

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Matt Laird, Assistant Planner

SUBJECT: PARKING ANALYSIS; DOWNTOWN

DATE: January 5, 2022

### Background

In 2020 and 2021, Planning Department staff conducted a Downtown Parking Study. The goal of the study was to answer the question, “Is there enough parking in the downtown area?” The study consisted of three weeks of car counts during four points in the day – 10:30am, 12:30pm, 2:30pm, and 5:30pm. The study focused on how much of the City’s public parking is being utilized on average. The first parking count was conducted between June 25 and July 1, 2020. The second count was conducted between July 30 and August 5, 2020. The third count was conducted between April 5 and April 11, 2021. The study area was divided into 19 study area blocks and included five public parking lots. (See Figure 1 “Study Area Map”). This memo is intended to summarize the analysis conducted by staff.

### Existing Conditions –

Downtown Cottage Grove generally has six types of parking ordinances in place:

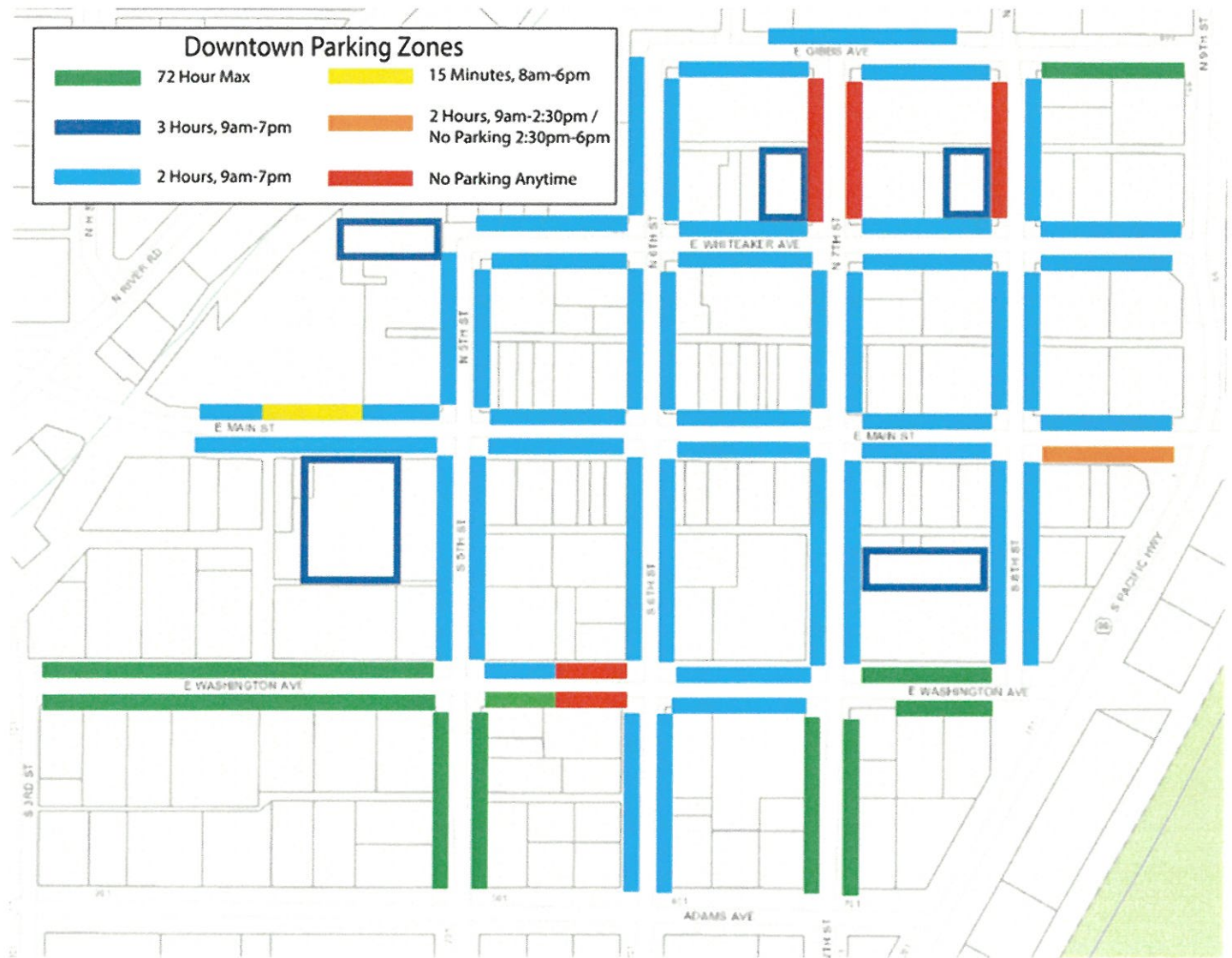
- 72 Hours Maximum (green)
- 3-Hour Parking, 9am-7pm (dark blue)
- 2-Hour Parking, 9am-7pm (light blue)
- 15 Minute Parking, 8am-6pm (yellow)
- 2 Hour Parking 9am-2:30pm & No Parking 2:30pm-6pm (orange)
- No Parking Anytime (red)

Most of the downtown area is governed by the “2 Hour Parking” rule. Public parking lots allow 3 Hour parking, residential areas allow 72 Hour parking, and the other three categories are location-based. (See Figure 2 “Downtown Parking Zones”).

There are 363 parking spaces within the public right-of-way in the study area. Additionally, the City owns public parking lots that accommodate 131 parking spaces. This study counted the use of three private parking lots identified as lots E, G and H in Figure 1, however they were not included in the final analysis, as they did not have formal “spaces” and may not be open to the public. Total private parking in the study area exceeds 340 additional parking spaces. The total number of public parking spaces equals 494. If you count the private parking, there are approximately 834 total spaces in the downtown study area.



Figure 2. Downtown Parking Zones



## Findings-

What does it mean for an area to have “enough parking”, in a downtown context? The standard that is typically used by planners and accepted by transportation researchers is between 80% to 85% occupancy. This concept, known as the “Goldilocks principle”, evaluates the balance between the supply and demand of the curb<sup>1</sup>. For the purposes of this study and memo, we can assume that any percentage more than 85% means that there is a lack of parking in Downtown Cottage Grove, while less than 80% occupancy means parking is largely available.

To answer the main question, “Does the downtown area have enough parking?”, the data gathered indicates that Downtown Cottage Grove does have enough parking, even at peak times. The busiest curbs in the study area only reached an occupancy rate between 60% and 70% on average. This is an average, and a given curb may fill up at times, but the data shows that there is usually parking nearby. Across the whole downtown core, the average parking occupancy rate is 30%. Even with curbs in front of certain businesses being more consistently occupied, this low average shows that surrounding blocks usually have low occupancy, thus parking should be available in the area.

## Where Are People Parking?

The parking data gathered shows that the biggest driver of parking occupancy is food and restaurant related. The three most occupied areas of parking are next to Jack Sprats, Coast Fork Brewing, and (in the evening) El Tapatio.

One noted outlier is the public parking lot located next to City Hall (Labeled A on the Figure 1 Parking Study Area map). This lot is occupied at high rates because City employees park there with a permit during work hours. Due to this, the lot is occupied at much a higher rate than the other three City-owned lots.

Another noted outlier is the space in front of Les Schwab Tire Center (Labeled 19-N on the Figure 1 Parking Study Area map). The data would seem to indicate that the street parking is full most of the time, however this is misleading, as there is only 1 spot available and was observed to be frequently occupied by employees of the business.

## Effects of COVID-19-

It is important to note that the parking study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus the parking rates are lower than what might have been “normal” previously. Feedback from local businesses in the downtown area gathered by the *Main Street Cottage Grove* Executive Director indicates that sales in July 2020 were down from the previous year on average. Of the four businesses that responded to our request, in-person sales were down between 13% and 68%. The businesses that responded included Jack Sprats, Ambrose Collectibles, Buster’s Main Street Café, and Kalapuya Books. These are all very different types of businesses, which is important to consider.

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<sup>1</sup> Shoup, D. (2009). *The Price of Parking on a Great Street*. Parking Today Media.



In total, the downtown study area has 494 public parking spots, counting curb parking and public parking lots. Of the three weeks of counts, the peak occupancy was 206 of the 494 spots filled (or 42% occupancy). Doing the math, even if we applied to the highest net impact of COVID-19 on downtown business (68% less business), the number of peak occupied parking spots in the study area is 336 of 494 (or less than 70% occupancy). Even using this most extreme number (which is likely not reflective of the rest of the downtown's business), occupancy still comes in under the 80% to 85% threshold.

#### The Armory-

Parking data related to the Armory was not gathered, as there were no events held at the space during Summer 2020 or Spring 2021. The Armory does not have a dedicated parking area or lot for events held there. It is anticipated that street parking in the area would fill up quickly. Future parking counts may need to be conducted to determine the impacts that temporary large events have on parking in the downtown area.



#### Conclusion-

Based on the data gathered, it can be concluded that parking in Downtown Cottage Grove is below the 80%-85% occupancy standard typically used by transportation planners as the threshold for when additional parking is required. Verified peak parking occupancy during the parking study averaged 42%, meaning that out of the 494 public parking spaces, 286 spaces were available. Even using an extreme 68% rate based on possible COVID 19 impacts, would leave 158 parking spaces open and available and would not exceed the typical parking standard of 80%-85% occupancy. This data shows that there is typically public parking available in the downtown area. Also, this data does not include the additional 340 private parking spaces that may also be available.

It should also be noted that in 2015, Cottage Grove City Council adopted the Main Street Refinement Plan. The study area for the Parking Study was based largely on the refinement plan's focus area, thus its findings relate directly. On pages 5 and 6 of the Downtown Refinement Plan, the deteriorating conditions of some of the streets and sidewalks are described and highlight the need for refurbishment. Some of these issues likely relate directly to where people choose to park in the downtown core area and may negatively influence perceptions regarding parking and walking downtown. Considering this, we recommend the City continue to move forward with implementation of the Main Street Refinement Plan.

As identified in the Cottage Grove Downtown Refinement Plan, the study area lacks the necessary ADA updates to be fully compliant with federal standards. The lack of ADA updates can make the downtown area difficult to navigate for some citizens. As the downtown redesign process takes shape, we recommend the City prioritize sidewalk and ADA improvements.

According to the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) design guidelines on intersection crosswalks, the best design includes high-visibility markings (ladder, zebra, and continental) painted as wide or wider than the connecting walkway, which should be accessible curb ramps as required by ADA standards<sup>2</sup>. This is particularly important along Main Street, which sees the most pedestrian and vehicle traffic. To prioritize pedestrian safety and comfort, we recommend restriping the cross streets along Main Street to promote better walkability.

It is clear from the parking study data that the city's public parking lots are underutilized. The single exception is the parking lot next to City Hall and the Police Station, that is frequently used by City employees. However, the other lots remain under-utilized despite allowing people to park in them for an hour longer than on-street parking. As the parking lots are located off Main Street, visitors may not know that they have access to surface parking nor know where they are located. We recommend improved wayfinding signage to the public parking lots, to make it easier for people to find.

For those citizens who have utilized the public lots, the City has received some feedback that the lots feel unsafe, as some vehicles have been vandalized in the past. This may be due to lack of sufficient lighting or "eyes on the street" in the parking lot areas. Refurbishing the lots with better lighting and possibly security cameras may make patrons feel more comfortable using public parking.

Furthermore, to ensure that businesses have sufficient parking close by for visitors, it is recommended the City work with business owners to encourage the use of public parking by employees.

When possible, Public Works staff will continue the following:

- Moving forward with implementation of the Main Street Refinement Plan;
- Prioritize sidewalk and ADA improvements;
- Prioritize pedestrian safety and comfort, by restriping the cross streets along Main Street;
- Improve wayfinding signage to the public parking lots;
- Refurbish public parking lots with better lighting and possibly security cameras;
- Work with business owners to encourage the use of public parking by employees.

Recommendations: None.

This item is informational only and no action is being requested of council at this time.

Cost: None



Richard Meyers, City Manager



Matt Laird, Assistant Planner

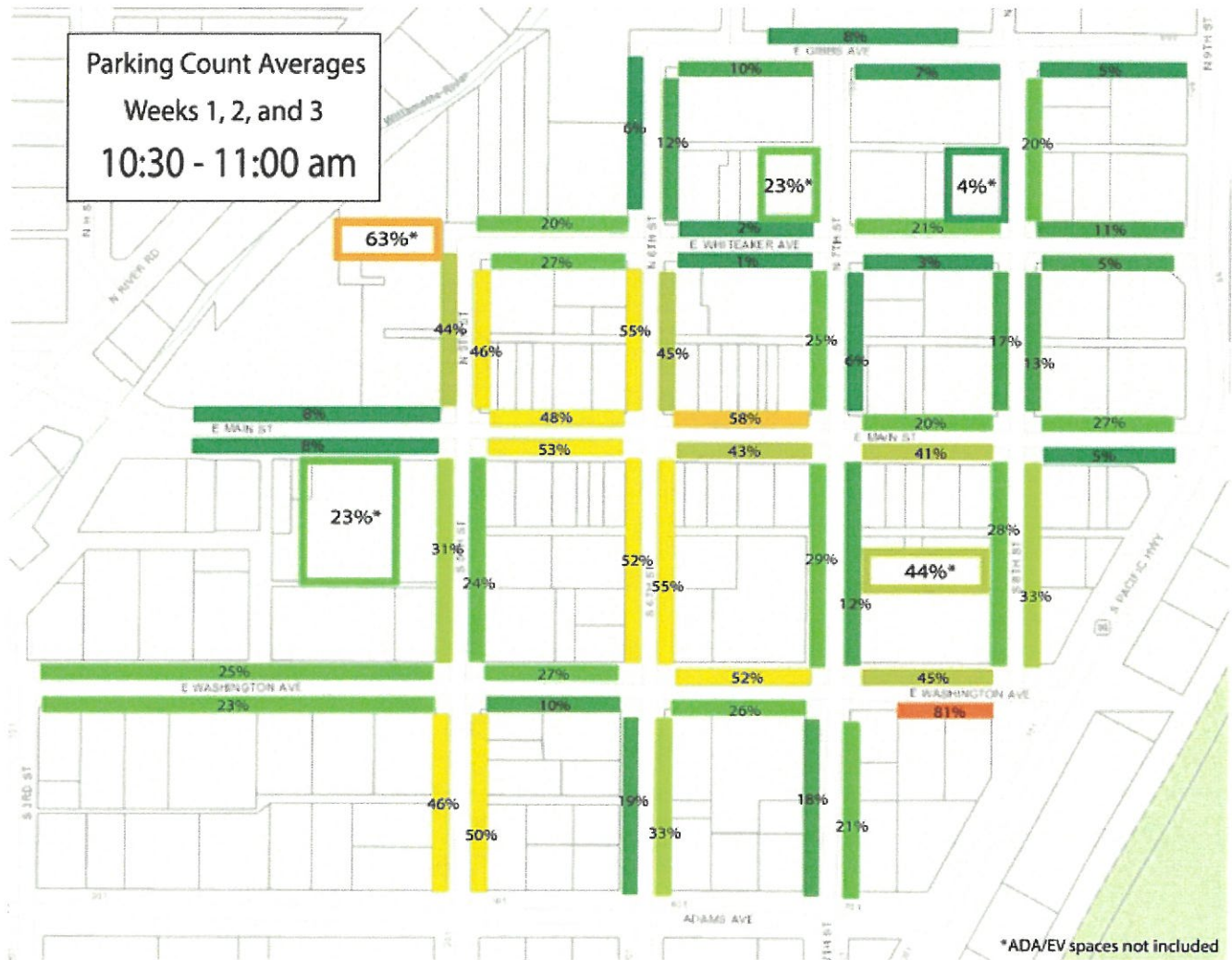
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<sup>2</sup> *Conventional Crosswalks*. n/d. NACTO. Retrieved from <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/intersection-design-elements/crosswalks-and-crossings/conventional-crosswalks/>

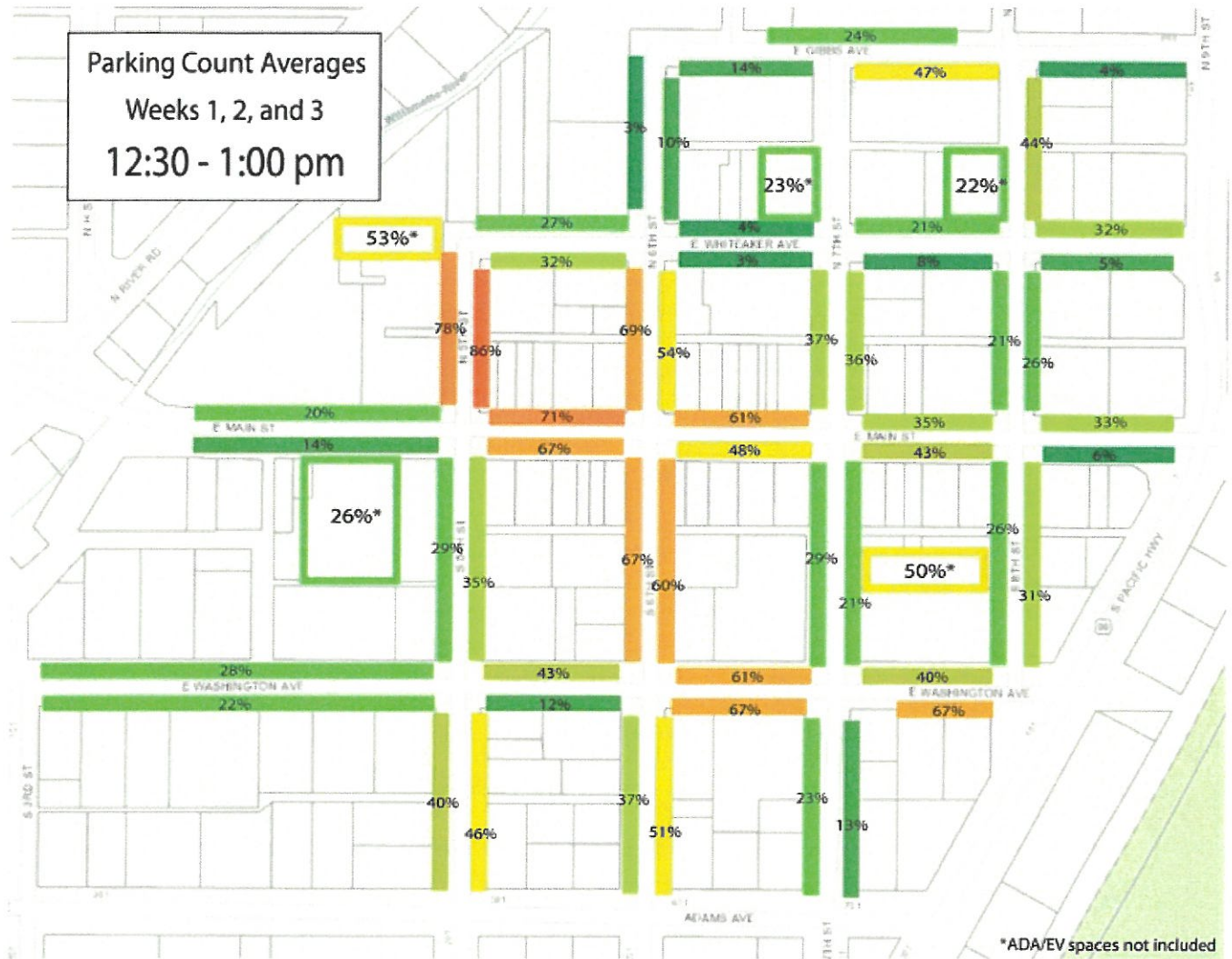


# Appendix

## Average Heat Map - Morning

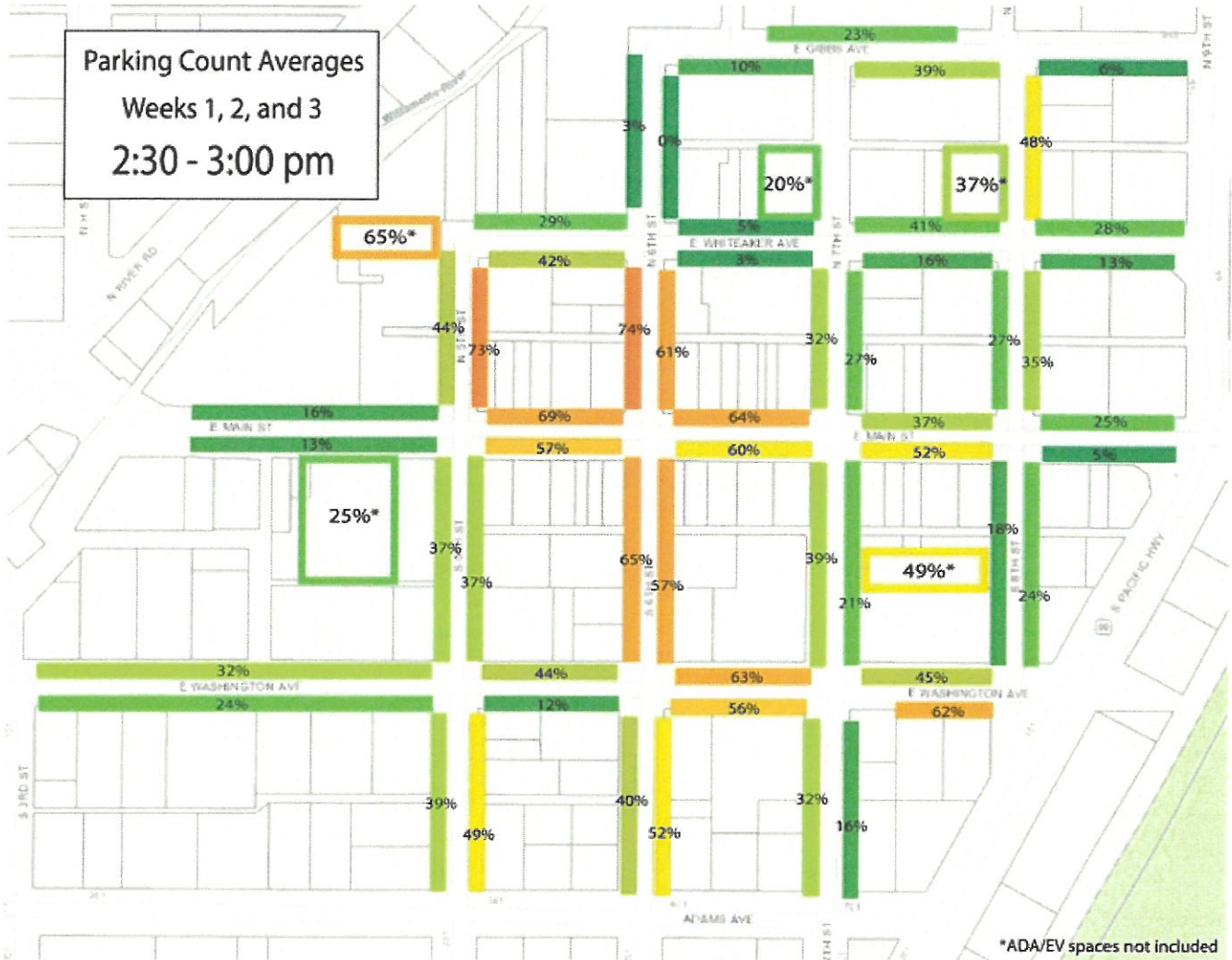


## Average Heat Map – Lunch

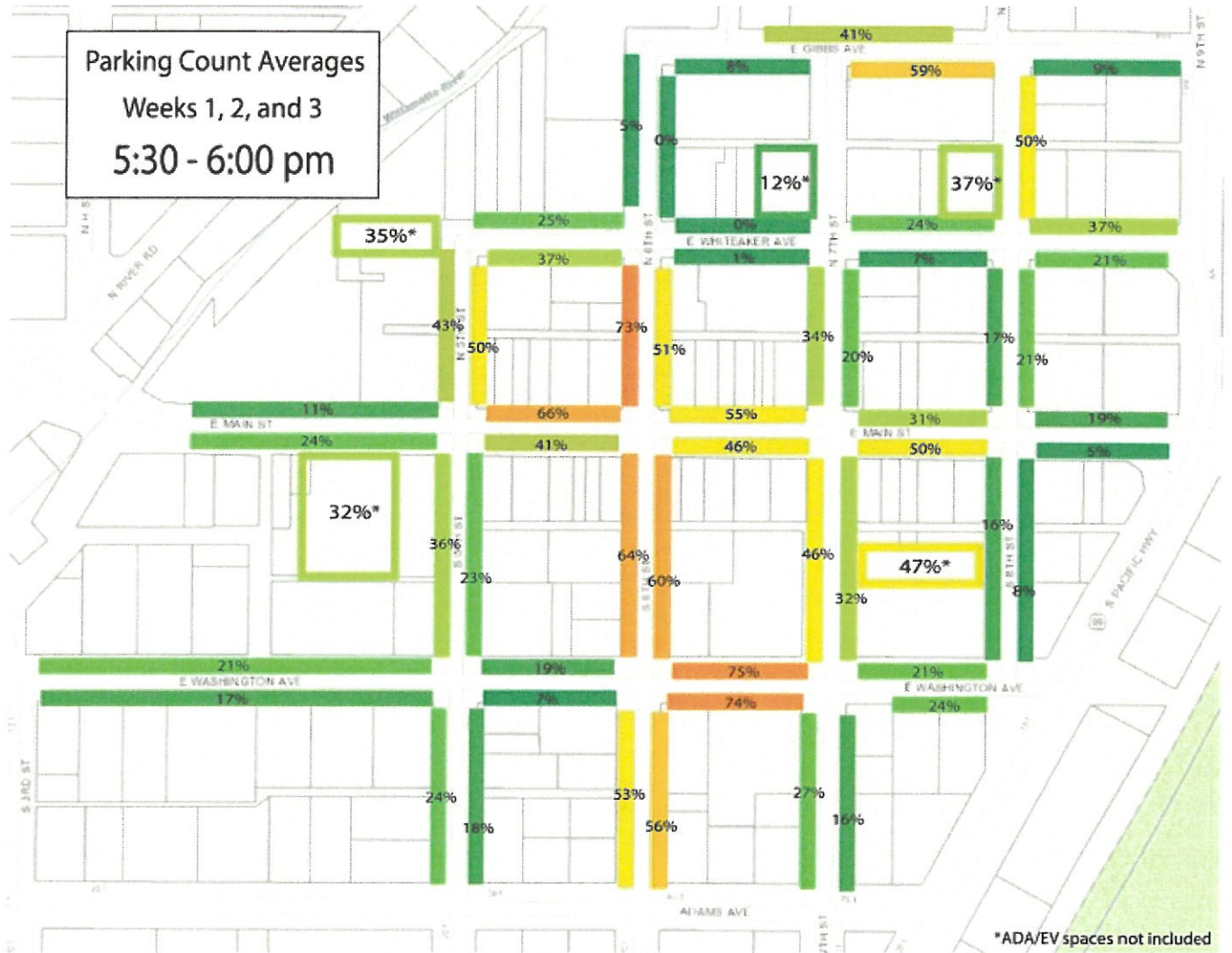




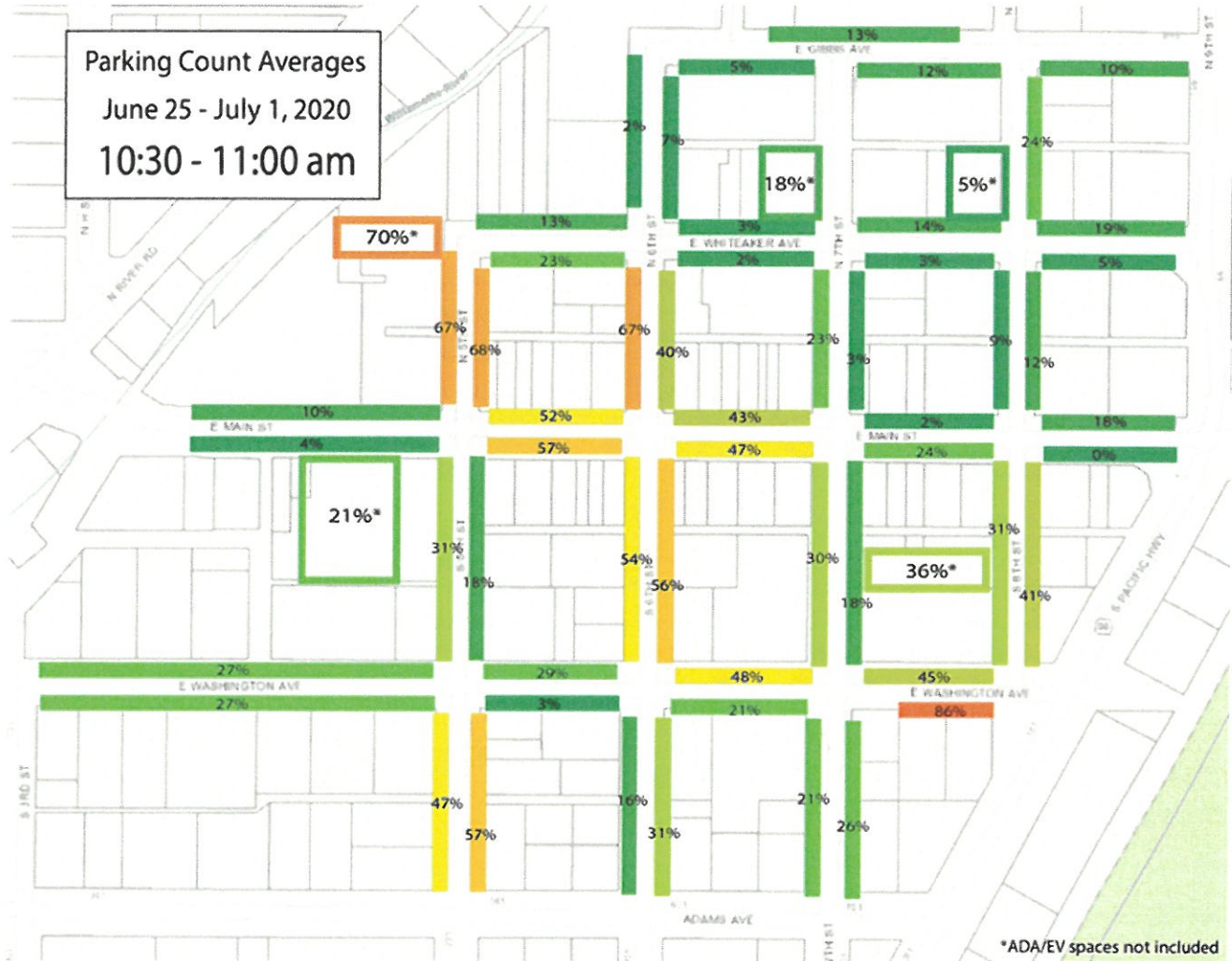
Average Heat Map – Afternoon



## Average Heat Map – Evening

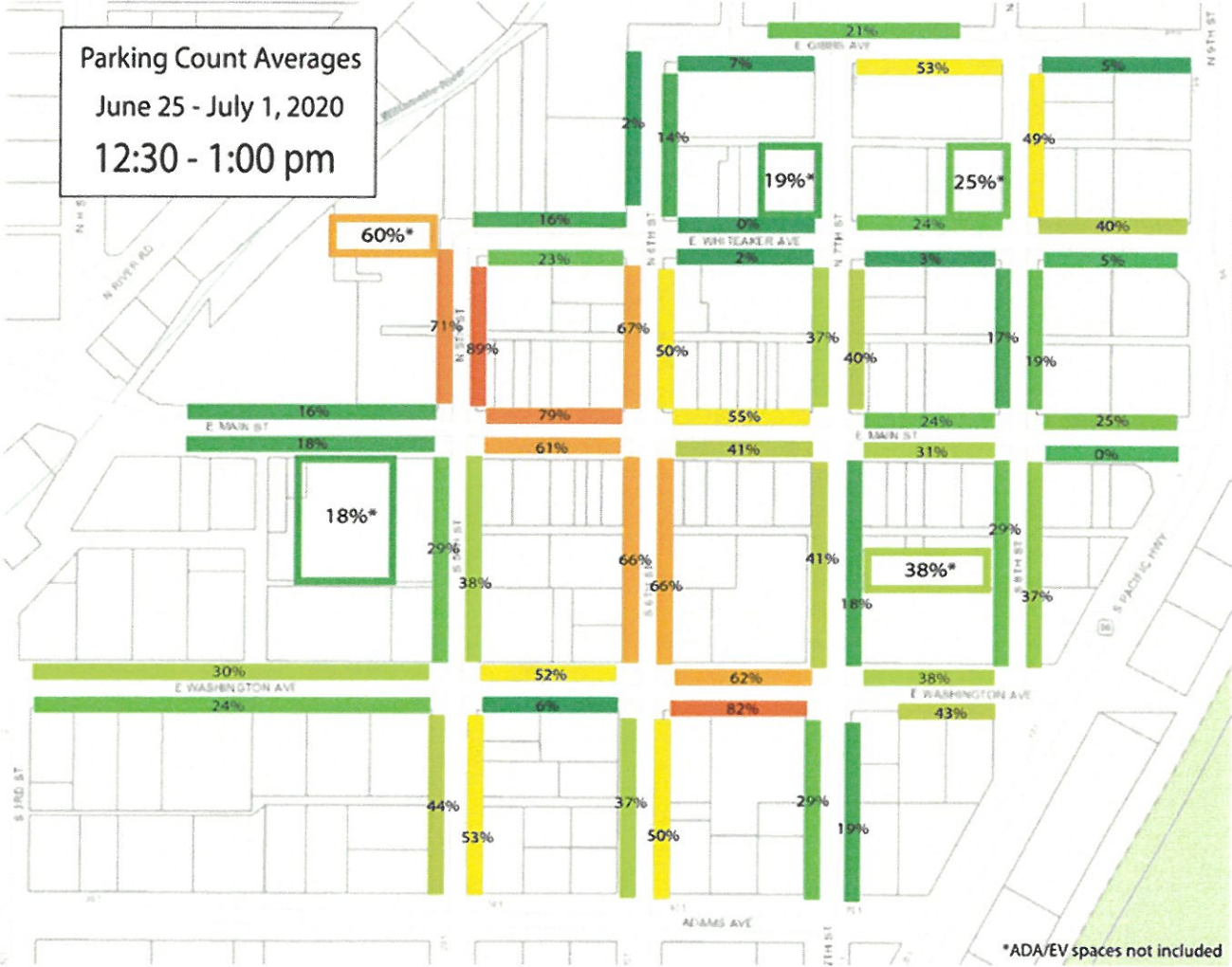


Week 1 Heat Map – Morning

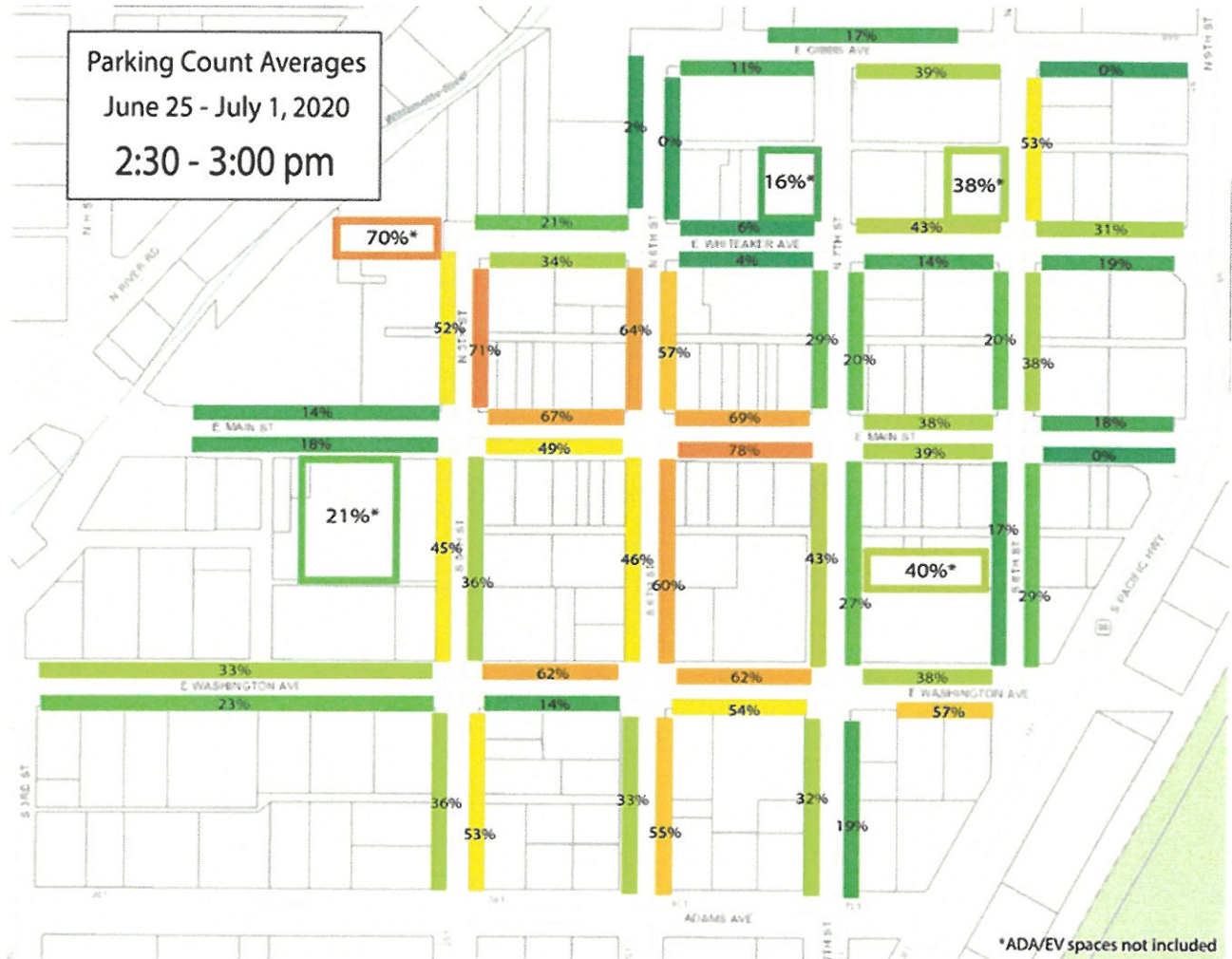




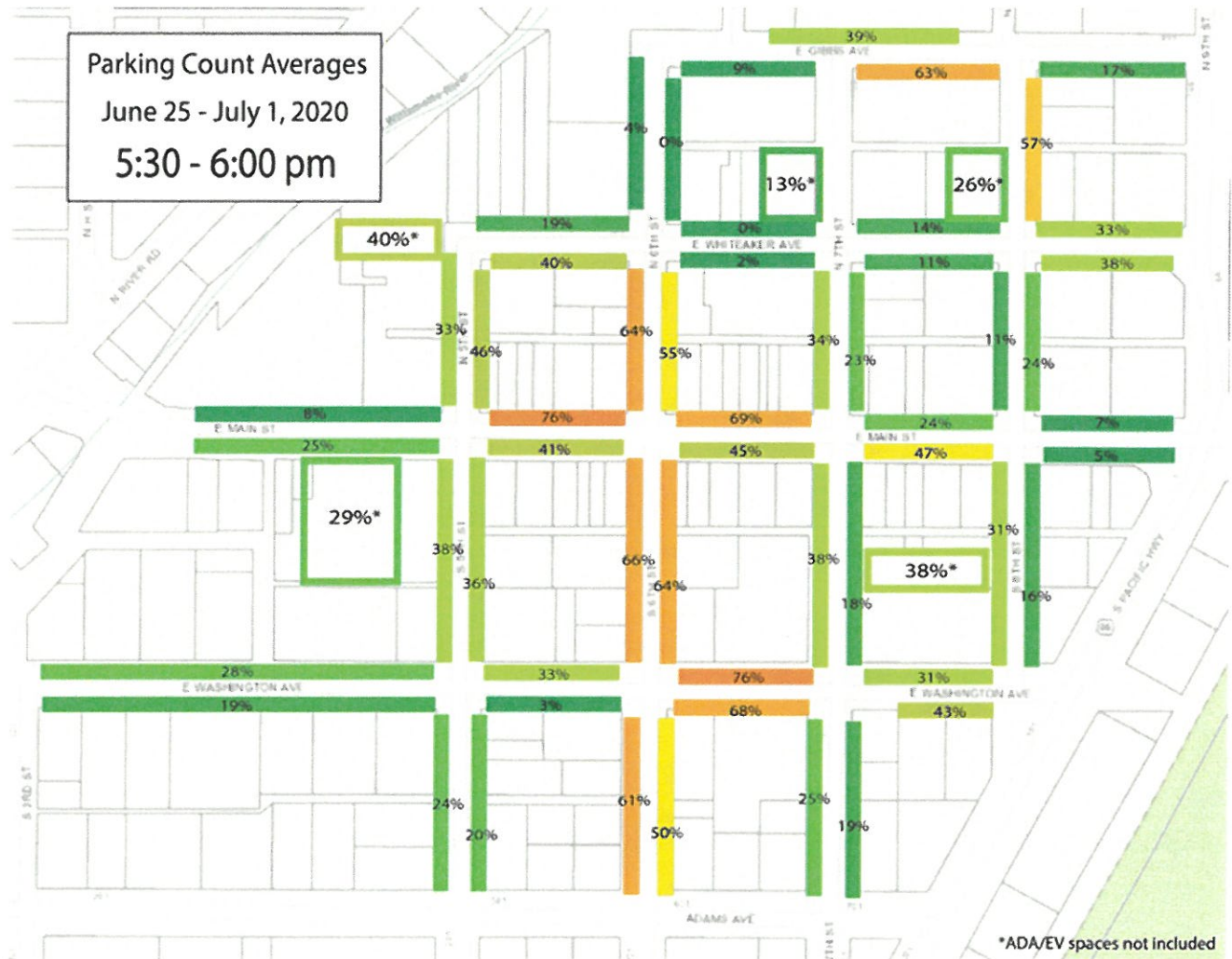
Week 1 Heat Map – Lunch



## Week 1 Heat Map – Afternoon

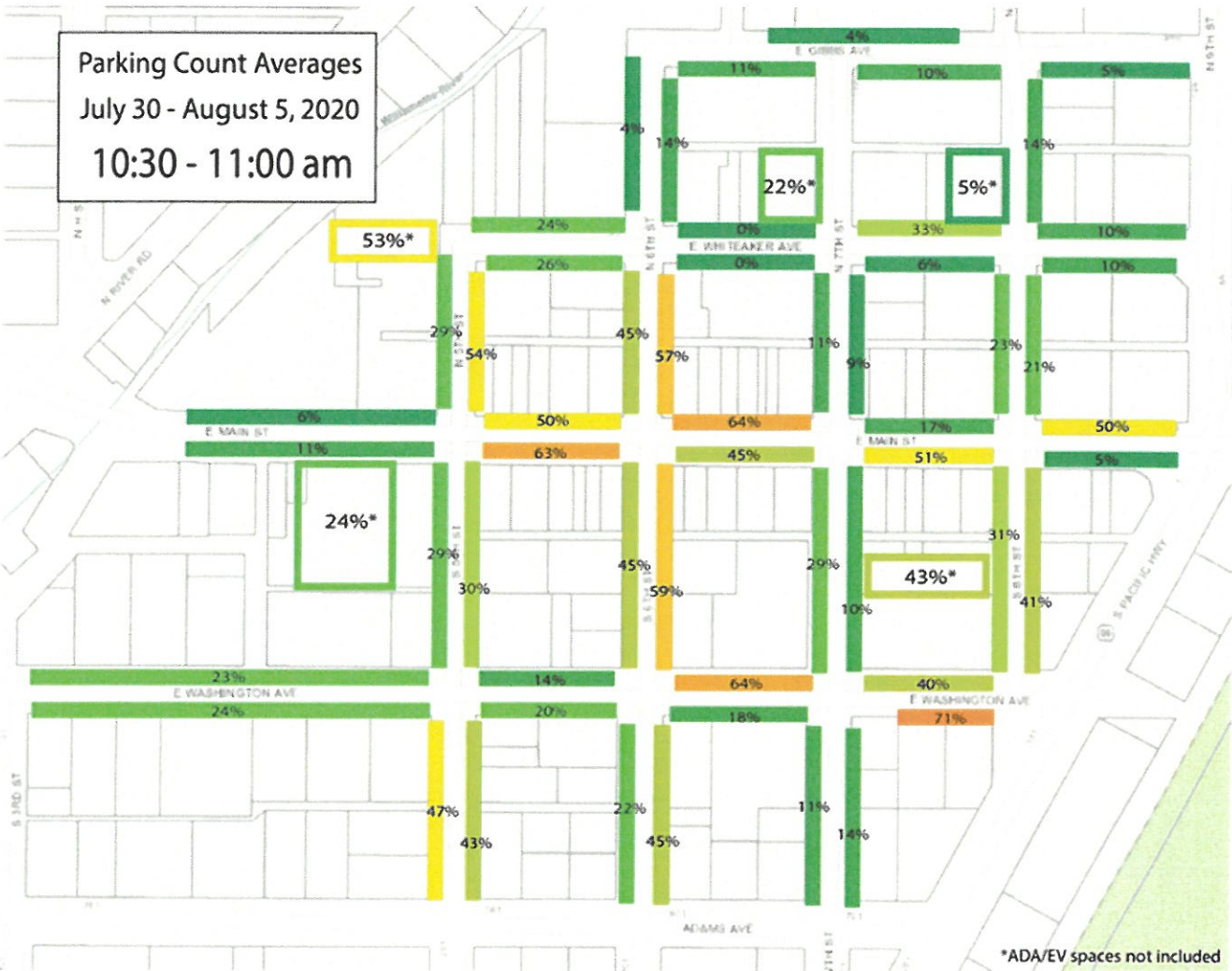


## Week 1 Heat Map – Evening

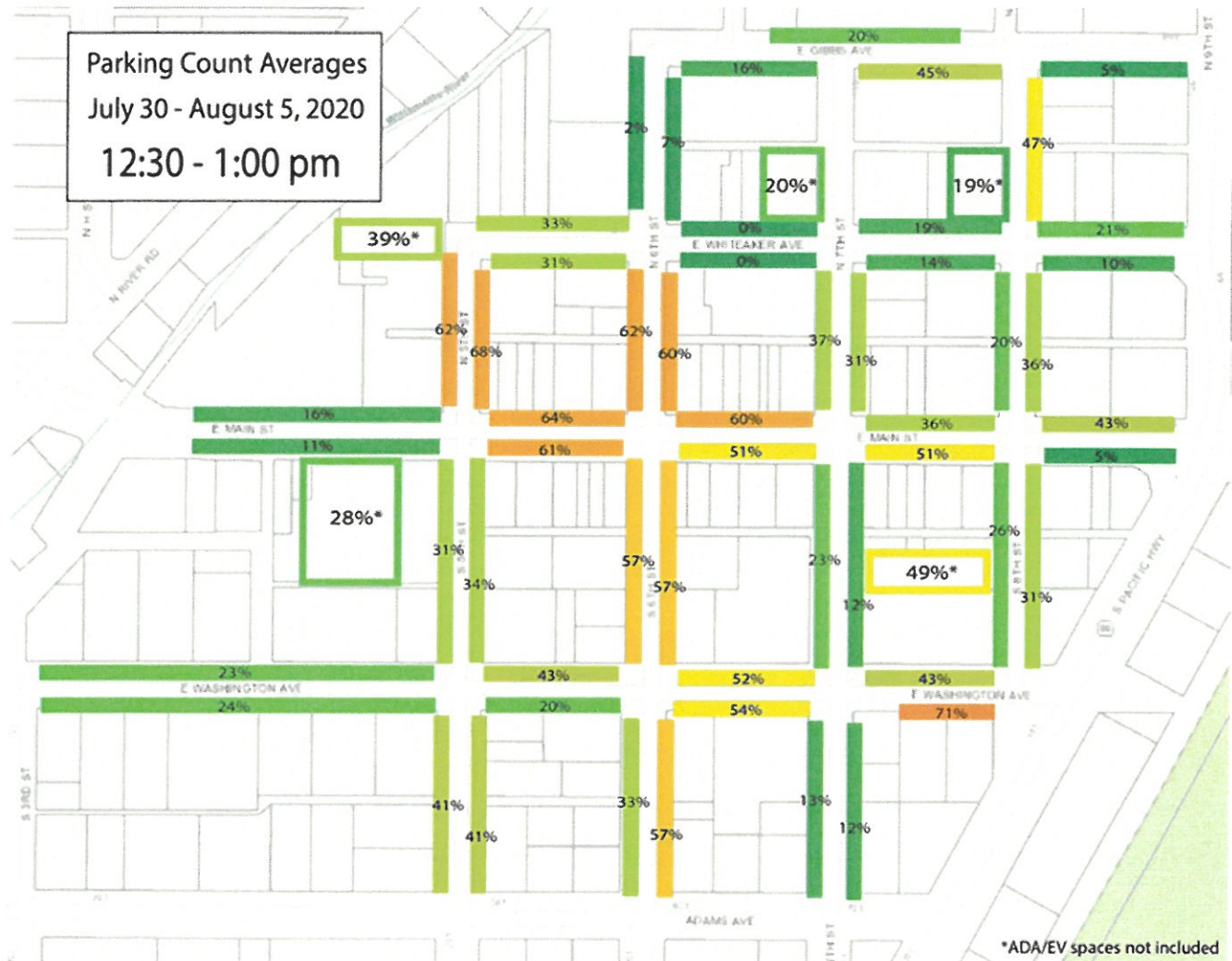




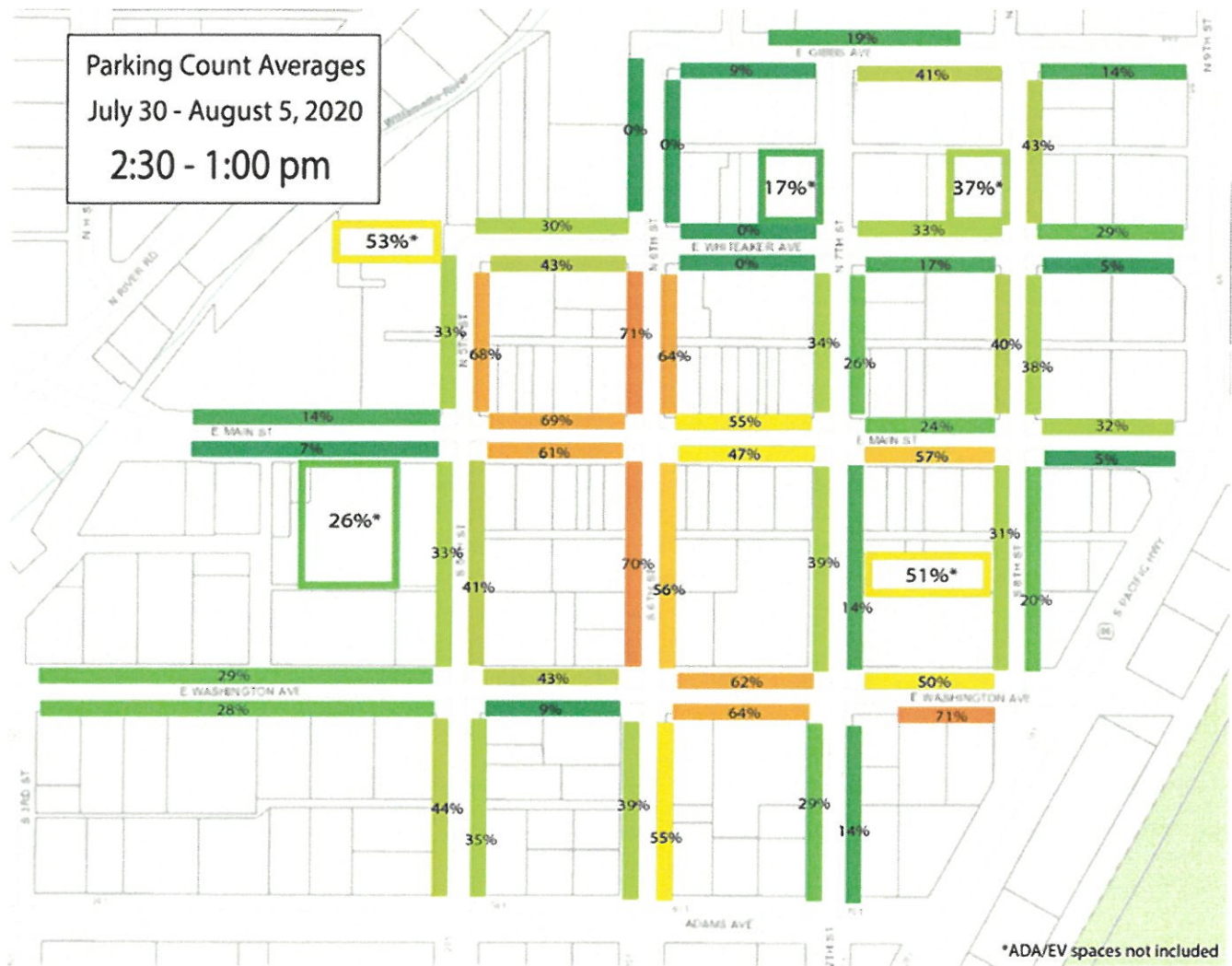
Week 2 Heat Map – Morning



## Week 2 Heat Map – Lunch

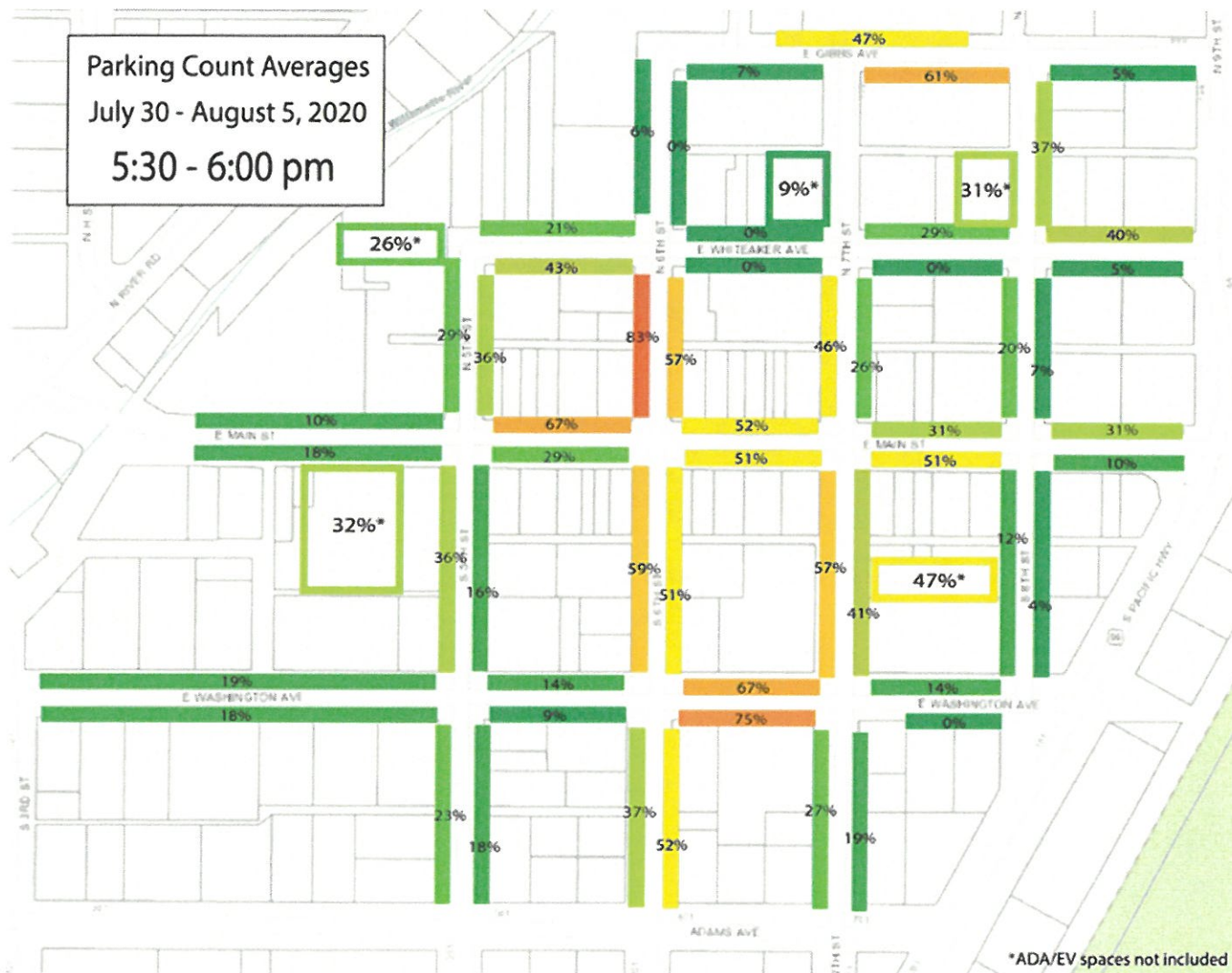


### Week 2 Heat Map – Afternoon

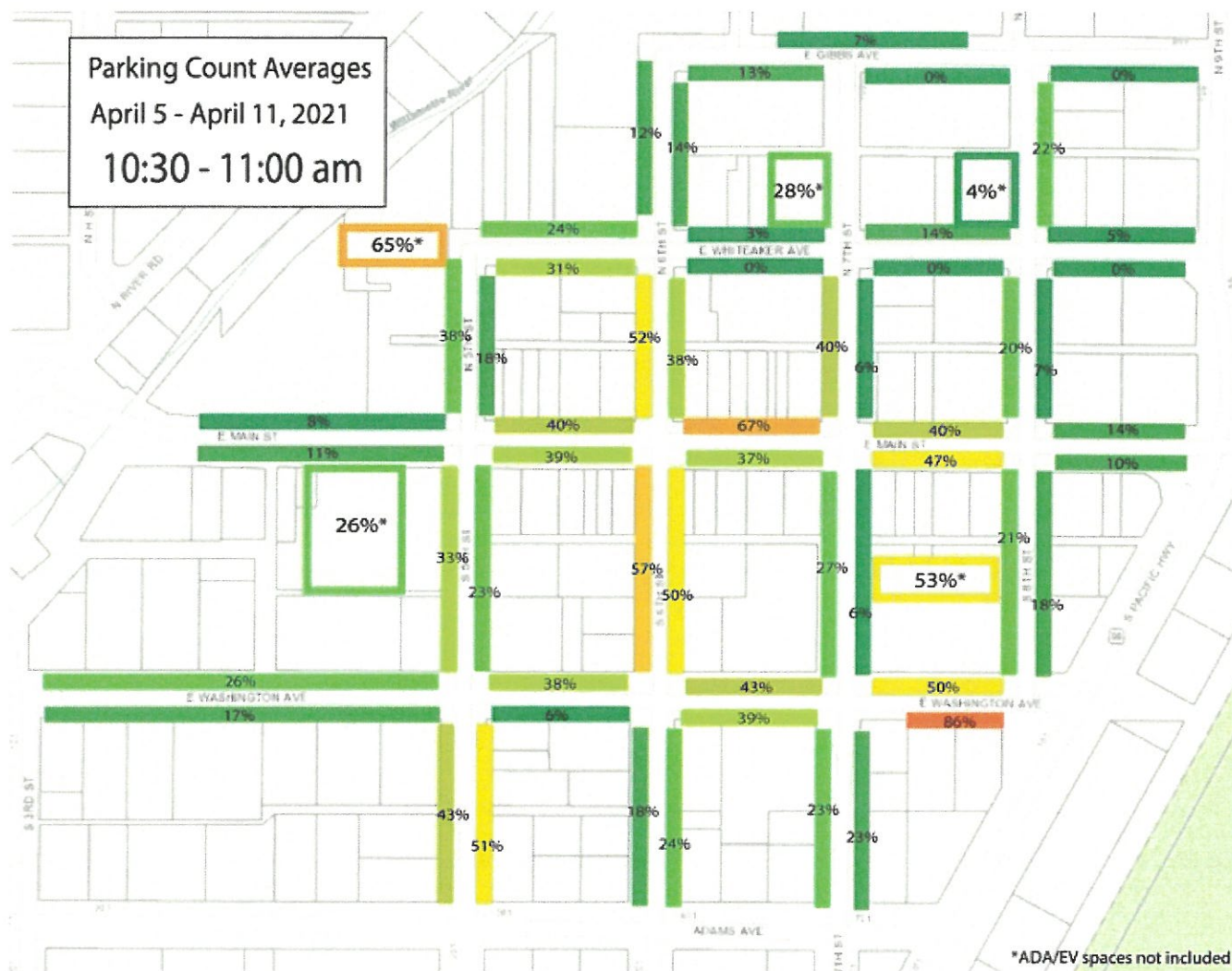




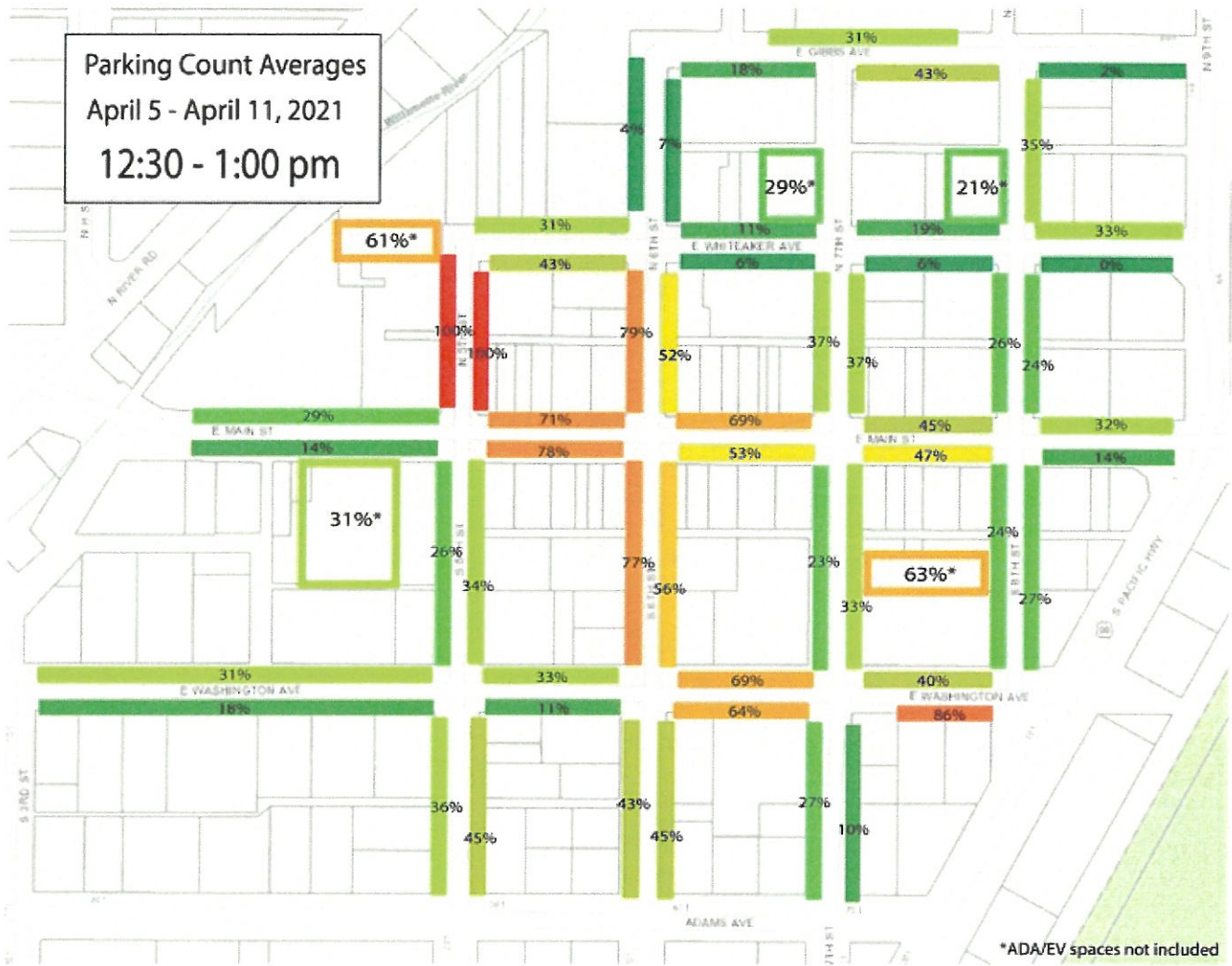
### Week 2 Heat Map – Evening



## Week 3 Heat Map – Morning

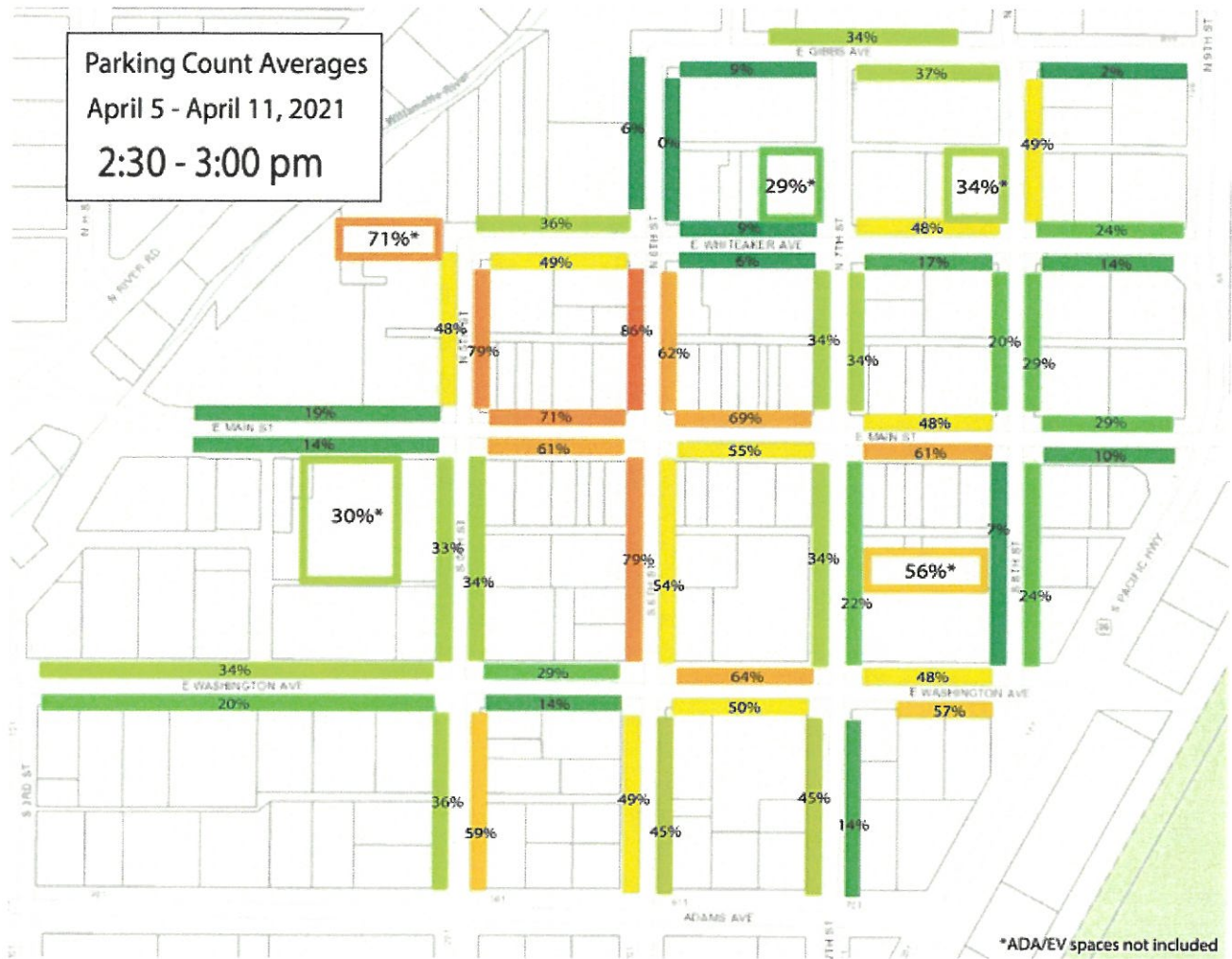


Week 3 Heat Map – Lunch

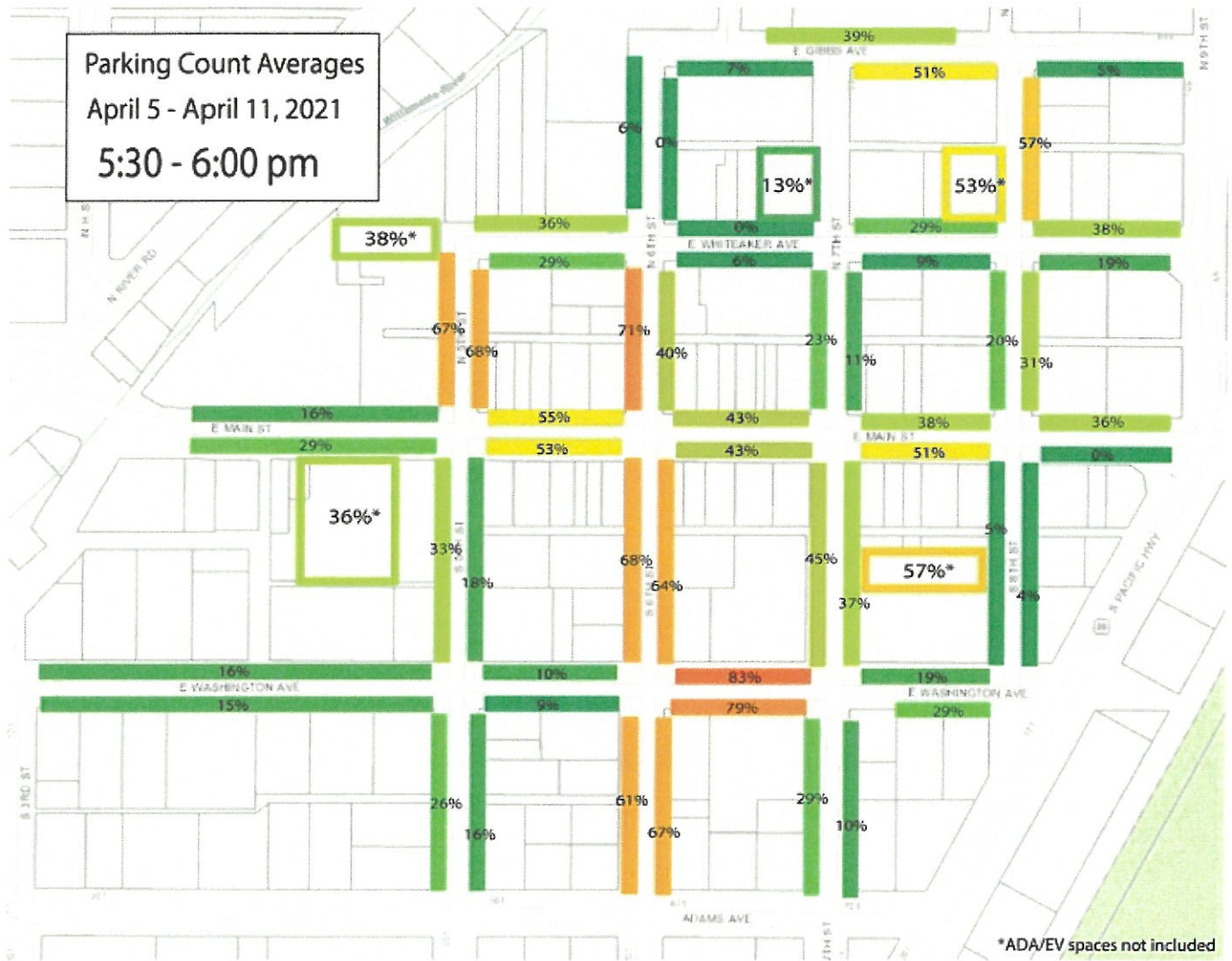




## Week 3 Heat Map – Afternoon



## Week 3 Heat Map – Evening



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