



NRCA, P.O. Box 3242, Alexandria, VA 22302

March 3, 2020

(REVISED) *SENT VIA EMAIL*

Mr. Nathan Macek, Chair
Alexandria Planning Commission
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: **March 3, 2020 Docket Item No. 8—*Update on Initiatives to Support Production of Market and Affordable Housing and Zoning for Housing***

Dear Chair Macek and Planning Commission Members:

The North Ridge Citizens' Association (NRCA) is providing input on Docket Item #8, which the Planning Commission intends to discuss at its March 3rd meeting. We understand that City Council intends to separately review this proposal at its March 24th meeting.

We are aware that the City has determined a need for additional housing that is affordable, and we appreciate the need to invest resources in preserving affordability for residents. However, this proposal—more accurately described as a number of inter-related proposals and initiatives—is sweeping in scope and profound in terms of its potential to have lasting impacts on the City and Alexandrians' quality of life for decades to come. It is startling how little notice and public review has been provided to date. We recommend that this proposal be separated into coherent pieces, so that each element is given the consideration and dialogue that it deserves.

We also have substantive questions regarding underlying data and assumptions. For example, the February 27, 2020 Memorandum states that the City will commit to 1,150 housing units each year for the next ten years (or a total of 11,500) as a participant in the COG Regional Housing Initiative, a very high number of new housing units for the population size and area of our City. To cover the predicted shortfall in the entire DC area and create 75,000 new units of housing, Alexandria is committing to roughly 3,100 additional units (just over 4%) of this total. Meanwhile, the City is *already* the most densely-populated jurisdiction in the entire Commonwealth of Virginia, and we are much more densely-populated than most other jurisdictions. We wonder why the City appears poised to voluntarily commit to such a disproportionate share of the burden to the great benefit of other local jurisdictions.

The City has thus far not provided a clear basis for its target of 75 percent of the net new units for affordable housing. The Memorandum references no estimate of the cost of such housing to taxpayers and other homeowners, to include the need for the fully-loaded cost of providing additional City services, school enrollment space and transit/roadway capacity for added residents.

We urge the Commission, City Council and management staff to adhere to established law and best practices when contemplating changes to existing zoning policies, as follows:



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- Zoning changes must take into account all applicable comprehensive area plans for those areas under consideration.
- There must be demonstrated need for zoning changes.
- Any zoning changes must be consistent with surrounding uses.
- Zoning changes must be consistent with the orderly development of public services, such as transit.

Further, we ask the Planning Commission in its recommendations to advise City Council not to consider adopting these initiatives until there is a good faith outreach effort to both fully inform residents about the proposals, and to address their concerns about these sweeping new initiatives for the City. The apparent rush to introduce them without serious public vetting has seemingly resulted in work product that appears to be substantively deficient and unsupported, requiring significant study. If these initiatives are worthy of consideration, why not let the public have a real opportunity to review the matter and express opinion?

For the North Ridge community, which consists mostly of single-family residences, any plans to change zoning ordinances that impact our neighborhood quality of life deserve fair and substantial discussion. We welcome the opportunity to work with the City on community outreach. North Ridge residents chose our neighborhood and its single-family homes - with open space, leafy green tree canopy and ample street parking - for a reason.

A robust and sustainable Alexandria needs to provide choices as to the type of neighborhood in which residents wish to live. The City should commit to maintaining property values, environmental commitments and quality of life for all neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Stimson

Ms. Kay Stimson,
NRCA President

cc: Mr. Karl Moritz, Director
City Council Members