

Existing Zoning Review

1. Introduction

The following memo contains a review of the District of Columbia's current zoning requirements for a selected set of uses – residential, commercial, office, and institutional – as well as a comparison of similar zoning standards in effect in three cities – San Francisco, Portland, and Philadelphia – selected for their comparable size and densities (See Figure 1 below). In contrast to the cities and practices outlined in Task 4 (Best Practices Review), the following review provides a broader perspective on contemporary practices in each location.

Figure 1 - City Populations and Densities

Place	Rounded Population	Area (Mi ²)	Population/ Mi ²
San Francisco	700,000	47	14,894
Portland	600,000	145	4,138
Philadelphia	1,500,000	135	11,111
District of Columbia	600,000	61	9,836

The comparison reveals that the standards in effect within the District, on the whole, are in-line with contemporary zoning approaches and practices. Standards for residential, commercial, and office uses in particular reveal patterns and levels of requirements quite similar to those implemented in the comparable locations (see Figure 2).

The comparison of standards for institutional uses – churches and religious institutions, schools, etc. – by contrast, reveal the variety of approaches that cities take in attempting to gauge demand generated by such uses. In doing so, the comparison underscores a level of uncertainty involved in this process (see Figure 3).

Figure 2 - Standards for Basic Uses

Land Use	City	High				Medium				Low			
		DC	SF	PT	PH	DC	SF	PT	PH	DC	SF	PT	PH
Residential (per Unit)		1/4	1/4	0	1/2	1/2.5	1/1	1/2	7/10	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Commercial (per Square Feet)		1/3000	0	0	0	1/750	1/500	1/360	1/1000	1/300	1/500	1/360	1/1000
Office (per Square Feet)		0	0	0	0	1/800	1/500	1/500	1/1000	1/600	1/500	1/500	1/1000

Figure 3 - Standards for Specific Uses

Land Use	City	Minimum Space Requirements			
		DC	SF*	PT*	PH*
Churches		None in mid- to high-density commercial areas	1 per 20 seats where in main auditorium exceed 200.	1 per 100 SF	1 per 10 seats
		1 per 10 seats in main sanctuary in all other areas**			
Daycare		1 per 4 <u>employees</u>	1 per 25 <u>children</u>	1 per 500 SF	1 per 1000 SF
Grade School		2 per 3 <u>teachers and staff</u>	1 per 6 <u>classrooms</u>	1 per <u>classroom</u>	1 per 1000 SF
High School		2 per 3 <u>teachers and staff</u> plus 1 for each 20 <u>classroom seats</u> **	1 per 2 <u>classrooms</u>	7 per <u>classroom</u>	1 per 1000 SF
Post High School		2 per 3 <u>teachers and staff</u> plus 1 for each 10 <u>classroom seats</u> **	1 per 2 <u>classrooms</u>	1 per 600 SF of non-dormitory plus 1 space per 4 <u>dorm rooms</u>	1 per 1000 SF

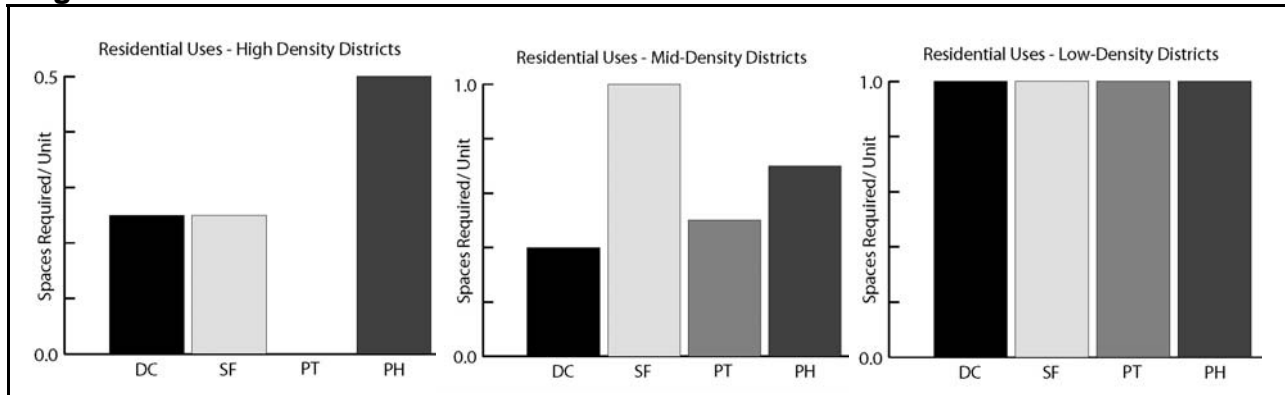
*No parking is required in downtown district.

** Standards language abridged for table, see full description below.

2. Land Uses
a. Residential

For each city reviewed, parking requirements for residential land uses are set based on their location within a variety of zoning districts, which are in turn roughly assigned based on development density. In general, parking requirements fall as density rises. Requirements range from 1 parking space per 4 residential units in the densest districts to 1 space per dwelling unit in the lowest density areas (see Figure 4). Even Portland, a noted exception for its elimination of all parking requirements in its downtown district, follows the same general range of requirements in all other districts.

Figure 4 - Standards for Residential Uses

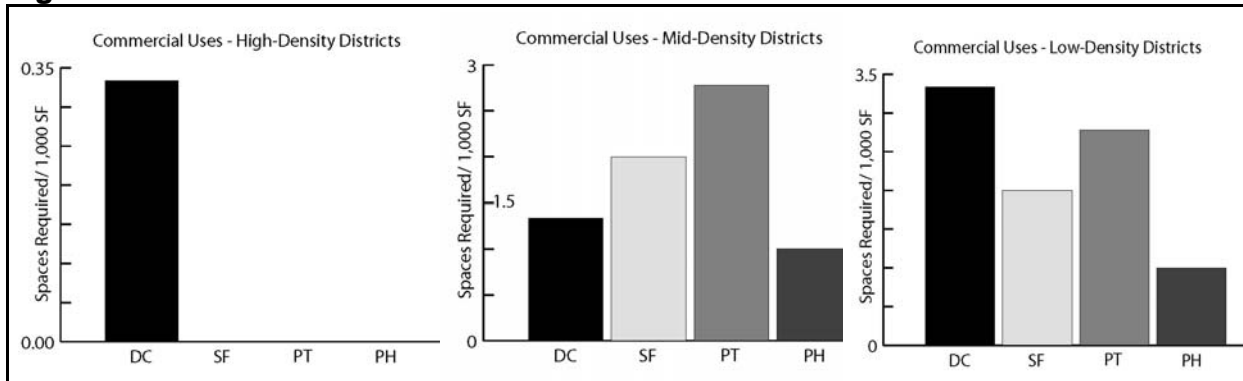


b. Commercial

The District’s minimum requirements for commercial development vary; ranging from 1 space per 3,000 square feet in high density districts, to 1 space per 750 square feet in medium density districts, and 1 space per 300 square feet in low density districts. Unlike any of the comparable cities, the District does require parking for commercial uses in its downtown districts.

In the comparable cities, requirements for commercial uses are less directly tied to density. San Francisco requires 1 space per 500 square feet in nearly all areas of the city. Outside of downtown districts, requirements in San Francisco, Portland, and Philadelphia are set at 1 space per 500 square feet, 1 space per 360 square feet, and 1 space per 1000 square feet respectively, independent of density.

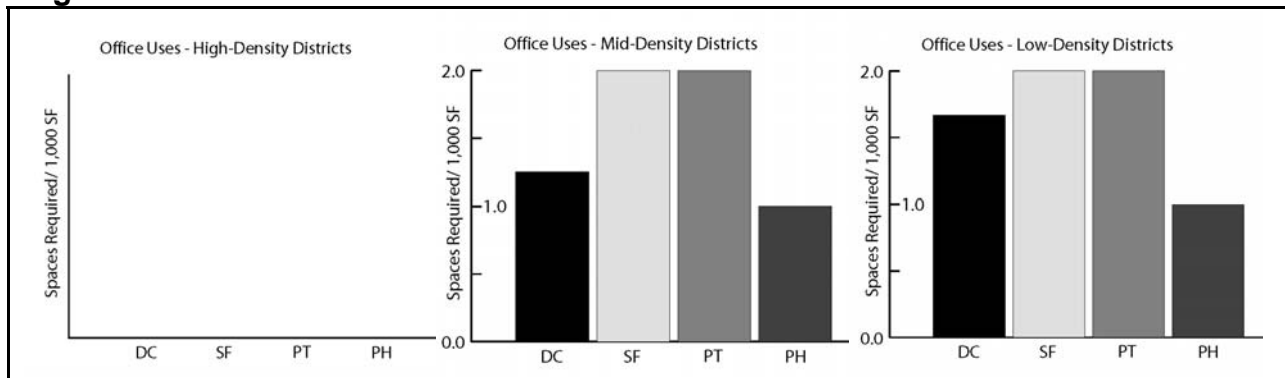
Figure 5 - Standards for Commercial Uses



c. Office

Neither the District nor the comparable cities require parking for office space in downtown districts. Outside of downtown districts, the District, again, adjusts minimum parking requirements for office uses based on density, ranging from 1 space per 750 square feet in mid-density districts to 1 space per 300 square feet in low-density districts. Minimum parking requirements in the comparable cities are set independent of density – 1 parking space per 500 square feet for San Francisco and Portland and 1 per 1000 square feet in Philadelphia.

Figure 6 - Standards for Office Uses



d. Churches and Religious Institutions

The District does require on-site parking for Churches and religious institutions in its highest density commercial districts. In all other areas, the requirement is 1 space per 10 seats within the main sanctuary. If seats are not fixed, 7 square feet of seating area or 18 inches of bench length are considered 1 seat.

San Francisco requires a minimum of 1 parking space per 20 seats while Philadelphia requires 1 parking space per 10 seats. Portland’s requirements are based on square footage, requiring 1 space per 100 square feet, with again no minimum requirements in downtown.

e. Daycare

The District requires a minimum of 1 parking space per 4 daycare center employees. San Francisco, by contrast, requires 1 parking space per 25 enrolled children. Portland's requirements are based rather on square footage - 1 space per 100 square feet, with no requirements in downtown. Philadelphia requires 1 space per 1,000 square feet outside of its downtown district.

f. Grade School

For grade schools, the District bases its requirements on the number of employees, requiring 2 spaces for every 3 teachers and staff. San Francisco and Portland base their requirements on the number of classrooms, requiring 1 space for every 6 classrooms and 1 space for each classroom, respectively (with no requirements within downtown Portland). For all school uses, Philadelphia requires 1 space per 1,000 square feet outside of its downtown district.

g. High School

For high schools, the District requires 2 parking spaces for every 3 employees plus 1 space for every 20 classroom seats, or 1 space for every 10 seats in its largest auditorium, gymnasium, or assembly space, whichever is greater.

San Francisco requires 1 space for every 2 classrooms, while Portland requires 7 spaces for every classroom, with no requirements for downtown. Philadelphia requires 1 space per 1,000 square feet outside of its downtown district.

h. Post High School

For post-high school facilities, the District requires 2 parking spaces for every 3 employees plus 1 parking space for every 10 classroom seats, or 1 space for every 12 stadium seats or 1 space for every 10 auditorium seats, whichever is greater.

San Francisco requires 1 space for every 2 classrooms. Portland requires 1 space for every 600 square feet plus 1 space for every 4 dormitory rooms, except for downtown. Philadelphia requires 1 space per 1,000 square feet for all post High School uses outside of its downtown district.

3. Parking Exemptions

Many cities have introduced various forms of exemption from standard parking requirements for developments anticipated to generate less than the standard level of parking demand. These exemptions are typically based on locational or tenant-market conditions. Conditions such as transit access and mixed uses typically trigger parking requirement reductions or eliminations. Similar adjustments are sometimes made for housing built specifically for elderly or low-income tenants. The following summarizes these forms exemptions currently available in the District and the three comparable cities.

a. Transit Access

Within the District, the residential minimum parking requirement can be reduced by up to 25 percent if the site is within 800 feet of Metrorail station entrance. Non-residential

parking requirements can also be reduced or even eliminated for sites outside central employment areas that have direct connection to the Metrorail system.

In Portland, there are no minimum parking requirements for sites within 500 feet of a transit station offering 20-minute peak-hour service frequencies. Constructing transit supportive plazas at sites adjacent to transit service can also be substituted for meeting parking requirements.

Similarly, minimum parking requirements are waived in specific zoning districts in San Francisco. These districts have essentially been designated based on their density of transit services. There are no exemptions for transit access within Philadelphia's zoning codes.

b. Elderly Housing

The District of Columbia requires 1 parking space for every 6 dwelling units of publicly assisted housing set aside for the elderly and/ or the handicapped. San Francisco reduces parking requirements for elderly by 80 percent in high density zones and by 20 percent in all other areas. The City of Portland reduces the number of required spaces by half. Elderly housing developments in Philadelphia are required to provide 3 spaces for every 10 dwelling units in all districts, a reduction of 70% in low density areas.

c. Affordable Housing

Neither the District nor any of the reviewed cities offers zoning requirement adjustments for housing built for low-income tenants.

4. Summary

a. Requirements

Zoning requirements for parking in the District are fairly typical of contemporary codes. Emerging best practices can be seen in Portland's elimination of parking requirements for all downtown-located uses, and in Philadelphia's exemption for non-residential uses in its downtown district. For most uses in most places, however, requirements for primary uses – residential, commercial, office – reflect a similar approach for setting minimum levels of required parking.

Requirements assigned to institutional uses, however, highlight the complications that arise in attempting to broadly project parking demand for some uses. Codes in the District, San Francisco, and Portland agree infrequently on the basis criteria used for establishing minimum requirements for these uses. From one city to another, requirements for houses of worship may be based on seats, seating capacity area, bench length, or overall development square footage. For daycare and schools, spaces may be required based on classrooms, students, teachers and staff, useable area, or dorm rooms. Meanwhile, Philadelphia largely sticks to its 1 space per 1,000 square feet formula for these uses outside of downtown. Even when city codes agree on the basis criteria, requirements can vary widely – whereas San Francisco requires only 1 space for every 2 high school classrooms, Portland requires seven for each high school classroom.

b. Exemptions

The emerging practice of providing exemptions from standard requirements under certain development conditions further highlights the challenge for zoning codes to anticipate parking demand. Recognizing the impact of transit access and tenant markets on vehicular demand is an increasingly common means for improving the fit between zoning requirements and travel behavior. The elimination of parking requirements near transit (Portland) or within transit-rich districts (San Francisco) is a good example. The District’s parking requirement reductions near transit represent a similar effort to recognize the impact of transit on parking demand.

San Francisco and Philadelphia reduce parking requirements for housing built specifically for elderly tenants. Neither the District nor Portland provides exemptions for such housing. None of the cities reviewed currently reduces parking requirements for housing built for low-income tenants.

Appendix – Downtown-Specific Standards

An increasingly common zoning strategy among North American cities is to reduce or eliminate parking requirements within specified “downtown” districts. The District of Columbia and the comparable cities reviewed above all provide some form of “downtown” exemptions for select land uses. In order to provide more detail on the use of this strategy, Figure A-1 below provides a summary of downtown exemptions by location, including the variety of values or goals that motivated the policy change.

Figure A: 1 - Downtown Parking Standards

City	Goals and Programs	Parking Requirements
Bellevue, WA	Since 1980, parking supply has remained constant at about 31,000 spaces off-street spaces, despite significant development and employment growth. City has set parking minimums and maximums and has pursued development of shared parking supply.	Min’s and Max’s vary by land use type
Boston, MA		In 1977, Boston adopted a freeze on commercial parking open to the public (not employer-provided employee parking). While the number of commercial spaces has not increased, the number of spaces exempt from the freeze increased 26% just between 1984 and 1987, which has led to an ineffective program.
Oakland	Attract 10,000 residents downtown. Major effort to promote commercial development.	No maximums. Minimums: Residential: 1/unit Retail and Commercial: No parking required for small projects. 0 - 1.6 spaces per 1,000 sq ft for larger projects.

Portland, OR	Reduce car trips by 20% over 15 years. Parking maximums in many areas, including downtown. Available parking focused on short-term shopping trips. Free fare bus zone throughout downtown.	No minimums. Maximums: Residential: 0.5 - 1.3/unit Retail: 1/1,000 sq ft. Office: 1/1,425 sq ft. In 1975, the city set a downtown parking cap at 40,000 spaces in downtown, including existing spaces, spaces that had already been approved but not built, and a “reserve” from which new spaces would be allocated. The cap moved up to 44,000 by the late 1980's and moved up again around 1995.
San Diego	All development must include comprehensive transportation management plan, including on-site childcare, transit pass availability, etc. Development fees into Central City Transit Improvement Fund pay for transit improvements and street amenities.	Residential: Minimum: 0.1 - 0.5/unit. Maximum: 0.2 - 2.0/unit Retail and office: 1/1,000 sq ft maximum
San Francisco	Downtown Plan strongly restricts parking as a land use in greater downtown area. Transit Impact Fee of \$5/sq of office development collected.	Residential: 0.25/unit minimum. Other uses: none required Projects that propose 150% or more of required parking are subject to development review.
Seattle	Aggressive programs to reduce car use. Amount of parking required varies by access to transit In-lieu payment allowed instead of parking, along with substitutions: offering transit passes for five years allows 15% reduction in parking requirement. Office uses of more than 10,000 sq ft must have transit coordinator. No parking requirement in historic districts.	High transit access areas: Residential: no minimum. Retail: Min. 1 per 3,125 sq ft after first 30,000 sq ft. Office: 1/1,851 sq ft after first 30,000 Moderate transit areas: Residential: no minimum. Retail: Min. 1 per 1,330 after 30,000. Office 1/1,785 after 30,000
Vancouver, BC	Aggressive strategies to reduce cars. Free fare bus zone. Excellent pedestrian infrastructure. Amount of parking varies by access to transit. All developers pay fees for infrastructure, transit operations, neighborhood daycare, replacement housing and parks and open space. City pays for 60% of required parking in historic districts. In-lieu fees available instead of parking.	Most transit areas: 1/1500 max. 1/1150 min. Moderate transit: 1/1150 max. 1/950 min. Least transit: 1/950 max. 1/880 min.
Bellevue, WA	Since 1980, parking supply has remained constant at about 31,000 spaces off-street spaces, despite significant development and employment growth. City has set parking minimums and maximums and has pursued development of shared parking supply.	Min's and Max's vary by land use type

Boston, MA		In 1977, Boston adopted a freeze on commercial parking open to the public (not employer-provided employee parking). While the number of commercial spaces has not increased, the number of spaces exempt from the freeze increased 26% just between 1984 and 1987, which has led to an ineffective program.
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