

**Arlington County Planning Commission**

**11.16.2022 ZOCO Hybrid Meeting**

**Missing Middle Housing Study: Phase 3**

**Public Comments Received by 12:00pm on 11.16.2022**

**Public Comment #1**

- The Board is trying to push through a poorly planned upzoning plan that will increase already high-density areas and ruin our neighborhoods. In addition to exacerbate drainage issues, it will increase on-street parking in neighborhoods where many people do not have driveways (parking is already an issue). It will also increase traffic, probably pedestrian fatalities. The aim of affordable housing is noble but the reality is that these multifamily townhouses will be bought by developers who will rent them out to higher income young professionals. Not families. If you want to solve residential zoning problems as they relate to affordability, increase the restrictions to get rid of the rapid invasion of McMansions (gargantions) in old, established neighborhoods. Those structures are increasing the overall cost of housing and they are RUINING our neighborhoods.

**Public Comment #2**

- As someone who lives in a dense single family home near a metro I am concerned about the proposed zoning changes. They make little sense to me because I don't think they will solve the problem of affordable housing. But setting that aside there are some significant issues that don't seem to be addressed. How will this impact already crowded schools? Has this issue been studied? I know are neighborhood elementary school has had persistent issue of overcrowding. And, how will this impact parking? Parking in my neighborhood near EFC metro, which requires a permit for street parking, is already crowded. In fact, the county recently limited the number of parking permits a household can have to 2. I am reading that a new multiplex may not require parking spots for all units. Most folks, even if they use public transportation, still have vehicles. So, where is everyone going to park, when parking is already limited? There is not enough space on the streets for that. These are critical issues that should studied before undertaking major zoning changes that will increase density in neighborhoods that are likely not equipped to handle that density.

**Public Comment #3**

- I moved to Arlington from DC in 1989. One reason for the move was that I was a young mother and I grew tired of hauling groceries around the block as my car could not be parked in front of my house because all spaces were taken. What a wonderful change it meant for me to park at my front door. Now, at 77, I appreciate this all the more. Since 1989, I have been very grateful to live in such a setting.

When our Arlington home was being renovated, we moved out for a year and live in a high rise. We enjoyed it and took comfort in knowing that when the time came to downsize, it would be ok. But I can't tell you how happy we were when the renovation was completed and we were able to return to walking out our front door on to our small yard, to return to caring for our yard and to enjoying our quiet haven. Again, I never took it for granted and have always been grateful to have lived in such a peaceful place.

My time in DC was short. I was born in Richmond, a city of beautiful neighborhoods. That was what I loved about Arlington. Arlington is special because of these neighborhoods and we should cherish them. I always loved Alex Haley's "find the good and praise it." I have been applying that to my neighborhood for over thirty years. How grateful I have been to have lived in this quiet, uncrowded place that I love so much. I only wish that I could believe that others will be able to follow in my footsteps.

**Public Comment #4**

- You don't care about residents or residents' requests. For example, safety, compliance with basic human and VA regulations. You could care less. There's no PR in that for you. Decades of experience watching you do this. You have pet projects you focus on. And you take care of certain things to make good PR to attract people. I think you are a deceptive and horrifically managed county. I'm now very sorry to live here.

**Public Comment #5**

- Why the rush for the County Board to take its first of two votes on December 17?" ZOCO and residents need more time to consider these complicated amendments, which are a fundamental change in the decades-old Arlington County goal to "preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods."

**Public Comment #6**

- I am an Arlington resident who is strongly opposed to the Missing Middle frame work for the following reasons: reduced tree canopy, increasing parking problems (especcially in older neighborhoods), increased water drainage problems from overbuilding,increased demands on schools and other public serevices, reducing affordable housing, reducing housing equity by increasing privilege to wealthy homeowners. I urge Zoning to remand this issue for further study and broader comunity engagement..

**Public Comment #7**

- These propose zoning amendments are inconsistent with Arlington's decades-old land use policy that focuses preserves single-family neighborhoods, while allowing for a significant number of multi-family dwellings in areas properly zones for them.

The LRPC and Zoning Committee should recommend that the County Board not vote in December on zoning amendments and that the County should conduct a comprehensive and inclusive process about the long-range vision for Arlington's future. Simply permitting these zoning amendments will cause a rapid hollowing out of many neighborhoods where families choose to live because they are neighborhoods of single family housing suitable for raising families. Families deserve a choice, and that choice must include neighborhoods zoned exclusively for single family homes.

#### **Public Comment #8**

- I am a 30-year Arlington resident and have a Masters degree in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia. As planners, I am baffled that you would support destroying the sense of place and cohesiveness of Arlington's single family neighborhoods. I completely support the goal of diversity in our county and ensuring that there is housing in Arlington for lower-income residents. However, maintaining our lovely neighborhoods is also a worthy planning goal. There are places in the county along the metro corridor and bus lines that have long been the targets of high-density development according to the planning policies of our county government. This is what drew me to Arlington County - the forward-thinking planning centered around transit. I would fully support public funding to assist buyers to purchase existing single family homes, such as a voucher program, and would love to have such an owner as my next-door neighbor.

I have raised 3 kids here with my husband (one is still an APS high school student). We first rented in Fairlington and then bought our single-family home in Arlington Forest (south side) in 1996. After living in the original footprint of the house for 21 years – pretty tight quarters with 3 children – we built an addition in 2017. We lucked into this modest neighborhood when we were young and love the location and community feel. This is where we intend to stay for as long as physically possible.

I believe my Planning degree has helped me understand intellectually what I already know on an intuitive level about neighborhoods: what makes them special are aspects like trees, sidewalks, street width, distance of homes from the street, distance between homes, proximity to parks and shops, etc. There is also a cohesiveness that comes from design elements of the homes that comprise the neighborhood. It needs to hang together visually – not that every home has to be a cookie cutter of the next but SCALE is very important. When a renovation or a new house is built that makes one home far larger than the rest, something is lost in how it feels to walk down that street (or drive, or live). There are a few homes in Arlington Forest that prove this point. They dwarf their neighbors and look completely out of place.

After 26 years in our home (we moved in July 4th weekend 1996!), I never would have imagined the neighborhood we have appreciated so much all these years would be under

threat of wholesale change. It truly breaks my heart to think of Arlington Forest homes (which have a historic designation) being torn down and replaced with multi-family homes. I know there is nothing stopping them from being torn down now, but it has only happened once or twice across the whole community. Under the proposed zoning changes, the incentive to do so would rise dramatically. This would pit neighbors against neighbors, as some decide to sell to developers for the highest bid, much to the anger and disappointment of those remaining. Those moving into new multi-family dwellings might not feel welcome, through no fault of their own but because of the ill will that has built up over this policy.

Others have written about the parking, traffic, infrastructure, services and environmental impacts of this rise in density. I would highlight the impact on public schools, which are already over-capacity. I truly don't understand the drive by local government to continuously increase Arlington's population by approving new building. It's as if the County Board and APS exist in different universes. When I studied Urban Planning, I was impressed that Arlington was a stellar example of a locality that was concentrating growth and development along the Metro corridor. It makes excellent sense environmentally and also allows for the county to have many lovely single-family home neighborhoods in close proximity to goods and services that all are seeking. Why is the county abandoning this planning principle now?

I understand that home prices in Arlington have gone through the roof and have priced so many out of buying single-family homes. However, the new units that would be built under the zoning change would not be affordable! Brand new condos or townhouses in attractive neighborhoods in Arlington would fetch prices over \$1 million. And they will not encourage home ownership but rather renting, due to their projected size. I haven't heard anything the county is doing to make these homes affordable for middle-income earners. There are many existing condos and townhomes in Arlington that already serve this purpose, or perhaps this new building could be targeted in areas already zoned for higher density.

In my mind my position on MM comes down to the concept "first, do no harm." One of the greatest things about Arlington is our neighborhoods and the community feel they engender. There are thousands of people who purchased homes in Arlington for its great quality of life and have been content, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens for many years. We are the first to extoll the virtues of Arlington to anyone who will listen. I feel so lucky to live here and raised my family here. We lived very frugally for 21 years in our modest 1500-square-foot home with a tiny galley kitchen raising 3 kids before we saved enough to put on our addition. Over the years, we tried to purchase a bigger home in a "more desirable" part of Arlington, but we simply could not afford it. We made do. There must be a better way to provide housing opportunities for the missing middle than to destroy the cohesiveness of our neighborhoods.

Please vote to reject this upzoning approach and go back to the drawing board. Study ways that the missing middle could be assisted to purchase single-family homes in single-family neighborhoods. In this way, our communities can stay intact; infrastructure, schools and the environment would not be negatively impacted; and there would be no “othering” of those who are moving in.

Thank you for considering my input.

**Public Comment #9**

- We are excited by the variety of new housing options to be created under the missing middle housing initiative. However, please consider removing the GFA maximum requirement because those looking for a new house (not townhome) around 3500 sq ft will not find any if you say 2 semi-detached homes cannot be more than 4800 sq ft. We have been looking to buy new construction around 3500 square feet for a long time now. This option simply does not exist because builders build SFHs that are 5000-6000 sq ft. We are hoping that there would be semi-dethatched homes around 3500 sq ft to choose from in the near future under the MMH initiative. Thank you.

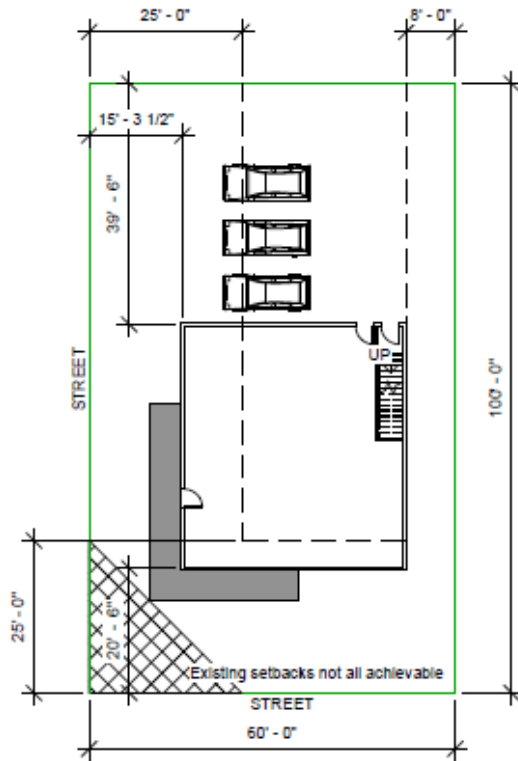
**Public Comment #10**

- I will not be able to attend the meeting tonight. I really appreciate all of the time and effort that the staff and the committee members are putting into this project. Ending exclusionary zoning in Arlington will be a huge step forward.

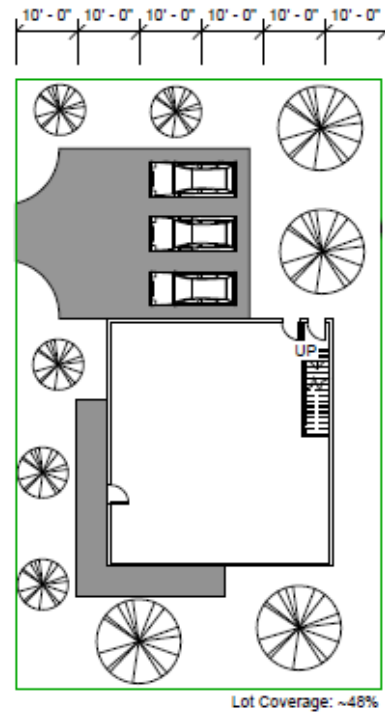
After listening to the meeting last week, I just wanted to mention that we can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We won't know every outcome or scenario that will play out after allowing "Expanded Housing Options." If we wait until we are satisfied that we've addressed every contingency, nothing will change. The change you approve will be fulfilled over decades, and will respond to conditions and preferences that we cannot yet imagine. Please do not be overly prescriptive based on the market we have today or the preferences of existing homeowners. We need a policy that is flexible so that it will continue to serve Arlingtonians into the future.

**Public Comment #11**

- As an example of how the Option 6A – one shade tree per dwelling unit – should be modified, I attach one of the schematics of potential tree plantings received under the FOIA. Landscape tree canopy coverage requirements should be tailored to the lot not to the number of dwellings per se. E.g., in this triplex example from the County Staff's potential tree canopy calculations, there are four large trees and five small trees.



③ Alt. 3 Site Plan w/ setbacks delineated and corner clear zone  
 1" = 20'-0"



④ Alt. 3 Site Plan w/ surface area and trees  
 1" = 20'-0"

In terms of the seemingly many older commercial properties along existing transit corridors, here are four commercial “units” -- the strip mall and the white house -- on Wilson Blvd at N. Jefferson. Redevelopment could add mixed-use commercial/MMH types as well as rectify stormwater run-off issues from over paving for parking.



Thanks and hope to make it this evening.

**Public Comment #12**

- I support the innovative and thoughtful framework that Arlington County staff drafted to end exclusionary zoning and restore diverse housing types to Arlington’s low-density neighborhoods.

The draft still puts “missing middle” type homes at a disadvantage relative to single-detached homes, which will limit the creation of more attainable and more sustainable homes.

In the draft text, the staff gives the Board choice on how much flexibility “missing middle” style homes can have.

I support allowing up to 8 units per dwelling, so that the most attainable homes can be built (Option 1B).

I support these expanded housing options without lot size tiering (Option 2A), in order to allow the market to provide the type of home at the location people want.

I support allowing “expanded housing options” to have additional flexibility with their maximum lot coverage percentage, since they will likely not have detached garages (Option 4B).

I support allowing these homes to reduce their parking requirement through a parking study, although I encourage staff to eliminate the parking requirement for lots near transit. (Option 5A).

I support the additional landscaping requirement of planting one shade tree per dwelling unit (Option 6A).

I am very concerned about the prospect of a cap on the development of “expanded housing options.” (Support Option 7B, no cap). We want this type of housing to thrive in Arlington.

I want to encourage conversions of existing buildings into expanded housing options through a use permit. This would give current owners more flexibility and could be an alternative to teardowns. (Options 8A).

Additionally, planned districts should not be excluded from “expanded housing options” by default. They should be allowed to use this zoning tool, unless there is a deliberate discussion and sound reason that warrants such exclusion.

Thank you for considering these issues.

**Public Comment #13**

- After carefully reviewing Mathew Ladd's 10/31 memorandum I would like to share the options that I believe you should adopt. They are:
  - 1B
  - 2A
  - 3A
  - 4B
  - 5B
  - 6B
  - 7B
  - 8B

Thank you.