



PARKING POLICY REFORM

Types of Off-Street Parking Policy Updates

Since the 1940s, many cities have required new developments to provide a set number of off-street parking spots, but research has shown that these requirements can lead to an oversupply of parking.

Cities across the United States (and beyond) are updating parking policies to better manage existing parking supply, reduce traffic, cut pollution, and lower development costs.

Selected Trends Influencing Parking Reforms

- **Historically high construction costs**—particularly in dense urban areas—are contributing to housing unaffordability, especially when the high costs of building on-site parking are factored in.
- **Changing shopping preferences, along with over-retailing**, are leaving acres of parking lots at many shopping malls and retail power centers vacant.
- **The popularity of human-powered transportation**, such as walking and bicycling, along with the growth of delivery services and the availability of shared mobility services—such as Lyft, Uber, and car-sharing services—is reducing the need for individuals to own—and park—cars.

The U.S. has approximately 2 billion parking spaces, but only 250 million cars.

THAT'S 8 PARKING SPACES PER CAR.



- **Advances in technology** are promoting more efficient management of the existing parking supply by using information technology that shares the location of available spaces, supports real-time dynamic pricing, and helps make shared parking options easier.
- **An increased focus by municipalities on sustainability, livability, and social equity** and a growing body of research show that many current parking requirements promote development patterns that increase traffic congestion, contribute to air pollution, raise housing costs, prevent walkability, and penalize those without automobiles.¹

Selected Types of Off-Street Parking Policy Reforms

POLICY TYPE:	EXAMPLES INCLUDE:
<p>Reducing or Eliminating Parking Minimums</p> <p>Reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements allows developers, parking consultants, and other stakeholders to determine how much parking to include in projects rather than requiring developers to build a set ratio of parking spaces based on a building's square footage, planned uses, or the number of bedrooms in multifamily units.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Bend, IN: In 2021, the South Bend City Council voted to end minimum parking requirements citywide. • San Francisco, CA: San Francisco's 2018 parking policy update made the city the largest in the United States to be completely free of minimum parking requirements. • Buffalo, NY: In 2017, Buffalo became the first major U.S. city to eliminate minimum parking requirements citywide. • Hartford, CT: In 2017, Hartford lifted all minimum off-street parking requirements throughout the city.
<p>Maximum On-Site Parking Requirements (aka Parking Caps)</p> <p>Maximum on-site parking requirements restrict the total number of parking spaces that can be constructed as part of a development project. A maximum number of spaces is often based on the square footage of a specific land use. Maximum parking requirements can be in addition to or instead of minimum parking requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunwoody, GA: In 2020, the city of Dunwoody transformed its former minimum required parking ratios into maximum parking caps for most uses. • San Diego, CA: The city's 2019 Transit Priority Area (TPA) Multifamily Parking Standards set a maximum of one parking space per unit for new apartment and condominium projects downtown. • Sandpoint, ID: A 2009 general code update set parking maximums for commercial, entertainment, and recreational uses at no more than 20 percent above the minimum requirement. The update also eliminated required minimum off-street parking downtown.
<p>Shared Parking</p> <p>Shared parking means that parking spaces are shared by more than one use, which allows parking facilities to be used more efficiently. Shared parking policies recognize that most parking spaces are used only part time, with usage patterns that follow predictable daily, weekly, and annual cycles.</p> <p>Parking shared between mutually beneficial uses can reduce parking provision by 40 to 60 percent, compared with the standard off-street parking requirements for each destination.² For example, offices require maximum parking during weekdays, whereas restaurants and theaters require maximum parking during evenings and weekends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honolulu, HI: In 2020, Honolulu eliminated the need for land use permits for on-site "joint use" of parking. The number of required parking spaces may be reduced by applying rates specific to various mixes of uses. • Phoenix, AZ: Shared parking reductions of up to 15 percent may be granted for retail, office, or mixed-use projects after using the city's shared parking model to estimate parking demand for a specific mix of uses. • Montgomery County, MD: An applicant proposing a development with more than one use may submit a shared parking analysis instead of using the county's usual parking requirement formula.
<p>Unbundled Parking</p> <p>Unbundled parking policies prohibit embedding parking costs with unrelated charges, such as including parking in the cost of housing or an office lease. Unbundling parking allows residents and tenants who do not own a car generally to pay less for housing or commercial space. When combined with other parking reforms, unbundled parking can support development goals and promote affordability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seattle, WA: The city requires landlords to separate the cost of parking spaces from residential and commercial rent charges, allowing tenants to choose whether to pay for parking. • Santa Monica, CA: The city requires off-street parking spaces to be sold or leased separately from the purchase or lease of residential units at new buildings with four or more dwelling units.

¹ Donald Shoup, "Parking Reform Will Save the City," Bloomberg City Lab, September 20, 2019.

² Thomas P. Smith, "Flexible Parking Requirements" (PAS Report 377, American Planning Association, 1983).