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Arlington County Board

Via Email: Countyboard@arlingtonva.us

Dear Chair Cristol and Members of the Board:

I am writing today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Arlington and Alexandria City to speak in favor of the County's recently released Missing Middle housing proposal. Like so many others, we would like to compliment County staff for their diligent and thoughtful work in creating a solid proposal to advance Arlington's latest effort to support expanded housing options in a manner that considers both past inequities and the County's future needs. We ask that the County Board take every measure necessary to bring this proposal to fruition in the shortest possible period.

The League has long supported the expansion of affordable housing in Arlington, including expanded options for Missing Middle housing. Our current position on Affordable Housing supports both County consideration of greater residential density zoning in currently lower density areas and efforts to reverse historic systemic racism in zoning practices. In 2019, the League joined with Challenging Racism, the Arlington NAACP, the Alliance for Housing Solutions and Virginia Humanities to sponsor an afternoon-long seminar on "The Color of Housing: The History of Racism in Housing in Arlington."

The current staff proposal will help spread demand for housing over a far wider swath of Arlington. Doing so will help to reduce the relentless upward pressure on home prices we have seen over the past few decades. While not the solution to all our problems, adopting this Missing Middle proposal will certainly slow the current forces that are driving home prices out of reach for most County residents. We must squarely face the reality that the single-family zoning which dominates the County's landscape is just another form of exclusionary zoning. We

must be prepared to reject it in favor of neighborhoods which better reflect all Arlingtonians, not just those with means.

Moreover, taking this step will show Arlington's commitment to the Fair Housing Act (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968). That Act established an obligation for localities to affirmatively further fair housing. Affirmatively furthering fair housing is not just a matter of outlawing the racist covenants of the past, but requires as well that localities take "meaningful actions . . . that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities . . ."

The changes contained in the Missing Middle proposal are sensible and measured. They will not bring radical change overnight, but they will open up new possibilities for individuals looking to buy something less than million-dollar homes; for elderly individuals looking to stay in the county but downsize; for young people just starting out who are looking to build equity; and for teachers, nurses and others working in public sector jobs to work and live in the community they serve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Pamela Quanrud on behalf of the Affordable Housing Committee