

ZONING FOR HOUSING/HOUSING FOR ALL MISSTATEMENTS/QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS/RESPONSES

Clarifications to statements made during public testimony at the November 18, 2023, City Council Public Hearing

Misstatement: The Zoning for Housing recommendations will result in an increase of 80,000 residents.

Clarification: Alexandria’s existing population is 158,309. The forecasted population figures for the timeframes requested are listed below. Please note, NPCD staff only forecasts population, household, and employment counts in 5-year intervals using 2020 as the base year. We have not found a good resource for estimating incomes of new residents.

- i. Forecasted 5-year (2025) population: 180,528
- ii. Forecasted 10-year (2030) population: 201,993
- iii. Forecasted 20-year (2040) population: 239,831

Zoning for Housing is estimated to increase the number of housing units by 2,838 over 10 years. Alexandria has an average of 2.11 persons per household.

Statement that the removal of the “family” definition will allow roominghouses and some of these could have up to 27 people living in them.

Clarification: The current ordinance allows any number of related persons along with domestic servants, nurses, and up to two boarders, and allows up to 4 unrelated persons (9 with a special use permit). The proposal will allow the same number of unrelated persons as related persons, and will be based on the building code. The maximum occupancy for several relevant examples is shown online [here](#). There is no example where 27 persons would be able to occupy a 4 unit building.

Statement/Question: What is the benefit of allowing up to four market rate units to replace an existing, modestly priced house? **Answer/clarification:** The more modestly priced single family homes in a neighborhood are already the most likely to be purchased for teardown and replacement with a brand new single family detached home that is typically developed at the maximum square footage and height allowed in that zone. The Zoning for Housing proposal will not make it more likely that such homes are torn down and replaced. Rather, it will mean that, of the instances where teardowns occur, more of them will be multi-unit buildings rather than single-unit buildings. Brand new multi-unit buildings do not meet a definition of “affordable” but they will certainly be priced much lower than a brand new single unit building on that lot.

Statement: Alexandria is among the densest cities in the nation.

Clarification: Alexandria has a population density of 10,700 persons per square mile and an employment density of 7,000 jobs per square mile. This is about the same as Arlington County and considerably less than the District of Columbia.

2020 data	Residents PSM	Employment PSM
Fairfax County	2.9	1.7
Alexandria	10.7	7.0
Arlington Co.	8.9	8.8
District of Columbia	10.7	12.6

PSM = per square mile

The Census Bureau treats independent cities as counties in many of its tables, and that is one reason why Alexandria City shows up as the 10th densest “county” in the country. But Alexandria is nowhere near the top 10 in the Census Bureau’s ranking of “cities.” (Table below is 2022 Census Bureau data).

Counties		
County	Population, 2022	Pop. per sq. mi., 2022
New York County, NY	1,596,273	70,451
Kings County, NY	2,590,516	37,340
Bronx County, NY	1,379,946	32,719
Queens County, NY	2,278,029	20,952
San Francisco County, CA	808,437	17,298
Hudson County, NJ	703,366	15,227
Suffolk County, MA	766,381	13,156
Philadelphia County, PA	1,567,258	11,665
District of Columbia, DC	671,803	10,990
Alexandria city, VA	155,525	10,413

Cities		
City, ST	Population, 2022	Pop. per sq. mi., 2022
Guttenberg town, NJ	11,446	59,305.70
West New York town, NJ	51,981	52,294.80
Union City city, NJ	65,366	50,789.40
Hoboken city, NJ	57,703	46,162.40
Kaser village, NY	5,664	32,930.20
New York city, NY	8,335,897	27,744.10
Cliffside Park borough, NJ	25,560	26,736.40
Kiryas Joel village, NY	38,998	26,674.40
New Square village, NY	9,749	26,564.00
Great Neck Plaza village, NY	7,562	24,315.10

Density within Alexandria varies greatly by neighborhood. Alexandria has a history of concentrating development density (building area per square mile) near Metro stations and existing/planned transitways. In fact, 90% of the planned development within the city is located within a ½ a mile of a Metrorail station and/or a transitway. 75% of the development in the past ten years has occurred within ½ mile of a Metrorail station or near a transitway. Neighborhoods with higher than average densities are Potomac Yard, Old Town North, Braddock, and Eisenhower East.

Zoning for Housing, in and of itself, will not appreciably change either citywide density figures nor neighborhood density figures because the estimated increase in units over the next decade (2,838) is very modest in comparison to existing development and will be dispersed over many neighborhoods.

Statement/Question: What elements of Zoning for Housing add density? **Answer:** Zoning for Housing would allow an increase in floor area for a limited set of townhouse lots in Old Town. Most of Old Town is zoned RM (with a floor area ratio of 1.5) while some lots are zoned RB (with a floor area ratio of 0.75). Zoning for Housing would allow Old Town lots that are currently zoned RB to be developed at the same level as their RM zoned neighbors. The West Old Town civic association noted in their testimony that this is something that they had requested prior to the pandemic. Zoning for Housing would increase the permitted units (but not floor area or height) in single family neighborhoods (increasing the number of permitted units to 4). In larger multifamily structures, it would eliminate caps on units per acre but because overall building size limits would not change, the potential increase in units is very small (an increase averaging 1-2 units per building).

Statement: There is insufficient analysis of the impact of Zoning for Housing on the City.

Clarification/answer: The City has numerous documents, studies and plans that address the impact of future development for the next decade and, often, further into the future. These comprehensive studies take into account planned development, including its location, type and amount, and estimate the needs of that growth in terms of city public facilities and infrastructure. Moreover, the City has put into place regulations on all new development designed to eliminate or mitigate the impact of new development on the environment, the neighborhood, and the City at large. An extensive but partial list of these planning studies is below. In addition, the specific impact of the 2,838 housing units expected from Zoning for Housing/Housing for All was reported in a document entitled [Net New Units and How They Are Supported by Infrastructure](#).

Planning Document	Summary
2021 Sanitary Sewer Master Plan	Provides sewer capacity for growth through 2045 and beyond (see chapter 5)
Flood Action Alexandria	Provides comprehensive analysis and solutions for flooding and stormwater management
School Capacity	This page reviews several joint planning projects (with ACPS) which analyze future school enrollment, capacity needs, and potential solutions.
Student Generation Rates 2023	Provides updated analysis of the number of new public school students "generated" by new development.
Student Enrollment Forecasts 2023	Provides an updated forecast of student enrollment to 2033 (currently anticipated to peak in 2026 and then begin to decline).
Alexandria Mobility Plan 2021	Provides a comprehensive strategy for meeting the transportation needs of Alexandria for the next decade (2031), taking into account future growth.
Road Paving	Provides information on the City's comprehensive strategy for maintaining the condition of the city's street network.

Open Space Planning	Provides policy guidance and recommendations for ensuring the City's open space needs are met, taking into account planned growth. Initiatives include the work since 2019 of the Open Space Steering Committee and the 2020 Open Space Policy Plan. See also the Strategic Master Plan for Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.
Environmental Action Plan 2040	Approved in 2019, the EAP is a comprehensive roadmap to sustainability for the City, including guidance for new development.
Green Building Policy	The 2019 Green Building Policy sets standards for new development to mitigate impact on the environment, with special emphasis on climate change. The policy is to be updated in 2024.
Housing Master Plan	Comprehensive analysis of the City's current and future housing needs. Contains policies and action recommendations. Scheduled for update in near future.
Urban Forestry Master Plan	Plan for the City's urban forest, including tree canopy. See also the updated Landscape Guidelines for new development.
Small Area Plans	Growth area of the City have had their small area plans updated in the past two decades. These plans provide recommendations to ensure that planned growth is fully supported by public facilities and infrastructure.

Misstatement: There are no studies that show that increasing the supply of housing makes housing more affordable. **Clarification/Response:** Below are examples of a strong body of research and literature from a variety of sources that represents how zoning reforms and the expansion of housing, including the expansion of affordable housing, has a positive impact on supply and that affordable housing does not negatively impact property values.

- [New Studies Provide Further Evidence that Zoning Reforms Work, Forbes \(Cites four studies from California and Houston\)](#)
- [Housing Demand, Cost-of-Living Inequality, and the Affordability Crisis, National Bureau of Economic Research](#)
- [City-wide effects of new housing supply: Evidence from moving chains, VATT Institute for Economic Research](#)
- [America, take note: New Zealand has figured out a simple way to bring down home prices, Bloomberg](#)
- [Repeat after me: building any new homes reduces housing costs for all, Financial Times](#)
- [Submarkets With Low Inventory Growth Maintaining Rent Increases, RealPage Analytics](#)
- [Do townhomes drive down housing costs? Social science has an answer, KUOW \(NPR\)](#)

- [Is affordability just, “You get what you pay for?” Market Urbanism](#)
- [More Flexible Zoning Helps Contain Rising Rents, Pew Trusts](#)
- [No, Really. Building More Housing Can Combat Rising Rents, Bloomberg \(cites several recent journal articles\)](#)

Question/misstatement: Do not see anything in the Zoning for Housing/Housing for All Initiative that would provide affordable housing opportunities for employees of restaurant/service establishments in Del Ray. The City’s plan for Arlandria is a giveaway to developers. **Clarification/Response:** The response to [#1 of the November 14 statements](#) provides information on the provisions within several Zoning for Housing/Housing for All proposals that will expand housing within the City in an affordable way. Additionally, the City, with extensive community input over a 2 year process, approved the Arlandria Chirilagua Small Area Plan in December 2021. That plan is centered around providing opportunities for increased affordable housing and diminishing the potential for displacement. Two fully affordable housing developments within Sansé and Naja, totaling 474 units, are scheduled to open in 2026 and Elbert Avenue Residences with 91 affordable units will replace 28 existing units built in 1947.

Misstatement/question: Zoning for Housing will not produce affordable housing. **Clarification:** Clarification in response to a similar statement pertaining to affordability was provided in the response to [#1 of the November 14 statements](#). There are key provisions in several of the proposals that will result in affordability for those who are most in need, choice in typology and choice in price points.

A high proportion of the units created with Zoning for Housing/Housing for All would be committed affordable units. The table below estimates the number of committed affordable units from each of the initiatives that produce additional units.

Initiative	Net New		Comments
	Units	Affordable	
Bonus Height	0		No longer being recommended
CDDs	800	267	One-third would be required to be committed affordable
Office-to-Residential	0	10-30	Assumes the potential for 1-3 committed affordable units in 10 conversions
Historic Development Patterns	60		Add'l units per building may make some projects more likely to move forward
Industrial Zones	0		Supports implementing planned housing
RMF Zone	1800	600-1200	The RMF zone has a minimum requirement of committed affordable units (one-third) but most projects have greatly exceeded that minimum
Expanding Options in Single Family	178		No requirement for committed affordable units
Townhouses	0		
Transit-Oriented Dev't	0		
10 year estimate	2838	877-1497	

Misstatement: Zoning for Housing will eliminate single family neighborhoods. **Clarification:** Zoning for Housing/Housing for All will not eliminate single family neighborhoods under the City's Zoning Ordinance. Single family homes remain a permitted use and the number of 2-4 units (178) anticipated under this proposal will be highly incremental compared to the 9,000 existing single family dwellings.

Question: What is the cost to send a mailer to all Alexandria households? **Response:** We have cost information for a proposed mailer (4 x 6 postcards) to all residential and business addresses in the City. The cost, which does not include design of the postcard or any language translation, is estimated at:

- B&W - \$44,826.89
- Color - \$45,551.01

This includes postage cost of \$33,519.00

Also, staff has been evaluating a mailer related to the upcoming Flood Resilience Plan and has received an early estimate of \$25,000.