

**New Apartments and Parking  
Frequently Asked Questions  
September 2012**

Recent proposals to construct apartment buildings with no onsite parking along many of Portland’s commercial streets have sparked concerns and questions from neighbors related to zoning requirements, parking exemptions, current City policy and the update to the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The following are responses to frequently asked questions.

**1. How is the City responding to concerns about new apartments and parking?**

Much work and research is underway so that we can have more informed conversations about new apartments and parking. Overall, this work will test assertions related to vehicle ownership, parking congestion and the cost of providing parking. Studies, analyses and research will be completed in October and will help provide some factual basis for decision-making.

When this fact finding is completed, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) will host a public forum with the Planning and Sustainability Commission to present results of the studies. It is scheduled for Nov. 13, 2012, at 12:30 p.m., at 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Room 2500A. *This forum will provide an opportunity for the public to relay comments and ask questions about the issue.*

**Studies, Analyses and Research in the Works**

<b>Research Topic</b>	<b>What is it?</b>	<b>Why we’re doing it?</b>
<b>Parking and Travel Behavior Study</b>	Study travel, parking behavior and vehicle ownership of residents of 8 existing residential/mixed use buildings with little or no parking. The study includes vehicle counts, surveys of residents and interviews with stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check assertions about vehicle ownership.</li> <li>• Measure parking congestion around existing infill development.</li> <li>• Understand travel and parking patterns for residents of infill development in inner Portland.</li> </ul>
<b>Costs of Providing Parking vs. No Parking Analysis</b>	BPS is modeling development data to evaluate the cost of providing on-site parking for infill apartments and affordability of rental units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check assertions that providing parking increases rents significantly.</li> <li>• Recognize that affordability is also a concern in inner Portland.</li> </ul>

## Studies, Analyses and Research in the Works (continued)

Research Topic	What is it?	Why we're doing it?
<b>TriMet Service Review</b>	Review of transit service frequency in 2007 (prior to service cuts) and current service levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate if routes where upcoming apartments are planned are vulnerable to service cuts.</li> <li>• Results show minimal peak hour service reductions along routes with upcoming buildings with the exception of bus 24 serving Fremont.</li> </ul>
<b>Other research</b>	Compilation of other research related to infill development, parking and travel behavior of residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn more about available research and how other cities address parking for infill development.</li> <li>• Learn more about techniques to increase use of non-single-occupant vehicles by residents of infill development.</li> <li>• Understand social and cultural dynamics that factor into vehicle ownership and travel behavior.</li> </ul>

In addition to concerns about parking, many neighbors are worried about building height, design, compatibility, accessibility, traffic and density. The Comprehensive Plan Update is underway and these topics will be addressed through that effort, particularly the Neighborhood Centers, Networks and Residential Development & Compatibility Policy Expert Groups (PEGs) for the Comprehensive Plan Update. For more information on the Comprehensive Plan Update please see #11 below.

### **2. Where are the upcoming apartment projects with no on-site parking? How many residential units are proposed for these buildings?**

Apartment projects with no on-site parking are proposed, under construction or recently completed in inner north, northeast, southeast and southwest Portland\* .

Inner north:

- N Interstate and N Sumner Street (46 units) *submitted for permits*
- N Interstate and N Overlook Boulevard (72 units) *pre-permit submittal*
- N Williams and N Beech Avenue (22 units) *submitted for permits*
- N Williams and N Shaver Street (18 units) *construction completed*
- N Mississippi and N Failing Street (25 units) *under construction*

Inner northeast:

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\* Apartments with less than 10 units or located in the Central City or Northwest Plan Districts are not included.

- NE Fremont and NE 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue (56 units) *pre-permit submittal*
- NE Sandy and NE 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue (47 units) *under construction*
- NE Tillamook and NE 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue (47 units) *under construction*
- NE Garfield and NE Failing Street (33 units) *submitted for permits*
- NE Hancock and NE 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue (50 units) *construction completed*
- NE Glisan and NE 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue (32 units) *under construction*
- E Burnside and NE 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue (50 units) *submitted for permits*

Inner southeast:

- SE Division and SE 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue (15 units) *construction completed*
- SE Division and SE 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (31 units) *submitted for permits<sup>±</sup>*
- SE Division and SE 33<sup>rd</sup> Place (28 units) *pre-permit submittal<sup>±</sup>*
- SE Division and SE 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue (81 units) *under construction<sup>†</sup>*
- SE Division and SE 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue (23 units) *construction completed*
- SE Division and SE 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue (29 units) *construction completed*
- SE Division and SE 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue (21 units) *pre-permit submittal*
- SE Hawthorne and SE 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue (50 units) *submitted for permits*
- SE Morrison and SE 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue (30 units) *submitted for permits*
- SE Tacoma and SE 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue (46 units) *pre-permit submittal*

Inner southwest:

- SE Water and SW Meade Street (29 units) *under construction*

### **3. Why is no on-site parking required for these apartment projects?**

Oregon’s Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) adopted in 1991 and related Metro requirements restrict the amount of parking that may be provided in local cities. The TPR seeks to “promote the development of safe, convenient and economic transportation systems” designed to reduce reliance on the automobile. A core element of the TPR is a requirement for metropolitan areas to reduce parking spaces by 10 percent. These reductions may be accomplished through restrictions on the development of new parking spaces and/or requirements that existing parking spaces redevelop as other non-parking uses. Metro ensures that local jurisdictions, including Portland, implement the TPR requirements and has applied further restrictions on the number of parking spaces cities in the metro-region may require.

Portland’s Transportation Bureau explored a number of different alternatives to meet the Oregon TPR and Metro requirements as part of the 2002 Transportation System Plan. These alternatives included reducing parking requirements throughout Portland

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<sup>±</sup> Two apartment buildings may share 10 parking spaces with a 30-unit building proposed at 3330 SE Division Street.

<sup>†</sup> 18-20 surface parking spaces across SE 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue from the building will be leased for resident or carshare parking.

and reducing requirements within a quarter mile of transit service. Project advisory committee members, the Planning Commission and community members provided feedback on the various alternatives. Ultimately sites within 500 feet of frequently operating transit service were exempt from providing on-site parking. (Frequently operating transit service is defined as MAX, streetcar or bus service that occurs at least every 20 minutes during morning and evening commute hours).

These parking exemptions are also reflected through Portland zoning requirements. Residential development is allowed in all of Portland's commercial zones as well as in the Central Employment (EX) zone. Many commercial zones in Portland do not require on-site parking including the Storefront Commercial (CS), Mixed Commercial/Residential (CM) and Central Commercial (CX) zones. These zones are generally applied on streets that have frequent transit service, access to daily services and high walkability. These zoning designations and associated parking exemptions were applied in the early 1990's. Some parking is required in the EX zone; however sites may still be exempt if proximate to a street with frequent transit service

#### **4. What is the rationale for the parking exemptions?**

The City of Portland Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies adopted in 1980 includes a policy related to off-street parking which states "regulate off-street parking to promote good urban form and the vitality of commercial and employment areas." The three underlying objectives state:

- a. Consider eliminating requirements for off-street parking in areas of the City where there is existing or planned high-quality transit service and good pedestrian and bicycle access.*
- b. Encourage the redevelopment of surface parking lots into transit-supportive uses or development or include facilities for alternatives to the automobile.*
- c. Limit the development of new parking spaces to achieve land use, transportation, and environmental objectives.*

The Portland Zoning Code further states "sites located in close proximity to transit, have good street connectivity, and good pedestrian facilities may need little or no off-street parking."

In the larger picture, regional and local policies encourage much of Portland's population growth to be housed downtown and in neighborhood centers and corridors where services and amenities are concentrated. The relaxed parking standards help to make sustainable affordable transit-oriented development more feasible in these locations, thus taking pressure away from single-dwelling neighborhoods to accommodate growth.

More recent focus has been on the creation of "20-minute neighborhoods" as a means to promote walkability, active living and transit use. Reduced dependence on the

automobile in turn can reduce the need for off-street parking and/or demand for on-street parking as well as result in local and regional air quality benefits and reduced fossil fuel dependence.

The City of Portland and Multnomah County *Climate Action Plan* adopted in 2009 recognizes that “despite thoughtful land-use planning and quality transportation options, residents of Multnomah County are more dependent on automobiles than are residents of more compact cities on the East Coast and in much of the rest of the world. A critical basic step to reduce automobile dependence is to ensure that residents live in ‘20 minute neighborhoods’ meaning that they can comfortably fulfill their daily needs within a 20-minute walk from home.”

*The Portland Plan*, adopted by City Council in April 2012, includes guiding policies related to development of high-quality, well designed housing in and around neighborhood centers and near transit, at a variety of sizes and cost ranges, to promote the 20-minute neighborhood concept, complete communities and active transportation. In response the *Portland Plan* includes an objective for 80 percent of Portlanders to live within a complete neighborhood by 2035.

Further focus on policies and implementation measures related to neighborhood centers and corridors will occur as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update described in more detail under #11 below.

**5. Have the outcomes of the parking exemptions been evaluated? Is there any data regarding the percentage of residents who own cars and live in buildings where the use of transit and bikes is promoted or where there is no on-site parking?**

Nathan McNeil from the PSU Center for Transportation Studies & Initiative for Bicycle and Pedestrian Innovation, who is doing research about access to various modes of transportation, states that “income is still the biggest determinant of car ownership, though there clearly is more to it than that, and factors such as density and transit accessibility play into it.”

A 2009 course taught by Ellen Bassett, former associate professor in the Urban Studies and Planning program at PSU, studied parking for new infill and streetcar era apartments and found that across building types, parking congestion was more related to business operating hours than residents. That is, more cars were found to be utilizing on-street parking spaces during daytime and evening dinner hours, than at night. In other words, visitors parking on neighborhood streets cause more parking congestion than residents of apartments and condominiums that own cars but don’t have access to an off-street parking space.

Three different Portland developers have shared information about their car ownership assumptions for apartment projects. At a recent Richmond Neighborhood Association meeting, one Portland developer summarized the car ownership assumptions utilized

with his projects. Generally, car ownership rates of 0.8 cars per dwelling unit are assumed. However, for sites with good transit service, walkability and amenities such as secure long-term bike parking, this developer's car ownership assumptions drop to about 0.6 cars per dwelling. The developer of the project on NE Fremont has stated that he generally assumes lower car ownership rates of about 0.45 cars per unit or 30 cars for the 68 unit project (now proposed as a 56 unit project). Developers of a 2008 apartment project with 51 residential units at SE Hawthorne and SE 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue voluntarily included a 3-level mechanical parking system and some on-site parking spaces for 34 cars or a rate of 0.65 parking spaces per dwelling unit. Due to lack of demand, some of these automobile parking spaces are now being converted to bike parking.

Please see #1 above for information about analyses, studies and research underway and related to new apartments and parking.

## **6. What are the requirements for providing bike parking for the residents of the building?**

For apartment and condominiums outside of the Central City, 1.1 long-term (resident use) bike parking spaces are required per residential unit. One short-term (guest use) bike parking space is required for every 20 units with a minimum of two short-term spaces required. The long-term bike parking spaces must be provided in racks or lockers which can be installed in the residential units or another locked room accessible to residents. Short-term bike parking spaces must also be provided in racks or lockers and must be located outside a building. Many of the upcoming apartment projects provide locked ground floor bike parking rooms with wall-mounted racks so residents do not need to carry their bike up stairs.

## **7. Are there ways for neighbors to achieve modifications to the apartment development proposals?**

Because the proposed apartments are generally allowed by right (i.e. they do not require a land use review), there are very few ways to influence changes to proposals. Working with the developer to share neighbor concerns and ideas is the most effective way. Neighborhood associations and district coalition offices can help make connections and provide guidance.

## **8. Is design review required for these apartment projects?**

Some areas where apartments are proposed are located in the Design Overlay Zone including Hollywood, along N Williams, N Mississippi and N Interstate. Other areas where apartment are proposed are not located in the Design Overlay Zone including along NE Fremont, E Burnside, SE Hawthorne, SE Morrison and SE Division. The Design Overlay Zone is applied in downtown Portland, Gateway, in light rail station areas and at N Williams and N Mississippi where the Central Employment (EX) zone requires the

Design Overlay Zone (as well as other areas not addressed by this memo). Outside of these areas, the Design Overlay Zone has not been applied and is generally not applied to sites zoned CS or CM because the development standards of those zones already promote pedestrian-friendly design and a storefront character.

It is important to point out that State law requires that areas outside of downtown, Gateway and historic districts must have a two-track approach to design review. Projects have one option of meeting objective standards – in Portland’s case the Community Design Standards in the Portland Zoning Code. If the project cannot meet those standards or the applicant does not want to meet them, then a discretionary design review is required. A discretionary review involves notice to neighbors, a set of discretionary design guidelines and an appealable decision made by staff or the Design Commission. A few years ago, City of Portland representatives advocated to the State legislature to change the rules that limit cities from requiring discretionary design review in only two locations and historic districts so that this type of review could possibly also be applied along Portland’s commercial corridors. Although these efforts were unsuccessful, advocacy will continue.

**9. Why is no ground floor retail included with the apartment project on NE Glisan, NE Tillamook, E Burnside, SE Hawthorne, SE Morrison when these projects are located in a commercial zone?**

Although ground floor retail is generally included with apartment and condominium projects along commercial streets, it is not required. While this can disrupt the main street commercial nature of these streets and may contrast with 20-minute neighborhood objectives, ground floor residential units can provide accessible housing for people with disabilities and older adults. In some areas of the city such as Hollywood, regulations are in place which require the ground floor of buildings to be designed and constructed in such a way to accommodate future conversion to retail or office uses.

**10. Why is there such a sudden boom of upcoming multi-dwelling apartment projects in inner Portland?**

As reported by the *Portland Business Journal*, Portland has the second lowest apartment vacancy rate in the nation at 2.5 percent — tied with Minneapolis and only behind New York City, which has a 1.8 percent vacancy rate. A Spring 2012 report by the Metro Multifamily Housing Association shows vacancy rates in inner and central Southeast Portland of 1.4 percent and 1.8 percent in inner and central Northeast Portland. Several areas in Portland are witnessing an upcoming increase in apartment construction, including N Williams, SE Division, Hollywood and the Lloyd District, where a 750-unit apartment complex is planned.

Other reasons for the sudden increase in inner Portland apartment construction include a decade long shift of preferences toward urban neighborhoods, whereas suburban

neighborhoods have seen a dramatic reduction in the amount of construction over this time period. This dynamic is particularly acute among younger people. A March 2011 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that 62 percent of those 18-29 years old prefer to live in complete communities with nearby retail shops, restaurants, cafes and bars. Studies also found that 25 percent of 16-34 year olds do not even have a driver's license and rely on transit, bicycling and walking much more than their parents ever did. Fuel prices also play a role; people can't afford to drive as much so car ownership is declining. This makes central inner neighborhoods more attractive places to live.

The mortgage collapse of 2008 is also a factor and dramatically changed the lending environment, making it much less likely that people can qualify to purchase new single-family homes. The financial crisis also halted most construction for several years, and this has made the supply bottleneck tighter than it otherwise might have been. Now that the economy is in a slow recovery, the bottleneck is easing up and a great amount of new development is occurring.

All of these factors drive up rents, which makes apartment construction more attractive.

### **11. How will the Comprehensive Plan Update address issues related to development along Portland's commercial streets?**

The Comprehensive Plan is the key long-range plan that helps the City prepare for and manage expected population and employment growth. The State requires cities to update their comprehensive plans every 25 years and this effort began as part of the Portland Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides direction for City decision-making on land use, transportation, sewer and water systems and natural resource management and describes Portlander's visions for the future through a set of maps, goals and policies and a list of capital projects. The update to the current Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 1980) is entering a more robust stage of public involvement in which policies will be updated to reflect current realities and future aspirations.

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has formed advisory groups, called Policy Expert Groups (PEGs) to help advise the Bureau on policy recommendations. The Neighborhood Centers PEG will explore how neighborhood centers and corridors can accommodate new growth, provide necessary commercial and community services and be designed to enhance the character of their local communities. One task of the PEG will be to advise staff on updating policies that provide guidance on objectives and priorities related to housing, transportation, urban development, design and economic development. Comments, suggestions and ideas regarding city policy related to off-street parking should be directed to this PEG.

The Residential Development & Compatibility PEG will consider policies related to the design and compatibility of new residential and mixed use development in areas outside of centers and corridors. One theme under Residential Development & Compatibility is

transitions between larger scale commercial, mixed use or residential projects and one and two-unit residential development on abutting lots. Commercial and medium to high density residential zoning designations in Portland are often only a half block deep. In recent years, the build-out of these properties has created large differences in building height, bulk and scale with adjacent single dwelling homes, limiting natural light and privacy and lacking more suitable transitions.

PEGs began meeting at the end of June 2012. The meetings are open to the community and time is provided on the agendas for questions/comments from community members. A public discussion draft (also known as a 60% draft) of the Comprehensive Plan Update will be released in November 2012. Portland residents and businesses will be invited to share their comments on this first draft over a two to three month period.

Although work of the PEGs will primarily focus on policy, later components of the Comprehensive Plan Update and Portland Plan implementation (referred to as refinement planning) will address more discrete district and neighborhood issues such as zoning. For further and updated information on the Comprehensive Plan Update please see:

[www.portlandonline.com/bps/pdxcompplan](http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/pdxcompplan)

Additional resources:

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has assigned “district liaisons” to act as resources to community members and as the Bureau’s primary contact between communities, city agencies, and nonprofit groups on planning and development matters in different parts of the city.

East District Liaison: Chris Scarzello, 503-823-7716, [chris.scarzello@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:chris.scarzello@portlandoregon.gov)

North District Liaison: Barry Manning, 503-823-7965,  
[barry.manning@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:barry.manning@portlandoregon.gov)

Northeast District Liaison: Debbie Bischoff, 503-823-6946,  
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Southeast District Liaison: Matt Wickstrom, 503-823-2834,  
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West District Liaison: Joan Frederiksen, 503-823-3111,  
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Central City Liaison: Troy Doss, 503-823-5857, [troy.doss@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:troy.doss@portlandoregon.gov)

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