

PARKING REIMAGINED – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The provision of an adequate number of appropriately sized parking areas is an essential element of the modern, multimodal transportation system. Whether one is considering the use of bicycles, electric scooters, private automobiles, public transportation vehicles, commercial delivery vehicles, railroad cars, or airplanes, space must be provided for the storage of these vehicles when they are not in use.

It is also recognized that the number and appropriate size of the parking areas associated with any of these cited travel modes should be regularly examined and adjusted over time. As an example, let us consider the number of parking spaces associated with single family residential dwelling units as they have evolved over the past century.

In the first two decades of the 20th Century, the number of privately owned automobiles was rather small, with ownership of these vehicles generally limited to wealthy individuals. For those living on large properties in urban and rural areas, stables and associated structures used for the storage of horse drawn carriages were commonly used for the storage of newly acquired gasoline powered automobiles. In more developed urban areas with smaller single family structure lot sizes, vehicles tended to be stored along the street curb in front of each house. This is a distinguishing characteristic of many so-called “streetcar suburbs” constructed in the 1920s.

With increasing household incomes and the expanding number and affordability of automobiles in the late 1940s and 1950s, the construction of many newer single family residential communities began to be characterized by the provision of either a carport or a single car garage attached or adjacent to the house itself. This characteristic feature of newly constructed suburban residential communities has continued to this day.

Through the final decades of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century, the basic parking component associated with the construction of single-family residential properties increased from a common one car garage to a two-car garage. Today, many larger single-family homes are being constructed with three or more car garage spaces. The key point here is that the number of parking spaces associated with each single-family home has been expanded to accommodate the observed, actual demand for parking spaces.

Indeed, in many residential communities within Fairfax County, the average number of licensed drivers and the number of automobiles associated with each single-family housing unit is greater than the number of off-street garage parking spaces that are being provided. This has resulted in increasing numbers of vehicles being parked on driveways or public streets. Once again, this demonstrates the need to provide an adequate number of appropriately sized parking areas to properly store these vehicles when they are not being operated.

This situation is particularly apparent in many townhouse developments across the county. With a sizeable percentage of townhouse units in communities such as Franklin Farm having transitioned over time from owner occupied units housing a single family to rental properties with multiple non-related persons residing within each unit. In many cases, it would appear that each defined bedroom area within a single townhouse unit contains a person who owns and operates an automobile, with each vehicle requiring a separately defined and appropriately sized parking space.

Similar discussions could be presented with respect to the continually changing demands for parking that are being observed across Fairfax County for various land use types in differing areas of the larger community.

The key point here is that the proposed action to make significant modifications to the currently adopted provisions of the County's zoning code and development ordinances which define the off-street parking requirements applicable to the various land use types which exist in the County needs to be based on actual factual, information as to what is taking place today. We do not accept as a rationale for this action, as described in the June 2022 Update Informational White Paper for the Parking Reimagined Project, to provide by-right reductions to whatever may emerge as the ultimately recommended "Baseline Parking Rates" for all uses in the County.

On what basis are these newly proposed "Baseline Parking Rates" being defined? Do they reflect the information contained in the 5th Edition of the *Parking Generation Manual* published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) in 2019 and the companion *Shared Parking* publication from the National Parking Association (NPA)? Do they reflect the reality of currently observed parking demands within Fairfax County or those in similar development areas in adjacent jurisdictions?

On what basis are the proposed by right reductions in these newly defined base parking rates of:

- A 10 Percent Reduction in Suburban Centers,
- A 20 Percent Reduction in Revitalization Areas,
- A 30 Percent Reduction in Transit Station Area/Tysons Urban Center, and
- A 40 Percent Reduction in Transit Oriented Development areas

being justified beyond a desire for enhancing speed, predictability, and flexibility of development and permitting reviews?

We would appreciate more explicit and direct responses to these and other related questions before such time as the Fairfax County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors take any final action on these proposed revisions.