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Arlington council to vote on new restrictions for auto-related businesses

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ARLINGTON — Faced with a growing glut of used-car lots along South Cooper and Division streets, the city plans to tighten restrictions for new auto-related businesses.

The Arlington City Council is expected to vote on [zoning changes to auto-related land uses](#) next month to include specifics on where auto service and repair shops, car washes, oil and lube businesses and used-car lots can be built after more than 260 new auto-related businesses opened in the past two years.

People expressed concerns about the appearance and amount of auto-related businesses popping up, so council decided to create a set of customized standards to address the appearance of used-car lots and other businesses, planning project manager Clayton Husband said.

New rules will allow existing businesses to stay in place, but other auto-related businesses wanting to open along portions of Lamar Boulevard and Cooper, Division, and Collins streets will need special approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission and council.

While current business owners will only need to obtain a certificate of occupancy that takes about one day on average, new auto-related businesses would need special approval that can take up to a few months, Husband said.

Auto-related businesses in light industrial districts, areas that primarily have warehouses and distribution centers, can go in without council approval as long as they are 200 feet from the street.

Mayor Robert Cluck said he expects the council to approve the new guidelines at its Jan. 7 meeting.

The modified ordinance will also allow business owners that "suffer a catastrophic loss in excess of 50 percent of reasonable value," will be allowed to rebuild instead of otherwise losing their "grandfather privileges," Husband said.

Councilman Robert Shepard requested the recent zoning modification updates in regard to the light industrial districts and property damage during last week's council meeting. Property owner Rick Merritt said he would rather see the downtown area be market-driven than have people zoned out of business, however, he said the modifications to the ordinance are more forgiving than before.

"What they had originally proposed was more harsh than what then ended up with," Merritt said.

Merritt owns several used-car lots, and also serves on the board of the Downtown Arlington Management Corporation. He said he would like to see downtown developed with multifamily units, and if someone offers a auto-related business owner a chance to buy his or her business, that business owner might not want to for fear of not being able to get a city permit elsewhere.

"I would like to see downtown develop into something else other than auto-related, but I'm afraid it will be hindered because it will be harder for someone to move their business somewhere else in Arlington," Merritt said.

This report includes material from the Star-Telegram archives.

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