

Mabon Young  
Bar Harbor  
LD 427

Hello, my name is Mabon Young. I'm currently a student at College of the Atlantic, in Bar Harbor. Thank you for this opportunity to testify strongly in favor of LD 427. Across the country, many cities are developing solutions to make their streets less car-dependent and more welcoming for the people outside vehicles. Although I currently live between Bar Harbor and Portland, I lived in one such city for 8 years: Boulder, Colorado. A keystone project in the pedestrianization effort there was converting Pearl Street from a congested byway into a fully walkable open-air mall with plenty of communal space and much-needed urban greenery. You could feel a tangible difference in the atmosphere coming into this area from the surrounding streets. Pearl Street felt safer, calmer, and overall more livable. I'd love to see spaces like this appear in cities across Maine.

However, as with any pedestrianization project, mandatory parking minimums create a critical roadblock for the development of such places. Since fully walkable streets are almost, if not entirely, closed to cars, there is no way for the businesses located on them to provide the required parking space. Even when it is possible to provide parking space, the requirement often makes running independent businesses prohibitively expensive, as store owners need to pay rent and taxes for not only the storefront itself, but also the parking spaces around it.

In addition, mandatory parking minimums are somewhat notorious for causing big-box stores to have enormous fields of asphalt around them that remain sparsely populated at best, and absolutely never reach maximum capacity. Think how many times you've driven to a Target or a Walmart and seen the parking lot utterly deserted; I'm willing to bet that encompasses most of your visits. These swathes of land serve no logistical, aesthetic, or economic purpose and only serve to degrade the biodiversity around them and worsen floods in the area by preventing the ground from absorbing stormwater. To make matters worse, the standards underpinning most parking minimum laws in the country are based on a manual published by the Institute of Traffic Engineers containing extraordinarily unreliable data based on averages of uncertain statistical analyses, over half of which contained 4 or fewer data points.

If we want to prioritize local businesses and meaningfully improve the livability of our cities, we need to abolish these outdated, unreliable parking requirements as soon as possible. Therefore, I urge you to vote in favor of LD 427. Thank you for your time.