

# CONNECTING ARLINGTON’S POLICY FRAMEWORK TO THE RESIDENTIAL PARKING WORKING GROUP

## Contents

- Arlington County Development and Growth Goals ..... 1
- Master Transportation Plan Policies Related to Multi-Family Residential Parking Requirements..... 2
- Affordable Housing Master Plan ..... 4
- Sector Plans..... 5
- Site Plan Project Review ..... 8
- Unified Commercial/Mixed Use Development Permits..... 9

The policy recommendations to come out of the Residential Parking Working Group process will exist in the context of prior Arlington County policies, plans, and law (in the case of the Zoning Ordinance). The following presents highlights from those policies, plans, and law. Full copies of the documents referenced are available for reading in the Documents section of the Residential Parking Working Group project web site.

## Arlington County Development and Growth Goals

From the “General Land Use Plan Booklet” (rev. Dec. 2015).

- 1. Concentrate high-density residential, commercial and office development within designated Metro Station Areas in the Rosslyn-Ballston and Jefferson Davis Metrorail Transit Corridors.** This policy encourages the use of public transit and reduces the use of motor vehicles.
- 2. Promote mixed-use development in Metro Station Areas to provide a balance of residential, shopping and employment opportunities.** The intent of this policy is to achieve continuous use and activity in these areas.
- 3. Increase the supply of housing by encouraging construction of a variety of housing types and prices at a range of heights and densities in and near Metro Station Areas.** The Plan allows a significant number of townhouses, midrise and high-rise dwelling units within designated Metro Station Areas.
- 4. Preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods.** Within Metro Station Areas, land use densities are concentrated near the Metro Station, tapering down to surrounding residential areas to limit the impacts of high-density development. Throughout the County, the Neighborhood Conservation Program and other community improvement programs help preserve and enhance older residential areas and help provide housing at a range of price levels and densities.
- 5. Preserve and enhance neighborhood retail areas.** The County encourages the preservation and revitalization of neighborhood retail areas that serve everyday shopping and service needs and are consistent with adopted County plans. The Commercial Revitalization Program concentrates public capital improvements and County services in these areas to stimulate private reinvestment.

## Master Transportation Plan Policies Related to Multi-Family Residential Parking Requirements

The Master Transportation Plan (MTP) is a component of Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan. The MTP Goals and Policies element was adopted by the County Board in November 2007.

It lists transportation policies for various modes, including Streets, Transit, Pedestrians, Bicycles, Parking and Curb Space Management, and Transportation Demand and System Management.

Following the adoption of the goals and policies document, the various modal elements of the Master Transportation Plan were developed. They expand upon the transportation policies for each mode and list implementation actions.

### The Parking and Curb Space Management Element of the Master Transportation Plan

The Parking and Curb Space Management Element of the MTP was adopted by the County Board in November 2009.

#### Policies

Five of the parking policies listed in the document directly relate to parking requirements for multi-family residential buildings:

*Policy 6. Ensure that minimum parking needs are met and excessive parking is not built. Divert resources saved by reducing excessive off-street parking to other community benefits.*

*Policy 8. Allow reduced parking space requirements for new development in close proximity to frequent transit service and exemplary access by non-motorized travel modes and car-sharing vehicles. Require enhanced TDM measures for developments with reduced quantities of parking. Allow site plan and use permit developments to cooperate with each other to meet off-street parking requirements.*

*Policy 9. Maximize the sharing of parking spaces, including in private parking lots and garages, by various users throughout the day and night. Discourage assigned parking. Balance shared parking goals with the preservation of neighborhood character in church, lodge and school parking lots in residential areas.*

*Policy 10. Encourage the separation ("unbundling") of the price of parking from the price of owning, renting or leasing a housing or office unit. Discourage subsidized parking for residents or commuters.*

*Policy 11. Reduce or eliminate parking requirements for specialized projects near transit nodes when they advance related County transportation goals, such as lowering the cost of transit-proximate housing dedicated to those who cannot afford a private vehicle, making available underground space for a new subway entrance, or adding retail amenities to a transit stop. Tailor TDM measures for such projects appropriately.*

## Implementation Actions

The relevant implementation actions for Policy 6 include studying the existing parking ratio requirements and determining the parking demand in special-exception project based on the expected travel patterns and needs of users of the site and the site's TDM measures. The implementation actions specify on-going research to assess the appropriate parking supply for the County's various neighborhoods and land uses.

For Policy 8, the implementation actions ensure that special-exception projects provide adequate parking for single-occupancy vehicles, carpools and vanpools, and that parking requirements are reduced only when adequate TDM measures are included.

Implementation actions for Policy 9 include allowing off-site options to satisfy part or all of the parking requirements, and using the special-exception process to permit agreements for off-site and shared parking and to evaluate and mitigate impacts on adjacent areas.

The relevant Policy 10 implementation actions encourage unbundled parking in residential facilities funded with County subsidies, in special-exception residential projects within ¼ mile of a Metro station or major transit facility, and in special-exception residential projects not within ¼ mile of a major transit facility when parking is not likely to spill over onto unmetered on-street parking.

Policy 11 implementation actions include the development of guidelines for adjusting the parking requirements for affordable and senior housing and other unique projects when TDM and transit support are provided.

Many of the other policies in the Master Transportation Plan and its modal elements indirectly affect the parking requirements for multi-family residential buildings. These policies support the goal of moving more people without more traffic. They aim at improving mobility and access through modes other than single-occupancy vehicles. They can affect the residential parking requirements by reducing the number of vehicles owned and used by County residents and thus the number of parking spaces needed.

## Excerpts from the Transit and Transportation Demand and System Management Elements of the Master Transportation Plan

### Transit

The Transit Element does not address private-vehicle parking directly. However, it does relate Arlington's transit service to vehicle ownership in the first paragraph of the Element's "Summary." Specifically,

*"[t]ransit is also supporting a lifestyle where car ownership is not a requirement for daily life" (p. 3).*

The Transit Element also addresses taxis and car-sharing,<sup>1</sup> and notes that,

---

<sup>1</sup> The Transit Element does not address ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft, as these services were not available when the Element was published and adopted (2009).

*"[t]axis and car-sharing also offer opportunities to reduce auto ownership and dependence. Surveys have found that access to car-sharing allows members to sell, or not purchase personal vehicles and leads to higher rates of travel by transit, carpool, walking, or bicycle" (p. 32).*

### Transportation Demand and System Management

Arlington's transportation demand management policies and programs are geared primarily toward reducing automobile use. However, it does link car-sharing to reduced vehicle ownership when it includes in a list of implementation items for Policy 5

*"Continue to expand the car-sharing program as needed to encourage and serve reduced private-car ownership" (p. 6).*

## Affordable Housing Master Plan

The Affordable Housing Master Plan indirectly addresses parking. Insofar as parking is essentially an issue of land use regulations, the Master Plan addresses parking through policy 1.1.1 and also policy 3.5.1. The matter of appropriate parking ratios was a topic of discussion in the three-year affordable housing study.

While no specific parking policy directives were included in the Master Plan, there was a general understanding that reduced parking is a potential tool for greater efficiency in the use of County resources for affordable housing and was included in the accompanying Implementation Framework.

### Policies

*Policy 1.1.1 Encourage the construction and preservation of affordable rental housing through land use/zoning policy, financial and technical assistance.*

The General Land Use Plan, Zoning Ordinance and other regulations affecting land use and development will be used to encourage the production and preservation of affordable housing and to provide for a diversity of housing types and sizes consistent with projected needs and within approved land use categories, densities and development/use constraints.

Arlington County will work proactively with state, federal, other local governments, the private sector, individuals, non-profits and faith based institutions to expand and maintain its supply of affordable housing. This may include advocating for changes to federal and state laws<sup>1</sup>, promoting regional-level planning for affordable housing, encouraging employer-assisted housing, expanding economic or regulatory incentives, or other initiatives. (p. 18)

*Policy 3.5.1 Integrate affordable housing goals and policies into County sector plans, economic development strategies, the Master Transportation Plan and other County planning efforts.*

In order to provide a wide base of opportunities for lower income households and achieve a broader distribution of affordable housing; new or updated area and sector plans will address how these plans further the goals of the Affordable Housing Master Plan.

Affordable housing goals will be incorporated into other County plans. Policies adopted in economic development, transportation, land use and the Affordable Housing Master Plan should be consistent and reinforcing. (p. 33)

## Implementation Framework

### **D. Affordable Housing Parking Standards**

[Supports] Policies 1.1.6, 3.5.2

*National and local precedents have demonstrated that there are reduced parking needs for occupants of affordable units.<sup>2</sup> Non-profit affordable housing providers have indicated that parking utilization rates in their properties tend to be less than one space per unit<sup>3</sup>. In 2013, the County conducted a commercial parking study and adopted a new parking policy for office buildings approved by site plan.*

*Evidence based research is needed to “right-sized” parking in the Arlington context. A parking study of affordable housing would provide a basis for recommendations on parking policy for affordable housing across the county. The affordable housing parking study could be conducted as a component of a countywide residential parking study or as a separate study. (p. 25)*

## Sector Plans

The County's sector plans further refine the Comprehensive plan for areas of the County, though they don't necessarily cover all elements or topics in the Comprehensive plan. They are updated as needed, and many of them address parking policy.

The following are excerpts from sector plans for areas in the Rosslyn-Ballston and Jefferson Davis Corridors that address off-street parking.

### “Crystal City Sector Plan” (2010)

*Transportation Policy Directive T11: Establish near-term parking ratios for new projects that range...between 1 and 1.125 spaces per residential dwelling unit (or apply the County’s most current parking management policies), while maximizing the sharing of parking space by various users and addressing short-term visitor and retail parking needs in Crystal City. (p. 29, p. 110)*

*With Crystal City’s rich mix of transportation choices, the flexibility of these [special exception] processes should continue to be used to apply a more appropriate parking requirement that takes into account other factors including, but not limited to, site location, accessibility to transit, transportation demand management (TDM) measures, trends in parking demand, and management strategies for parking spaces. (p. 72)*

*Sharing of existing and future off-street parking spaces should be encouraged whenever possible to increase utilization of the transportation infrastructure. (p. 73)*

### “Realize Rosslyn” (2015)

*Policy T12: Apply innovative parking and transportation demand management strategies ... that further reduce need for new parking facilities. (p. 63)*

### **Off-Street Parking Recommendations**

*Incorporate shared parking as part of all new and amended site plans where feasible.*

...

*Strengthen relationships of TDM policy to building form and development approval policy (e.g. requiring parking to be unbundled).*

...

*Regularly revisit parking requirements for the “C-O Rosslyn” district to see if adjustments are warranted based on real-world experience...(page 119)*

## Courthouse

The 1993 “Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum,” the “Sector Plan Summary” (2000), and the “Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum: Courthouse Square” (2015) focus on surface parking and the creation of a parking structure underneath a Courthouse Square park. They do not address residential parking.

## “Clarendon Sector Plan” (2006)

### **D.8 Parking**

#### ***Policies for Parking***

*43. Provide sufficient parking to meet realistic needs generated by the envisioned land use mix proposed in the plan.*

...

*46. Include knock-out panels in underground parking garages in order to facilitate connections to adjacent parking facilities particularly where adjacent parcels are irregularly shaped or sized which could limit the viability of underground parking. (p. 104)*

#### ***Recommendations***

*As in all other parts of Arlington, parking for Clarendon should be provided by two principal means: 1) through existing publicly-owned or leased parking facilities or 2) through privately-owned parking facilities. A more in-depth examination of the current and projected parking utilization is recommended with the goal of refining the parking ratios to best serve the Clarendon area. The following specific considerations should guide that analysis:*

...

***New Facilities.*** *As new development proceeds, the continuation of the existing Zoning Ordinance requirements is recommended for parking in new developments including existing parking standards for special exception site plan projects with several modifications for shared parking, small projects, and parking relief for preserved structures as follows:*

- *New projects should design their garages to maximize the use of their parking spaces over a twenty-four hour period. The parking spaces would be “shared” so that visitors of the proposed building(s) and the general public would have access to short-term, unreserved, high-turnover parking spaces during the hours not in use by the primary building occupants. The shared parking spaces should not be considered extra or additional parking spaces; rather, these spaces would be allocated from the total amount of required spaces for the total project based on the proposed uses. The parking spaces that are designated as shared parking would be calculated by applying the following formulas to the specific project and should be located on the first level of the garage closest to the street level:*

- *One space for every ten residential units, when there are at least 100 units, made available during the day from 9a.m.-5p.m.*

...

*Projects which include buildings listed for preservation in Chapter 2 [specifically Section D.4] may seek relief from meeting the parking requirements described in the Zoning Ordinance. (p. 108)*

## “Virginia Square Sector Plan” (2002)

### **Parking Recommendations**

...

*43. Improve parking efficiency by requiring shared parking in all new office and residential construction throughout Virginia Square, particularly in parking structures. Require shared parking as a condition of site plan approval of commercial office development.*

*44. Work with property owners to renegotiate parking agreements through the site plan amendment process to accommodate shared parking arrangements. (p. 73)*

...

## “Ballston Sector Plan” (1980)

This sector plan says little about residential parking. It does, however, tie parking demand to Metro service, stating that “[a]t present it appears that parking demand will be exceptionally strong in Ballston until further extension of the Orange Line.” (p. 77)

Also, the document encourages flexibility on parking policy, recommending that “[t]hroughout the redevelopment process, the County should remain open to other changes in parking policy as they relate to transportation and development goals.” (p. 77)

## Pentagon City

Pentagon City is governed by a Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP). A series of documents have laid out guiding principles for the development of this area over the past 40 years in anticipation of final site plans.

Though the foundational planning documents for Pentagon City (the Pentagon City Master Plan, 1976; and the report from the Pentagon City Planning Task Force, 1997) discuss screening and undergrounding of parking, they are largely silent on the topic of parking ratios; the 1976 document merely states that apartment uses should be built “unless otherwise approved in the final site plan” with [o]ne and one-eighth space per unit for the first 200 units, one space for each additional unit” (the base requirement in the Arlington Zoning Ordinance; p. 51). Later documents updated guidance for specific areas of the PDSP.

The “Pentagon Centre Site Guiding Principles” (2008) call for a balance between two priorities:

- “Parking ratios should be established to enhance the multi-modal nature of the site directing users to alternative modes of travel and lessening the impact of traffic associated with any future increases of density on the site.

...

- Parking requirements should minimize spillover into surrounding residential neighborhoods.” (p. 4).

The “Metropolitan Park Design Guidelines” (2013) do not provide guidance on the amount of parking to be built for residential uses.

The “PenPlace Design Guidelines” (2014) state that “[p]arking ratios should be established to reflect the multi-modal nature of the site” and that “[a]ll parking resources should be maximized through measures such as shared parking, building on the parking synergies inherent in mixed-use developments” (21).

## Site Plan Project Review

### Parking Requirements for Site Plan Projects

In DES’s review of special exception site plan projects, parking is one of several project components that DES staff reviews. Others include: traffic impacts, stormwater management, wet and dry utilities, street lights, traffic signals, multi-modal transportation, and construction impacts. Parking requirements for residential uses are listed in the County’s zoning ordinance. For most multiple-family housing (dwellings other than one- and two-family), parking requirements are standard across the various multiple-family (“RA”) zoning districts:

“One and one-eighth spaces for each of the first two hundred (200) dwelling units in any structure and one (1) space for each additional dwelling unit constructed and maintained in accordance with §14.3.3.”

For some other RA zones, and for multiple-family dwellings built in commercially zoned districts, the parking requirement is simply one off-street space per dwelling unit.

In most cases, it is possible for special exception site plan projects to provide an amount of parking that is less than that required by the underlying zoning, provided that there is justification. (Applicants may always provide more parking than is required by zoning.) However, there are several commercial zoning designations that do NOT permit the parking requirement to be modified by the County Board.

### Review of Parking for Site Plan Projects

When applicants for special exception site plan projects request a parking ratio that provides less parking than that prescribed by the zoning ordinance, they must provide a justifying rationale. Staff then analyzes the request, looking first at the parking element of the County’s Master Transportation Plan:

- Policy 6 ensures that minimum parking needs are met and excessive parking is not built. It also recommends analyzing expected travel patterns at the site, and using TDM to affect parking demand.
- Policy 8 allows reduced parking requirements for new development close to transit and other alternative transportation modes. It requires enhanced TDM measures for developments with reduced quantities of parking, and allows for shared parking across buildings and uses.
- Policy 11 allows adjustment of parking requirements for affordable housing near transit nodes, along with TDM measures.

In addition to policy guidance from the MTP, staff review includes a review of sector plan guidance, a look at past County Board actions for similar projects, analysis of occupancy studies, a look at existing parking utilization trends, and a review of any neighborhood on-street parking restrictions.

In the cases where a parking reduction is justified, staff may recommend approval of the reduced parking ratio along with recommendations for mitigation (to support multi-modal transportation choices). The mitigation is typically in the form of enhanced TDM strategies to be provided by the developer. An additional objective of the mitigation is to build out the County's multi-modal infrastructure, by providing such elements as improved and widened sidewalks, bus stops and shelters, bicycle parking, and access to shared transportation such as carshare and bikeshare.

However, it is important to note that there is no policy guidance other than the general guidance provided by the MTP, and there is no standard approach to staff's analysis and recommendations.

## Unified Commercial/Mixed Use Development Permits

This class of use permit—which allows residential units within in certain commercial zoning districts as part of mixed-use development—is one form of Arlington County's "special exception" processes in the Zoning Ordinance.

UCMUDs allow for "flexible, site-specific solutions for revitalizing shopping areas, promotes the compatibility of commercial developments and commercial districts with surrounding properties, provides for creative opportunities to encourage and retain local and small business, or promotes opportunities for affordable housing" ("A Citizen's Guide to Density," p. 7)

As written in Section 10.2.5 of the Zoning Ordinance,

*The County Board may, by use permit approval, approve unified commercial/mixed use developments in areas designated "service commercial" on the general land use plan and that are within the Clarendon Revitalization District and that are within the C-1, C-2, C-3 or C-TH zoning districts... (p. 10-8).*

To date only one project has been approved in the Metro Corridors through the UCMUD process: the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Flats project at the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and N Highland Street in Clarendon. Two other permits were issued but lapsed before construction began. Land within the Clarendon Revitalization District Other and other land with C-2, C-3 zoning in the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor and could be developed with an UCMUD permit in the future.