



Willamette Pedestrian Coalition

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*to improve
conditions for
walking in the
Portland region*

City of Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission
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Subject: City of Portland Code Provisions on Apartments with No Parking

The Willamette Pedestrian Coalition is dedicated to promoting walking and making the conditions for walking in the Portland area safe and attractive.

Besides a complete network of adequate sidewalks and crossing opportunities, a key component of walkability is putting a lively mix of residences, services, shopping, and jobs within easy walking distance or accessible by transit. Urban design is important too: walking past surface parking lots and across driveways is not a pleasant experience. The presence of off-street parking is of concern to pedestrians because it encourages auto usage and creates gaps in the urban fabric.

Portland's zoning code allows buildings in the CS and CM zones within 500 feet of frequent service transit streets to forgo off-street parking, and after many years, developers are finally taking advantage of that allowance. This is a good thing.

By eliminating parking, developers can offer less expensive dwellings along transit streets. With more people living there, a vibrant commercial corridor can develop. The increased density and mix of land uses increase walking and transit use. The absence of surface parking lots helps create a place where people want to be. Because residents are likely to own fewer cars, the number of auto trips is reduced, which also helps improve the pedestrian environment. Finally, the current parking policy supports state and regional goals to reduce reliance on the automobile and to reduce vehicle miles traveled, and will move Portland closer to the goals of the City's Climate Action Plan.

However, while residents of apartment buildings with no on-site parking may own fewer cars than the average American household, many still own and use a car occasionally for recreation or to visit friends and family. If the building has retail or restaurants on the ground floor, people from outside the neighborhood may drive and park to visit those businesses. If they cannot find parking, cars circle through the neighborhood looking for a parking spot, and this hurts the pedestrian environment.

The no-off-street parking provision should not be applied uniformly to all transit streets without regard for context. The right solution in any given location depends on what is already happening with parking on the transit street itself, as well as on cross streets and parallel streets nearby. The Willamette Pedestrian Coalition agrees with Jason Miner of 1000 Friends of Oregon that **MANAGING** parking needs to be part of the equation. He makes excellent management suggestions in [his article](#) for the Oregonian. Some of his ideas that we support include: issuing permits to apartments for on-street parking, enforcing stricter time limits, providing metered

parking on main corridors, and requiring developers to provide car sharing opportunities to residents. The revenue from this type of system could be returned to the neighborhoods for their direct needs such as traffic calming and fixing sidewalks, which would be beneficial for pedestrians and the entire community.

Good parking management typically requires an inventory of current parking usage, and a provision that when usage reaches 85% occupancy, the existing supply of on- and off street parking must be managed with time limits, resident permits, parking meters, or other means, or the supply of parking should be increased. Parking management strategies may vary according to time of day and day of week, and may consist of different strategies for resident parking versus parking for employees, visitors, customers, patients, etc. It all depends on the mix of land uses in the area, the parking patterns they generate (e.g. day or evening), and whether the single family residences on the parallel streets have garages and driveways. The right management tools for Hawthorne or Belmont may not work nor be needed on Killingsworth or Alberta, and may vary from one block to the next.

In addition, if on site ADA parking isn't provided, the developer should work with the city and neighborhood to designate on-street ADA parking accessible via wheelchair within a reasonable distance from the development.

To encourage affordable housing, the City should take on the responsibility of inventorying parking usage in transit corridors with high apartment building activity, and provide developers a menu of parking management options depending on what is happening with parking and land use on and around those corridors. We urge the city to conduct such parking inventories and to maintain the current no-parking provisions in the Code, supplemented with city-managed parking management strategies that respond to the specific parking patterns in any given sub-area.

Sincerely,

Lidwien Rahman
WPC Plans and Projects Committee Chair