

Racial Equity Pocket Questions - Residential Parking Requirements

What are the racial impacts?

Spatial analysis finds that residential properties close to transit—defined in the comprehensive plan as “within a half mile of a bus stop that is served at least seven days per week at an average of 30-minute intervals on weekdays and 60-minute intervals on weekends”—indicates most of the parcels in Carrboro’s two qualified census tracts (QCTs) as well as historically Black neighborhoods near Rogers Road and Alabama Avenue would be impacted by changes identified in this project. Additionally, multifamily apartments along NC 54 are included as well. Impacts of the reduction could benefit and harm existing BIPOC and low-income residents. The reduction could reduce impervious surface in neighborhoods (improving stormwater) and allow for more buildable area on smaller lots (increasing density overall and individual property values).

Who is or will experience burden?

Residents that could experience long-term burden include those living in the QCTs, those in historically Black neighborhoods, and those in multifamily homes. Additionally, families and households with multiple cars, frequent visitors, or that are multigenerational may be competing for limited street parking. Residents with mobility issues who cannot walk up to the half mile to the bus stop will experience additional burden if they move into a home without on-site parking. Lots may be developed more intensely for other uses, increasing the number of families in proximity, and resulting in increased competition for on-street parking and lower response times for emergency responders. If reductions occur where infrastructure for safely connecting to pedestrian routes is incomplete, residents, especially those without owners’ abilities to modify conditions on property or decide about assessments for public improvements, may be especially burdened.

Currently the Chapel Hill Transit schedule does not meet the comprehensive plan’s definition of “close to transit.” If bus routes change, or in future cases where service cannot be provided in full, additional residents and households could face burden as well.

Who is or will experience benefit?

Residents that could experience benefits include those living in the QCTs, those in historically Black neighborhoods, and those in multifamily homes. Families/households/residents that could now reduce the number of cars in the household would benefit, as well as those with no car. Residents/households that have/move into existing on-site parking or could afford to redevelop on-site parking areas into buildable/rentable space could benefit. Families/households/residents who have access to alternate transportation choices could benefit, particularly if safety and bike/ped infrastructure is improved long-term on narrower streets. Increased green spaces for natural areas, gardens, and stormwater improvements could positively impact community members, improve ecosystem resilience, carbon sequestration and counteract urban heat island effects.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Overall, economic disparities from discriminatory lending policies and restrictive covenants have contributed to wealth and land use disparities between white and BIPOC residents; transportation improvement projects are known to have negatively affected communities of color, and predominantly white communities have been afforded infrastructure improvements more readily than communities of color. Carrboro is not known to have as strong of a precedent for decisions like this. Going forward, research and data collection focusing on the experiences and expectations of BIPOC community members, current and new.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

Unintended consequences include the congestion of small streets that are unequipped for street parking (as residents who live or move into the area still have cars). Congested streets could make it difficult for emergency services to access residences, could make the streets more dangerous for walkers and cyclists, and could exacerbate accessibility barriers of community members facing mobility issues and could place multifamily residents, BIPOC residents, and/or low-income residents in a position of feeling incentivized and/or directed to take alternate modes of transit (bike/bus/walk) without sufficient infrastructure.