

Arlingtonians for Our Sustainable Future

Some Questions on Arlington's "Missing Middle" Study Proposal

February 2020

What is the Need? Why the Speed? What is the Outcome?

1. Housing Arlington staff indicated on January 22 that they had identified a gap or "missing middle" type of housing and indicated they may recommend new zoning to allow multi-family units in areas that do not permit them. Staff indicated however that there were indeed existing inventories of such units, including duplexes, in many neighborhoods. When can we receive an inventory showing the current inventory and gaps in this type of housing county-wide?
2. The county has said it will consider where new housing types could be compatible with existing neighborhoods, and that solutions will be "context sensitive." Does that mean it will allow "by-right" multi-family units only where they already exist? Does the county envision turning such majority single-family housing neighborhoods into majority multi-family neighborhoods?
3. Arlington County has stated that "barriers to ... missing middle housing impede the County's ability to increase its overall supply of housing and provide more choices at a broader range of price points." Has the county calculated the costs and benefits of increasing the overall housing supply? If not, when would it do so? What options other than a "missing middle" approach were considered and why were they rejected?
4. Has the county focused on up-zoning single-family neighborhoods because it has already factored in full site-plan development of transit corridors? Or redevelopment in housing conservation districts? Before approving missing middle changes, may we know maximum population outcomes for Lee Highway, Columbia Pike, Shirlington Arts/Industry, and housing conservation districts?
5. Isn't the county in fact pushing up-zoning in single family neighborhoods on the one hand to counteract what it is doing on the other hand, i.e. pushing out lower-income residents through high-end development in growth "corridors"?
6. Why is a "missing middle" type of home better than (and presumably different from) additional condo units? Don't you get more units per acre that way? Isn't a 3-bedroom condo a key stairstep to single family detached homes?

7. Doesn't missing middle research stipulate that first-time home buyers want walkable, shoppable neighborhoods? Would up-zoning include plans to "shoppify" and "walkify" neighborhoods that now do not offer such options?
8. If the county froze all development today, would it have everything it needs in terms of infrastructure (schools, transport, etc.)? If not, shouldn't infrastructure come first, like it did with Metro construction in the 1970's?
9. The May 2019 [report by the Housing Conservation District \(HCD\)](#) shows options for development called "mansion flats" (pp. 31-33). These and other building types envision NEW ZONING for increased height limits, reduced setbacks and fewer parking spots. Yet the plan does not discuss impacts on traffic, mature tree canopy, stormwater runoff, heat-island effect, and general "livability." Why not?

Affordability and Diversity

1. In considering up-zoning in single-family neighborhoods, what evidence do you have that builders could and would build affordable homes, including duplexes or triplexes, for, say, \$400,000-500,000?
2. From 2000 to 2018, [Arlington lost a net 14,000 market rate affordable units \(MARKs\)](#), due to rent increases and redevelopment. How will new duplexes or triplexes promote affordability and diversity if market-rate prices must be \$400,000 or more? Does the county support a trickle-down theory that this will free up lower-cost units? Are there examples where that has worked? Hasn't intense growth so far made Arlington less affordable for government employees, seniors, and individuals earning less than 60% of AMI?
3. Will we continue expunging the positive record of African-American homeownership that began in Freedman's Village? Why doesn't the county help protect those vestiges even now in Foxcroft Heights, instead of promoting new development? Can we promote something other than luxury units that displace residents with a long history in the area?

Environmental Concerns

1. Can the county provide aerial graphics for what it envisions a maximum by-right-built upzoning model of Arlington will be? Will it mirror Montreal? Vancouver? Brooklyn?
2. Can we consider creative options that would make housing units less palatial? Why not chart a trend towards smaller, more affordable homes to gain units? Or look at pocket neighborhoods on 2-3 contiguous residential lots instead of block apartment buildings, if they can be built by preserving green space?
3. The UN says we have to reduce our emissions by 7.6% ANNUALLY to meet the 1.8 degree warming limit. How does our growth pattern effect that?