



FAQs: PROPOSED MILL STREET NE PUBLIC PARKING CONDOMINIUM

PLANNING and ZONING

- 1) Why did the Town hold a public hearing on the Mill Street public parking condominium?** Town Council is considering purchasing, in the form of a condominium, the second floor of a proposed 4-story, 45-foot tall commercial/self-storage building located at 223-241 Mill Street NE. The potential public parking condominium was presented to the Town in 2017. Although not required by Town Code or the Code of Virginia, the Town held a public hearing in an effort to be as transparent as possible on the potential acquisition and to provide an opportunity for public input.
- 2) Is there a need for public parking in this location?** The need for a public parking facility was first identified in the **1995 Comprehensive Plan** and subsequently in the **Church Street Vision**. In particular, the Church Street Vision (C-1B zoning district) allows for a reduction in the parking ratio from 1 space per 200 square feet to 1 space per 600 square feet of total floor area to incentivize redevelopment, with the commitment that the Town would pursue a public parking facility. In 2008, Town Council directed the Planning Commission to conduct a **parking analysis** of the Church Street pedestrian district. Based on current zoning regulations for parking minimums, the study showed that there was a shortfall of approximately 250 spaces in the Church Street commercial corridor.

In the **2015 Update** of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town confirmed that there is still a need for public parking in the Town's central business district (CBD). As of today, approximately 96% of parking in the CBD is privately owned with only 4% publicly owned. Most of these public spaces include on-street parking along Church and Center streets, which often are nearly fully utilized during peak hours. The Comprehensive Plan states: "The Town should look at opportunities to build centrally located municipal

parking structures, ideally along Church Street, where parking demand exceeds supply. Parking structures can allow patrons to park once and walk to various establishments in the CBD.” To facilitate redevelopment, the Comprehensive Plan suggests creation of a “park-once” environment with parking garages, a parking district, and shared parking strategies. The need for public parking also has been echoed by Church Street business owners, including at an August 2017 meeting between business owners and the mayor and Town manager.

- 3) **How much public parking would be included on the second floor?** Approximately 127 spaces. The developer also is tentatively proposing 167 parking spaces below grade and in the rear of the first floor for the commercial businesses and self-storage facility, which exceeds the Town’s parking requirements for those uses (160 total required parking spaces).
- 4) **Will the developer build a shorter building if the Town decides not to purchase the public parking condominium?** The developer is permitted by-right to build a 45-foot tall building in the **CM Limited Industrial** zoning district and has indicated that he will build up to the allowable height limit.
- 5) **Is there a reason there would be an agreement between the Town and developer before approval of any modifications of requirements for setback requirements?** Due to the required width of 123 feet for an efficient parking structure and the 137 foot depth of the property, modifications are needed from the front and rear yard setbacks. Specifically, a reduction of 9 feet from the required front yard setback of 15 feet is needed, along with 7 feet of right-of-way, to provide a sufficient sidewalk and landscaped area along Mill Street. A reduction of 2 feet from the required rear yard setback of 10 feet will provide sufficient space to ensure that mature trees along the rear property line thrive and continue to provide natural screening for adjacent single-family homes on Park Street. Modifications of requirements are requested when the site plan is being reviewed. The developer needs an agreement in place before moving forward with the site plan process, which can be very expensive.
- 6) **What is the status of the existing businesses? What uses are allowed in the building?** The Town is not aware of the status of existing businesses since it is a private matter between the owner of the property and business owners. **Uses** permitted in the CM Limited Industrial zoning district include commercial uses allowed along Maple Avenue and Church Street as well as industrial uses, such as light manufacturing, carpentry and woodworking shops, and laundry/rug cleaning businesses.
- 7) **Why didn’t the Town consider alternative sites? Are there other creative parking alternatives (i.e. shared parking, inter-parcel connections)?** The Town has been

exploring alternative sites for several years, including the development of a private/public partnership with the Arrington Group in 2012 (see summary table below).

Past and Present Potential Public Parking Locations	Type of Arrangement with Town	Status	Pros/Cons
<i>Mill Street NE</i>	Town acquisition of second floor within proposed building in form of a condominium	Town Council currently is considering entering an agreement with developer to purchase floor	<p>Located near businesses on Church Street and Maple Avenue</p> <p>Provides parking for events at Town Green and Church Street, which can help lessen amount of on-street parking in residential neighborhoods</p> <p>Size of property allows for a significant amount of parking with an efficient layout</p> <p>Depth of property requires modifications of requirements for efficient parking layout</p>
<i>Fairfax County Patrick Henry Library</i>	Unsure at this time, no formal arrangements between county and Town	Currently in talks with Fairfax County to conduct a feasibility study	<p>Located centrally along Maple Avenue</p> <p>Fairly large site that appears to be able to accommodate efficient parking garage layouts</p> <p>No land costs associated with constructing parking</p> <p>May not be desirable for Church Street visitors/customers due to crossing Maple Avenue</p>
<i>120 Church NW - Arrington Property</i>	Public-private partnership with owner of 120 Church Street NW	Partnership ended after increasing estimates of constr. costs	<p>Located on Church Street</p> <p>Included 120 parking spaces for public</p>

			Risks associated with public-private partnership
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In addition to the three projects listed in the table, the Town has previously entered into discussions with four other property owners/developers, which did not progress for various reasons, i.e., requirements to rezone property, insufficient size of the property, and inability to assemble necessary land to make a parking structure feasible. The public was not notified while these potential projects were in the discussion phase, as allowed by State law, so that the Town would not be at a disadvantage during negotiations. Additionally, there are not many parcels available to support public parking in the Church Street corridor.

As for shared parking and inter-parcel connectivity, all lots developed as part of the **C-1B zoning district** are required to provide shared parking with other lots developed under the C-1B zone design guidelines, unless prevented by an adjoining lot or lots not developed under the approved guidelines.

- 8) Will parking for bicycles be available on the 2nd floor?** The Town will pursue bicycle parking for any potential public parking structure/project.

FINANCIAL

- 9) What is the cost of the project? What happens if construction costs go over budget?**

The total cost of the Town’s investment is expected to be contracted at \$4.6 million. With the condominium structure, the Town does not assume any building risk. If the project does not get built, any money the Town has invested will be returned. If the project goes over budget, that is the responsibility of the developer. No cost overruns will be billed to the Town.

How is the project to be financed? The Town’s portion of the project would utilize bond funding, to be financed by the Town’s current 3% meals taxes, covering 100% of the \$4.6 million. The Town also has applied for a grant from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), which would cover 50% of the purchase price (\$2.3 million). If the grant is awarded and accepted by the Town, the project would be financed equally by bond funding and the NVTA transportation grant.

- 10) Why is the Town’s portion structured as a condominium? Would it be considered a public/private partnership?**

- The Town does not own any property near Church Street conducive to a parking lot or facility.

- The Mill Street property owner purchased the property to redevelop it and is developing the site with mixed commercial uses.
- The property owner did not offer to sell the land to the Town.
- The property owner is able to incorporate public parking into the proposed building.
- The cost of acquiring land and then building a standalone parking lot/structure would be very expensive and could require condemnation, litigation, and loss of tax revenue due to displacement of businesses and taxable real estate.
- The Town does not want to share the risk in constructing a building in which it is using only one floor.
- The Town would prefer not to lease spaces from a private property owner since that was viewed as a short-term solution to Church Street/C-1B parking issues.

The proposal for the Town to purchase one floor (as a condominium unit) of a new building for parking is not a public/private partnership. A “partnership” would imply or include sharing risks and expenses of development. The proposed condominium purchase is a negotiated purchase of a specific interest in real estate for a specific price. The Town is not partnering with Mill Street Development One, LLC, it is a buyer.

11) What are the projected annual operating costs? The Town will negotiate responsibilities as part of the condominium documents, which aren’t completed yet. Early estimates range from \$50,000-\$75,000 annually.

12) What are the projected annual condominium fees? Unknown at this point.

13) Will the Town charge for parking? Not initially, but the public parking level will be wired to allow for later pay-for-parking infrastructure.

14) Can the Town afford the project without the 50% NVTA grant? Yes. The Town can finance the entire project with bond financing funded through meals taxes without raising the meals tax rate.

15) Does the Town lose the NVTA grant if they don’t use it? Yes.

16) What kind of due diligence has the Town done to ensure we pay the best/ appropriate price? Is the price too high? Too low? The Town has been working with Kimley-Horn, a parking and transportation consultant, since the fall. Kimley-Horn has reviewed plans, made suggestions, and provided input to the Town on appropriate

pricing for parking spaces and operating costs. Kimley-Horn has estimated that \$1.3 million of the \$4.6 million is for land costs.

17) The 2018 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) originally included a parking structure at the Patrick Henry Library at a cost of \$5.6 million. In a revision of the CIP presented at a January work session, the project had been moved out to 2028 at no cost increase.

Why? The Town is working with Fairfax County for a possible joint project improving the Patrick Henry Library and opening up as many as 250 parking spots for the Town. The county and/or Town could contemplate applying for NVTA funding for a portion or all of this project. The timing of the project is not firm and could move earlier or later than 2028. In September 2017, when the first CIP plan was done, the budgeted amount and timing were placeholders. The county has asked the Town for a \$75,000 contribution to fund a feasibility study, which was included in the 2018 bond sale that recently was completed.

18) If the Town accepts NVTA funding, are they obligated over the life of the project? Yes.

19) Will the Town pay a property tax bill for the condominium? No. Town property is exempt from property taxes.

20) Can the Town sell the condominium at a later date and convert it to residential condos? The site is not zoned for residential uses, so a conversion to residential condominiums would not be allowed.

21) Why does the developer want to sell a floor to the Town? Our understanding is the developer recognized a need for parking in the Church Street corridor and saw a benefit to add a floor of public parking.

22) Why isn't the Town using Net Present value to evaluate projects? As a government entity, the Town utilizes a different set of criteria than do for-profit businesses to evaluate projects. A government invests in projects that are cross-subsidized by other revenue sources. In this case, we incentivized redevelopment in the Church Street corridor by lowering the parking requirement and agreeing to develop other sources of parking. The Town is choosing to move forward with projects that meet our objectives and is ensuring that we have the cash flow to pay for the debt service required to finance construction of these projects.

23) What is the cost of other financing structures – leased spaces, etc.? See answer to question 10 – leasing was not considered a viable alternative to the parking issue.

24) Who will represent the Town on the condominium association board? Town Council has not yet determined who would represent the Town on the condominium association board.

TRANSPORTATION

25) What are the current traffic volumes at Mill and Church streets? What are the traffic impacts of a public parking facility on Mill Street? A **traffic and intersection analysis** conducted by Kimley-Horn shows that existing volumes at the intersection of Mill and Church streets are such that there currently is justification for a traffic signal. Justification for a traffic signal does not mean a traffic signal is required. A traffic signal at the intersection of Mill and Church streets could reduce vehicular delays, but would increase delays for pedestrians.

Public parking facilities have a nominal impact on existing traffic and generally redistribute existing trips in the network. Having said that, there would be an increase in the number of trips at the intersection of Mill and Church streets for the public parking facility. Since traffic volumes already warrant a traffic signal and, recognizing that a signal would be antithetical to the Church Street pedestrian experience, the Town would look at potential alternative transportation improvements to the Church Street corridor, i.e., roundabout(s), to alleviate any traffic impacts.

26) If the Town uses NVTVA funds to assist with purchasing the floor of parking, will the designation of 50% of spaces for commuters impact traffic patterns? The traffic analysis shows that commuter traffic will have a minimal impact on the Mill and Church streets traffic.

27) Are the layout plans provided by the developer adequate for determining if dimensions for travel lanes/turning movements are realistic? The layout plans at this stage are adequate for determining feasibility of the structure.

28) Will bus routes/stops move to be closer to the subject site? No bus routes/stops are expected to relocate closer to the site. The closest bus stop is approximately 800 feet away from the subject site, along Maple Avenue near Park Street and the W&OD Trail.

29) How will ventilation work to ensure healthy air quality on the floor of public parking? Although the back of the building will include a solid wall, ventilation of the second floor can be accomplished utilizing the sides of the building.

30) Is using the quarter-mile buffer from the site adequate for determining how far people will be willing to walk to and from the public parking? Kimley-Horn provided a **memorandum on acceptable pedestrian walking distances** as it relates to the distance

of the proposed public parking to commercial establishments along Church Street. The memorandum states that while there is not a definitive acceptable walking standard, applying an industry rule of thumb of a 5-minute, quarter-mile walking distance suggests that the proposed location on Mill Street can allow those who park there to reach most destinations along the Church Street corridor at a comfortable pace, within a reasonable amount of time, and with a tolerable level of acceptance. It also notes that there is much the Town can do to influence positive walking habits and acceptable walking distances. Effective wayfinding, pedestrian-scaled lighting, sidewalk quality, and traffic-calming can further enhance Church Street as a pedestrian corridor.