

Factors That Contribute to Economically Excessive Parking Demand

- Generous minimum parking standards result in abundant parking supply, which discourages owners from charging for parking
- Parking is bundled with buildings, so buyers and renters are forced to pay for parking whether or not they want it
- Governments often provide unpriced or low-priced parking on streets and in municipal lots, which discourages businesses from charging for parking at their sites
- Tax policies make parking subsidies an attractive employee benefit
- Zoning codes and development policies limit density and encourage dispersed development, creating automobile-oriented land-use patterns
- Businesses often reimburse customer parking costs and subsidize employee parking, but not other travel modes.
- Many motor vehicle costs are fixed or are external, so driving seems relatively cheap.
- Many communities make limited investments in travel alternatives (e.g., walking, cycling, ridesharing, and public transit services), leading to automobile dependency.

Table 2-2
Northwest Connecticut Parking Utilization Survey

Land Use	Average Occupancy	Highest Observed Occupancy
Bank	36 1%	59 1%
Big-box retail	24 3%	35 7%
Drive-thru restaurant	55 1%	100 0%
Retail	47 1%	100 0%
Office building	54 0%	94 7%
Industrial plant	42 3%	92 1%
Medical office building	46 6%	68 8%
Nursing homes	58 1%	96 1%
Restaurants	54 4%	100 0%
Small shopping plaza	56 1%	78 6%
Averages	47.4%	82.5%

Summary of the results of 42 parking utilization studies performed during the holiday shopping season which indicate excessive parking supply at most sites

Source Gould 2003

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Table 2-3
Suburban Business Park Parking Utilization Survey

Size, Age, and Location	Percent Floor Area Occupied	Parking Supply (Spaces Per 1,000 Square Feet GFA)	Percent Parking Occupancy During Peak Periods	Peak Space Utilization Per 1,000 Square Feet Occupied GLA)
Large, old, east	96.0%	1.2	47.6%	0.6
Small, old, east	96.3%	1.9	53.2%	1.0
Small, old, west	82.6%	2.1	28.0%	0.7
Medium, new, west	86.7%	2.3	34.0%	0.9
Large, new, east	84.2%	2.5	60.6%	1.8
Large, old, west	83.6%	3.1	43.6%	1.6
Large, new, west	88.4%	3.2	49.1%	1.8
Small, new, west	71.7%	5.8	56.1%	4.5
Averages	86.9%	2.6	46.8%	1.4

GFA = gross floor area. GLA = gross leasable area

Level of parking supply and utilization at various suburban business parks. Less than half of all spaces are occupied during peak periods.

Sources: ULI 1986 cited in Kuzmyak et al. 2003

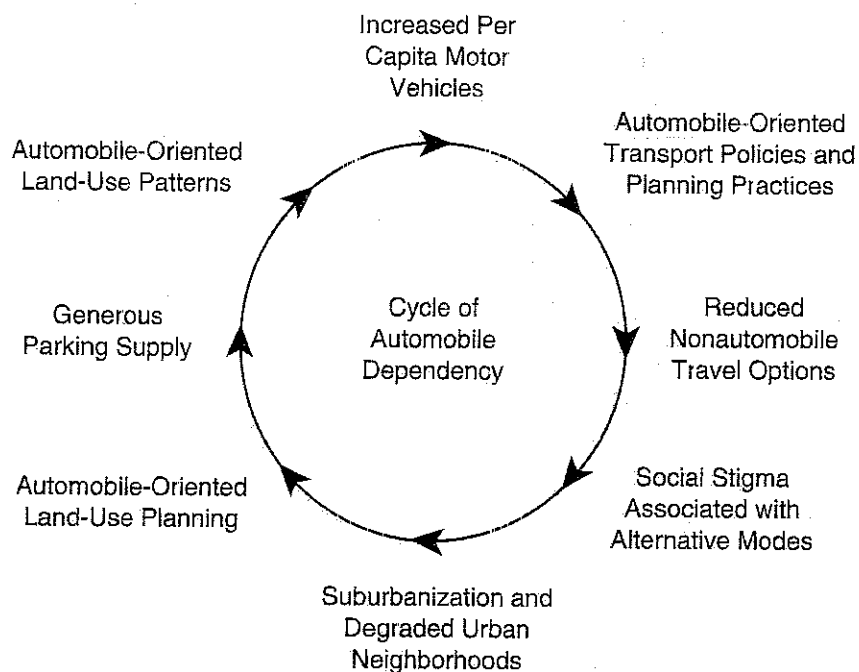
BETTER WAYS TO DETERMINE HOW MUCH PARKING TO SUPPLY

There are better ways to determine how much parking to supply at a particular site. One approach is to use efficiency-based standards, which means that parking supply decisions are based on the specific needs of each location and take into account geographic, demographic, and economic factors. With such standards, parking facilities are sized so that they may fill up, with management strategies used to ensure user convenience and address any overflow problems when this occurs. For example, parking facilities at a store can be sized to be fully occupied frequently as long as overflow parking is available nearby, motorists have information about available parking options, regulations are adequately enforced, and additional management strategies (e.g., commute trip reduction programs and shuttle services) are implemented as needed.

Management solutions should be used whenever they are more cost effective than adding more parking supply. Less parking is supplied where parking facilities are more expensive to build, where management programs are easy to implement, and where reduced parking supply supports other planning objectives. In many situations, parking management solutions can be

6. Parking Management Best Practices

Figure 1-1
Cycle of Automobile Dependency



Generous parking supply is part of a cycle that leads to increased automobile dependency. Parking management can help break this cycle

The old paradigm tends to resist change. It places a heavy burden of proof on innovative solutions. The new paradigm recognizes that transport and land-use conditions evolve, and parking planning and management practices need frequent adjustment. It shifts the burden of proof, allowing new approaches to be tried until their effectiveness (or lack thereof) is proven.

REDEFINING PARKING PROBLEMS

It is important to define parking problems carefully. For example, if people complain about a parking problem, it is important to determine the type of problem, the location, the time, and to whom the problem occurs.

As previously described, people often assume that the term "parking problem" simply means that motorists cannot always find a convenient and free parking space at every time and place. However, there are other types of parking problems that may be equally important:

- To motorists, parking problems can consist of inadequate information about parking availability and price options, inconvenient pricing methods, or poorly designed parking facilities.

Table 1-1
Comparison of Old and New Parking Paradigms

Old Parking Paradigm	New Parking Paradigm
"Parking problem" means inadequate parking supply	"Parking problem" can mean inadequate supply, inefficient management, inadequate user information, and other types of problems associated with parking facilities and activities
More parking is better	Too much parking is as harmful as too little
Parking should generally be free. Whenever possible, parking facilities should be funded indirectly through building rents or taxes.	As much as possible, users should pay directly for parking facilities.
Parking should be available on a first-come basis.	Parking should be managed to favor higher-priority uses and encourage efficiency.
Parking requirements should be applied consistently, without exception or variation.	Parking requirements should reflect each situation and should be applied flexibly.
Traditional solutions should be favored. New approaches should be discouraged since they are unproven and not widely accepted.	Innovations should be encouraged since even unsuccessful experiments often provide useful information.
Parking management should only be applied as a last resort where it would be too costly to increase supply.	Parking management programs should be widely applied to increase efficiency and prevent problems.
Transportation consists of driving. Dispersion of destinations (urban sprawl) is acceptable or even desirable.	Driving is just one of many transport modes. Dispersed, automobile-dependent land-use patterns may be undesirable.

Parking management requires changing the way we think about parking problems and solutions.

- To developers, parking problems may consist of the financial costs of satisfying generous parking requirements and the constraints these requirements impose on building design.
- To nearby residents, parking problems may include the aesthetic impacts of parking facilities.
- To local officials, parking problems may consist of numerous conflicts among different interest groups, including motorists, residents, visitors, businesses, and taxpayers.

In fact, there are many different parking problems, and a solution to one often exacerbates others.

Table 1-2 lists various parking problems and compares the impacts of increasing parking supply with management solutions. Increasing supply helps reduce parking congestion and spillover impacts but increases most other problems. Management solutions tend to reduce most problems and so tend to provide the most total benefits (see the sidebar entitled "Parking Management Solutions").