



Alexandria City Council
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

November 14, 2023

Dear Mayor Wilson and members of the Alexandria City Council:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Regional Policy Director for [Greater Greater Washington](#), a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. GGWash supports the Draft Zoning Text and Master Plan Amendments and Housing Policy Updates contained within Zoning For Housing.

We appreciate the City of Alexandria's commitment to doing its part to mitigate the region's housing shortage. A recent study from Up For Growth shows that the DC region is short 156,000 homes of what we need to accommodate our current and future population¹. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments has noted that as a region we need to produce 32,000 new homes each year to meet demand². One consequence of the lack of housing is that Alexandria is becoming a prohibitively expensive place to live. Recently, Mayor Wilson posted on social media that the average sale price of a new, single-family home in Alexandria this year was \$2.17 million³.


With that in mind, we're glad to see that the City's recommended amendments and updates in Zoning For Housing identified common-sense changes to the zoning code that can increase housing production now, including more attainably priced market-rate homes, and more income-restricted affordable homes. I'd like to highlight a few specific items we support.

- There are two options for reducing parking mandates for single-family detached, two-family and rowhouse or townhouse dwellings, which is currently two spaces per unit. Parking is expensive to build, which can make new developments financially infeasible—or require that

¹ <https://upforgrowth.org/apply-the-vision/housing-underproduction/>

² https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/housing/documents/missing-middle/mmhs_phase-1-report-final-draft.pdf

³ <https://twitter.com/justindotnet/status/1719469703721099464>

The Washington, DC region is great  and it can be greater.



those costs get passed along to renters and homebuyers, even if they don't own a car⁴. **We support Option 3**, as recommended by staff, which would eliminate parking requirements for homes within the Enhanced Transit Area, and require 0.5 parking spaces per home in the rest of the City.

- There are two options for creating more opportunities for new homes in areas where today only single-family houses are legal to build. **We support Option 2**, as it would provide more housing opportunities throughout the City, and crucially, near transit, including the King Street and Braddock Road Metro stations and future Duke Street and West End transitways.
- **We support removing the definition of “family” from the Zoning Ordinance**, which does not include or reflect the wide variety of households that call the City of Alexandria home today. Historically, the definition of “family” has been used to exclude people and households who do not conform to a traditional nuclear family arrangement. This change also shifts the focus of the City's zoning code from the people who live in buildings to the qualities of the buildings themselves.
- **We also support recommendations to remove references to minimum lot sizes, maximum units per acre, and zone transition setbacks**, which at best duplicate other regulations and at worst could make building types that are already allowed under current zoning infeasible. Likewise, we support streamlining rules for small-scale infill townhouse developments, as existing yard, bulk, and open-space requirements can make it difficult or impossible to build context-sensitive homes in historic neighborhoods like Old Town.

Zoning For Housing will go a long way to creating a zoning code that reflects the City of Alexandria's values while addressing the City's housing needs. As a regional organization that works in the District, Maryland, and Northern Virginia, GGWash is hopeful that this will set an example for other jurisdictions facing similar challenges. We look forward to working with the City Council to make that happen.

Sincerely,

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington

⁴ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/parking-requirements-and-foundations-are-driving-up-the-cost-of-multifamily-housing/>