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1-23-21
submitted.
Michael Schuster

Testimony Before the Alexandria City Council on January 23, 2020 in Support of Zoning Ordinance Amendments Allowing the Construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

My name is Michael Schuster. I am testifying on behalf of the Alexandria City Commission on Aging, and its Chair Babs Waters. The Commission on Aging fully supports the zoning ordinance amendments that would permit the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units in the City of Alexandria.

At present, older adults requiring care and persons with disabilities have limited housing options in Alexandria. Assisted living facilities in the City are often not affordable to low-and moderate-income households and are typically age-restricted. Although the City has approved the construction of new assisted living facilities in both the Eisenhower and Alex West areas of the city, a unit in these new facilities could cost more than \$6000 a month. Nursing home care is even more expensive – as much as \$10,000 a month in a Skilled Nursing Facility. Medicare does not cover most care in a nursing facility, and Medicaid beds are limited.

Like many metropolitan areas across the country, Alexandria is experiencing an increased aging population. According to the staff report on ADUs, between 2010 and 2019, the older adult population (65+) grew by 30%. Approximately 3,300 older adult households in Alexandria are considered low-income (60% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or less) and about 6,000 or 38% of older adults live alone. As aging older adults begin to require more assistance with daily activities, ADUs would enable them to either live with relatives who can provide care or to contract for private home health care. We agree with the staff report that these options would allow older persons “to age safely, comfortably and more affordably than many alternatives, including moving to assisted-living facilities, where monthly costs can exceed \$6,000 per month

in the City of Alexandria. (Staff Report on *Zoning Text Amendment #2020-00007 Accessory Dwelling Units* (December 2020). Available at [21-0620 Staff Report.pdf](#).)

We would like to address several aspects of the final set of recommendations:

1. First, we applaud both the Department of Planning and Zoning and the Office of Housing for its community outreach on their proposal. Staff from these two agencies agreed to make presentations to the Commission on Aging and its Housing Committee on at least four separate occasions in the past nine months. We genuinely feel like partners in the development of this proposal.
2. Second, like the Planning Commission, we do not believe an owner occupancy requirement would enhance the use of ADUs. If issues arise, such as noise or parking complaints, the city has ample tools to address them already.
3. Third, the zoning ordinance amendments do not expand the requirements for additional buildings on current properties. They are basically the same as for sheds and garages that are currently permitted. As Planning Commission Chair Nathan Macek asserted at the January 5th commission meeting, if we already permit structures such as sheds and garages, what is wrong in putting some humanity into similarly regulated structures?
4. Finally, this proposal will not change the character of current neighborhoods. ADUs must comply with the same requirements as sheds and garages. The Planning and Housing staff believe based on their cost, and the experience of other jurisdictions, fewer than 15 ADUs per year would be constructed. This is only an incremental step in making housing more affordable for Alexandrians, so its impact will be minimal.

6
1-23-21
submitted by Kevin
Brady

I am speaking today to express my strong support, as a homeowner in Del Ray, for the proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit amendment, and I urge the Council to approve it.

Accessory dwelling units can offer less expensive housing options than renting or buying a single-family home because of their smaller size. They are a practical low-cost solution for seniors, recent college grads, and other folks who otherwise might be priced out of living in our beautiful city. ADUs can also offer a stream of income for homeowners in what is obviously still a very tough time economically for many across Alexandria.

I'm in favor of the provisions being proposed that would allow ADUs citywide, not require off-street parking for the ADU in our transit-rich and walkable city, and with no owner-occupant requirement.

Lastly, this is just a step in the right direction for providing more affordable housing in the city as the presence of Amazon HQ2 and a rapidly gentrifying area will only exacerbate our current affordability crisis.

Thank you for your time.

6
1-23-21
submitted by
Stephen Popick

Members of the City Council,

I speak today in my personal capacity in favor of this proposal. I am a homeowner, a landlord, and active voter in the our city. One of my properties has an ADU. In addition to my local interest,, I hold a PhD in Economics from George Washington University, and my research focus is on housing costs and city / neighborhood characteristics. In short, I am well suited to comment on this proposal.

The American Planning Association recently stated that “DUs all have the potential to increase housing affordability (both for homeowners and tenants), create a wider range of housing options within the community, enable seniors to stay near family as they age, and facilitate better use of the existing housing fabric in established neighborhoods.” Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist also finds that “the major factors in favor of ADUs are affordability and flexibility... the share of entry level homes has declined a lot.” Finally, the Urban Institute also supports ADUs, stating “ADUs may also increase the supply of rental housing for low- and moderate-income renters in high-cost neighborhoods.”

I support making the proposal citywide. Based on research from Urban Institute, I support no parking requirements for ADUs. To promote housing supply and benefit lower income residents, I also support the removal of the owner occupancy requirement.

This proposal is one small step of many needed to increase housing affordability for all who live in our wonderful city.

Stephen J. Popick, PhD
Alexandria city resident and homeowner
stephenpopick@gmail.com
571 224 5114

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1-23-21
submitted By
Roy Byrd

Mayor Wilson, members of the Council,

I moved to Alexandria in 1998, I am the President of Clover College Park Civic Association and serve on the Board of the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations; however, I am speaking today on my own behalf as a private citizen.

(Assumption): A few moments ago, you adopted the "Race and Social Equity Resolution", and it is through that lens that I ask you to weigh whether the Text Amendment on Accessory Dwelling Units is ready for your consideration.

Staff and the Planning Commission support ADUs as a tool to enhance housing affordability—facilitating Inter-generational households, aging in place, workforce housing and wealth building—but for whom?

I think you will be hard pressed to find any opposition for an ADU policy tied to inter-generational households, aging in place, or onsite family assistance such as nanny, health, or adult care giver situations.

However, by allowing for this sweepingly broad usage of ADUs, the city risks establishment, though inadvertently, of an unequitable policy; benefiting the privileged at the expense of those you seek to assist. Consider the following:

- As an affordable housing option who benefits: the marginalized; those already or at risk of being displaced—including minorities; and who decides, the city, the principal owner?
- Which workforce is most likely to gain from ADUs—will arrival of Amazon, Virginia Tech and ensuing market forces price the intended beneficiaries out—yet again?
- Assuming a needy fixed income senior homeowner can secure ADU financing, are they better served pursuing longer-term tenants at what staff would presume to be below traditional rental market rates, or pursuing more lucrative short term vacation rental opportunities?
- If billed as affordable or workforce housing, the city is essentially sanctioning ADUs as suitable permanent residences. ADU's are generally efficiency or studio apartments, with lesser amenities than traditional rental units; without strict oversight and enforcement, the city runs the risk of subjecting those most in need of affordable housing to substandard living conditions?
- Finally, is the Council persuaded the ADU Zoning Amendment before you is consistent with the "Race and Social Equity Resolution", just passed; is it really the best we as a city can do?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Roy Byrd



City of Alexandria, Virginia Commission on Aging



Division of Aging and Adult Services
Department of Community and Human Services
6101 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 200
Alexandria, Virginia 22304
703-746-5999
<http://alexandriava.gov/Aging>
daas@alexandriava.gov

January 19, 2021

Sent January 19, 2021 via email to City Clerk for Distribution to Addressees

The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: COA Letter of Support for final proposal on Accessory Dwelling Units serving older residents

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council,

At its January 14, 2021 meeting, the City of Alexandria Commission on Aging (COA) voted to support the final draft of text amendments on ADUs designed in part to serve older residents. These recommended amendments to the City's zoning ordinance are contained in the December 2020 staff report from the Department of Planning and Zoning and the Office of Housing, to the Planning Commission. Moreover, inasmuch as the Planning Commission has unanimously voted to approve the ADU amendments to the zoning ordinance and recommends that the City Council approve these changes, the COA also urges the City Council to adopt the staff recommendations for the allowance of ADUs in the city designed to serve/support in part older Alexandrians.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Barbara (Babs) H. Waters

Barbara (Babs) H. Waters
Chair, Commission on Aging

cc:
City Manager, Attn: Mr. Mark B. Jinks
Deputy City Manager: Ms Emily Baker
Deputy City Manager: Ms Debra Collins
City Attorney: Ms. Joanna Anderson
Director, Department of Planning & Zoning
Director, Office of Housing

6
1-23-21

Gloria Sitton

From: Laura Mosoriak <lemge1@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 13, 2021 6:20 PM
To: Gloria Sitton
Subject: [EXTERNAL]ADU proposal

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Ms Sitton,

I encourage the city to pass the proposed guidelines in order to allow ADUs in the City of Alexandria. I'm especially happy about the city decreasing the set back requirements for ADUs.

My husband and I have been working with an architect and she has drawn up plans that fit your proposed guidelines so we can build an adu over our one car garage in Del Ray. We have been waiting for almost 2 years for the City of Alexandria to allow ADUs so we can do it! When we bought our 1923 bungalow in Del Ray in 2010, we chose to restore it accurately which means we restored the original exterior/interior and we didn't slap a "shoe box" or a second house on the back of our house like so many others I've seen. Our house looks as it would have in 1923 and we have plenty of beds/baths for our family of four as well as a decent sized backyard to entertain in. While it's a perfect size for our family, we don't have a place for family and friends to stay when they visit. We decided an ADU would be perfect! They could have their own space and we'd have ours and nobody would be in each other's way. We currently have a one car garage and will expand it to a 1.5 car garage with a Mother-in-Law suite (ADU) above as long as the city allows. Right now, our one car garage is in the same location of the original 1923 one car garage and we have the original driveway that runs along the edge of the property on the east side of the house leading to the garage. I'm encouraged to hear that the new guidelines will allow us to keep the garage close to the same location and not force us to set it back 7ft as it has been enforced in the the past. If you make folks like us set the garage back 7 ft from the property line, it will not be in line with the original driveway and not be in keeping with the original layout of the garage and large backyard.

Thank you for being flexible on the set back and allowing residents like us build a period appropriate, small scale ADU that will fit in with the rest of our property and blend well in the neighborhood!

Brandon and Laura Mosoriak
31 Rosecrest Ave

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6
1-23-21

Gloria Sitton

From: Sara S <ss7220a@alumni.american.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2021 11:52 AM
To: PlanComm
Cc: Gloria Sitton
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL]2021 Alexandria Planning Commission Comments

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Mr. Silva,

Thank you very much for your message. Have a great New Year.

Sincerely,

Sara

On Tue, Jan 5, 2021 at 11:19 AM PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov> wrote:
Ms. Sass,

Thank you very much for providing this statement in relation to the proposed Street Name Change docket item to change the name of Swamp Fox Road to Hoffman Drive, which is currently scheduled to be considered by the Planning Commission at their hearing this evening (1/5/2021). Please let this email serve as a formal confirmation that it has been received and that it will be provided to the members of the Planning Commission for their consideration, will be provided to the Staff members assigned to this case, and will be made publicly available as "additional materials" within the hearing docket. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns that you may have regarding this matter, or otherwise.

Warmly,

Patrick Silva

Senior Planning Technician
City of Alexandria
Department of Planning and Zoning, Room 2100
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Patrick.Silva@alexandriava.gov
(703) 746-3806

From: Sara S <ss7220a@alumni.american.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 11:11 AM
To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>; Gloria Sitton <Gloria.Sitton@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]2021 Alexandria Planning Commission Comments

Dear Alexandria Planning Commission and Ms. Sitton,

Hello, Happy New Year. These comments are for the planning commission meeting today, January 5th at 7 PM. I ask that these comments be made of record in the minutes of the commission:

Alexandria, Virginia has experienced incredibly high development in the past few years. Mature trees and swamp / drainage land has been destroyed to build high rises and parking lots. Indeed, the City of Alexandria recognized this in 2019 with an initiative to help grow Alexandria's tree canopy which asked Alexandria residents to pay money per tree since the city kept issuing construction permits which destroyed old trees. The City of Alexandria interestingly omits the information on how wetlands hold water during high runoff events in its "Flooding & Drainage" page. Of course, the City of Alexandria is one of the responsible parties for destroying local wetlands in the first place. As far as I can tell, the only wetlands project the city budgeted for is the Four Mile Run restoration project which has been ongoing for sometime. This is not enough and will lead to flooding and sewage backup which the city seems to admit on its Flooding & Drainage page.

The City of Alexandria should not be constantly constructing without any consideration on how this activity affects its citizens long-term. Flooding and its impacts on housing and construction is a massive issue, one that can not be solved with one wetlands project. Every single new development should have dedicated wetlands or land resource space. Every single new development should be evaluated for water barrel collection or solar panel install. The City of Alexandria signed its Eco-City charter in 2008 --- what has happened since then?

I have watched as Alexandria's population exploded due to high rise housing availability, and these people have literally nowhere to go for recreation. People walk their dogs -- and let their dogs do what dogs do --- in *Civil War cemeteries* including Hooff's Run where our veterans are buried. Is this respectful? No, it isn't, and it contributes to land degradation and degradation of historical sites that I doubt the city has budgeted for.

This outlook that construction is king can be seen in the proposed renaming of Swamp Fox Road. Hoffman Center already bears his name and is a very popular commercial space. Why rename the road at all? Because his family that got rich by diverting natural resources to wealth asked for it? Isn't this sort of biased? Shouldn't citizens of Alexandria remember that this area has a rich natural history and isn't dedicated to one man? Indeed, the Latin root of Alexandria is "defender of men". Not "constant construction made us all rich hehe".

I hope these comments are made of record in the commission meeting minutes and are taken into consideration.

Sincerely,

Sara Sass, Esq.

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6
1-23-21

Gloria Sitton

From: Nancy Jo Nelson <nancy.jo.nelson1@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 17, 2021 12:56 PM
To: PlanComm
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Accessory Dwelling Units

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Bennett- Parker, and Members of the City Council,

I am pleased that the Planning Commission voted unanimously to support Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). My hope is that this is one tool among many to address the need for affordable housing and flexibility for current homeowners like me that live in a large home with just two people now that my kids are grown. I have a finished basement with a separate entrance that I would consider making into an accessory dwelling unit as I age and may need live in help or someone near by.

I am walking distance to several ACPS schools and metro. I could rent to a teacher or para-professional who could walk to work and be a full-time member of the community rather than commute to an apartment many miles away due to Alexandria's incredibly high cost of rental housing.

In this age of economic inequality, ADUs allow us to share our homes while providing dignity and privacy, as well as security for the home owner.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nancy Jo Nelson
506 Upland Place
Alexandria VA 22301

(202) 251-6956
nancy.jo.nelson1@gmail.com

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1-23-21

Gloria Sitton

From: Leslie Hagan <leslie.hagan.lh@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 10:12 PM
To: PlanComm
Subject: re: Accessory Dwelling Units in Alexandria

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Those of us who live in neighborhoods zoned for single family homes DO NOT want our zoning changed so ADUs, low rise apartments and condos, and triplexes built in the neighborhoods we chose to live in BECAUSE they WERE zoned for single family homes. Changing the current zoning to allow the very types of housing we DO NOT want is the equivalent of invoking eminent domain. You are destroying our neighborhoods, raising our property taxes to unaffordable heights, and degrading the quality of our lives to meet the demands of other governing bodies who have no authority over our governance. No one ran on the promise that this would be done to us. We have been completely betrayed.

6
1-23-21

Gloria Sitton

From: Linda Thompson <dosthomp@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 4:05 PM
To: PlanComm
Subject: [EXTERNAL]ADU planning - objection

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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I am writing to voice my opinion on the ADU meetings.

The City has been holding meetings regarding the Zoning Amendment to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) throughout the city. Seminary Hill Assn. has had concerns about some of the aspects of this proposal, including the one-foot setback from neighboring property lines. It was felt, however, that the requirement that either the main residence or the ADU had to be occupied by the owner of the property would ensure that renters, whether long-term or short-term Airbnb, would be held accountable for maintaining the property in good condition with respect for neighbors' quality of life. Within the last 10 days, over the holiday season, the staff reversed their position on this very important safeguard and removed the owner occupancy requirement. Residents and civic associations raised questions in the last week after learning of this change, but no satisfactory answers have been provided, other than a vague reference to potential legal issues if the requirement was maintained. Other jurisdictions like Arlington, Washington, D.C., Charlottesville, and Norfolk have this restriction in their ordinances and we are not aware of any legal challenge that has happened.

Without safeguards, property in some neighborhoods would be devalued and parking would become a nightmare. Why change the image of Alexandria as a friendly place to live. Density is becoming a major issue and many of us do not want to live in a NYC environment. What is the recourse for problems on non-owner occupied properties?

Regards,
Linda Thompson

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1-23-21

Gloria Sitton

From: Barbara S <seacob@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 9:30 AM
To: PlanComm
Subject: re: Accessory Dwelling Units in Alexandria

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

I am concerned about ADU's being unsafe in times like these where overcrowding spreads illness. I am also worried about Air BnB's with people unknown to a neighborhood coming and going. Unbeknownst to those who live here, we had a drug house a number of years ago rented by a landlord who didn't live in the neighborhood.

Arlington Count doesn't allow such short-term rentals like Air BnB. We shouldn't either.

Barbara Seaman

147 N. French St.

Homeowner since 1976

Sent from my iPhone

Gloria Sitton

6
1-23-21

From: PlanComm
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 2:47 PM
To: Gloria Sitton
Subject: Fw: Accessory Dwelling Units in Alexandria

Hi Gloria,

Another public statement received regarding the ADU docket item scheduled to be considered by Council on 1/23.

Warmly,

Patrick Silva
Senior Planning Technician
City of Alexandria
Department of Planning and Zoning, Room 2100
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Patrick.Silva@alexandriava.gov
(703) 746-3806

From: Hart, Christopher <chart@lockelord.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 2:44 PM
To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: re: Accessory Dwelling Units in Alexandria

As long-time residents and home owners in Alexandria, we would like to make known our opposition to this policy unless it restricts such ADU's from short-term rentals (VRBO; AirBnB; etc.). In general, we believe that our City needs some strong general restrictions on ALL such short-term rentals, whether for principal residences or ADUs. We bought into our neighborhood over thirty years ago precisely because we valued the stability and relationships of having known, long-term neighbors (unlike our previous apartment communities where we lived as young adults). With two, young boys with special needs, who occasionally "elope" to nearby neighbors' yards, we are particularly worried about this issue and having potentially very transient, changing occupants mere feet away from our home.

Thank you, in advance, for taking this concern into account as you weigh whether to make this big change to the zoning code.

Chris and Cindy Hart
804 Circle Terrace



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