



Rational Parking

Is it really possible to have too much parking?

Figuring out how much parking to have in a neighborhood is a tricky balancing act. Too little, and prospective customers or residents have difficulty finding spots easily. Too much, and the empty lots are dead zones inviting crime and wasting space that could have contributed to the neighborhood. Further, high parking requirements make homes more expensive, cause higher rents that can make it impossible for local businesses to flourish, and make it harder to design beautiful buildings, parks and streets people enjoy.

Instead of a sea of parking, Great Communities provide only as much parking as is needed, reclaiming public space for parks, plazas, food markets, child care centers, clinics and other services.



Acres of land is wasted on parking lots which could have been dedicated to park land, open space or workforce housing.

Good parking policies tailor the supply to local conditions.

Finding the right balance depends on many factors and vary for different neighborhoods. Unfortunately, too many cities have one-size-fits-all policies designed for low-density areas with no public transit. These policies don't make sense for neighborhoods where people walk and take transit. At the very least, neighborhoods near transit should not require as much parking as the rest of the city. Additional conditions that call for less parking include:

Required Parking Spaces per Unit		
City	Studio	1 BR
Benicia	1	1
Berkeley	1	1
Daly City	1	1.5
East Palo Alto	1	1.2
Emeryville	0.5	1
Fairfield	1	1.33
Healdsburg	1.5	1.5
Livermore	1.5	1.5
Millbrae	1	1.5
Oakland	1.5	1.5
Petaluma	1	1
San Francisco	1	1
San Jose	1.5	1.5
Vacaville	1	1

Parking requirements in select Bay Area communities. Most of these are paired with policies that reduce parking demand.

VIBRANT AND COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS NEAR TRANSIT

Where we live has a big effect on how much parking we need. People own fewer cars in neighborhoods that have shops and frequent, high quality transit service. For example, residents of San Francisco's wealthy Nob Hill on average own one-fourth as many vehicles as residents in suburban San Ramon. Requiring more parking than is needed increases the cost of housing and undermines the character of those communities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING Low-income families own fewer cars than middle-income or wealthy families. According to 2000 Census data for the entire Bay Area, 15% of families making between \$25-35,000 did not own any cars.

SENIOR HOUSING Seniors own significantly fewer vehicles and thus generate lower demand for parking. In the Bay Area, households with all members aged 62 and above own 31 % fewer cars than households with no seniors.

Parking needs to be managed and optimized for local conditions. Too much parking can be more harmful than too little.

Reducing parking needs by reducing demand

SHARED PARKING LOTS Place a movie theater next to an office, and they can share. The office building uses the spaces during weekdays, while the theater needs weekend and weeknight parking.

CAR SHARE SERVICES City CarShare partners with home builders to include spots for car-sharing vehicles. This gives many households the convenience of a car while reducing the number of total parking spaces needed.

DESIGN FOR WALKING AND BICYCLING Most people prefer to walk if they can easily do their shopping, pick up a child from child care or meet other basic needs in their neighborhood.

PARKING MAXIMUMS Many communities developing station area plans are adopting parking policies that reflect the transit choices within a station area. People using transit, walking, or biking to their final destinations don't need parking.

UNBUNDLING PARKING COSTS FROM HOUSING COSTS Unbundling means that parking is rented or sold separately, rather than automatically included with buildings space. This allows the developer to make some or all parking optional when selling the units. Reducing the cost per unit by \$20,000 - \$40,000 creates a greater demand for units. This can also apply to rental units, reducing rental cost for residents without cars.



Carshare's prius located in a public parking garage within Library Gardens apartment complex in Berkeley, CA.

Cities that successfully manage parking to preserve Great Communities:

PETALUMA

The City's Smart-Code includes ways to reduce parking spaces based in a variety of ways:

- Parking spaces shared between adjacent properties. This includes parking lots within walking distance of the destination to support shared parking garages.
- Paying an in-lieu fee instead of building the spaces.
- Build parking spaces with permeable surfaces for stormwater runoff.



PALO ALTO

The City's zoning codes allow the planning director and the architectural review board to "defer" the standard minimum parking requirements when appropriate, as with transit-oriented affordable housing developments. The City can require the developer to hold open space in "landscape reserve" for additional parking in case the initial parking is insufficient. If parking demand is higher than expected, the open space can be converted to parking.



Checklist to ensure adequate parking supply determined by actual need:

- Are parking requirements lower near transit than in the rest of the city? Are there parking maximums rather than minimums?
- Are there clear policies that create incentives or require the use of Transportation Demand Management TDM measures? Such as in-lieu fees for parking spaces, free transit passes for new residents and employees, or parking studies that measure and monitor actual parking demand?
- Is structured parking encouraged rather than surface lots in high-density areas? Are there shared use parking lots allowing morning uses to mix with evening uses?



Traffic-Lite: Great Communities Have Less Traffic

How does Transit Oriented Development impact local traffic conditions?

Growth and development are happening in the Bay Area; it is just a matter of where. If we do not try to plan it around transit stations, then we are bound to face increased traffic. We need to decide whether we want car-centered or people-centered communities. If we continue to build as we have in the past, in low density tracts away from transit stations, then traffic will continue to worsen, compounded by future growth. Giving people choices so they can rely on transit for longer trips and walking or biking for short trips will go a long way toward decreasing the traffic and creating a new model for life in the Bay Area. Reducing traffic in the region is a central goal of creating transit oriented development.

How to ensure reduced traffic around a transit station:

By itself, locating homes and jobs next to transit stations will help. But to fully ensure that transit oriented development creates less traffic than a location far from transit, we must integrate the following:

DESIGN FOR PEOPLE TO WALK AND BIKE SAFELY People are much more likely to choose their feet or their bicycles as vehicles for getting around if they feel safe from crime and high speed traffic. Streets with lots of lights, activity and traffic signals that prioritize pedestrian and bicyclist safety are necessary to creating an environment with less vehicle traffic.

ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE If there are grocery stores, health clinics, child care centers, libraries, cafes, restaurants, and shops within walking distance of transit stations, homes or work, people will walk to use them.

In the Bay Area people who both live and work within a half mile of transit are ten times more likely to use transit.



Typical traffic conditions surrounding a compact affordable housing development across from the Pleasant Hill BART station in Contra Costa County.

BUILD COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS

Apartment dwellers own fewer vehicles than those in detached homes regardless of income. A recent study of the factors influencing vehicle ownership in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Chicago found that transit service and density, along with income and household size, explained virtually all the variation in vehicle ownership between different neighborhoods in each region.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING People who live in developments with affordable housing drive less and create less traffic. Higher-income households own significantly more vehicles than lower-income households.

SENIOR HOUSING Projects with homes for seniors also generate less traffic. In the Bay Area, senior households (all members are 62+) own 31% fewer cars than households with no seniors.

NO FREE PARKING Charging for parking reduces the number of trips people make, miles traveled, pollution and need for parking spaces. Free parking is a strong incentive to drive alone. Parking spaces can cost \$20-60,000 each to build and in many places take up more space than the buildings they serve. Free parking is a big subsidy for drivers, and usually comes at a cost to those who use transit, bike, or walk. The land and resources used for parking could instead have been invested in wider sidewalks, lighting, benches, trees or public art.

Development at a transit station versus development away from transit:



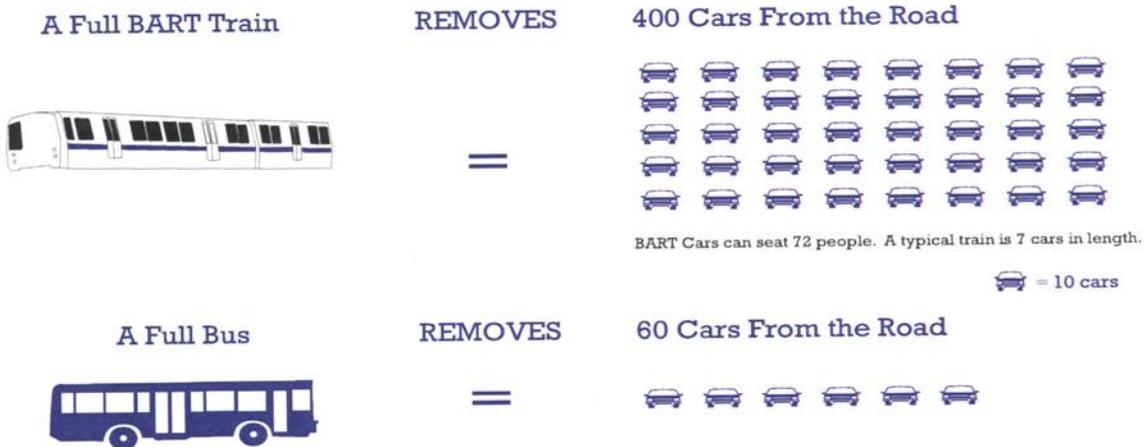
Pleasant Hill Transit Village

- 1,200 new homes
- 700,000 square feet of retail
- 1.3 million square feet of Offices
- 140 acres
- Next to Pleasant Hill BART

Northwest Pacific Plan, San Ramon

- 830 new homes
- no shops
- no offices
- 290 acres
- 9 miles to the nearest BART

Pleasant Hill Transit Village will create 1,800 fewer car trips per day than a similar development far from transit, even though the other development has fewer homes, fewer jobs, fewer shops and fewer community services.



Alice Slaughter - Resident of Metro Walk, Richmond, CA:

Living next to BART saves a lot of money on gas and transportation. There's less wear and tear on our car and it's simply less stressful than driving through heavy traffic, not knowing if I will get to work on time. I take BART everyday to downtown Oakland. Without BART as a viable transportation option I would have paid \$10 per day just for parking, in addition to sitting in traffic, battling traffic, and being stressed out when I got there. Being able to live within walking distance to BART allows me to begin and end almost everyday with a relaxing BART ride.