

Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

January 15, 2023

Dear President Friedson and Members of the County Council:

My name is Michael Larkin, and I am writing on behalf of Montgomery for All, the Montgomery County grassroots arm of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, with over 160 members throughout the county who want to see more sustainable, welcoming neighborhoods.

Montgomery for All supports the passage of Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 23-10 that eliminates parking requirements for new housing developments located within a half-mile of WMATA Metro stations, a half-mile from Purple Line stations, and a quarter-mile from existing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations or BRT stations that are funded for construction in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget. We support the elimination of parking minimums because it prioritizes housing for people over cars; sustainable, transit-oriented development over underutilized parking; and can significantly lower the cost of constructing housing. We would support the bill being expanded to apply a mile around Metro stations.

Parking minimums may appear to be a technical exercise, but it is more upon further reflection. They are effectively a tax on anyone that cannot afford a car because the cost of building parking increases housing costs. It is a tax on anyone that has the option to drive but chooses not to, or families that only want one car instead of two. People in these situations are forced to pay for parking they cannot or do not want to use. Even worse are the homes that are not built near transit because the cost of building a parking structure ends up making a project unviable or reduces the number of homes. Local Housing Solutions, a collaborative project of the NYU Furman Center and Abt Associates, estimates that a structured parking facility can cost [tens of thousands of dollars per space](#). The consequences we suffer are especially harmful when we know our communities need more mixed-income and affordable housing. The current policy is the prioritization of more space for inanimate objects over human beings. This choice should be reversed.

The Parking Reform Network and Strong Towns created a map showing [numerous localities](#) across the United States have eliminated parking minimums to varying degrees and reaped significant benefits. Buffalo, New York, eliminated parking requirements citywide in 2017, and Seattle, Washington, reduced or eliminated their parking requirements near urban centers and frequent transit in 2012. The Sightline Institute, an environmental nonprofit based in Seattle, asked researchers that studied both cases about what happened after the new parking requirements were implemented. [Both cities now have more new housing that was previously illegal when parking minimums were enforced](#). A StreetsBlog article reported on research from UCLA Associate Professor of Urban Planning Michael Manville that found San Diego's elimination of parking requirements near transit [helped make affordable housing projects financially possible](#).

To be clear, this ZTA does not eliminate existing parking or stops all parking construction. What will happen is the County will stop the arbitrary determination of how much parking a residence requires when it is located near public transportation. Building additional parking spaces near transit provides an incentive to drive more. A choice is being made to predetermine car dependence and increase vehicle miles traveled. Continuing this policy contradicts the climate goals Montgomery County set for itself. Government could instead encourage using transit and building more pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure. We can and we should reverse our current choices.

Our county is living through a housing crisis and a climate crisis. The County Council justifiably passed plans such as Thrive 2050 and the Climate Action Plan with visions of a future with abundant housing and the elimination of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. The elimination of parking minimums is an action this Council can take to implement the vision of a county that creates space for people and environmentally sustainable land use. That is a more humane Montgomery County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Larkin

On Behalf of [Montgomery for All](#)