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Downtown Parking Modifications Phase 1
C20-2023-043

Council Housing & Planning Committee and Mobility Committee Joint Meeting April 23, 2024

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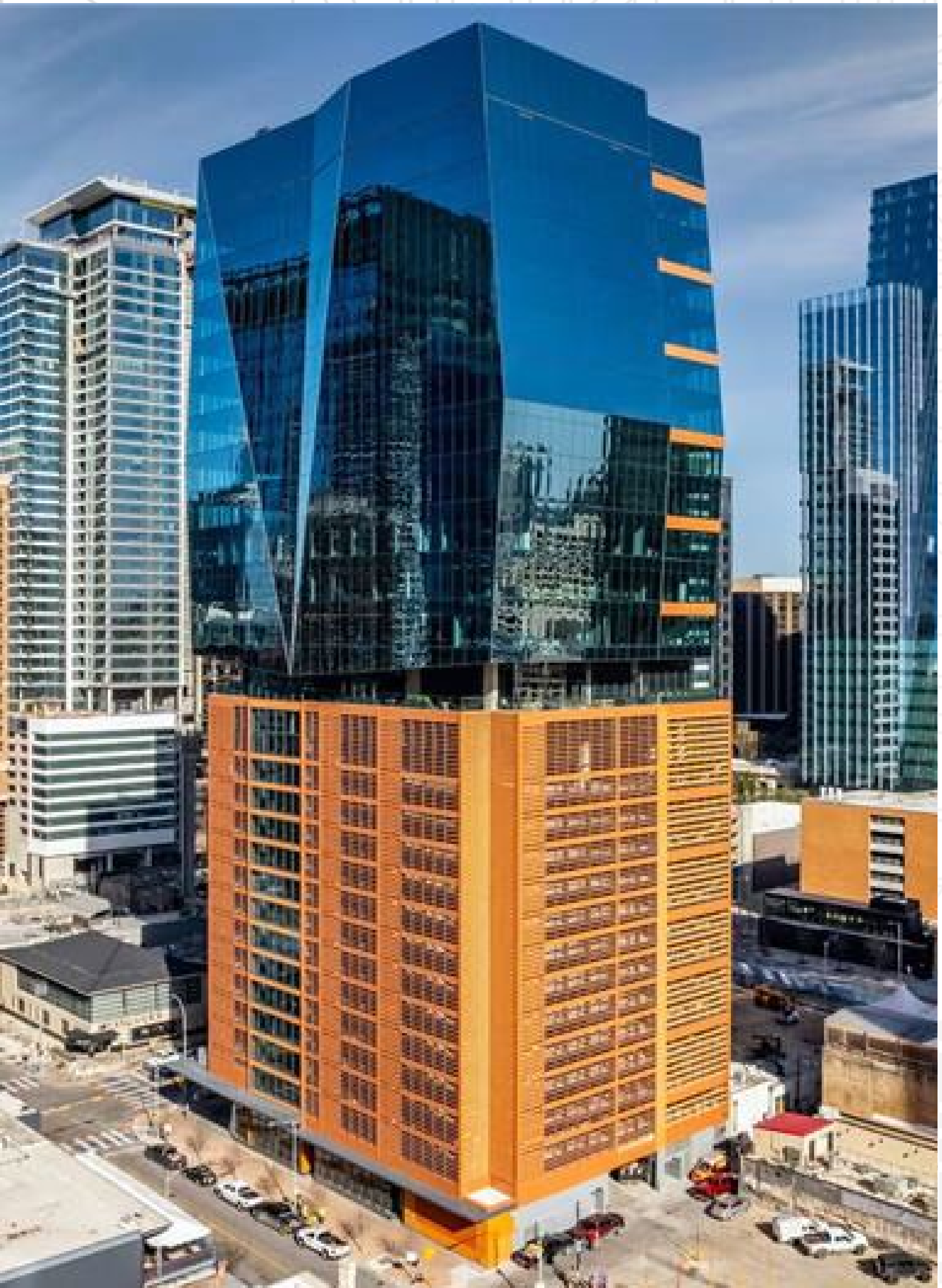
Background

On February 1, 2024, City Council adopted Resolution No. 20240201-054, initiating changes to the Land Development Code to modify parking regulations in downtown.

“so that the regulations…help achieve the goals of reducing the overall number of new parking spaces built within downtown Austin to meet parking needs more efficiently and creating a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented built environment with fewer large above-ground parking structures.”

These modifications could include:

- implementing parking soft caps and requiring a fee for parking built above soft caps;
- reducing the maximum motor vehicle parking allowed for a development downtown from the existing maximums in City Code Chapter 25-6, Article 7, Division 5; and
- requiring developers to decouple parking as part of the gatekeeper requirements for the Downtown Density Bonus Program.



FTA New Starts Application

Existing Land Use Criteria

Central Business District Parking

"A more constrained parking supply (fewer spaces per employee or square foot) indicates that transit is likely to be more competitive in this market, and therefore may support a higher land use rating. "

Rating	CBD spaces per employee[5]
High	< 0.2
Medium-High	0.2 – 0.3
Medium	0.3 – 0.4
Medium-Low	0.4 – 0.5
Low	> 0.5

[5] Average across CBD

Economic Development Effects Criteria

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies

"Elimination or reduction of minimum parking requirements, as well as establishment or reduction of maximum requirements, are strategies that are considered transit-supportive and may support a higher rating."

ULI Technical Assistance Panel Report

Parking ratios remain high. Although parking ratio demands–from commercial and residential tenants, financial institutions, and developers–are decreasing, the built ratios in Austin, and specifically downtown, are still higher than in other major cities.

Downtown is over-parked. With nearly every new development delivering corresponding tenant parking, regardless of commercial or residential use, there are thousands of parking spaces left unused at any point in time. Office workers do not typically use parking spaces at night and residents may use their space in the evening, their residence may be part-time, or they may not own cars to fill the spaces tied to their unit.

The source of parking demand is unclear. Across all interviewed stakeholders, there was a distinct lack of clarity as to which group is demanding parking. Lenders pointed to market and investors' demands, developers pointed to lenders' demands, commercial tenants pointed to talent attraction pressures, and individual residents were unsure how much parking was needed downtown but wanted a dedicated space in their building.

ULI Technical Assistance Panel Report

The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) seeks 50/50 mode share (50% drive-alone, 50% all other options combined) by 2039 to manage congestion based on Austin's forecasted growth. ASMP's "primary objective is to track reducing our dependence on driving alone while keeping an eye on the trends of individual modes." In downtown Austin, parking minimums have been removed since 2013 and much parking is still incorporated in developments. What can the City of Austin do to facilitate and encourage less vehicular transportation and parking incorporated within developments?

Market and Industry Concerns

There is a distinct lack of clarity around who or which industry is driving the perceived need for parking. Lenders, developers, brokers, and appraisers each point to one another when asked who is requiring associated parking and at what level. Without this clarity, and without clear data on the potential market response to lower parking ratios, most developers are defaulting to past parking ratio norms based on a fear that under-parking a project will not succeed in the market or will result in reduced rents.

Cities like Austin, with a strong real estate market in a growing economy, can benefit from pushing boundaries and finding innovative solutions. The current volatility in the capital markets, however, makes this type of innovation and risk-taking more difficult for developers and investors, which leads many to fall back on historic or conservative development patterns.

A shift in transportation friction is needed. As one stakeholder noted, Austin needs to "increase the friction for cars and minimize the friction for all other users." Making it easy to use public transit, bicycles, scooters, and other non-vehicular modalities should be a priority. Personal automobiles are not going away any time soon, but the era of catering to personal auto use should be over.

Market Movements

The panel was encouraged to learn that there are new buildings in the market with more under development that feature significantly reduced parking ratios or, in some cases, no dedicated parking spaces.

ULI Technical Assistance Panel Report

Parking Policy Changes for New Development

The City has a number of policy options it can pursue to encourage fewer parking spaces in new projects.

Use parking caps to limit parking facilities in new developments. The panel is sensitive to the impacts of hard limits on what the real estate industry believes the market needs. Using "soft" parking caps, the City can allow a certain level of parking while also calibrating the caps periodically, to ensure a proper balance between reductions in allowable parking and market trends. An initial soft cap pattern could include:

- Hotel parking cap – 0.25 spaces per room
- Office parking cap – 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet
- Residential parking cap – 1 space per unit
- Retail parking cap – 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet

For those developers wishing to build facilities beyond the limits of the soft caps, the City is encouraged to establish a fee for parking capacity built above these soft caps. Revenue from these fees could then be directed to the Great Streets program to fund initiatives to improve the pedestrian experience downtown.

In the medium to long term, the City should also consider taking a firmer stance on parking limits and institute hard caps downtown and in other parts of the city.

Encourage decoupling parking from residential assets. Developers who wish to participate in the Downtown Density Bonus program provide certain concessions to help advance City goals in exchange for additional development tools or capacities. By requiring the decoupling of parking as a part of the basic requirements to participate in the Downtown Density Bonus program, parking can then become an asset to be leveraged, shared, sold, or reduced separately from the rest of the building's activities.

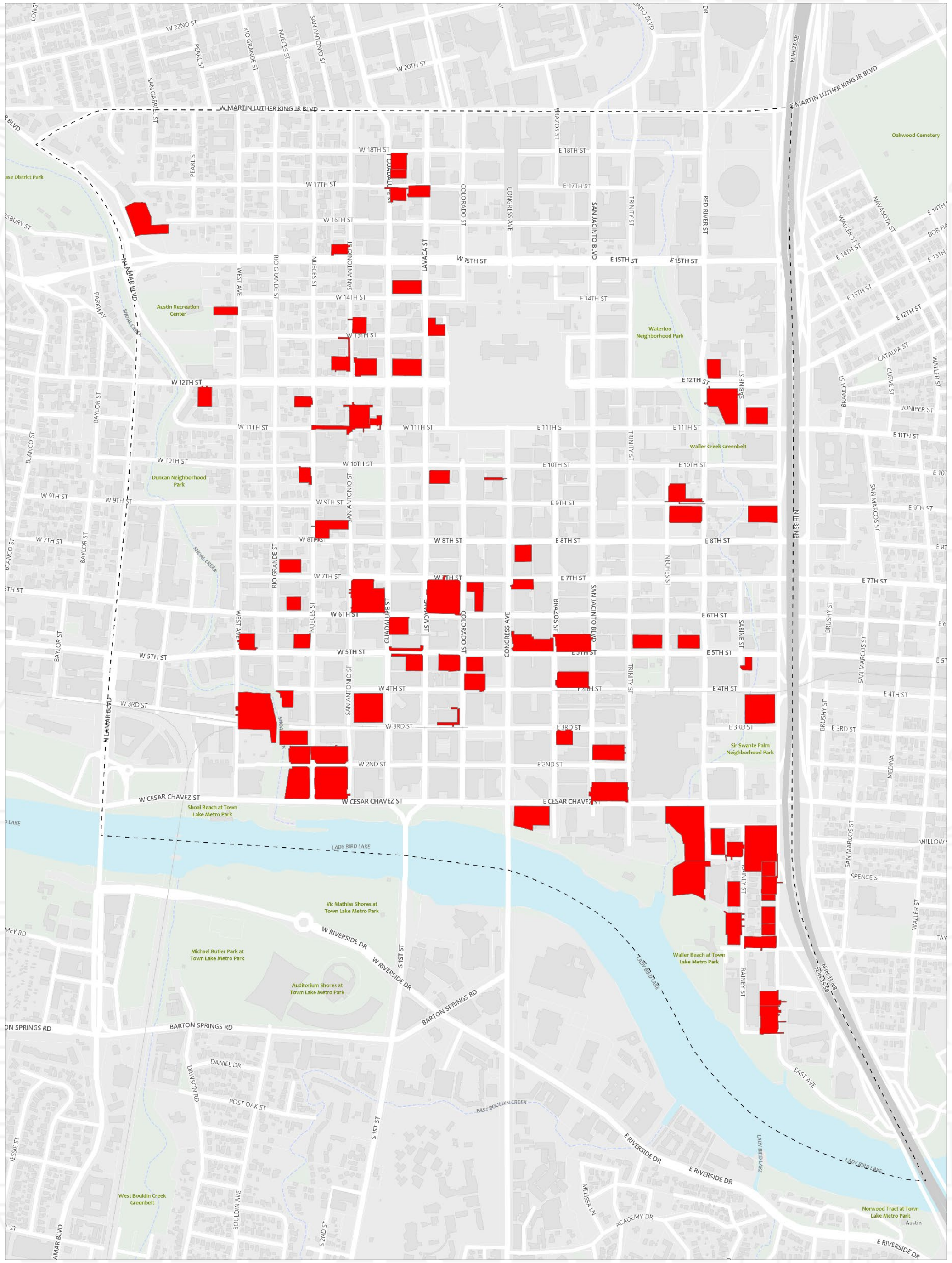
Encourage shared parking. Knowing that there is already an abundance of parking downtown, every effort should be made to encourage shared parking resources. The City should encourage private partnerships between owners to share parking–whether through sharing existing structures via long-term use agreements or planning for shared parking facilities at the outset of project design. Movability, Austin's Transit Management Association, may be a resource for coordinating shared parking.

Improve the biking and walking experience. In order to meet the Strategic Mobility Plan of a citywide 50/50 mode split by 2039, which envisions 50% of commutes to take place via mobilities other than personal vehicles, greater priority must be placed on walking and biking infrastructure.

Staff Analysis
Parking Calculations

Total Site Plans	76
Total Spaces	30,165

Parking Spaces	
Minimum	0
Average	397
Median	278
Maximum	2,064



*based on approved site plan applications from 2013 to present

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Staff Analysis
Parking Calculations

- The amount of parking allowed is calculated based on a site's land uses and parking ratios in Appendix A of the Land Development Code.
- Parking has not been required in Downtown since 2013 and citywide since 2023 (Appendix A is still used to calculate parking maximums and required accessible spaces).
- Parking Downtown is currently capped at 60% of the previous requirement in Appendix A and can be exceeded up to 110% upon request.
- Prior to 2013, a minimum of 20% for all developments and 60% for residential uses was required, with no parking maximum.

Chapter 25-6 Appendix A Parking Ratios

Use Type	Spaces/Unit or Spaces/SF per Appendix A
Hotel-Motel	1.1 spaces for each room
Business and professional offices	1 space for each 275 sq. ft.
General retail sales and services (convenience or general)	1 space for each 275 sq. ft.
Restaurant:	
• ≤2,500 sq. ft.	1 space for each 100 sq. ft.
• >2,500 sq. ft.	1 space for each 75 sq. ft.
• If no customer service or dining area is provided	1 space for each 275 sq. ft.
Cocktail lounge or dance hall:	
• <2,500 sq. ft.	1 space for each 100 sq. ft.
• 2,500—10,000 sq. ft.	1 space for each 50 sq. ft.
• <10,000 sq. ft.	1 space for each 25 sq. ft.
Indoor entertainment:	
• Meeting hall	1 space for each 50 sq. ft.
• Dance halls with liquor sales	See cocktail lounge
• Theater (live or motion picture)	1 space for each 4 seats within auditorium
Efficiency dwelling unit	1 space
1 bedroom dwelling unit	1.5 spaces
Dwelling unit larger than 1 bedroom:	1.5 spaces plus 0.5 space for each additional bedroom
2-bedroom dwelling unit	2 spaces
3-bedroom dwelling unit	2.5 spaces
4-bedroom dwelling unit	3 spaces
5-bedroom dwelling unit	3.5 spaces

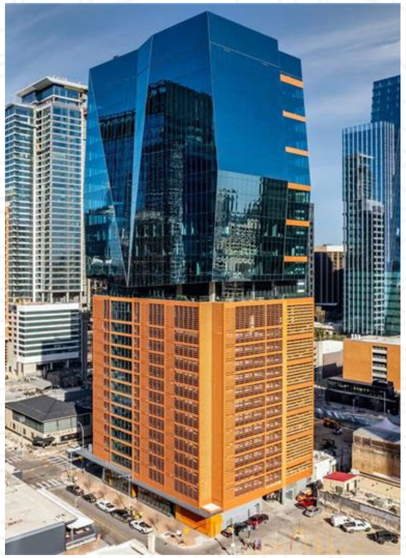
*not the complete list of uses

Example Development:

Use Type	Square Footage	Parking Ratio	Spaces at 100%*	Spaces at 60%
Offices	200,639	1 space/ 275 sq. Ft.	730	438
Restaurant	3,665	1 space/ 75 sq. Ft.	49	29
		Total	779	467

Parking Provided	Regular	ADA	Compact	Total
Garage	445	13	68	526

Percent of Appendix A = 68%



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Staff Analysis

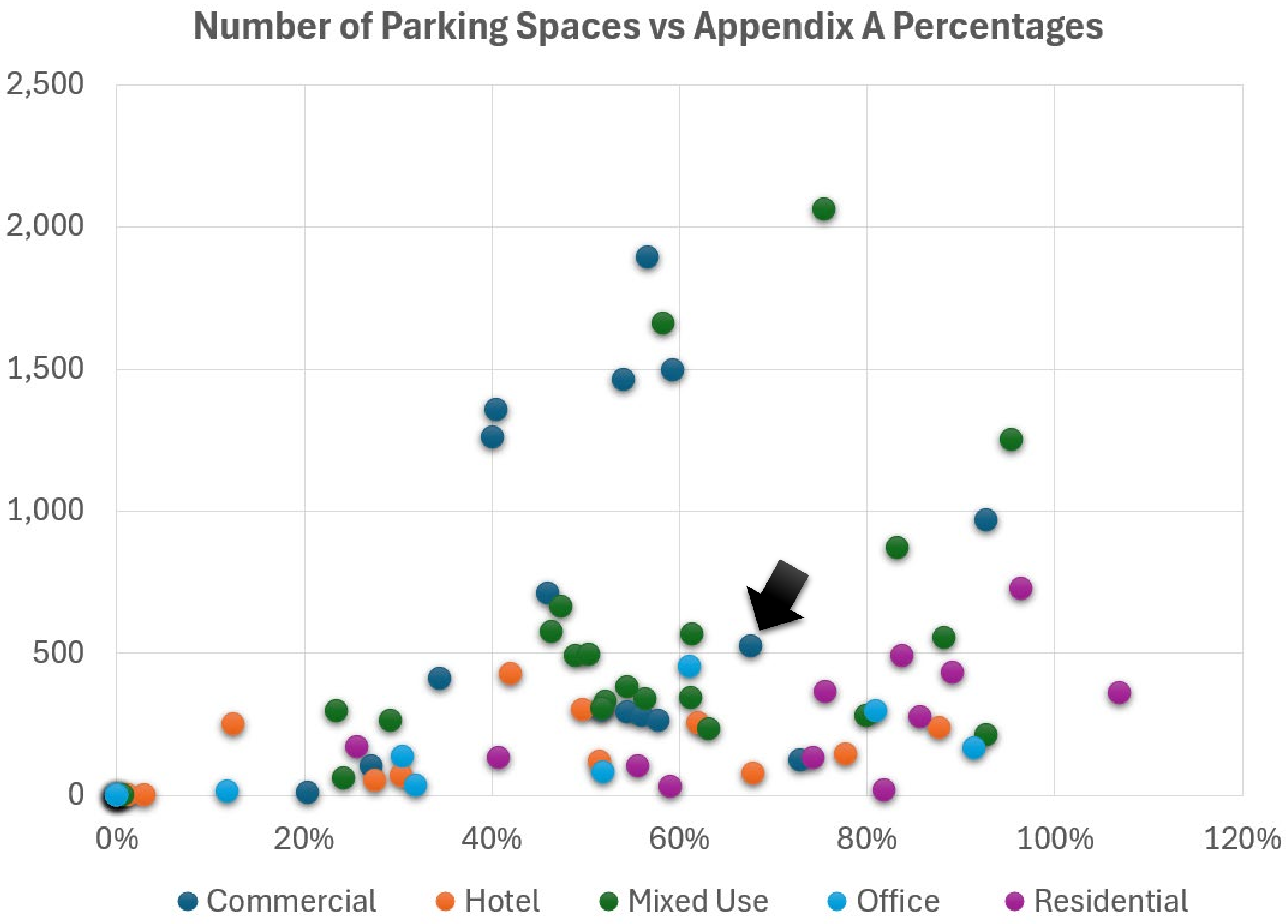
Total Spaces	**30,165**
Total Site Plans	76

Parking Spaces	
Minimum	0
Average	397
Median	278
Maximum	2,064

Percent of Appendix A	
Minimum	0%
Average	50%
Median	53%
Maximum	107%
80th Percentile	**79%**

Percent of Cases compared to Appendix A		
Less than 40%	23	30%
40% - 50%	9	12%
50% - 60%	17	22%
60%-80%	13	17%
Greater than 80%	14	18%

*based on approved site plan applications from 2013 to present



Appendix A = 779 spaces | Parking Provided = 526
Percent of Appendix A = 68%

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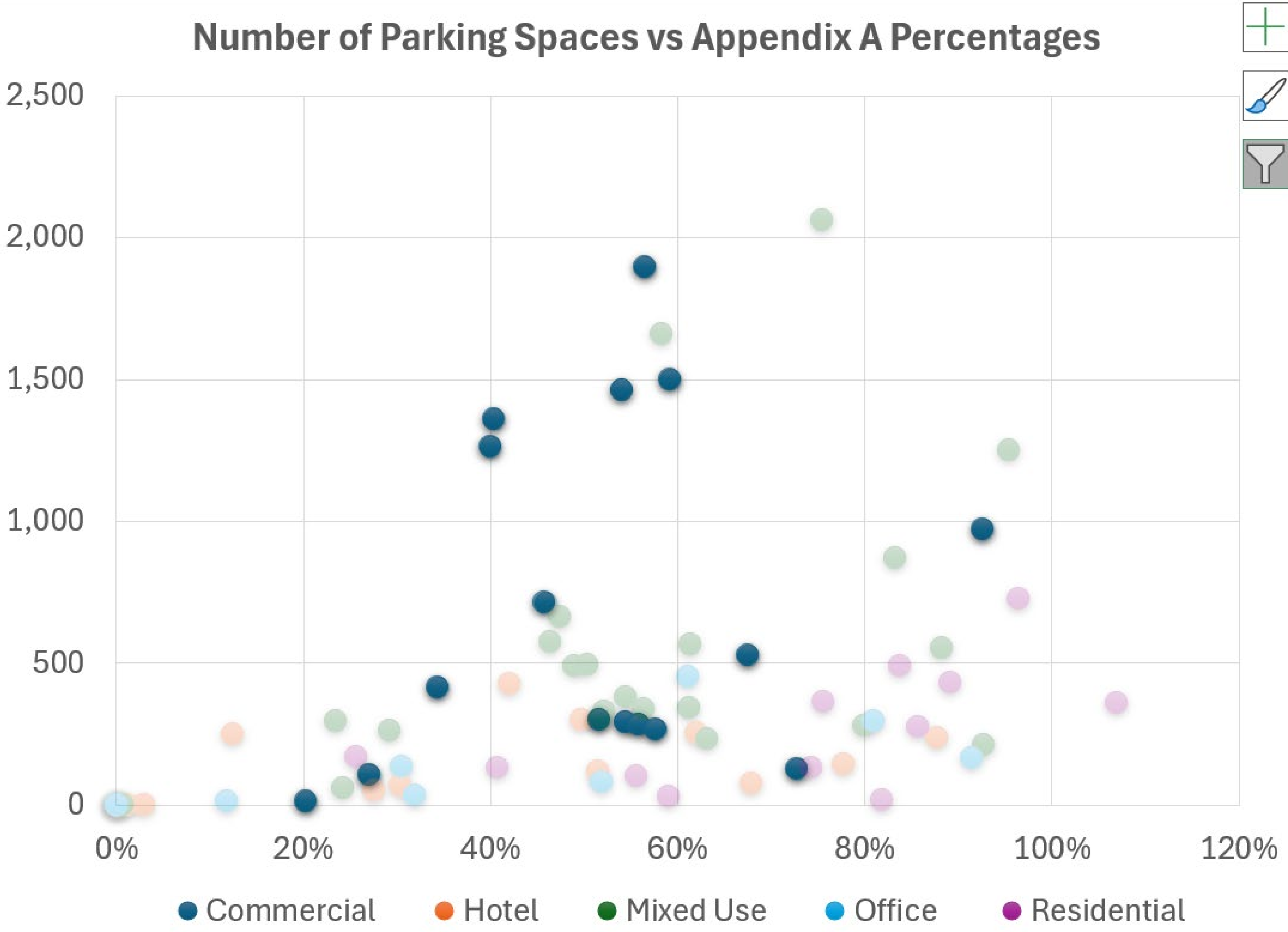
Staff Analysis Commercial

Percent of Appendix A	
Minimum	20%
Average	53%
Median	54%
Maximum	93%
80th Percentile	**61%**

Percent of Cases compared to Appendix A		
Less than 40%	2	13%
40% - 50%	3	20%
50% - 60%	7	47%
60%-80%	2	13%
Greater than 80%	1	7%
Total Site Plans	15	

Total Spaces	11,065
Minimum	12
Average	738
Median	526
Maximum	1,894

*based on approved site plan applications from 2013 to present



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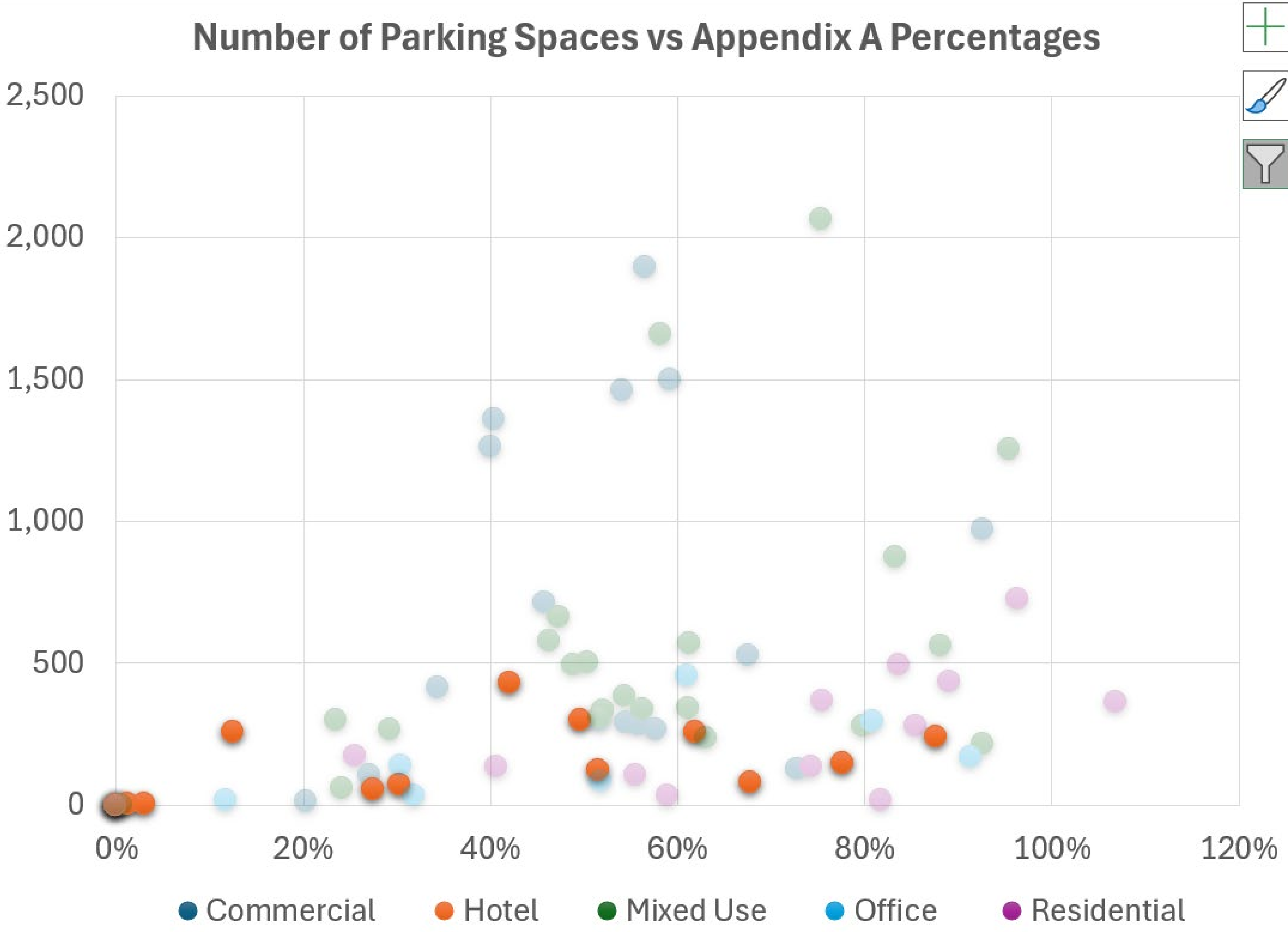
Staff Analysis
Hotel

Percent of Appendix A	
Minimum	0%
Average	34%
Median	30%
Maximum	88%
80th Percentile	**63%**

Percent of Cases compared to Appendix A		
Less than 40%	8	53%
40% - 50%	2	13%
50% - 60%	1	7%
60%-80%	3	20%
Greater than 80%	1	7%
Total Site Plans	15	

Total Spaces	1,965
Minimum	-
Average	131
Median	80
Maximum	429

*based on approved site plan applications from 2013 to present



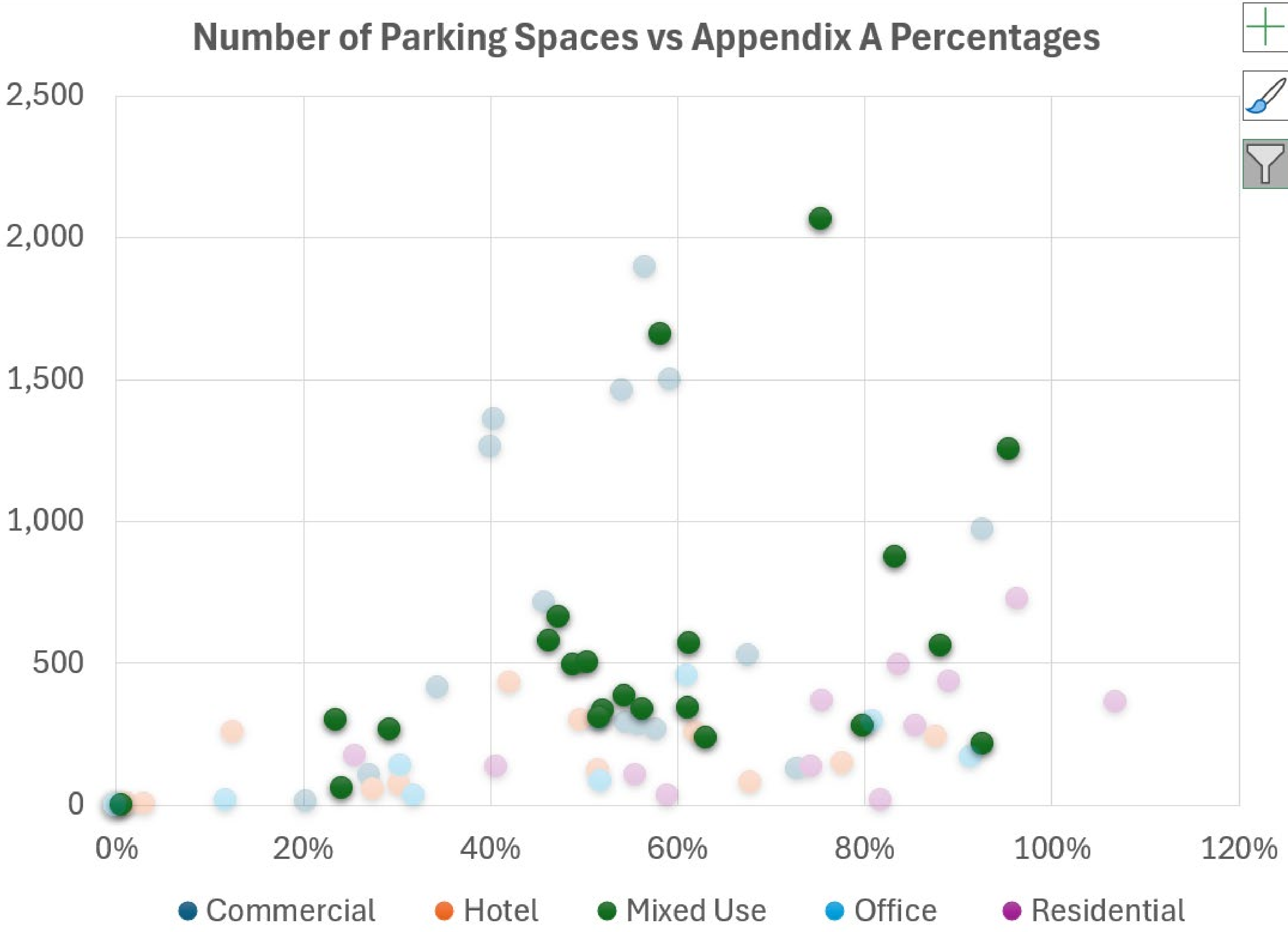
Staff Analysis Mixed-Use

Percent of Appendix A	
Minimum	1%
Average	56%
Median	54%
Maximum	95%
80th Percentile	**78%**

Percent of Cases compared to Appendix A		
Less than 40%	5	22%
40% - 50%	3	13%
50% - 60%	6	26%
60%-80%	5	22%
Greater than 80%	4	17%
Total Site Plans	23	

Total Spaces	12,684
Minimum	1
Average	551
Median	383
Maximum	2,064

*based on approved site plan applications from 2013 to present



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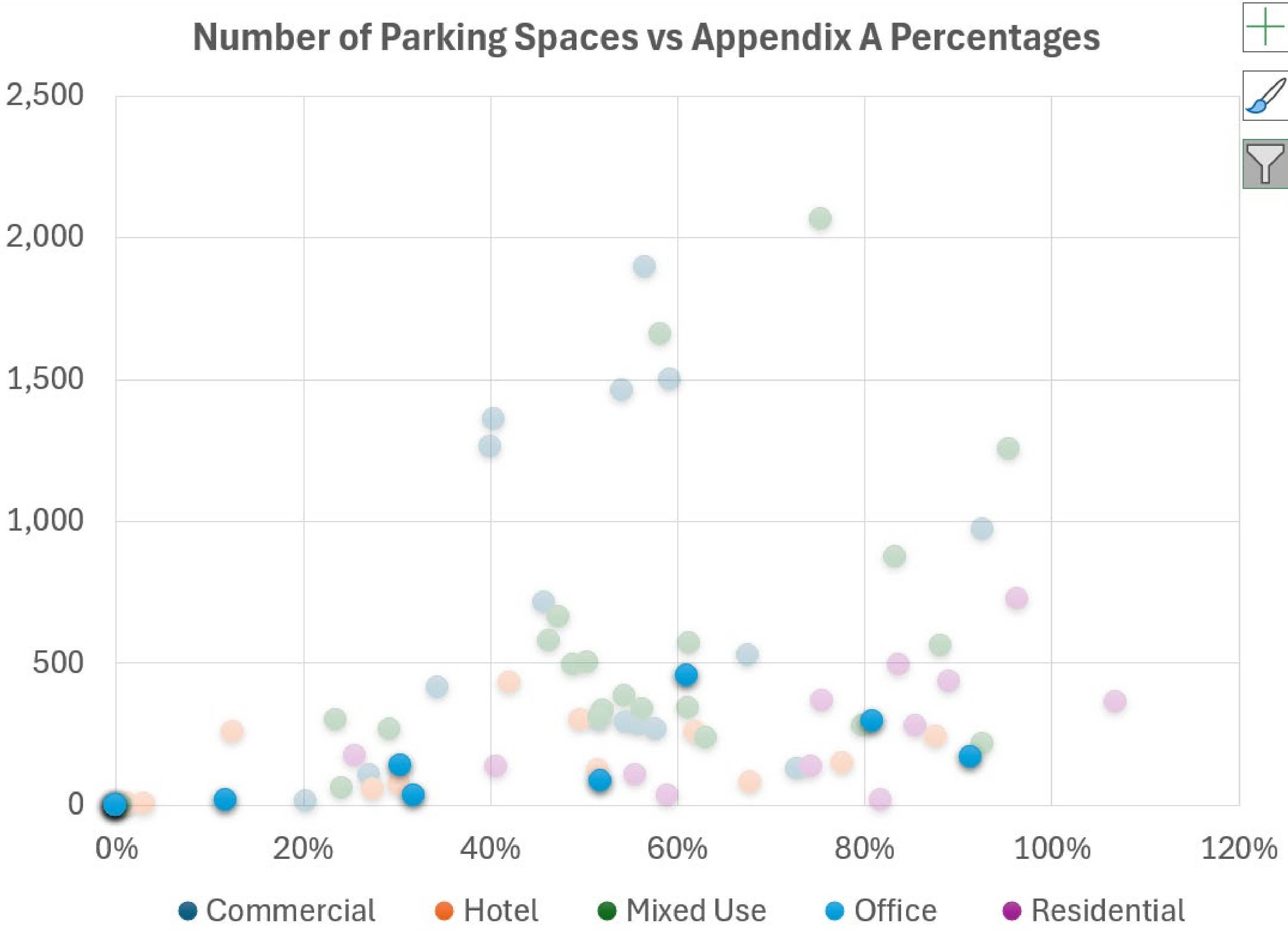
Staff Analysis Office

Percent of Appendix A	
Minimum	0%
Average	30%
Median	21%
Maximum	91%
80th Percentile	**59%**

Percent of Cases compared to Appendix A		
Less than 40%	8	67%
40% - 50%	0	0%
50% - 60%	1	8%
60%-80%	1	8%
Greater than 80%	2	17%
Total Site Plans	12	

Total Spaces	1,197
Minimum	-
Average	100
Median	26
Maximum	455

*based on approved site plan applications from 2013 to present



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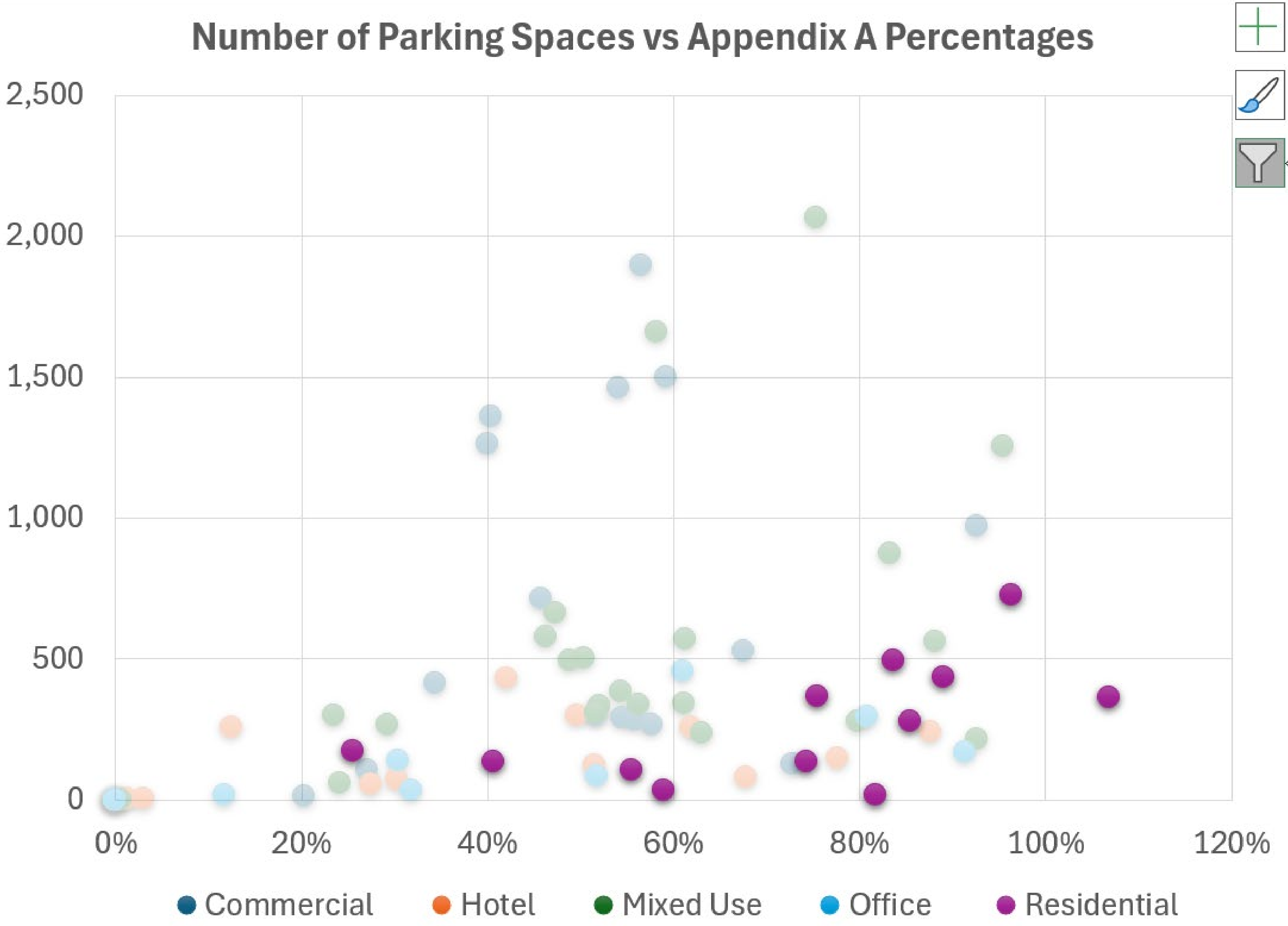
Staff Analysis Residential

Percent of Appendix A	
Minimum	26%
Average	73%
Median	79%
Maximum	107%
80th Percentile	**88%**

Percent of Cases compared to Appendix A		
Less than 40%	1	8%
40% - 50%	1	8%
50% - 60%	2	17%
60%-80%	2	17%
Greater than 80%	6	50%
Total Site Plans	12	

Total Spaces	3,254
Minimum	18
Average	271
Median	226
Maximum	727

*based on approved site plan applications from 2013 to present



Staff Analysis - Conclusion

	Actual Parking Provided	Max Spaces at 100% Appendix A	Max Spaces with ULI Caps	Spaces at 40%	Spaces at 50%	Spaces at 60%	Spaces at 80%
Total Spaces	**30,165**	**57,354**	**29,254**	**22,944**	**28,693**	**34,410**	**45,881**

- Only 36% of cases exceeded the current 60% parking maximum – making up 41% of parking provided
- Only 18% of cases provided greater than 80% of Appendix A – making up 23% of parking provided
- Only 1 case exceeded 100% of Appendix A (361 spaces)
- 30% of cases provided less than 40% of Appendix A
- 71% of total parking provided (51% of cases) fell between 40% - 80% of Appendix A

Percent of Appendix A	
Minimum	0%
Average	50%
Median	53%
Maximum	107%
80th Percentile	**79%**

	Percent of Cases compared to Appendix A		Total Spaces	
Less than 40%	23	30%	1,908	6%
40% - 50%	9	12%	5,927	20%
50% - 60%	17	22%	9,859	33%
60%-80%	13	17%	5,585	19%
Greater than 80%	14	18%	6,886	23%

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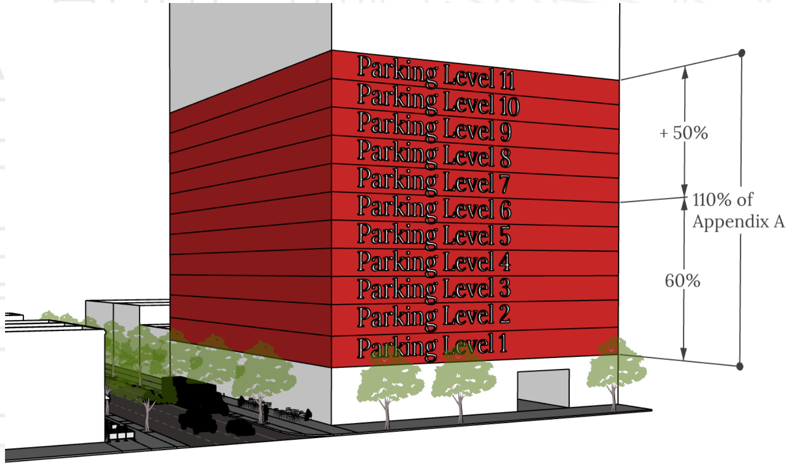
Staff Recommendation

- **Revise the existing “soft parking cap”**
  - Properties zoned CBD and DMU: Soft parking maximum reduced from 60% to 40% of former Appendix A requirement.
  - Developments under 10,000 sq ft or with 70 or fewer residential units can continue to include up to 60% of parking spaces formerly required by Appendix A.
- **Only allow more parking than the “soft cap” under certain conditions**
  - The director may allow more parking than the soft cap allows if:
    - There is no risk to public health, safety, or welfare and it aligns with planning policies for the area; and
    - Parking is part of a shared parking facility; or
    - Parking is rented or sold separately from the building space; or
    - Parking is designed and constructed for conversion to usable building space in the future; or
    - Parking is underground; or
    - Mitigation Fees are paid for parking built above the parking maximum and go toward multimodal improvements.
- **Reduce the absolute maximum amount of car parking allowed**
  - Current parking maximum reduced from 110% to 80% of parking spaces of former Appendix A requirement.
  - All developments allowed up to 100% of parking spaces of former Appendix A requirement, if excess spaces above the 80% limit are included underground.

Staff Recommendation

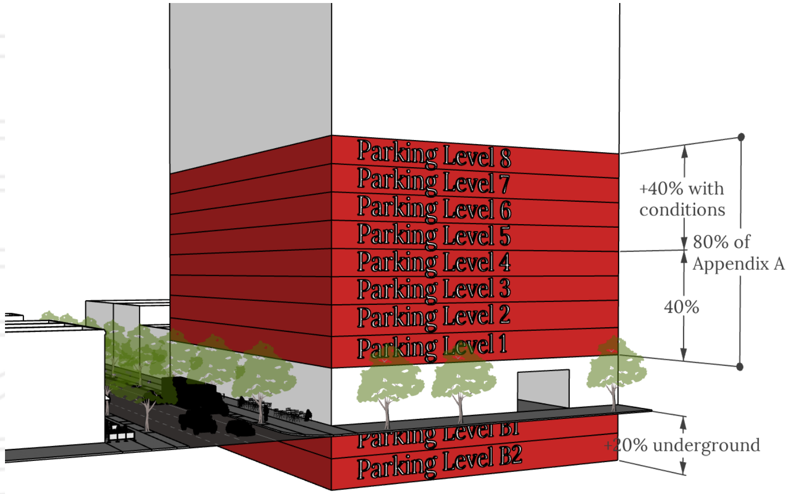
Existing Parking Regulations:

- No minimum parking requirements
- 60% of Appendix A allowed
- Up to 110% of Appendix A allowed without conditions

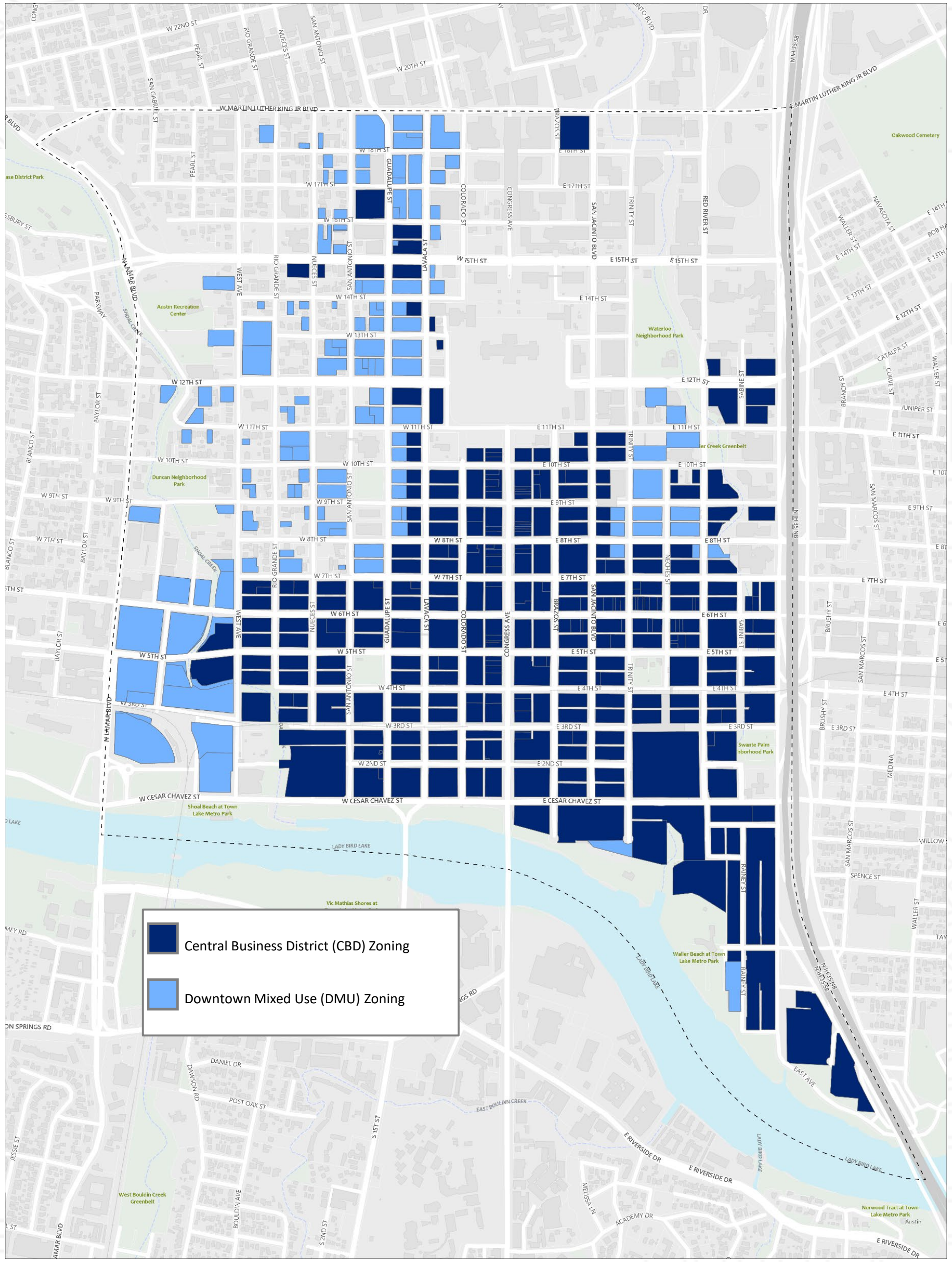


Proposed Parking Regulations:

- No minimum parking requirements
- <u>40%</u> of Appendix A allowed
- Up to <u>80%</u> of Appendix A allowed <u>with conditions</u>
- Up to <u>100%</u> of Appendix A allowed <u>if the additional parking is underground</u>



*Note: Parking Levels are not to scale. Each Parking Level is only shown as a way to represent 10% of Appendix A. Parking garages are designed based on the size of the site and may include more or less than eleven levels and each may not represent 10% of Appendix A.



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Thank You

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