



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Legislation Text

File #: 24-0325, Version: 1

Agenda Summary

That the Administration collaborate with this Council to draft a zoning ordinance to remove the requirement to build unnecessary new parking spaces.

Official Text

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS: The City of Somerville's current zoning ordinance strictly requires the construction of an often unnecessary number of parking spaces for new development outside of a certain radius from a transit station; and

WHEREAS: The Administration supports removing the requirement to build unnecessary new parking spaces and furthermore, to alternatively establish maximum parking regulations instead; and

WHEREAS: It is well documented that legally requiring the construction of excess parking spaces directly contributes to increased traffic congestion, especially the requirements imposed on large commercial developments; and

WHEREAS: Increasing traffic not only undermines the quality of life for Somerville residents, but also directly contradicts both the city's climate and safety goals as outlined in the Somerville Climate Forward Plan, the Somerville Vision Zero Plan, and other citywide planning documents; and

WHEREAS: Excessive parking requirements have repeatedly emerged as key elements of community pushback against several proposed new commercial developments, yet in many cases these large parking requirements are in fact a result of Somerville's current zoning ordinance; and

WHEREAS: The creation of even a single parking space costs, on average, \$50,000, with significantly higher costs in dense metropolitan areas or where undergrounding or multi-level parking structures are required, a cost which is a significant burden to affordable housing developers and directly translates to increases in rent for residential and commercial tenants; and

WHEREAS: Studies have shown that parking has been massively overbuilt in communities across the country, that parking in large commercial developments is underutilized with up to 50% of spaces remaining empty at peak usage times, and that nearly 30% of parking spaces in new apartment buildings in the Greater Boston area go unused; and

WHEREAS: Current parking requirements force City staff to spend substantial time working with individual development teams to reduce parking supply on a project-by-project basis; and

WHEREAS: The elimination of parking minimums in Somerville's Transit Oriented Development areas has resulted in a remarkable 62% decrease in the amount of parking spaces being built, compared to what was previously mandated; and

WHEREAS: There is near universal consensus among experts, both nationwide and within city staff, that minimum parking requirements are damaging and their elimination is supported by the administration, city staff, and our neighboring communities; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

RESOLVED: That the administration collaborate with this Council to draft a zoning ordinance to remove the requirement to build unnecessary new parking spaces, and consider imposing standardized parking maximums on certain large commercial developments outside of transit areas.