

# Rethinking Parking

Most cities set minimum parking requirements which mandate ample off-street parking for any new development. However, the provision of parking can be a major barrier to creating more livable communities that adhere to smart growth principles.

## The Problems with Minimum Parking Requirements

### Creates excess parking

Minimum parking requirements are usually set arbitrarily by city planners from standardized transportation planning manuals, which typically measure parking and trip generation rates in suburban areas at peak periods with ample free parking and no public transit. These parking standards can cause an oversupply of parking – taking up valuable land and lowering the price of parking below cost.

### Promotes automobile use

Providing plentiful and free parking encourages automobile use and discourages walking, cycling and transit use. Donald Shoup, a professor of urban planning at UCLA recognized as a leading scholar on parking issues, compares minimum parking requirements that mandate excessive off-street parking to “fertility drugs for cars.” By generating more car trips, inefficient parking requirements contribute to increased air pollution and reduced physical activity.

### Increases the cost of development

Requiring developers to provide large amounts of off-street parking significantly adds to the cost of new development, especially in dense, urban areas where land costs are high. These costs are typically passed to consumers, through higher housing prices and rents.

### Average development cost of parking (excluding land)

| Type of parking facility | Cost/space |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Surface lot              | \$2,000    |
| Multi-level above ground | \$10,000   |
| Subterranean             | \$20,000   |

## “Smart” Solutions for Dealing with Parking

### Reduce minimum parking standards

Urban planners need to re-examine parking demand in urban areas where land (and therefore parking) costs are higher, and transportation alternatives exist. Reducing minimum parking requirements will help to create more livable communities by reducing the abundant supply of free parking and encourage the use of compact urban design and alternative modes of travel.

### Establish maximum parking requirements near major transit stops

In areas well served by transit, planners should consider the use of maximum parking requirements to limit the amount of off-street parking built. These requirements prevent auto-oriented uses from occupying land near rail and bus stations, and encourage the creation of transit-oriented districts.



### Unbundle the cost of parking in residential projects

Typically, the cost of parking is included in the home price or rent of a condominium or apartment. Unbundling the cost of parking from housing costs allows off-street parking to be priced in response to the actual demand for parking, and gives consumers more information about cost of their transportation choices.

### Shared parking

Shared parking is an effective tool for reducing the number of parking spaces needed for a project or neighborhood. Shared parking strategies can be implemented within a new mixed-use development, through simple agreements between adjacent uses, or through a parking management district. Parking districts can also encourage pedestrian activity by encouraging people to park once and walk from destination to destination.

### Car Sharing

Car sharing programs allow many individuals to share access to a vehicle. Located within a housing development, car sharing can reduce the average household vehicle ownership rate, reducing the demand for parking. Several car sharing companies are starting to partner with housing developers to include car sharing programs within their new developments.

LIVABLE PLACES



634 S. Spring Street, Suite 727  
Los Angeles, California  
90014-3902

Tel. 213.622.5980  
Fax 213.622.3458

[www.livableplaces.org](http://www.livableplaces.org)