



TOWN OF ELIZABETH

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TO: Main Street Board of Directors

FROM: Zach Higgins, Community Development Director
Alexandra Cramer, Planner/Project Manager

DATE: May 13th, 2024

SUBJECT: Discussion Regarding Minimum Parking Requirement

SUMMARY

The Historic Advisory Board has been looking for ways to incentivize a future historic district within the Town and Main Street Board has been looking for ways to make development on Main Street more streamlined and desirable. Owners of historic properties have had difficulties complying with the Town's Site Plan requirements when looking to renovate or add to their historic lots. One potential solution to assist in both of these efforts is for the Historic Advisory Board and Main Street Board of Directors to explore the elimination or reduction of minimum parking requirements for properties within the proposed historic district and those on the local historic register. This initiative would seek to reduce the constraints imposed by parking mandates on historic properties and those within the proposed district. By doing so, it aims to encourage property owners to invest in and improve their historic buildings, allowing them to better utilize their unique spaces and offerings to the public.

The proposed historic district along Main Street represents the oldest part of Elizabeth, with buildings predating the establishment of current zoning codes. Most of these historic buildings are considered legal non-conforming, meaning they were constructed before current zoning regulations were enacted and do not comply with today's Downtown District (DT) zoning requirements. While this is common for historic Main Streets, it poses challenges for property owners seeking to make changes or additions to their properties.

In accordance with the Elizabeth Municipal Code, nearly all proposed exterior work on a property requires the submission of a site plan before a building permit can be issued. This regulatory step is to ensure that planned changes align with current zoning requirements. For instance, if a property like 188 Main Street proposes to add a patio to their property, they must first develop and submit a comprehensive site plan. This plan needs to detail both the existing features of the property and the proposed additions, providing the Town with an understanding of the intended modifications. A challenge arises when dealing with our historic Main Street buildings, many of which were constructed long before the establishment of these zoning requirements. As a result, many lack a previously filed site plan, making it incumbent upon current property owners to develop and submit one. This presents a unique challenge as the Town is then required to review these site plans against current zoning regulations, which may not always be congruent with the architectural and spatial characteristics of these historic structures.

Furthermore, the Downtown (DT) zoning district mandates a minimum parking requirement detailed in Section 16-6-10 of the municipal code. For retail use, one (1) parking space is required for every two hundred (200) square feet of usable floor area. For example, if a retail business with 1,600 square feet of usable floor area were to undergo a site



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plan process for a building addition, they would be obligated to fulfill this parking requirement. In the case of the 1,600 square foot business, the code could necessitate eight (8) off-street parking spaces, depending on their proposed layout. The zoning code currently permits a reduction of this requirement by up to twenty percent (20%) for Downtown District, and property owners not able to provide the required off-street parking spaces may opt to pay a fee of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) per parking space. Following the same example, if the proposed business cannot meet the parking requirements, they would be subject to a fee-in-lieu of \$30,000. This approach to parking regulation seemingly benefits larger or more corporate developers over small entrepreneurs prevalent on Main Street. Such regulations could influence the types of businesses viable on Main Street, thereby impacting the variety of offerings available to the public in the form of buildings and businesses.

The Town has been proactive about parking on Main Street and has procured properties for parking purposes while also planning for increased and intentional utilization of Town Right-of-Way for parking as part of the Streetscape project. The acquisition of 444 S Main Street is being planned to yield 60 to 70 parking spaces, while 174 S Banner Street is being planned for an additional 25-30 spaces. According to the Town's recently completed Old Town Circulation Study, the projected parking demand for Main Street is 270 spaces. With the combination of on-street Main Street parking, additional programmed side street parking, private lots on Main Street, and planned public lots there is an expected surplus of 34 spaces to serve Main Street. This approach to parking has the potential to increase foot traffic while promoting walkability, encourage adaptive reuse of historic properties, and provide more local less corporate developers a path to infill within the Town's historic core.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Historic Advisory Board and Main Street Board of Directors discuss the minimum parking requirements for properties within the proposed historic district and those on the local historic register. Staff also recommends that the Historic Advisory Board and Main Street Board consider providing a recommendation to the Board of Trustees regarding this issue.