

8

Quick Ways Cities Can Improve Parking Codes

Is your community concerned about housing costs, the cost of doing business, walkability, climate pollution, historic preservation or age-friendly development? Have you seen wasted land, turned away restaurant proposals in downtowns, or wished housing was cheaper to build?

There's something easy you can do – improve your parking code. Parking requirements affect all of these issues. While a thorough updating of parking codes is in order for most cities, these improvements can be made quickly.

Eight things cities can do today:

1. Allow required parking to be off-site, within walking distance

There's no reason for most required parking to be located on the same site as the use. Yet in too many local ordinances, builders are required to provide parking on the *exact site* of the development, instead of just providing residents and visitors who drive with space to park.

This can mean central buildings in downtowns never get redeveloped, as they were initially built before parking requirements. Or it can mean builders have to buy and raze adjacent buildings – an expensive proposition that also decreases a city's walkability.

Cities should allow any required parking to be provided within a reasonable walking distance. The Transportation and Growth Management program (TGM) recommends one-half mile – a distance often used to gauge transit accessibility. If it's reasonable to walk that far to access transit, it's reasonable to walk that far to access other modes. This creates efficiencies, allows for more shared parking, and removes barriers to the redevelopment of vacant or underused properties.

Cities that do some version of this:

Albany (for some uses such as theaters, up to 1000 feet), Ashland, Baker City (500 feet), Cascade Locks (required parking may be located anywhere downtown), Corvallis (in the downtown zone, 750 feet), Klamath Falls (500 feet for some uses), Lafayette, Lake Oswego, Roseburg, Salem (for employees and residents downtown, up to 2000 feet), Stayton (500 feet), TGM Model Code.

Sample code language:

Vehicle parking spaces required by this Chapter may be located on another parcel of land within *[one-quarter mile/2000 feet/one-half mile]* of the use it serves. The distance from the parking area to the use shall be measured from the nearest parking space to a building entrance, following a sidewalk or other pedestrian route.

[Additional option for on-street] On-street parking in non-residential zones within one-quarter mile of the building may be used toward fulfilling the minimum parking requirements. [An on-street parking space may be counted only once to fulfill an off-street parking requirement, except as provided in [shared parking reference – see #6, below.] The City shall maintain a record of on-street spaces that are



Parking and walking has multiple benefits for people and cities.

available under this provision. All on-street spaces shall remain available for use by the public in accordance with posted restrictions (e.g. Americans with Disability Act, loading zones, time limits, vehicle size limits, etc.).]

2. Allow curbside frontage to count toward required parking quotas

Requiring parking to be off-street limits the ability to site multiple housing units on smaller lots, and drives up the cost of housing. Such provisions have little effect on the parking supply, other than removing at least one parking space from the public use since the curb cut takes away an on-street parking space. Off-street parking also reduces walkability, causing conflict between pedestrians and cars, and often results in parked cars blocking the sidewalk.

This provision may not apply in areas where on-street parking is limited, such as areas served by alleys or on very narrow streets.

Cities that do some version of this:

Albany (certain uses and certain zones, up to 1000 feet away, with conditions), Ashland (discretionary - property frontage, up to 50% of requirement), Baker City (abutting block face), Cascade Locks, Cornelius (downtown and corridor commercial), Corvallis (certain zones), Klamath Falls (downtown businesses smaller than 3,000 sq. feet), Lake Oswego (downtown), Roseburg (up to 20% of frontage spaces can count toward requirement), Sisters, City of St. Helens (downtown, on abutting streets), TGM’s Model Code (3.5.030.B.4).

Sample code language:

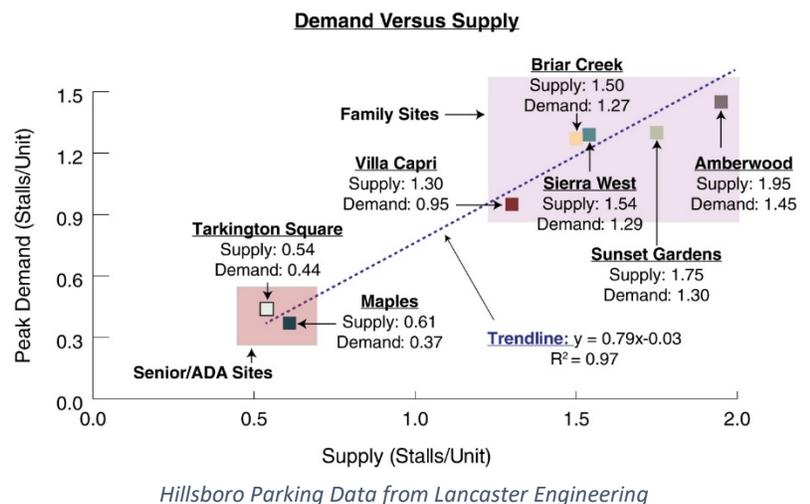
New development shall meet required on-site parking requirements with credit, on one-for-one basis of parking spaces in rights-of-way within one-quarter mile of the site. *[weaker but easier to implement option: spaces abutting the site.]* [Note: may want a provision limiting double-counting spaces, as in #1].

3. Waive or reduce parking requirements for affordable housing, senior housing, housing for people with disabilities, transit-oriented or mixed-use development

These are specific types of housing Oregon is aiming to promote, and often have users who own fewer cars or drive less than the average household. Local governments should let the builders of this housing make a market-based decision how much parking they will supply.

Cities that do some version of this:

Albany (mixed-use up to 10% reduction; up to 25% for redeveloping existing parking for transit-oriented uses), Ashland (up to 50% reduction for mixed-use or with transit facilities; one space/unit for senior housing; affordable housing developments have been allowed 50% reduction), Beaverton (with a parking study, 5-10% reduction near transit, reduction for senior and disabled housing, can apply for 10-50% reduction for affordable housing), Cascade Locks (no parking required for residential units in mixed-use buildings downtown), Corvallis (10% reductions for being near transit or



having lots of bike parking), Lake Oswego (transit-oriented development 10% reduction in downtown, other items with a parking study), Stayton (for senior housing, 1.25 spaces/unit instead of 1.75). TGM's Model Code suggests up to 20% reduction for sites served by frequent transit service.

Sample code language:

Parking requirement reductions. No automobile parking spaces are required to be provided for: (a) affordable housing, defined in [code reference]; (b) housing developments for elderly persons or persons with disabilities, limited to [insert list of applicable housing types as defined in code]; (c) housing within one-half mile of a transit stop served by frequent transit, defined as 15-minute or more frequent service at peak; (d) mixed-use development, as defined in [code reference].

4. Waive parking requirements for renovations of historic buildings, small businesses, and long-vacant buildings

Cities often want to promote the use of historic buildings, long-vacant buildings, and buildings under 3,000 sq. feet. Parking requirements can be a barrier for small businesses that are starting up. Los Angeles' downtown revitalization was sparked in part due to waiving parking requirements for renovations of historic buildings.¹ Detroit, MI has waived parking requirements for new uses in pre-existing buildings under 3,000 sq. feet.

Cities that do some version of this:

Detroit (MI), Los Angeles (CA), Albany (downtown exempt from parking requirements), Ashland (allows 50% reduction for historic buildings in certain area), Baker City (no mandated off-street parking downtown for commercial uses; residential uses downtown can meet parking requirements off-site, through lease, or shared parking), Cornelius (waives parking for change of use in existing buildings downtown and commercial uses in the core residential zone; decreases it for corridor commercial), Klamath Falls (for commercial or neighborhood commercial building that has been vacant for 24+months, parking requirements can be reduced by 75%), Lake Oswego (downtown, where former use was retail and new use is retail or restaurant), City of St. Helens. TGM's Model Code suggests no mandated parking in downtowns (3.5.030.B).

Note: Many cities have no parking mandates in their downtowns. Those cities often form a parking district to collectively manage parking supply. See TGM's *Parking Made Easy manual (2013)* for guidance to how to do the same in your community.

Sample code language:

No additional or new parking is required for sites with an existing building footprint coverage in excess of 50 percent of the site area (change of use or remodeling without a change to the existing footprint of existing development are also exempt from providing additional parking).

No additional parking is required for [existing] buildings under 3,000 square feet in gross floor area.

No additional parking is required for uses in buildings that have been vacant for more than 18 continuous months.

¹ "Parking Requirements and Housing Development in Los Angeles," Michael Manville, p. 205-212 in [Parking and the City](#)

5. Set parking requirements at no more than 1 per residential unit (0.5 for studios and one-bedroom apartments)

Local codes have overly large requirements for parking. Most Oregon renter households own zero or one car.

Studies in the California Bay Area and King County, WA have found 28-40% of residential parking spaces go unused. Ideally, the number of mandated car parking spaces would be zero, or at least less than one. But moving it down to one is a step in the right direction.

Note: State law prohibits mandating off-street parking for accessory dwelling units.

Jurisdictions that do some variation of this this:

Albany (high density zones require only 1 space per studio, one or two bedroom units; four and five-plexes only require 0.75 per unit), Ashland (only one space required for units smaller than 500 sq. feet), Baker City (studio and one-bedroom units require just one), Lake Oswego (single-family dwellings and studio apartments require just one), Metro (single family detached homes require just one), TGM Model Code (Table 3.5.030.A).

Recommended standard:

Parking per unit are usually in a table format. The required off-street parking spaces for new single-family units, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and multi-family developments should be no more than one. Studio and one-bedroom apartments should be no more than 0.5 spaces.

Most Oregon renter households own zero or one car.

Zero: 16%
One: 44%
Two: 29%
Three+: 11%

U.S. Census 2017 data

6. Allow shared parking

Cities have long known parking demand depends on the use. Breakfast restaurants and movie theaters, for example, have parking demands roughly opposite each other during a day. Cities should allow such uses to share their parking.

Cities that do some version of this:

Cornelius, Roseburg (downtown), TGM Model Code.

Sample code language:

Shared parking. Required parking facilities for two or more uses, structures, or parcels of land may be satisfied by the same parking facilities used jointly, to the extent that the owners or operators show that the need for parking facilities does not materially overlap (e.g., uses primarily of a daytime versus nighttime nature; weekday uses versus weekend uses), and provided that the right of joint use is evidenced by a recorded deed, lease, contract, or similar written instrument establishing the joint use. Shared parking requests shall be subject to review and approval through Site Plan Review.

7. Require parking for new multi-family developments and commercial projects be unbundled from the units (don't require people to pay for other people's parking)

At least four cities (Oakland, San Francisco, Santa Monica, and Berkeley) require new multi-family developments to rent/lease parking separately from the units and allow residents to opt out. Santa Monica also requires unbundled parking for new commercial projects. Seattle requires unbundling when leases turn over in existing buildings.

Cities that do this:

Oakland, Santa Monica, Berkeley, and San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA

Sample code language:

For any building with at least four residential units, off-street parking spaces shall be rented or sold separately from the rental or purchase of dwelling units. A tenant may elect not to rent or lease parking when renting or leasing a unit. Projects with affordable housing units as defined in *[code reference]* are exempt from this requirement.

All commercial parking spaces associated with new development shall be leased separately from the cost of a leased commercial space.

- Or -

Parking charges separately documented. For housing units in multifamily or mixed use structures that meet the threshold size requirement of *[code reference]* 1. Any rental agreement entered into after *[effective date of the ordinance]* shall specify in a rental agreement addendum or in a separate parking agreement the amount of any parking fee. 2. A tenant may elect not to rent or lease parking when renting or leasing a unit, in which case the tenant is not required to sign a rental agreement addendum or a separate parking agreement that requires the tenant to pay a parking fee.

Unless commercial uses are listed as exempt in subsection X, off-street parking accessory to rented or leased commercial use spaces in structures that contain 4,000 square feet or more of gross floor area shall not be included in any new rental or lease agreement and shall be subject to a separate rental or lease agreement. [Seattle, WA]

Some codes set a minimum size of the developments impacted (4 or 10 units, for example). Others include a right of first refusal for tenants (San Francisco, Santa Monica), or a notice requirement posted in a common area (Oakland). Santa Monica allows tenants deed-restricted affordable units to receive the parking space within the allowed rent level or a discount equal to half the amount charged for a monthly lease of a parking space.

Some affordable housing lending requirements require parking to be provided with the unit; codes generally exempt these developments from unbundling requirements.

8. Have a fee-in-lieu program

If it's too hard for developers to provide mandated parking, they should be able to pay into a city fund that helps with parking issues. Implementation is uneven; sometimes these options are set up but not used or administered fully.

Cities that do this:

Vernonia allows developers to pay a fee-in-lieu of providing parking to maintain municipal lots. Klamath Falls has such a program, costing \$500 for each 1,000 sq. feet of floor area downtown. Albany and Roseburg allow in-lieu fees for small lots downtown but have not collected such fees.

Sample language:

As an alternative to onsite parking, the City may establish an in-lieu parking fee as part of a transportation system development charge. The fees will be banked by the City to provide funds to maintain City public parking.

General Implementation Notes

Some cities allow reductions in parking mandates if a builder provides a parking study by a qualified professional. While that sounds reasonable, cities report this process ends up being expensive and time-consuming, and is therefore rarely used.

Similarly, making reductions discretionary makes them less effective. It is rare for planning departments to have high-quality data about current parking or experience and knowledge of parking habits to accurately predict future parking demand. The uncertainty around whether reductions will be allowed is a disincentive to builders.

Additional Resources

The Transportation and Growth Management program is eager to help cities reduce their parking mandates. We can provide speakers, have collected numerous resources on-line, and may be able to provide consultants. For assistance, call Evan Manvel at (503) 934-0059 or e-mail him at evan.manvel@state.or.us.

Visit us at www.oregon.gov/lcd/tgm

The TGM web page on parking, including handouts, do-it-yourself manuals and links to parking resources: www.oregon.gov/lcd/TGM/Pages/Parking.aspx

Feb 4, 2020 Version. Specific code references and TGM Model Code update forthcoming.

Additional TGM Parking publications on our web site:

The image displays three promotional materials for Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) parking resources. On the left is a blue and white graphic for 'PARKING MANAGEMENT' described as 'A Powerful Tool to Meet Community Goals'. In the center is a large blue and white sign for 'PARKING MADE EASY: A Guide to Managing Parking in Your Community' from the Oregon Transportation & Growth Management Program. On the right is a colorful graphic for 'Management Parking Made Easy: A GUIDE TO TAMING THE DOWNTOWN PARKING BEAST', which is a strategic guide to implementing parking reform. The graphic includes various parking signs and a red monster-like creature representing the 'parking beast'. Text on the right side of the graphic includes: 'A Strategic Guide to Implementing Parking Reform', 'Reducing costly parking mandates can be a challenging task for planners and decision-makers.', 'Too often, the easiest thing to do is to continue the path of the past... requires new development to provide lots of parking, avoiding potential complaints from people accustomed to abundant, "free" (subsidized) parking.', 'This hides the large costs of parking, but makes it harder to walk and easier to drive, artificially driving up the demand for parking and the costs of housing, local business, and getting around.', 'How to break the cycle? There are some recommendations on how cities might go about reducing the costs, create productive market distortions of mandated car parking.', 'Understanding the Fears', 'The average person worried about parking reform usually recalls a time when they failed to find free, available parking exactly where and when they wanted it. That experience leads to a belief: mandating more parking will make travel easier and more pleasant, at no cost to themselves.', 'Established on this story are important assumptions. First, the assumption is parking is a public good, where the government can and should help people view their vehicle behavior: they go at their or no cars. Second, someone else will pay for the costs of providing parking (people often describe this as a "developer" who makes large profits). Third, making a short distance from parking to a destination is a problem.', 'This narrative isn't easy to break down. The rest of this piece suggests some ways around it.', '1. Provide Data - and Images', 'Create opportunity for on-street parking reform. Here's the good news: when communities take the time to collect data, they nearly always find there is sufficient supply of parking within a block or two of each business. It just needs to be better managed through changes in time limits or pricing. (Parking surveys can be a small effort of just a few hours; larger efforts are...')