



DONALD C. SHOUP, FAICP
DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH PROFESSOR
WWW.SHOUPDOGG.COM
SHOUP@UCLA.EDU

DEPARTMENT OF URBAN PLANNING
LUSKIN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1656

September 12, 2024

Mayor and Council
City of Nanaimo
455 Wallace Street
Nanaimo, BC V9R 5J6

Re: Parking Reform

I have been asked to comment on removing minimum parking requirements in Nanaimo. I strongly support the removal.

In 2005, the American Planning Association published *The High Cost of Free Parking*, a 750-page book in which I argued that off-street parking requirements are dangerous pseudoscience. They subsidize cars, increase the cost of housing, aggravate traffic congestion, pollute the air and water, create heat islands, reduce walkability, degrade urban design, accelerate global warming, and penalize everyone without a car. To my knowledge, no city planner has argued that parking requirements do *not* produce these harmful effects.

Cities that use zoning to limit housing density and require off-street parking spaces have well-housed cars and homeless people. People pay more for housing so cars can park free. By increasing the cost of housing, parking requirements force some people to live in their cars.

The cost of parking doesn't go away just because drivers park free. If drivers don't pay for parking, who does? Initially, homebuilders pay for the required parking spaces, but soon homeowners and renters do. Commercial developers pay for the required parking, and then the tenants do, and so on until the cost of parking has spread throughout the economy. We unknowingly support cars in almost every commercial transaction because some of the money changing hands pays for parking. We rarely pay for parking as motorists, but we pay for it in all our other roles in life—even people without a car pay for parking. Parking requirements punish people for not owning a car.

For example, grocery stores with ample free parking charge higher prices for food to cover the cost of the required parking spaces. As a result, people who cannot afford to buy a car pay higher prices for food so richer people who drive to the grocery store can park free. Food insecurity, maybe, but no parking insecurity.

If you don't own a car, you can't park free. Because free parking benefits only people who own a car, parking requirements widen the class divide between those who can afford a car and those who can't. Money that could pay for better sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit is spent to subsidize parking. The lack of alternatives to driving then forces even low-income families to borrow money (often at usurious interest rates) to buy used cars, and then pay a large share of their low incomes to support the cars (Livingston and Ross 2022). Parking requirements make life expensive for poor people.

Is free parking worth the high cost of parking requirements? Do most people really want free parking more than affordable housing, clean air, walkable neighborhoods, a healthy economy, and a sustainable planet? Increasingly, the answer is **NO**, and many cities have removed their parking requirements.

Each new parking requirement in a city is like accumulating another barnacle on a ship's hull, slowing the ship down and increasing its fuel consumption. Removing the parking requirements in a city is like stripping the barnacles off a ship, and it's much easier.

So, I recommend removing parking requirements, and I look forward to hearing what Nanaimo does.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald Shoup". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.