

ARLINGTON RESIDENT SUZANNE SUNDBURG ANSWERS TO HOUSING ARLINGTON MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING QUESTIONNAIRE NOV 2020

Missing Middle Housing Survey Q and A

Arlington's Housing Shortfall

1. What are the consequences of Arlington's housing shortfall? (check all that apply)

[✓] Other: This is a loaded question. There is no housing "shortfall" in Arlington. We have increasing apt. vacancy rates, with sustained high vacancy rates in Ballston and Rosslyn since 2015. Arlington has been adding thousands of new housing units ever year for 20 years. According to Census Bureau data, for the years 2010–2017, Arlington produced 15% of all housing that was produced in the city center and inner suburbs (DC, ArlCo, PGCo, FfxCo, MoCo, City of Alex, FC City and City of Ffx). This area comprises a total of 1,590 sq mi, which includes Arlington's 26 sq mi. So even though Arlington represents just 1.6% of the total area, it produced 15% of the housing. <https://ggwash.org/view/70211/zoning-for-incremental-growth-how-is-our-region-doing>

2. What housing options are missing in Arlington's neighborhoods? (check all that apply)

[✓] Nothing is missing. [Note: Arlington continues to have housing at a range of price points. No, we don't have single-family homes at very low price points, but there are other options. Visit www.realtor.com input Arlington County and a maximum home price of \$300K. There are 137 condos, and most are well under \$300K: https://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-search/Arlington_VA/price-na-300000. Yes, they are smaller units, but they work as starter homes and as senior housing. No one has ever said that we must provide housing for all comers, and the Affordable Housing Master Plan doesn't say that either.]

3. What has been most impactful to you or someone you know about rising housing prices?

[✓] Other: Again, this is a loaded question. There is no "shortfall" of housing units in the aggregate. Upzoning existing neighborhoods will only inflate land values, further increasing property taxes on existing homes and pushing up rents for renters, which works to displace existing residents and does nothing to make housing more affordable for anyone. The sale of existing new duplex units confirms this dynamic: 2023/2027 N. Dinwiddie Street in High View Park: 2023 N. Dinwiddie Street sold for \$1,229,086 on 12/12/2019 and 2027 sold for \$1,212,500 on 1/10/2020: <https://propertysearch.arlingtonva.us/Home/Sales?Irsn=69971> and <https://propertysearch.arlingtonva.us/Home/Sales?Irsn=69972>, 730–732 N. Wakefield Street, two

new 4,200 & 4,400 SF on 3-level duplexes: <http://bcnhomes.com/portfolio/projects/730-732-n-wakefield-street/>, and 2005 S. Lincoln Street, a brand new 4/bd, 4/ba, 2,888 sq ft duplex for a mere \$950,000: https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/2005-S-Lincoln-St-Arlington-VA-22204/145639187_zpid/.

4. How will (or has) the trend toward oversized single-family detached houses impact (or impacted) your neighborhood?

[✓] Other: Arlington could easily reduce the footprint of single-family, detached houses if it wished. The flooding crisis offers an opportunity to limit impervious surfaces and take other measures to limit lot coverage and land disturbance. But the county has had no wish to limit development in any way. Quite the opposite. Moreover, the replacement of single-family detached dwellings with multiple attached dwellings will not change the current dynamic one iota or improve the current conditions with respect to land disturbance, increases in impervious surfaces, loss of mature trees, or even affordability.

5. If you selected negative impact, how so?

[✓] Other: Again, cramming a larger number of attached dwellings onto single-family lots — most of which are small to begin with — won't improve any negative impacts over current conditions with respect to land disturbance, increases in impervious surfaces, loss of mature trees, or even affordability. Upzoning could easily make matters even worse. On top of greater loss of tree canopy, greater increases in impervious surfaces, more runoff and flooding, greater inflation in land values and housing costs, upzoning existing single-family neighborhoods would exacerbate school overenrollment problems and lead to more deficit spending to provide expensive services to new residents.

6. Given the change that is occurring, would it be appropriate to explore alternatives?

[✓] I don't know

7. Over the past decade, most of the housing produced in Arlington has been one- and two-bedroom mid- and high-rise multifamily housing. The single-family detached housing produced over the same period has been on the larger side, with most houses having four or more bedrooms. What housing needs are unmet by the current housing production trends?

[✓] Other: Again, this is a loaded question. People still have choices. They can choose to live in smaller housing units, and many young people are choosing to raise a family in small condos in Arlington. It's not a lot different than people choosing to live in "tiny homes" elsewhere. No one is forcing anyone to buy grossly expensive McMansions in Arlington either. People have the right to live in DC, MD or elsewhere in Virginia if they don't like the currently available options in Arlington or if they would rather get more house and yard for the money further out.

8. How does the disproportionate lack of housing affordability for Black or African American households illustrate the challenges faced by Arlington (and the nation as a whole)?

Arlington's excessive densification/gentrification land-use scheme has inflated land values, taxes and thus housing costs—without any regard whatsoever for the displacement of thousands of low-income, minority residents in the process. In fact, successive County Boards and staff have created the very inflated housing costs and displacement that they now complained about. There is no better example than Arna Valley, "home to 3,000 mostly Hispanic immigrants, was torn down" in the late 1990s and replaced with luxury units. "And the trend continued as more high-rises and expensive townhouses went up. Wealthy, white 25- to 34-year-olds moved in and more blacks and Hispanics moved out. Census data show the combined black and Hispanic population shrank 7% from 2000 to 2010. The ranks of non-Hispanic whites grew by 16%." See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1998/05/07/tenants-fight-planned-arna-valley-sale/a897dece-a0c6-431f-bd4f-b76301826744/> and <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/11/10/northern-virginia-diversity-race/18079525/>. Far from helping minority families remain in Arlington or move to Arlington, further upzoning has only one purpose: to raise more tax revenue with no regard whatsoever for the resulting impacts on the land, on our overenrolled schools, our overtaxed stormwater system, on further inflation of housing costs and the displacement of seniors and other vulnerable existing residents, or on the added per capita deficit spending that will be necessary to provide expensive services and infrastructure for a larger population. This proposal is the height of hypocrisy and demonstrates once again staff's and the board's cynical conclusion that residents are just too stupid to see what staff and the board are truly up to.

9. How should Arlington respond?

First, start by acknowledging that committing financial suicide won't fix the affordable housing problem here or anywhere else. Then, acknowledge that Arlington cannot solve the region's or its own housing affordability problem simply by cramming more housing units into 26 sq mi with just 2.2 sq mi of public land on which to provide all public infrastructure and services. If Arlington had wanted to retain affordable housing, it could have established a housing authority and purchased garden-style apartment complexes and other affordable MARKs to preserve them in the mid-1970s–mid-1980s before land values skyrocketed along with Metro-fueled development. But the county chose not to invest those early windfall profits from significant commercial office upzoning by acquiring and preserving existing affordable housing units or by making significant purchases of land for future public uses—including public parks, schools, libraries, fire stations, stormwater management, etc. That bell cannot now be unring. Next, focus more on taking care of current residents rather than attempting to cram more people into an already tightly packed space. Arlington is second in population density only to the City of Alexandria. In DC Metro region, only DC itself has a higher population density than does Arlington. The very last thing we need is more people when we

clearly cannot adequately care for the ones we already have. Focus on antidisplacement measures to retain existing lower and fixed-income residents. Implement stronger measures to reduce eviction. Implement greater tax relief for lower and fixed-income homeowners, thus making it possible for lower income minority and senior residents to remain in Arlington. Shift resources from building additional, grossly expensive CAF units and reallocate those AHIF funds to providing more meaningful housing grants to supplement rents both in CAFs and MARKs for low-income residents. Next, concentrate on rebuilding the commercial office and retail sectors, which offset the deficit spending on all of the people who you have already crammed into Arlington. Finally, the endless growth myth really gets the physics folks sputtering with outrage. So if you find yourself at a cocktail party with a bunch of physics professors, toss out endless economic growth as a conversational gambit. The result should really liven up what otherwise might be a dull evening.

10. What housing types are missing or in short supply?

[✓] Other: Arlington already has plenty of housing "options" in the existing housing stock. Arlington's own data show that high-rise/mid-rise housing represents just under 1/2 of all housing, with low-rise apts/condos, townhouses and duplexes (single-family attached) and single-family (detached) representing the other half of the housing stock: https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2020/07/MMHS_ResearchCompendium_Bulletin3_final.pdf.

11. What are the characteristics of your neighborhood that you most value? (select all that apply)

[✓] Tree canopy

[✓] Other: The last vestiges of nature and wildlife that cling to life despite Arlington County government's sustained and increasing efforts to snuff out all life and natural space in its unending pursuit to pave over every last square inch of space, thus creating a human desert where nothing else can survive.

12. What are the most attractive features of this housing type? Single-Family Detached

Yards, green space, trees, living things, privacy, peace and quiet.

13. Are there opportunities to modify regulations for this home type?

Increase lot coverage restrictions, reduce permitted land disturbance, strengthen tree preservation requirements — all of this could be accomplished through Virginia State Code § 62.1-44.15:33 (<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title62.1/chapter3.1/section62.1-44.15:33/>), which authorizes localities with “excessive localized flooding within the watershed” to apply for a waiver that allows them to enact stronger stormwater management ordinances than

the State Water Control Board's "minimum regulations." This is just one of several alternatives that could help us reduce stormwater runoff, better mitigate flood impacts countywide, preserve green space and existing mature tree canopy, etc. It would also likely provide a side benefit of making it much less appealing to tear down existing, older, more affordable single-family homes. Thus preserving some of the most affordable housing stock that remains in Arlington.

**14. What are the most attractive features of this missing middle home type?
Stacked Duplex**

None that I can think of.

15. Would/do you support exploring modifications to regulations to support this missing middle housing type?

No, I do NOT support exploring modification of existing regulations to support this "missing" middle housing type. Existing regulations are sufficient to permit this kind of unit. Lots currently zoned as R-5 or R-6 already can qualify (under certain circumstances) for duplex or semi-detached redevelopment via a special exception use permit. Lots zoned R-8, R-10 and R-20 are frequently large enough to meet the criteria for the split-lot exception, pipestem redevelopment or other subdivision that would permit duplex redevelopment. See §3.2.4.C. Exceptions on pp. 3-8 and 3-9 of the Zoning Ordinance <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2019/10/ACZO.pdf>. On top of these zoning categories, many "single-family" homes are built on two lots, making it a simple matter to plop a duplex on the double lot. A good example is 2023 and 2027 N. Dinwiddie Street. See the old RPC data here: 2014 (2 lots and the house assessed for a total of \$586,600 in 2018): <https://propertysearch.arlingtonva.us/Home/Assessments?Irsn=12770> and <https://propertysearch.arlingtonva.us/Home/Assessments?Irsn=12771>. The house accounted for just \$76,400 of the total assessed value. Pretty darned affordable for the "missing middle." Sadly, that house is history, and we have 2, hideous \$1.2 million duplex units in its place.

16. What are the most attractive features of this missing middle home type? Side-by-side Duplex

None that I can think of.

17. Would/do you support exploring modifications to regulations to support this missing middle housing type?

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18. What are the most attractive features of this missing middle home type? Townhouse

None that I can think of.

19. Would/do you support exploring modifications to regulations to support this missing middle housing type?

No, I do NOT support exploring modification of existing regulations to support this "missing" middle housing type. Existing regulations are sufficient to permit these kinds of units to be built, and they are already being built countywide in R-C zoning districts (Townes of Ballston is a good example), in R-10T zoning districts, in R15-30T zoning districts and in R2-7 zoning districts as well as on site-plan sites (townhouses built on the Peck-Staples site in the 800–900 block of N. Wakefield Street) and in other zoning districts that are rezoned to permit townhouses.

20. What are the most attractive features of this missing middle home type? Small Multiplex

None that I can think of.

21. Would/do you support exploring modifications to regulations to support this missing middle housing type?

No, I do NOT support exploring modification of existing regulations to support this "missing" middle housing type. Existing regulations are sufficient to permit these kinds of units to be built, and they are already being built countywide in multiple zoning districts that already permit this kind of housing: including C-O, C-O-Crystal City, C-O-Rosslyn, C-O-1.0, C-O-1.5, C-O-2.5, C-O-A, RA4.8, RA-A-3.2, R-C and likely in all other existing apartment dwelling districts, etc.

Arlington's Land Use and Zoning History

The zoning and land use decisions of the 1940s-1960s to restrict missing middle housing in most of the County reinforced racial segregation practices of that era, such as the restrictions on FHA mortgages for African Americans to purchase a single-family home.

Lending restrictions were banned in the 1960s, yet the Zoning and General Land Use Plan separation of housing types remain today. Modern consequences include continued limitations on missing middle housing and a growing understanding of the original segregationist, exclusionary intent of separating residential uses, separation that persists to the present today.

22. How should Arlington respond? (select all that apply)

Other: The current GLUP has been redone multiple times since the 1960s. The notion that today's GLUP is "racist" simply by virtue of the past history of development is unfounded. And it is racist to perpetuate the notion that people of color don't already live in these single-family neighborhoods. In addition to Arlington View, Green Valley and Hall's Hill/High View Park — historically black, single-family neighborhoods whose residents are slowly being driven out by the county's own gentrification/densification land-use planning — people of color and of many ethnicities and races live in all Arlington single-family neighborhoods. Indeed, when I look out my front door in N. Arlington I can see two single-family homes owned by people of color. One of those property's assessed value is greater than my own. Moreover, In fact, we have multiple neighbors within a 2-block radius who hail from a number of different countries in Asia, the Phillipines, etc. Yet another family around the corner hails from the Middle East (Iran, I believe). And there are likely to be other neighbors here in North Arlington with varied ethnic and racial backgrounds whom I don't know. The notion that Arlington's single-family homes/neighborhoods today exclude any particular racial or ethnic group is just laughable. A look at the number of languages spoken in our school system (107) is proof that Arlington welcomes people of all races and backgrounds. This divisive, race-baiting script could have easily been written by the Trump administration — maybe that's where staff got the idea? In any case, the only constraint on owning a single-family home in Arlington today is financial. I, myself, couldn't now afford to buy the home I currently own. And yet, staff quite clearly states that "missing middle" housing has NOTHING to do with housing affordability. And affordability is what is preventing the vast majority of people — of all races and ethnicities — from purchasing a detached or attached "single-family" home in Arlington.

23. What are the greatest opportunities to consider when studying the addition of missing middle housing types? (select all that apply)

None of the above

Other: Staff has already stated that the "missing middle" process is NOT about housing affordability. So why is affordability being listed as an option for this question? Staff has already provided more than sufficient data in the "research" compendium

proving that we already have a very balanced and full range of housing options for all ages and family types. New missing middle housing "options" produced under this upzoning/gentrification scheme will be expensive, well beyond the reach of most public service employees and others who are not making at least \$150,000–\$200,000 a year. So why is that option listed for this question? What is the point of destroying existing neighborhoods that contain the county's last remaining vestige of mature tree canopy and green space to right a wrong that preceded the residency/life of almost everyone who now resides in Arlington County? It will not recompense those who were discriminated against in the past and it won't provide any more advantages to those who are living here today, because the single-most important criteria for owning a single-family home (attached or detached) in Arlington today is money. That's it. And rezoning neighborhoods and jacking up land values and tax assessments won't make these properties any more affordable to groups that have experienced discrimination, past or present.

24. What are the greatest concerns to consider when studying the addition of missing middle housing types?

- Compatibility with adjacent land uses
- Displacement of existing residents
- Impacts on school enrollment
- Impacts on on-street parking needs and traffic
- Impacts on environmental issues including tree canopy preservation, stormwater management
- Loss of neighborhood character
- Other: Increased risk of flooding. Worsening of affordability problems, as land values and taxes continue to skyrocket as a direct result of upzoning. Abrogation of the bargain that the county struck with its single-family neighborhoods when Metrorail was added. The county promised to shelter single-family and low-density neighborhoods from density creep and to confine increased density to the major transit corridors. Financial insolvency from deficit spending to provide services to new residents without corresponding revenue growth in the commercial sectors to offset all that deficit residential spending.

25. What are the highest priority actions/efforts/investments to undertake as we deal with growth in Arlington?

- Stormwater improvements
- Schools capacity
- Improve/expand open spaces
- Transportation infrastructure
- Public facilities
- Other

Additional comments:

The county must concentrate on meeting its obligations to existing residents — obligations that are already not being fully met. School capacity is not an optional obligation. Arlington is obligated by state law to seat every resident child that asks to be seated in Arlington Public Schools. Likewise, we cannot become flood resilient and staff has already stated that we cannot possibly build our way out of our stormwater capacity crisis. The county absolutely MUST stop paving over every scrap of land, stop increasing the proliferation of impervious surfaces, stop chopping down every last mature tree if it is to get a handle on the growing stormwater runoff and flooding problems. That means acquiring land to serve dual purposes as undeveloped open space that doubles as a place for stormwater retention/detention facilities to mitigate overland and downstream flooding. We don't need fancy equipment and buildings on public parkland, mostly because we cannot afford to maintain or replace it. Nature entertains people all by itself. And the 2016 Arlington County 2016 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey clearly signaled that Arlington County residents prefer nature trails and nature itself over all that other built infrastructure that staff keeps pushing: <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2016/01/Arlington-County-Parks-Rec-Survey-Findings-Report-May-9-2016.pdf>. In short, Arlington must begin to live within its means rather than continuing to push a self-defeating and unsustainable endless residential growth model.