



6 January 2026

Members of the Alexandria Planning Commission,

As the Alexandria leadership team for YIMBYS of Northern Virginia, we are excited to see two significant housing developments on today's docket, in addition to three subdivisions and a Zoning Text Amendment that is a step in the right direction towards streamlining the process for office-to-residential conversions, and we ask you to vote yes on all of them. Together, these developments will add 31 desperately needed new homes to Alexandria. Lastly, we'd like to share our perspective on the proposed Green Building Plan.

Docket item 6, 220 and 224 S Peyton Street, will replace a small surface parking lot with eight homes close to the King Street Metro station. The development will also benefit its neighbors with improved sidewalks and new street trees. We would like to note that you are again being asked to approve a parking reduction within a quarter mile of a Metro station in one of our city's most walkable areas. We hope you will legalize parking flexibility to make it easier to build homes like these, in locations where residents have choices in how to get around.

Docket item 7, 732 N Washington and 710 Madison, will convert a 1960s office building in Old Town North to twenty homes. In addition to the fact that a parking reduction is again required for a development within a half mile of a Metro station, we'd like to note that a Special Use Permit is required to build a residential building in the CRMU-X zone. A residential building in a residential zone should not be considered a special use. We hope you will consider removing this requirement, and more broadly, simplifying our zones so that housing is legal everywhere in Alexandria. Lastly, we'd like to comment on the map in the staff report showing that this development will be the sixth height increase to the Old Town North Small Area Plan, which is less than ten years old. We hope this will inform height limits that are appropriate for the housing our city needs in future planning processes, including the Duke Street plan.

Docket item 8, the zoning text amendment, is a step in the right direction towards simplifying the approval process for office-to-residential conversions. We enthusiastically support formalizing staff's interpretation to allow existing noncomplying buildings to convert to residential use. The new SUP process is a step in the right direction towards streamlining the regulatory complexity around office-to-residential conversions. We hope you will approve the proposed amendment, and then make further changes to our zoning code to allow more office-to-residential conversions to be approved by-right rather than requiring City Council approval for an SUP. This could include increasing residential FAR limits to match commercial limits in zones where they are not equal, and exempting office-to-residential conversions from requirements like open space and setbacks that do not apply to the existing office building.

Lastly, we'd like to share our thoughts on Docket Item 9, the proposed Green Building Plan. We unfortunately missed the initial public engagement last year, and we wish we had a clearer understanding of how the cost for building housing compares to the current policy. If the proposed policy will lower the cost of building homes as compared to the current policy in virtually all cases, then



we enthusiastically support it. If there are cases where it would increase the cost of building homes, then we urge caution and consideration of how the cost of important environmental requirements can be offset to ensure projects remain feasible in Alexandria itself. Any policy that aims to make buildings in Alexandria more sustainable must also acknowledge that any multifamily housing building within the City of Alexandria is inherently sustainable compared to the alternative. When a project cannot be built affordably in Alexandria it does not simply stop existing; that demand of housing is instead fulfilled elsewhere. This drives regional housing sprawl, increasing emissions as more people are forced to live in jurisdictions that are both A) more car-reliant and B) do not require projects to be built as sustainably. Reducing "Alexandria's" greenhouse gas emissions by displacing them into Fairfax or Prince William Counties is not a good solution. We are particularly concerned by the projected high costs for multifamily low-rise buildings, which the plan estimates at \$10 per square foot. More care should be given to reducing the costs of or allowing more leeway for this housing type.

In addition to that broader consideration, we suggest two specific changes to the Plan:

- 1) The plan mandates a certain percentage of required parking spaces be compatible for electric vehicles. The plan should instead: A) call for the elimination of parking mandates, since mandating more parking spaces than people actually need is bad for the environment, and B) shift how EV spaces are required by applying the percent to a project's number of *built* parking spaces rather than the *mandated* spaces. This disentangles the Green Building Plan from the current parking mandate policy, and also avoids penalizing developers for seeking a parking reduction.
- 2) The plan exempts buildings "under 25,000 square feet or with 4 or fewer units." By exempting the most inherently costly and least inherently sustainable form of housing (large single-family homes) while layering requirements on the most naturally affordable ones (multifamily, especially low rise), this creates a perverse incentive that will further encourage builders to focus on luxury houses. It is our understanding that all buildings over 3,000 square feet require a DSP, in theory allowing them to be subjected to this plan. Every single family home in Alexandria over 3,000 square feet costs at least \$1 million. It seems fair to apply higher standards to these luxury homes, and balance this by easing restrictions on the most-impacted and more affordable typologies.

We hope Alexandria will continue to welcome new homes of all types, all price points, and in all parts of our city to address our regional housing crisis and make our city better for everyone.

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