



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 13, 2023

TO: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Larry Zaragoza, D.Env, Chairman  
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

SUBJECT: EQAC Concerns with the Parking Reimagined Review of the Ordinance  
Regulating Off-Street Parking and Loading

EQAC does not support the proposed recommendations in the Parking Reimagined initiative to review of Article 6 of the Zoning Ordinance, which regulates off-street parking and loading proposal. The recommended ordinance changes primarily focus on reducing parking minimums rather than a broader, holistic approach that considers net environmental benefits.

In the EQAC Annual Report, we have consistently supported holistic approaches to address land use decisions and have recently added the land use recommendation: Improve Processes to Minimize Ecological Degradation from Development Pressure. The changes proposed for Parking Reimagined lack this broader perspective, ignore the complexity of holistic planning, and do not consider the net environmental benefits of these changes. EQAC recommends that Parking Reimagined and other ordinance revisions explicitly consider net environmental benefits associated with both CECAP and Resilient Fairfax.

In discussions regarding the environmental impact of this initiative, staff suggested that a follow-on project covering the Landscape and Screening ordinance may address environmental concerns, particularly in terms of increasing tree canopy in surface parking lots. However, the benefits of preserving forests, expanding green space, or adding green infrastructure are not components of the either the Landscaping and Screening or Parking Reimagined reviews. Broader issues relating to parking, such as improving stormwater management, transportation demand management, and quality of life were not cohesively considered.

The following is quoted from the 2022 EQAC Annual Report: “As the county addresses build-out, it is important to prioritize environmental protection of increasingly valuable open space. EQAC recommends that the county adopt a policy that all future development provides a net environmental benefit. ... This establishes the value of land that can be applied consistently across all projects and fits into the multi-dimensional rubric that needs to be considered for future planning,”

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While reducing parking seems like a straightforward issue, it directly impacts zoning decisions which need to be aligned to fulfill the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. For example, parking reduction could be used to complement the county investment in metro and transit. Investment savings generated by reduced parking could be linked to improved environmental controls, solar canopies, and/or amenities. As written in Parking Reimagined, there is no net environmental benefit to offset development savings.

We urge the county to adopt a more holistic approach to the ordinance changes with both the Parking Reimagined and the Landscaping and Screening initiatives so that they provide long-term net environmental benefits in support of both CECAP and Resilient Fairfax.

cc: Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive  
Bill Hicks, Director, Land Development Services, (LDS)  
Michael Davis, Parking Program Manager, LDS  
Tracy Strunk, Director, Department of Planning and Development, (DPD)  
Austin Gastrell, Planner, DPD  
Kambiz Agazi, Director, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination  
EQAC