



Arlington County Board
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

March 18, 2023

Dear Chair Cristol and Members of the Arlington County Board:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Regional Policy Director for [Greater Greater Washington](#), a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. GGWash supports the proposed Missing Middle Zoning Ordinance and General Land Use Plan amendments, along with specific options described below.


First, we commend Arlington County for showing leadership on this crucial issue. We have a regional housing shortage, with a recent study from Up For Growth showing we are short 156,000 homes of what we need to accommodate our current and future population¹. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments has noted that as a region we need to produce 32,000 new homes each year to catch up².

Without this needed housing supply, we've seen dramatic increases in home prices and rents, and Arlington County is no different. Inevitably, the burden of rising costs falls hardest on the least advantaged members of this community: young people starting out, seniors on fixed income, people of color, immigrants, and queer and trans people. People who grew up here and want to stay, or who moved here and want to put down roots. Like many jurisdictions in the DC area, Arlington risks losing them and the potential for decades of valuable contributions to this county.

This Missing Middle legislation isn't the only solution, but it's a crucial part of the solution: making it easier to build more homes, of all kinds, in all price ranges. More homes mean that more people, regardless of their needs or preferences, can find housing options that meet those needs or preferences without having to leave the county and the things that make life great: access to friends and family, good schools, economic opportunities, health care, leisure activities, and so on. The proposed Zoning Ordinance and General Land Use Plan amendments would be a regional best

¹ <https://upforgrowth.org/apply-the-vision/housing-underproduction/>

² https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/housing/documents/missing-middle/mmhs_phase-1-report-final-draft.pdf

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practice – if not a national best practice – for encouraging the construction of small, attainably priced infill housing.

Greater Greater Washington urges the County Board to craft a policy that maximizes the production of smaller, more affordable homes; encourages high-quality design without creating new barriers to approval; and creates a predictable and easy to follow development process for builders, property owners, and neighbors alike. Having reviewed the many options provided by planning staff, we generally recommend the more expansive recommendations, including:

- Option 10B, making sites within General Land Use Plan planning districts eligible for missing middle homes
- Option 1A, allowing multiple-family homes with up to 6 units
- Option 2A, making 6 units by-right on all R-5 through R-20 lots
- Option 11A, setting maximums for the total building size, which is an incentive to provide more, smaller, and affordable units as opposed to large expensive ones
- Option 4B, allowing a higher base lot coverage
- Option 12B, allowing accessory dwellings for townhomes or semi-detached homes
- Option 5C, requiring no parking for sites near transit
- Option 7B, placing no restrictions on the number of development permits
- Option 9B, allowing duplex with two front doors

As we wrote in July, we're excited to see Arlington County embracing missing middle housing, and hope that this legislation can be an example for other jurisdictions in the DC region. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you to make Arlington a place that more people can call home.

Sincerely,

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington