



Planning Commission Report

Planning Commission Meeting: January 30, 2012

Agenda Item: 6-A

To: Planning Commission
From: Jory Phillips, Deputy Director – Special Projects
Subject: Zoning Ordinance Update: Sustainability, Parking, and Transportation Demand Management

Introduction

The Land Use & Circulation Element (LUCE) includes several goals and policies related to sustainability and climate change, and along with Neighborhood Conservation, these goals are at the heart of the purpose of the LUCE. The Zoning Ordinance will implement sustainability and climate change goals in several ways. This report discusses three aspects of that implementation: bicycle parking, automobile parking, and Transportation Demand Management measures and tools.

The Zoning Ordinance will also include development standards and design guidelines intended to ensure new development is more pedestrian-friendly; that topic was covered in the Residential and Mixed-Use and Commercial standards and guidelines modules. Additional standards related to stormwater management, landscaping and drought-tolerant plantings, and photovoltaic and electric vehicle requirements will be presented at a later date in a module on standards that are applicable citywide.

The Zoning Ordinance Update will include new standards that implement the bicycle parking requirements of the Santa Monica Bike Action Plan. These standards will require both long-term and short-term parking for bicycles in new development, increase the overall amount of bike parking made available in the city, and make bike parking more visible, which is key to encouraging people to use their bicycle.

This staff report looks at a variety of recommendations related to automobile parking: modified requirements that are based on local conditions and the desire to transform into a more pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-oriented community; options for sharing spaces in private parking lots and garages to decrease the resources dedicated to parking and the number of times people have to move their car; and other recommendations for standards intended to reflect local conditions and make parking utilization more efficient.

Finally, the staff report discusses revisions to the Transportation Demand Management program, which are intended to differentiate requirements for buildings (developers) and

businesses (employers), as well as incorporate new requirements for residential and mixed-use development.

Discussion

The LUCE, Sustainability, and Climate Change

The Zoning Ordinance Update will include several key measures related to implementing the LUCE approach to sustainability and climate change. LUCE Goal LU2: Integrate Land Use and Transportation for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emission Reduction includes policies to redirect growth away from residential neighborhoods onto transit corridors, create new transit villages along the Expo Light Rail line, create vibrant activity centers at transit crossroads, create diverse housing options along the corridors, create physical spaces and programs to support walking, bicycling, and transit use, create active spaces, and to prepare a Climate Action Plan to include measures to reduce GHG emissions.

Many of these policies are echoed under the LUCE's fourth goal, LU4: Complete Sustainable Neighborhoods, which also further emphasizes providing uses within walking distance to meet the daily needs of residents, pedestrian-oriented design, art and amenities, and parking and Transportation Demand Management districts.

These goals and policies all point toward creating an environment in Santa Monica that makes it safer and more comfortable to use non-automobile means of transportation. Santa Monica does and will continue to rely on the automobile for economic prosperity; it is important to recognize the context of the dominance of the automobile in the greater Los Angeles region.

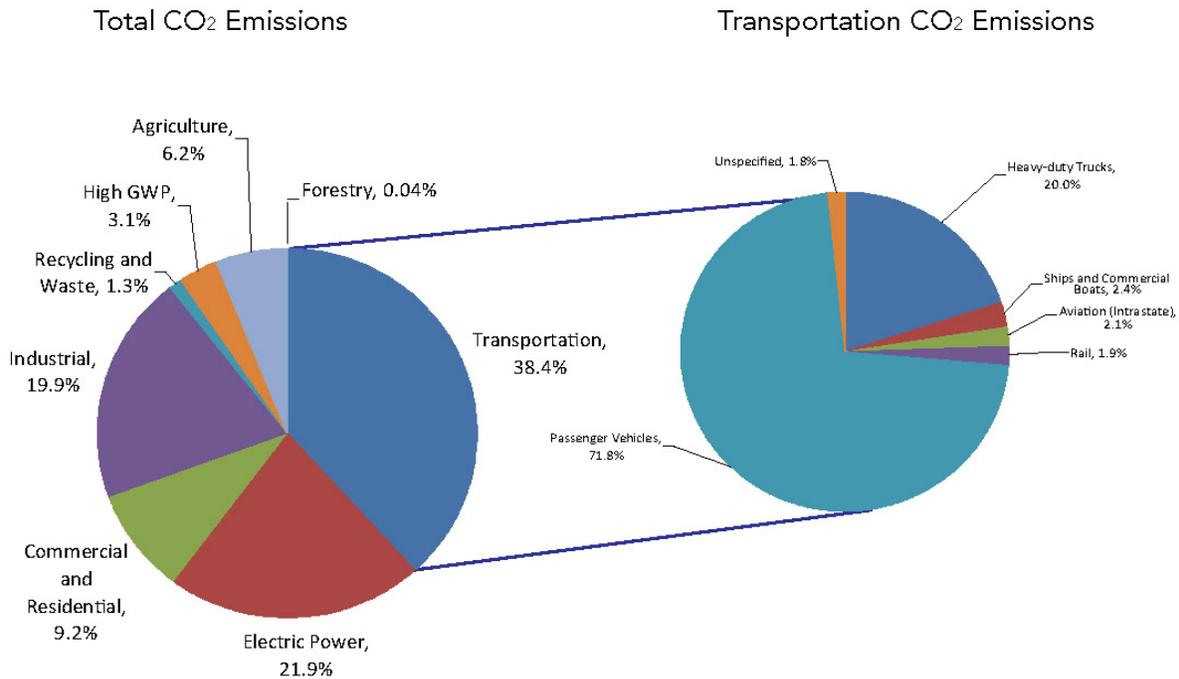
Santa Monica in a Global and Regional Context

It is also important to recognize the role that designing our cities around the automobile has had in making our lives more difficult and less healthy. The combination of being situated in the auto-dominated Los Angeles region and having regional employment destinations such as St. John's Hospital, SM-UCLA Medical Center, and Santa Monica College creates traffic congestion that affects Santa Monica and the region. Recent data collected by INRIX indicated that the I-10 and I-405 corridors that many residents and employees of Santa Monica rely on rank as the most congested in the U.S.¹.

Regionally, the abundance of auto use, the presence of a major port, regional manufacturing and industry in combination with local climate conditions create some of the worst air quality in the nation, with associated health problems of asthma and respiratory disease. Conversely, it has been shown that communities with higher walkability ratings have more pedestrian activity, which helps combat obesity health problems associated with heart disease.

¹ INRIX press release, May 2012, <http://www.inrix.com/pressrelease.asp?id=156>

According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2012 was warmest year on record in the United States, with more instances in extreme weather events, such as drought, wildfires, and hurricanes. Further, sea levels have been rising since the late 19th Century, with some estimates predicting a rise from 1-3 feet by the year 2100². Most scientists now agree that man-made greenhouse gas production is a primary contributor towards climate change and sea level rise³.



The above chart, taken from the LUCE and based on the California Air Resources Board 2006 Greenhouse Gas Inventory, shows that passenger vehicles are responsible for 71.8% of CO₂ emissions among transportation-related emissions. Transportation is the biggest single source of CO₂ emissions, comprising 38.4% of the total. One of the most important things cities can do to reduce greenhouse gases is to encourage people to take non-auto modes of transportation.

Santa Monica is uniquely poised to take on these issues. First, it is one of the more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly cities in the region, acknowledged by its status as both a Silver-level Walk-Friendly Community, and Bronze-level Bike Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. Additional improvements to facilitate these modes are underway. Santa Monica also has plans and the existing land use patterns in place to become even more pedestrian and bicycle oriented by focusing growth along mixed-use, transit-friendly corridors. Expo Light Rail will also provide an option that did not previously exist for thousands of people, allowing them to avoid the automobile backup

² Lemonick, Michael D., "[Sea Level Rise Accelerating Faster than Initial Projections.](#)" *Climate Central*, Web. November 27, 2012

³ Gornitz, Vivien, "[The Great Ice Meltdown and Rising Seas: Lessons for Tomorrow.](#)" *National Aeronautics and Space Administration Goddard Institute for Space Studies*, Web. June 2012.

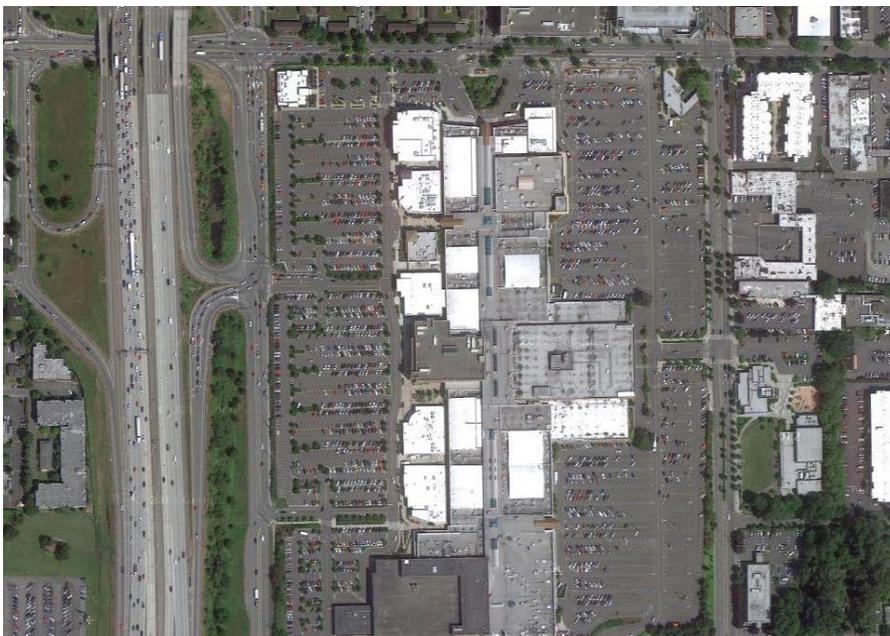
at the I-10 Cloverfield exit and instead get work done, nap, or read during their commute.

Santa Monica is also a regional leader. Its plans, policies and implementation measures, including the LUCE, Bike Action Plan, Green Building Design Guidelines, its parks and open space, and its housing programs often make it the city that other cities in the region often look to when formulating their own plans and programs. Additionally, Santa Monica actively demonstrates bike, transit, and pedestrian-oriented principles to regional visitors, who can then in turn demand of their hometowns.

The Link to Automobile Parking

There is a strong link between driving behavior and the availability and pricing of automobile parking. Suburban shopping malls and strip-mall styles of development sprang up after World War II and are rife throughout the United States. Recognizing that humans are creatures of convenience, the central design feature of these malls is a clear view of a generous amount of (typically) free parking. Automobile drivers will always choose a free or inexpensive parking space directly in front of their destination if it is available. Developments such as suburban-style shopping malls directly encourage people to drive their cars, and in fact make it difficult and uncomfortable for people to arrive by walking, biking, or taking transit.

The image below shows an aerial photograph of Northgate Mall in Seattle, which is recognized as the first suburban shopping mall of its kind. As the photo conveys, more land area is occupied by the surface parking lot surrounding it than the structure itself. The mall and a portion of the expansive parking lot are located within viewing distance of a freeway, to give drivers a clear view of the abundance of parking.



Santa Monica’s Downtown uses a more urban version to achieve success: parking is shared among a group of multi-story public parking structures. No one retail or service establishment is required to provide its own parking.

Smaller-scale retail areas such as Main Street rely on a combination of parking sources, including on-street spaces, public parking lots behind Main Street retailers and restaurants, as well as private parking lots and garages. On Montana Avenue, most of the private parking is located behind the buildings, similarly creating a more attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment. Most commercial areas outside of downtown rely on private parking lots and garages and on-street parking.

It is natural to assume that more parking associated with businesses and new development is better, and that the City should require as much parking as it reasonably can. While this approach obviously achieves more parking, it can also result in unintended consequences. First, someone has to pay for the parking, and it will usually end up being the person who is parking their car there. Developers pass costs associated with their projects along to their tenants. If increased parking is associated with housing, the rents or purchase prices for tenants will be higher. If the parking is associated with retail spaces, costs will be passed along to the tenants, who must raise the prices of their goods sold to customers. Employers factor the cost of the parking into the compensation of their employees and increase the cost of their services or products or decrease salaries. The residents, employees, and shoppers of Santa Monica ultimately pay for the construction of parking in the city.

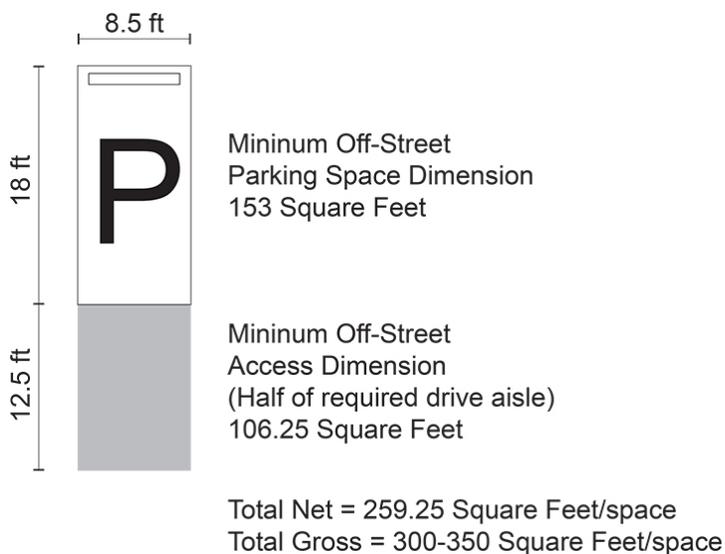
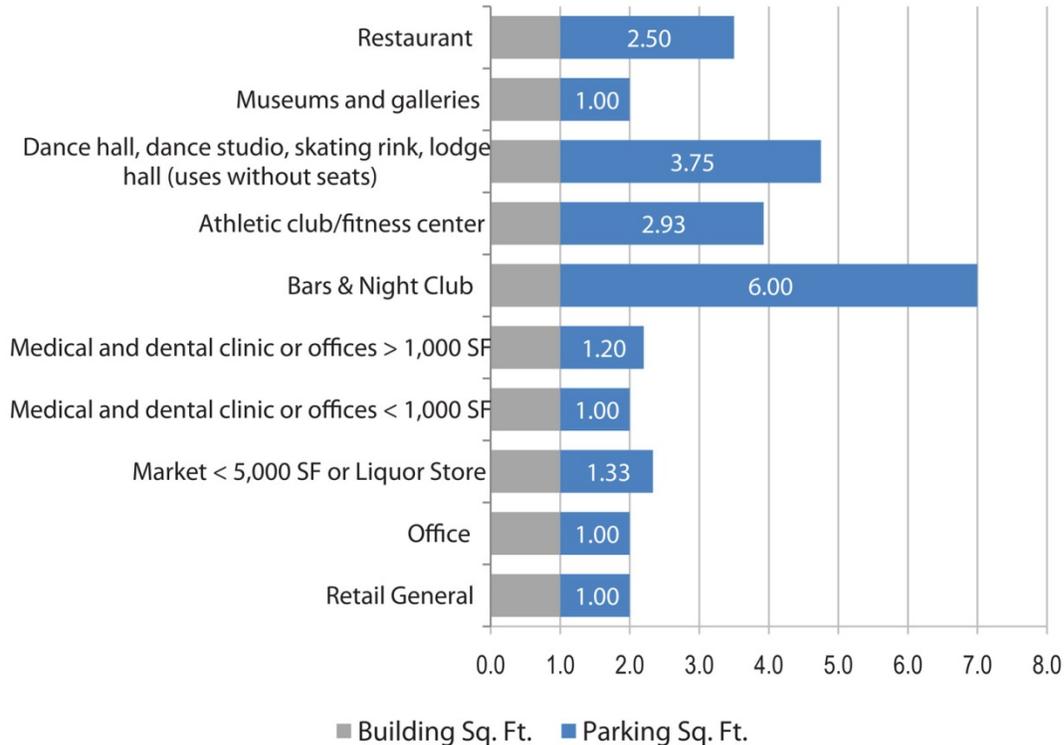


Figure: Typical amount of space required to park one car.

The second reason that building too much parking is not good is that it is an inefficient use of land. Suburban America was able to build shopping malls and strip malls for a very long time because of the vast amount of undeveloped land that was available on the periphery of cities. Santa Monica does not have this luxury, and must either build structured parking above and below grade to accommodate new buildings, both of

which are expensive. Further, if the ability to share pools of parking among different uses is not available, parking spaces may be underutilized and sit vacant for long parts of the day.

Ratios of Required Parking Area to Building Area in Santa Monica



Depending on the use being considered, modern parking development standards require around the same amount as, or dramatically more, space for cars as that of the use associated with it. Higher parking requirements result in more expensive buildings and a stronger message that the car is the preferred mode of transportation. The chart above shows how much space is required for cars for different types of uses, based on existing Santa Monica parking requirements. Bars and nightclubs require six times more space for automobiles than for the uses themselves; restaurants require two and half times more. While these ratios do take into account concentrations of people, it also illustrates how much investment in support of driving a car must be made for every new building. Building an oversupply of parking can suggest to residents, employees, and shoppers that it is preferred that they drive their car to these destinations, which is not what the City has adopted through the LUCE. Furthermore, an abundance of free or subsidized parking will reduce the effectiveness of Transportation Demand Management or other incentives targeting the reduction of vehicle trips and congestion.

Balancing Needs

The parking provisions of Santa Monica's Zoning Ordinance must carefully balance the needs of commercial areas to be successful, the needs of adjacent residential neighborhoods to be minimally impacted, and the broader citywide need to move towards a more multi-modal environment.

People's motivation to be around other people, their perceptions of activity, success, and comfort, and their ability to easily access areas are all dynamics of retail success. While an ample supply of parking shows potential shoppers that they have a place to park, large vacant parking areas do not paint an exciting picture to shoppers and visitors. Making the right amount of parking available and ensuring that it is used efficiently and effectively can contribute to the success of commercial areas. Making other options such as walking, bicycling, and taking transit easier and more comfortable helps get people out of their cars, and reduces neighborhood and environmental impacts.

Santa Monica's commercial and mixed-use areas need parking to be successful, and residents of future mixed-use developments will demand spaces for their cars. The challenge is that building too much parking for these uses will bring more cars into the community, leading to more traffic congestion; the more parking that is built, the more people are encouraged to drive. Revisions to Santa Monica's Transportation Demand Management program can help counteract this by encouraging the use of other transportation modes. Santa Monica already has lower ownership rates for vehicles per household than much of the rest of the Los Angeles region, and weaving together changes to parking requirements, Transportation Demand Management, and improvements and requirements to encourage walking and bicycling can help continue the overall improvement of the community.

Existing Parking Conditions in Santa Monica: Summary of Findings

In August 2012, Gibson Transportation Consultants, Inc. conducted a survey of on- and off-street parking demand and supply in select commercial areas of Santa Monica. The areas studied included portions Main Street, Montana Avenue, Ocean Park Boulevard, Santa Monica Boulevard, and Wilshire Boulevard. These areas were chosen as good representative samples of the areas that may be affected by changes to the Zoning Ordinance (as opposed to the Downtown or Bergamot areas, which have unique conditions, and are undergoing their own planning processes.)

The set of data collected and analyzed needed to be strategically limited to fit within budget parameters. The study looked at both on- and off-street parking conditions, as opposed to only off-street conditions, because the pool of available on-street parking is always the first to fill up from the demand generated by businesses. The study included both metered and unmetered spaces, spaces on side streets within preferential parking areas, and some off-street parking lots that are not necessarily available to the general public. Depending on the area, parking spaces were counted on side-streets up to a block away from the commercial street, reflecting typical driver behavior.

Examining on- and off-street data together provides the best information on the total availability of parking relative to demand. The data collected helps reflect driver behavior: many visitors will go to more than one establishment on foot after parking on the street or in a shared, public lot. While the Zoning Ordinance currently regulates parking based on individual uses in most areas, this does not reflect how parking gets used in many locations.

An analysis of study findings is available in Attachment A, and further detailed in Attachment B. In all areas studied, on-street parking was less available than off-street parking, consistent with normal expectations for commercial environments. The chart below shows average occupancy rates for all the areas studied.

Peak Hour Parking Occupancy Rates

Area	On-Street	Off-Street	Total
Main St.	89%	62%	69%
Montana Ave.	81%	71%	77%
Ocean Park Blvd.	73%	53%	58%
Santa Monica Blvd.	58%	59%	59%
Wilshire Blvd.	89%	54%	66%

In all areas studied, off-street parking tended to have a lower degree of occupancy than general community perception. While these spaces may be unoccupied, they are not necessarily available to the general public, pointing to a need to have regulations that allow more efficient and effective use of off-street parking resources (i.e. sharing).

Comparison to Other Communities

As discussed in Attachment A, transit-oriented developments and places with greater transit use tend to have lower parking requirements. Some communities eliminate or dramatically lower parking requirements under certain circumstances, such as easy access to transit or the availability of shared parking resources (as in Downtown Santa Monica). San Francisco, which is more concerned with limiting the number of car trips, has established low parking maximums that new developments may not exceed instead of requiring minimums as in other communities.

Examining the parking requirement information from other communities, from transit-oriented developments, and comparing these requirements to the Institute of Transportation Engineer (ITE)'s Parking Generation Manual and Santa Monica's existing conditions and regulations indicates that there is room for adjusting the City's parking requirements to be less auto-dependent, while still providing for automobile access.

Parking Policy questions

1. On the spectrum of pedestrian/bike/transit- vs. auto-oriented measures, where should Santa Monica be as the Zoning Ordinance gets updated? Where on the spectrum should the City be for the individual requirements and standards listed below?

The City of Santa Monica has clear goals and policy direction in its adopted LUCE to reduce the impact of the automobile on the community. This is at odds with oft-cited community member desire to require as much parking for new projects as possible. In Attachment A, Nelson/Nygaard has presented a number of recommendations that can be implemented immediately, or changed over time as the community grows more comfortable with less auto-oriented standards.

Individual standards can also be set at different levels to reflect Santa Monica conditions and preferences. The tables below list these standards, and provide examples of ranges that reflect the spectrum of multi-modal to auto-orientation that can be implemented. In some cases, the total amount of parking required is the determining factor of what is more or less auto-dependent. In other cases, such as compact or tandem spaces, the efficiency of the area required for parking is the issue.

Standards related to the overall amount of parking

Standard (Consultant recommendation)	More auto-dependent	More multi-modal
Minimum Parking Requirements (Varies: see Figure 3-6 in Attachment A)	Higher per-unit or per-square foot ratios	No minimum or lower per-unit or per-square foot ratios
Parking Maximums (4 spaces /1000 sq. ft. in Transit-Oriented and Mixed-Use areas; 6/1000 in low-intensity areas)	No maximum or high maximums	Lower parking maximums
Shared Parking (Allow reduced requirements for shared parking)	Not allowed or lower percentage (15-50%) of shared spaces allowed	Higher percentage (50-100%) of shared spaces allowed; reduced parking ratios for those that build shared parking
Off-Site Parking and Leasing Program (Allow parking requirements to be met off-site)	Not allowed or lower percentage or total number of spaces allowed to be provided off-site	Higher percentage or total number of spaces allowed to be provided off-site
Change of use (Exempt up to 5,000 sq ft of space from increased requirements for change of use)	Minimum requirements must be met; lower square footage exempted	Exemptions from increased parking requirements available to higher square footage or more intense uses

Standard (Consultant recommendation)	More auto-dependent	More multi-modal
Parking Waivers (100% when project travel demands can be met by alternative modes)	Not allowed or lower percentage or maximum number	Higher percentage or maximum number
Parking In-Lieu Fees (Reduce up to 50% of spaces required)	No in-lieu or low percentage	Higher percentage

Standards related to the efficiency of parking areas

Standard (Consultant recommendation)	More auto-dependent	More multi-modal
Unbundled Parking (Require off-street parking spaces to be leased separately from the improvement it is associated with)	No unbundling	Allow unbundling
Compact parking spaces (50%, up from 40%)	Allow a lower percentage of smaller spaces	Allow a higher percentage of smaller spaces
Tandem and stacked parking (100% for residential; 50% for non-residential if valet provided)	Not allowed or lower percentage allowed	Higher percentage of valet spaces allowed

There are operational challenges with compact spaces and with tandem or stacked spaces. In the case of compact spaces, they are sometimes the last to be occupied in a parking area, leaving a later-arriving, larger vehicle with no choice but to squeeze their vehicle in. Or in some cases, compact spaces are in a more convenient location, and larger cars will park in them first, but not correctly, reducing the total number of spaces available. However, there has been an upward trend in smaller vehicle purchases in the United States and especially urban areas in the last five years. Allowing a greater amount of compact spaces, or even allowing a reduction to the length requirement for some standard spaces, can greatly increase the efficiency of parking areas.

Tandem spaces are even more efficient, but require a valet when used in non-residential situations. They are difficult to use in a shared parking setting. It may be appropriate to only allow tandem spaces in situations of smaller residential projects, and to require a valet if tandem spaces are allowed in larger residential and mixed-use commercial settings.

2. Does the Planning Commission agree with the strategy of modifying requirements based on location (higher versus lower) density?

Nelson/Nygaard has recommended that the city modify parking requirements based on the expected density and levels of activity of different areas. Does the Planning Commission agree with this strategy?

Transportation Demand Management

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a tool used by cities to help minimize vehicle trips. In essence, TDM requirements administered by the City include requirements for developers and employers, along with incentives for employees, and include information about carpooling, carsharing, and vanpooling, requirements for bicycle facilities, and even transit passes for employees that do not drive a car to work.

TDM requirements can vary, based on the type and size of application. Their requirements can include physical improvements, such as bike lockers and showers, as well as operational requirements, such as having an on-site TDM Plan coordinator. TDM requirements may be applicable to both developers and employers. Additionally, the LUCE calls for TDM to apply to new development, and this can be construed to also apply to residential development.

Appropriate thresholds for different levels of TDM requirements will need to be defined for commercial and residential applications. Staff has discussed a TDM plan requirement for residential projects of 50 units or greater, and non-residential developments of 7,500 square feet or greater, or consistent with the general threshold for discretionary (Planning Commission) approval. Project below these thresholds would provide TDM-related physical improvements, such as bicycle parking spaces. Projects above these thresholds would provide both physical improvements and TDM operations.

Attachment C to this report includes an overview and discussion of TDM by consultant Dyett & Bhatia, and asks several policy questions. It also includes a draft of recommended individual TDM strategies in its Appendix A. Finally, it asks several policy questions, which pertain to the appropriate thresholds, whether TDM should be required of residential uses, and how TDM measures could interface with community benefits program.

- 1. Does the Planning Commission agree with the overall approach for TDM?*
- 2. How should TDM requirements be expanded to apply to residential and mixed-use development? Are the proposed thresholds appropriate?*
- 3. How should TDM community benefits be distinguished from baseline TDM requirements?*

4. *Should the TDM requirements identify and distinguish among different TDM Districts?*
5. *Should TDM requirements apply to additions and changes of use? If so, what floor area thresholds would be appropriate triggers? Should the City also enact requirements to ensure that TDM programs continue to apply when there is a change of occupancy or use that does not require discretionary zoning approval?*

Bike Parking Recommendations

Since the Bike Plan was adopted, staff has been working on additional ideas and considerations for bicycle parking to be included in the Zoning Ordinance Update. Attachment D includes more specific draft requirements for bicycle parking and access to support the 35% bicycle mode share aspired to by LUCE. These recommendations were developed concurrently with the Bicycle Action Plan, adopted in November 2011, and subject to public input and review during plan development. They are more ambitious than requirements in many other Cities, but consistent with the desire for growth in bicycling in Santa Monica and the LA region.

Number of Bicycle Spaces

The number of bicycle spaces proposed is intended to support bicycling at the level aspired to in LUCE: a 10-35% bicycle mode share. Design requirements specify that some of the bike parking will be long-term (more secure) and some will be short-term (more convenient). In addition to bike parking standards, the proposed provisions include standards for commuter amenities: lockers, showers, bikeshare stations, and carshare facilities.

Design Standards

Facilities are required to be visible and more easily accessed than vehicle parking. They include not only bike racks, but secure areas, bike rooms, and centers. They may also include bikeshare stations and commuter amenities with personal lockers and showers.

Address Existing Facilities

Owners of existing parking facilities are allowed to change one space or up to 10% of existing vehicle parking into bicycle parking area. City bicycle parking and bikeshare can be allowed on-street.

1. *Does the Planning Commission agree with the approach for bicycle requirements?*

Comparison to Other Bike-Friendly Communities

The chart below shows how the recommendations included here compare to Portland and San Francisco, two communities known for having bike-friendly regulations.

	Portland	San Francisco	Santa Monica proposed
Distance to Entrance (min)	50'	50'	25'
Existing Uses	could not locate	major renovation, major change of use, and addition of parking	Tenant improvements, any change of use, substantial remodel
In lieu fees	yes	yes	yes
Conversion of Auto Spaces	could not locate	Yes	Yes
Residential long-term	1.5 per unit	1 per unit, 100+ units - 1 per 4units	1 per bedroom
Residential short-term	2 min, 1 per 20	2 min, 1 per 20	0.1 per bedroom
Retail long-term	2 min, 1 per 12,000	1 per 7,500	1 per 10,000
Retail short-term	1 per 5,000	2 min, 1 per 2,500	1 per 1000
Restaurant long-term	not listed, use retail	1 per 7,500	1.5 per 2000
Restaurant short-term	not listed, use retail	2 per 750	1 per 3000
office long-term	2, or 1 per 10,000 sq. ft.	1 per 5000	1 per 5,000
office short-term	2, or 1 per 40,000 sq. ft.	2 per 50,000	1 per 8,000

Attachments

- A. Nelson/Nygaard Report
- B. Gibson Parking Study
- C. Dyett & Bhatia TDM Report
- D. Staff Bicycle Parking Recommendations