



Happy Cities

Parking Reform in Nanaimo

A letter of support

Happy Cities
102-1183 Odlum Drive
Vancouver, BC
V5A 2P6
Canada

info@happycities.com
happycities.com

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455 Wallace St,
Nanaimo, BC
V9R 5J6

To Mayor and Council:

We write to express support for the white paper by Strong Towns Nanaimo, entitled *People Over Parking: Nanaimo's Parking Problem*. We have spent more than a decade researching how to create vibrant, happy, successful communities, and eliminating parking mandates is one of the most effective single actions for achieving this goal.

We often joke that you can tell if a street is a good place if you can imagine proposing to your spouse there. A parking lot will never be a stage worthy of such memories.

It is natural to assume that providing abundant parking will be beneficial to a city's economy. This is true of outlying car-dependent areas, such as stripmalls. But for cities like Nanaimo to succeed, they need to offer something no stripmall can: a place that people love, that inspires them to linger, spend time, come back, and to brag about. Downtowns succeed when they lean into this competitive advantage — to be, above all else, a wonderful place for human life.

When downtowns set minimum parking requirements, they try to compete with stripmalls on their own terms — a place with the best-possible parking. Stripmalls will always win in this fight.

A third of Detroit's Downtown is now a parking lot thanks to highly successful parking mandates that contributed to the Downtown's failure. Many of the world's great downtowns, meanwhile, have little or no visible parking.



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It is important to remember that downtowns are the most economically productive parts of cities, and they are also where the lowest proportion of people drive. There is a simple reason for this. The more a downtown succeeds, the less it is possible for every person to travel there in a 4,000lb vehicle that consumes as much space as a small business. As more people travel in a small area, geometry dictates that more will need to walk, bike, or take transit.

Cars play an important role in enabling long-distance trips and deliveries, and it is valuable to provide on-street parking and to allow developers to build as much underground parking as they believe is financially desirable. Parking mandates, however, skew incentives and force the overproduction of parking. As Strong Towns notes, perhaps the most destructive impact is that many buildings are never built, and many businesses never open, because the cost of providing parking is too great.

Parking mandates hamper quality of life and economic growth. We hope you will support Strong Town's proposal to prioritize the vibrancy of your streets.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tristan Cleveland



Urban Planner

Happy Cities Studio Inc