

Summary - NST response to parking minimums

At Nashua Strong Towns, we are opposed to adding parking minimums to Nashua Downtown. We should instead be considering removing parking minimums from the rest of the city, not looking to increase the number of cars in our densest, most economically productive area of the city.

Nashua has put immense work into its downtown over the last decade. Investing many dollars into everything from - ensuring the sidewalks are high quality and creating in the Performing Arts Center to establishing an environment conducive to urban infill. This has provided the town with many tax dollars, and has created a very pleasant place to spend time in.

We are aware of the town's car conundrum as downtown continues to densify. At Nashua Strong Towns, we would like to provide a number of solutions to the town's car conundrum that do not involve parking minimums. All of these are expounded on in our full report.

Alternatives to parking minimums

Traffic calming

One of the first things the town needs to do is to invest in traffic calming. The walking experience is not pleasant in Nashua. Cars fly down roads at speeds much higher than the posted speed limit.

Traffic calming, is an alternative to lowering the speed limit, ensuring drivers pay attention to the road more and consciously slow down, rather than have to pay active attention to the posted speed limit signs. We need to ensure the pedestrian experience is pleasant and safe.

Dedicated cycle lanes

Nashua downtown is not big. Many goods can be acquired within a mile of residents of the parking study that recommended - a perfect distance to cycle. We understand not everyone can cycle, but Nashua downtown has a young population, and many can. If it is safe, many will do it as it is cheaper and more convenient than driving in many circumstances.

We need good cycling infrastructure first. Cement/grade separated cycling infrastructure is cheaper than traditional driving infrastructure, but is still expensive. We recommend the town trial cycle lanes with a cheaper alternative (cones, plastic rods, etc.) first which can be stood up in a few hours.

Bike parking

Bike parking is sorely lacking in downtown, with the little parking that is provided almost always being double parked with bikes. A typical car parking spot can fit up to 20 bikes, and comfortably fit 10-12. It is remiss the parking study does not include bike parking in the study, as we are far under capacity with regards to bicycle parking.

Upgraded transit

Transit is extremely expensive, and we are well aware of the struggles the town faces here. In lieu of getting more drivers and buses, we should consider a park and ride strategy, similar to the one employed at the Holiday Stroll to and from Holman and Rivier.

Barber/coffee shop upzoning, and incentives for doing so

All residential areas around downtown should be upzoned to mixed-use. In lieu of that we should consider upzoning nearby residential areas with a barber/coffee/corner store ordinance,

so small businesses can legally be opened in these areas with no additional parking minimums, encouraging local shopping.

We should also consider tax incentives for folks doing this that allow us to shape which new businesses are opened nearby and allow them to compete with big box stores.

Grocery delivery

Grocery shopping is difficult in downtown. The city of Nashua should consider providing grocery delivery services to residents downtown either with a public delivery service, or forming a public-private partnership to remove/decrease delivery fees.

Rideshare programs

Sometimes folks will need to use a car, and in those circumstances, a shared one is what we should incentivize using. Zipcar and Getaround have been deployed in Boston in 2015 with great success. This will make it easier to live in downtown without owning a car.

Car free transit to and from Boston

People commute to and from Boston in Nashua, but no solution is provided for them in downtown. Folks must either drive to Boston, drive to exit 8, drive to what was exit 35 *park and ride*, or drive to the Lowell commuter rail to get into Boston. We should provide transit either directly to Boston, or to one of these places.

Alt: What if we decide we do need parking minimums?

If we decide we really do need parking minimums, it is critical we set an expiration on them. That means the minimums will expire after X years, or after some condition is met. Whichever comes first. Some samples of what we are thinking:

- A self-set expiration (X years in the future) where they will be automatically revoked
- Rapid transit within the city (BRT - bus rapid transit, or light rail)
- When the town hits a certain density requirement in the downtown area and it is unfeasible to continue to have them and/or for everyone to transport themselves by car.

Ways to soften parking minimums

If we must have parking minimums, we can soften their impact. Many of these were discussed in the parking study, we will reaffirm their importance. These include:

An **in-lieu parking waver** allowing companies to buy their way out of paving an empty lot for parking. It is critical however that the waiver is less expensive than buying land for parking. We do not want to incentivize more parking from the business or from the town.

Inter/intra-facility lots allowing businesses to share lots to hit the newly added parking minimums. Many businesses operate at separate hours, making it logical and inexpensive for this solution.

Ensure the parking minimum does not just include cars meaning it could also include bikes. There is immense value add in a business adding 100 bike parking spots instead of 8 car parking spots, and would take up the same amount of space.

Addendum

Thank you for reading the executive summary of our response to parking minimums. We appreciate you taking the time to hear us out. For more details, feel free to reach out to Nashua Strong Towns conversation leader at nashuastrongtowns@darrienglasser.com or reading our full report.