



MEETING MINUTES

LAND USE COMMISSION

Wednesday, September 25th, 2024

7:00 PM

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle City Council Chambers

Members Present: Matt Rodgers, George Halik, Jeanne Lindwall, Jameika Mangum, Myrna Arevalo, Darush Mabadi, Kiril Mirintchev,

Members Absent: Brian Johnson, Max Puchtel

Staff Present: Neighborhood Land Use Planner Meagan Jones, Zoning Administrator Melissa Klotz, Senior Planner Sam Hubbard, Sustainability and Resilience Manager Cara Pratt, Transportation & Mobility Coordinator Sarah FioRito

Presiding Member: Matt Rodgers

I. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

II. DISCUSSION

A. Envision Evanston 2045 - Corridors, Centers and Zones and Referral Related to Parking Minimums

Discussion of City Council referrals regarding car parking minimums and mixed-use centers and corridors that will be recommended as part of Envision Evanston 2045.

Cara Pratt, Sustainability and Resilience Manager, Opened the discussion with a presentation about removing car parking minimums and establishing bike and micro mobility requirements. The current code requirements were outlined and information was provided to explain why the City was considering these code changes. Discussion questions were posed for the Commission to consider.

Sarah FioRito, Transportation & Mobility Coordinator, highlighted details about parking spaces, people driving, and parking access.

Key areas of discussion included:

Parking Minimums: The City Council has put forth a referral to explore removing parking minimums. Benefits include reduced congestion, cost savings for developers, and promoting sustainable transportation modes. Examples from other cities that have made similar changes were referenced. Data was

requested from other communities that had adopted similar code modifications that could help the Commission understand how these changes could impact the community. The City may wish to explore a policy that would require newly constructed developments to provide onsite parking to accommodate projected demand. Elimination of parking minimums did not mean residents couldn't drive or that property owners could not construct parking at all, it just meant that they were not required to construct parking spaces if they didn't want to. There was some debate on reducing parking minimums versus elimination of parking minimums.

Bike and Micro Mobility: Emphasis was placed on future-proofing by establishing standards for bike and micro mobility parking, with examples of cities that have introduced such requirements. Concern was raised relative to fire generated by e-Bikes and whether the older population would be able to utilize micro mobility options.

Community and Development Concerns: Commissioners questioned practical concerns about public transit availability, the responsibility to manage parking needs for larger developments, and maintaining neighborhood accessibility.

Existing Trends: Staff noted that many developments already request parking reductions, signaling a shift in parking demand.

Parking Reform Network Recommendation: It was suggested that participants explore the Parking Reform Network, which offers research and diagrams on parking needs and policies, including insights into city ordinances.

Transit Improvements: There was an emphasis on the need for better transit in Evanston and Chicago, with ongoing discussions at state and federal levels about transit funding.

Parking Policy Implications on Housing Affordability: The notion of unbundling parking costs from housing costs is presented, with the idea that fewer parking requirements could lead to reduced construction costs, thereby potentially lowering housing expenses for residents.

Affordability Tied to Parking Minimums: It was suggested to link reduced parking minimums with an increased percentage of affordable housing units in developments.

Data and Modeling Requests: Commissioners expressed interest in understanding parking usage statistics and modeling how changes might impact street parking, especially in more densely populated areas. They also highlighted the need to consider local data and potentially leverage findings from cities with similar demographics and climate.

Residential vs. Commercial Parking: A distinction was made between residential and commercial parking needs. There was some concern regarding elimination of parking minimums for commercial spaces. Additional data was requested. Office spaces might require more flexibility due to varied tenant needs.

Impact on Public Infrastructure: There was a discussion on potential long-term impacts on bike lanes, green areas, and walkways if more people rely on street parking. Several commissioners pointed out that Evanston's urban density and climate may necessitate unique approaches.

Micro-Mobility and Bike Parking: There was a suggestion to incorporate minimum requirements for bike and micro-mobility parking, possibly near transit stations, to encourage alternative transportation modes.

Policy Consistency: Commissioners called for clearer policy statements to help align parking reforms with the city's broader urban and sustainability goals. The potential creation of restricted residential parking zones was also discussed as a possible response to increased street parking.

Environmental Considerations: Sustainability and impervious surface coverage were mentioned as considerations, with some participants worried about how more extensive residential developments without parking might impact the environment and neighborhood aesthetics.

Meagan Jones, presented a map of mixed-use corridor and node/center framework. Centers are areas designated as hubs for economic, social, and cultural activities. These are typically mixed-use areas. Corridors are major arterial routes that are better served by transit and connect the nodes/centers. Clarity was provided on the map, which ranked sites as suitable for development based on their proximity to parks, transit, schools, and similar amenities.

Key areas of discussion included:

Centers and Corridors: Analysis can be done based on three different areas; regional Areas that serve Evanston and communities beyond, urban districts that are primarily commercial, and neighborhood districts that are smaller commercial areas serving local populations.

Density: Corridors may increase in intensity of use, but this should be done gradually. Density should occur in areas in close proximity to amenities. Greater density allowances may be needed to achieve development in areas with contamination. Downtown Evanston should be an area where density and development occurs. Site specific market factors should be considered in designating areas for redevelopment.

Public Transportation: Access to public transportation options should be a factor for redevelopment areas. Investments in public transit may be needed. The western areas of the City may not be as suitable for high-intensity redevelopment given that they have less public transit options.

Industrial and Commercial Areas: There are several examples of industrial or commercially zoned land that could be redeveloped with moderate density multi-family homes. Emerson Square was cited as an example of a successful redevelopment. There are other opportunities near public transit that could be good candidates for redevelopment.

Height: 3-4 stories in height may be viable along corridors without having a substantial impact on neighboring properties. Higher buildings that are buffered by a rail line or other larger developments are ideal. The Albion and 415 Howard were cited as examples. Ziggurat setbacks can be effective for mitigating height, but the current requirement needs to be revised. Taller buildings adjacent to single-family homes may create tension.

III. COMMUNICATION

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

G. Ahga said not enough parking data has been analyzed. Staff needs to find out what percentage of parking is unused. Parking spaces within his condo building are almost entirely used. Elimination of parking requirements may discriminate against the older population and those with disabilities. With more people using bikes, additional bike lanes will be needed, which would reduce street parking. Downtown Evanston is congested and more development could exacerbate this.

J. Cole stated that residents may be disenfranchised from the decision making process if development is streamlined.

Patricia Bluman also voiced concerns about referral requests for streamlining. Residents need an opportunity to express their concerns about issues that affect them.

S. Yajnik had concerns about eliminating parking requirements. Weather conditions in Evanston do not support year-round use of alternate transportation methods. Increasing density in certain nodes may be appropriate but not through-out the entire city. Streamlining the development process was also a concern.

S. Bernstein expressed support for reducing parking requirements along with appropriate guardrails, as well as infill redevelopment with appropriate guardrails. Decisions should be supported by data and he believes that the data supports these initiatives.

J. Grandy voiced support for elimination of parking minimums. The mandate to provide parking in every residential development adds to the cost of housing and could make this community unaffordable for certain populations.

J. Cabbet stated that changing the zoning code and streamlining the development process would allow developers to come into the community and have unsuitable projects approved without City staff review and community input.

C. Smith (pre-written statement read by audience member) wrote that macro zoning needs and preference need to be considered in the context of climate change. Existing greenspaces, including the lakefront, must be protected. A lakefront protection plan should be codified in the Municipal Code.

O. Wilson Thomas spoke in support of abolishing parking minimums. City parking garages were not fully utilized. Parking minimums were established during the automobile boom of the mid Twentieth Century when automobiles became the primary

mode of transportation, which has hurt downtown areas, increased pollution, and increased socio-economic division.

M. McLaughlin stated that Evanston should evaluate similar communities that have abolished parking minimums to determine what the impact may be. He questioned whether residents who pay luxury apartment rents would be willing to park their cars off-site in a City-owned garage.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lindwall moved to adjourn

Commissioner Arevalo Seconded

The next meeting of the Evanston Land Use Commission will be held **on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at 9:09 pm**, in the James C. Lytle Council Chambers in the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Justin Bock, Administrative lead