

2025 TRYON PARKING STUDY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the Town of Tryon staff for their support and guidance. Special thanks are extended to, business owners and concerned citizens in the Town of Tryon who participated in our public input survey.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



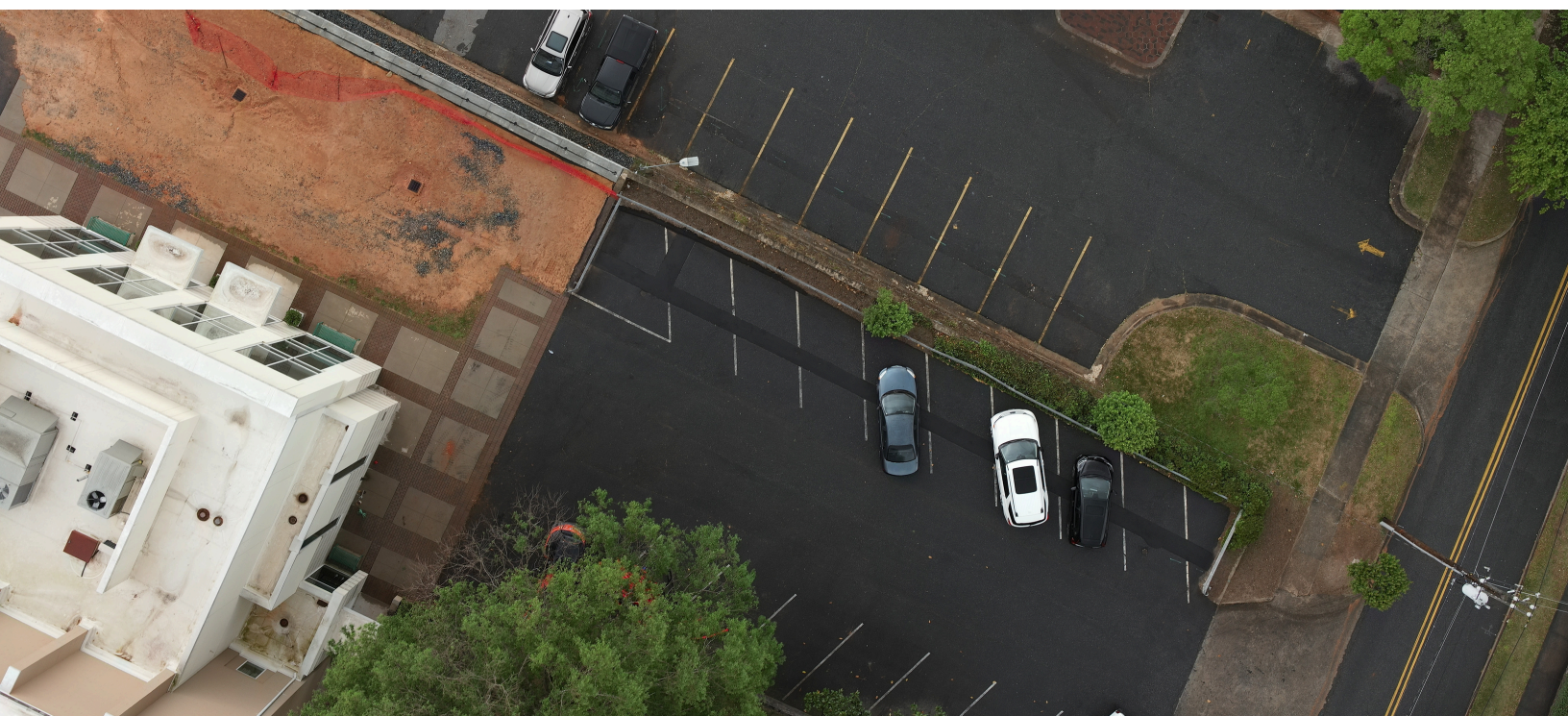
Introduction

Executive Summary

This parking study for the Town of Tryon provides a comprehensive analysis of the existing public parking capacity in Downtown Tryon, the current parking demands, trip and parking behavior of downtown residents, merchants, government offices, and visitors, and the parking solutions. Conducted by the Foothills Regional Commission, this study examines demographic trends, economic factors, and public input to identify key potential parking concerns. Through data analysis and a public survey, the study highlights any barriers, if any, to the public parking needs in Downtown Tryon. Based on these findings, it offers strategic recommendations to parking needs.

Purpose

The purpose of the Tryon Parking Study is to assess current parking, identify parking demands, and develop strategic recommendations to ensure adequate parking solutions. This study examines the current parking situation to understand if parking demand exists. Public input was gathered through two surveys for residents/visitors and downtown merchants to ensure community perspectives shape parking recommendations.



Methodologies

Study Area

The scope of this study is Downtown Tryon which will only include the parking availability within the downtown scope both private and public.

Demographic Analysis

Demographic data for population was acquired from the U.S. Census Bureau. This data has been used in its primary form and by Foothills Regional Commission for secondary calculations.

Economic Analysis

Economic data for employment was acquired from the U.S. Census Bureau. This data has been used in its primary form and by Foothills Regional Commission for secondary calculations.

Public Engagement

Foothills Regional Commission engaged in a public input mechanisms to acquire the best data from the citizens, visitors, and merchants of the Town of Tryon. By sending out two surveys to citizens/visitors and merchants of the town Foothills was able to use this information in their final recommendations.

Recommendations

This plan provides a series of recommendations focused on improving and maintaining Downtown Tryon's current parking. These recommendations aim to enhance accessibility, support economic vitality, and accommodate future growth while preserving the town's charm and walkability. Key components include optimizing the use of existing parking spaces, improving signage and wayfinding, and exploring shared parking agreements. The ultimate goal is to create a balanced and user-friendly parking system that serves residents, businesses, and visitors.

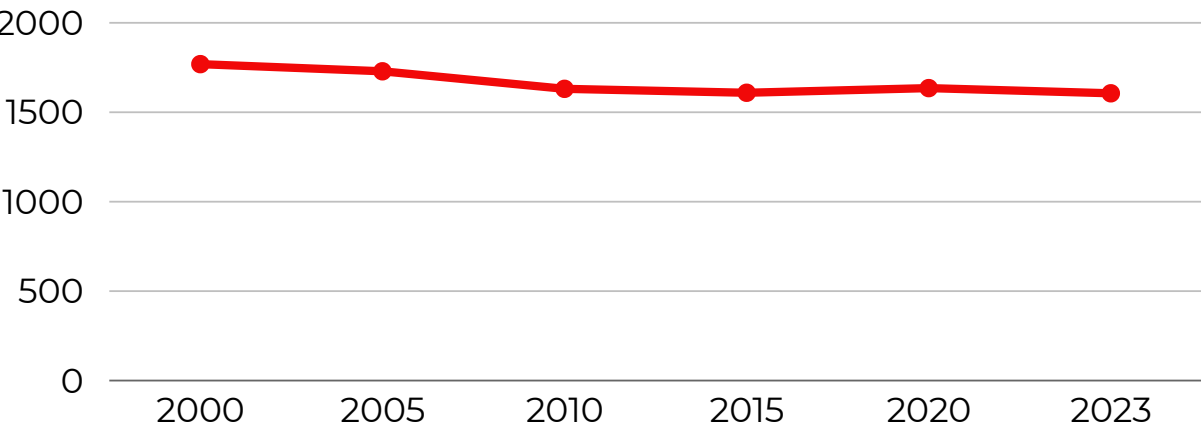
CHAPTER 2: DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS



Demographic Analysis

Population

The Town of Tryon is home to approximately 1,606 (Decennial Census) people. The overall population has decreased over time, from 1,769 in 2000 to 1,606 in 2023 indicating a -9.21% change.



Race

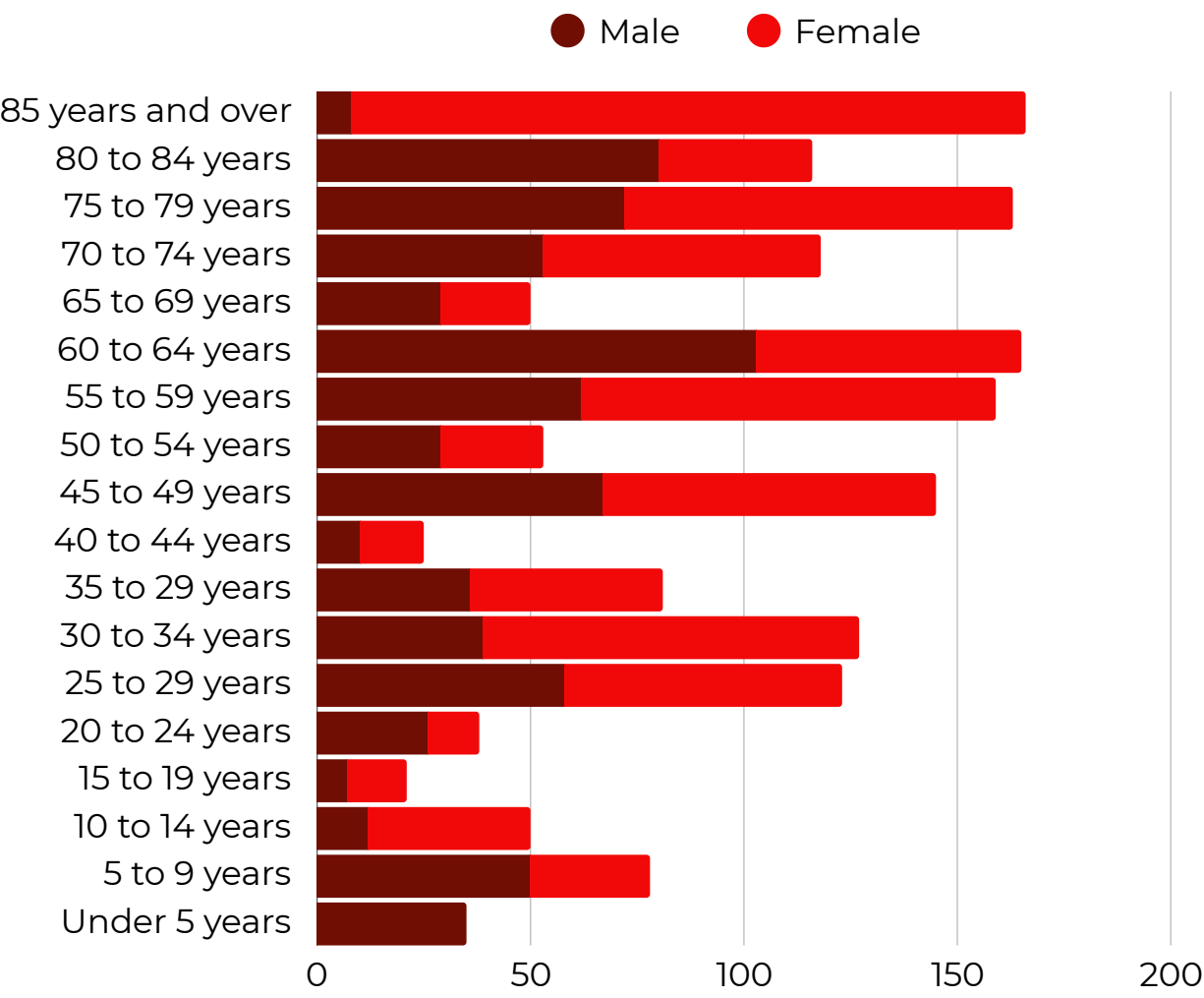
The following table breaks down the population by race in the Town of Tryon.

Race	Tryon
White alone	1,222
Black or African American alone	190
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	3
Asian alone	7
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0
Two or More Races	117
Hispanic or Latino	61
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	1,207



Population by Age and Sex

The following table explores a break down of population by age and sex. The median age in the Town of Tryon is 58 yrs and 35.8% of the population is 65 years and over.



CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC ANALYSIS



Economic Analysis

Employment By Industry

Industry	Tryon
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	22.7%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	11.7%
Retail trade	10.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	9.9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	9.2%
Manufacturing	8.9%
Other services, except public admin	7.7%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	7.3%
Public administration	4.4%
Construction	3.2%

Economic Analysis

Employment Statistics

The employment rate of the Town of Tryon stands at 48.8%, with the average travel time for commuters at 18.8 minutes. 62.2% of residents drive their own vehicle and 19.2% carpool. Approximately 11.7% of residents work from home.

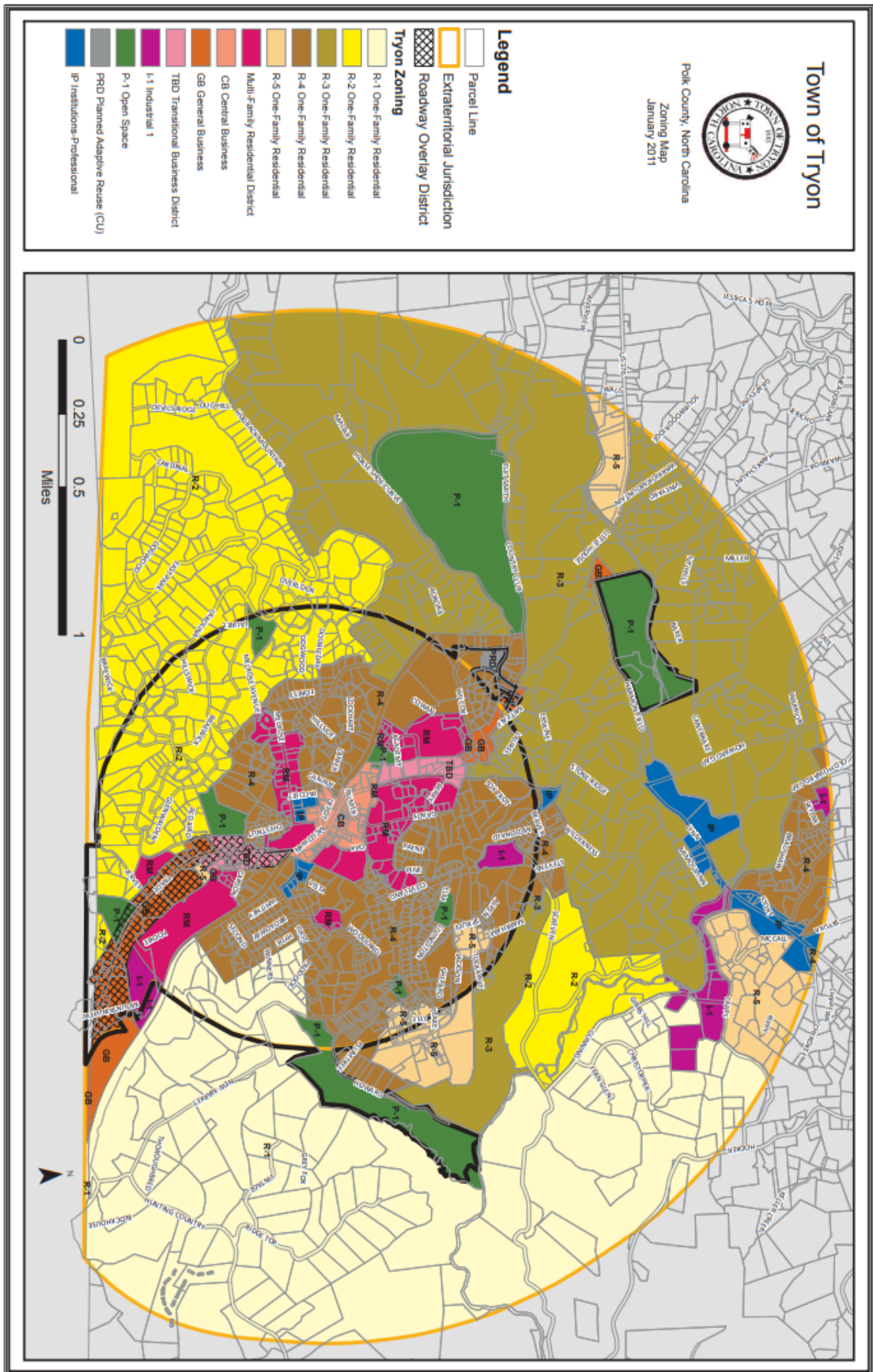
Income and Poverty

The median household income of the Town of Tryon is \$47,604. The poverty rate stands at 28.0%, more than doubling North Carolina's rate at 12.8%.

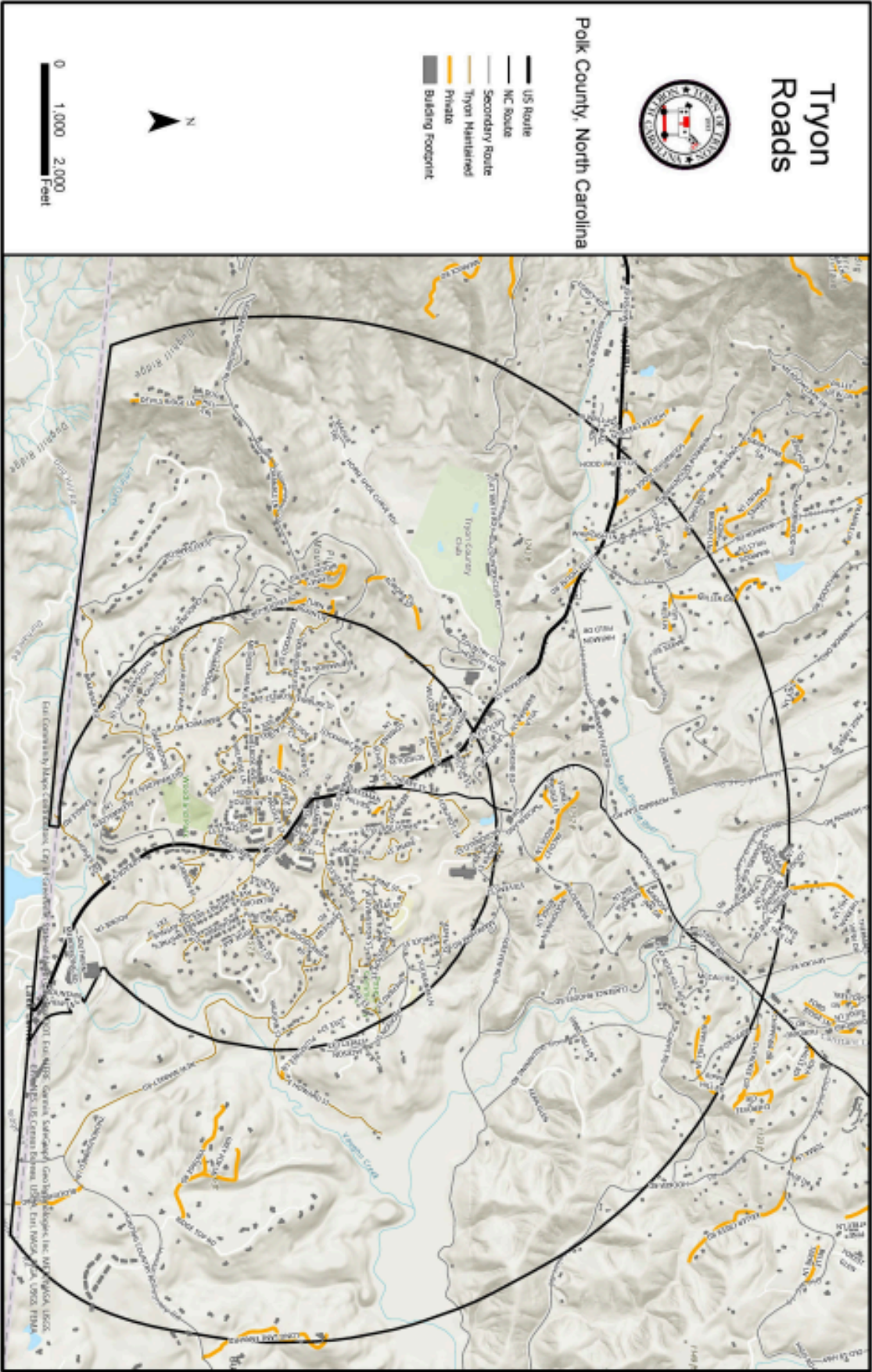


Zoning and Property Characteristics

Town of Tryon Zoning



Town of Tryon Roads



Downtown Tryon



CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Community Input Results and Analysis

Public Surveys

Public engagement played a critical role in shaping this parking study by providing valuable insights from residents, visitors, and merchants. To better understand any parking challenges facing Downtown Tryon, the Foothills Regional Commission (FRC) conducted a resident/visitor survey and a merchant survey. These efforts aimed to capture all perspectives on parking needs.

The surveys were conducted over a specified timeline using the ArcGIS Survey123 platform. Both surveys were advertised by the town and in the Tryon Daily Bulletin. In total, 406 responses were collected from residents/visitors and 22 responses from merchants, offering a comprehensive snapshot of Downtown Tryon parking concerns and priorities. The survey was designed to capture a holistic overview of various parking concerns affecting residents/visitors and merchants, including parking availability and improvements.

Survey questions focused on understanding if parking challenges existed within Downtown Tryon. The results presented below provide a detailed analysis of key trends and concerns expressed by respondents. Please note that percentages may not total 100% due to rounding or multiple-choice responses.

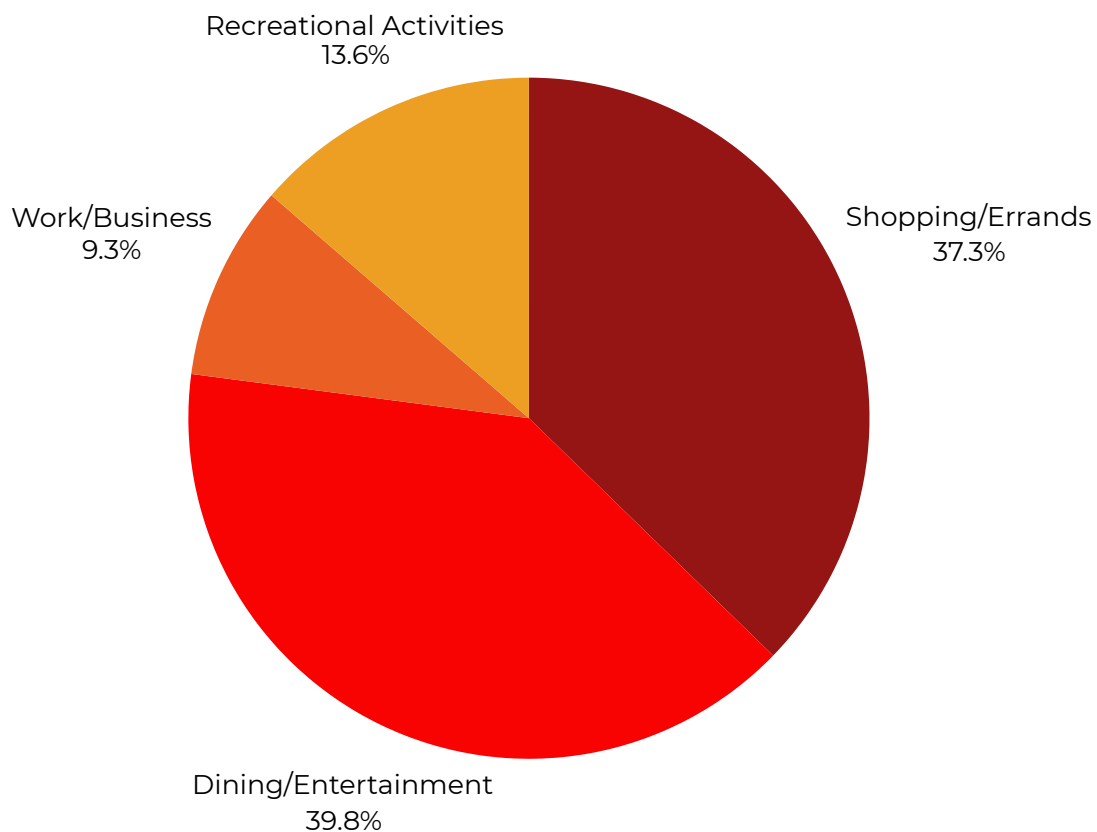




Resident/Visitor Key Findings

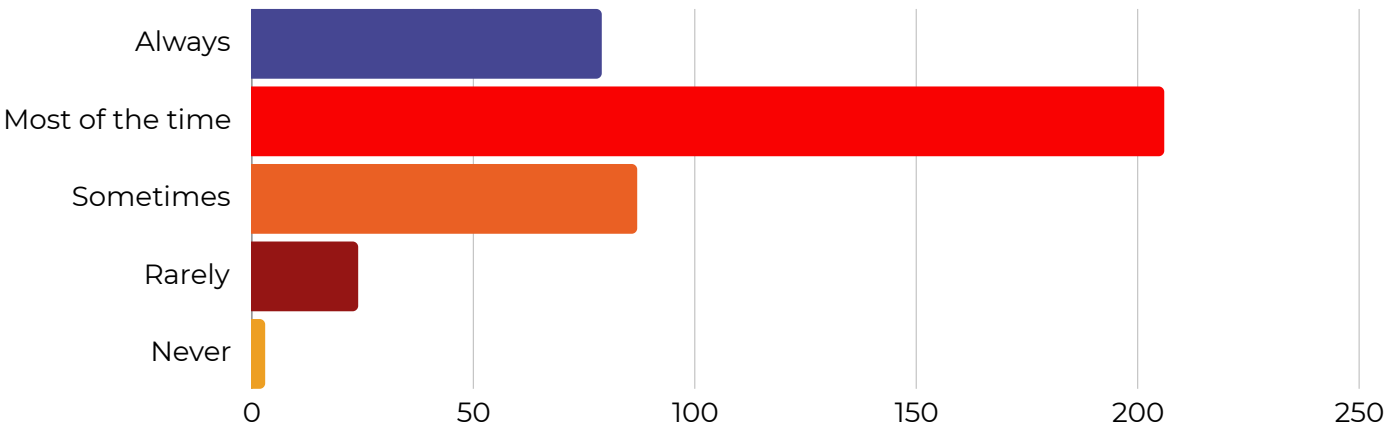
Of the 406 respondents, 342 were residents and 62 were visitors. Within the residents, **38.18%** have lived in the Town of Tryon for more than 10 years, **24.63%** 1-5 years, and **23.15%** 6-10 years.

36.70% of respondents visit Downtown Tryon daily and **44.83%** visit weekly with **93.84%** using free parking. The following pie chart explores respondent's primary purpose of visiting Downtown Tryon.

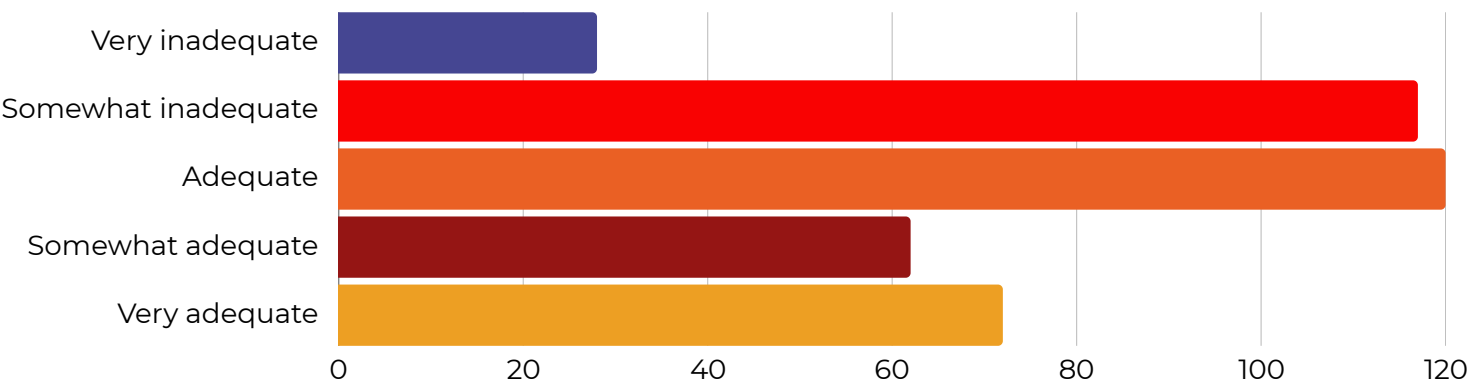


Parking Availability

Respondents were asked “How often do you find parking easily when visiting Downtown Tryon?”

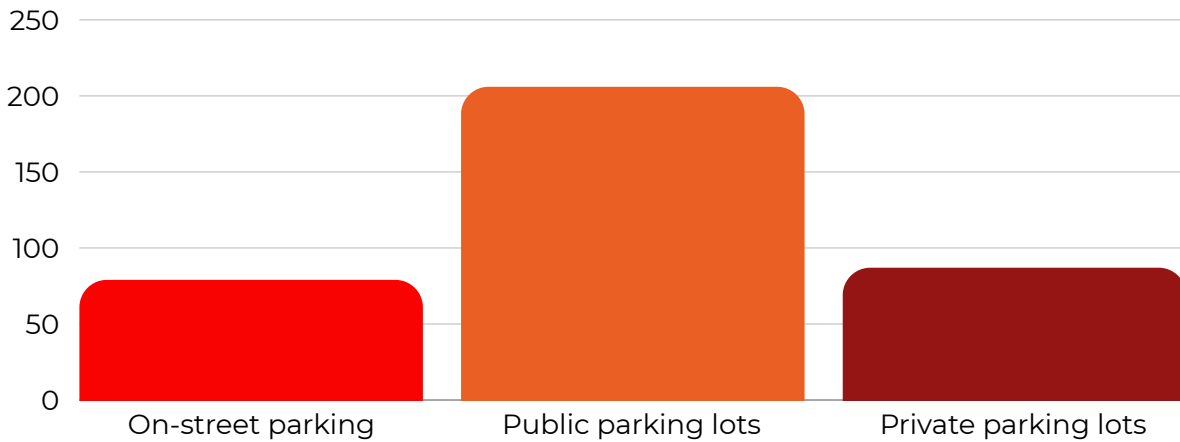


Respondents were asked “How would you rate the overall availability of parking in Downtown Tryon?”



Parking Availability and Improvements

Respondents were asked “What types of facilities do you typically use when visiting Downtown Tryon?”



When asked about parking challenges:

- **31.28%** found it difficult finding an available spot
- **52.22%** found too few parking spaces in high-demand areas
- **16.26%** found parking too far from their destination
- **10.34%** found lack of accessible parking spaces (disabled parking)

When asked about parking improvements, respondents advocated for:

- **34.98%** more parking spaces
- **32.27%** better signage directing traffic to available parking
- **31.77%** no parking solutions are necessary
- **27.59%** more public lots or garages
- **17.49%** better lighting and safety features in parking areas
- **13.55%** more bike racks and bike-friendly parking
- **7.14%** improved parking enforcement
- **1.23%** reduced parking costs

When asked if better parking options would encourage more frequent visits to Downtown Tryon, **36.70%** said it wouldn't make a difference, **26.60%** felt neutral, and **20.94%** said yes, somewhat.



Merchant Key Findings

Of the 22 merchant respondents:

- **31.82%** were retail
- **18.18%** included arts & entertainment
- **9.09%** were restaurants
- **9.09%** included health and wellness
- **27.27%** in the “Other” category said realtor, media, home heating, education, blacksmith, and architect

59.09% of the businesses have been there for more than 10 years, **18.18%** between 1-5 years, **13.64%** between 6-10 years, and **9.09%** less than one year. Of these businesses, **68.18%** do not own parking spaces for their customers.

Parking Availability and Problems

When asked about availability in spaces for their customers, merchants said:

- **40.91%** had fewer than 5 spaces
- **22.73%** between 5-10 spaces
- **9.09%** between 11-20 spaces
- **9.09%** more than 20 spaces

When asked if merchants believed customers experience parking problems:

- **45.45%** said often times
- **36.36%** said sometimes
- **9.09%** said always
- **9.09%** said rarely

Challenges and Solutions

Respondents were asked “Do you believe that improving parking availability would increase customer visits to your business?”

- **31.82%** yes, somewhat
- **27.27%** yes, significantly
- **18.18%** no, it would not have an impact
- **18.18%** not sure

When asked if there was a public parking lot nearby, **50%** said yes while **45.45%** said no.

When asked about the biggest parking-related challenges for their business, respondents said:

- **40.91%** insufficient parking spaces
- **31.82%** parking located too far from business
- **31.28%** lack of accessible parking spaces
- **9.09%** limited parking duration
- **9.09%** poorly maintained or unsafe parking areas
- **4.55%** none

When asked what parking solutions would benefit merchants, respondents said:

- **68.18%** improved signage to direct traffic to available parking
- **63.64%** expanded public parking lots/garages
- **40.91%** more on-street parking
- **22.73%** increases parking enforcement (time limits or security)
- **18.18%** reserved parking for employees
- **4.55%** bicycle racks or bike-friendly parking
- **4.55%** no parking solutions are necessary

Key Themes From Surveys

Small Town Culture

Respondents of the resident/visitor survey discussed their concern for large scale parking garages expressing the threat they would bring to Tryon's small town charm.

Improvements of Current Parking

Improving and maintaining current parking lots and parking spaces in addition to signage would facilitate the direction of traffic and expand parking availability.

Accessible Parking

The absence of enough accessible parking poses a safety threat for some downtown visitors inhibiting their mobility and forcing them to park farther away.

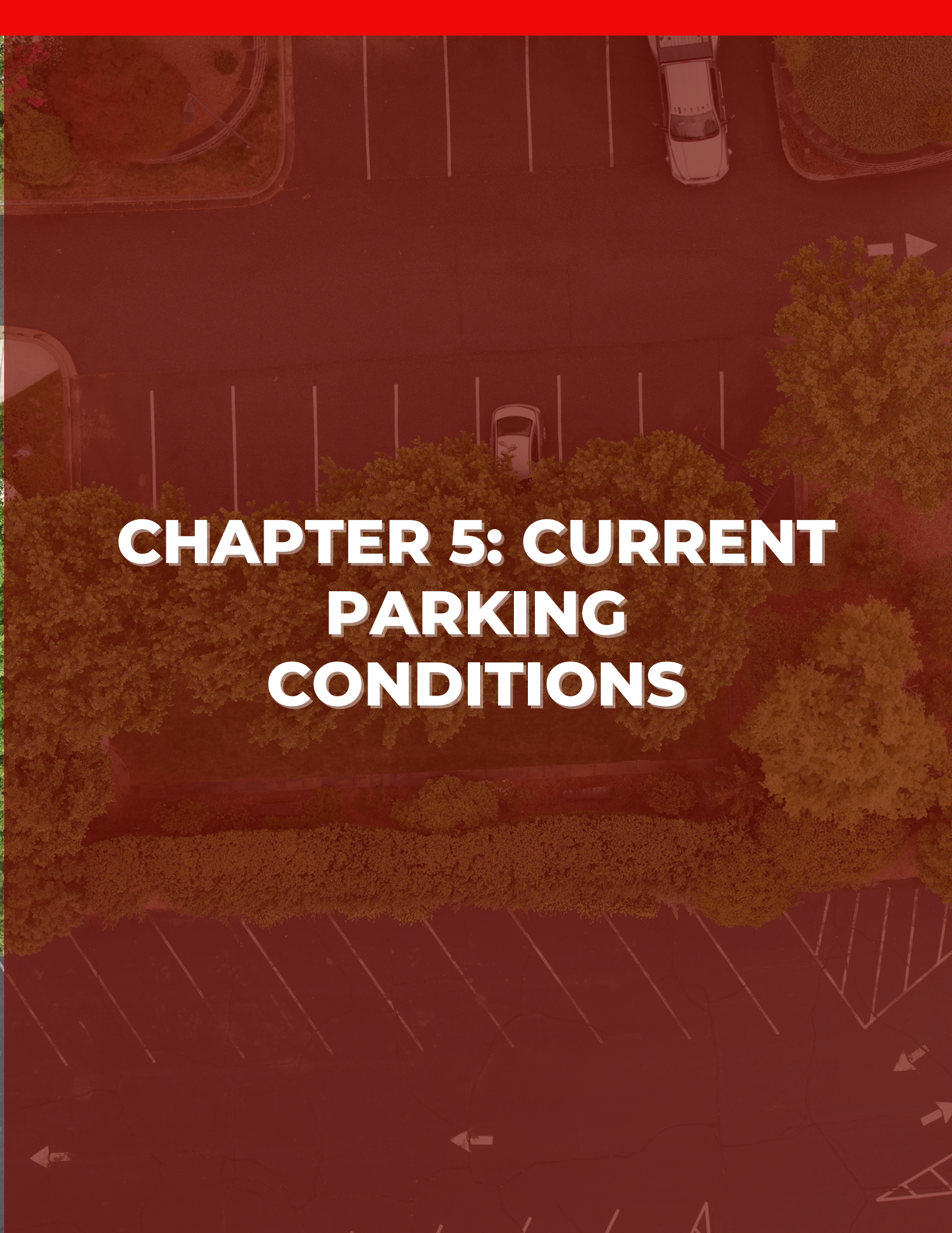
Safety Concerns

Survey respondents voiced concerns about the safety risks associated with angled parking spaces, especially for large trucks, citing limited visibility and an increased potential for collisions when maneuvering in and out of the spots.

Parking Enforcement

Survey respondents highlighted the lack of parking enforcement as a significant issue, noting that it leads to frequent violations and reduced turnover of spaces.





CHAPTER 5: CURRENT PARKING CONDITIONS

Methods

The Foothills Regional Commission team analyzed the current parking status of Downtown Tryon in April 2025. The analysis of downtown Tryon's parking was conducted using aerial imagery with a small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) to survey the area and count all available parking spots. The imagery with the sUAS was accomplished over a span of two sessions: the first flight took place in the early morning between 8:30 AM and 10:00 AM, and the second occurred about two weeks later around lunchtime between 12:30 PM and 2:00 PM.

By creating an aerial image of the Town of Tryon's parking options, Foothills Regional Commission was able to have a current picture of the stock of parking available in the downtown area. Staff utilized these images to count the amount of public parking spots that can be utilized to patrons of the downtown businesses.

Current Parking

The Town of Tryon offers public parking spaces in the downtown area in the form of street parking and public parking lots. After reviewing the aerial images that were collected, Foothills Regional Commission counted a total of 719 parking spots. Please note that some parking lots are not paved or have faded parking marks.

According to the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) data, the Town of Tryon has a population of 1,713 and 898 total households. This is roughly 3 parking spots for every 7 residents or 4 parking spots for every 5 households.





CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

This study provides a series of recommendations focused on maintaining and improving the current parking availability in Downtown Tryon. Recommendations will also include a timeline for implementation, ensuring that each phase is both achievable and impactful. Key areas of focus will include infrastructure upgrades, optimizing parking space usage, and enhancing accessibility for all users. The timeline will outline short-term and long-term actions, prioritizing the most urgent needs while allowing for gradual improvements over time.





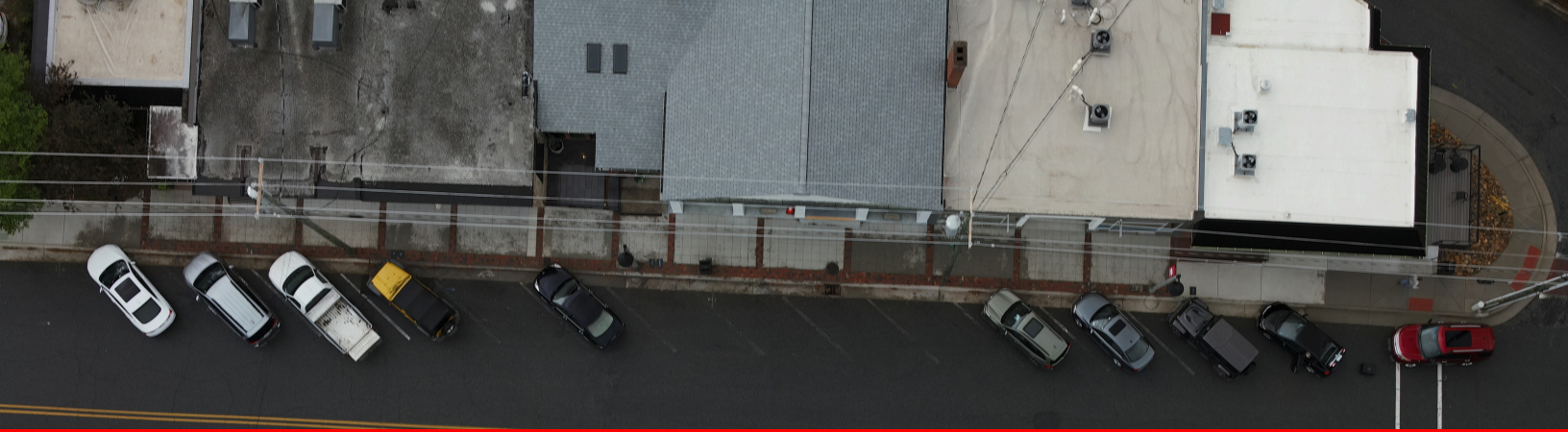
Downtown Tryon Growth Projections

The Town of Tryon is expected to see economic growth and higher levels of car traffic due to the paving of the Saluda Grade Rail. This trail is expected to be a major tourism asset for the Town of Tryon that will bring more money and tourism to local businesses.

It's difficult to predict how much tourism industries will be affected, and how much busier the parking will be downtown without knowing how many people will visit the Saluda Grade Rail Trail. However, a 2004 study on the economic impact of the Creeper Trail for Damascus, VA, estimates that 100,870 annual primary purpose visits (130,172 annual visits) has led to \$2,297,818 net economic value per year.

Because of the possibility of all this increased tourism from the trail, Tryon needs to expect increased bike and pedestrian traffic and implement strategies to ensure their safety.





Maintain and Improve Current Parking

Objectives

- **Review Angled and Parallel Parking Along Trade Street** – Engineers should evaluate the current layout and provide recommendations to improve visibility, maneuverability, and overall safety—particularly for larger vehicles. The goal is to create a more user-friendly parking experience that minimizes conflicts between drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. This effort should be coordinated in partnership with NCDOT to ensure alignment with state guidelines and support for implementation.
- **Implement Tactical Urbanism Techniques on Municipal Operated Streets** – Identify and promote tactical urbanism techniques that municipalities can implement on publicly operated streets—such as temporary curb extensions, painted crosswalks, parklets, and pop-up bike lanes—to enhance safety, accessibility, and community engagement through low-cost, scalable interventions.
- **Promote the Use of Bollards and Pavement Markings** – Clearly delineate parking spaces, improve traffic flow, enhance pedestrian safety, and create a more organized, visually accessible streetscape—all through cost-effective measures such as bollards and paint.
- **Implement Clear and Visible Signage for Available Parking** – Install strategically placed, easy-to-read signs to direct drivers to available parking areas, reducing congestion and improving overall accessibility and user experience.
- **Enhance Street Lighting in Parking Areas** – Increase and improve street lighting in parking lots and along streets to enhance visibility, safety, and security for pedestrians and drivers, particularly during nighttime hours.

- **Establish a Regular Maintenance Program for Parking Areas** – Create and implement a schedule for routine inspections, cleaning, resurfacing, and repair of parking lots and structures to ensure safety and preserve infrastructure quality.
- **Designate Parking Areas for Large Vehicles** – Identify and allocate specific parking spaces designed to accommodate oversized vehicles such as trucks and vans, improving safety and reducing congestion in standard parking areas.
- **Designate Compact Parking** – Designate specific parking spaces for compact vehicles in order to maximize space efficiency, improve traffic flow within parking areas, and enhance overall safety by reducing visibility obstructions caused by oversized vehicles.
- **Expand Accessible Parking Options** – Increase the number and visibility of ADA-compliant parking spaces throughout downtown, with a particular emphasis on addressing the lack of accessible parking from the southern side of the railroad tracks to Trade Street, ensuring equitable access to all downtown destinations for individuals with disabilities.
- **Sidewalk Expansion on the Southern Side of Trade St** – Assess, improve, and ensure the accessibility, safety, and continuity of sidewalks along the southern side of Trade Street, enhancing pedestrian mobility and supporting a walkable, connected streetscape.
- **Enhance Enforcement of Parking and Traffic Regulations** – Strengthen enforcement of existing rules, including prohibitions on illegal U-turns in parking areas and adherence to 2-hour parking limits, to improve traffic flow, reduce accidents, and enhance safety and accessibility for both pedestrians and drivers.

- **Implement Temporary and Supplemental Parking Solutions** – Develop and manage parking strategies to accommodate demand during large events, as well as increased weekday and weekend activity. Solutions may include designated overflow areas, shuttle services, clear signage, and partnerships—such as with the First Baptist Church of Tryon—to expand parking capacity and reduce congestion in core areas.
- **Create Designated Parking for Merchants and Employees** – Establish reserved parking spaces for downtown merchants and their employees to ensure convenient access to businesses, minimize congestion, and improve overall parking availability for customers.
- **Expand and Improve Bicycle Infrastructure** – Implement and enhance dedicated bicycle lanes and shared lane markings (sharrows), along with clear signage, throughout the downtown area to provide safer routes for cyclists, reduce traffic congestion, and promote eco-friendly transportation. Sharrows offer a cost-effective solution for improving cyclist visibility and safety without the need for major roadway reconstruction.
- **Increase the Availability of Bicycle Racks** – Install additional, strategically placed bicycle racks in high-traffic areas to encourage cycling as a sustainable transportation option and provide secure parking for cyclists.
- **Pedestrian Crossing Signals** – Enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility by implementing additional pedestrian crossing signals at key intersections and high-traffic areas, promoting safer, more efficient, and inclusive mobility for all users.
- **Implement Designated Golf Cart Parking** – Implement designated golf cart parking areas in strategic locations to improve traffic organization, enhance safety, and support the growing use of alternative local transportation.

Implementation Schedule

This implementation plan outlines a strategic, phased approach to improving parking, mobility, and streetscape infrastructure in Downtown Tryon. It identifies key actions, responsible parties, and defined timelines across short-term (1–3 years), mid-term (3–5 years), and long-term (5+ years). The plan focuses on enhancing visibility, safety, and accessibility through coordinated efforts such as reconfiguring parking layouts, implementing tactical urbanism techniques, increasing signage and lighting, and expanding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. By leveraging partnerships with NCDOT, local municipalities, and community stakeholders, this plan ensures that interventions are practical, cost-effective, and aligned with broader mobility goals. With a clear roadmap and phased priorities, it supports the creation of a more organized and user-friendly downtown environment for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Timeline	Recommendations	Key Actions
Short-term (1-3 years)	Review Angled and Parallel Parking Along Trade Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage engineers to analyze current layouts• Evaluate impacts on visibility, maneuverability, and safety• Coordinate recommendations with NCDOT for alignment and approval
Short-term (1-3 years)	Implement Tactical Urbanism Techniques on Municipal Operated Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify suitable streets for temporary curb extensions, parklets, and bike lanes• Conduct pilot projects using low-cost materials• Gather community feedback and measure outcomes

Timeline	Recommendations	Key Actions
Short-term (1-3 years)	Promote the Use of Bollards and Pavement Markings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a site audit to identify priority locations • Install bollards and pavement paint to delineate spaces and guide traffic
Short-term (1-3 years)	Implement Clear and Visible Signage for Available Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design user-friendly signage • Install at key entry points and decision locations downtown
Short-term (1-3 years)	Enhance Street Lighting in Parking Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess existing lighting coverage • Replace or add fixtures for improved nighttime visibility and safety
Short-term (1-3 years)	Establish a Regular Maintenance Program for Parking Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inspection and maintenance schedule • Implement routine cleaning, repainting, and resurfacing
Short-term (1-3 years)	Implement Temporary and Supplemental Parking Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and formalize overflow and event-specific parking locations • Develop signage and shuttle services in collaboration with partners

Timeline	Recommendations	Key Actions
Short-term (1-3 years)	Create Designated Parking for Merchants and Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey businesses for employee parking needs • Reserve clearly marked spaces in nearby lots or less-trafficked streets
Short-term (1-3 years)	Expand and Improve Bicycle Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add sharrows and paint dedicated lanes where feasible • Coordinate with NCDOT for lane integration and signage
Short-term (1-3 years)	Increase the Availability of Bicycle Racks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install racks at commercial, civic, and transit-accessible locations
Short-term (1-3 years)	Establish a Regular Maintenance Program for Parking Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inspection and maintenance schedule • Implement routine cleaning, repainting, and resurfacing
Short-term (1-3 years)	Enhance Enforcement of Parking and Traffic Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase patrol presence and update enforcement protocols • Introduce signage to clarify time limits and rules

Timeline	Recommendations	Key Actions
Mid-term (3–5 years)	Pedestrian Crossing Signals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify intersections with high pedestrian volumes • Install crossing signals with audible and countdown features
Mid-term (3–5 years)	Designate Parking Areas for Large Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current demand and areas of conflict • Mark designated spaces away from high-traffic pedestrian zones
Mid-term (3–5 years)	Designate Compact Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark compact-only spaces in appropriate areas to optimize lot capacity
Mid-term (3–5 years)	Expand Accessible Parking Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit current ADA spaces for compliance and distribution • Add spaces near priority destinations, especially south of the railroad tracks
5+ years	Sidewalk Expansion on the Southern Side of Trade Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct feasibility studies and develop construction plans • Secure funding and coordinate with property owners and NCDOT • Expand sidewalks to improve safety, access, and walkability