



# ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

## ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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September 15, 2015

Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Suite 300  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

**SUBJECT: 9. AFFORDABLE HOUSING MASTER PLAN.** Adoption of the Affordable Housing Master Plan, and General Land Use Plan Amendments. Acceptance of Affordable Housing Implementation Framework.

**RECOMMENDATIONS: The Planning recommends that the County Board:**

- 1. Adopt the Affordable Housing Master Plan as an element of the County Comprehensive Plan as amended:**
  - a. The Affordable Housing Master Plan be amended to indicate clearly that the 2040 Forecast of the Distribution of Housing Affordable up to 60% Adjusted Median Income in Appendix C is intended as a general guideline and not intended to serve as a cap or maximum number of housing units in a given geographic area.**
- 2. Accept the Affordable Housing Implementation Framework as an administrative guide for implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan.**
- 3. Adopt the related General Land Use Plan Amendments.**

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard these items at its September 15, 2015, public hearing. Russell Danao-Schroeder, Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development (CPHD) Housing, gave an overview of the Affordable Housing Study process and the changes since the Request to Advertise (RTA). The Chair of the Affordable Housing Study Working Group, Dr. Leonard L. Hamlin, Sr., gave remarks on behalf of the Affordable Housing Study Working Group. Additional staff present were: Steve Cover, Director, CPHD, David Cristeal, Director, CPHD-Housing, and Kellie Brown, CPHD-Planning.

Dr. Hamlin said that he was thankful for the amount of input they have received from the community. He said that we must make room in our community for people of all incomes. This Plan is intended to ensure that an adequate supply of affordable housing is available to meet the

P.C. #45.

needs of our citizens, both now and in the future, enable access to housing for vulnerable populations, and contribute to an economically and environmentally sustainable community. The working group has done its job in crafting an affordable housing policy that responds to today's realities and establishes a vision for our future based on a careful analysis of the facts.

### **Public Speakers**

There were three public speakers.

Bernie Berne spoke against the idea of needing more affordable housing. The first affordable housing in Arlington was Freedman's Village, which was a failed experiment that resulted in high crime. He lives in Buckingham and it had the highest crime rate in Arlington although with gentrification, that has decreased. There has been a lot of bonus density for affordable housing. There is also plenty of affordable housing Herndon and D.C. and Arlington will get nothing out of putting affordable housing near Metro. There is a preference for Arlington residents but it is not binding. Their neighborhood does not want affordable housing in Lubber Run Park.

Mary Rouleau, Alliance for Housing Solutions said that her organization took the unusual step of putting an ad in the Sun Gazette supporting the housing study documents. Her organization runs a coalition called Housing Arlington and they agreed that the policy document should be adopted. Everyone will get a say in the implementation. She felt that there is a lot of misunderstanding in the community, but there is a lot of support from a lot of groups. The study has important economic implications for Arlington. There have been multiple opportunities for input and many changes have been made in response to input and now it is time to move forward. This community has a strong reputation of being inclusive and welcoming and it is an important value.

David Perrow, Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH), has about 1,218 apartment units equally dispersed in north and south Arlington. An additional 756 units in development or in their five year pipeline, also equally dispersed in north and south Arlington. The Affordable Housing Study has been a three year process with ample opportunities for community input. The Plan and Implementation Framework are ready to be adopted and will result in much needed affordable housing in the future.

### **Planning Commission Reports**

Commissioner Sockwell has been the Planning Commission representative with the Affordable Housing Study Working Group and he reported that it had been a three year process with extensive community outreach and many hours were devoted to discussion of various policies. Generally he thinks this plan is a quantum leap beyond the policy apparatus used in the past. This is a systematic, rigorous, and imaginative plan.

Commissioner Brown reported that this is the fifth time that the Planning Commission has considered the Affordable Housing Master Plan ("AHMP"). The Long Range Planning Committee had been presented with the AHMP and has had opportunity to comment on three occasions; in October, 2014, in February and again in April of this year. The comments that LRPC provided to staff have been considered and have contributed to the plan we have today. The Planning Commission also heard the request to advertise this plan in June, made two recommendations at that time and the documents incorporated them.

### **Planning Commission Discussion**

Commissioner Iacomini was appreciative of the context that the inclusion of the history of affordable housing in Arlington gives to the Plan.

Commissioner Gutshall asked who made the recommendations set forth in Attachment 6? Mr. Schroeder said that the attachment contains staff's recommendations for revisions to the AHMP and the Implementation Framework ("IF") that were not reflected in the draft documents published in August that accompany the report.

Commissioner Hughes said that he would like to discuss the Form Based Code recommendation.

Commissioner Iacomini asked about annual reports and how frequently the AHMP would be reviewed? Mr. Danao-Schroeder said the policy itself would be subject to review every five years, the same as other Comprehensive Plan elements

Commissioner Sockwell said that this is a 25 year plan but at what point in the process will there be the need to go back and look at the needs analysis that was a basis for the plan? Mr. Danao-Schroeder said it would likely happen every five years during review of the comprehensive plan element. Mr. Cristeal said the last time this was reviewed was in the mid-90's which was too long a period. He expected that there would be annual monitoring reports, and a review every five years.

Commissioner Siegel asked if annual reporting would include numbers of units for the geographic areas identified in the plan as well as the global number of affordable units. Mr. Danao-Schroeder confirmed that this would be done.

Commissioner Hughes said the annual report is important and it tells us where we are winning and losing.

### **Geographic distribution of affordable housing**

Commissioner Gutshall asked if when looking at the table and percentages, and the percentages do add up to 100%, does that allow for flexibility, since it is unlikely that all areas will uniformly achieve the distribution, and some areas might outpace others. While the text of the plan under the geographic distribution policy 1.1.4 states a desire to achieve a distribution "proximate" to the forecast. Are the map and table intended to be prescriptive or to serve as guidance? Mr. Danao-Schroeder said that staff had struggled with the issue of differing rates of success for different areas, and was open to clarifying language.

Commissioner Gutshall asked staff to explain 3x average tracked poverty rate. Mr. Danao-Schroeder explained how it is based on HUD guidelines.

Commissioner Hughes followed up my asking staff about maps regarding the area meeting the 3x poverty rate. Mr. Danao-Schroeder presented a map of average tracked poverty rates by census track. Commissioner Hughes expressed concerns about drawing "bright lines" asking hypothetically was it then ok directly across the street.

Commissioner Gutshall suggested adding greater detail to the footnote on poverty rate under the recommendations for AHIF in the IF.

Commissioner Hughes said that he would have liked to have seen inclusive zoning as a tool in the IF and that he would support the use of inclusive zoning.

### **Form Based Code Recommendation**

Commissioner Hughes applauded the vice-chair of the Affordable Housing Study Working Group Mike Spotts, sitting in the audience, for his outstanding efforts to engage with community members on issues of concern. He stated that when people saw that the recommendation to consider form based codes (“FBC”) in other parts of the County was removed from the IF, they felt that if the FBC were good for Columbia Pike why would they not be good in other parts of the County? Commissioner Hughes was pleased to see that the recommendation will be reinstated.

Commissioner Siegel said that she does not understand the perception that FBC is bad policy.

Commissioner Schroll asked whether form based codes had a causal connection or correlation with more affordable housing and whether there is data showing use of FBC would achieve affordable housing beyond the 20%? Mr. Danao-Schroeder responded that there are a number of tools that could be used in achieving the planning goals for any area and FBC is one.

Commissioner Schroll asked for an explanation of the process that led to the use of this tool. Mr. Danao-Schroeder responded that as the planning process for Columbia Pike developed, those involved felt that this was the tool best suited to achieve their goals. A requirement for affordable housing was incorporated into the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area FBC, but FBC’s do not generally have this component

Commissioner Brown responded Lee Highway is about 20 years behind Columbia Pike in planning and although they will consider FBC, but they have a long way to go before figuring out height, density, and parking.

Commissioner Gutshall asked if staff felt that removal of the FBC statement if or when other areas were to look at FBC, will the plan be robust enough that affordable housing will be an available tool for other parts of the County. Mr. Danao-Schroeder said the adoption of the AHMP establishes county policy as an element of the Comprehensive Plan, future planning efforts will have to consider how they are contributing to achieving the policy. Commissioner Brown said there are a lot of new tools that might be available to Lee Highway.

Commissioner Iacomini said it is interesting to have a discussion about FBC. She stated she is not a true fan of Form Based Code. She noted that she prefers site plans as they provide the ability to tailor solutions to specific projects. She said that she likes goals in area plans, such as the ones in the Virginia Square Sector Plan. She agreed that transitions will be an issue along Lee Highway.

Commissioner Sockwell said if FBC were applied to a small enough area, a developer can produce more affordable housing units than by using a zoning category. Columbia Pike was not necessarily the best example because it was a massive project. If FBC were used as a tool, it

could be appropriate for smaller areas. Some of the edge areas might be appropriate for use of FBC. FBC generally could be appropriate a micro-level for areas in some circumstances.

### **Education of the Universal Design and “Visitability”**

Commissioner Ciotti said she doesn't see how the plan will be implemented without incentives. Many older people end up moving to nursing facilities because their homes are not designed for them as they age or if they break a hip. The AHMP does an excellent job of highlighting the intersection of disability and poverty. She said that she was thrilled to be in a community where the intersection of disability and poverty is recognized.

Accessible unit matching is an absolutely essential feature. She said that 60 days is not enough to lease an accessible unit and six months is appropriate. She said that the County should not open those units to the general population. Our aging population and recent and current wars will create a new generation of people with disabilities.

Commissioner Hughes said he also supports universal design for units and wraparound services. Specifically noting the challenges individuals in wheelchairs might face reaching the consolidated County Health Services within the Sienna complex.

Commissioner Ciotti said Arlington is the only place in the area that has successfully integrated accessibility with the FBC.

### **Assistance for Condominium Associations**

Commissioner Gutshall asked how financial assistance was different from other financial incentives in regard to item 24 of the IF, titled Assistance for Condominium Associations? Mr. Danao-Schroeder said financial assistance would be funds made available by the County for renovations needed to maintain viable condo associations.

### **Homeless Services**

Commissioner Ciotti said that other places have made real progress in dealing with homelessness and said micro-units with wraparound services has been working. It seems that the micro-units are more affordable and are we thinking about that? Mr. Danao-Schroeder said the IF speaks to this under the section on Supportive Housing with Services there is a section on supportive studio apartments which are essentially the same as micro-units.

Commissioner Gutshall said he serves on the Board for Doorways for Women and Families and there is a friendly competition among the non-profits in the community and suggested that when highlighting one shelter but leaving out others, the documents were potentially, though inadvertently, stirring the pot.

### **MARKs preservation planning**

Commissioner Iacomini spoke about MARKS and said 15 years ago there was a discussion among some citizens to perhaps remove the option for by right townhouses from RA zoning districts.. Some of the losses in market rate affordable unites are to new townhome developments that take the place of garden apartment. There is a precedent in C-2 zoning where a site plan is required for residential uses. This is a discussion the community should have. She noted Parkland Gardens that had been off of Lee Highway was lost to a plan to build townhouses.

### **Transfer of Development Rights**

Commissioner Schroll said the section in the IF on Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is missing any reference to preservation of market affordable housing.

Commissioner Iacomini said TDR has been used successfully and she is hoping that Courthouse Manor would be preserved through use of TDR. She observed that other communities with successful TDR programs have a banking mechanism. Mr. Danao-Schroeder said that looking into a TDR bank was one of the recommendations

### **Philanthropic Support**

Commissioner Iacomini referenced the philanthropic support section saying that she has been a proponent of the idea of creating a “giving back fund.” She asked what the County’s role would be? Mr. Danao-Schroeder replied that the County would have a supporting role providing technical assistance and guidance on possible housing programs that could be supported.

### **Planning Commission Motion**

Commissioner Brown made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board adopt the Affordable Housing Master Plan as an element of the County Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Sockwell seconded the motion.

Commissioner Gutshall made a motion to amend that the Planning Commission to recommend to the County Board that the Affordable Housing Master Plan be amended to indicate clearly that the 2040 Forecast of the Distribution of Housing Affordable up to 60% Adjusted Median Income in Appendix C is intended as a general guideline and not intended to serve as a cap or maximum number of housing units in a given geographic area. Commissioner Schroll seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission voted to support the amendment 7-0-1 with Commissioners Sockwell, Ciotti, Siegel, Iacomini, Schroll, Gutshall, and Brown in support and Commissioner Hughes abstaining.

Commissioner Hughes said he wishes he could support the plan however the absence of inclusive zoning is an obstacle for him. On the west end of Columbia Pike, the results are three big buildings that are all 100% committed affordable housing and he does not find that to be good public policy. The AHMP is a reasonable and improved plan and he thanked staff for all the hard work.

Commissioner Hughes said he wishes he could support the plan however the absence of inclusive zoning is an obstacle for him. His perspective is on the west end of Columbia Pike, where the results of our investments are three big buildings that are all 100% committed affordable housing, in our highest poverty zone, and he does not find that to be good public policy. The AHMP is a reasonable and improved plan and he thanked staff for all the hard work.

Commissioner Siegel responded that she recognizes the struggle of dealing with an issue and asked Commissioner Hughes whether there could be a constructive motion or approach that could be articulated to introduce the idea of inclusive zoning, or is his thought that we are too far away from that approach?

Commissioner Hughes said he does not know all the intricacies of Virginia Code well enough to propose a motion to achieve inclusive zoning within Arlington.

The Planning Commission voted to support the main motion as amended 7-1 with Commissioners Sockwell, Ciotti, Siegel, Iacomini, Schroll, Gutshall, and Brown in support and Commissioner Hughes opposed.

Commissioner Brown made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board accept the Affordable Housing Implementation Framework as an administrative guide for implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan. Commissioner Gutshall seconded the motion.

Commissioner Siegel made a motion to amend the main motion that the Planning Commission recommend the County Board direct staff to formalize a process to seek ways to further incentivize the production of affordable housing through the bonus density process as set forth on page 13 of the Implementation Framework draft. In particular, with regard to the proposal to raise the limits on achievable bonus density above .25% FAR, staff should consider the specific context, conditions, opportunities and constraints unique to existing or proposed small area, or other County plans and planning efforts. Commissioner Iacomini seconded the motion.

Commissioner Siegel said her impression of the discussion about bonus density and raising the cap as a tool to produce more affordable units was that staff was headed in the right direction with the questions listed on page 13. She is trying to support staff, and suggests that raising the limit could work, but that it would need to be tested against different area plans. Bonus density and how to apportion it to community benefits always comes up during site plan meetings and she would appreciate having further guidance here. There was a concern that .25 is too high for some sites, such as The Berkeley. There needs more policy thinking for guidance.

Commissioner Gutshall asked if she was trying to add emphasis to the gray box on page 13. Commissioner Siegel responded that those questions should be analyzed in the context of small area plans. Raising the cap is an interesting idea but there needs to be a judgment about whether its appropriate in different areas of the County.

Commissioner Iacomini clarified she believes the intent of the motion is that when the bonus density study is undertaken in the Implementation phase, staff would look at some existing small area plans and test various iterations of possible bonus increases to see if they would work and/or what effect they might have on building forms called out in the plans.

Commissioner Sockwell said he thought this was initiating a process at the County level to change the bonus density, which is problematic. One problem is that staff has not been consulted on the workplan and whether they would be willing to undertake a large public process. A second problem is the proposal is already out there and if someone wants to come up with a process to consider staff's ability to handle this large process, they are free to do so. The possibility as a policy is in the Plan and available as a process in the future and doesn't need to be done now.

Commissioner Iacomini clarified that she believes the intent is that when undertaken as referenced in the Implementation Framework the plan would be to test it as part of the study to consider small area plans and test the theory.

Commissioner Sockwell said he thought this was initiating a process at the County level to change the bonus density, which is problematic. One problem is that staff has not been consulted about their workplan and whether they would be willing to devote resources to such a large public process. A second problem is the proposal is already out there and if someone wants to come up with a process to consider staff's ability to handle this large process, they are free to do so. The possibility of developing such a policy is in the Plan already and available as a process in the future and does not need to be done now.

Commissioner Siegel asked whether additional bonus density should then be considered site plan by site plan?

Commissioner Sockwell said as a broad policy matter, the suggestion that more bonus density to generate more affordable housing is in the plan and available for further discussion. Commissioner Iacomini added on page 39, Number 8 "Bonus density seek ways to incentivize", there is an "s-t" by it for "short term".

The Planning Commissioner voted 2-5-1 to deny the amendment with Commissioners Siegel and Iacomini in favor, Commissioners Sockwell, Ciotti, Gutshall, Brown, and Schroll against, and Commissioner Hughes abstaining.

The Planning Commission then took up the main motion.

Commissioner Gutshall said it is remarkable for the Study to come forward in the allocated three years and it is fantastic groundwork that will serve the County well in the future.

The Planning Commission voted to support the main motion 7-1 with Commissioners Sockwell, Ciotti, Siegel, Iacomini, Schroll, Gutshall, and Brown in support and Commissioner Hughes opposed.

Commissioner Brown made a motion that the Planning Commission adopt the related General Land Use Plan Amendments. Commissioner Schroll seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously to support the motion 8-0 with Commissioners Sockwell, Ciotti, Siegel, Iacomini, Schroll, Gutshall, Brown and Hughes in support.

Respectfully Submitted,

Arlington County Planning Commission  
Christopher V. Forinash

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher V. Forinash". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.