

City of Alexandria, Virginia

# Zoning for Housing/Housing for All City Council Public Hearing

City Council Public Hearing Dates

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Saturday, November 18, 2023

City Council Legislative Meeting Date

November 28, 2023

City Council Chambers



# Zoning for Housing/Housing for All: 4 Year Effort



- **September/early October 2019:** In public meetings, the Planning Commission, City Council and the Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee received information pertaining to Washington Council of Government's (COG) Regional Housing Initiative (RHI): 75,000 additional units required across the region (2020-2030) above projected 240,000 units.
- **March 14, 2020:** City Council endorsed the COG RHI and Alexandria's target of 3,000 additional units over an 8,000 total anticipated during 2020-2030. Of Alexandria's current 800 units each year, 200 have been affordable. Of the additional 300 per year, between 2020-2030, 75 percent are to be affordable.
- **Zoning for Housing/Zoning for Housing Initiative:** The Initiative was proposed to augment the City's 2014-2025 Alexandria Housing Master Plan programs and policies underway to address Alexandria's existing and projected affordable housing needs.
- **Affordable Housing Need:** 19,000 households earning \$75,000 or less are cost-burdened (2017-2021 American Community Survey data/U.S. Census Bureau).

# Zoning for Housing Zoning Reforms



- **Zoning for Housing/Housing for All is included in past Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Programs (ILRPWP): Public Hearings and Legislative Meetings**
  - FY 2022 ILRPWP (12 Z4H Reforms): Z4H #4 (May 25, 2021 CC ILRPWP approval)
  - FY 2023 ILRPWP: Z4H #6 (June 14, 2022 CC ILRPWP approval)
  - FY 2024-2025 ILRPWP (Comprehensive Package): Z4H/H4All #1 (June 27, 2023 CC ILRPWP approval)
- **Three initiatives adopted between 2021 – 2022:** Work entailed study/analysis and extensive community engagement components:
  - [Accessory Dwelling Units Program](#): (January 2021 – CC approval)
  - [Co-Living Program](#): (January 2022 – CC approval)
  - [Auxiliary Dwelling Units Program](#) (July 2022 – CC approval)

# Remaining Nine Zoning for Housing Zoning Reforms



- **There are nine (9) remaining Zoning for Housing Zoning Reforms from the twelve (12) originally authorized by City Council in May 2021 to study:**
  - Bonus Height Zoning Reform Analysis (*Recommended to Table*)
  - Historic Development Patterns Zoning Reform Analysis
  - Residential Multi-Family Zone Zoning Reform Analysis
  - Industrial Zone Zoning Reform Analysis
  - Coordinated Development Districts and Affordable Housing Zoning Reform Analysis
  - Expansion of Transit Oriented Development
  - Office to Residential Conversion Zoning Reform Analysis
  - Townhouse Zone Zoning Reform Analysis
  - Expanding Housing Opportunities in Single Family Zones Zoning Analysis

# Methodologies for Research and Analysis



- **Online Fact Sheet is available for each proposed Zoning Reform.**
- **Methodology for Study and Analysis is described under each Fact Sheet: Analysis included:**
  - Gathering and analyzing data;
  - Reviewing and testing existing related provisions against a proposed reform;
  - Examining regional and/or national precedents for lessons learned and successes;
  - Meetings with practitioners on feasibility/utility;
  - Input from the public through community engagement opportunities;
  - Financial feasibility studies relative to several reforms (links to these studies are included under applicable Fact Sheets);
  - Regional, City-wide and Local functional planning resources and processes taken into account related to transportation, sewer, stormwater, student generation, open space requirements; and
  - Net new unit count and Infrastructure analysis pursuant to the proposed reforms is provided online: 2838 estimated units.

# How the City accounts for impacts from new development



- **Regional:** forecasts, regional models for transportation, air and water quality, etc.
- **Citywide:** regularly updated master plans for infrastructure and public facilities to support all planned growth (transportation, water and sewer, schools, open space, and more)
- **Neighborhood:** small area plans to ensure that planned growth is fully supported by infrastructure and public facilities.
- **Site:** Individual projects are evaluated for on and off-site impacts.



# How we've addressed concerns about changes to the single family zones

## **The limited changes in the proposal ensure that the potential for greater impacts is quite limited**

- No change to the development envelope
- No change to the developable footprint
- No change to tree canopy requirements
- No additional impact on stormwater runoff
- No financial windfall for developers who build 2-4 units instead of just one
- Overall number of new units is so modest that impacts on citywide facilities (water, sewer, traffic, transit, schools and open space) are negligible.

# Processes for Immediate Implementation of Proposals



- **Zoning Text Amendments**
- **Policy Amendments**
  - **2020-2021 Housing Policy**
  - **City's Master Plan**



# DRAFT ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS AND POLICY AMENDMENTS



- **Draft Zoning Text Amendments (ZTA)**
  - Expansion of Opportunities in Single-family Zones Zoning Reforms ZTA
  - Historical Development Patterns Zoning Reform ZTA
  - Residential Multi-family Zone Zoning Reform ZTA
  - Industrial Zone Zoning Reform ZTA
  - Townhouse Zone Zoning Reform ZTA
- **Draft Policy Amendments**
  - Coordinated Development Zoning Reform
  - Conversions of Commercial to Residential Zoning Reform
  - Residential Multi-family Zoning Reform

# Housing for All/Zoning for Housing's Equity Component



- **Each proposed Zoning Reform includes an Equity Statement showing conformance with one of the following housing and equity goals:**
  - Accessibility – wider geographic options of housing choices
  - Affordability – expanded affordability to meet the diverse income categories and job categories within the City
  - Availability – wider availability of choices in typologies, tenures, price points and locations throughout the City
- **Under a proposed change to the Master Plan is a recommendation to include an equity policy statement (See slide 17):** *“ . . . race and social equity is incorporated and centered in all planning per City Council Resolution 2974 . . . ”*
- **Ongoing Work:** In line with the above, staff will continue to study the feasibility of a potential Equity Impact Statement within development proposals brought forth for consideration as one of the future efforts to be explored in order to bring to full life the equity-based Master Plan Amendment and City Council Resolution above. Another future effort entails continuing to research the Zoning Ordinance to identify and address any remaining potential exclusionary barriers to housing production and/or access.

# Next Proposed Efforts



- **Outcomes:** Each proposal has a set of defined outcomes, except the Bonus Height Proposal which is recommended to be tabled.
- **Future Work:** Three of the zoning reforms which contain recommendations envision a Phase II to build on outcomes from this current effort. The three are:
  - Townhouse Phase II
  - Single-family Phase II
  - Historic Development Patterns Phase II

# Community Engagement



- **Message: Housing accessibility, affordability and availability.**
- **Variety of Tools to meet varied needs of households and individuals**
  - Extensive content with ongoing updates to the project website
  - Special events with panels (attended by 150 or more)
  - Community meetings (attended by 70 or more)
  - Pop-up events throughout the City, leveraging other City events (substantial turnouts)
  - Joint Work Sessions – City Council and Planning Commission (2)
  - Planning Commission Work Session (1)
  - Community-wide Questionnaire (1700 responses)
  - Online Comment board (700)
  - Ongoing communication through eNews and social media
  - Presentation and Questionnaire conducted with ACPS High Schoolers
  - September and October City Council Townhalls, meetings and public hearings
- **Translation services provided in many cases.**
- **Hybrid options in many cases.**



# Public Hearing Schedule

- Wednesday, November 1: Planning Commission  
Public Hearing
- Tuesday, November 14: City Council Public  
Hearing
- Saturday, November 18: City Council Public  
Hearing
- Tuesday, November 28: City Council  
Consideration

# Planning Commission Actions of November 1, 2023



- Approval of Master Plan Amendments as submitted: 7-0 Vote
- Approval of 2020-2021 Housing Policy Amendments as submitted: 7-0 Vote
- Approval of Staff Recommendations for 7 Proposals as submitted: 7-0 Vote
  - Bonus Height Recommendation to Table
  - Historic Development Patterns Recommendation to Approve
  - Residential Multi-Unit Analysis Recommendation to Approve
  - Industrial Zone Analysis Recommendation to Approve
  - Coordinated Development District Recommendation to Approve
  - Transit Oriented Development Recommendation to Approve
  - Commercial to Residential Recommendation to Approve
- Staff recommends City Council Approval.

# Planning Commission Actions on Remaining Proposals November 1, 2023



- Endorsement of Staff's Parking Recommendations for the Townhouse Zone and Single-family Zone Proposal: 5-2 Vote
- Endorsement of Staff's Family Definition Recommendation under the Single Family Zone Proposal: 5-2 Vote
- Endorsement of Staff's Townhouse Zones Recommendation: 7-0 Vote
- Endorsement of Staff's Expanding Housing Opportunities within Single-family Zones Recommendation: 6-1 Vote
- Approval of Zoning Text Amendment 2023-00007: 7-0 Vote

# Staff Recommends City Council Approval



# Testimony

## Questions and Answers

# Zoning Text Amendments and Policy Amendments

## BACKGROUND SLIDES

# Draft Zoning Text Amendment – Expanding Opportunities in Single Family Zones Zoning Reform



**Expanding Housing Opportunities in Single Family Zones:** Staff proposes increasing the types of dwellings – two to four units in one building – in the single-family zones and allowing the Building Code to determine occupancy numbers. This would contribute to more accessible and available housing opportunities in the City.

- **This is accomplished by changes to the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance:**
  - Article III: Sections 3-100 – 3-500 Single Family Zones (two-, three-four-family dwellings for R5, R8, R12, R20 and three-four unit dwellings in R2-5)
  - Article II: Definitions (Family)
  - Article VII: Supplemental Regulations (Roominghouses)
  - Article VIII: Off-Street Parking and Loading
  - Article XI: Exemption of lots developed with small scale multi-unit dwellings from Site Plan requirements.
  - Additional sections throughout the ZO which reference “roominghouse” have been deleted and any that reference “family” have been changed to “unit.”

# Draft Zoning Text Amendment – Expanding Opportunities in Single Family Zones Zoning Reform



## **Parking**

- **Option 3 is recommended by staff:**
  - No minimum parking requirements for dwellings up to four units within the enhanced transit area.
  - Minimum 0.5 parking spaces per unit for dwellings up to four units beyond the enhanced transit area.
  
- This is accomplished through changes to: Article VIII Off Street Parking and Loading
  - Section 8-200(A)(1) Enhanced and outside Enhanced Transit Area minimum parking requirements
  - Section 8-200(C)(7) Location of parking facilities and maximum number of cars parked outdoors

# Zoning Text Amendments – Historic Development Patterns Zoning Reform



## **Historic Development Patterns:**

- Staff proposes deletion of minimum lot size and maximum density (units per acre) requirements for multi-unit dwellings.
  - Staff also proposes elimination of the zone transition setback and all references to that provision.
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- **This is accomplished by changes to:**
    - Density and lot requirements for multi-unit dwellings:
      - Identified provisions in Articles III (Residential Zone Regulations), IV (Commercial, Office and Industrial Zones) and V Mixed Use Zones)
    - Zone transition setback:
      - Identified provisions in Articles IV (Commercial, Office and Industrial Zones), V (Mixed Use Zones), VII (Supplemental Zone Regulations) and XI (Development Approvals)

# Draft Zoning Text Amendment – Industrial Zone Zoning Reform



## Industrial Zone

- Staff recommends urban design standards for any new buildings that are built within the Industrial Zone.
- The intent is for any potential new industrial zoned building to be compatible with the future housing and mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. These standards do not apply to expansions or additions to existing buildings.
- **This is accomplished by changes to:**
  - Identified provisions in Article IV (Commercial, Office, and Industrial Uses)

# Draft Zoning Text Amendment – Residential Multi-family Zone Zoning Reform



## **Residential Multi-family Zone:**

- The RMF zone allows affordable housing with a Density Bonus and it allows neighborhood-serving commercial uses on the ground floor. The zone currently requires Special Use Permits for several of these uses, including restaurants, medical care facilities, and fitness studios, that are normally allowed by-right in other zoning districts.
- Staff is recommending a text amendment to make the RMF zone more flexible regarding these uses.
- **This is accomplished by changes to the following section of the Zoning Ordinance:**
  - Identified provisions in Article III (Residential Zone Regulations)

# Draft Zoning Text Amendment – Townhouse Zones Zoning Reform



## **Townhouses:**

- Staff proposes amendments to existing yard, bulk, and open space requirements for residential uses.
- Staff also proposes a new provision which would grant single-unit, two-unit, and townhouse dwellings on lots with similar sizes to those currently zoned RM similar development rights to those provided by the RM zone.
- **This would be accomplished by:**
  - Creating new Section 12-1000 (under Article 12 - Non-compliance and Non-conformity). This would replace existing sections in 3-607(A) and (B), 3-707(B), and 3-1108(A) and (B).
  - Establishing contextual front yard requirements in: Articles II (Definitions), III (Residential Zone Regulations), IV (Commercial Office and Industrial Zones), and V (Mixed Use Zones)



# Draft Zoning Text Amendment – Townhouse Zones Zoning Reform



## Townhouses (continued)

- **This would be accomplished by (continued):**
  - Eliminating side yard requirements for lots less than 25 feet wide and amending the side yard requirements in the RM zone to require side yards only on lots wide enough to accommodate them in: Articles III (Residential Zone Regulations), IV (Commercial Office and Industrial Zones), and V (Mixed Use Zones)
  
  - Amending lot width requirement for two-family, semi-detached dwellings in Article IV (Commercial, Office and Industrial Zones)

# Draft Zoning Text Amendment – Townhouse Zones Zoning Reform



## Townhouses (continued)

- **This would be accomplished by (continued):**
  - Amending FAR requirements in Articles III (Residential Zone Regulations), IV (Commercial Office and Industrial Zones), V (Mixed Use Zones), and XII (Noncompliance and Nonconformity). All lots within the Old and Historic Alexandria and Parker-Gray districts would be allowed up to 1.50 FAR. Additionally, all lots that are noncomplying in any zone that permits townhouses would be allowed up to 1.50 FAR.
  - Amending open space requirements in: Articles III (Residential Zone Regulations), IV (Commercial Office and Industrial Zones), and V (Mixed Use Zones). This would standardize the open space requirement for residential uses across various zones. In these zones, 35 percent of the lot area would be required to be open space and rooftop open space could be included to meet this requirement with the Director's approval.
  - Amending off-street parking requirements consistent with the single-family zoning reform.

# 2020-2021 Housing Policy Amendments



## 2020-2021 Housing Policy Amendments

- **Coordinated Development Districts: Draft Policy Language for the 2020-2021 Housing Policy Update:**
  - Consistent with Zoning Ordinance Section 7-700 and as a condition in CDD Special Use Permits, City policy is to require that one-third (1/3) of the density requested above what is recommended in the underlying Small Area Plan be provided as committed affordable housing.
- **Conversions to Residential: Draft Policy Language for the 2020-2021 Housing Policy Update:**
  - In zones in which the commercial FAR is higher than the maximum permitted residential FAR, City policy for commercial to residential conversions in existing buildings is to apply Section 7-700 in order to allow additional FAR for the proposed residential use.

# Draft Master Plan Amendments



- **Master Plan Amendments: Draft Revisions pertaining to Zoning for Housing Initiatives**
  - Amend the following sentence in the City’s Master Plan wherever it occurs, as follows: *"Areas of the City currently zoned residential should remain zoned for residential use **at no higher than their current density.**"*;
  - Incorporate the following note in all Master Plan: *References to low density will continue to refer to development configuration that limits overall building height and lot coverage compatible with the existing neighborhood;*
  - Incorporate the following note in all Master Plan chapters: *Ensure race and social equity is “incorporated and centered in all planning” per City Council’s Resolution 2974 including, but not limited to, all references to preserving and protecting neighborhoods and character;* and
  - Amend the Housing Master Plan, Zoning Tools Section on Page 107 to include the *purpose of Residential Multi-Family Zone*