

## Executive Summary

DATE	September 9, 2021		
TO	Rendell Bustos Julia Klein Zachary Dahl	FROM	Sophie Gabel-Scheinbaum Lynette Dias

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### RE: Auto Repair Regulations

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The purpose of this memorandum is to:

- Update the City Council on staff's work pertaining to whether businesses should be conducted wholly within an enclosed building and if zoning code parking standards should be amended to reduce the off-street parking requirement for auto repair shops.
- Obtain direction from the City Council as to next steps.

This executive summary provides a brief review of the background related to the issues including existing conditions, summarizes most recent work and findings, and then lists some questions for the City Council's consideration. A more detailed memorandum describing past efforts, peer city review, and specific options for modes of compliance and conformance are provided in Attachment A.

## BACKGROUND

The City's effort to consider amendments to the zoning code auto repair-related business was first initiated in late 2012 in response to neighborhood concerns about the operations of auto repair establishments from residential neighborhoods adjoining the Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue area. Specifically, residents reported spillover of customer parking and loading/unloading of vehicles from carriers parked on residential streets.

## CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

The City Council was last updated on this item on June 4, 2018 at which time they directed staff to come back with changes that support not changing the law with respect to special use permits for outdoor work, direction to amend the parking requirements to make it easier to comply for this type of use, and for staff to find creative ways to monitor and enforce this without putting anyone out of business. The key milestones are outlined below.

## STAFF EFFORTS

In response to City Council direction in 2018, staff began drafting potential amendments to specific sections of the municipal code, but the work was not completed. In 2020, the City reinitiated its efforts to modify the regulations for auto repair-related businesses to make it easier to comply for this type of use, and for staff to find creative ways to monitor and enforce this without putting anyone out of business. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this work was put on hold and reinstated early in 2021. See further information on past efforts in Attachment A.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

An updated field survey and review of business license records was conducted in early 2020. Businesses were field checked to identify on-site conditions related to parking, including whether auto repair lifts were present inside and/or outside the facility.

- **108<sup>1</sup> active auto repair businesses** were identified throughout the City in proximity to Amphlett Blvd., Claremont St./Railroad Ave., Hillsdale Blvd., Palm Ave., and Peninsula Ave.
- **Less than 20 percent** of the 108 facilities **conform** with current zoning requirements for on-site parking and auto-repair lifts.
- Conditions in the **public ROW were clear** of debris, trash, and no issues of major sidewalk blockages or any work being performed within the public ROW were observed.
- **Time-restricted street parking is limited** with some metered spaces along Claremont St./Railroad Ave. Time-limited parking was observed near, Amphlett Blvd. and Palm Ave.
- Cars that looked like they had been parked on streets for quite some time, possibly abandoned by businesses where customers left unpaid and unusable cars were observed consistent with our conversations with owners and employees.

The City currently requires two parking stalls plus two for each service bay, whether service is provided at ground level or upon a lift. A review of 28 peer cities revealed that most cities' (23 of 28) standards are based on **square footages**. Five out of the 28 cities used service bays as the measurement for **minimum parking requirements**. The City of San Mateo's requirements generally seem in the middle of what other jurisdictions require, particularly when looking at cities that use service bays to calculate parking.

## POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

In response to the City Council's request to make it easier to comply for this type of use and for staff to find creative ways to monitor and enforce this without putting anyone out of business two primary options were explored.

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<sup>1</sup> 113 facilities were surveyed and detailed in April memo, but removed 5 facilities that were specific to automobile washing and cleaning establishments.

## 1. MUNICIPAL CODE MODIFICATIONS

After considering several modifications to the code, the following were determined to result in the greatest increase of compliance for existing businesses and be effective for new businesses as well. *Italic type indicates additional work needed to implement the modification.*

### A. Special Exceptions for Businesses Established Prior to 1961

Prior to 1961 there were no parking regulations. Remove parking regulations for the approximately 21 facilities build prior to 1961 that are not already compliant with 2020 standards.<sup>2</sup> Prohibit all outdoor lifts independent of when business was established. *To confirm how many facilities were established as auto repair and have continuously operated as such, additional work is needed including obtaining data from the City's historic business license records and potentially requiring the business owner to provide evidence.*

### B. Special Exceptions for Businesses Established From 1961-1968

From 1961-1968: regulations were based on one parking space for each two employees. Establish these standards for 34 facilities established during this period, that are not already compliant with 2020 standards. Prohibit all outdoor lifts independent of when business was established. *Established dates would also need to be verified as described above.*

### C. Parking Requirements

Change parking standard from service bay (2 parking stalls, plus 2 for each service bay) to square footage (1 space/500 sq ft)<sup>3</sup> or keep the current standard and add the 1 space/500 sf as an either/or for uses established prior to 2020. *However, to determine how this may impact each area, a parking supply and demand study should be completed.*

### D. Valet Parking

Administrative use permit to allow the permittee the use of non-striped areas for parking and queuing if such use would not impact the public and inhibit save business operations. Staff would review and approve or deny permits, and only refer to planning commission if complex or otherwise controversial. *Findings of approval would need to be developed by staff and included with the code amendment.*

Implementation of the above measures have the potential to increase compliance with regulations from approximately 19 percent to 70 percent depending on how many businesses could be confirmed as being established prior to 1968 as detailed above (see A & B).

## 2. OTHER POTENTIAL MEASURES

In addition to the code amendments detailed above, the following measures are also recommended to increase supply and monitor code compliance.

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<sup>2</sup> A review of historic aerials indicates a significant number of the sites were developed prior to 1961. Aerial imagery was cross referenced for building footprints specific to certain uses, not for a specific use.

<sup>3</sup> 1 space/500 sf ft was the most frequently used measurement for peer cities using sf ft for parking regulations.

- A. Work with Public Works to modify street parking configuration to maximize on-street parking supply where ROW could accommodate diagonal or perpendicular to fit more cars.
- B. Coordination with code enforcement<sup>4</sup> related to:
  - Nuisance behaviors like excessive noise and trash in street, and blockages;
  - Prohibition of outdoor auto-repair lifts given public safety;
  - Additional street parking enforcement including: Enforcement on vehicles that appear inoperable and/or have not been moved for several weeks, sticker parking enforcement on metered and time-limited parking; and
  - Establishing a timeline and requirement to obtain permits for all unpermitted indoor auto-repair lifts and a monitoring program.

## REQUESTED DIRECTION

Please provide direction on the following questions to help us determine next steps:

1. The concerns around auto-repair businesses and parking were raised several years ago. Does this work remain a priority?
2. Is there an interest to modify/reduce the parking requirements to increase the number of businesses that would comply?
3. Is there an interest in developing a special exception provision for businesses established prior to 1968?
4. If parking reductions are considered, should a parking supply & demand study be completed?
5. Should we work with Public Works to assess restriping and paving improvements to increase the supply of on-street parking?

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that staff confirmed there have not been complaints on auto-repair related businesses since 2019.

## Attachment A - Memorandum

DATE	April 30, 2020		
TO	Rendell Bustos Julia Klein	FROM	Emilie Wolfson Sophie Gabel-Scheinbaum Lynette Dias
RE:	<b>Auto Repair Establishments Existing Conditions, Best Practices Review, Comprehensive Inventory, and Recommendations</b>		

The City recently reinitiated its efforts to modify the regulations for auto repair-related businesses specific to parking requirements, mechanical lifts, and outdoor business activity, to better accommodate their continued operation. Recognizing that the majority of auto repair-related businesses do not conform with current City regulations and that such business fulfill a vital service to the community, the City Council directed staff to explore options to modify existing regulations to be more accommodating to the current operations of these businesses. Urban Planning Partners (UPP) is working with the City to complete the updates. The purpose of this memorandum is to:

- Provide context and descriptions of prior work conducted towards this effort.
- Review the City of San Mateo Zoning Code as it relates to auto repair establishment parking as well as define specific terms.
- Summarize our findings related to 28 comparable peer cities.
- Provide recommendations for practices based on data gathered from the comprehensive inventory and suggestions from council that could be incorporated into specific code amendments and performance standards.

We hope the above information will provide the basis for City staff to provide feedback on our recommendations to address the City's objectives to help formulate specific code amendments.

This memorandum is organized as follows:

- **Prior City Work**, which includes a summary of the City's prior efforts related to auto repair facilities such as various city council directions, city staff actions such as prior field surveys and draft updates to parking ratios that were not officially adopted.
- **City's Existing Regulations**, which provides an overview of the City's existing regulations for parking requirements as well as important definitions related to auto repair establishments.

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- **Peer City Requirements**, provides an overview of peer city requirements about grandfathering parking requirements for their code.
- **2020 Comprehensive Field Survey**, provides a description of the methodology used to collect the inventory (how questions were developed, the checklist content, what auto repair business were surveyed, the type of outreach to businesses, times and days visited and the process for which the site visits were conducted), as well as limitations of results and data assumptions. Key themes from the comprehensive inventory including observations within the Public ROW, On-site Indoors, and On-Site Outdoors, and other considerations from the data analysis process are also presented.
- **Recommendations**, identifies recommendations for code amendments and performance standards in two key areas (Off-Site/Public ROW, and On-Site). These recommendations for code amendments and performance standards will fit into the existing Zoning Code and hold existing *and* new facilities accountable to updated code enforcement.

## PRIOR CITY WORK

The City's effort to reform auto repair-related business development standards was first initiated in late 2012 in response to ongoing neighborhood concerns. There were complaints about the operations of auto repair establishments from residential neighborhoods adjoining the Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue area due to parking constraints and visual impacts on the public ROW. Specifically, residents reported spillover of customer parking and loading/unloading vehicles from cars parked in residential streets. An outline of the work to date is provided below.

## CITY COUNCIL REVIEW IN 2016

The City Council discussed the concerns brought to their attention by homeowners in certain areas of San Mateo and expressed concern about protecting the viability of these businesses while also recognizing that some improvements and changes are needed. Staff presented on key issues including conformity over time for existing businesses, the need to prioritize high-impact areas, and the importance of creating and maintaining conformance on a citywide basis. Specific approaches to the issues presented included: immediate removal of vehicle lifts, amortization (removal within 2-5 years), reduction in parking standards, allowing off-site parking, special use permit for reduced parking, and/or code enforcement action. City Council members requested that staff do more outreach with the businesses in question in order to brainstorm solutions and get a better context for existing conditions.

In order to take the time to systematically address the issues that were raised at that time, and to work with the businesses in developing solutions, enforcement of most development code violations were suspended, and such suspension continues. The intent of this temporary suspension of enforcement was to enable the City to examine options and identify the types of assistance that

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could be provided to bring affected businesses into compliance.

## **CITY ACTION IN 2017**

The City sent letters to all auto repair establishments on November 1, 2017 requesting they complete an enclosed card regarding the presence of auto repair lifts and any related City permits they had acquired. At that time, there were approximately 140 auto repair establishments. Questions regarding the number of parking spots was not part of this information request. If the facility had no lifts, or if the issuance of City permits could be verified for existing lifts, no further action beyond returning the card was necessary. The self-generated mailer produced 15 responses. Out of the 15 received, nine detailed having auto repair lifts. Out of the nine with auto repair lifts, only three were listed as being permitted.

## **FIELD SURVEY OF AUTO REPAIR FACILITIES IN 2017**

Additionally, in 2017, the City notified and field surveyed 87 out of a total of 137 active auto repair establishments in the Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue. As part of the initial effort, businesses were field checked to identify (1) on-site conditions, including whether auto repair lifts were present inside and/or outside the facility and (2) what other types of nonconforming conditions existed.

The results indicated that out of the 87 field check establishments, 60 had lifts (69 percent), for 13 establishments it was unclear if lifts were present (15 percent), and 14 did not have lifts present (16 percent). The primary observed nonconforming issues included inoperable vehicles and parts stored outside of buildings, repair work performed outside and in the public ROW, unpermitted structures, parking violations such as double parking, cars within the ROW, and graffiti. Unpermitted on-site outdoor lifts were also discovered during the field survey—two of the 87 facilities had such unpermitted lifts.

## **CITY COUNCIL REVIEW IN 2018**

The City Council included a discussion on auto repair facility issues in their meeting on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The council requested review of the existing program as it relates to building permits, parking regulations, and outdoor operations and provided avenues of exploration and potential research to be done by staff.

Urban Planning Partners is picking up where staff left off in 2018 to provide an updated review of existing conditions and a comprehensive overhaul of the existing program that is still creating obstacles for business-owners and homeowners alike.

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## STAFF EFFORTS TO UPDATE PARKING RATIOS AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS IN 2018

As part of prior efforts to update parking ratios and performance standards in 2018, staff prepared an initial draft of potential amendments to specific sections of the municipal code as outlined below. **None of these amendments have been considered for adoption.**

### Section 27.64.160, Parking Schedules Generally

- Add a separate “automobile repair” Use that would have the same parking requirements as automobile service and gas stations.

### Section 27.64.185, Automobile Service Stations

- Add the following text as Additional Requirements.
  - Should the auto repair establishment not be able to provide the required parking stalls, such establishment may be permitted to submit a parking plan that demonstrates the ability to provide sufficient off-street parking within the structure or otherwise on the property such that:
    - Size of all parking stalls shall comply with the Standard Drawings and Specifications; however, the requirements for standard access will not be required provided that the autos in such stalls will be maneuvered by the establishment staff rather than customer.
    - Stalls may be placed in tandem.
    - Stalls may be located within stronger ad long as they did block emergency exits.
    - Two of the off-street parking stalls, accessible to the street and not located within the building, shall be required for customer drop-off only.
  - Should the auto repair establishment not be able to provide the required parking stalls according to the provisions for parking plans above, such establishments may be permitted to submit an application for a special use permit for the purpose of providing Valet Parking under a set of rules:
    - Permittee would not park and leave standing any patrons vehicle in any portion of the public ROW.
    - Pedestrian walkways are not blocked.
    - No vehicle should be parked upon private property.
    - Valet should have a valid California license, be over 18 years of age, and years identification.

As stated above these draft amendments have not yet been considered for adoption. We have used

them as a starting point for UPP's recommendations listed at the end of this memorandum.

## CITY EXISTING REGULATIONS

### DEFINITIONS

To help facilitate understanding of the City's current definitions related to automobile services, the following definitions are excerpted from City Municipal Code Section 27.04, Definitions, for convenient reference.

- **Automobile Service Station:**
  - a. Premises devoted to the retail sale of motor vehicle fuel, lubricating oils, and similar products.
  - b. Premises providing services for lubrication, car washing, polishing, undersealing, minor motor tune-up and repair, ignition system repair and front end and wheel alignment, including minor work incidental to the foregoing where cutting and fitting machinery is employed.
  - c. Premises devoted to the retail sale and installation of batteries, tires, windshield wipers, spark plugs, headlights, tail and backup lights, mufflers, shock absorbers, brakes, seat covers and similar accessories, including minor work incidental to the foregoing where cutting and fitting machinery is employed.
  - d. The following is excluded and not permitted: engine replacement, major repair, including, but not limited to, framework and body repair work; the repair and installation of clutch, transmission and differentials, and further excluding any other work where cutting and fitting machinery is employed, except that cutting and fitting machinery may be used for that work which is specifically or incidentally authorized under subsections (2) and (3) of this section.
- **Car Wash:** An automated or non-automated facility for and a process involving the washing and/or cleaning of motor vehicles, which may include drying facilities. To be designated a car wash, the use must constitute a major or principal use of the premises, rather than a causal or occasional use performed as an accommodation or convenience to customers.
- **Motor Vehicle Repair, Major:** Engine rebuilding or major reconditioning of worn or damaged motor vehicles or trailers; collision service, including body, frame, or fender straightening or repair; and overall painting of vehicles within an enclosed building.
- **Motor Vehicle Repair, Minor:** Incidental repairs, replacement of parts, and motor service to motor vehicles, but does not include any operation specified under major motor vehicle repair.
- **Off-Street Parking:** Parking stalls provided beyond the right-of-way of a street or highway.

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- **On-Street parking:** Parking stalls provided within the right-of-way of a street or highway.
- **Service Bay:** An enclosed work-station capable of accommodating one vehicle for automotive repair.
- **Valet Parking:** Automobile parking service provided by an attendant for the patrons of commercial establishments.

## PARKING REQUIREMENTS

The City of San Mateo regulates off street parking as part of City Municipal Code Section 27.64.160 "Parking Schedules Generally." The following chart indicates the requirements for automobile repair, automobile service and gas stations, and automobile washing and cleaning establishments.

Uses (for 3. Commercial, Retail, and Service Use)	Minimum Parking Stalls Required
a. Automobile service and gas stations (see Section 26.64.185).	Two parking stalls plus two for each service bay, whether service is provided at ground level or upon a lift.
b. Automobile washing and cleaning establishments.	Ten queued stalls for each wash rack exclusive of autos on conveyor plus parking stalls for each wash rack.
c. Motor vehicle sales and associated automotive repair.	One stall per 400 square feet of floor area plus one space per 1,000 square feet of outdoor display area.

In addition, 27.64.185 includes additional requirements for automobile service stations:

- a. Only vehicles awaiting service and towing vehicles shall be stored on the premises, except for employee parking and approved rental parking spaces.
- b. Parking of commercial vehicles shall be prohibited unless allowed in the zoning district as a permitted use.

## PEER CITY REQUIREMENTS

Urban Planning Partners reviewed 28 cities' municipal codes related to parking requirements for automobile repair, automobile service and gas stations, and automobile washing and cleaning establishments (except for self-service washing facilities). Cities immediately adjacent to San Mateo were included, as well as several east bay cities; a few further south, one further north, and one in Southern California including : Alameda, Albany, Belmont, Burlingame, Colma, Daly City, Davis, Dublin, East Palo Alto, Emeryville, Foster City, Fremont, Half Moon Bay, Hayward, Menlo Park, Millbrae, Milpitas, Newark, Oakland, Pacifica, Pleasanton, Redwood City, Richmond, Riverside, San Bruno, San Carlos, San Leandro and South San Francisco. Of the 28 cities mentioned above, 26 were also reviewed during efforts in 2018.

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In addition to reviewing code requirements related to parking requirements, we reached out to 10 of the 28 cities to better understand if they had grandfather clauses for facilities who operated before current regulations including Albany, Burlingame, Emeryville, Foster City, Hayward, Menlo Park, Redwood City San Bruno, San Carlos, and San Leandro.

Below is a description of both the minimum parking requirements data, and the grandfather clauses data and summary of conversations.

## **MINIMUM PARKING REQUIREMENTS**

The Peer City Minimum Parking Requirements Table provided as Attachment A lists minimum requirements for the 28 cities as well as an example facility to contextualize the associated standards. In order to understand where San Mateo stood in terms of the number of spaces required, we used a sample size auto repair shop to contextualize the requirements (which was the same example used in earlier 2018 efforts). It assumes a 4,800-square-foot auto repair shop with five workstations (or service bays), a 400-square-foot office, and 500 square feet of storage. San Mateo under this example requires 12 parking spaces, which falls in the middle of other cities' required parking. The highest number of spaces required under this example were 29 (Menlo Park), 25 (Emeryville), and 24 (Colma and Alameda); however, it should be noted that the City of Menlo Park calculates parking based on the zone, not the specific use or number of service bays. The lowest number of spaces required based on this example was 5 (Oakland) and 6 (Burlingame, Daly City and Millbrae). Other cities vary between 6 and 29. Additional detail is provided below.

There was a great deal of variety between the city's requirements for minimum parking. Most cities (23 of 28) had requirements based on square footages. Some of the 23 cities used service bays in addition to square footage to determine required parking (those cities including San Carlos, South San Francisco, and Redwood City). For cities that based minimum parking required on square footage, the cities that required the largest number of parking spaces were Colma, where one space was required for 200 square feet; Alameda, where five spaces are required per 1,000 square feet; Menlo Park, where six spaces are required per 1,000 square feet; and Emeryville, where one space was required per 200 square feet of shop area as well as 1 additional space. The City with the smallest number of total parking spaces required per square foot was Oakland where one space is required per 1,000 square feet.

Five out of the 28 cities used services bays as the measurement for minimum parking requirements. Redwood City uses three spaces/bays if that total is greater than one space per 500 square feet. Of the other cities using service bays, the requirements ranged from either four spaces/bays, three spaces/bays, or two spaces/bays. Of the five cities that use service bay as a measurement, two require more spaces in addition to the spaces per bay—with Riverside requiring six spaces in addition to the two spaces/bays under their vehicle repair category and South San Francisco requiring one space beyond the four spaces/bays.

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Some cities such as Emeryville have six categories of auto repair establishments each having separate requirements; some based off of square footage (in the case of the auto repair establishment, five spaces/1,000 square feet), or some based off service capacity in the case of auto service.

## **GRANDFATHER CLAUSES**

UPP reached out via email to 10 of the 28 cities cited above (some in the east bay, most in adjacent and/or neighboring cities) to better understand if they had grandfather clauses for facilities who operated before current regulations. In the email responses received, many cities recognized that their existing parking ordinance is out of date and imprecise. Many described that some of the issues they have with auto repair and auto body is the high volume of vehicle storage, and cars sitting until parts arrive. Some cities require conditional use permits (for nonconforming conditions), so parking issues are sorted out through a formal decision maker. The most relevant examples are highlighted below.

San Leandro offers a parking exception application which allows applicants to propose a solution to justify the modified parking. This makes it the applicant's responsibility to resolve any parking issue. As stated on San Leandro's parking exception information sheet (available as Attachment B), the purpose of the parking exception is to have the Board of Zoning Adjustments review and evaluate the specific hardships in relation to the use of complementary parking, available on-street parking, and other relevant parking conditions in the vicinity. This process is intended to resolve practical difficulties or unnecessary physical hardships in providing the required off-street parking spaces. Findings that are necessary for approval include difficulty or undue hardship, reasonable off-street parking compliance, alternative parking measures (car share features, transit passes, proximity to BART, or BRT), and projects that provide affordable/senior/mixed use housing. Projects within a ¼-mile of BART or BRT almost always qualify and get a pass on some and/or all parking requirement. (Auto-oriented uses are zoned out of those areas. The process takes about 3 to 6 months from date of application submittal and approval is not guaranteed. The planning manager for the City of San Leandro also mentioned that they have had difficulty bringing the parking ordinance up for a needed overhaul; though they do plan on establish parking maximums.)

In San Bruno, the City Council adopted a parking standard update in late February 2020, which went into effect in late March. The most relevant updates are summarized below:

- For nonresidential land uses in Specific Plan areas, the number of required off-street parking spaces as specified may be reduced up to 30 percent with approval of one or more of the programs as specified below by the community and economic development director or approving body for the project enticement or permit.

Nonresidential projects in Specific Plan Areas may pay an in-lieu fee as an alternative to providing required off-street parking spaces at the discretion of the approval body:

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- The amount of the in-lieu fee shall be set by city council resolution.
- The in-lieu fee and parking reductions may be combined to achieve a maximum off-street parking reduction of 30 percent which applies to new construction, enlargements, and changes of use.

The use of valet parking shall not reduce the number of off-street parking spaces required, and it requires a conditional use permit approved by the planning commission and shall not block any uses in the public ROW.

In Hayward, the municipal code does have grandfathering allowances related to parking for existing buildings. Specifically, Section 10-2.200 relates to Application of the parking regulations and specific triggers for bringing existing buildings/sites into conformance with the regulations for a change of use both downtown (subsection b, referred to as Central Parking District) and in the rest of the city (subsection c). In addition, Section 10-2.201 explains that no existing use of land or structure shall be deemed a nonconforming use solely because of the lack of off-street parking or loading facilities.

## **2020 COMPREHENSIVE FIELD SURVEY**

Given the prior field surveys were three years old and they were not comprehensive, the City and UPP decided that a new comprehensive survey should be prepared. The objectives of the 2020 field survey were to ensure City staff has a solid understanding of the existing conditions of auto-repair facilities throughout the City in the context of the City's existing regulations to inform our work in drafting amendments with the goal of maintaining and legalizing the existing business to the extent feasible. In late February 2020, the City sent 160 letters to auto repair facilities in San Mateo.

### **SCOPE OF SURVEY AND APPROACH**

Four different letters were sent out with the same information apart from dates and times of proposed site visits. The 160 auto repair facilities were broken up into clusters based on their location within the City of San Mateo and four main groups surfaced: 1) Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue, Hillsdale Boulevard, Palm Avenue, and Amphlett Boulevard and Peninsula Avenue (although these are two separate neighborhoods, we clustered them together for site visit purposes). Each letter:

- Described the City's re-initiation of efforts to modify the existing regulations for auto repair-related businesses specific to parking requirements, mechanical lifts, and outdoor business activity to better accommodate their continued operation.
- Summarized efforts so far and gave the history of efforts starting in 2012 in response to ongoing neighborhood quality concerns, which began with notification and inspection of the businesses in the Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue area.

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- Explained that the purpose of the site visit would be to verify existing conditions at auto repair-related establishments and *not* seek removal of any existing auto repair-related businesses or to issue citations, but rather to collect information to inform recommendations to the City Council about ways to better regulate parking, auto repair-lifts, and outdoor operations associated with auto repair-related businesses.

A copy of the letter sent is found in Attachment C.

Facilities were visited in groups pertaining to their location on February 28, March 2, March 4, March 5, and March 6, 2020. Auto repair facilities were given the choice between an afternoon or morning time slot and were asked to confirm which time slot they preferred. Out of the 160 letters sent, only a handful of facilities selected a preferred time. For the rest of the facilities, we visited them based on the instructions of the letter, either during a 2- to 4-hour block in the morning, or in the afternoon.

Site visits were conducted using a checklist developed specifically to observe (1) parking on and off-site, (2) the number of service bays and auto repair lifts, and (3) what equipment and operations occurred outside of the primary building, including other outdoor structures. Observations were recorded on checklists during the site visits. The checklist content is discussed below.

## CHECKLIST CONTENT

A checklist was developed to use at the auto repair facilities site visits. The checklist can be found in Attachment D. Basic information was entered before conducting site visits such as, business name, address of premises, neighborhood, type of facility, owners name and phone number (if readily available), and date of site visit.

Three different subsections were part of the checklist; conditions outside in the public ROW, conditions on-site and outdoors, and conditions on-site and indoors. Additionally, there was a place to enter any other concerns or comments. The checklist questions included:

### *Within the Public ROW*

- Is the street parking metered?

Is there available street parking immediately adjacent to the facility?

Is there evidence of customers employees using off-site parking?

Are there any blockages of side walk with anything?

Is there work being performed outside in public ROW?

Is there trash/debris/dumpsters in the street or blocking sidewalks?

Are vehicles or other queues obstructing public ROWs?

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#### *Outside but On-Site*

- Are there service bays present? If so, how many?
- Are there auto repair lifts present? If so, how many?
- Are there visible free standing outdoor structures (i.e., tents/canopies)?
- Is any work being performed outside?
- Is there any on-site stripped parking spaces? If so, how many parking spaces?
- Is there a que area and approximately how big?
- Excess noise noticed?
- Any storage of impounded/inoperable or vehicle parts in parking lots not covered by or enclosed within a 6-foot fence?

#### *Indoors*

- Are there service bays present?
- Are there auto repair lifts present? If so, how many?
- Does the type of use match the type of facility, i.e., if auto repair facility, are there elements of auto repair happening?
- Is there on-site stripped parking spaces? If so, how many parking spaces?
- Is there a queue area and approximately how big?

### **LIMITATIONS OF RESULTS AND DATA ASSUMPTIONS**

Our original list of auto repair establishments totaled 160, however, upon visiting the associated addresses we edited the list to reflect the 113 of these facilities that currently exist and operate. The list was established based on a list of active business licenses for auto repair facilities with the City of San Mateo. Many of the identified establishments were no longer in business or had changed names (resulting in two listings for one address). In addition, during our site visits, we noticed 12 facilities that were not on the business license list. Subsequent site visits to these facilities are tentatively planned for June 2020. As a result, these 12 facilities are not considered in the data analysis. If these additional facilities offer significantly differing results, we will amend the discussion in future versions of this document.

As described earlier, the existing City of San Mateo parking code standards section includes three different classifications: motor vehicle sales and associated automotive repair, automobile service and gas stations, and automobile washing and cleaning establishments. The original list of auto-related businesses provided to us from the finance department detailed the company's business type but did not use the same categories as described in the planning code. Given that the exact floor area was not known for each facility, it would have been difficult to use the motor vehicle sales and associated automotive repair calculation for the number of parking spots required. Only one of the establishments visited appeared to have been selling cars. In addition, we did not differentiate between automobile washing and cleaning establishments and automobile service and gas stations—and assumed that each facility's required number of parking spaces required would be

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equal to two parking stalls plus two for each service bay. Only five automobile washing and cleaning establishments were visited, and some of these facilities also served as detailing.

Many facilities with on-site parking areas did not have specific striped spaces; or for many, cars were parked in tandem. For the purposes of the parking space count, we considered non-striped parking spots and tandem parking as parking spaces; as long as they did not block the public ROW, or any ingress/egress, or any other noticeable safety feature.

## **KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS**

The following site visit analysis identifies key themes from the data to inform recommendations and eventual code amendments. The findings are categorized into observations made for the public ROW, on-site outside, and on-site indoors, and mirror the checklist content as described above. Most pertinent to the code amendments is a description of the existing number of on-site parking spaces for each facility and how it compares to what is required by current code requirements. In addition, we wanted to understand what percentage of facilities both citywide, and across the five neighborhoods (Amphlett Boulevard, Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue, Hillsdale Boulevard, Palm Avenue and Peninsula Avenue) were in compliance with the current parking standards. As further discussed below, approximately 18 percent of facilities are compliant with the current parking regulations signaling a needed change in the existing zoning code for parking requirements if the City wants to facilitate these business complying with City requirements.

The number of parking spaces for each auto repair facility is described under observations on-site indoors; however, parking spaces were considered and counted both indoors and outdoors on-site. Three facilities had ancillary lots off-site, and these were considered as part of “on-site parking”. One of these facilities was able to come into compliance because of the ancillary lots. In the future we recommend requiring a SUP for ancillary lots-off-site.

As part of our observations, and as part of prior city work to map auto repair establishments within the City of San Mateo, there is intensive clustering in certain neighborhoods of San Mateo. A current map of the facilities by neighborhood is provided in Attachment E.

The largest number of auto repair facilities in San Mateo is within the Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue (51 total). The clustering of facilities in this neighborhood was the densest, with facilities next door to each other for several blocks. Palm Avenue and Amphlett Boulevard neighborhoods also had a dense clustering of auto repair facilities; Amphlett Boulevard with 20 auto repair facilities, and Palm Avenue with 24 auto repair facilities. Peninsula Avenue (6 auto repair facilities) and Hillsdale Boulevard (11 auto repair facilities) neighborhoods did not have the same dense clustering of auto repair facilities, and in some cases there were only a few close to each other with the majority being several blocks away from one another. Given the clustering within the neighborhoods discussed above, it was no surprise that in observations the Claremont

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Street/Railroad Avenue and Amphlett Boulevard had overall smaller facilities with fewer service bays (on average around 5.7 service bays and 4.2 service bays respectively compared to the city average of 5.7 service bays citywide).

### **Observations: Public ROW**

When this initiative first started in 2012 many of the complaints regarding the operations of auto repair establishments were from residential neighborhoods adjoining the Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue specifically about work being conducted in the public ROW and a concern for trash and debris in the street. Conditions outside in the public ROW for all facilities as part of survey observations were clear of debris, trash, and we did not observe any issues of major sidewalk blockages. There were some instances where a car was parked on the sidewalk but by the time we did our site observations it was moved within a span of a few minutes. We did not observe any work being performed outside in the public ROW.

Metered parking and time-limited parking was not abundantly present near auto repair facilities. Metered street parking was only present near Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue. Time limited parking was observed near Amphlett Boulevard and Palm Avenue. We observed cars that looked like they had been parked on streets for quite some time given the amount of dust they accumulated, and/or other considerations such as flat or low tires. These observations of older, abandoned cars matched our conversations with both owners and employees of auto repair facilities as described further below.

We observed a few instances where facilities had parking lots off-site on a different property which employees had described as parking for customers; however, there were storage of inoperable vehicles within these lots. As part of the checklist, this question was listed under outside, but on-site; however, as mentioned these lots were off-site on a different property either immediately adjacent or some short distance away.

### **Observations: On-Site Indoors**

All facilities observed matched their stated use. All the facilities were operating as auto repair/maintenance/service or cleaning stations.

A handful of facilities seemed like they had an influx of parking, and even though they were not complying with the current code requirement, the number of parking spaces dictated by code was not necessary to meet their need. For some facilities, the opposite was true. Services varied widely between quick repairs (oil-change, fluid adjustment), medium repairs (where cars would be dropped off and picked up), or longer repairs with detailing. Detailing shops seemed not to struggle in the same way that other facilities did given that cars would often be worked on for several days a time versus more drop-ins which required more shuffling of cars and subsequently parking.

Figure 1 includes a comparison of facilities that meet the current parking code with facilities that do not meet the code.

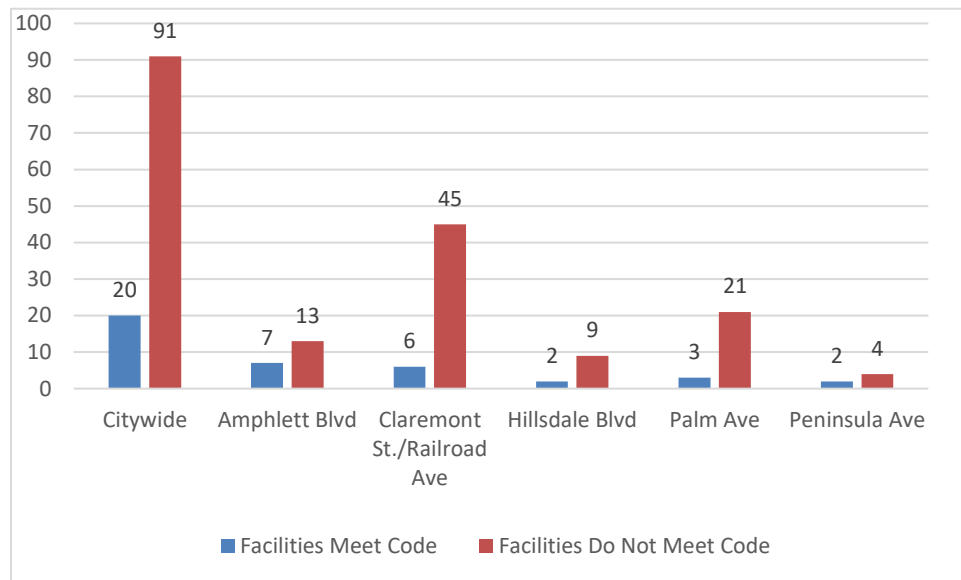


Figure 1 Comparison of, Facilities that Meet Current Parking Code, and Facilities that Do Not Meet Code

As stated initially, the primary focus and intent of this research is to inform zoning code amendments for the City of San Mateo related to parking ratios for existing and new auto repair-related businesses. The following describes key information about existing parking conditions by neighborhood and how they relate to further recommendations and considerations.

- In the Amphlett Boulevard neighborhood 7 out of 20 establishments met the current parking requirement (35 percent compliance). Of those businesses, 11 were within a 50 percent compliance (meaning they had at least 50 percent of the required spaces), and 13 were within a 25 percent compliance. The high end deficit is 14 spaces (where 16 are required), and the low end is 1 (where 10 spaces are required) with an average deficit of 8 spaces (with an average of 13 spaces required). Four facilities had no on-site parking spaces. See Table 1A attached at the end of this memorandum for more detail.
- In the Claremont Avenue neighborhood 6 out 51 establishments met the current parking requirements (12 percent compliance). Of those businesses, 13 were within a 50 percent compliance (meaning that they had at least 50 percent of the required spaces), and 21 were within a 25 percent compliance. The high end of the deficit is 36 (where 36 are required) and the low end is 1 (where 5 spaces are required) with an average deficit of 12 spaces (with an average of 9 spaces required). More than half of the facilities (29 out of 51) had no on-site parking spaces. See Table 1B attached at the end of this memorandum for more detail.

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- In the Hillsdale Boulevard neighborhood 2 out of 11 establishments met the current parking requirements (18 percent compliance). Of those businesses, 5 were within a 50 percent compliance (meaning that they had at least 50 percent of the required spaces), and 7 were within a 25 percent compliance. The high end of the deficit is 26 (where 34 are required) and the low end is 2 (where 10 spaces are required) with an average deficit of 12 spaces (with an average of 7 spaces required. See Table 1C attached at the end of this memorandum for more detail.
- In the Palm Avenue neighborhood 4 out of 24 establishments met the current parking requirements (17 percent compliance). Of those businesses, 7 were within a 50 percent compliance (meaning that they had at least 50 percent of the required spaces), and 12 were within a 25 percent compliance. The high end of the deficit is 18 (where 18 are required) and the low end is 1 (where 6 spaces are required) with an average deficit of 9 spaces (with an average of 5 spaces required). Eight facilities had no on-site parking spaces. See Table 1D attached at the end of this memorandum for more detail.
- In the Peninsula Avenue neighborhood 2 out of 6 establishments met the current parking requirements (33 percent compliance). Of those businesses, 3 were within a 50 percent compliance (meaning that they had at least 50 percent of the required spaces), and 4 were within a 25 percent compliance. The high end of the deficit is 22 (where 22 spaces are required) and the low end is 3 (where 14 spaces are required) with an average deficit of 11 spaces (with an average of 1 spaces required). Two facilities had no on-site parking spaces. See Table 1E attached at the end of this memorandum for more detail.

### **Observations: On-Site Outdoors**

An area of focus from previous efforts of the site visits was the number of outdoor lifts and/or structures such as tents or canopies that auto repair facilities had. From observations from the site visits there were only 16 facilities that had service bays outside—for a total of 38 service bays, and only 12 of these facilities had outdoor lifts—for a total of 15 lifts—which indicates that less than 10 percent of facilities in the comprehensive inventory have outdoor lifts. For the facilities that had outside lifts/and or structures such as tents or canopies only a few appeared to be actively performing work outside. About half of these looked like there were actively set up for work, whereas the other half looked like structures had been used previously but were not in use presently. There was no excess noise noticed on-site and outdoors of any of the auto repair facilities.

### **What We Heard**

In addition to our site survey and checklist with observations, we had informal conversations with several business owners or employees that brought additional concerns to light and are summarized below:

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- Where there was time-limited parking most employees described using these spots to park their cars all day and described enforcement of time parking being very soft. In areas where there was metered parking, people described not being vigilant in paying the meter and risking a ticket since there were no other options for parking.
- Cars were being left on the street for weeks at time, and some of these cars are inoperable vehicles. Without effective enforcement of time-limited parking or a sweep to see if cars were sitting for more than 2 to 3 weeks, employees described there being less active parking available for customers and employees at these facilities. They suggested that the city should ramp up enforcement of time-limited parking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings described above, our recommendations for code amendments and process improvements are outlined below. Some recommendations are similar to the draft recommendations staff prepared in 2018, and are noted as such. We see this approach as being a hybrid or tiered approach.

In addition to the recommendations within the categories discussed below, **we recommend additional outreach to auto repair establishments to continue building trust.** Several owners had expressed some initial hostility, and/or frustration with our efforts when we first arrived on-site citing previous efforts, and were unclear what this re-initiation of efforts was trying to accomplish.

This mistrust or hesitation comes from prior efforts, (expressed specifically), and likely a fear that this effort would threaten the way they currently operate. In order to combat this frustration, we suggest conducting at least one to two focus groups in the next 2 to 3 months<sup>1</sup>, with the goal of hearing solutions directly from those people who work in these establishments every day, and providing our initial recommendations to them to get their feedback. The neighborhoods that should be focused on are Claremont Street/Railroad Avenue, Palm Avenue, and Amphlett Boulevard given they have more struggles with the availability of parking and their adjacency to residential neighborhoods. A few of the areas to focus on would be:

- What are your daily stressors?
- What are the obstacles you face?
- What are potential solutions or ideas to alleviate the stressors for parking?

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<sup>1</sup> We can continue to conduct outreach to focused facilities using online tools and video/conference calls which would shorten this timeline. If we were to wait to do this in person, the timeline is dependent on when the city allows such events to continue in person.

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## **OFF-SITE/PUBLIC ROW**

### **1. Business Improvement Districts**

We suggest, if supported by auto repair establishments, implementing business improvement districts that could come up with shared parking solutions, and agreements amongst the business owners for specific neighborhoods. These types of outside the box solutions were also suggestions that the council had in 2018. Several of the businesses had expressed sharing parking as an informal agreement. This could be pursued on a broader, neighborhood scale that is managed with clear goals and bylaws that are agreed upon with a formal decree by the business association.

### **2. Parking Enforcement within the ROW**

There should be stricter parking enforcement on vehicles that look inoperable, and/or have not been moved for several weeks. In addition, there should be stricter parking enforcement for time limited parking (1-hour, 2-hour), and metered parking. There would need to be coordination between the police department, as well as public works department in order for these enforcements to be effective. Funding for additional staff time for enforcement would need to be discussed interdepartmentally.

### **3. Continued Enforcement of Trash/or Other Blockages Within the ROW**

While we did not observe any trash, debris, or and other blockages by cars within the ROW during our site visits, the continued safety of people and vehicles in the ROW should be enforced for the health and safety of residents and business owners. **Regardless of recommendations pertaining to grandfathering clauses related to parking requirements, the enforcement of blockages, obstructions and/or nuisances within the ROW should continue to be enforced.**

## **ON-SITE**

### **1. Building Permits for Indoor Auto Repair Lifts**

As described in staff recommendations in 2018, **we recommend that the City continue the previously established program (prior to the stop in enforcement from 2016 until today) to require building permits for existing auto repair lifts to ensure public safety, especially for employees of auto repair establishments.** The 2018 staff recommendations had an initial period of six months to be given for submission of building permit applications. We feel that this timeline should be lengthened to a year to ensure adequate compliance, and to afford time for proper education and outreach. Currently, as described immediately below, outdoor lifts are not allowed under the existing code.

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## 2. Outdoor Work/Outdoor Auto Repair Lifts

Currently under Code Section 27.36.030 Conditions of Use, it states that "all production, processing, assembly, cleaning, servicing, testing or repair of materials, good or products shall take place within completely enclosed buildings unless otherwise indicated herein." Council's comments were that this provision might be too restrictive, and it would be best to provide flexibility by allowing some outdoor use by being clear on how long and what type of service is allowed.

As described above, we observed 38 outdoor service bays across 12 facilities, indicating that less than 10 percent of facilities had outdoor service bays. If the provision stated above regarding enforcement of building permits for lifts materialized, it would mean that the 12 facilities would not be compliant with this regulation. **We understand that outdoor work is something that the city does not want. Those facilities would need to remove all service bays, and any outdoor structures to comply with the code.**

## 3. Parking Requirements for Existing Facilities

In comparison with auto repair establishments in cities within San Mateo, and Alameda counties as well as a few other cities in California, San Mateo's current parking standard places it at the median position, where half of the cities require more spaces, and the other half fewer. It seems that San Mateo's parking standard is reasonable in comparison to other cities. However, as expressed above only 18 percent of facilities currently comply with parking regulations. Staff's earlier assessment was the current standard should be retained, but that the regulation should be modified such that the service/bay lift should be counted as one of the required parking spaces. Even if the City of San Mateo made this change, this would only bring compliance to 21 percent of facilities representing a 3 percent gain in overall compliance.

In order to assess how changing the modifications to the parking requirements would impact overall compliance, we looked at three different scenarios by modifying the parking requirement by a reduction in 1) 25 percent, 2) 50 percent and 3) 75 percent. The current parking requirement is 2 parking spaces plus two for each service bay, and if we were to reduce this requirement by 25 percent it would be 1.75 parking spaces plus 1.75 for each service bay. If you were to reduce by 50 percent it would be 1 parking space plus 1 for each service bay. If you were to reduce by 75 percent it would be 0.5 parking space plus 0.5 for each service bay.

A 25 percent reduction in the requirement would bring the compliance up to 24 percent or 26 out of 111 facilities meeting the code. A 50 percent reduction in the requirement would bring the compliance up to 42 percent or 46 out of 111 facilities meeting the code. A 75 percent reduction in the requirement would bring the compliance up to 51 percent or 56 out of 111 facilities meeting the code. **Based on this, we recommend the City consider a 50 percent reduction which would increase compliance from 18 percent to 42 percent (20 businesses to 46 businesses) as one step to increasing compliance.**

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Many of the existing auto repair establishments are not able to successfully comply with the existing regulations, and there is limited existing space within their facilities and outside their facilities to provide parking.

**One additional possibility to take care of this problem is to institute grandfather provisions that are written into the current code so that no existing use of land or structure shall be considered a nonconforming use solely because of the lack of on-site parking required by this article. UPP is exploring options for this grandfather provision and is seeking advice from staff on the best course of action for grandfathering.**

#### **4. Parking Requirements for New Facilities**

There are several ways that parking requirements could be dealt with for new facilities. Some of these options are described below, with the idea that either some and/or all of the options could be chosen. The requirements as written would need to change such that:

- **There should be some clarification, and potential expansion of the definition of auto repair facilities for new facilities.** The grandfathering provision detailed above would extend to all existing facilities, but for new facilities, there should be different requirements for different types of facilities beyond what is existing in the code now. For example, auto detailing may not need as many parking spots as a different type of service.
- For new facilities that cannot meet the current standards they could be **required to fill out a parking exception and the onus is on the new applicant/sponsor to prove hardship.**
- **In an effort to provide a more flexible way for new facilities to comply with the current regulations, we agree with staff's earlier recommendations** for the use of valet parking. When operated properly, it would promote the more-efficient use of limited on-street parking spaces while providing a flexible way to comply with the required number of parking spaces. We recommend the use of a special use permit to allow the permittee the use of limited on-street parking spaces in a limited and controlled manner and on a temporary and nonpermanent basis.
- **Another flexible way for new facilities to comply with current regulations is to offer property owners the option of paying an in-lieu fee.** San Bruno explored the option of a parking in-lieu fee for up to 30 percent of the off-street parking spaces required and would be in combination with a TDM program. While this program is more appropriate for downtown areas, the option of an in-lieu fee can be explored. As discussed previously, the current existing compliance with the current standard is 18 percent, so the in-lieu fee percentage would need to take that into consideration, as a 30 percent reduction would not solve the problem. A reduction of 50-60 percent would seem more appropriate in most areas.

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## **NEXT STEPS**

Once we receive feedback on the proposed recommendations, we can proceed with drafting the zoning amendments related to auto repair establishments that best fit the City of San Mateo's needs at this time.