



# Rational Parking

## Is it really possible to have too much parking?

Figuring out how much parking to have in a neighborhood is a tricky balancing act. Too little, and prospective customers or residents have difficulty finding spots easily. Too much, and the empty lots are dead zones inviting crime and wasting space that could have contributed to the neighborhood. Further, high parking requirements make homes more expensive, cause higher rents that can make it impossible for local businesses to flourish, and make it harder to design beautiful buildings, parks and streets people enjoy.

*Instead of a sea of parking, Great Communities provide only as much parking as is needed, reclaiming public space for parks, plazas, food markets, child care centers, clinics and other services.*



Acres of land is wasted on parking lots which could have been dedicated to park land, open space or workforce housing.

## Good parking policies tailor the supply to local conditions.

Finding the right balance depends on many factors and vary for different neighborhoods. Unfortunately, too many cities have one-size-fits-all policies designed for low-density areas with no public transit. These policies don't make sense for neighborhoods where people walk and take transit. At the very least, neighborhoods near transit should not require as much parking as the rest of the city. Additional conditions that call for less parking include:

Required Parking Spaces per Unit		
City	Studio	1 BR
Benicia	1	1
Berkeley	1	1
Daly City	1	1.5
East Palo Alto	1	1.2
Emeryville	0.5	1
Fairfield	1	1.33
Healdsburg	1.5	1.5
Livermore	1.5	1.5
Millbrae	1	1.5
Oakland	1.5	1.5
Petaluma	1	1
San Francisco	1	1
San Jose	1.5	1.5
Vacaville	1	1

Parking requirements in select Bay Area communities. Most of these are paired with policies that reduce parking demand.

### VIBRANT AND COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS NEAR TRANSIT

Where we live has a big effect on how much parking we need. People own fewer cars in neighborhoods that have shops and frequent, high quality transit service. For example, residents of San Francisco's wealthy Nob Hill on average own one-fourth as many vehicles as residents in suburban San Ramon. Requiring more parking than is needed increases the cost of housing and undermines the character of those communities.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING** Low-income families own fewer cars than middle-income or wealthy families. According to 2000 Census data for the entire Bay Area, 15% of families making between \$25-35,000 did not own any cars.

**SENIOR HOUSING** Seniors own significantly fewer vehicles and thus generate lower demand for parking. In the Bay Area, households with all members aged 62 and above own 31 % fewer cars than households with no seniors.

*Parking needs to be managed and optimized for local conditions. Too much parking can be more harmful than too little.*

## Reducing parking needs by reducing demand

**SHARED PARKING LOTS** Place a movie theater next to an office, and they can share. The office building uses the spaces during weekdays, while the theater needs weekend and weeknight parking.

**CAR SHARE SERVICES** City CarShare partners with home builders to include spots for car-sharing vehicles. This gives many households the convenience of a car while reducing the number of total parking spaces needed.

**DESIGN FOR WALKING AND BICYCLING** Most people prefer to walk if they can easily do their shopping, pick up a child from child care or meet other basic needs in their neighborhood.

**PARKING MAXIMUMS** Many communities developing station area plans are adopting parking policies that reflect the transit choices within a station area. People using transit, walking, or biking to their final destinations don't need parking.

**UNBUNDLING PARKING COSTS FROM HOUSING COSTS** Unbundling means that parking is rented or sold separately, rather than automatically included with buildings space. This allows the developer to make some or all parking optional when selling the units. Reducing the cost per unit by \$20,000 - \$40,000 creates a greater demand for units. This can also apply to rental units, reducing rental cost for residents without cars.



Carshare's prius located in a public parking garage within Library Gardens apartment complex in Berkeley, CA.

## Cities that successfully manage parking to preserve Great Communities:

### PETALUMA

The City's Smart-Code includes ways to reduce parking spaces based in a variety of ways:

- Parking spaces shared between adjacent properties. This includes parking lots within walking distance of the destination to support shared parking garages.
- Paying an in-lieu fee instead of building the spaces.
- Build parking spaces with permeable surfaces for stormwater runoff.



### PALO ALTO

The City's zoning codes allow the planning director and the architectural review board to "defer" the standard minimum parking requirements when appropriate, as with transit-oriented affordable housing developments. The City can require the developer to hold open space in "landscape reserve" for additional parking in case the initial parking is insufficient. If parking demand is higher than expected, the open space can be converted to parking.



## Checklist to ensure adequate parking supply determined by actual need:

- Are parking requirements lower near transit than in the rest of the city? Are there parking maximums rather than minimums?
- Are there clear policies that create incentives or require the use of Transportation Demand Management TDM measures? Such as in-lieu fees for parking spaces, free transit passes for new residents and employees, or parking studies that measure and monitor actual parking demand?
- Is structured parking encouraged rather than surface lots in high-density areas? Are there shared use parking lots allowing morning uses to mix with evening uses?