

Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner  
Planning Commission  
County of Fairfax

August 14, 2023

Dear Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner and Members of the Planning Commission:

Thank you for your willingness to listen to community members' views on the Parking Reimagined proposal - and your patience as the hearing on July 26th slipped into July 27th. The long evening included lots of stories and visions from all sides but no actual data on how and why the Staff arrived at the numbers in their proposals that are **specific to Fairfax County**. In fact, in the material given you for your June 23rd Work Session, the Summary states "**Multifamily - Lowered to reflect national trends.**"

We thus must seek information from the Staff Report of July 12th. In this, Staff notes they are "informed by national parking demand survey data such as **Parking Generation** published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). The **ITE, however, is not an impartial entity** that produces unbiased analysis. ITE is an advocate for car free development. It's Vice Chairman of Sustainability, Douglas Halpert, told the Washington Post earlier this year that ITE is "studying how to help communities that want to reduce their dependence on cars". ITE recently published a paper entitled **Zero Auto Ownership (ZAO)** to promote the "concept of fostering and consciously investing in urban lifestyles that support zero auto ownership." The Staff Report additionally noted there were "jurisdictional peer reviews (of urban areas nationwide with very different histories and infrastructure from Fairfax) which were performed by our consultant" but no mention of how such reviews were structured or if a mix of communities were surveyed. Finally, Staff asserts "average parking demand is lower for multifamily developments that are in higher density and intensity (sic) urban locations, adjacent to rail". While this may be somewhat true in dense urban areas that have robust, comprehensive rail systems that developed over a century or more like New York or London, the reality is that Fairfax does not have a robust, comprehensive rail system and there are currently no plans to develop one.

But perhaps the Staff has carried out its own analysis over the past six or seven years of actual conditions in Fairfax County? With respect to multi-family developments, it would be helpful to have the following information:

For each multi-family development visited and surveyed (in all nine Districts of the County):

Dates and times visited (minimum of weekday evenings, weekend afternoons and holiday evenings);

Current parking space ratio for that specific development;  
Residents interviewed, concerns expressed;  
Percent of spaces available at designated times (not including reserved and accessible spaces)  
Neighboring communities impacted;  
Distance from closest Metro stop;

With this, Staff would have realistic knowledge of the importance of adequate parking to our neighbors in multi-family housing developments. Staff would be able to say what a reduction to 1.3 spaces per unit actually means in reality. Staff would be able to compare with some authority what the impact of a 1.3 vs 1.5 or 1.7 rate would be. Without this County specific information, it appears numbers have been proposed **simply to meet targeted percentage reductions without respect to the human cost.**

The ZAO report did have some interesting facts buried in their ideology. They note that in 1960 20% of American households did not own an automobile. That figure today in Fairfax is more like 4%. They also draw a distinction between "car free" and "car-less" - the former being a choice to not have a car, the latter referring to individuals who would like to have a car but are restrained from having one, usually for financial reasons. The difference between 1960 and now is that **rising economic opportunity has allowed more Americans to afford a car.** This trend will hopefully continue. The number of private and commercial **vehicles nationwide is increasing by almost 1% per year.** And they all have to be somewhere at night.

Made up numbers have real life consequences. The Staff's recommendations will impose hardship on our neighbors who can least afford it. **I strongly urge that the multi-family portions of Parking Reimagined be deferred until something more than "reimagining" goes into any proposal.**

Sincerely,

Dennis K. Hays  
Immediate Past President  
Reston Citizens Association