

Retail Parking Requirements

Parking spaces are where local traffic problems are born.

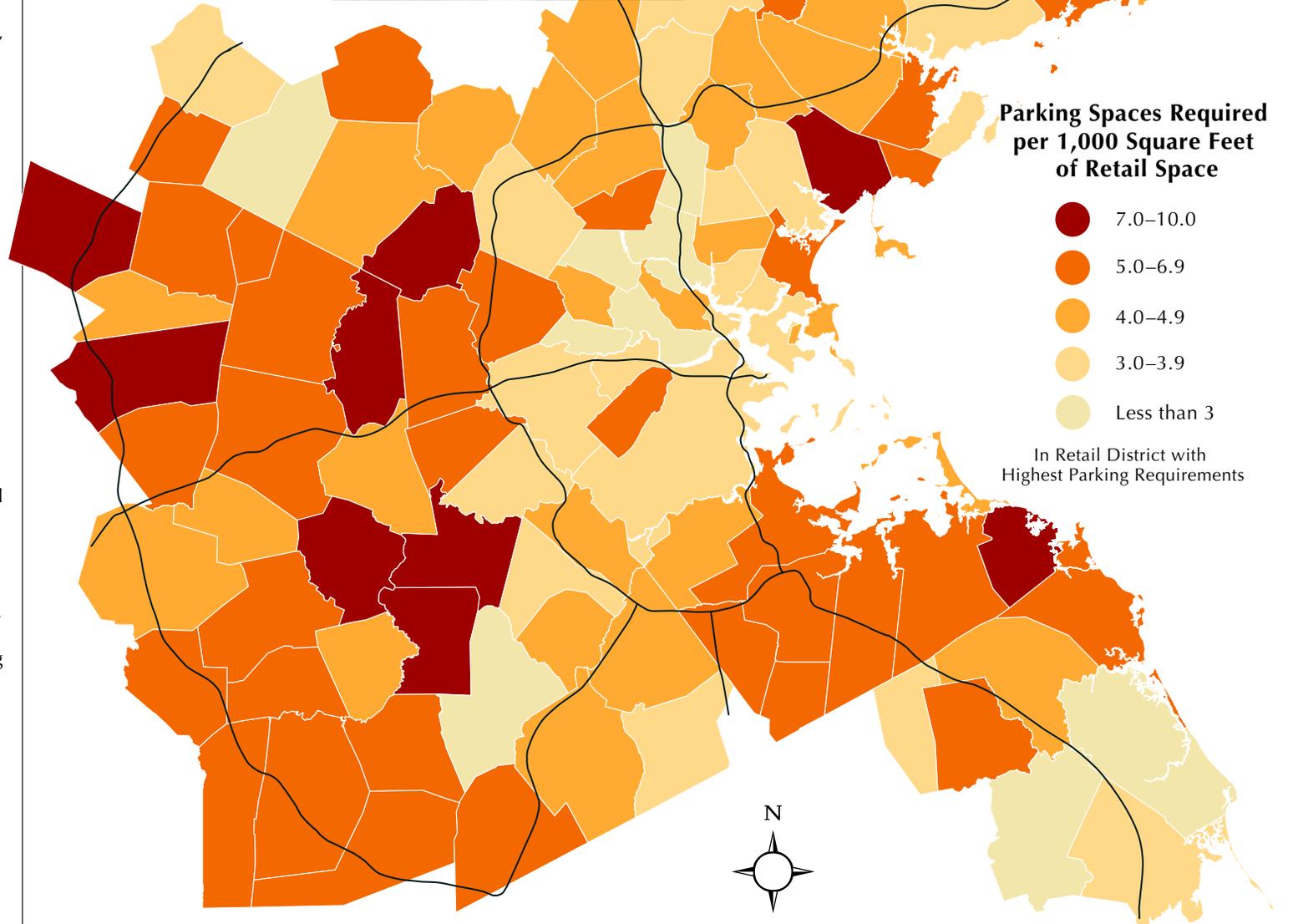


A shortage of spaces may discourage shoppers and create spillover effects, but an overabundance of parking encourages unnecessary driving, wastes valuable land, adds to the urban heat island effect, and increases stormwater runoff. The demand for parking is a complex function of location, land uses, transit access, cost, and other factors. However, most cities and towns establish relatively simplistic parking standards without the benefit of detailed local analysis. Instead, they use generic national guidelines or adopt the existing standards of neighboring municipalities.

This map shows the wide and largely unsystematic variation in parking requirements across the region. Based on current zoning, MAPC estimated the minimum number of parking spaces required per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area for a single story retail building. Some municipalities have additional (usually lower) requirements for additional floors; others add spaces for each employee or require a minimum number per establishment. Because each parking space requires at least 300 square feet of pavement (including aisles and driveways), requirements of more than 3.3 spaces mean that more area is devoted to parking than to floor space in the building.

There are many reasons to take a more flexible and responsive approach to parking requirements: more land can be used to generate tax revenue, and money that would have been spent on new parking can be used for building sidewalks, buying transit passes, or improving traffic patterns. For more information about state-of-the-art parking strategies, visit our Sustainable Transportation Toolkit: transtoolkit.mapc.org/Parking/.

There are more than 450 parking spaces at this shopping plaza, at a ratio of 6 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail space. Parking stalls and driveways total 5.5 acres (three times as much area as the buildings) and will create 6.5 million gallons of stormwater runoff each year.



Parking Spaces Required per 1,000 Square Feet of Retail Space

- 7.0–10.0
- 5.0–6.9
- 4.0–4.9
- 3.0–3.9
- Less than 3

In Retail District with Highest Parking Requirements