

## 8. Shared Parking

### DETAILED TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

**SAMPLE  
ORDINANCE**  
Portland, Oregon  
Shared Parking  
Guidebook  
see Section 8.8

Parking is one of the largest uses of land in urban and suburban areas. In auto-oriented shopping centers, for example, parking occupies more land area than the building itself. Often, a site with a large parking lot is located next to other sites with equally large lots. Because many commercial sites provide enough parking spaces for peak periods of demand (i.e., holiday weekends), their lots may be nearly empty most days. In some cases, while one lot is full, adjacent lots are only partially utilized, because different commercial sites have different peak hours, days, or seasons of demand. These observations suggest that an excessive amount of space is given over to parking in many commercial areas, and that less parking would have to be provided if adjacent lots were somehow connected, shared, and used more efficiently.

Shared parking is a planning concept that is being used throughout the country. Through shared parking, adjacent land uses that have different peak periods of parking demand share some or all of the same parking spaces. By sharing, each individual site would potentially have to provide fewer spaces. Shared parking could thus reduce the total amount of land area dedicated to surface parking and create more opportunities for development.

Shared parking is not a new phenomenon. It has been used for years in traditional commercial shopping areas, as found along Park Street and Farmington Avenue in Hartford, as well as in West Hartford Center. In these compact, historic shopping areas, the shops and restaurants that line the sidewalks rely mostly upon on-street parking spaces, public parking lots, and shared parking areas. Customers often park in one spot and then walk from store to store. More and more, shared parking is also being used in suburban and rural shopping centers, in order to reduce parking need and increase the potential building footprint.

This chapter addresses how to develop shared parking arrangements in such suburban and rural environments. Parking and other aspects of traditional shopping areas are addressed in Chapter 7, in the context of the discussion of Main Street revitalization.

### 8.1 SMART GROWTH REGULATIONS AND INCENTIVES

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#### ZONING REVISIONS

Most zoning ordinances have minimum parking requirements for each individual use, and on multi-use sites, most zoning regulations require that the total parking requirement equal the sum of the requirement for each individual use. If a code has such a clause, it should *not* be removed, because it ensures an adequate amount of parking where two adjacent uses have similar patterns of peak parking need. For example, a site with a grocery store and a home supply store would tend to have the same peak-hours of customer attraction. Thus, the "sum" clause would ensure that adequate parking is available on such a site during weekends and evenings, when both uses would tend to attract customers.

Shared parking between two adjacent land uses (whether on the same site or on adjacent sites) should be promoted as part of the review process, subject to certain conditions. Each individual use would be allowed to provide fewer parking spaces than normally required, provided that the two land uses would have differing peak-hours (or days, or seasons) of parking demand, or that the total parking demand at any one time would be adequately served by the total number of parking spaces.

## **INCENTIVES FOR SHARED PARKING**

In major commercial shopping and office centers, property owners often build the maximum possible number of parking spaces. Many commercial sites provide enough parking not to meet average daily needs or zoning requirements, but to accommodate the peak hour or season of use. Shopping malls often provide enough parking to meet the parking needs of holiday shoppers between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, meaning that only a fraction of the parking lot is used on a normal day. Some major retailers seek to provide more parking than they ever expect to need, even during peak season; this way, a portion of the lot is always empty, such that potential customers are not be scared away for a perceived lack of parking. In office parks, employers are eager to provide convenient parking spaces as inexpensive perks to their employees. Some lending institutions require a minimum ratio of parking as a condition of approval for business loans. Because parking lots are often built to excess and underutilized, there is an opportunity to reduce the size of parking lots, increase landscaping and greenery in parking areas, and promote shared parking, *without compromising business activity*. Incentives can be offered to counter the forces that encourage the provision of excessive parking.

One incentive that could be provided for shared parking is an increase in floor area ratio (FAR). That is, for every parking space that can be eliminated on the site through a shared parking arrangement with an adjacent use, the allowable FAR area of the building can be increased. This approach is intuitively sensible, because the increased building area can be expanded into the land area that would have been dedicated to that parking space. The complication with this approach, however, is that any additional increase in the building area would increase the total parking need, potentially upsetting the balance of the shared parking arrangement. Thus, if an FAR bonus were provided as an incentive, there should also be a limitation upon the amount of such a bonus that could be used.

Another type of incentive that can be provided in exchange for shared parking is increased flexibility in some of the development regulations. For example, because the size of the parking lot is being reduced, the allowable building coverage could potentially be increased; or the building heights could be increased. This would allow greater flexibility in the design of buildings.

Incentives for shared parking may not be necessary in all cases, because there may be an inherent economic incentive for sharing parking facilities. Shared parking can reduce the amount of paved parking area that a property owner needs to install and maintain. This is particularly true in traditional shopping areas or in areas with small-format stores, where the costs of parking development and maintenance make up a large proportion of the business's overhead costs.

## 8.2 COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS

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### SYNERGY OF USES

In a traditional Main Street setting, where there is a defined market niche that encourages "cross-fertilization" between adjacent stores, people are more willing to park in one spot and walk from store to store. That is, shoppers will gravitate from one store to another, because the stores generally follow a theme. In such a configuration, the total parking need may be less than the sum of the individual need for each individual store, because of the combination of the synergy of land uses and the walking environment. To the extent that such an environment can be encouraged, parking reductions and shared parking provisions may be applied.

One good example of such a synergistic shopping locale is downtown Freeport, Maine, which has a cluster of discount outlet stores. Although parking is limited in the downtown area, Freeport functions as a destination retail center, where people park once and walk on foot the rest of the day. Moreover, because it functions as a day-trip destination, people travel in relatively large groups, so that there are fewer cars overall per customer. This is unlike a regional mall or shopping center, where many shoppers arrive alone in their cars.

Another example is downtown Nyack in Rockland County, New York. This Hudson Valley town has a quaint collection of specialty shops, restaurants, and cafes along its Main Street, with offices and apartments on the upper floors. Once a neighborhood shopping center, Main Street has been transformed into a regional attraction, with a heavy flock of New Yorkers coming into town for day trips all year round. The shops along Main Street build off of one another to create synergy and appeal. People can park on-street or in one of the pay-per-hour lots; locals can walk in from the surrounding neighborhoods; other day-trippers can arrive by bus currently; water taxi service is being considered. The combination of the vibrant mix of uses and the various modes of access allow more people to circulate than the number of parking spaces alone would permit.

### DESIGN OF PARKING LOT AND WALKING ENVIRONMENT

There are geographic considerations in the development of shared parking lots. Parking spaces that are intended to be shared should be located within a reasonable walking distance of all the destinations they are intended to serve. Generally, the preferred distance a person is willing to walk for convenience shopping or services (grocery stores, professional services) is approximately 400 to 800 feet. People destined for entertainment locations, specialty shops (including enclosed malls), and workplaces are generally willing to walk a little farther, but still not usually more than 1,200 feet, or about one-quarter mile.<sup>1</sup>

Shared parking requires attention to walking environments, because some shared parking spaces may be located farther away from the building entrance than might otherwise be the case. Walkways, crosswalks, decorative paving, stop signs for cars, and landscaping are needed to allow ease of walking through the parking areas, such that the shared parking area is well-integrated with each of the sites that it serves. This does not suggest that the buildings

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Transport Policy Institute. "Shared Parking: Sharing Parking Facilities Among Multiple Users," *TDM Encyclopedia*. <[www.vtpi.org/tdm](http://www.vtpi.org/tdm)>, visited November 29, 2001.

themselves need to be designed in a pedestrian-oriented format, with stores lining the sidewalk. Shared parking can work in suburban shopping areas as well.

### **8.3 FISCAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

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Often, property and business owners are concerned that any reduction in their parking supply will hurt business. To be sure, a notable parking shortage could deter customers from making a repeat visit. *However, the idea of shared parking is not to reduce the number of parking spaces to levels below the need.* The idea is to use existing parking more efficiently, but still to have more than enough parking to meet peak-hour needs at any given time.

At the same time, the potential economic benefits of shared parking are many. Shared parking can encourage cross-fertilization between adjacent land uses, such that co-located businesses can benefit from the traffic generated from one another's activity. For example, in the case where a shopping mall shares parking with an adjacent movie theater, daytime shoppers may be enticed to catch a movie in the evening. Vice versa, an evening movie-goer would have an incentive to walk through the mall on the way to or from the movie and might be enticed to do some shopping or buy something to eat. This suggests that shared parking can help boost business by tapping into the market potential of parked customers. If customers can easily walk from place to place, without having to get into their cars and go through the hassle of finding another parking space in an adjacent site, they might be more likely to patronize more than one commercial establishment during their trip.

Also, the reduction in parking can reduce the ugliness of vast expanses of asphalt. The visual quality of some older shopping centers is quite poor, designed with over-sized parking lots with minimal landscaping. Through shared parking that reduces the overall size of the parking lot, these older sites can be filled in with additional buildings and new landscaping, creating a more appealing physical environment. Such enhancements to the character of a shopping site can only improve business and enhance the economic value of the property.

### **8.4 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

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Implementation of shared parking arrangements is a matter of working out the technical aspects of the program and implementing a few successful demonstration projects. In the case of shared parking, adoption of the ordinance is not typically a controversial item, because shared parking provisions are voluntary in nature.

#### **SHARED PARKING AGREEMENTS**

A development agreement between sharing property owners is necessary in order to ensure the proper functioning of the shared parking arrangement. The adopting ordinance needs to require such an agreement between neighbors as a condition of engaging in shared parking. The agreement should specify:

- The number and location of spaces to be shared.
- The nature of the sharing arrangement (exclusivity, limitations of sharing to certain times of the day, or days of the week, or seasons of the year, as applicable).

- Who is responsible for maintaining shared spaces, including striping, sealing, asphalt repair, and cleaning.
- Who is responsible for utility and tax payments for the shared spaces.
- Signage requirements and restrictions. For example, signage may be required indicating the times or days during which shared parking spaces are available for use. As another example, signage directing patrons to shared spaces may be limited in location or time of display.
- Enforcement procedures, especially for monitoring and addressing parking violations.
- Insurance requirements for the shared facilities.
- Additional legal language typical of contractual agreements, including indemnification, cooperation, termination, and other applicable clauses.

The Portland Metro government issued a guidebook entitled the *Shared Parking Handbook* in 1997, which provides a detailed description of how to go about adopting a shared parking ordinance and developing shared parking agreements. An excerpt from the handbook is presented in Section 8.8. According to the handbook, contract terms may state the following:

- Lessee shall have exclusive use of the facilities from 5:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.
- Lessor and Lessee agree to share the costs of striping, seal coating, and lot sweeping at a 50 percent-50 percent split.
- Lessor shall pay all taxes and utilities associated with the facilities, including maintenance of existing facility lighting.<sup>2</sup>

## **PARKING MANAGEMENT DISTRICTS**

Another mechanism for sharing parking is to organize a parking management district as a special district for overseeing the entire parking supply in an area. This approach is particularly useful when there are multiple small property owners, but it can even be used among two owners to provide greater flexibility in the sharing arrangement. Whereas a shared parking agreement is designed to allow sharing under defined parameters, the Parking Management District allows all uses within the district to have access to all the parking spaces at any given time.

The creation of a parking management district allows parking lots to be comprehensively planned and designed to serve all businesses in the district. Thus, rather than having a series of smaller-sized parking lots divided by arbitrary lots lines with landscaped buffers, lots can be consolidated and circulation systematized, with more creative and effective landscaping, pedestrian circulation, and lighting. This has the potential to create an overall more convenient shopping experience. In a parking management district, each property is typically levied a fee, based on the assessed value of the property, which is used to support the functions of the district. The district is responsible for maintenance, taxes, enforcement, utilities, signage, and so on. The district is typically governed by an oversight committee that represents the members of the district.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Portland Metro, *Shared Parking Handbook, Appendix B: Shared Use Agreement for Parking Facilities*, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Portland Metro. *Shared Parking*, 1997, p. 9.

## **DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS**

A demonstration project can help prove the feasibility of shared parking and develop interest among property owners. As new commercial projects are proposed, local governments can spearhead the task of developing a shared parking arrangement between a new project and an appropriate adjacent development site. That is, the governing body can take on the time and cost of approaching the potential sharer, analyzing parking demand and determining the potential for reduced parking, preparing and negotiating the shared parking agreement, or organizing a parking management district. By providing such technical expertise, the municipality would help the shared parking program get underway and create a model that could be used by other developers to develop their own independent arrangements.

## **8.5 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Shared parking is a technique that can be implemented throughout the Hartford region, in conjunction with a variety of different land uses, and in a variety of different settings, from rural, to suburban, to urban. In each setting, the application of shared parking may function in a slightly different manner, but the principles and the benefits are the same throughout.

In developing rural and suburban areas, the potential for shared parking will mostly occur in commercial shopping areas, between adjacent retail, office, and entertainment uses, or between adjacent office and residential development. In such settings, each site will have its share of on-site parking, with cross-access agreements allowing driveways to connect their adjacent parking lots and shared parking agreements to allow the sharing of those parking spaces. In older suburban and urban areas, shared parking has been, and will continue to be, a useful tool in traditional shopping areas, where shops and offices found in compact clusters, and space for parking is limited.

There have been some excellent examples of shared parking that have already been implemented in the Hartford region. Downtown West Hartford, for example, has an innovative shared parking arrangement. Downtown landowners developed agreements in which they agreed to consolidate the small parking lots located to the rear of downtown commercial buildings. By consolidating these areas, they were able to yield more parking spaces and improve auto and pedestrian circulation throughout the downtown area. The landowners share responsibility for maintaining and enforcing parking in the downtown area. The improved parking situation has helped make downtown West Hartford an appealing shopping district.

In the future, the challenge for CRCOG will be to encourage developing suburban and rural municipalities to implement shared parking arrangements. CRCOG should work with one or two willing municipalities in the region that are experiencing growth pressure to encourage adoption of shared parking provisions and then work with those municipalities to sponsor demonstration projects. CRCOG can help by providing technical expertise and assistance to these municipalities.

## 8.6 RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Urban Land Institute. *Shared Parking*. 1983. Washington D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1983.

## 8.8 SAMPLE ORDINANCE

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An excellent sample ordinance for shared parking has been prepared by the Metro regional government of Portland, Oregon and is included in the appendices of Metro’s *Shared Parking Guidebook* of 1997. The ordinance is reproduced in the following pages and is available online at <[www.metro-region.org/growth/main/appendixA.pdf](http://www.metro-region.org/growth/main/appendixA.pdf)>. The ordinance outlines the intent and applicability of shared parking, as well as a detailed section on how to calculate the total number of required parking spaces within a shared parking scenario. The ordinance also specifies the maximum distance from shared parking areas to the uses they are intended to serve. Furthermore, it includes provisions requiring an agreement between shared parking participants and provisions for requiring a shared parking plan that addresses the location of spaces, signage, pedestrian circulation, and security.

*Source: Stein Engineering for Portland Metro, Shared Parking Handbook, Appendix A, 1997.*

