

ARTICLE XX ARTICLE

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**Amend the Zoning By-law to eliminate off-street residential parking minimums in the Transit Parking Overlay District.**

To see if the Town will amend Article VI, Section 6.02, Paragraph 2 i. of the Town's Zoning By-Law (Off-Street Parking Space Regulations) as follows: (deletions in ~~strike through~~; additions in **bold underline**):

i. Residential uses on any lot for which any portion of the lot is within the Transit Parking Overlay District, notwithstanding the requirements of §3.02 paragraph 4, ~~must provide no fewer off-street parking spaces per dwelling unit than 1 for studio units, 1.4 for one-bedroom units, 2 for two-bedroom units, 2 for dwelling units of three or more bedrooms~~ **are not subject to the minimum off-street parking space requirements in Section 6.02.**

Or act on anything relative thereto.

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the Select Board voted to pursue a limited warrant for the Annual Town Meeting to meet the challenges of conducting an alternate form of town meeting and alleviate the number of public meetings and public hearings conducted during the state of emergency. This article is a duplicate of the article filed for the Annual Town Meeting.

This Warrant Article eliminates parking minimums for residential uses in the Transit Parking Overlay District (TPOD; see Figure 1 below). In 2016, Town Meeting created the TPOD, defined as parcels which are between 0 and 0.5 miles from a Green Line Stop, with slightly reduced parking requirements: 1 spot per studio, 1.4 spots per 1 bedroom, and 2 spots for two-bedroom units. This area has good bus service, wider sidewalks, more numerous bike lanes, and greater walking distance access to amenities such as grocery stores, cafes, restaurants, and jobs. According to the American Community Survey 2013-2018 estimate, about 25% of residents in the TPOD do not own a car and

70% of residents in the TPOD live in households with 1 or fewer cars.<sup>1</sup> About 66% of TPOD residents who work do not commute by car, compared to just 15% nationwide. Yet our current residential parking minimums in the TPOD exceed those in the city of Houston.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 1: The Transit Parking Overlay District (shaded gray)**



Our current approach to parking neither reflects the history of our Town nor its vision of a sustainable future. For most of this Town's history—from its incorporation as a separate municipality in 1705 until 1941—there was no requirement that housing provide off-street automobile parking.<sup>3</sup> If Brookline started over with today's parking minimums—the product of increases in 1962, 1977, 1987, and 2000—we would not get

<sup>1</sup> These numbers come from the 10 Census Tracts (Norfolk County 4001-4010) falling entirely or primarily within the TPOD. Brookline comprises these 10 Census Tracts in the TPOD and two others (4011 and 4012) in South Brookline, outside of the TPOD, where vehicle ownership and car commuting is much higher.

<sup>2</sup> Houston requires 1.66 parking spots per two-bedroom apartment and has no residential parking minimums in three central neighborhoods. Scherer, Jasper. "Houston may ease parking requirements in parts of EaDo, Midtown." *Houston Chronicle*

<sup>3</sup> Bolton, Craig. "Vehicle Parking in Brookline."

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2348/2000-Vehicle-Parking-in-Brookline-by-Craig-Bolon?bidId=>



our vibrant, walkable neighborhoods like Coolidge Corner and Washington Square because so-many defining residential and mixed-use buildings could no longer be built: they do not have any or enough parking.<sup>4</sup> Our neighborhoods enjoy long, uninterrupted sidewalks, greenspace, and walkable mixed-use commercial districts precisely because they do not have the asphalt and driveways required by our current zoning. We have the Brookline we love because planning and design substantially predated the dominance of the automobile.

Zoning shapes the future of our Town by molding the construction that will be part of Brookline for the next 100 years. Our Town has committed again and again to climate change mitigation and sustainable living. In November 2019, Town Meeting passed Warrant Article 21 prohibiting the installation of new fossil fuel infrastructure for heating, yet our current parking minimums *require* fossil fuel infrastructure even in our most transit-rich, walkable, and bikeable neighborhoods (the average car in the US emits 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide *per year*, according to the Environmental Protection Association).<sup>5</sup> In November, Town Meeting also passed Article 31, which enshrined our commitment to transportation of people, rather than automobiles, urging that, by 2050, only 25 percent of trips in Brookline would be made by single-occupant or single-passenger cars or trucks. Requiring a parking spot for every studio apartment and two parking spots for every two-bedroom residence in our transit-rich, walkable, and bikeable neighborhoods is not consistent with this goal. Scholarly research suggests that “when cities require parking with residential development, they increase vehicle ownership and use,” and these effects are more pronounced for housing near public transit.<sup>6</sup>

Eliminating residential parking minimums in the TPOD is not a radical proposition. Professional groups, including the American Planning Association and Greater Boston’s Metropolitan Area Planning Council, have advocated for eliminating off-street residential parking minimums, as did the Obama Administration’s Housing Development Toolkit.<sup>7</sup> This policy does not eliminate existing parking spots, nor does it ban the construction of new parking spots; it only eliminates a rigid requirement that new housing development include at-least a particular quantity of private car parking, and only does so in areas of Brookline with particularly good options for travel via means other than private cars, and where many existing housing developments predate and do not conform with current car parking requirements. The primary impact this policy is that new housing has less parking. In 2012, Seattle eliminated required parking in some neighborhoods near transit;

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<sup>4</sup> Writing before the most recent increase in parking quotas, Bolton (2000) noted that “Few buildings from before 1987 have the amounts of parking now considered necessary.”

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/greenhouse-gas-emissions-typical-passenger-vehicle>

<sup>6</sup> Manville, Michael. 2017. “Bundled parking and vehicle ownership: Evidence from the American Housing Survey.” *The Journal of Transport and Land Use*, 10(1), 27-55.

<sup>7</sup> Spivak Jeffrey. 2018. “People Over Parking.” American Planning Association.

<https://www.planning.org/planning/2018/oct/peopleoverparking> MAPC. 2019. “Metro Boston Perfect Fit Parking Initiative.”

<https://perfectfitparking.mapc.org/assets/documents/Final%20Perfect%20Fit%20Report.pdf> “Housing Development Toolkit.” September 2016. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/images/Housing\\_Development\\_Toolkit%20f2.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/images/Housing_Development_Toolkit%20f2.pdf)

housing built over the next 5 years in the impacted neighborhoods included about 40% fewer parking spots than the city had previously required, saving about \$537 million in construction cost.<sup>8</sup>

Municipalities around the country have eliminated their parking minimums, both near public transit and even citywide. Sacramento, San Diego, Atlanta, and Somerville have all eliminated parking minimums near public transit; the latter two having also imposed *parking maximums* within 0.5 miles of public transit. Other municipalities—including Buffalo, Hartford, Minneapolis, and San Francisco—have no parking minimums anywhere at all (many smaller towns, like South Burlington, Vermont, also do not have parking spot quotas for housing). While Brookline has been a leader on many issues related to climate change, on this one we are forced to play catch-up. This Warrant Article does not take the stronger stances of cities like San Francisco or Buffalo, which have no parking minimums anywhere, or Atlanta and Somerville, which have imposed parking maximums within 0.5 miles of public transit. Instead, it takes the middle ground: making it legal, within 0.5 miles of public transit, to build housing units with as much parking as makes sense for that project. The city of Houston, which has no residential parking minimums in three of its more walkable neighborhoods, calls this policy “market-based parking.”<sup>9</sup>

Our current parking minimums fail to reflect the diversity of parking needs within the TPOD, imposing a “one-size fits all” on parking. In the TPOD, about 66% of Brookline residents who work commute without a car (via mass-transit, walking, cycling, etc.) and 25% of households do not possess any cars, according to the American Community Survey 2013-2018 estimates. In two north Brookline Census Tracts (4001 and 4002), 37% and 35% of households, respectively, do not own a car; and among renters, these numbers are even higher: 58.2% and 66.1%. But even in these areas, and even for rental housing, our zoning requires all housing to be equipped with car parking infrastructure. Empowered by state law to ignore local zoning, many 40B developers build much less than the required parking in the TPOD. At 45 Marion St, a Coolidge Corner development completed in 2014, 64 residential units were built with just 21 parking spots. At 217 Kent St, a planned 40B includes 99 residential units and just 44 parking spots. Our zoning near public transit creates more asphalt, traffic congestion, and fossil fuel infrastructure than the market demands. As Harvard economics professor Edward Glaeser writes, “Reducing (or eliminating) minimum parking requirements is one of those unusual cases where the ardent environmentalist and the libertarian economist see eye-to-eye.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Gabbe, CJ, Gregory Pierce, and Gordon Clowers. 2020. “Parking policy: The effects of residential minimum parking requirements in Seattle.” *Land Use Policy*, 91.

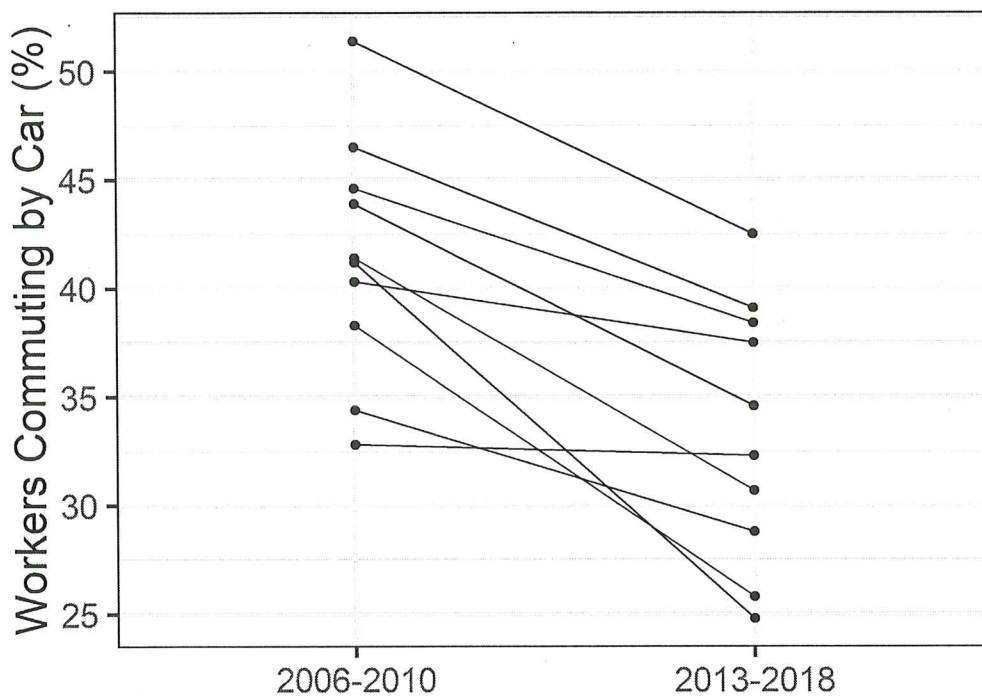
<sup>9</sup> Scherer, Jasper. “Houston lifts minimum parking requirements in EaDo, Midtown.” *Houston Chronicle*

<sup>10</sup> Glaeser, Edward. 2013. “Don’t require more spaces; price curbside ones properly.” *Boston Globe*



Despite our high parking minimums, the number of cars registered in Brookline has declined every year since 2013, according to the tax receipts from the Town Assessor's Office. In 2013, there were 34,259 vehicles registered in Brookline; by 2018, despite several new housing developments, the number of vehicles had declined to 33,210.<sup>11</sup> The data do not bear out concerns of a residential parking crisis. Survey data from the American Community Survey further demonstrate declining vehicle needs in the TPOD. In each of the 10 Census Tracts comprising the TPOD, the share of workers commuting by car, van, or truck declined between the 2010 5-year survey and the 2018 survey, as shown in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2: DECLINING VEHICLE USAGE IN TPOD CENSUS TRACTS**



Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates

In addition to the negative impacts of parking quotas on the environment, requiring parking also makes housing much less affordable. A January 2020 report to Brookline's Housing Advisory Board from Pam McKinney, a consultant contracted by the Town to examine housing production costs, states that building one above-ground garage parking spot costs \$35,000, while one underground parking spot costs \$100,000. Consequently, current requirements—1.6 parking spots for 1-bedroom apartments and 2 parking spots for 2-bedroom apartments in the TPOD—substantially inflate the price of housing. According to the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, one parking spot increases the cost

<sup>11</sup> Brookline Assessor's Office. "Looking at Excise Mailings and Commitments 11-19-2019." Document obtained via open records request to the Town Clerk's Office.

of housing by 12.5% and two parking spots increases the cost of housing by about 25%.<sup>12</sup> In Minneapolis and Miami, reductions in parking minimums have spurred the growth of relatively affordable apartment buildings with limited parking, according to media reports in both cities.<sup>13</sup> Given the increasing unaffordability of housing in Brookline, it makes little sense for our zoning to preclude the construction of less expensive housing options.

Ultimately, this Warrant Article is about creating the option to build housing responsive to people with different automobile needs. It neither removes existing parking nor prohibits new parking from being built. In the TPOD, many residents do not own a car, and a growing majority of residents do not commute to work by car. Requiring all new construction to include an arbitrary number of parking spots neither reflects our Town's history as a streetcar suburb nor its future as an environmentally sustainable community.

**TABLE 1: SAMPLING OF CITIES WITH NO PARKING MINIMUMS**

City	Parking Policy	Maximums	Date
Buffalo, NY	No minimums citywide		1/13/2017
Hartford, CT	No minimums citywide		12/13/2017
South Burlington, VT	No minimums citywide		10/15/2019
Minneapolis, MN	No minimums citywide		12/12/2018
San Francisco, CA	No minimums citywide		12/17/2018
Houston, TX	No minimums certain neighborhoods		7/19/2019
Sacramento, CA	No minimums near transit (<0.25 miles)		12/13/2018
San Diego, CA	No minimums near transit (<0.5 miles)		3/6/2019
Atlanta, GA	No minimums near transit (<0.5 miles)	Yes	11/2/2019
Somerville, MA	No minimums near transit (<0.5 miles)	Yes	12/16/2019

<sup>12</sup> Littman, Todd. 2019. "Parking Requirement Impacts on Housing Affordability." Victoria Transport Policy Institute.

<sup>13</sup> Schmitt, Angie. "How Parking Mandates Tilt the Market Toward 'Luxury' Housing." <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2018/02/01/how-parking-mandates-tilt-the-market-toward-luxury-housing/> San Juan, Rebecca. 2020. "Small-scale urban developments starting to sprout. Thank a change in the parking code." *Miami Herald*. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article238937913.html>