

Let's Talk About CONTEMPORARY AFFORDABLE HOUSING

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF PARKING

VEHICLE OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

Many factors affect the rate of vehicle ownership. When planning affordable housing it seems logical that all applicable factors be taken into consideration.

The Effect of Income

26%

Families earning 48%-60% of the area median income owned 26 percent fewer cars than the regional mean.

44%

When income drops to 24%-36% vehicle ownership rates drop 44% lower than the regional mean.

The Effect of Housing Type

39%

In multi-family developments of 5 or more units, auto ownership averaged just over 1 car per household – 39% below the regional mean.

Seniors and Automobile Ownership

34%

If all members of a household were 65 or older, that household was 34% less likely to own a car.

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In households where all members were 75 or over, average vehicle ownership dropped well below one car.

Parking in the Bay Area is a hot topic. When we hear of new developments in our neighborhood, where our new neighbors will park can be at the forefront of our concerns. Yet many common misconceptions about parking exist.

Consider the following facts about parking.

Lower Income Households Own Fewer Cars

Numerous national studies on vehicle ownership show a correlation between income and vehicle ownership. Low income households have a lesser tendency to own a second car, and a significantly larger percentage of very-low-income households own no car at all. These figures, coupled with increased public transit ridership, translate to fewer cars per resident than comparable market-rate housing. Additionally, Bay Area households with all members over 62 own nearly one-third fewer cars than households with no seniors.

Certain Bay Area jurisdictions like Palo Alto have created provisions for developers to apply for reduced parking requirements for affordable housing developments or to leave open space like playgrounds or picnic areas in “landscape reserve” in the event that the reduced parking proves insufficient to satisfy demand.

Parking Lots Are Eyesores

Unnecessary parking also has an aesthetic cost to the surrounding neighborhood as parking requirements can dramatically affect design. Surface level parking reduces opportunity for common areas, green space and creating walkable communities. Parking structures tend to make buildings more massive as well as boxy. The high cost of parking also reduces the availability of funds for architectural services that can design a beautiful structure which blends into the existing neighborhood fabric.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Parking Requirement Impacts on Housing Affordability, (Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Todd Litman, 2009) a comprehensive, in-depth examination of parking trends and requirements, suggests strategies for retooling parking laws for the new Millenium.

www.vtpi.org/park-hou.pdf

Livable City is a San Francisco non-profit advocating for more diverse, accessible and walkable neighborhoods by encouraging a reform in parking legislation.

www.livablecity.org/campaigns/parking.html

**The Non-Profit Housing Association
of Northern California**

369 Pine Street, Suite 350
San Francisco, CA 94104
[ph]415.989.8160
[f]415.989.8166

www.nonprofithousing.org



ALTERNATIVE PARKING STRATEGIES

Verona Homes in Santa Clara and San Clemente Place in Corte Madera are excellent examples of housing developments successfully reducing their parking requirements.

Tandem Parking



The lovely design of Verona Homes in Santa Clara was possible because tandem parking (two cars parked one in front of the other) was permitted on the ground floor, reducing space set aside for parking.

Partial Below Ground Parking



The one, two, three and four bedroom family apartments of San Clemente Place in Corte Madera include partially below ground parking. Their proximity to transit and jobs made reduced parking requirements possible. Limiting the land dedicated to parking allowed for the inclusion of a courtyard area for residents to enjoy.

Parking Equals Traffic

Providing less parking in a neighborhood can actually reduce the demand for parking. Lessening the amount of parking in a development has two important side effects: it leaves space for neighborhood amenities like grocery stores and cafes and it increases population density. Both of these are factors in reducing the need for car ownership.

Inclusion of amenities reduces the need to drive to grocery stores and shopping centers while denser populations allow for more frequent and higher quality transit services. Both of these provide alternatives to driving, lessening traffic and increasing the quality of life.

Reduced Parking Can Work In Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities

The current trend towards revitalization of suburban city centers has produced high density areas with myriad amenities and prolific transportation. Residents' parking demands in these suburban downtowns are lessened due to the availability of services, proving that even in smaller cities high levels of parking are not always necessary.

DEBUNKING COMMON MYTHS ABOUT PARKING

MYTH: Regardless of neighborhood amenities, people will own the same amount of cars.

FACT: Neighborhoods with a high density of quality alternatives to driving, such as grocery stores, restaurants and quality transit have lower rates of vehicle ownership.

MYTH: Affordable housing needs more parking than market rate housing.

FACT: Local and Federal studies have shown that low-income households own fewer cars than households with higher incomes. Additionally, a great percentage of very-low-income households own no car at all.

MYTH: People are unlikely to live in a home that does not include parking.

FACT: In a 1998 study on San Francisco home sales, single family homes without a parking space sold 5 days quicker and condominiums without parking sold 41 days quicker than their counterparts that included parking.

MYTH: Increased parking at a development can protect the aesthetic character and quality of the neighborhood.

FACT: High minimum parking requirements mean more money spent on parking and less money spent on quality materials and design. More parking also means less space for open areas and amenities which make a community more walkable.