City of Alexandria, Virginia

Work Session Item: Zoning for Housing/Housing for All

Planning Commission Work Session

October 3, 2023

7:00 p.m.

NEW INFORMATION

"Net new" Housing Units allowed by Zoning for Housing

Initiative	Net New Units	Comments
Bonus Height	0	No longer being recommended
CDDs	800	Assumes 2 CDDs. 1/3 affordable; effect on infrastructure assessed through 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 Dev. 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.
Single Family	178	Limited effect on systems; see note below.
Townhouses	0	This adds streamlining and consistency rather than new units.
TOD	0	Net new units will come through small area plans or plan amendments
10 year estimate	**2,838**	

How 'Net New' Units Are Supported by Infrastructure

- ~ 80,000 housing units exist in the city

- Recent SAPs allow for ~ 50,000 additional units (25-30 years)

- All have been analyzed for impacts on infrastructure and public facilities: accounted for in long range public facility plans

- Net new units under the initiative are well within existing and planned capacities for citywide facilities/systems

  - Net new units will be assessed at the development review stage

Draft Text and Policy Amendments required for Implementation

- Draft Text Amendments and Draft Policy Amendments: Summary Document to facilitate one's review: https://www.alexandriava.gov/planning-and-zoning/zoning-for-housinghousing-for-all
  - Released 10.2.2023
  - Consistent with ZTAs/Policy Amendments signaled in the Fact Sheets: https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/Z4H-Fact-Sheets-20230905.pdf
  - Want you to take time to review and to submit questions directly or via 2 on 2's
  - October 12 Community Meeting #3 will focus on these Amendments as well.

Draft Text and Policy Amendments required for Implementation

- Draft Zoning Text Amendments
  - Historic Development Zoning Reform
  - Industrial Zone Zoning Reform
  - Residential Multi-family Zoning Reform
  - Single Family Zoning Reform
  - Townhouse Zoning Reform
- Policy Amendments
  - Master Plan Amendments
  - 2020-2021 Housing Policy Update

Planning Commission: Several Key Comments/Questions to Date

- **Several Key Planning Commission Questions/Comments To-date:**
  - Bonus Height
  - Historical Development Patterns
  - Single Family
    - Density
    - Parking
    - Family
  - Town House
  - Housing for All
- **Several others that Staff are reviewing**
- **Welcome other questions from you/public**
- **Will start with the above reforms**

Bonus Height ZHT Potential

- **Question:** If the barriers to implementation are regulatory, then can those barriers be addressed to make this reform viable.

- **Response:** Bonus Height Zoning Reform is significantly challenged by floor-area ratio, setbacks, and units per acre limitations, which limits the financial feasibility of this approach (applicability on zones of 45 – 50 feet). Staff's Zoning for Housing recommendations do propose removing units per acre limitations, but the additional research also shows that significant changes to allowable floor area would likely also be needed. Should the floor area limitation be addressed, staff would also suggest that we explore Neighborhood Conservation provisions to ensure that existing market affordable housing would not be vulnerable to redevelopment pressure.

Historical Development Patterns – Design and Regulatory Changes

- **Question:** Is it possible to develop a historical development patterns book?
- **Response:** One of the Phase II recommendations included the introduction of "historic development patterns design guidelines," which could meet this goal.

- **Question:** What does it look like to allow garden apartments like the ones we already see in Del Ray to be built in the future in those same zones in which they exist today?
- **Response:** When we identified garden apartments as our case studies, we specifically looked at which zoning provisions caused them to be noncomplying – which we concluded were mostly prohibition on use, lot size requirements, and dwelling units per acre. Additionally, many historic garden apartments do not have off-street parking which is a major barrier. Removing the dwelling units per acre limits, as well as the average unit size in some zones, could increase unit production by an estimated 1.5 to 2.5 units in some projects.

Historic Development Patterns – Potential Regulatory Changes

- **Question:** In the Historic Development Patterns research, did staff examine eliminating the minimum lot size for residential projects (regardless of zone)?

- **Response:** For Historic Development Patterns, the proposal incorporates removal of minimum lot size in all zones which allow multi-family residential in our proposed text amendments. However, we have not proposed this for other residential uses (single-family, townhouse/duplex) at this time. See Townhomes for further information on that element.

- **Question:** What about eliminating FAR (re Historical Development Patterns proposal)?

- **Response:** While we have also discussed and considered removing this provision as well, more research is needed regarding the logistics and impacts this would produce. Thus, we have identified this as part of our Phase II approach.

Historic Development Patterns – Potential Regulatory Changes

- **Question:** What is the minimum regulatory structure that we think can ensure compatibility with a neighborhood? (A max height and setbacks?).

- **Response:** Aside from FAR, which we will be looking at in Phase II, we envision setbacks and maximum height (either in a zone or small area plan) will be the governing land use provisions at that time.

Single-Family - Compatibility

- **Question:** In the SF zones proposal, is it accurate to say the intent is to facility 2, 3, and 4 unit projects in SF areas that are nonetheless compatible with the neighborhood?
- **Response:** Yes; that is what City Council is being asked to consider. All dwellings up to four units are recommended as by-right uses. To accommodate three- and four-unit dwellings, staff is proposing that site plan amendments for this number of units does not apply.

- **Question:** Will there be images to indicate what lot sizes in these zones look like, and what different multi-unit projects in these settings could be possible given some thoughtful design guidance?
- **Response:** Yes; Illustrations for small-scale multi-unit dwellings in traditional single-family zones are being drafted now and will be presented to you soon.

Single-Family – Unit Count/Sizes

- **Question:** Did the W-ZHA methodology and approach result in erroneous unit counts and sizes?

- **Response:** Staff engaged a consultant firm well-versed in real estate development feasibility analysis and in the Alexandria market to estimate the number of properties that could be redeveloped over a ten-year period after determining the financial and physical feasibility for redevelopment of each unit type.

  The consultant offers a step-by-step methodology, page 41 of the W-ZHA report, which staff reviewed with the consultant and confirmed its accuracy.

Single- Family - Parking

- **Question: Why is the Enhanced Transit Area (ETA) for commercial zoning equally useful for residential zoning?**

- **Response:** The proposed parking policy options align with the Alexandria Mobility Plan, Curbspace and Parking Chapter, Policy A: Connect parking policy to City goals. Enabling more housing supply and housing choice is considered within the context of the City's current and planned transportation network.

- **Question: What is the projected impact of the change on the essentially unchangeable infrastructure of our existing street grid in the single- family zones?**

- **Response:** In regards to street widths, the City evaluates restricting parking on one or both sides of the street on a case by case basis with the Complete Streets Design Guidelines. In many cases, parking on one or both sides of the streets acts as traffic calming. Requests for removal of cars on one or both sides of the street could be considered by the Traffic and Parking Board.

Single-family - Parking

- **Question: What is the combined effect of Option 3 and elimination of the "family" from the Zoning Ordinance?**

- **Response:** Parking requirements apply to uses and not to the number of people living in a dwelling. Nonetheless, Article VIII of the Zoning Ordinance contains the limitation of four vehicles that can be parked outdoors for single family, two-family, and townhouse dwellings. Staff is considering the addition of up to four unit multi-family dwellings in single-family dwellings to the Section VIII provision.

Single-Family – Family Definition

- **Question:** Why change the definition of family?

- **Response:** The current family definition establishes a governmental preference for households composed of related members as opposed to households of unrelated members. It assumes a greater possibility of offsite impacts from households composed of unrelated persons. This would be a burden on those households to prove otherwise. Moreover, the City has enforcement tools in its Zoning Ordinance and City Code that are equally effective to mitigate impacts regardless of household composition. If you do not meet the current family definition standard, under Section 2-143 ZO, you are required to go before the City Council with a Special Use Permit. City Council considered two such cases in the last 20 years or so.

Town House Configuration

- **Question:** Do we have a sense as to whether typical townhouse style development could be produced as a 2,3, or 4 unit project on a SF lot under the proposal?

- **Response:** There is a Zoning Ordinance technical difference between a typical townhouse development (defined as three or more units each on an individual lot) and what would be allowed with staff's current proposal. Under the proposal before you now, a two- to four-unit building could be constructed to look like a row of two to four townhouses with each unit developed on one lot, but it would not be defined as a technical townhouse under the Zoning Ordinance.

Town House Application

- **Question:** Have staff considered applying the recommendations for THs in old town to TH zones throughout the city? What difference does that make in potential housing production?

- **Response:** Staff is recommending some changes to all zones that allow townhouses City-wide. These include amendments to front, side, floor area, and open space requirements. These changes would allow for housing production on lots that would currently be permitted to be developed with a house only with City Council or Board of Zoning Appeals approval.

Housing for All Education and Awareness

- Education and Awareness
  - Historical Documentation of Housing Discrimination
    - Restrictive Covenants
    - Historical Mortage Data
    - Historical African American and Low-income Neighborhood Descriptions/Oral Histories
    - Race and Social Equity FAQs
- Communities of Color and/or Low Income Today
  - Documentation and Mapping of Conditions
    - COGS Equity Impact Areas
    - Race and Social Equity Index Map

Housing for All Application

- Zoning Reforms
  - Equity Impact Statements Included
    - Accessibility (wider choice in location)
    - Affordability (wider choice in price points)
    - Availability (wider choice in typologies and tenures)
- Next Phase: Development/Institutionalization of Policies/Procedures
  - Development of Policies and Procedures in line with Best Practices(Government Alliance for Race and Social Equity)
  - Institutionalize as part of the City's land use and housing policies and programs:
    - I.E., Equity Impact Statement for development projects
  - Setting and Creating of Metrics to Gauge Progress
- Pathways to Removal of Barriers Grant: Request for funding to assist with further educational/awareness tools and implementation policies and procedures.

Human Capital Resouces

- Office of Housing offers access to many resources for tenants and landlords
  - List of available units
  - Other rental resources
  - Complaint Mediation
  - Area Relocation Counseling
  - Fair Housing Testing
  - Senior Relief Assistance
  - Homeowner resources
  - Homebuyer resources
  - Trainings and Workshops
  - Landlord and Manager resources

Human Capital Resources

- **Question:** Are tenants protected from displacement if they report poor living conditions in their homes?

- **Response:** Not necessarily. However, if the damage is such that the tenant needs to move, either the landlord or the tenant can terminate the rental agreement under Section 1-1240 of the Virginia Code.

- **Question**: Are there issues (black mold?) that are not addressed in building code but need to be addressed in regulation? Where does the authority to regulate those issues come from?

- **Response:** The Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA) includes guidelines for remediation of mold by landlords which issues are identified. In addition, the Office of Housing has a 2020 Mold Information Guide on its website:

  https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/2020MoldInformationalBrochure.pdf

Human Capital Resources

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Discussion