

Patrick Conlon in support of LD 427

I live in Biddeford Maine. Biddeford is a growing city that is trying to make a dent in the housing crisis that we see across our state and our country. But in Biddeford's new Comprehensive Plan they write "Reduce or eliminate parking requirements for some downtown projects." Yes, they say "eliminate" but, "reduce", "some" and "downtown" are the key words there. Why not eliminate all parking requirements city wide? Why just some? Why just downtown? Elsewhere in that document they write, "Begin planning for a second parking structure." Parking, parking and more parking.

The new book by Henry Grabar titled Paved Paradise: How Parking Explains the World argues that this fundamental, insatiable need to find space for cars "is the primary determinant of the way the place you live looks, feels, and functions." Grabar's gets a key principle correct: Parking isn't an afterthought in municipal policy; it's a core issue. Cities make choices and when those choices are to demand minimum parking requirements it makes building housing more expensive. We get strip malls instead of highly desirable walkable communities. We get more dangerous streets, and we contribute to the degradation of the climate.

Very recently we lost Professor Donald Shoup. He just died on February 6th. A few weeks ago. If you are not familiar with his seminal work, *The High Cost of Free Parking* you should be if you're going to decide about parking minimums. Shoup Dog as his fans sometimes referred to him, wrote a clear and convincing argument against minimum parking requirements sighting the reasoning behind them as inconsistent and varied to the point of the absurd and not based on any real merits. The Institute for Traffic Engineers generated industry standards for parking management. The ITE reports started as *descriptive* accounts of ad hoc parking requirements but quickly evolved into *prescriptive* requirements and were widely adopted resulting in the damage that has been done to our cities today.

I hear a lot of talk about how the increase in Maines population is going to wreck the great things about our state. I would agree that if we continue to build sprawl, those fears may be realized. But I would argue that if we follow the lead of organizations like Strong Towns, Build Maine, Grow Smart Maine and forward-thinking leaders like Representative Amy Roeder and pass LD 427 we could build more density and create more walkable places for more people to live while also undoing the damage brought upon us by more and more and more cars, enabled through minimum parking requirements.

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