

**Parking and Land Use Regulation
Opportunities to Support Redevelopment**

Prepared for the Town of Bel Air, Maryland



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Introduction

The parking challenges in small to medium suburban towns are always similar but never the same. Restaurateurs and shop owners want easy curbside or nearby parking lots for their customers; attorneys and other professional service providers recognize that off-street parking best meets their needs but don't want their clients to pay for parking; developers want to meet the market needs of prospective tenants, but don't want to be forced to overbuild by what they may see as an arbitrary zoning standard; planners and elected officials want to meet all of the above challenges in a balanced manner but often lack the data or tools to do so. On the edges of town, shopping centers face challenges in maintaining occupancy due to changes in shopping pattern; property owners are looking to repurpose their land for mixed use development but face constraints in the parking requirements of the zoning code. Downtown infill development faces the same challenge.

The Town of Bel Air squarely fits this mold.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to explore parking supply and demand in the Town of Bel Air with an emphasis on the regulatory environment and future growth scenarios for the greater downtown area. While the mobility landscape is constantly evolving, most recently with the rise of transportation network companies (Uber and Lyft, for example); electric, connected, and automated vehicles; dockless scooters; and increases in biking and walking, the effect of these changes on Bel Air has been very muted. The predominant form of travel in Bel Air is the automobile and there is no reason to foretell a great shift in this pattern absent significant changes in the mix of land uses in Bel Air.

The greatest change affecting parking demand has been the shift to telework and teleconferencing from the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be seen in significantly reduced occupancy of publicly owned parking lots throughout downtown and was confirmed through interviews with stakeholders for this study. The potential relocation of the District Court of Maryland will further reduce parking demand either due to vacancy or fewer users of a building that currently sees high turnover throughout the day.

Similarly, changes in the retail environment have affected occupancy of large shopping malls and strip shopping centers. Acres of parking go unused or underused at various times of the day. Throughout the region, many shopping centers are being converted to a mix of residential and commercial uses either by rebuilding within existing footprints or converting surface parking to other uses. This report considers how changes in parking regulations could encourage or be supportive of mixed-use redevelopment in the selected areas of Bel Air.

This report includes in-depth analysis of existing parking conditions, draws comparisons with peer communities, and includes a scenario-based approach to model how infill development encouraged by the Town 2022 Comprehensive Plan would affect parking supply and demand. Three areas were considered: downtown area, northern district (Main St & Ellendale St area), and the "four corners" district (around the intersection of Baltimore Pike and Veterans Memorial Highway.)

Mead & Hunt finds there is sufficient parking in downtown Bel Air, with a good mix of public, semi-public, and private parking. Parking spaces are geographically distributed to provide parking spaces that

makes most destinations accessible in a 5 to 10-minute walk. Parking is relatively unobtrusive to the downtown aesthetic; the downtown street grid makes it relatively easy to circle around and find a missed lot. Parking is relatively inexpensive and generally “pays for itself” although there is little room in the Town budget for enhancement or expansion, if necessary. Shared governance of parking facilities is awkward but generally cooperative among the major parties; consensus is necessary to move forward on any strategic rethinking of parking assets and policies.

In all areas, the current and forecasted oversupply of parking in the downtown area indicates that the town can be more flexible in its parking requirements and/or repurpose parking assets for more productive use. The primary recommendations of this report are that the town:

- Extend current parking code flexibilities beyond the B2 (Central Business) zoning district to include a greater area of downtown.
- Allow a market-based approach to parking in the “four corners” area with targeted protections for adjacent communities.
- Work with the County and State to consolidate parking lots and dispose of excess property for infill development.
- Improve the legibility of parking options with clear information on limits and fewer on-lot regulations.

Existing Conditions

There are 2,135 publicly owned and operated parking spaces in downtown Bel Air, spread across 14 lots and one parking garage. See Figure 1 for a location map showing parking availability in relation to downtown.

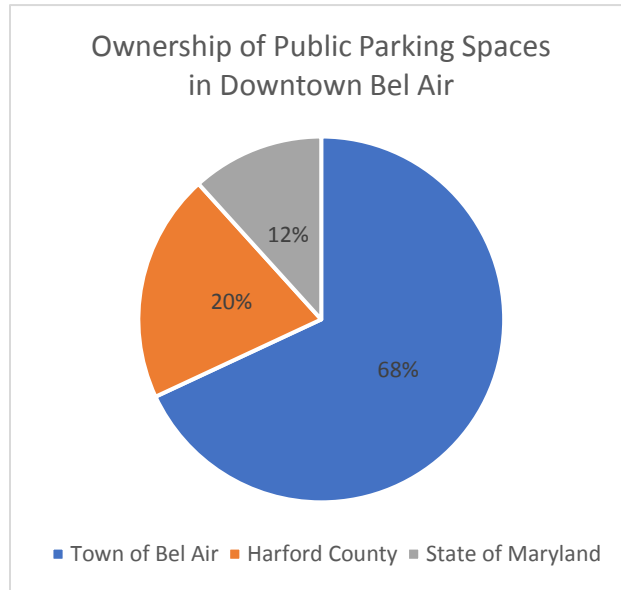


Figure 1: Ownership of parking in the Downtown District

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of parking lot ownership in the town. Harford County, the State of Maryland, and the Town of Bel Air each own a portion of the parking inventory; however, for the purpose of this report, parking supply is considered without regard to ownership as it assumed that the three levels of government have a shared interest and can cooperate with each other to ensure adequate parking is provided and serves a variety of users throughout the entire day.



Map 1: Existing Parking in the Downtown District

Parking Supply and Demand

Downtown Bel Air has the same parking demands as most small towns in Maryland that also function as a county seat – a strong daytime population linked to county offices, courthouses, and associated professional services firms; restaurants, coffee shops, and bakeries that serve patrons throughout the day; and, antique and boutique shops, galleries, that have low volume but are critical to the ecosystem of any Main Street environment. Evenings and overnight hours tend to be much quieter with a few bars and restaurants having strong patronage, but overall, much of the parking supply goes otherwise unused save for county fleet and public safety vehicles awaiting use. Planned special events like the Maryland State Barbeque Bash, First Fridays, Farmers Markets, summer movie nights, and holiday activities swell the area with visitors, but they too can be accommodated within the existing parking inventory – with a bit farther walk.

Post-pandemic, many small towns are seeing similar parking demand shifts caused by less daytime auto traffic. Based on field observations conducted specifically for this study, approximately 43% of all parking spaces in downtown Bel Air are unused during typical peak parking hours of 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM. During the evening and overnight hours, nearly 80% of all parking spaces are unused. While a significant amount of the unused parking capacity is in the Hickory Avenue Garage (391 spaces or 39.1% utilization), only one surface lot, Pennsylvania Avenue Lot B, was observed to exceed 75% during both the morning and afternoon time periods. Three lots were observed to have any significant use (greater than 40%) during evening or weekend observations. Even when accounting for the need of some spaces to be reserved for permits and general turnover, there is ample parking capacity throughout downtown.

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with town officials, small business owners, developers and community representatives. When discussing utilization rates during these interviews, all participants stated that “Bel Air does not have a parking problem.” Stakeholders feel that even though utilization varies from lot to lot and in different quadrants of downtown, Bel Air is very walkable and the distance between any destination and available parking lot is not a concern. Stakeholders acknowledge that while residents, customers, and workers would like a parking spot right at their door, it is neither practical nor necessary to plan for such accommodations. Stakeholders also suggested that:

- People are reluctant to walk to the Hickory Garage, especially after dark.
- Signage providing directions to parking lots is lacking.
- Parking regulations (hours, permits, etc.) for surface parking lots is confusing and inefficient.
- There is an opportunity to consolidate parking lots and convert underused lots for infill development.

Utilization Rate of Downtown Parking Lots by Time of Day			
Parking Lot	Weekday AM	Weekday PM	Weekday Evening
Armory	36%	21%	43%
Bond/Thomas	40%	41%	6%
Burns Alley	6%	0%	24%
County Administration	70%	50%	18%
County Council	57%	47%	16%
Downtown	40%	30%	10%
Habitat for Humanity	51%	44%	30%
Health Department	67%	54%	81%
Hickory Avenue	55%	49%	11%
Hickory Garage	37%	39%	10%
Lee Street	66%	59%	3%
Mary Risteau	46%	43%	NA
Pennsylvania Avenue A	62%	60%	65%
Pennsylvania Avenue B	81%	77%	21%
South Main Street	58%	57%	30%

Table 1: Utilization Rates of Downtown Parking lots.

Parking Lot Conditions

Mead & Hunt staff also conducted visual inspections at all lots in Bel Air using best professional judgement guided by standard industry practices. The purpose of these inspections was to assess the conditions, compliance, and operability of various parking related assets. For each Bel Air parking lot, data collection included surface condition & drainage, signs & markings, and rates & hours.

Overall, the parking lots were in good condition. All meters inspected were operational with the rates clearly posted. All pathways were ADA compliant and there were no potholes or trip hazards noticed at any of the parking lots. The most common issue regarding markings were faded parking lines, handicap spots, and arrows. A few lots had minor surface condition/drainage issues that can be handled with routine maintenance or surface patching. Table 2 summarizes parking lot conditions.

RECOMMENDATION: Maintain current maintenance practices to keep parking lots in a state of good repair; however, consider potential future disposition of parking lots before making capital investments in them.

Lot Name	Faded Lines	Faded Handicap	Faded Walkways	Cracks or Low Spots	Arrows Faded or Absent	Stop Signs Absent
Armory	No	No	No	No	Yes - Absent	Yes
Bond/Thomas	No	Yes	No	No	Yes - Absent	Yes
Burns Alley	No	N/A	No	Yes	Yes – Faded	Yes
County Administration	No	No	No	No	No	No
County Council	No	No	No	No	Yes – Absent	No
Downtown	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes – Faded	Yes
Habitat for Humanity	Yes	No	No	No	Yes – Absent	No
Health Department	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes – Absent	Yes
Hickory Avenue	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes - Absent	Yes
Lee Street	Yes	N/A	No	No	Yes – Absent	Yes
Mary Risteau	Yes	No	No	No	Yes - Absent	Yes
Pennsylvania Avenue Lot A	No	No	No	No	Yes – Faded	Yes
Pennsylvania Avenue Lot B	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes - Absent	No @Lee St Yes @Main St
South Main Street	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

Table 2: Lot Conditions of Downtown Parking lots.

Inefficiencies at Certain Surface Lots

Certain lots are marked, have barriers, or other restrictions that do not lend themselves to easy circulation or confuse motorists. These attributes lead to inefficient use of space. Figure 2 shows examples of these artificial demarcations.



Figure 2. Clockwise from top left: Library and Hickory Avenue lots; Health Department lots; South Main Street lots; Mary Risteau and District Court parking lots. Red lines indicate demarcations that hinder free flow of traffic or inefficient use of parking.

RECOMMENDATION: Reconsider markings, barriers, and regulations that artificially separate parking areas in the same physical space.

Bel Air Parking Code and Peer Comparison

§165-51 of the Bel Air municipal code establishes the framework to ensure adequate, safe, convenient, aesthetically pleasing parking facilities, while minimizing the negative visual impacts of parking, service and loading facilities. According to this code, Bel Air parking regulations are intended to achieve the following goals and objectives:

1. Regulate the number of required off-street parking spaces for the needs and safety of occupants, customers, visitors, or others involved in use or occupancy of any building, structural improvement, or place of assembly.
2. Support the state's smart growth goals by minimizing the area used for parking, thus minimizing runoff and other environmental impacts.
3. Eliminate the unnecessary use of the surface street system for parking purposes.
4. Provide shared parking options for different but compatible uses.

The third goal, to eliminate the unnecessary use of the street system for parking purposes, is unclear and works against the other goals of shared parking options and minimizing the area used for parking. Field observations indicate that like off-street parking lots, there are many blocks where on-street parking is lightly used. On-street parking often has the effect of slowing traffic and thus improving pedestrian safety, which was indicated as a concern by stakeholders. On-street parking also mitigates the need for off-street parking and should be considered a proper use of the public right-of-way to a reasonable degree.

RECOMMENDATION: Eliminate or revise the third goal of the parking code to include on-street parking as part of overall parking and pedestrian safety strategies for the Town.

Bel Air Parking Code

Most relevant to this analysis of future parking needs are the predominant land uses in downtown Bel Air and those anticipated with redevelopment. Table 3 details the current off-street parking requirements for the Town.

Use or Use Category	Spaces Required
Single-family detached, semidetached, and two-family dwellings	2 per dwelling unit
Townhouse	2.5 per dwelling unit (excluding garage space)
Multifamily and 55-and-over dwelling units	1.5 per 1-bedroom dwelling unit 2 per 2-bedroom dwelling unit 2.5 per 3-or-more-bedroom dwelling units (dens and libraries in multifamily to be counted as bedrooms)
Tavern, tavern with entertainment, microbrewery/winery/distillery	1 per 3 persons permitted under the State Fire Code
Theater	1 per 3 persons permitted under the State Fire Code
Restaurant	1 per 3 patron seats or 1 per 100 square feet of gross floor area, excluding food preparation area, whichever is greater, plus drive-through stacking spaces, if applicable
Retail use (unless specified otherwise)	1 per 200 square feet
Professional service	1 per 300 square feet

Table 3: Off-Street parking requirements based on land use.

These requirements were compared against peer jurisdictions with similar characteristics to Bel Air in at least three of the following categories: independent municipality; significant government present; similar land use mix/intensity; similar daytime vs. evening/weekend activity levels; comparable size of the downtown area; and mix of public vs. private ownership of off-street parking facilities. Overall, the Bel Air commercial parking requirements are comparable to its peer jurisdictions; however, some of the Bel Air residential parking requirements are higher than those of the other peer communities. For single-family and townhome dwellings, Bel Air is in line with that of the other communities examined. For multi-family housing, only Elkton requires more parking than Bel Air.

The Town of Bel Air’s parking code is visually compared against each of the peer communities in Figure 3. Because each jurisdiction has differing off-street parking nuances, a theoretical development scenario was applied to each land use and utilized to normalize calculations. The comparisons show the number of spaces required for the scenario in each of the ten peer jurisdictions. All completed visualizations can be found in Appendix B.

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent			Most Stringent	
Multi-Family	14				165	Aberdeen
Assuming:					155	Bel Air
80 Units					160	Havre de Grace
30 1-Bedroom Units			145			Harford County
30 2-Bedroom Units		80				Annapolis
20 3-Bedroom Units				160		Berlin
		80				Easton
					195	Elkton
			120			Frederick
				160		Mount Airy
			145			Westminster
Use	Use Code	Least Stringent			Most Stringent	
Townhouse	16				100	Aberdeen
Assuming:					100	Bel Air
40 Units			80			Havre de Grace
15 1-Bedroom Units			80			Harford County
15 2-Bedroom Units			80			Annapolis
10 3-Bedroom Units			80			Berlin
			80			Easton
				97.5		Elkton
			80			Frederick
						Mount Airy
					120	Westminster

Figure 3: Municipal Code Comparisons – Number of Spaces Required Under Certain Scenarios.

Parking Regulation and the Development Process

While many economic and social conditions must be present to attract development into downtown Bel Air, providing a competitive environment for land developers is essential. In the parking context, a competitive environment refers to both policy/procedural matters and physical requirements.

In terms of policy/procedural matters, the Town of Bel Air provides a good deal of flexibility to meet the parking goals expressed in the comprehensive plan and municipal code. This includes:

- Parking minimums are waived for retail and service uses in the B-2 District which do not exceed a requirement of 50 spaces per property.
- Fee-in-lieu of parking, which can cover up to 50% of required on-site spaces in business districts.
- Shared parking allowances within 500’ of a subject property based on a parking impact study provided by the applicant, which establishes peak demand for parking.

Nearby municipalities including Elkton, Aberdeen, and Havre de Grace, have similar flexibilities albeit tailored slightly differently to their jurisdiction.

Both Harford County and Aberdeen have similar shared parking policies in wording and effect, but Bel Air differs in how shared parking requirements are memorialized. Peer municipalities typically require a written agreement among involved property owners. Bel Air requires a written agreement, but also requires that the agreement be entered into the land records of Harford County. While understandable in terms of protecting the parking designated through a shared parking agreement, the recordation requirement adds procedural complexity and allows property owners to hold each other hostage as further redevelopment occurs.

RECOMMENDATION: Either eliminate the recordation requirement for shared parking or have the deed restriction self-extinguish after a designated period from use and occupancy permit of the development. This allows for current parking needs of an area to “shake out” without unnecessarily tying up land for otherwise productive future use.

Specialized Parking Requirements

Three additional areas of interest were examined as part of this study: requirements for bicycle parking, valet parking, and electric vehicle charging facilities.

Bicycle Parking: Bel Air requires all nonresidential parking areas designed for 25 or more vehicles to include at least one bike rack. This requirement is consistent with peer jurisdictions that have bicycle parking requirements. In urbanized areas, it is becoming increasingly common to require that multifamily residential developments provide secure bicycle parking. In some cases, like Annapolis, providing bicycle parking garners the developer a small offset in the number of off-street automobile parking spaces required.

RECOMMENDATION: Bel Air should add a secure bicycle parking requirement for large multifamily or mixed-use developments.

Valet Parking: Bel Air has no regulations to permit or prohibit valet parking. Annapolis is the only peer municipality with such requirements. As there is no known valet use in Bel Air at this time, creating new regulations should not be a high priority; however, inclusion of valet parking in the context of a shared use parking agreement could be considered.

RECOMMENDATION: Update shared use parking standards to permit the use of valet parking to meet off-street parking requirements.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations: Bel Air has no regulations that permit, prohibit, or require electric vehicle charging stations for new developments. Among peer jurisdictions, Elkton is the only municipality with specific code related to electric vehicles. Within the town center district, Elkton counts each electric vehicle charging station provided by the Maryland Energy Administration as two spaces toward a property’s parking space requirement to a maximum of five percent of the parking requirement. Additionally, statewide legislation is under consideration that would require developments of a specified size to include a certain number of communal off-street parking spaces with at least Level 2 electric vehicle charging station capabilities.

RECOMMENDATION: Update parking standards to require at least one electric vehicle charging station for every 25 off-street parking spaces, and initiate efforts to add electric vehicle parking at all public lots.

Parking Policies for Growth and Redevelopment in Bel Air

The Bel Air 2022 Comprehensive Plan includes several goals and objectives that may require an update to parking requirements in the zoning and land development code to be successful. Specifically, goals and objectives related to targeting specific areas for redevelopment and infill of underutilized properties require examination. The comprehensive plan calls for establishing flexible parking requirements to allow commercial areas to grow in place.¹ While there is ample unused parking capacity and thus an opportunity to reconsider Town parking policies, the comprehensive plan is also mindful that zoning regulations should “protect existing residential areas from the incremental incursion of commercial uses and traffic.”

Scenario-Based Planning and Analysis

To explore how future development would impact parking demand, scenarios were created to simulate different types and intensities of land uses in three areas of Bel Air specifically identified for redevelopment in the comprehensive plan:

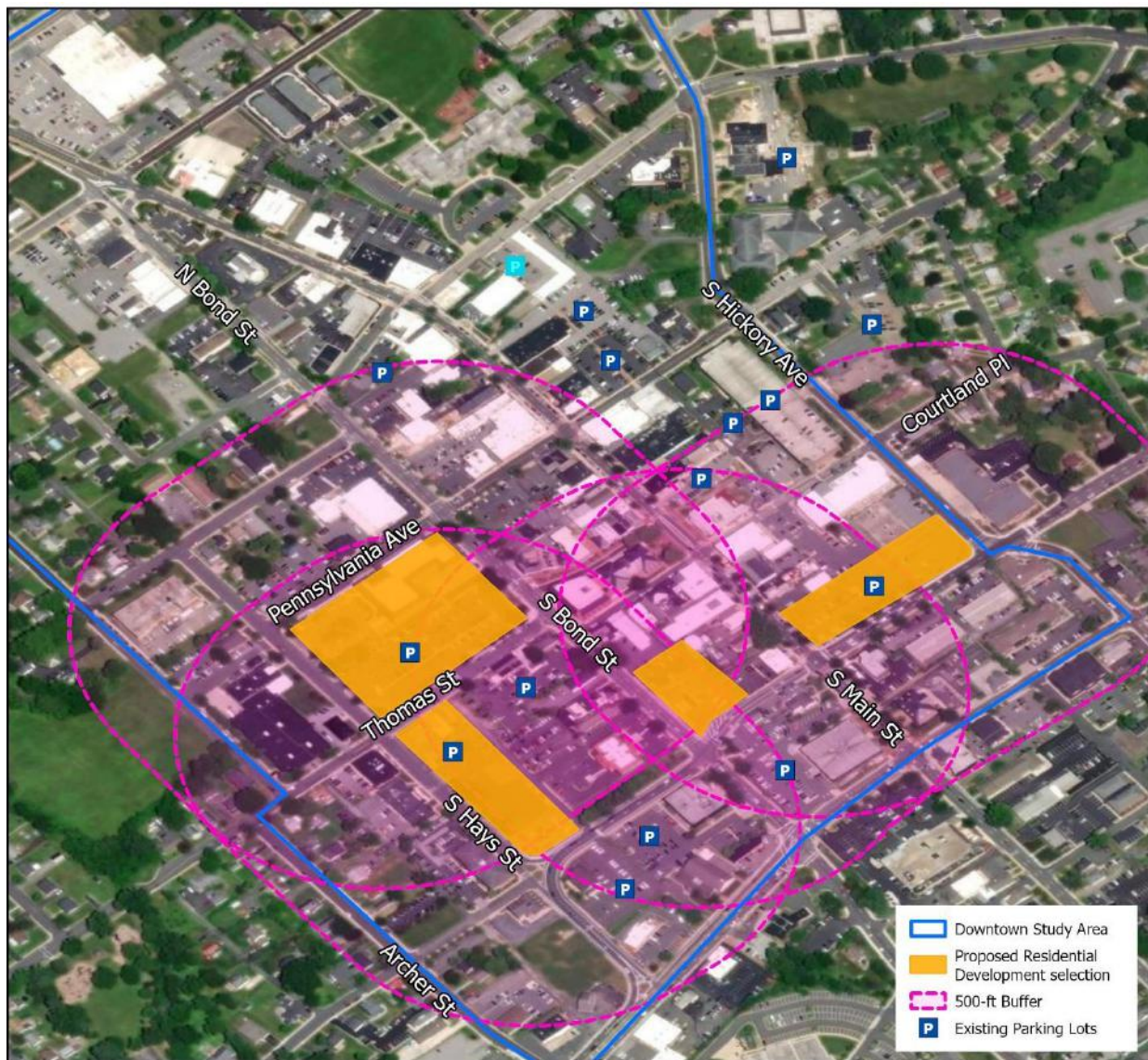
- Infill development in the downtown area.
- “Four Corners” area of MD 24 and US Business Route 1.
- Northern industrial district at Main Street and Ellendale Street.

For the two in town scenarios, parking demand was generated using both the existing zoning code and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Parking Generation Manual. Both calculations were then overlaid on existing parking supply and occupancy rates at different times of day to determine the extent to which parking lots in the vicinity would be overburdened by infill development, if any. Determination was made by the Town to only conduct a temporal analysis without existing parking data counts in the four corners district.

¹ Town of Bel Air Comprehensive Plan, Page 89

Downtown District

For this analysis, the downtown district is defined as extending south from Pennsylvania Avenue to Baltimore Pike, between Hays Street and Hickory Avenue. The downtown is comprised of small commercial storefronts, professional services firms, and restaurants, with government offices dominating the landscape. Several vacant or underutilized parcels are present that could be developed with residential or commercial uses, and public surface parking lots could be consolidated or repurposed for private development. The potential relocation of the District Court to a location away from downtown would significantly alter the parking landscape at least until other uses are in place.



Map 2: Downtown study area showing potential redevelopment area, existing parking and the 500-ft radius, as mentioned in the Town Code.

In the Downtown District, there are 14 parking lots with 2,135 total parking spaces. Of these spaces, 47% are occupied, and approximately 220 spaces (10%) have permits issued to town, county, or state agencies.

Two mixed-use infill development scenarios were developed consistent with the intent of the comprehensive plan. These scenarios range from 92 to 132 residential units and 30,000 to 50,000 square feet of commercial uses. To accommodate the infill development, analysis assumed that as many as 323 spaces could be eliminated; however, this is somewhat offset by differing peak hours of demand for commercial (daytime) and residential (evening/overnight). Total demand for parking spaces under this scenario would be between 325 and 486 parking spaces.²

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Residential Units	132	92
1-Bedroom Units	90	60
2-Bedroom Units	30	20
Townhouses	12	12
Commercial Square Footage	30,000	50,000
Total Square Footage	147,750	134,500
Zoning Code Parking Requirements	325	377
ITE Parking Generation	351	486

Figure 4: Downtown District scenario calculations

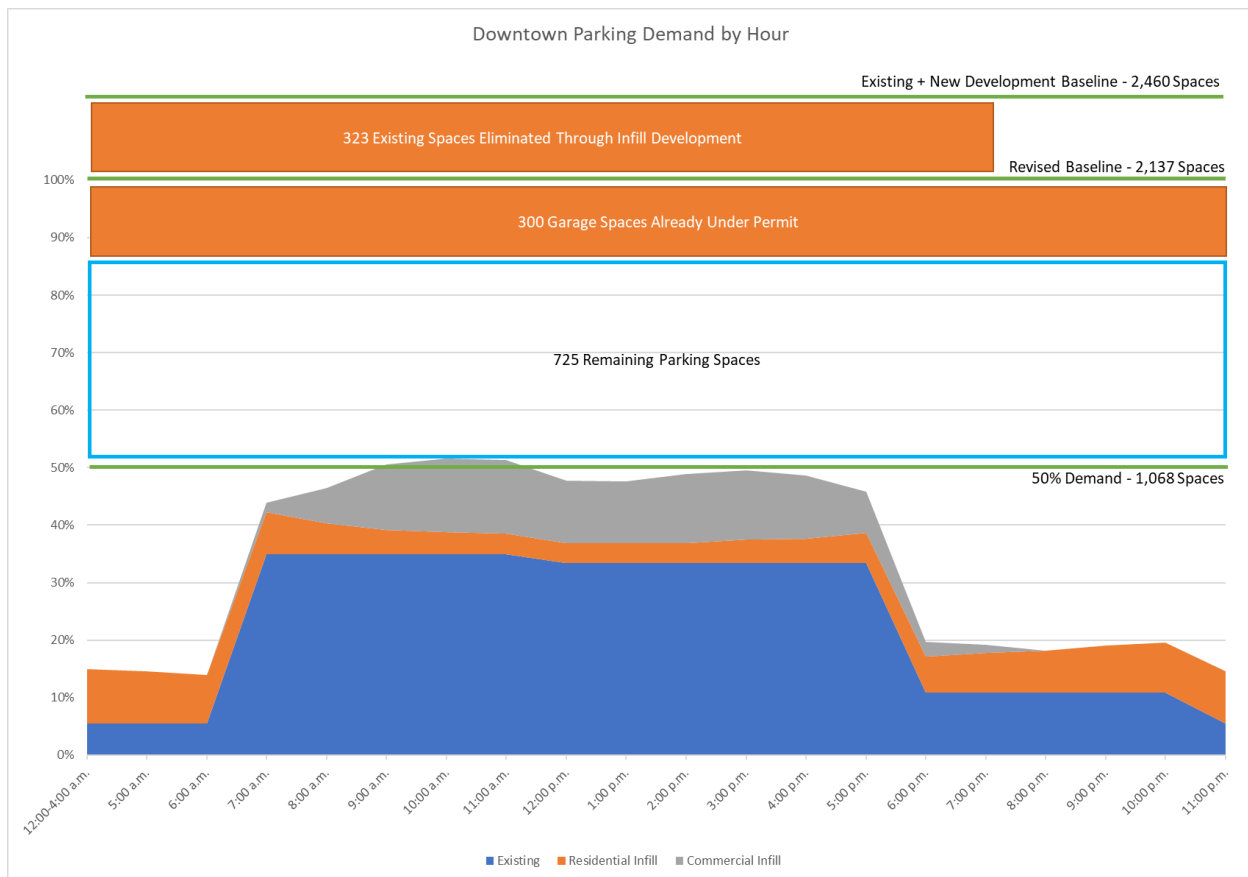


Figure 5: Parking utilization of existing and infill development in the Downtown District.

² The wide range is a function of differences between the zoning code and ITE manual; and the scale of land uses under each scenario.

1. Extend the 50-space exemption to include all development types in of the downtown area.

Currently, the Town code states that “Retail and service uses in the B-2 District which do not exceed the 50 spaces per property requirement are exempt from minimum parking requirements. All other uses must meet minimum requirements for parking.” (Section 165-51 B. 2). This exemption is a great tool to support small businesses that are looking to develop in the town but cannot meet such a high parking requirement. Expanding this exemption to all development types reduces the overall parking demand in an area while further supporting small business and infill development.

2. Reduce multifamily parking requirements to be less than or equal to peers.

Current town code requires the following for multifamily developments: 1.5 parking spaces per 1-bedroom dwelling unit, 2 parking spaces per 2-bedroom dwelling unit and 2.5 parking spaces per 3-or-more-bedroom dwelling units (dens and libraries in multifamily to be counted as bedrooms). For an 80-unit development with 30 one-bedroom units, 30 two-bedroom units and 20 three-bedroom units, the developer would be required to provide a minimum of 155 parking spaces. While several peers like Aberdeen, Havre De Grace, Berlin and Mount Airy have a similar requirement, other peers require less. Harford County and Westminster would require 145 spaces, Frederick would require 120 spaces, and Annapolis and Easton would each require 80 parking spaces.

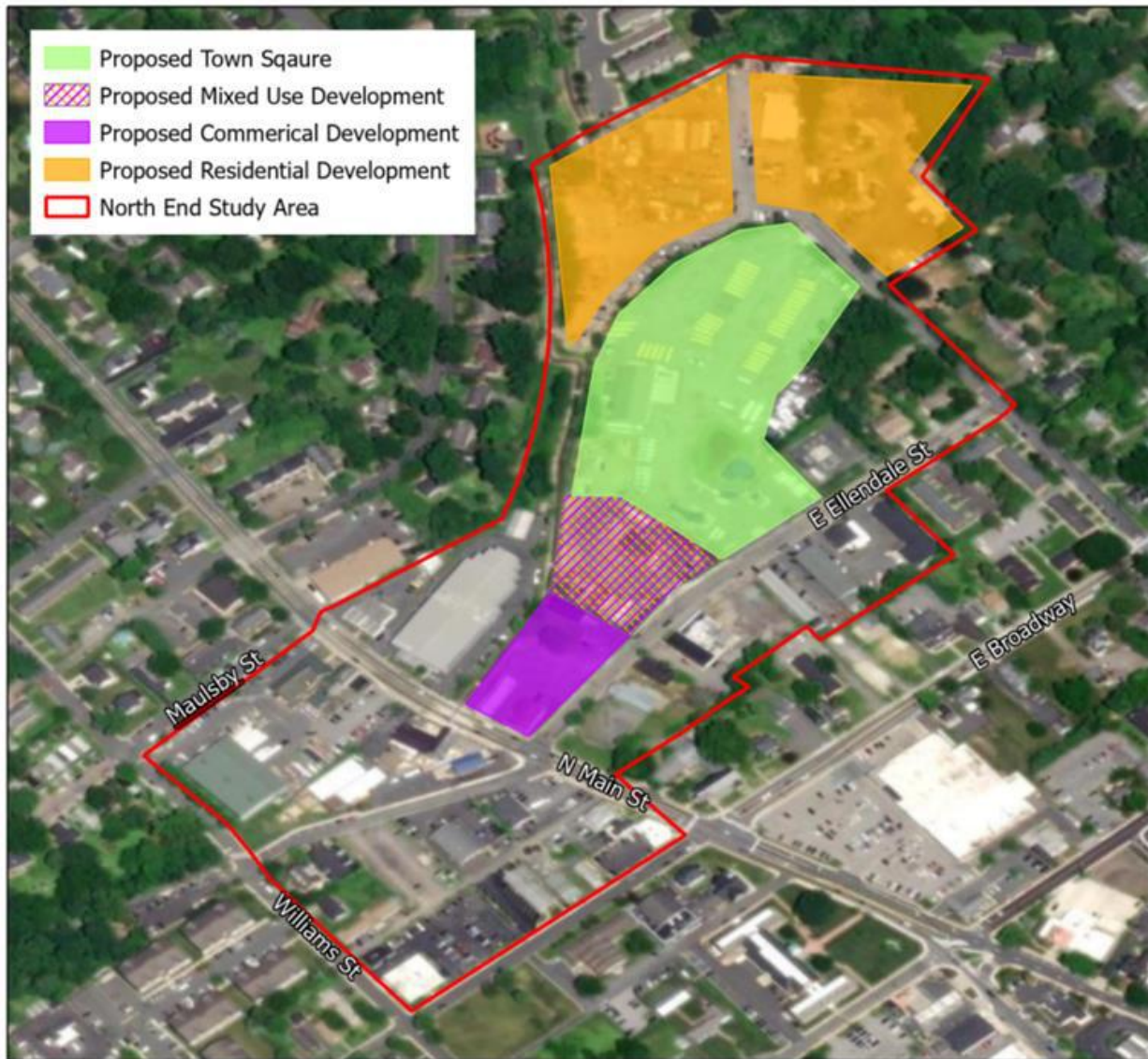
In the Downtown District, it is not necessary to require so much additional parking when there is already underutilization of existing spaces.

3. Add a bicycle parking requirement.

Decreasing vehicle parking requirements should go hand in hand with increasing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. As a starting point, the Downtown District should revise code to include bicycle parking requirements. This would ensure that bicycle facilities are created from the beginning of new development and the built environment accommodates for future increased bicycle use. Quality bicycle storage is often in short supply and can be an attractive amenity to any residential development or business.

Northern District

For this analysis, the Northern District is defined as the existing industrial area north of Broadway, extending north to Malsby Lane, between Williams Street and the bus yard to the east. Per the comprehensive plan, this area has potential to be developed with destination retail and entertainment uses with multifamily or townhouse units near the Ma & Pa trail. Today this area contains industrial-oriented land uses that are long-term not well-suited for the area because of the surrounding residential uses.



Map 3: Potential redevelopment in the Northern District Study Area.

Two mixed-use infill development scenarios were developed consistent with the intent of the comprehensive plan. These scenarios range from 160 to 194 residential units and 35,000 to 50,000 square feet of commercial uses, intended for a combination of arts and entertainment uses, galleries, and restaurants. No parking spaces would be eliminated to make way for the redevelopment. Total demand for parking spaces under the scenarios would be between 445 and 692 parking spaces³ which reflects differing peak hours of demand for commercial (daytime) and residential (evening/overnight) uses. Because there is relatively little parking in the Northern District today, a shared use parking plan would need to be developed.

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Residential Units	160	194
1-Bedroom Units	80	120
2-Bedroom Units	40	50
Townhouses	40	24
Commercial Square Footage	35,000	50,000
Total Square Footage	233,000	207,250
Zoning Code Parking Requirements	529	692
ITE Parking Generation	445	596

Figure 6: Northern District scenario calculations

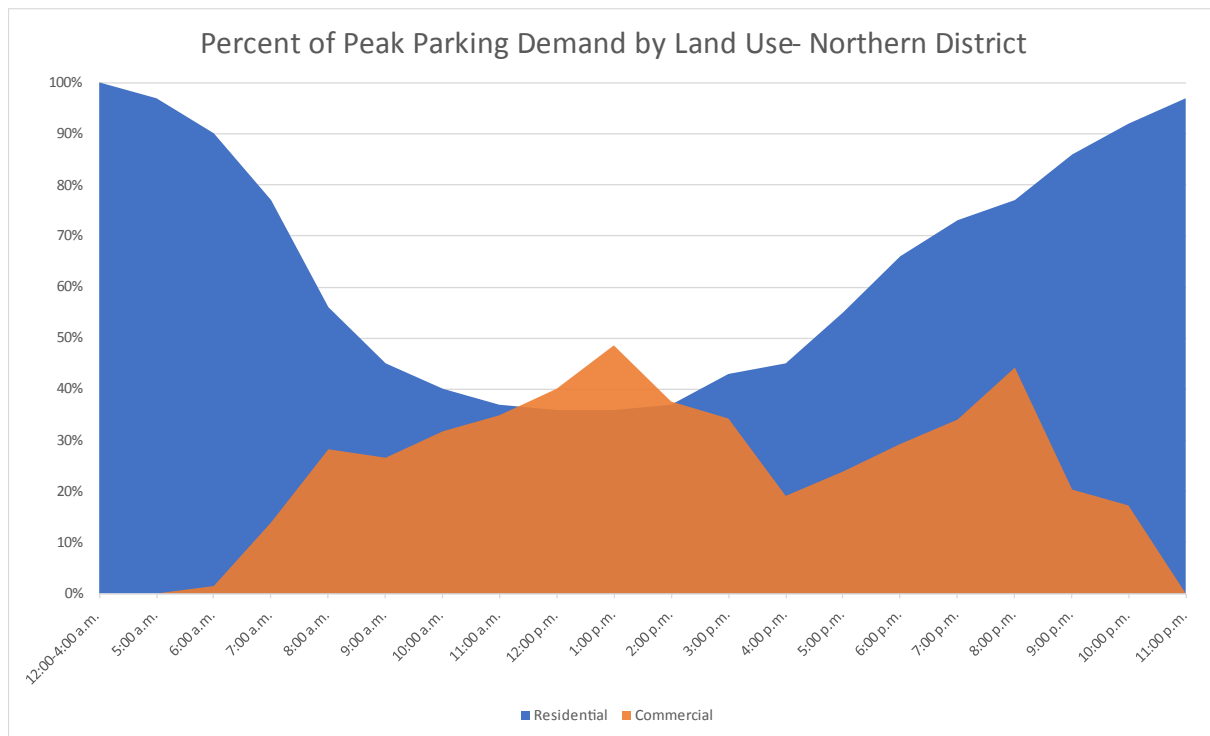


Figure 7: Parking Demand by Land Use – Northern District

³ The wide range is a function of differences between the zoning code and ITE manual; and the scale of land uses under each scenario.

Northern District Recommendations

A strength of the existing Town code is its flexibility when applied to mixed use redevelopment. This flexibility allows for easier redevelopment and encourages mixed use in the town. To further capitalize on this strength, Bel Air should consider incorporating the following:

1. Update the Town shared parking requirements to make them less stringent than typical suburban areas.

Shared parking is crucial to the success of mixed-use developments. By reducing parking for any individual use, mixed use developments have greater flexibility to meet market demand and reduces a significant development obstacle.

AND

2. Maintain the existing 500 foot maximum distance for shared parking.

Per Section 165-51 of the town code, shared parking facilities are permitted to be a maximum distance of 500 feet from the boundary of the subject property. This provision provides flexibility to developers while also protecting neighborhoods. If a developer can use shared parking, it alleviates the need for parking on site, which is often expensive, land intensive, and an obstacle for development in higher density areas.

OR

3. Apply fee-in-lieu requirements to all new development in the Northern District and use the funds to contribute to a public parking facility in the vicinity.

If mixed use development takes hold at scale, then there will be a need for a joint approach to parking. The town should consider purchasing land for a small parking facility (or improving an existing facility) in or adjacent to the Northern District to accommodate demand that cannot be met on site. Fees paid in lieu of providing on-site parking could be one element of a funding strategy to construct a new or expanded facility.

Four Corners District

For this analysis, the Four Corners district is generally defined as the retail parcels at US 1 Business and MD 24, including the Bel Air Town Center, Bel Air Plaza, and Tollgate Marketplace shopping centers and the Harford Mall. While specific parking counts were not taken in all areas of Four Corners, observations during peak times for commercial uses were conducted and found that all areas had significant underutilization. Several pad and anchor sites at the Harford Mall are vacant, as are similar sites along Marketplace Drive at Gateway Drive and Blum Street. This indicates that from a physical and parking capacity perspective, infill residential or mixed-use development would be practical.



Map 4: Potential Redevelopment Scenario in the Four Corners District.

Only one scenario was developed for the Four Corners district. Residential uses were added to the land use mix because existing commercial development abounds with significant vacancy. Four potential multifamily or townhouse development footprints were identified yielding up to 440 residential units. Under the zoning code, 780 parking spaces would be required; however, the ITE manual indicates demand for 640 parking spaces. Even once land is removed for infill residential, it appears that sufficient parking could be provided with a small footprint or low height parking garage of 200 to 300 spaces.

	Scenario
Residential Units	440
1-Bedroom Units	240
2-Bedroom Units	160
Townhouses	40
Total Square Footage	412,000
Zoning Code Parking Requirements	780
ITE Parking Generation	640

Figure 6: Four Corners scenario calculations

Four Corners Recommendation

Eliminate minimum parking requirements at shopping center developments, subject to a master plan.

The existing town code requires 4 parking spaces per 1,000 gross square feet for shopping centers under 400,000 square feet and 3.5 parking spaces per 1,000 gross square feet for shopping centers 400,000 square feet and above. As evident in the Four Corners district today, that creates large, land intensive parking lots that are rarely full and only used during business hours. Large areas of developable land that over serve one purpose during part of the day is simply inefficient. By eliminating these ratios, it frees up space for redevelopment and prevents this from happening again.

This is best done through the adoption of a planned unit development or overlay district with a parking element that is subject to adoption by the Planning Commission. Surrounding properties would have the safeguard of a transparent public process through the Planning Commission and technical analysis by the developer to support the plan.

Conclusion

The parking lots of Bel Air are an underutilized asset. This is in part because of post-pandemic changes in how people work and shop and thus use fewer parking space; and, because there are inefficiencies in lot design and management. Both contexts provide an opportunity for Bel Air to rethink vast areas of asphalt and their use in favor of community and economic development, greenspace, and other appropriate uses. The recommendations herein propose to loosen development-related parking requirements, create adaptability to anticipate future growth, and maintain reasonable protections for communities adjacent to new development.

Appendix 1. Parking Lot Utilization and Conditions Assessments

ARMORY PARKING LOT

41 N Main St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
18	1

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	5
Weekday PM	3
Evening	6
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	No
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	N/A
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

All spaces are dedicated for use by Armory and Marketplace visitors only

BOND THOMAS PARKING LOT

125 Thomas St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
82	4

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	33
Weekday PM	34
Evening	5
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	Yes
Rates Clearly Posted	Yes

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	N/A
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	No
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

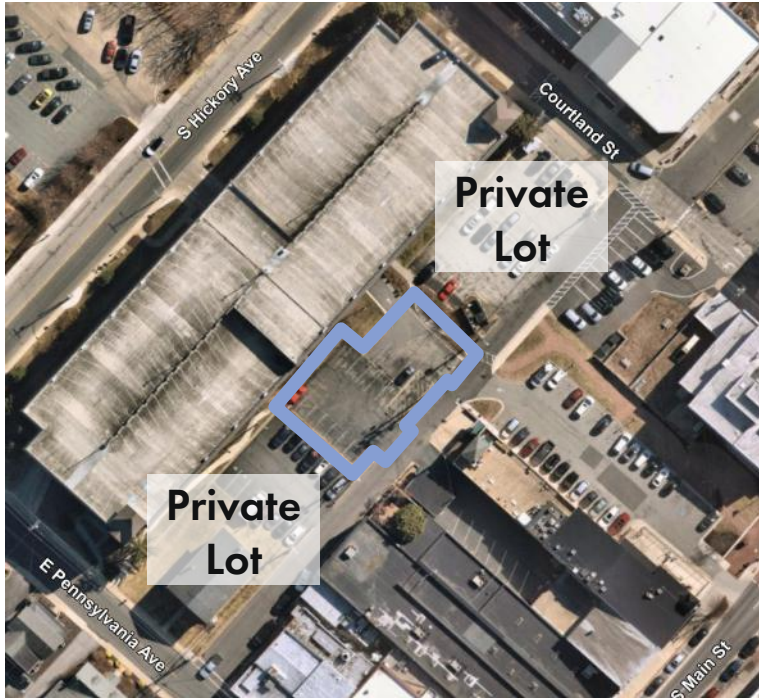
Comments:

Permit Parking; Hours are clearly posted for Public Pay-to-Park; One faded handicap space

BURNS ALLEY PARKING LOT

Burns Alley Lot
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
17	0

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	1
Weekday PM	0
Evening	4
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	Yes
Rates Clearly Posted	Yes

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	No
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	N/A
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	No
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	N/A
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Faded yellow lines at loading zone

COUNTY ADMIN PARKING LOT

239 S Bond St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Harford County



Total Spaces	Handicapped
107	7

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	75
Weekday PM	54
Evening	19
Weekend	13

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	Yes
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	Yes
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Business only visitor parking 7am-5pm; 2 limit

COUNTY COUNCIL PARKING LOT

212 S Bond St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Harford County



Total Spaces	Handicapped
93	6

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	53
Weekday PM	44
Evening	15
Weekend	10

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	Yes
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	N/A
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Stop signs cover blind spots at exits; Visitors and Permit only 8am - 5pm; County Council Employee only parking in section by S Bond St

DOWNTOWN PARKING LOT

33 S Main St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
30	2

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	12
Weekday PM	9
Evening	3
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	Yes
Rates Clearly Posted	Yes

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	N/A
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	No
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	No
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Lines and Handicap spaces are faded; Cross slope ADA issues

HABITAT PARKING LOT

205 S Hays St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Harford County



Total Spaces	Handicapped
57	2

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	29
Weekday PM	25
Evening	17
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	Yes
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	N/A
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	N/A

Comments:

Some parking spaces lines and signs are faded; 7am - 5pm Permit Parking

HEALTH DEPARTMENT PARKING LOT

161 N Hays St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Harford County



Total Spaces	Handicapped
>48	1

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	32
Weekday PM	26
Evening	39
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	No
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	No
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	Yes
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	No
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Health Dept Lot #1 : Permit parking, 8am-5pm; Some of the asphalt is cracked and faded in the unlined section
Overflow Lot: Permit and Health Dept. parking only; Lot's paved surface is patched; Parking space lines are faded

HICKORY AVE PARKING LOT

17 S Hickory Ave
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
135	1

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	74
Weekday PM	66
Evening	15
Weekend	12

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	Yes
Rates Clearly Posted	Yes

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	No
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	N/A
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	No
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Pay-to-park and permit parking; Some spaces reserved 6am- 5pm. Faded parking space lines; faded handicap space. Parking lot also used by contractors

HICKORY GARAGE

26 W Courtland St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
1009	21

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	370
Weekday PM	391
Evening	104
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	
Rates Clearly Posted	

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	
Free of Trip Hazards	
Free of Potholes	
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	
Pathway is ADA Compliant	

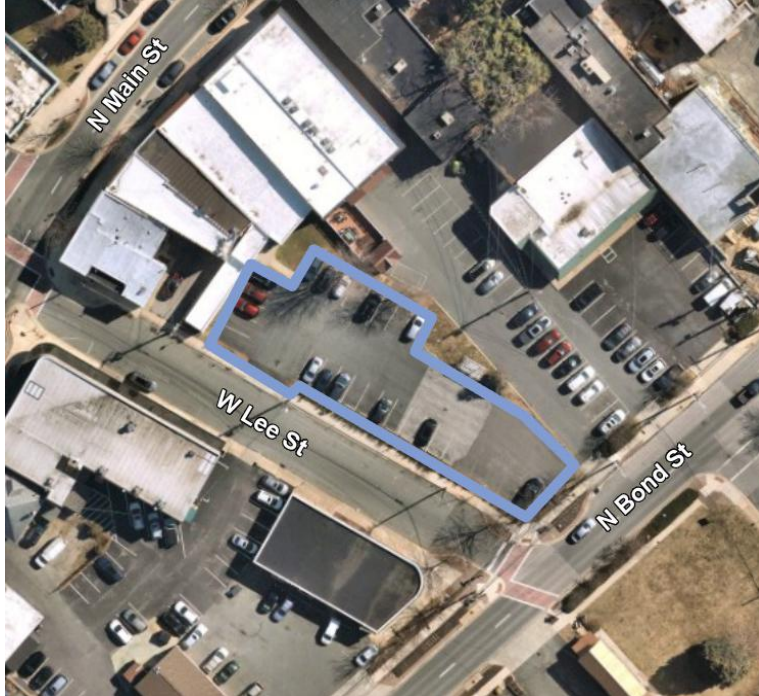
Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	
Handicapped Spaces Painted	
Wheel Stops Visible	

Comments:

LEE ST PARKING LOT

13 W Lee St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
29	0

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	19
Weekday PM	17
Evening	1
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	N/A
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	N/A
Handicapped Spaces Painted	N/A
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Lease parking only, 7am-5pm; Free parking after 5pm; Faded parking space lines

MARY RISTEAU PARKING LOT

127 Thomas St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
State of Maryland



Total Spaces	Handicapped
60/190	12

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	116
Weekday PM	107
Evening	N/A
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	No
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	Yes
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Permit use only at the large lot, small adjacent lot is private; Arrows present in private lot but in the permit-only lot; Lines fading in Permit-only lot

PENNSYLVANIA AVE PARKING LOT A

12 E Pennsylvania Ave
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
55	3

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	34
Weekday PM	33
Evening	36
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	Yes

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	No
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Free parking, 2 hour limit; Some painted navigation arrows are faded

PENNSYLVANIA AVE PARKING LOT B

23 N Main St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Private



Total Spaces	Handicapped
73	3

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	59
Weekday PM	56
Evening	15
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	N/A
Rates Clearly Posted	N/A

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	No
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	No
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

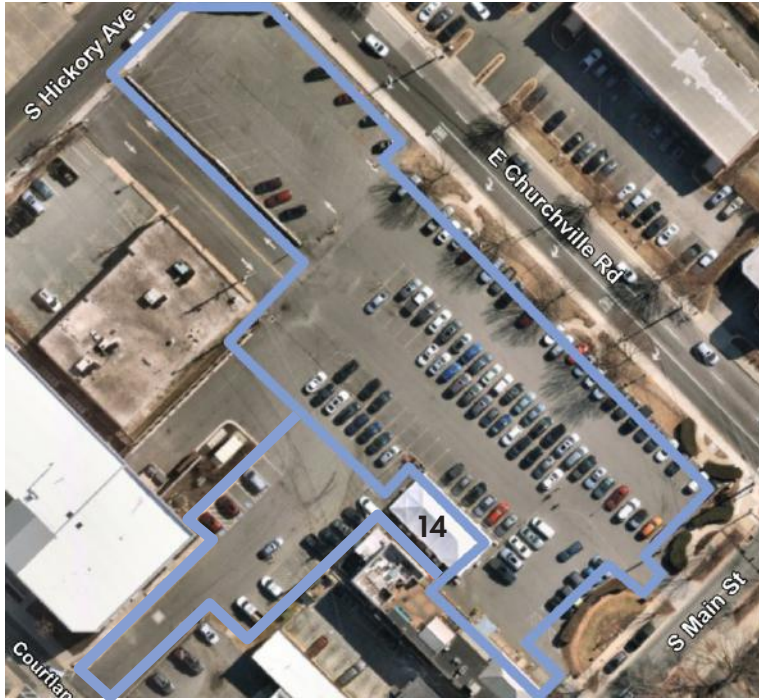
Comments:

Pedestrian walkways are faded; many parking lines are faded; Private lot; No public or Armory parking during business hours; Some spots are reserved

SOUTH MAIN ST PARKING LOT

121 S Main St
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air, Harford County



Total Spaces	Handicapped
Town = 18; County = 127	Town = 1; County = 0

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	84
Weekday PM	82
Evening	44
Weekend	60

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	Yes
Rates Clearly Posted	Yes

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	Yes
Free of Trip Hazards	Yes
Free of Potholes	Yes
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	Yes
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	Yes
Pathway is ADA Compliant	Yes

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	No
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	Yes
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	Yes
Handicapped Spaces Painted	Yes
Wheel Stops Visible	Yes

Comments:

Metered parking owned by Town of Bel Air
Permit parking owned by Harford County; faded parking space lines

TOWN HALL PARKING LOT

39 N Hickory Ave
Bel Air, MD 21014

Owner:
Town of Bel Air



Total Spaces	Handicapped
61	3

Occupancy	
Weekday AM	N/A
Weekday PM	N/A
Evening	N/A
Weekend	N/A

Rates & Hours	Acceptable
Meters Operational	
Rates Clearly Posted	

Surface Condition & Drainage	Acceptable
Free of Cracks and Spalls	
Free of Trip Hazards	
Free of Potholes	
Inlet Grates Clear of Debris	
Free of Standing Water/ Low Spots	
Pathway is ADA Compliant	

Signs & Markings	Acceptable
Stop Signs & Mirrors Placed	
Navigation Signs & Arrows Clear	
Pedestrian Walkways Marked	
Handicapped Spaces Painted	
Wheel Stops Visible	

Comments:

Under construction, entire parking lot closed; Count is post-construction

Appendix 2. Parking Code Comparisons

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent				Most Stringent			
Tavern/Brewery Assuming: <i>100 persons capacity</i> <i>2,500 sq. ft.</i>	1			35					Aberdeen
				33.3					Bel Air
			25						Havre de Grace
				30					Harford County
				30					Annapolis
									Berlin
			25						Easton
								50	Elkton
		16.6							Frederick
								43.3	Mount Airy
							Westminster		

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent				Most Stringent			
Single-family detached, semidetached	15			2					Aberdeen
				2					Bel Air
				2					Havre de Grace
				2					Harford County
				2					Annapolis
				2					Berlin
				2					Easton
				2					Elkton
				2					Frederick
								3	Mount Airy
				2			Westminster		

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent				Most Stringent		
Two-Family Housing Assuming: 2 Units 2-Bedroom						5		Aberdeen
					4			Bel Air
					4			Havre de Grace
					4			Harford County
			2					Annapolis
					4			Berlin
		1.5						Easton
							5	Elkton
				3				Frederick
								Mount Airy
						4		Westminster

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent				Most Stringent		
Restaurant Assuming: 100 Persons capacity 2,500 sq. ft. 10 Employees 60% Customer Space	32				43.3			Aberdeen
					33.3			Bel Air
			25					Havre de Grace
					33.3			Harford County
		15						Annapolis
			25					Berlin
							43.3	Easton
			25					Elkton
								Frederick
							50	Mount Airy
					30			Westminster

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent			Most Stringent		
Multi-Family Assuming: 80 Units 30 1-Bedroom Units 30 2-Bedroom Units 20 3-Bedroom Units	14				165		Aberdeen
					155		Bel Air
					160		Havre de Grace
				145			Harford County
		80					Annapolis
					160		Berlin
		80					Easton
						195	Elkton
			120				Frederick
					160		Mount Airy
			145		Westminster		

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent			Most Stringent		
Townhouse Assuming: 40 Units 15 1-Bedroom Units 15 2-Bedroom Units 10 3-Bedroom Units	16				100		Aberdeen
					100		Bel Air
				80			Havre de Grace
				80			Harford County
				80			Annapolis
				80			Berlin
				80			Easton
					97.5		Elkton
			80				Frederick
							Mount Airy
				120	Westminster		

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent			Most Stringent		
Three-Family Dwelling Assuming: 3 Units 1 1-Bedroom Unit 1 2-Bedroom Unit 1 3-Bedroom Unit					6.5		Aberdeen
					6		Bel Air
					6		Havre de Grace
					6		Harford County
		3					Annapolis
					6		Berlin
		2.25					Easton
						7.5	Elkton
			4.5				Frederick
					5.5		Mount Airy
					Westminster		

Use	Use Code	Least Stringent			Most Stringent		
Antique shop/art gallery/museum (Definition of gallery may vary between community) Assuming:	17			12.5			Aberdeen
				12.5			Bel Air
						23.3	Havre de Grace
						20	Harford County
							Annapolis
							Berlin
		5					Easton
			10				Elkton
					16.6		Frederick
							Mount Airy
					Westminster		

