

City of  
**PENSACOLA**  
Parking Strategies as a Catalyst  
to Economic Development





# PARKING STRATEGIES AS A CATALYST TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

West Florida Regional Planning Council

Technical Assistance Planning Project

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# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to study the current parking supply and the existing parking regulations for the downtown Pensacola study area, review best practices from around the country, and project future parking demand in order to support current and future development and businesses.

The City of Pensacola (City), and in particular the downtown core, has experienced significant growth over the past five years, and the rate of change over the next five to ten years has the potential to be even greater. Based on research regarding other cities of similar size and characteristics, it is evident that an effectively implemented parking model can enhance growth, provide a more satisfying experience to users, and result in a more profitable outcome for business owners in the area. Consequently, the City is interested in developing an approach to implement a parking strategy that will enhance the current experience and complement the anticipated development of the urban core.

The City recognizes that issues with respect to parking are a subset of a broader economic development vision that also covers transportation and livability. One significant example of this is the impact that the re-routing and construction of the new Pensacola Bay Bridge will have on the flow of traffic into and out of the downtown area. Finding ways to maximize the economic impact of this change should be part of a longer-term vision.

The City has conducted parking evaluations in the past that were focused on operational aspects of parking in the downtown core. This analysis will include a larger study area, and will forecast the need for parking based on projected growth and demand in the downtown urban core.

In order to project the future need for parking in the City and develop a complete set of parking strategies as catalysts for economic development, this report has four sections as follows: Assessment of Current and Future Parking Supply and Demand, Regulatory Review, Review of Best Practices, and Recommendations and Implementation. A review of the existing supply (on street, surface lots, and parking structures) and demand for parking determines a baseline for understanding the current condition. This is an update to the baseline from previous studies and increases the size of the study area from previous analyses. The current regulatory framework guides how parking is created and managed, and can greatly affect future development in the study area. The second section of this report provides a review of the City's existing regulatory framework (land development codes, comprehensive plan, current parking ordinances, incentives, etc.) as they relate to current and future parking requirements in the study area. The Review of Best Practices utilizes case studies focused on how model downtown parking strategies can meet the projected demand, enhance current businesses, and support future economic development. The final section includes a comprehensive list of strategies responsive to the findings in the previous sections capable of being implemented.

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# Assessment of Current and Future Parking Supply and Demand

The West Florida Regional Planning Council team conducted a review of the parking supply (on-street, surface lots, and parking structures) in March 2016. The boundaries of the study area are shown on Map 1 in the Appendix, and correspond to five zones defined in the City of Pensacola's *Urban Redevelopment Advisory Committee Final Report*: West End, Palafox Commercial Core, East Waterfront, Seville and Aragon, and Gateway.

## METHODOLOGY

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) shapefiles were created to represent the parking supply (public and private, on-street and off-street) based upon data available from the City of Pensacola, aerial imagery, Google StreetView, and field visits. For the purposes of this study, public parking is considered any city or privately-owned parking that is available to all users. Private parking is city or privately-owned parking that is reserved for specific users such as business employees, customers, or residents.

Residential parking supply for single-family units is excluded for study purposes. The majority of single-family residences within the study area include private driveways or garages, whereas most multi-family residences, which were inventoried in this study, include private parking lots for resident and guest use only.

### On-Street Parking

On-street parking spaces were readily identified via aerial imagery and Google StreetView, and were classified as either marked or unmarked parking.

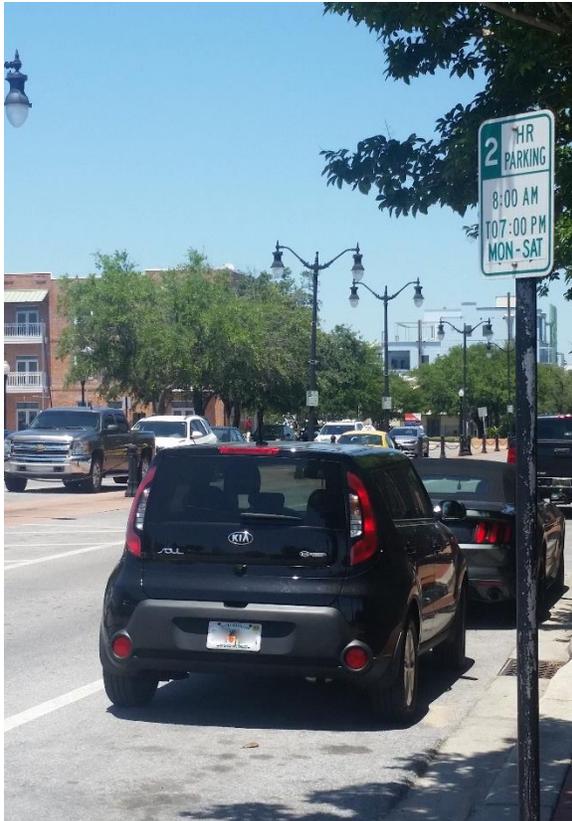
Marked on-street parking includes spaces delineated by pavement markings, either sectioning off individual stalls (Figure 1) or a contiguous length of area where parking is permitted. Where individual stalls were not delineated, a standard 20-foot per parking space was used to estimate the parking capacity.



Figure 1 - Marked On-Street Parking Source: Google StreetView

As part of the data collection, the marked on-street parking was broken down further as follows:

- Free, Unrestricted – free parking with no posted day or time restrictions
- Free, Time/Day Restrictions – free parking with posted time or day restrictions (Figure 2)
- Pay to Park/Meter – fee-based parking with meters or centralized pay stations (Figure 3)
- Permit Only – special permit required
- Accessible – disabled parking permit required



**Figure 2 - Free Parking with Time/Day Limitations**  
Source: WFRPC



**Figure 3 - Pay to Park** Source: WFRPC

Unmarked on-street parking includes other feasible street parking areas without posted restrictions (Figure 4). The standard 20-foot per parking space was used to estimate the parking capacity. Driveways and fire hydrant access points were excluded where visible.

Some streets included in the unmarked on-street parking count are narrow and not likely to experience vehicles stacked on both sides on a daily basis, but they do experience full feasible capacity during popular downtown events.



**Figure 4 - Unmarked On-Street Parking** *Source: WFRPC*

### **Off-Street Parking**

Off-street parking includes both public and private surface parking lots and parking garages. Single-Family Residential driveways and individual garages are excluded for study purposes. Due to access constraints, the police impound lot and the Port of Pensacola’s paved areas south of the administration building were excluded from the current parking supply as well.

As with the on-street parking, aerial photography and Google StreetView were used to collect parking space estimates for lots where data was not already available. Where individual parking stalls were not clearly visible from these sources, a standard 9-foot space width was used to estimate parking capacity.

Maps 1 through 6 in the Appendix depict the study area zones and their existing parking characteristics in more detail.

## PARKING INVENTORY

Table 1 provides a summary of the study area’s current parking supply broken down by study area zone. In total, the study identified 20,853 spaces, including 2,522 marked on-street spaces, 1,891 unmarked on-street spaces, 2,438 public off-street spaces, and 14,002 private off-street spaces.

**Table 1 - Current Parking Supply by Study Area Zone**

Study Area Zone	On-Street Parking		Off-Street Parking		Total
	Marked	Unmarked	Public	Private	
West End	612	551	454	3,009	<b>4,626</b>
Palafox Commercial Core	976	315	1,014	4,352	<b>6,657</b>
East Waterfront	258	0	652	1,340	<b>2,250</b>
Seville and Aragon	436	113	20	760	<b>1,329</b>
Gateway	240	912	298	4,541	<b>5,991</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,522</b>	<b>1,891</b>	<b>2,438</b>	<b>14,002</b>	<b>20,853</b>

*\*Single-Family Residential driveways and individual garages are excluded for study purposes.*

### On-Street Parking Supply

Of the 2,522 total marked on-street parking spaces identified within the study area, 51% are free and unrestricted. Free parking with time and/or day restrictions accounts for 24.9% of identified spaces, with paid parking (meters or pay stations) accounting for 20.6%, permit-only parking for 0.7%, and handicapped-accessible parking for 2.8%. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of marked on-street parking by type.

**Table 2 - Marked On-Street Parking by Type and Study Area Zone**

Study Area Zone	Free, Unrestricted	Free, Time/Day Restrictions	Pay to Park/Meter	Permit Only	Accessible	Total
West End	349	11	245	5	2	<b>612</b>
Palafox Commercial Core	263	400	274	4	35	<b>976</b>
East Waterfront	17	217	0	8	16	<b>258</b>
Seville and Aragon	427	0	0	0	9	<b>436</b>
Gateway	231	0	0	0	9	<b>240</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,287</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2,522</b>

Allowing a standard 20-foot per vehicle, an additional 1,891 potential unmarked on-street parking spaces were identified within the study area.

## Off-Street Parking Supply

Of the 16,440 off-street parking spaces identified within the study area, approximately 2,438 spaces are publicly accessible to all users. The remainder of the spaces are considered private and are reserved for specific users.

**Table 3 - Off-Street Parking by Type and Study Area Zone**

Study Area Zone	Off-Street Parking		Total
	Public	Private	
West End	454	3,009	<b>3,463</b>
Palafox Commercial Core	1,014	4,352	<b>5,366</b>
East Waterfront	652	1,340	<b>1,992</b>
Seville and Aragon	20	760	<b>780</b>
Gateway	298	4,541	<b>4,839</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,438</b>	<b>14,002</b>	<b>16,440</b>

\*Single-Family Residential driveways and individual garages are excluded for study purposes.

The off-street public parking areas are identified by study area zone as follows:

### The West End

- Chappie James Parking Lot – 46 metered spaces at \$0.50/hour
- Government Street Parking Lot – 80 metered spaces at \$1.25 for 5 hours
- Pensacola City Hall –15 metered spaces at \$0.25/hour
- Bayfront Stadium – 313 spaces, event-dependent
- Judicial Center Parking Lot (Figure 5) – 180 spaces for special events only (*not included in public space count*)

### Palafox Commercial Core

- E Gadsden and N Palafox, on Lee Square – 6 spaces
- Civic Center Parking Lot, Corner of Alcaniz Street and Chase Street – 129 spaces
- Civic Center Parking Lot 2, Corner of Alcaniz Street and Gregory Street – 288 spaces
- North Palafox Parking Lot – 133 spaces at \$0.50/hour
- Jefferson Street Parking Garage – 293 spaces at \$0.50/hour 8am-6pm, \$2 flat rate after 6pm
- Surface lot next to Jefferson Street Garage – 20 spaces at \$0.50/hour 8am-6pm, \$2 flat rate after 6pm
- Baylen Street Parking Lot – 59 spaces at \$0.50/hour
- Intendencia Street Parking Garage – 433 spaces for special events only (*not included in public space count*)
- Tarragona Street Parking Lot North - 38 spaces at \$0.50/hour
- Tarragona Street Parking Lot South – 48 2-hour time limit spaces

### The East Waterfront

- Cedar and Jefferson Streets Lot 1 – 46 spaces (Public Parking 6pm-6am)
- Cedar and Jefferson Streets Lot 2 – 37 spaces (Public Parking 6pm-6am)
- South Jefferson Street Lot – 76 spaces (Closed 11pm-6am)
- Commendencia Lot – 154 spaces (Closed 11pm-6am)
- Plaza de Luna – 237 spaces
- Barracks Street Lot – 70 spaces
- Bartram Park – 32 spaces

### Seville and Aragon

- Fountain Park – 20 spaces

### Gateway

- Salamanca Street/Technology Park Site – 57 spaces
- 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue Boat Ramp/Graffiti Bridge – 20 spaces
- Visitor's Center – 41 spaces
- Visitor's Center/Fishing Pier/Park – 115 spaces
- West 3-Mile Bridge Landing – 65 spaces



Figure 5 - Judicial Center Parking Garage *Source: pensacolaparking.com*

## EXISTING PARKING DEMAND ANALYSIS

For the purposes of this analysis, the downtown study area was divided into five zones defined in the City of Pensacola’s *Urban Redevelopment Advisory Committee Final Report*: West End, Palafox Commercial Core, East Waterfront, Seville and Aragon, and Gateway. Each zone has a variety of land uses including office, residential, retail/commercial, and industrial. In order to calculate parking demand, data was obtained from the City of Pensacola that included land use codes and square footages.

Parking Demand was calculated using the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) publication *Parking Generation, 4th Edition*, published in 2010. This publication represents the national standard for calculating parking demand based on a variety of land uses. This analysis utilizes the ITE average weekday parking generation rate to determine parking demand. Land uses identified in the data received from the City of Pensacola were matched with the most similar corresponding land use in the ITE *Parking Generation* publication. These land uses were then aggregated into five general land use categories: Residential, Office, Retail/Commercial, Industrial, Hotel, and Civic/Institutional.

This methodology calculates the parking demand needed to support all land uses within each zone regardless of time of day or utilization of shared parking. It should be noted that the land use data used in this analysis does not account for office vacancy rates, therefore a 15.8% office vacancy rate was used. This was obtained from Commercial Real Estate Information (REIS 2013). A summary of demand compared to supply is shown in Table 4 and illustrates a current need for parking in the Palafox Commercial Core.

**Table 4 - Current Parking Supply and Demand Summary**

	West End	Palafox Commercial Core	East Waterfront	Seville and Aragon	Gateway	Total
<b>Current Supply</b>	4,626	6,657	2,250	1,329	5,991	<b>20,853</b>
<b>Current Demand</b>	4,161	8,656	1,486	1,178	5,212	<b>20,693</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>-1,999</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>160</b>

Figure 6 summarizes total existing unshared parking demand for each zone based on ITE parking demand calculations. It should be noted that the demand calculations for the West End zone include parking demand for the Community Maritime Park (Bayfront Stadium: 1,562 spaces and office complex: 190 spaces). The demand calculations for the East Waterfront zone include parking demand for Port of Pensacola activities. It should also be noted that the demand calculations for the Gateway zone include parking demand for the Pensacola Bay Center (2,523 spaces).

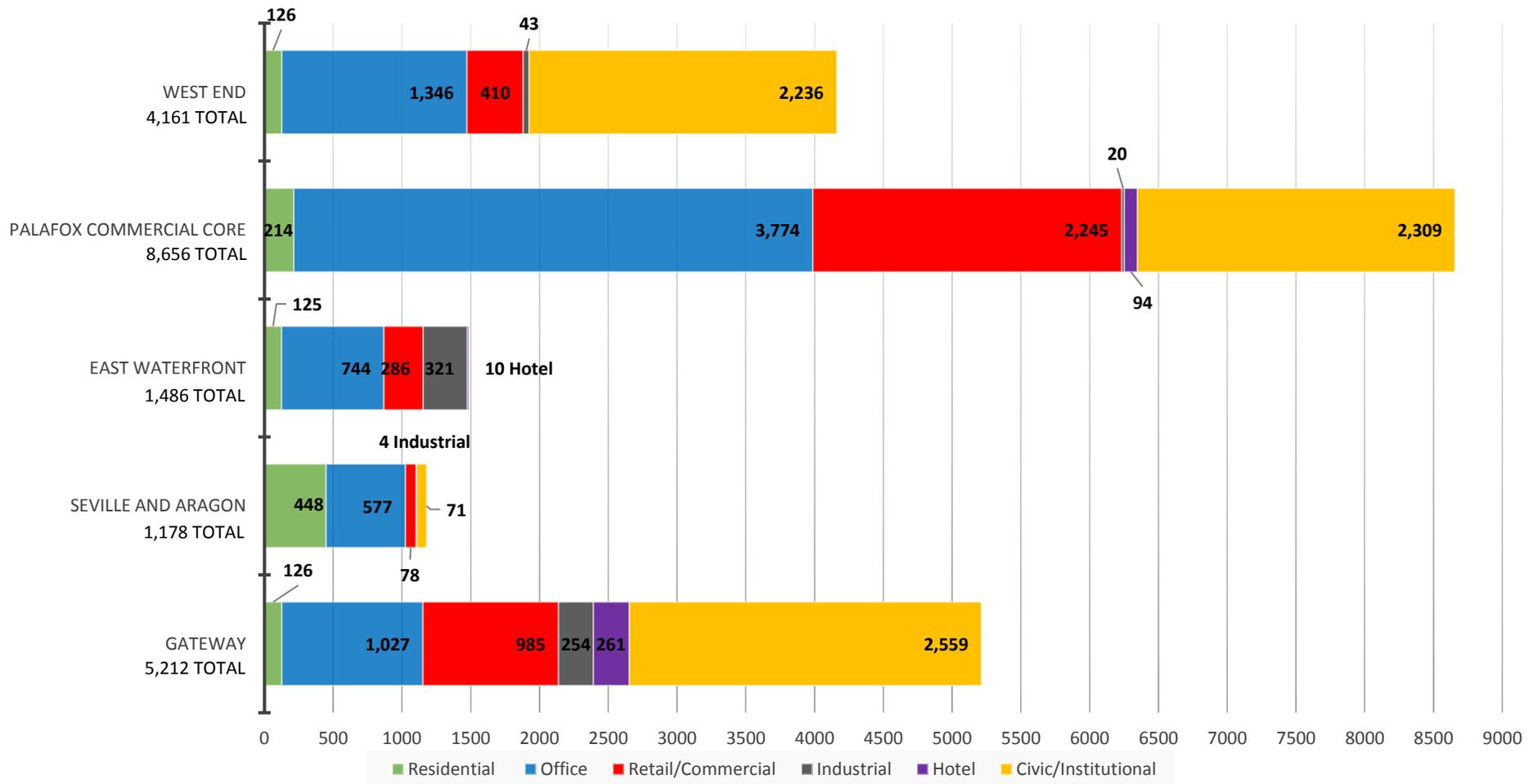


Figure 6 - Existing Parking Demand

## FUTURE PARKING DEMAND ANALYSIS

Future parking demand was forecasted based on new construction permits through January 2016 and future potential development obtained from the City of Pensacola. As with existing demand, future parking demand was calculated using ITE methodology. Table 5 summarizes all developments used in the future parking demand analysis. The major developments (highlighted in red) are illustrated on Map 7 in the Appendix.

**Table 5 - Downtown Pensacola Future Development\***

Future Development Projects	Square Footage/Units
<b>West End</b>	
Permitted Commercial Construction	5,366 sq. ft.
Permitted Residential Dwellings	10 units
Gulf Coast Marine Fisheries Hatchery/Enhancement Center	100,000 sq. ft.
Maritime Park Development	342,257 sq. ft. (retail/commercial), 185 units (residential), 120 rooms (hotel)
Future Retail/Commercial Development	807,602 sq. ft.
Future Residential Development	130 units
Future Hotel Development	24 rooms
Future Office Development	40,000 sq. ft.
<b>Palafox Commercial Core</b>	
YMCA	52,000 sq. ft.
Permitted Residential Dwellings	1 unit
Studer Properties Mixed-Use Office Project	46,000 sq. ft. (office), 11,000 sq. ft. (retail)
Studer Properties Mixed-Use Apartment Project	258 units, 15,500 sq. ft. (retail)
<b>East Waterfront</b>	
Holiday Inn Express	106 Rooms
Permitted Commercial Construction	37,653 sq. ft. (office)
Permitted Residential Dwellings	1 unit
Ferry Service	150-passenger boats
Future Commercial Development	19,439 sq. ft.
Future Office Development	97,193 sq. ft.
<b>Seville and Aragon</b>	
Permitted Residential Dwellings	4 units
<b>Gateway</b>	
Institute for Human and Machine Cognition Expansion	30,000 sq. ft.
Pensacola Technology Campus	310,000 sq. ft.
Hawkshaw Development	180 residential units, 9,000 sq. ft. (retail)
Other Permitted Commercial Construction	1,500 sq. ft.
Permitted Residential Dwellings	12 units
Future Retail/Commercial Development	104,974 sq. ft.

*\*Future Development is estimated based on the City of Pensacola's potential development information and future land use regulations.*

Table 6 summarizes total future unshared parking demand for each zone within the Downtown Pensacola study area. The analysis shows the entire study area having a net deficit of 2,268 parking spaces. These calculations are based on the future developments summarized in Table 5. The parking demand represents the maximum number of vehicles on an average weekday. It does not take turnover rates into consideration, and not all vehicles are going to remain parked throughout the entire day.

It is also important to note that many of the future developments represented in Table 5 are providing parking as required by the City of Pensacola’s Land Development Code. The Studer Properties mixed-use apartment project, located in the Palafox Commercial Core, will provide a 551-space garage to accommodate residents, the public, and YMCA patrons. The full build out design plan of the Pensacola Technology Campus, located in the Gateway zone, shows the provision of 1,058 parking spaces. As of June 2016, the conceptual planning studies of Hawkshaw Development, also located in the Gateway zone, indicates 210 parking spaces are incorporated into the design. As shown in Table 6, for the Palafox Commercial Core, the parking requirements in the Land Development Code for those projects with design plans are sufficiently covering the projected demand.

**Table 6 – Current and Future Parking Supply and Demand Summary**

	West End	Palafox Commercial Core	East Waterfront	Seville and Aragon	Gateway	Total
<b>Current Supply</b>	4,626	6,657	2,250	1,329	5,991	<b>20,853</b>
<b>Current Demand</b>	4,161	8,656	1,486	1,178	5,212	<b>20,693</b>
<b>Future Supply*</b>	0	551	0	0	1,268	<b>1,819</b>
<b>Future Demand</b>	2,022	541	522	7	1,155	<b>4,247</b>
<b>Total Supply</b>	4,626	7,208	2,250	1,329	7,259	<b>22,672</b>
<b>Total Demand</b>	6,183	9,197	2,008	1,185	6,367	<b>24,940</b>
<b>Total Difference</b>	<b>-1,557</b>	<b>-1,989</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>-2,268</b>

*\*Future supply represents only the parking that is known from official design plan proposals.*

## SHARED PARKING ANALYSIS – PALAFOX COMMERCIAL CORE

According to the Urban Land Institute (ULI), shared parking is the use of a parking space to serve two or more individual land uses without conflict or encroachment. This concept is particularly applicable to downtown areas that have a variety of land uses, such as residential, office, retail, restaurant, and entertainment, where time-of-day use varies. The concept of shared parking is key to mixed-use areas in that it allows these areas to avoid utilizing valuable areas of land for parking, allowing for a more efficient use of resources. ULI states that mixed-use developments that employ shared parking result in greater density and better pedestrian connectivity. This helps to reduce driving due to the fact that multiple destinations (i.e. stores and restaurants) can be accessed by walking.

The Palafox Commercial Core zone is a mixed-use area that contains many different land uses such as office buildings, restaurants, bars, music and theater venues, retail shops, and many others. Because of these characteristics, a shared parking analysis was performed on the Palafox Commercial Core to better determine

existing parking demand and parking characteristics. The shared parking analysis employed in this study uses the ULI *Shared Parking, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, published in 2005. The ULI shared parking methodology provides a way to apply adjustments to parking ratios for each use in a mixed-use area. As with the previous analysis, an office vacancy rate of 15.8% was assumed.

The ULI Shared Parking analysis shows a decrease from the ITE demand of 8,656 parking spaces to 7,482 spaces during the weekday peak. Figure 7 illustrates the shared parking demand for the Palafox Commercial Core at various times throughout the day. Using the shared parking methodology for the Palafox Commercial Core still shows a need for additional parking within that zone but increases the net surplus of the entire study area from 160 to 1,334 parking spaces.

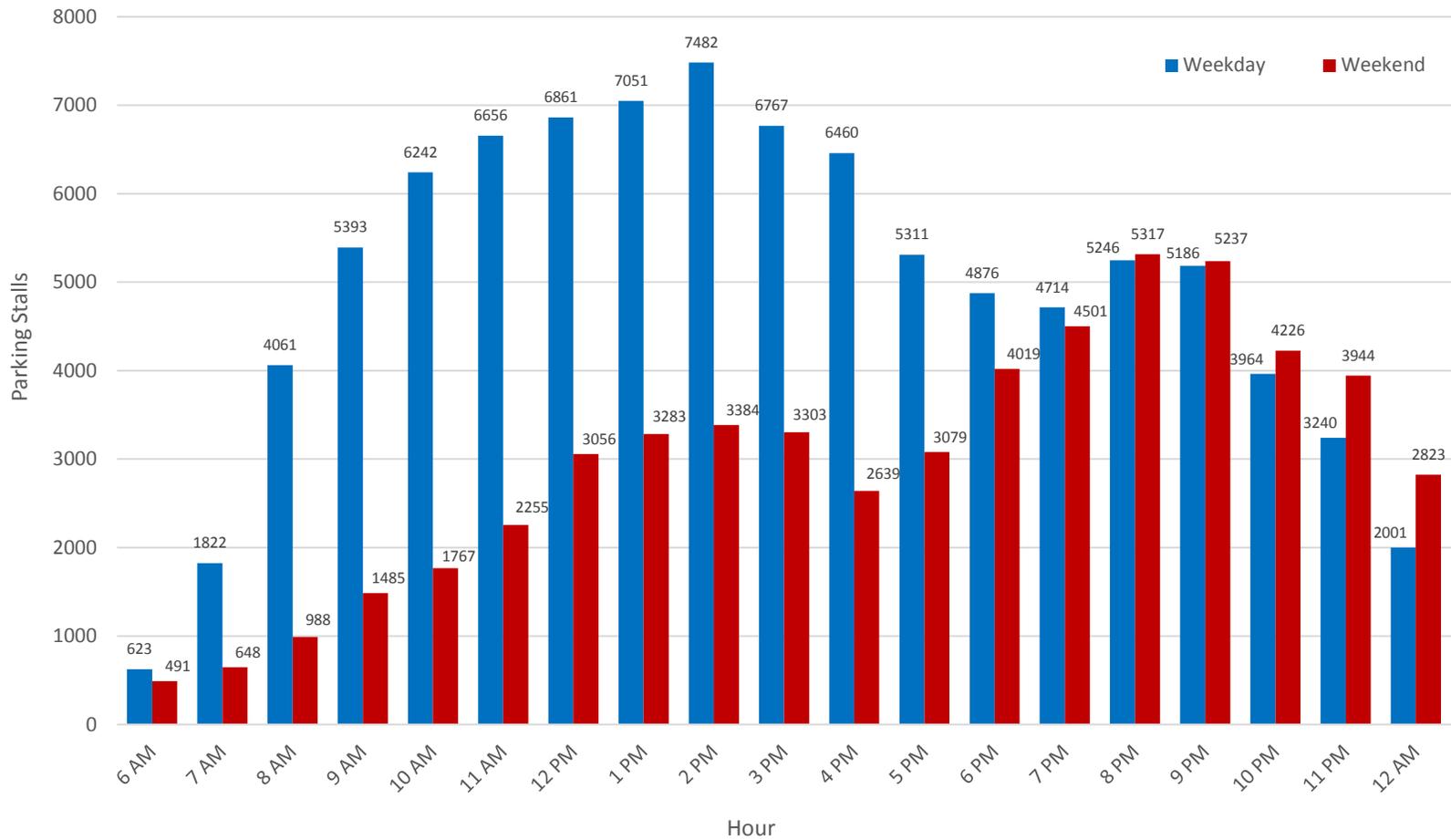


Figure 7 - Palafox Commercial Core: Shared Parking Demand

## CURRENT AND FUTURE PARKING SUPPLY AND DEMAND CONCLUSION

The demand analysis shows a current need for parking in the Palafox Commercial Core. The future demand analysis shows a continued need for parking in the Palafox Commercial Core and a new future need in the West End.

There is concern that the upcoming construction of the new 3-Mile Bridge will place an additional parking demand upon the Gateway Zone over the next several years. Also, potential increases in Port of Pensacola activities could increase demand within the East Waterfront Zone.

How the City implements the Land Development Code's parking requirements for future development will play a crucial role in the future parking supply. There are also a multitude of parking strategies to learn from that are being successfully utilized by municipalities throughout the country. The following sections will provide more detail regarding the current regulations used by the City of Pensacola and several parking strategies being used by other cities. The final section of this report outlines recommendations developed through this parking study.

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# Regulatory Review

Downtown development is regulated by the development-application review process outlined in Chapters 11 and 12 of the Land Development Code (LDC). The ability of its parking code to meet the unique demands of a downtown's built environment can strongly influence the success of commercial, office, and residential development. When developers have to go through a lengthy waiver process or modify their site design to meet antiquated parking regulations, it increases the cost of development and decreases the project's likelihood of coming to fruition. Parking codes have evolved beyond the notion that we need an over-abundance of parking in order keep a downtown economically viable. Developers and businesses know what their parking needs are in order to compete in the marketplace. The key is to ensure that by changing parking requirements, the community remains vibrant with access to commercial, office, and residential development through multiple modes of transportation (including walking, bicycling, transit, and car).

By understanding the City of Pensacola's current parking codes, we can assess which strategies are enhancing these goals, and where new strategies and policies could be improved. This assessment will help inform best practice recommendations. The City of Pensacola has modified their parking regulations in the Land Development Code through several progressive mechanisms. The LDC uses defined districts such as the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) as a tool to relax parking requirements. The LDC incorporates comprehensive strategies when determining parking availability by including on-street parking in calculations for off-street parking requirements in the CRA. Some of the commercial zone districts are exempt from off-street parking completely if they fit certain parameters pertaining to square footage and building height.

The downtown is comprised of many older buildings that have changed uses over time. The LDC recognizes that initial site design may not fit the current parking requirements of a new use; therefore, the parking spaces are considered in compliance if the building was built prior to 1994 and the use is maintained within the same building footprint. Applying realistic development code standards to old buildings means reducing costs to the private sector and increases investment in historic structures that are integral to the place-making of a community. Adapting parking requirements to the built environment realities of a historic downtown does not waive federal and state regulations regarding handicap accessibility.

The City of Pensacola enforces the Building Construction Standards, specified in Chapter 553, Florida Statutes; applicable Florida Administrative Codes; and the Florida Building Code that relate to accessibility by handicapped persons. The Land Development Code also requires handicapped parking spaces as a percentage of total required parking spaces for all developments other than single-family, duplex, or zero-lot-line residential. The percentage is dictated by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires one accessible space per twenty-five spaces. Accessible spaces must connect to the shortest possible accessible route to the building entrance or facility they serve.

In addition to considering factors such as building age and their location in the districts; the Land Development Code considers parking beyond a single parcel to satisfy requirements for a proposed use. Parking may be on the same parcel as the building, adjacent to the parcel, or on another separate parcel owned by the same person. There is also an opportunity to share parking facilities when two uses have different peak parking

hours, such as with a law office and a theater. Finally, there is the ability for new construction, additions, or new use in a dense area to comply with parking requirements through an in-lieu payment process. Through this strategy, the City collects money in lieu of the developer providing parking spaces, which is used for community-benefiting projects which eliminates a potential hindrance to economic development in the downtown.

Developments that do not meet any of the exemption criteria must follow conventional parking requirements. There is not a stringent maximum parking regulation which controls developers from providing an excessive amount of parking and negatively impacting the built and pedestrian environment. Despite a lack of maximum parking restrictions, the City discourages construction of more than the minimum number of parking spaces. This is done by requiring an administrative waiver should parking be in excess of more than ten (10) spaces or ten (10) percent (whichever is greater) above the parking totals dictated by the code. To promote downtown vibrancy, the City also encourages smart site design. This minimizes the impact of automobile parking through techniques that resemble form-based code, such as locating parking in the rear or side of the lot and breaking large parking lots into multiple smaller ones.

The availability of strategically located parking garages can condense parking into one location instead of having multiple surface level parking lots taking up valuable real estate. Multiple surface level parking lots viewable to pedestrians also creates gaps in a dense, walkable downtown. Parking garages can also be unsightly and out of scale with the surrounding environment, so the City has implemented design standards where garages do not dominate street frontage. Elements that characterize parking garages, such as ramps, must be screened from residential areas, and garage openings must be designed to obscure parked vehicles. Perhaps most importantly, the ground floor must be architecturally designed to accommodate the pedestrian scale. Figure 8 illustrates an example of mixed-use parking garage design.



**Figure 8 - Parking Garage Screened by Surrounding Mixed-Use Development** *Source: studerproperties.com*

The City of Pensacola has taken progressive steps in their development code to remove parking as a barrier to economic development. Absent from the LDC, however, is the flexibility on the planning and development sides to assess construction on an individual project basis. There does not appear to be an ability to allow an applicant to justify a certain number of parking spaces based on the vision of the general plan and market drivers for such a use. By looking at the plan, planners can comprehensively determine if there are any issues associated with the proposed parking instead of using rigid and conventional regulations based purely on gross square footage.

While there is an absence in flexibility for parking solutions on an individual project basis, there is also a noticeable absence of maximum parking standards clearly laid out in the required parking table, which is based on use. Also missing are design standards that acknowledge and incorporate structured garages into multi-use buildings. The LDC does not address the opportunity to implement transportation management plans (TMPs) with businesses when there is new construction or a change in use. TMP programs partner with the private sector to allow them an active role in improving downtown parking through employee transportation incentives and building modifications. The plans identify efforts to promote the use of transportation options such as walking, biking, and transit, and may include required parking and/or payment to a local Parking Fund. This program can also open the door for public/private partnerships to build parking structures.

It is important to note that the LDC often includes detailed regulations to be enforced based on a vision put forth by comprehensive plan policies and long range planning. In essence, the codes the City implements should be the result of an analysis based on future need and capacity. Parking is often overlooked or caught in limbo between long range transportation plans, which focus on roads, and comprehensive plans, which focus on land use. Thus, it is important for a city's master plan to consider the idealized build out and develop parking regulations to support the long-term plan, and create principles vetted by the community to shape the downtown into a built environment that is attractive to residents, businesses, and tourists. Establishing a desired percentage of public parking supply will guide development correctly, but give flexibility as to how it is accomplished. Development goals and smart growth that adhere to state and federal regulations and protect all members of society can be accomplished through best practices, partnerships, and unique financing opportunities. Creating objectives and policies that address long term parking planning also demands that the City make parking investments on the front end of the process.

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# Review of Best Practices

This Review of Best Practices is an analysis of cities from around the country that have implemented parking as a successful economic development strategy. In coordination with the City of Pensacola staff, the cities of Boulder, Colorado; Charleston, South Carolina; and Traverse City, Michigan, were identified for their parking strategies and/or their similarities with the City of Pensacola. While the City of Pensacola is a relatively small city, it has a very large metropolitan area and attracts visitors on a regular basis. Table 7 shows the population of each city and their respective metropolitan statistical areas as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Each of the case study cities were reviewed for best practice strategies to determine how parking is used in promoting economic development.

**Table 7 - Population by City and Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Area**

	July 1, 2014 City Population Estimates	July 1, 2014 Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Area Population Estimates
Boulder, Colorado	105,112	313,333
Charleston, South Carolina	130,113	727,689
Pensacola, Florida	53,068	474,081
Traverse City, Michigan	15,042	147,610

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## BOULDER, COLORADO

Boulder, Colorado, shown in Figure 9, is located northwest of Denver in a valley below the Flatirons of Colorado and has a population slightly over 100,000. Boulder is home to the teaching and research institution of University of Colorado Boulder.



Figure 9 - Downtown Boulder, CO Source: downtownboulder.com

Carl Walker was contracted by the City of Boulder to identify best practices to enhance the city’s parking program. The report generated through this contract highlighted the fact that the City of Boulder’s parking management operations provides more services than most other cities’ parking management services. In addition to their parking services, event coordination, and permitting, they also manage the downtown district and economic development for the commercial districts. Boulder’s parking has reached a sustainability loop: their parking program is able to contribute funding back to the community, attracting more visitors to the city who contribute back to the parking program and the local businesses. Boulder’s parking system provides funding for various programs that add value back into the community, including:

- Eco-Pass Program – Free bus passes for downtown employees
- Repayment of Pearl Street Mall improvement bond
- Funding to improvement district
- Parking structure debt service obligations
- Funding toward economic development initiatives

One notable practice is Boulder’s use of mixed-use development; Boulder’s 15<sup>th</sup> and Pearl Street Garage, located near the Pearl Street Mall in downtown Boulder, is a textbook example of **mixed-use parking design** (Figure 10). The garage is wrapped with retail space on the lower level and office space above. Mixed-use parking design is an economic development strategy as it allows parking to blend into the urban form of a vibrant downtown.



Figure 10 - 15th and Pearl Street Garage, Boulder, CO Source: [buildabetterburbs.org](http://buildabetterburbs.org)

## CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Charleston, South Carolina, shown in Figure 11, is located along the Atlantic Coast with deep roots in early American history. The city is a national leader in tourism management, boasting almost 5 million visitors in a tri-county area in 2012. Given the strong tourism industry in downtown, parking is identified as an issue in various plans, some containing goals to better utilize surface parking areas by adding **mixed-use buildings** that strategically conceal parking from the street front.



**Figure 11 - Downtown Charleston, SC** *Source: activerain.com*

The City of Charleston's Tourism Management Advisory Committee received survey results from the College of Charleston's Office of Tourism Analysis in 2014 that identified vehicle congestion and lack of parking as continuing concerns. In response, the City of Charleston updated their Tourism Management Plan in March of 2015. The plan produced numerous goals across five identified areas:

- Tourism Management and Enforcement
- Visitor Orientation
- Quality of Life
- Special Events
- Mobility and Transportation

Four of the five areas above included goals related specifically to congestion and parking, including:

- reducing and managing congestion
- identifying parking assets to encourage pedestrian traffic
- increasing alternative modes to transportation including public transit
- increasing the safety of pedestrians in a multi-modal transportation network
- providing a variety of parking options for residents and visitors
- developing park and ride lots

Of all the recommendations to come out of the Tourism Management Plan, three all-encompassing recommendations were identified as essential to the success of Charleston’s tourism. These recommendations included conducting a comprehensive traffic and parking study. The Tourism Management Plan also includes completion milestones with responsible parties listed for each recommendation identified to track the progress.

## TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN

Traverse City, Michigan, shown in Figure 12, is also a coastal city located on Grand Traverse Bay off of Lake Michigan. The Traverse City Parking System plays a vital role in the economic development of the downtown and is managed by the Downtown Development Authority. The system is self-sufficient, generating enough revenue to fund operations and maintenance of the parking system. In addition to utilizing **tax increment financing (TIF)** to pay off two bonds for recently-constructed parking garages, the Traverse City Parking System contributes funds to the City’s General Fund each year.



Figure 12 - Downtown Traverse City, MI *Source: traversecity.com*

Traverse City's Parking System has instituted a number of strategies which have improved customer services, as well as generated income for maintenance and operations of the parking system:

- **Meter Rates:** Meter rates were increased to align with the market rate, as determined by a comparison study conducted for the State of Michigan.
- **Meter Time Zones:** In locations throughout Traverse City, meter time zones accommodate a range of customers including three-hour meters for customers visiting downtown for shopping or leisure, and four- to ten-hour meters for downtown employees.
- **Payment Options:** Traverse City developed a website where customers could purchase permits and manage their parking accounts. Additionally, Pay Stations were installed throughout downtown which accept cash, coin, and credit cards.
- **Bicycle Parking:** The City assumed responsibility for on-street bike racks and expanded the number of racks available for use.

Traverse City does not have a parking requirement in the central business district, and prohibits private parking for most uses. Instead, the City provides parking utilizing optimal parking ratios to provide enough auto parking to serve existing businesses and accommodate planned growth. The City conducted a parking ratio analysis of their central business district, finding that the ratio is 363 square feet of commercial space per parking space, or about three parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial space.

Additionally, the City determined that promotion of redevelopment of underutilized land can be achieved by organizing off-street parking garages, promotion of other modes of transportation, and by increasing building density.

Traverse City staff members Nick Viox and Rob Bacigalupi conducted the study *How Much Parking Is Enough?: A Comparison of Similar Small City CBDs* to determine the optimal level of car parking necessary to promote economic development, but not reduce the quality of life in downtown with superfluous parking. They gathered data from peer cities with successful downtowns. They found that there was an average of 330 commercial square feet per total parking space and 564 commercial square feet per public parking space.

## OTHER BEST PRACTICES

### Parking Management

Parking management is an important element in any parking strategy. In 2006-2007, an operational assessment parking study was performed for the City of Pensacola which included a review of case studies with model parking management systems. Based on this study, the Pensacola Downtown Improvement Board now manages the city-owned parking downtown. It is important to note that mature parking programs manage their limited on-street resources to maximize their value by more effectively promoting turnover, enhancing customer services, and providing flexible parking options.

## Parking Design

Like the **mixed-used design** at the 15<sup>th</sup> and Pearl Street Garage in Boulder, Colorado, parking should be designed to fit into the community. It can be done in various ways with the other uses above, below, on both ends, or wrapped around the parking structure. Whether it is a parking structure or a parking lot, vehicles should not be the main feature. This can be accomplished through the location of the parking, landscaping, and architecture.

Another feature of parking design is the ability to provide for more parking with less pavement. Square footage is very valuable and in high demand in vibrant downtowns. Parking structures inherently provide more parking per footprint square footage than surface parking lots.

Parking design should promote the community's vision and quality of life. Parking structures can accommodate and/or promote transportation options through bicycle parking, electric vehicle charging stations, and bus passes for employees. Parking lots and structures can also provide "green" solutions with pervious pavement for stormwater runoff, solar power, or green roofs. Parking can also encourage a bikeable and walkable community by providing on-street parking which slows down vehicles and buffers pedestrians and bicyclists from the moving vehicles.

# Recommendations and Implementation

Based on the current and future demand analysis, additional new parking will be needed as developments occur in the Palafox Commercial Core and the West End. There are two overarching methods to address this emerging parking issue: 1. decrease demand, 2. increase supply.

## DECREASE DEMAND

Decreasing the demand for parking in a downtown area does not mean decreasing the demand to visit downtown areas. The high parking demand is a result of being automobile dependent. Promoting and increasing the use of transportation options, such as transit, bicycling, and walking, will decrease the demand on parking spaces. Transit and bicycle stations can be strategically located throughout the study area to encourage these travel options.

### Transit

Transit in the downtown can provide “in-between” trips that are too far to walk but too close to relocate a parked vehicle. Transit use in the downtown has been shown to benefit the local economy by bringing more people into the downtown area. The City of Pensacola has used a downtown trolley circulator route in the past to help people get around the downtown core.

### Bicycling and Walking

Bicycling and walking result in many benefits not only to the individuals partaking in the activity, but to the businesses they walk or ride next to. Studies have shown that bicycling and walking provide health, economic, environmental, safety, and transportation and mobility benefits. Bicycle sharing programs are becoming popular in cities across the country because of these community benefits. Map 8 in the Appendix illustrates activity “hot spots” within the study area where bicycle sharing stations could potentially be located.



Figure 13 - Pedestrians on Palafox Street Source: WFRPC

## INCREASE SUPPLY

With the current high demand for parking in the Palafox Commercial Core and the projected future demand in the West End, additional parking spaces are needed. One way to achieve the additional spaces is through construction of a parking garage. Furthermore, the City could utilize these parking garages to promote economic development. For new developments, the City can allow developers to purchase or lease spaces in the City-owned garage. This will maximize developments and minimize the number of surface lots while bringing in revenues to offset the cost of the parking garage. While parking garages are more expensive per space compared to surface lots, they do have benefits, such as taking up less land in a growing downtown where land is becoming a premium. Parking garages can also be built utilizing mixed-use designs like those highlighted in the Best Practices section to fit in with the urban form of the community.

An ideal location for a new parking garage is near or within the Palafox Commercial Core, where parking demand is currently exceeding supply by 1,989 spaces, or the West End, where parking demand is expected to exceed supply in the near future. While there are numerous publicly-owned (City, County, and State) properties throughout the study area, there are few near the Palafox Commercial Core that are currently undeveloped and large enough to accommodate a parking garage. The following sites, also shown on Map 9 in the Appendix, were identified as potential locations for a new parking garage:

- The North Palafox Street Lot (Palafox Commercial Core) – This is a public surface parking lot (133 spaces) at the corner of Palafox and Gregory Streets, and is owned by the Community Redevelopment Agency.
- The Chappie James Parking Lot (West End) – This is a private surface lot owned by the State of Florida. It has 350 spaces reserved for employees of the Chappie James Building.
- Bayfront Stadium Parking Lot (West End) – This is a public, City-owned surface parking lot at the Community Maritime Park with 313 spaces.
- South Jefferson Street/Commendancia Lots (East Waterfront) – These are four public/private-use adjacent City-owned surface lots totaling 313 spaces. While these lots are within the East Waterfront Zone, they are one block from the Palafox Commercial Core, and adjacent to major future developments such as the new Holiday Inn Express and the Pensacola Bay Ferry Landing Site.

Because the above properties are currently utilized as surface parking lots, the development of a parking garage would not diminish the property use of these locations.

## HOW SHOULD FUTURE PARKING BE FINANCED?

Building a parking garage is often a financial obstacle to overcome for local governments. Parking requirements are also major obstacles for developers. To stimulate economic development, being able to have parking available for lease or purchase off-site can help overcome this obstacle. Developers and local governments have many options for financing parking structures, such as those detailed below.

### Privately-Owned Parking

Developers usually provide parking to their tenants and pay for it through increased costs and/or lower wages. Providing parking to tenants encourages automobile ownership and discourages the use of transportation options such as biking, walking, and transit. Developers could also lease, sell, or charge parking fees to those using the facility to pay for the construction and operation of a parking facility. Alternatively, the local jurisdiction can reduce parking requirements, provide density bonuses, or provide real estate tax abatements. **Reducing parking requirements** can allow structured parking facilities to count more towards the parking requirement than standard parking lots. This allows the developer to operate at a more profitable rate. **Density bonuses** allow the developer to increase the floor area based on how many surface parking spaces are converted to structured parking spaces. **Real estate tax abatements** allow the developer to not pay real estate taxes on the property for a given time period. Real estate tax abatements with parking facilities provide an incentive to the developer, who may not want to take on the risk of insufficient returns, to pay for real estate taxes.

### Publicly-Owned Parking

Municipal bonds are most commonly used on publicly-owned parking structures. In order to benefit from a municipal bond's tax-free interest income, 90% of the parking must be available to the general public, otherwise federal taxation rules apply. There are various methods that can be used as repayment of a municipal bond. For parking facilities, **revenue bonds** use the parking fees, fines, leases or sales of spaces, development impact fees, or in-lieu fees as repayment. Because revenue bonds usually have a reserve fund that can be accessed if the facility does not generate sufficient funds, they have a risk associated with them. **General obligation bonds** are secured by the full faith and credit of the local jurisdiction and their taxing authority. The repayment on these types of bonds is usually through an ad valorem property tax used to fund public improvements. **Special assessment bonds** are very similar to general obligation bonds with the exception that those benefiting the most from the parking facility will be taxed. **Double-barreled bonds** are commonly used when the revenue from a facility is uncertain since these bonds are a combination of revenue bonds, general obligation bonds, and special assessment bonds, and can use multiple forms of repayment options. **Tax increment finance bonds** capture the increase of property taxes in a certain geography for a specified time period. Tax increment finance (TIF) bonds rely on the theory that the improvement being paid for will increase property values.

### Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships are becoming more popular as both sides can share in the costs and benefits of financing, constructing, and operating a new parking facility. The private entity can provide the needed source

of initial funding that is often lacking in a public entity's budget. The private entity can benefit from the tax-free interest income generated. Revenues from the parking facility can then be shared by both entities.

### **Lease Purchase Financing**

Lease purchase financing is a financing method used by a private entity to lease parking spaces to a public entity that makes payments, usually on a yearly basis, until repayment is reached. When repayment is reached the public entity will own the parking facility.

## **OTHER METHODS**

**Parking utilization** needs to be assessed throughout the entire downtown area to gain a better understanding of which spaces are being utilized and which are not. Underutilized lots and/or garages can be converted to better uses, or shared between multiple users based on time of day, such as employees during daytime business hours and downtown patrons in the evening.

A **marketing campaign** can help inform people of underutilized lots. Some cities have **mobile parking applications** that assist drivers with finding available parking. For example, Downtown Orlando's "Orlando parkIN" mobile app allows users to locate parking and find the fastest route to nearby garages and lots. Miami Beach's "ParkMe" app goes one step further by providing users real-time occupancy information for selected facilities. Many mobile parking apps also allow users to pay for fee-based parking via phone.

# Conclusion

Downtown Pensacola is experiencing a renaissance of growth and new development that will continue to change the downtown landscape over the next decade. Parking is a vital component to both new and existing developments, and this study's assessment of current and future parking supply and demand shows a need for additional parking solutions, particularly in the Palafox Commercial Core and West End zones.

In order to address the current and forecasted parking needs, the City is encouraged to take multiple approaches to solve the parking demand. Increasing vehicular parking supply is one solution, however, all transportation options should be supported within the City's parking strategies. A holistic and continuous approach to parking will ensure that Downtown Pensacola remains healthy and vibrant, as new developments evolve and come to fruition.

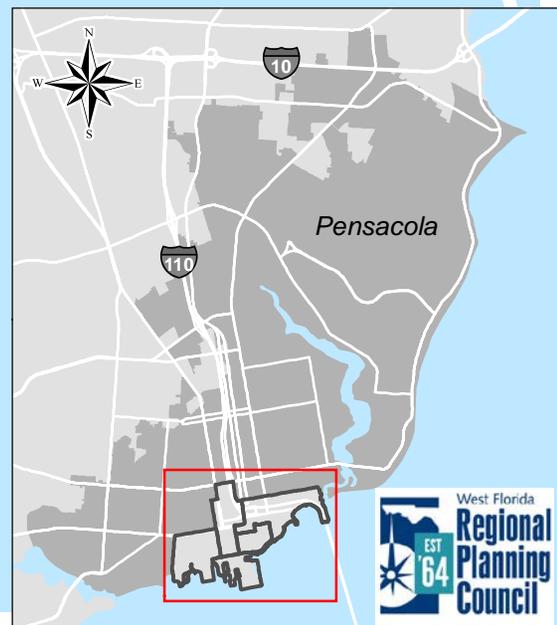
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# Appendix

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# Map 1 - Study Area

-  Study Area with Districts
-  City of Pensacola



## Map 2 - West End

 Study Area Boundary

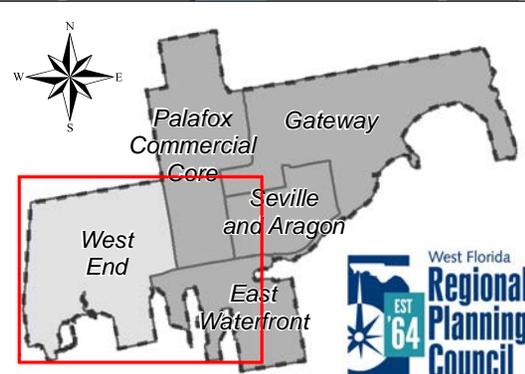
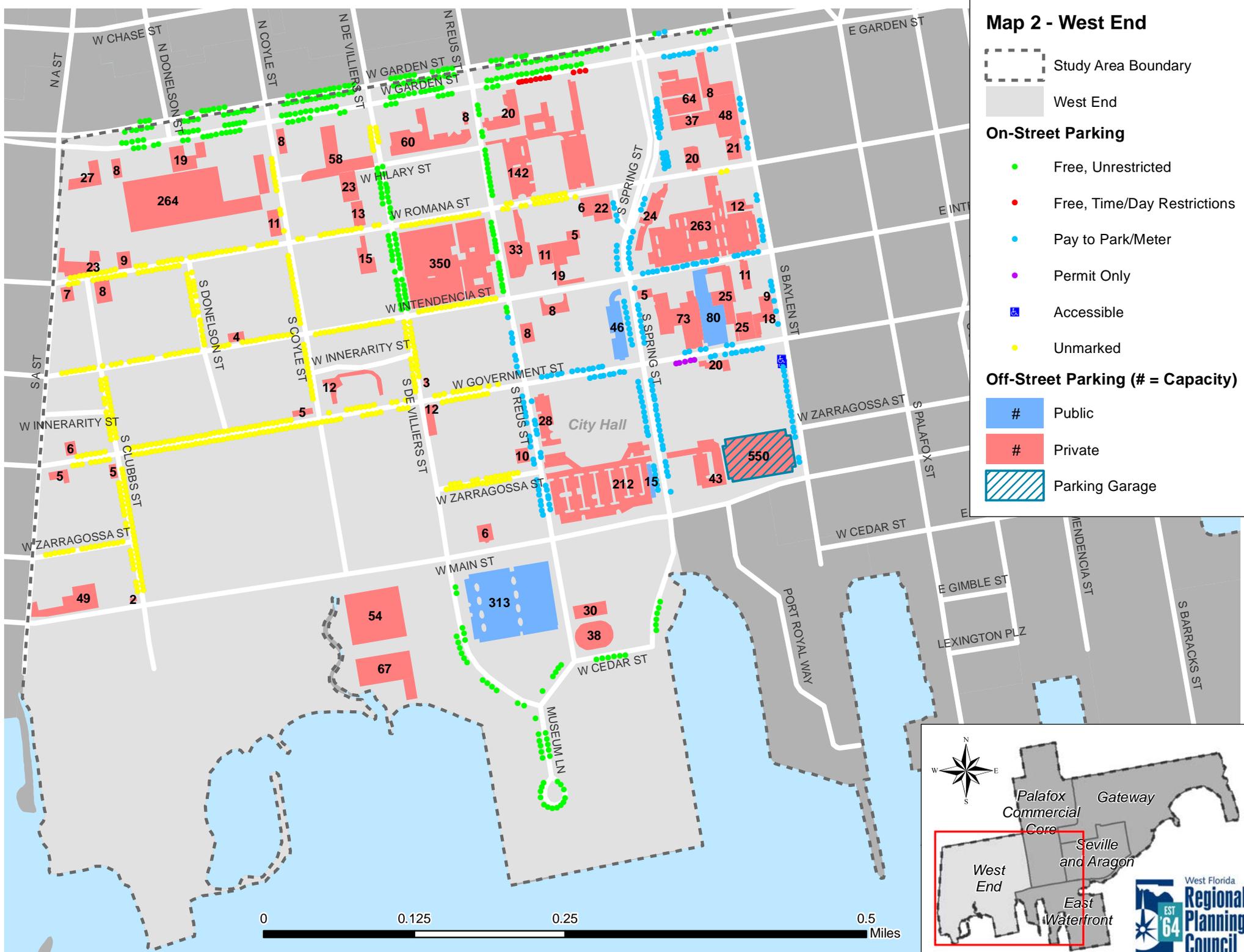
 West End

### On-Street Parking

-  Free, Unrestricted
-  Free, Time/Day Restrictions
-  Pay to Park/Meter
-  Permit Only
-  Accessible
-  Unmarked

### Off-Street Parking (# = Capacity)

-  # Public
-  # Private
-  Parking Garage



# Map 3 - Palafox Commercial Core

**Study Area Boundary**

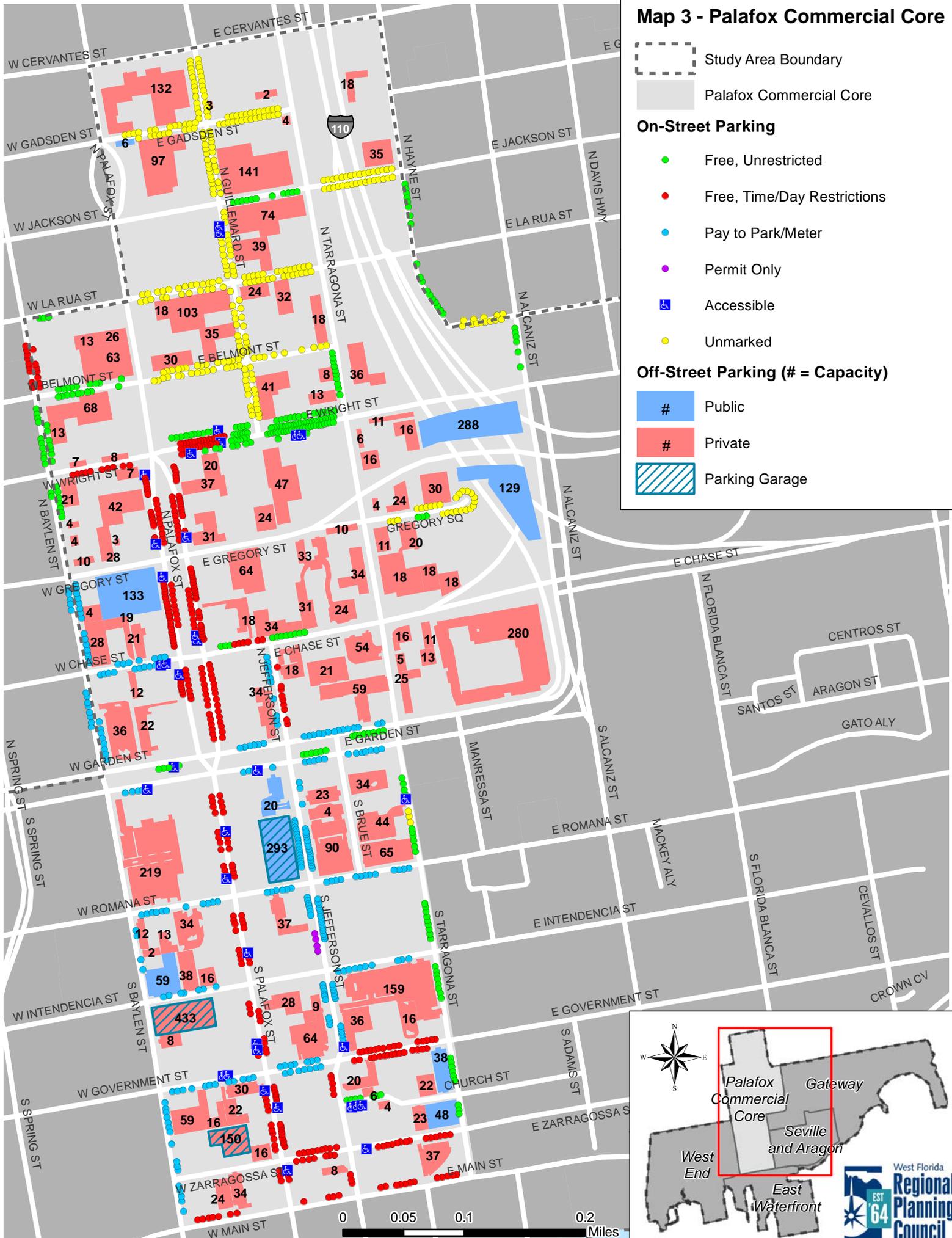
**Palafox Commercial Core**

**On-Street Parking**

- Free, Unrestricted
- Free, Time/Day Restrictions
- Pay to Park/Meter
- Permit Only
- Accessible
- Unmarked

**Off-Street Parking (# = Capacity)**

- Public
- Private
- Parking Garage

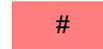


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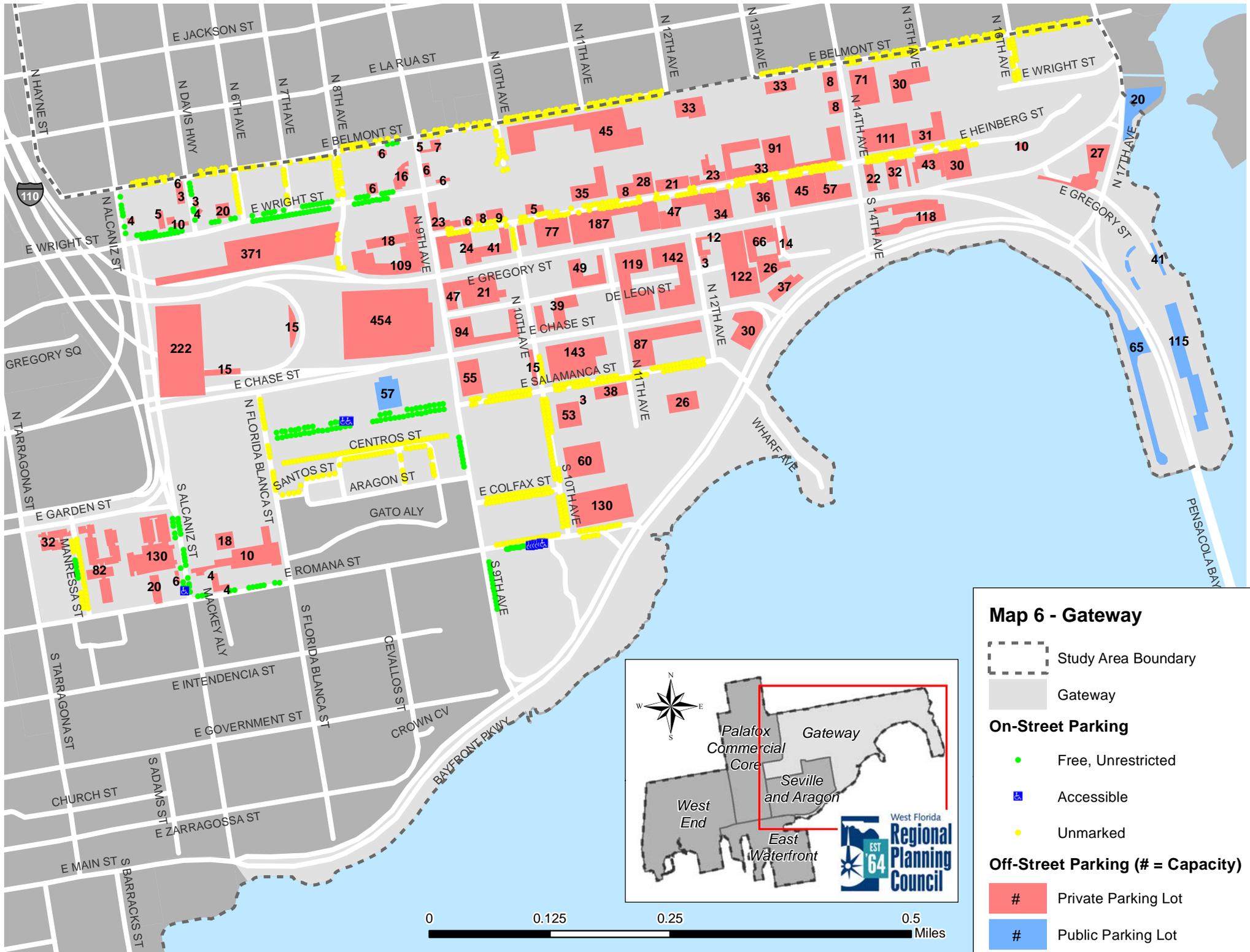


# Map 5 - Seville and Aragon

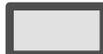
	Study Area Boundary	<b>On-Street Parking</b>		Free, Unrestricted
	Seville and Aragon		Free, Time/Day Restrictions	
<b>Off-Street Parking (# = Capacity)</b>			Pay to Park/Meter	
	Public		Accessible	
	Private		Unmarked	

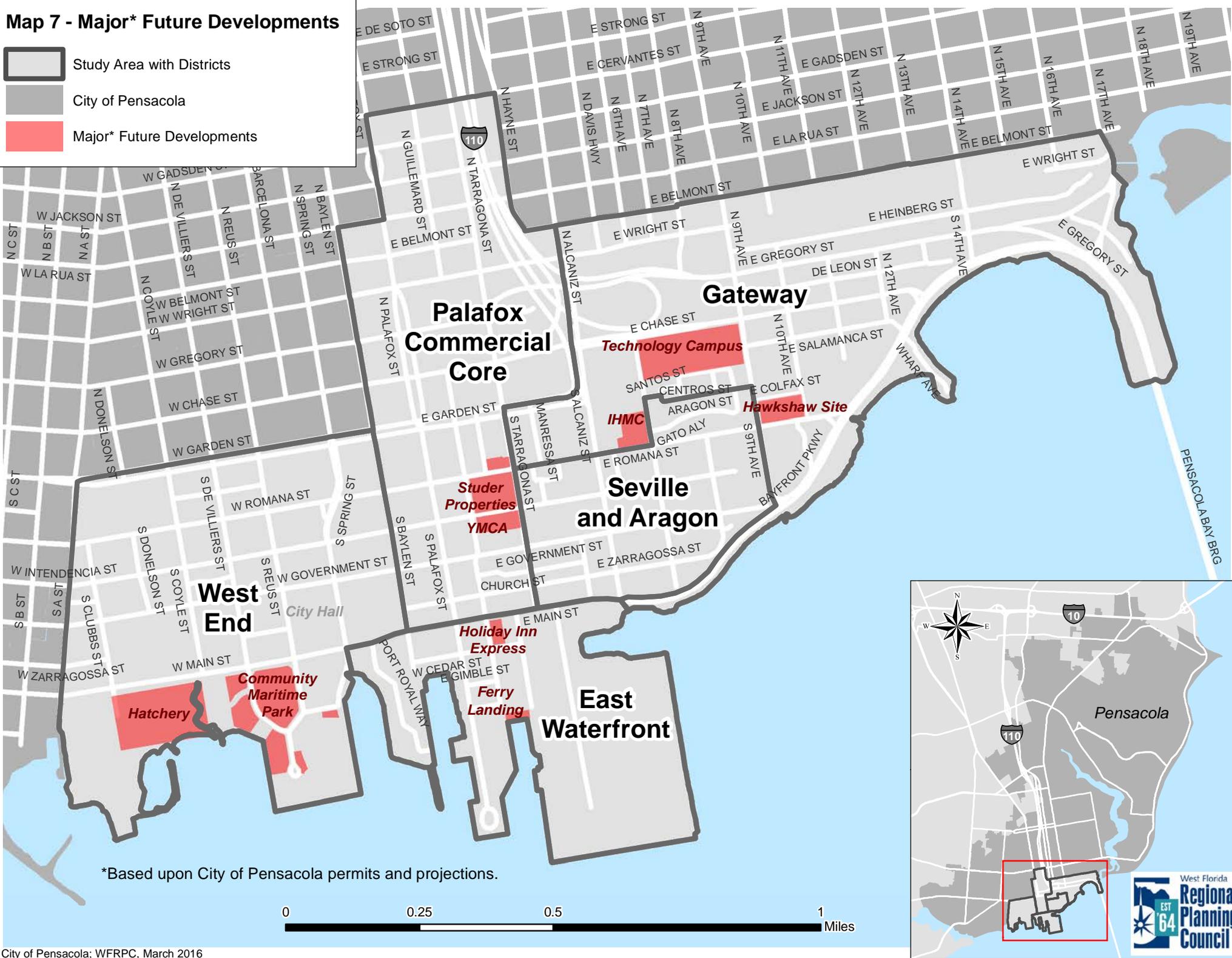


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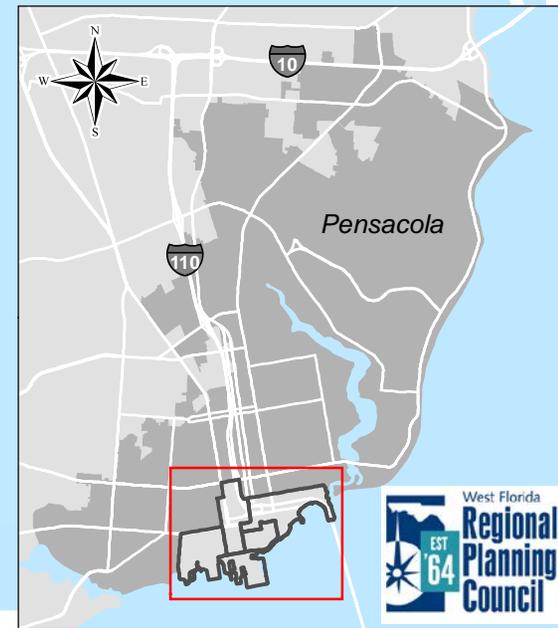


# Map 7 - Major\* Future Developments

-  Study Area with Districts
-  City of Pensacola
-  Major\* Future Developments

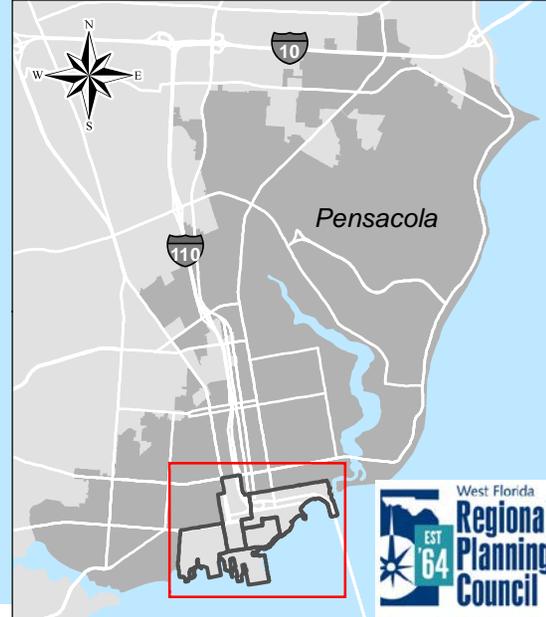


\*Based upon City of Pensacola permits and projections.



# Map 8 - Potential Bike Share Stations

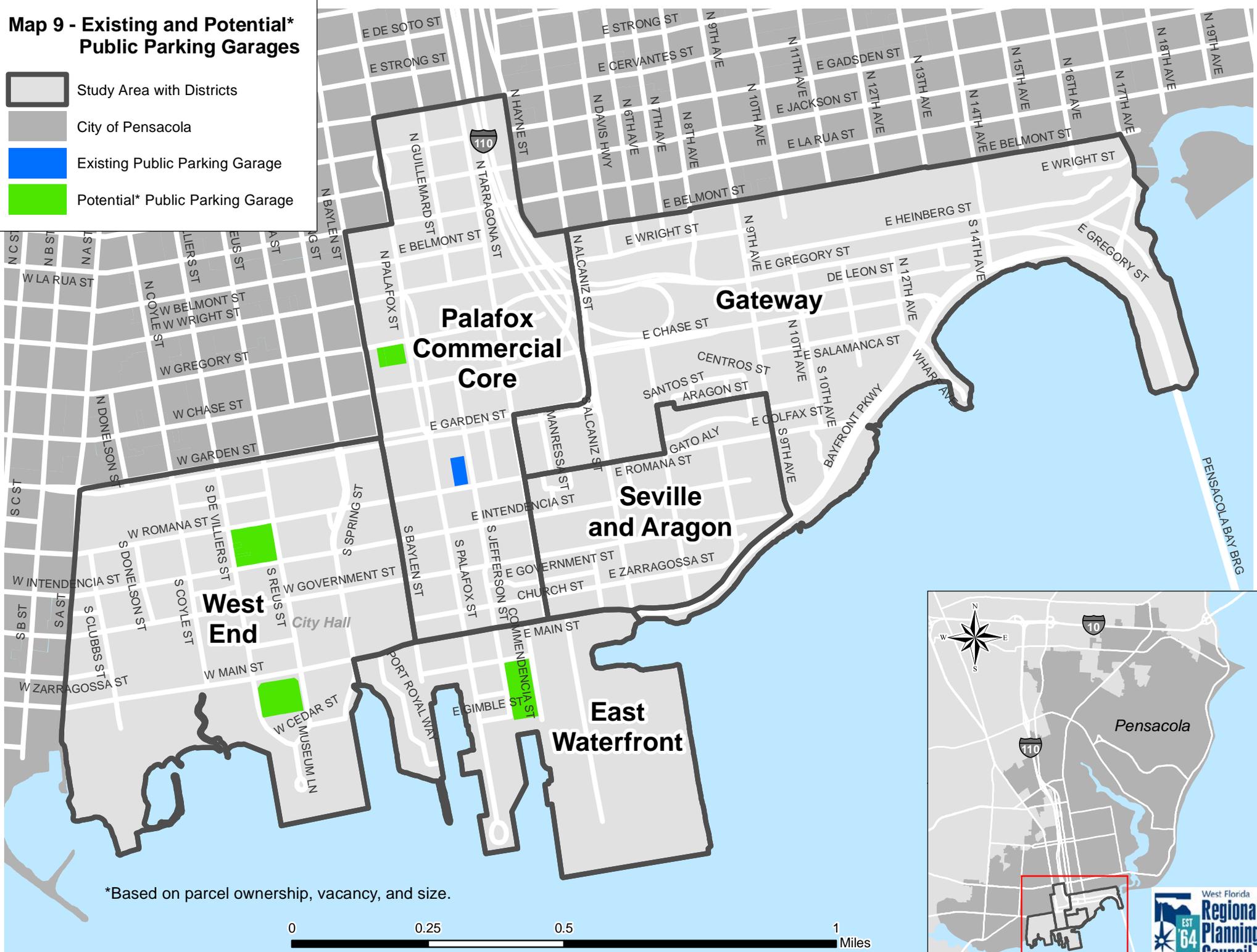
-  Study Area with Districts
-  Proposed Bike Share Stations



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

# Map 9 - Existing and Potential\* Public Parking Garages

-  Study Area with Districts
-  City of Pensacola
-  Existing Public Parking Garage
-  Potential\* Public Parking Garage



\*Based on parcel ownership, vacancy, and size.

