

More Housing, More Business, Lower Costs, and Parking Still Supplied:

What Happens When Parking Mandates are Reduced

New Oregon standards reduce how much parking can be mandated by local governments in metro areas. Reducing one-size-fits-all, costly parking mandates isn't new. It's been done for decades around the world, and in Oregon, with significant success.



Cities that lower parking mandates have seen reduced housing costs, increased business development, and more diverse developments, with creative approaches to providing parking.

Most builders in communities without parking mandates still provide some parking with new developments. Some of them provide less than previously mandated, or provide it off-site. Others provide more than previously mandated, as their market analysis or lenders indicate that's what their customers want. This how builders currently act; for example, a student-focused development on the edge of Corvallis provided 2.7 spaces per unit, higher than mandated.

After seeing outcomes, communities instituting reforms have retained or expanded them.

There are likely already examples in your community or a nearby community without parking minimums, either in code or by variance. Many Oregon communities have no parking requirements for commercial downtown developments (for example, Hillsboro, Monmouth, Milwaukie, Forest Grove, and Stayton). Others have no or limited parking mandates in downtowns at all (Salem, Coburg, Eugene, Portland).

Here are some examples:

- **Salem** gave a variance for a new housing development, and subsequently reduced parking mandates in its downtown, along transit corridors, and for traditional missing middle housing types.
- **Eugene** saw the construction of two large parking garages as part of a residential development in its downtown, though no parking was required.
- **Oregon City** saw creative, more affordable infill housing, after waiving mandates for single-family homes.
- **Tigard** repealed parking mandates in the Tigard Triangle in 2017, and has seen healthy redevelopment levels in the area since. Builders have included off-street parking, slightly under the old requirements.
- **Madras** recently repealed parking mandates in its downtown, aiming to spur business development.
- **Minneapolis, MN** saw typical rents of studio apartments fall 17% (from \$1200 to \$1000) in buildings without parking.
- **Fargo, ND** (pop. 125,000) saw a downtown economic renaissance, with new businesses and thousands of new residents, after repealing parking mandates.
- **Buffalo, NY** (pop. 255,000) saw significant new development after repealing parking mandates, with single-use projects providing more than previous requirements, on average, and mixed-use projects providing less.
- **San Diego, CA** saw a five-fold increase in affordable housing, and an increase in market-rate housing, after adopting reforms including parking reforms. The city later cut commercial parking mandates.
- **Los Angeles, CA** saw a four-fold increase in downtown housing development, focused on redevelopment of older buildings. Units provided an average of 1.2 spaces per unit; about 40% were off-site.
- **Seattle, WA** saw builders saving \$537 million (\$30,000 per unit) over five years after reducing mandates near transit and in centers. Still, two-thirds of developments provided more parking than mandated.

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Further Details *(builds on one-page summary above)*



Buffalo, New York

Buffalo adopted a “Green Code” in 2017, which included a repeal of minimum parking requirements citywide. Among the 36 major developments in the two years following passage, 47% included fewer parking spaces than previously mandated, indicating requirements may have been excessive. Mixed-use developments provided 53% fewer parking spaces than previously mandated, as developers found business models with less off-street parking.

While parking built for single-use housing projects varied significantly, the total spaces provided exceeded what would have been required by earlier mandates, meaning lenders and builders may have been wary to deviate from previous assumptions about parking demand.

In short: Buffalo developments had a more diverse parking market. Some places built just as much or more as previously required. Others had none. Others had some, but not as much, as would have been mandated.

[Full article: Minus Minimums \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

[Zoning rules change in Buffalo shows parking reform could reenergize downtowns - News Bit](#)

Fargo, North Dakota

After Fargo (pop. 125,000) repealed its downtown parking mandates, redevelopment followed. Builders built a 104-unit mixed-use development, and North Dakota State University moved its architecture and business schools downtown. Over 4,000 more students and faculty ended up living, working and studying downtown. The downtown “renaissance zone” saw a ten-fold increase in property tax dollars.

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2015/11/23/robust-growth-and-development-without-mandating-parking>

Minneapolis, Minnesota

After Minneapolis reduced its parking mandates in 2015, typical rents for a new studio apartment without parking fell from \$1,200 a month to about \$1,000 a month, saving renters \$2,400 per year. That decrease is in line with [previous studies](#) noting structured parking can cost about 17% of monthly rent. New developments near transit provided roughly 30% less parking than mandates would have been required.

[People Over Parking \(planning.org\)](#)

[What Happens When You Ease Parking Requirements for New Housing — nickmagrino.com](#)

Mixed-use developments provided 53% fewer parking spaces...

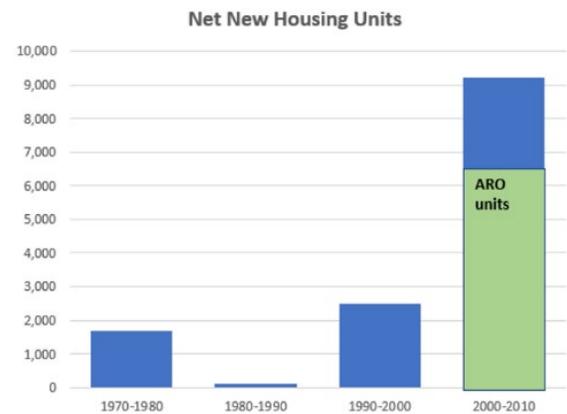
Total spaces for single-use projects exceeded what would have been previously required; but there was variation by development

Thousands more people moved downtown, leading to a ten-fold increase in property tax dollars in the area.

Typical rents for a new studio apartment without parking fell from \$1,200 a month to about \$1,000 a month

Los Angeles, California

Los Angeles removed downtown parking mandates in 1999, as part of its Adoptive Reuse Ordinance (ARO). In the previous 30 years, downtown Los Angeles added about 4,300 housing units. In the decade following the ordinance, over 9,200 housing units were added, about 70% of which relied on provisions in the ARO. One analyst argues, “the ARO created more housing in less than ten years than had been created in the previous thirty.” The ARO also provided alternative regulations on fire and earthquake standards, and allowed changes of use without variances. Because some of the



Developers revamping old commercial buildings under the ARO were particularly creative in meeting the demands for parking. In an analysis of 56 ARO building redevelopments, Professor Michael Manville found half of the parking for apartments was provided off-site. While total parking provided exceeded previous mandates (providing 1.2 spaces/unit), the relaxed mandates allowed more flexibility in location, and different amounts of parking provided among developments. Meanwhile, condo redevelopment provided 1.3 spaces per unit, well under the previous mandate of 2.0 spaces per unit, with 34% of parking off-site.

Housing development increased nearly 4-fold.

Less parking was built; though units still averaged 1.2 parking spaces/unit. Much of it was off-site.

In short, parking reform helped create thousands of new housing units, and a more nuanced approach to parking supply.

[Parking Requirements and Housing Development: Regulation and Reform in Los Angeles – ACCESS Magazine](#)

San Diego, California

In 2019, San Diego removed parking mandates in transit priority zones. This, combined with a density bonus program, led to a more than five-fold increase in affordable housing unit production. While previous years saw up to 289 affordable units built, 2020 saw 1,564 new affordable units. Market-rate housing also increased. The real costs of providing parking, and its crowding out of housing, became clear. In 2021, San Diego built on this success and reduced commercial parking mandates. <https://cal.streetsblog.org/2021/05/19/parking-requirements-are-not-a-useful-bargaining-chip-for-increasing-affordable-housing/>

The package of reforms helped lead to a five-fold increase in affordable housing unit production.

Seattle, Washington

Seattle reduced parking mandates in centers and near frequent transit in 2011. In the five years following that reform, developers built 18,000 fewer (40% less) parking spaces than previous mandates would have required while building over 60,000 housing units, saving \$537 million. On average, developers provided two parking spaces for every three units. About one in five housing developments provided no parking spaces, but two-thirds provided more than required. All but one of the 868 developments had less than two spaces per unit. High-end developments provided more parking than more affordable units.

Builders saved \$537 million (\$30,000 per unit) by building fewer parking spaces. Yet two-thirds of developments provided more parking than mandated.

https://transfersmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2020/11/Issue-6-Gabbe_finalv2.pdf

In Oregon

Coburg

Eager to boost development in its downtown, Coburg updated its codes in 2020 to repeal parking mandates, except for employee parking. It is too early to judge the outcomes.

Eugene

Eugene has not required off-street parking for downtown developments for several years. Despite that, a large new development at 13th and Olive included hundreds of units of 2, 3 and 4-bedroom housing (1308 bedrooms total), and two large new parking garages, as part of a business model. They're in part used for paid public parking, and monthly rentals. In the absence of mandates, hundreds of parking spots were developed.

Despite not having to build parking by mandate, one downtown builder included two parking garages with hundreds of spaces.

Tigard

In an effort to spur redevelopment, Tigard adopted a "Lean Code" in 2017 for the Tigard Triangle. That code included a removal of off-street parking mandates while adding requirements for on-street parking and public bike parking spaces. In the five years since, the City has seen significant redevelopment in the area. Builders continue to provide off-street parking, at levels slightly lower than previously required. Builders have also found creative ways to use shared parking. Unnecessary building expenses have been reduced. The city is now developing a Curbside Management Plan to ensure effective use of the curb for parking, deliveries, ride hailing, transit, and micromobility options, as use of the area intensifies.

Madras

Eager to boost development in its downtown, in 2022, the Madras City Council passed a resolution to repeal its parking mandates in the downtown core. The decision was made as part of a code update funded by Oregon's Transportation and Growth Management program. It is too early to judge the outcomes.

Portland

Portland has had limited parking mandates for quite some time, helping housing get built and providing for more infill. One oft-cited anecdote about parking is challenges finding spaces in the SE Division Street corridor. People understand that different ways. One way is parking in the neighborhood is difficult because too many people love the neighborhood and want to live there or visit. Another would note the city hasn't yet fully managed the area's parking demand with permits, pricing, signage, and other parking management techniques.

... too many people love the neighborhood and want to live there or visit.

Most of Portland also has no parking mandates but gets little attention. Attempts to build a new parking garage in Northwest Portland, near 21st and 23rd, have run into realities of the costs of doing so. Hence, Portland has worked in various ways to decrease demand for parking, such as its Transportation Wallet (providing affordable transportation choices) funded through parking permits, and on-street permit costs of \$195/year in Northwest (less for low-income people).

Oregon City

Since 2013, Oregon City has not required off-street parking for single-family detached housing and duplexes. Most new homes are still typically built with garages and driveways, due to market preferences. But in a few cases, the lack of parking mandates has allowed infill development to be constructed at a lesser cost. One creative example is [these smaller homes](#) that hit a \$325,000 sales price in the city where median home price is \$575,000.

Salem

In 2019, the City of Salem approved an application for a six-story, mixed-use downtown [development](#) for ground-floor commercial space and 148 units above. The development has 14 parking spaces in addition to secure bicycle parking. The units consist mainly of micro-housing studios, with some one and two-bedroom units. Building on the positive outcomes from that experience, and at staff recommendation, City Council passed code updates in 2020 that aimed to remove barriers to the development of multifamily housing. The code changes eliminated parking mandates for multifamily developments throughout downtown and within ¼ mile of the core transit network. Several local builders testified they would continue to build parking, as it was part of their business model.

One reduced-parking housing project led to broader reforms.

Those reforms then led to further reforms.

In 2022, the city implemented HB 2001 to allow traditional missing middle housing throughout Salem; that code change eliminated parking mandates for two, three, and four-unit developments and cottage clusters. Later in 2022, the city updated its Comprehensive Plan and associated maps and zoning code. As part of that citywide project, the city aimed to further incentivize infill housing and redevelopment near frequent transit service. It did so by eliminating parking mandates for any use in a mixed-use zone near the core transit network as long as multifamily housing was included.

Reform Communities Around the World

Scores of communities throughout the world have eliminated their parking mandates. Some of them:

Alameda, CA	Calgary, AB	Jackson, TN	Raleigh, NC
Albermarle, NC	Cambridge, MA	Kingston, ON	Raleigh, VA
Ann Arbor, MI	Canandagua, NY	Lunesurg, NS	Richmond, VA
Auburn, ME	Dover, NH	Mancelona, MI	River Rouge, MI
Bandera, TX	Dunwoody, GA	Mason City, IA	Sacramento, CA
Bastrop, TX	Ecorse, MI	Mexico City	Saranac Lake, NY
Berkeley, CA	Edmonton, AB	Minneapolis, MN	Seabrook, NH
Berlin, Germany	Fayetteville, AR	New Zealand (metro areas)	South Bend, IN
Boston, MA	Greensboro, NC	Norman, OK	Spartanburg, SC
Boston, MA	Hartford, CT	Ottawa, ON	St Paul, MN
Branson, MO	High River, AB	Peoria, IL	Toronto, ON
Bridgeport, CT	Hudson, NY		

Questions, Corrections or Comments

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