Minimizing Parking, Maximizing City Life

Ideas from Europe

The most innovative parking policies have impacted the economic, social and environmental quality of city centers. These strategies have helped bring time and money savings to shoppers, residents, commuters and business owners. Governments looking for new ideas in how to improve city centers and better manage overall mobility can find European experiences in dealing with parking useful.

Over three decades, Copenhagen has systematically taken parking space away from cars and given it to people. Image: Daniel Sparing

Parking reforms may include elements such as:

- limits to car access on retail corridors
- changing building codes to exclude parking mandates
- prioritization of streets for pedestrians
- revenue earmarking to support public transit
- traffic flow improvements
- air pollution reduction measures
- street calming

A policy shift took place after many local European governments realized that the free, underpriced and excessive supply of parking in high demand districts had numerous undesirable negative consequences. Traffic congestion had been viewed for a long time as an indicator of a robust economy. Eventually many European cities came to realize that central business districts and nearby residential areas catered disproportionately to car mobility at the cost of high quality infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit riders. The introduction of more stringent parking regulations, in several cases through public-private partnerships, has worked to better balance the competing demands on street space and land use. These policies have also been instrumental in addressing climate change and energy security issues while creating more attractive and comfortable cities.

Building Codes: The Missing Link

Connecting Land Use and Transportation Planning

Many national, city and regional governments have neglected to review long out-dated building codes. China and India, for instance, have national planning regulations that were barely revised since the 1970s—when first adopted—which mandate new buildings to have one unit of parking per every unit of housing. The effect over time is stimulated car ownership and induced traffic.

Development linked to local and regional transit. Paris, France

Two types of requirements control parking supply in new or refurbished constructions:

- **Minimums**: Regulate the least amount of parking developers are required to include based on land use (e.g., residential, commercial, school, hospital)
- **Maximums**: Set limit on upper most amount of parking a developer can include in a development.

CITIES WITH MAXIMUMS:

- Zurich
- Paris
- Strasbourg
- London

NATIONAL PARKING POLICIES

Several national governments in Europe have passed legislation to limit parking supply through strong encouragement.

- ***UNITED KINGDOM***
  National guidance to local municipalities on setting parking maximums
- ***FRANCE***
  Parking is viewed as a tool that can influence 14% of the greenhouse gas emissions emitted every year
- ***THE NETHERLANDS***
  Dutch A, B, C Policy (see table above, right)

Dutch Transit Access and Parking Supply Discounts for Commercial Developments

LOCATION	*DESCRIPTION*	*REGULATION*
A	Excellent public transport facilities, surrounding main train stations	1 parking place per 250 m²
B	Good public transport and also good accessibility by car	1 parking space per 125 m²
C	Mainly well accessible by car	Tailor made, no norms

Other Transit Access and Parking Regulation Discounts

- *PARIS*
  100% discount if a development is 500 meters from a metro stop. Every 500-600 meters, there is a metro in Paris and every 1.5-2 km a regional rail station.
- *STRASBOURG*
  50% discount for centrally located neighborhoods or neighborhoods less than 500 meters from a public transportation stop.

Parking Supply Cap-and-Trade Works

Street space can be used to support other transportation modes when parking is de-priortized.

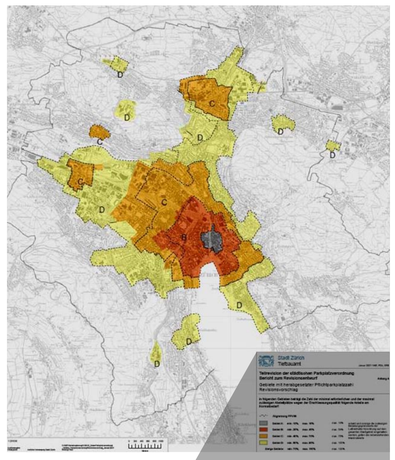
Transit streets made possible by removing parking. Zurich, Switzerland. Image: subhachandra via flickr

Certain cities have frozen existing parking supply in the city center and only permit an increase in the off-street supply on a case-by-case basis. The caveat is that an equal number of on-street spaces must be removed. This type of cap-and-trade keeps the supply constant while repurposing on-street spaces for other uses. Remaining spaces are meanwhile set at market prices based on location, time of day and day of week.

- **Amsterdam**: Every spot created off-street should remove a spot from on-street.
- **Hamburg**: Sealed inventory in Central Business District at roughly 30,000 spaces in 1976
- **Zurich**: "Historic Parking Compromise" instituted in 1996

Zurich: Streets Ahead

A working model

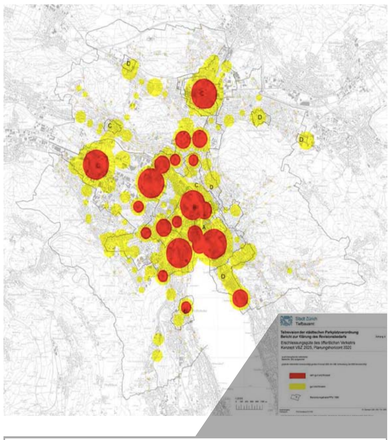


Accessory Parking Requirements Based on Access to Transit as Percentage of Building Floor Ratio

AREA	*MINIMUM (%)A*	*MAXIMUM (%)*	**MAXIMUM 2 (%)*
A	10	10	10
B	25	45	50
C	40	70	75
D	60	95	105
REMAINING AREAS	70	115	130

**Related to clean air regulation and land capacity*

Using parking maximums, a supply cap and traffic-contingent trip caps, Zurich has built a city where residents are usually no more than 300m from a tram or bus stop.



Zurich Transit Access Plot

- Very good access to public transport
- Good access to public transport
- Emphasizes the capacity gaps

Source: City of Zurich

Better Parking, Better Streets, Better Air

Play Streets Offer More Space for Children. Antwerp, Belgium

Parking Protected Cycle Path. Paris, France. Image: Martti Tulenheimo

Cafe life spills into former parking space. Brussels, Belgium

New shared spaces work for pedestrians and cyclists. Copenhagen, Denmark

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For more information, contact Michael Kodransky at mkodransky@itdp.org. Visit www.itdp.org and www.ourcitiesourselves.org