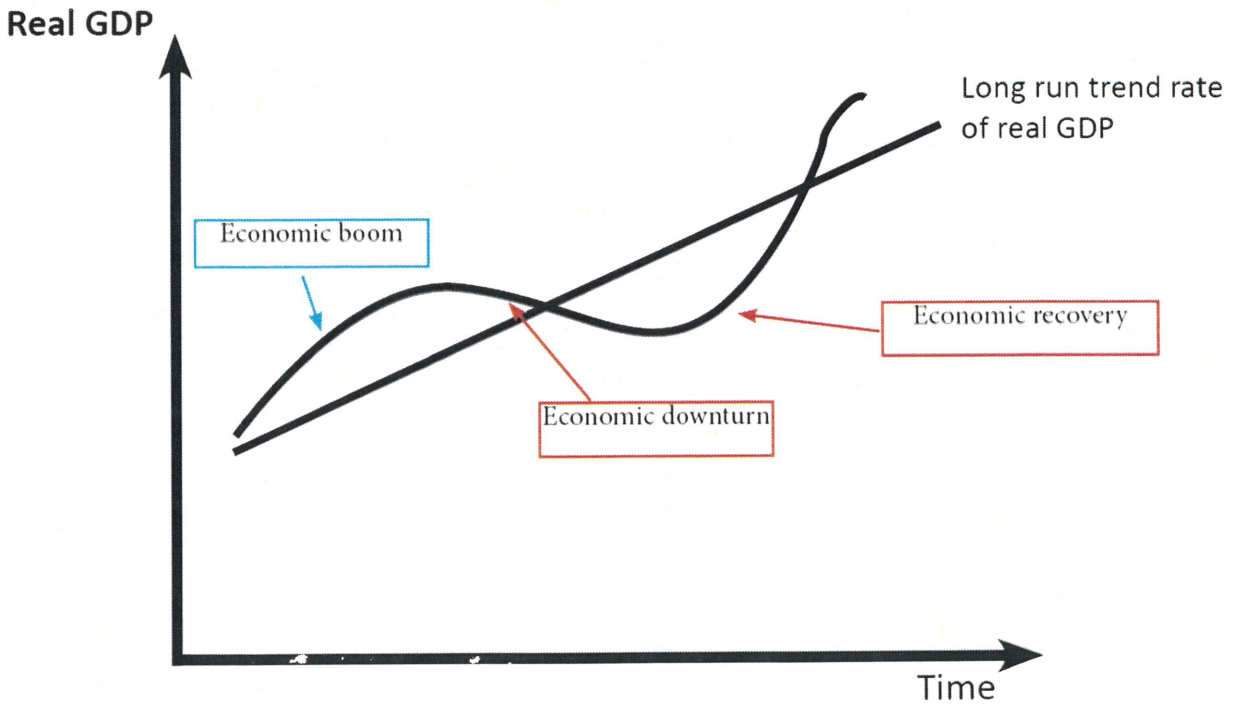


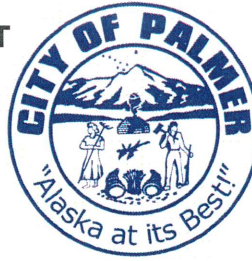


City of Palmer
Board of Economic Development
Regular Meeting
April 1, 2024



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**BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 1, 2024, 6 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
231 W. EVERGREEN AVENUE, PALMER
www.palmerak.org**



CHAIRMAN	Lorie Koppenberg
BOARD MEMBER	Christopher Chappel
BOARD MEMBER	Trisha Sims
BOARD MEMBER	Kelsey Anderson
BOARD MEMBER	Janet Kincaid
BOARD MEMBER	Lindsey Cashman
BOARD MEMBER	Louis Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:
CITY MANAGER – John Moosey

AGENDA

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Approval of Agenda
- E. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings
 - 1. Regular Meeting of February 5, 2024
- F. Reports – Staff
- G. Audience Participation
- H. Unfinished Business
 - 1. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM 23-003, Discussion of City of Palmer’s Central Downtown parking requirements (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)
 - 2. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM 24-001, Palmer’s 2023 Economic Development Strategic Plan – 2024 Update and Work Plan Update (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)
- I. New Business
- J. Board Member Comments
- K. Adjournment

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Minutes

**BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF PALMER, ALASKA**

**SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2024
6:00 P.M. - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

A. CALL TO ORDER:

The special meeting of the City of Palmer Board of Economic Development was called to order by Chair Koppenberg at 6:00 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL:

Present and constituting a quorum were Board Members:

Lorie Koppenberg, Chair

Louis Young

Trisha Sims

Lindsey Cashman

Christopher Chappel (via Zoom teleconference)

Absence(s) excused without objection:

Kelsey Anderson

Janet Kincaid

Also, present were:

Brad Hanson, Community Development Director

Pam Whitehead, Recording Secretary (via Zoom teleconference)

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge was led by Jack Snodgrass.

D. ORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD:

1. Election of Chair:

Following nomination:

Main Motion: To elect Board Member **Lorie Koppenberg** to serve as Chair for the ensuing term.

Moved by: Chappel

Seconded by: Young

Vote: Unanimous (Cashman, Chappel, Young, Sims, Koppenberg)

Action: Motion Carried by roll call vote.

2. Election of Vice Chair:

Following nomination:

Main Motion: To elect Board Member **Louis Young** to serve as Vice Chair for the ensuing term.

Moved by: Koppenberg

Seconded by: Chappel

Vote: Unanimous (Cashman, Chappel, Koppenberg, Sims, Young)

Action: Motion Carried by roll call vote.

E. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The agenda was approved as presented without objection by all members present.

F. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

The minutes of the **December 4, 2023, Special Meeting** were unanimously approved as presented.

G. REPORTS:

Director Hanson reported:

- Introduced new Board member Kelsey Anderson absent from meeting and welcomed her husband as new Board member to Parks and Rec Advisory Board.
- Requested Lindsey Cashman to introduce herself as new Board member.
- Update on library – City Council approved re-negotiating the current contract with Wolf Architecture to continue with design and construction management of library.
- City Council approved the budget for the year.
- Responded to questions regarding the new library.
- Commented regarding the City being an active sponsor of the Arctic Winter games from March 10-16th.

H. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: None.

I. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM 23-003, Discussion of City of Palmer’s Central Downtown parking requirements (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole).

Main Motion: To enter Committee of the Whole to discuss IM 23-003.

Moved by:	Young
Seconded by:	Sims
Vote:	Unanimous (Chappel, Sims, Cashman, Young, Koppenberg)
Action:	Motion Carried by roll call vote.

[The Board entered Committee of the Whole at 6:20 p.m.; exited at 8:02 p.m.]

Chair Koppenberg addressed parking in the downtown Central Business District creating economic development issues for businesses and residents. Presented a comparison table with information from the parking code and the central business district parking code to the Board as a handout to review and discuss, with the purpose of requesting a joint meeting with City Council to offer suggestions to find solutions to the parking issue.

Committee of the Whole topics included:

- Discussion began with focusing on parking requirements for restaurants, bars, bakeries, and high traffic businesses.
- Discussed challenges with parking on private property, highlighting the financial burden faced by property owners.

- Emphasized the need for businesses with high parking demand to provide the required parking space.
- Director Hanson spoke about the process of change of use of a building and building permits and the effects on parking requirements.
- Discussed the difficulties of monitoring and enforcing parking requirements based on the number of employees a business has. It was proposed not to consider staff in parking requirements development, but to account for it in a more identifiable manner such as square footage.
- Briefly discussed the cost of a parking spot, enforcement strategies, and what other cities have done in similar situations.
- Expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts on economic development with additional regulations and code enforcement.

[The Board continued in the Committee of the Whole without objection for ease of discussion of next agenda item]

Director Hanson will gather additional information regarding parking code requirements for the next meeting.

J. NEW BUSINESS: None.

1. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM 24-001, Palmer's 2023 Economic Development Strategic Plan – 2024 Update and Work Plan Update (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)

Committee of the Whole topics included:

- Director Hanson gave a brief overview of the Economic Development Strategic Plan and the action the Board has taken in the past when reviewing the information.
- Announced purchase of a data platform utilizing cell phone analytics for traffic and travel pattern analysis to help understand visitor demographics, travel patterns, and post-visit activities, and help create better policies for our public facilities.
 - Emphasized that the data is not used to track individual movements but rather to understand general trends.
- Suggested narrowing the focus to a few key items for discussion and action for successful accomplishment of specific goals.
- Commented to remove Objective A from Goal 3 since it has been accomplished.
- A request was made to invite the new CEO of the Alaska State Fair to speak at a future meeting.
- Commented about the modern library not fitting within the designated historic area and the importance of signage for 'historic downtown Palmer'.
- Spoke of potential development along the highway of the intersection of Palmer-Wasilla Highway and Trunk Road along with the impact of traffic and future road connections.
- The city's industrial park, which has seen significant growth and is nearly at capacity, was also discussed, with a consensus to focus on industrial areas in the coming year.

[The Board exited the Committee of the Whole without objection at 8:02 p.m.]

K. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Board Member Sims:

- Commented she liked the idea of gathering more data and also liked the idea of focusing more on the industrial aspect.

Board Member Young:

- Commented he also liked the idea of gathering more data.

Board Member Cashman:

- Looking forward to next work session and more information about the AI program.

Chair Koppenberg:

- Welcomed new Board member Cashman.
- Announced the Wearable Arts Fashion show in a couple of weeks at the Depot.

L. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned without objection at 8:05 p.m.

APPROVED by the Board of Economic Development this _____ day of _____, 2024.

Lorie Koppenberg, Chair

Brad Hanson, Community Development Director



Unfinished Business



**CITY OF PALMER
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 24-002**

SUBJECT: Discussion of PMC 17.64 and Impacts of Parking Requirements
Development Plan

AGENDA OF: April 1, 2024

ATTACHMENTS:

1. BED IM – 23-003
2. City Manager Moosey Memorandum "Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in City Parking"
3. PMC 17.64 Parking and Loading
4. Parking Matrix Modification by Chairperson Koppenberg
5. Various Parking Articles

Chairperson Koppenberg asked that discussion regarding City of Palmer's Parking and Loading requirements be placed on the agenda at the BED's December regular meeting. Chairperson Koppenberg has provided a matrix that outlines proposed changes to the parking code.

Board members should consider the information provided and discuss the effects of changes. If it is the desire of the BED to recommend changes, a resolution will be drafted that captures the changes. These proposed changes can be a part of the joint meeting between the City Council and BED. If the City Council would like to consider changes, a request will be sent to the Planning and Zoning Commission for evaluation and the drafting of an ordinance to bring back to council for debate.

Also included in the packet are articles that discuss the potential impact of parking code on business development, City Manager Moosey Memo regarding city parking and PMC 17.64



**CITY OF PALMER
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 23-003**

SUBJECT: Discussion of Palmer Municipal Code 17.64 Parking and loading

AGENDA OF: February 5, 2024
December 4, 2023, Special Meeting
October 9, 2023

February 5, 2024, Update

No new information was provided to staff. The packet is the same as the special meeting.

December 4, 2023, Special Meeting

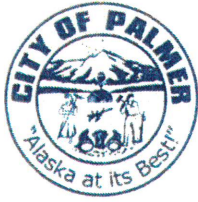
A special meeting has been requested to discuss City of Palmer Parking Code requirements. Chairperson Koppenberg is to provide staff with recommendations, so the BED can consider drafting a resolution for the city council to consider.

December 4, 2023, Update

Packet material includes items provided at the October Meeting.

October 9, 2023, Meeting

Chairperson Koppenberg has requested that this item is on the agenda for discussion. Included in the packet is a parking study conducted by City Manager Moosey regarding potential solutions to event parking issues.



John Moosey
City Manager

City of Palmer
231 W. Evergreen Ave.
Palmer, Alaska 99645-6952
(907) 761-1317
E-mail: jmoosey@palmerak.org
www.palmerak.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Palmer City Council
FROM: City Manager
DATE: May 18, 2023
SUBJECT: Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in City Parking

I. SUMMARY

The City of Palmer is facing familiar parking challenges, characteristic of many growing communities. While additional parking spaces might seem like an easy solution, we must also consider aesthetics, business activity, and the optimal utilization of our limited space. Our focus should not only be on increasing parking infrastructure, but on effective parking management strategies that enhance our city's functionality and attractiveness.

II. CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Managing parking in a growing suburban city like Palmer requires careful planning, collaboration between city officials, residents, businesses, and strategic decisions by the City Council. Here are the challenges and potential solutions we should consider:

1. **Lack of Parking Infrastructure:** As we grow, we should explore creative solutions such as multi-level parking structures, shared parking agreements, and better public transportation to reduce the dependency on cars.
2. **Parking Restrictions:** We must ensure that parking restrictions are clear, consistent, and well-communicated to avoid confusion and accidental violations.
3. **Parking Enforcement:** Consideration should be given to outsourcing parking enforcement to a professional service, which can operate more effectively and efficiently than our current resources allow.
4. **Parking for Businesses:** We need to work closely with businesses to identify their parking needs and offer feasible solutions such as parking permit programs, shared parking agreements or off-site parking facilities.

CITY OF PALMER

III. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PARKING

The Central Business District is particularly affected by these parking issues. Although our residential population is declining, business activities, recreation, and special events have significantly increased. This growth and influx of visitors puts pressure on our limited parking resources, which must be managed effectively to prevent any negative impact on our city's vibrant downtown culture.

Challenging Questions:

1. What is the City's responsibility to create more parking? Currently, we have 185 public parking spaces. Should we invest more?
2. How can we balance limited downtown space for business opportunities against space for cars?
3. How does parking enhance or detract from business growth, given that our City's revenue is primarily based on sales tax?
4. What is the proper balance between what the city receives from its business community (sales tax) and what the city invests in business opportunities?

IV. CASE STUDIES AND QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Please refer to the detailed descriptions and challenging questions raised in the attached document for specific case studies including the Eagle Hotel Parking Lot, the conflict between a new successful business and a neighboring establishment, and the effects of community events on parking.

V. CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate Actions:

- A. Seek the Council's input on balancing commercial investment and city requirements like parking, landscaping, and accessibility.
- B. Ask the Planning Commission to review our current parking code, last revised in 2020.
- C. Create 12 new downtown parking spaces north of the depot.



- D. Require Palmer Area Chamber of Commerce to provide offsite parking for Friday Flings and Colony Days.

Short Term Actions:

- A. Act on results of the City of Palmer Downtown Public Outreach.
- B. Hire a third-party firm to analyze the feasibility and impact of the 557-train operation downtown.
- C. Consider a shuttle service between downtown and the MTA Center.

Long Term Actions:

- A. Create a two-sided angled car park along Colony Way for increased downtown parking.



- B. Negotiate with the Eagle Hotel to improve their extra required parking lot, providing an additional 18 prime parking spots.

The City of Palmer's continued economic growth depends heavily on effective parking management. Thoughtful investment and planning are critical to ensure our community's prosperity. Parking challenges must be carefully considered and remain a priority for our downtown area.

Attachments:

- 1. Addendum 1: Parking Numbers
- 2. Addendum 2: City of Palmer Parking Code
- 3. Addendum 3: Case Studies and Questions for Consideration

Let's address these challenges and opportunities together, aiming to create a balanced, effective parking solution for our city.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Moosey'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

John Moosey, City Manager

ADDENDUM 3: CASE STUDIES AND QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

PARKING CASE STUDIES AND QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. EAGLE HOTEL PARKING LOT



In 20XX, Eagle Hotel was required by the city code to create additional parking. As a solution, they acquired a lot which currently sits vacant, used only occasionally for transient parking and vehicle storage. Despite being unsightly and attracting unsavory activities, this lot has potential to be an asset to the city's parking resources. However, it needs significant improvements to ensure it meets city aesthetic standards and discourages illicit activities. Future decisions need to focus on how to transform this lot into a valuable parking asset while considering safety and aesthetic elements.

2. NEW SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS UPSETS NEIGHBOR



In 2022, a new business, a small restaurant with a seating capacity for 35, opened in a General Commercial district. The restaurant's success, especially during breakfast and lunch hours, has stirred the ire of a neighboring business owner. Despite the restaurant's parking plan, which complies with city regulations and includes a mix of on-site and street parking, the level of activity has disrupted the peace for the neighbor. This case highlights the dilemma between fostering business growth and maintaining harmony among neighboring establishments. Despite meeting the city code, a successful business can become a burden for others if its operations disrupt the neighborhood's balance.

ADDENDUM 3: CASE STUDIES AND QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3. FRIDAY FLINGS AND COLONY DAYS



Summer events such as Friday Flings and Colony Days bring an influx of visitors to Palmer, increasing demand for parking in the Central Business District. Street closures during these events further reduce available parking. Street vendors also occupy prime parking spots, leaving less space for visitors. The challenge is to balance the city's desire for these revenue-generating events with the necessity for adequate parking. Potential solutions include creating more nearby parking, requiring vendors to park elsewhere, relocating these events, or investing in a shuttle service to make better use of parking at the MTA Center and Palmer Junior Middle School.

4. ABANDONED AUTO DETAIL LOT



The site of an Auto Detail business that burned down in 2018 has remained vacant and unmaintained. The city could benefit from putting this lot into commercial use, but strict on-site parking regulations could deter potential development. A small building of 4000 square feet would require ten on-site parking spaces, resulting in paving most of the lot. These extensive requirements, coupled with construction costs and utility connections, can be daunting for potential developers. The city must balance the need for adequate parking with encouraging private investment and development.

ADDENDUM 3: CASE STUDIES AND QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

5. INCREASED PARKING REQUIREMENTS

In 2005, the city increased downtown parking requirements due to a lack of investment. Properties couldn't be redeveloped due to inadequate parking. As a result, many buildings downtown are not fully compliant with the parking codes and, thus, could not be legally occupied. The city code requires parking and other site plan requirements to be reevaluated with any change of use or occupancy. This case study underscores the delicate balance between encouraging full occupancy and economic opportunities and maintaining appropriate parking standards.

Chapter 17.64 PARKING AND LOADING

Sections:

- 17.64.005 Intent.**
- 17.64.015 General provisions.**
- 17.64.021 Parking lot design standards.**
- 17.64.031 Parking spaces required.**
- 17.64.035 Off-site parking.**
- 17.64.041 Shared use parking.**
- 17.64.050 Central business district.**
- 17.64.060 Off-street loading.**
- 17.64.070 Development plan requirements.**
- 17.64.080 Landscaping requirements.**

17.64.005 Intent.

The Intent of this chapter is to promote the safety, convenience, comfort and common welfare of the public by providing minimum standards to regulate vehicle parking in a safe and efficient manner, to avoid the unnecessary congestion and interference with public rights-of-way, to reduce traffic hazards, and to provide safe operation of traffic circulation. (Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 4, 2005)

17.64.015 General provisions.

- A. Permanently maintained parking facilities for the use of occupants, employees and patrons of buildings shall be provided for all new buildings at the time of construction.
- B. Outside the central business district, free parking shall be required for any addition or enlargement of an existing building and for any change in the use of any building that would result in additional parking space being required. The number of parking spaces shall be that specified in this chapter unless it is demonstrated to the zoning administrator that the addition or enlargement of the existing building or the change in the use of any proposed building will not increase parking demand or reduce the total number of pre-existing required parking spaces and that the amount of proposed off-street parking is within 90 percent of the total requirement for all proposed uses and structures, including the enlargement of the existing building.

C. The intended use of all parking spaces required in this chapter is the temporary use by operable vehicles. Parking spaces shall not be used for the storage of delivery vehicles or trailers, motor homes, campers, dumpsters or other objects.

D. No existing parking area and no parking area provided for the purpose of complying with the provisions of this title shall, after January 17, 1978, be relinquished or reduced in any manner below the requirements established in this title. (Ord. 21-006 § 3, 2021; Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 6, 2005)

17.64.021 Parking lot design standards.

- A. Standard parking stalls shall be a minimum of nine feet in width and 20 feet in length.
- B. Parking lots with 90-degree parking stalls shall have a minimum aisle width of 25 feet.
- C. All parking areas, except for single- and two-family dwellings, shall be designed so no parking space requires the backing of a vehicle into public rights-of-way, except for alleys in the central business district, or across a sidewalk.
- D. Turning and maneuvering space shall be located entirely on private property. Vehicles backing into central business district alleys or departing single- and two-family dwellings are exempt from this requirement.
- E. Ingress and egress to parking facilities shall be designed to maintain adequate sight distance and safety.
- F. A secured wheel bumper to prevent encroachment of vehicles on pedestrian, bicycle or traffic routes shall be provided in parking stalls which are perpendicular to building fronts or abut property lines. This requirement does not apply when a fence or sight-obscuring landscaping occupies the same property line of the parking area or to single-family and two-family residences. The bumper shall not be less than six inches high.
- G. No wall, post, guardrail or other obstruction that will restrict car door opening shall be permitted within five feet of the centerline of a parking space.
- H. Parking lots shall be designed to avoid erosion damage to grading and surrounding landscaping.
- I. Accessible parking for persons with disabilities shall be designed in accordance with the Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities for Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - 1. An access aisle shall be provided of not less than five feet in width for each space, except accessible parking spaces may share a common access aisle.
 - 2. Accessible space shall be designated by the international symbol of accessibility.
 - 3. Accessible spaces shall be located near building entrances and have an unobstructed route to accessible entrances and along a path at least 36 inches in width without going behind parked cars.

4. One in every eight accessible spaces, but not less than one, shall be served by an access aisle with a width of at least eight feet and shall be designated "van accessible."

Total Parking Spaces in Lot	Minimum Required Accessible Spaces
1 – 25	1
26 – 50	2
51 – 75	3
76 – 100	4
101 – 150	5
151 – 200	6
201 – 300	7
301 – 400	8
401 – 500	9
501 – 1,000	2 percent of total spaces

- J. Prior to approval by the city for use, all parking facilities within the city shall be permanently surfaced with a suitable gravel base or paved with concrete or asphalt compound.
- K. Parking facilities which adjoin the side of a lot in residential districts shall be separated from the residential district by a fence or sight-obscuring landscaping. Fences shall be six feet in height; landscaping shall not be less than four feet. The fence or landscaping shall be maintained in good condition and shall comply with the requirements of PMC 17.60.070.
- L. All parking areas in nonresidential use districts and parking areas which serve nonresidential uses shall have lighting which meets the level of illumination, uniformity ratios and minimum lumen intensities specified in the illumination guidelines set by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America. The lighting system shall be designed to prevent glare to motorists on public rights-of-way and shall be arranged to reflect the light away from adjoining premises and streets.
- M. Signage or other provisions designating parking lot layout shall be required if the city determines that the layout is not apparent to the general public. (Ord. 17-014 § 3, 2017; Ord. 07-032 § 3, 2007; Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 8, 2005)

17.64.031 Parking spaces required.

A. The following minimum number of free parking spaces shall be provided for all structures and uses. For uses not specifically identified in this section, the requirement for free off-street parking shall be the same as for the use duly determined by the zoning administrator to be the most similar.

Use	Parking Requirement
Airport use	One parking space for each 1,600 square feet of gross floor area
Automobile service stations, repair garages	Four parking spaces for each vehicle repair bay, plus three parking spaces
Churches, auditoriums, theaters and other similar places of assembly	One parking space for every four seats in the principal auditorium or assembly room
Dance hall, bowling alley or skating rink	One parking space for each 400 square feet of gross floor area
Hospitals, nursing, convalescent homes	One parking space for each three beds based on maximum capacity
Hotel	One parking space for each two guest rooms
Laundromat	One parking space for each 250 square feet of gross floor area
Manufacturing uses; industrial, research, testing, processing, assembling, all industries	One parking space for each 500 square feet of gross floor area, plus one parking space for each 300 square feet of office gross floor area

Use	Parking Requirement
Medical offices and clinic	One parking space for each 300 square feet of gross floor area
Mortuary	One parking space for each four seats in the principal seating area
Motel	One parking space for each guest room
Post office	One parking space for each 100 square feet of gross floor area
Professional, offices, financial institutions	One parking space for each 300 square feet of gross floor area
Residences, multifamily	One and one-half parking spaces for each one-bedroom unit; two parking spaces for two-bedroom units; two and one-half parking spaces for each three-bedroom unit, plus one guest parking space for each five units
Residences, single-family and two-family	Two parking spaces per dwelling unit up to 1,800 square feet and three parking spaces for each dwelling unit over 1,800 square feet
Restaurants and bars	One parking space for each four seats based on maximum seating capacity

Use	Parking Requirement
Retail space, under 1,000 square feet	One parking space for each 500 square feet of gross floor area
Retail space, over 1,001 square feet	One parking space for each 350 square feet of gross floor area
Retail space, for furniture, large appliances, carpets or similar use	One parking space for each 500 square feet of gross floor area
Retail, shopping center	One parking space for each 350 square feet of gross leasable space
Rooming houses or boardinghouses	One parking space for every two guestrooms
Schools – Elementary	Two parking spaces for each classroom
Schools – Middle	Three parking spaces for each classroom
Schools – Senior high	One parking space for every three students based on the proposed building capacity at the time of initial construction
Self-storage facilities	One parking space for each 2,000 square feet of gross floor area, plus one parking space for each 300 square feet of gross floor area used for offices

Use	Parking Requirement
Swimming pools	One parking space for every four persons based on pool capacity
Warehouses, storage and wholesale businesses	One parking space for each 2,000 square feet of gross floor area, plus one parking space for each 300 square feet of gross floor area used for offices, or a minimum of three, whichever is greater

B. *Calculation of Amounts of Required Parking.*

1. Unless a specific use is listed above, the required number of parking spaces shall be the sum of the combination of uses on the lot.
2. If the calculation of required spaces results in a fraction of a parking space, the number shall be rounded up to the nearest whole number. (Ord. 21-006 § 4, 2021; Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 10, 2005)

17.64.035 Off-site parking.

A. All parking spaces provided shall be on the subject lot with the main building they serve, except that the commission, by conditional use, may permit the parking spaces to be on an abutting lot or any lot within 300 feet of the building if it determines that it is impracticable to provide parking on the subject lot.

1. Effective March 27, 2001, if the commission permits parking spaces to be on a lot other than the subject lot, then the commission, as a matter of law, shall require at a minimum the following conditions: that the off-site lot be made subject to duly recorded enforceable covenants running with the land reasonably acceptable to the city, which covenants:
 - a. Burden the off-site lot to the extent necessary to provide adequate incremental parking for the benefit of the subject lot;
 - b. Make the city a third-party beneficiary of the covenants;
 - c. Prohibit the termination, amendment, or subordination of the covenants without council approval;
 and

- d. Have a priority position prior to any deed of trust, mortgage or other encumbrance that can foreclose out the covenants.
2. The required priority position of the covenants may be obtained by due subordination of any existing encumbrance.
3. Upon the recording of the covenants, the owner of the subject lot must reimburse the city for obtaining a title policy on the off-site lot showing the covenants have the required priority position.
4. The owner of the subject lot shall post and maintain signs on the subject lot and on the off-site lot informing the public of the off-site parking relationship between the off-site lot and the subject lot.
5. If through change of use of the subject lot or otherwise the off-site parking is no longer required or if the extent of such requirement is significantly reduced, then the city, upon the written request duly signed by both the owner of the subject lot and the owner of the off-site lot and delivered to the city manager, shall in due course and after council action allow the termination or amendment of the covenants to meet the then-current requirements for parking for the subject property. (Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 11, 2005)

17.64.041 Shared use parking.

Joint use of off-street parking facilities within 600 feet may be permitted by the commission subject to the following conditions:

- A. The off-street parking requirements for buildings of limited uses, for example churches, auditoriums, clubs, or lodges, may be supplied through the use of off-street parking facilities provided for other uses, for example, business offices, retail stores, and manufacturing or wholesale buildings whose operations are not normally conducted during the same hours.
- B. Off-street parking space designated for joint use shall meet all other requirements as set out in this chapter.
- C. Sufficient evidence shall be presented to the commission to demonstrate that there will be no substantial conflict in the principal operating hours of the use or structures for which the joint use is proposed.
- D. The owner of the parcel seeking a shared parking agreement has adequate area on the lot or within 300 feet of the lot which could be used for parking in the event it is no longer possible to obtain shared parking.
- E. The use of off-street parking space for joint use shall be subject to the prior approval of the commission. (Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 13, 2005)

17.64.050 Central business district.

In order to encourage economic growth in the downtown core and permit the redevelopment of property to its highest commercial use, parking requirements may be waived after review by the city council. It is the intent of

this clause to provide as much off-street parking as practical while allowing commercial development in the core area. The central business district is described as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of the Palmer/Wasilla Highway & the Glenn Highway centerlines, then north along the centerline of the Glenn Highway, then east to the northwest corner of parcel 18N02E32 Lot D9, then east along the north side of parcels 18N02E32 Lot D9, Tract B, Colony Fair, 18N02E32 Lot D8, 18N02E32 Lot D7, then north along the west side of parcel Tract A-1, Colony Fair RSB T/A & C; then east along the north side of said parcel to the centerline of S. Cobb St., then north along the centerline of S. Cobb St., to the centerline of W. Blueberry Ave., then east along the centerline of W. Blueberry Ave., then southeast to the centerline of E. Blueberry Ave., then east along the centerline of E. Blueberry Ave., then crossing over S. Colony Way to continue east along the centerline of E. Blueberry Ave., to the centerline of S. Denali St., then south along the centerline of S. Denali St., to the centerline of E. Cottonwood Ave., then east along the centerline of E. Cottonwood Ave., to the centerline of S. Gulkana St., then south along the centerline of S. Gulkana St., to the southeast corner of Tract A, Arbor Estates, then west along the south property line of Tract A to Lot 4, Block 2, Arbor Estates, then south to the southeast corner of Lot 4, Block 2, Arbor Estates, then west along the south property lines of Lots 4, 3, 2, and 1, Block 2, Arbor Estates, then west to the junction of S. Eklutna & E. Fern Ave., then west along the centerline of E. Fern Ave., to the centerline of S. Chugach St., then north along the centerline of S. Chugach St., to the centerline of E. Fireweed Ave., then west along the centerline of E. Fireweed Ave., to the centerline of S. Colony Way, then south along the centerline of S. Colony Way, then west to the southeast corner of parcel 17N02E04 Lot B4, then west along the south side of said parcel, to the centerline of S. Cobb St., then north along the centerline of S. Cobb St., to the centerline of W. Fern Ave., then west along the centerline of W. Fern Ave., to the centerline of S. Diamond St., then north along the centerline of S. Diamond St., to the centerline of W. Elmwood Ave., then west along the centerline of W. Elmwood Ave., to the junction of W. Elmwood and the Glenn Highway, then north along the centerline of the Glenn Highway to the point of beginning.

A. The following minimum number of parking spaces shall be provided for all structures and uses in the central business district only. For uses not specifically identified in this section, the requirement for parking shall be the same as for the use duly determined by the zoning administrator to be the most similar.

Use	Parking Requirement
Churches, auditoriums, theaters and other similar places of assembly	One parking space for every five seats in the principal auditorium or assembly room

Use	Parking Requirement
Dance hall, bowling alley or skating rink	One parking space for each 500 square feet of gross floor area
Hospitals, nursing, convalescent homes	One parking space for each four beds based on maximum capacity
Hotel	One parking space for each three guest rooms
Laundromat	One parking space for each 350 square feet of gross floor area
Medical offices and clinics	One parking space for each 400 square feet of gross floor area
Mortuary	One parking space for each five seats in the principal seating area
Professional, offices, financial institutions	One parking space for each 400 square feet of gross floor area
Residences, multifamily	One parking space per dwelling unit.
Residences, single-family and two-family	Two parking spaces per dwelling unit.
Restaurants and bars	One parking space for each five seats based on maximum seating capacity

Use	Parking Requirement
Retail space, all types	One parking space for each 500 square feet of gross floor area

- B. No required existing parking spaces in the downtown district shall be relinquished as a result of this section.
- C. In areas with designated public on-street parking, each 25 feet in front of a lot will be counted towards the parking requirement for the lot.
- D. *Repealed by Ord. 21-006.*
- E. *Repealed by Ord. 21-006.*
- F. To promote growth in the central business district, the city council may waive the fee-in-lieu fees. (Ord. 21-006 § 5, 2021; Ord. 16-015 § 4, 2016; Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 14, 2005)

17.64.060 Off-street loading.

- A. All uses involving the receipt of or distribution of materials or merchandise by vehicles shall provide and maintain sufficient off-street loading space on the premises so as not to obstruct the freedom of traffic movement on public rights-of-way.
- B. On the same lot or premises with every building structure or part thereof erected and occupied for commercial, manufacturing or industrial use, or other uses similarly involving the receipt of or distribution of materials or merchandise by vehicles, there shall be provided and permanently maintained adequate space for standing of vehicles and unloading services in such manner as not to obstruct the freedom of traffic movement upon public rights-of-way. The space shall not be less than 15 feet wide by 25 feet long with a 14-foot height clearance and shall have access to an alley or street. (Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 16, 2005)

17.64.070 Development plan requirements.

Plans for all parking and loading areas shall accompany the building plans when the application for a building permit is made. Such plans shall show the following:

- A. Area of the lot involved;
- B. Layout and dimensions of each parking space;
- C. Entrance and exit to the parking area and the direction of traffic;
- D. Widths of all curb cuts, entrances, exits and driveways serving each parking or loading area;

- E. Lighting plan (see item in parking lot standards);
- F. Landscaping (see PMC 17.64.080). (Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 17, 2005)

17.64.080 Landscaping requirements.

- A. All parking lots shall have landscaping as required by this section, except those parking lots for single-family and two-family dwellings.
- B. All required parking lots of five spaces or more shall provide a landscape buffer at least five feet in width along any property line adjacent to a street, except for those in the airport commercial, airport industrial, airport mixed use, business park, and Industrial districts where they do not border a residential district.
- C. For parking lots containing less than five spaces, an area equal to at least five percent of the parking lot shall be in landscaping which is visible to the street, except in the airport commercial, airport industrial, airport mixed use, business park, and industrial districts.
- D. For parking lots containing five or more spaces, an area equal to at least 10 percent of the parking area shall be in landscaping which is visible to the street, except in the airport commercial, airport industrial, airport mixed use, business park, and industrial districts.
 - 1. Any interior landscaping planter counted towards the percentage requirement must have a minimum five-foot-wide area exclusive of any vehicle overhang. Only low-level shrubs, ground cover and grass shall be used in vehicle overhang areas.
 - 2. Any landscaping between the building and the parking lot counted towards the percentage requirement must have a minimum five-foot-wide area exclusive of any vehicle overhang. Only low-level shrubs, ground cover, and grass shall be used in vehicle overhang areas.
- E. No parking lot shall contain 45 or more contiguous parking spaces without a curbed planting area. Interior landscaping planters shall be dispersed throughout the entire parking lot area. Parking lots in the industrial and business park zoning districts may be exempt from interior landscaping requirements. Applications may be submitted to the commission requesting substitution of interior landscaping in exchange for common use area(s) for employees, such as a picnic or exercise area. (Ord. 21-006 § 7, 2021; Ord. 06-017 § 3, 2006; Ord. 05-036 § 18, 2005)

The Palmer Municipal Code is current through Ordinance 23-004-A, passed July 25, 2023.

Disclaimer: The city clerk's office has the official version of the Palmer Municipal Code. Users should contact the city clerk's office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

City Website: www.palmerak.org

Hosted by Code Publishing Company, A General Code Company.

USE	PARKING REQUIREMENT	USE CBD	PARKING REQUIREMENT CBD	USE CBD CHANGE	PARKING REQUIREMENT CHANGE
Churches, auditoriums, theaters and other similar places of assembly	One parking space for every four seats in the principal auditorium or assembly room	Churches, auditoriums, theaters and other similar places of assembly	One parking space for every five seats in the principal auditorium or assembly room		
Dance hall, bowling alley or skating rink	One parking space for each 400 sq ft of gross floor area	Dance hall, bowling alley or skating rink	One parking space for each 500 sq ft of gross floor area		
Hospitals, nursing, convalescent homes	One parking space for each three beds based on maximum capacity	Hospitals, nursing, convalescent homes	One parking space for each four beds based on maximum capacity		
Hotel	One parking space for each two guest rooms	Hotel	One parking space for each three guest rooms		
Laundromat	One parking space for each 250 sq ft of gross floor area	Laundromat	One parking space for each 350 sq ft of gross floor area		
Medical offices and clinic	One parking space for each 300 sq ft of gross floor area	Medical offices and clinic	One parking space for each 400 sq ft of gross floor area		
Mortuary	One parking space for each four seats in the principal seating area	Mortuary	One parking space for each five seats in the principal seating area		

USE	PARKING REQUIREMENT	USE CBD	PARKING REQUIREMENT CBD	USE CBD CHANGE	PARKING REQUIREMENT CHANGE
Professional offices, financial institutions	One parking space for each 300 sq ft of gross floor area	Professional offices, financial institutions	One parking space for each 400 sq ft of gross floor area		
Residences, multifamily	One and one-half parking space for each one-bedroom unit; two parking spaces for two-two bedroom unit; two and one-half parking spaces for each three bedroom unit, plus one guest parking space for each five units	Residences, multifamily	One parking space per dwelling unit		
Residences, single-family and two-family	Two parking spaces per dwelling unit up to 1,800 sq ft and three parking spaces for each dwelling unit over 1,800 sq ft	Residences, single-family and two-family	Two parking spaces per dwelling unit		
	One parking space for each four seats based on maximum seating capacity	Restaurants and bars	One parking space for each five seats based on maximum seating capacity	ADD bakery, entertainment venue	1 PARKING SPACE PER 100 SQ FT OF GROSS FLOOR AREA; PLUS 1 PARKING SPACE FOR EVERY 3 EMPLOYEES; PLUS 10 PARKING SPACES FOR EVERY 1,000 SQ FT OF OUTSIDE SEATING AREA IN EXCESS OF 20 OUTDOOR SEATS. IF GROSS FLOOR AREA IS GREATER THAN 5,000 SQ FT, 11 SPACES PER 1,000, PLUS 1 PARKING SPACE FOR EVERY 3 EMPLOYEES

USE	PARKING REQUIREMENT	USE CBD	PARKING REQUIREMENT CBD	USE CBC CHANGE	PARKING REQUIREMENT CHANGE
Retail space under 1,000 sq ft.	One parking space for each 500 sq ft of gross floor area	Retail space, all types	One parking space for each 500 sq ft of gross floor area		
Retail space over 1,001 sq ft.	One parking space for each 350 sq ft of gross floor area				
Retail space for furniture, large appliances, carpets or similar use	One parking space for each 500 sq ft of gross floor area				
Retail, shopping center	One parking space for each 350 sq ft of gross floor area				

3 Zoning Reform Success Stories that Reignited Downtown Development

In small and midsize cities, cutting parking minimums and adding by-right development rules catalyze economic development.

[Innovations](#) Zoning

Zoning reform efforts in Oxford, Mississippi, have brought more foot traffic to the downtown core, revitalizing local businesses. Photo courtesy of Visit Oxford.

March 9, 2023

By Patrick Sisson



Economic dynamism, the lifeblood of cities and small towns, comes in many forms: workplace mobility enabling talent to thrive and find new opportunities, investments in public infrastructure and education, the incubation of small businesses and entrepreneurs. In most cases, this starts with the space or places to build retail and housing — and experiment.

[Zoning reform](#), which can unlock new opportunities and new spaces to build affordable homes and small businesses, can be a key part of this shift.

In a number of smaller and midsize cities, changes to regulations meant to boost development have realized the potential of parking lots and underused commercial structures with a big impact on the vitality and success of their downtowns — especially during the current uncertainty around remote work and larger economic shifts.



Eliminating parking minimums in 2015 catalyzed economic development in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Here, a vacant lot was transformed into a mixed-use building with nine apartments, two offices, a smoothie bar, and a taproom. Photo courtesy of Specialized Real Estate Group.

Fewer parking requirements, more small businesses

Take Fayetteville, Arkansas, which [eliminated parking minimums in 2015](#). The change hasn't been a radical shift as much as a realization of new development opportunities. Local developers kept asking to redevelop abandoned or underused properties, but once they encountered the parking requirements and other red tape standing in the way, they often backed away from an uphill battle, says Matthew Petty, a planner, founder and principal of the Infill Group, and faculty member of the Incremental Development Alliance.

"The lack of convenience is the barrier," says Petty. For him, the real change happened when leadership saw an opportunity and followed the majority's inclination to try a new way. "You have to have leaders who are willing to take action, who are willing to stop the cycle of getting more and more information and trying to achieve total consensus."

The lack of a story around the policy shift [became the story](#). There was no fierce backlash, no business horror stories, no examples of the change constricting opportunity. The elimination of parking minimums proved there simply wasn't much justification for the regulations in the first place.

The result, a new approach to development and a handful of projects that rely on street and other existing parking instead of on-site spots, shows how creative zoning can literally open the door to a new small business. A vacant building that sat empty for decades because it only offered a handful of parking spots found new life when the new rules allowed a restaurateur to take a chance on the space, creating the highly touted Feed & Folly restaurant and rooftop bar.

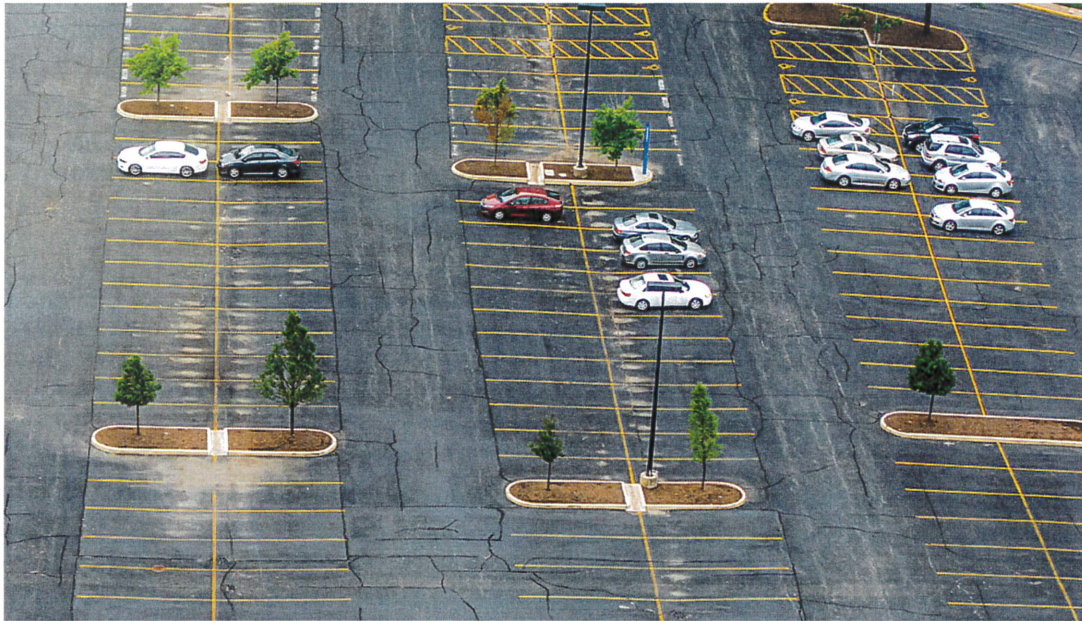
In another section of downtown, Petty's Infill Group was able to transform an old commercial space into a three-story, mixed-use retail and residential tower with 495 Prairie, a craft beer bar. This project type would have been impossible if saddled with onerous parking requirements. Currently, a 130-room hotel project is winding its way through council, only able to pencil out due to reliance on existing street parking.

Now, business owners can put [people over parking](#) by focusing on serving their customers, Petty says, instead of taking on the stress of also being compliance officers.

A Business Case for Dropping Parking Minimums

In the smallest of towns and the biggest of cities, these new zoning reform policies help boost small businesses, promote housing development, and put people over parking.

[Innovations](#) Parking



Changing parking minimums can support economic development and sustainability. Photo by eyfoto/iStock/Getty Images Plus.

June 1, 2022

By Jeff Spivak

Auburn, Maine, is a quaint, picturesque river town dating back to the 18th century, with a Main Street historic district of Victorian-era homes. There's also a riverwalk, a hockey arena, and even a mall. But like lots of smaller towns all over America, COVID ravaged some of its businesses. A Ruby Tuesday restaurant closed. So did a locally owned brunch place. And a Chinese buffet. And a French café. And others.

Something had to be done to replace the restaurants and encourage new businesses.

So in June 2021, this city of 24,000 people eliminated all minimum parking requirements for commercial developments, thus reducing upfront costs for new businesses and expansions. It had

an immediate impact. Later that autumn, the Olive Garden restaurant chain looked to open in Auburn and eyed the Ruby Tuesday's site, but the company wanted to build more square footage. Under the old parking regulations, Olive Garden would have had to supply more parking spaces. But now it didn't. The deal was done and approved.

"With COVID, we were searching [for] any way that could help businesses," says Eric Cousens, Auburn's longtime planning director. "This worked for us, and it's setting us apart from other communities."

Indeed, municipal parking reforms to reduce or eliminate parking minimums are such a major movement now across the U.S. that they're even spreading and taking off in small town America.

"It's such a small but significant step that any city can take to reduce development costs and encourage more commercial and residential growth," says Rachel Quednau, program director at a Minnesota-based nonprofit called Strong Towns that focuses on sustainable community initiatives such as parking reform. "I don't think there's any small town in America that doesn't want more businesses."

'A tidal wave'

To quantify the nationwide movement to reduce or eliminate parking minimums, a couple of advocacy groups — [Strong Towns](#) and the Portland, Oregon-based [Parking Reform Network](#), made up of planning professionals — collaborated to [compile a list](#) of all the North American cities that have implemented or proposed parking minimum reforms in certain districts (like a downtown) or citywide.

The early-adopter big cities that were at the forefront of the parking minimums movement are all there: Buffalo, New York; Minneapolis; Portland; San Francisco; Seattle. So are the most recent big cities to join the movement: Boston; Raleigh, North Carolina; San Diego. Overall, a recent version of the Strong Towns–Parking Reform Network list contained 73 cities with populations of at least 200,000 people.

Parking Reforms in Big and Small Towns

Places of all sizes are eliminating parking minimums, whether it's just downtown or throughout the whole city. An [interactive map](#) from the Parking Reform Network allows users to not just see where reforms are happening, but also click through to read the details about local parking regulations (users can submit data, too). Of the 200 or so communities on the map, more than half have populations of under 100,000.

The compilation of parking minimum reforms contained even more locales — more than 130 — with populations under 100,000. There are college towns, industrial cities, metropolitan suburbs, rural hamlets, retiree hubs, and resort communities. Some 40 states are represented, and Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington have five or more communities on the list. It's a geographic cross-section of rural and suburban America.

"I've been surprised at how many there have been," says Tony Jordan, president and cofounder of the Parking Reform Network. "It's been a tidal wave."

Smaller cities may not have the same congestion issues or transit alternatives as big cities, but they're pursuing parking minimum reforms for some of the same reasons — to promote downtown and commercial development, reduce barriers to small business growth, and encourage more housing.

That potential is certainly what's led Cutler Bay, Florida, down the path of parking minimum reforms. A town of 45,000 people and eight senior living facilities, the [AARP "age-friendly" community](#) south of Miami has had a waiting list for senior units for years.

Town officials talked to developers about what was holding them back. One common refrain: parking costs. So, in 2019, the town reduced parking minimums for senior housing, cutting the requirements in half from two spaces per unit to one. This move immediately led to a 99-unit senior project proposal.

Now Cutler Bay is doubling down on parking reform. A new metro bus rapid transit line is being built on the edge of town, and in April 2022, the town council passed new reductions in parking minimums for mixed-use and multifamily developments in a special transit zone.

"This is the town's way of incentivizing development," says Town Manager Rafael Casals.

Benefits of reforms

So what's so wrong with parking minimums, anyway?

Parking minimums tend to be controversial because they can be inconsistent and unpredictable. The requirements in one city aren't necessarily the same in another city. And some standards aren't always efficient, such as locales dictating two spaces per chair at a barber shop when a barber's chair can only hold one person at a time.

In today's age of environmental sustainability concerns, there's also more awareness about the spatial costs of parking — the fact that suburban parking lots can be larger than the square footage of the buildings they serve, and a string of downtown parking lots can look like a mouthful of missing teeth on the face of a walkable public realm. There can also be water quality costs, as rainfall lands on all that asphalt and then runs off into nearby waterways or storm sewers, taking oil and other surface contaminants with it.

Then there are the direct costs of building parking — estimated by industry analysts at roughly \$5,000 per surface space and up to \$50,000 per space in multilevel garages. This of course escalates the costs of real estate developments, sometimes to a point of making a project financially unfeasible.

"Parking requirements do so much harm," says Donald Shoup, FAICP, a distinguished urban planning professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a longtime evangelist for

parking reforms, as the [author of several books on the issue](#). "They add costs to the building of housing, and they increase the usage of cars and greenhouse gas emissions. They seem to work against almost everything that planners want."



With Minimums: Inefficiencies. Locales dictate two spaces per chair at a barber shop when a barber's chair can only hold one person at a time. Photo by stefanamer/iStock/Getty Images Plus.



With Minimums: Higher Costs. Requirements can add roughly \$5,000 per surface space, according to the National Parking Association. Photo by ideabug/ iStock/Getty Images Plus.

Even the [National Parking Association](#), the industry's trade group of parking operators, now [supports reducing or eliminating parking minimums](#) and instead favors allowing communities and developers to make market-based decisions on parking supply and demand.

But do parking minimum reforms actually produce their expected benefits? So far, there hasn't been much research on this topic, but some new studies have begun to be published that appear to answer that question with an emphatic "yes."

In Seattle and Buffalo, separate groups of academic researchers in 2020 and 2021, respectively, found that after policy changes concerning parking minimums, a large portion of developers did build less parking than previously required, and they particularly took advantage of the cost savings to build mixed-use projects. And in San Diego, another group of academic researchers in 2021 found that in the first year after parking reforms, [proposals for affordable housing units](#) jumped fivefold.

Bottom line, these studies indicate that more commercial and residential development occurred after parking reforms than would have happened without the reforms.

As the Buffalo researchers — planning professors from the University at Buffalo — wrote in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* article "[Minus Minimums](#)" last year, "Cities of all types [stand to benefit](#) from undoing constraining parking policies of the past and allowing developers to transform parking lots into 'higher uses.'"

Smaller-city experiences

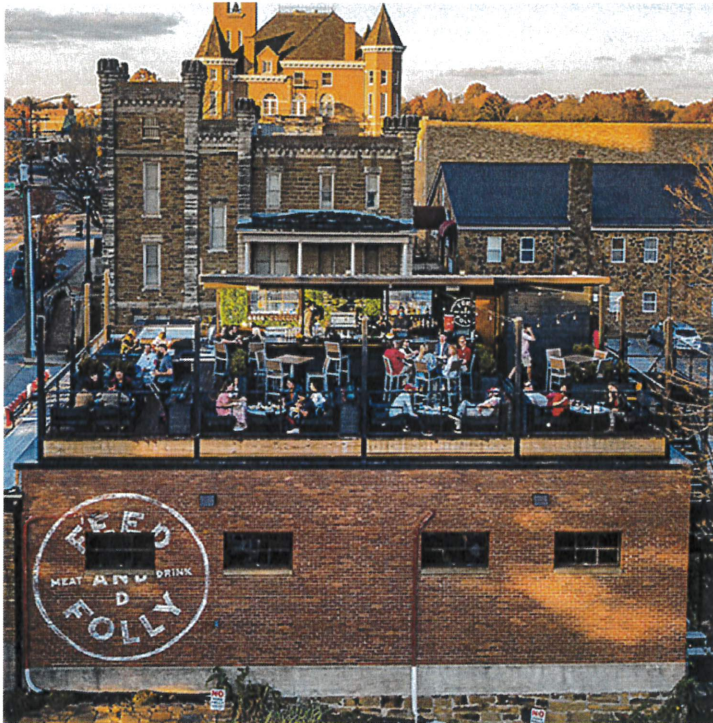
But all that parking research so far is from bigger cities. Can the same impacts occur in smaller towns? A couple of experiences in different parts of the country are already showing it can.

The college town of Fayetteville, Arkansas, is believed to be one of the first cities in the U.S. to have eliminated parking minimums citywide, which it did in 2015 for commercial properties. In the seven years since, Fayetteville officials don't claim that it spurred a frenzy of new development or redevelopment. But they do maintain it led to some projects that likely wouldn't have happened otherwise.

Take the Feed & Folly restaurant just off the downtown square. Its owners took over a building that had been vacant for decades, but the parking lot only had room for a half-dozen cars — some 30 less than the city's old parking regulations would have required. But under the new rules, it was able to open in 2020 while adding just a handful of parking spaces, and it instantly became a buzzworthy hotspot with its rooftop bar.

Similarly, Matthew Petty was on the Fayetteville City Council when the parking minimums reform was passed, and as a planning consultant and developer, he eventually wanted to take advantage of the rule change. He and his partners developed what's called 495 Prairie, a three-story project with nine apartments on upper floors, plus offices, a craft beer bar, and a smoothie shop at the street level. The project built just nine parking spaces — less than half of what would have been required before 2015.

"We wouldn't have been able to do mixed-use without the new parking policy," Petty says.



Without Minimums: Vacant Buildings Occupied. In Fayetteville, Arkansas, reducing the required spots from more than 30 to eight allowed one small business to turn a vacant building into a buzzy downtown hot spot. Photo courtesy of [Feed and Folly](#).



Without Minimums: Tax Revenue Increases. In Sandpoint, Idaho, dropping the minimums encouraged tech company [Kochava](#) to renovate an old lumber storage facility, resulting in a tax value assessment increase of more than \$2 million. Photo courtesy of Riley Emmer/Kochava.

A thousand miles from Fayetteville, a town in Idaho called Sandpoint experienced some of the same benefits from parking minimums reform.

Sandpoint is a resort town with less than 10,000 residents that swells with visitors who come for its lake, beach, and nearby skiing in pine forests. The town first did away with parking minimums for its downtown in 2009. Nine years later, it reduced the minimums citywide. Why? To make building renovations and redevelopments more affordable for small business startups.

Aaron Qualls, AICP, saw it all. From 2010 to 2021, he served as a planning commissioner, city planning director, and a city councilmember in Sandpoint, and he documented what he called "success stories made possible by parking reform." There was MickDuff's Brewery that remodeled an old library and Pend d'Oreille Winery that took over a vacant old furniture store. A tech startup renovated a dilapidated lumber supply building. And on and on — and Qualls says they wouldn't have happened under the old parking requirements, because local business startups often don't have extra capital to devote to parking.

"We've always assumed that more parking is better," says Qualls, now a project manager and planner for SCJ Alliance, an engineering and planning firm, "and what we found in Sandpoint is that's not always the case."

The lesson: A flexible policy

The countrywide parking reform movement is, of course, not a single-issue crusade. Boston and San Diego have also established parking maximums, or limits on how many spaces a new development can provide in transit-accessible neighborhoods. Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., have technology-driven programs that [adjust parking rates based on demand](#), like higher rates during the morning commute. And Chicago; Kansas City, Missouri; Philadelphia; and several other cities have allowed businesses and neighborhoods to repurpose on-street parking spaces into restaurant seating, [parklets](#), and other public gatherings during the pandemic. In many cases, those temporary changes are [becoming permanent](#).

But parking minimums are by far the most popular form of parking reform — they're even spreading to state legislative efforts in California, Connecticut, and Oregon — and they're usually the focus of smaller-town policies.

In Jackson, Tennessee, an industrial hub of 68,000 people, leaders are trying to encourage more infill development. Eliminating parking minimums for commercial projects last October was "an easy decision," Mayor Scott Conger says, because it didn't require any government funding or subsidies.

Nevertheless, it's not always an easy plunge for smaller cities to take.

Proposals to reduce or eliminate parking minimums are sometimes met with skepticism and apprehension in smaller towns. There, people are used to parking right by a store's front door. "There still is trepidation in these communities," says Carl Schneeman, managing principal of

Walker Consultants, a Minneapolis-based parking design and planning firm that works with cities of all sizes. "A lot of them simply fear a change."

And it usually turns out that such fears are overblown and don't come to pass. "Every time these reforms are put in, people go to meetings and say, 'This is going to be terrible.' And it never is," says Parking Reform Network's Jordan. "The sky doesn't fall."

If there's a lesson for how smaller communities can avoid or lessen such fears of parking minimums reform, it's by providing flexibility in the new policy. That is, don't necessarily apply the reduced parking standards to all types of properties or all parts of town. Be targeted in the approach.

That's what Auburn and Fayetteville did, applying reduced parking standards for commercial projects. Same with Cutler Bay, which lowered parking minimums first for senior housing only, then for mixed-use and multifamily developments in a transit zone. And the city of Alameda, California, was one of the latest communities to officially join the movement, [passing an ordinance](#) that eliminated parking minimums citywide in November 2021.

In Alameda, the Planning Board for years had been passing parking variances to reduce parking spaces for new projects. So the decision to eliminate minimum standards simply reflected the community's evolving attitude toward parking, plus the realization that this city — an island without room to sprawl — needed more room to devote to new housing growth.

"We have space for people and more buildings," says Andrew Thomas, AICP, director of the city's Planning, Building, and Transportation department. "We don't have space for more automobiles that need to be stored."

"We've come a long way."

Why Parking Minimums Almost Destroyed My Hometown and How We Repealed Them

John Reuter · November 22, 2017

I never thought about parking minimums until my favorite pizza place was getting knocked down. A local bank was building a new three-story headquarters across the street and the city of Sandpoint, Idaho's parking laws required that the bank either provide around 200 additional parking spaces around their new building or pay \$10,000 per space in lieu of providing them.



Monarch Mountain Coffee, saved from the wrecking ball (Source: Google Maps)

Weighing the options, it was actually cheaper for the bank to purchase the surrounding properties, kick out the existing businesses, knock down the structures, and build parking. So the small pizza stand with the best slices in town closed and was removed.

But that only accounted for a small portion of the parking the bank required. To satisfy the city's parking requirements, they were eyeing Monarch Mountain Coffee, a community gathering place next door to the new parking lot that was the former home of the pizza stand. Knocking down the local coffee shop, though, would *still* fall short of the city's parking requirements and the bank would further have to acquire and demolish multiple other neighboring buildings that were currently used for housing and other small businesses.

All of this was happening in the middle of Sandpoint's historic downtown. The city's large public parking lot was only a block away! It was never completely full (not even on Black Friday).

TIME TO TAKE ACTION

In the middle of all of this, I was appointed to the Sandpoint City Council. It had become clear to me that something needed to be done and now it felt like I was the person that needed to be doing that something.

The first vote I ever took, the same night I was sworn in, was to provide an exception to allow a historic building to be internally remodeled

to repeal the minimums. It was not an easy journey to get there.

I gathered letters from local business owners who wanted to expand but were unable to do so, due to the parking requirements. I worked with other residents to track just how many parking spots sat empty at the city lot and other locations where parking far exceeded demand. In collaboration with city staff, we discovered that the most beloved parts of our town would be illegal to rebuild under the current code.

SUCCESS!

It took a while to build enough support – and it was still contentious—but we managed to pass a series of reforms to Sandpoint’s parking requirements. We eliminated minimum parking requirements in Downtown Sandpoint entirely. Everywhere else in the city—for both commercial and residential uses—we greatly reduced them. And, finally, we set parking maximums to prevent even larger empty lots from damaging our community’s economy and quality of life.

The positive impacts were felt almost immediately. A popular Mexican restaurant was able to complete a long delayed expansion that, before the changes, would have cost them more in “in lieu of parking” fees than construction costs. Another restaurant turned their unused off-street parking spaces into additional outdoor seating in the summer. When a big box grocery store moved to town a little while later, the parking maximums left room for other small businesses and housing to also develop around them. And, by the way, they still had plenty of parking.

It became clear pretty quickly that parking minimums had never been protecting us from some dangerous world where no one could park their cars. The market actually wanted to provide more than enough (thus the maximums). In the end, parking minimums themselves were revealed to be the problem. And when we got rid of them, our businesses and community were allowed to gently, incrementally grow; creating more of the same kinds of places we used to build and still loved.

5 Tips for Repealing Parking Minimums in Your Community

Here are some of the lessons we learned from repealing parking minimums in our town that will help you do the same in your community:

- 1. Stay alert for opportunities.** Rarely (at least in my experience) do policies happen in a linear sequence. Look for chances, like the restoration of a historic building, to argue that requiring additional parking makes no sense. Remember



**CITY OF PALMER
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 24-001**

SUBJECT: Annual Update of Palmer's Economic Development Plan

AGENDA OF: April 1, 2024
February 5, 2024

April Update:

At the February Meeting members recommended changes to the 2023 COP Economic Development Strategy, they have been incorporated into the 2024 Document. BED members should consider any other changes that they feel are necessary to further the mission of the BED. Also, please be prepared to discuss any goals and objectives of the Economic Development Strategy that the BED should focus our efforts on during 2024.

February Update:

The BED reviews and updates the City of Palmer's annual Economic Development Plan and then presents it to Palmer City Council for consideration during the City Council and Board of Economic Development joint meeting. The plan shall be consistent with City Council policies and the City's Comprehensive Plan. The current plan was originally developed in 2011 with yearly updates and was based on the City of Palmer's Comprehensive Plan's summary of goals for economic vitality.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARD OF
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO
CITY COUNCIL

2023 CITY OF PALMER

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Community Economic Development Goals

Goal 1 ... Strengthen Palmer's position as the preferred location as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's institutional and utility co-operative hub.

Goal 2 ... Encourage expansion of medical, health-care, technology and research-related economic sectors, and other professional jobs in the Palmer area to make this the medical, health-care and vocational career center for Southcentral Alaska.

Goal 3 ... Strengthen Palmer's role as a retail and professional services hub and as a unique place to shop for residents of Palmer, area residents and visitors.

Goal 4 ... Strengthen Palmer as a tourism destination and hub for travel through the southern Matanuska-Susitna area.

Goal 5 ... Strengthen efforts to improve Palmer's quality of life by supporting Palmer as the agricultural center of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

Goal 6... Promote beautification of Palmer's open space and parks.

Goal 7 ... Maintain quality residential neighborhoods and promote a diverse range of quality housing from high density to single family housing which satisfies the needs of all sectors of the housing market.

Goal 8 ... Provide the necessary public infrastructure to support and retain existing industrial uses and expand industrial development within the community.

Goal 9 ... Palmer remains and continues to grow as the industrial education and career center of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Goal 10 ... Continue to develop and market the municipal airport to maximize its economic benefit to the community.

Goal 11 ... Increase marketing of Palmer and its diverse attractions, events and location.

Goal 12... Create a business-friendly environment for commerce and industry.

Goal 13...Review Economic Development Plan Each August and prepare report on progress in implementing Goals and Objectives

Goal 14... Study the feasibility of annexing property into the city limits to prepare for future commercial and industrial growth and to preserve the character of the community.

Goal 15...Acknowledge and consider Palmer's unique connectivity and pedestrian access with all existing and future developments.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2023

Goal 1 ... Strengthen Palmer's position as the preferred location as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's institutional and utility co-operative hub.

Objective A – Maintain existing institutions and secure new institutions by developing an action plan with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Matanuska-Susitna School District, Job Corps, the University, state agencies and Justice System to determine and pursue a very specific list of action items necessary to meet their long-term needs.

Objective B – Develop an action plan with the Hospital, Clinics, and other health-care providers to determine and pursue a very specific list of action items necessary to meet their long-term needs.

Goal 2 ... Encourage expansion of medical, health-care, technology and research-related economic sectors, and other professional jobs in the Palmer area to make this the medical, health-care and vocational career center for Southcentral Alaska.

Objective A – Promote the Palmer area as a hub of higher education by working with the University of Alaska, Alaska Pacific University and other educational institutions to increase the number of highly trained medical and health care specialist and technology and research related specialist who are available in the community.

1. Determine what new programs might be developed in the Palmer area, and how the City might help these institutions to expand.
2. Encourage the development of learning opportunities in medical and healthcare fields at local institutions of higher learning and the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center.

Objective B - Market the community to desired businesses, including technology and research-based businesses, and professional businesses such as law, medicine and veterinary science.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2023

Goal 3 ... Strengthen Palmer's role as a retail and professional services hub and as a unique place to shop for residents of Palmer, area residents and visitors.

~~Objective A – Work with the Planning & Zoning Commission to provide space for commercial expansion through the development of a new central business zoning district or zoning overlay.~~

Objective B – Promote Palmer as a more attractive retail and professional service destination.

Objective C – Actively pursue infrastructure improvements and identify areas appropriate for developing new areas and redeveloping vacant properties for commercial general development.

Objective D – Identify needs and options for effective public parking in downtown and within the city.

- ~~1. Resolve fee in lieu of formula and parking waiver issues. (Eliminate, ordinance has been repealed)~~
2. Examine interest in forming Special Assessment District or Business Improvement District.

Goal 4 ... Strengthen Palmer as a tourism destination and hub for travel through the southern Matanuska-Susitna area.

~~Objective A – Preserve, improve and celebrate Palmer's historic character; develop design guidelines for the historic district.~~

Objective B – Support efforts to improve and promote community attractions, including cultural facilities and multiple trails systems. Improve linkages between attractions. Evaluate the opportunities and threats of promoting theme rail excursions into Palmer.

Objective C – Build on the success of existing community events, including the Alaska State Fair.

Objective D – Support efforts to attract more team sports activities, sporting events and outdoor activities in and around Palmer.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2023

Objective E – Establish, improve and maintain city-wide parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Objective F – Discuss and study the possibility of a permanent Friday Fling/Farmer’s Market area as well as a public stage.

Goal 5 ... Strengthen efforts to improve Palmer’s quality of life by supporting Palmer as the agricultural center of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

Objective A - Promote distribution, awareness of, and sales of local agricultural products.

Objective B - Promote and expand farmers' market opportunities within the city limits and The greater Palmer area.

Objective C - Collaborate with state funded organizations and the agricultural community to promote Alaska Grown products.

Objective D - Open dialogue with the agricultural community to promote agricultural products and agricultural heritage.

Goal 6... Promote beautification of Palmer’s public space, open space, and parks and facilities.

Objective A – Public Safety.

Objective B – Library and City Hall

Objective C – Establish, improve, and maintain neighborhood parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Goal 7 ... Maintain quality residential neighborhoods and promote a diverse range of quality housing from high density to single family housing which satisfies the needs of all sectors of the housing market.

Objective A - Encourage a diverse range of quality housing, from attractive higher density housing to housing for a more rural setting.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2023

Objective B - Encourage new housing developments to have adequate access to transportation, employment opportunities, services, and social and support networks.

Objective C – Encourage infill development and higher density housing and prepare new zoning standards and design guidelines to ensure higher density housing is high quality.

Objective D – Encourage the development of areas for single family housing appealing to the upper end of the housing market.

Objective E – Encourage rehabilitation of older residential structures.

Objective F – Promote continued development and maintenance of high quality elder care facilities and senior citizen campuses in Palmer.

Objective G – Review code enforcement process and provide a report with recommended actions to City Council on a quarterly basis to gain perspective of property owners and residents understanding and compliance with city standards to protect the long-term stability of neighborhoods and Palmer’s economic vitality.

Goal 8 ... Provide the necessary public infrastructure to support and retain existing industrial uses and expand industrial development within the community.

Objective A – Review and identify logistical, environmental and other beneficial resources in the Palmer area available to attract new technology industries and prepare a map of existing utility lines and anticipated utility network expansions that serve developable property in the Palmer area.

1. Develop economic and demographic data survey questionnaire to determine what industrial sector needs to invest and develop in Palmer. (Relocate to **Objective C**)

Objective B – Review current infrastructure master plans to ensure they place a priority on maintaining effective municipal services.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2023

Objective C – Ensure that adequate areas are identified within the city for industrial growth.

2. Develop economic and demographic data to determine what industrial sector needs to invest and develop in Palmer.

Goal 9 ... Palmer remains and continues to grow as the industrial education and career center of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Objective A – Promote vocational, aviation, technical and career training centers and opportunities within the greater Palmer area to prepare individuals for a global marketplace.

Goal 10 ... Continue to develop and market the municipal airport to maximize its economic benefit to the community.

Objective A – Promote the Palmer Municipal Airport as a site for air taxis, aircraft maintenance and repair companies, flight schools, and aircraft rental and leasing businesses.

Objective B - Operate the Airport in a balanced manner, and as an integrated function of the whole community. Activities of the airport which generate revenue to the City are desirable, however, not at the risk of diminishing the quality of life for the residents of the City.

Goal 11 ... Increase marketing of Palmer and its diverse attractions, events and location.

Objective A - Collaborate with the Palmer Visitors Center, the Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce, the Mat-Su Visitors and Convention Center, and other organizations to actively promote Palmer.

1. Develop multimedia promotional material showcasing the attributes of Palmer as a business friendly, geographically key location.
2. Budget funding for development and publishing quality brochure for Palmer as a marketing tool.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2023

Objective B - Work to maintain and improve Palmer's quality of life. Continually enhance hiking and biking trails, parks, health care resources, downtown upgrades, etc.

Objective C – Continue to develop and promote the city owned Golf Course, Community Center (Depot), and MTA Events Center as economic factors.

Goal 12... Create a business friendly environment for commerce and industry.

~~**Objective A** – Implement online business transaction with the City, for example electronic filing of sale tax.~~

OTHER ITEMS??

Goal 13...Review Economic Development Plan Each January and prepare report on progress in implementing Goals and Objectives.

CONSIDER ELIMINATING SINCE IT IS ALREADY IN PMC 2.30.020 A

Goal 14... Study Consider the feasibility of annexing property into the city limits to prepare for future commercial and industrial growth and to preserve the character of the community.

~~**Objective A** – Develop Review annexation document that clearly which explains pros and cons of annexation.~~

~~**Objective B** – Consider where future annexation should logically occur.~~

~~**Objective C** – Prepare transition plan regarding potential future zoning.~~

~~**Objective D** – Study and make recommendations regarding new proposed zoning districts: Central Business District and Highway Commercial District.~~

Goal 15... Acknowledge and consider Palmer's unique connectivity and pedestrian access with all existing and future developments.



**CITY OF PALMER
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 23-003**

SUBJECT: Discussion of Palmer Municipal Code 17.64 Parking and loading

AGENDA OF: February 5, 2024
December 4, 2023, Special Meeting
October 9, 2023

February 5, 2024, Update

No new information was provided to staff. The packet is the same as the special meeting.

December 4, 2023, Special Meeting

A special meeting has been requested to discuss City of Palmer Parking Code requirements. Chairperson Koppenberg is to provide staff with recommendations, so the BED can consider drafting a resolution for the city council to consider.

December 4, 2023, Update

Packet material includes items provided at the October Meeting.

October 9, 2023, Meeting

Chairperson Koppenberg has requested that this item is on the agenda for discussion. Included in the packet is a parking study conducted by City Manager Moosey regarding potential solutions to event parking issues.