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Parking and Affordable Housing: Practical Strategies for Changing Codes

The problem

- Deficiencies in minimum parking requirements hamper the development of affordable housing:
 - Increase development cost – there's no parking Santa Claus
 - Encourage larger, more upscale units
 - Reduce the feasibility of urban infill sites
 - Constrain design on smaller parcels
- Negative transportation and environmental impacts by incentivizing auto ownership and driving



Typical ordinance deficiencies

- Parking minimums often exceed demand because they fail to account for any or all of the following:
 - Unit size and occupancy
 - Auto ownership of residents
 - Transit availability, location
 - Effect of pricing (if unbundled)
 - Alternative shared parking resources



Ordinance alternatives

- Simple “dumb” rules
 - Tend to require an oversupply
 - Easy to administer, explain
- Demand-based requirements
 - Minimums based narrower use categories, empirical data
 - May require restrictions on changing use
- Requirements that tighten supply/recognize pricing
 - Parking maximums, lower minimums
- Deregulating off-street parking
 - Allow market to determine; manage and control spillover



Cities' reasons for minimums and sources of information

- Southern California jurisdictions' reasons:
 - Avoid spillover on local streets
 - Traffic circulation
 - Avoid spillover on adjacent properties
 - Ensure economic success of project
- Sources of information about requirements
 - Survey nearby cities
 - Institute of Transportation Engineers data
 - APA/ULI data
 - Commission parking studies



Community readiness to change

- Experience with residential permit districts
- Experience with on-street parking time limits and charges
- Recently changed at least one minimum parking requirement in their ordinance
- Experience with shared parking
- Successful collaboration with neighborhoods/businesses (not just parking)



Low “readiness” communities

- Parking requirements have not been revised for decades
- Parking is not analytically based:
 - No parking occupancy surveys or use of census or other data
- Discussion about parking takes the form of...
 - “That’s how we’ve always done it”
 - “That’s what our neighbors do”
 - “That’s what the development community demands”
- Parking requirements are being used as an indirect tool to prevent affordable housing
- Residents and/or business owners are angry about on-street parking conditions



Ways forward in low readiness communities

- Assemble data about parking occupancy, educate stakeholders
- Provide tours of well-designed projects with less parking
- Assemble best practice examples from similar cities
- Implement pilot projects to provide local experience
- Conduct on-street parking management experiments
- Unpack various objections – density, design, social exclusion, and parking/transportation
- Emphasize offering choices for those with fewer or no cars



Outcome: improve minimum requirements

- Reduce minimum requirement for all housing (based on empirical evidence)
- Create special minimum requirements for affordable housing and transit-oriented development
- Examples:
 - City of Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Monica: reduce requirements for affordable units
 - Berkeley: bases requirement on sf, not bedrooms
 - Reductions for senior housing



High “readiness” communities

- Neighborhoods and commercial districts have experience with the benefits of on-street parking regulation, parking districts, etc.
- Minimum requirements have been revised to be more in line with demand
- Established stakeholder processes produce agreement on controversial issues
- Residents accustomed to growth and change



Way forward in high readiness communities

- Deregulate minimum requirements in designated areas
- Introduce on-street parking management in areas for future deregulation
- Expand deregulation on a district-by-district basis
- Partner for shared neighborhood parking facilities



Outcome: deregulation and market pricing

- Eliminate minimum parking requirements
- Require unbundling
- Price and manage on-street parking
- Example: City of Los Angeles is studying eliminating minimum requirements in parts of downtown



Stakeholders' questions

- Elected officials: How can I explain to constituents why ordinance changes are needed?
- Planners: is there community, planning commission and council support?
- Long-time residents: Why are you turning my neighborhood into a city?
- Business community: is there a linkage between affordable housing and the business climate?
- Aspiring residents : What took you so long?



Resources

- Parking & Housing: Best Practices for Increasing Housing Affordability and Achieving Smart Growth – Russo
- Parking Requirements Guide for Affordable Housing Developers – SCANP
- Parking Generation Handbook, 3rd edition – ITE
- US Census – American Factfinder