Estimating Parking Utilization in Multifamily Residential Buildings in Washington, D.C.

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The District of Columbia's Department of Transportation and Office of Planning recently led a research effort to understand how parking utilization in multifamily residential buildings is related to neighborhood and building characteristics. Prior research has shown that the overbuilding of residential parking leads to increased automobile ownership, vehicle miles traveled, and congestion. Parking availability can affect travel mode choices and decrease the use of transportation alternatives. In addition, zoning regulations requiring supplies of parking that exceed demand can increase housing costs and inhibit the development of mixed-use, mixed-income, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. The primary research goal was to develop an empirical model for parking utilization in Washington, D.C., and to apply the model to an interactive web-based tool, named ParkRight DC, to support and guide parking supply decisions. A transparent, data-driven process for parking supply decisions may help relieve problems associated with over- or undersupply of parking. This paper outlines the data collection, model-development process, functionality of the resulting tool, and findings on key relationships and policy implications. The model and the associated tool rely on local information reflecting residential development and automobile ownership patterns drawn from a survey of multifamily residential parking use at 115 buildings covering approximately 20,000 dwelling units in the District of Columbia. The resulting model achieved an R^2-value of .835, which indicates a strong model, given the complexity of the relationship being researched.

Research has shown that overbuilding of residential parking leads to increased automobile ownership, vehicle miles traveled, and congestion. Parking availability can affect travel mode choices, increasing single-occupancy vehicle use and decreasing the use of transportation alternatives. In addition, zoning regulations requiring parking supplies that exceed demand can increase housing costs and inhibit the development of mixed-use, mixed-income, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. Evidence-based information to guide the development review process and help planners and developers optimize the number and price of parking spaces provided could help avoid problems associated with over- or undersupply of parking.

Residential parking demand has long been a contentious issue in Washington, D.C., with development proposals often generating passionate arguments by citizens concerned about parking spillover that would reduce the availability of on-street parking (as well as traffic impacts generally). Residents often do not understand the potential societal cost of providing overparked developments (where more parking is provided than is needed), including increased housing costs and traffic impacts. Quite simply, one of the most effective transportation demand management (TDM) measures is providing appropriate supply for vehicle storage.

This issue is not unique to the District of Columbia. In many cities, concerns regarding the effects of new development are often focused on impacts to residential parking availability and parking cost (*1–3*). Discussions of parking are especially passionate and divisive. Various stakeholders come to the discussion armed with assumptions and biases and are rarely informed by empirical parking data because of the lack of available parking utilization resources. By providing a robust, data-driven parking utilization model and publicly accessible web-based tool, this research promises to generate better-informed discussions of parking. This study focused on researching and developing relationships between parking utilization and other factors, in support of efforts to use scarce resources more efficiently and minimize the overprovision of parking.

EFFECTS OF SPACE DEVOTED TO PARKING

Parked cars require a substantial amount of space. An on-street parking space may require between 144 and 200 ft^2. Off-street surface parking requires access lanes and ramps. Thus, each space in a surface parking lot consumes between 300 and 350 ft^2. Structured above- and belowground parking requires additional space for structural supports, stairs, and possibly elevators (*4*).

Parking regulations shape development so that walking, bicycling, and transit are less convenient when space devoted to surface parking spreads out destinations. This amplifies automobile ownership, driving, and parking needs. An oversupply of parking can damage natural landscapes through urban sprawl, increase impervious surfaces, and add to greenhouse gas emissions (*5*). In an urban context, where land prices are sufficiently high, the surface space required for parking is reduced through the creation of above- or belowground parking garages. This has price implications.

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IMPACTS OF PARKING COST

Growing demand for residences and commercial space in some cities is running up against requirements for on-site parking. To the extent that parking is not needed as much by new residents and employees, parking requirements needlessly add to the expense of urban development (*6*). The cost of constructing parking, exclusive of land costs, may be around $10,000 per space for surface parking lots and up to $30,000 per space for underground structured parking (*7*). To this must be added the cost of land, the cost of operations, maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement, and the forgone net revenues from alternative uses of the land devoted to parking. JBG, a developer in the Washington, D.C., area, estimates the cost of unleased parking spaces in a belowground garage to be $480 per space per month (for a $50,000 space). At the same time, the market rent for a space in the U Street area is $221 per space per month. Thus, even market-rate parking fails to cover costs and appears to be subsidized by others (*8*). Unless parking costs are separated (unbundled) from the cost of housing households are forced to pay for parking regardless of their needs. Even when parking costs are unbundled, developers often cannot charge the full cost recovery price for parking in a competitive housing market (*9*).

HOW MUCH PARKING SHOULD URBAN AREAS PROVIDE?

Existing resources for guiding parking provision decisions are incomplete or unsuited for application to urban areas such as the District of Columbia. Typically, decisions about how much parking to provide rely on the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) informational report, *Parking Generation* (*10*). The information gathered from ITE tends to be from automobile-dependent suburban locations that do not apply well to a vibrant urban area with many transportation options.

The ITE report emphasizes it is intended as an informational report and not as a manual, recommended practice, or standard, and that local conditions should be carefully considered. The Urban Land Institute's (ULI) book, *Shared Parking,* is a complementary, commonly cited resource for mixed-use development parking supply setting; it includes a solid set of principles for considering parking needs of mixed-use developments (*11*). However, as with the ITE report, development context needs to be carefully considered, and the case studies in the Urban Land Institute book primarily are oriented to town-center-style suburban developments.

Evidence from the Literature

Several recent studies have highlighted the oversupply of parking in multifamily residential developments. Most of these studies have assessed parking supply and demand in transit-oriented developments (TODs) or different types of development centers to help ascertain the relationship between development density and multimodal access with parking utilization.

To build evidence that TODs are over-parked, Cervero et al. looked at 31 multifamily residential housing complexes within two-thirds of a mile of rail transit in metropolitan Portland, Oregon, and in the East Bay of the San Francisco, California, region. The research uncovered that the average amount of parking built for all projects was 1.57 spaces per unit, notably above the ITE's rate of 1.2 spaces as well as the average observed demand of 1.15 spaces (*5*). Further research into the mismatch between parking supply and demand at TODs in the Bay Area found that, on average, only 1.3 spaces per unit were occupied during the period of peak demand but 1.7 spaces were supplied (*11*). A comparison of multifamily buildings at an urban and suburban center in King County, Washington, found an oversupply of parking at both locations, with greater excess at the suburban location (0.58 spaces per unit) than at the urban one (0.22 spaces per unit). Additionally, demand was less than the ITE rate at both types of centers, but the difference was more dramatic in the urban center, where observed demand was about half the ITE rate (*12*).

Additional research in King County as part of the Right Size Parking Project confirmed these findings. The results of the data collection indicated that in the central business district, parking supply averaged 0.8 spaces per residential unit and utilization averaged 0.6 vehicles per occupied residential unit. This pattern repeated itself in urban and suburban settings, resulting in a countywide average supply of 1.4 spaces per residential unit and utilization that averaged 1.0 vehicles per occupied residential unit (*13*).

Even with this compelling research, a lack of consensus remains on factors that drive demand for parking and account for the variation in auto ownership in multifamily buildings, especially in urban locations. Thus, a need remains to develop context-appropriate information for the development types and unique urban forms found in Washington, D.C.

Evidence from Practice

Required minimum amounts of parking minimums associated with zoning became commonplace as zoning spread across the country in the first half of the 20th century. The first parking requirements in the District of Columbia were established in 1942 through the District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Parking Facility Act adopted by the U.S. Congress. Less than a month later, D.C. adopted an amendment to its zoning regulations calling for compulsory off-street parking. In 1956, Harold Lewis, a New York planning and zoning consultant, recommended a major zoning overhaul, including stricter parking requirements, the better to meet current and future demand (*14*). For example, the Lewis Plan cited the need to require off-street parking for all new development, hoping for "the eventual removal of curb parking and the subsequent freeing of the traffic arteries" and anticipating a deficit of tens of thousands of parking spaces throughout D.C. (*15*). The zoning regulations that went into effect in May 1958 adopted most of the Lewis Plan's recommendations. The basic structure of the regulations has been in place since then, with some significant amendments over the past five decades. More recent amendments include parking requirements being relaxed for redevelopment of historic properties, development near Metrorail stations, and for developments that employ various TDM strategies. These requirements still remain higher than many advocates claim is necessary. Existing off-street parking requirements can be found in the D.C. Municipal Regulations, Title 11, Chapter 21.

Changing demographics and behaviors make it difficult to predict how much parking is truly required today. Although the population of the District of Columbia is rising, vehicle miles traveled per capita has been declining since 1996. Additionally, between 2010 and 2012, the number of car-free households in the District grew by 12,612—representing 88% of new households citywide. During that time, the share of car-free households increased from 35% to 38%, second only to New York City (*16*). These trends indicate that less parking may be needed. For developers, the right amount of parking has to do with the trade-off of the marketability of units on the basis of how much parking a renter or buyer wants to lease or buy, the cost of building the parking, and the potential of a non-car-owning market. In costly urban sites that are walkable and well served by transit, developers tend to want to build only enough underground parking to satisfy a demand for parking even where demand is low.

In practice, developers and their bankers and prospective retail tenants provide much direction on parking decisions. Since the 2008 recession, there is some evidence that developers are increasingly scrutinizing the size of parking facilities as a way to cut costs and that bankers have become less insistent on ample parking when making financing decisions. There are many recent local examples, in both the commercial and residential markets, that certainly help justify the need for a better understanding of parking utilization.

Bankers, developers, and retailers who have experience in suburban settings may find it difficult to estimate parking requirements in a transit-friendly and pedestrian-friendly urban environment. For example, a development in Columbia Heights in the District included some larger stores that had not yet typically established urban locations. Although parking requirements for this location were set at about half of suburban requirements, actual parking utilization has been about one quarter of those requirements. Although vehicular travel to this shopping complex is light, patronage has been robust; higher-than-expected sales tax revenue allowed municipal bonds that financed the parking garage to be retired 15 years ahead of schedule (*17*). Excess parking has been constructed in some new residential buildings as well. For instance, apartments in a new rental building near Union Station are fully leased, but only 60% of the parking spaces are leased (*18*).

NEW APPROACH: RIGHT-SIZE PARKING MODEL

Innovation Leader: King County, Washington

Noting the negative impacts caused by oversupply of parking and the lack of resources to inform parking provision decisions better, King County Metro Transit undertook the so-called Right Size Parking project. The project developed models and a website to estimate parking demand and associated impacts in multifamily residential developments in urban and suburban infill environments.

The project collected data from multifamily residential buildings in areas where multifamily residential development is both likely and zoned for. These areas include downtown areas, TODs, and more suburban locations with all-day transit service (*19*). These areas encompass approximately 270 mi^2 of the 2,115 mi^2 in King County.

A total of 223 buildings were surveyed. Place-based statistics, such as residential density and block size, were tracked to ensure adequate diversity. The survey collected information about each building and parking facilities were visited within the designated time period (midnight to 5:00 a.m.) to count the number of occupied spaces.

The final regression included 208 buildings. Many variables were tested in the regression analysis, from an urban form perspective as well as building characteristics. The final regression equation (with an R^2-value of 81%) used seven independent variables to estimate parking utilization (*9*). In order of decreasing significance, these are

- Gravity measure of transit service frequency,
- Percentage of units designated affordable,
- Average number of bedrooms per unit,
- Gravity measure of jobs plus population in the surrounding neighborhoods,
- Unit size,
- Average rent, and
- The price charged for parking.

Using this robust model as the engine for the website calculator allows users to estimate parking utilization for a given building on any parcel in the developed part of King County.

Washington, D.C., and Revised Approach

There are many lessons learned and applicable outcomes of the King County approach that can be translated to the Washington, D.C., context. Seeing the value of the web-based tool, the District Department of Transportation (DOT) and Office of Planning assembled a team that included many of the same technical experts involved in the King County project to research the local context and customize the tool. Early in the development of this approach, the team recognized that the city's context required a rethinking of the research approach and the expected use of the tool. Critical context considerations included the following:

1. Smaller geographic area and much higher development density. Washington, D.C., is only 61 mi^2, compared with King County's 2,115 mi^2. Population and housing unit density are both more than 10 times higher in Washington, D.C., than they are in King County (9,865 persons per square mile compared with 913 persons per square mile).
2. Parking demand in Washington, D.C., is significantly lower than in King County, in part a result of the higher density, the greater mix of uses throughout Washington, D.C., and an expansive transit system.
3. Washington, D.C., is more uniformly urban than King County and the data collection process would show less diversity on neighborhood context-related variables. Sensitivity to these types of variables within the model, and ultimately the tool, was expected to be more subtle.
4. Curbside parking is a scarce resource and appears to be a recurring political issue throughout much of Washington, D.C. The balance between the use of private, developer-provided parking and on-street parking managed through the city's residential parking permit program is a unique variable for consideration in this model.
5. Stakeholders who will utilize the tool represent a broader audience. Unique to the District are the advisory neighborhood commissions (ANCs). ANCs are the body of local government with the closest official ties to the people in a neighborhood and are directly involved in the development review process. ANCs consider a wide range of policies and programs affecting each neighborhood, including traffic, parking, and zoning, and ANC positions on parking relief requests are given great weight by the District's zoning bodies.

IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Development of a model reflecting the unique characteristics of multifamily housing in Washington, D.C., required a robust data collection and survey process. The project's initial goal was to collect data at 100 to 120 multifamily residential buildings. Because of the city's compact geography and relatively homogeneous levels of transit access, fewer sites than in King County were needed to establish a representative sample.

Site Identification and Screening

The project first identified properties controlled by major developers and property management companies to maximize the outreach efficiency. These sites were screened for a variety of factors, including (*a*) the presence of off-street parking; (*b*) the sufficiency of the off-street parking supply, to remove sites with a high potential for spillover to on-street spaces; and (*c*) development size, with a cutoff of 10 occupied units. Building occupancy was not considered as a separate factor, although newer buildings were given several months to lease enough units that parking demand stabilized.

The resulting sites were compiled in a database and mapped. Underrepresented neighborhoods and corridors were scrutinized using field visits and online mapping services to identify additional properties. The database was updated throughout the process to ensure that the collected sample contained sufficient geographic breadth across the District and compositional depth of the different sizes and types of residential buildings found in those neighborhoods.

Approval and Data Collection

The team contacted each property's ownership for approval to conduct the count and receive contact information for the properties' managers. Responses to these requests were mixed, but over time enough willing participants were found to fill out a representative sample of properties.

Once corporate approval and property manager contact information were received, the count team scheduled a time to collect building information. This interview covered basic parameters for use as potential independent variables in the model (Figure 1). The interview also was used to arrange site access for the overnight parking occupancy count, conducted at a later date between midnight and 5:00 a.m. on a typical weekday.

The resulting sample included 115 buildings where data were collected during the spring and summer of 2014 and 2015, of which 13 had no parking. These zero-parking sites were included to gain an understanding of building parameters, relative to sites with parking. The 115 buildings covered 20,541 dwelling units, 19,223 of which were occupied (94%), representing approximately 18% of apartment stock in Washington, D.C. (*20*). Condominium buildings were less likely to participate, meaning the sample consisted largely of apartments.

CRUNCHING DATA: WHAT THE MODEL SHOWS

The data collected on the 115 buildings were used to develop a model of parking utilization similar to the one in King County. Sites that were condominiums, or had owner-occupied units mixed with rental units, zero-parking buildings, and buildings that had incomplete data from the survey were left out of the regression analysis. This left 92 apartment buildings that have complete data and are in the model. Figure 2 is a map of all 115 sites surveyed, overlaid with the modeled value for parking utilization.

Across the surveyed sites, only 60% of the parking stalls are being used, on average. Figure 3 shows an abundance of parking in these buildings, plotting observed parked cars versus provided stalls. Data collection thus confirmed that buildings appear to be oversupplied with parking.

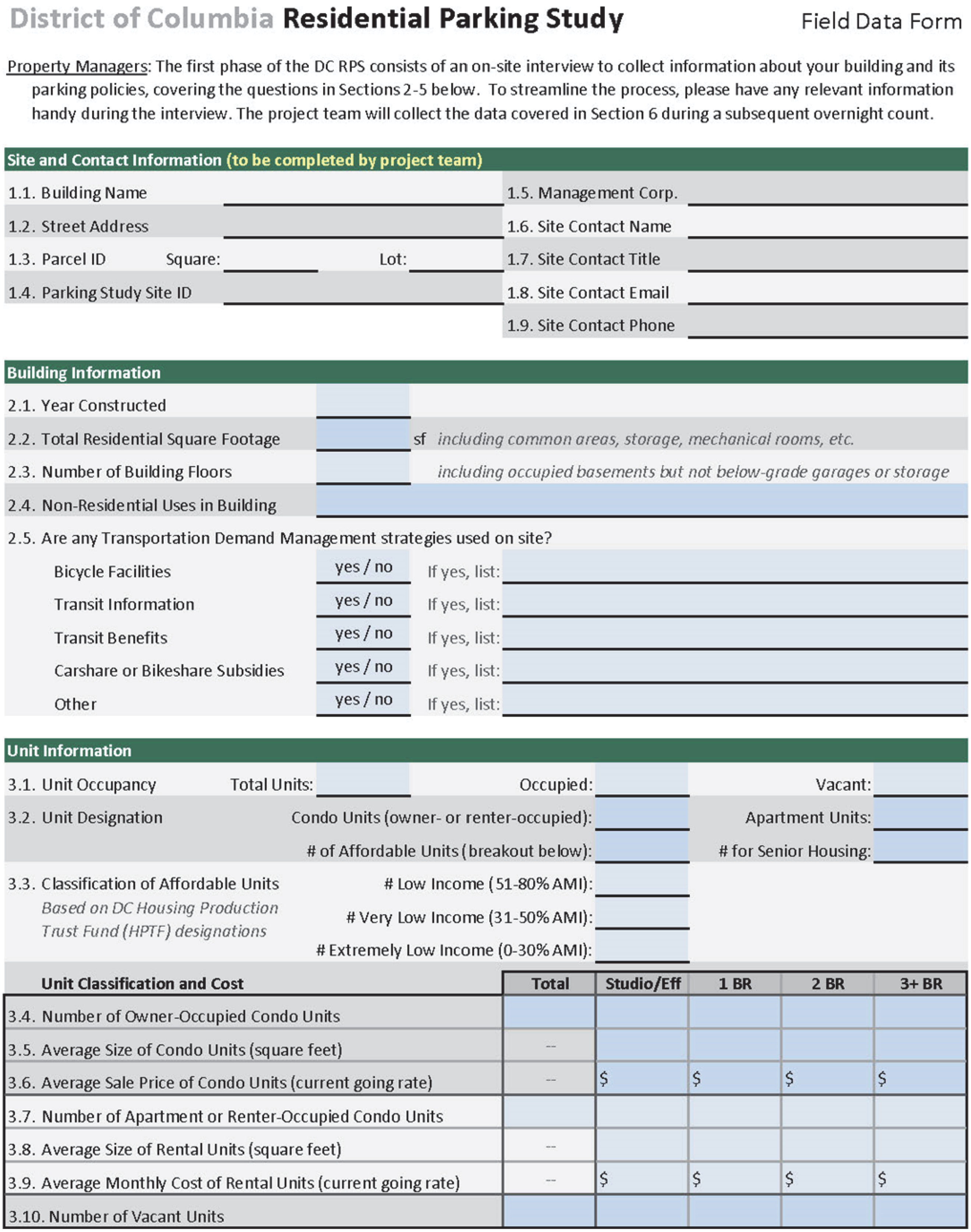
Table 1 lists the final variables used in the model and shows summary statistics of these variables for the 92 buildings whose data were used in the regression. The dependent variable for this regression is the observed parked cars per occupied housing unit in the building, (parking utilization). The independent variables were chosen to optimize both goodness of fit and predictability. The tested variables were grouped into two major categories: variables that describe the building and those that describe the surrounding neighborhood.

The variables tested for building characteristics included bedrooms per unit, square feet of units, rents, parking supply, parking charges, and various amenities such as bicycle facilities and access to car-share vehicles. In contrast with the King County model, the use of parking supply was employed in the model, and was found to be the variable that was correlated most with parking utilization. Other building-related variables were found to be statistically significant as well, including average rent, average unit square feet, fraction of units dedicated for affordable housing, parking price, and if the building management provides information on the availability of public transportation.

The variables tested to describe the building's neighborhood included distance to transit amenities (both Euclidean and network), distance to car and bikesharing facilities, several walkability measures such as block size, intersection density, link to node ratio, population and employment intensity, transit frequency and connectivity, and adjacency to residential permit parking (as a surrogate for on-street parking availability; this was not significant). The most significant neighborhood variable was walkability as measured by block size. Also included in the final model was the total number of jobs available by transit with a 45-min transit commute, the number of retail and service sector jobs within close proximity, and transit available in a walking distance.

Because all of the buildings surveyed were in an urban setting, the model testing approach was more nuanced than in King County. This quantitative research combines the building data with the neighborhood data to estimate an ordinary least squares regression model of parking utilization. This approach considers all interactions between the independent variables. For example, the transit trips per hour variable was correlated with parking utilization, but once walkability (measured by block size) and all the other variables were introduced into the regression, it was found that the statistical significance was reduced to a level that would mean it was not included in the final model. However, if transit trips per hour and block size were interacted, then the interaction variable was found to meet the significance criteria of $\Pr(<|t|)$ greater than 15% (raised from the usual 5% to include this important interaction). All variables were interacted with other variables and the final model form was chosen so that all interacting variables meet the significance criteria. Equation 1 is the final regression equation (all variables are defined in Table 1); the colored backdrop on the map in Figure 1 shows how this modeled parking utilization varies, by parcel, across the District.

$$\begin{aligned}P_{\text{use}} = 1.47 &- \frac{1.4}{\left(1 + P_{\text{supply}}\right)} - \frac{25 \times \ln\left(1 + J_{45}\right)}{U_{\text{size}}} - 0.00006 \times P_{\text{price}} \\ &\times J_{\text{retail}} - \frac{20 \times J_{\text{retail}}}{U_{\text{rent}}} + \frac{0.028 \times J_{\text{retail}}}{\left(1 + P_{\text{supply}}\right)} - 0.008 \times F_{\text{affd}} \\ &\times \ln\left(1 + J_{45}\right) + \frac{323}{U_{\text{bedrooms}} \times U_{\text{size}}} + 0.06 \times B_{\text{size}} - \frac{0.08 \times B_{\text{size}}}{U_{\text{bedrooms}}} \\ &- \frac{0.9 \times T_{\text{inf}}}{T_{\text{walk}}} + \frac{0.08 \times B_{\text{size}}}{T_{\text{walk}}} \qquad (1)\end{aligned}$$



District of Columbia Residential Parking Study Field Data Form

Property Managers: The first phase of the DC RPS consists of an on-site interview to collect information about your building and its parking policies, covering the questions in Sections 2-5 below. To streamline the process, please have any relevant information handy during the interview. The project team will collect the data covered in Section 6 during a subsequent overnight count.

Site and Contact Information (to be completed by project team)

1.1. Building Name
1.2. Street Address
1.3. Parcel ID Square: Lot:
1.4. Parking Study Site ID
1.5. Management Corp.
1.6. Site Contact Name
1.7. Site Contact Title
1.8. Site Contact Email
1.9. Site Contact Phone

Building Information

2.1. Year Constructed
2.2. Total Residential Square Footage sf *including common areas, storage, mechanical rooms, etc.*
2.3. Number of Building Floors *including occupied basements but not below-grade garages or storage*
2.4. Non-Residential Uses in Building
2.5. Are any Transportation Demand Management strategies used on site?

Bicycle Facilities	yes / no	If yes, list:
Transit Information	yes / no	If yes, list:
Transit Benefits	yes / no	If yes, list:
Carshare or Bikeshare Subsidies	yes / no	If yes, list:
Other	yes / no	If yes, list:

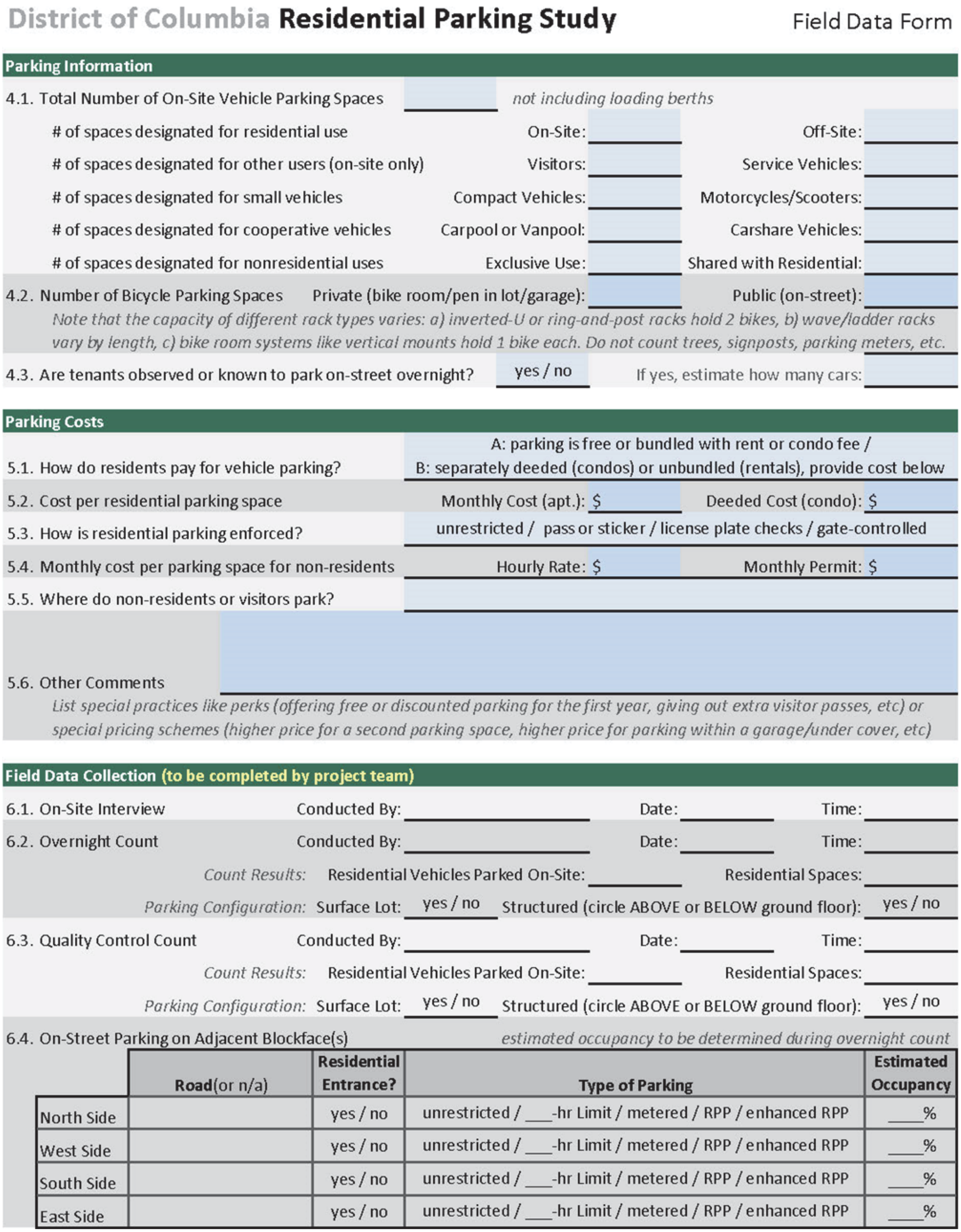
Unit Information

3.1. Unit Occupancy Total Units: Occupied: Vacant:
3.2. Unit Designation Condo Units (owner- or renter-occupied): Apartment Units:
# of Affordable Units (breakout below): # for Senior Housing:
3.3. Classification of Affordable Units # Low Income (51-80% AMI):
Based on DC Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) designations # Very Low Income (31-50% AMI):
Extremely Low Income (0-30% AMI):

Unit Classification and Cost	Total	Studio/Eff	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR
3.4. Number of Owner-Occupied Condo Units					
3.5. Average Size of Condo Units (square feet)	--				
3.6. Average Sale Price of Condo Units (current going rate)	--	$	$	$	$
3.7. Number of Apartment or Renter-Occupied Condo Units					
3.8. Average Size of Rental Units (square feet)	--				
3.9. Average Monthly Cost of Rental Units (current going rate)	--	$	$	$	$
3.10. Number of Vacant Units					

FIGURE 1 Interview form used in study, showing data collected for each site.

(continued)



District of Columbia **Residential Parking Study**

Field Data Form

Parking Information

4.1. Total Number of On-Site Vehicle Parking Spaces ______ *not including loading berths*

# of spaces designated for residential use On-Site: ______ Off-Site: ______

# of spaces designated for other users (on-site only) Visitors: ______ Service Vehicles: ______

# of spaces designated for small vehicles Compact Vehicles: ______ Motorcycles/Scooters: ______

# of spaces designated for cooperative vehicles Carpool or Vanpool: ______ Carshare Vehicles: ______

# of spaces designated for nonresidential uses Exclusive Use: ______ Shared with Residential: ______

4.2. Number of Bicycle Parking Spaces Private (bike room/pen in lot/garage): ______ Public (on-street): ______

Note that the capacity of different rack types varies: a) inverted-U or ring-and-post racks hold 2 bikes, b) wave/ladder racks vary by length, c) bike room systems like vertical mounts hold 1 bike each. Do not count trees, signposts, parking meters, etc.

4.3. Are tenants observed or known to park on-street overnight? yes / no If yes, estimate how many cars: ______

Parking Costs

5.1. How do residents pay for vehicle parking? A: parking is free or bundled with rent or condo fee / B: separately deeded (condos) or unbundled (rentals), provide cost below

5.2. Cost per residential parking space Monthly Cost (apt.): $ ______ Deeded Cost (condo): $ ______

5.3. How is residential parking enforced? unrestricted / pass or sticker / license plate checks / gate-controlled

5.4. Monthly cost per parking space for non-residents Hourly Rate: $ ______ Monthly Permit: $ ______

5.5. Where do non-residents or visitors park? ______

5.6. Other Comments ______

List special practices like perks (offering free or discounted parking for the first year, giving out extra visitor passes, etc) or special pricing schemes (higher price for a second parking space, higher price for parking within a garage/under cover, etc)

Field Data Collection (to be completed by project team)

6.1. On-Site Interview Conducted By: ______ Date: ______ Time: ______

6.2. Overnight Count Conducted By: ______ Date: ______ Time: ______

Count Results: Residential Vehicles Parked On-Site: ______ Residential Spaces: ______

Parking Configuration: Surface Lot: yes / no Structured (circle ABOVE or BELOW ground floor): yes / no

6.3. Quality Control Count Conducted By: ______ Date: ______ Time: ______

Count Results: Residential Vehicles Parked On-Site: ______ Residential Spaces: ______

Parking Configuration: Surface Lot: yes / no Structured (circle ABOVE or BELOW ground floor): yes / no

6.4. On-Street Parking on Adjacent Blockface(s) *estimated occupancy to be determined during overnight count*

	Road (or n/a)	**Residential Entrance?**	**Type of Parking**	**Estimated Occupancy**
North Side		yes / no	unrestricted / ___-hr Limit / metered / RPP / enhanced RPP	____%
West Side		yes / no	unrestricted / ___-hr Limit / metered / RPP / enhanced RPP	____%
South Side		yes / no	unrestricted / ___-hr Limit / metered / RPP / enhanced RPP	____%
East Side		yes / no	unrestricted / ___-hr Limit / metered / RPP / enhanced RPP	____%

FIGURE 1 *(continued)* Interview form used in study, showing data collected for each site.

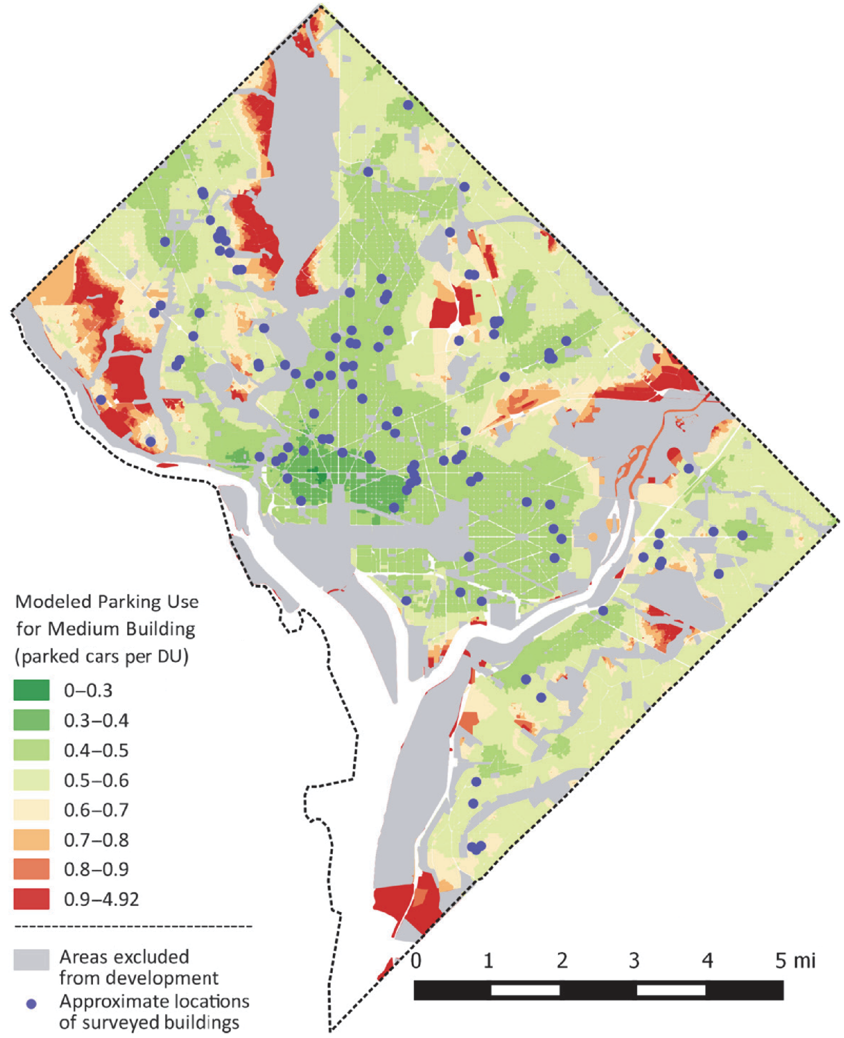


FIGURE 2 Approximate locations of surveyed buildings (DU = dwelling unit).

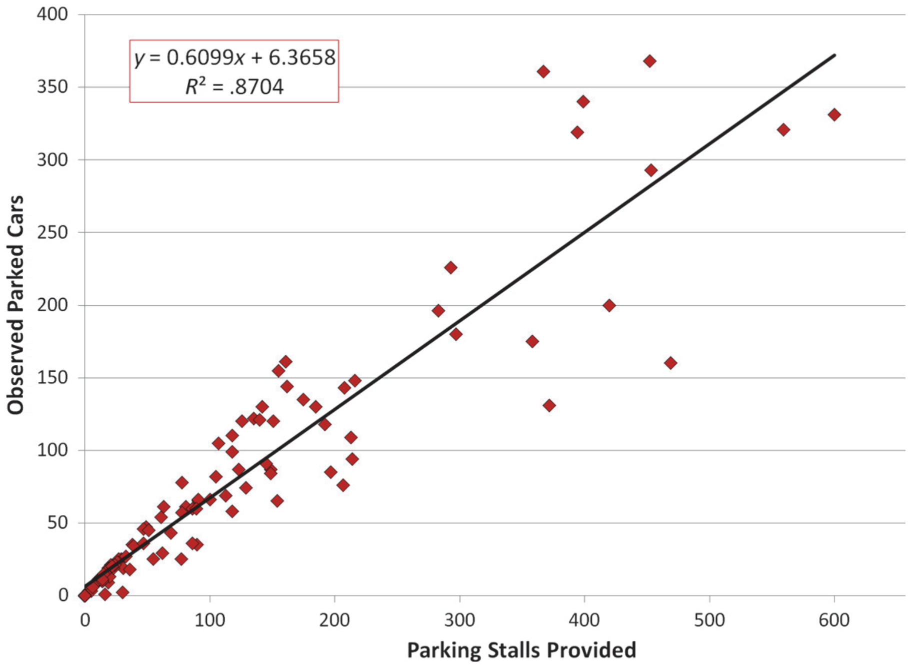


FIGURE 3 Parked cars versus parking stalls.

TABLE 1 Summary of Variables

Variable	Description	Data Source	Transform Function	Min.	Avg.	Max.
Dependent Variable						
Parking utilization, P_{use}	Observed parked cars per occupied housing unit in the building	Survey and site visit	None x	0.166	0.44	1.125
Building Independent Variables						
Parking supply per unit, P_{supply}	Number of stalls provided divided by total number of units in building	Survey	Inverse + 1 $1/(1 + x)$	0.017	0.641	3.750
Transit information, T_{inf}	Dummy variable set to 1 if there is transit information available	Survey	None x	0	0.30	1
Fraction affordable, F_{affd}	Fraction of units set aside for affordable housing	Survey	None x	0	0.20	1
Average unit size, U_{size}	Average unit size (ft^2) for all units in building occupied or vacant	Survey	Inverse $1/x$	436.9 ft^2	758 ft^2	1,113.0 ft^2
Parking price, P_{price}	Average price charged for parking one car in the building's parking facilities	Survey	None x	\$0.00	\$123.88	\$300.00
Average bedroom per unit, U_{bedrooms}	Average bedrooms per unit reported for all units in building occupied or vacant. Studio units were counted as one bedroom and units with three or more were counted as three.	Survey	Inverse $1/x$	1.0	1.4	2.4
Average rent, U_{rent}	Average rent for all units in building occupied or vacant	Survey	Inverse $1/x$	\$639	\$1,815	\$3,345
Surrounding Neighborhood Independent Variables						
Block size, B_{size}	Average size of all blocks that intersect a ¼-mi buffer around each parcel	Parcel GIS file from DCOP; U.S. Census TIGER shape file	None x	2.2 acres	5.6 acres	14.5 acres
Retail–service job density, J_{retail}	Number of employees working in these establishments was totaled for establishments within ¼-mi of parcel. This total is then divided by land area within this ¼-mi area.	Employment location and number of employees from DCOP	None x	0 retail jobs per acre	6.8 retail jobs per acre	45.2 retail jobs per acre
Transit trips per hour per acre, T_{walk}	Number of trips available within ¼ mi for buses and ½ mi for rail using network distances, divided by area (in acres) within ¼ mi of parcel	CNT GTFS data for Washington, D.C., transit agencies, and Open Trip Planner	Inverse of variable + 1 $1/(1 + x)$	3.63	16.75	62.56
Jobs by 45 min transit, J_{45}	Transit commute time is determined from every block in Washington, D.C., to every TAZ. Number of jobs in TAZs that are within a 45-min transit trip are totaled to create this measure.	Parcel GIS file from DCOP, jobs in TAZs from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, GTFS data for all transit providers in the Washington, D.C., metro area, and Open Trip Planner	Natural log of 1 + variable $\ln(1 + x)$	134,783	936,303	1,313,670

NOTE: GIS = geographic information system; DCOP = D.C. Office of Planning; TIGER = topologically integrated geographic encoding and referencing; CNT = Center for Neighborhood Technology; GTFS = general transit feed specification; TAZ = transportation analysis zone.

Table 2 lists the variables in combination as well as the value of the regression coefficients and their standard errors. Using this flexible form had the advantage of finding significant combinations of independent variables; however, it did make the model somewhat more complicated to interpret. No longer were all the independent variables unrelated to one another. To understand the relationship of any single independent variable with parking utilization, the other variables must be examined. Table 3 shows how the parking utilization estimate changed with a small change in each independent variable when the other independent variables were at their average value (from the surveyed buildings). This model gave an R^2-value of 83.5% and thus represented a very robust model. The model was then used as the engine for the web-based tool calculator.

TABLE 2 Final Fit Coefficients in Order of Decreasing Statistical Significance

Variable 1	Variable 2	Coefficient Value	Coefficient Error	Pr(>$\lvert t \rvert$ (%)
Intercept		1.47	.09	.00
Parking supply per unit	na	−1.4	.1	.00
Average unit size	Jobs by 45-min transit	−25	7	.08
Parking price	Retail–service job density	−.00006	.00002	.11
Average rent	Retail–service job density	−20	6	.13
Retail–service job density	Parking supply per unit	.028	.009	.19
Fraction affordable units	Jobs by 45-min transit	−.008	.003	.20
Average bedroom–unit	Average unit size	323	104	.25
Block size	na	.06	.02	.27
Average bedroom per unit	Block size	−.08	.03	.32
Transit information	Walkable transit trips per day	−.9	.3	.41
Block size	Walkable transit trips per day	.08	.05	14.24

NOTE: na = not applicable.

MODEL APPLICATION: WEB-BASED TOOL

A primary goal in this study was to provide a tool to estimate parking utilization on a dynamic website to support and guide parking supply and management decisions. Given the relative complexity of the model, the tool allows end users to view the model results in a simpler, easier to understand form. Tool development focused on displaying expected parking utilization throughout the District and considered the unique perspectives, experience, and concerns of three audiences typically involved in the process: the general public, zoning bodies, and the development community (including developers and real estate finance professionals).

The draft web-based tool is shown as a screenshot in Figure 4 and is branded ParkRight DC. The research was condensed into a simple map where parking utilization for all developable parcels in Washington, D.C., was illustrated. The tool allows users to view estimated parking utilization for multifamily developments throughout Washington, D.C. The tool should not be viewed as a definitive answer. Rather, it should be seen as a resource to inform discussions, weigh the factors impacting parking demand, and help in considerations of the proper provision of parking.

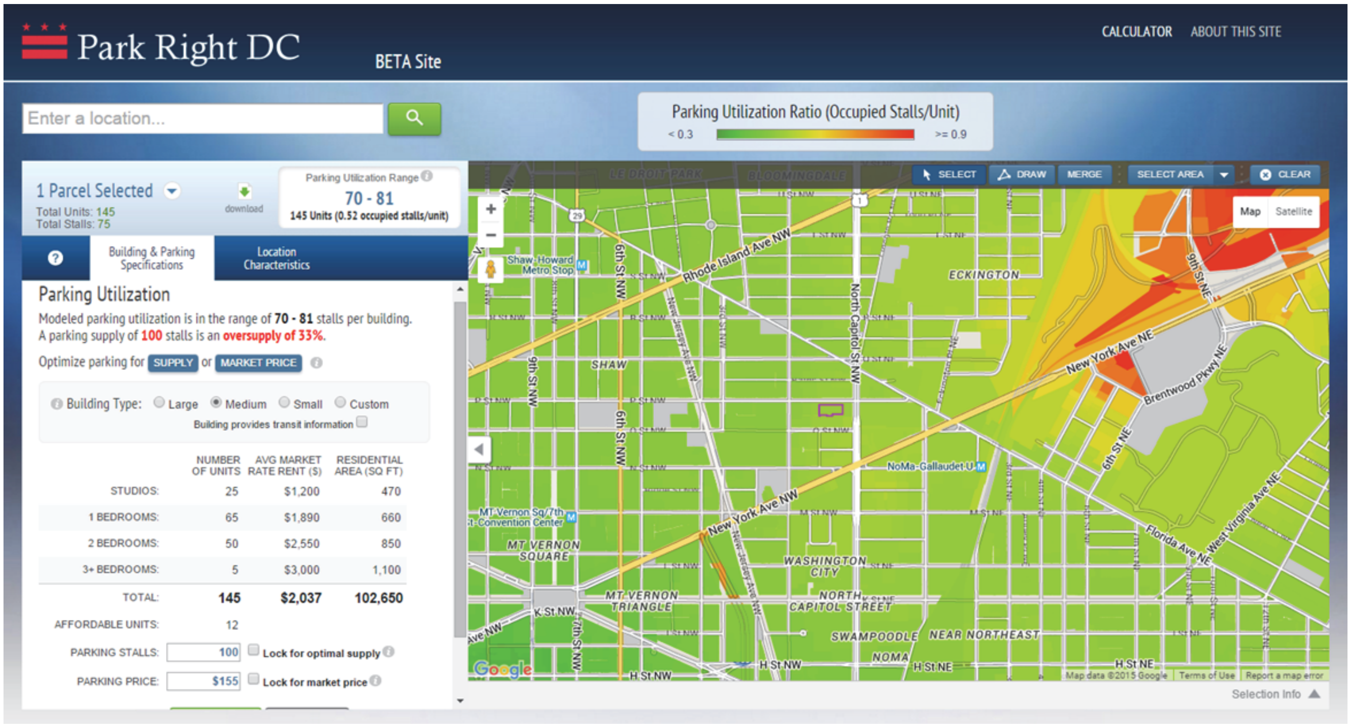
For any location selected, users are able to develop scenarios and view the influence on parking utilization by adjusting the model inputs. Unique aspects of the building and location specifications tab of the Washington, D.C., tool include options to

- Develop a building scenario based on typical large, medium, and small buildings in the District and their parking specifications. Parking use for each typical building scenario are estimated on the basis of study data. A custom option is also available that allows the user to enter unique building and parking specifications.
- Lock the building scenario to optimize supply. This case will return the optimal number of parking stalls needed to meet estimated utilization for the scenario.
- Lock the building scenario to the market parking price. This case will return the suggested parking price on the basis of the scenario.

TABLE 3 Derivatives and Point Elasticities by Independent Variable at Average Value for all Independent Variables

Independent Variable	Avg. Value	Derivative[a]	Elasticity[b]
Building			
Parking supply per unit	0.641	0.44	0.59
Transit information	0.30	−0.052	−0.0339
Fraction affordable	0.20	−0.12	−0.048
Average unit size	758 ft^2	0.00019	0.29
Parking price	$123.88	−0.00040	−0.10
Average bedroom per unit	1.4	0.015	0.044
Average rent	$1,815	4.2×10^{-5}	0.16
Surrounding neighborhood			
Block size	5.6 acres	0.0077	0.090
Retail–service job density	6.8 retail jobs per acre	−0.0016	−0.023
Transit trips per hour per acre	16.75	−0.00053	−0.019
Jobs by 45-min transit	936,303	-3.7×10^{-8}	−0.072

[a] Chance in modeled parking utilization with one unit of change in the independent variable.
[b] Percentage change in parking utilization for a 1% change in the independent variable.



1 Parcel Selected
Total Units: 145
Total Stalls: 75

Parking Utilization Range
70 - 81
145 Units (0.52 occupied stalls/unit)

Parking Utilization

Modeled parking utilization is in the range of **70 - 81** stalls per building. A parking supply of **100** stalls is an **oversupply of 33%.**

Optimize parking for SUPPLY or MARKET PRICE

Building Type: ○ Large ● Medium ○ Small ○ Custom
Building provides transit information ☐

	NUMBER OF UNITS	AVG MARKET RATE RENT ($)	RESIDENTIAL AREA (SQ FT)
STUDIOS:	25	$1,200	470
1 BEDROOMS:	65	$1,890	660
2 BEDROOMS:	50	$2,550	850
3+ BEDROOMS:	5	$3,000	1,100
TOTAL:	**145**	**$2,037**	**102,650**
AFFORDABLE UNITS:	12		

PARKING STALLS: 100 ☐ Lock for optimal supply
PARKING PRICE: $155 ☐ Lock for market price

FIGURE 4 Screenshot of ParkRight DC tool.

- Allow the user to note the presence of TDM information within the building, which when checked automatically adjusts estimated utilization downward on the basis of data collected in the study.

CONCLUSION

This effort provided valuable insight to the District DOT and the Office of Planning on factors driving parking supply decisions. Important findings include the following:

- On average, only 60% of parking stalls are being used.
- Parking supply was found to be the variable that correlates most with parking utilization, accounting for 66% of the variation in observed parking utilization. Other building variables were found to be statistically significant as well, including parking price, average rent, and unit size.
- The most significant neighborhood variable was a combination of walkability (measured by block size) and frequency of transit service within walking distance. As walkability and transit frequency increased, parking utilization decreased.
- The model achieved an R^2-value of .835, indicating that the variables used in the model on average predict about 83.5% of the variance in parking utilization. This is a very strong model, given the complexity of the relationship being researched.

Limitations

ParkRight DC is intended to be a decision-support tool, not a decision-making tool. It can serve as a resource to inform discussions while users weigh the factors affecting parking use and consider how much parking to provide, but it cannot provide definitive answers about specific future policies or developments.

Real-world parking use can and will vary from estimates produced by models. Several elements can affect parking utilization above or below the levels predicted by this model, including TDM and market segmentation. TDM plans can help reduce parking utilization by encouraging the use of nonauto travel and discouraging auto ownership. Additionally, a particular market target may have different parking utilization characteristics than the average resident that the model and tool assume.

The model used in the web-based tool is statistically very strong, but like all models, there exists error in estimates (the standard error for this model's estimates is 0.11). Data collection limitations also affect the model's accuracy. Observed parking mostly included supply that was off-street and on the same property, unless additional parking provided for residents was noted by property managers, and thus on-street parking supplies may not fully be taken into account. On-street parking utilization could not be accounted for in model development at this stage because of the lack of reliable on-street parking utilization information. However, the sites selected for the study were screened on the basis of available parking supply to control for potential undersupplied parking that could result in spillover. The result was that the sites studied were those whose predominant parking supply could be measured through parking counts, rather than those where undefined off-site parking would have resulted in an underrepresentation of parking use.

To ensure confidence in the model estimates, only properties in Washington, D.C., are covered by this model. The data sample utilized covered a wide range of neighborhoods, but data collection was restricted on the basis of a variety of factors. Some of these factors made data collection challenging in certain parts of the District, so the data collected are not necessarily a perfect representation of multifamily residential buildings in the District. More, because the model relies on data from existing buildings, it may not be representative of future buildings whose characteristics may differ or that may be located in new areas where there are few existing multifamily buildings.

Applications

Together, the model results coupled with the web-based tool can be used to tie Washington, D.C., policy and planning efforts more closely to current trends in parking utilization. With this innovation, there are now quantitative data to speak to calibrating the parking need with current demographic trends in the District.

This research will help improve the transparency with which the District DOT is able to analyze potential parking demand from a development, which often causes much concern among existing communities during the development review process. The research also facilitates understanding among the zoning bodies, community stakeholders, and the development community about parking assumptions to help all parties reach conclusions that best support community development and transportation goals.

The District of Columbia has been updating the parking requirements in its zoning regulations. This has been controversial and questions have been raised regarding the consistency of the requirements with actual levels of demand. The Office of Planning's draft recommendations include eliminating, reducing, or providing greater flexibility in parking requirements in different parts of the District, and specifically near transit. This study will provide information needed to test and calibrate the new parking requirements as they are adopted and implemented, and may inform future policy changes regarding parking. One challenge is that parking utilization calculates average occupied parking spaces, which is different from zoning regulations that establish parking minimums. Accordingly, parking utilization rates cannot be directly applied to zoning regulations, but can still provide valuable guidance to inform future parking policy discussions.

Next Steps

Although this research has contributed to the understanding of local parking utilization, future improvements will help further this research question. Refinements to the research include additional data collection, incorporating curbside parking utilization into the model, exploration of correlations with vehicular trip generation, refreshing the data used in model development on a regular basis, analyzing condominium buildings, and undertaking deeper comparisons with existing parking provision resources.

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