KCMO 2025 Zoning and Development Code Update

Best Practices

January 2025

PARKING

Background

Project Purpose

As Kansas City continues to grow and evolve, the need for a comprehensive update to its parking regulations has become more pressing. A central focus of the update is how parking is managed in response to the evolving demands of various land uses. One major issue is how changes of use are handled. When the new use requires more spaces than the previous use, it can be difficult or even impossible to accommodate the necessary parking within the space available, especially in areas where land is limited. In many cases, the additional parking requirements for new uses can prohibit those uses altogether, limiting the potential for growth and redevelopment in urban areas.

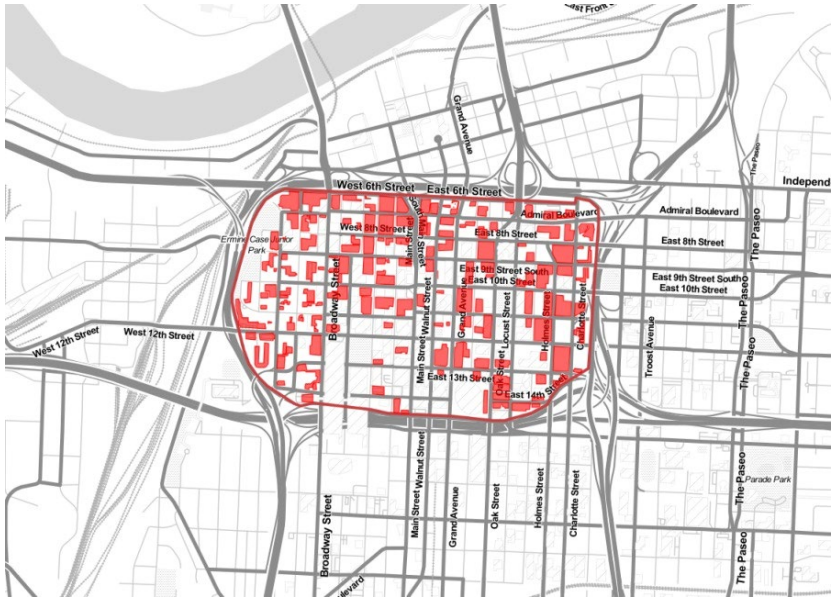

Figure 1 - Parking areas in downtown Kansas City

This issue is compounded by studies showing that Kansas City currently has an oversupply of parking, leading to inefficient land use and underutilized spaces. The code update aims to address these challenges by ensuring that parking requirements better align with actual demand, rather than adhering to rigid standards that no longer serve the city's evolving needs.

The update is grounded in the principles outlined in the Kansas City Spirit Playbook, which emphasizes flexibility, efficiency, and reducing the oversupply of parking. The ongoing debate about parking reflects a common debate—while many seek to minimize the visual and spatial impact of excess parking, they also want enough spaces available to meet demand. This code update aims to strike the right balance, ensuring parking requirements better align with actual needs while supporting the City's broader goals for sustainable, vibrant growth.

88-420-02 Applicability

Change of Use

General

Changes of use or occupancy can trigger a host of new requirements for a business, one of which is parking. Drafting easy to understand and implement regulations can reduce the issues that arise with parking and change of use. Most often, major issues arise in the urban core where there is less off-street parking and available land to satisfy higher parking requirements.

Current Chapter 88 Requirements

In general, occupants must provide additional spaces if the parking requirements for a new use exceed those of the previous use and the current parking supply is insufficient. The required amount is the difference between the parking spaces needed for the new use and the spaces required for the previous lawful use.

Example:

If Use A required 50 spaces but only had 40, and it is replaced by Use B, which requires 75 spaces, the occupant must add 25 spaces. They are not required to address the previous deficit.

Relationship to KCSP

No overlap with Community Supported Actions – Revisions to current approach could support the following Measures of Success:

- Decrease Surface Parking Lot Area
- Increase Land Use Entropy Index (Mixed Use Development)
- Expand off-street parking maximum limits to more TOD areas

Barriers and Issues

- Existing text is difficult to interpret which can lead to multiple applications that reduce consistency for applicants. Text can be reworded to clarify how to calculate the existing parking requirement, when additional parking is required…
- In portions of the City, the additional parking requirements can prevent the reuse of existing buildings while adding time and expense to obtain a variance to the requirements
- Parking requirements in parts of the City may be too high. (i.e. parking need and available space in Midtown is different than a site near Zona Rosa).
- Alternative compliance options are complicated and difficult to administer or be approved.

Best Practices

Kansas City's current approach is somewhat progressive compared to peer cities. Cities with more progressive approaches have eliminated parking minimums and, in some cases, implemented parking maximums.

- Minneapolis, MN: Removed parking minimums and only requires bike and loading zones to be updated to current standards when a use is changed.
- Raleigh, NC: Requires new parking as required by the use, unless the current parking is at the maximum, then no additional parking is required.
- Overland Park, KS: Primarily only done for instances of retail/office conversion to restaurant, may require additional spaces or amenities – if there are changes to building, that would trigger site design updates.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline improvements to this ongoing implementation issue:

- Identify areas of the city where implementing reduced parking requirements or parking maximums can reduce the burden of providing additional parking when changing use.
- Establish a process for offsetting parking maximums by allowing for the implementation of public amenities or infrastructure improvements.
- Parking ratios, locations, and designs approved in the development plan should not require further review during permitting unless a minor or major plan amendment is necessary.
- Means for alternative compliance need to be revised to be simpler to approve and administer.

- Additional parking ratios can be added to create parking requirements for buildings that may host several interchangeable uses, such as a shopping center parking ratio.
- Text can be reworded to clarify how to calculate the existing parking requirement, when additional parking is required, how to calculate the new amount needed, and options to offset that requirement through shared or alternate parking strategies.

88-420-04 Exemptions, Reductions, and Special Area Standards

General

In theory, providing exemptions and reductions in parking requirements is an effective strategy to combat the oversupply of parking and promote more efficient land use within the city. These measures support walkability, transit-oriented development, and sustainable growth. However, the sheer volume of exemptions, reductions, and special area standards now included in Kansas City's Zoning and Development Code has created a complex framework. This can make it challenging for developers and property owners to navigate and fully understand the requirements when developing or redeveloping a property. Simplifying and clarifying these provisions could enhance accessibility and ensure consistent application of the code's intent.

Current Chapter 88 Requirements

Sixteen different uses or areas in Kansas City are exempt from or have reduced parking requirements. Key exemptions include the Downtown Core, Downtown Loop, and the Downtown Streetcar Area – all of which overlap. Other districts, like Crossroads, B1 zoning districts, and Pedestrian-Oriented Overlay districts, have partial exemptions based on floor area. Residential

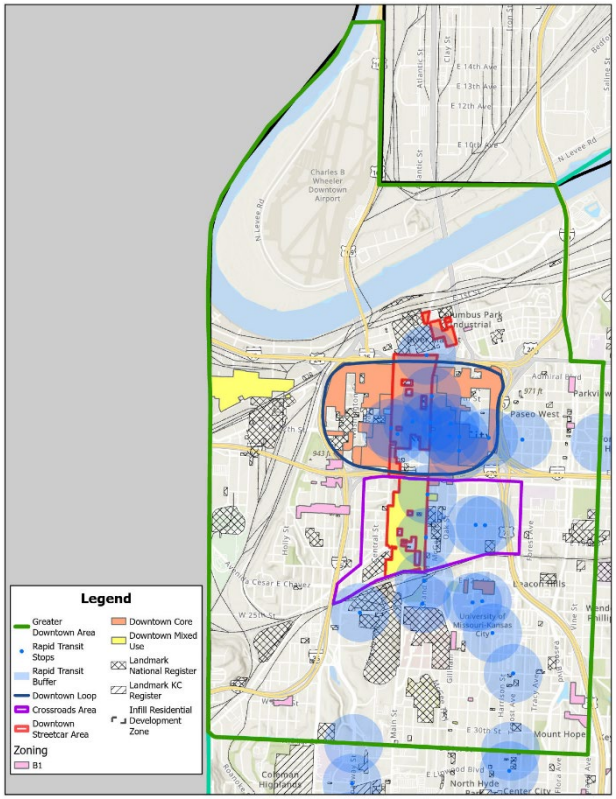

Figure 2 - Parking exceptions located within the Greater Downtown area

parking exemptions apply to lots platted before 1951 and small infill developments, and reduced requirements exist for affordable housing developments that meet specific criteria.

Relationship to KCSP

The practice of excluding and reducing parking minimums for certain uses and in certain areas aligns with the following Community Supported Actions:

- Develop area-specific parking management plans
- Eliminate off-street parking minimum requirements
- Expand off-street parking maximum limits to more TOD areas

The practices also work to advance the following measure of success:

- Decrease Surface Parking Lot Area

Barriers and Issues

A total of sixteen different exceptions or reductions to parking requirements are provided in 88-420-04, many of which may overlap creating confusion over which exception is applicable and whether they can be stacked to further reduce parking.

Best Practices

Kansas City's current approach to parking requirements allows for some flexibility through various exceptions and reductions, but the large number of exceptions can create confusion.

- Wichita, KS: Follows a more conservative approach to parking requirements by requiring a fixed minimum number of parking spaces across the city, with some exceptions for specific uses. Kansas City's approach is very similar to this approach.
- Reno, NV: Removed parking requirements in the densest districts, reduced requirements in the surrounding districts, and maintained/minimally reduced the requirements in the outermost districts. This approach is more context-sensitive and aligns parking requirements with the area's development density and transit access.

- Raleigh, NC: Takes a more progressive approach by removing parking minimums entirely.

Recommendations

To improve Kansas City's parking requirements, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Simplify and consolidate parking exceptions and reductions to improve ease of use and create more equitable parking requirements citywide.
- Adopt context-sensitive parking requirements to address parking demands based on development density and availability of alternative transportation modes.

88-420-06 Vehicle Parking Ratios

General

Vehicle parking ratios have traditionally been set to ensure parking needs are fully met on-site, often based on peak-use scenarios. While designed to prevent shortages, this approach has contributed to an oversupply of parking in many cities. Excessive ratios promote car-dependent development, leading to sprawling surface lots, underutilized spaces, and inefficient land use. Revising these ratios will reduce the oversupply of parking and help promote more efficient land use.

Current Chapter 88 Requirements

Minimum parking ratios are provided for every use and apply across Kansas City, except for areas specified under 88-420-04, which outlines exemptions and reductions. These baseline parking requirements were established to ensure adequate on-site parking. The ratios vary depending on the type and intensity of use, such as the number of dwelling units for residential properties or square footage for commercial spaces.

Parking Ratios per 1,000 SF

The following table outlines the minimum required parking ratios for various land uses across different cities, along with best practices identified by the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) and the American Planning Association (APA). The number of spaces is expressed as parking spaces required per 1,000 square feet of building area.

Land Use	Comparisons					
	KCMO	Des Moines	Minneapolis	Overland Park	ITE Parking Generation	APA Standard
General Commercial	2.5 spaces	2.5 spaces	3.33 spaces	1.5-2.5 spaces (C) 2.5-4 spaces (D)	3.7 spaces (E) 5.1 spaces (F)	2-5 spaces
Office	1 space	2.5 spaces	3.33 spaces	1.5-2.5 spaces (C) 2.5-4 spaces (D)	2.9 spaces (E) 3.3 spaces (F)	3.33-4 spaces
Restaurant	10 spaces	6.66 spaces	13.33 spaces	6-12 spaces	7 spaces (E) 15 spaces (F)	5-13.33 spaces
Bar/Tavern	20 spaces	6.66 spaces	13.33 spaces	6-12 spaces	No exclusive land use provided	6.6-20 spaces
Manufacturing	.25 spaces	0.5 spaces (A)	Low Impact – 5 spaces (B) - 1 space Moderate & High Impact – 5 spaces (B) + 1 space + 0.4 spaces	1.5-2.5 spaces (C) 2.5-4 spaces (D)	1.4 spaces (E)	1.6-2 spaces

(A) Per employee
(B) Per 1,000 SF up to 20,000 SF
(C) Area A in Overland Park has lower parking demand due to greater density of diverse land uses, increased mixed-use developments, and improved access to non-motorized transportation options.
(D) Area B in Overland Park has standard or increased parking demand due to decreased diversity of land uses, decreased mixed-use development, and decreased access to non-motorized transportation options.
(E) ITE categorizes land uses into several groupings, this denotes a Dense Multi-Use environment for the given parking ratio
(F) ITE categorizes land uses into several groupings, this denotes a General Urban/Suburban environment for the given parking ratio

Parking Ratio per unit

The following table outlines the minimum required parking ratios for residential uses across different cities, along with best practices identified by the ITE and APA. The number of spaces is expressed as parking spaces required per unit.

Land Use	Comparisons					
	KCMO	Des Moines	Minneapolis	Overland Park	ITE Parking Generation	APA Standard
Single Family Residential	1 space	1 space	No minimum	2 spaces (1 must be covered)	Removed from 5th Edition due to outdated data	2 spaces
Multifamily Residential	1 space	1 space	2 spaces	1-2 spaces (C) 1-2.5 spaces (D)	1.2 spaces (E) 1.7 spaces (F)	1.5 spaces

Relationship to KCSP

Currently there is no overlap with Community Supported Actions – Reductions to or removal of current ratios could support the following actions:

- Eliminate off-street parking minimum requirements citywide
- Expand off-street parking maximum limits

Barriers and Issues

The 2011 Zoning and Development Code update provided a uniform approach to parking ratios but didn't account for context when it established parking minimums. This has resulted in one set of parking requirements which apply to urban, suburban, and rural areas. Several exceptions and reductions were developed as an attempt to remedy this approach and barriers and issues to that approach are covered previously in this document.

Providing adequate parking for new construction or when changing uses, especially in the City's urban core, is an overly difficult exercise in trying to create parking when no space exists to accommodate parking. This often results in the need

for variances, alternative parking compliance, or other mechanisms which add time and uncertainty to the permitting process.

Best Practices

Kansas City's current approach to off-street parking requires minimum parking standards across various zones, which has led to an oversupply of parking, particularly in areas with dense development and good transit access. Many peer cities have shifted their approach to address the challenges associated with parking overprovision.

- Des Moines, IA and Omaha, NE: Both of these cities have removed parking minimums in urban areas and reduced parking requirements in areas that are well-served by transit. This approach allows for more flexibility in parking provision in dense and transit-rich areas, while still considering the need for parking in lower-density areas.
- Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis has taken a more progressive step by removing parking minimums entirely and implementing parking maximums to limit the amount of parking provided with any development. These maximums are based on proximity to transit, allowing for more parking in less transit-accessible areas. This approach encourages reduced car dependency, fosters denser and more walkable development, and promotes alternative transportation options.

Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to guide Kansas City towards a more flexible approach to parking requirements:

- Adopt context-sensitive/district parking requirements to address parking demands based on development density and availability of alternative transportation modes.
- Define and implement a periodic review process for parking requirements to continually assess and adjust parking requirements to align with the city's goals.
    - Periodic reviews may coincide with comprehensive plan updates or occur on a fixed schedule of 5-7 years.

88-420-09 Bicycle Parking Ratios

General

Bicycle parking ratios are meant to provide enough spaces for cyclists, promoting biking as a sustainable transportation option. Currently, these ratios are based on a percentage of the overall vehicle parking provided, aiming to encourage developers to balance vehicle and bike parking needs. Adjusting this approach will help create more practical and accessible bike parking, contributing to a more bike-friendly urban environment.

Current Chapter 88 Requirements

Minimum bicycle parking ratios are provided for every use and apply across Kansas City. These baseline parking requirements were established to ensure adequate parking facilities for cyclists. The ratios are based on the type and intensity of use, determined based on the number of dwelling units for residential properties, square footage, or as a percentage of the overall vehicle parking provided.

Long-Term Bicycle Parking Ratios

Parking Ratio per 1,000 SF

The following table outlines the minimum required long-term bicycle parking ratios for various land uses across different cities, along with best practices identified by the ITE and APA. Long-term bicycle parking spaces are intended for users needing to store bicycles for more than four hours and typically have higher security compared to short-term bicycle parking. The number of spaces is expressed as parking spaces required per 1,000 square feet of building area.

Figure 3 - Example of long-term bicycle parking

Land Use	Comparisons				
	KCMO	Des Moines	Minneapolis	Overland Park	APA Standards
General Commercial	1 + 0.1 spaces	0.25 spaces	0.2 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.33-0.4 spaces
Office	1 + 0.1 spaces	0.02 spaces	0.25 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.5 spaces
Restaurant	1 + 0.2 spaces	0.25 spaces	0.2 spaces	0.4 spaces	1 space
Bar/Tavern	1 + 0.2 spaces	0.25 spaces	0.2 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.45 spaces
Manufacturing	0.05 spaces (A)	None	Low impact – 2 spaces (G) or 0.05 spaces Moderate impact – 2 spaces (G) or 0.03 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.16-0.2 spaces

(A) Per employee

(G) Total spaces, use whichever is greater

Parking Ratio per unit

The following table outlines the minimum required long-term bicycle parking ratios for residential uses across different cities, along with best practices identified by the ITE and APA. The number of spaces is expressed as parking spaces required per unit.

Land Use	Comparisons				
	KCMO	Des Moines	Minneapolis	Overland Park	APA Standards
Single Family Residential	None	1 space	None	None	None
Multifamily Residential	0.33 spaces	2 spaces (G) or 0.06 spaces	0.9 spaces	0.2 spaces	1 space

Short-term Bicycle Parking Ratios

Parking Ratio per 1,000 SF

The following table outlines the minimum required short-term bicycle parking ratios for various land uses across different cities, along with best practices identified by the ITE and APA. Short-term bicycle parking spaces are intended for users needing to park bicycles for short periods of time and are typically located in highly visible, accessible locations. The number of spaces is expressed as parking spaces required per 1,000 square feet of building area.

Figure 4 - Example of short-term bicycle parking

Land Use	Comparisons				
	KCMO	Des Moines	Minneapolis	Overland Park	APA Standards
General Commercial	3 spaces (G) or 0.25 spaces	0.25 spaces	0.1 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.33-0.4 spaces
Office	3 spaces (G) or 0.1 spaces	0.2 spaces	0.01 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.5 spaces
Restaurant	3 spaces (G) or 1 space	0.25 spaces	0.1 spaces	0.4 spaces	1 space
Bar/Tavern	3 spaces (G) or 2 spaces	0.25 spaces	0.1 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.45 spaces
Manufacturing	3 spaces (G) or 0.02 spaces	None	Low impact – 0.05 spaces Moderate impact – 0.03 spaces	0.4 spaces	0.16-0.2 spaces

(A) Per employee

(G) Total spaces, use whichever is greater

Parking Ratio per unit

The following table outlines the minimum required short-term bicycle parking ratios for residential uses across different cities, along with best practices identified by the ITE and APA. The number of spaces is expressed as parking spaces required per unit.

Land Use	Comparisons				
	KCMO	Des Moines	Minneapolis	Overland Park	APA Standards
Single Family Residential	None	1 space	None	None	None
Multifamily Residential	3 spaces (G) or 0.1 spaces	2 spaces (G) or 0.06 spaces	0.1 spaces	0.2 spaces	1 space

Relationship to KCSP

Indirectly related to the following Community Supported Action:

- Review and revise standards for short-term and long-term bicycle or scooter parking to make sure that it meets modern needs and is aligned with City mode share policy goals.

Overall encourages modal shift/share and decreases vehicle parking demand, supporting the following measure of success:

- Decrease Surface Parking Area

Barriers and Issues

The short-term bicycle parking ratio for non-residential uses is based on a percentage of the overall actual off-street vehicle parking spaces provided. When originally drafted, there were hopes that requiring more bicycle parking would encourage developers to reduce parking to the minimum parking requirements. In reality, the high ratio has reduced the efficacy of the requirement and has resulted in numerous waivers and reductions through development plan approvals and variances.

Best Practices

Kansas City's current approach to bicycle parking includes minimum parking requirements but does not differentiate based on demand, location, or cycling infrastructure availability, which can lead to oversupply in areas with low bike usage. There is a growing trend to decouple bicycle parking from vehicle parking and base requirements on more dynamic factors, such as location, demand, and long-term transportation goals.

- Indianapolis, IN: Maintains the traditional approach of minimum bicycle parking requirements citywide. This approach is simple and applies universally, but it may result in either an oversupply or undersupply of bicycle parking depending on the area.
- Denver, CO: Tailors its bicycle parking requirements by location, setting higher requirements for urban areas with greater cycling demand and lower requirements for suburban or lower-density areas. This more flexible approach ensures that bicycle parking is aligned with actual demand based on the area's context.

Recommendations

To better align bicycle parking requirements with Kansas City's needs, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Study bicycle parking demand and usage patterns to establish bicycle parking requirements for various uses across the parking districts.
- Codify regulations that would improve bicycle parking or connections to public transportation even if vehicle parking is exempt.
- Establish design standards for both short- and long-term bicycle parking, along with a clear process for approving deviations from those standards.

88-420-16 Alternative Compliance Parking Plans

General

Alternative Compliance Parking plans are meant to allow flexibility in meeting the parking requirements outlined in the earlier sections of this document. The plans must be approved by the City Planning and Development Director and could include a variety of alternative parking arrangements including share parking agreements, off-site parking, valet parking, transportation demand management, and others.

Current Chapter 88 Requirements

Alternative compliance parking plans offer flexibility in meeting parking requirements outlined in the earlier sections of the code (88-420). Applicants must submit a detailed plan demonstrating how the proposed alternative arrangement meets parking demand, will not negatively affect traffic congestion and circulation, and will enhance economic viability or the appearance of the environment. Options include shared parking agreements between nearby uses, off-site parking located within a specified distance of a use, or provisions like valet parking. These plans should be supported by data, such as parking or traffic impact studies, and are subject to approval by the city to ensure they align with overall parking management goals.

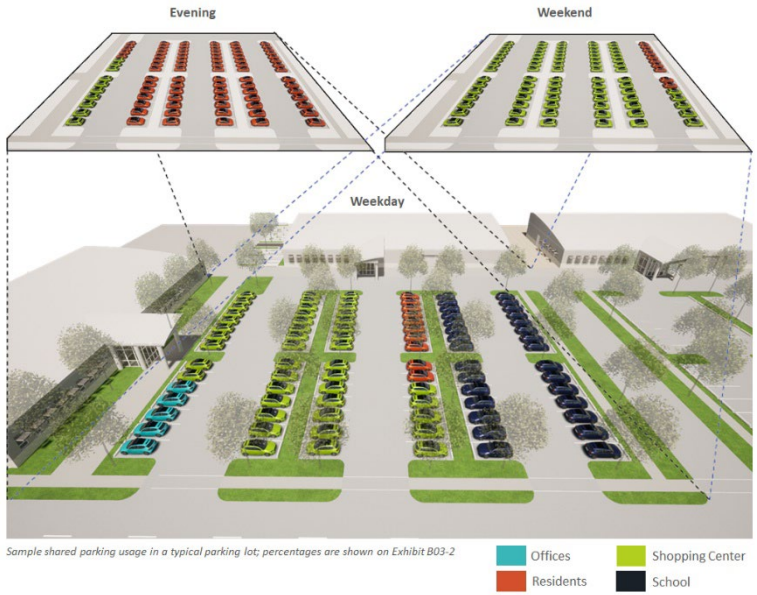

Figure 5 - Shared parking lot usage example

Relationship to KCSP

Does not directly support a Community Supported Action but advances the goal of improved parking management by:

- Encourages shared parking arrangements
- Seeks to stop the oversupply of parking

Alternative parking compliance plans do advance the following measure of success:

- Decrease Surface Parking Area

Barriers and Issues

Alternative compliance parking plans in the current code are intended to provide flexibility in meeting the parking requirements outlined in 88-420-06. However, how the code is currently written creates inefficiencies and may hinder the potential for innovative parking strategies. One of the barriers is the high number of stipulations required for approval, which

makes it difficult for developers to implement alternative parking solutions. This complexity can also lead to inconsistent application of the standards across different projects, resulting in confusion and potentially unfair treatment of developers or property owners.

Best Practices

Kansas City's current approach to alternative compliance parking plans is overly complex, which can create obstacles for developers looking to implement innovative parking solutions. The process lacks clarity and can be a deterrent for projects seeking more flexible or creative approaches to parking.

- Denver, CO: Offers a straightforward process for approval of alternative compliance plan, with established, easy to follow procedures that result in more predictable outcomes for developers. In addition, Denver provides fee reductions and expedited approvals for projects that incorporate shared parking agreements, incentivizing the adoption of innovative strategies.
- Austin, TX: Streamlined its approval process for alternative compliance parking plans to minimize barriers and provide developers with the flexibility to experiment with creative parking solutions.

Recommendations

- Develop a standard template for alternative compliance parking plans to provide developers with clear guidelines when submitting their alternative compliance parking plans, ensuring consistency and efficiency in plan approval.
- Offer incentives for shared parking agreements or other alternative parking compliance measures – such as fee reductions, tax incentives, etc., to encourage more developers to implement them.