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Re: Docket D-254 – Parking Reform

Chair Artze and Members of the Renton Planning Commission:

On behalf of the Washington Multi-Family Housing Association (WMFHA), thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Docket D-254 and the City's proposed updates to its parking regulations.

WMFHA appreciates the City's work to modernize its parking code and supports efforts to create regulations that are clear, predictable, and responsive to the needs of Renton's residents and businesses. We are concerned, however, with the proposed requirement that multifamily developments provide one visitor parking space for every ten dwelling units.

Parking remains a significant cost and design consideration in the development of new housing. At a time when Renton and communities throughout our region need more homes, we should be looking for opportunities to remove unnecessary barriers to housing production and provide flexibility for individual projects rather than imposing new, rigid requirements.

Visitor parking is particularly well suited for a flexible approach. Unlike resident parking, visitor demand can fluctuate significantly depending on the property, location, time of day, access to transit, surrounding parking availability, and characteristics of a particular community. Applying a uniform ratio to every multifamily development does not account for these differences.

The impact of that requirement also becomes increasingly significant as projects grow. Under a one-space-per-ten-unit standard, a 300-unit apartment community would be required to dedicate 30 parking stalls specifically to visitor use, regardless of the project's anticipated visitor demand, location, access to transit, unit mix, surrounding parking availability, or the amount of parking incorporated into the project overall.

Multifamily housing providers already have a strong operational interest in ensuring their communities can accommodate visitors, prospective residents, deliveries, service providers, rideshare activity, and move-ins and move-outs. Rather than prescribing a separate numerical requirement for one component of that demand, we encourage the City to allow visitor needs to be accommodated through a project's overall parking supply and parking management plan.

This approach would allow developers and operators to plan for the actual needs of an individual community while avoiding dedicated parking that may be underutilized and cannot easily respond to changing demand.

If the City ultimately determines that a numerical visitor parking requirement is necessary, we encourage the Commission to consider a less burdensome standard. Historically, Bellevue required visitor parking in applicable multifamily development at a rate of one space per 20 dwelling units, half the ratio currently under consideration in Renton. While Bellevue has since moved toward broader parking reform, its longstanding 1:20 standard provides a useful regional precedent for addressing visitor parking needs without requiring one dedicated space for every ten homes.

WMFHA respectfully encourages the Planning Commission not to adopt a separate numerical visitor parking minimum and instead allow visitor demand to be accommodated within a development's overall parking supply and management plan.

WMFHA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on Docket D-254 and would welcome the opportunity to remain an active stakeholder as the City continues its work on these regulations. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or if we can provide additional information or industry perspective as this proposal moves forward.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continuing to work with the City of Renton.

Sincerely,

William Schneider
Public Affairs Manager
Washington Multi-Family Housing Association