

According to a recent (July 2019) local news report on the Common Council's decision to eliminate minimum parking requirements in Hudson, NY, there are "dozens of cities across the U.S. . . . dropping off-street parking requirements."<sup>1</sup>

A number of American town and city councils and regional planning agencies state that the elimination of minimum parking requirements reverses arbitrary rules that have indirectly subsidized drivers, increased traffic congestion, eroded the safety and utility of sustainable modes, making the entire transportation system work worse. Minimum parking requirements that have been in place over decades have also created swaths of unused impervious surface parking lots, incited the demolition of smaller or ancillary buildings in order to create parking spaces, discouraged walking and biking (and led to increased CO2 emissions and stormwater runoff), and prevented the creation of affordable housing.<sup>2</sup> Minneapolis's 2040 plan demonstrates that the issues of housing prices and parking are inexorably linked and must be addressed simultaneously in order to redesign cities to be more walkable, more integrated, and more affordable. "Some studies have shown that mandatory parking spaces can add as much as 20 percent to the cost of an apartment." The article also quotes Janne Flisrand, a volunteer and co-founder of the advocacy group Neighbors for More Neighbors: "Parking minimums and parking ramps harm our efforts at achieving the elimination of racial disparities, addressing climate change and providing affordable housing."<sup>3</sup> "Nationwide, it's estimated that 17 percent of rent goes toward the cost of constructing that parking spot, as developers pass on costs to tenants."<sup>4</sup>

The change furthermore eliminates "a major barrier for business looking to set up shop" by lessening complications for developers and parking managers, in addition to making it easier to repurpose buildings more quickly and efficiently.<sup>5</sup> In all cases, the city and regional planners sought "higher and better uses" for the property, which enhance its human and fiscal value to the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hudsonvalley360.com/article/city-plans-elimination-street-parking-requirements> (Hudson, NY Common Council, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.hudsonvalley360.com/article/city-plans-elimination-street-parking-requirements>  
<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/eliminating-minimum-parking-requirements/> (Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Area, 2013)  
<https://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2015/10/07/fayetteville-eliminates-minimum-parking-requirements/> (Fayetteville, AR City Council, 2015)

<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/01/buffalo-is-first-to-remove-minimum-parking-requirements-citywide/512177/> (Buffalo, NY City Council, 2017)

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2018/12/12/minneapolis-moves-to-eliminate-mandatory-parking/> (Minneapolis, MN City Council, 2018)

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/12/13/hartford-eliminates-parking-minimums-citywide/>

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit. <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2018/12/12/minneapolis-moves-to-eliminate-mandatory-parking/> (In order to learn more, click on the hyperlink in the article to read the following article:

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/07/26/if-americans-paid-for-the-parking-we-consume-wed-drive-500-billion-fewer-miles-each-year/comment-page-2/>)

<sup>4</sup> <https://la.curbed.com/2019/8/6/20698162/parking-minimums-downtown-los-angeles> (In order to learn more, click on the hyperlinks in the article:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10511482.2016.1205647?journalCode=rhpd20>;

<https://www.citylab.com/solutions/2015/05/how-parking-keeps-your-rent-too-damn-high-in-2-charts/392894/>)

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.hudsonvalley360.com/article/city-plans-elimination-street-parking-requirements>  
<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/6/14/3-lessons-in-people-centered-transportation-from-the-first-us-city-to-completely-eliminate-parking-minimums> (Hartford, CT City Council 2017)

Op. cit. <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/12/13/hartford-eliminates-parking-minimums-citywide/>

community.<sup>6</sup> An architect who participated in the Fayetteville, AK City Council's discussion before they voted to eliminate minimum parking requirements for new non-residential environments testified that "the old system hinders the creation of vibrant areas around town. He said while places like Evelyn Hills Shopping Center may be convenient for motorists by providing a large amount of parking, it's areas like the downtown square that people are most proud of, even though parking can be difficult and sometimes costs money."<sup>7</sup> Overall, planning and development decisions shifted from being focused on parked cars to being people-centered.

Of the twelve sources I reviewed, the Massachusetts Metropolitan Area Planning Council site provided the most detail on unintended consequences and possible alternatives. It notes, "Having some paid parking garages or lots nearby that are not at full capacity and access to the site via non-auto modes increase the chances of success." In particular, it cites two possible "spillover effects" along with recommended solutions.

(1) Spillover into nearby residential districts' on-street parking: "This can be addressed with a residential permit parking program. Residents may resist the transition to permit parking, but one way to win them over is through residential parking benefit districts, which charge non-residents to park in unused resident spaces, and invest some of the revenue in neighborhood improvement projects." The Massachusetts MAPC also recommends charging for on-street parking in order to prevent a shortage of on-street parking for nearby residents and encourage other drivers to park in a parking garage.

(2) Spillover into nearby parking in lots provided by previous developments: "the burden of providing parking may be unfairly distributed on the properties that have been there longer." If this is a concern, the Massachusetts MAPC recommends maintaining required minimums but then waiving the requirement for a fee, which can be used for public parking, or to allow previous developments to rent or sell parking to newcomers who are unable to build off-street parking. As the MAPC notes, "In some cases, developers may be constrained by requirements from (bank) lenders that they provide a certain amount of parking."

In all the MAPC provides the following alternatives to the elimination of minimum parking requirements: "establishing flexible parking requirements, setting parking maximums in addition to minimums, allowing spaces to be held in landscaped reserves, and allowing developers to pay a fee in lieu of providing spaces."<sup>8</sup>

The NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association site provided additional recommendations:

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<sup>6</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2015/10/07/fayetteville-eliminates-minimum-parking-requirements/>  
Op. cit. <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/12/13/hartford-eliminates-parking-minimums-citywide/>  
<https://www.naiop.org/en/Magazine/2016/Summer-2016/Development-Ownership/Smaller-Cities-Lighten-Up-on-Minimum-Parking-Requirements.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2015/10/07/fayetteville-eliminates-minimum-parking-requirements/>

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/eliminating-minimum-parking-requirements/>

What if a community isn't ready to take the plunge? Three "baby steps" will help move it in the right direction:

- 1) Cut existing standards in half. This preserves a "safety net" for parking and reaches a compromise with those who believe parking standards are necessary.
- 2) Eliminate standards for small buildings. The best way to energize a vacant building is to require less parking. Consider eliminating requirements for buildings smaller than 5,000 square feet.
- 3) Eliminate parking standards in downtowns. Downtown parking should be treated like a utility and managed collectively. Most downtowns are actually plagued with too much parking.

Yet, the NAIOP asserts, "Cities that have successfully backed away from the "parking requirement" business are doing just fine; the anticipated "parking apocalypse" has never occurred. Instead, those communities have become more compact, walkable and vibrant. Eliminating minimum parking standards will unlock greater economic value and prioritize the well-being of people rather than cars."<sup>9</sup>

By contrast, Hartford, CT, expanded their mass transit at the same time they eliminated parking minimum requirements city-wide. "The city has long been home to a local bus system and Amtrak station, but three years ago, it also added several bus rapid transit lines as part of the new DTfastrak."<sup>10</sup> Two years ago, named a "bike friendly city" by the League of American Bicyclists, and a "walk friendly community," Hartford benefited from a Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator, argues Sara Bronin, Chair of the Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission.

Another factor to consider are the benefits of providing certainty in designing new projects, which is a major reason to refrain from including waivers within our new regulatory language.<sup>11</sup> Waivers would place additional responsibility on planning staff and could expose the city to allegations of favoritism.

The article that covers Ithaca, NY's Department of Public Works Board cites Tim Logue, Ithaca's transportation engineer. "There's been a common misunderstanding that eliminating minimum parking requirements eliminates parking," he said. "There's a very good chance that many developers will want to continue to provide parking on site because they know that it sells and that it's a quality of life issue for a lot of people to have an easy place to park. There are some, but not many, who are saying, 'I'll build a building no parking and I'll just try to attract a ton of tenants that don't want parking, but I'll take the risk that the people who do want easy, convenient parking are just not going to rent from me. They're going to find another place to go.'

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<sup>9</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.naiop.org/en/Magazine/2016/Summer-2016/Development-Ownership/Smaller-Cities-Lighten-Up-on-Minimum-Parking-Requirements.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/6/14/3-lessons-in-people-centered-transportation-from-the-first-us-city-to-completely-eliminate-parking-minimums>

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2015/10/07/fayetteville-eliminates-minimum-parking-requirements/>

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So it's not a ban on parking. I do imagine that many people will continue to provide parking, except for in particularly difficult places to build parking."<sup>12</sup>

Based on my research, **cites that have eliminated required parking minimums for new non-residential** developments include (but are not limited to):

**Spartanburg, SC** (2007), population 37,000, eliminated parking standards.

**Sandpoint, ID**, population 7,300, eliminated off-street parking minimums about a decade ago. "Since that contentious decision by the Sandpoint City Council, millions have been invested downtown projects that would not have been feasible, but for the elimination of parking requirements," Director of Planning and Community Development Aaron Qualls wrote. "Several jobs, building renovations and expansions by local businesses were essentially made possible by adding a single line of code."<sup>13</sup>

**Fayetteville, AR** (2015), population 170,000, completely eliminated minimum parking requirements for nonresidential properties.

**Portland, Oregon**, population 580,000, has maximum parking standards and no minimum parking requirements. "Bike Portland reported that of the 93 restaurants featured in Willamette Week's *Restaurant Guide 2015*, 73 set up shop on sites without any off-street parking. Why? Because people there value walkability and proximity to other restaurants over convenient parking."<sup>14</sup>

**Buffalo, NY** (2017), population 260,000, removed parking minimums city-wide; projects above 5,000 square feet require parking analysis that requires alternative transportation options.

**Hartford, CT** (2017), population 125,000, removed **all** parking minimum laws (for residential and non-residential) citywide. Parking mandates for car dealerships are Connecticut state law, and therefore those minimums remain in the Hartford code. Other special uses, like stadiums, will be subject to case-by-case review. The Strong Towns article indicates that it is not a metropolitan, transit-rich design that made this change successful. "Hartford was constructed long before the automobile in a compact manner with small commercial corridors in each neighborhood that residents can easily walk to. This means that many of residents' daily needs can be met without a car already."<sup>15</sup> This suggests that any future development in South Burlington under this new code would likely follow this walkable design and encourage a desirable human-scaled development pattern, which is a positive for the environment and for our housing stock and commercial base.<sup>16</sup> Twenty-five percent of Hartford residents do not drive,

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.ithaca.com/news/board-of-public-works-recommends-eliminating-minimum-parking-requirements/article\\_af79150a-7563-11e2-9e5c-0019bb2963f4.html](https://www.ithaca.com/news/board-of-public-works-recommends-eliminating-minimum-parking-requirements/article_af79150a-7563-11e2-9e5c-0019bb2963f4.html) (Ithaca Department of Public Works Board, 2013)

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.hudsonvalley360.com/article/city-plans-elimination-street-parking-requirements>

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.naiop.org/en/Magazine/2016/Summer-2016/Development-Ownership/Smaller-Cities-Lighten-Up-on-Minimum-Parking-Requirements.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit. <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/6/14/3-lessons-in-people-centered-transportation-from-the-first-us-city-to-completely-eliminate-parking-minimums>

<sup>16</sup> See the embedded article, The Complete Guide to Creating Walkable Streets: <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/5/1/the-ultimate-guide-to-walkable-streets>

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and prior to the parking requirement change, they were subsidizing the city's drivers. Nationwide, only 16 percent of licensed drivers are seniors (compared to 80 percent between the ages of 20 and 64), which I note in response to members of the public concerned that our city remain attractive and accessible to our senior population.<sup>17</sup> Seniors, as result, have been disproportionately subsidizing parking when most of them do not drive.

**Minneapolis, MN** (2018), population 380,000, approved a Comprehensive Plan that will eliminate off-street parking minimums throughout the city.

**San Francisco, CA** (2018), population 880,000, no longer require developers to build parking for new housing.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Massachusetts MAPC provides other examples and online resources:**

- The Middleborough Town Manager reported at the Massachusetts Smart Growth Conference in December 2006 that a change to the Town's zoning code to waive parking requirements for residential units on the second or third story of a downtown building if the building is within a quarter mile of a public parking area available for overnight parking. Because of this policy, the Town has been able to assist building owners to secure 4 different Housing Development Support Grants, creating 25 affordable housing units downtown. The Town Manager credited this change and the additional revenue from upper-story residential units with allowing the property owners to keep street-level retail rents low, increasing property value and property tax revenues, and helping downtown businesses to succeed.
- The Town of Ipswich does not require parking for developments in the CBD or within 500 feet of municipal parking
- The Town of Salem does not require parking for places of worship, secondary schools and places of higher education, or non-residential uses in the B-5 District
- The Town of Gloucester does not require parking for certain uses within 400 feet of a municipal parking facility

### **National examples:**

- A number of cities across the country have also eliminated required minimums in the Central Business District, including San Francisco and Portland, Oregon.<sup>19</sup>

### **More resources, in addition to these articles and resources embedded in them:**

- In the article covering Ithaca, NY, Rob Morache, one of Ithaca's Department of Public Works Board members, referred to the American Planning Association's recommendations for parking, a report that came out in 2003 and that supports the elimination of minimum parking requirements (I do not have access to the document but

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/pubs/hf/pl11028/chapter4.cfm>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.sfweekly.com/news/symbolic-vote-marks-end-to-parking-requirements/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/eliminating-minimum-parking-requirements/>

refer to its date as a significant factor that weighs against the idea that this idea is new and untested). Here is what Mr. Morache reportedly said before the Board voted to eliminate parking minimum requirements: “My take on it is we’re creating the context . . . based on American Planning Association best practices, 20 years of research about the effects of parking. . . . I think there’s a lot of solid science behind the underlying policy decision.”

- An Emerville, CA, Planning Commission staff report:  
<https://www.ci.emeryville.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/11621/Item-92---Parking-Minimum-Elimination>
- Saint Paul, MN’s Senior City Planner, Anthony Johnson, responded to a recent query I sent out. I share his reply in full (below) and attach a copy of the city’s parking exemptions that he included in his email:

Hey Meaghan,

We don’t have minimum parking requirements in our downtown (B4 and B5 zoning districts) and along the University Avenue light rail line (the Green Line) for parcels that are zoned traditional neighborhood, which is are mixed use zoning district. I have attached a code sections for reference. In regards to concerns from the residents, one thing that we have found in both Downtown and with new construction along Greenline, is that new development can’t get financing without providing parking – so even with no minimum parking requirements new multifamily residential buildings and businesses are still being developed with accessory off-street parking. Another thing to consider on the residential side is that an off-street parking space, for most people, is the top amenity that people want in a building and developers in our market know that and are reluctant to try to construct a building with a low parking space to unit ratio. Most of the developers that I have worked with along the green line have tried to park their buildings at one space per unit (unless its deeply affordable housing).

I hope that helps.

Have a great night,

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- Milwaukee, WI's Planning Director, Ed Richardson, responded to a recent query I sent out. I share his reply in full:

Ms. Emery

Our current zoning code was adopted in 2002 and we have not eliminated or reduced parking requirements. There are numerous land uses and zoning districts for which we have never required parking. (For example we have never required parking in most downtown district because we have always had an ample supply of multi-story parking structures downtown.) There are other land uses (such as day care centers) for which parking requirements may be determined by the Board of Zoning Appeals as part of their special use application.

Our minimum parking requirements are low and there are some land uses for which we set parking maximums. We also have provisions for using on-street parking to meet parking requirements and our code lists other factors that can reduce parking requirements. For example the minimum parking requirement may be reduced by 25% if it is located in a part of the city that is well served by transit.

It has been our general experience that developers want to provide significantly more parking than is required by code.

Below is a link to our parking requirements

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/ccClerk/Ordinances/Volume-2/CH295-sub4.pdf>