

February 17, 2020

Messrs. Joe Vaccaro and Jon Vaccaro  
Darien Place, LLC  
48 Rings End Road  
Darien, CT 06820

**RE: Parking Assessment  
Darien Playhouse Change of Land Use  
Darien, Connecticut  
MMI #7107-01-01**

Dear Messrs. Vaccaro:

We are pleased to provide this report summarizing our assessment of parking in connection with the proposed land use change at the Darien Playhouse, located at 1077 Boston Post Road (U.S. Route 1). It is our understanding that the existing theater is to be removed and approximately 4,300 square feet of retail and four apartments are to be put in its place. For this parking evaluation, existing parking demands at the shared private parking lot to the rear of the Playhouse were recently counted, as well as parking at the nearby Grove Street public lot and the Board of Education (BOE) lot, and future parking demands generated by the retail and apartments have been estimated. Figure 1 shows the location of the Playhouse building and adjacent lots.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The Darien Playhouse is located on the north side of Boston Post Road (U.S. Route 1) between Leroy Avenue, Grove Street, and Corbin Drive in downtown Darien. In addition to containing the movie theater, the Playhouse also contains commercial tenants, a café, and a wine bar. The movie theater to be removed occupies approximately 5,800 square feet of the Playhouse.

To the rear of the Playhouse is a lot containing 183 striped parking spaces. It is our understanding that these parking spaces are shared between the adjacent buildings under various agreements between the Playhouse building, the Darien Sport Shop, and Webster Bank. There is a small parcel of land adjacent to the Playhouse lot which is occupied by Kennedy's All-American Barber Club of Darien and seven striped parking spaces. Note that these seven additional spaces are included in our parking analysis, for a total of 190 striped parking spaces. Also note that we observed three unstriped spaces that are utilized in the loading dock of the Darien Sport Shop; these three spaces are not included in the parking analysis, although it is our understanding that they are regularly utilized by the Sport Shop. You have also begun enforcing parking in the Playhouse lot to limit parkers to those who are authorized to park in the lot.

Parking at the Playhouse lot was counted on Thursday, January 23, 2020; Friday, January 24, 2020; and Saturday, January 25, 2020. On both Thursday and Friday, parking at the Playhouse lot peaked around 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.; on Thursday, 150 of the 190 spaces were occupied (40 empty spaces), and on Friday, 162 spaces were occupied (28 empty spaces). On Saturday, parking peaked around 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. with 147 spaces occupied (43 empty spaces).

For more context, we also observed parking occupancy of the Darien BOE lot and at the Grove Street lot. Table 1 summarizes the existing parking demands of all the lots counted in January 2020. The parking demand for the Playhouse lot is also shown graphically in Figure 2.

**TABLE 1**  
**Existing Parking Counts Near Darien Playhouse**

Time Period Counted	Playhouse Parking Lot (190 spaces)	BOE Parking Lot (76 spaces)	Grove Street Parking Lot (78 spaces)
<b>THURSDAY</b>			
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	142	38	40
12:00 p.m. to 02:00 p.m.	150 [40]	37 [39]	37 [41]
02:00 p.m. to 04:00 p.m.	129	30	57
04:00 p.m. to 06:00 p.m.	132	21	44
06:00 p.m. to 08:00 p.m.	91	11	32
<b>FRIDAY</b>			
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	140	49	48
12:00 p.m. to 02:00 p.m.	162 [28]	40 [36]	47 [31]
02:00 p.m. to 04:00 p.m.	121	34	55
04:00 p.m. to 06:00 p.m.	114	11	49
06:00 p.m. to 08:00 p.m.	73	6	34
<b>SATURDAY</b>			
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	112	24	50
12:00 p.m. to 02:00 p.m.	105	26	58
02:00 p.m. to 04:00 p.m.	147 [43]	22 [54]	46 [32]
04:00 p.m. to 06:00 p.m.	122	25	38
06:00 p.m. to 08:00 p.m.	87	4	49

Source: Reliable Traffic Counts, LLC field observations conducted on Thursday, January 23; Friday, January 24; and Saturday, January 25, 2020.

00 = number of parked vehicles

[00] = number of empty parking spaces at the peak time of the Playhouse Lot

Note that the parking counts were authorized and conducted in January, when parking demands are sometimes lower than retail parking counts that can occur later in the year. Upon comparing the January parking counts that we collected at the Grove Street lot to data found in the 2015 Nelson Nygaard Parking Study for Downtown Darien for the same lot, which was collected in spring 2015, it was found that these parking counts are consistent with one another, and thus we feel our recent January 2020 parking counts are not under-representative of typical parking demands.

**PROPOSED LAND USE CHANGE AND ESTIMATED NEW GENERATED PARKING DEMAND**

The proposed land use change involves retrofitting the Playhouse building to remove the movie theater and to add four studio/one-bedroom apartments and 4,300 square feet of retail. Note that no specific retail tenants have been identified at this time.

In addition to changing the land use, minor site revisions are proposed as part of this project, including restriping some of the parking spaces close to the Playhouse building. This would result in a net increase of four spaces, increasing the capacity of the lot from 190 spaces to 194 spaces.

Estimates were made of new parking demands that would be generated by the two new land uses. The primary sources consulted to estimate parking demand were the Darien Zoning Regulation off-street parking requirements and data published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers<sup>1</sup> (ITE). Table 2 below shows the parking generation for the proposed land uses based on the Darien regulations and ITE data.

**TABLE 2**  
**Parking Generation Estimates for Proposed Land Uses**

Day of the Week	Residential (4 units)		Retail (4,300 square feet)		TOTAL PARKING REQUIREMENT
	RATE	PARKING REQUIREMENT	RATE	PARKING REQUIREMENT	
<b>ITE <sup>1</sup></b>					
<b>Weekday</b>	1.07 per unit	5	1.95 per 1,000 sq. ft	9	<b>14</b>
<b>Friday</b>	1.07 per unit	6	2.61 per 1,000 sq. ft	12	<b>18</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	1.31 per unit	6	2.91 per 1,000 sq. ft	13	<b>19</b>
<b>Town Regulations</b>					
<b>Any day</b>	2.5 per unit	10	1 per 200 sq. ft (5.0 per 1,000 sq. ft)	22	<b>32</b>

It is noted that the Town regulations provided higher and more conservative parking estimates, while ITE, which is updated frequently, typically provides what many consider to be realistic parking demand estimates.

To determine how many of the existing empty parking spaces, as well as the net increase of four spaces proposed, could accommodate more than one parker over the course of a day, the variations of parking demand throughout a typical weekday, Friday, and Saturday were also evaluated for both new land uses. Because there are two different proposed new land uses, it is important to note that they will not necessarily peak at the same times; residential typically peaks at night and retail typically peaks during the day/early evening. Thus, one might overestimate parking needs if only using the values in the total column in Table 2.

In the Darien Zoning Regulations, Article IX Section 905 does allow for a reduction in total spaces for joint (shared) use of a parking lot. For each of the proposed land uses, the parking requirement based on the zoning regulations was then determined by hour of day. The procedure followed for this analysis is based

<sup>1</sup> *Parking Generation, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition—Institute of Transportation Engineers, 2019*

on the *ITE Parking Generation Manual, 5th Edition (2019)*. Table 3 below compares the unshared parking demand from Table 2 to the shared demand as outlined by ITE procedures.

**TABLE 3**  
**Comparison of Unshared and Shared Parking Demand**

Time of Day	ITE			Darien Regulations		
	Weekday	Friday	Saturday	Weekday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Unshared Demand from Table 2</b>						
All Day	14	18	19	32		
<b>Shared Parking Demand</b>						
Mid-morning	7	11	14	16	19	23
Lunch	11	14	18	26	26	28
Mid-afternoon	10	13	17	24	24	29
Evening	10	13	17	23	23	26

**FUTURE ESTIMATED SHARED PARKING PORTFOLIO OF PLAYHOUSE LOT**

The parking requirement per the Town Zoning Regulations for the proposed land uses was summed up for each hour and added to the existing parking demands to determine the shared parking profile over the course of a typical weekday, Friday, and Saturday. Figure 3 illustrates the shared parking profiles for each of the time periods evaluated, based on the regulations. The results of the analysis identified that the peak shared parking demand would be 188 vehicles during the Friday midday period, below the parking lot capacity of 194 vehicles. These finding indicate that the Playhouse parking lot will be able to accommodate the estimated additional parking demands associated with the proposed changes in land use and the more conservative Town Regulations, even during the lot's peak time of day.

A similar analysis was undertaken, except that the initial zoning requirements were replaced with peak demand derived from the *ITE Parking Generation Manual*. This found that peak shared parking demand, during the Friday midday period, would be anticipated to be around 176 parked vehicles. This is about 90% of the 194 parking spaces. This is shown graphically in Figure 4.

It is important to note that these analyses did not net out the existing movie theater traffic. An anticipated reduction in parking due to the removal of the theater was based on ticket counts that were provided by the movie theater operator for Thursday, January 23, 2020; Friday, January 24, 2020; and Saturday, January 25, 2020, the same days that the parking counts were conducted. Based on the show times on those days, there is no reduction in parking demand during the morning and lunchtime peak periods, but the parking demand would be slightly lower (10-15 vehicles) in the evening and midafternoon peak periods.

It is also noted that during the holiday season and from time to time throughout the year, parking could be tight as in any successful downtown. These instances are relatively infrequent when looking at a whole year, and it is generally recognized that it is not good planning practice to over-build parking just for times like Black Friday. Further, if the demand were to occasionally approach capacity, there are other

nearby parking assets. For example, the 2015 Nelson Nygaard Parking Study for Downtown Darien<sup>2</sup>, as well as Milone & MacBroom, Inc.'s (MMI) recent parking counts conducted in January 2020, indicate that the nearby public Grove Street lot, as one example, has available spaces throughout the regular day and is often half empty during the morning and evening.

Lastly, we understand that you are to enter into an agreement with the BOE to have employees for your tenants park at the BOE lot during anticipated busy times of the year, as occurs today for employees of the Darien Sport Shop. This will relieve some pressure on the Playhouse parking lot.

### **SUMMARY**

In summary, existing parking demands at the private parking lot to the rear of the Playhouse were recently counted. It was found that existing parking at the Playhouse lot regularly peaks during the middle of the day and that the regular parking does not fill the existing lot. Future parking demands were estimated for the proposed new land uses of residential and general retail; it is expected that the new parking generated by these two proposed land uses would be able to be accommodated within the Playhouse parking lot, especially with the proposed net increase of four spaces in the Playhouse lot. During occasional times of the year when the Playhouse parking lot may be more full than normal, the area municipal parking options (public lots and on-street parking) are expected to be usable assets as well. The BOE parking lot is another option, particularly for employees of the retail tenants.

We hope this is useful to you and the Town of Darien. Please call either of the undersigned if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,

**MILONE & MACBROOM, INC.**



David G. Sullivan, PE, Associate  
Manager of Traffic & Transportation Planning



Neil C. Olinski, MS, PTP  
Lead Transportation Planner

Enclosures

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<sup>2</sup> FINAL Existing Conditions Report—Darien Downtown Parking Study. Nelson Nygaard, November 2015



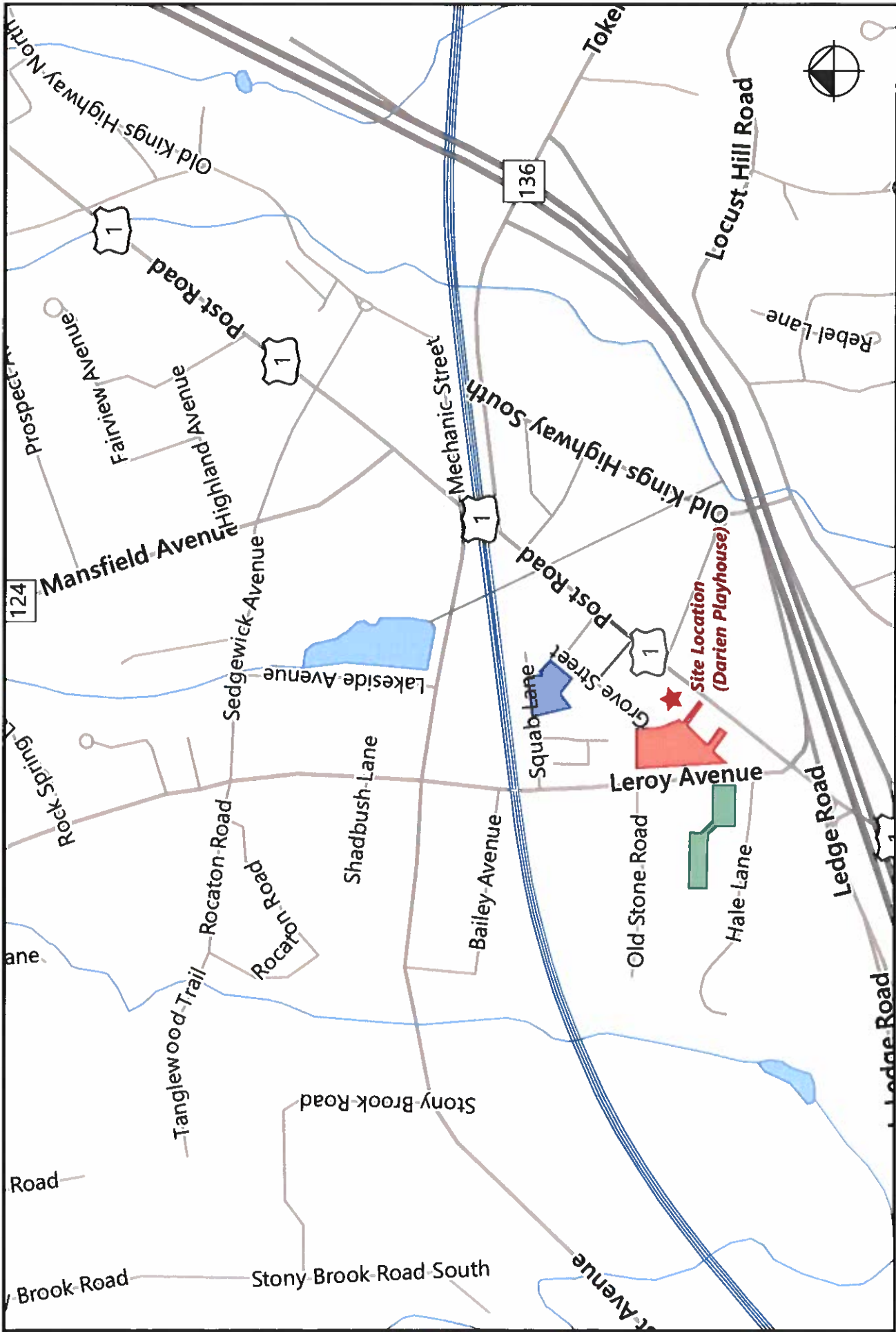


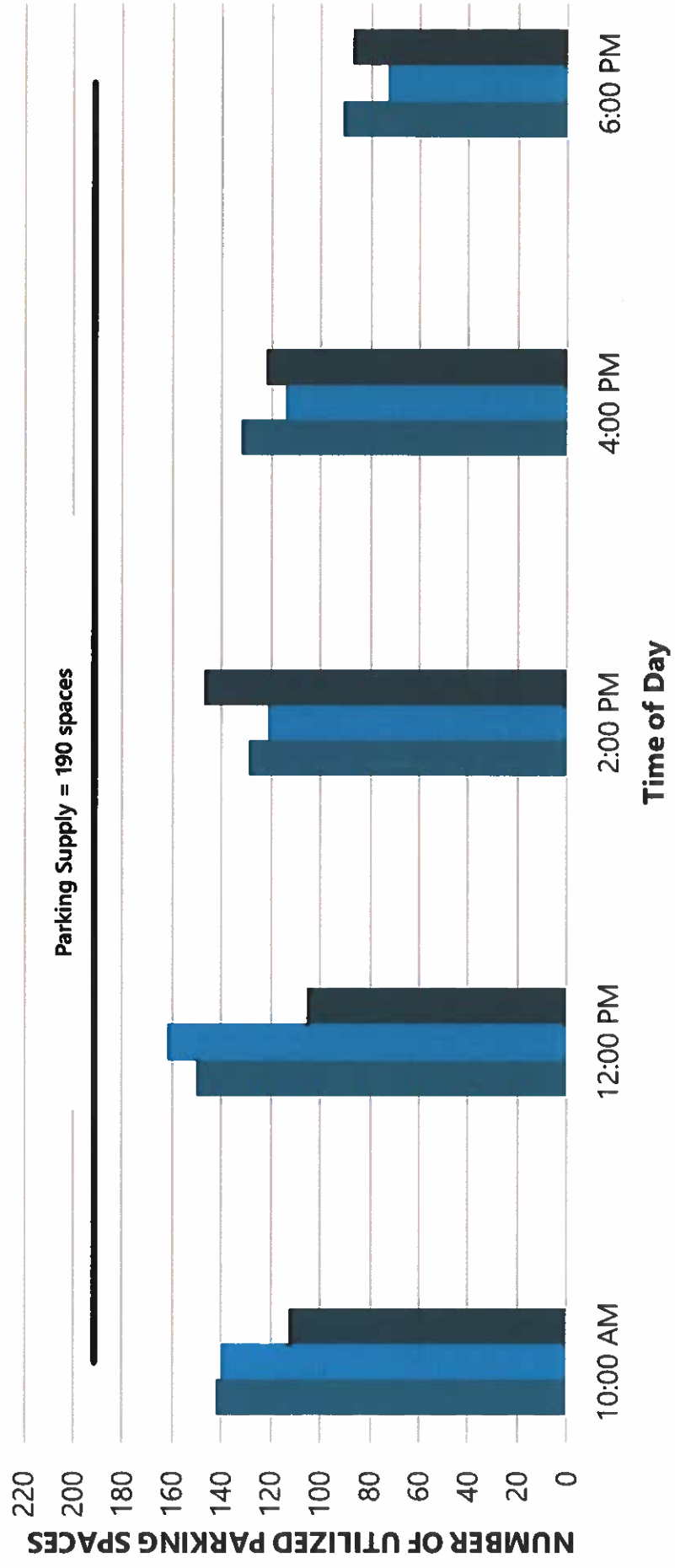
FIGURE 1  
PARKING COUNT STUDY SITES

- Board of Education Lot
- Playhouse Lot
- Grove Street Lot

**Existing Parking  
Darien Playhouse**

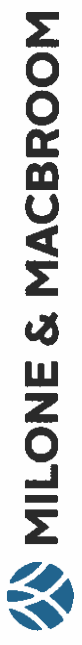
■ Weekday ■ Friday ■ Saturday ■ Lot Capacity

Parking Supply = 190 spaces

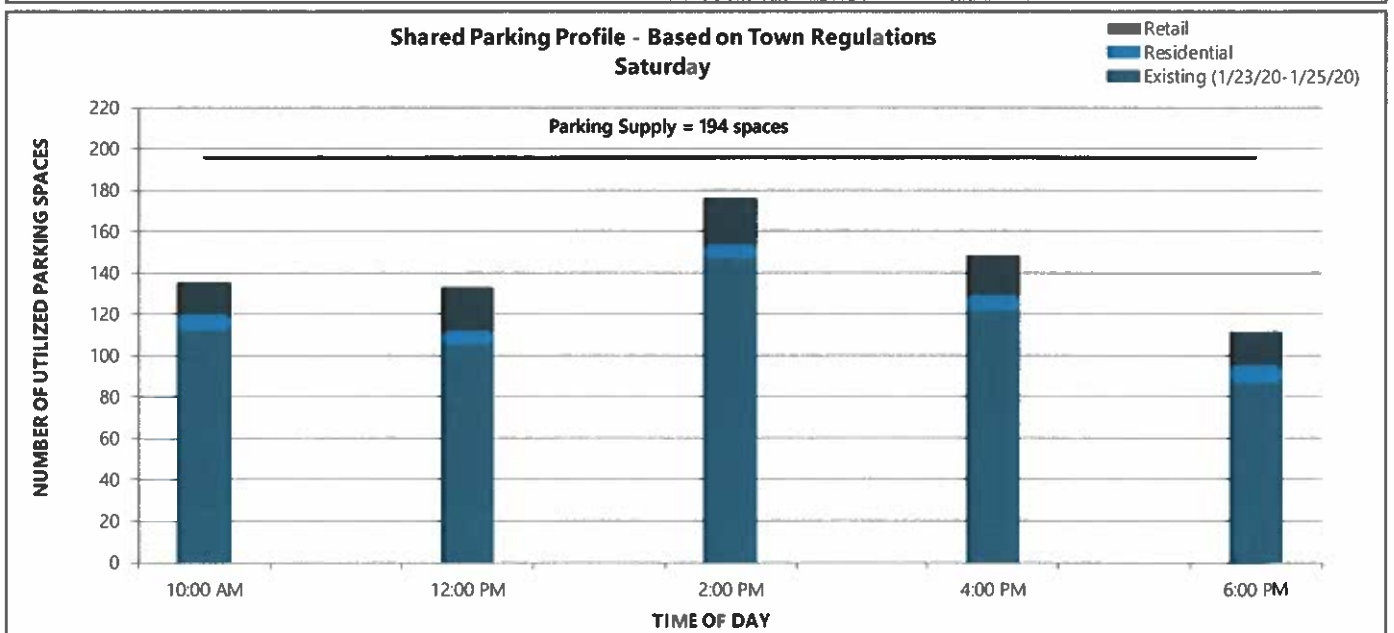
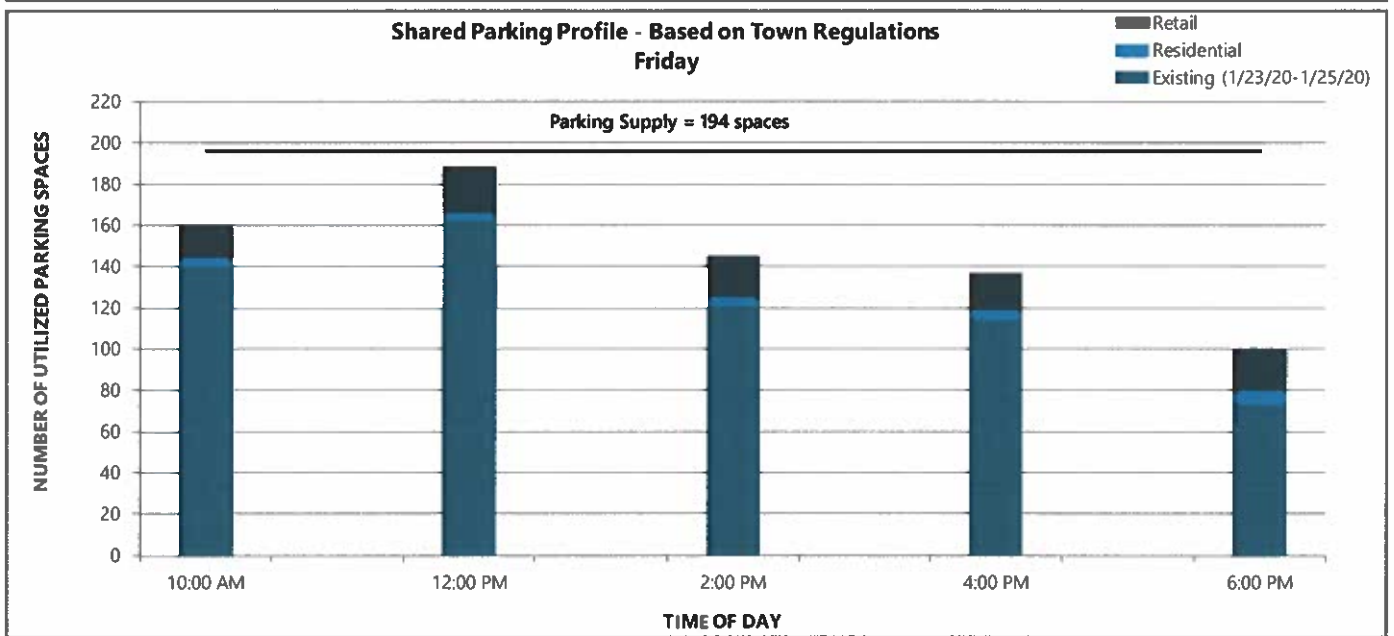
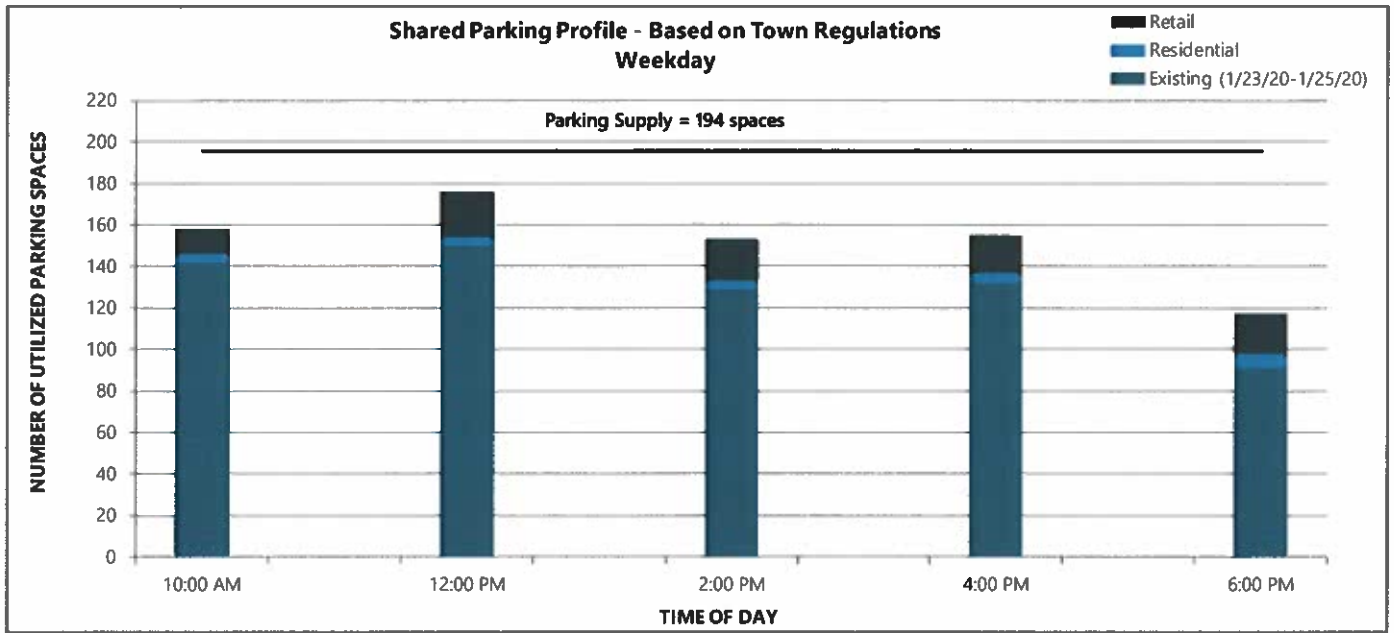


Parking counts conducted January 23, 24, and 25, 2020

FIGURE 2



DARIEN PLAYHOUSE PARKING LOT SUPPLY AND DEMAND

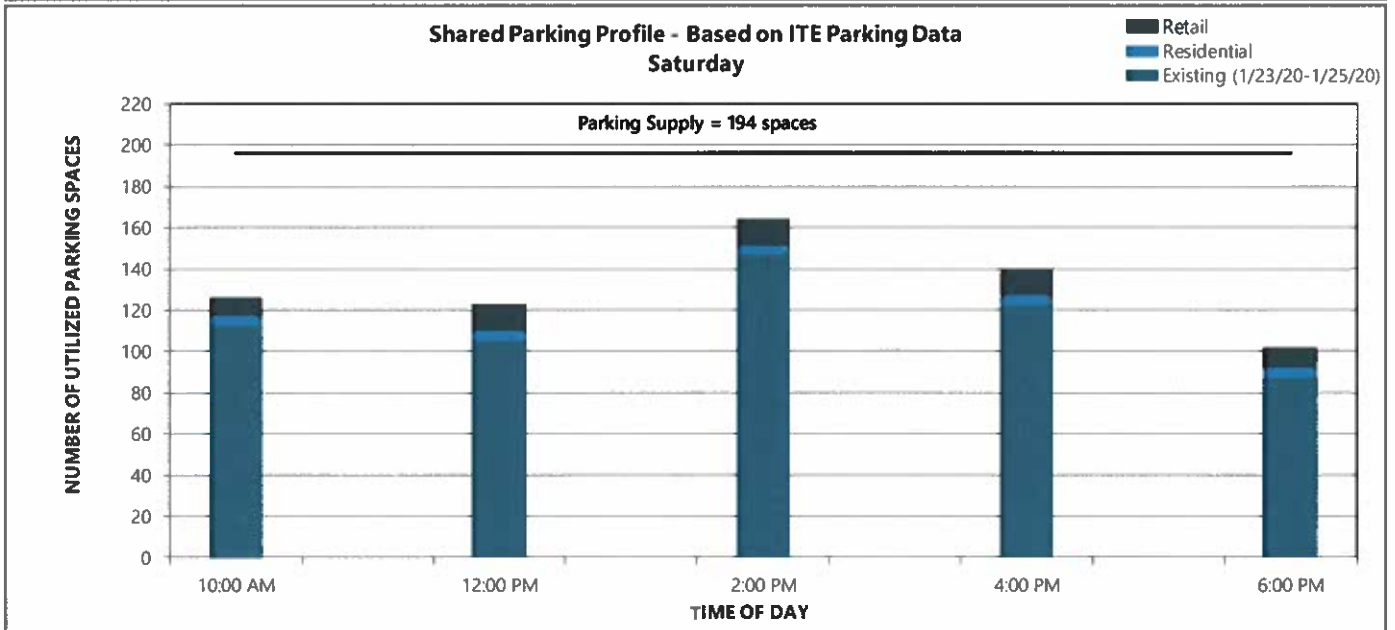
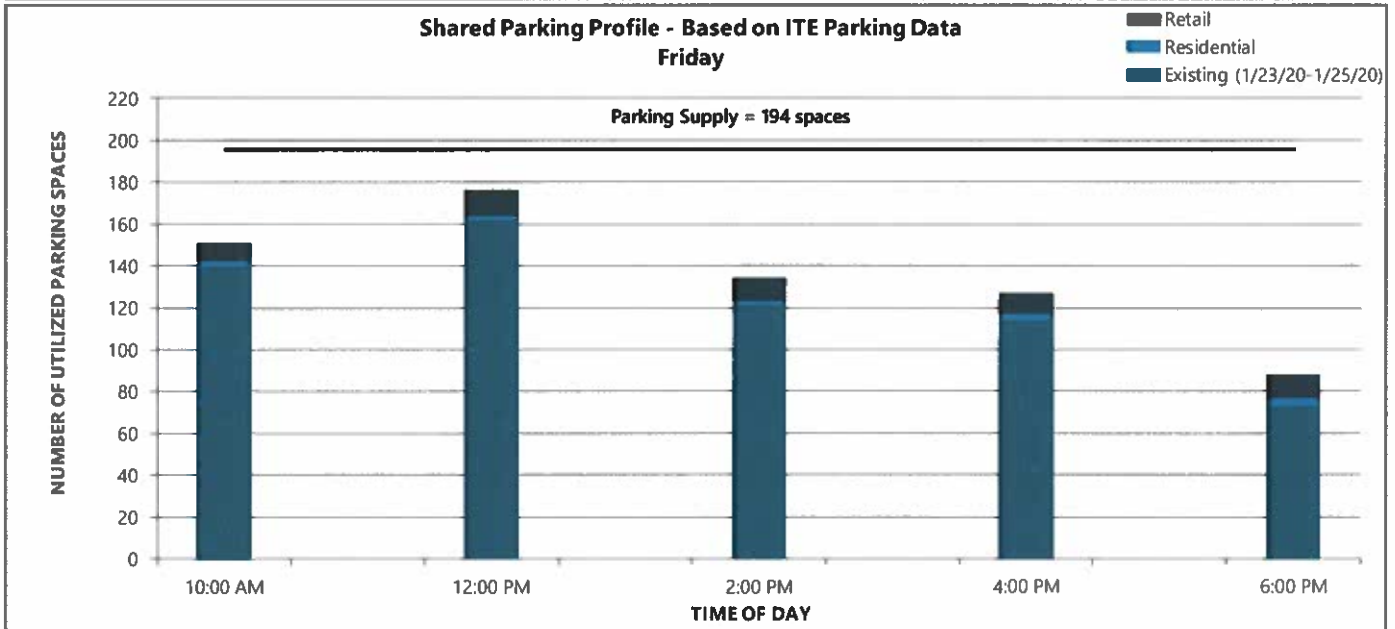
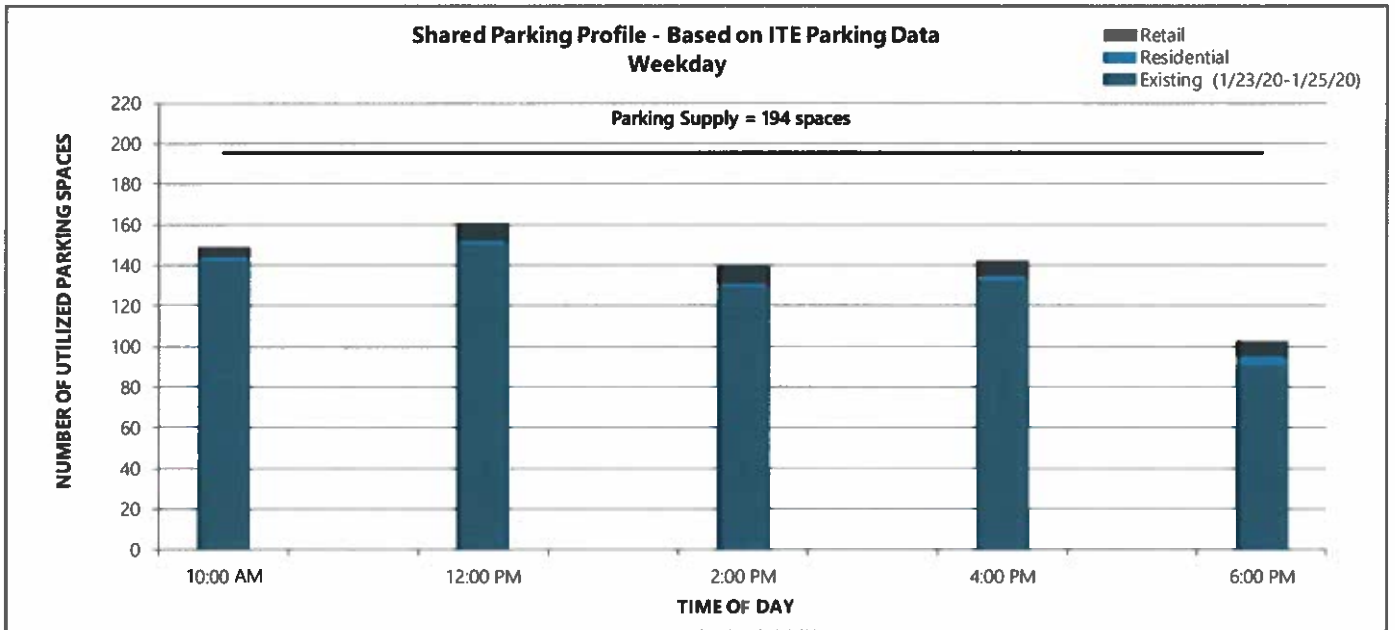


Based on Town Zoning Regulations and ITE hourly variation data (Land Use Codes 220 and 820)

FIGURE 3



DARIEN PLAYHOUSE PARKING LOT SUPPLY AND DEMAND



Based on ITE parking generation rates and hourly variation data (Land Use Codes 220 and 820)

FIGURE 4