

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 21, 2013

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR & MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: COUNCILMEN JUSTIN M. WILSON AND JOHN TAYLOR CHAPMAN

SUBJECT: DENSITY BONUS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Last month we adopted our Housing Master Plan, containing a forward-thinking set of tools to advance the preservation and creation of affordable housing in our community.

This Saturday we will consider Text Amendment 2013-0013A, which amends Section 7-700 of the City's Zoning Ordinance to add more specificity to the City's policy of offering bonus density to landowners in exchange for the creation of affordable housing. While we support these changes, we believe that the City should use this opportunity to more fully utilize density as a tool for the creation of new affordable housing.

Our adopted Housing Master Plan stated "Offering the incentive of increased density in appropriate cases offers the best opportunity for the City to obtain committed affordable units as it provides a developer with additional value for which the City should receive something in exchange (beyond future real estate tax revenue)."

The adopted Plan noted the limitations in our authority by clearly stating "Increased density is the only vehicle by which jurisdictions can require affordable housing in new development."

While urging the adoption of the proposed changes on Saturday, we would ask that a more complete exploration of expanding the authority in Section 7-700 beyond 20% of additional density be explored. Specifically, we would like consideration of increasing the maximum bonus density available up to 30%.

Mindful of the revisions to our public processes as part of the "What's Next" initiative, we would ask that Staff appropriately engage the community in a full discussion with residents and landowners. Upon conclusion, we would ask that Staff bring a recommendation before both the Planning Commission and City Council of a possible expansion of our density bonus authority.

The existing Code makes it clear that issuance of a density bonus is subject to the authority of the Planning & Zoning staff, Planning Commission and ultimately City Council.

We believe that an expansion of this provision will improve affordability in our City.

Cc: Rashad Young, City Manager; Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager; Faroll Hamer.
Director of Planning & Zoning; Mildrilyn Davis, Office of Housing; Planning
Commission