

Flexible Parking Policy for Washington Cities

Empowering local jurisdictions by crediting on-street parking towards off-street minimums.

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BACKGROUND: Cities across Washington are making it easier for homebuilders to meet parking mandates by allowing on-street parking to count towards a building's off-street parking minimum. It's a common-sense measure that recognizes the ways people already park their cars as counting toward their cities' efforts to build more homes and grow local businesses.

IMPACT: Just one additional parking space can mean the difference between a homeowner being able to construct a backyard cottage or not. That's why even small cities like **Anacortes** and **Port Townsend** are adding this flexibility to their zoning code to reduce barriers for accessory dwelling units. This flexibility also gives builders the option to forgo new curb cuts that turn public parking spaces into private ones, and it minimizes hazards for people walking and biking.

EXPERIENCE: The real experts in this policy are in **Spokane**, which has allowed all new developments to [use adjacent on-street parking](#) towards their off-street minimum **since 2012**.

Q&A with Spencer Gardner, Spokane Director of Planning Services

Are there ever conflicts between builders and permitting staff about whether adjacent street parking is legally permitted or not?

I'm not aware of any major differences of opinion. It has always been our policy to only count legal on-street spaces, so whether people are parking illegally or not **has not been a subject of contention** in my experience.

*Does the city need to keep a **database or records of these spaces**?*

No. We do not track, and there has **never been a need for tracking** expressed by either the community or staff that I'm aware of.

*If a building uses on-street parking to meet its minimums, is there ever an issue with **reallocating that space later, like to a bike or bus lane**?*

No. As we administer this rule, the approval of the development **does not create an inherent "hold" on on-street spaces**. So if a project were to repurpose parking spots for another use, it wouldn't raise any issues for the City.



This planned fourplex for a corner lot in Spokane was able to avoid costly alley improvements by utilizing on-street parking towards their parking mandate.



A homeowner in Anacortes used the on-street parking credit to build this ADU over a garage.