

To: Parking and Transportation Committee
Re: Infill Parking Plan

Over the last two years the Zoning Revisions Committee conducted several public forums to solicit public input on ways to best meet the goals of the Sustainable Northampton Plan. We are reporting to you that in these discussions participants consistently expressed concern around increased traffic and parking pressures as we implement the infill goals of Sustainable Northampton Plan.

While traffic is beyond our purview, parking is not. Our current zoning features Parking Requirements for new development. We find that this relationship between parking and development in our zoning often hinders increased vibrancy and density.

Currently, property owners are required to apply arcane parking formulas that do not recognize the multiple ways a project is minimizing parking by being in an urban setting. There is an assumption in our Parking Requirements that everyone is bringing a car. However, in a tightly knit setting with a mix of residential, office and neighborhood commercial uses, more customers will come by foot or bicycle, reducing the need for high commercial parking requirements.

At the same time, Urban Residential developers are required to provide parking for residential units intended for people who frequently walk, bike, and may not even own a car. When residences are located in tightly knit, traditional urban neighborhoods that are located in walking distance of goods, services, jobs, and transit, households are able to keep fewer cars. A wonderful example of this in Northampton is in the neighborhoods around Market Street – In these neighborhoods, U.S. Census data report that an astounding 26% of residents walk to work. In this neighborhood, 22% of households reported having NO vehicles and 52% of households reported having one vehicle – 74% of these households have 0 to 1 vehicles! We find the city's parking formulas to be ineffective and we have recommended the Parking Requirements in our zoning be relaxed or lifted.

At the same time, we do feel that many of the concerns expressed around parking and density are valid and that the city needs more appropriate and targeted strategies than zoning ordinances to address parking pressures. Therefore, we are recommending to your committee the development of an *Infill Parking Plan*. We anticipate that as the vibrancy of our downtown and village centers flourish, the need for parking strategies will increase. Some ideas we discussed included on-street residential parking permits, as well as allowing parking in front yard open space during snow emergencies. Having a plan to address parking issues as they arise will go a long way towards easing citizens' concerns surrounding the implementation of the Sustainable Northampton Plan.

Respectfully Submitted

The Zoning Revisions Committee