

Accessible Parking Requirements

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As leaders repeal parking mandates across the United States, **how are cities ensuring access for people with different, and sometimes conflicting, mobility needs?** There is no one answer. Some jurisdictions have simply made off-street parking fully flexible, with any parking spaces built subject to existing accessibility standards. Other localities have gone in the opposite direction, mandating a minimum number of accessible parking spaces, regardless of how many total parking spaces were provided. Overall, our research found that code amendments that go beyond federal standards have rarely been utilized. Developments with no parking at all are an unusual corner case, as most developments continue to provide parking voluntarily.

This memo is intended to provide policymakers with an overview of the growing need for various sorts of accessibility, commonly referenced policies that regulate accessible off-street parking, and examples of specific legislative language adopted by other jurisdictions. These examples focus solely on zoning and building code requirements and do not include other programmatic strategies like designating accessible on-street parking.

Context: Americans with disabilities are a fast-growing population with diverse transportation needs

- 12.7 percent of Americans currently have a disability.¹
- Adults with disabilities (ages 18–64) are **2–3x more likely to live in a household without a car**, compared to adults with no disabilities.²
- They are **less likely to drive**. Only 60.4 percent of people (ages 18–64) with disabilities drive a vehicle, compared to 91.7 percent of non-disabled respondents.³
- People with disabilities are **less likely to travel by car**. People age 18–64 with disabilities use personal vehicles for 74.8 percent of trips; people without disabilities travel by car for 83.9 percent of trips.⁴
- People with disabilities are **more likely to use transit**. People age 18–64 with disabilities use local transit (buses, subways, and commuter rail) for a higher share of trips than people without disabilities. Workers: 4.3 percent to 2.7 percent. Non-workers: 5.9 percent to 3.3 percent.⁵
- Accessibility needs will increase with a **growing senior population**. Twenty-four percent of adults 65–74 have a disability. Over age 75, 48 percent have at least one disability, and 31 percent have ambulatory difficulty.⁶ In the past decade (from 2009–2019) the number of people aged 65 or older has grown from 39.6 million to 54.1 million. By 2040, there are expected to be 80.8 million Americans over age 65.⁷

Commonly referenced United States standards

Both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards require that accessible parking spaces be allocated in proportion to the number of parking spaces provided. These requirements provide equal access, but not special access. One way to think of it is: ADA policy alone cannot require someone to build a sidewalk, but if a sidewalk is built, it must conform to certain standards to make it usable for all. In many ways, Washington is wholly unprepared should one of its refineries close overnight, lacking:

Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines, US Department of Housing and Urban Development

*“The Guidelines provide that a minimum of **two percent** of the parking spaces serving covered [by the Fair Housing Act] dwelling units be made accessible and located on an accessible route to wheelchair users. Also, if a resident requests an accessible space, additional accessible parking spaces would be necessary if the two percent are already reserved.”¹⁸*

ADA Accessibility Standards, by the US Access Board

*“Accessible parking spaces are **required for each parking facility** on a site, such as lots and garages. Requirements apply equally to public and employee or restricted parking. On sites with multiple parking facilities, the minimum number of accessible spaces must be calculated separately for each parking facility instead of on the combined total of parking spaces provided on the site. At least one of every 6 accessible spaces, or fraction of 6, in each parking facility must be sized to accommodate vans.”¹⁹*

Minimum number of accessible parking spaces:

- If only **1 parking space** is provided on a site, it must be accessible to vans, providing a 3-foot aisle on either side for ramp or lift access.
- If **4 or fewer** total parking spaces are provided, then the one required accessible space does **not** have to be identified with a sign or reserved exclusively for people with disabilities. Accessible parking spaces must be designated with a sign when more than 4 total parking spaces are provided.
- For **every 6 accessible** spaces, at least 1 must be “**van-accessible.**” Van-accessible is an informative designation that ensures spaces are built to certain design standards, but does not restrict use of spaces to vans only.
- Between **501–1,000 parking spaces**, 2 percent of total parking spaces must be accessible.
- For **1,001+ parking spots**, 20 accessible spots + [1 per 100 parking spots above 1,000].

Parking Facility Total	Minimum Number of Accessible Spaces		
	Standard	Van*	Total (Standard + Van)
1 to 25	0	1	1
26 to 50	1	1	2
51 to 75	2	1	3
76 to 100	3	1	4
101 to 150	4	1	5
151 to 200	5	1	6
201 to 300	5	2	7

[\(View full, continued table online\)](#)

Some uses require additional accessible parking spaces:

- **Hospital outpatient facilities** require 10 percent of patient and visitor parking to be accessible spaces.
- **Rehabilitation and outpatient physical therapy** facilities that *specialize* in mobility issues require 20 percent of patient and visitor parking to be accessible. Rehabilitation facilities that provide, but that do not specialize in, services or treatment for persons with mobility impairments, such as general rehabilitative therapy centers, are not subject to the 20 percent requirement. In mixed-use facilities, the 20 percent may be applied only to the portion of spaces that are determined to serve the types of rehabilitation or outpatient therapy facilities covered by this provision.

Legislative examples

Cities and states have implemented the above standards, or gone beyond them, in differing ways.

Municipal level

Buffalo, New York

Refers to federal ADA standards

“All vehicle parking lots and parking structures must conform with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design and ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities published by the United States Access Board.”¹⁰

Hartford, Connecticut

Refers to state and federal standards

“Required Accessible Parking. Parking facilities accessible for persons with disabilities shall be in compliance with or better than the standards detailed in the state and federal building or accessibility requirements, including quantity, size, location, and accessibility.”¹¹

Anchorage, Alaska

Increase from federal ADA ratio of accessible spaces

In its late 2022 repeal of parking requirements, Anchorage increased its ratio of required accessible parking spaces above federal ADA standards. This change reads as new code [deleted code].¹²

“A portion of the total number of parking spaces provided in each parking facility for commercial, industrial, community, multifamily, and mixed-use residential uses shall be accessible parking spaces. These requirements are intended to reflect current national data on prevalence of mobility disabilities. However, buildings in multifamily or mixed-use developments that are single-family, two-family, or townhouse style structures are not subject to the accessible parking space requirement. The number of accessible parking spaces shall be determined based on the total number of parking spaces provided, in accordance with table 21.07-7[8], Accessible Parking Spaces, except where otherwise stated in this section.”

TABLE 21.07-7[8]: ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES

Total Parking Spaces Provided	Total Accessible Spaces Required	Number of Accessible Spaces that shall be Van-Accessible
1 to 10	1	1
11 to 25	2[1]	2[1]
26 to 50	4[2]	2[1]
51 to 75	6[3]	2[1]
76 to 100	8[4]	2[1]
101 to 150	11[5]	2[1]
151 to 200	14[6]	2[1]
201 to 300	14[7]	2
301 to 400	14[8]	2
401 to 500	14[9]	2
501 to 1000	3[2] percent of total	1 for every 6 accessible spaces
1001 and over	20 plus 2[1] for each 100 over 1000	1 for every 6 accessible spaces

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

Requires one drop-off/pick-up space for multifamily housing without off-street parking

When Minnesota repealed parking requirements in 2021, it added a provision to ensure an accessible route to a loading space for new multifamily developments.¹³ However, the requirement is flexible as to not require a property to mandate a curb cut if the development would not otherwise provide one. When off-street parking is provided, those spaces must continue to comply with the Minnesota State Building Code, which uses federal ADA standards.¹⁴

“530.155. - Residential developments without off-street parking or loading.

*Where a newly constructed development with **four (4) or more residential units** provides zero (0) off-street parking or loading spaces, at least one (1) **temporary drop-off and pick-up space** shall be provided and shall be clearly labeled as such. An accessible route shall be provided between the drop-off and pick-up space and the building. This provision **shall not mandate a vehicle curb cut** to a street where a curb cut **wouldn't otherwise be provided.**”¹⁵*

No buildings have been built with this configuration as of January 2023. However, all of the five parking-free housing developments studied for this report successfully requested an alternative compliance to this regulation, citing a lack of space on-site.

Edmonton, Alberta

Maintains parking minimums for accessible spaces. *Note: Canadian example not bound to US standards.*

When Edmonton repealed minimum parking requirements in 2020, it had to compensate for a tricky bit of language to maintain accessible parking standards. The Alberta Building Code based the amount of required accessible parking spaces (referred to as “barrier free”) on the number of parking stalls **required by the municipality**, not on parking stalls provided by the developer.¹⁶

Table 3.8.2.2.
Designated Parking Spaces
Forming Part of Sentence 3.8.2.2.(2)

Number of Parking Stalls Required	Number of Designated Stalls Required for use by Persons with Disabilities
2 - 10	1
11 - 25	2
26 - 50	3
51 - 100	4
for each additional increment of 100 or part thereof	One additional stall

The Alberta Building Code table that determines the number of required spaces for people with disabilities.

To compensate for this, the City of Edmonton adopted a new table, grouping uses into five categories, to establish a new minimum parking requirement **solely for the purpose of calculating the minimum quantity of barrier free parking.**¹⁷

“Table 54.2.3 shall only be used as a tool to calculate the required quantity of barrier free Vehicle Parking spaces, in accordance with the following:

a. Deemed Minimum Parking requirements are not intended to represent the absolute number of required barrier free Vehicle Parking Spaces;

b. Deemed Minimum Parking requirements shall be used as the basis for calculating the required quantity of barrier free Vehicle Parking spaces, in accordance with the applicable building code;

c. the Deemed Minimum Parking requirement does not create a requirement for standard Vehicle Parking spaces; and

d. the quantity of Vehicle Parking spaces provided for a development shall not apply as a substitute for the Deemed Minimum Parking requirements.”

Tiers	Deemed Minimum Parking For the purpose of calculating required barrier free Vehicle Parking Spaces
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a) Tier 1:

- Residential Sales Centre
- Auctioneering Establishments
- Casinos and Other Gaming Establishments
- Commercial Schools
- Funeral, Cremation and Interment Services
- Health Services
- Adult Mini-Theatre
- Community Recreation Services
- Exhibition and Convention Facilities
- Indoor Participant Recreation Services
- Outdoor Participant Recreation Services
- Services
- Private Clubs
- Public Park
- Special Event
- Spectator Entertainment Establishments
- Spectator Sports Establishments
- Tourist Campsites

i) 1 parking space per 10.0 m² of Floor Area, except that, any Use located within the area of application of the Main Streets Overlay as defined in section 819.2, Downtown Special Areas, or the Quarters Overlay, and is a permitted Use or a discretionary Use the following Deemed Minimum Parking applies:
 A) 0 Vehicle Parking spaces for the first 60 m² of Floor Area; and
 B) 1 Vehicle Parking space per 30.0 m² of Floor Area in excess of 60 m² of Floor Area

[\(View full, continued table online\)](#)

Under the Alberta Building Code, a 50-unit apartment building in downtown Edmonton would continue to require 3 accessible parking spots, regardless of how many were provided otherwise. The Province continues to be able to provide relief from barrier free requirements, particularly for reuse of existing buildings, where it would be infeasible to add parking. No new building projects requesting a waiver from the accessible parking minimums were found during the course of this research. Since 2020—the same year Edmonton eliminated minimum parking requirements—more than 20,000 vehicle stalls have been added to the city’s supply, including 850 barrier free parking spaces.¹⁸

Austin, Texas

Has two different programs: requires a minimum number of accessible spaces with flexibility by waiver or sets a floor of one accessible spot per building

For areas of the city without parking minimums, like the central business district and downtown mixed-use areas, developers have several options for how to provide required accessible parking.¹⁹ Only one apartment building has been built without off-street parking since the new code was adopted in 2013.

(1) If off-street parking is provided, it must include parking for persons with disabilities as required by the Building Code and may not include fewer accessible spaces than would be required under Paragraph (2)(a) of this subsection.

*(2) Except for a use occupying a designated historic landmark or an existing building in a designated historic district, **off-street motor vehicle parking for persons with disabilities must be provided** for a use that occupies 6,000 square feet or more of floor space under the requirements of this paragraph.*

*(a) The following requirements apply **if no parking is provided** for a use, other than parking for persons with disabilities:*

*(i) the minimum number of accessible parking spaces is calculated by taking **20 percent of the parking required for the use** under Appendix A (Tables of Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements) and using that result to determine the number of accessible spaces required under the Building Code. The accessible spaces may be provided **on- or off-site, within 250 feet** of the use.*

*(ii) The director may waive or reduce the number of accessible spaces required under Paragraph (2)(a)(i) if the **applicant pays a fee in-lieu** to be used by the city to construct and maintain accessible parking in the vicinity of the use. The availability of this option is contingent on the establishment of a fee by separate ordinance and the adoption of a program by the director to administer the fee and establish eligibility criteria. A decision by the director that a use is ineligible for a fee in-lieu is final.*

(iii) The director may waive or reduce the number of accessible spaces required if no accessible spaces can be provided consistent with the requirements of Paragraph (2)(a)(i) and the use is ineligible for participation in the fee in-lieu program under Paragraph (2)(a)(ii).

*(iv) An off-site or **on-street parking space designated** for persons with disabilities that is located within 250 feet of a use **may be counted** towards the number of parking spaces the use is required to provide under Paragraph (2)(a)(i).*

(b) If any off-street parking is provided for a use, other than parking for persons with disabilities, then the use is subject to the requirements in Paragraph (1)



Example: Capitol Quarters was Austin's first housing development to not provide any off-street parking in the downtown mixed-use district.²⁰ Under (2)(a)(i) the 30 apartments here would have required 15 ADA parking spaces. One accessible parking space was ultimately provided at the curb. Photo by Capitol Quarters.

Austin's **Affordability Unlocked Bonus Program** provides relief from parking requirements for housing projects that meet the guidelines for affordability, while setting a floor for a minimum number of accessible parking spaces.²¹

*(1) If the parking provided by a qualifying development with more than two units is fewer parking spaces than required in Appendix A (Tables of Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements), the **minimum number of required off-street accessible spaces is the greater of:***

*(a) **one** accessible parking space;*

*(b) the number of accessible spaces **required under the Building Code** based on 100 percent of the parking required for the use under Appendix A (Tables of Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements); or*

*(c) the number of accessible spaces **required under the ADA or the FHAA**, as appropriate.*

(2) An accessible space must be adjacent to the site and on an accessible route.

(3) An accessible parking space must comply with design, accessibility, and location requirements imposed by the ADA and the FFHA, as appropriate.

(4) Accessible parking detailed in Subsection (J)(1) must be provided offstreet except insofar as on-street or off-site parking is allowed elsewhere in this title."

The lowest-parking building that has been permitted under this program is the Ivory, which will provide three accessible off-street parking spaces and two spaces for vehicles shared by building residents.²²

State level

Oregon: Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities rules

Repeals parking mandates for facilities for people with disabilities, defers to State Building Code

Oregon specifically prioritized facilities for people with disabilities, among other equity related uses, for maximum parking flexibility as part of the Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) parking reform.²³ These provisions apply throughout the state's eight metro areas.

Cities and counties may not require parking for the following development types:

*Facilities and homes designed to serve people with **psychosocial, physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities**, including but not limited to a: residential care facility, residential training facility, residential treatment facility, residential training home, residential treatment home, and conversion facility as defined in ORS 443.400;²⁴*

CFEC did not affect accessible parking requirements defined by the State Building Code, ORS 447.233(2)(a), which prescribes a number of required accessible parking spaces relative to the number of spaces provided. CFEC goes as far as to exclude ADA parking from its definition of parking spaces affected by the regulation. In other words, it makes clear that repealing parking mandates does *not* mean repealing accessibility standards for any parking spaces that people build voluntarily.

*(29) "Parking spaces" means on and off-street spaces designated for automobile parking, **other than** parking spaces reserved for carpools, vanpools, or parking under the Americans with Disabilities Act.*

Oregon: Building Code

Refers to federal ADA standards.²⁵

The state building code prescribes a number or ratio of accessible spaces based on the amount of parking provided. "*The number of accessible parking spaces shall be:*" followed by a table that closely follows the ratios in the ADA. The state has interpreted that to mean that ORS 447.233(2)(a) limits the ability of local governments to require higher ratios, but could adopt parking requirements that would apply if zero parking spaces were provided—since it is not covered by the current table of requirements.

California: AB 2097

Repeals parking requirements near transit, no exceptions for housing for people with disabilities

This bill prohibits a public agency from imposing any minimum automobile parking requirement on any development project that is located within 1/2 mile of public transit.²⁶ It does provide an exception process available to jurisdictions, but **local agencies cannot oppose housing for people with disabilities** over parking requirements if the proposed development:

*(1) dedicates a minimum of 20 percent of the total number of housing units to very low, low-, or moderate-income households, students, the elderly, or **persons with disabilities**;*

(2) contains fewer than 20 housing units; or

(3) is subject to parking reductions based on any other applicable law.

Under the law, cities may still require both electric vehicle (EV) and ADA-compliant accessible parking spaces even if no other parking is provided:

(f) This section shall not reduce, eliminate, or preclude the enforcement of any requirement imposed on a new multifamily residential or nonresidential development that is located within one-half mile of public transit to provide electric vehicle supply equipment installed parking spaces or parking spaces that are accessible to persons with disabilities that would have otherwise applied to the development if this section did not apply.

Since this law has gone into effect, cities like Los Angeles have decided to maintain current EV and ADA regulations that are based on the amount of parking provided.²⁷

California: Building Code

References Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines²⁸

*“Accessible parking spaces shall be provided at a **minimum rate of 2 percent** of the covered multifamily dwelling units. At least once space of each type of parking facility shall be made accessible even if the total number exceeds 2 percent.”*

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