

PARKING LOTS

PARKING LOTS - ATTRACTIVE?

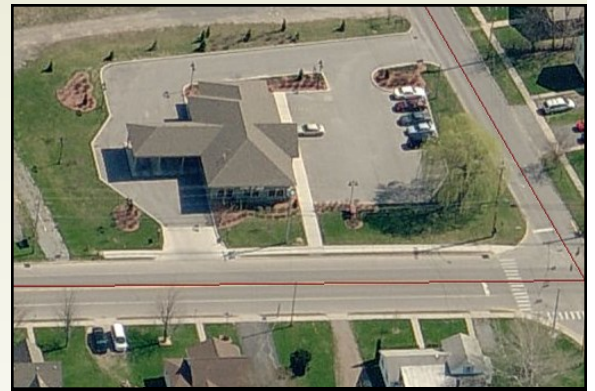
While certain individual cars or trucks by themselves can be considered distinctive or even attractive, parking lots full of cars are often considered neutral or unattractive. Less attractive still, are empty parking lots. Multiple large lots with only a few cars are sometimes referred to as “seas of asphalt”, often considered to have a negative visual impact within developed areas. When viewed from public roads and sidewalks, some parking areas are perceived as colossal investments constructed to satisfy parking demand for the one or two peak shopping days per year. For much of the year, they become heat islands, storm-water runoff generators, and barriers to convenient pedestrian access to buildings from public sidewalks.



Parking lot example: “sea of asphalt” effect

PARKING LOTS AS COMPLIMENTARY USES

While parking lots are necessary, they should not be the focal point of a developed site. In most cases, buildings and what’s offered within them are considered the destinations that enhance communities. Therefore, parking areas should be complimentary and accessory to the buildings they serve. Their visual dominance should be mitigated by more prominent and visible building designs, placing parking lots to the side and rear where possible, and using decorative fencing and landscaping to screen or buffer parked cars and expanses of asphalt. Shade trees should also be used to offset the reflective heat generated by the pavement. When successful, pedestrian connections are made easier and offer another option for convenient access.



WELL DESIGNED PARKING

Well designed and landscaped parking sites will yield more long-term value than the original investment, increasing financial returns for developers 5 - 15% accord-

MAKE PARKING AREAS MORE PARK LIKE

- **Instead of empty lots, build parking groves and courts,** with a number of shade trees surrounded by low hedges, stone walls or decorative fencing.
- **Divide the rows with planting strips and tree islands,** averaging a tree every 6 to 10 spaces.
- **Set landscaping guidelines for the interior of lots,** as well as the edge of lots. For example, some Towns require at least 15% of the inside area for larger lots be landscaped with trees and other plants.
- **Insist on a continuous landscaping treatment along any frontage** with street trees and low plantings and denser evergreens or fencing along residential neighbors.
- **Break up the blacktop and reduce water runoff** by using bricks, pavers, or textured surfaces for crosswalks and stalls, with grass block overflow areas.

Parking lot example: a village bank with the building close to the primary street is designed to blend in with the surrounding residential area. The parking lot and spaces are located to the side of the building, along a side street and a direct pedestrian connection is provided to the entrance from the village sidewalk system. The project also includes retained trees as well as additional landscaping along the other yards throughout the site.

A street level photo can be found on the next page.

PARKING SPACES - LESS IS MORE

Surface parking can cover more than half of many shopping center and office sites (as illustrated in the example to the right). Outdated zoning laws often require parking with twice the number of spaces needed on a typical day. This reduces the building and landscaping potential on many parcels, increases development costs and can limit redevelopment potential. More specific parking standards, tailored to more uses, results in less spaces required which then limits the need for expansive parking areas. Reducing unneeded parking spaces and asphalt reduces storm-water runoff, brings buildings closer together, and leads to lower development costs. Each surface space costs approximately \$50 per month or more on average to build and maintain, so smaller parking lots could mean more available money for greater investment in the building materials or site improvements.

TIPS TO ENHANCE PARKING LOT LAYOUTS/DESIGNS

- Decrease the required number of parking spaces for most uses, to reflect a more realistic “typical day need.” For example, a business may have two or more shifts, or may not have many customers at one time. Service uses such as beauty shops could base their parking on the number of stations, then allow enough parking for two customers to be there at a time per station, plus enough spaces for employees.
- When less parking is required, more room is left for buildings, landscaping, and pedestrian circulation areas.
- Many uses close to each other can share parking if the hours of operation are complementary.
- Parking spaces, aisle widths, and maneuver areas should be adequately sized.
- ADA Standards should be followed to ensure an adequate number of handicapped spaces are provided.
- Parking lot access roads, intersections, and other areas should be designed to allow adequate ingress, egress, and interior circulation for vehicles and delivery trucks.

Underutilized parking lot example:



Traffic Separation example:

The photo below illustrates traffic separation between the parking spaces and main travel lanes. It also includes a pedestrian access and a crosswalk through the lot.



Pedestrian Access and Landscaping Example:

This street level view shown below illustrates the direct pedestrian connection from the sidewalk and landscaping that buffers the parking area and front yard.

