



May 23, 2022

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

**Re: Missing Middle Housing Study Phase 2 Draft Framework**

Dear Ms. Cristol:

Arlington's shameful history of racist, exclusionary zoning policies needs reforming, and we urge the County Board to adopt the Missing Middle Housing Study Phase 2 Draft Framework. The framework is a first step in a series of necessary actions to reverse the damage done to Black and Brown residents by governmental and nongovernmental acts designed to segregate and disempower. We appreciate the work county staff have put into the Missing Middle Housing Study and the strength of their recommendations.

The recommendations successfully balance the needs of existing single-family home residents by keeping design standards the same while opening previously closed single-family home neighborhoods to diverse residents by allowing townhouses and buildings with 2-8 units in R-5 to R-20 zones. This change will begin to rebalance Arlington's land-use policies with the makeup of its population; 70% of Arlington's residential land reserved for single-family homes will potentially provide desperately needed housing to many more residents. We are particularly pleased to see the inclusion of 8-plex units because these will be the most attainable for residents making the area median income.


Black and Brown residents have struggled to find affordable homeownership opportunities in Arlington. The proposed zoning changes could result in additional housing attainable to up to 39% of Black households, 39% of Latino households, and 60% of Asian households in the Washington metro area, according to county staff analysis.

The proposed zoning changes also would aid environmental justice by allowing more low- and moderate-income workers to live closer to their places of employment, thereby reducing the negative environmental and social consequences of long commutes. Effects of the proposed changes on tree canopy should be minimal, as the current pattern in Arlington is for small single-family homes to be replaced by very large homes that cover as large a percentage of single-family-zoned lots as would the townhouses and homes with 2-8 units envisioned under the Missing Middle framework.

Allowing missing middle housing to be developed in R-5 to R-20 zones is a foundational element of improving housing affordability broadly, encouraging greater racial and economic integration, and expanding access to homeownership. However, this necessary step is not sufficient to bridge the gap between the market and lower income households and the victims of historical discriminatory practices. We strongly urge the County to commit to increased funding for affordable homeownership that targets first-generation homeowners as well as other programs that seek to affirmatively address the past harms of de jure and de facto racial segregation and associated discriminatory policies.

The proposed zoning changes in the draft framework, in and of themselves, will not repair the harm done to communities of color in Arlington in the last hundred years. However, the proposed Missing Middle framework is an important first step to addressing the legacy of racial discrimination and segregation in the housing market.

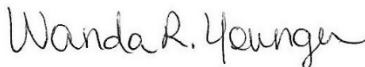
Sincerely,



Julius D. "J.D." Spain, Sr.  
President, Arlington Branch NAACP



Kellen M. MacBeth  
Chair, Housing Committee



Wanda R. Younger  
Branch Secretary

- c:     Arlington County Board Members  
        Samia Byrd, Chief Race and Equity Officer, Deputy County Manager  
        Claude Williamson, Director, CPHD  
        Anthony Fusarelli, Jr., CPHD Planning Director  
        Anne Venezia, CPHD Housing Director  
        Daniel Weir, Chair, Planning Commission  
        Eric Berkey, Chair, Housing Commission  
        NAACP Arlington Executive Committee & Members