

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

CURRENT

SUBJECT: MANAGEMENT OF TIME LIMIT PARKING ZONES AND
PARKING METER ZONES

POLICY NO.: 200-04

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 5, 2025

BACKGROUND:

Parking time limit and parking meter zones are established in accordance with San Diego Municipal Code (Municipal Code) sections 86.0106 and 82.04 in areas where on-street parking is in short supply and monopolized by long-term parkers. Time limit zones can be effectively employed in all areas of the City, whereas parking meter zones are most appropriate where the adjacent properties are not in an exclusively residential area. This policy shall not be construed to apply to residential permit parking, which is governed by Municipal Code sections 86.2001 through 86.2016.

Metered and time-limited parking should be used as a parking management tool in those areas where on-street parking is authorized, and where the absence of regulating time limits results in a rate of turnover of parked vehicles or occupancy that is insufficient for the community's needs.

PURPOSE:

To formalize the City's criteria to establish, manage, and remove parking time limit and parking meter zones, and to assure complete and equitable treatment of all requests for the establishment and removals of such zones.

POLICY:

A. Installation and removal criteria:

1. Under the California Vehicle Code, the City Council may establish or remove a parking meter zone by ordinance. It is the policy of the Council to consider the following criteria as part of a parking study to determine whether to establish or remove time limit or parking meter zones:
 - a. Existing curb parking will be surveyed to compute the occupancy, duration (the average stay per car, minimum of one hour longer than the proposed time limit), and the average turnover (number of cars using each parking space);
 - b. Traffic volume and patterns;
 - c. Enforcement problems relative to contiguity or isolation from other time limit zones or parking meter zones;

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- d. Area affected - a minimum length of one block face (one side of street) except in locations where the block face is divided by an alley intersection, or by a change in land use. In these cases, either one or both sections of the block face may be considered. The type of existing land use within close proximity to the individual parking space should also be considered;
- e. Times of operation relative to Time Limit Zones currently in operation in the general vicinity and should be effective not less than five days a week (holidays excluded);
- f. Impact of the proposed time limit or metered parking on the community;
- g. Location, price, availability, and type of off-street parking;
- h. Input from the Community Parking District Advisory Board, community planning group, Business Improvement District, or any other City Council-recognized community organization;
- i. Alternative forms of transportation available in the community;
- j. Such other information as the City Council, the City Manager, or staff may deem relevant; and
- k. Active residential parking permits within the area.

2. Time-Limited Parking

The City Manager will review the results of a parking study. If the City Manager determines that the installation or removal of time-limited parking is appropriate, the City Manager may take the necessary action to install or remove the time-limited parking.

3. Metered Parking

If the results of the parking study support the installation or removal of metered parking, as determined by the City Manager, and the proposed location is within a Parking Meter Zone that has been authorized by Council, the City Manager may install or remove the metered parking.

B. Parking Studies:

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1. A parking study is required to evaluate whether to install or remove a parking meter zone or time-limited parking. Due to the time and cost associated with commissioning and conducting a parking study, the City Manager shall consider a preliminary evaluation to identify the scope of the study area. Input from the Community Parking District Advisory Board, community planning group, Business Improvement District, or any other City Council-recognized community organization will also be taken into consideration prior to conducting a parking study.
2. A request for a parking study may be made by the City Manager, the City Council, a Community Parking District Advisory Board, community planning group, Business Improvement District, or any other City Council-recognized community organization. If the City Manager recommends metered or time-limited parking, the City Manager shall provide written notification to all property owners (or alternatively, a homeowners association if one exists) within 250 feet of the proposed change. The notification must include the facts supporting the recommendation, information regarding public meetings and forums where the proposed changes will be discussed, the criteria for evaluation, and a description of the approval process.
3. A preliminary evaluation is required to determine whether a more detailed parking study is warranted.
 - a. The preliminary evaluation should consider the following, where applicable:
 - i. Hours and areas to collect parking data, including the hours of operation of adjacent businesses;
 - ii. Special events in the area that may affect parking patterns in the study area;
 - iii. If the area is a tourist destination, whether the parking study should be conducted at both peak and non-peak periods (month, day of week, time of day, etc.);
 - iv. Where segments are within one-half mile of a parking meter zone or Community Parking District boundary, all street segments comprised of majority non-residential land uses should be included in study area; and
 - v. The effect of implementing metered parking on residents within a one-quarter mile of the potential parking meter zone area.

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4. If the parking study segment(s) have existing time limits, a parking study is not necessary because signs are in place regulating parking unless two or more of the thresholds below are met during the preliminary evaluation. A parking study may be conducted outside of the time-limited hours to understand how parking operates without the time limit regulation. The results of a parking occupancy count during a peak period shall determine whether to proceed with a parking study.

If two or more of the following preliminary evaluation thresholds are met, a parking study may be required:

- a. More than 50 percent of on-street parking spaces are occupied during a peak period parking occupancy count (passenger loading zones, commercial loading zones, short term parking spaces, and ADA parking spaces should be excluded);
 - b. Study segments have more on-street parking spaces than off-street parking spaces;
 - c. Study segments are identified as “Districts” in the Community Plan; and
 - d. Street segments are within one-half mile of tourist destination areas such as beaches, regional parks, stadiums, airports, and hotels.
5. Parking studies seek to understand existing parking patterns and may take into account future parking demands or changes in the area that may require certain parking management strategies, including mobility targets identified in the Climate Action Plan, Vision Zero, Mobility Master Plan, Community Plans, Regional Transportation Plan, or other community or traffic planning documents.
6. Parking studies may consider available alternative forms of transportation in the study area.
7. Parking studies may consider the following land uses and locations that may benefit from parking meter zones:
- a. Non-residential uses;
 - b. Mixed use (involving commercial and employment uses);
 - c. Industrial (often including breweries and gyms);
 - d. Within large employment-generating areas (universities, airports, UTC area, NASCO area); and

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- e. Within a Business Improvement District or Maintenance Assessment District.

C. Management of Parking Meter Zones

1. Parking Meter Rates:

Setting and evaluating parking meter rates are a key aspect of the City's management of parking meter zones. Citywide changes to the metered parking base rate (Base Rate) may be made no more than once a year. Base Rate is the fixed minimum price charged for parking per hour.

2. Special Events:

The City may use special event rates at on-street parking spaces in areas near large special events that generate significant short-term increases in the demand for parking in the parking meter zone. For the purposes of this Council Policy, special events are defined as athletic events, concerts, conventions, parades, street festivals, entertainment, or cultural exhibitions or shows, or any other similar event that is expected to generate a significant, short-term demand for on-street parking, with more than 10,000 expected attendees. In these designated special event areas, meter rates may be set up to \$20 per hour during, and up to four hours before the special event, as needed to cover the City's costs for managing parking and traffic during the special event. The City Manager may extend parking time limits during these periods.

Before setting any special event rates, the City Manager will post the locations included in special event areas and meter rates on its website. In addition, the City Manager will install distinctive signs to indicate which blocks are subject to special event pricing. Each parking meter will display the day's rate schedule, including applicable special event rates.

3. Dynamic Pricing:

- a. The City Manager will use parking occupancy data to find the lowest meter rate that achieves a target level of parking availability. To better match prices with parking demand over time, the City Manager will adjust prices based on parking demand, parking turnover, average occupancy, and availability at all metered blocks. The City Manager will make pricing adjustments based on data gathered via the technology available to the City staff. The City Manager will analyze the data at least quarterly to inform adjustments to dynamic pricing times and locations. For each adjustment, the City Manager will adjust the Base Rate using the following formula:

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- i. When occupancy averages 85 percent or more for any given two-hour increment, the City will raise the hourly Base Rate by no more than \$1.00, in any given block.
- ii. If occupancy averages below 50 percent, City staff should assess if a reduction of the Base Rate is appropriate.

D. Changes to parking enforcement periods within residential mixed-use areas:

Residential, business, and visitor parking demands simultaneously exist in areas with mixed residential land uses within parking meter zones. Where the City seeks to enforce parking meters or parking time limits in a residential mixed-use area after 6:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, or on Sundays, the City will provide an opportunity for residents, the impacted Council office, and any Community Parking District Advisory Board for the affected area to provide input on any impact on residents of such enforcement, whether the impact should be mitigated, and any mitigation options. Mitigation options may include a residential parking permit program under Municipal Code sections 86.2001 through 86.2016 for the area with administrative fees set to recover the cost to the City of implementing the program.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-169945 – 03/15/1962

Amended by Resolution R-212430 – 01/16/1975

Amended by Resolution R-257746 – 01/03/1983

Amended by Resolution R-289274 – 10/07/1997

Amended by Resolution R-299837 – 11/15/2004

Retitled to “Management of Time Limit Parking Zones and Parking Meter Zones” and

Amended by Resolution R-316228 – 06/05/2025