

# 2015 Downtown Parking Study

City of Linden

Genesee County, Michigan

November 2015

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Executive Summary

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## Study Purpose and Mission Statement

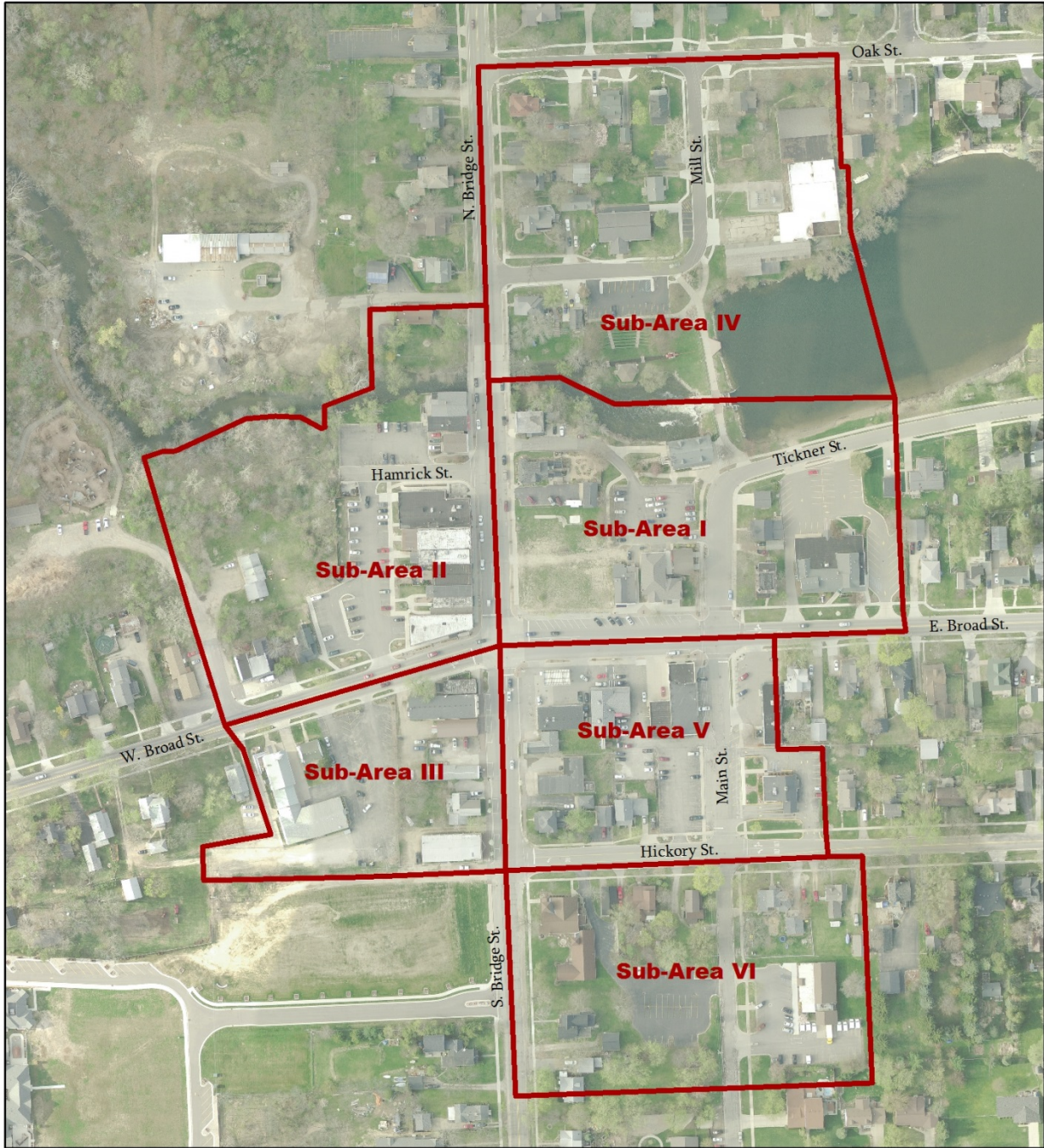
The City of Linden Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has undertaken this study to assess existing parking conditions, evaluate parking future needs, and identify strategies for parking improvements within Downtown Linden. It is the intent of the DDA and this parking study to provide and maintain convenient and safe downtown parking, and to beautify, preserve, and protect Linden's historic character and small town appeal. The DDA recognizes that adequate parking is a functional necessity that must be acted on, as a community, in order to maintain the Downtown's viability.

## Scope of Work

The 2015 Downtown Parking Study is an update to a parking study which was prepared by an ad-hoc Downtown Parking Committee in 1994. This updated parking study accounts for changes to the parking network that have occurred since 1994 and addresses contemporary issues and challenges currently being faced within Downtown Linden.

The study area for this project encompasses the downtown core of the City of Linden, generally surrounding the intersection of Bridge Street and Broad Street. The specific study area limits are shown in the **Study Area Limits Map**. For the 1994 parking study, Downtown Linden was divided into five total study areas. This 2015 Downtown Parking Study has generally maintained the limits of these five study areas, but has added a sixth study area east of S. Bridge Street and south of Hickory Street.


The scope of work for this study began with an inventory of existing parking conditions. This inventory was completed through a combination of field investigations and aerial photography interpolation. A survey of downtown business owners was then conducted in order to gauge overall perceptions of parking needs and deficiencies. An analysis of parking demand and future needs was then completed. Finally, specific recommendations for improvements to the parking system were developed.



2015 Downtown  
Parking Study



**Study Area Limits**

 Study Sub-Areas

February 19, 2015



0 50 100 200 Feet

## Chapter 2: Existing Parking Inventory

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### Methodology

The study area for this analysis as shown on the **Study Area Limits Map** encompasses 28.5 acres. In the fall of 2014, City representatives conducted field investigations of existing parking facilities and documented parking lot locations and spaces. This field work was verified and refined utilizing aerial photography of the study area.

### Parking Inventory

The results of the inventory are displayed on the **Existing Parking Inventory Map**. Within the study area, there are a total of 489 existing parking spaces. Of these, 186 are found in public off-street parking lots, 212 are found within private off-street parking lots, and 91 are public on-street parking spaces.

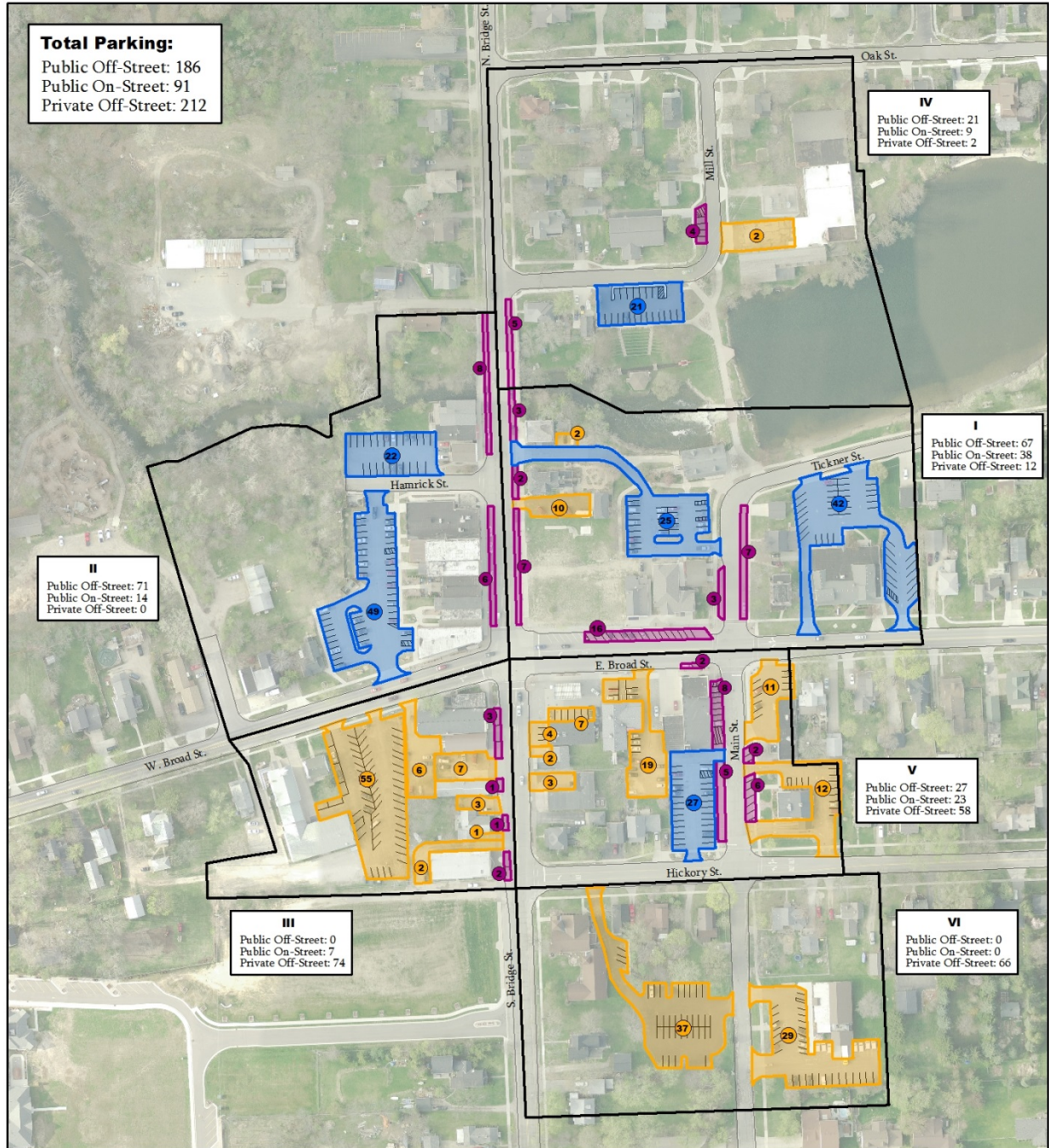
The 186 public off-street parking spaces are contained within 6 separate public parking lots. These lots are as follows:

1. Sharp Funeral Home Lot (Sub-Area I) – This 42 space public parking lot is located behind the Sharp Funeral Home business. Access to this lot is provided from East Broad Street as well as Tickner Street.
2. Mills Building Lot (Sub-Area I) – This 25 space parking lot is located adjacent to the Linden Mills Building. Access to this lot is provided from both North Bridge Street and Main Street.
3. North Side Hamrick Street Lot (Sub-Area II) – This 22 space parking lot primarily serves the businesses which are located along and front North Bridge Street.
4. Hamrick/West Broad Street Lot (Sub-Area II) – Located between West Broad Street and Hamrick Street, this 49 space parking lot serves the businesses which front North Bridge Street. All of these businesses have rear entries from this public parking lot.
5. Mill Street Lot (Sub-Area IV) – This 21 space parking lot serves the northern portion of downtown, including the VFW Hall, Mill Pond Park, and the Linden Mills Building.
6. City Hall Lot (Sub-Area V) – This 27 space parking lot is located south of Linden City Hall. Access to the lot is provided from Hickory Street and Main Street.

Generally, the public parking lots within Downtown Linden are well distributed. However, a critical gap exists within Sub-Area III where no public parking lots are found. The development of a public parking lot within this sub-area would provide needed additional parking spaces for the businesses which front South Bridge Street in this vicinity.

A total of 91 on-street parking spaces are available within the study area. In most cases, these spaces are striped; however, along certain stretches of road, on-street parking is allowed but the spaces are not striped. On-street parking is provided along North and South Bridge Streets, East Broad Street, Main Street and Mill Street.





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**Existing Parking Inventory**

- Public Off-Street Parking Lot
- Public On-Street Parking
- Private Off-Street Parking Lot
- Parking Lot Striping
- Parking Sub-Areas
- Streets



February 19, 2015

0 50 100 200 Feet

A total of 212 private off-street parking spaces are available within the study area. These private off-street parking lots are concentrated in the southern portion of Downtown Linden, south of Broad Street (Sub-Areas III, V and VI). The largest private off-street parking lot is located on the south side of West Broad Street and serves the Linden Presbyterian Church.

The following is a breakdown of the existing available parking within each sub-area (also refer to the **Existing Parking Inventory Map**):

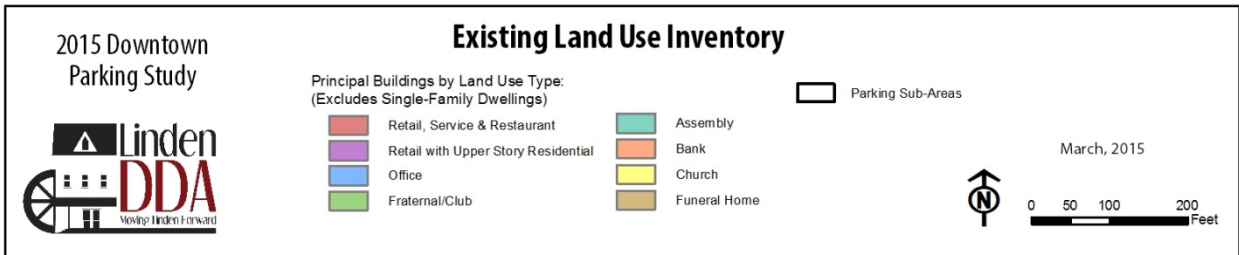
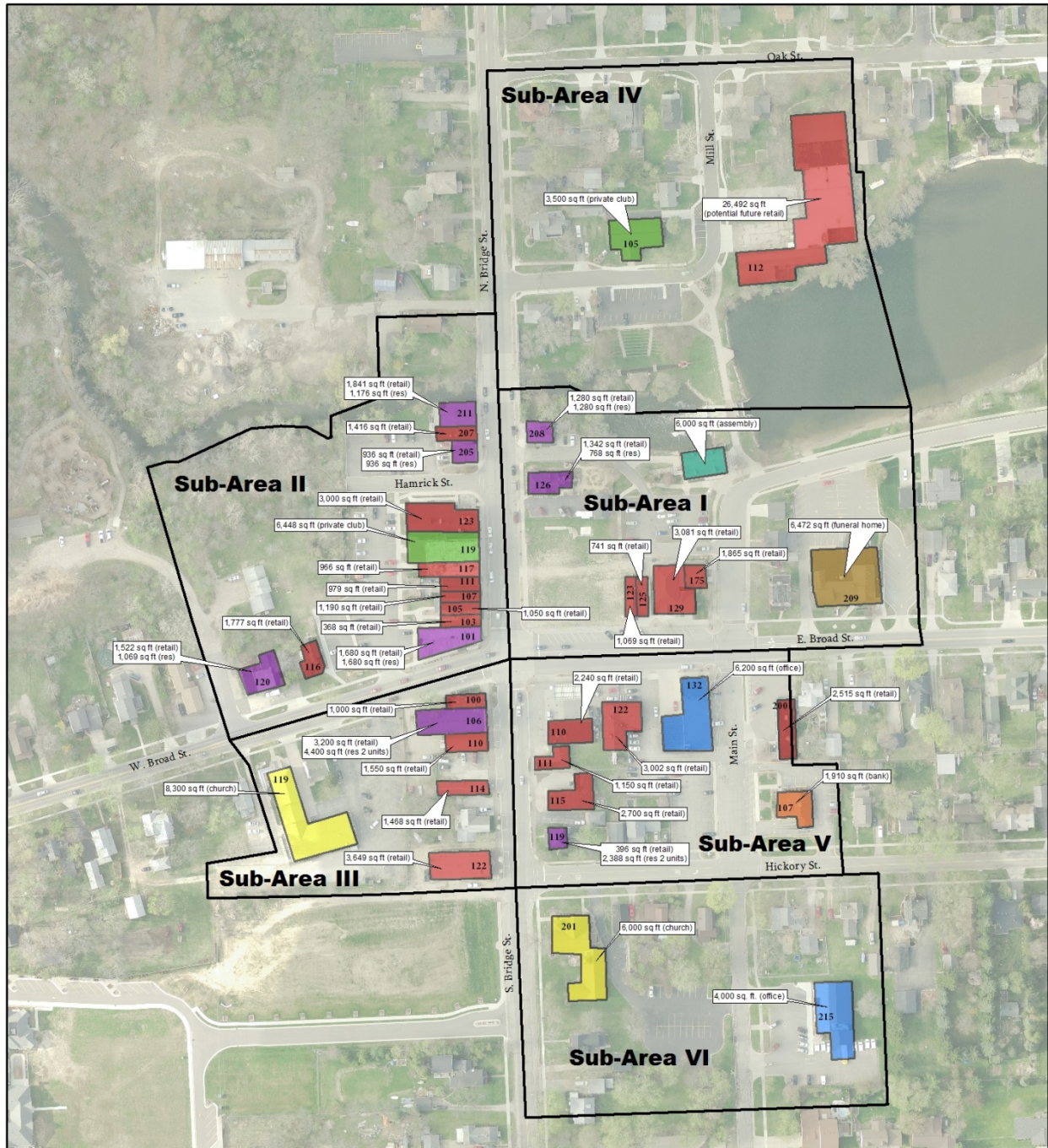
Sub-Area	Public Off-Street Spaces	Public On-Street Spaces	Private Off-Street Spaces	Total
I	67	38	12	117
II	71	14	0	85
III	0	7	74	81
IV	21	9	2	32
V	27	28	58	108
VI	0	0	66	66
<b>Totals</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>489</b>

## Land Use Inventory

Based on information compiled through property assessment records and a field inventory in late 2014, the study area contains 39 separate commercial, office, industrial, civic and mixed-use buildings (excludes single-family dwellings) totaling approximately 136,000 square feet of gross floor space. The locations of these buildings and their land use types are shown on the **Existing Land Use Inventory Map**. Several existing buildings, or portions thereof, are presently vacant; therefore, the land use types shown on the map reflect either their existing usage or potential future usage. The following is a breakdown of the existing land uses by building floor space:

Land Use Type	No. of Buildings	Approx. Gross Floor Space
Retail, Service & Restaurant	22	61,000
Retail with Upper Story Residential	8	26,000
Office	2	10,000
Fraternal/Club	2	10,000
Assembly	1	6,000
Bank	1	2,000
Church	2	14,500
Funeral Home	1	6,500
<b>Totals</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>136,000</b>







## Chapter 3: Parking Demand Analysis

### Parking Requirements per City Zoning Code

An evaluation of the required parking has been conducted in order to gauge parking supply within the Study Area. This evaluation is based on the City's currently adopted parking requirements (as outlined in Article 10 of the City of Linden Zoning Ordinance), applied against building floor space and land use types. The following zoning code parking requirements and assumptions have been utilized for this evaluation:

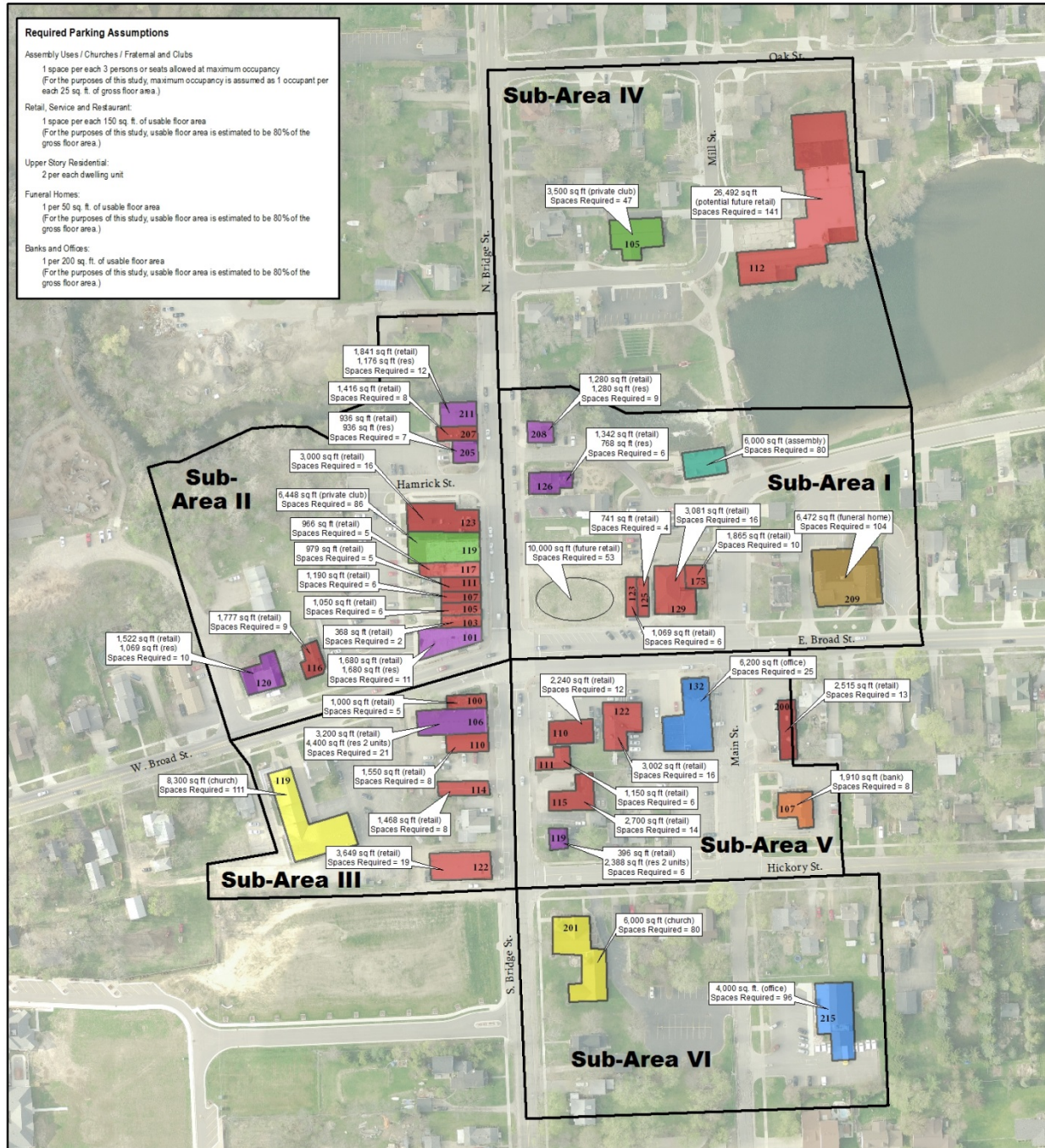
1. Assembly Uses / Churches / Fraternal and Clubs = 1 parking space per each 3 persons or seats allowed at maximum occupancy. For the purposes of this study, maximum occupancy is assumed as 1 occupant per each 25 sq. ft. of gross floor area.
2. Retail, Service and Restaurants = 1 parking space per each 150 sq. ft. of usable floor area. For the purposes of this study, usable floor area is estimated to be 80% of the gross floor area.
3. Upper Story Residential = 2 parking spaces per each dwelling unit.
4. Funeral Homes = 1 parking space per 50 sq. ft. of usable floor area. For the purposes of this study, usable floor area is estimated to be 80% of the gross floor area.
5. Banks and Offices = 1 per 200 sq. ft. of usable floor area. For the purposes of this study, usable floor area is estimated to be 80% of the gross floor area.

This evaluation represents the parking requirements for the Study Area at "full build-out", where every building in the Study Area is 100% occupied. For example, the 26,492 square foot "Evan's Building" located in Study Area IV is presently vacant; however, for the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the entire building will be occupied for retail development at future build-out. The future build-out scenario also includes the addition of a 10,000 square foot future retail building at the northeast corner of Bridge and Broad Streets.


The results of the parking requirements evaluation are displayed on the **Zoning Code Parking Requirements Map** and are summarized in the table below.

Sub-Area	Existing Parking Spaces	Required Parking Spaces	Surplus/ Deficiency
I	117	291	-174
II	85	183	-98
III	81	172	-91
IV	32	188	-156
V	50	100	-50
VI	66	96	-30
<b>Totals</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>-599</b>

As can be seen, there would be a significant deficiency of parking space within the Study Area at a full build-out scenario (1,030 parking spaces required versus 431 existing parking spaces for a deficiency of 599 parking spaces). Each sub-area would demonstrate a deficiency in required parking versus existing parking. The most significant deficiency would occur in Sub-Area IV, which contains only 32 existing spaces but would require 188 total parking spaces at full build-out.



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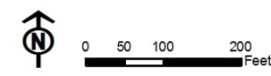


### Zoning Code Parking Requirements

Principal Buildings by Land Use Type:  
(Excludes Single-Family Dwellings)

<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #e67e22; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Retail, Service & Restaurant	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #2980b9; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Assembly
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #9b59b6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Retail with Upper Story Residential	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #f1c40f; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Bank
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #3498db; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Office	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #f1c40f; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Church
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #2ecc71; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Fraternal/Club	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8e44ad; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Funeral Home

March, 2015



0 50 100 200 Feet

The actual parking needs within downtown are likely to be less than the above zoning code calculations would indicate. Again, the above calculations assume a full build-out scenario with 100% occupancy rates. In reality, there will always be certain businesses or uses that are only used on a seasonal basis, or which are used only sparingly, such as church buildings. Additionally, some buildings within the downtown core will not devote their entire square footage for their stated use, but instead may dedicate a portion of the building for ancillary uses, such as restrooms or storage. Finally, the above zoning code analysis does not factor in the potential for shared parking reductions. The great variety of businesses, institutions and uses located in downtown means that many will have differing peak times and/or hours of operation. Banks, for example, typically have operating hours during weekday mornings and afternoons. Churches, for example, typically have peak hours on evenings and weekends. Therefore, a public parking lot which is in close proximity to both a bank and church will not need to accommodate the combined parking space demand of both the bank and church.

### **Business Owner Survey**

In order to gauge actual and perceived parking needs within downtown, a Linden Parking Questionnaire was created and distributed to business owners within the study area in late 2014. Because the questionnaires were hand delivered, an approximately 75% response rate was achieved with 25 total responses. When asked if they felt that there was a parking problem in downtown, 11 business owners responded that there was (44%) while 14 responded that there was not (56%). Several business owners offered suggestions to address parking within downtown, which included the need for better parking signage, parking lighting, more diagonal parking on the street, and a parking structure (garage).



## Chapter 4: Recommendations

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Based on the analyses and conclusions outlined above, as well as direction provided by DDA Board members, local business owners, and City staff, the following recommendations are offered to improve the overall parking situation within Downtown Linden. Low cost recommendations with immediate positive results are defined as near-term strategies. Additional mid-term and long-term strategies are also recommended for later implementation. Certain recommendations are highlighted on the **Parking Recommendations Map**.

### Near-Term Strategies

#### *Public Awareness Campaign*

The DDA Board should begin a public awareness campaign that will accomplish the following objectives:

1. Educate prospective visitors and customers on the locations of safe and convenient public parking, existing businesses and attractions, and the routes between parking and these businesses (sidewalks and other pedestrian routes).
2. Educate downtown business owners and employees on the importance of “reserving” prime parking spots for customers, while directing employees to park in less convenient parking spots which are less attractive to potential customers

The public awareness campaign should include the development of various maps and display materials which would be available online (City, DDA and Chamber websites, private business websites, etc.) and in print (at City Hall, in businesses, strategically located parking kiosks, bulletin boards, etc.). The DDA, City and business owners should work together to facilitate employer-based initiatives to encourage employee use of alternate modes of travel and/or car-pools.

#### *New or Reconfigured Parking Striping*

In several areas of downtown, existing on-street and off-street parking striping should be re-striped, while new and/or reconfigured parking striping should be implemented within other areas. These locations are shown on the **Parking Recommendations Map** and are described below:

1. New on-street parallel parking striping along Main Street, north of Broad Street.
2. Reconfigured on-street parking striping along Main Street, between Hickory and Broad. Currently, this area features a combination of perpendicular parking (in front of City Hall), parallel parking (in front of the public parking lot) and angled parking (in front of the bank). A reconfiguration of on-street parking is needed to create additional parking and establish consistency in parking configuration.
3. New on-street parallel or diagonal parking striping along the west side of South Bridge Street, between Hickory Street and the entrance to Caretel Inns.
4. New on-street parallel parking along Mill Street, east of North Bridge Street.

5. New on-street parallel parking along Hamrick Street, west of North Bridge Street. In order to maintain two-way traffic and accommodate on-street parallel parking on the north side of Hamrick Street, the first row of parking within the adjacent City parking lot could be shifted north.

### ***Wayfinding Improvements***

Over the years, the City has implemented a parking signage program to facilitate the easy identification of public parking lots (see photo at right). This existing signage should be the foundation for the establishment of a broader wayfinding system. Directional signage to the parking lot should be provided to help visitors locate parking resources. Then, identification signs should be located at the entrance of each parking lot which identifies it as a public parking lot. Finally, pedestrian-oriented directory signs or kiosks should be provided in strategic locations which can be used by visitors, once they have parked, to identify their specific destination and easily navigate within downtown.



An example of an existing Municipal Parking Lot Identification Sign

Proposed new wayfinding signage is shown on the **Recommended Parking Improvements Map**. New directional signs stating “P” or “Parking” with arrows should be provided along Bridge and Broad Streets, the primary vehicular entryway routes into downtown Linden. These directional signs will point visitors toward public parking lots. Certain existing public parking lots do not have identification signs. New such signs should be constructed, as shown on the improvements map. A directory sign or kiosk may not be necessary within each public parking lot. However, the improvements map shows several schematic locations for new directory signs or kiosks.



Example of a Potential Business Directory/  
Kiosk Sign



Potential New  
Parking  
Directional Sign

### ***Lighting, Safety and Pedestrian Comfort Improvements***

The City and DDA should work to provide for uniform and aesthetic shielded lighting to achieve high visibility and safety within all parking areas. The City and DDA should also work to provide certain improvements, such as benches, shade trees and emergency phones, which would enhance comfort and security within parking lots and along pedestrian routes that connect parking lots with businesses and destinations. Improving these issues can make public parking lots which are located further from primary destinations more attractive to visitors. The pedestrian route leading from Caritel Inns along South Bridge street to downtown is a key route that should be targeted for pedestrian safety and comfort improvements.

### ***Presbyterian Church Parking Shared Agreement***

The City and DDA should explore the potential to utilize the Linden Presbyterian Church private parking lot for public use. Presently, this 55 space parking lot is largely vacant during specific times and days, including weekday mornings and afternoons. During specific times, this parking lot could then be used for public parking to support the surrounding businesses. New identification and informational signage would need to be installed so that visitors are aware of the days and times that the lot can be used by the public.

### ***Zoning Changes***

Section 10.3.4 of the City of Linden Zoning Ordinance currently exempts buildings and uses located within the Central Business District from providing new off-street parking. Recognizing the availability of existing public parking within the Central Business District (which covers the majority of this study area), the City enacted this exemption as an incentive to stimulate new development within downtown. The City and DDA should explore potential modifications or reconfigurations of this parking exemption. For example, instead of complete exemption in downtown, a parking reduction could be written into the zoning language. This would continue to provide an incentive for new development but would also achieve the construction of new private parking within downtown. Another option would be to keep the parking exemption option, but allow it only after a contribution to a dedicated downtown parking fund.

## **Mid- and Long-Term Strategies**

### ***Downtown Parking Fund / Payment in Lieu of Parking Program***

The City and DDA should consider the establishment of a dedicated downtown parking fund to cover future public parking improvements. This can be achieved through the delineation of a special downtown parking district and establishment of a parking overlay zone within the City Zoning Ordinance. A payment-in-lieu of parking option could be implemented by the City which would provide a funding source for the parking fund. The payment-in-lieu of parking option could be configured in numerous ways. It could be crafted to provide developers a density bonus in exchange for contributions to the parking fund. It could also be crafted to allow developers to construct fewer on-site parking spaces than required by the zoning ordinance in exchange for a contribution to the parking fund for the equivalent costs of the spaces that are not constructed on-site. Another option to build the downtown parking fund is through the establishment of a special assessment district.



### ***New Private Off-Street Parking Lots***

Given their potential to accommodate a significant sized development, two key redevelopment sites within Downtown Linden will require the construction of new private off-street parking to serve their customers. These include the “Evans Building” site located on Mill Street and the former “Union Block” located at the northeast corner of Bridge and Broad Street. A public/private arrangement could be established at the time these properties are developed to allow for these lots to be used as parking for any business or destination within the vicinity.

### ***New Public On-Street and Off-Street Parking***

As a long-term goal, the City and DDA should seek to construct additional on-street and off-street parking within Downtown Linden, where necessary to accommodate increased parking demands. Although space for new public parking construction is generally limited within the study area, the following opportunities for new public parking may exist:

1. New on-street parallel or diagonal parking could be accommodated along East Broad Street, east of Main Street. Presently, the existing sidewalk in this area is located approximately 20 feet from the street edge, which could allow for new on-street parking.
2. The existing 22 space public parking lot on the north side of Hamrick Street could potentially be expanded further to the west.
3. The existing 21 space parking lot on the south side of Mill Street could potentially be expanded further to the west.
4. An existing unimproved and underutilized private parking area behind the businesses along the west side of South Bridge Street could potentially be improved and converted to public parking.
5. Other underutilized or vacant sites may become available in the future for lease or purchase for use as public off-street parking. The City and DDA should carefully evaluate such opportunities, where necessary to accommodate increased parking demands.

### ***Promote Pedestrian, Non-Motorized, Ride-Sharing, Transit and other Alternatives to Vehicular Travel***

As a long-term strategy to reduce the overall demand for parking, the City and DDA should encourage and promote alternatives to vehicular travel to and within Downtown Linden. Pedestrian improvements, such as benches and sidewalks, would enhance mobility within the study area and could lead to higher use of parking lots which are further away from the business core. Non-motorized improvements such as bicycle racks and canoe/kayak storage racks would allow for visitors to arrive by bicycle or boat as opposed to their car. The support of ride-sharing and transit alternatives, such as an employee car pool program, shuttle bussing during peak weekends, and dial-a-ride service would additionally lessen the need for vehicular parking spaces.

