



Land Use & Environment Committee

Amendments to Residential Parking Requirements Recommendation

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Title

Amendments to Residential Parking Requirements Recommendation

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Move to accept the Planning Commission recommendation to approve code amendments related to residential parking requirements and forward to City Council for decision.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to accept the recommendation to approve code amendments related to residential parking requirements and forward to City Council for decision.

Report

Issue:

Whether to accept the recommendation to approve code amendments related to residential parking requirements and forward to City Council for decision.

Staff Contact:

Joyce Phillips, Principal Planner, Community Planning and Development, 360.570.3722

Presenter(s):

Joyce Phillips, Principal Planner, Community Planning and Development

Background and Analysis:

In September 2022, February 2023, and March 6, 2023, City staff briefed the Planning Commission on efforts to reduce residential parking standards for new residential projects. This is part of a state funded grant the City was awarded to help implement its Housing Action Plan (HAP). Specifically, this work addresses the following strategy and action step of the HAP:

Strategy: Expand the overall housing supply by making it easier to build all types of housing.

Action 3i: Reduce parking requirements for residential uses, including for multi-family developments near frequent transit routes.

A community questionnaire was open for approximately one month on the City's Engage Olympia webpage. The questionnaire was not a scientific survey; instead it was an opportunity for members of the public to share opinions with staff on questions surrounding residential parking requirements.

Staff considered survey responses, public comments, and the intent of the Housing Action Plan strategy and action to develop a first draft of code amendments. That draft included staff comments to help explain why some changes were proposed or what other changes may result from a proposed amendment. The public hearing draft considered comments from the Planning Commission as well as the additional public comments submitted.

Planning Commission Guidance

The Planning Commission had briefings on this proposal in February and early March. In February the results of the questionnaire were reviewed. In March, the first draft of proposed amendments was reviewed. After reviewing the first draft, which proposed a range of 0.75 - 1.5 parking spaces per unit in multifamily developments, the Commission recommended staff remove the automobile parking minimums for apartments and reduce the maximum. In response, the public hearing draft of the amendments proposed a maximum of 1.25 automobile parking spaces per unit, with no minimum required for automobile parking. The short and long term bicycle parking requirements remain unchanged.

It is worth noting that in the Downtown, where new residential developments are not required to provide automobile parking, they provide parking at a rate of 0.7-0.8 parking spaces per residential unit. Additionally, provisions in our parking code would still allow a developer to propose a parking modification in order to increase the number of parking spaces provided. The parking modification language, while proposed to be modified in this set of amendments, is currently allowed but rarely requested.

Planning Commission Recommendation

The Planning Commission left the public comment period open until noon on April 7, 2023. All comments received by that deadline were attached to the packet for the April 17, 2023 Planning Commission meeting, in order to allow time for the Commissioners to review the comments prior to deliberations. At its April 17th meeting a motion was made to approve the proposed amendments with a few minor modifications. A motion to amend the motion was made, which was to remove required minimum parking requirements for all residential uses. The motion to amend the original motion passed by a vote of five to four. The vote on the amended motion passed by a vote of seven to two.

The Commission will submit a minority report, to be finalized at its May 1, 2023, meeting. The minority report is likely to include comments about safety (emergency vehicle access and how far people may need to walk in the dark from their cars to their houses if convenient parking is not nearby), how some streets are narrower and more congested than others, and other issues that came up during the Commission's deliberations.

Climate Analysis:

The proposed reduction in automobile parking spaces for new residences will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting alternative forms of transportation and promoting compact urban areas within the City. This would support a long-term reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. However, changes to parking requirements only impact new developments or substantial

redevelopment projects. While the impact of these amendments may be incremental and slow to accumulate, staff believes the amendments would support the Climate Mitigation Plan mitigation strategies as follows:

T1. Set land use policies that increase urban density and reduce urban sprawl: By reducing the amount of land that must be dedicated to automobile parking, that land could be used for additional housing units (or other things like open space, vegetation/gardens). Accommodating population growth within the City limits and Urban Growth Area (UGA) will reduce sprawl outside of the UGA in rural and resource lands.

T2. Increase the efficiency of the transportation system: As our community becomes more compact and urban over time, more goods and services (and schools and parks) will be available within walking or bicycling distances to a greater number of residences. Trips that are taken by car may be a shorter distance and those shorter trips will reduce fuel consumption. Many of the zoning districts that accommodate the most multifamily housing units are zones that also allow for a mix of commercial land uses within the development or in close proximity.

T4. Increase the use of public transit: More compact and urban neighborhoods provide densities that support transit. As demand for transit increases, the frequency of transit service is likely to increase as well.

T5. Increase the use of active forms of travel, such as walking and biking: See T2 above.

The proposed reduction of required automobile parking for new residences is also being considered at approximately the same time as Electric Vehicle parking standards are being considered. EV parking standards, if approved, would help the community transition to electric vehicles which would also result in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Equity Analysis:

It can be challenging to tie residential parking requirement reductions to equity issues. Most of the proposed parking amendments will impact multifamily housing units. Rents are generally designed to cover the development and maintenance costs of the site. If less parking is provided and if more housing units are provided, the rent per unit could be lower than it otherwise would be. In some cases, property owners charge a rate for rent and a separate rate for per parking space, which would benefit those who do not own a car.

In Olympia, roughly 37% of all households are cost burdened, with almost half of those households being severely cost-burdened. BIPOC members of our community are more likely to be cost-burdened than others. Opportunities to provide more housing units will eventually lead to less pressure on the rental market, which will ease increases to rents. Supply of more housing units of all kinds will help meet demand.

Approximately 42% of Olympians have a household income of less than \$50,000. Approximately 15% of our population live in poverty. In 2021, 13.5% of people in Olympia were reported to have a disability, up from 12.9% in 2016. People living in poverty, or with lower incomes or a disability of some kind, may not own cars or multiple cars per household. By eliminating minimum parking requirements, there will eventually be a wider variety of housing options available. People may have a greater ability to choose housing that best matches their transportation needs, especially for those

who choose not to own a car or those who cannot afford car ownership.

Obesity rates have been rising in children and adults in Washington State. Residential parking reductions support use of more active forms of transportation, such as by pedestrians or bicyclists.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Interest in parking issues vary by neighborhood and housing types. Some neighborhoods have wide streets with long and/or wide driveways serving one, two, or three car garages. Some have ample on-street parking. Others have narrower streets with or without sidewalks. Most apartment complexes have ample parking lots to accommodate tenants and guests, but some do not.

After its hearing on March 20th, the Planning Commission extended the public comment period through noon on Friday, April 7, 2023. The Commission considered the amendments and all comments received by the deadline at its meeting on April 17th. All public comments received to-date are attached.

Financial Impact:

This work is being funded by a Housing Action Plan Implementation (HAPI) grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services.

Options:

1. Accept the Planning Commission recommendation and forward the proposed code amendments to City Council.
2. Accept the Planning Commission recommendation, as modified by the Land Use and Environment Committee, and forward the proposed code amendments to City Council.
3. Remand the proposed code amendments back to the Planning Commission, with specific direction on what to reconsider.

Attachments:

Proposed Code Amendments
Public Comments