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1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Borough of Somerville desires to improve its on and off street parking operations in the downtown business area, in a manner consistent with being a parking friendly community, while at the same time, sustaining the positive growth they have recently enjoyed. The Borough wishes to address the parking demands of three distinct groups, including shoppers, employees, and residents, by developing a parking program that balances the needs of each.

Borough officials have also expressed concern about students parking on the streets adjacent to Immaculata High School because they cannot be accommodated within the campus. Some community residents have complained of students loitering, littering, and being disrespectful. Officials advise that the situation is usually exacerbated each spring, when new student drivers are also seeking parking spaces.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Borough of Somerville officials commissioned Urbitran Associates, Inc. to study parking conditions within the downtown area. The study area is bounded by Mountain Avenue to the west, Park Avenue to the East, 2nd Street to the south, and Cliff Street to the north. It also includes Mountain Avenue and several other streets immediately adjacent to Immaculata High School.

Among the issues Urbitran examined were:

- Parking utilization and duration of vehicles in the study area
- Operational methods used to manage parking
- Parking rates and time limits
Overall public perception of parking in the Borough
Analysis of parking demand versus current parking supply
Parking conditions related to and surrounding Immaculata High School

After examining these issues, Urbitran’s role is to provide Borough officials with a snapshot of conditions observed and to make recommendations on how to:

- Maximize current parking inventory
- Effectively manage parking using the latest available technology
- Provide greater levels of customer satisfaction
- Streamline operations while effectively managing short-term and long-term parking demand
- Centralize parking operations under one focused parking administrator

These recommendations are provided to Borough officials so that they may effectively meet current parking demand, increase levels of customer satisfaction, and properly plan for additional parking facilities as future need dictates.

**Findings & Recommendations**

Overall, our findings of parking conditions in the study area were acceptable for a municipality the size of Somerville. Public perception indicated that there was insufficient parking along the Main Street corridor. However, field data collection results do not support this view. Parking along Main Street may become limited during lunchtime and dinner hour but during other periods of the day, a sufficient number of on street spaces are available. This public perception is attributed to the normal social trait that users want to park directly in front of their final destination, or as close as possible.

With the development of the Courthouse Square Parking Garage, the Borough of Somerville is taking on a higher level of parking management than it has previously. Issues such as parking rates and assignments for long-term parkers in the immediate area will have to be reviewed. Parking rates, which are low for the area, will have to be adjusted slightly upward to help offset the cost of improvements such as surface parking lot refurbishment. This approach will allow the Borough to pass the cost of improvements directly to the users, rather than raising ad valorem taxes.
It is also firmly recommended that the Borough of Somerville investigate the hiring of a seasoned parking administrator to deal with the day-to-day operations of parking in the Borough, and to set the direction for long-term parking development. This individual can provide the Borough with valuable experience in dealing with both parking and redevelopment issues, which in turn will allow for effective redevelopment to take place in the study area. It will also provide the public and business community with a knowledgeable single point of contact to voice their parking concerns. This individual will also be aware of industry specific technology that can help the Borough control cost, maximize service, and ultimately realize the maximum parking revenues possible.

Urbitran also recommends that Borough officials discuss the creation of an independent parking department or authority. This approach will help ensure that individuals assigned to parking duties complete only these duties, without having to address other non-parking related work during the course of a day. This department or authority should be fully self-supported by the parking revenues created, and removed from the political influences of any government body.

In conjunction with increasing parking fees, as illustrated in the table found in the recommendations section of this report, it is recommended that other issues also be addressed, including:

- Replacement of the existing mechanical style parking meters with electronic meters having SmartCard readers. A detailed cost proposal for this is also included in the recommendations section of this report.
- The creation of a merchant validation program for restaurant patrons and shoppers that can be easily implemented with the use of SmartCards in new electronic parking meters.
- The immediate discontinuance of the existing parking permit program and the recreation of a permit program using recommended management procedures.
- Implementation of a Borough-wide way finding and trailblazing signage program. A detailed plan for sign installation, as well as a cost proposal is included in this report.
- Immediate changes to parking meter collection and repair procedures to include using a sealed coin box and a high security collection system.
- The creation of a residential permit parking program for the downtown area to accommodate growing residential parking needs. Recommended hours for this
program are 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. for off street facilities in close proximity to the
demand.

- The use of valet parking during lunch and dinner hours to increase service levels and
  maximize nearby off street parking inventory.

Although field data collection efforts did not indicate the immediate need for increased levels
of off street parking inventory, Borough officials stated that a number of development
projects might be occurring over the next several months that might increase this need. It is
understood that these will be mixed-use developments that will include residential
components. It is also understood that these projects will put an additional burden on both
off street and on street parking along Veterans Memorial Drive and the Main Street area. It is
recommended that the assessment of parking impact fees be discussed by Borough officials
for use with projects that will create additional parking demand, where the
developers/owners cannot support the requirement for parking within the confines of the
development property.

Although this topic could be controversial, discussions should take place as to when and how
this type of fee would be instituted, if at all. It is important to note that if the Borough should
decide that it would like to exclusively manage the future needs of the parking public, then
the funding to create additional parking inventory would be better funded by impact fees
than by General Obligation or Parking Revenue Bonds. These impact fees would offset the
creation and/or maintenance of municipal parking inventory, relieving the residents of
Somerville of this financial burden.

Finally, it is recommended that Borough officials seriously consider developing a long-term
relationship with a parking consultant, on an as needed retainer basis, to help guide and
implement the recommended changes. This recommendation is not made to be self-serving,
but to provide assistance to Borough officials as they deal with the positive and negative
impacts of their planning decisions, until a full-time parking professional is part of the
Borough’s staff. This recommendation will save the Borough valuable time and money when
dealing with complicated development issues, and will provide a valuable unbiased third
opinion.
3.0 **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

This section of the report focuses on the existing parking facilities serving the Borough of Somerville. It looks at both the on street and off street parking facilities and describes each one’s usage. Existing and anticipated future needs and deficiencies are also discussed. All on street metered parking, the public off street parking lots, and the parking garages are shown on the map in Figure 1.

3.1: **On Street Parking**

The Borough of Somerville provides on street parking in the business district, controlled by mechanical style parking meters with a very reasonable rate structure. The low cost of this parking contributes to the heavy demand for on street spaces. Rates are as follows:

- 12 Minutes per $0.05
- 24 Minutes per $0.10
- 1 Hour per $0.25

The parking meters on Main Street, west of Warren Street have a one-hour time limit, while the meters east of Warren Street permit two hour parking. Most parking meters on the side streets provide two hour parking, with the two-hour meters having the same rate structure as shown above. The only exceptions to this are the meters on South Street and Division Street, which provide 12-minute parking for postal customers. Either a penny or a nickel will activate these meters for 12 minutes. The following table represents an inventory of all on street parking meters in the Borough.
**TABLE 1A**  
On Street Parking Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Metered</th>
<th>Free</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Memorial Drive</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street</td>
<td>184</td>
<td></td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove Street</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bridge Street</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division Street</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Street</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Doughty Avenue</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Doughty Avenue</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Street</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davenport Street</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total On Street</strong></td>
<td><strong>376</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>384</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2: Off Street Parking

The Borough has seven off street parking lots varying in size from as few as 15 spaces in Lots 3 and 5, to a maximum of 178 spaces in Lot 1. Lots 1, 2, 4, and 6 are located directly behind the Main Street shopping district, and serve both shoppers and employees. Lot 7 is located off East High Street and serves employees and visitors of nearby government offices. In addition, a Somerset County-owned parking garage, the Bernie Fields Parking Deck, is located on East High Street, between Grove and Mechanic Streets. Lots 3 and 5 are located away from the central business district and serve local parking needs.

There is a blend of several different types of parking; including primarily five and twelve-hour parking meters, permit parking, free parking, and some residential parking. There are also many private parking spaces immediately adjacent to the Municipal Parking in Lots 1, 2, 4, and 6, as well as private garages with their only means of access from the Municipal Parking Lot. These are not always clearly marked and do cause some confusion for motorists not familiar with the Municipal lots. The County parking deck, which is near the downtown...
area, is not intended for shopper use, but should be considered in any discussion of downtown parking.

The table below is a summary all Borough owned off street parking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Off Street Parking Lots</th>
<th>Metered</th>
<th>Permit</th>
<th>Free</th>
<th>Hcp</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot #1</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #2</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #4</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Off Street</strong></td>
<td><strong>387</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>629</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) – Handicap parking is included with other total

**Lot #1**

Lot #1 is located behind the stores on the north side of Main Street, between Maple and Davenport Streets, with vehicular entrances on both of those streets. There is a pedestrian walkway leading from the parking lot to the shopping area on Main Street.

There are 88 12-hour meters, which are in effect from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Monday through Friday, except that parking is prohibited on Fridays from 5:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. The rates at the meters are $0.05 for one hour, $0.10 for two hours, and $0.25 for six hours. One set of four meters was missing during our observations. There are 64 five-hour meters that operate from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. The rates at the meters are $0.05 for
one hour, $0.10 for two hours, and $0.25 for five hours. There are also 23 “free” three-hour parking spaces, and three handicapped spaces.

**Lot #2**
Lot #2 is also located behind the stores, on the north side of Main Street, between Davenport Street and North Doughty Avenue, with vehicular entrances on both streets. There is a pedestrian walkway leading from the parking lot to the shopping area on Main Street. A Social Security office, which provides 13 additional free parking spaces for public use, is also accessible from Lot #2.

There are 65 spaces reserved for permit holders from Monday through Friday, while 50 spaces provide 12-hour metered parking and accommodate overnight parking. The rates at the 12-hour meters are $0.05 for one hour, $0.10 for two hours and $0.25 for six hours. There are 13 “free” three-hour spaces and four spaces with two-hour parking meters in effect from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Monday through Friday. The rates at these meters are $0.05 for ½ hour, $0.10 for one hour, and $0.25 for two hours. There are signs in this lot for “Overnight Parking.”

**Lot #3**
Lot #3 is located on a dead end section of Center Street off Veterans Memorial Drive. It contains 15 un-metered spaces that provide “five-hour parking 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Except Sunday.” This lot does not affect the “Main Street” parking.

**Lot #4**
Lot #4 is located behind the stores, on the south side of Main Street, between Union Street and Division Street, with vehicular entrances on both streets. There is a pedestrian walkway leading from the parking lot to the shopping area on Main Street. There are 70 two-hour parking meters, including two
reserved for handicapped motorists, with rates of $0.05 for ½ hour, $0.10 for one hour, and $0.25 for two hours. There are also 45 five-hour meters with rates of $0.05 for ½ hour, $0.10 for one hour, and $0.25 for 2 ½ hours. All meters are in effect from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

**Lot #5**
Lot #5 is located on Franklin Street, off South Bridge Street, and has a total of 15 spaces. Six are reserved for residents, and nine are signed for two-hour parking from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., Except Sunday. Posted signs indicate rates of $0.05 for ½ hour, $0.10 for one hour, and $0.25 for two hours. However, there are no parking meters in this lot, and like Lot #3, it does not affect Main Street parking.

**Lot #6**
Lot #6 is located behind the stores, on the north side of Main Street, between Maple Street and North Bridge Street, with a vehicular entrance on North Bridge Street. There is a pedestrian walkway leading from the parking lot to the shopping area on Main Street. There are 36 two-hour parking meters in effect from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. The rates at the meters are $0.05 for one hour, $0.10 for two hours, and $0.25 for two hours. There are signs in this lot restricting parking between 2:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M.

**Lot #7**
Lot #7 is located on East High Street, between North Bridge Street and Grove Street, with a vehicular entrance on East High Street, and an exit on East Cliff Street. This lot is located away from the main shopping district and serves government employees and visitors to nearby offices. There are 105 spaces reserved for permit holders, and 30 spaces controlled by five-hour parking meters. Rates are $0.05 for one hour, $0.10 for two hours, and $0.25 for five hours. The meters are in effect from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. There are also two handicap spaces.
Conditions Analysis - Surface Parking Lots

A physical inspection of all municipal surface parking lots was completed as part of our review of parking conditions in the Borough of Somerville. Our observation of each facility, along with unsolicited handwritten comments received as part of the public surveys used for this project; indicate that parking areas are not maintained in a routine fashion. Specifically, comments stressed that the parking lots were dirty and not cleaned on a regular basis. Other field observations include:

- Stall and directional striping is recent and bright
- Regulatory signage needs updating
- Handicapped parking stalls do not meet current ADA requirements
- Parking meter poles are bent or missing
- Some asphalt surfaces need repair or replacement (ponding and small potholes)
- Turning radii for emergency vehicle access to some commercial buildings connected to surface lots may be insufficient

Bernie Fields Parking Deck

Somerset County operates the Bernie Fields Parking Deck, a multi-story 720-space parking garage that supports the parking needs of the Somerset County Administration Building located on Grove Street. Currently, this garage is used by county employees, jurors, and visitors to the building, with a very small percentage of shopper parking. Hours of operation for this facility are 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. Monday through Thursday, and 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. on Friday. The facility is closed at night and on weekends. There are also 42 spaces in a surface lot directly in front of the Parking Deck that are designated for two hour parking.

Operationally, Somerset County reserves a large number of lower level parking stalls for the exclusive use of county vehicles, with non-reserved parking on the upper floors of the facility. Ingress and egress to this facility occurs at the ground level, from East High Street. Currently, no method of access control is used to control admittance, although access control systems
are in place and have been used in the past. The non-use of this system is attributed to extensive queuing time that was required to enter the facility during peak periods.

**New Jersey Transit Lot**

New Jersey Transit operates a parking lot near the Somerville train station, located off South Bridge Street between Veterans Memorial Drive and Second Street. This facility, which is operated by Central Parking System, has two separate areas to serve commuter and other passenger parking. The larger area, which is closer to the station, has 198 spaces; 190 permit, six handicapped, and two reserved for New Jersey Transit operations. The smaller area provides 156 spaces for daily parking at a flat rate.

The monthly permit fee is $25.00 and the charge in the daily lot is $2.00 per day. Permits are sold during the last week of the month for the subsequent month, and Central Parking reported that they are generally sold out. They have also advised that the daily parking is usually 80% - 90% occupied. Parking is free on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. This facility provides valuable parking inventory to supply the needs of New Jersey Transit ridership for this station. No indication was evident that the users of this area were long or short-term visitors of the study area.

Observations of this parking area indicated that this facility operates at or above capacity during normal work week periods. This is accounted for by parking that is occurring in areas not designated as intended parking stalls, grassy areas and along curb areas entering and exiting the facility, further indicating that this facility is operating at capacity during the majority of the study area business hours. As a result, this parking area should not be considered as an option to support the parking needs of the study area at this time. However, consideration should be given to directing some of the overflow from this lot to the new DeSapio deck when it is in operation.

**Courthouse Square (De Sapio) Parking Garage**

Both the Borough of Somerville and De Sapio Properties are in the final stages of construction for the development of a joint venture parking garage. This garage is designed to serve the needs of private sector professional and/or retail establishments, as well as the needs of public parking to serve the adjacent area. By design, 49% of the total parking inventory will be allocated to the private sector, with 51% of parking being available for public use. This garage will be operated and maintained by the Borough of Somerville, and costs for its operation and maintenance will be shared by both parties based on percentages of ownership.
Parking rates for this facility have been recommended to the Borough of Somerville that will help offset the cost of its operation, maintenance and debt service. Initial parking rates recommended are $1.00 per hour or any part thereof for hourly parking, and $65.00 per month for monthly parking, on a first come first served basis. Basic parking principles dictate that convenient on street parking should always be priced higher than less convenient off street parking. This will not be the case with this particular parking facility. However, this facility should be considered a premium parking area, as it will offer amenities such as security personnel and parking attendants. These features will help attract patrons who prefer this level of service.

This facility can also help support the need for long-term or overnight residential parking. Although some residential users may not view it as being the most convenient parking area, the availability of premium services that include security personnel to help deter the possibility of vehicle damage or theft, could attract some residential users. This use can also help offset the cost of operation of the facility. Attendant personnel would not be required during operational residential parking periods, which will lower costs. Entry during this time would be provided through the use of an access card system that has already been specified for use in this facility.

The Borough should initially monitor the operation of this facility on a month-by-month basis, to refine the operation of the facility to meet the demand of the public. If a lower number of hourly users are found to be using the facility than originally anticipated, an increased number of monthly or residential parkers should be accommodated to help meet the financial goals of operating this facility. To help introduce this facility to the public, the Borough of Somerville may want to entertain the idea of holding certain special events such as Friday Night Cruise Night in this facility. This will help free up on street parking for visitors and the event could be held in conjunction with other Friday night activities.

3.3: Parking Enforcement

The parking enforcement program in the Borough of Somerville consists primarily of one Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) who works from Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. He patrols the downtown area in a Borough-owned pickup truck, but frequently parks the vehicle to walk the metered areas, several blocks at a time. This officer writes approximately 800 parking summonses per month, which accounts for approximately 85% of all parking summonses issued, with the remainder written by Somerville police officers. The PEO’s duties are not confined to solely parking enforcement. He is frequently assigned to
cover school crossing posts in the morning and afternoon, when sufficient crossing guards are not available. He also places portable “Pedestrian Crossing” signs at several intersections on Main Street in the morning, and removes them just prior to the end of his shift in the afternoon. He is also occasionally assigned to other non-enforcement duties when the need arises.

The number of parking summonses issued has steadily declined over the past ten years, from more than 17,000 in 1991, to just over 8,000 in the year 2000. Summons issuance in 2001 is showing a slight increase. Parking meter violations account for approximately 70% of all tickets issued, two thirds of which are issued at on-street meters, and one third at off street meters. The officer checks the operability of each meter before writing a summons, and does not issue violations at broken meters. He notes the number of the broken meter and reports this to the maintenance division for repair. Most of the malfunctioning meters, which are easily identified by the yellow flag being displayed, were jammed, and it appeared that this was done intentionally.

Some meters, particularly on Main Street, were found in a “set” position; a result of a coin being inserted and the handle only partially turned. This causes the yellow flag to be displayed as though the meter were broken, when in fact continuing to turn the handle will actually activate the meter. Also, any time on the meter that the coin would have purchased, will not count down. This is a tactic used by motorists to park at meters, in excess of the time permitted, without having to continually deposit coins. During a field observation tour, the Enforcement Officer activated several meters while checking their operability. The Officer handwrites each summons and appeared to be conscientious in the performance of his duties, and very courteous to motorists who questioned him about meter related issues.

Parking summonses are returned to the Somerville Municipal Court. The basic fine for meter violations is $11.00, with a “Failure to Appear” fee of $10.00 added if the motorist does not respond in a timely fashion. There is no pre-determined time frame for responding to parking summonses. The PEO writes in a return date on the summons when he issues it that is generally 14 to 28 days from the issuance date. Motorists who do not respond by 14 days after the original return date are issued a “Failure to Appear” notice which imposes a $10.00
penalty in addition to the fine, and sets a new return date seven days hence. A second instance of failing to respond results in the issuance of a “Proposed Suspension” notice which adds another $10.00 penalty and allows 14 days to respond. Failure to respond to this notice within 14 days results in an automatic suspension of driving privileges in the State of New Jersey, which carries a penalty of $18.00, making the total due $49.00. The motorist must then not only respond to the summons, but also must apply to the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for reinstatement of their driving privileges and pay an additional fee of $50.00 to the DMV.

This process effectively eliminates the need for a scofflaw booting or towing program, as motorists who ignore the summons and notices are subject to revocation of their drivers’ license. The court processes about 1,000 transactions per month, including the Failure to Appear notices, which generates about $11,000.00 per month for the Borough, an average of approximately $11.00 per summons.

3.4: Parking Meters

All of the parking meters in the Borough are older style mechanical meters, which although serviceable, are subject to a higher degree of malfunction than newer electronic meters, due to their many moving parts. These older meters can also be less accurate in providing specific periods of time for coins inserted, resulting in complaints from the public about “fast” meters. This should not be construed as a criticism of the Borough’s maintenance personnel, as they do a satisfactory job of maintaining the meters, but rather a function of this type of equipment. Some meter heads are missing and some posts are bent, a result of having been struck by a vehicle. The Borough uses two keys, one for the upper meter housing (maintenance) and one for the vault (revenue collections). Therefore a single key provides access to the revenue in all 700+ meters in the Borough. Each maintenance man carries both keys.

3.5: Parking Meter Collections

The parking meters in Somerville are maintained and collected by two maintenance employees of the Borough who work from the Fire House on Main Street. Meter collections are normally done every Monday morning, alternating between the on street meters, and the meters in off street parking lots.
During a field observation tour, the following observations were made:

- The collection staff uses a van to make their rounds and departed the firehouse at approximately 8:00 a.m.
- The first stop was at the Police Station to pick up a list of meter complaints that had been reported during the previous week.
- The process begins with one man being dropped off at the beginning of a block to begin the collection process, while the other drives the van further down the block where he exits the vehicle and begins his collection process.
- The first man then moves the vehicle to the next location. This leapfrogging continues for most of the collection process.
- The meters are collected using one-gallon tin cans with handcrafted wooden handles. Meter vaults are opened, with the can placed under the door, and the coins simply fall into the can. Coins that miss the can due to the “free fall” method are retrieved and placed in the can.
- Each time one of the men enters the vehicle with a full or partially full can, it is emptied into a canvas coin bag.
- When the bag is full it is secured with a piece of plain cord, and a tag bearing the Borough’s bank account number is attached.
- The collectors complete routine repairs to meters, such as coin jams, during the collection process.
- After completing collection, the money is brought to the bank. One man enters the bank to obtain a cart to transport the moneybags.
- Once inside, a bank employee verifies the number of bags and places a nylon type security seal on each bag.
- The bags are transported at a later time by armored car to a central branch of the bank where the money is counted and deposited in the Borough’s account.
Collection of the parking meters in off street parking lots is essentially the same process.

3.6: Parking Administration

There is no central parking administration office in Somerville. The various functions related to parking issues are handled by a number of different entities. Parking regulations are drafted by the Parking Committee and enacted after approval by the Borough Council. These are usually the result of responding to a particular situation, rather than as a part of an overall parking plan. Borough maintenance employees, who are also responsible for collecting the revenue from the parking meters, do the actual installation of signs and/or parking meters. It should also be noted that these employees are also responsible for other municipal maintenance functions, and are members of the Somerville Fire Department. Parking enforcement is the responsibility of the Police Department, performed primarily by a single Parking Enforcement Officer, supplemented by Borough police officers. A clerk in Borough Hall issues permits for Parking Lots 2 and 7. This fragmented approach lends itself to some confusion and inefficiency in operating a well-organized municipal parking system.
3.7: Parking Rate Structure

Parking meter rates in Somerville are very low, and as previously noted, contribute to the high demand for the parking meters on Main Street. The maximum charge for hourly parking is $0.25, with some rates less than $0.05 per hour ($0.25 for six hours), and some meters near the Post Office that accept pennies and provide 12-minute parking. Even with these low rates, there are complaints about the cost of parking. There is also a disparity of time purchased for each coin inserted, as shown below. For example, $.025 will purchase anywhere from two to six hours in off street lots. On street meter rates are more uniform, with only those on Veterans Memorial Drive having a different structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Parking Meter Rates (Time Purchased Per Coin)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off Street Lots</td>
<td>Time Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #1</td>
<td>5 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #2</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #4</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #6</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot #7</td>
<td>5 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Street</td>
<td>Time Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Memorial Drive</td>
<td>12 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street</td>
<td>1 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove Street</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bridge Street</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division Street</td>
<td>12 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Street</td>
<td>12 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Doughty Avenue</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Doughty Avenue</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Street</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davenport Street</td>
<td>2 Hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8: Permit Parking

Permit parking is provided in Lots 2 and 7, with a total of 170 spaces designated for permit use only. The permits, which are sold in Borough Hall for a charge of $10.00 per month, consist of a small piece of paper, about the size of a 4” x 6” index card, on which the valid month and year is stamped, and the motorist’s license plate number is written. Where a business user has purchased multiple permits for their employees, no license plate number is written or recorded, and only the company name appears. These permits can be easily duplicated since they are essentially hand produced, allowing counterfeit copies to be used. Records of permits issued are maintained in a handwritten log.

3.9: Residential Parking

There are a large number of residential living units in downtown Somerville, above the street-level commercial buildings on Main Street, and along the adjacent side streets. Parking for these residents, coupled with the needs of employees and shoppers, presents multiple demands for the available parking. Some residential parking is available in the off street parking lots; however, ideally, residents would use on street spaces for overnight parking, vacating them for daytime commercial needs. This, however, is not the case, as there are often periods of overlapping parking needs that result in competition for these spaces. For example, on weekends residents may be parked at spaces that would otherwise be available to support the parking needs of commercial establishments in the area.

3.10: Immaculata High School

Somerville Borough officials expressed their concerns about parking in the vicinity of Immaculata High School on Mountain Avenue. In recent years, residents of the area immediately adjacent to the High School have been complaining about students parking in front of their homes, being disrespectful, and littering. The Borough has formed a Task Force to look into this situation and come up with a plan to ameliorate it. This issue was discussed at the August 17th meeting of the Borough of Somerville Council Workshop, where the Task Force Chairman stated, “…The purpose of the Task Force was to alleviate the problems associated with Immaculata High School students parking, such as littering, loitering, and
disrespect to residents on selected streets in the western portion of the Borough; to develop a plan that will appease area residents who have complained about these problems; and to develop a plan that will allow for optimal use of the local streets for student parking with the least amount of inconvenience to area residents.”

There are presently regulations on sections of Mountain Avenue near Immaculata High School that restrict parking between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. on school days, rendering them completely unavailable for student parking. As a result of the installation of this regulation, students have begun parking in the areas just beyond these restrictions.

Parking is also prohibited on Oak Terrace, with the exception of approximately five spaces, and Prospect Street is posted with signs permitting “Resident Permit Parking” between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, from Mountain Avenue to Prospect Drive on the north side, and North Middaugh Street on the south side.

There is a pending resolution to ban parking on alternate sides of several streets between the hours of 7:00 and 9:00 A.M. to minimize the number of spaces available to students. The regulation would affect one side of the street on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and the other side on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
The Task force recommended that Immaculata High School implement several procedures to control student parking. These include:

- Register all students who drive to school
- Issue parking decals or hangtags that must be displayed by students parking on or near school property
- Conduct a lottery for assignment of on campus parking spaces
- Monitor complaints from residents

Immaculata High School has implemented these procedures and has also:

- Required that all students who drive to school sign a pledge that they will cooperate with the community and comply with the conditions set forth by the school for student parking, with the understanding that failure to do so will result in revocation of their parking privileges
- Leased 31 spaces on private property directly across the street from the school
- Arranged for the use of 15 spaces during school hours in one of the parking lots of Brookside Apartments
- Initiated a student litter patrol for both on street and campus parking areas

### 4.0 Public Outreach

This section of the report discusses the methods used to collect information on parking utilization and the opinions of specific user groups as they relate to the overall operation of the parking program in the Borough of Somerville.

#### 4.1: Field Data Collection

The field data collection provides the results of a detailed analysis of existing on street and off street parking conditions throughout a selected study area located in downtown Somerville. The following items are addressed in this section:

- On street and off street parking facilities in the study area
- Hourly parking utilization on a typical weekday and Saturday for on street and off street parking
- Average parking duration on a typical weekday and Saturday for on street and off street parking
- Findings and recommendations.

Manual license plate surveys were conducted at each of the on street (curbside) and off street (lot) facilities. These surveys were conducted on an hourly basis between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on a typical weekday, and between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. on a typical Saturday during June 2001. This survey data was then summarized and analyzed by location, day, and parking facility type (on street versus off street parking). Appendix A contains the parking survey data.

**Analysis Methodology and Criteria**

The operational analysis of on street and off street parking facilities is typically based on two performance measures: utilization and average duration. Utilization is defined as the percentage of occupied stalls, and is typically examined on an hour-by-hour basis. To provide for the safe and efficient circulation of traffic, utilization should not exceed 95 percent during the peak hour.

Average duration is defined as the average length-of-stay for all vehicles parked at a particular facility during the course of the study period. For metered parking, the average duration value should not exceed the time limit for the meters.

**Current Conditions**

Based on license plate survey data, the average duration was calculated for the on street meters, and each parking facility for both the typical weekday and typical Saturday. In addition, hourly utilization profiles were developed for each of the parking facilities for both days.

Tables 3 and 4 show the peak hour utilization and average duration for the existing off street lots and on street spaces, respectively, during a typical weekday. It should be noted that parking utilization at the individual on street locations and off street parking facilities within the project study area did not peak at the same time. Consequently, the peak hour utilization values shown in Tables 3 and 4 are the highest hour values observed at each on street or off street facility during the course of the weekday survey period. In other words, the values shown do not reflect utilization occurring during the one hour of peak parking demand throughout the study area.
Appendix A contains detailed utilization and duration charts, and associated calculations, for the off street parking lots on a typical weekday. For each facility there is a chart showing the overall usage of the facility and separate charts showing the usage for each rate in that facility. For example, for Lot #1 there is an overall usage chart, and charts for usage at the 12 hour meters, five hour meters, and at the free three hour zone. Appendix B contains similar charts and calculations for the on street metered parking locations on a typical weekday.

Appendix C contains the detailed information for Saturday activity in the off street parking lots, and Appendix D contains similar information for Saturday at the on street metered locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot #</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Stalls</th>
<th>Peak Hour Utilization</th>
<th>Average Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>North of West Main Street between Maple Street and Davenport Street</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>North of West Main Street between Davenport Street and North Doughty</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Southwest quadrant of Veterans Memorial Drive and Center Street</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Northwest quadrant of Veterans Memorial Drive and Division</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Northeast quadrant of Veterans Memorial Drive and South Bridge Street</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>East of Maple Street between West Main Street and High Street</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>East of South Bridge Street between West High Street and West Cliff Street</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, peak parking utilization exceeds 95-percent at Lots #4 and #6 on a typical weekday. Peak hour utilization at all other off street lots was found to be less than 95-percent on a typical weekday.
As shown in Table 4 the utilization of on street parking along Main Street, and along the side streets adjacent to Main Street, was found to be relatively high (between 86 and 90 percent) on a typical weekday.
Tables 5 and 6 show the operational characteristics on a typical Saturday for the off street facilities and on street metered areas respectively. Again, it should be noted that parking utilization at the individual on street and off street parking facilities within the project study area did not peak at the same time. Consequently, the peak hour utilization values shown in Tables 5 and 6 are the worst-case values observed at each on street or off street facility during the course of the weekday survey period, and do not reflect utilization occurring during the one hour of peak parking demand throughout the study area. Appendix C contains detailed utilization and duration charts, and associated calculations, for the off street parking lots on a typical Saturday. Appendix D contains similar charts and calculations for the on street parking facilities on a typical Saturday.

Table 5
Summary of Existing Parking Operations
Saturday – Off Street Lots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot #</th>
<th>Lot Location</th>
<th>Total Stalls</th>
<th>Peak Hour Utilization</th>
<th>Average Duration (hrs/veh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>North of West Main Street between Maple Street and Davenport Street</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>North of West Main Street between Davenport Street and North Doughty Avenue</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Southwest quadrant of Veterans Memorial Drive and Center Street</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Northwest quadrant of Veterans Memorial Drive and Division Street</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Northeast quadrant of Veterans Memorial Drive and South Bridge Street</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>East of Maple Street between West Main Street and High Street</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>East of South Bridge Street between West High Street and West Cliff Street</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5, peak hour parking utilization was found to be relatively low at all off street lots on a typical Saturday.
As shown in Table 6, peak hour parking utilization was found to be relatively high along Main Street between South Doughty Avenue and Grove Street (between 89 and 90 percent), and along side streets adjacent to Main Street on a typical Saturday (78 percent). Peak hour utilization was found to be comparatively low (less than 25 percent) along all other streets within the study area on a typical Saturday.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Side of Street</th>
<th>Total Stalls</th>
<th>Peak Hour Utilization</th>
<th>Average Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Main Street</td>
<td>South Doughty</td>
<td>South Bridge Street</td>
<td>Both sides</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Main Street</td>
<td>South Bridge Street</td>
<td>Grove Street</td>
<td>Both sides</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Main Street</td>
<td>Grove Street</td>
<td>Mechanic Street</td>
<td>Both sides</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Memorial</td>
<td>South Doughty</td>
<td>South Bridge Street</td>
<td>South side</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East High Street</td>
<td>South Bridge Street</td>
<td>Mechanic Street</td>
<td>Both sides</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove Street</td>
<td>East Main Street</td>
<td>East High Street</td>
<td>West side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Doughty</td>
<td>West Main Street</td>
<td>West High Street</td>
<td>East side</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davenport Street</td>
<td>West Main Street</td>
<td>West High Street</td>
<td>West side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Street</td>
<td>West Main Street</td>
<td>West High Street</td>
<td>East side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton Street</td>
<td>South Street</td>
<td>West Main Street</td>
<td>West side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bridge</td>
<td>Franklin Street</td>
<td>East Main Street</td>
<td>East side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2: User Surveys

In addition to the license plate surveys, questionnaires were sent to the Borough of Somerville for distribution to three groups, local business owners or managers, employees, and shoppers within the study area. Separate questionnaire forms were issued for each group. A summary of key findings by group is provided below, and the questionnaire results for the business owners, employees, and shoppers are summarized in Appendices E, F, and G, respectively.

Based on the responses provided by all survey groups, there is a public perception that there is not enough parking in downtown Somerville, particularly along Main Street. Field data collection does not support this opinion; but this is an issue that the Borough should address. Since the parking spaces along Main Street are the most convenient, they are the most desirable to all users, and thus have the highest occupancy. The proposed rate increase for these parking meters should encourage a higher turnover in these spaces, making them available for more motorists during the course of a typical business day.

Business Owners or Managers

- Of the businesses responding to the survey, 86% were retail stores and 11% were offices.
- 59% of the respondents leased space in their building; 41% owned the space.
- Of those respondents that did not own or lease parking spaces, 45% indicated that their customers parked on the street and 45% indicated that their customers parked in public lots.
- 59% of the respondents felt there was not enough parking downtown.
- 66% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that workers often occupied “prime” downtown parking spaces that could otherwise be available for customers.
- 43% of the respondents indicated that parking is too expensive in downtown Somerville; 36% disagreed.
- 58% of the respondents indicated that their customers complain about having to pay for parking.
- 57% of the respondents felt that the Borough should designate a parking area for downtown employees.
- 56% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that "Parking enforcement in Somerville is not strict enough."
Employees

- Of the employees surveyed, 79% lived outside Somerville and 21% were Somerville residents.
- 80% of the respondents were employed full time; 20% were employed part time.
- Retail employment made up the highest percentage of employment types (28%), followed by government positions (27%), professional jobs (17%), and clerical positions (14%).
- The majority of the respondents (93%) reported that they drove to work. Of the remainder, 5% carpooled and 2% walked or were dropped off.
- 86% of the respondents that drove parked in off street lots (51% in public lots, 35% in private lots). The remaining drivers parked either at the county parking deck (7%) or on street (7%).
- 51% of the respondents indicated that they are not charged any fee for parking. 30% pay the entire parking fee themselves and 17% have their parking fee fully subsidized by their employer.
- Of the 26 respondents who paid for parking, 14 stated that they paid no more than $1.00 per day; the remaining 12 indicated that they paid no more than $25.00 per month.
- Only 6% of the respondents indicated that they owned a Borough parking permit.
- 49% of the respondents had received a parking ticket in downtown Somerville; 51% had not.
- 72% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that "Parking enforcement in Somerville is not strict enough."
- 54% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "It's safe to park in downtown Somerville."
- 35% of the respondents indicated that they would use a convenient shuttle bus to get to downtown; however, 51% of the respondents indicated that they would not.

Shoppers

- Of the shoppers surveyed, 89% lived outside Somerville and 11% were Somerville residents.
- The majority of the respondents (76%) drive alone into downtown Somerville. Of the remainder, 20% drove with others and 4% walked.
- 45% of the shoppers that drove parked on Main Street and 48% parked in off street lots (36% in public downtown lots, 12% in private lots). The remaining 7% parked on the county parking deck.
- Of the respondents who parked in a metered parking space, 62% put less than $0.25 into the meter.
- 56% of the respondents indicated that they planned to stay less than one hour in downtown Somerville. 34% indicated that they planned to stay more than five hours.
- 41% of the respondents stated that they came to Somerville every weekday (Monday through Friday). 53% indicated they came to Somerville less than twice a week.
- 54% of the respondents had received a parking ticket in downtown Somerville; 46% had not.
- 45% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that "Parking enforcement in Somerville is not strict enough."
- 57% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "It's safe to park in downtown Somerville."
- 65% of the respondents indicated that they would not use a convenient shuttle bus to get to downtown.

4.3: Public Meeting

A public meeting was held in the jurors’ waiting room on Monday, August 29, 2001 to provide an opportunity for the general public to express their opinions on parking in downtown Somerville, as well as to ask questions on parking related issues. This meeting was not well attended, but those individuals who did attend, heard a brief presentation of the Borough Parking Study, and did voice their concerns. Following are the issues that were raised. Each issue is addressed in the recommendation section of the report.

- Competition from Bridgewater Commons where parking is “free’
- Parking near Immaculata High School
- One hour time limit of parking meters on Main Street is insufficient
- Parking for residents of Main Street living above commercial uses
5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report describes the specific policies and actions recommended for the implementation of a parking management plan for the Borough of Somerville, and for the mitigation of the deficiencies identified in the Existing Conditions section of this report. To properly address the issues in the Borough, the entire parking inventory must be considered, both on street and off street parking spaces, parking meter rates, permit parking, and parking meter equipment. Therefore, the success of some recommendations may be reliant upon implementation of others.

5.1: On Street Parking

As shown by the summaries of the data collected, the most sought after parking spaces in the downtown area are those on Main Street, particularly those on the blocks between Grove Street and South Bridge Street, where there is angle parking, and along the block between South Bridge Street and South Doughty Avenue. This is true for both weekdays and Saturdays. There are 152 spaces, controlled by one-hour parking meters, on these blocks, representing 40% of the total on street spaces available. Weekday utilization averages approximately 80% between noon and 2:00 P.M., and peaks at 90% after 6:00 P.M. when the regulations no longer require parking meter payment. On Saturday, utilization is 80% or higher from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M., peaking at noon with an occupancy rate of more than 90%. Observations revealed that 83% of all vehicles parked for one hour or less, an indication of compliance with the time limit.

Parking on side streets off of Main Street, which mostly have two-hour meters, averaged about 80% on both weekdays and Saturday. 75% of the vehicles parked on weekdays, and more than 80% of the Saturday parkers, stayed for one hour or less, even though the parking meters allow two-hour parking. The existing time limits at these parking meters serve the needs of the community very well. The existing on street parking meter installations were found to be satisfactory to serve the Borough’s needs, and no additional installations are recommended except as noted below.

Although not included in the area that was surveyed, observations were made of parking on the streets adjacent to Borough Hall. Persons having business with any of the Borough offices utilize these spaces, and some motorists commented that they often have difficulty parking in this area. Observations revealed that occupancy at these spaces was approximately 80%. It is therefore recommended that ten two-hour parking meters be
installed on the north side of Somerset Street, and eight on the south side of West End Avenue immediately adjacent to Borough Hall. The Borough should also consider installing parking meters at the off street spaces on Borough Hall property.

The four 15 minute parking spaces directly in front of Borough Hall, and the two handicapped spaces, should remain as they are. There are also 21 spaces behind Borough Hall, six of which are reserved for municipal vehicles. The remaining 15 spaces can be used for employee parking.

5.2: Off Street Parking

Off street parking facilities are intended to serve the longer-term parking needs of shoppers and employees of the Borough’s downtown. These areas can also satisfy some of the residential parking needs. The results of the surveys and field observations indicate that the utilization of Lots 1, 2, 4, and 6, which serve the main shopping area, are very high during the week but relatively low on Saturdays. On weekdays, motorists were often observed stopped in the aisles of various facilities waiting for a parking space. This very high utilization rate is an indication that the time limit of the parking is too long and/or the rates being charged are too low. While both are true to some extent, the low rates are more of a factor. There are specific conditions that pertain to an individual facility, and several changes that apply to all facilities. The changes include:

- Replace existing single space mechanical meters with electronic parking meters. Consideration should be given to utilizing multi-space parking meters. This is discussed in further detail in the section on parking meter equipment.
- All “Free Parking” should be eliminated, and replaced by five-hour parking meters. This will continue to provide the medium term parking needed, but will also promote turnover in these spaces.
- Adopt a uniform hourly rate of $0.25 per hour, with a $1.00 maximum that would be applicable in all lots. For example, at 5 hour meters a motorist would receive 1 hour for each $0.25 deposited, and when $1.00 had been inserted the motorist would receive 5 hours.
- Replace all two-hour parking meters with five-hour meters, except in Lot #6, where short term parking is required.
- All 12-hour parking meters should be removed. Since the parking meters in all facilities are in effect from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., a period of only ten hours, the
12-hour limit is inaccurate. These should be replaced with five or 10-hour parking meters, and where all day parking is necessary, permit parking should be utilized. Electronic meters will allow a motorist to purchase time prior before the meters begin operation in the morning, thus allowing a commuter who parks at 6:00 a.m. to purchase 10 hours that will not begin counting down until 8:00 a.m.

- Overnight parking should be allowed in the off street parking lots and the growing residential parking need should be accommodated by the creation of a residential permit-parking program. Recommended hours for this program are 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. in off street facilities in close proximity to the demand.

- Lots #3 and #5 are too small (15 spaces each) and too far removed from the downtown area to have any significant impact. The two existing signs in Lot #3, which read “Five-Hour Parking” have red lettering on a white background, typically signifying a restrictive regulation. These should be replaced with new signs that have green lettering on a white background, which indicate a permissive regulation. The existing signs in lot #5 should also be changed to delete the reference to rates for parking.

**Directional Signing**

The Borough has erected signing directing motorists to each of the lots serving the downtown area. They are standard directional signs for parking areas, with green lettering on a white background, and a directional arrow. The arrows, however, point upward at a 45° angle, either right or left. This type of arrow is generally used to indicate a turn of less than 90°, which is not the case where the signs are posted. Also, the location of many of the signs is at the entrance to each of the parking lots, and would therefore be clearer if the arrow pointed right or left, at the nine o’clock or three o’clock position.

Some of the existing signs are poorly located on the left side of the roadway, as shown in the photo below, making it difficult for motorists to see. Also, additional directional signs are needed on Main Street to guide motorists to parking. A detailed plan for trailblazer signing for all off street parking facilities is included in Appendix I.
Parking Lot Design
The layout of the parking stalls and aisles in Lots 1, 2, 4 and 7 were reviewed to determine if redesign would yield any additional parking spaces. The existing layouts were found to provide the maximum utilization for each facility, and therefore, except for redesigning the handicapped spaces to provide dimensions that conform to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, no changes in the functional layout have been recommended. Some recommendations for the installation of raised curb areas at the ends of parking aisles have been included, and are shown on the individual drawings. The detailed drawings of the parking lots and the handicapped spaces design are in Appendix J. Each handicap parking space should also be identified with the standard Handicap Parking Only sign (with wheelchair symbol) and rider indicating the penalty for violation.

Lot #1
There are 23 parking spaces in this lot that are designated “Free Parking.” These spaces are the most convenient for shoppers because they are the closest access to Main Street and, therefore, have a very high occupancy rate. Since these are prime parking spaces, it is recommended that they be controlled by parking meters with a five-hour time limit. In addition, all 12-hour parking meters should be replaced by a combination of 10-hour parking and permit parking. The 28 spaces adjacent to the fence on the north side of the lot should be designated for permit use to accommodate the need for all day parking, and the remainder of the 12-hour meters should be replaced with 10-hour meters. As noted, the dimensions of the existing handicapped parking spaces do not conform to ADA requirements, and should be redesigned to comply with these standards. An “EXIT” sign with a left arrow should be installed to direct motorists to the Davenport Street exit. This is shown on the drawing for Lot #1

Lot #2
There are 13 parking spaces in this lot that are designated “Free Parking.” As in Lot #1 these spaces are the most convenient for shoppers in that they are the closest spaces to the access to Main Street, and therefore have a very high occupancy rate. It is recommended that these also be controlled by parking meters with a five-hour time limit. A heavy demand for spaces near the Social Security Administration (SSA) Office was also observed. Occupancy at the permit spaces in this lot was determined to be only 71%. It is therefore recommended that the 13 permit spaces adjacent to the SSA Office, and the four two-hour parking meters on the opposite side of this lot, be replaced with five-hour parking meters. It is possible that SSA employees may use these 13 permit spaces. If so, they should be moved to an area of lesser demand and convenience, leaving the more desirable spaces for shorter stays. Although the
average duration of vehicles parked at the 12-hour meters was only 3.76 hours, more than 35% of the vehicles observed parked for more than five hours. Replacing these meters with 10-hour meters will adequately serve existing needs.

**Lot #4**

This lot, which is the only lot south of Main Street, and has a combination of two-hour and five-hour parking meters, produced some very interesting data. At the five-hour meters, the average length of stay was 4.2 hours, indicating compliance with the time limit, and occupancy was 62%. However, 95% of these vehicles parked for less than two hours. This would seem to point to a demand for shorter term parking, but the existing two-hour parking is very under utilized. The average duration of vehicles parked at the two-hour meters was 1.43 hours, which indicates compliance with the time limit, but occupancy at these meters was less than 30%. These results point toward a pattern of motorists opting to park at a longer-term meter to avoid the risk of receiving a parking summons for expired meter or overtime parking. Since the average duration of vehicles parked in this facility was found to be very much in line with the established time limits, no changes are recommended for the parking meters in this lot.

**Lot #6**

The existing “EXIT” sign mounted on a building adjacent to the pedestrian walkway, and the sign “TO MAIN STREET STORES” are worn and should be replaced. Also a “Do Not Enter” sign should be installed at the exit from the parking lot onto Maple Street.

**Lot #7**

Lot #7 is closer to the government offices than the shopping area, and as such, was much more heavily utilized on weekdays, when peak hour occupancy was 59%. However, the 106 permit spaces in this lot were only 40 % occupied, while occupancy at the parking meter spaces was more than 90%. This indicates both the need for additional metered parking, as well as a surplus of permit spaces. It is recommended that 30 parking spaces be changed to five-hour metered parking. This will create some reserve in the metered parking, while leaving sufficient space for permit parking. These spaces are identified on the drawing for Lot #7. The Borough should also consider the use of raised curbing or wheel stops along the perimeter of this facility to prevent vehicles from parking too close to the brick walls, possibly causing damage to either, the vehicle, the wall, or both. Finally, since there is no protected walkway for pedestrians, the borough should install a “PEDESTRIANS” warning sign at the entrance to Lot #7 to alert motorists that pedestrians will be walking in the roadway.
Surface Parking Lots Conditions Analysis Recommendations

Although the overall conditions of the surface parking lots within the study area are acceptable, it is apparent that the public perception of these facilities is that they are poorly maintained on a daily basis. It is recommended that the Borough investigate the use of a private-sector contractor specializing in the maintenance of surface parking lots. Also, personnel should be assigned to make a tour of each facility on a daily basis to collect debris and sweep up broken glass or other articles that may pose a hazard to the public.

It is also recommended that, at a minimum, a complete sweeping of each facility occur by a device or equipment designed for this type of heavy-duty sweeping. This process should occur when each facility is either empty or near empty. Finally, the parking administrator should make regular and unscheduled site visits to ensure that the contractor completes these duties to the satisfaction of the Borough.

The Borough should also consider improving the aesthetic quality of these facilities in a manner similar to the Main Street corridor. This can be accomplished by the use of plantings similar to those on Main Street, and the installation of raised islands with low growing shrubbery at the end of the rows of parking where space will allow it. Such additions will soften the amount of the paved areas at the ends of the aisles. These areas are identified on the individual drawings for each parking lot.

Bernie Fields Parking Deck

Field data collection efforts indicated that the Bernie Fields Parking Deck is currently not supporting the parking needs of the adjacent study area, although 7% of the Shopper Survey respondents indicated they parked in this facility. However, once the Borough begins to make rate adjustments and other parking program refinements, this may become an attractive alternative to paid parking, despite a longer walking distance to certain destinations. Once the Borough enacts some of the recommendations found in other sections of this report, primarily rate and time limit changes, Somerset County officials responsible for the operation of this facility may want to more closely monitor the demand and use of the garage. An increase in short-term parking may indicate that a percentage of the parking public may opt for free parking versus convenient parking. Operationally, Somerset County may want to re-institute the use of the access control system, or may want to offer limited hourly parking to help offset the operational cost of this facility, should an increase in public parking occur. Therefore it could be considered for an expanded role in serving the Borough’s downtown parking needs.
New Jersey Transit Lot
New Jersey Transit’s (NJT) current parking facility off South Bridge Street is fully utilized on most business days. They are exploring the possibility of increasing their parking inventory through adjacent land acquisition to allow for the expansion of the existing surface lot. If successful in this pursuit New Jersey Transit’s total parking inventory will be sufficient to meet the present growing need for parking, and should accommodate the demand for several years.

However, should NJT not develop any new parking, the Borough should be able to accommodate some of this demand by offering available space at the Courthouse Square Garage to commuters. Although this would entail a greater walking distance than what is normally acceptable for commuter parking, premium services, such as security and covered parking may attract some commuters. To encourage the use of the Courthouse Square Garage on street spaces in close proximity could be changed to discourage all day or long term parking. If the Borough opts not to discourage this type of parking, they will be competing with themselves for their customers.

5.3: Parking Enforcement

The generally positive compliance with the posted parking regulations throughout the downtown area is an indication that the Borough’s enforcement program is effective. The majority of the respondents to the survey expressed the opinion that parking enforcement was strict enough, and more than half of the shoppers and employees said they had received a parking ticket in downtown Somerville.

Field observations of the Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) reveal that he is knowledgeable of parking regulations and conscientious in the performance of his duties. He was willing to give motorists the benefit of the doubt if there were any question about a violation, and was courteous when questioned. It is recommended that he be solely dedicated to parking enforcement, and that consideration be given to occasionally rotating his
shift to include Saturday patrols. Observations made on a Saturday revealed that many motorists do not activate the parking meters. On West Main Street, between Bridge Street and Doughty Avenue, 95 of the 103 parking meters were occupied, and 21 showed a violation. On East Main Street, between Bridge Street and Grove Street, 45 of the 49 stalls were occupied, and 25 were on violation.

Weekday observations revealed a much different picture. On one occasion, only seven occupied meters showed violation on West Main Street, and four on East Main Street. Four of eleven vehicles parked at meters marked violation had received parking summonses. There were also two “set” meters on the south side of East Main Street. Similar results were found during another observation, where a total of 13 meters were on violation and four had been issued summonses. Periodic Saturday patrols should foster the same level of compliance with the parking meters as observed on weekdays. These weekday observations also served to confirm that the level of enforcement is within acceptable levels, with approximately 30% of the violations summoned.

The current fine for overtime parking is $11.00, and the fine for most other parking infractions is $16.00. These are on the lower end of the scale for fines in New Jersey as shown in the table below. The Borough may want to consider increasing these fines to be more in line with other municipalities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Expired Meter</th>
<th>No Parking</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayonne</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
<td>$21.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>$18.00</td>
<td>444.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lee</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>$35.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoboken</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morristown</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>Some up to $44.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metuchen</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>Increase pending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
<td>Some are $27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plainfield</td>
<td>$17.00</td>
<td>$31.00</td>
<td>Increase possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerville</td>
<td>$11.00</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4: Parking Meters

The existing mechanical parking meters require considerable maintenance. They are easily jammed by motorists to avoid payment or parking tickets, and are subject to discrepancy concerning the amount of time given for each coin deposited. It is recommended that the Borough replace all of the existing parking meters with new electronic models having the SmartCard feature. Electronic meters:

- Have no moving parts, and therefore are less prone to jamming, requiring less maintenance
- Are more easily repaired when they do malfunction
- Can provide split or special rates for events (free parking during the holiday season, for example)
- Provide SmartCard capability
- Provide the Borough with the capability to conduct recommended revenue audits
- Allow the Borough to evaluate parking meter usage by examining revenue for individual parking meters for specific periods

SmartCards are prepaid cards that have an intelligent microprocessor embedded on it. These cards are available in multiple denominations and eliminate the need for motorists to carry coins to activate the meters. Use of SmartCards significantly reduces the amount of coins deposited in parking meters, which can result in less frequent collections. This, of course, would allow personnel assigned to this task to be utilized elsewhere in the Borough operation. It is recommended that the Borough use disposable type cards, which are very similar to phone cards in that they can be sold at multiple downtown retail outlets, as well as by the Borough, and can be discarded when the value has been depleted. Merchants can also use these cards, with a value of $1.00 or $2.00, to offer incentives to shoppers to park downtown.
Parking meter housings should also be replaced with higher security models that provide a closed collection system. Compatible collection carts and canisters will be required to properly operate the system. Use of this collection system, in addition to providing much greater security than the present system, will also simplify the process. Since the new canisters will have a much greater capacity than the one-gallon containers currently used, the collectors can continue collecting meters without having to stop to empty their container. The cart allows the canister to be rolled, rather than carried, which also extends the collectors range.

Parking meter maintenance can continue to be performed as part of the meter collection process. The number of repairs presently required is minimal, and can be expected to be reduced with the introduction of electronic meters. However, since the collections are currently only made on a bi-weekly basis it is recommended that a weekly maintenance patrol be added as a preventive maintenance effort.

In the off street lots, consideration should be given to the use of multi-space electronic meters. Since one multi-space meter can control 100 spaces or more, they can greatly reduce the amount of meters required. This, of course, also greatly reduces the number of meters that have to be collected and maintained, thus reducing personnel resources. Pay and retain models that require a motorist to enter the space number where they have parked are particularly effective in parking lots such as those in the study area. Motorists are then prompted to insert coins, bills or SmartCard for payment of the amount of time they wish to purchase. The receipt issued to the motorist verifying payment can be very useful in disputing parking tickets. These devices are approximately the same size as a typical pay telephone.
Space number signs would be necessary for this operation, and one machine is capable of controlling different time limits, depending on the space number entered. For example, in a particular lot, spaces numbered 1 through 20 were for three-hour parking and numbers 21 through 50, for five-hour parking. A motorist entering space number 17 would be able to purchase three hours, and a motorist entering space number 32 would be able to purchase five hours. It is recommended that a minimum of two units be placed in each of the five downtown lots located at the point where motorists would exit the lot on foot to reach their destination.

Space numbers marked on the pavement are frequently used for this purpose, but this is not a recommended procedure in northern climates where these markings may be covered by snow in the winter months. Although the cost of electronic equipment and higher security collection devices can be considerable, parking meter manufacturers do offer various alternatives to purchasing. Lease or lease/purchase plans, and in some cases revenue sharing arrangements, are available to avoid municipalities having to commit to capital expenditures. The benefits derived from this equipment should offset the cost. A breakdown of the cost and estimated monthly or annual payments follows.

### Parking Meter System Cost Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duplex High Security Housing</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>$475.00</td>
<td>$178,125.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sealed Coin Boxes</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>$28.00</td>
<td>$10,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single High Security Housing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
<td>$6,250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sealed Coin Boxes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>$400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Security Locks (3 per Duplex - 2 per Single)</td>
<td>1175</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>$23,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Parking Meter w/ SmartCard Reader</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>$190.00</td>
<td>$147,250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SmartCards</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Security Revenue Collection Canisters/Carts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$900.00</td>
<td>$1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$392,825.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Financing Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Payment</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>$91,936.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>60 months</td>
<td>$7,573.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Multi Space Meter Cost Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multi Space Meter</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Does not include installation (approximately $1,000.00 per unit)*

### Cost Comparison

- Single space meters: $472.00 per space
- Multi space meters: $286.00 per space*

* Based on replacing 385 single space meters with 2 Multi Space Meters in each of the five lots noted.

### Refurbishment Existing Mechanical Parking Meters

In order to provide the Borough with information on all of the options available to them, cost estimates were secured to refurbish the entire inventory of existing mechanical style parking meters. The estimates include the cost of the necessary parts to implement the rate changes as recommended in this report, and the labor to perform the work. The estimates averaged about $24.00 per meter, or a little more than $18,600.00 to overhaul the approximately 775 meters in the Somerville system. Expenditure of funds for this purpose is not recommended since the Borough would still be operating an antiquated system.

### 5.5: Meter Collections

It is recommended that the Borough convert to a “closed” system, where the money in the meter is contained in a locked coin box inside the meter, which can only be opened when the coin box is inserted into a locked and sealed collection canister. This system denies access to the meter revenue until authorized personnel; either in the Borough and/or at the bank, opens the canister. Two canisters and two carts would be required to properly collect from all meters in the Borough. It is recommended that the bags be sealed in the presence of Borough employees and that Borough personnel randomly verify the counting of the money. Also, the auditing capability of the electronic meters will periodically allow comparison to the actual collection revenue for accuracy. The keys for the parking meter
vaults and housings should be secured by the Parking Administrator, and issued to the appropriate personnel as required.

5.6: Parking Administration

The Borough of Somerville administers the daily operation of parking using an unclear and fragmented approach. During the course of any normal business day, most persons in Borough government can be contacted to address a myriad of operational parking issues. These issues can range from parking permits, parking citations, and other parking related problems.

These persons include the Mayor, Borough Council members, Borough Clerk, and any other individual who may receive a telephone call regarding parking issues. Most often, these calls are directed to either the parking advisory board or a member of that board acting in the capacity as a Borough Council member.

This approach has enabled the Borough to address the needs of its parking clients in the past. However, a direct and focused method needs to be established that will also allow the Borough to properly plan for, and address parking issues, before they become critical or controversial.

With the development of the new Courthouse Square Parking Garage, the Borough of Somerville has entered into a new area of parking operations and oversight. The Borough, in association with De Sapio Properties, will be responsible for the short- and long-term maintenance and operation of a multi-level parking structure. In addition, parking rates must be initially established for this facility that help offset the cost of these programs. To achieve a balanced and properly structured rate program, the Borough must also review its current on street parking rates to make sure the parking garage is a financially attractive alternative to on street parking.

As the Borough continues to grow, planning issues related to parking requirements for these new establishments must be adopted and adhered to. Issues such as parking impact fees will have to be discussed to help offset the cost of developing new or additional parking inventory. Residential parking will need to be established that not only accommodates the residents of the downtown area, but also provides for sufficient parking during peak business hours. This is discussed in detail in the section on Residential Parking.
To achieve these goals and to help the Borough take a proactive approach to planning and operational parking issues, it is recommended that a Parking Administrator position be established. This person would be responsible for all administrative duties related to parking in the Borough. The individual should possess a minimum of five years of prior parking administration experience, and should maintain the International Parking Institute’s Certified Administrator of Public Parking status. This level of qualification will allow the Borough to meet head-on the complex issues that affect the viability of continued growth in the downtown area.

In addition to the administrator, it is recommended that the following positions also be established as part of the Parking Department or Parking Authority:

- **Parking Meter Supervisor** - Responsible for all parking meter installations, revenue collections and maintenance, and parking sign installations
- **Parking Enforcement Officer** - Dedicated to parking enforcement (reassign the PEO who currently reports to the Police Department)
- **Parking Clerk** - Responsible for administering the parking permit program and other departmental clerical duties

Estimated annual salaries for these positions are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking Administrator</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Meter Supervisor</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Enforcement Officer</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Clerk</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$120,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.7: Parking Meter Rates

The high occupancy recorded at the on street meters is an indication that either the time limit is too long, or the parking meter rates are too low. Since the one-hour meters were found to be operating within accepted parameters in terms of the average duration, it is clear that the meter rates are too low. Raising parking meter rates is rarely a popular action on the part of a municipality. However, it is generally understood that the more convenient spaces should have a higher rate and shorter duration, and the longer-term parking spaces, which are usually further from the destination, have less expensive rates. To maximize the effectiveness of the spaces serving Main Street shoppers, we recommend that the rate at all parking meters be increased to $0.25 per thirty minutes, or $0.50 per hour.
This action should serve to provide a better turnover in the spaces, particularly at the one-hour meters west of Grove Street. Motorists who desire to stay longer have the option of using the two-hour meters east of Grove Street and on the side streets, or to park in the off street parking lots. It is also recommended that the rates at the on street meters, and in the off street lots, be standardized, as shown in the table below. When electronic parking meters are installed it is recommended that the Borough discontinue its policy of not charging at the parking meters between Thanksgiving and New Years. In lieu of this, a merchant validation program should be implemented using the SmartCards. This is described in the Special Event section of this report.

### Proposed Parking Meter Rates

#### Off Street Lots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Limit</th>
<th>$0.05</th>
<th>$0.10</th>
<th>$0.25</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hour</td>
<td>12 min</td>
<td>24 min</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>$0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hour</td>
<td>12 min</td>
<td>24 min</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Hour</td>
<td>12 min</td>
<td>24 min</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### On Street Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Limit</th>
<th>$0.25</th>
<th>$0.50</th>
<th>$1.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Min</td>
<td>12 min</td>
<td>24 min</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Hour</td>
<td>12 min</td>
<td>24 min</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hour</td>
<td>12 min</td>
<td>24 min</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uniformity of the rates will eliminate confusion that may presently exist where each denomination coin, purchases varying amounts of time in different metered locations within the Borough. The only deviation from the uniform rate structure is at the on street meters adjacent to the Post Office, where 12-minute parking is provided at fifteen meters to serve the very short-term needs of postal patrons. Depositing any coin, nickel, dime or quarter, in these meters, will purchase 12 minutes.

There is a perception that a parking meter, or any type of paid parking, is a deterrent to attracting shoppers. This is especially true when a regional shopping center or an enclosed mall is nearby. It is believed that parking is “free” at these facilities. However, the cost of providing that parking is included in the rent of merchants in those facilities, and is ultimately passed on to consumers in the cost of their purchases at those retailers. The Borough and the business association should move forward with a public information campaign to dispel this belief, along with the use of an incentive program, as discussed earlier in this report.
Other Municipalities
A review of parking meter rates in other New Jersey municipalities revealed that the current rates in Somerville are below average, and recommended rate increases compare favorably with these communities. Of those surveyed, only two still accept nickels, dimes and quarters in their parking meters; the others only accept quarters. The rates are shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>$0.05</th>
<th>$0.10</th>
<th>$0.25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lee</td>
<td>5 Min</td>
<td>10 Min</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoboken</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>20 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambertville</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morristown</td>
<td>6 Min</td>
<td>12 Min</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plainfield</td>
<td>6 Min</td>
<td>12 Min</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15 Min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8: Permit Parking

The Borough’s current permit parking program should be modernized and maintained on a computer. Records of permit holders should be entered into a database that will track usage and renewal information. Paper permits presently in use should be replaced by more permanent pre-printed and numbered permits, which are commercially available. These types of permits are similar to the hangtags issued by the State of New Jersey for handicapped motorists. They will also greatly reduce the opportunity for someone to fraudulently duplicate a permit. Changing from monthly permits to quarterly permits can reduce the cost of supplies and administration, as well as requiring less frequent renewals for motorists.

Permit rates, at $10.00 per month, are also very low. Changing to quarterly permits as suggested, with a rate of $50.00 per quarter, would still provide a less expensive alternative to parking at long-term meters and will help offset the administrative cost of this program.

5.9: Residential Parking

Currently, the Borough of Somerville does not make accommodations for residential parking needs within the study area. To properly manage this growing parking demand, it is
recommended that the Borough develop a residential permit parking program that allows for overnight parking of residential vehicles. Recommended hours for this program would be 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. in the off street facilities in close proximity to the demand.

This program should be designed so that residential buildings and units are recorded in a database used by the Borough to track and assign parking permits to actual residents of these units. To obtain a residential parking permit, the owners of these motor vehicles would have to provide proof of residency, (utility bill, vehicle registration, deed, lease, etc.) whereupon the Borough would issue a quarterly parking permit in a predetermined off street location nearest their location. The Borough would limit the number of vehicles per unit based on the square footage of each unit. This will also allow the Borough to track trends in residential parking demand in order to stay ahead of the demand for this type of parking.

Pricing of these permits would allow the Borough to receive revenue during periods when they otherwise would not and will allow the Borough to offset the cost of administering the program, enforcing residential parking regulations, and facility maintenance.

5.10: Immaculata High School

Observations of parking on streets in the vicinity of Immaculata High School did not reveal conditions that would substantiate the complaints of residents in the area. This may be the result of combined efforts of the Borough, the residents, the high school, and the students. In any event, it is recommended that the Borough reconsider the proposal to install additional parking restrictions in the area. Although this action may address the complaints of some of the residents, it can also adversely affect other residents by requiring that they move their vehicles to comply with the regulation, which will almost certainly be regarded as an inconvenience.

Several Borough officials have acknowledged that the problem is not apparent at this time, but believe that it will be evident in the spring months, April, May and June, when many junior year students will acquire licenses, and begin driving to school. Although this may occur, in the absence of having an opportunity to observe and quantify this condition, it is difficult to make recommendations for a specific course of action. It appears though, that between the on-site parking at the high school and other locations, and the existing on street parking available to
students, there is a surplus of parking spaces. However, it would be prudent for the Borough and Immaculata High School to renew their efforts to obtain additional off street parking in the event that the demand exceeds the space available. School officials indicated that their efforts to acquire additional spaces in a nearby apartment complex were met with some resistance. This is one potential source that should be explored further.

Using remote parking facilities to accommodate additional student parking, and providing shuttle service to and from the high school, does not seem to be a practical solution for several reasons. Among them are the lack of a suitable site, the high cost of providing the shuttle, and the possible reluctance of students to use this system. At least part of the reason students drive to high school is to drive there, and not use bus service. Offering them a shuttle service would seem to be contradictory to that.

One possible method of controlling the number of students driving to school would entail modifying the current system of registering students who drive to school by charging them a registration fee. The fee could be structured to discourage some students from driving, thus reducing the overall number of vehicles that require parking. Another approach would be to allow only senior year students to register. This would address the situation, which has been described as worsening during the spring months when many junior year students reach driving age.

5.11: Impact Fees and Future Private Sector Development

Presently, the Borough of Somerville is experiencing an increased level of interest in new or redeveloped commercial, retail, professional and residential development within the study area. This new development will increase the level of demand for short- and long-term on street and off street parking.

Borough officials are willing, at least initially, to meet this new demand for parking using current available municipal parking inventory. This approach is acceptable in the short term to help spur initial redevelopment and interest in the Borough, but can create irreversible parking problems if allowed to continue beyond a predetermined period. It is recommended that Borough officials start discussions on when and how to implement Parking Impact Fees for developers that cannot meet requirements for parking within the confines of their proposed development project. This approach will allow the Borough to properly plan for and finance additional parking inventory as the need dictates.
Parking Impact Fees are usually assessed by municipalities on a per space basis and are based on the geographic per space cost. The average cost of construction in the Central New Jersey area currently ranges from $10,000 to $12,000 per space for pre-cast parking structures, and from $5,000 to $6,500 per space for surface parking. The actual impact fee charged to developers would have to be determined by the Borough officials. This fee could pay for the entire cost of creating new parking or a pre-determined percentage.

Another issue that should be discussed by Borough officials, resulting from the completion of this report, is the long-term overall management of parking inventory in the Borough of Somerville. Specifically, who will control the rates, hours of operation, and maintenance of new off street parking structures? For example, the Borough of Somerville has entered into a long-term agreement with DeSapio Properties for the management of the new Courthouse Square Parking Garage. This type of agreement allows the Borough to share the cost of developing the required parking structure, while also controlling the supply of spaces not required for use by the development of the adjacent mixed-use building. This type of joint venture is probably the most effective approach the Borough can take regarding the development and control of additional off street parking inventory. This approach also allows the Borough to maintain the overall direction and destiny of parking within the Borough.

Although this approach is the most attractive method of managing parking in the Borough, it may not be possible to take this approach for all future parking development. For this reason, the Borough should also discuss the adoption of an ordinance that includes verbiage that will control private-sector parking rates, so that public parking rates not under Borough management do not negatively conflict with municipal public parking rates. This ordinance should also limit private-sector parking rates in the Borough, so that gouging does not occur during high demand parking periods, or in areas where parking inventory may be limited.

5.12: Loading Zones

There are two designated loading zones on West Main Street, just west of Davenport Street; one on the north side, and one on the south side. An additional loading zone is located on East Main Street, just east of South Bridge Street. During field data collection efforts, no problems or interference with the safe flow of vehicular traffic due to commercial vehicle loading and unloading were observed. This condition can be attributed to the availability of loading space behind most business establishments along Main Street, and the use of parking...
meter spaces on Main Street. No additional loading zones are deemed necessary at this time.

5.13: Parking Regulation Signage and Curb Parking

The condition and location of the signage regulation parking on and adjacent to Main Street is generally good. It is recommended that several additional signs be installed on West Main Street, opposite Davenport Street, to clearly mark the loading and no parking zones. Additional signs should be installed as follows:

- South side of West Main Street, west of Davenport Street (S/W corner) – “Loading Zone” with right arrow and “No Parking” with left arrow on existing light pole
- South side of West Main Street, east of Davenport Street (S/E corner) – “No Parking” with right arrow on new post three feet west of light pole 1026

All areas where parking is restricted, either by signage or fire hydrants, are clearly denoted with pavement markings to further emphasize the parking restriction. Parking is also restricted for approximately 50 feet at all intersections to “daylight” the corners. This provides additional sight distance for motorists of opposing traffic and/or pedestrians.

5.14: Special Event Parking

Presently, the Borough of Somerville does not charge for “special event” parking. It is recommended that the Borough evaluate adopting a fee for this type of parking in the downtown area. This can be accomplished by either extending the hours of operation for the parking meters, or by charging a prepaid fixed fee for parking at off street facilities, or by a combination of both methods. This parking fee can help offset the cost of maintaining and cleaning these parking facilities due to these types of events. Also, the Borough currently provides free parking at the parking meters during the period between Thanksgiving and New Years. This loss of parking revenue could be minimized by allowing free shopper and visitor parking through a merchant sponsored program of prepaid SmartCards. These could have minimal value of perhaps several dollars and would be given to patrons based on their purchases or as an incentive.
5.15: Merchant Validation Program

The Borough can work with the downtown business community to develop and implement a merchant validation program for shoppers to stimulate business. This can be readily accomplished through use of SmartCards to be used when the Borough installs new electronic meters with SmartCard readers as recommended in this report. Cards with small denominations of one to five dollars (or any amount deemed appropriate) could be offered to participating merchants or business owners at discounted rates. These cards would be given to customers to provide free metered parking on their next visit to Somerville. Managing the program in this manner creates the incentive for a business customer, shopper, or restaurant diner to visit to the Main Street corridor and to use their free parking, thus stimulating repeat business.

Both the Borough and the business community can agree upon the Parameters for this program. For example, merchants may want to establish a minimum sale price for a shopper to receive their “Free” one hour of parking. Restaurant owners may want to use similar guidelines but opt to provide two hours of “Free” parking to meet the needs of their patrons.

5.16: Capital Improvement Program

As part of this report a review of all current maintenance programs was made. The results of this review indicate that although the Borough of Somerville maintains their parking facilities in an acceptable manner, a regularly scheduled maintenance program is not in place. Routine maintenance, such as re-striping occurs more on an as needed basis (visually confirmed) than a routine maintenance program that is budgeted for, and scheduled well in advance of the need for the type of work required. This approach sometimes leads to less important items such as meter pole replacement or painting from being put off or ignored entirely.

It is recommended that the Borough adopt a routine maintenance and replacement schedule for all aspects of parking facility maintenance and parking operation. This includes Borough-wide parking meters, the new Courthouse Square Parking Garage, and the systems used to support the operation of parking in the Borough. Should the borough adopt some of the modernization recommendations found in this report then it will be imperative that the Borough remain up to date regarding software updates and system enhancements to maintain these systems at peak operating levels. This approach will also allow the Borough
to keep staffing levels at their lowest possible level through the efficient use of these same systems.

For the purpose of this report, an example of such a capital improvement program repair and replacement schedule is included as Appendix L. This schedule can be adopted to meet the needs of the Borough based on the unique usage characteristics of each facility or operating system. Overall, the chart will allow the Borough to plan and budget for repairs, replacements, and enhancements necessary to maintain a cost-effective parking operation.

In addition, an annual review of this program should take place during budget preparation periods to ensure that the needs of the public and the Borough parking operation are met even during times of adverse economic conditions and changing political climates.

The new Courthouse Square Parking Garage has not been included into the capital improvement program sample. This is due to the joint venture agreement arrangement allowing for shared facility and operating expenses. These costs have been identified in a separate financial pro forma developed for the Borough of Somerville.

Finally, to be a fully comprehensive capital improvement program, the Borough may want to plan for and budget future parking expansion projects in this program. This would include the funding required for land acquisition, joint venture parking development, and the payment of debt service related to the issuance of bonds to fund future growth. This will become important should the Borough decide to allow the parking system to operate as a stand-alone self-supporting enterprise fund requiring only the secondary guarantee of issued debt from the general fund.
APPENDIX A

Weekday Off Street Parking Lot Data
APPENDIX B

Weekday On Street Parking Data
APPENDIX C

Saturday Off Street
Parking Lot Data
APPENDIX D

Saturday On Street
Parking Data
APPENDIX E

Business Owner
Survey Data
APPENDIX F

Employee
Survey Data
APPENDIX G

Shopper
Survey Data
APPENDIX H

Sample
Survey Forms
APPENDIX I

Directional Sign
Installation Details
# Directional Sign Installation Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key #</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Mounting</th>
<th>Face</th>
<th>Arrow</th>
<th>Removals &amp; Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Main Street @ Union Street &amp; Entrance to Lot #1</td>
<td>N/E</td>
<td>Existing Sign Post</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Main Street @ Union Street &amp; Entrance to Lot #1</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>Existing Sign Post</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maple Street @ Entrance to Lot #1</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>New Sign Post</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Remove existing sign &amp; post on east side opposite entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>West Main Street @ Davenport Street</td>
<td>N/W</td>
<td>Existing Light Pole</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Davenport Street @ Entrance to Lot #1 and Lot #2</td>
<td>N/E</td>
<td>Existing Sign Post</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Davenport Street @ Entrance to Lot #1 and Lot #2</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>Existing Light Pole</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>West Main Street @ North Doughty Avenue</td>
<td>N/E</td>
<td>Existing Traffic Signal Post</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>North Doughty Avenue @ Entrance to Lot #2</td>
<td>N/E</td>
<td>Existing Sign Post</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>North Bridge Street @ Entrance to Lot #6</td>
<td>N/W</td>
<td>Existing Light Pole</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking signs and post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key #</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Corner</td>
<td>Mounting</td>
<td>Face</td>
<td>Arrow</td>
<td>Removals &amp; Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>East High Street @ Entrance to Lot #7</td>
<td>N/E</td>
<td>Existing Sign Post</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>East High Street @ Grove Street</td>
<td>N/W</td>
<td>Existing Traffic Signal Post</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>East High Street @ Grove Street</td>
<td>S/W</td>
<td>Existing Traffic Signal Post</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>South Bridge Street @ South Street</td>
<td>N/W</td>
<td>Existing Sign Post</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>South Street @ Division Street</td>
<td>N/W</td>
<td>Existing Street Sign Post</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Remove existing Parking sign on S/W Corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>South Street @ Entrance to Lot #4</td>
<td>N/E</td>
<td>New Sign Post</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Estimated Cost**

- Total number of new signs 31 $2,400.00
- Total number of new sign posts 3 $100.00
- Total Cost of Materials $2,500.00

The above installations can be made by Borough personnel, as can the required removals.

- Number of signs to be removed 15
- Number of posts to be removed 2
APPENDIX J

Off Street
Parking Lot Drawings
APPENDIX K

Parking Master Plan
Implementation
Timetable
APPENDIX L

Capital Improvement Program
### Capital Improvement Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Funding Required</th>
<th>Project Explanation</th>
<th>Funding Date (FY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lot Re-Striping</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
<td>Re-stripe lots/update ADA</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Meter Replacement (Single Space)</td>
<td>200,000.00</td>
<td>Replace Meters/Housings</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directional Signage</td>
<td>7,500.00</td>
<td>Parking Lot Directional Signage</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Meter Replacement (Multi-Space Meters)</td>
<td>100,000.00</td>
<td>Replace Single Space Meters/with Canopies</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lot Lighting Enhancements</td>
<td>175,000.00</td>
<td>Upgrade Lighting Levels/Surface Parking Lots</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Meter Poles</td>
<td>3,500.00</td>
<td>Paint Single Space Meter Poles (color code by time limit)</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Pathway Enhancements</td>
<td>150,000.00</td>
<td>Upgrade Pathways at Surface Lots Leading to Main Street</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handheld Citation Issuance System/with Software</td>
<td>100,000.00</td>
<td>Upgrade Current Manual Ticket Issuance System</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Landscaping with Irrigation System All Surface Lots</td>
<td>300,000.00</td>
<td>Replace Existing Landscaping Add Irrigation System</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repave Existing Lots (Includes Re-Striping)</td>
<td>195,000.00</td>
<td>2&quot; Topcoat Existing Lots</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Parking Study Update</td>
<td>65,000.00</td>
<td>Update 2002 Parking Study to Reflect Current Conditions</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
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</table>