

Alexandria Infill Task Force

Summary of Infill Activities & Implementation **In Surrounding Jurisdictions**

This is a summary of Infill/Mansionization measures that have been adopted by or are under consideration in surrounding jurisdictions.

Arlington County

Arlington County studied the issue of modifying the lot coverage requirement for single family residential lots for several years. In November 2005, the Arlington County Board approved revisions to lot coverage to “limit the ‘most egregious’ single-family homes that are out of scale with the surrounding neighborhood.”

A lot coverage regulation specifies the amount of a lot that can be covered by a main dwelling, accessory structures, and non-permeable surfaces, such as driveways and parking areas.

Historically, Arlington had allowed 56% of a lot’s area to be covered by structures and driveways. With the 2005 change, the regulations provide for a reduction in this percentage to a sliding scale percentage (45% – 25%) based on the zoning, with larger lot zones having a smaller percentage of lot coverage. Incentives are provided in the regulation to encourage both detached garages in the rear yard and front porches.

Fairfax County

Fairfax County began to look at residential infill development when a staff paper was presented to the Board of Supervisors in May 1999. Subsequently a draft staff report was produced in July 2000 entitled *Infill & Residential Development Study*. The Planning Commission endorsed selected staff recommendations and the Board was to hold a public hearing on the recommendations after a January 2001 meeting.

A recent discussion with staff indicates that their current near-term focus will feature an angle of bulk plane and a revised approach to measuring residential building height. They are also looking into the authority to implement a neighborhood conservation overlay district.

Fairfax City

Fairfax City staff in July 2007 presented to the Planning Commission three interim options to address the mansionization issue:

- Modify how building height is measured
- Restrict maximum lot coverage
- Limit building envelope with angle of bulk plane restrictions

Staff recommended the angle of bulk plane restrictions as the best interim measure. The Planning Commission expressed interest in pursuing the bulk plane approach, but asked for more study.

The Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan are currently being updated and the staff feels that it is likely that some new regulations to limit the impact of mansionization will be included in both documents.

Prince George's County, MD

Prince George's County has been one of the most energetic of the surrounding jurisdictions in currently pursuing measures to reduce the impact of mansionization. The Planning Board has sponsored three public forums in the last three months (August 22, September 5, October 3) under the heading *Infill Development: Oversized or Incompatible Buildings, Mansionization in Prince George's County*. They are examining the following:

- The existing regulatory system
- Identifying local mansionization examples
- Learning how other jurisdictions address the issues
- Discovering media resources, publications, and other reference sources

As a result of the three forums, community input, and staff research, draft legislative changes have been prepared for a Planning Board work session and public hearing on November 8, 2007. Indications are that legislative changes include the following:

- Require a special permit for new construction or additions that add more than 500 square feet of gross floor area.
 - Include accessory buildings
 - Include breezeways, patios, decks
- Include all full area of basement or cellar in calculation of FAR (currently storage areas and stairs are excluded in "gross floor area")
- Main dwelling lot coverage reduced
- Building height reduced and measured from lowest grade (not the average) to the highest point of roof surface
- Side yard setbacks increase for each foot over 30 feet

Montgomery County, MD

A zoning text amendment introduced in the County Council in November 2003 to change the building height and the method of height measurement was adopted in October 2005. The zoning change reduced the allowable height in established single-family residential zones. In addition, definitions of basement, cellar, and pre-development and finished grades were added or clarified.

In August 2006, the Historic Preservation Section of the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission published a guide to mansionization tools, *Teardown/Mansionization Bulletin: Protecting Older Neighborhoods with Newer Tools, Montgomery County, Maryland*. The tools include:

- Traditional historic districts
- Overlay zones
- Architectural covenants
- Legislative initiatives
 - Forest/tree conservation
 - Stormwater management
 - Demolition moratorium
- Neighborhood conservation districts
- Improving builder/resident communication

The Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight published a report in February 2007 entitled *Residential Infill Construction: A Review of County Laws, Regulations, and Practices*. The purpose of the report was to identify the set of laws and regulations that govern residential infill construction, review the procedures and practices of the permitting function, and summarize data on location, number, and type of residential infill construction. Over a five year period, there were 1,181 permits issued for demolition and new construction and 8,991 permits for addition and renovation projects in the County. Other than administrative and legislative recommendations, the report recommends that the County Council should discuss and decide whether the existing set of laws and regulations governing residential infill construction reflect the Council's preferences for development standards.

In May 2007, the Council approved funding for an Infill Development Task Force. The purpose of the Task Force is to research and recommend specific solutions to the problems posed by infill development in the established older neighborhoods of Montgomery County. The Task Force, headed by one of the Council members, started meeting in June 2007 and has been meeting every 2 – 3 weeks since then. Although it is too early for their recommendations, they are discussing lot coverage, setbacks (including established building lines), FAR/massing, and building height tools. Their goal is to make recommendations for legislation by the end of this calendar year.