



Creating Congested Neighborhood Streets: CodeNEXT (Version 3) Parking Standards

Overview. One of the paradoxes of the CodeNEXT model for density is that while it seeks to increase the number of residents on or visitors to a particular piece of property – and therefore the potential number of vehicles and vehicle trips - it decreases the required parking for that property – sometimes to the point of eliminating it altogether. Eliminating or reducing parking on property creates additional space for more density and more intense uses. The street becomes part of the parking lot – in effect **subsidizing development**. The proposed reductions are very substantial and will **constrict and congest** residential roads, designed for lower traffic volumes and parking loads, with parked cars, higher traffic volumes, and vehicles circulating, looking for parking. The incompatibility is multiplied because without onsite parking the densities and intensities of the uses can be larger (which is intended), generating more vehicle trips and the need for more parking – of which there will be less or none.

Schools. On November 27, 2017, before the release of the third version of CodeNEXT, the **Austin School Board** unanimously adopted a resolution urging the City not to cut parking and to restore the “Urban Core” parking reductions around schools. CodeNEXT ignored the School Boards’ urgent request. The resolution provided, in pertinent part:

Whereas, in the City’s urban core, the proposal to significantly reduce on-site parking for residential and commercial uses near schools will likely increase the number of vehicles permanently parked on surrounding streets, adding to the congestion, limiting parent and volunteer access, and posing serious student safety concerns for some urban campuses;

....

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Austin Independent School District requests the City of Austin to undertake the following actions in relation to CodeNEXT:

...

Retain current on-site parking requirements (without reductions contained in Austin Land Development Code Section 25-6-478 (A)) for residential properties with 750’ and for commercial properties within 1500’ of an urban core public school (as measured similar to Section 109.33 Sales Near School, Church or Hospital of the Current Land

Development Code), to maintain needed parking for parents, visitors, teachers and staff at school campuses. For single-family homes or duplexes, this would require two on-site parking spaces per dwelling unit. For multi-unit residential, commercial or other uses, on-site parking requirements would match those currently contained in the Austin Land Development Code, Section 25-6 Appendix A.

Purpose of Reductions. To be clear, the proposed parking standards are not intended to meet the parking needs of residential and commercial uses. In fact, they are specifically designed to fall short of those needs in order to **congest the streets, frustrate drivers and coerce people not to drive.** The adjoining or nearby residential neighborhoods are just collateral damage in this social engineering experiment. If it works at all – and the practicalities of family and work life and the experience downtown indicates that it will not – it will only work after neighborhood streets are parked to capacity and the streets are virtually impassable.

Residential Parking. At the same time that CodeNEXT is increasing residential density by either increasing the allowed units per lot or increasing the permitted lots per block, the **on-site parking requirement is cut to one parking space per household (unit) - half** of what is required today for single-family homes. Today an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) needs one parking space in most locations and no parking spaces in some areas. **CodeNEXT eliminates the parking requirement for ADUs in all locations.**

Commercial Parking. CodeNEXT increases the volume of **business traffic** generated by zoning districts in and around neighborhoods but reduces the parking requirement for uses in those districts. CodeNEXT designates most commercial uses near neighborhoods as either **Mixed-Use (MU)** or **Main Street (MS)** zones. These zones contain extreme parking reductions that will have a very significant negative impact. In Mixed-Use zones, the parking minimums are reduced 20% to 54% (but 100% for office uses under 2500 sq. ft.). In Main Street zones, the cuts are even more dramatic – ranging from 50% to the complete elimination of parking (even for the disabled). See the Appendix for more detailed information on common uses.

Additional Reductions. Today, commercial uses are eligible for **additional cumulative** reductions of up to 40% for a variety of reasons such as location in the “urban core,” providing a shower at work or the simple provision of additional bicycle parking. §23-4E-3060. These reductions have no empirical basis yet CodeNEXT increases these **additional** cumulative reductions (on top of the base reductions) up to 60%, including a 40% reduction for participation in the Affordable Housing Bonus Program. Because these **reductions are automatic, no consideration is given to the traffic and parking conditions in the immediate area.**

Further, the **Director of Planning, whose decision is unreviewable,** may eliminate the on-site parking requirement altogether by authorizing off-site parking 1,000 feet away without considering **the impact of the off-site parking facility on traffic patterns and nearby residents.**

Compare LDC §25-6-502 (C) with CodeNEXT §23-4E-3060. Affected residents do not receive notice and have no right of appeal.

Additionally, without notice to the public, the opportunity for public input or the availability of an appeal, **the Director can reduce the parking requirements** (with no stated limitation) for an applicant who submits a **Transportation Management Plan**. And, CodeNEXT does not afford the public the opportunity to offer information as to the accuracy or efficacy of the Plan. In short, **there are no binding parking (or transportation) standards, reviewable by the surrounding community**, that apply when a Transportation Management Plan is filed because the Director has the power to waive them without notice to the public and an opportunity to be heard.

Conclusion. When nearby commercial uses do not have adequate parking, patrons are forced to turn to neighborhood streets. Commercial parking is pushed deeper and deeper into the neighborhood compounding the problems caused by the additional on-street CodeNEXT residential parking. Overparked neighborhood streets make it difficult and dangerous for residents, visitors, delivery vehicles, service vehicles, garbage pickup, and emergency services. Neighborhood streets will be less walkable, less bike-able, less safe and less family friendly. The area around schools will be more hazardous and less accessible and inviting. **All of these conditions encourage families to move to safer, less congested locales.** These are the conditions that on-site parking requirements are supposed to prevent. These are the conditions that CodeNEXT will, instead, create or exacerbate.

Disclaimer: While the contributors to this overview made a concerted effort to be accurate, given the code draft’s complexity, ambiguity and the limited time afforded by the City for review, there may be errors or misunderstandings herein. The reader is encouraged to check statements in this document against the draft code, its amendments and additions.

Appendix¹
Mixed-Use Zones

<u>Use</u>	<u>Today</u>	<u>CodeNEXT Draft 3</u>	<u>Reduced By</u>
Retail	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	1 space per 350-sq. ft.	20%
Banks	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	1 space per 500-sq. ft.	45%
Office (<2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	0 spaces	100%
Office (>2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	1 space per 500-sq. ft.	45%
Medical Serv.	1 space per 200-sq. ft.	1 space per 500-sq. ft.	50%
Restaurant (<2500)	1 space per 100-sq. ft.	1 space per 150-sq. ft.	30%
Rest. (>2500<10,000)	1 space per 75-sq. ft.	1 space per 125-sq. ft. ²	30% ³

Bar (<2500)	1 space per 100-sq.ft.	1 space per 150-sq. ft.	30%
Bar (>2500<10,000)	1 space per 50-sq.ft.	1 space per 125-sq. ft. ²	54% ³

Main Street Zones

<u>Use</u>	<u>Today</u>	<u>CodeNEXT Draft 3</u>	<u>Reduced By</u>
Retail (<2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	0 spaces	100%
Retail (>2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	1 space per 500- sq. ft. ²	65% ³
Banks (<2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	0 spaces	100%
Banks (>2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	1 space per 500-sq.ft. ²	65% ³
Office (<2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	0 spaces.	100%
Office (>2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	1 space per 500-sq.ft. ²	65% ³
Med. Serv. (<2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	0 spaces	100%
Med. Serv. (>2500)	1 space per 275-sq. ft.	1 space per 500-sq. ft. ²	65% ³
Restaurant (<2500)	1 space per 100-sq. ft	0 spaces	100%
Rest. (>2500<10,000)	1 space per 75-sq. ft	1 space per 125-sq. ft. ²	65%*
Bar (<2500)	1 space per 100-sq.ft.	0 spaces.	100%
Bar (>2500<10,000)	1 space per 50-sq.ft.	1 space per 125-sq. ft. ²	50% ^{3,4}

1. Current LDC § 25-6-478 already arbitrarily cuts necessary parking by 20% for the “Urban Core.” The calculations in this Appendix take into account this existing reduction.

2. Calculated for the square feet above 2,500.

3. Reduction calculated for a 5,000 square foot use.

4. Different calculation than for bars in Mixed-Use.