

Zoning for Housing: Net New Units and How They Are Supported by Infrastructure

The zoning reforms in Zoning for Housing have the goal of expanding housing production and affordability and addressing past and current barriers to equitable housing access. Increased housing production comes both from changes that allow a net increase in the number of new units that are allowed as well as (and possibly more importantly) making it easier for the many planned housing units to move from concept to construction.

Alexandria currently has 80,000 housing units; plans approved in the past two decades allow for over 50,000 additional units, of which about 15,000 units have their required approvals but are not yet built. All of those units have been analyzed for impacts on infrastructure and public facilities (water and sewer, transportation, public schools, open space, etc.) and accounted for in our long range public facility plans. For example, the [Sanitary Sewer Master Plan](#) identifies the sewer infrastructure needed to support all planned growth to 2045 and beyond. Long range enrollment forecasts are prepared collaboratively with Alexandria City Public Schools based on planned development and demographic shifts.

This report uses the words “net new” to describe housing units that would be allowed by Zoning for Housing beyond those already allowed by small area plans and existing zoning. Staff estimates that Zoning for Housing could add as many as 2,800 net new units over the next 10 years. In March 2020, City Council endorsed Resolution R27-2019 including an increase in the City’s housing production allocation of 3,000 units (above the City’s development projections) by 2030, with a goal that 75 percent of the units (2,250) be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Zoning for Housing will greatly assist in achieving this goal.

Initiative	Net New Units	Comments
Bonus Height	0	No longer being recommended
CDDs	800	Assumes two CDDs. One-third affordable; effect on infrastructure assessed through the CDD process.
Office-to-Residential	0	Conversions typically permitted by existing zoning; this initiative adds affordability in some cases; effect on infrastructure systems is limited but assessed during review.
Historic Development Patterns	60	Additional units per building may make some projects more likely to move forward; effect on infrastructure assessed during review.
Industrial Zones	0	Supports implementing planned housing; infrastructure needs already accounted for.
RMF Zone	1,800	Supports affordability. These projects are funding dependent. Effect on infrastructure and public facilities assessed during project review.
Expanding Options in Single Family	178	Limited effect on systems; see note below.
Townhouses	0	This adds streamlining and consistency rather than new units.
Transit-Oriented Development	0	Net new units will come through small area plans or plan amendments
10 year estimate	2,838	

The majority (2,600) of these net new units will be assessed for their effect on the City’s infrastructure systems and public facilities at the development review stage. The 178 units in single family neighborhoods are not of a magnitude to cause measurable effects on local or citywide systems. For example, the proposal for single family zoning would have no effect on stormwater, as the development envelope (including allowable footprint) will not change and there is already a process for reviewing these smaller projects for stormwater. The increase in utilization of sewer, transportation, and open space networks of 178 additional units is well within existing and planned capacities. The student generation of 178 multifamily units is 15 over the 10 year period.

Bonus Height	Quick Summary: Allow “bonus height” in exchange for 1/3 affordable housing.	Units: Negligible. Not recommended for further consideration.	
Coordinated Development Districts (CDD)	Quick Summary: Treat additional development as “bonus density” with 1/3 affordable housing.	Units: 0-400 units per CDD, of which 1/3 would be affordable, assuming that additional density requests will vary between 0-400,000 square feet. CDDs will be used to implement Eisenhower East, Eisenhower West, some portions of the remaining Landmark/Van Dorn	Plan, and likely Alexandria West not already covered by a CDD. Not all CDDs will request additional density. CDDs contain within them conditions to ensure that infrastructure and public facilities needs are met.
Office-to-Residential Conversions	Quick Summary: Support most conversions; treat density requests as “bonus density” with 1/3 affordable housing.	Units: 1-3 affordable units per conversion, depending on individual case, for those cases that need the additional density.	
Historic Development Patterns	Quick summary: Remove limits on units per acre, remove additional setback requirements, implement townhouse zone recommendations.	Units: Units per acre limitations can reduce building yields by 1.5 to 2.5 units per building, depending on project. 5-10 buildings are under construction at any one time. Smaller unit sizes can help with affordability.	Relaxing this extra setback requirement can allow some additional square footage per building, but it is highly location dependent.
Industrial Zone	Quick summary: Equalize development standards for commercial versus residential development.	Units: 3,000-4,000 housing units are planned for land now zoned industrial. This recommendation supports that transition. The impact of these units on	infrastructure and public facilities is already addressed by the relevant small area plan.
Residential Multifamily Zone (RMF)	Quick summary: Amend the Housing Master Plan to establish general intent for RMF rezonings. Amend the RMF Zone in the Zoning Ordinance to expand the number of uses allowed on the ground floor of RMF buildings.	Units: The five RMF projects approved to date have provided a total of 1,840 housing units, of which 1,079 are committed affordable. This initiative has the potential of adding a similar number of additional units	over the next decade, but each project would require significant subsidy which can limit future production.
Single-Family Zones	Quick summary: Allow up to 4 units within current development envelope in zones that are currently limited to single family detached dwellings.	Units: Approximately 150-178 units over 10 years on 66 parcels. The potential increase in use of the transportation network, water and sewer systems, open	space network, and public school system is extremely minor.
Townhouse Zones	Quick summary: Simplify the regulation of townhouses and townhouse-like homes.	Units: These recommendations will make constructing these homes less costly, but are not expected to increase the pace of construction. Reduction in parking	requirements reflects assessment of parking demand and use of non-auto forms of transportation already existing or planned.
Transit Oriented Development	Quick summary: Contains research to inform future small area plans and development review.	Units: These recommendations will inform future planning efforts, which will also assess impacts of increased development on infrastructure and public	facilities networks. No specific increases in density are proposed.