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Reality Check Rally Contrasts County’s Claims with Reality

Today, at the Reality Check Rally, co-sponsored by [Arlingtonians for Upzoning Transparency](#) (AFUT) and [Arlingtonians for Our Sustainable Future](#) (ASF), [local housing and other professionals](#) showed how none of the promises made to Arlington residents when the Missing Middle Housing Study was launched have been kept. Instead, the current plan will accelerate gentrification, reducing Arlington’s diversity; displace moderate-and low-income households, including seniors, persons with disabilities and renters; raise property values and taxes; reduce tree canopy and greenspace; and further overload schools, infrastructure and services. The County has not studied potential impacts nor developed strategies to address them.

Below are examples of just a few of the County’s conflicting claims:

CLAIM	REALITY
The Missing Middle Housing Study will not be an across-the-board rezoning of all single-family areas ¹ and will take locational factors, like proximity to transit, into account.	The Plan is a one-size-fits all plan to rezone all singlefamily areas in Arlington and allow up to 8-unit buildings anywhere.
The Missing Middle Housing Study will not be a process to eliminate single-family zoning in Arlington. ¹	All single-family zoning in Arlington will be eliminated under the current Plan.
The Missing Middle Housing Study will not lead to incompatible housing types being built in single-family areas. ¹	The current Plan allows an 8,000 square-foot building with eight units to be located right next door to any home on any size lot – even the smallest.
The term “Missing Middle” itself conveys the false impression that Arlington lacks duplexes, triplexes, townhomes and small apartment buildings, which according to a county study “constitute only a small percentage of ... homes.” ²	Yet the County’s own reports show that Missing Middle housing (MMH) represents 30% ³ of Arlington’s existing housing stock, whereas only 24% is single family homes. ⁴

<p>Arlington has a shortage of housing supply. ¹</p>	<p>According to a non-profit organization tracking the regional effort to create more housing, “Arlington continues to exceed the annual production target of 1,393 units, with 1,732 new units built in 2021. Cumulatively, Arlington has produced more than 6,500 units since 2019.” Arlington’s own Housing Director was quoted in an August 2022 interview saying that Arlington is on target to meet its housing goals – without the Missing Middle plan. She went on to say, “We can confidently say we do have enough capacity within our current plans to enable the production that COG [Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments] has for Arlington targets.”</p>
<p>Strategies will be identified that could be used to mitigate any negative impacts. ¹</p>	<p>No impact or displacement studies have been conducted and no mitigation strategies have been developed.</p>
<p>The MM Plan will make housing more affordable to middle income residents, teachers, firefighters and police, and service workers.</p>	<p>New Missing Middle housing, whether owned or rented, will actually be more expensive than current housing according to County data,⁵ unattainable to any but the wealthiest residents, and help those the County says can help themselves.</p>
<p>A goal of the Missing Middle Plan is to create lower cost, three-bedroom ownership units, which the original MM Study and Arlington’s Affordable Housing Plan both said are what’s most needed.</p>	<p>This is no longer a goal because the Plan will not produce these types of units. Instead, the County’s own materials say more than 80% of new Missing Middle housing will be rentals, 90% will be one- and twobedroom units, and the result will be a net loss of much-needed three-bedroom housing.</p>
<p>The Missing Middle Housing Study “is not a process to codify something that we have already considered and developed. This will be an honest conversation with the community.”</p>	<p>Implementing upzoning to create Missing Middle Housing was the sole purpose of the study. No other alternatives were considered, and a “make no change” option wasn’t even included.</p>
<p>MMP will address the abhorrent racially- and ethnically-exclusionary zoning policies that were outlawed more the 50 years ago.</p>	<p>The current Plan will actually accelerate displacement of minority and low-income groups and raise the cost of Arlington housing. ⁵ Builders and developers have said they will construct the most profitable housing and to do that, it will be high-end.</p>
<p>When housing supply is increased, housing prices will go down.</p>	<p>Research has shown that this simple economic principle does not apply to communities like Arlington. “Expensive cities have much larger clusters of leadingedge tech and knowledge industries and of highly educated, skilled talent. It’s this, rather than differences in housing prices, that is behind growing spatial inequality....Upzoning does little to change this fundamental imbalance....Upzoning is far from the progressive policy tool it has been sold to be. It mainly leads to building high-end housing in desirable locations.”⁶</p>
<p>Living in Arlington should not be determined by one's income level.</p>	<p>Finding ways to fund and/or subsidize affordable housing would accomplish this goal, but MMP doesn’t do this. Instead, it removes zoning regulations and leaves housing up to the market. The market’s only goal is to maximize profits.</p>

50% tree canopy coverage is achievable.	Arlington will lose trees. Requirements for 20% tree canopy on residential properties will be reduced to 10% on the majority of Arlington lots and 15% for larger lots.
Missing Middle buildings won't be any worse than McMansions are now.	Civic associations have lobbied for years to change the zoning rules that have encouraged development of impactful McMansions, yet the County Board has done nothing to discourage their construction. The average new McMansion is 5,700 square feet. MM will be permitted to be 8,000 square feet. The Plan allows greater density and height than in Portland or Minneapolis.

View the livestreamed Rally on Twitter @ [AFUT](#).

For more information on the Rally, go to [AfUT.org](#) or [ASF-virginia.org](#).

Media Contact: Julie Lee, jfblee@aol.com.

¹ [County Board meeting launching the Missing Middle Housing Study](#).

² P. 6, [Missing Middle Housing Study: A Stakeholder Guide Bulletin 1](#): “Arlington has 116,000 housing units, and only a *small percentage* (emphasis added) of those homes could be considered “missing middle” housing.

³ P. 3, [Expanding Housing Choice: The Missing Middle Housing Study Phase 1 Report](#), the County says, “Approximately 30% of Arlington’s existing housing stock can be classified as Missing Middle housing.”

⁴ P. 6, Missing Middle Housing Study: A Stakeholder Guide Bulletin 1

⁵ [Missing Middle Housing Proposal and Draft October 31, 2022 Zoning Amendments - Impacts on Arlington and Its Comprehensive Plan](#), ASF, December 12 2022, pages 16-17.

	Median sale in Arlington 12/21-12/22	New Missing Middle median sale	% change
Studio	\$139,000	\$443,380	219%
1-bedroom	\$351,250	\$498,802	42%
2-bedroom	\$550,000	\$607,000	10%
3-bedroom	\$880,000	\$1,300,246	48%

	Avg. rent in Arlington	New Missing Middle avg. rent	Missing Middle % rise over avg. rents now
Studio	\$1,842	\$2,240	22%
1-bedroom	\$2,132	\$2,593	22%
2-bedroom	\$2,703	\$3,222	19%
3-bedroom	\$3,503	\$6,456	84%

⁶ [‘Build More Housing’ Is No Match for Inequality: A new analysis finds that liberalizing zoning rules and building more won’t solve the urban affordability crisis, and could exacerbate it](#), Richard Florida.