

Zoning for Housing: Expanding Housing Opportunities in Single Family Zones — Proposed Parking Requirements

Introduction

The [Alexandria Mobility Plan, Curbspace and Parking Chapter](#) reveals that providing parking as part of new housing construction has a major impact on the cost of a project, environmental sustainability, and neighborhood quality of life. The cost increase is passed onto the resident, resulting in more expensive housing. Additionally, a residential parking requirement can make construction impractical on certain lot sizes, dominating the aesthetics of a neighborhood, occupying more open space, and increasing traffic.

The proposed policy options (page 3) aim to right-size the parking requirements for expanded housing options, so that unnecessary, expensive parking will not be required for these new housing option types. These parking policy options aim to meet the ultimate goals of the zoning for housing/housing for all project of expanding housing production and affordability and addressing past and current barriers to equitable housing access.

Policy A of the plan, “Connect parking policy to City goals,” states:

Achieve broader City goals related to sustainability, congestion, and housing affordability through parking. Parking facilities are expensive to build and maintain, and when it is easy to park, more people will drive. The City of Alexandria will continue to use policy to right-size parking facilities and unbundle the cost of parking from housing to reduce the cost burden of parking on non-vehicle owners and limit its role in contributing to traffic.

Background

Current Parking Requirements in Alexandria

The current parking requirements for residential dwellings are found in [Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance](#). The requirement for single-family detached, two-family and row or townhouse dwellings is two (2.0) spaces per dwelling unit for single-family detached, two-family, and townhouse dwellings. The multi-family unit parking requirement is calculated by considering the number of bedrooms and proximity to transit.

Current Practice of Reduced Parking

The Alexandria City Council has approved reductions in required parking for residential infill projects without resulting impacts or neighborhood complaints. Between 2016 and 2023, 12 special use permit cases with parking reductions were approved, and in one case, Council reduced the parking requirement from one to zero.

Origin of the City’s Existing Parking Requirements

1951	Adopted a minimum off-street parking requirement in the City’s Zoning Ordinance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Residential buildings – 1 space per dwelling unit”
1987	Adopted a maximum off-street parking requirements in the City’s Zoning Ordinance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Single-family, two (2) family and row dwellings: one (1) space per dwelling unit.” “For all lots containing single-family, two-family and row dwelling uses, there shall be a limit of one (1) vehicle per 1,000 square feet of lot area, not to exceed a maximum of four (4) vehicles per lot parked or stored outside on the lot in question.”
1992	Adopted the current minimum off-street parking requirements in the City’s Zoning Ordinance, raising it to two spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Single family detached, two family and row or townhouse dwellings: two (2.0) spaces per dwelling unit for single family detached, two family, and row or townhouse dwellings.”

Local Jurisdiction Comparisons

Jurisdiction	Site Location	Minimum Parking Requirement (spaces)	Additional Requirements
Arlington, VA			
	Sites located entirely within a 3/4 mile radius of a Metrorail Station Entrance	0.5 per dwelling unit	Sites fronting a cul-de-sac shall provide a minimum of 1 space per dwelling unit
	Sites located entirely within a 1/2 mile radius of a transit stop along the Premium Transit Network, as indicated on the Master Transportation Plan		
	All other sites	1 space per dwelling unit	
Washington, D.C			
	Residential, single dwelling unit	1 per principal dwelling	
	Residential flat	1 per 2 dwelling units	
Montgomery County, MD			
	Agricultural, rural residential, residential, and industrial zones: single unit, two unit and townhouse living	2	
	Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones: single unit, two unit and townhouse living	Min. 1 /Max 2 within a parking lot district or reduced parking area	Min 2 Outside a parking lot district or reduced parking area

National Examples of Transit Oriented Based Parking Minimum Policies

San Diego, CA	Residential developments within 1/2 mile of a current or planned major transit stop are exempt from minimum parking requirements.
Portland, ME	Allows up to 3 homes without parking in low-density residential zones. The city also exempts projects within 1/4 mile of fixed route transit from parking mandates. ADUs are allowed without parking
Newark, NJ	No parking is required for residential and non-residential land uses within a 1,200-foot radius of a light rail, PATH train or NJ Transit train station.
Charlotte, NC	No vehicle parking is required for any use in any TOD District, except for bars, restaurants, micro-breweries, micro distilleries, micro-wineries, and live performance venues within 200 feet of a single-family residential zoning district.

Proposed Parking Options

Summary

- The parking policy options aim to right-size the parking requirements so that unnecessary, expensive parking will not be required for new housing unit types.
- These parking policy options aim to meet the ultimate goals of the zoning for housing/housing for all project of expanding housing production and affordability and addressing past and current barriers to equitable housing access.
- The proposed parking policy options align with the Alexandria Mobility Plan, Curbspace and Parking Chapter, Policy A: Connect parking policy to City goals.
- The proposed parking policy options reflect current best practice and models similar local jurisdiction policy.
- The current parking policy for single family detached, two family and townhouse dwellings of two (2.0) spaces per unit is does not reflect the multi-modal nature of the enhanced transit area of the city.
- The proposed parking policy options broken out by a site being within or outside of the enhanced transit area reflects the surrounding transportation and land use conditions.
- The proposed parking policy options bring us closer to the original parking policy from 1951. The current policy of two spaces per unit was brought into practice in 1992.
- City Council has approved all proposed SUP parking reductions within the last five years for residential infill projects without resulting impacts or neighborhood complaints.

Staff recommends amending Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance to revise parking requirements for residential dwellings throughout the city based on location within or outside the [Enhanced Transit Area](#). The enhanced transit area displays an aggregate 1/2-mile transit walkshed mapped to existing City streets and parcels. The walkshed is based on existing and anticipated mass transit stations and entryways. The enhanced transit area is currently used to determine commercial parking requirements. In 2018, the City Council approved a text amendment to update the commercial parking standards to include parking minimums and maximums that were differentiated whether a parcel is located within the enhanced transit area or beyond the enhanced transit area.

The policies from the multi-family parking update in 2015 allow for reduced parking based on access to transit and services. Details about credits to reduce parking that developments are eligible for based on transit access can be found in [Section 8-200\(A\)\(2\)](#) of the Zoning Ordinance.

Options 3 and 4 below (as proposed on September 5) provide flexibility for developers to determine the amount of parking for a project, eliminating the extra cost of unnecessary parking space production, and lowering dwelling unit costs. Each reflects the City’s goal of multi-modal transportation within the existing and any future planned enhanced transit area.

Option 3

No minimum parking requirements within enhanced transit area	
Number of units	Minimum required number of parking spaces
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
Minimum 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit beyond enhanced transit area	
Number of units	Minimum required number of parking spaces
1	1
2	1
3	2
4	2

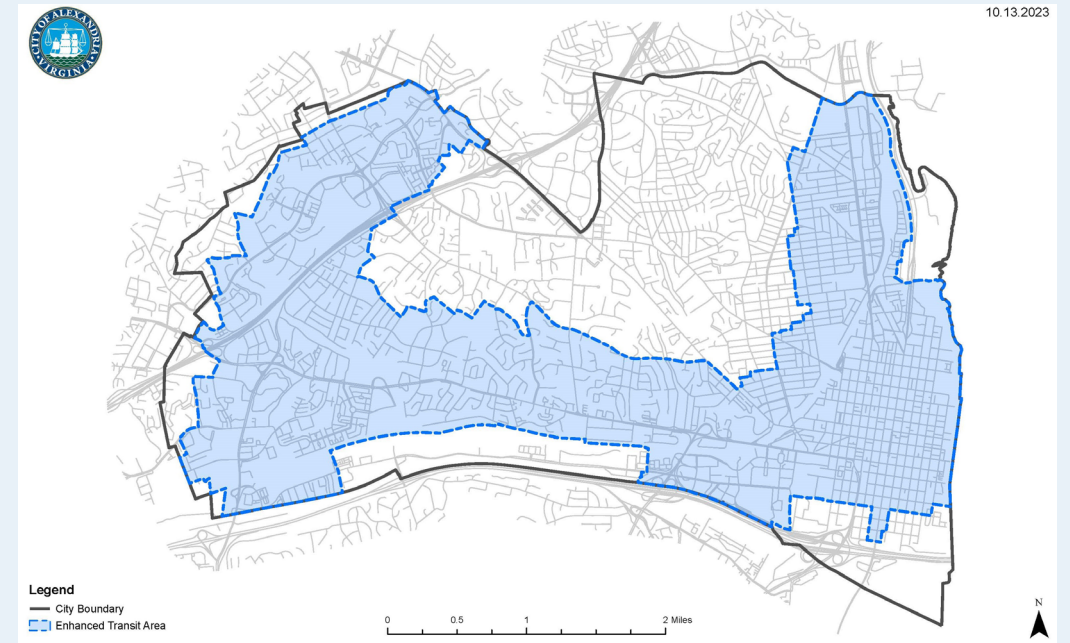
Option 4

Minimum 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit within enhanced transit area	
Number of units	Minimum required number of parking spaces
1	1
2	1
3	2
4	2
Minimum 1 parking spaces per dwelling unit beyond enhanced transit area	
Number of units	Minimum required number of parking spaces
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

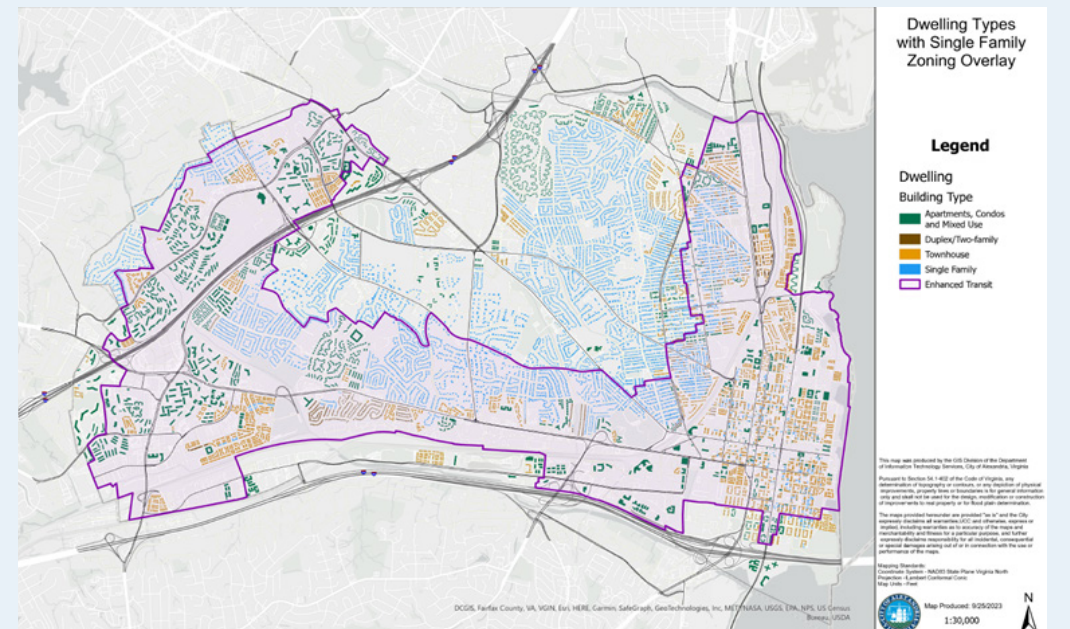
Enhanced Transit Area

The enhanced transit area map displays an aggregate 1/2-mile transit walkshed mapped to existing city streets and parcels. The walkshed is based on existing and anticipated stations and entryways. The proposed parking policy utilizes the enhanced transit area.

The enhanced transit area is currently used to determine commercial parking requirements. In 2018, the City Council approved a text amendment to update the commercial parking standards into the Zoning Ordinance. The commercial parking standards were updated to include parking minimums and maximums that were differentiated whether a parcel is located within the enhanced transit area or beyond the enhanced transit area.



Currently there are approximately 4,000 single family homes within the enhanced transit area and 5,000 single family homes outside of the enhanced transit area.



Supporting Research

Articles

- [A Business Case for Dropping Parking Minimums \(planning.org\)](#)
- <https://www.ssti.us/2018/10/planners-reevaluate-parking-requirements-for-affordable-housing/>
- <https://www.planning.org/planning/2018/oct/peopleoverparking/>
- [Parking Requirement Impacts on Housing Affordability \(vtpi.org\)](#)
- [ite-journal-feb-2013-drowe.pdf \(kingcounty.gov\)](#)
- <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2013/04/02/study-loosening-parking-mandates-leads-to-more-affordable-housing/>

Parking Reform Network

- National compilation of parking reforms: [Parking Mandates Map - Parking Reform Network](#)