

ZAC Meeting Summary – January 25, 2017

Code Studies Update:

Tom Rothmann, Principal Planner with the Department of City Planning's (DCP) Code Studies Division, provided the following updates:

- On January 18, 2017, the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance and Baseline Hillside Ordinance were approved by the Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUM). Click [here](#) for the council file.
- In addition, the R1 variation zones were approved in concept by PLUM. Click [here](#) for the council file.
- The Sign Ordinance went to PLUM on January 31, 2017. Click [here](#) for the council file.
- DCP has been hiring new Planning Assistants and adding capacity to External Affairs section.
- The Department's Chief Zoning Administrator, Linn Wyatt, is retiring.

Code Studies and Code Studio Presentation:

Bonnie Kim, Planning Assistant with Code Studies, presented on how parking is currently regulated in today's Zoning Code, current challenges to how the City deals with parking, and preliminary parking strategy objectives for **re:code LA**. See the attached presentation for details.

Colin Scarff, Principal with Code Studio, provided overview of case studies from projects including Denver, Raleigh, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Asheville. Denver's parking ratios vary depending on the context of the area. For example, a suburban context has higher parking ratios than an urban context. Raleigh has only one parking requirement for the whole city. In its downtown, Raleigh does not require parking for the first 16 dwelling units. There is a fee-in-lieu system allowing applicants to buy their way out of the requirements. Dallas has differing parking ratios depending on proximity to transit. The City of Fort Worth does not require parking for any parcel beyond 250 feet of single- or two-family districts. Asheville, North Carolina implemented a no parking requirement along an old streetcar corridor coming out of its downtown. This encouraged restaurants to locate in the area. Existing and new buildings are given different parking requirements – any use in an existing building is not required to provide parking. In contrast to these case studies, Buffalo recently removed all minimum parking requirements. See attached presentation for more details.

Best Practices Discussion Led by Prof. Willson and Prof. Shoup

Prof. Willson discussed how parking is a policy choice, not a technical calculation. The City can decide to have no requirements as Buffalo just did, to have some parking like Philadelphia, or to try and figure out the exact amount needed. Typically though, cities end up mandating extra parking beyond what is actually required because it is difficult to predict exact usage. Prof. Willson explained that in his experience as a consultant and researcher, he has found that eliminating parking altogether is not politically feasible, and has adopted an incremental approach with the goal of lowering the

requirements to appropriate levels. Impacts from trends in technology, transit availability, shared parking, and transit availability must be considered in setting parking requirements. Working on parking reform, a city often has to expand parking management if minimums are removed. Curbside parking has to be managed. Parking requirements should vary by geographic area without layering on complex parking reductions. The City needs to manage spillover.

Prof. Shoup discussed how some cities have a hidden parking maximum, in that any above ground parking counts toward FAR. This creates a high cost to underground parking and discourages overbuilding. Prof. Shoup explained that it's impossible to know exactly how any land use really affects parking demand, making minimum parking ratios inherently imprecise. In cases where parking ratios are used, Prof. Shoup recommended setting a common denominator for all ratios so that when the numerator is larger, it's easy to see more parking is required. Additionally whole numbers should be used in parking ratios to avoid false precision.

Prof. Shoup described the high cost of parking and the inequities of requiring low-income households to subsidize the cost through the provision of "free" parking, and stated that the customers who use the spaces should be the ones to pay. The Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (ARO) provides a good case study on parking. Originally, there was skepticism about whether the ARO would be effective, but it successfully revitalized underutilized historic structures and transformed an entire historic district. It is hard to see the effects of parking regulations when they are in place. However, the ARO illustrates the bad effects of parking minimums by showing all the good that can happen without them. When Pasadena put in parking meters, all funds went into sidewalk and alley improvements, and street furniture. By utilizing street meters, the City generated new revenue. Prof. Shoup explained that nearly half of people with a \$400 emergency expense can't pay it, and that stringent parking requirements prevent new housing development that could benefit low-income families.

ZAC Discussion

- **Parking Maximums:** ZAC members discussed how parking minimums are problematic in that excess parking could be used for other buildings in future. Developers will only build beyond the minimum requirements if there is demand. Developers who have tried to build excess parking beyond the minimum have been prevented from doing so by the City. Many buildings Downtown, for example, do not have any parking due to the ARO. This creates a demand for parking in the area that a developer could meet if they were allowed to build beyond the minimum and share the parking with neighboring buildings. Regulations should look at the overall need for area. The market should dictate how parking is provided.
- **Parking Minimums:** Several ZAC members questioned why to require parking at all. The reason staff and other ZAC members provided is that there is political opposition to removing minimums. The City allows reduced parking for eldercare, for bike parking, and many other reasons. ZAC members noted that there is support from Commission, and Planning staff to reduce parking, but projects are politically challenging to approve without requiring more parking. ZAC members generally agreed that if there are parking minimums, there should be

different parking ratios for different parts of the City, and that there should be an option available within the City that requires zero parking.

- **Change of Use and Parking Requirements:** ZAC members discussed whether a building of a certain age should be allowed to change use without creating additional parking. Considerations on this idea included preventing applicants from coming in with a use that has low parking requirements and then changing it right away to a use with higher parking requirements, and limiting the allowance only to certain uses.
- **Commercial Adaptive Reuse:** ZAC members discussed expanding the ARO to commercial buildings citywide in order to protect urban fabric.
- **Future Adaptability:** ZAC members discussed the importance of planning for the future in setting parking requirements. Ideas on this topic included: designing parking structures for conversion to other uses in the future, considering the role of technological changes in reducing our need for parking, car stacking, self-parking cars requiring smaller parking stalls, and how to allow for reduction of parking requirements in the future. ZAC members noted that a good indicator of a requirement not working is when you start getting a lot of variances. For instance, if parking variances start getting approved because cars are smaller, change the requirements accordingly.
- **Permit Parking:** ZAC members described the value of permit parking as a tool to bring funding into neighborhoods. For instance Boulder had residential parking next to an employment center. The employment center had permitting system so employees could park in the neighborhood with a permit during the day, and the funds went back into neighborhood improvements. Alternatively, permits can be used to prevent parking spillover into residential areas.
- **Off-site Parking:** ZAC members recommended that the City allow off-site parking for residential uses, similar to how off-site parking is currently allowed for commercial uses.
- **Shared Parking:** ZAC members discussed how while Downtown Los Angeles has more parking spaces per square mile than most downtown areas in other cities, the perception of not having enough parking is because parking spaces are not shared between uses. This lack of shared parking results in underutilization of parking spaces. Staff clarified that the Zoning Code doesn't require that a residential unit be tied to a parking space, meaning that the Zoning Code is not a barrier to unbundling parking.
- **In-lieu fee:** ZAC members discussed the possibility of allowing for in lieu fee payments instead of building parking spaces. For this to work, an upfront investment into a shared parking structure might be necessary in order to allow applicants to buy into it. In a dense residential area, a sensitively built in-lieu fee parking structure could work well.