



## EFFICIENT PARKING STRATEGIES

### What is it?

Actions to make more efficient use of parking can range from ordinance changes that rely on maximum numbers of parking spaces rather than minimum numbers, to encouraging shared parking by adjacent uses. These actions are aimed at reducing the “seas of asphalt” that seem to have taken over many of our communities. Because many of our local land use regulations concerning parking standards are modeled on outdated principles, in many areas the architectural adage: “form follows function” has been challenged by the modern reality: “form follows parking.” Devoting excessive land to parking is expensive, wastes resources, and degrades the environment by adding to urban heat islands and increasing water runoff. State-of-the-art parking management employs a variety of strategies that result in more efficient use of parking resources, address a range of transportation issues, and reduce impervious area without negatively impacting access to goods, services and activities.



This Action Item can be implemented as a

- POLICY
- ORDINANCE
- PROGRAM

### How long does this take to implement?

While some items require a change in ordinance or coordination with state transportation departments, many actions can be initiated quickly.

### Shared Impact and Benefits

- Reducing impervious surface, particularly heat-absorbing surfaces, decreases urban heat islands, slowing the production of ozone and reducing energy cooling costs.
- More efficient use of parking may encourage use of other forms of transportation rather than the single-occupant vehicle, and thus reduce emissions through reduced vehicle miles traveled.
- Decreased impervious surface reduces storm water runoff and peak flow rates, thus reducing surface pollution going into streams and rivers.
- Reducing the amount of land required for parking frees land for more profitable uses, enhancing economic development.
- Less impervious surface and more landscaping dramatically enhances the visual and environmental character of streets and communities.

### Costs

Costs vary greatly depending on which strategies are employed. In many cases, the strategies may save money rather than adding cost.

### The Bottom Line

- Efficient parking strategies may help create a positive experience for living, working, shopping and recreation, and may improve the environment.
- There are many tools and tactics available to initiate smart parking management, ranging from policy reform to site specific physical improvements. Many of them are inexpensive and easy to implement.

**Interested? Read on!**



## Who needs to be involved in implementation?

- Local governing boards and planning boards
- Local departments of planning, engineering, or property management
- Experts: transportation planners, landscape architects, etc.
- Residential and commercial developers and other business leaders
- Citizens informed and encouraged to use new parking strategies

### Action Steps

1. Read the Basic Information section below.
2. Assess the local problem. Inventory existing parking resources and overall impervious surface. Look at parking usage compared to capacity. These sites may prove helpful:  
<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/printable.asp?ID=8>  
<http://www.lcd.state.or.us/tgm/pub/pdfs/ParkingGuide.pdf>
3. Assemble a local project team made up of planners, traffic engineers, design consultants, business leaders, members of the planning board and citizen volunteers. Some municipalities create a formal downtown parking district board to manage central business district parking issues.
4. Have the team review efficient parking strategies and practices and develop a Parking Management Policy for the municipality describing the intentions of the local governing body regarding parking in all new and existing development.
5. Draft revisions to various planning documents (zoning ordinance, historic overlay, etc.) congruent with the revised policy and present them to appropriate governing bodies for public review and comment.
6. Finalize, enact and publish the revised ordinance documents and distribute them to local planners, engineers, designers, and developers prior to implementation.
7. Initiate programs for training developers, designers and business owners about new parking management strategies.

### Resources

- City/County transportation planner or planning staff position or consultant position. Staffing needs will vary with the size of the municipality.
- Cost of implementation varies widely with strategies employed. Some jurisdictions use public/private ventures. Some jurisdictions use developer fees to fund public parking instead of requiring individual facilities to provide off-street parking.
- Use public and private resources to build parking facilities. This can include direct government funding, free or discounted land provided to developers, tax exemptions and other favorable tax policies, and public parking facilities incorporated into public-private-partnership projects.
- On private lands the property owner or developer absorbs the costs.

### Who's doing this?

Cities such as Rock Hill, SC and Lexington, NC have found effective ways to employ efficient parking management strategies. For comment about the success of Efficient Parking Strategy programs, contact: Mr. Dwight Bassett - Downtown Development Manager, City of Rock Hill, SC ph. 803-329-7090



This action item is primarily aimed at local jurisdictions whose zoning ordinance and development policies address the approval of parking facilities can use some of the strategies outlined below. The private sector may also consider these strategies in developing site plans for responsive new businesses.

## Basic Information

- In most communities, multiple agencies are responsible for various aspects of parking management. These agencies are not always effectively integrated. Information about parking assets and regulations must exist in an accessible format that can be updated and easily shared across organizational lines. Where multiple agencies are involved in parking implementation (for example, one agency decides where parking goes and another enforces parking regulations), there should be frequent communication about issues, strategies, and plans.
- While simply limiting parking might seem like a good way to control the number of single-occupant cars in an area, this practice may entice developers to flee to the suburbs to get the parking opportunities they desire. The key is to pay attention to the quality of parking opportunities rather than to focus only on quantity.

Consider how a combination of some of these parking management strategies from the *Pavement Busters Guide* could help improve conditions in your community:

- ☞ Reduce minimum parking requirements and impose maximum parking limits.
- ☞ Provide for more on-street parking and minimize barriers against it. Enhance the pedestrian character of streets by converting traffic lanes to parking lanes, which is also a means of calming traffic. In smaller commercial centers, on-street parking may provide most of the parking supply needed.
- ☞ Limit on-street parking duration (maximum amount of time that a vehicle can be left in one space), to encourage turnover and discourage owners from using on-street parking for long-term vehicle storage.
- ☞ Limit use of on-street parking to area residents.
- ☞ Prohibit on-street parking of large vehicles to ease traffic flow.
- ☞ Prohibit on-street parking on certain routes at certain times (such as on arterials during rush hour), to increase the number of traffic lanes.
- ☞ Encourage shared parking between adjoining uses.
- ☞ Reserve parking for groups of employees or residents, rather than assigning to individuals. For example, 50 employees or residents can usually share 30-40 parking spaces without problem, particularly if implemented in conjunction with flexible work schedules.
- ☞ Start “cash out” parking programs, which provide the cash equivalent of free parking to commuters who use alternative transportation modes. <http://www.commuterchoice.gov/pdf/parkingcash.pdf>
- ☞ Provide means and incentives for vanpool, carpool, and bicycle parking.
- ☞ Install bicycle and/or shower facilities to encourage bicycle and pedestrian commuting.
- ☞ Limit front yard parking and move toward more rear-yard parking.
- ☞ Unbundle parking. Unpriced parking is usually “bundled” with building costs, which means that a certain number of spaces are automatically included with building purchases or leases. It is more efficient and fair to rent or sell parking separately, so that building occupants pay for just the number of spaces they require, and can adjust their parking supply as their needs change.
- ☞ Require a percentage of spaces to be constructed of pervious pavement materials.
- ☞ Develop Overflow Parking Plans to reduce parking requirements. Excessive parking is often designed to meet infrequent peak demand that occurs during special events or holiday shopping.
- ☞ Use developer fees to fund public parking instead of requiring individual facilities to provide off-street parking.
- ☞ Use public and private resources to build shared parking facilities. This can include direct government funding, free or discounted land provided to developers, tax exemptions and other favorable tax policies, and public parking facilities incorporated into public-private-partnership projects.
- ☞ Develop additional parking where land is relatively inexpensive and available and provide information and incentives to encourage longer-term parkers (particularly commuters) to use the more remote parking. This can include signs, brochures, pedestrian improvements, shuttle services, free transit zones, regulations (particularly limits on the length of time a vehicle can be parked at more convenient spaces) and pricing (remote parking is free or relatively inexpensive).
- ☞ Provide pedestrian improvements to encourage walking and remote parking use.
- ☞ Increase the number of spaces in existing parking facilities by using currently wasted areas (corners, edges, undeveloped land, etc.). Motorcycle parking can sometimes be located in an area that is too small for automobile parking spaces.



## Tracking Progress

- **Let Centralina Council of Governments know when you've implemented these actions by contacting Carol Lewis at 704-348-2730 or clewis@centralina.org.**
- An inventory of parking spaces and overall impervious surface, obtained through aerial photography or satellite imagery will provide a base line for tracking results.

## FAQ's

**Q:** *Won't these measures cost taxpayers and businesses more than they are worth?*

**A:** While some measures may incur implementation and maintenance costs, other measures will not. The cost of parking is really more expensive than most people realize. Costs average around \$10,000 per space for a downtown area. But few consumers purchase a parking space as an independent item. Instead parking costs are incorporated into the costs of buildings and property, as a hidden surcharge for virtually any good or service we buy. This is reflected in higher rents to tenants and higher taxes to owners. If the parking spaces aren't really needed or used (such as is the case in many large "power centers"), then reducing parking saves not only open space but also money.

**Q:** *Why should employers be concerned about parking?*

**A:** At first glance, parking management may not seem like a very important topic. But efficient parking management can save them money. For employers who own their own lot, efficient parking management can help them recoup the cost of their initial investment in parking. Employers who lease their lots and do not pay a separate charge for parking in their leases may gain more control over the number of parking spaces assigned to them by developers or building management. This change can lead to more competitive rents. Efficient parking management can help employers avoid the need to build new parking spaces or lease additional parking.

## Intersecting Interests



### AIR AWARENESS

Many parking management practices offer incentives to motorists to utilize alternative means of transportation, thus reducing the overall volume of automobile emissions.



### CLEAN AIR POLICY

Parking management practices are an important factor of overall transportation issues, which makes them essential to clean air policy.



### ENHANCED OZONE AWARENESS

As efficient parking strategies are employed, fewer cars are on the road, which helps to reduce the amount of ozone emitted.



### PARKING TAX BENEFITS

As a parking management strategy, employers can use the money they would otherwise spend on parking costs to offer it to employees as a transit pass or van-pool subsidy.



## Intersecting Interests



### TRANSIT CONNECTIVITY

Making communities more convenient to pedestrians and alternative transportation users means parking needs will decrease. Such improvements encourage motorists to use parking spaces distributed over a larger geographic area. This also encourages “park once” shopping patterns, where visitors park their vehicles and walk to several destinations, rather than driving to, and parking at, each destination.



### PEDESTRIAN- FRIENDLY STREETSCAPES

Parallel parking along curbs provides a physical buffer between the sidewalk and moving automobile traffic, providing a measure of safety and reducing the level of perceived noise for the pedestrian. Pedestrian related improvements encourage motorists to use parking spaces distributed over a larger geographic area.



### GREENWAYS & OPEN SPACE

Using efficient parking strategies, land currently devoted to meeting perceived parking needs may be converted to open space and credited toward meeting open space requirements.



### SEDIMENTATION & EROSION CONTROL

Decreasing the overall area of impervious surface allows more rainwater to percolate into the ground, reducing erosion and driving down storm water management costs.



### CARPOOLING/ VANPOOLING

Parking requirements are obviously significantly reduced with the use of carpools and vanpools.



### FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS

Flexible schedules mean more opportunity to share parking spaces. This increases parking efficiency and thus reduces the overall area needed for parking.

## For More Information

- Pavement Busters Guide – *Why and How to Reduce the Amount of Land Paved for Roads and Parking Facilities* – Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Land Use and Parking Management - [http://www.vtpi.org/0\\_land.htm](http://www.vtpi.org/0_land.htm)
- Parking Management Made Easy: *A Guide to Taming the Downtown Parking Beast* <http://www.nctr.usf.edu/clearinghouse/parking.htm>
- Planning for Residential Parking: A Guide For Housing Developers - <http://dcrp.ced.berkeley.edu/students/russo/parking/Developer%20Manual/index.htm>
- Smart Growth Online <http://www.smartgrowth.org/library/article.asp?resource=168>
- National Transportation Library *Managing Employee Parking in a Changing Market* <http://ntl.bts.gov/DOCS/sdd.html> <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/printable.asp?ID=8>
- Georgia Quality Growth Partnership <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/printable.asp?ID=8>

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