



ASF

ARLINGTONIANS FOR OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ASF 2025 Advocacy on Arlington Growth and Development

ASF had another busy year advocating for responsible planning, growth and development. We continued to sound the theme of making Arlington truly sustainable -- fiscally, environmentally, and demographically! Our holiday song “[Walking in an Ill-Planned Arlington](#)” is our satirical gateway into serious themes covered below on growth, fiscal solvency, affordability, and good planning. Thanks for your support; we wish you Happy Holidays, and don’t forget to keep engaging countyboard@arlingtonva.us in 2026.

Comp Plan Will “Transform” Neighborhoods (all civic associations, verse 11)

ASF in 2025 kept the **County’s planned revision to the Comprehensive Plan introduction** in laser focus. The County is writing a new introduction to the strategic Comprehensive Plan that likely will tee up land use changes and move density beyond the four clearly defined transit corridors, merging us all into indeterminate “integrated” blob relying on “high-opportunity” transit” (See County description below).



Please use [our sample letter to the county board](#) to urge preservation of our planning model that concentrates med/high-density along our 4 corridors and preserves low-density

residential/commercial areas or to ensure transit and other systems can meet new demand. Board Chair [Karantonis](#) as recently as December 13 declared the “de facto” death of a core precept that is actually still part of the Comp Plan: centering tallest heights at Metro station “bullseyes,” so we assess he is ready to abandon others.

Lot Coverage – Tree Canopy and Small Homes Ignored by “Low Residential” Study (all civic associations, verse 1, 3, 5, 8)

The County has a 40% tree canopy goal; low-density areas are key to compensate for 11%-15% canopy in high-density areas. The county’s “[Low Residential Study](#)” is an essential policy review; you can weigh in until December 21 via the County’s “[virtual open house](#).” Arlington Tree Action Group and [26 civic associations](#)—representing 31,000 households – have urged the Board to **INCULDE zoning changes for meaningful reductions of zoning lot coverage, as well as home footprints and setbacks as agreed in 2023’s** Forestry and Natural Resources Plan. These activists say the current effort to review only impervious surface could backfire with even larger homes and fewer trees. ASF agrees and wonders why Arlington can’t copy Fairfax, after one resident there drew major public outcry in October for dwarfing his neighbor’s home with a huge addition. Fairfax Supervisor Pat Herrity noted that “a 30-foot-high wall, 60 feet long, has no place 8’ from somebody’s property line.” [His fix](#) to zoning lot coverage was approved in November.



Upzoning/Poor Planning: Multiple projects/policies show the need for the county to adopt planning tools to ensure we provide infrastructure and services for new density ([Tischler Bise](#) as an example), and the folly of that the county can solve a “housing crisis” solely via zoning and land use. To wit:

➤ **Expanded Housing Options** (low-density civic associations, verses 4, 7, 10)

Several **holders of EHO permits** who stopped projects after the Arlington Circuit Court voided the new zoning in September 2024 (the “original” EHO lawsuit) in 2025 **won separate legal cases and were allowed to move forward** with construction. Apart from these handful of “vested interests” cases, **a separate developer lawsuit went to the Virginia Court of Appeals, which overturned the original lawsuit and reinstated EHO** as

of October 1. The Virginia Supreme Court has yet to rule on a request by the “original” case plaintiffs to appeal this latest Appeals Court ruling.

The County, meanwhile, refuses to go back to the drawing board to conduct proper planning (unlike Charlottesville), where [media reports](#) that the city “will fund two [studies of its infrastructure](#), . . . : one on transportation impacts and one to model future infrastructure and public service needs.” Indeed, notably Arlington’s Board has held 18 closed sessions this year. Open meetings ensure accountability; there may be exceptions to discuss legal issues. ASF can only ASSUME that most of these were to keep EHO in full effect and maintain the misleading analysis that accompanied that policy’s implementation.

Meeting Type	Meeting Date
County Board Closed Session Meeting	12/17/2025 1:00:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	12/9/2025 11:00:00 AM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	12/2/2025 1:00:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	11/25/2025 2:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	10/28/2025 1:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	10/17/2025 1:00:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	9/23/2025 1:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	9/9/2025 2:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	8/19/2025 12:00:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	7/15/2025 2:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	7/1/2025 2:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	6/10/2025 3:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	6/3/2025 2:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	5/20/2025 2:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	5/6/2025 12:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	2/18/2025 2:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	2/4/2025 1:30:00 PM
County Board Closed Session Meeting	1/16/2025 2:00:00 PM

As for EHO structures, as ASF projected in 2023, they are not affordable nor do they fulfill promised demographic diversity. [One EHO proponent projected](#) that a 3-bedroom unit in a 6-plex (the only sixplex unit built in 2025) will be priced from “the mid \$800,000s to the high \$900,000s”! The *cheapest* of those units will require an annual income of **\$243,000!** A duplex in North Highland sold in December for \$1,615,000!!!

➤ **Langston Blvd. Area Plan** (LB civic associations, verse 6)

When Langston Blvd. Area Plan was still in review, ASF noted [inconsistencies with projected “maximum building heights”](#) (p. 3-6) and pressed the Board to set numeric caps, rather than let outcomes be governed by obscure “form-based” site planning. With the plan approved and many projects on the table, civic associations are expressing concerns at the density and building heights emerging, from the [luxury residential building in North Highland](#) to the [market-rate high-rise](#) at Kirkwood/ Langston in Lyon Village (at right), to the 10-story [Leckey Gardens](#) and the [Kensington Senior Living](#) in Waverly Hills. Clearly, the “concrete canyons” are the new reality, even though these buildings will contravene existing land use guidance to confine high density to Metrorail corridors.



To top it off, the county seems ready to approve Langston Blvd. projects without capturing future costs of new residents, whether for schools, new parks, stormwater, community centers, fire/police. Since its founding, ASF has pressed successive Boards to **adopt Tischler Bise planning, or any proffer system** that would capture these costs up front as Falls Church and Fairfax do.

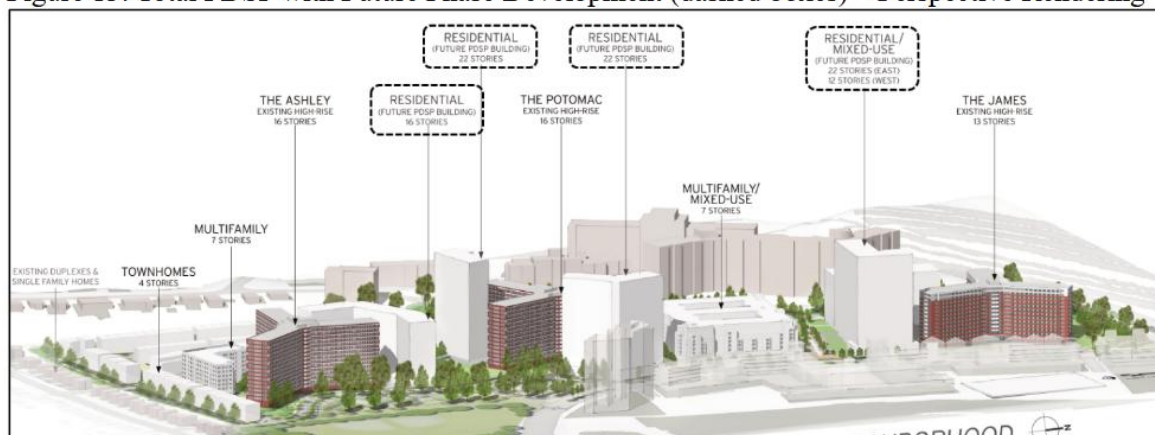
➤ **River House** (Arlington Ridge Civic Association, verse 6, 7, 12)

Density approved by the Board in December will add **more units at Arlington Ridge’s River House on the 36-acre property** owned by JBG Smith in Pentagon City as follows:

- 1,676 existing units (shown in brown below);
- **743 new units projected by 2027**; (1 townhome complex and two 7-story multifamily apartment buildings shown at left and center right, 66 units/acre);
- **2,047 multifamily units** (4 buildings shown as white cubes, 123 units/acre) after 2030;

This adds potentially 2,790 new units and 6,138 new residents. River House will have a total of 4,466 units. While adding high density, the County also voted to *narrow Joyce Street*. Inexplicably, **Board also approved not just the site plans for the first 743 units, but also the much higher density and thinly-sketched “Phase Two” buildings for which there are NO existing site plans.** Phase Two will see building heights soar to 22 stories, well above the 16 now on the site and blocking views of even ridgeline neighbors. This is the first major residential project approved as part of the Pentagon City Sector Plan. Over 100 residents spoke against the Plan when first adopted in 2022; ASF at that time said the plan ignored needed services/ infrastructure for 12,000 projected new residents.

Figure 13: Total PDSP with Future Phase Development (dashed boxes) – Perspective Rendering



The developer will provide almost no new services and minimal community benefits,¹while the phasing of the benefits is hazy. Project supporters pitched River House as “conversion of surface parking into a neighborhood.” ASF drew on that analogy and noted:

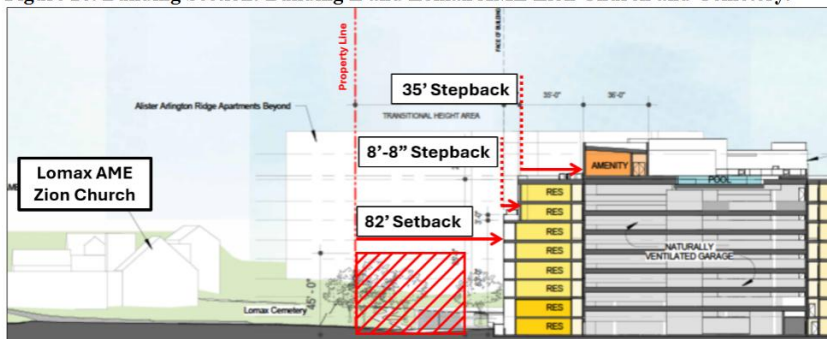
- an entirely new neighborhood would deliver schools, fire/police, library/community center, recreation space and real transit, none of which was on offer;
- Board presentations distorted the full scope of the zoning exemptions and bonus density, so we could not assess the real gain for JBG Smith vs. community benefits;²
- county reps pushed JBG Smith to add 1,000 housing units over their initial request. ASF likened this to a sheriff telling a thief breaking the law to rob two stores instead of one; we urged Board members to be better stewards of zoning laws.

The Board ignored us. In fact, **the plus-up of density unwanted by JBG Smith is a perilous new twist, with staff touting density not as a means to real benefits, but as the goal itself**, [saying the county](#) secured “notable improvements” of “increased density from 88 to 123 dwelling units per acre” and “raising building heights” from 7 to 22 stories! Brazenly equating developer benefits with community benefits makes us question why we need elected leaders at all. If Phase Two is realized, River House will provide about half of the projected 12,000 new residents; there seems to be no upper limit to Pentagon City density in the minds of County leaders. River House also shows the potential for Comp Plan revisions to reshape high-density as well as low-density areas for the worse.

- **531-unit Apt. Building to Dwarf Historic Lomax Church** (Green Valley Civic Association, verse 2, 12)

In April, the County Board approved – ignoring Green Valley neighbors, [Lomax AME Zion Church](#), and [ASF](#) -- intense density where low-rise Motel Pentagon sits today. The developer will deliver 531 housing units that tower over the National Historic Landmark Lomax AME church, where Martin Luther King spoke before his “I have a Dream Speech.” Dr. King’s dream remains elusive, as all traffic is dumped into a historic Black neighborhood. ASF predicts gridlock at S. Glebe and I-395. The project will gentrify the area with only market rate housing: Lomax Rev. Dr. Nelson likened it to “David and Goliath,” saying “**the County does not care about affordable housing**; we’ve increased the [affordable] units from 7 to 9, out of 531, **it’s laughable, it’s upsetting.**” And while the Board hastily foreclosed debate to help the owner meet financing deadlines, that may have been a ploy; no action onsite from April to December. See also [ASF long review of flaws in the community benefits process](#).

Figure 20. Building Section: Building E and Lomax AME Zion Church and Cemetery.



➤ **Melwood** (Aurora Highlands Civic Association, verse 9, 12)

[ASF supported Aurora Highlands Civic Association](#) (AHCA) in February 2025 on the [redevelopment of Nelly Custis School for current tenant Melwood Horticultural](#) which operates an education/training facility for the disabled at the site. ASF supported lower density outcomes [proposed by AHCA](#), but the Board approved a ten-fold increase (from 10 units/acre to 100+ units/acre) with a 60' building in an area zoned for single family homes. All units will be affordable at an average of 60% area median income, which ASF supported but at density levels compatible with R-6 zoning and limited infrastructure.

➤ **One Rosslyn** (North Rosslyn Civic Association, verse 6, 7, 10, 12)

[ASF weighed in](#) (July) on a site plan amendment for the mixed-use, high density [One Rosslyn Project](#), supported by its local civic association. We critiqued the lack infrastructure for 5,000 residents in 860 new housing units, and zero affordable units onsite. The Board ignored us and requests by North Highlands Civic Association to retain a skywalk across Langston Blvd. for safe access to Metro and shopping. Most disturbing, Arlington Planning Director Fusarelli on June 18 told the Board that staff was reducing by millions of dollars already-agreed community benefits with the amendment because “no one will want to build” unless the County shrinks the community benefits packages. You can [watch this incredible “justification” for cheating taxpayers](#) and join ASF in 2026 as we work to restore accountability in development (a key theme of [our Holiday song](#)).



¹ The county itself notes it will defer services while going ahead to “approve” very high density of 123 units per acre at River House: “Under the PDSP, in the near term, the Applicant will deliver market-viable mid-rise buildings, townhouses, and a substantial portion of Sector Plan-identified community benefits, whereas high-rise buildings and the remaining public spaces and infrastructure improvements would develop *over a longer period*.” (Italics ASF’s.)

² The board report indicated that JBG Smith is seeking “modifications of zoning ordinance requirements including: additional density, reduced parking, increased compact parking, off-site parking, loading space reductions, altered dimensional parking standards, density exclusions, and other modifications as necessary” while the actual discussion for the Board glossed over most exceptions.