

Parking Recommendations of the Chapel Hill Planning Commission

June 2023

The Town of Chapel Hill’s current parking standards for new developments predate the adoption of the Complete Community framework. This document proposes updates to the Town’s parking standards for developers.

Key Changes

1. The current parking minimums should be abolished Town-wide and converted to maximums (see table below). For purposes of administering the maximums, “parking” should be defined to include the sum of: garage spots, driveways, internal street parking, guest parking, and so forth.
2. For parking that is not physically attached to specific units, the cost of parking should be fully “unbundled” from the cost of housing. As a result, residents should expect to pay a lower base cost for housing with the option of paying more to use parking.

Proposed Standards

Use	Vehicular Parking			
	Town Center Districts		Non Town Center Districts	
	Minimum	Maximum*	Minimum	Maximum**
Studio	N/A	1	N/A	1
1 bedroom – multifamily	N/A	1	N/A	1
2 bedroom – multifamily	N/A	1.25	N/A	1.4
3-bedroom – multifamily	N/A	1.5	N/A	1.75
4+ bedroom – multifamily	N/A	1.67	N/A	2

* These figures simply restate the current LUMO maximums. There is no existing minimum in Town Center districts.

** These figures are taken from the current LUMO *minimums*, which are approximately 80 percent of the current LUMO maximums.

Related Details

- Town staff has recommended that parking at townhouse developments with three or more units follow the “multifamily dwelling” requirements. We agree with this recommendation.
- The Town should allow developers to satisfy the unbundling requirement through either of the following:
 - Excluding parking cost from the base cost of housing (purchase price or rent); or
 - Offering discounts to residents who opt out of parking.

- Designated “affordable” units in new developments should receive commensurate discounts on the cost of parking.
- The Town should require developers to provide, at the time of application, estimates of both the per-space cost of parking and the anticipated pricing of that parking for residents.
- The Town and developers should alleviate the potential impact of reduced parking on low-income residents by:
 - Funding low-cost bikeshare and car rideshare programs; and
 - Funding more bus lines and more frequent bus service.
- The Town should permit neighborhoods concerned about the availability of street parking to apply for zoned parking.¹

Justification

Abolition of Minimums

- Minimum parking requirements work against the Town’s Complete Community strategy by inflating the cost of housing, incentivizing driving, and impeding beneficial development (especially bike-, pedestrian-, and transit-oriented development).²
- Even without minimum parking requirements, developers typically have strong economic incentives to provide sufficient parking.
- Dozens of North American cities of various sizes have abolished parking minimums, including peer cities such as Raleigh and Ann Arbor (both in 2022).³

Conversion of Existing Minimums to Maximums

- The existing minimums were meant to ensure adequate parking. Anything more than those minimums is by extension excessive parking.
- Excessive parking prevents us from using land for things like housing, businesses, and green space. It also promotes traffic congestion and undercuts the Town’s investments in alternative transportation.
- It is already feasible for this to work economically: two projects (Aura and 110 Jay Street) appear not to exceed the current minimums. Another, 710 N. Estes Drive, comes very close.

¹ [This document](#) from Raleigh’s planning department considers the spillover problem in more detail, starting on page 5.

² See [this piece](#) by [Donald Shoup](#). See also [this piece](#) by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, focused on the relationship between parking requirements and housing affordability.

³ The detailed policy analyses assembled by Raleigh’s planning department on this issue are especially thorough and well worth reading. See [here](#) and [here](#). The non-profit Parking Reform Network maintains a [map](#) (with detailed citations) of North American cities with no minimum parking requirements. Miami is the only city that has subsequently re-instituted parking minimums after removing them, and it did so in 2022 against the strong advice of its planning board and reportedly without a formal study of the policy implications.

Unbundling

- Unbundled parking has become an important policy tool for cities interested in transit-oriented development, as well as housing affordability.⁴ The Town Council has already negotiated for unbundled parking on some projects (e.g., Aura).

⁴ See [this research](#) by Mobility Lab.