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MEDIA RELEASE
FINAL MISSING MIDDLE PLAN STILL A MESS
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The County Board just approved a poorly-planned and poorly-analyzed set of changes to massively densify Arlington. The Board's final Missing Middle plan is a gift to developers with very negative consequences for residents.

This County Board lacks credible answers to the criticisms that ASF provided in its 82-page report from January, [The Missing Middle Housing Proposal: Impacts on Arlington and Its Comprehensive Plan](#). Because [the government's civic engagement was painfully weak](#) (PDF pp. 72-76), many thousands of Arlington residents still have no idea that this will newly enable 6-plexes by right in all residential zones. Those who know, [overwhelmingly oppose](#) it.

Missing Middle is the most significant policy change since Arlington adopted its visionary transit-oriented-development policy in the mid-1970s. But Missing Middle is a major and ill-conceived departure from that. [A prominent Realtor correctly testified for ASF on March 8 at the Planning Commission](#) that Missing Middle is a “well-intentioned but ineffective policy proposal.”

“The final Missing Middle plan that County Board members just adopted is a blueprint for ideologically-driven, poor planning,” said ASF spokesperson Peter Rousselot. “This County Board has plopped a half-baked cake on the table that Arlington residents must now eat.”

Why have current County Board members blundered so badly?

Background

The Board's final plan is a [bait and switch from original claims by the County Board](#).

It does not address the actual housing shortages the Board itself has documented. It does not encourage home ownership because any options above 3-unit townhomes will drive a major loss of home ownership compared to current housing. It will create a net loss of “family-size-units” which remains a major goal of our community and Board. What becomes available will be about one-third *more* expensive than similar-sized units today.

ASF also has shown that [the County's plan will accelerate displacement and gentrification](#). In Arlington's still hot real estate market, Missing Middle is like pouring gasoline on the fire

because the newly enabled by-right density will cause prices to rise even faster as lower-cost homes are razed for luxury buildings.

The County Board's final plan will worsen housing problems.

The Board's final plan will not produce affordable housing. Instead, ASF [has demonstrated that it will require a \\$193K per year income to purchase one unit in a six-plex for the typical buyer using actual market data.](#)

But their plan will:

- [worsen diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) (Rezoned areas that are about 70% white today will become less diverse because adding Missing Middle will make Arlington *more* white; 72% of residents who earn the \$193K to buy the cheapest unit are white),
- exacerbate [Arlington's already serious infrastructure and long-term operating budget deficits](#) (PDF pp. 41-46), and
- [significantly harm the environment and transportation](#) (PDF pp. 50-67).

Their final plan substantially [increases profits for developers](#), and raises the tax revenues of the County government itself (via higher assessed property values). *These higher tax revenues help County government obscure its chronic long-term operating budget deficits.*

"This vote turns the page on the visionary transit-oriented development policy decisions of 50 years ago, as today's County Board members have approved developer-oriented instead of community- and transit-oriented policies for the future. It is 'densify to gentrify.' Follow the money," Rousselot continued.

Conclusion

Since [Arlington has no strategic plan](#), and the Board failed to decide even what it *hopes* to accomplish, no one can evaluate whether Missing Middle advances any strategic goal. At its February 22 meeting, [the County Board's hand-picked Joint Facilities Advisory Commission \(JFAC\) lamented that Arlington has failed to do critically necessary long-range facilities planning.](#) How can [a \\$1.54 billion-per-year government like Arlington](#) (which [touts its "world class" status](#)) approve this mess **without** a strategic plan and **without** the necessary long-range plans?

"Arlington County is [flying blind](#) on Missing Middle, but it's Arlington residents who now are headed for a crash landing," Rousselot concluded.

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 in that year. ASF has consistently highlighted the adverse impacts of Arlington's poor long-range planning, particularly in the context of Arlington's increasingly rapid pace of growth and development.

