Facts About American Parking

by Noah Kazis on February 24, 2010 (amended from Streetsblog)

- Ninety-nine percent of U.S. car trips begin and end in a free parking space.
- The average automobile is parked 95 percent of the time.
- Although many businesses today believe they benefit from free parking, kerbside parking meters were actually introduced in 1935 by an Oklahoma City department store owner. He wanted to increase parking turnover so that there would always be spaces available for his customers.
- Conventional parking policy counsels providing enough spots to handle car storage on the 30th busiest hour of the entire year, usually the weekend before Christmas. That means intentionally planning for an oversupply of parking the other 8,730 hours of the year.
- At free parking spaces, 40 to 60 percent of vehicles overstay posted time limits.
- Parking typically represents a full 10 percent of development costs. What's more, the people who actually park only pay 5 percent of the cost of non-residential parking, meaning that public subsidies and developer capital pay for the rest.
- In San Francisco, parking requirements have reduced the number of affordable housing units nonprofit developers can build by 20 percent, with each residence costing 20 percent more to build than it would have without parking.
- Seventy percent of Southern California suburban office developments built exactly the number of parking spaces required by law, suggesting that parking minimums are forcing developers to build more parking than they want to.
- How much space does parking eat up? Office space typically requires 175 to 250 square feet per person. In comparison, curbside parking requires 200 square feet per vehicle, and garages require 300 to 350 square feet per vehicle.
- Even in the Park Smart pilot areas of Greenwich Village, where peak hour meter rates have been raised, on-street parking still costs $12 per hour less than off-street parking. At that rate, cruising for 15 minutes to find an on-street space to park for one hour pays off at the equivalent of a $100,000 annual salary.