



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

400 LA CROSSE STREET | LA CROSSE, WI 54601 | P: (608) 789-7512

Memorandum

To: Neighborhood Revitalization Commission

From: Tim Acklin, AICP

CC:

Date: **April 30, 2021**

Re: Update on the Ordinance to eliminate off-street parking requirements.

To date I have feedback from eight Neighborhood Associations, the Apartment Association of the La Crosse Area, and have conducted multiple interviews with individuals who are local developers or landlords. I have one remaining neighborhood association scheduled to talk to.

To date I have heard the following:

Apartment Association of the La Crosse Area

“We are in favor of keeping the requirement of one parking stall per bedroom for many reasons.”

- Safety of our tenants.
- Tenants want off street parking. It makes rental properties with off street parking more desirable.
- On street parking in front of the premises should be kept for guests of the tenants within the buildings.
- The paid commuter parking areas around UW-L and WTC are not being used and those people are parking within the neighborhoods and walking further to campus, thus creating more parking congestion.
- Those that have off street parking lots are spending time having illegally parked cars towed, which is creating frustration for all involved.
- We don't want to see taxpayer money (TIF and other) being spent to subsidize a development or parking ramp or lot for a development.
- The parking study that was done looked at parking in the Goosetown neighborhood on a weekday afternoon when students have typically taken their cars to school or work or are not home. This was a really poor time to analyze the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Associations

- Have the cities of similar size cited in the study been contacted to find out how it is going with them? What is happening to their trends in public transportation? Has it been better utilized? Is the investment paying off?
- Are there specific counts for each neighborhood or just the study areas?
- Effort may stop students from bringing their cars. Would need better public transportation.

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- Would like to see a check in 5 years to see what impact this ordinance had. Should include a sunset clause and re-evaluation.
- Why do we need a change?
- Will this make it easier to convert homes to multi-family.
- Change Ordinance to also eliminate the ability to pave over your back yard for parking
- This seems like it would be a convenience to homeowners and an inconvenience to students.
- Provide secure outdoor bike storage could be a reduction in the existing requirement.
- Worried about building cheaply and putting the burden on the city streets and surrounding property owners.
- Needs to be in sync with the on-street parking programs and the Parking Utility. Needs to be partnered with the Parking Utility, MTU, and others to be successful.
- Could lead to less car dependency.
- Will existing buildings be allowed to eliminate parking?
- Existing owner-occupied homes on small lots with no off-street parking worried about being able to park near home.
- Instead of city-wide, keep requirements in single family zoning. Eliminate in areas with higher density zoning and development. Keep in Traditional Neighborhood Developments.
- Why the 5,000sqft threshold for TDM plans?
- Concerned about capacity of the streets.
- Won't bring visitors or shoppers to La Crosse if no parking.
- Will this require metering and/or time restrictions on other streets if people now have to park further away.
- Worried about the market dictating it correctly. Current properties removing parking. Needs to be a threshold that requires parking review.
- Whole city not the same. Different needs in different parts of the City
- Surrounding citizens should have a say if a development is proposing no parking. Notify like rezonings.
- What about the required handicapped spaces for new developments.
- Winter parking concern and alternate side parking. How does this affect that policy?
- No sidewalks in our neighborhood now. Have to walk in the street and would have to walk around a car.
- People should be required to do something.
- Should be required to provide a place to plug in a car. Electric cars.
- Would be hard to see to turn with more cars on the streets.
- Would love to have a "no-car" city. Very forward looking. It is a big step. Should be gradual. Also need to have good public transportation.
- Would be hard with alternate side parking.
- Should be evaluated on a project by project basis.
- Would increase the competition for off-street parking.
- All are paying for the streets. Should not compete for them.
- Provide an opportunity for difference in land use.
- Drastic move. Will clog the streets. Can we meet in the middle and only require half the requirements?
- Currently an outdated requirement. May not be so drastic.
- Do we let our problem areas guide this policy?

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- This does not eliminate parking. Would allow opportunities to develop more tax base.
- Could support eliminating requirements, but would need an increase in alternate forms of transportation.
- Provide opportunities for an increase in green space and better density.
- More cars on the streets does not make a good neighborhood.
- Better for cars to be parked on the street than making a tooth for a surface lot.
- Will drive all the cars to the streets and make it difficult for bikes.
- This will crowd the streets. Hard to find on-street parking as it is.
- Will be a step back for parking.
- Bad timing of survey to not be done during peak time of students.
- Non-student tenants. What will be the impact to them? Will it exasperate their existing struggles?
- Needs to be a harder look at how the study was broken down.
- How does this policy impact neighborhoods?
- The pay to park program will impact car usage. Parking to cheap now.
- 8-story buildings on Cass Street already do not have enough parking. People parking blocks away now. Policy would push them farther away.
- Hard to park on streets now. Not sure why there is a perception that there is a lot on available on-street parking.
- Require an electric plug in for cars as part of developments.
- Policy to be used in conjunction with Accessory Dwelling Units to convert surface parking to tax base.
- On-street parking opportunities near Aquinas High School, Lincoln Middle, and Elliot Arms not a reality. Any new building would make this area even more swamped with cars.
- More cars parked on the street would make it undesirable to come to La Crosse if visitors for tenants can't find a place to park.
- Need to coordinate this policy with the Police Department and other parking policies.
- Agree with the goal for the City to be greener and create healthier neighborhoods.

Individual Interview comments

- Land is valuable. Concept to allow for more tax base instead of parking is great.
- More likely to work for developments near parking ramps.
- Would not develop without parking
- No parking at all would be difficult. Could still work with a .5-.8 to 1 ratio.
- Could work depending on walkability of area
- Quality of Mass Transit important. Opportunity to MTU to be profitable and have greater use. Maybe require those developments who want little to no parking to buy bus passes for their tenants.
- Could work if close proximity to jobs.
- Would need more electric charging stations and planning for autonomous vehicles to encourage less dependency on cars.
- Should be looked at on a development by development basis for less or no parking.
- Would there still be an assessment for the properties in the DT Parking District?
- Landlords would start charging for parking.
- Underground parking even more that the 17-20% cited in the narrative.

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- Should start out as pilot program. Willing to be the first.
- No one will likely build with no parking.
- 1 to 1 is hard to make work on some redevelopment sites, especially with building costs going up.
- Incentivize other forms of transportation.
- Current requirements have made several potential developments not possible. I look forward to doing multiple larger scale developments in the multi-family area if this new agenda is to pass through. The positives are updated housing, increasing the city's tax base, and very possibly encouraging students/members of the city to use various other modes of transportation that would be beneficial to the city as well as to the environment (i.e. busing, bicycles, on foot). I also think this new proposal would uplift the overall look of the city, specifically the student housing areas that I am more personally involved in. It could open up the possibility of developers to use smaller spaces more effectively, develop areas currently not looked at heavily, and maybe increase business interest into new areas. I also understand the down side to this possible change. Alternate-Side parking may be a problematic area. Snow removal may also see some issues. Over the past 20 years of being involved in the student housing area; however, I have not noticed a big issue with street parking availability but that would be something to consider as a potential negative.
- Good rationale in the narrative.
- Having some guidelines would be better. Use the TDM plan to justify having less or none. Have some ability to require some parking.
- Who in town can do a TDM Plan?
- Define "substantial renovation" in (C2)
- Concerned about some landlords only caring about themselves and developing no parking and pushing it all to the streets making a terrible situation for others.
- More worried about smaller developments than larger ones. Like 6-8plexes. Easier to not provide parking.
- .8 to 1 ratio rather than a 1 to 1 for student developments. Less than that requires a TDM. Becomes a negotiation then. Don't need 1 to 1.
- I can give you my take on the subject, although it is just my opinion based on what I have seen over a 20 + year career. It is a balancing act. If you have too few spots your tenants will look elsewhere. The people who don't get a spot become unhappy. The fewer spots you have the more turnover. I would bet that 90 plus percent of people between the ages of 18 and 70 need and want their car. I understand the idea of how a large metro area would want to head that way. The concept of density shooting through the roof at the core and the tax base expanding with it. The biggest obstacle is the reality of what the tenants want. Twenty years ago, I built buildings with an 80% parking ratio. Then I built buildings with 100% ratio. I can say without a doubt that the need and desire for parking has grown over the years. I would not invest my money into a building with less than 85 to 90% parking. To serve my customers I need to provide what they want and our looking for. The progression is for each building to be better than the last and provide more amenities. Taking the parking spot away (not providing) would be going the other way in a big way. I do see the strong pull to do so as it would in theory increase your density and really give the appearance of a great investment for both the city and

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the landlord. Yet I believe that in reality it would lose in the long run. I just don't see the trend reversing itself.

Staff Takeaways/themes

- 1) Overall people are on board with opportunities to reduce the number of single occupancy trips of vehicles and dependency on the car.
- 2) Concerns have been expressed over the data and findings from the Parking Study. Issues raised have been with the hours where parking counts were conducted. They were done during student peak times in the evening and early morning hours. Also, looking at the study boundaries it was felt that some areas with high volumes of on street parking were not factored into its findings.
 - a. Staff spoke with the consultants who prepared the parking study about these concerns. Scope of the plan was to analyze parking during daytime hours in order to evaluate daytime parking programs. The findings in the study that suggest that there is an overabundance of parking is not a general statement about the city as a whole, only for certain areas.
- 3) Policy change may work/be supported with other policy implementation and an improved/efficient public transportation system.
- 4) Developers/landlords saw the benefit of being able to provide more units instead of parking. However, they were either opposed to reducing the one-to-one ratio or only in favor of reducing it, not eliminating it.
- 5) All developers/landlords indicated that they would still provide off-street parking as part of their development.
- 6) Neighborhood Associations geographically located in the higher density, central core of the city were strongly opposed to the elimination of off-street parking requirements. They felt there was already a parking congestion problem on the streets. The neighborhood associations around the periphery of the city limits, or with little to no large multi-family or commercial developments, were supportive of the vision but overly cautious of how it would affect other areas of the city.

Staff Recommendations

- 1) The parking study should not be used as supporting evidence for this policy decision. The scope was not designed to provide the data. A large timeframe of the day that is considered high/peak volume of on-street parking (10pm-3am) was not included. This study was design for daytime parking hours only and its findings of an overabundance of parking should not be considered as a general statement across the whole city.
- 2) There was a considerable amount of opposition, particularly for the elimination of the (1:1) ratio for multi-family development, from the neighborhood residents and the Apartment Association of the La Crosse Area. Should the NRC still want to pursue this change perhaps the ratio is reduced from (1:1) to a range of (.6-.8:1).
- 3) The NRC may also consider this policy on a geographic basis. A boundary could be established in parts of the city where the ratio is reduced for multi-family rather than a complete elimination.
- 4) Should the ordinance be submitted to the Council in its current form staff feels that there was enough opposition to prevent any form of this effort from moving forward. A compromise of some sort is encouraged, whether it includes a ratio reduction, property owner notification if a development is only providing a certain percent of parking, all off-street parking requirements are mandatory if development is a certain size, establishment of zones where complete elimination is permitted, or a combination of any of the above.