The Real Parking Problem

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In Montgomery County (and most places) today, any new property development must include off-street parking, based on a range of parking standards.

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The most common form of parking standards are minimum parking requirements (or parking minimums)— and they apply to just about every type of property.


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Their purpose is to oversupply parking so that there are always empty parking spaces available.

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Parking minimums seek to oversupply parking, even assuming that cars are the only way people travel from Point A to Point B.
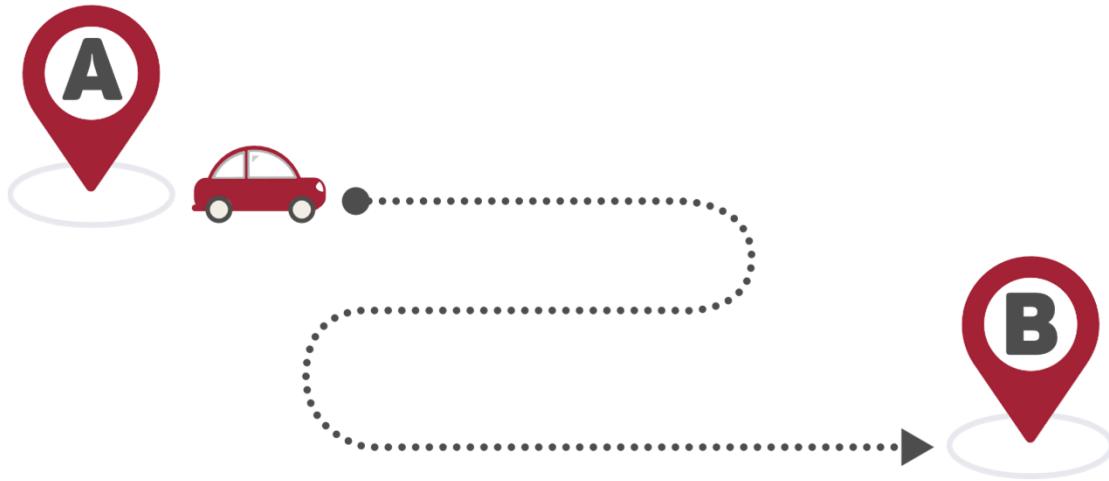
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**This is a feedback loop:
It shapes our communities around parking,
which makes us more dependent on driving,
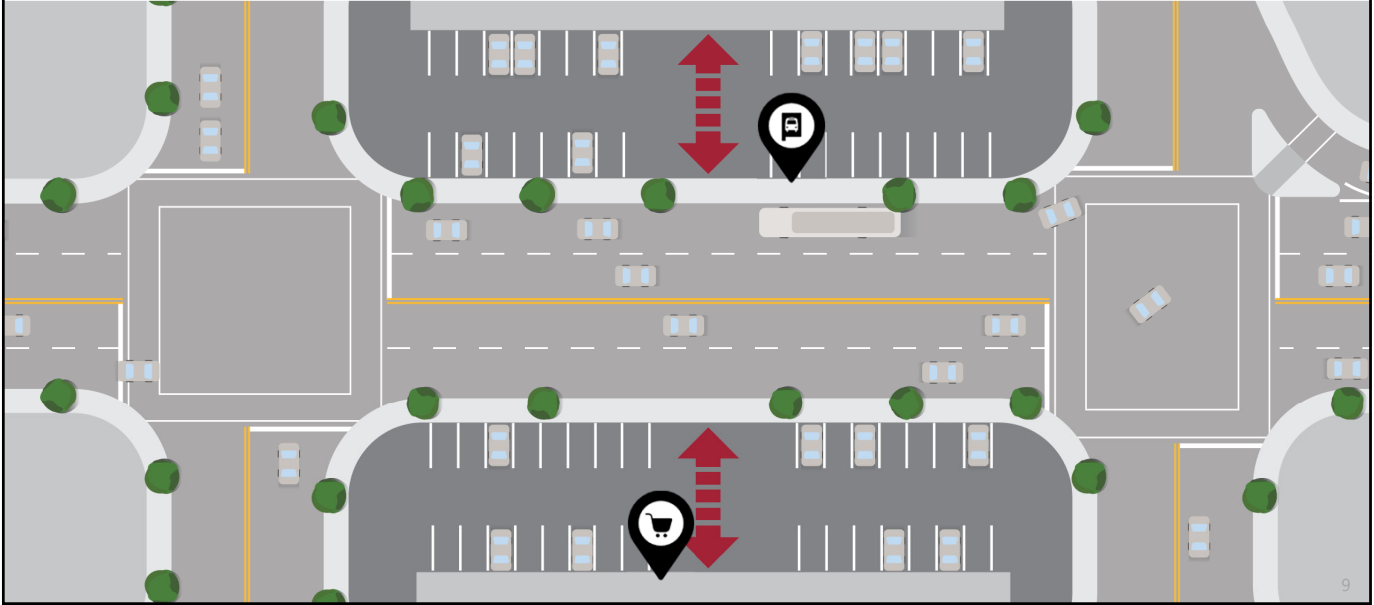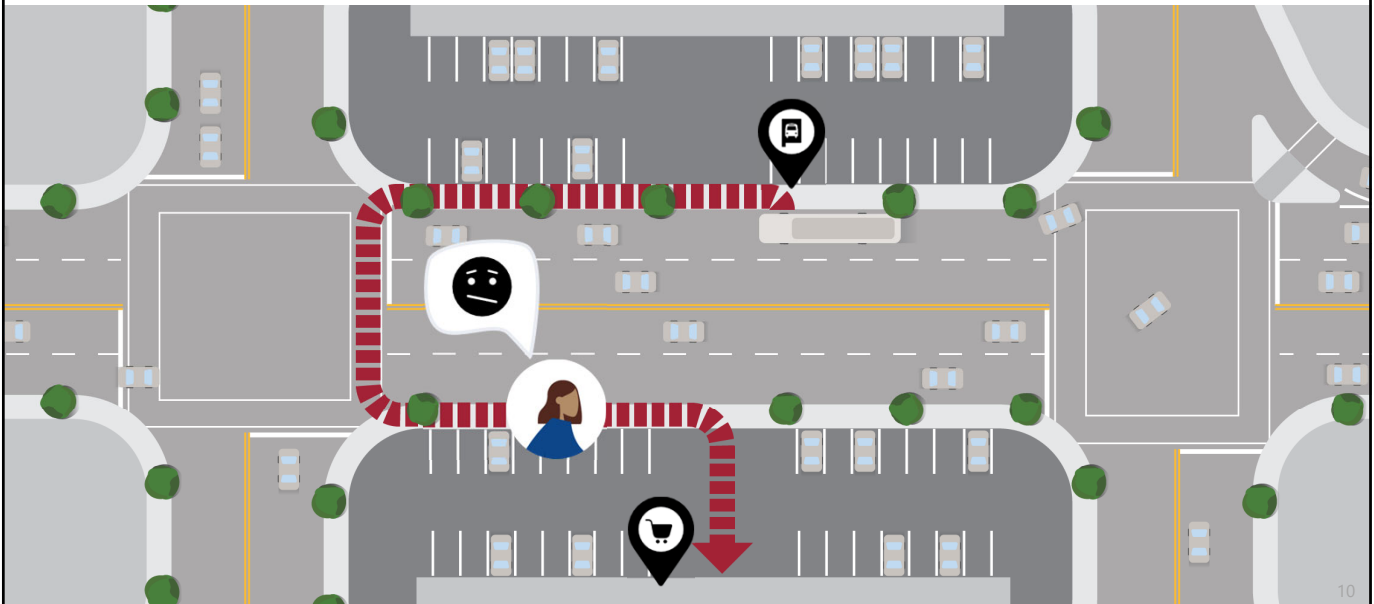which necessitates more parking ...**

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Parking lots are not appealing places …

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… and outside of the function of car parking they do not add value to communities.
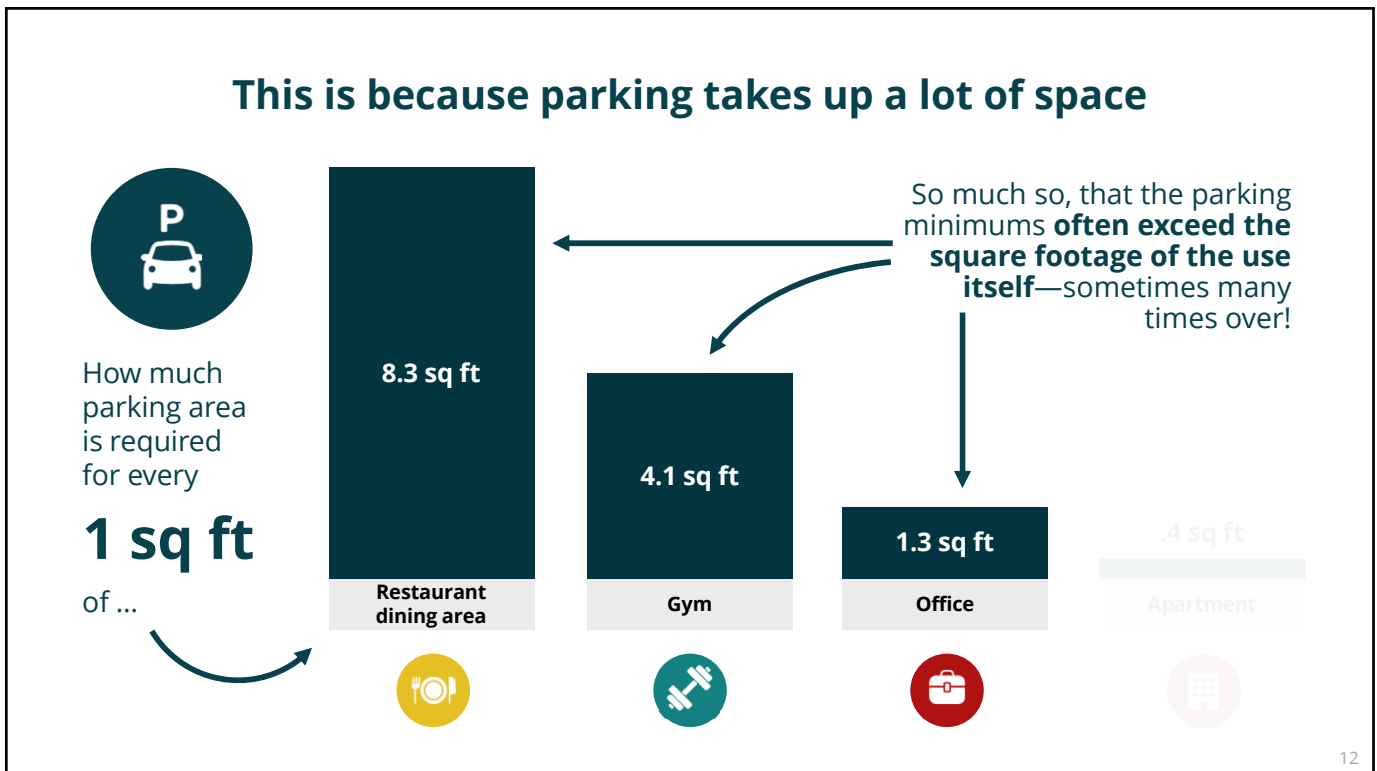
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Plus, too much parking pushes destinations farther apart.

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For people like Raquel who choose not to drive, this makes walking and transit less safe and less pleasant.

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With different parking regulations, destinations could be closer together, and our shared city space could be safer and more vibrant.

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This is because parking takes up a lot of space

How much parking area is required for every

1 sq ft

of ...

8.3 sq ft — **Restaurant dining area**

4.1 sq ft — **Gym**

1.3 sq ft — **Office**

.4 sq ft — Apartment

So much so, that the parking minimums **often exceed the square footage of the use itself**—sometimes many times over!
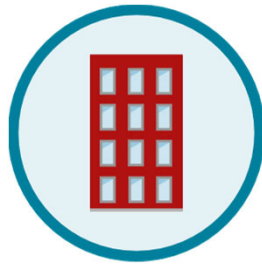
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Our land area is fixed, so space for parking is space that's *not* used for something else

Like housing, jobs, stores, restaurants, or green space

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At the end of the day, regulations tell us a lot about our values and priorities

Today, empty housing for cars takes precedence over housing for people

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So, why is this a problem?

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Housing Affordability	Business Flexibility	Economic Development	Transportation Options and Climate Change

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To help explain, let's introduce five characters

Renter Renee   Homeowner Harriet   Shopkeeper Shauna   Developer Danielle   Planner Pamela

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Parking minimums make housing expensive
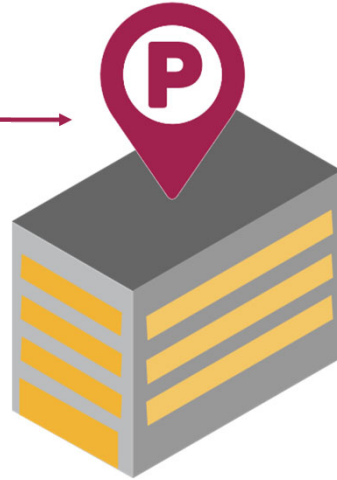
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All this parking is expensive to build

$5,000

initial cost per space
for **surface parking**

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All this parking is expensive to build

$25,000–$50,000
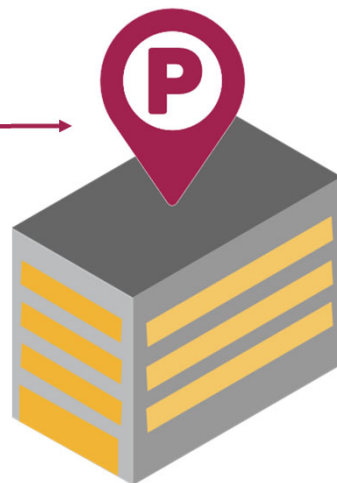
initial cost per space for
structured parking

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All this parking is expensive to build

$25,000–$50,000

initial cost per space for
structured parking

$$$

This becomes an added cost for
the property: monthly operations,
maintenance, and debt-service—which
is passed on to residents and tenants

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**A parking space adds $142 per month
to rent, on average**

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**But many people
don't need car
parking, including
Renter Renee**

People who choose not to drive,
young people, older people,
people with lower incomes, people
with low vision, the list goes on

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There are even parking minimums for housing designed for lower income households

34%

One-third of families that need and would qualify for housing affordable at 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) **do not own a car**

+$142

Developer Danielle has to build parking, even when she knows it will **increase rents and much of it will go unused**

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Without parking minimums, Developer Danielle could build more homes, more affordably priced, with less parking
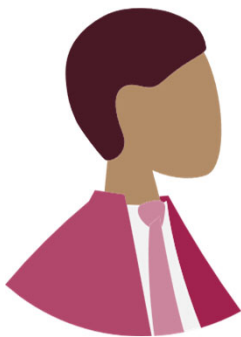
+$142

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Renter Renee would have more affordable housing options that better suit her budget and car-free lifestyle

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And for subsidized housing, Planner Pamela wouldn't have to spend public money to build parking for people who don't need it
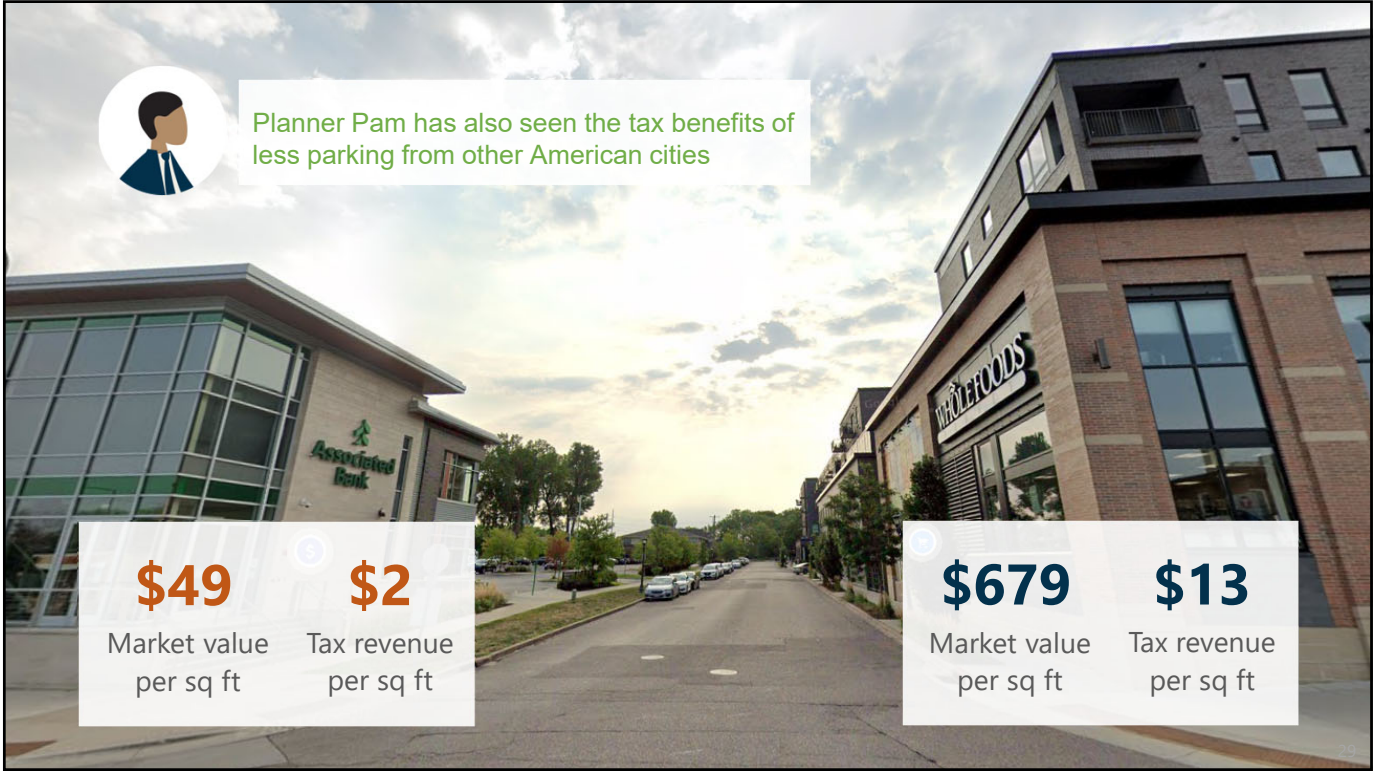

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Why else are parking minimums a problem?

1 Housing Affordability

2 Business Flexibility

3 Economic Development

4 Transportation Options and Climate Change

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Why else are parking minimums a problem?
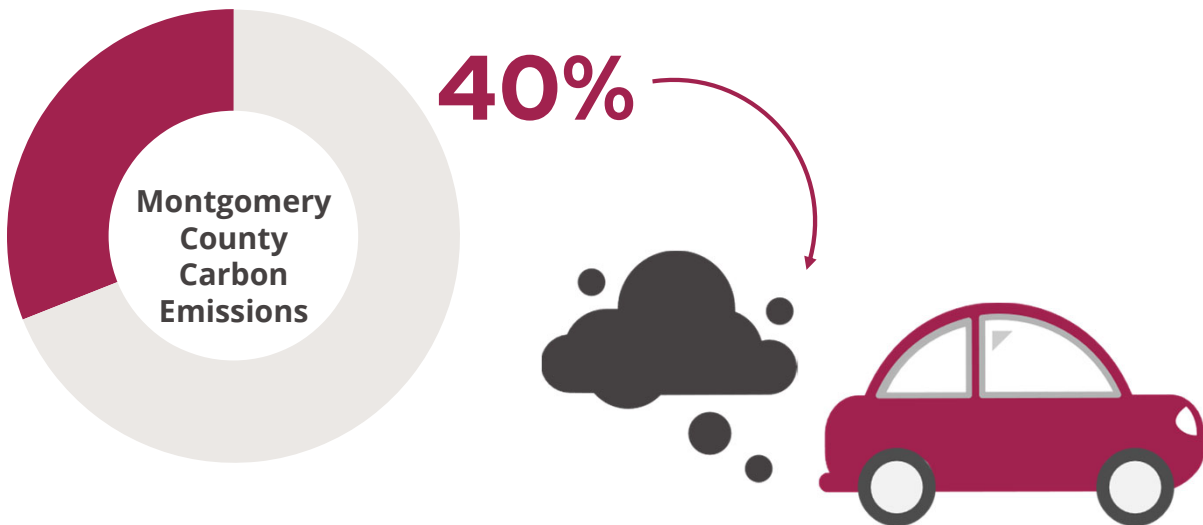
1 Housing Affordability

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4 Transportation Options and Climate Change

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**Zooming out, we are facing a climate crisis,
and Montgomery County is aiming
to eliminate GHG by 2035**

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**40% of Montgomery County's carbon emissions
come from vehicle travel**

Montgomery
County
Carbon
Emissions

40%

32

Nearly one-third (31%) of Saint Paul's carbon emissions come from vehicle travel

31%

Saint Paul Carbon Emissions

But wait, how does this relate to parking minimums?

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When there's a lot of parking, people have an added incentive to drive ...

Homeowner Harriet

STORE

... even if they'd be happy taking lower emissions options, like walking, biking, and transit

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TDM strategies support parking strategies and vice versa

PARKING STRATEGY

Right-size the parking supply to avoid building excess parking spaces and incentivizing driving over alternatives

TDM STRATEGIES

Manage demand for parking by providing high-quality alternatives to driving, such as walking, biking, and transit

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Without parking minimums, we can reduce the incentive to drive, make alternatives to driving more appealing …

… and reach our climate goal faster

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Why are parking minimums a problem?

1 **2** **Let's recap** **3** **4**

Housing Affordability

Business Flexibility

Economic Development

Transportation Options and Climate Change

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Reducing or eliminating parking minimums would help

	Renter Renee	Homeowner Harriet	Shopkeeper Shauna	Developer Danielle	Planner Pamela
1 Increase housing affordability and reduce construction costs	👍	👍	👍	👍	👍
2 Give new flexibility to small business owners who want to use their off-street parking for other uses	👍	👍	👍	👍	👍
3 Support economic growth	👍	👍	👍	👍	👍
4 Reduce our emissions and make walking, biking, and transit more appealing	👍	👍	👍	👍	👍

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Thank you!

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