

# ASF | ARLINGTONIANS FOR OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

October 16, 2020

## Agenda Item #47 - Regular County Board Meeting, October 17, 2020

### ASF Opposition to the Proposed Amendment to Arlington County Zoning Ordinance Article 11.2 Section 902 "CPN-FBC" Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Form Based Code Districts (Appendix B)

Arlingtonians for Our Sustainable Future (ASF) urges the Board to reject the proposed amendment, keeping the eligibility levels for the affordable home ownership program capped at 60% of Area Mean Income (AMI).

The 60% figure was agreed upon only 7 years ago when the Neighborhood Form-Based Code (N-FBC) was adopted; it reflected rents in the area at the time, and thus was pegged to market realities in the area. We agree with the Columbia Heights Civic Association (CHCA) and the NAACP that eliminating parity incentivizes construction or retention of condos over rental units and that this would displace market rate renters who live there now. ASF cautions the Board against tinkering with an 8-year old policy that resulted from a thorough evaluation of zoning in a major corridor that had broad support from the immediate neighboring community. The Neighborhood Form-Based Code should be respected, not seen as another flexible tool that may be constantly tweaked in favor of developers.

- **Displacement of low- and middle-income residents, particularly in favor of households whose higher income makes them better able to find existing affordable housing.** ASF believes we should work to keep current residents, not deploy every tool to meet "rosy" staff projections of a greatly-expanded 2040 population. Why must we eject current residents in favor of newcomers?
- **Loss of relatively "affordable" market-rate rental units (MARKs), because of the further incentivization of condo buildings over rentals.** Arlington has already lost a net 14,000 Committed Affordable Units (CAF's) from 2000-2018. Incentivizing a further loss of MARKs is inconsistent with our values as a community, and undercuts overall affordable housing goals. It represents a broken promise that came with Form-Based Code.
- **Increased land values resulting from the density that this change introduces.** This will make existing housing along the Pike more expensive for renters and owners. Homeowners who are not keeping up with median income will struggle to pay higher property taxes; some will have to move out of Arlington.

- **Delayed and costly assessments as the county has to backfill requirements for more schools, parks, roads/transit, libraries, water/sewage infrastructure, public safety facilities, increased public services of all kinds.**
- **Continued gentrification that displaces new immigrants, those on fixed incomes, and others who are trying to keep their footing here.** This displacement has a high potential to disrupt historic African-American communities and heritage with roots dating to the Civil War. This is a new form of "redlining," but more callous than the original as it will redline existing households out of our midst.

**In conclusion, ASF asks the Board to:**

-- maintain bonus density as currently stipulated under the N-FBC, keeping parity between programs for rental and homeowner units;

-- reject any proposed increase in density that are not accompanied by site specific quantitative assessments of impacts on the county budget, on the environment, and on income inequality in our community;

-- provide ways to help households at 60% of AMI overcome the problems that are complicating their ability to cover HOA and repairs to the homes covered by the current FBC program.