

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HOUSING
ERIC BERKEY, CHAIR

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July 11, 2022

Hon. Katie Cristol, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Missing Middle Housing Study – Phase 2

Dear Chair Cristol:

At its July 7, 2022, virtual public hearing, the Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing (Housing Commission) considered the draft framework presented by County staff regarding the Missing Middle Housing Study: Phase 2. While the Commission understands that the County Board will not be taking a formal vote on the framework at its July 12, 2022, work session, it was nevertheless determined that the Commission would formally provide the County Board with recommendations regarding Phase 3, considering the substantial attention to the framework and public engagement undertaken by County staff.

Context:

First, it is worth acknowledging the work performed by County staff up to this point regarding the Missing Middle Study. While County staff released a Research Compendium in Summer 2020, the notion of performing such a study was originally suggested during the process and issuance of the County's Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP) and Implementation Framework in September 2015. In addition to County staff's rollout of Phase 1 of the Study in Fall 2020 and Phase 2 in Winter 2021, presentations were made to the Housing Commission on the Study throughout the process, including: January 16, 2020 (scope of work); October 8, 2020 (update on progress); October 7, 2021 (Phase 1 Report); May 5, 2022 (Phase 2 Report); and a presentation and discussion during the Commission's Tools and Trends Subcommittee on May 31, 2022.

Accordingly, during its July 7, 2022, public hearing, the following recommendations were approved by the Housing Commission by a vote of 11 to 0, with Commissioners Berkey, Bray, Browne, Hemminger, Jackson, MacBeth, Montgomery, McGilvray, Norris, Rubalcava, and Serfis in favor.

Recommendations:

1. Move forward with preparing zoning amendments for missing middle housing types that duplicate the same design standards as required for single household development (height, setbacks, lot coverage) to promote context-sensitive development and support environmental goals.

2. Move forward with preparing zoning amendments for missing middle housing types that would allow townhouses and buildings with 2-8 units in zoning districts currently limited to single-household development (R-5 to R-20 zones) to support equitable opportunities to increase housing options and supply, throughout the community

Discussion: At the Commission's May 31, 2022, Tools and Trends Subcommittee meeting, there was general agreement regarding the number of units that could be permitted (Recommendation #2) and the maintenance of the same design standards currently required for single-family dwellings (Recommendation #1).

3. Consider revising the staff's recommendation regarding reduced parking requirements to reflect a more targeted approach in recognition of concerns of reduced on-street parking availability.

Discussion: At the Commission's July 7, 2022, public hearing, there was discussion from both public speakers and among Commissioners about concerns about the availability of parking, and accordingly the Commission recommends that staff consider a more target approach in its final zoning recommendations.

4. Limit townhouses up to groups of three (as recommended in the draft framework) to manage unit sizes and sales prices but do not set a limit on the maximum building size for new housing types.

Discussion: There was discussion at both the May 31, 2022, Tools and Trends Subcommittee meeting and the July 7, 2022, public hearing about whether the interior maximum floor sizes were too restrictive and/or necessary at all, given the Missing Middle Housing Study's goal of increasing housing opportunity, and whether the restrictions could in fact discourage the development contemplated by the potential zoning modifications. This recommendation was modified pursuant to an amendment offered by Commissioner Browne, and agreed to by Commissioners Berkey, Bray, Browne, Jackson, MacBeth, Montgomery, Norris, and Serfis, with Commissioner Hemminger abstaining. Commissioner Rubalcava voted against the amendment because she thought that some regulation of unit sizes was appropriate, and Commissioner McGilvray voted against the amendment because she thought it would be better to defer to the staff recommendation. The amendment passed 8-2-1.

5. Consider whether there are opportunities for encouraging the development of accessible or at least adaptable units for individuals with disabilities.

Discussion: Doris Ray, the Commission's liaison from the Disability Advisory Commission, expressed serious concerns about the absence of opportunities for accessible or even adaptable units within the draft framework. The Commission

briefly discussed the merits of recommending that staff give this concern consideration in Phase 3.

Ms. Ray expressed several additional concerns that were not included in the approved formal recommendations but are included here. First, she raised concerns about accessibility involved limiting the maximum square footage of units of Missing Middle housing which would limit, or make entirely impossible, the option of modifying the interior of the units to make them accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities or seniors who have physical limitations and want to age in place in the community rather than being forced into nursing facilities even though they may have many years of productive life. Similarly, Ms. Ray asked that if the standards for single family residents are used, whether staff might consider having an exception to zoning requirements regarding lot coverage that would allow for owners/residents to include driveways and walkways that permit a vehicle drop off for those who have accessible vehicles.

6. Consider whether the County could provide additional support to expand equitable homeownership opportunities for traditionally excluded populations to promote socio-economic diversity and racial integration throughout Arlington.

Discussion: Commissioner MacBeth expressed concerns about homeownership opportunities for communities historically omitted from the benefits and results of housing programs and zoning initiatives, and there was a consensus within the Commission to recommend that staff also consider these concerns in Phase 3 of the study.

Finally, I want to note that we have had significant interest and participation from Arlington residents at our May 31, 2022, Tools and Trends Subcommittee meeting and our July 7, 2022, public hearing (11 public speakers regarding the Missing Middle Housing Study). We welcome active participation from the community and look forward to further discussion and consideration of staff's recommendations at the conclusion of Phase 3 of the Missing Middle Housing Study.

Thank you for your consideration of the Commission's recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Eric Berkey
Chair, Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing