

A Proposal that the City of Derby Eliminate Minimum Parking Requirements

Section 1: Background

As in most cities, Derby's municipal code specifies in considerable detail the requirements of off-street parking space that must be furnished on all sorts of properties. While ample motor vehicle access to the destinations of our city may be ensured by this policy, other cities – some in Kansas and many beyond – have begun to recognize and address problems that this ubiquitous practice has created.

Beyond the obvious material and labor costs that accompany the parking lots of Derby, which the community's businesses and people must bear, there are many hidden costs. These are much more significant than the trivial amounts associated with maintaining excess parking spaces. In fact, a full accounting of all the ways in which the required parking costs the people of Derby will, I hope, convince you that the harms of such requirements far outweigh the benefits, and that alleviating the community of this burden is the most reasonable course of action.

Section 2: Problem Discussion

Fairness and Economics

The city's policy is one that virtually guarantees abundant, conveniently located parking on every destination site, but which also drives up prices and thus, the cost of living. At business establishments around town, the costs of ownership and operation are forced upwards by this policy, and the costs are then passed on to consumers, who still pay for their parking indirectly. In the case that there is unused parking space when a customer visits, they must also pay for the parking of other, hypothetical customers that the city has saved parking for, but who did not show up; there is no such thing as a free parking space.

Suppose that only on rare occasions does a particular parking space get used. Is it fair for *the City* to make regular patrons pay for the spot that is sitting empty every time they visit a business just so that it's available for the person who may eventually use it? How frequently must a parking space be used to justify its existence? When is it worth having? Perhaps it is not the City, but the more interested parties like developers, investors, property owners & managers, etc. who are best qualified to decide their parking needs. The removal of minimum parking requirements would restore flexibility to our community, allowing property owners to optimize their productivity now, and under the evolving social trends and dynamic economic conditions of the future.

City Finances

The only reasonable intervention (regarding parking space) that the City should seriously consider is *limiting/constraining* the amount of parking space allowed. The reason for this is simple: that the city *is an interested party* when it comes to maintaining roads/infrastructure that

serve developments, and as such, should be obsessively diligent in ensuring that the addition and maintenance of any lane-miles and other infrastructure liabilities entailed in further city-footprint growth will be fully funded by the revenue generated from the properties in said development/expansion.

Minimum parking requirements are a forcing mechanism that drive up distances between destinations in the city. Parking lots must be built around buildings instead of more buildings, (which of course, actually require parking lots of their own, too). The real features of our city – the destinations, the places that people want to go to spend their time and money – are driven farther apart. As a result, more road must be built to reach these places, which costs the city (taxpayers) money in the form of maintenance expenses that will endure forever. Not just roads, but all utility infrastructures must also be built out and then maintained in perpetuity – expenses that are ultimately borne by the people of Derby – as they traverse yawning, unproductive spaces (parking lots) to reach actual places.

Low density developments that result from the policy in question are less economically productive by land area, and by mile of infrastructure, than places that can be built free from this constraint. This can be the difference between a given development producing enough tax revenue to maintain the roads that serve it, and a development failing to do so (in which case, the eventual effect may be the effective subsidization of this sprawling type of development's roadways with funds from other places, or the deterioration of the roads serving these businesses). Removal of minimum parking requirements is a crucial first step in protecting the financial sustainability and solvency of the city for the future ahead, which could be quite bright and prosperous with additional economic activity and tax revenue coming from currently fruitless land.

Public Health

With needlessly long distances between places in town, dependence on motor vehicles for mobility is exacerbated. Many trips that might have been possible for pedestrians are made infeasible; and of the people who might still have been up to the task of making a trip via active/alternative transportation, many balk at the prospect of mixing with the autos that our built environment caters to. The inflated distances between places brought wide arterial roadways with loud, fast moving vehicles. As a result, we in Derby are limited in our access to moving about in a healthy way that could help to reduce lifestyle-related health problems like heart disease, diabetes, etc. With the proposed policy change, these problems may be somewhat mitigated. Improvements in public health could mean less healthcare-sector spending, lower costs of living, more discretionary spending, and ultimately longer and happier lives for the people of Derby. Removing minimum parking requirements is a critical first step in making our town one that can be explored and enjoyed by all modes, including active transportation.

Cost of Living

As previously mentioned, consumer prices, taxes, and healthcare are some areas in which the people of Derby could reasonably expect to see falling expenses and a lower cost of living. Other possibilities include:

- Transportation (where theoretically, less driving may translate to less expense on fuel, lower costs on insurance, or the freedom from reliance on an automobile and its coincident costs altogether for some people)
- Housing (where more units could be developed in currently dead spaces, increasing the supply, and where the construction of less parking space could save money)
- Electricity (where urban heat island effect can be reduced, allowing air conditioners to run more efficiently and less intensively)

Environment

Decreasing parking lot space may reduce the urban heat island effect (where blacktop absorbs heat from the sun all day), as well as tainted stormwater runoff (in quantities that can prevent otherwise feasible site plans from penciling out by adding drainage challenges and construction costs). It may also reduce car-dependency, and thereby, car trips. Reducing car trips could translate to cleaner air, less traffic noise, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Section 3: Further Considerations and Vision

Two types of parking space have been saved for discussion here: residential, and public. Residential parking spaces, while relatively benign in some cases, still contribute to some (though not all) of the problems discussed. As such, they should be included in the rollback of the parking requirement. Many housing developments have included more than the required parking provisions, and so it seems improbable that the city's policy change would create a shortage of residential parking; however, in the future, less auto-centric designs may thus be allowed to arise according to the market and Derby's vision for the future.

Public spaces – such as schools, libraries, and parks – now required to provide some specified amount of parking would no longer have to. In what manner the public sector should decide how much parking to offer at various destinations is another discussion; for this proposal, we need only remember that there would not be a prescribed amount that must be built or maintained there.

The hope and intent of this proposal is to make Derby a safer, healthier, happier, more affordable and prosperous place to live. With the right policy guidance, we can reasonably expect that, in time, Derby's empty parking spaces will one day be the infill development sites of wonderful and productive new additions to the housing, business, recreation, and other offerings of our community, and that *just the right amount* of parking will exist to accommodate the motorists of Derby. Please see fit to recommend to the City Council one of the following changes to code.

- 1) Changing present *minimum requirements* to *maximum entitlements/allowances* for new developments, as well as eliminating the former for all properties in city limits; or
- 2) Omitting all language that requires any sort of minimum parking provisions of/by property owners or developers; or
- 3) Revising all language *requiring* any sort of minimum parking provisions to only *recommend* these instead.

Supporting Literature:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/05/02/eliminating-parking-minimums-liveable-cities/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264837718312870>

[https://www.natlawreview.com/article/spaced-out-shift-away-minimum-parking-requirements#:~:text=Impacts%20of%20Eliminating%20\(or%20Reducing\)%20Minimum%20Parking%20Requirements&text=The%20elimination%20\(or%20reduction\)%20of.and%20time%20on%20parking%20minimums.](https://www.natlawreview.com/article/spaced-out-shift-away-minimum-parking-requirements#:~:text=Impacts%20of%20Eliminating%20(or%20Reducing)%20Minimum%20Parking%20Requirements&text=The%20elimination%20(or%20reduction)%20of.and%20time%20on%20parking%20minimums.)