



MEMORANDUM

To: Arlington County Staff
FROM: The Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance
RE: Draft Recommendations Phase 2 Missing Middle Housing
DATE: June 2, 2022

I am writing on behalf of the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance (NVAHA), a coalition of cross-sector housing industry professionals and advocates working in five jurisdictions in Northern Virginia. Our mission is to promote healthy, sustainable and equitable communities that meet the diverse housing needs of Northern Virginia residents. Our activities include housing research, policy analysis and advocacy, as we seek to build political will to advance housing affordability through a better understanding of its impact on health, equity, and economic development.

NVAHA supports the recommendations of the Missing Middle Housing Study Phase 2 Analysis and Draft Framework. The county's Missing Middle study is the first in Northern Virginia to advance our understanding of this issue, and an important step in demonstrating how zoning reform can unlock the potential to increase housing supply in our region. These recommendations move us closer to dismantling the legacy of racial inequities in our current land use and zoning patterns. We note that housing supply and affordability is a challenge faced by the entire Washington metropolitan area and is not unique to Arlington. Thank you for being a trailblazer on the issue of missing middle housing!

We also commend county staff for the comprehensive community engagement process used to inform and guide iterations of the study. Events like Ask the Authors, community partners' organizational meetings, multiple listening tours, and draft updates provided extensive opportunities for the broader Arlington community to comment.

One of the most important recommendations is the opportunity to create new housing options as by-right development on single-family zoned parcels. We believe that the draft recommendations allowing up to six units of housing with reduced parking have the best chance for being developed since the standards for suburban lot sizes have been retained. Relaxing existing set-backs and height requirements would increase the likelihood of more missing middle housing being developed.

While we support an eight-plex development, we would have liked more input from the developer and lender community to provide their assessment of the feasibility of an eight-plex given the lot size constraints. Arlington's location and amenities made it an attractive place to live and work and with

housing demand greater than supply these recommendations provide foundational change to address the imbalance in a meaningful way. However, affordability is not assured with missing middle housing, so additional strategies will be needed to achieve that goal.

As staff noted in the draft, the outcome for the first few years may be modest, but we support moving forward with these innovative first steps. It is likely that revisions to the policies will happen over time as the County learns from the new housing types developed in the community. We urge the County Board to adopt these recommendations, and look forward to seeing missing middle housing opportunities in Arlington in the future.

Sincerely,

Michelle Krockner, Executive Director
Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance