

Ending Mandatory Parking Minimums

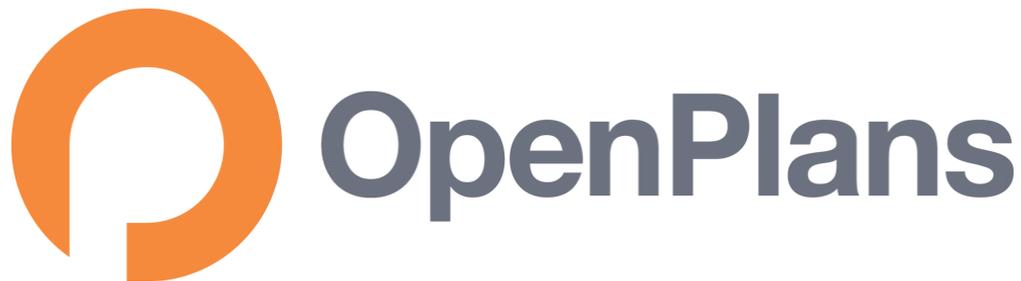
Open Plans and Open New York

Who we are

Open Plans

[Open Plans](#) is a nonprofit dedicated to transforming the streets of New York City to be truly safe, equitable and livable for all residents of New York City.

Open Plans uses tactical urbanism, grassroots advocacy, policy and targeted journalism to promote structural reforms within city government that support livable streets, neighborhoods and the city-at-large.



Open New York

Open New York is an independent, grassroots, pro-housing organization, working to bring about a New York City where everyone who wants to live here can readily afford to do so, including those who wish to stay. We realize this vision by fighting for abundant, affordable, and quality housing, specifically in transit rich, above-median household income neighborhoods.



Ending mandatory parking helps all of NYC

The pandemic showed that old policies aren't working, and we need to take real steps to change how our city works for the people who live here.

Ending mandatory parking requirements is a step in the right direction for revitalizing our city, improving our quality of life, and keeping New York affordable for the people and families who live here.

Ending parking minimums would:

- ease rent burdens
- benefit mass transit
- open new commercial and economic development opportunities
- bring NYC up to par with other cities
- tackle the climate crisis
- advance racial equity
- increase government efficiency
- create a more livable city

The problem

Mandatory parking requirements are the status quo, and the status quo is not sustainable.

What are mandatory parking minimums?

Outdated

Mandatory parking minimums are a Robert Moses-era policy (1950s) when urban planning put cars over people and public transit.



Complex

The City's current zoning code requires private businesses and residences to provide at least a certain number of off-street parking spaces.



Costly

The zoning code is convoluted and complex with various overlays and exceptions, making development more expensive and time-consuming.

How do mandatory parking minimums impact New Yorkers?

Rising rents

Forcing new buildings to add unnecessary parking means the cost gets passed on to renters, even though most New Yorkers do not own a car.

More traffic violence

Parking minimums prioritize street-level and below grade parking garages, making our streets more dangerous with curb-cuts and more vehicles crossing sidewalks.

A worsening climate crisis

Parking minimums encourage car ownership and use, which increases the release of emissions that cause climate change.

Why change parking minimums now?

1. to unleash the full potential of development and boost New York's post-COVID economic recovery



2. to seize this once in a generation chance to fix outdated zoning requirements, because we need major reform in the face of multiple crises—not piecemeal steps

3. to bring rents down and start addressing New York's housing shortage



4. to fulfill NYC Mayor Adams' pro-housing agenda

The solution

Citywide elimination: simple, direct, proven

1

Eliminate all mandatory parking minimums citywide, for residential, commercial, and industrial development.

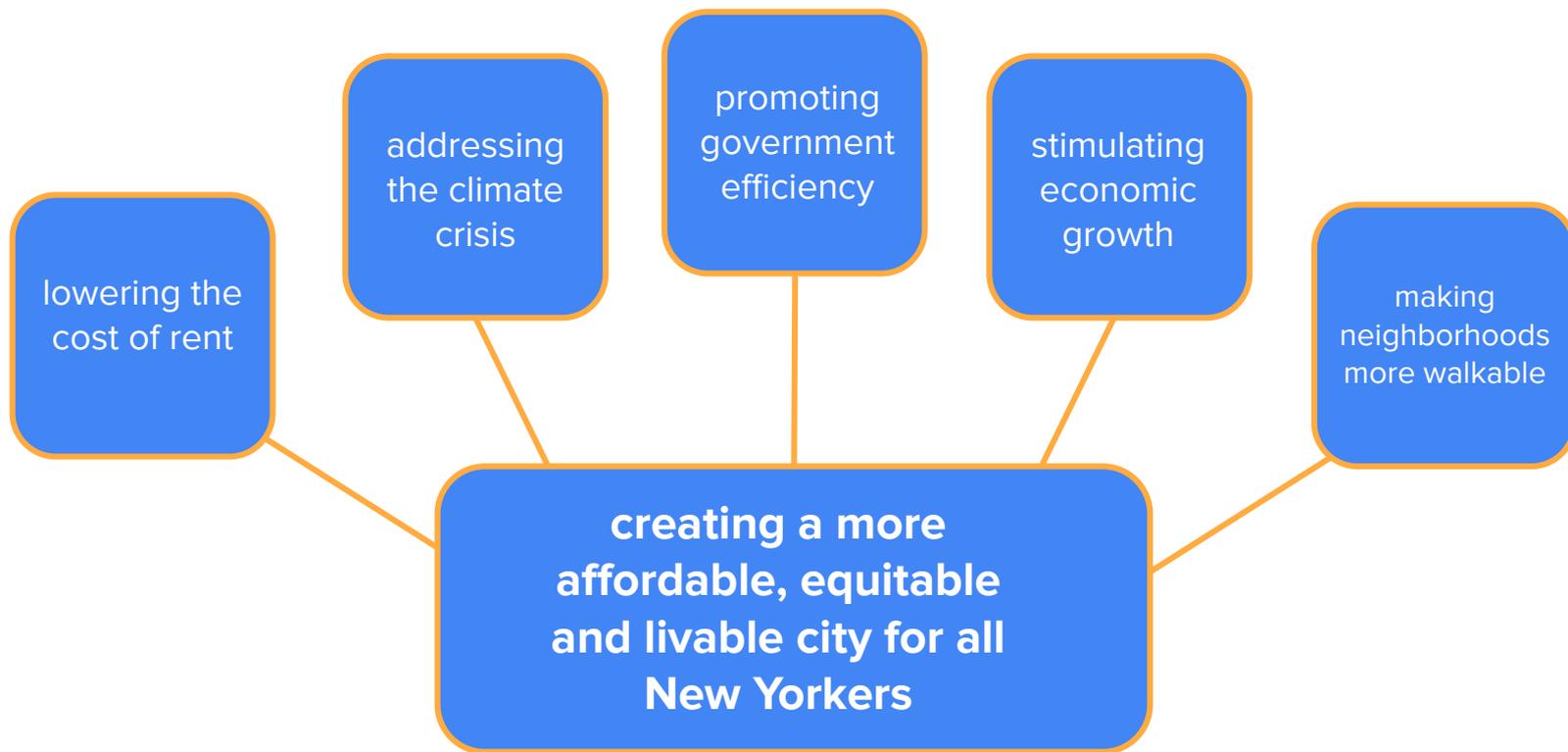
2

Make it retroactive by applying the change to existing properties (not just new development) so that adaptive reuse is simple and efficient.

3

Keep it simple with the zoning code change: “There are no provisions that establish a minimum number of parking spaces for all land uses.”

How will this fix the problems we face?



Lowering the cost of rent

- **Requiring parking minimums → higher rents**

A majority of New Yorkers don't even own a car, but are still impacted by the costs of government requiring new buildings to build parking (that cost gets passed on to renters – approximately \$1,700 per year, per renter)

- **Relaxing/eliminating parking minimums → lower rents**

In Minneapolis, rents fell by more than \$200 a month in new studios after parking minimums were relaxed.

New York City's parking minimums are inflating rents by as much as 17%

Addressing the climate crisis

- **Using more sustainable modes of transportation → fewer emissions**

Transportation is a leading cause of climate change, and driving automobiles only makes that worse. Less parking ideally moves towards less driving and fewer greenhouse gas emissions, which is good for the environment.

- **Fewer emissions → better health outcomes**

Eliminating parking minimums and improving mass transit would lessen the climate health burden on lower income communities bearing the brunt of emissions pollution.

Promoting government efficiency

- **Simpler zoning code → decreased housing costs**
The current zoning code complexity creates confusion for incoming developments, which makes it more technically challenging for staff to make adjustments, which limits growth and therefore increases housing costs.
- **Reforming parking minimums → less time administering parking-related provisions**
If staff can spend fewer hours on provisions concerning this complicated zoning code, they can spend more time working with developers and businesses to meet the City's transportation and housing goals.
- **Fewer vehicles on the roads → lower cost of maintaining them**
Cutting down on traffic will reduce the budget needed to repair and maintain roadways.

Stimulating economic growth

- **Eliminating parking requirements → thriving businesses**

Not having parking minimums would make it easier for businesses to

- establish themselves in existing properties that predate the parking minimums
- use currently required but underutilized parking for better uses
- make changes without having to go through the onerous ULURP process

Making our city more equitable

- **Less parking → fewer cars → cleaner air**

The Manhattan core (below 110th St) already eliminated parking minimums in an effort to comply with the Clean Air Act. All New Yorkers should get to breathe cleaner air.

- **Eliminate parking minimums + increase mass transit access → transit equity**

New Yorkers can rely less on cars and more on public transportation, thus decreasing the need for cars to access opportunity (financially, socially, etc.).

Creating a livable city

- **No parking minimums → more ground floor retail**

Eliminating minimums can add to a more vibrant street life and thriving local economy.

- **No parking lots → more walkable neighborhoods**

Commercial parking minimums that result in surface parking lots push businesses apart making it harder to walk and more likely that people will drive to do their shopping and errands.

- **More New Yorkers taking public transportation → stronger transit system**

Incentivizing public transit riders will supply the system with more fares and make the system safer with more ridership.

What people are saying

- **Kenmore, WA Mayor Nigel Herbig**: “Parking minimums make our housing more expensive (in the middle of a housing crisis), and our neighborhoods less walkable. It's past time to stop forcing unnecessary parking, and build our neighborhoods for people, rather than cars.”
- **St. Paul, MN Planning Commissioner Nate Hood**: “Parking minimums caused immense harm to cities... They worsen our car dependence. They hinder infill development. They undermine walkable neighborhoods. They block transit-oriented development.” →



What people are saying

- **New York City Council Member [Lincoln Restler](#):** “The cost of building housing in New York is already substantially higher than comparable cities—and below grade parking adds significant costs. By ending parking requirements we will reduce construction costs and help create more opportunities for affordable housing for our neighbors.”
- **New York City Council Member [Alexa Avilés](#):** “Let’s make mandatory parking minimums a thing of the past. Why should we have to give up more units of affordable housing to make room for cars?”
- **Raleigh City Council Member [Jonathan Melton](#):** “Parking minimums increase costs of housing, goods and services and are bad for the environment. Eliminating parking minimums doesn’t eliminate parking, but it does prioritize people over car storage.”
- **Cambridge City Council Member [Burhan Azeem](#):** “[Eliminating parking minimums will] be a huge boon for sustainability and those of us without cars.” [Here’s his TikTok.](#)



Cambridge Proposal Would Drop Parking Requirements

By [Steve Adams](#) | Banker & Tradesman Staff | Feb 7, 2022 | [Reprints](#) | [Print](#)



A proposal to eliminate off-street parking requirements for all new developments in Cambridge gets its first look tonight.

Newly-elected City Councilor Burhan Azeem says the change would cut development costs while reflecting the demographics of the city.

of the people in Cambridge don't own a car, Azeem, treasurer of the Abundant Housing sets group. "It adds 10 to 20 percent of new construction and it really makes it impractical."



Common misconceptions

“Eliminating parking minimums will hurt families who need a car in the city.”

- **False.** Eliminating parking minimums will help families by making housing more affordable and reducing the number of people who own and drive cars, making our streets safer and less congested.

“Eliminating parking minimums will cause more traffic as people circle looking for on-street parking spots.”

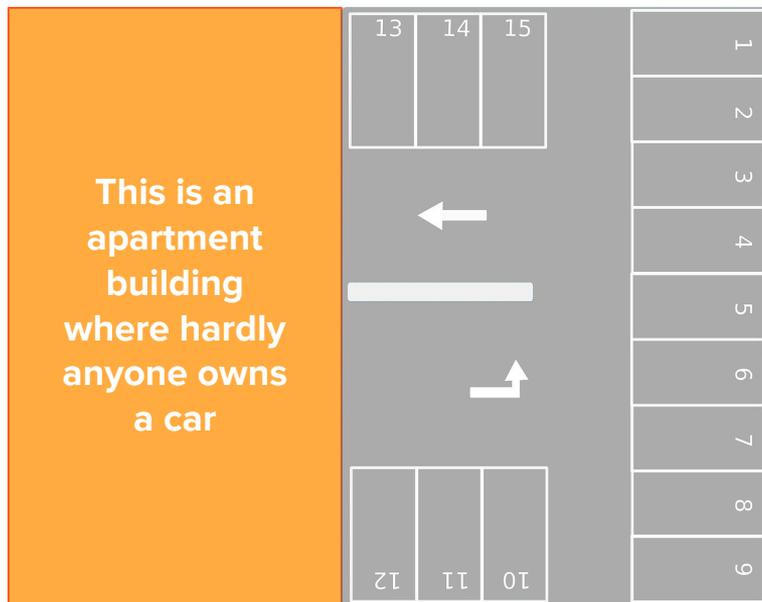
- **False.** When new development does not include off-street parking, residents moving in will be less likely to own cars. In neighborhoods where residents are more likely to feel they need cars, developers can still build parking if they believe it will be in-demand.

“Without parking minimums developers won’t build enough parking”

- **False.** Studies in other cities that have eliminated parking minimums have shown that developers still build parking in areas where it is in demand, but do not build parking in areas where it is not in demand and where they otherwise would have had to build it. This reform simply lets the market work.

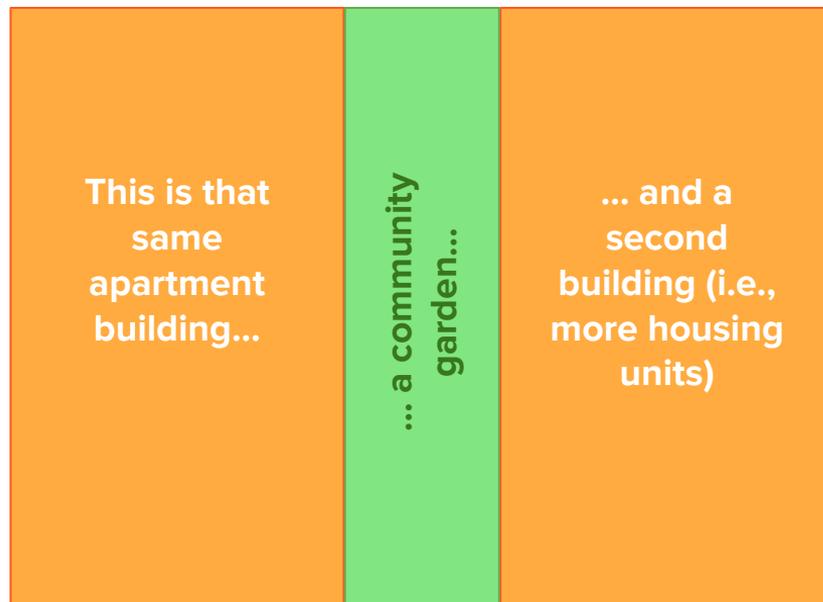
What's possible

With parking requirements:



... and this is the parking lot developers were required to build with the building.

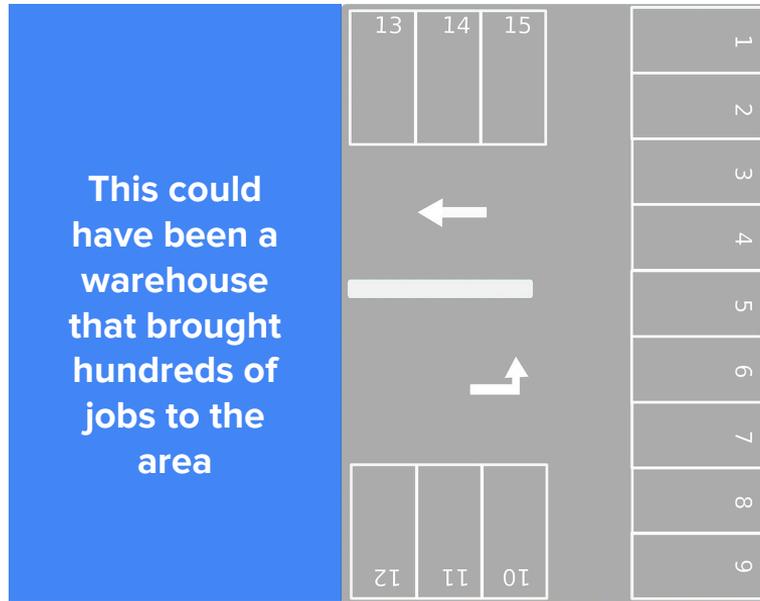
Without parking requirements:



... because developers don't have to spend all that money setting aside parking space.

What's possible

With parking requirements:



... but this is the parking lot developers were required to build, which is expensive, so it steered the business away.

Without parking requirements:



... because without expensive parking requirements, the business could afford to come here and take care of its workers.

Case studies

New York is behind the times

Ending parking minimums in cities like Buffalo brought rents down without reducing parking in the neighborhoods that need it. It's proven to work right here in New York State (and in large cities around the country), and we should implement it in New York City.

The most effective reform is the simplest: eliminating all parking requirements. Numerous other cities have already done this and proven that it is the best way to get all of the benefits of this needed reform.

Other cities

City	Type	Code Language
Minneapolis/St Paul, MN	Citywide	“There are no requirements for a minimum number of parking spaces.”
Buffalo, NY	Citywide	“There are no provisions that establish a minimum number of off-street parking spaces for development”
Hudson, NY	Citywide	“Parcels of real property to be developed within the City of Hudson shall not be required to establish a minimum number of accessory off-street parking spaces.”
Hartford, CT	Citywide	
San Francisco, CA	Citywide	
Portland, OR	Affordable Housing, City Center, Transit-Oriented	