



# WASTED SPACES

## OPTIONS TO REFORM PARKING POLICY IN LOS ANGELES

MAY 2017



# ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF INFILL BUILDERS

The Council of Infill Builders is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation of real estate professionals committed to improving California through infill development. Infill development revitalizes neighborhoods and communities, provides transportation choices, creates viable close-knit mixed-use areas, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and improves the overall economy. The Builders seek to educate the public about these benefits through research and outreach.

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*This report and its recommendations are solely a product of the Council of Infill Builders and do not necessarily reflect the views of all individual convening participants, reviewers, or TransitCenter.*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**E**xcessive parking requirements and poor parking management can undermine a community's economy and environment by wasting space and increasing pollution. The challenge is particularly acute in Los Angeles, with its 10 million residents, history of auto dependence, and recent efforts to invest in more non-automobile transportation options and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. While most Los Angeles residents want convenient access to destinations, many communities throughout the region currently require too many parking spaces as part of new development projects. These requirements waste scarce resources and encourage inefficient use of land that diminishes overall mobility.

To address the challenge, the Council of Infill Builders convened a diverse group of builders, public officials, nonprofit advocates, and land use experts in Los Angeles in January 2017. The group identified key barriers to parking policy reform and recommended solutions to encourage better parking policies throughout the Los Angeles region, including the county and its numerous cities.

**Participants described a vision for the ideal, high-impact parking policies. They wanted local governments in the region to:**

- Eliminate, reduce, or right-size parking minimums, while letting the market determine actual parking needs
- Charge optimal prices for parking based on demand, such as through dynamic pricing on metered spots and better enforcement of existing policies, and spend any increased

parking revenue on community-oriented goals of more efficient land use, improved equity, and reduced traffic

- Improve parking management, including transportation demand management options that promote multimodal options and access to destinations

Participants also described other parking reform opportunities, from better enforcement of California's parking cash-out law, more adaptive reuse ordinances and public funding of parking garages, and increased outreach to community members about parking needs and options.

### **These improved parking policies could in turn produce the following benefits for residents:**

- Reduced traffic
- Lower costs and prices for housing and businesses
- Improved social equity for low-income and next-generation residents
- Revitalized downtowns with more safe, convenient, and walkable neighborhoods
- Improved fiscal revenues for funding community investment priorities
- Improved overall transportation networks and mobility

Yet common barriers often prevent local governments from adopting these solutions and achieving the benefits.

### **Participants cited the following key barriers:**

- Public opposition due to concerns about parking availability
- Lack of available data on actual parking needs
- Excessive parking requirements used as leverage for achieving other objectives

Complex planning and development processes can limit reforms as well.

### **To help overcome these barriers, the group recommended priority solutions for local governments:**

1. **Accurate framing** of parking reforms by emphasizing improved public access to destinations and more efficient utilization of limited resources, coupled with strategic pilot projects when necessary
  - **Reframe parking policy reform** to address constituent concerns by discussing improved access to destinations and better allocation of resources
  - **Use key, memorable phrases** to communicate about parking policy reform, such as "parking efficiency" or optimizing instead

of simply “removing parking”

- **Use pilot projects** to demonstrate that parking reform can adequately address neighborhood concerns
- **Present parking reform options as part of a broader, multimodal plan** to provide convenient access to destinations and not as a standalone initiative
- **Address safety concerns through policy**, such as improved lighting near parking stations or ride-hailing (Uber and Lyft) drop-off zones directly outside destinations
- **Provide long-term education about the benefits** of reduced or reformed parking in a more multimodal system, including helping to achieve top public priorities such as making housing more affordable and combatting climate change
- **Utilize robust data to counter public misperceptions** about parking shortages or lack of access to destinations

**2. Gather, curate, and share data in a universal clearinghouse**, funded by project fees and with incentives for private parking data sharing, in order to address concerns about the lack of parking or fears of losing convenient access to destinations

- **Build a regional parking database/universal clearinghouse** with map-based data tools that are easy for the average resident to use, with a real-time occupancy metric
- **Inventory local government data from parking enforcement** rather than discarding them after officers process tickets or complete the day’s scans
- **Inventory local government data from planning processes** to centralize the data from existing parking studies or from transportation demand management programs
- **Secure private parking data** and develop incentives to share it
- **Fund the parking data clearinghouse development and ongoing maintenance**, using payments from developers for required parking studies as an existing funding stream

**3. Find common interest among housing and transportation advocates** to secure sensible parking reform while boosting affordable housing and equity goals

- **Use parking solutions to fund more affordable housing**, such as through grant programs and other incentives for jurisdictions that successfully address conflicts over parking, actively manage parking, or create a “preferential parking district” (which could ideally replace lost revenue from fees on construction that may distort and discourage home building)

- **Consider lowering minimum parking requirements at a greater rate for affordable housing projects**, given that lower-income residents tend to own or use fewer cars and ride transit more than upper-income residents (while ensuring that parking requirements for market-rate housing are not set artificially high)
- **Broaden stakeholder interest in affordable and infill housing** by reaching out to low-income housing advocates to find common ground

Local leaders in Los Angeles have near-term opportunities to implement these and other solutions via new L.A. Metro transit investments, City of Los Angeles re:code LA reforms and community plan updates, Santa Monica's downtown planning process, City of Los Angeles Transportation Demand Management ordinance development, and other options for pilot projects and long-term reforms throughout the region.

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This report discusses these priority solutions, challenges and next steps. It also provides an overview of the benefits of parking policy reform and examples of specific success stories that may apply to Los Angeles.





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# INTRODUCTION: EXCESSIVE PARKING REQUIREMENTS UNDERMINE THE ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

**L**ocal governments are ultimately responsible for regulating parking. Local policies, codes and standards determine how much parking developers should provide, where it must be located, how much it costs, who can park where, how long people can park in certain places, and when. These parking decisions directly and indirectly influence the economy, the environment, and the quality of life in local neighborhoods and the larger region.

## **Parking Mismanagement Hurts the Economy**

*Increases Cost of Development and Hurts Social and Environmental Equity:* Local codes typically require new development projects to provide certain amounts of off-street parking based on land use and project size.<sup>1</sup> For residential projects, off-street parking codes usually require a certain number of parking spaces per type of unit, with more spaces required as the size of the unit increases. Single-family homes usually must provide the most parking spaces per unit, while smaller apartments commonly include the fewest. Most local jurisdictions simply adopt boilerplate parking ratios from national planning guides.

The more land devoted to parking, the less available space for housing and other types of construction, parks, roads, and alternative uses. Parking is particularly costly for developers because land values are one of the biggest drivers of development costs, aside from construction and financing. In residential settings, buyers or renters therefore have to pay for the cost of the parking spaces, regardless of whether or not they use them. Based on typical affordable development costs, one study found that one parking space per unit increases costs by approximately 12.5%, while two parking spaces can increase costs by up to 25%. Since

## In Los Angeles County, 14 percent (about 200 square miles) of incorporated land is dedicated to parking.

parking costs constitute a higher percentage of the total rent for lower-priced housing, and since low-income households tend to own fewer vehicles, many observers consider minimum parking requirements to be regressive and unfair.<sup>2</sup>

*Limits Housing and Office Production:* Space for development is limited in urban areas, but academic and governmental studies have found that a significant portion of developable land is dedicated to parking. In Los Angeles County, 14 percent (about 200 square miles) of incorporated land is dedicated to parking.<sup>3</sup> For new projects, requiring less parking could therefore increase opportunities to build more residential, commercial, and office units, as well as more recreational spaces. In existing commercial areas, repurposing parking lots and structures may offer the opportunity for large redevelopment projects. In current residential areas, some parking spaces, such as garages, could be transitioned to create more dwelling units.<sup>4</sup> This development in existing urbanized areas would help increase job access and housing supply, which could in turn stabilize home prices and rents and shorten commutes.

*Subsidizes Inefficient Forms of Transportation:* Minimum parking requirements can create more parking than needed. The oversupply of cheap parking makes the cost of driving artificially low, essentially subsidizing automobiles and encouraging more driving at a time when communities seek to reduce congestion and increase more efficient forms of transportation, such as transit, bicycles and walking.<sup>5</sup> In addition, with the coming introduction of more autonomous vehicles, excessive parking spaces required today may become even more obsolete tomorrow.

*Deprives Revenue to Communities Due to Underpricing:* Failing to charge the right price for on-street parking deprives local governments and neighborhoods of untapped revenue. As an alternative to free curb parking or nominal fees for permits in residential neighborhoods, local governments can issue parking permits for the market price, while also pricing parking meters dynamically to increase with demand. Local governments can then dedicate the revenues to public services and amenities in the neighborhood and the community at-large. This revenue can be used to clean and repair sidewalks, plant street trees, remove grime from subway stations and provide other public services. In office and commercial areas, management of parking with dynamic, market-rate pricing can also maximize efficient use of parking spaces.<sup>6</sup>

### **Parking Mismanagement Damages the Environment**

*Bad Pricing Encourages Circling and Creates Pollution:* In crowded areas,



## Researchers estimate that cruising for parking in a 15-block business district in Los Angeles produces 3,600 miles of excess travel each day, equivalent to two round trips to the moon each year.

cheap pricing of curb parking gives a few lucky drivers a temporary benefit on any particular day. The spaces fill up quickly, creating shortages at busy times. When on-street parking is scarce, drivers will create traffic, pollute the air, emit greenhouse gases and waste energy while they hunt or “cruise” for free or cheap parking. Researchers estimate that cruising for parking in a 15-block business district in Los Angeles produces 3,600 miles of excess travel each day, equivalent to two round trips to the moon each year.<sup>7</sup> In New York, observers found that drivers hunting for curb parking on 15 blocks in Manhattan traveled 366,000 miles and created 325 tons of carbon emissions in one year.<sup>8</sup> Dynamic, market-based pricing reduces these impacts by encouraging turnover and alternative modes of travel.

*Bad Pricing Encourages Car Usage and Driving Miles while Discouraging Transit Usage:* Abundant parking, especially cheap parking, encourages residents to use cars and drive. Too much inexpensive parking also leads to sprawling destinations and an artificially low cost of driving.<sup>9</sup> Both of these factors weaken the viability of public transit.

### Los Angeles Has Historically Had Inefficient Parking Policies

Los Angeles has a long history of requiring too much parking, and parking policies have from the beginning engendered significant controversy (see Appendix B for a detailed chronology of off-street parking policies in the City of Los Angeles). The first battle around parking requirements occurred in downtown Los Angeles in 1920, as the automobile increased dramatically in popularity. The surge in automobile purchases meant that by 1924, one-half of all trips to the central business district in downtown Los Angeles was by car. To address the traffic congestion, the city council passed an ordinance in 1920 to ban on-street parking in the downtown business district at certain times. But the move angered businesses and auto clubs, so the city council modified the ordinance just 19 days later to allow 45-minute parking at certain times.<sup>10</sup> The move presaged further policies to accommodate the automobile, as the city developed the 1924 “Major Traffic Street Plan” to widen roads and accommodate more cars (even though planners warned congestion would just increase), which the voters passed by overwhelming numbers in order to approve a bond issue to fund the plan. The policy trend was now clear in Los Angeles: city leaders would accommodate the automobile at the expense of transit and other modes of travel.<sup>11</sup>

Since 1950 in Los Angeles County, much of the growth in parking has occurred outside the urban core in low-density residential and commercial developments. But neighborhoods within the urban core have the greatest parking space densities, while the central business district has the highest density of parking spaces, most of which are for patrons of nonresidential development. This abundance of parking in areas with high-quality transit and dense mix of uses, as in downtown Los Angeles, actually discourages transit use, cycling, and walking.<sup>12</sup>

As a consequence of these decisions, parking requirements have today resulted in 14 percent of incorporated land in Los Angeles County dedicated to parking, as mentioned previously. Despite the expansive freeway system in Los Angeles County, the total area dedicated to on- and off-street parking is 40 percent larger than the 140 square miles dedicated to the roadway system. The city has 18.6 million parking spaces for 3.5 million housing units, at 3.3 parking spaces per vehicle.<sup>13</sup>

### **Improved Parking Policies Would Ensure Better Use of Land**

These inefficient parking policies and results are the product of boilerplate planning guidelines that are not consistent with actual parking demand in Los Angeles. As a result, the requirements lead to significant excesses of supply and therefore inefficient use of land. For example, a University of Utah study of five transit-oriented development projects (including one in Los Angeles) found that all five projects generated fewer vehicle trips than current planning guidelines estimated for their land use, while using less parking than many regulations require for similar land uses. In one case, actual vehicle trips were just one-third of what current planning guidelines estimated. Even though the projects did not build as much parking capacity as typically required, the ratio of demand to actual supply was between 58 and 84 percent.<sup>14</sup>

The City of Los Angeles addressed these excessive parking requirements in an influential but limited experiment. In 1999, the city enacted an “adaptive reuse ordinance” for its downtown, which in part exempted the redevelopers of existing buildings in the area from minimum parking requirements. They did not have to add any new parking spaces upon repurposing the buildings and could provide spaces off-site or lease them

**Despite the expansive freeway system in Los Angeles County, the total area dedicated to on- and off-street parking is 40 percent larger than the 140 square miles dedicated to the roadway system.**



**The adaptive reuse ordinance helped produce over 75 percent of the housing construction in downtown Los Angeles between 2000 and 2010, or more housing in those ten years than had been created in the previous thirty in this part of the city.**

to commuters, businesses, or visitors if they wished. As a direct result of the relaxed parking requirements, UCLA professor Michael Manville (also a convening participant for this report) concluded conservatively that between 1999 and 2008, developers used the ordinance to create about 6,900 units in downtown Los Angeles, out of 9,200 total new housing units in the area between 2000 and 2010. The ordinance therefore helped produce over 75 percent of that decade's housing construction in downtown, or more housing in those ten years than had been created in the previous thirty in this part of the city. The results reveal how impactful reduced or eliminated parking requirements can be for boosting housing production and better use of land.<sup>15</sup>



## PARKING POLICY SUCCESS STORIES

Many jurisdictions, both in Los Angeles and around the country and globe, have experimented with parking reform policies to great success. Examples of cities and neighborhoods that have implemented such reforms include Pasadena, West Hollywood, Santa Monica, Eagle Rock, L.A. Cornfield, and Ventura in Southern California; San Francisco, Oakland, and Walnut Creek in Northern California; Buffalo, Austin, Houston and Seattle elsewhere in the United States; and the United Kingdom. Some of these stories are discussed below and later in the report.

### Improved Parking Policies and Management in Three Southern California Jurisdictions

Santa Monica, Pasadena, and the Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan area within the City of Los Angeles have adopted multi-pronged parking programs that employ many successful strategies.<sup>16</sup>

#### ■ Santa Monica

The city's municipal code includes strategies such as:

- Reduced parking requirements
- Shared parking
- Bicycle and van/carpool parking requirements
- Compact spaces
- Reduced minimum parking requirements near transit nodes
- Change of use-exemptions from parking requirements
- Minor additions-exemptions from parking requirements
- Compact spaces
- Tandem and stacked spaces
- Bicycle, vanpool, and carpool parking
- Parking cash-out program (see later sidebar)

#### ■ Pasadena

The city has pioneered a combination of the Parking Management Program, Parking Benefits District, Parking Management Zone, and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Parking Requirement Reduction. The TOD Parking Requirement Reduction applies to central district development projects that are located within 1,320 feet (1/4 mile) of a light-rail station platform.

The city's parking management consists of many interrelated initiatives, such as:

- Parking pricing and time restrictions that meet the needs of both commercial and residential areas throughout the city

- Collaboration with the business community to improve commercial and retail parking services, including shared parking and pooled parking to more effectively use existing parking supply and public
- Installation of bike parking in city-owned facilities and at locations of major activity throughout the city
- Management of on-street parking and curb loading provisions to accommodate delivery needs, short-term parking, disabled parking, and valet parking
- Establishment of preferential parking district programs and an overnight parking program to address residential needs for controlled parking
- Shared and joint parking
- Reduced parking requirements for multi-family residential and mixed-use development projects proposing at least 48 dwelling units per acre.

### ■ **Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP)** (within the City of Los Angeles)

The CASP takes a progressive approach to managing parking supply and demand, as the first in the City of Los Angeles that does not include parking requirements. It incorporates many of the parking management strategies found in the cities of Pasadena and Santa Monica. However, it goes beyond them by not imposing minimum or maximum parking requirements, which essentially unbundles parking from housing and other development costs. City officials believe the lack of parking requirements will allow developers to minimize the amount of parking for specific projects, given the neighborhood's proximity to transit, the changing transportation and housing culture of Los Angeles, and the declining need for parking.

## **Managing On-Street Parking with Technology, Pricing and Occupancy Targeting**

Cities struggle to manage on-street curb spaces. Cities unable or unwilling to properly price scarce parking spaces and enforce parking restrictions suffer from cruising, double parking, and illegal parking in bus stops and other restricted zones.<sup>17</sup> Yet cruising times decline, parking spaces become more available, and public revenues go up when cities adopt programs to better price and manage the occupancy of on-street parking. California cities using technology to manage parking more efficiently include San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Carlos, and San Mateo. San Francisco and Los Angeles use the technology in concert with pricing mechanisms. Other cities that manage on-street parking through a variety of techniques involving pricing mechanisms include Seattle, New York, Mexico City, Victoria, Seoul and London.

### ■ **San Francisco**

SFpark is the first large-scale experiment with performance-based management of on-street parking. Begun in 2013, the program adjusts parking meter rates based on occupancy information for the prior weeks or months, with the goal of achieving a per-block occupancy rate between 60 and 80 percent (meter rates increase when the occupancy is above 80 percent and decline on blocks with an occupancy rate below 60 percent). A 2016 study of SFpark suggests that the program worked, as occupancy



levels moved towards the 60-80 percent range and cruising fell by more than 50 percent over a two-year period, compared to other, similar neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup> The study authors acknowledged that sensors to monitor occupancy are expensive and recommended simpler methods, such as using transaction data or occasional manual surveys. They also found that most of the gain occurred simply from pricing parking in the first place, such as extending meter hours into high-demand times in the evening and on Sundays or pricing parking on unmetered residential streets.<sup>19</sup>

### ■ Los Angeles

LA Express Park began after a limited pilot in the downtown area in 2012. It launched with \$15 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation and \$3.5 million from the city. The program is an app-powered, sensor-fueled smart-parking initiative expected to eventually cover the entire city. It is designed to reduce inner-city traffic congestion and supply real-time information about parking availability. After the program was implemented, parking revenues nearly doubled with a rate hike at parking meters. Los Angeles plans to expand this program to San Pedro, Venice Beach, and the community around the University of Southern California. Past expansions covered parts of Hollywood and the area near University of California Los Angeles.<sup>20</sup>

### ■ San Carlos and San Mateo

These two Bay Area towns (with populations of 28,000 and 100,000 respectively) use sensors and other technology to reduce cruising for empty spaces in relatively small business districts. San Carlos has implemented a motorist guidance app to provide real-time availability for 100 spaces in the main downtown area. Merchants also place the real-time parking map directly onto their website to show available parking nearby. San Mateo has launched a real-time consumer-facing parking application and is exploring the potential for smart parking expansion throughout its downtown using the existing WiFi network in conjunction with more sensing devices. The goal is to reduce circling for parking spaces, improve efficiencies, and enhance quality of life.<sup>21</sup>



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## VISION FOR IMPROVED PARKING POLICY

Participants at the convening discussed various parking policy reform ideas for jurisdictions throughout Los Angeles. Ultimately, they coalesced around a vision for three priority, high-impact parking reform proposals. Local governments interested in improving parking policies should consider prioritizing at least these top three policy changes.

### **PRIORITY POLICY #1: Eliminate, reduce, or right-size parking minimums, while letting the market determine parking needs**

Too often, local governments require more on-site parking requirements than the public needs, leading to waste and diminished development opportunities in some of the most walkable and transit-friendly parts of the region. Local governments should consider eliminating – or at least reducing and “right-sizing” – these requirements to let the market determine the proper amount of parking needed. Participants felt that a priority focus should be on residential parking requirements. Notably, California moved in this direction for certain affordable housing developments near transit with Council of Infill Builders-sponsored Assembly Bill 744 (Chau, 2015), which reduced local parking minimums for qualifying projects to a maximum 0.5 spaces per unit bedroom.<sup>22</sup>

Reducing inefficient and excessive parking requirements brings significant economic and equity benefits. Most prominently, it will lower costs and prices for housing and businesses at all economic levels by removing a costly construction expense. It will also increase the housing supply by allowing developers to build more units without the burden of having to build excessive parking spaces. Increased supply will place

## **“Eliminating parking requirements is not eliminating parking. Eliminating a mandate is not the same thing as enacting a ban”**

- Michael Manville, UCLA

downward pressure on overall prices. Lower prices in turn will improve social equity for low-income and next-generation (“intergenerational”) residents.

Some convening participants advocated for instituting parking maximums, although others disagreed. As an alternative to parking maximums, some participants suggested instituting a progressive tax or fee based on a project’s parking ratio, with higher fees or taxes with each



### **Seattle’s Successful Reduction of Parking Minimums**

Between 2007 and 2012, Seattle gradually eliminated minimum parking required in various urban centers around downtown, while encouraging shared parking and better use of existing parking spaces.<sup>23</sup> The areas included all of downtown and those near bus and rail lines, in neighborhoods such as Ballard, Fremont, the University District, Northgate, West Seattle, Columbia City, Beacon Hill and Rainier Beach. As a result, 30 percent of new apartment developments proposed in the past several years have included no parking at all, while on average across the city, developers now include 60 percent fewer parking spaces per unit at new buildings than a decade ago. Only half of new apartments even have an option to rent or purchase a parking space.<sup>24</sup> Yet the city has not experienced a shortage of parking in apartment buildings. A King County Metro study in 2015 found that residents were using only 70 percent of the apartment parking spaces in downtown Seattle and throughout the county overnight.<sup>25</sup>

### **London: Parking Minimums to Parking Maximums**

In 2004, London eliminated parking minimums and imposed new maximums on parking supply for developments in the metropolitan area. No other major city has reformed its parking requirements on such an aggressive, comprehensive scale.<sup>26</sup> A study of the London program from the years 2004 to 2010 found that the number of parking spaces provided after the 2004 parking reform fell by a total of approximately 40 percent compared to the number of parking spaces that would have been supplied with the previous minimum parking requirements.<sup>27</sup> But almost the entire decline was due to elimination of the minimums, not imposition of the maximums, which caused only a 2.2 percent decline.

The study authors also found that the market actually provided more parking in areas with the highest density and best transit service, attributable to three factors:

- Larger units are built in those closer-in areas
- The buyers in those areas have higher incomes, so developers might actually obtain a higher premium by allocating some floor space to parking instead of housing
- Local boroughs may be reluctant to reduce maximums in central areas because they are concerned about parking spillover on already crowded local streets.<sup>28</sup>



### **Santa Monica's Parking Cash-Out Policy & Need for More Enforcement**

Santa Monica was on the cutting edge when it instituted its parking cash-out program, pursuant to state law. The program is employer-funded, in which employers with 50 or more employees in non-attainment air quality areas offer a cash allowance to an employee equivalent to the cost of a parking space. Cash-out programs also allow employees to choose a transportation benefit rather than simply accept the traditional free parking space.

According to a study by UCLA's Don Shoup (a convening participant), the cash-out program has reduced the number of solo commuters and thus caused a decrease in annual commuting miles.<sup>30</sup> Other cities have since adopted similar programs.

However, California's legislative analyst estimated that while 290,000 employer-paid parking spaces are subject to the cash-out law statewide, most employers do not comply. California authorized cities, counties, and air quality management districts to establish a penalty for firms that fail to comply in 2010, but few have done so. Santa Monica is currently the only city in Southern California that enforces the law.<sup>31</sup>

additional parking spot beyond certain ratios. Local governments could spend the revenues on programs that address equity or transportation goals (although many new "fees" require supermajority two-thirds approval, per California's Proposition 26 from 2010). Cities could also consider a low parking maximum coupled with "unbundling," in which developers have the option of renting or selling parking separately from the housing units. This policy could have the effect of reducing rental and purchase prices for low-income residents who are unable to afford a car, as they would no longer be charged for parking they do not need as part of their rent or mortgage. Households that want parking would then pay more and seek housing in buildings with more parking available (i.e. a type of parking market).

### **PRIORITY POLICY #2: Charge optimal prices for parking based on demand, such as through dynamic pricing on metered spots, to achieve community-oriented goals of better land use, improved equity, and reduced traffic**

Participants advocated for improved enforcement and dynamic pricing of parking, both to manage parking demand but also to generate

**"Residents respond to the money more than any other ancillary benefit of parking meter reform. You ask people what they want in their neighborhood, and then you present market-based pricing as a way to pay for those desired changes."**

- Don Shoup, UCLA

revenues to offset the impacts of automobile usage in the area. Cities could improve parking meters by introducing dynamic pricing to increase prices with demand to encourage turnover and therefore availability and by removing arbitrary parking time limits. Participants also wanted the county, cities, and air district to improve enforcement of existing parking policies, such as California's parking cash-out law, which requires large employers to offer employees cash instead of a parking space.<sup>29</sup> In Los Angeles, the South Coast Air Quality Management District administers this program (see sidebar above on Santa Monica's cash-out policy). Municipalities could also ensure greater parking enforcement of handicap placards and illegal parking.

Revenue from these actions could further neighborhood improvement and equity. Local governments could use the revenue for community investment priorities, such as better services and infrastructure for walking, biking, and transit. Cities could spend a portion of the money gathered citywide to avoid enriching only wealthier neighborhoods (the term "power equalization" describes this equitable distribution). Each neighborhood could get the same amount per meter, regardless of the meter revenue.

### **PRIORITY POLICY #3: Improved parking management, including shared parking and transportation demand management options**

Local policy makers could explore cheaper options for improving access to destinations rather than relying on excessive parking requirements. These options can include improved parking management through transportation demand management (TDM), which helps minimize parking demand and single-occupant vehicle trips through subsidized public transit passes, ride-hailing services, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, among other strategies. Cities could encourage these approaches first before requiring additional parking spaces. Adaptive reuse ordinances (discussed above), which allow existing buildings to change uses without incurring additional parking requirements normally associated with the new use, can help.

Policy makers should also consider shared parking arrangements, in which diverse adjacent uses can share the same parking spaces given their different hours of demand. Current parking metrics may hide the potential for shared parking if they fail to account for peak hour occupancy of spaces. Local governments could evaluate a metric like "parking occupancy hours" to reveal unused space from existing practices. If local governments combine shared parking with proper on-street parking pricing, they could encourage more use of shared assets, particularly if off-street parking owners receive additional revenue through these arrangements. Cities can also directly lease private parking for public purposes during defined hours, such as occurs in San Clemente. Local governments or business improvement districts may need to create staff





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**“If a lot of parking is available, transit won’t perform as well. If we’re saying we shouldn’t reduce parking until alternatives are available, then we’ll never get there.”**

- Rick Willson, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

positions to facilitate these strategies, which can be labor- and process-intensive but highly cost effective.<sup>32</sup>

These strategies will produce additional economic benefits such as revitalized downtowns and more safe, convenient, and walkable communities for residents. Environmentally, the combination of reduced parking requirements and improved management will lead to decreases in traffic by removing automobile travel subsidies. Letting the market determine prices will help reflect the true cost of automobiles while boosting investments in transit, biking and walking to improve the overall transportation network. Finally, better parking management and options will lead to increased efficiency for limited public resources, as well as improved transparency in government and planning.



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### 1) Negative public perception of reducing parking requirements

Neighbors, residents, and business owners tend to fear changes to parking requirements, out of concern that it will leave insufficient parking and therefore create an inconvenience in their neighborhood. Merchants may fear parking charges that might discourage customers from shopping. Residents may fear spillover from nearby commercial districts into their residential neighborhood, based on a common concern that “there isn’t enough parking” in general. Or if an area has enough parking, residents may feel the spots are not conveniently located. They may also be fearful for their safety and security if they have to walk a fair distance to destinations, if closer parking is not available.

Individual opponents to parking reform (and the associations that represent them) can act on these fears through a typically complicated planning process that can offer residents multiple veto points during a project’s journey through entitlement. Local officials, meanwhile, often lack the data on parking availability to combat negative perceptions. The public may instead interpret city arguments as covering for a developer who does not want to pay for parking, rather than advocating for the larger public benefit of reduced parking requirements.

**SOLUTION: Provide solid data and counter narratives to reframe the debate**

## BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING IDEAL PARKING POLICIES AND SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME THEM

**“There is a general public perception that there is not enough parking.”** - Ashley Atkinson, American Planning Association – Los Angeles

Local officials and advocates for efficient parking policies can counter negative perceptions by providing solid data on parking availability (discussed in more detail below) and by reframing parking policy ideas in ways that address constituent concerns.

**Reframe parking policy reform to address constituent concerns by discussing improved access to destinations and better allocation of resources.** Policy makers may encounter public opposition to parking policy reform if they only argue it will reduce vehicle miles traveled or induce more transit, biking, or walking. The public might construe these arguments as a penalty or taking something they value (convenient parking) away. In reality, local agencies have more direct and secondary benefits they can achieve with these policies, and local officials should reframe the discussion and objectives more accurately.

Local officials should start by defining the problem and respecting the basic needs that parking provides in terms of access. Most commonly, parking policy reform is about a problem of inefficient allocation of resources, and local officials seek these reforms to meet the public's basic needs of convenient access to destinations, while optimizing a limited supply of the costly resource of land. Optimizing parking utilization may help transform a car-dependent city into a more accessible city, without alienating current drivers but still achieving reduced air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Local officials' goal should therefore be to provide the same level of overall access and to increase utilization of existing parking places.

**Use key, memorable phrases to communicate about parking policy reform.** Key phrases and framing can often make a significant difference in changing public perceptions. Planners can use a more pragmatic approach to defining the problem, communicating that they want parking to be better utilized. Through data, they can demonstrate that current usage is wasteful and could be better utilized through policy change. They can frame reforms as "parking efficiency" or optimizing instead of simply "removing parking." They need accessible phrases, free of jargon, to reach the public. These phrases must be easy to remember and clearly understood (such as 10 words or less), to be used in marketing and planning material. Local officials must ultimately show the public that they are not about taking but adding options.

**"Planners need to understand that they're never going to win 100% of the crowd. They're aiming towards the crowd in the middle that would accept something like a pilot program."** - Marco Anderson, Southern California Association of Governments

**Use pilot projects to demonstrate that parking reform can mitigate neighborhood concerns.** In some cases, planners can frame projects with reduced parking requirements as a pilot, particularly if the neighborhood is resistant to more permanent changes. As some behavioral research shows, people tend to fear losing something they currently have more than they are positive about future gains. While they might fear life without a particular parking space, once it is gone temporarily, they may realize that the benefits may outweigh the costs or that the loss is not as bad as they feared.

As an example, cities could initiate a transportation demand management (TDM) ordinance (discussed below) and frame it as leveraging an increased supply of mobility services and additional investments through new development. Officials can establish a system for project and program evaluation that measures pilot project performance and creates a parking database for new uses that comply with the program. This feedback would help inform any needed changes to parking standards based on greater participation in alternative mobility services. As a result, the parking standards reform becomes a pilot project that can change, subject to real-world and real-time feedback.

**Present parking reform options not as a standalone initiative but as part of a broader, multimodal plan to improve convenient access to destinations.** Officials may have a challenging public engagement process when they present parking reform as a stand-alone initiative, unaccompanied by an overall shift in land use policy or transportation programs to mitigate the parking changes. Instead, officials may be more likely to win public support if they include parking reforms as part of a broader initiative, such as a new transportation demand management program, a bigger development project, a new zoning plan, or an initiative to increase multi-modal options. Increases in transportation options can assure members of the public that they will retain the access they fear losing with parking reform.

**Address safety concerns through policy.** Parking is not only about convenient access but safety. Local officials can assure residents that safe parking spaces will be available beyond the one right outside the destination. That assurance can include efforts to improve lighting near parking stations or multimodal solutions such as creating ride-hailing (Uber and Lyft) drop-off zones directly outside destinations.

**Provide long-term education about the benefits of reduced or reformed parking in a more multimodal system.** As part of the reframing effort, local officials and advocates for reform could focus on long-term education of the public about the need for better utilization of land to bolster overall access. For example, they can document how much parking is currently available (perhaps just not right in front of where residents want to go). They can also discuss benefits of reduced



parking in a multi-modal system where overall access is bolstered to compensate for changes to the parking regime. They can emphasize that parking policy is not in a silo but has been a barrier to achieving other goals that are high public priorities, such as making housing more affordable and combatting climate change. Officials and advocates can incorporate this education effort into the many planning processes addressing parking and transportation.

**Utilize robust data to counter public misperceptions about parking shortages or lack of access to destinations.** Changing public perception can be difficult without more accurate data about existing parking availability and needs. This challenge is discussed in the following section.

## **2) Lack of data on parking availability and actual needs**

The public and planners alike often lack basic data on the occupancy rates and usage of existing parking spaces, as well as how much parking exists in the city or region. What data might exist may not be publicly accessible or might be for a one-off use at a particular building for a specific approval process and not archived for later analysis. Cities and counties often lack a comprehensive approach to collecting and curating the data. They may also have difficulty getting public participation. As a result, decisions and advocacy related to parking requirements often occur without adequate information, leading to inefficient use of land and sometimes frustrating the goal of improved access that parking was meant to provide.

### **SOLUTION: Gather, curate and share data in a universal clearinghouse to help alleviate concerns about the lack of parking or fears of losing convenient access to destinations**

To address the lack of data, cities and counties should consider developing a universal clearinghouse of data on parking across the region. Officials will need to couple public and private parking utilization data to create the database and then dedicate staff time to maintain it. Such a global database of parking would be helpful to facilitate shared-use arrangements and more evidence- and need-based parking requirements.

**“A lack of funding has not been the major problem. Rather, it is the lack of will and staff time to maintain a database.”**

- My La, City of Los Angeles



**“It’s amazing what a little well-presented data with specificity can do to address people’s concerns about parking. Not always, but sometimes.”**

- Mott Smith, Civic Enterprise Associates & Council of Infill Builders

**Local governments should build a regional parking database/universal clearinghouse.** Parking data exist in various silos, both public and private, and cities within the region need to develop a universal site to amass the data. The database should have map-based data tools that are easy to use by the average resident (skeptics as well as professionals). It could also include a real-time occupancy metric. A leading city, such as Los Angeles, could provide a universal template for data collection for other cities. They could use [opendata.org](https://opendata.org) as a source for publicly accessible data.

The GreenTRIP parking database from TransForm provides an example of how data can help support parking policy reform. The database contains information from 80 multi-family residential sites around the San Francisco Bay Area between 2013 and 2014. The data show parking supplied and used at each site and helped result in statewide policy reform with the passage of AB 744.<sup>33</sup>

**Inventory local government data from parking enforcement.** Many local governments already collect vast parking data for enforcement purposes. Parking enforcement vehicles are collecting the data and essentially discarding them after officers process the tickets or complete the day’s scans. But often they are scanning the areas with the greatest parking difficulties. As they scan license plates, the data could be used for an occupancy study. Local officials could also use license plate recognition for utilization data by block face.

**Inventory local government data from planning processes.** In addition to enforcement data, local governments collect parking data from surveys done for a particular plan or development project. Local governments should centralize the data from existing parking studies or use data collected through transportation demand management ordinances. They should also ask for all finance department and parking enforcement data. They should ensure that they collect coding from the curb and that the public has access to a comprehensive, city-wide curb analysis.

**Secure private parking data and develop incentives to share it.** Beyond public data, many private entities collect parking data. City officials should ask CEOs and regional managers of property management

**“We need to have a public relations component to get some public buy-in. We have to be able to build on the academic work and make it palatable and ingrained among the stakeholders.”** - Josh Stephens, Westside Urban Forum & Planning Report

firms for data on their parking usage and availability. Officials could boost political buy-in by going to regional management rather than on-site management for this information. They may need to create incentives for private parties to share the data, such as by emphasizing why the data are important to achieve parking reform or by offering the possibility of transportation demand management programs. Ultimately, the private sector may be better than public sector at this data collection.

**Fund the parking data clearinghouse development and ongoing maintenance.** Participants did not believe that lack of funding would be a barrier to developing the database. Instead, the lack of political will or staff resources to maintain the database could be a challenge. Since developers already pay for parking studies, this option has an existing funding stream. Political leaders will need to show interest in implementing and maintaining the clearinghouse. They could use developer fees to pay for it, ultimately saving individual developers money by not having to duplicate neighborhood-wide data collection. For example, West Hollywood no longer has a project-by-project parking study. Instead, developers pay a fee and the city collects the data.



### **Oakland's Improved Demand Pricing, Ride Sharing, Transit Use and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure**

In November 2016, the City of Oakland adopted a significant overhaul of its downtown parking policies, including demand-based pricing at meters and city-owned garages and actions to promote ride sharing, transit use, and electric vehicles. The goal was to have 85 percent of the spaces occupied at any given time (the city had experimented with demand pricing in one neighborhood and found it to be successful prior to adopting the new citywide program). The Metropolitan Transportation Commission awarded the city a \$1.3 million, three-year grant to fund the demand-based pricing initiative, to pay for staff, consultants, and equipment. The changes will first focus on downtown and commercial districts north of downtown, before rolling out to other neighborhoods in subsequent phases, based on the availability of additional funding.

In addition, the city approved a new permit process and location-based fee for dedicated car-sharing spaces. The city also plans to reduce the number of parking spaces in front of certain transit stations and convert the space to more curbside loading zones in order to make it easier for people to access ride-hailing services, taxis, or shuttles. The plan will also bring more electric vehicle charging spaces throughout the city. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District awarded Oakland a \$244,000 grant to install 28 new electric vehicle-charging stations in seven city-owned garages.<sup>34</sup>

**“People like seeing the data mapped down to the address.”**

- Ann Cheng, TransForm

### **3) Parking as a trade-off for other benefits**

Parking reforms sometimes face opposition from interest groups, particularly affordable housing advocates, who rely on excessive parking requirements as leverage to secure production of more affordable units from market-rate developers. The current California density bonus law allows local governments to reduce parking requirements if developers add affordable units. Policies that reduce the requirements without any concessions are therefore considered to be a ‘giveaway’ to market-rate developers and a loss of leverage by some affordable housing advocates. As a result, a political schism among some transportation and housing groups has hindered progress on parking policy reform. Some powerful affordable housing groups may fight efforts to reduce parking minimums because they want to maintain leverage for more affordable units.

### **SOLUTION: Find common interest among housing and transportation advocates to secure sensible parking reform and boost affordable housing**

Advocates need to create a powerbase of naturally aligned advocates among the environmental, smart growth infill proponents, and low-income housing groups. They should dialogue to find common ground and proposals that further their mutual interests, in order to enact sensible parking reform to benefit all constituents. Such an effort should account for the likely decreased demand for parking associated with affordable housing projects and the importance of developing rules that directly create mixed-income communities, rather than setting bad rules and then waiving them to incentivize affordable housing. Advocates will need a strategy that can reduce parking across the board while creating incentives for affordable, transit-oriented projects that do not mandate excessive parking for market-rate development.

**Use parking solutions to fund more affordable housing.** Advocates should eliminate the basis for perceiving affordable housing to be at odds with efficient parking policies. They could seek to direct financial rewards to local governments that actively managing parking or creating a “preferential parking district.” If cities and the county did more to manage the conflicts between commercial and residential conflicts in these districts, then they could be eligible for grant funds for affordable housing (such financial incentives would ideally replace los revenue from fees on construction that may distort and discourage home building). For example, Los Angeles Metro or Caltrans could provide grants to support cities that establish progressive parking policies. Local governments could also institute a progressive housing tax on additional parking spaces, with the revenue supporting

**“Policy wonks are eager to jump to the parking solutions, but we could use a better set up. Ultimately, to achieve our vision we need unlikely allies.”** - Jessica Meaney, Investing in Place

affordable housing, or allow regional parking benefit districts (PBD) to direct money from metered spots to affordable housing, provided a sufficient nexus exists to justify the expenditure.

**Consider lowering minimum parking requirements at a greater rate for affordable housing projects.** Because lower-income residents tend to own or drive cars at a lower rate than upper-income residents, and ride transit at a greater rate, new affordable housing projects are less likely to need as many parking spaces as market-rate projects. As with AB 744, local governments considering reducing minimum parking requirements could reduce these levels at a greater rate for affordable housing projects (provided that parking requirements for market-rate housing are not set artificially high), giving affordable housing advocates more incentive to support overall parking reform efforts.

**Broaden stakeholder interest in affordable and infill housing.** Parking advocates should reach out to low-income housing advocates to find common ground. They should use moments that organize a neighborhood (such as a large new development proposal) for mobilizing for better parking policy. They can also engage more advocates in housing debates, such as “YIMBY” (Yes In My Backyard) groups.



### **Pasadena’s Success at Optimizing Parking Demand and Increasing Revenue**

Pasadena has adopted two creative parking policies that have contributed to the revival of Old Pasadena. One policy is the Parking Meter Zone (PMZ), within which parking is priced and revenues are invested in local public improvements. The other complementary policy was the creation of the Business Improvement District (BID), a public/private partnership with an advisory board composed of business and property owners. The board sets spending priorities for improvements and services based on the zone’s parking revenues. Sales tax revenue in Old Pasadena increased after the implementation of the parking improvements, and today it is one of the most successful districts in the Los Angeles area. The City of Pasadena also attributes much of its success in revitalizing the Old Town area to the decision to build public parking garages and allow property owners to convert underperforming spaces into shops and restaurants by leasing “parking credits” instead of building on-site parking.<sup>35</sup>



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## CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS: THE FUTURE OF PARKING POLICY IN LA

**P**arking reform is badly needed but controversial. The ideal policies, challenges to implementation, and solutions in this report could produce immediate benefits in the Los Angeles region, if local leaders decide to prioritize them.

Participants identified numerous near-term opportunities to implement some of the parking reform ideas in this report:

- Re:code LA is an effort to review and update the City of Los Angeles' development code. It will have an opportunity to recommend changes to parking minimums in the City of Los Angeles and its more densely developed neighborhoods, via updates to the downtown community plan. Los Angeles could also introduce a transportation demand management program overhaul as part of the General Plan update and update of 35 community plans.
- L.A. Metro can leverage the recent passage of Measure M, a half-cent transportation sales tax increase in the county for transportation investments, to offer funding for planning the development of thriving neighborhoods around new Metro Rail and major bus stops with sensible parking policies. Metro already has a list of over 600 first mile/last mile key priority areas that could be used for this purpose.<sup>36</sup> Metro also participates and holds quarterly meetings of public and private operators, consultants, and other local officials to further parking reform options like those contained in this report.
- For parking reform pilots, the recently passed Measure JJJ requires a "transit-oriented communities" policy for the City of Los Angeles that could pilot parking reform. Los Angeles also has an electric vehicle low-income carshare pilot that could be used in conjunction with



reduced parking requirements. In addition, the Los Angeles Mayor's "Great Streets" initiative could identify areas of the city that could be prime targets for reform or pilot projects.

- The City of Los Angeles could overhaul its transportation vanpool ordinance to encourage improved parking policies and greater usage. It could also allow "modified parking districts," which are applicant-initiated but not available in specific plan areas, to expand their application to specific plan areas that boost parking reform.
- Cities within Los Angeles, as well as the county, could transform transportation metrics to incorporate vehicle miles traveled (VMT) analysis of new projects, instead of auto delay. This change would prompt project developers to incorporate more transportation demand management options rather than excessive parking spaces.
- The county, cities, and air district can establish a penalty for employers who fail to comply with California's parking cash-out law.
- Santa Monica is updating its downtown plan, with planning commission review. The plan could include parking reforms discussed in this report.
- Cities around the county can initiate ExpressPark (discussed previously), which uses new parking meter technology, parking space vehicle sensors, a real-time parking guidance system, and an integrated parking management system. As discussed above, the program started in an area of downtown Los Angeles, expanded to parts of Hollywood and Westwood, and is in the process of covering at least three other communities.
- Cities across California are updating their accessory dwelling rules to abide by Assembly Bill 2299 (Bloom, 2016) and Senate Bill 1069 (Wieckowski, 2016) that make it easier to add second units on properties with a single-family house. The new rules allow the addition of a second unit without new parking when the site is near transit or in a historic district. Cities could use this opportunity to help rethink parking requirements in lower-density residential neighborhoods.

These are just a few of the near-term opportunities to implement the reforms discussed in this report throughout Los Angeles, sooner rather than later.

While parking reform can be controversial in many communities, it represents one of the most impactful local land use policies that determines how livable, convenient, and sustainable a community can be. Parking reform advocates should therefore harness available framing, data, and partnerships to further the cause of reform throughout the region, in service of a more convenient, thriving and environmentally sustainable future for Los Angeles and beyond.

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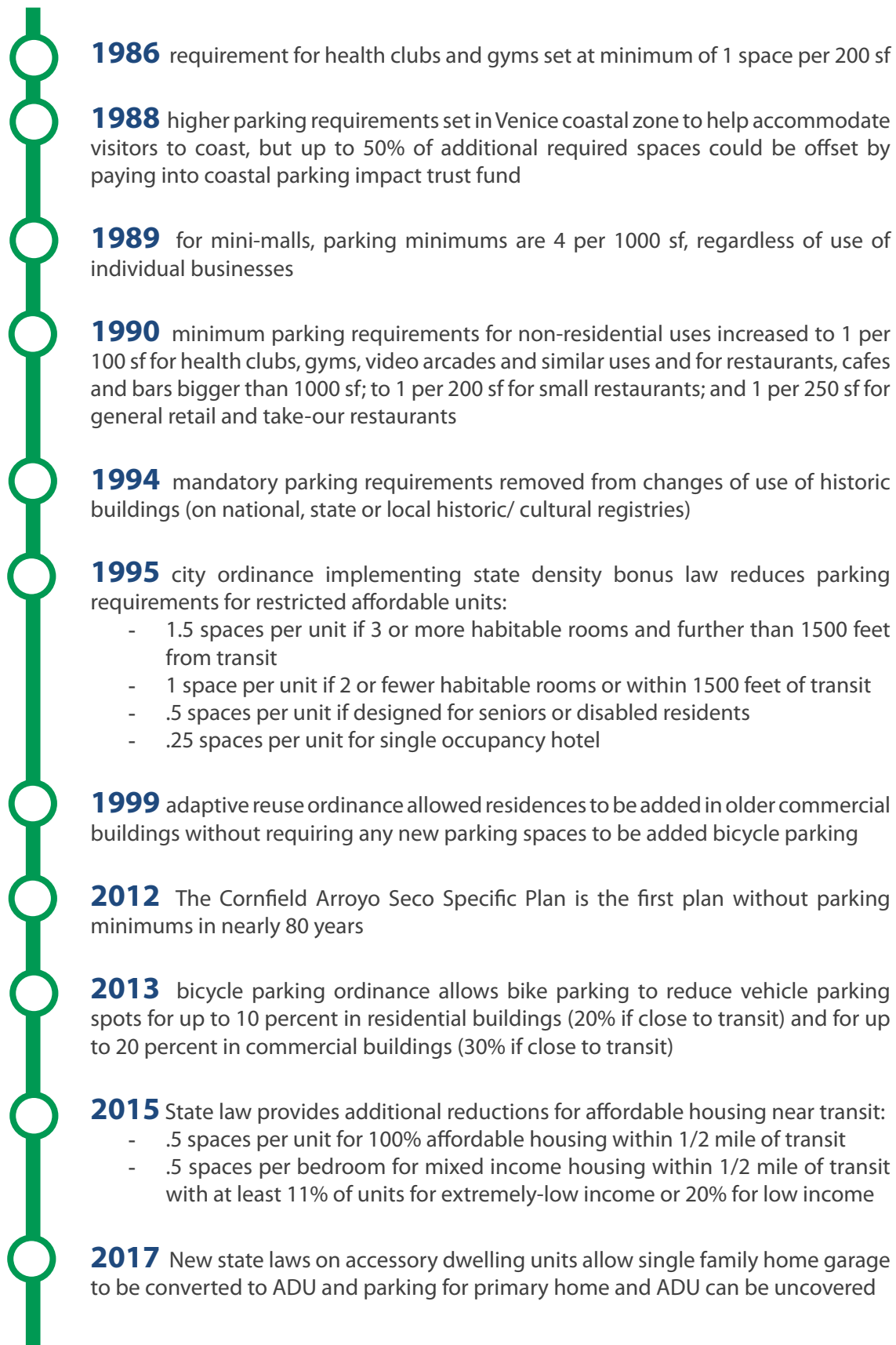
# TIMELINE OF OFF-STREET PARKING POLICIES IN LOS ANGELES

*Sources: Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Zoning Code Manual and Commentary, Fourth Edition; Archival research by Mark Vallianatos*

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- 1908** Citywide residence district ordinance (limiting commercial and industrial uses in areas designated as residential) sets four horse maxima for each dwelling's stable
  - 1921** Zoning code sets four car maxima for a garage in single family zone
  - 1930** City imposes the first parking minimum: one space per unit in apartments with 20 or more units in multi-family zones. Spaces must be in a garage on the same property
  - 1934** Same requirement for 20+ unit apartment buildings located in commercial zone
  - 1935** Multi-family residences with fewer than 20 units (duplexes, small apartments, bungalow courts\* etc.) required to have at least one parking space per unit, in a garage on site  
\* requirement hastens the demise of classic LA-style bungalow courts
  - 1946** 1946 zoning code requires:
    - minimum of 1 covered spot per dwelling unit in residential zone, including, for first time, single family houses. Also sets minimum dimensions of parking spots as 8 by 18 feet\*\*
    - minimum of 1 spot per dwelling unit in commercial or manufacturing zones (does not have to be covered)
    - minimum of 1 spot for each guest room for the first 20 rooms in hotels, 1/4 per next 20 guest rooms, 1/6 per remaining rooms (does not have to be covered and can be located within 1500 feet of hotel site)
    - minimum of 1 spot per room in "tourist courts" (today called motels); can be uncovered, within 1500 feet
    - minimum of 1 spot per 1000 square feet for commercial buildings 7500 square feet ("sf") or larger; spaces can be up to 1500 feet away from site
    - minimum of 1 spot per 1000 square feet for hospitals or welfare buildings; spaces can be up to 1500 feet away from site
    - minimum of 1 space per ten seats for theaters, auditoriums, and stadiums

\*\* due to building material shortages post-World War II, requirement for covered parking was waived for first few years

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- 1950**
    - minimum number of parking spots in multi-family dwellings in high density residential & commercial and industrial zones based on number of habitable rooms in units (excluding kitchen): 1 space per unit if more than 3 rooms; 3/4 spaces per unit if 3 rooms; 2/3 spaces per unit if fewer than 3 rooms
    - government buildings must meet same parking minimums as hospitals (1 per 1000 sf)
    - industrial building must meet same minimums as commercial (1 per 1000 sf)
  - 1958**
    - required parking spots for dwellings need to be covered in single family and duplex zones, can be uncovered elsewhere
    - parking requirement for units with 3 or more habitable rooms (includes kitchens) in buildings of 6 or more units raised to 1 1/4 per unit
    - requirements for commercial & industrial buildings larger than 5000 sf + institutional buildings doubled to 1 spot per 500 sf)
    - requirements for theaters, auditoriums, stadiums doubled to 1 space per 5 seats
    - new requirements for elementary schools of 1 space per classroom
  - 1965** residential parking requirements increased (except downtown):
    - parking requirement for single family homes doubled to 2 spaces
    - parking ratio for multiple unit dwellings raised to 2 per unit for 3+ habitable rooms, 1.5 per unit for 3 rooms, 1 per unit for fewer than 3 rooms. Kitchens of 150 square feet + count
    - exception for residences in central city area which only require 1 spot per unit
  - 1970** all kitchens count as habitable rooms for determining parking requirement for multifamily developments
  - 1972**
    - up to 20% of required spaces for non-residential buildings may be compacts stalls
    - all commercial and industrial buildings regardless of size must have minimum 1 parking space per 500 sf
  - 1973** parking minimums for health clinics and medical offices set at 1 space per 200 sf
  - 1980** joint living and work quarters allowed in commercial and manufacturing zones and required parking spaces for residential uses may be reduced or eliminated if there is not space on the site
  - 1982** for residences, all parking spaces in excess of one can be compact in size; for non-residential, up to 40% of required spaces can be compact

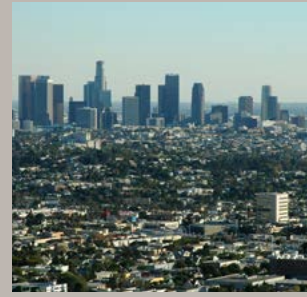




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  - 36 See "Active Transportation Strategic Plan," Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, April 2016. Available at: <https://www.metro.net/projects/active-transportation-strategic-plan/> (accessed March 15, 2017).



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