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Dave Nagel

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# Parking Lots Are a Waste of Space and a Drag on Growth



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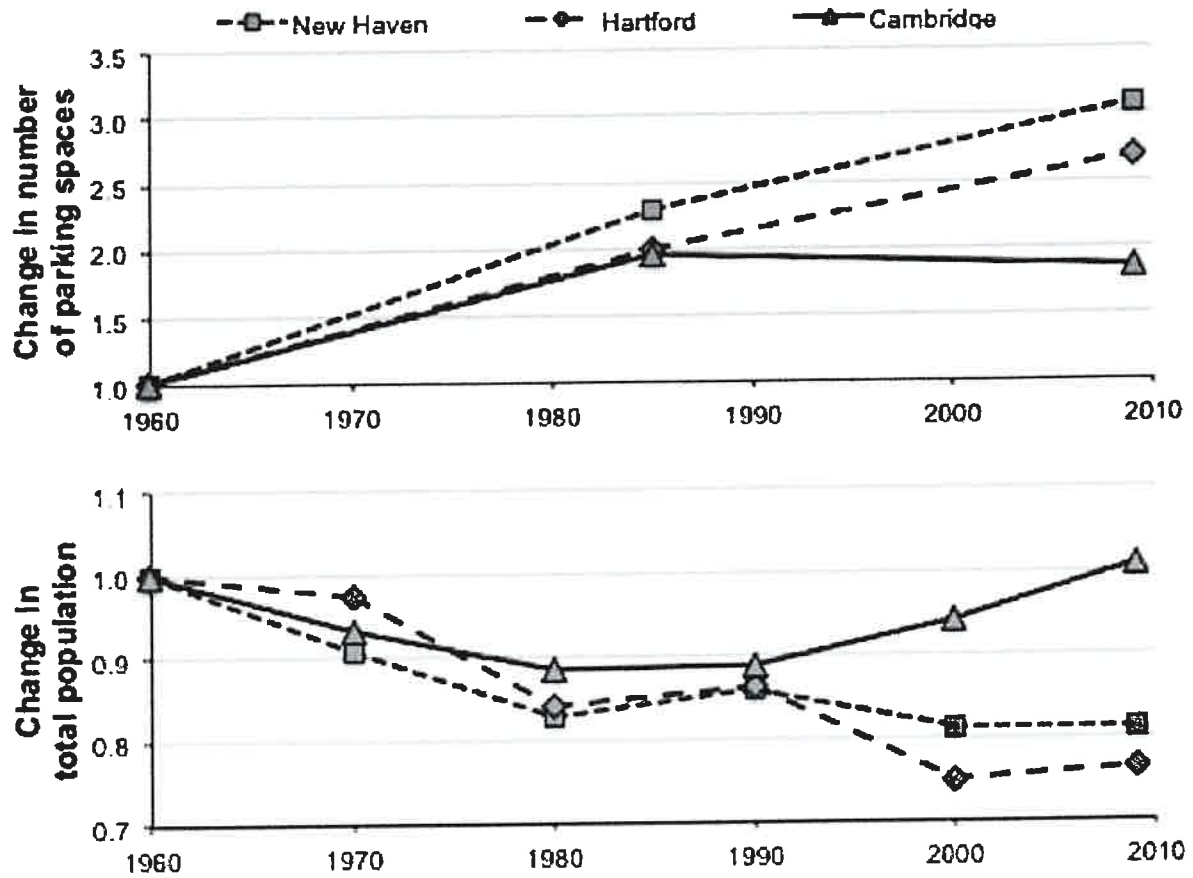
Riffing off of a study on parking lot spaces and population and economic growth, [Felix Salmon](#) writes:



Image via Wikipedia

Parking lots are — with only a handful of **exceptions** — the best possible way of destroying a city's soul. They're gruesome, lifeless places, and I'm constantly astonished by the way in which governments and developers are convinced that they're a great idea. Instead, local government should act as a brake on private developers' desires to build out new parking: while that might (or might not) be good for an individual commercial operation, it can at the same time be bad for the city as a whole. Cambridge is living proof that this can be done: other cities, including New Haven and Hartford, should follow its lead.

While New Haven and Hartford continued to build parking lots, Cambridge banned the creation of new parking spaces in 1985. It turns out all that wasted real estate and sprawl really does negatively affect a community.



Now there are obviously going to be more factors than just parking spaces at play here, but certainly this is an observable phenomenon: go into any dilapidated inner city area and look around. What do you see? Lots of empty parking lots.

Parking lots and strip malls are both ideals of a car-culture and suburban ideal that never actually panned out. As more people opt for a denser more walkable urban experience, these will become relics of a different economy.

Which is a good thing. Car-culture is unsustainable in its current form. Gas prices will go up. The environmental burden will be felt sooner or later. Commuting is a huge waste of productive potential.

Suburbia will survive the shift, but suburbs themselves will change as driving becomes too expensive an option for many Americans. Telecommuting is the future.

And parking lots? Well, I think Joni Mitchell had the right idea: