

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEP 08 1999

TO: Gerald E. Connolly, Supervisor
Providence District

FROM: James P. Zook, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning

SUBJECT: The Mobil Restaurant Park in Merrifield

REF: RZ 98-P-007, SE 95-P-008
Tax Map Ref: 49-3 ((1)) 142A
Zoning District: C-6

This is in response to your memorandums dated August 10, 1999 to me and August 19, 1999 to Jane Gwinn, regarding required parking for freestanding eating establishments and parking problems associated with the Mobil Restaurant Park in Merrifield.

As you noted in your August 10, 1999 memorandum, the referenced restaurant park meets the Zoning Ordinance off-street parking requirement in that 490 spaces are required for the combined uses and 492 spaces are provided. However, the existing parking apparently does not adequately accommodate the site's parking demand and patrons often park on the street along Gatehouse Road, or in other locations when visiting some of the more popular restaurants. To address this problem, the Board on July 12, 1999, approved Special Exception SE 99-P-008 for an alternate use of public facilities to permit up to 124 parking spaces on the adjacent Luther Jackson School site to be utilized for parking for the restaurant park, per an agreement with the School Board. This parking is intended to be reserved for employee and valet parking for the restaurant park, and when implemented, should alleviate the existing parking situation.

I can only speculate as to why the parking appears to be insufficient at the referenced park. The County's parking requirement is based on an average and is intended to accommodate the parking demand at eating establishments the majority of time. Experience has shown that the requirement is adequate for most eating establishments, however, if an eating establishment is extremely successful, the minimum parking requirement may not be sufficient. The eating establishments in the referenced park have been extremely successful (especially the Sweetwater Tavern) resulting in a higher parking demand. Additionally, the parking problem is compounded by the apparent willingness of patrons to endure relatively long waits for seating and it appears to be a tendency for patrons to want to park as physically close to their destination as possible, which leads to individuals parking on Gatehouse Road, rather than parking in available parking in the southwestern portion of the park.

The parking requirement for eating establishments has not changed since August 14, 1978, the effective date of the current Zoning Ordinance, and requires 1 space per 4 seats plus 1 space per 2 employees where seating is at tables, and/or 1 space per 2 seats plus 1 space per two 2 employees

where seating is at a counter. In 1988, during a comprehensive review of the County's parking requirements, staff evaluated the parking requirement for eating establishments and considered converting the determinant from a seat and employee base to a square footage base. However, it was subsequently determined that the existing per seat base more appropriately captures parking demand than a square footage base given the size diversity that exists in the restaurant business. As such, the current requirement was retained, with the recommendation that the employee portion of the requirement be eliminated once further analysis could be conducted to adjust the per seat rate accordingly. The employee base was never eliminated, however, over the years with very few exceptions, the current requirement has appropriately accommodated the parking demand for freestanding eating establishments. Where there have been difficulties, the parking shortages have usually been worked out through the use of various parking alternatives, such as shared parking arrangements and valet parking. I anticipate this will also be the case at the referenced park given the recently approved parking agreement.

If I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff.

JPZ

cc Jane W. Gwinn, Zoning Administrator
Barbara A. Byron, Director, Zoning Evaluation Division, DPZ
Eileen M. McLane, Deputy Zoning Administrator
for Ordinance Administration Branch

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035



MEMORANDUM

TO: Jim Zook, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning

FROM: Gerry Connolly
Providence District Supervisor 

SUBJECT: The Mobil Restaurant Park in Merrifield

DATE: August 10, 1999

As you may already be aware, the Merrifield Restaurant Park (located north of Arlington Boulevard, west of Gallows Road and south of Gatehouse Road) has been quite successful since it was built. Parking on the site is a consistent problem, especially on the weekends. While I understand that parking for the site meets the County requirements, every weekend patrons of the restaurants are forced to park on the street or in other locations to access the restaurants. Why is the parking on the site so inadequate for the uses? Have the County parking regulations been changed since this project was approved? I am concerned that similar projects not be approved so that new developments encounter the parking problems the Merrifield Restaurant Park is facing. I would appreciate your response to my questions. Please contact my office if I can provide you with additional information. Thank you.

RECEIVED

AUG 11 1999

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE**

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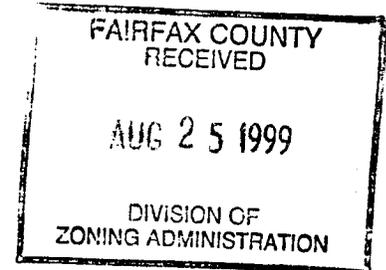
MEMORANDUM

TO: Ms. Jane Gwinn, Zoning Administrator
Department of Planning and Zoning

FROM: Gerry Connolly
Providence District Supervisor *[Signature]*

SUBJECT: Parking Requirements, Stand-Alone Restaurant Facilities

DATE: August 19, 1999



1999-0593

I have recently been working with the Fairfax County Police Department, the Terrabrooke Corporation and restaurant owners in the Gatehouse Plaza Restaurant Park to resolve concerns associated with the lack of parking available at this location.

While the minimum amount of spaces that each restaurant owner must provide is specified under Fairfax County Code, many restaurant owners feel that this requirement does not provide adequate parking for their customers, especially at stand-alone facilities.

What are the requirements under County Code, for the amount of parking to be provided at stand-alone restaurant facilities? What assumptions were used in the development of these requirements, and what factors dictate the amount of parking spaces required to be provided by each restaurant? Has the County ever experienced similar problems with lack of parking at stand-alone restaurant facilities even though the minimum amount of parking spaces required under the Code were provided?

I thank you for your response to my inquiries and appreciate the benefit of your expertise on this matter.