

RESOLUTION
THE COUNTY BOARD OF ARLINGTON
February 15, 2005

WHEREAS, Arlington has been committed to smart growth strategies that have brought extensive, urban development to Arlington and national recognition as a model community; and

WHEREAS, one of the unintended consequences of development has been a dramatic loss of affordable housing -- 47 percent (over 9,000 units) between 2000 and 2004; and

WHEREAS, other unintended consequences from this intense development have also emerged, including traffic congestion, strains on the capacity of the subway system, loss of open space, elimination of small, affordable retail space for entrepreneurs, and a need for increased public services; and

WHEREAS, Arlington is committed to creating a world-class urban community that is inclusive of people of all economic levels; and

WHEREAS, an economically diverse community is essential to sustain the urban development in Arlington and to make future development viable; and

WHEREAS, there is a direct relationship between development and both the loss of affordable housing and the need to preserve and increase affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, the County uses a range of tools to provide affordable housing, including over \$70 million in funding since 1988 in the County's revolving loan fund to create or preserve 5,138 committed, affordable units; and

WHEREAS, in Fiscal Year 2005 Arlington allocated \$8.4 million in general revenues for a range of other affordable housing programs including a locally-funded rental assistance program for working families and others (Housing Grants), an extensive system of supportive housing; housing development and planning, homeless services, tenant-landlord programs, code enforcement, and a live-where-you work program for employees of the County and School system; and

WHEREAS, the County's "Affordable Housing Guidelines for Site Plan Projects" (the Guidelines) were approved on April 27, 2004, providing targets for negotiation of affordable housing contributions as part of site plan projects; and

WHEREAS, there has been confusion and misinterpretation of the County Board's intent regarding implementation of the Guidelines;

1) NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the County Board clarifies and reaffirms that the affordable housing program related to site plan projects be administered in a manner that is in full compliance with state laws; specifically the County Board affirms the following:

- a) Affordable housing units or contributions are not an implied or explicit “requirement” of site plan projects, but are one of several community benefits, subject to voluntary negotiation, that can mitigate the impact of increased density and development and help achieve sustainable development.
- b) Site plans cannot be “administratively deferred or denied” based on an affordable housing contribution. Site plans are to be processed by staff in a reasonable timeframe and may only be approved or denied by the public action of the County Board.
- c) Site plan projects will be considered by the County Board based on adopted land use plans and policies, the amount of height and density requested, the overall quality of the project, the impacts of development on the community, and the conditions designed to mitigate the impacts of a project -- and, expressly, not solely on the amount of affordable housing.

2) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Manager is directed to develop recommendations in the following areas to clarify the County Board’s expressed intent regarding the General Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance under which it is implemented:

- a) Amendment to the General Land Use Plan to clarify that the densities shown for any given land use designation are intended to be “up to” the maximum shown and that it is not desired or expected that every development project could or should be at the maximum density. It is not the vision of the County that every site in any land use designation be developed at the same maximum density level.
- b) Amendments to the affordable housing related provisions of the Zoning Ordinance (Section 36.H. and related zoning district provisions) pursuant to section 15.2-2304 of the State Code, clarifying at what point and to what extent increased density may be considered in exchange for affordable housing.
- c) A structured process that ensures the involvement of members of the business community and other stakeholders in the development of the amendments to the General Land Use Plan and to the affordable housing related provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, consistent with Arlington’s commitment to an inclusive, participatory approach.

3) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in the event the Virginia Housing Commission undertakes a study of affordable housing issues and state laws relating to them, the County should participate in that process to the fullest extent possible.