

## ISSUES WITH PARKING REIMAGINED

Fairfax County is proposing a parking amendment to Article 6 of the Zoning Ordinance that will reduce **Minimum Parking Requirements (MPRs)** both in residential and commercial areas. There are some benefits to the concept of reducing MPRs and residents support reductions that are reasonable and add a net benefit to the environment. The currently proposed parking amendment does not attain these goals.

Residents have raised many issues associated with the proposed parking amendment during the last year, both in the County Parking Reimagined Work Group and in many virtual Town Halls. Some of these issues have been addressed, but many still exist. Key issues of major concern about Parking Reimagined include the following:

- The amendment benefits developers and the County staff, but it does not improve the quality of life for residents and does not do enough for the environment. Environmental groups are concerned that saved space will not be replaced by green and also believe there needs to be more integration with another County staff group that is separately looking at Place Making in Parking lots. Integration with Road Placemaking is also an issue as is the connection with the road work itself. More study and analysis are needed and work between these related groups in the County.
- While many think that minimum parking requirements should be reduced near metro transit stations, many have concerns about reducing MPRs in areas not near metro stations. The claim of County staff that MPRs can be reduced in areas where there is currently bus service instead of metro service is imprudent. Bus service in Fairfax County has been cut in the past for various reasons and could easily be cut in the future, leaving residents in these areas without necessary transportation. There is also extensive overflow parking in all County Supervisory jurisdictions and this exacerbates that problem.
- In regard to reducing MPRs in areas near metro transit stations, many think that this reduction should be done in relation to distance from the metro station. Many surrounding jurisdictions choose to reduce MPRs within one-half of a mile of a metro station. This is far more reasonable than reducing MPRs in the entire zoning designation, which is what Fairfax County is proposing. But even then, Metro stations have different issues affecting parking and even they need to be looked at separately in many cases.
- The County must identify the specific challenges of each area before changing parking requirements. Applying percentage reductions to areas based on their zoning designation is not sufficient. In fact, there are so many unique areas across the County that these will need to be treated differently even beyond using distance from transit rather than zoning designations.

- Many residents have voiced extreme concern that the proposed parking rates for multifamily dwelling units are not sufficient to support the residents living in these multifamily buildings. Residents have not found meaningful analysis for these proposed parking rates in the material posted on the Parking Reimagined website and do not think that they have received reasonable answers to their questions at the various virtual Town Halls hosted by the County.
- Reductions in MPRs need to take into consideration that we are now seeing extended families living in townhouses and multifamily dwellings. Also, reductions in MPRs should be integrated with other aspects of parking, such as enforcement procedures that ensure overflow parking into adjacent communities is prevented which along with other points here is crucial.
- Reductions in MPRs must provide adequate loading spaces for numerous daily deliveries and strict enforcement to ensure handicapped spaces remain accessible for handicapped use only. There needs to be a careful case by case review if a developer wants a reduction or waiver of loading spaces. Keep a public hearing requirement with notice and an opportunity to be heard is a matter of dignity and respect for the handicapped population in Fairfax County.
- Residents are concerned that the amendment gives the Director of Land Development Services (LDS) the ability to issue reductions in MPRs through administrative action, for up to 50% of the required parking. Residents do not think that MPRs should be further reduced without information indicating the availability of other accessible parking. In these cases, residents think that a public hearing concerning the further reduction in MPRs should be held.
- Residents do not think that the proposed parking amendment does enough to benefit the environment as a result of the reduction in required parking. In many jurisdictions here in the U.S. and other places across the world using reductions in MPRs to increase green spaces to assist with climate issues, stormwater management, mitigation of heat islands and other environmental benefits. The proposed parking amendment does not require any additional green space as a result of reductions in MPRs. County staff has stated that developers are free to add green space if they wish, but that the County wants to keep the amendment “flexible”.
- These changes are likely to have a greater impact on lower-income, minorities and the elderly who all have a greater need for vehicles than others due to their work environment and hours. This policy runs in opposition to the One Fairfax Policy.
- County staff has stated that the parking amendment does not increase the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of a proposed development. However, it does allow the developer to build out to the enlarged footprint resulting from the decrease in parking area. Therefore, the

County could be increasing the buildings associated with a development, and hence the impervious surfaces, without an increase in FAR. It is conceivable that as a result of this amendment, Fairfax County could end up with more impervious surfaces than it currently possesses.

- There is a generally pretty strong feeling that residents are not being listened to and there is significant opposition. That has not been reported to the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission.

There can be potential benefits to reducing MPRs in certain areas throughout Fairfax County, but many other areas will be harmed. Further analysis is needed. Further integration with roads and placemaking is needed. Further outreach is needed even though much was done. More listening is needed by County staff, although the County assigned excellent staff to this project. However, it seems they were told to reduce parking and get it done by a given date despite protests by citizens. A delay would not make a difference since all it means is more work by developers, County staff, the Planning Commission, the Board and citizens to address the concerns about Parking Reimagined and to ensure that the final amendment is beneficial to all stakeholders involved.