

POSITION ON RESIDENTIAL PARKING

ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 2005

The mission of the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC) is to promote well-designed and well-located housing serving the needs of all San Franciscans. We take positions on transportation and other planning and urban design issues insofar as they impact housing production. This paper states the SFHAC's position on residential parking.

Providing parking facilities in residential developments increases the per unit construction costs for a given project, which can result in an increase in the price of housing for individual buyers and renters. Environmentally sustainable and economically efficient modes of transport - such as car-pooling, car-sharing, transit, bicycling, and walking - should be strongly encouraged to make San Francisco a more livable city. Similarly, minimizing reliance on private automobiles would advance this goal.

Infill housing located in areas well-served by walking, bicycling, and public transit tremendously benefits the region and the city because it helps to alleviate our housing shortage, provides greater accessibility for residents, and has the least impact on the physical environment.

For the foreseeable future, many people will continue to use private automobiles in the city and region as it is currently structured. In the long run, we desire that San Francisco will evolve into a city where its residents are less dependent on cars and driving. But in the short run, we support a "transitional parking strategy" that addresses the city's housing shortage while incrementally reducing automobile dependence.

We believe that the three key principles for an intelligent parking policy are flexibility, creativity and moderation:

1. Provide residential builders the flexibility to reasonably determine how much parking to provide.
2. Encourage builders to be creative in the design of off-street parking facilities.
3. Limit excessive parking, particularly in those areas well-served by transit infrastructure, bike networks, and neighborhood services.

In an attempt to strike a balance between the benefit of reduced construction costs, the satisfaction of consumer demand and preferences, and the requirements to obtain financing for new housing, the SFHAC has developed specific guidelines for project endorsements and for guiding our support of new residential parking zoning controls.

Project Endorsement Guidelines

The guidelines we will follow in our review of specific housing projects are as follows:

In districts where the minimum parking requirement is one parking space per residential unit (1:1) or more, the SFHAC will not, except in extraordinary circumstances, support a project with parking in excess of 1:1. In districts where the minimum parking requirement is less than 1:1, SFHAC will only support additional parking up to 1:1 if the need for additional is clearly established to the satisfaction of the SFHAC.

The SFHAC will give extra support to projects that reduce parking where appropriate, particularly in areas that are transit accessible. The Coalition prefers creative strategies to reduce the need for parking, such as transit linkages, car-sharing on-site or nearby, and the un-bundling of parking spaces from residential units.

The SFHAC's endorsement of a project is never conditioned on a project providing less parking than the current minimum required by zoning. However, for those projects that seek to build less parking, we will provide support for variances or conditional use permits if such an approval is required to build below the minimum.

The SFHAC requires that the design of residential parking facilities protect the pedestrian realm, minimize curb cuts, and provide active ground floor uses. We encourage creative designs that configure parking spaces to maximize dwelling space in a given project. Where parking is provided on the ground floor, consider design solutions (such as level floors with adequate ceiling heights) that would allow conversion of parking spaces to other uses in the future

Zoning Reform Policies

The guidelines we will follow in formulating our legislative approach to new planning and zoning controls are as follows:

- Establish neighborhood-specific off-street parking requirements based on roadway capacity, transit availability, and proximity of Class 1 bicycle lanes and publicly available car share spaces, as well as accessibility to complete neighborhood services and shopping.
- Eliminate residential parking minimums in appropriate neighborhoods. Eliminate minimum parking requirements for the following housing types regardless of their location: affordable housing projects; senior housing units; group housing units; and single-room occupancy (SRO) units.
- Establish appropriate residential parking maximums. Establish incentives to reduce parking below 1:1.
- Encourage the efficient use of space by lowering the minimum dimensional requirements for parking spaces, and encourage parking arrangements where individual spaces are not independently accessible through such means as tandem parking, lifts, mechanical stackers, and valet operations.

- Encourage the provision of required parking in off-site facilities to take advantage of surplus parking capacity in the project vicinity and allow the provision of residential parking in new off-site shared facilities.
- Establish design guidelines that reduce the conflicts between new off-street parking facilities with transit operations and the safety, convenience, and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Enact provisions encouraging or requiring car sharing and other alternatives to private vehicle use.
- In higher density multi-unit districts, require the cost of buying or renting a new residential unit to be unbundled from the cost of buying or renting a parking space in the new residential development.

