

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

AUGUST 21, 2025

A meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee was held Thursday, August 21, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber and duly noticed in two places, including the City's website, in accordance with the requirements of RSA 91-A:2 II.

The roll call was taken with 3 members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee present:

Alderman Tyler Gouveia, Chair
Alderman Derek Thibeault
Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly

Members not in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderman Ernest Jette

Also in Attendance: Matt Sullivan, Community Development Manager
Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

ROLL CALL

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

DISCUSSION/PRESENTATIONS

- Re-Code – Mobility/Parking

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Well, I'm Sam Durfee for the record, Planning Manager. Thank you very much for making time for me this evening. This is 4th, 3rd of 4th session. So yeah, we're going to talk about parking and mobility. This is article 10 of the new code. Yeah, let's jump right in.

Just for a little bit of context. This is kind of what we've covered so far. We did a general introduction to the code. It was a joint session of Human Affairs and this committee. Then we went over building types density. We did a little mock development. We looked at the overlay districts which is that cool tool that we really help hope that will spur development some key areas identified by the master plan. This evening we're talking about mobility and parking and then on Tuesday of next week we'll be talking about inclusionary zoning. I'm happy to say that our consultant Russ Preston will be here, as well as our sub-consultant from RKG, Kyle, will also be participating via zoom, so we can get really weedy and talk about numbers and why things are the way they are and market forces. So that will be interesting, and I'm really looking forward to it. But for tonight, we have parking but also future topics should we choose to schedule some more of these some of the things that we could talk about? So just wanted to kind of flag that and happy to talk individually if you have questions as well. You know, we can set up time because there's a lot here and some of it I think is intuitive. Other pieces, not so much.

Alright, so parking and mobility. We already have parking regulations. In some cases, they work. In some cases, they could be improved. So what is changing? We are introducing mobility management. We're going to talk about that in some level of detail tonight. We'll be talking about some adjustments we're making to the parking minimums and maximums, introducing bicycle parking requirements something that we heard in some of our public sessions that people have no place to lock up a bike if they are biking somewhere. I have seen bikes locked to trees, to parking meters and we could be doing better for relatively small dollars.

Also, we'll be talking a little bit about design standards for structured parking and other parking assets as this is a form-based code. And also a very key kind of regulatory structural change is moving parking regulations out of site plan and subdivision regulations and into the zoning ordinance. I'll touch on why that's important. But also I think it's important to note the context in which we're making some of these changes is we had a Parking Study done. There were a number of recommendations that came out of that and we took those to heart when crafting these regulations. So actually I want to start there with the Parking Study, some of the things they recommended. They recommended mobility management. Again, I'll get into some of what those details are in and what that generally means. They did encourage us to reinstate parking minimums in the downtown. I think we should applaud ourselves to recognize that we got rid of parking minimums

before it was you know, the cool thing to do, right? And there's no question it had success in terms of spurring development in the downtown area. The Parking Study also then shows that we need about 1,000 spaces downtown.

So we saw benefit, but we also saw the flaws in a context where we despite having an excellent bus system there is culture changes that would need to happen in order to really come away from you know, such an automobile-focused transportation system. So we have really good you know, data points and some reflection. They also recommended to establish a payment in lieu system, basically you can buy out of providing parking spaces and also looking into shared use agreements. So you know, multiple uses of a parking lot, being able to count those spaces to a portion of their parking share or what they're required to provide.

So this code does have mobility management in it. We do have parking minimums in the downtown. There are some specific exemptions, but that also is open to a broader policy discussion. We are currently testing payment in Lieu to see what the market can bear, and how do we accurately price what a parking space cost? Surface parking far cheaper than structured parking.

And then we do have some really good standards for shared use agreements. It's a bit more prescriptive, but what that does is we put very fine grain standards around those in the hopes that we begin to incentivize a private parking market. There are quite a few lots that are parking lots right now or could be or are kind of informal. And while we would like to see active use of those we're not going to see everything kind of redevelop and upscale all at once. There will be opportunities for those lots to become more utilized for something that may need a satellite lot and we'd be creating a structure to allow that to happen.

So then moving into shared parking because I think that's an important piece to cover here. I think intuitively you get the sense of what it is, right? There's a there's a large parking asset. Think of a garage, you know High Street, Elm Street you know, these garages have huge amounts of spaces, multiple users. The important thing is different times of day right? You know, I'm not going to read through all this, but basically I think the big things here are multiple users recognizing the different times of day and then also proximity. You know, we would love if everyone had parking right out front of the store. Obviously, that doesn't work all the time, but we recognize that there is a reasonable distance in which someone will walk, but more importantly, the context of when they are parking, you may be willing to walk farther if you plan to park there for a longer period of time. Think of overnight parking for residential uses. So we wanted to put a kind of a perimeter around quarter mile for some of those. The structure of this comes in the form of a table.

These, so think of commercial, your daytime commercial activities. That's retail, that's office, very broadly speaking here, evening commercial bars, restaurants, hotels and residential, right? So we kind of recognize those times of day of when these uses receive the most parking attention. So the way this works is you basically identify the types of uses and the associated parking demand with those uses, plot them, fill in your x's, fill in your y's and then you multiply those demands by that percentage, sum it out and basically we say alright, which quarter of the day has the most parking demand? Well, now that is your parking minimum. Anytime you run numbers through this because you don't have a 100, 100, 100% line across the table will always result in a lower parking requirement than what would otherwise be in the table. So there's already an incentive baked into this.

Chairman Gouveia

I just want to interrupt quickly if I can.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yup.

Chairman Gouveia

So looking at these numbers, is this more of a rule of thumb or did this come from our Parking Study?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

So this didn't come directly from our Parking Study. This came from our consultants, who have worked very closely with parking consultants in other so this isn't, this isn't just...

Chairman Gouveia

So it's more of a comparative to like-communities?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah, you can say that, yeah. And based on you know, experiences elsewhere, based on you know, real data not done directly from our parking.

Chairman Gouveia

So it's more of a general concept or would you say a little bit more than that?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah, but also driven by real world examples. You know, we didn't just assign these numbers based on the concept, you know. There's evidence you know, there's, there's all sorts of metrics that go into feeding this and then a little bit of contextual like Nashua Survey that fed into these numbers.

Chairman Gouveia

Thank you.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Sure. Does that table more or less make sense? Feel free to anytime and ask questions interrupt. Let me, so say you had 100 parking spaces demand for daytime commercial, 100 for evening, 100 for residential. 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. you know your total percentages are collectively higher than all the other lines. So you would need 25 parking spaces for daytime commercial, you would need 100 for evening, and 100 for residential. Without this you'd be required to provide 300 parking spaces, but with this 225. That's effectively how that works. So this was again, one of the recommendations from our Parking Study.

Moving into mobility management. So the idea here is how can we prescribe ways in which land owners, landlords, owners of businesses can reduce in real terms the demand for parking on a site. There are many ways to do this. Some will work more for other types and other uses than others, but as you can see there's just many different ways. And they can also any, anyone who wants to try something out you know, they can run it by us. And ideally, and this is something we're still testing is any sort of mobility management practice would be assigned a specific level of relief. Say, okay a large employer elects to provide bus passes for all employees. They do that, they get a straight 25% reduction in their parking requirement. The idea is we want to be able to calibrate relief so that there's predictability on the side of the applicant.

There's also predictability on the side of staff and the Planning Board and the public so that we know, and this is going to be something that you know say, this starts getting adopted and people start doing this and we then have real data points to see okay, they did the bus pass thing. Well, how much has that actually reduced their demand and this is something we'll be able to track and adjust these you know, percentages of relief you know, over time as we see how things actually shake out. Any questions on this?

Alderman Thibeault

Yeah, thank you Mr. Chair. So looking at all this stuff, it's interesting. I would say that if you start doing some of this, it's not gonna do all these things at once, right? Are you gonna try one thing and see how that works or a couple of things?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

It's not us to decide or assign. This is like a menu of options that the...

Chairman Gouveia

So it'd be up to the landowner?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Exactly, exactly it's up for them to decide you know, what works.

Alderman Thibeault

You're just giving them hey, these are some of the things you could do and they may adopt whatever.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Right. Qualified transportation fringe benefits, like monetary contributions does not really work for like in a residential context. No landlord is going to be paying you know, unless they're giving them a rent discount or something like that. But for employers you know, oh you walk to work, you bike to work. Well here's you know, some extra pay because you are not taking up a parking space that we would otherwise have to build and maintain which those are real costs.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, and it's funny because when I'm thinking of parking, I can't get out of my head downtown. Like that's all I'm thinking about and I know this is supposed to be for all of Nashua I assume, right? So, but I keep getting in my head the downtown parking because that's whenever we talk parking we rarely talk Daniel Webster Highway or other places, it's always downtown. So that's what I'm trying to get that trying to you know, rearrange my head to think okay, this is parking not just this could be an employer on the other side of town that wants to get bussing or you know, people take busses so they can reduce their footprint of parking. So alright, I think I'm getting it now. I just trying to get out of that mindset, but thank you.

Chairman Gouveia

Alderman Kelly.

Alderman Kelly

So this might be getting in the weeds a little bit, but do you have any sense on how a large employer would calculate how much adoption like a bus pass program would?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yes.

Alderman Kelly

Excellent.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

If they opt into any of these there are annual reporting requirements, you know. So what they're getting is an approved reduction in their parking which if they otherwise do not do, they do not execute this you know, something that we need to hash out or what are the repercussions of that. You know, we're probably not going to be revoking their site plan approval, but there's got to be something. There's got to be a carrot and stick here. And the carrot is obviously a reduction in parking but again, the stick that comes along with it, you do have to report annually. One for their own tracking purposes a lot of these do have costs associated with them. They're going to want to know you know, okay the money that we're putting into bus passes does that realistically? And are we seeing adoption from our employees? Does that money? Is that money less than providing the parking? You know, I think that's the calculation and they're going to want to track that. So there's incentives, just from a market standpoint, but also we would require it because we want to know that information as well and so they have to report that back to us.

Alderman Kelly

I had a follow up. It says it's a slide back. So I was trying to absorb.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

We can go back if you like.

Alderwoman Kelly

Yeah, I got it once you explained it with like an example. My question is around day of the week because I'm thinking downtown a Thursday night, shared parking is going to look very different than a Monday or Tuesday.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

We're assuming peak here.

Alderwoman Kelly

Okay, so you do assume the worst-case scenario.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yes.

Alderwoman Kelly

Okay, great.

Chairman Gouveia

I just want to follow up on this slide here. So when we're looking at it. So say I have a business downtown or anywhere in the city for that matter. They say I need 10 spots. I adopt one of these policies. The city could come back and say alright, we'll cut that down to 8 spots required. Okay, so it brings down that mandatory or the minimum. And in looking at these I find it's interesting. So I'm just gonna throw a scenario out there. Say I have a restaurant in downtown Nashua right on Main Street.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yep.

Chairman Gouveia

If I adopted valet parking that moved cars into a city parking garage instead of parking them in front of my restaurant, what would happen in that situation.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

So you're actually getting to the trickiest use.

Chairman Gouveia

Yeah, because that's how I see it.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Because they are not important in and in the downtown context is the most challenging, right? So in the downtown context payment in lieu may actually be the most appropriate you know, because parking is while it may be free, it's never free. Whether it's downtown garages, we are investing millions of dollars into the garages as we speak. You know that comes out in real estate taxes you know, for the owner of the restaurant building. That gets passed on to rent to the restaurateur. It comes down to the cost of food, right? So there's all these trickle-down effects of parking. It's just a matter of where you actually where the buck stops, right? So those are the sorts of strings that we need to keep pulling on to figure out what is the best way to you know, compartmentalize the relief and making sure that it is well calibrated to the use, the action, but also the context. Primarily being the differences between downtown and Daniel Webster Highway.

Chairman Gouveia

Yeah. Alderwoman Kelly.

Alderman Kelly

Do we within this is there contemplated an opportunity to help people right size, like if they have more parking than they possibly need. They never use that back parking lot. They decide they're going to do something like put workforce housing? Is there some sort of incentive for that kind of like, reduction in existing parking?

Chairman Gouveia

Absolutely, so I should have started with you know, broadly speaking there's a recognition you know, from outside consultant in the code that underutilized parking is a bad thing for everyone. It's expensive to build and maintain, it could be more productive even if you have you know, you're renting out space, but no one is using them like that's just wasted capital and energy, right? So the way that we're setting these sorts of things up and we do have parking maximums which we'll get into a table, we can actually look at those, you know. One, we want to prevent over building in the first place but you know, say there's a giant parking lot in the city that's heavily underutilized and I'm sure you can think of one you know. There may be instances where the owner has their own reasons and you know, we're not going to tell them that they have to do something with it, but we want to develop a framework which really would incentivize them you know, to do that. Now that could be utilizing that parking lot under some sort of shared agreement which then allows a higher density of housing to be developed around that parking lot. That would be great or the owner decides to develop it themselves or with a partner.

Alderman Kelly

Great. Thank you.

Chairman Gouveia

Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you. Sorry for another question. So I'm just thinking about like you know, you go downtown you got Shaw's, right? Obviously, Shaw's probably has enough parking for what they need, based on the calculations, right? But then you go further on Main Street and you get these other places that have no parking. So how does that figure into if they have to have a minimum where's the parking? Like, how do they find it? Like you know, say where Indian Head Bank was and now it's apartment buildings and I don't know what that would be, but say you need 15-20 spots, or whatever. Where are you going to find them? Like, how does that, if they're held to a minimum what happens?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah, so the minimum you know, we want to institute the minimum right so that there is regulatory requirement that parking is created, we're not just giving it away, right? There is demand being introduced. You're putting people in a location; they're probably going to have cars. There's an inherent demand; they need to park somewhere right? When we have no parking minimums it's just like okay, you know the demand is going to somewhere get absorbed by the city's public assets some way, somehow, parking study says we're out, we don't have any more capacity to absorb that demand. Something's got to give. So okay by instituting minimums of the downtown there's pressure on the developer side of like okay we gotta find something. We either make it ourselves, we either do an off-site sort of satellite agreement with a space that's time use sort of agreement. They buy out of it comes to us we invest it into our assets, we further develop them. Basically like there's no more of like the demand not being recognized. The demand is being captured and it is being you know, maybe it's offset from other means. Bike parking you know, maybe people start biking. It could be all; we want to basically find ways where we can channel that demand elsewhere, but find the way that most fits with the use, the users and the vocational contacts.

Alderman Thibeault

Just to follow up. Two questions both related so going forward if this is instituted right, or when it's instituted. When a developer is building something one, they're coming to you with the building permit or whatever, the Planning Board whatever. Is that when you say how much parking they need? And two, are you going to go back to every other business house and say oh, you don't have enough parking your limit has to be, the minimum has to be this.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

So I'll start with your second question. This will likely render some parking use relationships non-conforming. We recognize that we're not going to force them to do anything. When someone comes forward with a site plan application, these are the standards you have to meet them. Here are all your various ways of potentially getting relief if they work for you. Change of use will be a very common thing that will trigger compliance with this. And you know, I think that there will be instances and we're beginning to look at this at the staff level. When things come in; we get change of use applications all the time. Okay, let's just like game this out a little bit you know, if this was under our current code what would happen? And we try and run through scenarios. We're like okay, what breaks and like where do we have problems? So it's great because while we you know, we have a code that's maybe like 80% level development so we're really able to start applying it from a you know, kind of an academic standpoint to real world scenarios coming across the desk and we're learning a lot from that which has been great.

Chairman Gouveia

How about change of ownership? Would that not change?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

No, because the inherent demands likely aren't changing.

Chairman Gouveia

Okay, yep.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you.

Chairman Gouveia

Alderman Kelly?

Alderman Kelly

Two questions. Payment on lieu makes me a little leery. I'm a little bit nervous about that. I know that we see with our sidewalk program that that's often what happens is people pay in lieu of and then we never actually have enough money to build the sidewalks. So my question around that is how will you decide when that is an option? And who's keeping track of that so that everyone downtown doesn't get a payment of lieu and then we still end up with not enough parking?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yes, so excellent question and excellent comparative example. The reason the sidewalk payment in lieu does not work is because it's not reflective of true cost of construction. So you know, we've been kicking around ideas of how we tie it to the Construction Price Index you know, you tie it to a real metric that moves with the market, we do annual or semi-annual updates to what that number is and we have a formula for it, and we bring it to the Planning Board if the Planning Board gets the authority to change that number because we do have to be nimble with these things. Market fluctuations happen all that more frequently now so we do want to be responsive.

And it can't be a number, you know. So the question is like okay, is the payment in lieu 100% of the cost of construction, is it 120% so that they're more incentivized to build it? Or if we are strategically gearing up for a major investment in you know, a new parking asset we make it 80% of construction so that people are more likely to pay in. You know, these are strategic questions that we can have as you know, as a policy discussion. But the point is, like we really want to be intentional about calibrating these payment in lieu numbers, but we also need to be nimble with it as well.

Alderman Kelly

And my second question if I can?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Sure.

Alderwoman Kelly

I haven't been to the first two sessions so I'm getting caught up here. I know this is a workshop as we're working through this. How will this or can it affect existing larger projects that are kind of in the mix being talked about so they can kind of start to align to a new code?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

That's a good question. So speaking kind of more broadly about the type of development that we're seeing and I think you know, we can generally characterize it as large, multi-family, inherent demand. Right off the bat you know, we're seeing a lot of five over ones, right so the podium style development. In most cases what we're seeing being proposed by these relatively sophisticated developers is already right in line with what we're talking about. We're very, it cuts both ways being where we are geographically speaking, our proximity to the Boston market has pros and cons right? There's a huge amount of demand, there's a huge amount of capital coming into the city. It's bringing developers of a higher level of sophistication.

Massachusetts their regulatory framework and what municipalities are able to do there is far more progressive so when these developers are coming to New Hampshire it's like oh, a sigh of relief. Like your regulations are so much less than Massachusetts. Well, it's almost like open the floodgates because now we our regulations are behind. We're beginning to talk about some of these things that we may not be used to. You know, what we're talking about is like oh my, form-based code like all of this stuff is crazy. You sit down with these developers like oh yeah, okay sure. What are you requiring for you know, IZ units? They already have these conversations elsewhere. They're making it work in those markets. The market pressure coming here, the cost of housing it's making the projects pencil. We need to make our regulations work so that we're not giving away; we're not leaving stuff on the table, and we're getting a lot of more justified and fair community benefits out of the projects while still making them pencil. And that's why we're very sensitive about the build ability of this code and making sure that it's very sensitive to market forces.

Chairman Gouveia

I have one question before we get going again and it's you kind of hinted at it. It's more of a broader picture recode question. But I mean, the State Legislature just passed a lot of legislation about recoding and I just pulled up the one that I was thinking of which was HB 631 which had to do with the residential building and commercial zoning. How does that play with what we're looking at?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Well, I have some legislation that we're proposing to bring our current code into compliance. It's been an effort but, yeah that under current code not really a big deal. We already have M/U or mixed use overlay on top of a vast majority of our commercial districts already. Frankly, it hasn't resulted in much housing creation. I think there's a variety of reasons behind that. Not really going to go into them all, but there are other concerns how that may play into the redevelopment overlay portion of the recode. We're navigating that and yeah, it was a bit of a whirlwind seeing all of that legislation get passed. And but yeah, if you want to look at some of our ordinances we do need sponsors.

Chairman Gouveia

Anyone else?

Alderwoman Kelly

Let the man keep going.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Alright, so I want to just highlight this particular mobility management practice because this is really interesting and something that is I'm told one of the first things that communities really should look at. However, it's not something I believe we can require. Hence why we're kind of trying to make it an incentive as part of this mobility management relief. So unbundling parking from rental of a unit, rental of commercial space. Basically, you're paying for the space, the use of the space currently and very traditionally parking comes with that. Now what you are paying is that bundle, the use of the space and the parking. There will be instances right now and always where users of the space don't need the parking.

So with this where land owners can structure their leases in a way that parking is an amenity, an optional feature where basically the landlord prices the parking based on whatever they think is fair. Maybe they do a real solid analysis of what it actually costs to maintain their parking lot and then those costs get really passed on to the user. Part of this, if daylight the true cost of parking which I think generally is a good thing for the user, for the owner of the parking lot as well.

So that conversation then happens at the private market level, but by offering an incentive reduction in parking they're encouraged to have that conversation with their tenants. So it's kind of an interesting concept, one that I was not familiar with, but I find it very thought provoking. So I did want to flag that as it's interesting.

Chairman Gouveia

Alderwoman Kelly.

Alderwoman Kelly

Am I dreaming to think that that would mean they'd actually bring the rent cost down for people who didn't need parking?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

So theoretically, you're paying \$1,500 a month for your apartment. You have this option. Well, maybe you're paying \$1,300 for your apartment and you're not opting into the \$200 a month parking cost.

Alderwoman Kelly

So maybe?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Maybe, so I just wanted to highlight that one. So parking table the ostensibly most interesting part of any land use code. The very general land use categories in the left-hand column we have the current code requirements. In the second column from the left we have re-Code parking requirements for vehicle parking and bicycle parking. And then I just wanted to note some nuances of those differences. I will say that our current code is already out-of-date because there was a piece of legislation that was passed at the State House. One to one requirements across the board. That is the right way to say it, the maximum minimum that municipalities can impose. We are no longer allowed to require 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit.

We can only require one. Doesn't matter if it is single family or, you know, 150-unit multi-family development. So that has been taken out of our hands which, okay we're still seeing projects sometimes. Shooting for you know, 1.15 to 1.3 spaces per dwelling unit ratio. Typically we're seeing that being the target. We do have a development approved at the corner of Mulberry and Elm they are .7. I know that the developer is actively seeking satellite parking agreements because they know that they are going to have a hard time leasing units potentially that don't come with a parking space.

So the recode vehicle parking respects that that 1.0. We do provide an incentive where if you're providing inclusionary zoning units, those only have a demand of half a space then we are also capping at 2.0 because we one) we're not really seeing that anyways. However you know, say someone is developing a large parking structure wrapping it in an apartment building well now there's a parking reservoir for possibly a district parking asset. We would then explore how that ratio plays with some of the other shared use entities that are using that space.

I think bicycle parking is relatively explanatory. We'll get into what short term and long-term spaces are.

Office space, I want to say one thing about our current code where the parking table is all over the place. What we're trying to do with recode is everything is on a x space per 1,000 square feet, or x space per dwelling unit. Our current code is x space per number of seats in a restaurant, x space per 75 square feet, per 50 square feet, per 1000 square feet. There's no way to very easily do any sort of comparables when you're talking about change of use right? So we're trying to streamline that all over to everything is against 1,000 square feet. So it's been interesting to kind of explore some of those comparables. So look at restaurant. One space for four seats is in our current code. That equates to roughly seven spaces per 1000 square feet. As we were already exploring restaurant is one of the most challenging spaces or uses from a parking demand standpoint and then that challenge is compounded by location.

I think it's important to note that anytime you have a chain that's coming in, they know their business model, they will build

exactly how much parking they need. That is why we don't have a maximum there. They know they don't want to over build it, but they know that this is how many we're going to need to meet that peak demand.

Chairman Gouveia

So that legislative change you were talking about the one to one, that's just residential right? So that won't impact the office or retail or restaurants.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Correct.

Chairman Gouveia

Okay.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Happy to take questions on so I don't want to read the table.

Chairman Gouveia

Alderman Kelly.

Alderman Kelly

You said this was the most exciting part of the recode. So when it comes to office these are maximums and minimums. I'm surprised to see the 50% reduction. Does the type of office have any play into that, like a doctor's office or it does like that they have a lot more people coming? There's never parking by the hospital, by the way ever!

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Right, so I wouldn't say that this is you know, a hospital is not office.

Alderman Kelly

Something else completely.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

This is I chose very general categories just to kind of illustrate a couple of things. I will also say that there are just as much as so one of the other relief mechanisms aside by from doing you know payment in lieu or mobility is a demand study. If you can demonstrate that your demand is going to be less you don't have to build as much parking. However, if you demonstrate that your demand is going to be higher than the maximum we would listen to that. You know, if you're telling us you need more parking and you have legitimate data to back that up why would we say no, right? So we want to make sure that there is ability to meet demand especially if it's context appropriate. We don't really want someone building a giant surface lot in the downtown. No one would do that anyways because the land values are too high it just wouldn't make economic sense. But we are trying to avoid the over building of parking. However, we do want to have relief mechanisms in place so that when that unique case comes along we can accommodate it without sending them to the Zoning Board for a variance.

Alderman Kelly

Gotcha. Thank you.

Chairman Gouveia

Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Chair. So question I had hospitals not on here so that's obviously a separate case. What about like a manufacturing plant? I'm thinking like does that fit into office? Like the Canning One Company or you know, maybe a Spring Water Bottle Company?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Interesting case.

Alderman Thibeault

But just I mean you know, I'm thinking of Can One like because that's not really an office right? That would be more like manufacturing.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

No, no, no. That would be industrial manufacturing. Those are also use categories.

Alderman Thibeault

You have many more categories for this you're just showing us a few.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah, it wouldn't have you know, printed so well on this doing the entire table.

Alderman Thibeault

Gotcha. Gotcha. Thank you.

Alderwoman Kelly

Thank you.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Alright, so this is the big regulatory structural change. You're moving our parking regulations out of site plan and subdivision regulations into the zoning ordinance. What that means the Planning Board has waiver authority over site plan and subdivision regulations. It does not have waiver authority over the zoning ordinance. That's why we have a Zoning Board of Adjustment. You need relief from anything that's in the zoning ordinance you are getting a variance the highest bar of relief. So recognizing that we are being very intentional behind our minimums and maximums. So hopefully what that means is we are creating these guardrails if you will, around parking demand and associated regulations that are in tune with the market and real experience and data points in the city.

So hopefully there they won't need to seek relief anyways. But if they do, you have options through mobility management. You have options through shared parking agreements. We've covered a number of these relief valves that are already baked into the zoning ordinance. You can demonstrate demand through a parking study, things like that. But then variance relief is still an option. I am hopeful that would not really be utilized. I think there may be some reluctance to try mobility management, I think from maybe some you know, long time Nashua establishments that have not had the experience, but as we receive development pressure from elsewhere coming from areas that this is the norm, I think the practice may be more readily adopted than it may exhibit success and others may then pick it up as a result.

This isn't all set in stone. We do want to explore some district-based exemptions. So urban core, urban mill, urban station, the most dense, arguably designed to be the most walkable, the areas in which a parking lot simply does not make economic sense because it does not return enough revenue to justify the taxes on the property. We would want to see if it works to totally eliminate parking minimums in that area and let the market dictate how much parking needs to be built, right? So that gets at that the whole you know, remove parking minimums, let the free market have at it. There is a little when we have conversations with developers in the D1 and the D3 districts now they're coming say oh you know, you don't have any parking minimums. Hey, that's really great. So yeah, where are your tenants going to park? Like all you guys have garages, right? And this overnight street parking, right? You know we're very upfront now we're saying hey look we're tapped out. You're not getting any licenses in any city assets. You can't park on the street overnight. Then the

developers like oh, if you know coming to Nashua for the first time you know, that's kind of a shock. And so there's, there's going to be some going back to the drawing board in that case where they say alright well, we have to redesign the project or re-approach the development in a different way.

But I think there is still some good reason to have district based exemptions; we just need to test those. So ideally the variance path will never be utilized because our standards, minimums and maximums are well calibrated to market demand. We have meaningful relief mechanisms that are relative to potential impact that those mobility management practices would provide on the parking demand. Those obviously will change as we learn and we see the results from those annual reports. And then, you know the shared space concept and the private parking market and we'll see how that develops. And we do want to learn and constantly revise based on what we're seeing in real time.

So the other side of that is right now under a Planning Board site plan waiver criteria the Planning Board has this discretionary judgment that doesn't really have any guardrails metrics to it. They can kind of just say yeah, we'll waive all your parking or we'll waive some of it because we feel, you know it's really squishy right? By putting really strict percentages for relief, it results in clarity, consistency and predictability for all parties, the board, the developer, the public, the city who recognizes stress on parking assets. So hopefully this results in just a cleaner process and we build the right amount of parking for demand. We don't over build, we don't under build and people start exploring other ways to travel. So that's the big thing I wanted to cover with the structural changes.

Just to tie up a couple other loose ends from the presentation we had mentioned, bike parking. Short term bike parking you know it right, it's the bike racks. You know, you're there for a short period of time. Long term bicycle parking much more associated with an employer or a residence protected from the elements. You know, a place where you can secure your bike for a long time but it's also conveniently you know, ideally on street level you don't have to bring it down an elevator. You know, this is not a one to one. You know, you don't need to build 100 of these for 100-unit garage or sorry, for 100-unit development. But we wanted to provide some guidance. This is what short term bike parking looks like this is Main Street in Concord. Two points of contact, bikes not going to fall over, something secure to lock it to. They come in all shapes and sizes. These little lollipops are quirky.

We also do have some design standards for parking lots, but I think more importantly structured parking right? There are some very interesting ways to do parking garages in an urban context. And I'll reiterate a lot of the reason behind adopting form-based standards is to be a good neighbor, but also not and what I mean by that is don't drag down your adjacent property values. Build something that looks good and begets more investment and more development and that will just hopefully snowball. So instead of just reading through the structured parking standards. Figured I would show a picture and that is right here. This is Wincoop Street in Denver. That building in the middle is a parking garage, but you need standards around it so that people build in a way that makes it look like a storefront. And you still have you know, offices on floors six and seven. So it can be done, it is done all over the place. But to have standards that seamlessly blend that block face together, you're matching architecture, you know, it's good to have these standards so that people build in a way that continues to beget better development in more investment.

So through all my slides.

Chairman Gouveia

Questions from anybody? Discussion?

Alderwoman Kelly

That's it? Are you done?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

It's that easy, right.

Chairman Gouveia

We tried to design these so they didn't go too long in the presentation. It was more conversational.

Alderwoman Kelly

Just one question. Good job. Very, very interesting. I'm surprised more people aren't here. Parking is always such a hot

topic.

Chairman Gouveia

I know.

Alderman Kelly

It's okay. So back to payment in lieu for a second. Do we have any parameters on how if we go that route and we take them how that money can be used?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

I believe we do. I can't speak to exactly what they are. I think any time that we venture into expanding a program like that or potentially even just recalibrating a program like that, it's an opportunity to revisit what those procedures are and I think that would be warranted, especially if you know this Code results in more development which is the goal but then there's also more pressure for payment in lieu and in those, oh no, again is it 80%? Is it 120? Is it 100? Cost of construction? You know, results in more money coming in. There will be more people who are more interested in where that money is going, and what it is being used for, and that's the policy discussion that then follows or proceeds ideally.

Alderman Kelly

The reason I asked as a follow up was just - and obviously, we could invest it into more parking but I'm wondering if there's opportunities for us to invest in our transit, or commuter rail, or think something that would actually reduce the need for parking.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Absolutely.

Alderman Kelly

I just want to make sure we have that opportunity.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Absolutely. That's the policy discussion.

Alderman Kelly

Great. Love that.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. Chair. So thank you for coming out. I appreciate it. I know we've been trying to get these all in before we have to vote on it. So I'm glad that we were able to get this one in.

I, too, am shocked that, you know, we have these issues that aren't, in my opinion, as important to the city where something like this is extremely important. You know you had to drag Director Sullivan and just to have an audience. So I appreciate that.

I like everything that you went over. I think it's a good direction. You know in a perfect scenario, all this stuff sounds fantastic. So it'll be interesting to see, you know, if this goes forward, and how it's implemented, and, you know, hoping that what ends, you know, the end game of all this stuff actually does what it's supposed to do because I think that's good. It's just, you know, I can't wait for this garage to be on Main Street. That thing looks awesome. But, yeah, I just hope that it's able to end the right way and these things will happen in a good way.

You know, people don't like change. Change is tough in the city. You see it all the time. Any time we tweak something, right now is, you know, something I thought was good is a huge controversy over the garbage cans because they're AI generated, you know, that's a huge - it's a change that's supposed to be good because now, you know, it consumes more

trash and, you know, we don't have to have people go out there as much but people are freaking out about that. So it's like change for people is like tweak one little thing and it's hard for people. You got to get them used to things.

So the meetings you guys have, you know, you've had coding meetings for the last couple years to try to get input from people to and I know, you know, some people have come. I wish more people have been invested and some people just don't know this is going on. It's, you know, it's hard without a real newspaper and without, you know, word of mouth sometimes to get that word out that, hey, you should come to these things because they're going to impact your daily life. I tell people all the time you may be upset about federal, or State, or whatever kind of things, but it's the city level where things may impact your day to day. You're driving down the street and there's a pothole, there's not a stop sign, or something like that. That's your day to day and this stuff will impact that. I think it's important that people know it but, you know, I think it's got the right - it's going in the right place or it has the right of where we should go as a city. You know, just how it gets implemented and how it actually turns out will be interesting to see. So thank you for coming and presenting. I appreciate it.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

If I may just follow on that for a moment. You know, so this is obviously coming right on the heels of the Imagine Nashua master planning work, right. So, you know, I took that document and used it to craft the RFP for this Code update. So the community had already articulated a number of, you know, visions, and wishes, and aspirations, and right so that made it right into the guiding document that you know is bringing forward, you know, what we're talking about. You couple that with some relatively high profile and controversial Planning Board applications that really highlighted just the patchwork, the band aiding that we've done over the years, and just it is time to re-look at the zoning map, how we regulate land development comprehensively so that we can bring it into the modern era and lean on some of those things that have not been so great, and learn from them, and then make adjustments, you know, because there's a lot of pressure coming which is good if we get out ahead of it and we can leverage it to create a better place rather than reacting to it and being stuck with something that, you know, could have been a lot better if we were ready.

Chairman Gouveia

So I'll finish up here. So I think, as always, thank you for the presentation. Very informative and I still am on the fence about just the re-code in general. I mean - I and I've said it before at our previous meetings. I think this is it's a tough balance between what the free market wants to dictate, how we appease wanting developers to come here without like over regulating, and it's still that balancing act for me of how we can attract developers to come here and want to spend a lot of money building these buildings without out regulating them or putting too many constraints to where they don't see worth it. And I mean that's kind of why I lean more towards the free market, open market dictating especially when we're talking about parking.

I mean I talk to a lot of the developers being on this Committee. We'll talk a lot about different developments around the city and they talk about housing or apartment complexes and they know how much parking they need. I mean if you didn't put parking at any of these places, good luck finding tenants because the city is not there to help. We don't have the inventory to be able to do that. So they know what they need to do, how many spots they need for how many units, and I think that's why I think kind of a more at times, a more hands-off approach when it comes to parking might be for the better. I think there's circumstances and that's where this, I think, it really kind of gets messy is there's times where I think you need minimums and then there's times where I think we're best hands off letting the market just do what it wants to do.

On top of that, has our Parking Department commented at all on this type of stuff?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

So I sat down with Director Hannum earlier this week and went through the entirety of the parking article in the Code and then went over this presentation with her. Sitting down and going through the Code, she's like generally, this is all great. You know, there's a lot of pain right now because we don't have parking minimums in the downtown. All of that is input that's going into this document. The fact that it's also feeding on the parking study. You know, we're trying to bring those recommendations to fruition but your point is well taken about the free market, right. We do want to be open.

I think the free market conversation applies great when you are talking about someone wanting to do a project. It does not work when that person has completed their project, everything's great, and then the neighbor comes in with an asphalt plant, right. So there need to be guardrails and ideally, those guardrails are just there to make sure that everyone just does a good job, right. Like we want to bring the bar to here. In most cases, any developer is going to be operating here or better but it's the people that are going to go here. We need to bring them up just to be a good neighbor, play fair from

an impact to property values standpoint, and that's really what the form standards are for.

We presented to BIDA a week or two ago. I'll admit, it was mixed but that was good. You know, we talked a lot about - you know, I think we focus a lot here on like residential, multi-family. This is the big, hot thing housing crisis, all that stuff. What often falls by the wayside is, you know, what's happening on the outskirts of Amherst Street? What's going on in like that commercial/industrial? Question is, you know, do form standards really matter in that context? And they don't as much as they do downtown. So we had an opportunity to kind of test it with BIDA and I think that we're going to roll some of them back the form standards for certain buildings in that context because what's the impact, right? It's already going to be a trucking terminal. Does it need a granite facade? No, not to say that that's what the form standards were requiring but, you know, it doesn't matter as much. So that feedback was incredibly valuable, you know, because commercial/industrial bedrock to any sort of tax base, right. So we want to make sure that those still come in and are successful but at the same time where things are happening that are more exciting, we want to make sure that those livable areas are really up to snuff because that's where people are talking about their lived experience. They're coming around this horseshoe and they've got complaints or whatever, you know, and we want to make sure that they're living a good life in the neighborhoods.

Chairman Gouveia

And I think that's good because I do think there were areas we should probably roll back kind of that form fitting because it's just not necessary. I mean being the Alderman for half of Amherst Street, I mean, you go through and nobody's going to care what it looks like from storefront to storefront. It doesn't matter but then I look at us three here in the chamber. We are all from different sides of town basically, different Wards. I don't think any of us are hearing from our constituents that we want our neighborhoods to go through big change. If anything, we don't want our neighborhoods to change at all. We're perfectly fine the way they are.

I don't want somebody to build X, Y, and Z next to me because it just doesn't make sense. So I think it's having those safeguards but also like you said having areas where it just doesn't matter because I don't think we need form standard and I'll just say, because it's Amherst Street and that's very familiar with it in that Amherst Street area. Nobody's going to say, Wow, that building looks way out of place. It's just...

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

But the form standards do perpetuate character, right. So they're incredibly useful. You're in Ward 5, 9, parts of Ward 3 where there is real character. Those form standards quantify that qualitative look and feel so that when there is development, it's following that pattern so that whatever is being proposed does blend with the neighborhood. There are, obviously, times and places where the form standards are absolutely necessary and others where we can waive them entirely. Your building type is a box building. Okay because you're going to have loading docks, that's all you get. I don't care how wide it is, I don't care how long it is, I don't care how set back it is. What's most important in that context is site circulation, access, and how it functions. It's not about the form, it's about the function.

But elsewhere in like an R9 District, it's much more about the form because there's a clear pattern of development. A lot of that southwest quadrant was built out in a relatively narrow window and kind of all at the same time where there was a pattern established and anything that deviates from that sticks out like a sore thumb and we want to control for that.

Chairman Gouveia

One more for me. So talking about the kind of the form fitting in high residential neighborhoods, do you find with this it would stabilize housing or assessed values housing prices in a neighborhood because you would have to fit with a façade or do you think this would because to me, it sounds like you wouldn't have streets of mixed housing. A really big house over here with some smaller, less expensive houses down the street. It would kind of form fit that whole neighborhood into this is kind of what you can fit in here. This is the design we're looking at and kind of takes away a little bit of freedom from the homeowner which if you wanted to totally break down your house and rebuild and that's kind of where I struggle.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah, so I want to be clear that there are zones in the city right now and in the proposed Code where your window of diversity and form is much narrower than in other places. Southwest quadrant, incredibly narrow. French Hill, Crown Hill area, way more diverse because you have historical buildings. You have historical uses.

In the context of the re-Code, neighborhood/residential and urban/residential are two districts we're proposing. Those are

the most unique in that they have so many building types. So the building types again are the kind of the bedrock of the Code and it's not to say that they all have to be triple deckers. They all have to be houses, you know. The form standards recognize that huge amount of diversity and it celebrates it in that saying, okay, all of this is still allowed but to perpetuate the character and recognizing that level of diversity, we have all these form standards but it's a huge library, right.

So think of it in the amount of like deviation from the norm and when you create that norm out of an average of the character of that given area, there's some places where it's going to be incredibly narrow, other places where it's going to be very wide which in those wide areas, you should have a lot more choice when it comes to building types and how the building relates to the street.

Chairman Gouveia

That's the Planning Board who would come up with what fits inside that range?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Well it's going to go into the Code. So the Code...

Chairman Gouveia

So it's that spelled out in the Code?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah and we can go back to building types and...

Chairman Gouveia

I kind of remember that now from the beginning. Yeah, I think that's the first one we did.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Maybe that's a sit down, you know, one on one and we go through some of these scenarios because, you know, we do recognize the huge diversity of building types throughout the city and the concentration of that variety in certain areas. It's been an incredible exploration to put the zoning map together and the building types. Our co-consultants spent a lot of time in the city. They were out measuring windows, and being in different areas to really understand what makes a place look and feel the way it does, and that's where the standards come from to be able to replicate it but, again, within that huge window or very narrow window depending on what's there.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you him. Manager Durfee keeps talking and ends up with more questions, right?

So like Ward 8 for example. There's areas in Ward 8 that are very, very uniform. Everything looks the same and then there's areas on the hills where you have a modern house that looks like - it doesn't look like anything else in the neighborhood next to a colonial, next to a cape, next to a ranch. Like it's all over the place. It looks like, you know, builders had chunks of land and they just built what they want and so every house looks different which, I mean, I don't want to look in a Stepford world where every house is like exactly the same, right. You want some character and some differences.

You mentioned that you put the you came to BIDA. You went the whole Code or not just the parking.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

I had half an hour and I had to hit the high points, right.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay. Are you planning on going to any other group in the city, or any other committees, or anything to go over this, or is it just here? BIDA because obviously, you know, they're a small business.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah, I mean one, anyone that will have us, right. I'm happy to talk to anybody. If and when we come forward as a piece of legislation, I would welcome President Wilshire referring the Code to any committee to have conversations because every single committee is going to have a different focus. This does touch everyone to one degree or another but we've had the mailing list, notifications of anything that's coming up with re-Code. You know, I just pushed one out earlier this week.

Alderman Thibeault

Do you think you get people at the office hours next week?

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

We'll see. We'll see.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

It's going out to people that are on various committees. You know, citizens who are on various communities in the city. So they are plugged in not necessarily from official committee capacitors but they're there. Yeah, Sherry Dutzy from the Conservation Commission has come to a number of these meetings. You know, we see all types. It's been great, you know, and...

Alderman Thibeault

Like landlords, and business owners, and stuff like that? Okay.

Chairman Gouveia

I think is really important. Like landlord and business owners are having a heavy input on this, as much as developers and builders too. I think it's going to take everybody.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Back in May of '24, we had a week where principal came here, we set up in the Hunt, and we had I mean generally, it was open office hours for an entire week Monday to Saturday.

Alderman Thibeault

Yeah, it was great.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

But we then also had very targeted sessions in the mornings, basically every day, of like, you know, Main Street, commercial/industrial, you know, different topics, and then in the evenings, we had a housing conversation. So, you know, we're trying to touch all aspects. Some of those were incredibly well attended. I mean we filled the library auditorium for the housing discussion. It was incredible. You know, the kickoff meeting up in the third floor of the auditorium that was packed. It went a little sideways but that's just the nature of the discussion. This is so dense.

Alderman Thibeault

I do remember that.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Yeah, I'd be happy to talk to anyone and everyone about it.

Alderman Thibeault

Great. Okay. Cool. Thank you.

Chairman Gouveia

Anyone else? Thank you.

Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

Thank you. My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

COMMUNICATIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES – None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE - None

GENERAL DISCUSSION - None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

How many minutes do I have?

Chairman Gouveia

Three.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

I just wanted to thank the Committee for their efforts this evening and just make a plug for something that Manager Durfee referred to and thank you for the extra seconds that you just gave me. Thanks for not starting the timer.

Sam and I will be reaching out for one on one sessions with each member of the Board. We obviously have ambition to close this Code update by the end of the year. We also want to be realistic, responsive, and I think take the time needed to have the right Code put in front of the Board of Aldermen. So we're going to be reaching out for one on one sessions at least as an initial step to make sure that you're comfortable with elements of the Code and for those that you may not be comfortable with to have further discussion with you.

As Sam mentioned, I think you put it perfectly. The discussion with BIDA last week was a bit surprising but also very refreshing, I think, in the sense that we had good dialog about some concerns and we would prefer to have that discussion now than three months after this Code's adoption and realizing that we've suddenly gone the wrong direction. So we're going to try to get to folks early and often over the coming months in hopes, again, of getting the Code adopted by the end of the year. So look out for an email from me by end of week this week or certainly early next week asking for some time with you. We're flexible as far as whether it's next week, the week after, or over the coming month. We know summer vacations are winding down but, again, we look forward to having an opportunity to discuss this with you.

It's a significant pivot in the way that we look at our land use regulations and we want to take that seriously but we really do believe and to your point, Mr. Chair, we really do believe this is the right balance of both being more permissive with our regulations but also being more restrictive in the places that matter and in the ways that matter. I think Manager Durfee has done an excellent job balancing those two things but we have several months to convince you of that and we look forward to doing so. So again, thank you for this evening's conversation and we'll be in touch over the coming week. Thanks.

Chairman Gouveia

Thank you. Anyone else? Seeing none.

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN - None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERWOMAN KELLY TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared closed at 8:11 p.m.

Alderman Derek Thibeault
Committee Clerk