

ASF | ARLINGTONIANS FOR OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

October 7, 2021

Arlington County Housing Commission,

Dear Commissioners,

Arlingtonians for our Sustainable Future is concerned about what seems to be foreordained "yes" votes for new up-zoning for "Missing Middle" multiplexes and split lots across the county by 2022.

Changing land use and zoning in single-family areas upends the pact the county made with residents in 1979; namely, that county leaders would intensely develop the Metro corridors while leaving the remainder of the county relatively "suburban" with significant tracts of single-family housing. Such intense development along the Metro corridors makes sense given the addition of this mass transit option for denser populations. Although the county has refused our requests to project maximum residential infill capacity for these corridors, ASF believes that there is still fairly substantial development capacity along these designated "urban strips."

However, we believe the county has failed to disclose substantive impacts of decisions to approve infill in other areas outside these Metro corridors, and we hope you agree that prudent planning demands answers prior to new zoning recommendations, especially given the likely irreversible nature of up-zoning under Virginia's Constitution.

ASF believes there is likely a negative fiscal impact of Missing Middle infill. We believe it will add to more school overcrowding/boundary shifts, and that specific plans for new school infrastructure should precede any new zoning. We believe MM will increase overall yields on any upzoned land, further exacerbating county-wide land inflation which will benefit (mostly white) current homeowners. Such up-zoning will likely spur loss of existing affordable housing, including *existing Missing Middle*. In fact, Missing Middle units account for 50% of housing types outside of the R-B corridor, and preserving these older homes and encouraging remodeling vs. teardowns will do more to preserve true affordability than denser zoning in these areas. MM-driven land price inflation will lead to more gentrification, as is happening currently with new Missing Middle units being built in Green Valley (Towns of 24, Towns of Glebe), where the average price of units falls squarely outside Area Median Income for African Americans, Latinos, and seniors, but exactly at the AMI for Arlington's white population.

We believe the loss of trees and greenspace will cause more runoff and flooding, loss of habitat for insects and birds, poorer air quality and heat islands -- including in historically African-American neighborhoods of Halls Hill and Highview Park and Green Valley and diverse neighborhoods of Columbia Heights, Penrose and others. Loss of trees and green space will also have negative mental health benefits for our residents. Missing Middle plans would make Arlington almost as

dense as parts of Brooklyn but without the important "guardrails" for lower income residents that New York provides (public housing, rent control, extensive and relatively affordable mass transit, extensive park and public tree programs, etc.).

Therefore, ASF is asking that the county conduct analyses of effects on our budget, our environment, and on income inequality in Arlington before it takes any more steps toward up-zoning:

1. Perform site-specific fiscal impact analyses for new, multi-unit residential projects;
2. Release all existing long-term operating budget forecasts;
3. Prepare county forecasts comparing current zoning with up-zoning, regarding:
 - Long-term operating budget;
 - Long-term environmental impact;
 - Long-term household income by quintiles showing projected disparities among different household groups.

Thank you for your consideration,

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