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Creating Congested Neighborhood Streets: Eliminating Parking in CodeNEXT

Overview. One of the paradoxes of the CodeNEXT model for density is that while it seeks to increase the number of residents on or visitors to a particular piece of property – and therefore the potential number of vehicles and vehicle trips – it decreases the required parking for that property. Eliminating parking on property creates additional space for more density and for more intense uses. The street becomes part of the parking lot – in effect **subsidizing development**. These reductions are substantial, and the additional vehicles will **constrict and congest** residential streets, designed for lower traffic volumes and parking loads, with parked vehicles, higher traffic volumes and vehicles circulating, looking for parking. The incompatibility is multiplied because without onsite parking the densities and intensities of the uses can be larger (which is intended), generating more vehicle trips and the need for more parking – of which there will be less. **Overparked neighborhood streets** make it difficult and **dangerous** for residents, visitors, delivery vehicles, service vehicles, garbage pickup, and emergency services. Neighborhood streets will be less walkable, less bike-able, less safe and less family-friendly.

Here are some details:

Residential. At the same time that CodeNEXT is **increasing the number of households** per lot, the **on-site parking** requirement is cut to one parking space per household (unit) – **half** of what is required today for single-family homes.

Commercial. At the same time that CodeNEXT is **increasing** the volume of **commercial traffic** generated by zoning districts in and around neighborhoods, it is **reducing** the **parking** requirement for those uses. In CodeNEXT, onsite **parking**, other than for restaurants, is generally **reduced**. Compare e.g. CodeNEXT § 23-4D-4040 with LDC 25-6 Appendix A.

For example, here are reductions in some of the most common neighborhood commercial uses:

	Today	Draft 2	Reduced By
Retail	1 space for each 275-sq. ft.	1 space for each 350-sq. ft.	20%
Banks	1 space for each 275-sq. ft.	1 space for each 350-sq. ft.	20%
Office	1 space for each 275-sq. ft.	1 space for each 500-sq. ft.	45%

Medical Serv.   1 space for each 200-sq. ft.   1 space for each 500-sq. ft.   60%

These are all very significant reductions that will have a very significant impact. But CodeNEXT authorizes even **more** parking reductions.

Additional Cumulative Reductions. Significantly, the reduced parking requirements will be eligible for **additional** cumulative reductions of up to 40% for a variety of reasons such as being within a half-mile of a transit corridor (e.g. a major arterial with a bus line) or the simple provision of bicycle parking. §23-4E-3060. Further, the **Director of Planning**, whose **decision is unreviewable**, may eliminate the onsite parking requirement altogether by authorizing **offsite parking** 1,000 feet away without considering **the impact of the offsite parking facility on traffic patterns and nearby residents**. Compare LDC §25-6-502 (C) with CodeNEXT §23-4E-3060.

An example of what these reductions mean. A 2,600-sq. ft. **medical office** is required to have 13 parking spaces today. Under CodeNEXT, that same office would only be required to have 5 spaces – barely enough to cover the medical staff. In fact, applying only 20% of the allowable 40% additional reductions, that number is reduced to **4 parking spaces**. The end result is grossly inadequate parking.

Conclusion. When nearby commercial uses do not have adequate parking, patrons are forced to turn to neighborhood streets. Commercial parking is pushed deeper and deeper into the neighborhood, compounding the problems caused by the additional on-street CodeNEXT residential parking. **When vehicles line both sides of a neighborhood street, the width is constricted making it difficult for one car, much less two cars, to navigate**. This creates a **dangerous situation** for pedestrians and cyclists, a condition exacerbated by the lack of sidewalks. These are the conditions that make it **difficult for families with children** to stay in a neighborhood. These are the conditions that onsite parking requirements are supposed to prevent. These are the conditions that CodeNEXT will, instead, create.

The CodeNEXT approach to parking contradicts the CodeNEXT sales pitch. On the one hand, the City promotes further densification as fully compatible with existing residential areas, and on the other, it promotes parking policies that undercut that promise.

It doesn't have to be this way.