

EXPANDING HOUSING CHOICE: MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING STUDY PHASE 1 REPORT



In case you missed it, here are key takeaways from the September 28 Public Q&A Session:

Will the study explore opportunities to incentivize housing construction for County employees or seniors?

Some housing types proposed for study may be more accessible than others, and some may be less expensive than others, providing new housing opportunities for meeting different household needs. The first step is to identify the most appropriate options for Arlington, then amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow those options. At that point, we can look at how existing programs or potential new policies, such as County employee housing programs or senior housing policies, can best coordinate - with new flexibility in the Zoning Ordinance.

It is also important to recognize that housing built today will age and become less expensive than new construction in the future, representing an important investment in the overall sustainability and long-term vitality of any community.

Will fiscal impacts of expanded housing choice be addressed?

While specific budgetary impacts are not included in the scope of study, the study will evaluate both the benefits and impacts of expanding housing choice as compared with the status quo. This evaluation will include factors such as student generation, impervious surface, reduced housing costs, and increased density supporting more transit demand and lower carbon emissions. The study may result in recommendations for future study of additional policy, planning, and regulatory guidance in areas of need.

The report provides a lot of information on concerns, which may not be concerns shared by all Arlingtonians, such as renters, who represent the majority of all Arlingtonians. Will outreach focus on connecting with renters and those who do not yet own property in Arlington?

The Phase 1 Report has documented what the study team has heard through multiple rounds of community engagement. While the study listserv already includes 11,500 people, engagement efforts will continue to focus on those who may benefit from expanding housing choice, including renters.

Will the different priorities and concerns be weighted in some way in Phase 2, to better reflect the goals of expanding housing choice? Will Phase 2 look at more than one option or scenario for different housing types?

The priorities and concerns discussed in the report are consistent with those addressed by the County's adopted goals and policies, as articulated in the 11 elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Design parameters and locational recommendations for new and expanded housing options will seek to balance community priorities and concerns, and there may be different options or choices to consider. Findings and tradeoffs from the detailed Phase 2 analysis will be presented to the public for review and feedback.

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Will the study look at addressing minimum lot size requirements so that all lots, even those smaller or narrower than current requirements, would be subject to the same standards?

Design parameters for the housing types recommended for study will identify appropriate lot sizes. This could result in recommendations for minimum lots sizes for existing and new housing types that are lower than today's minimum requirements.

Will the recommendations include geographic focus?

Phase 2 will evaluate locating the housing types recommended for study (small lot single detached, duplexes, small multiplexes, and townhouses) throughout Arlington, to determine recommendations for the most appropriate locations for each type.

What impact will the study have on population growth? What consideration should be given to the fact that Arlington is already projected to grow significantly?

The study is focused on how Arlington can best manage change that is already occurring. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments estimates that the region will need to add an additional 75,000 housing units beyond what is currently planned by the year 2030 to meet expected household growth. This study is seeking to identify if there are options for new construction and preservation of existing homes, beyond the mid- and high-rise apartments planned for Arlington's transportation corridors and the continued tear down and replacement of single detached homes. As a piece of the housing puzzle in the D.C. area, new housing options could support both individuals and households moving to Arlington and current residents who wish to stay through expanded housing choice.

How can we encourage condo and home ownership opportunities?

The study is focused on allowing new housing types, that could be either ownership or rental options. Both are needed. Ownership could be an area of future study, once new options are enabled. It is important to make sure that regulations do not "discriminate by tenure", which is discrimination based on whether housing is ownership housing or rental, a violation of Fair Housing laws.

The County has an array of programs and activities that support [homeownership](#), including first time homebuyer assistance and the [Condominium Initiative](#).

Will the County use eminent domain?

The County does not use eminent domain to realize private development. Rather, the County Board adopts planning and policy guidance and Zoning Ordinance regulations that specify how private landowners can use their property, to allow and encourage a land use pattern that achieves the recommendations or goals set forth in County plans and policies.



[HTTPS://HOUSING.ARLINGTONVA.US/MISSINGMIDDLE/](https://housing.arlingtonva.us/missingmiddle/)

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How will the study keep focus on the importance of addressing the County’s exclusionary land use policy and zoning patterns, and the challenges it has created for being an inclusive community with equitable housing options for all?

Nationwide, there is a growing understanding that increasing housing demand, combined with restrictive land use policies, is creating a shortage of housing for both new households and existing households when their housing needs change. This shortage drives up all housing prices and pushes new supply away from starter houses toward more profitable, higher cost houses. People of Color—who on average possess less generational wealth as a legacy of discriminatory practices, laws, and policies—are more likely to be pushed out of the market as prices rise. Essential workers, critical to support local economies, services, and public institutions, may not seek employment in high-cost communities if they cannot find housing nearby.

The County’s exclusionary land use policy and zoning patterns are being addressed by studying how to expand housing choice and supply throughout Arlington County. The study will carefully consider how to distribute the potential for new development. Findings and recommendations of this study will be evaluated through a racial equity lens, to determine who might benefit, who would be burdened, and who would be left out, to ensure the County can work toward realizing an equitable community where all have access to the conditions needed to realize individual opportunities and goals.

The study is not intended to create “affordable housing,” which is typically restricted to households earning less than 60% of the area median income (\$69,660 for a three-person household) for rental or 80% of the area median income (\$92,880 for a three- person household) for ownership. However, removing barriers in the Zoning Ordinance and in Arlington’s land use policy will allow for housing choices that provide more rungs on the ladder between mid- and high-rise apartments/condos and single detached houses. As these housing options age over time, they will become more attainable than new construction. The study might also recommend additional, future efforts to focus on increasing the affordability of new housing choices.