

Parking Bylaws



Northampton Parking Garage

What are the objectives of a parking bylaw?

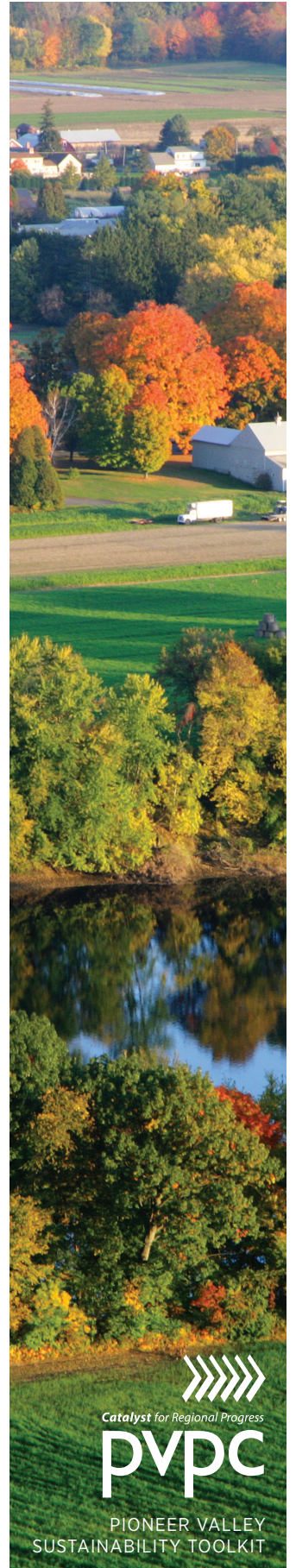
To ensure that all uses provide sufficient off-street parking space to meet the needs of employees, patrons and deliveries; to reduce congestion on streets; to improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and safety in a cost effective and environmentally sound manner.

Why do we need a parking bylaw?

Parking is an essential component of any land use as well as the overall transportation system. Parking must be accommodated at every destination whether at a residence, convenience store, commercial strip or urban center. The vast majority of a vehicle's life is spent parking and utilizes several parking spaces over the course of the day. From a consumer's point of view there is a perceived parking problem if they can't park near the front door of where they want to shop, and from a developers point of view they are required to provide too much parking. Parking problems are less often a matter of supply and more often a matter of inefficient management of existing resources. Parking regulations promote better designed, more efficient and cost effective off-street parking creating more functional and attractive communities with reduced environmental impacts.

How do parking bylaws work?

Parking requirements are typically based on general land use categories and calculated on either the amount of square footage of a facility or the number of cars/trucks expected to be generated. Often times these numbers are based on a worst case scenario (i.e. holiday season shopping) leaving a majority of the parking lot unused for large portions of the year (resulting in increased construction costs, excessive stormwater run-off and heat island effects). In many urban centers parking requirements are being reduced



(and in some cases even eliminated) in place of instituting better parking management practices (off hour/dual usage of spaces, combined facilities, shared off-site facilities, parking garages, peak demand plans, pricing, improved signage, encouraging other modes of transportation, etc.). Bylaws can also, through a Special Permit, allow for a reduction in the number of parking spaces where it can be demonstrated as being warranted (employer car/van pooling, flexible/alternative work hours, telecommuting programs).

Some communities also allow for a payment into a municipal parking fund in lieu of physically providing the spaces on the ground. This enables communities to raise funds to develop new shared municipal parking facilities.

DID YOU KNOW...

Cost-effective parking management programs can usually reduce parking requirements by 20-40%

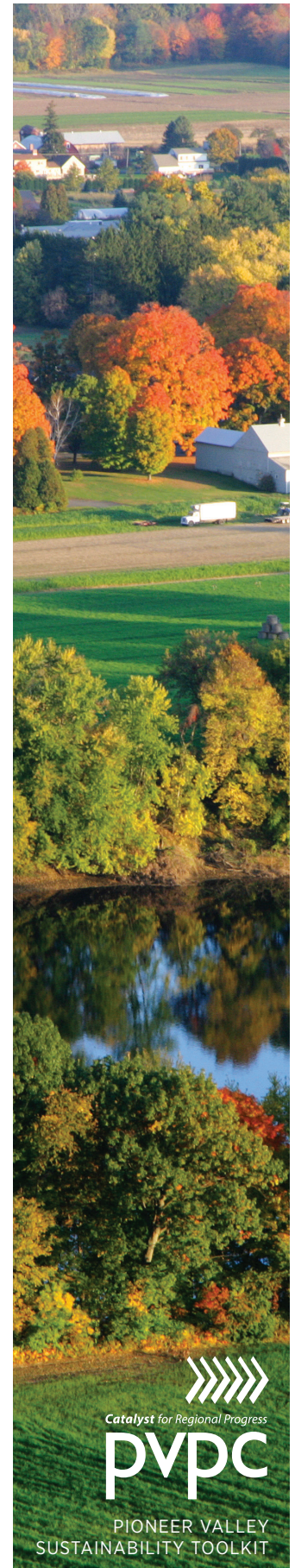
EXAMPLES FROM THE PIONEER VALLEY

Northampton MA

Northampton recently eliminated most of the parking requirements for its Central Business District. The downtown is well served by a municipal parking garage as well as a number of strategically located municipal parking lots. In addition the Planning Board can issue a Special Permit allowing multiple buildings, uses and parcels to share a combined facility. In all districts except the Central Business District the Planning Board can permit (through Site Plan Approval) a reduction of up to 20% of the required number of spaces with an acceptable trip reduction plan and even greater percentages (through a Special Permit) where dual usage of spaces are utilized based in different peak demand periods. The Planning Board can also issue a Special Permit for off-site parking in available non-municipal lots within 500-1000 feet of the use. The Central Business District also allows a by-right option to pay into a Downtown Parking Reserve Account to be used solely for expenses related to increasing parking availability, improving the management and utilization of existing parking spaces, or reducing the need for new parking.

Westfield, MA

Recognizing that strict on-site parking requirements sometimes discouraged otherwise viable and desired downtown revitalization projects, the city of Westfield recently revised its parking ordinance to provide more flexible standards and options. While downtown Westfield does not have a parking garage, it does have a number of well utilized and maintained municipal lots behind its main street stores. The ordinance allows for shared off-site facilities within 300 feet of the uses. The Planning Board can also issue a Special Permit for the multiple use of individual spaces in accordance with an approved Parking Management Plan. The Plan must demonstrate that the peak parking demand generated by the uses occur at different times, and that there will be adequate parking for the combined uses at all times. Westfield also offers a “payment in lieu of” option by Special



Permit in the downtown. These other new parking options are not just limited to the downtown but are also available in all business and industrial districts.

For more information on examples of Smart Parking from across Massachusetts, please refer to the state's *Smart Growth / Smart Energy Toolkit* developed by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

A model bylaw or strategy is included in the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Toolkit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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