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What Happens When Cities Eliminate Minimum Parking Requirements?



Ellen Schwartz
 Manager, UCLA Center for Parking Policy

Despite growing evidence that minimum parking requirements both constrain development and produce more parking than necessary or desirable, many cities remain reluctant to repeal them. A common concern is that eliminating these mandates will result in too little off-street parking. This issue brief synthesizes research from cities that have already removed minimum parking requirements and finds these concerns to be largely unfounded. Rather than opting to build zero-parking projects, developers generally continue to include parking where demand exists, often building somewhat less than previously required, but sometimes more, depending on the project and location.

Key Research Findings

The scope of repeal varies across study locations, with some cities eliminating minimums citywide and others only in specific neighborhoods. One study, for example, examined a targeted

repeal for downtown adaptive reuse projects. Across these studies, several patterns emerge in how developers respond to repeal.

1. Eliminating parking requirements does not eliminate parking.

Of the 12 cities or areas analyzed, nine saw an overall decline in new parking supply relative to the former minimums (Figure 1). In three cases, developers built more parking than previously required, showing that developers will voluntarily build parking when sufficient demand exists.

2. Developers were more likely to use parking flexibility for mixed-use projects and in dense areas near transit.

In Buffalo, New York, parking ratios in residential and commercial projects continued to exceed former requirements, but mixed-use projects provided 53% less parking, driving the overall decline in new supply.¹ In Champaign, Illinois, both residential and mixed-

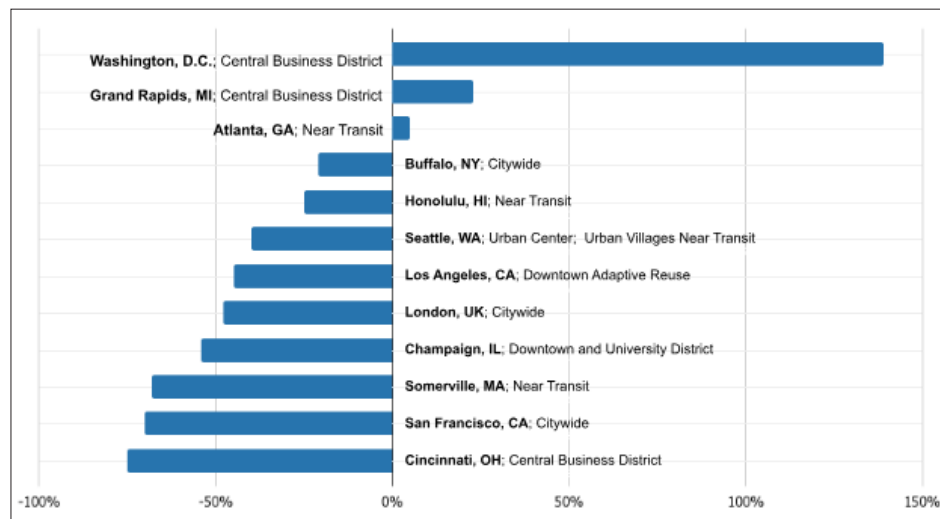


Figure 1. Percent Increase or Decrease in New Parking Provision Compared to Former Minimums.

use projects reduced their parking provision, but reductions were larger for mixed-use projects.² Across the four cities that eliminated minimum parking requirements in their central business districts, mixed-use projects provided less parking than purely residential projects.³

In London, reductions in new parking were concentrated in inner London, where developments provided 67% fewer spaces than before the reform, compared with a 32% reduction in outer London.⁴ Similarly, after San Francisco and Buffalo eliminated requirements citywide, reductions in core areas were 1.5 to 1.9 times greater than elsewhere in the cities.⁵

3. Developers were less likely to reduce parking for higher-income housing in central areas.

Developments targeting higher-income residents frequently provide more parking than previously required, even in transit-oriented, mixed-use areas. In Los Angeles, higher-end apartments under the adaptive reuse ordinance often included two parking spaces, while more affordable units were offered with no on-site parking.⁵ In London, projects in the densest, highest-income area of the city had 30% larger units and provided roughly three times as much parking as projects in the second-densest area.⁶

4. In some areas, nearby garages with excess capacity enabled on-site parking reductions.

Even after parking requirements are lifted, developers often believe guaranteed parking is necessary to secure tenants, but they are more willing to reduce on-site parking when nearby off-site spaces can meet demand. In Los Angeles, developers often arranged off-site parking for residents when converting downtown buildings to housing, while in Champaign and Cincinnati, abundant nearby private and public garages allowed tenants to meet their own parking needs.^{5, 2, 3}

5. Commercial developments may still include as much or more parking than previously required.

In Atlanta, commercial developments in special public interest districts near transit provided slightly more parking than previously required, as lenders considered it necessary for a building's competitiveness.⁷ In Buffalo, four commercial developments built during the study period included 64% more parking than the former minimums required.¹ Interviews with local developers and lenders indicate that national commercial chains often follow their own corporate parking standards. Overall, evidence on how commercial developers respond to the repeal of minimum parking requirements is limited, and further research is needed.

Policy Implications

These findings suggest that developers do not automatically reduce parking when minimum requirements are removed. Instead, they evaluate each project individually, providing substantially less parking, mainly when residents are likely to drive less or can use nearby off-site garages or lots with spare capacity. Cities that lift minimum parking requirements may find that the overall change in parking supply is modest, while the added flexibility can make new development more feasible and allow land to be used more efficiently.

Further Reading and Sources

The research literature that informed this issue brief is summarized in greater detail, with citations to the underlying studies, in [The Impacts of Minimum Parking Requirements: A Research Synthesis](#).

Endnotes:

1 Hess, D. B., & Rehler, J. (2021). Minus minimums: Development response to the removal of minimum parking requirements in Buffalo (NY). *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 87(3), 396–408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2020.1864225>

2 Sohoni, S., & Lee, B. (2024). After the Minimum Parking Requirement: Parking reform in a small university city. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 90(3), 471–485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2023.2248093>

3 Sohoni, S., & Lee, B. (2025). Parking the minimum parking requirement: Evidence from nine U.S. cities. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 46(1), 88–101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X251343047>

4 Li, F., & Guo, Z. (2014). Do parking standards matter? Evaluating the London parking reform with a matched-pair approach. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 67, 352–365. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2014.08.001>

5 Manville, M. (2013). Parking requirements and housing development: Regulation and reform in Los Angeles. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 79(1), 49–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2013.785346>

6 Guo, Z., & Ren, S. (2012). From minimum to maximum: Impact of the London parking reform on residential parking supply from 2004 to 2010? *Urban Studies*, 50(6), 1183–1200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098012460735>

7 Nelson, A. C., Meyer, M. D., & Ross, C. B. (1997). Parking supply policy and transit use: Case study of Atlanta, Georgia. *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, 1604(1), 60–66. <https://doi.org/10.3141/1604-08>