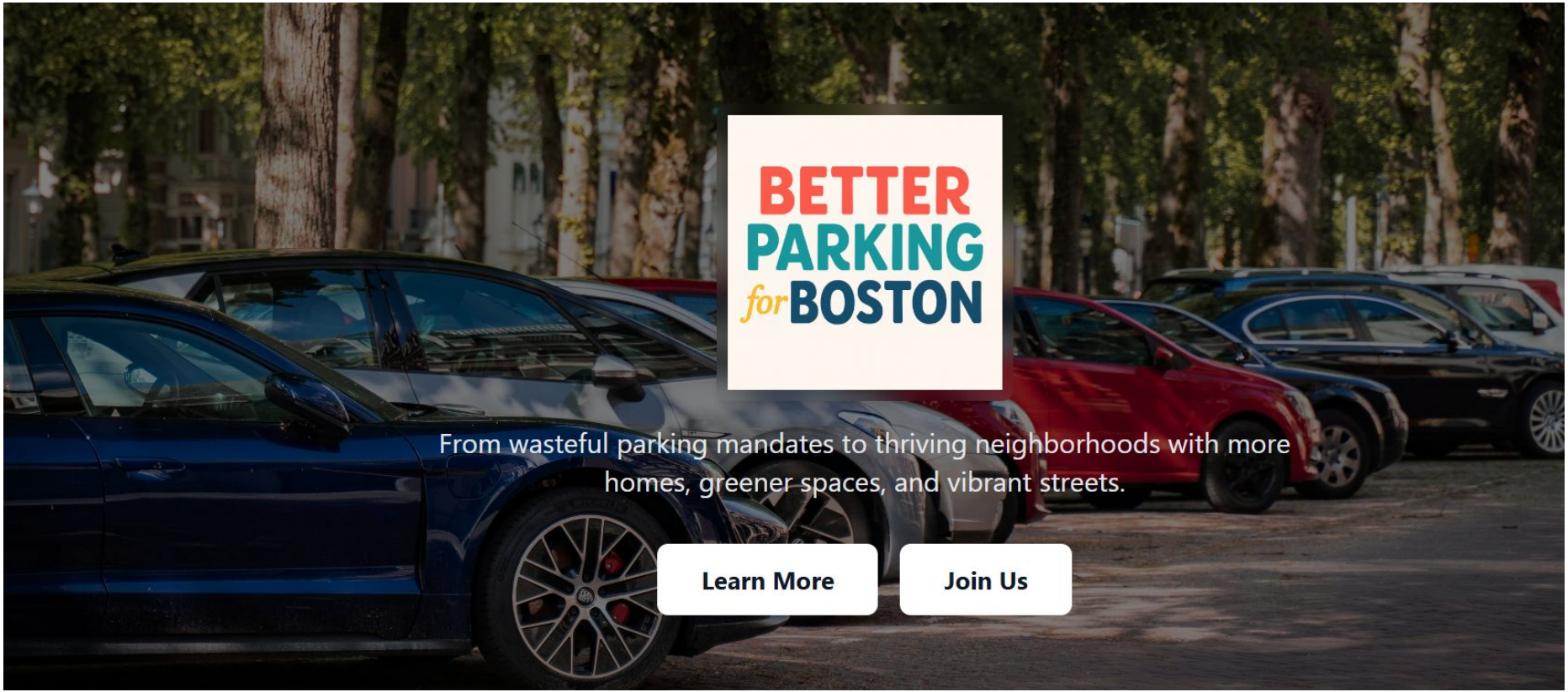
How to Create an Ordinance

Boston & Pittsfield
AHMA Symposium 2026


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Residential Parking Minimums Ordinance

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS SHARON DURKAN AND HENRY SANTANA



CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL

A TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE BOSTON ZONING CODE WITH RESPECT TO PARKING MINIMUMS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Residential Parking Minimums Ordinance

12. In *Section 51-56. Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements*

a. In *Subsection 51-56.2,* strike the text "or the number of Dwelling Units," and "or the additional number of Dwelling Units"

b. In *Subsection 51-56.4(a)*, replace the text "off-street parking spaces required by this Article for the residential uses" with "off-street parking spaces for the residential uses"

c. In *Subsection 51-56.4(b)*, replace the text "the off-street parking facilities required by this Section 51-56" with "off-street parking facilities"

d. In *Subsection 51-56.4(b)*, strike the text "in either of the following cases: (1) where the main use on a Lot is for Residential Uses, and the other Lot is within four hundred (400) feet of that Lot; and (2)"

e. In *Subsection 51-56.5*, strike the text "provided to comply with this Article"

f. In *Subsection 51-56.5(a)*, add the text "if any," after the text "specified by this Article,"

b. Add text, "None" in the text in the Row titled: *Dormitory/Fraternity Uses* and each Row after the Row titled: *Residential Uses* in Column: *Space(s) per Dwelling Unit*[3] as illustrated below

	Space(s) per Dwelling Unit[3]
Dormitory/Fraternity Uses	None
Hotel Uses	0.7
Residential Uses	
Elderly Housing	None
Group Care Limited	None
Homeless Shelter	None
Lodging House	None
Transitional Housing	None
Affordable Housing	None
Other Residential Uses	
1-9 units	None
10+	None

Findings of Professor Sara C. Bronin

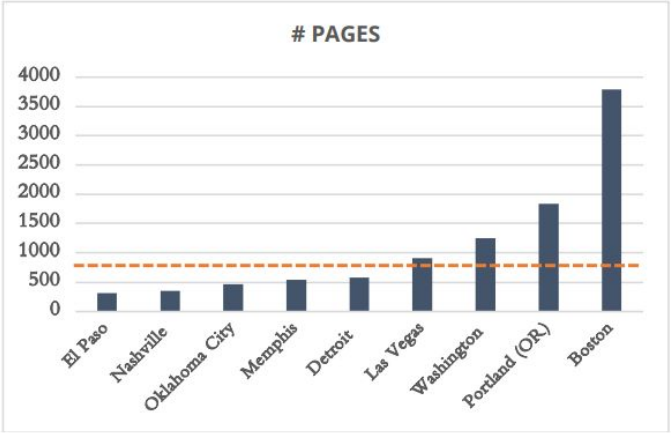
REFORMING THE BOSTON ZONING CODE

by Sara C. Bronin

2. COMPARING ZONING CODE LENGTH IN SIMILAR CITIES

Now that we have identified the right set of legal documents for comparison, we turn to reviewing the length of the zoning codes in the eight cities and Boston. These charts show how far above average Boston sits:

CITY	# PAGES
El Paso	320
Nashville	349
Oklahoma City	466
Memphis	542
Detroit	579
Las Vegas	915
Washington	1,242
Portland (OR)	1,830
AVERAGE	780
BOSTON	3,791



Findings of Professor Sara C. Bronin

- **Parking**: Most cities cover minimum parking requirements in one section of a zoning ordinance, assigning minimum requirements to certain uses regardless of the location of those uses. In other words, parking requirements for shops, apartments, movie theaters, and office buildings do not differ for shops, apartments, movie theaters, and office buildings citywide. Article 23 of the Zoning Code ("Off-Street Parking") appears at first glance to be the place to find such requirements in Boston.[24]

  However, BPDA staff recently documented almost 200 places in the Zoning Code with minimum parking requirements, including many requirements that differ even among similarly-developed neighborhoods.[25] It is hard to fathom a rational reason for so many different standards within a city of just 48 square miles.

Findings of MAPC



Require fewer spaces – or none at all.

Much of the oversupply we observed stemmed from outdated minimum parking requirements in the local zoning code. In Metro Boston, many developments are approved through a special permit process. During this process, developers often advocate for reducing parking beyond the minimums required through zoning but confront resistance from neighbors. Every city and town can consider reducing their existing requirements, and, more important, can tailor those requirements to different types of development in different locations. On-site shared parking (daytime/nighttime) is one proven strategy for reducing parking construction while meeting community needs. Additionally, allowing for parking spaces available off-site to count toward the minimum parking requirements can make more efficient use of existing parking resource. In some cases, and as San Francisco has just done, parking minimums can be eliminated, and parking maximums established to prevent over-supply.

Article 80 process, which assesses a project's impact on transportation, the public realm, the environment, and historic resources. Recently, the BPDA and Zoning Board of Appeal have permitted several residential developments with little to no parking provided on-site, including Lovejoy Wharf in the North End, 47-55 LaGrange Street in Chinatown, and 1970 Dorchester Ave near Ashmont Station in Dorchester. These low/no-parking sites tend to be in transit-rich neighborhoods, and in many cases, off-site parking accommodations are available if necessary. This approach allows the city to take a context-sensitive approach to determining the parking demand and the alternative transportation options at each site.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Allow for on-site shared parking at mixed-used sites with different peak demand times
- Allow for off-site parking spaces available to residents to count toward minimum parking requirements
- Eliminate minimum parking requirements altogether, and replace them with parking maximums

PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Two Ordinances, Two Organizing Campaigns

How residents moved from opposition to coalition-building, testimony, public pressure, and alternative policy proposals



Median Safety Ordinance (2025)

- Proposed restrictions on standing or loitering in roadway medians
- Sparked protest, testimony, and public scrutiny
- End result: City Council filed the petition

Camping on Public Property Ordinance (2025–2026)

- Proposed ban on camping in public spaces
- Sparked a broader coalition and sustained public pressure
- Debate shifted toward public-health and outreach alternatives

Opposition → Coalition-building → Testimony → Public pressure → Alternative proposals

Case examples from recent Pittsfield ordinance campaigns

PITTSFIELD, 2025

Case 1 | Median Safety Ordinance

What was proposed?

- ‘Median Safety and Pedestrian Regulation in Public Roadways’
- Restrictions on standing or loitering in roadway medians
- Framed by the city as a public-safety measure

How residents responded

- Park Square protest
- Public testimony at City Hall
- Press coverage and public scrutiny
- Clear message: poverty is not a public-safety problem



The Berkshire Eagle

Pittsfield Looking at Median Safety Policy

iBerkshires.com

Pittsfielders Protest ‘Median Safety’ Rule at Park Square

The Berkshire Eagle

Pittsfield Council Files ‘Median Safety’ Petition

Outcome: City Council filed the petition.

Lesson: visible public opposition and consistent testimony can stop harmful ordinances.

PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Lessons from Two Ordinance Campaigns

How residents moved from opposition to power



Name the harm

Translate policy language into plain language people can act on.

Build a coalition

Bring together faith groups, housing advocates, grassroots groups, and directly affected residents.

Turn out testimony

Fill meetings, submit comments, and tell concrete stories.

Create public pressure

Use protest, media, and community communication to shape the narrative.

Offer alternatives

Move from saying no to proposing public-health, outreach, and housing solutions.

Key takeaway: durable power comes from pairing resistance with a credible alternative.

Opposition → Coalition-building → Testimony → Public pressure → Alternative proposals

PITTSFIELD, 2025–2026

Case 2 | Camping on Public Property Ordinance

What was proposed?

- Ban on camping in streets, sidewalks, parks, open space, and waterways
- Restrictions aimed at unhoused residents and encampments
- Debate quickly expanded beyond enforcement to housing and dignity

Homes Not Handcuffs Coalition

- Cathedral Pittsfield
- Berkshire Interfaith Organizing
- Roots & Dreams and Mustard Seeds Inc.
- Berkshire Stonewall Community Action
- Wildflower Alliance



Outcome: debate shifted toward public health, outreach, and alternative responses.

Lesson: broader coalitions can reframe enforcement debates around housing, dignity, and public health.