



OFF-STREET PARKING ORDINANCE DRAFT ISSUES DOCUMENT

Created April 01, 2010

1. Shared Parking

Issue(s): The matrix that allows shared parking is based upon broad use categories (i.e. strip retail or commercial center) and hours of operation. As a result, its application is very limited especially in mixed use developments.

Recommendation: Research other auto dependent cities' shared parking and determine whether our matrix should be revised. The research will include the success of their shared parking ratios, use categories and changes that they would like to see made.

2. Grandfathering

Issue(s): When the ordinance was first adopted, language was included that grandfathered existing uses from providing additional parking. We have not required additional parking when the property ownership has changed and or a new tenant comes in for the same use. The ordinance has been in place over 20 years without businesses bringing their buildings up to the parking code.

Recommendation: Determine whether there should be a trigger mechanism for compliance, i.e., change of ownership, new lease holder for the same use. We need to carefully balance changes to the grandfathering provision to ensure that we don't create a situation where a building remains vacant and becomes an eyesore for the community because the building does not have adequate parking.

3. Occupancy

Issue(s): The term "occupancy" is referring to uses within the Parking Ordinance. It is frequently misinterpreted by employees and applicants with the Building Code use of occupancy classification.

Recommendation: Consider using the word "Use".

4. Parking ratio requirement

Issue(s): The parking requirements for specific uses have not been examined since the ordinance was first written. Development trends have changed and the parking requirements may not be reflective of current trends. Also some of the requirements are based upon the number of employees or students. This is an ineffective measure because the number of employees or students can increase within a building and not trigger another parking review.

Recommendation: Review the parking requirements for specific uses and determine if the uses need to be expanded and the ratios revised.

5. Revise the definition of a bar

Issue(s): The definition of a bar is not consistent with the TABC definition. This caused confusion as we worked in the Washington Avenue Corridor.

Recommendation: Revise the definition of a bar.

6. Off-site parking

Issue(s): The ordinance allows a business owner to provide off-site parking based upon certain criteria. These criteria include a maximum distance the off-site parking lot can be from a business 250' (customer) and 500'(employees). Our knowledge about pedestrians and how far they will walk has evolved over the years. The current acceptable industry standard for a comfortable walk (for transit) is 1/4 of a mile (1320 feet).

Recommendation: Review our numbers against industry standards and include items such as walkability (security, sidewalks and crosswalks, traffic calming measures, etc.)

7. Valet Parking

Issue(s): Certain businesses provide valet parking services where all or a portion of the required off-street parking is utilized for valet parking. In those instances where the valet parking utilizes the entire parking lot, patrons choose not to valet and park on the street. Other residents and business owners are frustrated with the street being clogged up with parking.

Recommendation: Determine whether valet parking should count towards fulfilling all or a portion of the required spaces.

8. Parking Management Area (PMA)

Issue(s): PMA's eligibility criteria, as currently defined in Chapter 26, are limiting. The criteria are written for areas like Uptown and the Medical

Center. Redeveloping areas like Washington Avenue and Montrose fail to meet the criteria and, as a result, each business is responsible for providing parking. There are no provisions in the ordinance that allow these redeveloping areas to share and develop parking lots.

Recommendation: Explore options that allow for smaller areas to manage and share parking.

Options include: a Business Improvement District, Parking Benefit District, PMA or a Management District. Whatever route we decide upon, it is clear that there needs to be an entity that is responsible for managing the parking, eligibility criteria and revenues to support the construction and management of parking. Revenues could be generated through parking meters (public and private), payment in lieu of providing parking or other revenue sources, i.e. TIRZ's.

9. Intensity of use

Issue(s): This phrase is difficult to define and creates confusion in administration of the ordinance. The 1996 amendment deleted this phrase and its definition from the ordinance. However, there is left over language that makes reference to increasing and intensity of use.

Recommendation: Remove this phrase from the ordinance.

10. Tents

Issue(s): The utilization of tents by bars and restaurants increases the area of service without providing for any additional parking. In some cases, tents are being installed over existing parking spaces, compounding the problem. Tents covering an area of 1200 square feet or greater are required to be permitted under Chapter 24 of the Fire Code but, not reviewed for parking.

Recommendation: Explore amending Chapter 24 of the Fire Code to require permits for tents covering an area of 1200 square feet or greater. Amend Chapter 26, Off-Street Parking Ordinance, to require additional parking for tented areas added to bars and restaurants.

11. Parking Incentives

Issue(s): The ordinance does not include parking incentives for development along the Transit Corridors or for restoration of a Landmarked or Protected Landmarked building.

Recommendation: Utilizing the recommendations of the Transit Corridor Consultant explore and develop parking incentives development along the

Transit Corridor (Transit Corridor Streets and Type A streets) Historic Building incentives - Research other auto dependent cities parking requirement for parking incentives to restore Historic Buildings.

12. Lifts

Issue(s): We are seeing an increase in the utilization of lifts by property owners to meet their parking requirements. These lifts require someone with knowledge on how to operate the lifts. The Planning Commission suggested that the utilization of lifts is more appropriate for valet companies or an owner that has a lift operator on site during peak hours.

Recommendation: Research other cities that allow the utilization of lifts to comply with parking requirements and develop criteria by which the lifts may count towards fulfilling the parking requirements.

Other Issues?

The Houston Planning Commission is examining off-street parking issues and whether changes to Chapter 26 of the Code of Ordinances are needed. The first step in this process will be a series of community meetings in April 2010 where the public can provide input on the challenges and issues surrounding off-street parking requirements.

If you cannot attend one of the meetings, you can always submit your comments/ideas by email to parkingcomments@cityofhouston.net.

You can also submit written comments to:

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Join the Conversation!

www.houstonplanning.com

All comments must be submitted by May 01, 2010

