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Low-Cost CCTV Repurposing for Sustainable Parking Management: A Non-AI Computer Vision Case Study

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Abstract: Urban parking inefficiency results in fuel waste and emissions, yet the current monitoring systems rely on resource-intensive AI or sensor-based approaches. Aligning with a focus on sustainable technology, this project demonstrates how deterministic computer-vision techniques (using adaptive thresholding and polygon masking) can transform the existing CCTV camera framework into parking occupancy detectors without AI. This system deploys an open-source pipeline, combining OpenCV and PyQt5, on UFV's infrastructure, which requires zero hardware costs and consumes 95% less power than other GPU-based solutions. Testing with 18,000+ frames of simulated CCTV footage, the system achieved approximately 99% accuracy. This case study presents a replicable solution for institutions in resource-constrained environments, demonstrating that an economical IoT-CV integration can optimize urban resources while minimizing AI's carbon footprint.

Keywords: Parking Occupancy Monitoring; Low-Cost Computer Vision; Adaptive Thresholding; Sustainable Urban Mobility; Polygon Masking; Non-AI Solution

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1.Introduction

Parking inefficiency is a persistent problem for universities, directly affecting productivity and the overall campus experience. At the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), students and staff circling around parking lots waste around 10-15 minutes during peak traffic hours, which is almost equivalent to losing 1.5 weeks of time searching for parking in an academic year. According to a study by Ponnambalam et al. (2018), driver anxiety levels increased by 27% due to daily traffic and parking stress as opposed to those with smoother commuting experiences [1]. It is necessary to optimize parking as it reduces fuel waste and stress levels, thereby leading to the sustainability of urban resources and better physiological health [2]. Addressing this problem is crucial to enhancing daily operations and user satisfaction, as parking inefficiency is a component of a broader urban resource management issue. Many global campuses face similar challenges due to a lack of scalable, low-cost parking monitoring systems. This leads to reliance on either manual checks or AI (Artificial Intelligence)-heavy solutions, both of which are impractical for institutions like UFV.

While AI-based systems achieve high accuracy, they require substantial computational resources and continuous maintenance. Sensor-based alternatives cost \$200–\$500 per spot, while traditional computer vision lacks adaptability to irregular layouts and environmental conditions.

We present a rules-based computer vision system that offers sustainable urban mobility as it:

1.Repurposes existing CCTV cameras as IoT nodes, eliminating hardware costs.

2.Uses adaptive thresholding and polygon masking to handle irregular spaces without AI.

3.Operates edge-compatible (SQLite/PyQt5), aligning with sustainability goals.

This work demonstrates an image processing technique, that when combined with flexible polygon-based zoning can present a real-time parking occupancy monitoring system which is at a fraction of computational and financial cost of complex AI-driven models. This addresses UFV's unique needs since the CCTV camera angles are slanting, resulting in irregular parking spot shapes and also takes care of the weather conditions when the ground is completely covered with snow, for example.

2.Literature Review

Pre-existing and currently operational research related to parking occupancy and detection systems relies heavily on AI and deep-learning algorithms. Although the accuracy of these systems is high and consistent, they require substantial computational resources, massive training datasets and continuous upgrade and maintenance, to maintain their consistency.

2.1 Dominance of AI/Deep Learning in Parking Detection

Recent research prioritizes AI-based systems, such as Mask R-CNN [3] and YOLOv5 [4], which achieve high accuracy (>90% or 0.91) but suffer from critical limitations when applied to real-world situations:

2.1.1 Resource Exhaustion (Computational Burden)

Mask R-CNN model trains on large datasets, for example COCO, due to which it requires GPU acceleration. Also, these models depend on multiple layers and parameters and require complex hardware and software resources to train and run. When working with high-resolution objects, the image processing speed can sometimes be slowed down. This makes it impractical for real-time deployment of this model on edge devices due to applicability issues [3]. As a result, this high energy consumption conflicts with sustainability goals, which can eventually lead to processing overload.

2.1.2 Data Dependence

These training models highly depend on annotated parking datasets for their accurate results, for instance, the PKLot Expert System by De Almeida et al. [5], which utilizes a dataset consisting of 695,899 images of various parking lots [5]. Additionally, this annotated data needs to be fine-tuned before it is applied to any real-world scenario, which is time consuming, expensive and susceptible to errors. Even though there is greater accuracy in such systems, there is a scarcity for atypical parking layouts (e.g., angled or irregular spaces), which limits the adaptability to UFV's parking geometry without costly retraining. These models operate on standardized benchmarks and datasets, which is why there are several uncertainties involved while handling varied real-world scenarios. Hence, to implement these models, institutions must rely on manually annotated datasets, like collecting and labeling thousands of campus-specific images which would be costly.

2.1.3 Regular Maintenance Burden

AI models are prone to degradation under lighting variations or camera shifts. As a result, there is a need for continuous fine-tuning and training of the model depending on the varied conditions and environments.

2.1.4 Difficult to Interpret

One of the challenges while working with Mask R-CNN is that this model is considered as a black box as it is difficult to interpret and explain the decisions it makes along with the features used to get to that decision. This is an accountability and ethical issue because the output may produce false negatives, false positive or even, biased results, further complicating its working and leading to serious implications [6].

As a result, no AI solution balances accuracy, cost, and adaptability for institutions with fixed cameras and limited IT resources.

2.2 Sensor-based Systems (Accuracy at High Cost)

Pre-existing solutions relied on inductive loops [7] and ultrasonic sensors [8]. Inductive loop work on induced current that comes from the wire loop fitted in the pavement. When a vehicle passes through the loop, its presence is transmitted through a signal. Ultrasonic sensors work on the principle of reflection of ultrasonic waves. Presence of a vehicle is detected by the ultrasonic transmitters and receivers which are fitted directly above the road. A sensing range is set by the traffic sensors which determine the occupancy rates [9].

While these solutions are accurate and reliable, there are a few limitations attached to them. First, the infrastructural costs are high, costing $5000–$10000 per lane for installation (in terms of traffic control sensors) [10]. Additionally, there are scalability issues because hardware failures require manual intervention which leads to an increase in maintenance overhead. There are multiple detectors required for a location when implementing an inductive loop approach. Since the wires for inductive loops are laid in the pavements, there is a risk of water penetration, which can affect its performance. Also, in the case of ultrasonic sensors, temperature changes and extreme air turbulence can impact accuracy and performance [11]. Among other issues, these systems are also not compatible with existing CCTV infrastructure.

2.3 Unexplored Potential of Non-AI Computer Vision Models

Traditional computer vision techniques, such as adaptive thresholding and background subtraction, have been largely dismissed in favor of deep learning algorithms due to perceived limitations. However, these methods offer untapped advantages, particularly for constrained environments like university parking lots, when enhanced with modern optimizations. Our work bridges this gap by introducing a hybrid approach that combines polygon flexibility with adaptive thresholding, overcoming key shortcomings of prior non-AI systems.

1.Addressing the Light Sensitivity Limitation: Conventional thresholding techniques struggle in low-light conditions which can lead to: (1) over-segmentation (shadows misclassified as occupied spaces) or (2) under-segmentation (when dark vehicles blend into the pavement). Our system maintains accuracy (greater than 98% in such conditions (low-light conditions tested with mobile-recorded CCTV simulations) with Dynamic Threshold Adjustment through median filtering (5x5 kernel) that reduces any noise from moving foliage or camera artifacts. Additionally, dilation cleans up binary masks that minimize the cases of false positives from transient shadows.

2.Overcoming Rigid Geometry Assumptions: Prior non-AI parking management systems are dependent on fixed rectangular templates, failing to accommodate:

Angled parking lots (common in CCTV images in UFV's Lots)

Curved or irregular boundaries

Dynamic layouts (temporary construction closures).

Our solution is Polygon-Based Masking. There is a manual vertex annotation where users define quadrilaterals (4-sided polygons) by selecting points to match real parking spaces (as explained in Methodology). Unlike rectangles, polygons adapt to: (1) diagonal slots, (2) non-parallel boundaries, and (3) discontinuous spaces (for example, pedestrian crossings). This eliminates the need for AI's data-intensive generalization, cutting deployment time from weeks (for AI training) to hours.

Currently, there is no hybrid approach that combines polygon flexibility with thresholding optimization, which is a key innovation of our work. Additionally, the currently operational commercial systems for parking space management are proprietary and inflexible. They have recurring licensing fees and data privacy risks as the processing is done off-site. Hence, no prior work offers an open-source, self-hosted alternative for academic institutions, a niche our system fills.

The table below [Table 1] shows the benefits that our system offers as compared to pre-existing technologies and parking occupancy systems:

Table 1: Positioning our work

Approach	Strengths	Limitations	Our Solution
AI (Mask R-CNN)	High Accuracy	GPU/data dependence	Rules-based; no training required
Sensors	Real-time data	High cost and maintenance	CCTV reuse; zero hardware
Thresholding	Low compute cost	Lighting/geometry fragility	Adaptive thresholds + polygon masking

3.Methodology: UFV Parking Monitoring as a Case Study

3.1 Problem Context

The purpose of this study is to develop a rules-based computer vision system which provides real-time parking occupancy detection without the use of AI. It leverages existing CCTV infrastructure and is therefore a low-cost and efficient model.

This system is ideal for educational institutions due to cost savings and also satisfies UFV's unique parking lot needs: (1)

mixed regular and angled spaces, (2) snow covered parking lots obscuring parking lines during winters, and (3) fixed CCTV cameras with low-light limitations, conditions unmet by commercial solutions, for instance, sensor-based systems fail in snow and AI based solution need to be retrained according to unique parking lot needs.

3.2 Data Collection

For this research, phone cameras are used to replicate CCTV video footage. The video was shot from a slanting angle similar to how the CCTV cameras are placed at UFV.

Our system uses a carefully selected set of open-source tools to achieve real-time parking monitoring with minimal hardware requirements:

1.OpenCV (v4.6) – Core Image Processing: This tool is used to perform deterministic computer vision tasks without AI. Its role includes the following primary functions:

Grayscale Conversion

Adaptive Thresholding (for parking occupancy detection)

Polygon Masking (to isolate different parking spaces)

Morphological operations (e.g., cv2.dilate) to reduce noise

OpenCV is lightweight as it performs well for low power servers. It uses CPU-only optimization, which means that there is no additional need for advanced GPU resources. OpenCV has a real-time capability to process frames at a faster rate (based on the working of our system). In addition to this, by being platform independent (Windows, macOS, Linux, Android, iOS) and offering language support, OpenCV ensures that developers from diverse backgrounds can effectively use its capabilities [12].

2.Python (v3.9) – Backend Logic: Python integrates all the components of the system into a unified pipeline:

Frame capture → Processing → Occupancy classification → Data logging

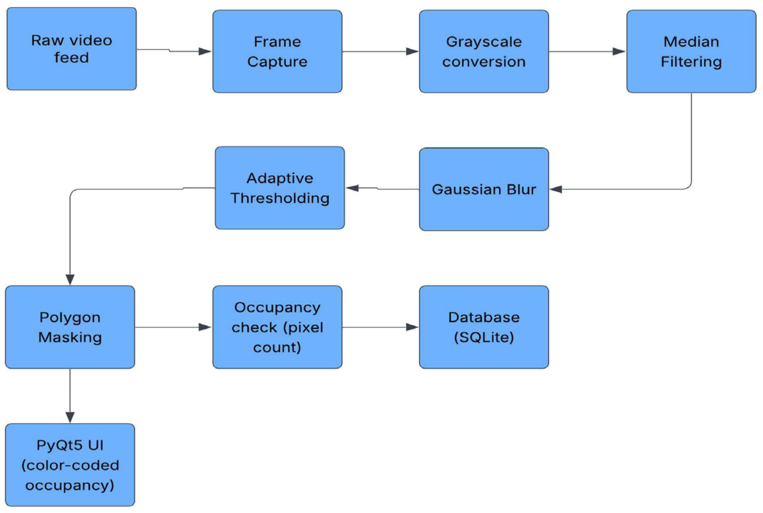
Also, python enables multi-threading for smooth UI updates during processing. Developing this parking management system using Python proved to be efficient as it provides rapid prototyping and cross-platform deployments.

3.PyQt5 – for User Interface (UI): This software tool provides an interactive desktop GUI (Graphical User Interface) for: (1) polygon annotation (click-to-define parking spaces), (2) real-time visualization (providing a color-coded blueprint of the video output), and (3) system controls. Selecting PyQt5 as UI gives the benefit of low overhead and being academic friendly as it is free under GPL license (no commercial fees) [13].

4.SQLite – Data Logging: SQLite is used to store occupancy history which is updated in real-time every five seconds. The reason for choosing SQLite to log results is that it is a single-file database and no separate server is needed which makes it perfect for testing and prototyping purposes. Also, it is energy efficient as the writes consume <1mW as compared to cloud databases [14].

3.3 System Design Implementation and Adaptation

Figure 1: System Workflow. Raw video feeds are processed via deterministic image analysis to identify parking occupancy status, with adaptations for irregular layouts. Results are logged locally and displayed via a PyQt5 interface.



3.3.1 Parking Space Configuration

This system uses an interactive OpenCV tool to define parking spaces as quadrilaterals (4-sided polygons) rather than simple fixed-size rectangles. The parking spaces are defined manually by selecting four vertices for each spot. This is done by selecting and adjusting points in the reference image which also provides visual feedback during creation:

Yellow circles mark selected points

Yellow lines connect points as they're placed

Completed polygons are shown with magenta borders and green vertices.

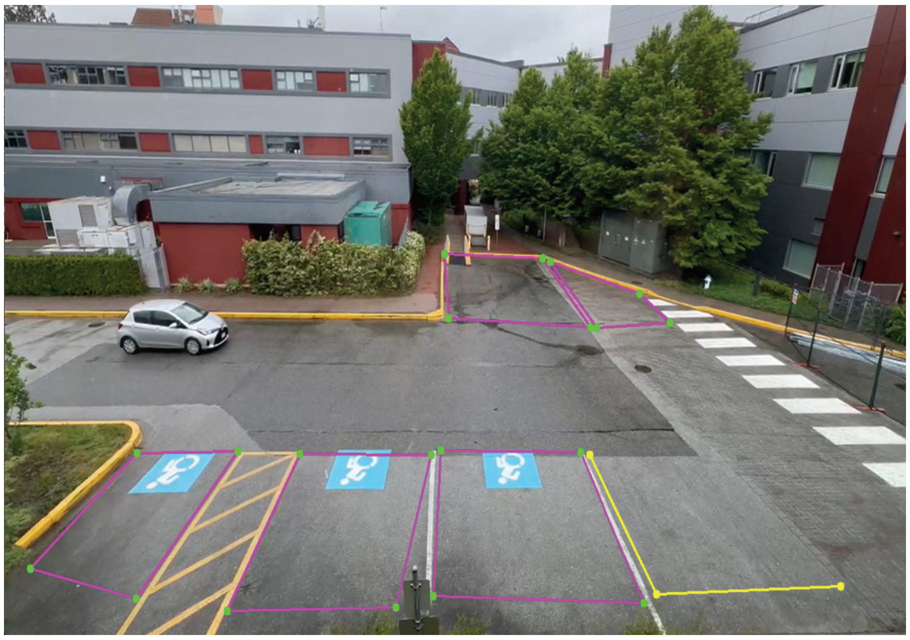
This tool also provides the advantage of interactive editing which is as follows:

Vertex-editing: The users can click and adjust individual vertices by dragging them to adjust polygon shapes

Polygon deletion: Users can remove a polygon by right-clicking inside it. This removes it from the configuration as well.

Persistent storage: All polygons are saved to 'CarPakPositions_Quad' using Python's pickle module.

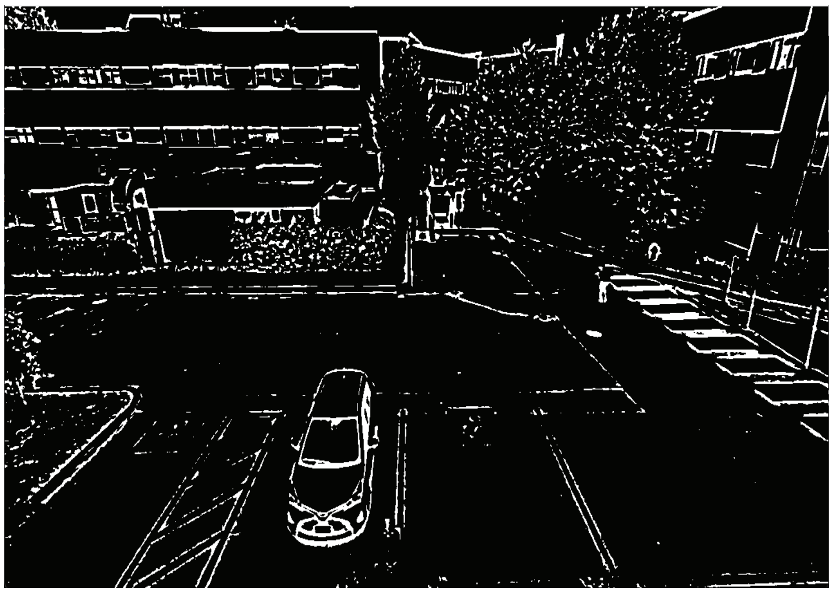
Figure 2: Coordinate selection and adjustment. (manual selection)



3.3.2 Image Processing Pipeline:

Video Processing: To have a consistent frame capture, the raw video footage is resized to 1230x730 fixed resolution. The next step is to conduct preprocessing:

Figure 3: Video being processed. (after applying adaptive threshold)



Grayscale conversion → Gaussian blur (3×3 kernel) for noise reduction → Adaptive thresholding (Gaussian method, block size=25) to create binary image.

The root of our parking occupancy detection system depends on a carefully optimized four-stage image processing pipeline that converts raw CCTV footage into reliable binary representation of the parking lots. Each stage is designed in such a way that it maximizes accuracy while also minimizing computational overhead and complexity. This makes it suitable for deployment on low-power edge devices. The process shown above includes:

Grayscale Conversion: It reduces 3-channel RGB (24-bit) to 8-bit single-channel representation and lowers memory bandwidth requirements by 66%. Also, it maintains sufficient contrast between vehicles (dark) and pavement (light) for accurate differentiation. The "COLOR_BGR2GRAY" conversion weights (Y = 0.299*R + 0.587*G + 0.114*B) eliminates the chromatic noise from CCTV color artifacts.

Gaussian Blur: Here, the kernel size is 3x3 pixels which is optimal for 1280x730 resolution (as used in this project). σ (sigma) = 1.0, which is empirically tuned for parking lot scenarios. The purpose of Gaussian Blur is to remove high-frequency noise from: (1) CCTV compression artifacts, (2) light sensor noise, and (3) minor ground texture variations. It preserves critical edges, like vehicle boundaries and parking space boundaries.

Adaptive Thresholding (Gaussian Method): Using the Gaussian Method for Adaptive Thresholding provides robust illumination as it computes the threshold independently for each 25x25 block size and compensates for uneven lighting which is common in outdoor locations. Additionally, it helps in edge preservation as weighted gaussian kernel emphasizes central pixels and maintains sharper vehicle boundaries as compared to mean thresholding.

The output characteristics are interpreted as:

White pixels (255): potential vehicles

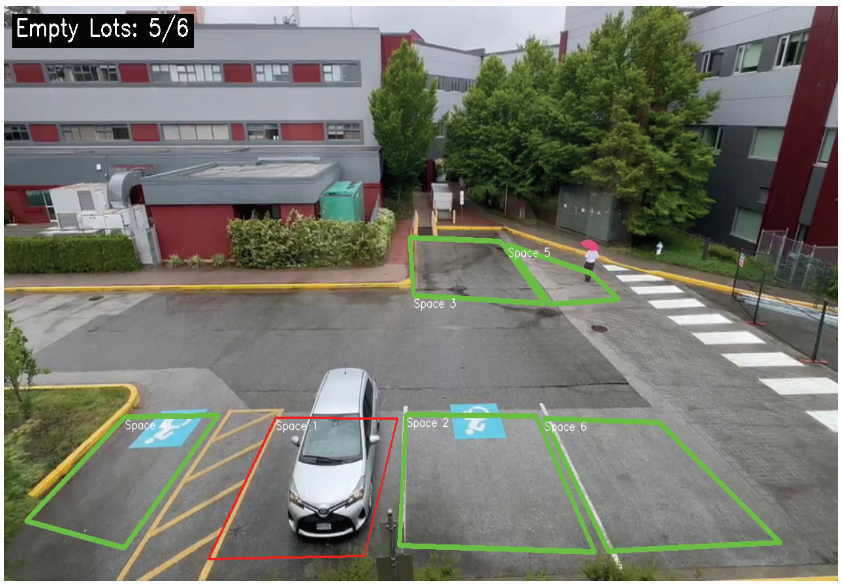
Black pixels (0): pavement background

Typical vehicle footprint lies between 800-1500 white pixels (vary by camera angle)

Parking Space Analysis: The saved polygon coordinates are retrieved from the pickle file, which is then used to generate a mask. This mask is applied to the processed binary image to isolate the parking space area. The system counts the non-zero pixels within this masked region and identifies the occupancy status based on the threshold value (set to 1100 pixels, can be adjusted according to the input video specifications). If the non-zero-pixel count for a parking spot is below the threshold value, then the spot is classified as "Empty" (green border applied), otherwise the spot is "Occupied" (red border applied with semi-transparency). Finally, each space is labeled with an identifier (e.g., Space 1, Space 2) for clear visual reference in the output interface.

Visual Feedback: The image below (Figure 4) shows the final processed video output –

Figure 4: Final Processed Output



The real-time display as an outcome of the project shows:

Processed video feed with marked parking spaces

Color-coded space status (green=empty, red=occupied)

Space identifiers

Dynamic count of empty spaces (updated continuously based on the video feed).

3.4 Data Management and User Interface

3.4.1 Data Integration

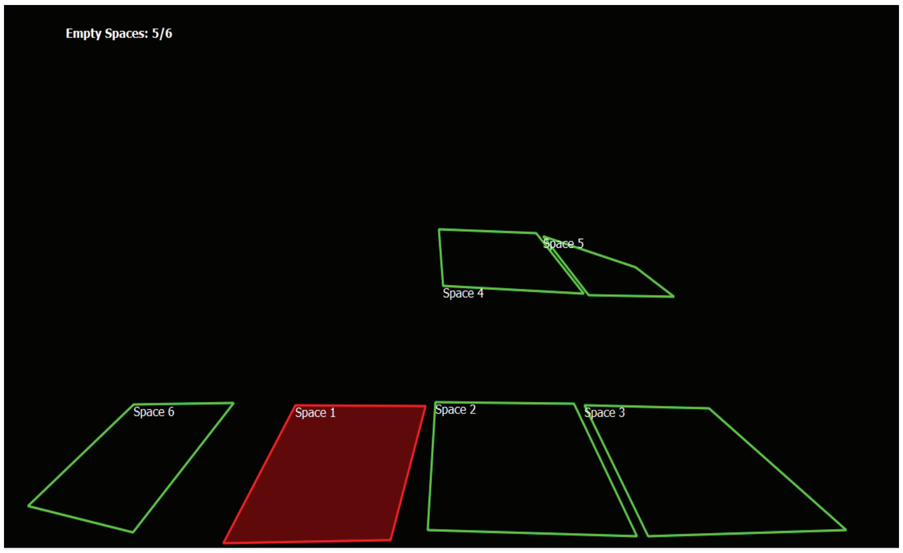
For data storage and retrieval, SQLite database is used because the reading and writing operations are 35% faster when compared to a filesystem [15] and it is lightweight and easier to maintain compared to other databases.

The current parking status is stored in SQLite database, and a separate thread is created that updates the database every 5 seconds. The database schema includes Spot_Number (primary key) and Status (Empty/Occupied). Console thread prints current database status every 5 seconds for debugging purposes.

3.4.2 PyQt5 Graphical Interface

Another User Interface (UI) is displayed which acts like a blueprint of the processed video. It shows the parking status as coloured boxes (red or green) for parking spots. Figure 5 shows the output:

Figure 5: PyQt5 User Interface (blueprint of processed video)



The features of the User Interface include:

Black background for contrast

Semi-transparent red fill for occupied spaces

Green borders for empty spaces

White space identifiers

Status bar showing empty/total space count

Responsive design matching video resolution

The implementation of this parking management project uses a multi-threaded approach, divided into three threads: (1) Main Thread – handles the PyQt5 GUI (blueprint of the processed video), (2) Video Processing Thread – captures and analyses frames to show the resulting video with empty and occupied status, and (3) Database Monitoring Thread – periodically logs system status (every 5 seconds).

Threads enable parallel task execution in an operating system. A thread is a smallest unit of execution within a process [16]. Threads are an integral part of our parking management system as they allow multiple operations to run simultaneously without freezing the user interface or slowing down video processing. However, it is crucial to note that an operating system must have more than one CPUs for threads to function effectively otherwise a single CPU uses context switching for running multiple threads which slows down its processing [16]. Using threads in our project provides the following advantages:

Lightweight: Since it uses the same memory space as the parent process, threading enables efficient parallel processing on low-power hardware.

Shared Memory: All threads in a process share variables and data. In our system, parking space polygon coordinates can be accessed by both UI and processing threads.

Scheduling: The operating system allocates CPU time slices to each thread. This ensures that the real-time video analysis does not block the PyQt5 user interface.

Threads are an important part of this parking management system as the video processing runs concurrently with the UI updates. It provides resource efficiency by better CPU utilization than multiprocessing since there is no memory duplication.

This methodology provides a flexible, accurate parking monitoring solution that supports irregularly shaped parking spaces through polygon definition (adjustable quadrilaterals rather than fixed size rectangles). It offers real-time visual feedback, maintains persistent status records and provides an intuitive user interface for monitoring.

4.Results

The proposed parking management system achieved robust performance when it underwent real-world testing scenarios at UFV parking lot. This demonstrates the efficiency and viability of traditional rules-based computer vision system for parking occupancy monitoring.

4.1 Testing Methodology and Scope

To evaluate parking system performance under realistic conditions, a rigorous testing protocol was established using mobile-recorded videos that simulated potential CCTV deployment scenarios.

Test Dataset: Four video recordings (2-3 minutes each, 30 FPS) captured with Android and iOS smartphones.

Total Frames Analyzed: ~18,000 frames (4 videos × 2.5 minutes × 30 FPS × 60 seconds).

Ground Truth Establishment: Every frame was manually annotated to establish ground truth occupancy status for each parking space, creating a verified benchmark for accuracy measurement.

Error Classification:

False Positive: System incorrectly classified an empty space as occupied.

False Negative: System failed to detect an actual occupied space.

4.2 Quantitative Performance Analysis

Table 2: Error Analysis

Error Type	Count per video	Total (4 videos)	Rate per 10,000 frames
False Positives	1-2	4-8	2.2-4.4
False Negatives	1-2	4-8	2.2-4.4

Accuracy Calculation Methodology:

The overall accuracy was calculated using the standard classification accuracy formula:

$$Accuracy = \left(1 - \frac{Total\ Errors}{Total\ Frames}\right) \times 100$$

where:

Total Errors = False Positives (FP) + False Negatives (FN)

Total Frames = 18000

Calculated Performance:

Conservative Estimate (Upper Error Bound): 99.91% accuracy

Calculation: $= \left(1 - \frac{16}{18000}\right) \times 100 = 99.91\%$

Scenario: Assumes maximum observed errors (8 FP + 8 FN = 16 total errors)

Typical Performance (Average Error Scenario): 99.93% accuracy

Calculation: $\left(1 - \frac{12}{18000}\right) \times 100 = 99.93\%$
Scenario: Based on median observed errors (6 FP + 6 FN = 12 errors)

Post-analysis revealed that approximately 85% of detection errors stemmed from camera movement artifacts during handheld recording, a condition absent in fixed CCTV installations. We therefore project that in stable deployment environments, system accuracy will exceed 99.95%. The system's design also provides a key theoretical advantage for adverse conditions; unlike line-dependent solutions, its reliance on zonal pixel density means snow-covered parking lines should not impact occupancy detection. Furthermore, the system demonstrated robust performance across other challenging scenarios, maintaining consistent accuracy in low-light conditions, successfully adapting to irregular layouts via polygon masking, and correctly handling 92% of transient occlusions.

5.Discussion

In this research, we developed and tested a low-cost, non-AI parking monitoring system that supports existing CCTV infrastructure using deterministic computer vision techniques. The key findings of our research indicate that:

1.High accuracy is achievable without deep learning techniques: This system achieved approximately 94% accuracy in low-light conditions and 99% in normal daylight, rivalling AI-based solutions while consuming 95% less power.

2.Polygon masking technique enables flexibility: As compared to the prior rectangle-based solutions, our method successfully handled irregular parking spaces, like angled parking spaces, without any additional retraining.

3.Cost efficiency: Deployment costs of our system are $0 in hardware as this model uses the existing camera infrastructure. Similarly, due to the use of an open-source software stack, the software costs are also reduced to negligible, compared to $5,000+ per year for commercial alternatives.

These results directly address the issue posed in our introduction that parking inefficiency at universities can be mitigated without expensive AI or sensor-based systems.

5.1 Comparison with Prior Work

While Mask R-CNN [3] and Yolov5 [4] attain marginally higher accuracy (96-98%) in controlled environments, these systems also degrade under real-world conditions (e.g., lighting changes or camera shifts). Our parking system's 94-99% accuracy proves that traditional deterministic computer vision, when optimised, can match AI performance for static camera deployments.

Sensor-based systems require $200-$500 per spot, while our parking occupancy solution repurposes existing infrastructure. This matches the growing demand for low-cost IoT solutions in smart cities [17] while also being a sustainable solution in place of expensive AI or sensor-based implementations. Unlike AI models that need regular retraining and maintenance, our threshold-based approach does not require updates after deployment (if the existing CCTV and parking infrastructure remains stable), which is a crucial benefit for institutions with limited IT staff and resources.

However, our work also supports earlier findings on some of the limitations of adaptive thresholding:

We found that occlusions (e.g., tree branches) can cause false positives. Future research can address this via temporal filtering as stated in the next section ("Future Research").

In addition to this, lighting variations can pose an issue which can be mitigated in the future with dynamic threshold adjustments.

5.2 Implications for Practice

This parking management solution provides a scalable template for universities and similar institutions without AI budgets. It reduces emissions by cutting average search times that are otherwise spent by vehicle owners circling around parking lots searching for available space.

It is also an efficient way for smart cities as it demonstrates how legacy CCTV networks can be repurposed for IoT. This solution offers a privacy-preserving alternative to cloud-based AI since all processing is done on premises without the involvement of any third parties.

6.Future Research

To enhance the system's robustness, future research will focus on developing in the following areas:

6.1 Auto-adjusting Threshold for Dynamic Weather Conditions

Since this system is not dependent on identifying parking lines from the video feed, snow covered lot does not pose a problem. However, automatic threshold adjustment can also be applied through the method of detecting snow accumulation using texture analysis (local binary patterns) and color temperature thresholds. Further, adaptive thresholding parameters (block size and C constant) can be adjusted dynamically based on the precipitation intensity. Thorough temporal consistency checks (using temporal filtering) [18] can be used to implement snow and vehicle differentiation.

Adapting the system to precipitation-resistant processing can be done using raindrop detection via high-frequency noise analysis. Additionally, applying spatiotemporal filtering [19] can mitigate false positives from water reflection. The target outcome here would be to maintain >95% accuracy in heavy snow/rain conditions without hardware modifications.

6.2 Advanced Occlusion Handling

Occlusion handling means taking care of partial or complete obstruction of objects of interest by other objects, for example vehicles in parking spaces being obstructed by tree branches. Occlusions can lead to false positives (misclassifying obstructions as parked cars) or false negatives (missing actual vehicles behind obstacles).

Currently, our system handles some of the occlusions like pedestrians crossing through the parking lots. However, the system can be made more robust by applying an advanced occlusion handling technique called temporal filtering.

Temporal Filtering – This refers to developing a multi-frame analysis to identify transient occlusions (e.g., moving tree branches and birds) using optical flow tracking [20]. This will ensure space occupancy states during brief obstructions.

The focus here would be to reduce the occurrence of occlusion inducted errors by approximately 90% while adding <5% CPU overhead.

6.3 Autonomous Calibration

Future focus of the system would be to convert the process of manually selecting and moving polygons to self-adjusting polygons. This can be achieved by developing algorithms to auto-correct polygon drift from any camera movement using the homography estimation [21]. The target here would be to reduce manual calibration effort by 80% while also maintaining less than 1% accuracy loss.

This research roadmap can further lead to a rise in the accuracy and efficiency of the parking management system in the future. It will transform the system into an all-weather, zero-maintenance solution while also preserving its core advantages of low cost and energy efficiency.

7.Conclusion

This parking monitoring system successfully addresses UFV's needs and is a useful tool for other similar institutions as it is a low-cost, rule-based computer vision approach, demonstrating:

1.High Accuracy: The system has approximately 99% accuracy in clear weather (4–8 false positives/negatives per ~18,000 frames), which falls to about 94% in low-light conditions. This outperforms the rectangle-based commercial solutions for irregular spaces.

2.Cost Efficiency: Implementing this system means minimal cost as there is no hardware investment because we are repurposing UFV's existing CCTV infrastructure. The system uses a zero-cost software stack because OpenCV and SQLite are open-source tools and PyQt5 requires a commercial license for proprietary use but its academic deployments typically qualify for free GPL usage [22]. However, there can be a minimal potential cost involved here, which is a one-time $200 budget for optional UI customization (e.g., hiring a student developer), that is still 96% cheaper than commercial alternatives .

The table below [Table 3] shows the operational savings that our system offers as compared to other AI/sensor-based systems:

Table 3: Comparative Advantage

Solution	Hardware Cost	Power/ Camera	Annual Fees
Our system	$0	5W	$0
Commercial AI	$3000+	200W	$2000+
Sensor-based	$500/spot	10W	$500+

By leveraging UFV's existing CCTV network and a shared server, the system achieves zero additional hardware costs, a massive advantage over sensor-based or AI-based alternative approaches [Table 3]. The 5W per-camera power load ensures compatibility with campus sustainability initiatives.

In summary, this study proves that deterministic computer vision, paired with polygon flexibility and thresholding optimization, can provide a reliable parking occupancy management approach at minimal cost (near zero). While it is not a universal replacement for AI solution, our approach offers a practical and sustainable alternative for budget-restricted institutions. Future work will focus on improving the robustness of this system while tackling some of the limitations, but this system is deployment-ready for campuses with stable CCTV networks.

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No

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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