Improving Amherst's Downtown Parking

2018 Massachusetts Municipal Association Annual Meeting

Jan. 20, 2018

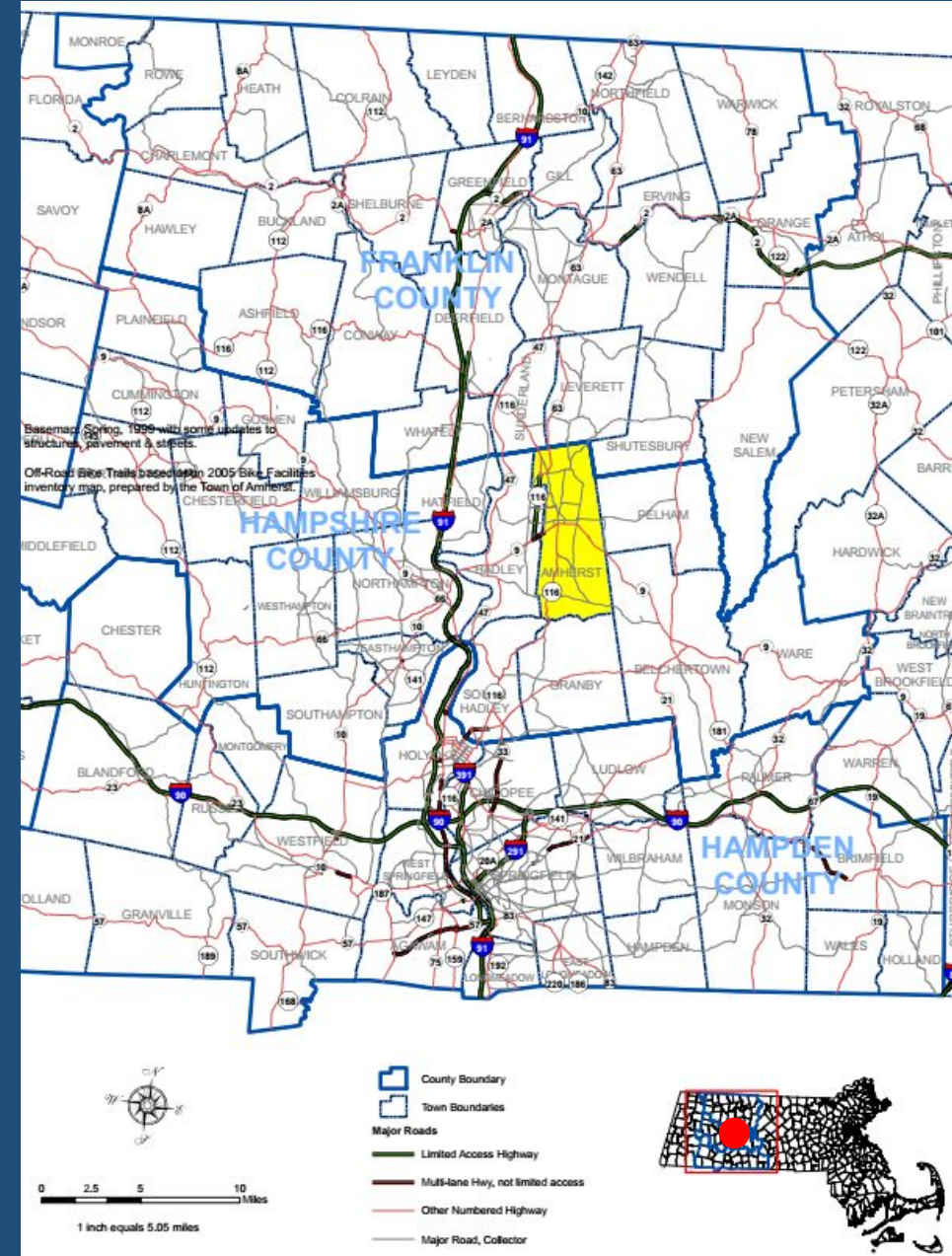**Connie Kruger, AICP, Select Board**

Nate Malloy, Senior Planner

Image source: http://onlyintherepublicofamherst.blogspot.com/2016/06/parking-reality-vs-perception.html

About Amherst

- 2017 Est. Population: 39,000
- Daytime Population: 50,000
- 28 sq. miles
- Town Meeting with Select Board

- Business Improvement District
- 115 business with 45 restaurants
- UMass, Amherst & Hampshire Colleges
- Transportation fund: $1M
  - 20,000+ tickets/year
  - 750+ on-street permits
- 2015 Transportation Plan: $50K and 1 Yr
- 2014-15 Community Forums
- 2016 Parking Inventory: $40K
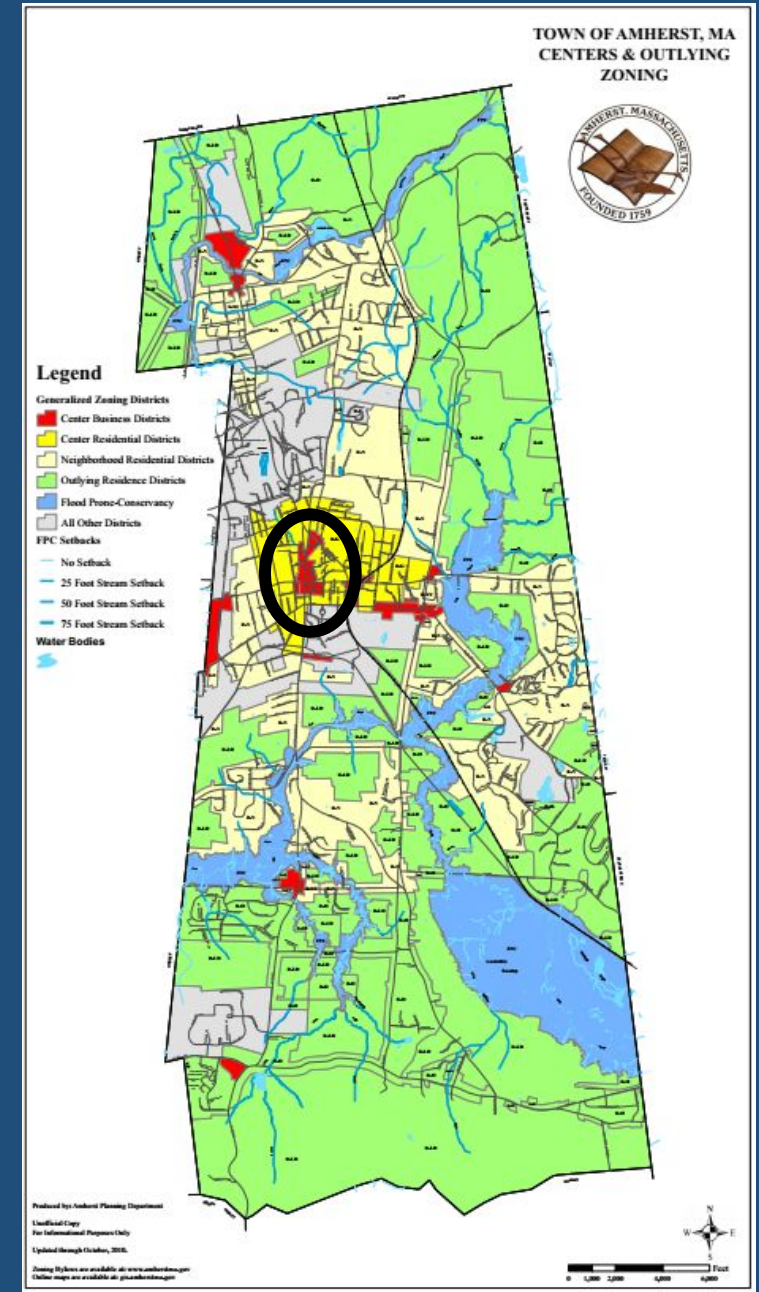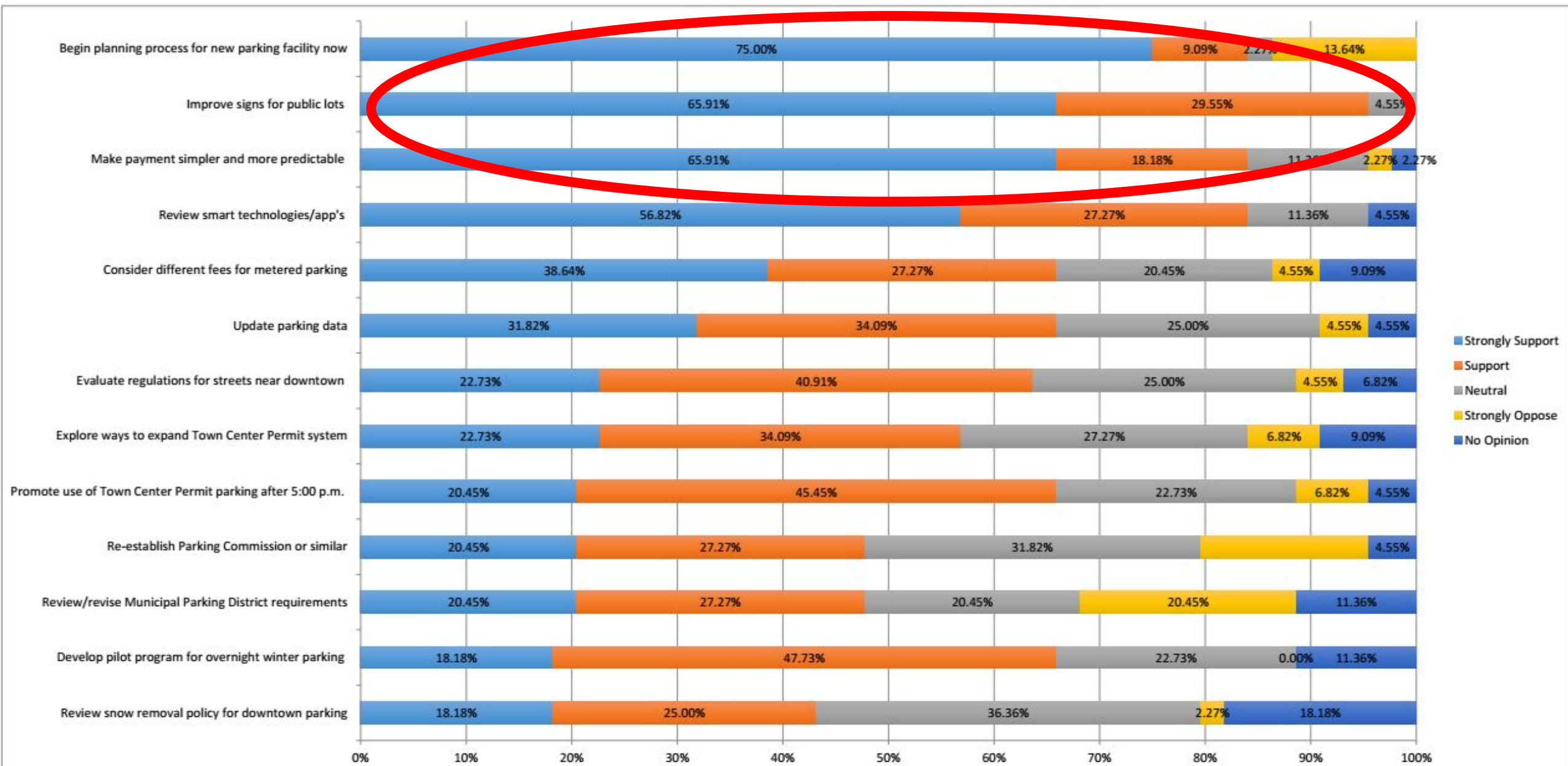- 2016-18 Downtown Parking Working Group

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4

Image sources:
1&2http://onlyintherepublico
famherst.blogspot.com
3 https://en.wikipedia.org
4. http://cutlerdb.com

History of Downtown Parking

- **2008 Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Parking Study**
  - **Areas of high demand, but adequate supply of public parking**
  - **Data did not support planning for a new garage**

- **2015 Transportation Plan**
  - **Pedestrian, Transit, Roads, Parking**
  - **Current supply of downtown parking adequate but needs better management**
  - **Recommended improvement—signs, pricing, shared parking**

- **2014-15 Community Forums**
  - **Many businesses and visitors think parking is a problem**
  - **Parking demand from college students**
  - **Businesses hear that customers cannot find parking**
  - **An assumption that downtown needs another garage**

TOWN OF AMHERST, MA
CENTERS & OUTLYING ZONING

Legend

Generalized Zoning Districts
- Center Business Districts
- Center Residential Districts
- Neighborhood Residential Districts
- Outlying Residence Districts
- Flood Prone-Conservancy
- All Other Districts

FPC Setbacks
- No Setback
- 25 Foot Stream Setback
- 50 Foot Stream Setback
- 75 Foot Stream Setback

Water Bodies

2016 Parking Inventory by Nelson Nygaard

- Public metered spaces: 650
- On-street permit: 400
- Unregulated on-street: 280
- Private: 2,000
- **TOTAL SPACES: 3,400**
- Peak demand (use) is lunch time (1 PM) and evenings (7 PM)
- Short term actions: maximize current system
- Long term strategies: shared/leased parking agreements, increase supply of public parking (including a possible parking garage)
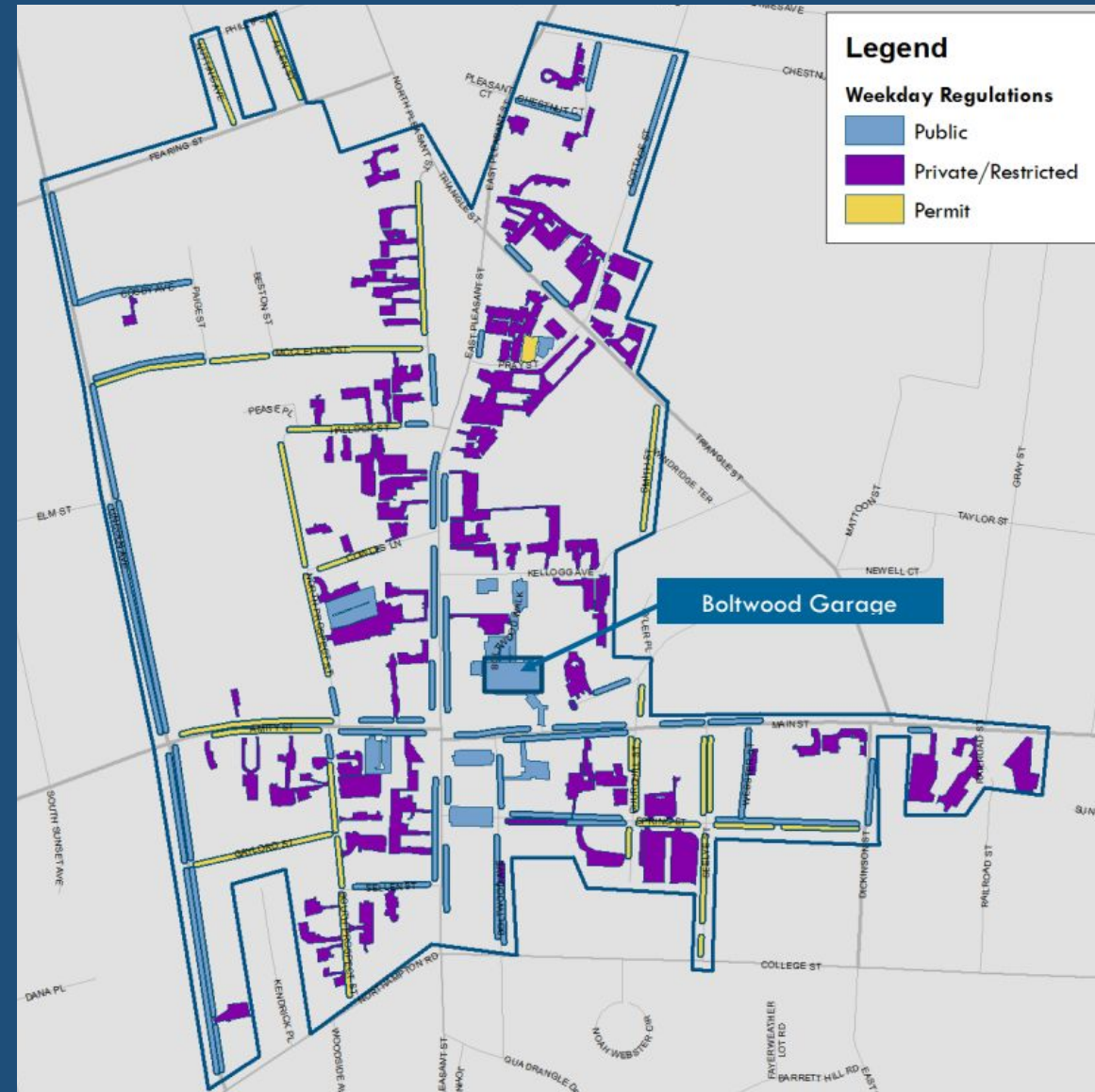
Current Issues Identified

- **Perception is reality when it comes to parking**

- **High demand for visible spots**

- **Low cost—students use downtown as a parking lot; employees meter feed**

- **Time limits not enforced**

- **Current system is confusing**

- **Zoning—Municipal Parking District = no parking requirements**
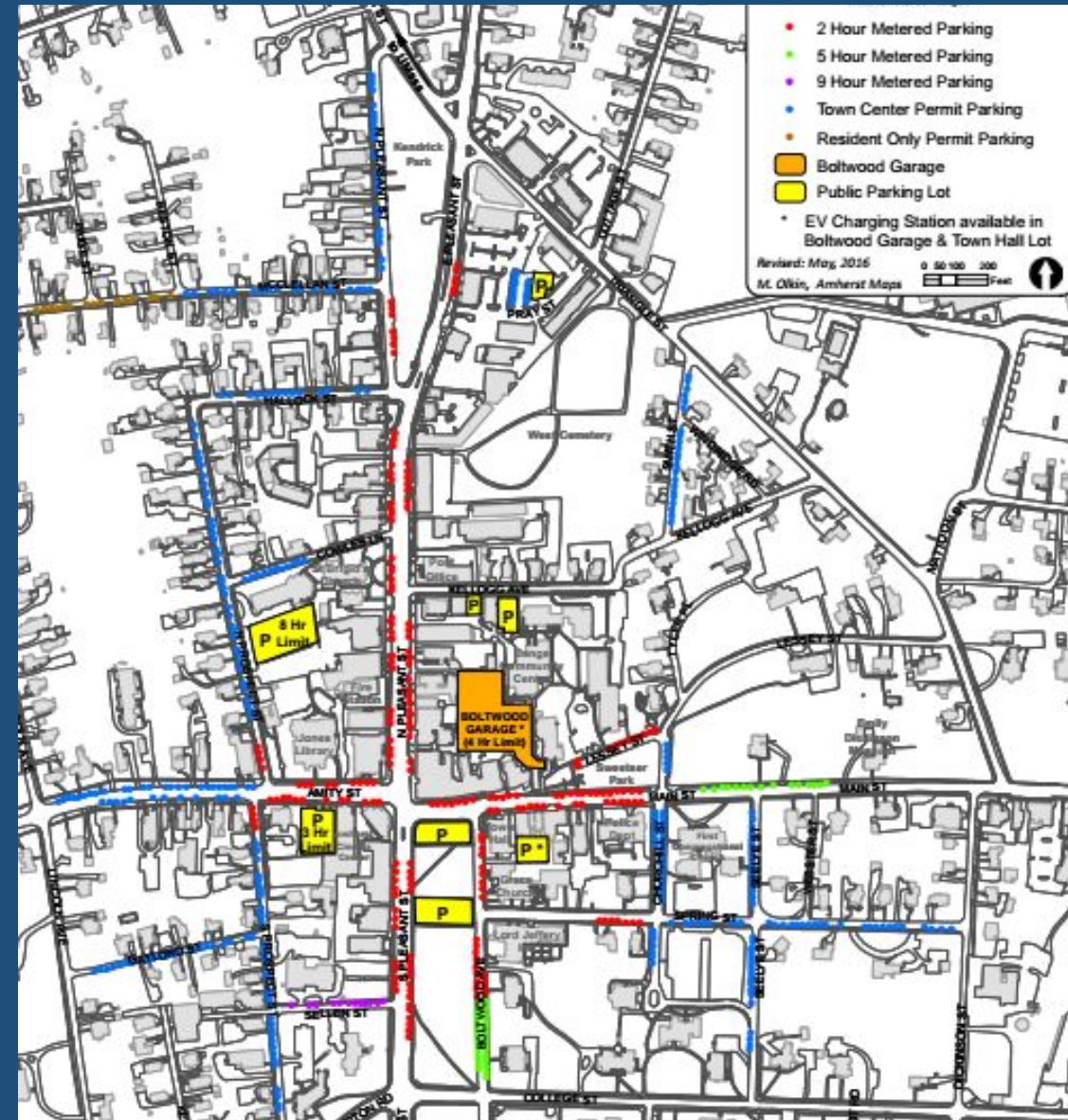
Downtown Parking Working Group (DPWG)

- **Broad community representation with 7 members—**
  - commercial property owner,
  - downtown resident, downtown business owner/manager,
  - Planning Board representative,
  - Select Board representative,
  - at-large members,
  - staff support from Planning, Public Works, Treasurer/Collector

- **Term limited (2 yrs.) committee**

- **Identify short, medium and long range strategies**

- **Refine and present prioritized parking recommendations to the Select Board for action**

- **Identify baseline information required prior to further consideration of a parking facility and other changes**

# DPWG Goals and Recommendations– Phase 1

- **Demand-based parking**
- **Turnover of prime spots**
- **Consistent regulations**
- **Increase visibility of parking**
- **Community input—June 2017 forum and 3+ meeting with Select Board (televised)**

Demand-based parking (or tiered pricing)

- **Goal is to have 10-15% vacancy of prime spots at any given time**
- **Price of parking is proportionate to demand**
- **Encourage use of all parking (i.e. peripheral spaces cost less for longer term parking)**

The High Cost of Free Parking
DONALD SHOUP
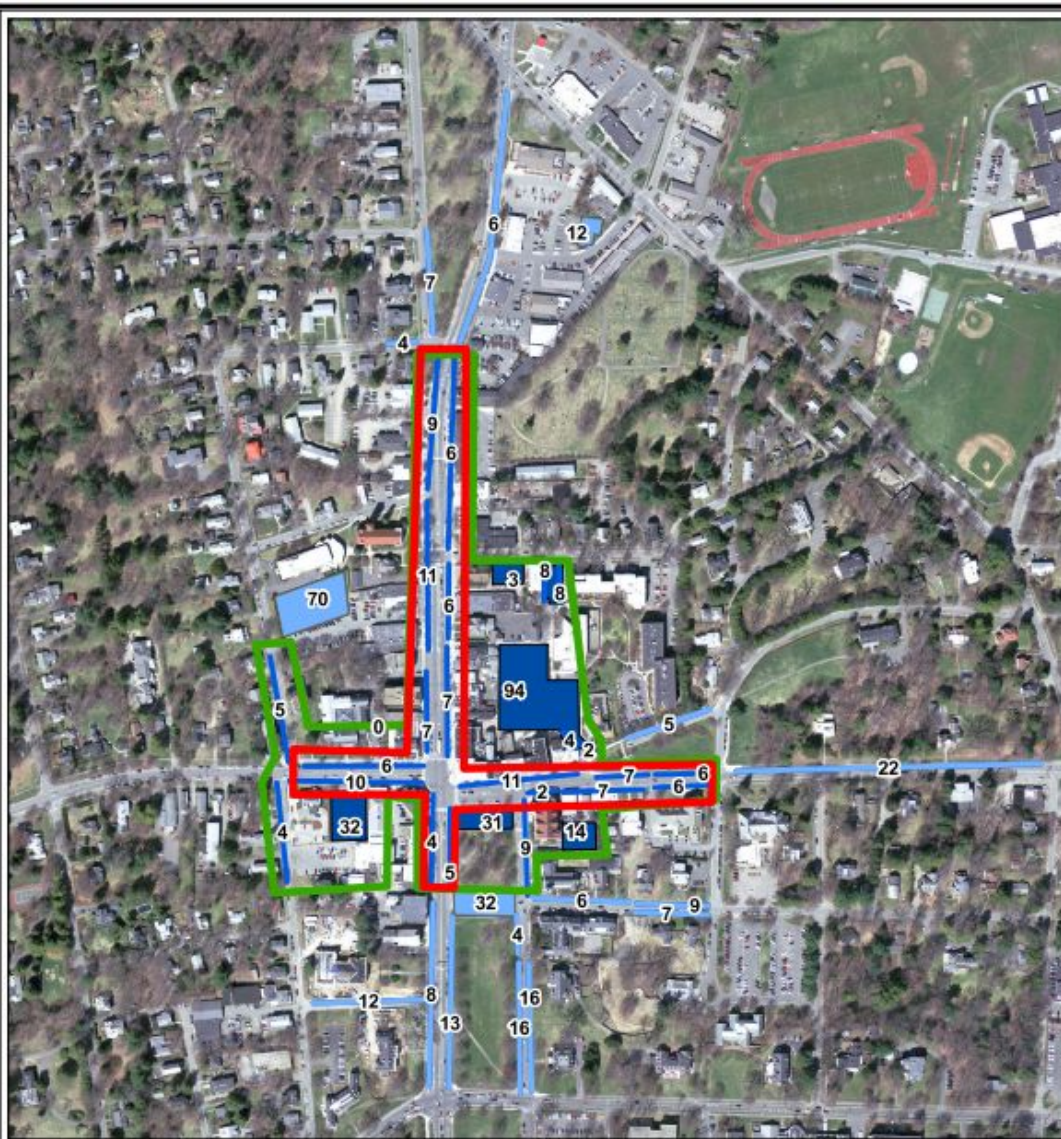
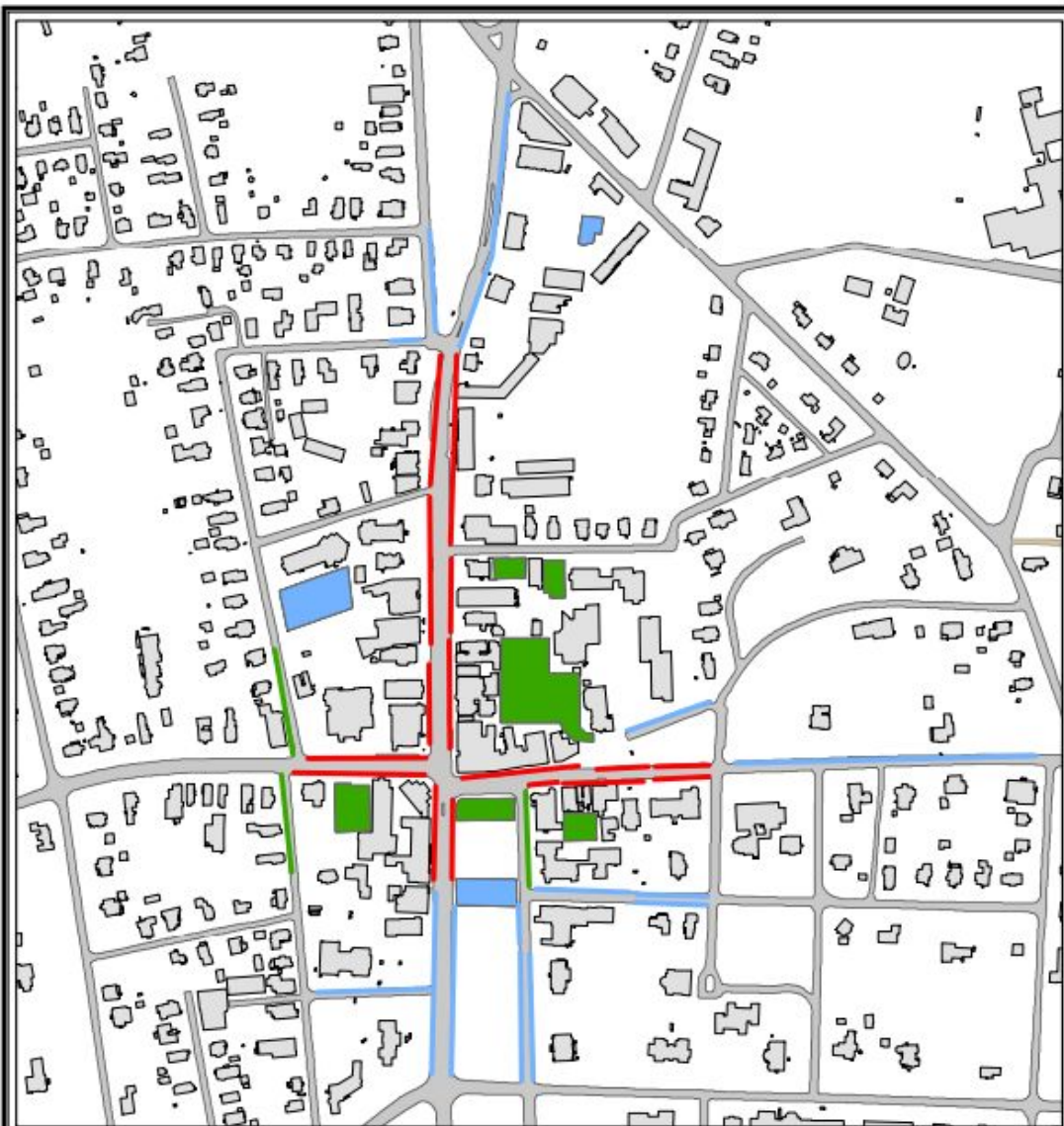Town of Amherst **DPWG Recommended Parking Boundaries**

www.amherstma.gov/maps

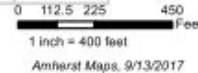Horizontal Datum: MA Stateplane Coordinate System, Zone 4151, Datum NAD83, Feet

Planimetric basemap features compiled at 1"=40' scale from April, 2009 Aerial Photography.

Parcels compiled through a "best-fit" methodology to match the basemap; revisions are ongoing. Property Lines are not for conveyance purposes.

The Town of Amherst and its mapping contractors assume no legal responsibility for the information contained herein.

Legend

☐ Mini-core
☐ Core
■ Public Lots
— Parking Counts by Staff

|	In Core		Outside Core		Total Metered Spaces*
Mini-Core (red)	110	18%	513	82%	623
Core (green)	324	52%	299	48%	623
Between Mini-core and Core	214	34%			623
* excludes 10 spaces designated for EV (3) and 15-min free (7)
Note: LL Boltwood Garage is outside of core and mini-core

0   112.5   225   450
Feet
1 inch = 400 feet

Amherst Maps, 9/13/2017

Town of Amherst **DPWG Recommended Parking Rates and Times**

www.amherstma.gov/maps

Horizontal Datum: MA Stateplane Coordinate System, Zone 4151, Datum NAD83, Feet

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Legend

— $1/hr, 2 hour limit, 8am-8pm
— $1/hr, 4 hour limit, 8am-8pm
— $.50/hr, 4 hour limit, 8am-6pm

0   112.5   225   450
Feet
1 inch = 400 feet

Amherst Maps, 9/13/2017
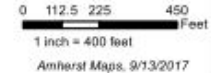
Recommendations: For Clarity, Consistency and to Encourage Turnover – Phase I

- Identify parking core
- Increase rates in core: 50 cents to $1/hr.
- Consistent time limits: 2 hr and 4 hr
- Consistent hours of enforcement: 8 am- 8 pm
- Use enforcement to discourage meter feeding
- Increase parking ticket fines: $10 to $15
- New signs, webpages, outreach
- Allow overnight winter parking with weather emergency
- Mobile Payment option-Parking App
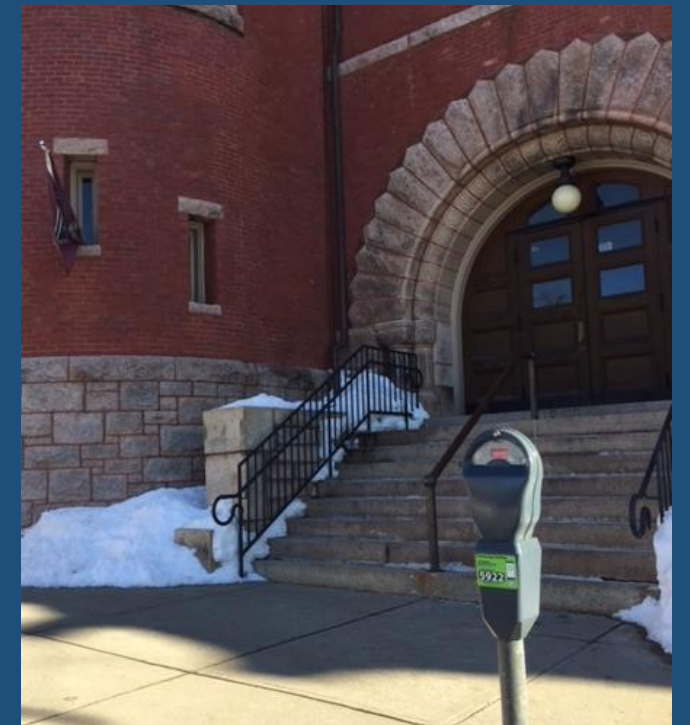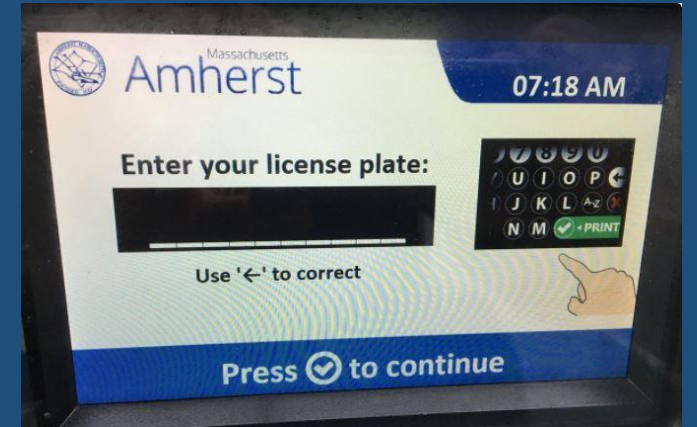
Recent Changes Implemented

- **New maps and webpage**

- **More parking available in the core**

- **Parking machines are easy to use**

- **Mobile App is used by many**

- **Few complaints**

- **Anecdotally, more town center permits (on street parking) are used**