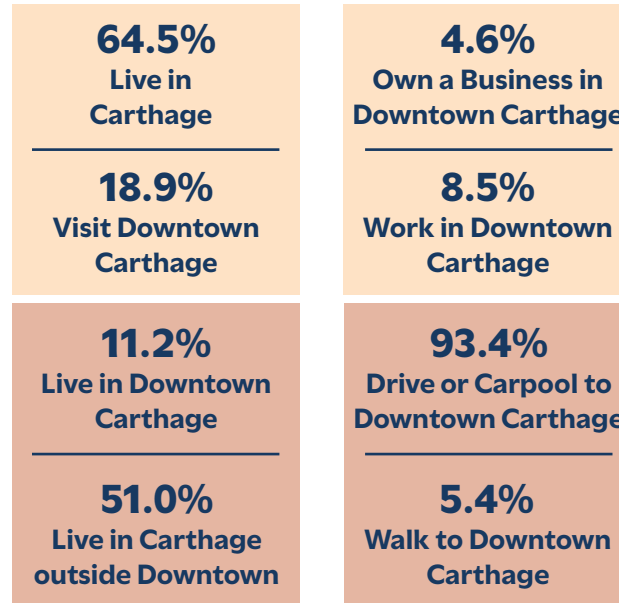
- Their relation to Downtown Carthage,
- What they go to Downtown Carthage for,
- Where they park and how long it takes,
- Whether they feel safe walking from parking to their destination
- What they saw as the biggest challenges when parking Downtown

Business owners were asked a couple of additional questions about:

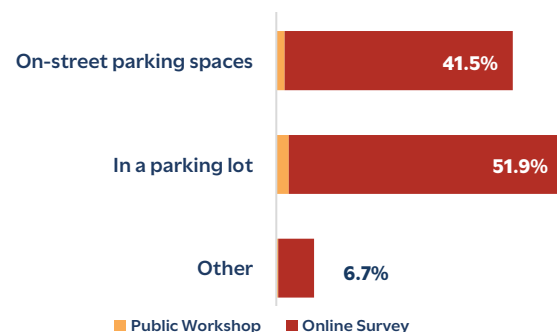
- Their top priorities for businesses surrounding parking and mobility
- Times of highest parking demand around their business
- What parking demand management solutions they are most open to

The online survey was available from November 27th to December 22nd. A shortened version of the survey also was available at the first public workshop on November 16th.

Of Online Survey Respondents:

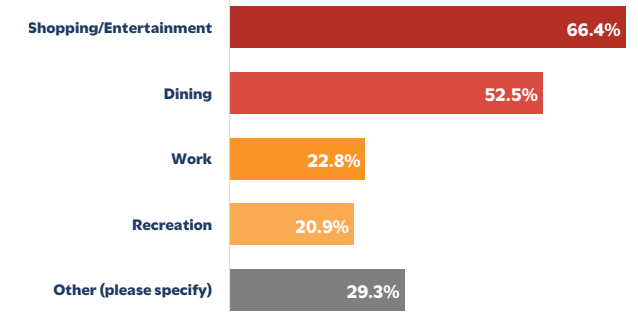


Where do you usually park when you come Downtown?



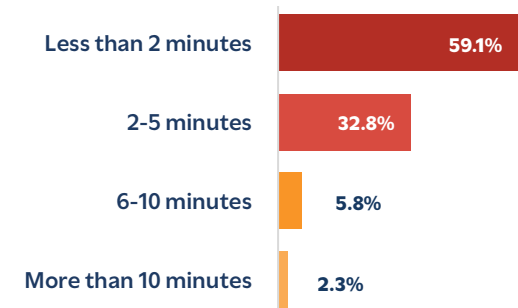
More respondents park in a lot rather than on-street. However, spaces in lots make up more of the Town's spaces and are still underutilized.

Why are you typically going to Downtown Carthage?



Out of the online survey respondents, most came to Downtown Carthage for **shopping, entertainment, or dining**. Running other errands and visiting friends and family were some of the most common responses under "Other".

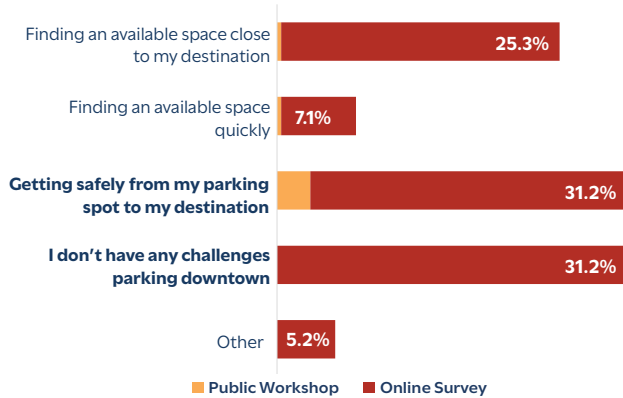
How long does it typically take to find a parking space Downtown?



Overall, **finding parking quickly was not a large issue**. Over 90% of respondents typically find parking in less than five minutes.

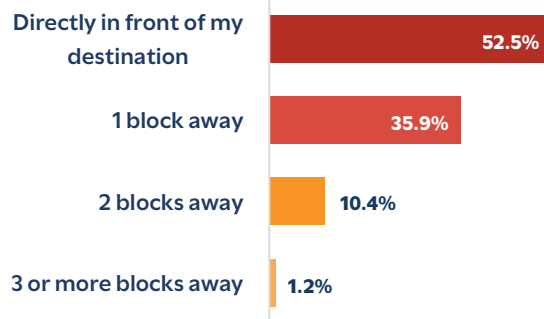
Public Input

What do you consider the biggest challenge when parking Downtown?



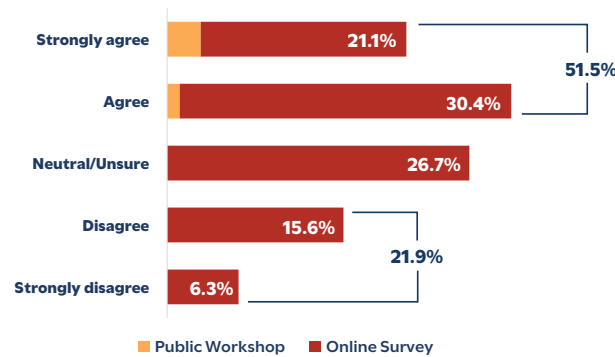
At both the workshop and through the online survey, people's biggest challenge was being able to **get between their parking space and their destination safely**. Others found finding a space near their destination challenging.

How close to your destination/work do you typically park?



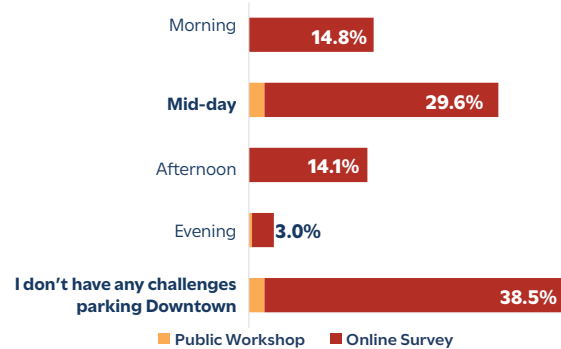
Most respondents park right outside their destination, but over a third already walk about a block from parking to their destination.

Agree or Disagree: "I feel unsafe crossing the street when trying to get from my parking spot to my destination."



Over half of respondents across both the workshop and online survey **agreed that they felt unsafe** trying to get from their parking spot to their destination, several specifically citing crossing the street as a challenge.

When is it most challenging to find parking Downtown?



Most respondents did not have any challenges finding parking, but a sizeable amount of people said mid-day is when they had most challenges.

Amongst Business Owners:

6 out of 9 business owners said their biggest Downtown parking priority was **safe pedestrian crossings and sidewalks** so that people can easily get to their business from wherever they park.

Two business owners said nearby parking for customers and one said nearby parking for employees.

Weekday mornings and weekday mid-day were tied for times of highest parking demand near businesses, followed by weekday evenings.

5 out of 9 business owners said **improving pedestrian safety** on sidewalks and at crosswalks was the **most favorable parking management solution** of the options listed.

Paid parking and time limits for parking each got two votes, though comments noted the challenges with time limits for people who are doing business with the courts, which can take longer than a time limit would allow.

One comment noted that building the Carthage Bypass could help by removing traffic just passing through from Downtown streets.

What We Heard

Pedestrian Safety is the Top Priority

The largest challenge people repeatedly mentioned was **pedestrian safety**—safely getting between their parking space and their destination. There are few marked pedestrian crossings in Downtown, and in places with crossings drivers often speed through the area, rarely waiting for people to cross. With just under half of respondents parking at least one block away from their destination, crossing streets is a need for many of Downtown's patrons.

Pedestrian safety was not only important to visitors and residents—two thirds of Downtown business owners responding to the survey also considered safe pedestrian crossings and sidewalks their top priority, and difficulty crossing the street also was one of the biggest complaints from Moore County workers.

During the first workshop, most pedestrian safety challenge spots marked were along Mcrynolds Street and Monroe Street. Ray Street and Barrett Street also were marked in areas with no sidewalks. Workshop participants called out a couple locations around Courthouse Square as needing pedestrian signals.

Parking Demand Peaks Weekday Mornings and Mid-Days

While many do not experience parking challenges, those that do primarily experienced them on **weekdays in the morning and mid-day**. Businesses also saw the highest parking demand on weekday mornings and mid-days, with some seeing high demand weekday evenings.

On-street parking around Courthouse Square and along Saunders Street near the Libtary seemed to see the highest occupancy rates during these times, while all lots stayed below 75% occupied.

Amidst Downtown Construction, Construction Workers Parking Add to Challenges

The public, Town staff, and county staff at the Moore County Library noted that **construction workers frequently have taken up significant amounts of on-street parking** that otherwise would have been open to business patrons and other visitors. While current construction projects are temporary, having a policy in place may help considering the potential for continued Downtown revitalization to bring additional projects.

Underutilized Lots Can Potentially Help With On-Street Parking Turnover

While many people already park in parking lots, there is still a sizable amount that prefers parking on-street in front of their destination. At the same time, our parking inventory showed that lots were frequently underutilized at times where on-street spaces were near capacity. This implies room to **direct additional parking to lots to free up on-street spaces for short term parking**.

Business owners noted parking turnover is important for businesses but that time limits may not be the best solution since many people will need parking for more than a couple hours, especially workers and others doing business with the courts. Comments from the public during the second workshop also mentioned this.

Separating short-term parking from long-term parking potentially could help with parking turnover, allowing the larger surface lots to have no time limit and to be more oriented towards longer visits or courthouse business.

What We Heard

Wayfinding Signage Could Help Direct Visitors to Parking and Destinations

At the second workshop, comments reiterated the need for **clear signage** to help people find recommended **parking** and to direct visitors to **destinations** around Downtown.



Recommendations

Goals and Actions

Based on what we heard from the public and business owners through the workshop and survey, as well as feedback on needs and current conditions from Town and County staff, the project team developed a series of **goals for improving mobility and parking** in Downtown Carthage and **corresponding actions to accomplish those goals**.

Plan Goals



Pedestrian Safety

Improve the safety, comfort, and convenience of walking around Downtown Carthage, especially when crossing streets and walking between parking and destinations.



Parking Demand Management

Create better balance and utilization between on-street and off-street parking Downtown.



Signage and Wayfinding

Create wayfinding for Downtown Carthage that clearly and safely directs people to parking and destinations.

Pedestrian Safety Actions



Action 1A | Near-Term

Implement high visibility crosswalks at intersections throughout Downtown

- Piano Key style with perpendicular markings for visibility and longevity
- Where applicable, use as opportunity to improve ADA accessibility (ex. SE corner of McNeill Street and Monroe Street)



Action 1B | Near-Term

Coordinate with NCDOT to install pedestrian walk signals

- Around Courthouse Square
- NC 27/McNeill Street
- Ray Street/NC 27



Action 1C | Long-Term

Proceed with plans to install sidewalks along N. Ray Street and Barrett Street



Action 1D | Long-Term

Consider curb extensions at key intersections and in on-street no-parking zones to extend pedestrian space

- Concrete or planters allow unused space mid-block to become part of the pedestrian streetscape; potentially helpful for streets lined with restaurants and businesses.
- Concrete curb extensions at corners can shorten crossing distances at intersections and improve visibility.

Recommendations

Parking Demand Management Actions



Action 2A

Encourage courthouse visitors, via signage and guidance from courthouse employees, to use off-street lots rather than curbside parking

- Lots would act as long-term parking, while curbside parking should be mostly for shorter durations and accessibility spaces
- Consider working with Moore County to implement permit parking or assigned spaces for county employees in county lots



Action 2B

Assign Parking Director duties to someone within Planning Department

- Would oversee any demand management programs and enforcement



Action 2C

Dedicate additional man hours in either Planning or Police Department to parking enforcement at reasonable intervals during times of peak demand (Weekdays 8am–2pm)

- Enforcement should include fines for violations



Action 2D

Evaluate the potential for implementing a parking management system and/or app to help with management and enforcement

- May be worth investing in license plate recognition (LPR) technology to reduce time, effort, and manpower needed for enforcement
- Must have way to match plates to parking to use LPR for enforcement



Action 2E

Make the most in-demand curbside parking spaces along NC-27 paid parking during times of peak demand (Weekdays 8am–2pm)



Action 2F

Create construction parking requirements to manage where construction workers park during project durations

Signage and Wayfinding Actions



Action 3A

Provide clear, visible, and visually consistent signage indicating time limits and parking restrictions throughout Downtown, especially at curbside parking spaces and county lots.



Action 3B

Create an easy-to-understand wayfinding system and branding for the Town

- Signage directing courthouse visitors and other longer-term visitors to park in off-street lots
- Signage to direct people walking from parking to key destinations



Action 3C

Place "Crosswalk Ahead"/"Crosswalk Here"/"Yield to Pedestrians" signs leading up to and at intersections with crossings

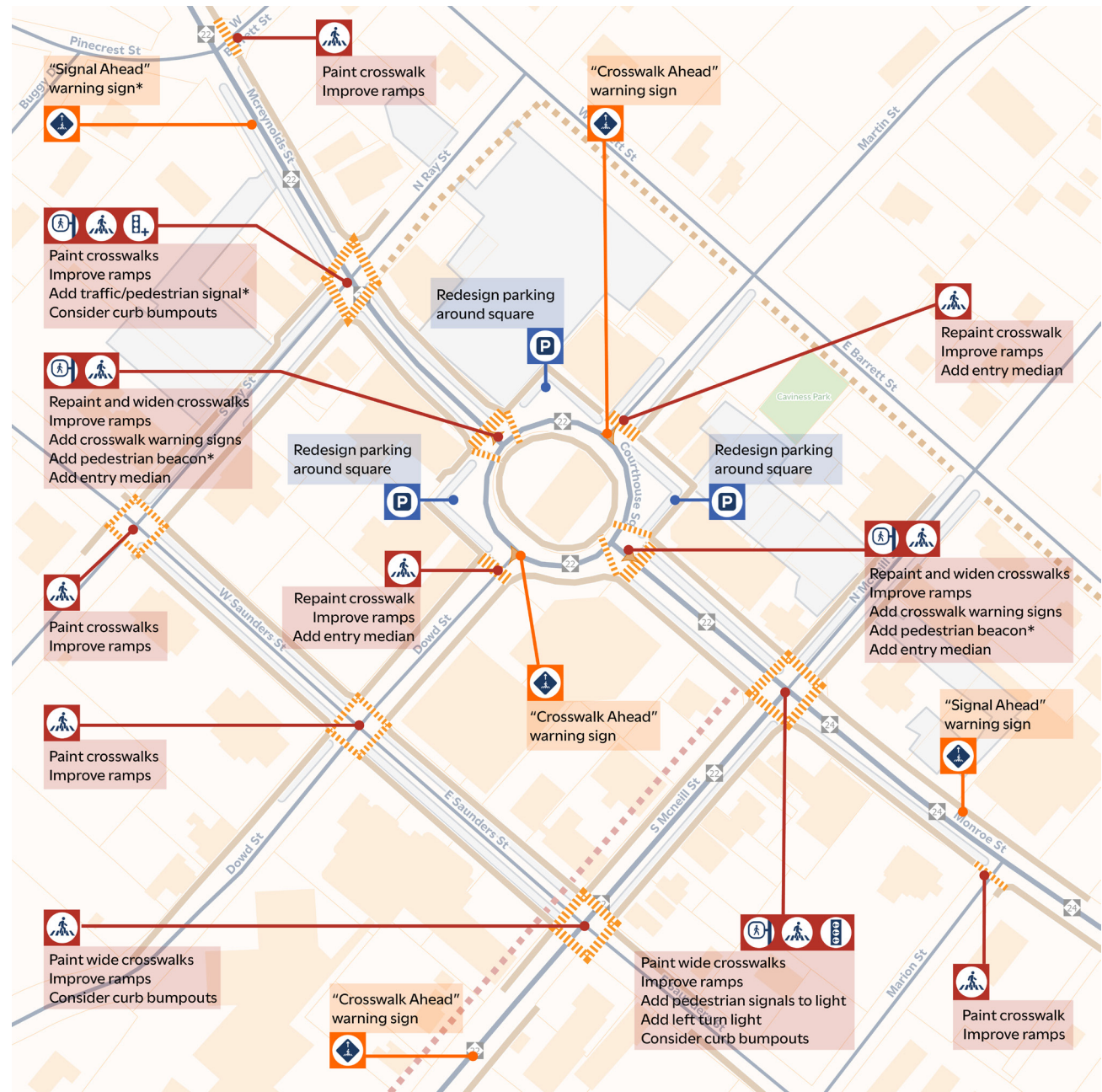
Recommendations

Infrastructure and Safety

In addition to the actions presented previously, this plan includes location-specific recommendations to **help improve pedestrian safety and comfort** across Downtown Carthage. These recommendations are shown in the map to the right and largely consist of the following:

- Adding and improving pedestrian crossings and signals at intersections across Downtown
- Adding warning signs ahead of pedestrian crossings to alert drivers to upcoming pedestrian zones
- Redesigning the parking around Courthouse Square to make the travelway clearer and discourage speeding

Locations with crossing improvements also should be evaluated for lighting improvements to make sure people crossing are clearly visible to drivers and provide a better pedestrian experience.



Recommendations

Wayfinding

In addition to the actions presented previously, this plan includes location-specific recommendations to **help improve parking wayfinding** across Downtown Carthage and **help manage different types of parking demands**. These recommendations are shown in the map to the right and largely consist of the following:

- Adding signs marking entrances to long-term parking (including for courthouse visitors) in off-street lots
- Adding wayfinding signs directing drivers towards long-term parking lots from major intersections
- Adding signs alongside short-term on-street parking clearly indicating shorter time duration and directing long-term parking elsewhere

