



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

ORD. 2023-101: To amend the City's Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of eliminating off-street parking and loading space minimums.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Department of Planning and Development Review
Date: April 17, 2023

PETITIONER

City of Richmond
900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

LOCATION

City-wide

PURPOSE

To amend the City's Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of eliminating off-street parking and loading space minimums.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The City Council adopted the first Zoning Ordinance in 1927 with no off-street parking space requirements. Updates to the Zoning Ordinance in the 1940s included a few parking space requirements. The first time the Zoning Ordinance included a separate section devoted to off-street parking was when City Council adopted the 1960 amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. City Council has adopted numerous incremental changes to the parking regulations section of the Zoning Ordinance since the 1960s.

Over the past couple decades, City Council has approved several changes to the parking requirements to make the parking requirements less stringent or to eliminate requirements in certain parts of the city by way of parking overlay districts, parking except overlays, and changes to zoning districts to eliminate parking requirements for most uses. The current parking regulations are onerous and complicated for staff and the public to understand, implement, and regulate. The parking minimums have contributed to urban sprawl, lack of abundant and affordable housing, and automobile dependency.

The proposed ordinance to eliminate parking minimums from the Zoning Ordinance will not prohibit property owners from building parking spaces on their property. Moreover, the zoning change will allow property owners to determine the amount of parking that is need to support their proposed development and allow the market to determine the appropriate amount of parking. Furthermore, the Zoning Ordinance will retain the parking size and screening

requirements so if a property owner decides to build parking, they will be required to comply with the requirements on configuration and screening set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.

The Richmond 300 Master Plan contains goals, objectives, and strategies to create a thriving environment, an equitable transportation network, and inclusive housing. Parking minimums in the Zoning Ordinance are considered an auto-centric approach to development that can cause harm to both the quality of our air and water through automobile exhaust and road runoff; and reduce the amount of land available for housing and commercial uses. Eliminating parking space minimums may help reduce urban heat, improve water quality, and increase the amount of land available for redevelopment by reducing the eliminating the practice of having the government direct the amount of a parking a development needs.

The Master Plan strives to create a safe, reliable, equitable, and sustainable transportation network that prioritizes the movement of people over the movement of vehicles. Government-mandated parking minimums ensure that parking is provided even if the parking is not needed. The overabundance of parking can perpetuate a car-centric built environment and discourage the use of public transit or other forms of transportation. Instead of requiring parking minimums in the Zoning Ordinance, the Master Plan encourages market-based parking strategies, including shared parking so that each property does not have to dedicate valuable land to parking spaces.

Off-street parking spaces, especially those in structures, are expensive. Requiring parking spaces based on the number of dwelling units or floor area can directly increase the costs to residents and business owners. The space used for parking cars takes away space that could be used for additional housing. Parking minimums can be a cost burden on small businesses and discourage them from establishing in Richmond.

The Master Plan focuses on the importance of walkable neighborhoods that are less reliant on the automobile. The elimination of parking minimums may help create new walkable neighborhoods that are built with greater focus on the pedestrian experience.

Staff recommends approval of the Ordinance.

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