People Over Parking
Nanaimo's Parking Problem

Outdated Parking Policies: Municipal parking requirements were designed when personal automobiles were seen as the primary mode of transport. These regulations, intended to reduce on-street congestion, have led to excessive parking infrastructure.

Negative Impact on Society: Parking minimums are a subsidy to automobiles that negatively affect everyone, including drivers, by contributing to environmental damage, inefficient land use, and economic stagnation.

Urban Planning Challenges: Excessive parking leads to inefficient land use, increased vehicle emissions, and visually unappealing urban areas, replacing potentially productive land uses with unproductive parking spaces.

Social and Aesthetic Issues: Parking-dominated areas are unwelcoming and prioritise cars over pedestrian-friendly spaces, which hinders community interaction and prevents the density needed for vibrant neighbourhoods.

Proposed Reforms: Strong Towns Nanaimo suggests two motions to reform municipal parking policies, aiming to address the negative impacts of current regulations and promote sustainable, equitable, and aesthetically pleasing urban development.

"The right to access every building in a city by private motorcar in an age when everyone owns such a vehicle, **is actually the right to destroy the city."**

Lewis Mumford, 1961

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1 Executive Summary

Municipal parking requirements were initially implemented in a time when personal automobiles were assumed to be the best and primary mode of transportation. We have learned much about equity, finance, and the environment since which has made it clear that parking minimums are a subsidy to the automobile which comes as a detriment to nearly everyone in society, including those who drive them. Parking minimums were created with the specific intent to alleviate on-street parking congestion. Ultimately however, these regulations have resulted in an overabundance of parking infrastructure, leading to a host of urban planning challenges. This surplus parking not only degrades our environment through inefficient land use and increased vehicle emissions but also undermines economic vitality by replacing potentially productive land uses with unproductive parking for private vehicles. Aesthetically, places dominated by parking are unwelcoming, visually hostile urban landscapes. Socially, they are auto-oriented environments that prioritise vehicular movement over lively pedestrian-friendly spaces and human interaction, preventing the density necessary for community to form.

In the face of these challenges, Strong Towns Nanaimo proposes two motions for council's consideration, aimed at reforming Nanaimo's municipal parking policies. These motions seek to rectify the adverse impacts of our current parking provisions and foster sustainable, equitable, beautiful, and prosperous urban development in our beloved city.

Full Elimination Of Parking Mandates	**Expansion Of The Cash-In-Lieu Program**
Motion to change the word "**required**" to "**recommended**" in Section 7.3.3 Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266.	(1) Motion to expand the cash-in-lieu areas to cover all of the City of Nanaimo in Section 7.3.3 Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266.
	(2) Motion to expand the qualified number of parking stalls to from 10% to 100% in Section 7.3.3 Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266.

2 Introduction

2.1 Historical Context

In the realm of urban planning and development, municipal parking requirements have long been a staple of zoning ordinances and municipal policy across North America. The increase in personal automobile ownership and suburban sprawl seen through the mid-20th century dramatically increased vehicle traffic in cities, leading to concerns about where to park said vehicles. In a well-meaning attempt to address the congestion burdens car ownership was placing on the city, planners and policymakers devised the parking minimum. The reasoning was: if developers are required to provide parking on all new buildings and businesses, supply of parking will rise to meet demand, alleviating congestion, enhancing accessibility (of those travelling in cars), and supporting economic growth.

While this seems like a straightforward solution, most parking bylaws were based on little or no evidence and have continued to build on its shaky foundations. Parking minimums are individual to land uses. A reasonable assumption is that policy makers would prescribe parking requirements based on how much is needed in similar situations. If the data on this was lacking, perhaps they would commission a study. Sadly, neither assumption is true. Most often, parking minimums have been based on guesses slapped together in a rush[1], with municipalities often copying the minimums of neighbouring cities under the assumptions. When data on parking *has* been gathered, it has extremely little statistical rigour, but is dressed up in a manner to indicate high accuracy. The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) continues to publish the definitive guide on parking allocation for municipalities and *even the ITE themselves note that the R^2 value comparing the size of a property and the number of suggested parking stalls is a paltry 0.038. In layman terms, this means that there is a 3.8% causal relationship between property size and the number of parking stalls mandated.*[2]

Additionally, planners often looked to the busiest day at a typical establishment when considering how much parking ought to be built. The poor reasoning of this is obvious in

[1] https://parkingreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/APA_-Practice_Parking_Reform_February-2020.pdf
[2] https://www.ite.org/technical-resources/topics/trip-and-parking-generation/

hindsight: if one prescribes a department store to build as much parking as they will need on Black Friday, they will have a parking lot that is nearly empty the entire year. This is a colossal waste of urban space and massive financial burden to the business in question.

The predictable result of these approaches is a massive oversupply of parking in many North American cities. In the USA, it is estimated that there are 1.5 billion parking spaces for a country that only has 278,870,463 registered vehicles according to the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration[3]. In 2018, Nanaimo underwent a parking study, and at each of the six sites surveyed, parking was only about 25% used[4]. At Strong Towns Nanaimo, we are eager to see the results of the parking study currently underway, but regardless of how oversupplied parking is in this city, we don't believe that supply should be the only consideration. A city built to perfectly accommodate the convenience of automobile use has large environmental, aesthetic, fiscal, social, equity, health, and climatic impacts which we detail in this document.

Critics of conventional parking policies, including influential voices such as Donald Shoup, Chuck Marohn, Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, and others, have since challenged the legitimacy of parking requirements. Notably, Donald Shoup in his seminal work "The High Cost of Free Parking" argues that mandates are a form of pseudoscience rather than sound urban planning practice. Shoup extensively documents how parking mandates usually distort development patterns, encourage car dependency, and exacerbate urban sprawl - all unforeseen detriments to our cities that modern, evidence-based planning is currently working to undo.

Despite reams of evidence demonstrating their harms, municipal parking requirements remain deeply entrenched in zoning codes across North America. In this document, we aim to detail issues associated with parking minimums across four broad categories: housing, aesthetics, environment, and finance.

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[3] https://www.forbes.com/advisor/car-insurance/car-ownership-statistics/#department-of-transportation-federal
[4] https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/default-document-library/open-house-slides.pdf

3 How Parking Mandates Impact Housing

3.1 Parking Mandates Increase Housing Costs For Residents

Nanaimo's Official Community Plan expresses the desire to facilitate the creation of a wide variety of housing types. One of the most challenging objectives for anybody attempting to build denser forms of housing in our city is the requirement to build parking. Depending on the designated parking area, a housing developer would be forced to include between 0.5 and 1.45 parking stalls per bedroom. On the surface, this might seem reasonable – there are many places
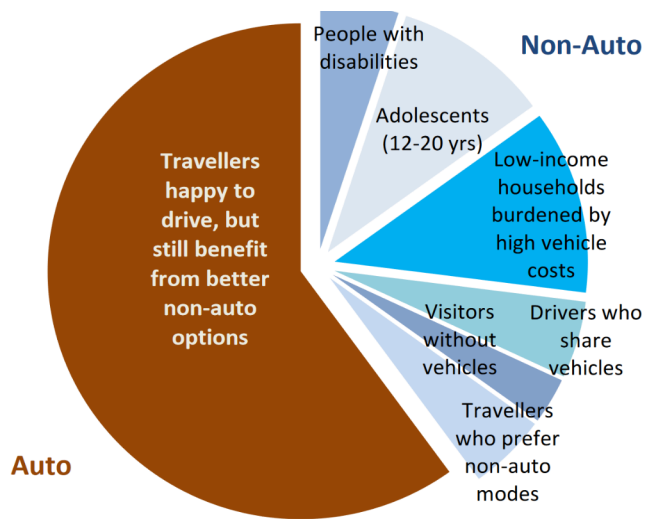
In a typical community 20-40% of travellers cannot, should not, or prefer not to drive, including people with disabilities and low-incomes, adolescents, drivers who lack personal vehicles, and people who prefer non-auto travel for health and enjoyment.

Auto-oriented planning deprives non-drivers of independence, forces them to bear excessive costs, imposes chauffeuring burdens on motorists, reduces public fitness and health, and increases traffic problems. This is unfair and economically inefficient.

in Nanaimo where shopping for groceries or grabbing a bite to eat would be infeasible without a personal vehicle. However, Nanaimo is rapidly improving its transportation network through capital investments in infrastructure & amenities, and the RDN's adoption of the Transit Future Plan. It is no secret that Nanaimo, like many other Canadian cities, is experiencing a housing crisis. The reality of the situation is that the cost of these parking stalls trickles down to the future residents of the housing unit[5]. The City of Vancouver, who recently eliminated parking mandates city-wide, calculated the average cost of an underground parking stall to be $100k per stall[6]. There will always be a need for parking in the City of Nanaimo. However, approximately 20-40% of people cannot, should not, or prefer not to drive[7]. Forcing families

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[5]https://www.vtpi.org/LP6.pdf
[6]https://globalnews.ca/news/10590288/vancouver-parking-minimums
[7]https://www.vtpi.org/vmt_red.pdf

who cannot, should not, or prefer not to drive to pay upwards of $60,000 extra for housing due to the enforcement of mandatory parking mandates is both unjust and inequitable. Our community is struggling with the notion that purchasing housing is now out-of-reach for many residents; if the City of Nanaimo is serious about its commitment to facilitating the development of affordable housing, it needs to seriously consider the financial burden of its parking mandates.

3.2 Parking Mandates Also Kill Developments

Buyers aren't the only ones affected by Nanaimo's parking mandates. Housing is primarily constructed by developers who seek to profit off the construction. If a proposed development doesn't pencil out, then shovels never enter the ground. If someone wanted to construct 100 two-bedroom units in an apartment building in Harewood (Area 2), they would need to include 1.62 parking stalls per bedroom. This would obviously necessitate some sort of parkade given the relative lack of suitable land. As mentioned above, each underground stall roughly costs $100k. Here's what this looks like in rough financial terms:

- 100 units x 2 bedrooms/unit # 1.62 stalls = **324 parking stalls**
- 324 parking stalls x $60,000 - $100,000 per stall = **$19,440,000 - $32,400,000 total cost**

Despite Nanaimo's explicit desire to increase housing stock, it is a massive economic waste and therefore a barrier to development for a developer to spend millions on a parkade in a neighbourhood that's (1) well-served by transit, (2) walkable, and (3) bikeable. In an ideal world, a housing developer would perform their own study to determine *how much parking a project actually needs* instead of being forced to spend millions on parking that would be underutilised. As mentioned above, these added costs also drive up the overall cost of each individual unit, further exacerbating the housing affordability crisis in Nanaimo.

## 3.3 Parking Prevents Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing From Being Built

Equally important to the financial burden parking mandates put on developers and residents are the ways that parking mandates prevent development-- particularly small scale infill development--by monopolising physical space. City-mandated parking requirements demand

excessive space, competing directly with the creation of bus stops, bike parking, green spaces, and housing. While these spatial constraints are easier to manage in greenfield developments

on the city's outskirts where land is cheaper and lots are larger, Nanaimo's goal to contain growth and preserve its surrounding environment makes prioritising infill housing (developing underused parcels within existing urban areas) over greenfield development crucial to addressing the City's housing supply issues. In fact, Nanaimo's own City Plan highlights infill as key to addressing the city's housing needs.[8] Parking mandates directly inhibit this goal. Requiring infill developments to accommodate parking on small lots makes many small scale projects unfeasible under current policies. The diagram above shows that a hypothetical four-plex on a typical single-family lot, with two parking spaces per unit, would require an underground parking garage, which is impractical and a complete non-starter for development at this scale. The
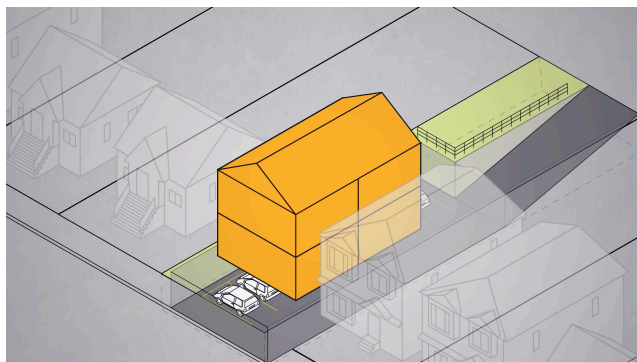
physical constraints of a given lot often force developers and architects to prioritise parking structures in their designs. This results in sacrificing other design elements such as park space, gardens, and shared amenities to meet arbitrary parking mandates. As a result, an often-repeated joke in the development community is "form follows parking," a play on the famous "form follows function." On the technical side, these underground parking structures typically require shoring due to the tight proximity to adjacent lot lines. Shoring involves reinforcing the excavation site to prevent soil collapse and ensure the stability of nearby structures. This

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[8] https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/city-plan-documents/city-plan---low-resolution-2022-jul-04.pdf

process can be incredibly expensive, requiring specialised equipment, materials, and labour-intensive techniques. Developers on larger properties usually don't face this challenge, enjoying more space to safely manage excavation without extensive reinforcement. Consequently, the cost and complexity of shoring make underground parking unfeasible for small infill developments. If we want to get serious about building more housing, particularly infill housing, we need to consider both the cost of construction and the physical constraints of the lot.

3.4 Why Not Simply Ask For A Variance?

To accommodate new construction within existing lot sizes and height constraints many builders and businesses must request variances. This was an expectation from the city after it passed its City of Nanaimo Off-Street Parking Bylaw 7266. While this may seem a simple

workaround as variances are often granted, requesting a variance introduces risk and uncertainty that may dissuade builders and potential business owners entirely. The request

itself often takes months with little to no certainty that such a request will not be rejected, possibly ending a project before it's even begun. This added uncertainty makes it difficult for small-scale developers and small local businesses to gather financing, essentially giving a leg up to large developers and franchises in the development and business worlds of our city.

Put yourself in the shoes of a local businessman in town. One day, you decide to open a cafe in Harewood, a neighbourhood in dire need of more community-oriented spaces. You find a prime location with an existing building that seems perfect for your cafe.Put yourself in the shoes of a local businessman in town. You decide one day to open a cafe in Harewood, a neighbourhood in need of more community-oriented commercial space. You manage to find a piece of land in a prime location with an existing building already on the lot that you think would be perfect for your cafe. You purchase the property, but you're informed by City staff that you'd need to *double* the amount of parking on the lot given the size of your cafe in order to meet the off street-parking requirements set out by the city. You cannot afford to demolish part of the existing structure to add the required parking, so you request a variance with the City. You are now in bureaucratic limbo, unsure if the City will grant you a variance. If you were planning on acquiring financing for the renovations, then those are on hold too since your lender is unsure if you'll be granted your variance. Is it any wonder that more small-scale community-oriented commercial spaces aren't built in Nanaimo? We have heard from many on council that variances are almost always approved when they're submitted.

If this is truly the case–if Nanaimo understands that our existing parking mandates are precluding the construction of denser forms of housing and small businesses–then why do we subject developers to the bureaucratic red tape & financial uncertainty of the variance process? The barrier of a variance alone creates a condition where many projects don't even reach council's desk, disappearing before they've begun like forests before a wildfire. One might conclude that the provision of parking is treated as more important than the amenities new businesses and housing could provide.

4 How Parking Mandates Impact Urban Aesthetics

4.1 Building Form Suffers As A Result Of Parking Mandates

When parking is mandated, the topology of a building is fundamentally altered. Almost every developer we've consulted with has said something to the effect of: "parking mandates restrict the kinds of developments we're able to build." Despite the city's support of higher densities and mixed-use buildings, if a developer isn't able to fit parking into their project, it dies before ever reaching the city's desk.

- Most lots in Nanaimo are not physically expansive enough to construct a surface parking lot, so developers need to work with engineers to explore the feasibility of parkades. Often, even if a parkade is *technically* possible, the project doesn't pan-out financially due to the high cost of construction.
- Buildings must still conform to setback requirements and FAR (Floor Area Ratio) requirements which limit the physical space that a developer can allocate for parking on a given property.
  - To fit the form of the site, variances are often requested. As mentioned above, this injects uncertainty into a project and makes financing challenging.
- If a developer is forced to pave a large surface parking lot, this means that there is less space for the physical dwelling unit, leading to smaller units overall.

Parking mandates lead to excessive parking supply in developments, which consumes valuable urban space and encourages car-dependent lifestyles. Large parking lots create dead spaces that undermine walkability and the overall urban vitality of our neighbourhoods.

4.2 Mandating Parking Creates Inhospitable Urban Spaces

Parking mandates significantly contribute to the creation of inhospitable urban environments by–according to prominent urban thinkers as Jane Jacobs and Donald Shoup–distorting the urban fabric, prioritising cars over people, and hindering the development of vibrant, livable cities. Jane Jacobs, in her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, emphasises

the importance of mixed-use neighbourhoods, short blocks, and active street life. Parking mandates directly oppose these principles by promoting land uses that segregate functions and disrupt the fine-grained diversity that Jacobs championed. Mandating large surface parking lots or multi-story parking garages leads to the displacement of potential housing, shops, parks, and public spaces. This creates a monotonous, spread out urban landscape where people are discouraged from walking, cycling, or engaging in street-level activities. Instead of vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhoods, we get vast, car-dominated areas that lack the "sidewalk ballet" Jacobs so admired. These spaces often become desolate and unsafe, particularly at night, as they lack the "eyes on the street" provided by active uses. Donald Shoup's work, particularly in *The High Cost of Free Parking*, details how parking mandates impose substantial economic, social, and environmental costs. Shoup argues that these mandates distort land use by encouraging excessive parking provision, which in turn *increases the cost of development and reduces the affordability of housing*.

From an urban design perspective, the requirement for abundant parking leads to sprawling, low-density development. Surface parking lots consume large areas of land, contributing to urban sprawl and making cities less walkable. Buildings are set back from the street to accommodate parking, which disrupts the pedestrian experience and creates uninviting spaces. This sprawl undermines the compact, human-scale environments that foster community and interaction that is key to Jacobs' vision of a healthy urban ecosystem.

Moreover, parking mandates prioritise car travel over other forms of transportation. This not only discourages walking, cycling, and public transit use but also perpetuates car dependency. As Shoup highlights, by spreading things out and subsidising car parking in the way that

mandates do, we are contributing to a cycle of increased driving and demand for more parking - creating a self-reinforcing problem.

The environmental impact of parking mandates is significant. Large expanses of asphalt contribute to urban heat islands, increase stormwater runoff, and reduce green spaces (which mitigate both of the prior problems). This environmental degradation makes urban areas less resilient to climate change and diminishes the quality of life for residents. Socially, parking mandates exacerbate inequality. They raise the cost of housing, making it less accessible for low-income residents. This can lead to socio-economic segregation, as only wealthier individuals can afford to live in areas where parking costs are embedded in the price of housing.

To create more hospitable urban spaces, cities need to rethink parking mandates. Reducing or eliminating these requirements can encourage the development of more compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods. It can also promote alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling, and public transit, leading to healthier, more vibrant communities.

By drawing on the principles of Jacobs and Shoup, urban planners and policymakers can foster environments where people, not cars, are the priority. This shift is essential for creating cities that are not only livable but also sustainable and equitable. Reimagining urban spaces without stringent parking mandates can lead to the development of dynamic, inclusive, and thriving communities that reflect the best of urban living.

5 The Fiscal Implications of Parking

5.1 How Parking Requirements Bleed Cities Dry Financially

What makes parking–surface parking in particular–so destructive is that it consumes a finite resource (developable land) with virtually no direct financial benefit. One focus that distinguishes Strong Towns apart from other urbanist groups is our preoccupation with municipal financing. From this perspective, parking–in particular the vast kind that adorns strip malls and box stores–is dead weight. Local governments are all constrained by the land they can develop. What they do with that resource is paramount to how well they can pay their bills, and unfortunately, parking dilutes the substantial tax production of development with fiscally barren waste. Let's take the case study of two identical blocks in the small town of Brainerd, Minnesota. They are exactly the same size, they're on the same road, they are serviced by the same infrastructure, and they cost the city the same amount of money to maintain. They are identical in every way, except in their development style. The first one was built in the

# of Bedrooms	Parking Requirement (m)				
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5
3+	2.00	1.84	1.68	1.52	1.20
2	1.80	1.62	1.44	1.26	0.90
1	1.45	1.26	1.07	0.88	0.50
Studio/ Micro	1.20	1.05	0.90	0.75	0.45

1920's using a more traditional style of development. It is a series of extremely basic structures, it is functional, and the many small-scale commercial units allow for new upstart businesses to come and go, offering a degree of flexibility to meet the changing needs of the city. Two blocks over, the lot used to look exactly the same. The city labelled it "blight" and the lot was bulldozed. In its place, a new fast-food taco restaurant was opened, utilising all of the conventions we expect in modern suburban style of development: Low density, large setbacks, and above all, plentiful off-street parking. Unfortunately, comparing the tax revenue of the two lots shows that this was a mistake from the perspective of municipal financing and revenue generation.

6 Negative Environmental Effects Of Surface Parking

Parking mandates, which require developments to include a certain number of parking spaces, have significant negative externalities and feedback loops that impact both the environment and spatial organisation of cities. In Nanaimo, a blanket parking requirement has forced many developments to construct extensive surface-level parking lots to comply with city bylaws. While these laws may seem harmless at first glance, they have profound and damaging consequences for our community's environmental and climate goals.

6.1 Space Constraints and Car Dependency

Nanaimo, nestled between mountains, forests, and the ocean, has limited space. Requiring parking, especially for larger residential and commercial developments, often necessitates vast surface parking lots. While this may seem beneficial, it spreads out basic amenities, creating an environment hostile to those who cannot, will not, or should not drive.
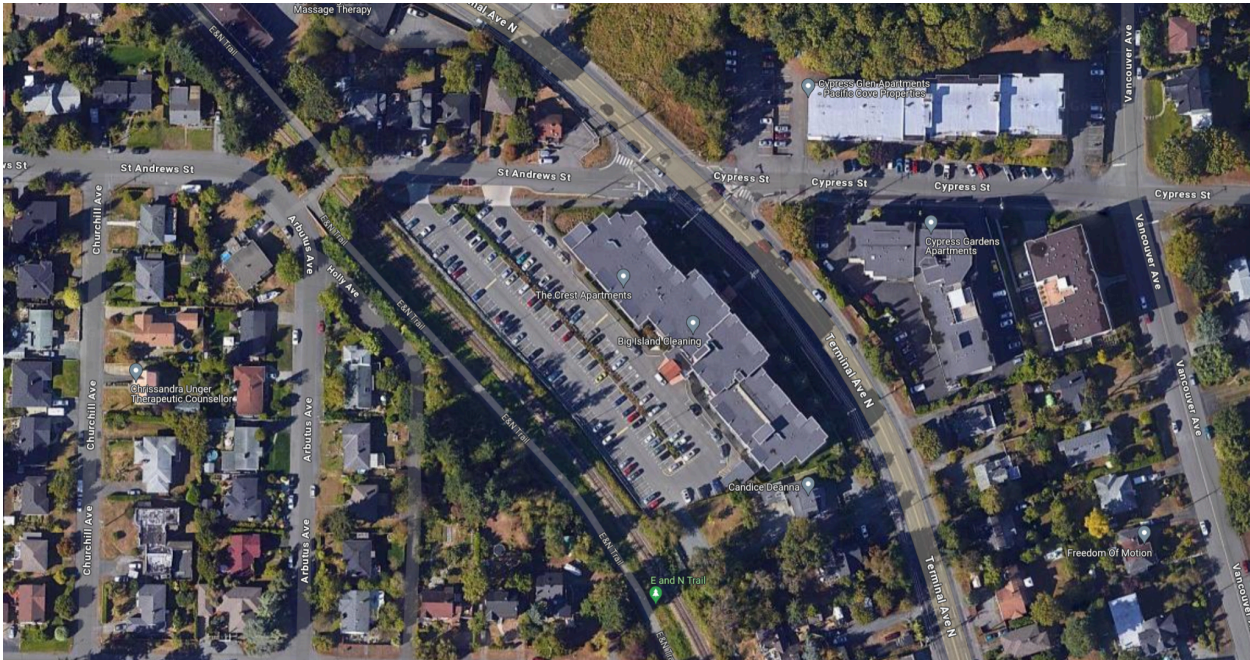
This spatial distribution fosters car dependency, making it necessary to own a car for a meaningful quality of life in Nanaimo. Car dependency exacerbates the city's emissions, even as residents transition to electric vehicles. The maintenance of extensive car infrastructure and

the use of oil byproducts will continue to contribute to Nanaimo's emissions, undermining efforts to meet climate goals.

6.2 Environmental Impact of Surface Parking

Surface parking lots contribute to significant environmental issues, particularly through surface impermeability and water runoff. This runoff places pressure and additional costs on Nanaimo's physical infrastructure. Large amounts of impermeable surfaces make these places drier, dirtier, and unsuitable for the kinds of wildlife and biodiversity the City of Nanaimo claims to value.
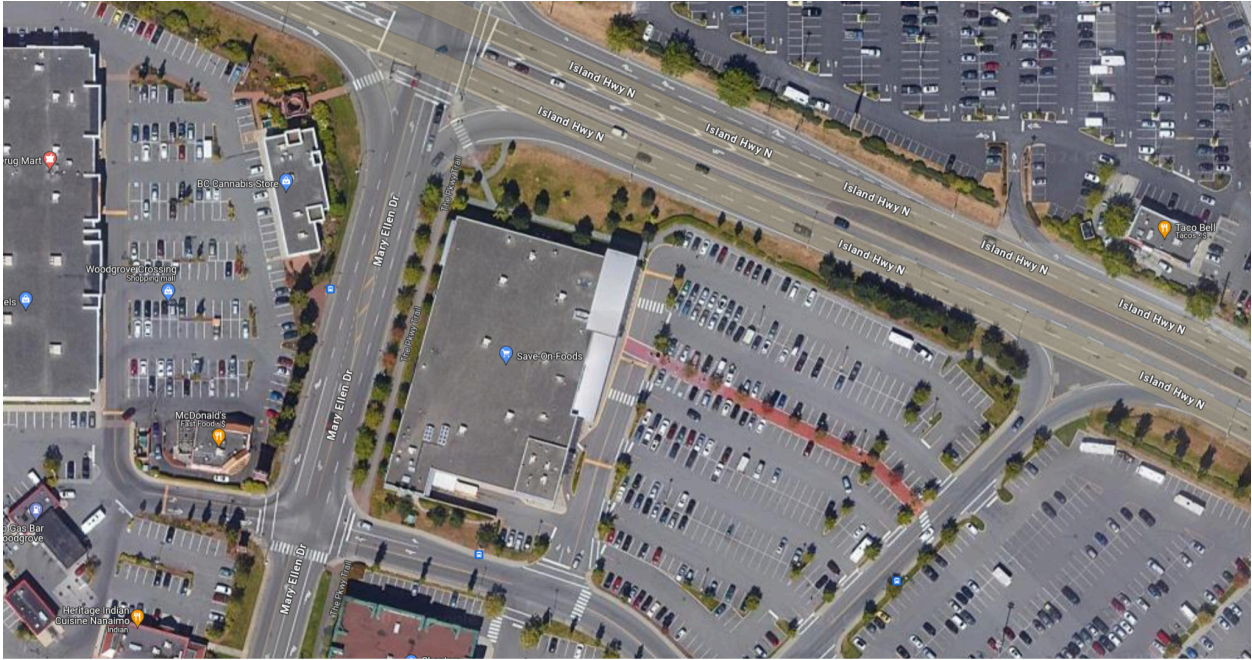
Additionally, the extensive use of land for parking reduces green spaces and increases urban heat island effects, further compromising environmental quality and sustainability.

7 Case Studies

While to many Canadians, and likely also to many residents of Nanaimo, the idea of leaving parking up to the private market might seem unthinkable. The idea of parking reform is anything but new and Nanaimo would not have to reinvent the wheel. Below is a map of all cities in North America that have reformed their parking mandates (as of 2024-07-09).

There are hundreds of cities across North America that have embraced the project of allowing
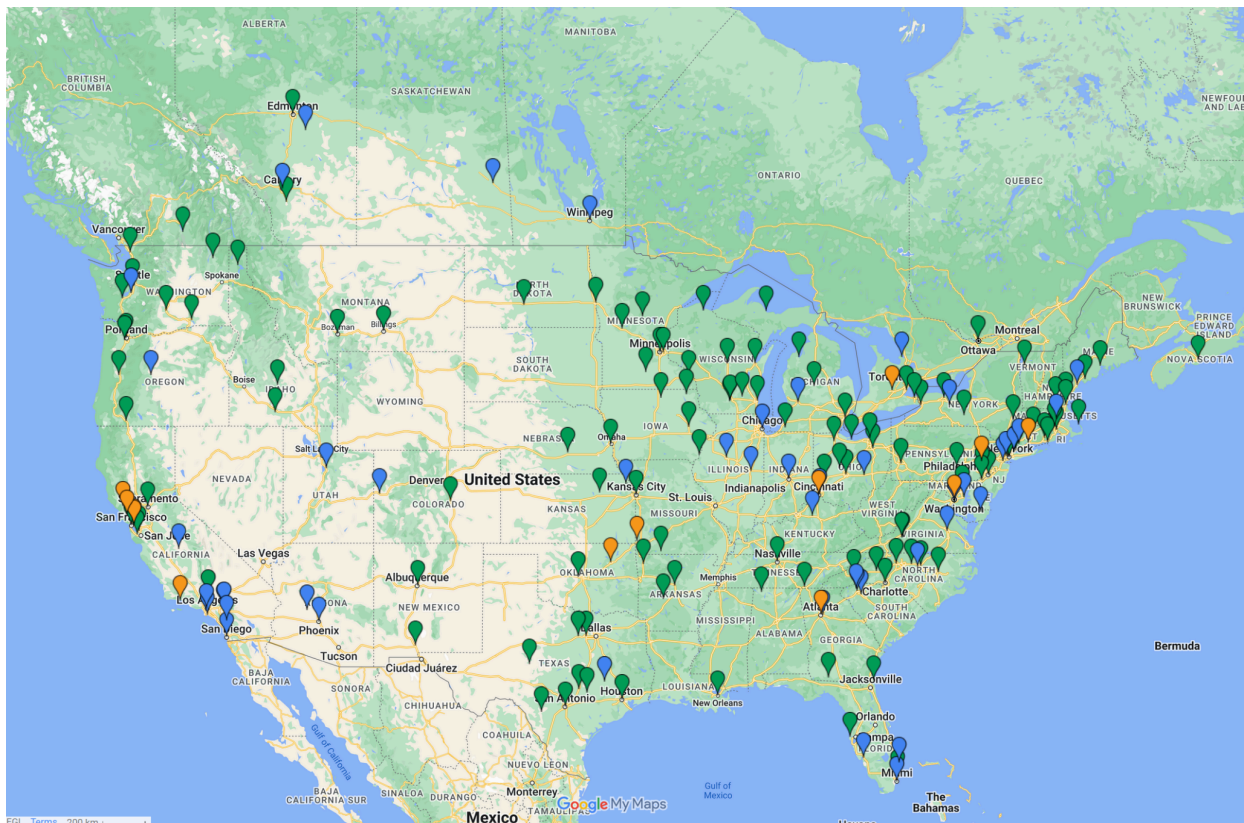
their cities to choose for themselves how much parking they need. Below are four case studies of cities and small towns in North America that have embarked upon their own versions of parking reform. Parking reform isn't fringe–momentum is building across North America. You can visit parkingreform.org/resources/mandates-map for a live version of this map.

7.1 Buffalo, New York, United States

In 2017, the city of Buffalo, NY made headlines by becoming the first major city in North America to embark upon reforming their parking. Through this policy initiative, the city

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removed parking requirements for all buildings and put in place a requirement for large developments to create transportation demand management plans. By requiring these plans the city is now treating transportation holistically rather than with assumptions and mandates.

To quote a recent CBC Article on Bufalo, they "got rid of parking minimums and 'the sky did not fall.[9]" While there were many fears that parking would go vastly unsupplied in this new unregulated space, the reality was quite different. Instead, the city found that "removing parking minimums spurred development rather than stifling it." Buffalo found that where development shined most was in creating "low-rise infill projects and conversions." Buffalo was one of the first cities to discover how much they were missing out on by requiring incompatible policies with desired outcomes. By aligning policies with goals the city created the conditions for a more free and dynamic city space.

7.2 Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

To speak to the Canadian experience, on July 2nd, 2020 the City of Edmonton opened up the decision of parking to its residents by implementing "Open Option" parking. Open Option parking is the system where the proper amount of parking for a residence or business is no longer dictated by the city but rather determined by its residents. This removes the barriers for new business owners or or housing to have to provide an unrealistic amount of parking for the planned use. To quote the City of Edmonton, "Removing parking minimums doesn't necessarily mean that no parking will be provided. Businesses and homeowners know their parking needs best and have an interest in ensuring they are met, making this approach more likely to result in the 'right amount' of parking."[10] Edmonton has also recognized that providing parking for their residents can be treated with more nuance as "[d]esign requirements for both surface and underground parking facilities have also been enhanced," as well creating the environment "for businesses and homeowners to share parking or lease out parking spaces to nearby properties."

In Nanaimo's current parking bylaw there is little to no flexibility to find new and spatially creative ways to continue to accommodate parking while also allowing creativity and

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[9] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-parking-minimum-rule-requirement-space-change-1.7179240

[10] https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/open-option-parking

innovation. The city has also implemented a new Curbside Management Strategy that finds better and more economically viable ways to handle the question of street parking. As will be addressed later, there are many creative ways to manage the price and placement of parking to help meet the needs of our community. Edmonton has demonstrated itself as a Canadian example of treating the question of parking with a paintbrush versus a hammer. Open Option parking will allow the city to grow and change gradually to adapt to its real parking needs rather than its perceived parking needs.

7.3 Sandpoint, Idaho, United States

While the first two case studies showed two car-oriented metro areas of over a million people were able to adapt and overcome the question of what the right amount of parking looks like for their communities. One might argue that these communities can achieve this change due to their transportation systems; however, the next two communities show that even fully car dependent municipalities can gain benefits from eliminating or amending their parking

mandates. Sandpoint is a rural ski town in Northern Idaho. With minimal bus service the town of over 10,000 people is primarily rural in nature. However, when a new development destroyed historic buildings and displaced small businesses in their downtown to accommodate the required parking by the Town of Sandpoint, the council took action and implemented a parking exempt zone in the downtown area and removed cash in lieu parking fees for small business. The town also implemented policies outside of the exempt zone allowing parking to be provided within 300m of apartments and space sharing.[11] All of this adds to the flexibility of the town's parking

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[11] https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/sandpointid/latest/sandpoint_id/0-0-0-6145

ecosystem which allows parking to still be provided, but an understanding that spatial constraints might inhibit businesses from starting or buildings from being created.

The result of these changes is that small businesses in the town have flourished and the city hosts a multitude of events all year round. All of this was done with the understanding that the amenities created by their community were greater than the need to accommodate parking in every building and business. Since 2009, the city hasn't looked back. Strong Towns even wrote an article on Sandpoint's success by actually creating **more** businesses in their downtown by removing parking requirements.[12]

7.4 Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Vancouver City Council voted unanimously to eliminate minimum parking requirements for all types of land use across the city. This change retains existing requirements for accessible and

In the average multi-unit building in Vancouver 35-42% of parking spaces are underused

Cost per space: up to $70,000   Area required per space: 13.75 sq.m
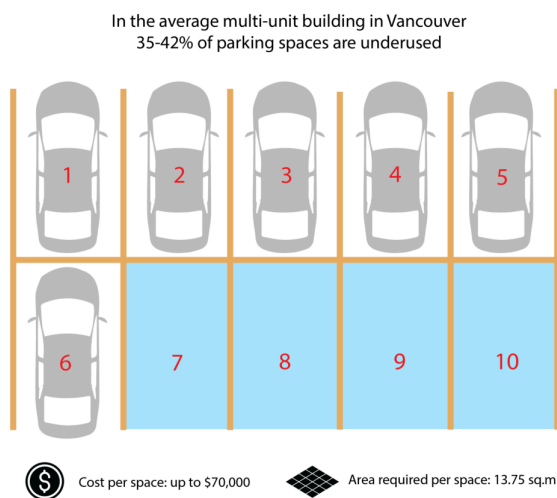
visitor parking spaces but removes other parking mandates. The decision, prompted by recent provincial legislation aimed at encouraging small-scale multi-unit housing and transit-oriented development, seeks to simplify and expedite the development review process, supporting the city's goals for transportation and climate action. The elimination of parking minimums, which follows similar moves in Edmonton, Toronto, and numerous American cities, is expected to reduce development costs—potentially lowering housing prices by $110,000 to $150,000 per unit—and increase flexibility for developers to match parking supply with demand.

Notably, the downtown and Broadway Plan areas had already been exempt from parking minimums since 2019, with developers still providing parking for condo buildings while

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[12]https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/1/30/one-line-of-your-zoning-code-can-make-a-world-of-difference#:~:text=In%202009%2C%20as%20buildings%20were,debate%20and%20was%20not%20unanimous.

reducing it for rental units. The change may lead to increased on-street parking demand, and the city has allocated $685,000 to manage and enforce permit areas. Jon Stovell, president of Reliance Properties, supports the move, highlighting its alignment with trends in other major North American cities and its potential to make housing more affordable.

8 Conclusion

Nanaimo stands at a critical juncture, where the decisions made today regarding parking mandates will shape the future of urban development, livability, and sustainability in our city. As demonstrated throughout this paper, the current parking requirements have far-reaching negative consequences on housing affordability, urban aesthetics, municipal finances, and environmental health. These mandates, which were implemented with the best of intentions, have inadvertently stymied development, driven up housing costs, and prioritised vehicles over people. The evidence is clear: parking mandates significantly increase the cost of housing, both for developers and residents, creating an unnecessary financial burden that is particularly detrimental in the context of Nanaimo's ongoing housing crisis. These requirements also lead to inefficient land use, resulting in sprawling developments that detract from the compact, walkable, and vibrant urban spaces that cities like Nanaimo aspire to cultivate.

From a fiscal perspective, the maintenance and expansion of parking infrastructure represent a considerable drain on municipal resources, diverting funds away from more productive uses that could enhance the city's economic vitality. Environmentally, the prevalence of surface parking lots contributes to urban heat islands, increased stormwater runoff, and higher greenhouse gas emissions, undermining efforts to address climate change and promote sustainability.

The case studies of cities such as Buffalo, Edmonton, and Sandpoint illustrate that it is not only possible but also beneficial to reform parking policies. These cities have shown that reducing or eliminating parking mandates can lead to more dynamic, equitable, and sustainable urban environments. They serve as valuable examples for Nanaimo, highlighting the potential for positive change through thoughtful policy adjustments.

In light of these findings, Strong Towns Nanaimo proposes two key motions for council's consideration: the full elimination of parking mandates and the expansion of the cash-in-lieu program. By changing the word "required" to "recommended" in the Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw and expanding the cash-in-lieu areas to cover all of Nanaimo, we can begin to mitigate the adverse impacts of current parking provisions. These measures will help to foster a city that prioritises people over cars, encourages diverse and affordable housing

options, and supports a vibrant, sustainable urban fabric. Addressing Nanaimo's parking problem is not merely about altering parking policies; it is about reimagining the city's future. By embracing reform, we have the opportunity to create a more equitable, economically robust, and environmentally sustainable Nanaimo. The time to act is now, and with the support of policymakers, planners, and the community, we can build a city that truly reflects our shared values and aspirations.

Nanaimo has already solved the housing crisis...for cars. Strong Towns Nanaimo is asking Nanaimo City Council and staff to put people over parking.

STRONG TOWNS NANAIMO

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9 Frequently Asked Questions

We know that there are a lot of questions surrounding the elimination of mandatory parking mandates. Below, we have included some answers to frequently-asked questions on the topic, with citations, of course.

9.1 Will Eliminating Parking Mandates Lead To A Parking Shortage?

Not necessarily. Removing mandates doesn't mean eliminating parking; it allows developers to provide parking based on actual demand rather than arbitrary requirements. Developers can still build parking if they see a market need.

- CNT (2006), Paved Over: Surface Parking Lots or Opportunities for Tax-Generating, Sustainable Development?, Center for Neighborhood Technology (www.cnt.org); at www.cnt.org/repository/PavedOver-Final.pdf.
- Stuart Donovan (2011), Convenient, Affordable Parking When And Where You Need It: The Benefits Of Accurate Pricing and Smart Technologies, Frontier Centre For Public Policy (www.fcpp.org); www.fcpp.org/files/1/PS107_Parking_JN01F2.pdf.FHWA (2007), Advanced Parking Management Systems: A Cross-Cutting Study, Report FHWA-JPO-07-011, Intelligent Transportation Systems (www.its.dot.gov), FHWA, USDOT; at www.its.dot.gov/jpodocs/repts_te/14318.htm.
- Todd Litman (2007), Pavement Busters Guide, VTPI (www.vtpi.org); at www.vtpi.org/pavbust.pdf.
- Todd Litman (2006), Parking Management: Strategies, Evaluation and Planning, Victoria Transport Policy Institute (www.vtpi.org); at www.vtpi.org/park_man.pdf.
- Wesley E. Marshall and Norman W. Garrick (2006), "Parking at Mixed-Use Centers in Small Cities," Transportation Research Record 1997, TRB (www.trb.org), pp. 164-171; at www.mdt.mt.gov/research/docs/trb_cd/Files/06-2864.pdf.

9.2 How Will Businesses Be Affected?

Businesses can benefit from the elimination of parking mandates as it reduces their development costs and allows for more flexible use of space. They can decide how much parking is needed based on their customer base rather than conforming to a one-size-fits-all regulation.

- CNT (2006), Paved Over: Surface Parking Lots or Opportunities for Tax-Generating, Sustainable Development?, Center for Neighborhood Technology (www.cnt.org); at www.cnt.org/repository/PavedOver-Final.pdf.

- Douglas Kolozsvari and Donald Shoup (2003), "Turning Small Change Into Big Changes," ACCESS 23, University of California Transportation Center (www.uctc.net), Fall 2003, pp. 2-7; www.sppsr.ucla.edu/up/webfiles/SmallChange.pdf.

- Todd Litman (2007), Parking Management: Comprehensive Implementation Guide, VTPI (www.vtpi.org); at www.vtpi.org/park_man_comp.pdf.

- Eric Vallabh Minikel (2010), Evaluating Whether Curb Parking Is The Highest And Best Use Of Land In An Urban Commercial District: A Case Study of Harvard Square, Master in City Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (http://web.mit.edu); at https://sites.google.com/site/ericminikel.

- Oregon Downtown Development Association (2001), Parking Management Made Easy: A Guide to Taming the Downtown Parking Beast, Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development; at www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/publications/parkingguide.pdf.

- San Francisco (2009), On-Street Parking Management and Pricing Study, San Francisco County Transportation Authority (www.sfcta.org); at www.sfcta.org/content/view/303/149.

9.3 Won't This Hurt Local Businesses That Rely On Customers Driving?

Experience from other cities shows that eliminating mandates can actually enhance local business by creating more walkable, bike-friendly, and transit-oriented areas, which attract a broader range of customers.

- CORDIS (2002), Parking Policy Measures and the Effects on Mobility and the Economy, Cost-Transport, CORDIS (www.cordis.lu). This is a comprehensive research program in several European countries to investigate parking management strategies and develop standard parking policies.

- Douglas Kolozsvari and Donald Shoup (2003), "Turning Small Change Into Big Changes," ACCESS 23, University of California Transportation Center (www.uctc.net), Fall 2003, pp. 2-7; www.sppsr.ucla.edu/up/webfiles/SmallChange.pdf.

- Michael Manfille and Donald Shoup (2004), "People, Parking, and Cities," Access 25, (www.uctc.net), Fall 2004, pp. 2-8.

- Donald Shoup (2006), The Price of Parking On Great Streets, Planetizen (www.planetizen.com/node/19150).

- Lawrence Solomon (1995), "On the Street Where You Park: Privatising Residential Street Parking Will Keep the Lilacs Blooming, the Larks Singing and the Pavement to a Minimum," The Next City, Vol. 1, No. 2 (www.nextcity.com), Winter 1995, pp. 58-61.

9.4 What About People Who Still Need To Drive?

People who drive will still be able to find parking. The difference is that parking supply will be driven by market demand rather than regulations, leading to more efficient use of space.

- Paul Barter (2011), Promising Parking Policies Worldwide: Lessons for India? presented at the International Conference on Parking Reforms for a Livable City, 17 August 2011, New Delhi (www.reinventingparking.org/2011/10/promising-parking-policies-worldwide.html).

- Paul A. Barter (2014), "A Parking Policy Typology For Clearer Thinking On Parking Reform," International Journal of Urban Sciences (http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjus20), at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/12265934.2014.927740.

- Cities21 (2010), $2 Daily Workplace Parking Charge + $4 Cashout: Cut U.S. Commute VMT/GHG 23%, Cities21 (www.cities21.org); at www.cities21.org/cms/index.php?page=parking-charges.

- CORDIS (2002), Parking Policy Measures and the Effects on Mobility and the Economy, Cost-Transport, CORDIS (www.cordis.lu). This is a comprehensive research program in several European countries to investigate parking management strategies and develop standard parking policies.

- Joshua Engel-Yan and Dylan Passmore (2010), "Assessing Alternative Approaches to Setting Parking Requirements," ITE Journal (www.ite.org), Vo. 80, No. 12, December, 30-25.

- J. Richard Kuzmyak, Rachel Weinberger, Richard H. Pratt and Herbert S. Levinson (2003), Parking Management and Supply, Chapter 18, Report 95, Transit Cooperative Research Program; Transportation Research Board (www.trb.org).

- Todd Litman (2006), Parking Taxes: Evaluating Options and Impacts, VTPI (www.vtpi.org); at www.vtpi.org/parking_tax.pdf.

- NALGEP (2005), Clean Communities on the Move: A Partnership-Driven Approach to Clean Air and Smart Transportation, National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals (www.nalgep.org).

- Schaller Consulting (2006), Curbing Cars: Shopping, Parking and Pedestrian Space in SoHo, Transportation Alternatives (www.transalt.org); at www.transalt.org/campaigns/reclaiming/soho_curbing_cars.pdf.

9.5 How Will This Affect Public Transportation?

Eliminating parking mandates can encourage greater use of public transportation by making cities more transit-friendly and reducing reliance on cars. This can lead to improved public transit services as demand increases.

- FHWA (2007), Advanced Parking Management Systems: A Cross-Cutting Study, Report FHWA-JPO-07-011, Intelligent Transportation Systems (www.its.dot.gov), FHWA, USDOT; at www.its.dot.gov/jpodocs/repts_te/14318.htm.

- Go Transit (2013), GO Transit Rail Parking and Station Access Plan, MetroLinx (www.metrolinx.com); at

www.metrolinx.com/en/regionalplanning/projectevaluation/studies/GO_Transit_Rail_Parking_and_Station_Access_Plan_EN.pdf.

- ITDP (2015), Parking Basics: Paving the Way For Better Cities," Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (www.itdp.org); at www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Parking-Basics.pdf.

- Todd Litman (2009), "Parking Costs," Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis: Techniques, Estimates and Implications, Victoria Transport Policy Institute (www.vtpi.org); at www.vtpi.org/tca/tca0504.pdf.

- Patrick Siegman (2008), Less Traffic, Better Places: A Step-by-Step Guide to Reforming Parking Requirements, San Diego Section of the American Planning Association (www.sdapa.org); at http://sdapa.org/download/PatrickSiegman_SDParkingSym_7-14-06.pdf.

- ULI (2000), The Dimensions of Parking, Urban Land Institute (www.uli.org) and the National Parking Association.

- Rachel Weinberger, John Kaehny and Matthew Rufo (2009), U.S. Parking Policies: An Overview of Management Strategies, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (www.itdp.org).

- Richard Willson (2015), Parking Management for Smart Growth, Island Press (http://islandpress.org); at http://islandpress.org/book/parking-management-for-smart-growth.

9.6 Is This Policy Change Environmentally Friendly?

Yes, reducing parking mandates can significantly benefit the environment. It decreases urban sprawl, lowers greenhouse gas emissions, reduces stormwater runoff from large impervious parking lots, and helps preserve green spaces.

- CCAP (2005), Transportation Emissions Guidebook: Land Use, Transit & Transportation Demand Management, Center of Clean Air Policy (www.ccap.org/guidebook). This Guidebook provides information on various smart growth and mobility management strategies, including rules-of-thumb estimates of VMT and emission reductions.

- Lawrence D. Frank, et al. (2010), "Carbonless Footprints: Promoting Health and Climate Stabilization Through Active Transportation," Preventive Medicine, Vol. 50, Supplement 1, pp. S99-S105; at www.activelivingresearch.org/resourcesearch/journalspecialissues.

- Todd Litman (2006b), Win-Win Transportation Emission Reduction Strategies: Smart Strategies Can Achieve Emission Reduction Targets and Provide Other Important Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits, Victoria Transport Policy Institute (www.vtpi.org); at www.vtpi.org/wwclimate.pdf.

- G. F. Nemet, T. Holloway and P. Meier (2010) "Implications of Incorporating Air-Quality Co-Benefits into Climate Change Policymaking," Environmental Research Letters (http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/5/1/014007); at http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/5/1/014007/pdf/1748-9326_5_1_014007.pdf.

- Lloyd Wright and Lewis Fulton (2005), "Climate Change Mitigation and Transport in Developing Nations," Transport Reviews (www.tandf.co.uk), Vol. 25, No. 6, November, pp. 691–717; at http://cleanairinitiative.org/portal/sites/default/files/articles-70119_paper.pdf.

- Lloyd Wright (2009), Win-Win Solutions and Climate Change and Transport, United Nations Centre for Regional Development (www.uncrd.org.jp); at www.uncrd.or.jp/content/documents/4EST-P1-1.pdf.

9.7 How Will This Policy Change Affect People With disabilities?

Developers can still be required to provide accessible parking spaces. The goal is to ensure accessibility while removing unnecessary parking requirements.

- COST Accessibility Instruments (www.accessibilityplanning.eu) is a program to develop practical tools for accessibility planning.

- Heather Allen (2008), Sit Next To Someone Different Every Day - How Public Transport Contributes To Inclusive Communities, Thredbo Conference (www.thredbo.itls.usyd.edu.au); at www.thredbo.itls.usyd.edu.au/downloads/thredbo10_papers/thredbo10-plenary-Allen.pdf.

- Daniel Carlson and Zachary Howard (2010), Impacts Of VMT Reduction Strategies On Selected Areas and Groups, Washington State Department of Transportation (www.wsdot.wa.gov); at www.wsdot.wa.gov/research/reports/fullreports/751.1.pdf.

- Coordination Council for Access and Mobility (www.ccamweb.org) is supported by the US Department of Transportation and the Department of Health and Human Services works to increase the cost-effectiveness of resources used for human service transportation.

- Environmental Justice And Transportation Website (www.brejtp.org) is developing tools to incorporate equity analysis into regional transportation planning.

- Todd Litman (2002), "Evaluating Transportation Equity," World Transport Policy & Practice (http://ecoplan.org/wtpp/wt_index.htm), Volume 8, No. 2, Summer, pp. 50-65; revised version at www.vtpi.org/equity.pdf.

- Eduardo Vasconcellos (2003), Inclusion Of Social Benefits In Transport Planning, Transport For Development Thematic Network (www.transport-links.org).