

Parking Reduction Incentive Pilot Program

February 28, 2013

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Introduction

On December 6, 2012, the Austin City Council directed the City Manager to establish a pilot program to allow commercial businesses to reduce their parking requirements if they committed to implement strategies designed to reduce individual motor vehicle trips. The intent of the pilot program is to support the vision of the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan for a compact and connected city by promoting alternative means of travel and encouraging the adaptive re-use of existing buildings. By reducing the need to provide additional parking facilities, the program will enable existing structures to be converted to more productive uses without requiring that additional land be devoted to off-street parking.

The pilot program is intended to provide a mechanism for experimenting with parking reduction strategies and determining their effectiveness. If successful, it is anticipated that the program could become permanent.

Overview

Up to five projects will be selected to participate in the pilot program. Each project will be allowed to reduce the normal parking requirement in exchange for a commitment to implement incentives which will encourage employees or customers to use alternative transportation modes to the private automobile. At the end of a one-year period, the effectiveness of the incentive strategies will be evaluated and recommendations developed for continuation or modification of the program.

Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible for the parking reduction incentive pilot program, a project would have to include an existing building or buildings that are proposed to be expanded or converted to a use that would normally require additional parking spaces. Since there is a pending proposal to eliminate all parking requirements in the downtown area, the project would have to be located outside the downtown area where parking requirements still apply. The project would have to be located in an area where access by alternative modes such as pedestrian, bicycle, or transit is attractive and convenient. It would also have to include a use or uses that are conducive to access by non-motorized vehicles. An example of a use that would not qualify for the pilot program would be a warehouse that is heavily dependent upon truck deliveries. A project should also be able to be completed and occupied within 6 months of approval. Finally, an applicant would have to commit to providing and maintaining strategies to reduce parking and agree to participate in a follow-up evaluation at the end of the trial period.

Application Process

Each applicant is required to submit an application which provides basic information about the property, the proposed development, and the employees and customers of the business. It also includes a plan for parking reduction incentives and an explanation of how the applicant intends to implement the program. During the pilot program each participant would be allowed the flexibility to develop an incentive program tailored to their specific project. The application packet contains a list of strategies that have been employed in other cities to reduce travel demand. Each strategy is accompanied by an estimated level of parking reduction that is appropriate to the strategy. The exact level of parking reduction allowed will be determined in consultation with City staff based on the characteristics of each project and the level of commitment to implementation.

Objectives and Performance Measures

The key objectives of the pilot program are to:

- Reduce parking requirements with no adverse effects on employees, patrons, or the public.
- Reduce motor vehicle miles traveled.
- Test and evaluate alternative incentive methods.

In order to determine whether these objectives are being met, each proposal must include specific performance measures that can be tracked through a cooperative data collection effort between the applicant and City staff. Performance measures must be identified in the application and should include such factors as:

- Number of participants
- Total number of employees/customers
- Rate of participation in each incentive
- Motor vehicle trips eliminated
- Customer or public complaints to owner and to City

This information should be collected by means of oral or written surveys of employees and customers and monitoring of public comments received by the City's 311 system.

Staff Evaluation

Each proposal will be reviewed and evaluated by a staff committee containing representatives of the Planning and Development Review Department and the Austin Transportation Department. The evaluation will include an assessment of the reasonableness of the applicant's proposal and the likelihood that the parking reduction objectives can be achieved. Staff may consult with the applicant as part of the evaluation and may ask for refinement of the proposal during the review process.

Signed Agreement

Each proposal that is selected for participation in the pilot program will be incorporated into a written agreement identifying the responsibilities of the participants and documenting the parking reductions allowed. The agreement will include a timeframe for implementation and a provision for follow-up monitoring of the program to determine its effectiveness. Penalties for non-compliance with the agreement would also be identified.

Implementation

Staff will work closely with participants during the implementation phase to ensure that projects proceed to completion and occupancy in a timely manner. Once occupied, each project will be monitored on a quarterly basis to evaluate how it is performing relative to the expectations contained in the application. At the end of one year, a full evaluation will be performed and presented to City Council with recommendations on the continuation of the program on a permanent basis.

Questions

For questions about this pilot program, please contact George Zapalac, Planning & Development Review Department, 974-2725, or George.zapalac@austintexas.gov

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ORDINANCE NO. 20121206-073

AN ORDINANCE INITIATING AMENDMENTS TO CITY CODE CHAPTER 25-6 TO ESTABLISH A PILOT PROGRAM TO REDUCE PARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES UTILIZING TRIP-REDUCTION STRATEGIES; AND WAIVING CITY CODE SECTION 25-1-502.

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

PART 1. The city council makes the following findings:

- A. The Imagine Austin comprehensive plan lays out a vision for a compact and connected city.
- B. As Austin becomes increasingly compact and connected, a growing number of Austinites are using forms of transportation other than automobiles to travel to destinations across the city.
- C. Provision of parking spaces in excess of what a particular use needs is counter to walkability and multi-modalism, as contemplated in the Imagine Austin plan.
- D. Buildings that are not able to provide the required number of parking spaces on-site are currently able to participate in an off-site parking agreement as outlined in Chapter 25-6-502 of the city's Land Development Code to fulfill their parking requirement.
- E. Allowing some flexibility with how businesses meet the transportation needs of their customers is likely to allow more adaptive re-use of existing buildings built before parking minimums were in place.
- F. City Code Chapter 25, Subchapter E, Section 2.4.2 of the city's Land Development Code allows a reduction in the number of required parking spaces in exchange for transportation impact-reducing elements such as car share spaces or shower and locker facilities.
- G. Many businesses are responding to and encouraging citywide trends toward alternative forms of transportation by incentivizing their patrons to use alternate means of transportation through a variety of individualized programs; and
- H. According to the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, parking management programs can reduce parking needs by 20-40%.

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PART 2. The city council initiates amendments to City Code Chapter 25-6 (*Transportation*) and directs the City Manager to prepare a draft ordinance establishing a pilot program to authorize reductions in the minimum number of parking spaces required for a commercial businesses, subject to implementation of parking reduction strategies.

PART 3. The proposal required under Part 2 of this ordinance must be limited to a one-year period and to five participating businesses, with a requirement for a report to council on the success of the pilot program and any needed improvement at the end of the one-year period.

PART 4. The proposal required under Part 2 of this ordinance must include selection criteria for participating businesses and require implementation of strategies with demonstrated success in reducing parking demand, including but not limited to:

- A. Location near transit or bicycle routes;
- B. Advertisement and encouragement of public transit options for travel to that location;
- C. Price discounts for those patrons who can show that they have arrived without using a car;
- D. Provision of carshare or transit passes to employees;
- E. Employee parking demand management programs, like cashouts; and
- F. Provision of valet or delivery service.

PART 5. The proposal required under Part 2 of this ordinance must include a description of the key objectives and performance measures to be used in the evaluations of the success of this program.

PART 6. The city manager is directed to present the proposal required by Part 2 of this ordinance to council no later than March 1, 2013, after providing a staff briefing to the Planning Commission. The city council waives the requirement of City Code Section 25-1-502 (*Amendment; Review*) for review and recommendation by the Planning Commission prior to considering adoption of the proposed pilot program. The staff report accompanying the ordinance should summarize any comments provided by commissioners in response to the briefing.

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PART 7. This ordinance takes effect on December 17, 2012.

PASSED AND APPROVED

_____, December 6, 2012 §
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 § _____ *Lee Jeffingwell*
 Mayor

APPROVED: *Karen M. Kennard* **ATTEST:** *Shirley A. Gentry*
 Karen M. Kennard Shirley A. Gentry
 City Attorney City Clerk