



**The January 13, 2023 Missing Middle Housing Proposal:
Impacts on Arlington and Its Comprehensive Plan**

January 18, 2023

**Before the Arlington County Board
Item #33: Request to Authorize Advertisement (RTA) and consider the scope of the
proposed GLUP and zoning amendments resulting from the Missing Middle Housing
Study.
Arlington County, Virginia**

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January 18, 2023

Missing Middle Housing Proposal - Impacts on Arlington and Its Comprehensive Plan



Missing Middle Housing in Ballard Washington

I. Executive Summary

This paper addresses the Missing Middle (MM) Housing Plan that the Arlington County Board will discuss at its January 21, 2023 meeting. Just *8 days* before that, the county released a 122-page [MM Staff report](#) with *hundreds* of changes to its earlier [October 31](#) and [December 8, 2022](#) drafts. No one could reasonably absorb, process, and understand these changes and their consequences in a week. Nor have they (nor us). Even to do so since the first actual text came out (on Halloween) is an insurmountable task and an irresponsible way to govern massive policy changes.

Sadly, the lack of analysis and lack of any *meaningful* opportunity to be heard is a Missing Middle motif. It is a rush to push a solution in search of a problem. In August 2022, the county's own Housing Director, Anne Venezia, declared there is no housing crisis in Arlington, certainly not one the MM Plan will address—[the County has been](#)

[exceeding its housing production goals and will continue to do so](#) under “current plans.” Despite the county’s haste, this paper tries to highlight just *some* flaws in the MM Housing Plan (both in substance and in process) and explain why it will *worsen* the concerns the county proclaims it will improve.

A. Introduction

The Missing Middle (MM) Housing Plan is the [most significant policy change](#) since the county agreed to plan for transit-oriented growth in the mid-1970s. MM plays out against a complex mosaic of other planning guidelines, including the county budget, Realizing Arlington’s Commitment to Race, and [The Comprehensive Plan](#), which the county frames as “one of the most important decision-making and priority-setting tools that is used by the County Board, Planning Commission and County Departments.” The Comprehensive Plan guides coordinated development and sets high standards of public services and facilities. Since 1960, it has grown to include 11 elements. [On November 9, 2022, County staff told the County’s Long-Range Planning Committee of the Planning Commission](#) (at 10:12) that Missing Middle up-zoning is consistent with the county’s current comprehensive goals.

Despite those claims, the facts and data show there will be significant impacts that, in many cases, require a full review of the budget, diversity and equity goals, and several Comprehensive Plan sub-elements, namely the Affordable Housing Master Plan, the General Land Use Plan, the Community Energy Plan, the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, the Chesapeake Bay Protection Plan, the Stormwater Master Plan, and the Master Transportation Plan. ASF’s research and conclusions are outlined in this report. Of further concern, the county is acting contrary to regular process and has omitted staff briefings on the final draft zoning amendments for County Board advisory commissions, even though many (Housing, Climate Change, Energy and Environment, Forestry and Natural Resources, and Transportation) were briefed and weighed in on earlier, less consequential phases of the study. Instead, the Board has taken the most minimalist statutory requirement for a Planning Commission review and vote. This extraordinary exclusion deprives the Board and public of a complete and accurate picture of zoning impacts.

B. About ASF

[Arlingtonians for our Sustainable Future](#) (ASF) is a non-partisan educational and advocacy group founded in 2019 after county planning failures exacerbated the terrible floods of 2019. ASF aims to address the adverse impacts of poor planning and the increasingly rapid pace of Arlington’s growth and development. Since its founding, ASF has played an active role in advocating for long-term planning to ensure the county’s sustainable future.

ASF recognizes that major population growth and development in Arlington will continue to occur by right under current land use and development policies. However,

ASF believes that the Arlington County government needs to change some of its current policies and priorities to ensure Arlington's diversity and future fiscal and environmental sustainability.

The Arlington County government should:

- prioritize livable communities ahead of accelerating population growth in America's geographically smallest county,
- pursue affordability, diversity, and inclusion through policies that are not so heavily dependent upon accelerating the pace of new density,
- return to Arlington's earlier development and growth model in which transportation, schools, water/sewer construction, and other long-term infrastructure planning *precede and shape population growth*, rather than following it haphazardly.

C. Report Highlights

By 2019, it was clear that MM is a very important County Board priority, but County Board members kept changing the reasons why. In Arlington, MM has always been a solution in search of problems to solve. To try to sell MM to the public, Board members spoke of problems that were very important—even if MM would not solve them.

MM will:

- NOT produce affordable housing, or even median-income housing,
- NOT foster diversity, equity, and inclusion, but will worsen them,
- harm the environment and transportation, and
- exacerbate Arlington's already serious infrastructure and operating budget deficits.

However, *the problems for which MM does provide partial solutions are further enhancement and diversification of the revenue portfolios of developers, builders, and the county government itself (via higher assessed property values.)*

D. MM: community discussion prior to April 2022

Community discussion of MM housing proposals began in earnest in 2019. From the start, the county told the public MM would “not” be a countywide “across-the-board” change and would not “eliminate single-family zoning,” calling either result not “the right fit for Arlington.” *Further, until April 2022, the county failed to identify any specific geographically-based zoning changes to implement MM.* By failing to specify where, when, or how MM housing in Arlington would be newly enabled, community discussion was necessarily muted. No Arlington resident knew if, or how, MM would impact their neighborhood. Indeed, ASF is not aware of any Neighborhood Plan that calls for such densification.

COVID-19 also suppressed MM community engagement. Residents grappled with a fearful new disease, parents struggled to juggle virtual schooling and work responsibilities, and many Arlington restaurants, hotels and small businesses disappeared.

As county policy makers persisted with their claims that enabling new MM housing in Arlington was desirable, they continually shifted their alleged rationales for it. Throughout its process (until it released the text of its actual proposed changes) the county emphasized the goals of lower-cost, 3-bedroom, ownership units. But the county's current presentations have excised those goals.

So, what problems is the county trying to solve?

Throughout this discussion, ASF consistently advocated for a long-term planning approach to any specific MM plans that might emerge. **ASF insisted that the county develop and present for community discussion three baseline demographic, environmental, and fiscal growth forecasts—both without and with any newly enabled MM housing.**

E. MM: community discussion since April 2022

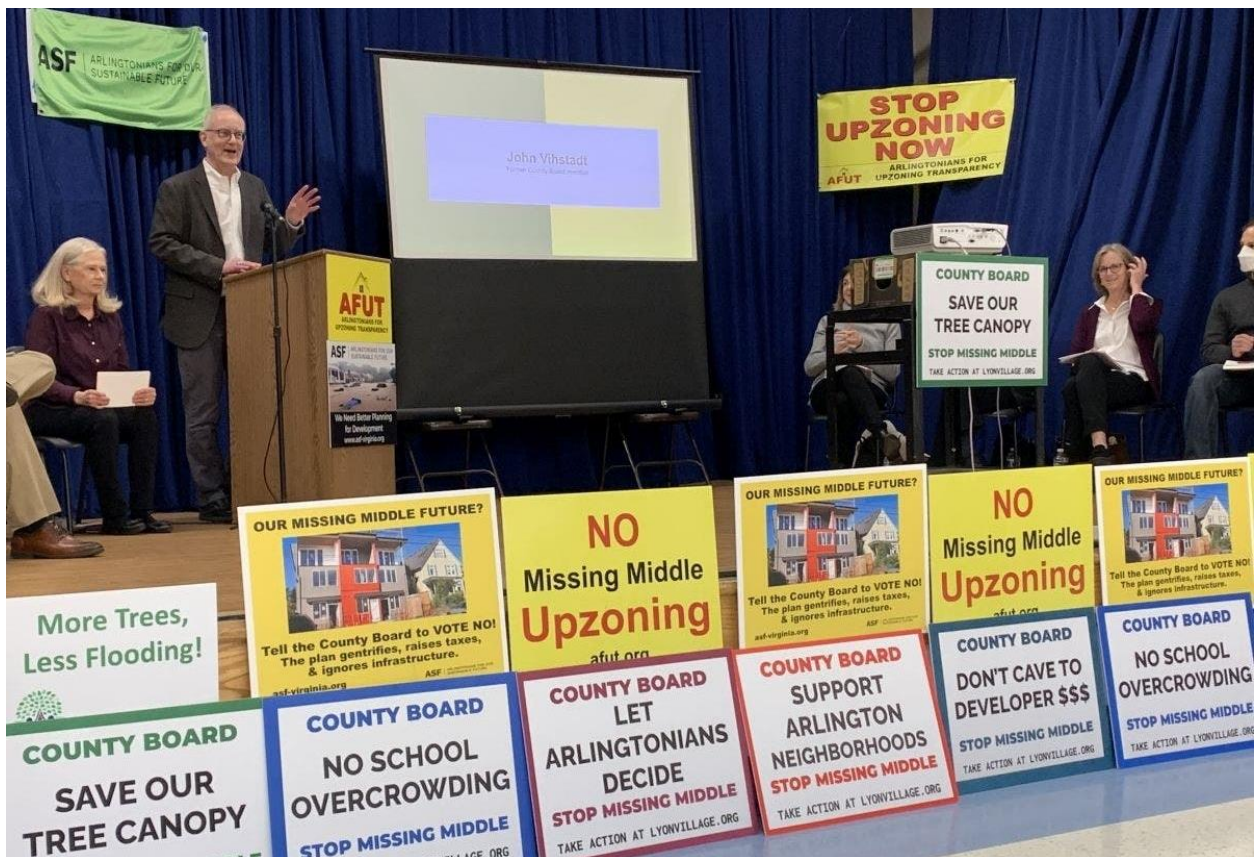
ASF continues to advocate for these same three long-term forecasts as applied to the geographically specific MM proposal that the county first unveiled at the end of April 2022. Arlington residents had only 29 days to examine 85 dense pages and submit formal comments on this geographically-specific proposal before the Board instructed Staff to start rewriting the zoning code in July. In doing so, the Board also rejected the pleas of Civic Associations, the backbone of the “Arlington Way,” for more time given the breadth and complexity of the proposal. **It is the most consequential and far-reaching Arlington zoning and land use proposal in decades.** Many thousands of Arlington residents still have no idea that these changes could newly enable 8-plexes next door, across the street, and behind them.

County policy makers assert that these far-reaching changes are needed countywide to lower housing costs and to assure affordability, diversity, and inclusion. However, in a [draft report](#) on other communities that enacted MM policies, Arlington's own Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (JFAC) concluded: “It was not clear from Commissioner research that the Missing Middle housing in the jurisdictions researched were able to accomplish the goals of affordability, diversity or inclusion.” ASF's research and analysis, detailed below, shows **Arlington's MM plan will be no different, and, in fact, will worsen efforts to reach those goals.**

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, public opposition is strong. [More than 5,500 people have signed a Change.org petition against the MM plan.](#) When County Board members met with the public for closed-door “community conversations,” approximately [71% of participants were opposed](#) to the MM plan. Similarly, County Staff characterized feedback in the formal response period in the Spring of 2022 as [75% opposed in whole](#)

or in part (e.g., 751 people “negative,” 294 “positive,” and others “mixed”). More recently, the Planning Commission heard from a reportedly record turnout 10-times more than ever with 80% of speakers opposed to the MM plan.

Most recently, hundreds rallied, standing room only, on a cold January 8th day in support of a “reality check” on the MM plan’s flawed process and substance. The crowd heard what the county has refused to allow in its carefully curated fora—objective views from experts on the *facts of the MM Plan*. This event, co-sponsored by ASF and AFUT, gained widespread media coverage ([Arlington Patch](#), [Arlington Connection](#), [Sun Gazette](#), [Falls Church News Press](#), [Fox5](#), and on [social media](#) (images below)).



F. MM will not lower housing costs

Arlington County Board members and planners argue that Economics 101 tells us that when you increase supply, Arlington housing prices will be more affordable. *But this simple economic principle is not supported by empirical research regarding communities like Arlington.*

Arlington is now a tech-fueled super-community. As Richard Florida [writes](#):

“Expensive cities have much larger clusters of leading-edge tech and knowledge industries and of highly educated, skilled talent. It’s this, rather than differences in housing prices, that is behind growing spatial inequality.”

“A key factor here is the growing divide between highly-paid techies and knowledge workers and much lower-paid people who work in routine service jobs.”

“Upzoning does little to change this fundamental imbalance.”

“Upzoning is far from the progressive policy tool it has been sold to be. It mainly leads to building high-end housing in desirable locations.”

In this tech-fueled super community, the county government’s proposed MM plan will fail to deliver on any of its promises in a futile quest to manage powerful market dynamics. In fact, as discussed in more detail in the Housing section of this report, MM will *increase* housing prices in Arlington.

G. MM is not missing in Arlington; MM will not be “affordable housing”

MM housing types already are plentiful in Arlington. The county’s Phase I MM Report concluded that “[approximately 30% of Arlington’s *existing* housing stock can be classified as Missing Middle housing.” Many more already can be built by right in many areas. Why hastily rush to enable them most everywhere else in Arlington? Whose interests are served or harmed?

County policy makers have abandoned earlier claims that MM will yield “affordable housing” as that term has been commonly understood in Arlington for decades, i.e., housing affordable to those with incomes under the Arlington median income. The county’s consultant projected the *cheapest* MM unit will be 700 square feet, far from Metro, and cost \$416,000; the cheapest 2-bedroom will cost \$571,000; the cheapest 3-bedroom unit will be over \$1 million. The county now says the **cheapest unit will cost \$520,000**. Rents for any of these far exceed today’s averages for same-sized units. Yet policy makers continue to deliberately muddy the waters to induce as many people as possible to believe that the new MM housing will be “affordable” or priced *lower* than housing today. The new MM housing will NOT be affordable to residents in lower income ranges, and it will be at prices *higher* than today.

Misappropriating the language of civil rights and voting rights advocates, county planners now argue that MM *housing types* are “under-represented,” despite being 1/3 of

our housing stock (see also section on General Land Use Plan below). Other Arlington policy makers and activists claim that MM should be expanded (with reduced limitations) to address the abhorrent racially- and ethnically-exclusionary zoning policies that were outlawed more the 50 years ago. But adopting the county government's current MM plans *will accelerate displacement of minority and low-income groups and raise the cost of Arlington housing*.

The housing types that will be newly enabled by MM will be [high-end housing](#), affordable to tech workers, lawyers, and consultants. MM housing will not be affordable for individual police, firefighters, teachers, or service workers.

More details about MM housing issues are in the Housing section of this report.

H. Arlington's General Land Use Plan (GLUP) controls land use decisions; MM is inconsistent with the GLUP Development/Growth Goals

[The County's General Land Use Plan](#) (GLUP) (adopted February 2020) is the foundation for the larger Arlington Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). MM must comport with the GLUP and any effects must be assessed across the full spectrum of the Comp Plan. The [Missing Middle Research Bulletin 3](#) (p. 5) explains:

[M]ost of Arlington's residential neighborhoods [R-5, R-6, R-8, R-10, R-20] are guided broadly by the County's 11 Comprehensive Plan elements, including the General Land Use Plan (GLUP), which lays out the County's land use vision, and the Zoning Ordinance, which provides rules and regulations for each of the County's 38 zoning districts. To help guide the land use vision, the GLUP contains Development and Growth Goals, which the County Board adopted in 1975. ... These goals support a vision of high-density development within the Metro corridors and the preservation of lower-density areas elsewhere in the County. As a result, for Arlington's residential neighborhoods outside of the planning corridors, the GLUP provides a vision for low-density residential development, and the Zoning Ordinance provides regulations that are consistent with that vision.

The GLUP has five development and growth goals, two of which are most relevant to impacts of the MM housing proposal. Goals 3 and 4 contain commitments to:

#3. Increase the supply of housing by encouraging construction of a variety of housing types and prices at a range of heights and densities in and near Metro Station Areas.

#4. Preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods.

I. Development, land use and zoning in Arlington today; nowhere to build

Arlington, at 26 square miles, is the smallest county in the U.S. There are severe constraints on land use, with the county noting there is “virtually no undeveloped land to accommodate future growth.” (Aug 2022 draft [Forestry and Natural Resources Plan](#), or FNRP, p.24.) It is therefore essential that Arlington’s leaders explain how they will assure best use of land for all elements of its Comprehensive Plan. Drawing on the FNRP draft (p.13.), we see that:

[S]ome 50 plans now guide the development of public and private properties Many reflect the County’s early commitment to the principles of Smart Growth – the concentration of higher-density development around public transportation hubs to accommodate population and economic growth in more sustainable ways. As Arlington continues to grow, the community is challenged to balance the need for maintaining space for nature and providing access to it against the need to house, educate, and provide jobs for an ever-growing, increasingly diverse population.

[Virginia’s Zoning Code 15.2.2884](#) likewise echoes the theme that jurisdictions, including Arlington, must balance needs of residents across all sectors of policy.

Many more details about MM land use issues are in the Land Use section of this report.

J. Arlington fails to do proper long-term infrastructure planning

Current county government policy makers assert, without credible evidence, that the population growth attributable to MM will be minimal because perhaps only about 150 or so new residents will occupy the new MM units. But this de minimis MM excuse collapses when these same policy makers also see no need to quantify and weigh *in advance* the long-term impacts of by-right population growth of 63,000 new Arlington residents by 2045.

In 2018, Arlington told the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) that over 63,000 new residents will move here by 2045 under **existing zoning**. As documented by [ASF](#) (Slide 2), Arlington has failed to develop long-term plans to pay for the new infrastructure needed (e.g., schools, parks, fire stations, libraries, stormwater mitigation, etc.) for these 63,000 new residents. Arlington policy makers refuse to do any of this long-term planning *in advance* of adding more, and more, and more density anywhere and everywhere. Why do they continue to refuse to do so, and why is there such an urgency to up-zone? Whose interests are benefited and whose interests are harmed?

The County Board’s own [JFAC, which advises the Board on property acquisition for public needs and infrastructure, on October 26](#) mulled whether the county would be ready if MM projections exceed the county’s predicted maximum 20 new infill projects per year (yielding perhaps 150 or so new residents). Several JFAC members noted that the county has not been acquiring property for schools and needs to at least start planning long-term for other public facilities, e.g., parks, libraries, fire stations. County Board

member Libby [Garvey told JFAC in September 2022](#) said the county “tried to do some strategic planning” years ago but it “crashed and burned,” adding, “it is something we really need to do.” Indeed, it is, so why isn’t the county doing strategic planning?

K. Arlington has a long-term operating budget deficit

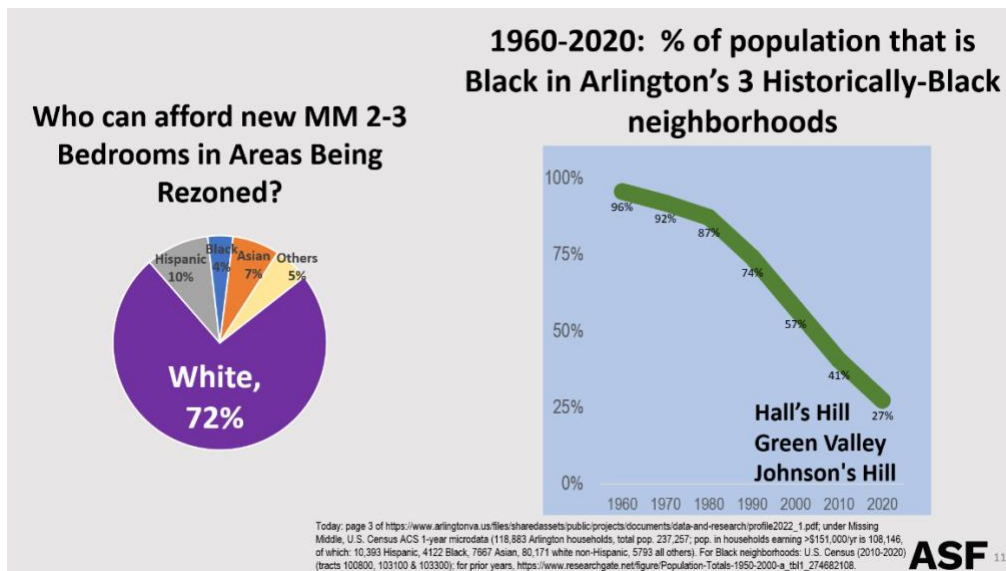
There is strong evidence Arlington has a long-term operating budget deficit as its operating expenses are rising at a significantly faster rate than its operating revenues.

As of 2018, when it last published long-term, multi-year operating budget forecasts, the county [admitted it was running an operating budget deficit](#) (p. 4-5). But since then, the county has refused to publish such forecasts. Why? Why such a lack of transparency? Arlington Public Schools (APS) — which accounts for roughly half of overall Arlington operating budget spending — publishes such forecasts. Notably, APS shows increasing operating budget deficits in the out years. *To formulate meaningful long-term plans, the Arlington County government should not only set goals and adopt Master Plans, but also should account for the timeframe, tools, and **costs** to achieve them, at the time the goals are adopted.*

More details about MM fiscal issues are in the Fiscal section of this report.

L. MM will accelerate the loss of Arlington’s diversity

Arlington lifted its rowhouse ban decades ago in the twentieth century. In 1948, the Supreme Court held racially restrictive housing covenants unenforceable. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 then made illegal all forms of racial and ethnic exclusion. The current access to housing barrier in Arlington is purely economic. MM does **NOTHING** to lower that barrier. The housing under the MM proposal would ALL require incomes to purchase or rent that exceed median Black, Hispanic, or senior household incomes. MM is much more likely to be a gentrifying force, as the growing body of research shows.



We already have seen severe gentrification in Arlington's Historically-Black neighborhoods since 1960 (chart above), contrary to expectations after eliminating racially-exclusionary legal barriers and having zoning in those areas (like Green Valley) that already allow MM housing types. Arlington is NOT addressing the fact that Arlington's own land use policies are driving up land prices. Indeed, in 2005, Arlington zoning changes were followed by increased teardowns of modest homes to be replaced by large ones (McMansions), thwarting Arlington's affordability goals. MM will make these problems worse. Based on Arlington incomes from the U.S. Census and MM prices from the county's consultant, ASF projects that the White population of the new MM units will be 72% (compared to 70% today in the single-family neighborhoods and 58.5% countywide), with a Black population at only 4%.

The county says offering diversity of housing types is now a key MM goal. Why do we need diverse housing types that do not promote racial and economic diversity? We see from [this chart](#) that a household needs to earn 118% of AMI to afford what the county's consultant said would be the cheapest MM unit at \$416,000. Looking at current Arlington population, senior, Hispanic, and Black median household incomes fall short of being able to purchase the cheapest MM unit. It does not mean that no one in these groups can afford any MM units. It does illustrate how slim the chances are and that the MM plan predominantly promotes housing for wealthy white residents. Likewise, we expect a negative impact on Arlington's current senior population, who may find increased tax impacts (as their own properties rise in value due to up-zoning), beyond their ability to pay or to find relief from limited county tax assistance programs.

ASF condemns the long-illegal racially biased policies of the past. But TODAY the consequential barrier to home ownership is an economic one, and many of the MM outcomes will ironically lead to more displacement, as we continue to widen gaps between our highest and lowest income households.

More details about MM diversity issues are in the Diversity section of this report.

M. MM will harm Arlington’s environment and energy goals

The proposed new MM zoning contains multiple options that will harm Arlington’s environment. Notably, the county has not even briefed its Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2) on the MM text, and its Forestry and Natural Resources Commission opposes the plan and questions its legality.

Assuming Article 10.4 of the draft code passes legal muster (*see* the legal discussion below), it will regulate MM housing types. The rules will apply solely in zones that for approximately 50 years have allowed only single-family home construction, i.e., R-5, R-6, R-8, R-10, and R-20. The County Board is likely to allow multiplex dwellings in these zones on a by-right basis, which means no further approval by the community or the Board would be required. These parameters, including on-site parking, lot coverage and setbacks, will affect tree canopy, pervious surfaces, and energy use and car emissions that all impact our environmental health.

Ultimately the market—not consultant estimates—will drive outcomes. By-right zoning opens the door to full conversion and 8-plex density across all zones. ASF expects more heat islands, loss of greenspace per family, greater carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, and stormwater runoff—possibly leading to more flooding—if this MM plan goes forward.

N. Likely Impacts on TREES of the Draft ACZO Options

In a [June 2022 letter to County Board Chair Cristol](#), the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) criticized the planning for trees. This letter found:

Serious negative impact that the construction of multi-unit dwellings would have on the County’s already declining tree canopy. . . [T]he Missing Middle Housing plan would reduce tree canopy lot coverage to only 10% to 15% in 20 years on MMHS redevelopment lots, much less than the already inadequate 20% coverage in 20 years for new single-family homes.

ASF shares these concerns. See [data from Arlington Transparency](#) showing: **a weighted-average 49% canopy reduction on 97% of the land being rezoned**. If 20% of the land becomes MM, as the county’s consultant projects, this means:

- a loss of 584 acres of tree canopy (equivalent to 9 Pentagon parking lots),
- a loss of 9,116 tons of carbon storage and 430 tons/year of carbon sequestration,
- 11 tons more pollution and 99 tons more carbon emissions in the air per year, and
- increased storm runoff by 480,000 cubic feet per year.

More details about MM environmental issues are in the Environment section of this report.

O. MM will harm Arlington's transportation

The MM plan proposes to cut—even eliminate—current, carefully-crafted parking rules substantially. Notably, the county did not even brief its Transportation Commission on the MM plan that unquestionably affects Arlington's streets *until January 5, 2023—8 days before the final Staff report*. Three commissioners voted “no,” with one calling out the county: “when I look across the body of work on Missing Middle, [I see very little analysis on Transportation](#) writ large [and] this is a fundamentally watershed kind of moment” to add “a lot of housing into areas that do not have the infrastructure to support [it] ... [and] **it feels like we're walking into this a little bit blind.**”

The county's responses to Freedom of Information Act requests by ASF perhaps reveal why the county essentially sidestepped its Transportation Commission—the county has no analysis of the possible impact on parking or on street congestion related to its MM plan.

The county is ignoring facts showing a continued, indeed growing, high reliance on cars and declining public transit use. Car ownership and miles driven are up in Arlington and more people commute alone by car than all other means together.

The county is also neglecting the need for useful analysis of the draft MM zoning. The current MM plan offers the County Board four elements for on-site parking:

- no off-street parking required for 62% of the rezoned lots (20,000 lots) that are “proximate” to “transit,” loosely defined—Option 5C;
- 1/2 spot per unit (i.e., 4 cars on-site per 8-plex) for any lot “proximate” to “transit”;¹
- One spot per unit for all other lots (Option 5A could reduce this 1/2 spot per unit if a parking survey shows curbside occupancy from Missing Middle units would not exceed 85%),
- One spot per unit for lots on cul-de-sacs.

While staff correctly [told the Long-Range Planning Committee on October 17](#) (min 17:07) that the new zoning was consistent with the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) sub-goal to “make greater use of on street parking,” they omitted the other MTP sub-goal to “ensure that minimum parking needs are met.” Over time, the county has established current parking minimums to meet those goals. Its MM efforts have revealed no basis to depart from them.

P. Intense Curbside Parking Spillover onto Residential Streets

ASF has shown that residential streets quickly fill up after just a few smaller-unit MM housing types are built, but the MM Plan allows more infill than on-street capacity. Whatever option the County Board chooses, we will have less on-site parking and cars in excess of the minimum standard will spill over onto residential streets. We already see in some areas that excess on-street parking is only allowing one-way traffic on two-way

streets (for example, on 800 North Jackson Street. With current low-density land use of less than 10 units per acre, neighborhoods can accommodate traffic, but this will change when zoning rises to 69 units per acre (for example, if 8-plexes are allowed in zone R-5).

Pro-density advocates and developers have claimed, without data to prove acceptable impacts, that onsite parking should be eliminated for MM units. But [census data](#) show that only large buildings (*buildings with 50 or more units*) would make a difference; these account for 61% of car-less housing units. **Of MM housing types of the kind being proposed, less than one unit in 11 is car-less today.**

More details about MM transportation issues are in the Transportation section of this report.

Q. The Arlington Way Has Gone Astray

A deep sore among the growing thousands of residents who oppose the MM Plan is the county's failure to tell people in clear and simple terms what the plan really is about. Adding to that is how the county abandoned established community planning processes. Instead, the Board imposed limited, closed-door sessions, formed one-sided panels of "experts" that excluded County Staff and the one "expert" the county paid over \$100,000 to work on the MM Plan, and then rejected pleas for meaningful engagement that includes objective voices. Worse yet, the County Board is doing so to push a process that fundamentally alters decades of planning and the public's reliance on it.

Arlington's Comprehensive Plan establishes choice in neighborhood density. Plan Goals #1-3 put density "in and near Metro Station[s]" where infrastructure supports it; Goal #4 is to "[p]reserve and enhance existing single-family ... neighborhoods" (at 6). Even for Crystal City, East Falls Church, and elsewhere, the goal remains to "[p]reserve the integrity of the single-family neighborhoods" nearby, or "preserve and protect" them (at 17, 20, 22).

But Missing Middle densifies all neighborhoods, far from transit. The county said in its [May 2, 2022 rollout](#) that Missing Middle will be "**geographically dispersed**" (pp. 14a, 23). It projects 72% of new units will be greater than 1/2 mile from Metro ([Table A-8](#): 78 of 108 units/year to be "non-Metro"). The new density allowed, 8-plexes on all R5 to R20 residential lots, means a level of densification to the same level as Rosslyn south of Clarendon Boulevard.

The [Arlington Civic Federation](#) (CivFed), a 106-year-old institution of about 80 independent civic groups, is on the verge of voting on a historic [resolution](#) "To Restore Public Confidence in Arlington County's Governance." The resolution details the County Board's failure to govern inclusively. It is backed by [700 footnoted examples](#) of how the county is failing its residents. On Missing Middle, CivFed documented (pp. 50-51) how the County Board's Missing Middle process has been

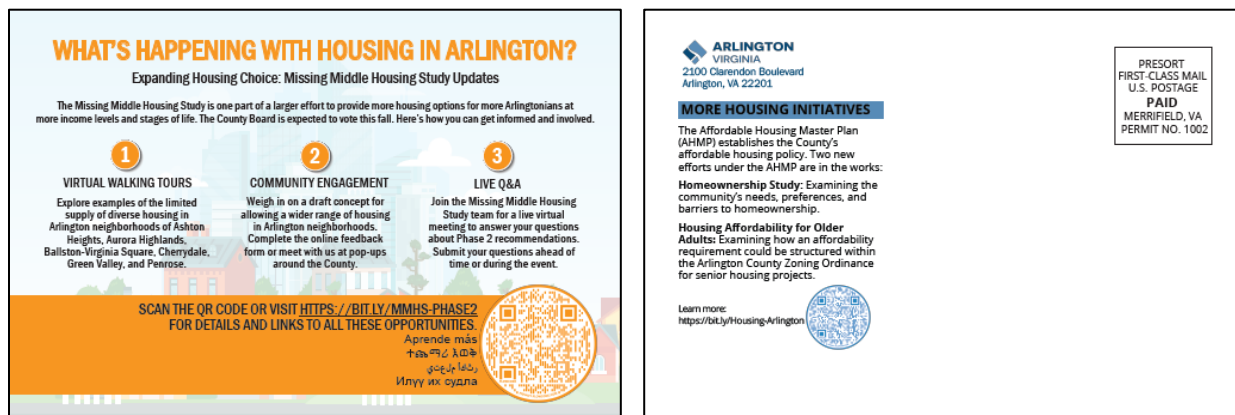
riddled with a lack of transparency and data, and the community engagement opportunities are calculated, controlled and are to convey rather than to collect insights. Furthermore, the County’s own surveys and feedback illustrate that the County is misrepresenting the community’s consensus and strongly oppose the proposed Plan.

CivFed documented how the county held its *only* public Q&A on its MM Plan on May 2, 2022, which allowed just 74 minutes for questions from the public (filtered through Staff) (p. 51). County Housing Staff were later excluded from the Board Members’ “community conversations,” leaving many residents just as uninformed as when they went in. Excluded from all public engagement has been the county’s consultant, PES, which did the only actual analysis of MM impacts.

Critically, rather than include the County Board’s own hand-picked commissions to vet the MM Plan, they excluded and marginalized them. The County Staff did not brief the Transportation Committee until 8 days before releasing the final Staff Report. Other key commissions like C2E2, Aging, and JFAC were essentially left out.

The county’s poorly worded postcard mailer. The county touts: Missing Middle “[p]ostcards mailed to 151,000+ residential addresses” in May 2022. Staff [said](#) it did this; but the county has only “120,200 housing units” . Worse yet, a FOIA response revealed the county only paid [\\$7600 for postage](#), enough to reach only a fraction of the claimed 151,000 addresses (at USPS’s bulk mailing [rate](#), \$0.187/ card). Member Karantonis even said *he* didn’t receive one.

More importantly, the [postcard itself](#) (in small font), shown below, did not give any details or a date to act and was mailed *during* the 29-day comment period. It failed to mention “zoning,” allowing up to 8 units, or even say whose lot would be changed.



R. Conclusion

Throughout this Executive Summary, we have asked what problems Arlington County policy makers are really trying to solve with MM. We have shown how the county has failed to examine a wide range of critical issues needed to enact the type of transformative change that MM represents.

Based on the available data, we have explained why:

- the county’s MM proposals will NOT produce affordable housing, or even housing for median income families;
- will NOT foster diversity, equity, and inclusion, but *worsen* them;
- will harm the environment and transportation; and
- will exacerbate Arlington’s already serious infrastructure and operating budget deficits.

However, MM will generate major new revenue streams for developers, builders, and for the county government itself (via higher assessed property values). The substantially higher Arlington County tax revenues that would be generated by MM are one way to finance the county’s long-term operating budget deficit. But this is certainly not a desirable way for tens of thousands of seniors and low-income Arlington residents.

On balance, the costs of MM are highly likely to far exceed any public benefits. At the very least, there is no reason to rush to approve MM, and many reasons to take many more months to better understand and weigh the costs and benefits before committing to MM up-zoning that, as a practical matter, can never be undone.

**_*_*_

II. Missing Middle Effects on Housing

Arlington’s Comprehensive Plan sets the goal to preserve and promote 3-bedroom ownership housing at moderate prices, but the Missing Middle Plan will undermine that goal and exacerbate housing challenges in 3-bedroom housing. Specifically, county and census data show the plan will replace lower-cost, owner-occupied (and wealth-generating) 3-bedroom detached homes with buildings likely to be 90% 1- to 2-bedrooms, 80% or more as rentals, and at prices far higher than in Arlington now for same-sized units. Strikingly, the county admits Missing Middle housing is already 1/3 of existing housing. Why then the rush to do something so large, so fast, causing such harm?

The [Affordable Housing Master Plan](#) (at 15, 21, 22) declares: “[f]amilies with children ... [are] a growing segment ... [but the supply of] three or more bedroom[homes] ... has diminished ... leaving [them] particularly underserved.” “It shall be the policy of Arlington County to ... [e]ncourage production and preservation of ... 3+bedroom... moderately-priced ownership units.” While the county started the Missing Middle Housing Study emphasizing those goals, its analysis and the data we show below demonstrate it fails to achieve those goals, as [former Planning Commissioner Elinor](#)

[Schwartz explained](#). In fact, it will *worsen* them. Quite notably, County Staff has now removed those goals from its presentations.

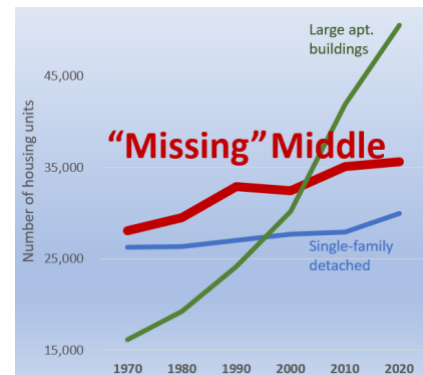
Moreover, the county's own commission found no evidence that missing middle initiatives elsewhere are any different. The Joint Facilities Advisory Commission ([JFAC](#)) studied six other jurisdictions with such initiatives. [JAFC reported](#) (at 2): "It was not clear ... that the Missing Middle Housing in the jurisdictions researched were able to accomplish the goals of affordability, diversity, or inclusion."

A. "Missing" Middle now: 69,000 people in Arlington live in 34,000 homes the county calls missing; they are overwhelmingly zero- to two-2-bedrooms

Missing Middle is already 1/3 of housing in Arlington. The county says 71% of housing here is multi-family ([at 1](#)). Its Phase I Missing Middle report ([at 3](#)) states: "Approximately 30% of Arlington's existing housing stock can be classified as Missing Middle housing." That means about 1/3 of Arlingtonians ([69,000 people](#) in 2021) live in the [1/3 of Arlington housing](#) that is *already* "Missing Middle." The county also states Arlington's percentage of detached homes is **46% lower** ([at 11](#)) than the region to which it benchmarks itself.

Missing Middle housing has been growing. Since Arlington began its transit-oriented mindset in the 1970s, developers have built [twice as much Missing Middle housing](#) in the county than detached homes (chart, right).

Missing Middle housing is mainly 2-bedrooms or less, not needed 3-bedroom and larger sizes. In Arlington now, buildings of 2 to 9 units are [95% 0-2 bedrooms](#) per U.S. Census data ([total count](#)). Roughly the same ratio applies to all MM building sizes—87% 0-2 bedrooms for 2-unit buildings; 96% for 3–4-unit ones; and 96% for 5–9-unit ones. Attached homes are 47% 0-2 bedrooms. By contrast, detached homes in Arlington are 32% 3-bedroom and 58% 4- or more bedrooms; the rest are likely all capable of expanding to 3+bedrooms.



B. What gets built: County says 2/3 of new buildings to be 6- & 8-plexes and 90% 1- or 2-bedrooms, but no analysis behind pace of building

The county's [only data](#) on what gets built: 2/3 of new Missing Middle buildings will be max density 6- and 8-plexes, and about 90% of new units will be 1- to 2-bedrooms. But even that is incomplete because it is based on the Consultant's analysis in early 2022, well before the many changes Staff subsequently added.

County's consultant has no analysis behind projected pace of Missing Middle; existing data contradicts that of the county. Multiple FOIA requests revealed the county did not receive its consultant's full data until *August 2022*, well after the county started drafting new ordinances. When [finally received](#), the spreadsheets show [zero analysis](#)

behind the projected pace of development. The mere guess—19 to 21 lots per year out of about 190 total tear downs—is essentially just numbers someone manually typed into a spreadsheet. There is no econometric analysis or housing market financial modeling. See for yourself: in the “[Pace-Summary](#)” worksheet, cells E20-G20 have hard-coded numbers (guesses) for overall lots redeveloped; cells B21-B45 have hard-coded numbers (guesses) for how many will be MM types. This is perhaps not surprising from a consultant whose website notes [only two employees with academic training in economics](#)—one undergraduate degree in economics with “2+ Years of Experience,” and another individual with an undergraduate degree. Without explanation, the county has refused to include its consultant in any of its “[Information Sessions](#)” of “experts” or other events.

Other jurisdictions show much more rapid tear downs of single-family homes to become what Arlington projects will be 1–2-bedroom rentals here. First, in Portland’s first year of Missing Middle, [45%](#) of its 196 development projects were Missing Middle types (compare that to Arlington County saying it’ll only be 11% here). Second, a [FOIA response](#) revealed Arlington County Board Members received data from Montgomery County projecting 0.9% of all single-family homes in that county would be “converted” in the first 3 years of a rollout. For Arlington, that’d be 84 conversions per year (not 19-21 as Arlington County says).

Board Member Karantonis is reportedly telling people he expects 20% of all single-family homes will be “converted” as early as 2050. That means roughly **207 tear downs/year to become Missing Middle**, *not* “19-21.”

While Staff point to areas like Minneapolis that had a slower-than-expected build out, Arlington Realtor Kathy Rehill points out the critical difference—the MM Plan *here* is “allowing subdividing [of land] and that’s [the game-changer](#).” (Not to mention, Minneapolis is a vastly different market and capped its effort at duplexes and triplexes.)

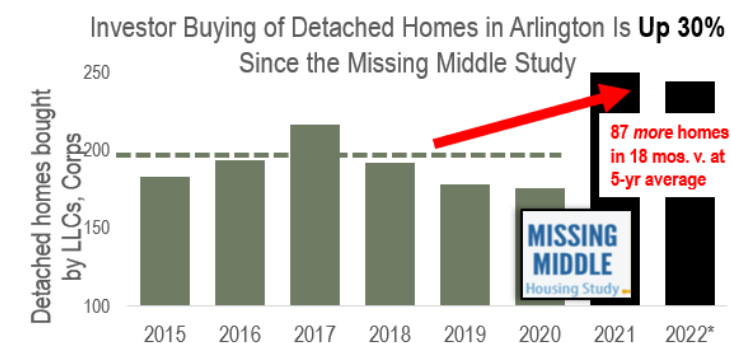
The county consultant failed to consider neighborhood-specific differences in pricing and what gets built. Arlington paid over \$100,000 to its Missing Middle consultant (FOIA C000877-063022). The contract required the Consultant to “[I]dentify likely pace of growth and **neighborhoods** where missing middle housing types would be most economically viable;” and analyze “[l]ikely prices/rents for **different neighborhoods/** markets.” Instead, it lumped all areas not within ½ mile of Metro into one omnibus neighborhood. Basic knowledge of Arlington reveals why this creates a useless result:

- *Arlington neighborhoods have **vast** price differences.* Average new homes in Arlington range from \$910,900 in Columbia Forest to \$3.6 million in Arlingwood ([Table 2](#)), nearly 300% *higher*.
- *Neighborhood markets mean vastly different Missing Middle results.* A [FOIA](#)

[response](#) revealed Arlington’s Board received projections on Missing Middle done for Montgomery County. MoCo’s consultant analyzed neighborhood/area differences, and the pace over time. At 10 years, some areas likely would have *de minimis* Missing Middle, but others would be as high as **6.8% of all single-family homes torn down to become Missing Middle**.

Arlington planning expert Molly McKay has noted the county’s consultant report (the only analysis the county had performed) is full of [“gaps”](#) and [“methodological weaknesses”](#) with “important” analyses left “not completed.”

County data shows developers/ investors are surging to buy homes. While the county says the overall pace of tear downs will remain the same, property sales data tells a different story. Detached home [purchases by investors are up 30%](#) over historic trends (chart, right). Even this may understate the impact. As noted above, billions are being spent to [buy up Missing Middle](#) as “high-margin, predictable investments.” The county has done no analysis on this issue.



C. What gets built: The county plan incentivizes buildings with above ground space nearly *double* (or more) than new homes built today

The Missing Middle Plan allows buildings that are far larger than even new detached homes built today (sizes that many in the community already have concerns).

Specifically, the MM Plan allows 5- to 8-unit multiplexes to have **8,000 sqft of above-grade living space**. This is **84% larger** than *new* single-family homes built today on lots 9,000 sqft and larger, as shown below (MLS data). The green line shows the above-grade square footage of new homes sold from December 2021 to December 2022, sorted by increasing lot size from left to right (starting at 5,000 sqft lots). The red “buildings” along the 8,000 sqft line are the new MM 5–8-unit buildings. Critically, as noted above, the county projects 2/3 of new MM types will be 6–8-unit structures.



Lot Size	Avg. New Home (above grade sqft)	Missing Middle Size (sqft)	% Change
<6000 sqft	3,407	8,000	135%
6000-8999 sqft	3,615	8,000	121%
9000+ sqft	4,349	8,000	84%

Even “smaller” Missing Middle types will far exceed the size of new detached homes built today. MM 4-plexes can be 7,200 sqft and triplexes 6,000 sqft. That exceeds the size of virtually *every* new detached home sold this year. MM duplexes can be 4,800 sqft, which is larger than **85%** of new detached homes sold. Staff projects MM buildings will be 3-stories and local realtors confirm demand will be for all units to be above grade, making the comparison to be above grade square footage apt.

D. County data shows its Plan causes net *loss* in needed 3-bedroom units

The county says “The Problem” with our housing market is too many 1- to 2-bedroom units. The county’s [5/2/2022 MM Framework](#) (at 7) states, “Arlington’s new housing construction is primarily 1- to 2-bedrooms”. Staff [point](#) (at 22) to recent developments like the Pierce Condo (1559 Wilson Blvd) as being 92% 1- and 2-bedroom units and proclaim this “illustrates the need for missing middle housing.” But Missing Middle will exacerbate these market dynamics.

County data: MM to be 90% 1- or 2-BRs. In [model after model](#) (3/17, 3/22/2022), the county’s consultant found over 90% of new MM housing will be 1- or 2-bedroom units. Its [April 8 final report](#) did not stray from those unit size ratios (Tables A-3, A-4, A-8). Curiously, however, the final report omits bedroom count even though its contract (6/1/2021; FOIA#C000877-063022) identified “lack of family size units [3 bedrooms]” as a “problem” it “shall” address (“must detail ... bedroom count;” “analysis must include ...unit size and bedroom count”).

County data: MM means net loss of 3+bedroom housing. The county’s [consultant projected](#) (that if 76 3+BR homes are torn down to build MM, only 23 3+BRs would likely be built, for a net loss of 53 3+BRs ($23 - 76 = -53$), as shown below. Its [final report](#) (Tables A-3, A-4, A-8) projects 21 homes razed; the unit sizes mean only 12 new 3+BR units likely result ($12 - 21 = -9$). [Former Planning Commissioner Elinor Schwartz recognizes](#) this will be the result.


From: Anita Morrison <amorrison@pesconsult.com>
 Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 12:26 PM EDT
 To: Matthew Ladd <Mladd@arlingtonva.us>
 CC: Richard Tucker <Rtucker@arlingtonva.us>; Kellie Brown <Kebrown@arlingtonva.us>; Russell <Rschroeder@arlingtonva.us>
 Subject: Materials for Today's Call
 Attachment(s): "Tables for 3-23-22.docx"

EXTERNAL EMAIL

CAUTION: This email contains file attachments. Do NOT open files that you are not expecting to know senders.

Matt - I have not been able to complete the revised narrative, but attached are the model results table information from Portland. See you at 2:00. I'll get Abby to send around a Zoom invitation. Anita

Anita Morrison
 Principal
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 349 Cedar St. NW
 Washington, DC 20012
 202 621-9103
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 **PES**
 Partners for
 Economic Solutions

High End of the Pace Range

Lots	Metro/Non-Metro Split	MMH% of Total	Units	Number of Bedrooms			
				1	2	3	4
Missing/Middle	190	40%					
5,000 Square-Foot Lots	76	8%					
Side-by-Side Duplex #4 - Non-Metro	2	40%	4				4
Side-by-Side Duplex #6 - Metro	4	60%	8				8
6,000 Square-Foot Lots		22%					
Side-by-Side Townhouse #4 - Non-Metro	6	50%	18		18		
Side-by-Side Townhouse #4 - Metro	3	50%	9		9		
Multiplex 3 (6 units) - Metro	3	100%	18		18		
Side-by-Side Duplex #6 - Non-Metro	2	50%	4			4	
Side-by-Side Duplex #6 - Metro	2	50%	4			4	
8,000 Square-Foot Lots		27%					
Multiplex 3 (6 units) - Non-Metro	12	75%	72		72		
Multiplex 3 (6 units) - Metro	4	25%	24		24		
Fourplex #6 - Non-Metro	3	75%	12		12		
Fourplex #6 - Metro	1	25%	4		4		
10,000 Square-Foot Lots		33%					
Multiplex #4 (6 units) - Non-Metro	18	90%	108		108		
Multiplex #4 (6 units) - Metro	2	10%	12		12		
Multiplex #2 (6 units) - Non-Metro	5	90%	30		30		
Multiplex #2 (6 units) - Metro	1	10%	6		6		
12,500 Square-Foot Lots		10%					
Multiplex #4 (8 units) - Metro	3	10%	24	3	18	3	
Fourplex #6 - Non-Metro	4	90%	16		16		
Fourplex #6 - Metro	1	10%	4		4		
Total Units			377	3	351	11	12

E. County admits its Plan is NOT affordable housing, won't lower prices. County data shows MM prices will be much *higher* than today

County concedes MM plan lacks affordability and is unlikely to lower prices.
[Staff admit](#) (at 22) the MM Plan is “**unlikely to have an impact on overall housing prices**” and “[a]dding an affordability requirement ... would likely result in little to no missing middle housing.”

County Commissioner sees price increases. A C2E2 Commissioner calculated the MM plan results in prices **29%-59% higher** per square foot than what they replace.

County data shows MM rents will be (at least) about 20%-84% higher than now.
 The increase is shown below comparing [2022 Q3 rents](#) now to data from the [county's consultant](#) from early 2022 (Tables A-3, A-4, A-5; 3-BRs as sale to rent ratio for all other units). This surely undercounts the price rise. For example, the county has not updated its rent projections to current day, and as established in this Section, the county used unreasonably low estimates for condo fees.

	Avg. rent in Arlington	New Missing Middle avg. rent	Missing Middle % rise over avg. rents now
Studio	\$1,842	\$2,240	22%
1-bedroom	\$2,132	\$2,593	22%
2-bedroom	\$2,703	\$3,222	19%
3-bedroom	\$3,503	\$6,456	84%

County data also shows MM median sale prices will be 10% to 219% higher than like-sized units sold now. Shown below are actual sales in Arlington from December 2021 to December 2022 from the MLS, and data from the [county's consultant](#) (Tables A-3, A-4, A-5, A-8).

	Median sale in Arlington 12/21-12/22	New Missing Middle median sale	% change
Studio	\$139,000	\$443,380	219%
1-bedroom	\$351,250	\$498,802	42%
2-bedroom	\$550,000	\$607,000	10%
3-bedroom	\$880,000	\$1,300,246	48%

F. County Plan is not inclusive: new housing attainable only for wealthiest 1/5; it helps those the county says can help themselves

Missing Middle prices to be very high. The county projected [sale prices](#) of what likely gets built (Tables A-3, A-4, A-8). The *cheapest* unit would be a 700 square foot efficiency or 1-bedroom selling for \$416,000 in an 8-unit building far from Metro (\$594/sqft). The *cheapest* 2-bedroom would start at \$571,000 (\$561/sqft). For 3-bedroom units, the range is \$1,149,000 to \$1,533,363 (\$644 to \$595/sqft). Now, county materials project the *cheapest* unit will be \$520,000, shown below ([p. 5](#)):

Figure 1: Expanded Housing Options Anticipated Sales Prices, Rent, And Minimum Required Household Income				
Housing Option	Bedrooms	Anticipated Sales Price	Anticipated Monthly Rent	Required HH Income to Attain Lowest Rent/Price
6-plex/8-plex	1-2 bedrooms	\$520,000 - \$670,000	\$2,700 - \$3,300	\$108,000 / \$118,000
3-plex/4-plex	2-3 bedrooms	\$700,000 - \$900,000	\$3,100 - \$3,900	\$124,000 / \$160,000
Townhouse	3-4 bedrooms	\$970,000 - \$1.3 million		\$223,000
Semidetached	3-4 bedrooms	\$1,100,000 - \$1.4 million		\$244,000

Sources: [Consultant Analysis of Missing Middle Housing Alternatives, 2022](#) and Arlington County [CPHD, 2022](#).

“Who can afford MM?” The county used unrealistic inputs for down payment, interest rate, and condo fees in calculating who can afford MM units. A FOIA request revealed that [the county used Zillow’s Home Affordability calculator](#) to determine MM affordability. In doing so, the county used unreasonable and arbitrary inputs:

- The county assumed condo fees of [\\$250/month](#); its consultant used \$246/month ([at 11](#)). By contrast, months later the [county reported](#) ([at 15](#)) *actual* condo fees for properties sold in 2021 were **\$357/mo.** for a 1-bedroom garden condo, **\$430/mo.** for a 2-bedroom garden condo, and **\$432/mo.** for a 3-bedroom townhouse condo. A local realtor reports [similar, higher figures](#).
- The county used 20% down payments, as [confirmed](#) by the Washington Post. By contrast, the median down payment is only **12%** ([at 85](#)); for 22-30 year-olds, it is only **6%**; for 21-40 year-olds it is **10%**.

- The county used 4.39% interest rates *not* in effect at the time of its report (“[Income calculations](#)”). By contrast, the 30-year average for a 30-year fixed rate is [5.7%](#). As of December 2022, those rates are [6.33%](#).

Applying realistic inputs of typical people shows how the MM Plan is not affordable for who the county says it will be. Applying the reasonable inputs noted above (12% down payment; 5.7% interest rate; \$357/mo. in condo fees), and taking *all* of the [county’s other favorable assumptions](#) reveals a stark difference in affordability.

Specifically, as shown on the next page, it will take someone earning **\$143,748 per year to afford the *cheapest* Missing Middle unit of 700 square feet** (if sold at \$416,000, the lowest amount in the Consultant’s report)— **that is 144% of AMI** ([Area Median Income](#)) for a single household, and 126% AMI for a 2-person one. For a typical young person in their 20s, with a 6% down payment, it’ll take \$150,542 in annual income. By contrast, the [county says](#) it takes only \$118,000 a year in income to afford that.

The county’s *cheapest* 3-bedroom is projected at \$1,149,000, **32% higher** than the median 3-bedroom sold in Arlington in 2022. Applying the same realistic inputs as above, but \$432/mo. in county-reported condo fees for a 3-bedroom townhouse, such a Missing Middle unit is affordable at incomes of \$303,681 per year—**237% AMI**.

Thus, while the county [promotes](#) its MM Plan as for “teachers, police officers, and firefighters,” this is unrealistic. It would take [three firefighters](#) to pool resources to afford the *cheapest* MM 2-bedroom. Indeed, only about the top fifth of society could afford these Missing Middle units.

A local mortgage loan specialist recently came out with a similar analysis as ASF, debunking the county’s unrealistic forecast. Using current interest rates and a realistic 5% down payment, [a buyer needs \\$150,000 per year in income to afford the *cheapest* Missing Middle unit](#) (\$520,000)—about 117% of AMI for a family of three.

Critically, the county says the private market works for those who can afford Missing Middle prices, and they do not need government intervention. The county [admits](#): “The **private market has provided sufficient rental housing** for households with incomes above 80% of AMI” and **demand “will continue to be met** with the

The screenshot shows a mortgage affordability calculator. On the left, there are input fields for various financial factors: Annual income (\$143,748), Monthly debts (\$1,200), Down payment (\$49,920), Debt-to-income ratio (36%), Interest rate (5.7%), Loan term (360 months), Include taxes/ins (checked), Property tax (1.013%), Home insurance (\$900/year), Include PMI (checked), and HOA dues (\$357/month). On the right, the calculator displays the result: "You can afford a house up to \$416,000". Below this, it states: "Based on the information you provided, a house at this price should fit comfortably within your budget." There is a "Full report" button in the top right corner and a "Calculator disclaimer" at the bottom.

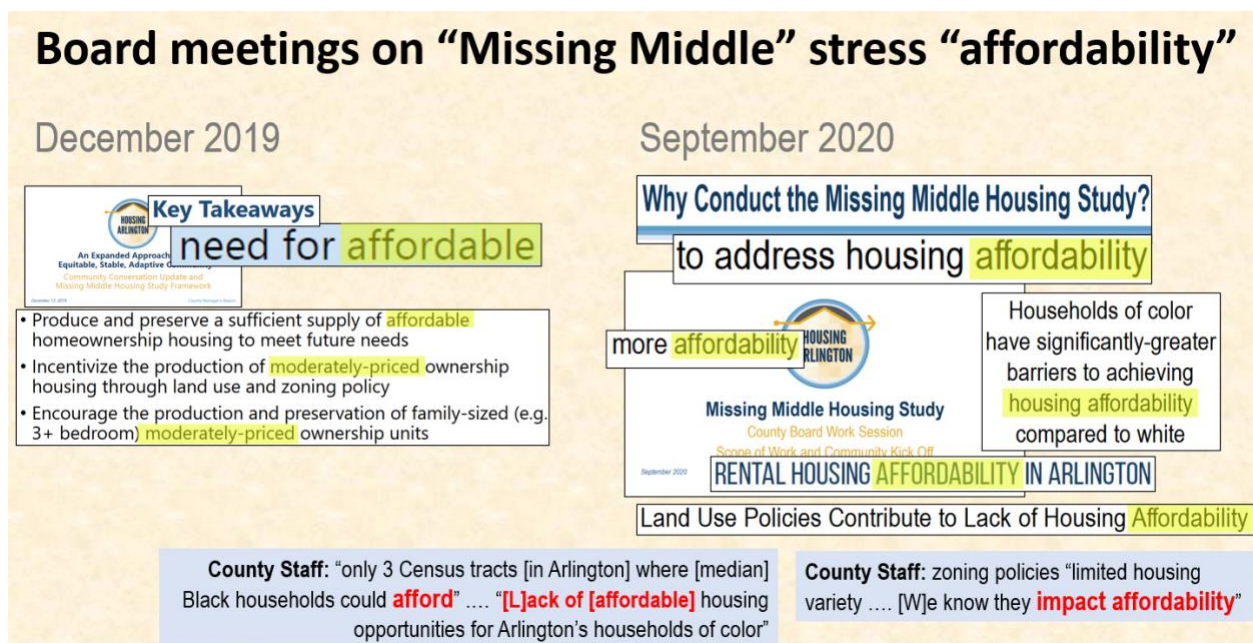
private market **without public intervention;**” the same applies to ownership (at 6, 14) (emphasis added).

G. Despite the county’s overwhelming evidence its Missing Plan will result in *higher prices*, it repeatedly promoted the plan as “affordable”

Despite the county’s own data and market realities that show the Missing Middle Plan results in pricier units than today, plan proponents claim the opposite.

The MM Plan is [carried out](#) (at 5) under the county’s *Affordable Housing* Master Plan. Throughout the process, Board members emphasize the plan will *lower* housing prices or *slow* increases and create options more “*affordable*” than today (and more ownership) for same-sized units. This narrative is so misplaced a LRPC Commissioner called out colleagues in October 2022 to stop, telling them: [missing middle is “not affordable housing.”](#) But those claims permeate the process as detailed below.

The county has promoted Missing Middle as “affordable” housing. At Board meetings, Staff emphasized the MM Plan as promoting “affordable homeownership” of “moderately-priced” “family-sized (e.g., 3+ bedroom units.” As shown on the next page, again and again, Staff stressed “housing affordability” when discussing MM. ²



Setting aside the facts, County Board Member Katie Cristol promotes the MM Plan as putting “**home own’ship in reach for [med\[ian\] income Arlingtonians](#)**” (below). The reality is that income needed to afford the *cheapest* unit far exceeds median household income in Arlington (especially for Black and Hispanic households), and those units are likely to be *rentals* not ownership.



Katie Cristol @kcristol · May 3

...

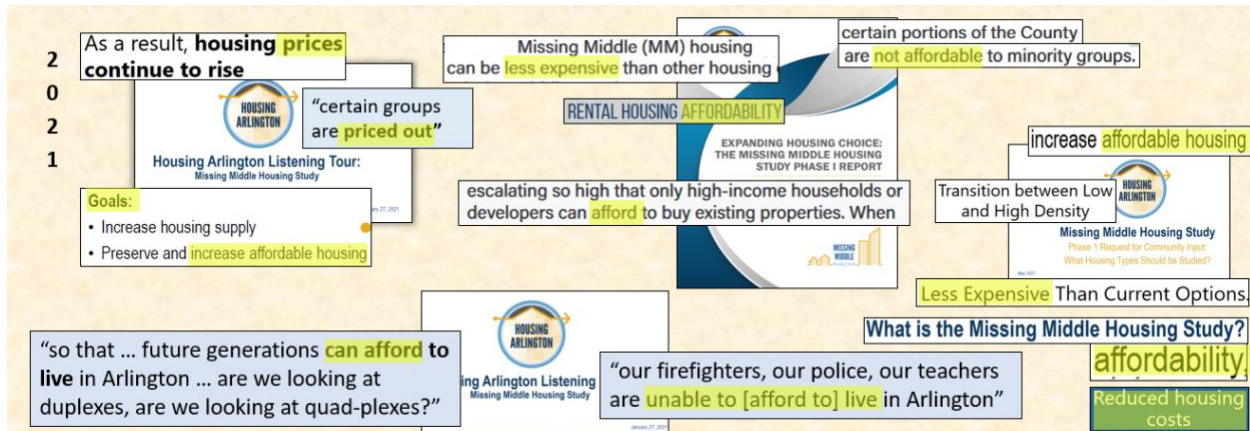
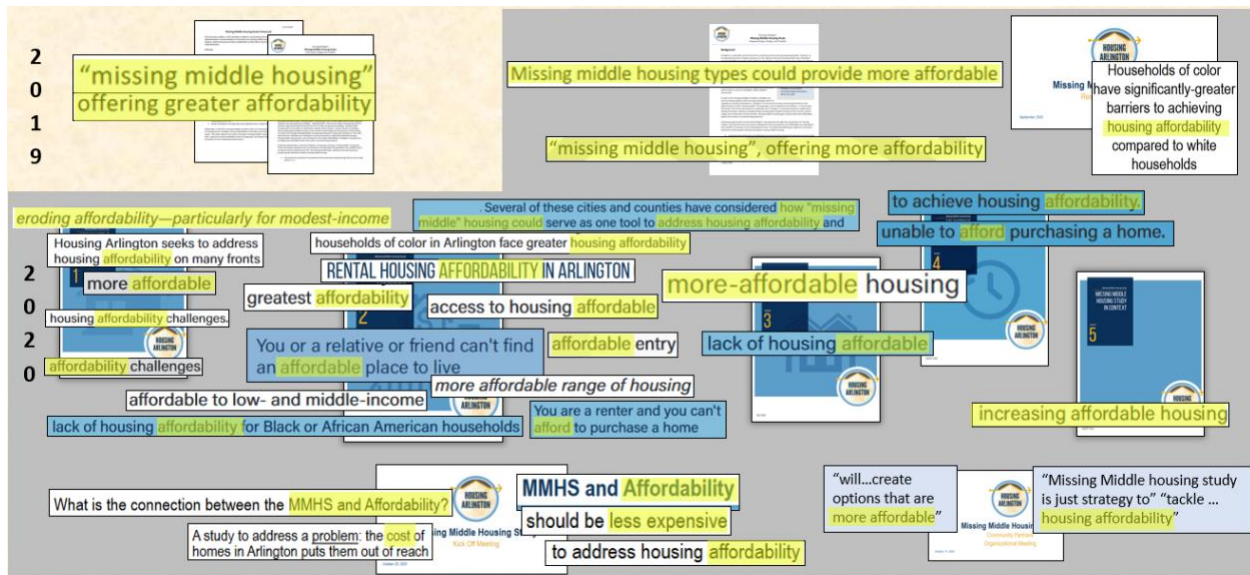
Missing Middle draft framework is here: Ideas to legalize new housing forms while addressing enviro impacts + new expert findings re: likely price points of 6, 8-plexes. Spoiler alert: Could put home own'ship in reach for med-income Arlingtonians for the 1st time this generation.

Board members repeatedly spoke of MM as a way to make housing “affordable:”

- In [January 2020](#), Ms. Cristol declared Arlington’s “low density neighborhoods ... out of reach for all but the wealthiest of homebuyers” and “unaffordable,” as reasons to enact the MM Plan.
 - In [September 2020](#), Ms. Cristol said “one of the reasons to pursue missing middle is not simply affordability.”
 - In [May 2022](#), Ms. Cristol promoted the county’s MM Plan by tweeting: “Spoiler alert: Could put home own’ship[sic] in reach for med-income[sic] Arlingtonians for the 1st time this generation.” Mr. Karantonis [tweeted in 2018](#), “Missing Middle housing is a ... [way] to tackle #ArlingtonVA’s housing affordability crisis.”
 - In [January 2021](#), Mr. Karantonis said he “support[s] ... approaches to housing affordability ... such as the missing middle study.”
 - In [June 2021](#), Mr. Karantonis said Arlington’s “affordable housing stock [is] dwindling significantly. Housing prices have been skyrocketing The missing middle study ... [details] how and exactly to whom Arlington has become unaffordable”
 - In [October 2021](#), Mr. Karantonis promoted MM housing as “creating more affordable ownership opportunities for moderate-income buyers.”
 - In [September 2020](#), and throughout his 2022 campaign, Mr. de Ferranti spoke of the supposed need for the MM Plan as, without it, current residents’ “kids won’t be able to afford to live here.”
 - In [January 2021](#), Mr. de Ferranti said, “Missing Middle ... can help make the costs of homeownership in Arlington more affordable.”
- In [2022](#), Mr. de Ferranti declared that “Missing Middle housing types are necessary;” he added, the “60% of Arlington residents who currently rent cannot realistically save up to buy a place. We risk becoming as unaffordable as San Francisco”
- In [January 2020](#), Ms. Garvey proclaimed, “we don’t have many of the kind of ... homes in the middle,” “we want [housing for] people across the whole economic spectrum.”

- In [June 2022](#), Ms. Garvey said the “Missing Middle Housing Study explores ... shortfall in housing [caused by zoning] making it harder and harder for anyone but very wealthy families to afford a home”

In document after document, the county emphasized “missing middle housing” will “offer[] greater affordability” and create housing that “should be less expensive.”³



2
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2
2

Missing Middle Housing Study: Expanding Housing Choice
Phase 2 Analysis and Draft Framework
May 3, 2022

reduce housing costs

housing of moderate size and cost

wider range of housing types at lower prices

support lower cost housing

Priorities

Reduce housing costs

Response: types to encourage smaller, lower cost options

"This is a huge accomplishment for Arlington County in tackling the housing affordability crisis"

Karantonis: "[people] say, I would like to age in [place], but I cannot ... afford"

Cristol: "likely price points ... perhaps half a million dollars in some circumstances for a condominium within a multiplex"

de Ferranti: "the means is missing middle housing ... affordability is key"

County Staff: "housing attainable to moderate-income households"

Fact: min. 2-BR price is \$571,000, per County

Fact: all new housing attainable only for 118% to nearly 300% AMI, per Co. data

._*._*._*._

III. Missing Middle Effects on the General Land Use Plan

A. Introduction and Goals

1. Introduction

[Arlington County's General Land Use Plan](#) (GLUP) book (Feb. 2020) is the foundation for the larger Arlington Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). The Missing Middle Housing plan must comport with the GLUP and any effects must be assessed across the full spectrum of the Comp Plan. The [Missing Middle Bulletin 3](#) (p. 5) explains:

Most of Arlington's residential neighborhoods [R-5, R-6, R-8, R-10, R-20] are guided broadly by the County's 11 Comprehensive Plan elements, including the General Land Use Plan (GLUP), which lays out the County's land use vision, and the Zoning Ordinance, which provides rules and regulations for each of the County's 38 zoning districts. To help guide the land use vision, the **GLUP contains Development and Growth Goals**, which the County Board adopted in 1975 These **goals support a vision of high-density development within the Metro corridors and the preservation of lower-density areas elsewhere in the County**. As a result, for Arlington's residential neighborhoods outside of the planning corridors, the GLUP provides a vision for low-density residential development, and the Zoning Ordinance provides regulations that are consistent with that vision.

2. GLUP Goals: Add Housing Near Metro and Preserve Existing Single-family/Apartment Neighborhoods

ASF

The GLUP has five goals⁴, two of which are most relevant for impacts of the MM housing effort. Goals 3 and 4 contain commitments to:

#3. Increase the supply of housing by encouraging construction of a variety of housing types and prices at a range of heights and densities in and near Metro Station Areas

#4. Preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods

B. Development, Land Use and Zoning in Arlington Today

1. Nowhere to Build

Arlington, at 26 square miles is the smallest county in the U.S. There are severe constraints on land use, with the county noting there is “virtually no undeveloped land to accommodate future growth.” (Aug 2022 draft [Forestry and Natural Resources Plan](#), or FNRP, p.24.) It is therefore essential that Arlington’s leaders fully explain how they will assure best use of land for all elements of its Comprehensive Plan. Drawing on the FNRP draft, we see that:

some 50 plans now guide the development of public and private properties Many reflect the County’s early commitment to the principles of Smart Growth – the concentration of higher-density development around public transportation hubs to accommodate population and economic growth in more sustainable ways. As Arlington continues to grow, the community is challenged to balance the need for maintaining space for nature and providing access to it against the need to house, educate, and provide jobs for an ever-growing, increasingly diverse population.

Aug 2022 draft FNRP, p.13

[Virginia’s Zoning Code 15.2.2884](#) likewise echoes the theme that jurisdictions including Arlington, must balance needs of residents.⁵

2. Role of the Public and County Board in Development

The [Arlington County Zoning Ordinance](#) (ACZO), relevant building codes, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and other local ordinances and state laws govern how properties are developed.

The ACZO consists of a text and a map and classifies all land according to various districts. Each district permits a certain type and level of development ‘**by right.**’ Beyond this, certain districts provide public

review processes for **special exception by site plan or use permit** that allow for greater flexibility in use, density and form of development. **A rezoning request must be filed with the Zoning Administrator, pursuant to the ACZO**, in advance of the County Board hearing to allow for proper legal advertising and administrative and public review.

GLUP Excerpt, p. 28, section 6.6 (bolding ASF's)

The FNRP fleshes out this distinction of “by-right” and “special exception” zoning with the latter always requiring community/Board inputs.⁶ Under the ACZO, single-family detached homes are built by-right in these residential areas under review for new zoning. Multi-family construction of Missing Middle type homes (duplexes, small multiplexes including townhomes, in other parts of the county where they are allowed) may also be built “by-right.” These all carry fairly conservative “by-right” prescriptions for parking and other setbacks of lot coverage that limit the scope of maximum infill. Special exception processes, as noted above, often involve “horse-trading” whereby communities and the board may negotiate for “community benefits in exchange for flexibility in use, density and form of development.” Special exception process may also cover mixed-use residential or small townhome clusters (i.e., Missing Middle housing), but it has not been in use in the residential areas now being rezoned. The GLUP acknowledges drawbacks of adding density and implies the need for “reasonable mitigation,”⁷ which explains the need for higher review standards. ASF believes it is important to maintain the public and County Board review in these types of negotiations, i.e., not to dispense with community/board review for special exceptions.

C. Missing Middle Plan Falls Short on GLUP Growth & Development Goals

1. Introduction

ASF believes that economic growth and what ASF believes to be lower-priority (i.e., middle income) housing goals⁸ are distorting the Comp Plan focus and pitting different goals against one another. This distortion is also introducing elements of poor process, stifling public inputs on growth and development. We call for a strategic rethink of the land use and the Missing Middle, and renewed emphasis on demographic diversity, true housing affordability, environment and climate goals, and long-term fiscal solvency.

2. Goal 3: Increase Supply and Variety of Housing Near Metro

The zones that the county proposes to change to allow Missing Middle type homes are: R-5, R-6, R-8, R-10, and R-20. The R-5 and R-6 zones are typically closer to transit. ASF agrees that MM would add supply in “lower density areas” as per [staff's claims to LRPC November 9](#) as seen below (discussion of GLUP goals begins at 14:04). But “lower density areas” were not part of the original goal, and the county could alternately increase the density of housing in transit corridors as the GLUP urges. Judging mostly by its actions, we are left to surmise the Board sees land use as the magic

tool -- because there are no up-front financial costs -- to leverage higher density across all of Arlington -- while dodging the responsibilities that SHOULD come from adding such density (i.e. addressing other Comp Plan goals to avoid adding congestion, to add truly affordable housing, to reduce energy use, to finance stormwater infrastructure, to protect the Chesapeake Bay, and to avoid major flooding like we saw in 2019.)

GLUP Development and Growth Goals

Draft GLUP amendment maintains current development and growth goals

Goal	Draft GLUP amendment context
1. Concentrate high-density residential, commercial and office development within designated Metro corridors	High-density land uses would continue to be concentrated in the Metro corridors
3. Increase supply and variety of housing in and near Metro station areas	Provides more options and ability to increase supply in lower density areas, both inside and outside Metro station areas
4. Preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods and provide housing at a range of price levels and densities	Maintains option for single-family housing while allowing a wider range of housing options and price levels in "single-family and apartment neighborhoods"

3. Goal 4. Preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods

The county has distorted the concept of “Missing Middle Housing” designed in 2010 by architect Daniel Parolek to “transition” between single-family and multi-family housing areas (illustrated below.) After assuring residents in 2019 it would not allow new multifamily zoning countywide, the county has now laid out options for either four-six- or 8-plexes on all lots, zeroing out Parolek’s least dense areas.



Even 4 families on a lot developed to maximum coverage (as per the least dense option currently before the Planning Commission and County Board) will create exponential demand for new parks/rec, but the county is planning no greenspace. Nor

transit, schools, or police stations. Once new zoning becomes law, **ONLY** the market will determine what happens; single-family blocks can pass from the scene, even quickly. Ballard Washington near Seattle (seen in the image on page 1 of this report) rezoned a single-family area approximately 20 years ago, and there is substantial infill of triplexes and other multi-family units already. [County projections for slow transition \(150 new residents per year\) have been questioned by local economist Max Lyons](#) (see section 9). For these reasons, **ASF strongly disagrees that Missing Middle is consistent with “preserv[ing] and enhanc[ing] existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods.”** Claims that possible numeric caps on the numbers of permits can ameliorate these concerns are hollow because caps contained in previous up-zonings have subsequently been amended or eliminated when development didn’t match expectations (ADU’s, Columbia Pike Form Based Code, for example.)

D. We are Not Fooled by the Jargon

1. Arlington Already Has Zoning for High- to Low-Density Transition

A key precept of Parolek’s concept is already contained in our code: **Article 7.3 of the ACZO** offers the R-C, Multiple-family Dwelling and Commercial District “to encourage high-medium density residential development **while also providing for a mixed-use transitional area between higher density development and lower density residential uses.**”⁹ ASF asks that the Board clarify why this part of our code is failing.

2. R-Zones Split 50-50 Single/Multi Family Housing

The county promotes the idea that “73% of the land currently zoned residential does not allow new Missing Middle types,” which is mostly mis-translated as “3/4 of Arlington is reserved for single-family homes.”

There are two problems with this formulation. The reality shows that 1/3 of our residents live on the 1/3 of our land that has detached homes. Specifically, of Arlington’s 26 square miles (16,640 acres), the county reports that single-family detached housing “is located on approximately 5,500 acres” ([at 3](#)), *i.e.*, 1/3 of the land.



Moreover, virtually *all* of the R5 to R20 zones *already* allow “single-family” homes to be converted to two-family homes or to add a second residence on the same lot via the [accessory dwelling unit process](#). This includes building new attached homes, splitting a current home vertically into two, splitting a current home horizontally into two, building a new detached home in the front or back of an existing home. Arlingtonians have embraced these types of options (see below), yet the Board ignores them.¹⁰ Then-Board Chair Katie [Cristol erroneously told the Washington Post](#) in 2022 that in Arlington “forms of housing other than ‘one house on one lot’ in about 80 percent of the county” are not legal[], as a reason why the MM Plan is necessary.



While touting the limits on NEW construction, the builders who will profit and our leaders ignore that single family detached comprise only half of the homes in these areas now, as revealed in the county’s own MM research:¹¹

"Within these residential neighborhoods today,

- nearly 50% of the housing stock is single-family detached housing,
- 30% is low-rise multifamily, and
- 13% is mid- and high-rise multifamily”

E. Last-Minute Unorthodox Zoning Tools

1. Introduction

Beyond concerns about GLUP consistency, the county is creating unusual constructs revealed or explained only on October 31 or November 9, 2022. They include claims that land use depends on what is built, not what is set by law as base density. In other cases, the county seeks to apply zoning tools to reduce public scrutiny, possibly in violation of the ACZO or Virginia code.

2. Problems with Expanded Housing Option

For all new MM units, owners will retain the option, under section 5 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO), to build single-family homes ‘by right. All current rules (setbacks, tree canopy, etc.) will apply. But the [Oct. 31 draft ACZO amendments](#) include a new Section 10.4 (p. 22-29), called “Expanded Housing Option Development.”

a. Problem #1: “Expanded Housing Option” Combines “By-Right” and “optional” Zoning

The new zoning amendments show a unique “optional, by-right development path” (briefed to ZOCO/LRPC¹² with slide below); ASF questions whether the county has legal authority to combine “by right” and “special exception zoning” for the same project and apply this rare combination across almost half of Arlington’s land area.

Zoning Tool

Preliminary approach: establish an optional, by-right development path

- Precedents for optional development tools that apply broadly to specific zoning districts:
 - Unified Residential Development (requires use permit)
 - All R-5 to R-20 and R2-7 district are eligible
 - Residential Clusters (requires site plan)
 - All R-5 to R-20 districts are eligible
- Allows for tailored development standards
- Can apply to new construction or retrofits of existing buildings
- No changes to existing R district standards for single-detached housing and other permitted uses

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b. Problem #2: Special Exception Zoning – No Community or County Board Review

The Article 10.4 Expanded Housing Option introduces for the first time a broad application of special exception zoning in these affected R-zones. Staff explained to ASF in late October that this tool allows the county to “offer bonus elements” (density, lower parking ratios) in exchange for the owner/developer adding “optional” deliverables (e.g., more trees) or other public benefits. ASF sees this as a Trojan Horse to strip away zoning safeguards contained in the “old” ACZO which the county has for decades found necessary (e.g., on parking minimums). This new feature, we fear, also declares open season for political “horse trading” with builders for the first time in these areas. **Most troubling, unlike the special exception uses in all other parts of ACZO, this one does not require community or board inputs.**

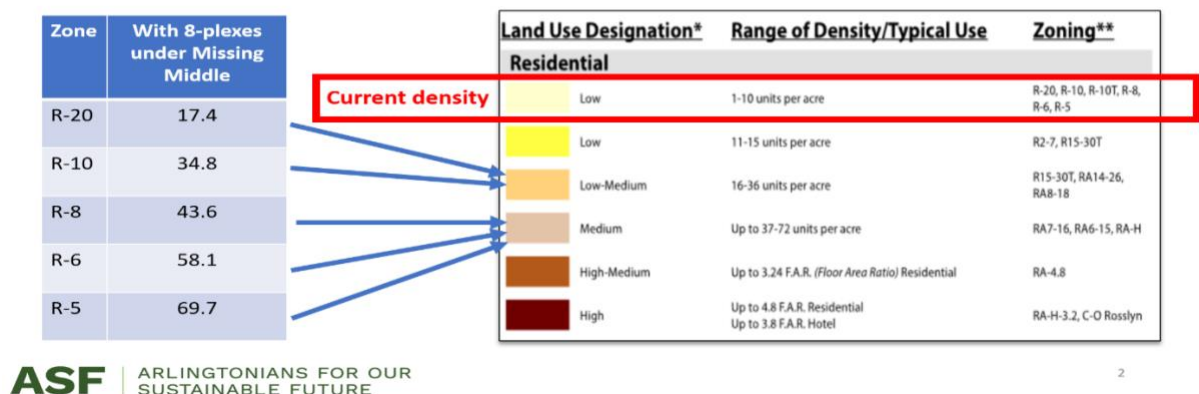
3. Problems Beyond "Expanded Housing Options" Zoning

Aside from the problematic adoption of a new zoning tool that should require public and Board scrutiny, the county is avoiding strategic GLUP reviews that in ASF's view should be conducted.

a. Problem #3: GLUP Map Needs Revision

Currently these new MM zones correspond to the “low residential” GLUP category, which allows 1-10 units of housing per acre. If rezoned for 8-plexes, density will rise to the GLUP category that aligns with “medium” and “low-medium” density, in one case rising to almost 70 units/acre! (See chart below briefed by ASF to the Zoning Committee on November 30.)

Missing Middle Units Per Acre with 8-plex Zoning and Corresponding GLUP Categories



Nonetheless, [County staff told the Long-Range Planning Committee on November 9](#) (min 17:02), there's no need to change this part of the GLUP because the “low” density designation depends on housing units per acre *built*. ASF views staff's claim to LRPC that Missing Middle infill will be “**incremental**” and “**geographically dispersed**” as irrelevant -- GLUP designation and zoning categories are not “laissez-faire” constructs. In the case *Board of County Sups. of Fairfax County v. Carper*, 200 Va. 653, 660, 107 S.E.2d 390 (1959) the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that action by the county “is presumed to be valid **so long as it is not unreasonable and arbitrary.**” ASF believes GLUP designations that might vary from block to block or month to month is the very definition of unreasonable and arbitrary.

b. Problem #4: Circumventing Rules to Amend the GLUP (P. 30)

The GLUP provides two ways to amend it:

1) as part of a long-range planning process for a designated area or 2) as a result of an individual request for a specific change. The first process includes detailed land use studies which may be undertaken for designated areas of the County at the County Board's directive where conditions warrant a comprehensive framework of policies for community improvement through redevelopment, revitalization or conservation. Alternative land use policies are developed for the area by the Planning staff in cooperation with other County agencies, the Planning Commission, County Board appointed commissions and task forces, neighborhood and civic organizations and the business community.

The GLUP also outlines the need for public inputs.¹³ ASF questions whether staff is skirting this process by removing public inputs with its claim no GLUP amendments -- except those needed to introduce the expanded housing options -- are needed.

c. Problem #5: Much Smaller Lots: What Does it Mean?

The county proposes to allow owners to subdivide and sell on a "fee simple basis" all the new MM duplexes and 3-unit townhomes. That means R-6 lots averaging 6,000 square feet could be converted into three 2,000 square feet new lots by right — likely gutting the whole zoning framework for the affected zones, especially the designations based on "average" lot size. Staff told ASF this was intended to boost ownership, but is not explaining long-term impacts, like the erasure of standards that define each zone by minimum lot size (i.e., R-6 at 6,000 square feet), and whether such lots could be "stapled" back together by future owners, and whether the Article 5 standards would apply if they were converted to single-family from multi-family units.

F. Conclusion: More Questions than Answers

The county needs to address these concerns in depth, particularly the legal consequences and likely outcomes based on real housing market trends. There are no easy fixes; land use tools are not easily reversed. ASF requests no upzoning without a full economic analysis of October 31 code amendments, with likely buildouts, beyond staff's useful but cursory briefing November 16. This must include analysis of lot subdivision, buildable/allowable lot size, impacts of caps, or any changes from by right to special exception use permits to project what would be built, where, and at what price, for each MM type. If there is a cap on 4-plexes, for example, more 3-bedroom units would be built — and a higher student-generation factor. We ask the county to compare what will be built vs. what is on the market now that is comparable; with acquisition scenarios to be adjusted for higher interest rates since the Phase Two plan was issued in April. The county must clarify impacts of more density far from transit, and where our "lack of land" leaves us with respect to future policy calls across the span of the Comp Plan.

IV. Missing Middle Effects on Fiscal Situation and Infrastructure

A. Introduction

While ASF has looked at elements of the Comprehensive Plan to assess whether new Zoning Code amendments for Missing Middle housing would require changes, the county does not maintain the equivalent of “goals” for its budget. Therefore, ASF is extrapolating from other documents likely and stated fiscal goals, and assessing them against likely Missing Middle outcomes. And while staff did not include budget impacts in its briefing to the Long-Range Planning Commission in November, the county has noted it has no plans to plan for or finance new services or infrastructure for the new residents enabled by adoption of the county’s MM plan, so we may extrapolate that it believes the budget impacts are inconsequential. ASF believes, however, that the fiscal consequences of new MM up-zoning could be significant and likely will hinge on the final buildout and types of homes, with larger (3-bedroom) units likely having more negative budget impacts than 6 or 8-plexes that will likely generate fewer school enrollments.

B. Assumed and Required Financial Goals of the County

1. Assumed Financial Goal: Ensure Sufficient Financing to Support Key Infrastructure and Services for All Residents

a. Arlington Lacks Long-term Infrastructure Financing Plans

[Arlington in 2018 projected through the Metropolitan Council of Governments \(MWCOG\) that it would plan for approximately 63,000 new residents between 2020 and 2045](#) – and pledged to do so *under then-existing zoning*. ASF’s [Peter Rousselot in 2021 wrote in ARLNow](#): “As documented [by ASF] Arlington has failed to develop long-term plans to pay for the new infrastructure needed to support new residents,” let alone the those we might add with the Missing Middle upzoning. As shown in those slides, those cities had 20 schools, 29 parks, 4 libraries, 11 bus lines.” (See Slide 2 of [ASF slide presentation for more info.](#)) Arlington policy makers refuse to do any of this long-term planning *in advance* of adding more, and more, and more density.

b. County Tells Residents and Advisors Not to Worry About Budgeting

These budget pressures and planning failures may explain the claim in May 2022 — when releasing the first detailed MM plans — that “modest housing and population growth, geographically dispersed, can be accommodated with existing infrastructure” and

an expected “net increase of school enrollments of 9 - 13 students per year.” ([Missing Middle Phase 2 framework of May 2, 2022](#), page 23.)

However, the County Board’s advisory [Joint Facilities Advisory Commission \(JFAC\) which advises the Board on property acquisition for public needs and infrastructure, on October 26](#) mulled whether the county would be ready if Missing Middle projections exceed the county’s predicted maximum 20 new infill projects per year (resulting in 90-108 new housing units). Several JFAC members noted the county has not been acquiring property for schools. Commissioners said they should be looking ahead five years to advise on property to build schools due to new up-zoning. They noted the need to think beyond schools to other public facilities — parks, libraries, fire stations, etc., and pondered when these plans should begin. ASF believes the county should have planned fiscal impacts as part of the entire Missing Middle process.

2. Financial Goal: Maintaining a Balanced Budget [Arlington is required to maintain a balanced budget](#) by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

a. County Finances Not Keeping up with Revenues

As of 2018, when it made the initial projections, the [county was running an operating budget deficit](#) (slide 16.) The county also refuses to clarify what additional population it envisions with multiple land use densifications passed since 2018. County Planning Director Fusarelli told participants in Arlington Neighborhood College in November 2022 (according to notes from a participant) the county could not project the total population enabled through full buildout under current land use and zoning allowances. Failing to budget or even project populations numbers is negligent. **In ASF’s view, organizations must be able to formulate goals but also to account for the timeframe, tools, and costs to achieve them, at the time the goals are adopted.**

3. Assumed Financial Goal: Planning Public Procurement for Most Reasonable Price

a. Arlington Prices Itself Out of the Property Market, with Negative Budget Impacts

When the county up-zones land, it prices itself out of the market for later public uses. For an analysis of bonus density awarded to Amazon in April 2022, [ASF priced one acre of land in Crystal City at \\$144 million](#) (p.9.) Bonus density gives owners higher yield off their land, making that land more expensive even without improvements. Significant density awarded by the county for large parts of Pentagon and Crystal Cities through the February 2022 [Pentagon City Sector Plan](#) and the [Pen Place Site Plan](#) will make that \$144 million/acre look like a bargain when the county inevitably needs acreage for a new school, park, or community center.

Thus, delayed planning shifts higher costs to taxpayers. With Metro in the 1970's the county did the planning and land acquisition as a way to attract new residents; and acquired land for mass transit before upzoning drove up prices. ASF is aware of only minimal thought being given to such long-term infrastructure needs: one Planning Commissioner on November 9 cited concerns to staff about new infrastructure or equipment for the Fire Department as a result of Missing Middle density; but his concerns didn't translate into amended options for the Board. And staff briefed the [LRPC on November 9](#)¹⁴ (see slide below) that the Missing Middle effort was consistent with the county's [Sanitary Sewer Collection System Master Plan](#) (not further reviewed in this paper.)

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

Elements	Selected Goals or Policies
Stormwater Master Plan and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce flooding risks • Reduce the impacts of development on streams, the Potomac River, and Chesapeake Bay • Regulate new development through the Stormwater Ordinance to mitigate impacts
Sanitary Sewer and Water Distribution Master Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet current and anticipated growth demand needs • Outline maintenance and enhancement programs to ensure reliable service

4. Assumed Financial Goal: Keeping Taxes at Reasonable Levels for Residents and Keeping Commercial Tax Receipts on Par with Residential

a. More Housing Doesn't Equal Lower Taxes

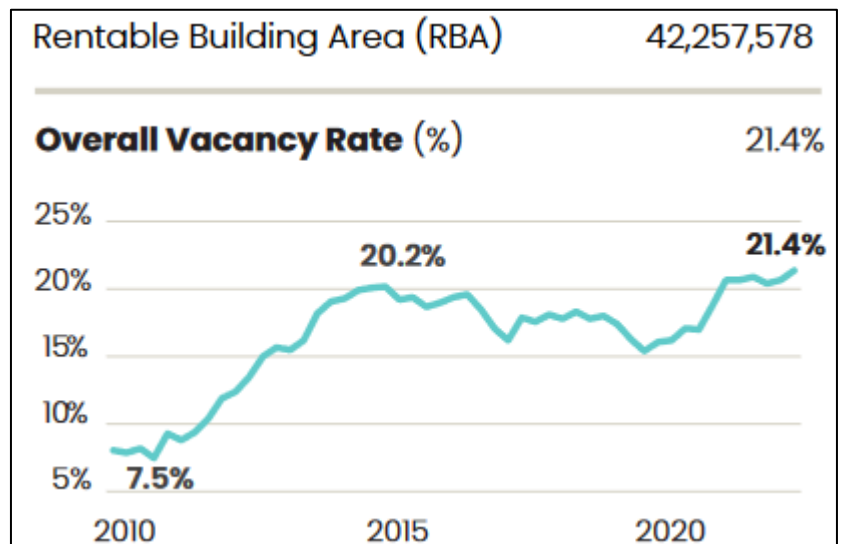
Jurisdictions seek to keep tax levels manageable to attract economic development and growth. Rising commercial property vacancies have recently jolted the 50-50 balance of commercial with residential tax revenue out of equilibrium; many assume the county is pursuing residential density to make up the gap. Advocates of Missing Middle often project that adding housing will add property and income taxes and offset the costs of new services. [Yet the county has produced more new housing as a percentage of existing stock than any other local jurisdiction but Loudoun County over the period 2000-2018](#) (p.1), and taxes have not abated. **In fact, taxes are rising, giving us pause about the effects of adding additional density.**

According to the Civic Federation’s April 2022 Report [“Impacts of Rising Real Estate Assessments/Tax Burden on Vulnerable Residents: The Arlington County Manager’s FY2023 Proposed Budget,”](#) (p.2)

In 2022, residential properties will contribute 54% of real estate revenue, with commercial properties contributing 46%. As recently as 2019, the commercial share of county revenue stood at 49%, with the residential share at 51%. Residential property owners have seen their share grow (along with skyrocketing assessments), while many commercial property owners have seen their share shrink . . . In dollar terms, the **average “single-family homeowner”** (which includes detached and attached homes, townhouses and condos) **will have seen his/her real estate tax bill . . . rise from \$4,977 in CY2012 to \$7,726 in CY2022—a percentage change of 55% in actual dollar cost to homeowners over 10 years.** This 5.5% average annual increase is well above the average annual inflation rate (ranging from 0.1% to 4.7%) for each year, from 2012 to 2021.

Aside from the effects on public finances and taxes, the report also notes, “rising property tax bills . . . push already high housing costs higher and make homeownership and renting even less affordable for all Arlingtonians, especially for those living on lower or fixed incomes as well as those who have experienced job loss, income reduction or other pandemic-related financial hardship.” (p.2) As noted above, we can assume the county does see MM as a means to make up growing imbalances between commercial and residential property.

The commercial office vacancy rate in [Q3 of 2022](#) was 21.4% (chart, right), the highest in the county’s reporting. There are other worrying indicators: from April 2020 to July 2021 Arlington lost 2.4% of its population, and 47,874 Arlington residents work in remote-eligible jobs; meaning there is great scope for more departures and continued low office vacancies.



5. Assumed Financial Goal: Budget Transparency

a. No Financial Impact Analysis Shared by the County for MM Plan

With commercial leases normally having a term of 10 years, Missing Middle tax revenue (i.e., assessments on as many as 8 times the number of households) might be seen as a budget hedge, but county leaders have kept mum. Missing Middle tax impacts may indeed be positive. Other jurisdictions considering infill, such as Montgomery County, did analysis showing estimated tax benefits (as shown in data released to ASF as part of a Virginia Freedom of Information Request.) Their analysis concluded that “Upzoning is expected to result in almost \$190 million in increases in county transfer and recordation tax revenue in the decade following approval, with half of the net increase occurring in the first three years.” (p. 75 "Single Family Zoning Reform study", unpublished report from Montgomery County MD)

In contrast, Arlington, which is on the brink of approving 8-fold density increases across half of its land area, has rejected ASF and other public calls for fiscal analysis of its study. A Virginia Freedom of Information Request relating to fiscal impacts of the Missing Middle effort, as seen below, showed the county had “no responsive records”

County budget outlook: Expect tax increases

- Arlington Analytics: taxes to increase faster than inflation to 2031.
- County has a long-term structural deficit built into operating budget.
- Tax increases are expected as land values rise.
- Long-term fallout of COVID-19 on budget still unknown.
- **County admits it has no data on MM fiscal impact; ASF says unwise to upzone while impacts unknown**

Arlington County received a public records request from you on September 22, 2022. Your request mentioned:

Any analyses, projections, estimates, or reports concerning potential tax revenue, County budgetary impact, or expenditure forecasts related to potential implementation of any form of the Missing Middle Housing framework, including any such documents prepared by the Department of Management and Finance.

Arlington County has reviewed its files and has determined there are no responsive record(s) to your request.

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Arlington has problems now with its finances. Taxes are expected to increase faster than inflation up to 2031. In 2018, the county projected an operating budget deficit of \$54 million by FY 2024. That was the last multiyear forecast it released. The county has withheld other long term budget projections that would help residents assess overall fiscal health. Such information belongs in the public domain.

C. Conclusion: Request for Action Prior to Up-zoning

Given the concerns ASF has highlighted, the county needs to clarify the fiscal impact of all proposed new zoning amendments that will bring substantial population growth but also levy demands for new services and infrastructure. We request that the county stop the Missing Middle effort and first:

- ***admit*** population increase has fiscal consequences
- ***release*** all existing multiyear operating budget projections
- ***project*** long-term impact on the future operating budget, to include costs of NEW transit, traffic mgt., parks, recreation, police/fire, libraries, community centers, stormwater facilities.

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V. Missing Middle Effects on Diversity

A. Introduction

In December 2019, the county adopted a [Racial Equity resolution](#), focusing on racial equity and diversity. The [Comprehensive Plan](#) applies this lens to all protected classes, and states that Arlington will be a "diverse and inclusive world-class urban community with secure, attractive residential and commercial neighborhoods where people unite to form a caring, learning, participating, sustainable community in which each person is important."

B. Missing Middle Impact on Equity and Diversity

1. Land Costs, Not Zoning, are the Main Barrier to Diversity in Housing

The county has consistently tied the Missing Middle proposal to racial equity and diversity. As but one example, the Commission on Climate Change Energy and the Environment (C2E2) in its July 15, 2022 letter on Missing Middle to the County Board noted that "allowing for more diverse housing types in areas currently zoned for single-family homes corrects for the exclusionary effect that zoning has had in the past." This is incorrect. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 made illegal all forms of racial and ethnic exclusion that the zoning of 1938 and redlining prompted. The current barrier is purely economic and Missing Middle does NOTHING to lower the barrier to any level that opens doors to a majority of Arlingtonians of lower means.

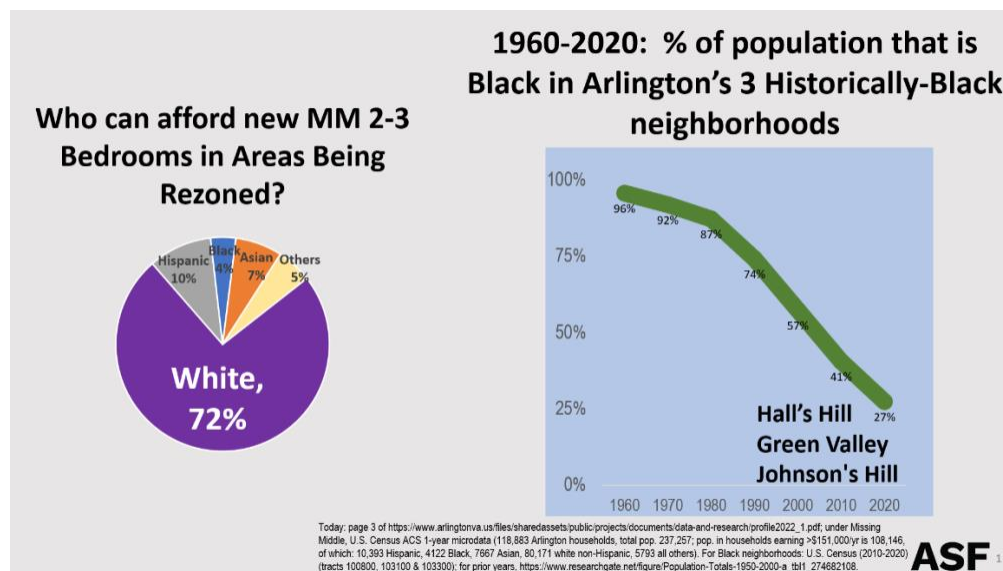
ASF notes the new housing types offered as per the outlines of April 28, would ALL require incomes to purchase or rent that exceed median Black, Hispanic, or senior household incomes. Missing Middle is much more likely a gentrifying force for this reason, and because we expect

"voluntary" relocation as developers' prey on lower-priced lots as their first projects.



2. Rezoning Will Make R-Zones Whiter

We've already seen a [severe drop in Black populations since 1960](#) (slide 11), contrary to expectation after eliminating racial exclusionary barriers, AND having zoning in these areas that allows Missing Middle types already. Arlington is NOT addressing that its land use policies are driving up land prices, indeed 2005 zoning changes were followed by increased teardowns of modest homes for large ones, thwarting affordability goals, presumably in the interest of padding tax revenues. Missing Middle will make these problems worse. Based on current incomes and prices of MM units, [ASF projects that the White population of the rezoned areas will rise from 70% to 72%, with Black population likely to max out at 4%](#) (slide 11).



C2E2 recognizes this deficit in its letter, noting that “most of the housing types recommended, while less expensive than most new single-family homes, are expected to be out of range for many who have traditionally called Arlington their home.”

Given the tradeoffs with other Comprehensive Plan goals outlined in this paper, coupled with major shortcomings to address the real crisis in affordable housing that affects all residents at lower socioeconomic levels (including many protected classes, such as seniors, disabled, and racial and ethnic minorities), ASF asks the County Board to prioritize housing for those with greater needs, and that we start with options that address the glaring need for households at and below 50% of Area Median Income, not households earning 118% of AMI, where Missing Middle kicks in.

3. Seniors Likely Face Displacement, vs. County's Claim of Better Options to "Age in Community"

A local economist with [Arlington Analytics \(AA\)](#) conducted an analysis that supports ASF's view that MM can have a displacement effect particularly on seniors of all races. AAs recent study notes that "Arlington has gone through a rapid increase in development, which has made residential land far more valuable. These land prices are reflected in higher assessments, which mean higher real estate taxes. We evaluate the effect of these taxes on retired Arlington residents before any tax relief programs are applied. We find that the tax increases are likely regressive; the increase in taxes affects people similarly regardless of average area income." [Tax relief programs that could mitigate some of the impacts of higher taxes in many cases do not suffice](#), and the county's goals for senior housing, even with the shift in recent years from "aging in place" to "aging in community," may be more difficult as Missing Middle zoning drives up land values.

C. Conclusion

ASF disputes widespread claims that Missing Middle will undo the abhorrent past practices of racial and ethnic exclusion such as redlining or racial covenants; only targeted policies that address the exorbitant cost of land will broaden access to housing for all socioeconomic groups. Unlike Portland, which adopted anti-displacement strategies for its Missing Middle effort, Arlington has not looked at any such mitigation or wider policies for true diversity. We agree with UCLA professor Michael Storper, who said about blanket upzoning [of the type Arlington is considering]:

What it's not going to do is solve the housing crisis for the middle classes and lower-income people. Even with so-called affordability set-asides, the trickle-down effect will be small. It could even be negative in the highly desirable areas, if the set-asides (which are in the range of 15-25 percent in current legislative proposals) are lower, or the income thresholds higher, than the current pattern of lower-income, lower-cost housing in those areas compared to the new housing profile. This is just one example of the many unintended consequences that proponents of blanket upzoning don't take into account, and that is why it will fail.

**_*_*_

VI. Missing Middle Effects on Environment -- Four Plans: Energy, Urban Forest, Stormwater, and Chesapeake Bay Protection

With virtually no undeveloped land to accommodate future growth, the County must adapt its urban forestry and natural resources policies and practices to assure the next generation of Arlingtonians enjoy the same quality of life we have today.

Arlington Forestry and Natural Resources Plan

Most of Arlington's existing streams currently flow through public parkland or areas of low-density land use. In the 1970s, land use planning shifted to targeting future high-density development around Metrorail transit corridors; this planning focus is reflected in updates to the GLUP which have continued to present day.

[Chesapeake Bay Protection Plan](#) (p. 11)

Recent intense storms have resulted in serious flooding along buried stream corridors, demonstrating that Arlington's rapid development in the first half of the 20th century has current ramifications that are difficult to address.

Chesapeake Bay Protection Plan

A. Introduction

The county combines several key environmental goals into four Comprehensive Plan elements: the [Urban Forestry Master Plan](#) (a subset of the Public Spaces Master Plan), the [Community Energy Plan](#), the [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Plan](#), and the [Stormwater Master Plan](#). These last two share many goals and strategies. Residential construction (mostly redevelopment) poses significant challenges for these plans in our small county, which has often subordinated environmental goals to the quest for growth and development.

B. Current Tree Canopy, Stormwater, and Energy Situation

1. Current Situation: Tree Canopy (Urban Forestry Plan, Updated Forestry and Natural Resources Plan)

The county's draft 2022 [Forestry and Natural Resource Plan](#) (p.16) and its 2004 predecessor describe benefits of our impressive tree canopy:

- "Arlington's trees remove over 235 tons of airborne pollutants annually. They sequester over 9,600 tons of carbon each year, a little less than half of 1% of total annual greenhouse gas emissions;
- Existing trees store some 204,000 tons of carbon in their branches, trunks, roots;
- Through shading and transpiration, these trees provide over \$1,000,000 per year in avoided energy costs and more than an additional quarter of a million dollars in avoided carbon emissions;"
- Trees also capture more than 10,000,000 cubic feet of stormwater runoff per year;"

- “Arlington trees reduce 10,730,168 cubic feet/year of runoff, with the preservation of larger trees giving the greatest stormwater relief;
- Economic costs calculated do not include values on beauty, wildlife benefits, mental and emotional benefit, or property value increase.

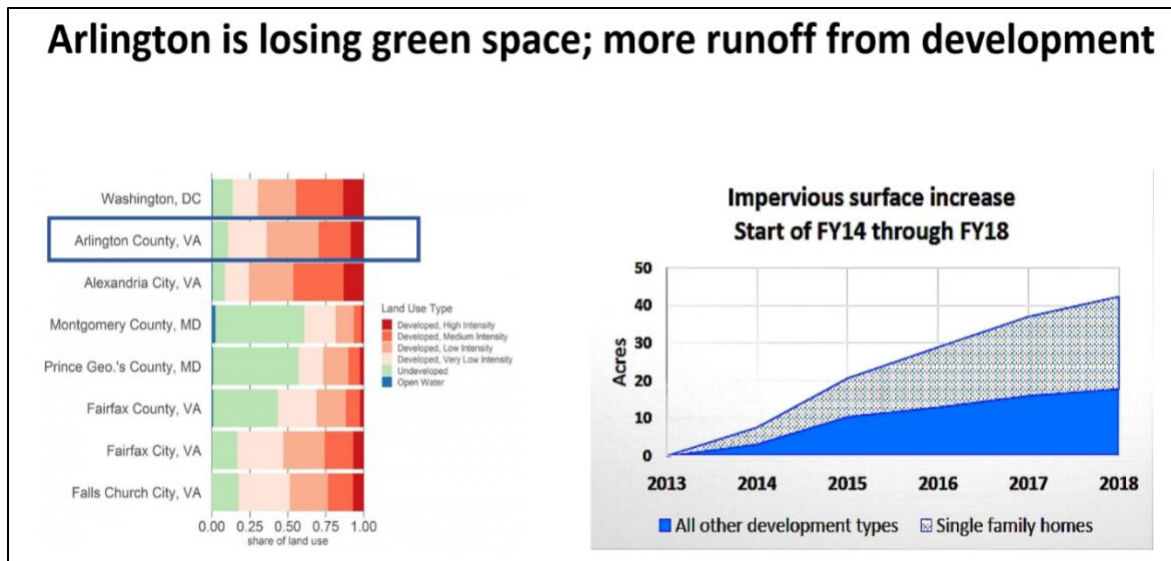
Tree canopy covers 41% of Arlington’s land area. This has remained fairly constant for the past 20 years, although the 2022 draft FNRP noted “significant losses on private property,” and we expect more serious loss will be revealed from a survey planned for 2023. [70% \(4,408 acres\) of Arlington’s tree canopy is in residential areas](#); and 59% (3,713 acres) of Arlington’s tree canopy will be re-zoned by the Missing Middle Plan. This represents about half of Arlington’s total land area. These are the ones with the lowest heat island effect, as per a [2022 study from Marymount University](#).

2. Current Situation - Flooding and the State of the Bay (Stormwater Master Plan and Chesapeake Bay Protection Plan)

a. County Background - Development Causes Runoff

ASF notes that development is the biggest threat to achieving our stormwater and Chesapeake Bay Protection goals. The flooding we saw in July 2019 was unprecedented, causing many of the buried streams (the victims of rapid growth in the 1930s-1950s) to flood.¹⁵ The county has identified the current challenge. It says the Stormwater Master Plan "and the CBPO are closely coordinated to provide consistent and clear direction for stormwater management and to minimize the impact of new development and redevelopment on county streams and watersheds."

The county has outlined key stormwater and runoff challenges. "Approximately one-third of the storm sewer system that has been modeled needs additional capacity to reduce flooding risks." It noted that "more than five miles of county streams continue to experience severe and continuing erosion" from runoff, and projects the county could potentially treat runoff from [only] about 9% of total land area with new facilities on public land. Noting a positive trend, in 2014, the county said "more runoff from impervious areas is now being treated by stormwater facilities than is being created by new or re-development." However, it notes that "State and federal Chesapeake Bay cleanup mandates require Arlington to achieve specific nutrient and sediment pollutant reductions. . . [and] these requirements must be met in full by 2028. (page vii of Stormwater Plan). The county acknowledges even greater challenges lie ahead stemming from "state and federal requirements to address water quality impairments in local streams – caused primarily by the volume and rate of stormwater runoff."



b. Arlington’s Undeveloped Greenspace and Impervious Surface (Stormwater and Chesapeake Bay Protection Plans)

Arlington has less remaining green space than any jurisdiction except Alexandria. Some MM advocates have said added infill will preserve green space in the exurbs. The C2E2 commission noted in its July 2022 letter to the County Board that “density in general helps to reverse the environmental impact of decades of urban sprawl development.” Yet ASF sees no indication that Loudoun is making moves –in concert with Arlington’s upzoning – to limit plans for jobs and housing. We believe Missing Middle advocates are consigning us to a future with far fewer options for mental health and recreation and the other benefits of trees.

c. Impervious Surface (Stormwater, Chesapeake Bay Protection and Forestry and Natural Resources Plans)

The chart in the section above shows how single-family homes have outstripped all other development in adding to impervious surface in Arlington in recent years. We are paving over the equivalent of one Pentagon surface area every 3-4 years, a staggering number. The new FNRP draft also notes that, [today, more than two out of every five acres in the county is covered by buildings, pavement, parking lots and streets](#); and says with [“little ‘plantable space’ remaining on existing county-owned land, opportunities to offset future losses will be limited by the need to conserve natural areas.”](#)

3. Current Situation: Energy - Buildings are a Key Contributor to Carbon Outputs (CEP)

The Community Energy Plan does not spell out the county's current energy profile much beyond a notation that "buildings account for over 60% of energy use within the

county. (p.1 of CEP.) The current plan notes that energy programs and partnerships, have brought about a "24% reduction in emissions 2007-2016, despite a 10% increase in population."

C. Key Goals (4 Plans) - Protect Watersheds, Reduce Flood Threats, keep 40% Tree Canopy, Be Carbon Neutral by 2050

The four plans contain numerous goals that MM will affect, so we will list those most affected by development and address them comprehensively.

1. **Stormwater Goal 1** - Reduce the potential for stormwater threats to public health, safety, and property.
2. **Stormwater Goal 2** (shared with CBPP Goal) 2—Reduce the impacts of existing urban development and redevelopment on Arlington streams, the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay (p. 16 of CBP)¹⁶
3. **Forestry and Natural Resources Goal** - 40% Tree Canopy Countywide
4. **Community Energy Plan Goal** - Goal 1.1 “By 2050, total building energy usage in Arlington should be, at a minimum, 38% lower than 2016 levels (despite growth in number of households and corresponding economic activity).”. Arlington’s Community Energy Plan update in 2019 set Arlington on a path to becoming a **carbon neutral community by 2050**.

D. Missing Middle Plan Impacts on Key Goals

1. What Development will Missing Middle Spur?

On October 31, 2022 the county released draft amendment to the Arlington Zoning Code (ACZO), allowing up to 8-plexes in all single-family residential zones. Three major options will determine what level of density we can expect (up from single family only homes with one on-site parking space);

1. 8-plexes by right on all lots;
2. 6-plexes by right on all lots, or,
3. 4-plexes by right on all lots, and larger units up to 8-plexes on lots larger than 9,000 square feet.

Assuming Article 10.4 of the draft code passes legal muster, this section of code will regulate “Expanded Housing Options” (EHO) or Missing Middle housing types. Multiple options cover parking ratios, maximum number of units, limits on gross floor area, lot coverage; what size unit is allowed on different lot sizes; options to encourage or discourage development closer to transit; limits on gross floor area for certain units (2,400 square feet per each unit of a duplex as one example); and added landscaping for trees. The EHO rules will apply solely in zones that for approximately 50 years have allowed only single-family home construction, i.e., R-5, R-6, R-8, R-10, and R-20. The

County Board is likely to allow multiplex dwellings in these zones on a by-right basis, which means no further approval by the community or the Board is required. These parameters, including on-site parking, lot coverage and setbacks, will affect tree canopy, pervious surface, storm runoff, carbon output, and energy use.

2. Staff Claims No Impact on Plan Goals

County Staff have minimized projected impact: **as recently as November 9, [CPHD staff told committees of the Long-Range Planning Committee of the Planning Commission \(PC\) that the Missing Middle proposals do not interfere with our 40% canopy goal, nor our energy or stormwater goals.](#)** Staff asserted that new housing would "increase the operational efficiency of all buildings." ASF believes staff is downplaying the added quantity of built space and cars the Missing Middle entails. ASF believes that all current draft ACZO options represent the most impactful change – on the types of housing built, energy use, carbon output, air and water pollution, stormwater, and flooding potential – of our lifetimes and we are being asked to ignore the big picture.

3. County's Projection of 20 MM Teardowns Per Year Likely Low

The county projects only 20 MM teardowns per year. This adds to the average 170 or so teardowns for single-family homes. The county projects (per its April 28 [analysts' report](#), p.8-11), that single-family detached homes will continue to predominate. As explained above, however, the county's analysis lacks any economic or financial analysis. ASF believes MM teardown will exceed this projection, based on experiences in other communities and comments like those by local builder Classic Cottages who said its company was looking to build 8-plexes in all zones, if permitted. (Comments recorded by ASF notetaker, no public link available) [Charles Taylor, Classic Cottages, at a National Association of Realtors seminar in October 2022.](#)) Local economist Max Lyons has also [projected](#) (item 9), that **“in almost all cases the type of housing arrangement that would be most profitable to build would be some variant of ‘Missing Middle’ housing, rather than a single-family home.”**

4. More Teardowns Means Less Green Space, More Flooding as Lot Coverage Goes Up in New Areas

Aside from the pace, another resident of Boulevard Manor neighborhood has projected (to ASF) that teardowns that have largely centered on smaller lots near Metro will spread to his area further from transit. This will bring the same buildout to maximum lot coverage, create massive land disturbance and tree removal that we have seen in areas where redevelopment has proliferated. The teardowns exacerbate runoff; either requiring very expensive mitigation or causing floods such as those seen in 2019. As noted earlier, staff claims the MM plan won't alter our current stormwater plan. C2E2 has nevertheless voiced concern, noting “that the current development trend of

replacing modest single-family homes with larger homes, whether single-family or missing middle types, will further exacerbate tree canopy loss, stormwater runoff, and flooding, requiring sizable county expenditures to build the necessary stormwater infrastructure to handle the increased demand.”

5. Caveat Emptor

Policy makers, advisors, and residents must be aware that ultimately the market will drive outcomes; by-right zoning opens the door to full conversion and 8-plex density across all zones. (ASF has shown that 8-plexes fit on lots as small as 5,200 square feet.) ASF expects more heat islands, loss of greenspace per family, major reduction in total tree canopy, greater carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, and stormwater runoff and flooding if this MM plan goes forward. We believe the key goals of the four plans cited above will be severely constrained, particularly as the county has indicated it has no plans for major new stormwater facilities on public land.

6. Household Energy and Commuting Impacts

Arlington’s C2E2 Commission indicated in a [July letter to the County Board](#) that “increased density with more households occupying the same square footage reduces per capita energy consumption and miles traveled to get to work and meet every day needs.” ASF agrees per capita consumption may be lower but overall consumption will rise with a possible 6-fold population increase. And ASF notes that large homes (such as current single-family ones) are not energy efficient but likely pale in comparison to the even larger 4-, 6- or 8-plex structures all with kitchens and separate HVAC systems. The more people who occupy the structure, the more greenhouse gas emissions from an operating standpoint. [Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy](#) (AIRE) has acknowledged that “by-right infill code-built housing is also a problem related to meeting our CEP goals, but this Missing Middle proposal will be incentivizing that type of construction.” ASF also notes that increased congestion on roads will also raise vehicle emissions and air pollution and seeks additional data from the county to substantiate the claim made by staff of reduced “vehicle miles traveled.” (November 9 brief to LRPC, see also section VII below on Transportation).

7. Carbon Impact of More Teardowns

The most environmentally-friendly structure is the one already built, and emissions from the building sector are a leading factor in global warming (and, as noted, in Arlington’s carbon output.) In fact, [“it takes between 10 and 80 years for a new building that is 30% more efficient than an average-performing existing building to overcome, through efficient operations, the negative climate change impacts related to the construction.”](#) The Missing Middle effort will likely incentivize teardowns of existing, affordable, older row homes, duplexes, and small multi-family walkups,

ironically removing “middle” units from our mix. [More than 90% of debris generated from replacing homes](#) comes from the demolition projects, while new construction accounts for less than 10%. Arlington has not considered any options such as landfill or teardown taxes, even as we can project massive new deliveries of debris. The building industry and housing is the main source of CO2 emissions both in new materials used to build and operating energy for heating and cooling etc. Every new large home adds over 200 tons of carbon just for the materials used, the same as adding close to 300 gas vehicles a year. New houses are often 3-4 times larger than older current houses and use 2-3 times more energy for heating and cooling and electricity. We cannot keep adding new buildings — especially very large ones that keep increasing the number of square feet per occupant —if we want to have a carbon neutral county.

8. Tree Canopy Loss of 584 Acres

In a [June 2022 letter to County Board Chair Cristol](#), the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) criticized the planning for trees. This letter found:

Serious negative impact that the construction of multi-unit dwellings would have on the County’s already declining tree canopy. We note that both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 proposals do acknowledge the need to ‘conserve tree canopy and create and maintain connections to nature.’ But . . . the Missing Middle Housing plan would reduce tree canopy lot coverage to only 10% to 15% in 20 years on MMHS redevelopment lots, much less than the already inadequate 20% coverage in 20 years for new single-family homes.

ASF shares these concerns; [data from Arlington Transparency](#) showing a 49% canopy reduction on 97% of the land being rezoned. Should those areas be redeveloped as the county’s consultant says is possible, it means:

- a loss of 584 acres of tree canopy (equivalent to 9 Pentagon parking lots);
- a loss of 9,116 tons of carbon storage and 430 tons per year of carbon sequestration;
- and leaves 11 tons more pollution and 99 tons more carbon emissions in the air per year;
- and increases storm runoff by 480,000 cubic feet per year.

9. Current Formulas for Trees: Virginia Code, Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (CBPO)

Pursuant to State code, properties that are redeveloped and that disturb more than 2500 square feet of land fall under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, and have a tree replacement requirement. The state sets the amount of tree canopy that

localities must require, based on the number of units allowed per acre. The current tree canopy replacement in these zones is 20%, as single-family zoning is among the least dense land uses. Canopy requirements drop to 10% with most of the options now on the table for multifamily zoning for Missing Middle units.¹⁷

ASF believes there are both legal and practical complications with the Chesapeake Bay standards and new standards being proposed by the county.¹⁸ We lack confidence that either the current zoning standard for single-family homes, or the new zoning standard in Article 10.4 for multiplex units, will achieve a 20% canopy in 20 years, and we believe there may be legal challenges to the new "optional" landscaping tool the county has proposed to make up this canopy loss. Until this is clarified, ASF believes we are cutting tree canopy standards from 20% to 10% (for 97% of the land being rezoned). For more information on computing tree canopy, see endnotes.¹⁹

10. New Guidelines Likely Fall Short of Current 20% Canopy Rule, Putting Urban Forestry Goal of 40% Tree Canopy Goal for Arlington Out of Reach

In a November 3 email to ASF, County Staff said, “if Option 6A [of the new zoning amendments] is selected, . . . depending on the lot size, number of units, and tree species, *in most cases the one-tree-per-unit zoning requirement would result in more shade trees than relying solely on the 10% or 15% CBPO standard.*” (Italics ASF’s.) The Arlington Tree Action Group has done some preliminary analysis that shows the 20% canopy replacement will be met only with large multiplexes (i.e., 6-plex) on smaller lots (this would add 6 trees and due to small lot, likely exceed the 10% CBPO requirement, possibly even reaching 20%. Most other combinations would still fall short of the 20%, but the county has not provided full details, showing multiple variables based on lot size, MM housing type, and shade tree combinations.

11. No Effort to Reduce Bulk Lot Coverage for Single-Family Homes as Part of MM Zoning, as Done Elsewhere to Help Environment

[Portland’s Missing Middle/Residential Infill effort](#) incentivized construction of MM over SFH and recognized that large home construction has depleted much of its canopy. It therefore reduced the allowed size of new single-family detached homes as part of its MM effort. Arlington has resisted such calls, despite the Board having indicated even in early 2022 that it intended to address tree loss with amended lot coverages for single-family homes. The new ACZO is a major missed opportunity. The informal [Civic Federation Tree Canopy 2021 report includes many ideas to help save our trees](#); Team 4 on zoning recommended a 10% reduction of lot coverage and setbacks to help save trees. It is high time to reconsider such steps.

12. [ACZO Option](#) Awards Bonus Density for Garages

The new zoning amendments (p. 24, Art. 10.4.4.C) includes options for “extra lot coverage” for detached garages, even if no garage is built! Giving density in return for zero benefits further degrades tree canopy. The [CivFed tree group has recommended removing the incentive for detached garages, even for single-family homes.](#)

E. Conclusion

ASF sees the October 31 draft ACZO changes as a tacit admission the county is abandoning its 40% tree canopy coverage, and complicating CEP goals to reduce energy use. The County Board adopted at its November 12 meeting its [package of 2023 Legislative Priorities; it should have included much tougher language to address tree loss through Richmond](#). Instead of seeking specific authorities in its draft leg package, the Board agreed only to ask Richmond to “Support legislation to provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, reduce energy use, and mitigate urban heat islands and their health effect.” Without real ammunition to fight for provisions such as those we suggest below, this language is useless.

F. ASF Ask

ASF’s requests that Arlington County perform a prospective analysis of energy, stormwater, tree canopy and related environmental costs and benefits of the new zoning options vs. current zoning.

._*._*._*._*

VII. Missing Middle Effects on Transportation Goals

The Arlington Transportation Commission only first considered and discussed the county’s current MM proposal on January 5, 2023. It is rash and irresponsible for the county to believe it is ready to vote to advertise an MM plan given the incredibly broad countywide impacts of this proposal on Arlington’s transportation networks. For this reason, ASF completely agrees with [the January 5 statement of Transportation Commissioner Ludlow](#): “I still do not believe we've got enough information here to make a good decision in terms of the broad sweeping change this could make for our county ... I don't think we are really as ready as we could be or should be ... I think there’s a lot more work that needs to be done to get this right.”

A. Introduction

The Missing Middle Plan's changes to the General Land Use Plan ("GLUP") and zoning ordinance must comport with the County's Comprehensive Plan and its supplements, including the [Master Transportation Plan \(MTP\)](#). ASF believes the [current Missing Middle Plan](#) falls short of and even contradicts elements of the MTP, although County Staff asserts the opposite. ASF has asked the Planning Commission to join us in recommending a delay in the County Board vote to advertise new zoning amendments while staff analyzes the demographic, environmental, and fiscal impacts of the Missing Middle Plan on the MTP.

B. [Master Transportation Plan](#) of 2007 - Goals

The MTP has 6 goals, with sub-goals and policies for each (p. 2-3). The county and ASF have focused on three of these goals to assess the Missing Middle plan. These goals and sub-goals focus on the safety of residents and sustainability of our environment, and seek to limit the use of personal vehicles that add to congestion. ASF reviews both the county's claims and other data on transportation to show that key MTP goals are in jeopardy.

1. "Goal 2 – Move More People Without More Traffic

Provide more travel choices and reduce the relative proportion of single-occupant-vehicle travel (this includes policies to focus development near transit also known as transit-oriented development);"²⁰

- [Sub-goal "Parking and Curb Space Management Element."](#) This goal was briefed to LRPC and ZOCO after the new code options were published in October 2022. It sets a goal of between 60-80% for on street parking occupancy on streets without Residential Parking Permit restrictions. It also aims to reduce parking ratios for builders while still meeting needs of residents/visitors.²¹

2. "Goal 3 – Promote Safety

Provide transportation system operations that are safe and secure, and enable prompt and effective emergency response;" and

3. "Goal 6 – Advance Environmental Sustainability

Reduce the impact of travel on community resources, e.g., air and water quality."

C. Current Transportation and Parking Situation in Arlington

1. Arlington's Car Use and Parking Profile - Countywide and in R-5 to R-20 Areas Being Rezoned

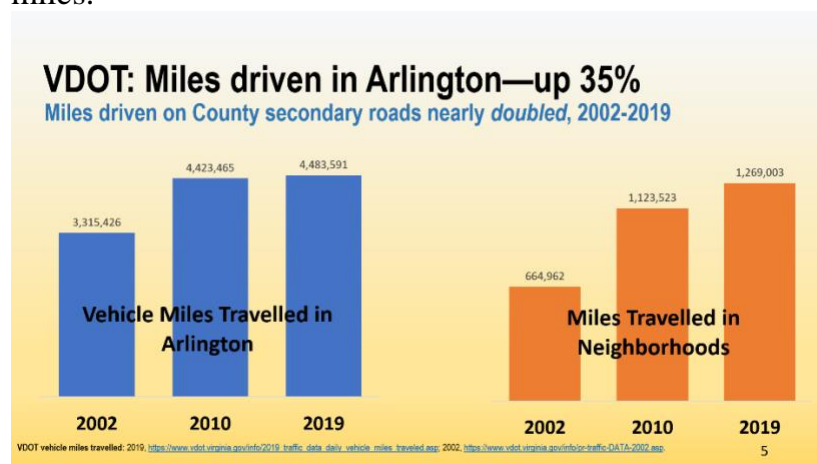
Arlington leaders emphasize "multi-modal" transit, "transit-oriented development," "car-free diets," "complete streets," "walkability" and bike-friendly design. But the land uses and densities they are implementing are closer to those in urban areas like New York and Chicago that provide easy, frequent public transportation that Arlington lacks. So, it is no surprise the data shows that for 20 years, Arlingtonians have relied on cars and adequate parking for them. Cars are still king, and planning must accommodate reality. Before upzoning, leaders must clarify these countywide transportation patterns, including current driving and parking patterns for Missing Middle housing types (duplexes up to 8-plexes.)

2. Car Ownership - Ownership and Use Have *Grown* since 2000

In the last 20 years, the number of cars in Arlington has gone *up more than 24,000*, while the number cars per capita has remained the same at 0.6 cars for every person (including non-drivers). Specifically, U.S. Census data shows that:

- in 2000, Arlington had [121,060 vehicles](#), and a population of [189,453](#);
- in 2020, Arlington had at least [145,342 vehicles](#), and a population of [234,200](#).

County Board Chair Katie Cristol claimed (incorrectly) in a November 2022 promotion ([at 15:16](#)) that although Arlington “added sizable population in the last 20 years, the number of cars on the road has actually declined in real terms.” Officials -- in efforts to add population density --- are not addressing that Arlingtonians are also driving more miles.



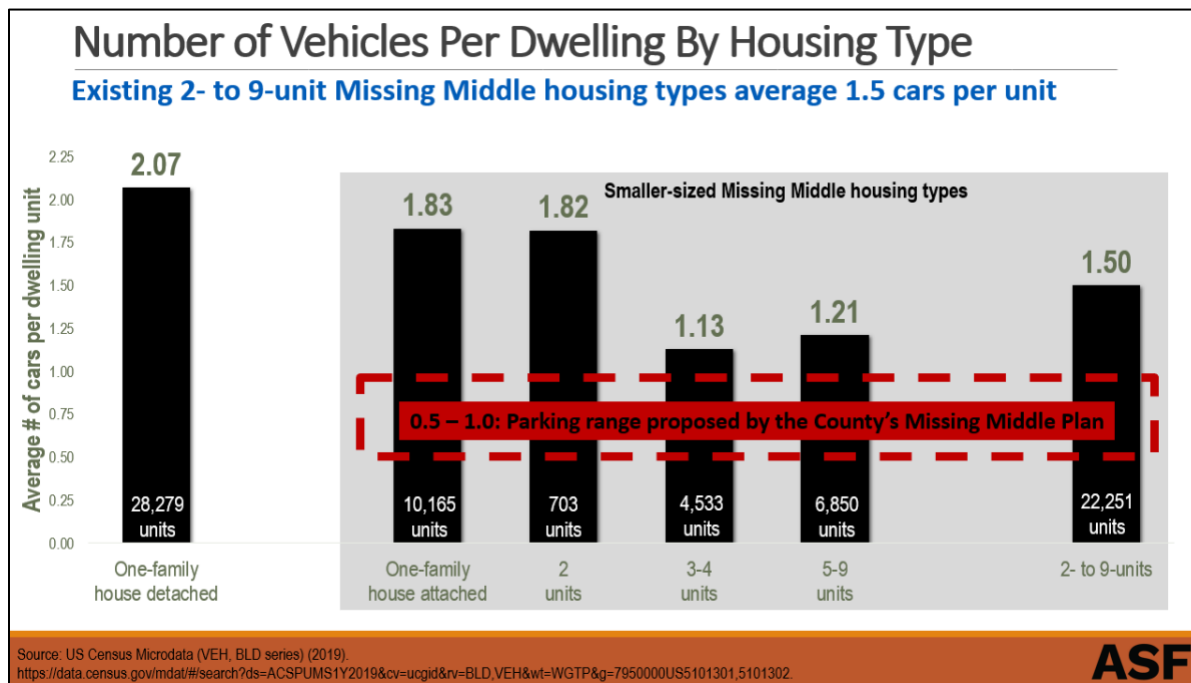
For 2019, [VDOT reports](#) **4,483,581 vehicle miles travelled** (pre-COVID), **35% more miles than in 2002**. Worse yet, the increase is heavily focused in neighborhoods (Missing Middle areas); miles travelled on secondary roads **increased 91%**, from 665,000 to **1.27 million miles**.

3. Car Ownership: Missing Middle Type Housing Averages 1.5 Cars Per Unit

ASF drew on Census data for car ownership among households of the type we can expect from the new Missing Middle plan vs. the current single-family only model:

- single-family detached homes average 2.07 cars per unit.
- attached homes (duplexes, townhomes, etc.) and 2-unit apartments average about 1.8 cars per unit (i.e., a 3-unit townhome would have 5.4 cars);
- multiplexes of 3-9-units average 1.1 to 1.2 cars per unit.

On the whole, Missing Middle housing types of 2- to 9-unit buildings average 1.5 cars per unit,²² meaning a four-plex would have about 5 cars and an 8-plex would generate about 10 cars.

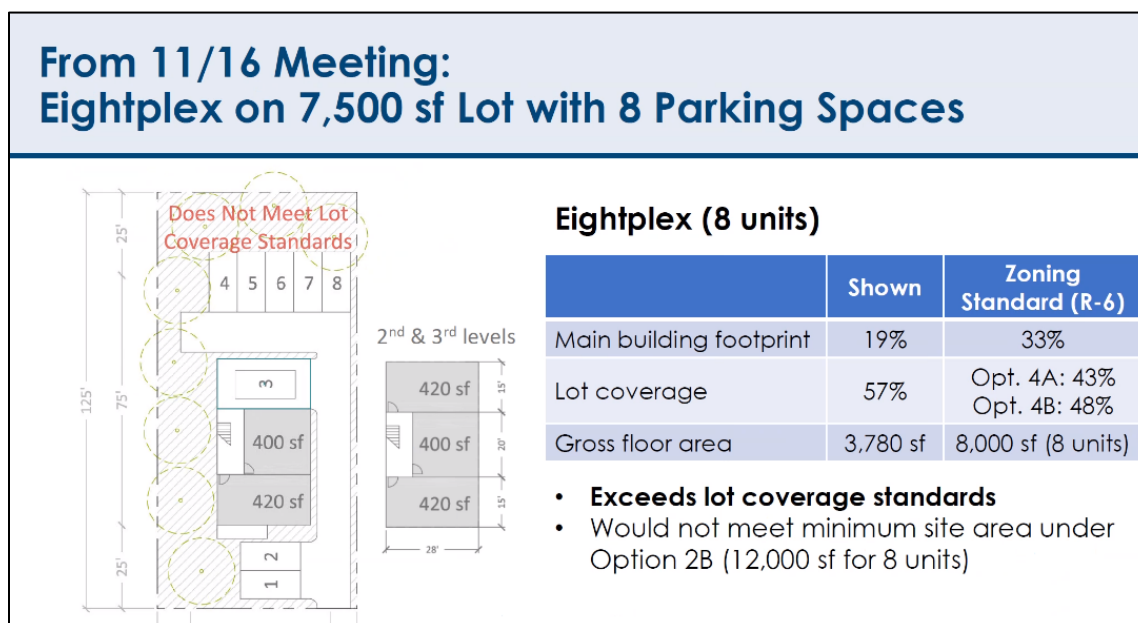


4. Car Ownership and Curbside Parking - County's Limited Parking Study Shows Many Streets Already at Capacity

The county has published data -- based on studies conducted over several weeks in 2018, 2018, and 2019 -- that shows *several streets are already "full"* (at 85% or higher capacity) and many others are very close, at "61%-85%" ([Parking Study](#) at 20-62). Moreover, the county "sets parking occupancy at 75% or greater as a key criterion for determining whether a block qualifies for [permit] restrictions." ([Parking Study](#) at 2).

At the same time, county planners want to fill in what they call "underutilized" street parking in these currently less dense residential areas as a way to maintain the

largest building footprint for new multifamily (MM) housing units. Removing parking from the site provides more options for trees. The county zoning ordinance currently requires one on-site parking spot for every new housing unit in these areas. This is a 1:1 house/car ratio (as only single-family homes may be built currently.) [Staff illustrated for the Zoning Committee on November 30, 2022](#) (slide 12), how the current zoning standard, if maintained for Missing Middle units, would rule out 8-plexes on most lots because the parking area counts towards "lot coverage" in the county's Zoning Ordinance and the lot coverage for Missing Middle construction retains the same maximums that now apply to single-family homes.



D. Review of Goals Two, Three and Six - Missing Middle Plan Chokes Roads by Allowing up to 8-plex Development across Majority of Residential Areas

1. What will MM Do? County to Add Thousands of Residents far from Transit and Halve Parking Spots, but Asserts MTP Goals Can be Met

The county is ignoring facts showing high reliance on cars and neglecting the need for useful analysis of the draft MM zoning. The new plan will add up to 8 times more homes, with perhaps 6 times more residents per residential lot, and it will halve the minimum parking for units beyond the reach of Metro and other transit routes. [There are currently two options for on-site parking](#) (see p. 27, line 165 of the draft code). Option 5B would provide for:

- 1/2 spot per unit (i.e., 4 cars on-site per 8-plex) for any lot near transit²³;

- One spot per unit for all other lots (Option 5A could reduce this ½ spot per unit if a parking survey shows curbside occupancy from Missing Middle units would not exceed 85%),
- One spot per unit for lots on cul-de-sacs;

2. MTP Goal 2 - Move More People Without More Traffic – Sub-Goal: Transit-Oriented Development

a. MM Breaks 50-Year Pattern of Development

Goal 2 of the MTP emphasizes transit-oriented development and complements the General Land Use Plan or GLUP. County Staff told the Long-Range Planning Commission on November 9, 2022 ([at 12:22](#)) that the Missing Middle Plan is consistent with the County’s Transportation Plan to “allow better use of the transportation system,” and said Missing Middle is consistent with current MTP goals.

Arlington has been a national leader in transit-oriented development (TOD). In the 1970s, it worked with our regional partners and invested heavily in new transit with Metro, which enabled housing density and population growth along the Rosslyn-Ballston and Route 1 corridors.



b. Geographic Dispersal of New Zoning Breaks with Transit-Oriented Development

The county stated in its [May 2, 2022 rollout](#) of Phase Two details that its Missing Middle Plan will create buildings up to eight times the density of current single-family zoning and that this density will be “**geographically dispersed**” (pp. 14a, 23). Indeed, **its Consultant projects that 72% of new Missing Middle units will be greater than 1/2 mile from Metro** ([Table A-8](#), 78 of 108 units/year to be “non-Metro”). While ASF has serious concerns about the quality of the Consultant’s work, it is the data the county relies on.

ASF believes the Missing Middle Plan reverses Arlington's record on transit-oriented development. It aims to add density and population *away* from transit

infrastructure and without increasing transit funding or infrastructure. Adding insult to injury, the decision to expand density into transit-poor areas runs counter to [the recommendations of the Metropolitan Council of Governments](#), which in 2019 said 75% of new housing units need to be in "high activity centers" or "high-capacity transit station areas."²⁴

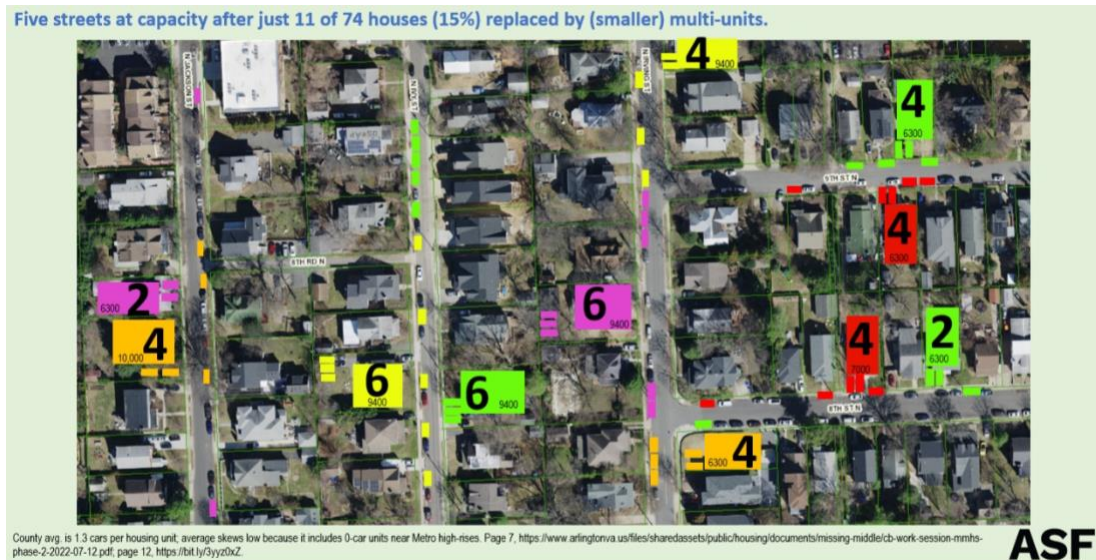
3. MTP Goal One: Move More People without More Traffic, Sub-Goal Ensuring Sufficient Off-Street Parking

a. County Staff Says We are on Track with MTP Goals . . .

Staff correctly indicated to the Long-Range Planning Committee on October 17 (min 17:07) that the new zoning was consistent with MTP sub-goal to “make greater use of on street parking,” but ASF notes that is not the whole story. Staff also drew on the [Arlington County On-Street Parking Occupancy Study](#) (“Parking Study”) to tell LRPC that parking occupancy on "permit-restricted" and "unmanaged" blocks (i.e., the type you would find mostly in single-family areas away from commercial sites such as the R-5 to R-20 zones) is “typically 20 to 40%.” (ASF note: could accommodate significant increases.) Transportation Commission Chair Slatt reinforced this sentiment with remarks on November 9 to the LRPC as part of its new MM zoning review ([at 36:33](#)), saying the vast majority of the areas studied for the Parking survey “had on-street occupancy rates of under 60% . . . at all times of the day.”

b. . . .but Arlington County Has Not Provided Key Specifics

The county has not quantified which streets they deem have extra capacity or quantified *how many cars it will take to “fill” up different streets*. *Comments by MM advocates are not taking into account the much higher density*. ASF notes that density in zone R-5 would go from 8.7 units per acre with single-family only zoning to 69.7 units per acre with 8-plex zoning. To show the impact of new density on curbside parking, ASF modeled modest Missing Middle infill in the Ashton Heights graphic below: **on-street “slack” in this R-5 and R-6 area (where densities will be among the highest) is exhausted after only 11 lots out of 74 (15%) are converted from single-family homes**. To be conservative, ASF assumed only 1.3 cars per household ²⁵



The results show that some number of county streets will rapidly fill under the Missing Middle Plan. The county's attempted justifications are not supported by adequate expert analysis. [Parking Manager Melissa McMahon of the County's Department of Environmental Services told the County Board on July 12](#) (1:22:20), that a recent update to parking studies shows there is "no rapid fluctuation in curbside parking" and occupancy is under 50%, and "in some areas it's gone down." She also told the Board that conditions meant "you don't have to walk more than a block to find . . . room for your car, you just might not be able to park in front of your house." ASF asserts that "recent observations" are irrelevant, and asks the county for impacts of density rising from 8 to 69 homes units per acre. Parking overflow will severely compromise the existing MTP goals, in ASF's view.

Several pro-density advocates and developers — such as YIMBY NOVA — have claimed, without data to prove acceptable impact, that onsite parking should be eliminated for Missing Middle units. But [census data](#) shows that it's only the construction of very large buildings (*with 50 or more units*) that can make that kind of difference; these account for 61% of car-less housing units. **Of the Missing Middle housing types being proposed, less than one unit in 11 is car-less.**²⁶

4. Goal 3: Ensuring Safety – But Fire Vehicles May Not be Able to Access Choked Secondary Roads

a. Most Arlington Roads are Narrow

The Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, [§ 503.2.1](#), requires that all fire department access roads "shall have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet, exclusive of shoulders." That provision is incorporated into Arlington's County Code, [§ 8.1-22](#) and is reflected in County MTP Goal #3. As Transportation Commission Chair

Slatt has [reported](#), “the Arlington Fire Department acknowledges that ‘there are many streets that do not meet fire code.’” Other reports indicate Arlington’s Fire Chief thinks about 70% of Arlington’s streets do not meet the 20-foot requirement and that the Chief will not approve any addition of parking spaces if it may violate the 20-foot law. Zoning and Long-Range Planning Committees gave only marginal consideration to some concerns that were raised during October/November discussions of the new draft code, and no changes were recommended.

b. Narrowed Streets May Not Accommodate Rescue Vehicles

The combination of Arlington’s road infrastructure and state law means some roads are at capacity or may be with even one Missing Middle building. As a result, the Arlington County Fire Department may find it can no longer safely navigate some of the narrowed streets. ASF believes this outcome will compromise MTP goal #3.

5. MTP Goal 6: Improving Transit for the Environment

a. Carbon Impact

With no plans to add transit or boost transit frequency, adding up to six times the population in the R-5, R-6, R-8, R-10, and R-20 residential zones will boost carbon levels in our atmosphere, through increased car trips, including construction traffic. A Freedom of Information Act response ([#C001377-100722](#)) revealed the county did not analyze the potential carbon impact of the MM Plan. Staff review of the new code with the ZOCO and LRPC did not touch on transit sustainability goals.

As Arlington has no undeveloped land, construction introduces pollutants in already populated areas. It adds significantly to noise pollution as an environmental nuisance not cited in the MTP goals. These effects undermine MTP goal #6.

E. Conclusion

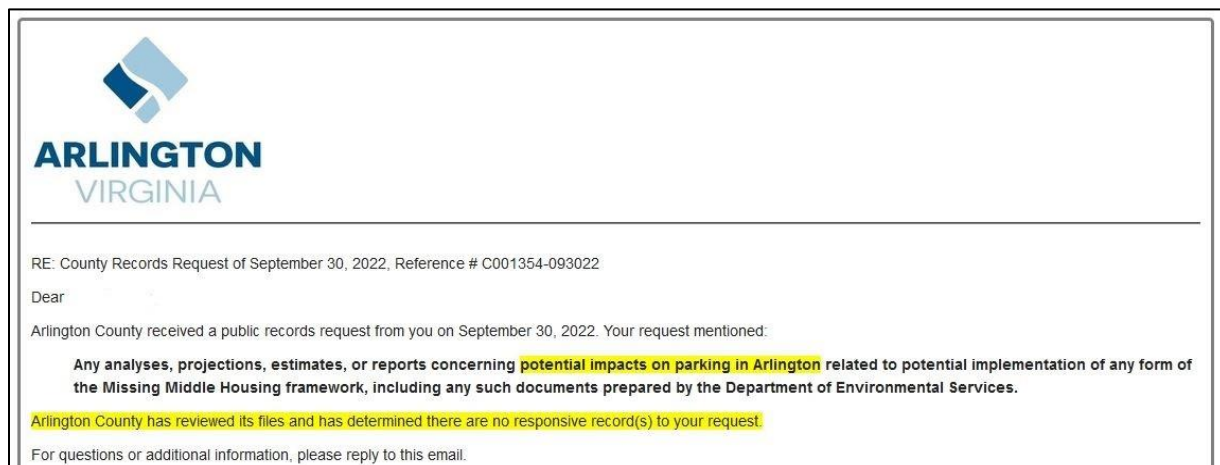
1. Density will Add Cars and Parking Demand

Whatever option the Board chooses for the allowed multi-plex limit and parking ratios, we will have less on-site parking and many cars will spill over to residential streets. We already see in some areas excess on-street parking allows only one-way traffic on two-way streets (800 North Jackson Street), this narrowing and traffic may affect emergency access/safety, and will add to pollution/emissions. With current low-density land use of less than 10 units per acre, neighborhoods can accommodate traffic and parking, but this will change when zoning rises to 69 units per acre (for example, if 8-plexes are allowed in zone R-5) or even with the lowest option of “only” 4-plexes on all lots.

ASF has shown that we will not be able to meet key goals of the current Master Transportation Plan, and we have shown that the county is neglecting infrastructure that is essential to sustain the kind of urban density its land use plans are activating. The volume of cars, and the remoteness of many of the new units from reliable, frequent transit, and the evidence that cars will continue to figure largely in residents' lives, shows the need for more study, and community engagement. Zoning requirements for homes — especially those more than ½ mile from mass transit — must continue to offer at least one on-site parking spot per unit.

2. Need for Better Data

Finally, we note the county must back up the substantial changes to its Zoning Ordinance with solid data. It has so far failed to do so. In response to an ASF request under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, the county revealed it had undertaken *no* analysis of the “potential impacts on parking in Arlington related to . . . the Missing Middle Housing framework.” (See county response to FOIA # C001354-093022).



A separate Freedom of Information Act request ([#C001377-100722](#)) sought any study or analysis on whether the Missing Middle Plan will “reduce or prevent congestion in the public streets.” Once again, the county’s response came back empty.

F. ASF Ask

ASF requests the county provide thorough analysis of the impacts of the increased MM density, as to environmental, fiscal and demographic outcomes to include the transportation issues noted above. They may include the costs of future mass transit or transportation management systems, mitigation of air or water pollution, investments in new emergency vehicle acquisition, or other solutions. ASF also requests the county reassess its MTP goals given the considerations we have raised.

VIII. Missing Middle and the Lost Arlington Way

A deep sore among the growing thousands of residents who oppose the MM Plan is the county's failure to tell people in clear and simple terms what the plan really is about. Adding to that is how the county abandoned established community planning processes. Instead, the Board imposed limited, closed-door sessions, formed one-sided panels of "experts" that excluded County Staff and the one "expert" the county paid over \$100,000 to work on the MM Plan, and then rejected pleas for meaningful engagement include objective voices. Worse yet, the County Board is doing so to push a process that fundamentally alters decades of planning and the public's reliance on it.

A. County abandons decades of transit-oriented development, choice in diversity of density, community goals, inclusive planning.

Arlington's Comprehensive Plan establishes choice in neighborhood density. Plan Goals #1-3 put density "in and near Metro Station[s]" where infrastructure supports it; Goal #4 is to "[p]reserve and enhance existing single-family ... neighborhoods" (at 6). Even for Crystal City, East Falls Church, and elsewhere, the goal remains to "[p]reserve the integrity of the single-family neighborhoods" nearby, or "preserve and protect" them (at 17, 20, 22).

But Missing Middle densifies all neighborhoods, far from transit. The county said in its [May 2, 2022 rollout](#) that Missing Middle will be "**geographically dispersed**" (pp. 14a, 23). It projects 72% of new units will be greater than 1/2 mile from Metro ([Table A-8](#): 78 of 108 units/year to be "non-Metro"). The new density allowing 8-plexes on all R5 to R20 residential lots means densification to the same level as Rosslyn south of Clarendon Boulevard.

The county circumvents and contradicts carefully crafted Neighborhood Conservation Plans that support conserving single-family zones and oppose density. The County Board has accepted [48 Arlington neighborhood](#) plans. The plans set forth how the localized community wants to address land use and zoning. The County's Comprehensive Plan makes clear that "these plans serve as guides to the Board and staff when considering proposals for General Land Use Plan amendments" and rezoning (GLUP, [p. 27](#)). The **plans universally and strongly oppose added density in single-family areas**, especially given the county's infrastructure failures.

For example:

South Arlington

1. [Douglas Park 2021](#) (at 31): “Substantial changes to zoning in areas of single-family homes and townhouses are not envisioned or widely supported.” County has “fail[ed] to provide supporting infrastructure” for existing density.
2. [Alcova Heights 2014](#) (at 1): “Goals: Preserve the character of the neighborhood — primarily single-family homes bordered by [higher density].”
3. [Barcroft 2008](#) (at 11): “Barcroft’s residents strongly recommend that any new housing built in the core of the neighborhood be limited to detached single-family homes.... [No m]ulti-family units should be permitted.”
4. [Arlington Heights 2008](#) (at 3, 5): “The neighborhood supports preservation of the mostly single-family character of the neighborhood, and strongly opposes any changes to the zoning or General Land Use Plan”.
5. [Penrose 2004](#) (at 6-2): “The county should commit to the preservation of existing single-family homes in Penrose, recognizing that, traditionally, residents of single-family homes have formed the core of active civic life in Arlington neighborhoods.”
6. [Arlington Ridge 2013](#) (at 11, 40, 47, 48): “[T]he overall top concerns of the individual residents are ... preserving a quiet single-family residential character....” “No up-zoning;” “[L]imit new housing to detached single-family homes in the single-family zoned districts.”
7. [Aurora Highlands 2008](#) (at 7, 19): “We want to conserve the single-family neighborhood.”
8. [Columbia Forest 2004](#) (at 8, 9, 11): “Neighborhood Goals[:] ... preserve the single-family character of interior sections of Columbia Forest.” Residents “expressed strong support for maintaining and enhancing the single-family character of the interior of Columbia Forest. Residents oppose the redevelopment of single-family properties into multi-family dwellings, either as duplexes or townhouses.” “The county should take no action that would increase the percentage of Columbia Forest residences that are rented.”
9. [Columbia Heights 2000](#) (at 69): “most [residents] express general satisfaction with” current zoning; “our residents are united in their concern about overcrowding in this area. They would be likely not to support public policy that would increase population density.” The civic association “urges Arlington County not to exceed the existing population density”
10. [Green Valley 1998](#) (at 29, 31): “Goal: Protect the low-density density residential areas” and “preserve [the] existing single-family character.” “A major land use concern” “is the replacement of single-family houses with

higher-density, townhouse dwelling units;” “residents object to their increasing presence. The occasional townhouse or set of townhouses, scattered throughout a single-family neighborhood, disrupts its architectural continuity” and is “incompatible with detached homes.”

11. [Arlington View 1965](#) (at 13, 19): “It is the community desire that Arlington View remain fundamentally a single-family residential area,” and “it is recommended that ... the community be designated as single-family residential” (exceptions noted).

Central Arlington

12. [Arlington Forest 2022](#) (at 18): “87% wanted Arlington Forest to remain primarily single-family detached homes.”
13. [Glencarlyn 2011](#) (at 9, 18, 63): “Goal” of “perpetuating the neighborhood’s single-family residential character.” 80% of “Glencarlyn residents ... felt [it] should remain predominantly single family residential, and any infill development should preserve the single-family character of the neighborhood.”
14. [Boulevard Manor 2009](#) (at 2-1): “98% of respondents either strongly favored or favored Boulevard Manor remaining an area of primarily single-family homes.”
15. [Clarendon-Courthouse 2007](#) (at 21): “Recommendation: Do not allow any ‘upzoning’ of existing R-5 areas in Clarendon-Courthouse.”
16. [Lyon Park 2019](#) (at 11): “Encourage renovation over tear-downs” and “[d]o not rezone N Pershing Dr for townhomes.”
17. [Dominion Hills 2004](#) (at 13, 43): “96% of survey respondents say they favor Dominion Hills staying the way it is, an area of mostly single-family detached homes.” “The county should not approve ... infill housing developments....”

North Arlington

18. [Williamsburg 2017](#) (at 21): “84% of respondents want the neighborhood to remain one of mostly single-family detached homes rather than ... higher density....”
19. [Cherrydale 2014](#) (at 169): “95% (225/237) of respondents think Cherrydale should remain primarily single-family residences.” Specifically, “84% (199/236) of respondents do not think any part of Cherrydale should be rezoned to allow townhouses to replace single-family houses.”
20. [Waycroft-Woodlawn 2014](#) (at 6, 16): “our community seeks to preserve its quiet residential side streets and ... minimize the subdivision of property/infill development.” It “is primarily single-family homes” and the community “wishes to maintain [that] character.”

21. [Leeway 2010](#) (at 5, 22-23): “The Leeway community is in agreement that ...the vast majority of the Leeway area shall remain used for single-family homes [It] is essential that the county adhere to [that in the future].” “The community is likewise generally opposed to any future upzoning of the current R-6 residential zoning.”
22. [Rock Spring 2009](#) (at 20-21): Residents “are resistant to in-fill development” and “do not want any changes in the neighborhood’s essential character,” so the “County should maintain the existing zoning....”
23. [Highland Park Overlee Knolls 2006](#) (at 9): “98% in favor of remaining an area of mostly single-family detached homes. Residents place a high priority on maintaining the existing character of the neighborhood.”
24. [Tara-Leeway Heights 2005](#) (at 39): “approval of new residential construction should be limited to single-family, detached residences.”
25. [Woodmont 2003](#) (at 7): residents support “redevelopment within the neighborhood only when [it] results in the same or lower density... [I]ts residents strongly oppose zoning changes that would lead to higher density or attached dwellings.”
26. [Old Dominion 2002](#) (at 32): “Old Dominion residents strongly favored maintaining the predominantly single-family, detached housing character of the neighborhood, and raised concerns about in-fill development and zoning variances.”
27. [Donaldson Run 2000](#) (at 23): “84% did not support” allowing two homes on a single-family lot.
28. [Madison Manor 2000](#) (at 9, 10): Goal: “Maintain current land use and zoning to preserve the current low-density residential character of the neighborhood.... Arlington County Planning Division agreed with this goal.” Goal: “Amend GLUP to limit density to one to six units per acre”
29. [Highview Park 1994](#) (at 19): “the High View Park community seeks to maintain its single-family character and not be overburdened by higher density uses such as additional apartments...” “GOALS: Retain the single-family character of High View Park, and keep residential densities low.” “A comparison of the housing condition of investor-owned and owner-occupied single-family detached units ... reveals some striking differences,” for example, 24% of owner-occupied units need “moderate or major work” but 43% of investor-owner ones “require major work.”
30. [Westover Village 1991](#) (at 10): “the citizens of Westover oppose any rezoning in the neighborhood that would permit or lead to higher density ... unless there were major and substantial offsetting benefits to the neighborhoods.” “[A]llowing town house development and condominium construction were

raised, and in all cases the response was the same – residents do not want the community rezoned and they oppose any additional development”

31. [Ballston-Virginia Square 1984](#) (at 7): “Changes in the existing R-5 and R-6 zones should be considered only for site plans of exceptional quality and originality in transition areas.”
32. [Arlington – East Falls Church 1986](#) (at 7, 8): “the primary concern is maintaining the low density residential zoning where it currently exists;” for one project next to Metro, “townhouses are not to be built on infill sites contiguous to single-family detached homes”
33. [Lyon Village 1978](#) (at 14): “we strongly support the existing General Land Use Plan” that preserves low-density, single-family areas; “We urge that Clarendon’s redevelopment be controlled to the extent possible to ensure adequate buffering for surrounding residential areas.”
34. [Maywood 1965](#) (at 18, 23): “we are unalterably opposed to any further extension of Apartment zoning within our area [T]his area should remain for low density Residential use.” Long-range plan: “Retain neighborhood in single family use.”

Those not listed above were silent on upzoning. Rather than working *through* the community plans, the County Board has evaded them — even refusing to allow County Staff to present the Missing Middle plan to civic associations and neighborhood groups.

B. The Arlington Way Gone Astray.

1. Excluding community involvement and County Commissions.

In neighborhood after neighborhood shown above, the local process of community involvement resoundingly rejected the type of unbridled densification that the MM Plan will impose. Rather than an inclusive process, the Board rejected more time for civic groups to meet, further exacerbating democratic concerns.

The [Arlington Civic Federation](#) (CivFed), a 106-year-old institution of about 80 independent civic groups, is on the verge of voting on a historic [resolution](#) “To Restore Public Confidence in Arlington County’s Governance.” The resolution details the County Board’s failure to govern inclusively. It is backed by [700 footnoted examples](#) of how the county is failing its residents. On Missing Middle, CivFed documented (pp. 50-51) how Arlington County’s Missing Middle process has been

riddled with a lack of transparency and data, and the community engagement opportunities are calculated, controlled and are to convey rather than to collect insights. Furthermore, the County’s own surveys and feedback

illustrate that the County is misrepresenting the community’s consensus and strongly oppose the proposed Plan.

CivFed documented how the county held its *only* public Q&A on its MM Plan on May 2, 2022, which allowed just 74 minutes for questions from the public (filtered through Staff) ([p. 51](#)). County Housing Staff were later excluded from the Board Members’ “community conversations,” leaving many residents just as uninformed as when they went in. Excluded from all public engagement has been the county’s consultant, PES, which did the only actual analysis of MM impacts.

Critically, rather than include the County Board’s own hand-picked commissions to vet the MM Plan, they excluded and marginalized them. The County Staff did not brief the Transportation Committee until 8 days before releasing the final Staff Report. Other key commissions like C2E2, Aging, and JFAC were essentially left out.

2. Moving Goalposts.

The county said MM would “not” be countywide or end all single-family zones. In 2019, it launched the “Missing Middle Housing Study” saying it “is not: an across-the-board rezoning of all single-family areas” or “[a] process to eliminate single-family zoning” ([at 8](#), right). The County Housing Coordinator

Missing Middle Housing Study	
What it is:	What it is <u>not</u> :
A community discussion to determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How/whether new housing types can help address the shortage of housing supply in Arlington• Where new housing types could be introduced• What strategies could be employed to mitigate any negative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An across-the-board rezoning of all single-family areas• A process to eliminate single-family zoning in Arlington• A process to codify decisions that have already been made• A process that will lead to incompatible housing types (e.g. high rises) being built in single-family areas

read those words aloud ([at 2:12:03; excerpt](#)), adding he “want[s] to be clear, the study is not going to lead [to those things],” “this will be an honest conversation.” The Board issued a [press release](#) that “emphasized” how neither result “would be the right fit for Arlington.” Member [Dorsey told the Washington Post](#): **“Let me be clear — the Board’s direction ... has not included anything constituting a countywide up-zoning.”**

MM Plan abandons original goals of “affordable homeownership,” and “moderately-priced ownership units” of “3+bedrooms.” At the start, in 2019, the county repeated the aforementioned goals ([at 5](#)). Then, in November 2022, Staff [eliminated those goals](#) ([at 7](#)) from what its Plan will do.

3. Lack of time for meaningful community input.

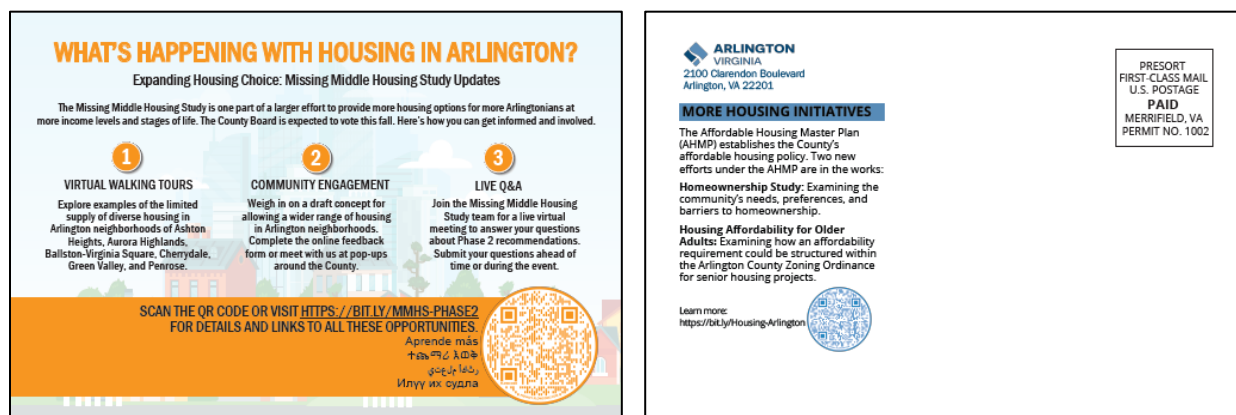
No meaningful time for input on the specifics (2413 days for Staff; 29 days for public). Member [Garvey said](#) in 2022, “people do not really pay attention until there are specific recommendations.” Thus, the county’s claims of lengthy community

involvement are dampened. No detailed “framework” came out until April 28, 2022 and no one saw the actual text of changes until Halloween 2022.

Data dump; 29-day turnaround. The county released 85 pages of its Missing Middle framework on April 28, 2022 ([30 pages](#) & [55 pages](#)), 2,413 days after deciding to study it ([at 21](#)). Just 5 days later, it had its one and only live Q&A session (for 74 minutes) with Staff, soliciting comments by May 27 (within 29 days of release) ([at 28](#)). As it turns out, Staff had not even *received* the county consultant’s data until months later in August.

The county’s poorly worded postcard mailer. The county touts: Missing Middle “[p]ostcards mailed to 151,000+ residential addresses” in May 2022. Staff [said](#) it did this; but the county has only “120,200 housing units”. Worse yet, a FOIA response revealed the county only paid [\\$7600 for postage](#), enough to reach only a fraction of the claimed 151,000 addresses (at USPS’s bulk mailing [rate](#), \$0.187/ card). Member Karantonis even said *he* didn’t receive one.

More importantly, the [postcard itself](#) (in small font), shown below, did not give any details or a date to act and was mailed *during* the 29-day comment period. It failed to mention “zoning,” allowing up to 8 units, or even say whose lot would be changed.



Based on the above, the Board met on [July 12, 2022](#) and directed Staff to start writing the new zoning ordinance. It allowed [no public comment](#) at the meeting.

It was not until Halloween 2022 that the county finally released the text of its proposed changes. The [42-page](#) densely worded document came just 9 days before a series of [3 LRPC and ZOCO meetings](#) in November that led to a flurry of other additions and changes. Next came the County Staff’s [118-page memo](#) of December 7, [just 5 days before](#) the Planning Commission met to hear public comment. Who could possibly process that and meaningfully participate?

At the December 12 Planning Commission, the public still mobilized. But just *30 seconds before the first speaker said a word*, Chair Daniel Weir [unilaterally cut speaking](#)

[time by one-third](#). Facing an audience that was [80% opposed to the Missing Middle Plan](#), this effectively cut an hour of opposition comment (but only 15 minutes from MM supporters). As [CivFed has documented](#) (at p. 67), weeks before this meeting, Weir posted the below on social media, poisoning the public policy debate and further dividing the community baselessly.



The Planning Commission ultimately voted 7-2 to move the flawed plan on, vowing to figure things out later. But it added so many motions and additions in December that County Staff reported they struggled to keep up. The changes included wild suggestions that had never been analyzed or even considered seriously—like removing *all* parking requirements for MM housing in rezoned areas, while maintaining them for detached homes in those areas and MM housing in other areas.

The changes, however, were not documented until the county released its updated Staff report on January 13, **just 8 days** before the County Board meeting. Again, depriving the public of any meaningful ability to be included and understand.

3. Lack of transparency and analysis on supposed “undo” process.

The [county attorney says](#) “you can always amend the zoning ordinance” if Missing Middle creates unintended consequences, but anyone who “built” a multiplex or “applied for permits” is “vested.” Yet the county refused to release any of its [50 pages of analysis](#) on the practical and legal challenges of doing so. One undescribed challenge, for example, is that the county may have to compensate certain landowners if it reverses Missing Middle, yet the county admits it did [no analysis](#) of that. On October 25, 2022, the County Board voted 5-0 to meet in a [closed session](#) to discuss what is “legally permissible in zoning ordinances,” thereby excluding the public from knowing.

4. Unsurprisingly, growing thousands of Arlingtonians oppose the MM Plan and its across-the-Board densification.

Widespread public opposition. More than 5,500 people [signed a Change.org petition](#) opposing the Missing Middle Plan. The county reported in July 2022 that its formal feedback survey (at 14) found [75% opposed the Plan](#) in full or part (751 were negative to it; 154 mixed; and only 295 people had a positive opinion). In the Fall 2022 closed-door “community conversations,” participants were [71% against the plan](#), 16% for it, and 13% neutral or unknown (per reports from 14 of 19 sessions). In December 2022, [80% of individuals opposed the Plan](#) at the Planning Commission’s lone public comment hearing on the Missing Middle.

Civic association surveys show widespread opposition. A November 2022 Ashton Heights survey found [78% “strongly oppose”](#) the county’s plan. A 2022 survey in Arlington Forest found, [87% oppose densification](#) (at 18). A 2022 survey of “more than 320 homes was [4:1 against](#) Missing Middle housing” in Woodmont, with even those supporting it wanting to see “economic- and environmental-impact studies” first. A couple in Old Glebe took the county’s actual plan to 75 nearby homes and 74 of the 75 [\(99%\) were opposed](#). In Douglas Park, in 2021, civic leaders reported that “substantial changes to zoning in areas of single-family homes and townhouses are [not envisioned or widely supported](#)” (at 31). In September 2022, the Bluemont Civic Association adopted a resolution [opposing the plan](#) because it “introduces more problems than it solves.”

Endnotes

¹ The following sites would get 0.5 parking spots per unit: sites located entirely within a 3/4-mile radius of a Metrorail station entrance, sites located entirely within a 1/2-mile radius of a transit stop along the Premium Transit Network, as indicated on the Master Transportation Plan, and sites located entirely within a 1/4-mile radius of a transit stop along the Primary Transit Network, as indicated on the Master Transportation Plan

² **2019:** Staff presentation, pages 4, 5, 9 of https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/12/HousingArlington_PresentationtoCounty-Board_121719.pdf.

2020: Staff presentation, pages 15, 17, 23, 27, 31 of <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2020/09/Presentation-CB-Work-Session-Sept-22-1.pdf>; “only 3” at <https://youtu.be/GNfAcAVvsNU?t=1446>; “limited” at <https://youtu.be/GNfAcAVvsNU?t=1926>.

³ **2019.** Staff presentation, pages 4, 5, 9 of https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/12/HousingArlington_PresentationtoCounty-Board_121719.pdf; pages 1, 2 of https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/12/HousingArlington_MissingMiddleHousingStudy_Framework.pdf.

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2021: 1/27/2021, pages 4, 7, 13-14 <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/Housing/Documents/Regional-Mtg-Presentation-1-27-21.pdf>; “certain groups,” <https://youtu.be/R9OWO2F-Od4?t=289>; 2/2/2021 “so that,” <https://youtu.be/-ADzPEekyIk?t=403> and “firefighters,” <https://youtu.be/-ADzPEekyIk?t=433>; 5/2021, pages 4, 6, 9, 14, https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/Housing/Documents/Presentation-Phase-1-Housing-Typology-and-Community-Feedback-Final_042121.pdf; Phase I Rpt, pages 2, 5, 10, 11, 28,31, https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/housing/documents/missing-middle/expanding-housing-choice_mmhs-phase-1-report-9-21-21.pdf.

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⁴ “1. Concentrate high-density residential, commercial and office development within designated Metro Station Areas in the [metro] Corridors. This policy encourages the use of public transit and reduces the use of motor vehicles.

2. Promote mixed-use development in Metro Station Areas to provide a balance of residential, shopping and employment opportunities. The intent of this policy is to achieve continuous use and activity in these areas.

3. Increase the supply of housing by encouraging construction of a variety of housing types and prices at a range of heights and densities in and near Metro Station Areas. The Plan allows a significant number of townhouses, mid-rise and high-rise dwelling units within designated Metro Station Areas.

4. Preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods. Within Metro Station Areas, land use densities are concentrated near the Metro Station, tapering down to surrounding residential areas to limit the impacts of high-density development. Throughout the county, the Neighborhood Conservation Program and other community improvement programs help preserve and enhance older residential areas and help provide housing at a range of price levels and densities. (ASF Note: The county slide to explain that Missing Middle is consistent with GLUP Goal 4 misrepresents the full content of this goal.)

5. Preserve and enhance neighborhood retail areas. The county encourages the preservation and revitalization of neighborhood retail areas that serve everyday shopping and service needs and are consistent with adopted county plans.”

⁵ Zoning ordinances and districts shall be drawn and applied with reasonable consideration for

- 1) the existing use and character of property,
- 2) the comprehensive plan,
- 3) the suitability of property for various uses,
- 4) the trends of growth or change,**
- 5) the current and future requirements of the community as to land for various purposes as determined by population and economic studies and other studies,
- 6) the transportation requirements of the community,
- 7) the requirements for airports, **housing**, schools, parks, playgrounds, recreation areas and other public services,
- 8) the conservation of natural resources,
- 9) the preservation of flood plains”

⁶Excerpt [FNRP draft Aug. 2022](#) page 11.

“For private lands, the county must use different tools to guide development that vary based on the size of the property, its use and ownership. At its most basic level, the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) distinguishes between uses permitted “by-right” and those which require a “special exception.”

“By-right development. All property owners are entitled to certain by-right development permissions, based on the provisions of the underlying zoning district. They remain subject to land development codes, which have tree canopy and other vegetation requirements. These include Erosion and Sediment Control, Chesapeake Bay Preservation, Stormwater Management, and Floodplain Management, as well as elements of the zoning code that determine lot coverage and setbacks.

“Special Exception development. Uses permitted by special exception are reviewed through a public process and include public hearings by the Planning Commission and County Board. Special exception processes include use permit and site plan processes.”

⁷ Section 6.8 of the GLUP states “It is recognized that development at increased density levels has an increased impact on the community. Therefore, development at the higher end of the density range on the General Land Use Plan may not necessarily represent the vision for a specific location or may not be desirable under all circumstances. However, when the impacts of increased density are mitigated in a manner consistent with county goals, policies and plans, and good zoning practice, increased density may be permitted.”

⁸ (In March 2022, the county reported a surplus of 1600 housing units available to households at the level new Missing Middle units will be priced, while it identified a deficit of 9000 housing units for households at lower income levels of 50% of area median income

⁹ This district is designed for use in Metro station areas as identified on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP), and primarily for sites any part of which is located: 1. Within a 1/4-mile radius of a Metrorail station entrance and 2. That are designated "high-medium residential mixed-use" on the GLUP

¹⁰ Examples of how Arlington today allows certain Missing Middle types on all lots are located at 20th St S; N Jackson St; N Carlin Springs Rd; S Nelson; N George Mason.

¹¹ Arlington County Research bulletin #3.

¹² Slide from Arlington County staff briefing to LRPC October/November 2022 shows intent to use zoning tools that in other cases require processes providing for County Board review (unified Residential development, residential clusters)

Zoning Tool

Preliminary approach: establish an optional, by-right development path

- Precedents for optional development tools that apply broadly to specific zoning districts:
 - Unified Residential Development (requires use permit)
 - All R-5 to R-20 and R2-7 district are eligible
 - Residential Clusters (requires site plan)
 - All R-5 to R-20 districts are eligible
- Allows for tailored development standards
- Can apply to new construction or retrofits of existing buildings
- No changes to existing R district standards for single-detached housing and other permitted uses

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¹³ The Planning Commission and the County Board hold public hearings on the various proposals and adopt a series of recommendations for future development that may include extensive changes to the General Land Use Plan. This process was used to develop the Sector Plans for each of the Metro Station Areas in the Rosslyn-Ballston and Richmond Metro Corridors. A similar process is used in developing plans for Neighborhood Conservation Areas or any other large area of the county requiring comprehensive study.

¹⁴ Staff said that the county's "existing water and sanitary sewer capacity is adequate to accommodate existing and anticipated housing and population growth."

¹⁵ The Stormwater Master Plan describes the loss of over 50 percent of the county's natural stream network in the 1930s-1950, ".as land was cleared for development and many miles of headwater streams were replaced by approximately 366 miles of underground storm sewers designed to convey runoff to the remaining 32-mile stream network. (p.3)

¹⁶ "Currently, the proactive GLUP review policy, in combination with zoning standards that reinforce Chesapeake Bay program goals, support the county's ability to limit water quality impacts from land development." (p. 12, Chesapeake Bay Plan)

¹⁷ Missing Middle zoning -- if the county approves 8-plexes in all R-zones, tree canopy will go from 20% to 10%. Imposing caps on unit size as per column at right could raise that canopy to 15%

Zone	Min. Sq. Ft. per Lot	Current Zoning for SF Homes		If Missing Middle Allows 8-plexes in all R Zones		15% Alternative	
		Units per acre (u/a)	COVER (20% if zoned <10 u/a)	Units per acre (u/a)	COVER (10% if zoned >20 u/a; 15% if zoned 10-20 u/a)	Units per acre	Caps on housing types to keep canopy replacement at 15%
R-5	5,000	8.7	20% canopy	69.7	10% canopy	17.4	Duplex
R-6	6,000	7.3		58.1		14.5	
R-8	8,000	5.4		43.6		16.3	Triplex
R-10	10,000	4.3		34.8		17.4	Quadplex
R-20	20,000	2.2		17.4	15% canopy	17.4	Eightplex

¹⁸ **Complex Combo of Formulas Look to Boost Trees in Development – Many Questions Remain.**

The proposed ACZO amendments establish two separate elements to determine tree canopy for new development in the affected R zones.

- Article 5 -- the current and only standard for R zone development -- will remain. It will apply to both single-family detached (SFD) home construction and construction of "expanded" or MM units. It applies the Virginia and CBPO standards described above;
- New Article 10.4.6, (see p.29 of [the draft zoning memo](#)) which is part of the "Expanded Housing Option Development," will NOT apply to single-family detached construction, but will be paired with tree canopy standards of Article 5 for the Missing Middle units. Draft article 10.4.6. currently offers TWO OPTIONS for trees:

- Option 6B would require builders meet ONLY the Chesapeake Bay tree canopy standards required under Article 5, while
- Option 6A would require that owners meet a "landscaping requirement" to "preserve or plant one shade tree per housing sub-unit" on MM lots. Page 14 of the zoning memo indicates that "trees preserved or planted to meet this site design requirement would also count toward a development's CBPO tree canopy requirement," which means the trees planted as landscaping (for example, four trees at a quadplex) will be allowed to count towards the CBPO requirement. Note: Option 10.4.6A (if selected by the Board) may violate the Virginia canopy code which states: "In no event shall any local tree replacement or planting ordinance adopted pursuant to this Article exceed the requirements of this sub-Article."

¹⁹ **Comparing Current Canopy to Maximum Possible New Canopy:**

	Single family detached	Duplex/triplex	Quadplex	6-plex	8-plex
Current Article 5 canopy requirement	20%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Art. 5 requirement post enactment of by right MM	10%*	10%	10%	10%	10%
Option 6A Art. 10.4. requirement with by-right 6 or 8-plex zoning	N/A	Two to three shade trees	Four shade trees	Six shade trees	Eight shade trees
Max. possible tree profile with by-right and Option 6A	10%	2 trees or 10% lot coverage, whichever greater	4 trees or 10% canopy, whichever greater	6 trees or 10% canopy, whichever greater	8 trees or 10% canopy, whichever greater

***The county is claiming a distinction between what is “built” vs. what is “zoned”** and says all new single-family homes can maintain the current Article 5 standard of 20%, even after new zoning. **ASF asserts that once the land is zoned for a density over 20 units per acre, all lots are developed at the lower 10% canopy standard, with the exception of R-20 (not shown on the chart above), which will go to a 15% standard.** We anticipate likely legal challenges to the county’s claimed 20% canopy will still be applied to single-family detached construction.

²⁰ “General Policy A. Integrate Transportation with Land Use. Organize community *development around high quality and high-capacity transit.*” Specifically, the Rosslyn-Ballston, Route 1, Columbia Pike, and Crystal City/Potomac Yard corridors.

- To carry out this policy, “Goal 2” of the Transportation Plan is to “Move More People Without More Traffic” by using “transit-oriented and mixed-use development that result in better access and use of the transportation system.” Also, the strategy to support Goal 2 is to “[e]ncourage the use of environmentally sustainable modes,” such as walking and transit.
- “General Policy C. Manage Travel Demand and Transportation Systems,” as explained in two relevant sub-parts:
 - “Parking and curb space management policies” with the following key parts:
 - “2. Increase curb space availability”
 - “3. Promote on-street parking within residential neighborhoods”
 - “6. *Ensure that minimum parking needs are met* and excessive parking is not built.”
 - “8. Allow reduced parking space requirements for new development *in close proximity to frequent transit service*”
 - “Streets Policies” to “operate Arlington’s street network in a manner that balances safety to users while still supporting efficient emergency responses.”

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- “Goal 3” of the Transportation Plan calls for “system operations that are safe and secure, and enable prompt and effective emergency response.”

²¹ Both the MTP and the GLUP aim for sufficient off-street parking; Arlington’s zoning code reflects county policy: “*that . . . [f]or every land use hereafter established, there shall be provided sufficient space for access by, and for the off-street standing and parking of, all motor vehicles that may be expected to come to the premises at any time under normal conditions for any purpose. . .*” Zoning Ord. [§ 14.3.1](#) (emphasis added).

²² (Note: This analysis, however, does not adjust for income or location. It is reasonable to assume that given the new units will cost significantly more than average units today, the occupants will be wealthier and more likely to own *more* cars (or need them at locations not near transit, where the bulk of new units will be).)

²³ The following sites would get 0.5 parking spots per unit: sites located entirely within a 3/4-mile radius of a Metrorail station entrance, sites located entirely within a 1/2-mile radius of a transit stop along the Premium Transit Network, as indicated on the Master Transportation Plan, and sites located entirely within a 1/4-mile radius of a transit stop along the Primary Transit Network, as indicated on the Master Transportation Plan

²⁴ In 2019, the COG Board adopted three regional housing targets calling for at least 75,000 additional housing units by 2030 beyond the 245,000 new units already anticipated, at least 75 percent of the units in Activity Centers or High-Capacity Transit Station Areas (HCTs), and at least 75 percent of the units affordable to low-and-middle income households.

²⁵ (the countywide average per dwelling as per the [2017/2018 Arlington Oversample and Analysis of the MWCOG Regional Travel Survey](#)). ASF also excluded any 7-8-plexes, used mainly duplexes and 4-plexes for its analysis

²⁶ Data and walking tours show that the county needs to plan for parking, even near Metro. At least one Transportation Commissioner has argued (without supporting data) that the Missing Middle Plan should create a special parking exception not applicable to any other housing in the county—that 2- to 8-unit buildings near Metro have zero onsite parking requirements because of a supposed lack of demand. This fantasy is belied by the data and view from the ground (and the air). First, as explained above, only 1-in-11 units in buildings of that size today have no cars. Second, two examples make this clear. The large building at top left of the map above is a 13-plex on North Jackson near 10th Street, with 16 on-site parking spots (1.23 spots/unit). This complex routinely creates spillover of cars onto surrounding streets, despite onsite parking that exceeds the proposed standards and despite its close proximity to Metro. As [another example](#), a supposed “triplex” (single-family home converted into three 2-bedroom apartments) at, about four blocks from Metro, is for sale advertising *nine* onsite parking spots (3.0 spots/unit).