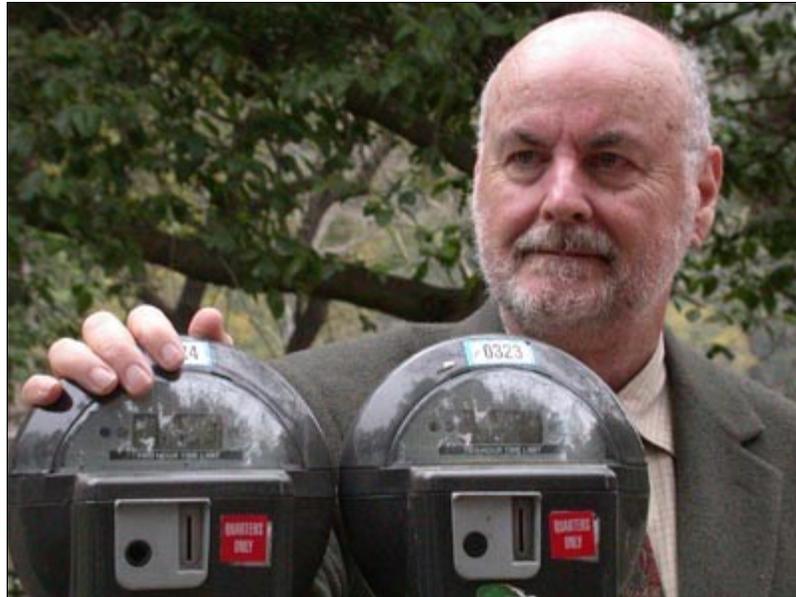


## Parking Guru sees *Cruising* causing congestion

<http://www.streetsblog.org/2007/12/12/shoup-dogg-parking-policy-cult-hero-fills-fordham-auditorium/>

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### [Shoup Dogg, Parking Policy Cult Hero, Fills Fordham Auditorium](#)



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*Spencer Wilking reports:*

There's nothing more blessed to the New York City driver than finding an open parking spot. Donald Shoup, professor of Urban Planning at UCLA, would like New Yorkers to reconsider that ideal. The parking policy cult hero addressed a crowd at Fordham's Pope Auditorium Monday evening. His mission: Eliminate free parking.

"Some people think that charging for curbside parking is un-American. I think it is very American to ask people to pay for what they use," Shoup said. "We're not a nation of freeloaders."

Shoup contends that much of the congestion on New York City streets is due to drivers circling the block, hunting for that elusive free parking spot. Shoup's bold plan is to charge more for curbside parking, which he believes would free up more parking space for people who need it, reduce congestion-causing

cruising and generate funds for local street improvement projects. He also said that his ideas on parking would be easier to implement than Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan.

Armed with a Powerpoint presentation, Shoup displayed Al Gorian flare, weaving humor, amusing visuals and staggering facts to keep his audience both entertained and informed.

Shoup's lively lecture and the fact that he may very well be the only academic in America to focus solely on parking policy has earned him cult hero status in the world of urban planning. In his introduction, Paul Steely White, executive director of Transportation Alternatives joked that Shoup is a rock star who "prefers loose tweed to leather." With his characteristic droll delivery, Shoup replied, "Maybe I should change my name to Shoup Dogg."

The professor began his lecture by illustrating the ills of American parking policy, first citing the staggering amount of real estate Americans allocate for cars. He believes faulty public policy has created a culture that expects free parking everywhere. "The planning process has gone wrong and it costs a lot of money," said Shoup. "Because we so deviate from normal business practice with curb parking we get these very inferior results."

In New York City, this is compounded by the cost differential between curbside parking and private lot parking. Shoup says the low, often free, cost of curbside parking versus the high cost of off-the-street parking has created a perverse situation in which drivers are more inclined to cruise around hoping to be rewarded with a free parking spot.

Shoup quoted Seinfeld's George Costanza to sum up the essential New Yorker attitude when it comes to curbside parking: "It's like going to a prostitute. Why should I pay when, if I apply myself, maybe I could get it for free?"

Calling Manhattan "the capital of cruising," Shoup cited several recent studies on cruising to demonstrate its contribution to **gridlock**. Bruce Schaller, a deputy commissioner at the Department of Transportation found that 28 percent of drivers in SoHo were looking for curb parking. A similar study conducted by Transportation Alternatives in Park Slope concluded that 45 percent of drivers were cruising.

To limit the amount of cruising and balance the supply and demand of parking, Shoup suggests the city should allow the price of curbside parking to float upwards until each block reaches 85 percent occupancy, or about one free parking spot per block. Shoup calls this the Goldilocks principle: "Parking prices shouldn't be too high, or too low. They should be just right."

Shoup says that the price of curbside parking should vary according to time and location, much like the pricing of hotel rooms. "If you turned parking supply over to the hospitality industry they would figure out how to do it," said Shoup.

To ease store owners' fears of losing customers to increased parking costs, Shoup suggests that merchants get a cut of the parking revenue. A large portion of the cash created by new parking costs would go local Business Improvement Districts that would use the money to improve the streetscape, making commercial corridors more pleasurable for pedestrians.

Shoup offered three California cities where this type of parking policy has been implemented successfully. Pasadena, Redwood City and Glendale were able to revitalize their downtown shopping districts by increasing the cost of parking and funneling those funds into public space improvement projects.

The issue of congestion pricing was conspicuously missing from Shoup's talk. The only mention of congestion pricing came in Paul Stealy White's introduction saying that Shoup's ideas on parking were "not an alternative to congestion pricing, but a complement." However, talking to Dr. Shoup after the lecture he suggested that his reforms would be more feasible than the Mayor's plan due to the controlled pace of implementation. "The city can do the parking first because it can be done in small increments," he said.

Shoup did have some skeptics. Hilary Kitasei, of the Lower East Side, voiced concern over the increased movement of cars that parking reform seeks to create from parking turnover. "New Yorkers wouldn't dare drive for fear that they'll lose their space. Once you create this wonderful environment where it's possible to drive to other neighborhoods, why would I stay home at night? It seems like this city could be unleashing a much worse nightmare than what we have now," she said.

Shoup also had some ideas about the influx of city parking permits -- a long abused system that lacks accountability. He says New York City employees are three times more likely to drive to work. Shoup believes that the city could offer employees cash to get these permits off the street. "If you told these permit holders we'll give you \$500 a month to surrender your permit I bet a lot of them would give up that permit," he said.

Over 100 people filled Fordham's Pope Auditorium to hear Dr. Shoup speak. He's in New York to further his "no free parking" campaign, meet with BID leaders, city agency officials and the press. Shoup's theories are detailed in his 700-page opus, ["The High Cost of Free Parking"](#) (Chicago: Planners Press, 2005).

*Reported by Spencer Wilking for Streetsblog.*

*Photo: Stan Paul, UCLA School of Public Affairs.*

Filed by [Aaron Naparstek](#) under [Parking](#)