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October 31, 2022

Dear Chair Weir, Vice Chair Patel and Members of the Arlington County Planning Commission,

Thank you for your ongoing service to the community and thoughtful counsel to us on the County Board.

We write today to provide some context and perspectives from the Board to accompany the draft zoning text regarding, and to inform your upcoming deliberations about, the Missing Middle Housing Study (MMHS).

As you know, the County Board's design for [Phase Three of the MMHS](#) was iterative: Staff's drafting of potential text amendments would occur concurrently with, and be informed by, an extensive community engagement process led by the Board. We are grateful to the staff team who have prepared materials for discussion as well as to the thousands of Arlingtonians who have engaged with us on the County Board in person or in writing, who viewed and submitted questions for our three Information Sessions, and/or who participated in our 20 Community Conversations. (A complete summary of the Community Conversations feedback is [available here](#).)

The input from so many members of the Arlington community has shaped the options for text amendments that are now before you for consideration. As the Long Range Planning Committee saw during [the materials and presentations for its October 17th meeting](#), the Phase 3 Preliminary Policy Approaches and Considerations – options which this text could effectuate – reflect key areas of community feedback. These areas include questions and concerns about:

- The number of units allowed, particularly on smaller lots
- Parking for new housing
- Protection and expansion of tree canopy; and
- The impact of missing middle zoning changes on the pace of redevelopment of existing single-detached housing.

Options to address each of these areas are included within the potential text amendments that you have received from staff. Specifically, we wish to highlight how the text responds to each of these concerns, and to underscore that these are areas of continuing deliberation by members of the County Board:

- Regarding the number of units allowed, particularly on smaller lots:
 - The minimum lot size matrix from Option 2B on page 23 (line 105) addresses the Board's July 2022 feedback and provides a framework for further deliberation of the appropriate lot sizes, particularly for multiplexes.

- The options for limiting the number of units within a “multiple-family” (multiplex) building on page 22 (lines 88-89) allows for continued discussion of the highest number of units allowed on any R-zoned lot.
- Regarding parking, the alternatives starting on page 27 (line 165) address both the Board’s feedback from July 2022 and a key area of input during the Community Conversations by allowing for consideration of varying parking requirements based on both proximity to transit and site-specific parking conditions.
- Regarding protection and expansion of tree canopy, the options on page 29 (line 210) offer a design standard requirement of additional shade tree plantings.
- Finally, regarding the impact of zoning changes on the pace of redevelopment: You will find an initial reference, on page 29 (line 224), to a key area of discussion for Board members in the coming weeks and months: The potential inclusion of annual caps on the number of properties that may be developed through the new zoning tool.
 - Within the concept of annual caps, Board members will be evaluating questions such as geographic distribution *and* distribution of annual allotments based on form, and the appropriate number for an annual cap.

We also understand that the Long-Range Planning Committee has expressed an interest in continuing to discuss design standards for missing middle forms (currently included on page 28) prior to a Request to Advertise, to ensure that these forms are compatible with their neighboring properties and the community. We share this interest and will be glad for your insights as we continue to deliberate, as well.

The next milestone for the Missing Middle Housing Study will be a Request to Advertise, to be considered sequentially first by the Planning Commission and then by the County Board. Any text considered for advertisement will provide public notice of the outside parameters of any potential changes to the zoning ordinance, and we look forward to using a period of advertisement – we anticipate two months – to gather further input and determine the right set of amendments between the status quo and those advertised changes.

As you begin your Commission deliberations on these text amendments, please know how much we appreciate and are looking forward to hearing from you – and members of other Commissions – as resident leaders and subject matter experts in Arlington County’s zoning ordinance and General Land Use Plan.

Thank you for your partnership.

Sincerely,

The Arlington County Board

Katie Cristol, Chair

Christian Dorsey, Vice Chair

Matt de Ferranti, Member

Libby Garvey, Member

Takis Karantonis, Member