

**TR BROAD II, LLC
222 SUMMER STREET
STAMFORD, CT 06901**

April 13, 2023

Michael Cacace, Esq.
1111 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06905

Re: 128-136 Broad Street, Application 222-37

Dear Attorney Cacace:

Our office has conducted research on national parking trends and prepared this summary for submission to the Zoning Board in connection with the above referenced application.

Cities throughout the country have been reducing or eliminating parking minimums and some have even set parking maximums to limit the number of spaces new developments can provide. According to the "Progress on Parking Mandates" map found on the Parking Reform Network website, *105 cities with populations over 100,000 have either reduced or eliminated parking minimum requirements*. Numerous articles and publications discuss the damaging impacts of parking minimum requirements and how cities are striving to change parking regulations:


"According to land use policy experts, the resulting oversupply of parking has led to numerous problems, including: (1) making sprawl endemic, leading to more driving and even more parking; (2) causing housing to be more costly, as adding parking spaces leads to higher developer costs; (3) blocking redevelopment of vacant or underutilized buildings, as complying with parking requirements makes such projects infeasible; (4) increasing flooding risk with more and more concrete surface area; and (5) contributing to climate change by adding to the urban heat island effect." - Spaced Out – The Shift Away from Minimum Parking Requirements (The National Law Review, 2023)

"Urban planners and economists say this helps to reduce construction costs, hold down rents, relieve congestion, revitalize cities and mitigate the national housing shortage by making better use of some of the country's most valuable land." – America Has Too Much Parking. Really. (The Wall Street Journal, 2023)

"But there is good news: of all the harms traditional zoning has inflicted on communities, parking requirements are the easiest to fix, said Sara Bronin, former chair of the Hartford, Connecticut, Planning and Zoning Commission. Bronin was at the helm in 2017, when Hartford became one of the first cities in the United States to eliminate residential and commercial parking mandates. The year before, city leaders had tested the waters by eliminating requirements in the downtown area, a move that yielded new development projects and new proposals for reuse. "Every community should be eliminating their parking requirements," Bronin said." – Shifting Gears, Why Communities Are Eliminating Off-Street Parking Requirements—and What Comes Next (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2022)

It is abundantly clear that early adopters of parking reforms, such as the City of Hartford, are reaping the benefits of eliminating parking mandates and that the national trend of reducing or eliminating parking requirements is being widely recognized as the new gold standard.

Sincerely,


Emmy Sasaki
TR Broad II, LLC

cc: Thomas L. Rich

Encl: 1) Shifting Gears, Why Communities Are Eliminating Off-Street Parking Requirements—and What Comes Next (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2022)
2) America Has Too Much Parking. Really. (Wall Street Journal, 2023)
3) Spaced Out – The Shift Away from Minimum Parking Requirements (The National Law Review, 2023)
4) Awash in Asphalt, Cities Rethink Their Parking Needs (The New York Times 2023)

Additional Reference: <https://parkingreform.org/resources/mandates-map/>

A high-angle, top-down view of a brick courtyard. The courtyard is bounded by multi-story brick buildings on all sides. In the center, there are several trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of red, orange, and yellow. A silver hatchback car is parked in the upper right, a dark blue sedan in the lower left, and a dark SUV in the lower right. The ground is paved and scattered with fallen leaves. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

SHIFTING GEARS

**Why Communities Are Eliminating
Off-Street Parking Requirements—
and What Comes Next**

By *Catie Gould*

COLUMBUS, OHIO, INVENTED THE FIRST KNOWN off-street parking requirement for an apartment building in 1923. After nearly a hundred years, the results are in, and they're not good.

Last year, an assessment of the local zoning code—commissioned by the city as part of a comprehensive code revision process—concluded that off-street parking requirements were “not effective” and “often poorly matched to true parking demand.”

That mismatch has gotten worse over time. Today's parking requirements in Columbus are far higher than their cousins from the city's midcentury zoning code. In 1954, an apartment building with 100 one-bedroom units was required to have 100 parking spaces; today it has to have 150. For a 2,500-square-foot restaurant, nine required parking spaces became 34, in the 90 percent of the city not covered by special overlay districts. These ratios are out of step with the local market, leading builders to request parking reductions more than any other type of zoning variance. City and regional plans have recommended reducing parking requirements and making them more consistent (LWC 2021).

Columbus is not alone. Across the United States, decades of similar parking requirements have led to a glut: researchers estimate that for every car in the country, there are at least three parking spaces—and some have suggested the number is closer to eight spaces.

This oversupply has created a host of problems: parking requirements can inflate housing costs, block buildings from being adapted to new uses, and contribute to sprawl, making additional driving (and parking) necessary. They create an administrative burden. And the impervious surfaces of parking lots increase the risk of flooding and contribute to the urban heat island effect.

But there is good news: of all the harms traditional zoning has inflicted on communities, parking requirements are the easiest to fix, said Sara Bronin, former chair of the Hartford, Connecticut, Planning and Zoning Commission. Bronin was at the helm in 2017, when Hartford became one of the first cities in the United States to eliminate residential and commercial parking mandates. The year before, city leaders had tested the waters by eliminating requirements in the downtown area, a move that yielded new development projects and new proposals for reuse. “Every community should be eliminating their parking requirements,” Bronin said.

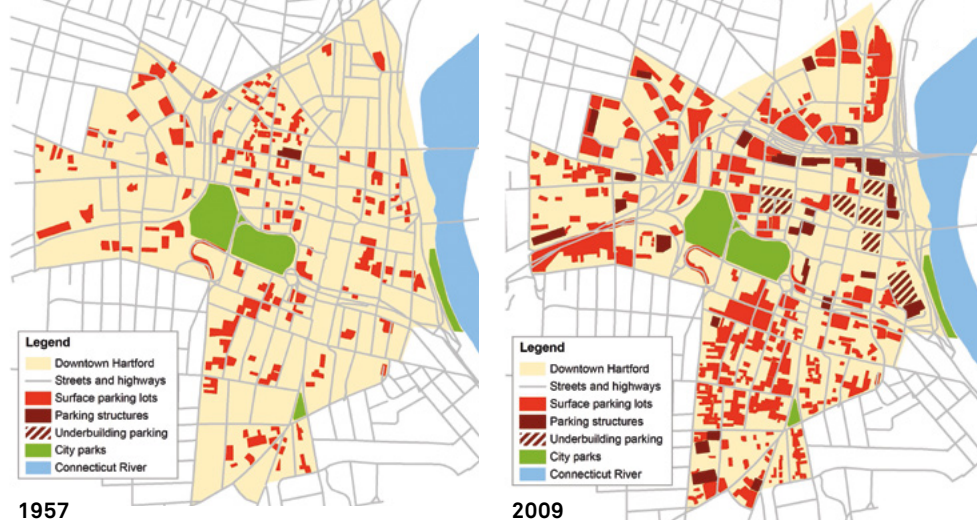
Each year, more cities are eliminating or reducing such mandates. In 2021, cities from Minneapolis to Jackson, Tennessee, eliminated minimum parking requirements from their zoning codes. In the week that this article was drafted alone, cities from Spokane to Chicago to Burlington, Vermont, rolled back parking mandates.

Communities might reduce their parking requirements because they are trying to reinvent themselves by attracting new businesses and development, accommodate population growth with space-efficient infill, or focus more on transit and walkability. Regardless of the reason, parking reform advocates say this land use regulation could finally be on its way out.

“We're going to look back at this as just this weird, late-20th century aberration,” predicts Patrick Siegman, an economist and planner who has been studying parking since 1992, including as a partner at the national transportation planning firm Nelson Nygaard. “We created something wildly inefficient.”

Across the United States, decades of off-street parking requirements have led to a glut: researchers estimate that for every car in the country, there are at least three parking spaces.

Researchers have determined that the land dedicated to surface parking lots in downtown Hartford, Connecticut, tripled between 1960 and 2000. Credit: Christopher McCahill and Norman Garrick.



Hartford Leads the Way

Like many industrial cities in the United States, Hartford saw dramatic population decline during the second half of the 20th century. In 1960, half of the people working in Hartford lived there, many walking or taking transit to jobs downtown; by 1980, less than a quarter of its workforce called the city home. Many white residents had fled for the suburbs and the overall population was declining. The repercussions of this demographic and economic shift are visible in the city's bounty of parking lots: to accommodate the increase in car commuters, the city essentially paved over swaths of its downtown.

As historian Daniel Sterner put it, "Hartford is famous for having so much torn down" (Gosselin 2013). Not even the city's first skyscraper, built in 1912, survived the demolition boom. It was razed to make way for a taller office tower, but those plans were abandoned in 1990 as the country entered a recession. The prominent corner lot became, and remains, surface parking.

University of Connecticut Professor Norman Garrick and his team found that from 1960 to 2000, the amount of land dedicated to parking lots in the downtown business district tripled, nearly equaling the amount of land underneath all the adjacent buildings. "The increase in parking was part of the collapse of the city," Garrick said. "It's typical of a lot of American cities."

Even without the research, there was little debate that Hartford had an oversupply of parking. "I don't think every city needs a full-on parking history, or parking analysis," said Bronin. "Most people should be able to just look around and say, 'there's a lot of parking in this city.'"

The overabundance of parking came at a great cost, Garrick's team found. In a 2014 report, they estimated that the city was missing out on property tax revenue to the tune of \$1,200 per downtown parking space, or about \$50 million a year. That was a significant amount for a city whose downtown buildings were generating \$75 million in annual tax revenue (Blanc et al. 2014).

Attracting investment is critically important for Connecticut's capital city—and particularly challenging. More than half of the city's real estate is nontaxable, because the land is owned by the government or nonprofit institutions. The rest is subject to the highest property tax rate in the state. Eliminating parking requirements citywide is one way to create a more flexible, inviting environment for development.

"It's easy to say we have no parking minimums, as opposed to 'what zone?'," said Aaron Gill, current vice chair of Hartford's Planning and Zoning Commission. The biggest hurdle now is convincing developers they have new options, Gill said. He encourages developers to revisit parcels they might have discounted in the past, and to review how much parking is actually being used in previous developments.

The strategy seems to be working. The quasi-public Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) has funded more than 2,800 new homes downtown since 2012, aiming to build a critical mass of residents to support retail and other services. Mike Freimuth, executive director of the CRDA, said the new zoning code has helped reduce costs and increased the use of existing parking garages.

One of the CRDA projects, Teachers Village, involved converting an office building that had been vacant for 20 years into housing for area educators. Thirty percent of the apartments were designated as affordable. Prior to the code change, more than one parking space would have been required for each unit, but the renovated building has only 18 underground parking spaces for 60 households. The spaces are leased separately from the apartments, saving money for those who don't need a parking spot. According to estimates based on U.S. Census data, more than 30 percent of Hartford households don't even own a car (Maciag 2014).

Other redevelopment projects have cut deals with adjacent parking garages, which are also adapting to the new world of remote work, to provide an off-street parking option for residents for an additional fee. Two derelict commercial buildings on Pearl Street, which Freimuth used to joke were the largest pigeon

coops in the state, went that route when the buildings were renovated into 258 new homes. A few blocks away, a former Steiger's department store is being converted into 97 new apartments with commercial space below.

Eliminating parking requirements citywide is one way to create a more flexible, inviting environment for development: "It's easy to say we have no parking minimums, as opposed to 'what zone?'"

The CRDA is also involved in an ambitious project known as Bushnell South, which aims to convert a 20-acre area dominated by surface parking into a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood with up to 1,200 apartments and townhouses, restaurants and retail, green space, and cultural attractions. The city was reviewing proposals from developers this summer with the goal of moving forward this fall. Although some developers have expressed concern that the city is building more residential space than the market can support, Freimuth is eager to proceed. "This land has been laying fallow for 50 years," he told the *Hartford Courant* (Gosselin 2022). "Why do we have to keep on waiting?"

Planners hope to convert an area of downtown Hartford currently dominated by surface parking (left) into a mixed-use neighborhood known as Bushnell South (right). Credits (left to right): Mark Mirko/*Hartford Courant*, Goody Clancy/*Bushnell South Planning Consortium*.



The Benefits of a Citywide Shift

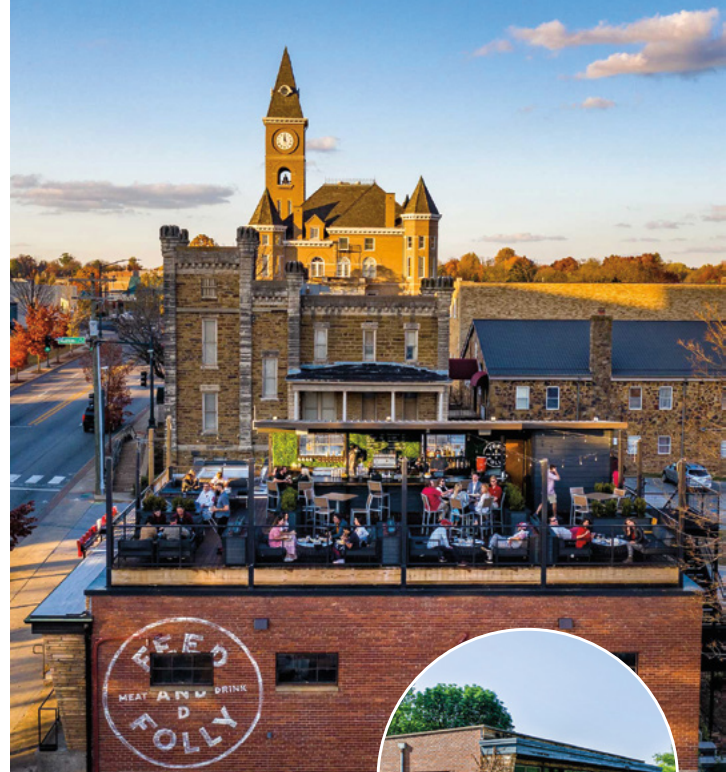
On the edge of downtown Fayetteville, Arkansas, a building that had stood vacant for nearly 40 years now houses a local restaurant with a rooftop patio. Down the road, a formerly abandoned gas station is back in use as retail space. The reuse of these once-forgotten properties was made possible several years ago, when Fayetteville's city council voted to remove commercial parking requirements citywide.

While most cities start with reducing parking mandates in a central business district, like Hartford did, planners in Fayetteville were fielding requests about properties throughout the city, and opted against defining a smaller boundary. At 44 square miles, Fayetteville is nearly 2.5 times larger than Hartford, with 70 percent of the population.

"As a city planner, you receive phone calls about what's possible with this property," Fayetteville planner Quin Thompson explained. "What I began to see was the same properties over and over again. Some of those properties were downtown, but a lot weren't." None of the parcels had enough space to meet the parking requirements in place at the time.

The planning staff approached the city council with the idea of eliminating commercial parking requirements citywide. Some of these properties were so constrained, they explained, it was impossible to imagine how they could be redeveloped under the current rules. They also said investors taking on the financial risk of a project were best suited to determine their own parking needs, and would act as a backstop even when the city was no longer regulating off-street parking spaces. In October 2015, Fayetteville's city council agreed.

What happened next? "The buildings that I had identified as being perpetually and perhaps permanently unusable were very quickly purchased and redeveloped, and are in use right now," said Thompson. "I can't think of any that are still out there that I had used as case studies that haven't been redeveloped."



The elimination of commercial parking requirements in Fayetteville, Arkansas, made new projects possible, including the conversion of a long-vacant building (inset) into the busy Feed and Folly restaurant. Credits: Courtesy of Feed and Folly; Katie Mihalevich, Realtor® (inset).

Thompson and his colleagues were right that the distinction between parking needs in a central city versus outlying neighborhoods can be arbitrary. In the lead-up to the removal of parking requirements in Edmonton, Alberta, in 2020, a citywide study of 277 sites found no clear geographic trend that related to how full parking lots were, even after factoring in variables like population density, walkability as measured by Walk Score, or drive-alone rate. Of all the sites surveyed, only 7 percent neared capacity at the busiest times of day. It was far more common for parking lots to remain half empty, as was the case for 47 percent of observed sites (Nelson Nygaard 2019).

In Fayetteville and other cities, eliminating parking minimums citywide has had another benefit: reducing administrative work and freeing up city staff to work on other things. "One of the

things you find in American cities is that they've got all of these college-educated planners, many of whom actually have graduate degrees, and what they're doing is spending hour after hour processing parking variances," explained Siegman.

Kevin Robinson was one of those planners, until he was hired as director of Planning and Development Services for Albemarle, North Carolina. To his surprise, the city had almost no parking requirements, having eliminated virtually all of them two decades prior. "However you came about it," he recalls telling city officials, "I think you're on the right track."

Towns where he had worked previously had only reduced parking requirements in central business districts, not citywide. "From an administrative standpoint, it's a heck of a lot easier to deal with," said Robinson.

"Quite honestly, a lot of times [parking minimums] are very arbitrary numbers," Robinson said. Now that he no longer has to enforce them, he has more time to spend on other aspects of development—including a downtown parking plan. He has plenty of data to rebut complaints that there isn't enough parking. Even at peak hours, public parking never gets more than half full, his heatmaps indicate.

Robinson acknowledges that eliminating parking minimums wasn't a cure-all: "We are still seeing far more parking being built than is absolutely necessary." (See sidebar to learn how the shift has played out in other cities.)

Construction in Albemarle is picking up as people get priced out of nearby cities like Charlotte. In the last two years, this small city of 16,000 has approved permits for 3,000 new

housing units, with another 1,000 in the works, including middle housing like duplexes and townhouses.

Robinson is nervous that the parking requirements, which were discarded at a time when the city wasn't growing, might return as development accelerates. "I'm trying to keep them from going in that direction," he said. His concerns aren't unfounded, as the experience of another city shows.

Left to the Market, How Much Parking Gets Built?

In Buffalo, New York, which struck down parking requirements in April 2017, a review of 36 major developments showed that 53 percent of projects still opted to include at least as many parking spaces as the previous code had required. The developers who did propose building less parking averaged 60 fewer parking spaces than the old minimum required, avoiding over eight acres of unnecessary asphalt and saving up to \$30 million in construction costs.

Seattle saw similar results after eliminating parking requirements near transit in 2012. A study of 868 residential developments permitted in the following five years found that 70 percent of new buildings in areas not subject to parking requirements still chose to have on-site parking. Collectively, the new buildings included 40 percent fewer parking spaces than would have previously been required, saving an estimated \$537 million in construction costs and freeing up 144 acres of land.

Sources: "What Happened When Buffalo Changed Its Parking Rules," Streetsblog (June 2021); "Seattle's Reduced Parking Minimums Cut 18,000 Stalls and Saved Over \$500 Million," State Smart Transportation Initiative (February 2021).

"The buildings that I had identified as being perpetually and perhaps permanently unusable were very quickly purchased and redeveloped, and are in use right now."

When Mandates Make a U-Turn

It took almost a decade for a new apartment building with no parking to arrive in Portland after the city waived requirements near transit in 2002. The political backlash came more swiftly. As Portland's rental market tightened, the city found itself with the second-lowest vacancy rate in the country in 2012. Apartment construction was booming, and buildings without off-street parking were becoming increasingly common.

Then controversy erupted. The epicenter was a 13-block section of Division Street, a car-oriented commercial corridor experiencing a building boom. By the time the issue made it to the front pages of *Willamette Week*, the local

weekly paper, 11 new multifamily buildings were under development, seven with no parking at all.

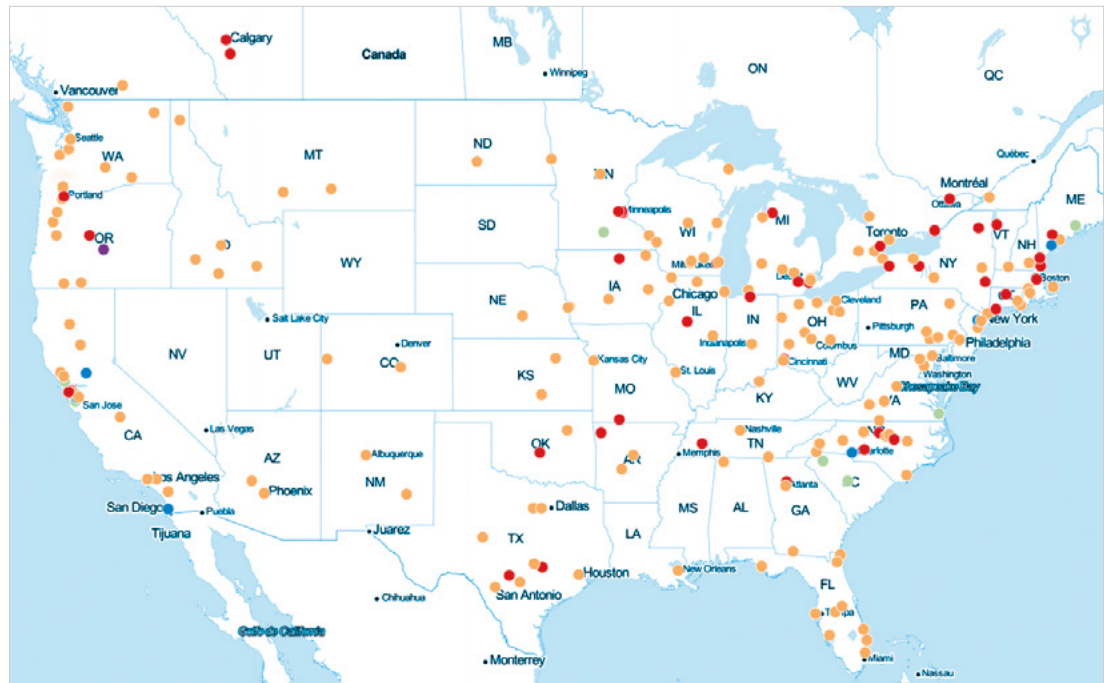
A city-commissioned survey of 115 residents of new apartment buildings would show that 72 percent of the respondents owned cars, with the majority parking on neighborhood streets (Mesh 2012a). Even though the same survey showed that the areas around the buildings had plenty of available parking, neighbors didn't perceive it that way. Mayor Charlie Hales, who had championed the removal of parking mandates as a council member in 2002, even floated the idea of instituting a building moratorium until the zoning code could be sorted out. Hales told *Willamette Week* that he had anticipated developers might build one parking spot instead

It took almost a decade for a new apartment building with no parking to arrive in Portland after the city waived requirements near transit in 2002. The political backlash came more swiftly.

Communities across the United States and Canada have modified or eliminated their off-street parking requirements. Credit: Parking Reform Network.

Scope of Reform

- Regional
- Citywide
- City Center/District
- Transit Oriented
- Main Street/Special



of two, but hadn't imagined banks would finance housing with no parking at all (Mesh 2012b).

In response to the outcry, Portland's city council reinstated a parking requirement for multifamily developments with more than 30 units. Those larger buildings would need to provide one parking space for every three or four units, depending on the building size. "That was the strategic retreat," Hales explained. "We decided to adjust our ideal slightly to a watered-down version in order to reduce the controversy."

Hales, who is no longer mayor, still believes strongly in eliminating parking requirements. "There's some things we really don't need to regulate," he said recently. "Minimum number of parking spaces is one of them." Given the political pressure of the time, he has a hard time imagining how things could have worked out differently.

While supporters of parking mandates prevailed in that case, the matter was far from settled. Several years after the brouhaha, regulated affordable housing near transit regained its exemption from parking requirements, after rising rents and economic displacement prompted Portland to declare a housing state of emergency and elect a tenant advocate to city council. Portland adopted an inclusionary zoning policy that same year, requiring multifamily buildings to set aside units for affordable housing—and waiving residential parking requirements for those buildings.

Looking back, Portland activist Tony Jordan, who went on to launch the national Parking Reform Network, thinks the city was foolish to derail the housing construction wave. "Why would you do anything" to make developers think twice about investing in larger buildings, he asked. The way the code was written, adding one more unit to a 30-unit building came with a penalty of six parking spaces, incentivizing builders to stay under the limit. "Even if we only lost 60 apartments," Jordan said, "that's a housing subsidy that we just threw away—and for what?"



Raleigh, North Carolina. Credit: Rose-Marie Murray via Alamy Stock Photo.

Communities with No Parking Minimums

According to the Parking Reform Network, the following communities do not have citywide minimum parking requirements (dates of implementation indicated when known). Learn more about these and other changes to U.S. parking mandates at www.parkingreform.org.

- **California:** Alameda (2021), San Francisco (2018), Emeryville (2019)
- **Connecticut:** Bridgeport (2022), Hartford (2017)
- **Georgia:** Dunwoody (2019)
- **Indiana:** South Bend (2021)
- **Michigan:** Ann Arbor (2022), Mancelona, Ecorse (2020), River Rouge (2021)
- **Minnesota:** Minneapolis (2021), St. Paul (2021)
- **Missouri:** Branson
- **New Hampshire:** Seabrook (2019), Dover (2015)
- **New York:** Buffalo (2017), Canandaigua, Hudson (2019), Saranac Lake (2016)
- **North Carolina:** Raleigh (2022)
- **Tennessee:** Jackson (2021)
- **Texas:** Bandera, Bastrop (2019)
- **Alberta:** Edmonton (2020), High River (2021)

Stopping Parking Spillover

When parking complaints bubbled up in Portland's Northwest neighborhood in 2016, the city was ready to try a different strategy: directly managing on-street parking. A local parking advisory committee had petitioned Portland's city council to apply the citywide parking requirements to the growing district, which had historically been exempted. But when a study showed that those regulations would have made 23 percent of newly constructed homes in the neighborhood illegal, the council opted to improve the district's fledgling parking permit program instead.

"When city staff manage on-street parking properly, they can prevent that on-street parking from getting overcrowded with a 99 percent success rate," said Siegman, who has spent much of his career studying spillover parking concerns. The problem, he said, is that almost no one has training in how to manage street parking in a way that is both effective and politically popular. On-street parking management is not part of the core curriculum for planners or transportation engineers.

"What you're essentially doing with on-street parking spaces is taking a valuable resource that belongs to the public and setting up rights to determine who gets to use it," said Siegman. Any hotel manager knows that once the keys are gone, there is no vacancy. Yet cities often hand out multiple residential permits for every street space, and wait until the problem is so bad that neighbors have to petition for curbside management.

When a neighborhood has more drivers seeking permits than there are on-street spaces, there are a number of ways to ensure balance. Boundaries for a parking district could exclude new buildings or households with driveways, or restrict the number of permits to the street frontage of the lot—forcing developers and incoming residents to make a plan for storing cars off-site.



Officials in Vancouver addressed curb congestion by raising the price of on-street parking permits. Credit: Elena_Alex_Ferns via Alamy Stock Photo.

Siegman estimates the costs of setting up an effective parking permit program could be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$100,000—a bargain compared to the cost of building parking, which can run as much as \$50,000 per space. "There are all kinds of different feelings about what's fair," Siegman said, "but you can often come to a solution that has durable majority political support."

That's what officials in Vancouver, British Columbia, did in 2017 to resolve crowded curbs in the West End. Despite 94 percent of residents having access to an off-street parking space, many still preferred to park on the street. Over 6,000 drivers had opted for the \$6 a month permit for the chance to park in one of the 2,747 on-street spaces. When the city raised permit prices to \$30 per month—more in line with what private garages charged—and installed more parking meters, curb congestion cleared up. Before that change, only one out of five blocks met the city's standards of being less than 85 percent full at the busiest times of day. Within two years of the pricing adjustments, all of the blocks measured below that threshold, making it far easier to find a parking space.

The Next Wave of Parking Reform

More and more, champions of eliminating parking mandates are getting elected to offices and planning commissions, according to Jordan, of the Parking Reform Network. “One person can really get the idea and push it through,” he said. The growing number of cities that have taken this deregulatory action (see map and sidebar on pages 28–29) provides political cover for policy makers who have been hesitant to go first.

But parking reform advocates say change should and will happen beyond the local level. Since “the perceived benefits of instituting parking regulations [have been] almost entirely local,” Siegman said, he thinks almost all of the productive reform to get rid of minimum parking laws is going to come from the regional, state, or national level.

A wave of legislation against parking mandates has been gathering momentum on the West Coast. In 2020, Washington State quietly capped excessive parking requirements near transit for market-rate and affordable housing. California’s third attempt to limit local parking requirements near public transit succeeded in September with the signing of AB 2097. That came on the heels of another statewide rollback in Oregon, where a state land use commission struck down parking mandates for projects near transit, affordable housing, and small homes across the state’s eight largest metro regions, which house 60 percent of Oregon’s population.

By July 2023, nearly 50 cities in Oregon will need to choose between wholly eliminating minimum parking requirements or implementing a suite of other tools to manage parking and comply with the new administrative rule. They are sure to have lots of company, as municipalities

and states across the nation weigh the harm these regulations have caused against the 20th century dream of free and easy parking.

Aaron Gill, of the Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission, has some simple advice for jurisdictions considering removing parking minimums: “I would say just do it. Don’t waste time having a discussion as to if it’s going to work or not. The reality is we have way too much parking in this country.” □

Catie Gould is a transportation researcher with the Seattle-based nonprofit think tank Sightline Institute.

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Municipalities and states across the nation are weighing the harm these regulations have caused against the 20th century dream of free and easy parking.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/parking-problem-too-much-cities-e94dcecf>

America Has Too Much Parking. Really.

Cities get rid of spaces, freeing land for new development; 'looking for a place to live, not to park'

By *David Harrison* [Follow](#) | *Photographs by Philip Cheung for The Wall Street Journal*

April 2, 2023 9:50 am ET

For decades, American cities have had a parking problem: too much of it.

Countless residential parking spots go unused, and many downtown garages sit half empty. Ride-sharing and the rise of remote work during the pandemic have aggravated the trend. The average American drove 4% fewer miles in 2022 than in 2019, according to government statistics.

Recognizing this, cities are shrinking the number of spaces, freeing up the land for other uses, with far-reaching consequences.

Garages and parking lots are being demolished. New buildings now come with fewer spots. Major retailers are leasing unused spaces for new development. And local governments are scrapping decades-old minimum-parking rules for new buildings.

Urban planners and economists say this helps to reduce construction costs, hold down rents, relieve congestion, revitalize cities and mitigate the national housing shortage by making better use of some of the country's most valuable land.

"The Dutch have reclaimed land from the sea, and I think we can reclaim land from parking," said Donald Shoup, an urban planner at the University of California, Los Angeles who pioneered the field of parking research.

Any driver who has been late to an appointment for lack of a parking spot might be surprised to hear there is a parking glut. Economists, however, say expectations for inexpensive or free on-street parking create the appearance of scarcity when in fact spots often are plentiful nearby. Drivers prefer to circle the block looking for government-provided

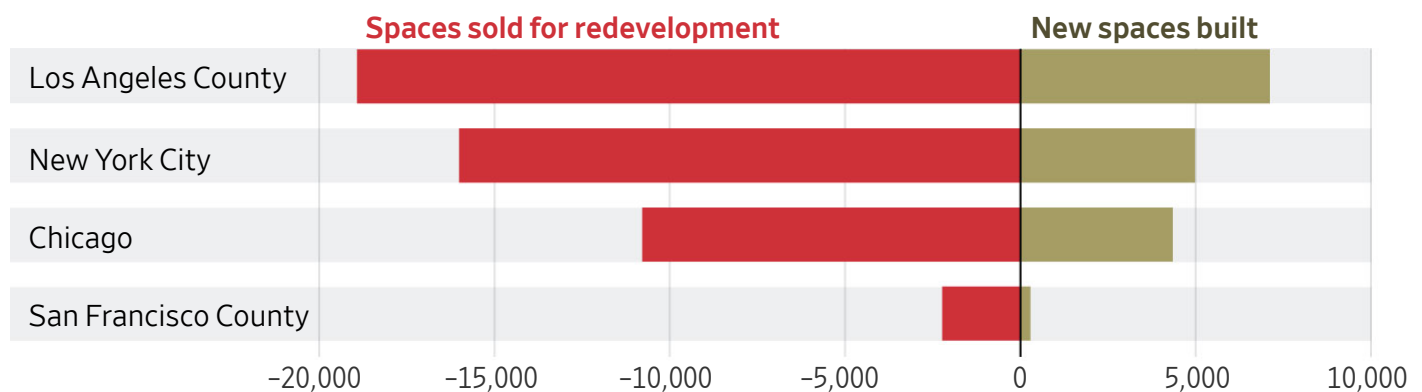
curbside parking rather than paying more in a privately owned garage. That adds to congestion.

Meanwhile, garages are rarely full. A 2012 survey by real-estate firm Colliers International found downtown parking garages in most major U.S. and Canadian cities have at least 20% vacancy during weekdays and on weekends during special events.

Mr. Shoup estimates there are between 700 million and 2 billion spaces in the U.S. That equates to between 2½ to seven spots for every registered vehicle. There are no official government statistics.

Dozens of cities across the country have eliminated at least some minimum-parking requirements, including big coastal cities such as New York City and San Francisco, and smaller cities such as Norman, Okla., and Bend, Ore. Last year, California abolished parking minimums statewide for new construction near public transit.

Change in the number of parking spaces in standalone garages and lots since 2010



Source: CoStar

Places that still have parking requirements are now more willing to grant exceptions.

Three years ago, the Charlotte, N.C., city council granted a rezoning request to Grubb Properties, a local developer, to build a 104-unit apartment close to downtown with no resident parking at all.

That enabled it to build about 25% more units than would have been possible had the building included parking, said Clay Grubb, the company's chief executive. Fitting in more units means rents will be about \$250 lower than they otherwise would have been, he said.

The building, which is set to open next year, will feature bicycle storage areas. It sits along a greenway close to downtown, and Mr. Grubb expects many residents will bike to work.

Mr. Grubb contrasted the Charlotte development with a 405-unit apartment project in Aurora, Colo., where city rules require him to build 485 spaces even though he estimates residents will only need 390. “That is a complete waste of money,” he said.

Building those extra spots, which subtracts from the space available for apartments, he said, will add more than \$100 to the average rent. The building sits next to a major hospital complex and not far from public transit. Mr. Grubb expects many of his future tenants to be hospital employees who will find it quicker to walk to work than to drive.



A 104-unit apartment building that Grubb Properties is building near downtown Charlotte, N.C., will have no resident parking at all.

PHOTO: ANGELA OWENS/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Michael Brannen, a spokesman for Aurora, said city parking requirements take into account the neighbors of residential or commercial properties, who often worry that new developments will overwhelm the neighborhood’s parking supply.

America’s parking glut has its roots in zoning rules first passed in the 1950s, when car ownership was on the rise and urban planners worried there weren’t enough curb spaces for all the new drivers. Many municipalities imposed detailed parking requirements for every type of land use. In Los Angeles, for instance, churches must include one spot for every five seats in the pews. Hospitals must have two per bed.

Parking mandates resulted in an abundance of parking, particularly in the West, where development boomed after they took effect. Parking covers about 14% of the land area in Los Angeles County, according to one study by a group of researchers from Arizona State University, UCLA and Georgia Tech. That is an area almost as large as Houston.



Downtown parking garages in most cities are rarely full. A garage in Los Angeles.

About 20 years ago, researchers and local leaders began challenging the rationale behind those rules. A 2016 study by C. J. Gabbe, a professor at Santa Clara University, and Gregory Pierce of UCLA found many of those spots are rarely used. The cost of providing all those spots is passed on to consumers in the form of higher rents or retail prices that even nondrivers pay, subsidizing drivers.

A garage adds about 17% to the average rent, the study found. Almost three-quarters of carless renters have a parking spot included in their rent. They collectively pay \$440 million a year for parking they don't need, the study concluded.

One of the earliest experiments with reducing parking came in 1999 with a Los Angeles ordinance designed to turn neglected downtown office buildings into apartments and condominiums.

To encourage builders to take a chance on what was then a moribund part of town, the ordinance made them exempt from parking requirements though forbidden from removing existing spaces.

That allowed builders to pack more units into the buildings and offer them at lower cost. In a 2013 paper, Michael Manville, a UCLA urban-planning professor, studied 56 of those refurbished buildings that added about 6,700 new units, and found that 2,640 of them wouldn't have been economically viable had existing parking rules prevailed.

In many cases, developers were able to lease existing spaces in the neighborhood to provide parking for a fee for those residents who wanted it.

Josh Gray-Emmer moved to one of the renovated buildings 20 years ago and later bought a condo in another, an old hotel where Charlie Chaplin once lived.

At first, he paid to park in a neighboring garage. About eight years ago, he gave up his car and parking spot, saving \$250 a month and, he said, improving his quality of life.



The apartment building where Josh Gray-Emmer lives in Los Angeles. He gave up his car and nearby parking space about eight years ago.

The ordinance kicked off a wave of downtown redevelopment that has brought \$35 billion in investment and boosted downtown's population from 18,000 to around 85,000, said Nick Griffin, executive director of the Los Angeles Downtown Center Business Improvement District.

“Eliminating parking requirements can have this huge impact on the quality of life and sustainability of a community,” said Sara Bronin, an architecture professor at Cornell University. “It is among the most significant changes that a local government can make.”

The shift away from parking picked up steam about a decade ago, as more people moved downtown for closer access to jobs and amenities. A rebound in apartment construction following the 2007-09 recession led governments to plan for denser, more walkable neighborhoods, which meant less land set aside for cars.

Average number of parking spaces per new U.S. residential unit



Average number of parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of new U.S. office construction



Sources: Yardi Matrix (per new residential unit);
CommercialEdge (per square feet)

In 2017, Buffalo, N.Y., became one of the first big cities to eliminate minimum parking requirements citywide. “The priority was people are looking for a place to live, not to park,” said Brendan Mehaffy, the city’s director of strategic planning.

Developments approved in the first two years after the change provided 21% fewer spots than would have been required under the old rules, according to a study by the University of Buffalo. It also contributed to a development boom in the city’s downtown that helped arrest decades of decline.

The latest once-a-decade Census count, done in 2020, showed Buffalo’s population grew for the first time since the 1950 Census.

One former parking lot on the east side of downtown is now a grocery store and 201 units of affordable housing, with limited on-site parking.

Buffalo has since become a model. Mr. Mehaffy frequently speaks to planners elsewhere looking to replicate the city's parking policy.

The changes are starting to have an effect nationwide. Apartment buildings completed in 2022 included an average 1.1 spaces per unit, down from a peak of 1.7 in 1998 and the lowest parking ratio since 1959, according to Yardi Matrix, a data provider.

New office construction in 2022 included 2.29 spots per 1,000 square feet, down from a peak of 3.66 in 1999, according to CommercialEdge, a data provider.

Major retailers are also rethinking their parking supply. Macy's Inc. has started redeveloping some parking lots near its department stores, leasing the space to fast-food restaurants, coffee shops or banks.

The revival of downtowns has led developers to turn old parking lots and garages into new buildings. That has caused anxiety among some drivers and parking executives.



Street parking in downtown Los Angeles. The city has lost parking spots as lots and garages get redeveloped.

Since 2010, Los Angeles and New York City have each lost more than 11,000 spots as old parking lots and garages get redeveloped, according to an analysis performed for The Wall Street Journal by real-estate firm CoStar.

In Philadelphia, the city estimates the number of parking spots in downtown garages fell to 45,898 in 2020, from 50,023 in 2010, replaced by office and condo towers.

A 22.5% gross-receipts tax on parking operators is pushing many to sell or redevelop their properties, said Robert Zuritsky, chief executive of Parkway Corp., a Philadelphia real-estate company that owns and operates parking facilities.

“You went from the city through policy and regulation forcing you to build too much parking to now really they’re forcing developers to not have any parking at all,” he said.

Rebecca Lopez Kriss, Philadelphia’s deputy revenue commissioner, said the city uses the tax to encourage more high-value development downtown. “The parking tax is really one strategy to promote alternative transportation options and sustainable land use,” she said.

The 19-story headquarters building for the law firm of Morgan Lewis & Bockius is going up on a former parking lot. Comcast Corp. built a \$1.5 billion skyscraper on another lot. Elsewhere, hotels and apartments have gone up on land once used to park cars.

Corie Moskow, who works downtown, used to park on the lot that will become the Morgan Lewis building. “Now I’m adding an extra half an hour in the morning just to make sure I can find a spot,” she said.

Ms. Moskow is the executive director of the Rittenhouse Row Business Merchants Association in downtown Philadelphia. She worries that a lack of parking will keep people from visiting the area’s stores and restaurants.

“We want to make it easier for people to come,” she said. “Having less parking space isn’t making it easier.”



An indoor parking lot in Los Angeles.

Write to David Harrison at david.harrison@wsj.com

Corrections & Amplifications

Georgia Institute of Technology, commonly known as Georgia Tech, was incorrectly referred to as Georgia Tech University in an earlier version of this article. (Corrected on April 3.)

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Spaced Out – The Shift Away from Minimum Parking Requirements

Article By:
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While it's well known that the auto industry is undergoing an electric vehicle (EV) revolution, one of the industry's offspring is experiencing a quieter but notable sea change as well — parking.

Parking reform, the reduction or elimination of requirements for [off-street parking](#), has recently taken off across the United States, and the early results hold lessons for key shapers of our built environment, namely real estate developers and municipalities.

Introduction

[Parking requirements first sprung up](#) in the United States in the 1920s when motor vehicles became the predominant form of transportation which caused crowded streets and dangerous driving and parking conditions. A century later, parking lots are a ubiquitous part of everyday life for most Americans that are often overlooked yet dominate the urban landscape. Parking takes up almost [one-third of the land area](#) in US cities. For every vehicle in the country – numbering [nearly 291 million](#) as of 2022 – there are [at least three, and some estimates put as high as eight, parking spaces](#). Though there is no consensus as to the total number of parking spaces in the US, [there may be two billion spots](#), more than six times the number of people.

This parking excess did not develop by accident. Rather, researchers pinpoint requirements in local zoning codes that diverged from actual parking demand in the latter half of the 20th and early 21st centuries, requiring developers to build more parking spaces regardless of need.^[1] According to land use policy experts, the resulting [oversupply of parking has led to numerous problems](#), including: (1) making sprawl endemic, leading to more driving and even more parking; (2) causing housing to be more costly, as adding parking spaces leads to higher developer costs; (3) blocking redevelopment of vacant or underutilized buildings, as complying with parking requirements makes such projects infeasible; (4) increasing flooding risk with more and more concrete surface area; and (5) contributing to climate change by adding to the urban heat island effect.

Cities across the country have begun to address these issues by [reducing or outright eliminating parking requirements](#) from their zoning codes. Many have eliminated parking in the densest areas, such as downtown or near large public transportation hubs, while others eliminated parking requirements city-wide. In 2017, [Buffalo, New York](#), was the first US city to eliminate minimum parking requirements from new development projects across the entire city. In 2022, [at least 10 US cities](#) eliminated parking mandates, with [San Jose, California](#), becoming the largest to date. Interestingly, parking reform is not occurring just in major cities but also in [suburban areas](#) like Culver City, California, and [smaller cities](#) like Fayetteville, Arkansas. Moreover, states led by those on the West Coast are increasingly addressing the parking glut at the state level to spur affordable housing development and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.^[2]

Impacts of Eliminating (or Reducing) Minimum Parking Requirements

On Developers

The elimination (or reduction) of parking requirements should theoretically lead to construction cost savings and shorter construction timelines for developers as they will not be forced to spend funds and time on parking minimums. Across the United States in 2021, the average parking space cost roughly [between \\$21,000 and \\$35,000](#) to construct. Underground parking can [double the per-space cost](#). In addition, parking reform advocates maintain that the added construction costs due to minimum parking requirements can increase the rent or mortgage for an apartment or house by [\\$200-\\$500 per month](#). As elimination of parking mandates has occurred relatively recently, new studies have emerged in just the last few years to show what effect parking reform had in practice.

A study of Seattle, which in 2012 reduced or eliminated parking requirements for multi-family housing in high-density areas and near major transit corridors, found that impacted developers built [40% less parking](#) than otherwise would have been required under the old parking regime, resulting in almost 18,000 fewer parking spaces. The study's authors estimated this [reform saved \\$537 million](#) in direct construction costs over five years, more than \$20,000 per unit, savings which parking reform advocates claim [benefitted both developers and consumers](#).

Since the 2017 parking reforms in Buffalo, 14 mixed-use projects that were studied provided [53% less parking](#) than previously required, with four projects building no parking at all. The full 36 developments studied [built 502 fewer parking spaces](#) than would have been needed under the prior rules, [saving \\$30 million in construction costs and eight acres of land](#). What's interesting is that developers responded to new parking rules in some cases by innovating, moving to a [shared parking model](#) with adjacent projects, whereas others outside the downtown area elected to build the same or even more parking than previously required. This outcome illustrates a fundamental takeaway from parking reforms nationwide: parking is not going away entirely. Parking will continue to be built in more car-reliant areas for the near future, though some developers insist that loosening the requirements will allow them to [tailor their projects](#) to better reflect actual parking needs instead of adhering to arbitrary parking minimums.

By reducing or eliminating parking requirements, proponents of parking deregulation also argue that municipalities provide more certainty to developers in pricing their projects and free them from having to seek [variances for parking reductions](#), an oft-requested zoning modification, on a case-by-case basis.

On Municipalities

Advocates for parking reform believe that municipalities will also benefit from abolishing or reducing minimum off-street parking requirements, namely through increased development of affordable housing, revitalization of underutilized buildings, and increased tax revenue.

Groups ranging from developers to neighborhood preservation advocates assert that the potential to [increase housing stock](#) is one of the most compelling reasons behind the movement away from parking requirements, as many cities are struggling to meet demand for affordable housing. The Washington, DC, metropolitan area, for example, needs to [add 320,000 new housing units by 2030](#) according to one study, with at least 75% of those being for affordable to low- and middle-income wage earners. With less land devoted to parking, additional housing and other projects can be built on areas that previously would have been allotted to parking space under minimum parking requirements. Proponents argue that cities will be able to grow at a [higher density](#), creating a more walkable and bike-friendly environment, thus reducing the reliance on cars and overall need for parking.

Eliminating parking minimums also aligns with many municipalities' goals of historic preservation and revitalization. Often these projects are not financially or logistically feasible when taking parking into account. Many older buildings were built before parking requirements gained traction around the country and thus most revitalization efforts would require extensive additional parking infrastructure. Take Los Angeles in the late 1990s, for example: [19th-century office buildings sat vacant](#) in the financial district with no developers willing to renovate them because any housing development would require two parking spaces per unit. However, after an ordinance was passed eliminating this requirement, [57 of the historic buildings were converted into housing](#) in the following eight years.

Additionally, [municipalities lose vital property tax revenue](#) by having an overabundance of parking. Sandpoint, a small town in Idaho, provides an interesting case study. Worried about the destruction of historic buildings to build parking, Sandpoint eliminated all downtown parking requirements. In addition to spurring the development of small businesses, the change incentivized a growing tech startup to stay local and renovate an old lumber facility as its new tech campus, leading to a [property assessment value increase](#) of over \$2 million. The property had ample parking as it stood, but if the parking requirement were still in existence the startup would have had to double the lot size to avoid fees, potentially pushing it to relocate. Consequently, the new campus brought more jobs to Sandpoint, a positive economic driver.

A Path Forward

A shift away from minimum parking requirements is gathering momentum across the country, which is likely to accelerate as other municipalities observe that this successful deregulation is easy to implement. Parking policy experts assert that those yet to act would be wise to start taking steps toward a future transition, including ensuring a practical and efficient public transit system, planning denser land use patterns, and [pricing on-street parking at optimal levels](#).^[3] Further, smaller scale changes, such as eliminating parking requirements only in a downtown area or [just for affordable housing developments](#), are viable ways to introduce parking reform where the public is more skeptical about it.

With the proliferation of EVs and a demographic movement away from city centers during the pandemic, parking reform should continue to be a hot topic for years to come. Whether you're a developer who needs help understanding the variance process or a municipality tasked with re-working parking requirements, we're here to make sure you stay up to date on the most salient parking trends.

FOOTNOTES

^[1] For example, in Columbus, Ohio, the city's zoning code from the 1950s required developers to provide 100 parking spaces for 100 one-bedroom units; nowadays, the same development would require 150 spaces. Similarly, parking for a 2,500 square foot restaurant ballooned from 9 to 34 required spaces during the same time period. Catie Gould, [Shifting Gears: Why Communities Are Eliminating Off-Street Parking Requirements—and What Comes Next](#), Lincoln Inst. Land Pol. (Oct. 12, 2022).

^[2] California's AB 2097 will prohibit minimum parking requirements near high-quality transit corridors and key transit stops starting January 1, 2023, and Oregon recently approved sweeping parking rules that give the state's largest metro areas flexibility to roll back or eliminate parking mandates. Amanda Lee, [More Places, Less Spaces: California Is Driving Down Development Costs](#), Nat. L. Rev., Vol. XII, No. 346 (Dec. 12, 2022); Kimberlee Stafford, [Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission Tackles Parking Reform](#), Tonkon Torp (June 14, 2022).

^[3] According to notable parking authority Donald Shoup, an urban planning professor at UCLA, on-street parking should be priced so that there is always at least one spot open on each block to satisfy demand. He also advocates reinvesting revenue made from parking meters in public services to help gain the support of the public for the parking regime. Donald Shoup, *The Pseudoscience of Parking Requirements*, Zoning Prac., Issue 2, at 2 (Feb. 2020).

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SQUARE FEET

Awash in Asphalt, Cities Rethink Their Parking Needs

Local leaders across the nation are overhauling parking requirements for developers, scaling back the minimum number of spots for shopping centers and apartment complexes.

By Jane Margolies

Published March 7, 2023 Updated March 9, 2023

Spying an empty spot in a parking lot, a driver flicks on the turn signal and steers the car into the space. This little maneuver happens so often across the country that it's done almost without a second thought.

But now, the humble parking spot is suddenly a hot topic. Scrutinizing their parking regulations, cities across the nation are rolling back requirements for new development.

The United States has about two billion parking spots, according to some estimates — nearly seven for every car. In some cities, as much as 14 percent of land area is covered with the black asphalt that engulfs malls, apartment buildings and commercial strips.

The fact that the country is awash in parking spots stems from America's longstanding love affair with the car, compounded by arcane zoning codes that mandate off-street parking for real estate projects.

But paving over paradise, to paraphrase Joni Mitchell, is now being blamed for a number of societal woes, including the housing crisis, climate change and the rise in fatalities among pedestrians and cyclists.

The idea that the country has an overabundance of parking may come as a surprise to residents of big cities like Chicago, New York and Washington, where drivers are routinely hunting for a spot, and sometimes even get into fights over parking spaces. Some worry that rolling back mandates may make it even harder to find that coveted spot.

But in city after city, minimum parking requirements, as they are called, are being struck down, thrilling progressives and real estate developers alike. "It's snowballing," said Jeff Speck, a city planner and the author of "Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time."

Despite pushback from some residents not ready to share their favorite spot, hundreds of cities, from Gainesville, Fla., to Anchorage have overhauled their parking requirements. Dozens have repealed them; 15 in 2022 alone.

Changes in work modes may be coming into play: The rise in popularity of remote and hybrid work arrangements means fewer office workers are commuting daily, decreasing the need for parking.

Priscilla Barolo of Carmel, Calif., found she no longer needed a parking spot when she started her own consulting business from home, giving up a communications job at Zoom — and a commute that took an hour each way, which cut into the time she spent with her two young sons. "Remote is going to be my future," Mrs. Barolo said.

The move to reduce parking lots has particular relevance for real estate. "We think it's the future," said Dirk Aulabaugh, an executive vice president at Green Street, a real estate analytics firm.

Off-street parking sprang up in the 1920s with the rise in car ownership. Concerned that there would not be enough curb space for vehicles, towns and cities started to require that stores or apartment complexes provided parking for customers and tenants.



Cars parked in Plain City, Ohio, in 1938. Off-street parking sprang up in the 1920s with the rise in car ownership. Library of Congress



and customers. Even a basic, stand-alone parking structure costs nearly \$28,000 per spot on average, not including land, said Rob McConnell, a vice president at WGI, an engineering firm. And underground parking costs twice as much, he added.

Some developers would include space for parking even if it was not mandated, believing the success of their projects depended on it. Others petition for variances, a time-consuming undertaking.



Buffalo eliminated mandates in 2017, leaving it up to developers to figure out how much parking to provide. George Etheredge for The New York Times

Officials in Buffalo decided there had to be a better way. In 2017, the city eliminated minimum parking mandates for new developments, leaving it up to developers to figure out how much to provide. A 2021 study revealed that after the repeal, new major developments overall had 21 percent fewer spaces than the minimum parking mandates would have required.

And projects in Buffalo that might not have been feasible before the repeal suddenly were, including one with affordable apartments that was built, coincidentally, on a former parking lot.

Other cities — seeing that “the sky did not fall,” as Mr. Shoup put it — followed suit. Some reduced minimum requirements, others did away with them altogether and still others went so far as to set parking maximums, according to the nonprofit group Parking Reform Network, which has been tracking the moves. Instead of parking, some developers provided allowances for mass transit and bike use or rental-car-sharing arrangements.

Overturning the requirements is not the only way parking lots are being refashioned. There have been efforts to landscape them with plants to absorb rainfall rather than letting it run off, which can cause flooding. The greenery can also reduce heat radiating from the asphalt. Some lots have been transformed into parks, while others are topped with solar panels to provide power as well as shade.

Not everyone is a fan of the reforms. Those with disabilities need to be able to park close to where they are going, Mr. McConnell of WGI said. Much of the time, however, objections to repealing minimums come from homeowners who fear their neighborhoods will be overrun with cars.

In South Boston, mandates were increased in 2016. Last year, Miami reinstated minimum parking requirements. “This is not a pedestrian and bicycle city,” said one commissioner who complained of people parking in front of his house.

But the momentum is in the other direction, driven in part by a housing shortage, which has prompted officials to explore ways to ease construction requirements and make homes more affordable.

In December, San Jose, Calif., became the largest U.S. city to eliminate parking minimums, and Bend, Ore., repealed its minimums this year.

In some cities, the amount of parking may already exceed demand, according to a 2018 inventory commissioned by the Research Institute for Housing America, part of the Mortgage Bankers Association. The survey showed that there were 19 parking spots per household in Des Moines, and that in Jackson, Wyo., there were 27 spaces for every home.

There’s action at the state level, too. California recently capped parking in cities with robust mass transit, and Oregon capped it for cities of a certain size. In New York, a bill in committee would prevent cities, villages and towns from imposing exclusionary zoning, including parking minimums.



Parking garage provided by the municipality in the downtown area of Elizabeth, N.J. Ben Sklar for The New York Times

And legislation introduced at the national level, known as the Yes in My Backyard Act, would require recipients of certain federal funds to show that they were eliminating or reducing barriers to affordable housing, including off-street parking requirements.

“We need more housing, we need more density in certain cities,” Mr. Aulabaugh of Green Street said. “Converting parking or lowering the parking requirement, that’s how you get there.”

Even on Black Friday, traditionally the busiest shopping day of the year, there may be more than enough parking spaces for shoppers now that so many people buy presents online during the holiday season. To raise awareness of the glut, the nonprofit organization Strong Towns started a #BlackFridayParking social media campaign; every November, photos of half-empty lots are tagged. Indeed, outer edges of lots around malls are now being regarded as a kind of land bank for future development.

Those parking spots may not be missed when they’re gone, given the decline in car ownership among millennials coupled with changes in transportation modes, including ride-hailing, car-sharing, and electric bikes and scooters.

Dr. David Rosen, a physician who specializes in sleep disorders, doesn’t need a parking spot when he bikes from his home in Tenafly, N.J., to a hospital in the Bronx where he works in an intensive care unit once a week. “Arriving by bike is a fantastic feeling,” he said.