

## Trends that will shape the future of parking

Driverless cars, walkable cities, smart cities and sustainability concerns are some of the trends that are affecting or will affect the way people travel and how public policies are defined. Those different movements converge towards one direction: a reduction in parking supply (or at least a reduction in the growth of supply) and possibly demand, especially in dense urban areas. So, what should parking owners/managers, developers, city administrators and anyone involved in the parking industry know to prepare for the future? We highlight below the main points.

### Walkable cities

Cities like Oslo, Madrid, Hamburg, and Brussels are planning to or have already banned private cars in specific areas. High-density and mixed-used developments are a trend. Millennials enjoy living and working in the same area and a detached house in a remote suburb may not be the next generation's dream. Conversely, city living normally comes with a hefty price tag and parking is often a significant component. These aspects imply that, for some people and in some areas, cars will not be the most convenient way of moving around, affecting parking demand.



Before and After: Nicholas Place Car Park Conversion to Jubilee Square.

In areas where cars have been banned or with a majority of the population not owning a car, it is necessary to consider repurposing car parks. At grade car parks can be repurposed into public areas, as was the case of the Nicholas Place Car Park in Leicester, UK, which was converted to Jubilee Square (see images above).



A SCADpad micro apartment in Atlanta, USA.

As more and more on street parking spaces are eliminated to make space for bike lanes and improve public transport efficiency, greater reliance would be placed on underground parking facilities. As they say, out of sight out of mind!

There is also a trend in identifying new uses for multi-level car parks, particularly residential buildings. The SCADpad

project, for instance, created affordable housing by developing micro apartments that fit into an average US parking spot (around 135 square feet).

When demand for parking is not constant, it is also possible to repurpose car parks temporarily; two recent Australian examples where car parks were used as an event venue demonstrate the potential of parking facilities. A multi-level car park in Adelaide was the perfect place for a cycling competition and in Sydney, a garage was the stage of a theatre play. Read more: [Sometimes the car park IS the destination!](#)

Not always is repurposing the best solution. Where demand is strong, but there is excess supply, differentiation is the way to go. Extra features to improve presentation (sometimes going as far as perfume and music!) can help create a unique atmosphere. Of course the basics must be covered; after all, primarily, people want to easily find a parking spot, preferably near their destination, and easily find the exit at the end of their visit.

### Bike Culture



Cycling uptake is directly connected with investments in infrastructure. When a network of protected bicycle lanes is developed people tend to embrace cycling as a mode of transport, as it increases safety and convenience to get from point A to point B. Therefore, changing people's behaviour on a scale that affects car usage and parking needs is highly dependent on government policy and investment. Read more: [Cycling uptake, safety and social equality.](#)

In areas where the cycling community is large, providing end-of-trip facilities can attract a new type of tenant. Cyclists looking for a secure place to park their often expensive bikes and pleasant changing rooms and shower facilities might be willing to pay a reasonable fee to do so. If the market is big enough, cyclists can drive a new revenue stream in a parking facility.

### Smart Cities

This terminology involves a lot of concepts, as each city can have its own priorities of what to include under smart city projects. While in some cities becoming carbon neutral is the ultimate goal, in others it may be providing better transportation and security services to the community.

In situations where smart city plans involve traffic and parking, those projects may result in fewer cars and a more efficient use of the parking inventory, which again means that car park managers need to create differentiation strategies to reach full capacity.



It is also important to evaluate new and developing technologies and how the car park can be connected to them. For instance, if the city has plans to monitor on-street parking spots to provide a navigation solution for drivers to find available spaces, it is necessary to evaluate the possibility of integrating your parking inventory in the same solution.

### Driverless cars



Depending on how we use driverless cars the parking industry will be highly affected or not. At one end of the scale is a scenario where driverless cars are a luxury vehicle, used only by few privileged drivers in the same way we use private cars today, not sharing it. On the other end is a scenario where government incentives for the adoption of driverless vehicles resulting in a shared fleet of autonomous vehicles able to take those who once where drivers to their destination.

The first scenario implies almost no change for parking facilities. The second one leads to a greater level of disruption, fewer cars, less need to park, no need to park in city centres as parking can be redirected to adjoining neighbourhoods. However, consideration will need to be given to the impact of this on road congestion as in theory these vehicles will be circulating from one place to another in a never ending cycle all day long.... What would then happen to congestion and parking levies being charged to owners of car parks?

The design of future car parks will need to change. Parking bays for autonomous vehicles will be smaller, as the space to open the doors is not necessary, ceiling heights can also be reduced, since no pedestrians will be in the area (or conversely increased to allow for potential future repurposing). Vehicle flows can also be adapted as the risk of collision is lower when all cars are aware of one another and there are no pedestrians to deal with.

The reality is that multiple adoption scenarios will occur at the same time as cities and countries will have their own pace in embracing the changes. The rhythm that a regulatory system adopts to incorporate driverless cars, the appetite for public incentives for their adoption and the way cities adapt to the new technology will have a great impact on how the adoption occurs.

Cultural factors will also be an important factor in the equation. Will the majority of people be willing to forego the convenience of having their own vehicle to share rides with strangers? Will cars still be a status symbol or will owning a car be eventually considered old fashioned? There are no conclusive answers for these questions and they will probably vary in different cities as well. Read more: [Will autonomous cars drive people away or to suburbs?](#)

## Parking requirements

In our previously Newsletter, we mentioned several examples of [car-free developments](#). At the same time, cities around the world are dismissing parking minimum requirements and even stipulating a maximum requirement for new developments, which will lead to less parking supply. Therefore, in high demand areas the available parking spaces will need to be well utilised. Technology can be an ally here: automated parking garages require less space to fit more cars; apps that connect drivers to available parking spots can fully exploit parking spaces. Read more: [The Social Inequality of Parking Requirements](#).

As the future is uncertain and we still don't know when and how these trends will affect us, it is important to stay up to date with new technologies and regulations. Car park managers need to be aware of opportunities to differentiate their car parks, enhancing their **customers' experience**, and when necessary adopting new technologies to increase users' convenience. Developers can think of designing car parks that can be easily repurposed in the future and how to efficiently repurpose the ones that are already built.

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