



## Parking Requirements Reform

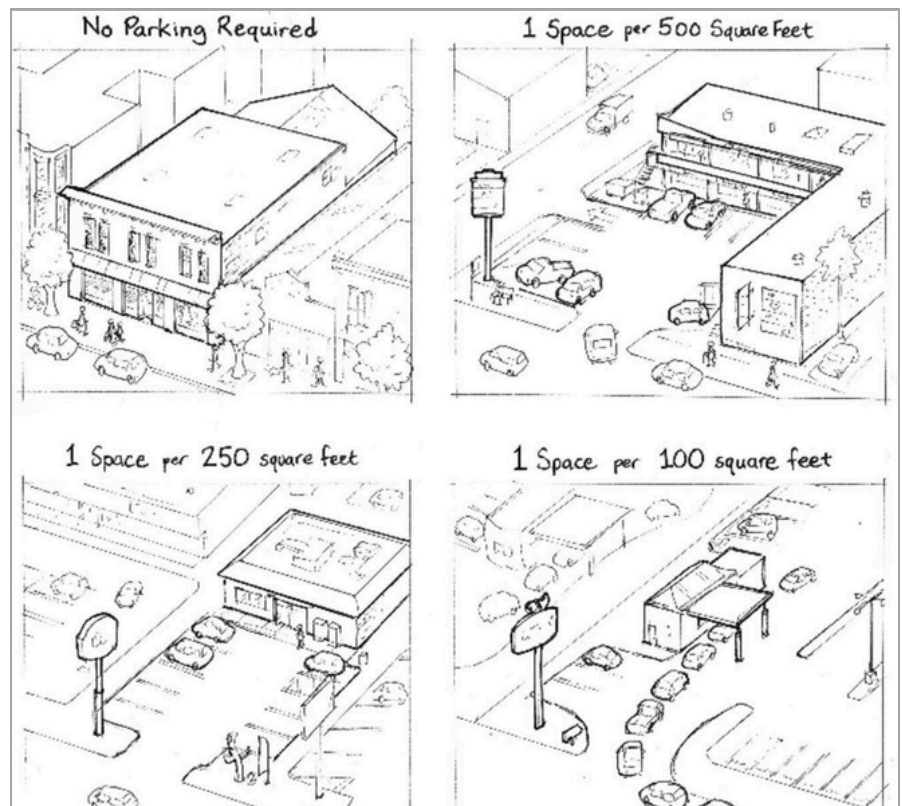
Many, if not most, parking requirements are based on old studies and limited data and have been passed down without regard to the local land use context, demographics, or transportation options. In most cases, these requirements are higher than needed, resulting in more off-street parking than necessary.



Requiring large amounts of parking (typically through minimum parking requirements) restricts a municipality's and applicant's flexibility to adjust to a variety of sites and contexts, and can make new housing, local retail, infill projects, and other desired development much more expensive or even infeasible. Parking also takes up a lot of land, and over-supplying parking prevents the use of that land for more productive purposes, including housing.

### Benefits of Requiring Less Parking

- Lowers the cost of development, making desired development, such as housing and infill projects, more feasible and affordable
- Makes more land available for economically productive uses, including housing and local businesses
- Reduces impervious surface and runoff, improves walkability, and makes the street (and community) more attractive
- Provides flexibility to meet local needs



Alfred Twu illustrations from *Paved Paradise* show the impact of various levels of parking requirements on urban form.

Source: [www.gacities.com/Resources/Reference-Articles/Shining-a-Light-on-Parking-Reform.aspx](http://www.gacities.com/Resources/Reference-Articles/Shining-a-Light-on-Parking-Reform.aspx)





## Common Concerns

**If we don't require enough parking, people will park on residential streets, and our neighborhood will be overrun!**

- **Response:** Allowing shared parking, providing one or more public parking lots, and creating a dynamic, walkable area where people don't mind walking a block or two to their destination can all help reduce parking pressure on a particular site. For complex or controversial projects, the Planning Board can require a parking demand analysis. In most cases, developers will do their research and propose parking to fit local needs.

**What about accessible (handicapped) spaces? Parking for the elderly?**

- **Response:** Accessible spaces would still be required, per the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#). Flexible requirements does not mean no parking – it is reasonable to provide some parking (including for people with limited mobility), just less than typically required.

**What if things change and we need more parking later?**

- **Response:** If necessary, parking can be 'land-banked,' such that some space is reserved (often landscaped) in case it is needed for parking later. Land-banking does have drawbacks (the space cannot be used for anything else), so it should not be treated as a universal solution. Consider the context – there may be plenty of parking within walking distance, even if it's not directly on the subject site.

## Strategies

- **Reduce or Remove parking requirements:** There are three main approaches to this, all intended to provide more flexibility in how parking is provided:
  1. **Remove minimum parking requirements** and let the applicant propose what is reasonable based on parking demand at similar establishments, the specific site context, and the proposed use(s). If needed, the Planning Board and applicant can negotiate as part of the site plan review process. Adjusted versions of this strategy include:
    - Remove minimum requirements in certain areas only, such as walkable centers, near train stations or bus lines, etc.
    - Remove minimum requirements for certain uses or smaller projects (such as projects under 5,000 square feet).
    - Don't require additional parking for reconstruction of an existing site or renovation of an existing non-conforming use.





2. **Provide parking maximums** instead of minimums, with the option for the Planning Board to override the maximum in cases where more parking is clearly needed.
  3. **Reduce parking minimums** to be substantially lower than legacy requirements and provided as guidance for the Planning Board rather than a requirement.
- **Allow Shared Parking:** In many cases, multiple uses can share parking, such that the parking needed is significantly less than the sum for each if provided separately (people can park once and walk between sites/uses). Shared parking can be on adjacent lots, with written agreement from the property owner.
  - If retaining requirements by use, **simplify your off-street parking schedule** to create fewer use categories.
  - **Round down**, rather than up (and for reductions, round up rather than down), to avoid over-supply.
  - Incorporate a **bicycle parking requirement**, or at least consideration, as part of site plan review, particularly for commercial, multi-family, and institutional uses. The Dutchess County Transportation Council has guidance at [dutchessny.gov/BikeParking](https://dutchessny.gov/BikeParking). In general, long-term (covered) bike parking should be provided at uses where people stay for 4 or more hours, and easily accessible short-term parking (near the entrance) should be provided at uses where people stay for fewer than 2 hours. ‘Inverted U’ racks are recommended for ease of use.

## Other Resources

- The [Parking Reform Network](#) has background information and best practices from around the country. Many municipalities – urban, rural, and in between – have removed parking minimums and found it to decrease costs and incentivize smart growth. Examples in New York include the [City of Hudson](#), [Village of Saranac Lake](#), and [Town of Canandaigua](#). The [City of Kingston](#) revised its code to provide parking maximums; see also [engagekingston.com/kingston-forward](https://engagekingston.com/kingston-forward).
- [The High Cost of Free Parking](#), by Donald Shoup, is a comprehensive study of the need for parking reform. Donald Shoup’s [website](#) also includes sample reforms, articles, videos, and other resources related to parking reform.

