

ASF | ARLINGTONIANS FOR OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Tenant Landlord Commission
September 14, 2022
Agenda Item Barcroft Apartments

Mr. Chair, Commissioners,

Thank you. I'm Anne Bodine, and in December 2021 I wrote in my personal capacity to the County Board to question the \$150 million loan that the county extended to the new owners of the Barcroft. It seemed rushed and ill-considered, having the county assume a senior loan to Amazon and agreeing to an adjustable interest rate when rates were rising. But it went ahead, under the guise of helping our most vulnerable residents..

I have continued to follow engage at Barcroft with ACE but tonight I am speaking on behalf of Arlingtonians for Our Sustainable Future. ASF is concerned about density pressures that are continuing to raise the land values across the county.

The county lost 14,000 market rate affordables* from 2000-2018. Many more have been lost since. And more will be lost with Plan Langston Blvd, Pentagon City upzoning, and other efforts that spell the end of older affordable housing stock. In March for example, the board approved 16 stories [for a building] at the Courthouse Wendy's site (previously zoned for 4 stories), yielding only 5% affordable units, despite major density added that has other drawbacks. This formula cannot make up the loss, and other programs, such as Federal and State housing assistance, have tapered to leave yawning gaps. Covid programs have helped, but they are waning. At the Wendy's site, 5% CAPF out of 241 units! That translates [241 is 5% of 240,000 units] to 995 additional 16 story buildings just to make up this loss [of market rate affordables.]

Let's face facts: we're just standing by to witness the displacement of the most vulnerable. And Barcroft, as our largest existing affordable complex, with perhaps the greatest racial and ethnic diversity of any single complex in Arlington, needs a new approach. The county will say its loan and Amazon's are the new approach, but ASF disagrees.

I have heard recent comments by Board Chair Cristol and Vice Chair Dorsey that **NO ONE WILL BE DISPLACED**. No direct displacement, but circumstances will effectively displace these people.

- An annual 3% rent increase, which the board says is allowed, will be one factor. I have numerous first-person accounts of lapsed maintenance and you have heard others from the tenants tonight. Many told me no one cares about them

and they will have to look elsewhere to live, although at the same time they were unclear on the scope and pace of likely redevelopment. Reading the acquisition budget for the development, the goal here is redevelopment, not preservation of existing units. [Sadly,] the county has ignored recent info from its affordable housing master plan update that shows greatest housing need for those earning 60% of AMI, and especially seniors in their 80's. Instead, the staff and board are expending ENORMOUS effort to help the wealthy with its Missing Middle plan. [This plan will provide housing for those making \$118,000 to \$273,000 of Area Media Income (slide provided to commissioners at end of meeting.)]

- Tenants may also lose standing if the household earns above 60% of AMI. We just saw [from Jair Lynch the new owners] that almost 22% of tenants fall above that earning level. The borrower agreed to restrictive covenants to maintain the 1,334 units at 60% of the area median income (AMI) for 99-years." For a family of 4 tht's only \$77,400. We saw this type of displacement occur at Howard Manor.

Do not let it happen again here. ASF asks you to consider ways to stop the displacement, to advise the county board to scope out the extent of displacement resulting from its continuous densification of the county, in this case along Columbia Pike. Most Barcroft residents do not know what form-based code is, but they see the writing on the wall with Amazon, and many do not see a future home in our midst.

Thank you.