

New Apartments and Parking: Applicability of Parking Permit Programs

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Multi-unit residential development is occurring along many of Portland's main street corridors. Much of the residential development along these corridors is being built under city policies and zoning codes that have been in place since the 1980s, which allows apartments near a frequent service transit route to be built without parking.

There is concern about the impacts of these developments, and discussion regarding appropriate parking minimums, design, and public involvement requirements. Additionally, neighborhood residents have expressed concern about how the vehicles of the new developments' residents and visitors may impact the on-street parking environment.

City Council has asked PBOT to evaluate parking permit programs as a tool to help manage the on-street parking environment. However, in order to design an effective permit parking program, a clear definition of the parking problem to be addressed is needed.

The City's existing parking permit program (the Area Parking Permit Program) is designed to manage the supply of on-street parking for the benefit of residents and businesses where the parking problem is created by commuters placing excess demand on the supply. There are currently 10 APPP Zones in place surrounding the Central City and over 12,000 permit holders. To better serve smaller areas and provide greater flexibility, Council approved an ordinance in July 2012 for an APPP Pilot Program which decreases the minimum size required to form an APP (from 40 block faces to 12) and allows more discretion in defining the "parking problem" in July 2012.

Guiding Principles for Parking Permit Programs

To ensure consistency with City policies, staff recommends the following principles be used to design a parking permit program:

1. **Equity.** The rules and regulations for on-street parking should be equitable for all residents regardless of housing type or tenure (e.g., owner and renters; established residents and new residents, single family home residents and apartment dwellers.)
2. **Legitimate Uses.** Residents, employees, customers, and visitors are all legitimate users of the parking supply in mixed use areas and their needs should be addressed in the design of parking regulation programs. Parking uses that should be prohibited or discouraged include commuters that are using

neighborhood streets to ‘park and ride’ and long-term storage of vehicles that are functionally abandoned (flat tires, expired registration, etc).

3. **Travel Demand Management.** Rules and regulations for parking that support travel demand management (policies and incentives that encourage reduced car use and ownership) are consistent with City policy. These may include tiered pricing that discourages individuals from parking multiple vehicles on street or limited permit availability per household.
4. **Efficient Use of Parking Infrastructure.** Both on-street and off-street parking infrastructure should be used to create an efficient and effective parking environment. This environment may be encouraged through a variety of tools including pricing that promote on-street turnover, incentivize use of private parking infrastructure (lots, driveways, garages) through pricing, and creating more opportunities for shared parking use.

Policy Questions

With these principles in mind, City staff can begin to formulate a framework for a parking permit program. Yet, even with these principles, it is necessary to define what a “parking problem” in these neighborhoods would look like. Policymakers need to be able to answer the question:

“What is considered a parking problem?”

When answering this question, context is important. An industry standard for a well-used right of way is 85% occupancy, about one space open per block face. For the City’s Area Parking Permit Program, 75% occupancy (with 25% of the 75% being commuter parking) is considered the problem needed to justify an APP Zone.

This question is more difficult than face value may indicate. While an occupancy rate of 75% or 85% might be optimal from an operational and functional aspect, it needs to be acknowledged that these rates are higher than what most residential neighborhoods in Portland experience. Therefore, defining when a parking situation becomes a “problem,” may communicate that change up to a certain point is not considered a problem. This change, at any rate, is often unwelcome by residents, and policymakers need to be ready to explain how and why a problem is defined in order to help residents better understand the role that change fills in our City’s development.

The second question that needs to be asked is:

“Is the permit program equitable?”

A primary permit parking program design principles is that access to permit privileges should not be varied per housing type, tenure, or ownership status. To do so would raise equity concerns that should not be ignored.

The City of Portland has created the Portland Plan which looks to move the City forward in an equitable fashion, prioritizing in ways that benefit communities that have been discriminated against in the past; any foreseen discrimination is unacceptable, especially if the discrimination perpetuates inequities of the past along racial and ability lines.

Given that home owners in the Portland area are more likely to be whiter and more abled than renters, a permitting system based on housing type would further the inequities of the past and not be a productive step in creating a Portland where all residents have equitable access to City resources.¹ Any proposed permit program should be reviewed through an equity lens to ensure that unintended equity consequences do not occur.

Attached Documents

The Portland Bureau of Transportation has created two documents to assist City staff, Council, PSC, and stakeholders have a more educated discussion about new apartment developments and their potential parking impact:

1. **Response to Donald Shoup's editorial.** In January, Dr. Donald Shoup, a professor at UCLA, proposed an overnight parking permit program as a solution to potential parking issues created by apartments being built with little or no parking. City staff have reviewed the editorial and responded about the practicability of such a program.
2. **Parking Permit Primer.** City staff has created a primer that explains various types of parking permits, the City's current parking permit program (the Area Parking Permit Program), and a summary of how other cities across the country implement overnight parking permits (the suggestion put forth by Dr. Shoup).

Summary and Next Steps

With these principles in mind, we believe that the APPP Pilot referenced above may be adaptable for managing parking in neighborhoods where apartment development is occurring. Area residents may apply for the APPP Pilot under the already adopted guidelines.

In summary, City staff will continue to work with neighborhood stakeholders to better understand and manage the on-street parking environment in neighborhoods seeing

¹ For example, according to 2010 Census data, 57% of white households in Portland own their home. In Portland's communities of color, 59% rent their homes. For black, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander households, the rental rates are above 65%.

new apartment development. We encourage all stakeholders to continue to work towards a parking environment that makes efficient use of the limited supply for all legitimate users.