

RESOLUTION NO. 20120426-074

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Land Development Code Chapter 25-6-591 imposes minimum parking requirements on new development in the Central Business District (CBD) and Downtown Mixed Use (DMU) zoning district, subject to certain exceptions and reductions; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Austin Plan envisions the urban core as, “a multi-modal transportation system that is convenient, sustainable, affordable, and a viable alternative to the automobile”; and

WHEREAS, the average occupancy rate of existing off-street parking downtown is 26 percent and peak occupancy is 67 percent; and

WHEREAS, *requiring parking in excess of that demanded by the market imposes significant costs on development that are ultimately passed on to residents and customers; and*

WHEREAS, a growing number of cities nationwide have eliminated or reduced the minimum parking required in their central business district based on concerns over affordability and sustainability; **NOW, THEREFORE,**


BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The Council initiates amendments to Title 25 (*Land Development*) of the City Code and directs the City Manager to: (1) develop an ordinance to reduce or eliminate the minimum parking space requirements in the Central

Business District and Downtown Mixed Use zoning district; and (2) present the ordinance to Council for consideration after completing the required boards and commissions review.

ADOPTED: April 26, 2012

ATTEST:


Shirley A. Gentry
City Clerk

ORDINANCE AMENDMENT REVIEW SHEET

AMENDMENT: C2o-2012-013

DESCRIPTION: Modify minimum parking requirements in the CBD and DMU districts.

BACKGROUND: On April 26, 2012, City Council passed a resolution directing staff to develop and ordinance to reduce or eliminate minimum parking space requirements in the Central Business District and Downtown Mixed Use District.

CURRENT REGULATIONS: Under Sec. 25-6-591, the following regulations are in effect for parking in the CBD and DMU districts:

- No parking is required for historic buildings or any existing buildings in a historic district.
- No parking is required for any use of less than 6,000 square feet in a structure that existed on April 7, 1997.
- Residential uses must provide 60 percent of the normal parking requirement.
- All other uses must provide a minimum of 20 percent of the normal requirement.
- There is a maximum parking limit of 60 percent of the normal requirement, unless all parking spaces are contained in a parking structure or the Land Use Commission approves additional spaces through off-site accessory parking.
- Parking for the disabled is required based on the total number of motor vehicle spaces provided.
- Parking for bicycles is required based on the total number of motor vehicles required.
- Off-street loading for certain uses is required at a different rate from uses outside the CBD and DMU districts.

ALTERNATIVES: There are several options for addressing Council's directive:

- All minimum parking requirements for CBD and DMU could be eliminated, leaving only the maximum parking limit of 60% of the normal requirement for surface parking.
- All minimum parking requirements for CBD could be eliminated, and the minimum parking requirement for DMU could be maintained or reduced.
- Different parking requirements could be established for different geographic areas of downtown, instead of for different zoning districts.
- Minimum parking requirements for certain uses (e.g., residential) could be reduced or eliminated, while minimum requirements for other uses could be retained.
- Adopt a fee in lieu of providing parking spaces, with revenue to be used for constructing public parking facilities or fund an electronic wayfinding system.
- Require that parking be sold or leased separately from floor space.

ISSUES: Staff research has found that reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements in the downtown area may have the following consequences:

- Lower development costs and possibly lower tenant costs, especially for housing, since developers can build more leasable floor area and less parking.
- Greater use of transit, bicycling, and pedestrian modes of travel since development can be more compact.
- Development of more pedestrian-friendly land uses.
- Increased cost for the use of existing parking spaces due to reduced growth in supply.
- Possible spillover of on-street parking by downtown visitors or employees into adjacent residential areas.

- Increased traffic congestion in some areas as drivers search for available spaces.
- Increased pressure on the public or private sector to provide parking garages.
- Less parking available for people with disabilities.

However, elimination of parking requirements will not necessarily result in less overall parking downtown, because most lenders will likely require that a minimal amount of parking be provided for new commercial and residential projects as a condition of approving the loan.

Off-street loading was not specifically addressed by the Council resolution but has been an issue for recent developments downtown. Loading requirements for some uses appear to exceed the actual demand and have required some projects to seek variances.

DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

- If motor vehicle parking requirements are reduced or eliminated, requirements for bicycle parking and parking for the disabled should be maintained. A separate ordinance amendment is currently in process to modify bicycle parking requirements and should be coordinated with this amendment.
- Parking requirements for a transit-oriented development (TOD) district are also based on CBD parking requirements and would need to be modified accordingly.
- Spillover effects of on-street parking into residential neighborhoods (particularly Judges Hill) could be addressed through residential permit parking, but only single-family areas may take advantage of it.
- Traffic congestion could be reduced by better wayfinding devices which would direct drivers to available parking.
- Loading space requirements for larger uses could be addressed by requiring the developer to submit documentation of loading needs for approval by the Director.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Pending

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1st 2nd 3rd

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

ASSIGNED STAFF: George Zapalac, 974-2725