

Frequently Asked Questions

What are parking ratios?

A parking ratio is a measurement that indicates the relationship between the number of parking spaces and a land use (e.g. square footage, number of seats in a venue, bedrooms). Residential parking ratios are based on the number of dwelling units (D.U.) or number of bedrooms.

What is a parking minimum/maximum?

A parking minimum is the minimum amount of parking spaces that a developer must provide to support a given development project. The parking maximum is the maximum amount of parking spaces allowed to be built by a developer.

Where do typical existing parking minimums come from?

Existing parking ratios are based on suburban parking conditions more than 20 years ago when transit was less available and a single purpose trip was most common. They assumed that the automobile will be the primary way patrons access a business and residents to commute to work.

Why do the parking ratios need to change?

Alexandria's parking ratios have generally been the same since the 1990's. Non-auto travel has increased since current standards were set. Moreover, parking is expensive to construct and unnecessary parking uses funds that could be used for amenities that serve the public good. Recent small area plans have addressed the problem by establishing lower parking ratios that are maximums rather than minimums. Individual development projects that propose reasonable parking ratios (lower than those required by the zoning ordinance) require a special use permit. Many of the most attractive and thriving cities have undergone similar changes in their parking policy to reflect their goals/values of sustainability, effective land use, and economic development.

Does this mean I will lose my parking access?

Any existing parking standards will remain in effect. The changes in parking ratios will only affect new developments in the city.

What are some factors that affect parking?

- Distance from Metro
- Walkability of the neighborhood
- Proximity to neighborhood services
- Car ownership rates
- Number of bus routes serving the area
- Fee for parking
- Number of bedrooms
- On-street parking availability

Glossary

Density: The average number of housing units, square feet of office, etc., per unit of land; density is usually expressed “per acre”. Density is controlled by limiting the amount of development on a piece of land through zoning which has specific restrictions, e.g., use; height; minimum lot-size requirements; floor area ratio; and setback and yard requirements.

Mixed-Use Zoning: Zoning which permits a combination of uses within a single development. Many zoning districts specify permitted combinations of uses, for example, residential and office/commercial. More recently the term has been applied to major developments, often with several high-rise buildings, which may contain offices, shops, hotels, apartments, and related uses.

Off-Street Parking: Parking spaces that are not located in Public Right of Way.

On-Street Parking: Parking spaces located in the Public Right of Way; and usually parallel to the curb.

Parking Demand: The amount of parking that would be used at a particular time, place, and price. Parking demand is affected by vehicle ownership, trip rates, mode split, duration (how long motorists park), geographic location (i.e., downtown, regional town center or suburban), the quality of travel alternatives, type of trip (work, shopping, recreational), and factors such as fuel and road pricing.

Parking Management: Policies that result in a more efficient use of parking resources.

Parking Maximums: An upper limit placed on supply of parking allowed, either at individual sites or throughout an area, such as a commercial district.

Parking Minimums: A lower limit placed on supply of parking allowed, either at individual sites or throughout an area, such as a commercial district.

Parking Ratio: A measurement that indicates the relationship between the number of parking spaces and a land use (e.g. square footage, number of seats in a venue, bedrooms).

Residential Parking Zone: Area where on-street parking is regulated to help protect residents from commuter/long-term parking by using residential parking permits or other enforcement mechanisms.

Shared Parking: A concept that refers to the use of a parking facility to serve multiple land uses.

Transportation Demand Management: General term for various strategies and policies to reduce travel demand which would result in more efficient use of transportation resources, by changing travel timing, route, mode, destination, and frequency.

Unbundled Parking: Parking spaces that are rented or sold separately from building space, so occupants only pay for the number of parking spaces they use.

In-Lieu Fees: Fees paid by developers to fund public parking facilities as a substitute for private, off-street parking serving a single destination.

Long-Term Parking: Parking spaces intended for 4 hours or more duration, for use by commuters and residents.

Occupancy Rate: Number of parking spaces used at a particular location and time; also called Utilization Rate.

Development Special Use Permit: A form of special approval for development projects that do not comply with the existing land use and zoning requirements.

Small Area Plan: A visionary guidance document which establishes a long-term (20 to 30 year) vision and framework for future infrastructure, land use, open space, affordable housing; and is also intended as a guide for public and private investment.

Transportation Management Plan: Transportation Management Plans (TMPs) are developed to offset the traffic impact of new developments. Development projects which meet certain size requirements must submit a special use permit application which must include a traffic impact analysis and a transportation management plan. A TMP fund is established to finance

transportation strategies designed to induce people to use modes of transportation other than the single occupancy vehicle. Some examples are shuttle bus service, registration fees for car sharing, bus shelter maintenance, bicycle lockers and parking facilities.

Right-Sized Parking: Parking standards which are based on locally credible and context sensitive data on parking demand. Right-sized parking is designed to support economic development, improve urban land use sustainability and encourage multi-modal transportation.