

Community Planning and Economic Development News Release

Contact: Rose Lindsay, Communications (612) 673.5015

Minneapolis City Council Adopts Residential Off-Street Parking Zoning Code Text Amendment

Friday, July 10, 2015 (Minneapolis, MN) – Today, the Minneapolis City Council unanimously passed a new zoning code text amendment reducing the number of parking spaces that must be provided for residential uses in areas well-served by bus and rail transit.

“Our parking requirements have a lot of unintended consequences that raise the cost of housing, preclude development on smaller sites, and drive poor design choices,” said Council Member Lisa Bender who authored the ordinance. “Today we made it easier for people in Minneapolis to choose where to live and how to get around by tying parking reform to transit-rich areas of our city. This is a small change that will have a big impact over time.”

In most zoning districts, the City of Minneapolis requires that apartment and condominium buildings provide parking spaces equal to the number of dwelling units in the building. Exceptions apply in selected areas of the city. With today’s City Council action, smaller-scale, multifamily residential developments within one-quarter mile of frequent bus service and one-half mile of rail service will have their off-street parking requirement eliminated. For larger-scale multifamily residential developments in those same geographic areas, parking requirements will be reduced by 50 percent, to one-half space per dwelling unit. Since 2009, the City has not had parking requirements in its downtown zoning districts.

The City felt the amendment was necessary for several reasons including the following:

Housing affordability:

Parking is expensive to construct. The substantial costs associated with building and maintaining parking is passed on to residents through higher rents or sale prices. Constructing buildings with fewer parking spaces offers an opportunity to provide housing at a more affordable price.

Transportation:

The public has made substantial investments in public transportation. These investments support City and regional goals of offering people choices about how they access jobs, schools, retail stores, and recreational amenities. Transit-oriented development, with lower supplies of parking, supports a range of housing options and capitalizes on the public’s investment in transit. Allowing the market to play a greater role in determining the number of parking spaces that must be provided for apartments and condominiums reduces the degree to which public policies are skewed toward increased automobile use. While the Twin Cities area is the 16th largest metro area in the U.S., a University of Minnesota study suggests that the Twin Cities area has the 13th best transit system. And Walk Score ranks

Minneapolis as the 12th most walkable city in the country. It's notable that approximately 18 percent of Minneapolis households do not own a car.

Land use and urban design:

The City's land use policies encourage transit-oriented development along our transit corridors. However, ordinances that require a large number of parking spaces for residential uses make it more difficult to fulfill these policies. Areas that are designated for higher-density uses may remain underutilized because it's impractical or economically infeasible to provide parking for every dwelling unit. Further, creative building designs are hindered by the amount of space required to provide parking and associated maneuvering aisles and access ramps.

"We've been pleased to work with Council Member Bender, the City Planning Commission, and a variety of stakeholders to modernize our parking regulations for a twenty-first century city," said Jason Wittenberg, City of Minneapolis Land Use, Design and Preservation Manager. "We'll continue to work with policymakers to provide opportunities for additional housing options while ensuring that we have high expectations for new development.

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