

City of Alexandria, Virginia

**Zoning for Housing/  
Housing for All  
FALL COMMUNITY MEETING #1**

September 14, 2023

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Beatley Central Library



# Proposal to add Zoning for Housing/ Housing for All Initiative to the HMP Toolbox



***Zoning for Housing*** is a draft comprehensive proposal of zoning reforms with the goal of expanding housing production and affordability and addressing past and current barriers to equitable housing access.

***Housing for All*** is the equity component of *Zoning for Housing* and will explore the extent of past discriminatory housing policies and any identified continued impact, especially on people of color and/or low-income.

# **Background of Housing Master Plan and Regional Housing Initiative: Need, Goals and Tools**

# Alexandria's Housing Need

## 2023: 1900 HHs are Cost-Burdened



- Approximately **15,500 Alexandria renter households** with incomes up to \$75,000 are estimated to be housing cost burdened, defined as spending more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing costs (American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates). Housing cost burden is experienced most acutely by Alexandria households with incomes below \$50,000 (approximately 10,500 households).
- In addition, approximately **3,500 Alexandria homeowner households** with incomes up to \$75,000 are estimated to be housing cost burdened (American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates).

# City's Housing Master Plan (HMP) 2013 – 2025 and Regional Housing Initiative (RHI) 2020-2030 Aspirational Goals



- **2013-2025 Housing Master Plan (HMP) Goal:** Alexandria set a goal of 2000 affordable units by 2025. That goal is well on track.
- **Metropolitan Washington's Council of Governments' (COG) Regional Housing Initiative 2020 – 2030 (RHI):** In 2019, COG adjusted its prior unit forecast of 240,000 for its 23 member jurisdictions to 320,000 units of housing based on projected increases in job and population growth, including new jobs created by Amazon's selection of National Landing as its new HQ2 location producing an estimated 25,000 new jobs alone.
- **Seventy-five percent of RHI's proposed new units were to be affordable to households of low to moderate incomes** and percent should be located near transit and activity centers.

# City's Housing Master Plan (HMP) 2013 – 2025 and Regional Housing Initiative (RHI) 2020-2030 Aspirational Goals



- **Approximately 800 units (market rate and affordable) were more recently produced each year by the private and non-profit sectors in Alexandria, including approximately 200 units of affordability opportunity per year.**
- Alexandria has characterized its RHI goal as an aspirational target. But in increasing the number of estimated units to be produced in Alexandria between **2020 -2030 the estimated Alexandria RHI total number of units per year would rise from an estimated 800 to 1100 (market and affordable).**
- Under RHI, the new number of units of affordable opportunity would increase **Alexandria's Housing Master Plan goal of affordability of 2,000 units by 2025 to 4,250 units by 2030.**
- This increases **the City's affordable unit goal to about 325 units per year from 2020 to 2030.**

# HMP Tools to Address affordability Need



- **HMP Tools are extensive to promote:**
  - Preservation
  - New Construction
  - Rental Assistance
  - Homeownership Acquisition Assistance
  - Homeowner Rehabilitation Assessment
- **Technical Assistance Tools**
- **Regulatory Tools Examples**
  - The City's Bonus Density and Bonus Height Program under Section 7-700 of the ZO
    - Developer provides affordable housing in exchange for added density
  - The City's voluntary Affordable Housing Contribution Policy
  - **Zoning for Housing Draft Reforms, including Equity Statements.**

# **ZONING FOR HOUSING/ HOUSING FOR ALL**

**Housing for All: Slides 8-14**

**Draft Zoning Reforms: Slides 15-34**

**Upcoming Meetings: Slide 35**



# Government Alliance for Race and Equity

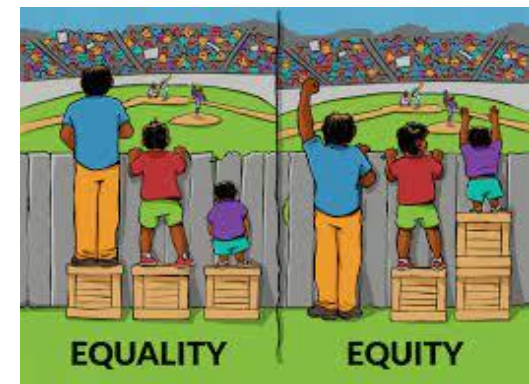


- City of Alexandria participated in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (COG) inaugural year-long **Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE) training** with approximately 10 other COG jurisdictions: 2019-2020.
- **Alexandria's cohort** consisted of an interdepartmental group.
- Alexandria Cohort **adopted Zoning for Housing as a Project** and initiated Housing for All as the Equity Component.
- Post the year-long GARE Training: the **Cohort formed the Housing for All Subcommittee** from the City's Interdepartmental Equity Core Team to study Alexandria housing from an equity perspective.
- Subcommittee operated through approximately 2021, with follow-up work continuing by P&Z and other individual departments.

# GARE Philosophy & Housing for All



- The **Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)** is a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. (Source: GARE Website).
- **Housing for All** is Alexandria's initiative under Zoning for Housing to research past discriminatory housing policies/practices and to research potential impact today, especially on people of color and/or low-income.



# City's Housing for All Subcommittee



- Alexandria City Public Schools
- Alexandria Health Department
- Alexandria Police Department
- City Attorney's Office
- City Manager's Office & Office of Race and Social Equity
- Courts/Court Service Unit
- Department of Community and Human Services
- Department of Fire/EMS
- Department of Information Technology Services
- Department of Planning & Zoning
- Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- Department of Transportation and Environmental Services
- Office of Historic Alexandria
- Office of Housing
- Office Human Rights
- Office of Performance Analytics

# Housing for All Continued Work



- Researching past laws, policies and practices of housing discrimination.
- Researching Alexandria's communities today.
- Developing Equity Impact Statements for Zoning for Housing Initiatives
  - Incorporate measures as part of draft Zoning for Housing reforms to further facilitate principles of housing accessibility, affordability and availability for an All Alexandria.
  - Leverage related City tools to support building, sustaining and strengthening holistic communities throughout Alexandria – Housing, Education, Economic Development, Sustainability, Multi-modal transit, Health and other Neighborhood Services, adequate Infrastructure.
  - Incorporate Metrics to gauge progress

# Work of the Housing for All Subcommittee: Housing for All Webpage and Research



- [Housing for All | City of Alexandria, VA \(alexandriava.gov\)](https://alexandriava.gov)
  - **A Timeline of African American Housing in Alexandria** (Subcommittee and Dr. Krystyn Moon)
  - **A History of Land Use Zoning and Restrictive Covenants in Alexandria** (Dr. Krystyn Moon)
  - **A Courageous Journey: A Guide to Alexandria's African American History** (Source: Office of Historic Alexandria and VisitAlex)
  - **A Map of Alexandria African American Neighborhoods** (City of Alexandria Information Technology Department)
  - **A List of African American Neighborhoods and related Oral Histories** (Dr. Krystyn Moon and information from the Office of Historic Alexandria's Oral History webpage)
  - **Race-Based Discrimination and Mortgages in Alexandria** (Dr. Krystyn Moon)
- **Work Continues**

# Related Resources of the City's Office of Race and Social Equity (RASE) and the Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE)



- [Race and Equity Toolkit \(RASE\)](#)
- [Equity Index Map \(RASE\)](#)
- [Race and Society Equity Terms \(RASE\)](#)
- [Advancing Equity in Housing, Land, Development \(GARE\)](#)
- [Racial Equity Action Plan Manual \(GARE\)](#)

# DRAFT ZONING REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

# Bonus Height Text Amendment



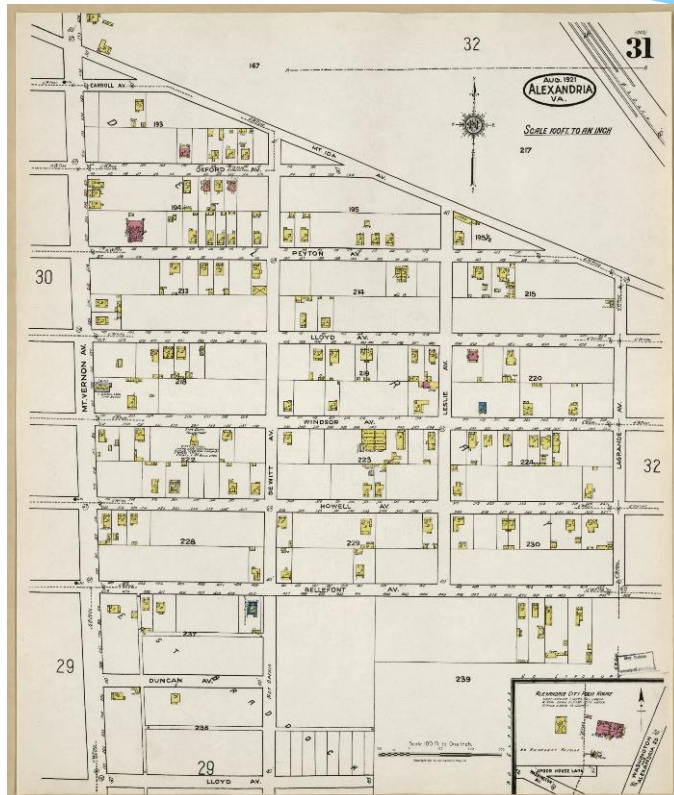
*Visual depiction of "bonus height."*

This initiative would incentivize more use of Section 7-703 of the zoning ordinance that allows additional height in new residential projects in exchange for affordable housing. Current law allows the provision to be used in areas with a height limit greater than 50 feet, and the proposal is to allow it to be used in areas with height limits of 45 feet or more. A goal of the initiative is to expand housing choices and dispersion throughout more areas of the City in a manner that is harmonious to the surrounding physical context of the community.

**EQUITY IMPACTS:** Section 7-700 (Bonus Density Program) is an important tool to help expand housing production and affordability while also creating more opportunities for choice of housing types and location and more opportunity for affordability.



# Historic Development Patterns



1921 Map of Del Ray



*Alexandria Square condominiums, Del Ray  
Year Built: 1940  
Now zoned RB (townhouse)*

# Historic Development Patterns



## Our recommendation:

- **Remove dwelling units per acre limitations in multifamily zones** to allow smaller unit sizes within the same development envelope. Removing the dwelling units per acre limits as well as the average unit size in some zones, this could increase unit production by an estimated 1.5 to 2.5 units in some projects.
- **Remove zone transition setback requirements**, which require additional setbacks when commercial buildings are proposed on land adjacent to residentially zoned parcels; and
- **Implement the Zoning for Housing townhouse zone recommendations.**

## For the future

- Simplifying the ordinance and adding flexibility
- Creating design guidelines for traditional neighborhood development
- Consider the Neighborhood Conservation District tool to preserve our best examples of building types not currently being constructed.

**EQUITY IMPACTS:** These recommended zoning changes would diversify housing options, including housing unit size, for all income-levels and allow low-scale multifamily developments that would likely provide housing opportunities for lower income households.

# Residential Multi-family (RMF) Zone Analysis



## ParcView II

Illustrative Rendering



## Witter Place

Illustrative Rendering



## The Heritage

Illustrative Rendering



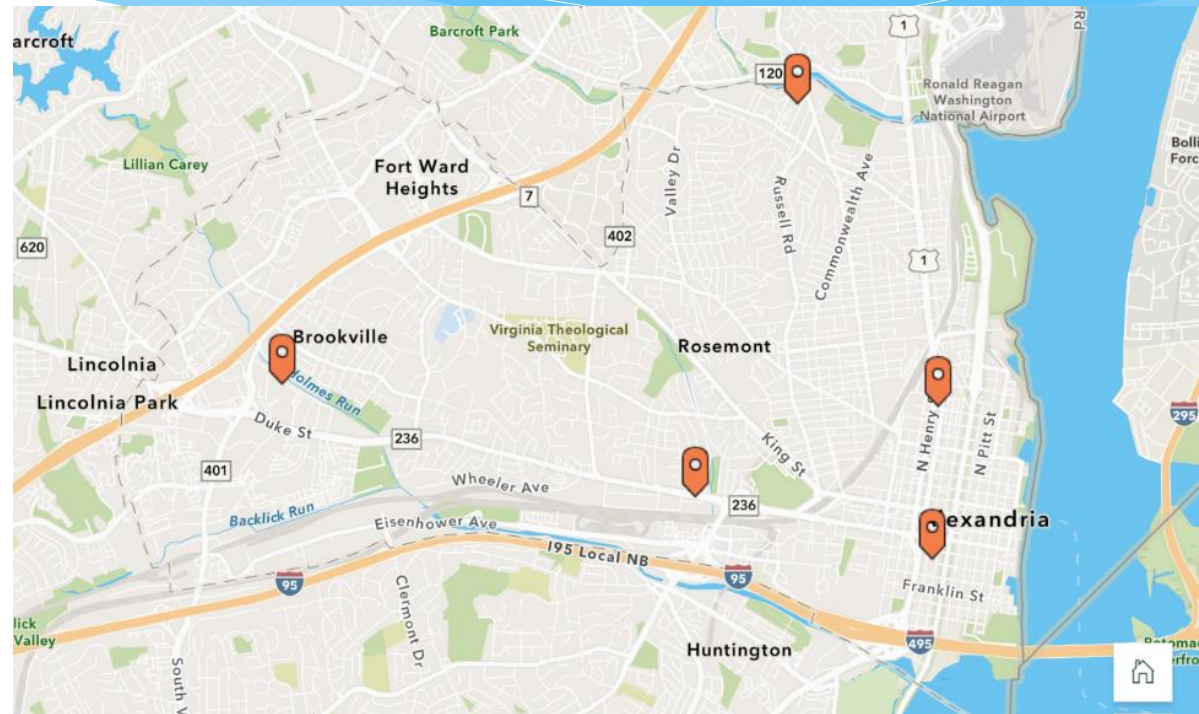
## Samuel Madden Redevelopment

Illustrative Rendering



## Elbert Aveune

Illustrative Rendering



*From the online story map for the RMF Zone analysis, showing the affordable housing projects approved with the RMF zone tool.*

# Residential Multi-family (RMF) Zone Analysis

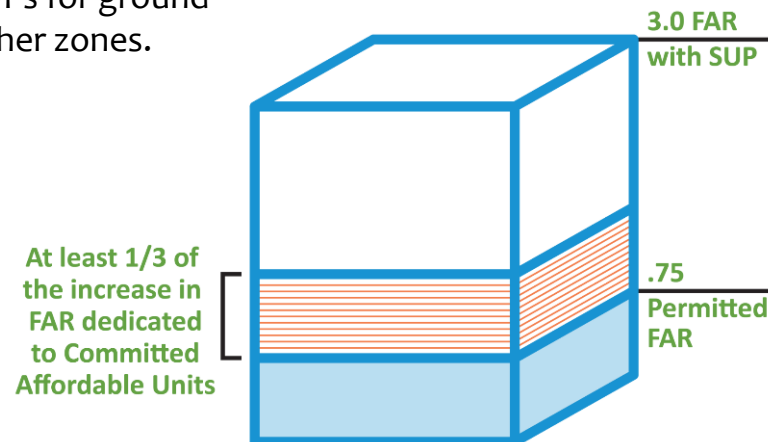


**What we found:** Projects that meet the enhanced affordable housing requirements of the RMF zone can be compatibly located on sites planned for medium and high density residential development, as well as other specific locations. The existing RMF zone already allows development at smaller scales, but the economics of affordable housing generally require higher densities to move forward, so a second, lower FAR version of the RMF zone would be not helpful. The zone currently requires SUPs for ground non-residential uses that are permitted by right in other zones.

*The RMF zone works by providing a substantial density bonus along with a requirement for committed affordable housing*

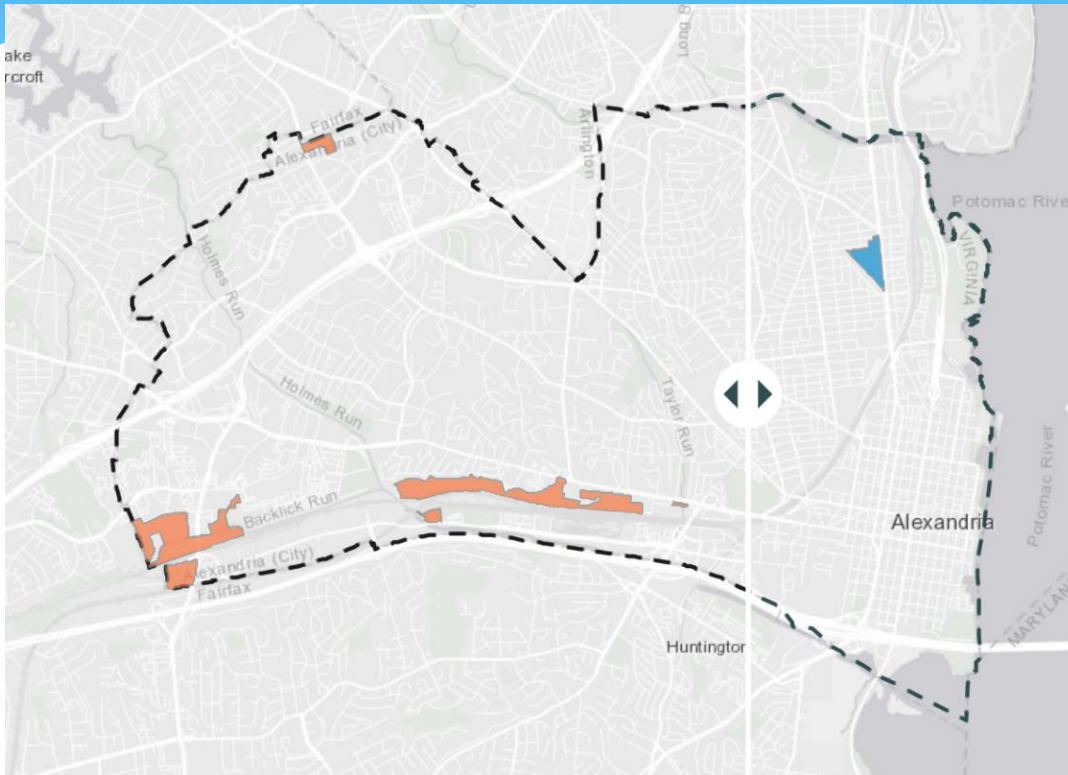
## Our recommendation:

- Amend the Housing Master Plan to establish general intent for RMF rezonings.
- Amend the RMF zone to expand the uses permitted by right on the ground floor of RMF buildings, consistent with other zones.



**EQUITY IMPACTS:** The recommendation will make it clear that this important tool, and the density it requires, is suitable in many locations around the city.

# Industrial Zone Analysis

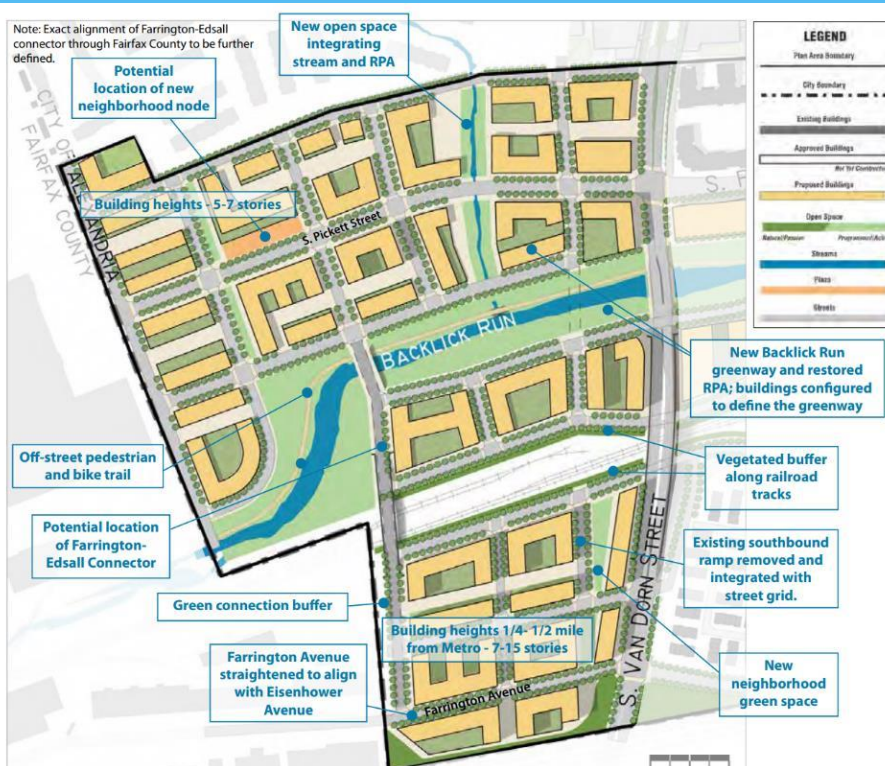


*Story Map of Alexandria Industrial Zoned Property 2014 (blue) and today (orange)*



*Recent industrial building constructed on Pickett Street*

# Industrial Zone Analysis



Plan for redevelopment of industrial zoned land in Eisenhower West

## What we found:

- Many buildings in industrial zoned land have uses like retail, exercise studios, offices, and even churches, that are compatible with housing. But the sites and buildings are developed in a way that's pedestrian unfriendly and anti-urban.
- The ordinance doesn't prevent RMF zone requests from being considered.
- The lack of urban design performance standards for new industrial buildings can impede the transition to the mixed-use walkable future that is planned.

**What we recommend:** Add site and building criteria to the Industrial zone to require new buildings to be compatible with any potential future residential/pedestrian-scale development.

**EQUITY IMPACTS:** The recommendation paves the way for planned new housing to be built, with requirements for affordable housing, and ensuring that quality of life is consistent with other areas of the City.

# Coordinated Development Districts (CDDs) and Affordable Housing



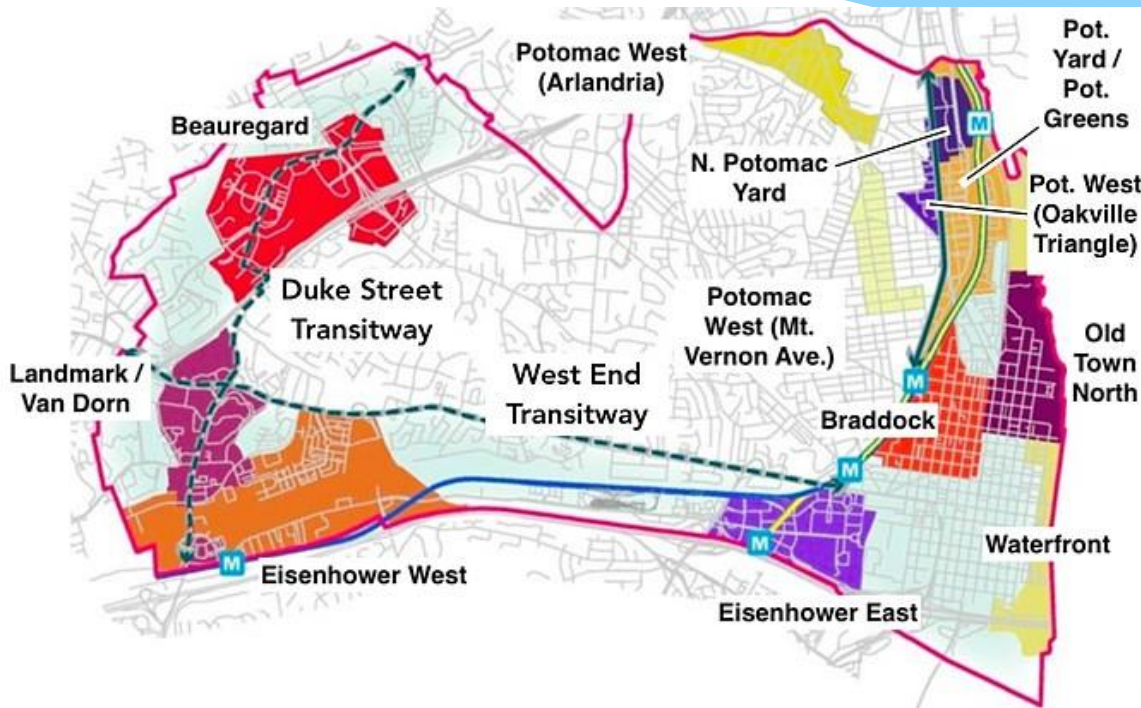
PRGS, Old Town North



**Our recommendation:** When the City approves density above that provided by small area plan through a CDD, one-third of that additional density should be committed affordable units. This policy would also clarify that the City’s affordable housing bonus density program applies to CDDs.

**EQUITY IMPACTS:** The recommendation ensures that affordable housing is “first in line” when density increases are sought in these areas.

# Expansion of Transit Oriented Development



## Planned, Not Yet Built Housing in Small Area Plans

N. Potomac Yard: 3,800

Oakville Triangle: 2,100

Old Town North: 4,400

Braddock: 700

Eisenhower East: 11,300

Eisenhower West/LVD: 10,900

Beauregard: 7,500

Mt. Vernon Ave: 120

*Many of the small area plans approved since 2000 follow a principle of locating higher density development in the vicinity of high capacity transit, including Metro and bus rapid transit.*



# Expansion of Transit Oriented Development



## Specific challenges of transit-oriented development:

- Land is more costly (+/- 25% higher than other comparable areas).
- Higher density construction types (steel and/or concrete) are also more costly.
- Urban blocks are more constrained and more challenging to develop.
- While bonus density and/or height are an option, there are often some market limitations. For example, developers generally do not want to deliver more than 350-450 units/building because of market conditions/absorption rates.
- Parking (underground or structured) can be a limit to additional units both because of cost and space limitations.
- The planned priority transit corridors in Alexandria West and the Duke Street corridor present an opportunity to add more market rate and affordable housing.

**EQUITY IMPACTS:** Potential to expand housing options, including affordable housing, in areas with high levels of transit service.

# Office to Residential Conversions



*Park + Ford*



*The Oronoco*



*The Foundry*



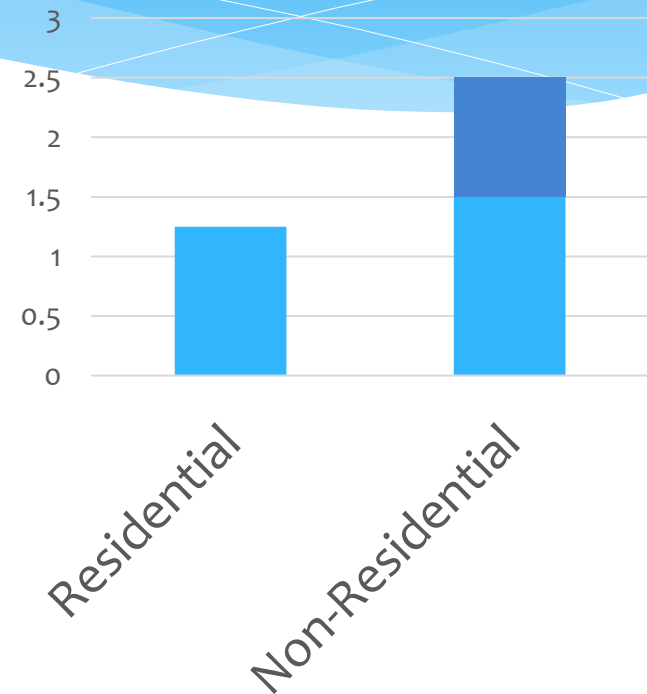
# Office to Residential Conversions



**Our recommendation:** Continue to support conversions of older, obsolete buildings. Prioritize for retention office buildings that are competitive or where City policies or plans call for non-residential development in that area. Establish a City Council policy, possibly memorialized in the Housing Master Plan, affirming that conversions should use Section 7-700 to increase the residential density on the site, in exchange for affordable housing.

Work with Office of Climate Action and the City Attorney to develop conversion standards for Green Building. Continue to look for barriers to desirable conversions and for opportunities to increase support for affordable housing.

CD Zone FAR Limits



**EQUITY IMPACTS:** The recommendation ensures that affordable housing is “first in line” when conversions require additional density to be completed.



# Townhouse Zoning Analysis

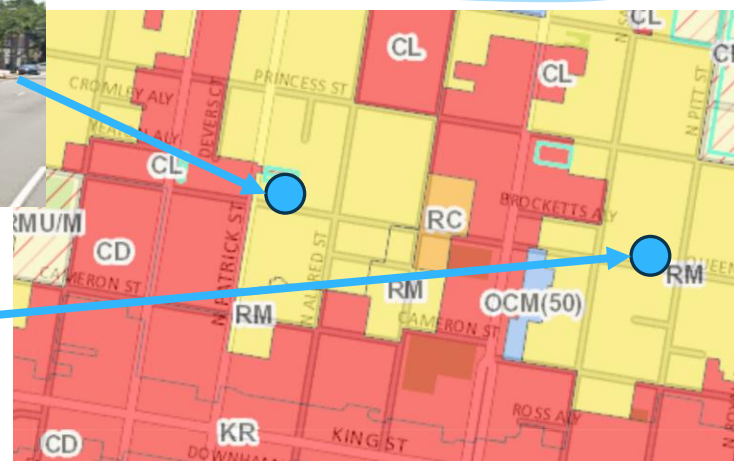
**300 block of North Patrick, zoned RB**

Minimum lot size: 1980/1600 sf

Required open space: 800 sf

FAR: 0.75

Heights 30-45 feet



**300 block of North Pitt, zoned RM**

Minimum lot size: 1452 sf

Required open space: 35%

FAR: 1.5

Heights 35-45 feet



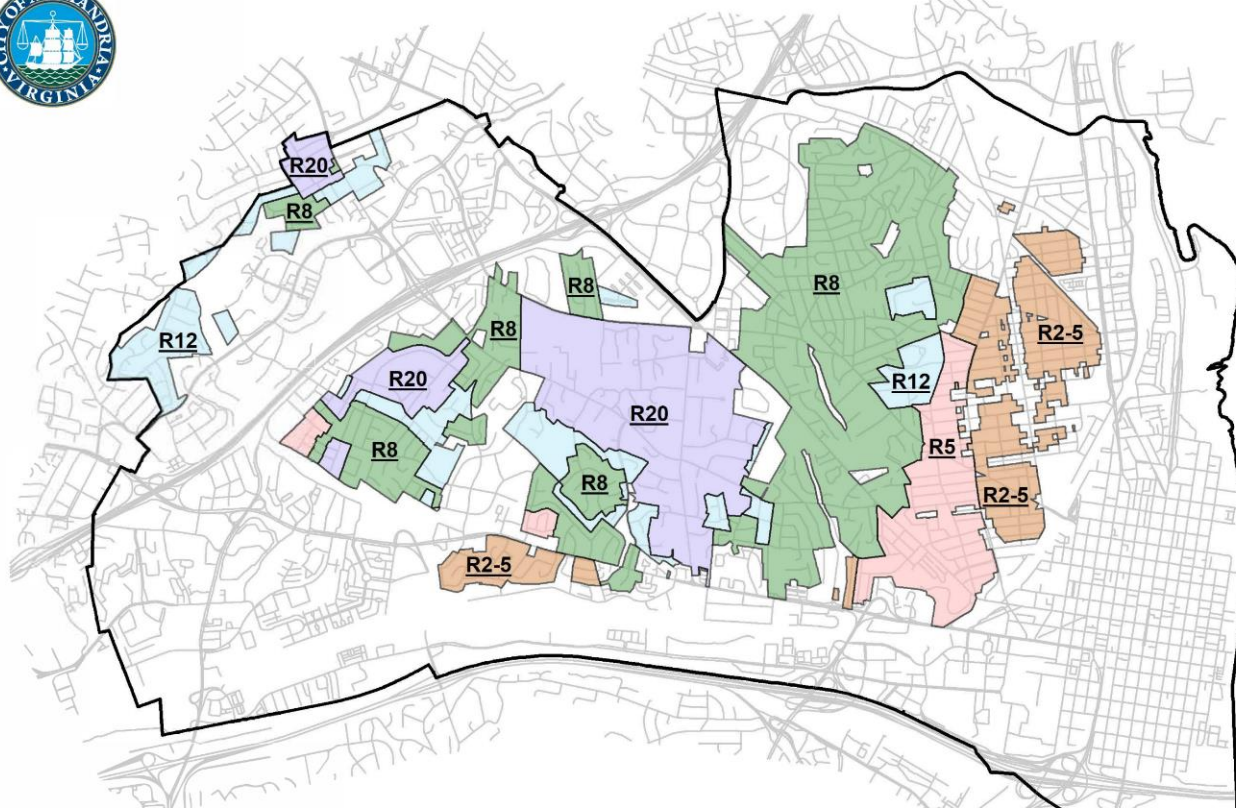
# Townhouse Zoning Analysis

## Our recommendation:

- **Establish lot requirements based on location and similarity of lot size/pattern/configuration instead of housing type.** (Apply RM townhouse standards to all properties in Old Town where townhouses are permitted, including when reviewing single and two-unit dwellings on narrow lots).
- **Establish contextual front setback requirements** for townhouse zones and for residential development in commercial zones City-wide
- **Eliminate side yard setback requirements for lots 25 feet in width or less**
- **Establish 35 percent open space requirement across all townhouse zones and for residential uses in commercial zones**
- **Apply the same parking approach that is recommended in the single family zoning recommendation** (Eliminate off-street parking requirements for single-unit, two-unit or townhouse dwellings within the Enhanced Transit District and require one space per dwelling unit for dwellings outside the Enhanced Transit District).

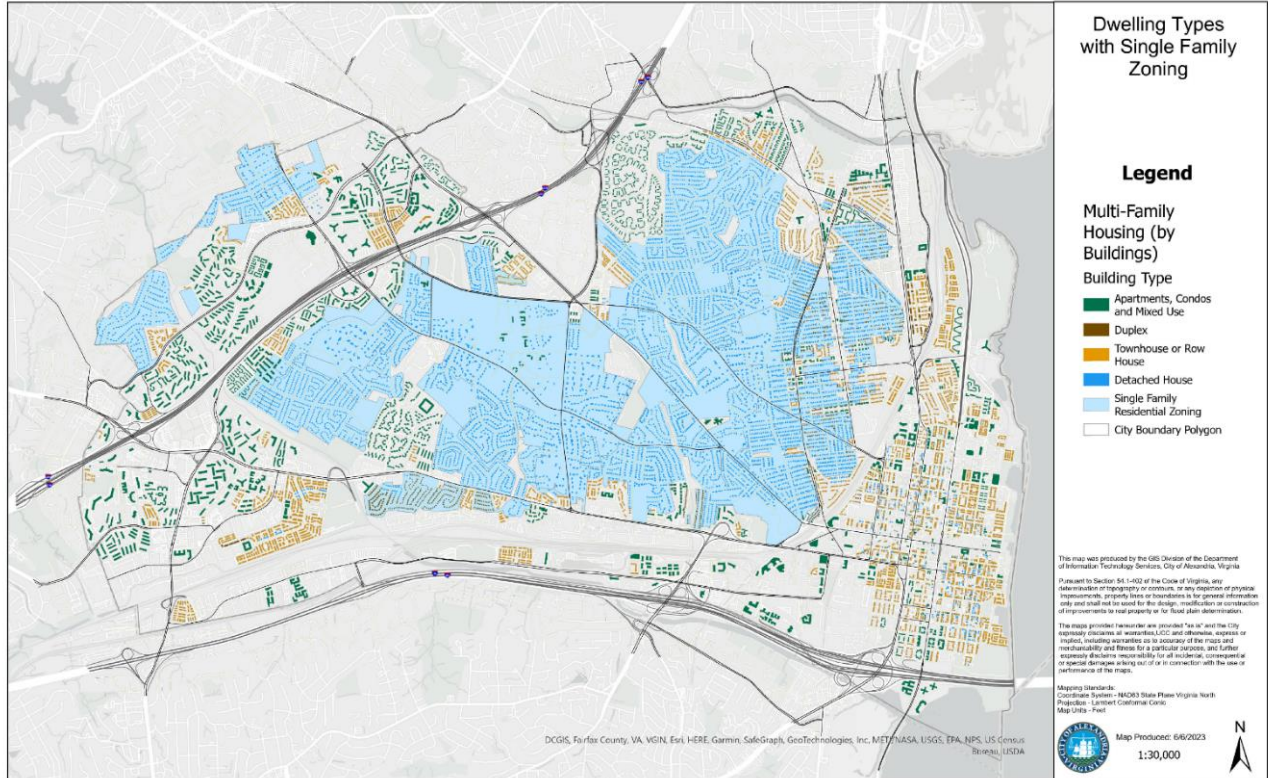
**EQUITY IMPACTS:** Removing inconsistencies would grant homeowners similar rights to those granted by the RM zone.

# Expanding Housing Options in Single Family Zones



Single-family zones account for 5.17 square miles or 34% of the total land area of the city. The single-family zones are R2-5, R5, R8, R12 and R20.

# Expanding Housing Options in Single Family Zones



Housing units in Alexandria by type and location

# Expanding Housing Options in Single Family Zones



## What we recommend:

Staff has developed two options for the number of housing units to be permitted in single family zones (Option 2 is recommended):

**Option 1:** Add the opportunity to construct two-unit dwellings in the R20, R12, R8, and R5 zones and three to four multi-unit dwellings in R2-5 zone. An estimated 66 new residential buildings would be developed over a 10-year period containing an estimated 150 units.

OR

**Option 2:** Add the opportunity to construct two-unit and three to four-unit dwellings in the R20, R12, R8, R5, and R2-5 zones. An estimated 66 new residential buildings would be developed over a 10-year period containing an estimated 178 units.

(Continued next slide)



# Expanding Housing Options in Single Family Zones



## What we recommend (continued from previous slide):

Staff has developed two options for parking requirements for single family zones (Option 3 is recommended):

### Option 3:

- No minimum parking requirements for dwellings with up to four units within the enhanced transit area.
- Minimum 0.5 parking spaces per unit for dwellings up to four units beyond the enhanced transit area.

### Option 4:

- Minimum 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit for dwellings with up to four units within the enhanced transit area.
- Minimum 1.0 parking spaces per dwelling unit for dwellings with up to four units beyond the enhanced transit area

(Continued next slide)

# Expanding Housing Options in Single Family Zones



## What we recommend (continued from previous slide):

**Staff recommends deleting “family” from the zoning ordinance**, with occupancy solely based on capacity as determined by statewide building code. Some nomenclature changes will also be required to implement this recommendation (i.e., “single family” detached dwelling might become “single unit” detached dwelling).

**Staff recommends an amendment to a policy statement contained in some 1992 chapters of the Master Plan.** That policy statement states that densities in single family residential neighborhoods should not be increased. Staff believes that our housing and planning policies have evolved since 1992 such that the overall goal of supporting and protecting residential neighborhoods is no longer dependent on strict adherence to one dwelling unit per lot.

**EQUITY IMPACTS:** Broaden the housing and population diversity in single family areas. Create a zoning ordinance that no longer recognizes some family structures rather than all of them.



# What are the next steps?

**September 5:** Joint Planning Commission/ City Council Work Session, City Hall (draft recommendations released).

**September 14:** Community meeting, Beatley Library

**September 23:** City Council Public Hearing, City Hall (opportunity to comment)

**September 24:** City Council Town Hall (opportunity to comment) Location coming soon.

**September 25:** Community meeting, William Ramsay Recreation Center

**October 12:** Community meeting, Charles Houston Recreation Center.

**October 14:** City Council Public Hearing, City Hall (opportunity to comment)

**October 21:** City Council Town Hall (opportunity to comment) Location coming soon.

**November 1:** Planning Commission Public Hearing on Zoning for Housing, City Hall (opportunity to comment)

**November 14:** City Council Public Hearing on Zoning for Housing, City Hall

**November 18:** City Council Public Hearing on Zoning for Housing *continued*, City Hall

**November 28:** City Council Meeting, City Hall (scheduled vote on Zoning for Housing reforms)

# Questions

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Webpage:

[Zoning for Housing/Housing for All | City of Alexandria, VA \(alexandriava.gov\)](http://alexandriava.gov/zoning-for-housing/housing-for-all) -