

Downtown/C1 Parking Minimum Reform and Parking Wayfinding

Overview

Stevenson has already done most of the policy work needed to justify a narrow C1/downtown parking reform. The 2021 parking work, Ordinance 2021-1172, the Downtown Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, the Wayfinding Master Plan, and the 2021/2023 Downtown Parking Report all point in the same direction: reduce or eliminate private on-site parking mandates in the downtown core, manage the public right-of-way better, preserve accessibility and safety requirements, and help visitors find the parking supply that already exists.

Eliminating the C1 minimum off-street parking requirements does not mean "no parking." It stops requiring every downtown property to solve a district-wide parking issue on-site, while keeping the City focused on ADA access, fire access, loading/service access, sight distance, pedestrian safety, stormwater, voluntary parking design standards, and on-street/right-of-way management.

Because this builds on work Stevenson has already completed, it is also a practical quick win. Some of the larger housing, infrastructure, and downtown vitality questions will take longer to solve, but this is one place where the City can put a clear stake in the ground now: Stevenson is serious about removing avoidable friction, using its adopted plans, and working constructively with people who want to build housing, open businesses, reuse downtown buildings, and invest in the community.

1. Summary of the problem / what we are trying to solve

- **Downtown redevelopment friction.** C1 parcels are often small, irregular, expensive, and constrained. Requiring on-site parking can consume the same land that would otherwise hold storefronts, housing, lodging rooms, restaurants, or services. On many parcels, the requirement makes a useful project infeasible or pushes an applicant into a variance process that ultimately discourages the development from happening in the first place.
- **A mismatch between the parking problem and the regulatory tool.** Minimum off-street parking ratios are a blunt tool. They do not guarantee that customers can find convenient spaces, that employees avoid prime curb spaces, that visitors understand where to park, or that ADA-accessible spaces are in the right locations.
- **Existing parking is not obvious to visitors.** People driving through town on SR 14/2nd Street do not necessarily know that substantial parking is available within a short walk if they turn toward Russell Avenue and continue to 1st Street, Cascade Avenue, and nearby connectors. Better wayfinding could get more use out of existing parking before the City considers more expensive supply-side solutions.
- **The City has already identified the same issues.** The local planning record already calls for reducing parking requirements, improving shared/managed parking, and adding wayfinding. This discussion is about implementation, not starting from scratch.

2. Extensive work already done locally

A. 2021 C1 parking work and Ordinance 2021-1172

The 2021 staff memo was expressly titled "Reducing Parking Requirements - Increasing Residential Building Capacity" and addressed zoning code amendments related to parking requirements in the downtown area. It identified the need to reduce parking ratios, increase flexibility for shared/joint-use parking, allow off-site parking farther away, and make mixed-use residential development more feasible in C1.

Source link: [2021 parking memo / Ordinance 2021-1172 packet](#)

B. 2022 Downtown Plan for SUCCESS

The Downtown Plan gives the clearest policy statement: the parking framework should facilitate efficient short-term needs, minimize on-site parking requirements, and avoid burdening redevelopment with unnecessary parking infrastructure costs that may limit or discourage redevelopment. It also says on-site parking constraints likely stifled downtown commercial and residential development because land is expensive, parcels are small/irregular, and structured/tucked-under parking can be expensive or physically impossible.

Source link: [2022 Downtown Plan for SUCCESS](#)

C. 2022 Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan already directs the City to manage on-street parking safely and efficiently, review and revise parking policies to minimize off-street parking requirements, consider shared-parking programs using underused lots, and provide wayfinding signage to aid traveler navigation and guide visitors to attractions and amenities.

Source link: [2022 Stevenson Comprehensive Plan](#)

D. Stevenson Wayfinding Master Plan - Fall 2012

The Wayfinding Master Plan already includes vehicular directional signs and parking/amenity signs as part of the City sign system. It also emphasizes visible placement, reduced sign clutter, public safety, tourism/business support, and reinforcement of Stevenson's existing brand. This supports a relatively low-cost signage phase rather than a new branding exercise.

Source link: [Stevenson Wayfinding Master Plan](#)

E. Downtown Stevenson Parking Report - 2021 and 2023 data

This report is especially useful because it separates the parking conversation into supply, usage, ADA access, regulation, and management. It found a large inventory of parkable spaces, noted that usage data suggested overall supply was sufficient with problems localized/time-limited, and recommended actions including clarifying where parking is available/permmissible, reserving curbside spaces for accessible-only use, reducing parking requirements for new development, adaptively managing requirements for changing uses, and amending SMC Table 17.42.090-1, SMC 17.25.130.B, and SMC 17.42.030.

Source link: [Downtown Stevenson Parking Report - 2021 and 2023 Data](#)

Overall takeaway

The policy conclusion: Stevenson has already identified downtown parking minimums as a barrier, already reduced them once, already recommended further reduction and management tools, and already identified wayfinding as part of the solution. Eliminating minimum off-street vehicle parking requirements in C1 is the next logical implementation step, not a new direction.

3. How exactly could we move this forward?

If there is enough buy-in, the Mayor can direct staff to move directly into drafting.

Requested direction to staff

If there is Council buy-in, the requested next step is for the Mayor to direct staff to prepare the mechanical ordinance language necessary to eliminate minimum off-street vehicle parking requirements in the C1 Commercial District/downtown area; route the draft through City Attorney review; complete or identify any required procedural steps; and bring the ordinance back for Council consideration at the earliest procedurally available meeting.

The intent is not to reopen the entire parking code or begin a broad citywide parking study. The intent is to implement the direction already supported by Stevenson's prior work: remove minimum private on-site parking mandates in C1/downtown, while preserving the City's authority to regulate safety, access, ADA compliance,

loading, fire access, sight distance, pedestrian safety, stormwater, voluntary parking design standards, and public right-of-way/on-street parking management.

What staff would be asked to draft

The draft ordinance should accomplish the following:

1. **Findings.** Include findings tying the amendment to the 2021 parking work, Ordinance 2021-1172, the Downtown Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, the Wayfinding Master Plan, the Downtown Parking Report, downtown redevelopment barriers, small/irregular lots, and the City's desire to manage actual parking impacts rather than impose fixed private ratios.
2. **Amend SMC 17.25.130(B), or the applicable C1 parking/loading provision.** State that no minimum off-street vehicle parking spaces are required for permitted, accessory, or conditional uses in the C1 Commercial District. Staff should decide whether loading requirements stay in 17.25.130(B), move to Chapter 17.42, or are handled through right-of-way/service-access standards.
3. **Amend SMC 17.42.030, or any equivalent general minimum-parking compliance provision.** Make clear that general off-street parking minimums do not apply within the C1 Commercial District, including for new uses, changes of use, additions, expansions, mixed-use projects, outdoor seating, residential uses, lodging, retail, food/beverage, office, service, civic, and similar downtown uses.
4. **Amend SMC Table 17.42.090-1, or any equivalent parking-ratio table.** Either exempt C1 uses from minimum off-street vehicle parking ratios or add a clear C1/downtown note stating that the minimum required number of off-street vehicle parking spaces in C1 is zero. This is the core mechanical change.
5. **Review and conform related Chapter 17.42 provisions.** Clean up any provisions addressing joint use, shared parking, off-site parking, reductions, fee-in-lieu, changes of use, mixed-use projects, outdoor seating, lodging, residential uses, unlisted uses, and loading so they do not accidentally reimpose C1 minimums or create conflicts.
6. **Preserve design and safety standards for parking that is voluntarily provided.** Any parking voluntarily provided should still comply with applicable standards for space dimensions, aisles/access, surfacing, drainage/stormwater, screening/landscaping, driveway design, pedestrian safety, and sight distance.
7. **Preserve ADA-accessible parking requirements where applicable.** The ordinance should not waive ADA, Washington State Building Code, or other accessibility requirements. Suggested language: "Nothing in this section modifies accessible parking requirements where parking is provided or where accessible parking is otherwise required by state or federal law."
8. **Preserve fire, loading, emergency access, and right-of-way management.** Make clear that eliminating C1 minimum parking ratios does not affect fire apparatus access, fire lanes, no-parking zones, loading/service access, garbage/recycling access, delivery management, utility access, curb use, public right-of-way control, or on-street parking regulations.
9. **Clarify no entitlement to public parking.** A property owner may rely on the absence of a private minimum, but the ordinance should not create any private right to reserve, occupy, control, or count public curb spaces or public lots.
10. **Preserve the City's public-parking management tools.** Make clear that the City may still use time limits, loading zones, ADA curb spaces, employee-parking strategies, wayfinding signage, enforcement, paid parking if ever considered separately, and other curb-management tools.

Likely code sections to review: SMC 17.25.130(B), SMC 17.42.030, SMC Table 17.42.090-1, and related provisions in Chapter 17.42 governing space size/access, joint use/shared parking, off-site parking, loading, surfacing, screening, fee-in-lieu, outdoor seating, unlisted uses, and change-of-use rules. Staff should verify the current code text in Municode before drafting.

Source link: [Stevenson Municipal Code](#)

Source link: [City Laws & Regulations page](#)

Companion parking wayfinding direction

Separately from the zoning ordinance, Mayor Taylor could also direct staff to identify a practical first-phase parking wayfinding package. This should be treated as a low-cost implementation track, not a prerequisite to the C1 code amendment. Staff should identify:

- A simple map of existing public, municipal, shared, or otherwise visitor-usable parking within one to three blocks of the downtown core.
- Recommended first-phase sign locations for drivers on SR 14/2nd Street, especially signs that tell drivers when and where to turn toward Russell Avenue and connect to 1st Street, Cascade Avenue, and nearby parking areas.
- Clear sign language such as "Downtown Parking," "Public Parking," "Waterfront / Downtown Parking," and walking-time cues if appropriate.
- Consistency with Stevenson's adopted Wayfinding Master Plan and existing sign brand.
- WSDOT/state-highway/right-of-way coordination needs for any signage visible from or located along SR 14/2nd Street.
- ADA-accessible parking wayfinding: not just more signs generally, but signs that help visitors find accessible spaces and do not displace loading, fire, or emergency access.
- A rough cost range, phasing option, and maintenance plan. Phase 1 should be the cheapest useful package: a small number of attractive directional signs before any larger capital project is considered.

Requested meeting outcome

The requested outcome is to determine whether there is enough Council support for the Mayor to direct staff to draft the ordinance language necessary to eliminate minimum off-street vehicle parking requirements in the C1 Commercial District/downtown area, have the draft reviewed by the City Attorney, complete or identify any required procedural steps, and bring it back for Council consideration as soon as legally and practically available.

The requested action is direction to draft and return with proposed ordinance language. If the required steps can be satisfied or properly scheduled quickly, the draft could come back as soon as the next regular meeting; otherwise, staff should bring it back at the earliest procedurally available meeting.

4. Source links

Key local sources

- [2021 parking memo / Ordinance 2021-1172 packet](#)
- [2022 Downtown Plan for SUCCESS](#)
- [2022 Stevenson Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Stevenson Wayfinding Master Plan](#)
- [Downtown Stevenson Parking Report - 2021 and 2023 Data](#)
- [Stevenson Municipal Code](#)
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Process and Washington-law sources for broader context

- [RCW 35A.63.100 - zoning ordinance hearing / municipal authority](#)
- [RCW 36.70A.106 - Commerce notice / adopted regulation transmittal](#)
- [WAC 365-196-630 - 60-day and expedited review process](#)
- [MRSC Parking Regulations](#)