

**Agenda Item #35 -
New Zoning in Multifamily Zones, up to 60 feet for 100% affordability
Arlington County Regular Board Meeting
March 20, 2021**

Agenda Item #35: Request to authorize advertisement of public hearings by the Planning Commission and County Board to consider proposed amendments to Articles 12 and 15 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) to allow modifications of the maximum building height for multifamily residential development in the RA14-26, RA8-18, and RA6-15 districts by the County Board through its site plan approval authority for development projects providing 100% of the dwelling units as low- or moderate-income housing.

C.M. Recommendation: Adopt the resolution (attached to the staff report) to authorize advertisement of public hearings by the Planning Commission on April 5, 2021, and by the County Board on April 17, 2021, to consider proposed amendments to Articles 12 and 15 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) to allow modifications of the maximum building height of up to 60 feet for multifamily residential development in the RA14-26, RA8-18, and RA6-15 districts by the County Board through its site plan approval authority for development projects providing 100% of the dwelling units as low- or moderate-income housing, and to make other editorial changes to improve clarity.

ASF Talking Points (Points highlighted in red were omitted from spoken comment at the board meeting)

Mister Chairman, members of the board, Mr. Manager, Staff,

Thank you for your time today and for the work on this presentation.

My name is Anne Bodine and I am speaking on behalf of Arlingtonians for Our Sustainable Future.

ASF would like to request the board reject the county manager's recommendation to amend Articles 12 and 15 of the zoning ordinance pending further study.

ASF strongly favors affordable housing and we will continue to submit ideas short of upzoning the county could take in pursuit of those goals.

We have some questions the Board should address before approving any new density:

On the fiscal front:

1. How will the county pay for and provide sites for schools, parks, roads, public safety and health facilities for the many new residents you would approve today?
2. We have asked these same questions about the missing middle project. The board tells us we are anti-growth, we are NOT. We are realists, we believe in having one's ducks in a row before adopting new policies, especially ones that are likely to displace existing residents, add new budget pressures, and wreak environmental damage.
3. The board is free to refute ASF's fiscal projections by releasing its own long-term fiscal outlooks and we ask that you do so now.

In terms of Environmental impact:

1. We see almost monthly new site plan redevelopments that produce piles of rubble in Rosslyn or Crystal City, replaced by expansive taller high rises. It takes an environmental toll on an already over-built environment.
2. Bill Gates has just called on progressive thinkers to look beyond concrete and steel for future construction needs. Your density proposal will likely lead to more concrete high-rises and may run counter to meeting such key climate challenges. As we know, a majority of high-rise projects produce blocky structures where greenspace is an afterthought and trees are removed to make room for concrete and steel.

Finally:

1. We noted with fiscal impacts of "Growth Arlington Style," the constant density drive is doing more harm than good. We applaud the social benefit of 100% affordable units. The cutout you are providing for "less than 100%" is unclear, however, and dilutes the impact significantly. This policy is also not clear as to what extent builders can provide "moderate income"

units vs. low or low-moderate income, nor does it explicitly encourage deep affordability.

2. If we are just masking subsidies for units MOSTLY at 80% of median are income ASF opposes that gameplan.
3. We ask more study be given to the extent to which owners of naturally occurring affordable housing and already subsidized housing will be incentivized to remove those homes, possibly creating a net loss of "affordables" and further gentrification. **Why it is better to kick out current residents and raze long-term affordable units to build units where affordability expires in 30 years.**

We understand some of the affected neighborhoods do not feel they were sufficiently involved in this process, which could bring new 12 story buildings, a jarring change for any community, and another reason for pause.

I'd also note that transitions to neighboring areas are already being ignored right now in projects between Clarendon and Ashton Heights, among others. So your assurances on appropriate transitions also falls flat.

You have tried to reassure us that any potential overreach by builders will be addressed in the site plan reviews, but we have seen no restraint in this area in the past.

In sum, the reasons for delay are many and we ask that you expand your impact analysis to focus on these questions we raise, before approving such changes in multifamily zones.