



Clarendon Presbyterian Church  
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July 8, 2022

### **Why I Support Arlington's "Missing Middle" Proposal**

Dear Arlington County Board,

I want to go on record with my appreciation of the County's work in developing the recently released Missing Middle Framework. While this is only a first step, it is a promising one and has my support.

As the County acknowledges, this framework will not help low income residents, and the number of new units created each year is projected to be modest. However, it is meaningful not only because of the middle income units it will promote over time, but because it addresses the need for changes to the County's current restrictive zoning and land use rules.

In Arlington, as in much of the country, the history of highly restrictive zoning and other land-use rules had an explicitly racist component. Those restrictions have caused particular harm in minority communities, constituting a real barrier to building household wealth that has persisted across generations. Protecting a status quo with such origins and such effects is wrong.

Currently, 20% of Arlington residents live on over two thirds of the land. This is because in 79% of the County's residential land area, only single-detached housing is permitted. As smaller, originally affordable houses are replaced with very large and expensive ones, there is less and less available for anyone but the wealthy.

Some of the households that are priced out are staying in rentals for longer periods of time, driving up rents. Rents increased 16% this year in Arlington and low-income families who were already spending a third or more of their income on rent are increasingly desperate. A larger pool of middle income housing should help to relieve some of this upward pressure on rents over time, especially if the county ensures that 6-plexes and 8-plexes are vigorously protected and promoted as options. The Board already recognized that relaxation of parking requirements will be necessary, and I urge you not to backtrack on that commitment.

The County indicates it has other initiatives under way to specifically address the housing crisis affecting low-income residents, and variations to zoning will be required to accomplish meaningful progress in this area as well. As you know, this would be the right thing to do even if

it only promoted the interests of these heavily burdened members of our community. But as you also realize, the increasing inability of people who work here to live here also affects the cost and availability of services, such as child care, and contributes to the pollution exacerbating our environmental crisis, as thousands of people make their long commutes to do necessary work that benefits us.

Thank you for considering this input.

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