



June 17, 2022

Richard Tucker  
Housing Arlington  
Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development  
2100 Clarendon Blvd  
Arlington, VA 22201

**RE: Missing Middle Housing Study Phase Two**

Dear Mr. Tucker,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the goals of the County's Missing Middle Housing Study. Allowing for more density and a greater diversity of housing types in Arlington's single-family neighborhoods is an important step forward. It is critical to making Arlington a place where people of all backgrounds can live, and where workers can find homes near their jobs. With the overwhelming majority of Arlington's land area taken up by single-family detached zoning, there must be opportunities to open up these neighborhoods to new housing forms if Arlington is to ever make real progress on this issue.

We are pleased to see that the proposal allows these new housing types to be built by-right. This is essential to making them viable for builders. Given the nature of the rezoning process, it is unlikely that many builders would go through the trouble of rezoning when they can build more expensive homes by-right without the hassle and expense. However, we are disappointed by the projections of how many units this change will bring forward. The consultant's study projects the redevelopment of 20 lots per year, divided into approximately 100 units. While that would represent a step forward, it barely scratches the surface of the problem of housing affordability in Arlington.

Further, we are concerned that the study may be overestimating the viability of some of these units. By requiring the structures to fit into the same footprint required for single-family detached homes, builders' options for new housing types can be very limited. By requiring building heights to be no higher than 35 feet, stacked townhomes are effectively blocked, despite being there being a proven market for them in neighboring jurisdictions at reasonable price points. By requiring lot coverage standards to be the same as those required for single-family detached homes, sufficient on-site parking may be very difficult to install for larger projects.

In order to realize the goal of making housing more attainable, more flexibility should be granted. That would mean increasing building heights by just five to ten feet to allow stacked townhomes to be considered as an option. That might also mean allowing increases in lot coverage to allow for parking that meets the demand of prospective residents further away from transit. Existing zoning rules allow 56% lot coverage for duplexes, townhomes, and multifamily housing, which, if applied here, would enable a more diverse type of units to be constructed on larger lots than we would likely see at single-family detached standards.

While allowing for the construction of more duplexes and three-unit townhomes is a positive, and much needed change, the price points for these units could still be over \$1 million. This is especially true in many areas where the County would allow more units per lot under the

proposed changes, but which might not come into fruition without more flexibility. Duplexes and triplexes are great, but will accomplish less than other types in improving Arlington's affordability. We are worried that given the proposed height and lot coverage rules, they may end up being a significantly larger portion of the missing middle units that get built than currently projected.

The Chamber strongly support the goals of this study, and we urge the County not to give in to the demands of opponents who want to shut this down prematurely. However, we think it is important that the County get this right, and would go further to bring real options to residents who would otherwise be unable to find them in these neighborhoods. As you move through the process, please consider what it would take to build units, that the County wants to allow with these changes, at a lower cost based on market conditions, and ensure that the development standards are imposed allow for that. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Bates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Bates  
President & CEO

CC: Arlington County Board Chair Katie Cristol, Vice-Chair Christian Dorsey, and members Matt de Ferranti, Libby Garvey, and Takis Karantonis; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli; Planners Matt Ladd, Kellie Brown, and Russell Danao-Schroeder