

To: Washington State Legislature
Re: Washington needs parking flexibility
January 2025

Dear Honorable Representatives and Senators,

Nowhere in Washington is there a parking space that is more important than a home or a job. Unfortunately, our outdated laws tell a different story. Predetermined parking mandates forbid countless residents from creating a home or a job without spending significant sums to overbuild unnecessary parking. All that excess concrete competes for valuable space that could be used to house a family or create a business, preserve trees or build greenspaces. The mandates make the things we want – from housing to daycare - more expensive and scarce.

These mandates also make it illegal to build the affordable, walkable main streets and convenient, close-knit neighborhoods that historically formed the cultural and economic hearts of communities across the state. The mandates apply whether or not anyone thinks the space will ever be used.

Costly parking mandates are a poison pill for housing affordability. Unnecessary mandatory parking requirements increase the cost of housing by adding \$5,000 to \$60,000 per stall, driving up prices for buyers and adding over \$200 on average to the cost of monthly rent. The unnecessary expense can push projects into the red, meaning many homes never get built. The building projects that do go forward frequently have fewer homes than they could, because they are constrained by the size of the parking lot. This drives up housing costs and restricts our ability to meet our housing production goals and keep costs under control.

Mandates also raise the price of most everything else. When we require builders to bundle excess parking with new buildings, we hide the cost of all this pavement inside the price of everything we buy, from groceries to childcare and healthcare. This also puts an unfair burden on people without cars, who are disproportionately lower income, elderly, BIPOC, or people living with disabilities.

Parking mandates are also terrible for the environment, locking cities and towns into sprawl and strip-mall style development. Mandates frequently force builders to chop down mature trees that shade our neighborhoods and clean our air. Paving over trees and other green spaces with concrete worsens heat-islands and toxic runoff. The mandates also create sprawl and increase traffic, since parking takes up so much space and it is cheaper to build on the edge of cities where land costs are lower.

Reforming our outdated system of parking mandates does not ban parking. Owners and builders still build parking, often choosing to build more than what is required, because most people rely on personal vehicles. Rather than a one-size-fits-all mandate that forces expensive overparking, parking reform provides flexibility to decide the right amount of parking to attract tenants or customers tailored to the specific context of the building and neighborhood.

Some parts of Washington, like Spokane, Port Townsend and Bellingham have already made parking fully flexible, returning decisions to homeowners, local builders, and small business owners. Shoreline is also following suit. Full parking flexibility makes sense in every community.

Please pass the Parking Reform and Modernization Act, sponsored by Senator Jessica Bateman, so that we may create more diverse and affordable housing options and create livable, walkable communities in Washington.

We, the undersigned, urge you to support this critical solution.

Futurewise
Sightline
Sierra Club Washington State
350 WA
American Farmland Trust
Climate Solutions
Washington Conservation Action
Housing Development Consortium
Habitat For Humanity, Seattle/King County
Black Home Initiative Network
Plymouth Housing
LISC Puget Sound
We Build Back Black Alliance (WBBA)
Spokane Low Income Housing Alliance
Whatcom Housing Alliance
American Association of Architects (AIA) Washington
UFCW 3000
SEIU 775
SEIU 925
SEIU 1199NW
IAM 751
Fuse Washington
Puget Sound Sage
Washington Community Alliance
NW Progressive Institute
City of Vancouver
Vancouver City Council
City of Port Townsend
Northeast Public Development Authority
Master Builders of King and Snohomish Counties
NAIOP Washington State
Washington Realtors
The Urbanist

Transportation Choices Coalition
Complete Streets Bellevue
Transit Riders Union
Move Redmond
Eastside Urbanism
West Seattle Urbanism
Seattle YIMBY
Strong Towns of Washington State
Spokane Rising
Parking Reform Network
Larch Labs

Mayor David Faber, City of Port Townsend
Deputy Mayor Amy Howard, City of Port Townsend
Mayor Linda Redmon, City of Snohomish
Councilmember Paul Dillon, City of Spokane
Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle, City of Vancouver
Councilmember Ty Stober, City of Vancouver

Anthony Gill, Editor of Spokane Rising
Mike Eliason, Founder, Larch Labs
Jesse Piedfort, Deputy Director, Sierra Club Clean Transportation for All Campaign
Scott Bonjukian, Urban Designer
Robert Cruickshank, Chair, Sierra Club Seattle
Ron Davis, editor/writer, Rendezvous newsletter