

Parking Lot Reform: Parking Minimums and Parking Width Minimums

- WHAT?:** We aim to empower communities to make cost-effective decisions that support smart growth, reduce unnecessary regulations, protect natural areas, and improve quality of life.
- WHY?:** Many local parking minimums are outdated and costly, limiting development opportunities and negatively impacting community wellbeing and the health of our land, air, and water.
- HOW?:** Support our Parking Lot Reform proposal to eliminate burdensome parking minimum ordinances and parking space width requirements for motorized vehicles.

WHAT ARE PARKING AND PARKING WIDTH MINIMUMS?

Parking Minimums: ordinances that specify the minimum number of off-street parking spaces required for new developments based on their category and size (e.g., 1 space per 500ft of retail space).

Parking Width Minimums: ordinances that mandate minimum parking space dimensions based on vehicle size and configuration (e.g., standard, compact, angled), typically 8-10ft wide and 18-20ft long.

WHY ARE PARKING MINIMUMS HARMFUL?

Parking minimum ordinances are expensive for everyone!

- Minimums impose costs and space allocation on developers and business owners, limiting opportunities and increasing expenses.
- Added development and maintenance costs are often passed on to consumers through higher prices for goods, services, or rent.
- The space required for parking fragments walkable, tight-knit communities, contributing to urban sprawl and car dependence.
- Minimums harm natural areas by increasing impervious surfaces, which in turn raise flood risk, generate heat, worsen air quality, destroy habitat, and contribute to runoff.

WHY IS THIS PROPOSAL IMPORTANT?

Parking has shaped our communities and way of life by prioritizing cars over people. As North Carolina grows, parking reform is key to responsibly boosting business, affordable goods and housing, public transit and walkability, and health of natural areas for the future.

WHAT DOES THIS PROPOSAL DO?

Our proposal breaks the cycle of blindly repeating outdated, costly parking requirements without evaluating their impact. By nullifying and outlawing parking and parking width minimums for motorized vehicles, this proposal reinstates market-based decisions, fostering new business opportunities, reducing urban sprawl, cutting administrative burdens, and minimizing impervious surface area to reduce flooding and protect natural areas in our communities.

FAST FACT!

Building a surface parking space costs \$5,000 to \$10,000, while constructing a space in a parking garage can range from \$25,000 to \$50,000 (Source: Strong Towns). These costs burden developers, business owners, and consumers alike.



Food and Folly before and after Fayetteville, AR banned parking minimums. With parking minimums, the project would have fallen 30 spaces short of the parking requirement.

DID YOU KNOW?

On August 18, 2021, Gastonia, NC removed minimum parking requirements for motorized vehicles, joining over 50 other US cities and towns where such changes have spurred new businesses and revitalized vacant buildings.

How can you help?

Contact Ryan Carter about working on this legislation (ryan.c@catawbariverkeeper.org).

Parking Lot Reform: High PAH Pavement Products

- WHAT?:** We aim to empower communities to protect community members and natural areas by eliminating toxic chemicals from their local infrastructure in favor of viable alternatives.
- WHY?:** Many pavement sealing products contain high concentrations of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), toxic contaminants harmful to both human and environmental health.
- HOW?:** Support our Parking Lot Reform proposal to prohibit the future purchase and importation for use of high PAH pavement products in NC.

WHAT ARE PAHS?

PAHs are a group of hundreds of toxic contaminants formed during the incomplete burning of coal, oil, gas, and other carbon-containing materials. Everyday sources, such as tires, motor oil, and playground turf, contain PAHs, but pavement sealant application is the primary source of PAHs in urban environments. As these materials break down, they release PAH-laden particles into the air and soil where they can be ingested, tracked indoors and incorporated into house dust, or carried into streams by runoff.



Applying sealant to a parking lot.

WHY ARE PAHS HARMFUL?

PAHs negatively impact human health and the environment.

- **Human health:** Short-term exposure can cause eye and skin irritation, nausea, vomiting, and confusion. Long-term exposure may lead to lung, skin, and bladder cancer, fertility and reproduction issues, kidney and liver damage, and asthma.
- **Environment:** PAHs are toxic to birds, fish, plants, insects, and other aquatic species. In waterways, they bind to sediment particles, impairing reproduction, causing developmental deformities, weakening immune systems, and killing aquatic life.

ARE THERE VIABLE ALTERNATIVES?

Asphalt-based sealcoats are safer and similarly priced to high PAH products like coal tar sealants. They contain 1000x fewer PAHs, have a similar application process, and cost about the same. These products have been used in the western US for decades.



Rain, wind, tires, and even our feet transport worn particles from high PAH pavement products to other settings including inside our homes.

WHAT DOES THIS PROPOSAL DO?

Our proposal positions NC alongside major retailers like Lowe's, Home Depot, and Ace Hardware as well as over 50 state and local governments that have banned coal tar sealants and other high PAH products. By prohibiting the future purchase and importation for use of high PAH pavement products, this proposal prioritizes the wellbeing of communities and natural areas over the unnecessary use of toxic products when safer alternatives are widely available.

DID YOU KNOW?

Parking lots treated with coal tar sealcoat, a high PAH pavement product, produce runoff with PAH concentrations 65 times higher than unsealed lots (Source: Mahler, 2005).

How can you help?

Contact Ryan Carter about working on this legislation (ryan.c@catawbariverkeeper.org).

Parking Lot Reform: Floodwater Reduction and Redevelopment

- WHAT?:** We aim to empower local communities to reduce the volume and velocity of floodwater before it reaches local waterways where it damages property and infrastructure.
- WHY?:** Many buildings in NC predate our awareness of the relationship between runoff and flooding. Addressing runoff during redevelopment reduces flooding in downstream areas.
- HOW?:** Support our Parking Lot Reform proposal to empower local governments with active NPDES MS4 discharge permits with the tools to address runoff during the redevelopment process.

WHAT IS RUNOFF?

Runoff is rain that flows over impervious surfaces, mainly parking lots, instead of being absorbed by the ground. Runoff collects trash and other harmful pollutants, which end up in nearby waterways. The high volume and velocity of water damages downstream communities. In NC, runoff is the leading source of water pollution.

WHY IS RUNOFF HARMFUL?

Following a rain event, runoff rushes into nearby streams at unnaturally high volumes and speeds, carrying pollutants with it.

- **Flooding:** Excess water entering streams causes rapid flooding of nearby waterways and downstream properties and businesses.
- **Erosion:** Fast-flowing water erodes stream banks, damaging property, disrupting aquatic habitats, and increasing flood risk.
- **Pollution:** Pollutants deposited into streams degrade water quality, harm aquatic species, and raise water treatment costs.

WHY IS THIS PROPOSAL IMPORTANT?

Redeveloping unused or underused buildings, many of which predate current best management practices for runoff management, is crucial to North Carolina's growth. Under current law, communities can not require or incentive runoff controls on an redevelopment site. This restriction hampers local efforts to reduce flooding and destruction in downstream areas. In order to continue to grow, we must reduce our flood risk by addressing runoff during the redevelopment process.

WHAT DOES THIS PROPOSAL DO?

Our proposal allows local communities with active NPDES MS4 discharge permits the option to implement runoff capture ordinances that require up to 50% and/ or incentivize up to 100% capture of the final runoff calculation of the site during the redevelopment process in order to balance strategic business growth with the protection of our waters and communities.



DID YOU KNOW?

1 inch of rainfall on 1 acre of impervious surface generates 27,000 gallons of runoff! That same amount of rainfall on an acre of forested land produces 0 gallons of runoff. This stark difference has dramatic impacts on our streams, rivers, lakes, and communities.

How can you help?

Contact Ryan Carter about working on this legislation (ryan.c@catawbariverkeeper.org).