

DISCUSSION OF THE CITY'S ZONING FOR HOUSING PROGRAM

Coalition for a Livable Alexandria Event

October 5, 2023

TOPICS

Important Trends, Facts and Observations

Affordable Housing Policy Direction in Alexandria

Impacts on Residents

ALEXANDRIA AND DIVERSITY

We embrace diversity

We celebrate it

We are proud of what we have achieved

It has enriched our lives and those of our kids

There is always more to do

Alexandria is the 6th most diverse mid-size city in the US – WalletHub study 2021

THIS IS BIG - AND THE CITY IS MOVING FAST!

“This year Alexandria is undertaking the most ambitious housing reform in our history, with the goal of expanding housing production and affordability and addressing past and current barriers to equitable housing access.”

– Mayor Justin Wilson, 3/4/2023 on Twitter

I was on City Council in the early 1990s the last time we revised our zoning. We took three years to draw up a master plan and work thorough it with the public, knowing that it would have a long-lasting impact.

*– paraphrased from comments of former Vice Mayor Bill Cleveland
8/29/2023 at CLA launch event*

CITY'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM

- Roots in the Amazon deal
- Two stated predicates:
 - The reported regional housing shortage
 - Equity, historical racism, exclusionary zoning
- The City of Minneapolis became the model
- Launched formally as “Zoning for Housing/Housing for All” only in November 2022
- Official staff proposals announced on September 5th – just weeks ago

The other agenda: If we add more people, we can address our financial challenges

CITY'S FUTURE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- Tax bills increased at double the rate of inflation over a recent 10-year period, affecting both homeowners and renters.
- Per capita income growth since 2011 trails the area and our neighbors in the DC MSA¹ :
 - 19.7% in Alexandria, 22.2% in Arlington, 28.9% in Fairfax, 29.4%
- Per capita debt as a % of per capita income has increased from 4.4% to 5.9% since 2011.²
- City manager: “...in 2025 we have the largest potential debt service we have to incur. We just can’t add to that because there is no fiscal ability to manage that.”³
- The City’s 10-year Capital Improvement budget has doubled to \$2.4b since 2013.⁴

1 Source: Alexandria Annual Consolidated Financial Report 2022.

2 Source: Alexandria Annual Consolidated Financial Report 2022.

3. Source: “Alexandria’s City Council and School Board Clash in Intense Budget Battle,” ALXNow, 3/14/2023.

4. Source: Alexandria FY2014 and FY2024 city budgets. The total 10-year budget increased from \$1.23 billion to \$2.41 billion.

IS MORE DENSITY THE ANSWER?

Alexandria is more densely populated than 93% of largest 200 cities¹

- Our density is close to that of DC, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Newark¹

Added an estimated 15,000 people from 2012-2022², challenging...

- Our infrastructure (stormwater, schools, roads)
- Our city service providers (e.g., police, fire, jail, courts, prosecutors)

City aspires to add more than 80,000 more people³

- 50+% increase
- Only 21% increase in jobs, however

¹ Source: World Population View, "The 200 Largest Cities in the United States by Population 2022."

² Source: US Census for 2000 and 2020. Population grew at an average annual rate of 1.0%.

³ Sources: Zoning for Housing/ Housing for All - Fall Community Meeting #1, September 14, 2023 and City Consolidated Annual Financial Report 2022.

DOES MORE DENSITY PAY FOR ITSELF?

- Average annual inflation rate from 1/2013 to 1/2023: **2.1%**¹
- SFH tax bill increases averaged **4.4%** over about the same period.²
- Residents' portion of the property tax base has increased from about **70% to 81%**.³
- The city has become less and less affordable for everyone over this timeframe.

Additional density has not paid for itself over the past decade -- here in Alexandria

1 Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics Mid-Atlantic Information Office for DC-VA-MD-WV CPI from 1/2013 to 1/2023.

2 Source: Alexandria City budget documents. Calculation based on average single-family home value, the tax rate, refuse fee and stormwater fees for 2012 and 2022.

3 Source: Alexandria City budget documents. Includes commercial rental property.

EFFECTS OF POPULATION GROWTH, 2012-2022

10.5% population growth¹

16.0% ACPS enrollment growth²

20% increase in violent crime against persons³

27% increase in emergency medical calls for service⁴

120% increase in police calls for service⁴

45% increase in Fire/EMS response time standard⁴

96% increase in the 10-year capital budget⁵

Add to that more frequent flooding and water main breaks

1 US Census 2000 and 2020, average annual growth rate 2000-2020 is about 1.0%.

2 Source: Alexandria Annual Comprehensive Financial Report 2022, about 2,400 additional students, or 15.8% of the 12,025 increase in population.

3 Source: Alexandria Annual Crime Statistics.

4 Source: Alexandria FY2014 and FY2024 Approved Operating Budgets. The standard increased from 5.5 to 8.0 minutes.

5 Source: Alexandria FY2014 and FY2024 city budgets. The total 10-year budget increased from \$1.23 billion to \$2.41 billion.

THE CITY'S PLANNED GROWTH IS DRAMATIC

40,820 housing units “planned, not yet built”¹
– *in transit corridors only!*

Reflects a **50%** increase on our existing 79,000 occupied units

At 2.0 people per household, that's over **80,000** more people

How much further will our quality of life decline?

¹ Source: Zoning for Housing/ Housing for All - Fall Community Meeting #1, September 14, 2023 and City CAFR report 2022

IMPACT OF 80,000 MORE PEOPLE

11,250 additional ACPS students¹

- 1 more high school
- 2 more Hammonds or GWs
- 8 more elementary schools the size of our largest K-5 school
- 800+ more teachers²

50% increase in people will likely drive more than a 50% increase in:

- Patrol officers, detectives, social/health workers, sheriff's deputies, judges, prosecutors
- Requirements for jail space, court space, city office space, parking for city vehicles & buses, athletic facilities

Much slower average vehicle speed will lead to:

- Need for more fire stations and/or even slower response times
- Much slower bus travel time for DASH and ACPS
- More gridlock!

¹ Based on 2012-22 growth rates & proportions – 14.1% of population growth was additional enrolled students.

² Source: ACPS, Wikipedia, US News and World Report. Assumes current 14:1 teacher/student ratio .

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY-CHALLENGED

*74% of all Alexandrians overall –
64% of homeowners – are
challenged by housing costs, not
just those at the lower end*

Source: City of Alexandria Approved Fiscal Year 2023 Budget, Office of Housing section

SINGLE FAMILY HOME SHORTAGE

- Only 9,132 detached single-family homes, or 11.6% of our total units¹
 - About 14,000 townhouses, rowhouses and duplexes – total SFH is 23,200 or about 28%¹
 - About 61,000 condo and rental apartments¹
 - About 5,000 homes are vacant²
 - While the City has added 11,600 new homes since 2012, the number of SFH units declined by two³
- Detached SFH account for only 23-28% of the land⁴

1 Source: : Alexandria Annual Consolidated Financial Report 2022, numbers are rounded. 83,943 units less the 5,000 unoccupied units (according to the city).

2 Source: Alexandria City Government, approximate number

3 Source: Alexandria Annual Consolidated Financial Reports 2012 and 2022

4 Source: We used two figures: The city has reported the proportion as 34%, equating to 5.1 square miles, as recently as the September 2023 Zoning for Housing, Housing for All community meeting at William Ramsay Elementary School. The online publication Greater Greater Washington reported it as 29%, equating to 4.3 square miles in its article, "Alexandria lost 90% of its affordable homes in the past few decades. Is it really 'radical' to build more?," January 8, 2019. Our own analysis produced an estimated 615 acres or approximately 1 square mile of SFH-zoned land used for other purposes – public and private schools, some parks, Virginia Theological Seminary, houses of worship, Ivy Hill Cemetery, Woodbine Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center, some parks and the major roads running thorough SFH neighborhoods. The actual percentage could be as low as 23% based on the Greater Greater Washington figure or as high as 28% based on the City's figure.

CITY'S FOCUS: ADDING MORE RENTAL UNITS

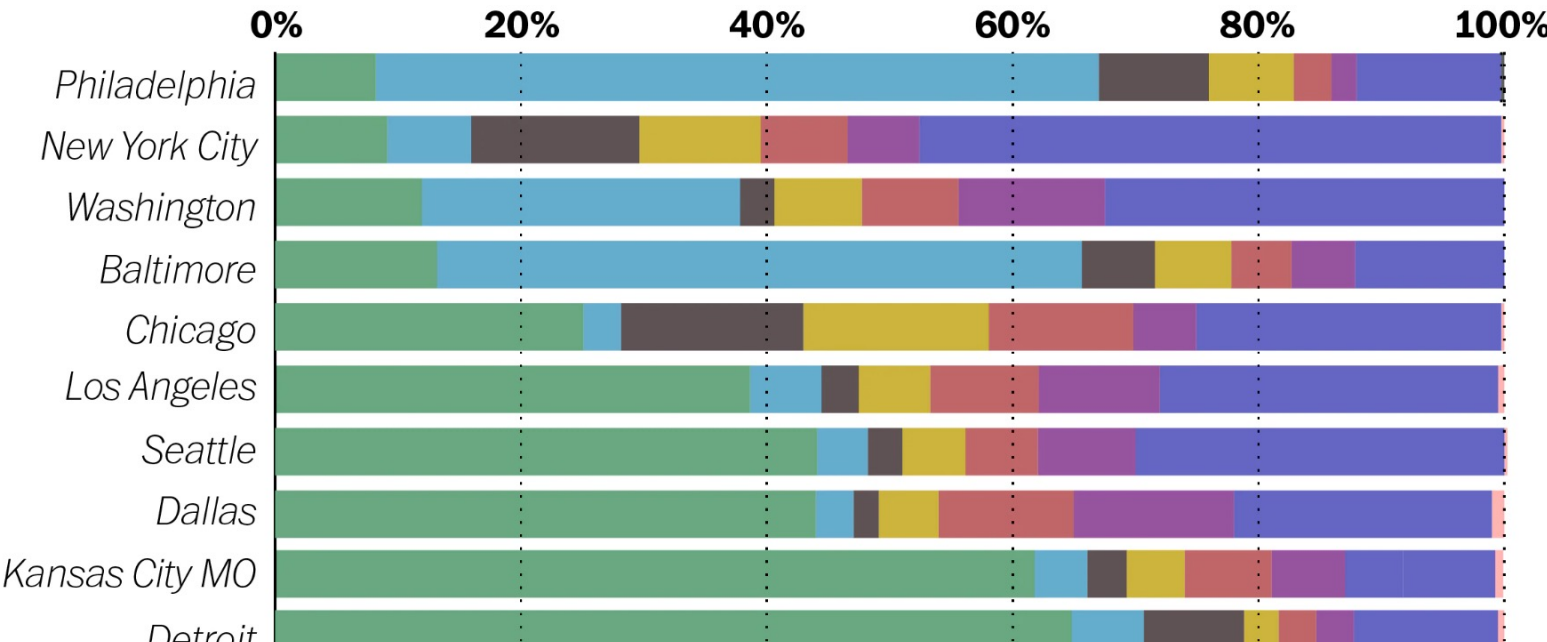
Since 2012, 11,000 more rental units were added, but no one, including City Hall, is asserting that Alexandria is more affordable now*

* Source: Alexandria City Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports 2012 and 2022. Number is rounded.

SMALLER % OF SFH THAN ALL LARGE CITIES EXCEPT NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA

The way we live, city by city

Occupied housing units, by building type



Alexandria also has a higher percentage of apartments (in buildings of 10+ units) than all large cities except NYC, ...and a lower home ownership rate than any of them

Sources: Washington Post, "The Most Popular Type of Home in Every Major American City, charted" September 21, 2015; Alexandria

ARLINGTON vs. ALEXANDRIA

Factor	Arlington	Alexandria
Detached SFH land area as % of total area	73% ¹	23-28% ²
Detached SFH units as a % of total units	24.0% ¹	11.6% ³
Population density per square mile	9,180 ⁴	10,677 ⁴
Housing choice	Plenty of SFHs and apartments, not much of anything else ¹	Mix of detached SFHs, townhouses, duplexes, rowhomes, and apartments ³

1 Source: Missing Middle Housing Study Research Compendium, Bulletin 3, July 2020, pages 2-3.

2 Source: Our analysis started with the City's figure of 34%, which includes about 1 square mile of SFH-zoned land used for other purposes – public and private schools, some parks, Virginia Theological Seminary, houses of worship, Ivy Hill Cemetery, Woodbine, some parks and the major roads running thorough SFH neighborhoods. The actual percentage could be as low as 23% based on other published figures.

3 Source: Alexandria Annual Consolidated Financial Report 2022.

4 Source: US Census Quickfacts, 2020 Census.

“ZONING FOR HOUSING/HOUSING FOR ALL”

Zoning for Housing

Objective: Increase housing units

Predicate: Regional housing shortage

Assertions:

- “More housing supply will reduce prices”
- “More people will grow the tax base”
- Zoning changes will allow for more rapid development
- We have to do our part for the region

Housing for All

Objective: Achieve equity by providing more opportunities for people of color to live anywhere in the city

Predicate: Historical racism and growing segregation – city code, redlining and racially restrictive covenants

Assertions:

- “Building apartments in SFH neighborhoods will address equity”
- “Eliminating SFH zoning is necessary”

CITY ASSERTIONS DON'T HOLD WATER

Zoning for Housing

- Addressing the regional housing shortage requires lots of land
- Alexandria has little to offer – only 0.2% of all the metro area land
- Population growth does not pay for itself in a mature city – as we've seen
- Negative impacts of more growth – traffic, schools, infrastructure, taxes, noise, parking

Housing for All

- Fair Housing Act of 1968 is 55 years old
- City Code contains no racial or restrictive covenants at all
- Restrictive covenants are illegal and rare
- No pattern from data or examples to prove their assertions on systemic racism
- Zoning changes cannot guarantee increased diversity – it's against the law
- Ignores the reality of existing diversity in all neighborhoods that have not been upzoned

“THE TOOLKIT” FOR HOUSING

- Building height changes in the zoning code
- Bonus density*
- Reducing parking requirements*
- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)*
- Ending SFH zoning (lot use, setbacks, height, unmarried co-occupants)
- Ending public participation in planning* and notification on SUPs
- Ownership of school property and colocation on public land
- Transit corridor redesign for dense development and bus rapid transit*
- Bike and scooter facilities

* Already in use by the City of Alexandria

THE COG “FAIR HOUSING PLAN FOR ALEXANDRIA”

- Only 8 of the COG’s 24 local government members are participating; only Alexandria is promoting it.
- Complains that “mere policy changes may not be enough to dismantle opposition...” and the need to “combat” homeowner “perspective.”
- Does not recommend what governments should do to “dismantle opposition.”
- Alleges that the goal of homeowners is to “maintain their self-segregation.”
- Alexandria’s top two priorities: “public land for affordable housing” and tax breaks for building and renting out ADUs.
 - None of the other 7 regional governments are considering colocation.
 - Other regional governments place displacement prevention as a key goal; Alexandria is silent on displacement.
- Cites gentrification as a major cause of rising housing costs in Alexandria.

* Source: Alexandria Fair Housing Plan, Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG), 2023.

MORE ON THE CITY'S ASSERTIONS

- “We are experiencing an affordable housing crisis.”
 - Or is it simply the same challenge that all major metropolitan areas have faced for decades?
 - We are still achieving significant growth in minority and foreign-born communities.
 - School demographics bear this out.
- “Our zoning codes and property deeds contain racist language.”
 - No such covenants have been found after 1962 anywhere in the city.
 - Most West End development was built after 1962.
 - A few may still exist east and north of King Street, but it appears to be exceedingly rare.
- “Redlining and other practices are still having an impact.”
 - Vola Lawson: Jim Moran and I ended redlining in Alexandria in the early '70s.

FROM A WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE 1983

"The black population is so scattered because housing opportunities are pretty open [in Alexandria]."

-- Ulysses Calhoun, then president of the Alexandria chapter of the NAACP

Source: Washington Post, June 23, 1983, "N. Va. Blacks Differ On Election by Ward"

THE HOUSING/DEVELOPER ECOSYSTEM

- Developers and their land use attorneys
- Non-profit housing advocacy organizations
- Engineering companies and trade unions
- Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (“The COG”)
- The Urban Institute
- Libertarian think tanks
- YIMBYs of NoVa and local Alexandria community organizers
- Greater Greater Washington and bike activists
- Urbanist groups, e.g., Coalition for Smarter Growth, Sierra Club



All of these groups have strong ties to elected officials and/or key city staff

CONCERNS FOR MULTI-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS

Townhouse owners

- Tall apartment built right next store or behind the back fence, e.g., Seminary & Beauregard
- Traffic, parking, noise, flooding concerns
- Reduced greenspace
- School overcrowding

Apartment dwellers

- A second tower on the same property – e.g., ParcView Apartments, two new buildings
- Less parking allowed in new buildings – e.g., The Waypoint on Menokin Drive and King
- History of displacement – e.g., Heritage in Southwest Old Town
- Traffic, flooding concerns
- Reduce greenspace
- School overcrowding

CONCERNS FOR SINGLE-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS

- Duplexes up to 6-plexes on small single-family lots
 - Potential for less parking, more noise, more neighbor conflict
- Continuing infrastructure challenges from additional density
 - Even worse traffic congestion, more crowded schools, neighborhood flooding, and much higher taxes
- Colocation at schools and parks, as articulated in the COG study
- ADUs within 3 feet of the property line (with rents as high as \$3,000)
- The possibility of dense development on the existing site of the hospital
 - Currently zoned for townhouses or SFHs, which has been supported by the local civic association
 - Draft text amendment for RB zoning would allow mult-family development there

RESEARCH & REPORTS: LESS AFFORDABILITY AND DIVERSITY, MORE PROFIT FOR SPECULATORS

MINNEAPOLIS STUDY:

Elimination of Single-Family Zoning Increases Housing Costs for Small Properties in Inexpensive Neighborhoods

MINNEAPOLIS REPORTS:

Elimination of Single-Family Zoning Has Negligible Impact on Housing Supply and New Authorities Are Misused

CHICAGO UPZONING STUDY:

Upzoning Increased Housing Costs in City of Chicago

MONTGOMERY COUNTY:

MoCo Executive Rejects “Koch Bros” Density Policies Leading to Displacement and Excessive Gentrification

FAIRFAX PATCH:

Candidates Endorsed by YIMBYs of NOVA Oppose Upzoning of Single-Family Zones

ALEXANDRIA TIMES:

Alexandria Has Greater Housing Density than Chicago, Los Angeles and Queens County, NY

CURRENT AFFAIRS:

The Only Thing Worse Than a NIMBY is a YIMBY

WASHINGTON BLOG:

What Do YIMBYs Really Want?

Sources: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01944363.2020.1852101>; <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-08-20/what-happened-when-minneapolis-ended-single-family-zoning#xj4y7vzkg>; <https://www.csmonitor.com/Business/2022/0927/Minneapolis-seeks-housing-equality.-Is-building-more-homes-enough>; https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1078087418824672?fbclid=IwAR2wFeIAc_feOG5deJpMV_4ube7XASWdV9K31YkuYQVvjakHviKVUercpK4; <https://moco360.media/2023/03/20/elrich-outlines-his-plan-for-mocos-housing-crisis/>; <https://www.marcelrich.org/housing>; https://patch.com/virginia/greateralexandria/s/irh0i/fairfax-co-candidate-vows-to-keep-out-arlington-style-missing-middle?utm_source=local-update&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=alert&fbclid=IwAR11cFHEpKrCTHF9Tjdmfn7ZkxqEg_I80uBwxdF5bydD3iTDAy3bsQb630; <https://alextimes.com/2022/11/your-views-census-shows-alexandria-more-dense-than-l-a-chicago-queens/>; <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2021/01/the-only-thing-worse-than-a-nimby-is-a-yimby>; <https://washingtonsocialist.mdcda.org/ws-articles/22-12-nova-yimbys>; What Charles Koch and Other Donors to George Mason University Got for Their Money - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

41 DRAFT ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS

ONLY PUBLISHED ON MONDAY 10/2

- [3-600-RA-ZONE](#)
- [3-700_RB_ZONE](#)
- [3-800_RC-X_ZONE](#)
- [3-900_RC_ZONE](#)
- [3-1000_RD_ZONE](#)
- [3-1100_RM_ZONE](#)
- [3-1200_RS_ZONE](#)
- [3-1300_RT_ZONE](#)
- [3-1400_RMF_ZONE](#)
- [4-100_CL_ZONE](#)
- [4-200_CC_ZONE](#)
- [4-300_CSL_ZONE](#)
- [4-400_CG_ZONE](#)
- [4-500_CD_ZONE](#)
- [4-600_CD-X_ZONE](#)
- [4-800_OC_ZONE](#)
- [4-900_OCM-50_ZONE](#)
- [4-1000_OCM-100_ZONE](#)
- [4-1100_OCH_ZONE](#)
- [4-1200_I_ZONE](#)
- [4-1300_UT_ZONE](#)

- [4-1400_NR_ZONE](#)
- [5-100_CRMU_L_ZONE](#)
- [5-200_CRMU-M_ZONE](#)
- [5-300_CRMU-H_ZONE](#)
- [5-400_CRMU-X_ZONE](#)
- [5-500_W-1_ZONE](#)
- [5-600_CDD_ZONES](#)
- [6-300_FLOODPLAIN_DISTRICT](#)
- [6-500_OLD_TOWN_NORTH_URBAN_OVERLAY_DISTRICT](#)
- [6-600_MOUNT_VERNON_AVENUE_URBAN_OVERLAY_ZONE](#)
- [6-700_KR_ZONE](#)
- [ARTICLE I - GENERAL REGULATIONS](#)
- [ARTICLE II - DEFINITIONS](#)
- [ARTICLE III - RESIDENTIAL ZONES](#)
- [ARTICLE IX_SIGNS](#)
- [ARTICLE VII - SUPPLEMENTAL ZONE REGULATIONS](#)
- [ARTICLE VIII_OFF STREET PARKING AND LOADING](#)
- [ARTICLE XI_DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS](#)
- [ARTICLE XII - NONCOMPLIANCE AND NONCONFORMITY](#)
- [ARTICLE XIII__ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT](#)

Less than two months for the community to review, digest and comment on these changes without any small area meetings

ALL HAPPENING RIGHT NOW

Planning Commission meeting on 11/1

Public Hearings on 11/14 and 11/18

City Council votes on 11/28

*City Council is trying to get this done this year
as 2024 is an election year*

QUESTIONS

