



City of Auburn, Maine

Office of Planning & Permitting

Eric Cousens, Director

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To: Auburn Planning Board
 From: Megan Norwood, City Planner
 Re: Proposed Amendment to Chapter 60, Article V, Section 60-608 to Remove Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements for all Land Uses
 Date: June 08, 2021

I. PROPOSAL: At their June 7, 2021 meeting, the City Council is expected to request a recommendation from the Planning Board on removing minimum off-street parking requirements for all land uses. Currently, our ordinance under Chapter 60, Article V has a list of the minimum number of off-street parking spaces for each permitted use (some uses are not listed in the table, so Staff uses discretion to find a similar use and apply that standard). NOTE: This section applies to *all* uses in *all* districts with the exception of the Form Based Code Districts that have their own set of parking minimums (see subsequent Staff Report).

Off-Street Land Use	Minimum Number of Parking Spaces
Residential	
Single-family; farm	Two per each dwelling unit
Multifamily; two-family	1½ per dwelling unit
Elderly**	One-half per dwelling unit
Commercial	
Retail, business or institution	One per 300 square feet of gross floor area
Office, business, medical or dental	One per 200 square feet of gross floor area plus one per each doctor
Wholesale, warehouse	One per 1,200 square feet of storage gross floor area
Industrial or Manufacturing	One-half per employee for combined employment of the two largest overlapping shifts.
Hotel, motel, boarding and lodging and lodgings, tourist homes	One per guestroom plus one-half per employee
Places of assembly	

Restaurants	One per each three seats or equivalent bench seating capacity
Stadiums, outdoor amphitheaters	One per each four seats or equivalent bench seating capacity
Churches, temples, synagogues	One per each five seats or equivalent bench seating capacity
Indoor theaters	One per each five seats
Auditoriums	One per each ten seats
Meeting halls, convention exhibition halls	One per 100 square feet of floor area and floor area used for assembly
Hospitals	One per bed
Nursing homes	One-half per bed
Educational institutions	
Elementary/middle	One per classroom
High school	Four per classroom
College, business, vocational schools	One per 200 gross square feet of classroom area
Dormitories	One-third per bed
Home Occupation	One per 50 square feet of gross floor area used for home occupation
Recreational Uses	
Golf course	Six per green
Tennis court	Three per court
Swimming pool	One per 100 square feet of gross area per facility
Skating rink	One per 100 square feet of gross area of facility
Ranges (golf, skeet)	1½
Campgrounds	1½ per campsite

Ski areas	50 percent of the lift capacity
Shopping centers	4½ per 1,000 square feet of gross leasable floor area
Mixed uses	Sum of various uses computed separately unless it can be demonstrated to the planning board's satisfaction that the need for parking by each occurs at different times.
Uses not listed or	The required number of similar to those parking spaces shall be noted above determined by the municipal officer charged with enforcement and shall conform to the number of spaces for similar uses as listed in the latest planning publication on file in the office of community development and planning.
**Applies to elderly housing as constructed under special local, state or federal guidelines restricting occupancy to elderly persons.	

Our parking requirements oftentimes dictate the square footage of allowable uses and/or the number of units. If the parking requirements cannot be met, the size of the proposed land use will have to be adjusted to be able to provide the required amount of parking.

As part of the Comprehensive Plan update process, the Committee received recommendations from the Mercatus Center at the George Mason University. One of those recommendations was thought to be something that the City could benefit from currently as the market should be able to dictate what is needed for parking without the City having to provide minimums.

The parking minimums is a section of our ordinance that is oftentimes not revisited once it is created. It is assumed that 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit is what should be required for multifamily developments. Similarly, the standards are vague in the sense that a certain square footage of retail/warehouse space should require a certain number of parking spaces, regardless of the actual business proposed and demand for parking. The argument for removing parking minimums is that they create several empty spaces that do not add value to the City or property, they push homes and businesses further apart, impede the walkability of neighborhoods, raise the cost of housing and place an especially costly burden on small, local entrepreneurs. Removing the minimum parking requirements is not thought to remove parking entirely but will allow Property Owners to decide how much parking their proposed use will actually need, rather than being forced to add unproductive, empty parking spaces to their site.

On the contrary, comments from Department Heads speak to some of the unintended consequences this could cause such as increased on-street parking, issues with snow-bans/plowing, additional units created beyond what the site could reasonably accommodate to make installing a sprinkler system cost effective, etc.

As part of the Planning Boards recommendation to City Council, we suggest weighing the benefits and unintended consequences of scrapping the parking requirements entirely. Perhaps it is the direction the City wants to go in to spur affordable housing development or perhaps the City wants to ease into something like this by applying it only to developments less than a certain square footage, only in certain areas of the City, only for affordable housing projects or housing projects near transit.

II. DEPARTMENT REVIEW:

- Police – From the Police Department’s perspective, parking in the downtown and in congested residential areas is already challenging. Many multifamily properties do not have adequate parking and rely heavily on street parking. Allowing new units to be built specifically in these areas with no parking space requirements will magnify the problem. Parking during snow emergencies and for snow removal after storms is a shared concern we have with Public Works. The city has limited residential parking options with the exceptions of properties located

close by the city's parking garage and the few winter relief lots that currently exist. These lots are very limited in their size and availability. If the single parking space per unit requirement for multi-unit buildings is removed, we feel that the residential parking challenges may only get worse.

- Auburn Water and Sewer – No Comments
- Fire Department/Code Enforcement – The only thing that comes to mind is that the fire department needs to be able to access buildings in case of an emergency or fire. If there was congested parking lots, or roadways, it may present difficulties in our response to a scene. Also, see discussion above regarding problems that will be difficult to resolve later pertaining to sprinkler system cost effectiveness.
- Engineering – No Comments
- Public Services – I agree with PD on this especially the concerns during Winter Storms. We don't call Parking Bans for anything less than 3 inches usually, but we still have to plow the streets. It is difficult getting by these cars and it usually leaves piles of snow that freeze, and it is difficult to remove after that.
- Airport – No Comments
- 911 - No Comments

III. PLANNING BOARD ACTION/STAFF SUGGESTIONS: Staff suggests the Planning Board think about the benefits and potential unintended consequences of removing all parking minimums in the City and make a recommendation to the City Council.