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Department of City Planning • City of Los Angeles
200 N. Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: 213.978.1300
www.planning.lacity.org

Parking Workshop:
History, Context, and Examples



On May 12, 2011,
the Los Angeles City Planning Commission,
prompted by citywide discussion of the proposed
Modified Parking Requirement (MPR) District Ordinance,
hosted a
Workshop on Los Angeles' Parking History, Context, and Examples.

14 invited speakers –
including leaders of City and regional agencies,
developers and architects,
parking academics and professionals, and
affordable housing advocates –
presented to the Commission on many of the issues
surrounding Los Angeles' policies regarding mandatory parking requirements.

This pamphlet contains excerpts from the speakers' presentations.
Full streaming audio of the entire event is available at:
<http://bit.ly/parkingsummit>



Historic Images: Courtesy of University of Southern California Digital Library
Civic Center Parking Lot, 1961



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setting the stage: parking policy as Los Angeles matures and the regional transit system is built

Regional Context



Robin Blair (METRO) Robin Blair is a Planning Director at Metro and the Parking Policy Modal Lead for the 2011 Call for Projects.

- “Currently the renaissance of rail raises the issue of land use, which is the most considered factor for the Federal Transportation Agency (FTA) in evaluating any new funding. In this context, the discussion of parking around transit becomes important.”
- “Places like MacArthur Park have well survived and people gravitated to these areas where they could get around the city without using automobiles. On the other hand, however, parking requirements have actually hindered the revitalization or utilization of these old areas.”
- “Transit agencies regard the encouragement of transit as the right policy. It would probably be better that the land uses near transit do not demand too much parking.”
- “The biggest encouragement to reduce parking is to create an environment where there is alternative parking. This is

something that is essential to the FTA funding process and to the criteria we are using. So far, the city of Los Angeles and the surrounding cities have adopted fairly aggressive land use policies which favor transit use.”

“The five criteria of FTA’s evaluation for funding are the existing land use, the containment of sprawl, transit supporting corridor policies which are directly tied to parking and parking form, the supporting zones near transit including parking requirements and form, and the track records of performance.”

Regional Context



Jay Kim (LADOT) Jay Kim is the Acting Assistant General Manager for the newly re-organized Office of Parking Management, Planning and Regulations with the Department of Transportation. He has over 20 years of transportation planning and engineering experience from both private and public sectors.

- “Because we impose parking requirements on a project-by-project basis and parking spaces are not designed to be publically shared, we over-provide parking. Parking spaces should be shared.”
- Regarding shared parking, “every building will probably need to have some portion of the parking dedicated for their use; but there is huge opportunity still for part of that building to have that pool be available for public use.”
- “Parking problems should be approached as a district problem. The ‘just perfect’ parking supply cannot be obtained based on the notion of supplying the average parking rate. However, if we can create the framework under which the assets of the private sector could be made into the public pool, and if we can address

security, liability, and insurance issues, there could be maximum flexibility in dealing with parking.”

“In the U.S. we have built three spaces per each car. In downtown in particular, we have dedicated 81% of the land for parking that translates into 170 parking lots with only a few parks.”

Regional Context



Hasan Ikhata (SCAG) Hasan Ikhata is the Executive Director of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). Prior to joining SCAG, Mr. Ikhata worked for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) where he developed a comprehensive Transportation Demand Management program for the MTA.

- “The nation has experienced a great change since the 1960s. In 1960, almost half the households were households with children. Today that number is around 28% and is expected to fall down. Single-person households grew from 13% to 34%. The housing, transportation, and health care needs in the future are probably not going to be similar to what we had in the past.”
- “Recent national surveys consistently revealed the preference of a significant portion of people for attached (38%-39%) and small lot housing with amenities including easy access to transit. But, people’s actual preference may be very different. This makes it very hard for the region to plan for the future.”

- “The urban form we will have in the future will be based not only on people’s preference for housing, but also factors such as energy costs. The future—though not everywhere—will be multi-family, small lots, near transit, and walkable communities.”

“In Southern California, the demands for single-family homes on large lots is going to decline significantly by about 1 million units; the demand for multi-family, small lots will go up, about 0.65 million units.”

Site Context



Stefanos Polyzoides (Moule and Polyzoides Architects) Stefanos Polyzoides is a principal of Architecture firm Moule & Polyzoides. His professional experience spans institutional and civic buildings, historic rehabilitation, commercial projects, housing, campus planning, and urban design.

- TOD parking recommendations:
“Neighborhood and District-wide parking measures (1/4-mile radius); station parking (street and structure) managed as a Park-Once system; high-quality public space throughout, particularly connecting parking and station; project parking ratio maxima, low to begin with and monitored over time for use on a shared parking basis; area-wide reduction of parking ratios over time based on development thresholds and triggers; in lieu support of shuttles to adjacent neighborhoods and districts; free parking for businesses under 2,000 sf; obligatory decoupling of units and parking for sales and rentals; bicycle stations located adjacent to each station, and; reduction in street and garage parking dimensions.”

“The actual space requirements for parking are so extreme and the access requirements for parking are so extreme that they end up dominating the architectural projects, as they emerge from the various zoning requirements for various municipalities.”



Illustration: Del Mar Station Transit Village
Pasadena, California

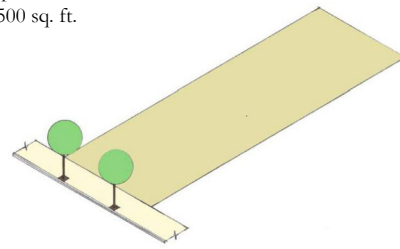
Site Context



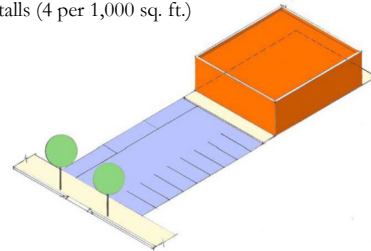
Gwynne Pugh (Gwynne Pugh Urban Studio) Gwynne Pugh is a member of the City of Santa Monica Planning Commission, an urban designer, and a consultant. He has over 20 years of architectural and design experience.

- “Each parking stall is about 350 square feet, if it’s reasonably and efficiently parked, incorporating the drive way, circulation and particularly ramps. A two-bedroom unit in an affordable workforce housing project would be 850 square feet. However, its parking requirement would be 2-2.5 parking stalls, which equals to 850 square feet. We are not building housing; we are building parking.”
- “The not-shared parking, which cannot be leased out and it cannot have other uses, contributes to part of the parking problems.”

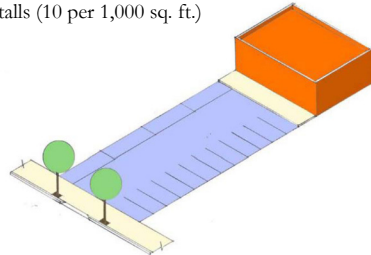
Illustration: MDA Johnson Favaro Architecture & Urban Design
Typical Commerical Lot
7,500 sq. ft.



“By-Right” Retail Building
3,125 sq. ft. (improvements)
12 stalls (4 per 1,000 sq. ft.)



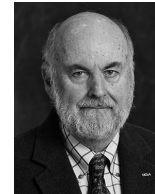
“By-Right” Restaurant Building
1,665 sq. ft. (improvements)
16 stalls (10 per 1,000 sq. ft.)



“Parking drives what you can actually do on lots, rather than what the activity we really want to have happen.”

academic perspectives on minimum parking: congestion and the cost of housing, goods, & services

The True Cost of Parking



Donald Shoup, Ph.D. (UCLA) Professor Donald Shoup has served as Director of the Institute of Transportation Studies and Chair of the Department of Urban Planning at UCLA. Donald Shoup has extensively studied parking as a key link between transportation and land use.

- “Los Angeles is following the rest of the world in reforming its parking requirements, it’s not leading. The minimum parking requirements are the real barrier to density in this city. It isn’t the FAR; it isn’t the dwelling units per acre; it is the minimum parking requirements.”
- “Off-street parking requirements resemble the pseudoscience of phrenology. Phrenologists believed that separate parts of the brain were responsible for such characteristics as benevolence, friendship, integrity, neatness, and selfishness, and the external features of the skull predicted these behaviours. This sounds alarmingly similar to the notion that, without knowing anything about the cost of parking spaces or the price charged for using them, planners can predict how many parking spaces every

land use ‘needs’ simply by measuring such variables as the number of fuel nozzles at a gas station, nuns in a convent, or reposeing rooms in a funeral parlor.”

“For a concert hall in downtown, L.A. requires, at a minimum, 15 times more parking than San Francisco allows as the maximum. We built the Disney Hall garage seven years before we had the money to build the Disney Hall. San Francisco built Louise David Hall without any parking at all.”



Mike Manville (UCLA) Mike Manville is a postdoctoral scholar at the Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies and the Institute of Transportation Studies at UCLA. He has conducted research into transportation policy and local public finance with a focus on how parking requirements influence both travel behavior and urban form.

- With residential minimum parking requirements, housing has to be accompanied by a specific amount of parking spaces. Usually these parking spaces have to be on the same site. “When local government requires the developer to provide parking on-site with every unit, two things happen: the cost of housing goes up, and the cost of driving goes down. Cities end up with more expensive housing and less expensive driving, resulting in less housing, more driving, and more congestion.”
- “Most cities prefer to have more housing, more affordable housing, less driving, and less congestion. Residential minimum parking requirements actively undermine that goal. Off-street parking requirements take the cost that should be paid by drivers, which is the cost of parking, and it adds it to the cost of property development. The money people spend on housing is converted into the money

“We fight the problem of congestion by making it hard to build housing—by forcing every housing unit to make room for cars. This is both counter-productive and circular. It doesn’t solve the congestion problem and it makes housing prices boom.”

“The residential parking requirement is going to reduce the overall quality of housing and the variety of housing available. Removing the minimum parking requirements in turn will give you both more housing and more variety of housing.”

- spent on parking. For people who do drive, this minimum parking requirement functions as a subsidy. For people who don’t drive, this minimum parking requirement is a penalty. This situation results in less housing and more expensive housing for consumers.”
- The number of required parking spaces may lead developers to build fewer housing units than originally intended or permitted. “The zoning code just says one has to provide X amount housing, no matter the cost. Parking can be extraordinarily pricy. The marginal cost of an additional parking space can be two or three times the original price. Confronted with the cost of that one space, developers may prefer not to build those housing units. Cumulatively, the city loses a lot of housing, and the price goes up. Also, the composition of housing supply changes. Developers tend to build bigger units with two parking spaces for each unit, rather than more affordable units. The parking requirement changes the amount of housing and the type of housing.”
- “The provision of off-site parking could be one solution to the parking problem: existing buildings and existing parking may be used more efficiently, and unbundling parking from rents would be easier. Unbundling is important because it lowers the price of housing.”

local examples & expertise: critical analysis

Affordable Housing



Helmi Hisserich (LAHD) Helmi Hisserich is the Assistant General Manager at the Los Angeles Housing Department. Prior to joining LAHD, Ms. Hisserich has served as the Deputy Mayor of Housing and Economic Development Policy for the City of Los Angeles and as a Regional Administrator with the CRA/LA.

- “Around the TOD areas, within the TOD areas and within 0.5 mile each of these transit stops, there are approximately 112,000 RSO units that are about 18% of our entire housing stock. It’s ready for the taking. 55% to 70% of renters in the TOD areas right now are already rent burdened.”
- “Reducing parking could decrease the cost of development. However, it undermines the current density bonus incentives for the provision of affordable housing—we are going to create tremendous amount of gentrification pressure.”

“In the 10 years after the opening of the Red Line in Hollywood, land values went up 562% and rents quadrupled.”



Shashi Hanuman (Public Counsel Law Center) Shashi Hanuman is the Directing Attorney of Public Counsel’s Community Development Project (CDP), which is dedicated to building strong foundations for healthy, vibrant communities in Los Angeles. Shashi’s work in CDP includes providing counsel to nonprofit community-based organizations that advocate for strategies to preserve and produce affordable housing.

- “Between 2001 and 2007, 20,000 affordable homes were built, while 13,000 RSO units were lost, and 13,000 is actually an underestimation. This cycle we have the same trends. The need is about 40,000 affordable homes. The last housing annual report from 2009 says that so far we have only built about 500 affordable units, and 180 units were built with density bonus.”
- “RSO units have lower parking requirements. Current condo parking requirements are higher. Reduction of parking permits additional units to be built, which makes feasible conversions and demolitions. It is not a bad policy, but which can have unintended consequences. Reduce parking but do it by ensuring that people of low income can live near transit.”



Lisa Payne (SCANPH) Lisa Payne is the Policy Director for the Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing. SCANPH creates affordable housing opportunities for low-income people by expanding the knowledge, capacity, and influence of the nonprofit development sector.

- “According to the RHNA numbers, during the last Housing Element period (1998-2005), the city of Los Angeles was supposed to build 17,990 homes affordable to very low-income households, about \$40,000 dollars per household. The City built only about 4,043 homes, or 21%; and 218% of housing for above-moderate income households in terms of market rate.”
- “In 2007, nearly 50% of workers in Los Angeles made under \$25,000 dollars a year; over 75% made under \$50,000 dollars a year. What’s being planned around transit stops right now are mainly apartments for single people and couples making over \$80,000 dollars per year. This is a gap that will not be filled just by reducing parking or just by building more density.”

- “Since January 2010 in a really down market, we had 180 affordable units built in market rate developments, using the density bonus parking incentive. If reducing parking further, we should keep some affordable requirements, and even ask for more.”

“Transit planners frequently speak of the need for transit-oriented development to support ridership, but what transit stations need is transit-oriented neighbors who will regularly use this station. I would say they need both.”

“The ARO is the only, single, piece of legislation in this country to create 14,000 units of housing from 1999 to 2007.”

Adaptive Reuse



Hamid Behdad (Central City Development Group) Hamid Behdad is the Co-President of the Central City Development Group. During his 18 years of civil service, Mr. Behdad served three consecutive Mayoral Administrations for the City of Los Angeles. Mr. Behdad brings an exceptional breadth of knowledge and expertise of real estate development, construction, land use, entitlements, real estate law, civil and structural engineering.

- “Whatever parking exists in any perspective of adaptive reuse project, let’s maintain that; do not reduce it, but do not ask for additional because these buildings simply cannot provide. But for the developers, if they feel the need for the market, they will do it. Let’s trust the free market, let it decide rather than regulating it.”
- Because of parking provisions of the adaptive reuse ordinance, “we created 14,000 housing units. It is the financing structures and certain specific plans that made 7.5%-10% of those units affordable.”



Bruce Silberman (Allied Parking) Bruce Silberman is the President and CEO of Allied Parking. He has served as the primary consultant for construction and development for numerous clients over his 40 plus years in the parking business.

- “Historically, Los Angeles has had citywide centralized parking. Back in the 1950s, the parking commission was formed, which purchased parking lots in various areas to have centralized parking for future development. In the 1980s, the off-street parking provisions changed and the parking facility stopped getting built. The off-street parking is what allowed for the parking garages which could serve as the transitioning. Centralized parking does work.”
- “There are properties that are available for centralized parking, and there is adequate parking. The City has some 1,500 covenants within the garages that we own in downtown L.A. that are useable for adaptive reuse and for housing.”

Process Issues & Parking Credits



Mott Smith (Civic Enterprises) Mott Smith is a Principle for Civic Enterprises. His work has focused expanding the application of joint-ventures, mixed-use, and public-private real estate development models.

- “Overwhelmingly it is ‘moms-and-pops’ that own the properties in L.A.’s commercial districts. Mostly, they are working families with one or two small parcels. An ordinance passed in 1990 by imposing different requirements on different uses created the problem for change of use and made entire neighborhoods non-conforming. Discretionary actions have become the norm for changes of use in these areas. They can cost businesses \$50,000-100,000 dollars and more than a year just for these paper approvals. A lot of small business and non-profits that tried to operate in L.A.’s commercial districts failed because there is no good way to comply with our parking rules at this scale in L.A.”
- “Most infill developers in Los Angeles are not professional developers—they are ‘moms-and-pops’. In 2006, there were

12,003 multifamily units built in L.A. in 595 projects. 92% were in projects of 50 units or less. These projects are relatively marginal profit wise. 69% were in projects of 10 units or less. Our current parking codes make this kind of small-scale, workforce development impossible.”

- “This current dysfunctional system benefits land assemblers and speculators, community benefits advocates, lobbyists and lawyers, city council members and extortionists; while ‘mom-and-pop’ landowners, small businesses, working families, small workforce and retail developers and community stakeholders get hurt.”

“Because our rules don’t work for normal parcels -- assembly, exceptions and ‘creatures of the code’ have become the norm.”

Process Issues & Parking Credits



Michael Tharp (Eagle Rock Neighborhood Council) Michael Tharp moved to Eagle Rock in 1988. He was president of The Eagle Rock Association known as TERA, a dues paying residents' association with over 600 members, from 2005 through 2007. He currently sits on the Eagle Rock Neighborhood Council Planning and Land Use Committee and on the Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan Design Review Board. He was President of TERA when the Eagle Rock Pilot Parking Program was implemented.

- “Back in 1988, when I moved to Eagle Rock, Colorado Boulevard was a fading boulevard. We tried to come up with a parking program that would incentivize the boulevard. At that time, a lot of businesses complained that the variance procedures were too expensive and there was no guarantee of success. Resident groups were saying that we were destroying our historical buildings in order to build parking lots for commercial uses; we weren't allowing small business entrepreneurs coming in but instead encouraging only national chains to come in because they could afford to assemble

parcels large enough to build the surface parking that is necessary by code.”

- “The proposed parking program wasn't to rent out parking spaces; it was to rent out parking credit for those spaces and consider them all as one area, to allow business to tap into that pool based on their use and pay for the use of the credit for the spaces, rather than go through the variance procedure. We started to get the small businesses the type we wanted.”

“If you can't park in front of the business, that's okay because you can park somewhere nearby. And if you walk two or three blocks, that creates a more viable street life. Other businesses benefit from that as well.”



Image: <http://blog.andrewsable.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/banksy-parking1.jpg>

By Banksy, at 9th & Broadway, Los Angeles