



HOUSING AND LAND USE SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, April 28th, 2021 | 6:30pm

HLU Committee

Kate Baxter-Kauf
Hugo Bruggeman
Kathleen Deming
Tom Dietsche
Susan Duffy
Jack Fei
Colin Fesser
Evan Hall
Patty Hartmann
Chase Huffman
Dawn Huffman
Ryan Huffman
Gene Johnson
Saura Jost

Julie Kaupa
Jenifer Krol
Kensley Lipstreuer
Marc Manderscheid
Wendy Merrell
Michael Moore (Chair)
Zuza Pakula
Dave Pasiuk
Cathy Plessner
Nora Ptacek
Art Punyko
Cindy Radtke
Tim Schmidt
Mike Sonn
Colin Voerding

Elizabeth Wefel
Zak Yudhishthu

Presenters

Tony Johnson, Senior City Planner
Menaka Mohan, Principal City Planner
Theresa Nelson, Move MN

Staff

Alexa Golemo

MINUTES

Zoom Webinar (6:20 – 6:30 pm Tech Check)

18:33:14 Welcome & Introductions

18:38:05 Addition/Deletion of agenda items

18:38:19 Approval of March 2021 HLU Meeting Minutes

Staff received name corrections and updated attendance ahead of meeting.

Motion to approve March 2021 HLU Meeting Minutes (Dave P., Cathy P.)

24-0-5. Motion passes.

18:40:25 Parking Study, <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-and-economic-development/planning/current-activities/parking-study>

Presentation from PED Staff and Move Minnesota on Parking Study.

18:57:55 Discussion

Mike reminds everyone about the focus of the parking study and the committee's goal to make a recommendation to the City of Saint Paul regarding the study.

Wendy M.: Concerns about safety for women walking or taking public transit right now. Notes that the change to electric vehicles can make an impact on climate change. Lack of parking and traffic issues makes people go outside of Saint Paul for errands and shopping. Parking is good as is.

19:02:32 Motion to recommend reduction of parking minimums as laid out in the 2021 Parking Study (Mark M., Gene J.)

All MGCC meetings are online through Zoom at this time. Visit www.macgrove.org/participate/ to receive the Meeting ID # and password for this meeting. All times are approximate. Agenda is subject to change due to additions or deletions. All meetings of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council are open to the public and residents are invited to attend. As of January 2021, MGCC public meetings are recorded and posted at www.macgrove.org. For more information about the Macalester-Groveland Community Council or its committees, please call 651-695-4000 or visit www.macgrove.org.



Discussion concerning whether or not community members can provide feedback with a motion on the table.

Motion to table the motion temporarily and continue discussion on the parking study (Patty H., Kathy M.)

24-2-1. Motion passes.

19:12:33 Public Comment

Question re: exempting properties within 1 mile of public transit.

Answer: Exempted properties would include any within ¼ mile of BRT, Light Rail Lines and Street Cars

Question: Does this apply to old developments?

Answer: Full elimination would apply to current properties. Reduce option would depend upon location due to transit exemption. Buildings built after 1955 allows you to change use without have to provide the additional parking for the new use.

Mike confirms that MGCC uses the Democratic Rules of Order.

Does the City of Saint Paul know how many customers for businesses come from outside of the City?

Tony: That was not included in this study. This study focused on policies citywide and did not include analysis of specific properties.

Menaka: They did review two years of site plan reviews.

Kate H.: Concern for seniors and those with health issues who use vehicles to get to doctors outside of St. Paul and who do not take mass transit. Crime is up on mass transit. Concerns for safety. Seniors need independence.

Tony: Developers will not respond to a parking minimum change by eliminating parking all together. Reducing parking minimums allows developers to reduce their parking based on their need. Market realities mean they will build parking even if it is not required by law.

Kate H.: Developers will not do anything they are not required to do. Doesn't think they will willingly build parking because it is expensive.

Tony: In the last 2 years, developers built/maintained/improved 18% more than the minimum required amount of parking.

Discussion concerning the difference between the Democratic Rules of Order and Robert's Rules. Discussion about MGCC's switch to the Democratic Rules of Order.

Chris M.: Concern regarding a focus on transit usage in a state with a cold winter.

Tony: Personally experience, he does not own a car and does not want a car. Parking minimum eliminations are happening all over the country – New York, Connecticut, and cities in Canada. People have made this change in similar climates.

Mike M.: Has the city of Minneapolis eliminated parking minimums?

Tony: They have declared their intent to do so but they have not actually done it.

Question: 34% of low income residents do not have a car which means 66% do. Street parking can lead to snow emergency ticketing and towing, catalytic converter thefts as well as long walks to the car which can be a safety concern. Do you think not providing parking can be considered a hardship for the 66% of low income households with cars?

Tony: No developments have been built without parking in the last 2 years. This allows developers to tailor their parking towards the clients they serve. Building extra parking can add costs to developments. This policy does not address on street parking policies. Even full elimination does not mean that developers will not look at parking and parking issues. Potential options in situations where parking is tight is shared parking options, on-street parking regulations for areas with concentrated development.



19:30:34 Committee Member Comments

Cindy R.: Does option reduce have less oversight than the status quo? What did your study show regarding variances?

Tony and Menaka: 16% of all variances are parking. Full elimination would remove all of those and reduction would take away about 62% of that 16%.

Either option would make our code a lot easier to administer. Reduction would make parking not as much of an issue – 56% reduction for existing commercial businesses and 21% would no longer have parking reqs.

We did a lot of process improvement include streamlining and consolidation of processes. Both options would include this.

Colin F.: As a mentally and physically disabled person that uses all forms of transportation, I appreciate parts of this discussion. Where do parking minimums come from and when was the last time it was changed? My understanding is that a lot of minimums are based on peak number of drivers at peak times of day.

Tony: You are correct. The first minimum parking requirements come from Ohio in the late-30s. In the 1940's-1970's, cities around the country started introducing parking minimums in city codes. In Saint Paul, the first parking minimums were introduced in 1955 and that was a 1 per unit requirement. And then in 1975 when we adopted our modern zoning code we then applied minimum parking amounts to every use. You are absolutely correct that the origin of parking minimums is the same for everywhere. It is problematic. They look at peak demand (Christmas, Black Friday) and basically tried to create requirements for peak demand. So for the vast majority of the year we see a big oversupply of parking that is not needed. Cost and density coupled with that creates unintended consequences now. Climate change was not an issue at that time. We were still planning to expand our city out at that time. We are in a different era now where cities are eliminating or reducing them.

Art P.: You've identified success factors and metrics – affordability, business flexibility, economic development, transportation options and climate change. I have heard from the community about safety measures, accessibility. Basically you are making statements that in 20 years our city will see these factors improve. Not sure how you are measuring these factors. Do you have models or predictive analysis that look 20 years out and say yes we will move all of these factors? And I think you have a few more you need to add.

Tony: No, we did not do any modelling or make predictions that are super specific (we will see X amount of increase in affordability). We looked back two years and compared places where we had minimums and where we did not have minimums and what happened. Eliminating minimums does not mean that we are going to get bunch of developments without parking. Our markets do not work that way. Developers will not reduce their ratios in ways that make them lose business; housing developers know that and parking is still the number one amenity that people look for in housing. We think they will target their parking to their target audience.

Art P.: You have a much broader set of success factors. I really wasn't talking about getting rid of the parking minimums. You've made some strong statements here. Is two years back really going to predict how development goes in 15 years? It's just an observation that you've made some really strong statements and if there is more information available. The statements don't seem supported.

Menaka: The parking study is provided by what other cities have done with similar sizes. In particular, the TDM strategies and program guide all came from that research and are tied to getting people into more multimodal transportation.

Patty H.: I noticed that some of the cities that were cited were places like San Francisco. I don't know that you can necessarily say what is going to happen here based on other cities because of what is unique about here – our climate, our population, and what's been going on. My personal experience is that we do not have excess parking capacity. I think if developers are given a way to cut costs, they will do it. The very selfish freeloader mental attitude will make people park on the street and transfer the congestion and burden onto the other residents or businesses and not help create the supply or capacity for whatever it is their doing. Economic motives to cut costs and take the resources that already exist – I think that is going to happen. And inflict congestion and lack of livability on the population. I agree with what Art said – I think there are a lot of strong statements you've made and there's no evidentiary support at all. I think you are confusing cause and effect a lot of the time. I think it is a symbiotic thing. People who are poor can't afford cars and don't have the same opportunities to get jobs. They spend more of their time in less efficient ways because they don't have a car. It is one of those circular things that seems to happen. Not



impressed with study. I don't think the two options that are laid out are not options at all. There should have been a lot more community engagement before the city proposed this.

Hugo B.: I wanted to point out that the City did very good community engagement. They started this back in 2018. Anyone with an interest in the topic have had 3 years to get involved if they were interested. I believe the effort they have given us to consider these two options should be considered part of that engagement. We are discussing this now. I think the city has done a great job. The first option – essentially an update to the 21st century and the second option is very simple. I believe currently the involvement of the city by requiring these minimum requirements creates a lot of bureaucratic work but has very little impact on what actually gets built. I think Tony commented on that when he said that developers have been building more than the minimum requirements in the last 2 years. Fiscally, knowing that I live in a city that is short of resources, do I want to live in a city that uses a lot of money towards something that does not have an impact on what actually gets built. Can you confirm that the city would save money by removing all minimum parking requirements? Will the City commit to spending that budget for the next 5-years on repairing pot holes on our streets?

Tony: That's above my pay grade in terms of funding. The tax revenue comparison – we get vastly different tax revenues from different types of developments and it also allows us to save resources for abatements, etc. 200 units' vs 200 with 20 houses per block – building denser, which this would allow us to do, we get a lot more bang for our buck. More tax revenue per block – this allows us to use that revenue for a lot of things – affordable housing, fix potholes.

Hugo: I was trying to point out that removing the requirements helps remove city bureaucracy from the process and we should leverage that cost saving towards repairing potholes. That is something I would like to discuss with the City.

Nora P.: I am very excited about both options. As a renter in Mac-Grove, I want to share info about parking and how it works. I live in an 11 unit building with 22 people. There are 6 parking spots and they are, 1. Never usually full and 2. There is always enough street parking. Both of these options are meant to help people consider if they really need a car. My partner and I both have to go different places every day and we realized we do not need two cars where we live. We have the A-Line and both have bikes. Evaluating all the options showed us that there is so much transit in the community that we only need one car.

Kate B-K: Thank you for making this presentation and I thought it was exceptionally well done. The slides are well done and the patience with which you have answered questions is very well done. My questions is – I can see the value in both options – is there an option that city prefers or is there a rationale for one over the other? Both seem better than what we have now.

Tony: Staff is not making a recommendation. We think both options can meet the goals that we have set out to meet. There is a strong policy basis in the Comp Plan and the Climate Action Plan calling for carbon neutrality by 2050. The big trade-off is with the TDM. The way the reduce option works, a developer could get to whatever parking ratio they want but in order to do that they have to choose from the TDM measures which will help shift travel behavior from driving to other options. We are using the parking req. (specifically the cost) to subsidize other options (bus passes). That is the big trade off in my mind. The full elimination allows for a simple code and easier implementation but we will only get the TDM measures that are required. We don't have that incentive. Under either option we will be trendsetters and leading in the country. The reduce option, the amount of parking reduction with the TDM measures is super unique and an original idea that I am proud of. We are also trendsetters in that regard as well. I will be excited with either option.

Zak Y.: First, I wanted to talk about, as student rep, there are 2000 students at Mac and we are not the only higher ed institution. Most of us do not have cars and I know that our needs can be different than other peoples in the neighborhood but I want to voice for that constituency we get around great without cars. And I know people have jobs and internships all over both cities and they get around great. Secondly, I want to talk about climate. In the Transportation Committee meeting and today, several people mentioned that electric cars are becoming more common which is true but electric cars represent a very small portion of cars on the road and also I learned from someone at Move Minnesota, a personal electric vehicle is still less green than a gas-powered bus because it divides the cost so much on a shared bus system. This is the right move to make to reach the climate goals we have as a city. Lastly, I cannot stress enough what Tony said about driving still being feasible and practical for anyone who lives in St Paul. And it is important how this contours this discussion and this allows an unbundling of the cost so that college students and others without cars are not paying. It will be a cost that drivers will pay for all of their reasonable needs for having a car.

Mike S.: Well stated Zak. I echo Kate's compliments to the City. It is very well put together and got me excited for a city initiative. Compliments to the staff for patience and clarity. We do have a massive excess of parking; you can go anywhere in the city and find a spot anytime and anywhere. A local example is the CVS is Grand and Fairview. There are normally two cars in a parking lot the size of a baseball field. Parking induces traffic and a car to drive on the roads nearby to get to those parking



spots. If we want to reduce traffic, we need to reduce or charge for parking. Climate change is real and is happening. We need to address it now. This is not a debate. This is a way we as a city can address our addition to climate change and we don't have to wait for a federal mandate.

Mike Moore mentions the time and that we still have 12 peoples with hands raised.

Jack Fei moves to put the motion back on the table and continue discussion. Susan seconds.

Wendy discusses concerns over meetings going past 8:30 pm and almost until 9 pm.

Dave reminds everyone that there is a motion on the floor.

Mike Moore says we can proceed with the originally motion from Marc without a vote.

Colin F.: This is our one opportunity to weigh in before this moves beyond the Planning Commission.

Menaka: There is another public hearing at City Council. Some district councils have chosen to wait. The Planning Commission will be encouraged to choose one option and recommend it to City Council based on the feedback they have received and the analysis after they receive the comments. They can also amend any of the options as well.

Wendy raises a concern over why we get these items from the City at such a late date and why was this not brought before the group the previous month. Alexa (staff) suggests we defer that item for a later discussion.

Motion restated: Motion to recommend reduction of parking minimums by Marc.

Susan wanted to clarify that she was seconding a motion from Jack to table the vote and wanted to rescind her second. Cindy had second the motion as well.

Julie: We should be careful with the word table. The motion is out there for discussion.

Mark E.: I am curious about the small businesses ability to use the parking lot space for other options. What are those other options?

Tony: It would allow businesses to use the space for other things – business expansion into an area that would have been used for parking whether they needed it or not. A lot of businesses realize they don't need as much parking after they open up. Food trucks, etc. This would only be for off-street parking; not on-street parking.

Elizabeth W.: I actually prefer the option – eliminate. I worry that this system and what it does for smaller developments who don't have the resources of larger developers. I will take that option (reduction) if that's what happens but I think just eliminating parking minimums is the best way to go. Please take Zak's comments to heart – it is important we remember that we are deciding for the next 30 years, to battle climate change and build a community for the Zak's of the world, your children and your grandchildren.

Colin V.: I agree with Wendy about safety and with health and the congestion on buses is a concern. This approach focuses on cars on the ultimate enemy. As a small business owner, I drive alone all the time and meet clients all over. It seems that cars are singled out to be an issue. Safety is an issue in the community and in the city. I've seen cars towed on the east side and the cars here are snowed in and the roads plowed down the middle. The study is looking at other cities like San Francisco and that is not representative of St. Paul. The reduce option seems like an eliminate option because of the TDM. It allows them to get to 0. What is going to grow the community and welcome people in? Encouraging people to walk, bike, or take the bus doesn't seem welcoming. We go a lot places in the car.

Cindy R.: Thank you presenters. I am hearing a lot of concerns about safety and I take that seriously. I want to work on things in tandem. We need to work on that as a community. One of the things that I haven't heard come up – I am in favor of reduction. I came thinking about elimination but I am in favor of reduction now. I am hearing everyone's perspective and seeing the entire picture. I see a cascading effect. We are concerned about affordable housing and getting developers to add affordable housing – because of the parking minimums – forces developers to push easements out closer to the street, sidewalks, and alleys.



Parking has a cascading effect on variances and that is not 21st century. From personal experience, I have lived around the country and we can learn from other cities. Living here as caused my family to go down to one car. We should continue the safety conversation at another time.

Susan D.: I've been following parking for over a decade as a parking lot owner and landlord. I've heard the complexities for a long time and have relied on other forms of transportation. I agree with the mission statement but the form the city is going about it is asinine. Built it and they will come or don't build it and they won't come is never a motto that has been proven historically factual. We have zoned parking because some areas were allowed to expand. Reducing or eliminating it will not make it go away unless we are very innovative. Thinking about why the district councils will be created was so we could be heard and I think the two platforms the city has provided here is their way of promoting the "Walmart" of developers. They are allowing developers to move in like Walmart and have their lobbyists be the ones that our City Council listens to. You are hearing from the people who have lived through the complexities of these problems and want to solve these problems. We know there is a problem and that why it needs a lengthy discussion. I don't like being steered into these two options when they will not solve the problem. I think ultimately, as a landlord, if I could say I will not rent to you if you don't have a car is one of the ways that we could eliminate a lot of the cost of parking. So if I don't have parking, I can't rent to people who don't own a car and that is how we old developers accountable.

Ann D.: The hardest part being on this committee is the stuff I hear about where we are taking direction from. I hear us asking the City what the City wants and we are not taking enough time to talk to the residents who don't want this. They do not want the two options the City has presented us with. They have come on to this committee and send we do not want this; we want to keep it as is. And we don't listen to that. I think a lot of this is built on faulty premise; that somehow this is going to make more affordable housing. Developers never pass that along and it never happens. I worry about small businesses that do need that extra parking. I don't see an expanse of parking. Every time I go out and do something, and tooled around looking for a spot and have gone home because I could not find one. Downtown doesn't have a minimum and it has proven itself to be a disaster. It is a ghost town and no one wants to go down there. We need to listen to the communities and what they want instead of trying to manipulate them into what they want.

Saura J.: Thank you for the presentation. I work downtown and ride the bus downtown and I think it was fantastic. I am all for at least reducing it if not eliminating it all together, for a lot of the reasons said today.

Clarification on the motion on the table and that a recommendation for reduction would not allow us to recommend elimination.

Motion to amend the original motion to recommend the elimination of parking minimums rather than the reduction of parking minimums (Saura J., Kate B-K.)

Clarification on the motion and how to vote.

14-19-1. Amendment fails.

Kathy M.: I am hearing that this is a big tax revenue for the City and is very advantageous to developers. Who is monitoring the impact of all of the development and what this is doing for pedestrian safety. The city has a responsibility here. I think that this all or nothing approach needs some improvement – like a pilot study. Try it in a certain location and see what happens. But saying that elimination is going to keep people from having cars and from driving just isn't going to work. Who is going to minotie whether these people are parking on the street and driving? The city and all of us have a job to educate people to use cars less and use mass transit. But a blanket change like this that is going to have a huge impat is a mistake.

Colin F.: I don't think we can talk about ped. safety without talking about the fact that automobile accidents are one for the leading causes of death in this country. The pilot study was University Ave and it worked out just fine. I was on the UPDC Land Use Committee when Ryan companies bought the Vintage, associated bank and the Starbucks next to that and it is a perfect case study. They did not go for a parking study for the Vintage because they thought it would hurt their chances of getting the project approved even though they knew that they wouldn't be able to use all the parking. Despite that it is still bringing in tons of tax revenue. They built a ton of parking at the Associated Bank because local businesses said that parking was essential and it ended up not being true and it sits mostly empty. The land use value is way down causing way less tax revenue. The Starbucks were asked to consider a 2-3 level development and they said they couldn't get a loan from a bank to support that project based on the parking that they had room to build on that site along with an elevator. The banks are not going to finance anything that goes below a certain level of parking in this climate and in this city. We are still going to have parking even if we get rid of the minimums. We will reduce the cases where we overbuild parking, lose out on tax revenue and lose out on the



services that we would otherwise get. I think that is the perfect case study. I would love to eliminate but if we have to reduce, I say we go that route.

Marc M.: There are comments about the 1975 standards that the parking minimums are based on in the report. It is very true that the standards on based on suburban standards and called for too much parking. The report fails to mention that in 2010 the City substantially liberalized its parking requirements so you could build more with less parking. That really should be in there and it's not fair to talk about it otherwise. We need a proviso that we don't rely on trusting real estate developers. What we ought to have in the code, is that when new construction is built – most of St. Paul is built up – they should provide on-site parking for their fair share for the parking demand that they create. It makes sense that we would reduce parking minimums for affordable housing and things of that sort. The better proposal is for the reduction of parking minimums and that strikes a balance between those who are really concerned about climate, tax revenue and those who still want to be able to drive their car wherever they need to. I think the balance minimum approach is the reduction of parking requirements.

20:36:00 Motion to recommend reduction of parking minimums as laid out in the 2021 Parking Study (Mark M., Zak Y.)

21-10-1. Motion passes.

Future Committee Topics, Discussion (Agenda item from 2/24/2021)

- ~~Saint Paul land use education~~
- ~~Equitable Development Scorecard~~
- ~~Other equity related topics~~

20:38:17 Updates/Announcements

20:38:43 Adjourn