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PARKING RATIOS

WHITE PAPER

Presented to:

Town of Chapel Hill, NC
July 24, 2002

PARKING RATIOS

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Contents

Introduction

The City Council has requested a paper relating to the use of minimum parking requirements. Most municipalities seek to avoid parking shortages by requiring developers to provide a minimum amount of parking as a condition of zoning approval. However, municipal zoning codes do not address issues relating to an oversupply of parking. Only recently have municipalities begun to address the problems that too much parking creates by limiting the number of parking spaces that developers can provide for their projects.

The Town of Chapel Hill currently has no maximum parking requirements in its Development Code. However, the Town requires parking limits as a condition of development approval. Maximum parking requirements are established in the draft Development Code. These standards were established by using the current TC and OI-3 districts (which have the least restrictive requirements) as the minimum standards, and using the existing minimum standards as the maximum standards.

This paper introduces the role of minimum and maximum parking requirements in planning, and explains some the issues that need to be considered by a municipality that is thinking of implementing maximum parking requirements. The appendix has ordinance examples from municipalities that have implemented maximum parking requirements, and web addresses for other ordinances. The bibliography also includes

several addresses to websites that contain additional information about minimum and maximum parking requirements. Following the appendix there is an attached exhibit that illustrates existing parking ratios in Chapel Hill.

Minimum Parking Requirements and the Undersupply of Parking

Minimum parking requirements address problems associated with an undersupply of parking. Minimum parking requirements require developers to provide *at least* a certain number of off-street parking spaces. Historically, these requirements were developed in the 1950's to address a lack of parking space that was making urban areas less economically competitive and attractive to residents, businesses and their customers. Minimum parking requirements were implemented to ensure that there was parking within a reasonable distance of a driver's final destination (TCRP 1998).

In addition to creating a more competitive urban environment, minimum parking requirements are thought to guard against parking spillover into residential neighborhoods. When there are not enough parking spaces at a certain destination, drivers park in the next convenient area. When the next convenient area is a residential neighborhood, local residents are left without a convenient place to park when they come home and local elected officials are given a highly contentious political issue (Shoup 2002; VTPI 2002).

Minimum Parking Requirements and the Oversupply of Parking

While minimum parking requirements alleviate some problems, it is increasingly recognized that they can create others. Minimum parking requirements are generally designed to satisfy peak demand for free parking (EPA 1999; Shoup 2002). They are not designed to accurately reflect the need for parking, nor are they intended to optimize land usage (Weant 1990). Thus minimum parking requirements can create an oversupply of parking spaces.

Parking has been described as a "fertility drug for cars" (Raad 2002). As more parking is provided, more cars take advantage of it (Shoup 2002; Cervero 1988). As the number of cars increase, so does road congestion and traffic jams. In response, local governments must pay for the increased wear and tear on the roads, more sophisticated and expensive traffic control mechanisms at intersections and eventually the widening of road for drivers who wish to maintain their current degree of access within urban areas (TCRP 1998).

The amount of parking also affects public transportation. As parking availability increases, fewer people use public transportation. Several reports even indicate that mass transit improvements will not increase ridership unless the parking supply is reduced (DETR 2001).

As the number of cars increase and mass transit use decreases, air quality decreases. Decreased air quality creates and/or aggravates health problems for urban residents. Individuals who suffer from pulmonary diseases such as asthma and bronchitis suffer as the increased number cars decrease air quality (EPA 1999; Shoup 2002).

Parking pavement creates environmental problems. The impervious surfaces of parking lots do not allow water to be absorbed into the ground, which creates problems with storm run-off and water quality (EPA 1999). Parking lots with large black tarmac surfaces attract heat and increase the ambient temperature in urban areas on hot summer days. Parking lots also replace other productive types of urban land uses such as office buildings, shopping centers, or residential developments causing urban space to be less dense (Willson 1995). Less dense urban areas act as an impediment to current trends in pedestrian friendly neighborhood design and facilitate greater car dependency (Willson 1995; EPA 1999).

The potential negative consequences of parking lots lead to increased expenses for municipalities. These expenses can be passed to taxpayers. Even if municipalities tried to avoid addressing the problems created by an oversupply of parking federal laws such as the Clean Air Act and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century are forcing municipalities to address the problems (TCRP 1998). Increased taxes and poor environmental and driving conditions combine to create an incentive for businesses to invest in locations on the urban fringe instead of in the urban core (EPA 1999; DETR 2001).

Failing to address the oversupply of parking creates many of the same problems that minimum parking requirements were supposed to solve (e.g. sprawl, poor economic environment, loss of investment). To avoid these problems a balance between an oversupply of parking and an undersupply of parking must be found. A balance is struck when there are enough parking spaces to accommodate recurrent peak-parking demand, but additional spaces do not undercut current transit ridership, nor a city's financial ability to meet other public needs and obligations. The underlying goal is reasonable and balanced land use management that create travel choices that sustain local economies and their environments (Weant 1990; DETR 2001).

Maximum Parking Requirements

Municipalities in the United States have begun to supplement minimum parking requirements with maximum parking requirements in an attempt to achieve balanced land use management. Maximum parking requirements limit the number of parking spaces a developer can provide. Instead of asking developers to provide *at least* a certain number of parking spaces, developers are now asked to provide *no more* than a certain number of parking spaces.

Large cities such as San Antonio, Seattle, San Francisco and Portland have maximum parking requirements. Portland, Oregon has one of the most sophisticated maximum parking requirement ordinances in the country (see appendix). Portland's maximum parking requirements vary within the city, depending on the characteristics of different districts, and the distance of a land use from mass transit. Other cities, such as San Francisco and Seattle, apply maximum parking limits only to office buildings (VTPI 2002). Smaller municipalities such as Cambridge, Massachusetts; Redmond,

Washington; Queen Cree, Arizona; and Concord, North Carolina are also implementing maximum parking requirements (see appendix).

States and regional governments are also beginning to support or implement maximum parking requirements. The state of Washington recently advised its municipalities to consider implementing maximum parking requirements (Washington 2002). Regional councils in the Portland metropolitan area and in southwest Washington have also recommended that municipalities adopt maximum parking requirements (Metro Council 1996; Southwest 1996).

The United Kingdom, which has a centralized system of urban planning, recently enacted a policy requiring every municipality to implement maximum parking requirements for retail stores, stadiums, office buildings, cinemas and conference centers that reach sizes above relevant thresholds (e.g. 30,000 square feet). Additionally, the central government suggested that municipalities apply maximum parking requirements to other land uses depending on the particular needs of the municipality. Except in exceptional circumstances, minimum parking requirements have been abolished in favor of permitting developers to provide as many parking spaces as they think is fitting for the particular development (DETR 2001; East Midlands 2002).

Maximum parking requirements work in the same way minimum parking requirements do. Depending on the proposed land use (e.g. office building, golf course, apartment building) there is a particular ratio of parking spaces allocated to the land use. For example, an office building might be limited to 2.5 parking spots per 1000 square feet of gross leasable area. The numerical limits set by municipalities for particular land uses usually come from either the parking generation manual published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, and/or from limits other municipalities have instituted (Shoup 2002). This practice of determining the ratios for minimum and maximum parking requirements can create problems (Shoup 2002; ULI 1994; Weant 1990).

The Problem Calculating Minimum and Maximum Parking Requirements

When municipalities create maximum and minimum parking requirements they are predicting parking demand. Parking demand is defined as the accumulation of vehicles parked at a given time as a result of activity at a given site. Parking demand is an outgrowth of a municipality's political and economic environment and a municipality's history (Weant 1990). There is no universal standard for parking demand (ULI 1993). Parking demand varies among and within municipalities for a variety of reasons including a municipality's development patterns, financial resources, investment climate, street traffic, and mass transit use (Weant 1990).

Municipalities cannot afford to be cavalier with maximum parking requirements (Shoup 2002). The negative implications of an oversupply of parking can be more noticeable to the general public than an undersupply of parking. For instance, a driver is not as likely to associate poor air quality and congested roads with an oversupply of

parking, but they will quickly associate not being able to find a parking spot with an undersupply of parking. Similarly, a business owner is not as likely to associate increased taxes for road construction with an oversupply of parking, as they will associate a lack of parking spaces for customers with an undersupply of parking. Pressures may also come from lenders and developers who feel that only insufficient parking will harm their long-term investment in a building (EPA 1999).

Adjusting to Maximum Parking Standards

Precautions can be taken to avoid creating an undersupply of parking. As with any parking policy, a municipality should diligently examine parking demand to understand the characteristics that create the unique parking demand for the municipality (Weant 1990). The parking generation manual for the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and the parking requirements of other municipalities can be used to reference parking requirement ratios, but municipalities should avoid following them blindly (Shoup 2002).[1]

A municipality can also hedge against creating an undersupply of parking with maximum parking requirements by using Transportation Demand Management ("TDM") (EPA 1999; PPG 2002). TDM is the term used to describe strategies that result in the efficient use of transportation infrastructure (VTPI 2002). The term also pertains to creating incentives for drivers to seek other methods of transportation (TCRP 1998). Maximum parking requirements themselves are considered a TDM

10 Questions for a Municipality to Consider When Creating a Parking Policy

1. What are the community development, transportation, and environmental goals for downtown and surrounding areas?
2. What distribution of parking facilities is desired in regard to land-use intensity, demonstrated parking needs, existing or proposed transit services, and available and proposed roadway access capacity?
3. What are the individual worker, shopper and visitor parking requirements of subareas that might lead to a differentiated policy regarding the provision or prohibition of parking?
4. What opportunities exist for sharing parking between generators having non-concurrent parking demand timeframes?
5. How can parking serve as a catalyst for desired development?
6. What are the effects of parking on the location and design of transportation system improvements, both existing and proposed?
7. Should parking be provided for all people who want to drive into the central business district, or should it be rationed in some specified manner?
8. Who should develop, finance, and operate parking facilities?
9. What public-private joint developments or working relationships are desirable in developing, financing and operating parking?
10. Should parking lead or follow new development?

Source: *Parking*, Weant and Levison (1990)

[1] The ITE parking generation manual guided the maximum parking ratios this firm submitted to Chapel Hill in the draft ordinance. Those ratios can be examined to ensure that they comply with the needs of Chapel Hill. See Appendix B.

strategy (EPA 1999; VTPI 2002). Other TDM strategies include in-lieu parking fees, shared parking, centralized parking, parking freezes, subsidies for transit, cash out programs, transit improvements, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, vehicle trip reductions parking brokerages, parking pricing (see attached paper) (EPA 1999; Shoup 2002; VTPI 2002). The business community in Portland, Oregon would not accept maximum parking requirements until Portland made a greater commitment to mass transit (EPA 1999).

TDM recognizes that travel patterns will change as parking conditions change, especially among individuals who drive to work (TCRP 1998). As TDM strategies are implemented people who live in the suburbs tend to shift more to ridesharing, telecommuting, and cycling, while people who live in urban areas shift primarily to transit and walking (VTPI 2002). TDM builds flexibility into the rigidity of parking requirements and lessens the burden placed on maximum parking requirements to reduce the oversupply of parking (Smith 1983; EPA 1999).

A Place for Minimum Parking Standards

After a generation of minimum parking requirements and given the current oversupply of parking in many regions, it might be easy to think that developers want to build as many parking spaces as possible, but this is not true. It cannot be assumed that developers will meet the parking demand for their projects (EPA 1999). Certain land uses may fail to provide an adequate parking supply (Weant 1990). Parking is costly to construct, and developers are forced to pass on the cost of construction to the individuals who purchase or lease their buildings. The cost of providing parking can increase the rent of office space by as much as 67% (Shoup 2002). Developers can benefit financially by not providing enough parking spaces for some projects (TCRP 1998).

This disincentive shows that developers will not uniformly oppose maximum parking requirements. The disincentive to provide parking, however, is also a factor that cautions against eliminating minimum parking requirements in favor of relying solely on maximum parking requirements. The goal after all is to find a balance between an undersupply and oversupply of parking. While the United Kingdom did away with minimum parking requirements, it should be remembered that the United Kingdom's system of mass transportation and the development patterns of many of their cities are much different than cities in the United States. In addition, the goals that the United Kingdom is trying to achieve with its parking policy might not be the same goals that municipalities in the United States are trying to achieve.

Conclusion

Maximum parking requirements address the problems caused by an oversupply of parking. The need for and calculation of maximum parking requirements depends of the particular characteristics of each municipality. If a municipality decides to implement maximum parking requirements, the municipality should consider supplementing maximum parking limits with other TDM strategies, in order to achieve a flexible parking policy tailored to the unique characteristics of the municipality. If implemented

correctly, maximum parking requirements can help a municipality to achieve the goal of reasonable and balanced land use management that creates travel choices that sustain local economies and their environments.

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REDMOND, WASHINGTON

20D.130.10-020Required Off-Street Parking.

(1)The minimum required and maximum permitted number of parking spaces for each zoning district and land use is noted in the table entitled, "Required Off-Street Parking," which is incorporated as a part of this subsection. The requirements for land uses that have special parking needs supersede those based on zoning districts for the uses specified, regardless of location. Where calculations of parking requirements result in fractional amounts they shall be rounded up if 0.5 or over.

The table for this ordinance can be viewed on-line at
http://www.mrsc.org/.

PORTLAND, OREGON

33.266.115 Maximum Allowed Parking Spaces

A. Purpose. Limiting the number of spaces allowed promotes efficient use of land, enhances urban form, encourages use of alternative modes of transportation, provides for better pedestrian movement, and protects air and water quality.

The maximum ratios in this section vary with the use the parking is accessory to and with the location of the use. These maximums will accommodate most auto trips to a site based on typical peak parking demand for each use. Areas that are zoned for more intense development or are easily reached by alternative modes of transportation have lower maximums than areas where less intense development is anticipated or where transit service is less frequent. In particular, higher maximums are appropriate in areas that are more than a 1/4 mile walk from a frequently-served bus stop or more than a 1/2 mile walk from a frequently-served light rail or streetcar stop.

B. Maximum number of parking spaces allowed. Regulations in a plan district or overlay zone may supersede the regulations in this subsection.

1. Surface parking. Where more than 25 percent of the parking accessory to a use is on surface parking lots, both the structured and surface parking are regulated as follows. Parking accessory to a use includes accessory parking that is on- and off-site:

a. Generally. The maximum number of parking spaces allowed is stated in Tables 266-1 and 266-2, except as specified in subparagraph B.1.b, below;

b. Exception for sites not well-served by transit. For sites located more than 1/4 mile from a transit stop with 20-minute peak-hour

bus service and more than 1/2 mile from a transit stop or station with 20-minute peak-hour light rail or streetcar service, the maximum number of parking spaces allowed is 125 percent of the amount stated in Tables 266-1 and 266-2. Peak hour service is measured on weekdays between 7:00 AM and 8:30 AM and between 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM. Applicants requesting this exception must provide a map identifying the site and all transit stops and stations within 1/2 mile of the site and Tri-met schedules for all transit routes within 1/2 mile of the site.

2. Structured parking. Where 75 percent or more of the parking accessory to a use is in structured parking, both the structured and surface parking are regulated as follows. Parking accessory to a use includes accessory parking that is on- and off-site:

a. Generally. There is no maximum number of parking spaces, except as provided in subparagraph B.2.b, below;
b. Parking accessory to Medical Centers and Colleges. The maximum parking allowed that is accessory to Medical Centers and Colleges is stated in Tables 266-1 and 266-2.

3. Exception in the EG and I zones. In the EG and I zones, there is no maximum number of accessory parking spaces for either structured or surface parking where both B.3.a. and b. are met, and either B.3.c. or d. is met:

a. The site is at least eight acres in area;
b. The site is located more than 1/2 mile from a transit stop or station with 20-minute peak-hour light rail or streetcar service; and
c. At least 700 of the accessory parking spaces are in a structure; or
d. The structured parking is in a structure with at least three floors, and parking is on at least three floors of the structure.

The table for this ordinance can be viewed on-line at
http://www.ordlink.com/codes/portland/index.htm

CONCORD, NORTH CAROLINA

This ordinance can be viewed on-line at
http://www.ci.concord.nc.us/planning/zoning/acrobats/Article%208.pdf

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

This ordinance can be viewed on-line at
http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~CDD/commplan/zoning/zord/zo_article16_nt_pt.pdf

QUEEN CREEK, ARIZONA

Table 5.7-2 establishes the minimum numbers of parking spaces required and the maximum number of parking spaces permitted for the uses indicated. For the

purposes of parking calculations, the gross area of any parking garage within a building shall not be included within the Gross Floor Area of the building.

(THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT OF TABLE 5.7-2):

5.7-2 OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Group Living	**Assisted Living Facilities; Treatment Facility**	**0.3 per room**	**1 per room**	**N/A**
	Other Group Living	**0.3 per room**	**1 per room**	**N/A**
Household Living	**Bed and Breakfast**	**1 per guest room plus 2 spaces for owner's portion**	**N/A**	**N/A**
	Rooming/Board House	**1 per room**	**2 per room**	**N/A**
	Dormitories/Fraternities/Sororities	**1 per 2 beds**	**1 per bed**	**0.5 per unit**
	Single-Family and Duplex	**2 accessible (non-tandem) spaces per dwelling unit**	**N/A**	**N/A**
	Multi-Family	**1 per unit**	**1.9 per unit**	**0.5 per unit**
	Elderly housing	**1 per three units**	**1.5 per unit**	**N/A**
	All Other Dwelling Units	**1 per unit**	**2.0 per unit**	**N/A**
Colleges	**All**	**1 per 4 students**	**1 per 2 students**	**1 per 5 vehicle spaces**
Community Services	**All**	**1 per 250 sf GFA**	**1 per 200 sf GFA**	**1 per 20 vehicle**

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

The entire ordinance can be viewed on-line at
http://www.sanantonio.gov/dsd/pdf/udc_article5division6.pdf

Table 526-3 establishes the minimum number of parking spaces required, the maximum number of parking spaces permitted, and the minimum number of bicycle spaces required, for the uses indicated Applicants are entitled to a reduction in the minimum parking requirements of Table 526-3 pursuant to § 35-523(f)(2) of this Code to help meet the minimum tree preservation requirements. . . .

Structured Parking and Pervious Pavement shall not be subject to the maximum parking requirements.

(EXCERPT FROM PARKING TABLE):

	Permitted Use	Minimum Vehicle Spaces	Maximum Vehicle Spaces
ACCESSORY	ACCESSORY USES - secondary or incidental to primary use	N/A	N/A
ALCOHOL	ALCOHOL - bar and/or tavern	1 per 2 seats	1 per 1.5 seats
ALCOHOL	ALCOHOL - beverage manufacture or brewery - alcohol	1 per 1,500 sf GFA	1 per 300 sf GFA
ALCOHOL	ALCOHOL - distillation, storage	1 per 600 sf GFA	1 per 350 sf GFA
ALCOHOL	ALCOHOL - microbrewery	1 per 2 seats	1 per 1.5 seats
ALCOHOL	ALCOHOL - beverage retail sales	1 per 300 sf GFA	1 per 200 sf GFA
ALCOHOL	ALCOHOL - winery with bottling	1 per 1,500 sf GFA	1 per 300 sf GFA
AMUSEMENT	ANIMAL RACETRACK and/or RODEO ARENA	1 per 6 seats or 1 per 30 sf GFA if no permanent seats	1 per 4 seats or 1 per 50 sf of GFA

Illustrations of Existing Parking Ratios

The parking requirements that were proposed in the Second Draft of Chapel Hill's proposed Development Ordinance have been carried over to the Third Draft. Questions have been raised regarding the basis for the recommended ratios.

A discussion paper prepared by Mark White of Freilich, Leitner, & Carlisle underscores the localized nature of parking patterns. Application of national standards for any local situation would be problematic, and especially so in Chapel Hill. The Town Council has adopted a policy that the maximum number of parking spaces provided with new development should be 110% of Chapel Hill's minimum requirements.

The parking requirements included in the Second (and Third) Draft start with Chapel Hill's minimum requirements acts as a base. Maximums are then proposed using the 110% policy as a guideline, rounding up or down so that requirements are easily understood and applied.

Establishing maximum parking requirements as an ordinance, rather than as policy, represents a significant change from existing regulations. The Town Council has been clear about its intent to move in the direction of restrictions on the supply of parking, and these proposals would codify that intent.

For purposes of illustration, it may be useful to look at the existing parking ratios for typical Chapel Hill businesses, to understand how the new requirements would restrict parking. The following table is offered to facilitate this study.

Name of Business	#Square Ft Existing Floor Area (Sq Ft)	# of Existing Parking Spaces	Current Min Parking Requirement	Proposed Min Parking Requirement	Proposed Max Parking Requirement
Centura Bank (downtown)	13,176	36	1 per 400 sf (33 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (33 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (38 spaces)
Dip's Country Kitchen	3,750	10	1 per 400 sf (10 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (10 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (11 spaces)
Breadman's Restaurant	6, 625	60	1 per 400 sf (17 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (17 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (19 spaces)
Panera Bread Company	3,392	22	1 per 400 sf (9 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (9 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (10 spaces)
Wachovia Bank Estes Drive	4,451	22	1 per 400 sf (12 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (12 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (13 spaces)

Credit Union Elliott Road	8,445	30	1 per 400 sf (22 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (22 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (25 spaces)
Wachovia Bank Timberlyne	3,500	39	1 per 400 sf (9 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (9 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (10 spaces)
Cedar Ridge Offices	18,259	69	1 per 350 sf (53 spaces)	1 per 400 sf (46 spaces)	1 per 350 sf (53 spaces)