

## Draft GLUP Booklet Amendment – Missing Middle Housing Study

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### Special Planning Areas

#### **5.4 Lower Density Residential Areas: Vision for Greater Sustainability and Expanded Housing Choice**

Arlington’s land use vision has focused transit-oriented development along the County’s Metro and commercial corridors, preserving the majority of Arlington’s residential land area for single-family detached housing.

While Arlington’s progressive policies to support growth along transit corridors (Rosslyn-Ballston, Richmond Highway and Columbia Pike) enabled production of multifamily housing typically more affordable than single-family detached housing, the exclusionary nature of Arlington’s planning vision for the rest of the County’s residential land area has contributed to economic and racial segregation. The high cost of single-detached housing relative to other housing options may limit access to racial groups with less wealth than white households. The areas of Arlington zoned primarily for single-detached housing overlap with census tracts where 70% or more of the population is white.

This inequity in Arlington’s lower density residential areas has worsened with the growing replacement of original, smaller, housing with much larger houses as a result of aging housing stock, rising land costs resulting from housing demand exceeding limited supply, and restrictive zoning regulations that only enable single-detached housing forms. These new homes are attainable to only the highest end of the home-buyer market.

The negative impacts of ongoing change in Arlington’s lower density residential areas require a refined General Land Use Plan vision for these areas that allows for a range of housing options, to ensure that Arlington can live up to its overall vision as a diverse, sustainable, and inclusive community. This refined vision for Arlington’s lower density residential areas should build upon the County’s Development and Growth goals, particularly to “preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods” and to provide housing at a range of price levels and densities. This approach should also build from the Affordable Housing Master Plan goals, adopted in 2015, to have an adequate supply of housing for the community’s needs, ensure that all segments of the community have access to housing, and ensure that housing efforts contribute to a sustainable community.

Given the need for a new approach to realize the County’s vision and associated goals, Arlington’s lower density residential areas should include a wider range of low-scale, low density housing choices including not only single-detached homes, but other housing types that can blend into the surrounding context and sustain diverse access to these neighborhoods into

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the future, including accessory dwellings, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and small, low-rise multi-family buildings. Expanded housing choice in the County’s low-density residential areas should be complemented and sustained by the guidance and investment provided for by Arlington’s Comprehensive Plan and Capital Improvement Plan, including but not limited to opportunities for historic preservation, energy efficiency investment, intentional tree canopy and stream conservation, and long-term investment in public facilities such as schools, community centers, parks, transportation, and infrastructure including water, sewer, streets, and solid waste.

Consistent with the County’s overall vision, specific goals for lower density residential areas are as follows:

- **Economic Sustainability:** Providing equitable housing options through new choices for more Arlingtonians at wider income levels and stages of life throughout the Arlington community.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Including opportunities for tree planting, options for reduced on-site parking requirements, more compact building design, and leveraging the capacity of existing and planned future infrastructure investments.
- **Neighborhood Vibrancy:** Building on and maintaining valued neighborhood features including community and public uses, enhanced walkability, emerging micromobility, opportunities for connections to nature, connections to neighbors, and diversity and inclusion.

To help realize this newly refined vision and goals for Arlington’s lower density residential neighborhoods, following a multi-year Missing Middle Housing Study to increase housing choice and supply, [insert County Board actions on Zoning Ordinance amendment; specific language will be drafted as draft zoning text is refined].

This vision will also be realized through updates and implementation of recommendations from other various elements of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, including but not limited to Plan elements addressing forestry and natural resources, transportation and transit, housing, and stormwater, as well as the Capital Improvement Plan.

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## Planning History and the Development of the General Land Use Plan

### 3.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENERAL LAND USE PLAN

The first community planning efforts began in Arlington County as residential and commercial development intensified following World War I. In 1927, the Arlington County Board adopted an ordinance providing for limited control of land use by allowing plats to be recorded only upon the approval of the Directing Engineer. A Zoning Ordinance, implemented by a Zoning Administrator, was adopted in 1930 to encourage orderly development and prevent conflicting uses on the land within the County. In 1937, the County Board established a five-member Planning Commission which was charged with preparing and recommending a Master Plan for the physical development of the County.

The original 1930 Zoning Ordinance and major amendments through the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were products of a time when Virginia and Arlington County were legally segregated by race. While explicit racial zoning had been deemed unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1917, Arlington and many other communities throughout the country used their zoning authority to create regulatory barriers to housing types that would be attainable to most people of color. Arlington's 1930 Zoning Ordinance restricted much of the County to single-family detached housing, and subsequent amendments banned the construction of row houses (1938) and established minimum lot sizes for single-family detached houses (1942). Mortgage lending practices and restrictive covenants, supported by the federal government, also played a role in limiting housing opportunities for people of color.

In the two decades following Arlington's establishment of zoning, the County experienced a period of tremendous population growth, from 26,615 residents in 1930 to 135,449 in 1950. However, 97% of the County's growth during this period can be attributed to an increase in the White population. While many of the practices that initially created a pattern of residential segregation are no longer in place, inequities in housing opportunities resulting from 20<sup>th</sup> century land use policies persist.

Arlington's first General Land Use Plan was adopted by the County Board on August 12, 1961 as one element of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The General Land Use Plan may be amended through two processes: 1) as part of a long-range planning process for a designated area, or 2) as a result of an individual request for a specific change (see Reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and Amending the General Land Use Plan). Through these two processes, the General Land Use Plan has been updated and periodically amended to more clearly reflect the intended use for a particular area. These amendments have been incorporated into a published document ~~eleven~~ twelve times: 1961, 1964, 1966, 1975, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1990, 1996, 2004, ~~and~~ 2011 and 2020.

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Below is a description of how the General Land Use Plan has changed since its adoption over 50 years ago:

**1960s**

The 1961 Plan used a color keyed system of 13 land use categories. The three residential categories generally corresponded to the zoning that had been in place since the 1930s, ensuring that the land use decisions from this earlier era would continue to guide Arlington's development. The original Plan designated several large areas requiring further study as "Undetermined Use." Changes in the 1964 and 1966 Plans primarily involved the adoption of land use designations for those areas which were previously shown as "Undetermined Uses."

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**Draft GLUP Map Legend Amendment – Missing Middle Housing Study**

**Land Use**

<u>Land Use Designation*</u>	<u>Range of Density/Typical Use</u>	<u>Zoning**</u>
<b>Residential</b>		
 Low	1-10 units per acre, including <u>one-family dwellings, accessory dwellings, and expanded housing option uses</u>	R-20, R-10, R-10T, R-8, R-6, R-5
 Low	11-15 units per acre	R2-7, R15-30T
 Low-Medium	16-36 units per acre	R15-30T, RA14-26, RA8-18
 Medium	Up to 37-72 units per acre	RA7-16, RA6-15, RA-H
 High-Medium	Up to 3.24 F.A.R. ( <i>Floor Area Ratio</i> ) Residential	RA-4.8
 High	Up to 4.8 F.A.R. Residential Up to 3.8 F.A.R. Hotel	RA-H-3.2, C-O Rosslyn

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