

Parking Issue – with data on Finley Forest

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January 28, 2016, updated on January 30, Feb 17-18, Feb 27, and March 1, 3, and 21

Abstract

Buried deep in the Chapel Hill zoning ordinances are some little known formulas for calculating the minimum number parking spaces a developer is obliged to provide. These formulas were added in 2014 as part of the introduction of Form Based Code (FBC) for the Ephesus-Fordham redevelopment project.

It is my assertion that the Chapel Hill parking formulas do not demand adequate parking. Too few spaces are required. Such short-sightedness can lead to fights over parking. In February 2015 a parking space dispute resulted in three people being killed at the Finley Forest complex.

I compared the Chapel Hill formulas with those of other towns and then calculated how Finley Forest's situation would change if it were built today according to each town's rules.

I conclude that Chapel Hill should switch to the higher numbers used by Flagstaff, Arizona.

1.0 Problem Statement

The formula used by Chapel Hill to calculate parking space quantity is too skimpy. It should be substituted with something more realistic like the one used by Flagstaff, Arizona.

2.0 Details

2.1 Chapel Hill formulas

In 2014 the Chapel Hill Town Council approved the adoption of Form Based Code (FBC) for some sections of Chapel Hill. Buried deep in the FBC are formulas which dictate minimum requirements for parking space quantities. These can be found on page 31 of this document:

http://chapelhill.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=7&clip_id=2096&meta_id=88591

For an apartment complex, the formula is based on the quantities of various size apartments. The minimum numbers of parking spaces are:

- 1 space for a 1 bedroom apartment (max = 1.25)
- 1.25 spaces for 2 bedrooms (max = 1.75)
- 1.50 spaces for 3 bedrooms (max = 2.25)
- 1.67 spaces for 4+ bedrooms (max = 2.5)
- 0 spaces for guest parking

These are numbers which get multiplied by the quantities of the various apartments. For example, if a building has eight 2 bedroom apartments, then a developer would only be obliged to provide 10 parking spaces ($8 \times 1.25 = 10$).

2.2 Flagstaff formulas

Flagstaff, Arizona is a college town similar to Chapel Hill. The populations and school enrollments are almost identical.

However, the parking space formulas for Flagstaff, Arizona use these numbers:

- 1.5 spaces for a 1 bedroom apartment
- 2 spaces for 2 bedrooms
- 2 spaces for 3 bedrooms
- 0.25 for each 2+ bedroom unit – for guest parking

See Table 10-50.80.040.A on page 50.80-6 in part 2 of chapter 10- 50 of the [Flagstaff zoning code](#).

2.3 Proposed changes to Flagstaff parking formulas

On January 21, 2016 I emailed Flagstaff's zoning person, Roger Eastman, to query him about the Flagstaff formulas and how happy they were with the accuracy of their numbers.

Here's Roger's response:

Hi Ken. Thanks for making contact with us.

I've attached some scanned pages from our proposed amendments to the parking section of the Zoning Code that shows the latest proposal that has been recommended for approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission and is expected to be approved by the Council in early February. As we are a college town we found local developers were building duplexes that had up to five bedrooms to provide student housing. Clearly the required 2 parking spaces was not enough! We think we have the right balance now with this proposed amendment.

In the attachment, Flagstaff's new parking formulas would become:

- 1.5 spaces for a 1 bedroom apartment
- 2 spaces for 2 bedrooms
- 2 spaces for 3 bedrooms
- 2.5 spaces for 4 bedrooms
- 2.5 spaces for the first 4 of 5+ bedrooms; 0.5 spaces for each additional bedroom
- 0.25 for each 2+ bedroom unit – for guest parking

3.0 Finley Forest Example

To prove my assertion about the skimpy parking, I visited the Finley Forest condo complex and calculated the number of parking spaces currently in existence and what the numbers would be if the Chapel Hill and Flagstaff formulas were applied. Finley Forest has had a history of parking problems culminating with a tragedy in February 2015 when three people were killed over a parking dispute. See <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/crime/article11303375.html>

3.1 Finley Forest Summary

Finley Forest has 380 units. 223 are 2 bedroom, and 157 are 3 bedroom.

There are 682 parking spaces. 675 are located adjacent to the various buildings, and 7 are located near the clubhouse.

If the complex were built with the Chapel Hill formulas, a developer would only have to provide 514 parking spaces. That's 168 fewer spaces.

If the complex were built with the Flagstaff formulas, then 855 spaces would have to be provided. That's 173 more than currently exist.

3.2 Finley Forest Details

#	Cul de sac	Street	Units	2BR	3BR	Finley Forest Parking spots	# of parking spaces per Chapel Hill FBC	# of parking spaces per Flagstaff FBC
1	100-106 even 108-114 even	Finley Forest	8		8	16	12	16
2	109-123 odd 133-139 odd 141-155 odd	Brookberry	20	20		32	25	40
3	116-122 even 196-202 even	Finley Forest	8		8	16	12	16
4	124-130 even 132-138 even	Springberry	8	8		22	10	16
5	125-131 odd 101-107 odd	Finley Forest	8	8		16	10	16
6	148-154 even 140-146 even	Springberry	8	8		13	10	16
7	156-162 even	Summerwalk	4	4		16	5	8
8	165-171 odd 157-163 odd	Springberry	8	8		12	10	16
9	180-194 even 164-178 even	Summerwalk	16	16		27	20	32
10	181-187 odd 173-179 odd	Summerwalk	8	8		17	10	16
11	189-203 odd 205-219 odd 221-235 odd 284-298 even 268-282 even	Summerwalk	40	40		64	50	80

#	Cul de sac	Street	Units	2BR	3BR	Finley Forest Parking spots	# of parking spaces per Chapel Hill FBC	# of parking spaces per Flagstaff FBC
12	204-210 even 212-218 even	Finley Forest	8		8	16	12	16
13	220-226 even 228-234 even	Finley Forest	8		8	16	12	16
14	236-242 even 244-250 even	Brookberry	8		8	16	12	16
15	237-251 odd 253-267 odd	Summerwalk	16	16		24	20	32
16	252-258 even 260-266 even	Brookberry	8		8	16	12	16
17	260-266 even 252-258 even	Brookberry	8		8	17	12	16
18	269-283 odd 285-299 odd	Summerwalk	16	16		24	20	32
19	300-330 even 348 350 360 362 364 366 376 378	Summerwalk	24	11	13	32	33	48
20	301-307 odd 333-339 odd	Brookberry	8		8	14	12	16
21	309-315 odd	Finley Forest	4	1	3	11	6	8
22	325-331 odd 317-323 odd	Brookberry	8	2	6	12	12	16
23	332-346 even 352 354 356 358 368 370 372 374 412 414 424 426 396 398 408 410 380-394 even	Summerwalk	32	32		47	40	64
24	359-373 odd 343-357 odd	Summerwalk	16	16		28	20	32
25	375-389 odd 391-405 odd	Summerwalk	16		16	22	24	32
26	400 402 404 406 416 418 420 422 428-442 even	Summerwalk	16	8	8	37	22	32
27	407-421 odd	Summerwalk	8		8	16	12	16
28	423-437 odd 439-453 odd 455-469 odd	Summerwalk	24		24	39	30	48
29	471-485 odd 487-501 odd	Summerwalk	16	1	15	37	24	32
	Totals		380	223	157	675	514	760
	Guest parking						0	
	On street parking		0					
	Clubhouse lot		0			7		

3.3 Feedback from the manager of Finley Forest

On January 25th I talked to Casey Ferrara, the manager of Finley Forest (FF). Her phone number is 919-459-1860, and her email address is CFerrara@WMDouglas.com.

Casey's comments were:

1. FF residents couldn't live with fewer parking spaces. When originally built (in the 1980s) the formula they used was 1.67 spaces per unit.
2. What she wished FF had is designated guest parking in each parking lot. They have none. Each dwelling gets one reserved space and there are several unreserved spaces that the nearby dwellings share first come first served.
3. Renting is a big thing now. When originally built, it was intended that a dwelling be for a family of 2 with a child. Now a dwelling may be rented to three college students ... each of whom has their own car.
4. Most of the calls she gets are from residents wanting a car towed, because the car is parked in their reserved space.
5. They've had many problems with UNC students parking in FF spaces and then walking 100 feet to the Friday Center. To deal with that problem, all cars must have stickers to identify that they are FF residents; otherwise, they could be towed.

4.0 What do other college towns have for off-street parking formulas?

Here are five other college towns and what their parking formulas are.

4.1 Ann Arbor, Michigan

See section 5.167 in the [Code of Ordinances](#).

- 2 spaces per dwelling unit

4.2 Athens, Georgia

See section 9-30-2 in the [Athens-Clarke County, Georgia municode](#).

- 1.5 spaces/1 BR
- 2 spaces/2+ BR

4.3 Bloomington, Indiana

See section 20.05.075 in <http://bloomington.in.gov/code/>

- Dwelling, multifamily: 1 space/BR
- Dwelling, single family: 2 spaces/dwelling unit

4.4 Charlottesville, Virginia

See section 34-984 in

https://www.municode.com/library/va/charlottesville/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CO_CH34ZO

- 1 space/1 BR
- 1 space/2 BR
- 1 space/3 BR
- 1 space/4+ BR

This is lower than Chapel Hill! I don't know how anyone could live with such limited parking.

4.5 Greenville, South Carolina

Greenville zoning laws: https://www.greenvillecounty.org/gcpc/zoning_administration.asp

- 1 space/1 BR
- 1.5 spaces/2 BR
- 2 spaces/3+ BR
- 10% for visitor parking

5.0 Side-by-side comparison of all the cited towns

	Ann Arbor	Athens	Bloomington	Chapel Hill	Charlottesville	Flagstaff	Greenville, SC
1 BR	2	1.5	1	1	1	1.5	1
2 BR	2	2	2	1.25	1	2	1.5
3 BR	2	2	3	1.5	1	2	2
4 BR	2	2	4	1.67	1	2.5	2
guests				0		0.25 for each 2+ BR	10%

6.0 How the Finley Forest complex would fare in the cited Towns

If Finley Forest were built today, here are the minimum number of parking spaces that each city would require:

Finley Forest (current spaces)	Ann Arbor	Athens	Bloomington	Chapel Hill	Charlottesville	Flagstaff	Greenville, SC
682	760	760	917	514	380	855	649

7.0 My efforts to raise awareness to the parking problem

I've made several efforts to alert the Town Council and the general public about the parking problem, but thus far they've had no effect. The formula has not been changed.

September 23, 2014: I attend CDC meeting at Town Hall to alert them about the parking issue, but "it's outside of their purview".

October 22, 2014: I send an email to the Mayor and Town Council members alerting them to the parking issue. I never get a response.

November 10, 2014: I send an email to Town Manager Roger Stancil, Gene Poveromo, Kay Pearlstein, Judy Johnson, and Scott Murray alerting them to the parking issue. I never receive a response.

I record this WCHL commentator's piece which gets broadcast on October 6, 2015:

http://chapelboro.com/?powerpress_pinw=150815-podcast

8.0 Final comments

It's troubling to me that the seven towns cited all have different parking formulas ... along with a lot of other differences. That's a lot of duplicated effort and a waste of money. From a Google search I learned that there are over 18,000 towns in the United States. If they could standardize more stuff, then a considerable amount of money could be saved.

I suspect that developers are the source of the low parking formulas. The less parking they're obligated to provide, the more profit they can make.

Some people argue that "in the future fewer cars will be needed, because we'll be able to walk, bike, or take the bus or light rail." I regard that as total BS. If you have a job, you need a car. I play golf in Hillsborough, go swing dancing in Carrboro, visit friends in Raleigh, and travel to other parts of the Triangle. Overall I drive a lot less than most people, but I absolutely need a car, and I need a place to park that car. There is no way I could efficiently rely on other modes of transportation.


Some people argue that if we reduce parking, people will be less inclined to drive and then traffic will be reduced. That's another distorted argument. With less parking, people will be inclined to go elsewhere for their shopping. If we really want to reduce traffic, we should stop approving new development willy-nilly. Significant impact fees should be imposed.

9.0 Feedback

I emailed this document to the Mayor, Town Council, and Planning Board on January 28, 2016. Here's some feedback I've received since then:

Rich Leber	Jan 29	The Lux apartments were built with 608 bedrooms and only 216 parking spaces! It's downtown and was built for students. Grove Park will be 900 student beds, but only 680 parking spots.
Nancy Oates (Town Council)	Jan 29	<p>Thank you for all the time and thought you put into this report. It gives us some hard data on the need for parking. We do strive to be a walkable community, but in a college town, students move off-campus in part because they want a place to park their cars. We saw that with Shortbread Lofts some years back when council approved a lower number of parking spaces than the ordinance required because the reasoning went that students living downtown wouldn't need cars. Now that the project has been built, Shortbread has had to rent a parking lot from UNC during evening and weekend hours to accommodate overflow parking from Shortbread residents.</p> <p>I will keep your information front of mind as more development projects come before us.</p>
Joan Guilkey	Jan 29	<p>Mayor and Council Members, I favor less use of cars, but the changes to our code that reduce parking to one space/unit or less (such as is proposed for the senior facility at Central West) will have unintended negative consequences. If I ever live in the senior facility, I most certainly need a parking space and I expect to have one for anyone visiting me from outside the town limits who has no access to buses or rail. And I cannot realistically expect my nurses and other staff to ride the bus all the time. I strongly believe in encouraging family and friends to visit the elderly. The current code works against that and needs a bit more study.</p> <p>We might not have had citizens murdered last year at Finley Forest if there had been 2 parking spaces/unit. We have confirmation from apartment complexes that most renters are students and often we allow or tolerate 3-4 students/unit. If we are not planning to enforce the parking codes, then we should enforce the number of renters.</p> <p>Resident Ken Larsen has done some research on what is happening around parking codes across the U.S. I think he sent results to you. Please take a look before we approve another development project. Rail is a long way off for us and our bus system is in debt right now. We have no choices except walking, bikes, or cars in many areas of the county.</p> <p>Please be realistic with number of parking spaces allowed. Tell developers what we must have and if they don't agree, don't approve their project.</p>
Gene Poveromo	Feb 16	I spoke at tonight's Planning Commission meeting to get advice on how best to proceed – so that this issue is not forgotten. Gene advised me to submit a petition to the Town Council via the Town's website. He said that I can do it via email. [I can't attend any Monday meetings,]

me	Feb 17	<p>Via email, I submit the following petition to the Mayor and Town Council:</p> <p>Honorable Mayor Hemminger and Council members,</p> <p>I hereby petition the Council to modify the Town formulas for development parking space quantities to mirror what is being done in Flagstaff, Arizona. Attached is an eight page PDF file which documents the issue as I see it.</p> <p>Last night I attended the Planning Commission meeting and ask for their advice. They advised me to petition the Council ... which is what I am now doing.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please contact me by phone or email. I can't attend any Monday evening meetings, but I'm available if you have a non-Monday council meeting.</p>
Ed Harrison	Feb 17	<p>Council member Ed Harrison promptly responded to my petition by giving me this advice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Someone will have to present this for you at a Council meeting unless you want to wait until late April. It can come from others if they can talk about the issue. It would really have been better if the Planning Commission petitioned the Council. 2. More detail would be helpful in the petition itself. 3. I don't intend to use out-of-state cities for land use examples because they may have entirely different abilities to regulate from NC cities. The last item on this Monday's agenda was to list and describe the eight different land use powers that the legislative "revoked" in 2015.
Steve Kenney	Feb 27	<p>Steve is a member of my backgammon club and owns a company which develops apartment housing for students. He used a parking study his company conducted on a South Carolina property of theirs to justify a parking variance on a Richmond, Kentucky property. In South Carolina he had hired a transportation engineer to calculate the number of parking spaces that students would need. They found that the students needed an average of 0.89 spaces per bed. If you add in guest parking, then the figure of 1.0 space per bedroom would be ideal. However, if the students could walk to campus or ride a shuttle bus, then you could go with a lower number.</p> <p>The Richmond, Kentucky ordinance stipulates that 2 parking spaces/bedroom be provided. See section 411.5 on page 52 of their ordinances: http://richmond.ky.us/images/planning/files/DO_April_9_2013_MASTER.pdf</p> <p>Both of these numbers are above what Chapel Hill stipulates.</p>

Chris Anderson	Feb 29	<p>Chris is another member of my backgammon club. As part of his job, Chris visits many parts of the world. In Brazil and other parts of South America developers retain ownership of parking lots and charge for parking. It's a profitable business. There is virtually no free parking ... even at a shopping center or apartment complex.</p> <p>In Amsterdam almost everyone bikes. Here's a picture of the bike parking facility at the central train station of Amsterdam. He said, " I don't think they actually have car parking available, or if they do, it is far from the terminal. They have dozens of bike racks though, like the one in the picture."</p> 
Donna Bell	Mar 7	<p>During 32:33 to 38:00 of the March 7th Town Council meeting, council member Donna Bell and UNC's Stan Austin talk about restricting parking as a way to modify behavior and curb car use. I disagree with their opinion.</p>