

TOWN COUNCIL



STAFF REPORT Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	February 10, 2015
PROJECT:	Ordinance Amending Article 4 Zoning Districts and Article 5 Design Standards of the Unified Development Ordinance to Allow Private Parking Lots as a Permitted Use and Increase the Off-Street Parking Requirements and Standards in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District – First Reading
PROJECT MANAGER:	Kendra Lelie, AICP Planning and Community Development Manager

RECOMMENDATION: The Planning Commission recommends that Town Council approve First Reading of the following application:

ZONE-12-14-8753. A Unified Development Ordinance Text Amendment to amend Article 4, *Zoning Districts* and Article 5, *Design Standards* to allow private parking lot as a permitted use and to increase the off-street parking requirements and standards in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

INTRODUCTION: At the November 2014 Town Council Workshop meeting, Town Council discussed parking within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. As a result of that discussion, Town Council directed Town Staff to revise the off-street parking standards, specifically to increase the amount of parking required to be provided on-site, allow for the provision of stand alone private parking lots, and implement adequate design standards including landscaping and other elements to ensure parking lots will aesthetically blend into the Old Town streetscape.

BACKGROUND: As part of the Town Council Workshop, Town Staff presented initial findings regarding available parking within the Old Town Historic District study area which result from the ongoing Calhoun Street and Adjacent Area Study. Several key items from the survey of existing parking include the following:

- **Existing Public Parking.** There are a total of 622 existing publicly owned parking spaces serving the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.
- **Existing Private Parking.** There are currently 537 privately owned parking spaces at larger parking areas within Old Town of Bluffton.
- **Proximity of Total Parking.** In total, there are currently 851 public and private parking spaces available in the Old Town and located within a 5 minute walk of Calhoun Street and the Promenade.

- **Parking Demand.** Build-out of Calhoun Street, north of Bridge Street, projects approximately 85,000 square feet of building area on Calhoun Street and approximately 195,000 square feet of building area in the Promenade. Application of a parking requirement of 1 or 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet results in a surplus of parking. There is a deficiency of 269 spaces when a more traditional, mixed use parking requirement of 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet is applied.
- **Identified Issues.** The existing parking conditions have led to challenges including:
 - Timing of parking congestion occurring in the evening hours;
 - Strain on available parking spaces from special events;
 - Employees using prime parking spaces;
 - Underutilized parking in private parking lots;
 - Lack of adequate connections to existing public parking lots;
 - Inadequate UDO parking requirements for development; and
 - Proliferation of uses requiring significant parking.
- **Recommended Solutions.** In response to the identified issues, the following solutions were recommended for consideration by Town Council:
 - Implement streetscape improvements that have the potential to add an additional 171 on-street parking spaces;
 - Encourage shared parking agreements between existing and proposed businesses;
 - Implement time restrictions on prime parking spaces;
 - Create adequate connections to public parking lots;
 - Encourage private coordination for a shuttle service; and
 - Increase the parking requirements per the UDO for development.

The proposed amendments that are the subject of this report are the result of this last bullet. At the direction of Town Council, Town Staff is proposing to increase the minimum parking provisions for new development, redevelopment or a change of use throughout Old Town. Although increased, these proposed standards are still reduced from more traditional parking requirements where public parking and walkability is not immediately available as it is in Old Town.

In response to the comments received at the Town Council and Planning Commission meeting, Staff developed an amended draft ordinance for Town Council's review and consideration (attached).

Below are a few key elements of the draft ordinance:

1. Increased parking standards for new development, redevelopment and change of uses within the Old Town as found in the Comparison Table below;
2. Permitted stand-alone parking lots and structures in the Old Town. Please note that in accordance with the Old Town Master Plan which states "Parking should not be placed on corner lots at key intersections"¹, Staff, and

¹ 2006 Old Town Master Plan, Page 5.3, Getting There.

ultimately with the recommendation of the Planning Commission, incorporated a section in the Ordinance that identified where stand-alone parking lots are not permitted; and

3. Revised and clarified credit toward the parking requirement using on-street parking spaces located adjacent to the property being developed, redeveloped or incurring a change of use.

The following table provides a comparison of existing standards to the proposed standards:

Comparison Table: Parking Spaces		
Use	Existing Parking Standard	Proposed Parking Standard
Residential	2 spaces per dwelling unit	2 spaces per dwelling unit 1 space per accessory dwelling unit
Lodging	1 space per 1000 sf	1 space per room for rent plus 1 space per 3 employees
Office	1 space per 1000 sf	2 spaces per 1000 sf
Health/Human Care	1 space per 1000 sf	2 spaces per 1000 sf
Commercial Services	1 space per 1000 sf	2 spaces per 1000 sf
Restaurants	1 space per 1000 sf	4 spaces per 1000 sf
Restaurant – Carry Out Only	1 space per 1000 sf	2 spaces per 1000 sf
Civic/Institutional	1 space per 1000 sf	2 spaces per 1000 sf
Religious Assembly	1 space per 1000 sf	1 space per 6 seats
School	1 space per 1000 sf	1 space per classroom
Recreation & Entertainment	1 space per 1000 sf	Number of spaces shown to be necessary and reasonable by data submitted by the Applicant and as approved by the UDO Administrator

At the January 2015 Planning Commission meeting, Planning Commission members reviewed the draft ordinance and requested amendments to the ordinance which include the following:

1. Revised the parking requirement for a school by eliminating the 1 space per 3 student parking requirement making the requirement 1 space per instructor;
2. Revised the limitation on the placement of stand-alone parking lots at corner lots to apply only to Calhoun Street, May River Road, Bluffton, Bruin and Bridge Street and all cross streets intersecting with these streets; and

3. Required that as determined by the Unified Development Ordinance Administrator, shared parking arrangements must be within a reasonable, accessible distance from the use for which the shared parking lot supports.

It is the intent of these changes to provide a more balanced public and private approach to parking in the Old Town that is sustainable for the long term build-out.

TOWN COUNCIL ACTIONS: The Town Council has the authority to take the following actions with respect to the application:

1. Approve the Ordinance as submitted;
2. Approve the Ordinance with conditions; or
3. Deny the Ordinance as submitted.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: The Town Council is required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.5.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Zoning Text Amendment. These criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding(s).

1. **Section 3.5.3.A.** The application demonstrates consistency with the Comprehensive Plan or, if conditions have changed since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted, consistency with the overall intent of the Comprehensive Plan, recent development trends and the general character of the area.

Finding. The application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, as well as the general character of the area.

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need to monitor parking regulations and needs "to determine if changes are needed to the supply, location, and design of Bluffton's regulations" especially as it relates to environmental, aesthetic and placement issues². In addition, the 2006 Old Town Master Plan³ contains the following applicable goals:

1. When planning for the future of Old Town, we must be sure to plan for an adequate supply of parking to accommodate future growth and development. Appropriate management is necessary; parking is handled differently in the historic center of town.
2. Old Town must have parking, but the Town must handle parking in smart ways so that it does not dominate the entire environment.
3. Parking should not be placed on corner lots at key intersections. Surface parking lots on corners disrupts the urban fabric.
4. Specific parking requirements for the entire Old Town area should be included, lessening the impact of parking requirements in the historic town core.

² 2007 Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element, page 9-27.

³ 2006 Old Town Master Plan, Chapter 5, Getting There, page 5.3

The recommended revisions in the draft ordinance reflect the goals and objectives in the Old Town Master Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

2. **Section 3.5.3.B.** The application shall show consistency with demographic changes, prevailing economic trends, and/or newly recognized best planning practices.

Finding. The application is consistent with demographic changes, new economic trends and best planning practices.

As the Town is experiencing increased growth rates, both in residential and commercial uses, the need to update the parking regulations in response to these recent changes is evident. Staff recognizes that the current parking standards require revisions especially as the UDO (as adopted in 2011) is just now being tested on an increased number of development plan applications and in response to recent land development challenges associated with the current parking regulations.

3. **Section 3.5.3.C.** The application shall be an enhancement to the health, safety and welfare of the Town of Bluffton.

Finding. The application would enhance the health, safety and welfare of the Town of Bluffton.

The proposed amendment to the parking standards will ensure that the required off-street parking developed in Bluffton is adequate for future growth, is compatible with the existing Town character and will promote a multi-modal environment.

4. **Section 3.5.3.D.** The application considers the impact on the provision of public services.

Finding. A positive impact on public services is associated with the proposed parking regulations amendments.

The proposed amendment to the UDO will provide clarification leading to staff review efficiencies and a more user friendly document for applicants and the public at large.

5. **Section 3.5.3.E.** The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Application Manual.

Finding. The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete, meeting all requirements of the Applications Manual.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: Planning Commission finds that the requirements of Section 3.5.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance are met and recommends that the Town Council approve the text amendment application as recommended and revised by Staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance No. 2015-_____
 - a. Exhibit A: Article 4, *Zoning Districts* and Article 5, *Design Standards*

ORDINANCE NO. 2015 - _____

TOWN OF BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE 4 ZONING DISTRICTS AND ARTICLE 5 DESIGN STANDARDS OF THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE TO ALLOW PRIVATE PARKING LOTS AS A PERMITTED USE AND INCREASE THE OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS IN THE OLD TOWN BLUFFTON HISTORIC DISTRICT

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluffton desires to improve the general safety, welfare, health and properties of the citizens of the Town of Bluffton; and,

WHEREAS, to establish the necessary provisions to accomplish the above, the Town of Bluffton has authority to enact resolutions, ordinances, regulations, and procedures pursuant to South Carolina Code of Laws 1976, Section 5-7-30; and,

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluffton's Town Code and Ordinances provide guidance and requirements for development within the Town of Bluffton through regulations set forth to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the Town's citizens, as espoused through the provisions of the Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan and as authorized by the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994, Title 6, Chapter 29 of the Code of Laws for South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluffton Town Council adopted the aforementioned standards, which are known as the Unified Development Ordinance, Chapter 23 of the Code of Ordinances for the Town of Bluffton, South Carolina on October 11, 2011 through Ordinance 2011-15; and

WHEREAS, The Unified Development Ordinance unifies the subdivision, land use, development/design regulations as well as the Old Town Bluffton Historic District Code into a single set of integrated, updated, and streamlined standards; and

WHEREAS, the Unified Development Ordinance, Article 4, Zoning Districts and Article 5, Design Standards provides the current regulations pertaining to land uses and development standards related to parking requirements for development, redevelopment, changes of use, and public parking facilities within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District; and,

WHEREAS, the Town Council shall from time to time examine ordinances to ensure that they are properly regarded, enforced, sufficient and satisfactory to the needs of the community and can further suggest changes as deemed appropriate; and,

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluffton Town Council desires to amend Article 4, Zoning Districts, Section 4.3 Uses by Districts to remove Public Parking as a Civic/Institutional Land Use in the Neighborhood Center Historic District (NCE-HD) and Neighborhood Core Historic District (NC-HD) and add Public and Private Parking Structures and Stand Alone Parking Lots as a permitted land use for the NCE-HD and NC-HD Districts as well as Article 5, Design Standards, Section 5.15.7, Parking to revise the parking standards applicable to the Old Town Bluffton Historic District and ensure adequate design standards are in place to ensure parking lots will aesthetically blend into the Old Town streetscape.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED AND ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, in accordance with the foregoing, the Town hereby amends the Code of Ordinances for the Town of Bluffton, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance as follows:

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. The Town of Bluffton hereby amends the Code Ordinances for the Town Of Bluffton, South Carolina, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance by adopting and incorporating an amendment to Section 4.3, Uses by District of Article 4, Zoning Districts and Section 5.15.7, Parking of Article 5, Design Standards as shown in Exhibit A, which is attached and incorporated hereto.

SECTION 2. REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES. All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent with this Ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION 3. ORDINANCE IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT. This entire Ordinance shall take full force and effect upon adoption.

DONE, RATIFIED AND ENACTED this _____ day of _____, 2015.

This Ordinance was read and passed at first reading on _____, 2015.

Lisa Sulka, Mayor
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

Sandra Lunceford
Clerk, Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

A public hearing was held on this Ordinance on _____, 2015.

Lisa Sulka, Mayor
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

Sandra Lunceford
Clerk, Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

This Ordinance was passed at second reading held on _____, 2015.

Lisa Sulka, Mayor
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

Sandra Lunceford
Clerk, Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

ARTICLE IV – USES BY DISTRICT

Table 4.3: Uses by District	Preserve (PR)	Agricultural (AG)	Rural Mixed Use (RMU)	Residential General (RG)	Neighborhood Core (NC)	General Mixed Use (GM)	Light Industrial (LI)	Riverfront Edge Historic District (RV-HD)	Neighborhood Conservation Historic District (NCV-HD)	Neighborhood General Historic District (NG-HD)	Neighborhood Center Historic District (NCE-HD)	Neighborhood Core Historic District (NC-HD)
	Civic/Institutional											
Cemetery	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	-	-	P	P	P
Club, Lodge, Union Hall, or Social Center	-	-	P	-	P	P	P	-	-	P	P	P
Conference or Exhibition Center	-	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	-	-	-	P
Government Building	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Parks	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Public Parking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	P
Museum	P	P	P	P	P	P	-	P	P	P	P	P
Religious Assembly	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
School	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Utilities	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	p
Other												
Public and Private Parking Structures and Stand Alone Parking Lots	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	P

Old Town Bluffton Historic District

.Sec. 5.15.7 Parking

A. **Intent.** The intent of these parking regulations is to encourage a balance between compact pedestrian oriented development and necessary car storage. The goal is to construct neither more nor less parking than is needed. The parking requirements and regulations are subject to review and adjustment by the UDO Administrator.

B. **Applicability.** In addition to the parking requirements found in Section 5.15.7 Parking within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District, the provisions found in Section 5.11.4 Standards: Design Standards for Parking Areas and Parking Lots and in Section 5.11.6 Standards: Bicycle Parking shall apply to all development in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

B. C. Parking Requirements

1. The minimum parking count requirement shall be in accordance with the following parking standard in Table 5.15.7.C.1.a: 1 parking space for every 1000 square feet of leaseable or saleable building area. These parking spaces may be located either on-site, on-street (directly adjacent to a property), in shared parking scenarios, or in any public parking facility, the closest outside edge of which facility is located no more than 500 feet from the entry to the proposed building.

<u>Table 5.15.7.C.1.a</u> <u>Parking Spaces</u>	
<u>Use</u>	<u>Parking Standard</u>
<u>Residential</u>	<u>2 spaces per dwelling unit</u> <u>1 space per accessory dwelling unit</u>
<u>Lodging</u>	<u>1 space per room for rent plus 1 space per 3 employees</u>
<u>Office</u>	<u>2 spaces per 1000 sf</u>
<u>Health/Human Care</u>	<u>2 spaces per 1000 sf</u>
<u>Commercial Services</u>	<u>2 spaces per 1000 sf</u>
<u>Restaurants</u>	<u>4 spaces per 1000 sf</u>
<u>Restaurant – Carry Out Only</u>	<u>2 spaces per 1000 sf</u>
<u>Civic/Institutional</u>	<u>2 spaces per 1000 sf</u>
<u>Religious Assembly</u>	<u>1 space per 6 seats</u>
<u>School</u>	<u>1 space per instructor</u>
<u>Recreation/Entertainment</u>	<u>Number of spaces shown to be necessary and reasonable by data submitted by the Applicant and as approved by the UDO Administrator</u>

2. Credit shall be given for on-street parking spaces located within the public or private right-of-way that are directly in front of or adjacent to a property. When an on-street parking space is shared between two properties, the following methods shall determine how that parking space will be allocated.
 - a) If the on-street parking space is demarcated, project the property line or, in the absence of a property line separating the subject building or use from the adjacent building, use a line determined by the midpoint between the closest points of the subject and adjacent buildings or uses, perpendicular to the to the edge of parking pavement. From this point measure the distance along the pavement edge to each parking space marking. The use or parcel having the majority of this distance may count the space towards the required parking.
 - b) If the on-street parking space is not demarcated, project the property line or, in the absence of a property line separating the subject building or use from the adjacent building, use a line determined by the midpoint between the closest points of the subject and adjacent buildings or uses, perpendicular to the to the edge of parking pavement. From this point

measure the total distance along the pavement edge between each property line or adjacent building or use. For parallel parking divide the total distance by twenty-two (22) feet and for angled parking divide the total distance by nine (9) feet. Round the resulting value down to the nearest whole number.

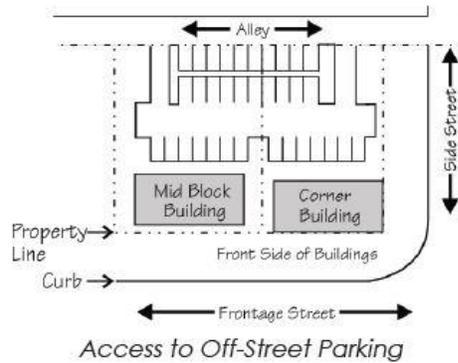
~~When an on-street parking space is shared between two properties, a line perpendicular to the right-of-way at the point separating the properties will be projected to the curb. From this point the distance will be measured along the curb to each parking stripe. The use or parcel having the majority of this distance may count the space towards its required parking.~~

C. D. Off-Street Surface Parking Lot Placement

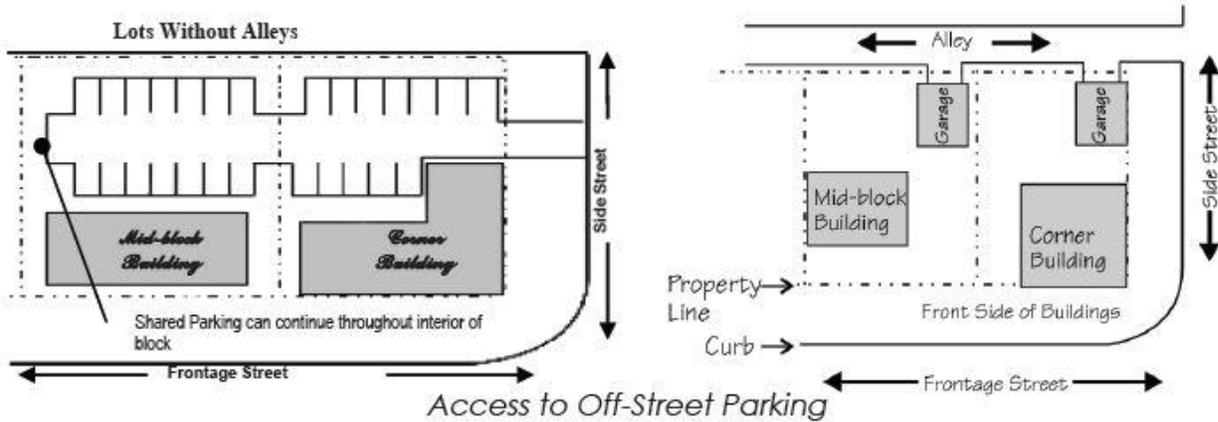
1. Wherever possible, parking lots shall be located behind buildings, such that buildings separate parking areas from the street. In no case shall parking be located in front of a building. In the absence of a building or along secondary frontages, off-street surface parking lots shall be set back a minimum of ~~20~~ 10 feet from property lines along public rights-of-way, excluding rear lanes. Outbuildings serving as garages facing rear lanes shall be permitted within this setback along the rear lane.
2. In order to provide a horizontal and vertical visual buffer softening the public view, the setback between any public right-of-way and an off-street parking area shall contain a combination of landscaping, including a variety of trees and shrubs capable of providing year round screening, and architectural features such as, but not limited to, garden walls, fences and ~~hedges~~ columns designed in accordance with the Old Town Bluffton Historic District Architectural Standards. The visual buffer shall be a minimum of 42 inches in height and should have a minimum 50% opacity. Shrubs shall be projected to reach their required height and opacity within one year of installation.
3. The buffer between any public right-of-way and an off-street parking area shall contain pedestrian amenities such as, but not limited to, benches, fountains, or other features to create visual interest and continuity in the streetscape. The perimeter of off-street parking not adjacent to a public right-of-way shall include a landscape buffer a minimum of 5 feet in width, be a minimum of 42 inches in height, and contain vegetative material to visually screen the parking area from adjacent properties.
4. In accordance with the Old Town Master Plan, public and private stand-alone parking lots shall not be located on corner lots at the following intersections:
 - a. Calhoun Street and any cross street;
 - b. May River Road and any cross street;
 - c. Bruin Road and any cross street;
 - d. Bridge Street and any cross street; and
 - e. Bluffton Road and any cross street.

D. E Access to Off-Street Parking

1. Rear lanes, service lanes, or secondary frontages where present, shall be the primary source of access to off-street parking. When rear lanes, service lanes, or secondary frontages are not present, parking shall be accessed by a single width driveway placed at the side of the lot, adjacent to the neighboring property line and a demonstrated effort made to obtain a cross access easement allowing for shared access between adjoining properties.



2. Access between parking lots across property lines is also strongly encouraged. Pedestrian connectivity must be provided from the parking lot to the building which the parking serves or in the case of public parking to the nearest public pathway.



E. F. Public Parking Structure

1. Public parking structures shall comply with the applicable setback for Civic Buildings and reserve room for Liner Buildings between parking structures and the lot frontage. The Liner Building shall be no less than 20 feet in depth. Liner Buildings may be detached from or attached to parking structures. A Liner Building is only required along the first story of a public parking structure.

F.G. Shared Parking

1. An efficient method for handling parking in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District is through the coordinated use of shared parking. Businesses and churches may be able to use certain parking spaces during the day while these same spaces are then used by residents at night. Shared parking works in a mixed-use, park-once, pedestrian-friendly environment, all of which are key elements in the *Old Town Master Plan*. Development proposals in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District should include shared parking strategies to minimize surface parking.
2. Shared parking may be applied when land uses have different parking demand patterns and are able to use the same parking spaces/areas throughout the day. Shared parking is most effective when these land uses have significantly different peak parking characteristics that vary by time of day, day of week, and/or season of the year. In these situations, shared parking strategies will result in fewer total parking spaces needed when compared to the total number of spaces needed for each land use or business separately. Land uses often used in specific shared parking arrangements include office, restaurants, retail, colleges, churches, cinemas, and special event situations. Shared parking is often inherent in mixed-use developments, which include one or more businesses that are complementary, ancillary, or support other activities. General parking lots and/or on-street parking that is available for patrons of nearby businesses/commercial districts is another form of shared parking. The UDO Administrator shall evaluate all shared parking applications to ensure that parking is handled appropriately in Old Town.
3. The UDO Administrator shall evaluate all shared parking applications to ensure that parking is handled appropriately in Old Town. As determined by the UDO Administrator, the shared parking lot shall be a reasonable and accessible distance from the uses for which it will serve. The approval of a shared parking application by the UDO Administrator is conditioned upon the Shared Parking Easement required by Section 4(f) herein being recorded with the Office of the Register of Deeds for Beaufort County, South Carolina, within thirty (30) days of the Administrator's written approval of any plan.
4. Factors evaluated to establish shared parking arrangements should include operating hours, seasonal/daily peaks in parking demand, the sites orientation, location of access driveways, transit service, accessibility to other nearby parking areas, pedestrian connections, distance to parking area, availability of parking spaces, cooperation of adjacent owners). The minimum number of parking spaces for a mixed use development or where shared parking strategies are proposed shall be determined by a study prepared by the applicant following the procedures of the Urban Land Institute Shared Parking Report.
5. The shared parking plan submitted by the applicant shall include one or more of the following:
 - a. Site plan of parking spaces intended for shared parking and their proximity to land uses that they will serve.
 - b. A signage plan that directs drivers to the most convenient parking areas for each particular use or group of uses (if such distinctions can be made).

- c. A pedestrian circulation plan that shows connections and walkways between parking areas and land uses. These paths should be as direct and short as possible.
- d. A safety and security plan that addresses lighting and maintenance of the parking areas.
- e. Any additional applicable information, as requested by town staff.

G.H. Garages

1. Garage doors shall be positioned no closer to streets, squares or parks than 20 feet behind the principal plane of the building frontage. Garage doors shall not exceed 12 feet in width. Where space permits, garage doors shall face the side or the rear, not the front.
2. Driveways shall be a maximum of 10 feet wide in front of the principal plane of the building.