



Arlington Partnership For Affordable Housing

November 11th, 2021

Arlington County Board
Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 307
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Missing Middle Housing Study Phase I Report

Dear Arlington County Board and Staff

We support and congratulate county staff on the completion of Phase I of the missing middle housing study. As the study enters Phase II, we urge the Board to support proposed changes to allow for more missing middle housing types, such as duplexes, triplexes, or small apartments, throughout the county, and particularly in areas currently zoned exclusively for detached single-family homes. This is a critical and necessary step to achieve the county's goals on housing affordability, equity, and environmental sustainability.

As an owner and developer of affordable housing in the county, APAH has for many years partnered with the county to produce subsidized, income-restricted affordable housing which meets the needs of the lowest income Arlingtonians. Although new missing middle housing will not be as affordable as this, it is no less important to meeting the housing needs of our county. Permitting more missing middle housing types would lead to more housing supply and smaller, more affordable homes in single-family zones. The evidence for this is clear: townhomes and condos have, on average, significantly lower assessed values than detached single-family homes.¹

Permitting this housing also would allow for a wider array of housing options for residents with diverse needs, such as seniors aging in place or young adult couples looking to purchase their first home. Meeting this housing demand would also lessen pressure on the affordable housing market, allowing more low-income Arlingtonians to comfortably stay in their homes.

Allowing for more missing middle housing would also represent a significant step toward housing equity by reversing the County's previously discriminatory housing policy. Throughout much of the 20th

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¹ Arlington 2021 Profile, Page 5. Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development

century, Arlington banned rowhouses, in part to exclude low-income communities and people of color. Although this ban is no longer active, the current Zoning Ordinance has largely the same effect by restricting most of the county's land for the exclusive use of single-family detached homes.

We recognize that some community members have concerns over these potential changes because of the potential or perhaps perceived/anticipated impact on traffic increases, loss of green space, or overcrowding in schools and public facilities. Although changes to our neighborhoods can be difficult, it is critical to not let our fear of change hinder our ability to provide housing choice and affordability for our diverse community. Moreover, APAH is confident that the County can meet these challenges by continuing to invest in infrastructure -- such as public transit, public schools, or stormwater infrastructure -- as we grow.

Finally, we believe that doing nothing is not a viable option. Under the status quo, small single-family homes are routinely replaced by much larger homes in single-family areas, where this is the only allowed housing type. This not only leads to more expensive homes, but also greatly adds to the impervious surface area in Arlington. Moreover, every home we do not build in Arlington forces middle or low-income workers to live further away, increasing traffic congestion, regional sprawl, and greenhouse gas emissions due to longer commutes. Every day we spend doing nothing means that these negative effects continue, so we encourage the County to accelerate the study to the extent possible.

In sum, allowing for missing middle housing throughout the County would greatly increase our ability to deliver affordable and abundant housing to all Arlingtonians. We urge you to support the study and these potential changes.

Sincerely,

Carmen Romero

Carmen Romero
President and CEO
Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing

