

## **Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) Recommendation to the Austin City Council:**

### **Eliminating Parking Minimums and Expanding Parking Benefit Districts in Austin**

WHEREAS, the purpose of the PAC is to advise the City of Austin on pedestrian planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement efforts regarding the creation, maintenance and operation of pedestrian facilities;

WHEREAS, cities around the country are experiencing an infrastructure crisis. Rights of way, pipes and electrical grids are depreciating faster than cities can afford to repair them and the City of Austin is not immune to this problem;

WHEREAS, City of Austin zoning rules currently require that developments outside of the Central Business District (CBD) provide enough car parking (usually on-site) to accommodate expected “peak demand” for parking, resulting in a large-scale, over-consumption of land that further spreads out buildings, exponentially increases infrastructure requirements, and makes walking impractical and often impossible;

WHEREAS, the few studies that have been completed to establish the parking minimums used in Austin do not predict actual parking needs and are considered so unreliable by statisticians that their use is not recommended;

WHEREAS, the cost of construction can be 20-100% higher per project due to parking requirements;

WHEREAS, the higher costs of complying with minimum parking requirements flow through to all Austinites in the form of higher prices for goods, services, rents, etc. and thus, parking minimums reduce affordability for Austinites and will limit the effectiveness of affordable housing bond funds and other affordability efforts;

WHEREAS, many Austinites are inequitably impacted by these costs, with 63% of rental units in Austin occupied by residents who own one car or fewer (according to the American Community Survey 2017 five-year estimates), yet current regulations generally require the cost of renting a new rental unit to be bundled with two parking spots;

WHEREAS, the costs to the citizens of Austin of the requirement to massively overbuild parking far outweighs any potential spillover impacts from under-building parking;

WHEREAS, the commonly prescribed solution for mitigating spillover – variable pricing for all City-owned curb parking – can be an ideal source for the funding required for sidewalks, parks (i.e. active infrastructure) and other associated projects (e.g. burying overhead lines and street lighting improvements) within neighborhoods;

WHEREAS, sidewalks will continue to depreciate faster than we can afford to repair them until a dedicated funding source is established;

WHEREAS, the citizens of Austin deserve better pedestrian infrastructure that enables walking to be a safe and dignified transportation choice;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Pedestrian Advisory Council recommends that the Austin City Council approve the following improvements this year:

1. Expand the City's current elimination of parking minimums in the CBD to the rest of Austin,
2. Expand the City's current Parking Benefit District structure to the rest of Austin to create a possible dedicated funding source within each neighborhood for sidewalks, parks and other associated infrastructure in the pedestrian right of way, and
3. Implement the following:
  - a. Dynamically adjust the price of parking to optimize the use of public space and so that there is always parking space available on every block,
  - b. Ensure multimodal parking, such as dedicating bike and scooter on-street parking on every block where there is none available,
  - c. Remove time limits for paid parking city-wide,
  - d. Install pay stations when demand for parking justifies raising the price for parking above \$0 per hour,
  - e. Develop fee structure for charging for use of public curbside space based on curb cuts removing parking spots, and return these funds to benefit the local area in the same manner as Parking Benefits Districts,
  - f. Ensure accessibility to ADA-compliant parking remains required in land use code at least as effectively as current code, allowing for off- or on-street accessible parking spots, even after parking minimum requirements are removed,
  - g. Remove the apparent incentive for above ground parking garages through strategies such as including above ground parking in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirements or implementing height limits.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC requests a response to this recommendation by our meeting on May 6, 2019.

Date of Approval: February 4, 2019

Vote: 7-0 with Bauereis and Henderson absent

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jay Blazek Crossley', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jay Blazek Crossley, Pedestrian Advisory Council Chair