



# City of Cambridge

## Executive Department

**YI-AN HUANG**  
City Manager

CMA 2025 #156  
**IN CITY COUNCIL**  
June 16, 2025

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please find attached the Parking Impact Report from Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Melissa Peters.

Yi-An Huang  
City Manager





To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager

From: Melissa Peters, Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: June 12, 2025

Re: **Parking Impact Report**

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City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Section 6.31 Paragraph (b) directs the Community Development Department to submit the following report to the City Council detailing the number of parking spaces and residential housing units that were added subsequent to the adoption of the provision to require zero minimum accessory parking for all uses and any discernible impacts the ordinance has had on the availability of on-street parking.

## **Context**

### *Accessory Parking Reforms*

In October 2022, the City Council adopted an amendment to Article 6.000 of the Zoning Ordinance to require zero minimum accessory parking for all uses. Section 6.31 now sets forth that “Notwithstanding any other provision in this Zoning Ordinance, the minimum accessory parking required for all uses shall be zero (0) parking spaces, including in overlay districts.”

### *Reporting Requirements*

While amending the Zoning Ordinance to eliminate accessory parking minimums, the following additional reporting provisions were added.

- Section 6.31(a) “Developers building more than 4 units of housing and/or Projects subject to Article 19 (Project Review Special Permit) shall provide a written report as part of the public record and permitting process detailing the number of proposed parking and loading spaces, and how that number was determined, including any surveys, parking demand studies or other research that was conducted.”
  - Section 6.31(b) “The Community Development Department shall provide the City Council with an impact report no later than July 2025 detailing the number of parking spaces and residential housing units that were added subsequent to the adoption of this provision and any discernible impacts the ordinance has had on the availability of on-street parking.”
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**Melissa Peters** | Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development

**Sandra Clarke** | Chief of Administration & Operations

There are two ways that the City receives parking reports required by Paragraph 6.31(a). Projects subject to an Article 19 Project Review Special Permit are already required to provide a certified Traffic Impact Study (TIS) if the proposed project meets the thresholds established in Article 19.20 of the Zoning Ordinance, and so this new reporting requirement is included as part of the TIS. Residential projects meeting the threshold above but not subject to an Article 19 Project Review Special Permit are required to provide a separate report.

### **Reporting Summary**

Between October 24, 2022 and May, 2025, ten residential projects seeking building permits or Planning Board special permits triggered the new Section 6.31(a) written parking report requirement; only one non-residential project was subject to a Project Review Special, the conversion of an existing commercial building with no change to Gross Floor Area and for which parking is provided off-site.

- Three of those residential projects also needed a Project Review Special Permit and submitted a full Traffic Impact Study (TIS) as part of their application materials.
- Seven smaller residential projects required a parking report but were below the threshold for a Project Review Special Permit and TIS.
- Of the residential proposals, a total of 471 new housing units and 110 new parking spaces were proposed, but the distribution is not even across projects and some projects have additional off-site parking available.
- Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) projects, which are exempt from the parking quantity requirements of Section 6.30, are not included in this reporting.

Among these projects, there were large variations in the approach taken by developers to provide accessory parking. The ratio of off-street accessory parking spaces per unit proposed in residential projects range from 0.0 to 1.0 or more spaces per unit of housing. Some projects include off-site-parking.

The residential projects are listed by status in the tables on the following pages.

To date, none of these projects have completed construction, so any impacts to on-street parking availability are still unclear. Some projects that received building permits prior to the Multifamily Zoning Amendments in 2025 may pursue alternative designs enabled by that zoning change.

### **Residential Projects by Status**

The following projects received a special permit from the Planning Board or approval from the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA), but have not yet received a building permit.

Address	Report Submission Date	Rehab, Conversion, or New Construction	Proposed Residential Units	Proposed Off-Street Accessory Parking Spaces
<b>75 First Street</b>	October, 2022 (TIS)	New Construction	90	0*
<b>231-235 Third Street</b>	2/7/2023	Rehab	19	0
<b>2400 Massachusetts Avenue</b>	March, 2024 (TIS)	New Construction	56	67
<b>745 Concord Avenue</b>	December, 2024 (TIS)	New Construction	236	15

*\*75 First Street: Part of a multi-site Planned Unit Development (PUD) with shared parking on a different site.*

The following project sought a special permit from the Planning Board and provided a parking report, but later withdrew its application.

Address	Report Submission Date	Rehab, Conversion, or New Construction	Proposed Residential Units	Proposed Off-Street Accessory Parking Spaces
<b>48-50 Bishop Allen Drive</b>	4/18/2023	New Construction	22	0

The following projects received building permits, but have not begun construction and may be considering alternative designs.

Address	Report Submission Date	Rehab, Conversion, or New Construction	Proposed Residential Units	Proposed Off-Street Accessory Parking Spaces
<b>16-18 Porter Street</b>	5/9/2023	Rehab	6	6
<b>8 Winter Street</b>	11/21/2023	New Construction	19	0

The following projects received building permits and have begun construction.

Address	Report Submission Date	Rehab, Conversion, or New Construction	Proposed Residential Units	Proposed Off-Street Accessory Parking Spaces
<b>2161 Massachusetts Avenue</b>	4/20/2023	Rehab	8	6
<b>18 Pleasant Street</b>	6/19/2023	Conversion	6	4
<b>27-29 Mellen Street</b>	11/14/2024	Conversion	9	12*

*\*27-29 Mellen Street: Site contains existing parking lot to be reduced from 22 to 12 spaces.*

## Parking Report Themes

### *Overall Observations*

The developer parking reports highlight that parking needs and solutions vary depending on the specific location and type of project, with factors like proximity to public transportation and neighborhood characteristics influencing perceived parking demand.

Of the above projects, those with 10 or fewer units were more likely to propose a higher ratio of parking to residential units. These smaller projects not requiring special permit approvals or Traffic Impact Studies generally provided less data on existing conditions, relying instead on informal observations. These narratives ranged from a few sentences to several pages in length, and did not include formal surveys or parking demand studies.

These narratives generally used framing that is consistent with Cambridge's stated sustainability, active transportation, and housing affordability goals. Narratives relied on the applicant's instincts for market demand, proximity of neighborhood amenities and public transit, and whether they are proposing to sell or rent the units. These narratives also weighed social and environmental benefits of additional housing against expected burdens of off-street parking (both financial costs and the constraints of an inflexible site layout in meeting other market and regulatory needs).

### *Reasons Cited for Providing More Parking*

- Perceived market expectation for condo and ownership projects to provide at least one deeded private parking space per residential unit.
- Responding to the feedback of some neighbors.
- Anticipated reduction in on-street parking.

*Reasons Cited for Providing Less Parking*

- Existing transit service, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and neighborhood amenities.
- Existing underutilized parking facilities.
- Site constraints.
- Open space and cool score requirements.
- Availability of on-street spaces during non-peak times.
- Architectural style.

*Illustrative Quotes from Parking Reports*

"The site is well served by public transportation. Within reasonable walking distance to... subway stations, it is also served by several bus routes... With the recent elimination of on street parking in the area to accommodate separated bicycle lanes and dedicated bus lanes, community reaction to the proposal strongly favored the provision of off-street parking."

The above quote highlights the tension between providing parking and promoting sustainable transportation options, and it also reflects the influence of community feedback on the issue and why some applicants chose to provide off-street resident parking.

"Reducing the # of spaces between the two properties... was done for the following reasons: a. Reduce car traffic b. Increase permeable surface – with the extensive landscaping planned, any storm water runoff will be greatly reduced c. Achieve open space requirements – the existing lots are almost 100% paved. The proposed landscaping exceeds open-space requirements, beautifies the ground and includes new trees, lawns, and low and high planting areas. d. Meet cool score requirements – the landscaping plan reduces the amount of heat generated on the lot e. Make room for bike parking area – the proposed development requires 10 bike parking spaces. There are no existing bike parking spaces on the lot."

The above quote demonstrates a project's conscious effort to decrease the negative impacts of parking by reducing the number of spaces and increasing landscaping.

"This project will continue as a residential use with... [a one to one parking ratio]... as it is the market-rate expectation to have a minimum of one deeded off-street parking space per unit."

The above quote points to perceived market expectation that developments with an ownership model require dedicated off-street parking to remain competitive for buyers.

“The proposed residential project is an Inclusionary Housing Project... with 20% of its net square footage designated as affordable and contains 0 off-street parking spaces. The reduced amount of parking will provide positive environmental or other benefits to the users of the lot and the neighborhood, including specifically, among other benefits, assisting in the provision of affordable housing units in keeping with the intent of Article 6.35.1.”

The above quote directly connects a reduction in off-street parking to the provision of affordable housing units. Below, the same developer adds that additional off-street parking would directly increase the cost and time of development, while reducing environmental quality.

“Additionally, the provision of off-street parking for this development containing affordable housing units, and especially as a development employing the increased FAR and Dwelling unit density provisions of Section 11.200, will increase the cost of the development, will require variance relief from other zoning requirements applicable to the development because of limitations of space on the lot, or will significantly diminish the environmental quality for all residents of the development.”

## **Conclusions**

Out of the ten residential projects that have submitted parking reports, none has completed construction and only three are actively under construction. These three smaller projects include a total of 23 residential units and 23 off-street accessory parking spaces. Any impacts to the availability of on-street parking from these projects would likely be minor.

One of the ten projects has withdrawn their development proposal and at least two more appear to have paused development while reconsidering market conditions and contemplating recent zoning changes.

Larger residential developments have not moved into construction since the elimination of zoning requirements, but early proposals suggest that developers may opt for very low parking ratios in many cases. These projects tend to be rental developments in transit-rich areas, and in some cases there are other off-street parking options available. The key exception is 2400 Massachusetts Avenue, proposed as a condo development with a greater than 1-to-1 residential parking ratio. This developer noted that this parking was provided in response to neighborhood feedback and market expectations for condos to have deeded off-street parking.

In summary, these reports suggest that so far there is no one prevailing approach for developers to choose how much off-site accessory parking to provide and where.

Additionally, it will be some time until larger proposed residential developments finish construction and there is an opportunity to assess real-world impacts to on-street parking availability.