



City of Barre, Vermont

August 25, 2022, 5:30 PM

Regular Meeting of the
Planning Commission

Venue Options:

Council Chambers, City Hall

Zoom <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83604836326?pwd=SVR0TjNySy9hRE5pY2duUFZ6bE95dz09>

Meeting ID: 836 0483 6326 Passcode: 381819

Phone: 1 (929) 205-6099 US (New York – Long distance rates will apply)

Agenda

1. Call to order - 5:30 PM
2. Adjustments to the agenda
3. Approval of minutes
 1. July 28, 2022 [view draft minutes](#)
4. Public comment (for something not on the agenda)
5. New business
 1. Review of current development ordinance constraints on residential development.
 2. Discussion of bylaw modernization grant application (deadline November 1st).
 3. Discussion of practical steps to support development of "missing middle" housing, leading to neighborhood site visit in subsequent meeting.
 4. Discussion of approaches to parking minimums to unlock development opportunities and review of planning best practices.
6. Confirm date of next meeting
 1. September 8, 2022
7. Staff updates
8. Roundtable
9. Adjourn

Barre City Planning Commission

July 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Present: David Sichel (Chair), Michael Hellein (Secretary), Rosemary Averill, Amanda Gustin, Raylene Meunier, Joe Reil, Becky Wigg

Absent: None

Staff: Janet Shatney (Director of Planning, Permitting & Assessing)

Visitors: Peter Anthony, Samantha Hiscock

1. Call to Order

5:30pm

The chair welcomed new commissioner Raylene Meunier and other commissioners introduced themselves.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

The chair moved the public hearing to before old business.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. New Business A

A. Open Public Hearing for draft revisions of the Unified Development Ordinance for Accessory Dwelling Units Section 3202

i. Opening remarks by the Planning Commission

ii. Presentation of the draft revisions to Section 3202

iii. Questions and answers, any testimony

i. Peter Anthony thanked the commission and encouraged a vote to forward the changes to City Council.

iv. Decision to close or recess public hearing

i. Motion to close, Gustin, second Reil. Roll call vote unanimous in favor.

v. Decision to vote to forward draft revisions of Section 3202 to the City Council for consideration of a first reading

i. Motion to forward revisions, Gustin, second Hellein. Roll call vote unanimous in favor.

5. Old business

A. Approval of Minutes of the Regular Planning Commission meeting May 26, 2022

i. Motion to approve, Averill, second Reil. Roll call vote: Sichel, Hellein, Averill, Gustin, Reil in favor, Wigg and Meunier abstaining.

B. Housing Density Discussion

Sichel suggested removing all density requirements other than making more than two dwellings per lot a conditional use in R4 and R8. Gustin asked what the current density constraints are trying to achieve. Hiscock pointed out that in some places our density constraints are too right. Hellein said that the idea of getting rid of density constraints entirely was a very dangerous plan in the absence of a professional planner and without being about to point to somewhere else this was implemented successfully. Gustin suggested identifying key areas to adjust density to meet needs and to fill in density comparable to adjacent Barre Town zoning.

Sichel asked what a process could be to move forward, and whether using a municipal planning grant to revisit the development ordinance was a good idea. Hellein suggested using the current dwelling unit per acre data to identify where we need to take action now, and he suggested considering using a municipal planning grant for some form of transportation planning. Gustin agreed that getting this data will help inform where we can make changes today, and will help us focus development in areas where we already have the most infrastructure.

Hellein suggested that we not add any new zoning districts at the moment, but find places where we should draw zoning district boundaries. Sichel worried that some people would be concerned at finding themselves in a

new district. Gustin pointed out that changing the density would always have some impact on what development can happen.

Gustin suggested agenda items for next time: looking at density requirements for R-16 and R12, and looking at district lines in the R-4 district around Beckley Street and Maple Avenue. Averill praised the work of the committee and was enthusiastic about doing site visits. Sichel asked if doing walking site visits would work, and Gustin said it would be good to keep them during our current meeting times. Gustin suggested getting the dwelling unit per acre data from our U.D.O. consultant to inform walk locations.

Shatney noted that the area off of lower Prospect Street was a location of common developer frustration. Sichel requested that commissioners look for locations to focus on for our next meeting.

Action item: Shatney will try to acquire KML parcel data for dwelling units per acre from PlaceSense.

6. New Business B

A. Discussion and/or designation of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary for FY23

Nomination for Hellein as chair Gustin, Reil second. Motion to close nominations for chair Reil, Wigg. Roll call unanimous in favor.

Nomination for Gustin as vice chair Hellein, Wigg second. Roll call unanimous to elect.

Nomination for Reil as vice chair Averill, Reil second. Roll call unanimous to elect.

7. Staff Updates

No further updates.

8. Roundtable

Sichel mentioned there's a new round of planning grants that the city should apply for, and should be suggested at the next meeting.

9. Adjourn

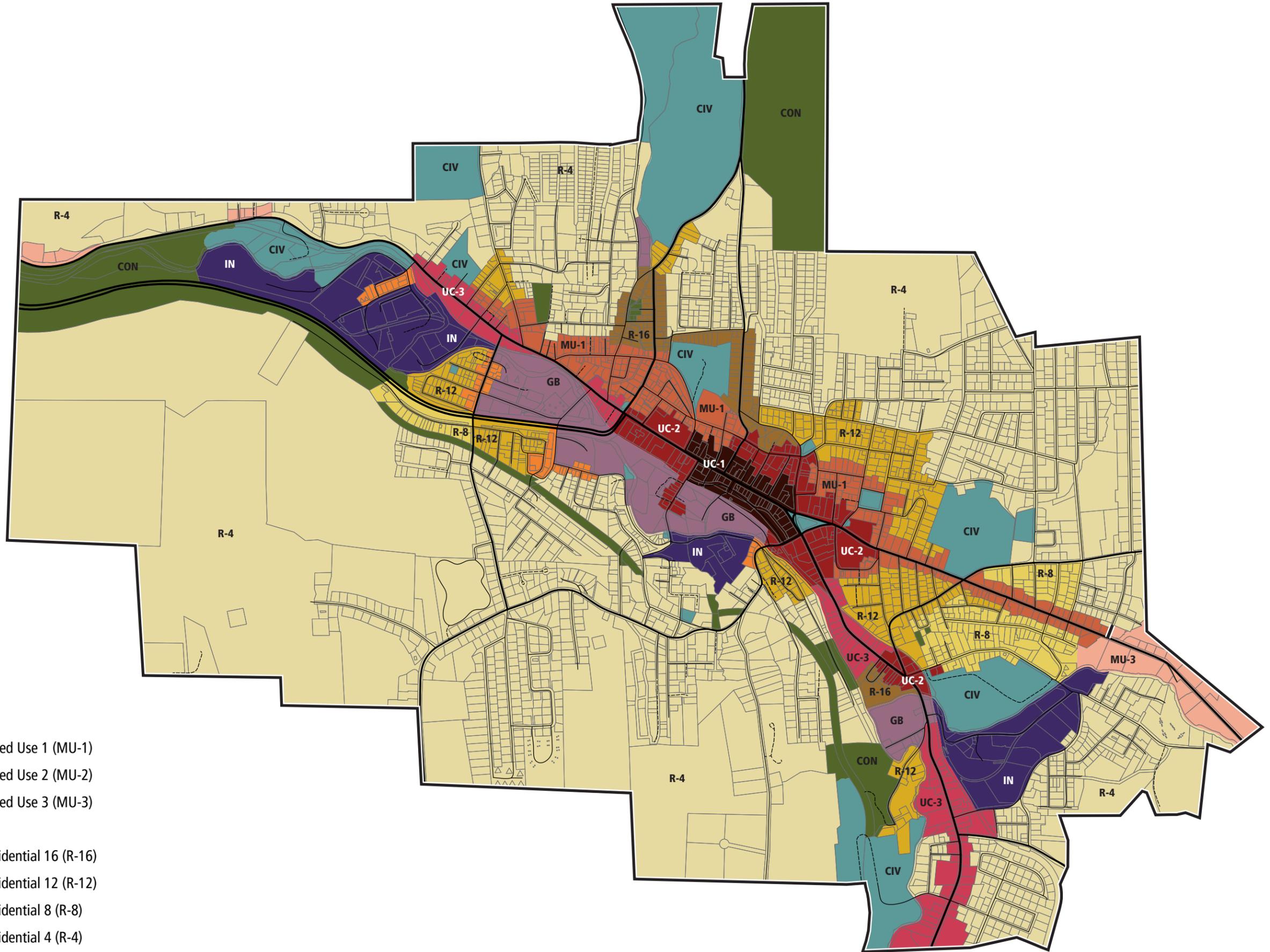
6:06pm, **Motion Hellein, Second Reil. Roll call unanimous vote to adjourn.**

An aerial photograph of a coastline, showing dark water and a white, irregularly shaped area that appears to be a beach or a break in the water. A large white rectangle is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the text 'Current Ordinance' in a black, sans-serif font.

Current Ordinance

BARRE CITY ADOPTED ZONING MAP

7 January 2020



ZONING DISTRICTS

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Urban Center 1 (UC-1) | Mixed Use 1 (MU-1) |
| Urban Center 2 (UC-2) | Mixed Use 2 (MU-2) |
| Urban Center 3 (UC-3) | Mixed Use 3 (MU-3) |
| General Business (GB) | Residential 16 (R-16) |
| Industrial (IN) | Residential 12 (R-12) |
| Civic (CIV) | Residential 8 (R-8) |
| Conservation (CON) | Residential 4 (R-4) |

2116 Dimensional Table

USE & DEFINITION	UC-1	UC-2	UC-3	MU-1	MU-2	MU-3	R-16	R-12	R-8	R-4	GB	IN	CIV	CON
LOTS														
Minimum lot size Inclusive of all land within the property boundaries, but excluding any land within a street right-of-way.	2,000 sf	3,000 sf	3,000 sf	4,000 sf	4,000 sf	10,800 sf	4,000 sf	4,000 sf	5,400 sf	10,800 sf	10,000 sf	20,000 sf	20,000 sf	40,000 sf
Minimum lot frontage On a maintained public or private street, excluding any frontage on limited access highways, or Class 4 roads or unimproved rights-of-way.	15 ft	30 ft	45 ft	30 ft	30 ft	60 ft	30 ft	30 ft	45 ft	60 ft	60 ft	90 ft	90 ft	180 ft
Maximum lot coverage Total amount of impervious surface as a percentage of total lot area.	100%	90%	80%	80%	80%	50%	80%	70%	60%	50%	80%	80%	40%	20%
SETBACKS														
Minimum front setback Measured from the edge of the street right-of-way, or if no right-of-way from the front lot line. For accessory structures, also see Section 3005 .	0 ft	0 ft	8 ft	8 ft	8 ft	12 ft	8 ft	12 ft	16 ft	16 ft	12 ft	16 ft	20 ft	40 ft
Minimum side setback Measured from the side lot lines. For accessory structures, also see Section 3005 .	0 ft	8 ft	8 ft	8 ft	8 ft	12 ft	8 ft	8 ft	12 ft	16 ft	12 ft	16 ft	20 ft	40 ft
Minimum rear setback Measured from the rear lot line. For accessory structures, also see Section 3005 .	0 ft	8 ft	8 ft	12 ft	12 ft	16 ft	12 ft	16 ft	16 ft	16 ft	12 ft	16 ft	20 ft	40 ft
BUILDINGS														
Build-to-line Measured as a line drawn the specified distance from and parallel to the street right-of-way.	8 ft	16 ft	24 ft	24 ft	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Minimum build-to-line coverage Percentage of the build-to-line that must be covered by a principal building.	80%	65%	50%	50%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Minimum principal building height Measured from the average finished grade at the base of a principal building to the eaves or the roof deck if roof is flat.	18 ft	18 ft	18 ft	18 ft	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Maximum structure height Measured from the average finished grade at the base of the structure to the highest point of the structure, excluding architectural and roof-top elements listed in Paragraph 2005.G(3). For accessory structures, also see Section 3005 .	72 ft	60 ft	48 ft	36 ft	36 ft	36 ft	36 ft	36 ft	36 ft	36 ft	48 ft	48 ft	36 ft	30 ft
DENSITY														
Maximum residential density Measured as number of dwelling units per square foot of total lot area, except that accessory dwellings in accordance with Section 3202 will not be included.	no maximum	1 du per 1,200 sf	1 du per 1,800 sf	1 du per 2,100 sf	1 du per 2,700 sf	1 du per 10,800 sf	1 du per 2,700 sf	1 du per 3,600 sf	1 du per 5,400 sf	1 du per 10,800 sf	1 du per 2,100 sf	n/a	n/a	n/a

2115 Use Table

USE & DEFINITION	UC-1	UC-2	UC-3	MU-1	MU-2	MU-3	R-16	R-12	R-8	R-4	GB	IN	CIV	CON
RESIDENTIAL														
Single-family dwelling Use of a structure for habitation by one household that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.	X	X	P ¹	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Two-family dwelling Use of a structure for habitation by two households each in a unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, and with each unit having a separate entrance from the outside or through a common vestibule.	X	X	P ¹	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Three- or four-family dwelling Use of a structure for habitation by 3 or 4 households each in a unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, and with each unit having a separate entrance from the outside or through a common vestibule.	X	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Multi-family dwelling (5+ units) Use of a structure or part of a structure for habitation by five or more households each in a unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, or any dwelling unit in a mixed-use building. See Section 3201 .	P	P	P	P	C	X	P	C	C	C	C	X	X	X
Accessory dwelling Accessory use of single-family residential property for a second dwelling unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation. See Section 3202 .	X	X	P ¹	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Home occupation Accessory use of single-family residential property for a small business that does not alter the residential character of the property. See Section 3203 .	X	X	P ¹	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Home business Accessory use of single-family residential property for a small business that may alter the residential character of the property. See Section 3204 .	X	P	P	P	P	P	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X
Family childcare home Accessory use of single-family residential property for a small daycare business that operates under state license or registration. See Section 3205 .	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Senior housing Use of one or more structures to primarily house people age 55 or older that: (a) Contains multiple dwelling units each intended for habitation by one household and providing complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation; and (b) May offer minimum convenience services to residents as an accessory use.	P	P	C	P	X	C	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Assisted living Use of one or more structures to provide housing, board and care to residents who need assistance with daily activities such as dressing, grooming, bathing, etc. and that operates under state license. Includes residential care homes.	C	C	C	P	X	C	P	C	C	C	C	X	X	X
Skilled nursing service Use of one or more structures to provide housing and 24-hour skilled nursing care to residents and that operates under state license. This includes nursing or convalescent homes, and hospice or respite care facilities.	X	C	C	P	X	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X
Group home Use of single-family residential property to provide housing to people with a handicap or disability that operates under state license or registration. See Section 1105 and Section 3206 .	X	X	P ¹	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Single-room occupancy Use of a structure or part of a structure to provide housing to single individuals each in a single-room dwelling unit that is not required to include food preparation or sanitary facilities. See Section 3207 .	C	C	C	C	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Emergency housing Use of structure or part of a structure to provide food, shelter, and other support services on a temporary basis to people who are homeless or to victims of disaster.	C	C	C	C	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

P = Permitted Use | C = Conditional Use | X = Prohibited Use | All uses other than single- and two-family dwellings, and accessory uses to single- and two-family dwellings, require site plan review in accordance with [Section 4305](#). | ¹ Additional use standards apply (see zoning district section)

USE & DEFINITION	UC-1	UC-2	UC-3	MU-1	MU-2	MU-3	R-16	R-12	R-8	R-4	GB	IN	CIV	CON
LODGING														
Bed-and-breakfast Accessory use of single-family residential property to provide short-term accommodations for travelers. See Section 3208 .	X	X	P ¹	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
Inn Use of one or more structures to provide short-term accommodations for travelers. May include a restaurant, bar, event facility, spa or fitness club as an accessory use. See Section 3209 .	X	P	P	P	P	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rooming and boarding house Accessory use of a single-family residential property to provide accommodations that will typically serve as the boarder's principal residence, and that commonly includes meals, housekeeping and/or laundry services. See Section 3210 .	X	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	C	C	X	X	X	X
Short-term rental Accessory use of property to provide short-term guest accommodations. Includes Airbnb and similar rentals. See Section 3211 .	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	C	C	X	X	X	X
Hotel or motel Use of one or more structures to provide short-term accommodations for travelers. It may also include accessory uses such as food services, recreational services, convention hosting, laundry services, etc. See Section 3212 .	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	X	X	X
COMMERCIAL														
Retail sales (up to 3,000 sf >3,000 sf) An establishment that sells goods to the general public for personal or household consumption primarily from within an enclosed structure, excluding any use specifically defined in this section. It may also provide installation, repair or maintenance services as an accessory use.	P C	P P	P P	P C	P X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	P P	X X	X X	X X
Sales lot An establishment that sells large items such as vehicles, boats, equipment, machinery, manufactured homes or prefabricated buildings primarily from an open lot. It may also provide installation, repair or maintenance services as an accessory use. See Section 3213 .	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	C	X	X
Repair service (small goods, up to 3,000 sf vehicles, large goods or >3,000 sf) An establishment that maintains, services, repairs or paints goods such as appliances, vehicles, boats, equipment or machinery. See Section 3214 .	P X	P X	P C	P X	C X	P X	X X	X X	X X	X X	P P	P P	X X	X X
Fueling station A specialized establishment for selling gasoline or other vehicle fuels. Commonly combined with other retail uses such as a carwash or convenience store, or with an auto repair and service garage. See Section 3215 .	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	X	X	X
Carwash A specialized establishment for washing, waxing, polishing and general cleaning of vehicles. See Section 3216 .	X	X	C	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	C	X	X	X
Lawn, garden and farm supply sales An establishment that sells goods to the general public for personal or household consumption primarily from outdoor areas or open-air structures, excluding any use specifically defined in this section that sells specialized products and services for lawn, garden or farm use. It may: (a) sell farm supplies such as feed and seed; (b) sell nursery and garden products, such as trees, shrubs, plants, seeds, bulbs, soil, compost, mulch, or sod; (c) sell lawn, garden or farm equipment or machinery as an accessory use; and (d) provide installation, repair or maintenance services as an accessory use. See Section 3217 .	X	X	P	X	X	P	X	X	X	C	P	C	X	X
Lumberyard and building supply sales An establishment that sells lumber and heavy building materials and that typically stores most of its stock outdoors or under open-air structures. See Section 3217 .	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	X	X
Open market or auction house An establishment where goods are brought to be immediately sold to the general public for personal or household consumption including from outdoor areas or open-air structures, excluding any use specifically defined in this section. See Section 3218 .	X	C	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	C	X	X
Food or beverage store (up to 3,000 sf >3,000 sf) An establishment that sells food or beverage items primarily not for immediate consumption to the general public. It may offer prepared foods or drinks for immediate consumption either on-site or for take-out as an accessory use.	P C	P C	P P	P C	P X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	C C	X X	X X	X X
Convenience store (up to 3,000 sf >3,000 sf) An establishment that sells a limited line of staple food, packaged food, and convenience items primarily for off-site consumption. It may offer prepared foods or drinks for immediate consumption either on-site or for take-out as an accessory use.	P C	P C	P C	P C	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X

P = Permitted Use | C = Conditional Use | X = Prohibited Use | All uses other than single- and two-family dwellings, and accessory uses to single- and two-family dwellings, require site plan review in accordance with [Section 4305](#). | ¹ Additional use standards apply (see zoning district section)

- (2) Outdoor use areas must not be located on or extend into public rights-of-way except as approved by City Council.

3104 Parking and Loading Areas

3104.A **Purpose.** The provisions of this section are intended to:

- (1) Ensure that development provides adequate off-street parking and loading areas to avoid congestion on surrounding streets;
- (2) Avoid creating excess parking and loading areas that result in increased flooding and land consumption, and decreased water quality and pedestrian-friendliness;
- (3) Promote greening and quality design of parking and loading areas to improve stormwater performance and enhance the character of streetscapes and property frontages in the city.

3104.B **Applicability.** All development must provide off-street parking and all nonresidential or mixed-use development must provide loading areas in accordance with this section except as specifically exempted below:

- (1) **Urban Center 1 and 2 Districts.** The following apply to off-street parking in the Urban Center 1 and 2 districts:
 - (a) There are no minimum off-street parking or loading requirements.
 - (b) The creation of new, private surface parking areas is prohibited except:
 - (i) That existing parking areas may be redesigned and relocated provided that there is no net increase in the total area devoted to surface parking on the development site (which may include multiple parcels).
 - (c) Any off-street parking or loading areas that will be provided in the Urban Center 1 and 2 districts must be sized, located and designed in accordance with the provisions of this section.
- (2) **Small Businesses.** There are no minimum parking or loading requirements for non-residential uses that occupy not more than 1,500 square feet and that are located either on a street with on-street parking or within 1,000 feet (as measured along the sidewalk) of public parking. Any off-street parking areas or loading that will be provided must be sized, located and designed in accordance with the provisions of this section.
- (3) **Natural Resource Based Uses.** There are no minimum parking or loading requirements for natural resource based uses. Any off-street parking or loading areas that will be provided must be sized, located and designed in accordance with the provisions of this section.

3104.C **Amount of Parking.** Except as exempted in Subsection (B) above, all development must provide an adequate amount of off-street parking to fully meet the needs of the proposed

use(s) in accordance with the following:

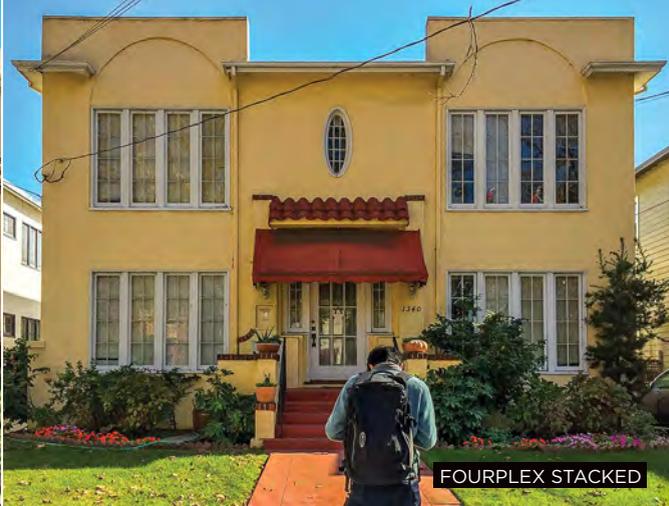
- (1) **Minimum Number of Spaces.** The minimum number of spaces will be as specified below unless the applicant submits a professionally prepared parking study establishing the amount of parking needed:
 - (a) **Residential Uses:** 2 per detached single-family dwelling. For all other dwellings, 1 per unit plus 0.2 for each bedroom in excess of one (i.e., 1.2 for a two-bedroom unit, 1.4 for a three-bedroom unit, etc.).
 - (b) **Lodging Uses:** 1.2 per guest room.
 - (c) **Commercial Uses:** 1 per 500 square feet of gross floor area (does not include outdoor use areas).
 - (d) **Industrial Uses:** 1 per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area (does not include outdoor use areas).
 - (e) **Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Civic and Community Uses:** 1 per 5 seats or 1 per 500 square feet of gross floor area if no seats.
- (2) **Maximum Number of Spaces.** The maximum number of parking spaces will be twice the minimum number of spaces based on the applicable ratio in Paragraph (1), above, unless the applicant submits a professionally prepared parking study establishing the amount of parking needed.
- (3) **Calculation of Number of Spaces.** The Zoning Administrator will determine which ratio in Paragraph (1), above, applies to a proposed use. When calculating the total number of spaces, any decimal will be rounded up to the nearest whole number. On lots with multiple units or uses, the number of spaces for all units and/or uses may be added together before rounding up any decimal.
- (4) **Modification of Number of Spaces.** The Development Review Board may increase or decrease the amount of off-street parking required if:
 - (a) The applicant submits a parking study prepared by a qualified professional demonstrating the amount of parking that will be needed;
 - (b) The applicant meets the requirements for shared parking in Subsection (D) below; or
 - (c) The applicant demonstrates that there is adequate on-street or public parking available within 1,000 feet (as measured along the sidewalk) of the proposed development to meet all or a portion of the demand.

3104.D **Shared or Off-Site Parking.** The Development Review Board may approve a cooperative parking plan to allow parking to be shared by two or more uses and/or to be provided off-site in accordance with the following:

An aerial photograph of a coastline, showing dark water and a white, irregularly shaped area that appears to be a beach or a break in the water. A large white rectangle is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the title text.

Missing Middle Housing

Share images of different housing types with your community to help minimize fears of increased density.
OPTICOS DESIGN, INC.



TOOLS

KNOWLEDGE YOU CAN PUT TO WORK
How-To | The Profession | Tech

FOR THE TRADE



HOW-TO

9 ZONING HACKS FOR MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

Thoughtful tweaks to your community’s code can have a big impact on housing diversity and density. *By Kati Woock*

ONE-THIRD OF AMERICAN households are made up of a single individual. Up to 85 percent of households will not include children by 2025. By 2030, one in five Americans will be over the age of 65.

These statistics add up to a simple fact: Demand is high for smaller homes, lower living costs, walkable neighborhoods, and places for people to age in place. Yet zoning across the U.S. largely discourages these features.

That’s because codes tend to be based on residential density, which is measured in dwelling units per acre, and most prioritize single-family housing. As of 2019, a *New York Times* report found that “it is illegal on 75 percent of the residential land in many American cities to build anything other than a detached single-family home.” Not only are large multifamily buildings banned from many neighborhoods, but so are smaller housing types that cost less than a single-family home: side-by-side and stacked duplexes, triplexes, townhouses. These constitute “missing middle housing”

or “house-scale buildings that just happen to have multiple units in them,” says Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design, who coined the term in 2010.

In the past few years, Oregon, Minneapolis, California, and other states and cities have launched zoning reform efforts to better promote housing affordability, diversity, and density. If your community lacks the political will to make these kinds of sweeping changes, a few thoughtful tweaks can still make a big impact. Adapted from Parolek’s APA Learn course (bit.ly/zhacks), these nine zoning hacks—and a bonus tip—can help planners increase local density.

1 REDUCE MINIMUM LOT SIZE.

Does your code require two lots to build a duplex or a fourplex? If a builder must aggregate multiple lots to build a small multiunit building, your minimum lot sizes are too big.

Instead, replace minimum lot sizes with minimum lot widths and tie types of buildings to the lot’s width, not its square footage.

2 REGULATE MAXIMUM WIDTH AND DEPTH. Replace rear setback requirements with maximum depths to ensure house-scale buildings and document existing building sizes to create a set of maximum widths and depths. These restrictions also discourage demolitions that might replace small single-family homes with very large ones.

3 INCREASE ALLOWED DENSITIES. Rather than applying a blanket density increase to all types, officials in Medford, Oregon, tested different building types on various lot sizes to find density numbers that compliment specific neighborhoods.

4 ALLOW FOR MORE HOUSING TYPES AND REVISIT STRUCTURE SIZES. As Joe Zehnder, chief planner for Portland, Oregon’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, says, “if the house size is the same, why do you care how many units are in there?” In Portland, zoning changes now allow someone building on a 5,000-square-foot lot to construct up to four units divided between a main building and detached accessory dwelling units. Five or six units are allowed if half of them are affordable to low-income residents.

5 LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR SMALLER UNITS. More density doesn’t always mean bigger buildings. In Santa Barbara, California, an average unit size ordinance provides for increased density as the average unit size decreases. This enables missing middle housing by allowing for greater density, even in smaller structures.

Respect the neighborhood context, but don’t be slavish to it—most neighborhoods are made of different building types.

6 REDUCE OR ELIMINATE PARKING MINIMUMS. “If you want missing middle [housing], you need to fix your parking standards,” says Parolek. “We’ve done a better job delivering houses for cars than we have delivering houses for people.” If you require more than one off-street parking space per unit, it’s not economically viable or physically possible to create missing middle housing on infill lots. Instead, opt for one parking space—or even none—per unit and no guest parking.

In suburban or rural areas, like Beaufort County, South Carolina, driving might be a fact of life. Try being creative about how you design parking so it can become an extra unit in the future, if factors like demand or public transit change.

7 RETHINK PRIVATE OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS. While the motivations behind private open space requirements are good, they typically result in unattractive balconies that are used primarily for storage. In a walkable, urban neighborhood, the amenity is the environment. Rather than delivering outdoor amenities on a unit-by-unit basis, focus on shared spaces like courtyards and vibrant streets.

8 ALLOW MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING EVERYWHERE (IF POSSIBLE). Is more than 20 percent of your land area zoned exclusively for single-family housing? Then you need to change the boundaries limiting missing middle housing to deliver it effectively and equitably. In Portland, Oregon, planners proposed allowing middle housing types in all districts across the city unless there is a physical limitation, like flooding or landslide hazards.

In response to displacement concerns, Zehnder says, “the more places where we allow this to happen, the less it’s going to overwhelm any individual place.” And development won’t happen all at once: Portland planners estimate an add of 4,000 new units over the next 15 years. But if a single house in a wealthy neighborhood is replaced with three units, that alone can help take the pressure off demolitions in an area with lower incomes, Zehnder says.

9 IMPROVE INFILL DESIGN. Respect the neighborhood context, but don’t be slavish to it—most neighborhoods are made of different building types. (Tuck-under townhouses that face away from the street, however, can quickly overwhelm available infill lots without enhancing neighborhoods, Parolek says.) Focus on a number of stories instead of a maximum height, and limit where parking is allowed. You can also limit curb cuts and garage frontage to preserve the street front.

Take the opportunity to increase accessibility, too. In Portland, new codes require lots with three or more units to ensure that at least one is “visitable,” with a no-step entry, ground-floor bathroom, and ground-floor living space.

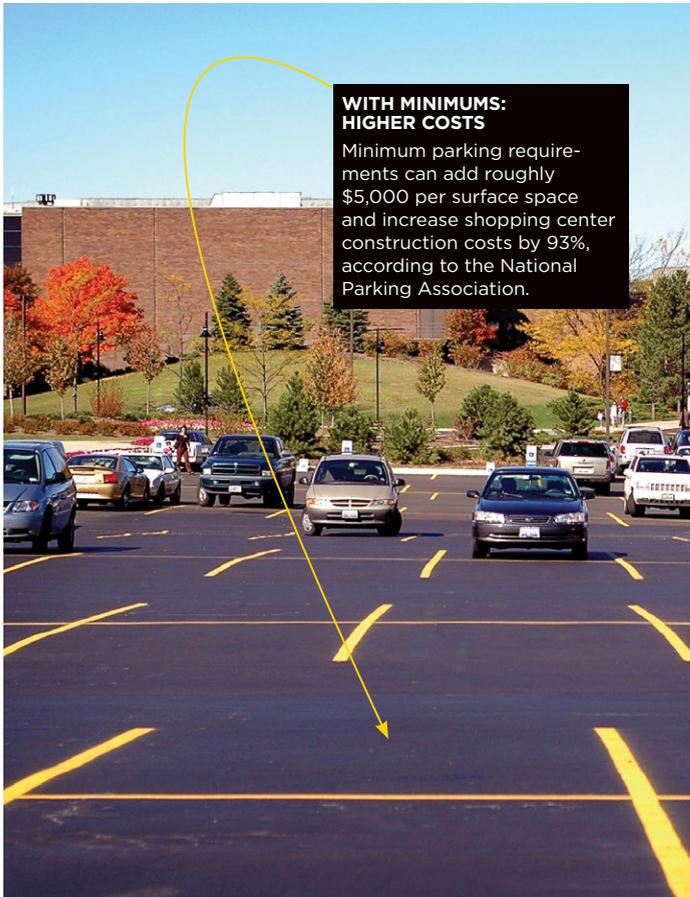
BONUS: FRAME THE CONVERSATION. When you’re presenting your ideas to the community, it can be helpful to avoid terms that might have negative connotations to some, like “density,” “multifamily,” or “upzoning.” Present zoning changes as a way to offer new housing choices or options. Focus on form and scale, not density metrics. Imagery (missingmiddlehousing.com) can help community members understand how missing middle types could look in their neighborhoods.

Kati Woock is a freelance editor and writer based in Michigan.

Vermont parcel land value per acre
<http://maps.vcgi.vermont.gov/ParcelValuation3D/>

An aerial photograph of a coastline, showing dark water and a white, irregularly shaped landmass. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing the text "Parking Minimums" in a large, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered within the white box.

Parking Minimums



A Business Case for Drop

Reforming policies doesn't just put people over parking. It can be a smart econ

AUBURN, MAINE, is a quaint, picturesque river town dating back to the 18th century, with a Main Street historic district of Victorian-era homes. There's also a riverwalk, a hockey arena, and even a mall. But like lots of smaller towns all over America, COVID ravaged some of its businesses. A Ruby Tuesday restaurant closed. So did a locally owned brunch place. And a Chinese buffet. And a French café. And others.

Something had to be done to replace the restaurants and encourage new businesses.

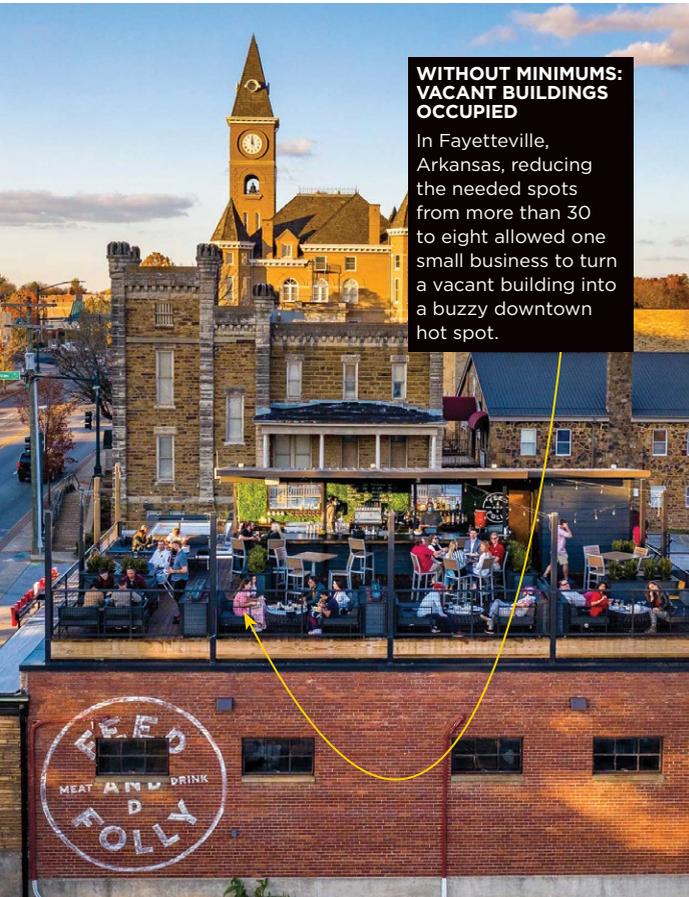
So, what this city of 24,000 people did in June 2021 was eliminate all minimum parking requirements for commercial developments, thus reducing upfront costs for new businesses and expansions. It had an immediate impact. Later that autumn, the Olive Garden restaurant chain looked to open in Auburn and eyed the Ruby Tuesday's site, but the company wanted to build more square footage. Under the old parking regulations,

Olive Garden would have had to supply more parking spaces. But now it didn't. The deal was done and approved.

"With COVID, we were searching [for] any way that could help businesses," says Eric Cousens, Auburn's longtime planning director. "This worked for us, and it's setting us apart from other communities."

Indeed, municipal parking reforms to reduce or eliminate parking minimums are such a major movement now across the U.S. that they're even spreading and taking off in small town America.

"It's such a small but significant step that any city can take to reduce development costs and encourage more commercial and residential



**WITHOUT MINIMUMS:
VACANT BUILDINGS
OCCUPIED**
In Fayetteville, Arkansas, reducing the needed spots from more than 30 to eight allowed one small business to turn a vacant building into a buzzy downtown hot spot.



**WITHOUT MINIMUMS:
TAX REVENUE
INCREASES**
In Sandpoint, Idaho, dropping minimums encouraged tech company Kochava to renovate an old lumber storage facility, resulting in a tax value assessment increase of more than \$2 million.

ping Parking Minimums

conomic development move, even in small towns. By JEFFREY SPIVAK

growth,” says Rachel Quednau, program director at a Minnesota-based nonprofit called Strong Towns that focuses on sustainable community initiatives such as parking reform. “I don’t think there’s any small town in America that doesn’t want more businesses.”

‘A tidal wave’

TO QUANTIFY THE nationwide movement to reduce or eliminate parking minimums, a couple of advocacy groups—Strong Towns and the Portland, Oregon-based Parking Reform Network, made up of planning professionals—collaborated to compile a list of all the North American cities

THE PSEUDOSCIENCE OF PARKING REQUIREMENTS

In *Zoning Practice*, Donald Shoup, FAICP, runs through the many costs of parking minimums—and exposes the weak rationales used to justify them.

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zoningpractice](http://planning.org/zoningpractice)

that have implemented or proposed parking minimum reforms in certain districts (like a downtown) or citywide.

The early-adopter big cities that were at the forefront of the parking minimums movement are all there: Buffalo, New York; Minneapolis; Portland; San Francisco; and Seattle. So are the most recent big cities to join the movement: Boston; Raleigh, North Carolina; and San Diego. Overall, a recent version of the Strong Towns–Parking Reform Network list contained 73 cities with populations of at least 200,000 people.

Yet, the compilation of parking minimum reforms contained even more locales—more than 130—with populations under 100,000. There

are college towns, industrial cities, metropolitan suburbs, rural hamlets, retiree hubs, and resort communities. Some 40 states are represented, and states such as Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington have five or more communities on the list. It's a geographic cross-section of rural and suburban America.

"I've been surprised at how many there have been," says Tony Jordan, president and cofounder of the Parking Reform Network. "It's been a tidal wave."

Smaller cities may not have the same congestion issues or transit alternatives as big cities, but they're pursuing parking minimum reforms for some of the same reasons—to promote downtown and commercial development, reduce barriers to small business growth, and encourage more housing.

That potential is certainly what's led Cutler Bay, Florida, down the path of parking minimum reforms. A town of 45,000 people and eight senior living facilities, the AARP "age-friendly" community south of Miami has had a waiting list for senior units for years.

Town officials talked to developers about what was holding them back. One common refrain: parking costs. So, in 2019, the town reduced parking minimums for senior housing, cutting the requirements in half from two spaces per unit to one. This move immediately led to a 99-unit senior project proposal.

Now Cutler Bay is doubling down on parking reform. A new metro bus rapid transit line is being built on the edge of town, and in April 2022, the town council passed new reductions in parking minimums for mixed-use and multifamily developments in a special transit zone.

"This is the town's way of incentivizing development," says Town Manager Rafael Casals.

Benefits of reforms

SO WHAT'S SO WRONG with parking minimums, anyway? Parking minimums tend to be controversial because they can be inconsistent and unpredictable. The requirements in one city aren't necessarily the same in another city. And some standards aren't always efficient, such as locales dictating two spaces per chair at a barber shop when a barber's chair can only hold one person at a time.

In today's age of environmental sustainability concerns, there's also more awareness about the spatial costs of parking—the fact that suburban parking lots can be larger than the square footage of the buildings they serve, and a string of downtown parking lots can look like a mouthful of missing teeth on the face of a walkable public realm. There can also be water quality costs, as rainfall lands on all that asphalt and then runs off into nearby waterways or storm sewers, taking oil and other surface contaminants with it.

Then there are the direct costs of building parking—estimated by industry analysts at roughly \$5,000 per surface space and up to \$50,000 per space in multilevel garages. This of course escalates the costs of real estate developments, sometimes to a point of making a project financially unfeasible.

"Parking requirements do so much harm," says Donald Shoup, FAICP, a distinguished urban planning professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a longtime evangelist for parking reforms, as the author

of several books on the issue. "They add costs to the building of housing, and they increase the usage of cars and greenhouse gas emissions. They seem to work against almost everything that planners want."

Even the National Parking Association, the industry's trade group of parking operators, now supports reducing or eliminating parking minimums and instead favors allowing communities and developers to make market-based decisions on parking supply and demand.

But do parking minimum reforms actually produce their expected benefits? So far, there hasn't been much research on this topic, but some new studies have begun to be published that appear to answer that question with an emphatic "yes."

In Seattle and Buffalo, separate groups of academic researchers in 2020 and 2021, respectively, found that after policy changes concerning parking minimums, a large portion of developers did build less parking than previously required, and they particularly took advantage of the cost savings to build mixed-use projects. And in San Diego, another group of academic researchers in 2021 found that in the first year after parking reforms, proposals for affordable housing units jumped fivefold.

Bottom line, these studies indicate that more commercial and residential development occurred after parking reforms than would have happened without the reforms.

As the Buffalo researchers—planning professors from the University at Buffalo—wrote in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* article "Minus Minimums" last year, "Cities of all types stand to benefit from undoing constraining parking policies of the past and allowing developers to transform parking lots into 'higher uses.'"

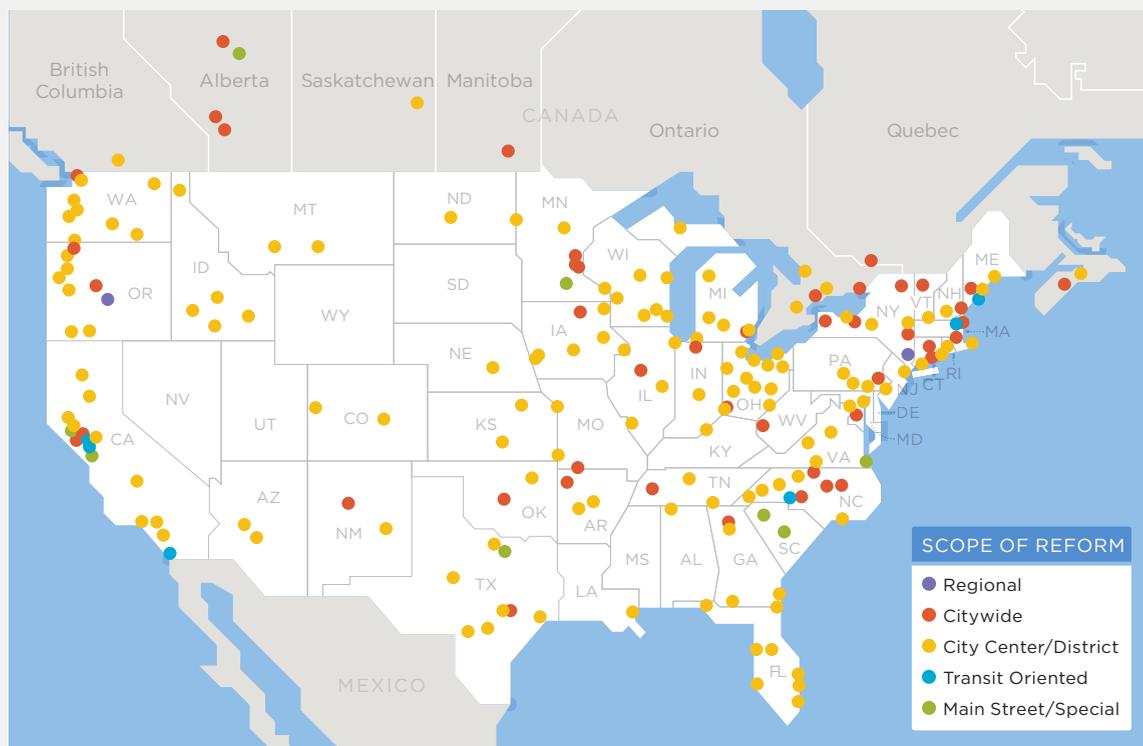
Smaller-city experiences

BUT ALL THAT parking research so far is from bigger cities. Can the same impacts occur in smaller towns? A couple of experiences in different parts of the country are already showing it can.

The college town of Fayetteville, Arkansas, is believed to be one of the first cities in the

PARKING REFORMS IN BIG AND SMALL TOWNS

Places of all sizes are eliminating parking minimums, whether it's just downtown or throughout the whole city. An interactive map from the Parking Reform Network allows users to not just see where reforms are happening, but also to click through to read the details about local parking regulations (users can submit data, too). Of the 200 or so communities on the map, more than half have populations of under 100,000.



SOURCE: PARKING REFORM NETWORK. [PARKINGREFORM.COM/RESOURCES/MANDATES-MAP](https://parkingreform.com/resources/mandates-map)

U.S. to have eliminated parking minimums citywide, which it did in 2015 for commercial properties. In the seven years since, Fayetteville officials don't claim that it spurred a frenzy of new development or redevelopment. But they do maintain it led to some projects that likely wouldn't have happened otherwise.

Take the Feed & Folly restaurant just off the downtown square. Its owners took over a building that had been vacant for decades, but the parking lot only had room for a half-dozen cars—some 30 less than the city's old parking regulations would have required. But under

the new rules, it was able to open in 2020 while adding just a handful of parking spaces, and it instantly became a buzzworthy hotspot with its rooftop bar.

Similarly, Matthew Petty was on the Fayetteville City Council when the parking minimums reform was passed, and as a planning consultant and developer, he eventually wanted to take advantage of the rule change. So, he and his partners developed what's called 495 Prairie, a three-story project with nine apartments on upper floors, plus offices, a craft beer bar, and a smoothie shop at the street level. The project

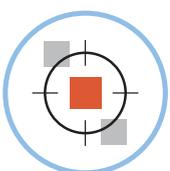
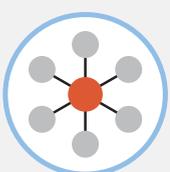
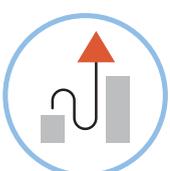
5 TIPS TOWARD REPEALING PARKING MINIMUMS

It may take a while, but you can change a community's thinking. BY MEGHAN STROMBERG

IN 2009, SANDPOINT, IDAHO, (pop. 8,692) passed a series of parking reforms, although not without a fight. Two things kicked it off: the construction of a new bank in the small town's historic downtown that would have required 200 new parking spaces (despite being a block away from a municipal lot) and a historic building's interior remodel project, which triggered a new parking minimum. After much debate, the city council cut the bank's requirement in half and nixed new spots for the remodel.

With those wins—and growing community support—it then eliminated parking minimums downtown entirely, greatly reduced minimums for commercial and residential properties elsewhere in the city, and instituted parking maximums. The latter was meant to prevent large, empty lots from damaging the community's economy and quality of life.

Here are some of the lessons learned by former Sandpoint city council member John Reuter, who wrote about it for the Strong Towns blog in 2017.

	<p>1. STAY ALERT FOR OPPORTUNITIES. Rarely are policies crafted and adopted in a linear sequence. Look for chances, like the restoration of a historic building, to argue that requiring additional parking makes no sense. Remember your end policy goals and push for them as soon as opportunities emerge.</p>
	<p>2. DO WHAT YOU CAN, AS YOU CAN. Sandpoint didn't start by removing all parking minimums. The incremental changes it did pursue have made a difference—and could help make a case for a complete repeal. So, make an exception for the reuse of existing structures, reduce parking requirements where possible, and eliminate them entirely in the sections of town where you can garner majority support.</p>
	<p>3. POINT OUT SPECIFIC NEGATIVE OUTCOMES IN YOUR COMMUNITY. Don't get lost in theory, abstract ideas, or even concrete examples from other communities. Show specific examples where parking requirements are causing problems for your city's businesses or are driving up the cost of housing. Point out blocks that everyone loves and show how they would be illegal to build today.</p>
	<p>4. BUILD BROAD COMMUNITY SUPPORT. Use these local examples to identify and gain the support of new partners who would benefit from eliminating parking minimums: the family that wants to build an accessory dwelling unit for their aging parents but can't meet the parking requirements; the business that can't expand; or the developer who wants to reuse an old building. Well-organized facts are useful in supporting the implementation of new policies, but real people who demand action based on those facts are even better.</p>
	<p>5. DON'T GIVE UP. It took a long time to eliminate parking minimums in downtown Sandpoint—and that positive outcome didn't always look likely. Keep building support, person by person and business by business, and eventually you will get to a new community consensus.</p>

Meghan Stromberg is APA's editor in chief. This article was reprinted with permission from Strong Towns.

built just nine parking spaces—less than half of what would have been required before 2015.

“We wouldn’t have been able to do mixed-use without the new parking policy,” Petty says.

A thousand miles from Fayetteville, a town in Idaho called Sandpoint experienced some of the same benefits from parking minimums reform.

Sandpoint is a resort town with less than 10,000 residents that swells with visitors who come for its lake, beach, and nearby skiing in pine forests. The town first did away with parking minimums for its downtown in 2009. Nine years later, it reduced the minimums citywide. Why? To make building renovations and redevelopments more affordable for small business startups.

Aaron Qualls, AICP, saw it all. From 2010 to 2021, he served as a planning commissioner, city planning director, and a city councilperson in Sandpoint, and he documented what he called “success stories made possible by parking reform.” There was Mick Duff’s Brewery that remodeled an old library and Pend d’Oreille Winery that took over a vacant old furniture store. A tech startup renovated a dilapidated lumber supply building. And on and on—and Qualls says they wouldn’t have happened under the old parking requirements, because local business startups often don’t have extra capital to devote to parking.

“We’ve always assumed that more parking is better,” says Qualls, now a project manager and planner for SCJ Alliance, an engineering and planning firm, “and what we found in Sandpoint is that’s not always the case.”

The lesson: A flexible policy

THE COUNTRYWIDE PARKING REFORM movement is, of course, not a single-issue crusade. Cities such as Boston and San Diego also established parking maximums, or limits on how many spaces a new development can provide in transit-accessible neighborhoods. Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., have technology-driven programs that adjust parking rates based on demand, like higher rates during the morning commute. And Chicago; Kansas City, Missouri; Philadelphia; and several other cities have allowed businesses and neighborhoods to repurpose on-street parking spaces into restaurant seating, parklets, and other public gatherings during the pandemic. In many cases, those temporary changes are becoming permanent.

But parking minimums are by far the most popular form of parking reform—they’re even spreading to state legislative efforts in places like California, Connecticut, and Oregon—and they’re usually the focus of smaller-town policies.

In Jackson, Tennessee, an industrial hub of 68,000 people, leaders are trying to encourage more infill development. Eliminating parking minimums for commercial projects last October was “an easy decision,” Mayor Scott Conger says, because it didn’t require any government funding or subsidies.

Nevertheless, it’s not always an easy plunge for smaller cities to take.

Proposals to reduce or eliminate parking minimums are sometimes met with skepticism and apprehension in smaller towns. There, people

are used to parking right by a store’s front door. “There still is trepidation in these communities,” says Carl Schneeman, managing principal of Walker Consultants, a Minneapolis-based parking design and planning firm that works with cities of all sizes. “A lot of them simply fear a change.”

And it usually turns out that such fears are overblown and don’t come to pass. “Every time these reforms are put in, people go to meetings and say, ‘This is going to be terrible.’ And it never is,” says Parking Reform Network’s Jordan. “The sky doesn’t fall.”

If there’s a lesson for how smaller communities can avoid or lessen such fears of parking minimums reform, it’s by providing flexibility in the new policy. That is, don’t necessarily apply the reduced parking standards to all types of properties or all parts of town. Be targeted in the approach.

That’s what Auburn and Fayetteville did, applying reduced parking standards for commercial projects. Same with Cutler Bay, which lowered parking minimums first for senior housing only, then for mixed-use and multifamily developments in a transit zone. And the city of Alameda, California, was one of the latest communities to officially join the movement, passing an ordinance that eliminated parking minimums citywide in November 2021.

In Alameda, the Planning Board for years had been passing parking variances to reduce parking spaces for new projects. So the decision to eliminate minimum standards simply reflected the community’s evolving attitude toward parking, plus the realization that this city—an island without room to sprawl—needed more room to devote to new housing growth.

“We have space for people and more buildings,” says Andrew Thomas, AICP, director of the city’s Planning, Building, and Transportation department. “We don’t have space for more automobiles that need to be stored.

“We’ve come a long way.”

Jeffrey Spivak, a market research director in suburban Kansas City, Missouri, is an award-winning writer specializing in real estate planning, development, and demographic trends.

Minneapolis Winter Parking

<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/getting-around/snow/winter-parking-restrictions/>