

**ORDINANCE NO. 2025-01-001**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM, WA RELATING TO LAND USE AND ZONING, ADOPTING INTERIM ZONING REGULATIONS TO ELIMINATE MINIMUM AUTOMOBILE PARKING REQUIREMENTS AND ESTABLISHING CONSISTENT BICYCLE PARKING STANDARDS CITYWIDE.**

**WHEREAS**, this Ordinance is in direct response to Mayor Kim Lund's Executive Order #2024-02 *Expanding Housing Options in Bellingham* issued on 11/21/2024; and

**WHEREAS**, minimum automobile parking requirements drive up the cost of development, with an inordinate impact on the cost and production of housing, and lead to unsustainable land use patterns; and

**WHEREAS**, eliminating minimum automobile parking requirements promotes efficient use of land, enhances urban form, encourages use of alternative modes of transportation, provides for better pedestrian movement, and protects air and water quality; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 26, 2024, Washington State adopted SB 6015 which established, with limited exceptions, that cities may not require parking spaces to exceed eight feet by twenty feet (8' x 20'), except for required parking for people with disabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed amendments include establishing citywide bike parking standards for new development to ensure a range of alternative transportation options are provided and compensate in lieu of eliminating minimum automobile parking requirements; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed amendments will make the provision of automobile parking optional for all uses citywide while retaining all other parking design and performance standards for when parking is provided; and

**WHEREAS**, an interim ordinance would allow the City to determine if not requiring automobile parking minimums appropriately balances transportation modes and the environmental impacts of impervious surfaces; and

**WHEREAS**, the interim controls in this Ordinance, plus any extensions, would be entirely or partially extinguished when the review and revision of applicable parking regulations is completed; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 36.70A.390 provides that, "A county or city governing body that adopts a moratorium, interim zoning map, interim zoning ordinance, or interim official control without holding a public hearing on the proposed moratorium, interim zoning map, interim zoning ordinance, or interim official control, shall hold a public hearing on the adopted moratorium, interim zoning map, interim zoning ordinance, or interim official control within at least sixty days of its adoption, whether or not the governing body received a recommendation on the matter from the planning commission or department. If the governing body does not adopt findings of fact justifying its action before this hearing, then the governing body shall do so immediately after this public hearing. A moratorium, interim zoning map, interim zoning ordinance, or interim official control adopted under this section may be effective for not longer than six months but

may be effective for up to one year if a work plan is developed for related studies providing for such a longer period. A moratorium, interim zoning map, interim zoning ordinance, or interim official control may be renewed for one or more six-month periods if a subsequent public hearing is held, and findings of fact are made prior to each renewal”; and

**WHEREAS**, interim zoning controls enacted under RCW 36.70A.390 and/or RCW 35.63.200 are methods by which a local government may establish temporary zoning controls while it develops more permanent zoning controls; and

**WHEREAS**, RCW 36.70A.390 and RCW 35.63.200 both authorize the enactment of an interim zoning map, interim zoning ordinance, or interim official control without holding a public hearing as long as a public hearing is held within at least sixty days of its enactment; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to RCW 43.21C.450, the adoption of this interim zoning ordinance is exempt from the requirements of a threshold determination under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and future permanent zoning regulations will be reviewed in accordance with SEPA Rules; and

**WHEREAS**, on May 20, 2024, the City Council directed staff to explore policies and regulations eliminating parking minimums, and the City Council has determined it needs additional time to conduct appropriate research to analyze the effects of eliminating minimum parking requirements; and

**WHEREAS**, interim zoning will provide the City with additional time to review and amend zoning and land use regulations related to eliminating minimum parking requirements; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council concludes that the City does have that authority to establish an interim zoning ordinance and that the City must adopt interim zoning concerning eliminating minimum vehicle parking requirements and establishing consistent bicycle parking: (a) to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Bellingham by avoiding and ameliorating negative impacts and unintended consequences of excess parking; and (b) to avoid applicants possibly providing parking inconsistent with any revisions the City may make for its rules and regulations as a result of the City’s study of this matter; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council adopts the foregoing as its findings of facts justifying the adoption of this Ordinance;

**NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM DOES ORDAIN:**

**Section 1.** Interim zoning for elimination of minimum automobile parking requirements.

A. Purpose. The development of off-street automobile parking spaces can add cost to development projects, separate land uses, increase impervious surfaces, constrain sites, and unnecessarily constrain the production of housing. In order to allow for less-costly development and a wider array of housing options, the standards of this section allow property owners to choose how much off-street parking to provide for their needs. The standards of this section allow for greater variety of development, increased capacity for new development, and new housing in particular.

- B. Applicability. This section applies to all land uses in all areas of the City.
- C. Adjustment to Minimum Required Parking Spaces. Notwithstanding other provisions of Title 20 BMC, all uses located within the Bellingham city limits shall not be required to provide off-street automobile parking.
- D. When automobile parking is created, the *General Provisions, Design Provisions* and *Improvement Standards* in BMC 20.12.010 shall apply, provided that tandem stalls shall not be required to be enclosed and no parking stall shall be required to exceed eight feet by twenty feet (8' x 20'), except for required parking for people with disabilities.
- E. ADA Parking - Accessible parking shall be installed for all new construction except for the following:
  - 1. Those projects built under the International Residential Code; or
  - 2. Development with 6 or fewer units in a single building; or
  - 3. Use changes or the creation of additional residential units on or for buildings constructed before January 31, 2025.

Whenever parking is provided on-site, accessible parking shall be provided according to *Table 1106.2 – Accessible Parking Spaces* - of the International Building Code and unless as exempted above.

**TABLE 1106.2  
ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES**

| TOTAL PARKING SPACES PROVIDED IN<br>PARKING FACILITIES | REQUIRED MINIMUM NUMBER OF<br>ACCESSIBLE SPACES            |
|--|--|
| 1 to 25  | 1  |
| 26 to 50   | 2  |
| 51 to 75   | 3  |
| 76 to 100  | 4  |
| 101 to 150   | 5  |
| 151 to 200   | 6  |
| 201 to 300   | 7  |
| 301 to 400   | 8  |
| 401 to 500   | 9  |
| 501 to 1,000   | 2% of total  |
| 1,001 and over   | 20, plus one for each 100, or fraction thereof, over 1,000 |

F. Bike parking required. Bike parking shall be provided in urban villages consistent with Chapters 20.35 and 20.37 BMC. Outside of urban villages, bike parking shall be provided as follows:

1. *Number of Spaces Required.* Bicycle parking is required for certain use categories to encourage the use of bicycles by providing safe and convenient places to park bicycles. These regulations ensure adequate short- and long-term bicycle parking based on the demand generated by the different use categories and on the level of security necessary to encourage the use of bicycles for short and long stays.

a. The required minimum number of bicycle parking spaces for each use category is shown in the Minimum Required Bicycle Parking Table. No bicycle parking is required for uses not listed.

b. The required minimum number of bicycle parking spaces is based on the primary uses on a site. When there are two or more separate primary uses that operate at the same time on a site, the required bicycle parking for the site is the sum of the required parking for the individual primary uses.

2. *Exemptions.*

a. No short or long-term bicycle parking is required for single family housing, infill housing in Chapter 20.28 BMC, or on a site where there is less than 2,500 square feet of gross building area.

b. No bicycle parking is required for unattended surface parking lots.

3. *Bicycle Parking Standards.*

a. *Short-Term Bicycle Parking.*

i. *Purpose.* Short-term bicycle parking encourages shoppers, customers, messengers, and other visitors to use bicycles by providing a convenient and readily accessible place to park bicycles. Short-term bicycle parking should serve the main entrance of a building and should be visible to pedestrians and bicyclists.

ii. *Standards.*

(A) Required short-term bicycle parking shall be located:

(1) Outside a building;

(2) On the site;

(3) At the same grade as the sidewalk or at a location that can be reached by an accessible route; and

(4) Within 50 feet of the main entrance to the building as measured along the most direct pedestrian access route. For sites that have more than one primary building, the bicycle parking shall be within 50 feet of a main entrance as measured along the most direct pedestrian access route, and shall be distributed to serve all primary buildings.

(B) Short-term bike parking may be located within the public right-of-way provided the location and design are subject to public works department approval.

**Minimum Required Bicycle Parking Table**

| Specific Use  | Long-Term Spaces                                | Short-Term Spaces                               |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Multifamily housing  | 2, or 0.5 per bedroom and studio unit.          | 2, or 0.05 per bedroom and studio unit.         |
| 2. Commercial: Retail sales and service, including eating and drinking establishments                               | 2, or 1 per 12,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area. | 2, or 1 per 5,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area.  |
| 3. Commercial: Office   | 2, or 1 per 10,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area. | 2, or 1 per 20,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area. |
| 4. Commercial: Off-street parking lots and garages available to the general public without charge or on a fee basis | 2, or 1 per 20 automobile spaces.               | 6, or 1 for each 20 automobile spaces.          |

Note: Wherever this table indicates two numerical standards, such as “2, or 1 per 5,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area,” the larger number applies. Fractions of 0.5 or greater are rounded up to the next whole number.

b. *Long-Term Bicycle Parking.*

- i. *Purpose.* Long-term bicycle parking provides employees, residents, commuters and others who generally stay at a site for several hours a secure and weather-protected place to park bicycles. Although long-term parking does not have to be provided on site, the intent of these standards is to allow bicycle parking to be within a reasonable distance in order to encourage bicycle use.
- ii. *Standards.* Required long-term bicycle parking shall be:
  - (A) Provided in racks or lockers that meet the standards of subsection (F)(3)(c) of this section;
  - (B) Located on the site or in an area where the closest point is within 300 feet of the site;
  - (C) *Covered.* At least 50 percent of required long-term bicycle parking shall be covered and meet the standards of subsection (F)(3)(c)(v) (Covered Bicycle Parking) of this section; and

(D) *Secured.* To provide security, long-term bicycle parking shall be in at least one of the following locations:

- (1) In a locked room;
- (2) In an area that is enclosed by a fence with a locked gate. The fence shall either be eight feet high or be floor-to-ceiling;
- (3) Within view of an attendant or security guard;
- (4) In an area that is monitored by a security camera; or
- (5) In an area that is visible from employee work areas.

c. *Standards for All Bicycle Parking.*

- i. *Purpose.* These standards ensure that required bicycle parking is designed so that bicycles may be securely locked without undue inconvenience and will be reasonably safeguarded from intentional or accidental damage.
- ii. *Bicycle Lockers.* Where required bicycle parking is provided in lockers, the lockers shall be securely anchored.
- iii. *Bicycle Racks.* Required bicycle parking may be provided in floor, wall, or ceiling racks. Where required bicycle parking is provided in racks, the racks shall meet the following standards:
  - (A) The bicycle frame and one wheel can be locked to the rack with a high security, U-shaped shackle lock if both wheels are left on the bicycle;
  - (B) A bicycle six feet long can be securely held with its frame supported so that the bicycle cannot be pushed or fall in a manner that will damage the wheels or components; and
  - (C) The rack shall be securely anchored.
- iv. *Parking and Maneuvering Areas.*
  - (A) Each required bicycle parking space shall be accessible without moving another bicycle;
  - (B) There shall be an aisle at least five feet wide behind all required bicycle parking to allow room for bicycle maneuvering. Where the bicycle parking is adjacent to a sidewalk, the maneuvering area may extend into the right-of-way; and
  - (C) The area devoted to bicycle parking shall be hard surfaced.
- v. *Covered Bicycle Parking.* Covered bicycle parking, as required by this section, can be provided inside buildings, under roof overhangs or awnings, in bicycle lockers, or within or under other structures. Where required covered bicycle parking is not within a building or locker, the cover shall be:
  - (A) Permanent;
  - (B) Designed to protect the bicycle from rainfall; and

(C) At least seven feet above the floor or ground.

- vi. *Signs.* If required bicycle parking is not visible from the street or main building entrance, a sign shall be posted at the main building entrance indicating the location of the parking.

**Section 2.** Duration of Interim Zoning. This interim zoning shall be in effect for twelve (12) months, beginning on January 28, 2025, and ending on January 28, 2026, unless an Ordinance is adopted amending the Bellingham Municipal Code and rescinding the interim zoning before January 28, 2026.

**Section 3.** Public Hearing Required. As required by RCW 36.70A.390, if a hearing is not held prior to adoption of this interim zoning ordinance, the City Council will hold a public hearing within sixty (60) days of passage of this Ordinance.

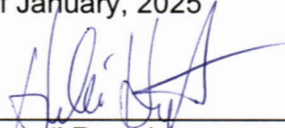
**Section 4.** Work Plan. During the interim zoning period, City staff will study the issues concerning the elimination of minimum automobile parking requirements. Staff will prepare appropriate revisions to the City's codes and regulations and conduct the public review process as required for amendments to the Bellingham Municipal Code.

**Section 5.** Effective Date. This Ordinance shall take effect 15 days after the date of final passage.

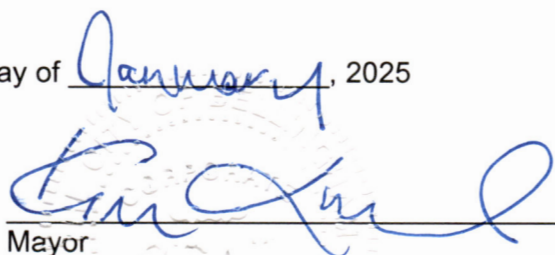
**Section 6.** Conflict with other BMC Provisions. If the provisions of this ordinance are found to be inconsistent with other provisions of the Bellingham Municipal Code, this Ordinance shall control.

**Section 7.** Severability. If any section, sentence, clause or phrase of this Ordinance should be held to be unconstitutional or unlawful by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect the validity or constitutionality of any other section, sentence, clause or phrase of this Ordinance.

**PASSED** by the Council this 13th day of January, 2025

  
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Council President

**APPROVED** by me this 22 day of January, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

**ATTEST:**

  
Finance Director

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

  
Office of the City Attorney

**Published:**

January 19, 2025

