

## **6. NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS**

Boston is blessed with a diversity of neighborhood business districts. Each district is a center of neighborhood life and reflects both the stable and changing natures of the surrounding residential communities that it serves. Most business districts are also historic centers with landmark buildings built in the days before the automobile and are characterized by a mix of land uses built into a dense fabric. Shops and supermarkets, housing, libraries and other community facilities, restaurants and services crowd these areas. This complicates the ability to provide access to necessary transportation services and needs careful on-street parking management. As much as each district differs in style, flavor and rhythm, they all face similar transportation issues and opportunities. Most districts lie at the crossroads of the limited number of major thoroughfares that traverse the city and, as a result, receive a significant and growing amount of automobile through traffic.

### **GOALS**

Effective transportation access and services is key to enhancing the unique community based character and vitality of Boston's neighborhood business districts. BTDC is working with merchants, residents and local business associations to address transportation issues. The goals of the programs are to:

- Improve pedestrian safety and access.
- Encourage visitation by public transportation, walking and bicycling.
- Increase parking turnover for on-street parking to encourage short-term parking.
- Improve access to off-street parking.
- Implement Transportation Action Plans developed with local merchants and residents.

### **Transportation Issues**

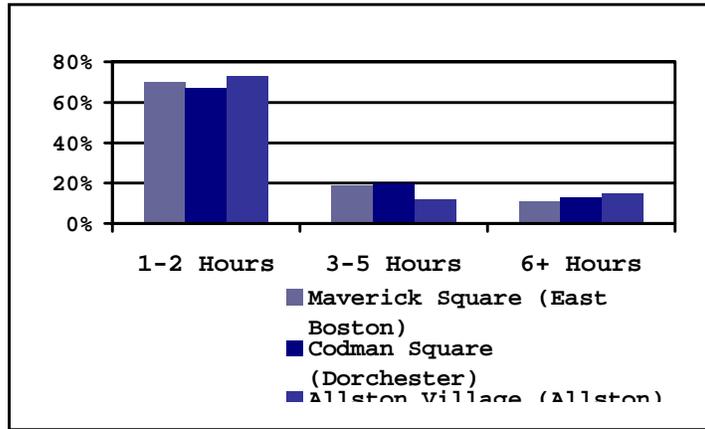
Below are transportation issues common to neighborhood business districts. The combination of these issues contributes greatly to the accessibility and ultimately the economic vitality of Boston's neighborhoods.

- Automobile use in Boston and its neighborhoods continue to grow at a record pace. As a result, there is not enough parking for customers and employees.
- All districts are served by public transportation, such as a rapid transit station or a connection point for major bus routes in the city. Nonetheless, there is often insufficient use of public transportation in the districts.
- Historic and dense neighborhood business districts were established before today's loading and service needs, resulting in insufficient loading areas and double parking.
- Traffic congestion results from roadway capacity constraints and sometimes encourages motorists to seek alternative routes such as through residential streets.
- Most local travel trips are walk trips. Pedestrian safety is therefore key to the vitality of the district.
- An array of regulatory and directional signs have been placed in neighborhood business districts over the years. The resultant sign clutter is insufficient and unclear.
- Neighborhood business districts need regular enforcement of parking and traffic regulations.



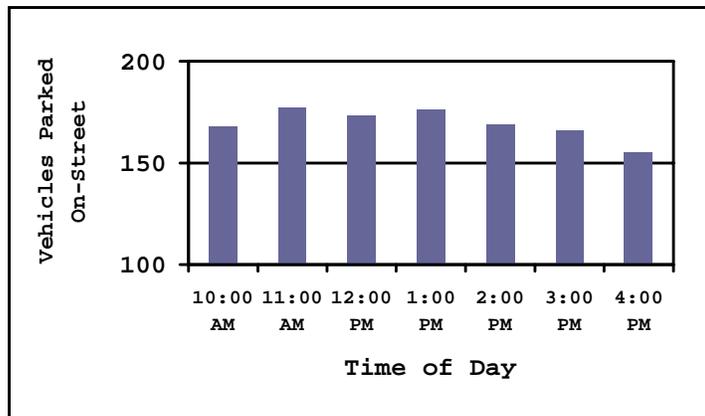
Neighborhood business districts provide a variety of shopping options and services in a pedestrian-scaled environment.

**Figure 22**  
On-Street Parking in Neighborhood Business Districts



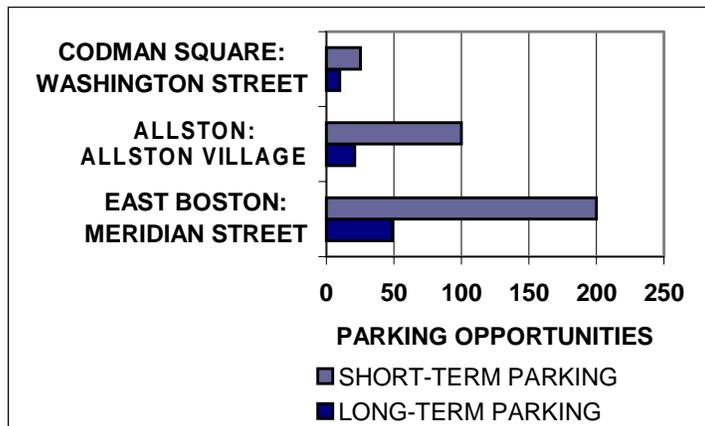
Thirty percent of on-street parking is for three hours or more. (Source: BTD Parking Accumulation Study)

**Figure 23**  
Parking in Maverick Square



Illegal curb parking and double parking begins to occur in the middle of the day. (Source: BTD Parking Accumulation Study)

**Figure 24**  
Lost Short-Term Parking Opportunities



Every vehicle that is parked long-term displaces five customers looking for short-term parking. (Source: BTD Parking Accumulation Study)

## Impacts of Long-Term Parking

All-day parking by commuters, residents, and even merchants and their employees is the reason for the shortage of short-term parking in neighborhood business districts. As illustrated in Figure 22, vehicles that park for two hours or less used up to 70% of the parking in a business district. However, parking for more than two hours, especially all-day parking, has a significant impact on the availability of parking in the district. All-day parking on the street, including by merchants and employees who park in front of their business, takes valuable parking spaces away from potential customers. Every vehicle parked long-term displaces almost five customers looking for short-term parking.

Figure 23 illustrates parking accumulation in Maverick Square. All-day parkers – in this case, merchants, employees and residents – are present throughout the day. As shoppers and visitors begin to arrive in the square, the legal parking spaces fill up until illegal curb parking and double parking begins to occur in the middle of the day.

Customers and businesses in neighborhood business districts are sensitive to the price of parking and the level of enforcement used to ticket parking violations. Parking meters and aggressive parking enforcement can potentially create an adverse business climate in a neighborhood business district that is often competing with supermarkets, chain stores and other businesses in large suburban and smaller local malls that provide free and ample parking.

However, many motorists prefer metered parking rather than not being able to find a space.

An analysis of data from three BTD studies indicates that long-term parkers (more than six hours) use 20% to 50% of the available on-street parking supply. As Figure 24 indicates, every vehicle parked long-term in these neighborhood commercial districts displaces almost five customers looking for short-term parking. This can have a significant effect on parking availability, creating “lost parking opportunities” (i.e., short-term parking demand that could be otherwise accommodated in the spaces used for long-term parking).

### Neighborhood Business District Transportation Action Plan

Through Neighborhood Business District Transportation Action Plans, BTM evaluates the entire transportation system that serves a neighborhood business district, including motor vehicle and bicycle access, parking, and pedestrian public transit concerns. This analysis often indicates that a well-planned set of small-scale improvements and modifications can have a significant and positive effect on the quality of transportation serving a neighborhood business district. BTM's approach seeks to balance available on-street and off-street parking to serve both the long-term needs of merchants and employees, as well as the short-term needs of customers.

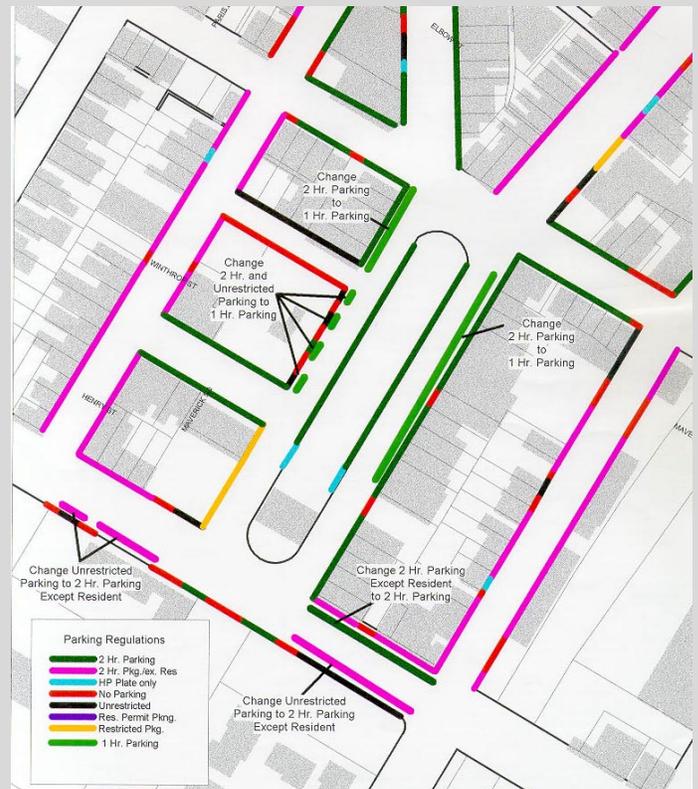
BTM has successfully developed Neighborhood Business District Transportation Action Plans in East Boston (Maverick Square), Allston Village, and Codman Square in Dorchester. As part of the Codman Square plan, area merchants developed an agreement with an area church to use the church's parking lot for employee parking. Employees using the lot received a parking sticker that made them eligible to park in the lot for a small fee. This approach increased the parking supply in the business district with no construction costs or impacts. Figure 25 illustrates parking regulations that were developed for Maverick Square. The plan improved the balance among the different on-street parking uses through:

- New 1 hour parking spaces near businesses
- More 2 hour parking spaces
- Multi-use parking regulations instead of unrestricted

The following are key steps for merchants and residents to, working with BTM, develop a Transportation Action Plan.

- 1 Meet with local community leaders for orientation and to establish partnerships.
- 2 Hold a kickoff meeting. Identify transportation issues.
- 3 Gather information;
  - Define and map main street district boundaries. Identify key intersections and circulation within area.
  - Identify land uses in the district.
- 4 Survey existing conditions relating to:
  - Parking supply and regulations.
  - Parking demand and usage.
  - Traffic patterns and conditions.
  - Commercial traffic, including service and delivery.
  - Pedestrian facilities, circulation, safety and access.
  - Bicycle access and parking.
  - Availability and use of public transit and location of bus stops.
- 5 Hold additional public meetings:
  - Discuss findings, issues, and possible solutions.
  - Develop the TAP including implementation timeline.
  - Hold an event to unveil and promote the TAP.
- 6 Monitor and adjust the plan as necessary.

Figure 25

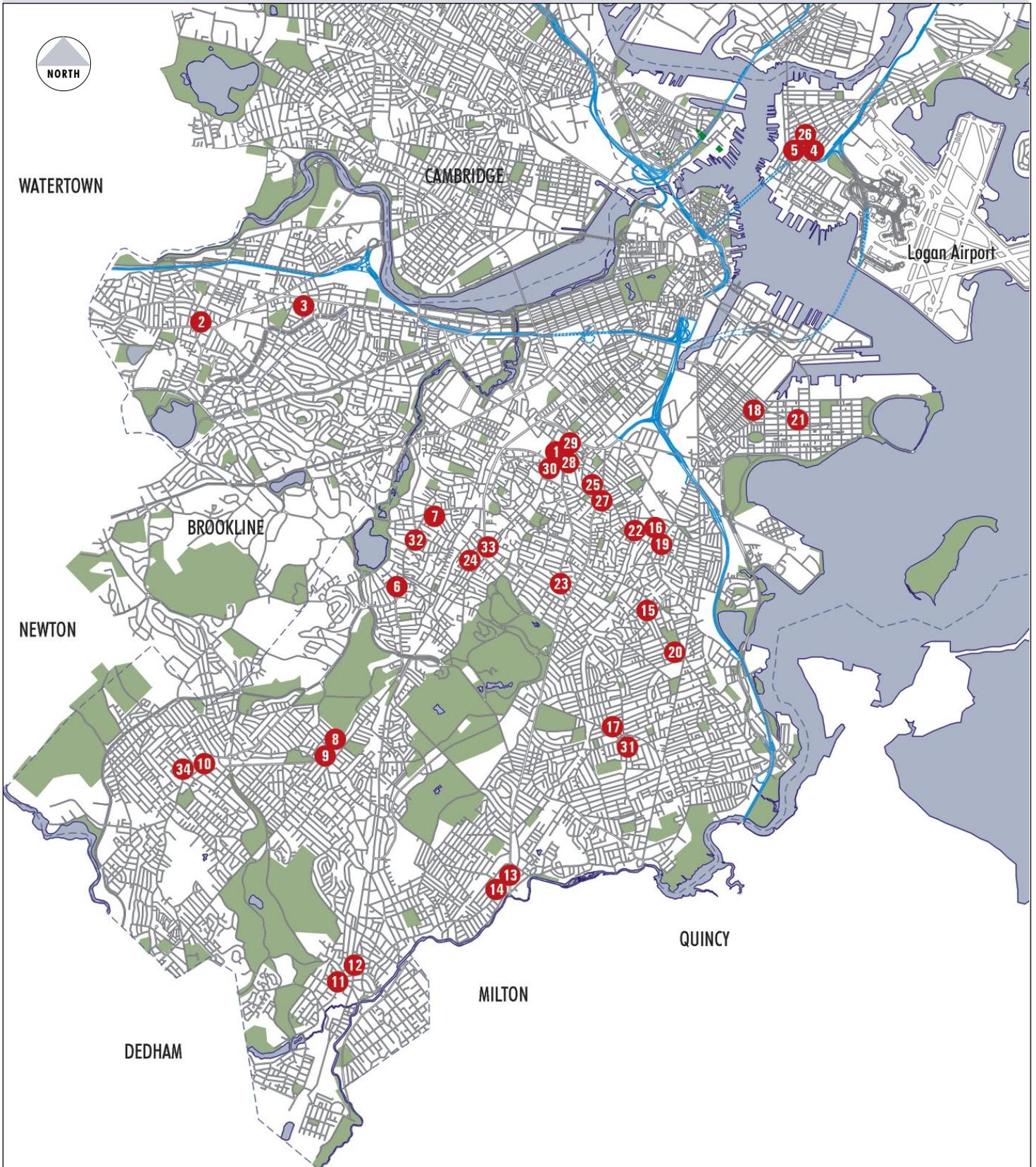


Transportation Action Plan for Maverick Square.



Clearly marked bus stops and routes are key to managing access to neighborhood business districts.

# PARKING IN BOSTON



**Figure 26:**  
**Municipal Parking Lots**

**Off-Street Parking Lots**

Available off-street parking adjacent to neighborhood business districts is generally limited to municipal parking lots maintained by BTS (see Figure 26). As Table 15 indicates, these lots provide over 1,500 off-street parking spaces free of charge to the general public, typically without restricting the amount of time that a vehicle can park in the lot. Municipal lots are not the only off-street parking option in the neighborhood business district. Many districts have businesses with their own off-street customer and employee parking. These lots often do not allow parking by the general public unless they are conducting business with the adjacent stores. Other off-street parking resources include the network of alleys, backyards and special use parking that are also not generally available to the general public.

**Table 15 – Municipal Parking Lot Key**

<b>No.</b>	<b>LOCATION/ADDRESS</b>	<b>SPACES</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Roxbury</b> 30 Ruggles Street	72
<b>2</b>	<b>Brighton</b> 398 Market Street	42
<b>3</b>	<b>Allston</b> 115 Harvard Street	60
<b>4</b>	<b>East Boston</b> 40 Porter Street	35
<b>5</b>	<b>East Boston</b> 166-180 London Street	35
<b>6</b>	<b>Jamaica Plain</b> 737 Centre Street	103
<b>7</b>	<b>Jamaica Plain</b> 350-352 Centre Street	24
<b>8</b>	<b>Roslindale</b> 10 Taffhill Terrace	92
<b>9</b>	<b>Roslindale</b> 711 South Street	16
<b>10</b>	<b>West Roxbury</b> 39-41 Corey Street	118
<b>11</b>	<b>Hyde Park</b> 1269 Hyde Park Avenue	8
<b>12</b>	<b>Hyde Park</b> 37 Winthrop Street	135
<b>13</b>	<b>Matapan</b> 451-467 River Street	90
<b>14</b>	<b>Mattapan</b> 23 Fairway Street	40
<b>15</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 254-258 Bowdoin Street	18
<b>16</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 8-20 Belden Street	32
<b>17</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 575 Washington Street	42
<b>18</b>	<b>South Boston</b> 450 West Broadway	60
<b>19</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 16 Hamlet Street	100
<b>20</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 191 Adams Street	22
<b>21</b>	<b>South Boston</b> 650-652 E. Broadway	22
<b>22</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 730-732 Dudley Street	12
<b>23</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 23 Georgia Street	40
<b>24</b>	<b>Jamaica Plain</b> 3087 Washington Street	15
<b>25</b>	<b>Roxbury</b> 14 Roxbury Street	12
<b>26</b>	<b>East Boston</b> 36 Bennington Street	26
<b>27</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 25 Blue Hill Avenue	18
<b>28</b>	<b>Roxbury</b> 44 Warren Street/Ziegler Street	23
<b>29</b>	<b>Roxbury</b> 2196 Washington Street	91
<b>30</b>	<b>Roxbury</b> 353 Dudley Street	28
<b>31</b>	<b>Dorchester</b> 629 Washington Street	24
<b>32</b>	<b>Jamaica Plain</b> 490-498 Centre Street	33
<b>33</b>	<b>Roxbury</b> 3042 Washington Street	41
<b>34</b>	<b>West Roxbury</b> 1891 Centre Street	18

### Action Plan

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#### Neighborhood Business Districts

##### *Provide Merchants and Residents with a Basic Planning Tool to Assess Transportation Conditions*

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BTD will prepare and distribute an informational brochure that describes its approach to developing a Transportation Action Plan for a neighborhood business district. The brochure will describe common transportation problems in neighborhood business districts based on the plans already completed by BTD. It will provide merchants and residents with insight to identify and evaluate problems at an introductory level. The study tools described in the brochure will include merchants' surveys to gauge long-term parking demands, highlight ways to encourage the use of alternative modes, and sample parking surveys. Dissemination of this information will provide an opportunity to inform merchants of potential transportation issues.

##### *Establish Partnerships to Fund Implementation*

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Establishing partnerships between the City and business groups, like Main Streets and the local Chamber of Commerce, will be required to enhance the implementation of improvements to business districts. For example, BTD will investigate the feasibility of channeling local parking revenues toward supporting improvements in business districts. The new revenues would be used for the sole purpose of maintaining and improving public parking and other public amenities, such as street furniture, and landscaping. The city would be guaranteed the revenue needed to install and maintain new parking meters. New legislation may be required to pursue this program.

##### *Investigate the Construction of New Municipal Off-Street Parking Lots*

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BTD should continue to investigate potential opportunities to add new lots in neighborhood business districts. Though the supply and use of off-street parking resources vary from district to district, these lots are often the best places to relieve long-term parking problems. BTD will consider cost and land use in the siting and construction of off-street lots.

***Use On-Street Parking for Short-Term Demands***

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BTD will work with area merchants and residents to develop curb regulations that accommodate short-term customer parking needs as part of a larger program of transportation improvements. BTD will use several approaches to ensure that turnover occurs at the valuable space along the curb. The first is to limit the parking time during business hours. BTD recommends a time limit as a function of the adjacent land use and general character of a district. For example, 15-minute spaces are often used in front of a post office or an ATM location. Two-hour limits would be used in front of business or groups of businesses that require longer parking, such as a grocery store or professional office. BTD will encourage merchants and their employees to observe these restrictions to minimize the need to issue parking tickets in order to achieve compliance.

***Encourage the Increased Use of Private Off-street Parking Lots for Long-term Parking***

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BTD will work with area merchants and residents to develop and implement arrangements that would support the increased use of private off-street parking lots. In districts with short-term parking deficits, it is often desirable to relocate long-term parking from in front of businesses to provide additional short-term customer parking opportunities. In many cases, municipal lots do not provide a viable alternative since they are often at or near capacity. Private lots are an alternative resource that requires a creative approach to address the property owner's concerns about liability and safety issues. Working together, and with BTD, merchants should develop specific arrangements to make this additional parking available to help alleviate the long-term parking demands of the district. Codman Square is an example of a successful application of this approach.

***Improve Pedestrian Safety and Access***

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BTD will work with area merchants and residents to develop and implement improvements to pedestrian safety and access. Pedestrian safety and access is integral to the vibrancy of neighborhood business districts. BTD will use the guidelines that are described in its "Streetscape Guidelines for Major Roads" and "Pedestrian Safety Guidelines for Residential Streets" to guide these efforts as part of future evaluations of neighborhood business districts.

***Consolidate Loading Zones to Serve Multiple Businesses in Neighborhood Business Districts***

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BTD will work with merchants to consolidate loading zones in areas with demonstrated demand for on-street loading. Historically, on-street loading zones in neighborhood business districts were established on a request basis, often leading to alternate locations with either too much or too little curb space allocated to loading. BTD seeks to consolidate loading zones where possible, using regulations that were originally developed for downtown. BTD should take advantage of corner locations and other specific elements of each neighborhood business district to provide consolidated loading zones in a manner that minimizes impact to on-street parking, increases the visibility and definition of the loading zone and simplifies the enforcement of the regulation.

***Continue Bicycle Racks Program***

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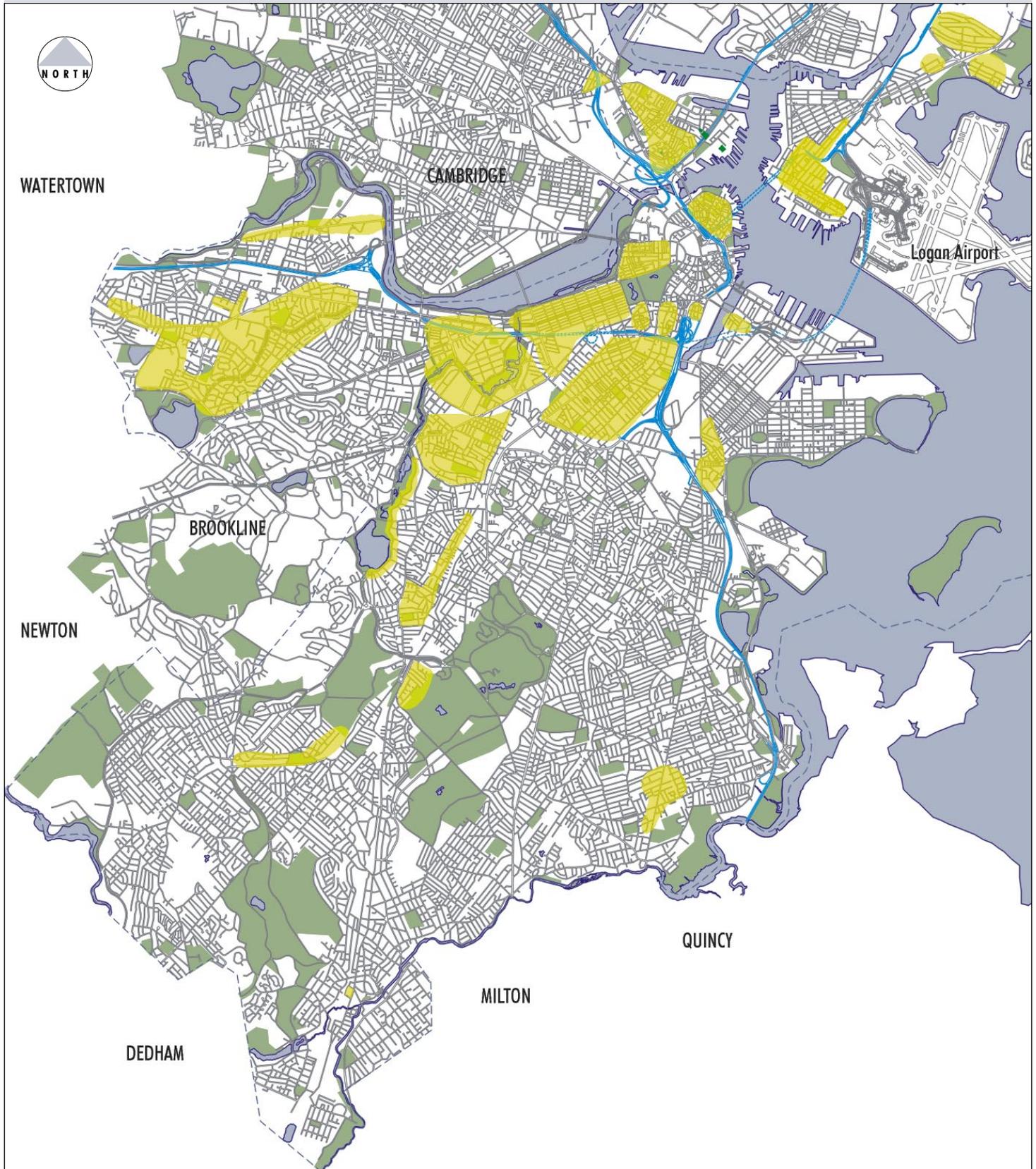
BTD will continue to install bike racks in publicly accessible areas in consultation with local businesses and community groups. BTD started this program in the summer of 2001. Business districts with newly installed bike racks include Codman Square, Roslindale Square and Centre Street (Jamaica Plain). It will seek additional funds to expand this program. Bicycle racks will also be included in all roadway (which include sidewalks) reconstruction projects.

***Adjust MBTA Bus Stop Locations to Improve Service and Reduce Parking Impacts***

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BTD will work with area residents, merchants and the MBTA to locate bus stops near high demand areas in ways that minimize their impact on curbside parking. Consideration should be given to the relationship of the bus stop to adjacent land uses, its visibility and convenience within the district, pedestrian safety and traffic safety. Parking impacts should consider opportunities to reduce the length of the bus stop and re-use the curb space for parking. For example, moving mid-block stops to an intersection reverts 20 feet of curb (or one parking space) to general use.

# PARKING IN BOSTON



**Figure 27:  
Resident Permit Parking Program Locations**

The Resident Permit Parking Program, which is in nineteen Boston neighborhoods, addresses the competition for spaces in residential neighborhoods by vehicles from outside the neighborhood. The locations illustrated in this figure are approximate and for illustrative purposes only.  
(Source: City of Boston, Office of the Parking Clerk)