

From: Andrew Ericson <ericson.andrew777@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2024 9:24 AM
To: ZZ City Clerk External
Subject: Support for Parking Minimum Deregulation

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Mayor Reynolds and Common Council,

I'm writing to express my support for deregulating off-street parking requirements. Over the past year, I've attended discussions on this topic at the Neighborhood Revitalization Commission (NRC), which led to the recommendation before you today.

What stood out most to me in those discussions was the transformation I witnessed. Some individuals who were initially skeptical—a few seemingly opposed—ultimately voted to support a citywide deregulation of parking minimums. Their shift came after understanding three key points:

1. The negative impacts parking minimums have had on housing affordability, land use, and sustainability.
2. Nearby and comparable cities have successfully eliminated these requirements without the feared consequences that opponents often cite.
3. The simple fact that a one-size-fits-all ratio makes no sense, especially in a city like La Crosse, where 40% of residents are non-drivers.

Removing these requirements makes sense for a city like ours. We're short on space, struggling with a tough housing market, and committed to addressing climate change. This policy is part of our comprehensive plan, climate action plan, and housing study because it supports all three priorities.

Parking demand is complex and highly context-dependent. Building at the fringes of the city, as some do, might cater to car owners but is often impractical for those without vehicles (like me). Conversely, developments near bus lines, within walking distance of amenities like grocery stores, or targeting populations with lower car ownership might require far less parking, such as the Lincoln Middle School with a parking ratio of around 0.5. And then there's the question of the target demographic for each development. Housing for college students, young professionals, families, or seniors will all have vastly different parking needs. In fact, there is another development, around the corner from the Lincoln Middle School project that is looking at around 1.5 parking places per unit, due to it being for a different market. In essence, you literally can have two side by side properties with massively different parking needs.

Meanwhile, other factors—like improvements in transit, the adoption of new mobility technology, changing car ownership trends, and shifting generational preferences—make it clear that demand will continue to evolve. A rigid, one-size-fits-all policy cannot keep pace with these nuances.

I understand concerns about an increase in on-street parking, but I believe this would be manageable. At worst, we may see an uptick in on-street parking in some areas. However, this could work to the city's and resident's

advantage. When comparing the tax base impact of surface parking lots versus buildings that generate tax revenue, the shift toward better use of public space, like on-street parking, could help strengthen our tax base. A stronger tax base directly benefits residents by supporting vital city services, which all too often we are looking at cutting. This is especially important as many residents are already feeling the strain of property tax.

I also recognize that the city is in the process of a zoning code update, which is an exciting initiative. However, waiting 18-24 months for this process to play out is unnecessary when we have a simple solution to one part of the problem right now. Renters like me are already feeling the pressure of a tight housing market. Addressing this issue now would help alleviate housing challenges by removing a barrier that drives up costs and limits housing supply.

La Crosse has a unique advantage. Our geography, nestled between the river and the bluffs, has kept us dense and walkable, sparing us from the worst of urban sprawl. As public preferences shift toward walkable communities, we're perfectly positioned to meet that demand. Deregulating parking requirements is a meaningful step toward embracing that future and ensuring a more affordable, sustainable, and livable city. And creating a city that I, myself a young professional, wants to live in for years to come.

Thank you for considering this important issue. I'm confident this change will benefit La Crosse for years to come, and I appreciate your time and leadership in shaping our city's future.

Regards,

Andrew